

Kuwait, global firm examine ways to privatize sports



Royal revolution; Indonesia sultan taps female heir



Radwanska cruises into Wimbledon second round



Kuwait moves to overhaul health care system

Ramadan Timings

Emsak:	03:07
Fajer:	03:17
Shrooq:	04:52
Dohr:	11:52
Asr:	15:26
Maghreb:	18:52
Eshaa:	20:23

SUICIDE BOMBERS STORM ISTANBUL AIRPORT, KILL 41

AMIR SENDS CABLE OF CONDOLENCE; KUWAITIS 'SAFE'; KUWAIT AIRWAYS CANCELS FLIGHTS



Min 35°
Max 50°
High Tide 07:16 & 08:35
Low Tide 01:01 & 14:14



ISTANBUL: Aircraft parked on the tarmac of Istanbul's Ataturk airport. Suicide attackers killed dozens and wounded scores of others at Istanbul's busy Ataturk Airport late Tuesday, the latest in a series of bombings to strike Turkey in recent months. (Inset) Dead victims are seen near the entrance of Istanbul's Ataturk airport. — AP

ISTANBUL: Suicide attackers armed with guns and bombs killed 41 people and wounded hundreds at Istanbul's busy Ataturk Airport, apparently targeting Turkey's crucial tourism industry. The government blamed the attack on Islamic State extremists but there was no immediate confirmation from the group. Travelers and airport workers described scenes of chaos Tuesday night as gunfire and explosions sent fleeing crowds first in one direction, then another.

Airport surveillance video posted on social media appeared to show the moment of one explosion, a ball of fire that sent terrified passengers racing for safety. Another appeared to show an attacker, felled by a gunshot from a security officer, blowing himself up seconds later. A growing stream of travelers, some rolling suitcases behind them, fled down a corridor, looking fearfully over their shoulders. "Four people fell in front of me. They were torn into pieces," said airport worker Hacer Peksen.

The victims included at least 23 Turkish citizens and 13 foreigners. The death toll excluded the three bombers, who arrived in a taxi and eventually blew themselves up after coming under fire, according to the government, though there were conflicting reports about exactly where they detonated their explosives. The Istanbul governor's office said more than 230 people were wounded. Hundreds of passengers who fled the airport in fear were left sitting on the grass outside Tuesday night.

By midday yesterday, the Islamic State group had not claimed responsibility for the attack, although it did issue an infographic celebrating two years since announcing a caliphate. It claimed to have "covert units" in Turkey, among other places, according to the SITE Intelligence Group. Funerals for some victims began yesterday as Turkish authorities tried to piece together

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APOLOGIZE IN HOLY MONTH

Ramadan Kareem

By Hassan T Bwambale

Apologizing, or al-eitithaar in Arabic, means to amend what you did or said that others found offensive or negative and thus reproached you for it. From the Islamic perspective, according to Al-Imam Al-Jirani, it refers to ones' efforts to efface the effects or traces of a sin or mistake. Moreover, regarding this issue, Al-Kafawi said that eitithaar means to regret and show remorse over a mistake, sin or slip of the tongue.

Prophetic narrations

Anas bin Malik narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Slowing down (to study the situation) before taking any action is among the virtues that God encourages, and being hasty (without prior assessment of the situation before you do whatever you intend to do) is among the vices of the devil. On the other hand, there is no one who accepts more apologies than Allah. And there is nothing more beloved to Allah than praising Him" (Al-Mujmaa 8/19).

All human beings are equal, whether rich or poor, master or subject, king or subject, president or civilian- no one has prerogative over others. The only criterion that makes someone better than another in God's eyes is piety, or God-consciousness. However, no one can tell whether someone really fears Allah; only Allah knows who fears Him truly and sincerely. If God forgives those who repent to Him sincerely, who are we not to forgive? Some people claim to be righteous, yet when someone commits a mistake they condemn him, accusing him of disbelief and vice. Why can't they just forgive? On the other hand, it is very important for a sinner or anyone who commits mistake to be quick to apologize. Don't underestimate the person you wronged because of seemingly low position. God's standards are different from ours.

Apologies overwrite sins

A man approached Al-Hasan bin Sahl to apologize for a sin he had committed. Al-Hasan told him, "Before the sin, you were doing good deeds, then the sin came in between and, after that, you repented. Therefore, a sin cannot overpower two good deeds." This means that the apologetic man was doing good deeds before committing a mistake or slipping into wrongdoing. After realizing his mistake, he repented, which is also an act of worship. So there was an act of worship followed by a sin, which was followed by repentance. This means that one sin occurred between two acts of worship, which of course will overpower it (Al-Aadaab Al-Shar'fiyya 1/349).

Apology in Ramadan

Inasmuch as ones craves God's mercy in Ramadan, he should be quick to apologize to those whom he wronged, as well as forgive those who wronged him, before, during and after Ramadan.

Courtesy of the TIES Center, whose mission is to empower Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, please call 25231015/6 or e-mail: info@tiescenter.net

MAJOR DRUG BUST; SUSPECTS ARRESTED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid Al-Sabah personally supervised the checking of evidence of the latest drugs bust in the presence of Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Col Suleiman Al-Fahd and other officials. A statement by the security information department said Sheikh Mohammad said all state authorities must consolidate efforts to eradicate drugs completely, as he thanked the sincere efforts of the Drugs Control General Department to rid the society of this destructive lesion.

He asked the DCGD men to exert more efforts to fight drugs that target the youth, and overcome means and ways smugglers resort to. "This makes us seek continuous training and using the latest technology to fight drug smuggling," he added. Sheikh Mohammad said that he will call for, in coordination and cooperation

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KUWAIT: This handout photo made available by the Interior Ministry shows the illicit drugs confiscated during an operation on Tuesday by the security forces.

ELECTION LAW BECOMES EFFECTIVE

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A controversial amendments to the election law that bar those convicted of insulting religion and the Amir of contesting parliamentary elections have become effective after their publication yesterday in the official gazette Al-Kuwait Al-Youm.

The publication came after the Cabinet endorsed the amendments following its approval by the National

Assembly with a massive majority last week and after the Amir signed the law. The amendments state that "people convicted in a final court order of insulting the Almighty Allah, the prophets and the Amir are barred from contesting parliamentary polls". The ban is expected to include dozens of opposition leaders and activists who have been handed jail terms for insulting the Amir and undermining his authority.

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DUBAI AWARDS METRO EXTENSION CONTRACT

DUBAI: Dubai's transport authority announced yesterday it had awarded a French-led consortium a \$2.88 billion contract to extend its metro network to the site of the Expo 2020 world trade fair. The consortium, led by France's Alstom Conglomerate and also including Spain's Acciona and Turkey's Gulermak, will construct a 15 kilometer extension to the site of the fair, a statement said. Alstom will supply 50 trains, 15 of them for the new extension and 35 to upgrade existing services, the statement said.

Ten international consortiums bid for the project, it said. "Negotiations were made with two of them in the final stage," it added. Road and Transport Authority chairman Mattar Al-Tayer said that a Japanese-led consortium including "capable" Mitsubishi was the runner-up but Alstom's offer was cheaper. "Both of them are competent but financially we find it cheaper for us to go with Alstom," he said. The government has already provided \$409 million for the first six months, Tayer said, adding that the RTA has different options for funding the remainder of the project.

The consortium, dubbed Expolink, will begin work on the project in the final quarter of 2016, Tayer told a briefing. Services should begin on May 20, 2020, five months ahead of the trade fair, he said. Alstom led a consortium that built Dubai's 10-kilometre tramway, which cost just over one billion dollars and opened in 2014. The Dubai Metro, which transformed transportation in the Gulf city state when it opened in September 2009, was built by a consortium led by Japan's Mitsubishi. Alstom chief Henri Poupart-Lafarge said his consortium was "proud to have been chosen," describing the contract as a "new major award for Alstom in the UAE".

"We will bring the most innovative and cutting-edge technologies to Route 2020 project and continue to be reliable partners of RTA," he told reporters. "We are the world leaders in integrated urban systems. We equally have strong experience here in Dubai... Our international experience and our local knowledge here and in the Gulf allowed us to make a good offer," he later.

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News

in brief

Algeria security forces foil Islamic State plot

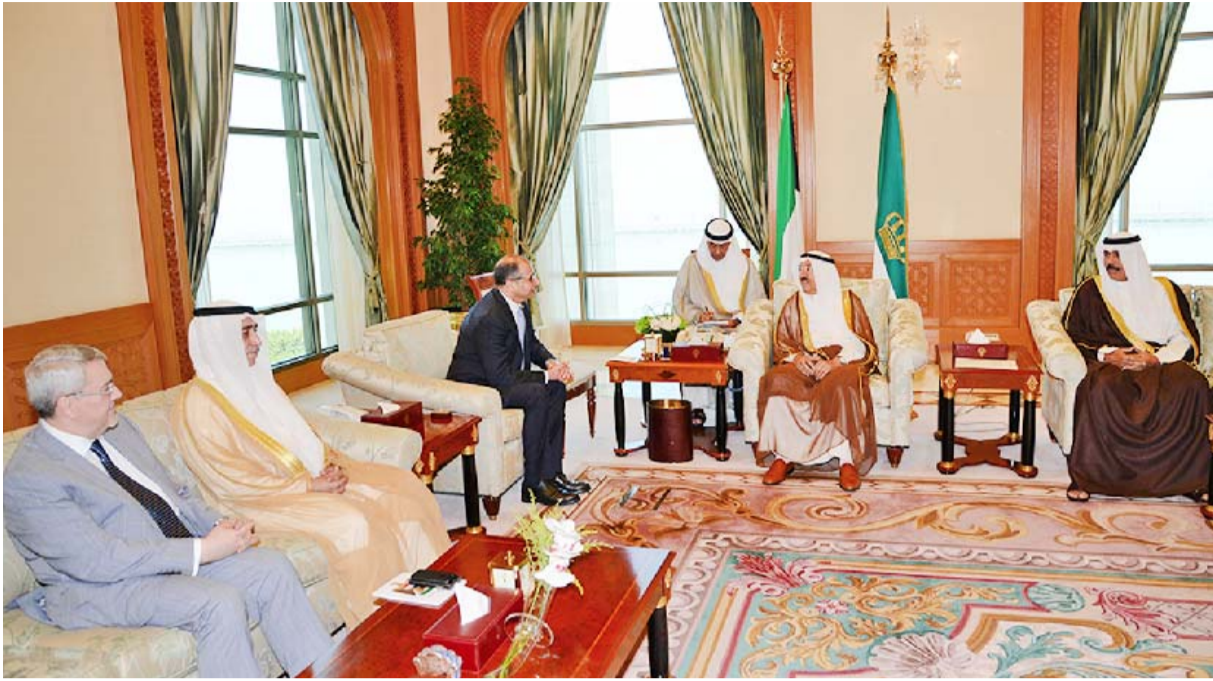
ALGIERS: Algerian security services foiled an attempt by Islamic State group-linked militants to attack a shopping mall in the eastern city of Setif, a government newspaper reported yesterday. The Park Mall in Setif, 300 kilometers southwest of the capital Algiers, attracts some 40,000 visitors a year, El Massa said. The attack was planned by a group that lost eight members who were killed in a May 31 firefight with the army near Guelta Zerka, 60 kilometers east of Setif, the paper said. It quoted security sources as saying the group was linked to IS cells active in neighboring Libya. El Massa said the group had planned spectacular attacks during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, which started on June 6. A civil war during the 1990s that pitted Islamist militants against the Algerian government left 200,000 people dead.

Bahrain jails, revokes citizenship of 8 'spies'

DUBAI: A Bahraini court jailed six Shiites for life and two for 15 years yesterday after convicting them of "spying" for Iran, a judicial source said. The criminal court also stripped all eight of their citizenship, the source added. The court also found them guilty of "joining a terrorist group, possessing arms, ammunition and explosives," and training in their use, the source said. In recent weeks, Bahrain's Sunni rulers have carried out an intensifying crackdown against leading figures from the kingdom's Shiite majority that has drawn criticism from the United Nations and the United States. Manama has repeatedly accused Shiite Iran of fanning persistent unrest among the majority community since security forces crushed Shiite-led protests for a constitutional monarchy and an elected prime minister in 2011.

India's court refuses to hear gay-sex challenge

NEW DELHI: India's Supreme Court refused yesterday to hear a petition challenging a law criminalizing gay sex, a setback for gay rights activists battling in the country's courts to get the ban overturned. A number of well-known lesbian, gay and bisexual Indians had argued that Section 377 of India's penal code, which prohibits "carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal", undermined their fundamental rights by failing to protect their sexual preferences. "The Supreme Court refused to hear the matter and asked the petitioners to approach the Chief Justice of India," Arvind Datta, a lawyer for one of the petitioners said. India's chief justice is already hearing a separate case to strike down the ban, and India's top court has previously argued that only parliament has the power to change Section 377.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Speaker of Iraqi Parliament Dr Salim Al-Jabouri and his accompanying delegation. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Speaker of the Iraqi parliament Dr Salim Al-Jabouri.

AMIR RECEIVES VISITING TOP IRAQI LEGISLATOR

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the visiting Speaker of Iraqi Parliament Dr Salim Al-Jabouri and his accompanying delegation, at Seif Palace yesterday. Acting National Assembly Speaker Adel Al-Kharafi and Deputy Minister of Amiri

Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meeting. Later, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Jabouri, in attendance of Kharafi and Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Ghassan Al-Zawawi. Jabouri and his delegation arrived in

Kuwait yesterday starting a day-long visit. They were received at the airport by Kharafi and Zawawi, as well as the Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Hussein Bahr Al-Oloum and the National Assembly's General Secretary, Allam Al-Kanderi.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the PM Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak and First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the

Crown Prince received His Highness the PM Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah turns the silver wheel to officially begin exporting the first Kuwaiti oil shipment, during a ceremony on 30th of June 1946.



KUWAIT: The late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrives to attend a ceremony held to officially begin exporting the first Kuwaiti oil shipment on 30th of June, 1946.

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF EXPORTING 1ST KUWAITI OIL SHIPMENT: CHALLENGES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

KUWAIT: On June 30, 1946, late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah turned a silver wheel to begin the process of Kuwait's first crude oil export aboard the tanker 'British Fusilier'. Today marks the 70th anniversary of exporting the first Kuwaiti oil shipment. This enabled the State of Kuwait to join the ranks of the world's major oil producers.

At seven o'clock in the morning of the 30th of June, 1946, a grand celebration was occasioned by exporting the first Kuwaiti oil shipment. The celebration, held under the auspices of the late Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber A-Sabah, the then Amir of Kuwait, was attended by the country's senior officials, the Political Resident in the Gulf area, the Political Agent in Kuwait and a distinguished audience of guests.

Southwell, Director of Kuwait Oil Company Ltd, London, started the event by receiving Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber A-Sabah and his companions and escorting them to the ceremony site, where the silver wheel had been placed to herald the occasion.

Sheikh Ahmad turned the wheel to start the first Kuwaiti crude oil shipment flowing smoothly through an off-shore pipeline to the British tanker Fusilier. A total of 10,567 tons of crude oil were loaded in 11 hours and 13 minutes, an average of

950 tons per hour. In response, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber A-Sabah said: "Every one of my people and my friends will rejoice with me in this happy event, which by the Grace of God is for our future and welfare. I thank God for such an opportunity as this which will help us carry on with the various improvement which we desire for the happiness and welfare of the Kuwaiti people."

"I would like to further mention the assistance offered by the Company during their operations in our country. My thanks are also due to Her Majesty's Government for their help in making such operations a success, and to my personal friends the British and American members of the Board as well as to all the Company's staff for their valuable assistance. I am sure the friendship relation existing between us and the Company will continue to exist in a spirit of cordiality and good will," he added. Following the event was a ceremonial war dance (Al-Ardha) held in Kuwait city. At night, fireworks ended the activities of the occasion.

Nationalization

A new era of historic importance began on December 6, 1975 with the nationalization of Kuwait's oil industry. In line with all the other Arab oil producing states, Kuwait began negoti-

ations in the early 1970s to restore control over its own natural oil resources.

By mutual agreements with the Company's two original partners, the State's shareholding in Kuwait Oil Company was increased progressively until full control was achieved. On March 5, 1975, an agreement was signed by the State of Kuwait and the two oil companies (British Petroleum and Gulf) giving Kuwait complete control of its oil resources.

The development of Kuwait's early oil industry to its prominence in the world of oil today is of course due to the abundance of the God-given gift; however, much of it depended on the wise direction of Kuwait's rulers and the business acumen of the Kuwaiti people.

On the 50th anniversary of the first shipment of crude oil from Kuwait, the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah unveiled a memorial monument in Ahmadi on June 30, 1996. The late Amir also turned a symbolic golden wheel in memory of the original ceremony.

KOC has dedicated a memorial monument on the 50th anniversary of exporting Kuwait's first crude oil shipment. The monument highlights the importance of the event in bringing together Kuwait's glorious past with its bright and promising future. — KUNA



YEMENI TALKS EMBARK ON NEW PHASE IN TWO WEEKS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed yesterday announced that the Yemeni peace talks would embark on a new phase for the next two weeks. The Special Envoy said: "after convening extensive discussions with the participants we have established the main principles that will guide the next phase of Yemeni talks. These principles are based on the working papers submitted by the two delegations and the recommendations of the specialized committees."

The two delegations will use the coming two weeks to meet their respective leaderships and will then return to Kuwait on July 15th with practical recommendations on how to implement the necessary mechanisms that will enable them to sign a peace accord and thus end the conflict in Yemen."



Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed

The Special Envoy will utilize the two-week period to meet with key Yemeni and regional political stakeholders to press for a comprehensive solution that will address the mechanisms discussed in the talks and which will ensure the security and stability of Yemen.



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah attends a meeting with a global consultative firm to examine the prospect of privatizing sports in Kuwait. — KUNA

SHEIKH SALMAN, GLOBAL FIRM EXAMINE WAYS TO PRIVATIZE SPORTS SCENE

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah chaired a meeting yesterday with a global consultative firm, to examine the prospect of privatizing the sports scene in the country.

The meeting with leading global strategic management and consulting firm McKinsey and Company, represents genuine efforts on the part of the government to privatize the sport industry as it seeks to propel Kuwait to the upper echelons of the sporting world, a statement by Public Authority for Sports (PAS) noted.

Moreover, the global company presented a survey of the sporting landscape in the country, which included the best possible ways to bring privatization plans to fruition. The meeting was attended by PAS Director General Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Sabah, alongside other senior sports officials.

McKinsey and Company, formed in 1926, has been instrumental to the success of past Olympic events, in addition to developing the sports scene all across the globe. More than 2,000 companies and institutions have relied on the company's studies and analyses as a springboard for further prosperity.

GCC Championship

In other news, Sheikh Salman has vowed support to the Public Authority

for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) for hosting the 8th GCC Sports Championship for universities and higher education Institutions.

The PAAET will be offered full logistic and media backing to guarantee success for the tournament that authority hosts in November, Sheikh Salman told a PAAET delegation, the Ministry of Information said in a statement yesterday. The minister stressed the significance of the event for the GCC youth.

The delegation, led by Director General Dr Ahmad Al-Atthari, expressed gratitude to Sheikh Salman for his unlimited support to the Kuwaiti people, especially youth, in sports, social and cultural activities to enhance the constructive and effective national thinking.

The meeting also addressed the programs the PAAET can offer for training and qualifying Kuwaitis within the development program backed by the Ministry of Information and the State Ministry for Youth Affairs.

Meanwhile, the statement said that Minister Sheikh Salman had also received the new board of the Ministry of Information workers' syndicate. Congratulating the board members, the minister underlined the importance of holding the values of national unity and interests above all other considerations. The syndicate board thanked Sheikh Salman for his unrelenting efforts to promote the Kuwaiti media. — KUNA

KUWAIT MOVES TO OVERHAUL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

KUWAIT: Far-reaching reforms aimed at strengthening Kuwait's national health care system are gaining momentum, as the government moves forward with its plans to rationalize public spending in the face of a rising budget deficit.

Plans for overhauling the health care sector include reducing the number of patients travelling abroad for treatment and focusing on preventive health care through the promotion of healthier lifestyle choices and screening services. The reforms are expected to produce sizeable savings over time, while also paving the way for greater private participation across the sector.

Homegrown focus

Reforming Kuwait's health care system forms a key part of the government's KD31 billion (\$102.9 billion) Kuwait Development Plan (KDP). Taking the form of a series of five-year plans, with the most recent blueprint for 2015-2020, the KDP envisages a raft of initiatives and legislation supporting project development in health care as well as across other areas of the economy.

In line with the KDP framework, the Ministry of Health (MoH) plans to construct eight hospitals and hospital extensions at a cost of \$1 billion. The Ministry of Public Works has also allocated \$4.2 billion to build nine additional hospitals, which will boost the number of beds available in public facilities by 3334, while creating an estimated 15,000 new jobs.

The new hospitals will enable Kuwait

to offer more specialized treatments locally, helping to bring down the national health care bill over time by reducing the number of outbound medical tourists. Long a cause of concern, Kuwait's growing health care bill has become a focal point for the government amidst a challenging economic environment, which has seen revenues fall on the back of low oil prices. Kuwait's budget deficit is expected to reach KD12.2 billion (\$40.5 billion) during the current fiscal year, marking an increase of 50 percent.

Medical tourism

The number of Kuwaitis travelling out of the country for treatment has long been a cause for concern, especially in terms of the length of time some patients spend abroad. However, government action taken to address this issue has already seen some progress.

In 2015 the MoH said that new regulations introduced the previous year, including boosting the standards of local medical facilities, have reduced the number of Kuwaitis travelling abroad for treatment by more than 50 percent. The number of Kuwaiti outbound medical tourists undergoing treatment in London, for example, fell from 1,100 in 2013 to 500 in 2014.

The government has also recently announced it would reduce the daily allowances provided to patients travelling abroad for treatment as well as to their companions, according to local media. However, the overall bill remains considerable, with the Kuwaiti government



spending KD 441 million (\$1.5 billion) to fund 11,000 medical trips abroad in 2014, according to the State Audit Bureau.

New trends

A significant number of Kuwait's outbound medical tourists seek treatment for diseases linked to lifestyle choices, such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes. In fact, almost all of Kuwaiti cancer patients are treated abroad, as well as many nationals with diabetes.

Like other GCC member states, Kuwait has witnessed rising levels of type 2 diabetes, sparked, in part, by an influx of

Western fast food outlets and sedentary lifestyles. Kuwait recorded 399,900 cases of diabetes in 2015, according to the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), which is equivalent to 10.3 percent of the population. Up to 50 percent of GCC nationals with diabetes are unaware that they have the condition, making diagnosis and identification of pre-diabetes symptoms a priority for governments.

The MENA region spends at least \$5.5 billion or 14 percent of total health care expenditure annually on diabetes care and treatment. The average annual cost of treating a patient with diabetes in Kuwait

is \$2,040, according to the IDF, bringing the overall cost of treating the condition in Kuwait last year to \$815.8 billion.

In-demand services

In a move aimed at meeting rising demand, several health care providers have begun introducing both specialty care for diabetes and screening programs. In December 2015 the Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), a multidisciplinary research-based facility located in Kuwait City, teamed up with the Sultan Center, a supermarket retailer, to offer a free screening program. More recently, the institute hosted a knowledge workshop on insulin pump therapy and glucose monitoring for health care professionals.

"Managing diabetes requires complex and demanding self-care," Dr Qais Saleh Al-Duwairi, director-general of DDI, told OBG. "A good diet, physical activity, diabetes-related counseling and interventions such as educational outreach can all play a valuable role in mitigating the burden of diabetes."

A recent DiabCare study from the Gulf region found that educating patients about diabetes could increase life expectancy by 17 percent, and reduce the costs associated with treatment by 8 percent. Although more can be done to improve screening services and treatment, initiatives such as these are expected to play an important role in Kuwait's efforts to create a more sustainable health care sector.

—Oxford Business Group

MINISTER URGES SPEEDING UP ONLINE LABOR TRANSACTIONS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Social Affairs and Labor Minister and State Minister for Planning and Development Affairs Hind Al-Subaih asked employees at the computer sector of the Manpower Public Authority (MPA) to speed up the projects of computer systems through which transaction processing can be started at the labor sector online without the need to go to the department. The minister was speaking after receiving the second batch of outstanding employees at the authority to honor them for their efforts.

Subaih said that a large number of projects will be finished soon, through which MPA's services can be done online, expecting to start in September. She said all these projects will contribute to organizing the marketplace, transparency and preventing any manipulation in transaction processing. She said the goal is to have all transactions processed electronically, and ending the era of paperwork, and reduce the number of employees who visit labor departments.

In other news, MPA recently explained the new mechanisms in inspecting companies, saying that the mechanisms are built on continued coordination with the Interior Ministry's residency detectives' department. The coordination has yielded a task force from both sides, which had a positive effect on the market place, it added.

It said that the labor inspection department inspects companies to make sure about their compliance with the private sector's labor law. Employers are given a grace period to avoid violations based on article 141 of the labor law. When the violation continues, the employer is referred to the investigations department, and his file will be suspended until the violation is corrected. The statement said that there are some grave violations, including that the facility is not at the address given, which is a violation that warrants closing the file, while the employer in this case will be sent for the investigations department. Furthermore, MPA said that more than 1,588 absconding cases were solved in an amicable settlement after being registered by employers against expat labor. MPA said that through coordination with

those concerned at the interior ministry, it was agreed to cancel absconding complaints for some cases including Palestinian travel document holders, children of Kuwaiti women, and expat laborers' wives who work in the private sector. Meanwhile, MPA said that the latest statistics show that the number of files suspended permanently for violating the rules of article 10.2 of law 6/2010 in regards to working in the private sector reached 703 files, 663 of it in 2015, and 67 file from the start of 2016 until June 23. This article states "the employer cannot bring employees from abroad, or use employees from inside Kuwait, then does not give them jobs at his facility, or if proven he does not actually need them."

Inmates sue ministry

Several central prison inmates said they filed lawsuits against the Interior Ministry because of a fire that killed one person and injured scores of other prisoners. Lawyer Ali Al-Ali said some of the injured are very critical, adding that the Interior Ministry is to blame for not safeguarding the inmates' lives, and its lack of an emergency plan.



Firefighters tackle flames in a vehicle following an accident reported on Fahaheel Expressway.

SCORES ARRESTED, WEAPONS CONFISCATED IN CRACKDOWN

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Relations and Security Information Department said weapons detectives carried out a wide-range campaign in Naseem, Qasr, Firdous, and Waha, resulting in arresting four citizens and confiscating unlicensed firearms. Detectives also found two AK-47s, three pistols, two rifles, 11 magazines and a large quantity of ammunition. The statement added that two persons wanted to serve a five-year jail sentence were arrested along with two bedoons, who resisted police and hindered their work. All were sent to concerned authorities.

Accidents

A two-car collision resulted in injuring two Arab nationals, who were taken to hospital. The accident took place on Fahaheel Expressway near the Sixth Ring Road intersection, as one of the cars caught fire. Mishref fire center responded and put the fire out.

Food safety

Kuwait Municipality continued its campaigns on food stores, restaurants, cooperatives, markets and warehouses as part of the media campaign during the holy month of Ramadan titled "Your Health is our Concern". Farwaniya municipality branches carried out a campaign that resulted in issuing 66 citations, including 30 for working before receiving a health certificate, 30 for employing workers before receiving health certificates, two citations for not moving trash to designated areas and a citation for not complying with general hygiene. A store was closed for doing business before receiving a municipality license.

Fire calls

Director of Public Relations and Information at Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) Colonel Khalil Al-Amir said fire departments received 2,879 calls during the first quarter of the current year. He said the number of calls increased by 2.7 percent from the first quarter of 2015.

CENTRAL BANK CALLS FOR DECENT HANDLING OF NATIONAL CURRENCY

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) on Tuesday called for proper and civilized way in dealing with the Kuwaiti banknotes in keeping with their symbolic significance derived from the sovereignty and status of the country. The Bank took note of some people who tend to stick the Kuwaiti banknotes on their bills of exchange to make them seem as if they were issued by the CBK as promotion for the issuers. These banknotes cannot be used as gifts at Eid Al-Fitr, for example, unless they were removed from the cheques which have nothing to do with the CBK, the Bank said in a statement. These practices are improper and uncivilized as they could damage the banknotes and render them invalid for use at the ATM machines, it cautioned. — KUNA



MAN ARRESTED OUTSIDE INTERIOR MINISTER'S HOUSE

KUWAIT: A citizen wandering around the house of Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and shouting "Interior Minister, I want to meet you" was found to be a psychiatric patient and was sent to the psychiatric hospital, where he already has a file. He retired from the defense ministry in 1999 and was angry that his license was revoked. A security source said the citizen was walking in front of the interior minister's house in Qurtuba screaming hysterically that he wanted to meet him. Policemen went to the site and arrested him, and they found that he was angry that his license was revoked, and wanted to complain to the interior minister.

Phone shop worker beaten

A mobile phone technician was beaten badly by a citizen who was angry that his pictures were deleted from the phone. The technician lodged a complaint at Jahra police station. He said the citizen asked him to repair the phone, but after he finished, the pictures stored were gone, so the citizen became angry and beat him and refused to pay for the repairs. The technician, an Indian, gave police the suspect's car license plate number. They are working on the case.

Thief caught

A citizen put an end to the adventures of a thief who repeatedly broke into his car. After installing a hidden camera at the entrance of his house, he noted the thief's car license plate number during his third theft. The citizen told Abu Halifa police about the thefts and the camera. Policemen were able to arrest the thief who lives in the same area, and is an ex-convict.

Fight

A Syrian man was stabbed in the shoulder during a fight with another Syrian at a car lube shop in Fahaheel. He lodged a complaint against his colleague. The Syrian, 27, brought a medical report from Adan Hospital and told police that he was beaten and stabbed with a screwdriver. Detectives were asked to arrest the suspect. Separately, two brothers who differed over money exchanged blows when things escalated. The fight stopped when their father intervened, and both went to Fahaheel police station to lodge complaints.

Second wife assaulted

A citizen who was jealous of her husband's second wife stormed into her flat in Rehab and beat her badly, screaming "you destroyed my house", which caused bleeding from her nose. The victim lodged a complaint and submitted a medical report stating her injuries.

Reckless driving

A citizen was showing off while driving recklessly, and was arrested by Ahmadi police after failing to escape. His car was impounded and he was found wanted on a theft case. The suspect engaged in reckless behavior just before iftar, and police received complaints about the suspect endangering the lives of others, and they responded accordingly. — Al-Rai

MUNICIPALITY APPROVES LAND PLOTS FOR FOREIGN MINISTRY

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality has approved a Foreign Ministry request to allocate three residential land plots with an area of 1,000 meters squared in the embassies neighborhood in Dayea, along with allocating a 755 meters squared parking lot in the same area. Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi stipulated that it is necessary to obtain approvals of services ministries.

Friday speech

Official spokesman and Director of

Information at Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Ministry Ahmad Al-Qarawi said the ministry issued an administrative circular in which it asked all imams to comply with the model speech circulated for the Friday prayer tomorrow.

Hajj nurses

Head of Kuwait Nursing Society Bandar Al-Enezi said the society is ready to provide nurses, both Kuwaiti and expats for Kuwait Hajj campaigns. Enezi asked campaigns who wish to get nurses to call the number 94466162, adding that they have lists of nurses' names who are ready to serve in hajj.



KUWAIT: This photo made available by the Interior Ministry shows Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah inspecting drugs caught during four operations Tuesday.

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KUWAIT AIRWAYS CELEBRATES GIRGIAN WITH EMPLOYEES



KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways officials pose with two children at the events. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



Rasha Al-Roumi, Chairman and Managing Director of KAC takes a photo with two kids.

By Faten Omar
 KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways (KAC), the national airline of Kuwait, celebrated girgian with its employees and their families, at its headquarter in Dajej recently. "The annual girgian celebration comes as part of KAC's social responsibility strategy toward its employees," KAC's Media and Public Relations Department Fayez Al-Enezi said. The ceremony was under the auspices and the presence of Rasha Al-Roumi, Chairman and Managing Director of KAC. "Roumi was keen to make this year's ceremony different and more special than previous years, in recognition of the efforts of Kuwait Airways' success and advancement," Enezi added. Several competitions were organized during the ceremony, while girgean packs were distributed to the children of the employees. Enezi pointed out that these activities held during Ramadan "strengthen the bonds of love and brotherhood among staff away from the atmosphere of official working hours." Other company officials in attendance were the Board member Abdul Samad, Executive Vice President Kamel Al-Awadhi, Assistant Chief Operations Officer Abdulmuhsen Al-Faqan, and the affairs of the implementation of the strategic plan Talal Al-Tamimi, in addition to the presence of a number of media.



Ramadan Quiz 2016

Answer & Win Fabulous Prizes

Kuwait Times annual Ramadan Competition returns with one YES or NO question published every day throughout the holy month of Ramadan. All thirty coupons with the correct answers must be sent to the newspaper to be eligible for the raffle draw. All coupons must be received by Friday 8th July 2016 at Kuwait Times Office.

2016/76



KUWAIT: A group photo of journalists and KFH representatives.

KFH ORGANIZES GHABQA FOR JOURNALISTS

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) organized Ramadan gathering (ghabqa) for journalists in recognition of their vital role in the economic and social issues, not to mention the confirmation of the bank's keenness to continually communicate with all local media outlets. The ghabqa witnessed remarkable attendance of journalists and reporters from different media types; print media, broadcast media, and the Internet, along with a number of KFH's representatives.

Manager Media Relations at KFH, Mohammed Al-Fares welcomed everyone to the ghabqa and congratulated them on Ramadan. He thanked them for coming and praised their important role of media in tracking news and highlighting different issues of interest to the society.

He added that KFH attaches great interest in the media industry that has witnessed a paradigm shift with the emergence of social media. KFH spares no efforts in recognizing the journalist and reports as they contribute in highlighting the bank's success and achievements at all levels.



Mohammed Al-Fares speaking.



A scene from one of the competitions held during the event.

Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz Answer & Win

25) Where are the pilgrims during Jumarat Aqabah?

Mina.

YES NO

Date: _____
 Name: _____
 Civil ID.: _____
 Tel: _____
 Email: _____

Espresso Ramadan Kareem Baby sebamed



BEHBEHANI COMPANY ORGANIZES RAMADAN GHABQA FOR ISUZU CLIENTS

KUWAIT: Mohammad Saleh and Reza Yousuf Behbehani - Isuzu's dealer in Kuwait - has organized its sixth consecutive Ramadan Ghabqa for its customers at the Safir Hotel in Fintas.

The attendance was remarkable, with an impressive turnout from major company owners and senior executives. The special guests enjoyed a pleasant evening to the tune of the Oud, which created a charming atmosphere that was commended by all.

A number of Isuzu's managing executives were also present, who had especially flown in from Japan and Dubai for the event. They took the opportunity to praise Behbehani for its distinctive achievements and to celebrate a partnership of over 40 years. Kingy Hesieda, Isuzu Motors' Middle East General Manager, noted: "we have an important interest and pay close attention to the Gulf States, including Kuwait, which have proven to be promising markets. I think that this event is an important opportunity to communicate closely with Isuzu's clients and to strengthen our relationships with them. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation for Behbehani for its success and commitment in upholding the Isuzu name

in Kuwait, through its sales and excellent customer service."

Abdulghani Behbehani, the company's Executive Director, commented: "I was very pleased to meet with our valued customers and share this pleasant evening with them. This occasion has allowed for us to get closer to our clients and strengthen our ties with them, away from the daily obligations of work."

Mohammed Saleh and Reza Yousuf Behbehani, the exclusive agent for trucks and Isuzu D-Max vehicles in Kuwait has achieved earlier this year "Number one agent in the Middle East Award." This award is granted by Isuzu for the first time in its history. Several factors paved the way for this prestigious award has been taken into account in the evaluation of agents, including sales growth, sales lounge, expectations system accuracy, excellence in the show brand, effective means of communication and marketing, the efficiency of experimental drive system, the level of maintenance and after-sales service. The company has achieved excellence in most of these factors, which paved the way to win the first place prize road.

It is worth noting that Isuzu is one of the



world's top Japanese companies specialized in the development and manufacturing of commercial N-Series trucks and D-Max Pickup trucks, which are an ideal partner for employers and individuals who are looking to maximize their business potential. Isuzu continuously strive to raise the industry's standard in trading mechanisms, designed in accordance with the global standards for safety, economy and environment.

Young Voices

'BETTER SCHOOLS MAKE KUWAIT BETTER PLACE'

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

Nearly a quarter of Kuwait's entire population is under the age of 14 and yet with the exception of school assemblies, we never hear their voices. During Ramadan, Kuwait Times likes to publish a special series that engages with its readership in a more direct, personal way to learn their concerns, issues and viewpoints.

This Ramadan, we will chat with some of our youngest readers about their lives in Kuwait, in an attempt to see the world through their eyes. What do they see for the future of our beautiful country? What would they improve and how would they change it? By listening to their future plans, stories, and experience in Ramadan, we can remind ourselves and hopefully our readers of the ties that bind us all together as a species. These are the voice of Kuwait's future and we invite them to share their thoughts with us here.

Sara Ibrahim is a lively eight-year-old girl who has many hobbies. She loves dancing, singing, drawing, playing, watching stuff on her iPad, TV, etc and creating a fashion show for her dollies. An injury she suffered on her arm did not prevent Sara from answering Kuwait



Times' questions.

Unlike other kids, Sara celebrates her birthday twice a year - once on the 22nd of September and the other on the 22nd of Ramadan. Sara sees herself either as a doctor, painter, movie star or singer when she grows up.

In Kuwait, she enjoys going to Cartoon Network, Kidzania, Magic Planet, Funcity World, Ice Skating Rink and Trampo. But what she likes the most about Kuwait are the good schools. However, she believes Kuwait needs better schools to make it a better place. Sara told Kuwait Times that she has taken advantage of her spare time during the summer holidays by enrolling in a summer camp in Italy.



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FAITHFUL PERFORM QIYAM PRAYERS AT GRAND MOSQUE

KUWAIT: The Grand Mosque situated in the heart of downtown Kuwait City is filled with Ramadan pure spirit particularly on the blessed Al-Qadir Night, which falls during the last ten days of the holy month of fasting. The faithful perform overnight 'Qiyam' prayers at the grand mosque, seeking the Almighty's blessing and mercy. —KUNA



OOREDOO VOLUNTEERS VISIT YADAWI CENTER, SADU HOUSE SUPPORTING CULTURE AND RAISING AWARENESS OF HISTORY OF KUWAIT AND HERITAGE OF ITS PEOPLE



KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of international Ooredoo Group, along with members of its volunteers program, has recently conducted visits to both 'Yadawi' center for arts and crafts, and the Sadu house.

The main objective behind the visit to 'Yadawi' was to give the volunteers a comprehensive idea about how to recycle waste, sort, and reuse it in manufacturing children toys to be donated to children in need. Additionally, volunteers were able to contribute to some arts and crafts activities such as: knitting, manufacturing tools, wooden carvings, and many more.

The Sadu house visit's main purpose was to introduce to the volunteers with all traditional Kuwaiti arts and crafts, in addition to the tools and material used in the knitting process of the Sadu. The hosts were keen on keeping visitors interested by taking them through stories of the deep rooted Kuwaiti history. Through these field trips, Ooredoo aims at encouraging youth to take part of projects and activities that support Kuwaiti culture and raise awareness of history of Kuwait and heritage of its people.

'SAME HOTEL, ROOM, DATE': CELEBRATING 31 GLORIOUS YEARS OF MARRIAGE

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Iqbal Hadi Zaidi and his wife Shireen were welcomed yesterday at the Crowne Plaza/Holiday Inn Hotel by the management and staff. The loyalty of this couple is unquestionable as they have booked over the years the same room number on the same date at the same hotel, since their wedding in 1985. Iqbal, a former Pakistani diplomat, married compatriot Shireen on June 29, 1985 at Holiday Inn Islamabad. At that time, he was an administration manager at a US company in Kuwait.

According to Iqbal, he proposed

to marry Shireen even though she was a complete stranger to him and he did not even know her family name. At that time, he offered only 500 rupees as dowry. Shireen's family objected as they wanted her to get married to someone wealthy, but Iqbal promised Shireen to love her till death.

The couple has been making headlines all over the world for staying at the same hotel brand, same room and same date wherever they happen to be. "Never in the history of mankind has a couple stayed in the same hotel, same date and same room on their anniversaries, but we did. We promised to each other that



we will keep our vows and we're maintaining it like a tradition for the last 31 years," said Iqbal, who was welcomed by Antoine Flouty, Intercontinental Hotels Group, Area General Manager, in the auditorium of the hotel.

In 1985, Iqbal booked Room 306 at Islamabad Holiday Inn for their wedding ceremony. From then onwards, they have been celebrating their anniversaries at the same hotel, staying in the same room number and on the same date. The couple has a daughter who is a doctor at Amiri Hospital. "Today, we join the couple in their remarkable love story shared in our hotel. We became a part of their love story and we thank them both for keeping their vows and loyalty towards our

hotel over the years. I sincerely congratulate the couple, Mr and Mrs Iqbal. We are giving them a memento for being our most valued and loyal guest for so many years, and we pray that there will be more anniversaries to come. The story of your love and loyalty has been followed, especially by IHG, and we congratulate you on this special occasion," Flouty said.

Iqbal, 72, and wife, 62, are both retired and still reside in Kuwait with their daughter, who is a very successful doctor. "I am thankful to Crowne Plaza/Holiday Inn for the attention and comfort given to us, to my wife and my daughter, I cannot even think about anything but Crowne Plaza on this special day," he said.

ABK RECEIVES REGIONAL RECOGNITION AT INSIGHTS AWARDS IN DUBAI

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) was recently honored at the Annual Insights Middle East Call Center Awards, where it received two coveted awards; the 'Best Small Call Center' and 'Best Escalation Management'. Sawasun Abdulla, Senior Manager Alternative Delivery Channels and Nawaf Al-Khrayef, Call Center Manager at ABK attended the ceremony on behalf of the bank.

The 'Best Small Call Center' and the 'Best Escalation Management' awards highlight the professionalism of the Banks people in addressing customers' requests and issues, and the Bank's innovative and up to date Call Center solutions and systems that allow it to efficiently manage situations that require increased awareness and swift action.

ABK has been active in rolling out a series of enhancements and developments that have transformed the Bank's opera-

tions, which fall in line with its 'Simpler Banking' strategy that aims to enhance systems and procedures and ultimately offer a more superior service and a simpler banking model for its customers.

The bank's tremendous efforts in the past year have been recognized through a series of awards. The Bank was recently named 'Bank of the Year' by Arabian Business Magazine, and received the 'Best Commercial Bank in Kuwait' by Banker Middle East, who also named Michel Accad, ABK's Chief Executive Officer as 'Banker of the Year' for his outstanding leadership and work with the Bank. The Bank's strategic expansion into the Egypt market through the acquisition of Piraeus Bank (PBE) was also acknowledged as 'The Deal of the Year for Africa' by The Banker, an FT affiliate and ABK recently received the coveted 2016 'Best Bank Transformation' in the Middle East by Euromoney.



Sawasun Abdulla, Senior Manager Alternative Delivery Channels and Nawaf Al-Khrayef, Call Center Manager at ABK attend the ceremony.

AHLI UNITED BANK CELEBRATES GIRGIAN SPIRIT WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

KUWAIT: In line with its diverse activities throughout the Holy month of Ramadan in collaboration with LoYac, Ahli United Bank (AUB) celebrated girgian with special needs children at the Kuwait Down Syndrome Society, and Souad Al Sabah Special Needs Care Center. Through these visits, the Bank distributed a range of gifts and shared the joy of girgian spirit with special needs children. The initiative is in line with AUB's social role and overall commitment towards all segments across the society.

Ahli United Bank declared that the visits aim at integrating special needs children with the wider society, and help them participate in Eid festivities, a core belief within AUB's strategy to support special needs (children in particular) and to continue providing more support to them in different ways. The children's reaction to gifts and happiness is a

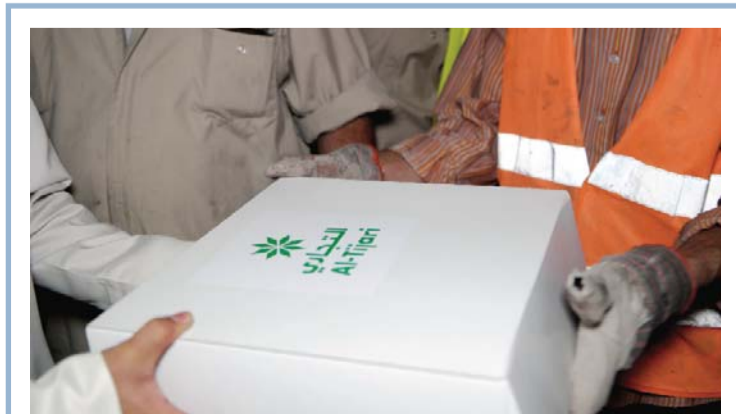
major driver to the Bank's efforts to continue increasing similar activities.

Ahli United Bank continues to implement its social responsibility strategy through real contribution and direct participation of the Bank's volunteers across a wide range of charity initiatives that have a positive impact on the local social fabric - not just through financial contributions.

Ahli United Bank is very pleased with its tie up with LoYac. These activities are the initial results of the strong partnership between both organizations. The Bank looks forward to more activities in the near future with an aim of achieving long term objectives of supporting the Kuwaiti society through strong partnerships between financial institutions and the youth who are able to innovate, lead and deliver meaningful initiatives.



Ahli United Bank (AUB) celebrate girgian with special needs children.



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait continues distributing suhoor meals to construction and cleaning workers as part of its ongoing campaign to distribute gifts to outdoor laborers.



Trump Taj bankruptcy leaves 'little guy' contractors angry

JORDAN WIDENS IS CRACKDOWN

AMMAN: Two dozen men charged with supporting the Islamic State group squeezed into a cage in Jordan's state security court. After brief questioning from a judge, they filed back out, and guards ushered in the next group of accused militants. The court's heavy load is part of a widening domestic crackdown on the extremist group. Hundreds have been sentenced to prison, are awaiting trial or are being held for questioning about links to IS. Under toughened anti-terror laws, even liking or sharing the group's propaganda on social media can land someone a prison sentence.

Some say the crowded court rooms - along with recent attacks - signal that the pro-Western kingdom has a more serious problem with home-grown extremism than it has acknowledged in public. "We have an extending of the network of IS in Jordan," not just among the poor, but also the middle class, said Mohammed Abu Rumman, an expert on extremists. "It is a minority but it is very dangerous." The extremists underscored their reach last week when they launched a suicide attack from Syria, detonating a car bomb near a Jordanian border post and killing seven soldiers in the deadliest attack in the kingdom in years.

The Islamic State group's 2014 capture of large parts of neighboring Syria and Iraq sent jitters through Jordan. The US spent millions of dollars to help the kingdom fortify its borders, and Jordan joined the US-led anti-IS military coalition. Jordanian government spokesman Mohammed Momani said that extremism is a global problem and that "Jordan is at a level just like any other societies in the world." The challenge is to reach and prosecute extremists and "make sure we have enough awareness in the society against these elements," he said.

For the West, any sign of instability in Jordan, a key ally, would be of great concern. This would include rising support for jihadi Salafism, the violent version of Sunni Islam that underpins IS and its precursor, Al-Qaeda. US-based analyst David Schenker said that while it's difficult to measure jihadi activity, the recent uptick "points to a threat that is not insignificant". Abu Rumman estimated that there are more than 10,000 jihadi Salafists in Jordan, most loyal to IS, and that about 2,000 of them are fighting in the ranks of IS and al-Qaida in Syria and Iraq.

Jordan's domestic jihadi Salafi movement goes back almost three decades when Jordanians returning from Afghanistan spread the extremist message at home. Jordan's movement produced a spiritual leader of Al-Qaeda, Abu Mohammad Al-Maqdisi, and the network's first chief in Iraq, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, killed by the US in 2006. Over the years, jihadi recruitment has been fueled by high unemployment, restrictions on political expression and the perception that the world stands by as Sunnis are being slaughtered in Syria's civil war and the Sunni-Shiite conflict in Iraq.

Support

In Jordan, militant strongholds include poor urban areas, remote tribal towns and decades-old Palestinian refugee camps, where some feel like lesser citizens. The support was on display recently in one stronghold, Zarqa. Hundreds attended the funeral of Nasser Idreis, a resident convicted of IS support who died in prison from complications of a liver infection. Clean-shaven intelligence agents mingled with the mourners, and didn't try to blend in. One even introduced himself to a journalist as "mukhabarat" - intelligence - and asked why she was taking photos.

Some mourners wore Salafi attire - short robes or pants that stop above the ankle - though that didn't necessarily mean they belong to the jihadi strain of Salafis that supports violence. Bearded men hugged each other outside a mosque, among them a leading local jihadi Salafi known as Abu Bandar. Abu Bandar said the government has stepped up pressure in recent months, including with preventive arrests, "because they are concerned that something might happen". Idreis' family denies he had ties to IS.

In 2011, dozens of Zarqa residents were arrested after clashes between local Salafis and security forces - including Abu Bandar, who was one of the last of the group to be released, about six months ago. Dozens of those have since left and joined the IS "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria, said Moussa Abdallat, a lawyer who represented many of them.

In response to the rise of IS, Jordan toughened anti-terror laws, criminalizing social media support for the group. Sharing IS material on social media can bring one to five years in prison, and involvement in an actual



ZARQA, Jordan: In this June 19, 2016 photo, men pray inside the Al-Makhtoum mosque in Zarqa, Jordan during the funeral of Nasser Idreis, an alleged Islamic State sympathizer who died serving a three-year prison sentence. — AP

plot far more. The Jordanian intelligence agency closely monitors social media with an "electronic army," said Abu Rumman. "Anyone they find sympathizing with IS, they send him to court," he said.

Abdallat said about 300 Jordanians have been sentenced or are on trial, most for social media support. About 300 more are being held for questioning, though the number changes frequently, he said. Most are in their late teens and early 20s. "There is a notable increase in the number of detainees," he said. Court officials would not provide statistics.

Attacks

During a recent session, a judge presided over

a courtroom crowded with defense lawyers and family of the accused. In the defendants' cage, the men stood tightly packed. Some hugged new arrivals. Among them were five young men accused of being part of a cell plotting attacks on security installations, a charge their lawyer denied. In recent months, other reports of such alleged plots have emerged, along with actual attacks.

In November, a police captain opened fire in an international police training facility, killing two Americans and three others. In June, a gunman killed five Jordanians in an attack on an intelligence agency branch in the Palestinian refugee camp of Baqaa. The government has portrayed the police captain as troubled and

clamped a news blackout on the June attack. Abu Rumman said he believes both attackers were inspired by IS.

In March, Jordanian commandos and suspected IS supporters exchanged fire during an arrest raid, leaving seven militants and a member of the security forces dead. The IS cell had allegedly plotted to carry out attacks in Jordan. More than a dozen suspects arrested after the gun battle were charged in the security court this week, Abdallat said. Jordan defends its anti-IS strategy, saying it is part of a broader counter-radicalization program involving 13 government agencies. Critics say the focus on jailing IS sympathizers is counter-productive.

Prison creates more bonds among jihadis,

while a security-centric approach risks neglecting other causes of radicalization, said Schenker, an analyst at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. A survey among Jordanians, published last week by the U.S.-based International Republican Institute, found a sharp rise in discontent with Jordan's economy and political institutions. The poll also showed that 89 percent of Jordanians consider IS a terrorist organization, while 4 percent disagree and 7 percent are not sure - the same as in 2015. As jihadi Salafism continues to spread in the region, Jordan will have to adapt, Schenker said. "Ultimately, you are going to have more Salafists, and the king can't lock them all up," he said. — AP



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ISRAELI SPONGE BULLETS LEAVE PAINFUL LEGACY

JERUSALEM: Ahmed Abu Al-Homs's life changed forever as the 13-year-old was on his way to see his sister and became caught up in clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police. He was hit by an Israeli anti-riot bullet during the January clash in east Jerusalem, leaving the young Palestinian in a coma for 45 days. When he came out of it, a piece of his skull was gone. "Before, Ahmed was an intelligent boy, lively and dynamic," his uncle Mehdi Al-Homs said of the teenager, whose head still bears scars and stitches. "Now all he can do is walk, and not for very long. He has difficulty expressing himself and remembering things."

Homs is among the Palestinians wounded by a new type of anti-riot bullet Israeli police began using around two years ago, rights groups say. While not designed to be lethal, the bullet's ability to inflict heavy damage has raised concern. Israeli police regularly use such sponge-tipped bullets during clashes in mainly Palestinian east Jerusalem. In Jan 2015, police were given the authorization to use what is known as bullet model 4557 in east Jerusalem, said Nesrine Aliane, a lawyer with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel.

Capsule-like in shape, the bullets have a hard plastic base and a rounded tip covered in hard black foam. Some six centimetres long and three centimetres wide, they are heavier than the previous model used, ACRI says. While official authorization did not come until Jan 2015, police had in fact been using them since

July 2014 as violence escalated and eventually led to that year's conflict in the Gaza Strip, said Aliane. More than 30 Palestinians in east Jerusalem have been wounded since police began using them, most with head injuries, she said. Aliane said 14 have lost an eye. As for Homs, he can no longer read or write and spends most of his time in his family's home in the Issawiya neighborhood of east Jerusalem.

Irresponsible Use?

In Sept 2014, 16-year-old Mohammed Sonoqrot died from his wounds after being hit by one of the bullets on Aug 31. "He is dead because he was hit with a bullet in the head fired from very close range," Aliane said. ACRI says Israeli police closed the case in May without charging anyone, citing a lack of evidence. Rights groups say that while they are supposed to be non-lethal, there are risks related to how the bullets are used.

Fired at the legs from at least 10 metres away, the bullets cause severe pain, but are not supposed to leave permanent damage. "The problem is that they are being used in ways that are irresponsible," said Sari Bashi of Human Rights Watch. "What we see in east Jerusalem is that police are using an excess of force - unnecessary force against demonstrators - and they are failing to take precautions to protect civilian demonstrators, especially children." — AFP



JERUSALEM: A combination of pictures taken in March and April 2016 shows Palestinian men and youths posing with a mobile phone bearing a picture of them after they were wounded by a sponge-tipped bullet used by Israeli security forces to disperse demonstrations. — AFP



CAIRO: Hundreds of Egyptian students chant slogans during a protest against the cancellation of high school exams yesterday, demanding the resignation of Education Minister Al-Helali Al-Sherbini. — AP

DISENCHANTMENT IN EGYPT AS DEMOCRATIC HOPES RECEDING

STATE TOLERATES NO PROTESTS, LITTLE CRITICISM

CAIRO: Three years after huge crowds of Egyptians rallied to oust Islamist president Mohamed Morsi, democratic hopes have given way to a spiralling crackdown on freedoms in the name of stability. On June 30, 2013 millions took to the streets of Cairo and other cities to call for the removal of Morsi, whose rule had been deeply divisive. Their hopes were fulfilled on July 3 when the army stepped in for the second time in less than three years to remove a president following mass protests - only unlike veteran autocrat Hosni Mubarak, Morsi had been democratically elected.

Now that former military chief Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has become president, the state tolerates no more protests, and little criticism. "When I look back on June 30, 2013, I feel that we were deceived and deployed by part of the state," prominent rights lawyer Gamal Eid said. For secular activists, there were initial hopes after the military installed a government with former chief judge Adly Mansour as interim president and a liberal economist as prime minister.

But in the months that followed, security services moved to crush Morsi's Islamist supporters, detaining the ex-president and thousands of members of his Muslim Brotherhood. The crackdown reached its pinnacle on Aug 14 when police shot dead hundreds of Islamists at a protest camp in Cairo during clashes - the worst mass killing in Egypt's modern history.

Protests Banned

More than 40 policemen were killed across the country that day by Islamists, and the event helped inflame a jihadist insurgency that has killed hundreds of policemen and soldiers. In May the next year Sisi was elected president with almost 97 percent of a vote boycotted by the Brotherhood and secular dissidents. Few prominent non-Islamists spoke out during the crackdown, embittered by the

Islamists' hapless and heavy-handed time in power and sectarian rhetoric.

But after moving on from crushing the Islamists, security services began jailing left-leaning dissidents who had helped spark the 2011 uprising that deposed Mubarak. Three years later, activists like Eid say little remains of the democratic ideals that had swept the most-populous Arab country. Protesters were used three years ago "not to topple the Brotherhood and to begin establishing a democratic system, but in the interest of the military - which is part of the Mubarak regime - to take over power," said Eid, the executive director of the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information.

He is among several civil society activists accused of receiving illegal foreign funding and banned from leaving the country. Protests are now banned unless they are approved by the police. Calling for one can get an Egyptian jailed, as can posting an amateurish video on Facebook poking fun at the president, or wearing a T-shirt denouncing torture.

'Worst in History'

Hundreds of Islamists, including Morsi, have been sentenced to death in mass trials so hastily convened that dead people and a toddler were mistakenly included among the defendants, lawyers say. "Today, and without exaggeration, the human rights situation is the worst in Egypt's modern history," said Eid, whose group estimates that authorities are holding some 60,000 political prisoners, mostly Islamists.

The government regularly denies there are political prisoners and says those in jail - who include a number of journalists - have all committed crimes. Sisi has said it will take decades for Egypt to have a proper democracy but that the country nevertheless enjoys unprecedented freedom of speech. Rights activists and many journalists disagree, and are concerned that restrictions on freedom of speech and

media may be tightened further.

In one of the most prominent cases against the press, authorities last month arrested three top members of Egypt's journalists' union - including its chief Yahya Kallash - and charged them with harbouring two wanted journalists. The two journalists had been arrested in an unprecedented raid on the syndicate's headquarters, for allegedly inciting protests.

'Steady Steps'

The two had been involved in protests against the government's decision earlier this year to hand over two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia. That deal has been a rare setback for Sisi-Egyptians who have grown up reading in textbooks that the islands belong to their country and many have opposed the move. There is also increasing frustration with the government's failure to address a deep economic crisis and to meet its pledge to eradicate jihadists who continue to carry out regular attacks, mostly in the Sinai Peninsula.

"There is resentment among the majority of citizens due to economic policies," said Mostafa Kamel Al-Sayed, a political science professor at Cairo University. But Sisi's supporters say he is making progress, and that at any rate there are few or no alternatives. Sisi inherited an already battered economy and a devastated tourism industry, supporters say. And he has said human rights include not only free speech but also economic rights afforded by stability. Indeed, few Egyptians would welcome further tumult. Mahmoud Badr, the founder of the Tamarod group that spearheaded calls for protests three years ago, said they were aimed at "achieving national independence... and improving social and economic conditions." "I think we are taking steady steps towards achieving that," he said. "We are on the right track." — AFP

SYRIAN REBELS PUSHED BACK BY IS FROM TOWN NEAR IRAQ

BEIRUT: Islamic State militants yesterday pushed back US-trained Syrian rebels from the outskirts of a town on the Iraqi border, dealing a setback to a budding offensive that aims to sever the militants' transit link between Syria and Iraq, a rebel spokesman said. The Islamic State-linked Amaq news agency said IS militants repelled the New Syrian Army from an air base which the rebels had briefly captured earlier in the day. IS also claimed it had seized 15 hostages.

Earlier Wednesday, the Pentagon-trained force entered the Hamdan air base - northwest of the border town of Boukamal - following intense clashes, rebel spokesman Mozaheem Al-Saloum said. The base was used as a militant outpost for the IS-held town. Airborne fighters were dropped from coalition helicopters on Boukamal's southern edge, helping the fighters advance, said Saloum and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The Observatory's chief, Rami Abdurrahman, said foreign airborne fighters were also dropped, but to the north, enabling the takeover of the base. The rebels were heavily backed by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes and were coordinating their fight with Iraqi tribesmen and forces on the other side of the border, Saloum said. The Observatory said several rebel factions were involved in the

offensive, bringing ground troop numbers to several hundred. It said IS fighters have dug trenches south of the town and planted land mines to prevent advances.

A spokesman for the Joint Military Operation Command denied knowledge of the operation. The new offensive was launched Tuesday. Amid the heavy fighting, Saloum said the New Syrian Army forces were unable to keep the base and other outposts to the south, near the Qaim border crossing with Iraq. "We can't continue," he said. But Saloum said the retreat was only the end of phase one.

Yesterday's setback was another blow to the NSA. Two weeks ago, Washington accused Russian aircraft of bombing the NSA near the Iraqi border. Russia has been carrying out airstrikes in support of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's forces since September. IS seized much of the Iraq-Syria border in its 2014 blitz, along with large swaths of territory in both countries, declaring an Islamic caliphate. But IS has in recent weeks been losing ground, both in Iraq and in Syria. US-backed Kurdish-led forces have besieged Manbij, an IS stronghold in northern Syria's Aleppo province, while Iraqi forces have taken Fallujah in Iraq's western Anbar province from the Sunni extremist group. — AP

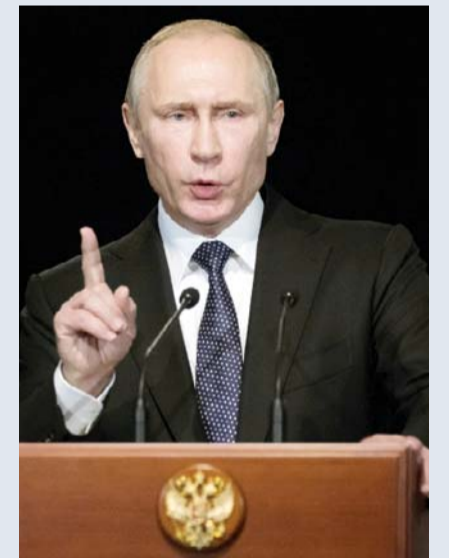
PUTIN AND ERDOGAN HOLD FIRST PHONE TALK SINCE JET DOWNING

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday sought to heal ties in their first phone call since Ankara downed one of Moscow's jets in Syria last year. A statement from the Turkish presidency said Erdogan and Putin "highlighted the importance of the normalization of bilateral relations between Turkey and Russia." The November incident froze relations between the two nations and saw Moscow slap sanctions on Ankara.

Putin also condemned the "heinous" attack at Istanbul's Ataturk airport Tuesday that killed at least 41 people and offered condolences to the Turkish people, the statement said. "Reiterating their commitment to reinvigorated bilateral relations and fight terrorism together, the two leaders agreed to remain in contact and meet in person," Erdogan's office said. The Kremlin confirmed that the conversation took place and said a statement would be released.

The breakthrough phone call by Putin came after Erdogan on Monday sent a letter to the Kremlin leader that Moscow said contained an apology. The downing of the plane in November ruptured relations and saw Moscow impose a raft of sanctions, including an embargo on Turkish food products and a ban on charter flights and the sale of package tours to the country. It also sparked a bitter war of words between the leaders with Putin calling it a "stab in the back" and demanding an apology from Erdogan.

Ankara has said Erdogan expressed his "regret" over the incident in Monday's letter to Putin and asked the family of the pilot who died to "excuse us," but has not explicitly confirmed he apologized for shooting down the plane. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures as he addresses students during his visit to the German Embassy school in the Russian capital yesterday. — AP

Peskov on Tuesday described the letter as an "important step" but warned that "there is no need to think that in several days it will be possible to normalize everything."

Turkey has argued that the Russian plane strayed into its airspace and ignored repeated warnings, but Russia insisted it did not cross the border and accused Turkey of a "planned provocation". The countries are on opposing sides in the Syrian conflict, with Ankara backing rebels fighting to topple President Bashar Al-Assad while Moscow is one of his last remaining allies. — AFP

FEARS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES AS JORDAN BLOCKS ACCESS



This photo taken on Jan 14, 2016 shows a Syrian refugee family walking with their belongings after crossing into Jordan, at the Hadalat border crossing, east of the Jordanian capital Amman. — AFP

AMMAN: Concern is growing for tens of thousands of refugees on the Syrian-Jordanian border after Amman blocked access to a makeshift refugee camp following last week's deadly jihadist attack at the frontier. In stifling heat with minimal shelter and little access to food and water, some 70,000 refugees fleeing Syria's civil war have gathered at the Rukban border crossing in Jordan's remote northeast. For months they have been dependent on food and water from international aid agencies but since last week's attack have been cut off.

Aid groups are alarmed but Jordanian authorities say the camp has become a hotbed of jihadist activity and security needs to come first. "Since the attack... all humanitarian activities at the border were suspended until further notice," said Shaza Moghraby, a spokeswoman for the UN World Food Programme in Jordan. She said there was deep concern for the refugees "who are enduring very harsh weather conditions, sweltering heat and frequent dust storms" and "have or are running out of food".

Rukban is a key crossing into Jordan for refugees fleeing Syria's five-year civil war, which has killed more than 280,000 people and forced millions from

their homes. There has been an influx of people to the area since fighting intensified late last year in central and eastern Syria but, after accepting waves of refugees earlier in the conflict, Jordan is now being more cautious about allowing them in. Amman insists newcomers must be screened before entering the country to ensure they are genuine refugees and not jihadists from IS or Al-Qaeda.

'Security Must Take Precedence'

Jordan is a member of the US-led coalition battling IS in Syria and Iraq. It has carried out air strikes targeting the jihadists and hosts coalition troops on its territory. Many of the refugees have set up camp inside a no man's land between the Syrian and Jordanian borders, from where they were able to receive assistance. The Jordanian army said last Tuesday's attack saw the suicide bomber set off from the camp in no-man's land in an explosives-laden vehicle and blow it up at a military outpost, killing seven soldiers.

Jordan responded by declaring the remote desert regions "closed military zones", with no access to civilians including aid workers. IS claimed

responsibility for the attack and authorities had no choice but to seal off the area, government spokesman Mohamed Momani said. "National security must take precedence over any other consideration," Momani told AFP. "The zone where the refugees are gathered has become an enclave for Daesh on our borders," he said, using an Arabic name for the jihadist group.

The WFP, which previously had been providing food parcels including canned goods, bulgur wheat, rice, cooking oil, fruits and vegetables to the refugees, has since been unable to make any deliveries. Perhaps more worrying, aid workers say, is the lack of water deliveries to the camp, where summer temperatures can often exceed 40 degrees Celsius. Since the attack, aid groups have only twice been able to deliver water to the camp - which is dozens of kilometres from the nearest source in Syria.

The UN children's agency UNICEF was able to bring a water tanker to the area on Monday, Andrew Harper, the Jordan representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said on Twitter, but "food (is) still a massive concern." — AFP

'MOVE ON' FROM BENGHAZI? REPS SAY IT'S UNLIKELY

WASHINGTON: Hillary Clinton says it's "time to move on" after a congressional report on the deadly 2012 Benghazi attacks accused the Obama administration of lethal mistakes, but produced no "smoking gun" pointing to wrongdoing by the former secretary of state. Not likely, especially in an election year with Clinton's presidential rival - Donald Trump - lashing out. An 800-page report by a special House committee makes no direct accusations of wrongdoing by Clinton, who was secretary of state during the Sept 11, 2012, attacks that killed four Americans, including U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens.

Still, Republicans point to Benghazi as a major failure by the administration and by Clinton during her tenure leading the State Department. The issue is likely to shadow Clinton as she continues her bid for president. "Four Americans died, yet no one has been fired. No one even missed a paycheck," said Rep Ed Royce, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "Americans - including all our men and women serving overseas -

deserve better." Clinton, now the presumptive Democratic nominee for president, said the report by Republicans on the House Benghazi Committee took more than two years and \$7 million but "found nothing to contradict" the findings of earlier investigations. "I'll leave it to others to characterize this report but I think it's pretty clear it's time to move on," Clinton said a campaign stop in Denver Tuesday.

Republicans were not ready to let the issue go, especially with an election that will decide who occupies the White House and which party will control the House and Senate. The Benghazi panel has scheduled a July 8 meeting to formally adopt the report - 10 days before the Republican National Convention begins in Cleveland. Sen Kelly Ayotte, a New Hampshire Republican facing a tough re-election race, said the administration "ignored a deteriorating security situation" in Benghazi, "and the State Department disregarded repeated requests for increased security."

Trump was uncharacteristically quiet on the topic Tuesday, but he has repeatedly blamed Clinton for the deaths in Benghazi. Even after issuing the report the committee's work is not over. On Wednesday the panel will interview a witness who posted on Facebook that he was a crew chief based in Europe on the night of the attacks. A committee spokesman said the interview would be posted on the panel's website and any information he provides can be added to the report.

Political Fodder

Democrats called the interview ridiculous. The Libya attacks have been political fodder from the start, given their timing in the weeks before President Barack Obama's re-election, and that has not abated despite seven previous congressional investigations. There has been finger-pointing on both sides over security at the diplomatic outpost and whether Clinton and the White House initially tried to portray the assault as a protest over an offensive, anti-Muslim video, instead of a calculated

terrorist attack. The prolonged investigation into the attacks has also been marked by partisan sniping. Republicans accuse the administration of stonewalling important documents and witnesses, while Democrats say the panel's primary goal is to undermine Clinton's presidential bid. Republican insistence that the investigation was not politically motivated was undermined last year when House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., suggested that the committee could take credit for Clinton's then-slumping poll numbers. His statements helped dash McCarthy's chances of becoming House Speaker.

The committee interviewed more than 100 witnesses and reviewed some 75,000 pages of documents, but an almost accidental discovery by the panel last year has shadowed Clinton's candidacy. The committee disclosed that she had used a private email server to conduct government business while serving as secretary of state, a practice that has drawn widespread scrutiny, including an FBI investigation.

Already bitterly partisan, Tuesday's release of the report exposed divisions within Republican ranks. Reps Mike Pompeo of Kansas and Jim Jordan of Ohio issued a separate report slamming Clinton and the Obama administration, with Pompeo telling reporters that the former first lady and senator was "morally reprehensible." Clinton's public comments casting the attack as a possible protest over the anti-Muslim video differed sharply from her private assessments to family members and diplomats, Jordan and Pompeo said.

The panel's chairman, Rep Trey Gowdy, deflected questions, saying the report "is not about one person." The GOP report severely criticizes the military, CIA and administration officials for their response as the attacks unfolded, and their subsequent explanations to the American people. Hours after the attacks began, "Not a single wheel of a single US military asset had even turned toward Libya," Gowdy complained. US military leaders told the committee they thought an evacuation was imminent, slowing any response. —AP



ST CLAIRSVILLE, Ohio: A woman reacts as she meets Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump after he spoke at a rally at Ohio University Eastern Campus on Tuesday. —AP

TRUMP VOWS TO REOPEN, OR TOSS, NAFTA PACT

MONESSEN, Pennsylvania/WASHINGTON: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump on Tuesday vowed to force Canada and Mexico to renegotiate the NAFTA trade agreement with the United States if elected, as part of an effort to protect and restore American jobs. Trump criticized the North American Free Trade Agreement as a US job killer, saying he would be willing to scrap the pact if Canada and Mexico were unwilling to budge. He also tried to link Democratic rival Hillary Clinton to the deal on the eve of a meeting in Ottawa of the "three amigos," the leaders of the three NAFTA signatories: the United States, Mexico and Canada. In his most detailed speech on trade, the presumptive Republican nominee said he would pull the United States out of negotiations for a deal among 12 Pacific Rim nations and promised to use executive power to resolve trade disputes with China. Trump also pledged to revive the U.S. steel and aluminum industry, speaking at an aluminum scrap company in Monessen, Pennsylvania, nearly 30 miles (50 km) south of Pittsburgh, the one-time American steelmaking capital.

Trump has identified Pennsylvania as a state he believes he can wrest from the Democrats in the Nov 8 election. He also campaigned on Tuesday in Ohio, which like Pennsylvania is a Rust Belt state. Democratic President Barack Obama won both states in 2008 and 2012, but manufacturing job losses have led to voter anxiety in the region. "I'm going to tell our NAFTA partners that I intend to immediately renegotiate the terms of that agreement to get a better deal for our workers. And I don't mean just a little bit better, I mean a lot better," Trump said in Pennsylvania. If Canada and Mexico do not agree to renegotiate the pact, Trump said he would notify them under

the agreement's terms "that America intends to withdraw from the deal."

He tried to tie his Democratic rival to the pact, approved in 1993 during the administration of her husband, President Bill Clinton, as he called NAFTA one of the "worst legacies" of the Clinton years. On MSNBC after Trump's speech, Clinton spokeswoman Kristina Schake called the wealthy New York businessman the "king of outsourcing," in an apparent reference to Trump-branded products such as suits and ties made overseas. "It was full of hypocrisy and misstatements and outright lies," Schake said.

Trade has been a vulnerability for Clinton, who struggled for white, blue-collar votes in her Democratic primary race against US Senator Bernie Sanders, who criticized her for supporting trade deals and said she was too close to Wall Street.

Trans-Pacific Partnership

Trump echoed Sanders' criticism on Tuesday, saying Clinton supported the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, while she was secretary of state and only opposed it once she was running for president. Clinton's campaign said she opposed the agreement because it was not strong enough on currency manipulation and other areas.

Clinton has said she will evaluate each trade deal on its merits but does not believe the TPP is good for US workers. Sanders now says he will vote for Clinton in November, although he has not formally withdrawn from the race. Trump said he saw no way to fix the TPP, calling it a "death blow" for American manufacturing. Although China is not part of the agreement, Trump said Beijing might try to enter it "through the back door" later on. —Reuters

TRUMP TAJ BANKRUPTCY LEAVES 'LITTLE GUY' CONTRACTORS ANGRY

'KING OF DEBT' OWED \$70M TO CONTRACTORS

ATLANTIC CITY, New Jersey: The contractor who provided the onion domes for the Taj Mahal casino had to eat \$2 million in losses. The contractor who supplied the Carrara marble from Italy ended up filing for personal bankruptcy. The contractor who put in the bathroom partitions had to lay off his brother. A quarter of a century has passed since Donald Trump refused to pay in full 253 contractors who help build his Taj in Atlantic City. But for many of them, it could have happened yesterday. "We got next to nothing," says Michael MacLeod, whose 40-person studio made the giant elephant statues at the casino's entrance. "I took a big hit."

After the Taj opened in April 1990, the self-anointed "King of Debt" owed \$70 million to contractors employing thousands who built the domes and minarets, put up the glass and drywall, laid the pipes and installed everything from chandeliers to bathroom fixtures. A year later, when the casino collapsed into bankruptcy, those owed the most got only 33 cents in cash for each dollar owed, with promises of another 50 cents later. It took years to get the rest, assuming the companies survived long enough to collect.

Trump spokeswoman Hope Hicks and Trump attorney Alan Garten did not respond to a list of questions about the candidate's Taj dealings. Marty Rosenberg, former vice president of Atlantic Plate Glass, says the way Trump handled the contractors shows the candidate is shrewd and clever, but Trump won't get his vote. "If ethics or morality has nothing to do with business," Rosenberg says, "he's a very good businessman."

Trouble

For the contractors, the first signs of trouble came in Feb 1990. Regular cheques for work completed stopped arriving in the mail. Rosenberg, who was owed \$1.1 million for installing floor-to-ceiling curtain walls of glass, picked up the phone in his Atlantic City office and called one of Trump's men overseeing construction. "I'll check it out, Marty, and call you right back," the man said. A day later, he got his answer: The money's coming in two weeks. The cheque never came.

Five hundred miles away, in Ashabula, Ohio, Robert Morrison of the Molded Fiber Glass Co. was pressing his workers to finish the domes, minarets and other faux Moorish ornaments in time for an April 2 opening - and worrying about who was going to pay for it all. An invoice sent weeks earlier for \$1.4 mil-

lion still hadn't been paid. Many contractors didn't know what to think. Trump said he needed to complete audits first to make sure they weren't overcharging; he denied he was in financial trouble. "I have a tremendous amount of cash," he told The Washington Post that March. Desperate for money to pay workers and suppliers, some contractors became easy targets for a new Trump offer: Agree to less than they billed, and he'd pay the lower amounts immediately.

One of the hardest hit was marble supplier John Millar, who was owed \$3.9 million. As he was walking into a meeting with contractors to share strategies, land-

But he had received only \$100,000 of the \$1.3 million he had billed Trump. He exploded one day just as his son, Philip Paone, then 24, walked up to his office door. "I want my money!" Philip recalls his father screaming into the phone to Trump. "Pay me my money!"

Bankruptcy

Documents filed with regulators suggest Trump gave Paone about a third of what he was owed over the next year. Trump managed to open the Boardwalk casino on April 2, 1990, and continued to dismiss rumors that he was in financial trouble, but the truth soon came out.

his business Avalon Commercial, close many of his retail stores and borrow from friends to make ends meet, according to court documents and Millar's lawyers and former employees. In 1996, he filed for personal bankruptcy.

Morrison's Molded Fiber Glass joined with 47 others in a negotiated settlement with Trump for cash equal to 33 cents of each dollar owed, plus 50 cents in convertible bonds, according to a book by Morrison published in 1994. Strapped for money, some contractors sold the bonds immediately, getting a fraction of what they were worth at maturity. Morrison wrote off \$2 million of



ATLANTIC CITY, New Jersey: In this April 5, 1990 file photo, Donald Trump stands next to a genie's lamp as the lights of his Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort light up during ceremonies to mark its opening. —AP

scaper Herman Caucci asked him what he planned to do: Stick it out, or take cash at a discount? "I don't know, Herman, I need the money," Caucci recalls Millar responding before the March 1990 meeting. "We could lose everything." Court documents suggest he got about 30 cents on the dollar over the next year. Millar is deceased. His family wouldn't comment.

The stress was also building at Hastings Pavement, a company supplying paving stones. Mario Paone, president of Hastings, rarely lost his temper.

Over his protests, regulators unsealed a devastating report in August written by Trump's own accountants that showed he had been burning through cash in his personal accounts so fast in the spring that he would have had nothing by end of the year if he didn't take drastic action. The next year, the Trump Taj filed for bankruptcy.

When the casino emerged from Chapter 11, Trump got a contract to manage it. Others caught up in the Taj turmoil didn't fare as well. Marble man Millar had to lay off workers, shut down

the \$3 million Trump owed him, according to his book. The company refused to comment.

MacLeod, the elephant sculptor, says his anger has faded. Giving a slide presentation of his work to an architectural firm two days after Trump swept the New York Republican primary in April, he slipped in two photos - one showing one of the elephants, the other showing Trump's name on the casino marquee in red lights. "This guy never paid me," MacLeod deadpanned. Everyone laughed. —AP

TRUDEAU HOSTS PENA NIETO, OBAMA AMID BREXIT DRAMA

OTTAWA: US President Barack Obama headed to Ottawa yesterday for talks with the leaders of Canada and Mexico, as the shockwave from Britain's vote to leave the European Union reverberates on both sides of the Atlantic. Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who both made clear their desire to see Britain remain in the 28-member bloc, will join Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto for the so-called "Three Amigos" summit.

The three countries are economic partners in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a bloc of 500 million people, and work closely on security matters. Since Britain's EU referendum last week, Obama has sought to reassure Americans - and global markets - warning against "hysteria" and saying he doesn't expect "major cataclysmic changes" as a result of the vote.

But the US leader - who will address Canadian lawmakers after the summit - had warned against this very result during a trip to London in April. Although the three leaders are expected to focus on climate change and their joint efforts to promote clean energy, the Brexit "will be on the agenda," Mark Feirstein of Obama's National Security Council said. "We'll be eager to talk about what it means for us and how we can coordinate our efforts," he said ahead of the summit.

The "Three Amigos," who will face

reporters in the early afternoon at a joint news conference, are also likely to be asked about Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump, who is vying to succeed Obama. In a speech on Tuesday in Pennsylvania, he reiterated that he would seek to renegotiate NAFTA, which he blames for all the woes of working Americans. "If they don't agree to a renegotiation... then I will submit under Article 2205 of the NAFTA Agreement that America intends to withdraw from the deal," he warned.

Trudeau says No Protectionism

Also on Tuesday, Trudeau warned against "turning inwards" and protectionism, saying greater North American integration is key to the continent's economic prosperity. But are the United States, Canada and Mexico worried that a Brexit will adversely affect NAFTA, or even prompt questions about whether it should exist at all? For the Obama administration, any comparison between Europe's woes and North America is irrelevant. "Countries in North America have pursued a different strategy, and one that has worked well for us," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said. "It is a strategy that has enhanced the economies of all of our countries. It's enhanced the national security of all of our countries." —AFP

ORLANDO: 'GUNSHOTS CLOSER, MULTIPLE PEOPLE SCREAMING'

ORLANDO, Florida: Police dispatchers heard repeated gunfire, screaming and moaning from patrons of the Pulse nightclub who called to report that gunman Omar Mateen was opening fire inside the club, according to written logs released

Tuesday. The first call of "shots fired" came in at 2:02 am and the caller reported "multiple people down". One caller said Mateen had gone upstairs where six people were hiding. Dispatchers heard up to 30 gunshots in the background at another point as

callers screamed and moaned.

"My caller is no longer responding, just an open line with moaning," one dispatcher said in the report. Another dispatcher wrote, "Hearing gunshots closer, multiple people screaming." A caller described Mateen as wearing a gray shirt and brown pants. Mateen opened fire at the club on June 12, leaving 49 patrons dead and 53 injured in the worst mass shooting in recent US history. In calls with the police after the shooting began, Mateen pledged his allegiance to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State group, declared himself to be an Islamic soldier and demanded that the United States stop bombing Syria and Iraq, the FBI said. "Saying he pledges to the Islamic State," a dispatcher wrote at 2:40 am.

The report recounted where patrons hid in the nightclub: In an office upstairs, in a closet, in a dressing room and behind a stage. Ten people were hiding in the handicap stall of a bathroom. One caller described patrons using their hands to stop the bleeding of shooting victims. At several points, callers relayed misinformation to the dispatchers. One caller said there was a second gunman and another thought Mateen had a bomb. Mateen "is saying he is a terrorist ... and has several bombs strapped to him in the downstairs female restroom," the dispatcher notes said. —AP



ORLANDO: In this June 22, 2016 photo, traffic moves along Orange Avenue after authorities opened the streets around the Pulse nightclub, scene of a recent mass shooting. —AP

COLD KILLS HOMELESS IN SAO PAULO, BRAZIL'S RICHEST CITY

SAO PAULO: Even under three blankets, Marcio Carvalho can't stop shaking as he seeks shelter on the streets of Brazil's biggest and richest city, Sao Paulo. The teeming central streets of a city that is home to 20 million people are deserted at night except for members of the estimated 16,000 homeless population. And while much of Brazil basks in tropical conditions, a chilly wave in the first days of the southern hemisphere winter has already claimed the lives of six people this month.

Among their few lifelines are volunteers from the aid group Anjos da Noite (Angels of the Night), who distribute food, water and blankets to the hundreds sleeping rough. Carvalho, 41, who moved to Sao Paulo from the northeastern state of Bahia to improve his life, said he has been homeless for three years. "I was working as a plumber but I separated (from his wife) and I couldn't stay in the house," he said. "That's how I ended up here. Life on the street is very difficult and dangerous," he added. "I've been attacked several times. They've stolen my things and I've been very cold. I've had a drinking problem since I got here. To live on the street you have to drink."

Cold is his latest enemy. Temperatures hit a 22-year low in early June to 3.5 degrees Celsius. Homeless people and local media also accused security officers of stripping street people of their blankets and mattresses, prompting an outcry. The leftist mayor, Fernando Haddad, initially said he didn't want squatters occupy-

ing public squares with shacks and other gear, but later backtracked, making clear that personal belongings can't be taken from the homeless.

Mean Streets

Sao Paulo's population has risen around 0.7 percent each year over the last decade-and-a-half, but the homeless number has gone up by almost five percent annually. More than 80 percent are men and 2.5 percent children - 403 in all, according to the most recent study. For those who fall through the cracks in Brazil's crumbling economy, the landing is brutal, says Silvia Schor, an economics professor at Sao Paulo University. "Survival conditions in Sao Paulo are cruel," she said. "The city has unacceptable inequality, where income distribution means a lot of families can't have their own house."

Some two million residents live in slums called favelas, she added. The severe recession has resulted in a 10 percent increase in homeless numbers, says Kaka Ferreira, head of Anjos da Noite and a 27-year veteran of helping the city's homeless. "There are the unemployed, the sick, those with no family," said Ferreira, who works at the agriculture ministry and devotes Saturdays to caring for the homeless along with a network of 80 others.

One of those gratefully collecting a plate of dinner recently was Marina Mayara da Silva, 19. Homeless with her two-year-old son and five months pregnant with



SAO PAULO: A homeless man spends the night on the street in downtown Sao Paulo on June 26, 2016. — AFP

another child, she sells sweets during the day. "I've been here for two months because I couldn't pay the rent anymore," she said. "I used to live with my mother but there came a time when I couldn't." Just along the street

was Carvalho, wrapping himself in the blankets and saying he dreamed of being able to return to his onetime home in Bahia, where Brazil is tropical and even the winters are hot. — AFP



BRUSSELS: EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (left) and EU Council President Donald Tusk talk prior to a press conference during a EU summit meeting at the EU headquarters yesterday. — AFP

EU LEAVES UK OUT IN COLD, MEETS WITHOUT CAMERON

SCOTLAND DETERMINED TO REMAIN IN EU

BRUSSELS: European leaders met yesterday without Britain for the first time in 40 years to prepare for life after the Brexit bombshell, as the race began to succeed Prime Minister David Cameron. Highlighting the seismic shock from last week's referendum, one person who was in Brussels however was Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, "utterly determined" to see Scotland remain in the EU. Britain "made the decision that it did. And this morning it looks like they aren't sitting at the table anymore," European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said as he arrived Wednesday.

At a summit described as "sad" on Tuesday, Cameron won some breathing space from the remaining 27 leaders of the bloc five days after Britain rocked financial markets by voting 52 to 48 percent to leave the bloc. EU President Donald Tusk said he understood that time was needed "for the dust to settle" before the next steps can be taken. However, Juncker warned Britain did not have "months to meditate" before triggering Article 50 - the EU treaty clause that begins the two-year withdrawal process - after Cameron's successor takes office in early September.

And German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned that London could not "cherry-pick" the terms of the exit negotiations. Some in Brussels are con-

cerned that giving Britain favorable divorce terms will spark a domino effect of others leaving the union, set up six decades ago to foster peace on the continent after World War II. "We need more than ever a united Europe, in contrast to a disunited UK," Luxembourg's Prime Minister Xavier Bettel said yesterday.

Cameron Out, Sturgeon In

Cameron flew back to London after Tuesday's summit, as Sturgeon headed in the opposite direction to test the waters in Brussels for her country joining the bloc as a separate entity. Scotland overwhelmingly backed "Remain" in last Thursday's vote, and the combative Sturgeon has said she was "utterly determined to preserve Scotland's relationship and place within the EU". That may require a new referendum on Scottish independence, with Sturgeon saying that the Britain from the last vote in 2014 "does not exist anymore" following the Brexit vote.

Sturgeon met yesterday morning with European Parliament President Martin Schulz and was to hold talks with Juncker later. Top of the agenda at yesterday's EU meeting was how the remaining 27 members can bolster unity after the shock of the British vote. Cameron has urged a reform of the rules of freedom of movement, with officials seeing the large

influx of eastern European workers as a key factor behind the referendum outcome. Merkel has called for a "new impulse" for the EU and stepped-up cooperation in areas including defence, jobs and competitiveness.

Corbyn Hangs On

Meanwhile, both main political parties in Britain are in turmoil with the opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn refusing to resign despite a crushing no-confidence vote. Within the governing Conservatives, nominations opened Wednesday for a successor to Cameron. The cut-off is noon on Thursday and the winner will be named on Sept 9. Pro-EU finance minister George Osborne, long seen as a possible Cameron successor, has ruled himself out.

Boris Johnson, the charismatic blond-mopped former London mayor and a leading Brexiteer, was expected to throw his hat in the ring along with Interior Minister Theresa May. A new poll Tuesday put May in the lead with 31 percent, against 24 percent for Johnson. Meanwhile, on Tuesday thousands protested in London, which voted to stay in the EU by a 60-percent margin, waving EU flags and placards saying: "Stop Brexit" and chanting "Fromage (cheese), not Farage!" — AFP

RACE OPENS TO SUCCEED CAMERON AMID DISARRAY

LONDON: The race to choose a successor to Prime Minister David Cameron got underway yesterday after last week's stunning Brexit vote, with former London mayor and top "Leave" campaigner Boris Johnson tipped as the narrow frontrunner. With turmoil surging through both of Britain's main parties, defiant opposition Labour chief Jeremy Corbyn meanwhile faced a looming leadership challenge after last Thursday's referendum.

Johnson, who led the "Leave" campaign to victory, tops the opinion polls along with interior minister Theresa May for the Conservative leadership. But the first to throw his hat into the ring was work and pensions minister Stephen Crabb, a virtual unknown to the British public. The 43-year-old called on the party to "get past this Boris/stop Boris dichotomy", in reference to the divisive Johnson.

The party will official open nominations at 5.00pm (1600 GMT). Johnson and May are expected to announce their bids Thursday, before nominations close at noon. The new leader, who will be chosen by a postal ballot of party members currently numbering around 150,000, is expected to be announced on September 9.

Boris Bookies' Favorite

Bookmakers make Johnson slight favorite over May, and The Sun newspaper reported Wednesday that he had already secured the backing of 100 of the Tory MPs who will vote next week to whittle down the field to two nominees. The ConservativeHome blog surveyed more than 1,300 members and found the slimmest of leads for May, mirroring the results of a YouGov poll published Tuesday. Pro-EU finance minister George Osborne, long seen as a possible Cameron successor, has ruled himself out.

Critics have questioned whether the "Leave" camp - and Johnson in particular - has any idea how to manage the unprecedented situation left by last week's vote. "He has still to offer anything like a concrete plan on how he would negotiate the post-Brexit future," wrote former BBC political editor Nick Robinson. The political chaos was not confined to the ruling party, with opposition Labour leader Corbyn arming himself for battle against a huge majority of his own MPs.

Corbyn was defeated by 172 to 40 in a non-binding no-confidence vote held by Labour lawmakers late Tuesday, and speculation was mounting that a candidate would come forward and challenge him. "It looks as though we will have a leadership election now," Corbyn loyalist and shadow finance minister John McDonnell told reporters yesterday. Media reports suggested that his former business spokeswoman Angela Eagle could be preparing to launch a bid.

For Heaven's Sake, Go!

Even Cameron weighed in, telling Corbyn

"for heaven's sake man, go!" during parliament's weekly Prime Minister's Questions session. That followed former leader Ed Miliband's declaration that he had "reluctantly reached the conclusion that his position is untenable." Corbyn is due later Wednesday to rally trade unions and the Labour members who helped him win last year's leadership vote by a landslide margin, and a fierce battle is looming over who owns the soul of the party - parliamentarians or members.

"I was democratically elected leader of our party for a new kind of politics by 60 percent of Labour members and supporters, and I will not betray them by resigning," the 67-year-old self-declared pacifist said in a statement.

Apocalypse

The Labour turmoil comes amid speculation that Cameron's successor as Conservative leader and prime minister may



David Cameron

be tempted to call an early election later this year. Labour, which has lurched to the left under Corbyn's leadership, is viewed by some as unelectable in a general election while he remains in charge. Former foreign minister Jack Straw said his party faced an "apocalypse" if an election was held with Corbyn still in office. "It's probably the worst crisis since Labour's formation," he told Sky News.

The leadership ructions of both parties dominated the front pages of yesterday's newspapers, with the Metro calling on Corbyn to "Please Jez go!" and The Sun declaring it "Boris day". In a sign of the depth of the crisis, the Scottish National Party, which has 54 seats in the House of Commons to Labour's 229, announced it would make a bid to take over as the official opposition party in parliament. — AFP

US COMPENSATES FAMILY OF CHILD KILLED BY MOTORCADE

WASHINGTON: Hoping to make amends for a tragic accident, the United States has provided a wide range of compensation to a Cameroonian family whose child was killed by a vehicle in UN Ambassador Samantha Power's motorcade. The package included everything from cash to cows, US officials said. The incident occurred in April as Power visited the front lines in the war against Boko Haram. Traveling near the remote, northern Cameroon city of Mokolo, an armored jeep in her caravan struck 7-year-old Birwe Toussein at high speed after he darted into the road, killing him instantly.

Power returned later that day for a tense and emotionally fraught gathering with Birwe's family and community members. She promised to compensate them for their loss. State Department officials said the cash payment was 1 million Central African francs, roughly \$1,700. Cameroon's GDP per person is about \$1,300. Cameroon's government, aid organizations operating in the area and the UN - which also had officials in the convoy - contributed another 5 million francs, bringing the total cash payout to more than \$10,000. In addition to money, officials said the US government provided a pair of cows; hundreds of kilograms of flour, onions, rice, salt and sugar; and cartons of soap and oil. Still to come: A well that will provide the vil-

lage with fresh drinking water. State Department spokesman Jeffrey Loree called it a "compensation package commensurate with local custom, as well as the needs of the family and village".

"This package included a potable water well in the boy's community that will serve as a lasting memory and some monetary, food, and other support," Loree said. "US diplomats have visited the family on several occasions following the accident and will continue to provide all support possible." Power was on the first leg of a week-long trip through West African countries bearing the scars of Boko Haram's Islamist insurgency. Traveling through territory that had witnessed previous Boko Haram attacks, Power's motorcade was moving at a fast clip, at times exceeding 60 mph. Villagers lined up along the sides of the road to greet the ambassador as US and Cameroonian special forces ensured her security.

But when Birwe darted onto the two-lane highway, perhaps distracted by a Cameroonian helicopter monitoring overhead, there was no time for the sixth vehicle in Power's convoy to react. The vehicle that hit the boy initially stopped, only to be ordered by American security forces to continue traveling through the unsecured area. — AP

E EUROPEANS DEFIANT IN BREXIT HEARTLAND

BOSTON, United Kingdom: Eastern European immigrants in Britain's Brexit capital are defiant despite over three quarters of locals voting to leave the EU. "Are British people going to the factory working? I don't think so," said Aurelia, a Lithuanian factory worker in the town of Boston, near England's east coast. "I'm not scared. This referendum, for me - no problem," added the 28-year-old of Britain's vote to leave the European Union last Thursday.

The historic Lincolnshire market town has changed dramatically since eight ex-communist nations entered the EU in 2004, with thousands

chiefly from Poland, Latvia and Lithuania drawn by ready work in England's food-producing heartland. Twelve years on, Boston is the most eastern European town in Britain. Its population hailing from the eight new EU countries had surged to 10.6 percent by the time of the 2011 census. The vote to leave the bloc won by its highest margin in Boston, at 75.6 percent.

Despite the town's rejection - undoubtedly fuelled by the immigration issue - east Europeans such as Aurelia, who was eating dumplings in a Lithuanian restaurant, feel completely convinced

that their future remains in Lincolnshire. Piotr Untermann, 35, who is Boston's longest-serving Polish taxi driver, said: "Polish people are not bothered. They are not scared. I know they cannot do anything because I've lived here 11 years. My daughter, she has a British passport. I pay taxes, I have my life here, I have a mortgage. If they want me to leave, OK: give me money for my house I can leave straight away!" he laughed.

'I'm Having an English Baby'

One young woman heading to a Polish butcher's shop was completely unmoved by the stark local referendum vote. "For me, it doesn't matter. My boyfriend is English and we are not bothered about that. And I'm having an English baby," she said, patting her midriff but declining to give her name. And Jeff, 28, a fork lift driver from Lithuania, also felt on solid ground despite Thursday's momentous national vote. "If everybody goes home, who will work here?" he asked. "I've lived here nine years, I spend my money here. I pay tax, everything here. I'm not taking anything out," he added. Boston's shopping streets are dotted with Polish bakeries, Lithuanian eateries and outlets servicing the eastern European population. Both Bostonians and eastern Europeans alike talk of different communities living separate lives: working, eating and socializing apart. In a study in January, the Policy Exchange think-tank found Boston was the least-integrated town in Britain. "I know many English but I also know people who don't want to interact with the English," said Untermann. "We work hard - we have no time to socialize!" he joked. — AFP



BOSTON, England: This file photo taken on Feb 19, 2013 shows a couple walking past shops catering for eastern Europeans in Boston, in Lincolnshire, eastern England. — AFP

MURDERS, VIOLENCE ON RISE AS INDIA BATTLES FOR WATER

BHOPAL, India: Imrat Namdev and her younger sister Pushpa Namdev were neighbors in Chhatapur district, in the drought-hit Indian region of Bundelkhand. Both relied on the same well for water and, according to police, frequently quarrelled over how much the other was using. In May, during one fight over water, Pushpa, 42, beat Imrat, 48, with a stick, police say. The injured sister was rushed to a hospital, but died there, and Pushpa was charged with murder. "Our village faces a severe shortage of potable water," Imrat's son, Jitendra, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Pushpa always felt my mother drew more water from the well."

As northern and central India continue to suffer thorough severe drought and oppressive heat, police in Bundelkhand and several other regions are reporting a rise in violent - and often deadly - clashes over water. After almost 10 years of below-average rainfall and several consecutive years of drought, the region's rivers, lakes, reservoirs and wells are drying up. Disputes are a common problem in many places in India that face water shortages. But Indian police report that the fighting is getting more frequent and bloody. In many parts of the country, neighbors, friends and family are turning on each other, desperate to protect what little water

they have left, police records suggest.

Last month, in the tribal-dominated Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh, 13-year-old Surmada, her brother and her uncle used a neighbor's hand-pump, without permission, to get water for the family's houseguests. According to police, the owner of the pump and his son attacked the group with arrows. One pierced Surmada's eye, killing her. And in the village of Kanker, in Shivpuri district, a large-scale argument broke out after two motorcyclists got into an accident, causing one to spill the 15-litre (4 gallon) container of water he was carrying. "The two later called their family members and friends and attacked each other with spears, axes and sticks," said investigating officer Jaisingh Yadav of Sathanwada police station. Fifteen people were injured, five of them women, he said.

Lal Singh Arya, Madhya Pradesh's urban administration and development minister, said the government is using all its resources to try to make sure everyone has water. But he predicted tensions will remain high until monsoon rains - which began recently in some areas - take hold. "There have been disputes over water in many parts of the state because of two consecutive droughts," he said. "The situation will improve with the monsoon rains."

Only Drinking Water

Activists say the government's failure to act to better manage water is partly to blame for the rise in violence. "The present crisis is the fallout of over-consumption, wasteful use and inefficient water governance systems," said Ajay Dubey, an activist with the environmental non-governmental organization Prayatna, based in Madhya Pradesh. "People are going to any lengths for the sake of water. They've lost hope that the situation will ever improve. Things were never so bad," Dubey said.

According to the Madhya Pradesh water resource department, out of the state's 139 main reservoirs, 82 are at only 10 percent capacity and 22 are empty. As authorities try to make the remaining water last until monsoon rains help refill the reservoirs, the measures they have implemented have only exacerbated the sense of desperation. Across much of the region, authorities have banned the use of water for washing cars or trucks, bathing cattle or irrigating crops. In most cities in Madhya Pradesh, the local government only supplies drinking water on one out of every two to seven days.

The district administration of Sehore in Madhya

Pradesh has temporarily taken charge of all water sources, whether government or privately owned, so that it can manage use of the dwindling resource. And in three towns in Madhya Pradesh, the use of water for anything other than drinking is banned. Lokesh Kumar, sub-divisional magistrate of Ichhawar town, said water can't be used for farming or industrial purposes until July 5, when the monsoon is underway and authorities hope water sources will be replenished.

For many in rural India, the struggle to survive with very little water is proving too difficult. In areas like Bundelkhand, a growing number of people are leaving their homes and abandoning their work in hopes of finding water - even just a little more - somewhere else. Asandi Das, who lives in a village in Chhatapur district, plans to take his family to Agra, where the famous Taj Mahal is located, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. He said that right now his family has neither food nor water. He knows it won't be easy even in Agra - or anywhere else - but hopes to get enough work to make ends meet. "We'll not be able to survive in our village," Das said. "There's just no water. We'll have to go to some other place if we want to live." — Reuters

INDIA TOP COURT TO CONSIDER INTERVENING IN 'TRIPLE TALAQ'

NEW DELHI: India's Supreme Court said it will examine how far it could interfere in Muslim laws governing family-related issues as it heard a plea to end a practice allowing Muslim men to divorce their wives by saying "talaq" three times. The Indian constitution allows Muslims, the biggest religious minority group, to regulate matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance through their own civil code.

A Supreme Court bench said Muslim personal law affected a large number of people and asked the federal government to weigh in on the debate as to whether intervening in the law would violate the Muslim community's fundamental rights. "It is a serious issue and it has to be examined within the framework of the Constitution," Chief Justice of India, Tirath Singh Thakur, said of the petition yesterday. "We have to hear all of the views and take a call as to what extent courts can interfere in Muslim personal laws," he said. The next hearing is on Sept 6.

Muslims make up 13 percent of the country's 1.2 billion population, yet government data show they are among some of the most excluded and marginalized communities. Women's rights activists have long called for reform of the Muslim personal law which they say discriminates against women. What they want instead is a well-defined law that criminalizes polygamy, unilateral divorce and child marriage. Campaigners say the "triple talaq" practice - which allows Muslim men an instant divorce with Muslim women being divorced via Facebook, Skype and text message - is unconstitutional because it violates the right to equality.

Aware of Rights

The petition being considered by the Supreme Court also seeks an end to polygamy and 'halala', which mandates that if a woman wants to go back to her husband after a divorce, she must first consummate her marriage with another man. "Triple talaq is not valid as per the Quran, which stresses mediation and reconciliation before the decision to divorce," said Zakia Soman, co-founder of Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA), which campaigns for Muslim women's rights and is a co-petitioner in the case. "The Supreme Court needs to be guided by the Constitutional mandate," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

More than 90 percent of Muslim women surveyed by BMMA last year said they wanted an end to polygamy and triple talaq. There are drives to end other practices as well. Some women in the Dawoodi Bohra community, the only South Asian Muslim community known to practise female genital mutilation, are calling for an end to the centuries-old custom. In a 1985 landmark judgment, the Supreme Court granted divorcee, Shah Bano, alimony for life. But following protests from Muslim leaders and others that the court was being intrusive, the judgment was overturned.

"Thirty years after Shah Bano, Muslim women are more aware of their Quranic rights and more willing to fight for them," Soman said. "We think the Court will strike the right balance between gender justice and the right to religious freedom," she said. — Reuters



MANILA: In this June 8, 2016 photo, police conduct an overnight curfew for minors. — AP

DRUG PUSHER DEATHS JUMP AS DUTERTE TAKES OFFICE

CONCERNS ABOUT VIGILANTE JUSTICE, LACK OF DUE PROCESS

MANILA: The bodies of dozens of suspected drug peddlers have turned up in the Philippines in recent weeks, providing an eerie backdrop to the swearing-in on today of Rodrigo Duterte, who has warned of a bloody presidency in his bid to eradicate crime. Some of the dead were killed in gunfights with police; others mysteriously turned up on the street. One was dumped with sign: "Don't follow me or you'll die next." The numbers of bodies have spiked since Duterte swept the May 9 elections on promises to wipe out crime and corruption within six months. That bold pledge won him huge support but also sparked concerns about vigilante justice and a lack of due process.

Nicknamed "Duterte Harry" after a Clint Eastwood character with little regard for rules, he says he plans to fulfill his promise despite criticism from human rights advocates and church officials and dares his critics to impeach him. "If I couldn't convince you, I'll have you killed. Just imagine if I kill 10 persons a day for the next six years," he was quoted as saying by Cebu Daily News in his native Visayan language, referring to drug suspects. "If you're into drugs, I'm sorry. I'll have to apologize to your family because you'll surely get killed."

So far, the threats seem to be working to some extent: Hundreds of drug pushers and addicts have surrendered to police in recent days, signing pledges to reform. National police data show 39 mostly drug peddler suspects were killed since the start of the year until the election. But since then, 72 killed have been killed, bringing the yearly total so far to 111 deaths.

Outgoing national police chief Ricardo Marquez dismissed speculation that the spike in deaths was timed to the beginning of Duterte's presidency, saying he already promised an intensified anti-drug campaign when he took over last year. "There is no truth to what is being said that it is only now that the police have stepped up the fight against drugs," he said. So far this year, 183 have been killed in clashes between police and clandestine drug lab workers, dealers and users, he added. The reason for the discrepancy in the totals wasn't immediately clear.

Alarm

In one television report, a mother wailed as she saw the body of her son sprawled on a roadside in eastern Camarines Sur province, apparently shot with four wounds and a slash on his neck. "What they have done is too much," she said, sobbing on the shoulder of another woman. Nearly 5,000 suspects have been arrested in anti-drug operations after the election, bringing the number of arrests in a nationwide drive to nearly 19,000 since January, according to police records.

"We are alarmed about the rate of almost everyday killings of suspected criminals and members of drug syndicates," said Winlor Montilla Papa, a human rights campaigner for Amnesty International in the Philippines. "Our concern is on the lack of due process, the seemingly abusive stance" of authorities.

Last week, the head of the influential Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines issued a letter saying the group was disturbed by the reports of growing numbers of drug suspects being killed as well as the spike in vigilante killings. The letter reminded law enforcers that one can "shoot to kill" solely on the ground of legitimate self-defense or

the defense of others. "To kill a suspect outright, no matter how much surveillance work may have antecedently been done on the suspect, is not morally justified," Archbishop Socrates Villegas said.

Praise

Others praised Duterte's drastic approach to combatting crime. Arsenio Evangelista, whose son was kidnapped and killed 5 years ago, supports the incoming president's plan to restore the death penalty and promise to eradicate all major crimes, especially drug-related offenses in three to six months. But he said the recent increase in drug dealer deaths could not have been on orders of Duterte because he isn't in office yet.

"We want results out of frustration, dismay" with a criminal justice system that is corrupt and does not work, said Evangelista, who is also a spokesman for a group called Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption. He said his group believes the deaths could be part of an effort by police officials to burnish their accomplishments in the face of Duterte's plans to revamp the police force. Under pressure to step up efforts, police have clamped down on mostly small-time drug pushers who are easier to find and apprehend, he added. In the past, such peddlers would rather bribe officers than engage in a shootout, Evangelista said. "It's not believable that street-level drug peddlers' behavior changed totally," he said. — AP

PHILIPPINES POLICE KILLINGS STIR FEAR

MANILA: Two things catch the eye in the office of Joselito Esquivel, a police colonel enforcing a national crackdown on drugs in the Philippines' most crime-ridden district: A pair of boxing gloves in a display cabinet and an M4 assault rifle lying beside him. "It's all-out war," the Quezon City officer says of a spike in killings of suspected drug dealers by police across the country since last month's election of Rodrigo Duterte, a tough-talking city mayor, as the country's president. "Duterte has already given the impetus for this massive operation."

Duterte has vowed to wipe out drug crime within six months but, according to Chito Gascon, head of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), the aggressive rhetoric behind his promises has already instilled a sense of impunity among the police. "Basically, you have Mr Duterte saying: 'It's okay, I've got your back,'" said Gascon. On average, at least one person has been shot dead by police or anonymous vigilantes every day since the May 9 election that swept Duterte to power, an escalation from the first four months of the year when the rate was about two a week. Handwritten warning signs have been left on some corpses.

Duterte, who will be inaugurated today for a six-year term, has cheered the police on: After a druglord was killed in a northern province recently, he travelled there to congratulate them and hand over a reward worth about \$6,000. Critics, including leaders of the influential Roman Catholic Church and human rights advocates, fear a spiral of violence could lie ahead for the Philippines if vigilantism and summary executions become an accepted norm after Duterte takes office. "My concern is that instead of law and order, what we will see is lawlessness and fear," said Gascon. "What will result is an increase in the body-bag count."

On Monday, Duterte branded as "stupid" human rights groups and lawmakers who have complained about his draconian plans to crush crime and re-introduce the death penalty. "When you kill someone, rape, you should die," he told his last public meeting as mayor of Davao City, where death squads have killed hundreds of

drug-pushers, petty criminals and even street children since 1998, according to rights groups. Duterte denies any involvement in the vigilante killings. A political outsider whose coarse defiance of the traditional ruling class has drawn comparisons with Donald Trump, Duterte has even figured in commentaries on Britain's vote to leave the European Union as an example of a global trend towards populism triumphing over the establishment.

Police Covering Their Tracks?

Duterte's pick to be the country's police chief, Ronald dela Rosa, concedes that some recent killings may have been carried out by officers involved in the drugs business who were covering their tracks so that the new president does not go after them. "That could be true," he told Reuters. "Some police officers are shifting from drug protectors to drug punishers." But dela Rosa added that so much work towards wiping out drug crime has been accomplished recently that his job will be easy when he takes over at the end of this week.

Railing against critics, he said most of the victims in the recent wave of killings were shot by police in self-defence. "I have no problem how many people die in legitimate police operations, the police have a right to defend themselves," he said. "We are police officers, we are not hard killers." Only two of the roughly 60 recent killings took place in Quezon City, a crowded and gritty part of sprawling Metro Manila that has the country's highest crime rate. Most were in areas outside the capital that are less intensively policed.

Esquivel, the officer in Quezon City, said his force has also adopted a softer tack by inviting drug peddlers and addicts to surrender and go into rehabilitation. Just last week, over 1,000 gave themselves up there, he said. Despite that gentler approach, police in the Philippines are open about their readiness to use guns. Outside Esquivel's headquarters there is a police firing range and a banner cheerily announces a monthly "shoot fest", a contest for officers where sometimes winners receive a gun. — Reuters



TAJIKISTAN: A picture taken on March 6, 2016 shows a woman riding a donkey-drawn cart at a settlement. — AFP

TAJIKISTAN MOTHERS KILLING THEMSELVES AND THEIR BABIES

VAHDAT, Tajikistan: Pointing to the leaden waters of the river, Manzura Borbieva recalls the horror of seeing her 21-year-old colleague commit suicide with her baby. "That's where she jumped in," she said. Borbieva, a pot washer at the bazaar in the provincial town of Vahdat in ex-Soviet Tajikistan, saw trader Maftnuna Rakhmonova plunge into the swollen river with her three-month-old son. In the Central Asian country where a region-wide economic crisis has exacerbated grinding poverty and social tensions, some women are choosing a terrible way out.

"We told her to at least spare the child, but she would not listen," recalled Borbieva, who scrapes by on less than \$100 per month as a sweets seller in the town around 20 km from the capital Dushanbe. "She told us, crying: 'Whatever my destiny is, that will be the destiny of my child.'" Rakhmonova committed suicide in April along with her son, whose body was never found.

Her death is one of at least four such recent suicides that have shocked the conservative mainly Muslim country. Up to half of working-age men in the impoverished republic head to Russia to find work, often in construction. But such jobs are increasingly scarce due to the recession in Russia and families are struggling without the men's contributions. Rakhmonova's family attributes her suicide and infanticide to regular domestic violence and abuse at the hands of her in-laws, but Borbieva says such tragedies are also rooted in the economic situation.

"Our men cannot find work to feed their large families. Quarrels start inside the home," Borbieva said as traders from the bazaar where Rakhmonova works gathered to listen. "This is what drives people to do such things," Borbieva added. "This is our Tajikistan."

Violence Rising

The landlocked country has been clob-

bered by the wider economic crisis sweeping through the Central Asian region closely linked to Moscow. The national currency has fallen 40 percent against the dollar since January 2014 and the government has sought help from international financial institutions to keep its battered banking system afloat. According to the World Bank, it is the world's most remittance dependent country, but these cash transfers - mostly from Russia - fell by around two thirds in 2015.

"If before our social problems were connected with men going abroad and spending long periods without their families, now the issue is that they are sitting at home without income," said Alla Kuvatova, a gender expert and director of the Dushanbe-based NGO Women with Higher Education. "Violence against women is rising. The level of aggression and cruelty in society as a whole is growing," Kuvatova said. There were 325 registered suicides and attempted suicides among women in 2015, a spokesman for the state prosecutor told AFP by telephone. The spokesman could not provide data for previous years. Many such suicides go unregistered because of the stigma surrounding them.

'Bad Family'

Experts like Kuvatova say that a tendency for early marriages and large families places a heavy burden on young women, who often suffer from excessive demands of in-laws. Last summer, a provincial court found two young women guilty of conspiring to murder their common mother-in-law and burn her remains. Maftnuna Rakhmonova's grandmother Harimbibi Rakhmonova, 59, who raised her and saw her married to a man from a neighboring village, said that her in-laws were abusive. "They were a bad family. They beat her almost every day," she said. — AFP

MONGOLIANS HEAD TO POLLS AMID ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

MANDALGOVI, Mongolia: Mongolians went to the polls across their sprawling, sparsely-populated country yesterday as it struggles to benefit from its vast natural resources amid disputes over foreign investment and slumping demand from neighboring China. Squeezed between Vladimir Putin's Russia and Communist China, Mongolia prides itself on its democracy, but voters expressed frustration with the country's poor governance and weakened economy. Many said they feared a repeat of 2008 riots that followed claims of election tampering.

The contest largely comes down to a choice between the ruling Democratic Party and the opposition Mongolian People's Party. Both their campaigns have been heavy on bromides about economic development but light on concrete proposals for tackling voter concerns, including improving the country's educational and healthcare systems. In Mandalgovi, capital of the province of South Gobi, mother of three Shatarin Chahdal told AFP: "I voted for an independent candidate, who is young and wise. I want the new government to focus on creating new jobs rather than delivering cash handouts."

Across the country - more than twice the size of France, but with a population of only three million - trucks with mobile ballot boxes crisscrossed the vast steppe to enable the sick and elderly to vote, while

herders and others streamed to polling stations in tents, traditional Mongolian tents. But while enormous efforts have been made to ensure participation in even the most isolated areas, enthusiasm for voting has waned in the 26 years since the young democracy threw off the yoke of Soviet influence.

Turnout has declined each election cycle, a trend that experts attribute to increased scepticism in the country's political class. "As the economic crises persist, there's considerable mistrust in the political system," Morris Rossabi, an expert on Mongolia at Columbia University, told AFP, adding that voters were "facing increasing disillusionment with political parties". Mongolia's vast natural resources have drawn the attention of multinational mining giants, such as Anglo-Australian Rio Tinto, which has a multi-billion-dollar copper and gold project at Oyu Tolgoi.

But political disputes over the role of foreign investment - and at what price - have stymied development, while slowing growth in China, by far Mongolia's biggest trade partner, has sent commodity prices collapsing. China's economy grew 6.9 percent last year, the worst since 2009, meaning less demand for the raw materials, such as coal, that Mongolia supplies. For its part Mongolia enjoyed world-leading growth of 17.3 percent in 2011, but that slumped to 2.3 percent last year.



MANDALGOVI, Mongolia: A villager casts his vote for the parliamentary elections at a polling station in the middle of Gobi province yesterday. — AFP

One third of voters had gone to the polls by noon yesterday, the election commission said. Ashleigh Whelan, country director for the International

Republican Institute (IRI), which has observers all over the country, said turnout had been high in the countryside but disappointingly low in Ulan Bator. — AFP



YOGYAKARTA: This picture taken on May 7, 2016 shows Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, who holds the dual roles of sultan of the tiny kingdom of Yogyakarta and local governor, together with his wife, Queen consort Gusti Kanjeng Ratu Hemas, as they watch a dance performance to celebrate his 70th birthday and 27th year in power. — AFP

REVOLUTION AS INDONESIA SULTAN TAPS FEMALE HEIR

BITTER FEUD HAS ERUPTED OVER MOVE

YOGYAKARTA, Indonesia: Courtiers in elaborate outfits danced to the gentle tinkling of Javanese music as the Sultan of Yogyakarta looked on, a scene that has played out in much the same way for centuries in the tiny Indonesian kingdom. But the recent ceremony to mark the 70th birthday of Hamengku Buwono X, Indonesia's last sultan with real political power, had one key difference from previous celebrations - many of his relatives refused to attend. A bitter feud has erupted at the heart of the kingdom on Java island, after the Muslim ruler signaled he wants his eldest daughter to become the sultanate's first female monarch after he leaves the throne.

Indonesia is home to numerous small kingdoms. But while other provinces now elect political rulers and their sultans are largely ceremonial figures, Yogyakarta's sultan serves as both royal leader and governor of the city and its surrounding areas. Jakarta allowed the Yogyakarta royal family to keep power as the central government was grateful for the sultanate's support for independence in 1945 after a long period of Dutch colonial rule.

The sultan still maintains many of the trappings of Javanese royal rule in the kingdom, which has a history stretching back to the 16th century. His main residence is a traditional Javanese palace complex, known as a Kraton, and important events are celebrated with much pomp and circumstance. But the sultan's push to make the eldest of his five daughters - he has no sons - the first female monarch of

Yogyakarta has transformed him into an unlikely champion for gender equality, and threatens to overturn hundreds of years of tradition in the Muslim, conservative sultanate.

Rooster or Hen?

It has sparked a furious row with his family, who say he is breaking rules laid down to govern the sultanate, amid speculation that his brothers were jockeying to fill his position. "A female sultan is an impossibility," the sultan's cousin, Kanjeng Raden Tumenggung Jatiningrat, told AFP. "One symbol in this palace is a rooster - so if we have a queen should we change it to a hen?" The rooster is a symbol of bravery. He added that a female ruler could not oversee rituals in the mosque or other ceremonies that have traditionally been led by men.

Hamengku Buwono, who has been on the throne 27 years, last year set in motion the process for his daughter to become monarch by giving her the title "Gusti Kanjeng Ratu Mangkubumi". While he has not confirmed publicly that she is the crown princess, in Javanese culture - where much is conveyed through symbolism rather than anything said out loud - the signs are clear. The title Mangkubumi, which translates from Indonesian as "the one who holds the Earth", was the same one given to the sultan when he was made crown prince several decades ago.

She was also entrusted with the task of "attempting to bring safety, happiness and prosper-

ity to the world", another indication she would succeed her father. And the sultan made small changes to his own lengthy royal title - removing a word normally only used by men and tweaking another - to make it gender-neutral, opening the door for a woman to take over.

'An Islamic Kingdom'

The sultan has defended the move, saying there is nothing stopping him from making changes in his kingdom and he has to adapt as Indonesia modernizes. "The Yogyakarta palace doesn't have a hereditary tradition that can't be changed, and all ruling sultans can introduce changes," he told local media. Still, many disagree with him, from his relatives to local Muslim groups. "The king should maintain the tradition as it was originally, because this is an Islamic kingdom," said Abdurrahman, from local headline group Islamic Jihad Front, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

But it is not the first time there has been a female monarch in diverse Indonesia - nowadays Muslim-majority, but which has had Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms over the centuries and is home to about 300 different ethnic groups. Queens at times ruled over the ancient Majapahit empire, which covered large parts of what is now Indonesia from the late 13th to the early 16th centuries, as they did in Aceh, on western Sumatra island, when it was an independent sultanate. — AFP

US TO UPGRADE THAILAND IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING REPORT

WASHINGTON/BANGKOK: The United States has decided to remove Thailand from its list of worst human trafficking offenders, officials said, a move that could help smooth relations with Bangkok's military-run government. The upgrade, confirmed to Reuters by a US official in Washington and a Bangkok-based official from an international organization with direct knowledge of the rankings, would mark a rare boost for US-Thai relations. Ties between the countries have flat-lined since the Thai military seized power in a 2014 coup that Washington strongly condemned.

It also comes as President Barack Obama works to forge a united front among wavering Southeast Asian countries against China's pursuit of its territorial claims in the South China Sea. Bangkok has protested publicly to Washington that it should be removed from the lowest ranking on the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, which is due to be released on Thursday. The report is expected to cite improvements in Thailand's efforts to combat human trafficking, especially in its vital multi-billion-dollar seafood industry, the US official said.

The upgrade would put Thailand on a so-called "Tier 2 Watch List" and remove it from the rating for countries with the worst human-trafficking records, known as Tier 3. Major General Sansern Kaewkamnerd, spokesman for the Thai premier's office, said the upgrade shows Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha had stuck to his pledge to fight human trafficking in response to international criticism. "The international community will see that what the prime minister told the international community he would do, he did," Sansern told Reuters.

Thai Defense Minister General Prawit Wongsuwan said the upgrade to Tier 2 Watch List did not mean Thailand will stop tackling trafficking issues. "Even though we will be moved to Tier 2 we need to keep solving this problem," said Prawit. The report organizes countries into tiers based on trafficking records: Tier 1 for nations that meet minimum US standards; Tier 2 for those making significant efforts to meet those standards; Tier 2 "Watch List" for those that deserve special scrutiny; and Tier 3 for countries that are not making significant efforts. Thailand was downgraded to the lowest ranking in June 2014 just weeks after the military seized power.

Thai officials were incensed last year when Malaysia was upgraded from Tier 3 but Thailand was not, and even human rights advocates agreed that Bangkok had made a greater effort to curb human trafficking than Kuala Lumpur had. In this year's report, the State Department has opted to keep Malaysia at the higher ranking it received last year, according to the US official. State Department spokesman John Kirby declined to comment on the tier rankings: "We will not comment on the contents of this year's report until after the report is released," he said.

The junta has repeatedly vowed to crack down on human trafficking, particularly in its multi-billion-dollar seafood industry. Thailand is the world's third-largest seafood exporter, and much of the labor the fishing industry employs comes from neighboring Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. Thailand recently reformed its anti-trafficking laws and introduced a system to track fishing vessels, part of what it called "comprehensive and irreversible" measures to clean up its supply chain and curb illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.

But rights groups say millions of migrant workers remain vulnerable to abuse in the fishing sector and other Thai industries. Investigations by news organizations and rights groups have exposed widespread trafficking and abuse, sparking fears of a consumer backlash in the West against Thai-sourced seafood. The Obama administration has been unsettled by China's warming ties with the Thai junta, which has sought to counterbalance the cooling of its traditionally strong U.S. relationship, US officials say.

A Reuters investigation published last August found that senior diplomats repeatedly overruled the State Department's anti-trafficking unit and inflated the grades of 14 strategically important countries, including Malaysia. The State Department denied any political considerations but US lawmakers raised questions about the report's credibility and called for reforms. The TIP report matters to Thailand's generals not only because the US appraisal could affect a key industry. The junta, widely criticized at home and struggling to kick-start a sluggish economy, also is keen to boost its record for tackling issues that previous, civilian governments did little about. — Reuters

CAMBODIA OPPOSITION LEADER PROMISES RETURN FROM EXILE

MANILA: Cambodian opposition leader Sam Rainsy yesterday accused Prime Minister Hun Sen of using the judiciary to crush the opposition and guarantee his own victory in 2018 elections while the country goes "down the drain" amid rampant corruption. Speaking to Reuters in Manila, where he spends some of his time since he went into his latest period of self-imposed exile, Rainsy said he still hopes to strike a political deal with his nemesis. He said he will definitely return home just before local elections in June next year.

"Hun Sen himself realizes that he is losing ground, that the popular support the opposition enjoys is growing," Rainsy said during a break from a meeting with nearly 60 key members of his Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), most of whom had flown into the Philippines' capital overnight. "So he wants to disrupt the election process by creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation... This is just intimidation and an attempt to frighten the whole population not to support the opposition."

Government spokesman Phay Siphon could not be reached for comment yesterday. The spokesman for Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party denied that the government or the party uses the judiciary for political ends. "The cases against people at the CNRP are criminal wrongdoings, and they must be held responsible

before the law," said Sok Eysan, adding that Rainsy should not hope for a political deal before the 2017 vote.

Rainsy, 67, has gone into exile four times, the latest coming last November when a warrant for his arrest was issued. He flew to Paris, where he has lived for considerable periods of his adult life. He said that since then Hun Sen, who has led the country for three decades altogether, has used the judiciary to hound opposition politicians to avoid a rerun of the 2013 poll. The CNRP says it won and that the result was fixed to keep it out of power. "The judiciary in Cambodia is just a political tool for the ruling party to ensure impunity for themselves and to crack down on the opposition," said Rainsy, wearing a garland of jasmine flowers presented to him for the party meeting.

'Culture of Violence'

Rainsy's deputy, Kem Sokha, has been holed up in the CNRP's headquarters in Phnom Penh for more than a month to avoid arrest. Rainsy said that two of his party's lawmakers are behind bars while others face threats and live in danger. Hun Sen, who is 63 and has said he will rule Cambodia into his seventies, portrays himself as the man who saved Cambodia from the terror and chaos of the Khmer Rouge years in the 1970s and the civil war that followed. — Reuters

MICRO PLAYERS AND PARTIES GIVE AUSSIES POLL CHOICE

SYDNEY: Voters sick of the Liberal-Labor duopoly in Australian politics have plenty of choice at polls on Saturday with more than 50 minor players on the ballot, including a sex party, one for car enthusiasts and another with no policies. While Malcolm Turnbull's Liberals or the Labor party led by Bill Shorten will be elected to high office, minor party alliances can hold the balance of power in the upper house Senate. This means their vote could decide the outcome of an issue if the government and opposition disagree, something that has frustrated the current Liberal government.

It prompted Turnbull to call an early poll because crossbenchers - politicians who are independent or from minor parties - have failed to pass legislation relating to the creation of a construction industry watchdog. But minor players remain undeterred, promising a range of alternatives to the mainstream despite operating on a shoestring. The Greens are traditionally the most powerful small party, and the centrist Nick Xenophon Team - named after its founder member - is tipped to get two or three members

elected, but there are no shortage of others hoping to pick up disaffected voters.

The Australian Sex Party, established in 2009 in response to what it saw as escalating government encroachment on adult's civil liberties, now has 6,000 members. Among its policies, it advocates for nationally consistent age of consent laws, the decriminalization of

sex work and voluntary assisted dying. In a bid to boost its chances, it recently announced an alliance with the Marijuana (Hemp) party, running a "joint ticket" in all states and territories except New South Wales and Victoria.

Minor parties secured 15 percent of the vote in 2013 elections under Australia's complex transferable ballot system, where voters

rank parties or candidates according to preference. Fiona Patten, Sex Party MP in the Victorian state upper house, said they traditionally attract the youth vote, but support was increasing among baby boomers. "Because we've also had a very strong stance on euthanasia, I must say I'm getting approached by people in their 80s who are saying 'I'm voting for Sex Party,'" Patten said. "And they're also the people who want access to medicinal marijuana."

'Real-Time' Voting

Independent Victorian senator John Madigan has called for "a snub to the major political parties on July 2 and a vote for independents and minor parties". "People are sick and tired of the duopoly. They no longer want the Coles and Woolies of Australian politics calling the shots," he said, referring to the grocery shopping duopoly. Political scientist at Monash University Nick Economou admitted "the choice has never been greater". "It's true that there's a bit of a drift away from the major parties, but there's a huge increase in the number of parties," he said. — AFP



SYDNEY: Australia's Labor Party leader Bill Shorten speaks to the press at Port Botany yesterday as he campaigns to become prime minister at an election on July 2. — AFP



ISTANBUL: Mother (center) of an air hostess Gulsen Bahadir killed during last night attacks cries during the funeral in Istanbul yesterday, a day after a suicide bombing and gun attack targeted Istanbul's airport, killing at least 41 people. — AFP

SUICIDE BOMBERS STORM ISTANBUL AIRPORT...

Continued from Page 1

how the attack happened, going through surveillance footage and interviewing witnesses to establish a preliminary timeline.

The HaberTurk newspaper reported that one attacker blew himself up outside the terminal, and two others opened fire near the X-ray machines. The report said an attacker was shot at while running amid fleeing passengers, then blew himself up at the exit. It said the third attacker went up one level to the international departures terminal, was shot by police and detonated his explosives. It was not clear if any attackers were on the loose. Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said there were no immediate indications of that.

"So, what can we think? We cannot think anything," said Ali Batur, whose brother died. "A terror attack might happen everywhere, it happens everywhere. ... If God permits, we will get over this in unity and solidarity." As dawn broke over the destroyed terminal, workers began removing debris from the blast. The airport reopened yesterday morning, in sharp contrast to the 12-day complete shutdown in Brussels after the deadly airport bombing there. An information board inside showed about one-third of scheduled flights were canceled and a host of others were delayed, Yildirim said it appeared that the Islamic State group, which has threatened Turkey repeatedly, was responsible.

"Even though the indications suggest Daesh, our investigations are continuing," Yildirim said, using shorthand for the Islamic State group. He also suggested the attack could be linked to steps Ankara took Monday toward mending strained ties with Israel and Russia.

Turkey has suffered a series of attacks of increasing frequency that have scared away visitors and devastated its economy, which relies heavily on tourism. The country is a key partner in the US-led coalition against the Islamic State group and a NATO member.

Islamic State offered no immediate claim of responsibility, but the extremist group rarely does for attacks in Turkey. One possible reason is a reluctance to be seen as killing fellow Muslims; another is its desire to exploit the violent rift between Turkey and Kurdish rebels, said Anthony Skinner, director of the analyst group Verisk Maplecroft. "It very clearly meets Islamic State's strategic objectives to leave this ambiguity," Skinner said.

Turkey is beset by an array of security threats, including from ultra-left radicals, Kurdish rebels demanding greater autonomy in the restive southeast, and IS militants. It shares long, porous borders with both Syria and Iraq, where IS controls large pockets of territory. Turkish authorities have blamed IS for several major bombings over the past year, including on the capital Ankara, as well as attacks on tourists in Istanbul. "The reality is that Turkey is situated in a very vulnerable situation geographically speaking," Skinner said. Turkish airports have security checks at both the entrance of terminal buildings and then later before entry to departure gates.

The government has stepped up controls at airports and land borders and deported thousands of foreign fighters, but has struggled to tackle the extremist threat while also conducting security operations against Kurdish rebels, who have also been blamed for some recent deadly attacks. The devastation at Istanbul's airport echoed the March 22 attack on the Brussels airport, where two suicide bombings ripped through check-in

counters, killing 16 people. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for that attack, as well as an explosion at a Brussels subway station that killed 16 more people.

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel said on Twitter: "Our thoughts are with the victims of the attacks at Istanbul's airport. We condemn these atrocious acts of violence." Two South African tourists, Paul and Susie Roos from Cape Town, were due to fly home at the time of the explosions. "We came up from the arrivals to the departures, up the escalator when we heard these shots going off," Paul Roos said. "There was this guy going roaming around, he was dressed in black and he had a handgun."

Yildirim, the prime minister, called for national unity and "global cooperation" in combating terrorism. "This has shown once again that terrorism is a global threat," Yildirim said. "This is a heinous planned attack that targeted innocent people." Dozens of anxious friends and relatives waited yesterday outside Istanbul's Bakirkoy Hospital. "You can hear that people are wailing here," said Serdar Tatlisu, a relative of a victim. "We cannot cope anymore, we can't just stay still. We need some kind of solution for whatever problem there is."

This year alone, a Jan 12 attack that Turkish authorities blamed on IS claimed the lives of a dozen German tourists visiting Istanbul's historic sites. On March 19, a suicide bombing rocked Istanbul's main pedestrian street, killing five people, including the bomber, whom the authorities identified as a Turkish national linked to IS. Last October, twin suicide bombings hit a peace rally outside Ankara's train station, killing 102 people. There was no claim of responsibility but Turkish authorities blamed it on an Islamic State cell.

Kuwait Airways cancels flights

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday night following the twin bombing that hit Istanbul Ataturk Airport. He expressed his profound grief over the scores of innocent victims who fell as a result of "this despicable terrorist attack which runs counter to all holy faiths and humanitarian values." His Highness the Amir renewed Kuwait's principled stance against all forms of terrorism, and reaffirmed support to sisterly Turkey and the international community in the fight against terrorism.

Consul General of Kuwait in Istanbul Mohammed Fahad Al-Mohammad said yesterday that all Kuwaitis in the Turkish city of Istanbul are safe. Al-Mohammad's statement follows the attacks that hit the Ataturk Airport in the city claiming the lives of at least 36 people and wounding scores. Just after the attacks took place, the consulate formed a task force upon directives from First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, he said. The team worked at the airport to help Kuwaitis whose flights were cancelled for security reasons after the attacks, he added.

In another development, Kuwait Airways has announced cancellation of its two days' flights to and from Istanbul Ataturk Airport, following an attack that killed 41 people and injured 60 others. The airliner said in a statement that it has decided to cancel flights KU155 and KU 156, scheduled on June 28-29 following the devastating attack on the airport. — Agencies

MALALA JOINS MILLIONAIRES' CLUB

LONDON: Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani teenage education activist who survived a near-fatal attack by the Taleban, and her family have become millionaires in under four years due to sales of a book about her life and appearances on the global speaker circuit. Yousafzai, 18, the youngest person to win the Nobel peace prize, shot to international fame after emerging defiant from the assassination attempt on a school bus in Pakistan's Swat valley in October 2012 to continue her fight for girls' rights.

Yousafzai, who received medical treatment in Britain where she now lives, is in constant demand globally, charging \$152,000 per speech compared with Desmond Tutu's reported \$85,000, according to US-based Institute for Policy Studies. Her memoir, "I Am Malala", published in 2013, has sold 287,170 copies in Britain with a total value of about 2.2 million pounds (\$3 million) and over 1.8 million copies worldwide, according to a spokesman from Nielsen Book Research.

While Yousafzai has set up the Malala Fund to support

girls' education projects in developing countries, her family also established a company, Salarzai Ltd, in 2013 to protect the rights to her life story. Publicly available information shows that the London-based company, owned by Yousafzai, her father Ziauddin Yousafzai, and her mother, Toor Pekai, has a net worth of 1.87 million pounds in August 2015, up nearly 65 percent from the previous year.

Earlier this year Malala urged world leaders at a conference in London to commit \$1.4 billion to give Syrian refugee children access to education. Malala told a crowd in London's Trafalgar Square last week at a memorial for murdered British lawmaker Jo Cox that the opposition Labor MP "showed us all that you can be small and still be a giant". Cox, a strong supporter of refugee causes and staying in the European Union (EU), was shot and stabbed to death in her constituency in northern England a week before Britain voted to leave the EU. — Reuters

DUBAI AWARDS METRO EXTENSION CONTRACT

Continued from Page 1

The metro was projected to cost \$4.4 billion when work began in 2004, but that had surged to \$7.6 billion by the time it was completed. The Dubai Metro has two lines, a 52 kilometer Red Line and a 23 kilometer Green Line. The new project will extend the Red Line from Nakheel Harbor & Tower station to the Expo 2020 site. It

will feature 11.8 kilometers of elevated railway and 3.2 kilometers of underground. The new line could possibly be extended to Dubai's second airport, Al-Maktoum International, just a few kilometers down the road, Tayer said. The city state has a population of 2.5 million people, most of them expatriates, and received more than 14 million tourists last year. Its target is to receive 20 million visitors a year by 2020. — AFP



DUBAI: People watch a presentation of the Route 2020 metro expansion project during a press conference yesterday in the emirate of Dubai. — AFP

ELECTION LAW BECOMES EFFECTIVE

Continued from Page 1

These include prominent opposition leader and former MP Mussallam Al-Barrak who is serving his second year of a two-year term for insulting the Amir at a public rally. Three former opposition MPs, Khaled Al-Tahous, Falah Al-Sawwagh and Bader Al-Dahum will likely be affected by the ban. They were handed a suspended jail term for insulting the Amir. Activists and groups strongly criticized the law as "political death" and "political exclusion" and appealed to the Amir to reject it.

A number of Kuwaiti opposition groups met a few days ago and said the new law is not in line with the constitution and called for rejecting it. But a number of MPs defended the legislation as necessary to safeguard the country against coup plots targeting the regime. The amendments also state that if the elections are held in the holy fasting month of Ramadan, as are expected next year, voting will commence from midday to midnight, to avoid extremely high temperatures, instead of the normal voting hours of 8.00 am to 8.00 pm.

MAJOR DRUG BUST; SUSPECTS ARRESTED

Continued from Page 1

with National Assembly members, to increase precautionary detention from two to four days. Fahd said the country's security requires increased vigilance by everyone, especially the security systems that are entrusted to safeguard the country and its residents.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for Criminal Security Affairs Maj Gen Abdelhameed Al-Awadhi said detectives are able to deal with innovative criminal methods used by the suspects and are always at the ready. He said among the most important problems that affect the process of arresting suspects and take them to court is the short time of detention, which is two days, and this affects investigations, besides the inability to

arrest the rest of those involved in the case. Acting Director General of DCGD Col Waleed Al-Durawi gave detailed description of the first case, as tips were received about a Syrian arriving in the country with drugs. The suspect was searched thoroughly and 200,000 Captagon tablets were found with him hidden in biscuit bags.

He was arrested and sent to concerned authorities. Durai said the second case is of an Indian whose house in Um Al-Haiman was raided, where four kilos of drugs were found along with 500 gm of heroin. The third case is of an Iraqi who attempted to smuggle shabu through Abdaly border outlet. The fourth is of a bedouin woman who was arrested in Qurain with 500 gm of shabu and 250 gm of heroin.

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Issues

AS BRITAIN TURNS
INWARD, ONE FIRM
LOOKS TO EUROPE

By William Schomberg

Britain and the European Union are likely to take years to rewrite the rules that govern their business ties after the UK voted to leave the bloc. Mike Ashmead can't wait that long. The managing director of Encocam, a company that makes crash-test dummies, had planned to hire 120 people between now and 2018 to work at the company's design and production base near Cambridge. But at a hastily called meeting on Monday, four days after the so-called Brexit referendum, Ashmead and his management team shifted their sights to the continent.

The firm, which currently employs 172 people, immediately began enquiring about grants to open a design centre in Spain and is considering Portugal, Ireland, Germany and Poland too. "We cannot wait for two years to see what will come out of this," Ashmead said in an interview at the firm's headquarters in the town of Huntingdon, part of a high-tech cluster centered around Cambridge. His worry is not the markets meltdown that was unleashed by Thursday's vote. A plunge in the value of sterling, which touched a 31-year-low against the US dollar earlier this week, is likely to help Encocam's bottom line.

Eighty percent of its revenues come from exports - including motorcycles and lightweight panels for high-speed trains - which will now be cheaper for buyers, although the aluminum it imports from Germany and Italy will be more expensive. What worries Ashmead is the likelihood of new immigration rules that could hinder his ability to hire engineers, designers and other skilled workers from abroad. It is a concern that is reverberating among many British employers who have long relied on foreign workers.

Telecoms giant Vodafone has said the continued freedom of movement of people is vital for its choice of location. According to the Office for National Statistics, 2.1 million people from other EU countries and 1.2 million non-EU nationals are working in Britain, compared with 28.2 million Britons. One of the key pledges of politicians who campaigned to leave the UK has been to introduce more selective immigration rules, responding to widespread concerns among voters about strains on public services.

It is not clear whether those promises will survive the renegotiation of Britain's entire relationship with the EU as a non-member. Many issues will be on the table, including the rights of UK banks to sell their services in the EU and myriad other trade issues. The issue of foreign workers promises to be one of the thorniest because migration featured so prominently in the Leave campaign while the free movement of people is a key element of the EU's single market for goods and services - something to which the UK wants to keep as much access as possible.

Ashmead expects it will become too hard to keep on hiring from abroad as his firm has done until now. While most of its employees are British, a quarter come from other EU countries. "We love making things in this country and we will continue operations here, that is for sure," Ashmead said as workers from Poland, Spain and Britain prepared high-tech replicas of human legs for simulations of a pedestrian being hit by a vehicle. "But we have to have the ability to do it. I need the people who can make it happen."

Selective or restrictive?

Leaders of the Leave campaign say their planned changes would give priority to immigrants who are most needed by British employers. Under the current system, EU citizens can work in Britain without visas, unlike workers from outside the bloc who often have to pass a complicated application process. Employers have long complained that they cannot find enough British workers with the right skills to fill their vacancies, especially in areas such as engineering and programming. Recruiting from abroad has been an answer to that problem.

Extending administrative controls to workers from Britain's neighboring countries does not sound promising to Encocam. It took the company 18 months to get a work visa for an engineer from India. The process at one point required three managers to travel to Birmingham to explain how the engineer had skills they could not find among workers locally nor in the EU. Helen Dighton, Encocam's head of sales, said Britain was unlikely to be able to spend sufficient time on designing a visa system that worked well for employers, given how many other issues it will have to deal with as it leaves the EU.

Within hours of the announcement of the referendum result on Friday, she called Spain's embassy in London to ask about grants and other assistance for foreign investors and has followed up with enquiries with other EU embassies. By deciding to focus abroad, the firm is necessarily reining in its plans for Britain. It cancelled a 500,000-pound (\$668,500) investment in 20 metre-tall, automated storage tower which would have stood in a forecourt of one of the company's sites to open up space for more production on its shopfloor. Encocam also dropped a plan to buy a four-bedroom home for employees moving to the Huntingdon area which would have added to the five others it owns for staff accommodation. —Reuters

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TURKEY TERROR: THE MILITANT GROUPS BEHIND ATTACKS

Turkey has been hit by a wave of attacks over the past year that have claimed the lives of more than 260 people, mainly in the capital Ankara and the country's biggest city Istanbul. The military is also waging an offensive against Kurdish rebels in the southeast of the country that has left hundreds dead on both sides since the conflict reignited last year.

Islamic State group

IS jihadists have been blamed for some of the bloodiest assaults in Turkey, including an October 2015 attack on a pro-Kurdish peace rally in Ankara that killed 103 people in the worst attack in Turkey's modern history. Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said Wednesday that the group, also known as Daesh, was likely to have been behind the carnage at Istanbul airport which killed 41 people including foreigners and wounded more than 200. Turkey was initially criticized by its NATO allies for not doing enough to crack down on IS as its fighters seized large swathes of neighboring Iraq and Syria in 2014. But after a bombing blamed on the jihadists in the town of Suruc near the Syrian border in July last

year, Turkey swiftly went on the offensive, hitting IS targets in Syria as well as Kurdish militants.

It has lumped both campaigns together in a broad "war on terror", even though the secular Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the jihadists are bitterly opposed to each other, and Kurdish fighters are at the forefront of the battle against IS in Syria. Over the past year, Turkey has rounded up scores of suspected Islamic State members, which is thought to have set up sleeper cells in many areas. In the face of sustained US pressure, Turkey launched its first air strikes on Syria as part of the US-led coalition in August last year, and authorized the US to use its strategic air base at Incirlik. IS has claimed attacks targeting Syrian activists in Turkey but none of the major bombings.

The PKK

The PKK and the Turkish military have been locked in a year of deadly tit-for-tat violence that shattered a fragile March 2013 truce and ended hopes of a lasting peace. The Kurdish militant group-outlawed by Turkey and its Western allies as a terrorist outfit-has waged an armed campaign against

Ankara for three decades that has killed 45,000 people, mainly in the Kurdish-dominated southeast. PKK fighters have carried out a wave of attacks against police and the military, mainly in the southeast, since the collapse of the truce triggered by the Suruc bombing. It has not claimed any of the attacks over the past year in Istanbul and Ankara. But the government has vowed no let-up in its campaign to wipe the rebels from urban centers in the southeast, often imposing punishing curfews on towns and villages and bombarding hideouts in northern Iraq.

The PKK, which has its main command base across the border in Iraq, has narrowed its demands from outright independence to autonomy as well as cultural and language rights. In 2012, Turkish intelligence officials resumed talks aimed at ending the conflict, holding several meetings with jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in his remote island prison cell. In March the following year, Ocalan called on his fighters to lay down their arms and withdraw to their Iraq bases and the fragile ceasefire held until mid-2015. The PKK is believed to have between

3,000 and 5,000 active guerrillas.

TAK

The shadowy Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK) has claimed a string of deadly bombings in Istanbul and Ankara, warning foreigners that Turkey was no longer a safe place for them to visit. The TAK-seen as a PKK splinter group-has said its actions are in revenge for Turkish army operations in the southeast. It claimed an attack on a police vehicle in Istanbul in June that killed 11 people, as well as bombings in Ankara in February and March that left a total of 63 people dead.

It also said it was behind an April attack in Turkey's former Ottoman capital of Bursa, where the female assailant only killed herself. The group also claimed to have shelled Istanbul's second international airport, Sabiha Gokcen, in December. TAK's founders are believed to have broken away several years ago from the PKK. Although little is known about the group, analysts consider its aims and methods to be more radical than those of the PKK, which usually concentrates its attacks in the southeast conflict zone rather than cities like Istanbul or Ankara.—AFP

ALBANIAN PM CALLS FOR EUROPEAN REVIVAL

By Briseida Mema, Nicolas Gaudichet

Albania's Prime Minister says his resolve to join the European Union has not been shaken by Brexit but has called for "a substantial change" in the nature of the bloc's leadership to ensure its survival. In an interview with AFP in Tirana, Edi Rama also described the migration crisis-which saw hundreds of thousands of displaced people cross the Balkans as a "disgrace for Europe".

Rama, 51, described the vote by British people to leave the European Union as the "most important" shock for the 28-member bloc, stressing the EU's importance for peace and security in the Balkans. In his region, he said, there remained something "which was somewhat lost in the most developed countries: the true meaning of Europe as a large project for peace"-as well as security and development.

After Brexit, "a substantial change in the nature of European leadership" is required, otherwise the EU risks "being dismantled piece by piece with consequences that cannot be positive", Rama warned. Albania has been a candidate for EU accession since mid-2014, and Rama believes membership will happen "if the European Union exists on the day when Albania is ready". The Socialist Party leader, a former mayor of Tirana and head of government since 2013, spoke to AFP on Tuesday ahead of a Balkans summit in Paris next week.

Failure over migrants

He slammed Europe's lack of planning over the migration crisis as "a disgrace for Europe" and "a disgrace for the countries which rid themselves of the problem" under the pretext that "geographically they were not affected". Rama said Albania had from the beginning been "ready to take responsibility" for welcoming "a number of refugees, in proportion to the country, and in a European plan." "The European Union has failed to live up to Angela Merkel and Germany," he added, saying the German Chancellor had "saved the honor of Europeans".

Albania, population 2.8 million, did not become a major crossing point for migrants trying to reach western Europe, although hundreds of thousands have crossed through neighboring nations over the past year. One of Europe's poorest countries, Albania



TIRANA: Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama speaks during an interview in Tirana. When Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama wrote to the London Times about the risk of Brexit, his message was clear-and echoed other Balkan nations desperate to join the European Union. —AFP

remained on the margins of the crisis even after other Balkan countries closed their doors to migrants in March. Rama has meanwhile been working to get his parliament to adopt reform of a corruption-plagued judicial system, a precondition set by the EU to accession. "Albania's justice is the most extraordinary example of why it is not a member of the European Union, and why we need another ten years to become one. It is the shame of this country," said Rama.

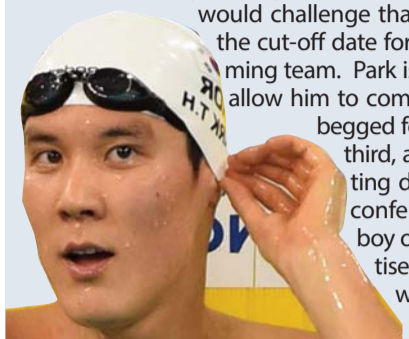
'Unthinkable reconciliations'

Rama acknowledged other difficult issues facing the Balkans, such as the refusal of Belgrade to

recognize Kosovo's independence, Macedonia's political instability and Bosnia's fragility. But he insisted: "The changes in each country and in the Balkans are linked to a simple fact: the Balkan people want to be part of Europe." He pointed to his landmark visit to Serbia in 2013 - the first by an Albanian head of government in 68 years-and the reciprocal visit to Tirana by Serbian premier Aleksandar Vucic. Rama concluded that "Europe is a natural force" towards "an area of peace, security and cooperation". Thanks to the European dream, he said, "we saw unthinkable reconciliations."—AFP

PARK SEEKS 'URGENT' RULING ON RIO BAN

LAUSANNE: South Korean swim star Park Tae-Hwan is seeking "an urgent ruling" by July 8 on his appeal against his Rio Olympics ban over doping, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) said Wednesday. The multiple Olympic medallist completed an 18-month suspension in April after testing positive for an anabolic steroid in out-of-competition controls before the 2014 Asian Games. But he remains barred from competing in Rio, where the Games begin on August 5, under a national rule which prohibits athletes from representing South Korea for three years after the expiration of any doping ban. Park's legal team said earlier this month that they would challenge that rule at the Lausanne-based CAS. July 8 is the cut-off date for selection to South Korea's Rio-bound swimming team. Park is seeking a judgment "that would potentially allow him to compete" in Brazil, CAS said. Park has repeatedly begged for a chance to compete in what would be his third, and probably last, Olympics at one point getting down on his hands and knees during a press conference. The 26-year-old was once the poster boy of South Korean swimming-courted by advertisers and idolised by fans before his positive test was revealed in January last year. — AFP

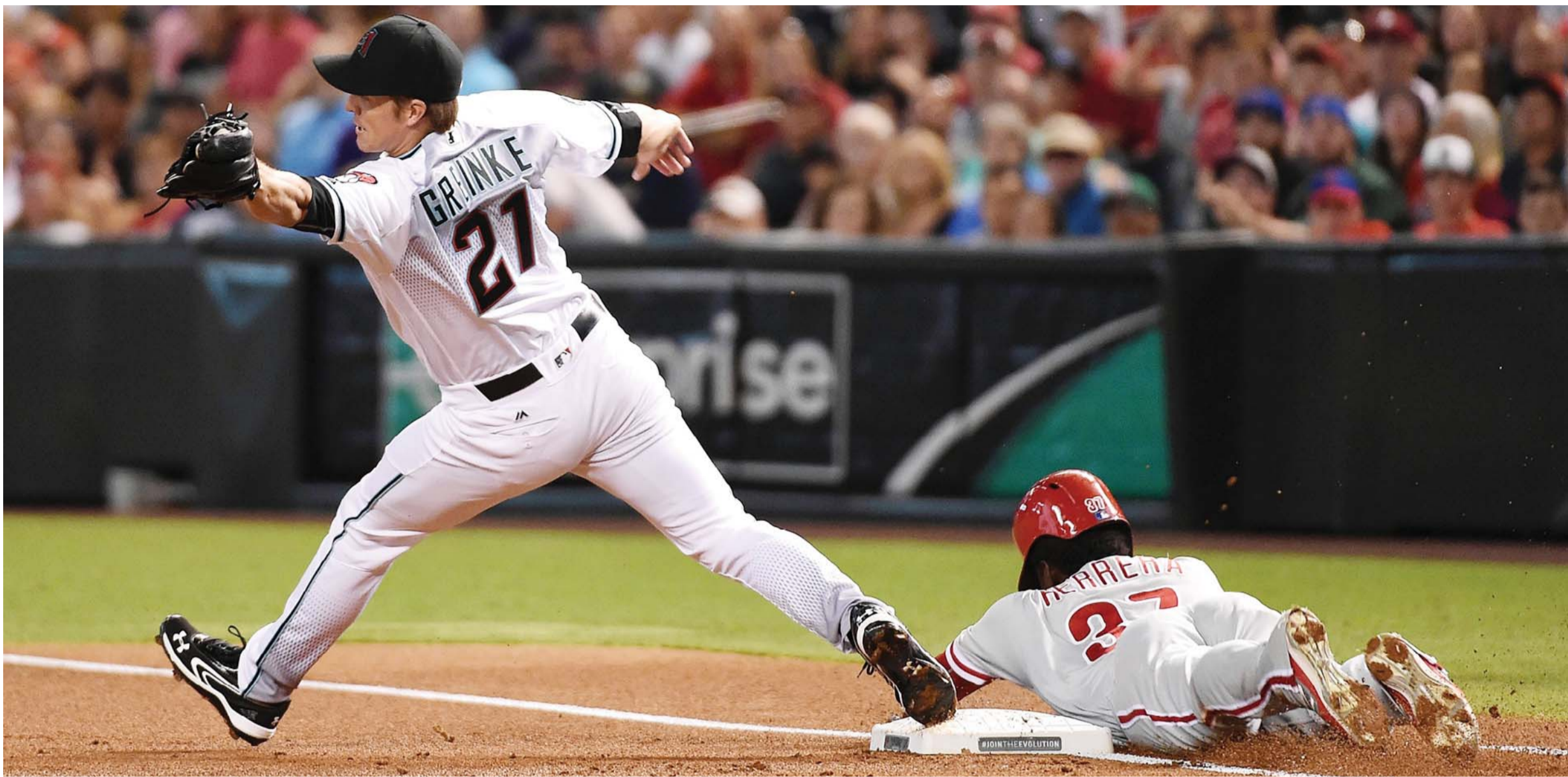


BAYERN KICK OFF TITLE DEFENCE AGAINST BREMEN

BERLIN: German champions Bayern Munich will open the Bundesliga season with a home game against Werder Bremen, after the fixtures for the 2016-17 campaign were released yesterday. Carlo Ancelotti's first task in the league since taking over from Pep Guardiola as head coach sees the visit of a Bremen side that finished 13th last term, on Friday, August 26. Former Barcelona boss Guardiola left Bavaria for Manchester City, who Bayern will play in a friendly on July 20, at the end of last season. Guardiola racked up seven major trophies at Bayern, but failed to take the five-time European champions past the Champions League semi-finals. Ancelotti, 56, has won Europe's premier competition three times, twice with AC Milan in 2003 and 2007, and once with Real Madrid in 2014. Elsewhere on the first weekend in Germany, RB Leipzig kick off their maiden top-flight campaign only seven years since being formed against Hoffenheim. Last season's runners-up Borussia Dortmund take on Mainz, while the pick of the games sees Bayer Leverkusen, who finished third last term, play Borussia Moenchengladbach, who came fourth. — AFP

NEWCASTLE SWOOP FOR BELGIAN KEEPER SELS

LONDON: Newcastle United snapped up goalkeeper Matz Sels for a reported fee of £4.5 million (5.4 million euros) from Belgian side Gent yesterday. The 24-year-old, voted goalkeeper of the year last season in Belgium, signed a five-year contract and becomes Newcastle manager Rafael Benitez's first summer signing, as the Spaniard looks to freshen up his squad after relegation from the Premier League. "I am really pleased to welcome Matz to the club," Benitez said. "He's a fantastic goalkeeper and many top clubs have been interested in signing him. "Obviously we have injuries to Tim Krul and Rob Elliot which could be difficult for us in the first part of the season so it was important to strengthen in this area to be sure we can make a strong start in the Championship." Sels joined Gent from Lierse in January 2014 and made 106 appearances in all competitions for the club. He was in the Belgium squad ahead of their Euro 2016 qualifiers with Andorra and Israel last October but failed to make the squad for the finals in France. "I'm very pleased and I'm very happy to be here. In Belgium, Newcastle is a really big club, and that's why I chose Newcastle," the stopper said. As soon as Newcastle showed their interest in me and I spoke to the coach Rafa Benitez, it was an easy decision to make." — AFP



PHOENIX: Odubel Herrera #37 of the Philadelphia Phillies safely slides into first base as Zack Greinke #21 of the Arizona Diamondbacks stretches to make a play on a wide throw during the first inning at Chase Field on Tuesday in Phoenix, Arizona. — AFP

GREINKE LEAVES EARLY WITH INJURY, PHILLIES RALLY FOR 4-3 WIN

PHOENIX: Philadelphia first baseman Ryan Howard walked with the bases loaded to force in the winning run in the ninth inning when the Phillies compounded Arizona's loss of ace Zack Greinke with a 4-3 victory over the Diamondbacks. Pinch-hitter Jimmy Paredes doubled to open the ninth inning off Brad Ziegler (2-3) and scored on a single by Andres Blanco to tie the game. Odubel Herrera singled to right to send Blanco to third and Peter Bourjos walked to load the bases. Ziegler struck out Maikel Franco to bring up Howard, who walked on a 3-2 pitch. Greinke, who is 10-3 and had won his last seven decisions, left the game before the start of the third inning with left oblique muscle tightness. He spoke to home plate umpire Pat Hoberg after throwing several warmups pitches and then summoned manager Chip Hale and trainer Ken Crenshaw to the mound.

Rangers extended their road winning streak to eight games with a victory over New York. Adrian Beltre hit a two-run home run off CC Sabathia (5-5) and it was enough for Hamels (9-1). Beltre added an RBI single and Prince Fielder contributed an RBI double as Texas won for the 28th time in its last 36 games. Pinch hitter Nomar Mazara, Rounched Odor and Jurickson Profar had RBI singles for the final margin for Texas.

a three-run blast with two outs in the sixth inning-broke the game open and provided Gibson and the Twins (25-51) with some breathing room. Gibson (1-5) scattered five hits and one walk while striking out seven.

Cruz's two-run home run gave the Mariners a 5-0 lead in the fifth inning. Pittsburgh (37-41) scored twice in the seventh off tiring Seattle starter Hisashi Iwakuma, who allowed two runs on six hits over 6-2/3 innings.

Orioles with multiple runs batted in. Jonathan Schoop and Davis had three hits. Ubaldo Jimenez (5-7) worked five innings, surrendering one run on three hits. He struck out five and walked four.

INDIANS 5, BRAVES 3

Carlos Santana's run-scoring single in the ninth inning drove in the deciding run and the Cleveland Indians won their 11th straight game, beating the Atlanta Braves 5-3. With the game tied 2-2, Atlanta closer Aroldys Vizcaino walked Tyler Naquin and Juan Uribe to start the ninth inning. Santana delivered a single to right field to drive in Naquin. The Indians added two insurance runs. Pinch runner Rajai Davis scored on shortstop Erick Aybar's fielding error and Santana scored on a single by Jose Ramirez. The victory gave Cleveland its first 11-game winning streak since 1982. The franchise record is 13, last accomplished in 1951.

RANGERS 7, YANKEES 1

Cole Hamels pitched seven shutout innings for his ninth straight road victory and the Texas

TIGERS 7, MARLINS 5

Miguel Cabrera blasted a go-ahead, three-run homer during a seven-run fifth and Detroit held on for a victory over Miami. Cabrera's homer was sandwiched by two-run shots from Jose Iglesias and Nick Castellanos as the Tigers snapped a three-game losing streak. Mike Pelfrey (2-7) lasted 5-1/3 innings despite giving up four runs on 12 hits and got the win. Francisco Rodriguez collected his 21st save.

RED SOX 8, RAYS 2

Travis Shaw had a solo home run and five RBIs, helping Boston bounce back with a win over Chris Archer and Tampa Bay. Boston had dropped six of eight before Tuesday's win, which saw starter Rick Porcello (9-2) keep the Rays bats in check, one day after an 18-hit, 13-run barrage. Tampa Bay saw Archer (4-11) become the majors' first 11-game loser, matching the team record for losses before the All-Star break. Archer has also lost his last eight decisions against Boston.

TWINS 4, WHITE SOX 0

Brian Dozier hit two home runs and drove in all four runs, and Kyle Gibson threw seven shutout innings as the Minnesota Twins beat the Chicago White Sox. Dozier's second homer-

CARDINALS 8, ROYALS 4

Matt Carpenter homered, doubled and drove in a pair of runs and Michael Wacha pitched six useful innings as St. Louis held off Kansas City. The Royals loaded the bases with one out in the ninth off Seung-Hwan Oh, but came away empty. Pinch hitter Alex Gordon popped up foul to third baseman Jhonny Peralta, while Eric Hosmer grounded out to end the game. Carpenter, who leads the National League in on-base-plus-slugging percentage and with 43 extra-base hits, homered to lead off a two-run sixth and contributed a RBI-double in a three-run sixth. Wacha (4-7) gave up four runs, one unearned, on nine hits and a walk in six innings.

DOGERS 6, BREWERS 5

Rookie phenom Julio Urias earned his first career victory Tuesday night, holding the Milwaukee Brewers to two hits while striking out six in a 6-5 victory for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Urias (1-2), who is 19, worked six innings and might have picked up at least one more but walked six batters to hit the 100-pitch mark for the first time in his career. Adrian Gonzalez had three hits and reached base four times for the Dodgers, who finished with 12 hits.

CUBS 7, REDS 2 (15 INNINGS)

Javier Baez's grand slam highlighted a five-run 15th inning, and the Chicago Cubs earned a 7-2 win over the Cincinnati Reds. Kris Bryant singled off J.J. Hoover (1-2) to drive home Ben Zobrist in the 15th, making the score 3-2. Baez's grand slam was the sixth allowed by Hoover, a Reds franchise record. Cincinnati's much-maligned bullpen shined for much of the game with four relievers combining for 8-1/3 hitless innings before the Cubs broke through against Hoover.

NATIONALS 5, METS 0

Lucas Giolito pitched four scoreless innings in his major league debut and combined with four others on a five-hitter as Washington beat New York in a game that ended around 12:15 a.m. ET after two rain delays. Wilson Ramos, who caught the shutout, had two hits and his two-run double in the seventh gave the Nationals a 5-0 cushion. Bryce Harper also had two hits for the Nationals, including a homer. The first-place Nationals (46-32) are five games ahead of the Mets (40-36), who have lost seven of their last 11 games.

MARINERS 5, PIRATES 2

Robinson Cano had three hits, and Seattle teammate Nelson Cruz hit his 20th home run of the season as the Mariners beat the Pittsburgh Pirates. Cano had three singles, an RBI and two

MLB Results/Standings

Washington 5, NY Mets 0; Texas 7, NY Yankees 1; Detroit 7, Miami 5; Boston 8, Tampa Bay 2; Chicago Cubs 7, Cincinnati 2 (15 innings); Cleveland 5, Atlanta 3; LA Dodgers 6, Milwaukee 5; Minnesota 4, Chicago White Sox 0; St. Louis 8, Kansas City 4; Toronto 14, Colorado 9; Philadelphia 4, Arizona 3; Houston 7, LA Angels 1; Baltimore 11, San Diego 7; Seattle 5, Pittsburgh 2; Oakland 13, San Francisco 11.

American League					National League				
Eastern Division					Eastern Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB		W	L	PCT	GB
Baltimore	46	30	.605	-	Washington	46	32	.590	-
Boston	42	35	.545	4.5	Miami	41	36	.532	4.5
Toronto	42	37	.532	5.5	NY Mets	40	36	.526	5
NY Yankees	37	39	.487	9	Philadelphia	34	45	.430	12.5
Tampa Bay	32	44	.421	14	Atlanta	26	51	.338	19.5
Central Division					Central Division				
Cleveland	46	30	.605	-	Chicago Cubs	50	26	.658	-
Kansas City	40	36	.526	6	St. Louis	40	36	.526	10
Detroit	39	38	.506	7.5	Pittsburgh	37	41	.474	14
Chicago White Sox	38	39	.494	8.5	Milwaukee	34	42	.447	16
Minnesota	25	51	.329	21	Cincinnati	29	49	.372	22
Western Division					Western Division				
Texas	51	27	.654	-	San Francisco	49	30	.620	-
Houston	41	37	.526	10	LA Dodgers	43	36	.544	6
Seattle	39	38	.506	11.5	Colorado	37	40	.481	11
Oakland	34	43	.442	16.5	Arizona	36	44	.450	13.5
LA Angels	32	46	.410	19	San Diego	33	45	.423	15.5

VIVA LAUNCHES ULTIMATE BEIN SPORTS PACKAGE FOR POSTPAID CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launched the ultimate and exclusive beIN Sports package for postpaid customers. This one-year commitment offer includes, 1 TB data and beIN sports channels subscription, for KD 18.

tournaments, exclusively on beIN sports channels, the most prevalent and advanced network in MENA and North Africa, from anywhere. In addition, customers can pay KD 2 extra to add 4G LTE Hotspot.

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NUMBER ONE GOLFER DAY WITHDRAWS OVER ZIKA

MELBOURNE: World number one Jason Day became the latest top golfer to withdraw from August's Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games because of the Zika virus on Tuesday.

Golf is returning to the Olympics for the first time since 1904, but a number of big names, including four-times major champion Rory McIlroy, Fiji's Vijay Singh and Charl Schwartzel of South Africa, have also pulled out due to Zika concerns. The mosquito-borne Zika virus, which the World Health

Organization says is spreading rapidly in the Americas, can cause crippling defects in babies and has been linked to the neurological disorder Guillain-Barre in adults.

"The reason for my decision is my concerns about the possible transmission of the Zika virus and the potential risks that it may present to my wife's future pregnancies and to future members of our family," Australian Day, 28, said in a statement.

"While it has always been a major

goal to compete in the Olympics on behalf of my country, playing golf cannot take precedent over the safety of our family. I will not place them at risk."

The decision means Australia's top three golfers have now withdrawn their names from consideration for the Games with world number eight Adam Scott blaming his busy schedule and Marc Leishman, who is ranked 39th in the world, also citing Zika.

"We respect Jason's decision," the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC)

said in a statement. "He is a family man and he has put his family first."

Ireland's Shane Lowry, the world number 25 who finished joint runner-up in this month's U.S. Open, also withdrew on Tuesday and said his decision was based on firm medical advice.

"While I am bitterly disappointed to be missing out on that experience and the opportunity to win an Olympic medal for Ireland, on this occasion I have to put my family's welfare first," said Lowry who recently married.

Ireland Olympic golf team captain Paul McGinley said the withdrawals were not good for the image of the sport. "I agree it doesn't particularly reflect well on golfers when they seem to be the only ones withdrawing but when it is for their own personal reasons, we have to respect that," he told national Irish broadcaster RTE. "The risk is very, very, very small but ultimately it's a risk they're not willing to take." The Rio Olympics, the first in South America, take place from Aug. 5-21. —Reuters

KENYAN MILERS HEADLINE SELECTION TRIALS IN ELDORET

NAIROBI: Three-time world 1500m champion Asbel Kiprop and women's silver medalist Faith Kipyegon will headline the list of top Kenyan performers at the Olympic selection trials which start today. The two-day event is being held at Eldoret's Kipchoge stadium, right in the heartland of the sport, outside its traditional venue of Nairobi for the first time.

The trials come with Kenya under scrutiny over its flagging doping system, necessitating changes to legislation to avoid expulsion of its world-beating distance runners from August's Rio de Janeiro Olympics. In May, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) declared Kenya non-compliant after the legislation to criminalise doping passed in parliament failed to meet its requirements, forcing a review to include sections which had been left out from the original draft passed by WADA.

"Our athletes have performed well since the start of the season, and we expect very tough competition in Eldoret," Kenya's veteran athletics coach Julius Kirwa told AFP.

"We should be able to pick one of the best teams for Rio. It will have a nice mixture of both veteran and up-and-coming athletes." Kiprop, the 2008 Olympic champion and Kipyegon, who won the 1500m silver at the Beijing world championships behind Genzebe Dibaba of Ethiopia, are both unbeaten this season and are currently top of the leaderboard in the IAAF Diamond League in their respective events.

The powerful duo arrive at the Olympic trials fresh from their wins in the Oslo Diamond League earlier this month and are both expected to shine on Thursday and Friday. The men's 800 metres, which pits Olympic champion David Rudisha against a host of young pretenders, is likely to be just one of many intense encounters. The 27-year-old Rudisha has been struggling to

find the form that carried him to an Olympic title and world record in London in 2012. Despite a dominant pre-season race performances over two 800 metres in Australia in March, and in the rarely-run 600m at Birmingham, where he set an African record of 1:13.10, Rudisha was however well beaten at the Shanghai and Stockholm Diamond League meetings.

A starter's error caused him a late start in Shanghai, but the two-time world champion threw away a commanding lead in the Swedish capital to finish a disappointing fourth behind his Kenyan arch-rival Ferguson Rotich, France's Pierre-Ambroise Bosse and Poland's world silver medalist Adam Kszczot. Rotich, who was only fourth at the world championships in Beijing, won both the Shanghai and Stockholm races, and will be hot favourite to win at the trials, where the top two athletes across the line will be guaranteed places for Rio.

World junior champion Alfred Kipketer (1:45.93), Willy Tarbei and Kipyegon Bett, who secured Kenya's 1-2 for the first time in 10 years at last year's IAAF World Youth Championships in Cali, Colombia will also be in contention. Others are newcomers Nicholas Kiplangat Kipkoech and Jonathan Kiprotich Kitilit, who hold the season's best times of 1:43.37 and 1:43.48 respectively. Like Rudisha, world javelin champion Julius Yego hopes to improve on his performance ahead of the Rio Olympics.

Unbeaten at home, Yego, Kenya's first ever world field gold medalist, has struggled on the Diamond League against the resurgent African champion, Ihab Abdelrahman of Egypt and world record holder, Thomas Rohler of Germany.

Yego was placed third behind Abdelrahman and Rohler at the Stockholm Diamond League with a throw of 83.09 metres.—AFP



SOPOT: In this March 8, 2014 file photo, Australia's Sally Pearson clears a hurdle in her 60m hurdles semi-final during the Athletics World Indoor Championships in Sopot, Poland. Hurdles gold medalist Pearson has reportedly withdrawn from the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro because of a hamstring injury.—AP

AUSTRALIA'S HURDLER PEARSON DEVASTATED AT MISSING RIO

SYDNEY: Australian Olympic hurdles champion Sally Pearson withdrew from the Rio games yesterday, saying she was devastated she had injured her hamstring during training and could not compete. Pearson, Australia's top athlete, who won 100 metres hurdles gold at London in 2012, told the Nine Network she did not want to risk a career-ending injury by going to Brazil.

"The risk of going to compete at the Olympics could do major damage to my hamstring, and there'd be no opportunity to come back and try to go to the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast in two years' time," she said. "It's heartbreaking and devastating that I can't be in Rio, as the Olympic champion, and run at 100 percent and be proud to represent my country, it's just not going to happen this year—my body won't allow it." In confirming earlier reports that she would miss the games, Pearson said the new injury had come "out of the blue" and at a time when she was training well.

She said her heart sank when she felt "two sort of squeezes in my hamstring" when she went over two hurdles during training on Monday. "It was very disappointing, but I thought it was just a hamstring tear, probably

take me a couple of weeks and I'll be alright," she said. "But, we went and got scans, and it showed it was actually a tendon tear.

Any tendon in the body takes a long time to recover." The 29-year-old only returned to competition in June after spending a year on the sidelines following a fall that shattered her wrist, which affected the technique she uses at the start of a race.

But her return did not go to plan, with Pearson trailing in after pacesetter Americans in three races in Europe. Earlier this month she pulled out of her last scheduled race in Stockholm to return to her Gold Coast base and focus on training for Rio.

'VERY, VERY SAD'

In a blog post on June 18, Pearson reflected on the "broken bones, torn calf, degenerative aches and hammy problems" that have plagued her over the past year.

"What brings athletes back even after we get pushed down time and time again from disappointment?" she wrote.

"For me, it's the excitement, the fun and the pure determination that I can overcome the set-

backs and still deliver my best." But Pearson also admitted she was struggling to regain fitness. "I have now been home for six days. I have left nothing in the tank on my return," she said.

"Training has been intensely hard and I am exhausted from it but at this stage I have absolutely no other choice if I am going to be competitive in Rio. "I have just less than nine weeks until I compete and I am going to do everything in my power to be the best athlete I can be while representing my country in the biggest sporting event in the world." The Australian Olympic team's chef de mission Kitty Chiller had earlier yesterday praised her courage.

"She's fought so hard over the last year," the Australian Broadcasting Corporation quoted her as saying in Perth.

"It is just such a shame for a fantastic champion, a fantastic fighter and if she doesn't run in Rio I'll be very, very sad for Sally and the team."

Pearson, who also won hurdles silver at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and gold at the 2011 Daegu Athletics World Championships, is the Australian track and field team captain and was due to race her opening Olympic heat on August 16. —AFP



Usain Bolt

BOLT GEARS UP FOR OLYMPIC TRIALS

KINGSTON: Usain Bolt will embark on the first major test of what he plans to be a triumphant swansong here today as the Jamaican Olympic athletics trials get under way. With less than 40 days to go before the Olympics, the sprint superstar will aim to seal his ticket to Rio as he targets a defence of his 100 metres, 200m and 4x100m crowns.

Bolt, who completed an unprecedented second consecutive set of victories in all three events at the London 2012 Games, is hoping to complete a remarkable "Triple Triple."

So far this season, the signs have been encouraging that Bolt is firmly on track, with the 29-year-old clocking a blistering 9.88 seconds at a meeting in Kingston on June 11, the second-fastest time in the world this year. Only France's Jimmy Vicaut, who clocked a wind-assisted 9.86sec earlier in June, has run faster this season.

Unlike the IAAF world Championships, there are no byes to the Olympics and under the rules of the Jamaica Athletics Administrative Association (JAAA) rules every athlete seeking to be chosen for Rio Games must compete at the trials.

Bolt's main challenge is likely to come from Yohan Blake and Nickel Ashmeade, both of whom have clocked under 10 seconds this season at 9.94sec. Blake committed the cardinal sin of defeating Bolt at the trials for London four years ago but ultimately finished behind his training partner at the Games themselves.

With Bolt and Blake favored to take two

of the 100m berths, Ashmeade will likely face competition from Asafa Powell and Kemar Bailey-Cole for the third spot.

Heats begin Thursday at Kingston's National Stadium with the final set for Friday. While Bolt has yet to run a 200m so far this year, he will start as favorite to win over the longer distance with Ashmeade, the fastest Jamaican so far this year with 20.07sec, Julian Forte, Warren Weir and Commonwealth Games champion Rasheed Dwyer all in the mix.

In the women's events, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce will aim to book her place for Rio after a season which has been disrupted by an injury to a big toe. Fraser-Pryce, the 100m champion at the 2008 and 2012 Games and reigning world champion, is also chasing a place in the 200m contingent. Veteran Veronica Campbell-Brown, 34, will also be running in the 100m and 200m as she attempts to qualify for what would be her fifth and possibly last Olympics.

Campbell-Brown who has eight Olympic medals, is the Jamaican leader in the 100m while Elaine Thompson who took silver in the World Indoors this year, leads the 200m rankings.

Elsewhere this weekend, world leader Omar McLeod and Olympic bronze medalist Hansle Parchment are on course to clash in the 110m hurdles on Sunday.

McLeod has the four fastest times in the world so far this year while Parchment is third and their battle could overshadow the 200m.—AFP



BEIJING: Athletes parade during a ceremony to unveil the Chinese Olympic team's uniforms for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, in Beijing yesterday. The uniforms were unveiled at a ceremony in the Water Cube, the venue for the swimming competition at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.—AFP



OMAHA: Michael Phelps reacts after swimming in a men's 200-meter butterfly semifinal at the US Olympic swimming trials, Tuesday, in Omaha, Neb. — AP

PHELPS ON TRACK AS MISSY FRANKLIN, GREVERS DENIED

OMAHA: Michael Phelps took another step toward a last Olympic hurrah on Tuesday as 2012 gold medalists Missy Franklin and Matt Grevers failed to qualify at the US swimming trials for the Rio Games.

Franklin and Grevers were just the latest big names to fall in Omaha, where Ryan Lochte had already failed to qualify to defend his 400m individual medley crown.

Franklin, whose four gold medals in London included the 100m and 200m backstroke, could manage only seventh place in the 100m back won by Olivia Smoliga in 59.02sec.

Kathleen Baker finished second in 59.29 to put herself on the road to Rio. The only swimmer to finish behind Franklin was 33-year-old Natalie Coughlin, who won gold in the event

in the 2004 and 2008 Games. "Oh my gosh, it was a star-studded field," Smoliga said. "To have all those girls in there, and I know every single one of them, so it's so comforting to have them in the ready room."

"You know they're going to put up such a great race, such a great fight, and it was a fight," she added. "I'm just so happy with the outcome." Franklin faced an uphill battle after posting the seventh-fastest semi-final time, and the 21-year-old couldn't produce a miracle from lane one.

Her time of 1:00.24 left her 1.22sec off the pace. Less than half an hour earlier, she eased into the final of the 200m freestyle with the fourth-fastest time in the semi-finals, which were led by the indomitable Katie Ledecky.

"I am feeling more pressure than I ever

have before," Franklin admitted.

"Right now, I need to make the team in whatever way that looks like." Grevers, the men's 100m back gold medalist in 2012, came up just short in that event, finishing third in a scintillating final won by Ryan Murphy in 52.26sec. David Plummer grabbed the second Rio berth in 52.28sec, with Grevers out in the cold in 52.76. "My heart breaks for Matt," Murphy said. "He's been dominant in that event for so long." But the 20-year-old who won relay gold at last year's world championships has high hopes of keeping the 100m back title in US hands. "Hopefully, we have a good shot of going one-two," he said. Townley Haas, 19, won the men's 200m free final in 1:45.66, just one one-hundredth of a second ahead of Conor Dwyer.

FRESH FACES

Lochte, the 11-time Olympic medalist battling a groin injury that has threatened his Rio bid, is at least assured of travelling to the Games as part of the relay pool thanks to a fourth-place finish — 96-hundredths of a second behind the winner.

"I'm just happy that I'm going to Rio," he said. Lochte still has the 200m backstroke, 200m medley and 100m free to come, but, ominously, described the pain from his injury as "seven or eight" on a scale of one to 10.

"I can't really think about that," he said. "I made the Olympic team, I'm going to Rio." Lilly King booked her first Olympic berth in style, winning the 100m breaststroke in 1:05.20, the world's fastest time this year.

Katie Meili stuck with her to finish second

in 1:06.07, which put her inside the top five in the world this year. Of the eight swimmers to punch their tickets in individual events on Wednesday, only Dwyer has competed in the Games before.

The bevy of new Olympians produced in the first three days of racing caught the eye of Phelps, who is trying to become the first US man to make a fifth Olympic swimming team.

"I don't even know half of them," said the 18-time gold medalist who topped the 200m butterfly semi-final times in 1:55.17 and can clinch is Rio berth in Wednesday's final.

"It's good for our sport," he added. "It's exciting to have new faces of people who are really pumped to come up into the sport. That's a good thing to see as I'm on my way out." —AFP

CRICKET AND RUGBY SHOW ENGLAND HUMILIATION NEED NOT BE TERMINAL

LONDON: England's embarrassing exit from the European Championship finals at the hands of outsiders Iceland completed an unwanted treble failure for the country's cricket, rugby union and football teams at international tournaments.

The rugby and cricket teams have rediscovered their mojo under foreign coaches. Last year, England's cricketers failed to beat a single major nation before a 15-run loss to perennial makeweights Bangladesh in Adelaide sealed the latest in a long of World Cup flops. England's rugby union team became the first main host nation to be knocked out in the first round of their sport's World Cup. England, Australia and Wales found themselves in the same 'Pool of Death', with only the top two going into the quarter-finals. Defeats by Wales (28-25) and Australia (33-13) on successive weekends at their Twickenham headquarters saw England knocked out.

In both sports, the response was similar. Two relatively low-profile English coaches in Peter Moores (cricket) and Stuart Lancaster (rugby) were sacked and replaced by Australians with proven international track records in Trevor Bayliss and Eddie Jones respectively.

After England's 2-1 loss to Iceland in Nice on Monday, a defeat that prompted the resignation of manager Roy Hodgson, Twitter was awash with requests for a good Australian football coach.

'NEW METHOD'

Encouraged by Bayliss and English assistant Paul Farbrace to pursue a more aggressive approach, the one-day side still led by captain Eoin Morgan but with just seven survivors from the World Cup — soon found themselves at home to New Zealand, who had hammered them at the global showpiece. Responding to the bold style of their opponents, the new-look England side won a thrilling series 3-2.

"The learning experience we've had over the last 12 months, with the new group of players, has been so significant that there is almost a completely different team," said Morgan on Tuesday. "I suppose

for us, it was going with a new method and a new group of players."

In rugby union, the transformation has been even more stark. Jones has now won all nine of his matches as England coach, a sequence that includes a Six Nations grand slam and a 3-0 series win away to his native Australia concluded last week.

But for Jones, that was not good enough. "We're inconsistent in our defence, we've had two poor games in defence and one very good game and if we want to be the number one team in the world then we need greater consistency in that," he said.

Whether it is Bayliss encouraging his team to play with more freedom or Jones insisting upon reverting to a traditionally English forward-based power game, both coaches have brought a clarity to their sides' style of play lacking under their predecessors and which many pundits say was missing from Hodgson's men.

Admittedly they have more far more chances to put their methods into practice, given their teams have an annual diet of major international competition that isn't available to the England football manager, with a vast gap in intensity between qualifying and friendly matches compared to tournament play.

Nevertheless, on this point the Australian duo, for all the debate about whether the financially mighty English Premier League, a magnet for overseas players, harms the development of the national soccer side, may have something to teach football.

German football journalist Raphael Honigstein, writing on the ESPN website, said national teams needed "a clear, continuously implemented system of play, with a coach who picks his players accordingly". In the 50 years since England beat West Germany in the 1966 World Cup final at Wembley—the team's last major tournament success—the Germans have won three World Cups and as many European Championships. The Football Association has said a foreign coach could be named to replace Hodgson. —AFP



Saina Nehwal

NEW-LOOK NEHWAL PRIMED FOR RIO SUCCESS: PADUKONE

MUMBAI: Saina Nehwal is better equipped to win a medal in Rio in August than the Indian shuttler was when she claimed a bronze at the London Olympics four years ago, former All England champion Prakash Padukone told Reuters. Hopes that the former world number one can turn bronze into a first Olympic gold medal in the sport for her country were raised when Nehwal won the Australian Superseries title. Rio will mark a third Olympics for Nehwal, who beat former world champions Ratchanon Intanon of Thailand and Wang Yihan before overpowering China's Sun Yu in the final in Sydney. "Saina has a lot more variety now," former men's world number one Padukone said in an interview. "I think she plays a lot more at the net now. Earlier her game was more or less predictable. She had a few strokes, she used to keep playing them and there were not many variations. "Now she has developed a lot more strokes, specially at the net. She is much more confident and that has made a big difference."

The victory in Australia came at just the right time for Nehwal, who had failed to reach a World Superseries final since last November in China and was returning from an Achilles injury she sustained at the end of last year.

Padukone, who won the All England title in 1980 long before badminton was admitted to the Olympics in 1992, said the 26-year-old's game just needed a bit of tweaking. "Tactically she can do a little bit more. Maybe a plan A and plan B, which I'm sure she already has," said Padukone, who will be a panellist for broadcaster Star Sports during the 2016 Games. "Maybe if something doesn't work, then she has to have a different plan. It's just the question of a little bit of polishing. She definitely has everything otherwise she wouldn't have been where she is."

China has long been the dominant force in the sport, sweeping all five titles at London four years ago, but their shuttlers no longer top the world rankings heading to Rio. While Malaysian Lee Chong Wei tops the men's singles rankings, Carolina Marin of Spain leads the women's list with Nehwal in sixth place. World Badminton has also limited each nation to two singles entrants in each event - down from the three at London and previous Games - and Padukone feels that makes a Chinese sweep of badminton gold in Rio less likely. "They are no longer the dominant

force going by the results we have seen in the last 12 to 24 months," Padukone said. "Earlier when the draw used to come, everybody used to hope there are no Chinese."

"That's no longer the case, that fear is not there anymore. That's good for the game. For the Indians, though they wouldn't say it, but it used to be a mind-block." India's best chance of medals will come in the women's singles, Padukone said, where as well as Nehwal they

have PV Sindhu ranked 10th in the world. Padukone said the most important thing for the Indian shuttlers was to peak during the Aug. 11-20 Rio competition. "When you go there it doesn't matter if in the last two months you have beaten all the top players and you have been the world number one," Padukone said. "It's important that you reach the peak and play your best during that particular week. That's what will count ultimately and will be the key." — Reuters

INDIA COACH KUMBLE SET FOR BUSY YEAR

NEW DELHI: Anil Kumble thinks a year - and 17 test matches - is enough for India to make its mark on all three formats of cricket. Kumble's one-year contract as coach of the national team begins with the first of four tests against West Indies in the Caribbean, starting June 21, followed by 13 home test matches against New Zealand, England, Australia and Bangladesh.

"I am not permanent in this role, (but) I am really privileged that I am part of this journey," Kumble said Wednesday. "We all believe that the potential is there for the Indian team to dominate in all three formats."

Kumble, who was among 57 candidates for the job including former Indian team director Ravi Shastri, took 619 wickets in 132 test matches and 337 from 271 ODIs. "I was the first one to call Ravi after I was chosen the head coach," Kumble said. "It's not about Ravi or Anil or whoever it is. It's not about the head coach, it's about the players, it's about the team." India defeated West Indies 1-0 in the last test series in the Caribbean in 2011 in which fast bowler Ishant Sharma took 22 wickets. Three other current players - captain Virat Kohli, Murali Vijay and Amit Mishra - were also part of that tour.

"I think Ishant was man of the series, he will be the leader to take the bowling attack," Kumble said. "West Indies is always (a) tough team at home... but the (Indian) team is pretty geared up for the challenges."

While Kumble is keen to help his bowlers perform against West Indies - "At this point of time I thought I can get closer to the bowlers ... I'd like to observe and try see how the team

is shaping up" - he stresses it's the captain in charge out on the field.

Since his retirement from test cricket in 2008, Kumble has been mentor of Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Indian Premier League. He also has an important role as head of the ICC's cricket committee. The number of test matches ahead shows "how important test cricket is" to India, Kumble said, but he has an open mind over any future changes. "Whatever it takes to popularize test cricket, I'm for it." — AP



BANGALORE: Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli and head coach Anil Kumble, left, leave after attending the first day of the team's six-days training in Bangalore, India, yesterday. Indian team is scheduled to travel to West Indies' to play four match test series starting July 21. — AP

INDIA'S ATHLETES WARNED TO COVER UP OVER ZIKA

NEW DELHI: India's Olympians have been warned to cover up at all times in Rio to minimise bites from mosquitos feared to carry the Zika virus, a senior official said yesterday. Brazil has been the epicentre of the outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease, which is blamed for birth defects in babies born to women infected with the virus.

World number one golfer Jason Day and several other players have withdrawn from the Games starting in August because of fears over the virus. India's more than 100 athletes, its biggest ever Olympic squad, have not raised any concerns about the virus, said Indian Olympic Association chief de mission Rakesh Gupta.

But they have been advised to wear long-sleeve shirts and tracksuit bot-

toms as much as possible and use insect repellent, Gupta told reporters. "There are full sleeve T-shirts in the kit that will be provided to the players, who will be advised to wear covered clothing during their stay," he said.

"There has been an advisory given by the IOC (International Olympic Committee) in which they have mentioned that we have to use a repellent with certain contents."

The threat of the virus has been cited as the reason for withdrawal by a number of golfers, as the sport returns to the Olympics for the first time since 1904. But the World Health Organization's emergency committee on the disease has said there is a "very low risk" of the Zika virus spreading further internationally as a result of the Olympic Games in Brazil. —AFP

BRAZILIAN HULK TO SIGN FOR SVEN'S SHANGHAI SIDE

SHANGHAI: Zenit St Petersburg's Brazilian international Hulk arrived in Shanghai yesterday to sign for Sven-Goran Eriksson's Shanghai SIPG team, as the cash-flush Chinese Super League embarks on a new round of transfer spending.

A horde of cheering red-shirted fans mobbed the 29-year-old at Shanghai airport as he made his way through the arrivals halls carrying two bouquets of

flowers. Russian media have said Zenit would be paid around 55 million euros (\$61 million) for his services. But according to posts on China's Twitter-like Weibo, SIPG's general manager Sui Guoyang has said the figure was "not that high".

Website transfermarkt, which tracks dealings in the sport, put the fee at 58 million euros. SIPG said on a verified Weibo account the "Incredible Hulk"

would undergo a medical on Thursday, after which he would be officially signed, with a press conference to follow later.

The deal could break the Asian transfer record of 50 million euros, paid by Jiangsu Suning for Shakhtar Donetsk's Alex Teixeira earlier this year in China's world-leading transfer splurge.

President Xi Jinping has ambitions to make the Asian giant a footballing power. During the winter transfer window in

January and February, Chinese teams broke the Asian transfer record four times in an acquisition spree that outstripped even the mega-rich English Premier League.

But the big spending did not pay off for all of them. Guangzhou Evergrande and Jiangsu Suning flopped in the regional AFC Champions League, a route to a coveted FIFA Club World Cup spot while Shanghai SIPG are through to the

quarter-finals.

Because Shanghai SIPG already have the maximum five foreign players, Hulk's arrival would mean one would have to leave the club.

Shanghai SIPG are fourth in the Chinese Super League table but have struggled in recent matches and are winless in five games. On Saturday they could only manage a 1-1 draw at home to mid-ranked Tianjin Teda. —AFP

SOUTHGATE IN LINE FOR ENGLAND'S HOT SEAT

LONDON: Gareth Southgate could be in line to succeed Roy Hodgson as manager on an interim basis in the wake of England's latest embarrassing early exit from a major tournament. English football has embarked on another round of soul-searching after one of the most humiliating nights in the country's history saw them go out of Euro 2016 2-1 to Iceland on Monday.

Hodgson quit on the spot and Football Association chief executive Martin Glenn hinted on Tuesday that Southgate, who has been in charge of the England Under-21 side since 2013, could step up on a temporary basis. Southgate, 45, who had an unremarkable spell as manager of Middlesbrough but is perhaps best known for missing a spot-kick in the Euro 96 semi-final penalty shoot-out defeat against Germany, is the strong 2-1 favourite with the British bookmakers.

Glenn Hoddle, a former England manager who lost his job over comments about disabled people, and USA coach Jurgen Klinsmann are next in the running with the bookies.

West Ham manager Slaven Bilic was among the names linked with the England vacancy—often referred to as the "Impossible Job"—but Hammers co-chairman David Gold said on Wednesday that the former Croatia coach would not be "the slightest bit interested".

"He told us at his interview for this position (last year) that his mission was to manage at the highest level in England—the Premier League—with the club he loves

West Ham United," Gold told West Ham blog site www.claretandhugh.info.

"England is simply not part of Slaven's mission. He is a very, very loyal man. He is loyal to his backroom team and to the board. "We have backed him 100 percent and he us-our commitment to each other is total."

English football chiefs say they would be open to another foreign coach and Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has been mentioned in English media as a possible target after his deal with the Gunners expires in a year. FA chief executive Glenn hopes to have appointed a successor by the start of England's 2018 World Cup qualifying campaign in early September, but said that if not, "we have an interim plan in mind".

Asked on Tuesday if he was speaking about Southgate, he said: "We are not talking about names today, but it would be a pretty obvious one to pick." He, FA technical director Dan Ashworth and FA vice-chairman David Gill, the former Manchester United director, will lead the search for Hodgson's replacement.

"We clearly need an inspirational manager who can harness the big resources that the English game has got, everything we have now got at St George's Park (the national training centre), to make us more resilient in tournaments," Glenn said.

Glenn also said that the FA would be prepared to leave an interim manager — or even a collection of temporary coaches—in place for a few months in order to get the long-term appointment right. —AFP

ENGLAND'S 'BRITTLE' PSYCHE EXPOSED AGAIN

CHANTILLY: In attempting to unpick England's Euro 2016 humiliation by Iceland, captain Wayne Rooney and outgoing manager Roy Hodgson touched upon a common theme: mental readiness. England have now gone eight major tournaments without reaching a semi-final. Previous failings have been ascribed to factors such as the lack of a mid-season break in English football or the high proportion of foreign players in the Premier League.

But during Hodgson's four-year stewardship, which ended after Monday's 2-1 loss to Iceland in the last 16, an apparent inability to handle pressure in knockout-phase matches has emerged as a new culprit. "The perennial problem (is that) when it gets to the business end of the tournament, England seem brittle," Football Association chief executive Martin Glenn said on Tuesday.

"We need to understand why that is. It's not a particular issue Roy Hodgson's had to face. People before him have handled it too. "We have to accept it's a national imperative that we become more resilient in tournaments, that we punch our weight in a way we haven't been able to, not for 50 years." Since winning the World Cup on home soil in 1966, England have played 18 matches at World Cups or European Championship finals and won only six of them, against Paraguay, Belgium, Cameroon, Spain, Denmark and Ecuador. The team's major tournament failings have become ingrained in the national psyche.

Stuart Pearce and Chris Waddle's squandered penalties at Italia 90. David Beckham's red card at the 1998 World Cup came in a crucial defeat to Argentina. And now comes goalkeeper Joe Hart's blunder against tiny Iceland at Stade de Nice.

For a nation that boasts the Premier League, the world's richest domestic football championship, it is a baffling state of affairs and one that the FA has failed to explain despite repeated attempts.

'DEFINITIVE REVIEW'

When England failed to qualify for Euro 2008 under Steve McClaren, the FA promised a "root-and-branch review".

More recently, FA chairman Greg Dyke tasked a commission to uncover the reasons behind England's consistent underachievement on the global stage, resulting in the publication of two wide-ranging reports. Glenn has announced that his organisation will now carry out a "definitive review" of what happened at Euro 2016 and "canvas opinion across the game" before announcing a permanent successor to Hodgson. Adding to the sense of incomprehension is the fact that England's youth-level teams do not seem as prone to collapse as the senior side, as shown by the Under-20 team's success at this year's Toulon Tournament. England have taken steps to address psychological shortcomings by using Steve Peters, a renowned psychiatrist who has previously worked with Liverpool, British Cycling and UK Athletics.

Peters was available for England's players to consult throughout the Euro in France, but Hodgson's analysis of the team's failings suggested that mental factors had played a part.

"We know that at tournament level, mentality is a vital factor," he said Tuesday.

"We've tried hard in our preparation to deal with that, but once again the result wasn't there, so therefore we'll be accused of failing." Glenn, seated beside him, warned: "We've started to invest a lot more in the psychological side of things at St George's Park (the national training centre), but it's very new and I suspect, looking at other sports, that's an area we need to go into more deeply."

Rooney acknowledged a shortcoming in the team's ability to plot their way through matches after the Iceland defeat, saying that "our ... figuring out how the game's going to work out wasn't there".

Former England defender Jamie Carragher wrote in the Daily Mail that England's players, cosseted by their clubs, have become "too soft". "Game management" became a hot England topic after a tactically ill-disciplined 2-1 loss to Uruguay under Hodgson saw them eliminated after just two games at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. Two years on, England are still trying to get their heads right. —AFP



PARIS: Wales' defender Ashley Williams runs during the Euro 2016 round of sixteen football match Wales vs Northern Ireland, on June 25 at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. — AFP

'MR INDESTRUCTIBLE' SHOWS ENGLAND WHAT THEY MISSED

PARIS: There was a collective intake of breath in the stands and a string of worried faces in the dugout as Wales captain Ashley Williams lay flat on the turf in the closing stages of their Euro 2016 victory over Northern Ireland.

Williams collided heavily with a team mate as the seconds ticked away at the Parc des Princes with Wales leading 1-0 and a place in the quarter-finals within touching distance. Substitute James Collins was readied to enter the fray but Williams insisted he would stay on the field.

It was exactly what you would expect from a player who had featured in every minute of Wales's European Championship, from the qualifying campaign through to the tournament finals. Gareth Bale may be Wales's star attraction but Williams is their leader and he boasts a formidable appetite for battle.

The Swansea City centre back was pictured celebrating after the final whistle with his arm in a sling and there were fears he would miss Friday's quarter-final clash against Belgium in Lille. Instead, his fitness was confirmed when he returned to training on Tuesday, one day ahead of schedule. That was typical for a player who has made more Premier League appear-

ances for his club since 2011 than anyone else in the English top flight. Williams is one of the sport's great scrappers and his career has been as far away as one could imagine from the image of the pampered Premier League player whose livelihood was handed to them on a plate at a young age.

FOOTBALL'S SCRAP HEAP

Williams had to claw his way up through the game's lower ranks having been dumped on football's scrap heap at the age of 16 when he was released by West Bromwich Albion.

He was playing for non-league Hednesford Town at 19 and left fourth-tier Stockport County four years later to join Swansea, who were then going for promotion in the division above.

It was during this early part of his career that the English-born Williams started on his journey to becoming Wales's defensive linchpin.

By chance, former Wales youth coach Brian Flynn went to watch their current goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey, who was then on loan at Stockport.

"He liked me during the game and recognised that I had a Welsh surname," Williams said

ahead of their group-stage match against England.

A Welsh grandfather on his mother's side meant Williams would be eligible to play for Wales and a phone call from then manager John Toshack sealed the deal.

England's loss was Wales's gain

What would Roy Hodgson's forlorn side have given for Williams's assured presence as England came into Euro 2016 with a makeshift centre back pairing and exited with their tails between their legs after an embarrassing 2-1 defeat to Iceland?

Former England centre back Rio Ferdinand is certainly a fan. "How one of the top four teams haven't signed Ashley Williams amazes me," he said towards the end of last season.

With Williams at the heart of their defence, Wales have shut out Russia and Northern Ireland in their last two games at Euro 2016 and a third successive clean sheet could see them reach the semi-finals of a major tournament for the first time.

Should they do this, the man hailed as Wales's 'Mr Indestructible' might find himself in high demand. — Reuters

TOUGH LOVE: PSYCHOLOGY OF ARGENTINA-MESSI RELATIONSHIP

BUENOS AIRES: Like neurotic parents, Argentines swung from criticism to unconditional love for their star footballer Lionel Messi this week, providing the soccer-mad nation's many therapists with rich material for psychoanalysis.

Fans' frustration at the superstar's missed penalty in Sunday's defeat to Chile in the Copa America Centenario soon gave way to panic as he vowed to quit the national team ahead of the 2018 World Cup. As fans online pleaded "Leo, don't go," psychologists, neurologists and philosophers appeared on chat shows and published newspaper columns to analyze the hero's motivations and help the nation cope.

To judge by the past criticism Messi has received, having a player widely rated as the best in the world is not enough for Argentines.

They also want him to win-as Diego Maradona did at the World Cup in 1986.

Now they have started to ask themselves whether they are too demanding. President Mauricio Macri said Tuesday that Lionel Messi was "God's gift" to the country and it should "take care of him."

One school teacher became a minor celebrity when she sent an open letter to the player which was read out on television. "Please don't give up," wrote the teacher, Yohana Fucks-a not-uncommon surname in Argentina. "Don't make people think that all we care about in this country is winning and being first."

FOOTBALL IDOLATRY

Andres Rascovsky, former president of the Argentine Psychoanalytical Association, links the country's intense sporting passions to its dirty politics. "Argentines need idols," he said.

That desire stems from "the humiliation and denigration of the masses by the politicians," Rascovsky added.

"That generates a need for them to redeem themselves through sporting heroes like Maradona or Messi." The provocative extrovert Maradona "is more identified with transgression

and omnipotence," Rascovsky said.

That exuberant spirit is epitomized by what Maradona called his "Hand of God" goal against England at the 1986 World Cup.

"The Hand of God was a goal of transgression, a false goal scored with the hand which in a spirit of idolatry was elevated to the status of the divine," Rascovsky said.

The nation's relationship with Messi is different, however. "A lack of decent values causes a lot of Argentines to identify with the transgres-

sive omnipotence of Maradona," said Rascovsky.

"On the other hand, Messi comes across as a more modest, normal personality."

Maradona himself recently accused Messi of having "no personality." But he too threw his support behind Messi after he vowed to quit, urging him to stay. "I knew him when he was a kid," said Enrique Dominguez, who coached the young Messi at Newell Old Boys football club.

"He is very sensitive though his face doesn't always show it." —AFP



EAST RUTHERFORD: Argentina's Lionel Messi waits to receive the second place medal during the Copa America Centenario awards ceremony in East Rutherford, New Jersey, United States, on June 26. — AFP



DINARD: Wales' midfielder Gareth Bale speaks during a press conference in Dinard yesterday during the Euro 2016 football tournament. — AFP



GERMANY DESPERATE TO REWRITE HISTORY AGAINST ITALY

EVIAN: Germany are determined to snap their tournament losing streak to Italy dating back almost half a century when the two meet in a Euro 2016 quarter-final on Saturday in Bordeaux, players said yesterday. The world champions have lost to Italy in every single tournament knockout match they have played against them, starting from a 1970 World Cup semi-final.

They also lost the 1982 World Cup final, a 2006 World Cup semi-final in Germany and a Euro 2012 semi-final to them.

The Germans, four times World Cup winners like the Italians, have also met Italy on four occasions in group stages of tournaments, drawing every time and failing to record a single win over them.

"We have matured and developed but we know that everything is possible," Germany's goalkeeping coach Andreas Koepke told reporters. "We know we have to bring a top performance but we are ready, ready to rewrite history."

Germany, who have won just eight of their 33 encounters against Italy since 1923, have yet to concede a goal in their four matches of the tournament and, after winning the 2014 World Cup, are deservedly among the title favourites in France.

Central defender Mats Hummels played in the losing semi-final in Warsaw four years ago but said he was not interested in what happened in the past.

"I played only once against them (in a tournament)," he said, "in friendlies I think

we drew twice 1-1 and then won 4-1 (in March). The recent past since 2012 proves we can keep up with them but Italy are just like us, a tournament team.

"As for the past I don't know what to say if a team failed to win in the 1980s or so." The Germans will need a tight defence against the surprisingly attack-minded Italians but they will also have to break past their solid backline that has let in just one goal so far. Striker Mario Gomez, who has netted twice in the tournament and could again be spearheading Germany's attack on Saturday, said the time had come to beat Italy. "It will no doubt be an extremely tight game but I am convinced that we will be the winners at the end," Gomez said. "We want to go further. We believe in us and have to show it on the pitch. I can discuss after the final if the Euro was good for us or not. At the moment it is a good Euro so far but we have to keep it going." —Reuters



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

UEFA EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP
Poland v Portugal 22:00
beIN MAX 2 HD
beIN MAX 3 HD EN
beIN MAX 1 HD



PARIS: Portugal's defender Eliseu (C) and teammates take part in a training session at the team's base camp in Marcoussis, outskirts of Paris, yesterday, on the eve of the UEFA Euro 2016 quarter final football match Poland vs Portugal. — AFP

RONALDO-LEWANDOWSKI FACE OFF FOR EUROS SEMIS SLOT

MARSEILLE: Two of Europe's most prolific marksmen go head-to-head as Robert Lewandowski aims to end Cristiano Ronaldo's dreams of landing an international trophy when Poland meet Portugal in a Euro 2016 quarter-final clash today.

Ronaldo is just one goal away from even more European championship history by matching French legend Michel Platini's record mark of nine goals in the finals.

The Real Madrid star has already become the first player to score in four Euros and broken the competition record for appearances. At 31 Ronaldo is unlikely to get a better chance for international glory with the winners in Marseille facing a semi-final clash against his Real Madrid teammate Gareth Bale and Wales or Belgium.

Despite a double against Hungary to save Portugal's blushes to sneak through the group stage in third place, Ronaldo has yet to catch fire in France. A flat display and post-match rant against Iceland in Portugal's opener was followed by a missed penalty in a stalemate against Austria.

He was also kept quiet for 117 minutes a dull last 16 clash with Croatia, but his only effort on goal led to the breakthrough as Ricardo Quaresma headed home after Danijel Subasic

parried Ronaldo's effort.

LUCKY PORTUGAL

"We'll always have a chance. We've got the best player in the world - Ronaldo - and the likes of Nani, Quaresma and Joao Mario," said Portugal defender Jose Fonte.

Portugal were criticised for their negative approach against Croatia as for the first time in Euros history no team had a shot on target during the regulation 90 minutes.

However, Fonte insists Fernando Santos's men don't care how they play as long as they make the last four. "If we have to play bad and win, I'll do it. As a team you want to play good football and win games but sometimes you can't." Poland goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny laughed off suggestions Ronaldo is not on top form, but said he has also been impressed by Bayern Munich's 35 million euro (\$38.5 million) recruit Renato Sanches after the 18-year-old came off the bench to win man-of-the-match against Croatia.

"Portugal are a great team, they are not just Cristiano Ronaldo and some say he is not playing his best. I would still love to have him in my team," said Szczesny.

"Besides Cristiano, I am impressed by Renato

Sanches. Undoubtedly we have a big task ahead of us today." Lewandowski is yet to find the net in four games in France, but kept his cool to convert from the spot as Poland progressed to their first major quarter-final for 34 years with a 5-4 penalty shootout win over Switzerland.

"We are not worried about Robert, not at all," said Poland assistant boss Hubert Malowiewski. "Of course he felt some pain after that match, but there is not even the slightest bit of doubt he will be ready for Portugal."

Szczesny admitted he is unlikely to return from the injury he suffered in Poland's opening 1-0 win over Northern Ireland after Lukasz Fabianski's heroics in goal against the Swiss.

Swansea stopper Fabianski was beaten by a sensational Xherdan Shaqiri bicycle kick as Poland conceded for the first time in the tournament, but produced a string of saves to force the tie to a shootout. "I would not be able to help the team as Lukasz does at the moment, so of course I will not play against Portugal. I will try to support the team from the bench," said Arsenal 'keeper Szczesny. Portugal have fitness concerns over Raphael Guerreiro, Andre Gomes and Joao Moutinho, so wonder kid Sanches looks certain to start for the first time in the tournament. —AFP



MONTPELLIER: (LtoR) Italy's forward Ciro Immobile, Italy's defender Federico Bernardeschi, Italy's midfielder Emanuele Giaccherini, Italy's defender Leonardo Bonucci and Italy's midfielder Thiago Motta practice during a training session at the team's training ground in Montpellier yesterday, as part of the the Euro 2016 European football championship. — AFP

POLAND'S 'BAMBI' GOALKEEPER THRUST INTO EURO LIMELIGHT

WARSAW: After Poland beat Switzerland to reach the Euro 2016 quarter-finals, Lukasz Fabianski let his joy show, a rarity for someone deemed too shy to be really good. The goalkeeper roared and punched his fists in the air. The 31-year-old Swansea player rarely shows such emotion. "Fabianski, or the triumph of a timid player," read a splash in Poland's Rzeczpospolita daily after Poland won on penalties following a 1-1 draw on Saturday. "Fab" pulled some magic saves and only a spectacular Xherdan Shaqiri scissors kick beat him. Shaqiri is the only player so far to score against Poland at the tournament.

"I'm not going to tell you whether this was my best international game," Fabianski said after helping set Poland up against Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal in Marseille on Thursday. "I just did what I was expected to do," shrugged the man described by media as "reserved", "modest", "too nice", even "Bambi", after the fawn from the 1942 Walt Disney movie.

At times, the nicknames have turned into reproachful labels on the perpetual number-two keeper, both in clubs and on the international scene.

"People have always assessed me according to my behaviour off the pitch-kind, well-behaved," says Fabianski, who has managed only 33 international games since his debut in 2006.

SCZESNY RIVALRY

Despite playing the last six games of Poland's Euro 2016 qualifying campaign, Fabianski started the tournament as a number two to Wojciech Szczesny.

The two contestants for the Poland job also clashed at Arsenal, where Fabianski frequently found himself shaded by his rival who is exactly five years his junior.

In early 2011, Fabianski looked set to finally become Arsenal's number one, but a shoulder injury ruled him out for the rest of the season, barring him from his dream for good.

The injury was due in part to Szczesny who blasted a shot at Fabianski during a

warm-up ahead of a game with Manchester City. Fabianski pulled a great save which cost him dear.

"I take advantage of my teammates' misfortunes," sighed Szczesny, who spent last season at Roma on loan from Arsenal. At Euro 2016, it was his own misfortune that put Fabianski in charge. Szczesny led Poland to a 1-0 win over Northern Ireland in the opener but injured his thigh during the game.

Fabianski then shut out world champions Germany and Ukraine in the remaining group games.

NORMAL YOUNG MAN

Born on April 18, 1985 in Kostrzyn nad Odra, a town on the border with former East Germany, Fabianski started his career with Polonia Slubice.

At 19, he signed up with Poland's top-flight side Lech Poznan, where he spent a mere six months before joining Legia Warsaw. Legia relied on Artur Boruc, but Poland's number three at Euro soon moved to Celtic, turning Fabianski into the first-choice keeper.

Fabianski won a title with Legia in his first season and was chosen as the Polish league's top keeper twice before joining Arsenal in July, 2007.

But his seven-year stint with the Gunners turned out a sour experience for Fabianski who more often than not warmed the bench for Jens Lehmann, Manuel Almunia and Szczesny.

Fabianski scrambled a mere 78 appearances for Arsenal, earning a "Flapianski" label from some disillusioned fans. In 2014, he left the Gunners to start a new chapter with Swansea, where he at last became an incontestable number one.

The timid star is married to his secondary school friend Anna, with whom he has a six-month-old son named Jan. "Fabianski is a normal young man, who is not seeking to become a celebrity, show off his tattoos, cars, girlfriends or a celebrity wife," Rzeczpospolita wrote.

"He is a hero of the pitch, not tabloids," it added. — AFP

ICELAND LEAD REVIVAL OF THE LONG THROW

MARSEILLE: In an era when possession is king, launching a long throw into the penalty area has re-emerged as an unlikely but successful way of catching out defenders more used to teams trying to emulate Spain's high-tempo "tiki taka" passing game.

It is one of the weapons in the artillery of Iceland, creating two goals in their fairytale run to the quarter-finals and leaving opposition managers struggling to nullify its effects despite knowing what is coming.

Spain, on the other hand, who have dominated football over the last decade with the mesmerising pace and frequency of their interplay, are on the plane back to Madrid after a 2-0 loss to Italy in the last 16.

Done well, a long throw can have the pace of a cross-low and with little arc-to be flicked on to other attackers. Goalpoachers may even be able knock it straight in with the added advantage that there can be no offside from a throw.

Iceland are lucky to have a specialist in the long throw- midfielder Aron Gunnarsson-who said it was a technique he picked up playing a different sport.

"It's all down to the technique you develop playing handball. I played for years and that is where it comes from. People can have arms twice the size of mine but its all about the way you throw it," Gunnarsson said.

Leicester City, who shocked the world of football by winning the Premier League this year, also had a long-throw expert in Austrian defender Christian Fuchs. Former Stoke City midfielder Rory Delap was probably the best proponent in the modern era, able to reach distances of around 40 metres.

INITIAL HEADER

In theory, it should be easy enough to handle. The first defender must challenge for the initial header but ensure his team mates anticipate that he may lose it and track the other runners looking for the flick-on.

England coach Roy Hodgson identified Iceland's strength in this area after watching

them score a goal from a long throw in their group stage win over Austria.

"These are things we will be aware of and will prepare for, he told reporters.

"They have already scored from a long throw, so that's a warning to us that if we don't do our homework and get our positional play correct and make the right challenges it will give them a chance to score again."

But within minutes of going ahead through an early penalty, England conceded from a Gunnarsson throw. Iceland defender Kari Arnason rose above Wayne Rooney to flick the ball on to the back post where Ragnar Sigurdsson evaded a static Kyle Walker and tapped in.

England went on to lose the match 2-1 and Hodgson resigned. France, who meet Iceland in the last eight on Sunday, will be hoping they can

better deal with the throw-in which can be so deadly for those who have it in the locker.

Delap created so many goalscoring chances for his teams over the years, particularly during time spent at Stoke between 2007-2013, that there is a five-minute compilation of his best throws on YouTube.

One man who was not a fan, however, was Arsenal's French manager Arsene Wenger, who suggested scrapping throw-ins altogether in 2008.

"(The rule I would change would be) maybe to play throw-ins by foot. Why not? I think it would make the game quicker," said Wenger.

"For example at Stoke, for Rory Delap it is like kicking the ball. It is a little bit of an unfair advantage. He is using a strength that is usually not a strength in football." —Reuters



ANNECY: Iceland's coaches Heimir Hallgrímsson (L) and Lars Lagerbaeck give a press conference, yesterday in Annecy, four days ahead of the team's quarter final match against France as part of the Euro 2016 European football championship. — AFP

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RONALDO-LEWANDOWSKI FACE OFF FOR EUROS SEMIS SLOT Page 19



WIMBLEDON: Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns against France's Adrian Mannarino during their men's singles second round match on the third day of the 2016 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London. (Inset) Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska returns to Ukraine's Kateryna Kozlova during their women's singles first round match on the third day of the 2016 Wimbledon Championships. — AFP

CHAMPION DJOKOVIC SWEEPS PAST MANNARINO

RADWANSKA WINS QUICK MATCH UNDER CENTRE COURT ROOF

LONDON: Novak Djokovic brushed past France's Adrian Mannarino 6-4 6-3 7-6(5) yesterday to book his place in the third round of Wimbledon. The defending champion, aiming for his third consecutive title, played well within himself and was rarely troubled during the second-round match.

Mannarino, ranked 55, put up spirited resistance in the third set to force a tiebreak but was ultimately swept off Centre Court by the Serbian's laser-guided ground-strokes.

World number one Djokovic holds all four grand slam titles and has another historic mark in his sights. The 29-year-old is aiming to become the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to achieve the calendar Grand Slam - winning the four majors in a single season.

Earlier, with rain delaying play on the outside courts, Agnieszka Radwanska wasted no time in taking care of business under the roof on Centre Court.

The third-seeded Pole, who reached the final here in 2012, overwhelmed Kateryna Kozlova 6-2, 6-1 in just over an hour yesterday to move into the second round at the All England Club.

Radwanska used her clever all-court game to thoroughly dominate the 97th-ranked Ukrainian, who was making her main draw debut at Wimbledon and has never won a Grand Slam match. Radwanska won the first four games and was always in control.

"A one-hour match is always good, especially with that weather," Radwanska said. "Now we're playing every day, so I'm just very happy with that win and ready for the next one." The match was played in its entirety under the retractable roof, which was closed after steady rain lashed the grounds and forced delays on all other courts. "It's like an indoor tournament, sometimes," Radwanska said. "Have to kind of get used to that. Of course, it's a little bit different without the

sun, without the wind. So it's a different game. But, well, it's good that we could play today."

Radwanska lost to Serena Williams in three sets in the 2012 final. The two are in the same half of the draw this year and could meet in the semifinals. "(I'm) trying every year to do better and better, of course," Radwanska said. "I was close a couple times. So it's another year to try. And hopefully I can do one step (further)."

Next up on Centre Court was defending men's champion Novak Djokovic, who faced Adrian Mannarino, a Frenchman playing on his 28th birthday. Djokovic is bidding to extend his Grand Slam match winning streak to 30, which would give him sole ownership of third place on the all-time list of most consecutive victories at the majors. But all that seemed just a warm-up to the main event coming later in the day. Seven-time champion Roger Federer - perhaps the greatest player of all time - had a second-round match against Marcus Willis, a

772nd-ranked British qualifier who had never won a tour-level match until Monday.

Willis is the lowest-ranked qualifier to reach the second round of a Grand Slam since 1988. He gives tennis lessons at a club in central England and was only recently talked out of giving up on his goal of making it on the pro tour by his girlfriend.

Now, Willis gets to face Federer on the most famous court in tennis, with a large group of friends and family on hand to support him in a journey that has captivated the British public.

Before play was stopped by rain on the outside courts, three players managed to finish matches that had been suspended the previous day: 10th-seeded Tomas Berdych completed a 7-5, 7-5 (5), 5-7, 6-1, 7-6 (2) win over Ivan Dodig; Andrea Petkovic, seeded No. 32, beat Nao Hibino of Japan, 3-6, 7-5, 6-2; and Evgeniya Rodina downed Lesia Tsurenko 6-3, 7-5. — Agencies

DEL POTRO RELISHING WIMBLEDON RETURN AFTER INJURY AGONY

LONDON: Former US Open champion Juan Martin del Potro is relishing every moment of his return to Grand Slam action at Wimbledon after being pushed to the brink of retirement by a serious wrist injury. Del Potro has battled his way back from three wrist operations that left him depressed and considering whether it was time to hang up his racket for good last year.

The 27-year-old Argentine marked his comeback by crushing France's Stephane Robert 6-1, 7-5, 6-0 in the Wimbledon first round. His reward for successfully coming through his first Grand Slam match in 894 days is a fascinating second round tie against world number five Stan Wawrinka today.

"This is my comeback after three years. It means I'm feeling great sensations," del Potro said. "I was close to quitting at the end of last year but now is completely different. I'm expecting to be better in the future, but for this year my biggest challenge is to finish healthy and make a good preparation for next year." Renowned for his huge ground-strokes, the 6ft 6in del Potro was tipped as a serious challenger to the big guns after beating Roger Federer aged just 20 in the 2009 US Open final.

Del Potro still possesses the same power game that rocked Federer and he banished world number 79 Robert in ruthless style. Overcoming Wawrinka, a two-time Grand Slam champion, would be another huge step on the road to recovery, but regardless of the result, del Potro, now ranked a lowly 165, is just relieved to be back.

"I'm feeling better week by week. I'm going one step at a time at the moment. I wake up and I can set my

practice and I do it," he said. "That's important for my mind, as well, because I'm not thinking about treatments or injuries or doctors."

"Just want to play free. That's what I'm doing at the moment. I'm in a good way to be healthy very soon."

MARATHON

Del Potro's last appearance at Wimbledon three years ago had provided further evidence of his potential as he rattled Novak Djokovic in a marathon five-set semi-final before finally succumbing.

"I was here in 2013 making the semi-finals in a great match against Djokovic," del Potro said.

"But my family and friends was very important for me. They were behind me all the time and pushed me up every day."

"I'm enjoying tennis again. I'm starting to talk about tennis and no more about my wrist. That's important."

Fourth seed Wawrinka, a first round winner over American teenager Taylor Fritz, is pleased to see del Potro back on the tour. However, Wawrinka would rather not have faced such a dangerous opponent on the fast grass courts that suit his game.

"For sure I think we're all happy that he's back on the tour, hopefully without any injury, and he can play for a long time now," Wawrinka said. "He always been a great champion, a great player to watch also. I remember him winning the US Open, for sure, against Roger. An incredible match."

"I had some tough matches against him as well. It's going to be difficult. He's playing well again." — AFP



WIMBLEDON: Germany's Andrea Petkovic (L) shakes hands with Japan's Nao Hibino (R) after Hibino won their women's singles first round match on the third day of the 2016 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, yesterday. — AFP

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Oil recovers in tune
with stock markets

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US consumer spending
posts healthy growth

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Huawei opens after
sale service center
in Kuwait

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TOP ADNOC, ARAMCO EXECUTIVES TO OPEN ANNUAL GPCA FORUM

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LYON: People take pictures of the new Citroen C3 of French automobile manufacturer during its presentation in Lyon yesterday. —AFP

STATISTICS FOG RAISES RISK AS CHEAP OIL HITS GULF

SAUDI SLASHES Q4 GDP GROWTH FIGURE ● BAHRAIN STOPS PUBLISHING DATA

DUBAI: A sharp revision of economic data in Saudi Arabia suggests its economy may be weaker than previously thought, underlining the risks which investors in the Gulf face as they try to estimate the damage caused to the region by low oil prices.

In April, the government's statistics office released data showing gross domestic product grew 3.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 2015 from a year earlier. That was the same as third-quarter growth, implying the economy was coping well with cheap oil. But this month, the statistics office posted new data revising the fourth-quarter rise to just 1.8 percent - a major slowdown, and one which has some analysts speculating that Saudi Arabia could come close to recession this year.

Unreliable and irregular economic data is a problem for governments and investors in the six nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council as low oil prices put pressure on banking systems and slash state revenues. During the region's economic boom, which lasted for more than a decade until last year, accurate data often seemed unnecessary. Huge flows of petrodollars eliminated most risks and guaranteed solid growth.

That gave governments little incentive to invest in extensive statistics systems. Oil wealth meant GCC states did not

need to levy income or sales taxes, leaving them with less access to data from the private sector that trends in tax receipts would normally provide. Gulf governments' penchant for secrecy may also have played a part.

Now, however, authorities need accurate numbers to make tricky policy decisions. And they have begun borrowing abroad and trying to attract foreign investment to cover deficits caused by oil's drop from \$100 a barrel or more two years ago to half that now. It may be harder to do this if foreign investors don't feel they have a clear view of the risks. "Getting timely data in the GCC is certainly challenging, and disclosure does lag behind many emerging markets," said Razan Nasser, senior economist at HSBC Bank Middle East. "We're in mid-2016 and we still don't have 2015 current, fiscal and national accounts data for some countries in the region."

A portfolio manager at a New York-based hedge fund, declining to be named under his organization's briefing rules, said the GCC was generally less transparent than other emerging economies which he monitored, and this distorted market prices. "The lack of clear, reliable data creates more downside risk to my investment so I need to be compensated through an appropriate risk premium," he said. "The less

transparent the data, the higher the required risk premium, and I think you definitely see this in the GCC."

TRANSPARENCY

Almost all nations, including developed ones, revise their economic data after the initial release. But the Saudi fourth-quarter change was huge; an OECD study last year found revisions to year-on-year GDP growth rates by 18 member countries rarely exceeded 0.3 percentage point within the following five months. The Saudi statistics office did not explain the revision, and did not respond to a request for comment on it. The portfolio manager said he believed revisions in the GCC were due to poor data collection, not deliberate manipulation.

There are some strong spots in GCC data; Qatar releases timely and extensive figures, and the Saudi central bank is respected for its money supply numbers. Nevertheless, investors face long delays and patchy coverage in most countries. The central bank of Bahrain, the GCC country hardest hit by low oil prices, has not published monthly monetary statistics - including for its foreign reserves - since June 2015.

Oman, which has a big fiscal deficit caused by the cheap

oil, never published December 2015 figures for public finances. After an unexplained three-month gap, it resumed publishing the data this month. Neither Bahrain's central bank nor Oman's statistics office responded to a request for a comment. In the absence of good official data, Gulf investors look at proxy signals of economic activity, from car registration figures to monthly passenger traffic through Dubai airport. Late last year, Saudi construction companies' failure to pay tens of thousands of foreign workers indicated the economy wasn't as strong as official figures suggested.

Bond prospectuses can also be revealing. One for a \$1 billion international debt issue by state-owned Abu Dhabi National Energy Co this month showed the emirate had posted an \$8.8 billion fiscal deficit last year. There are some signs of improvement; GCC governments established a joint statistical centre in 2011 partly to strengthen data collection in the region. Nasser at HSBC said things should get better in coming years.

"I think as the region taps global markets more for funding and pushes to attract foreign investment, there will be a greater need for them to provide more timely and detailed macroeconomic data." —Reuters

ABU DHABI TO MERGE FUNDS MUBADALA, IPIC

ABU DHABI/DUBAI: Abu Dhabi will merge two of its most important investment funds, Mubadala Development Co and International Petroleum Investment Co (IPIC), responding to the impact of lower oil prices by pooling their investment power and consolidating operations. With oil prices still below half the levels they were at two years ago, all Gulf sovereign funds are having to adjust their strategies to cope with lower inflows. Mubadala did not receive any new cash from the government in 2015 for the first time in at least eight years.

The combined fund would have assets worth around \$135 billion, according to Reuters calculations based on both funds' latest financial statements. Yesterday, in a statement published by the state news agency, Abu Dhabi said it had formed a committee led by Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahayan to oversee the combination of Mubadala and IPIC.

"The merger of the two companies augments the investment advantages and economic revenue for Abu Dhabi, and creates a body capable of achieving the highest level of integration and growth in multiple sectors, including energy, technology and space industry," the agency said. The tie-up, which was being approached as a merger of equals, should be completed by the end of 2017, a source close to the discussions told Reuters on condition of anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the subject. While not adopting the radical approach of neighboring Saudi Arabia, which aims to completely revamp its economy through a national transformation plan, Abu Dhabi has been slowly reforming key parts of its economic infrastructure to cope with reduced oil revenues.

Abu Dhabi National Oil Company is just one of the state-owned entities to have shed thousands of jobs in recent months, while two of its largest lenders, National Bank of Abu Dhabi and First Gulf Bank, confirmed earlier this month they were in merger talks.

BENEFITS

"It's a sensible move at a time when there's a need for Abu Dhabi to slim the budget and consolidate organizations that are doing similar things," said one analyst who covers sovereign wealth funds, who declined to be named due to company policy.

Mubadala's role had been to make investments to help advance Abu Dhabi's economy, both domestically through ownership of firms such as satellite operator Yahsat and aerospace components manufacturer Strata, but also through stakes in global names including General Electric and Carlyle Group. It also has a petrochemicals division and a number of investments in energy projects, including ownership of clean energy firm Masdar, which would fold neatly into IPIC's traditional energy sector remit. IPIC owns Spanish energy firm Cepsa, Canadian petrochemical maker NOVA Chemicals and has a majority stake in Austrian plastics company Borealis.

The improved ability to raise money from international markets was also a rationale behind the tie-up, according to the source close to the discussions. IPIC's debt levels have been regarded as an issue for some time, with rating agency Standard & Poor's saying in a June 28 note that while its business risk was satisfactory, its financial position was "highly leveraged". —Reuters

GULF STOCKS PUSH HIGHER BUT VOLUMES SUBDUED

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Most stock markets in the Gulf nudged up yesterday, supported by recoveries in oil and global equity prices after the shock of Britain's vote to leave the European Union last week, but turnover was small before summer and Eid Al-Fitr holidays.

Riyadh's index added 0.3 percent, buoyed by the banking and telecommunications sectors, with phone operator Zain KSA climbing 1.3 percent to 7.95 riyals. NCB Capital said in a note that strong revenue growth, improving market share and margin expansion were Zain KSA's main strengths.

"The company is also expected to benefit from the reduction in inter-connection charges, while capital expenditure is expected to continue with the support of the recent 2.25 billion riyal (\$600 million) loan renewal," the note added. NCB is neutral on Zain shares with a price target of 9.0 riyals.

Shares in retailer L'azurde Company for Jewellery closed 7.6 percent higher at 39.80 riyals as they

listed, but came off their intra-day high of 40.70 riyals. It is unusual for a Saudi stock not to end up its 10 percent daily limit on its first day of trade. The company sold 12.9 million shares in its initial public offer at 37.0 riyals per share. Main competitor Fitaihi Holding dropped 3.0 percent. L'azurde is the first retail company to list in Saudi Arabia this year, and its stock price performance in coming months may depend on the outlook for discretionary spending in the midst of an economic slowdown due to low oil prices.

Dubai's index fell 0.4 percent, sagging in the final hour of trade as investors booked profits in small and mid-cap stocks ahead of the holidays. Islamic insurer Dar Al Takaful slumped 10.0 percent.

The most heavily traded stock, amusement park builder Dubai Parks and Resorts, dropped 3.2 percent. The company said that at the behest of Dubai's ruler, it had made an exception to its exclusive right to develop and operate Six Flags-branded theme parks in the Gulf

Cooperation Council, in order to let Six Flags help Saudi Arabia build theme parks.

Abu Dhabi's index edged up 0.2 percent. National Bank of Abu Dhabi, which is in talks to merge with fellow lender First Gulf Bank, added 1.2 percent. Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank also gained 1.2 percent. Some analysts believe ADCB could merge with Union National Bank.

EGYPT, QATAR

In Cairo, the main index added 0.2 percent. El Sewedy Electric, the top gainer, jumped 4.7 percent. But financial firms, favored by international funds, lagged. Commercial International Bank lost 1.2 percent and investment bank EFG Hermes dropped 1.1 percent. Doha's index nudged up 0.1 percent in the final hour of trade as investors bought shares with attractive dividend yields ahead of second-quarter corporate results. Doha Bank gained 1.6 percent; the lender has a 12-month forward dividend yield of 7.7 percent, according to Reuters data. —Reuters

BOURSES TO CLOSE FOR EID

KUWAIT: Middle Eastern securities exchanges have announced plans to close for upcoming Eid Al-Fitr holidays. The Saudi Stock Exchange will be closed throughout next week and reopen on Sunday, July 10. The Dubai, Kuwait and Oman markets will close from Tuesday, July 5 and reopen on Sunday, July 10. The Egyptian Exchange will close on Thursday, June 30 to mark the Revolution and reopen on Sunday, July 3. —Reuters

GULF BANK'S SECOND QUARTERLY TRIO DRAW TODAY

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank's Second Quarterly Trio quarterly draw is scheduled to take place today at 2pm, today on Marina FM's Diwaniya Show. Three draws will take place at the same time and location. The Al-Danah draw will be for cash prize of KD250, 000. While the Salary & Red Account draws include a brand new

Cadillac SRX and cash prizes up to KD1, 000. The draw event will be held in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. To participate in the Al-Danah draws, customers must have an Al-Danah account containing at least KD 200. Customers can open a new Al-Danah account at any one

of the 56 Gulf Bank branches in Kuwait. Those who already have an account can increase their chances of winning by increasing their deposits. This will also increase their chances of winning one of the two KD1, 000 prizes, which are drawn each working day. Furthermore, new Red Account or

Salary Account customers who open an account and transfer their student allowance or salary will also be eligible to enter the monthly cash draws for a chance to also win up to KD 1,000 each. In addition, the quarterly car draw will be for 1 lucky winner who will have a chance to win a new Cadillac SRX.

For further information about the Al-Danah, Salary and Red accounts and prize draws, visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, or call Gulf Bank's Customer Contact Center on 1805805. General information about Gulf Bank's products and services, can also be found at the Bank's website at www.e-gulfbank.com

OIL RECOVERERS IN TUNE WITH STOCK MARKETS

LEADERS LOOK TO TEMPER BREXIT FEARS

LONDON: Oil prices extended gains yesterday, tracking a recovery in equity markets as leaders look to temper fears over the effects of Britain's shock EU exit and traders bet on a fall in US stocks. Around 1000 GMT, the London benchmark Brent crude added 46 cents to \$49.04 and US benchmark West Texas Intermediate rose 57 cents to \$48.42. "Oil markets mirrored the rebound on stock markets as fundamentals came back into focus," said analysts at PVM oil brokerage. Global stock prices have risen in a second day of recovery from a sharp sell-off prompted by Britain's vote to leave the European Union, with Asian markets leading the way on hopes that authorities will unveil fresh stimulus to counter the effects of the vote. Seoul on Tuesday unveiled a \$17-billion plan to support South Korea's already frag-

ile economy, while news emerged yesterday that Japan's leaders were holding talks on how to contain any tailwind from the Brexit crisis. Also Tuesday, European Central Bank boss Mario Draghi said central banks should aim to align monetary policies to mitigate "destabilising spillovers". European leaders, who gathered in Brussels for a two-day meeting, urged Britain to act quickly to resolve the political and economic mayhem unleashed by the vote. PVM analysts said oil prices were also being pushed higher by threat of a strike in Norway affecting supplies, as well as the shutdown of two offshore platforms in the US Gulf of Mexico. "The possibility of a strike in the Norwegian upstream sector, where a pay dispute involving more than 700 workers at seven producing fields has the potential

to impact combined oil output of around 280,000 barrels per day-almost a fifth of the country's output," said analysts at JBC Energy. And a slight weakening of the greenback, as traders shift out of safe haven investments, also helped as it made dollar-priced crude less expensive for buyers holding other currencies, in turn boosting demand. **Falling oil stocks expected** Official data on US commercial crude stockpiles, which is used to gauge demand in the world's top oil consumer, is due later in the day. But data from the private American Petroleum Institute released late on Tuesday encouraged expectations of a further drop in US crude oil stocks. The API's data had US crude stocks declining by 3.9 million barrels last week

after having dropped by 5 million barrels the previous week. "The market had only been anticipating a 2.2 million barrel reduction," noted analysts at Commerzbank. They said it would not be surprising if the official data from the US Department of Energy showed a marked drop in crude stocks, which would be supportive of the price of oil but unlikely push it sharply higher. "The continued high level of uncertainty over the United Kingdom's upcoming exit from the EU is likely to preclude any steeper price rise, however, meaning that it is unlikely that the \$50 per barrel mark will be exceeded in the near future..." They added that strength of the US dollar in the wake of the Brexit vote also limits the potential for oil prices to push sharply higher. —AFP

News

in brief

Qatar's Rasgas signs LNG deal with EDF

DUBAI: Qatar's RasGas said yesterday it signed a new agreement with French energy company EDF to deliver up to 2 million tons per annum (Mtpa) of liquefied natural gas (LNG) starting from next year. Under the deal, Ras Laffan Liquefied Natural Gas Company 3 will deliver the LNG into EDF's new terminal in Dunkerque, France. "This new agreement complements three existing long term sales and purchase agreements between RasGas ventures and EDF Group subsidiaries, for delivery of up to 4.6 Mtpa to Edison in Italy and up to 3.5 Mtpa to EDF Trading in Belgium," RasGas said in a statement.

Egypt's FIHC receives offers in soyoil tender

ABU DHABI: The lowest offer presented at Egypt's Food Industries Holding Company (FIHC) soyoil tender was \$755 a ton for 30,000 tons of soyoil, Cairo-based traders said yesterday. The offer was made by ADM and was for immediate payment. Results for the tender seeking 25,000 tons of soyoil for arrival Aug. 11-31 were expected later yesterday. FIHC sought separate offers for immediate payment or for payment 90 days after the contract award or 180 days after the contract award with additional bank interest charges, the traders said.

Egypt's launches tender for third regasification unit

CAIRO: Egypt has launched a tender to hire a third floating and storage regasification unit (FSRU) to import liquefied natural gas (LNG), an official from state-run energy firm EGAS told Reuters. Egypt, a former energy exporter but now net importer due to falling production and rising consumption, began LNG imports last year to help avert blackouts on its overworked power grid. The official said the tender was launched on Tuesday seeking an FSRU with a capacity of 750 million cubic feet per day and would close in two weeks. Egypt's gas shortfall has led to rationing among energy-intensive industries such as steel mills and fertilizer plants and caused some output disruption last year. Egypt took delivery of its first FSRU from Norway's Høegh in April 2015 and a second from Singapore-based Norwegian firm BW Gas last September.

Iraq gets \$2.7bn US loan for military equipment

BAGHDAD: Iraq secured a \$2.7 billion loan from the United States yesterday to fund ammunition and maintenance of fighter jets, tanks and other military equipment for use in the war against Islamic State. Baghdad will have eight and a half years, including a one-year grace period, to repay the loan, which carries a 6.45 percent interest rate, a US embassy statement said. The deal will help Iraq service its F-16 fighter jets, M1A1 tanks, armored vehicles and attack helicopters as well as maintain navy ships and systems to protect the Umm Qasr port and southern oil platforms, the embassy added. Declining global oil prices and the costs of fighting Islamic State militants who seized a third of Iraq's territory in 2014 have hit government revenues, which rely almost completely on oil exports. Iraq received its first batch of F-16s in 2015 as a part of a \$65 million deal with Lockheed Martin Corp.

INDONESIA'S PERTAMINA PICKS SHELL TO PROCESS IRAQI CRUDE

JAKARTA: Indonesia's Pertamina has selected Shell to process a million barrels per month of Iraqi crude at a Singapore refinery, a senior official at the state-owned company said yesterday. The quest for oil-processing capacity abroad is partly spurred by a lack of investor interest in building domestic refineries because of unfavourable investment conditions set by the government. "We've selected Shell because they are the most competitive," said Daniel Purba, senior vice president of Pertamina's Integrated Supply Chain unit. Purba added that the Shell deal is expected to be formalised in the coming weeks and will initially run for the six months from July to December. An estimated 900,000 barrels a month of gasoline for import will be produced from the Singapore refinery. "After that we'll see how it goes; if it runs smoothly and what market conditions are like," Purba said, adding that the arrangement is a far better solution than importing products directly. Pertamina's monthly Iraqi oil shipments to the Singapore refinery are likely to consist of 290,000 barrels from a stake in the West Qurna block and a further 700,000 barrels from other Iraqi fields. Pertamina has about 1 million barrels per day (bpd) of domestic refining capacity, which meets only about two thirds of Indonesia's daily oil consumption. Separately, Purba said that Pertamina is close to finalising a deal to import 1 million barrels of Iranian light crude for delivery in the third quarter from Iran's national oil company. —Reuters



NEW DELHI: World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim (left) interacts with Indian youths studying at a vocational skills development center in New Delhi yesterday. —AFP

KFH OFFERS DONATION SERVICE ON ATMS WITH ZAKAT HOUSE

KUWAIT: Emanating from its endeavors to render clients high-end e-services, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) offers "Fitr alms and feed the fasting" donation service on ATMs in collaboration with Zakat House. KFH offers this service in a streamlined and easy manner only during Ramadan in its ongoing thrust to meet clients' needs and allow them to donate the desired amount of money effortlessly starting from KD 1 and up until KD 30. This donation service is a culmination of KFH eventful Ramadan program. The service incarnates KFH's Islamic identity and confirms its keenness to meet

clients' requirements for all occasions. Moreover, it consolidates KFH's status and strengthens ties, communication and participation with the society. KFH is keen on offering innovative services in line with the highest standards of quality in order to cater for clients' aspiration and fulfill their requirements. It is worth noting that when conducting any withdrawal transaction on KFH ATMs, clients can donate "Fitr alms and feed the fasting" by following easy steps on the screen. KFH was established in Kuwait in 1977 and is enlisted in the Kuwait Stock

Exchange. KFH Group is a global pioneer in the field of Islamic banking services, where it offers a wide array of Islamic products and services, not to mention a high standard of innovation and client service. KFH manages its operations in the GCC, Asia, and Europe through over 446 branches, including KFH-Turkey, in order to offer services for the bank's clients in Turkey, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Germany, Jordan, and Dubai. KFH's mission is to achieve highest levels of excellence and innovation in the field of client service, while developing common interest for all those con-

cerned with the financial institution. KFH's vision is to spearhead the global development in Islamic financial services, and to upgrade the bank into the level of becoming the most sustainable profitable Islamic bank in the world. KFH's values include cementing leadership through all its businesses, including leadership in the Islamic banking services worldwide, through innovation and in client service and the development of its employees. In addition, KFH is committed to all its procedures, and to setting up long-life partnerships with the concerned authorities.



EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
ASIAN COUNTRIES		
Japanese Yen	2.959	
Indian Rupees	4.460	
Pakistani Rupees	2.893	
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.057	
Nepali Rupees	2.793	
Singapore Dollar	224.680	
Hongkong Dollar	39.006	
Bangladesh Taka	3.858	
Philippine Peso	6.446	
Thai Baht	8.604	
GCC COUNTRIES		
Saudi Riyal	80.750	
Qatari Riyal	83.180	
ani Riyal	786.512	
Bahraini Dinar	804.170	
UAE Dirham	82.443	
ARAB COUNTRIES		
Egyptian Pound - Cash	30.850	
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	34.473	
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.216	
Tunisian Dinar	138.700	
Jordanian Dinar	427.260	
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.018	
Syrian Lira	2.158	
Morocco Dirham	31.363	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		
US Dollar Transfer	302.650	
Euro	336.850	

Sterling Pound	407.370
Canadian dollar	233.440
Turkish lira	105.090
Swiss Franc	310.410
Australian Dollar	225.470
US Dollar Buying	301.450
GOLD	
20 Gram	266.260
10 Gram	136.260
5 Gram	68.970
DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD	
Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	302.850
Canadian Dollar	232.596
Sterling Pound	403.734
Euro	335.832
Swiss Frank	298.175
Bahrain Dinar	801.309
UAE Dirhams	82.684
Qatar Riyals	83.905
Saudi Riyals	81.487
Jordanian Dinar	426.562
Egyptian Pound	34.008
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.060
Indian Rupees	4.451
Pakistani Rupees	2.890
Bangladesh Taka	3.856
Philippines Peso	6.435
Cyprus pound	160.532
Japanese Yen	3.957
Syrian Pound	2.376
Nepalese Rupees	3.784

Malaysian Ringgit	74.687	
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.880	
Thai Bhat	9.568	
Turkish Lira	103.168	
BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.395436	0.405436
Czech Korune	0.004306	0.016036
Danish Krone	0.040939	0.045939
Euro	0.0329233	0.0338233
Norwegian Krone	0.031473	0.036673
Romanian Leu	0.073948	0.073948
Slovakia	0.009016	0.019016
Swedish Krona	0.031483	0.036483
Swiss Franc	0.303039	0.314039
Turkish Lira	0.098303	0.108603
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.215587	0.227587
New Zealand Dollar	0.207685	0.217185
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.237356	0.236355
Georgina Lari	0.136668	0.136668
US Dollars	0.298500	0.303200
US Dollars Mint	0.299000	0.303200
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003387	0.003971
Chinese Yuan	0.044242	0.047742
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036909	0.039659

Indian Rupee	0.004221	0.004631
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002883	0.003063
Kenyan Shilling	0.002982	0.002982
Korean Won	0.000248	0.000263
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070913	0.076913
Nepalese Rupee	0.002853	0.003023
Pakistan Rupee	0.002744	0.003034
Philippine Peso	0.006366	0.006666
Sierra Leone	0.000067	0.000073
Singapore Dollar	0.217755	0.227755
South African Rand	0.013870	0.022370
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001672	0.002252
Taiwan	0.009219	0.009399
Thai Baht	0.008234	0.008784
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.796083	0.804583
Egyptian Pound	0.027064	0.032182
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.422792	0.431792
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000150	0.000250
Moroccan Dirhams	0.019285	0.043285
Nigerian Naira	0.001248	0.001883
Omani Riyal	0.779554	0.785234
Qatar Riyal	0.082305	0.083755
Saudi Riyal	0.079607	0.080907
Syrian Pound	0.001282	0.001502
Tunisian Dinar	0.135746	0.143746
Turkish Lira	0.098303	0.108603
UAE Dirhams	0.080962	0.082662
Yemeni Riyal	0.001367	0.001447

EU TO BRITAIN: NO ACCESS TO SINGLE MARKET WITHOUT MIGRATION

BRUSSELS: European Union leaders spelled out stark conditions for a new relationship with a departing Britain yesterday, warning that if British business wants to keep access to Europe's single market, the country must accept European workers, too.

The leaders produced no clear rehaul for their shaken union after an unusual and emotionally charged summit, but agreed they must make it more relevant to citizens and keep it from disintegrating after Britain's unprecedented vote to leave. The 27 remaining presidents, chancellors and prime ministers said they're "absolutely determined to remain united," EU Council President Donald Tusk said.

They met without British Prime Minister David Cameron, who left Brussels on Tuesday night without any clear divorce plan, fending off pressure for a quick exit and punting the complex departure negotiations to his successor. In Britain, nominations opened Wednesday for a new Conservative leader to replace him after his devastating political miscalculation in calling last week's referendum.

Other EU leaders warned the UK that if it wants to continue to enjoy the seamless single market after its departure, it would also have to accept that EU citizens can continue to enter Britain. That's the crux of the current tensions: Britain's "leave" vote hinged on concerns about migration from poorer EU countries. The leaders emerged insisting that the "four freedoms" central to European unity are indivisible: the free movement of people, services, goods and finances.

They were focusing yesterday on how to deal with the rest of the continent now that Britain is leaving. There's a widespread sense that the post-war project to foster peace via trade has become a bureaucratic, undemocratic behemoth with little meaning for its 500 million citizens. The initial EU founding nations in the west lean toward a tighter, closer union, while newer nations in the east want to keep more control with national governments - notably of their borders.

"We all need to wake up and smell the coffee," Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė said. To allow the status quo to continue, French President Francois Hollande warned, would benefit populist forces that seek "the end of Europe."

Other EU countries are now facing calls for referendums on quitting the bloc. Popular French far-right leader Marine Le Pen pressed unpopular Hollande in a weekend meeting for such a vote in France, but his government has rejected the idea.

Tusk convened a special EU summit on Sept. 16 in Slovakia's capital to work out a plan forward to keep the EU united. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the lesson from Britain's departure isn't necessarily either deeper integration or returning more powers to national governments. She said Wednesday:

"This is not about more or less Europe as a principle, but about achieving results better." She said that combating youth unemployment, for example, could involve both scrapping EU directives and deepening European cooperation.



BRUSSELS: French President Francois Hollande (C), flanked by French Minister of State for European Affairs Harlem Desir (L), arrives for a press conference during an European Union summit yesterday at the European Union headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

ECB HAPPY TO STAY PUT AS BREXIT JITTERS SUBSIDE

BANK IN NO RUSH TO EASE MONETARY POLICY

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is in no rush to ease its monetary policy in response to Britain's vote to leave the European Union, taking comfort in a calmer-than-feared market reaction, several sources have told Reuters.

The Brexit vote has hit the shares of eurozone banks and is likely to act as a drag on the euro zone economy, as ECB President Mario Draghi told EU leaders on Tuesday. It is also raising fundamental questions about the future of the EU. But conversations with around a dozen officials familiar with the ECB's thinking showed that the bank found some reassurance in the market rebound this week and was happy to take a wait-and-see stance, given the lack of hard evidence about the actual impact of Brexit.

Emergency swap lines designed to provide euros to UK banks in case of stress had not been activated and, contrary to what had happened during the 2008 crash, financial markets had functioned smoothly despite heavy losses in the pound and some shares, the sources, who asked not to be named, said. They stressed the ECB's willingness to provide more stimulus if the inflation outlook worsens but cautioned the UK vote was raising political questions that were for EU governments and institutions, rather than the central bank, to answer.

"This is a political problem not a monetary phenomenon," one of the sources said. "We could act, we have the tools, but that would not solve the broader problem and for now, every estimate about the actual impact of Brexit is nothing but guesswork."

The officials added it was too early to assess

the impact of the referendum on investor and consumer confidence - the most immediate transmission channel - and the bank would be in a better position to make a call on that when it gets updated staff forecasts in September.

If markets continued in the same, calm vein in the run up to the ECB's July 21 policy meeting, the most to expect could be verbal reassurance that the bank stands ready to do more if needed, conversations with the sources showed. For now, the officials expressed relief at the sanguine reaction of investors in sovereign debt. Southern Europe's borrowing costs fell sharply for a third straight day and French bond yields hit record lows yesterday. The calm on the sovereign bond market marked a sharp contrast to the 2010-12 debt crisis, when a 'doom loop' between indebted governments and their main creditors, banks, threatened the euro's very existence, the sources noted.

"Markets priced in a lower growth path, both for the euro zone and the UK," one source said. "It seems quite realistic now and I don't see significant overreaction."

Still, this line of thinking may put the ECB on a collision course with markets, which have rebounded at least partly in the hope that the ECB and the Bank of England would step in with more stimulus. Investors now fully price in a rate cut in Britain and the euro zone by the end of this year.

The ECB cut rates twice since December and is already buying 80 billion euros (\$88.71 billion) worth of assets, mainly eurozone government bonds, every month in a bid to boost inflation.

These purchases helped soothe market nerves

when a Greek referendum on the terms of its bailout agreement with creditors almost pushed the country out of the eurozone last summer and the reaction to the UK vote was seemingly following the same path. The sources said that any further move by the ECB to support markets, while possible in theory, would merely act as stop-gap and do nothing to address fundamental citizen and investor concern about Europe's political cohesion and economic strategy.

BANKS

In fact, a new interest rate cut could even exacerbate problems at euro zone banks, which have complained that low lending rates and a charge on the money they park at the ECB were squeezing their margins, some of the sources said. There was agreement among the officials who spoke to Reuters that the broad selloff in banking shares cast the sector as the weakest link in the European economy, with its meagre profits and, in countries such as Italy, heavy burden of bad loans making it vulnerable to any economic downturn.

The ECB's top supervisor, Daniele Nouy, spelled out some of the steps the ECB would like European and national law-makers to take in a letter to a group of members of the European parliament published on Tuesday. "Among other reforms, they should consider streamlining legal processes related to debt recovery, removing impediments to the enforcement of loan collateral, introducing out-of-court debt work-out solutions, and fostering the development of distressed debt markets," Nouy wrote. — Reuters



ATLANTA: A customer (bottom), pays for goods while shopping at the Atlanta Farmers Market in Atlanta. The Commerce Department issues its May report on consumer spending, which accounts for roughly 70 percent of US economic activity. — AP

US CONSUMER SPENDING POSTS HEALTHY GROWTH

WASHINGTON: Americans went shopping this spring, increasing their spending in May for the second straight month and delivering good news for economic growth. The Commerce Department said yesterday that consumer spending increased 0.4 percent in May on top of a 1.1 percent surge in April.

Spending on durable goods such as autos and appliances grew 0.6 percent, down from a 2.6 percent jump in April. Spending on non-durable goods, such as food and clothing, grew 0.5 percent. And spending on services grew just 0.1 percent. The overall numbers underscore that consumer spending, which accounts for about 70 percent of US economic activity, picked up in the spring after getting off to a slow start in 2016. The economy grew at a lackluster 1.1 percent pace from January through March, partly because consumer spending grew just 1.5 percent, the slowest pace in two years.

Economists expect growth to rebound to a pace of 2 percent or faster in the second quarter. "Consumption held up well," Michael Dolega, senior economist at TD Economics, wrote in a research note. "In fact, after a timid first quarter American shoppers appeared to be out in full force during the second quarter, with real consumption rising more than 4 percent annualized - enough to boost (economic) growth above the mid-2 percent mark this quarter."

Still, Americans' incomes grew just 0.2 percent in May, down from 0.5 percent in April. It's unclear how American consumers will respond to Britain's decision last week to leave

the European Union, which so far has rattled global financial markets and raised fears over prospects for the world economy.

On Tuesday, the Conference Board, a business group, reported that its consumer confidence index rose in June to the highest level since October. But its survey was taken before the "Brexit" vote. The University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index, out last Friday, registered deterioration in consumers' spirits this month.

An inflation gauge watched by the Federal Reserve showed prices are up 0.9 percent over the past year, 1.6 percent excluding volatile food and energy costs. Both numbers are well below the Fed's target of 2 percent.

Pending home sales

Fewer Americans signed contracts to buy homes in May, with the year-over year pace of pending sales sliding for the first time in nearly two years. The National Association of Realtors says its seasonally adjusted pending home sales index fell 3.7 percent last month to 110.8, slightly below its May 2015 reading of 111. Overall home sales have steadily improved over the past year. But buyers are facing a shortage of available homes that might have curtailed pending sales last month.

Completed sales of existing homes rose 1.8 percent in May to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5.53 million, the highest level since February 2007, the Realtors reported last week. But the number of listings sank 5.7 percent from a year ago, meaning that homebuyers have fewer options. — AP

ALCOA SPINS OFF SMELTING BUSINESS; AERO, AUTO UNIT NOW 'ARCONIC'

CHICAGO: Metals company Alcoa Inc said yesterday that its planned split will consist of a spinoff of its traditional upstream smelting business, and that up to 19.9 percent of the new company will be owned by its value-added business that serves the aerospace and automotive industries.

The company to be spun off will be named Alcoa Corp and the value-added business Arconic Inc, Alcoa said in a regulatory filing. The split is due to take place in the second half of this year.

The spinoff comes at a time when aluminum prices have hovered around historic lows. Many producers have accused China of selling metal into oversupplied global markets below market rates. China denies this and says excess capacity is a global issue. Amid that downturn, Alcoa has been reducing its refining and smelting capacity and has focused on more advanced aerospace and automotive products.

In recent months the company has announced deals to provide a light but tough aluminum alloy for Ford Motor Co's high-selling F-150 pickup and aerospace contracts including titanium seat track assemblies for Boeing Co's 737 MAX, 777X and 787 Dreamliner.

Australia's Alumina Ltd has raised concerns over the impact of Alcoa's planned split on the pair's bauxite and alumina pro-

duction joint venture, Alcoa Worldwide Alumina and Chemicals (AWAC).

In May, Alcoa filed a lawsuit seeking a declaration that Alumina has no right to block the plan. In 2015, Alcoa's traditional upstream business had pro forma revenue of \$11.2 billion, while its value-added business had revenue of \$12.5 billion, the company said.

As part of the split, the new upstream business will have around \$236 million in outstanding long-term debt. The new company will raise approximately \$1 billion in new debt and provide for up to \$1.5 billion in funding through a revolving credit facility. Alcoa's total debt in the first quarter was around \$9 billion, so the lion's share will remain with Arconic, the larger of the two companies post-split.

On a conference call with analysts, Alcoa Chief Executive Klaus Kleinfield said the pension obligations of the new upstream business as of the end of 2015 will be around \$2.6 billion, while the value-added business Arconic will have pension obligations of around \$3 billion.

The company reiterated that Arconic will be an investment-grade entity, while the new Alcoa will be a "strong non-investment grade" firm. In early trading, Alcoa shares were up 1.9 percent at \$9.51. — Reuters



SEOUL: Currency traders work at the foreign exchange dealing room of the KEB Hana Bank headquarters in Seoul yesterday. — AP

GOLD EDGES HIGHER ON DOLLAR

LONDON: Gold rose yesterday as the dollar retreated and investor appetite for safe assets continued on longer-term financial uncertainty after Britain's surprise vote to leave the European Union. Bullion fell by about 1 percent on Tuesday as investors took profits from its biggest two-day gain since November 2008 as the British vote sparked sales of riskier assets.

The metal, often perceived as a hedge against economic and financial risk, surged 4.8 percent on Friday to \$1,358.20 an ounce, its highest since March 2014. Spot gold rose 0.5 percent to \$1,318.70 an ounce by 1147 GMT yesterday, while US gold was up 0.3 percent at \$1,321.60.

"Although there are still big uncertainties ahead, looking at the way equities have performed over the past couple of days, a risk-on mentality is definitely coming back," Mitsubishi

Corp Jonathan Butler said. "In the medium term, gold is going to be supported by the unlikelihood that the Fed will raise rates in the next couple of months."

European and Asian stock markets continued to recover after last week's hefty losses, while the dollar was down 0.3 percent against a basket of leading currencies. "If Brexit is seen severely impacting the market, central banks will step in to calm the markets, which would not be good for gold," said Jiang Shu, chief analyst at Shandong Gold Group.

European leaders have asked Britain to act quickly to resolve the political and economic confusion unleashed by the so-called Brexit vote, with the IMF having said the uncertainty could pressure global economic growth. Britain's vote to leave the bloc could also drag on the US

economy at a time when momentum in the country's job market may already be slowing, Federal Reserve governor Jerome Powell said on Tuesday. Markets will continue to monitor US economic data for clues on the timing of the next rise in US interest rates.

Low interest rates are positive for gold because the opportunity cost of holding it decreases while the dollar falls, making the metal cheaper. Spot silver gained 2.5 percent to \$18.17 an ounce and tread close to Friday's one-and-a-half-year high of \$18.31. Platinum climbed 1.2 percent to \$988.75 and palladium rose 1 percent to \$573.40.

Spot gold was at a record peak relative to platinum this week after institutional and retail investors piled into bullion following the referendum verdict. — Reuters

ABE PLEDGES BROAD POLICY TO WEATHER BREXIT SHOCK

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged yesterday to use all available policy tools to keep the wheels of the economy turning as financial markets were gripped by uncertainty in the wake of Britain's shock vote to exit the European Union.

The yen's spike following the referendum has kept Japanese policymakers on edge as a stronger currency threatens to put more pressure on the export-reliant economy, already reeling from weak demand at home and abroad. Retail sales fell more than expected in May, data showed earlier in the day, keeping policymakers under pressure to roll out more stimulus.

"Consumer spending has been stagnant and the trend is likely to continue for a while due to sluggish growth in wages," said Hidenobu Tokuda, senior economist at Mizuho Research Institute.

In a meeting to discuss post-Brexit market developments, Abe urged Bank of Japan (BOJ) Governor Haruhiko Kuroda to ensure the central bank provides ample funds to the market to prevent any credit squeeze. "A sense of uncertainty and worry about risks remain in the markets," Abe told the meeting, the second between the government and the BOJ since the June 23 referendum.

The premier also called on Finance Minister Taro Aso to keep a close watch on currency moves and respond flexibly to market developments in coordination with Group of Seven economies.

Abe is expected to hold similar meetings regularly as Tokyo looks to put safeguards in place against potential instability in financial markets after Britain's messy EU divorce. The rush of money to safe havens such as the yen has been stoked by fear Brexit would adversely affect Britain's economy and undermine already fragile growth in the EU, causing more disruption in global investment and trade.

FX INTERVENTION, BOJ STIMULUS

Japan stepped up threats to intervene to weaken the yen after the Brexit vote drove the currency to multi-year highs, but the risks of a costly failure may dis-

suaude policymakers from matching their words with action. Still, Masahiko Shibayama, an adviser to the premier, said unilateral yen-selling intervention cannot be ruled out to counter excess speculation, adding that the central bank should stand ready to expand its already massive monetary stimulus.

"We won't hesitate to take action against excess speculation," he told Reuters in an interview.

The dollar firmed to 102.63 yen yesterday, moving away from a 2-1/2-year low of 99.00 touched on Friday. Former top BOJ economist Hideo Hayakawa told reporters the central bank could be forced into further easing at the July 28-29 policy meeting given prices are undershooting its forecasts. However, he shrugged off speculation about the BOJ holding an extra policy meeting before that.

The BOJ is wary of rushing into expanding its monetary stimulus, preferring to wait and see if the market turmoil lasts long enough to threaten Japan's economic recovery, sources say.

Hence, analysts see Abe's meetings as more a symbolic move to show the public the government is doing what it can to contain damage ahead of a July 10 upper house election in Japan. "There's not a lot of policy tools left for authorities to reboot the economy. Therefore, Abe has no choice but hold meetings one after another at least until the July election," said Yasuji Yajima, chief economist at NLI Research Institute. "If the yen spikes beyond 100 to the dollar, authorities would intervene in the currency market but I doubt whether it could have a lasting impact," he said.

Japan's economy expanded at the fastest pace in a year in the first quarter but analysts say growth will not pick up much for the rest of this year as slow wage gains weigh on consumption. External headwinds, such as weak emerging market demand and the yen's gains, also cloud the outlook for exports. Worried about the additional hit from Brexit, the government is willing to spend at least 10 trillion yen (\$97.7 billion) on a stimulus package, sources have told Reuters. — Reuters



TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2nd R) speaks during an emergency meeting as Finance Minister Taro Aso (2nd L) and Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda (L) attend to discuss the impact of Britain's vote to exit the European Union, at Abe's official residence in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP



KUWAIT: Huawei's Kuwait Consumer Business Group, Country Manager, Jim Zhu, Huawei Technologies Kuwait CEO, Trevor Liu, Future Communications Company CEO, Huawei's Kuwait Consumer Business Group President for Middle East and Africa, Gene Jiao and Country Manager Salah Al-Awadhi cutting the ceremonial cake to mark the inauguration of Huawei Service Center in Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

HUAWEI OPENS FULLY-INTEGRATED AFTER SALE SERVICE CENTER IN KUWAIT

AFTER SALE SERVICES FOR ALL SMARTPHONE AND OTHER DEVICES

KUWAIT: The Huawei Consumer Business Group - Kuwait yesterday inaugurated its first fully-integrated after sale service center. The Center provides high quality maintenance, parts and warranty services for all Huawei smartphones and devices, in addition to a VIP service exclusive to Huawei loyal users and the smartphone experience corner which allows customers to test a smartphone before making a purchase.

The Huawei Service Center was inaugurated by Huawei's Kuwait Consumer Business Group, Country Manager, Jim Zhu, Huawei Technologies Kuwait CEO, Trevor Liu, Future Communications Company CEO, Huawei's Kuwait Consumer Business Group President for Middle East and Africa, Gene Jiao, Country Manager Salah Al-Awadhi, Huawei users and loyal users, as well as members of the local media.

Huawei's Kuwait Consumer Business Group, Country Manager, Jim Zhu, said during the inauguration: "Huawei's strong partnership with Kuwait started by servicing the telecommunications sector and enhancing its network through its close relation with the Ministry of Communications and network providers in the country. Our offering has since expanded to provide high-quality consumer products to the local market. Our internet devices and smartphones have gained unprecedented interest by the local market. The opening of the Huawei Service Center is just a natural step to enhance the customer experience offered by Huawei."

The Huawei Service Center aims to enhance customer experience by providing them with quality experience from the purchase of a device to its use and maintenance. The opening expands on services provided by the company in Kuwait, which include a dedicated call center and collection points at branches operated by its partner, the Future Communications Company. Zhu said: "Through the Center, we aim to offer more than just an after sale service. We have designed the Center to provide an enhanced and exclusive experience in which customers can also test new devices before mak-

ing a purchase. We know that smartphones and tablets play a significant role in each individual's life. This is why we are enabling them with choices to choose what best suits their lifestyle while taking advantage of the high quality service."

Zhu added: "The Huawei customer experience extends as well to the warranties provided as devices and chargers have a one-year warranty, six-month for batteries and three-month for headsets."

Zhu concluded his speech saying: "We are committed to servicing our customers with a fast and efficient service. This commitment comes as part of our larger commitment to Kuwait, a major market for our company in the Middle East. We are very proud of this new milestone and success which fully benefits our customers and partners."

Huawei is ranked third largest smartphone manufacturer in the world in 2015, and second in the Android smartphones category. The company's success comes after a series of successful flagship smartphones launched in international markets since 2015. The most acclaimed smartphones included the recent launches of the Mate 8 and the P9, as well as the Huawei smart watch.

The Huawei Consumer Business Group - Kuwait is part of "Huawei Technologies - Kuwait" which was established in 2015 with a vision to build a better connected Kuwait. Locally, Huawei provides services and consultancy in the fields of communications networks, information technology solutions to enterprises and offers consumer devices ranging from routers to mobile phones.



KUWAIT: Huawei's Kuwait Consumer Business Group, Country Manager, Jim Zhu, Huawei Technologies Kuwait CEO, Trevor Liu, Future Communications Company CEO, Huawei's Kuwait Consumer Business Group President for Middle East and Africa, Gene Jiao and Country Manager Salah Al-Awadhi during the inauguration of Huawei Service Center in Kuwait.

UK CONSUMER BORROWING GROWTH HIT 10-YEAR HIGH

LONDON: British consumer borrowing expanded at the fastest annual rate since 2005 in May, but analysts said this could be a high watermark before the shock of last week's vote to leave the European Union spreads through the economy. Consumer lending expanded 9.9 percent compared with a year ago, the biggest annual increase since November 2005 and up from 9.6 percent in April, the Bank of England said yesterday. Consumer lending includes credit cards, overdrafts, personal loans, but not student loans.

The number of mortgage approvals also increased unexpectedly, rising to 67,042 in May - almost 1,800 more than expected in a Reuters poll and up from 66,205 in April. These figures add to signs Britain's economy was a bit firmer than many expected in the run-up to last Thursday's referendum. However, the result in favour of leaving the EU will cast a pall over consumers' mood, economists said.

"With the wider economy likely to slow during the second half of the year as the impact of last week's vote feeds through, we would expect the

appetite of consumers to take on new credit may start to fade," said Martin Beck, economist from the EY ITEM Club consultancy.

The referendum result wiped a record \$3 trillion off global shares and sterling fell to its lowest level in 31 years against the dollar. Finance minister George Osborne, whose attempt to calm markets had fallen on deaf ears on Monday, said the country would have to cut spending and raise taxes to stabilise the economy after credit rating agencies downgraded its debt.

Fitch Ratings reiterated on Wednesday that leaving the EU would exact a significant toll on the economy, hammering business investment.

Osborne had predicted a cooling of the housing market, a cornerstone of many Britons' wealth, if Britain left the EU. Mortgage lender Nationwide said it was too early to judge the impact of the referendum result on the housing market, as it reported annual house price growth picked up to 5.1 percent in June from 4.7 percent, beating economists' expectations.

The number of mortgage approvals rose

throughout most of 2015, following a slowdown the previous year when tougher checks on mortgage borrowers were introduced.

Net mortgage lending, which lags approvals, rose 2.824 billion pounds (\$3.79 billion) in May, the BoE said, more than a forecast of 2.2 billion pounds in the Reuters poll.

"Higher than expected approval numbers for May are likely to be the last bit of good news for the industry for the upcoming months," said Kay Daniel Neufeld from the Centre for Economics and Business Research. "Stocks of housebuilders and property developers were hit especially hard following the EU referendum, reflecting the fact that investors expect Brexit to have a negative impact on property markets."

Britain's economic recovery is still heavily reliant on spending by households many of which have been buoyed by strong growth in the value of their homes. The BoE said lending to non-financial businesses increased by 2.814 billion pounds, compared with a 176 million pound drop in April. — Reuters

BRITISH CAR INDUSTRY GROWTH DRIVES HOME EU BENEFITS

LONDON: Britain's car sector yesterday said its growth depended on the country keeping "unrestricted access" to the European single market-a situation thrown into doubt by Brexit.

"Our growth depends on certainty and continued open and reciprocal access to the 100-plus markets with which the UK automotive industry so successfully trades," Mike Hawes, chief executive of industry body SMMT, said in a statement ahead of an annual conference in London yesterday featuring car bosses from across Europe. "This is not just finished cars but components, technologies and the wider automotive value chain. Any risks and uncertainty to these fundamental benefits need to be addressed head on by UK government," he added.

Britain last week voted in a referendum to quit the European Union, causing Prime Minister David Cameron to announce that

he planned to step down later this year. Ahead of the vote, major carmakers, including Nissan and Toyota, voiced fierce opposition to Brexit-pointing to the fact that most of their British production is exported to Europe and beyond.

Other leading automakers producing in Britain and thus in the firing line include Jaguar Land Rover's Indian owner Tata and BMW, the maker of the Mini and Rolls-Royce. A report also released Wednesday by the SMMT said: "Access to the single market and EU-negotiated international trade deals, the ability to recruit talent internationally and influence new standards have all helped make the UK automotive industry one of the world's most competitive."

"This has helped attract billions of pounds in investment in recent years, delivering record productivity, job creation and growth." — AFP

GLOBAL TURMOIL, DROUGHT AND FISH DEATHS SLOW VIETNAM ECONOMY

HANOI: Vietnam's economy slowed in the first half of 2016, official figures showed yesterday, with a severe regional drought and a spate of fish deaths adding to losses caused by turmoil in global markets. GDP growth dropped to 5.52 percent in the first six months compared to 6.32 percent in the same period last year. The country grew at its fastest pace for five years in 2015 thanks to strong exports and a flurry of foreign investment.

"Less active global trade and investment... and unpredictable upheavals in the world financial and monetary markets have badly influenced our economy," the General

Statistics Office (GSO) said in a statement yesterday. Domestic production was also hampered by the region's worst drought in decades, which slammed Vietnamese rice and coffee farmers and cost the country \$681 million, according to the GSO.

The economy suffered another blow from a huge loss of fish along the country's central coast that has yet to be fully explained. "Drought and serious salinisation in Central Highlands and the Mekong Delta as well as mass fish deaths in the central coast have created a major impact on the people's production and lives," the Hanoi-based office said.

Tonnes of dead fish and other marine life

began washing up on central shores two months ago and continued to appear for two to three weeks.

The environmental disaster has devastated local fishermen and hit tourism in the area, while also sparking protests across the country. Activists have pointed the figure at Taiwanese conglomerate Formosa, which operates a steel mill in the area where the fish have died and has a poor environmental track record around the globe. Communist authorities have cracked down on the demonstrations with arrests. They are expected this week to announce the result of an official probe into the fish deaths. — AFP



TOKYO: A currency dealer speaks in front of an electronic board showing a variety of exchange rates at Ueda Harlow, a foreign exchange trading company in Tokyo yesterday. — AP

TOP ADNOC, ARAMCO EXECUTIVES TO OPEN ANNUAL GPCA FORUM

DUBAI: The Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA) yesterday announced the keynote speakers for the 11th Annual GPCA Forum. Based on the theme "Competitiveness: Riding New Waves", the Annual Forum will be held from November 27-29, 2016, in Dubai.

Dr Sultan Al-Jaber, UAE Minister of State and Chief Executive Officer of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), and Amin H. Nasser, President and Chief Executive Officer of Saudi Aramco, will be the keynote speakers at the conference, which is expected to host over 2,000 leaders from the regional and global chemical industry.

Dr Abdulwahab Al-Sadoun, Secretary General, GPCA, said: "With uncertain market conditions, finding new avenues for growth, and opportunities for development. The



Dr Sultan Al-Jaber

United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia understand this reality, and are driving progress.

Both Dr Al-Jaber and Nasser have recently taken up their respective roles. They are expected to inject fresh, new strategies into ADNOC and Aramco, which is vital for the evolution of the UAE and Saudi economies. Their perspectives will be extremely valuable for all GPCA members."

The UAE and Saudi Arabia have 13.7 million tons and 98.5 million tons of petrochemical capacity respectively in 2016, according to GPCA research. Combined, the two GCC members hold 74% of the chemicals portfolio of the Arabian Gulf. "The emergence of ADNOC and Saudi Aramco are inextricably linked with the histories of the UAE and Saudi Arabia respectively," explained Dr Al-Sadoun.

"The expansion of both companies into the downstream sector over the last decade has resulted in strategic partnerships with



Amin H Nasser

international oil and chemical companies, helping to internationalize both economies. That trend is set to continue, making now a

very exciting time for the region's upstream and downstream sector."

Previous inaugural speakers at the Annual GPCA Forums have included former Saudi Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Al-Naimi, UAE Minister of Energy Suhail Al Mazrouei, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Arabia's Deputy Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, and Dr. Mohammed Saleh Al-Sada, Minister of Energy and Industry of Qatar.

"Over the last decade, the Forum has developed a reputation of gathering the most influential people in the regional and global energy industry, to discuss and debate the most relevant topics that impact the sector today, and insights on how it will develop tomorrow," concluded Dr. Al-Sadoun. "We are proud that this will continue into 2016."

AGILITY, SUPER GROUP FORM SOUTH AFRICA LOGISTICS JV DEAL STRENGTHENS AGILITY IN STRATEGIC MARKET

KUWAIT: Leading global logistics provider Agility announced that it has formed a joint venture in South Africa with Super Group, a Johannesburg-based supply chain management and transportation specialist, after acquiring a minority stake in Super Group's freight forwarding unit.

SG Agility Proprietary Ltd. will be led by Henk Theron, formerly CEO of Micor, Super Group's freight forwarding business. Super Group, listed on the Johannesburg Securities Exchange, is a leader in South Africa's supply chain and contract logistics market. Super Group's Micor unit has been a global strategic partner for Agility since 2005. The new venture, SG Agility, will offer local and multinational customers a range of logistics and supply chain solutions, including air freight, ocean freight,

road freight, customs clearance, warehousing, and distribution. SG Agility will have more than 150 employees. Its head office is Johannesburg; branch offices are located in Port Elizabeth, Durban and Cape Town.

Elias Monem, Agility's CEO of Middle East & Africa, said: "South Africa is vital to our strategic growth and expansion in Africa. It has well-developed financial, legal, communications and transport sectors, along with an open trade policy and a comparatively strong domestic market. The joint venture with Super Group is a sign of our commitment to both South Africa and the continent."

Theron said: "Partnering with Agility gives our customers access to a leading international logistics provider with a strong global network and a legacy of proven performance. Our team

on the ground and experience in the market allow us to add value to Agility's operations and further the growth and development of the logistics industry in sub-Saharan Africa."

Agility continues to expand its Africa footprint, with operations in Egypt, Algeria, Angola, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa providing logistics services across the continent, including warehousing, freight forwarding, customs clearance and project logistics. Agility's Infrastructure group operates in Ghana, Rwanda, Libya, Uganda, Ivory Coast, Malawi and Mozambique, providing services that include warehousing and infrastructure construction, aviation and camp services. Agility's emerging market roots enable the company to handle complex environments in an efficient way, ensuring that clients are serviced with top-of-the-line services and solutions.



ETIHAD AIRWAYS HOSTS GHABQA WITH KEY MEDIA, TRADE PARTNERS

KUWAIT: Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, hosted its annual Ghabqa in Kuwait to celebrate the spirit of Ramadan. The event, co-organized by Sabre and hosted by Etihad Airways, was attended by a number of travel agents and media at the Al Thuriya Ballroom, JW Marriott, Kuwait City.

The event was a great honour to mark the holy month of Ramadan with Etihad Airways' key partners in Kuwait and recognize them for the continued support they continue to show the airline.

Earlier this year, Etihad Airways introduced the new Business Studio to the Kuwait market and have increased our flight frequency to Abu Dhabi to five-times-per-day. The additions have provided additional comfort and connectivity for Kuwaiti guests looking to connect through the UAE capital to Europe, North America and the rest of the world.

Etihad Airways began operations in 2003,

and in 2015 carried 17.6 million passengers. From its Abu Dhabi base, Etihad Airways flies to, or has announced plans to serve, 117 passenger and cargo destinations in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas. The airline has a fleet of 122 Airbus and Boeing aircraft, with 204 aircraft on firm order, including 71 Boeing 787s, 25 Boeing 777Xs, 62 Airbus A350s and 10 Airbus A380s.

Etihad Airways holds equity investments in airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Alitalia, Jet Airways, Virgin Australia, and Swiss-based Darwin Airline, trading as Etihad Regional. Etihad Airways, along with airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Alitalia, Etihad Regional, Jet Airways and NIKI, also participate in Etihad Airways Partners, a brand that brings together partner airlines to offer customers more choice through improved networks and schedules and enhanced frequent flyer benefits.

AUDI OFFERS AN EXCLUSIVE RAMADAN PROMOTION OFFERS ON AUDI APPROVED: PLUS CARS

KUWAIT: Audi is offering an exclusive promotion to mark the Holy month of Ramadan, providing customers with added benefits and purchase options on a wide range of its pre-owned vehicles.

Audi Approved: Plus, represented by Fouad Alghanim & Sons Automotive Company, is offering customers 0 percent interest for the first three years, when they purchase an Audi Approved: plus Q7, Q5, Q3, A5 or A4.

"The month of Ramadan is a joyous and celebratory season in Kuwait. At FAA we look for ways to celebrate with our customers by offering Ramadan-exclusive offers, and there is no better

time to enjoy peace of mind than with the purchase of a pre-owned approved vehicle from Audi Approved: plus," stated Tarek Ramadan Al-Shafie General Manager & Dealer Principal of Fouad Alghanim & Sons Automotive Company. He also added "Audi offers a model line-up that caters to every customer lifestyle from the all-new flagship SUV- the Audi Q7, to the sporty Audi TT."

Audi Approved: plus are pre-owned Audi models, which are all subjected to a 300 point check including, but not limited to mechanical, bodywork, interior and electrical checks.

The Ramadan promotion is valid to all cus-

tomers until June 30, 2016 in cooperation with Warba Bank. Kuwaiti nationals and residents also have until the end of the month to take advantage of 0 percent financing, on a wide variety of new Audi models.

Fouad Alghanim & Sons Automotive Company's showrooms are open Saturday to Thursday from 10:00 to 13:00 and 20:30 to 23:30 during the month of Ramadan

The Audi Group, with its brands Audi, Ducati and Lamborghini, is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the premium segment. It is present in more than 100 markets worldwide and produces at 16 locations in twelve countries. In the second half of 2016, the production of the Audi Q5 will start in San José Chiapa (Mexico). 100 percent subsidiaries of AUDI AG include quattro GmbH (Neckarsulm), Automobili Lamborghini SpA (Sant'Agata Bolognese, Italy) and Ducati Motor Holding SpA, (Bologna, Italy).

In 2015, the Audi Group delivered to customers approximately 1.8 million automobiles of the Audi brand, 3,245 sports cars of the Lamborghini brand and about 54,800 motorcycles of the Ducati brand. In the 2015 financial year, AUDI AG achieved total revenue of €58.4 billion and an operating profit of €4.8 billion. At present, approximately 85,000 people work for the company all over the world, about 60,000 of them in Germany. Audi focuses on new products and sustainable technologies for the future of mobility.

AUDI AG's commitment to the region was confirmed through the foundation of its fully owned subsidiary in 2005. The current Middle East model range comprises the Audi A3 & S3 Sedan/Sportback and RS 3 Sportback, A4 and RS 4 Avant, the A5 Coupe, Sportback, Cabriolet and RS 5, the A6, S6, RS 6 Avant, RS 6 Performance, A7, S7, RS 7 & RS 7 Performance, A8 L, S8 & S8 plus, the Audi Q3 and RS Q3, Q5 & SQ5, Q7 and the Audi TT Coupe/Roadster, TTS Coupe and TT RS Coupe, the Audi R8 Coupe and R8 Spyder as well as R8 V10 plus.



AS BRITAIN TURNS INWARD, ONE FIRM LOOKS TO EUROPE

HUNTINGDON, England: Britain and the European Union are likely to take years to rewrite the rules that govern their business ties after the UK voted to leave the bloc. Mike Ashmead can't wait that long. The managing director of Encocam, a company that makes crash-test dummies, had planned to hire 120 people between now and 2018 to work at the company's design and production base near Cambridge.

But at a hastily called meeting on Monday, four days after the so-called Brexit referendum, Ashmead and his management team shifted their sights to the continent. The firm, which currently employs 172 people, immediately began enquiring about grants to open a design centre in Spain and is considering Portugal, Ireland, Germany and Poland too.

"We cannot wait for two years to see what will come out of this," Ashmead said in an interview at the firm's headquarters in the town of Huntingdon, part of a high-tech cluster centred around Cambridge. His worry is not the markets meltdown that was unleashed by Thursday's vote. A plunge in the value

of sterling, which touched a 31-year-low against the US dollar earlier this week, is likely to help Encocam's bottom line.

Eighty percent of its revenues come from exports - including motorcycles and lightweight panels for high-speed trains - which will now be cheaper for buyers, although the aluminium it imports from Germany and Italy will be more expensive. What worries Ashmead is the likelihood of new immigration rules that could hinder his ability to hire engineers, designers and other skilled workers from abroad. It is a concern that is reverberating among many British employers who have long relied on foreign workers.

Telecoms giant Vodafone has said the continued freedom of movement of people is vital for its choice of location. According to the Office for National Statistics, 2.1 million people from other EU countries and 1.2 million non-EU nationals are working in Britain, compared with 28.2 million Britons.

One of the key pledges of politicians who campaigned to leave the UK has been to introduce more selective immigration rules, responding to widespread

concerns among voters about strains on public services.

It is not clear whether those promises will survive the renegotiation of Britain's entire relationship with the EU as a non-member. Many issues will be on the table, including the rights of UK banks to sell their services in the EU and myriad other trade issues.

The issue of foreign workers promises to be one of the thorniest because migration featured so prominently in the Leave campaign while the free movement of people is a key element of the EU's single market for goods and services - something to which the UK wants to keep as much access as possible.

Ashmead expects it will become too hard to keep on hiring from abroad as his firm has done until now. While most of its employees are British, a quarter come from other EU countries. "We love making things in this country and we will continue operations here, that is for sure," Ashmead said as workers from Poland, Spain and Britain prepared high-tech replicas of human legs for simulations of a pedestrian being hit by a vehicle. "But

we have to have the ability to do it. I need the people who can make it happen."

SELECTIVE OR RESTRICTIVE?

Leaders of the Leave campaign say their planned changes would give priority to immigrants who are most needed by British employers. Under the current system, EU citizens can work in Britain without visas, unlike workers from outside the bloc who often have to pass a complicated application process.

Employers have long complained that they cannot find enough British workers with the right skills to fill their vacancies, especially in areas such as engineering and programming. Recruiting from abroad has been an answer to that problem.

Extending administrative controls to workers from Britain's neighboring countries does not sound promising to Encocam. It took the company 18 months to get a work visa for an engineer from India. The process at one point required three managers to travel to Birmingham to explain how the engineer had skills they could not find among workers locally nor in the EU. —Reuters



NEW YORK: Jersey and footwear for various countries' soccer teams made by Nike during an unveiling event in New York. Sports equipment giant Nike's shares have skidded in disappointment over its sales performance in the face of strong emerging competitors in North America. —AFP

NIKE SLIPS AS SALES DISAPPOINT

NEW YORK: Sports equipment giant Nike's shares have skidded in disappointment over its sales performance in the face of strong emerging competitors in North America. Nike, sponsor of leading world sports names including Real Madrid striker Cristiano Ronaldo, revealed Tuesday a rise in quarterly sales-but it was not as large as investors had anticipated.

"A lot of the initial fears investors had about the increasing competitive landscape, specifically around this quarter, actually came true," said Chen Grazutis, an analyst at Bloomberg Intelligence. Nike, which is up against rising competitors Under Armour and New Balance as well as a resurgent Adidas, suffered a seven percent decline in its share price at one point in after-market electronic trade.

By early Wednesday, the shares were down 2.1 percent at \$50.95.

The sportswear and equipment manufacturer said sales rose six percent from a year earlier to \$8.24 billion in the three months to the end of May. That was slightly below average market analysts' forecasts for revenue of \$8.28 billion, according to Consensus Metrix data cited by Bloomberg News.

Net profit fell 2.2 percent to \$846 million over the same period. In North America, Under Armour is eating into Nike's basketball business thanks in part

to its sponsorship of NBA star Stephen Curry of the Gold State Warriors.

LeBron James hopes

Nike is banking on its NBA megastar LeBron James, who led the Cleveland Cavaliers to a championship this month, to help pull back some of that lost ground. USA Basketball has announced, however, that James will not be on the 12-man USA squad at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

Internationally, Nike faces a strengthening rival in Adidas, which last week said it expected revenue in its soccer business to shoot 12 percent higher to a record \$2.5 billion this year. Nike, by contrast, reported soccer business revenue of \$2.14 billion in the 12 months to the end of May.

Besides stiffer competition, Nike was hit by a stronger US currency, which undercut the dollar-based value of its international sales made outside of the United States. A key investor concern for was a smaller-than-expected 11-percent increase in Nike's "future orders" for athletic footwear in the June-November period, a barometer of expected demand.

Analysts say the outlook is clouded for Nike, which is targeting sales of \$50 billion a year by 2020, up from \$32.4 billion in its 2015-2016 business year to the end of May. —AFP

MICROSOFT KUWAIT REINFORCES COMMITMENT TO GROWTH

KUWAIT: In support of its regional growth and expansion plans, Microsoft Kuwait, recently moved to a larger and more central office, which will accommodate the company's growing team, business, and solution suite. The new office will also feature new amenities for employees and visitors, improved customer experience areas, and room for growth as well.

Charles Nahas, General Manager, Microsoft Kuwait, said: "These are exciting times for Microsoft Kuwait, and our continued growth and expansion has

made us more than double our existing office square footage. Our new spaces are geared towards increased efficiency, improved experiences, and better amenities for our people, which will ultimately lead to better technology consulting and solutions for our customers."

"Kuwait has always been enabling companies including Microsoft to grow and thrive locally by connecting customers to opportunities, enabling businesses to thrive and support economical prosperity. Considering the traction

that we have already built within the Kuwait market, we wanted the move to foster positive impact, and a larger location with more modern facilities will help us achieve this. We have also prioritized our customer experience, and we are confident that our enhanced operational efficiencies will only lead to exceptional value and superior service to our customers and partners," he added. Microsoft Kuwait's new office is located at Arraya Complex, Al-Shuhada Street, Kuwait City, Kuwait.



SAN FRANCISCO: In this Dec 16, 2014, file photo a man leaves the headquarters of Uber. —AP

UBER SOFTWARE TRACKS DRIVERS FOR HIGH SPEED, SUDDEN STOPS

SAN FRANCISCO: Using smartphone sensors to peek over its drivers' shoulders, Uber is promising to keep a closer eye on their behavior - while discouraging speeding or slamming on the brakes. The global ride-hailing company on Wednesday announced an extensive test of new software that aims to increase safety by analyzing data from individual drivers and sending them daily reports about things like sudden acceleration, braking and whether they're holding their phones when they drive.

Trucking companies and fleet operators collect similar information, while some auto insurers offer a discount to motorists who install a data-collection device in their cars. Uber, which is requiring drivers in several cities to participate, is eager to show that it's making safety a priority at a time when some jurisdictions are mulling whether to impose stricter oversight on ride-hailing businesses.

At the same time, Uber is also trying to ease some strains in its relationship with drivers, who work as independent contractors and in some cases have sued Uber over pay and working conditions. Earlier this month, Uber modified its app to give drivers more discretion to reject rides at certain times and to charge passengers who keep them waiting.

New safety program

For now, Uber says it isn't using the new safety program to penalize drivers - or even to reward good driving habits - although the software measures some of the same behaviors that the company says are often cited by passengers when they give drivers a low rating. Repeated low ratings can lead to drivers being suspended from the service.

One part of the new program uses data from the same gyroscope and motion sensors that let smartphone users play

games on their devices. Uber drivers already use a smartphone app to book rides and track their progress via GPS. By adding additional software to the app, Uber says it can measure a car's movement and gauge how fast the driver accelerates or brakes.

The software sends a daily summary to each driver, including a count of how often the driver has sped up or hit the brakes too abruptly. But it's an automated process: Uber says the software's not intended to trigger human intervention in the case of a driver who's dangerously erratic. Instead, the company says passengers should use the "help" button on its app.

San Francisco-based Uber will also use sensors to measure "phone movement," which may indicate the driver is clutching the phone while steering. Since that can be a distraction, Uber says it will notify drivers if it detects excessive phone movement through the day, with a reminder that it's safer to leave the phone in a mounting device. As it tests this program, Uber may also send passengers an email or text, asking if their driver was holding the phone. A third feature will send drivers a notice immediately if they're traveling at excessive speed, although for now, the notice will only be triggered if a car is moving more than 15 miles per hour above the posted limit on highways. A fourth program will send generic reminders to drivers about the benefits of taking a rest break.

Uber says it's testing the new features in a handful of large cities. About half of its drivers in each test city will get the new software, so the company can compare their behavior with the half that don't receive the notifications. After two months, the company says it will evaluate the results and decide whether to expand the programs. —AP

GOOGLE OFFERING NEW WAY TO MANAGE PERSONAL DATA

SAN FRANCISCO: Google is trying to make it easier for you to manage the vast pool of information that it collects about your online activities across phones, computers and other devices. Among other things, a new privacy tool will enable the more than 1 billion people who use Google's search engine and other services to block certain ads from appearing on every device that they log into, instead of having to make a special request on each individual machine.

Some users of Google's search engine, Gmail and Chrome browser will start receiving notices about the new option beginning Tuesday, but it will take several more weeks before it's available to everyone. Google also is introducing a "My Activity" feature that will enable users to delete records of their online search requests and videos watched on YouTube in a single location instead of having to visit different websites or apps.

Longtime practice

Google's business has been built on its longtime practice of monitoring its users' online behavior in an effort to learn about their interests so it can show ads most likely to appeal to them. Those customized ads

shown alongside Google's search results and the content on millions of other websites have turned Google's corporate parent, Alphabet Inc., into one of the world's most profitable companies. In an effort to minimize complaints about invading people's privacy, Google has long allowed its users to impose limits on how much data is accumulated about them and how many customized ads they see.

Last year, Google also opened a "My Account" hub to serve as a one-stop shop for setting privacy and security controls. If they choose, users will now be able to authorize Google to store their web browsing histories in the "My Account" center. Until now, Google had been keeping personal information in different digital dossiers that sometimes require users to take multiple steps to manage specific pieces of data. For instance, someone annoyed by a Google-generated ad on their personal computer can prevent it from appearing again by clicking on an "X" in the corner. Taking that step currently won't block the same ad from appearing on a few hours later. Google says that will no longer happen if users allow it to stockpile web browsing histories in the "My Account" center. —AP

HOW AMAZON'S DASH BUTTONS CAN THWART SMART SHOPPING

DEVICES LETS YOU REORDER PRODUCTS WITH SINGLE TOUCH

NEW YORK: Amazon is expanding its lineup of Dash buttons, its "Jetsons"-style devices that let you reorder a particular product with a single touch. The online retailer says the buttons offer "quick and easy" convenience - but they won't necessarily help you save money. Amazon first introduced the buttons, which bear product logos and attach to household surfaces, around April Fool's Day in 2015. On Tuesday, it added 50 more brands to Dash, including Campbell's Soup, Nerf and V8 vegetable juice, bringing the total number of Dash buttons to 150.

Dash buttons are undeniably simple to use. You set them up with a smartphone via Wi-Fi, and can configure them to send order alerts to your phone in case you need to cancel. You'll need an Amazon Prime membership (\$99 annually) and will get free two-day shipping in the US. But Dash may not always be the greatest way to stretch your shopping dollar. Here's a look at some smart-shopping tactics that can fall by the wayside with Dash.

Stick to a budget

Dash buttons let you choose what size or type of product to order. For example, you can configure a Tide button for any of 14 different products, including a \$13 box of detergent or a \$27 container of 77 Tide Pods. But prices can fluctuate. Mary Hanson-Busch, a medical technologist in New Prague, Minnesota, uses a Dash button for cat litter, and she noticed that the price of a 40 lb. box of Arm & Hammer cat litter changed from \$10.49 to about \$14 between orders. Still, she says the convenience of not having to lug home a box of cat litter is worth a few dollars. "It's so simple and easy to set up," she said. "I do like the convenience factor." If you're not quite sure what you're paying,

though, it's much harder to stick to a budget. The Dash button encourages piecemeal reordering, so it sometimes isn't clear when you'll be paying for what, either.

Avoid impulse shopping

It's an old adage not to grocery shop when you're hungry, but Dash buttons can make it all too easy. If you hit the Pepperidge Farm Goldfish button one day when you're thinking about a snack, you could find yourself a few days later with a 6-pack of cracker boxes that you don't really want. Amazon gives you the option to cancel orders - but you have to log into your account, which sort of negates the time-saving "convenience" of the Dash button. "Impulse shopping is

something we warn against," says Benjamin K. Glaser, features editor for online deal site DealNews.com. "Having a shopping list and sticking to it makes it easier to resist impulses."

Stock up in bulk

Stocking up in bulk isn't a great deal for items like perishable foodstuffs. But you can save quite a bit on products like toilet paper and laundry detergent by buying in bulk at warehouse clubs or elsewhere. A Dash button could make it easy to miss out on savings.

Make price comparisons

Dash buttons are ideal for people who are extremely loyal to one brand. Of course, manufacturers like them for

similar reasons: They help brands stand out on Amazon's site and encourage people to reorder the same thing over and over again. (Amazon cites the ease of repeated orders as a plus.) That's fine if you've discovered the best paper towels on Earth and will never willingly use anything else. But you probably won't be getting the best price, either. "Deal hunters by nature are brand agnostic, and retailer agnostic, and this locks you into both a brand and a retailer," DealNews' Glaser said.

This story has been corrected to fix the spelling of the DealNews editor's last name in the final paragraph. It's Glaser, not Galer. In the second paragraph, the day of the week was corrected to Tuesday, not Wednesday. —AP



NEW YORK: This Oct 8, 2015, file photo shows Clorox and Ziploc Dash buttons from Amazon. —AP

MEDIA FIRMS LOSE CONTROL OF NEWS AS TECH PLATFORMS RISE

WASHINGTON: When allegations emerged that Facebook was skewing its trending news stories, many learned about it... on Facebook. That underscored the rapid shift in media-not only is news moving from print to digital, but Facebook, Google and other tech platforms are increasingly becoming the main gateways for information. Technology and social media firms are increasingly playing a role in filtering and delivering news, often with automated feeds, algorithms and "bots" designed to determine the most relevant articles.

That means the news industry is rapidly losing control of the news along with the revenue that goes with it, underscoring the profound changes in the journalism world. "In the past 18 months, companies including Facebook, Apple, Twitter, Snapchat, and Google have moved from having an arm's length relationship with journalism to being dominant forces in the news ecosystem," said a June report by the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University. "By encouraging news publishers to post directly onto new channels, such as Facebook Instant Articles and Snapchat Discover, tech companies are now actively involved in every aspect of journalism."

As newspapers' financial woes deepen, most revenue from online news in the United States is going to five big tech companies, a Pew Research Center survey released in June found. The poll underscored a changing relationship between readers and the news: unlike traditional newspapers where editors determine the most important stories, social platforms are "crowdsourcing" feeds based on how often their users click on stories.

Global trends are similar. A survey across 26 countries by Oxford University's Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found 51 percent of

respondents indicating they use social media for news, with 12 percent using it as their main news source. Facebook was by far the most important source, used by 44 percent in the total survey.

Quality of news

While some see the development as a democratization of information, a number of analysts say it can dramatically alter the quality of news. News organizations are necessarily joining the wave of social news even if it means a loss of editorial control, says Dan Kennedy, journalism professor at Northeastern University. "You really have no idea what people are going to see and it may be more likely readers will see something rather trivial from your news organization rather than major news," he said.

Nic Newman of the Reuters Institute said in a blog that its survey found "strong concerns that personalized news and more algorithmic selection of news will mean missing out on important information or challenging viewpoints," but noted that "young people are more comfortable with algorithms than with editors." When a former Facebook contractor accused the platform of suppressing conservative viewpoints earlier this year, around one in six Americans learned about it on Facebook itself, according to a survey by the news site Morning Consult.

The allegations set off an internal investigation that found no bias, but Facebook said it would take steps to ensure neutrality nevertheless. The news selection process at Facebook is largely "machine-based," chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg says. "We're a tech company, we're not a media company," she recently told a Washington forum. "We're not trying to hire journalists and

we're not trying to write news." But there is some human intervention, she added, "because without that, every day at noon, lunch would be trending."

Algorithms and values

Even if news feeds are based on algorithms, they are still programmed by humans and thus reflect underlying values, journalism and computer science specialists say. Nicholas Diakopoulos, a professor of computational journalism at the University of Maryland, says concerns are growing about "algorithmic accountability" as news feeds, "bots" and other automated systems become prevalent. "As news organizations implement these things, there are questions about transparency," he said. "It might be interesting to know what data the bot is feeding from or what websites it is monitoring. We need to think about standards for disclosure."

Some news organizations fear that news platforms such as Facebook and Google can "pick winners" and lock out media groups based on their algorithms. Facebook referral traffic to top publishers fell 32 percent after the social giant revised its algorithms, a survey found last year. However, Nikki Usher, a George Washington University professor of new media, says algorithms are not necessarily any less opaque than the processes news organizations use to determine top stories. "Algorithm is a scary word, but people forget algorithms are designed by people," she said. "It is true that Facebook can make or break a news organization depending on how it tweaks its algorithm," she added. "On the other hand, for other players in the news media, there has never really been accountability for the decisions they make." —AFP

CHINA APPOINTS NEW HEAD OF INTERNET REGULATION

BEIJING: The director of China's internet regulator has stepped down and been replaced by one of his deputies, state news agency Xinhua reported yesterday. Lu Wei will no longer head the Cyberspace Administration of China, Xinhua said in a brief report, adding that one of his deputies, Xu Lin, would replace him.

Xu, 53, was in charge of propa-

ganda in China's commercial capital Shanghai from 2013-15 before being moved to Beijing a year ago to become a deputy to Lu, according to his biography. Hong Kong's South China Morning Post said Xu is regarded as a protégé of President Xi Jinping. The two of them worked together when Xi was briefly Shanghai's Communist

Party chief in 2007 before moving to Beijing ahead of his appointment as president.

Xinhua did not say where Lu would go next. It can take a few weeks before subsequent appointments are announced. The Chinese government exercises widespread controls over the internet and has sought to codify

that policy in law. Officials say internet restrictions, including the blocking of popular foreign sites like Google and Facebook, are needed to ensure security in the face of rising threats, such as terrorism. Foreign governments and business groups have pointed to restrictions on the internet as a broader trade issue. —Reuters

DEATHS FROM HEROIN, OPIOID DRUGS IN US RISE SHARPLY

CHICAGO: The Obama administration on Tuesday emphasized the need for funding to treat opioid and heroin addiction, releasing new statistics showing explosive growth in overdose deaths. From 2010 to 2014, the number of heroin overdose deaths in the United States more than tripled, while deaths from opioid drugs such as fentanyl—which killed the singer Prince—almost doubled, according to a new report by the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Drug overdoses now kill more

Americans than car crashes. "The death and destruction connected to heroin and opioids is indeed unprecedented and horrific," DEA Acting Administrator Chuck Rosenberg said in a statement. "The problem is enormous and growing." More than 16,000 died in 2014 alone from heroin and opioid drug abuse. Nearly half a million people that year were addicted to heroin. Heroin and opioid abuse are related. Addiction to an opioid drug such as Oxycodone, Hydrocodone and Methadone—three drugs most commonly

involved in overdoses—can lead to heroin addiction when the prescription painkiller is no longer available. Officials say the phenomenon is fueling drug-related violence and crime. According to the Centers for Disease Control, heroin-related deaths have risen most acutely in the US Midwest—a region encompassing states such as Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

The White House, which is asking Congress for \$1.1 billion to fund treatment programs across the country, sought to underscore the crisis in the

Midwest by inviting officials from Wisconsin to speak with reporters on a conference call. The state is home to House Speaker Paul Ryan, a Republican who will play a key role in deciding the fate of Obama's funding request.

"We find that if we get to the individuals before they become so dependent upon this (that) they either lose their lives or turn to crime, we're going to really, really improve the situation," said Tom Barrett, mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin's largest city. Addicts often have trouble getting

into treatment programs, according to officials, because there are too few of them. When treatment is available, patients often struggle with costs because health insurance programs offer no coverage or inadequate coverage. Bradley Wentland, police chief in the Milwaukee suburb of Greenfield, spoke of one family that lost their retirement savings and took out two mortgages on their home to pay for their son's treatment. "He started at age 16 when a friend shared a single Vicodin pill," Wentland said.—AFP

INDONESIA PLANS MONITORING SYSTEM TO CURB CHOKING HAZE

JAKARTA: Indonesia is planning a hi-tech monitoring network to protect peatland at the centre of last year's raging fires that cloaked Southeast Asia in toxic haze, a senior official said. The fires sent smog billowing across the region in September and October, disrupting the daily lives of tens of millions and fuelling anger at Indonesia for its failure to tackle the crisis.

The blazes and resulting haze, caused by illegal slash-and-burn land clearance, are an annual occurrence. But the fires in 2015 were the worst for years as an El Nino weather phenomenon created tinder-dry conditions. The hardest-hit areas were peatland on Sumatra island and the Indonesian part of Borneo, which become highly flammable after being cleared of vegetation and drained to make way for palm oil and pulpwood plantations.

'Peatland'

Jakarta in January set up an agency to oversee the restoration of 2.6 million hectares roughly the size of Rwanda-of peat in the next five years to try to prevent future fires. It is part of a broader push to stop a repeat of the devastating blazes. President Joko Widodo has introduced other measures to protect peatland and banned the use of new land for palm oil operations.

Restoration of peat involves damming enormous canals built to drain the peat, replanting vegetation and replacing lost

water. Monitoring devices will be installed in the peat to ensure restoration is being properly carried out, said Peatland Restoration Agency head Nazir Foad. "We are going to install monitoring tools, sensors, that will send us the data real time through the Internet so companies are fully aware that their restoration action is being monitored," he told AFP in an interview on Tuesday.

Roughly half the peat earmarked for restoration is on companies' concession land and they are responsible for carrying out the improvement work, with guidance from the agency. The agency will restore peat on government- and community-owned land. The monitoring stations will include an underground sensor and rain gauge to check if peat is retaining water after rainfall, allowing authorities to work out whether drainage canals have been properly closed off.

The sensors will send regular updates to a control centre near Jakarta which is linked to government departments, Foad said. A test monitoring device was installed on Sumatra last month and the agency hopes eventually to have hundreds across the country. Foad conceded that only "very small steps" had been taken so far in restoring peat, but was optimistic the body would be able to fulfill its task. He said he did not believe 2016 would see a repeat of last year's fires as authorities were better prepared.—AFP



PARENTS TOLD TO CONTACT DOCTORS AMID INDONESIA VACCINE SCANDAL

'IF VACCINATIONS NEED TO BE REDONE THEN WE WILL DO IT'

JAKARTA: Indonesian parents were being advised yesterday to consult their doctors and consider re-inoculating their children as a massive counterfeit vaccine scandal sweeps the country. Police smashed a criminal syndicate last week accused of selling fake vaccines for more than a decade to health clinics across Indonesia, a vast archipelago of 255 million people.

Sixteen people, including a married couple believed to have masterminded the scheme, have been arrested over their alleged involvement. They are accused of distributing fake boosters for diseases including tuberculosis, hepatitis B and tetanus.

Indonesia's health ministry is working with police to determine the scale of the problem. The national food and drugs agency has confiscated vaccines from nearly 30 health clinics, but it is not yet known how far the syndicate reached. "We are working with the national food and drugs agency to collect data and take all measures necessary," health ministry spokesman Oscar Primadi told AFP.

"If vaccinations need to be redone then we will do it, it's not impossible." The Indonesian Pediatric Association said parents unsure if their child could be affected should ask their hospital or health clinic about the origin of their vaccines. "If you're still unsure, you can redo the vaccination. It does not have any negative impacts on a child's health," association chairman Aman Bhakti Pulungan told AFP.



INDONESIA: This handout photo shows Agung Setya (L) of the Criminal Investigation Agency of the National Police (BARESKRIM) displaying evidence of fake vaccines, at the National Police headquarters in Jakarta.—AFP

The scandal was brought to light after a major pharmaceutical company alerted Indonesian authorities that some of its products had been counterfeited. The case has caused

nationwide concern and condemnation, with Indonesian President Joko Widodo demanding the harshest punishment possible for this "extraordinary crime".—AFP

STUDY FINDS ZIKA INFECTION LASTS LONGER IN PREGNANCY

WASHINGTON: Researchers infected pregnant monkeys with the Zika virus to learn how it harms developing fetuses - and in a highly unusual twist, the public can get a real-time peek at the findings. Among the first surprising results: While most people harbor Zika in their bloodstream for only a week or so after infection, the virus lingered in one pregnant monkey's blood for 70 days and in another for 30 days.

A bit of good news: Tests with non-pregnant monkeys suggest one infection with Zika protects against a second bout later on. Rhesus macaque monkeys make a good model for studying how Zika infects people, researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison concluded Tuesday in Nature Communications. But what's novel is that the team is posting its raw data online right away - even ultrasound images of developing monkeys that they acknowledged at the time "can elicit stronger emotions than looking at relatively sterile charts" - so that normal-

ly competing research labs can work together to speed discoveries.

That collaboration will help "use as few animals as possible to answer important research questions," lead researcher David O'Connor, a pathology professor at UW-Madison, told reporters. "We hope this will encourage others to make their data available in real time to accelerate the response time to Zika virus and other outbreaks in the future." A handful of other labs have joined in the movement to share their own data from Zika-infected monkeys in real time.

"This is how research should be, especially for emerging diseases that are causing so many problems," said Koen Van Rompay of the California National Primate Research Center at the University of California, Davis. He and O'Connor have begun consulting to avoid duplicating experiments. "We are in a race against the virus, a race against time. We should not be competing against each other," Van Rompay added.—AP

BOOSTER ROCKET FIRES IN KEY NASA TEST FOR MARS MISSIONS

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida: NASA's fireworks came early this year with a successful rocket test in Utah. On Tuesday, NASA fired a booster intended to hoist astronauts into true outer space. The ground test lasted the full two minutes, and the early word is that everything went well. NASA plans to use the mega-rocket for trips to Mars in the 2030s. This is the second and final test-firing of the booster designed for NASA's Space Launch System.

The debut launch from Florida's Kennedy Space Center in 2018 won't carry people. But a few years later, astronauts will climb aboard for a flight near the moon. Tuesday's test was conducted by Orbital ATK, the NASA contractor that also made

the smaller shuttle boosters for NASA. This 154-foot-long booster was horizontal and pointing toward a mountain near Promontory, Utah, when it spewed out flames and smoke - 3.6 million pounds of rocket thrust. Each SLS rocket will have two boosters along with four main engines.

There ultimately will be 9 million pounds of thrust at liftoff, considerably more than the now-retired shuttle, noted former astronaut Charles Precourt, an Orbital ATK vice president. Precourt said the team worked nonstop over the past five weeks to prepare for Tuesday's milestone. "Really a delight," he said. Noted NASA human exploration chief William Gerstenmaier, "We should all enjoy this moment."—AP



UTAH: The moon rises ahead of the second and final qualification motor (QM-2) test for the Space Launch System's booster, at Orbital ATK Propulsion Systems test facilities in Promontory, Utah.—AP

BIDEN HOSTING CANCER SUMMIT TO TRY TO ACCELERATE RESEARCH

WASHINGTON: Vice President Joe Biden will try to give efforts to cure cancer a jolt during a summit in Washington that's casting a spotlight on research and innovative trials taking place across the country. Scientists, oncologists, donors and patients planned to gather yesterday at Howard University for the day-long event, with thousands more participating at related events across the country, the White House said.

Comedian Carol Burnett, whose daughter died of cancer, was to introduce Biden and stay to emcee the summit. For Biden, the conference comes as time is running out to make good on his pledge to double the rate of progress toward a cure before leaving office. After his son, former Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden, died of brain cancer last year, the elder Biden announced he wouldn't run for president but would spend his remaining months in office on a cancer "moonshot."

Yet while Biden had hoped to dramatically boost government activity on cancer, his campaign has run up against the same political and bureaucratic hurdles that have challenged other White House priorities. To fund Biden's effort, President Barack Obama asked Congress for \$1 billion over two budget years for research. Only a fraction has been approved. To that end, Biden has sought to use the time he has to highlight private and nonprofit research efforts, while lobbying the country's leading cancer institutions to collaborate more and better use their resources.

'Moonshot'

Greg Simon, the head of Biden's "moonshot," said the government's role is to harness "the power of the people of the country by focusing them on particular problems." To illustrate what's on the cutting edge for cancer, the Energy Department and the National

Cancer Institute planned to announce new programs to analyze cancer data with supercomputers, plus another computing program teaming up with drug maker GlaxoSmithKline to speed up drug development.

IBM was to unveil plans to donate its Watson supercomputing technology to help Veterans Affairs ramp up its precision medicine program by sequencing the genomics of tumors for 10,000 patients over two years. "Those are the types of partnerships that really start to push things forward," IBM Watson Health Vice President Steve Harvey said in an interview. "We kind of need each other in this journey."—AP



WASHINGTON: In this photo, Vice President Joe Biden speaks in Washington.—AP

PRAYING MANTIS CANNIBALISM EXPLAINED

PARIS: When a female praying mantis bites the head off her sexual partner, it is probably not out of anger. According to a study published yesterday, the mantis' proclivity for devouring her mate may have evolved to better provide for her offspring. In eating the male, a female ensures he continues to provide for their progeny even after death-as food.

"Sexual cannibalism... increases male investment in offspring," said William Brown of the State University of New York at Fredonia, who co-authored a paper published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B. For the study, Brown and Katherine Barry from Australia's Macquarie University fed crickets dosed with traceable radioactive amino acids to male mantises.

They then allowed the spindly insects to mate. For half the males it turned out to be

their final act, while the lucky rest were rescued by their human handlers immediately after pairing. The scientists tracked the flow of radioactive proteins through the bodies of the cannibalistic females, and through their eggs. In females those who ate their mates, "there is an increase in the number of eggs produced subsequent to cannibalism," Brown told AFP by email.

A large proportion of the amino acids were absorbed not by the female, but passed on to the mini mantises. In nature, male mantises are eaten by females in about 13-28 percent of sexual encounters, according to the study. During the mantis mating season, males can make up as much as 63 percent of the female diet. Such behavior, said the team, can "be considered an extreme case of male parental investment."—AFP

ZIMBABWE WILDLIFE BOSS SUSPENDED OVER RHINO HORNS GONE MISSING

HARARE: Zimbabwe's wildlife authority has suspended its head over valuable rhino horns that went missing from secure vaults. Rhino horns are worth thousands of dollars due to demand in East Asia for their supposed medicinal qualities, fuelling a boom in poaching and trafficking in Zimbabwe and neighboring South Africa. Zimbabwe parks and wildlife management authority announces the sending on leave of the authority's director general, Edson Chidziya. The move has been taken to allow for an audit, a statement said. "This follows anomalies in the rhino horn stockpiles amounting to 228 kilograms."

Chidziya has been suspended for two months, the authority said. Zimbabwe has 70 tons of elephant ivory and five tons of

rhino horn which cannot be sold due to a ban by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The country has in the past appealed to CITES to be allowed to sell the stockpiles to raise funds for conservation programs.

The stocks have accumulated from animals that died of natural causes, while some were recovered from elephants and rhinos killed by poachers. Parks authorities say they lack the funds for patrols to fend off poachers. Rhinos are targeted by armed gangs due to the belief in Vietnam and China that ground-up horn cures diseases including cancer. Also believed to be an aphrodisiac, the horn is composed mainly of keratin, the same component as in human nails.—AFP

FDA APPROVES PILL TO TREAT ALL FORMS OF HEPATITIS C

WASHINGTON: Federal health officials on Tuesday approved the first pill to treat all major forms of hepatitis C, the latest in a series of drug approvals that have reshaped treatment of the liver-destroying virus. The Food and Drug Administration approved the combination pill, Epclusa, from Gilead Sciences for patients with and without liver damage. The new drug's broad indication could make it easier to use than five other hepatitis drugs recently approved by the FDA, which are each tailored to different viral strains or stages of liver disease.

Gilead's previous two hepatitis drugs have raked in billions of dollars by replacing an older, less effective treatment that involved a grueling pill-and-injection cocktail. But the company's aggressive approach to pricing has drawn scorn from patient groups, insurers and politicians worldwide. The company said Epclusa will cost \$74,760 for a 12-week course of treatment, or roughly \$890 per pill. That's less than the initial price for company's previous drug, Harvoni, which cost \$1,125 per pill. Gilead's first hepatitis C drug, Sovaldi, cost roughly \$1,000 per pill, touching off a national debate about escalating drug costs.

'Virus develops slowly'

Since 2014, the FDA has approved rival medications from AbbVie Inc, Merck & Co, and Bristol-Myers Squibb Co that have helped curb prices. Hepatitis C affects at least 2.7 million people in US and caused more than 19,000 deaths in 2014, according to the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention. The virus develops slowly over decades and many people don't realize they are infected until signs of liver damage emerge, including yellowish skin, dark urine and fatigue.

Some develop liver cancer or cirrhosis and require a liver transplant, but many die before a match is available. Baby boomers are five times more likely to have the virus than people in other age groups. Gilead's new pill combines Sovaldi with a new drug that attacks the virus using a different mechanism. The daily pill can treat all six genetic subtypes of the virus and cures 95 percent of patients in three months, according to clinical trial data reviewed by the FDA.

The drug is designed to be used in combination with ribavirin, an older antiviral drug. The most common side effects with Epclusa included headache and fatigue, according to the FDA. Although professional medical societies recommend Gilead drugs as first-line treatments for anyone with hepatitis C, a Senate investigation last year found that high costs resulted in less than 3 percent of the potentially eligible Medicaid beneficiaries getting treatment in 2014.

Medicaid is the federal-state health program for low-income people. In 2015, Harvoni was the top-selling prescription drug in the world with over \$18 billion in global sales, according to IMS Health. Sovaldi ranked eighth, pulling in \$6.6 billion in sales. Shares of Gilead Sciences Inc, which is based in Foster City, California, rose \$4.06, or 5.2 percent, to \$82.31 on Tuesday.—AP



WASHINGTON: This photo provided by Gilead Sciences, Inc shows the drug Epclusa.—AP



NEW YORK: In this photo provided by the Wildlife Conservation Society, two humpback whales dive inside what is called the New York Bight, with the New York City skyline in the background.—AP photos

CAN YOU HEAR THEM NOW? NEW BUOY LISTENS FOR WHALE SONGS

'SEVERAL SPECIES OF GREAT WHALES IN NEAR REAL-TIME'

MINEOLA, New York: Scientists have deployed a buoy 22 miles off the coast of New York's Fire Island to monitor several species of great whales in "near real-time." The high-tech acoustic device will eavesdrop on the songs of the whales to better understand and safeguard their movements near two busy shipping lanes entering New York Harbor. "We know they're there, but we know very little about them," said Dr Howard Rosenbaum, director of Wildlife Conservation Society's Ocean Giants Program.

His New York-based organization, in collaboration with the New York Aquarium, has teamed with the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts on the research project. Scientists last week deployed the buoy, which is four feet in diameter with a mast standing six feet above the sea surface south of Long Island. The buoy is connected by "stretch hoses" to a weighted frame that sits 125 feet below on the sea floor. The frame features high-tech listening devices connected to an underwater microphone.

Endangered species

The devices will focus on obtaining data on the sounds of several species of baleen whales because they are endangered, said Dr Mark Baumgartner of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. The data will be transmitted back to scientists in near real-time, for analysis within about two hours, Rosenbaum said. The buoy also will collect the sounds of other whales, but that information will be archived in the listening devices at the bottom of the sea and analyzed when the buoy is retrieved after a year, Baumgartner said. The scientists noted that all whales rely on their acoustic environment to socialize and navigate, and they are vulnerable to underwater noise, ship strikes and fishing gear entanglements.

The research collected could help prevent ship strikes, and may be helpful as the federal government and New York state consider placing a massive wind energy farm offshore in the



WOODS HOLE: In this Nov 9, 2015 photo provided by the Wildlife Conservation Society, Dr Mark Baumgartner of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution stands next to a whale buoy, left, a high-tech acoustic device that will eavesdrop on the songs of the whales.

coming years. The buoy has been placed inside what is called the New York Bight, which features busy shipping lanes and lucrative fishing grounds. The Bight is home to seven species of great whales, including the humpback whale - known for its acrobatics and long, haunting songs - and the blue whale.

The highly endangered North Atlantic right whale - one of the world's rarest whale species - migrates through New York waters, and fin, sei, minke and sperm whales also have been seen or

heard, the scientists said. Similar buoys were deployed off the coasts of Massachusetts and Maine earlier this year, and a Cornell University project has deployed near real-time buoys in shipping lanes near Boston to help protect the animals from ship strikes in that area, Baumgartner said. Scientists around the world deploy listening devices to study whales, but the projects off New York and New England are the only known projects that relay information in near real-time, he added.—AP

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ACICO HOLDS IFTAR PARTY FOR EMPLOYEES

ACICO Industries Co held in presence of its Deputy CEO Eng Ghosson Al Khaled, at Al Raya Ballroom of Marriott Courtyard an Iftar banquet for its employees from all sectors. After welcoming the attendees, Eng Al Khaled expressed her happiness about this gathering which confirms ACICO's keenness to

celebrate with its staff in a family atmosphere. Al-Khaled also stressed on the importance of supporting the human element as it is one of the most important pillars of the Company's success and development. Especially on such occasions which beef up bonds of communication and cooperation among the employees,

and create familiarity and love among them in a way that makes them stronger. Al Khaled did not forget to thank the employees who contributed directly to award ACICO Co as one of the best Arab Companies in term of performance in year 2016, according to Middle East Forbes. It is worth mentioning

this respect that this prize is concerned with high performance of ACICO's different sectors locally and in the Gulf region. Al Khaled confirmed also that ACICO is going on to achieve its aims at all sectors through its distinctive staff that proved that they are the corner stone in confronting the

challenges which ACICO fought for throughout the years. Finally, It is worth mentioning that ACICO is one of the deepest-rooted companies in the industry of different construction materials in addition to ACICO's multiple sectors in contracting and in the hotel sector among many others.





Group photo with International Hotels Group Area General Manager Antoine Flouty, and Director of Convention Sales Kamal Kokash. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

IHG INVITES IWG MEMBERS FOR RAMADAN GHABQA

IHG Area General Manager Antoine Flouty invited members of the International Woman Committee, represented by Ambassadors wives and members of the com-

mittee, to a Ramadan Ghabqa. The event witnessed a marvelous reception by Flouty and Kamal Kokash. There were outstanding Ramadan dishes

from Fauchon which was very much appreciated by the guests. Committee Advisor Narjis Al-Shatti welcomed the guests along with the general manager who thanked them for

attending and congratulated them on the upcoming occasion of Eid Al-Fitr. The Ambassadors wives gave information about how Ramadan is celebrated in their

countries, as informative contests were carried out. Narjis Al-Shatti distributed Qirqaian to cap-off a magnificent night which was enjoyed by one and all.



From right Aishah, Hazel, Nusra Al-Naqi, Meutia, Novenkeo (wife of Laos Ambassador).



Jerry, Madam J, Nusra Al-Naqi, Christine Khraibet.



Narjis Al-Shatti



Kamal Kokash, Aziza Khan, Narjis Al-Shatti and Antoine Flouty.



Rada (wife of Serbian Ambassador), Hazel and Meutia.



Erfinda Gusti and Jerry.



Group photo of IWG members.



Aisha and Rita



Antoine Flouty, Narjis, Dr Ihsan (wife of Sudan Ambassador) and Kamal Kokash.



Antoine Flouty and Kamal Kokash welcome guests.



Kamal Kokash, Hala Yassini, Narjis Al-Shatti and Antoine Flouty.



Guests at the event

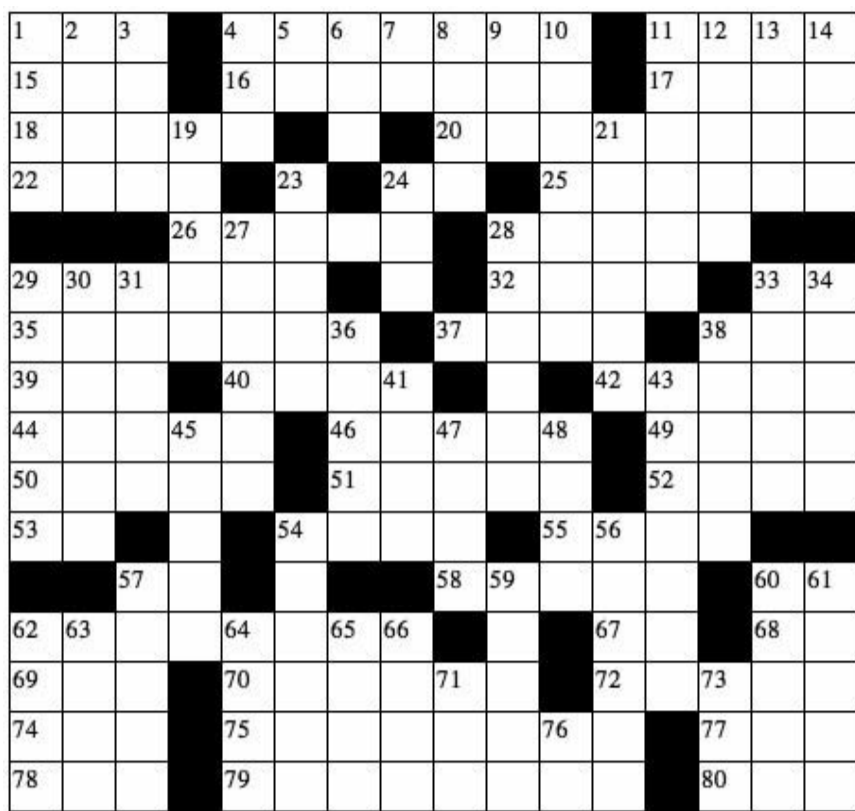


A scene from the Ghabqa activities.



Narjis with Hala Al-Yaseen and the Indian Ambassador's wife and daughter.

CROSSWORD 1300



ACROSS

1. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
4. The tissue (covered by mucous membrane) of the jaws that surrounds the bases of the teeth.
11. A mark left by the healing of injured tissue.
15. A flat wing-shaped process or winkle part of an organism.
16. Relating to or resembling a cone.
17. The lean flesh of a fish similar to cod.
18. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
20. A band of cloth or leather or metal links attached to a wristwatch and wrapped around the wrist.
22. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
25. The agent to whom property involved in a bailment is delivered.
26. Strong lightweight wood of the balsa tree used especially for floats.
29. Keenly excited (especially sexually) or indicating excitement.
32. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
35. A blank leaf in the front of back of a book.
37. A young horse.
39. A small piece of cloth.
40. A small nail.
42. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
44. Capital of Nigeria in the center of the country.
46. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
49. A kiln for drying hops.
50. Realistic Norwegian author who wrote plays on social and political themes (1828-1906).
51. A device (trade name Aqua-Lung) that lets divers breathe under water.
52. Swiss painter influenced by Kandinsky (1879-1940).
53. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
55. (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
58. At right angles to the length of a ship or airplane.
62. Of or relating to studies beyond a bachelor's degree.
67. A state in the eastern United States.
68. The atomic weight of an element that has the same combining capacity as a given weight of another element.
69. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
70. North American bluebirds.
72. Jordan's port.
74. The local time at the 0 meridian passing through Greenwich, England.
75. White Southerner supporting Reconstruction policies after the Civil War usually for self-interest.
77. Light informal conversation for social occasions.
78. An associate degree in applied science.
79. Certainty based on past experience.
80. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
2. (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
3. A cord that is drawn through eyelets or

- around hooks in order to draw together two edges (as of a shoe or garment).
4. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
5. (Greek mythology) A maiden seduced by Zeus.
6. The compass point that is midway between north and northeast.
7. Of or relating to the stomach and intestines.
8. A ballistic missile that is capable of traveling from one continent to another.
9. A unit of electrical power in an AC circuit equal to the power dissipated when 1 volt produces a current of 1 ampere.
10. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
11. The leader of an Arab village or family.
12. South African plant widely cultivated for its showy pure white spathe and yellow spadix.
13. Widely cultivated in tropical and subtropical regions for its fragrant flowers and colorful fruits.
14. A network of intersecting blood vessels or intersecting nerves or intersecting lymph vessels.
19. A clique that seeks power usually through intrigue.
21. An esoteric or occult matter that is traditionally secret.
23. Clear to the mind.
24. Someone who is morally reprehensible.
27. Pertaining to or resembling amoebae.
28. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
30. Lacking firmness or stiffness.
31. Plant-sucking bugs.
33. 'cease' is a noun only in the phrase 'without cease' End v 1.
34. A list of dishes available at a restaurant.
36. A person of Iranian descent.
38. A sedimentary rock formed by the deposition of successive layers of clay.
41. Small European freshwater fish with a slender bluish-green body.
43. A doughnut-shaped chamber used in fusion research.
45. A holy war by Muslims against unbelievers.
47. An ancient kingdom of southern Palestine with Jerusalem as its center.
48. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
54. Flesh of large European flatfish.
56. Washing out a hollow organ (especially the stomach) by flushing with water.
57. A game in which darts are thrown at a dartboard.
59. Muscular strength.
60. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
61. Jordan's port.
63. Avatar of Vishnu.
64. A former communist country in eastern Europe and northern Asia.
65. An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
66. (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
71. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
73. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
76. A radioactive element of the actinide series.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You take an attitude of gratitude today as you move forward with your career plans-loved ones support your ideas. Your system of values may deepen, providing you with a better sense of discrimination and good taste. You will begin to make good choices in the area of investments now. There is a lot of mental energy to complete your plans but there must be a balance maintained so you are not too stressed. At home you get down to the business of cleaning up your act, taking care of loose ends and attending to any details you may have neglected up to now. Health, food and physical condition come under scrutiny and you work to care for these matters. Perhaps you will encourage loved ones to join you in some new and fun daily exercise.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

There could be some restrictions on your activities at work today-you may find yourself pacing the floor much of the morning. Inactivity can be just as stressful as too much activity. Repairing machinery or perhaps taking inventory would be beneficial. Perhaps you could find ways in which you can be of help to someone else. This will speed things along and then you will find a busy afternoon. Your ambitions are admirable but sometimes one has to take small steps before the leaps forward can be beneficial. Things are beginning to look better in the financial realm and this would be a good time to seek financial advice on investments. Honest, frank and to the point, you hate routines and love the outdoors, travel and sports. It is time to consider a vacation.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your outward seriousness and no-nonsense approach to things are obvious to all. This deliberate sense of responsibility comes across and is central to your personality and the way you relate to other people. Everything is run through your check-point to see if it holds up and can pass the test. You can be a stickler with details today. You are driven and passionate in your pursuit of change and inner growth. You possess, at the core, an intensity that burns through superficialities, searching for opportunities to face the truth and render the evident to view. This ceaseless analytical activity, while central to your nature, may be the source of discomfort to others. You will find opportunities to be with your friends this afternoon.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are a solid supporter, always gravitating to the heart of things. You may have trouble getting yourself motivated today, but others had better watch out once you get rolling! You have a stick-to-itiveness that will find you in the thick of things-toughing it out today. This is a good day for accomplishing whatever you set out to do. Lovers, children and other people or things dear to your heart are emphasized now. You may be surprised at those who come forward to show their appreciation of your talents and your hard work. Taking chances can bring big rewards. This can be an expansive, creative and even romantic phase; a time you will look back on with pride and fondness; a camera would be an important item to bring with you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Others may find you especially witty and eccentric at this time. Much of your personal life hinges on pursuing your own growth and success. Your sense of discrimination, the ability to discern gradations and differences, is a crucial element in your personality. Your value system, the way you enjoy and appreciate everything, is a central factor in your make-up. Your inner self and your goals are the most active facets of your personality. There is a need to be the center of attention now with a craving to give and to be appreciated for your gifts. This can be an expansive, creative and even romantic phase; a time you will look back on with pride and fondness. A parent's past experience has a lot of influence on you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

There are plenty of opportunities today for you to choose and move into positive and upbeat circles. You may not have had any idea that your supervisors knew you were talented. You will have a chance to show off your talents and help create new ideas that improve the techniques of many employees you may have never seen. This may also entail the writing down of instructions and perhaps a guide for others to follow. You are very clear and people will find it easy to easily adapt to the routine in the office. This cycle will be marked by a more intense focus on mental and communicative activity than you may ever have experienced before. It's a time of more involvement with other people, a time for gathering information. Finally there will be travel.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are a very feeling person and can sense the drift of a situation without a lot of study or wasted time. This immediate hands-on approach might be contrasted with one that is more deliberate. You could be left with a bit of an inferiority complex when it comes to matters of education, philosophy and conceptual ability. In a word, you revere this kind of stuff, not because it is natural to you, but rather because it may not come easily. You have to work for it-but then you are to be congratulated for aiming high and continuing to stretch and learn. Do not be afraid to promote your own abilities. Feel good about yourself. This evening is a great time to continue in your self-improvement activities, which may mean new clothes or reading a book.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Try not to worry so much-your abilities are much more accurate than you realize. Your general sense of concern for everything makes you valuable when anything needs doing but, if left unoccupied, you have been known to worry needlessly. Given only a few facts, you are able to take in a situation and come up with a real picture of what is happening. So, be realistic and use your worry energy productively. The accent now is toward earning, spending and possessions. You can put a new moneymaking idea into motion. Your sharp communication skills are at a high just now. Your timing should be perfect and those around you should find you most spontaneous and alive. Take a walk this evening and enjoy the out-of-doors.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You have an innate urge to save, salvage and conserve. You could and probably will teach others the secret of your success-whatever that might be. You always want to help, to be of service, and to be fully useful. You hate waste and are very thorough and precise. For the most part, you are accepting. There is a need to be the center of attention this afternoon when you discover an investment you made was a good choice. Careful-you could defeat your purpose. Emotionally, you are hot stuff, rushing into areas and handling subject matters that others would never come near. Vulnerable issues, sensitive areas of the self and psychology are the first places you head. This amounts to a passion with you. Give some thought into how you could help others.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

The support you need is within your reach. This is a good time to solve problems and make important decisions. You will find a way around almost any obstacle and are in control and able to guide yourself with ease. Your sense of inner direction is good and should lead to many opportunities. You bring a sense of value and the ideal to what are otherwise very practical matters. You may find that you would be good management material. You go about organizing yourself and others in order to complete projects today. You have a sense for what the crowd wants along with an astute advertising skill. Everything brings out your unique and unusual qualities. You may discover an admirer today, but be careful not to mix business with pleasure.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You will tend to enjoy socializing at work today. You can always put your ideas into words and describe or analyze situations for yourself and others. Your theories may be fine, but you may lack the patience to let things ripen. Write down your ideas and present them to an administrator instead of talking about them to co-workers. You will get credit for your own ideas and the people in control of business production will appreciate your input. Work on patience; new opportunities are present. Careful attention to finances will help you to see where you do not need to spend money just now. This will ease soon. You have made some discoveries today that warrant attention. You are the center of attention tonight.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There may be confusion today over a professional or career decision. You do not like making career decisions any more than the rest of us-this time you might consider some professional advice. Otherwise, the question at hand could become somewhat more complex. Making your mark on the world has special significance for you. Achievement, ambition and authority take on a greater importance. Organizing and administering people and projects will become central to your lifestyle. This may mean a more prestigious or powerful job or it could mean you now have your own business. The cycle that begins for you now will be marked by a more intense focus on mental and communicative activity than you may ever have experienced before.

WORD SEARCH

Old TV Shows 2

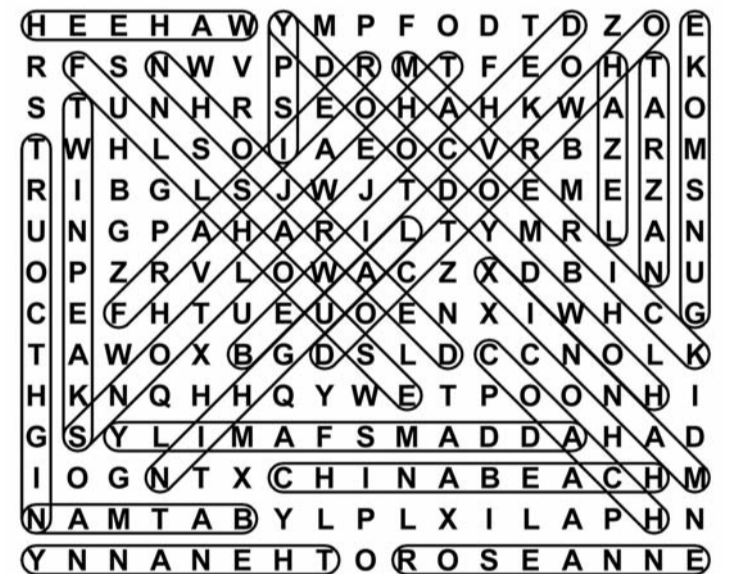
Find the words hidden in the grid of letters.



- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| ALICE | HARRY O | PROFILER |
| ALIEN NATION | HIGHLANDER | RAWHIDE |
| BIG VALLEY | HOTEL | RHODE |
| CHEYENNE | LOU GRANT | RIN TIN TIN |
| CHICAGO HOPE | MAJOR DAD | SILVER SPOONS |
| ELLEN | MASH | THE COSBY SHOW |
| EMERGENCY | MIAMI VICE | WISEGUY |
| GOMER PYLE | PARTY OF FIVE | |

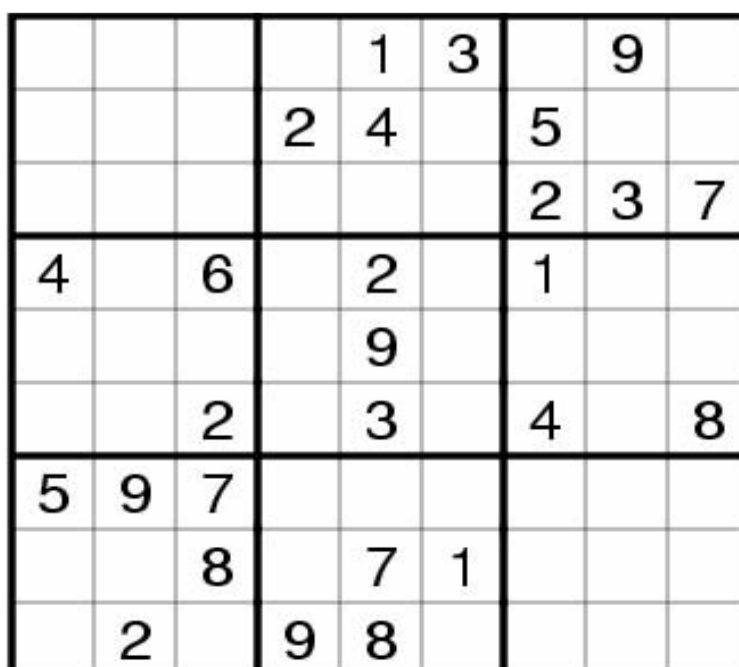
Yesterday Solution

Old TV Shows 1 - Solution

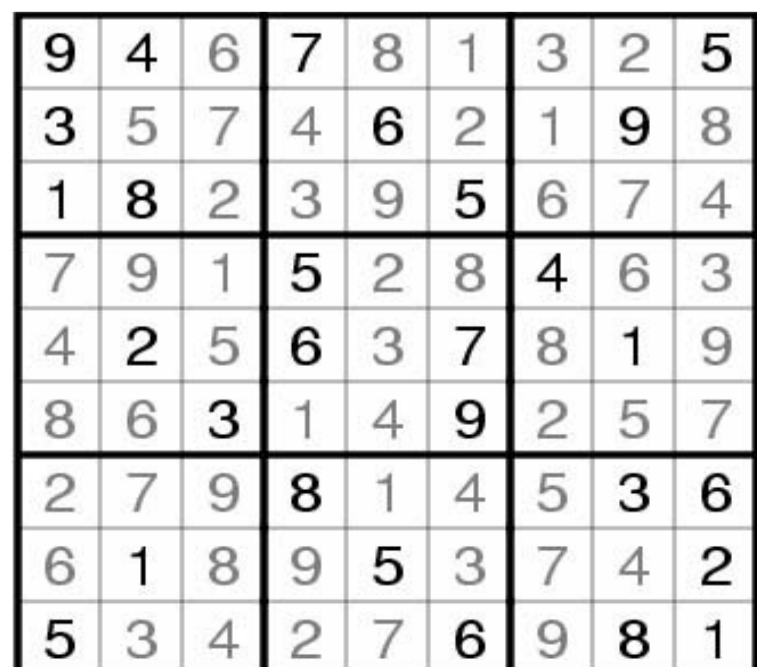


- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| ADDAMS FAMILY | FULL HOUSE | MAVERICK |
| BATMAN | GUNSMOKE | NIGHT COURT |
| BEWITCHED | HAZEL | ROSEANNE |
| CHINA BEACH | HEE HAW | TARZAN |
| COACH | HOWDY DOODY | THE NANNY |
| DEAR JOHN | I SPY | THE WALTONS |
| DOCTOR WHO | LAUGH IN | TWIN PEAKS |
| FRASIER | MANNIX | |

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





Color me!



DID YOU KNOW?



- * Rainbows can be seen not just in rain but also mist, spray, fog, and dew, whenever there are water drops in the air and light shining from behind at the right angle.
- * Sir Isaac Newton identified the 7 colors of the visible spectrum that together make up white light. All of which are present in a rainbow in the order red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet (the acronym or name VIB GYOR is a good way to remember these colors and their order).
- * Most rainbows we see will be a "primary rainbow" whereby the color red can be seen on the outer edge through to violet on the inner edge.
- * The sky within a primary rainbow is brighter than the sky outside of the arc. This is due to the fact that the millions of droplets needed to make a rainbow are spherical and overlap to create white light. At the edge however, these colored discs don't overlap so display their individual colors producing the rainbow arc.
- * A "double rainbow" is where a second, much fainter

- arc can be seen outside of the primary arc. This is caused by the light reflecting twice inside the water droplets. As a result of this double reflection the colors of the second arc are inverted with violet on the outer edge and red on the inner edge.
- * The dark, unlit sky between the primary arc and secondary arc is called Alexander's band, after Alexander of Aphrodisias who first described it in 200 AD.
- * Very rarely, light can be reflected 3 or 4 times within a water droplet which produces even fainter tertiary (third) and quaternary (fourth) rainbows in the direction of the sun.
- * A "moon bow" is a rare lunar rainbow or night time rainbow produced by light from the moon. Our eyes see it as white even though all colors are faintly present.
- * A "fogbow" is formed by cloud and fog droplets, they are almost white with very faint colors visible. Fogbows are quite large and much broader than a rainbow.

AVENGERS WORD SEARCH

J Q J N J W K X D L E I H S H
 F V K N G P A N W C M K L V E S
 A M B E M X Y W K I I Q G E S
 Z L R O H T U A B H V R O L W
 A V E N G E R S N X U L F L N
 V F P N G A Z P K E G R E H Z
 C A P T A I N A M E R I C A C
 A N N W O D I W K C A L B W B
 Q A I P F V I K O L R Y X K Q
 W M C Z N Z R Y M L P Y Y E A
 G N K I S U P E R H E R O Y T
 V O F C F A P G M I Y Z E E T
 V R U V A G E O F U L T R O N
 K I R K L U H E H T C L D J V
 Y N Y C V B Y R T T A T E O H

- Avengers
- Thor
- Loki
- Nick Fury
- S.H.I.E.L.D.
- Iron Man
- Captain America
- The Hulk
- Black Widow
- Hawkeye
- Age of Ultron
- SuperHero

Q: What's a tornado's favorite game?

A: Twister!

Q: What did one volcano say to the other volcano?

A: I lava you!

Q: What bow can't be tied?

A: A rainbow!

Q: What falls but never hits the ground?

A: The temperature!

Q: How do hurricanes see?

A: With one eye!

Q: What did the cloud say to the lightning bolt?

A: You're shocking!

JOKES

Make your own pinata animal

ACTIVITY

What you need:

- * Balloons
- * Newspaper
- * Craft glue
- * White paper
- * Sticky tape
- * Paint
- * Paintbrush
- * Streamers, googly eyes, pipe cleaners - whatever you need for embellishing your animal



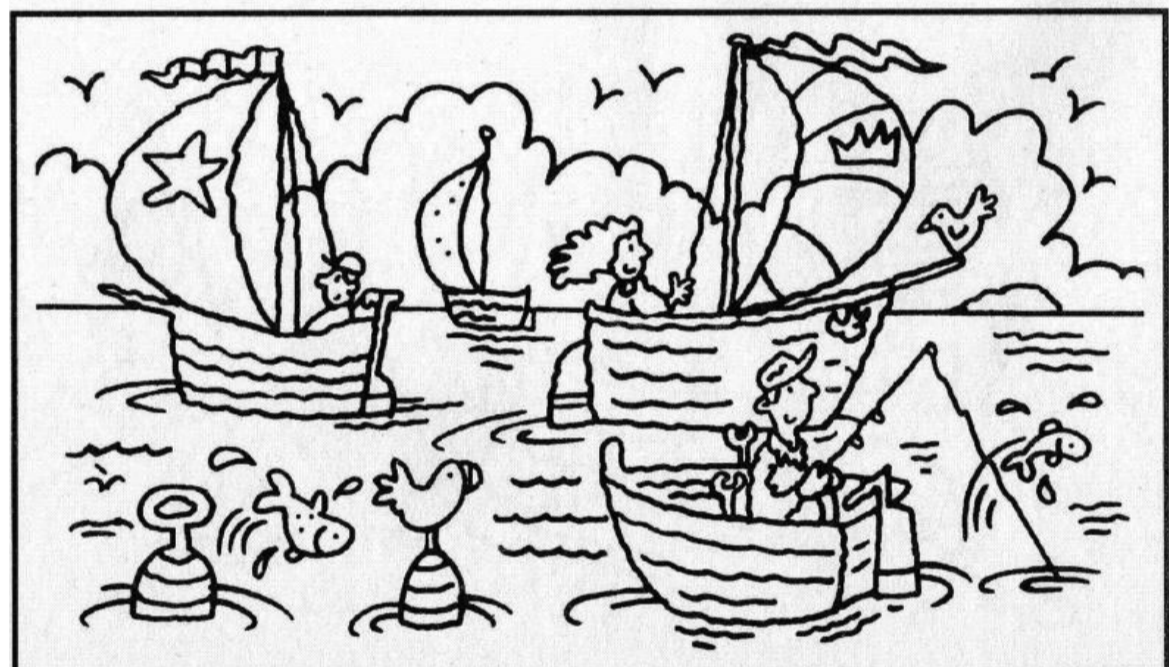
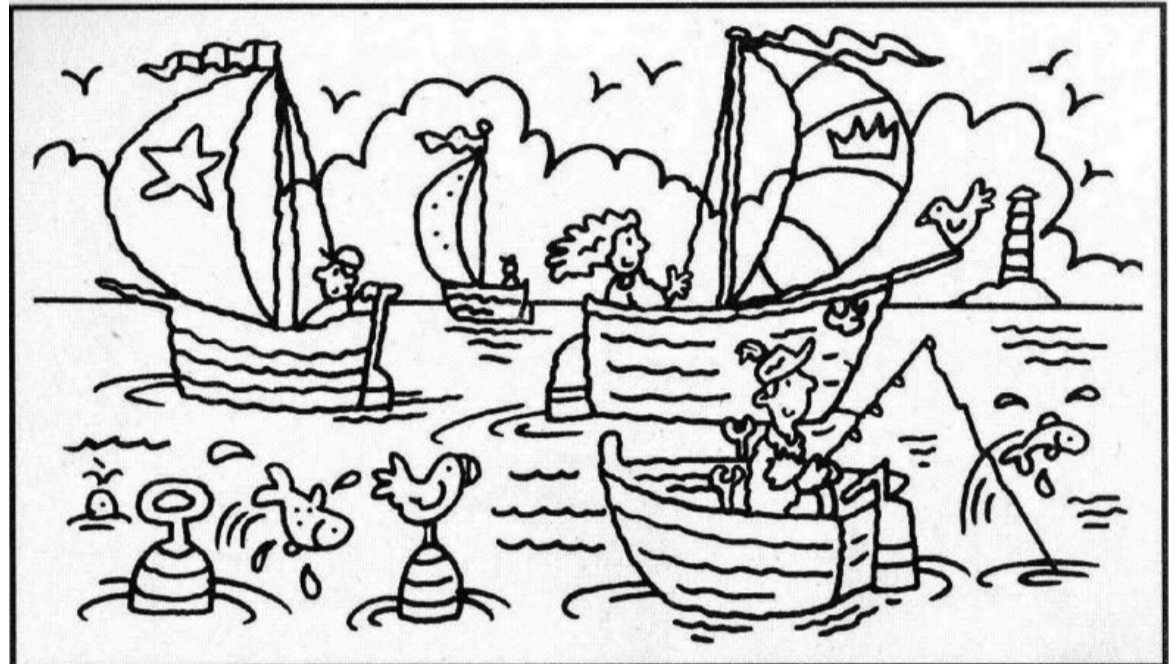
animal you have chosen to make - use cardboard to cut out the shape and stick to the balloon with tape. 3. Tear the newspaper into pieces. Squeeze the craft glue into a small container and water down until it is runny like paint. 4. Apply glue to the balloon using the paintbrush, then paste the pieces of newspaper to the balloon. Try and do one layer at a time until you have built up about four layers.

Activity:

1. Blow up your balloons. It depends on what kind of animal you want to make. You may need a large one for the body and a smaller one for the head. Tie them together, and using a bit of tape secure the head to the body. Or you may need just one balloon, if you are going to make a jellyfish, like we did.
2. To create a tail, ears, beak - or any other small part of the

5. The final layer should be torn white paper, to make painting easier.
6. Set the pinata aside to dry for a couple of days before painting.
7. When the paint is dry, cut a 6cm flap in the top using a craft knife (this will burst the balloon) and fill with treats.
8. Tape the flap closed, string the pinata up to a tree or a clothesline and let the kids smash it open.

Can you spot the 10 differences between these two pictures



SUDOKU

1	2			7		3	6
	4			2		5	
6			5	4	8		
7	6		3		1		5
5						6	
9		2		8			
8				2	5	7	
		1	4				8
	9				3	2	

1	2	5	8	9	7	4	3	6
3	4	8	1	2	6	9	5	7
6	7	9	3	5	4	8	1	2
7	6	4	2	3	9	1	8	5
5	8	3	7	4	1	2	6	9
9	1	2	5	6	8	7	4	3
8	3	6	9	1	2	5	7	4
2	5	1	4	7	3	6	9	8
4	9	7	6	8	5	3	2	1

PEPPER & ONION FRITTATA

KIDS RECIPE

What you need:

- * 3 egg whites
- * 3 eggs
- * 1/2 teaspoon salt
- * 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- * 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- * 1 medium pepper, thinly sliced
- * 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- * 1/3 cup low-fat cheddar cheese, shredded

What to do:

1. Set the oven to broil. Careful, this is a hot-hot setting!
2. Wrap handle of skillet with nonstick aluminum foil.
3. In a medium bowl, mix together eggs, salt, and pepper.
4. Heat olive oil in the nonstick skillet over medium heat.
5. Add sliced peppers and onions and cook until soft, about 8 minutes.
6. Pour egg mixture over the peppers and onions and stir gently with a rubber spatula. Cook for 2-3 minutes, just until eggs begin to



- set on the bottom.
7. Sprinkle with shredded cheese.
8. Use an oven mitten to transfer the skillet in to the broiler. Broil for 3-4 minutes. The cheese should bubble and the frittata should be "set." That means it's not liquid and jiggy anymore.
9. Remove pan from the oven and allow to cool for a minute before slicing into 6 wedges.





Calvin Harris won't date celebrities

Calvin Harris doesn't want to date another celebrity. The 'This Is What You Came For' hitmaker - who romanced Taylor Swift and Rita Ora in the past - has reportedly had a change of heart about relationships after splitting from the 'Shake It Off' singer. A source close to the 32-year-old DJ thinks celebrities are narcissistic and is after a normal girl to share his life with. And Calvin is also said to be shocked that Taylor decided to dump him soon after his car accident and also claims she was so obsessed with her own life and her superstar status that she got annoyed when his plans conflicted with hers, TMZ reports. Meanwhile, Taylor has moved on with Tom Hiddleston and is reportedly already telling pals they are "in love". A source said: "She is having a blast travelling with

him. He is very romantic and attentive towards her. He is extremely charming. He also makes sure she feels safe wherever they go together. "She is on cloud nine and really enjoying this quality time they are spending. She texted her close friends and said, 'I think I am in love and I never felt this way before!'" And 'The Night Manager' star is Taylor's ideal man and "checks off a lot of boxes". An insider shared: "Tom checks off a lot of boxes for Taylor. He's hot, smart, talented, British, everything she's into. What's not to like? She's going with it and why shouldn't she? They have been bonding over the industry, their childhoods, where they are from. It's the getting-to-know-you phase. Taylor is just happy to have the time to meet someone new and move on from Calvin."



Williams mourns Appleton's cat

Robbie Williams has paid tribute to Nicole Appleton's dead cat. The All Saints singer took to Twitter account to reveal her beloved kitty, named Lady Our Kid, has passed away at the age of 19. Nicole bought the pet when she was dating Robbie back in 1997 but when they separated in 1999 she kept the kitty and then when she embarked on a romance with Robbie's pop rival Liam, the pussy lived with her and the former Oasis frontman. The 'One Strike' singer let the former Take That star know the cat had passed in her Twitter post in which, as well as containing a photo of her hugging the moggie, she wrote: "I lost my best friend of 19 years tonight...ladykid..I'm hurting so bad!..@robbiewilliams (sic)" Robbie, 42, has now posted on his own Twitter account, "Here's to you Lady Ourkid. Bless #RIP" followed by a heart emoji.



Nicole, 41, responded to Robbie's tweet with a simple broken heart emoji. Liam, 43, posted his own photo tribute to his feline friend on his Twitter account, simply writing "RIP KID". Nicole retweeted her ex-husband's post, showing that there is no hard feelings between the pair following their divorce in October 2015. The ex-couple's five-year marriage imploded in August 2013 when Nicole dumped Liam - with whom she has 14-year-old son Gene - after it was revealed he had fathered a child with American journalist Liza Ghorbani. Robbie is now married to American actress Ayda Field and the couple have two children, daughter Teddy, three, and 20-month-old son Charlton.



Chloe Grace Moretz has hit back at her Twitter trolls

The '5th Wave' star has slammed her online critics for making hateful comments and has called for those who are "hiding behind keyboards" to stop judging others. She wrote on the micro blogging site: "When will people hiding behind computer screens get tired of calling someone 'fat' or 'masculine' - does it make you feel good typing your hateful comments? Does it fulfill you in some dark way? ... Sit back before you fire away commenting ignorant things and imagine the real HUMAN BEING you are commenting about ... He or she is a PERSON, with feelings and thoughts and a life that you are affecting so negatively ... "I've spent my whole life in front of cameras growing up with miscellaneous people judging and critiquing every little thing about myself and it's time we all stop hiding behind keyboards pretending we know even the smallest thing about the people

we judge. (sic)" Meanwhile, the 19-year-old actress - who is dating Brooklyn Beckham - previously opened up about her own body confidence issues, admitting she wanted a boob job when she was just 16. She explained: "When I was 16, I wanted a boob job. I wanted the fat pad under my chin to be removed. I wanted a butt reduction, or whatever ... "I have had hair extensions. Yes, the reason I have this body is because I work out seven times a week. Yes, I eat really clean - even though I don't always want to, and I definitely cheat. But you're not just born with this." And Chloe - who struggled with cystic acne "for years" growing up - still gets "hormonal breakouts", she thinks eating clean is the secret to a pimple-free face. She added: "I still get my hormonal breakouts. I'll eat pizza and the next day I will wake up with a pimple. I'm like, 'Ah! I knew it. It really is about diet. It really helps eating clean."

Lisa Marie Presley has filed for a divorce

The 48-year-old singer songwriter - who is the daughter of the late music legend Elvis Presley and Priscilla Presley - has ended her 10-year marriage with Michael Lockwood under irreconcilable differences on Tuesday according to TMZ, although the brunette beauty has reportedly listed the date of their separation as June 13. It is alleged the mother-of-four - who has daughter Riley, 27, and son Benjamin, 23, with her ex-husband Danny Keough, and seven-year-old twin daughters Finley and Harper with the 57-year-old musician - wants full custody of her and Michael's children. However, Lisa - who married Michael in 2006 in a traditional Japanese ceremony in Kyoto, Japan - is willing to let the American guitarist visit their children, which will be monitored, although she is not requesting to receive any child

support. And sources claim Lisa has not made the arrangement for financial gains because the pair allegedly have a post nuptial arrangement, which does not detail any division of property. A source said: "She [Lisa] doesn't want any of his money." Lisa - who was previously married to Danny, Michael Jackson for two years in 1994 and Nicolas Cage in 2002 before wedding Michael - has previously admitted the secret behind her fourth marriage was Michael's hands on approach. Speaking previously, she said: "He takes care of everything. He picks the musicians. He gets them ready to tour. "That's how we met, so we kind of knew each other that way and fell in love - you know, by just working together. "I'm just amazed at how much he takes on and how much he deals with and handles."

Kelly Rowland refuses to wear shoes that aren't comfortable

The 'Motivation' hitmaker insists she only opts for footwear that she can walk in rather than what might look nicer as she doesn't want to damage her feet for the sake of fashion. She told ESSENCE.com: "I love shoes but whatever shoe I wear it need to be comfortable - cute, but comfortable. After all, you only get on set of feet!" Meanwhile, the 35-year-old singer - who has 19-month-old son Titan with her husband Tim Witherspoon - previously revealed her Destiny's Child make up made her look like a "monster". She said: "I remember going to Europe and there was this one make-up artist I'm a chocolate girl, and she made me look pink. And then when she tried again, I looked green. And then when she tried again, I looked way fairer than what I really am. I looked like

a monster in one picture." And the mother-of-one recently admitted she was forced to learn how to do her own make up after a "crazy" attempt on her first efforts. She shared: "I remember Destiny's Child went to the Brit Awards, and we tried to do our faces ourselves-I looked crazy. So I had to learn!" And now Kelly is teaming up with her makeup artist Sheika Daley to create a cosmetics line for all women. She added: "My makeup artist Sheika Daley and I are actually starting amake up line we're making sure we make, well, we're starting off with lashes and then we're going to have it grow for all women. "But definitely making sure we have our chocolate girls covered. Gotta get the chocolate girls in there! We have to have that, you know. I think Iman has done a beautiful make-up line and I want to do it too!"



Karlie Kloss can get ready in less than 15 minutes



makeup and a further seven minutes to choose an outfit. She said: "Hm, I reckon seven minutes on beauty. And then maybe another seven on choosing my outfit. I really love sleep, so I tend to do whatever I can to get a lie-in. "I like to keep it simple with just the right amount of 'un-make up make up' - some cover up, a flick of mascara and a bit of cream blush and I'm usually out of the door." And the 23-year-old model also revealed she shares beauty and exercise tips with her close pal Taylor Swift. She added: "Taylor can do a killer red pout. I love her signature beauty look: the classic lip and winged liner. She's really good at doing her own make-up, so I've definitely picked up some good tips and products from her. "I've probably helped her more with different ways to work out, like Pilates or strength training. We're both very healthy and active, so we like to train together." Karlie has a really active lifestyle and tries to work out in some way at least once a day, whether it's heading to the gym or going for a run outside. She told InStyle.co.uk: "I try to break a sweat every day. The best gift I can give myself is actually making it to the gym for an hour, or throwing on my trainers and just going for a run outside. "I get to visit all these amazing places for work, so I always pack them and hit the streets when I can."

The former Victoria's Secret Angel has perfected her early morning routine as she "really loves sleep" and only takes seven minutes to do her



Emma Watson: Walking the red carpet is still terrifying

The 26-year-old actress has been attending glitzy bashes ever since 2001 when she first took her starring role as Hermione Granger in 'Harry Potter' and she admits she still fears walking in front of so many judging eyes. She said: "It's funny because obviously I've been doing it since I was like 10-years-old. But it doesn't ever not feel terrifying. It's just the level of energy and adrenaline and the amount of people and it is a lot of attention in a small place." The brunette beauty also said that she likes to "experiment" and keep fashion "fun" because premieres are another outlet for her creativity. Speaking on Good Morning Britain Wednesday she said:

"I love fashion I always have. I think done right it is such a creative expression. It is really fun, I'm an actress, I love how both can transform you it has a chameleon affect. "I like to experiment and have fun with it. It's kind of like red carpet dressing is otherworldly. You might as well experiment and have fun because it is not every day." Meanwhile, Emma says she wouldn't be able to manage her red carpet attire without the help of the various fashion designers she has worked with over the years including Karl Lagerfeld. She said: "I work very closely with them because there is no way I could organize the amount that goes into it on my own." — Bang Showbiz

Beyonce thanks fans on stage in Sunderland



Beyonce thanked her fans for letting her "evolve and grow" as she brought her Formation world tour to Sunderland on Tuesday evening. The 'XOXO' hitmaker wowed crowds with an electric set list as she took to the stage at the Stadium of Light in north east England. She told the 49,000-strong crowd: "I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. Most of you met me 19 years ago when I was in Destiny's Child. "Thank you for allowing me to evolve and grow. This next song is about the most important relationship we have in our lives and that is the relationship we have with ourselves." The 34-year-old singer - who stunned in a range of costumes including a fitting black sequined bodysuit - also admitted to fans she has had her heart broken before. Whilst introducing track 'Me, Myself and I', she added: "Have you ever had your heart broken? I have." However, Beyoncé angered fans when she appeared 45 minutes late on stage. One wrote: "Beyoncé 45 mins late, fuming! ... We didn't pay over £300 for Beyoncé to be late on stage. (sic)" Whilst another added: "You could never be late to a concert. It is your job. Be on time. Especially when it is raining and freezing cold. Not impressed #beyonce. (sic)" However, others were more sympathetic and just thrilled with the chance they could see her life. They wrote: "45 minutes late but who cares, it's Beyoncé. In Sundays (sic)"



Palestinian composer and singer Moneim Adwan (right) as "Dimna" and Tunisian singer Mohamed Jebali as "le Roi" (The King) perform in the opera "Kalila wa Dimna" yesterday during the International Festival of Lyric Art in the French south-eastern city of Aix-en-Provence. For the first time an opera is being performed in Aix in both Arabic and French languages, based on Arab tales for children. The opera is conducted by Tunisia's Zied Zouari and directed by France's Olivier Letellier. —AFP

'Ghostbusters' backlash reflects Hollywood's sexism problem

An all-female reboot of "Ghostbusters" hits theaters next month amid a savage backlash by Internet trolls that has thrown the spotlight back onto Hollywood's gender discrimination problem. The film's first trailer has become the most reviled in YouTube history, having amassed almost 900,000 dislikes, while director Paul Feig and his cast have been bombarded with death threats and misogyny on social media. "This garbage was made to make Feminazis happy," one Twitter user complained in a broadside typical of the firestorm of abuse.

upcoming "Rogue One" after six consecutive male-led films.

"We are struggling every day to get the word out against that bias. We still get called in the press a 'chick flick' constantly," Feig said. "We're never referred to without the words 'all-female Ghostbusters,' which makes me crazy," he added. "You never talk about the 'all-male Expendables.' It's an uphill battle that I can't believe in 2016 we're having to fight."

The backlash against "Ghostbusters" demonstrates how deeply ingrained the idea remains

annual Celluloid Ceiling study.

The knock-on effect is fewer female characters of any depth or interest on screen. Of 11,306 speaking characters in film and television in 2014 analyzed by the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, two-thirds were male overall and almost three-quarters in feature films. However, the figures suggest the industry is shooting itself in the foot. Female-led films grossed 3.3 percent more than movies with male protagonists in 2014, according to Stacey Smith, director of the school's Media, Diversity, and Social Change Initiative.

Taking risks

At just 25, the Australian actress Margot Robbie is carving out a reputation for picking roles that are anything but shrinking violets, from the feisty Naomi Lapaglia in Martin Scorsese's "The Wolf of Wall Street" (2013) to the villainous Harley Quinn in "Suicide Squad," which comes out in August. "I think people have finally recognized that half the ticket sales are coming from women," she said in an interview about her fiery take on the character of Jane in the upcoming "The Legend of Tarzan." "And if they don't create the kind of roles that women are going to be able to relate to, then they're not going to enjoy watching them as much."

Anna Rose Holmer's directorial debut "The Fits," which played to acclaim at the Venice and Sundance film festivals, could be described as independent cinema's "Ghostbusters." Made almost entirely by women and girls behind and in front of the camera, it focuses on an 11-year-old who trains as a boxer with her brother at a Cincinnati community center while dreaming of becoming a dancer.

Holmer, who wrote the film with Lisa Kjerulf and Saella Davis, feels the gender-bias tide may finally be receding. "But ultimately, the thing that's going to change is if people hire women and people invest in women and people take risks with women in the helm," she said. "That's the only way it changes, and that requires action," she added. "It's very simple and it's possible." — AFP



Feig, who has made his name directing female stars in hits such as "Bridesmaids," was responsible for bringing on board Kate McKinnon, Melissa McCarthy, Leslie Jones and Kristen Wiig for the new version of the 32-year-old all-male original movie. "I've been hit with some of the worst misogynistic stuff you've ever seen in your life over the last two years," he told a recent producers' conference at Sony Pictures headquarters in southern California. "The onslaught that came in was just so chilling." The "Woman and Hollywood" blog noted a similar reaction after the producers of "Star Wars" cast female leads in the latest installment and the

that big-budget, mainstream movies are "the province of males," says Martha Lauzen of San Diego State University's Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film. "Traditionally, they have featured males and been made by males, with a young male audience in mind," she said. "Further, the majority of critics reviewing these films have been male," she added. "Making a reboot of one of these films with a mostly female cast violates this group's sense that this public space belongs to them." Women comprised nine percent of directors and 11 percent of writers working on the top 250 domestic grossing films in 2015, according to Lauzen's

Documentary turns Disney loving autistic man into a star



Owen Suskind had largely retreated into silence in the years after his autism began to manifest, around age 3. Three painfully mute years later, and after countless rapt hours spent watching Disney animated movies, a word broke through. "Juicervose!" His parents, Ron (a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist) and Cornelia, initially thought he was asking for juice. But he wasn't. He was repeating back a line from "The Little Mermaid," a scene he often rewound to watch again, where Ursula the sea witch sings "Poor Unfortunate Souls." She sings, "It won't cost you much, just your voice!" ("Juicervose")

It was just the first phrase from a Disney film that Owen would go on to recite, but it was the first hint of his rediscovery of language. For the Suskinds, it was a lifeline back to their son. A few weeks later, Ron picked up a puppet of Iago, the parrot from "Aladdin," and had his first conversation with his son in years - albeit one doing his best Gilbert Gottfried impression. Roger Ross Williams' documentary "Life Animated," which opens Friday, chronicles Owen's remarkable growth, aided by the colorful, underdog sidekicks of Disney movies. The film, inspired by Ron Suskind's book "Life Animated: A Story of Sidekicks, Heroes and Autism," is both about Owen's impressive maturity and the power of movies, of stories, to connect people across daunting divides.

'Life Animated'

The film has been a hit on the festival circuit where 25-year-old Owen has bounded down theater aisles, high-fiving cheering crowds. Owen, the most ardent of movie lovers, is now a star himself. "I've never experienced anything like I'm experiencing with this film," says Williams. "What I hope is that it not only gives parents hope, but it inspires everyone to realize the potential of people living with autism. There are all these gifts they have to offer to the world," says Williams. "What I hope is that it not only gives parents hope, but it inspires everyone to realize the potential of people living with autism. There are all these gifts they have to offer to the world," says Williams. "What I hope is that it not only gives parents hope, but it inspires everyone to realize the potential of people living with autism. There are all these gifts they have to offer to the world," says Williams.

"Hi Jake," said Owen. "That's also the name of the hilarious, awesome, cool, wise-cracking kangaroo rat from Disney's 'The Rescuers Down Under.'" Owen had what's called "regressive autism," which only reveals itself once a child is a toddler. "Life Animated" captures Owen at a universal crossroads: He's graduating from

school, moving out of his parents' house, finding (and losing) a girlfriend and getting a job at (where else?) a movie theater. He speaks knowingly about why Disney films so resonate for him.

"I live in these characters and they live in me," he says. "It speaks to me. It helps me with my own life, to find my place in the world, to touch a lot of people." In his best-seller, Suskind writes of Owen finding "a language and a tool kit" in Disney films that gave him fables to live by. "He starts with the moral - beauty lies within, be true to yourself, love conquers all - and tests them in a world colored by shades of gray," wrote Suskind. "It's the sidekicks who help him navigate that eternal debate, as they often do for the heroes in their movies." "It says something about the power of story for all of us, that we all need a story for us to survive," says Williams. "It's kind of the lifeblood of human interaction. These Disney films are basically classic fables and Owen was raised on these fables."

Unpolished gem

The normally guarded Disney approved the use of clips from its films for "Life Animated," though it has no involvement in the movie's release. (It's being distributed independently by Orchard.) Suskind's book, however, was published by an imprint owned by Disney. Owen is a fan of recent Disney films like "Zootopia" and Pixar's "Inside Out." But as Williams notes, "Owen likes the classics." He identifies most with sidekicks and has filled sketchbooks with loving drawings, writing: "I Am the Protekter of Sidekicks." His favorite movie, unmistakably, is "Aladdin." "It's fun, magical, colorful, musical, kid-friendly, wacky, hilarious, show-stopping and entertaining," says Owen. "Mostly, it's about accepting who you are and being OK with that, show them that you are an unpolished gem and a diamond in the rough."

In "Aladdin," the title character - a young vagabond - learns that he doesn't need to be a prince to reach his dreams. "I'm not one either," adds Owen. Researchers have begun studying the usefulness of affinity therapy to coax others out from their shell by tapping into their interests. Owen's passion has affected others, too. Gottfried and Jonathan Freeman (voice of Jafar in "Aladdin") are among the Disney voice actors he's met. Freeman cried. "He didn't see the meaning in the film that Owen saw," says Williams. "He said Owen opened his eyes to the beauty of the film." — AP

Tibetan director Pema Tsenden hospitalized after scuffle

Tibetan film director Pema Tsenden has been hospitalized following a scuffle at a Chinese airport, bringing an outpouring of support from fans on social media. Tsenden's producer Sonam said the director was detained Saturday following a dispute over left luggage at the airport in the western city of Xining. The next morning, he was ordered held for five days of administrative detention for causing a disturbance and was taken to a hospital Monday night suffering from a headache, chest pain and other complaints, said Sonam, who like many Tibetans uses just one name.

Airport police did not immediately respond to questions about the case yesterday. Tsenden was a member of the jury at this month's 19th Shanghai



Pema Tsenden

International Film Festival attended by international celebrities including British actor Ian McKellen. The son of nomadic herders, Tsenden is one of the few Tibetans to have graduated from the Beijing Film Academy. His films are rare in that they are filmed entirely in the Tibetan language, earning him legions of Tibetan fans at home and overseas.

Many have taken to Twitter and other social media sites to express their concern over his condition. Tsenden's four films have won acclaim from critics and juries around the world. His second feature, "The Search," was selected to show at the Locarno Film Festival while his third, "Old Dog," won prestigious prizes at festivals across Asia. — AP

Turkish film and TV community reacts to airport terror attack

The three suicide attacks at Istanbul's Ataturk airport, which killed at least 41 people and wounded dozens Tuesday night, sparked fresh fears in the Turkish film and TV community yesterday over the increasing impact of terrorism on the country and the industry. Security concerns have already caused the cancellation of next year's Discop Istanbul TV content market. Basic Lead, the event's organizer, cited "ongoing geopolitical tensions" in the region as the reason for his decision earlier this month. Last year's international section of Turkey's prominent Adana Film Festival was also canceled because of safety concerns.

Over the past 12 months, terror attacks have resulted in more than 200 deaths in Istanbul and Ankara, the Turkish capital. The assault on Istanbul's airport Tuesday is being blamed on extremists inspired or directed by the radical group Islamic State. "These

attacks affect first of all the psychology of the people," said Basak Emre, co-director of Festival on Wheels, which promotes Turkish films. She noted the drop in number of both international guests and local attendees at the Istanbul Film Festival in April. "The reason is fear and anxiety."

Those same worries have also caused a dip in local box-office grosses, as Turkish moviegoers become more reluctant to go into movie theaters, especially multiplexes. But "the film industry is still strong," Emre added, "as the country's screens and film releases continue to increase." On Tuesday night, as the massacre at the Istanbul airport was unfolding, producer Muge Ozen was on the Istanbul set of a Turkish comedy, the as-yet-untitled sequel to "Give Me a Break!" ("Yok Artik"), a local box-office smash.

"The current events affect the potential co-productions and shootings in Turkey in a

very negative way," Ozen said. "It becomes harder and harder to convince international crews to come and shoot in Turkey, where the economic and politic stability, as well as the security conditions are questionable." Russell Crowe's "The Water Diviner" was shot in 2014 in Turkey. So were "Argo," "Skyfall" and "Ghost Rider 2." But that was before the recent spate of major terrorist attacks cast the country in a less attractive light. Turkish artist-auteur Kutlug Ataman, best-known on the international fest circuit for sardonic rural drama "The Lamb," ("Kuzu"), struck a stoic note.

"The best answer to acts of terror is not to become alarmist and go on with the business of daily life and obviously reflecting on life," he said. "This is exactly what I am doing." "People make films, and sometimes even better films, under more difficult conditions. We will certainly overcome these inconveniences and continue telling our stories." — Reuters

Jean Reno set to receive top honor at Karlovy Vary

The Karlovy Vary fest will honor veteran French action thesp Jean Reno with its President's Award in the Czech Republic on July 4, the org has announced. Luc Besson's "Leon" will be screened in tribute to the actor, whose credits also include "Ronin," "Mission



Jean Reno

Impossible" and "The Da Vinci Code."

Fest will also host the European preem of Michael Shannon starrer "Complete Unknown," directed by Joshua Marston ("Maria Full of Grace") and produced by Jay Van Hoy. The trio will all be in attendance at the fest while Van Hoy will serve on the Karlovy Vary main jury. Pic also toplines Rachel Weisz, Kathy Baker and Danny Glover and was scripted by Marston with Julian Sheppard. Story sees Tom (Shannon) started to recognize a woman from his past (Weisz) appear at a dinner party he is hosting with his wife. She initially denies knowing him but soon proves to be a major complication in the couple's life.

Amazon Studios snapped up US rights to the pic at Sundance in January. Amazon topper Ted Hope is also set to attend Karlovy Vary, which unspools on July 1. Fest also announced its closing film, Woody Allen's "Cafe Society," which will wrap the nine-day event, held in West Bohemia, on July 9. — Reuters



This file photo shows Scotty Moore, a former guitarist for Elvis Presley, playing music at the 2nd annual Ponderosa Stomp in New Orleans. — AP

Elvis Presley guitarist Scotty Moore dies at 84

Scotty Moore, a pioneering rock guitarist best known for backing Elvis Presley as a member of his original band and into superstardom, died on Tuesday at the age of 84, the Memphis Commercial-Appeal reported. Moore, who played on Presley's first hit, "That's All Right" ("Mama"), as well as such singles as "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Hound Dog," died in Nashville after several months of poor health, the newspaper said. "We lost one of the finest people I have ever met today," Matt Ross-Sprang, an engineer at the Sun Studio in Memphis said on Instagram. "The guitarist that changed the world ... especially mine; I hope you don't mind if I keep stealing your licks."

Moore, who was born in Gadsden, Tennessee, and began playing the guitar at age eight, was recruited for Presley's band by legendary producer Sam Phillips in 1954, according to Rolling Stone magazine. It was that band, which was dubbed the Blue Moon Boys and also included bassist Bill Black and drummer DJ Fontana, that backed Presley over much of the next decade on the songs that earned him the title of the King of Rock 'n' Roll. Services were scheduled for Thursday in Humboldt, Tennessee, for Moore, who was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2000, the Commercial-Appeal reported. — Reuters

REAL FOUZ

It's better to fail than never trying

One thing I love about a young lady or a woman is independence. Being a woman, I get to see, hear as well as experience many situations that might challenge a woman's strengths, beliefs and goals. Being from the Middle East, I've noticed that in those recent years many women have become stronger, more successful and voiced their opinions, loudly too, and I love it! We've always asked for equality, and when we do we're labeled as sexists, but the truth is asking for equality between women and men is just basic and fair, and to become equal we need to feel like we deserve the same treatment, go through the same issues as men do, but being a woman, do you really want that? I'd like to enjoy the fact that I'm a woman and everything that comes along in the package, like motherhood, parenting, the hormones, the beauty, the physical and emotional grace, all of it. However, the

one thing that always stands out to me when I meet women at events, family gathering, friends and so on, is that one trait that always gets me, independence.

We live in a time where everything is available, where young girls and women are exposed to the good and the bad, we're constantly being told or guided to what we think is the right path, the right education, the right way to look, the right way to work out, what you should look like, how to speak, you name it, but we're rarely ever taught how to become independent, or how to throw ourselves out there, outside of our comfort zone to achieve a goal that people never even considered, or to become someone we want to be, whether it was a certain job, career, to a hairstyle or wardrobe. It can become difficult for some girls to believe in themselves that they can do more than what the people surrounding them are doing or have achieved, and way easier to



take the shortcut and the safest way, which is what everyone else is doing.

Molding your personality

Independency comes from within, to gain the confidence to rely on yourself is powerful, and it starts from within yourself. You need to know who you really are and start reflecting on things, and it can be the simplest of things like agreeing to something you didn't really want to do, or noticing the difference between how you really feel and you behave in front of everyone else in this world, and that gap is the gap that you need to get rid of. Become assertive, if it's something you truly believe in then stick to it, our opinions and beliefs are mostly habitual, which is why we are sometimes afraid of thinking outside the box or questioning how we feel. Soothing yourself and being a good parent to yourself is almost everything you need, don't feel bad for questioning a situation or analyzing a certain decision you want to make, because it's your right to do so.

We're living on this planet to live our lives, not to follow everyone else's lives and decisions. Each and every one of us leads a different lifestyle, thinks through an entirely different brain and biological body, we shouldn't all be doing the same things as if we were programmed. The more you're independent, the more you're exposing yourself to different surroundings, the more you're educating yourself and molding your personality, which then leads to elevating your life, your mentality, your options.

This will also lead you to becoming more confident to trust yourself that you have yourself's best interest. Be yourself, dare to experience, maybe you'll fail at a few things, which is normal, you have to fail to learn, but failing is you actually trying and going for something you wanted, and always, always, follow what your heart wants. It's better to fail than never trying.



'Saq Al Bambo' and 'Been Galbin': Episode 23

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Times is publishing daily recaps of two of the Kuwaiti soap operas airing on Al Rai TV and MBC Drama. Here are the recaps of the 23rd episode:

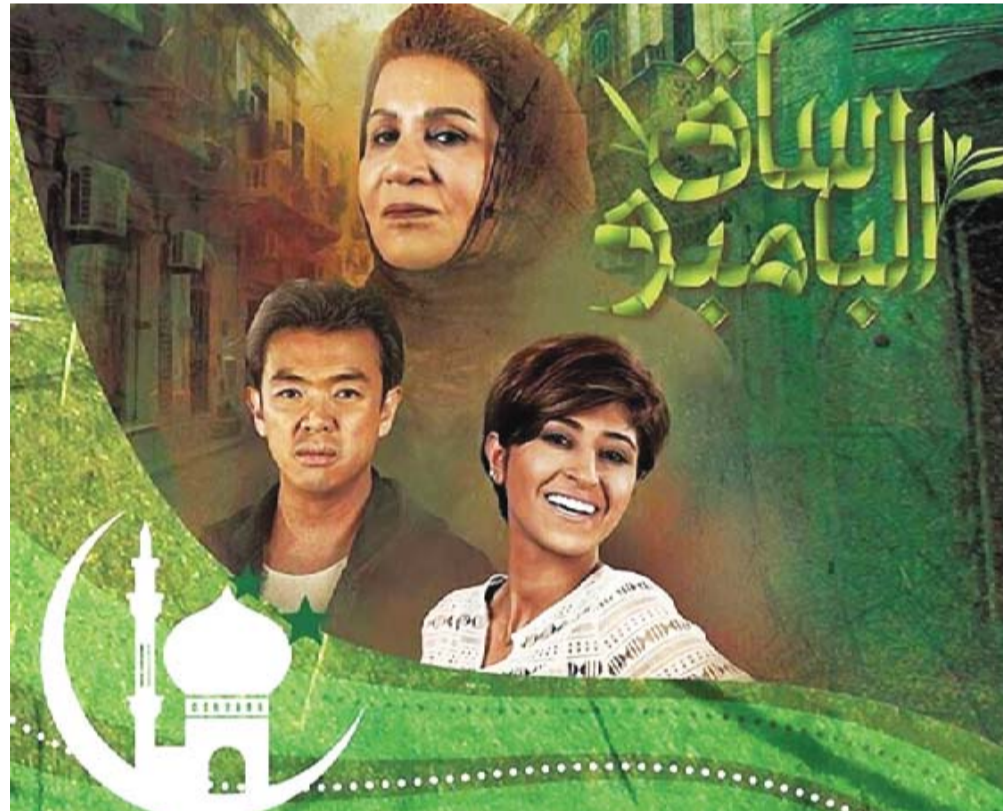
'Saq Al Bambo' (Bamboo Stalk)

It's Eid and the family gathers at Ghanima's house. Her neighbor Jaber calls for their Filipino servant (Eisa) to serve her guests. Ghanima tells Eisa and he replies that he is not a maid. Eisa then massages her feet. Eisa asks Noor if Jaber called her and she denies. He says that Jaber loves her but she thinks that he is just playing around. She asks him to complete the story he started last time they spoke. He tells her about his cousin Merla, and that he loved her but she wanted to be alone.

Eisa calls his mother to ask her if she knew anything about Merla, as he lost contact with her. She tells Eisa that even her mother is worried about her and looking for her. Khawla's mother comes to Ghanima's house to take her daughter to her house after she heard that Eisa, Rashid's son is back from the Philippines and is living in their house. But Ghanima and Khawla refuse. Noor asks Eisa if he loves Merla to which he says that he doesn't know. She then tells him that Jaber called her and that she hates him because she loves someone else.

Been Galbin (Between Two Hearts)

Dana calls Noora and asks her if she is sure of her decision to get married to her cousin Mihsen. She says that she already took her decision. Aryam comes with Bashar to his house for Noora's wedding. She asks Noora to see Bashar's room. There she throws away the frame which



has Bashar and Dana's photo, but Noora stops her telling her to leave as the guests have arrived.

Masoud asks Fareeda for help in convincing Dana to forget her sadness and start a new life with him as he loves her and wants to marry her. Fareeda promises to help him since she thinks they are suitable for each other.

Mihsen tells Noora that he regrets for not waiting for Yasmin to return home after she left, and he wished to go back in time, which is impossible. Noora cries saying that she was a very kind person and she misses her. Aryam is angry that Bashar is still keeping photos of him and Dana in his house and asks him to throw them as Dana is now out of his life.

Spiders are among most effective predators of plant pests

Although many people have a built-in aversion to them, spiders rank as one of the gardener's best tools for biological pest control. They also are one of the few pest predators that don't eat plants. "Spiders eat the (equivalent insect) weight of all the humans on earth annually," said Linda Rayor, an assistant professor of entomology at Cornell University. "A significant percentage of those insects are herbivores or granivores (seed eaters) or other insects that adversely affect humans. Spiders perform a vital function."

There are more than 45,500 known spider species around the world, divided into 110 spider families, Rayor said. "Few of those have a venom that affects us," she said. "The yellow sac spider, the black widow and the recluse. That's about it. And none are aggressive."

Spiders, including black widows, respond to movements in their webs, and that leads to people getting bitten, Rayor said. "Black widows are super common in the desert around the U.S. but you'll also find them in many cities because they have water," she said. "Houses and edges of houses are perfect for black widows. They can build underneath and protect their



This spider photographed while spinning a web in a Langley, Wash., yard, is one of the gardeners best tools for biological pest control. — AP

webs." Spiders use venom to kill or paralyze their prey. They actively hunt or spin webs to trap insects, invertebrates, and even small vertebrates like lizards and frogs. What also makes them garden-friendly is that they don't eat plants, Rayor said. "They'll eat a little pollen, maybe, but that's about it," she said. "They're totally

beneficial to have in the garden."

On the unfavorable side, spiders are generalists in what they hunt and cannibalistic. They feed on other spiders and many beneficial insects, including honeybees and butterflies. Spiders also are not a good choice for taking out specific plant pests in fields or gardens if there's a particular out-

break you're trying to eradicate, Rayor said. "But for reducing all prey abundance in certain areas, they're great." Rather than try to eliminate spiders in or near homes, the knowledgeable, organic-leaning gardener prefers to recruit them. You can increase spider numbers in the garden by:

- 1- Adding more trees, shrubs and perennials to provide anchor points for web-building spiders to spin their webs, said Gail Langellotto, an entomologist with Oregon State University's Extension Service.
- 2- Allowing areas to go untended, or leaving plant stalks standing for overwintering habitat. Many adult spiders emerge in early spring, before most other bio-control resources are available.
- 3- Mulching with grass or wood chips to provide cover and humidity.
- 4- Growing flowers that attract insect prey.

"Even if you want to bring spider numbers down around your property, consider that they're difficult to eradicate with pesticides," Langellotto said.

"The amount and concentration needed is often higher than what's necessary to kill insects, (and that) poses a greater risk to humans," she said. "Heavy doses also will kill a lot of other beneficial insects." — AP

Metulla offers peaceful hike

A frontier town that juts into a hostile neighboring country and has a long history of militants firing upon it doesn't seem like a typical place to seek serenity. But that's exactly what you will find in Metulla, Israel's most northerly point, which is engulfed by Lebanon on three sides but which is home to a nature reserve.

Barbed-wire and electric fences divide the countries and signs warn against approaching the border at almost every turn. Lebanese cars and homes can be easily glimpsed upon from just a few hundred meters away, as well as the yellow flag of the Hezbollah guerrillas flapping in the wind just across the border, a reminder of the bloody war that raged a decade ago and rained rockets on the region.

But all that seems a world away once you enter the Nahal Iyyon Nature Reserve on the northeast corner of town and descend into a narrow canyon along a scenic hiking trail. The track is carved out alongside a babbling stream that includes romantic pathways shaded by droopy eucalyptus trees and breathtaking waterfalls. If you are lucky enough to find yourself alone on the trail, let yourself enjoy the silence, interrupted only by birds chirping, the occasional tractor humming on the Lebanese road above and water trickling through this tributary to the Jordan River. The animal life you'll encounter includes frogs, crabs and large neon blue dragonflies.

The highlight is reaching the third waterfall on the trail and the most majestic. The "Oven Fall" is a 30-meter (100-foot) drop that sends water crashing into a pool below and which over time has created a noted chimney shape to the rock formation. There's a perch from the canyon ridge offering a view of the plunging fall and also a shaded platform at the bottom where the mist will cool you off on a hot day.

The reserve is not without its reminders of the area's troubled history. The entrance is beside a military base



Photo shows the Oven Fall, a waterfall on a trail in the Nahal Iyyon Nature Reserve in Metulla, Israel's most northerly point. — AP photos

and a memorial to 12 soldiers who were killed in a blast during Israel's lengthy military presence in southern Lebanon. The trail begins at the remains of the Iyyon Bridge, which was blown up in the late 1940s by Jewish militias fighting for an independent Israeli state, and passes by the Metulla cemetery, which includes the final resting place of some of the Lebanon conflict's victims.

Still, it all only seems to add to the tranquility of the 90-minute hike through Israel's most northerly nature reserve. If you've got more time to spend in Metulla, there are a few quaint bed and breakfasts, some historic sites and the Canada Center - housing Israel's only official skating rink and hockey center. But if it is quiet you seek, stick to nature where the violence of the past is more easily forgotten. — AP

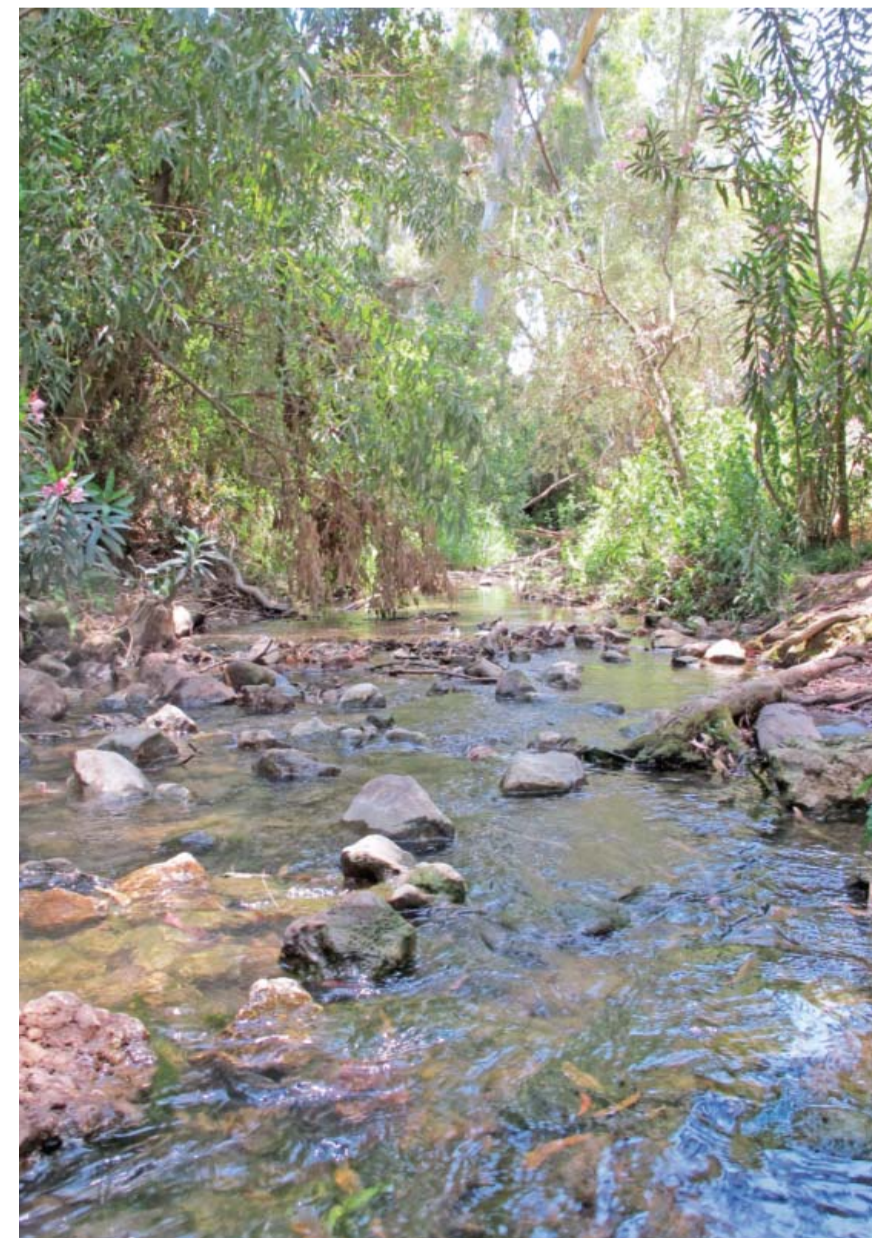


Photo shows the Iyyon stream in the Nahal Iyyon Nature Reserve in Metulla, Israel's most northerly point.



Photo shows a beach house rental home in Rehoboth, Del.



Photo shows people on the beach in Rehoboth, Del. — AP photos

Checklist for that beach house rental: Bring your own tongs

By Linda Lombardi

My husband and I have vacationed at the beach in Rehoboth, Delaware, with our dogs for many years. We always stayed at a pet-friendly inn, except for one weekend at a condo. Nobody told us to



Photo shows the open trunk of a car packed with luggage and supplies for a week at a vacation rental house in Rehoboth, Del.

bring our own bedsheets and towels, though, so an emergency shopping trip was needed before we could go to sleep. This year we rented a whole house for a week, and we knew not



Photo shows grills at a beach house rental in Rehoboth, Del.

to make that mistake again. But I figured there were less obvious mistakes we could make. Here's what I learned, with the help of friends who've done this a lot.

Linens

"Bring towels" seems obvious, but there were a couple things I wouldn't have thought of: Kitchen towels for drying your hands are nice, even if you're not planning to dry dishes, and while this place supplied a bathmat, not everyplace does. Bring your own pillow if you're fussy about that sort of thing.

Kitchen supplies

What's supplied with vacation rental kitchens varies enormously, as do different people's plans for cooking, but here are some general tips. You'll probably have plates, cups, glasses and cutlery. But if you're going to cook, a lot of things that seem basic may not be available. No one leaves their best chef knife at

a beach house, so bring your own knives. Pasta might seem like a simple vacation meal, but you may need to bring a colander. And while our house had both a gas and charcoal grill, there were no implements for cooking on it. The only tongs were made of plastic. We had to poke sausages with regular forks, which is far from ideal. Potholders are also something so basic you don't think about them, but they might not be in the kitchen.

Groceries

The kitchen will likely have some kind of coffee maker but you might want to ask what kind. We brought ground coffee then had to go buy Keurig cups.

If you're a tea drinker, you're probably on your own. If you don't bring a tea kettle, a Pyrex measuring cup to boil water in the microwave will do in a pinch.

Serious vacation house cooks recommended planning menus in advance because you

Photo shows the water and a beachfront home in Rehoboth, Del.



can't count on more than maybe salt and pepper in the kitchen. You can decant basics like cooking oil into smaller jars to save space and money. Bringing foil, plastic wrap or containers for leftovers might save you some frustration. Our kitchen had plastic containers but no lids.

Bathroom and cleaning

We were told to bring paper goods, so we packed toilet paper, paper towels and tissues. Previous guests had left some of each, so we left ours to pay it forward, but you may not be so lucky, so at least don't forget the TP. Many liquid hand-soap bottles were also around, but no bar soap, which is probably thrown out by the cleaning staff. Consider bringing dish soap, laundry soap and maybe a cleaning spray. Remember you won't have a maid coming in daily.

Pets

Packing for your pet for a house is mostly

the same as going to a hotel. Just remember that a "pet-friendly" rental may not be safe for your dog. You probably have trash cans at home that your dog can't get into. At this house, the bathroom trash cans were small enough for our pug to get into. And we were fortunate to discover the easy way that even a 15-pound dog could easily push the screen door open because the latch didn't quite work.

Miscellaneous

It's nice to have a house full of closets instead of everything being crammed into one hotel room. But those closets may not be full of hangers, so if you care about being unwrinkled on vacation, bring your own. Extension cords or power strips for electronics might come in handy, especially if the house is old. My biggest regret was forgetting the lap desk that I use for my laptop, which made it less comfortable to post all those vacation photos to make my friends jealous. — AP



Dubai Skyline



Peles Castle

flydubai announces increased flights to Bucharest



Romanian Countryside

Dubai-based flydubai has announced the addition of two new flights a week between Dubai and Bucharest and will now fly daily to the Romanian capital. "We are delighted to announce our daily flights from to Bucharest," said Ghaith Al Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer of flydubai. "At flydubai, we are committed to expanding connectivity to destinations that have historically been underserved from Dubai. Since the launch of our Bucharest route in 2012, we have witnessed increasing demand from GCC passengers visiting the city and Romanian expatriates using our hub in Dubai to connect and visit family and friends around the world."

flydubai's passenger traffic between Dubai and Bucharest continue to grow year-on-year, and it remains a particularly popular route for Business Class passengers. The airline has seen great demand from pas-



JBR Beach

sengers travelling to Dubai and further afield on the flydubai network,

whether for business or leisure. "The launch of daily routes to Bucharest



will provide greater convenience and connection options for flydubai passengers travelling to Dubai and beyond. Popular connecting routes from Bucharest include Colombo, Delhi, Kuwait, Male', Mumbai and Zanzibar," said Jeyhun Efendi, Senior Vice President Commercial (UAE, EU, ME, CIS) for flydubai.

"Our Business Class offering, which provides passengers with spacious seats, a choice of meals, generous checked baggage allowance and fast track immigration and security, is particularly popular on this route. It demonstrates our commitment to continually innovate and offer our passengers a range of different travel

options and the latest on-board entertainment." flydubai offers its passengers a variety of features on-board including an award-winning inflight entertainment system, comfortable seating and hot meals. The airline recently introduced WiFi connectivity and Live TV for the first time on selected flights as it continues to roll out the service across the rest of its fleet.

Round trip fare

Economy Class return fares from Bucharest to Dubai start at AED 1,300, including 20kg checked baggage, while Business Class fares start at AED 4,235, including 40kg checked baggage.

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 2016

'Ghostbusters'
backlash reflects
Hollywood's
sexism problem

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Shiite Muslims pray on Lailat Al-Qadr (Night of Power) which marks the night in which the holy Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), outside the shrine of Shiite Imam Ali in the holy Iraqi city of Najaf yesterday. — AFP

Exhibit unfolds origami's beauty as large-scale art

Remember those origami cranes you meticulously folded out of tiny slips of paper in elementary school? Imagine them 100 times larger, as a massive swan made out of corrugated board, its swooping wings stretching the length of a room. That piece, "Ruga Swan" by Chinese artist and designer Jiangmei Wu, is one of many large-scale origami artworks in the exhibit "Above the Fold: New Expressions in Origami," at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles until Aug 21. The show opened in January 2015 in Springfield, Massachusetts, and will have been in nine cities by the time it closes in 2020 in Wausau, Wisconsin.

Featuring nine international contemporary artists, the exhibit explores origami, the 1,000-year-old Japanese tradition of folding paper into objects, as much more than small-scale craft. "Everyone has seen the cranes. A lot of people are not aware of what can be done with folded paper in the art world," said the exhibit's curator Meher McArthur. "These pieces are very complex and abstract. It's not what you typically consider origami. They're much more sculptural."

A miniature city

American origami master Robert Lang's "Vertical Pond II" showcases groups of colorful koi fish - sculpted out of 60 uncut sheets of paper - lining a wall. Nearby, his "Pentasia" is made with 500 squares of yellow and gray paper folded, interlocked and stacked like a miniature city. Japanese artist Yuko Nishimura's 3-D, wall-mounted pieces include a complicated display of pleated white circles within circles called "Shine." Based in Israel with his Israeli artist wife Miri Golan, who has three works in the exhibit, British artist Paul Jackson called his untitled piece a reflection on how "notions of front, back, left, right become one during the process of folding."

Hanging from the ceiling, the installation features four panels, two of them showing photo images of the front of his hands, and two showing the back of his hands. Jackson combined digital prints and a folding technique to create the two-sided images.

"Origami is a kind of alchemy, transforming 'garbage' - paper - into objects that are beautiful, clever and cool," mused Jackson. "It is something anyone can do anywhere at any time, regardless of age, gender, faith or background." While McArthur noted that YouTube videos are good resources for origami beginners, Jackson and Golan suggested learning the art from books. They also recommended the website OrigamiUSA.com for local and

global classes, groups and conventions. Newbies can start with straightforward designs such as cranes, boxes and boats using a simple square piece of paper. Golan, like Jackson, discovered origami as a kid. She later founded the Israeli Origami Center, which trains and places origami teachers in Jewish, Muslim and Christian schools, and Folding Together, an

organization showcasing origami as a way to unite Israeli and Palestinian children. She also developed the program Origametria, which uses origami to teach geometry in schools. Each of her pieces in the exhibit, including two scrolls connected by a twisted, pleated, white sheet of paper and resembling both the Jewish Torah and Muslim Quran, took roughly four to six days to complete.

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Personal sides

"The exhibition gives me a chance to bring together my professional and personal sides in a series of works that express my frustrations with the situation here in the Middle East," Golan said. Canadian father-son artistic partners Martin Demaine, 73, and Erik Demaine, 35, both based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, work in a field known as "computational origami."

It's a branch of computer science that studies math algorithms for solving paper-folding problems. The pair's sleek, looping, curving "Destructors" and "Together" sculptures are made of circles of paper that bend according to natural creases and are interwoven through holes in the center of each circle, explained Martin Demaine. "Our work grows directly out of our decades collaborating together in mathematics and sculpture," said Erik Demaine, who joined MIT's faculty at age 20.

Paper is also, of course, vulnerable. Installing, packing and shipping large-scale origami is challenging (issues include humidity). French artist Vincent Floderer takes on the idea of fragility, said McArthur. Made of crumpled and inflated tissue paper, the sea urchin-like creatures of Floderer's "Unidentified Flying Origami" dangle from the ceiling. "These pieces were not made to last," said McArthur. "They're actually made to decompose and be like nature, to be born and then die." — AP



This photo shows Chinese artist Jiangmei Wu's large-scale origami art piece "Ruga Swan," part of the national traveling exhibit "Above the Fold: New Expressions in Origami" at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, and runs through Aug 21. — AP photos



Photo shows French artist Vincent Floderer's crumpled and inflated fine tissue paper origami art piece "Unidentified Flying Origami".



Photo shows one panel of British artist Paul Jackson's untitled four-panel origami art piece of his hands, part of the national traveling exhibit "Above the Fold: New Expressions in Origami".

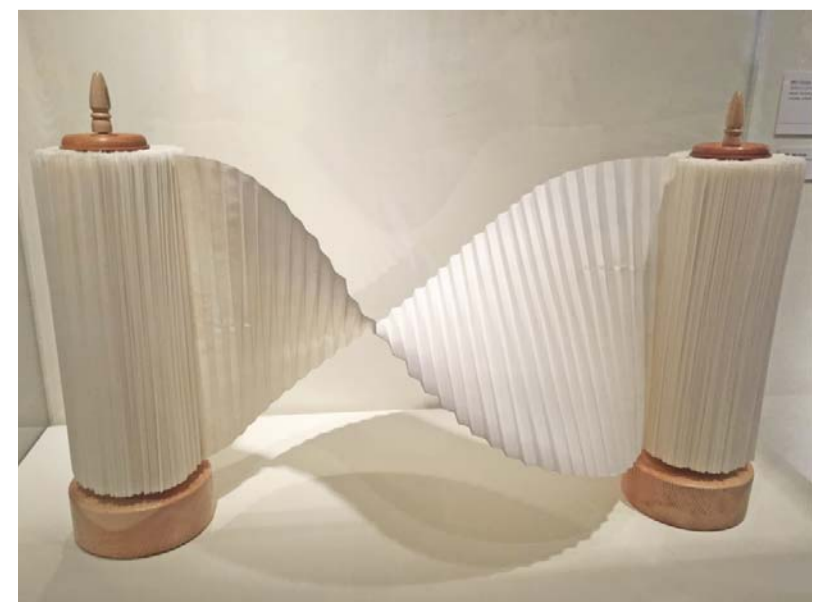


Photo shows Israeli artist Miri Golan's origami art piece of holy scrolls connected by a pleated sheet of paper.