

In pictures:
Chinese dance
troupe regales
audience



Philippine
crime war
packs
decaying jails



In pictures:
Kuwait kites
soar high
at UK fest



Ibrahimovic
makes United
debut in front of
fellow Swedes



UN ENVOY OFFERS YEMEN FOES WORKSHEET FOR FUTURE PHASE

PROPOSAL TO EXTEND TALKS AMID CONCERNS OVER NEW COUNCIL



Min 30°
Max 48°
High Tide
08:38 & 23:07
Low Tide
02:52 & 16:37



150 FILLS
NO: 16948
40 PAGES

MPS SLAM MOVE TO CUT SALARIES OF DIPLOMATS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: MPs yesterday demanded that salaries of diplomats should not be reduced and called on First Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled to intervene. MP Ahmad Muta'ei rejected any decision that will lead to the reduction of diplomats' salaries, as Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh has suggested. He wondered why Saleh opted for this "strange" decision, while his ministry is not adopting any of the solutions given "by me or my colleagues" on reducing the budget deficit.

MP Talal Al-Jalal asked Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled to coordinate with the finance ministry to reconsider the decision to reduce salaries and subsidies of diplomats abroad. He said the roles these missions are playing are appreciated by all, and the state must provide all facilities, particularly financial, so they can carry out their duties perfectly. He rejected any intention to impinge on the rights of diplomats under any excuse, especially since their salaries are considered "humble" compared to those in other GCC countries.

Continued on Page 13

145 ARRESTED IN JAHRA RAID



KUWAIT: A crackdown by the Interior Ministry continued yesterday in Industrial Jahra, resulting in the arrest of 145 residency violators and wanted persons. The campaign was supervised by a number of senior ministry officials led by Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmad yesterday met the delegations of Yemen's Ansarullah movement and the General People's Congress (GPC) as part of the Kuwaiti consultations on peace in Yemen. During the meeting with Ansarullah and the GPC, Ould Cheikh Ahmad discussed visions to resolve the crisis in Yemen. There have been expectations that the talks would focus on the movement's decision on forming a presidential council to take over the reins in Yemen.

Following yesterday's meetings, the UN envoy said he had handed the negotiating teams a worksheet on visions for the coming period with the prior target of concluding a solution in Yemen. The talks with the Yemeni parties focused on the envoy's vision for an integrated and comprehensive solution to the crisis in Yemen, and a proposal for extending the Kuwait talks for a short period. Meanwhile, informed sources said that the Yemeni parties would each hold closed meetings to discuss the worksheet and form a stance towards it.

Officials with Yemen's internationally recognized government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi told AP they were considering proposals to reconvene the talks, which have failed to bridge the gap with the rebels, in Oman. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to brief reporters. "There can be no more talks after the new coup," delegation spokesman Mohammad Al-Emrani told AFP on Friday.

Ould Cheikh Ahmad was later expected to meet Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister

Continued on Page 13

CLINTON, TRUMP TAKE GLOVES OFF

HARRISBURG: Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump traded insults at opposite ends of the country Friday, taking their fight for the White House to rival battleground states and portraying starkly different visions of America. One of the most divisive US campaigns in modern history is entering a new chapter with Republicans and Democrats having selected their nominees, leaving the candidates slogging it out before election day on Nov 8.

Clinton followed her historic acceptance speech on Thursday as the first woman presidential nominee for a

major party with a rally in Philadelphia before embarking on a bus tour of Rust Belt states Pennsylvania and Ohio. In Colorado, a key western state, her Republican opponent promised "no more Mr Nice Guy." He trashed Clinton's speech as "average," called her a liar and promised to end the migration of Syrian refugees. "I'm starting to agree with you," the 70-year-old told supporters chanting "lock her up, lock her up" in Colorado Springs. "I'm taking the gloves off," he said. "Just remember this Trump is going to be no more Mr Nice Guy."

Continued on Page 13

16 KILLED IN TEXAS BALLOON INFERNO

AUSTIN: At least 16 people were feared dead after a hot air balloon caught fire and crashed in a pasture near the central Texas city of Lockhart yesterday morning, according to federal and local authorities. "It does not appear at this time that there were any survivors of the crash," Caldwell County Sheriff Daniel Law said in a statement, according to his office. Emergency responders in Texas said the fire hit the basket portion of the hot air balloon.

The accident is likely to be one of the deadliest hot air balloon crashes on record. It comes about three years after 19 people, mostly Asian and European tourists, were killed in a hot air balloon crash in Luxor, Egypt. The Federal Aviation Administration confirmed the Lockhart crash, about 50 km south of Austin. It did not offer any information on fatalities but said at least 16 people were on board the balloon. The Caldwell County sheriff's office said it was working to determine the identities of those aboard.

More than a dozen police vehicles could be seen on pasture land at the site of the crash, in live video provided by Austin TV station KVUE.

Continued on Page 13

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Go Further

ASSISTANT FM HOLDS LUNCHEON FOR UN ENVOY

KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's Bureau Affairs, Ambassador Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, held a luncheon on Friday for the UN envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed and the Saudi Ambassador to Yemen Mohammed Al Jaber. The formal lunch was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for

GCC Affairs Nasser Al-Mezain, Ambassador Salem Ghesab AlZamanan, Kuwait's ambassador to Yemen Fahd Saad Almeie, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Arab World Affairs Ambassador Aziz Rahim Al-Dihani, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for the Foreign Minister's Bureau Affairs Ambassador Saleh Salem Aloghani and a host of the foreign ministry officials. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's Bureau Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah is pictured with the guests. — KUNA

UNSC COMMENDS KUWAIT'S CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR IRAQ

NEW YORK: UN Security Council welcomed the strong bilateral relations between Iraq and Kuwait and commended the Government of Kuwait's continued support for Iraq in its efforts to achieve stability. In a press statement issued Friday by the Japanese-led Council, the members of the Security Council encouraged the two countries, as per Security Council resolution 2107, to collaborate closely through the tripartite mechanism on the file of missing Kuwaiti persons and third-country nationals to achieve further concrete results.

The members of the Security Council noted the limited progress made on this issue recently and expressed their regret that no cases of missing Kuwaiti persons have been solved and no human remains exhumed over the past 11 years, reiterating their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the missing.

While recognizing the considerable challenges facing Iraq at this time, the 15-member body called on the Government of Iraq to continue in its efforts to achieve tangible progress with respect to returning all missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains, in addition to returning Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. However, the UNSC recognized that important steps have recently been taken to reinvestigate this file, and commended the momentum, energy and positive engagement of the Government of Iraq. In the statement, the Council members were encouraged by the commitment of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense to the file,

as evidenced by recent activities, and welcomed the adoption of the 2016 Iraqi plan of action with the inclusion of the Kuwaiti recommendations, and strongly encouraged the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait to reconvene the Joint Property Committee, every six months, as agreed.

Expressing their strong support for the perseverance of the members of the tripartite mechanism and its chair, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in an effort to locate the remains of the missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals, the Council supported the Secretary General's opinion that "ascertaining the fate of missing persons and providing answers to their grieving families depend on steadfast commitment, action and the adoption of new and innovative ways to push the file forward." The members of the Security Council expressed their intention to remain engaged in this issue.

On July 15, the members of the Security Council were briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jan Kubis, on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, following the recent report of the Secretary-General. In this regard, the members of the Security Council commended the efforts of UNAMI, its Special Representative and Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs to continue to promote, support and facilitate the efforts of the Government of Iraq. — KUNA



Washington intermediate school students performing at the 25th anniversary of the Kuwait-America Foundation (KAF) gala.

KUWAITI AMBASSADOR LAUDS US CAMPAIGN TO STOP VIOLENCE

WASHINGTON: Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday extolled the 'National Campaign to Stop Violence' in the United States, stressing his country's support for the campaign that aimed to promote peace and understanding amongst people. This came in a statement by Ambassador Sheikh Salem after participating in a gala marking the 25th anniversary of the Kuwait-America Foundation (KAF) and the final day for the educational and awareness program 'Do The Right Thing', organized by the Washington intermediate school students campaign. He hailed the awareness and educational program which highlighted the disadvantages of the violence, an act in which Kuwait was one of its victims during the Iraqi invasion. The 'Do The Right Thing' program is directed to all segments of society and there lies its importance, the Kuwaiti diplomat said, adding that the program would be featured in across 30 American cities. Meanwhile, Chairman of KAF Dr Hassan Al-Ebraheem said that US students, who attended the ceremony, expressed their appreciation for the role of the Foundation in the promotion of peace and anti-violence in schools, hoping such campaign would continue this noble role.

He added that the ceremony, which was attended by a number of ambassadors and diplomats, honored winners of the 'Do The Right Thing' program in recognition of their efforts to spread peace and love in schools. He said that those in charge of the campaign had asked all the participants, estimated at 70,000 students, to send essays regarding their experience with violence and how it affected them.

Ebraheem said that 50 students have won awards for the best essays written in this area



WASHINGTON: Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (fourth from left) at the 25th anniversary of the Kuwait-America Foundation (KAF) gala. —KUNA

and were honored at the closing ceremony. He added that the National Campaign to Stop Violence also will organize a Washington trip for the students, holding meetings with a number of officials in the Supreme Court and visiting several government buildings as well as the Library of Congress to deposit their articles in this historical building.

In separate interviews conducted on the sidelines of the ceremony, Emma Moser, a 13-year-old student of San Antonio, Texas, said that her article titled (Violence) spoke about her experience in 2012 when her the Sandy Hook Elementary School was the target of a

shooting incident. Moser added that she also got to know about the suffering of Kuwaitis during the Iraqi invasion through her participation in the program, a matter that prompted her to search the net to become acquainted with Kuwait.

In the meantime, Aaron Rattijan, 14, spoke in his article about the harsh experience with someone who brutally attacked him near his house in Charlotte, New Jersey. He expressed appreciation to those in charge of the program and looked forward to learning more about the "small country that was invaded by a big country." — KUNA



OOREDOO DISTRIBUTES AID TO SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON IN COLLABORATION WITH AL-NOURI CHARITY ASSOCIATION



KUWAIT: In collaboration with Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Association, Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of international Ooredoo Group, has recently announced distributing aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley. The charitable campaign was successfully launched during Ramadan 2016 with a dedicated hashtag communicated through Ooredoo's social media channels encouraging people to contribute in the donation process, for the whole month.

This campaign aimed at promoting a link which allowed all Ooredoo's social media followers to donate and save the lives of those refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey and contribute using their debit or credit cards. There were no limits to the donations that can be made while minimal amount was 1 KD. The charitable campaign witnessed large turnout and the result was distributing more than 500 aids stake including food, clothes and other basic necessities for living.

Commenting on the success of the charitable campaign, Mijbil Alayoub, Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait said: "We are pleased with the campaign's outcome especially the overwhelming response by our followers on different social media channels. Our main goal behind launching this campaign was to endorse the concept of giving back particularly during Ramadan. We aim to be part of other charitable campaigns and to collaborate with more organizations either in or outside of Kuwait."

Ooredoo had conducted a series of key activities during Ramadan including Al-Nouri charity campaign, distributing daily iftar meals at its iftar tent located in front of Ooredoo's headquarter at Al-Soor Street - Al Mirqab and many other initiatives such as celebrating Gergian with children at hospitals in collaboration with number of NGOs.



34% SHEIKH JABER CAUSEWAY COMPLETE

NO MALFUNCTIONS AT POWER, CONTROL ROOMS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Ministry of Public Works' (MPW) Assistant Undersecretary for Road Engineering Sector Ahmad Al-Hassan said 34 percent of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway project (Doha Spur) has been completed. He said work on the project is proceeding with cooperation and coordination between all concerned parties. Hassan said the project is of extreme importance because it links Doha from near the Entertainment City all the way to Shuwaikh till the start of Ghazali Bridge, to reduce traffic jams and complete the road network in the country. He said the total cost of the project is KD 169 million, to be completed in 1,462 days.

Hassan said the MPW is keen to implement most modern standards in the road engineering field, as the Doha Spur is considered the largest project in the world, including a sea bridge that starts from Shuwaikh port and the free trade zone, goes through Kuwait Bay to the west, passes besides Um Al-Namel islands to Doha, then links with Doha Expressway, with a length of 12.4 km. Hassan said the project consists of a 7-km sea bridge with two intersections, and has the same specs of the main bridge (Subbiya Spur).

No malfunctions

Ministry Electricity and Water's (MEW) undersecretary for power stations and water distillation Fuad Al-Oun denied malfunctions at the power generation and control rooms. He said air conditioners are under regular maintenance contracts throughout the year. About some reports on social media, Oun said it was a personal act by some employees at Zour station without coordination with the management. Oun said journalists will be invited to visit Zour station to make sure air conditioners are working efficiently.

Fish sale

Chairman of Kuwait Farmers Union Hadi Al-Watary asked Social Affairs and Labor Minister Hind Al-Subaih to stand against a decision issued by an official at the ministry banning Kuwaiti farmers from Wafra, Abdaly or Sulabiya to sell products in any cooperative society directly. They can only sell through four outlets - Kuwait Farmers Union and Wafra Company were agreed upon previously, but a Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) official added two more brokers to the list in contradiction with the MSAL decision. Watary said some influential marketers do not care about anything other than their personal interests, without regard to the inter-



KUWAIT: Ongoing construction works at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway project. —KUNA

ests of the country or citizens. He called on Subaih to fulfill her promises so brokers won't manipulate the interests of all for their own. Watary said the Kuwait Farmers Union, while it appeals to Subaih to stand by the farmers, is confident that she does not accept decisions that are against them. Watary also asked Subaih to

exempt Kuwaiti farmers from the new work permit fees, as they have increased by 60 percent. Work permits issued for the first time are now charged KD 50 instead of KD 2 and transfers are charged KD 50 instead of KD 10, in addition to changing renewal fees to KD 10, which is burdensome to Kuwaiti farmers.



KUWAIT: Photos from the reception hosted by the Taipei Commercial Representative Office in Kuwait. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

TAIPEI COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE WELCOMES NEW DIRECTOR

KUWAIT: The Taipei Commercial Representative Office in Kuwait hosted a welcome and farewell reception for the new director, Bruce Chou of Taiwan Trade Center in Kuwait and the outgoing director Mike Tang on July 27 at Sheraton Hotel. Bruce Chou says, as oil price stagnates in the first half of this year, some GCC countries are suffering from this situation. Nevertheless, it is a good time for Kuwait to encourage and promote private industries.

Since the global economy in 2016 is still uncertain, global demand keeps weakening. According to the research of IMF, the global economy growth has been cut to 2.8 percent from 3.2 percent this year. As the economic activities moving slowly, it affects consumers' confidence everywhere. Kuwait is one of the few countries that has strong capital reserve in the world, Bruce Chou maintains his optimistic view to Kuwait in terms of its potential of developing new private industries. He indicates that although consumers become more conservative these days, there are still many new fields and products coming out, some of them are worthy for young generation of Kuwait to participate, such as the fields of home robot application, smart phone APPs,

interactive education content and facilities, internet marketing, energy savings and environment protection.

Bruce Chou wants to encourage more Taiwan companies to cooperate with Kuwait companies by bringing in more trade delegations to Kuwait and focusing more on those companies who could provide system integrated or total solutions to Kuwait. With the support of Taiwan companies, he believes that opportunities could be provided to young Kuwaitis to open creative services or new business.

Kuwait is the market that adopts new things fast. According to Bruce Chou's observation, young Kuwaitis create new ideas easily resulting for their using experience. Those ideas could be turned into brand new business model. The private industry in Taiwan is very good at transferring new ideas to products, which help young Kuwaitis to establish new business and could be expanded to other GCC countries. Mike Tang has finished his term in Kuwait and is very thankful to all the support he has received from Kuwait for the past few years. During his stay in Kuwait, the export from Taiwan to Kuwait has significantly increased around 25 percent in total.

FOREIGN WORKERS SHELTER: ADDITION TO KUWAIT'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

KUWAIT: Due to its utter commitment to the issues of human rights, Kuwait had established the foreign workers shelter as a measure to protect laborers from abuse. The facility, founded in 2014 on a decision by the Cabinet and efforts by a number of government bodies, is the personification of Kuwait's strive to uphold the rights of honest workers and laborers.

Director of the expatriate workers center Falah Al-Mutairi said that the shelter was established to protect laborers from being victims of human trafficking, noting that the facility mostly hosted housemaids who had been seriously abused by their sponsors. About 90 percent of the victims suffer from being brought to the country by shady agencies that took advantage of their needs, said Mutairi. He added that the shel-

ter, which houses many facilities, had a capacity to host some 500 people. Currently there are 360 residents at the shelter, said the official. All services within the shelter are for free and the state covers the expenses, said the official, revealing that the annual operation budget of the shelter was at KD 1.7 million.

Moreover, Mutairi said that the shelter offered expatriate workers to head back to their countries and also offered programs to reintegrate them back into their own societies. The Kuwaiti official affirmed that the shelter, in cooperation with foreign embassies and international bodies, made its mission to ensure that foreign workers in Kuwait received their rights through the rule of Kuwaiti law and globally accepted legislations and regulations. — KUNA

MOH LAUNCHES ELECTRONIC HEALTH GUIDE FOR TRAVELERS

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) has launched a comprehensive electronic health guide in Kuwait International Airport for travelers, in an effort to help globetrotters stay healthy. The guide consists of brief informative health films put together by specialists from the MoH, which will be shown on screens all across the airport, in conjunction with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and Kuwait Airways, said a press statement by head of the MoH's media department Ghalia Al-Mutairi.

Moreover, the guide features advice on immunity measures against some of the most pervasive diseases encountered by travelers, in addition to information on health clinics and emergency numbers, the statement added. The statement also urged those with chronic diseases to ensure that all precautions are in place prior to travel.

Medical services

In other news, a ministry official announced that the ministry will secure all medicines and medical services for the Kuwaiti expedition during the upcoming pilgrimage. Mugheer Al-Shemmari, the deputy chief of medical services for the hajj pilgrimage, said in a statement that a ministry delegation that departed today to Saudi Arabia would coordinate with the authorities there for securing all necessary medical drugs and equipment during the rituals' season.

A team of doctors and pharmacists will travel to Holy Makkah on August 26 to install the makeshift clinics. A second group will leave for the Kingdom on September 1st, he said, adding that by September 3rd, the medical team would be fully ready to admit and treat ill pilgrims. He called on the pilgrims to take the necessary vaccinations ahead of travelling to the holy land. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Head of the MoH's media department Ghalia Al-Mutairi (second from right) launches the electronic health guide project for travelers. — KUNA

SPANISH-KUWAITI FESTIVAL KICKS OFF IN MARBELLA

MADRID: Activities of the Spanish-Kuwaiti festival kicked off Friday night in Spain's southern city of Marbella. The three-day festival opened its doors under the slogan (Kuwaiti-Spanish Festival in Marbella). The event is held in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry represented by the Embassy in Madrid with the participation of Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL), the municipality of Marbella, and the Spanish Ministry of Tourism.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Spain Dr Suleiman Al-Harbi said that the embassy's participation aimed at highlighting Kuwaiti culture and heritage. The Ambassador stressed that the embassy in Madrid was keen on the success of any gathering which highlighted the traditions and heritage of the State of Kuwait. He pointed out that the diplomatic mission did not hesitate to offer all sorts of support to any activity aimed at boosting tourism between Kuwait and Spain. Harbi said the festival promoted his country as a unique global tourist destination

in the Gulf region, affirming that this was in line with Kuwait's development plan which focused on diversifying the nation's economic resources and national income.

Meanwhile, the Director General of Kuwait's Future Communications Company Global (FCCG), Abrar Al-Masoud described the festival as "Kuwait's gift to Spain," saying it is an opportunity "to familiarize Spaniards with Kuwaiti culture." Furthermore, she noted that the festival would feature a slew of exhibitions and activities that will go on well into midnight, particularly, the ones where visitors would get to relish on Kuwaiti and Spanish delicacies. She also revealed that an even bigger Gulf gala was in the works for next year. The FCCG is one of the sponsors of the festival. In the meantime, Marbella's tourism official Miguel Luna called on residents of the city to come out for the festival, saying it was a chance for them to get acquainted with Kuwaiti culture. The first of its kind festival, set to take place in Antonio Banderas Plaza in Puerto Banus, Marbella, opened its doors at 07:00 pm local-time Friday. — KUNA



MADRID: Kuwaiti folklore music performed at the Spanish-Kuwaiti festival in Marbella. — KUNA

Local Spotlight

EXPAT KIDS



By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

Gulf states have relied on expat workers, whether Arab, Asian or others, for a long time. We in Kuwait are no exception. Expatriates make up the majority of the population in Kuwait, as citizens do not exceed 30 percent of the population and the percentage of citizens in the labor market does not exceed 15 percent of the total workforce.

Expats came to Kuwait for work, but for different reasons, terms and durations. Some want to save some money for themselves and their families, then leave for good. Some have fled war and civil conflicts, so they cannot return to their homelands. In some cases, there are expats who have been living in Kuwait for the last 30 years and more, so Kuwait is their home because they have been living here for so long. Many expats married here, had children here and even became grandparents.

But have we benefited from the expat kids who were born and raised in Kuwait? I don't

We did not make practical and strategic use of the minds of skilled expatriate children who were born and studied here

think so. We did not make practical and strategic use of the minds of skilled expatriate children who were born and studied here for 12 years until they left for college, whether Arabs, Asians or Westerners. There is a common code that expat kids usually leave Kuwait after high school, except a few who go to local universities here. After they leave, only a few come back. We are only like a breeding plant. This is wrong and also not fair to those expats who have been in Kuwait for more than 30 years.

Expats are equal in rights, and nations of the world seek good education, prosperity, safety and security of citizens and foreign residents in their countries, including refugees, in order to encourage them to integrate with the local community. These are basic human rights in any society. Why aren't intelligent expat students who finish high school with high grades not entitled to overseas scholarships at the expense of Kuwait, in exchange to work here after graduation for the money that was spent on their education? This is a better investment for these kids who were born in Kuwait and educated here for 12 years.

I believe expat children are an important segment that needs attention, especially the ones who are very smart. Why not take advantage of them? Education is the best investment, and by helping them gain a better education, we will become confident that they won't leave and impart their knowledge to others.

I also think smart expat children must be rewarded to be given the chance to study in government schools to reduce the burden of high fees on their parents. They would appreciate this and become role models for Kuwaiti students. I know some expats can send their kids to government schools, like teachers and doctors, but this is not allowed for everyone. Smart expat children are a treasure and we should not be lax in taking care of this wealth.

News

In brief

Morocco's Monarch decorates Kuwaiti envoy top royal order

RABAT: King Mohammed VI of Morocco yesterday decorated Kuwait's ambassador to the Kingdom Shamlan Al-Roumi a top royal order. Receiving Al-Roumi at the presidential palace in Tetouan, the king thanked him for his efforts during his term in the Kingdom to enhance bilateral ties. Roumi, whose term has ended in Morocco, voiced pleasure and pride for being decorated the royal order that crowned his diplomatic efforts and hard work to promote ties between the two countries, supported by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and King Mohammed VI. It is symbolic that being bestowed the order coincides with the 17th anniversary of the King's ascending to the throne, Roumi said.

Ministry denies passports rumors

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department categorically denied reports posted on social media which claim that the citizenship department received Kuwaiti passports that do not meet technical specification. Passports are subject to scrutiny to make sure they completely meet technical specifications before arriving in the state of Kuwait, the statement said.

ORIENTAL DANCE CHARM HELD AT ABDULHUSAIN ABDULREDHA THEATRE



KUWAIT: Dancers from China's Hunan Xinghe Arts Troupe perform on stage at the Abdulhusain Abdulredha theatre in Salmiya late on Friday. The event titled 'Oriental Dance Charm' was organized in cooperation with the National Council of Culture, Arts, and Letters. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



In Brief

SUDAN'S CHIEF JUSTICE LAUDS TIES WITH KUWAIT

KHARTOUM: Judicial ties between Kuwait and Sudan have made some headway, Sudan's Chief Justice Haider Ahmad Dafallah said yesterday, adding that he is hopeful of further progress in relations. Sudan's Chief Justice received Kuwait's Ambassador to Khartoum Talal Al-Hajeri, to mark the end of his diplomatic tenure in the Northeastern African nation. Moreover, Dafallah noted that Hajeri's efforts were instrumental to the enhancement of judicial ties between Kuwait and Sudan, adding that he has accepted a Kuwaiti invitation to visit the country in February. — KUNA



KRCS DELIVERS AID TO SYRIANS

BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) yesterday announced delivering relief aid to 250 Syrian refugee families in the town of Ameerq southeast of the capital. The chief of the field team, Mahdi Al-Hesar, said the delivered items included food and detergents, sufficient for a month for a five-member family, adding that candies and gifts for children were given to these families too. He conveyed expressions of gratitude from the refugees to the State of Kuwait, His Highness the Amir and people for their generous giving. — KUNA



KUWAIT'S CRUDE OIL PRICE DOWN TO \$37.41 PB

KUWAIT: Price of Kuwait's crude oil went down 99 cents on Friday to stand at \$37.41 pb compared to \$38.40 pb the day before, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. In the international market, the prices of crude oil retreated for the seventh sessions in a row affected by fears of an increase in the world demand following US reports over a hike in oil supplies by nearly 1.7 million barrels last week. — KUNA



o f t h e d a y



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti sailors brave the scorching heat and carry traditional fishing nets on their head as they prepare to board dhows ahead of a pearl diving trip this past Thursday, in Kuwait City. Pearl-diving trips are held annually under the patronage of His Highness the Amir in order to keep alive traditions that accompanied the once important national trade of pearl diving, prior to the discovery of oil. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

AMBASSADOR OF MALAYSIA TO KUWAIT PRAISES KFH'S ROLE IN ISLAMIC FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY
KFH-GROUP CEO, DELEGATION MET AMBASSADOR

KUWAIT: KFH-Group CEO Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh and the accompanying delegation met with the Ambassador of Malaysia to Kuwait Ahmad Rozian Abd who received them at the Malaysian embassy. The visit comes in continuation of a series of visits of KFH to the ambassadors of the countries in which KFH operates in efforts to reinforce relationships and paves the way for further cooperation and coordination.

During the visit, the Ambassador and Nahedh discussed issues of mutual interest, focusing on KFH's banking operations and the investment opportunities in vital sectors such as education, health and infrastructure in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, the Ambassador of Malaysia to Kuwait Praised KFH's Role in Islamic financial services industry, indicating (KFH-Malaysia) Berhad is the first foreign bank to introduce Islamic banking in Malaysia since 2005.

He expressed his appreciation for the visit of KFH's delegation led by the Nahedh, affirming that this visit ensures continuing collaboration and desire to



KFH-Group CEO Mazin Al-Nahedh and his delegation are pictured with the ambassador.

continue the investment in the Malaysian market that provides the legislative framework for Islamic banks.

Nahedh, stressed the importance of the Malaysian market, noting that KFH targets all the markets that offer good investment opportunities. He referred to the depth of relationships between

the two countries, Kuwait and Malaysia that is crowned with bilateral and mutual investments in several fields including trade, tourism and other vital fields, affirming KFH's keenness to reinforcing its ties with the countries in which the Group operates that encompass Turkey, Malaysia, Bahrain, Saudi and the UAE.



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) concluded a field training program for university students, which was organized by the human resources department at CBK Academy in the Faiha branch.

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- THE LISTER HOSPITAL
- London Bridge Hospital
- The Portland Hospital
- THE PRINCESS GRACE HOSPITAL
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Al-Qabas

TRADE IN RELIGION

By Ahmad Al-Sarraf

An intellectual said that trade in religion is always popular, especially where ignorance is widespread. So whoever wants to control the ignorant has to wrap his need with a religious cover. For instance, if we send 20,000 WhatsApp messages asking for 20 fils daily to spend on cultural and civil projects, it is most likely that recipients will ignore it, but they will answer if it is covered by a religious purpose.

We wrote several columns about engineer (A A) who established an entity that was not legal, and was able to convince former ministers and senior dignitaries to work with him in a very short time. It was mentioned in Al-Qabas on 9/4/1999 that his establishment signed an agreement with Malaysia to carry out technological projects in poor villages to produce hydroelectricity. It was also reported in Al-Qabas on 27/12/1999 that the same establishment implemented treatment project and opened a branch, out of its charitable and developmental role, to treat the poor free of charge. Then on 14/5/1999, it was mentioned that the establishment's activities reached Yemen, and its board members were inspecting the development projects supervised by the social development fund.

On 24/5/1999, the chairman of the establishment announced that they were preparing a project to support needy families in Kuwait, and signed an agreement with (A Sh), an official at the research center to prepare a study about the development projects for those families to uplift them. In the 16/8/1999 issue, it was mentioned that the Global Development Establishment organized a conference of the heads of Islamic societies in Los Angeles on the occasion of the donation campaign it was organizing.

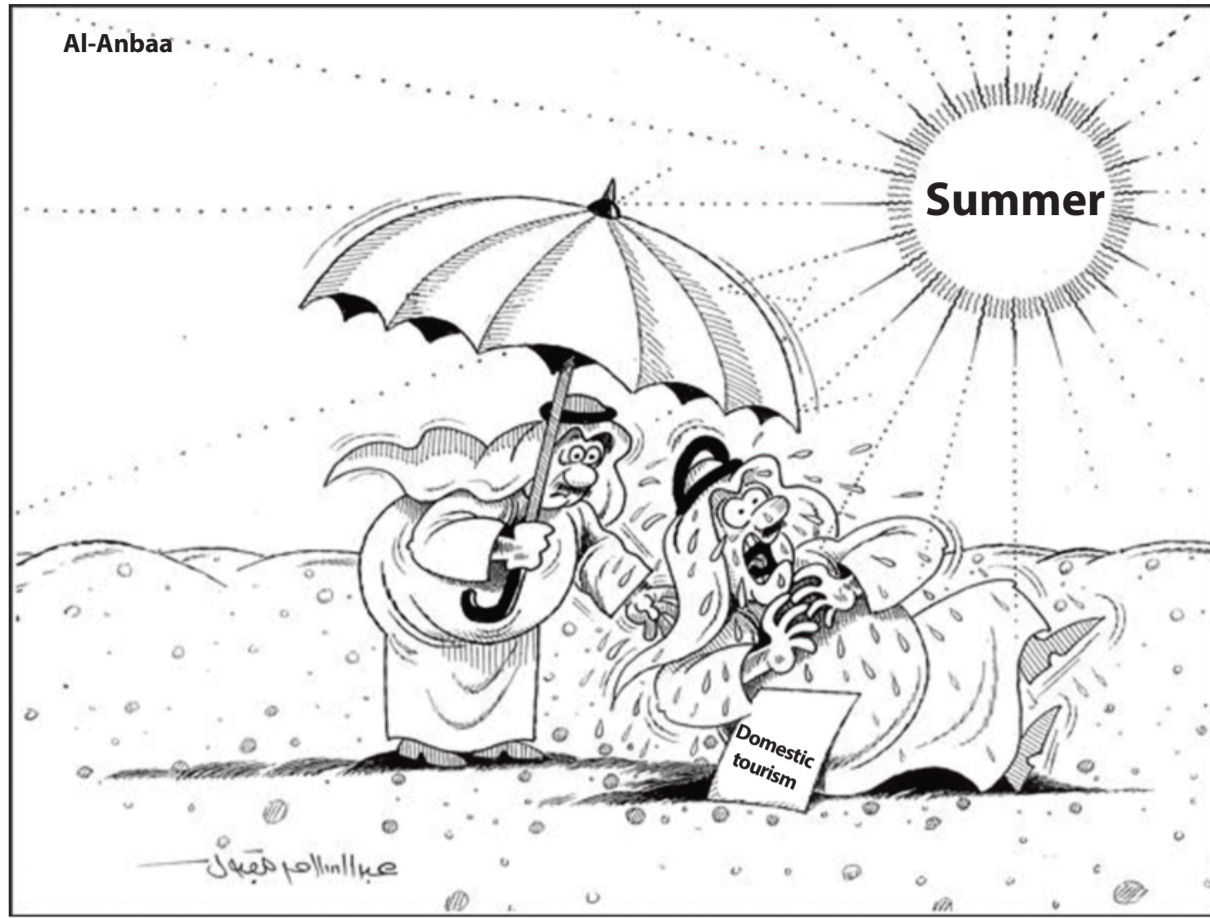
In the 8/9/1999 issue, there was a news item about the return of its chairman from Jakarta, along with a member of the founding council (W W), which means it was still being established following an inspection tour of some projects there, and that it was concerned with developing the manpower and occupational capabilities of Muslim establishments and people to reach self-sustenance, as per the nature of each Muslim country. Bearing in mind that among the goals of the establishment was to strengthen ties between Muslim people and Kuwaitis through the Kuwait-Indonesian Friendship Society.

In the 17/4/2000 issue, it was mentioned that the establishment signed a cooperation agreement with Sudan to farm large lands for the poor and that its chairman received a \$10 million donation from Saudi Arabia to buy and bring "Silicon Valley" technology to Muslims.

In 22/12/2000, the establishment announced its plans to support the poor, widows and divorced women in a number of Arab and Muslim countries, and that they will complete several charity projects in Egypt, a fish farming project in Sudan and two similar projects in Jordan and Palestine, and the ownership shares of the project will be distributed to the poor who work in it, in addition to the many claims that never came to reality.

The seven columns I wrote about this establishment, names of ministries and senior dignitaries, disappeared without implementing any project, and till date it is unknown as to how those seniors and former ministers believed that any of the projects could be implemented, or they might have had an interest in all of that. About our friend (A A), he took advantage of the religious nature of his projects, collected millions, then disappeared.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



KUWAIT: The Kuwait National Guard recently celebrated the graduation of newly recruited officer from a training course, which included a comprehensive program that helped them become acquainted with National Guard's basic working system.

LAW FIRM SELLS VISAS TO EGYPTIANS

KUWAIT: While Kuwait is doing its best to fight human trafficking, advertisements still appear on social media about selling visas to people who are dreaming of a comfortable life. The new and strange thing this time is that the ads were made by a law firm that belongs to a Kuwaiti woman, calling on Egyptians to work in Kuwait in exchange of money paid in cash or installments. The citizen was contacted by WhatsApp from the labor office in Cairo asking for a visa for a laborer. She said a one-year residency for a car wash worker costs KD 1,250 and KD 1,650 for two years, with a salary of KD 70.



Brigadier Adel Al-Hashah

About the possibility of paying in installments, the owner said the office provides a facility to pay in three installments - the first is a KD 500 down payment, KD 500 when the visa is issued and a third payment of KD 500.

Director of Public Relations and the official spokesperson of the Manpower Public Authority (MPA) Aseel Al-Mazid said "such ads are not the authority's concern". She said the role of MPA starts when the laborer enters Kuwait, adding the responsible party is the interior ministry. "Our role is to issue laws to fight human trafficking through residency traders," she said. About the role of MPA when it learns about such ads, she said if a worker or company complains, "we make sure about the complaint, take legal action and block the file".

Meanwhile, the head of the Relations and Security Information Department at the Interior Ministry Brigadier Adel Al-Hashah said there is a task force that monitors what is advertised over social media and checks violations including sale of work visas. He said a website of a popular lawyer was detected offering visas to Egyptians in exchange of money, with an address and phone number to communicate via WhatsApp. He said residency detectives made sure about the information, and the lawyer was blocked and banned from sponsorships for life, while detectives searched the office to make sure about its licenses and its activities.

Hashah said letters were sent to MPA to make sure about the legality of all permits and work permits issued by the lawyer's office and a garage, and their files were suspended until the facts are determined. He said electronic detectives are checking the site and any other sites in violation of the labor law, taking advantage to trade in loose and bogus laborers. —Al-Rai

News

In brief

Kuwaitis in private sector down 18%

KUWAIT: The number of Kuwaitis working in the private sector dropped by 18.3 percent this year compared to last year. Recent statistics released by the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program revealed that there are 60,619 Kuwaitis working in the private sector, compared to 73,576 registered in 2015, which means that around 12,957 have left their jobs within one year. A MGRP source said that steps taken to fight fake employment at the private sector this year have forced many to terminate their contracts before they are busted, thus dropping the total number of employees. — Al-Qabas

Unknown fate

KUWAIT: Around 100 paramedics face an unknown fate since their contracts which are set to expire today are yet to be renewed, Ministry of Health sources said. The paramedics received word last week that their contracts, which are signed through a contractor, were going to be renewed before Thursday. That did not happen, however, as they were told that the ministry official in charge of signing their contract extension was absent at the time, the sources said. — Al-Qabas

Roaming vendors

KUWAIT: Municipal Council member Abdullah Al-Kandari proposed giving temporary licenses to bedoons (stateless) wishing to work as roaming vendors, in order to allow them to practice their profession without fear of prosecution. The proposal, which includes a clause to allocate a market that hosts their trade activities, has been referred by Kuwait Municipality to the cabinet for deliberation, Kandari added. — Al-Rai

Nonpaid bills

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water collected KD 830 million in nonpaid bills since October 2012, Undersecretary Mohammad Boushehri said. Furthermore, he indicated that the ministry placed a tender to import smart meters necessary to implement the new energy tariffs next year. — Al-Jarida

Free trade zone

KUWAIT: The cabinet has officially agreed to establish a free trade zone in Nuwaiseeb south of the country. It will be built on a total area of two million square meters, making it one of the largest in the region. The cabinet agreed during last week's meeting to handover the free trade zone to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. — Al-Anbaa



KUWAIT: Director of the Interior Ministry's Residency Affairs General Department Major General Talal Maarafi and a number of staff members at the Mubarak Al-Kabeer's residency department office for their efforts during the past holy month of Ramadan.



Taleban capture district in Helmand

POLICE CHIEF UNDER FIRE OVER OUTBURSTS



ALEPPO: Syrian government forces secure a street as civilians come back to the neighbourhood of Bani Zeid. —AP

SYRIAN CIVILIANS BEGIN LEAVING REBEL-HELD PARTS OF ALEPPO

BEIRUT: Dozens of families and some opposition fighters started leaving besieged rebel-held neighborhoods in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo yesterday after the government opened safe corridors for civilians and fighters who want to leave, state media reported.

The government completely closed the main road into rebel-held areas of Aleppo on July 17, effectively besieging the 300,000 people living there. Earlier this week, Syrian President Bashar Assad offered an amnesty to rebels who lay down their arms and surrender to authorities in the next three months.

About a dozen young men were shown on state TV surrendering to government forces. All had covered their faces, and most were carrying automatic rifles over their head. As the men walked out of a building, Syrian government soldiers pointed their rifles toward them.

State TV also showed dozens of women and children arriving in a street lined with heavily damaged buildings in the government-held part of Aleppo's Salaheddine neighborhood. State news agency SANA said the civilians later boarded buses and were taken to shelters set up by the government on the western side of Aleppo.

SANA said some fighters came forward to government forces stationed in Salaheddine, where they handed over their weapons and surrendered to authorities. Usually surrendering fighters are questioned by government authorities and then sign a pledge promising not to take up arms against the Syrian state again.

169 civilians left

"We are feeling good now because we are under the protection of the army, may God protect them. We suffered a lot in order to be able to come here," a Syrian woman told state TV after leaving rebel-held parts of Aleppo, Syria's largest city and once commercial center.

The Russian military said 169 civilians have left Aleppo through the three safe corridors since they were set up,

including 85 on Friday and 52 more yesterday. In addition, 69 fighters have left after laying down their arms, Lt. Gen. Sergei Chvarkov, who heads the Russian center for reconciliation located in Latakia military base, said in a statement. He said four more corridors were in the process of being created.

The Syrian government has set up six shelters that can accommodate at least 3,000 people, he said. Syrian opposition activists expressed deep skepticism over the government's humanitarian corridors.

Aleppo-based opposition activist Baraa al-Halaby denied reports that civilians and fighters have left to government-held parts of the city. "This is a game by the regime. Not a single person left," al-Halaby said. "The regime wants to say that civilians have left in order to burn Aleppo."

The Local Coordination Committees, a Syrian opposition monitoring group, denied that civilians and fighters were heading to government areas of the city. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed that people have left opposition areas but had no numbers.

The evacuation came a day after UN special envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura urged Russia to leave the creation of humanitarian corridors around Aleppo to the United Nations and its partners. His comments were seen as a gentle snub to Moscow, which had made the proposal a day earlier as pro-government troops tightened their encirclement of rebel-held parts of the northern Syrian city.

In comments carried later Friday by Russia's Interfax news agency, deputy defense minister Anatoly Antonov said that Russia was willing to work with the UN on setting up the corridors. He said that Russia is "ready for close and constructive cooperation with all international humanitarian organizations and, of course, with the office of the UN special envoy on Syria." — AP



LIMA: A soldier takes part in a military parade to celebrate Peru's independence day on Friday.—AFP

The Harley Street Clinic

HCA
International Hospitals

The Complex Care Hospital

Uniquely, The Harley Street Clinic is a specialist private cardiac, cancer and neurosciences hospital providing complex care to adults, children and babies. The Hospital has received multi-million pound investment and this has attracted leading specialists from major London teaching hospitals who are in turn supported by a team of caring, experienced and professional clinical staff.

The Hospital has separate paediatric and adult Intensive Care Units (ITU). The paediatric ITU is the largest private facility in the country. This allows us to support cardiology, cardiac, thoracic, cancer, spinal and other major treatments for children from babies to young adults. These facilities attract world-renowned paediatric consultants, who are supported by highly experienced and specialist doctors and staff.

Technology for treating cancers includes the UK's first CyberKnife and with both Gamma Knife and the latest Linear Accelerator treatments also available, the Hospital offers one of the widest portfolios of radiosurgical equipment in Europe.

Additionally, diagnosis is helped with direct access to the latest scanners such as PET CT, MRI, CT and Gamma Cameras.

LEADERS ON ONCOLOGY CARE (LOC)

LOC was founded in 2005 by four specialists and has now grown to be supported by 35 oncologists with a wide range of specialist expertise covering all types of cancer. Located next to the Sarah Cannon Research Institute and Harley Street Clinic, it avails of the Clinics diagnostic and therapeutic services. LOC is designed around the patient needs, and the patient orientated facility attracts London's very best consultants.

Treatment is delivered in a very personal way, with each patient treatment being individually tailored to take account of the



patients' circumstances and life style. HCA acquired an interest in LOC and partners and supports LOC in its activities. LOC has recently opened a new Centre at The Wellington Hospital.

SARAH CANNON RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SCRI)

Sarah Cannon Research Institute (SCRI), in partnership with HCA Inc., is a global strategic research organization, based in the USA and now in the UK, focusing on advancing therapies and accelerating drug development. It is one of the largest clinical research programs, conducting community-based clinical trials in oncology, cardiology, gastroenterology and other therapeutic areas through affiliations with a network of more than 700 physicians in the United States and United Kingdom. Additionally, SCRI offers management, regulatory and other research support services to drug development sponsors and strategic investigator sites. SCRI recently launched Sarah Cannon Research UK, a cancer drug development program in the United Kingdom that provides access to Phase I clinical trials for patients.

www.theharleystreetclinic.com

HCA - London's No.1 private hospital group

WHAT'S SAFE? EUROPE GRAPPLES WITH SECURITY AFTER ATTACKS

STRUGGLING TO PROTECT PEOPLE

PARIS: You can't put a guard in every church and patrol every beach. But after a wave of attacks in Western Europe, authorities are struggling to protect their people as best as they can. The French Riviera city of Cannes has banned large backpacks on beaches lest they hide explosives, and Britain is providing extra funding for security at tens of thousands of places of worship.

The grisly slaying this week of an elderly priest celebrating Mass in a Normandy church, less than two weeks after 84 revelers were mowed down by a truck on a beachfront promenade in Nice, sounded the alarm that nothing is sacred and no place is safe. Four attacks in a week in Germany sealed that conviction.

in the streets, has called up reserves to bolster police and borders, and plans to use some to create a National Guard.

But the challenge of protecting churches, synagogues, tourist haunts, beaches, summer festival sites, airports and train stations is among the most daunting tasks security forces have faced in recent times in France, and Europe.

The city of Nice, citing the terror threat, canceled a memorial march set for Sunday to honor victims of the attack on the famed Promenade des Anglais. French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve visited security forces sent in Friday at the start of a famed two-week jazz festival in the village of Marciac in the Gers, an annual treat

means to protect their citizens." Trying to prevent attacks using intelligence is just as daunting. French security services twice missed catching the two 19-year-old Frenchmen who slit the throat of Rev. Jacques Hamel before they acted. In a glaring example of the challenge, four days before the attack the main counter-terrorism agency issued an all-points alert to police with a photo of one of the attackers warning the man pictured may be preparing an attack-but no one knew his name.

Now, a lot of attention is focused on securing places of worship, particularly small vulnerable churches like the one in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray that came under attack on Tuesday.

Shockwaves crossed religions and borders. Some of Rome's more famous churches and basilicas already figure among the more than 4,000 places in Italy deemed at particular risk for extremist operations, but the French attack has also brought attention to the vulnerability of little-known churches in outlying neighborhoods. Officials have also requested additional police security at Milan's Duomo cathedral after the attack and in light of a security breach that saw an American tourist spend the night on the spired rooftop after being overlooked by security. "I don't see a reason to militarize churches," Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, the head of Italian Bishops Conference told Sky TG24. "Of course you can't let down your guard, it is always necessary to be alert and to collaborate with Europe. But there is no need to be afraid, because otherwise you play the game of these homicidal fanatics."

In Britain, where the overall threat level is judged "severe," police have warned Christian religious institutions throughout the country to be extra vigilant, and even small rural parishes are expected to take note and review procedures and defenses. The British government announced the details of a plan to provide extra security funding to places of worship on the day of the attack on the French church. France has more than 50,000 Catholic churches, Britain has roughly 47,000 chapels and meeting houses of various Christian denominations, and steeples dot the landscape of most other European countries. In France, most synagogues, mosques and major Christian churches have been protected by police or soldiers since the deadly attack at the Charlie Hebdo satirical newspaper and a kosher supermarket in Paris in January 2015.

After the French president met with religious leaders this week, the president of the Protestant Federation of France, Francois Clavairoly, stressed that much has already been done to protect places of worship of all faiths. "Obviously, more security measures for every place of worship in the country are absolutely inconceivable and unfeasible," he said.

Since the priest was killed, Muslims in France and elsewhere in Europe have stepped forward to embrace the nation's Catholics in a way rarely seen, an act of bravery because the Islamic State group views Western Muslims as the enemy, too.

The head of the Finsbury Park Mosque in London, which has distanced itself from extremism since being associated with it in the 1990s, says "extra measures to be careful" are being added to its closed circuit TV cameras and security guards. "We are all now under threat," Mohammed Kozbar said. —AP



FRANCE: French soldiers patrol near the Biarritz's beach, southwestern France yesterday. —AP

"Churches take great pride in being open. But there comes a time when the reality of crime and the reality of terrorism may mean that some of that balance needs to be readjusted," said Mark Gardner, spokesman for Community Security Trust which provides extensive protection to Jewish synagogues and schools throughout Britain.

The Trust started operating in 1994 after a car bomb attack on the Israeli Embassy in London injured roughly 20 people and a devastating attack on a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killed 85 people.

The attacks

The attacks in France and two of the four in Germany were claimed by the Islamic State group, thousands of miles away in strongholds in Syria and Iraq. Their preferred targets are symbols of what they label the "crusader" West in Europe, but with so many to choose from, no one can predict where terror might strike anew. A police couple was killed in June in their home west of Paris, in an attack also claimed by IS.

France has been muscling up its security forces since two waves of IS-claimed attacks in 2015 that left 147 dead - and after two March attacks in Belgium that killed 32. President Francois Hollande has ordered 10,000 soldiers who have been patrolling since last year to stay

for hundreds of thousands of jazz lovers - but a high-risk event for police. Cazeneuve reiterated what the French hear daily - "There are no miracle solutions" - but insisted on the need for the "physical presence" of police at summer festivals around France.

Some towns are pitching in as they can, or inventing new rules to ward off threats. The Riviera city of Cannes, 33 kilometers (20 miles) from Nice, has banned big bags on beaches until at least the end of October, bags that Mayor David Lisnard says "could contain explosives or weapons." More controversially, the mayor of Rive-de-Gier, a small town near Lyon, decided this week to "systematically refuse" new applications by residents to bring their families to live with them, a process most often used by immigrants with loved ones in another country.

Whether the mayor can actually change national policy allowing families to live together remains to be seen, but the initiative reflects a rising level of fear - often directed at immigrants even though many assailants have been European-born.

no commune in France is safe

"Today, no commune in France is safe," Mayor Jean-Claude Charvin said in a statement on the town's website. "Each day, the government says 'We're at war' ... (it) must give small towns the

GAZA'S HAMAS HANDS OUT LAND HOPING TO AVOID FINANCIAL CRISIS

KHAN YOUNIS, GAZA STRIP: Earth movers dig into sand dunes on land where once Jewish settlements stood - prime real estate that the Gaza Strip's ruling Hamas group hopes will ease its worsening financial crisis.

Hamas has begun handing out plots of the land to 40,000 civil servants loyal to the Islamic militant group, to make up for millions of

closed, Hamas earned millions of dollars from taxes on smuggled consumer goods, including subsidized Egyptian fuel.

Unity government

Later that same year, Hamas and its rival, West Bank-based Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, agreed to form a unity government for both Gaza and the



KHAN YOUNIS, GAZA STRIP: Palestinian diggers dump sand into a truck at the site of Al-Isra 2 housing project on July 20, 2016. —AP

dollars in salaries it owes them for the past two years.

The land giveaway is the latest sign that Hamas is struggling financially after almost a decade of uncontested power in the coastal strip. Gazans grumble about lack of jobs, constant electricity shortages and a blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt that has confined the territory's 1.8 million people to the tiny strip. The World Bank says unemployment is 38 percent.

Since 2014, Hamas' main problem has been a dire lack of cash amid Egypt's clampdown on smuggling tunnels underneath Gaza's border with Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. Before the tunnels

West Bank. Abbas had lost Gaza to a Hamas takeover in 2007, and this was an attempt to heal the split. But the deal stalled, partly because Abbas refused to add the 40,000 employees hired by Hamas since 2007 to the payroll of his Palestinian Authority. In time, Hamas resorted to paying its loyalists 40 percent of their salaries at 50 day intervals.

Since March, after Hamas collected additional taxes, these civil servants have been receiving 45 percent of their salaries on a monthly basis. The price of cigarettes went up 35 percent and an additional \$30 in taxes was imposed on each ton of fruit enter-

ing Gaza from Israel. The land giveaway allows each group of four Hamas employees to share a 500-square-meter plot that they can either build on or sell. Even the sand collected on the land can be sold for about \$100 a truckload. About 13,000 civil servants have already signed up for certificates attesting to their ownership of the plots. Bulldozers are working to get three initial projects launched in August. Most of the land once was part of Jewish settlements in southern Gaza, near the towns of Rafah and Khan Younis. The settlements were demolished when Israel pulled settlers and soldiers from the coastal strip in 2005.

Earlier this week, earth-moving equipment dug into a high hill near Khan Younis, scooping out sand and loading it into trucks at the site designated for the Al-Isra 2 housing project. Riham Khalil, one of the civil servants, said Hamas owes her 64,000 shekels (about \$17,000) in back salaries. Last month, she and three of her colleagues were allocated a 500-square-meter plot in Al-Isra 2.

"We had to accept it on a 'bird in the hand' basis because there was no cash," she said. "I wish I could find someone to buy the land and get the money."

Senior Hamas official Salah al-Bardawil said the land giveaway is a temporary fix, "not yet a strategic one" that would solve the group's financial problems for good. If Abbas had put Hamas employees on his payroll, he would have likely encountered major problems with donor governments, including the United States, suspicious of money ending up in the pockets of Hamas, which much of the West considers a terrorist group.

The West Bank-based Palestinian Authority opposes the land-for-money program. "No one has the authority to issue decisions to privatize government-owned land in the public interest, except

for President Abbas," said PA spokesman Jamal Dajani. He dismissed Hamas' claims that Abbas has neglected Gaza. The Palestinian Authority still pays the monthly salaries of some 70,000 civil servants in Gaza who are loyal to Abbas and left their posts after the Hamas takeover.

Qatar's role

The Gulf Arab state of Qatar has bailed out Hamas in the past and recently announced it was giving about \$30 million to help pay a full month's salary to all Hamas employees in Gaza. In October 2014, Qatar sent cash to half of Hamas' public employees, excluding the security forces.

Hamas has been spending some of its new revenue to fund summer camps, where children are exposed to its militant anti-Israeli ideology, or for large communal evening meals known as iftars during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

It is also looking to its patron Turkey to help resolve Gaza's growing electricity and water shortages. Gazans live with rolling power cuts of 12 to 18 hours a day and the strip's water is polluted and undrinkable.

After an Israeli-Turkish reconciliation deal in early July, Turkey sent an aid ship to Gaza through an Israeli port and a delegation that met separately with Israeli, Palestinian and Hamas officials to explore Gaza's energy crisis and outline possible solutions.

However, Turkey's efforts are mere band aids for Gaza's larger woes and could serve to empower Hamas even further, said Mkhaimar Abusada, a political scientist at Gaza's Al-Azhar University.

"They increase Hamas' determination to cling to its unilateral governing of Gaza," Abusada said. "Time will tell if these promises are enough to convince the Palestinian citizen to keep silent over his living conditions." —AP



ISTANBUL: A woman sells Turkish flags yesterday. —AP

FIGHTING BETWEEN TURKISH FORCES, KURDISH REBELS KILLS 43

ISTANBUL: Authorities say fighting between Turkish forces and Kurdish rebels in the restive southeast of the country has killed eight Turkish soldiers and 35 Kurdish fighters. The office of Turkey's General Staff headquarters said yesterday the eight soldiers were killed in a clash Friday afternoon with Kurdish militants at a checkpoint in the southeastern Hakkari province. A subsequent operation against the Kurdish rebels left eight Kurds dead, the military said. Separately, a further 27 fighters from the Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK, were killed in the same province when Turkish troops launched an air-and-ground opera-

tion against groups of PKK fighters attempting to infiltrate early yesterday, the state-run Anadolu news agency said, quoting the military.

The PKK reportedly bombed a freight train in the eastern province of Elazig yesterday, planting an improvised device on the tracks that caused damage but no casualties, Anadolu said. Security forces have begun an operation in the area to apprehend those responsible. Turkish forces have been fighting the PKK for decades, with armed clashes resuming after a 2 1/2 year cease-fire collapsed in mid-2015. —AP

DOZENS SUSPENDED FROM TURKEY'S HIGHEST COURT IN COUP PROBE

ISTANBUL: Dozens of employees at Turkey's highest court have been suspended from their jobs as part of the government crackdown in the wake of a failed military coup, authorities said yesterday.

Sixty-four employees at the Constitutional Court were suspended until an assessment could be made on any possible links they have to the July 15 attempted coup, the court said in a statement. Eight other employees had already been dismissed and were detained on July 18, it said.

Nearly 70,000 people in Turkey have been suspended or dismissed from their jobs, according to the latest figures cited by the state-run Anadolu news agency, affecting workers in the judiciary, the education system, media, health care and other sectors. It's part of a broad crackdown by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government on those suspected of ties to a US-based cleric, Fethullah Gulen, who

the government says was behind the attempted coup.

Gulen, who has lived in self-imposed exile since the late 1990s, has denied any involvement or prior knowledge of the coup. More than 18,000 people have been detained or arrested at some point since the abortive coup, with more than 3,500 of them since released. Of those detained, more than 9,000 people, mostly in the military, have been formally arrested, according to figures from Interior Minister Efkani Ala.

Yesterday, courts released 800 military conscripts arrested in the coup probe. The Istanbul chief public prosecutor's office recommended the release of 758 out of 989 conscripts under arrest, on grounds they had delivered their testimony and did not pose a flight risk. Those released included military high school students.

Another 47 were released by a court in Ankara on similar grounds. —AP

TUNISIAN LAWMAKERS HOLD NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE

TUNIS: Tunisia's parliament is holding a no-confidence vote that is expected to decide the fate of technocratic Prime Minister Habib Essid, a US-trained agricultural economist whose authority has suffered amid the country's economic and social turmoil.

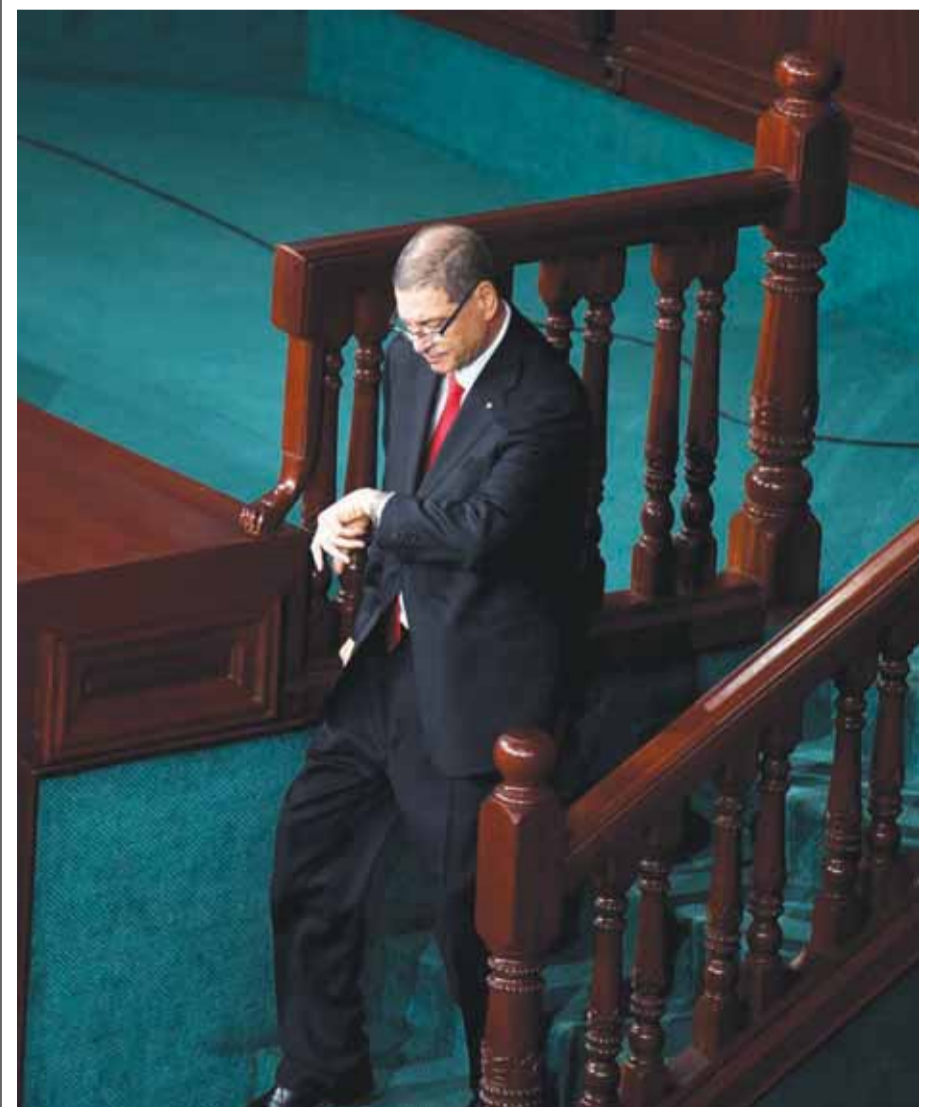
The odds are stacked against Essid, who has been criticized by both the four-party ruling coalition and Tunisia's opposition. Essid himself appears resigned to a negative outcome; while defending his record, Essid told lawmakers on Saturday that he was "not attached to this job." Nevertheless, he said, "I wanted, in accordance with the constitution, to address the parliament, which gave me its confidence and which has the power to withdraw it."

Tunisia is the only country to successfully transition to a parliamentary democracy

following the uprisings that rocked the Arab world in 2011. Still, it has struggled to respond to jihadi attacks that have damaged its crucial tourism industry and faces high inflation, high unemployment and persistent strikes.

Essid's position has been undermined by political maneuvering within Tunisia's secular Nida Tounis party and pressure from the country's president, Beji Caid Essebsi, who critics say is trying to raise the political profile of his son, Hafedh Caid Essebsi, by removing Essid from power.

It's Essebsi who first proposed a "national unity government" last month to pull Tunisia out of what he described as a catastrophic socio-economic situation - a move that Essid said had caught him by surprise. The debate over Essid's position appears set to drag into late Saturday evening. —AP



TUNIS: Tunisian Prime Minister Habib Essid looks at his watch after delivering a speech at the Tunisian parliament yesterday. —AP



ASUNCION, PARAGUAY: View of Brazilian drug trafficker Jarvis Chimenos Pavao's cell at Tacumbu prison on July 28, 2016. Three rooms, a plasma TV, a library, and even a collection of DVDs of Colombian Pablo Escobar TV series, Jarvis Pavao Chimenos lived in a luxury cell in Tacumbu prison, one of the most crowded of prisons in Paraguay. —AFP

BRAZILIAN DRUG LORD TURNS JAIL CELL INTO LUXURY SUITE

ASUNCION: Paraguayan authorities got a surprise when they raided a Brazilian drug lord's jail cell... and found a three-room luxury suite complete with library, kitchen, conference room and plasma TV.

Jarvis Chimenos Pavao, considered one of South America's most dangerous drug traffickers, had been serving an eight-year sentence for money laundering at the Tacumbu prison in the Paraguayan capital, Asuncion. But little did anyone on the outside know what kind of lifestyle that really meant—until a powerful bomb was discovered inside the prison.

Chimenos Pavao, who was due for release next year but facing extradition back to Brazil on drug charges, had allegedly planned to use the plastic explosives to blow a hole in the prison walls and escape. But his plan backfired when police poured into the prison to investigate and discovered his pimped out cell.

The "VIP cell," as it was known to prisoners, had three rooms with an ensuite bathroom, a kitchen and conference room, air conditioning, stylishly tiled walls, plush furniture and a library complete with a DVD collection to watch on the big-screen plasma TV, AFP reporters saw during a visit.

The DVDs included the full collection of "Pablo Escobar," a TV series on the feared Colombian kingpin who was killed in 1993, a hero of Chimenos Pavao's.

The raid, which took place Tuesday night,

has already shaken up the Paraguayan penal system. Chimenos Pavao's lawyer, Laura Acasuso, told reporters the corruption that enabled her client to turn his cell into a luxury suite reached all the way to the top. "Six or seven justice ministers and six or seven prison directors" took bribes from Chimenos Pavao, she said. Justice Minister Carla Bacigalupo was sacked almost as soon as the scandal broke. Her replacement, Ever Martinez, vowed a crackdown. "We're going to demolish Chimenos Pavao's cell and take measures against the prison directors who allowed this inmate to enjoy these privileges," he said.

Chimenos Pavao has now been transferred to a cell in a police special operations unit. Among the 3,500 inmates at Tacumbu—double its capacity—many already say they miss him. "I don't know what's going to become of us without him," said a fellow prisoner, who spoke on condition of anonymity. He said Chimenos Pavao was a generous benefactor who paid for a football pitch and chapel at the prison, as well as employing bodyguards among the inmates. "He was the most loved man in this prison," said another inmate, Antonio Gonzalez. Like at many prisons across Latin America, most inmates at Tacumbu eat only irregularly and sleep on cardboard boxes or directly on the floor. Riots are common. "It's miserable," said Josieux, another prisoner from Brazil. — AFP

STATES' FLAG-BURNING LAWS UNCONSTITUTIONAL, BUT PERSIST

URBANA, ILLINOIS: Champaign County State's Attorney Julia Rietz had just finished walking in a July 4th parade when her assistant told her a central Illinois man had been arrested on suspicion of burning an American flag.

Rietz said she knew "immediately" that the Urbana Police Department needed to release Bryton Mellott, who posted a video of the act on Facebook and whom police initially said they arrested to protect from threats. The state law used to jail him, though clear in its prohibition of desecrating either the US or state flags, is unconstitutional.

An Associated Press analysis shows at least 40 states still have flag-desecration laws, punishing those who burn or otherwise damage US and, in most cases, state flags with fines or even jail time. A handful of Southern states extend that protection to Confederate flags. Yet, the US Supreme Court ruled in separate cases in 1989 and 1990 that flag burning and other forms of damage are constitutionally protected free speech.

Political motivation

Most people who burn flags in protest, like those outside of the Republican National Convention in Cleveland this month, are not arrested. But at least eight people have been arrested since 2007 for things such as burning a flag while walking in traffic and hanging a torn flag from a tree. And there appears to be little political motivation to change or do away with the flag-desecration laws, an act for which some voters might punish them.

"Inevitably someone who is not schooled in Supreme Court decisions reads the statute book and says, 'Hey, let's take

this guy in,'" said Ken Paulson, dean of the College of Media and Entertainment at Middle Tennessee State University and president of the First Amendment Center. He argues the laws need to be repealed, saying, "Otherwise innocent people will be arrested."

Arkansas, Connecticut, Missouri, New Hampshire and Rhode Island are the only states to have taken any kind of action to get rid of their flag-desecration laws, while Alaska, Wyoming and Wisconsin have no such laws. "I can tell you that some of the emails and messages that I've received, I'll kindly say (they are) passionate," Rietz said of the response to the Urbana man's arrest. "I can see where a legislator might not want to vote against this kind of a statute or take action on it."

Maryland State Delegate Eric Bromwell recently sponsored and pushed through legislation amending state law to allow flag-themed commercial products and events, something that his fellow lawmakers were nervous about because they thought it might affect its prohibition on flag desecration.

"People were very careful when they signed onto the bill when I was looking for co-sponsors. The question came up with every turn," the self-described conservative Democrat said.

Regular activity

Flags are regularly burned around the country as parts of protests, such as in Cleveland. Though there were some arrests, no one was charged under Ohio's flag-desecration law, and Police Chief Calvin Williams and Mayor Frank Jackson talked afterward about flag-burning as a form of free speech. — AP



CHICAGO: Protesters burn an American flag on Feb. 23, 2016. —AP

POLICE CHIEF UNDER FIRE OVER OUTBURSTS

GOOD COP OR BAD COP?

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT: New Haven Police Chief Dean Esserman has confounded both supporters and critics over the years with dueling good cop-bad cop personalities. He has gained attention and respect nationally for putting in place community policing programs in Connecticut and Rhode Island, accomplishments that got him invited to the White House this month for a discussion with the president and others about easing tensions between law enforcement and minority communities. He also is known for meeting with crime victims' families.

Then there's the Esserman who has gotten in trouble for angry public outbursts, the latest coming this month at a New Haven restaurant where he reportedly was upset about the service and berated a waitress, leading people sitting near him to request other tables.

Esserman agreed to take three weeks of paid leave, announced Monday, and potentially faces more serious discipline. Mayor Toni Harp warned him two years ago when she reprimanded him for a confrontation with an usher at the Yale Bowl.

What witnesses saw

A Yale professor who witnessed the episode told city police commissioners that when the usher asked Esserman for his ticket to the Yale-Army football game, Esserman threatened to cancel the game, told the usher he didn't need tickets because he was the police chief, verbally abused the usher and demanded a stadium supervisor remove the usher.

In 2011, when he was police chief in Providence, Rhode Island, Esserman was suspended without pay for one day for what media reports said was a threat to throw coffee in the face of a sergeant who was coughing during a speech by Esserman.

Officers in both New Haven and Providence voted no confidence in Esserman, accusing him of publicly berating officers, intimidation, favoritism and retaliation, among other things. Esserman, a Dartmouth College graduate and former prosecutor who never served as a rank-and-file officer, has apologized in the past for



NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT: Police Chief Dean Esserman speaks at news conference about a new effort to reduce gun violence on Nov. 27, 2012. —AP

public outbursts. He declined to comment for this article.

Harp said in a statement that she considers reports of Esserman's conduct with the waitress unbecoming of a public official. She declined further comment. The New Haven police union is calling for Esserman to resign.

Esserman also had a rocky tenure in Providence, where he was chief from 2003 to 2011. In June 2011, four months after his one-day suspension, Esserman resigned after minors consumed alcohol at a graduation party for his daughter at his home. Esserman said at the time that the minors drank without his permission and that he broke up the party. He resigned, saying the controversy had become a distraction.

Esserman's credits

Esserman was credited with cleaning up department corruption fomented by former Providence Mayor Buddy Cianci, who served 21 years and was forced out twice because of felony convictions. When Esserman was hired, then-Mayor David Cicilline, now a congressman, called his pick "the best police chief in America." Cianci, who died in January, used his radio show after his release from prison to deride Esserman as "Chief Shiny Badge" for flashing his badge around. Sgt. Robert Boehm, president of the Providence Fraternal Order of Police Lodge No. 3, said Esserman was good at getting money for the department and getting people's attention. "A lot of people obviously like the guy," Boehm said. "For whatever reason, once in a while he tends to show this side of himself and gets in trouble. ... It's not easy being chief of police. You're always going to have your supporters and your enemies."

Esserman is a protege of New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton, former chief of the Los Angeles police and former Boston police commissioner. Esserman was an assistant prosecutor in Brooklyn, New York, then was assistant police chief in New Haven from 1991 to 1993. As assistant chief, Esserman was credited with helping start the city's first community policing program. He later worked as police chief for the Metro-North Railroad and in Stamford, Connecticut, before moving to Providence in 2003 and back to New Haven in 2011. In his return to New Haven, he has committed to revitalizing community policing.

Esserman was among 30 law enforcement officials, civil rights activists and other people invited to a White House discussion this month on improving police-community relations. He also attended a White House discussion on reducing incarceration across the country in October. Harp, the New Haven mayor, praised Esserman when she recommended his reappointment to a four-year term in 2014. She touted the police department's community policing efforts and the city's declining crime rate. —AP

JOHN HINCKLEY'S RETURN TO NORMALCY

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA: Life for the man who tried to assassinate President Ronald Reagan 35 years ago has progressively become more normal, with greater freedom outside a psychiatric hospital, and perhaps nowhere is this more evident than the record store where he whistles away so many hours.

John Hinckley Jr., now 61, has made purchases at Retro Daddio one might expect from a man of his generation: A book about The Who, the graying rock band currently on a farewell tour, and an album by obscure '60s rockers Ian and the Zodiacs that languished on the shelf for six months.

He is on a first-name basis with the owner, Jen Thurman, chatting her up about a Beatles poster he has that was signed by Paul McCartney and other musical trivia. A photo on the wall of a young Jodie Foster — the actress he said he was trying to impress when he shot Reagan and three others in 1981 — seems to go unnoticed. "I'm alone in the store frequently with him, and he's never crept me out," Thurman told The Associated Press. "He's very nice and very pleasant to be around."

Judge's orders

A judge on Wednesday ordered Hinckley's permanent release from a mental hospital as early as next month. But Hinckley has long been building a life in this gated community along a Williamsburg golf course after years of supervised releases to his mother's house, which most recently numbered 17 days a month.

Hinckley is expected to move into the gated community, known as Kingsmill, in early August. And while many have expressed dismay and even outrage, several have welcomed the man often seen around town in a generic baseball cap. He cares for feral cats and drives himself around town in a Toyota Avalon, to places like the movies and fast-food restaurants.

Hinckley joins his now 90-year-old mother for Sunday services at the Williamsburg United Methodist Church, where parishioners know his presence by the Secret Service agents in back. Senior Pastor Bill Jones told The Associated Press he's never met Hinckley but the church "would not exclude him from our fellowship."

Hinckley also has been volunteering at the local Unitarian Church, cutting grass, raking leaves and building birdhouses, according to the



WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA: John Hinckley gets into his mother's car in front of a recreation center on March 19, 2015. —AP

judge's 100-page order. Hinckley's case manager told the judge that several church members expressed their "support for John and willingness really to have him engage in more things at the church if he was willing."

Hinckley also volunteers at the patient cafeteria of Eastern State Hospital, a local mental institution. He clears tables, does dishes and works the counter as needed, said Maria Reppas, spokeswoman for Virginia's Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

A local photographer has been mentoring Hinckley as well, according to court records. He declined to comment to the AP. The life Hinckley is building comes with conditions: He must live with his mother for a year, and only after that can he live alone, with roommates or in a group home. If his mother becomes unable to supervise him, his sister will immediately come to Williamsburg until a more permanent solution is found.

His family

His mother has been his most consistent companion: He treats her to dinner occasionally

at Ruby Tuesday and takes her to scenic drives. By his own account, it appears he has been looking forward to living permanently outside the hospital for some time: "It's really refreshing to be in a group with people who aren't completely out of their minds," he said, according to court documents.

Sandra Kochersperger, who once supervised Hinckley when he volunteered in Eastern State's library, said she has wondered how he'll manage. "I don't think he would ever bother anyone," Kochersperger told the AP. "He would probably live a very quiet life, and would probably be just fine on his own."

Hinckley has sometimes appeared less than fully engaged in the world around him. Gordon James, who lives three doors down, said Hinckley appeared to ignore his hello as he passed by on a routine walk.

"My initial thought was that he may have been heavily medicated," said James, a retired Navy aviator and commercial pilot. "He was certainly not in the moment in terms of listening to me. But I don't imagine he gets engaged in a lot of conversations." — AP

FORMER KKK MEMBER CONVICTED IN DEADLY BOMBING UP FOR PAROLE

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA: Thomas Edwin Blanton Jr. was a young Ku Klux Klansman with a reputation for hating blacks in 1963, when a bomb ripped a hole in the side of 16th Street Baptist Church, killing four black girls during the civil rights movement.

Today, Blanton is old and imprisoned, the last survivor among three one-time KKK members convicted of murder in the bombing. Soon, Alabama's parole board will decide whether Blanton deserves to be free after serving 15 years of a life term for murder.

The board has scheduled a hearing for Wednesday to consider parole for the 78-year-old Blanton. Inmates are not allowed to attend parole hearings in Alabama, but opponents of Blanton's release are expected to address the three-person board when it meets in Montgomery. The president of the Alabama NAACP, Bernard Simelton, said releasing Blanton at a time when protests are occurring nationwide over police killings of black people would send a horrible message. NAACP chapters statewide are sending letters in opposition to Blanton's release, and the Birmingham chapter is sending a bus-

load of people to oppose parole, he said. "It would be a slap in the face to those young ladies and their families to release him," Simelton said. Blanton was convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment in 2001 for being part of a group of Klansmen who planted a dynamite bomb that exploded outside 16th Street Baptist on Sept. 15, 1963. The blast killed 11-year-old Denise McNair and 14-year-olds Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson and Cynthia Morris, also known as Cynthia Wesley.

The girls, who were inside the church preparing for worship, died instantly in a hail of bricks and stone that seriously injured Collins' sister, Sarah Collins Rudolph. Their deaths inside a church on a Sunday morning became a symbol worldwide of the depth of racial hatred in the segregated South. Doug Jones, a former US attorney who prosecuted Blanton on the state charge, said Blanton shouldn't be released since he has never accepted responsibility for the bombing or expressed any remorse for a crime that was aimed at maintaining racial separation at a time Birmingham's public schools were facing a court order to desegregate. — AP



ALABAMA: Inmate Thomas Edwin Blanton Jr., a one-time Ku Klux Klansman convicted in the 1963 church bombing that killed four black girls in Birmingham, ALABAMA. —AP

SCOTS BACK REMAINING IN UK DESPITE BREXIT VOTE

LONDON: Most Scots still back remaining in the United Kingdom despite Britons voting to leave the European Union, a move which was opposed by the majority in Scotland, according to an opinion poll published yesterday.

Scotland's nationalist First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has said the June 23 vote for Brexit had put Scottish independence back on the agenda just two years after it was rejected in a referendum. While Britons backed leaving the EU by 52-48 percent, Scots voted by 62-

38 percent to remain in the bloc, an outcome Sturgeon argues has changed the political landscape regarding possible Scottish secession.

However according to Saturday's YouGov survey, 53 percent of Scots wanted to stay part of the United Kingdom with 47 percent backing independence. Even when asked if they would rather stay in the EU but leave the UK, 46 percent of the 1,006 respondents said they wanted to remain in the UK and only 37 percent preferred Scotland

becoming an independent nation within the bloc.

"Inevitably, some will suggest that the high-water mark of Scottish independence has now passed, especially as it was thought that leaving the EU might persuade 'No' voters to change their minds and vote against the Union," said Joe Twyman, YouGov's Head of Political and Social Research.

"However, the situation is, naturally, more complicated than that. There remains a great deal of uncertainty

about what the UK's relationship with the EU will look like in the long term. A lot could, and almost certainly will, change on this front in the coming years."

Scots rejected independence by 55-45 percent in the 2014 referendum, but since then Sturgeon's Scottish National Party has gone from strength to strength, winning 56 of Scotland's 59 seats in the British parliament in the 2015 election.

She said on Monday she would start

preparatory work on making independence an option, depending on the outcome of British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit negotiations to determine the United Kingdom's future relations with the EU.

May has made keeping Scotland in the UK a priority in the wake of the Brexit vote, and has she would not trigger Article 50, the formal mechanism to start EU divorce talks, until she had concluded an agreement that suited all regions of the country. —Reuters

UKRAINE DETAINS TOP ALLY OF OUSTED PRO-RUSSIA PRESIDENT TO FURTHER CONSIDER THE DEAL



WARSAW: Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo (R) and British Prime Minister Theresa May (L) pose for a picture during a meeting. —AFP

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May personally intervened to delay the French and Chinese-backed Hinkley Point nuclear project so she could further consider the deal, a government source said, explaining Friday's shock move.

The plan by France's EDF to build two new reactors with financial backing from a Chinese state-owned firm was championed by May's predecessor David Cameron as a sign of Britain's openness to foreign investment. But just hours before a signing ceremony was due to take place on Friday, May's new government said it would review the project again, raising doubts over Britain's approach to infrastructure deals, energy supply and foreign investment.

A government source told Reuters May had explained to French President Francois Hollande that she would need time to consider the project when they met at the Elysee nine days ago and in a phone call. "They agreed on the timetable," the source said. On Saturday, a former colleague revealed May had objected to Cameron's approach to courting Chinese investment, and had indicated she was worried about Hinkley Point. Britain and EDF first reached a broad commercial agreement on the project in 2013, with Chinese involvement sealed two years later when London laid on a state visit for President Xi Jinping, designed to cement a "Golden Era" with Beijing. "When we were in government Theresa May was quite clear she was unhappy about the rather gung-ho approach to Chinese investment that we had," Britain's former business secretary Vince Cable told BBC Radio. "As I recall, she raised objections to Hinkley at that time. We've got a different prime minister with a different set of priorities and projects of this kind are going to be looked at through a different filter."

The about-turn came little more than a month after Britons voted to leave the EU in a referendum that forced the resignation of Prime Minister Cameron and the promotion of May. May has since been keen to state that Britain remains open for business. But she has also said the government should be able to step in to defend a key sector from foreign ownership.

Security concerns

Potential security risks have been cited as a concern about the Hinkley Point project in some quarters. Under the deal China General Nuclear Power Corp (CGN) was set to hold a 33 percent stake in the plant. That was then supposed to pave the way for CGN to lead another project in Britain in which Chinese nuclear technology would be used. Last year, Nick Timothy, May's joint chief of staff, said security experts were worried the state-owned Chinese group would have access to computer systems that would allow it to shut down Britain's energy production.

The two new reactors at Hinkley Point, in southwest England, would provide about 7 percent of Britain's electricity, helping to fill a supply gap as coal plants are set to close by 2025. Although EDF and CGN are responsible for the 18-billion-pound (\$24 billion) cost, Britain has committed to pay a minimum price for the power generated by the plant for 35 years.

Critics, including some British lawmakers and academics, say the country would be overpaying at that minimum price, which equates to double current market levels. Any attempt to renegotiate the terms could strain ties between London and Paris, at a time when it is starting to renegotiate Britain's exit from the EU.

The state-controlled utility EDF, which itself had to come through a bruising boardroom battle on Thursday in order to secure backing for the project, said it had not been given any advance warning of the review announced late on Thursday. China General Nuclear said on Saturday it respected the decision of the new British government to take the time needed to familiarise itself with the programme. A decision is now due by the autumn, meaning it could come in September when the government is also due to give the go-ahead to a plan to expand either Heathrow or Gatwick airport, another major infrastructure project that has been delayed. May's office did not comment on Saturday, but the government has said it is right that it should consider all component parts before reaching a final decision. —Reuters



MUGLA, TURKEY: This picture obtained from the Ihlas News Agency shows journalist Nazli Ilıcak posing in Mugla on July 26, 2016 after being detained by Turkish police. —AFP

TURKEY JAILS JOURNALISTS AS ERDOGAN REBUKES WESTERN CRITICS

ANKARA: Yesterday Turkey was holding 17 journalists on charges of "terror group" membership as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Western critics to "mind your own business" over a relentless crackdown following a failed coup. But in a goodwill gesture two weeks after the July 15 coup bid, Erdogan also announced he was withdrawing thousands of lawsuits against individuals accused of insulting him.

Turkey has detained more than 18,000 people over the attempted putsch which has been blamed on the US-based preacher Fethullah Gulen—a charge he denies — with the relentless crackdown sparking warnings from Brussels that Ankara's EU membership bid may be in danger.

Seventeen journalists remained in custody by an Istanbul court over links to Gulen woke up in jails across the city yesterday as international concern grows over the targeting of reporters in the wake of the putsch.

Twenty-one journalists had appeared before a judge in hearings lasting until midnight on Friday. Four were then freed but 17 were placed under pre-trial arrest, charged with "membership of a terror group", the state-run Anadolu news agency said.

Those held include the veteran journalist Nazli Ilıcak as well as the former correspondent for the pro-Gulen Zaman daily Hanim Busra Erdal. Among those freed was prominent commentator Bulent Mumay who was given a rapturous welcome by supporters. "I could never have imagined being accused of such a thing. It was a madness. It's not right to arrest journalists—this country should not make the same mistakes again," he said, quoted by the Dogan news agency.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu defended the detention of reporters, saying it was necessary to distinguish between coup plotters and those "who are engaged in real journalism".

The president also announced that as a gesture of goodwill after the coup he was dropping hundreds of lawsuits against individuals accused of insulting him. "I am going to withdraw all the cases regarding the disrespectful insults made against me," said Erdogan. Earlier this year, officials had said more than 2,000 people were being prosecuted on charges of insulting the president.

'Mind your own business!'

Thousands of those detained after the coup have now been released, with an Istanbul court releasing 758 soldiers late on Friday, adding to another 3,500 former sus-

pects already set free. But with concern growing about the sheer numbers rounded-up, EU enlargement commissioner Johannes Hahn said he needed to see "black-and-white facts about how these people are treated". "And if there is even the slightest doubt that the (treatment) is improper, then the consequences will be inevitable," he told German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

In a speech at his presidential palace late Friday remembering those killed during the failed coup, Erdogan angrily denounced the criticism and accused the West of deserting Turkey in its hour of need. "Some people give us advice. They say they are worried. Mind your own business! Look at your own deeds," Erdogan said. "Not a single person has come to give condolences either from the European Union... or from the West," said Erdogan. "Those countries or leaders who are not worried about Turkey's democracy, the lives of our people, its future—while being so worried about the fate of the putschists—cannot be our friends," he growled.

One of the very few EU officials of any rank to visit Turkey in the wake of the coup was Alan Duncan, a junior minister within Britain's foreign office. But yesterday Erdogan was to meet Foreign Minister Mohammed Abdulrahman al-Thani of Qatar, one of Turkey's closest allies.

'Taking the plotters' side'

Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said Turkey has succeeded in eradicating all elements linked to Gulen from the military after sacking nearly half of its generals following the failed coup. "We are going to make our armed forces stronger and we are going to work towards making this country more secure," he said.

Turkey implemented a shake-up of the military on Thursday after nearly half of its 358 generals were sacked for complicity in the coup. Erdogan had earlier also lashed out at a top US general who had expressed concerns about military relations after the putsch.

Quoted by US media, US Central Command chief General Joseph Votel said Thursday that the coup bid and subsequent round-up of dozens of generals could affect American cooperation with Turkey. "You are taking the side of coup plotters instead of thanking this state for defeating the coup attempt," Erdogan said at a military centre in Golbasi outside Ankara, where air strikes left dozens dead during the coup.

Votel swiftly denied any link to the coup however. —AFP

PROTEST IN BURUNDI AFTER UN DECIDES TO SEND POLICE

NAIROBI: Around 1,000 people marched through the streets of Burundi's capital yesterday to protest against a United Nations Security Council decision to send a police contingent to the violence-wracked country. The demonstration—"organized by the authorities," according to one Western diplomatic source—passed off peacefully but showed the government's hostility to the proposed unit of 228 UN police. Protesters marched to the French embassy, angry that France had drafted the UN resolution to send the controversial police squad.

One demonstrator carried a banner saying that it was France that needed UN peacekeepers, making a reference to a truck attack in the southern French city of Nice that killed 84 people. French ambassador Gerit Rossus, who went out to address the crowd, said there was "a deep misunderstanding" about France's role at

the UN security council. He said there was "no problem" at the demonstration.

The crowd also demonstrated outside the Rwandan embassy, accusing Rwanda of training Burundi rebels. On Friday, the UN agreed to send the force of 228 police to the capital Bujumbura and throughout Burundi for an initial period of a year.

The UN police force would be tasked with monitoring security and human rights in coordination with African Union rights observers and military experts. Burundi has agreed to allow 100 AU rights observers and 100 AU military experts into the country to monitor the crisis, but fewer than 50 have begun work on the ground.

But the planned police deployment has sparked fury from the authorities, who have said they will accept no more than 50 officers. Four countries on the 15-member UN council abstained from the vote, which passed with 11 votes in favor. — AFP

CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS TO MOURN MURDERED FRENCH PRIEST

PARIS: Muslim and Christian groups will hold vigils for a French priest murdered by jihadists yesterday, as authorities charged a man in connection with the brutal church attack that rocked the nation. A shellshocked France is still coming to terms with the jihadist murder of a priest at his altar that has sparked fears of tensions between religions in the secular nation. In a bid to forge togetherness between the communities, a regional Muslim council has planned a "brotherhood march" in the southeastern city of Lyon.

A church in Bordeaux said it would hold a non-denominational vigil for the 85-year-old Jacques Hamel, who had his throat slit by IS-inspired teenaged attackers. And prayers were also planned at the Saint-Etienne church where the killing took place as Hamel was celebrating mass on Tuesday.

'Criminal conspiracy'

Meanwhile, police were still trying to piece together links to the two 19-year-olds who carried out the attack, Adel Kermiche and Abdel Malik Petitjean—both of whom were on intelligence services' radar and had tried to go to Syria.

On Friday, authorities filed charges against a 19-year-old man accused of "criminal conspiracy with terrorists" after police discovered a mobile phone video of one of the assailants at his home.

Police were still questioning Petitjean's cousin and a Syrian refugee, after a photocopy of his passport found at Kermiche's house. A 16-year-old was released but could ultimately face a separate investigation for possessing jihadist propaganda, authorities added.

A source close to the enquiry said that a 17-year-old, who had tried to travel to Syria with Kermiche, was arrested in Geneva and sent back to France just a few days before the attack.

However, "nothing suggests he was in any way implicated in the attack" at this stage, the source added. Both Prime Minister Manuel Valls and Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve have come under fire for perceived security failings.

Valls has said he would consider a temporary ban on foreign financing of mosques, urging a "new model" for relations with Islam after a spate of jihadist attacks. France has just over 2,000 mosques, for one of Europe's largest Muslim populations of around five million.

Some large mosques have been financed by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf or northern African countries, according to local media reports. After meeting with President Francois Hollande earlier this week, the rector of the Paris Mosque Dalil Boubakeur himself suggested "certain reforms of the institutions" of Islam.

'Peace, it's what we want'

Since the assault, harrowing details have emerged about what happened in the church as well as a chilling warning from one of the attackers. On Friday, L'Express magazine revealed that Kermiche had described the modus operandi of the attack on the encrypted messaging app Telegram. "You take a knife, you go into a church. Bam!" says the message recorded just a few days before the attack. Meanwhile, two elderly nuns who were in the church at the time of the attack told AFP the assailants "smiled" and spoke of the Quran. Sister Helena said when asked if she was familiar with Islam's holy book, she said she had read several suras especially those about peace.

According to the nun, one of the attackers replied: "Peace, it's what we want... as long as there are bombs on Syria, we will continue our attacks. And they will happen every day. When you stop, we will stop." —AFP



LYON, FRANCE: People hold a placard reading "All united against terrorism, long live to peace" as they take part in a silent march yesterday in Lyon planned by the regional Muslim council and gathering nearly 400 people between Muslims, Christians and laypersons in a bid to forge togetherness between the communities following the attack at the church Saint-Etienne in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray on July 26, 2016. —AFP

US URGES UN TO BACK AFRICAN FORCE FOR SOUTH SUDAN

UNITED NATIONS: The United States urged the UN Security Council on Friday to back a regional force for South Sudan to shore up UN peacekeepers unable to cope with the violence.

The council adopted a resolution extending the mandate of the UN mission in South Sudan, known as UNMISS, until August 12 to allow time to negotiate another measure authorizing the new force. The proposed resolution is also expected to slap an arms embargo on South Sudan and targeted sanctions on those seen as responsible for the violence.

US Ambassador Samantha Power said the proposal by the African regional IGAD bloc to send an intervention brigade to Juba should be

supported by the council. "We all need to support them," said Power. "The United States believes the region's proposal offers a basis to re-establish a secure environment in Juba, which is critical for the parties to make progress on implementing the peace agreement" and allowing aid deliveries, she said.

Juba was rocked by several days of heavy fighting in early July between government forces and those loyal to rebel chief Riek Machar, the latest upsurge in the two and half year war. Nearly 300 people died in the violence and two Chinese peacekeepers were killed in an attack on a UN base, where thousands of civilians rushed for safety. —AFP



SILDUBI VILLAGE, INDIA: A woman prepares a meal by a flooded road on Friday. —AP

MONSOON FLOODS KILL AT LEAST 52 PEOPLE IN INDIA

GAUHATI, India: Indian authorities yesterday tried to rescue thousands of people stranded in flooded villages after a week of heavy rain killed at least 52 people and uprooted tens of thousands of others from their homes in the states of Assam in the remote northeast and Bihar in the east.

Twenty-six deaths have been reported in Assam, where incessant downpours have damaged roads and snapped telephone cables in several districts, a government statement said.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh flew over the worst-hit areas yesterday and said the floods were "very serious."

Twenty-six deaths also have been reported in Bihar due to drowning and home collapses in 10 districts bordering Nepal. The Bihar state government was running more than 350 relief camps providing food and other necessities to the flood

victims. The federal government-run National Disaster Response Force was helping with relief efforts.

Vast tracts of Assam's Kaziranga National Park, home to the rare one-horned rhino, and another wildlife reserve were under water, the state government said in a statement. Forest officials found the remains of six rhinos drowned by floodwaters in Kaziranga, the statement said. Another rhino was killed in another national reserve in the state.

The Brahmaputra River and its tributaries were overflowing their banks in 18 of Assam's districts, washing away roads and highways and toppling power pylons. Floodwaters entered homes in at least 14 districts, leading to house collapses. Floods are an annual occurrence in Assam and many parts of India during the June-September monsoon season. —AP

TWO INDIAN SOLDIERS AMONG FOUR KILLED NEAR KASHMIR BORDER

SRINAGAR: Two soldiers and two suspected rebels were killed overnight in a gunbattle in Indian-administered Kashmir near the disputed territory's de facto border with Pakistan, the Indian army said yesterday.

Colonel N. N. Joshi said the firefight occurred in Naugam sector, some 120 kilometers northwest of the main city of Srinagar, after soldiers intercepted the militants attempting to infiltrate the territory from Pakistan. "Two terrorists were killed and two soldiers attained martyrdom. One soldier was injured," Joshi told AFP.

More than 50 people have been killed and thousands injured in weeks of unrest in Indian-administered Kashmir, sparked by the death on July 8 of popular rebel commander Burhan Wani in a firefight with government forces. Nearly 100 protesters and police were injured in clashes Friday as authorities sought to block a rally called by separatist groups opposed to Indian rule, officials said.

A curfew continued to be in force across large parts of the territory for the 22nd con-

secutive day yesterday. Schools and businesses remained shut and internet services suspended, although mobile networks have been partially restored.

Kashmir has been divided between rivals India and Pakistan since the two won independence from Britain in 1947. Both claim the territory in its entirety. Several rebel groups, including Wani's Hizbul Mujahideen, have been fighting for decades an estimated 500,000 Indian soldiers deployed in the restive territory, demanding independence for the region or its merger with Pakistan.

Tens of thousands, most civilians, have died in the fighting since 1989 when the armed rebellion against Indian rule of the Himalayan territory began. India regularly accuses Pakistan of arming and sending rebels across the de facto border known as Line of Control, to launch attacks on its forces. Islamabad denies the allegation, saying it only provides diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmiri struggle for right to self-determination. —AFP

AFGHAN CLERIC ARRESTED FOR MARRYING SIX-YEAR-OLD GIRL

KABUL: An elderly Afghan cleric has been arrested after he married a six-year-old girl, officials said Friday, in the latest case highlighting the scourge of child marriages in the war-battered country.

Mohammad Karim, said to be aged around 60, was held in central Ghor province as he claimed her parents gave him the girl as a "religious offering," officials said. But they cited the family of the girl, believed to be in shock, as saying that she was abducted from western Herat province, bordering Iran.

"This girl does not speak, but repeats only one thing: 'I am afraid of this man,'" said Masoom Anwari, head of the women affairs department in Ghor. The girl is currently in a woman's shelter in Ghor and her parents are on their way to the province to collect her, the local governor's office said. "Karim has been jailed and our investigation is ongoing," said Abdul Hai Khatibi, the governor's spokesman.

The arrest comes just days after a 14-year-old pregnant girl was burned to death in Ghor, in a case that sparked shock waves in Afghanistan. The family of that girl, Zahra, said she was tortured and set alight by her husband's family. But relatives of the teenager's husband insisted her death was by self-immolation.

The incidents underscore rising incidents of child marriages in Afghanistan. "In some regions because of insecurity and poverty the families marry off their daughters at a very early age to get rid of them," Sima Samar, head of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, told reporters this month.

Afghan civil law sets the legal age of marriage at 16 for girls, yet 15 percent of Afghan women under 50 were married before their 15th birthday and almost half were married before the age of 18, according to Save the Children.

"So many children who are married off at a young age are deprived of their right to education, safety and the ability to make choices about their future," the international charity said this month. "This is such a fundamental breach of a child's basic rights." The latest case comes after a young woman was stoned to death in Ghor last November after being accused of adultery. And in March last year a woman named Farkhunda was savagely beaten and set ablaze in central Kabul after being falsely accused of burning a Quran. The mob killing triggered angry nationwide protests and drew global attention to the endemic violence facing Afghan women. —AFP

TALEBAN CAPTURE KEY DISTRICT IN HELMAND

17 POLICEMEN DEAD AND 10 WOUNDED

KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN: An important district in Afghanistan's southern poppy-growing province of Helmand has fallen under Taliban control after heavy fighting that killed around 17 police and wounded up to 10 others, an official said yesterday.

The director of Helmand's provincial council, Kareem Atal, said that Taliban militants attacked a series of police checkpoints Friday night as part of a larger assault in the Kanashin district. Earlier, his deputy, Abdul Majeed Akhonzada, told The Associated Press that Kanashin district has "fallen into Taliban hands."

The fall of the district, which borders Pakistan and major poppy-producing districts, means "Taliban are in control of 60 percent of Helmand," Akhonzada said. Much of the area of Marjah, Sangin, Garmser and Dishu districts have already fallen to the Taliban, he said. The district police chief and deputy head of the local branch of the national intelligence agency were critically wounded in clashes, he said.

Bodies still littered the ground

Precise casualty figures can't be confirmed as fighting was still underway, he added. He said that bodies still littered the ground. Atal said troops had been deployed to retake the district, but it would be a difficult task "because the Taliban have destroyed all the checkpoints."

The central authorities have been trying for many months to convince rural districts to reduce the number of police checkpoints, as they are manned by small numbers of policemen who are vulnerable to Taliban attack. They want to consolidate the checkpoints, so that there are fewer of them but each one is more heavily-manned and less vulnerable to attack.

Residents, however, prefer the regularly-spaced small checkpoints, officials have said, as they make them feel safe. Kanashin is a major drug smuggling route. Helmand produces most of the world's opium, the raw material of heroin, which helps fund the Taliban's insurgency.

The fall of Kanashin follows a report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, which concluded that government forces have lost five percent of the territory they held at the end of January.

The report released earlier this week said that about 65.6 percent of districts across Afghanistan were under government "control or influence" at the end of May, "a decrease from the 70.5 percent" at the end of January. It said that of Afghanistan's 407 districts, 268 were under government control of influence, 36 or 8.8 percent were under insurgent control or influence, and 104 or 25.6 percent were considered "at risk." The Taliban have been fighting to over-

throw the Kabul government since 2001, when their regime was ousted by the US invasion. The insurgents consider Helmand, along with neighboring Kandahar province, to be their heartland.

Elsewhere yesterday, explosives hidden in a fruit cart at a market in the western city of Herat killed two people and wounded six others, according to Abdul Rawoof Ahmadi, spokesman for the provincial police chief.

He said that the bomb, which went off at around 9.30am, targeted Afghan security forces who were buying fruit and other supplies for their nearby base. A 40-year-old man was killed instantly and a 23-year-old man died later of his injuries, Ahmadi said. —AP



HERAT, AFGHANISTAN: Afghan doctors assist an injured man who is wounded from a bomb attack yesterday. —AP

AFGHAN TROOPS PRESS OFFENSIVE AGAINST ISLAMIC STATE

JALALABAD: When Afghan troops pushed into Kot, a district close to the border with Pakistan, this week, they found many of the houses empty, with posters plastered on the walls and black flags left by departing Islamic State fighters.

Backed by US special forces troops and airstrikes that authorities say have killed hundreds of Islamic State fighters in recent weeks, the Afghan army has launched an offensive against the movement, which is now believed to be confined to three or four districts in eastern Afghanistan.

Afghan commanders said they faced little resistance as they pushed into Kot after a heavy air and artillery bombardment as fighters pulled out into nearby mountain areas. "We have already destroyed their training camps in Kot district and the operations will expand to other districts too," said Shereen Agha, an Afghan army spokesman.

Provincial government spokesman Attahullah Khogyani said 78 Daesh fighters had been killed in the operation and many bodies had been concealed inside houses to hide the number of fatalities they had suffered.

"Wrath of the Storm"

Five US special forces troops, fighting along-

side Afghan special forces, were injured in the fighting. Involving both regular army and special forces, the operation in Nangarhar, dubbed "Wrath of the Storm," coincided with last week's suicide bombing in Kabul that killed at least 80 people and wounded more than 230 more.

The operation, the Afghan army's first major strategic offensive of the summer, was planned well before the attack on a demonstration by mainly Shi'ite Hazara people in Kabul. But that attack, which was immediately claimed by Islamic State, added urgency to the operation, which military officials say has pushed Daesh fighters back into the mountains of southern Nangarhar.

Abdul Hakim, one of the residents left in the dusty town bazaar, gave a careful welcome to the incoming troops. "I am very happy to see the government forces defeated Daesh and saved us from the atrocities and terror," he said as troops moved about pulling down the posters and flags covering many of the surrounding walls.

However after innumerable false dawns in decades of conflict in Afghanistan, officials in the NATO-led coalition that provides assistance to Afghan forces are cautious about declaring success against Islamic State, which President Ashraf Ghani promised to "bury" in January.

According to figures quoted in a report by the Special Investigator for Afghanistan, a US watchdog, Afghan government forces control just under two thirds of the country, 5 percent less than at the start of the year. But Western officials say the army has increasingly taken the offensive against the insurgents, both Taliban and Islamic State, and prevented the fall of district and provincial centers.

Islamic State first appeared in Afghanistan at beginning of 2015 and US officials say some 70 percent of its fighters come from the TTP, the Pakistani Taliban, many from the Orakzai area in the frontier region on the Pakistan side of the border. Previously considered a much smaller threat than the Taliban, their bitter enemies, the Kabul bombing underlined how dangerous they could be, even without holding large tracts of territory. Afghan and US military officials believe the concentrated attacks on the movement over the past six months have killed many of its fighters and leaders and weakened the group, despite its ability to mount the Kabul attack. Gen. John Nicholson, the senior US commander in Afghanistan, said this week that the number of Daesh fighters, estimated at around 3,000 in January, has been roughly cut in half and now stood at between 1,000-1,500. —Reuters

TWO SISTERS SHOT DEAD IN PAKISTAN 'HONOR' KILLINGS

LAHORE: A man killed his two sisters on the eve of their weddings in Pakistan's central Punjab province, police said yesterday, in the latest case of so-called "honor" killings in the country.

Kosar and Gulzar Bibi, aged 22 and 28, were shot dead by 35-year-old brother Nasir Hussain on Friday as they prepared to marry men they had chosen themselves, senior police officer Mehar Riaz told AFP. Hussain objected to the love matches and had wanted the women to marry someone within the extended family, he added. "The brother shot dead both the sisters yesterday and fled the site," the officer said, adding that a search was underway. "It is a simple case of killing for honor," he said. Father of the family Atta Mohammad told reporters that Hussain had "destroyed everything." "He ruined my family, he destroyed us, he destroyed

everything" Mohammad said. The murders came days after social media starlet Qandeel Baloch was strangled to death by her brother who said he was "not embarrassed" to have killed her, reigniting calls for action against the crime.

Hundreds of women are murdered by relatives in the conservative Muslim nation each year on the pretext of defending what is seen as family honor. Pakistan's law minister this month announced that bills aimed at tackling "honor killings" and boosting rape convictions would soon be voted on by parliament, after mounting pressure to tackle a pattern of crime that claims around 1,000 lives a year. The perpetrators of so-called honor killings-in which the victim, normally a woman, is killed by a relative-often walk free because they can seek forgiveness for the crime from another family member. —AFP

FLOOD WATER KILLS 26 WEDDING GUESTS IN PAKISTAN

PESHAWAR, Pakistan: At least 26 people, mostly children, were killed yesterday when a vehicle carrying wedding guests was washed off a mountainous road by floods and flung into a gorge, officials said.

The dead included 18 children and six women. "Rescue operation has been completed, dead bodies of 26 people had been retrieved," Rahimullah Mehsud, a local government official of Khyber tribal district, where the incident took place, told AFP. Mehsud earlier said rescue workers and residents were facing difficulties as the "area is remote and mountainous". The accident happened when a pick-up truck carrying the groom's party of 29 was hit by floods in a remote village in Khyber, one of Pakistan's seven tribal districts bordering Afghanistan. Three people who survived were taken to hospital. Hekmat Khan, another government official, confirmed the new death toll and told AFP that the child victims were aged up to nine years.

The heavy monsoon rains began earlier this month, drenching the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and central Punjab provinces, which have been badly affected by flooding in recent years that some scientists have linked to climate change. —AFP

BANGLADESH POLICE IDENTIFY CAFE ATTACK 'MASTERMIND'

DHAKA: A Canadian citizen was one of the masterminds behind a mass killing at a Dhaka cafe, Bangladesh police said yesterday, after new information came to light following a raid on an extremist hideout.

Tamim Chowdhury, whose whereabouts are unknown, returned to Bangladesh from Canada three years ago. He has since led and financed efforts to radicalize young Muslims, officers with knowledge of a probe into recent attacks told AFP.

The dual Canadian-Bangladeshi national, in his early 30s, is thought by counter-terrorism officials to lead a fac-

tion of the Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militant group, blamed for scores of murders of foreigners and religious minorities.

Five assailants stormed an upscale cafe in Dhaka's Gulshan neighborhood on July 1 and killed 20 hostages, including 18 foreigners in Bangladesh's deadliest single militant attack. A week later, gunmen attacked an Eid prayer gathering of 250,000 people held to mark the end of Ramadan, killing three.

"So far what we learnt is that Tamim Chowdhury is one of the masterminds of the attacks of Gulshan cafe and Sholakia Eid prayer ground," an officer

told AFP on condition of anonymity. "He trained the extremists behind the two attacks and the nine extremists killed at Kalyanpur," the officer said, referring to a shoot-out by police at a flat used as an extremist hideout on Tuesday.

He added that Chowdhury "has been working to radicalize" young Muslims. Another senior police officer told AFP that Chowdhury's role in fostering extremism was revealed during the interrogation of Rakibul Hasan, 25, who was arrested in the raid on the hideout.

According to a police first information report into the raid, seen by AFP, Chowdhury and others gave him and

the nine militants killed in the raid "money, explosives and weapons" and "trained and advised" them.

Hasan told police during the interrogation that Chowdhury "used to visit the extremists' flat and give them necessary funds and encourage them by talking about jihad and religious issues," the report said. Authorities blame the JMB militant group for the attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka and the assault on the Eid gathering.

However, the Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the cafe attack, releasing photos of the carnage and of extremists posing with the

group's flag. Arrested extremist Hasan told police the group busted in the raid were members of IS, with officers recovering its signature black flags and robes from their hideout.

But the national police chief A.K.M Shahidul Hoque has rejected that claim, asserting that they were members of the banned JMB. Another senior officer told AFP that foreign intelligence agencies sounded alarm bells on Chowdhury's extremist activities a year ago.

Police are investigating whether the JMB faction allegedly led by Chowdhury has any ties with IS. —AFP

AUSTRALIANS RALLY AGAINST YOUTH DETENTION ABUSES

SYDNEY: Australians rallied yesterday against the treatment of young people in detention-including the hooding and physical restraint of teens-amid calls for an inquiry into the abuse to be expanded.

Graphic footage of teenage boys being stripped naked, tear-gassed, held in solitary confinement and shackled to a chair as a restraint measure shocked the country when it aired last week.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull

immediately ordered a royal commission into how youths were treated at the Don Dale Centre in the Northern Territory in 2014 and 2015. But at snap "emergency protests" in Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere on Saturday, hundreds gathered to call for justice for the teens, many of whom are Aboriginal.

"If we could see some action, some real fair and just action taken, I think that would allay some concern," Sydney community elder Auntie Jenny Munroe told

the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The Northern Territory has one of the highest crime rates in Australia, with indigenous offenders making up more than two-thirds of the prison population.

But there have been calls for the royal commission to be expanded beyond the Northern Territory, given concerns about physical and emotional abuse in youth detention centers in other states. Opposition Labor leader Bill Shorten said his party fully supported the inquiry but

argued that it should also have indigenous commissioners.

"This royal commission has to be with Aboriginal people, not to Aboriginal people," he told reporters in the northern city of Darwin. "I believe it would be appropriate for the royal commission to have two co-commissioners who are Aboriginal Australians, strong people, men and women, who can make sure the voices and the experiences of Aboriginal Australians are given full justice in this royal commission."

Australia's Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion has since apologized for not being aware of the what went on at the Don Dale centre. One barrister has described the treatment of some teens at the facility as reminiscent of Guantanamo Bay, the notorious US military prison in Cuba that holds terror suspects. "I'm sorry I wasn't aware of the full circumstances that were exposed this week," Scullion said. —AFP

US ARMY SECRETARY SAYS US-SOUTH KOREA WAR GAMES TO PROCEED

US ARMY SECRETARY SAYS US-SOUTH

JOHOR BAHRU, Malaysia: US Army Secretary Eric Fanning said yesterday that annual military drills between the United States and South Korea would go ahead next month, despite North Korea's warning of a "vicious" showdown if the war games proceed.

On Thursday, North Korea's top diplomat for US affairs said that the nature of the maneuvers has become openly aggressive, and that Pyongyang is ready for war. The United States and South Korea regularly conduct joint military exercises south of the Demilitarized Zone dividing the two Koreas, and Pyongyang typically responds to them with tough talk and threats of retaliation.

planned," he told The Associated Press. "We have been conducting exercises with South Korea and with many other militaries in the region for decades. That's partly what had provided stability that we have seen since World War II."

The drill is a "routine and defense-oriented exercise designed to enhance readiness, protect the region and maintain stability on the Korean Peninsula," Maj. Chris Ophardt, Fanning's public affairs officer, said in an email.

Heightened animosity

Last year's Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercises involved 30,000 American and 50,000 South Korean troops and followed a period of height-

ened animosity between the rival Koreas sparked by land mine explosions that maimed two South Korean soldiers. The exercises escalated tensions and rhetoric, but concluded with no major incidents.

Despite plans to scale down the size of the army, Fanning said the US has increased its presence in Asia-Pacific, reflecting its commitment to the region. The number of US soldiers and civilian Army workers in the Pacific region has shot up to more than 100,000, from 70,000 just four years ago, he said.

"The types of relationships that we have with armies across the Pacific are really what helps, I think, keep things stable in this part of the world," he said. "We find these exercises to be very important, very fruitful and build relationships that last generations."

On a war footing

In an interview with the AP on Thursday, Han Song Ryol, director-general of the US affairs department at North Korea's Foreign Ministry, said the US move to put North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on its list of sanctioned individuals and other recent actions have put the situation on the Korean Peninsula on a war footing.

Han said that US-South Korea military exercises conducted this spring were unprecedented in scale, and that the US has deployed the USS Mississippi and USS Ohio nuclear-powered submarines to South Korean ports, deployed the B-52 strategic bomber around South Korea and is planning to set up the world's most advanced missile defense system, known by its acronym THAAD, in the South, a move that has also angered China.

Han said North Korea believes the drills reportedly now include training designed to prepare troops for the invasion of the North's capital and "decapitation strikes" aimed at killing its top leadership. "Nobody can predict what kind of influence this kind of vicious confrontation between the DPRK and the United States will have upon the situation on the Korean Peninsula," he said, using the acronym for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "By doing these kinds of vicious and hostile acts toward the DPRK, the US has already declared war against the DPRK. So it is our self-defensive right and justifiable action to respond in a very hard way."

"We are all prepared for war, and we are all prepared for peace," he said. "If the United States forces those kinds of large-scale exercises in August, then the situation caused by that will be the responsibility of the United States."

Fanning, who was appointed to his post in May, was in Malaysia to observe an annual joint army drill. He had earlier visited Hawaii and Guam. He flew to Japan late Saturday and will then travel to South Korea. —AP



PYONGYANG: North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un watches a parade from a balcony at the Kim Il Sung Square on May 10, 2016. —AP

NORTH KOREA SENDS CLOSE AIDE OF KIM JONG UN TO RIO

SEOUL: Yesterday North Korea sent a high-level delegation led by a top aide to leader Kim Jong Un to Rio de Janeiro for the upcoming Olympics, state media said.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said the delegation, headed by Choe Ryong Hae, vice chairman of the country's State Affairs Commission, left Pyongyang, but did not provide details about what the senior officials plan to do in Rio de Janeiro or how long they will stay.

South Korea's Yonhap News Agency reported that Choe and the other North Korean delegates arrived in Beijing on Saturday morning, and that it wasn't clear whether they would meet with Chinese officials before heading to Brazil.

North Korea, which has been put under heavy international sanctions over its nuclear test and long-range rocket launch earlier this year, has previously used international sporting events as stages for attempting diplomatic breakthroughs.

Choe was part of a senior North Korean delegation that visited South Korea in October 2014, when the rivals held rare high-level talks during the Asian Games in Incheon to ease tensions. Once considered to be Kim's No. 2, Choe was believed to have been briefly banished to a rural collective farm last year for re-education before regaining his political footing during a rare congress of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party in May.

Choe regaining a seat on the powerful Presidium of the party's Central Committee was seen as one of the most significant promotions at the congress, and some experts believe Kim could use Choe as his diplomatic point man for improving relations with China, the North's most important strategic and economic partner.

North Korea has reportedly sent about 30 athletes to Rio de Janeiro to participate in Olympic events such as wrestling, judo, weightlifting and table tennis. —AP



JOHORE BAHRU, MALAYSIA: US Army Secretary Eric Fanning, fourth from right, takes a selfie with fellow personnel during an annual joint military exercise with the Malaysian army yesterday. —AP

Fanning, who was in Malaysia as part of a regional tour, said that the US has conducted military drills with South Korea for decades, and that "these exercises contribute to stability, they don't compete with stability."

"The games are currently to continue as

ened animosity between the rival Koreas sparked by land mine explosions that maimed two South Korean soldiers. The exercises escalated tensions and rhetoric, but concluded with no major incidents.

Despite plans to scale down the size of the

SWIMSUIT MURAL OF HILLARY CREATES A STIR IN AUSTRALIA

MELBOURNE: An Australian mural of US presidential nominee Hillary Clinton in a revealing, stars and stripes swimsuit may be taken down, after it has reportedly been deemed offensive. The creator of the painting, the street artist who goes by the name Lushsux and who has also painted murals of the likes of Donald Trump and Kim Kardashian, branded calls to remove it "pathetic."

The provocative mural is on the wall of a small business in the Melbourne suburb of Footscray, and reports say the business has been asked by the local Maribyrnong Council to remove it. "We believe it is offensive because of the depiction of a near-naked woman, not on the basis of disrespect to Hillary Clinton, in accordance with the Graffiti Prevention Act 2007," the council's chief executive Stephen Wall told

Fairfax Media on Friday. Wall said local police had been asked to urgently provide their opinion on the mural, adding that the council intended to issue a notice to the building's owner to remove it within 10 days. Lushsux accused the council of being out of control, telling Fairfax the mural was "on par offence-wise" with a deodorant ad.

Speaking on Melbourne radio, Lushsux said he suspected that his Instagram account, which he said had some 110,000 followers, was deleted due to him posting a photo of the raunchy Hillary image. "It's hard enough to be an artist... to lose your social media following in this day and age is a big loss," he told 3AW on Friday.

But the artist shows no sign of changing his style. Asked what he planned next, Lushsux told listeners: "I might paint a big mural of Trump in similar style." —AFP



MELBOURNE, VICTORIA: People take photos of a mural of Democrat US presidential nominee Hillary Clinton clad in a swimsuit, created by street artist Lushsux, in West Footscray yesterday. —AFP

PRO-INDEPENDENCE ACTIVIST BANNED FROM HK ELECTIONS

HONG KONG: A leading pro-independence politician is disqualified yesterday from standing in Hong Kong's upcoming legislative election, his party said. Andy Chan, who founded the Hong Kong National Party in March, was banned by the city's government from taking part in the September poll. But the party, which claims there is growing support for the semi-autonomous city to break away from mainland China, said it was "honored" to be the first to have a candidate disqualified. "The National Party on July 30 received an email from the government saying they have officially disqualified the party's convener Andy Chan," a statement said yesterday.

"Even if they stop the party from taking part in the election, they cannot stop the inevitable process of Hong Kong becoming independent." Chan was one of at least 13 pro-democracy candidates who refused to sign a form saying the city is an "inalienable" part of China.

Critics slammed the new stipulation as political censorship and an attempt to deter candidates from advocating self-determination or independence from Beijing, and campaigners have challenged the move in court.

Beijing and Hong Kong officials have repeatedly said that advocating independence goes against the city's mini constitution, known as the Basic Law, and that independence activists could face legal consequences.

"(The) independence of Hong Kong is inconsistent with the constitutional and legal status of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)," a Hong Kong government statement said yesterday. "If a person advocates or promotes the independence of the HKSAR, he cannot possibly uphold the Basic Law or fulfil his duties as a legisla-

tor," it said. Some young campaigners are calling for more distance or even a complete breakaway from the mainland as fears grow that freedoms in the semi-autonomous city are disappearing as Beijing's

clout grows. Some activists say they are not afraid to use violence to achieve their goal.

Hong Kong was returned from Britain to China in 1997 under an arrangement that guarantees civil

liberties unseen on the mainland. But concerns have grown that such freedoms are now fading as Beijing increases its influence across a range of areas, from politics to the media. —AFP

CHINA ASKS SUDAN TO PUNISH THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PEACEKEEPER DEATHS

SHANGHAI: China's foreign minister Wang Yi met his counterpart from South Sudan and asked him to quickly identify and punish those responsible for killing two Chinese soldiers in the capital of Juba, according to an article on the foreign ministry's website.

Two Chinese peacekeepers were killed and several others injured by a mortar shell earlier this month during fighting between followers of President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar, the former rebel leader who became vice president under a deal to end the civil war. During that time personnel of the United Nations Mission to South Sudan (UNMISS) also came under attack. The Sudanese minister Deng Alor Kuol expressed grief over the deaths and promised to quickly investigate and punish the culprits, according to the Chinese foreign ministry statement.

Wang told Deng Alor Kuol that peace is a prerequisite for development, and he hoped both sides in South Sudan can put the public interest first, and protect the safety of lives and property, including Chinese lives and property.

The peacekeepers' bodies were returned to China on Tuesday. To date, China has sent over 30,000 offi-

cers and soldiers to 24 UN peacekeeping missions, and 13 have lost their lives, according to state media.

China is the largest consumer of oil produced in the Sudan region, but its energy strategy - including major infrastructure investment - has been bedeviled by civil conflict. Beijing was originally a supporter of the northern Sudanese government and sold it weapons, but the country split in half and China had to reestablish relations with a skeptical new government in South Sudan.

Now the South Sudan government has destabilized, and China sent a special envoy to Africa earlier this month to help resolve the political crisis. China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) said it had evacuated the bulk of its workers from South Sudan but its operations were unaffected.

The United Nations Mission to South Sudan (UNMISS) has extended its mandate to operate in South Sudan until Aug. 12 after UN chief Ban Ki-moon said the country is on the "brink of an abyss," but the South Sudan government has cancelled issuing visas on arrival to UN personnel and diplomats and instituted a three-day waiting period, according to a Xinhua report. —Reuters

TALEBAN DELEGATION VISITS CHINA

PESHAWAR: A delegation from the Taliban visited China earlier this month to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, where the insurgent movement is fighting the Western-backed government in Kabul, sources in the Taliban said.

A delegation led by Abbas Stanakzai, head of the Taliban's political office in Qatar, visited Beijing on July 18-22 at the invitation of the Chinese government, a senior member of the Taliban said. "We have good terms with different countries of the world and China is one among them," said the Taliban official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "We informed Chinese offi-

cial about the occupation by invading forces and their atrocities on Afghan people," he said. "We wanted the Chinese leadership to help us raise these issues on world forums and help us get freedom from occupying forces."

The visit was confirmed by other senior Taliban figures who did not want to be named because they were not authorized to speak on behalf of the Qatar political office. The Chinese foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Along with Pakistan, the United States and Afghanistan itself, China is a member of the four-country group that tried to restart peace talks with the Taliban earlier this year. —Reuters

PHILIPPINE CRIME WAR PACKS DECAYING JAILS



Inmates sleep on the ground of an open basketball court inside the Quezon City jail at night in Manila on July 19, 2016. — AFP

MANILA: Mario Dimaculangan shares a toilet with 130 other inmates in one of the Philippines' most overcrowded jails, and conditions are getting worse as police wage an unprecedented war on crime. Security forces have killed hundreds of people and detained thousands more in just one month as they have followed the orders of President Rodrigo Duterte, who has said the top priority at the start of his six-year term is to eliminate drugs in society.

Those detained appear doomed for lengthy stints in an underfunded and overwhelmed penal system, like in the Quezon City Jail where Dimaculangan has wallowed for 14 years while his trial over murder and robbery charges have dragged on. "Many go crazy. They cannot think straight. It's so crowded. Just the slightest of movements and you bump into something or someone," Dimaculangan told AFP in one of the jail's packed hallways that reeked of sweat.

There are 3,800 inmates at the jail, which was built six decades ago to house 800, and they engage in a relentless contest for space. Men take turns to sleep on the cracked cement floor of an open-air basketball court, the steps of staircases, underneath beds and hammocks made out of old blankets. Even then, bodies are packed like sardines in a can, with inmates unable to fully stretch out. When it rains, the conditions are even worse as inmates cannot sleep on the basketball court, which is surrounded by the cells in decaying concrete buildings up to four storeys high.

The cash-strapped national government has a daily budget of just 50 pesos (\$1.10) for food and five pesos (11 cents) for medicine per inmate, although with the bulk buying of supplies, Quezon City Jail detainees have a sustainable diet of soup, vegetables and meat. Pales of water are used to flush the scarce toilets, with the stench compounded by the rotting garbage in a nearby canal.

Unthinkable Conditions

The jail's management does what it can to make life bearable, such as running dance competitions and other rehabilitation activities. Inmates also say there have been improvements in recent years, particularly with the food and more rehabilitation programs. But Raymond Narag, a criminal justice scholar at the Southern Illinois University in the United States, said such conditions were unthinkable in Western nations. "If this happened in America, there would be a riot every day. Courts would declare these jails unfit for human habitation," Narag told AFP.

The Philippine penal system is the third most congested in the world, according to the University of

London's Institute for Criminal Policy Research. Jails nationwide have nearly five times more inmates than they were built for, according to government data. And the situation is set to get much worse, very quickly. Under Duterte's crime war, police have reported arresting more than 4,300 people for drug-related crimes since he took office on June 30.

Duterte has repeatedly urged his law enforcers to do more, calling on them to triple their efforts to eradicate the drug menace that he says is threatening to turn the Philippines into a narco-state. The population of Quezon City Jail, which houses inmates in a northern district of the Philippine capital who are on trial but not yet convicted, has grown by 300 since Duterte won May elections.

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre told AFP government was preparing locations for new prisons while courts have been ordered to prioritize the expected deluge of drug cases. But Duterte has said little about far-reaching reforms needed to fix the systemic problem of overcrowding. "If there are no new jails, no budget increases, no additional courts and prosecutors, the system will explode. That will be a humanitarian crisis," said Narag, the scholar who speaks from harrowing personal experience.

Justice Delayed

Narag, 41, was locked up in Quezon City Jail in 1995 as a 20-year-old after being accused of killing a student from a rival college fraternity. It took seven years for a court to acquit him, which is about the average length of a trial in the Philippines and one of the main drivers of the overcrowding problem. Dimaculangan is the longest-serving inmate in Quezon City Jail, after being charged with killing a politician's relative in 2001. Dimaculangan is a pseudonym, because his real name cannot be used for legal reasons.

He insists he has a "clear conscience" but cannot get a chance to prove his innocence in court, averaging just one trial hearing a year in a chaotic judicial system notorious for its lack of judges, publicly funded lawyers and court rooms. Dimaculangan said his spirits used to rise when he was informed of a date for a court hearing, but he had been disappointed too many times with cancellations or postponements. "Now when they say I have a hearing, I don't care anymore," he said. With no hopes of freedom, Dimaculangan said he had turned to his Catholic faith and values. "My purpose is to help my fellow detainees," he said. "God did not send me here because I am a thief. There are many thieves out there but how come they are not in jail?" — AFP

CLINTON, TRUMP TAKE GLOVES OFF

Continued from Page 1

Just over 100 days before the election, Americans are being asked to choose between two sharply polarized visions - and between two monumentally unpopular candidates. "I can't think of an election that is more important, certainly in my lifetime," Clinton told supporters at the rally in Philadelphia. The 68-year-old Democrat portrays Trump as a threat to democracy, and is seeking to both woo moderate Republicans repelled by the former reality TV star and shore up a coalition with progressives on the left of her party.

"Donald Trump painted a picture, a negative, dark, divisive picture of a country in decline," she said. "I'm not telling you that everything is peachy keen - I'm telling you we've made progress, but we have work to do." She promises to focus on parts of the country that have been "left out and left behind" - constituencies where declining living standards, fears about safety and lost jobs have fueled support for Trump.

Trump, who has never previously held office, portrays himself as the law and order candidate - the outsider who will shake up an out-of-touch Washington, restore jobs, cut the deficit and end illegal immigration. "This country, if they choose her, this country will not be in good shape," Trump told ABC News on Friday. "She doesn't know how to win, she's not a winner," he said in an excerpt of the interview set to air Sunday.

In Colorado, Trump goaded Clinton on her failure to hold a news conference since December and accused her of lying to the FBI over its investigation of her email scandal as secretary of state. "We're going to stop the Syrian migrants from coming into the United States," he said referring to the killing of a French priest, whose attackers

proclaimed allegiance to the Islamic State extremist group. Trump's campaign released a new ad Friday claiming that in Clinton's America "things get worse" with taxes going up, terrorism spreading and voters losing jobs, homes and hope. "Change that makes America great again," the video promised.

Clinton needs to win over some of the disgruntled working class voters that form the backbone of Trump's base. She has blasted Trump for making so many of his products overseas, and for alienating women, Hispanics and Muslims. Clinton - accompanied by her husband Bill, and her running mate Virginia Senator Tim Kaine and his wife Anne Holton - is on a campaign tour of so-called Rust Belt states, vital parts of almost any strategy to garner the 270 electoral college votes needed to win the presidency.

The candidate and her team were moving in Pennsylvania in a convoy of more than two dozen vehicles, including two large buses with the campaign slogan "Stronger Together" emblazoned on the side in giant letters. Clinton stopped at a toy factory in the town of Hatfield, underlining the priority that she would give to manufacturing jobs. Then the convoy proceeded to an afternoon outdoor rally in the town of Harrisburg.

Experts predict that "negative partisanship" - voting against a candidate - will play a major role in deciding who makes it to the White House. Clinton's unpopularity is second only to Trump's, with a disapproval rating of 55 percent compared to his 57 percent, according to recent averages. Ratings from Nielsen showed that 2.2 million more people had tuned into watch Trump's acceptance speech last week than Clinton's on Thursday. When it comes to voter intentions, Trump and Clinton are in a statistical dead heat, according to the most recent poll average from RealClearPolitics. — AFP

UN ENVOY OFFERS YEMEN FOES WORKSHEET...

Continued from Page 1

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to acquaint him with developments of the Yemeni peace talks, and to discuss the proposal to extend negotiations. On July 20, Kuwait set a 15-day deadline for Yemeni parties to reach a peace agreement during the current UN-brokered negotiations. Indirect negotiations held in Kuwait since April have failed to make headway. Most of the discussions focused on the type of the government to run Yemen during a transition period.

On Thursday, the Houthi rebels and the General People's Congress of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh jointly announced setting a 10-member "supreme political council", a step described by the United Nations envoy to

Yemen as jeopardizing peace talks in Kuwait. The job of the council will be to "manage state affairs politically, militarily, economically, administratively, socially and in security", a statement said.

International ambassadors stationed in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, said they were concerned by the new alliance, calling it in a statement "not consistent with commitments and good faith in pursuing a peaceful resolution under the auspices of the UN." The UN had urged all parties to engage positively and effectively in the Kuwait talks in order to reach a sustainable solution quickly. The six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council and the ambassadors of the 18 nations backing peace in Yemen have also called for the resumption of peace talks in separate statements. They also condemned the formation of the council. — Agencies

16 KILLED IN TEXAS BALLOON INFERNO

Continued from Page 1

The FAA said the crash took place at about 7:40 am (1240 GMT) and that the National Transportation Safety Board had been notified. Texas Governor Greg Abbott offered his condolences to those killed in the crash. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families, as well as the Lockhart community," he said in a

statement. Lockhart is a town of about 13,000 people near state parks and home to a variety of barbecue restaurants considered to be among the best in the state.

The crash in Egypt occurred after a midair gas explosion. A year before that incident, a hot air balloon burst into flames and crashed in New Zealand, killing all 11 people on board, in the country's worst air incident in more than three decades. — Reuters

MPS SLAM MOVE TO CUT SALARIES OF DIPLOMATS

Continued from Page 1

Deputy Speaker Mubarak Al-Khrajaj appealed to HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah to reconsider and cancel the decision to set an exchange rate for the salaries of diplomats abroad. He said Kuwait diplomats are known for being highly competent and are building relations with countries worldwide, as well as defending the interests of Kuwait and its people.

MP Askar Al-Enezi demanded that the finance ministry decision to reduce financial allocations for workers in the diplomatic corps should be cancelled, adding that it is a wrong decision because of its negative effects on those in diplomatic jobs. He said the justifications given to reduce financial allocations for diplomatic jobs are not convincing, especially since fixing the

exchange rate of currencies against the Kuwaiti dinar does not suit their job and their big role in defending the country's interests.

MP Dr Mansour Al-Thafiri asked the prime minister and foreign minister to intervene immediately to reconsider the decision and called for issuing a decision that restores matters as they stand. He said diplomats carry out very important missions, and the current situation requires more support due to the turmoil the region is going through.

MP Abdullah Al-Turajji also called on the premier and foreign minister to intervene immediately to reconsider the "unstudied" decision, adding that he did not receive any satisfactory or convincing answer about this decision. He urged the foreign minister to cancel the "unfair" decision which will reflect negatively on work in the diplomatic corps as a whole.

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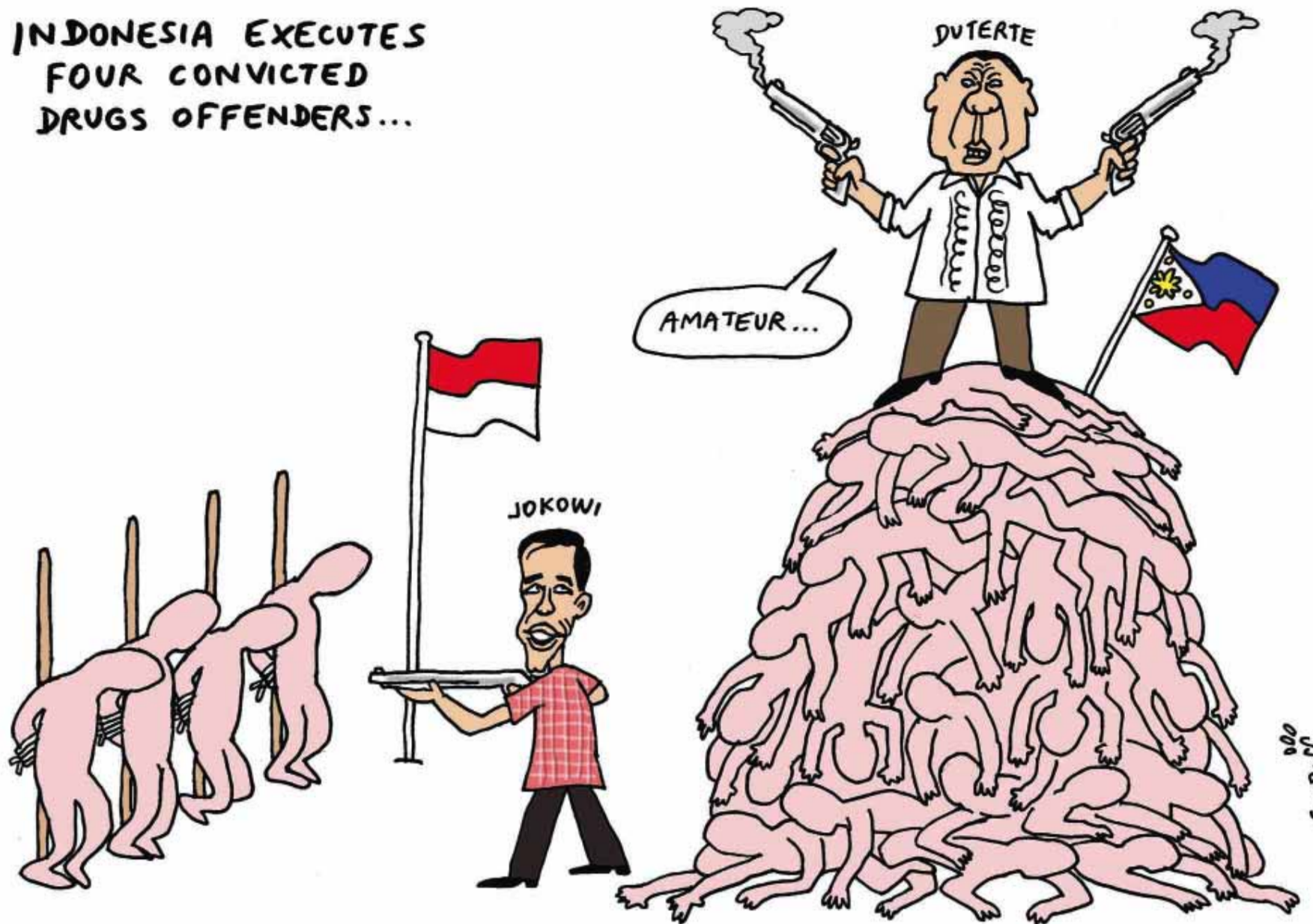
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INDONESIA EXECUTES FOUR CONVICTED DRUGS OFFENDERS...



MEXICO SHELTER FOR REPORTERS FACING THREATS

By Carola Sole

When photojournalist Ruben Espinosa felt harassed by the authorities in eastern Mexico, he fled to the capital. Without protection, he was shot dead in a case still unsolved a year later. Now, a group of journalists is about to open a secret shelter in Mexico City to protect colleagues like Espinosa in one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a reporter. "It's a house where we want them to have food, with all the basic services, where they are safe and they have psychological help," Judith Calderon, president of the House of Rights of Journalists, told AFP.

Journalists who face threats can request government protection in Mexico, but the hideout will give another option for those who don't trust the authorities, who sometimes are the tormentors. The organization refused to reveal the shelter's location for security reasons, but said that it will be able to house a dozen people when it opens in the coming weeks. The group already has a waiting list. "Colleagues feel safe because, for the first time, there's a house to protect journalists" without having to ask for help from the government, Calderon said.

Panic Button

The House of Rights of Journalists was founded in 2010 by Mexican news media veterans to protect and advise their peers who are in mortal danger. More than 90 journalists have been murdered and another 17 have disappeared in Mexico since 2000, according to Reporters Without Borders. In the eastern state of Veracruz alone, 19 media workers have been killed in the past six years. Espinosa, 31, had fled Veracruz due to threats. Public officials and drug cartels have been accused of intimidating journalists, or worse.

Pedro Tamayo, a 45-year-old crime reporter, was the latest victim of violence in Veracruz. Tamayo was shot dead on July 20 outside his house in front of his wife and two grown sons, despite being under special protective measures given by the state of Veracruz. The measures included taking him to another state for several months, and daily police patrols at his house after he returned to Veracruz.

But Tamayo's family said that state police were present during the murder and did nothing to catch the killers. The federal government launched a program to protect journalists in 2012. Veracruz created its own the same year. Since then, officials say, 181 reporters have received assistance. The aid measures range from a panic button to bodyguards and home surveillance cameras. They can also be hidden in other states. "What will guarantee their protection is physical security along with the reduction of impunity," said Leopoldo Maldonado, coordinator of Journalist protection at the press rights group Article 19. "Impunity persists and that is a clear message that a worse aggression can take place at any time," Maldonado said.

With unsolved crimes and killers roaming free, the Committee to Protect Journalists ranks Mexico in eighth place in its Global Impunity Index, just under Afghanistan and worse than Pakistan or Russia.

Murdered in Safe Haven

Mexico City is considered safer than other parts of the country, which is why Espinosa's unresolved murder on July 31, 2015, came as a shock. Espinosa was shot dead along with four women in an apartment. The motive for his killing remains a mystery. "Ruben's murder was a shock. Although journalists have been attacked by police in protests in Mexico City, most of the murders have taken place in the (other) states," Calderon said.

While Calderon's organization completes the security measures for the shelter, Espinosa's case highlights the weak spots in the informal network that journalists have set up to help colleagues in danger. Espinosa refused to sign up with the government protection program, and left Veracruz with the help of other colleagues. Nevertheless the shelter's administrator, the journalist and activist Sara Lovera, is convinced that her project will work. "We no longer want goodwill or help from alleged saviors," Lovera said. — AFP

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Washington Watch

THE TWO CONVENTIONS

By Dr James J Zogby

After back-to-back Republican and Democratic conventions, the stage is set for a 100-day mad dash to the November presidential contest. There were telling differences between the two events. To begin with, the conventions revealed the state of play within each party. Both Republicans and Democrats confronted insurgencies with dramatically different outcomes. On the Republican side, one of the insurgent candidates, Donald Trump, vanquished the establishment leaving the party in some disarray.

Many national GOP leaders boycotted the convention and refused to endorse Trump. Those who endorsed the victor did so either because they felt they had no choice or because they retained a vague hope that should he win, their congressional leaders would be able to limit the damage that might occur in an unrestrained Trump presidency. Adding to the fractiousness of the GOP's situation, significant components of another insurgent group, prominent leaders of the religious right, also refused to endorse the nominee creating negative press with a walkout on the first day followed by a prime time rejection by Ted Cruz on day three.

The Democrats fared somewhat better since their establishment candidate, Hillary Clinton, won. Because Clinton embraced a good number of her opponent's progressive proposals, Bernie Sanders' supporters felt comfortable enough to give her a full-throated endorsement on the convention's opening night. This display of unity appeared to be enough to mollify many of Sanders' supporters, though a number of movement activists who had embraced the Sanders' cause left the convention unsatisfied. Nevertheless, the Democrats concluded their four-day meeting with the appearance of greater unity than had been found at the GOP gathering.

There was another key difference between the two parties' quadrennial events. Modern conventions have been largely stripped of their political functions, reducing them to over-produced infomercials. While Trump had promised a "blockbuster", the Republican convention was a lack-luster affair bringing together a strange collection of minor "celebrities" and drew headlines for a series of unforced errors.

On the first day, there was a contentious rules fight

leading to a mass walk-out. This opening sour note was later eclipsed by revelations that the initially well-reviewed speech by Trump's wife had been, in part, plagiarized from a speech given by Michelle Obama, eight years earlier. On the next night, Trump inexplicably decided to call into one of the networks to complain about an unrelated issue in the midst of an emotional speech by the mother of a victim of the embassy attack in Benghazi. Then, of course, there was the payback speech by Ted Cruz. With most GOP luminaries not in attendance, the key Trump endorsement speeches were given by his children.

Flawless

In contrast, the Democrats' event was well produced and, despite moments of tension and controversy, was a nearly flawless affair. Clinton was able to receive validation and support from President Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, Vice-President Biden, her main opponent Senator Sanders, leading progressive Senator Elizabeth Warren, and most of the Democratic party's Senators and Members of Congress. In addition, there was a host of major celebrities who performed at or addressed the event.

The Democrats were also able to dodge a few potentially disruptive bullets caused by concerns among Sanders' supporters that the establishment had unfairly tipped the scales of the election in favor of Clinton. The Clinton team did this by agreeing with Sanders to form a commission to write new rules for party operations and for the next election and by forcing the party's controversial chair to resign in advance of the convention.

The Sanders and Clinton campaigns did compromise on the party platform with Clinton accepting more progressive positions that had been put forward by Sanders. Nevertheless some movement activists who had embraced the Sanders' campaign remained unsettled by concerns like: the absence of strong and clear opposition to unfair trade agreements; a commitment to no more war and universal health care for all; and a firmer position in defense of Palestinian rights. This resulted in a few demonstrations inside the convention and larger protests outside the hall. But while these efforts served as reminders of work that remains to be done, none ultimately disrupted the thematic orchestration of the Clinton convention.

Themes

A final major differences between the two conventions were in the themes they conveyed. Trump's insurgency has been predicated on the personality of Trump, hatred of all things Clinton, and the frustration, fear, and anger of those who have felt they are losing ground in today's economy and changing world. They resent the "other" - Mexicans, Muslims, and groups whom they feel benefit from affirmative action programs. They fear crime, terrorism, loss of American power and prestige, and changes in the world and society that have feeling left out and adrift. Sensing this, Trump and his convention preyed on this anger and fear - focusing it on the person of Hillary Clinton.

The convention was an angry affair with former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani ranting about crime and Clinton, and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie leading a shocking anti-Clinton floor chant of "lock her up". For his part, Trump's acceptance speech was well-crafted and well-delivered. But it was an anger-filled dark litany of the nation's ills. It was a far-reaching indictment of all that is wrong with America with his solution being to elect him with the vague assurance that he alone knows how to get it right. Clinton, on the other hand, developed a more positive message. She acknowledged that problems exist, to be sure, but she proposed specific fixes that involved bipartisan compromise, and communities working together with government to create and expand opportunities and improve the quality of life for all. It was an upbeat message conveyed not only by Clinton but by a stream of speakers - citizens from every walk of life who told of their struggles and how action had been taken to address their needs.

As political and policy events, the Democrats' convention had the clear advantage. Both parties spent considerable time in attacking the others' nominee. But Democrats were better at telling their story, presenting their candidate and their programs, and creating optimism that they had made progress in the last 8 years and would continue to make positive change in the years to come.

If anything, the two conventions established was that just as the primary season has been raucous and contentious, the general election promises more of the same. It will be an election like no other.

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

TURKEY CRACKDOWN RIPPLES FAR AND WIDE

By Abdi Sheikh

Barely 12 hours after a failed coup in Turkey, Somalia's cabinet met in Mogadishu to consider a request from Ankara to shut down two schools and a hospital linked to Fethullah Gulen, the Muslim cleric Turkey blames for the attempted putsch. Such is Turkey's sway in the Horn of Africa nation, where it has spearheaded international reconstruction efforts after decades of war and instability, it was not a difficult decision. Teachers and pupils - almost all of them Somali - at the two huge boarding schools run by Gulen's Nile Academy educational foundation were given seven days to pack their bags and, if they were foreign, leave the country.

"Considering the request of our brother country Turkey, the cabinet ministers have agreed upon the following points - to stop the services provided by Nile Academy including schools, hospitals, etc," a July 16 government statement said. A week later the order had been carried out to the letter. Turkey's ties with Somalia are well established. President Tayyip Erdogan became the first non-African leader to visit Somalia in nearly 20 years when he travelled there in 2011 as Turkey's prime minister. Turkey was a major contributor to the humanitarian aid effort during the 2011 famine and Ankara continues to build hospitals and dispatch aid across Somalia.

The closures in Somalia are part of a far wider effort to erode Gulen's influence. Erdogan has vowed to "cleanse" Turkey of what he describes as the Gulenist cancer, going not only after the cleric's followers at home but also his

network of schools and other interests around the world. Gulen's schools have been a key source of influence and revenue for his "Hizmet" movement. It runs some 2,000 educational establishments in around 160 countries, from Afghanistan to the United States. The schools are generally well equipped, teach a secular curriculum in English, and are popular, especially in poorer countries, with the political and business elite.

Like the two Somali schools, the Deva hospital, a rare private clinic in battle-scarred Mogadishu popular with a tiny Somali elite, is no longer working. "The Turkish workers left Somalia," police major Mohamed Nur told Reuters. "These institutions are now under the custody of police. No teaching and no medical services are going on now. Nurses just visit us every day to monitor and just go back."

Somalia is not alone in feeling Erdogan's international backlash against Gulen, who has denied any role in the attempted coup from his home in the United States. Besides a purge of the army, police and judiciary to rid it of "Gulenist" elements at home, Turkey has also applied pressure to countries including Germany, Indonesia, Nigeria and Kenya that are home to Gulen-backed institutions. Azerbaijan, which like Somalia enjoys close ties with Ankara, closed an independent television station on Friday that planned to air an interview with Gulen.

Reluctance

But other countries appear less keen to follow their lead. In Kenya, where Gulen's Omeriye Foundation has grown from its first school in 1998 in the vast Nairobi slum

of Kibera to a nationwide network of academies, the government has resisted pressure to close them down. "Turkish officials have requested Kenya to shut down the Gulenist schools on a number of occasions before the attempted coup but the Kenyan government has not acted on them," a foreign ministry source told Reuters. Since July 15, the Turkish ambassador had requested another meeting, the source said, but it has yet to happen. "It has not been scheduled," the source said.

Authorities in Germany, which has an estimated 14 high schools with links to Gulen, have also been contacted. Winfried Kretschmann, premier of the southwestern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, said he had received a letter from the Turkish Consul General asking him to examine a list of institutions such as private schools. He said he had forwarded the letter to Germany's federal government. "I think it is not on at all for a foreign state to interfere in our internal affairs," Kretschmann told broadcaster ARD. "We are responsible for these institutions and no one else. We will judge these institutions with our own discretion and we are aware of nothing negative about these institutions."

Indonesia, another country where Gulen's foundations have put down roots, was equally unimpressed. "Indonesia is a democratic country and will always prioritize free and active politics. Indonesia's internal affairs remain Indonesia's responsibility," cabinet secretary Pramono Anung told reporters. "That includes anyone who has officially received the recognition of the Indonesian government. They will be governed by Indonesian law." — Reuters

ATLETICO SIGN FORWARD GAMEIRO FROM SEVILLA

MADRID: Atletico Madrid will sign French forward Kevin Gameiro from fellow La Liga side Sevilla, the Champions League runners-up announced yesterday. Atletico have brought in Gameiro on a four-year deal, and he will join up with compatriot Antoine Griezmann in attack. Gameiro will arrive in Madrid on Saturday afternoon to undergo a medical. The 29-year-old joined Sevilla from Paris Saint-Germain in 2013 and was part of the side that won three consecutive Europa League titles. Gameiro enjoyed the most prolific season of his career last term, scoring 29 goals in all competitions, including 10 in Europe, but missed out on selection for Dider Deschamps' France Euro 2016 squad. Atletico coach Diego Simeone had been looking to strengthen his forward line, as Griezmann and Fernando Torres have been sharing the bulk of the striking duties. Argentinian Simeone had also added former Benfica winger Nicolas Gaitan and Croatian defender Sime Vrsaljko to his squad this summer. Atletico also announced Saturday that striker Luciano Vietto, who only joined the club last year, would leave and go to Sevilla "for the next season." Atletico will be hoping to push on in the coming season, after narrowly missing out on both the Champions League and La Liga titles last campaign. —AFP



REED MOVES INTO CONTENTION AT PGA

SPRINGFIELD: The question stumped Patrick Reed and he asked for it to be repeated. Or maybe he was simply stunned that after shooting a second-round 65 to move into contention Friday at the PGA Championship, someone was asking him about his cockiness.

Reed's self-assurance is well known throughout golf. Why it would be a topic following several enthusiastic answers about his upcoming Olympic participation, and some insightful thoughts on how Baltusrol played in the second round, was somewhat difficult to fathom.

But Reed scrambled - something not required much in his seven-birdie performance that placed him at 5-under 135. Asked about believing in himself as a "top-three player," Reed seemed somewhat amused.

"I appreciate you saying top three, because I said top five," he said. "And I appreciate you calling me cocky, as well. I don't really know how to take that one. You have to believe in yourself. If there was not a mic around and you went out and asked every single guy, and if they knew you weren't media and ... asked every single guy where do you want to be, they are going to say No. 1 in the world. And if they don't, then those guys also aren't winning every week or even having a chance to win golf tournaments because they are not believing in themselves.

"But really at the end of the day, when it comes down to it, yeah, I believe in myself. I play golf. I am who I am. ... I'm not writing the articles. It comes down to how you all portray me, not how I portray myself, because I didn't write the article. There's been some I fixed and some that are true and I like the articles.

IMPRESSIVE

"But at the end of the day, all I can do is play golf and be who I am, and hopefully I'll write the good ones." Reed has written an impressive story since becoming a PGA Tour regular in 2013. He's won four times, including becoming the youngest player to take a World Golf Championship by winning at Doral in 2014. He also won the 2015 Tournament of Champions in Hawaii. His 3-0-1 showing at the 2014 Ryder Cup was the

strongest and most forceful of any American. Yet because he hasn't won this year - he has two runner-up finishes and ranks 14th in the world - his confident attitude gets questioned.

Reed also was asked why he hadn't elevated his game to match "guys your age?" "I'm playing great, I have a lot of top-10s," he responded emphatically. "I've just had my best finish at a major so far (tied for 12th at the British Open) and I've only been on the tour for three years.

Everyone acts like I've been on tour for 15, 20 years. I'm only 25." Reed always brightens when asked about representing his country. He actively sought a spot on the US team for Rio, something he got when Dustin Johnson pulled out. Reed was in the middle of a round at the Scottish Open, where he finished tied for 10th, when Johnson withdrew.

After discussing the options with his "team," Reed and his wife, Justine, basically said, "Let's go."

"I can't wait," he said. "It's one of those things that just talking about it kind of gives me goosebumps, because going over there, wearing the stars and stripes, playing again, it's going to be great."

His 65 Friday was the best morning round and matched Jimmy Walker's opening score. Reed shot it after an overnight change of driver. In his first round, Reed was happy with his iron play and his putting. "But I couldn't keep a driver on the planet," he said. "So I switched to my old driver and went and hit the driver better. The difference between a top-10 and a win out on tour is if you hit fairways, you'll hit greens, and those 50-50 putts, you're always on the right side of them."

One putt that definitely wasn't a 50-50 proposition came on the ninth, Reed's final hole. He hit a 6-iron to the par-3, but couldn't tell how close it was to the hole. "So I just thought it might have been on the green because not a single person clapped," he said with a chuckle. "So I walk up there and I realize it's a foot (from the pin). I was just like, OK, I guess the rest of the field has been hitting it inside a foot all day. Didn't get a single clap, and it's in there tight." — AP



SPRINGFIELD: Patrick Reed waves to the crowd after making a putt on the 18th hole during the second round of the PGA Championship golf tournament at Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield, N.J., Friday. — AP

YOUNG GRILLO EMBRACES HIS MAJOR CHALLENGE AT PGA

SPRINGFIELD: Argentinian Emiliano Grillo says he will embrace the opportunity as he enters the third round of the PGA Championship just two strokes off the lead.

"I want to be here. I wanted this my whole life. I want to win a major," Grillo told reporters on Friday after shooting three-under-par 67 at Baltusrol to tie for third with world number one and defending champion Jason Day. "We want to see our names on the board. We want to win. We want to hold the trophy. That is what we're here for. I am going to feel the nerves tomorrow, that's for sure.

Makes sense. But I'm going to enjoy it." Grillo, 23, will be paired with Australian Day in the group ahead of American co-leaders Jimmy Walker and Robert Streb. "I think I played very nice today, especially off the

tee. Made some good putts on the front nine and I was able to hang on on the back nine," said Grillo, who made four birdies including a 40-footer before the turn, and then dropped one shot coming home.

Grillo said he takes confidence from his tie for 12th at the British Open and his season-opening victory in the Frys.com Open.

"A win is a win and it's hard to learn to win. Some people have it, some people don't," the PGA Tour rookie said. "I think I've learned. First I have to be in the situation and that's what I was on these first two days. I have just have to manage to be in contention the last nine (holes). My game is right there. Going to be an interesting weekend. I've never been in this situation, and I'm not afraid of it. I'm going to go out and enjoy it." — Reuters

RUSSIAN RIO TEAM STANDS AT 266 COMPETITORS

MOSCOW: Russia's sports minister said yesterday that the national team to compete in the Rio Olympics starting next week so far has 266 competitors, although decisions were still pending on several athletes. "As of this morning I can say that we will represent 29 disciplines out of 34, with 266 people," minister Vitaly Mutko said in an interview with sports channel Match-TV. Besides 67 track and field athletes banned by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) over revelations of a state-run doping scheme, dozens more have been told not to compete in Brazil, including swimmers, rowers, and wrestlers. Mutko said that Russia is still expecting to hear final judgement on its swimming team yesterday. "In swimming, we announced a team of 35 people, now 26 have passed the selection process," he said, adding that he expected a final decision "today". The US Anti-Doping Agency said Friday that Olympic medalist Nikita Lobintsev has tested positive for meldonium, the substance banned in the beginning of 2016. He is one of seven swimmers who have been banned from Rio. —AFP

ROSBERG FASTEST IN PRACTICE

HOCKENHEIM: Nico Rosberg completed a clean sweep of practice for his home German Formula One Grand Prix by topping the timesheets ahead of Mercedes team mate Lewis Hamilton in yesterday's final session. Hamilton, who set a time just 0.057 seconds slower than Rosberg's best of one minute 15.783, was summoned to see the stewards for being released from his garage in an unsafe manner. Daniel Ricciardo went third for Red Bull with a late flier that put him less than a tenth behind the Mercedes pair, indicating that the German team may have more of a fight on their hands in Saturday's qualifying than the opening day of practice had suggested. Kimi Raikkonen was fourth for Ferrari ahead of team mate Sebastian Vettel who is making his first appearance at home in the Maranello-based squad's scarlet colours. Max Verstappen was sixth in the second Red Bull ahead of the Williams pair of Valtteri Bottas and Felipe Massa. Spaniard Fernando Alonso, who celebrated his 35th birthday on Friday, was ninth in his McLaren while Force India's Nico Hulkenberg rounded out the top 10. Alonso's team mate Jenson Button got back behind the wheel of his McLaren after making a precautionary visit to hospital on Friday to remove carbon dust lodged in his eye. —Reuters



BALTUSROL: Robert Streb watches his tee shot on the eighth hole during the second round of the PGA Championship golf tournament at Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield, N.J., Friday. — AP

STREB FIRES 63 TO SHARE PGA LEAD AS DAY CHARGES

SPRINGFIELD: Unheralded Robert Streb matched the record-low round in major golf history Friday with an astonishing seven-under par 63 to seize a share of the lead after the second round of the PGA Championship.

Top-ranked defending champion Jason Day's amazing run of seven birdies in eight holes to grab a share of third was overshadowed by a 29-year-old American on a rain-soaked Baltusrol layout soggy enough to surrender low scores in a wild afternoon of shot making. Back-nine starter Streb made a lone bogey and eight birdies, the last of them on a curling 21-foot putt at the par-three ninth to make history and match compatriot Jimmy Walker for the 36-hole lead at nine-under 131.

"I was pretty excited about it," Streb said. "I was waiting on it to break, waiting on it to break and it finally turned there at the end. It was a great round. Happy to be part of that 63 club."

Streb's 63 was the 30th shot at a major but he was the 28th player to achieve the feat, Fiji's Vijay Singh and Australian Greg Norman having done it twice. British Open champion Henrik Stenson and runner-up Phil Mickelson each did it two weeks ago at Royal Troon.

Baltusrol has surrendered the most 63s of any major course with four, including two of only four in US Open history, the 63s of Jack Nicklaus and Tom Weiskopf in the first round in 1980, and another by Thomas Bjorn at the 2005 PGA Championship.

Streb, whose lone US PGA victory came in the 2014 McGladrey Classic, has gone 27 US PGA events without a top-10 showing since placing 10th at the 2015 PGA Championship, although he was fourth at this year's European Tour Nedbank Challenge in South Africa.

Streb missed the cut in all three prior majors this year but played the round of his life to put himself in contention for a major title.

"The ball-striking and putting has been a little difficult this year," he said. "Just been trying to hang on by a thread. Obviously it's coming together this week, which is nice."

Australia's Day fired a 65 to stand two strokes adrift on 133 along with Argentine rookie Emiliano Grillo, who shot 67.

Day, who battled illness and fatigue in round one, became annoyed at a double-bogey on the seventh hole and responded with short birdie putts at eight and nine, 18-foot birdie putts at 10 and 13 around a 10-footer at the par-3 12th.

Then came a stunning 37-footer at 14 and a five-footer on 15 for good measure, although he failed to take advantage of the par-5 17th and 18th or he might have shot 63, or better.

"That double bogey kicked me in the bum a little bit," Day said. "A little disappointed I didn't birdie either of the par-5s. But I'm saving them for the weekend."

SHOWERS SOFTEN UP BALTUSROL

Morning showers dumped an inch of rain on the 7,428-yard layout and halted play for 41 minutes as groundskeepers cleared puddles from greens and standing water from fairways. Balls held on saturated greens and made up for the lack of fairway roll.

"It was much softer," Walker said. "If you were in the fairway you could do anything you wanted with the golf ball."

Sweden's Stenson was alone in fifth after his second consecutive 67 with two-time major win-

ner Martin Kaymer of Germany sharing sixth on 135 with Americans Patrick Reed and Brooks Koepka. Japan's Hideki Matsuyama eagled the second hole on his way to a 67 to share ninth with Welshman Jamie Donaldson and Americans Rickie Fowler and Harris English.

Fourth-ranked Rory McIlroy fired a 69 but could not overcome a bogey-less first-round 74 and the four-time major champion missed the cut on 142 by a stroke. US left-hander Mickelson, who opened with a triple bogey after a tee shot that went over a fence and onto a street, birdied the last to make the cut on the number.

Second-ranked Dustin Johnson, who won the US Open last month, fired a 72 to finish on 149. Only 10 players had worse 36-hole totals.

PGA BLUNDER HURTS IKEDA

The PGA of America apologized after a rules blunder that impacted the first back-nine starters, including Japan's Yuta Ikeda, who shot 67 to stand on 137.

The location guide sheet given Ikeda's group showed a hole cut on the left side of the green when it had actually been put on the right side, a blunder not caught until the group had played approaches at the 10th, which Ikeda bogeyed.

Also on 137 was Jordan Spieth, whose shot from a gravel path at the seventh hole aroused ire for television viewers over possible rules violation, although a PGA of America statement said there was no violation. — AFP

MICKELSON MAKES CUT DESPITE HORROR START, MCILROY MISSES IT

SPRINGFIELD: Phil Mickelson made a "horrific" start to the second round of the PGA Championship on Friday but recovered to make the cut with nothing to spare, while Rory McIlroy's bogey at the last saw him miss out by one stroke.

Mickelson sliced his tee shot out-of-bounds at the par-four first, his ball landing on the adjacent Shunpike Road and bouncing onto another street.

"Just a total mental block on that first hole. It was just horrific," said Mickelson, who teed up again and in the end was fortunate to salvage a triple-bogey seven after almost hitting his approach shot out-of-bounds too.

"I think in the history of the PGA Championship, that's the worst start of any player's round. I'd have to look that up," Mickelson looked stunned as he trudged to the second tee but settled down and had only one further blemish, a bogey at the 16th, before closing with a birdie at the par-five 18th to make the cut with nothing to spare.

"I was able to fight back and be patient, start to make a birdie here or there," the British Open runner-up said after shooting a 70 for one-over 141, 10 strokes behind leaders

Jimmy Walker and Robert Streb.

"I actually hit a lot of good shots and missed on a lot good opportunities in the middle of the round." McIlroy, who played with Mickelson, messed up the final hole to miss the cut for the first time in eight starts at the PGA Championship.

"I've hit the ball really well this week and I'm walking away not playing the weekend. It's really disheartening," said the world number four. McIlroy, who continues to struggle on the greens, also missed the cut at the U.S. Open and tied for 10th at the Masters and for fifth at the British Open. The Northern Irishman's last major win came at the 2014 PGA Championship in Kentucky.

"I just need to figure out what to do on the greens. I need to have a long hard think about that. I think if you had to give anyone else in this field my tee shots this week, they would have been up near the top of the leaderboard. It just shows you how bad I was around the greens," Mickelson agreed. "You watch him with a driver and it's the sweetest thing you can imagine," he said. "He's just so tentative through impact (with his putter). He's just not confident. You can just tell." — Reuters



SPRINGFIELD: Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland looks on from the first tee during the second round of the 2016 PGA Championship at Baltusrol Golf Club on Friday in Springfield, New Jersey. — AFP

F1 RULERS LEAVE GLOBAL AUDIENCE CONFUSED AND FED UP

HOCKENHEIM: Formula One's rule-makers took another U-turn yesterday when they agreed a compromise on track limits at the first corner of the Hockenheim circuit.

In the process, they left a global audience of fans, many seasoned paddock observers, team staff and drivers confused and puzzled. It was just one more in a series of rule changes made almost daily in the last week in a season of upheaval that began with uproar over a controversial new qualifying format introduced at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix. Last weekend's Hungarian Grand Prix saw a stewards investigation into the meaning of waved double yellow flags which will, this week-

end at the German Grand Prix, automatically engage a red flag and stop the action. Radio communications, which had been severely restricted and resulted in penalties for leading drivers, were relaxed this week following a meeting of the F1 Strategy Group.

And on Saturday morning, in another twist, the saga of track limits was the focus of renewed attention when race director Charlie Whiting sent a note to the teams advising of a compromise arrangement that over-ruled new rule changes introduced only 24 hours earlier. On Thursday, the Strategy Group had voted to abolish track limits for the German Grand Prix to permit a more spectacular race with cars running wide

around corners to gain speed.

Whiting, however, ruled that idea out. He said it would create chaos and decided instead to enforce limits at Turn One with an electronic sensor and penalties for those who contravened the limit three times. Teams and drivers protested at this and raised objections with the sport's supremo Bernie Ecclestone while there were also several heated discussions on this, and other issues, during a drivers' meeting late on Friday. "We discussed this at the Strategy Group meeting, so that we could have a 'wild' weekend here because this track has adequate run-off areas," said Ferrari team principal Maurizio Arrivabene.

"But instead, they recorded everyone

who went over the white lines as if nothing was agreed. So we went to see Bernie." The outcome was Whiting's note on Saturday which said the electronic sensor at Turn One would be moved further away from the track, permitting drivers to full the use of the kerbs.

Though the latest change was welcomed, it came too late to prevent many drivers bemoaning their situation and television commentators sympathising with fans increasingly fed up with the over-regulated sport. Two-time world champion Fernando Alonso said he felt a sense of utter despair at the constant rule changes.

Asked to comment, on his 35th birthday on Friday, Alonso said: "I don't care... I

give up. They can tell us what they need to in every race. "We know things change from race to race and now we are back to the rules we had about a year ago, more or less."

"I think it was at Spa, last year, that they got tough in terms of the radio and so on... Now, nothing has changed - or it is worse, we are going back. "It is the same with the track limits. There were track limits last week, then this morning there weren't any, but then there were three strikes again - and now..."

His feelings were widely shared. "When I go out during qualifying, I think I will ask what I have to do and what are the rules so I don't have to waste any more time thinking about it now." —AFP

VARGAS EAGER TO PROMOTE FIGHT WITH PACQUIAO

LOS ANGELES: There are no shortage of suitors for Manny Pacquiao, but Mexican-American boxer Jessie Vargas thinks he has the inside track when it comes to enticing the Filipino superstar back into the ring. "I am the WBO welterweight champion and he wants to return to fight for this belt. So I am happy to give him a title shot," Vargas told AFP during the Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame function on Friday.

Vargas (27-1-0) said Friday he is in talks with Pacquiao's camp to hold a fight on November 5 at the Thomas & Mack Center arena in Las Vegas. "The fight is still under negotiation and I can say that soon we will announce it, although I do not want to advance because in boxing everything can change every minute," Vargas said.

Undefeated Terence Crawford has also been named as potential opponent for Pacquiao, who is likely to return to the ring later this year according to his pro-

moter Bob Arum. Arum tweeted Friday night that he is also talking to a group that wants to stage Pacquiao's next fight in the Middle East. "Meeting on Sunday with people anxious to put on a @MannyPacquiaoTR fight in the Middle East," Arum wrote. Vargas won the vacant WBO welterweight title with a ninth round TKO of Sadam Ali in March. "Manny has never faced someone like me. I'm at my best, I have several advantages. I'm taller and faster than him. I'm really smart fighter too," Vargas said.

"I not only want to face him but I want to beat him. Juan Manuel Marquez did it and I want to beat him too, mainly because at his best he was someone who gave many headaches to Mexico fighters," he said. Record eight division champion Pacquiao announced his retirement from boxing in April after his unanimous decision victory over Timothy Bradley. — AFP



BRIDGEPORT: United States' Maya Moore, left, and Tamika Catchings, right, pressure Canada's Miah-Marie Langlois, center, during the first half of an exhibition basketball game, Friday, in Bridgeport, Conn. — AP

STEVENSON DEFENDS TITLE WITH FOURTH ROUND KO

MONTREAL: Canada's Adonis Stevenson made his seventh successful title defense by knocking out Thomas Williams at 2:54 of the fourth round to retain his WBC light heavyweight belt on Friday night. Stevenson improved to 28-1, with 23 knockouts as he almost ended the south-paw slugfest in opening round at the Videotron Centre in Quebec City. With about 30 seconds left in the first round, Stevenson slammed a hard left into the side of Williams' head, sending the American to the canvas. But Williams was able to get up and beat referee Michael Griffin's count. "He wanted to put on some pressure, so I put some on as well," said Stevenson. "Two men who know how to fight. We gave a good show, and that's what people want to see."

Stevenson was fighting for the first time since scoring a third-round knockout 10

months ago of journeyman fighter Tommy Karpency in Toronto. The 38-year-old Stevenson went on the attack in the fourth, landing a barrage of body shots which took their toll on Williams. With the challenger slowed and unable to put up a proper defense, Stevenson landed a vicious left to the head that put Williams down for good.

It was Stevenson's seventh title defense of the crown he took from US fighter Chad Dawson by knockout in June 2013.

Stevenson is on a 15-fight win streak since suffering his lone loss to Darnell Boone in 2010, a defeat he avenged by knocking out the American in 2013. In all, Stevenson has 13 knockouts in his past 15 bouts. Stevenson, who hasn't fought outside Canada since 2011, holds the lone belt in the division not owned by Russian fighter Sergey Kovalev. Williams' record dropped to 20-2 with 14 knockouts. — AFP



QUEBEC: Adonis Stevenson, left, of Canada, hits Thomas Williams Jr. during a WBC light heavyweight title boxing bout Friday, in Quebec City. — AP

ARGENTINA OLYMPIC TEAM ROBBED AT MEXICO HOTEL

PUEBLA: Argentina's Olympic football team complained Friday that cash and electronics were stolen from its players' hotel rooms while they were playing a friendly in Mexico. Argentina Football Association (AFA) vice president Claudio Tapia said the theft took place when Mexico and the South American team played to a 0-0 draw in the central city of Puebla on Thursday night.

It was the last preparation game before both countries compete in the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, which start next Friday. "When we returned at 11:40 pm and went up to the rooms, we realized that they had been robbed," Tapia said, without specifying how much money was taken. The Mexican Football Federation said in a state-

ment late Friday that an agreement was finally reached between the AFA, the Camino Real hotel and an insurance firm to compensate the Argentine delegation. Tapia said earlier that the team had given several statements to the authorities and complained of a "total lack of respect" in the way the issue was handled.

He had warned that the delegation would not leave the hotel until it received guarantees that it would be compensated. "You know what's the strangest thing? It's that they have verified and know who is the thief from the (security) cameras, so they are protecting the thief," he said before the Mexican football federation announced the agreement. —AFP

TAURASI, 4 FORMER UCONN STARS HELP OVERWHELM CANADA 83-43

BRIDGEPORT: Just after the United States routed Canada by 40 points, Geno Auriemma and his UConn greats posed for a group photo on the court. The five former UConn players, who helped the Huskies win 10 of their 11 national championships, received one last rousing ovation from the crowd. A fitting send off for the team from their adoring Connecticut fans.

Auriemma gave those same fans an opportunity to cheer their former stars early on, starting all five. It was virtually the same starting lineup he used in a win over France on Wednesday. The only change was putting Breanna Stewart into the group instead of Elena Delle Donne.

The Hall of Fame coach said it was the right thing to do. "I hadn't had the same starting five in any games we played," he said after the 83-43 victory Friday night. "I thought to myself, I asked Cheryl (Reeve), if you were head coach instead of me, you'd do it, because it's the right thing to do. She said OK. I'm not going to worry about it and did it. It was fun for the kids and the fans."

The players really didn't notice it until the opening tip. "When you look at it, you have a good piece of history out there with Sue (Bird) and Diana (Taurasi) representing the early success and then Stewie on the other end," said Maya Moore, who helped the Huskies win two titles. "It was really cool and really cool for the fans." The US will aim for an unprecedented sixth consecutive gold at the Olympics. The Americans have one more exhibition game today at Madison Square Garden against Australia, which beat France 76-67 on Friday night. Taurasi, Bird, Moore, Stewart and Tina Charles struggled a bit offensively when they were in, but defensively they shut down Canada. After struggling in their first two exhibition games in the first half, the Americans jumped all over their neighbors to the north.

The US only had a three-point lead on the select team in their pre-Olympic tour opener Monday and led France by one Wednesday at the half. The Americans wouldn't let that happen against Canada.

The Canadians missed 13 of their first 14 shots and couldn't recover from the slow start, trailing by 13 after one quarter and 24 at the half. "I thought defensively we were about as good as we can be given the short amount of work that we've done," Auriemma said. "That kind of led to a bunch of other things."

FAVORITES

Taurasi scored 14 points, and Delle Donne added 12 to lead the US. Auriemma had always seemed to shy away from playing all his UConn players at the same time during the 2012 London Olympics and the last two world championships. He rarely had five UConn players on the court in either of those major championships. But just as he did starting Delle Donne in Delaware on Wednesday, he gave the fans one more opportunity to cheer the local favorites. The loud crowd gave the former Huskies a great ovation in pregame introductions and then cheered every one of their plays.

"When we get to Rio, the best five players for that situation will be on the floor regardless of where they come from," Auriemma said. The offensive highlight of the first half came from Delle Donne, who threw a nifty no-look pass to

Taurasi for a layup. Canada finished fifth in the world championship in 2014 and will look to improve on that in Rio. The Canadians have never won a medal at the Olympics in women's basketball and hope to change that with a nice mix of veterans and youth. One of those talented young players is Kia Nurse, who is a junior at UConn. Nurse help lead Canada to the gold medal at the Pan-Am Games last summer. She got a nice hand from the crowd in pregame introductions, but had a rough game. She was

scoreless in 25 minutes, missing all three of her shots. This was Nurse's second game back for Canada. She had sports hernia surgery after helping UConn win a fourth consecutive national championship in April. "I can't say how impressed and pleased we are that she's come back as well as she has," Canada coach Lisa Thomaidis said. "She's such a competitor, so tough, nothing surprises us anymore with her." Canada will play France in the opener at the Garden today. —AP

RADFORD DETERMINED TO END HULL'S WEMBLEY HOODOO

LONDON: Hull FC coach Lee Radford said his side were desperate to emerge as Wembley winners after coming from behind to beat Wigan 16-12 in a Challenge Cup semi-final.

The Black and Whites trailed at the interval to George Williams's try, despite having the best of possession and territory, but hit back through former NRL stars Steven Michaels and Fetuli Talanoa after the break. Two Marc Sneyd penalties in either half were also ultimately vital for Hull in Friday's victory at Doncaster's Keepmoat Stadium. Now, after booking a third trip to Wembley in the last eight years, Radford is determined to mastermind the club's first win at the iconic London stadium. "I'm really pleased obviously as there was not a great deal between the two sides, I said that before we started, but it came down to who wanted it the most," he said. "I felt we just had that little bit extra. At half-time we spoke about that special play because there was nothing really in-between the two teams. "Somebody had to come up with it and it was really important that we found it. "I want to right that wrong at Wembley, and get that record fixed up, I really do. It will put an end to the 'You'll never win at Wembley' song that's for sure."

Meanwhile, an emotional Hull skipper Gareth Ellis praised his team-mates' gritty performance, and revealed he is hoping for a showdown with former club Wakefield Trinity, who face Warrington in Saturday's

second semi-final, at Wembley on August 27.

He said: "You get a little bit older and you think that this opportunity is not going to come, but we've been outstanding all year and I thought we were outstanding again tonight. "If I'm being slightly critical we probably weren't clinical enough in that first half but the effort that the boys showed, particularly in defence on our own try-line, was unbelievable."

"It was a great game. It would be something special to see my old club (Wakefield) make the final as well, but I'm really happy about tonight." Defeat meant Wigan were left waiting for a 20th Challenge Cup crown and they must now turn their attentions to the Super 8s, where they face Castleford next week in one of a series of matches that will determine this season's Super League champions. Wigan coach Shaun Wane said his side were inconsolable after their semi-final loss. "They (Hull) were absolutely the best team, but I am very proud of our efforts as well," he said. "To be honest we gave ourselves too much to do. We turned the ball over a lot on play one or two again, but the desire my team showed was excellent and it will help us further on in the year. "But this is very tough to take, and the players are as devastated as I've ever seen them, because I thought they were there for the taking. "We did so much defending that when we did get the ball our attack wasn't crisp." —AFP



Hull FC coach Lee Radford

US SAILOR LENDS HAND TO CLEAN RIO'S BAY BEFORE GAMES

RIO DE JANEIRO: Bobbing on Rio de Janeiro's Guanabara Bay in a blue and white fishing boat, American sailor Brad Funk uses a plastic bin to scoop rubbish from the waters where Olympic sailing races will take place next month.

Funk missed out on his dream of competing in Rio 2016 in the two-man 49er sailing class, but travelled to Brazil anyway with the aim of clearing the path for those who did, including his girlfriend British windsurfer Bryony Shaw. A native of Clearwater, Florida, Funk is leading his own clean-up effort to help remove rubbish from the Bay which is clogged by sewage from some 15 municipalities, home to some 9 million people. "I decided that if I am not going to compete, I want the sailors to not have problems when they sail," he told Reuters. "I love Rio, and it is very important to me that the Olympic Games is a success and the trash does not get stuck on the sailboats, taking medals away from them."

In recent months, concern flared over pollution levels in the bay and nearby sea, where sailing, windsurfing and long-distance swimming events are being held. Two academic studies seen by Reuters in June showed the waters were infected by drug-resistant super bacteria and microbes normally found only in hospitals. The State Environmental Agency (Inea), which is conducting daily monitoring of water quality with the help of the World Health Organization (WHO), insists the water quality is fine, helped by the rapid movement of water through the mouth of the bay where events will be held. More worrying for many competitors, however, is the floating debris which could crash against boats and slow them

down in the competition. Inea has deployed 12 green eco-boats - each with a wire metal scoop on the front that lifts rubbish out of the water and into its hull. It has also placed 17 red floating eco-barriers across the mouth of rivers and canals feeding the bay, which collect debris floating on the water's surface. Just the eco-barrier in the Canal do Cunha had collected 208 tonnes of rubbish in the last month, Inea said. Brazilian sailors said recently that the work of eco-boats picking up rubbish along competition routes had improved

the situation considerably, but that more needed to be done.

Inea has appealed to Rio's citizens to stop throwing waste into canals and into the bay. On the airplane over to Rio, Funk met Camila Avelar who decided to volunteer to help his effort, hoping to inspire a chain reaction. "A lot of people say that the two of us trying to clear the rubbish from the sea will not make any difference," Avelar said. "But I don't think that is the point, it is the attitude and encouraging other people to do the same thing." — Reuters

GENETIC DOPING: THE 'SEA SERPENT' OF CHEATING

LAUSANNE: How big a threat is genetic doping to clean competition in sport? "It's a bit like sea serpent," mythologised, potentially capable of causing serious harm, "but not so present", said Martial Saugy, former director of the Swiss Laboratory for Doping Analyses. The lab is in Lausanne, near the headquarters of the International Olympic Committee, which put Saugy on the front-line of efforts to purge drug cheats from global sport.

In an interview with AFP ahead of the August 5 start of the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, Saugy said anti-doping labs had to keep pace with new methods developed by doping cheats that multiple scandals involving Russia have proved are still a major threat. But he cautioned against putting too much focus on the still under-terminated threat of genetic doping, when other dangers-like micro-doses-are far more pressing.

LOOKING FOR 'INDICATORS'

Doctors have for years been experimenting with ways to inject synthetic genes into patients, altering an individual's genome to enhance muscle recovery or stem muscle deterioration, among other benefits. Should such treatments be taken up by athletes, anti-doping efforts could be set back years.

"We've been talking about it since the creation of the World Anti-Doping Agency in 1999," Saugy said, adding that the goal for labs is to find a way to detect "the indicators of genetic doping."

But he noted that since the world's best doctors are struggling to use the technology to treat sick children, athletes and trainers seeking to cheat with genetic doping are inevitably facing similar difficulties. "We need to put things in perspective. Genetic therapy in the medical domaine has difficulty getting its place because it's very complicated," he said.

Asked if there was a testing system for genetic doping in place for Rio, Saugy, who stepped down from the Lausanne lab last

month, said: "there may well be tests but I'm not sure of their relevance."

THE BIGGEST THREAT

"The biggest problem at the moment are microdoses," Saugy said, when asked about the worst threat to fair play.

Dopers have increasingly realised that tiny doses of steroids or the oxygen capacity booster EPO can be very effective and extremely hard to detect. Saugy noted that Tour de France 2006 winner and former Lance Armstrong teammate Floyd Landis cheated with a steroid "that is still very present". Landis "made an error in usage. Without that error, we wouldn't have seen anything," he explained.

The use of biological passports "helps enormously," said the doctor, who now heads the Center for Research and Expertise in anti-Doping sciences at the University of Lausanne. "This is one of my main principles: you need to work with the right sample from the right athlete taken at the right time," he said.

CHANGING THE SYSTEM

Overall, Saugy endorsed the notion that the entire global anti-doping infrastructure needed a shake-up.

In too many cases, private labs motivated by profit are accredited to conduct tests by sport federations, which are sometimes motivated by the desire to see their star athletes have clean records.

Making sure that WADA has the authority and willingness to withdraw accreditation for labs whenever problems occur is crucial to cleaning up the system, Saugy argued. IOC executives have pushed for a major anti-doping overhaul and have floated the idea of WADA taking over the entire system, removing authority from national sport federations which can be corrupted, as notably happened in Russia and Kenya. IOC executives last month called for a special summit on doping to be held next year, where enhancing WADA's authority will be discussed. —AFP



PRISTINA: Kosovar judoka Majlinda Kelmendi sits with other Kosovo's athletes prior to the flag handover ceremony in Pristina on Friday. Double world judo champion Majlinda Kelmendi will carry Kosovo's flag and its dreams of winning a gold medal in its first Olympic Games in Rio. —AFP

JUDO STAR CARRIES KOSOVO HOPES FOR GOLD AT FIRST OLYMPICS

PRISTINA: Double world judo champion Majlinda Kelmendi will carry Kosovo's flag and its dreams of winning a gold medal in its first Olympic Games in Rio. Serbia will lead the nations who will not be celebrating if the 25-year-old succeeds in putting Kosovo's name on the Olympic map. The 52 kilogramme champion leads eight Kosovo athletes at the Rio Games following its recognition by the International Olympic Committee in 2014. Olympic fever is mounting among the 1.8 million Kosovars and with it the pressure to succeed. President Hashim Thaci set Kelmendi's photo, Kosovo flag and the Olympic rings logo as his Twitter account background. "We may get gold, we may not, still we are heroes," he tweeted in a reflection of the growing national pride.

Kelmendi and her coach Driton Kuka went into hiding ahead of Rio. Having made her international debut in 2011, Kelmendi is unbeaten since 2013. "This girl is a machine," said France's Priscilla Gneto after losing the European title final to Kelmendi in April.

But Kelmendi only assured local media she wanted "to win a medal this time". The judo star went to the 2012 London Olympics for Albania as the IOC had not yet recognised Kosovo.

NOT JUST WAR

Kelmendi said she chose to compete for Kosovo because she wants to show the world "it is not just a little country with a history of war. I want to show the good side, where young people do sport, show they can win and be creative." Kosovo declared its independence in 2008 a decade after a war in the former Serbian province between Serb forces and ethnic Albanian fighters. More than 100 countries now recognise Kosovo as a country, but not Serbia, which opposed its membership of the IOC as well as major sporting federations such as football's FIFA and UEFA.

More than 70 countries and territories competing at the Olympics have yet to win a medal but Kosovo "deeply hopes" for success at its first try, Kosovo Olympic Committee head Besim Hasani told AFP. "Our adherence into the IOC has been the tip of an iceberg in the internationalisation of Kosovo's athletes," Hasani said. Being in Rio will be "a new chapter" for Kosovo's sport, he added.

Musa Hajdari, an 800 metres runner, highlighted the upbeat mood of those going to Rio.

"It is a special feeling one cannot describe in words. This is an utmost point that one athlete can experience on the international arena. 'I have never lost hope that I would see this day,' added the 28-year-old, talking of the days when ethnic Albanian athletes were excluded from international sport.

Shooter Urata Rama said appearing at the Olympics was more than a dream "due to the politics that were interrupting sport activities. 'Obviously going to Olympics is the biggest dream an athlete can have. We in Kosovo now can finally enjoy and experience that,'" added the 30-year-old. Kuka—who will coach Kelmendi and another judoka, Nora Gjakova, in Rio—has a special reason to be happy. The six-time national champion should have taken part in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, but Serbia blocked Kosovo. "First ever Olympic Games for Kosovo... Proud of my judokas who achieved Olympic quotas for our country," he recently tweeted. Hasani estimated that Kosovo would score a "huge victory already at the very opening of the Games" when Kelmendi leads the team into the Olympic arena "in front of the eyes of three billion people around the globe seated in front of TV screens."

"The message will be clear: Kosovo is equal to the world. 'It is a moment worth living it,' he declared. —AFP

RUSSIAN FATHER AND SON HAMMER THROWERS SHARE OLYMPIC SORROW

MOSCOW: Russian hammer thrower Sergey Litvinov and his father have a lot in common: a first name, an athletics discipline and now a history of missing the Olympics.

The suspension of Russia's athletics federation over "state-sponsored" doping will deny the 30-year-old a shot at Olympic glory, just as the Soviet boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Games did for his father and coach, legendary Soviet hammer thrower Sergey Litvinov.

Father and son recognise the striking parallels between their careers and wish the stinging memories of 1984 had not returned more than thirty years later. "There is nothing good in this," Litvinov Sr. told AFP about seeing his son sidelined from Rio like he was in 1984.

Unlike many banned Russian athletes, Litvinov and his father have been openly critical of Russia sports authorities and their inability to reform the scandal-ridden anti-doping system in time for track and field athletes to compete in Rio. Litvinov Sr., 58, thinks that Cold War-era politics weighed into the decision to keep Russians away. He blamed the country's sports authorities for their "passive approach" to the problem.

His son, who competed at the youth level and the 2009 world championships for Germany before a falling-out with the federation there saw him change his allegiance, has rejected the popular notion in Russia that the ban is a Western conspiracy aimed at eliminating strong competitors.

GREAT DEPRESSION

"I don't have a negative attitude towards the West," he told AFP after a consolation track and field in Moscow held for the banned athletes. "You have to look for the problem within yourself first. There is no smoke without fire." Litvinov Sr., who won silver at the Moscow Olympics, had his sights set on gold for Los Angeles, having won his first world title one year ahead of the Games.

The Soviet boycott devastated him. "A great depression swept over me," Litvinov Sr. said. "It took me a whole year to return to my normal self." Although he returned to win gold at the boycott-free 1988 Seoul Games-Olympics in which Litvinov said the sports

world could finally breathe-his absence from the Los Angeles Games left a stain on his stellar career. "I could have had a chance to go for gold," he said. "But what can I say? It didn't happen and that's it."

Litvinov Sr. declined to answer questions whether he had doped or had witnessed the use of performance-enhancing drugs among his Soviet teammates. But he said that doping "has always existed."

'A CLEAR WAY'

The younger Litvinov insists he has never doped and says he has paid the price for refusing to cheat. In a letter to IAAF chief Sebastian Coe, Litvinov Jr. implored international athletics chiefs to outline what Russia needs to do to return to international competition. "Just please show me a clear way," he wrote. "Otherwise the situation is out of my control and I am dependent on my federation, which does not make me optimistic."

Russian athletes in other sports have been cleared to compete in Rio after the IOC shied away from a blanket ban and called on international sports federations to determine Russians' eligibility. That sparked fierce criticism from some anti-doping agencies and athletes outside Russia. Litvinov—who missed the cut for Russia's 2012 Olympic team—says that his choice to compete without performance-enhancing drugs had seen him lag behind other competitors.

"The pharmaceutical path doesn't interest me," he said. "I'm interested in the training process, in competing against myself." Litvinov shrugged at the prospect of competing at the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 when he will be 34.

"I didn't make it to the 2012 London Games because of my own stupidity, now I'm not going because of others' stupidity," he said. "Maybe for Tokyo there will be other kinds of stupidity that won't allow me to go." He said he will keep training, no matter the uncertainties ahead. His father has little advice about the future but pledged he will be there to tweak his son's technique.

"I try to be more of a coach than a father," Litvinov Sr. said. "I don't give him advice on life. Just on the hammer throw." —AFP



MOSCOW: Russia's Sergey Litvinov competes in the men's hammer throw final at a track and field meet called "Stars of 2016" in Moscow on Friday. Russia's athletics federation holds a competition event for the athletes who have been banned from the Rio Olympics over evidence of state-sponsored doping and mass corruption in the sport. — AFP

S SUDAN REFUGEE OLYMPIANS RUN FOR GLORY OF LOST HOME

NAIROBI: There will be more South Sudanese competing at the Rio Games in the Olympics refugee team than for the African state that will be taking part for the first time. Five South Sudanese runners who make up half of the refugee Olympic Team arrived in Rio on Friday. For the likes of James Nyang Chiengjiek the troubles of home have cast a shadow over the tough preparations for the Games which start August 5.

South Sudan is allowed to send three runners who will take part with special invitations. The refugee team was selected by the International Olympic Committee in June to compete under the Olympic flag as the world struggles with its biggest migrant crisis since World War II.

Apart from the South Sudanese there are Syrian swimmers Yusra Mardini and Rami Anis, Ethiopian marathon runner Yonas Kinde and judokas Yolande Bukasa Mabika and Popole Misenga, who come from Democratic Republic of the Congo and live in Brazil.

The three men and two women from South Sudan—Chiengjiek, Yiech Pur Biel, Paulo Amotun Lokoro, Anjelina Nadai Lohalith and Rose Nathike Lokonyen—were picked in September at trials held at the sprawling Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya.

"The team has been training well in Ngong and I hope they perform well in Rio," said the athletes' Olympic co-ordinator Tegla Loroupe, referring to the town southwest of Nairobi where they have been

training. Beyond their sporting talent, the quintet's childhoods also bind them together. All come from families that fled civil war that broke out in Sudan in the 1980s and lasted until 2005. None have lived in South Sudan since it split from its northern neighbour in 2011, but the pain of the new country's five years of on-off fighting since plays on their minds.

RUNNING BACKWARDS

"It is so sad that our country is going backwards instead of moving forward," Chiengjiek, who will compete in the men's 400 metres told AFP.

In recent weeks, clashes between government troops loyal to President Salva Kiir's and former rebels allied with arch-rival Riek Machar have left 300 dead.

"We hope our leaders will use our participation at the Olympics to bring peace to our people, since sport has long been considered a unifying factor," Chiengjiek added. The athletes are training at Ngong, some 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the capital, following intensive two-week sessions running alongside elite Kenyan athletes. Piech Bur Biel sought shelter with his mother and older brother in the Kakuma camp in 2002 aged seven. He believes that Olympic success could offer a chance to find his father. "I may not be a good runner now," the 21-year-old said, modestly, "but it is my duty to go back and bring up others in my country," to an Olympic level. He wants to inspire the next generation of athletes to represent South Sudan. —AFP



NGONG: International Olympics Committee (IOC) 2016 olympics refugees team members run along a dirt road at a high altitude training camp, at the foot of the Ngong' hills, approximately 35km southeast of Nairobi, on Friday, in preparation for the 2016 Rio Olympic games. — AFP

ENGLAND HAVE POTENTIAL TO RULE WORLD - HOGGARD

COVENTRY: England possess so much strength in depth that captain Alastair Cook's side have the potential to dominate world cricket for years to come, according to former Ashes-winning fast bowler Matthew Hoggard. Hoggard, England's ninth-highest test wicket-taker with 248 victims in 67 matches, believes his country are already feared by the other elite sides after defeating Australia, South Africa, India, New Zealand and Sri Lanka over the past three years.

Cook's team are fourth in the test rankings behind top-rated Australia, India and Pakistan but the former

Yorkshire seamer expects them to climb to the summit soon. "England have flirted with periods of dominance before and have never quite achieved it," Hoggard told Reuters in an interview while playing in this week's Farmfoods British Par-3 Golf Championship at Nailcote Hall near Coventry. "But at this moment in time they've got the right balance to be the best in the world for a number of years. We are feared ... and with the group of players we've got there's no reason why we can't be the best." Hoggard said the back-up cricketers itching to get a chance in Cook's side were as good as, if not better, than

the players now in the team.

"The reason England are so strong is the competition for places," he said. "There are loads of wicketkeepers in line to play and loads of middle-order batsmen. Sam Billings is getting lots of runs and look at Ben Duckett who scored 220 not out for the Lions in a 50-over game against Sri Lanka this week. He put on an unbeaten 367 for the second wicket with Daniel Bell-Drummond (171). "In the bowling department we missed Ben Stokes and James Anderson in the first-test defeat against Pakistan at Lord's this month but look how well Chris Woakes is playing for the team at the moment,"

said the 39-year-old Hoggard. "There are a group of players behind the current crop who have got the shirts at the moment who could do at least as good a job and maybe an even better job. We've got so much strength in depth."

Cook's men rebounded in style from their 75-run defeat at Lord's by handing Pakistan a 330-run drubbing in the second test of the four-match series in Manchester and Hoggard said the visitors would now be "licking their wounds". "Sport is funny," said the Yorkshireman who featured in the England team that ended an 18-year wait to win the Ashes when they beat

Australia in a memorable series in 2005. "Look at Yasir Shah at Lord's, he looked a world-beater, the best spinner in the world, Shane Warne-esque, and then he took one for 213 in the first innings at Old Trafford. "That's the great thing about sport, you never really know what's going to happen next."

"They are two fantastic games coming up. Edgbaston is another wicket that will produce a result," he said of the venue for the third test in Birmingham that starts on Wednesday. "It might turn a little bit but whoever plays the best cricket for four to five days will come out victorious." — Reuters



PALLEKELE: Australia's Peter Nevill plays a shot as Sri Lankan wicketkeeper Dinesh Chandimal and Dimuth Karunaratne watch on day five of their first test cricket match in Pallekele, Sri Lanka, yesterday. — AP

SRI LANKA BEAT AUSTRALIA BY 106 RUNS IN FIRST TEST

PALLEKELE: Batsman Kusal Mendis' fighting maiden test hundred backed up by quality spin bowling from Rangana Herath and Lakshan Sandakan led Sri Lanka to only its second test victory against Australia yesterday.

Chasing 268 to win the match Australia was bowled out for 161 in the second session of the final day handing the hosts a comfortable 106-run win against the No. 1 ranked team coming from behind.

The victory is only the second for Sri Lanka against Australia in 27 tests. Australia has won 17. The last victory for Sri Lanka came in 1999 under Sanath Jayasuriya's captaincy. Sri Lanka was bowled out for 117 runs in its first innings and Australia gained an 86-run lead by scoring 203 in its first innings.

Mendis hit 176 to turn Sri Lanka's fortunes around as the hosts scored 353 in its second innings. He was named player of the match. Herath took nine wickets in the match including five for 54 in the second innings, his 24th five-wicket haul. Sandakan took a match haul off seven wickets on his test debut troubling the more experienced batsmen.

After Australia lost eight wickets for 157 shortly after lunch on Saturday Peter Nevill and Steve O'Keefe resisted valiantly frustrating the Sri Lankans. With O'Keefe left out of the remainder of the series because of a hamstring injury that made running between wickets difficult, the pair batted out 22.5 consecutive maiden overs.

Their four-run partnership for the ninth wicket lasted 97 minutes and took 178 deliveries before debutant off-spinner Dhananjaya de Silva had Nevill caught behind for nine. Later Herath bowled O'Keefe out to seal the match that came as a relief for the Sri Lankans who had lost six of the last seven test series. They could only beat a below par West Indies last year.

"After a rough, tough six to eight months we needed this victory and that give us a lot of confidence going forward," Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews said after the match.

"We are humbled by the victory but still have a long way to go." Mathews credited 21-year-old Mendis for the change in fortunes. Australia captain Steve Smith said that his batsmen failed to capitalize after a good bowling effort that saw Sri Lanka being dismissed for a low score in the first innings.

"I thought we were in a really good position to get a much bigger lead than 86. We didn't push on as much as we would have liked," Smith said. "I guess in the third innings of the match we didn't do a great deal of wrong, I think Kusal Mendis played an exceptional innings of 176 and that took the game away from us." Smith said he is disappointed with yet another poor show in Asia.

Since winning its last three-match series in Sri Lanka 1-0 five years ago, Australia lost its matches in a series against Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates and on a tour of India - 2-0 and 4-0 respectively.

"It's disappointing," Smith said. "As I said before the game we hadn't played all that very well in the sub-continent conditions for a while now and it's something that under my captaincy I sort of want to change."

The final day began with equal chances of winning for both sides with Australia needing 185 runs with seven wickets in hand and Sri Lanka encouraged by a spin-friendly pitch. Herath took three wickets in a rain-shortened morning session dismissing Adam Voges (12) caught and bowled, Mitchell Marsh (25) and captain Smith (55) both lbw.

Fellow spinner Sandakan took a return catch to dismiss Mitchel Starc to end the morning session. Smith brought up his 17th half-century cautiously facing 125 deliveries and hitting only one boundary. He successfully reviewed a catch behind decision against him at 54 but failed to capitalize on the reprieve.

Voges straight drove Herath in the eighth over of the day which appeared to come off the pitch. But on appeal for a return catch the television umpire confirmed that the ball hadn't hit the ground before being caught. — AP

PORCELLO PITCHES 5-HITTER TO LEAD RED SOX PAST ANGELS

ANAHEIM: Rick Porcello pitched a five-hitter for his first complete game since 2014, Xander Bogaerts homered and drove in three runs, and the Boston Red Sox beat the Los Angeles Angels 6-2 on Friday night. Porcello (14-2) struck out three while winning his sixth straight start - also for the first time since 2014 - and eighth consecutive decision. He became the majors' fourth 14-game winner, joining Baltimore's Chris Tillman, the Chicago White Sox's Chris Sale, and Washington's Stephen Strasburg. Porcello hasn't lost since May 17 and he's pitched five or more innings in 29 straight starts dating back to last Aug. 26. Jackie Bradley Jr. also homered to help Boston end a four-game losing streak. Tim Lincecum (3-4) continued to struggle in his comeback attempt, giving up four earned runs and five hits with four walks. He was removed after giving up Bradley's homer leading off the sixth. The loss ended the Angels season-high seven-game home winning streak.

CUBS 12, MARINERS 1

Jon Lester recovered from a rut of bad starts, pitching six shutout innings to help Chicago rout Seattle for its third straight victory. Jason Heyward and David Ross homered and the NL Central leaders improved to 10-5 since a 1-9 slump. Seattle lost in its first trip to Wrigley Field since 2007. The Mariners let infielder Luis Sardinas pitch the eighth, and he threw a perfect inning. Lester (11-4) had lasted just 16 innings over his previous four starts, going 1-1 with a 10.13 ERA. That skid came after he had gone 9-3 with a 2.03 ERA in his first 16 starts. Lester gave up four hits, struck out seven and walked two. He was already done when there was a 74-minute rain delay in the seventh. Chicago's Kris Bryant reached base all five times he came up. He singled twice, doubled and walked twice. Hisashi Iwakuma (11-7) was the loser.

CARDINALS 11, MARLINS 6

Tommy Pham homered and drove in three runs in St. Louis' victory over Miami. Kolten Wong had three hits and drove in two runs and Jeremy Hazelbaker hit a two-run homer for St. Louis. The Cardinals have won four of five and lead the Marlins by a game in the NL wild-card standings. Marlins outfielder Ichiro Suzuki went 0 for 4 to remain at 2,998 career hits. Martin Prado homered and drove in three runs, and Marcell Ozuna also homered for the Marlins. Mike Leake (8-8) was the winner. Jose Urena (1-3) took the loss.

BLUE JAYS 6, ORIOLES 5

Jose Bautista, Edwin Encarnacion and Troy Tulowitzki hit solo home runs in the first inning, Marco Estrada snapped a four-start winless streak and Toronto beat Baltimore. Encarnacion reached base three times and scored twice to help the Blue Jays win the opener of a three-game series between the top two teams in the AL East, cutting Baltimore's division lead to a half-game. The Orioles have lost four straight. Estrada (6-4) allowed four runs, three earned, and five hits in six innings. Joaquin Benoit worked the seventh, Jason Grilli gave up Manny Machado's solo home run in the eighth and Roberto Osuna finished for his 22nd save. Mark Trumbo's two-out double gave Baltimore a 2-0 lead in the top of the first but the Blue Jays answered with a trio of solo shots in the bottom half against Kevin Gausman (2-8).

ROCKIES 6, METS 1

Tyler Chatwood kept winning on the road, Carlos Gonzalez homered and drove in four runs and Colorado beat New York for its fourth straight victory. Mark Reynolds also homered for the surging Rockies. They are 11-4 since the All-Star break and have



ANAHEIM: Los Angeles Angels catcher Ryan Hanigan loses the ball as Boston Red Sox's Dustin Pedroia scores on a Xander Bogaerts double during the third inning of a baseball game in Anaheim, Calif. — AP

moved within four games of Miami for the second NL wild-card spot. Chatwood (10-6) improved to 6-0 with a 1.30 ERA away from Coors Field this season. The 26-year-old is 4-6 with a 5.69 ERA at home. Gonzalez matched a season-high hitting streak of 11 games with an RBI double in the first. He hit a 448-foot, three-run drive in the ninth for his 21st homer. Steven Matz (8-7) was the loser.

RANGERS 8, ROYALS 3

Rougned Odor homered twice, and A.J. Griffin pitched into the sixth inning in Texas' victory over Kansas City. Jurickson Profar also went deep for the Rangers, and scored three runs. Odor hit a solo homer in the first that put AL West-leading Texas up 3-0 against Edinson Volquez (8-9). That 443-foot drive into the second deck of seats in right field came a night after Odor's 465-footer that is the longest in his career. He had another solo shot in the seventh, his 21st of the season barely clearing the 8-foot wall in right. Griffin (4-1) struck out one and walked two in 5 2-3 innings. Eric Hosmer homered for the defending World Series champion Royals. They dropped 10 games behind Cleveland in the AL Central.

BREWERS 3, PIRATES 1

Junior Guerra limited Pittsburgh to four hits over 8 2/3 innings, and Chris Carter hit a two-run home run in Milwaukee's victory. The Pirates managed Andrew McCutchen's RBI groundout off Guerra (7-2), who departed with two on and two outs in the ninth. Jeremy Jeffress got Jung Ho Kang to ground out to third on one pitch to record his 25th save in 26 chances. Guerra's scoreless streak was snapped at 20 innings. He struck out five and walked one. Pirates rookie Steven Brault (0-1) gave up three runs and seven hits over six innings.

INDIANS 5, ATHLETICS 3

Abraham Almonte scored the go-ahead run on a wild pitch in Cleveland's four-run seventh inning in the Indians' comeback victory over Oakland. Cleveland erased a 3-1 deficit after being held to four hits through six innings. Jason Kipnis' bases-loaded single tied it, and Almonte scored from third on Ryan Dull's wild pitch one batter later. Carlos Santana homered in the sixth for Cleveland. Cody Anderson

(2-4) pitched a scoreless seventh. Cody Allen worked out of ninth-inning trouble for 20th save. Kendall Graveman (7-7) was the loser. Josh Reddick and Khris Davis hit back-to-back homers in the sixth for Oakland.

TIGERS 14, ASTROS 6

Tyler Collins and Justin Upton each hit a three-run homer, helping Detroit beat Houston for its fourth straight victory. James McCann added a solo shot in the eighth and Cameron Maybin had three hits and scored three times. Jose Altuve and Jake Marisnek homered for Houston. The Astros lost for the third time in four games. Matt Boyd (2-2) allowed three runs on four hits in five innings. He walked one while striking out six. Collin McHugh (7-7) didn't make it out of the second inning.

RAYS 5, YANKEES 1

Jake Odorizzi pitched masterfully into the seventh inning, Logan Forsythe and Corey Dickerson hit solo homers in the first, and Tampa Bay Rays cooled off New York. The Yankees had won eight of 11 to close within 3 1/2 games of Boston for the second AL wild card. Odorizzi (5-5) struck out five and allowed six hits over 6 2/3 innings. Alex Colome entered with two on and one out in the ninth, and got two straight outs for his 23rd save. Ivan Nova (7-6) gave up five runs and six hits in 4 1/3 innings.

TWINS 2, WHITE SOX 1, 12 INNINGS

Pinch-hitter Joe Mauer drew a bases-loaded walk with one out in the bottom of the 12th inning to lift Minnesota over Chicago. Dan Jennings (4-3) hit Eddie Rosario with a full-count pitch to lead off the 12th. One out later, Byron Buxton walked. Reliever Tommy Kahnle then came on and walked Brian Dozier and Mauer to push across the winning run. Trevor May (2-2) pitched a perfect 12th. Adam Eaton put the White Sox on the board early when he led off the game with a long home run to right-center field. After that, however, only one White Sox runner reached second base against Nolasco. Kennys Vargas drove in a run with a bloop to short right field in the sixth. However, Miguel Sano, who had doubled, ran through a stop sign at third base and Eaton's throw easily beat him to the plate. — AP

TAYLOR SPARKLES AS NZ ZEALAND CLOSE IN ON WIN

BULAWAYO: Ross Taylor and BJ Watling scored centuries as New Zealand closed in on victory against hapless Zimbabwe after day three of the first test yesterday. Taylor finished unbeaten on 173 and shared a sixth-wicket stand of 253 with Watling (107) to take the touring side to 576 for six declared in their first innings, a lead of 412. Seamer Trent Boult then took three quick wickets as Zimbabwe closed the day on 121 for five, still 291 runs shy of making New Zealand bat again on what remains a flat wicket. Craig Ervine (49 not out) and captain Graeme Cremer (14 not out) will resume in the morning, with the side hoping to have Regis Chakabva and Sean Williams back after the pair missed the third day through illness.

Zimbabwe came out all guns blazing in their second innings and scored at close to six an over throughout, even as the wickets tumbled. Hamilton Masakadza (four) steered a Tim Southee delivery to Taylor at first slip inside the first over before Brian Chari (five) was bowled by Boult.

Boult induced an edge from Chamu Chibhabha (seven) to Taylor and trapped debutant Prince Masvaure lbw for a golden duck as Zimbabwe were reduced to 17 for four. The wicket was a 150th in tests for the New Zealand seamer. Ervine and Sikandar Raza (37) launched a counter-attack, adding 69 in under nine overs before the latter became the seventh victim of the match for seamer Neil Wagner with a wild hack at a short delivery that went straight up in the air and was caught by Tom Latham.

Ervine and Cremer delayed what seems the inevitable as they saw the hosts through to the close.

New Zealand had resumed the day on 315 for four and lost only nightwatchman Ish Sodhi (11) in the first two sessions as Taylor and Watling plundered runs.

Taylor brought up his 14th test century from 191 balls, his first score over 50 in eight test innings since he hit 290 against Australia in November last year. Watling needed only 169 deliveries to reach his ton, a sixth in test cricket. — Reuters



BULAWAYO: New Zealand's batsman BJ Watling celebrates his century during the third day of the first test match in a series of two tests between New Zealand and hosts Zimbabwe at Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play on the fifth day in the first Test between Sri Lanka and Australia yesterday in Pallekele, Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka 1st innings 117	N. Lyon lbw b Sandakan	8
Australia 1st innings 203 (R. Herath 4-49, L. Sandakan 4-58)	S. O'Keefe b Herath	4
Sri Lanka 2nd innings 353 (K. Mendis 176; M. Starc 4-84)	J. Hazlewood not out	0
Australia 2nd innings (Overnight: 83-3; Target: 268 runs)	Extras	0
J. Burns b Sandakan	Total	(all out, 88.3 overs)
D. Warner b Herath	161	
U. Khawaja lbw b D. Perera	Fall of wickets: 1-2 D. Warner, 2-33 U. Khawaja, 3-63 J. Burns, 4-96 A. Voges, 5-139 M. Marsh, 6-140 S. Smith, 7-141 M. Starc, 8-157 N. Lyon, 9-161 P. Nevill, 10-161 S. O'Keefe	
S. Smith lbw b Herath	Bowling:	
A. Voges c&pb Herath	N. Pradeep 6-3-16-0, R. Herath 33.3-16-54-5, D. Perera 13-3-30-1, L. Sandakan 25-8-49-3, D. de Silva 11-7-12-1.	
M. Marsh lbw b Herath	Result: Sri Lanka won by 106 runs.	
P. Nevill c Chandimal b D. de Silva		
M. Starc c&pb Sandakan		

FIVE FACTS ABOUT FOOTBALL AT THE RIO OLYMPICS

RIO DE JANEIRO: Five things to know about football at the Olympics in Rio: The men's football tournament runs from August 4-20 with the 16 nations split into four groups of four.

* The top two teams from each group go into the knockout stages. There are only 12 teams in the women's tournament forming three groups of four which starts on August 3. That allows the two best third-placed teams to progress to the last eight before quarter-finals and semi-finals will determine the gold medal matchup on August 19.

* There is a third-placed playoff between the two semi-final losers for the bronze medal in both competitions.

A gold in the men's football tournament in the final at the historic Maracana stadium is one of Brazil's most wanted as it hosts the games for the first time.

* Having won five World Cups and being crowned champions of South America eight times, Olympic gold is the only major honour to escape the Selecao. They have won the silver medal three times with even the likes of Ronaldinho, Ronaldo and previously Neymar missing out. Barcelona star Neymar—who sat out the Copa America in June to take part — returns to spearhead a strong squad with Brazil heavy favourites to finally break their duck despite the presence of world champions Germany and eternal rivals Argentina.

* Neymar will be one of three players over the age of 23 each side is allowed to select. The restriction introduced for the 1992 Barcelona Olympics was a compromise reached between football's governing body FIFA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to allow professional players to play without ridding FIFA's prize asset the World Cup. Despite that Neymar is far from the only world class talent to have carried the hopes of his nation in the Olympics.

* Lionel Messi won his only honour with Argentina at the Beijing games in 2008 and Cristiano Ronaldo represented Portugal in Athens in 2004. However, the restrictions only apply to the men's tournament. The women's competition is contested between full international sides. Following on from the success of taking football round the country at the London games four years ago, many stadiums that hosted World Cup fixtures two years ago will be used for both men and women's tournaments. As well as the Maracana—which will host both finals—and the Olympic stadium, games will be held in Sao Paulo, Brasilia, Salvador, Belo Horizonte and as far away as the Manaus, nearly 3,000 kilometres away from Rio in the Amazonian jungle.

Although not considered the peak of the sport, men's football has been in every Olympics bar 1896 and 1932. The first appearance at the Olympics dates back to before the first World Cup and changing regulations throughout the decades has allowed for a far greater variety of winners. A total of 18 countries have landed gold with Hungary and Great Britain leading the way with three wins each.

Football was introduced to the women's programme in 1996 and has since been dominated by world champions the United States, who have won four golds and a silver in the five games since. — AFP

50TH ANNIVERSARY LEAVES ENGLISH FOOTBALL WITH MIXED FEELINGS

LONDON: Fifty years on from the greatest day in the history of English football, pessimists fear that the prospect of becoming world champions again is as remote as it has ever been.

On that day, Saturday, July 30 1966, the nation came together in a manner rarely seen since the end of the Second World War as Alf Ramsey's England side defeated West Germany 4-2 after extra time to win the World Cup for the only time. In the intervening years, the event has come to be seen as an important part of British popular culture, exemplified in a book published last year titled "1966: The Year the Decade Exploded".

As part of the anniversary celebrations, British media are devoting acres of newsprint to the triumph and BBC Radio 5 Live is broadcasting almost 12 hours of programming based on it.

That will include a 90-minute phone-in, in which football fans can be relied upon to offer unfavourable observations about the present state of the national team and most of its predecessors.

Sam Allardyce has just been appointed as the 12th full-time manager since Ramsey was sacked in 1974. The best any of the other 11 achieved was losing on penalties in the semi-finals of the 1990 World Cup (Bobby Robson) and Euro 96 (Terry Venables). Germany, taking ample revenge for 1966, won each of those matches and went on to take the trophy. In the last two tournaments, England under Roy Hodgson won only one game out of seven in total, the 2014 performance being their worst

ever at a World Cup. Being knocked out of Euro 2016 by Iceland was particularly humiliating and offered no encouragement towards former Football Association chairman Greg Dyke's stated aim three years ago of winning the 2022 World Cup.

"We should have won a tournament in the last 50 years," he said more recently. "We haven't. But we will win in the next 50 years, hopefully long before." Others are less convinced.

"We are blinded by the Premier League," former striker Alan Shearer told the BBC.

"We think it's the best in the world for talent. It's not. We are totally reliant on foreign players and managers for excitement. We are not as good as we think we are." In the circumstances it is hardly surprising that the reputation of the boys of '66 grows stronger with every passing year and each tournament failure.

A number of the surviving team members are suffering from ill-health, adding further poignancy to memories of their World Cup victory.

Nine of them survive, although at least half a dozen have suffered from either cancer or serious memory loss. Skipper Bobby Moore died of cancer in 1993 aged 51, followed by manager Ramsey in 1999 and midfielder Alan Ball eight years later.

"As a team we remain great friends and have kept in touch, but it is getting harder to meet up with some of the guys now because they are not well," goalkeeper Gordon Banks said this year. The consolation is retaining their unique place in the country's sporting history. — Reuters



LOS ANGELES: Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Grzegorz Krychowiak, (L), defender Thomas Meunier (R), and coach Unai Emery pose with their jerseys after a press conference before their International Champions Cup (ICC) game against Leicester City F.C., at StubHub Center in Carson, California on Friday. The two teams will meet at StubHub Center today. — AFP

PSG'S KRYCHOWIAK EYES CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GLORY

LOS ANGELES: Poland international midfielder Grzegorz Krychowiak said on Friday he had moved to Paris Saint-Germain to power the French giant to an elusive first Champions League trophy. The Qatar-backed club dominates at home, having won four consecutive Ligue 1 titles, but has never progressed beyond the quarter-finals of Europe's elite competition.

"PSG is one of the biggest clubs in Europe," said Krychowiak, who was in Los Angeles with his new teammates for the pre-season International Champions Cup (ICC).

"Coming here gives you the opportunity not only to play in the Champions League but also the opportunity to win it. And that motivates the player, makes you want to come here and be part of that adventure." The 26-year-old won back-to-back Europa League titles with Sevilla before signing for PSG on a five-year deal earlier in July for a reported 26 million euros (\$28.9 million). Krychowiak, who started his career at Ligue 1 side Bordeaux, links up again with former Sevilla coach Unai Emery, now at the helm of PSG. "Every year PSG is progressing, evolving and getting better, and I try to do the same in my career," said the midfielder, who was part of Poland's Euro 2016 squad eliminated in the quarter-finals by Portugal. "I went to Sevilla to become a better player. That was the aim for me going there, and in coming back to play for PSG—one of the best teams in the world."

Krychowiak was PSG's second recruit of the summer after French international midfielder Hatem Ben Arfa from Nice. The French champions have also secured the services of Belgian international Thomas Meunier from FC Bruges, pipping rivals from across Europe to get the deal across the line.

'FANTASTIC STORY'

The 1.90 metre (6ft 3in) right-back, 24, who featured twice for Belgium at Euro 2016, has signed a four-year deal for an undisclosed fee. "When a club like PSG knocks at your door, you can't hesitate too long to make a decision," Meunier told reporters at the StubHub Center, home of the LA Galaxy. "I asked myself a lot of questions. Coming from the Belgian league, would I be able to step up to the level played here?" But he added: "I couldn't refuse PSG, I couldn't turn down coming to join one of the top five European clubs."

Emery took over at PSG last month from Laurent Blanc, who won the domestic treble twice in a row but failed to make substantial progress in Europe. The team faces surprise English champions Leicester City today in the ICC, an exhibition tournament which involves 17 clubs playing on four continents.

The Foxes, 5,000/1 outsiders in pre-season, were crowned champions for the first time in their 132-year history in May, beating much bigger rivals like Manchester United and Arsenal to the title. "It's a pleasure to see the Leicester City story—it's great for football," said Emery.

"It's such a fantastic story that not only the big teams can win the Premier League, but also a small team like Leicester who can come up and overcome all that competition. "Thanks to the Premier League, their story has become recognized worldwide, which makes tomorrow's match even bigger—the French champions against the English champions." —AFP

IBRAHIMOVIC DELIGHTED TO MAKE UNITED DEBUT

MANCHESTER: Veteran Swedish star Zlatan Ibrahimovic said he is delighted his compatriots will get to see the moment 'everyone has been waiting for', namely his debut for new club Manchester United in his homeland yesterday. Ibrahimovic will lead United's front-line in the pre-season friendly with Turkish side Galatasaray in Gothenburg, Sweden, after missing the club's trip to China.

Ibrahimovic, who has had to wait till the end of his career to play in the Premier League having won titles in Italy, Spain, France and the Netherlands, said it pleased him his compatriots would be the ones to see him don the United shirt for the first time since arriving on a free transfer from French champions Paris Saint-Germain.

"Everybody has been waiting for that moment," a typically immodest Ibrahimovic told the club's television station MUTV referring to his first appearance.

"There has been a lot of talk and to make my debut in my country will feel great. "I think the fans are waiting for me to come back and they are waiting to enjoy not only me, but the team as well.

"Hopefully, we can give them a good

game and, at the same time, we are in the preparation. "We need to keep focused, to build up the physical part and the conditioning part but we will give them what they want." Ibrahimovic, 34, who retired from international football following a disappointing Euro 2016 campaign in France, said he had been impressed with the first few days of training under United manager Jose Mourinho, for whom he played at Inter Milan.

"Positive vibes. They seem to be good guys, quality players, they train very hard and, during the training, are very focused," said Ibrahimovic. "The coach (Mourinho)—he is direct, he is concrete, he says what he wants and the players are adapting. So there are only positive things."

Ibrahimovic, who scored 156 goals in 180 appearances for PSG, said he didn't feel his age because of his attitude to training and playing. "I believe in working hard," he said. "Not only in games but even in training."

"The way you train is the way you play in the games—that's my philosophy. Working hard, training hard and feeling good. Then you need to get the rhythm by playing games." — AFP



GOTHENBURG: Manchester United's new striker, Swedish Zlatan Ibrahimovic, exits the team bus at the hotel in Gothenburg yesterday. Manchester meets Turkey's Galatasaray in a friendly match. — AFP

ALLEGRI SAYS ABSENCE OF STAR NAMES 'POSITIVE'

HONG KONG: Juventus manager Massimiliano Allegri believes the absence of the club's marquee names from their pre-season tour of Asia might prove a blessing in disguise as he prepares the Turin giants for a tilt at an unprecedented sixth straight Serie A title. "It has given young players their chance," Allegri said Saturday as the Juventus tour came to a close. "From what we have learned we will go back to Italy now and some will stay and some will move on to get experience from other teams. So it has been very positive." This summer's European Championship, coming on the back of a hectic domestic season, meant the Italian had to leave as many as 15 first-team regulars out of Juve's tour through Australia and then to Hong Kong. But Allegri says their absence gave him more time to focus his attention on the likes of new signing Miralem Pjanic, lured over for 32 million euros (\$35.6 million) from Roma, as well as the Brazilian duo of Alex Sandro and Hernanes, who both joined Juve last year and will be hoping for more game time in 2016. Defender Medhi Benatia, recruited on a season-loan from Bayern Munich, was also put through his paces and impressed as did rising star Paulo Dybala, the 22-year-old Argentinian coming fresh from a breakout first season for Juventus that saw him score 19 goals from 34 appearances after crossing from Palermo.

Both Dybala and Benatia scored in Juve's 2-1 win over Tottenham Hotspur in Melbourne on Tuesday, while 20-year-old Spaniard Carlos Blanco lit up their 1-1 draw with Melbourne Victory last Saturday with a 50-yard screamer. Benatia looks ready to add some bite to the Juve defence with his forward runs and was again on the scoresheet as the team wrapped up the tour with a 2-1 win over Hong Kong outfit South China.

"I'm very satisfied," smiled Allegri. "He's

been a very positive addition to the squad." The second goal came from 21-year-old Lorenzo Rossetti, another of Juve's young guns to impress their manager while their more seasoned teammates were back home.

MERGING THE SQUADS

Allegri flew out of Hong Kong on Saturday night—no doubt hoping he would arrive to hear the 100 million euro saga of midfielder Paul Pogba's "will he or won't he" transfer to Manchester United had been put to bed. The 48-year-old had throughout the tour pretty much avoided all mention of whatever business might be going on. "I don't like to talk about the market," was his offering on the matter in Hong Kong. "On Tuesday I will be back at the club and talk about it then. What I can say is I am happy with what we have done on the market so far." Allegri will hook up with the rest of his squad on his return to Juventus Turin base, among them club-record signing Gonzalo Higuain, the Argentine striker captured for a reported 90 million euros from rivals Napoli. It's hoped Serie A's top-scorer last season with 36 goals from all competitions will add the firepower needed to help Juventus break a European Champions League drought that dates way back to 1996. Juve were finalists two seasons ago and last year fell in the round of 16 to eventual champions Bayern. Allegri said Higuain would formally meet his new teammates as the two squads—those on tour and those left behind—get together on Tuesday.

"The plan is well defined," said Allegri. "We will merge the two parts of the team. Those who have toured will be more advanced in their condition and we have three pre-season matches left now before the season starts to get everyone to the same level." —AFP



HONG KONG: South China player Chan Siu Ki (L) scores against Juventus during the football match between Juventus and South China at Hong Kong Stadium yesterday. — AFP

Sports

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Taurasi, 4 former UConn stars help overwhelm Canada

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TORONTO: Gael Monfils of France plays a shot against Milos Raonic of Canada during Day 5 of the Rogers Cup at the Aviva Centre on Friday in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

MONFILS BEATS RAONIC IN TORONTO, DJOKOVIC WINS

TORONTO: Frenchman Gael Monfils maintained his run of brilliant form when he nullified Milos Raonic's big serve to eliminate the local favourite from the Rogers Cup in Toronto on Friday. Monfils displayed his renowned athleticism in a high-quality quarter-final, relying on his lightning-fast court coverage to manufacture a 6-4 6-4 victory over the losing Wimbledon finalist.

The 10th seed set up a semi-final against top seed Novak Djokovic, who overcame poor serving and 33 unforced errors to beat Czech Tomas Berdych 7-6(6) 6-4 in an error-riddled match. Second seed Stan Wawrinka and third seed Kei Nishikori will meet in Saturday's other semi-final.

Five days after ending a drought of more than two years by winning an ATP event in Washington, Monfils took his hot form with him north of the border. The capacity evening crowd did their best to lift powerful Canadian Raonic, but Monfils, whose attitude has often been questioned, did not buckle against the fourth seed. Earlier, Djokovic staved off three set points in a first set tiebreak before improving his career record against Berdych to 25-2.

The Serbian admitted he was lucky to advance after saving seven of eight break points. "Bit fortunate I must say," he said in an on-court interview. "My serve just wasn't right today. I just completely lost my rhythm, and he was taking over control of my second serve, attacking it."

"On a quick surface like this you need a good serve. Today it wasn't to be but I won in straight sets. I must be pleased with the way I hung in there. That's all." In the afternoon session, Swiss Wawrinka advanced with a comprehensive 6-1 6-3 victory over big-serving South African Kevin Anderson.

"I started really well from the first game," said Wawrinka, a two-times grand slam champion who is seeking his 15th ATP World Tour title. "It showed me that I was ready, aggressive, moving really well."

"It's one of the best matches of the year I played, I think. I was calm. Serving really good. Mixing a lot. I was reading the game well, good in defence and found a way to come back and attack."

Next up for Wawrinka is Nishikori, who battled past unseeded Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov 6-3 3-6 6-2. The Japanese player, who reached the final in Miami and

the last four in both Madrid and Rome in ATP Masters 1000 events earlier this season, emerged victorious in a see-sawing encounter that lasted a little more than two hours.

Earlier, Romania's Simona Halep rallied for a 3-6, 6-1, 6-1 victory over Svetlana Kuznetsova on Friday to set up a semi-final showdown with Angelique Kerber at the WTA Montreal tournament. Halep, seeded fifth, will have a chance to avenge her quarter-final Wimbledon defeat at the hands of Australian Open champion Kerber, who reached the final four in Montreal with an emphatic 6-2, 6-2 victory over teenager Daria Kasatkina.

"It was very tough, I feel really tired now, she played very well and she's very strong so I knew it was going to be like this," Halep said. "All I can say is that I'm very happy I could win against her, because we always have tough matches."

Once Halep shook off some early nerves, she was able to pressure the Russian veteran's serve and was rewarded when Kuznetsova surrendered an early break in the second set with a double fault.

Halep seized control for good with an early break in

the third to keep alive her hopes of improving on her runner-up finish in Canada last year-when she retired from the final against Belinda Bencic with an illness. While Kerber encountered little resistance against Russia's Kasatkina she said Halep would be another matter.

"It's going to be tough," Kerber said. "We've played a lot of good matches in the past." In the day's other quarter-finals, world No. 121 Kristina Kucova's fairytale run continued on Friday night with a straight set win over 15th seeded Johanna Konta. The Slovakian qualifier, who ousted Canada's Eugenie Bouchard in the third round, fashioned a 6-4, 6-3 victory to end Konta's impressive recent run and quash her hopes of becoming the first British player in 32 years to reach the top 10.

Kucova's win sets up a semi-final clash with tenth seeded Madison Keys who defeated Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 7-6 (7/3), 1-6, 6-0.

"I cannot believe it, I'm so happy. There is no secret to my success, I feel so good here, I get so much energy from the crowd," Kucova said. "Although I'm already a bit tired but they help me through." — Agencies

BLANKET WEIGHTLIFTER BAN NEW BLOW FOR RUSSIA

RIO DE JANEIRO: A ban on all Russian weightlifters dealt a new blow to the country ahead of an International Olympic Committee meeting yesterday that will be dominated by multiple doping scandals.

New criticism of the athletes' village in Rio added to the dark clouds hanging over the Games which start in one week. The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) banned all eight Russian contenders-five men and three women-entered for Rio.

About 117 Russian competitors from the 387 initially put forward by the Russian Olympic Committee have now been banned from the Games. They include 67 track and field athletes.

Weightlifting's reputation "has been seriously damaged on multiple times and levels by the Russians, therefore an appropriate sanction was applied in order to preserve the status of the sport," the IWF said. "We would like to highlight the extremely shocking and disappointing statistics regarding the Russian weightlifters." Among those banned, Artem Okulov is a world champion while Ruslan Albegov took a bronze medal at the 2012 London Games and Tatiana Kashirina a silver. The IOC has taken fierce criticism for not ordering a blanket ban on Russia after an independent report said there was state-organized doping at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. The IOC executive is to meet today to discuss the crisis. The full IOC meets from tomorrow.

MORE FEDERATIONS TO REPORT

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) president Craig Reedie, who is also an IOC vice-president, is to give a report on the agency's activities yesterday. Reedie had led calls for a blanket ban on Russia over the doping. The IOC decided last week however that individual sporting federations had to examine Russian entries and decide whether they should be allowed to compete. The Olympic committee will take a final decision on

Russian entries based on the recommendations. It is not yet known when this will be announced however.

Boxing, golf, gymnastics and taekwondo are among sports still to have announced their decisions. A small fire at the Rio athletes village on Friday, which forced the evacuation of the Australian delegation, left a new stain on preparations for the Games.

Team spokesman Mike Tancred told AFP "there was a lot of smoke" but that athletes returned after fire fighters controlled the blaze. "There was no big drama," he said. Australia had led a boycott over conditions at the village last week. And Rio de Janeiro mayor Eduardo Paes lashed out Friday at the Olympics organizing committee, accusing it of "serious problems" in managing the village.

Paes blamed the Rio2016 committee for a slew of problems at the village, which has been his public relations nightmare all week. "The athletes' village was ready. Then the organizing committee took charge for three months, and there were extremely serious management problems."

"During those three months, people intruded into the apartments and a lot of things were stolen," he told O Estado de Sao Paulo newspaper. "The doors were left half-open. The organizing committee was careless, objectively speaking." He said his office was informed of the problems only last week, despite a series of weekly meetings between his staff and the organizing committee.

Paes's week got off to a rough start Sunday when the Olympic village opened to a boycott from Australia, which refused to move in because of exposed wiring, leaking pipes, blocked toilets, unlighted stairwells and other problems.

More than 600 plumbers have been working at the village this week to make repairs. The Rio Games start on August 5 and run through to August 21. — AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: A woman takes a selfie before an Olympic rings installation at Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, yesterday. The Olympic Games will run from August 5 to 21, 2016. — AFP

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Euro-zone growth slows;
Brexit dangers threaten

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Turkey investment grade
'hanging in the balance'

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Myanmar launches
thin economic policy

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BANK OF JAPAN EASES POLICY BY DOUBLING ETF BUYING

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LONDON: Pedestrians pass a branch of Lloyds Bank in London. Britain's Lloyds Banking Group said it plans to eliminate 3,000 jobs and close 200 branches - the first big cuts announced since Britain voted to leave the European Union.— AP

NO CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH FOR EU BANKS

STRESS TEST RESULTS RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT PROFITABILITY

LONDON: Banks from Italy, Ireland, Spain and Austria fared worst in the latest European Union stress test, which the region's banking watchdog said on Friday showed there was still work to do in order to boost credit to the bloc's economy. Eight years since the collapse of Lehman Brothers sparked a global banking meltdown, many of Europe's banks are still saddled with billions of euros in poorly performing loans, crimping their ability to lend and putting off investors. "While a number of individual banks have clearly fared badly, the overall finding of the European Banking Authority - that Europe's banks are resilient to another crisis - is heartening," Anthony Kruczynski at PwC said.

Italy's Monte dei Paschi, Austria's Raiffeisen, Spain's Banco Popular and two of Ireland's main banks came out with the worst results in the EBA's test of 51 European Union (EU) lenders. "Whilst we recognize the extensive capital raising done so far, this is not a clean bill of health," EBA Chairman Andrea Enria said in a statement. "There remains work to do." Italy's largest lender, UniCredit, was also among those banks which fared badly, and it said it will work with supervisors to see if it should take further measures.

Germany's biggest banks, Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank, were also among the 12 weakest banks in the test, along with British rival Barclays.

Monte dei Paschi, Italy's third largest lender, had been scrambling to pull together a rescue plan and win approval for it from the European Central Bank ahead of the test results. The Italian bank confirmed less than an hour before the results that it had finalized a plan to sell off its entire portfolio of non-performing loans and had assembled a consortium of banks to back a 5 billion euro capital increase. The EBA looked at how banks could withstand a three-year theoretical economic shock which ended with the Italian lender, the world's oldest, having a core equity capital ratio of minus 2.44 percent.

This was the third stress test in the EU since taxpayers had to bail out lenders in the 2007-09 financial crisis, with no pass or fail mark this time round. The test involved scenarios including EU economic output 7.1 percent below the baseline over the next three years and a 20 percent drop in interest income. "Based on these results European banks do have deeper loss absorbing capacity than previously, but concerns clearly remain around profitability and

the appetite of equity investors to invest in bank stocks," said Steven Hall of KPMG. Analysts have informally set a basic pass mark of 5.5 percent, the threshold set in the last round of tests in 2014, and a weak result could raise question marks over dividend payments.

More resilient

Like Monte dei Paschi, Allied Irish Banks was also below the 5.5 percent level at 4.31 percent, but said it has undergone fundamental restructuring and is now sustainably profitable. Markets will also look at how many banks were able to maintain a core ratio of capital to risk-weighted assets of 7 percent. This is a typical level for triggering the writedown of bonds issued by banks to replenish capital.

Spain's Banco Popular, Bank of Ireland and Austria's Raiffeisen all ended the test below this level at 6.62 percent, 6.15 percent, and 6.12 percent, respectively. "We are aware of our capital situation and have been implementing for some time appropriate measures to strengthen our capital base," Raiffeisen CEO Walter Rothensteiner said. Popular earlier said that it had fired its chief executive Francisco Gomez after its profit was nearly wiped out in the

second quarter. It said the EBA tests had not included the 2.5 billion euro share issue it completed in May to clean up toxic retail assets.

Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank both scored core ratios of below 8 percent, although Deutsche said it was on track to reach at least 12.5 percent by the end of 2018. Of the banks tested, 37 are based in the euro zone and supervised by the ECB, which said the results reflected progress in repairing balance sheets.

"The banking sector today is more resilient and can much better absorb economic shocks than two years ago," said Daniele Nouy, who heads supervision at the ECB.

At the start of the test, the banks had an aggregate core ratio of 12.6 percent, with all capital requirements factored in. However, this fell to 9.2 percent by the end of the test, a drop of 340 basis points, equivalent to 226 billion euros of capital. For the first time, the EU test included the impact of conduct risks such as fines and settlements. EBA said the total hit from conduct costs was 71 billion euros. The largest impact was from credit or losses on loans, totaling nearly 350 billion euros across all the banks tested. — Reuters

IMF 'BENT ITS RULES' IN ILL-FATED GREECE RESCUE

WASHINGTON: An independent probe into the IMF's handling of European bailouts found that it bent its rules and was vulnerable to political pressure as it embarked on the ill-fated 2010 Greece rescue. The International Monetary Fund's Independent Evaluation Office said in its report Thursday that in the plunge into the euro-zone crisis, the Fund's executive board was poorly informed and exercised too little oversight over decisions which taxed the Fund's resources. And it suggested that, led by and operating too closely with Europeans, the Fund underestimated the risks in the European economy and overestimated the region's ability to handle any problems.

The IEO report bluntly criticized the rush by the Fund's management, led former French finance minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn up to May 2011, to join the European Central Bank and European Commission in the crisis bailouts of Greece, Ireland and Portugal. It questioned whether the Fund had sacrificed its independence and ability to clearly assess the situation in Europe after joining the bailout "Troika" with the ECB and EC. The Fund too readily accepted the ECB and EC decision to not restructure Greece's massive debt, which would have lightened Athens' financial burden, before embarking on the first 110 billion euro bailout.

"The IMF was kept on the sidelines in late 2009 and early 2010 when approaches to dealing with the developing crisis in Greece were being debated in Europe," the report said. "By the time the IMF was invited to provide its expertise and financing in late March 2010, the option of debt restructuring at the program's outset was off the table." Debt restructuring was later required after the first bailout program failed, and even now, the IMF is demanding its European partners reduce

Greece's debt load if it is to join the third rescue program.

The report said that the IMF management's move to lend Greece more than normally permitted was rushed through the executive board, which represents the crisis lender's membership, with little discussion and understanding. That raised eyebrows around the rest of the world, where IMF crisis loans have been less flexible. "Weaknesses in the decision-making process created the perception that the IMF treated Europe differently. The procedure used for Greece was essentially repeated for Ireland and Portugal," the report said.

The IEO acknowledged that the European crisis was an extraordinary, complex challenge, the first time the Fund dealt with advanced economies in a currency union. However, it said, in joining the Troika, "the IMF lost its characteristic agility as a crisis manager. The IMF supported programs in Greece and Portugal incorporated overly optimistic growth projections; lessons from past crises were not always applied."

It suggested that the IMF, by tradition always led by Europeans, was too embedded in European sensitivities and so not making clear-eyed assessments of economic risks. "At the euro area level, IMF staff's position was often too close to the official line of European officials, and the IMF lost effectiveness as an independent assessor," the report said. The IEO added that the IMF reliance on Troika partners left it lacking flexibility, unable to change course when the Greece program stumbled early on. "IMF management and staff, having decided not to push for debt restructuring for Greece, did not make a case for it when the program's likelihood of success increasingly came into doubt, starting from the fall of 2010." — AFP

WITH NEW FACTORY, DAIMLER SKIRTS TARIFFS...AND UNIONS

DETROIT: German automaker Daimler AG broke ground this week on a \$500 million plant in Charleston, South Carolina to build vans, with the company hoping at last to avoid steep US import tariffs. When the factory comes online by the end of the decade, it may also help the company pay lower wages and circumvent labor unions.

Volker Mornhinweg, head of Mercedes-Benz Vans at Daimler, said the key reasons for putting the plant in Charleston were the city's excellent port operations and logistics and because Daimler already operates a factory next door.

Avoiding the 25 percent tariff that the United States puts on imports of commercial vehicles was also crucial. "We won't have to pay the tariff," he said, adding that the Mercedes-brand Sprinter vans were currently built in Dusseldorf, Germany and then shipped to the United States where they are re-assembled. "It's a logistical nightmare," Mornhinweg said.

South Carolina wages are markedly lower than those in Germany and the governor, Republican Nikki Haley, opposes organized labor. "We discourage any companies that have unions from wanting to come to South Carolina because we don't want to taint the water," she told The Greenville News, a local newspaper. Assembly line workers get \$18 an hour in South Carolina, according to Labor Department figures. Hourly wages for German autoworkers are closer to \$37 an hour. Frank Klein, director of operations at Mercedes-Benz Vans, said the company's practice was to pay a "competitive" wage wherever it builds a plant.

According to Mornhinweg, the new Charleston plant should be operational around 2020, following the introduction of the next Sprinter model, with some versions capable of running on electricity or featuring driverless

navigation. The new Sprinter will also fall under Daimler's Freightliner brand, part of its truck operations.

Daimler representatives touted their success in the US commercial van market, which represents nearly a half-million newly registered units per year and had traditionally been dominated by General Motors, Ford Motor Company and what is now known as Fiat Chrysler Automobiles. The arrival of the Sprinter on the US market helped popularize the European style of van, spurring American makers to market their own similar, taller versions, suitable for different trades and cargos.

The van can also be outfitted as an ambulance, according to Bernhard Glaser, head of Mercedes-Benz Vans USA. Mathias Geisen, head of marketing for Mercedes vans in the United States, said the Ford Transit van had quickly captured 50 percent to 60 percent of the market while Mercedes held 8 percent to 9 percent based on current sales. The courier service FedEx now uses the Sprinter, he noted. Geisen said Ford enjoyed a robust, nationwide network of dealerships, while the Ram ProMaster was built in Mexico and therefore not subject to US trade barriers.

The Charleston plant will help even the playing field for Daimler, Geisen said. Daimler is not the only automaker to set up operations in the southern United States, where organized labor has struggled to make inroads. Volkswagen, Nissan and Honda also maintain auto plants which the United Automobile Workers has yet to bring into its fold. According to Glaser, Mercedes-Benz vans have risen in US sales for five straight years. One of the Sprinter's selling points will be its easy customization to meet each customer's needs. "You're the expert in your trade and your van is the tool to get the job done," Glaser said. — AFP

SAUDI GROWTH SLOWING; FISCAL CONSOLIDATION MOVES AHEAD

NBK Economic Update

KUWAIT: Saudi economic growth has slowed markedly in the two years since oil prices began their descent, impacted by a combination of tighter government control on spending, lower consumer confidence and slower deposit and credit growth. As both the current and fiscal accounts swung into deficit, foreign reserves have fallen, debt issuance has returned and markets remain anxious-stock prices are down, interbank rates and CDS spreads are elevated and speculative pressure on the riyal has increased. Ratings agencies responded by downgrading the kingdom's sovereign credit rating, citing concern over weakening finances and fiscal buffers.

Faced with the prospect of a prolonged period of lower oil prices, the Saudi authorities unveiled the Saudi Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program (NTP), the kingdom's overarching strategic vision and tactical roadmap, respectively, for growth and prosperity in the post-oil era. Wholesale transformation of the Saudi socio-economic model is envisaged, with the private sector, aided by a dynamic and educated Saudi workforce, driving the kingdom's shift away from oil. Fiscal sustainability, government efficiency and labor market reforms are also top of the agenda.

Initiatives, such as spending cuts, energy/utility subsidies cuts and the restructure of ministries have already begun. The introduction of value added tax (VAT) and the public listing of up to 5% of Saudi Aramco are also in the works. The plans are undoubtedly ambitious and will face significant challenges, but the government's determination, coupled with the kingdom's ample financial reserves, should give cause for optimism.

Real oil growth

Real oil GDP expanded by 4.0% in 2015 after oil production surged to a record high of 10.2 million barrels per day (mb/d) on average. Elevated output was a direct result of Saudi Arabia's twin strategy of maintaining market share and progressing up the hydrocarbon value-chain (ie more refined products). The launch of the Satorp and Yasref refineries during 2014-15 brought an additional 0.8 mb/d of refined products output capacity.

Looking ahead, we expect oil production to average around 10.3 mb/d during 2016-17 in order for the kingdom to maintain export market share and to satisfy rising domestic demand for refined products. Indeed, over the next two years, more Saudi oil could be freed up for export if natural gas is substituted for crude in domestic power generation. The commissioning of the Wasit gas plant this year should eventually see the kingdom's output of gas increase by at least 15%, or 1.7 billion cubic feet per day (bcf/d). This will provide a boost to both oil and non-oil GDP, with the latter benefiting from the additional gas for use as feedstock for downstream processes such as petrochemicals production. Real oil GDP is therefore forecast to expand by 0.5% and 0.6% in 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Non-oil activity

The key determinant of the performance of the Saudi non-oil economy is government spending. Last year, amid cutbacks in investment spending and tighter control of current spending, non-oil growth moderated to 3.1%, from 4.8% in 2014. We expect a further slowdown in activity to 2.1% in 2016 as the authorities push ahead with more fiscal consolidation. Reflecting the cooling of the economy, key metrics of consumer and business activity such as point of sale (POS) and ATM transactions, private sector credit growth and the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) are subdued, although there was a recent uptick in some of the figures, most notably POS growth data and PMI data, which came in at 5.8% y/y and 54.2, respectively.

Meanwhile, private sector credit was expanding at 9.7% y/y in May, but has further to go to meaningfully support activity in the non-oil sector. Indeed, according to some reports, the rebound in credit growth since October's low of 5.5% y/y may be more to do with firms borrowing to ease cash flow constraints resulting from delays in government

payments than with an uptick in real business activity. The authorities will be closely monitoring credit for further improvement, given how important it is to the fortunes of the private sector, a key sector in the Saudi Vision 2030.

Inflation rises

Inflation has accelerated sharply since fuel and utility prices were hiked by the government in January. The increase in consumer prices, as measured by the kingdom's cost of living index, was of the order of 4.1% y/y in May. The transportation category, which accounts for 10% of the total index, posted the most dramatic increase in 21 years, rising from 1.3% y/y in December to 12.6% in January before slowing to 11.3% y/y in May, after the government raised the price of gasoline by as much as 67% in an effort to reduce its expensive subsidy bill. Similarly, prices in the housing and utilities segment, which has the greatest weight in the index with 20.5%, were up by 10.3% y/y as of May, they were near 4% y/y in December 2015, after the government raised water and electricity tariffs.

Up until the implementation of these subsidy cuts, consumer prices had been rising by a relatively benign 2.2% y/y. Subdued food and commodity prices and an appreciating US dollar, to which the Saudi riyal is pegged, were restraining imported inflation. Nevertheless, while these trends are likely to persist over the forecast period, inflation is expected to intensify; second-round effects of the subsidy cuts (ie as producers pass on higher costs to the consumer) and the persistence of the long-running housing shortage will provide upward price pressure. We have therefore raised our inflation forecast for 2016 and 2017 to 4.1% and 4.2%, respectively.

A third consecutive fiscal deficit is expected in 2016 but subsidy cuts and reforms will put the kingdom on a more sustainable fiscal footing. Saudi Arabia's fiscal deficit widened significantly in 2015 to 15.3% of GDP from 2.3% of GDP in 2014. This was due to a combination of elevated expenditures, including King Salman's \$23.4 bn accession bonus, and lower oil revenues. Oil revenues fell by 51% in 2015 in response to lower oil prices.

Still, the deficit was much better than the 21% of GDP that many had previously forecast. The government kept a tighter rein on its expenses than many had anticipated, cutting capital spending by an estimated 29% and overall spending by 12% to \$260 bn.

Non-oil revenues also surprised, rising by 29% to \$45.2 bn, as the government imposed higher taxes on petroleum products and accrued greater returns on its investments at SAMA and the Public Investment Fund (PIF).

Balancing the budget through fiscal consolidation and tapping additional non-oil revenue streams were among the dominant themes in the Saudi Vision 2030 and its 4-year tactical roadmap, the National Transformation Program (NTP). According to the NTP, by 2020, the authorities hope to have scaled back non-essential capital expenditures, restrained current expenditures by cutting public sector wages by 5%, and increased non-oil revenues by more than 200%, from SR 163.5 billion (\$45 bn) in 2015 to SR 530 billion (\$141 bn). These non-oil revenue streams include: higher fees for public services; new taxes on cigarettes and soft drinks, so called 'sin' taxes; a new GCC-wide value-added tax (VAT), which is expected in 2018 at a rate of 5%; and taxes on undeveloped urban land. A rough estimate of the gain to the Saudi treasury resulting from the introduction of a VAT could be in the order of \$9.6 billion, or 22% of non-oil revenues. This would approximate to around 1.5% of GDP. Further fuel and utility price hikes are also expected over the next few years as the authorities look to cut the costly subsidy bill by SR200 billion (8.3% of GDP).

Privatization of state entities is also a key strategic objective. Chief among these will be the sale of state oil giant Saudi Aramco (up to 5% of the company is expected to be floated) and its incorporation in a restructured PIF, the kingdom's newly designated sovereign wealth fund. According to our estimates, these initiatives should help narrow the fiscal deficit to -

11.4% of GDP in 2016 and -7.4% of GDP in 2017.

Large foreign reserves

The kingdom's official foreign reserves stood at \$581 bn in May, declining by \$98 bn, or 14.5%, compared to a year ago. This equates to a still healthy 26 months of import cover. The rate of reserve drawdown has slowed in 2016, however, as the authorities increasingly use debt financing. Last year saw approximately SR 98 bn (\$26 billion) worth of government bonds sold to local financial institutions, which helped to cover just over a quarter of the deficit. In 2016, the authorities augmented their domestic bond issuance program with a \$10 billion syndicated loan obtained from foreign banks. \$10-15 billion sharia-compliant Eurobond is also mooted this year.

Public debt, unsurprisingly, has risen. From a historic low of 1.6% of GDP in 2014, gross public debt increased to 5.8% of GDP last year; it should continue rising to 21% of GDP by the end of 2017 at the current rate. This is, however, still an extremely low level of debt by international standards. Rising public debt along with broader concerns over fiscal sustainability, were the key reasons ratings agencies such as Standard & Poor's (S&P) and Moody's downgraded the kingdom's sovereign rating this year. S&P downgraded Saudi Arabia by two notches to A- in January before Moody's followed suit with a one-notch downgrade from AA3 to A1.

Liquidity tightens

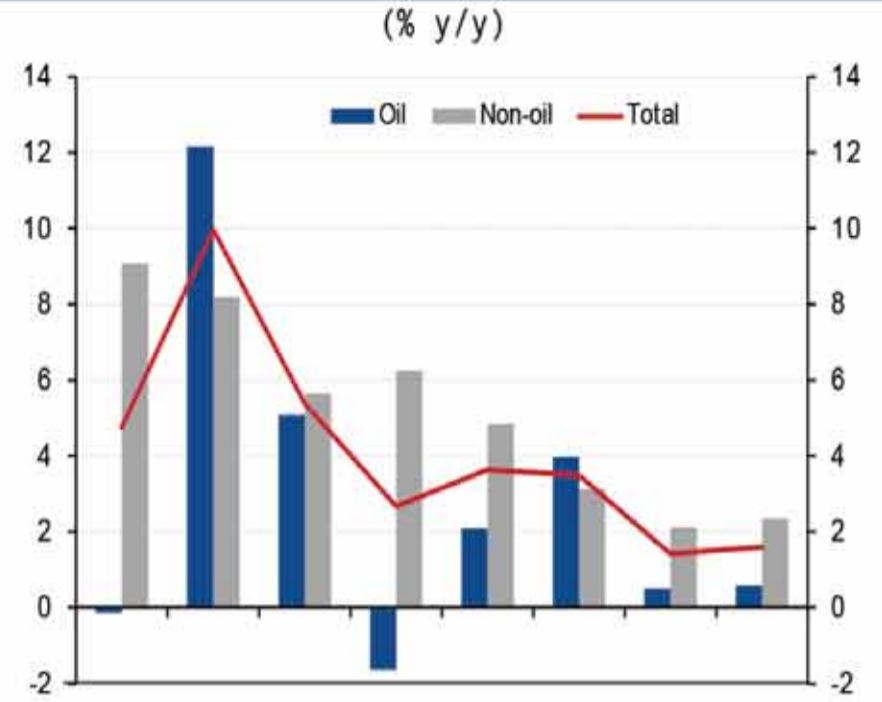
The drop in oil prices has had a material impact on deposit flows into the banking system. Total bank deposits were contracting by -3.4% y/y in May, led by declines in both government (-3.9% y/y) and private sector deposits (-4.3% y/y). Money supply (M3) has contracted for four straight months, falling to -3.2% y/y in May. With overall deposit growth lagging credit growth, the banking system's loan-to-deposit (LD) ratio increased to 86% in May. Liquidity has consequently tightened, along with a rise in interest rates; the 3-month Saudi Arabia Interbank Offered Rate (SAIBOR), for example, is up 15 bps y/y at 2.23%, which is its highest in 7 years.

In a move to alleviate some of the liquidity constraints, SAMA recently loosened the LD ratio, allowing banks to lend up to 90% of their deposits (previously 85%). The government is also concerned that its sovereign debt issuance program could crowd out bank lending to the private sector, with negative economic effects. Banks have already begun reducing their lower-yielding cash, deposit and treasury bill holdings at the central bank and are shifting the liquidity into higher-yielding sovereign bonds. As of May 2016, total bank reserves at SAMA had declined by -24.2% y/y (to \$39.7 billion) and holdings of SAMA bills had fallen by -73.2% y/y (to \$16.3 billion).

Consequently, reserves at SAMA, as a share of total bank assets, have declined to 6.6%. On the other hand, bank holdings of government bonds increased by 192% y/y in May to \$40.9 billion. At the same time, speculation that the authorities would be forced to devalue the riyal, in effect abandoning the 30-year peg to the US dollar, reached its highest in about two decades earlier in the year. The SAR: USD forward exchange rate spiked by 975 forward points over the spot rate to 3.85 on 12 January, though it has since come off that high.

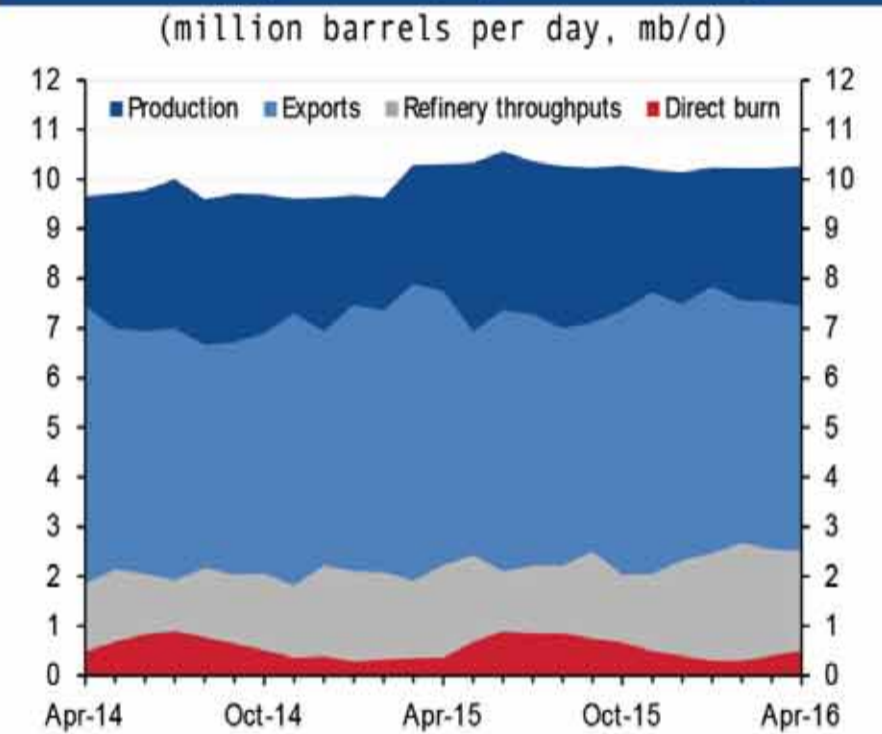
The authorities, for their part, however, are unlikely to shift away from an exchange rate regime that has served them well in the past, anchoring both the economy and inflation. The dollar peg provides stability to trade and income flows, especially given the fact that oil, which is priced in dollars, continues to dominate the Saudi economy. With the exception of 2015, over the last decade oil has accounted for close to 90% of the kingdom's export and fiscal revenues. Meanwhile, 5-year credit default swap spreads (CDS) remain high at 187 bps and very sensitive to changes in the outlook for oil prices and Saudi Arabia's fiscal situation. Since oil prices began falling in mid-2014, Saudi CDS have climbed by more than 140 bps.

Chart 1: Real GDP



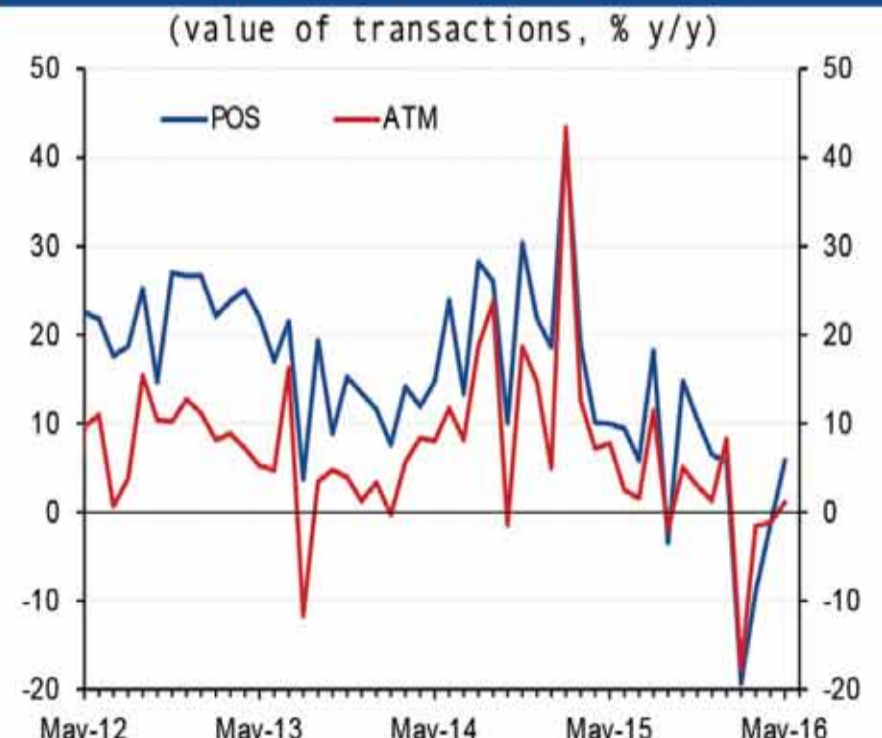
Source: General Authority for Statistics, NBK

Chart 2: Oil production, exports and consumption



Source: JODI, OPEC

Chart 3: ATM and POS transactions



Source: Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA)

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
ASIAN COUNTRIES		
Japanese Yen	2.971	
Indian Rupees	4.521	
Pakistani Rupees	2.896	
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.082	
Nepali Rupees	2.823	
Singapore Dollar	227.930	
Hongkong Dollar	39.078	
Bangladesh Taka	3.865	
Philippine Peso	6.450	
Thai Baht	8.730	
GCC COUNTRIES		
Saudi Riyal	80.883	
Qatari Riyal	83.317	
ani Riyal	787.812	
Bahraini Dinar	805.500	
UAE Dirham	82.580	
ARAB COUNTRIES		
Egyptian Pound - Cash	31.250	
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	34.530	
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.218	
Tunisian Dinar	137.800	
Jordanian Dinar	428.000	
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.022	
Syrian Lira	2.0162	
Morocco Dirham	31.447	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		
US Dollar Transfer	303.150	
Euro	342.260	

Sterling Pound	404.100
Canadian dollar	234.430
Turkish lira	101.860
Swiss Franc	316.110
Australian Dollar	233.120
US Dollar Buying	301.950

	GOLD
20 Gram	270.610
10 Gram	138.220
5 Gram	69.960

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.350
Canadian Dollar	232.955
Sterling Pound	402.010
Euro	340.030
Swiss Frank	295.260
Bahrain Dinar	801.930
UAE Dirhams	82.820
Qatari Riyals	84.035
Saudi Riyals	81.615
Jordanian Dinar	427.450
Egyptian Pound	34.064
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.081
Indian Rupees	4.520
Pakistani Rupees	2.888
Bangladesh Taka	3.860
Philippines Peso	6.436
Cyprus pound	159.865
Japanese Yen	3.920
Syrian Pound	2.405
Nepalese Rupees	3.825

Malaysian Ringgit	76.025
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	46.035
Thai Bhat	9.695
Turkish Lira	101.620

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.391319	0.406319
Czech Korune	0.004314	0.016314
Danish Krone	0.040738	0.045738
Euro	0.0327885	0.0336885
Norwegian Krone	0.031333	0.036533
Romanian Leu	0.074498	0.074498
Slovakia	0.009051	0.019051
Swedish Krona	0.030979	0.035979
Swiss Franc	0.299214	0.310214
Turkish Lira	0.096447	0.106747
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.218594	0.230594
New Zealand Dollar	0.207096	0.216595
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.224611	0.233611
Georgina Lari	0.137008	0.137008
US Dollars	0.299250	0.304250
US Dollars Mint	0.299750	0.304250
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003397	0.003981
Chinese Yuan	0.044080	0.047580
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037016	0.039766

Indian Rupee	0.004361	0.004771
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000019	0.000025
Japanese Yen	0.002791	0.002971
Kenyan Shilling	0.002986	0.002986
Korean Won	0.000257	0.000272
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071286	0.077286
Nepalese Rupee	0.002681	0.003031
Pakistan Rupee	0.002728	0.003018
Philippine Peso	0.006337	0.006637
Sierra Leone	0.000052	0.000058
Singapore Dollar	0.217947	0.227947
South African Rand	0.015083	0.023583
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001662	0.002242
Taiwan	0.009341	0.009521
Thai Baht	0.008331	0.008881
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.798072	0.806572
Egyptian Pound	0.027140	0.032258
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000182	0.000242
Jordanian Dinar	0.424763	0.433763
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.019363	0.043363
Nigerian Naira	0.001252	0.001887
Omani Riyal	0.781502	0.787182
Qatar Riyal	0.082511	0.083961
Saudi Riyal	0.079807	0.081107
Syrian Pound	0.001286	0.001506
Tunisian Dinar	0.132882	0.140882
Turkish Lira	0.096447	0.106747
UAE Dirhams	0.081166	0.082866
Yemeni Riyal	0.001371	0.001451

MYANMAR GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES THIN ECONOMIC POLICY



YANGON: Two hotel high rise towers partially obscure the skyline of old Yangon with a view of Yangon river in the background. Scores of historical buildings from the British colonial era have already been razed by the flood of foreign investment that followed the end of total military rule in 2011 and has pushed the city into a development frenzy. — AFP

NAYPYITAW: Myanmar's government has released a long-awaited economic policy, but the document was noticeably light on specifics and will likely do little to ease the concern of businesses that have grown frustrated with the lack of a detailed plan. At just three pages, the policy, launched by the Ministry of Planning and Finance in the capital, Naypyitaw, comes some eight months after Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won a resounding victory in a November election.

The paper broadly outlined 12 policies ranging from prioritizing labor-intensive enterprises to the privatization of some state-owned ones, but it

lacked detail or plans for how to accomplish the goals. "To create human resources which will be conducive to economic development and to develop technologies and vocational education," the government said in one of the points. Maung Maung Win, deputy minister of finance and planning, told Reuters the policy document was an "overview," and that more detailed plans on specific areas of the economy would be released in future. But he said he did not know when. "I cannot say the specific date," he said. "It will come, it will come."

As well as NLD members and ministry officials, diplomats and representatives of international aid



YANGON: A rice straw bundle for feeding birds hangs from the door of the abandoned colonial building that was the former headquarters of Burma Oil during the British rule. — AFP

groups attended the launch. Han Tha Myint, a senior NLD member, said that those in attendance were hoping for more insight as to how the government planned to promote business and boost the economy in the impoverished country of 51 million. "They are asking for details, it is very vague," he said. "There are no specifics, objectives or those things." Members of the media were barred from attending. Dr Sid Naing, country director for the Marie Stopes international healthcare group, who also attended, said many people were disappointed about the lack of specifics.

The private sector has increasingly questioned the NLD's commitment to business as Suu Kyi, the

country's leader, has focused her efforts on the country's complex peace process.

Since April, the government has approved just 19 foreign and domestic investment projects after a two-month delay in reforming an investment commission that led to a backlog of more than 100 projects. On Friday, Suu Kyi met members of two ethnic minority armed groups, including members of the United Wa State Army, believed to be the largest and most powerful such group in the country. The Wa, who control large swathes of land on the Myanmar-China border, have largely sat out the peace process started by former President Thein Sein. — Reuters



TOKYO: A man looks at clothing on sale at a shop in Tokyo. Japan's Central Bank has opted for a modest expansion of its lavish monetary stimulus to help perk up sluggish growth and combat deflation. — AP

BOJ EXPANDS STIMULUS

BANK OF JAPAN EASES POLICY BY DOUBLING ETF BUYING

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan expanded stimulus by doubling purchases of exchange-traded funds (ETF), yielding to pressure from the government and financial markets for bolder action, but disappointing investors who had set their hearts on more audacious measures. The central bank, however, said it will conduct a thorough assessment of the effects of negative interest rates and its massive asset-buying program in September, suggesting that a major overhaul of its stimulus program may be forthcoming. BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said the bank was conducting the review not because its policy tools have been exhausted but to come up with better ways to achieve its 2 percent target - keeping alive expectations of further monetary easing.

"I don't think we've reached the limits both in terms of the possibility of more rate cuts and increased asset purchases," Kuroda told reporters after the policy meeting. "We will of course consider what to do in terms of monetary policy steps, based on the outcome of the assessment." At the two-day rate review that ended on Friday, the BOJ decided to increase ETF purchases so its total holdings increase at an annual pace of 6 trillion yen (\$58 billion), up from the current 3.3 trillion yen. The decision was made by a 7-2 vote.

But the BOJ maintained its base money target at 80 trillion yen, as well as keeping to the existing pace of purchasing other assets including Japanese government bonds. It left unchanged the 0.1 percent interest it charges on a portion of excess reserves that financial institutions park with the central bank. The dollar fell more than a

full yen on Friday at one point to as low as 102.825 and the Nikkei average tumbled nearly 2 percent, after the BOJ's decision fell short of expectations. The benchmark 10-year JGB yield rose briefly to minus 0.170 percent, its highest since June 24, as the BOJ held off on expanding bond purchases.

"The BOJ did not live up to expectations," said Norio Miyagawa, senior economist at Mizuho Securities. "Increasing ETF purchases makes no contribution to achieving 2 percent inflation. The BOJ won't admit it, but it has reached the limits of quantitative easing and negative rates." By coordinating its action with the government's promised \$272 billion economic stimulus spending package, the BOJ likely aimed to maximize the effect of its measures on an economy that is struggling to escape decades of stagnation. "Japan is conducting a powerful mix of flexible fiscal policy and quantitative easing," Kuroda said. "The government's stimulus package helps reinforce this drive and is timely in achieving sustainable growth with price stability."

More stimulus coming? The BOJ maintained its rosy inflation forecasts for fiscal 2017 and 2018 in a quarterly review of its projections. It also left intact its timeframe for hitting its 2 percent price growth target, but warned that heightening uncertainties could cause delays. Kuroda justified Friday's slight easing as aimed at preventing external headwinds, such as weak emerging market demand and Britain's vote to leave the European Union, from hurting business and household confidence. But analysts say pressure from the

government and markets was largely behind the move. Japan's economy minister lobbied for more BOJ action in the wake of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's announcement of a bigger-than-expected 28 trillion yen stimulus package on Wednesday.

"The BOJ seems to have had no choice but to ease policy this time as markets had factored in fresh stimulus measures significantly. In addition to that, there seems to have been political pressure," said Tsuyoshi Ueno, senior economist at NLI Research Institute. Worried about their dwindling policy options, some BOJ policymakers have expressed doubts over the feasibility of expanding an already massive stimulus program that has failed to boost inflation. Such concerns may be addressed when the BOJ conducts an assessment of the effect of its current policies at its next rate review on Sept 20-21, though Kuroda ruled out the chance of modifying the price target or the timeframe for hitting it.

He stressed that there was still more room to deepen negative rates or expand bond purchases. Some analysts say the review may lead to more radical steps being proposed. "What's noteworthy is that the BOJ has promised to review the effects of its policy at its next meeting, keeping alive expectations of further easing," said Shunsuke Yamada, chief Japan currency strategist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. "This makes the next meeting very important. The yen is likely to be volatile until then." — Reuters

JAPAN AIRLINES PROFIT 'MORE THAN HALVED'

TOKYO: Japan Airlines said its three-month net profit more than halved as savings from a decline in fuel costs could not make up for weak travel demand at home and abroad. Falling oil prices have helped the carrier's bottom line-fuel is often an airline's single-biggest expense. JAL said the impact of killer earthquakes in April in western Japan dented tourist travel to the region and thus demand for flights, while revenue on international routes slumped amid "stagnant" demand.

The airline in a statement said net profit in April-June dropped to 14.7 billion yen (\$142 million) from 32.6 billion yen a year earlier, as revenue inched down 4.8 percent to 297.2 billion yen. JAL offered little detail on the sharp profit decline but the Nikkei business daily reported Thursday that growing personnel costs on the back of a pilot shortage as well as the negative impact on travel due to terror attacks in Europe were key factors.

Terror attacks, now often honing in on so-called soft targets, including foreign tourists, are expected to remain a "down-

side driver", said Hiroshi Hasegawa, an analyst at SMBC Nikko Securities. Revenue from JAL's international services for the quarter dropped 9.1 percent from a year earlier. "Crude oil prices, which affect our fuel purchasing costs, international passenger revenue and international cargo revenue, have been lower than the year before," JAL said.

The airline nevertheless left its full-year forecast unchanged, projecting net profit of 192 billion yen with sales at 1.343 trillion yen for the fiscal year to March. But analyst Hasegawa cited the rise of low cost carriers as a worry for Japanese airlines in huge regional market China. "The prospect for aviation demand in China is another concern in the wake of severe competition with LCCs there," he said. JAL re-listed its shares in Tokyo in 2012 to mark a spectacular turnaround three years after it went bankrupt with massive debts and saw its stock delisted from the Tokyo Stock Exchange. Rival All Nippon Airways is scheduled to announce its quarterly earnings next week. — AFP



AMRITSAR: Indian vendor, Vikram Singh (unseen) sells Kara or Kada - bracelet made of steel or iron - at his roadside stall in Amritsar yesterday. Singh earns about 500 Indian rupees (\$.50) per day. — AFP

UK AND CHINA REGULATORS DISCUSS FRAMEWORK FOR FINANCIAL PROJECTS

HONG KONG: British and Chinese securities watchdogs are discussing an agreement that will pave the way for landmark financial services projects between the countries, sources said, easing fears that Britain could be a less attractive partner for such deals after last month's vote to leave the European Union. Britain's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) are cooperating on a regulatory framework for a scheme for distributing fund products in each other's jurisdiction and a proposed London-Shanghai link for trading shares, two people with direct knowledge of the matter said.

Britain, home to the EU's biggest finance

sector, has been pushing in recent years to deepen its financial services ties with China, which has agreed to these and other cross-border financial services schemes as part of the UK-China Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) program.

The UK's former Chancellor George Osborne and Chinese vice premier Ma Kai said at last September's EFD meeting in Beijing that they would explore the creation of a London-Shanghai equity link and mutual funds recognition scheme, but neither government has provided further details. The formal cooperation between the FCA and CSRC signals that the projects are going ahead, with one source saying the discus-

sions had remained "very positive". Some market watchers had raised concerns that leaving the EU, which puts in doubt the UK's future access to the trading bloc and its "passports" to provide financial services there, could scupper such projects by limiting their potential scope and appeal. "So far none of the cross-border exchange initiatives has been derailed by the risk of Britain leaving the European economic area and the associated passporting rights," said Frederic Ponzio, managing partner at financial services consultancy GreySpark Partners in London. "What is clear is that the CSRC and the FCA will not stop cooperating after the vote to leave the EU," he added.

A second source said the FCA and CSRC were exploring a regulatory agreement similar conceptually to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) inked by the CSRC and the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) prior to the launch of the Hong Kong-Shanghai stock trading link in November 2014.

The Hong Kong-China MOU created a framework for policing the scheme, including sharing trading data and coordinating on investigations, although it was not clear if a UK-China cooperation would be as far reaching, the sources said.

Details of the regulatory agreement may be announced at the next EFD meeting in

the Autumn, though this has not been decided yet, both sources said. One said the UK and China may also unveil cooperation on so-called "fintech" initiatives.

Both said, however, that Britain and China did not expect to announce any major new financial services initiatives at this year's EFD meeting, the date for which has not been set but will likely be held in October or November in Britain, a third source said, while both countries analyse the implications of Britain's exiting the EU. The FCA declined to provide comment. The CSRC, UK Treasury and Chinese Ministry of Finance did not respond to requests for comment. — Reuters

KSE ENDS IN THE GREEN ZONE

BAYAN INVESTMENT WEEKLY REPORT

KUWAIT: Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) ended last week in the green zone. The Price Index closed at 5,460.73 points, up by 1.29% from the week before closing, the Weighted Index increased by 0.18% after closing at 352.20 points, whereas the KSX-15 Index closed at 818.46 points up by 0.88%. Furthermore, last week's average daily turnover decreased by 19.42%, compared to the preceding week, reaching KD 7.24 million, whereas trading volume average was 94.29 million shares, recording an increase of 16.41%.

The three stock market indices ended the week's trading in the green zone, whereas the Price Index was able to increase affected by the quick speculative operations executed on many small-cap stocks, and the Weighted and KSX-15 indices were able to realize gains as a result to the random purchasing operations executed on some leading stocks. On the contrary, the market witnessed quick profit collection operations during the last week's sessions that limited the indices gains to some point, while such operations could not push the market to the red zone on the weekly level.

As per the daily trading activity, the market was able to realize a grouped increase for the three indices on last Sunday's and Monday's sessions affected by the random purchasing operations that targeted many previously traded stocks, in addition to the quick speculative operations which the small-cap stocks received a portion of, plus the purchasing activity witnessed by some listed investment groups, amid an optimism about the financial results for the first half of the current year.

Moreover, the market witnessed a fluctuation at closing for the three indices in the mid week session, whereas the price Index recorded a noticeable growth, while the Weighted and KSX-15 indices declined by the end of the session. Furthermore, the price Index was able to realize a big increase in the same session and was able to reach its highest level in about 7 months, as a result to the support received by the big increase recorded by the National Consumer Holding Company's stock at the end of the session, where it recorded a daily increase by 220%, which positively reflected on the Price Index.

On Wednesday's session, the market indices continued its fluctuation for the second consecutive session, as the Price and Weighted indices declined affected by the profit collection operations that concentrated on the stocks of previous different increases, while the KSX-15 Index recorded good growth supported by the random trading operations that targeted some operational stocks.

By the end of the week, the stock market witnessed mixed performance for the three indices whereas the Weighted and KSX-15 indices realized limited gain supported by the purchasing operations executed on some leading stocks, especially the Telecommunication sector, while the Weighted Index declined as a result to the profit collection operations executed on the small-cap stocks.

Moreover, the market capitalization reached by the end of last week KD 22.94 billion, up by 0.16% compared to its level in a week earlier, where it reached then KD 22.90 billion. However on an annual level, the market cap for the listed companies in KSE declined by 9.21% from its value at end of 2015, where it reached then KD 25.27 billion.

As far as KSE annual performance, the price index ended last week recording 2.75% annual loss compared to its closing in 2015, while the weighted index decreased by 7.73%, and the KSX-15 recorded 9.10% loss.

Sectors' indices

Seven of KSE's sectors ended last week in the green zone, while the other four recorded declines, whereas the Banks sector's index closed with no change from the week before. Last week's highest gainer was the Industrial sector, achieving 7.93% growth rate as its index closed at 1,139.16 points. Whereas, in the second place, the Health Care sector's index closed at 1,043.81 points recording 0.85% increase. The Telecommunications sector came in third as its index achieved 0.59%

growth, ending the week at 608.24 points. On the other hand, the Consumer Services sector headed the losers list as its index declined by 3.51% to end the week's activity at 923.81 points. The Oil & Gas sector was second on the losers' list, which index declined by 3.50%, closing at 762.29 points, followed by the Technology sector, as its index closed at 989.54 points at a loss of 3.11%.

Sectors' activity

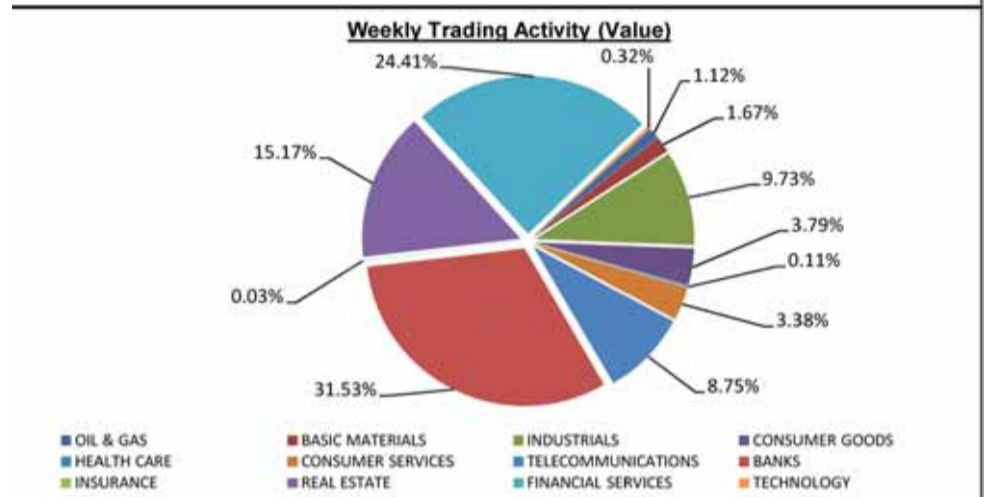
The Financial Services sector dominated a total trade volume of around 180.38 million shares changing hands during last week, representing 38.26% of the total market trading volume. The Real Estate sector was second in terms of trading volume as the sector's traded shares were 30.63% of last week's total trad-

ing volume, with a total of around 144.41 million shares. On the other hand, the Banks sector's stocks were the highest traded in terms of value; with a turnover of around KD 11.41 million or 31.53% of last week's total market

trading value. The Financial Services sector took the second place as the sector's last week turnover was approx. KD 8.83 million representing 24.41% of the total market trading value.

MARKET ACTIVITY			
	Last Week	Previous Week	Ch. %
Volume	471,433,903	404,966,402	16.41%
Value (K.D)	36,181,485	44,904,069	-19.42%
Deals	11,160	10,446	6.84%
MARKET CAPITALISATION (K.D.)			
	Last Week	Previous Week	Weekly Ch. %
	22,938,356,709	22,901,580,901	0.16%
			Annual Ch. %
			-9.21%
TOP GAINERS OF THE WEEK			
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)
NCCI	40.00	12.50	27.5
GGMC	325.00	250.00	75.0
KAMCO	98.00	79.00	19.0
AWJ	75.00	64.00	11.0
ACICO	290.00	260.00	30.0
TOP LOSERS OF THE WEEK			
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)
KCIN	960.00	1,380.00	-420.0
EQUIPMENT	55.00	63.00	-8.0
NAPESCO	730.00	830.00	-100.0
LOGISTICS	70.00	79.00	-9.0
ASC	244.00	270.00	-26.0

KSE INDICES				
		Price Index	Weighted index	KSX 15
Weekly	Last week	5,460.73	352.20	818.46
	Previous week	5,391.20	351.57	811.34
	Change (Point)	69.53	0.63	7.12
	Change (%)	1.29%	0.18%	0.88%
Annual	Last year	5,615.12	381.70	900.43
	Change (Point)	-154.39	-29.50	-81.97
	Change (%)	-2.75%	-7.73%	-9.10%



SECTORS' WEEKLY TRADING ACTIVITY				
Sector	Volume	To Market %	Value	To Market %
OIL & GAS	8,771,365	1.86%	406,110	1.12%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,850,307	0.39%	603,247	1.67%
INDUSTRIALS	61,979,913	13.15%	3,522,070	9.73%
CONSUMER GOODS	1,210,230	0.26%	1,369,670	3.79%
HEALTH CARE	191,143	0.04%	38,419	0.11%
CONSUMER SERVICES	15,724,128	3.34%	1,223,176	3.38%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	22,259,975	4.72%	3,165,619	8.75%
BANKS	33,601,651	7.13%	11,406,544	31.53%
INSURANCE	105,196	0.02%	9,968	0.03%
REAL ESTATE	144,407,866	30.63%	5,487,796	15.17%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	180,379,726	38.26%	8,833,629	24.41%
TECHNOLOGY	952,403	0.20%	115,238	0.32%

SECTORS INDICES PERFORMANCE				
Sector	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
OIL & GAS	762.29	789.91	-3.50%	-6.89%
BASIC MATERIALS	960.69	967.23	-0.68%	-2.60%
INDUSTRIALS	1,139.16	1,055.45	7.93%	9.22%
CONSUMER GOODS	1,193.52	1,197.26	-0.31%	9.01%
HEALTH CARE	1,043.81	1,034.98	0.85%	12.80%
CONSUMER SERVICES	923.81	957.42	-3.51%	-8.41%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	608.24	604.65	0.59%	1.61%
BANKS	789.26	789.23	0.00%	-12.99%
INSURANCE	1,019.58	1,017.49	0.21%	-9.53%
REAL ESTATE	841.70	839.76	0.23%	-10.53%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	565.46	564.30	0.21%	-5.03%
TECHNOLOGY	989.54	1,021.31	-3.11%	20.65%

AHLI UNITED BANK WINS 'THE BEST ISLAMIC BANK IN KUWAIT'

AUB WINS FOR FOURTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

KUWAIT: The Banker offers one of the most prestigious annual awards reflecting excellence in the global Islamic banking industry. This award is recognition and appreciation of Ahli United Bank's achievements in offering distinguished and competitive Islamic banking services in Kuwait. In a press release to commemorate this award, Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Ahli United Bank, stated: "Ahli United Bank's achievement in receiving this award for the fourth consecutive year underscores the distinct progress the Bank has made in the Islamic banking sector in Kuwait."

Despite fierce competition, we have continued with our success since our transformation to operate in accordance with the Islamic Sharia on 1 April 2010. We provide a full range of banking products and services that have consolidated the Bank's pioneering status in the Kuwaiti market acquired throughout the past 75 years. The Bank continues to win numerous international awards and coupled with very good credit ratings, reaffirms its sound approach in developing the right products and services for the Kuwaiti market.

Dr Al Mudhaf added: "This award is to be added to the growing record of Ahli United Bank's many achievements and successes. This would have been impossible without the dedicated efforts of the Bank staff and the confidence placed in us by our customers and, furthermore, their appreciation of the high quality of our banking products and services. The excellence that the Bank has achieved represents another challenge - a challenge to maintain the gains, and retain the acquired reputation and leading position."

Richard Groves, Ahli United Bank's CEO, said on this occasion: "We are very proud of winning this prestigious award, especially as it is for the fourth year in a row. It is further proof of our solid success and the sound path which we tread. I sincerely congratulate all my staff on this achievement which continues a series of accomplishments realized during the past years. I also wish to express my gratitude to all our customers and stakeholders for their business and the confidence they place in us. Without them, the winning of such awards would be impossible. Thank you."



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US AGENCIES SUBPOENA GOLDMAN SACHS IN 1MDB MALAYSIA PROBE

NEW YORK: US regulators have issued subpoenas to Goldman Sachs for documents related to the investment giant's dealings with the 1MDB Malaysian state investment fund, a source close to the probe told AFP on Friday. Subpoenas were issued a few months ago by investigators from the Department of Justice and Securities and Exchange Committee (SEC) the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The investigators also want to interview a Goldman Sachs employee over the bank's role, according to The Wall Street Journal, which first broke the story. The US officials, who base their authority on the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, want to know why Goldman Sachs did not report transactions deemed suspicious that involve funds raised by bond offerings worth \$6.5 billion (5.8 billion euros) for 1MDB, the source said.

Goldman Sachs arranged for the bond sale, and has collected some \$590 million in commissions for its work. The investment bank is collaborating with US regulators, the source said, and is also providing information to regulators in Singapore, which is also carrying out a probe, The Journal reported. When contacted by AFP, Goldman Sachs had no comment. US regulators want to see if Goldman Sachs followed US banking laws that requires banks and financial

institutions to report suspicious transactions. Goldman has rejected any charges linking them to corruption.

Malaysia has been gripped for more than a year by allegations that billions of dollars were looted from state investment fund 1MDB in an audacious campaign of fraud and money laundering. On July 20, the US Justice Department filed suit to recover more than \$1 billion in assets it says were illegally purchased using 1MDB funds. Later Singapore said it had seized nearly \$180 million linked to the scandal-tainted fund. "The Department of Justice will not allow the American financial system to be used as a conduit for corruption," US Attorney General Loretta Lynch said on announcing the legal action.

Lynch said the funds taken from 1Malaysia Development Berhad had been meant to help develop the Malaysian economy. "Instead, they were stolen, laundered through American financial institutions and used to enrich a few officials and their associates," she said. 1Malaysia Development Berhad, or 1MDB, is a state investment fund launched and overseen by embattled Prime Minister Najib Razak in 2009 shortly after assuming office. Both Najib and 1MDB have consistently dismissed allegations of wrongdoing as political attacks by his opponents.— AFP

MAURITANIA GOLD MINE TO REOPEN

NOUAKCHOTT: Production at a giant Canadian-owned gold mine in Mauritania will resume in August, the company said, after operations were suspended in June over a dispute with the government about work permits. Work at the Tasiast site, one of the main gold mines in west Africa, stopped after the state ordered expatriates whose work permits had expired to stay home. That order came a month after workers went on strike over plans by the owner Kinross to slash costs. "Operations of extraction and treatment at the Tasiast

mine should resume normally in the first half of August," said a statement from Tasiast Mauritania Limited, a local subsidiary of Toronto-headquartered Kinross, on Thursday.

The resumption follows an agreement between TLMSA and the government of Mauritania to resolve the work permits dispute, according to the statement. In June, the government intervened after a routine inspection of the mine to ensure workers had the necessary permits and that their rights were being upheld.— AFP

GMO WHEAT FOUND IN WASHINGTON COULD AFFECT US TRADE

SEATTLE: Genetically modified wheat not approved for sale or commercial production in the United States has been found growing in a field in Washington State, agriculture officials said Friday, posing a possible risk to trade with countries concerned about engineered food. The Food and Drug Administration says genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, are safe and little scientific concern exists about the safety of those on the market. But critics say not enough is known about their risks, and they want GMOs labeled so people know what's in their food.

On Friday, President Barack Obama signed into law a bill that will require labeling of genetically modified ingredients for the first time. The legislation passed by Congress two weeks ago will require most food packages to carry a text label, a symbol or an electronic code readable by smartphone that indicates whether the food contains genetically

modified organisms, or GMOs. Several Asian countries temporarily banned US wheat imports after genetically modified wheat was found unexpectedly in a field on an Oregon farm in 2013. It also popped up in a field at a university research center in Montana in 2014.

It wasn't immediately clear how altered wheat cropped up in Washington. But the US Agriculture Department said there is no evidence it has entered the market. If it did, the FDA concluded that "it is unlikely that the wheat would present any safety concerns if present in the food supply," the department said. A farmer discovered 22 plants in an unplanted field, and the wheat was developed to be resistant to the herbicide known as Roundup, created by seed giant Monsanto, the USDA said. An agency spokeswoman did not know where in the state it was found.

Federal officials said they were work-

ing with the farmer to ensure that none of the modified wheat is sold. Out of caution, the agency said it is holding and testing the farmer's full wheat harvest, but so far it has not found GMOs. The plants are a type of wheat that had been evaluated in limited field trials in the Pacific Northwest from 1998 to 2001 but never commercialized, Monsanto said in a statement. It said the type found in Washington state is similar to the one discovered in Oregon three years ago; it has the same inserted DNA but in a different location.

No variety of genetically engineered wheat has been approved for commercial use or production in the US. GMOs are plants or animals that have had genes copied from other plants or animals inserted into their DNA. Most genetically engineered crops are corn and soybeans eaten by livestock or made into popular processed food ingredients like corn-

starch, soybean oil or high fructose corn syrup. Only a handful of modified fruits and vegetables are available, including Hawaiian papaya, some zucchini and squash and a small percentage of sweet corn. The FDA also has approved for consumption a genetically engineered salmon that would grow faster than traditional salmon, but it's not yet available in grocery stores. South Korea said Friday that it will inspect US wheat imports for genetically modified wheat, the Yonhap News Agency reported. The Ministry of Food and Drug Safety said it has asked the USDA for information on the unapproved wheat and inspection methods.

The USDA said it has validated a test that Monsanto developed for the herbicide-resistant wheat, which would be available to trading partners. "Trading partners will get the tests. I believe that once they have those in place, they'll continue buying," said Glen Squires, CEO of

the Washington Grain Commission, a state agency that represents wheat farmers. "We don't anticipate any major disruptions."

The USDA also said it has beefed up oversight of genetically engineered field trials and now requires developers to apply for a permit for those involving GMO wheat starting this year. In 2014, genetically modified wheat plants were found at a university research center in Huntley, Montana, where it was legally tested by Monsanto in the early 2000s. The plants in eastern Oregon were found in a field that had never conducted such tests, and the USDA closed its investigation two years ago unable to determine how the wheat got there. Different strains were found in each state. The Washington Association of Wheat Growers and the Washington State Agriculture Department referred questions to federal authorities. — AP

BREXIT DANGERS THREATEN

EURO-ZONE GROWTH SLOWS

BRUSSELS: Growth in the euro-zone halved in the second quarter, official data showed, with analysts warning that the consequences of Brexit could harm the economy further later in the year. The Eurostat statistics agency said economic growth in the 19-nation single currency bloc slowed to 0.3 percent in the April to June period, with stagnation in France largely contributing to the poor data.

This was down from a far more robust expansion of 0.6 percent in the previous quarter, though analysts had said that result was due to a surprisingly warm winter in Europe. The latest figures were in line with forecasts of analysts surveyed by data company Factset, and meant the euro-zone grew by 1.6 percent over 12 months.

The period covered by the gross domestic product (GDP) data largely pre-dates the shock vote in late June by non-euro Britain, which the European Central Bank warned would negatively influence growth in Europe for years to come. Signals so far are that economic activity in the euro-zone is proving resilient despite the vote, after strong initial shocks rocked the financial markets.

"The good news is that the economy still has some momentum, though there is little acceleration to be expected as long as the Brexit story continues to inject some uncertainty into the external environment," said Peter Vanden Houde, chief economist at ING Bank in Brussels. Looking ahead, "the third quarter started on a good foot-

ing, but it is probably too soon to start downplaying the potential negative impact of Brexit on euro-zone growth," he added. In the euro-zone, Spain managed to grow a solid 0.7 percent despite political deadlock since inconclusive elections last December.

But French growth ground to a halt in the April-June period, a disappointing result for the euro-zone's second-biggest economy. Eurostat also announced that euro-zone consumer prices rose 0.2 percent in July after a gain of 0.1 percent in June as the single currency bloc edged further away from the dangers of deflation. "The inflation data is likely to be the start of a more sustained pick-up in price rises," said Jack Allen, European economist at

Capital Economics. The ECB last week refrained from adding more monetary stimulus to boost consumer prices in the euro-zone, disappointing markets.

Slow euro-zone growth has seen inflation slide in and out of negative territory, threatening a dangerous downward spiral of falling prices and wages. The ECB aims to get inflation back to its long-term target of two percent or just below, a level it deems healthy for growth. Euro-zone unemployment meanwhile was unchanged at 10.1 percent in June compared with May, but down from 11 percent in June 2015, Eurostat said. The agency said GDP growth for the EU's 28 member states as a whole stood at 0.4 percent, for a year-on-year gain of 1.8 percent. — AFP



BOSTON: Passers-by walk near the construction site of a high-rise building in Boston. — AP

US GROWTH LACKLUSTER

INVENTORIES FALL FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2011

WASHINGTON: US economic growth unexpectedly remained tepid in the second quarter as inventories fell for the first time in nearly five years and business investment remained weak, offsetting robust consumer spending. Gross domestic product increased at a 1.2 percent annual rate after rising by a downwardly revised 0.8 percent pace in the first quarter, the Commerce Department said on Friday.

In addition, the GDP growth estimate for the fourth quarter was cut by five-tenths of a percentage point to a 0.9 percent rate. The three straight quarters of weak growth suggest a significant loss of momentum that puts the economy at the risk of stalling, but economists expect growth to accelerate in the second half against the backdrop of strong consumer spending. Though the inventory drawdown weighed on GDP growth, that is likely to provide a boost to output in the coming quarters. Economists believe other drags to growth during past quarters, including lower oil prices and a strong dollar, are fading. They expected growth to average just above 2 percent in the second half. "The US economy just went through a meaningful inventory correction cycle," said Harm Bandholz, chief US economist at UniCredit Research in New York. "In the past, those developments have even led to recessions, but given that potential growth is slower these days and that other headwinds occurred at the same time, one may actually be tempted to highlight the economy's resilience."

Excluding inventories, GDP growth rose at a 2.4 percent rate and domestic demand increased at a 2.7 percent pace. Economists had forecast the economy growing at a 2.6 percent rate in the second quarter after a previously reported 1.1 percent expansion pace in the January-March quarter. The weak GDP report is unlikely to have an impact on the interest rate outlook, with the Federal Reserve focused on the labor market and persistently low inflation. The US central bank said on Wednesday that near-term risks to the economic outlook had "diminished."

"We think they are unlikely to set monetary policy according to wild swings in inventory, but rather labor market dynamics and final demand, although the doves will cite these numbers as a reason for more 'wait and see,'" said Paul Mortimer-Lee, chief North America economist at BNP Paribas in New York. The GDP report combined with poor earnings from oil majors Exxon and Chevron to pull down US stocks. The dollar fell to session lows against a basket of currencies, while prices for US government bonds rose.

Robust consumer spending Consumer spending,

which makes up more than two-thirds of US economic activity, increased at a 4.2 percent rate - the fastest since the fourth quarter of 2014 and accounting for almost all the rise in GDP growth in the second quarter. Although that rate of growth is probably unsustainable, a tightening labor market, rising house prices and still higher savings should underpin spending for the rest of 2016. In the second quarter, income at the disposal of households after adjusting for inflation increased at a \$13.92 billion rate from \$13.81 billion early in the year. A separate report from the Labor Department on Friday showed labor costs increasing at a steady 0.6 percent rate in the second quarter, matching the prior quarter's rise. Business inventories fell \$8.1 billion in the second quarter, the first drop since the third quarter of 2011, after increasing \$40.7 billion in the first quarter. Inventories sliced off 1.16 percentage points from GDP growth, the largest drag in more than two years. It was the fifth straight quarter that inventories weighed on output. Some economists said the inventory drop likely reflected lower oil prices. "Our read is that the unwinding of the energy boom has produced a larger drag than had been previously reported," said Mark Vitner, a senior economist at Wells Fargo Securities in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Business spending on equipment contracted for a third consecutive quarter, the longest stretch since the 2007-2009 recession, though the pace of decline slowed. Business spending on equipment fell at a 3.5 percent rate after declining at a 9.5 percent pace in the first quarter. Investment in nonresidential structures, which include oil and gas wells, declined at a 7.9 percent pace in the second quarter after rising at a 0.1 percent rate in the prior period. Business spending has been hurt by the cheap oil, which has squeezed profits in the energy sector, forcing companies to cut capital spending budgets. Prospects for business spending are not encouraging.

Exxon Mobil, the world's largest publicly traded oil producer, on Friday reported a lower-than-expected quarterly profit. Chevron, the second largest US-based oil producer, posted a second-quarter loss on Friday, its largest since 2001. Outside the oil sector, economists say uncertainty over global demand and the upcoming US presidential election are also making companies cautious about spending. Investment in residential construction and spending by the government fell, but economists expect a rebound. Despite the lingering effects of the dollar's rally and weak global demand, trade contributed two-tenths of percentage point to GDP growth. — Reuters

BIGGEST DROP IN BRITISH CONSUMER MORALE PUTS BOE ON TRACK TO ACT

LONDON: British consumer morale suffered its sharpest drop in more than 26 years after last month's decision by voters to leave the European Union, according to figures that are likely to embolden Bank of England policymakers to take action next week. Market research firm GfK said its gauge of consumer confidence fell to -12 from -1 in June, the biggest drop since March 1990 - when Margaret Thatcher was prime minister and Britons were reeling from interest rates rising to 15 percent.

The comparison ends there, however. Economists expect the Bank of England to cut rates to a new low of 0.25 percent next week and possibly revive its bond-buying program, spurred by plunging business and consumer morale since the June 23 vote. Consumer spending has been a key pillar of economic growth, so the BoE will likely be concerned that Britain's headline gauge of consumer mood has fallen so sharply, even if the actual level of the GfK is still around levels seen in late 2013.

Business surveys overnight offered a mixed picture. A survey of manufacturers from industry group EEF showed business confidence dropped in factories across Britain, particularly in south-east England and Wales. But a Loyds Banking Group survey showed business confidence regained some lost ground after falling to a four-and-a-half-year low immediately following the referendum. "The latest GfK consumer confidence survey adds to the evidence from other post-referendum surveys that have warned of a potentially sharp correction in the economy," said RBC economist Sam Hill.

The GfK survey was worse than all forecasts in a Reuters poll that suggested consumer confidence would tick up from a reading of -9 in a one-off "Brexit special" version of the survey published three weeks ago. Separate BoE data showed consumer lending expanded last month at the fastest pace since 2005 although a gradual slowdown in the number of mortgage approvals persisted into June.

"The broader picture underscores the story told by the Q2 GDP numbers earlier this week - the economy was shrugging off political uncertainty in the run-up to the referendum," said Elizabeth Martins, an economist at HSBC.

Official figures this week showed Britain's economy expanded 0.6 percent in the three months up to its vote to leave the European Union, although most of this reflected a surge in output during April. "The post-referendum indicators suggest that this strength has fallen away since the result," Martins added, citing the GfK survey as an example.

The BoE lending figures mostly reflect lending that took place before the vote, but there are signs that the Brexit decision has already had an impact on the property market. London-focused estate agent Foxtons blamed a 42 percent drop in first-half profit on the referendum, saying it led to a fall in transactions which is likely to last until the end of the year. The GfK survey showed pessimism about the economy's prospects in the next 12 months rose to the highest level since April 2012, when Britain last flirted with recession. Economists polled by Reuters earlier this month said it was more likely than not that Britain will fall into recession in the coming year. — Reuters



LONDON: Buses and pedestrians pass the Bank of England in London. — AP

News

in brief

Brazil unemployment rises to 11.3 percent

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's unemployment rate rose to 11.3 percent in the second quarter, official data said yesterday, as a drawn-out recession continued taking its toll. The figure stood three percentage points higher than the same period last year, said the government statistics institute, IBGE. Latin America's largest economy entered recession in 2014. It remains in a deep slump, weighed down by the fallout of a massive corruption scandal centered on state oil giant Petrobras and political uncertainty caused by the suspension of President Dilma Rousseff pending an impeachment vote. Interim president Michel Temer is trying to get the economy back on track with market-friendly reforms, but the recession is forecast to last into 2017. The gloomy outlook comes as the country prepares to host the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, which kick off next Friday.

Mexico economy shrinks; industrial activity down

MEXICO CITY: Mexico's economy retreated in the second quarter as industrial activity fell while services stagnated, official figures showed Friday. The gross domestic product of Latin America's second-biggest economy shrank 0.3 percent between April and June compared to the first three months of the year, according to the INEGI statistics institute. The primary sector, which includes agriculture and mining, fell 0.1 percent while the secondary sector, which includes industry, was down 1.7 percent. The services sector posted zero growth. The contraction follows growth of 0.8 percent in the first quarter of this year and 0.5 percent in the last quarter of 2015. On an annual basis, the economy grew 1.4 percent in the second quarter compared to the same period last year.

Brazil's Petrobras sells its first pre-salt oil field

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's scandal-plagued state oil company Petrobras said it will sell off its first "pre-salt" deep-water oil field to Norway's Statoil in a bid to pay off its massive debt. The Petrobras board approved the \$2.5 billion sale of its 66-percent stake in the offshore exploration block known as BM-S-8, the company said in a statement. It said the sale was part of its strategy to prioritize investment in "assets with greater potential for short-term cash generation, capital optimization and economies of scale." Petrobras had said in December it would start selling off its prized assets, the deep-water offshore fields found in what is known as the pre-salt layer some five kilometers (three miles) below the Atlantic seabed. It said it needed the money to get its books back in order after its debt soared by more than 40 percent in 2015. The pre-salt fields hold potentially massive amounts of oil, but it is technically challenging and eye-wateringly expensive to reach. Brazil's Congress must still approve the pre-salt sales. Currently, Brazilian law gives Petrobras exclusive rights to the offshore fields, setting the company's minimum stake at 30 percent.

Russian Central Bank holds key rate over inflation fears

MOSCOW: Russia's central bank on Friday held its key lending rate at 10.5 percent as inflationary pressures weighed off against trying to spur a faster economic bounce back. The Bank of Russia said in a statement that it made the move as "the decline in inflation expectations has stalled" but insisted that it remained on target to meet its long-term targets of 4 percent inflation by the end of 2017. The majority of economists predicted that the bank would hold the rate steady after trimming it in June for the first time in almost a year. The Bank of Russia said that decision was down to decreased inflation risks but that it did not signal the start of a cycle of cuts. The last few weeks have prompted cause for caution over inflation as figures for June saw household incomes that have been hit for two years over the economic crisis rebound. The ruble also remains volatile after a recent bounce back gave way to a fall as oil prices have slipped down. The bank said that at its next meeting it "will consider the possibility of a further rate cut based on estimates for inflation risks and the alignment of inflation decline with the forecast trajectory."

Taiwan ends contractions as it limps out of recession

TAIPEI: Taiwan came out of recession in April-June, data showed, as a pick-up in the island's key electronics sector helped end a run of three successive quarterly contractions. The 0.69 percent year-on-year growth beat expectations and comes after newly elected President Tsai Ing-wen pledged to kickstart growth, including establishing a "Silicon village" for Asia. Traditionally an export-driven technology hub, the island is home to industry giants such as Foxconn and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), which a key suppliers for Apple's iPhone. But China has been pushing to grow its own tech sector, with the development of domestic smartphone brands and homegrown hardware like Huawei, while sluggish global demand has also acted as a drag. However, the latest growth figures show a rise in semiconductor, electronic components and computer industries in the second quarter, having fallen ten percent in the same period last year.

5 WAYS TO BUILD A GREAT 'EMPLOYER BRAND'

Employer branding is one of the most important aspects of any business, large or small. A successful employer brand strategy gives you a major edge in the increasingly competitive market. Simply put, your employer brand is your promise to employees and future candidates; it tells them what to expect from applying and working at your company, and differentiates what you're offering from other companies fighting for top talents. Here are a few tips from Bayt.com, the Middle East's #1 job site, to help you build a great employer brand for your company:

Introduce a health policy

The Bayt.com 'Health and Lifestyle in the Middle East and North Africa' poll, March 2016, revealed that 96% of professionals in the MENA region believe it is an employer's responsibility to promote employees' health and wellness. Health and wellness benefits are among the top benefits job seekers want to see when applying for a job. Bayt.com, for example, encourages all employees to lead a healthy lifestyle, both inside and outside the office. Each employee has an annual fitness

allowance to join a gym of their choice, and our pantries are stocked daily with fresh fruits and vegetables for everyone to enjoy.

Allow flexible hours

Flexible hours have become a common work arrangement in many companies across the region and the world today. Allowing employees to work the stipulated work hours, but at timings of their own choosing relieves stress for many professionals who have obligations, such as dropping their children to school in the morning or taking care of an elderly parent, etc. This work arrangement helps employees achieve a better work-life balance, and in turn, yields happier, more satisfied and more productive employees.

Hold regular events

It is no secret that we spend the majority of our days at work, and this can lead to burnout if the office doesn't offer some form of relief. Every once in a while, plan a fun activity for your employees. This can be an office lunch or a picnic if the weather permits. Always celebrate important

milestones, achievements and major holidays as a team, and provide entertainment options at the office.

Provide training

Career development plays a key role in the lives of the majority (85%) of professionals across the MENA region, and 82% would leave their current company for better training opportunities, as revealed in the Bayt.com Career Development in the Middle East and North Africa survey, January 2016. Ensure that you've implemented internal and external learning structures and that you're fostering a culture of learning throughout your company. This can be done via a multitude of ways, such as online courses and seminars, social learning and mentorship, in-house training programs, and even company-sponsored scholarships for higher education.

Promote your brand

Social media is a great way of creating an impression on customers and future employees. Being active on social media and creating a con-

sistent employer brand helps people identify you instantly. Make sure you create a company page on Bayt.com and that your page is current and regularly updated. Talking about your company culture, your commitment towards employees and enabling two-way communications helps establish trust towards the company brand. This could in turn attract top talent. According to the Bayt.com 'Social Recruiting in the Middle East and North Africa' poll, October 2014, 81% of professionals agree that online social platforms, such as Bayt.com Specialties, are a good way for employers and job seekers to get together and engage in industry-related questions and discussions.

About Bayt.com

Bayt.com is the #1 job site in the Middle East with more than 40,000 employers and over 25,500,000 registered job seekers from across the Middle East, North Africa and the globe, representing all industries, nationalities and career levels. Post a job or find jobs on www.bayt.com today and access the leading resource for job seekers and employers in the region.



TOKYO: A man looks at an electronic stock board of a securities firm in Tokyo, Japan. — AP

GULF BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE AL DANAH DAILY DRAWS

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its Al Danah daily draws on 24 July 2016 announcing the names of its winners for the week of 17 July - 21 July 2016. The Al Danah daily draws include draws each and every working day for two prizes of KD1,000 per winner. The winners were: (Sunday 17/7) - Wajihah Yousef Mohammed Behbehani, Ibtisam Salman Husain Al-Shamali; (Monday 18/7) - Michael Noronha, Sabah Rashed Jefat Al-Shuraifat; (Tuesday 19/7) - Fahad Rabea Salem Al-Muhammed, Kasem Mohammad Al-Awad; (Wednesday 20/7) - Zahraa Mohammad Helal Al-Enezi, Rabab Mohammed Ismael Kamal; (Thursday 21/7) - Walaah Ameer Ali Al-Haddad, Waleed Mahdi Ashkanani.

Gulf Bank's Al Danah 2016 draw lineup includes daily draws (2 winners per working day each receive KD1000). Al Danah's 3rd Quarterly Draw for the prize of KD500,000 will be held on September 29th. The final Al Danah draw for 1 Million Kuwaiti Dinars will be held on 5 January, 2017 whereby the Al Danah Millionaire will be announced. Open an Al Danah account now or deposit more to increase your chances of winning the Millionaire Draw! Five reasons why the Al Danah account is the Best: (1) Kuwait's sin-

gle biggest yearly cash prize of KD 1 Million. (2) Kuwait's biggest quarterly cash prizes, up to KD500,000. (3) Two winners of KD1,000 every working day. (4) The most chances to win. (5) Only Bank that transfers your chances to win from year to year.

Making millionaires

Al Danah also offers a number of unique services including: the Al Danah Deposit Only ATM card which helps account holders deposit their money at their convenience; as well as the Al Danah calculator to help customers calculate their chances of becoming an Al Danah winner. Gulf Bank's Al Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the draw within two days. To take part in the Al Danah 2016 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must have an Al Danah account containing at least KD 200; customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, transfer on line, or call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805 for assistance and guidance. Customers can also log on to www.gulfbank.com/aldanahwinners, to find out more about Al Danah and its winners.



WASHINGTON: Photo shows the Marriner S Eccles Federal Reserve Board Building in Washington. Federal regulators say risk remains heavy in large loans made by banks and other financial institutions, though lending standards have improved. — AP

STILL HEAVY RISK IN BIG BANK LOANS, US REGULATORS SAY

WASHINGTON: Federal regulators say risk remains heavy in large loans made by banks and other financial institutions, though lending standards have improved. The Federal Reserve and other agencies cite increasing risks in loans to oil and gas producers as oil prices have fallen to three-month lows. The regulators said their latest examinations also showed continued high risk from loans made to companies that are already heavily in debt.

The steep decline in oil prices has hurt many energy companies, making it harder for them to repay their loans. The amount of large oil and gas loans that are at risk of failing or already in default doubled in the first quarter from the same period in 2015, according to the agencies' semi-annual review released Friday. Those loans jumped to \$77 billion from \$38.2 billion. Overall, the review found that loans at risk of failing or already in default, plus those showing potential weakness, remained high at 10.3 percent of the total \$4.1 trillion in large loans. That was up from 9.5 percent of a total \$3.9 trillion a year earlier. The review found that the level of problem loans remained higher than in previous periods of

economic recovery and growth, raising concern that future loan losses could increase significantly in the near future. The regulators said banks have improved their lending standards for loans to heavily indebted companies - something they have been pushing banks to do. Loans in the oil and gas industry represent 12.3 percent of total large loans outstanding. US banks posted increased loan losses in the first quarter driven by a huge jump in delinquent energy loans.

Oil prices have fallen dramatically over the past couple of years, touching levels not seen since the depths of the recession in 2009. They now are running around \$41 a barrel for crude oil, down from a \$100 high in mid-2014 - slicing into the profits of energy companies and putting projects on hold. As cash flow from oil sales has trickled, some companies are straining to repay their loans. Regulators are worried about a heavy load of risky loans weighing on institutions' financial soundness and the potential threat to the broader banking system. By conducting the periodic reviews, they are seeking to prevent the kind of risk-taking that touched off the financial crisis in 2008. — AP

TURKEY'S INVESTMENT GRADE HANGS IN BALANCE AS POST-COUP PURGES DEEPEN MOODY'S HAS TURKEY ON REVIEW FOR POSSIBLE DOWNGRADE

ISTANBUL: A crackdown in Turkey after a failed coup could further weaken its institutions and threaten its investment grade status, investors fear, as dismissals and detentions stretch from the judiciary into the private sector and even the central bank. Turkey has suspended, detained or put under investigation more than 60,000 soldiers, judges, teachers, journalists and others suspected of ties to the network of US-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom it blames for the July 15-16 coup attempt.

What began as a purge in the security services and judiciary has spread to commercial firms and financial institutions. The head of research at brokerage AK Investment had his licence revoked on Tuesday over a report to investors analyzing the coup plot, while the chief of Turkey's biggest petrochemicals firm Petkim was detained in connection with the events, the state-run Anadolu news agency said. Turkish Airlines, arguably the country's most recognized brand, has fired 211 staff over alleged links to Gulen's religious movement, while a source at the central bank said purges of junior officials had also started there.

"It's certainly fair to say that foreign investors are concerned about the extent to which the purges will impact stability over the near to medium term, and what the impact on business confidence and investment propensity will be," said Manik Narain, a London-based strategist at UBS. Turkish officials dismiss suggestions that the crackdown is too heavy-handed, pointing out that never in Turkey's history have its own warplanes been used to bomb parliament as they were during the abortive coup, and that many of the more than 240 people killed were civilians.

But in investment banks and Western capitals, many fear the purges are being used by President Tayyip Erdogan to tighten his grip and erode the already fragile independence of institutions including the courts and the media. Moody's said on July 18 it was putting Turkey's credit rating on review for a possible downgrade to junk status, citing, among other things, the medium-term impact of the failed coup on the country's policy-making institutions and on economic growth. Fitch has also said any downgrade decision will depend on the extent to which the government's reaction deepens political divisions and weakens institutional independence.

Standard & Poor's meanwhile cut its unsolicited rating further into junk territory last week and changed its outlook to negative, citing political concerns following the failed coup. Turkey is rated at the lowest investment grade rung of BBB-/Baa3 by Fitch and Moody's respectively, allowing its bonds to be bought by more conservative funds that require a country to be classed as investment grade by at least two agencies. JP Morgan estimated in a recent report that investors could dump around \$10 billion worth of Turkish bonds alone if the country's rating is cut to junk by one of the two agencies.

Government officials have been on a charm offensive to try to ensure that does not happen: Turkey needs to attract more than \$200 billion annually to finance its current account deficit and pay foreign debt. Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek held two conference calls to try to calm nervous investors on July 17 and 21, telling them the failed coup would ultimately unite the nation, ease political tensions, and lead to stronger institutions.

But he also said the government, while maintaining the rule of law, would look into every institution including the treasury and central bank, as it investigates Gulen's network. "The main problem is the eradication of meritocracy and the erosion of institutions... It will be crucial how and on which criteria they replace the purged personnel," said Ugur Gurses, a former central banker and columnist. Central Bank Governor Murat Cetinkaya declined to answer questions on any purges at his institution at a news conference on Tuesday, although he said a statement may be made in the coming days.

Checks and balances

While Simsek, an ex-Wall Street banker who previously oversaw economic management, may be a reassuring voice, there are questions over his influence. His powers were reduced when he was reappointed in a new cabinet in May and others in government are sending less comforting signals for investors. "Simsek clearly sees the risks ... but there are limits to what he can do," Gurses said, drawing a distinction between him and another deputy prime minister, Nurettin Canikli.

"While Simsek is trying to calm down markets, the steps taken by institutions reporting to Canikli are not helping Simsek at all," he said. The Capital Markets Board (SPK), which reports to Canikli, cancelled the licence of Mert Ulker, head of research at brokerage AK Investment, over his report on the impact of the coup, saying he had not "fulfilled his responsibilities". Ulker will face charges under articles 299 and 301 of the penal code covering insults to the president, the nation and state institutions, the SPK said.

"This kind of action will inevitably bring self-censorship, less criticism of policy, fewer checks and bal-



ISTANBUL: A woman walks past the headquarters of 'Zaman' newspaper, after being closed by the government in Istanbul. The European Union has called the crackdown on media in Turkey 'worrying' and warned Ankara to respect fundamental freedoms. — AP

ances in the system, and this might be seen as part of the institutional weakening that the ratings agencies highlighted," said Timothy Ash, a strategist at Nomura. But he also noted Turkey's institutions were already weak, something the credit agencies needed to weigh in the balance. "It would be naive to think that Turkey's legal and judicial system operated to anything close to Western standards pre-coup ... Has the coup and subsequent purge likely resulted in a meaningful deterioration of the rule of law in Turkey? Actually likely not, as the bar was set low anyway."

High hopes

Finance Minister Naci Agbal told Reuters on Thursday he had held a positive meeting with Moody's and that the agency "appreciates" the government's fiscal discipline. He described S&P's downgrade as hasty and was hopeful neither Moody's or Fitch would follow suit. "I believe that the final evaluations by Moody's and Fitch will be positive. There is a great deal of harmony between the suggestions of Moody's and Fitch for the Turkish economy and our government's targets," he said in an interview.

Simsek said on Wednesday he wanted steps to be taken to prevent ratings agencies from making "erroneous decisions", adding there was no reason for any downgrades. Cetinkaya said the central bank did not expect any rating moves in August and played down the possible impact of any cut. "Ratings are not the only determinant of investment decisions, we have seen that in the past," he told Tuesday's news conference, which was also attended by economists. Moody's will assess Turkey's rating on Aug. 5 and Fitch will release its assessment outcome on Turkey on Aug. 19. But a week is a long time in Turkish politics. While raw economic data suggests Turkey does not deserve a sub-investment grade rating, the government needs to persuade the ratings agencies that it will uphold the rule of law and is serious about forging ahead with promised economic reforms, said Ozgur Altug, chief economist at Istanbul-based BGC Partners. "Moody's seems to be more sensitive to political developments than other agencies. Moody's has kept Turkey's outlook at negative since April 2014, which is a very long period for a rating agency," he said in a report. "So there is a sizeable risk of a downgrade." — Reuters

EGYPT ASKS IMF FOR A \$12 BILLION LOAN AMID STRUGGLING ECONOMY

CAIRO: Egypt is in the "final stages" of negotiating an agreement with the International Monetary Fund to secure a \$12 billion loan over three years, while targeting more loans totaling \$7 billion annually, according to a Cabinet statement. President Abdel-Fattah El-Sissi held a Cabinet meeting to discuss economic developments, including the IMF loan. Amr El-Garhy, the finance minister, told the CBC TV network on Tuesday that Egypt is discussing a total of \$12 billion from the IMF. He added that the rest will be negotiated from other sources.

IMF Middle East and Central Asia director Masood Ahmed said in a statement that an IMF delegation will start a two-week visit to Egypt on July 30 to continue the talks. "The Egyptian authorities have asked the IMF to provide financial support for their economic program. We welcome this request, and look forward to discussing policies which can help Egypt meet its economic challenges. Our goals are to help Egypt return to

economic stability and to support strong, sustainable and job-rich growth," the statement said.

Presidential spokesman Alaa Youssef told reporters that the meeting is aimed at finding the necessary financial sources to help stabilize the Egyptian economy. Years of unrest since the 2011 overthrow of longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak have taken a heavy toll on both foreign investment and tourism, which along with Suez Canal revenues and remittances from Egyptians working abroad are the primary sources of foreign currency. Reserves fell 18.1 percent from June to December, shrinking to \$16.5 billion, before edging up to \$17.546 at the end of June, according to central bank data. Egypt had \$36 billion in reserves before the 2011 uprising. Egypt's local currency has been falling to new lows; the official central bank rate is 8.78 Egyptian pounds to the dollar, but the true price on Egypt's robust black market, according to media reports, is close to 13 to the dollar. — AP

EXXONMOBIL AND STATOIL AMONG FIRMS LOOKING TO DRILL OFF CYPRUS

NICOSIA: ExxonMobil, Qatar Petroleum and Capricorn Oil are among eight companies that have applied for a license to carry out exploratory oil and gas drilling in waters off Cyprus' southern coast, the Cypriot government said. These companies are seeking to drill in three neighboring blocks, or areas, as part of a third licensing round whose deadline expired last week.

France's Total and Italy's Eni have teamed up to apply jointly for blocks 6 and 10. Eni is seeking a license on its own for block 8 for which a consortium made up of Capricorn Oil - a subsidiary of the UK's Cairn energy - and Israeli companies Delek and Avner has also applied. Dutch Statoil Upsilon and a consortium composed of ExxonMobil and Qatar Petroleum International Upstream have also applied for block 10.

Total and Eni had been granted drilling licenses in previous rounds, as had Delek and Avner as part

of a consortium with Texas-based Noble Energy. Noble found a gas field off Cyprus estimated to contain more than four trillion cubic feet in reserves. A discovery by Eni of a gas field in adjacent Egyptian waters last year that's been touted as the largest ever gas find in the Mediterranean sea has lifted hopes that more deposits could be found in Cypriot waters.

Eni Chief Executive Claudio Descalzi said this month that exploratory drilling inside Cypriot waters where the company is already licensed to do so will begin next year. Both Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and the leader of the ethnically divided island's breakaway Turkish Cypriots, Mustafa Akinci, have said that future oil and gas revenues could partly finance the huge cost of a reunification deal the two men are negotiating. But Akinci has warned that the start of drilling before a deal is reached could renew tensions. — AP



In this July 13, 2016 photo provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, killer whales swim off the coast of Maui, Hawaii. — AP

DRONE TECHNOLOGY ASSISTING WHALE RESEARCH OFF HAWAII

HONOLULU: Federal researchers returning from a 30-day expedition to study whales and dolphins around the Hawaiian Islands said they are looking for clues to help sustain healthy populations of the marine mammals. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientists told reporters Thursday that gathering data on the animals is often difficult, especially around the windward coasts of the Hawaiian Islands.

The researchers worked from a large ship, instead of using their normally small survey boats, and explored the coasts of the main Hawaiian Islands where wind conditions and severe weather make it difficult to navigate and remain at sea for extended periods of time. The team also used a hexacopter drone to photograph the whales and dolphins, something they have never done before in this region. Using drones allows researchers to get better images of groups of whales because they are not disturbed by the approaching boat, said NOAA's Erin Oleson, who led the expedition.

More accurate counts

The vantage point of the drone also allowed them to more accurately count the number of individuals in a pod, including mothers and calves that sometimes stay underwater. The number of calves helps researchers gauge the whale's reproductive health. The perspective also allows the scientists to get more accurate size estimates for individual whales. "This is the first time that we've used (drones) as part of our

research here in the Pacific islands, and it's also the first time it's been used to estimate group sizes," Olsen said. "We wanted a way of calibrating the observers."

Olsen said there are over 20 species of dolphins and whales around the Hawaiian archipelago. The researchers took tissue samples and attached satellite tags to some whales to monitor their movements. Understanding the animals' movements in conjunction with events like El Nino help inform the researchers' understanding of the impacts of climate change and warmer water temperatures.

The team had three separate encounters with killer whales, which are rarely seen around Hawaii. They found one pod of orcas off the coast of Maui and another off the coast of the Big Island. Days after finding the Big Island group, the researchers found the same group again. One whale they did not see but had hoped to was the beaked whale. Using underwater acoustic detection technology, scientists heard the calls of an unidentified species of the elusive beaked whale, but despite tracking them for several hours the researchers never saw the creatures. Beaked whales dive to extremely deep levels and only surface for air about once an hour, making them hard to identify and study.

Olsen said whales and dolphins are a critical part of the overall ecosystem around the islands. If populations decrease, as is the case with false killer whales, the oceans food chain becomes unbalanced and could impact the entire ecosystem. — AP



MOUNTAIN VIEW: This Thursday, June 30, 2016, file photo provided by Google shows the Android Nougat statue at Google campus. — AP

ALPHABET/GOOGLE INCREASES ADVERTISING, BOOSTS PROFITS

SAN FRANCISCO: Google parent Alphabet beat expectations Thursday with robust profit growth for the past quarter, fueled by gains from its leading online advertising platform on mobile devices. Second quarter profit jumped 43 percent from last year to \$4.9 billion. Revenue increased 21 percent to \$21.5 billion, the California tech giant said, in results that topped most analyst forecasts.

Alphabet chief financial officer Ruth Porat called the results "terrific" and said they "reflect the successful investments we've made over many years in rapidly expanding areas such as mobile and video." "We continue to invest responsibly in support of our many compelling opportunities," Porat said in a statement. She said the gains came mainly from "increased use of mobile search by consumers, benefiting from our ongoing efforts to enhance the mobile search experience." She also cited "solid growth in desktop and tablet search as well as continued strength in YouTube and programmatic advertising." Alphabet shares rallied 5.6 percent in after-hours trade on the results.

The company announced a reorganization last year that left Google as its main operating unit within Alphabet, with several others representing "moonshot" investments in new areas. The Google segment nonetheless produced almost all the revenues — \$21.3 billion — and operating profit of \$6.9 billion. Advertising accounted for \$19.1 billion in revenue. The "other bets" line item showed \$185 million in revenue and an operating loss of \$859 million. The new structure gives the tech giant more ability to focus on its core business, while offering startup-like flexibility to long-shot, trailblazing projects. They include self-driving cars, "Google Glass" smart spectacles, internet balloons, drones, health care and Google TV — none of which have become a major revenue source.

Advertising machine

But Alphabet's bread and butter comes from online advertising, where Google dominates the market. The research firm eMarketer estimates that Google accounts for 30.9 percent of the total worldwide digital ad market and 55 percent of search advertising, which is linked to its leading search engine. Google unit chief Sundar Pichai told a conference call that "the strength of the quarter was about mobile." Mobile, he said, "has transformed the way that people consume information and Google's products have become an essential and much loved part of the experience." The tech giant's Android operating system dominates the smartphone market with a share of around 80 percent, which enables Google to offer search and other services to handset users. Analyst Colin Gillis at BGC Partners said Google still has room to boost revenue.

"We remain highly positive on Google's ability to monetize its large user base including seven products with over one billion users each," he said in a note to clients this week. "Mobile clicks are likely to see increased monetization as Google continues to experiment with formats and presentation." But Google's success and dominance have also prompted scrutiny from regulators. The European Union recently opened a third investigation accusing Google of unfairly blocking rivals in online advertising.

EU officials are also probing Google's dominance in Android and whether it harms rivals in online shopping. The rise of Google/Alphabet, which is vying with Apple to be the world's most valuable company, has coincided with a steep decline for Yahoo, which this week announced a sale of its core operations to Verizon for \$4.8 billion, a far cry from Alphabet's market value of more than \$500 billion. — AFP

5 COOL THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH FACEBOOK MESSENGER

NEW YORK: You'd be wrong to think that Facebook's Messenger app is all about messaging. Although people typically install it on their phones to chat privately with their Facebook friends, Facebook also uses Messenger to bring features and capabilities that might not make sense, or even be possible, as part of the main Facebook service. And of course, a separate app gives Facebook even more advertising and other moneymaking opportunities.

For that reason, Facebook is pushing users to download the app, even though it takes up valuable storage on the phone. The company recently started blocking access to Facebook messages from mobile web browsers on Android phones in some markets. The ban will extend to iPhones as well, though Facebook isn't saying when. Before you complain, consider what a separate Messenger app offers beyond simply typing words and sending emoji back and forth:

Group chats

Messenger lets you easily add friends to group chats so you can make dinner or travel plans or just talk about your day. Although this is also possible using your browser, it's more convenient with the app. If kicking people off mobile browser messaging is the stick to prod people toward the app, the convenience of Messenger is the carrot to lure users. Tapping the "groups" icon at the bottom of the screen will take you to existing group chats and let you start new ones. You can add people to group chats at any time, or leave the group. If you have an often-used group chat, you can also "pin" it to the top of your messages to make it easily accessible.

Bots

Who wants to chat with people when you can chat with ... bots? Well, most of us, but bear with me here. Since April, Facebook has let outside businesses create "chat bots" that can send you the news or weather, help you shop for shoes or book plane tickets and hotel rooms. You send a message to a brand's bot just as you would a friend; the difference is that the reply is automated through software. The results can be clumsy, as expected for such a new venture. But bots can be helpful. Expedia, for example, lets you search for hotels and book them by messaging with its bot. Start by telling the bot where you are going and when. After some back and forth, the bot will give you hotel options. To book, the bot will take you to Expedia's website. This is just the start. Perhaps one day, the bot will be more useful by letting you book directly through Messenger. David Marcus, Facebook's head of messaging products, has called bots "overhyped in the short term and underhyped in the long term." Beware, though: Once you start chatting with a bot, it's going to keep sending you messages, much like a chatty friend. CNN, for example, will send news updates through Messenger every morning.

Send or request money

Using your debit card, you can send money to your Facebook friends using Messenger — as long as they also have their card number



SAN FRANCISCO: An Associated Press reporter holds a mobile phone showing the Facebook Messenger app icon. — AP

attached to their Facebook account. You can also request money, in case your friends forgot to pay you for those movie tickets and aren't answering their email. To use the payments option, select the person you want money from and tap "payments." There are no extra fees to send or receive payments, but you must use a debit card — not a credit card.

Video calls

Your mom isn't on Skype? FaceTime isn't cutting it because your friend has Android? Messenger offers yet another way to do video calls on your phone. It's free over a Wi-Fi connection. If you use cellular, you might get charged

for data by your phone company.

Play games

How about some soccer — or football, as it's known in most of the world? Select a friend to play with. Then, select Messenger's emoji keyboard by tapping on the emoji icon on the left side of your message window, right above the keyboard. Tap the soccer ball icon and send it to your friend. Then, tap the ball with your finger and keep tapping it so it stays in the "air." During a recent, frustrating attempt, I had a high score of just two — though that's still one more than what Portugal scored to win the Euro Cup this year. — AP

FACEBOOK TO CHALLENGE US BILL FOR BACK TAXES

WASHINGTON: The US government is expected to hit Facebook with a bill for between \$3 billion and \$5 billion in back taxes, the social network has disclosed. Facebook said it would challenge the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) assessment in the US Tax Court when it becomes final. The tax bill relates to a previously disclosed review of the pricing of assets Facebook transferred to its Irish subsidiary.

In a filing with regulators Thursday, Facebook said it had received a notice this week from the IRS about the review. "While the notice applies only to the 2010 tax year, the IRS states that it will also apply its position for tax years subsequent to 2010, which, if the IRS prevails in its position, could result in an additional federal tax liability of an estimated aggregate amount of approximately \$3.0 billion to \$5.0 billion, plus interest and

any penalties asserted," the filing said. "We do not agree with the position of the IRS and will file a petition in the United States Tax Court challenging the notice."

The news comes after Facebook reported Wednesday a huge quarterly profit jump, with net income leaping 186 percent from a year ago to \$2.05 billion and revenues surging 59 percent to \$6.4 billion. The IRS revelation is the latest highlighting tax questions on the global operations of big tech companies. European Union officials have looked at the tax liabilities of companies including Google, Amazon and Apple. Some of the firms have taken advantage of tax breaks offered from Ireland, Belgium and Luxembourg. Ireland has long been a favorite location for multinationals because its 12.5 percent corporate tax rate is the lowest in the 28-nation EU. — AFP

WIKILEAKS, SNOWDEN CLASH ON TWITTER

PARIS: National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden and transparency website WikiLeaks are clashing over how best to handle the publication of sensitive data, a spat played out over Twitter. WikiLeaks has come under increasing criticism over what it publishes, particularly following the release of what the website advertised as emails from Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party. When a large number of emails turned out to be

little more than messages from ordinary citizens, critics said WikiLeaks should have exercised better discretion to protect innocent people's privacy. Snowden praised WikiLeaks on Thursday but said their "hostility to even modest curation is a mistake." WikiLeaks fired back, accusing Snowden of "opportunism." Such a public split is unusual. WikiLeaks played a key role in getting Snowden asylum in Russia in 2013. — AP



REDWOOD: This Monday, June 18, 2012, file photo shows Oracle headquarters in Redwood City, California. Oracle is buying cloud company NetSuite in a deal valued at about \$9.3 billion. Oracle CEO Mark Hurd said in a statement on Thursday, July 28, 2016, that the two company's cloud applications are complementary. "We intend to invest heavily in both products — engineering and distribution," he said. — AP

PERSONAL COMPUTING PIONEER DIES AT 98

CAMBRIDGE: A former Massachusetts Institute of Technology computer science and electrical engineering professor who helped usher in the personal computing age has died. Robert Fano was 98. The university says Fano died July 13 in Florida. Fano's work in the 1960s on time-sharing systems so multiple people could use a computer at one time helped pave the way for the more widespread use of com-

puters. His research spurred data-compression techniques now used in high-definition TVs and computer networks. He was also one of the world's first open-source advocates who saw computing as a public utility that should be accessible to all. Fano was born in Italy and moved to the US in 1939. He was on MIT's faculty from 1947 until 1984. He is survived by three daughters and five grandchildren. — AP

APPLE: OVER ONE BILLION IPHONES HAVE BEEN SOLD

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple announced Wednesday the sale of its billionth iPhone, a milestone for the company as it seeks to keep momentum in a competitive smartphone market. Chief executive Tim Cook made the announcement at a staff meeting at the company's California headquarters. "iPhone has become one of the most important, world-changing and successful products in history," he said in a statement. "It's become more than a constant companion. iPhone is truly an essential part of our daily life and enables much of what we do throughout the day. Last week we passed another major milestone when we sold the billionth iPhone. We never set out to make the most, but we've always set out to make the best products that make a difference."

The news comes a day after Apple reported a drop in iPhone sales over the past quarter, a second straight drop after uninterrupted growth since its introduction in 2007. Apple sold 40.4 million iPhones in the quarter ending June 25, down 15 percent from a year earlier, highlighting concerns over growth for the iconic smartphone. The quarterly results underscored the challenges for Apple, which has built a huge business around the iPhone but is unlikely to see continued growth, due to a saturated smartphone market and increased competition. Apple has been seeking to diversify its product line and move into services for a more stable revenue base, while keeping users in its ecosystem with offerings such as music, connected cars and its Apple Watch. — AFP

IS MEDICARE DRUG PLAN VULNERABLE TO EXPLOITATION?

WASHINGTON: A senior senator is examining whether Medicare's prescription drug benefit is vulnerable to manipulation by pharmaceutical companies that set very high prices for medications. In a letter Tuesday to Medicare's top administrator, Sen Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, said policymakers must ensure the Part D prescription program serving some 38 million beneficiaries "is free from exploitation," and asked if it meets that test as currently structured.

Grassley acted after The Associated Press reported on Medicare data that show spending for high-cost drugs covered under the program's "catastrophic" protection

jumped by 85 percent in three years, from \$27.7 billion in 2013 to \$51.3 billion in 2015. The data include costs to taxpayers, insurers and beneficiaries, as compiled by Medicare's number-crunching Office of the Actuary.

Catastrophic coverage kicks in after a beneficiary has spent \$4,850 of their own money. At that point, taxpayers cover 80 percent of the cost of medications. The beneficiary's share is limited to 5 percent, while insurers pick up the remaining 15 percent. The congressional Medicare Payment Advisory Commission recently warned that spending on the prescription program is rising at an "unsustainable" rate,

singling out pricey specialty drugs covered under Medicare's catastrophic protection.

The commission urged Congress to overhaul the benefit so that insurers bear 80 percent of the cost of catastrophic coverage and taxpayers pay 20 percent. That would give insurers more incentive to negotiate lower prices with drug companies. Separately, the Obama administration and Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton want to give Medicare the legal authority to directly negotiate with the pharmaceutical companies. Republican Donald Trump has also supported opening the door to negotiations, although GOP congressional leaders do

not. Polls show that regardless of political affiliation, Americans want government action to curb drug costs.

Medicare's prescription program "is an important part of the health care of many Americans, but has recently seen an alarming trend in spending growth," Grassley wrote Medicare administrator Andy Slavitt. "Do you believe there is potential for exploitation of the catastrophic benefit as it is currently framed?" Grassley asked. Lawmakers who created the Medicare prescription program in 2003 saw catastrophic coverage as a way to protect seniors with multiple chronic illnesses from the cumulatively high costs of taking many

medications. The recent advent of drugs that sell for \$1,000 per pill is changing that. Now some patients can land in the catastrophic benefit in short order.

An analysis of Medicare's ten most pricey drugs finds that the catastrophic benefit is picking up an increasing share of costs, meaning more exposure for taxpayers. In 2013, there were four medications among the top ten that had 80 percent or more of their total costs covered by catastrophic protection. In 2015, seven of the top ten priciest drugs had crossed that threshold, according to Connecture, a company that tracks drug prices paid by health plans. —AP

ARE SWEDES HAVING LESS SEX? GOVERNMENT WANTS TO KNOW

STOCKHOLM: Worried that Swedes aren't having enough sex, the government wants to analyze the bedroom activities of its citizens in a major new study. It's been 20 years since the last in-depth study of the sex habits of the Scandinavian welfare state, so Public Health Minister Gabriel Wikstrom says it's high time for another survey. One of the goals of the investigation, set to be completed in 2019, is to find out whether there's any truth to Swedish tabloid reports that Swedes are having less sex than they used to. "It's important to investigate whether that is the case and if so, what the reason is," he wrote Friday in an opinion piece in the Dagens Nyheter newspaper.

If stress and other health issues are affecting Swedes' sex lives, he said, "that is also a political problem." Morgan Eklund, an official in Wikstrom's office, said the minis-

ter was referring primarily to a 2013 survey of 3,000 people by the Aftonbladet tabloid, which found that lovemaking is on the wane in Sweden, a country with a reputation of being sexually liberated. Eklund said the survey was not scientific enough to be used as the basis of government policies "but it points in a direction that can be interesting to follow up."

In a separate article on the government's website, Wikstrom said the Social Democratic-led government needs better information about people's sex habits to guide its policies related to sexual and reproductive health. "Sex is an area that strongly influences people's health, so we can't just talk about things like, for example, venereal disease, but also things that are positive and lust-filled about sex," Wikstrom said. The study will be carried out by the Public Health Agency of Sweden. —AP



BANGKOK: A woman participates in daily exercise at the elderly day care center in Bangkok. —AFP

TO REVERSE DAMAGE OF SITTING, TAKE A BRISK, HOUR-LONG WALK

60 TO 75 MINUTES OF EXERCISE CAN UNDO SITTING DAMAGE

LONDON: If you spend all day sitting, then you might want to schedule some time for a brisk walk - just make sure you can spare at least an hour. Scientists analyzing data from more than 1 million people found that it takes about 60 to 75 minutes of "moderate intensity" exercise to undo the damage of sitting for at least eight hours a day. Not exercising and sitting all day is as dangerous as being obese or smoking, they found. And the added risk of parking yourself in front of a television for 5 hours or more a day after sitting at the office is so high even the hour of exercise is not enough to reverse the ill effects of sitting.

It has long been suspected that sitting a lot, at work or at home, is not healthy, because it can weaken the heart, arteries, bones and muscles. Being sedentary is known to be a risk factor for problems including diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Among other benefits, physical activity helps prevent insulin resistance, keeps the brain active and strengthens the heart, muscles and bones. "We cannot stress enough the importance of getting exercise, whether it's getting out for a walk at lunchtime, going for a run in the morning or cycling to work," said Ulf Ekelund of the Norwegian School of Sports Sciences in Norway, one of the study's authors, in a statement.

In the new research, experts combed through 13 papers with data on factors including how long people spend sitting, their physical activity levels and their television-watching habits. The majority of studies included people older than age 45. All except one were done in the US, Western Europe and Australia. Researchers found that people with the highest levels of moderate physical activity - 60 to 75 minutes daily - erased the higher risk of death linked to being seated for more than eight hours a day. But even that exercise regime was not enough to counter the hazards of also watching more than five hours of television a day.

The study's conclusions suggest that current guidelines from the World Health Organization - which recommend 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day - may not be enough to offset the dangers of sitting. The paper was published online Wednesday in the journal *Lancet*. Lars Bo Andersen, who co-authored an accompanying commentary, called the new research "very convincing." He said watching lots of television was probably even worse than sitting at the office all day because it likely includes other unhealthy habits. "A lot of people don't just watch TV, they eat fatty snacks at the same time," said Andersen, of Sogn and Fjordane University College in Norway.

Andersen said some cultures make it easier than others to squeeze in an hour of exercise every day, noting that in Denmark and much of Scandinavia, about half of all people either cycle or walk to work. But he said that getting the recommended amount of physical activity shouldn't be overly arduous and doesn't necessarily mean going to the gym for an intense workout. "If you are walking and can feel yourself getting a little warm and your breathing is a little heavier, that's enough," he said. "You don't have to be sweaty and out of breath to get the benefits." —AP

'ZIKA IS HERE' - MOSQUITOES NOW SPREADING VIRUS IN US

MIAMI: Mosquitoes have apparently begun spreading the Zika virus on the US mainland for the first time, health officials said Friday, a long-feared turn in the epidemic that is sweeping Latin America and the Caribbean. Four recently infected people in the Miami area - one woman and three men - are believed to have contracted the virus locally through mosquito bites, Gov. Rick Scott said. No mosquitoes in Florida have actually been found to be carrying Zika, despite the testing of 19,000 by the state lab. But other methods of Zika transmission, such as travel to a stricken country or sex with an infected person, have been ruled out.

"Zika is now here," said Dr Thomas Frieden, director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Still, US health officials said they do not expect widespread outbreaks in this country like those seen in Brazil, in part because of better sanitation, better mosquito control and wider use of window screens and air conditioners. The virus has triggered alarm across the Western Hemisphere's warmer latitudes. While most people who get Zika don't even know they are sick, infection during pregnancy can cause severe brain-related birth defects, including disastrously small heads.

More than 1,650 people in the mainland US have been infected with Zika in recent months, nearly all while traveling abroad. The four people in Florida are believed to be first to contract the virus from mosquitoes within the 50 states. "This is not just a Florida issue. It's a national issue - we just happen to be at the forefront," Scott said. Florida agricultural officials immediately announced more aggressive mosquito-control efforts, and Florida politicians rushed to assure tourists it's still safe to visit the state. Some medical experts said pregnant women should not travel to the Miami area, especially if the visit involves spending time outdoors. The CDC is not issuing such advice, however.

Health officials said the US might see small clusters of infections. But "we don't expect widespread transmission in the continental United States," the CDC's Frieden said. The four Florida infections are thought to have occurred in a small area just north of downtown Miami, in the Wynwood arts district, the governor said. The area, known for bold murals spray-painted across warehouses, art galleries, restaurants and boutiques, is rapidly gentrifying and has a number of construction sites where standing water can collect and serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

People in Florida's Miami-Dade and Broward counties are being tested to learn whether there are more cases, the governor said. "If I were a pregnant woman right now, I

would go on the assumption that there's mosquito transmission all over the Miami area," warned Dr Peter Hotez, a tropical medicine expert at the Baylor College of Medicine in Texas. He said that there are probably more cases that have not been diagnosed, and that people should not be surprised if mosquitoes are soon found to be spreading Zika in Louisiana and Texas as well. Earlier this week, federal authorities told blood centers in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale areas to stop collecting blood until they screen it for the virus. Zika's symptoms can include low-grade fever, rash, joint pain, headaches and inflamed eyes and typically last seven to 10 days. None of the four people infected in Florida are showing symptoms anymore, officials said. Frieden said the evidence suggests that the mosquito-borne transmission occurred several weeks ago over several city blocks.

It's not unusual that no mosquitoes have tested positive for Zika, said C Roxanne Connelly, a medical entomology specialist at the University of Florida and a past president of the American Mosquito Control Association. It can take a couple of weeks before an infected person shows symptoms, and by then the mosquitoes that transmitted the virus are dead, she said. "Believe it or not, it's difficult to find positive mosquitoes even when you're in the middle of an epidemic," Connelly said. "Sometimes you don't know where these people were infected. At home? At work? Where they were playing baseball?"

Zika primarily spreads through bites from a specific species of mosquito that is found in urban parts of the South and peaks in number in August and September. There have been more than 4,700 cases of mosquito-borne Zika in Puerto Rico and other US territories. The cycle of infection inside a country can start when a blood-sucking mosquito bites a traveler who has returned from abroad with the virus in his or her bloodstream. The mosquito then bites someone else, spreading the virus.

Health officials have been long predicting this would happen in the continental US sometime this summer, probably in Florida and Texas, because of the types of mosquitoes that thrive there and the large numbers of people who travel back and forth to Latin America. Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs, whose jurisdiction includes Walt Disney World and other Orlando-area theme parks, said tourists shouldn't think twice about coming to the Sunshine State. Florida had more than 106 million visitors last year, and tourism is the state's biggest industry. Florida's theme parks "have mosquito control down like no place else I don't think on the planet," Jacobs said. —AP



FLORIDA: Photo shows Miami-Dade mosquito control worker Carlos Vargas pointing to the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito larvae at a home in Miami, Florida. — AFP

FDA TRY TO PROTECT BLOOD SUPPLY AMID ZIKA PROBE

CHICAGO: The US Food and Drug Administration has ordered blood banks in Florida's two most densely populated counties to stop collecting blood as health officials determine whether Zika has begun transmission in the continental United States. Florida has been investigating four possible cases of local transmission in Miami-Dade County and Broward County. It is the first US state to report cases that may not be related to travel to other countries with active outbreaks.

Zika has struck hardest in Brazil, where the outbreak was first detected last year, and has since spread rapidly through the Americas. The virus can cause a rare birth defect, microcephaly, in newborns whose mothers have been infected, and is believed to be linked to Guillain-Barre syndrome in adults. Zika most commonly infects people via mosquito bite. But reports of the virus being transmitted through sex and blood transfusions has prompted public health officials to recommend additional precautions for sexual partners and blood banks. In a statement posted online on Wednesday, the FDA said blood centers in the two Florida counties should stop collecting blood until they can test each unit or put in place technology that can kill pathogens in the blood.

The FDA also recommended that nearby counties implement the same measures as it moves to prevent transmission of the virus through the blood supply. OneBlood, Florida's biggest blood collection center, said it will begin testing all of its collections for Zika virus, effective July 29, using an investigational screening test and that it is working as quickly as possible to comply with the FDA's request. The FDA has authorized the emergency use of several investigational Zika screening tests, including products made by

Hologic Inc and Roche Holding AG.

The agency has also approved a pathogen inactivation technology made by Cerus Corp that kills the virus in blood platelets and plasma. The company is conducting clinical trials to show it can also kill pathogens in red blood cells. The United States uses roughly 12 million units of red cells, four million plasma units and two million units of platelets a year. Unlike oxygen-carrying red blood cells, which can be kept for 42 days in a refrigerator, or plasma, which keeps for a year if frozen, platelets have a shelf life of just four to seven days. Platelets in general tend to be scarce because there are fewer donors. It can take up to two hours to extract platelets using an apheresis machine, said Dr Richard Benjamin, chief medical officer for Cerus. And because of their short shelf life hospitals typically do not keep much surplus. It can be hard to source them from elsewhere, too. By the time they are flown from one place to another they may only have two days of life left. "All we need is a few more Zika hotspots and there will be a shortage of platelets across the country," Benjamin said.

The FDA's action follows Florida's announcement that it had identified two additional Zika cases - one more in each county - that were not related to travel to an area where the virus is being transmitted. A CDC spokesman said on Wednesday that "evidence is mounting to suggest local transmission via mosquitoes" in South Florida, noting that the cases fit transmission patterns seen with prior mosquito-borne outbreaks such as Chikungunya. FDA said it will continue to monitor the situation in Florida in cooperation with the CDC and state public health authorities and provide updates as additional information becomes available. —Reuters



CHOLULTECA, Honduras: Nurses take care of babies born with microcephaly in the Intensive Care Unit of the South Hospital in Cholulteca, 130kms south of Tegucigalpa. Honduras authorities said that eight children were born with microcephaly, most cases associated with Zika and called on the population to fight the mosquito that transmits the disease. — AFP

FIVE JAILED IN PANAMA OVER TOXIC COUGH SYRUP

PANAMA CITY: Five people were sentenced to prison in Panama Friday over a 2006 poison cough syrup scandal in which hundreds of people died after unwittingly ingesting a toxic compound found in antifreeze. The verdict capped years of investigation and a convulsion of shock at the many deaths in this small

Central American nation. Officials say 400 people died when they drank the adulterated cough syrup, which had been mixed and distributed by the national health agency using an ingredient supplied by a private company, Medicom.

Some Panamanian organizations believe as many as 10,000 people may

have died from the medicine. Medicom had bought the ingredient, labeled "TD glycerin", from a Spanish pharmaceutical firm, Rasfer International, which had purchased it from a Chinese group, CNSC Fortune Way Company, which had sourced it from the Taixing Glycerine Factory. In reality, the ingredient con-

tained high amounts of diethylene glycol, a poisonous, practically odorless liquid which has a sweetish taste. The compound can be used as a solvent, in brake fluid, or in heating fuel, and is often found in automobile antifreeze. The scandal triggered investigations in Panama, Spain and China. In Panama, 26 people

were charged over the matter, with 11 of them prosecuted. On Friday, the legal representative of Medicom in Panama, Angel Ariel de la Cruz Soto, was sentenced to five years in prison and fined \$6,000. The four other people sentenced received terms of one year. Six people were acquitted.—AFP



EL NURO, Peru: A worker unloads the catch of the day at the pier in Nuro, Piura, northern Peru.—AFP

STILL WATERS - US TO CRACK DOWN ON OCEAN NOISE THAT HARMS FISH

WASHINGTON: The ocean has gotten noisier for decades, with man-made racket from oil drilling, shipping and construction linked to signs of stress in marine life that include beached whales and baby crabs with scrambled navigational signals. The United States aims to change that as a federal agency prepares a plan that could force reductions in noise-making activities, including oil exploration, dredging and shipping off the nation's coast.

"We've been worried about ocean noise for decades, since the 1970s," said Richard Merrick, chief science adviser to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fisheries agency and a key author of the agency's more detailed 10-year plan to be released publicly later this year. "The question is, what should we do now?" The draft plan calls for developing noise limits and setting up a standardized listening system. It would also call for the creation of an online archive of noise data that could hold thousands of hours of recordings, which scientists could then cross-reference against data on where marine life congregates.

The plan urges more research on the effects of noise on sea creatures and more coordination with environmental and industry groups, the military and government. Some data is in short supply, since NOAA has assessed the abundance of only 17 percent of the marine mammal species that it is mandated to monitor. Noise also takes on greater urgency with Arctic seas increasingly open to shipping and development with the melting of ice from global warming.

Deafening nemo

The scientists behind the project admit the ocean was never quiet. For millions of

years it was filled with sounds ranging from the thunder of storms to the songs of whales. But fish and marine mammals evolved to coexist with those sounds, scientists note. "A hundred years ago the ocean wasn't quiet, it was a dynamic acoustic place. But now there is a lot more human noise out there," said Jason Gedamke, head of the NOAA's ocean acoustics program. Man-made noise from such work as pile driving, dredging, seismic air guns used in the search for oil, sonar, power-producing windmills and ice-breaking has raised the sound level dramatically.

Researchers have shown that off the coast of California, for example, underwater noise has risen several-fold in a few decades, in part from an increase in shipping. The increased noise interferes with the sounds that marine animals use to communicate, hunt and navigate. For instance, blue whales twice the size of school buses and sleek fin whales, known as the "greyhounds of the sea" for their speed, use songs to find food and mates.

Bottlenose dolphins - the kind made popular through the 1960s TV series "Flipper" - locate objects by bouncing sound waves off them. Fish and crab larvae use reef sounds for directions. Snapping shrimp produce collapsing bubbles whose sound waves stun prey and ward off predators. NOAA has long required noise permits for one-off events, like drilling. The draft plan would be the first to broadly set long-term rules around noise levels. Many oil companies already invest in quieter technology, and the European Union is also developing targets for ocean noise. The United Nations' International Maritime Organization in 2014 adopted voluntary guidelines to reduce underwater noise from ships.—Reuters

ELEPHANT SEDATIVE EMERGES AS NEW THREAT IN OVERDOSE BATTLE

CARFENTANIL, ONE OF THE MOST POTENT OPIOIDS

COLUMBUS: A drug used to sedate elephants and other large animals, 100 times as potent as the fentanyl already escalating the country's heroin troubles, is suspected in spates of overdoses in several states, where authorities say they've found it mixed with or passed off as heroin. The appearance of carfentanil, one of the most potent opioids known to investigators, adds another twist to the fight against painkillers in a country already awash in heroin and fentanyl cases.

Each time authorities start to get a handle on one type of drug, another seems to pop up, said Joseph Pinjuh, chief of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force and narcotics unit for the US attorney in Cleveland. "You feel like a kid with his finger in the dike, you know?" he said. "We're running out of fingers." A man suspected of selling carfentanil as heroin was indicted this week in central Ohio on 20 counts, including murder, in connection with a July 10 death and nine other overdoses that happened within hours of one another.

Some of the surviving users told investigators they thought they were buying heroin, but testing found none, Franklin County prosecutor Ron O'Brien said. The suspect, Rayshon Alexander, pleaded not guilty. Investigators are trying to track down the source of the carfentanil. Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine said he was unaware of any thefts of the drug, which, he noted, could be shipped from abroad or produced here. Chinese companies sell carfentanil online, but it hasn't shown up much in the US drug supply, according to the US Drug Enforcement Administration. There hasn't been much evidence of carfentanil on the streets or in testing related to criminal cases, said agent Rich Isaacson, a spokesman for the DEA's Detroit Division, which covers Ohio. The drug has been suspected in overdoses or found in seized drugs in central Kentucky, in Florida's Tampa Bay and Sarasota areas and in other Ohio cities. Akron authorities have seen more than 230 overdoses in July, 20 of them fatal, and police said evidence of carfentanil was found in some of those.

The drug is thought to be similar in strength to a painkiller known as W-18, which has shown up in heroin in Philadelphia, New England and Canada. Such drugs up the ante in a market where sellers already mix powerful painkillers with or disguise them as heroin to increase their products' potency, which can increase overdose risks for users, especially when they're unaware of what they're using.

A traditional businessman might conclude that killing his customers is bad for

business, but dealers looking to increase profits can find a burst of overdoses to be a boon, helping to draw customers to their product, Pinjuh said. "They know that's the high that'll take you right up to the edge, maybe kill you, maybe not," he said. "That's the high that they want."

Carfentanil is so powerful that zoo veterinarians typically wear face shields, gloves and other protective gear - "just a little bit short of a hazmat suit" - when preparing the medicine to sedate animals because even one drop splattered into a person's eye or nose could be fatal, said Dr. Rob Hilsenroth, executive director of the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians. A loaded syringe of a reversal drug is kept on hand just in case, and the extremely limited carfentanil supply regulators allow for such facilities are kept locked away and subject to auditing, Hilsenroth said.

Investigators are taking the risks seriously. In a bulletin to law enforcement agencies last week, DeWine's office discouraged police from field-testing suspected heroin or fentanyl for fear it contains carfentanil or other potentially harmful synthetic opioids. Instead, the office recommended sending samples straight to a lab for testing. DeWine said drugs used for animals have showed up in street drugs before, but carfentanil is so new on the investigative scene that the state's crime lab didn't even have a standard for comparing samples. In some suspected carfentanil cases, emergency responders have had to administer multiple



This undated file photo shows Rayshon LaCarlos Alexander of Columbus, Ohio. Rayshon Alexander has pleaded not guilty to 20 counts, including murder, following a death and nine other overdoses that investigators say were caused by drugs that buyers thought were heroin, but were actually the animal tranquilizer carfentanil, used to sedate elephants and other large animals.—AP

doses of the overdose antidote naloxone, often known by the brand name Narcan, to save people, but even the antidote might not be enough.—AP

AUSTRALIA MOVING UP IN THE WORLD - LITERALLY

SYDNEY: Australia will adjust its latitude and longitude, a government science body says, to put the vast country into alignment with global navigation satellite systems. The nation's coordinates are currently out by more than a meter, Geoscience Australia says, and the discrepancy could cause major headaches for possible new technologies such as driverless cars which require precise location data.

"We have to adjust our lines of latitude and longitude... so that the satellite navigation systems that we all use on our smartphones these days can align with all the digital map information," Geoscience's Dan Jaksa told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation this week. Australia currently moves north by about seven centimeters each year due to normal tectonic motion and Jaksa said the change was needed "to

keep pace with that". He said smartphones were already accurate to within 5-10 meters, but shrinking the gap would be crucial in coming years, particularly with greater use of remotely-operated vehicles in farming and mining.

"(And) around the corner, in the not too distant future, we are going to have possibly driverless cars or at least autonomous vehicles where, 1.5 meters, well, you're in the middle of the road or you're in another lane," he said on Thursday. "So the information needs to be as accurate as the information we are collecting." Australia's local coordinate system, the Geocentric Datum of Australia, was last updated in 1994 and officials believe it will be out by 1.8 meters by 2020 unless corrected. New data on the country's coordinates is expected to be available from 1 January 2017.—AFP

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Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM



Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368

LULU EXCHANGE DIRECTOR HONORED WITH GLOBAL BUSINESSMAN AWARD AT BRAND ICONS

The seventh edition of the Brand Icons Awards presented by The Times Group were held at Taj Vivanta in Thiruvananthapuram, India on Friday. The awards recognize key icons and organizations that achieve outstanding results and that set them apart as leaders in their own spheres. TM Thomas Isaac, Minister of Finance, Government of Kerala graced the occasion as the guest of honor and presented the Brand Icon Awards.

In recognition of his contribution towards the growth of business across various sectors around the world, Adeb Abahmed, Director, Lulu Exchange was honored with Global Businessman award. Adeb is a multifaceted professional who also spearheads several other organizations including Twenty14 Holdings and Tablez

Food Company.

After successfully establishing LuLu Financial Group as a reputed global foreign exchange and money remittance enterprise with more than 130 branches across the globe within 7 years, Adeb went on to set-up Twenty14 Holdings, a hospitality investment firm which owns prestigious properties around the world including the Great Scotland Yard in London, Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay in Dubai and Fairfield by Marriott in Kochi, among others.

"It is indeed a great honor to be recognized among the top icons in the field of business. The award will help me reaffirm my commitment towards setting up new benchmarks in the sectors I am involved with. I would also like to congratulate my fellow awardees who have carved a niche of

their own in their fields of expertise," said Adeb Abahmed after receiving the award.

He further added, "This is a truly wonderful initiative to recognize such enterprising people, and this will go a long way in inspiring the youth to take up business opportunities. I would like to thank the Times Group for this recognition and dedicate it to all my associates at my organization."

Many other noted luminaries were also honored during the ceremony, including Firoz Meeran, Managing Director, Eastern Condiments Pvt Ltd, B Govindan, Chairman, Bhima Jewellers, Professor N I Abraham, Managing Director, NFC Finance and T S Pattabhiraman, Chairman and Managing Director, Kalyan Silks, among others.



Adeb Abahmed, Director, Lulu Exchange receiving the Global Businessman award from TM Thomas Isaac, Minister of Finance, Government of Kerala during the Brand Icons 2016 event at Taj Vivanta in Thiruvananthapuram, India.



ENLIVEN YOUR MORNINGS WITH NEW ENVIVO LUNGO FROM NESPRESSO

The first sip of coffee in the morning is a blissful moment of sheer pleasure. Inviting coffee lovers around the world to savor this moment for longer, the coffee experts at Nespresso have created a new permanent addition to their range - introducing Envivo Lungo. An intense Lungo to enliven the senses and help start the day right.

New Envivo Lungo (intensity 9 on the scale from 1 - 12) is the most intense of the Nespresso Lungo range with a sumptuous and unique flavor. This dark roasted coffee is a blend of distinctive Arabica from India with a Robusta from Mexico, with roasted notes and rich scents reminiscent of aromatic woods and gingerbread.

Alexis Rodriguez, Head of Coffee Development at Nespresso commented, "We carefully crafted Envivo Lungo with a high proportion of Robusta coffee beans to produce a strong, full bodied coffee. We specifically use washed Robusta which gives a more refined taste to deliver a final product that is intense but without any harshness on the palate."

The Nespresso intensity scale has been created to help consumers differentiate between their favourite Grands Crus. The intensity is defined by looking at three aspects - an evaluation of the roasted notes, the bitterness and the body. Envivo Lungo is ranked towards the top of this scale at intensity level 9 meaning that those who enjoy a long, intense cup of coffee in the morning now have the perfect option that offers delicious caramelised notes. When creating the new Grand Cru, the Nespresso coffee experts were inspired by the traditional morning coffee that many consumers savour with milk in a longer serving size so Envivo Lungo also marries perfectly with milk, maintaining its distinctive intense flavour for a deliciously rich and full-bodied start to the day.

Envivo Lungo joins the range of five existing Nespresso Lungos, all designed to be enjoyed at a 110ml serving size:

- * Fortissimo Lungo - Intensity 8 - Rich and full-bodied
- Linzio Lungo - Intensity 4 - Round and smooth
- Vivalto Lungo - Intensity 4 - Complex and balanced



- Bukeela ka Ethiopia - Intensity 3 - Floral and wild (Pure Origin)
- Vivalto Lungo Decaffeinato - Intensity 4 - Complex and balanced (Decaffeinato)

Envivo Lungo flavor profile

Envivo Lungo is a long cup that stimulates the senses through its intense and generous character, high intensity and high body. Delight your senses with aromatic dry wood, gingerbread and caramelised notes followed by an intense and pleasant after taste.

Intensity: 9

Serving size: Lungo (110ml)

Envivo Lungo will be particularly appealing to the intense espresso lovers that are searching for an intense long cup. Those who prefer coffee with milk can also delight as Envivo Lungo is equally delicious with milk, becoming rounder in flavor and maintaining its intense character.

Savoured as a Lungo Macchiato, with a touch of milk froth, Envivo Lungo becomes rounder while keeping its intense character. Enjoyed as a Latte Macchiato, combined with the smoothness of milk froth, the Envivo Lungo Grand Cru expresses softened woody notes while developing round, indulgent and buttery aromatics.

Envivo Lungo is a permanent addition to the Nespresso range which now consists of 24 Grands Crus. It is available at Nespresso boutiques worldwide, as well as through orders from the Nespresso Customer Care Centres and online at www.nespresso.com.



ADVISORY REGARDING NARCOTICS/DRUGS FOR INDIAN COMMUNITY IN KUWAIT

The Indian Embassy has noticed that there has been a spurt in the number of Indian nationals arrested in Kuwait allegedly for bringing drugs/narcotics substances inside Kuwait. Also, there has been an increase in the number of Indian nationals arrested in Kuwait in drug related cases. About 65 percent of total Indian inmates in Central Jail are due to drug related offences. Furthermore, about 40 percent

Indians under arrest in Public jail are due to drug-related charges.

It is reiterated that penalties for possession, use and trafficking of drugs, even a small amount in Kuwait, could result in arrest and imprisonment. The convicted offenders could even be given capital punishment or life imprisonment by the local Courts. Moreover, in drug-related cases, Indian Embassy cannot extend

any legal/ financial assistance to those arrested. All concerned have to defend themselves in local courts by hiring lawyers at their cost. The release of accused or convicted person depends upon the verdict of the Court. The Embassy advises once again to all Indian community members in Kuwait to abide by the laws of the land and not to involve themselves in any drug-related activities.



Kuwait University Rector Dr Hussein Al-Ansari met recently with a team from the United Nations led by Zineb Benjelloun Kuwait's UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative. The two sides discussed matters of mutual interest and ways to implement joint projects in the future.

REPATRIATION OF DISTRESSED INDIAN NATIONALS FROM KUWAIT

There has been an increase in Indian nationals seeking assistance of Embassy for their immediate return to India. Many Indian nationals continue to languish in various police stations, Detention Cell and Deportation Centre awaiting their repatriation to India. Also, there are distressed persons in Male and Female Shelters seeking early repatriation. Some of them in the Shelters are unfortunately waiting for 3-6 months and beyond for return to India.

The Embassy would like to clarify the following in this regard:

i. Distressed workers in the shelters (male and female)

(i) As per local regulations, the repatriation of distressed domestic worker can take place under three circumstances; (i) the sponsor handing over the passport with valid residence visa. (in such case, the worker can return to India after booking of air-passage); (ii) sponsor filing an absconding case against the domestic workers thereby nullifying the

residence status of the worker (in such case, the repatriation process/formalities may take 2-3 months after lodging of absconding case); (iii) and lastly, on the expiry of residence visa of the worker (repatriation process/formalities may take 2-3 months after expiry of visa).

(ii) Please note that distressed Indian nationals unfortunately remain stranded in Kuwait till such time one of the above three options materializes. The Embassy makes consistent efforts in expeditious repatriation of all stranded Indian workers in Kuwait. However, due to strict immigration procedure in Kuwait, the entire process of repatriation remains time-consuming as the repatriation of Indian nationals depend on the cooperation from the sponsors/employers and the local authorities which can sometimes take 3-6 months (or even more).

(iii) Therefore, those seeking refuge in shelter of the Embassy must bear in mind that the repatriation process takes a long time and that despite best efforts by the Embassy, there is

no easy or quicker way out. It is not possible to arrange repatriation without fulfilling the local immigration procedure/conditions explained to above.

ii. Indian nationals in deportation center, Kuwait

(i) As per the local laws, expatriates detained for residency or visa law violations in Kuwait are deported to their home countries. Indians, who are not having a valid residency/visa, are detained by police authorities and deported to India. They are kept under detention at various police stations and finally at the Deportation Center, till the procedures for their deportation are completed by the local authorities. The number of such detainees varies on daily basis as the Indian detainees in Deportation Center are deported in small numbers and new deportees are forwarded to this Center by the police stations almost on a daily basis. There are presently 28,495 Indian nationals staying unauthorized in Kuwait (as per Data as on 15/2/2016 received from

Kuwaiti authorities) due to visa or residency violations.

(ii) The Embassy, on its part ensures travel documents are issued early to Indian nationals facing deportation. In this connection, request for Emergency Certificate are received from the police stations/Deportation Centre authorities where passports are not available with the detainees or could not be retrieved from their Kuwaiti sponsors/employers. The Embassy officials visit the police stations; Detention Cell/Deportation Centre etc. to meet these Indian nationals detained, for interaction so as to verify nationality status and for issuing travel documents (Emergency Certificates) to Indian detainees not having passports with them to facilitate their repatriation to India. In recent years, the number of Emergency Certificates issued by the Embassy is as follows: 2,635 in 2013, 2,789 in 2014, 3,922 in 2015 and 3,127 in 2016 (till June 16).

(iii) In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the entire process of repatriation

through Deportation Centre takes considerable time as it entails finger printing/verification and completion of other formalities/booking of tickets by Deportation Centre. It is not possible to indicate definite time-frame by which the deportees would travel to India and repatriation can only take place after completion of all formalities with the Kuwaiti authorities.

This is to assure once again that on receiving complaints, the Embassy takes up each and every case reported for early repatriation by contacting sponsors/employers and with the local authorities. To assist distressed Indian nationals, the Embassy can issue travel documents (Emergency Certificates) after verification of credentials and provide even free air-tickets for their travel to India in deserving cases. However, the process of repatriation is time-consuming and it is not possible for the Embassy to repatriate without the completion of immigration procedure and fulfillment of conditions, which may take 3-6 months or more.

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antiga	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Azerbaijan	00994	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lesotho	00266		

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

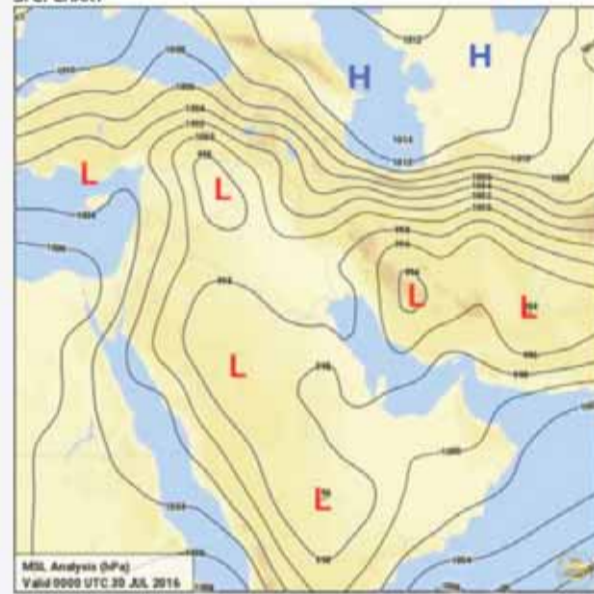


Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours
Issued 30/07/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 46 °C

By Day : Hot and relatively humid especially over coastal areas with variable wind changing to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h
By Night : Relatively humid weather over coastal areas with variable wind changing to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Expected Weather	very hot	very hot	very hot + raising dust	very hot + raising dust
Min Temp °C	28	29	31	32
Max Temp °C	48	48	50	49
Wind Direction	north westerly	north westerly	north westerly	north westerly to northerly
Wind Speed km/h	15 - 35	15 - 40	25 - 45	25 - 50

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C	EXP
KUWAIT CITY	34		43	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	27		46	
ABDALY	31		49	
BUBYAN	31		36	
JAHRA	32		49	
FAILAKA ISLAND	31		38	
SALMIYAH	33		37	
AHMADI	34		37	
JAL ALIYAH	30		48	
QAROH ISLAND	32		34	
UMM AL-MARADEM	32		35	
NUWAISIB	28		44	
WAFRA	28		48	
MANAGISH	28		49	
SALMY	29		47	
MUTRIBA	29		50	

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	44
Min Temp (°C)	28
Max Rel Hum (%)	65
Min Rel Hum (%)	17
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	28 SE
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm
Sunrise	05:07
Sunset	18:42

Prayer Times

Fajr	03:38
Sunrise	05:07
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:30
Sunset	18:42
Isha	20:08



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabaa	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhazeem	22636920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rfae	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
Dr Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarroof	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gajare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammes Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC	
Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	
Te: 2575077	
Fax: 25723123	



- 03:25 Mutant Planet
- 04:15 Ten Deadliest Snakes
- 05:02 River Monsters
- 05:49 Mutant Planet
- 06:36 Swamp Brothers
- 07:20 Swamp Brothers
- 07:25 Dog TV
- 08:15 Treehouse Masters
- 09:10 Penguins On A Plane: Great Animal Moves
- 10:05 The Wild Life Of Tim Faulkner
- 11:00 Dog TV
- 11:55 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
- 12:50 Biggest And Baddest
- 18:20 Treehouse Masters
- 19:15 Penguins On A Plane: Great Animal Moves
- 20:10 The Wild Life Of Tim Faulkner
- 21:05 BonDi Vet
- 22:00 Treehouse Masters
- 22:55 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
- 23:50 Gator Boys
- 00:45 Gator Boys
- 01:40 Biggest And Baddest
- 02:35 Biggest And Baddest

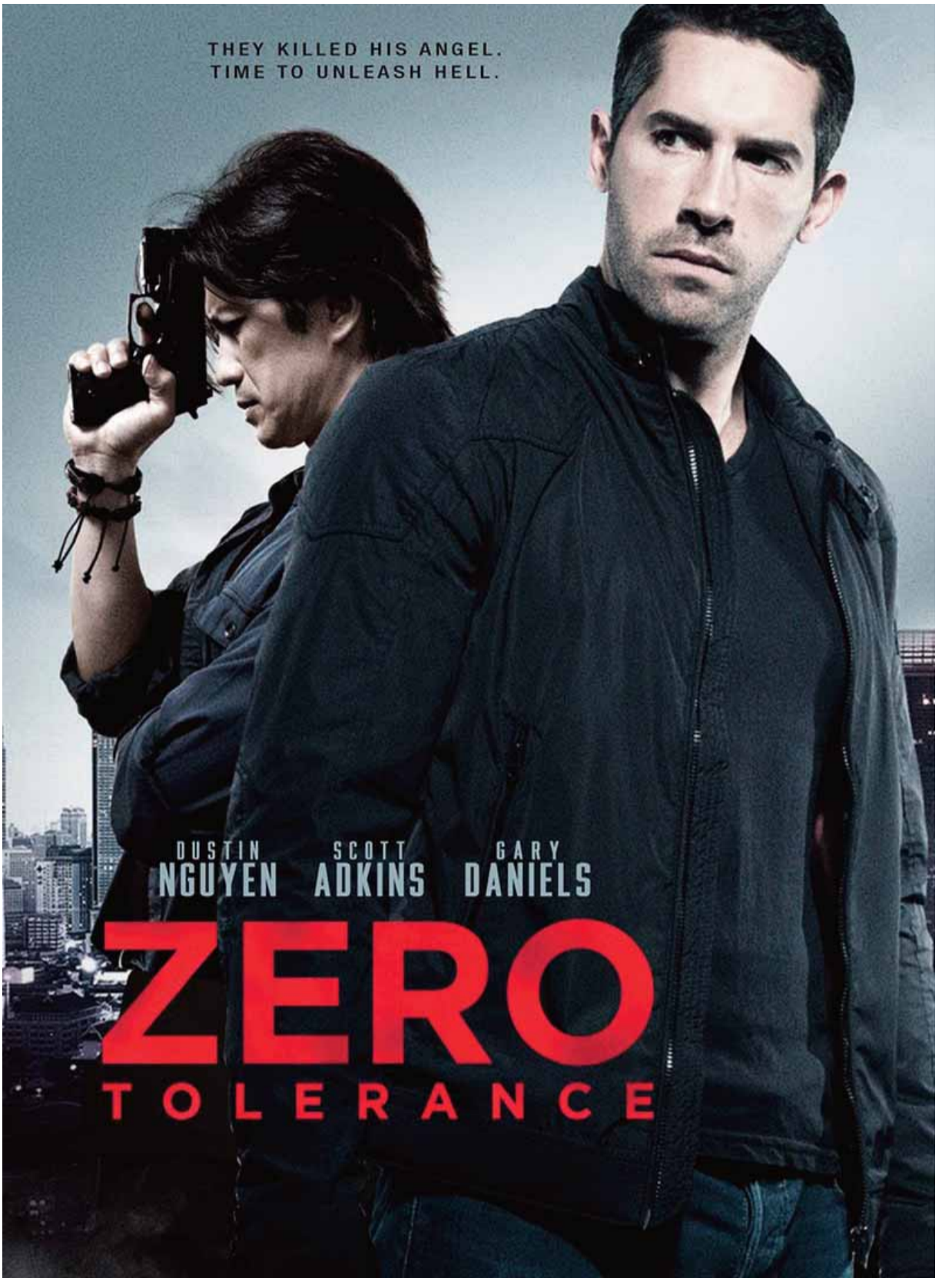


- 01:20 Ultimate Survival
- 02:10 Dirty Jobs
- 03:00 Scorned: Crimes Of Passion
- 03:48 The Perfect Murder
- 07:00 Swamp Murders
- 10:20 Web Of Lies
- 11:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
- 12:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 15:20 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
- 16:10 Reel Crime/Real Story
- 18:40 The Whies Did It
- 20:20 A Crime To Remember
- 21:10 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
- 22:00 Last Hope With Troy Dunn
- 22:25 Last Hope With Troy Dunn
- 22:50 I Am Homicide
- 23:40 Obsession: Dark Desires
- 00:30 A Haunting
- 01:20 The Haunted
- 02:10 Deadly Sins

- 19:00 PJ Masks
- 19:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 20:00 Doc McStuffins
- 20:30 Sofia The First
- 21:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 21:30 PJ Masks
- 22:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 22:30 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 22:45 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 22:50 Zou
- 23:05 Henry Hugglemonster
- 23:20 Calimero
- 23:35 Zou
- 23:50 Loopdidoo
- 00:05 Art Attack
- 00:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 00:45 Calimero
- 01:00 Zou
- 01:15 Loopdidoo
- 01:30 Art Attack
- 02:00 Calimero
- 02:15 Zou
- 02:30 Loopdidoo
- 02:45 Art Attack



- 03:23 Paw Patrol
- 03:46 Paw Patrol
- 04:10 Wanda And The Alien
- 04:19 Wanda And The Alien
- 04:30 Dora And Friends
- 04:53 Dora And Friends
- 05:16 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 05:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 06:00 Paw Patrol
- 06:13 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 06:36 Dora The Explorer
- 07:00 Wanda And The Alien
- 07:11 Zack & Quack
- 07:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 07:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 08:10 Ni Hao, Kai-Lan
- 08:58 Dora The Explorer
- 09:22 Little Charmers
- 09:32 Paw Patrol
- 09:57 Bubble Guppies
- 10:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 10:40 Zack & Quack
- 10:52 Team Umizoomi
- 11:15 Louie
- 11:22 Louie
- 11:30 Ni Hao, Kai-Lan
- 11:53 Olive The Ostrich
- 11:58 Olive The Ostrich
- 12:03 Max & Ruby
- 12:26 Wanda And The Alien
- 12:37 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 12:48 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 13:00 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 13:22 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 13:45 Zack & Quack
- 13:55 Zack & Quack
- 14:05 Team Umizoomi
- 14:28 Louie
- 14:35 Louie
- 14:42 Louie
- 14:48 Paw Patrol
- 14:58 Paw Patrol
- 15:23 Paw Patrol
- 15:46 Paw Patrol
- 16:10 Wanda And The Alien
- 16:19 Wanda And The Alien
- 16:30 Dora And Friends
- 16:53 Dora And Friends
- 17:16 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 17:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 18:00 Paw Patrol
- 18:13 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 18:36 Dora The Explorer
- 19:00 Wanda And The Alien
- 19:11 Zack & Quack
- 19:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 19:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 20:10 Paw Patrol
- 20:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 20:58 Dora The Explorer
- 21:22 Little Charmers
- 21:32 Paw Patrol
- 21:57 Bubble Guppies
- 22:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 22:40 Zack & Quack
- 22:52 Team Umizoomi
- 23:15 Louie
- 23:22 Louie
- 23:30 Ni Hao, Kai-Lan
- 23:53 Olive The Ostrich
- 23:58 Olive The Ostrich
- 00:03 Max & Ruby
- 00:26 Wanda And The Alien
- 00:37 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 00:48 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 01:00 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 01:22 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 01:45 Zack & Quack
- 01:55 Zack & Quack
- 02:05 Team Umizoomi
- 02:28 Louie
- 02:35 Louie
- 02:40 Olive The Ostrich
- 02:44 Olive The Ostrich
- 02:49 Paw Patrol



ZERO TOLERANCE ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



- 03:35 Doctors
- 04:05 Doctors
- 04:35 Eastenders
- 05:05 New Tricks
- 06:00 Doctors
- 06:30 Eastenders
- 07:00 New Tricks
- 07:55 Death In Paradise
- 08:50 Stella
- 09:40 Father Brown
- 10:30 Doctors
- 11:00 Eastenders
- 11:35 Death In Paradise
- 12:30 Stella
- 13:20 New Tricks
- 14:15 Eastenders
- 14:50 Doctors
- 15:25 Death In Paradise
- 16:20 Stella
- 17:05 The Musketeers
- 18:00 Doctors
- 18:30 Eastenders
- 19:05 Death In Paradise
- 20:05 DCI Banks
- 21:00 DCI Banks
- 21:55 Ripper Street
- 22:50 Spooks
- 23:45 Doctors
- 00:15 Eastenders
- 00:45 DCI Banks
- 01:30 DCI Banks
- 02:15 Ripper Street



- 03:15 The Hive
- 03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 04:10 Hank Zipzer
- 04:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 05:00 Violetta
- 05:45 The Hive
- 05:50 Mouk
- 06:00 Hank Zipzer
- 06:25 Sofia The First
- 06:50 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 06:55 Gravity Falls
- 07:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 07:45 Shake It Up
- 08:10 Bunk'd
- 08:35 Backstage
- 09:00 Alex & Co.
- 09:25 Girl Meets World
- 09:50 Liv And Maddie
- 10:15 Binny And The Ghost
- 10:40 Teen Beach 2
- 12:20 Shake It Up
- 14:25 Austin & Ally
- 15:15 Descendants Wicked World
- 15:20 Liv And Maddie
- 16:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 17:00 Gravity Falls
- 17:25 Double Teamed
- 18:55 The 7D
- 19:05 Dog With A Blog
- 19:30 Bunk'd
- 19:55 Jessie
- 20:20 Mako Mermaids
- 20:45 Good Luck Charlie
- 21:10 H2O: Just Add Water
- 22:00 Binny And The Ghost
- 22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 23:10 Hank Zipzer
- 23:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 00:00 Violetta
- 00:45 The Hive
- 00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 01:40 Hank Zipzer
- 02:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 02:30 Violetta



- 06:00 Boyster
- 06:10 Super Matrak
- 06:35 Super Matrak
- 07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 07:25 K.C. Undercover
- 07:50 Supa Strikas
- 08:15 Annedroids
- 08:40 Mighty Med
- 09:10 Marvel Avengers: Ultron Revolution
- 09:35 Lab Rats
- 10:00 Supa Strikas
- 10:25 K.C. Undercover
- 10:50 Annedroids
- 11:20 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 11:45 Kirby Buckets
- 12:10 Mighty Med
- 12:35 K.C. Undercover
- 13:00 Lab Rats
- 13:30 Supa Strikas
- 13:55 Annedroids
- 14:20 Kickin' It
- 14:45 Kickin' It
- 14:55 Louie
- 15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 15:15 Mighty Med
- 15:40 The 7D
- 15:50 Shake It Up
- 16:05 Lab Rats
- 16:30 Pickle And Peanut
- 16:55 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
- 17:25 K.C. Undercover
- 17:50 Supa Strikas
- 18:15 Lab Rats
- 18:40 K.C. Undercover
- 19:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 19:10 Annedroids
- 19:35 Marvel Avengers: Ultron Revolution
- 20:00 Kirby Buckets
- 20:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 20:55 K.C. Undercover
- 21:20 Supa Strikas
- 21:45 Lab Rats
- 22:10 Mighty Med
- 22:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA



- 03:00 Ace Of Cakes
- 04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 05:00 Chopped
- 06:00 Man Fire Food
- 07:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 08:00 Chopped
- 09:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes
- 10:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 11:00 Siba's Table
- 12:00 Barefoot Contessa
- 13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 15:00 Chopped
- 16:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 17:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes
- 18:00 Siba's Table
- 18:30 Siba's Table
- 19:00 Patricia Heaton Parties
- 19:30 Patricia Heaton Parties
- 20:00 Cutthroat Kitchen
- 21:00 Chopped South Africa
- 22:00 Man v Food
- 22:30 Man v Food
- 23:00 Mystery Diners
- 23:30 Mystery Diners
- 00:00 Cutthroat Kitchen
- 01:00 Chopped South Africa
- 02:00 Man v Food
- 02:30 Man v Food



- 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 Max & Shred
- 05:24 Henry Danger
- 05:48 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
- 06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 06:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 07:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 07:48 Wrxn Club
- 08:12 The Loud House
- 08:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 09:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 09:24 Harvey Beaks
- 09:48 Henry Danger
- 10:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
- 10:36 The Haunted Hathaways
- 11:00 Wrxn Club
- 11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 11:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 12:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 12:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 13:00 Breadwinners

- 13:24 The Loud House
- 13:48 Get Blake
- 14:12 Rabbids Invasion
- 14:36 100 Things To Do Before High School
- 15:00 Game Shakers
- 15:24 The Loud House
- 15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 16:36 Harvey Beaks
- 17:00 Sanjay And Craig
- 17:24 Harvey Beaks
- 17:48 Breadwinners
- 18:12 Henry Danger
- 18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
- 19:00 100 Things To Do Before High School
- 19:24 Game Shakers
- 19:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 20:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 20:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 21:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 21:24 Breadwinners
- 21:48 Breadwinners
- 22:12 Sanjay And Craig
- 22:36 Sanjay And Craig
- 23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 23:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 23:48 Henry Danger
- 00:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
- 00:36 Max & Shred
- 01:00 The Haunted Hathaways
- 01:24 Sanjay And Craig
- 01:48 Sanjay And Craig
- 02:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 02:36 SpongeBob SquarePants



- 03:00 Calvary
- 05:00 Grand Central
- 07:00 Foreverland
- 09:00 The French Minister
- 11:00 Grand Central
- 13:00 Rosewater
- 15:00 Changing Hearts
- 17:00 The French Minister
- 19:00 The Kings Of Summer
- 21:00 Inside Llewyn Davis
- 23:00 Suite Francaise
- 01:00 The French Minister



- 03:00 Ja'mie: Private School Girl
- 03:30 The Brink
- 04:00 HBO Comedy Half-Hour
- 04:30 Def Poetry Jam
- 05:00 Lackawanna Blues
- 07:00 Sugar
- 09:00 The Laramie Project
- 11:00 In The Gloaming
- 12:00 Dancing In September
- 14:00 Vice Special Report: Fighting Isis
- 15:00 Quincy Jones: Burning The Light
- 16:00 In The Gloaming
- 17:00 Dancing In September
- 19:00 Vice Special Report: Fighting Isis
- 20:00 Band Of Brothers
- 21:00 Animals
- 21:30 Girls
- 22:00 American Crime Story: The People vs O.J. Simpson
- 23:00 Vice Special Report: Fighting Isis
- 00:00 Louis C.K.: Oh My God
- 01:00 Band Of Brothers
- 02:00 Animals
- 02:30 Girls



- 03:00 Mad Dogs
- 04:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 05:00 Good Morning America
- 06:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
- 07:00 Castle
- 08:00 The Blacklist
- 09:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 10:00 Suits
- 11:00 Castle
- 12:00 The Blacklist
- 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 14:00 Graceland
- 15:00 Live Good Morning America
- 16:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
- 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 18:00 The Blacklist
- 19:00 Containment
- 20:00 Containment
- 21:00 Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders
- 22:00 Code Black
- 23:00 Damien
- 00:00 Castle
- 01:00 Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders
- 02:00 Code Black



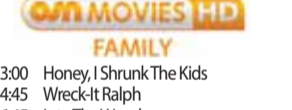
- 03:54 Batman vs. Robin
- 05:45 Airplane vs. Volcano
- 07:45 Crimson Tide
- 09:45 Faster
- 11:45 Batman Unlimited: Animal Instincts
- 13:30 I, Robot
- 15:30 X-Men: The Last Stand
- 17:30 Crimson Tide
- 19:30 Transformers: Age Of Extinction
- 22:30 Death Race
- 00:15 Zero Tolerance
- 02:15 The Liability



- 04:00 Bad Parents
- 06:00 Sister Act
- 08:00 Raising Helen
- 10:00 Bad Parents
- 12:00 Nitro Circus: The Movie
- 14:00 My Father The Hero
- 16:00 Raising Helen
- 18:00 Krippendorf's Tribe
- 20:00 Scenes From A Mall
- 22:00 Three Night Stand
- 00:00 This Is 40
- 02:15 Krippendorf's Tribe



- 03:00 Calvary
- 05:00 Grand Central
- 07:00 Foreverland
- 09:00 The French Minister
- 11:00 Grand Central
- 13:00 Rosewater
- 15:00 Changing Hearts
- 17:00 The French Minister
- 19:00 The Kings Of Summer
- 21:00 Inside Llewyn Davis
- 23:00 Suite Francaise
- 01:00 The French Minister



- 03:00 Honey, I Shrank The Kids
- 04:45 Weck-It Ralph
- 06:45 Into The Woods
- 09:00 Inside Out
- 11:00 Garfield's Fun Fest
- 13:00 Ernest Goes To Camp
- 15:00 Toy Story
- 17:00 Toy Story 2
- 19:00 Toy Story 3
- 21:00 Marvel's Hulk vs. Thor & Wolverine
- 23:00 Garfield's Fun Fest
- 01:00 Ernest Goes To Camp



- 03:30 Out Of The Furnace
- 05:30 Won't Back Down
- 07:30 Breathe In
- 09:30 Dr. Strangelove
- 11:30 Get On Up
- 14:00 Hitting The Apex
- 16:30 Anna Karenina
- 19:00 One Fine Day
- 21:00 Romeo & Juliet
- 23:00 Blaze
- 01:00 Anna Karenina



- 04:30 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
- 06:00 The Dragon Pearl
- 08:00 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 09:45 The Nutcracker Sweet
- 11:15 Looney Tunes Rabbit's Run
- 12:45 Vampire Dog
- 14:30 Saving Santa
- 16:00 Space Warriors
- 18:00 The Nutcracker Sweet
- 20:00 Echo Planet
- 22:00 Saving Santa
- 23:30 Space Warriors
- 01:15 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 02:45 Echo Planet



- 04:15 Persecuted
- 06:00 So Undercover
- 08:00 I Am Ali
- 10:00 Special ID
- 11:45 Snow White And The Huntsman
- 14:00 Veronica Mars
- 16:00 I Am Ali
- 18:00 Accidental Love
- 20:00 The Water Diviner
- 22:00 Focus
- 00:00 Insidious: Chapter 3
- 02:00 Accidental Love



- 04:00 Captain America: The Winter Soldier
- 06:15 Hidalgo
- 08:30 All's Faire In Love
- 10:15 Jack
- 12:15 Maleficent
- 14:00 The Lone Ranger
- 16:20 Surrogates
- 18:30 Casanova
- 20:00 Casanova
- 22:00 Ain't Them Bodies Saints



- 03:00 The Listener
- 05:00 Fit For Fashion
- 07:00 Castle
- 08:00 Low Winter Sun
- 09:00 Private Practice
- 10:00 The Listener
- 13:00 Fit For Fashion
- 14:00 Fashion Star
- 15:00 Making MrRight
- 16:00 American Idol
- 17:00 American Idol
- 18:00 Da Vinci's Demons
- 19:00 The Bridge
- 20:00 House Of DVF
- 21:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
- 22:00 The Simpsons
- 23:00 The Simpsons
- 00:00 American Idol
- 01:00 American Idol
- 02:00 Da Vinci's Demons



- 04:05 Welcome To Pine Hill
- 05:30 Detroit Unloaded
- 07:00 Rolling Stones: Crossfire Hurricane
- 08:55 Banksy Does New York
- 10:15 Robert Redford
- 10:30 The Journey
- 12:10 The Trip To Bountiful
- 13:55 Discovering: Zeffirelli
- 14:40 Andrea Bocelli: Child Destined To Sing
- 15:30 Look, Stranger
- 16:55 The Overbrook Brothers
- 18:30 All On The Line
- 19:30 Cathedrals Of Culture
- 20:00 Hollywood's Best Film Directors
- 20:30 The Wild Man Of Navidad
- 22:00 Isabella Rossellini's Green Porno Live
- 23:00 Rake
- 01:00 Cole
- 02:45 Chorus



- 03:15 Extreme Couponing
- 03:35 The Undateables
- 04:20 Ultimate Shopper
- 06:00 Say Yes To The Dress
- 06:25 Super Soul Sunday
- 07:15 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 08:05 Are You Fitter Than A Pensioner?
- 08:55 Nidia
- 09:45 Little People, Big World
- 10:35 Jon & Kate Plus 8
- 11:25 Cake Boss
- 11:50 Oprah's Master Class
- 12:40 Super Soul Sunday
- 13:30 My Giant Life
- 14:20 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm
- 15:10 Little People, Big World
- 16:00 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 16:50 Jon & Kate Plus 8
- 17:40 Cake Boss
- 18:05 Say Yes To The Dress



DEATH RACE ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

CROSSWORD 1328



ACROSS

1. A syndrome that occurs in many women from 2 to 14 days before the onset of menstruation.
4. Of or relating an apse.
11. A member of the Pueblo people living in northern New Mexico.
15. Tastelessness by virtue of being cheap and vulgar.
16. Comprises tropical American species usually placed in genus Masdevallia.
17. American professional baseball player famous for hitting home runs (1895-1948).
18. Unlicensed drinking establishment.
20. General term for any insect or similar creeping or crawling invertebrate.
21. A monocotyledonous genus of the family Iridaceae.
22. Fallow deer.
23. A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
25. Mentally sluggish.
27. The compass point that is one point east of due south.
29. The trait of lacking restraint or control.
31. Having gaps or spaces.
34. (Greek mythology) Any of the 50 sea nymphs who were daughters of the sea god Nereus.
37. Automatic data processing by electronic means without the use of tabulating cards or punched tapes.
38. English economist noted for his studies of international trade and finance (born in 1907).
40. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
41. A fractional monetary unit in Bangladesh and India and Nepal and Pakistan.
43. A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
47. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
51. The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
52. The basic unit of money in Thailand.
53. Metal or plastic sheath over the end of a shoelace or ribbon.
54. A training program to prepare college students to be commissioned officers.
56. Shrubby lichens of the family Usneaceae having a flattened thallus.
58. West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
61. A Hindu disciple of a swami.
62. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
63. A hardy cabbage with coarse curly leaves that do not form a head.
66. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
70. A score in baseball made by a runner touching all four bases safely.
74. A sharp projection on an edge or surface.
75. The bureau of the Treasury Department responsible for tax collections.
76. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
77. Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
78. The cry made by sheep.
79. Elder brother of Krishna.
80. Being one more than ninety.

DOWN

1. An anxiety disorder associated with serious traumatic events and characterized by such symptoms as guilt about surviving or reliving the trauma in dreams or numbness and lack of involvement with reality or recurrent thoughts and images.
2. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
3. (Linguistics) The form of a word after all affixes are removed.
4. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
5. Be earlier in time.
6. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
7. Being nine more than ninety.
8. Give a nickname to.
9. (zoology) Pertaining to alulae.
10. A body of water cut off from a larger body by a reef of sand or coral.
11. A three-legged ruck used for support.
12. A plant hormone that promotes root formation and bud growth.
13. United States inventor who manufactured the first elevator with a safety device (1811-1861).
14. Title for the former hereditary monarch of Iran.
19. A vigorous blow.
24. Cassava with long tuberous edible roots and soft brittle stems.
26. A master's degree in religion.
28. Area around the altar of a church for the clergy and choir.
30. Any of numerous hairy-bodied insects including social and solitary species.
32. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
33. Plausible glib talk (especially useful to a salesperson).
35. Quieter or silence (a sound) or make (an image) less visible.
36. Any of several compounds of barium.
39. Ludicrously odd.
42. Scarabaeid beetle considered divine by ancient Egyptians.
44. Muslim name for God.
45. A garment (coat or sweater) that has raglan sleeves.
46. (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
48. A language spoken by the Atakapa people of the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
49. A person who commits larceny.
50. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
55. A Russian river.
57. A severe recurring vascular headache.
59. (Zoroastrianism) Title for benevolent deities.
60. East Indian tart yellow berrylike fruit.
64. Using speech rather than writing.
65. The basic unit of money on Malta.
67. A mythical Greek hero.
68. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
69. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
71. A state-chartered savings bank owned by its depositors and managed by a board of trustees.
72. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
73. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

This is a good workday and may prove to be rather profitable. Working with others is successful and you may be sought after as just the person for a particular job. Your inner resources and emotions are accented. Expect a sense of support from those around you. Perhaps you feel this is really you-how you feel and are. It is natural for you to put your practical and managerial abilities to work. You can make a career out of your keen organizational skills and clear insight into how things work. Supervision and taking charge are your trademarks. There is a feeling of stability and permanence that satisfies a deep emotional need this evening. Music or a neighborhood entertainment is likely to play a more important role for you this evening.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Career moves may depend upon your cutting through some of the fluff and really taking care of business-getting down to your most practical. Ridding yourself of excess or unneeded stuff may be a key move now. If you have to make decisions for other people today, you could really shine in this day. Your advice and guidance may be blunt and to the point just now but it is truthful and a great deal of help for all who seek your help. You are able to cut through the red tape and get at what is beneath and behind most any difficulty. This evening there is a feeling of being at peace and stable on the emotional level. Stability and permanence satisfy a deep emotional need. An addition to your aquarium or the purchase of a new pet may be in order this evening.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You prefer diplomacy but could find yourself in the midst of a difficult situation this day. There could be some hard feelings, especially from a young person, if you become too aggressive. You could have difficulty getting outer recognition for your efforts or accomplishments. This does not mean they are worthless; it does mean you should throw your efforts into work or ventures you really love doing. Take a little trip, or get outside today. You may want to break that routine and try something new or different right now. You may discover insights into day-to-day problems that will be of great value later. You have a lot of energy for improving your surroundings or life situations. You are very motivated to improve your life.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Problems that come to your attention are easily worked through today as the usual complications are not present. You have something to say and people are listening; careful, keep to the subject matter. You make your way through ideas and concepts, and your ability to express them to others is successful. Any lecture or conference meetings will go smoothly. A play, a musical, a sitcom or any number of creative entertainment projects are the things that excite your creative mind this afternoon. There are sudden insights into some of the most sensitive and vulnerable areas of your inner self and psychology. The establishment of a new habit pattern is beginning to set in and you are pleased with the results. You lend a helping hand to a mother tonight.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Work consists of much communication. To be a good communicator, one must be able to carry a fair share of the conversation in many walks of life. You are a good communicator. You are inspired and you inspire others; you value all of the benefits that come from using the mind: words, ideas, thoughts and such. You enjoy stimulating literature and may find it difficult to put down a book or an article when duty calls today. You could be most persuasive with others and you may decide to use information from your books to make your point understood. The situation lends itself to your particular ideas. Enchantment, entertainment and enticements are all a part of the celebrations tonight; enjoy-take a few pictures.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This could be a frustrating day regarding practical or job-related activities. Your ideas however, will save the day. Think through to the outcome and make your presentation in writing. You are persistent but with a light sense of humor; higher-ups will come back to your work again and again. New methods or new ways of thinking will take time to take hold. Concerned with a friend or friends, you will find yourself aiding or counseling and helping others. Your presence in a group has a very decided effect. You will make a positive difference in many people's lives, especially the young. Question and answer period takes patience, but you can do it. Tonight is for you, anything your heart desires. Music is hard to resist this evening.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

A creative project works to your advantage-you feel more inspired. You have the gift of working well with others and you help them to sense and feel the unity of life. Your love of the spiritual and the eternal is clear to all who meet you. You love to solve the problems of the world, at least in words and images; when you talk, all are enchanted. You could have your own radio show or write as a reporter for a popular newspaper. You do not mind working through a puzzle or problem to find the best outcome. In-depth discussions find you at your mental best this afternoon. The way you express yourself and your writing has begun to take on a special style, which counts for a lot now. This evening, family and friends bring good cheer.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is a great time to be with others and to work together: teamwork. Your keen business sense is never sharper than when you are working with or for others-a group, corporation, etc. You can find support from all sides when it comes to most any sort of activity. Playing sports professionally may be a leap but you work with your teammates as though you are all working together to win a big game. You may go the extra mile today to make sure your team wins the game or becomes approved or achieves whatever is set before them. You may be moved to appreciate and discover the beauty in your life and in those around you. Be wise in shopping this afternoon; think about how long it takes to work and pay off the bill before you buy.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

Public relations, public speaking or sales is an option today. Even if you are not changing jobs, you may find yourself in one or more of these categories. The word here is accomplishment. If there is a job, you can do it. You are a hard worker-you pour yourself into any task with absolute determination. You would make a good teacher of others in matters of organization, practical competence, etc. You have a great desire and drive to be thorough and responsible down to the smallest detail. Music is likely to play a more important role for you than usual and perhaps there is also an urge to spend money on adding to your music collection or tickets to a concert. Close relationships begin to take on more emotional depth, power and importance.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You enjoy mental effort and discipline, and work long and hard at whatever you want to accomplish. You could find yourself lecturing or teaching. Being successful in life is easy-you have a built-in sense of how to approach and unravel even the most difficult problems. You have an instinct for justice and the law and today you have the opportunity to approach a problem from just the right angle. You may become involved in a little counseling or guiding others toward a more positive outcome for their situations. Let yourself dream this evening-do not ignore this opportunity to let your imagination loose. An unexpected social invitation has you reviewing your wardrobe contents. You might also want to think about replacing a billfold.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

High technology plays a bigger part in your life. If you do not already have a computer, you may think about owning one now. Perhaps this means you have a lot of experience on computers in the workplace. Advertising, newsletters, personal communication and any other information media are where you work best. A financial obligation will not go away, but deal with your responsibilities and they will feel less of a burden. Be careful while shopping this afternoon-you may tend to purchase an overpriced item simply because of the convenience. You could have real difficulties when it comes to matters of self-discipline. Stability and permanence satisfy a deep emotional need. This evening you may decide to create a new recipe.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

A new study has your interest this morning and you may be thinking of taking it on for a new research project. A library will be helpful. You are able to cut through the red tape and get at what is beneath and behind any delays or problems in the work arena today. You may meet a new friend through the work environment. Unusual and unique qualities catch your attention. This individual may affect you in a profound way on several levels. There are opportunities to express yourself in many ways. You tend to be creative and original in your work and career, managing to bring new ideas and spontaneity to bear. You are not afraid to get into the stickiest of situations and you always come up with the heart of the matter for all to understand.

WORD SEARCH

Animals 3 - Word Search

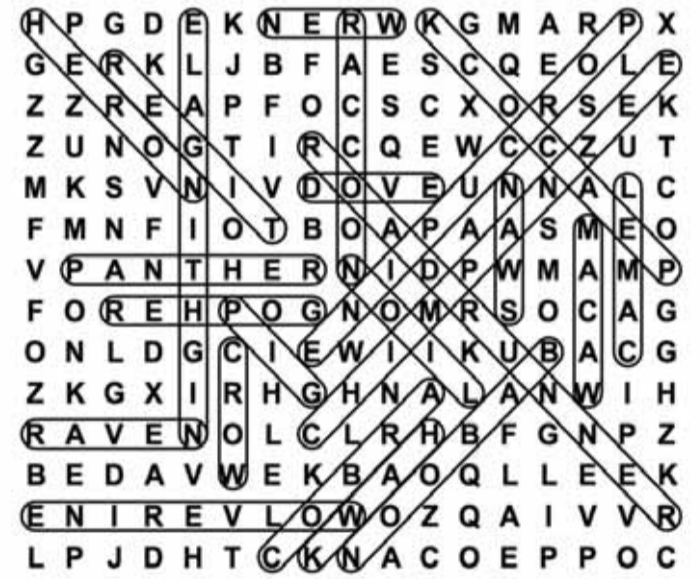
Find the words hidden in the grid of letters.



- | | | |
|----------|-------------|-------------|
| ANTELOPE | EMU | PARAKEET |
| BAT | GAZELLE | PORPOISE |
| BEAVER | GOOSE | PUMA |
| BUFFALO | HUMMINGBIRD | RATTLESNAKE |
| COYOTE | JAGUAR | TURTLE |
| CRANE | LAMPREY | WALRUS |
| DOLPHIN | MONKEY | WHALE |
| DUCK | ORCA | |

Yesterday Solution

Large Print Word Search Puzzles
Animals 2 - Solution



- | | | |
|------------|-------------|------------|
| BABOON | HERON | RACCOON |
| CAMEL | LION | RAVEN |
| CHIMPANZEE | MACAW | ROADRUNNER |
| COBRA | NIGHTINGALE | SWAN |
| CROW | PANTHER | TIGER |
| DOVE | PEACOCK | WOLVERINE |
| GOPHER | PIG | WREN |
| HAWK | PORCUPINE | |

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





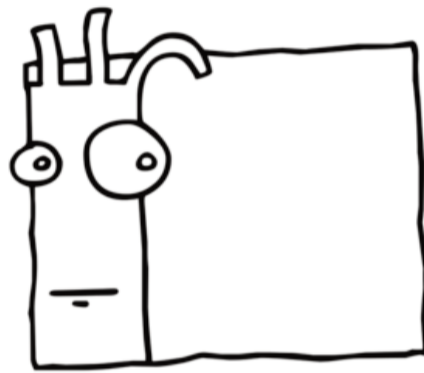
Sudoku 6x6 Puzzles - Sheet 7

Every row, column and mini-grid must contain the numbers 1 through 6. Don't guess - use logic!

	3	2	1	6	
		1	6		
		5	4		
	4	6	5	3	

4					3
		2	6		
	2			5	
	3			6	
		1	2		
2					4

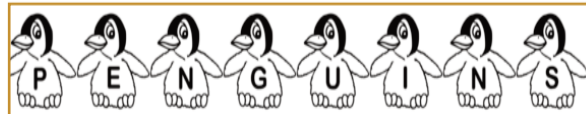
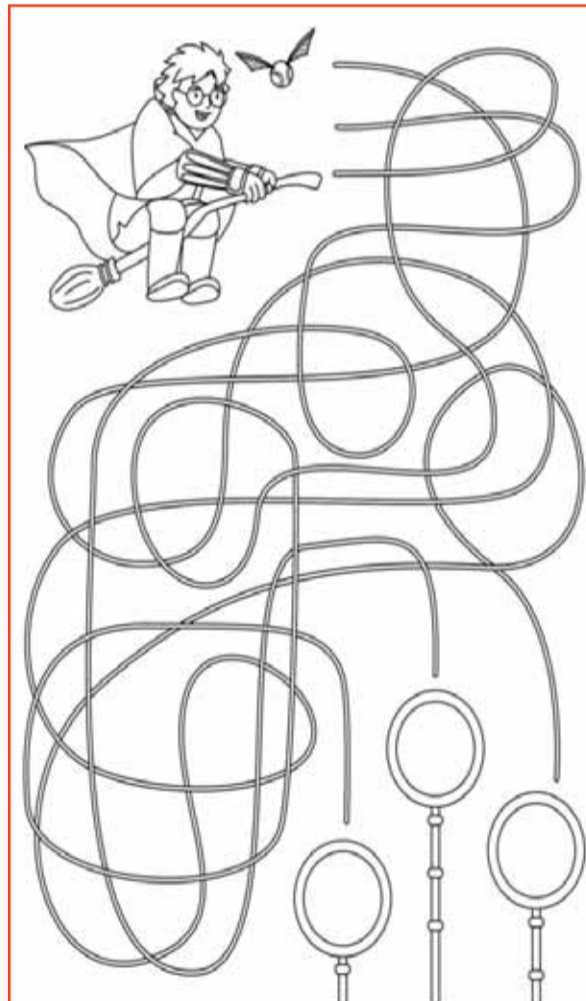
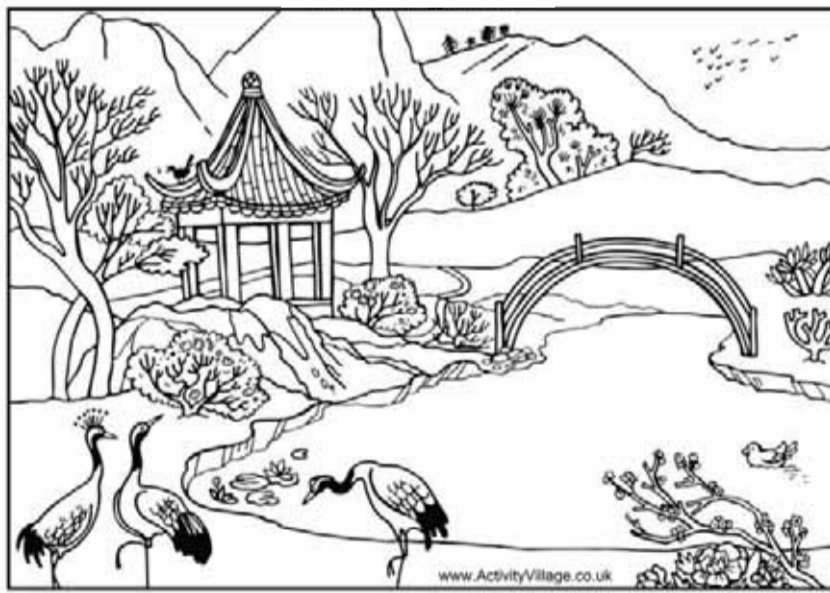
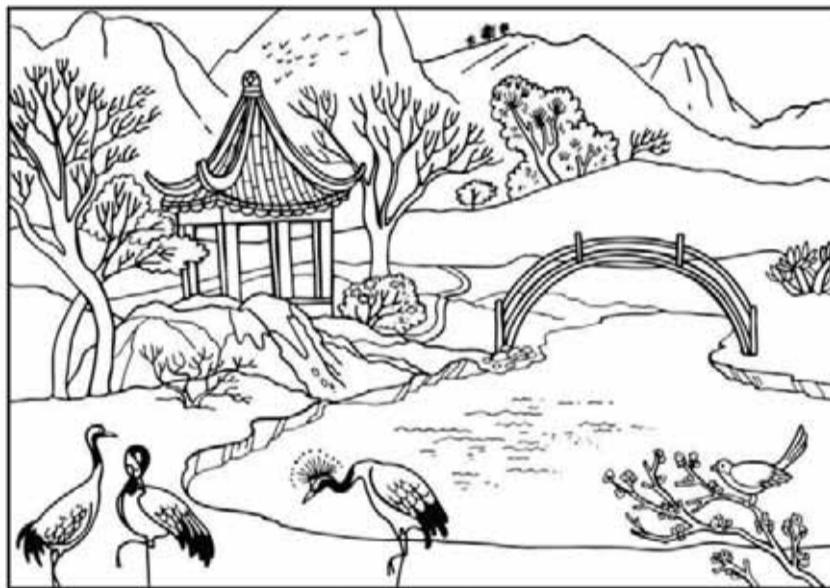
1		3	5		4
3					1
6					2
2		5	6		3



Color me!

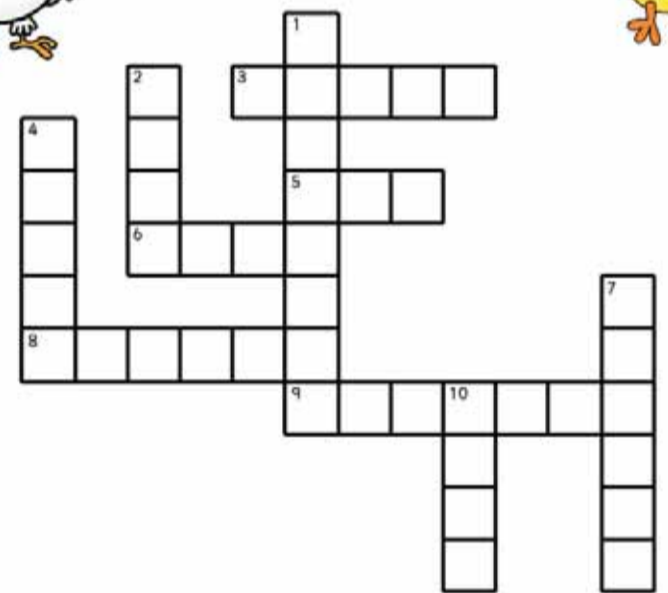
Gyarados
Gyarados

Find the differences



How many smaller words can you make from the letters above?

Farm Animal Babies Crossword



Across

- 3. a baby dog
- 5. a baby goat
- 6. a baby horse
- 8. a baby cat
- 9. a baby goose

Down

- 1. a baby duck
- 2. a baby cow
- 4. a baby hen
- 7. a baby pig
- 10. a baby sheep

Connect the dots



count the bears



GOSSIP



Shannen Doherty opens up on cancer battle

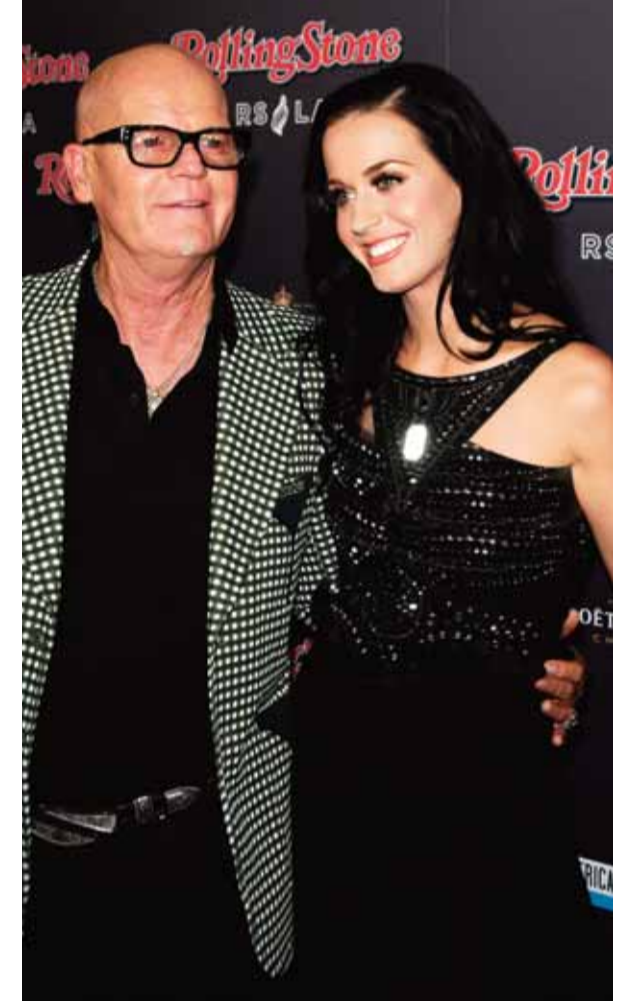
The 45-year-old actress has been fighting breast cancer since last year and admitted that there are times when she worries if she will survive. She told Entertainment Tonight: "It's hard, I started thinking that I wasn't going to live ... I don't look past today. "I don't know if I'll ever look like me again." However, Shannen is determined to beat the disease and is doing everything she can to fight it. She said: "I want to believe that if I fight, I'm gonna be okay." Shannen recently shaved her head and posted pictures on Instagram and her former 'Beverly Hills 90210' co-star Jason Priestley, 46, called her "brave" for sharing her struggle. He said: "What she did the other day, shaving her head and posting the pictures and everything, that was incredibly brave. Shannen's a strong kid and a

tough fighter, and I know that she's gonna come through this fight and she's gonna be OK." Shannen - who is currently married to her third husband Kurt Iswarienko - revealed her diagnosis in August 2015 after she filed a lawsuit against her former management and accounting firm, Tanner, Mainstain, Glynn & Johnson, who she took action against for allegedly failing to pay her SAG [Screen Actor's Guild] medical insurance without her knowledge. In court documents, the actress accused the firm of ignoring an invoice to pay her insurance premium in early 2014. Shannen re-enrolled shortly before doctors discovered she has "invasive breast cancer metastatic to at least one lymph node".

Paltrow wants to marry later this year

The 'Iron Man 3' actress' divorce from Chris Martin - the father of her children Apple, 12, and 10-year-old Moses - was only finalised last week, but she has already begun planning her nuptials to TV producer Brad Falchuk and has even enlisted the services of a wedding planner. A source said: "Gwyneth and Brad are talking seriously about marriage and are in the process of picking a day at the end of autumn." They want something low key, most likely in the desert where they often go for weekend breaks. "Gwyneth has started working with a planner. She's a traditional person and wants a proper commitment." And the 43-year-old star is even keen to have a baby with Brad, 45. The source added to heat magazine: "Gwyn and Brad are crazy about each other. There was chemistry from day one and

she likes to think they are 'twin flames', which is an even stronger romantic connection than soul-mates. "She's also very keen to try for a baby with Brad. She's always talked about having a third child in her forties, even when she was with Chris, but the thought of doing this with Brad feels right. "But first things first - a wedding." People might be surprised that she's planning to get married again but she doesn't care. She feels lucky to have found Brad." The 'Contagion' actress recently hinted she was keen to marry again. She said: "Marriage is a beautiful and noble institution. And I haven't gone off it. I absolutely believe in marriage."



Perry's dad says her feud with Swift 'ain't over yet'

The two singers haven't seen eye-to-eye for some time, with the 'Shake It Off' hitmaker's track 'Bad Blood' supposedly about the brunette beauty, who was a "straight-up enemy" that tried to "sabotage an entire tour". Though Katy has seemingly made reference to the tensions between them during Taylor's recent public spats with Kim Kardashian West and ex-boyfriend Calvin Harris, her mother Mary Hudson insists she's currently trying to "rise" above it all, but her father Keith Hudson says that doesn't mean the end of their war. Mary said: "Katy released 'Rise'. It says, 'My feet have been put to the fire but I will rise.' That's what she's about right now." Keith added to Britain's Grazia magazine: "You know it ain't over yet." Katy became embroiled in Taylor's row with Calvin - who she split from in June, a few weeks before she began romancing Tom Hiddleston - after it emerged the 'Shake It Off' hitmaker secretly wrote his track 'This Is What You Came For'. In a series of tweets, he wrote: "Hurtful to me at this point that her and her team would go so far out of their way to try and make ME look bad at this stage though I figure if you're happy in your new relationship you should focus on that instead of trying to tear your ex bf down for something to do. I know you're off tour and you need someone new to try and bury like Katy ETC but I'm not that guy, sorry. I won't allow it. Please focus on the positive aspects of YOUR life because you've earned a great one. God bless everyone have a beautiful day (sic)". In response, Katy, 31, retweeted a message she wrote in May 2015 which read "time, the ultimate truth teller" and shared an animated GIF on Twitter of US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton pulling a smug "I told you so"-type expression.



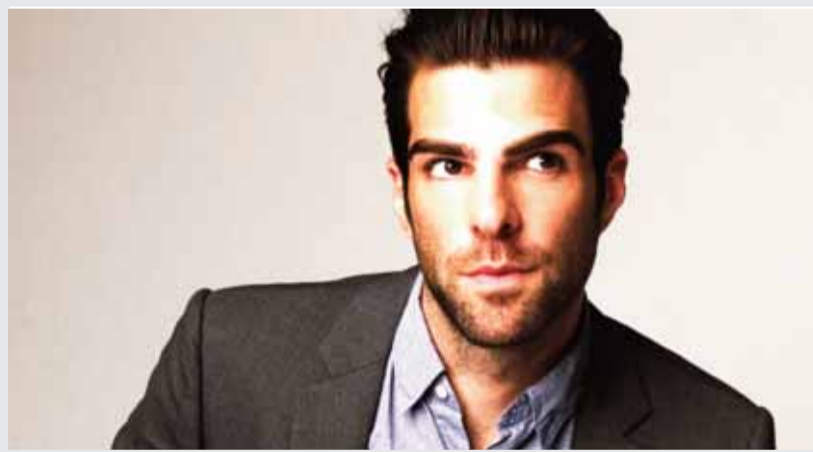
Olly Murs hates being single

The 'You Don't Know Love' singer split from Francesca Thomas last September after three years of dating and though he doesn't like being on his own, he's at least grateful their break-up gave him the chance to show off a new side of himself on his upcoming fifth album. He said: "I hate being single. It's not really where I want to be. "[But] because of the heartbreak, it's nice to give the fans something different..." I want to be a bit more bold [in the music] and for people to see I'm not just this cheeky guy who sings happy songs all the time. "I don't get frustrated by that because it is who I am but it was important for me to grow as an artist. "You get to a point where you think, 'I have been through a break-up.' The last couple of albums I hadn't. I was in love and I was happy, so those are the songs you do." And

the former 'X Factor' presenter admits thinks had felt "clunky" between him and Francesca for a while before they split. He said: "You grow apart. It wasn't right. When you're with someone it should feel right and at times it did feel a little bit clunky during last year. "I was doing 'X Factor' and had a lot on my plate. She was busy. We weren't seeing each other very much. It was just hard." But Olly, 32, is hoping he can learn from his failed relationship when he finds love again as it was his first experience of dating in the spotlight. He told Britain's HELLO! magazine: "It was my first proper relationship in this job, this weird world that I am in, doing music and being famous. "It was weird for her and me to figure it all out. "When I'm with my next partner... you learn from the mistakes."

Quinto spoke about getting married to Miles McMillan

The 'Star Trek Beyond' actor - who has been dating the 27-year-old model for around two years - fuelled speculation they were tying the knot when he was spotted with a band on his ring finger and whilst the couple haven't got engaged just yet, they have spoken about the possibility. Zachary told E! News: "I was just taking it [the ring] for a test drive, nothing formal. It's a vintage ring that I bought as a gift for Miles and because we were not together on this long press tour I was like, 'I am going to take that ring because I love it.' But the only finger it fit on was my ring finger on my left hand so I didn't think much of it. "I am thrilled that we can [get married] and I fought really hard for the right to marriage equality. I am really grateful for the Supreme Court for passing it a year ago. We love each other and we talk about it, but we have no immediate plans." Meanwhile, the 39-year-old star previously revealed he didn't come out as gay until he was at college. He said: "The question of when I knew I was gay and when I accepted I was gay are two very different conversations. I suppose I knew what was going on. I just wasn't ready to look at it. "In college, I'd say. [When he came out]. Once I broke free of the expectations of my upbringing, my socioeconomic exposure to ... I grew up with a pretty suburban, Catholic upbringing. I feel once I was able to create my own life and explore my own path ... um ... then I started to turn my attention to fully understanding and accepting who I am."



Price would have liked to stay married to Peter Andre



The 38-year-old star has revealed she is "old fashioned" when it comes to relationships and would have preferred if she could have stayed with her first husband, with whom she has Princess, nine, and Junior, 11. She said: "I'm still quite old fashioned, if I'd had it my way I would have stayed married to the first person I was married to, had kids and lived happily ever after." And Katie hasn't ruled out the chance of reuniting with Peter, 43, on a professional level. She added: "Work is work. I can be professional, Pete can be professional. So why couldn't we all do a 'Loose Women' together? Imagine us presenting 'This Morning'? "People would definitely watch it. We'd probably give each other crap, and people would wonder if we were serious or not. It would be quite funny." Meanwhile, Katie - who recently had

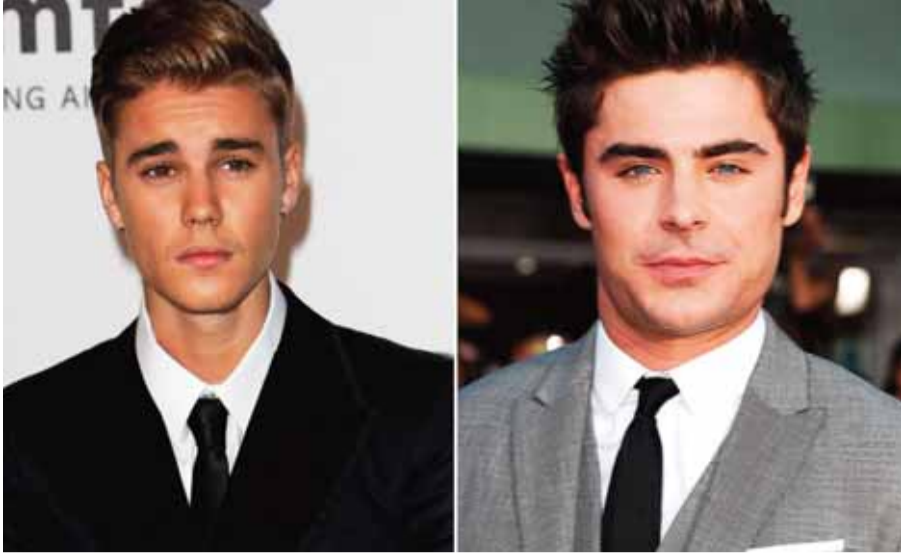
her breast implants removed - also opened up about her cosmetic surgery scars, insisting they don't bother her. She shared: "No one's perfect. I'm proud of my caesarean scars, as that's where my kids came from. It makes me feel normal, what makes me feel normal is that I'm not pregnant for the first time in a few years and I'm doing my own thing again. That's the way forward. Bring back the old Katie Price, the businesswoman and the empire. I'm addicted to work, I absolutely love working and new challenges." And Katie - who also has Harvey, 14, from a previous relationship and Jett, two, and 23-month-old Bunny with her husband Kieran Hayler - isn't a fan of going to nightclubs anymore and prefers to stay at home with her family.

Smith wants his daughter to start lying more

The 'Focus' star has always had a good relationship with his three children - Willow, 15, and Jaden, 18, with his wife Jada Pinkett Smith and Trey, 23, from his marriage to Sheree Zampino - and growing up, he used a technique called the Circle of Safety, where his kids were encouraged to be completely honest and say how they feel but isn't keen for it to continue now. Speaking on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon, he quipped: "As a father, you do not want a circle of safety with a 15-year-old daughter. You do not. I'm like, 'Baby, you need to start lying!' " Meanwhile, Willow previously opened up about family life and revealed she feels as though her and her brother Jaden are "identical twins" because they are so similar. She shared: "We're like binary stars, like two parts of one thing. I know what he's thinking at all times. And he knows what I'm thinking. We're not identical twins, but it feels like that in a lot of ways ... "I was lost and super insecure [when I was figuring things out]. But then I stopped trying to find myself in these other inanimate objects, people, and ideas. I realized it isn't about finding yourself - it's about creating yourself." And the 'Whip My Hair' hitmaker also opened up about her unique sense of style.

She said: "I have some cool shoes on and I wear crazy eyeliner, but it's really all about emulating the colors you feel inside. A lot of clothes are cute, but after you buy the Yeezy shoes, after you get your hair done with a weave, you're still the same person. I feel like more and more kids are starting to realize this."





Bieber gives Zac Efron career advice

The 'As Long As You Love Me' hitmaker was reportedly spotted offering acting tips to the '17 Again' star when they partied at Efron's home in Los Angeles earlier this week. A source told Us Weekly magazine: "[Justin told Zac] to be more selective about the roles he takes. Justin was very honest and kind of went in on Zac but Zac appreciated it. 'Zac told Justin to keep breaking boundaries. He was giving him life tips.' Meanwhile, 22-year-old Justin has also been giving Kylie Jenner advice

on how to cope with fame at a young age. She shared recently: "I'm so close to him because I feel like he's been through exactly what I've been through in a completely different way but very similar. 'He gets me, and every time I see him he always sits me down and is like, 'Are you OK? You're amazing. You can get through this, just stay true to yourself.' He helps me a lot.' And Justin is equally happy to receive advice, after it was previously revealed he got tips on making a comeback from Kanye West. He said:

"Out of anyone in the industry who is creative and I see eye to eye with, he really gets me. His advice is always just, 'make music that's so good people can't hate on it'. I didn't wanna bore him or waste his time. So I was like, 'Can I play you these songs?' and he was like, 'I wanna hear everything.' To hear him say that, it stuck with me. It just showed that he cared."

Hadid hoped to 'help people' when she hit back at bodyshamers



The 21-year-old model wrote a lengthy post on Instagram last year slamming those who criticized her figure and 12 months on, she admits it was all a bit overwhelming for her. She said: "That was the journal entry that I thought would help people and let people know that they can speak up and defend themselves. Everyone is affected by the pressures that come from being on social media. We're all human. I'll never say that it doesn't affect me ... I'll post a picture and one person will say I'm too fat and three comments down someone's calling me anorexic. So it happens to everyone. We all go through it and no one's alone in that for sure." And Gigi - who is dating Zayn Malik - also revealed she was "really touched" that so many other models got in touch with her to tell her they felt the same way. Speaking in Vogue magazine's podcast, she added: "What also really touched me that week was my friends that came to me that hadn't done so before. Everyone from my friends that are considered plus-size models to Victoria's Secret Angels who are often shown a lot of hate for being too skinny. Neither are too much this or too much that - they're bodies." In her open letter, which she posted in September 2015, Gigi revealed she is "proud" of her figure. She wrote: "Yes I have boobs, I have abs, I have a butt, I have thighs, but I'm not asking for special treatment ... If I didn't have the body I do, I wouldn't have the career I do. I love that I can be sexy. I'm proud of it. 'I've said it before ... I hope everyone gets to a place in their life where they'd rather talk about the things that inspire them over the things that bring others down. At least be open if not part of the change, because it's undeniable happening."



Robbie found it 'exciting' starring alongside Jared Leto

The 26-year-old star worked opposite the 30 Seconds to Mars frontman in the hotly anticipated movie and admits he surprised her every day. She told ShortList magazine: "I was ... surprised. I was surprised! There's an understatement! I loved that stuff. Jared was doing half my work for me. 'Harley [Quinn, her character] is very much a part of a relationship. To have such commitment from the other half made my job a thousand times easier, and a thousand times more fun. I didn't know what was going to happen when we got on set. It's exciting to act opposite that.' Meanwhile, the 'Legend Of Tarzan' star previously revealed she studied Jared, 44, like a psychologist would so she could get to know him as he was always in character.

She said: "He's in character all the time. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out their relationship. Because he's got this facade up, it was really hard for me to get through to him at first. So I was like, okay, I gotta approach this as if I'm trying to crack the Joker. 'It's a test that psychologists use to determine what mental illness people might have. It's a list of 500 questions or something. Whenever we had time to rehearse or improvise, or even in scenes, I'd just start with those questions ... I'd see which ones would catch him off guard and how, how he'd react, and I'd be like, 'Okay, I'm gonna go for this tactic now.'"



Blige confirms her divorce was a 'divine plan'

The 'Missing You' singer has filed to legally separate from Martin 'Kendu' Isaacs - who is also her manager - after 12 years of marriage, citing irreconcilable differences for the cause of the split. Now, Mary has released a statement admitting things just haven't worked out between the couple but she is determined to move on with her life. Her representative said: "Ms. Blige is saddened to say it is true that she has filed for divorce, saying sometimes things don't work how we hoped they would. But, there is a divine plan and a reason for everything." The R&B star is going to put all her energy into recording her new album - her first since 2014's 'The London Sessions' on which she worked with Sam Smith, Naughty Boy, Emeli Sande and Disclosure among others - and she has thanked all of her fans for their messages of support. The represen-

tative added: "Mary will continue writing and working on her album which is due out later this year along with her world tour. She thanks and appreciates her fans for their support and love through this very difficult emotional time." Mary has previously opened up on her relationship with Martin, and admitted having a professional relationship with her husband could lead to complications. She said: "He always has my back - he's going to fight to the death for Mary J Blige. The downside is that there's no separation - it's on all the time. "When you don't feel like answering to your manager, he's still your husband. If one of you doesn't want to talk about something right now, you have to respect that. And you have to respect each other's space."

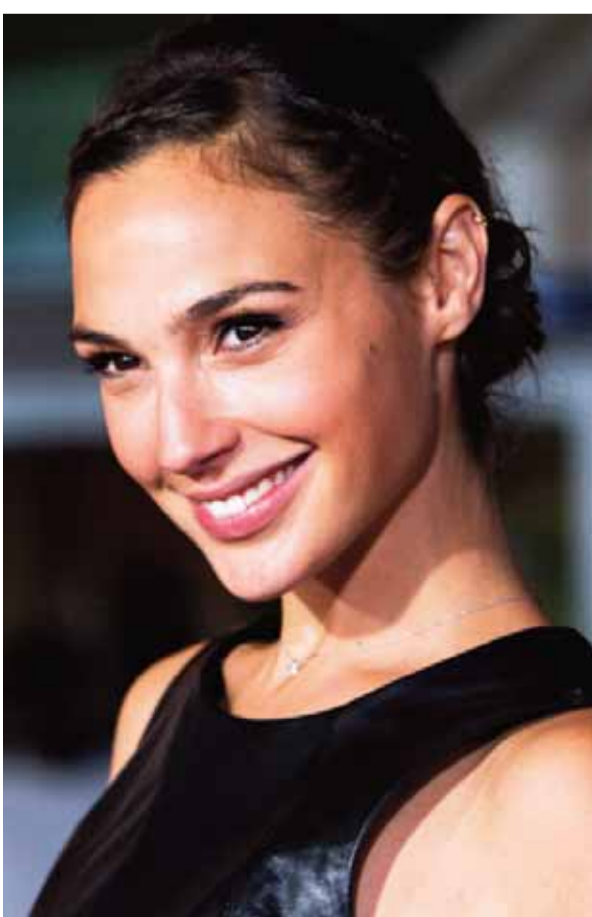


Van Damme storms out of Australian TV interview

The 55-year-old action star was being interviewed via satellite for morning show 'Sunrise' on Thursday when he became annoyed by the questions, which included one about his former fling Kylie Minogue, and stormed out. He said: "Yeah, I like Kylie, I like everybody - can I please come to Australia and talk to you? Sorry guys, I cannot do this anymore. You are talking to a guy who's very rough, you know? Let me talk. It's good for the people; they can hear that. Let me talk please. Those questions, the press, they have been asking me the same questions for the last 25 years. 'Kylie?' 'How's your training?' 'How's your this?' 'How's your that?' So, I'm coming to Australia to maybe do something kind of different with the audience. 'I'm 55 years old. So I'm not anymore 35, 25. I'm 55 years old. So I've got a different view of life, and we'll talk about this in Australia. But those interview you are giving me on TV right now, they are very boring. Because the questions are boring. It's difficult for me to answer the question, so I start to sweat. I don't feel good, because then I'm very...they are boring. Next question? You have something interesting to ask me?" Jean-Claude, who was in Bangkok when the interview took place, then claimed he had to go to the restroom but actually tore off his microphone and left. He could be heard saying: "What the hell is going on with Australia? What the fuck is going on? I cannot do this. I'm too natural. You can blow this stuff away. What is this?" The star was appearing on the show to promote an upcoming speaking tour in Australia.

Jodie Marsh has given her fans a lesson in staying positive

The 37-year-old bodybuilder took to her YouTube channel to preach the benefits of positivity, something she insists has helped her deal with the breakdown of her eight-month marriage to James Placido. In a video, she said: "Today I want to talk to you about being strong and being happy. Do you know what? People could do with a lesson from me in happiness and staying positive." Jodie believes she's uniquely qualified to give advice on optimistic thinking because she has been able to remain a strong person in the face of adversity. Although she has been "through a lot of crap in life, a lot," she has overcome all her problems by being the "strongest person I know and also the most positive". Jodie has also claimed she's been a target for lots of unscrupulous people because of her celebrity status. She explained: "I've never had an easy ride - I've had people steal money from me, steal jewelry from me, I've had people stab me in the back because of who I am. Even now I'm going through hell in my private life, and I won't go into it because it's private. But I am going through hell believe me." Following her split from her husband James, television documentary maker Jodie is once again living a celibate life and she intends to fulfil her dream of having a baby by using a sperm donor.



Gadot thrilled with the 'Wonder Woman' Barbie doll

The 31-year-old actress stars as Diana, warrior princess of the Amazons, in the new movie and was overwhelmed when she saw the likeness of her character. Posting a picture on Twitter, she wrote: "This is absolutely extraordinary - the #WonderWoman @Barbie is here! Who got theirs at #SDCC this year!?! (sic)." The Barbie shows Wonder Woman wearing a gold tiara and a blue cape, while carrying a gold lasso. Gal recently revealed she took inspiration for the character from the real-life Princess Diana, after watching a documentary on the late British royal. She said: "She leads from her heart not from her head. And that describes this Diana." The trailer's official description was revealed at San Diego Comic Con earlier this month and it states: "Before she was Wonder Woman, she was Diana, princess of the Amazons, trained to be an unconquerable warrior. 'Raised on a sheltered island paradise, when an American pilot crashes on their shores and tells of a massive conflict raging in the outside world, Diana leaves her home, convinced she can stop the threat. 'Fighting alongside man in a war to end all wars, Diana will discover her full powers...and her true destiny.'" Wonder Woman' also stars Chris Pine, Robin Wright, Connie Nielsen, David Thewlis, Danny Huston, Elena Anaya and Ewen Bremner. - Bangshowbiz

FEATURES



These images released by Lionsgate shows Emma Roberts in scenes from the thriller, "Nerve." — AP photos



'Nerve' is a dark thriller for the digital generation

The invigorating new thriller "Nerve," now playing in theaters, goes deep into the psychology of the internet with an addictive game that's so fresh, you wonder whether the filmmakers had a tip that the Pokemon Go craze was on the horizon.

In the film, based on the 2012 Jeanne Ryan novel, Nerve is an app-based game that's all the rage among the kids. You can choose to be a "player" or a "watcher." Players are given dares by anonymous masses of watchers with the promise of cash prizes at the end of each dare, which they have to film themselves doing - not dissimilar to Facebook Live or Periscope. The dares can be as innocuous as kissing a stranger for five seconds, which is how Emma Roberts' square high school student Vee gets hooked up with Dave Franco's slightly older, slightly untrustworthy Ian. Or the dares can be as dangerous as dead-hanging off a high-rise.

"Nerve" is directed by Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman, the men who brought the world "Catfish," that is-it-real, is-it-fake cultural phenomenon/docu-

mentary from 2010 about lying on the internet that birthed the popular television show. They were excited to jump back into the current state of the internet. A lot has changed in six years, and "Nerve" almost makes "Catfish" look quaint.

Hacker collaborations

"There have been a lot of movies that are fantasy or dystopian that take place in this world that you have to imagine. And we look around and we're kind of already living in a sci-fi movie with the technology that exists today and a lot of really simple things we take for granted," Joost said. "We've gone so far beyond '1984' that it feels like we had to tell a story about that." They collaborated with everyone from teens to a former hacker for the CIA to develop technology that would look and feel believable "five minutes in the future," and also something that wouldn't look as though it required startup money.

The scariest part of "Nerve" is that the game is user generated and promulgated. There is no center to

attack once things start getting out of hand. This was a change from the novel, which has a shadowy evil genius controlling everything. "We realized what was actually more insidious and scarier and much harder to control and confront is if we're the bad guys," screenwriter Jessica Sharzer said. "It's more truthful to the way the internet works."

Beyond the drug-like thrills of the escalating dares, the film feels part "Risky Business" and part "After Hours," as Vee and Ian team up to try to win the game - which is also incidentally a popularity contest. Those with the most watchers get to advance. But the stakes keep going up as more and more dares are completed. "Just wait. Neither of us think it's necessarily a good idea for the game to exist, but it might be inevitable," Schulman said. — AP



Spanish fans play the addictive Pokemon Go game during a gathering in central Madrid, Spain. — AP photos

'Pokemon Go' creators working to be 'respectful' of reality

The creators of "Pokemon Go" say they're working to remove real-world locations that don't wish to be included in the mobile gaming sensation. The Pokemon Company's consumer marketing director JC Smith said in an interview this week that they're updating the augmented-reality game so it remains fun for players but respects the real world.

"When something is really popular, we have to figure out the most respectful way to deal with it and make sure that everyone is playing safely and doing things in a respectful manner," said Smith. "It's only been two weeks since it launched, and there's been so much attention and so many people playing that it's tough to think of all the ways it could affect the world." The location-aware game provides virtual rewards for players who visit real sites designated as "Pokestops" in the game. Several locations, such as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Japan and the Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC, have asked to be removed from "Pokemon Go."

Since the free game launched July 6 for mobile devices and rocketed to the top of the download charts, some players have injured themselves in pursuit of virtual monsters or have been distracted while playing "Pokemon Go" while driving. "For us, we're making sure the play experience is done right," said Smith. "Initially, there was some server overload,

which we've worked on. Now, we're looking at features in the game and how to fine-tune them so that it's appealing to the fans but also respectful of the private institutions that are affected by it."

Smith wouldn't offer a timeline of when updates will come to the game. "Pokemon Go" developer Niantic offers an online form to request exclusions, but changes to the game are not automatic. For some sensitive locations, change has already come to "Pokemon Go." US Holocaust Memorial Museum spokesman Andrew Hollinger said the museum had been removed from the game per its wishes.

Despite the monumental success of "Pokemon Go," Smith said the mobile game's triumph isn't affecting how the Pokemon Co. is approaching future projects based on the 20-year-old franchise, such as a live-action film to be produced by Legendary Entertainment or the upcoming "Pokemon Sun" and "Pokemon Moon" games for the Nintendo 3DS system. "We don't need to directly tie anything to 'Go' for it to benefit our fans or the brand as a whole," said Smith. "In the end, the characters are the same. Pikachu in our animated series or Pikachu in our upcoming Legendary film or Pikachu in 'Go' are all the same." — AP

Reunions make Marvel's 'Black Panther' especially personal

Two reunions make "Black Panther" an especially personal chapter in the Marvel cinematic universe. The movie, set to begin filming in January, will mark the third time director Ryan Coogler has worked with actor Michael B. Jordan. They teamed up previously on "Creed" and "Fruitvale Station." They're joined by Lupita Nyong'o and Danai Gurira, the star and writer, respectively, of the Tony-nominated play "Eclipsed," which concluded its run on Broadway last month. Chadwick Boseman stars as T'Challa, also known as Black Panther.

"They've been doing a really good job of keeping this a secret - even from the cast," Jordan said after his role was revealed to fans at Comic-Con over the weekend. "I'm really excited to get

back to working with Ryan Coogler," Jordan plays the villain in the movie, set in the fictional African nation of Wakanda. "I'm really, really curious to start diving into a side of my personality that a lot of people don't get a chance to see. It's always cool to show a different side," the 29-year-old actor said.

Coogler, 30, is still polishing the script for the movie, which features the first black superhero in comics, at a time of turmoil in the US over police killings of black men. "I feel fortunate and excited to be making a film like this. No time better than now," he said. Though best known for her role in "The Walking Dead," Gurira's "Eclipsed," about five women caught in Liberia's civil war, garnered six Tony nominations. She grew up in Zimbabwe.

"To see an epic story like this told with the Marvel engine, the Marvel abilities - through the personhood, really, of African people - is really, really thrilling," she said. "It's a dream come true for a little African girl who spends her life watching other folks do those types of stories - and gets to see Africans do that story. I mean, that's pretty amazing." The Oscar-winning Nyong'o credited "God's good grace" with reuniting her with Gurira, "because I had no say in the matter." "We did a secret jump up-and-down while we were working on 'Eclipsed,'" she said. "I don't mind carrying on the rest of my life with her." "Black Panther" is set for release in 2018. — AP



Actor Michael B. Jordan, right, and writer-director Ryan Coogler pose for a portrait in Los Angeles.



Lupita Nyong'o, from left, Michael B. Jordan and Danai Gurira attend the "Black Panther" panel on day 3 of Comic-Con International on Saturday, July 23, 2016, in San Diego. — AP photos

Building his brand: Rapper Nas ventures into filmmaking

Nas, one of music's most revered lyricists and story tellers, is taking his talents into filmmaking. The rapper has traded performing onstage to work behind-the-scenes as an executive producer on projects including Netflix's "The Get Down" and IFC Films' "The Land," which opens in New York and Los Angeles on Friday. Nas said he's looking to make a mark in film like he has done in music. "I'm right on track of what I'm supposed to be doing in my life," the 42-year-old said in an interview this week. "It's been my dream to work in films. I share a love for films as much as I feel it for music. This is my calling."

"The Land," which stars R&B singer Erykah Badu, focuses on four teenagers who have aspirations of becoming professional skateboarders and hopes to escape the streets of Cleveland. But their plans are derailed when they get caught in a drug dispute with a local queen pin. Nas found and placed songs for the film's 14-song soundtrack, which features Kanye West and Pusha T. It's the first soundtrack released under Nas' indie label, Mass Appeal Records. "It gave us a little idea of what is cut out for us for future projects," he said. "We got wings behind our back, so we're just flying with it. We're looking to do more in the future."

On "The Get Down," Nas wrote all the lyrics

including poems and battle raps that will appear in the 13-episode series, co-created by Baz Luhrmann. The show, which premieres Aug. 12, delves into the birth of hip-hop in New York in the 1970s and rap icon Grandmaster Flash is also an associate producer on the project. Luhrmann said Nas played an integral part of the filmmaking process. "He completely dedicated himself to getting it done," said Luhrmann, who also directed "Moulin Rouge!" and "The Great Gatsby."

"He wrote rhymes for every act. It's his voice. He is an executive producer, and it's not just a

title. He helped me with bringing a lot of creative ideas to the table. He was a go-to guy," Luhrmann continued. "I would call him at 2 am in the morning for his opinion. So, he's been great like that." It's not the first time Nas has ventured into film: He had roles in the 1998 movie "Belly" and "Black Nativity" in 2013. But these days, Nas is continuing to learn the different aspects of filmmaking so he can one day create his own movie. He wants to get more involved as a screenwriter and director.

Luhrmann believes Nas has the potential to do just that. "His raps are very well-written narratives, and filmmaking is storytelling," Luhrmann said. "If Nas would make a film, it would be something to see." "The Get Down: Original Soundtrack from the Netflix Original Series" will also be available Aug. 12 via Sony's RCA Records and Luhrmann's label, House of Iona. Nas executive produced the soundtrack, which features the Grammy-nominated rapper as well as Miguel, Christina Aguilera, Zayn, Leon Bridges and others. — AP



This Dec 20, 2012, file photo shows rapper and actor Nas, born Nasir Jones, posing in New York. — AP

Fans embrace their inner geek at Hong Kong's Ani-com



A young woman dressed in cosplay uses her phone.



A man dressed in cosplay has his makeup applied by a friend at the annual Ani-Com show in Hong Kong on July 29, 2016. — AFP photos



Two young women dressed for cosplay take a selfie.



A girl plays a virtual reality parachuting game.



Three hostesses pose with Sony Playstation merchandise.



A statue based on local politician Christopher Chung is displayed at the stall of a virtual reality game called "Hong Kong Infected" by production house YYY Industry.

Hong Kong's 2014 pro-democracy "Umbrella Revolution" was re-imagined as a zombie apocalypse by gamemakers who transformed politicians and protesters into the walking dead using virtual reality technology at a comic and games expo Friday. Teenagers and video game enthusiasts packed the Ani-Com show at the city's harbourfront convention centre and queued for "Hong Kong Infected", where they shot down protesters and police officers who had been afflicted by an unknown contagion.

In late 2014, tens of thousands took part in a mass democracy rally, dubbed the "Umbrella Revolution" which paralysed the city for more than two months, with residents calling on Beijing to allow fully free elections of future leaders. The rally exploded on September 28 of that year when police

fired tear gas to disperse crowds. But in the virtual reality parallel universe, they were turned into zombies.

"(In the game) there is a mysterious gas released at that time when protesters are being dispersed," Elphonso Lam, art director for production house YYY Industry which created the game, told AFP. "You can imagine how scary it would be as the protesters, police and even lawmakers turn into zombies," Lam said. "We wanted to make a record of what Hong Kongers have experienced, so we used this topic," he said, adding that very few local productions would be willing to touch upon such a sensitive issue.

The game was designed for the virtual reality platform and players got their first look at the show. Players also have to gun down "the boss"—an enlarged, zombified version of a pro-

Beijing lawmaker, in a three-dimensional re-creation of the area near the government headquarters where the protests were held. The game is expected to be released next year along with a feature-length film and a comic series on the same storyline.

Player Flan Lau, 24, who along with other players wore an Oculus VR headset and held up a mock gun to play the demo, said the experience was better than traditional video games. "If you are unable to experience a three-dimensional environment... there is a difference," the subway technician told AFP. Sony also displayed their newest VR kit, which will launch in October with their PS4 gaming console, to the exhibition. "Everybody is talking about VR...I believe this trend will totally change the gaming industry," Sony Marketing Communication

for Hong Kong assistant general manager Jacqueline Chiu said.

Players donning VR headsets at Sony's Playstation booth beat up baddies as Batman in "Batman: Arkham VR", while others carried out robberies in "The London Heist". The Ani-Com show is one of the biggest of its kind in Asia, where teenagers and video game lovers go to buy limited editions of toy figures and wear costumes mimicking their favorite comic book heroes. — AFP

A look at some of the most death-defying stunts of all time

Although he's one of the most accomplished skydivers in the world, Luke Aikins will tell you what he's about to do - jump out of a plane without a parachute - is one crazy stunt. "If I wasn't nervous I would be stupid," Aikins, who has jumped 18,000 times with a parachute, said recently as he prepared to jump from 25,000 feet without one. He plans to land in a giant net for a program being broadcast live Saturday on Fox. Crazy perhaps, but only the latest in a long line of outrageous endeavors. Here are 10 of the craziest and most dangerous.

Evel Knievel's Snake River Canyon Jump

After years of jumping motorcycles over buses, trucks and fountains, and breaking many of his bones, Knievel decided to ride a rocket-powered motorcycle across a mile-wide chasm in Utah's Snake River Canyon on Sept. 8, 1974. He didn't make it, his cycle crashing on the canyon floor below. His escape chute deployed prematurely, likely saving his life.

Felix Baumgartner's Stratosphere Jump

The Austrian daredevil became the first skydiver to break the speed of sound when he jumped from a small capsule 24 miles above Earth on Oct. 14, 2012, and landed safely on the ground near Roswell, New Mexico, nine minutes later. Aikins helped train Baumgartner for that stunt and was the backup jumper.

The Trade Towers Walk

Phillipe Petit and his companions surreptitiously strung a wire between New York City's then-recently constructed World Trade Towers on Aug. 6, 1974, and Petit walked across it the next day. He danced, strutted and clowned around for 45 minutes as startled bystanders watched from 110 stories below. The Frenchman's stunt is the subject of the 2008 documentary "Man on Wire" and

the 2015 film "The Walk."

Karl Wallenda's Final Walk

The patriarch of the famous German high-wire-walking family plunged to his death on March 22, 1978, while attempting to cross a wire strung between two hotel towers in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Although the 73-year-old Wallenda had performed much more difficult stunts, a wind gust caught him off guard and he fell. In 2012, his great-grandson, Nik Wallenda, became the first person to walk a tightrope across Niagara Falls. And a year later he tightrope-danced across a gorge near the Grand Canyon.

Move Over Knievel

Record-setting Australian motorcycle daredevil Robbie Maddison rang in 2009 by flying his bike 120 feet through the air and landing on Paris Las Vegas hotel's 96-foot-high arch. The feat put a gash in one hand that required 10 stitches. Noting afterward that he'd previously broken his neck, wrist and collarbone doing stunts, Maddison said he considered this injury no more than a paper cut.

Mad Mike Hughes' Steam-Powered Rocket Jump

Using a rocket powered by the same technology as Knievel's Snake River motorcycle, Hughes soared 1,374 feet across the Arizona desert in January 2014, staggering out of the contraption after it landed. He plans a longer jump later this year.

Dean Potter's Last BASE Jump

One of the sport's most acclaimed and safety-conscious jumpers, Potter, 43, was attempting a twilight wingsuit leap from Yosemite National Park's Taft Point on May 16, 2015, when something went wrong and he plunged to his death. Graham Hunt, a

friend jumping with him, also died. BASE jumping is an acronym for leaping from a building, antenna, span or Earth and is banned in Yosemite, although it occurs there with some regularity.

Johnny Strange's Final Flight

The American adventurer, who at 17 became the youngest person to summit the highest mountains on all seven continents, was 23 last October when crashed into a mountain in the Swiss Alps while filming a video for a new wingsuit. The day before he'd posted on social media stunning close-to-the-ground photos he'd taken, but he'd also noted the weather had been unpredictable.

Feats of the French Spiderman

"Urban climber" Alain Robert has scaled the tallest structures all over the world, often without ropes or harnesses and sometimes illegally. On Christmas Day 2004 he climbed to the top of Taiwan's Taipei 101 Building, which at the time was the world's tallest. Braving rain and wind, he climbed for four hours to get to the top, stopping along the way to chat with Taiwan's president.

Changing Planes in Midair

That's what Paul Steiner did in 2010 when he climbed out of one glider flying at about 100 miles per hour over Austria, jumped onto the wing of another and then stood up and grabbed hold of the tail wing of the first plane as they flew in tandem. Steiner was wearing a parachute at the time, which he used to get back to the ground safely. — AP



Leona Lewis puts aside pop world to get nails in 'Cats'

When she was not yet 10, Leona Lewis was taken to see "Cats" in London. It turned out to be theatrical catnip. "It was so magical and it was such a spectacle, just the music and the dance, everything was so emotional. I just remember loving it," she recalled. "After seeing the show, I went to my singing teacher and I went, 'I want to learn "Memory." So I ended up learning "Memory" when I was like 9."

More than two decades later, Lewis is leading the Broadway revival of Andrew Lloyd Webber's still-frisky musical. In the years since she first encountered "Cats," Lewis won the TV contest show "X Factor," earned three Grammy nominations. She became the first British female solo artist to top the US Billboard 200 album chart in more than 20 years. Broadway represented a career shake up following a disappointing reception to "I Am," her fifth studio album and the first since she left Simon Cowell's record label.

"It's a lot of work and it's very focused and dedicated and you have to literally eat, sleep, live, breathe the theater. That was a whole new challenge for me and something I wanted to take on," she said. "I feel like it will improve me as a performer - it already has." Lewis, 31, is playing Grizabella, a once-elegant but now faded and isolated creature in a shabby coat. It's a role immortalized by Elaine Paige and Betty Buckley. "It's thrilling to see Leona step into the shoes of a character that has inspired thousands of theater fans for almost four decades," said choreographer Andy Blankenbuehler. "From the start of our work on this production, she has jumped in with such openness and courage."

Lewis and the cast endured a sort of feline boot camp led by Blankenbuehler, a Tony winner for "Hamilton." "We spent two days crawling around as a cat. We were cats. We ate as cats, we were napping as cats, the whole cast was crawling around as cats. So we definitely have that in our body," she said, laughing. — AP



In this Aug 7, 1974, file photo, Philippe Petit, a French high wire artist, walks across a tightrope suspended between the World Trade Center's Twin Towers in New York. — AP photos



In this July 31, 1974, file photo, a parachute opens behind the rocket-powered Sky Cycle X-2, containing American motorcycle stuntman Evel Knievel, as he attempts to jump the Snake River Canyon, Idaho.



In this Oct 9, 2012, file photo, Felix Baumgartner, in pressurized suit on platform at left, prepares to enter the balloon capsule in Roswell, New Mexico.



ST ANNES KITE FESTIVAL

David Hoggan of the Kuwaiti Al Farsi Kite Team checks a kite before flying it in the St Annes Kite Festival on the seafront in Lytham St Annes, North West England yesterday.



Members of the Kuwaiti Al Farsi Kite Team send up their kites as they participate in the St Annes Kite Festival. — AFP photos

Everyday is the Olympics for sports-crazy Rio

Rio de Janeiro's residents, or Cariocas, don't need the Olympics to prove their city is the center of the sporting world—they know that the second they step outside. Winter or summer—well, there isn't too much difference in tropical paradise—crowds of locals get up at dawn for a jog. That might be true in many cities. What's different here is that Cariocas also rise for rowing, paddleboarding, group swimming in the Atlantic, climbing on Sugarloaf Mountain, surfing, skateboarding, football, volleyball—the list goes on. And then after work, out they all come again.

Every evening, Copacabana, Ipanema and Barra beaches fill with people in bathing suits, bikinis and Lycra athletic gear. Even at two or three in the morning, it's common to see employees from hotels and restaurants playing beach football by floodlight at the end of their long shifts. It's the healthy, even sometimes fanatically healthy, side of a country where obesity is a serious problem, with more than 52 percent considered overweight nationwide.

Sports addicts

"We're addicted to sport. We have classes from Monday to Thursday and if we can, we go Friday too. And Saturday. And Sunday," said Manuela Jifoni, a 34-year-old foot volleyball player waiting for her companions to show up on Flamengo beach. Leonardo Ghisoni, a Hawaiian outrigger canoe champion and instructor, said "there's no better city than Rio" for swimming sports, given the average annual temperature of 24 Celsius. "I have students of all ages. At six in the morning, older women come and in the afternoon, it's the adolescents," Ghisoni, 44, said.

Ghisoni leads classes paddling out into the beautiful, but badly polluted Guanabara Bay, where Olympic sailing and windsurfing events will take place, and further out into the Atlantic to visit the coastal Cagarras islands off Ipanema. The



A surfer walks towards the water at a viewpoint overlooking Ipanema beach in Rio de Janeiro.

49-foot canoe takes six people at a time and although the sport only arrived 15 years ago in Brazil, the boat's Polynesian design is ancient. Marcus Vinicius Freire, sports director at the Brazilian Olympic Committee, which oversees the 465-strong team at the Summer Games, told AFP that Rio is a sports capital for three basic reasons.

"First, it's the geography: it's green, there's water, mountains, flat areas, so you have options. Secondly, there's the temperature, and thirdly there's the Carioca spirit," he said. That spirit is partly the easygoing Carioca way, but it also includes the love of living outdoors, where the beach becomes an extension of the living room and swimming is



A woman takes a selfie before an Olympic rings installation at Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro.

feasible 365 days a year. "There's also a big cult of the body. But it's also the cult of health, it's a mix," said canoe instructor Ricardo Moreira, 42, who has competed at a high level and also likes to cycle, run and go to the gym every week.

All in the name of fun

Victor Melo, coordinator at the Sports History Laboratory at Rio Federal University, said there's another big element: the love of having fun. "There's a cult of having a good time" and Rio has the public space to let that happen, Melo said. "Having fun is the Carioca's strong point and before or after work, he's trying to find ways to do that." That's why in addition to the

team sports, Cariocas take seriously the after-games tradition of having a cold beer.

"Always after football, you have beer—it's as important as the football," Melo said. Adriana Behar, a silver medal-winning Olympic beach volleyball player in the Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 Games, said Rio is "fabulous." "There are mountains, paths, beaches, lagoons. The temperature gets people up and they can stay outside late into the night," Behar said. "Cariocas go to the beach to sunbathe, but it's also to play sport and to have fun with friends and family. To play." — AFP