

No injuries in blaze at Hawally transformer



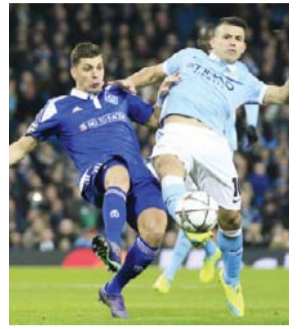
Mass killer Breivik makes Nazi salute as he sues Norway



Suu Kyi close aide voted Myanmar's next president



City qualify for Champions League quarterfinals



150 FILLS
NO: 16815
40 PAGES

SUBAIH GRILLING DELAYED, DASHTI IMMUNITY LIFTED

ASSEMBLY OKS RECOMMENDATIONS ON BEDOONS, ELDERLY BILL



Min 18°
Max 25°
High Tide 05:59 & 16:38
Low Tide 11:10



KUWAIT: Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi is welcomed by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah upon his arrival at Kuwait international airport yesterday on a two-day official visit. — KUNA (See Page 2)

KUWAIT: The National Assembly decided yesterday to delay the grilling of Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih to today's follow-up session. MP Saleh Ashour had filed an interpellation motion against the minister on issues related to privatizing cooperative societies and purported manipulation of financial allotments for orphans, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported. Subaih is also Minister of State for Planning and Development.

Following the session, MP Abdullah Al-Turajji announced intentions to file yet another grilling motion against Subaih tomorrow. The lawmaker accused the minister of 'failure to enforce the law' that penalizes those who hinder national unity, not being up to her position's responsibilities and having negative attitudes towards the Assembly.

Turajji explained that the minister "stood still and did nothing" when a senior social affairs ministry official allegedly posted some 'racial comments' on his Twitter account. "Accordingly, we have to be up to the responsibilities stipulated in the constitution to avoid our silence being taken as an excuse for further violations," he stated.

On Ashour's grilling, Turajji said that he would attempt to evaluate Subaih's arguments during the debate today before making his decision whether to support or oppose the grilling accordingly. "Regardless of the result of Ashour's motion, I am filing mine (tomorrow morning)," he emphasized.

Also during the session, the parliament approved the public prosecution's request to strip MP Abdulhameed Dashti of his parliamentary immunity.



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Planning Hind Al-Subaih gestures during a session at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Continued on Page 13



DHAKA: Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman, who resigned yesterday, addresses a press conference yesterday. — AP

B'DESH BANK CHIEF QUILTS OVER \$81M CYBER HEIST

MAN IN MANILA GETS \$30M CASH

DHAKA/MANILA: Bangladesh's central bank governor resigned yesterday over the theft of \$81 million from the bank's US account, as details emerged in the Philippines that \$30 million of the money was delivered in cash to a casino junket operator in Manila. The audacious cyber-theft has embarrassed the Bangladeshi government, triggered outrage in the impoverished country and raised alarm over the security of the country's foreign exchange reserves of over \$28 billion. The rest of the money hackers stole from the Bangladesh Bank's account at the New York Federal Reserve, one of the largest cyber heists in history, went to two casinos, officials told a Philippines Senate hearing into the scandal.

They said a mix of dollars and Philippine pesos was sent by a foreign exchange broker to the ethnic Chinese junket operator over several days, a haul that would have been made up of at least 780,000 banknotes. Unknown hackers last month breached the computer systems of Bangladesh Bank and attempted to steal \$951 million from its Fed account, which it uses for international settlements, but the bank's security systems and typing errors in some requests prevented the full theft. They managed to transfer \$81 million to entities in the Philippines.

Bangladesh Bank officials have said

there is little hope of apprehending the perpetrators and recovering the money would be difficult and could take months. In Dhaka, central bank governor Atiur Rahman said he had resigned to set an example in a country where there is little precedence of accountability and to uphold the image of the institution. The government also fired two deputy governors of the bank, Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith said, days after blaming it for keeping the government in the dark about the theft.

Rahman, who held the bank's top post for seven years, told reporters he resigned voluntarily. "I submitted my resignation to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina ... tears rolled out from her two eyes," he said. Rahman's exit could be a blow to Bangladesh, a South Asian nation of 160 million. The country has been aspiring to reach middle-income status, and Rahman was seen as one of the driving forces helping Dhaka towards that goal. Under the former development economics professor, the country's foreign exchange reserves have increased four-fold to \$28 billion and he also sought to ensure farmers and women entrepreneurs had better access to banking services and credit.

Rahman defended his record at the central bank, saying he was proud of his achievements there.

Continued on Page 13

RUSSIA JETS RETURN FROM SYRIA

KNPC CLOSE TO \$3BN LOAN TO PART-FUND REFINERIES' REVAMP

DUBAI: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) expects to close the first phase of funding for its multi-billion-dollar Clean Fuels Project with local banks as soon as the first week of April, the state oil refiner told Kuwait News Agency yesterday. Part of the country's KD 30 billion (\$100 billion) economic development plan, the Clean Fuels Project will upgrade and expand two of the Gulf Arab state's largest existing refineries with a focus on producing higher-value products such as diesel and kerosene for export.

KNPC was in advanced talks with local conventional and Islamic banks to secure a KD 900 million loan of 10 years duration, Chief Executive Mohammed Al-Mutairi was quoted as saying in a statement to the state news agency. National Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Finance House were helping to arrange this part of the funding, the statement said. Negotiations were also underway to secure further financing from international banks which would be guaranteed by the export credit agencies of South Korea, Japan, Britain, Italy and the Netherlands.

No figure for this portion was given, but the statement said the expected completion of talks was scheduled later this year. Sources told Reuters in April 2015 that KNPC was in talks with banks to raise as much as \$10 billion for a period between seven and 10 years to fund around 70 percent of the total project cost.

Continued on Page 13

MOSCOW: The first of Russia's warplanes to leave Syria received a hero's welcome back home yesterday, starting a surprise withdrawal the West hopes could boost peace talks by pressuring Damascus. Despite the initial pullout, a monitoring group said Russian helicopters - and likely warplanes - which are still in Syria had pounded Islamic State group positions as regime troops pressed an advance. UN peace envoy Staffan de Mistura described the withdrawal announcement as a "significant development" for negotiations that began in Geneva on Monday in the

latest push to end the brutal conflict as it enters its sixth year. "We hope (this) will have a positive impact on the progress of the negotiations," he said in a statement.

President Vladimir Putin on Monday ordered the "main part" of Russia's forces out of the war-torn nation, but the Kremlin denied it was trying to pressure its long-time ally President Bashar Al-Assad. Russia will, however, keep a contingent at its air and naval bases in Syria and a senior official said strikes against "terrorist targets" would continue.

Continued on Page 13



VORONEZH, Russia: A Russian pilot receives a hero's welcome on returning from Syria at an airbase near this Russian city yesterday. — AP

1503 SHIPWRECK FOUND OFF OMAN



Divers excavate the wreck site of Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama's ship Esmeralda, which sank in a storm in May 1503 off the coast of Al Hallaniyah island in Oman's Dhofar region. — AP

DUBAI: The 500-year-old wreckage of Portuguese ship piloted by an uncle of explorer Vasco da Gama has been found off the coast of Oman, archaeologists said yesterday, a discovery that included the recovery of an incredibly rare coin. The Esmeralda sank during a violent storm near Al-Hallaniyah Island in the Indian Ocean in May 1503, killing commander Vicente Sodre and all those aboard.

Beginning in 2013, a team from the British company Blue Water Recoveries and the Oman Ministry of Heritage and Culture explored a site in the island's Ghubbat ar Rahib Bay. They later determined the debris found there came from the long-missing ship, one of two lost in the storm from da Gama's second voyage to India. Among the stone shot, ceramics, a bell and other debris, divers discovered an incredibly rare silver coin called an Indio, of which only one other is known to exist today, said David L Mearns, the director of Blue Water Recoveries. The coins were forged in 1499 after da Gama's first voyage to India, which helps date the wreckage, he said.

Continued on Page 13



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi are seen during the official reception ceremonies.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, in presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi attend a lunch banquet held in Hadi's honor.

AMIR, YEMENI PRESIDENT HOLD OFFICIAL TALKS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the visiting Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and his accompanying delegation, at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was present at the meeting.

After the reception, official talks were held between the two sides. The Kuwaiti side was chaired by His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and senior state's officials. The Yemeni side, meanwhile, was chaired by the Yemeni President and his senior officials.

Yemen's legitimacy

The talks shed light on the latest developments in Yemen and stressed the importance of supporting the country's legitimacy, security and stability. The talks also tackled promoting bilateral ties in all domains. Later, His Highness the Amir held a lunch banquet in the honor of the visiting Yemeni President and his accompanying delegation.

President Hadi accompanied by senior officials arrived to Kuwait yesterday starting a two-day official visit. He was welcomed at the

airport by His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

The eminent guests are accommodated by an honorary mission headed by the Amiri Diwan Advisor, Khaled Al-Flajj. President Hadi is accompanied by Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Abdulmalak Al-Mekhlafi, Finance Minister Munser Al-Quaiti and other ranking officials. Later, the visiting Yemeni President received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the PM Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah and Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled at the guests' residency section at Bayan Palace.

State officials

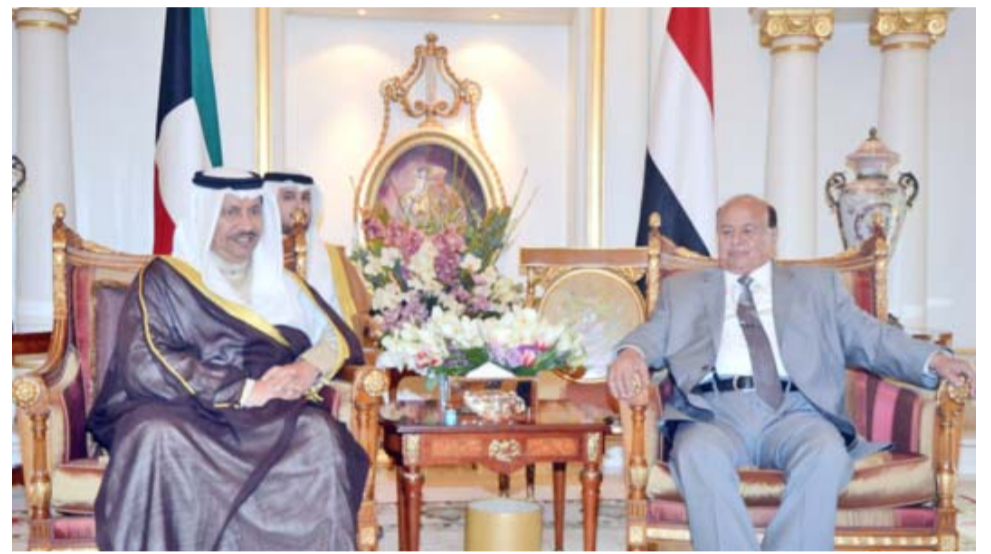
Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister, as well as Deputy Chairman of the Ruling Family Affairs, Dr Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah welcomes Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

Outstanding students

In other news, His Highness the Amir will patronize and attend today the 2014-2015 graduation ceremony for outstanding students of the Public Authority for Applied



Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Education and Training (PAAET) at the College of Basic Education Theater in Al-Ardiya. Meanwhile, the opening ceremony of the Second Conference for Business Schools of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Universities, organized by the College of Business Administration (CBA) at Kuwait

University, will be held this morning under the patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince. Minister of Education Dr Bader Hamad Al-Essa is set to represent His Highness the Crown Prince at the event, to be convened at the Conference Center at Shuwaikh Campus. — KUNA



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets the Assembly's assistant secretary general for the guards affairs Major General Khaled Al-Wqait and first batch of women guards serving at the Parliament headquarters. — KUNA

SPEAKER UNDERSCORES FEMALE SECURITY'S ROLE

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem hosted yesterday the first batch of female security guards serving at the parliament's headquarters.

Speaker Ghanem addressed the female guards, including two officers and two non-

commissioned officers, to be responsible in performing their duties, be committed to cooperation and discipline while coordinating with their fellow male guards.

The presence of the female guards at the National Assembly headquarters has

become necessary for tighter security at the premises, he said. The women guards were presented to the Speaker by the National Assembly's assistant secretary general for the guards affairs Major General Khaled Al-Wqait. — KUNA

SOMALI FM THANKS KUWAIT FOR 'RELENTLESS SUPPORT'

KUWAIT: Somali Foreign Minister Abdusalam Omer yesterday thanked Kuwait for its relentless support for his country for more than 20 years. The State of Kuwait is supporting Somalia in many fields including education, transport and social affairs, Omer told a press conference on the occasion of his visit to the country.

He said he had the opportunity to meet

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Omer described relations between Kuwait and Somalia as strong, and this was manifested during his meeting with His Highness the

Amir. He said he and Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled discussed ways of encouraging investment in Somalia, and the opening of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Mogadishu.

Omer called on Somalia's friendly countries to open embassies in Mogadishu to further contribute to fighting extremism and terrorism. He and Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also discussed Kuwait's hosting of an international conference to support education in Somalia. "This is one of the most important initiatives (by Kuwait) because education is the most important weapon against extremism," he said.

Omer said Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) has recently offered USD two million to the Somali universities. Talks with the Kuwaiti officials, he added, also dealt with means of creating jobs for the Somali youths, and relations between Somalia with Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. He said they agreed to reschedule the Kuwaiti debts on Somalia.

Omer, meanwhile, said Somalia was making progress in the face of extremist separatists but was in need of political and economic support. He said economic growth in Somalia was 7.3 percent last year, and there were many investment opportunities. Omer said Somalia was in the process of writing a new constitution, forming a government and electing a new parliament. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Somali Foreign Minister Abdusalam Omer (center) attends a press conference held on the occasion of his visit to Kuwait. — KUNA

KUWAIT CONDONES POLITICAL SOLUTION IN SYRIA: DIPLOMAT

GENEVA: The debacle in Syria will not peter out in the absence of a decisive political solution that would reinstall peace and stability in the country, said a Kuwaiti diplomat yesterday. Addressing the UN Human Rights Council, Kuwait's delegate to the UN in this city, Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim, said Kuwait was appreciative of the work of the UN-sponsored fact-finding commission in Syria and shared with its anxiety over the rampant arrests of civilians, forced disappearances, and the kidnapping of children to be conscripted to armed gangs of fighters. He stressed the conviction that Kuwait condemned all violations of human rights in Syria as stated by a report from

the commission, saying that Kuwait was committed to the unity and sovereignty of Syria.

Kuwait, he said, has launched numerous undertakings to bring international humanitarian support to the Syrian people, culminating in hosting four donors conferences, three of which took place in Kuwait. Up to \$17 billion were pledged at the donors conferences, Kuwait paying so far \$1.3 billion of the pledged amount, said Ghunaim, noting that His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah brought attention to the fact that Syrian refugees ought to have access to health care and proper education. — KUNA

FOREIGN MINISTER PATRONIZES FIRST CITIZENSHIP CONFERENCE

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah will patronize the first citizenship and development association conference. The event takes place today starting at 7 pm, at Kuwait National Library of Kuwait's grand hall.

The two-day event, chaired by Dr Sheikha Maymona Khalifa Al-Athbi Al-Sabah, will include a number of workshops



Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled

and lectures presented by a group of experts and specialists on the topics of citizenship concept, besides values of decent citizenship.

They will also tackle the role of civil society in citizenship and development, and means to improve education, besides improvement of oil services in the governmental and private sectors, and development of industry and media. — KUNA



KFH SPONSORS PAVILION OF DIABETES UNIT AT AVENUES

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) sponsored the pavilion of the Al-Amiri Hospital's diabetes unit at Avenues as part of its social role and interest in the medical field.

The pavilion was heavily visited by the mall goers where over 1000 people benefited from the services and medical consultations it offers. The mall goers were granted the chance to test their blood glucose levels, while receiving important preventive tips. The pavilion was equipped with high-end medical equipment and highly qualified medical staff, in addition to a number of leaflets and brochures to educate people on the implications and consequences of the disease.

It is noteworthy that KFH spares no efforts in supporting all institutions, official bodies, and medical centers involved in fighting against dia-

betes and preventing its danger as part of its social responsibility. The bank participates annually in the world diabetes day and takes part in several activities meant to increase awareness, yet in solidarity with the diabetic patients around the world.

In addition, during the last years, KFH had sent scholars to international diabetes institutions, including a center that is affiliated with Harvard University, in order to shed light on the latest efforts and researches in the field of diabetes, not to mention the means of limiting the spread of the disease, and the means to overcome it.

Furthermore, KFH was the first bank to sign an international agreement with International Diabetes Federation IDF that has over 200 associations working under its umbrella in the diabetes field in over 160 countries.



KUWAIT: Firefighters tackle a blaze at a main power transformer in Hawally yesterday.

NO INJURIES IN HAWALLY TRANSFORMER BLAZE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A power transformer caught fire near a private school in Hawally yesterday morning, but no injuries were reported. Firefighters from three different fire stations arrived to the scene located at the Zarqaa Al-Yamaha Street shortly after the blaze was reported. They immediately evacuated the area and tackled the flames. The fire was brought under control shortly afterwards. Necessary procedures were carried out and power was restored to the affected buildings in the area, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported quoting a Ministry of Electricity and Water statement. An investigation was opened to determine what caused the main transformer to catch fire. Separately, a fire broke out in a car in Riqqa. Mangaf fire center responded and put out the fire. No injuries were reported.

Ex-cons arrested

Ahmedi police arrested two ex-convicts - a Kuwaiti and a Saudi - following a hot pursuit.

A police patrol asked the motorist to stop because the car did not have a license plate in the front, but he sped off instead.

The patrol went after the car and rammed it, and the driver and his passenger were chased on foot until they were caught. Thirty five tablets were found with the Saudi, while the Kuwaiti had eight cases against him - 10 years for possessing weapons, 3 months for dishonesty, five years for liquor and drugs, arrest for using drugs and three cases of debt to communications companies totaling KD 1,628.

Crackdown in Wafra

Ahmedi police carried out a campaign targeting Wafra farms under the supervision of acting assistant undersecretary for general security Major General Ibrahim Al-Tarrah and command of Director General of Ahmedi Security Department Brig Abdullah Al-Mulla. Mulla said several cars were spotted being driven by reckless drivers on major streets, scaring citizens in the process. He said the



Sports cars impounded during a security campaign in Wafra.

vehicles were videotaped by helicopters and with tires for replacement of worn out ones. The campaign resulted in impounding 29 sports cars and two vehicles driven on two wheels, in addition to a vehicle loaded



Abandoned cars removed

Kuwait Municipality's public relations department said the general cleanliness and

road occupancy department in Jahra carried out a field campaign that resulted in removing 198 cars from Jahra industrial area, 160 warnings were issued, while 18 citations were issued to stores in the area.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFS) and EQUATE Petrochemicals signed a cooperation protocol in various fields related to coordination and training. The protocol includes development of cooperation between KFS and Equate in the field of responding to emergencies, readiness for risks, preventing fires, training courses, exchanging expertise and other topics. The protocol was signed by KFS Acting Director General Major General Khalid Al-Mikrad and EQUATE's CEO Mohammad Hussein. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun



CBK TAKES PART IN JOB OPPORTUNITIES EXPO

KUWAIT: As part of its community service activities and efforts to support Kuwaiti youth who are looking for outstanding job opportunities in the banking sector, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently took part in the 21st 'Economy Makers and Job Opportunities Exhibition'. The event was organized by Kuwait University's College of Business Administration and attended by the college's Dean Dr Jassem Al-Mudhaf, Graduates Training Supervisor

Dr Abdul Rahman Al-Taweel, the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs' Assistant Undersecretary for Youth Projects Shafiq Al-Sayyed Omar, as well as students. In this regard, CBK's Human Resources General Manager Mona Al-Abdul Razzaq said that CBK was keen on taking part in the exhibition because it demonstrates the best means of communicating with ambitious new graduates seeking job opportunities in banking.



KUWAIT: Zain announced its sponsorship for the 'Kuwait Al-Khair' charity bazar organized by the 'Help Your Muslim Brother' charity foundation of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO). Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih, IICO Chairman Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq and head of the 'Help Your Muslim Brother' charity foundation Nasiba Al-Mutawa attended the event.

NO WORK PERMITS FOR CO-OPS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Manpower Public Authority yesterday suspended the issuance of work permits for co-ops until further notice, said the authority's PR and media manager and official spokesperson Aseel Al-Mazyad, noting that the authority would issue work permits co-ops had already applied for before the suspension.

Salmiya homeowners

Municipal Council member Yousef Al-Ghareeb reiterated calls on the state to repossess residential areas in Salmiya, which include houses inhabited by citizens, in order to end home owners' sufferings for good. Ghareeb added that the Hawally committee had filed a proposal on this concern to the Municipality a year earlier.

"Salmiya includes three residential blocks inhabited by Kuwaiti families and those blocks are overlooked by tall investment buildings that have been annoying citizens and disturbing them," he said, adding that citizens were also fed up with traffic congestions resulting from the large number of bachelors living there. In other news, Municipal Council member Nayef Al-Sour said that a meeting was held yesterday with representatives from the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) and Kuwait Municipality to discuss a project on releasing the land located to the west of Abdullah Al-Mubarak to hand it over to the housing authority. Separately, Municipal Council's Vice Chairman Meshaal Rashed Al-Jowaiseryan stressed that following its meeting yesterday, the council recommended referring all transactions that had not been reviewed since

2013-2014 to various committees for study. Jowaiseryan added that the council's office stressed the necessity of responding to all transactions in accordance to law number 5/2005.

New technology

Assistant Undersecretary for Road Engineering Affairs at the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) Ahmed Al-Hessan said that new construction technology was used at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Causeway project for the first time in the GCC. Hessian explained that the new technique involved using on-site preparation of concrete blocks to be used in the bridge construction without having to use any support underneath, adding that this technique would be ideal for construction above water passages and highways.



TRAFFIC WEEK EXHIBITION OPEN AT AVENUES



KUWAIT: The Unified Gulf Traffic Week Exhibition opened at The Avenues mall under the patronage of Assistant Interior Ministry Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs and Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the week Major General Abdullah Al-Muhanna, in the presence of participating Gulf delegations. Muhanna toured the stands and inspected the traffic department's booth and its role in ensuring the success of the week.

In Brief

INTERIOR OFFICIAL ARRIVES IN MEXICO

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry's Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahad arrived in Mexico City yesterday, heading a high-level delegation. Fahad is to hold talks on bilateral security relations, including training and countering terrorism, with senior Mexican security officials, said Sameeh Hayat, Kuwait's Ambassador to Mexico. The four-day visit is to further witness the signing of four security agreements, Ambassador Hayat noted. — KUNA



KUWAIT DEVOTED TO HUMAN RIGHTS

CAIRO: Kuwait is strongly committed to all mechanisms and international standards concerning the human rights field, including ways to enhance them, Kuwait Foreign Ministry Assistant Deputy Talal Al-Mutairi said Monday. Mutairi made his remarks on the sidelines of a workshop on the Arab charter and laws regarding human rights, at the Arab League, stressing that Kuwait was one of the first countries to join the Arab charter for human rights, and will submit its first report soon. — KUNA



NO DEVELOPMENT WITH DEPLETING RESOURCES

KUWAIT: The Arab Towns Organization (ATO) marked yesterday its 49th anniversary under the theme 'No sustainable development with resources depletion and migration continue,' Secretary General Ahmad Al-Subaih said. The theme goes in line with the current events and developments in the Arab region, which impede development plans and programs, and in the meantime open the door wide for forced migration and depletion of natural and human resources, Subaih added in a press statement on Monday. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Kuwait was affected yesterday by a depression that increased wind's speed and created a dust haze around the country. Today's weather is expected to be mostly sunny with 'light variable wind,' according to the Kuwait Meteorological Department.— KUNA photos

ORPHANS' WELLBEING 'PROMINENT FEATURE' OF KUWAIT'S CHARITY: AMBASSADOR NAJIM



KUWAIT: Ensuring orphans' wellbeing is one of the prominent features of Kuwait's charity work, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tanzania Jassim Al-Najim stressed yesterday. He made his statements after leading a delegation from Zakat House in a tour around a few charity projects in Tanzania. Zakat House is currently sponsoring around 290 orphans; this number might go up to 320, Najim said.

Meanwhile, Zakat House envoy Mohammad Hassan Al-Failakawa said that regular visits are being made to follow up on projects set in East African country. On Monday, Kuwait and Tanzania discussed bilateral ties that have been developing in various domains.

Bilateral ties were discussed by Tanzanian Foreign Minister Augustine Mahiga and Ambassador Najim. Mahiga lauded Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic and Development and various charity bodies for setting up many projects in his country. — KUNA



DODOMA: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tanzania Jassim Al-Najim tours charity projects in Tanzania. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Sheikha Awrad Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (center) attends the press conference. —KUNA

KUWAITI PEOPLE 'PROFOUNDLY PASSIONATE' ABOUT CHARITY WORK: SHEIKHA AWRAD

KUWAIT: The general supervisor of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Islamic center, which is planned to be built in Canada, Sheikha Awrad Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said yesterday that the people of Kuwait have always been "profoundly passionate" about charity work.

Sheikha Awrad said, in a joint press conference with Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Martin Morrow, that they're continuing to receive donations from people, particularly after setting the cornerstone of the center. They expected the first stage of building the center to be over during the current year.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Morrow praised Kuwait's humanitarian role and its charity work, which crossed borders to reach as far as the edges of the earth. Kuwait charity endeavors resulted in global recognition that led to the UN-honoring of Kuwait as a humanitarian center and the naming of His Highness the Amir as a humanitarian leader.

Morrow added that building the Islamic center in her country will be a good opportunity to bridge the gap for coexistence between all religions and different cultures, expressing hope that the center would be completed soon to serve many of the Muslim communities there.

The center will be placed near Catholic and Protestant churches, which represent the vast majority of the population of Canada. The current mosque accommodates about 300 worshippers only, but after the completion of the center, it is expected to host around 12,000 worshippers. The \$55 million center will contain a mosque, a school, and a large multi-purpose hall. — KUNA

KRCS LAUNCHES KIDNEY DIALYSIS PROJECT FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) launched yesterday a kidney dialysis project in Lebanon, among its humanitarian efforts to help the Syrian refugee patients. KRCS's head of volunteers department Dr Musa'ad Al-Enezi said that the project included treatment for Syrian refugee patients for a six-month period and providing appropriate medical equipment such as dialyzers in coordination with Orange Naso Hospital, Tripoli, and the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC).

Enezi pointed out that dialysis treatments

are costly for these Syrians who face difficulties in securing such treatment prompting the KRCS to continue this project, pointing out that the Society presented a modern device for dialysis. Since the eruption of the Syria crisis, the KRCS has been active offering assistance to thousands of refugees all over Lebanon. A KRCS delegation is visiting Lebanon to extend humanitarian aid for Syrians throughout Lebanese territories, offering help to the refugees all year round. — KUNA





CAIRO: KFAED Director General Abdulwahab Al-Bader (left) and Egyptian Minister of International Cooperation Dr Sahar Nasr sign the loan agreement. —KUNA

KFAED HELPS FUND POWER PROJECT IN EGYPT

CAIRO: Egypt and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed yesterday a loan agreement by which Egypt receives a loan for KD 30 million from KFAED to fund a power station in the city of Hilwan, south of Cairo.

The total cost of the power station, when completed, will be KD 489 million. KFAED's loan covers about 12.2 percent of the total cost of the project, payable over 25 years at a 2 percent interest rate, plus 0.5 percent for administrative fees. KFAED's loan is the 41st loan given to Egypt. The previous 40 loans totaled KD 720.6 million and went to finance numerous projects.

Moreover, KFAED advanced 11 grants to Egypt worth KD 2.98 million to finance economic projects. KFAED also directed two grants from the government of Kuwait to the government of Egypt worth KD 4.8 million for building schools that had been damaged by an earthquake in 1992 and for repairing damages to villages affected by flood waters in 1995. —KUNA

KUWAIT, UAE LEAD GULF STATES IN OFFERING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

DUBAI: Kuwait and UAE outperforms other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in offering job opportunities, being the only two nations in the Gulf region not facing a drop in jobs demand since beginning of 2016, a specialized economic report said yesterday.

The regional branch of US Monster Company specialized in recruiting people in Kuwait and UAE continued registering the best performance in offering job opportunities among all Gulf nations, in Kuwait and UAE, especially in the fields of medical care, education, and information technology, it said.

The growth of demand on jobs in Kuwait reached 21 percent last February, while UAE scored 45 percent compared to last December, it added. The medical care domain comes at the top of most demanded jobs sectors in Kuwait and UAE, followed by information technology, it said.

Meanwhile, the oil sector suffered a drop in demand on jobs by 11 percent since the beginning of 2016, it mentioned. The medical care domain is one of the most growing in the Gulf region recording annual growth rates since last August, exceeding 47 percent, it said.

On the other hand, the financial banking series and insurance sectors reached negative results at the level of employment in general in the Gulf region for the second consecutive day. The amount of Gulf investment in the medical care field is expected to reach \$19.5 billion by 2020 to hit an annual growth rate of 12.7 percent. —KUNA

FOOD SAFETY CONFERENCE KICKS OFF

KUWAIT: The 2nd Kuwait Food Safety Conference (KFSC) kicked off yesterday with the participation of several international experts and specialists in the field. The conference coincides with the start of implementing stipulations of the Sustainable Development Summit, held at the UN headquarters in September 2015, Ministry of Health Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs Dr Majda Al-Qattan said in an opening speech. She hoped the conference would come up with significant recommendations concerning the development and updating of policies and procedures to counter challenges facing food safety.

Meanwhile, deputy head of Administration of Food and Nutrition at the Ministry Dr Nawal Al-Hamad, said that the conference targets the core issue of food safety in Kuwait. She noted that the Administration is tasked with monitoring and following up on procedures to guarantee safety of food in the country, especially through spreading awareness.

Dr Hamad pointed to the dangerous consequences of consuming high level of sodium and saturated fat in processed food, such as in hotdogs, noting that specific terms should be placed to regulate entry of these products. The event will be associated with a large fair of Kuwait's major companies specialized in nutrition, in addition to a pavilion for the best awareness design on food safety. —KUNA

MIDEAST RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS ESTIMATED AT \$75 BILLION: AUTHORITY

KUWAIT: Proposed renewable energy projects in the Middle East and North African exceed in value \$75 billion, said a leading expert in the field. President of the Preparatory Committee of the Sixth Conference and Exhibition of Renewable Energy in the Middle East and North Africa, (MENAREC6), Dr Saad Al-Jandal, said in a press release yesterday that the upcoming conference, due in Kuwait on April 4-6, would tackle latest renewable-energy innovations, rising production and proposed investment projects in the field. The sixth session of the conference, to be hosted by Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), would bring together some 400 energy officials and experts from Middle Eastern and African countries. The conferees will discuss for three days most prominent global experiences in the renewable energy field. —KUNA

KUWAIT SEEKS TO TAP SOUTH KOREAN'S URBAN EXPERTISE

SEOUL: Kuwait's visiting Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul met yesterday with South Korean Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport Kang Hoin in Sejong City. During the meeting, Abul was briefed on South Korea's expertise in urban development and establishing and managing smart cities.

During his visit to several Korean cities, the Kuwaiti minister got familiar with the different infrastructure utilities in several cities, mainly Seoul and Sejong, as well as the second generation of smart cities. The minister's accompanying delegation includes representatives of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, the Supreme Planning Council, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority. The Kuwaiti Housing Ministry signed a memo of understanding for expertise swap with the Korean infrastructural ministry in September 2014. —KUNA



SEOUL: Kuwait's Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul presents a memento to South Korean Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport Kang Hoin. —KUNA

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Cyprus threatens to block EU-Turkey migrant deal

HISTORIC VOTE GIVES MYANMAR FIRST CIVILIAN PRESIDENT IN DECADES

THOUSANDS OF MAIDS IN HONG KONG ARE IN 'FORCED LABOR'
 NEW REPORT FUELS GROWING CRITICISM

HONG KONG: Tens of thousands of foreign maids in Hong Kong are in "forced labor", according to a new report that fuels growing criticism of the city's treatment of its army of domestic workers. The study by the Justice Centre estimates that one in six, or 50,000 of Hong Kong's more than 300,000 migrant domestic workers—mainly from Indonesia and the Philippines—fell into the "forced labor" category.

Its findings come after a report by the UN Committee Against Torture in December urged Hong Kong authorities to reform laws in order to protect victims of forced labor and trafficking. The plight of the city's domestic workers was also thrown into the international spotlight by the high-profile abuse case of Indonesian maid Erwiana Sulistyansih, whose Hong Kong employer received a six-year jail sentence last year. The new report defined forced labor as employment for which the worker had not been recruited freely, was not doing the job freely, or could not walk away from work.

Fourteen percent of those in forced labor had been trafficked into the city, it said. "Hong Kong must come clean and acknowledge these problems. It can no longer afford to sweep them under the carpet," said Piya Muqit, executive director of Justice Centre, a non-profit rights group. "Current regulations can actually increase the vulnerability of workers to exploitation and victims face very real barriers in seeking assistance and justice," she said. Debt incurred by unscrupulous employment agencies both in Hong Kong and the workers' home countries also played a major role in trapping workers in their jobs, the report found.

"Forced labor does not always involve physical violence, there are many tools of coercion and deception," said Victoria Wisniewski Otero, co-author of the study that interviewed more than 1,000 workers. One Indonesian maid named as Indah told researchers she felt she had no choice but to continue working because of the debt she had incurred. She also said she had no access to her passport, which was being held by her employer. The study found migrant domestic laborers worked an average 70-hour week and more than a third



HONG KONG: This file photo taken on February 10, 2015 shows a group of protesters gathering outside the courthouse in support of Indonesian former maid Erwiana Sulistyansih. — AFP

were not given the full 24-hour rest period required under Hong Kong law.

The report called on the Hong Kong government to review legislation, improve workers'

living and working conditions, and penalize agencies that overcharge. Rules that say foreign maids must live with their employers and leave the city within two weeks of terminating

an employment contract must also be scrapped, it said. "The government will have to be pushed and pulled into doing something," said legislator Emily Lau, head of Hong Kong's

Democratic Party, who also called for workers' home countries to take action. Hong Kong's labor department had no immediate response to the report. — AFP



BERLIN: Rescuers and police officers work around a damaged car after a blast caused by an explosive device killed its driver travelling down a street yesterday. — AFP

CAR BOMB KILLS DRIVER IN BERLIN

BERLIN: A car bomb killed a driver travelling down a street in central Berlin yesterday, police said, as investigators suspected that it was likely a case of homicide. The blast caused by an explosive device "on or in the vehicle" occurred during peak-hour traffic on Bismarckstrasse, within sight of the Victory Column monument, leaving the front of the car severely dented

after it flipped over, while debris was strewn a few meters away.

No other injuries were reported, although the car rammed into a parked vehicle. "The identity (of the victim) is unclear," police spokesman Michael Merkle told N24. "We believe this was a homicide," prosecutor's office spokesman Martin Steltner told the daily Tagesspiegel. The Volkswagen

Passat station wagon was heading downtown when the explosion struck close to the subway entrance to Deutsche Oper station, in front of one of Berlin's three opera houses. Police had asked residents to stay indoors and keep their windows shut before giving the all-clear to after completing a sweep for further explosives. The broad avenue remains cordoned off. — AFP

QAEDA THREATENS FRANCE AND ALLIES

ABIDJAN: Al-Qaeda's North African branch threatened France and its allies fighting against jihadists in the volatile region, in a statement boasting about the group's deadly weekend attack on an Ivory Coast beach resort. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM) said the shooting rampage at the Grand-Bassam resort on

Sunday that left 18 people dead was one of a series of operations "targeting dens of espionage and conspiracies".

It warned that those nations involved in the regional anti-insurgent Operation Barkhane and the 2013 French-led Operation Serval in Mali would "receive a response", with their

"criminal leaders" and interests targeted, according to the SITE group which monitors extremist organizations. The statement was issued on the eve of a visit by French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault and Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve to Ivory Coast after the beach attack whose victims included four French nationals.

Barkhane, which succeeded Serval in 2014, has at least 3,500 soldiers deployed across five countries—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger—to combat jihadist jihadist insurgencies. AQIM warned Ivory Coast and all allies of France in the region that their "crimes will not pass without a response" and issued a wider threat to Western nationals to leave Muslim lands or "we will destroy your security and the security of your citizens". The group had also claimed the attack on a top hotel and a nearby restaurant in the Burkina Faso capital in January that killed 30 people, and a hostage siege in the Malian capital Bamako in November that cost 20 lives. — AFP



GRAND-BASSAM: An Ivorian soldier holds a Rocket-propelled grenade while manning a position in a street near the the Etoile du Sud hotel in Grand Bassam on Monday. — AFP

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US ELECTION CAMPAIGN: A SLUG FEST LIKE NO OTHER

WASHINGTON: In America, these are days of rage, fueled by a cocktail of gripes making for a White House race that's been wild and raunchy. Fist fights between opposing sides are now breaking out at rallies, where people give each other the finger. Candidates openly call each other liars, among other insults. Accusations of racism and bigotry have tainted the campaign trail. One hopeful-brash Republican frontrunner Donald Trump, of course, has even boasted in veiled fashion about the size of his genitalia. "This would all be fun if it weren't so serious," said Patrick Haney, a professor of political science at Miami University of Ohio.

Thanks in part to the gnawing sensation that the so-called "American dream" the idea that if you work hard, you will get ahead-is dead or comatose, it is the year of the outsider: the candidate claiming to be utterly free of the dysfunction of Washington-style, nothing-gets-done politics. "There is a sort of fundamental level of irritability in the American electorate right now. Some of it is probably economic and some of it is social and cultural," said Haney.

Paul Beck, a political scientist at Ohio State University, said the national funk cuts across party lines and to some extent stems from dissatisfaction with the status quo. "The other thing is much more deeply seated and that really goes back decades, to the declining status of the middle class," Beck said. Expressed in numbers, it looks like this: in 1970, 62 percent of aggregate US income went to middle-income households. But in 2014, that figure was down to 43 percent, according to the Pew Research Center. This means the other ends of the income spectrum-the poor and the rich are getting bigger.

'American Rage'
Another poll, entitled "American Rage" and published in January by Esquire magazine, gave even grimmer numbers. It found 52 percent of those polled say the American dream is dead, and 54 percent believe they are worse off than they thought they would be when they were younger. "We the people are pissed. And the body politic is burning up," the magazine wrote in an introduction to the polling data. On another hot-button issue-immigration-Esquire said 46 percent of those polled feel immigrants are a burden because they take US jobs, housing and health care. Trump has tapped into these fears, vowing to deport immigrants here illegally, build a wall along the border with Mexico and institute a blanket ban on Muslims entering the country.

Critics have heaped scorn on the 69-year-old businessman, saying he is fueling hatred and racism. Rival John Kasich, the Republican governor of Ohio, says Trump has created a "very toxic atmosphere." Another Republican contender, Marco Rubio, called his language "dangerous." Even President Barack Obama-the target of much of the anger expressed by Trump supporters-has weighed in, condemning the "divisiveness along the lines of race and faith" seen on the campaign trail. Trump says his rallies are nothing but a "love fest." And among the four remaining Republican candidates, he leads by a wide margin.

Trump, the man hogging the headlines, is a billionaire who has never held public office and is widely ridiculed by critics as a bigoted, clownish blowhard. His party is described as cringing over the prospect that he will actually win the Republican nomination, which for his critics borders on handing over the election to the Democrats on a silver platter. —AFP



SKIEN: Norwegian mass killer Anders Behring Breivik makes a Nazi salute as he arrives to a makeshift court in Skien prison's gym yesterday. — AFP

MASS MURDERER SUES NORWAY OVER 'INHUMAN' PRISON LIFE

BREIVIK MAKES NAZI SALUTE, IGNORING LAWYER'S ADVICE

SKIEN: Mass killer Anders Behring Breivik opened a court case against Norway yesterday with a Nazi salute as his lawyers prepared to argue he has received inhuman treatment by being kept in isolation for murdering 77 people in 2011. Appearing in public for the first time since he was sentenced in 2012, Breivik has had just one visitor with whom he had physical contact - his mother, who was allowed into prison and gave him a hug shortly before she died of cancer in 2013. Clean-shaven and wearing a black suit, white shirt and golden tie, Breivik raised his right arm in a flat-handed Nazi salute on arrival at the court, slightly different from the outstretched arm and clenched fist he used in 2012.

Breivik's lawyer accused Norway of violating a ban on "inhuman and degrading treat-

ment" under the European Convention on Human Rights by keeping the 37-year-old isolated from other inmates in a special three-room cell. "There is no tradition in Norway for this type of isolation," lawyer Oeystein Storrvik told the special court that will meet until Friday in a gymnasium at Skien jail about 100 km (60 miles) south of Oslo. Storrvik told Reuters he had advised Breivik against making the Nazi salute. "He (Breivik) says he is a national socialist," he said, adding that making the gesture was "the worst thing you can do in a courtroom."

Norway rejects the charges of inhuman treatment. "Breivik is a very dangerous man," said Marius Emberland, the lawyer representing the state, defending Breivik's conditions. He said another prisoner tried to attack Breivik last year, getting to within earshot.

When stopped by guards, the man shouted: "You are a killer, a child killer ... And I love my country," Emberland said. Breivik killed eight people with a bomb in Oslo and gunned down 69 others on an island nearby, many of them teenagers. He is serving Norway's maximum sentence of 21 years, which can be extended.

Breivik will have a chance to speak today. The single judge - there is no jury - will issue a ruling in coming weeks. Norway considered it too dangerous to hear the case in Oslo. The makeshift courtroom has walls lined with timber bars and a climbing frame as well as two basketball hoops.

Some survivors watched the trial in an Oslo court with a direct transmission by television. Most stayed away, not wanting to revive memories of July 22, 2011. — Reuters



VIENNA CENTER: US Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump at a rally in Vienna Center, Ohio on Monday. — AFP

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CYPRUS THREATENS TO BLOCK EU-TURKEY MIGRANT DEAL

NICOSIA: Cyprus yesterday threatened to derail a proposed EU deal with Turkey to curb the flow of migrants to Europe, insisting on longstanding demands including that Ankara recognize its government. "Cyprus does not intend to consent to the opening of any new chapters if Turkey does not fulfill its obligations," Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades said after talks with EU president Donald Tusk.

EU and Turkish leaders agreed last week to a tentative proposal including the return of migrants landing in Greece and a "one-for-one" swap of Syrian refugees. Cyprus has expressed reservations, not least as its longtime adversary Turkey expects the accord to lead to the opening of new chapters in Ankara's long-standing EU membership bid and to ease visa requirements in Europe's passport-free Schengen area.

Anastasiades said Cyprus would not accept "the Turkish demands without (the) implementation of Turkey's long-pending obligations" in its EU membership bid. Tusk, who heads to Ankara for talks ahead of negotiations on the EU-Turkey proposal, admitted "we are not

there yet" in terms of a deal. "The Turkish proposal... still needs to be rebalanced so as to be accepted by all 28 member states and the EU institutions," he told reporters. The plan to expel migrants en masse from Greece has sparked international criticism, with the UN's top officials on refugees and human rights questioning whether it would be legal.

Officials have also expressed concern over the potential need for compromise with Ankara, as fears grow over freedom of expression and rights abuses under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "One of the issues to be sorted out is the key question of legality," Tusk said. A Cypriot refusal of the migrant-swap deal would effectively block the largest diplomatic push yet to ease Europe's burden of accommodating hundreds of thousands of refugees, many of whom enter the EU through Turkey. The island of Cyprus has been divided since 1974 when Turkish troops invaded its northern sector in response to an Athens-engineered coup attempt.

Turkey does not recognize the government of Cyprus and Nicosia has blocked

six key chapters of Ankara's negotiations for EU membership since 2009, effectively halting the process. Cyprus insists Turkey must first meet its longstanding demands for recognition, and to open up trade ties, ports and airports. Complicating matters further is a UN-backed negotiation process between Greek and Turkish Cypriot administrations aimed at reuniting the island. European sources say EU officials admit that they took the wrong approach to Cyprus's concerns, which were overlooked in the enthusiasm among member states for a deal.

At one point last week in Brussels, Anastasiades was involved in a heated confrontation with five key European figures, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, in which he came under heavy pressure to back the accord, sources said. Germany registered a record influx of asylum seekers that reached 1.1 million in 2015. Tusk's Cyprus visit was arranged at the last minute—a sign of Brussels' realization that a new approach is needed. "I am not here to exert pressure on Cyprus," the EU president told reporters. "I am here to listen to your position." — AFP



NICOSIA: European Council President Donald Tusk (L) holds a press conference with Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades after a meeting yesterday. — AFP

QAEDA GUNMEN DRANK BEER IN BAR BEFORE UNLEASHING ATTACK

RAID DEMONSTRATES AL-QAEDA'S GROWING REACH

GRAND BASSAM: Gunmen from Al-Qaeda's North African branch drank beer at a beachside bar before launching a shooting rampage at an Ivory Coast resort town that left at least 18 people dead, the group's third major attack in West Africa in four months. Sunday's raid, details of which are beginning to emerge in witness and official accounts, was the furthest yet from Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) traditional desert base, a worrying indication of the militants' growing reach.

The attack raised questions about Ivory Coast's preparedness for such an attack, with some asking why such a sensitive target was left so vulnerable. Fifteen civilians and three members of the special forces were killed and 33 people were wounded in the attack in Grand Bassam, a weekend retreat popular with Ivorians and westerners about 40 km (25 miles) east of the commercial capital Abidjan.

Interior Minister Hamed Bakayoko said another 26 wounded were still receiving medical attention on Monday, as President Alassane Ouattara declared three days of mourning for the country, which has never before been hit by Al-Qaeda. Three militants also died in the attack on the resort town, a UNESCO heritage site of crumbling colonial-era buildings. Witness Christian Eddy said four men arrived in a Ford saloon car at the beachside bar where he works around noon on Sunday. While two remained outside, the two others entered and drank beers for around a half hour.

They then launched the attack. "They didn't speak French. They spoke Arabic. We communicated with them in English.... The guys who were still outside started shooting and the two seated at the table yelled 'Allahu Akbar' and flipped over the table," he said. He said the first victim was a boy who was made to kneel before he was shot. Bar staff tried to warn a deaf boy who was playing nearby. "People were yelling 'Come over here!' But he didn't know what was happening and just went down to the water. They

shot him in the water," Eddy said. The gunmen then moved up the beach, continuing their killing spree and entering several seaside hotels.

Surveillance footage from Hotel Etoile du Sud — one of the attackers' first targets where two people including a German woman and a Lebanese man were gunned down — showed the initial panic in the hotel bar as the first shots rang out. Staff crouched and then fled along with customers, among them parents carrying babies or leading young children by the hand. A man, apparently disguised as a waiter in a red waistcoat over a white dress shirt, entered with a rifle, fired at the empty bar and disappeared behind it, where the Lebanese man had been hiding. More gunshots were then heard.

The first police officers arrived on the scene around 15 minutes after the shooting began, witnesses said. It would be another half hour before special units from the security forces arrived from Abidjan. The victims included foreign citizens from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, France, Germany and Mali. Among the dead was Henrike Grohs, 51, head of the Abidjan branch of Germany's Goethe Institut cultural body. France's President Francois Hollande said four French nationals were killed in the attack. The French government had earlier said just one of its citizens had died.

Easy target

The attack is a heavy blow for Ivory Coast, which has recovered from more than a decade of political turmoil and a 2011 civil war to become one of the world's fastest growing economies. President Ouattara won a landslide election victory in October, promising to attract foreign investment to the largest economy in French-speaking West Africa which is also the world's top cocoa producer. "Ivory Coast will not let itself be intimidated by terrorists," Ouattara said in a televised address late on Monday. "Yes, Ivory Coast is on its feet. Yes, on its feet to combat the cowards and protect its people." AQIM has spread across the Sahara

from Algeria and now operates in much of western and northern Africa.

In January, gunmen killed dozens of people in a cafe frequented by foreigners in neighboring Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou, and also attacked a hotel. Militants attacked another hotel in the Malian capital Bamako late last year, killing 20. Since those attacks, Ivorian authorities have increased security around hotels and shopping malls in Abidjan, a city of around five million inhabitants. But there were few signs that was the case in Grand Bassam ahead of Sunday's attack. "Attacking Bassam was the easiest thing for them to do. Bassam is where all the expatriates and middle class from Abidjan gather on the weekends," said one longtime resident, who said he had seen no sign of recent security improvements.

"We don't understand why this wasn't considered a priority for protection. It would be easy," he said, asking not to be named. The recent attacks in the region are generally viewed as targeting France and its allies after Paris intervened militarily in Mali in 2013 to drive out Al-Qaeda-linked militants who had seized the desert north a year earlier. The attack in Grand Bassam, thousands of kilometers from Al-Qaeda's traditional operational zones, raises fears over where they might strike next. It poses serious security questions for former regional colonial power France, which has thousands of citizens and troops in the region.

While some 18,000 French citizens live in Ivory Coast, over 20,000 reside in Senegal. France has 3,500 troops in the region, from Senegal in the far west to Chad. A French military base in Abidjan, manned by around 800 soldiers, serves as a logistical hub for regional operations against Islamist militancy in the Sahel. French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault and Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve will travel to Ivory Coast on Tuesday to offer logistical support and intelligence, French diplomatic sources said. Counter-terrorism officials have also been sent to help the investigation. — Reuters

FRENCH PM URGES CARDINAL TO 'TAKE RESPONSIBILITY' IN ABUSE SCANDAL

PARIS: French Prime Minister Manuel Valls yesterday urged a cardinal, accused of covering up the sexual abuse of young boys by a priest, to "take responsibility" in a case which has deeply embarrassed the French Church. Cardinal Philippe Barbarin hit back, insisting at a press conference: "I have never covered up paedophilia." The latest abuse scandal to hit the Catholic Church erupted when priest Bernard Preynat was charged in January, after victims came forward with claims he had sexually abused Scouts between 1986 and 1991.

Prosecutors say he has admitted the charges. The victims have filed complaints against several senior officials in the Lyon diocese in eastern France, including Lyon archbishop Barbarin, accusing them of being aware of the abuse but failing to report the priest. Valls told BFM TV that without seeking to take the place of the Church or judges looking at the case, "The only message I have... is that (Barbarin) must take responsibility, speak and act." Barbarin has argued he was

not archbishop at the time when the first complaints emerged against Preynat—who was briefly suspended and then moved to another parish.

Accusations were made against Preynat only when a victim who was allegedly abused in the 1980s realized in 2015 that the priest was still in service. Other victims have since come forward. The case recalls the recent Oscar-winning film "Spotlight," which highlighted how the Church transferred deviant priests between parishes in Boston in the United States. While this practice is no longer commonplace, the French case raises the question of how deep Church authorities should dig into abuse cases lurking in their past.

'Yes, I believed him'

Barbarin has said he learned of Preynat's "behaviors" in 2007 or 2008, and met with him "to ask if, since 1991, anything had happened; he assured me there had been absolutely nothing." "Some blame me for believing him... Yes, I

believed him," Barbarin said in an interview with Catholic newspaper La Croix. The diocese removed Preynat from service in May 2015. The Vatican has backed the cardinal, saying he had shown "a great deal of responsibility" in dealing with the matter.

But as the scandal took centre-stage at a meeting of France's 120 bishops in Lourdes, southwestern France, new accusations emerged against Barbarin. An alleged victim pressed new charges against the cardinal, saying he was sexually abused at the age of 16 by another Lyon priest who was still in service. The man, now 42, pressed charges against the priest in 2009, but the case could not go forward because of a statute of limitations.

He told Le Figaro newspaper that he met with Barbarin, who allegedly admitted that the priest involved had a problem—he had been sentenced to a month in prison in 2000 for exhibitionism—and apologized. But nothing was done to remove the priest from service. The scandal has been extremely embarrassing for the Church in France, which has worked to harden its stance against predator priests since Bishop Pierre Pican was convicted in 2001 for failing to report abuse. "The rules, best practices and prevention measures that we have put in place remain unequivocal," said Georges Pontier, archbishop of Marseille and head of the French Catholic Church.

'The culture has really changed'

The Church continues to be dogged by cases of priests abusing young children and past cover-ups, despite Pope Francis' promise of a crack-down. Barbarin's case, as well as a scandal in Australia that has seen Cardinal George Pell, the pope's powerful finance minister, accused of protecting paedophile priests, have been used as examples that a culture of silence persists.

But an editorial in Le Figaro argued that decades-old abuse cases do not necessarily reflect how the Church reacts today. "Most dioceses in the world now get rid of any accused priest, and demand that he report to the courts... The culture has really changed in the Church," the editorial read. Charles Scicluna, a former senior official in the Vatican's justice department, said: "Today it is no longer possible that a priest accused of paedophilia is simply moved to another parish." — AFP



LOURDES, HAUTES-PYRENEES: Roman Catholic Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, Archbishop of Lyon (L) answers journalists' questions next to Bishop of Pontoise for the Conference of Bishops of France Stanislas Lalanne (C) French Archbishop of Marseille and President of the Bishops' Conference of France Georges Pontier (R). — AFP

12 DIE IN FIRE AT RUSSIAN REHAB

MOSCOW: Twelve people died overnight as a fire swept through a rehab centre with barred windows in central Russia, investigators said yesterday. The bodies of 12 people, two of them women, were found in the residential building in the mainly Muslim Bashkortostan region, the regional Investigative Committee, which probes serious crimes, said in a statement. "They are believed all to be members of a social rehabilitation centre. Their identities are being established," investigators said.

Residents said the single-story building in the town of Sterlitamak, about 1,200 kilometers east of Moscow, housed a private drug rehabilitation centre, ProUfu.ru regional news website reported. An emergency situations official told Russian television that the windows "could not be opened from the inside or were bolted." The bodies had "no visible injuries", investigators said. "Based on the appearance of the bodies, they died from carbon monoxide poisoning," the

head of the emergency service in Bashkortostan, Marat Latypov, told Interfax news agency. The head of the Bashkortostan region, Rustem Khamitov, said the victims were undergoing work therapy to get rid of "harmful habits".

He called for an investigation into why the "12 people were living in a small room with barred windows and a metal door." The fire was reported at 3:00 am Moscow time (GMT) and took almost two hours to extinguish, the regional emergency situations ministry said. Russia frequently sees deadly fires at state-run facilities for the elderly or those with mental illness, which often have bars on windows and locked doors and are located in isolated areas. In 2013, 37 people were killed when a fire swept through a psychiatric hospital in northwestern Russia. Russia is gripped by drug addiction fuelled by easy access to narcotics with the head of the federal anti-narcotics service estimating last week that 7.3 million people were addicted to drugs. — AFP



BRUSSELS: A father carries his child after kids were evacuated from schools located within the security perimeter following a shooting in the southern Forest district of Brussels. — AFP

ONE SUSPECT KILLED IN BRUSSELS TERROR RAID

BRUSSELS: Police shot dead one suspect yesterday during a major Belgian-French anti-terror operation in Brussels linked to the Paris attacks, Belgian media reports said, citing the federal prosecutor's office.

The prosecutor's office could not be immediately reached to confirm the reports but a spokesman told AFP earlier that four police were wounded in the massive security operation in the south of the city. — AFP

ITALY SEXISM ROW OVER 'MAYOR NO JOB FOR A MAMMA' CLAIMS

ROME: Silvio Berlusconi sparked fury yesterday by claiming that being mayor of Rome was "no job for a mother" while backing a male candidate who advised a pregnant rival to stick to breastfeeding. The three-time former premier claimed the task of cleaning up the scandal-hit capital would be too much for far right candidate Giorgia Meloni, who is due to give birth soon after the election in May or June.

"A mother cannot dedicate herself to a terrible job which will require 14 hours a day in the office," Berlusconi said. The media tycoon, famed for his bunga bunga parties with young female escorts, was speaking in support of Guido Bertolaso, who said on Monday that Meloni would be unable to "sort out the rubbish, the traffic jams and the rats in Rome when she will have to be at home nursing."

Meloni replied tersely. "I don't want a row, I simply say politely and proudly that I hope to be a very good mother, as are all the women who, with a thousand problems

and often in much more difficult circumstances, manage to reconcile professional commitments with maternity." Behind the row lies a battle for ascendancy on the right of Italian politics with Berlusconi backing Bertolaso and Northern League leader Matteo Salvini endorsing Meloni in an election race the right feel they can win.

The last mayor, the centre-left's Ignazio Marino, was forced to resign last year after a minor expenses scandal intensified pressure on him over his perceived mismanagement of the cash-strapped capital. Salvini yesterday described Bertolaso's comments as "50 years out of date" while Italy Prime Minister Matteo Renzi insisted: "Of course a mother can be mayor." Female politicians lined up to denounce the outbursts as symptomatic of a lingering macho culture in Italian politics. "When will they ask a male candidate to withdraw because he is not telegenic? Or because he is due to be a father?" asked Constitutional Reform Minister Maria Elena Boschi on Twitter. — AFP



AFGHANISTAN: Afghan children watch Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers in Dand-e-Ghori district in Baghlan province yesterday.—AFP

LAW PROTECTING WOMEN FROM ABUSE 'UN-ISLAMIC'

PAKISTAN RELIGIOUS GROUPS URGE GOVT TO RETRACT LAW

LAHORE: An all-parties conference convened by Pakistan's oldest Islamic political party and attended by powerful religious groups asked the government yesterday to retract an "un-Islamic" law that gives unprecedented protection to female victims of violence. The Women's Protection Act, passed by Pakistan's largest province of Punjab last month, gives legal protection to women from domestic, psychological and sexual violence. It also calls for the creation of a toll-free abuse reporting hot line, women's shelters and district-level panels to investigate reports of abuse and mandates the use of GPS bracelets to keep track of offenders.

Domestic abuse, economic discrimination and acid attacks made Pakistan the world's third most dangerous country in the world for women, a 2011 Thomson Reuters Foundation expert poll showed. But since the law's passage, many conservative clerics and religious leaders have denounced it as being in conflict with the Muslim holy book, the Koran, and the constitution. Yesterday, representatives of more than 35 religious parties and groups came together for a conference called by the Jamaat-e-Islami party and condemned the women's protection law as un-Islamic.

"The controversial law to protect women was promulgated to accomplish the West's agenda to destroy the family system in Pakistan," read the joint declaration issued at the end of the conference. "This act ... is redundant and would add to the miseries of women." The passage of the new law was welcomed by rights groups but spirits have since dampened as conservative voices have increasingly called for its retraction. On Monday, Fazlur Rehman, the chief of one of Pakistan's largest religious parties, the Jamiat-i-Ulema Islam, said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had promised him at a meeting that he would address the reservations of religious parties.

"Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif heard our reservations against the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016. He promised to amend the law so that it doesn't contravene the teachings of the holy Koran," Maulana Fazl told journalists at his residence. Earlier this month, the Council of Islamic Ideology, a powerful Pakistani religious body that advises the government on the compatibility of laws with Islam, declared the Women's Protection Act un-Islamic. A prominent lawyer has also filed a petition in the top sharia court asking it to strike down the law.—Reuters

POPE APPROVES SAINTHOOD FOR MOTHER TERESA

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis yesterday approved sainthood for Mother Teresa, the missionary nun who became a global icon of compassion for her care of the sick and destitute. The pontiff set September 4 as the date for her canonization, elevating the Nobel peace laureate to an official icon for the Catholic faith. The move comes 19 years after the death of the Albanian nun who dedicated much of her adult life to working with the poor in the slums of Kolkata, India.

Officials said the canonization ceremony would take place at the Vatican—an announcement which had been expected but nevertheless disappointed Indian Catholics who had hoped for a visit by Francis. Yesterday, hundreds attended a prayer meeting at Mother House in Kolkata, the global headquarters of the Missionaries of Charity where Mother Teresa is buried. Sushmita Roy, a housewife who was one of those attending, said Teresa had long been a saint in the eyes of Indian believers. "I came here today to pay homage to her," Roy said. "It would have been great if the canonisation of Mother Teresa would have been held in this city where she spent her life."

'Saint of the Gutters'

Teresa, who was 87 when she died in 1997, was revered by Catholics and many others around the world. Known as the "Angel of Mercy" or "Saint of the Gutters", she won the 1979 Nobel peace prize for her work with the poor. But she was also a controversial and divisive figure with critics branding her a religious imperialist whose fervent opposition to birth control and abortion ran contrary to the interests of the communities she claimed to serve. Despite posthumously published letters revealing that she suffered crises of faith throughout her life, Teresa has been fast-tracked to canonization in unusually quick time, underlining her status as a modern-day icon of Catholicism.

Teresa took the first step to sainthood in 2003 when she was beatified by Pope John Paul II following the recognition of a claim she had posthumously inspired the 1998

healing of a critically-ill Bengali tribal woman. Last year she was credited by Vatican experts with inspiring the 2008 recovery of a Brazilian man suffering from multiple brain tumours, thus meeting the Church's standard requirement for sainthood of having been involved in two certifiable miracles.

Gentle eye that 'sees'

Teresa was born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu to Albanian parents in 1910 in Skopje, now the capital of Macedonia. She started her life as a nun as a teenager with a missionary order in Ireland and arrived in India in 1929. She founded her own Missionaries of Charity order in 1950 and was granted Indian citizenship a year later. Francis, who regards Teresa as the incarnation of the kind of Church he wants to lead, met the by-then internationally famous nun three years before her death, when he was still a bishop in Argentina.

He later joked that she had seemed so formidable he "would have been scared if she had been my mother superior". Others were much harsher in their judgment, with the likes of Australian-born feminist writer Germaine Greer and British polemicist Christopher Hitchens accusing her of contributing to the misery of the poor with what they saw as her dogmatic views. In her Nobel acceptance speech Teresa described terminations of pregnancies as "direct murder by the mother herself".

Critics also raised questions about the Missionaries of Charity's finances and the often insalubrious conditions in the order's hospices. The late Italian film director and writer Pier Paolo Pasolini was among those who fell under her spell, in his case when he met her during a trip to India in the early 1960s. "She has an almost virile jaw and a gentle eye that in its gaze 'sees', he wrote, describing Teresa as a combination of "goodness without sentimentality, someone with no expectations who is both calm and calming, powerfully practical." India granted her a state funeral after her death and her grave has since become a pilgrimage site.—AFP

IN SECRET MEETINGS, TALEBAN REJECTS PAKISTAN PRESSURE ON PEACE PROCESS

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani officials threatened to expel Afghanistan's Taliban from bases in Pakistan if they did not join peace talks this month, but the militants rebuffed their traditional patron, two officials said, casting doubt on how much influence Islamabad retains over them. After the secret meetings with Pakistani officials about two weeks ago, the Taliban's Supreme Council met at an undisclosed location and voted to reject the talks scheduled for early March with the Afghan government, according to a council member.

Instead, the insurgents are now pouring back into Afghanistan for what they say will be a fierce spring offensive to be launched soon. Pakistan's influence over the insurgents is the lynchpin to the peace plan developed over last few months by Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China to bring an end to the 15-year-old war in Afghanistan.

A Pakistani official in Islamabad said the Taliban's recent success on the battlefield inside Afghanistan had changed the equation. "They no longer need their Pakistan bases in the same way, so if Pakistan threatens to expel them, it does not have the same effect," said the official, a retired military officer close to the talks. The insurgents have won new zones of influence - if not outright control - from Afghan security forces since the United States and its allies pulled most combat troops from Afghanistan at the end of 2014, Afghan and Western officials acknowledge.

"Pakistan's trump card - safe havens on its soil - is in danger of being snatched away," said Michael Kugelman of the Woodrow Wilson Institute, a Washington-

based think tank. "The Taliban have little incentive to step off the battlefield now, given recent gains and those likely to come in the next few months. In effect, why quit while you're ahead?" Nafees Zakaria, a spokesman for Pakistan's Foreign Office, said he had no knowledge of meetings with the Taliban but added, "We usually don't know who has met with whom" in the sensitive and high-level peace initiative.

In Kabul, however, members of the Afghan government were sceptical about Pakistan's assertions. "Pakistan's honesty and sincerity with regard to the Afghan peace process has always been a question," said an Afghan cabinet member, echoing the sentiment of several officials interviewed there. Pakistan's military has long been accused of fostering the Taliban as a way of pursuing regional rivalry with India. Pakistani officials, however, deny the charge and insist the government and military recognize that Afghanistan's war threatens their own security.

'Their dream'

A member of the Taliban's leadership council, or shura, whose members are mostly based in Pakistan and Afghanistan but also travel between Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, said rebel representatives met in Islamabad with Pakistani officials a little more than two weeks ago. "They have asked our representatives to bring more decision-making people to the next meeting ... to the meeting with US and Afghan officials. This is their dream, but they will not be able to see our senior commanders," the Taliban council member said.—Reuters



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FROM SUU KYI'S SCHOOL FRIEND TO PROXY PRESIDENT

NAYPYIDAW: Myanmar's next president may be little known outside his homeland but for Aung San Suu Kyi, who plucked her schoolfriend and longtime aide from the political sidelines to be her proxy, it is Htin Kyaw's loyalty that is paramount. The 69-year-old was comfortably elected Myanmar's first civilian president since 1962 yesterday, a position he will hold in place of the Nobel laureate who is banned from top office by the army-drafted constitution.

The son of a revered poet who has helped run Suu Kyi's charitable foundation in recent years, Htin Kyaw is billed as someone with a high level of education, personal standing and absolute trustworthiness to "The Lady". Yet he remains an unknown and untested quantity with many asking how much influence he will wield over a government he will only nominally lead and in a complex political system where the military still wields considerable influence.

Suu Kyi has pledged to pull the strings of power from "above" her appointee, though in this delicate and secretive transition, she has not revealed how the arrangement will work. But Htin Kyaw's appointment suggests she thinks he has sufficient pedigree in the country's long struggle against junta rule to be embraced by the millions of voters who swept to the polls in November to validate her star power and simple message of change. He is believed to have joined the party last year although the NLD has not confirmed exactly when.

Nonetheless the soft-spoken economics graduate's life has been entwined with Myanmar's democracy struggle and Suu Kyi's movement. His father Min Thu Wun, was a national poet and early NLD member while his wife Su Su Lwin is a sitting party MP whose late father was once party spokesman.

"He's not just anybody, he comes from a very political family," Bertil Lintner, a veteran Myanmar commentator said.

Right hand man

His inner circle closeness to Suu Kyi was illustrated in 2010 when the Nobel Laureate was finally released from years of house arrest. As she greeted jubilant crowds from behind the gate of her crumbling Yangon mansion, Htin Kyaw stood to her right. During those heady but often unsure times when Suu Kyi remained under intense military scrutiny, he could sometimes be seen at the wheel of her car, shuttling her between high-level meetings.

For the last four years he has been a senior executive in Suu Kyi's charity, which provides development aid and skills training to her Kawhmu constituency and other areas of the impoverished country. In an interview with AFP about the charity's work in July 2015, Htin Kyaw spoke of the steep climb Myanmar faced to claw its way out of poverty. "You see that we are doing a lot, which means we need a lot. We are just doing only a very small portion of what is required for the nation," he said.

Born in 1946, Htin Kyaw earned a masters degree in 1968 from the Yangon Economics University and went on to complete further courses abroad, including in the UK, the US and Japan. According to an official biography released by the Daw Khin Kyi Foundation, he studied at the University of London's Institute of Computer Science from 1971 to 72. In a varied career he worked as a university teacher and also held positions in the finance and national planning and foreign affairs ministries in the late 1970s and 80s before retiring from government service as the military tightened its grip.—AFP

HISTORIC VOTE GIVES MYANMAR FIRST CIVILIAN PRESIDENT IN DECADES

NAYPYIDAW: Myanmar got its first civilian president in decades yesterday after lawmakers elected a close aide of Aung San Suu Kyi, who is expected to hold the real reins of power in the formerly junta-run nation.

Htin Kyaw, 69, hailed his elevation to the top post as "Suu Kyi's victory," a clear nod to her plan that he serve as a proxy for the Nobel laureate who is constitutionally barred from becoming president. MPs erupted into applause after the result was announced following a lengthy ballot count by hand in the capital Naypyidaw, in which Htin Kyaw took 360 of 652 votes cast.

Myanmar is undergoing a dramatic transformation from an isolated and repressed pariah state to a rapidly opening aspiring democracy. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won a thumping victory at elections in November, allowing her party to dominate Myanmar's two legislative houses. But the military remains a powerful force and has refused to change a clause in the junta-era constitution which bars her from the presidency.

The veteran activist has instead vowed to rule "above" the next leader. Her choice of Htin Kyaw is seen as a testament to her absolute faith in his loyalty. "This is sister Aung San Suu Kyi's victory," the newly elected president told reporters after the vote. Htin Kyaw will be sworn in on March 30, replacing incumbent Thein Sein. It will be the first time Myanmar has had a civilian president since 1962, when the military seized power.

Thein Sein, a former general, led a quasi-civilian reformist government for the last five years that has been praised for moving the nation out of the shadow of outright military rule.

For many MPs from Suu Kyi's party yesterday's vote was a vindication of their long years of struggle for democracy under the repressive former junta, which locked up hundreds of dissidents as it tried to stifle criticism.

The NLD is still haunted by its 1990 election victory, which was snatched away by the generals. Zin Mar Aung, an NLD MP who was involved in 1988 protests and is herself a former political prisoner, termed the vote "very historic". She said the election of Htin Kyaw, who was also detained by the former junta, made her think of their long struggle and "the way we have marched to here since more than 20 years ago".

But others expressed disappointment their leader would not be taking the top post.

"We all want to see Aung San Suu Kyi be the president," NLD MP Myo Zaw Aung told AFP. "But so far, it is not reality." Yesterday's election also confirmed the two other candidates as vice presidents-retired general Myint Swe, who is seen as a hardliner ally of the former strongman Than Shwe and is on Washington's sanctions list, and



NAYPYIDAW: Htin Kyaw, newly elected president of Myanmar and member of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, leaves after a parliament session yesterday.—AFP

ethnic Chin MP Henry Van Thio.

Chosen one

Suu Kyi, 70, enjoys unrivaled popularity both as the daughter of the country's independence hero and as a central figure in the decades-long democracy struggle. It is not yet clear what role she plans to take or how she will manage her relationship with the new president. She is barred from top political office because she married and had children with a foreigner. Months of negotiations with army chief Min Aung Hlaing failed to remove the charter clause that blocks her. In central Yangon people crowded into teashops to watch the vote live on television. "He was chosen by Mother Suu. Now he is our president. He will be a good president because he has been working with Mother Suu for many years," said Daw Mya, 60, a vegetable vendor.

While little known outside Myanmar, Htin Kyaw commands considerable respect inside the

country, partly because his father was a legendary writer and early member of the NLD.

Though he has never previously stood for political office, he is married to sitting NLD MP Su Su Lwin, whose late father was the party's respected spokesman, and he helps run Suu Kyi's charitable foundation.

A new cabinet, set to be announced at the end of the month, is expected to include figures from across the political spectrum as Suu Kyi tries to promote national reconciliation. It will face many challenges, including poverty, civil wars in ethnic minority borderlands and decrepit infrastructure.

Senior party figures say one of the government's first tasks will be to whittle down myriad ministries by combining overlapping portfolios.

But one of the most crucial tasks will be to manage the relationship with the military, which retains significant power including control of the vital home, defense and border ministries.—AFP

MALAYSIA DEPORTS AUSTRALIAN REPORTERS; PAIR WON'T BE CHARGED

CANBERRA, Australia: Malaysian authorities will not charge two journalists from Australia's state-owned broadcaster who attempted to interview Malaysia's prime minister over corruption allegations, deciding to deport them instead, police said yesterday.

The decision came after Australia's government intervened and suggested the detention was part of a Malaysian crackdown on press freedom. Following the deportation orders, Australian Broadcasting Corp. television reporter Linton Besser and camera operator Louie Eroglu left Malaysia on a flight yesterday, ABC confirmed in an email to staff. The pair had previously been told to appear in a Sarawak state court on yesterday morning charged with obstructing a public servant from discharging his duties when they questioned Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak as he entered a mosque in the state capital of Kuching on Saturday.

ABC reported that two hours after a press release was issued Monday confirming the charge, the lawyer for the two was told they would not be charged. The broadcaster said no explanation was given for the change.

Sarawak police said in a statement that they were told by prosecutors yesterday that no charges would be filed. The pair was to be deported, the statement said, without giving further details.

Shortly before boarding his flight at Malaysia's Kuching International Airport, Besser said he was relieved the ordeal was

behind him. "There have been a lot of changing events. It has been a roller coaster, but it's almost over," he said.

ABC's news director, Gaven Morris, said the journalists would continue to investigate the corruption story. "They did nothing wrong in Kuching. They were doing journalism," he said in a statement. "This incident has demonstrated again why it is vital to defend media freedom, including the right to question authority."

On Monday, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said the case would be raised at the "highest levels within the Malaysian government." She said there were concerns about "a crackdown on freedom of speech." Sarawak police said the pair were detained after they "crossed the security line and aggressively tried to approach" Prime Minister Najib, accusations that ABC denied.

Najib is engulfed in a scandal over \$681 million deposited into his bank accounts in early 2013. Critics accuse him of corruption and say the money came from an indebted state investment fund that he founded in 2009. In January, Malaysian Attorney General Mohamed Apandi Ali decided not to prosecute the prime minister, saying the money was a "personal donation" from the Saudi royal family. Besser and Eroglu, on assignment for an investigative current affairs program, had asked Najib as he entered a mosque why the money had been deposited into his accounts, ABC reported. Najib did not respond and his security detail surrounded the two.—AP



HANOI, Vietnam: Vietnamese residents hold banners during a gathering yesterday.—AP

VIETNAMESE HONOR SOLDIERS KILLED BY CHINESE 28 YEARS AGO

HANOI, Vietnam: About 200 Vietnamese gathered in central Hanoi on Monday to remember 64 Vietnamese soldiers who were killed by the Chinese navy in a clash 28 years ago in the disputed South China Sea.

They lit incense and laid flowers at the statue of King Ly Thai To, a Vietnamese hero, and then marched around the landmark Hoan Kiem Lake, chanting "down with Communist China's aggression" in the commemoration that lasted an hour.

There were no official commemorations by the government. "I think the government should organize official ceremonies to remember those soldiers who were killed defending Truong Sa and Hoang Sa islands," said 84-year-old retired civil servant Le Mai Dau, one of the participants. Truong Sa and Hoang Sa are Vietnamese terms for the Spratly and Paracel islands.

Police watched the ceremony but did not intervene. Unauthorized gatherings are normally stopped by the authorities.

The 64 were killed in skirmishes with the Chinese at Johnson South Reef in the Spratly Islands and nine Vietnamese engineering soldiers were taken prisoner. In the last two years China has reclaimed land around the Johnson South Reef to form artificial islands.

China claims almost all of the Spratlys, which are rich in natural resources. Vietnam along with the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also claim parts or all of the islands.—AP

MAJOR THAI TRAFFICKING TRIAL OPENS AMID FEARS FOR WITNESSES

BANGKOK: The trial of 92 suspected human traffickers, arrested after the discovery of shallow graves of migrants in Thai jungle, began in Bangkok yesterday and the attorney-general's office said it would be over within a year amid fears about the safety of witnesses.

Traffickers abandoned boatloads of migrants at sea last year after a crackdown by Thai authorities that led to a regional migrant crisis with Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar and Bangladesh refusing boats permission to land.

Rights groups had expressed fears that a drawn-out case, lasting anything up to two years, could put the hundreds of witnesses at risk because of inadequate police protection. "The court is accelerating the case to finish within a year," said Prayuth Porsuttayarak, deputy director-general of the human trafficking office at the Attorney-General's Office.

Thailand remains on the lowest tier on the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report for not meeting the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.

Sunai Phasuk, senior researcher on Thailand at Human Rights Watch, welcomed a shorter trial but said the cases should not be rushed to impress the United States. "It will totally send the wrong message if the trial is being fast-tracked simply to impress the TIP report reviewers." The defendants,

wearing beige prison uniforms, were brought to the packed court for the start of formal hearings.

The investigation and arrests followed the discovery of 30 shallow graves at a trafficking camp near the Malaysian border. Many of the bodies were believed to be of Rohingya, a persecuted ethnic Muslim minority in majority Buddhist Myanmar.

Weeks later, police revealed 139 graves had been found over the border in Malaysia. That led to a crackdown on the multi-million dollar trade which had until then flourished in Thailand's southern provinces and in Malaysia.

The 92 suspected human traffickers include an army general, civilians and police. Rights groups have called on authorities to step up witness protection after some witnesses said they had been forced into hiding because of threats.

Prayuth said the justice ministry was "looking after the witnesses", but did not say how many of the more than 400 witnesses were receiving police protection. Around 50 suspects were still at large, said Prayuth. Some had fled to neighbouring Myanmar. The United Nations and rights group say the number of migrants leaving Myanmar and Bangladesh by boat in past months has plummeted because of the Thai and Bangladeshi crackdowns on human smugglers. The number of people trying to flee was expected to be significantly lower this year, they said.—Reuters



SARAWAK, Malaysia: Australian Broadcasting Corp. television reporter Linton Besser, right, and camera operator Louie Eroglu, left, prepare to leave at the Kuching International Airport in Sarawak yesterday.—AP

B'DESH BANK CHIEF QUILTS OVER \$81M CYBER HEIST

Continued from Page 1

He described the heist as an "earthquake" and said the bank had promptly informed intelligence agencies in Bangladesh and abroad and also brought in international experts to investigate. FireEye Inc's Mandiant forensics division is helping investigate the cyber heist. The bank has also been in touch with the Fed and other US authorities, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Justice.

Bangladesh Bank is also working with anti-money laundering authorities in the Philippines, where it suspects the stolen \$81 million arrived in four tranches. The Philippines' Rizal Commercial Banking Corp (RCBC) said last week it was investigating deposits amounting to just that sum, which were made at one of its branches. Teofisto Guingona, head of the Philippines Senate's anti-corruption committee, told Reuters the transfers into RCBC were subsequently consolidated into one account and some of the money was converted to pesos.

CCTV cameras at the branch were not functioning when the money was withdrawn, RCBC's anti-money laundering head, Laurinda Rogero, told the Senate hearing. The president of a foreign exchange broker called Philrem Service Corp, Salud Bautista, told the Senate that her firm was instructed by the bank branch to transfer the funds to a man

named Weikang Xu and two casinos. She said that \$30 million went to Xu in cash. Guingona has said Xu was ethnic Chinese and a foreigner, but he was not sure if he was a Chinese national.

A tranche of \$29 million ended up in an account of Solaire, a casino resort owned and operated by Bloomberry Resorts Corp. Bloomberry is controlled by Enrique Razon, the Philippines' fifth-richest man in 2015, according to Forbes. Silverio Benny Tan, corporate secretary of Bloomberry Resorts, told the hearing that the \$29 million was transferred into a casino account under Xu's name in exchange for 'dead chips' that can only be cashed in from winnings.

Bautista said a further \$21 million went to an account of Eastern Hawaii Leisure Co, a gaming firm in northern Philippines. Reuters tried several phone numbers to seek comment from Eastern Hawaii officials but was unable to reach any. "Our money trail ended up at the casinos," Julia Bacay Abad, executive director of the Anti-Money Laundering Council, told the open hearing. She said her agency had frozen 44 accounts connected to the case and had requested assistance from the FBI. Senator Guingona said that because casinos are not covered by the country's anti-money laundering laws it was not clear if the stolen funds could ever be recovered. "The paper trail ends there. That is the problem," he said. "Right now we are at a dead end." — Agencies

JOLIE VISITS LEBANON, SAYS WORLD HAS FAILED REFUGEES

BEIRUT: Angelina Jolie, the Hollywood actress and special envoy for the UN's refugee agency, said yesterday that the international community must address the root causes of the global refugee crisis. "We cannot manage the world through aid relief in the place of diplomacy and political solutions," she said under the pouring rain at a press conference in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have sought refuge in the Bekaa. Lebanon hosts well over a million Syrian refugees, who now account for nearly a fifth of its population.

Jolie said she had hoped to be in Syria helping victims return to their homes on the fifth anniversary of the uprising against President Bashar Al-Assad. She said it's "tragic and shameful that we seem to be so far from that point." There are now more people displaced through conflict around the globe than during World War II, according to the UN. The war in Syria between Assad's government, rebels and foreign jihadis has drawn in world powers and generated what the UN says is the largest humanitarian catastrophe in a generation.

Half of Syria's prewar population of some 23 million has been displaced, with around 5 million having fled their homeland, mainly to neighboring Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. The international relief organization OXFAM warned yesterday that Lebanese municipalities are running out of space to bury deceased refugees. "We should never forget that for all the focus on the refugee situation in Europe at this time, the greatest pressure is still being felt



Angelina Jolie

in the Middle East and North Africa, as it has for each of the last five years," Jolie said.

After a tidal wave of refugees poured into Europe last year, some countries began erecting political and physical barriers to migration, which have left tens of thousands of refugees stuck in squalid conditions in the Balkans this spring. Jolie called on such countries to adhere to their international obligations to aid refugees. "The reason we have laws and binding international agreements is precisely because of the temptation to deviate from them in times of pressure," she said. — AP

SUBAIH GRILLING DELAYED, DASHTI IMMUNITY...

Continued from Page 1

Dashti was stripped of his immunity in the state security case 10/2016 related to addressing abusive remarks against Saudi Arabia. Up to 41 MPs approved the request and five declined, out of the 46 MPs present in the session. The parliamentary legislative panel unanimously recommended in its meeting on March 13 the prosecution's request, denying that the case had any personal ill intentions.

The committee had clarified that the public prosecutor received a letter from the foreign ministry notifying him about an official memo addressed by the Saudi Embassy in Kuwait stating that the Dashti had uttered harmful remarks against the kingdom during an interview with Syrian television channel Al-Ekhabria on Feb 24. He was also accused of inciting against the kingdom. The MP had made similar remarks in previous TV interviews.

Elderly people's rights

Meanwhile, lawmakers endorsed a draft law to preserve the rights of the elderly for optimum care. The draft law identifies any Kuwaiti citizen above the age of 65 to be an elderly person, however it differentiates between an elderly person capable of independent living and one who does not have the wherewithal to do so, or is physically or mentally incapacitated.

The draft law provides numerous advantages enabling the elderly to secure their needs with ease and dignity, including the requirement that senior citizen cards be issued to them with which they could obtain government or public services without any hassle.

The elderly, in accordance with this law, would get some government services without charge, such as free bus passes, or special care at government clinics and hospitals. This draft law urges the private sector and civil society organizations to dabble into establishing and running elderly care facilities and to create means of supporting families that have elderly folks amongst them. Following voting on the draft law, Subaih touted the law but pointed out that it was an improvement on an existing law from the 1970s. She promised that she would implement the law when it is officially sanctioned by the government.

Illegal residents

In the meantime, the Assembly gave the thumbs up to several recommendations pertinent to the conditions of illegal residents (bedoons). The recommendations included the naturalization of worthy illegal residents, mainly the children of martyrs, Kuwaitis' relatives and military personnel.

They also called for handing out 'security cards' to illegal residents who are not included in naturalization lists so that they could gain access to basic humanitarian and social rights, recruiting them at military and government agencies and bodies as well as the private sector, and for reconsidering existing security restrictions on illegal residents' families. Furthermore, illegal residents should be given access to birth and death certificates, marriage and divorce contracts, driving licenses

and public schools. Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah had warned that the government would abstain from voting unless such recommendations were reformulated. But, he had assured that the issue of illegal residents was given top priority by the government.

Government contracts

Also yesterday, the Assembly approved a recommendation for excluding government contracts for companies with a record of flaws and in and shortcomings in past deals' execution. The parliament approved the recommendation against such companies, with a record of breaches and irregularities recorded by the Audit Bureau, to avert recurrence of such shortcomings. Moreover, the parliamentary commission for protecting public funds will present to the parliament, at the upcoming session, a report about a company with an identical record.

Also in the same session, Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousef Al-Ali pledged to hold a presentation on terms' compatibility, due to be addressed to the central tenders committee regarding an infrastructural project, pending the funds protection panel's cross-examination of the company.

Sovereign rating

Furthermore, the parliament approved an address from the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh to the financial affairs committee regarding prospected downgrading of Kuwait's sovereign rating internationally. The MPs blessed a request by MP Faisal Al-Kandari urging the Assembly to tackle conditions in the oil sector and another one addressed to the finance minister re-examine irregular acts and performance reported by the Audit Bureau.

In response to the motion, presented by Kandari, the minister said that the examination and hazards committee at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation had tasked him with following up on remarks of the Audit Bureau. As to "purported targeting of special allocations" for the oil personnel, the minister affirmed the government serious care for the sector and the workers, explaining that the government is actually seeking to "rationalize some of the allotments granted to leaders" in the public and oil sectors.

Universities' bill

Separately, Minister of Education and Higher Education Bader Al-Essa affirmed significance of the public universities' bill, allowing establishment of branches for Kuwait University and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training in the country's six governorates.

During the session, the minister said the said bill had been referred to the parliamentary committee for educational affairs, pending voting in the parliament. On press reports about non-accredited certificates, he said 200 persons who work in the private sector and suspected of involvement in the case have been referred to the public prosecution. — KUNA

1503 SHIPWRECK FOUND OFF OMAN

Continued from Page 1

"That was an amazing discovery," Mearns said. "It was like a thing you read about in a Hollywood story." The archaeologists announced their findings in an article published yesterday by The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology. Ayoub Al-Busaidi, the supervisor of marine

archaeology at the Oman Ministry of Heritage and Culture, said this marked the first underwater excavation carried out by his country. He said it inspired officials to continue to explore the waters around the sultanate for other finds. "Oman is now looking at outside archives to read about the relationships and trade between Oman and the outside" world, Busaidi said. — AP

RUSSIA JETS RETURN FROM SYRIA

Continued from Page 1

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights director Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP that "Russian helicopters and warplanes, that are likely Russian" had struck IS targets around the ancient city of Palmyra. There was no official confirmation from Moscow.

Meanwhile, one Al-Qaeda linked group branded the withdrawal a "defeat" and vowed to launch a new offensive in Syria. Putin said Monday that Moscow's military goal had been "on the whole" completed some five-and-a-half months and 9,000 combat sorties after the Kremlin launched its bombing campaign in support of Assad. State media broadcast live footage of flag-waving crowds and priests greeting returning pilots at a military base in southwest Russia as a brass band played.

The West reacted cautiously to the announcement, since Moscow is yet to specify a timeframe for completing the withdrawal, and a Kremlin official said Russia will keep advanced air defence systems in Syria. Some governments expressed hope the Russian move could push Assad to negotiate, but in Geneva both sides remained locked in a bitter dispute over his fate. The talks opened after a temporary ceasefire between Assad's forces and opponents went into force on Feb 27 and has largely held, although it does not cover IS jihadists and Al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate the Al-Nusra Front.

De Mistura was yesterday to hold his first official meeting with the opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC), which has repeatedly said Assad cannot be part of Syria's political future. Damascus sparked Western anger by staking out an uncompromising stance before the talks, insisting that discussions on Assad's removal were a "red line" they would not cross. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied that the Kremlin was angered by Assad's perceived inflexibility.

But in February, Russia was unusually critical of Assad after he vowed in an interview with AFP to retake the whole country, saying his stance was "not in accord" with Moscow's diplomatic efforts. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter

Steinmeier said a Russian withdrawal "increases the pressure" on Assad to negotiate, while France's foreign ministry said "anything that helps towards a de-escalation in Syria should be encouraged".

Moscow has pledged to ratchet up its own diplomatic efforts to find a political solution to a conflict that has killed more than 270,000 people and displaced millions since March 2011. The White House said President Barack Obama had spoken to Putin following Russia's announcement, and discussed the "next steps required to fully implement the cessation of hostilities". But US officials offered a cautious initial assessment. "At this point, we are going to see how things play out over the next few days," a senior administration official told AFP.

The foreign minister of Iran - which controls thousands of troops supporting Assad on the ground in Syria - said Russia's withdrawal showed Moscow did not "see an imminent need (to) resort to force in maintaining the ceasefire". Russia began air strikes in Syria in September, in a move that helped shore up the regime's crumbling forces and allowed them to go on the offensive. Moscow sent some 50 warplanes to carry out thousands of strikes across Syria, saying it was targeting "terrorist" groups including IS jihadists. The intervention was slammed by the West and its regional allies, which accused Moscow of mainly bombing more moderate rebels.

Meanwhile, a jihadist commander told AFP that Al-Nusra was preparing to launch a new offensive "within the next 48 hours", saying the regime was unable to hold onto territory it had seized with the help of the Russians. Syria's main opposition welcomed the Kremlin announcement, but said it would wait to see what happens on the ground. "We must verify the nature of this decision and its meaning," HNC spokesman Salem Al-Meslet told reporters in Geneva. After his first official meeting with the regime on Monday, de Mistura told reporters that "strong statements (and) rhetoric" were part of every tough negotiation and that his initial discussions with government representative Bashar Al-Jaafari were "useful". — AFP

KNPC CLOSE TO \$3BN LOAN TO PART-FUND...

Continued from Page 1

Under the project, the capacity of the Mina Ahmadi refinery will drop to 347,000 barrels per day (bpd) from 466,000, while Mina Abdullah refinery's capacity

will rise to 454,000 bpd from 270,000. The reduction in the capacity of the Ahmadi refinery, after shutting one of its crude distillation units, will be compensated for by adding new units to produce higher-value products. — Reuters

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ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
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Washington Watch

N KOREA NUKE
THREAT NOT ALL
BLUFF, BLUSTER

By Eric Talmadge

Skeptics of North Korea's nuclear threat, and there are many, have long clung to two comforting thoughts. While the North has the bomb, it doesn't have a warhead small enough to put on a long-range rocket. And it certainly doesn't have a re-entry vehicle to keep that warhead from burning up in the atmosphere before it could reach a target like, as it has suggested before, Manhattan. North Korea yesterday suggested it will soon show the world it has mastered both technologies.

That would require a huge jump in the North's suspected nuclear capabilities, so it may be just the latest case of Pyongyang saying with vitriolic propaganda something it cannot demonstrate in tests. But if it delivers, it will put to rest one other comforting thought: that it's safe for policymakers in Washington and elsewhere to take North Korea's claims as mainly just bluster.

"We have proudly acquired the re-entry technology, possessed by a few countries styling themselves as military powers, by dint of self-reliance and self-development," North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was quoted as saying. The authoritarian country's state-run media reported he made the comment after meeting scientists and technicians, following what it said was a successful ground test of a re-entry vehicle.

The report said Kim ordered the commencement of preparations for a "nuclear warhead explosion test" and test-firings of "several kinds of ballistic rockets able to carry nuclear warheads" to be conducted soon. As with all such reports, it's hard to separate Pyongyang's wishful thinking from the current reality. North Korea's most likely candidate for an intercontinental ballistic missile is generally known as the KN-08 - in North Korea it's called the Hwasong. The three-stage rocket has an estimated range of 5,000-6,000 km, longer if modified further. That range would be ample for attacks on US military bases in Japan, but not the US mainland. A militarized version of the rocket used to put a North Korean satellite into orbit last month is believed to have - potentially - a much longer range that could reach the US. A new version of the KN-08 was displayed at a military parade in October. IHS Jane's Defense weekly said it featured a smaller and blunter warhead shape "that could confirm US intelligence assessments and North Korean claims of success in miniaturizing its nuclear warheads."

Incredulity

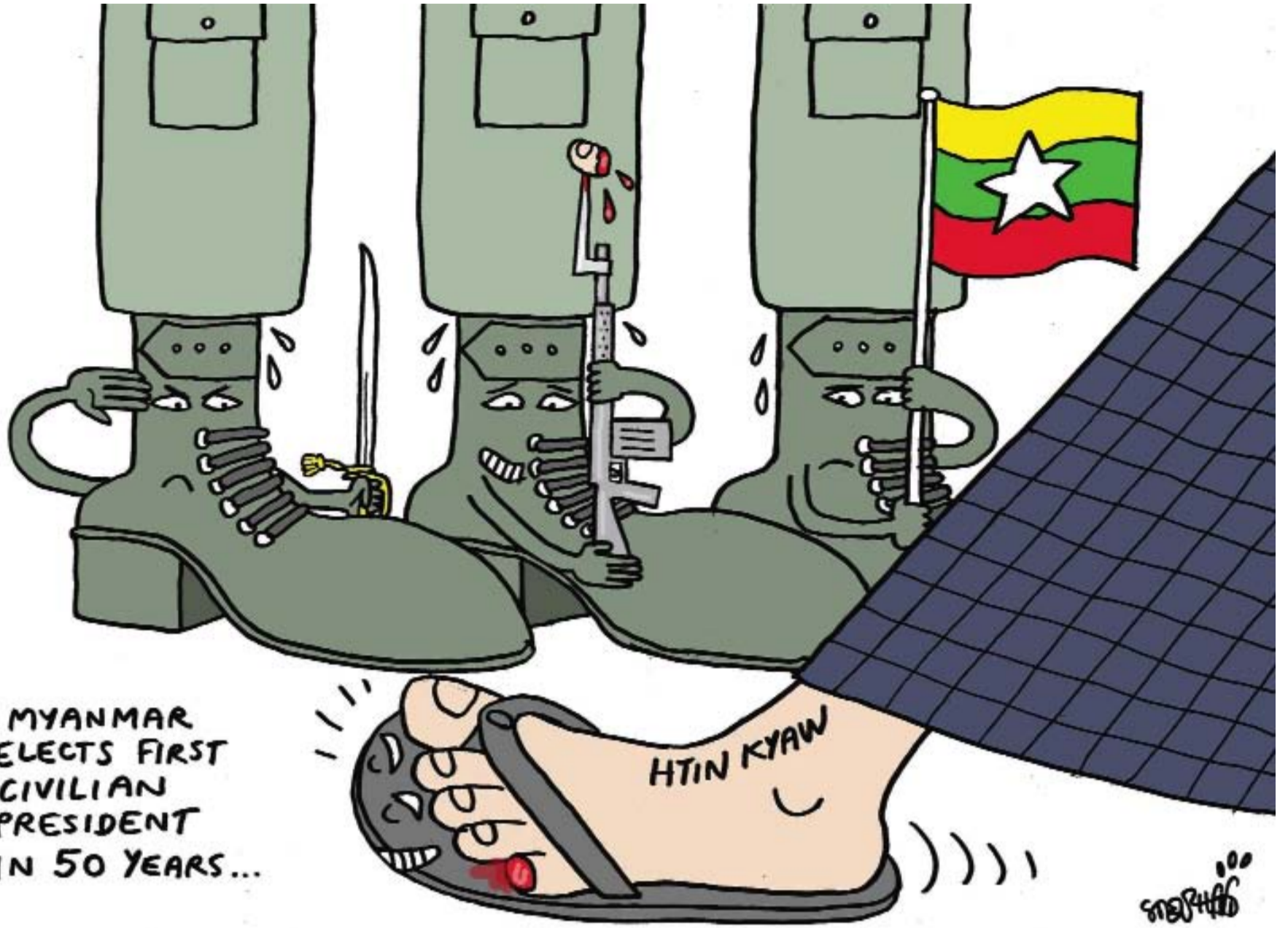
But the Pentagon has often expressed incredulity over the reliability of the KN-08 because North Korea has never tested it "end-to-end" - meaning from launch through re-entry and warhead delivery - to prove it works. Just last week, photos of Kim, splashed across the front page of the ruling party's Rodong Sinmun newspaper, showed him standing in a hangar filled with ballistic missiles and looking happily down at a silvery orb about the size of a disco ball.

Experts say the object looks very much like a credible nuclear weapon, though it was clearly a mock-up of whatever device the North may have. Kim and his scientists certainly wouldn't have stood so close to the real thing without radioactivity protection gear. Nor would Kim, a chain smoker, likely have been holding a lit cigarette right next to it. The message, however, was obvious: We know what you think our weaknesses are, and you might consider thinking twice.

"Every time the North Koreans test another bomb or a missile, I get calls asking what message the North Koreans are trying to send," wrote Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, in a recent op-ed in the influential Foreign Policy magazine. "Well, let's see: They've paraded two different ICBMs through Pyongyang, conducted four nuclear tests, showed us a compact nuclear design sitting next to a modern re-entry vehicle in front of one of those ICBMs, and hung a giant wall map of the United States marked with targets and titled 'Mainland Strike Plan,'" he wrote. "Here's a wild guess: They are building nuclear-armed ICBMs to strike the United States! Why is this so hard to grasp?"

Timing

The timing of Pyongyang's recent moves is crucial. It's facing a new UN sanctions package after its Jan 6 nuclear test - which it claimed was of an H-bomb - and has significantly amped up its rhetoric amid unprecedentedly large-scale war games between the US and South Korean militaries. Those exercises continue through April. The country is also conducting a 70-day "loyalty campaign" ahead of a once-in-a-generation ruling party congress in May. The congress could be something of a coming-out party for Kim, a venue to emerge from the shadows of his father and grandfather and more firmly establish himself at home and abroad as North Korea's supreme leader. He could also lay out his own long-term domestic and international agenda. — AP



TRUMP WITHOUT HAIR? EU POLICY GETS ROUGH

By Paul Taylor

Europe's emerging migration policy is looking increasingly like Donald Trump without the hair. Except that, unlike the Republican presidential frontrunner, who wants to make Mexico pay for a wall to keep migrants out of the United States, the Europeans are willing to pay their neighbor Turkey to do the job for them. Seven months and a million migrants after Chancellor Angela Merkel declared a "welcome culture" for Syrian refugees in Germany, the European Union is rushing to erect "No vacancy" signs along its internal and external borders.

Under fierce political pressure in her own conservative camp and from an insurgent right-wing populist party, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), Merkel's mantra of "We can do this" is morphing into "The Turks can do this for us". In a surprise overnight deal she negotiated with Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu last week, Ankara offered to take back all migrants, including Syrian refugees, who cross from its shores into Europe from now on or are intercepted off its coast.

Having thus sealed its most porous border to irregular migrants, the EU would admit a limited number of carefully vetted Syrian refugees directly from Turkey - one for each Syrian asylum seeker Ankara took back from Greek Aegean islands. The lucky few would be chosen with the help of the UN refugee agency from among those who had waited patiently in camps in Syria's neighbors, not those who had paid smugglers thousands of

euros for a risky sea crossing. They would be sent to those EU countries that agreed last year to take in a quota, although some states are resisting that.

Stifling doubts about the legality of such a blanket return policy, discomfort at outsourcing it to a partner many of them see as worryingly authoritarian, and irritation at the price Turkey is demanding, stunned EU leaders gave their provisional assent.

Desperation

European public opinion is so petrified by images of tens of thousands of bedraggled migrants trekking across muddy fields and highways towards western and northern Europe - and populists have made such capital out of those fears - that governments are desperate to halt the flow. Another summit in Brussels this week is due to conclude the Faustian bargain, granting Turkey €6 billion (\$6.7 billion) in aid to keep refugees on its soil, an accelerated path to visa-free travel for Turks and faster EU membership talks in return for its agreement to act as Europe's gatekeeper. European Council President Donald Tusk says regaining control of Europe's external borders is a condition for gaining public acceptance to take in refugees. In practice, it looks more like a way of keeping them out, if it can be implemented. Human rights groups and volunteers who work with refugees are outraged to see Europe slamming shut its open door for victims of war and persecution.

EU lawyers are working overtime to try to make it legal. The Geneva Convention on

refugees requires signatories to examine individually each claim for protection submitted by an asylum seeker on their soil. The German-Turkish deal would get around that provision by declaring Turkey a "safe" third country to which irregular migrants could be returned under a bilateral Greek-Turkish readmission agreement. The United Nations' top human rights official has said that could entail illegal "collective and arbitrary expulsions".

Apart from the moral issues raised by this dodge, there are several legal problems. Turkey restricts its application of the Geneva Convention to refugees from Europe. People fleeing war or persecution in the Middle East and Asia will not be covered unless Ankara amends its laws. Turkish officials say they will ensure Turkey complies with international law to fulfill its part of the potential EU deal. Even so, lawyers say asylum seekers who reach Greece have a right to appeal against being sent back to Turkey if they fear for their personal safety there. A Greek court would have to hear each appeal before a person could be removed. There is no appropriate court on the Greek islands, and Greek justice is notoriously slow.

Embarrassment

At the same time, the rush to declare Turkey "safe" could hardly have come at a more embarrassing time for the EU. President Tayyip Erdogan has stepped up a military crackdown on Kurdish militants, the government has seized Turkey's best-selling newspaper, critical journalists face prosecu-

tion and jail, and businessmen and public officials close to a dissident Muslim cleric have been purged. Unlike Trump, most EU leaders do not declare they want to prevent more Muslims settling in their country, with the exception of Hungary's Viktor Orban and Slovakia's Robert Fico, who have stressed preserving their countries' Christian identity.

However, anti-immigration campaigners like Marine Le Pen in France and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands openly cite Islam as a reason for rejecting refugees, and they are increasingly setting the agenda for mainstream politicians. They oppose visa-free travel for Turks in Europe for the same reason. France, which has a tradition of political asylum and took in tens of thousands of Vietnamese "boatpeople" in the 1970s, is limiting its intake of Syrian refugees now, citing security concerns following last year's Islamist attacks in Paris.

Like other west European countries, France has struggled to integrate second and third generation young people of Muslim or north African origin. The place of Islam in public life is fiercely contested in these secular societies, and resentments from Algeria's war of independence still simmer. European politicians may be aghast at the rhetoric of Trump, who has said he wants a database to register and track Muslims in the United States and would bar any Muslim entering the country until Congress could act. But if the pact with Turkey goes through as conceived, the EU will be retreating into a "fortress Europe" policy for fear of its own Trumps. — Reuters

BOMBING EXPOSES DIVISIONS TEARING TURKEY

By Umit Bektas, Nick Tattersall and Humeyra Pamuk

Government resign!" chanted some of the mourners at the funeral yesterday of four young victims of the suicide bombing in Turkey's capital Ankara. "Our child has become a victim of ugly politics. We don't want any politicians at our funeral," one of the relatives called out, before family members hushed him and warned him against speaking out in front of journalists. Far from bringing the nation together in mourning, the aftermath of Sunday night's attack has again laid bare the deep divisions tearing at Turkey as it struggles to avoid being drawn into its neighbors' conflicts.

If Turkey continues on this path, some analysts warn, it risks a cycle of violence and a lurch away from the European standards of freedom and democracy to which it once aspired. President Tayyip Erdogan shows little sign of healing the rifts. Parties from across the political spectrum - from nationalists to the pro-Kurdish opposition - have condemned the car bombing, which killed 37 people in the heart of Ankara and was the third in the city in five months.

But the question of how to respond is far more divisive. Officials quickly blamed Kurdish militants. Turkish warplanes began bombing their camps in northern Iraq within hours, and clashes with the security forces widened in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast. In his first speech since the attack, Erdogan said the country's anti-terrorism laws, already seen by rights groups as too invasive and used in recent months to detain academics and journalists, should be widened further.

"It might be the terrorist who pulls the trigger and detonates the bomb, but it is these supporters and accomplices who allow that attack to achieve its goal," he told a dinner for doctors in his palace late on Monday. "The fact their title is lawmaker, academic, writer, journalist or head of a civil society group doesn't change the fact that individual is a terrorist... We should redefine

terror and terrorist as soon as possible and put it in our penal code."

Erdogan's opponents say he is using anti-terrorism laws to silence dissent and that his authoritarian leadership is dangerously dividing a nation needed by its European and NATO allies as a bulwark against the instability of the Middle East. Almost as Erdogan spoke in Ankara, police used tear gas and water cannon to disperse several hundred leftist demonstrators in Istanbul who had gathered to protest what they perceive to be the government's failure to prevent Sunday's attack. Some in the crowd began chanting "Thief, Murderer, Erdogan", a rallying cry during the anti-government protests of recent years, prompting police to intervene, Reuters witnesses said.

'Angry Country'

"Turkey has become a country that can neither rejoice nor mourn together, or find a common sense to unite around. It has become an angry country, with ever shrinking and fragmenting tribal outlooks," said

Turkish-British researcher Ziya Meral. "Pressure on media and denials of freedom of expression are only fuelling mistrust, dangerous propaganda and misinformation," Meral, a research fellow at Britain's Sandhurst military academy and founder of the London-based Centre on Religion and Global Affairs, wrote in a blog post.

The ruling AK Party, founded by Erdogan more than a decade ago, was "no longer driven by pragmatism" but by its own survival and its ambition of securing the stronger presidential system that Erdogan wants, he said. Since winning Turkey's first popular presidential election in 2014, Erdogan has lobbied for replacing its parliamentary system with an executive presidency more akin to the United States or France. Many of his supporters, who represent just over half the electorate and see him as champion of the pious working class, believe the narrative that Turkey, battered by regional conflicts, needs strong leadership for its long-term stability. His opponents fear too much power in the hands of a man who brooks no dissent.



Family members and friends gather around the bridal veil and Turkish flag-draped coffin of Zeynep Basak Gursoy, 19, one of 37 victims of Sunday's explosion, during the funeral procession in Ankara yesterday. — AP

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ICC WORLD TWENTY20



NAGPUR: New Zealand's Ish Sodhi (down) celebrates the wicket of India's Ravindra Jadeja during the ICC World Twenty20 2016 cricket match at the Vidarbha Cricket Association stadium in Nagpur yesterday. — AP

WEST INDIES' 'GAYLE STORM' SET TO HIT ENGLAND

MUMBAI: Controversial batsman Chris Gayle will be looking to ensure the West Indies' troubled build-up to the World Twenty20 becomes a distant memory when they open their campaign against England in Mumbai yesterday. The Windies are out to prove they are still a force in the shortest form of the game despite their declining Test status, while England want to atone for a humiliating early exit from last year's 50-over World Cup.

A pay dispute cast doubt over the West Indies' appearance in India and while the row was resolved at the 11th hour, relations between players and the country's cricket board remain tense. Their preparations have also been hit by the withdrawal of all-rounder Kieron Pollard and off-spinner Sunil Narine, who is T20 cricket's top-performing

bowler and has thrived in the Indian Premier League (IPL). But in the enigmatic Gayle they possess a batsman capable of destroying whatever bowling attack he faces and single-handedly winning any match, providing he stays clear of off-field controversy.

The Jamaican, nicknamed "Gayle Storm", faced allegations of sexism after he asked an Australian TV presenter for a date live on air in January during the Big Bash League. He also lit up the tournament for the right reasons, hitting a 12-ball half-century. Gayle, 36, holds the record for the highest ever score in T20s, 175 off 66 balls, and hit the format's first international century during the inaugural World T20 in 2007. "To me he is the best T20 batsman, the most destructive one in this game so he knows his game inside-out," West Indies captain Darren

Sammy said of the left-handed batsman last week. But the second-ranked Windies, who are looking to add to their 2012 World T20 title, face a tough prospect at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium in the shape of a new, attack-minded England side. Eoin Morgan's team have turned their fortunes around since they were dumped out of the 2015 World Cup by Bangladesh, adopting a more aggressive attitude which has seen them up their run rate. In Morgan, all-rounder Ben Stokes, opener Jason Roy and classy right-hander Joe Root, England have strength in depth but they will miss injured fast bowler Steven Finn. England, who won the 2010 World T20, enjoyed a six-wicket win over New Zealand in a warm-up game on Saturday. "The confidence we take from that is massive," said Roy. —AFP



MUMBAI: West Indies' Chris Gayle warms up during a practice session ahead of their ICC Twenty20 2016 Cricket World Cup match in Mumbai. —AP

BUOYANT BANGLADESH BID TO TURN SCREW ON PAKISTAN

KOLKATA: Bangladesh will look to compound the misery of beleaguered Pakistan today in their opening group match of the World Twenty20, fresh from humbling their arch-rivals in the Asia Cup. Despite their recent improvements in 50-over cricket, Bangladesh have a rotten record in the World T20 and have never beaten Pakistan in the premier tournament of cricket's shortest format. But they will fancy their chances like never before at Kolkata's Eden Gardens against a team who are on a miserable run and whose preparations have been hit by their late arrival in India in a row over security.

Bangladesh cruised through last week's preliminary round and know that a victory over Pakistan will set them up nicely if they are to make the semi-finals for the first time. Star batsman Tamim Iqbal is in the form of his life, scoring Bangladesh's first ever international T20 century in Sunday's victory over Oman after scores of 83 and 47 in the first two games. Fans in the cricket-mad nation held impromptu street parties earlier

this month when Bangladesh clinched a five-wicket win over Pakistan in Dhaka, sealing a place in the final of the Asia Cup which they lost to India.

Bangladesh was part of Pakistan before a brutal 1971 war of separation, and matches between the sides therefore always have an extra edge to them. Mashrafe Mortaza's side can expect strong support from their fellow Bengalis in what is the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal. But Afridi has been making his own overtures towards the locals by claiming his team has received more "love" from fans in India than back home, comments that incensed former Pakistan skipper Javed Miandad.

Backing for Boom Boom

Pakistan coach Waqar Younis said that the team's troubled build-up to the tournament did not mean they should be written off. "We're the kind of team that once we get the momentum going, we can surprise people," Younis said in a pre-match press conference. The former



KOLKATA: Pakistan's Mohammad Hafeez takes part in a training session ahead of their first WT20 match against Bangladesh at Eden Gardens in Kolkata. —AFP

bowling great also backed the big-hitting Afridi to rediscover the kind of form with the bat that earned him the nickname Boom Boom. "It takes less than a minute to lose form and to get it back as well.

T20 cricket is like that, we're hoping that he's one innings away from getting back his old form," said Younis. Bangladesh's build-up has been serene

in comparison to the dramas in Pakistan's camp. But after seeing off Oman, the Netherlands and Ireland in the preliminaries, Mortaza knows the hard work now begins in a group that includes India, Australia and New Zealand. "In that group you can't make any mistakes, you have to be up to the mark everywhere," said the veteran bowler. — AFP

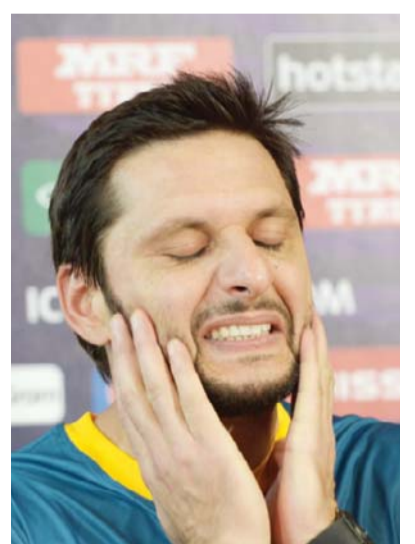
PAKISTAN'S COACH BACKS AFRIDI ON INDIA LOVE ROW

KOLKATA: Coach Waqar Younis stood by his skipper Shahid Afridi yesterday over his declaration that Pakistan's cricketers receive more love in India than back home, saying critics should stop stirring up trouble. Former Pakistani captain Javed Miandad has been at the forefront of the outrage over Afridi's comments at the weekend shortly after the team's delayed arrival for the World Twenty20 being played in India.

But Younis said Afridi's critics were making something out of nothing and he should not be criticized for wearing his heart on his sleeve. "This is something he felt. It's his emotions," the former fast bowler told reporters in Kolkata on the eve of Pakistan's opening match in the World Twenty20 against Bangladesh. "I believe we should leave it at that rather than creating a controversy out of nothing. We are here to play cricket, to beat teams," he said ahead of Pakistan's opening rubber against Bangladesh. "My message to the boys is just leave everything behind. This is about playing some quality cricket and playing for the nation."

In a press conference in Kolkata on Sunday, Afridi said that Pakistan had always enjoyed playing in India and "have been loved by Indians crowds more than crowds back home in Pakistan." The comments raised eyebrows as Pakistan's build-up to the tournament has been embroiled in controversy over whether they would be allowed to travel to arch-rivals India. They agreed to take the trip only after negotiations with India over security arrangements and the shifting of their match against the hosts to Kolkata from Dharamsala.

Diplomatic tensions between the two countries have meant that the two teams have not played any bilateral series for more than three years, and their rivalry is restricted to multi-national tournaments such as the World T20. India's batting great Sunil Gavaskar on Tuesday said Afridi's comments would help dull the hostility of the usually raucous home crowd at Eden Gardens, the venue for the much-awaited India-Pakistan tie on March 19. "Emotions run high whenever India play Pakistan," Gavaskar told the NDTV news network. "He (Afridi) said nice things—maybe you need it, maybe you don't. It will help as far as the crowd is concerned. It has ensured the crowds won't be overly hostile to him and the Pakistani team." —AFP



Pakistan's Captain Shahid Afridi

ENGLAND'S MORGAN FEELS FOR SUSPENDED NARINE

MUMBAI: England skipper Eoin Morgan voiced sympathy yesterday for West Indies spinner Sunil Narine after the number one-ranked bowler pulled out of the World Twenty20 following his suspension for a suspect action. The West Indies' hopes of winning the tournament were dealt a severe blow last month when Narine withdrew from the squad, saying he was not ready to return to the international fold after work to remodel his action. But while Narine's absence from the World T20 is something of a relief for Morgan's team who play the West Indies in their opening match on Wednesday, the England

skipper said he felt for his former teammate.

"I think it's a very touchy subject. I know Sunil. I'm not pleased to see what he's going through. I wouldn't wish it upon anybody," Morgan told reporters in Mumbai. The 27-year-old Trinidadian was suspended in November after being cited during a match in Sri Lanka for a suspect bowling action, the second time he has been reported for an illegal action.

Morgan and Narine have played together for the Kolkata Knight Riders in the Indian Premier League (IPL), a competition in which the spinner has regu-

larly bamboozled opponents. "He's bowled the same way since he was probably 15 or 16 years old. The fact he's got to this stage in his career and it's only being looked at now is probably disappointing from his point of view," said Morgan. "But there are set rules in place that are being applied."

West Indies skipper Darren Sammy acknowledged in his pre-match press conference that Narine would be a big loss, along with allrounder Kieron Pollard who also pulled out of the squad after an injury setback. "It's always really difficult to replace someone like Narine or Pollard who have so much experience

here," said Sammy. "Yes we'll miss them, but it creates another opportunity for somebody else to step up to the plate."

Despite not playing since November, Narine is still way ahead of his nearest rivals in the T20 international rankings. Narine was a key member of the West Indies team which won the 2012 World T20, taking three wickets for just nine runs in the final against Sri Lanka in Colombo. He is one of a number of leading bowlers who are absent from this year's tournament, including Pakistan's former world number one Saeed Ajmal who has struggled with a remodeled action after being reported in 2014. — AFP



France's forward Karim Benzema

FRENCH PM OPPOSES BENZEMA'S RETURN TO THE NATIONAL TEAM

PARIS: French Prime Minister Manuel Valls yesterday said Real Madrid star Karim Benzema should not be allowed to return to the France team while he remains at the centre of a sex-tape bribery inquiry. "I think that the conditions have not yet been met for Karim Benzema to come into the France team. He is still under investigation," Valls told French broadcaster RMC. Benzema, 28, is France's leading goalscorer, but has been excluded from national duty since he was placed under investigation over an attempt to bribe France teammate Mathieu Valbuena for a sex-tape. Benzema has been accused of complicity in the attempt.

"For young people, a great sportsman must be exemplary," the Prime Minister said, adding "(football) is our heritage, it's not something that just interests amateur sports fans, so we have to be careful, all acts and decisions have their importance". Valls, whose words echoed those of France's Sports Minister Patrick Kanner on Monday, added: "At the same time it is a decision for the French football federation and the coach." Benzema, whose hopes of playing at Euro 2016 had received a huge boost after his bail conditions were eased last week, later took to Twitter to express his frustration at Valls' comments.

"12 seasons that I'm professional: 541 matches played 0 red card 11 yellow cards !!! And some talk about me being exemplary???" Benzema tweeted. France coach Didier Deschamps has made no secret of his desire to see Benzema return to the national team set-up, after the striker was indefinitely suspended by the French Football Federation (FFF) in December. "On a sporting plan, I want to have the best players. You're not a striker at Real Madrid for five years with (Jose) Mourinho, (Carlo) Ancelotti, (Rafael) Benitez and (Zinedine)

Zidane for nothing. All the countries envy us," Deschamps told French daily L'Equipe recently.

'A great player'

Former France winger Franck Ribery backed Benzema's bid to return to play in the blue shirt. "Karim is a great player, he showed that at Real Madrid and with the France team," said Ribery during a Bayern Munich press conference. "I read that Didier Deschamps wants to take the best to the Euro and Karim certainly belongs to that group." On Friday, an appeals court upheld an investigating magistrate's decision to lift restrictions placed on Benzema that prevented him from coming into contract with Lyon midfielder Valbuena, who was the target of the blackmail attempt.

The FFF said the decision to lift the legal restrictions was "a first step", but added that it would wait to see how the investigation unfolded before deciding whether to recall Benzema. A final decision will be taken by FFF president Noel Le Graet. Meanwhile, publishing company Panini confirmed they have included Valbuena and not Benzema among the 20 France players present in their traditional sticker album for Euro 2016.

"At the time we made our choice, Karim Benzema was not selected," explained Panini France marketing manager Isabelle Fillon at Tuesday's launch. But Panini France president Alain Guerrini said the door remained open for his inclusion. "When we had to give up on including Benzema's picture that was a problem because he's a major player," Guerrini admitted. "If by chance Benzema is called up for France, it suits us perfectly. He's popular with young people and that would give us a marketing coup since there would be an update 'set', with the possibility for advertising."—AFP

YOUNG AFGHAN BOXER PACKS A PUNCH AGAINST PATRIARCHY

KABUL: Nineteen-year-old Afghan boxer Sadaf Rahimi slams her punching bag deep in the bowels of Kabul's Ghazi stadium, dealing blows to gender stereotyping and doing her part to to exorcise history: it was on these very grounds that the Taliban carried out public executions. Sadaf, whose shy gaze seems at odds with her muscular 60kg (130lb) frame, pulls on her gloves. A liberating spasm accompanies each blow that crushes the leather mitts of Agha Gul Alamyar, one of her trainers. Sadaf is a brilliant boxer. But she is also an exception in this conservative Muslim country where women participating in sport remains a taboo.

Her black pirate bandana serves not just to hold her hair in place, but to cover it. "I also wear a scarf in my everyday life because we live in a conservative country," she says. The Taliban's regime, known for its brutal treatment of women, was toppled in 2001 by a US-led military alliance. Since then, women's rights have improved, but a bitter patriarchal aftertaste remains for many Afghan women pressured to stay at

home to cook and raise children. At all of 19 years of age—seven of which she has spent in the ring—Sadaf sees a moral obligation "to prove that men and women can be equal. Girls are not forced to stay at home".

Going back in time

Born to a middle-class family from the Tajik ethnic group, Sadaf had to first make the case for boxing—which she discovered by watching Mike Tyson and Laila Ali on TV—to those closest to her. "At first my family was opposed to me boxing. They were saying: 'Why is a girl boxing? She should stay home, do the chores and cook.' My aunt is still against it," recalls the young woman, who is also pursuing a degree in economics. She is taking a stand on misogyny and against the darkest hours of Afghan history, by training inside Ghazi stadium which the Taliban used for their public executions during their 1996 to 2001 regime.

One of these executions was filmed in secret in 1999. The images show a woman, Zarmina, being executed by Kalashnikov fire for having killed her violent husband. "It's a pleasure to train her," says Agha Gul Alamyar, Sadaf's trainer. Like other young women, Sadaf has to contend with poor equipment and basic infrastructure. The mats are threadbare and the gloves and punching bags are old and worn out. "We lack everything, gloves, boots. There is no encouragement for the girls," he says. The federation currently counts only 20 women in its ranks.

Thirst for gold

In an effort to boost the sport among women, Sadaf wants to set up her own club and become a trainer. But first she must mount the podium in international competitions, a distant dream. She has already brought home three bronze medals in regional competitions, but isn't yet up to Olympic standard—the sport's Holy Grail. In 2012, Sadaf lied in order to accept an invitation by the Olympics organizer. But the International Boxing Association eventually did not allow her to leave for London, fearing her better trained opponents could seriously injure her. And this year, she won't be going to Rio. This time around the reasons are more prosaic—her defeat in the South Asian Games in India in mid February means she won't be Olympics bound. "I am disappointed," she said. "In India I was completely alone. No trainer came with me, I had no support at all. —AFP



ITALY COACH CONTE TO QUIT, OPENING UP CHELSEA MOVE

ROME: Italy coach Antonio Conte, who has been linked to Chelsea, will give up his post after Euro 2016, the Italian Football Federation said yesterday. The 46-year-old former Juventus coach took over the national team in August 2014 and secured their qualification for the European Championship. Federation president Carlo Tavecchio told Italian media: "Antonio Conte has told me that at the end of the European championship, his job will end. He feels the need for the pitch, the everyday training, and this is something you can understand."

The news fueled speculation that Conte, who won three Serie A titles with Juventus, will be appointed manager of English Premier League side Chelsea following the tournament in France from June 10 to July 10. British and Italian media reports say that Chelsea have an accord with Conte, even adding that he will take his long term assistants Angelo Alessio and Massimo Carrera with him to London. Chelsea are having the worst season of Roman Abramovich's 13-year ownership. They sacked Jose Mourinho in December and interim boss Guus Hiddink had to take the team from just above the relegation zone to 10th place. Conte took over a demoralized Azzurri side following their humiliating first round exit from the World Cup in Brazil.

He confidently succeeded in his first task of qualifying for the European Championships. Italy advanced to the finals with ease by dominating their group which included Bulgaria, Norway, Croatia, Azerbaijan and Malta, with seven wins and three draws. Conte's Italy defense, with a Juventus core of Gianluigi Buffon, Leonardo Bonucci and Andrea Barzagli, proved solid, the coach has come under fire for his lacklustre forward line that managed just 16 goals in 10 qualifying games. Three months



BAKU: In this file photo, Italy's head coach Antonio Conte shouts instructions during the Euro 2016 soccer qualifying group H match between the Azerbaijan and Italy at the Olympic stadium in Baku, Azerbaijan. Antonio Conte will leave his post as Italy coach after this summer's European Championship. — AP

before the tournament gets underway, the team remains a work in progress.

In France, the Italians have been drawn in Group E along with Belgium, Sweden and the Republic of Ireland. Italy were beaten by world number one ranked team Belgium in a friendly last November, demonstrating the gap between Conte's side and the top European teams. Conte has also clashed with Italian football chiefs. He

had hoped to organize a training camp in February and wanted the Italian Cup final brought forward to allow international players involved to take holidays. Both requests were turned down to Conte's fury. Former Italy coaches Roberto Donadoni and Cesare Prandelli have both been named as possible replacements for Conte along with Claudio Ranieri, manager of surprise Premier League leaders Leicester. —AFP



NANJING: Elkeson (right) of Shanghai SIPG fights for the ball with a Gamba Osaka player during their AFC Champions League group stage football match in Shanghai yesterday. — AFP

ELKESON DOUBLE FIRES SHANGHAI TOP

SHANGHAI: Brazilian forward Elkeson's double strike fired Shanghai SIPG to the top of their AFC Champions League group with a 2-1 win over Gamba Osaka yesterday. Elkeson, off-loaded by reigning Asian champions Guangzhou Evergrande in January, looked an increasingly important signing as he sealed SIPG's second win in Group G. It was enough for Sven-Goran Eriksson's side to leapfrog Melbourne Victory, who were held 0-0 by South Korea's Suwon Samsung Bluewings in a combative contest earlier.

Elkeson put SIPG ahead with a finish from close range on 41 minutes as the home side dominated. And after his Brazilian opposite number Patric nodded Gamba level on the hour-mark, Elkeson popped up again with the match-winning strike just two minutes later. The decisive goal may have made uncomfortable viewing for Evergrande fans as it came from a cross by Dario Conca, Elkeson's former team-mate at the Asian and Chinese title-holders.

Meanwhile big-spending Chinese team Jiangsu Suning's unconvincing campaign remained stuck in second gear with a 0-0 draw away to FC Tokyo. Asia's record signing Alex Teixeira failed to inspire the visitors, who were missing ex-Chelsea midfielder Ramires following a red card in their previous outing. Instead it was FC Tokyo who looked likelier to win, with goalkeeper Zhang Sipeng forced into a reaction save in the second half and Hiroki Kawano seeing a deflected header drop just wide.

The draw left Jiangsu second in Group E behind 2006 champions Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors, who beat bottom-placed Vietnamese outfit Binh Duong 2-0. In Melbourne, A-League champions Victory were frustrated by a disciplined Suwon defense, although the goalless draw meant they remained unbeaten

in their three games so far. Chances were at a premium with Kwak Hee-Ju man-marking leading Victory scorer Besart Berisha so closely that he didn't have any shots at goal in the 90 minutes. "They are a very difficult team to break down, they're so disciplined," Victory coach Kevin Muscat said.

"When you're that disciplined and you've got a work ethic like Suwon have then they

are difficult to break down but we did create some decent chances, particularly in the first half." Victory veteran Archie Thompson had the ball in the back of the net in the 53rd minute after heading in from a corner, but was ruled offside. Singapore referee Muhammad Taqi brandished the yellow card six times in a physical contest but also let the game flow.—AFP

PALESTINIAN CHILD SURVIVOR TO MEET REAL MADRID STARS

RAMALLAH: A Palestinian boy who survived a firebombing by Jewish extremists that killed his parents and brother will travel to meet Real Madrid stars including his idol Cristiano Ronaldo. Five-year-old Ahmed Dawabsha, his uncle and his grandparents were to fly from the Jordanian capital Amman to Spain, his grandfather said.

"We have been invited by Real Madrid, but we don't know yet which day we will be able to meet the players," Hussein Dawabsha said. Palestinian Football Association head Jibril Rajoub welcomed the "superb humanitarian gesture by Real Madrid, its administration and Cristiano Ronaldo, who are restoring hope for a child who lost his entire family." "There is an unknown soldier in this initiative and that is Zinedine Zidane, who we warmly thank," he said of the Real Madrid coach.

The July 31 attack on the Dawabsha family home in the village of Duma in the occupied West Bank killed 18-month-old Ali Saad Dawabsha and fatally wounded his parents. Ahmed, who was hospitalized after

the attack with severe burns, was the sole survivor from the immediate family. "He has just spent eight months in hospital," his grandfather said. "He is doing better, but a lot of time and care is still needed for him to truly recover." The attack drew renewed attention to Jewish extremism and accusations Israel had not done enough to prevent such violence. It also sparked international condemnation and worsened tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. Palestinians moved by images of the bandaged boy wearing a Real Madrid jersey campaigned for months on social media to convince the team to meet Ahmed. The team signaled in January that it would be able to organize such a meeting. Ronaldo's rival Lionel Messi was similarly moved by the plight of another five-year-old boy. The Afghan boy won the Internet's heart when he was pictured wearing a plastic bag as an improvised Messi jersey. Murtaza Ahmadi later travelled with his family to Kabul to receive two jerseys autographed by the Barcelona star and presented to the young fan by UNICEF.—AFP

Sports

Hood, Jazz shoot down Cavaliers; Warriors mark Curry birthday



Thai monk lucky charms help Leicester outfox opponents



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016

PAKISTAN'S COACH BACKS AFRIDI ON INDIA LOVE ROW Page 17



MANCHESTER: Kiev's goalkeeper Oleksandr Shovkovskiy (left) dives as he watches a shot from Manchester City's Jesus Navas (right) go past him, but it hits the post, during the Champions League round of 16 second leg soccer match between Manchester City and Dynamo Kiev at the Etihad Stadium yesterday. — AP

INJURIES MAR MAN CITY'S HISTORY NIGHT

MANCHESTER: Injuries to centre-backs Vincent Kompany and Nicolas Otamendi overshadowed proceedings as Manchester City reached the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time by drawing 0-0 with Dynamo Kiev yesterday. Leading 3-1 from last month's away leg, Manuel Pellegrini's side completed the job in forgettable fashion, with Jesus Navas's shot against the post for City the nearest either side came to breaking the deadlock. But first-half injuries to captain Kompany and Otamendi cast a pall over the evening at a hushed Etihad Stadium, leaving City vulnerable in defence ahead of Sunday's derby with Manchester United in the Premier League.

While progress in the Champions League represents a historic achievement for Pellegrini, who will hand over to Pep Guardiola at the season's end, the injuries could have a costly impact on City's attempt to resurrect their domes-

tic title challenge. The League Cup winners have fallen 12 points below leaders Leicester City, although they retain a game in hand, and face challenges from both United and in-form West Ham United for their top-four place.

Pellegrini welcomed Yaya Toure back from the heel problem that had caused him to miss Saturday's frustrating 0-0 draw at Norwich City, but within seven minutes he was counting the cost of another injury. After misjudging a bounce on the City right, Kompany slipped as he tried to recover the situation and immediately realized that he had done himself damage, passing the ball out of play and signaling to the bench before limping off with a look of disgust etched on his face. The Belgium international, who has suffered 13 calf injuries since 2008, was soon joined in the home changing room by Otamendi, who came off second-best in a

collision with Vitaliy Buyalskiy. The Argentine attempted to play on, before admitting defeat, leaving City with reserve centre-backs Eliaquim Mangala and Martin Demichelis in the heart of their defense. It was not a combination that will have inspired great confidence among the home support and there were early nerves as Mangala's missed kick from Demichelis's pass almost let Lukasz Teodorczyk in on goal.

With the atmosphere affected by the double injury blow, City struggled to get going and when Navas managed to pick Sergio Aguero out with a right-wing cut-back, the Argentine miscued. Visiting goalkeeper Olexandr Shovkovskiy was not tested until early in the first half, when he showed a neat touch to control the ball on his thigh after a defender had inadvertently prodded it towards his own goal. City began to show

signs of life, Toure curling a free-kick over and Aguero dragging a shot wide, before Navas collected a pass from Toure and drilled a low shot against the left-hand upright.

Moments later, City goalkeeper Joe Hart made his first save of the night, comfortably fielding an effort from Andriy Yarmolenko after the Ukraine winger robbed Gael Clichy. Toure continued to drive the home team forward and he threatened to make the breakthrough from Navas's cut-back, only for Shovkovskiy to save. There were two late scares in the hosts' box when first Buyalskiy and then substitute Olexandr Yakovenko took aim, but Hart blocked alertly on both occasions, giving City a clean sheet for only the second time in their 18 Champions League home games. — AFP

SPIN GAMBLE PAYS OFF AS N ZEALAND SPANK INDIA

SANTNER LEADS INDIA'S ROUT

NAGPUR: Kane Williamson's gamble to compromise on speed and pick three specialist spinners paid off as New Zealand humbled hosts India by 47 runs in a spin-dominated Super 10 contest of the World Twenty20 yesterday. Opting to bat first, New Zealand posted 126-7 in the Group Two contest on a prodigiously turning track at Nagpur's VCA Stadium, seemingly a below-par total against the host nation who are famed for their proficiency against spin bowling.

New Zealand's three-pronged spin attack, however, ensured it was more than enough as Mitchell Santner (4-11), Nathan McCullum (2-15) and the Indian-born Ish Sodhi (3-18) wrecked the hosts who folded for 79 in 18.1 overs. Williamson said it was not an easy decision to drop the pace duo of Tim Southee and Trent Boult to accommodate the spinners. "Obviously that was tough, they are world class bowlers," the Kiwi captain said. "But at the same time we are looking to do the best we can in these conditions. Certainly the spinners paid off today. The wicket spun a lot and they bowled very well on it."

The first three balls of the match contained the kind of drama and excitement that fans would be expecting from the sixth edition of the tournament in cricket's emotional and financial home in India. After Williamson won the toss and decided to set a target, Martin Guptill nonchalantly hit the first delivery from Ravichandran Ashwin over the bowler's head for a six. The off-spinner settled

score in the very next ball, trapping the batsman leg before with a delivery that, replay suggested, would have gone over the stumps.

New man in Colin Munro reverse hit the next ball for a six but threw his wicket in the next over. As wickets kept tumbling at the other end, Corey Anderson (34) tried to steady the innings and it was Luke Ronchi's (21 not out) 11-ball cameo that took them past the 125-mark. The Indian fans expected the chase to be a stroll in the park but Santner, who was adjudged man-of-the-match, and McCullum had other ideas. They blew away India's top order, reducing them to 26-4 in the fifth over to derail their chase.

Virat Kohli (23) resisted the onslaught for a while but Sodhi struck a crucial blow with his very first ball to send back the Indian batting mainstay. Home captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni waged a lone battle with a run-a-ball 30 but the celebrated 'finisher' could not get his team over the line. New Zealand beat India at their own game with their spinners claiming nine of the 10 wickets but Dhoni insisted the defeat was more down to his team's careless batting. "It was our batting that let us down," the home captain said after India's fifth futile attempt to beat New Zealand in Twenty20 Internationals. "There were quite a few soft dismissals. It was not like the deliveries got a lot of batsmen out. Maybe it was our shot selection... there was no partnership also," Dhoni rued. — Reuters



India's captain and batsman Mahendra Singh Dhoni



NAGPUR: New Zealand's Mitchell Santner plays a shot during the World T20 cricket tournament match between India and New Zealand at The Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur yesterday. — AFP (See Page 17)

SCOREBOARD

NAGPUR, India: Final scores in the World Twenty20 group match between India and New Zealand at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur yesterday:

New Zealand		India	
M. Guptill lbw b Ashwin	6	R. Sharma st Ronchi b Santner	5
K. Williamson st Dhoni b Raina	8	S. Dhawan lbw b McCullum	1
C. Munro c Pandya b Nehra	7	V. Kohli c Ronchi b Sodhi	23
C. Anderson b Bumrah	34	S. Raina c Guptill b Santner	1
R. Taylor run out (Raina)	10	Y. Singh c&b McCullum	4
M. Santner c Dhoni b Jadeja	18	MS Dhoni c McCullum b Santner	30
G. Elliott run out (Dhawan)	9	H. Pandya lbw b Santner	1
L. Ronchi not out	21	R. Jadeja c&b Sodhi	0
N. McCullum not out	0	R. Ashwin st Ronchi b Sodhi	10
Extras (b4, lb3, w6)	13	A. Nehra b Milne	0
Total (7 wks, 20 overs)	126	J. Bumrah not out	0
Did not bat: A. Milne, I. Sodhi		Extras (w3, nb1)	4
Fall of wickets: 1-6 (Guptill), 2-13 (Munro), 3-35 (Williamson), 4-61 (Taylor), 5-89 (Anderson), 6-98 (Santner), 7-114 (Elliott)		Total (all out, 18.1 overs)	79
Bowling: Ashwin 4-0-32-1, Nehra 3-1-20-1, Bumrah 4-0-15-1, Raina 4-0-16-1, Jadeja 4-0-26-1, Pandya 1-0-10-0		Did not bat:	
		Fall of wickets: 1-5 (Dhawan), 2-10 (Sharma), 3-12 (Raina), 4-26 (Singh), 5-39 (Kohli), 6-42 (Pandya), 7-43 (Jadeja), 8-73 (Ashwin) 9-79 (Dhoni)	
		Bowling: McCullum 3-0-15-2, Anderson 3-0-18-0, Santner 4-0-11-4, Elliott 2-0-9-0, Milne 2.1-0-8-1, Sodhi 4-0-18-3	
		Result: New Zealand win by 47 runs	

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016

GCC needs \$151bn worth of financing needs: Markaz
Page 22

China considers tax on currency trades: Report
Page 23



The winning four - the new-generation Audi A4

ZAIN OFFERS NEW GALAXY S7 AND GALAXY S7 EDGE

Page 26

Page 25



BOWIE: A shopper at Safeway in Bowie, Maryland. US retail sales dipped in February and were revised sharply lower in January, the Commerce Department said yesterday. — AFP

WEAK RETAIL SALES HIGHLIGHT RISKS TO US ECONOMY JANUARY RETAIL SALES DROP 0.4%, PRODUCER PRICES FALL 0.2% IN FEB

WASHINGTON: US retail sales fell less than expected in February, but a sharp downward revision to January's sales could reignite concerns about the economy's growth prospects. Yesterday's weak report from the Commerce Department bucked the trend of recent labor market data that had suggested the economy remained on solid ground despite some concerns that a recession was looming. "The economy's engines are not going into reverse ... but at the moment, it is hard to see GDP with a 2 percent handle," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFJ Union Bank in New York.

Retail sales dipped 0.1 percent last month as automobile purchases fell and cheaper gasoline undercut receipts at service stations. January's retail sales were revised down to show a 0.4 percent decline instead of the previously reported 0.2 percent increase. Retail sales excluding automobiles, gasoline, building materials and food services were unchanged after a downwardly revised 0.2 percent increase in January. These so-called core retail sales correspond most closely with the consumer spending component of gross domestic product and were previously reported to have risen 0.6 percent in January. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast retail sales slipping

0.2 percent and core retail sales rising 0.2 percent in February.

Prices for US government debt rose after the data, while US stocks were trading lower. The dollar was largely unchanged against a basket of currencies. Last month's weak core retail sales reading, together with January's modest gain, suggest that consumer spending will probably remain tepid in the first quarter after growing at a 2.0 percent annualized rate in the fourth quarter.

Economists at Barclays slashed their first-quarter GDP growth estimate by five-tenths of a percentage point to a 1.9 percent rate after the data. The economy grew at a 1 percent pace in the fourth quarter. Economic growth prospects were also dented by another report from the Commerce Department showing business inventories edging up 0.1 percent in January as sales continued to decline. That pushed the inventory-to-sales ratio to its highest level since May 2009, suggesting inventories could remain a drag on growth in the near-term.

FED ON HOLD

The reports came as Federal Reserve officials prepared to

gather for a two-day policy meeting. The US central bank is expected to leave interest rates unchanged as policymakers monitor developments on global financial markets, domestic inflation and the labor market. The Fed hiked its benchmark overnight interest rate in December for the first time in nearly a decade.

"Market turbulence will keep the Fed from hiking in the near-term while a softer economy will keep the Fed from going later this year. This (retail sales) report suggests that the softer economy may be coming sooner than we thought," said Bricklin Dwyer, an economist at BNP Paribas in New York.

In a separate report, the Labor Department said its producer price index dropped 0.2 percent last month on lower energy and food costs, after edging up 0.1 percent in January.

In the 12 months through February, the PPI was unchanged after falling 0.2 percent in the year through January. It was the first time since January 2015 that the year-on-year PPI did not decline.

With the dollar losing some momentum after gaining 20 percent against the currencies of the United States' main trading partners between June 2014 and December 2015, import-

ed deflation is starting to wane. That could curb further declines in producer prices. But oil prices, which tumbled by as much as 4 percent on Monday on concerns that a six-week market recovery has gone beyond the fundamentals, remain a wild card. So far this year, the dollar has gained about 0.9 percent on a trade-weighted basis.

A 4.4 percent drop in the value of sales at service stations weighed on retail sales last month. Gasoline prices dropped 9 percent in February, according to the US Energy Information Administration, as oil prices fell further. Retail sales were also hurt by a 0.2 percent fall in sales at auto dealerships and a 0.5 percent drop in receipts at furniture stores. Auto sales declined 0.2 percent in January.

Receipts at electronics and appliance stores slipped 0.1 percent. But there were pockets of strength, with clothing store sales rising 0.9 percent last month and receipts at building materials and garden equipment stores gaining 1.6 percent.

Sales at sporting goods and hobby stores rose 1.2 percent and sales at restaurants and bars increased 1.0 percent. Online store sales dropped 0.2 percent. — Reuters

HOW EGYPT IS STRUGGLING TO END CORRUPTION IN WHEAT

CAIRO: When Egyptian lawyer Ahmed Gad stepped out of a cafe on the outskirts of Cairo to take a call last October, a gunman on the back of a motorcycle trained a semi-automatic rifle on him and opened fire. Three bullets ripped into Gad's right side before his attackers sped off. Gad, who survived, said the men were trying to silence him for his attempts to expose corruption in one of Egypt's most important commodity markets: wheat.

Wheat can be a matter of life and death in Egypt. The country is the world's biggest importer of the grain, in large part because Cairo runs a bread subsidy program that feeds tens of millions of poor Egyptians. Wheat shortages have triggered riots in the past, and when Egyptians rose up against autocrat Hosni Mubarak in 2011 one of their signature chants was "Bread, freedom and social justice."

The pressures have returned over the past few months as Egypt has faced potential wheat shortages because of its strict ban on imports of wheat infected with ergot, a common fungus.

The hardest blight to eradicate, though, has been corruption. President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has made ending corruption - including graft in the wheat industry - one of his government's priorities. In 2014, his government rolled out a system of smart cards designed to stop unscrupulous bakeries selling government-subsidised flour on the black market. Cairo says the system has been a big success, saving millions of dollars in bread subsidies, reducing imports, and ending shortages that once prompted long queues outside bakeries across the country. Supplies Minister Khaled Hanafi told Egyptian reporters in late 2014 that roughly 50 percent of the country's flour supply was stolen. In December last year he told Reuters that the new system had saved more than 6 billion Egyptian pounds (\$766 million) worth of flour.

But industry officials, traders and bakers say those reforms have failed - and even made abuse of the system worse. Eight sources in the wheat industry said the smart card system could

be hacked, allowing some bakers to falsify receipts and request far more subsidised flour than they officially sold. Instead of reducing the amount of flour the state paid for, the critics said, the smart card system actually increased it. That triggered a wave of fraud higher up the supply chain that the sources say cost the country hundreds of millions of dollars last year. Internal statistics produced by the Supplies Ministry and reviewed by Reuters suggest the problems with the smart card system were considerable. The data show that consumption of state-subsidised flour rose in early 2015 in 12 of the 19 provinces where the smart card system had been introduced. In February 2015, consumption of subsidised flour was 955,000 tons, the data show, up from 750,000 tons the previous February. The government concedes there were teething problems in the smart card system that temporarily drove up consumption. But it said the problem was limited and was dealt with.

Whatever the case, the extra consumption early last year drained government grain reserves. By last May, ministry data show, wheat reserves had fallen to just 435,000 tons, enough for about two weeks' supply and far below the stock of three to four months normally held by the state. Four traders said that the government tried to paper over the shortage by declaring a bumper domestic harvest last year and then quietly filling the gap by buying extra imported wheat. In fact, the traders and one former adviser to the Supplies Minister said, the harvest was no bigger than normal. It was not possible to verify the size of the harvest. Nader Nour El-Din, a former adviser to the supplies minister and now a professor of agriculture at Cairo University, said it was inconceivable for the harvest to have been as big as the government said because the area under wheat had not increased in size, production methods had not changed and fertilizer use had not increased.

The Egyptian government denied that it faced a wheat shortage. In his December interview with Reuters, Supplies Minister Hanafi said

that wheat levels were deliberately reduced in the first five months of 2015 to clear space in silos for the bumper crop the state was expecting. "We never, (and) we are not facing at all, a shortage in the reserves," he told Reuters. "The opposite is true."

SMART SYSTEM HACKED

The smart card system was designed to end corruption. The scheme provides each family with a plastic card allowing them to buy five small flat loaves of bread per family member a day. A family member must swipe their card through a machine every time they visit a bakery - so the Ministry of Supplies can track exactly how much bread each bakery sells. The government then pays each bakery a subsidy per loaf. Until the smart card system, the ministry relied on bakeries to report how much bread they sold. But many bakeries overstated the amount and then sold the extra on the black market. The government has said the new system stopped that over-reporting.

But four bakers, three wheat traders and a miller told Reuters that the system was possible to cheat. The smart cards and the machine that reads them were produced by SMART, a private company based in Cairo. According to the traders and bakers, employees at SMART secretly produced cards that resemble the ordinary smart card but act as a "master" that overrides the system. By swiping a master card through their machine, bakers were able to reset the system and then swipe ordinary smart cards multiple times. SMART employees sold the cheat devices to bakeries for several thousand dollars, according to rival bakers. One grocer in the industrial suburb of Helwan, outside Cairo, described how merchants in his neighborhood cheated the system: "The card is entered into the machine and the ration spent but the device can then reset the card allowing more spending. So instead of spending once or twice a month you can spend 1,000 times," said the grocer. —Reuters

COMMODITY AND CURRENCY SLUMP EXPOSE FRAILTIES OF AFRICAN ECONOMIES

JOHANNESBURG: Slumping commodity prices have taken African currencies down with them, exposing the fundamental economic frailties of the world's poorest continent by driving up inflation in countries that import most of their manufactured goods. Regional economies are in no position to use their weakening currencies to their trade advantage because they have few exports beyond their natural resources. The hardship for households has been compounded by rising prices for food - one commodity that has defied the price fall due to drought in southern Africa.

The economic problems are growing in countries from South Africa, a major producer of minerals and precious metals, to nascent natural gas producer Mozambique and Nigeria, the continent's top exporter of crude oil. They highlight the need for African economies to diversify and adopt strategies for industrialisation to reduce their reliance on imports, say economists. But they acknowledge this will be difficult in the current environment as investment is hindered by rising inflation and interest rates, as well as the power shortages that plague many areas.

"For commodities producers the situation is very clear and very negative," said Francois Conradie, head of research at NKC African Economics. Inflation, which many African economies had contained in recent years, is picking up pace as currencies crumble, driving up the prices of the goods they don't produce and so need to import - the vast majority of manufactured products. Even where central banks have introduced additional measures in an attempt to maintain stability, such as in Africa's biggest economy Nigeria, which has introduced capital controls, inflation is picking up. "In Nigeria's case, a lot of importers cannot get dollars from official channels, so they get their dollars at the black-market rate which can be almost double the official rate. Their sales price reflects that," said Conradie.

INFLATION ACCELERATES

Inflation in Nigeria, which fell from close to 14 per-

cent in 2010 to below 8 percent in 2014, has been gathering pace and hit 9.6 percent in January. Even South Africa, the continent's most industrialised economy which saw its rand currency lose over 30 percent in 2015, has failed to translate currency weakness into an export boon.

A fall in the value of its exports pushed its current account deficit to 5.1 percent of gross domestic product in the fourth quarter of 2015, from 4.3 percent in the third. In Mozambique - which has vast natural gas deposits - inflation was 12.18 percent in January, the third straight month of double-digit price increases, fuelled by a 30 percent depreciation in its metical currency the past 12 months.

Angola, Africa's third-largest economy and second-biggest crude producer, is almost completely dependent on oil, which accounts for over 90 percent of foreign exchange revenues.

It saw inflation rise to 17.34 percent in January from 14.27 percent in December. Its kwanza currency fell more than 30 percent last year. President Jose Eduardo dos Santos last week urged "entrepreneurs" to lift domestic production of goods and food.

But it may be a case of too little, too late in a country where analysts say there has been no serious attempt at industrialisation, with billions of dollars squandered on "industrial parks" where almost nothing is produced.

FOOD PRICES RISE

During the commodities boom - fuelled by top consumer China's rapid growth and industrialisation - the value of Africa's exports soared to \$420 billion from \$100 billion between 2000 and 2011, according to World Bank data. Virtually all of those exports were commodities; the value of Africa's manufactured goods in that period rose only to \$33 billion from \$13 billion.

The commodities boom financed an African consumption binge on imported goods - domestic demand accounted for two-thirds of African growth in that period - that the continent can now ill afford as commodity revenues and currencies sink. —Reuters

IMF HEAD PRESSES LAOS TO DEEPEN REFORMS

BANGKOK: Communist-ruled Laos must deepen reforms to maintain its rapid expansion, the IMF chief said yesterday at the end of a rare visit to one of the world's fastest growing economies.

Resource-rich Laos has an annual growth rate of around 7.4 percent, but gains have not been evenly distributed and poverty remains widespread among its 6.8 million people, the majority of whom work in agriculture. Much of the boom has been driven by huge foreign investment since Communist authorities began a very slight opening up of the economy.

China in particular has led that investment, capitalising on the landlocked country's mineral, forestry and water resources. In a statement issued after her

visit, the head of the International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde stressed the need to focus on sustainable growth and bolster the country's fragile economy against shifts in the global market.

"Economic prospects for Lao PDR remain favourable," she said, referring to the People's Democratic Republic. "However, to safeguard macroeconomic stability during the transition out of low-income country status in the medium-term, it will be important to strengthen the economy's resilience to external shocks and put in place the conditions for sustainable growth."

Lagarde said key reforms should involve investing in education and raising living standards, crafting a more efficient public administration, accumulating



VIENTIANE: International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde (left) meets with the Bank of the Laos Governor Somphao Phaysith (R) in Vientiane yesterday. — AFP

international reserves and developing the financial system. The IMF head also urged the country's notoriously opaque leaders to put out "better quality and timely statistics".

Laos is tightly-controlled by its Communist leaders, who have barred a free press, clamped down on dissent and rarely disclose how their policies are crafted or implemented. Corruption is also widespread. The country has approached free trade and other liberal reforms much more cautiously than neighbouring Vietnam, a fellow Communist state that is far wealthier.

Many economists say recent growth in Laos has had much less of an impact on poverty reduction than in neighboring Cambodia and Vietnam. — AFP

CHINA CONSIDERS TAX ON CURRENCY TRADES: REPORT

LATEST VOLLEY AGAINST THOSE BETTING ON YUAN DEPRECIATION

BEIJING: China's central bank has drafted plans to impose a tax on currency trades, Bloomberg News reported yesterday, in what would be its latest volley against those betting on a depreciation of the yuan.

Chinese authorities have spent unprecedented sums to support the currency and stem capital flight since a surprise devaluation rattled investors last summer. The tax would be the most dramatic measure to date, although Bloomberg reported that the rules had yet to be approved and the level might initially be kept at zero as an experiment.

Dubbed a "Tobin tax" after Nobel economics prizewinner James Tobin, it would impose a small levy on foreign-exchange transactions. The aim would be to deter investors from seeking to profit on fluctuations in the currency. Analysts

said the move would reduce liquidity in the long term and possibly fuel short-term volatility as investors were forced to leave the market.

If implemented, the tax could also raise questions about plans for the yuan to join the International Monetary Fund's elite reserve currency basket, scheduled for October. "RMB as reserve currency RIP," George Magnus, associate at the University of Oxford China Centre, wrote on Twitter. "Not that it was likely anyway." "Tobin taxes" have been fiercely debated since they were first proposed, with Sweden adopting a financial transaction tax in the 1980s to boost government revenue, and then abolishing it after bond trading volumes collapsed.

Major banking hubs such as Britain and the US have previously opposed them for the damage they would cause the financial sector. The

idea of a Chinese Tobin tax was floated last year by the deputy chief of the central People's Bank of China in an article for China Finance magazine, in which he said it would help "contain the inflows and outflows of short-term speculative and arbitrage funds".

Chris Weston, chief market strategist at IG, said there was speculation that the central bank "is taking the fight to the speculative FX community", but that the Tobin tax would "not be taken kindly by the IMF" if adopted. "If Chinese officials broaden this to other markets, like swaps, then speculators may pile into proxy currencies" such as the Hong Kong dollar, he added. China's foreign-exchange reserves dropped to \$3.20 trillion at the end of February, the People's Bank of China reported last week-down more than \$300 billion in just four months. — AFP

SRI LANKA'S ECONOMY SLOWS AS TEA PARTY ENDS

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's economic growth slowed slightly to 4.8 percent last year due to a fall in exports of its main commodity, tea, official figures showed yesterday. The figure marked only a marginal decline on 2014, but will add to concerns after international lenders and ratings agencies warned the country is heading for a debt crisis. Tea production dropped 2.6 percent during 2015 to about \$545 million, the Department of Census and Statistics said in a statement, while exports fell by nearly seven percent to 306 million kg (673 million pounds).

The declines were offset by services, which grew 56.6 percent, and industrial output, which expanded by 26.2 percent. Last week the government announced a series of emergency tax increases to combat a debt crisis that has forced it to seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has put on hold for one year plans to lower corporate taxes, and has revived a capital gains tax abolished in 1987.

The moves are aimed at repairing the economy, battered by mounting debt repayments that led ratings agency Fitch to downgrade Sri Lanka's credit rating last month. In a special statement to parliament, Wickremesinghe blamed the previous government for allowing debt to spiral, saying his ministers had uncovered \$7 billion in loans unaccounted for in the national budget. However, the current administration embarked on a spending spree after taking power in January 2015 to deliver on election promises of higher wages and lower prices, increasing the deficit and sparking concern over the balance of payments.

Last month Sri Lanka received pledges of over \$2 billion in loans and equity from the Asian Development Bank over three years. It is in bailout talks with the IMF, although the sum it is seeking has not been disclosed. — AFP



SYDNEY: A bride gets ready for a photo-shoot at Sydney harbor yesterday. According to a report Australia's economy grew by a stronger-than-expected 0.6 percent in October to December, supported by government and consumer spending, to take the annual rate of expansion to 3.0 percent. — AFP

AUSTRALIA MULLS TAX INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE STARTUP INVESTMENT

SYDNEY: Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said yesterday his government will this week introduce legislation to stimulate greater investment in startups - as Australia looks to transition its economy away from a slowing mining sector.

Australia has proposed amended tax laws that would allow retail investors a 20 percent income tax rebate, capped at \$200,000 per year on any startup investments, while a 10 percent tax rebate for venture capital investors in established start-ups wishing to expand will also be permitted.

Turnbull said the legislation will be introduced as early as Wednesday. The new tax laws are a key element of Australia's plan to encourage greater risk-taking to ease the pain of an economic transition amid an end to the investment phase of a lucrative mining boom that sustained its economy for more than a decade. "We have been from an economy that was fired up by the mining construction boom... but inevitably it was going to tail off so what comes next? What comes next is innovation," Turnbull told reporters in Canberra. — Reuters

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KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babbain Co, the exclusive agent of Nissan in the state of Kuwait launched the exceptional 'March Campaign' in cooperation with Nissan Japan, which is considered the best chance to buy one of the Nissan vehicles for prices that are offered for the first time.

The campaign is only valid for the month of March only, Nissan Al Babbain is welcoming its clients in AlRai and Ahmadi showrooms, to give them the opportunity to buy a vehicle of Nissan's big family of vehicles that includes all the categories and meets all tastes, for unprecedented discounts supported by the factory.

Through this promotion, the Company aims to present a gift for its clients on the beginning of summer, by giving them the privilege of sitting behind the wheel of one of Nissan vehicles that are known for its elegant design, great power, dependance, safety and security for unbeatable prices. This campaign includes all of the Nissan

Sentra, Nissan Altima, Nissan Juke, Nissan X-TRAIL, Nissan Pathfinder, and Nissan Patrol vehicles. Through these promotions, the Company aims to strengthen the trust of clients in the brand and to maintain its leading position in the local and regional automotive market. It's also keen to systematically keep in contact with them, which is best expressed in the after sales service, especially that Nissan Al Babbain, which is one of best known companies in Kuwait and the region, believes that its role is not limited to car sales only thus it goes beyond it as part of its goal of providing all kinds of comfort for its clients.

No doubts that the 'March Campaign' will prove the fact that the promotions of Nissan Al Babbain always gained the satisfaction and trust of the clients due to its credibility and its fitting to the needs of consumers in Kuwait and the GCC countries according to certified studies and surveys.

TANZANIA'S FEMALE ENGINEERS STRIVE TO BREAK MALE DOMINANCE

DAR ES SALAAM: Shouting above the din of a concrete mixer, 25-year-old civil engineer Angela James says she is unfazed about being the only woman technician working at a busy construction site in the Tanzanian capital. "I am a trained civil engineer, so you should expect to see me working in the field," she said. "It doesn't matter who I'm working with, as long as my job is done perfectly."

The graduate engineer from the University of Dar es Salaam has over the past two years been gaining practical experience as she works towards her final professional qualification.

"Some people don't believe that a woman can work in this field, but I have proved them wrong,"

she said. Dressed in a shiny yellow safety jacket and a hard hat, James mingles with the casual labourers while giving instructions on the construction of the wedge-shaped, five-storey building that will house offices and apartments in the Dar es Salaam suburb. "I have to ensure that all the technical standards are met. There's no margin of error," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. James is one of almost 300 female trainees participating in the women-only Structured Engineers Apprenticeship Program (SEAP) which aims to equip them with knowledge and experience to become professional engineers in a male dominated field.

Although the first female engineers in Tanzania

graduated in 1976, official statistics show that by 2009 only four percent of all registered engineers in the east African country were women. But under the SEAP program, implemented by the Engineering Registration Board, Tanzania's professional body, with funding from the Norwegian government, the number of female engineers in Tanzania has more than doubled since 2010, said ERB officials.

INSPIRATION

Few girls complete secondary education in Tanzania due to widespread poverty and the perception among parents that girls should carry out domestic duties. If they are in school, girls have received little encouragement to pursue mathematics and science subjects, often considered the domain of male students.

According to Zuhura Said of Temesa - the government agency dealing with electrical, engineering and mechanical services - more women engineers would inspire young girls to study mathematics and sciences and take up the profession themselves. "Female trainees will become mentors for young engineers and some of them will take leadership positions," she said.

Over five years, the Norwegian government has provided 13.9 million Norwegian crowns (\$1.65 million) in funds to support trainee female engineers, mostly in the form of a monthly living allowance and training for mentors. "This programme ... aims to bring gender balance in professional training and to empower women engineers to manage their responsibilities," said Monica Blaalid, a consultant at the Norwegian Embassy in Dar es Salaam. Benedict Mukama, ERB's Assistant Registrar, said the programme had enrolled 291 women, of whom 143 have already been registered as professional engineers. The trainees who have received Norwegian funding had a completion rate of 86 percent, compared to 20 percent for the candidates who had to pay their own way, ERB data shows. — Reuters

AVON TO CUT 2,500 JOBS, MOVE HQ TO BRITAIN

NEW YORK: Struggling cosmetics company Avon Products, Inc said yesterday it was eliminating 2,500 jobs and moving its headquarters to Great Britain, its latest restructuring after selling off its North American business.

The changes were expected to cost \$60 million before taxes in mostly employee-related charges in the first quarter of 2016, but headcount reduction will result in \$30 million in savings this year, the company said in a statement. Savings were expected to reach up to \$70 million in 2017. Avon has "significant commercial operations" in Great Britain and the move would happen "over time," the statement said, without giving a specific timeline. "With the recent completion of the sale of the North American business, our commercial operations are now fully outside of the United States, allowing us to dramatically rethink our operating model," Avon CEO Sheri McCoy said in the statement.

The company will maintain two facilities in New York state, continue to be incorporated in New York and trade on the New York Stock Exchange. Shares of Avon (AVP) were up two percent in after-market trading. As of late last year, Avon employed 28,300 people outside of North America. In December, hedge fund Cerberus Capital Management bought a 16.6 percent stake in Avon and 80.1 percent of its North American business, in a deal worth \$605 million.

Avon products are sold door-to-door through 6 million independent representatives in about 70 countries. The company has struggled amid competition from online and traditional retailers, as well as niche brands. Avon's departure comes as other corporations leave the US for more tax-friendly bases, a trend dubbed "tax inversion" that President Barack Obama has condemned as "unpatriotic." — AFP

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EUROPE SHARES TRACK ASIA LOWER AFTER BOJ VIEW

LONDON: European shares fell yesterday, mirroring declines in Asia after the Bank of Japan painted a bleaker picture of the Japanese economy and helped push the yen higher...

plot' charts of the possible path of interest rates after its December hike that it could raise rates four more times this year. Economists say this could be reduced to three or even two.

modity-related stocks. The STOXX Europe 600 Basic Resources index was down 4.3 percent. 'There is still a soft demand coupled with excess supply story in the commodities spectrum', said Lorne Baring...

markets by introducing negative interest rates at its last gathering in January. That was seen as a desperate attempt to prop up Japan's faltering economic growth...

producers would stop pumping in a bid to dampen a glut of global supplies. A slight uptick in oil prices yesterday-the US benchmark added eight cents to \$37.26...

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Tuesday 15 March 2016. Includes sections for Price Index, Weighted Index, KSX 15, Trades, Security, Oil & Gas, Basic Materials, Industrials, Consumer Goods, Health Care, Financial Services, Investment Instruments, Technology, Parallel Market, and Banks.

Asian stocks fall
Asian stocks retreated yesterday, with energy companies sliding after a drop in oil prices...

Energy stocks tumble
Sydney also dropped more than one percent, hit by a slump in energy companies after oil prices slid...

Financial Markets Daily Report
At 02:00 PM Previous Day. Includes a line graph showing market trends.

Global Stock Indices table with columns for Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance, and Yearly Performance.

MENA Stock Indices table with columns for Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance, and Yearly Performance.

Global Currencies Exchange Rate table with columns for Currency, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, US Dollar, Euro, Sterling Pound, Swiss Franc, Japanese Yen, and Australian Dollar.

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate table with columns for Currency, US Dollar, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahraini Dinar, Qatari Riyal, Omani Riyal, Emirates Dirham, and Egyptian Pound.

Global Interest Rates table with columns for Currency, 1-Week, 1-Month, 3-Month, 6-Month, and 1-Year rates.

Global Bond Yields table with columns for Country, 2 Year, 5 Year, 10 Year, and 30 Year yields.

Commodities table with columns for Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance, and Yearly Performance.

producers would stop pumping in a bid to dampen a glut of global supplies. A slight uptick in oil prices yesterday-the US benchmark added eight cents to \$37.26...

KEEPING SCORE: The Shanghai Composite Index lost 1.1 percent to 2,828.31 points and Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 0.6 percent...

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 slipped 0.7 percent to 17,110.31 and Sydney's S&P ASX 200 fell 1.4 percent to 5,111.40. Seoul's Kospi was off 0.2 percent...

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

ZAIN OFFERS NEW GALAXY S7 AND GALAXY S7 EDGE

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, launched its latest Galaxy S7 and Galaxy S7 Edge with plans for postpaid customers with more talk time and more data starting from KD 21 monthly.

The new smartphone plans allow postpaid customers to enjoy exciting features, including 50 GBs of monthly data, 500 local minutes, unlimited SMS messages, as well as free Zain Wi-Fi at the Avenues and Souq Sharq. Zain is committed to bringing its customers the latest and most advanced products in the telecommunications world, as it strives to enrich their lives with technology's most advanced solutions. A great number of Zain customers are devoted Samsung Galaxy users who are keen to enjoy the latest technological offers.

The Galaxy S7 and Galaxy S7 edge introduce the first Dual Pixel camera on a smartphone, delivering brighter and sharper images, even in low light. Thanks to the revolutionary Dual Pixel technology, brighter lens with wider aperture, and bigger pixel, the camera has a faster shutter speed and a more accurate autofocus even in low-light conditions. Motion Panorama, a new camera mode, brings movement to traditional panoramic photos, giving

the user a completely immersive visual experience.

The 5.1-inch Galaxy S7 and 5.5-inch Galaxy S7 edge are constructed with 3D glass and metal - all in a sleek design with durability and ergonomic curves for a comfortable grip. From work to play, the device's new Always-On Display, gives users a simplified, zero touch experience where they don't need to worry about missing a call or important notification.

Without compromising design, Galaxy S7 and Galaxy S7 edge both have increased utility with IP68 water and dust resistance. Edge UX, the advanced edge experience available on Galaxy S7 edge, provides convenience and increased efficiency by creating easy shortcuts to users' most loved functions such as email, selfie mode, panorama mode or third party applications.

Galaxy S7 and Galaxy S7 edge deliver fast wired and wireless charging technology. Additionally, the hybrid SIM card tray allows users to insert a microSD card for up to 128GB of additional storage and in some select countries; the tray can be used with a dual SIM card.

It's worth mentioning that every official Galaxy S7 and S7 Edge device will include Galaxy

Entertainer app, which provides over 1,000 buy 1 get 1 free coupons that provides wide access to several global hotspots including luxury hotels, cafes, premium spas, amusement parks, golf clubs and much more.

Samsung also made significant hardware and software updates to optimize gaming performance on Galaxy S7 and Galaxy S7 edge. The powerful processor and bigger battery capacity ensure longer playing time, and the internal cooling system keeps the device from overheating. Game Launcher, a new add-on for gamers, allows users to manage battery consumption and minimize notifications. Additionally, users can record their gaming experience or share their screen to play with others. Paired with Galaxy S7 and Galaxy S7 edge, Vulkan API gives users the ability to play high-performance graphic games with lower battery consumption.

Zain emphasizes its commitment to the needs of the largest customer base in Kuwait, and will continuously look into expanding its horizons to keep customers conveniently connected, to download content and stay in touch with their loved ones throughout the day.

HONDA ALGHANIM ACHIEVES A GROWING DEMAND WITH THE BIGGEST MARCH OFFER

KUWAIT: Owning to the great success it has achieved through its February promotions, Alghanim Motors, the exclusive distributor of Honda products in Kuwait, including cars, bikes power equipment, power generators and more, continues to honor the loyalty of its customers with another valuable offer available throughout the month of March 2016 and across Honda Alghanim showrooms.

The March 2016 promotion presents customers the opportunity to receive a cash gift of up to KD1000, in addition to a golden comprehensive insurance that provides a wider and larger insurance coverage. The promotion also guarantees the peace of mind of Honda customers by availing them a free warranty package that includes a maintenance contract for up to 3 years without any additional charges, thus effectively saving their money and time every time they pay a visit to the service center for maintenance purposes.

In addition to these valuable offers, Honda Alghanim is keen on offering the latest and most innovative cars with unbeatable rates. The lineup includes Honda City, Accord, CR-V, Odyssey-G, Odyssey and Pilot, with the starting prices of KD 3,999, KD 6,666, KD 6,777, KD 7,999, KD 8,999 and KD 10,555, respectively.

Honda Alghanim invites all its customers to visit the latest showroom at AlRai to take advantage of this offer and learn

more on the vehicle models, features, and prices. The new showroom is situated as part of Safat Alghanim on an area covering 9,000 square meters. The new showroom has been built by integrating Alghanim Industries brand values in order to achieve a prestigious status that the leading global brand Honda deserves. This showroom accentuates on architecture, design, and offering high-quality services of which customer satisfaction is of highest priority allowing for a pleasant experience. It includes 3 floors to offer versatile services including a service center that is able to receive daily 70 vehicles through 16 stations. For that reason, the new showroom is considered to be the largest in the Middle East and North Africa region. Honda Alghanim showroom operates from 8.30 am until 10 pm Saturday to Thursday, and from 9:30 am until 10 pm on Fridays.

Alghanim Motors, the exclusive distributor of Honda automobiles, motorcycles, power products, and marine products in Kuwait, is committed to providing customers with flexible payment solutions and efficient and cost-effective services. The cars service center waiting lounge offers entertainment and comfort for customers with gaming consoles, digital satellite TV, free wireless internet and relaxing massage chairs. For more information, please call 1822777.

BOARD EFFECTIVENESS KEY TO UNLOCKING GROWTH IN TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT: BDI TWO-DAY WORKSHOP HELD IN SPONSORSHIP WITH EMIRATES NBD

KUWAIT: At a time of unprecedented change for the region, board effectiveness is crucial for businesses to unlock growth in today's market environment and stimulate economic diversification, as highlighted during the 21st edition of the Foundation of Directorship Workshop conducted by the GCC Board Directors Institute (BDI) in sponsorship with Emirates NBD. The two-day workshop commenced yesterday at the Meydan Hotel in Dubai.

"Today, board effectiveness is an integral part of every board's reality; the success of most top tier companies - from publically listed to family-owned businesses - is driven by an effective board structure and composition," said Jane Valls, Executive Director, GCC Board Directors Institute (BDI). "I feel privileged to lead the Institute during a time where the pace of change is faster than ever before. The Board Directors Institute recognises that increasing regulation, greater competition, new business models, technical innovation and

increasing stakeholder expectations are changing traditional approaches to board leadership; similarly, boards are increasingly faced with uncertainty caused by market volatility. It is our aim to prepare directors so that they can adapt to today's complex world."

During the alumni dinner taking place on the eve of the Foundations of Directorship Workshop, H.E. Obaid Al Zaabi, Acting CEO, Securities and Commodities Authority (SCA), emphasised: "There is no doubt 2016 will be a challenging year for all of us, where the ability to unlock growth will be crucial. Implemented in the right way, the pillars of board effectiveness can guide businesses, help them grow and ensure sustainability. A higher level of corporate governance obligations in the region will significantly impact board structure, processes and protocols, with businesses becoming more and more performance driven. Directors need to make sure that they remain focused on strategy, risk, the financials and man-

agement oversight, and are clear about their duties, obligations and liabilities, both individual and collective."

"The purpose of the Foundations of Directorship workshop is to delve deeper into the changing roles and accountabilities of the board and its directors, unwrapping the secret of a model board and the right operating model under current market conditions," added Valls.

The GCC Board Directors Institute has established one of the region's largest and most influential networks of more than 620 board members in the region. This year, the Institute's Foundations of Directorship workshops will see over 50 participants who will discuss and share past experience, whilst exploring and analysing potential solutions, tools and effective practices for boards and directors in the GCC region. The two day workshop is preceded by an alumni dinner, sponsored by Emirates NBD - one of the Institute's founding members and a leading bank in the region.



SHARJAH ASSET MANAGEMENT ANNOUNCES FIRST SALE OF FREE HOLD LAND PLOTS

SHARJAH: Sharjah Asset Management, the investment arm of the Government of Sharjah, yesterday announced their first ever sale of freehold land plots for GCC nationals and UAE's arab residents and long-term leasehold (Usufruct) right for 100 years for UAE's residents of other nationalities being offered for sale at Al-Saja'a Industrial Oasis in the Emirate of Sharjah.

Strategically situated in close proximity to Sharjah International Airport and Al Hamriya Port with frontage and direct access from Emirates Road (E611), Al Saja'a Industrial Oasis comprises some 353 land plots, stretching over 14 million sq. ft. of area, already approved and being developed for light and medium industrial uses, mixed use with some retail and a large plot for staff accommodation. Hand over of the land plots is expected to be available after 31st October 2016.

With the announcement of freehold and Usufruct right land plots now being available for light and medium industrial, mixed use, some retail and a large plot for staff accommodation at Al-Saja'a Industrial Oasis development, the move signals the further commitment of Sheikh Dr Sultan Bin Mohammed Al-Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and the Ruler of Sharjah's vision to create a strong and diversified economy and to further boost the competitiveness and prosperity of the UAE's third largest domestic economy.

"Sharjah maintains one of the finest industrial areas in the Gulf region and today's announcement can only further enhance the Emirate's reputation for its long-term commitment to this sector," said Gregg Downer, Chief Real Estate Officer, Sharjah Asset Management.

"Sharjah Asset Management's investments involve diverse yet strategically focused developments in sectors such as financial and commercial investments, logistics, technology, real estate, transportation, industrial, as well as oil and gas," Downer added.

The launch of Al-Saja'a Industrial Oasis is inline with the visionary long-term plan of the Government of Sharjah, which seeks to expand the Sharjah industrial real estate sector to address ongoing demand and to provide ready access along its strategic growth corridors.

Al-Saja'a Industrial Oasis is an international standard master planned industrial and mixed-used development. It has an integrated firefighting network system, water, electrical and telecommunication network including street lighting paved on-street parking and footpaths, dedicated services, storm water, provision for a community park and a Juma'a Mosque, some retailing and a large plot for staff accommodation. The Government of Sharjah has committed its power provision to the development and Sharjah Asset Management will deliver the plots during Q4, 2016.



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BURGAN BANK WILL SOON ANNOUNCE YAWMI ACCOUNT DRAW WINNER

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank will be conducting the Yawmi account Quarterly Draw on March 20th, where the lucky winner will receive 125,000 KD as a cash prize. In addition to the daily draw of KD 5,000 the account also offers the chance to win the Mega prize of KD 125,000 every quarter.

To enter Burgan Bank's Yawmi Quarterly Draws, customers should maintain a minimum amount of KD500 for 2 months prior to draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. For more information about opening the newly enhanced

Yawmi account, customers are advised to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch, or call the bank's Call Center at 1804080 where customer service representatives will be delighted to assist with any questions on any of the bank's products and services. Customers can also log on to Burgan Bank's www.burgan.com for further information.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial Bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank

customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment,

excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

The bank was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2008, making it the first bank in the GCC, and the only bank in Kuwait to receive such accreditation for the third consecutive year. The Bank also has to its credit the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twelve consecutive years.



SEOUL: TV screens show the live broadcast of the Google DeepMind Challenge Match between Google's artificial intelligence program, AlphaGo, and South Korean professional Go player Lee Sedol, at the Yongsan Electronic store in Seoul, South Korea yesterday. — AP

GOOGLE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM BEATS S KOREAN GO PRO WITH 4-1 SCORE

COMPLEXITY OF GO SEEN A KEY TEST FOR AI SCIENTISTS

SEOUL: Google's artificial intelligence (AI) program yesterday beat South Korean professional Lee Sedol in the ancient board game Go, recovering from Sunday's loss to win its fourth match in a five-game series. AlphaGo, developed by Google subsidiary DeepMind, had already clinched a series victory with its third win on Saturday, in a result that shocked the world.

The program made history last year by becoming the first machine to beat a human pro player, but 33-year-old Lee, one of the world's top players, was seen as a much more formidable opponent. "I am disappointed that the matches are over, and also disappointed that I could not end the series on a high note," Lee told reporters, thanking fans for their support and adding that he had wholeheartedly enjoyed the games. "I think the humans still have a good chance," he added.

Go, most popular in countries such as China, South Korea and Japan, involves two contestants moving black and white stones across a

square grid, aiming to seize the most territory. It is perfect for artificial intelligence research because there are simply too many moves for a machine to win by brute-force calculations, the route IBM's Deep Blue used to famously beat former world chess champion Garry Kasparov in 1997. "It was just an incredible game," DeepMind founder Demis Hassabis told reporters. Until AlphaGo's victory last year, experts had not expected an artificial intelligence program to beat a human professional for at least a decade.

The program's developers overcame the hurdles it faced with a design that enabled it to learn on its own, hoping it would be able to approximate human intuition by studying old matches and using simulated games to hone itself. "AlphaGo's win is important, because, unlike techniques used in previous programs, it is applicable generally, and can be used for many other things," said Daniel Sleator, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon

University. Google executives say they aim to apply the technology underlying AlphaGo to create algorithms and programs to assist humans in fields from medical care to scientific research and robotics.

Last week, Eric Schmidt, executive chairman of Google parent Alphabet Inc, told reporters he expected the technology would eventually be deployed across all of Google's services. "Artificial Intelligence can help find new strategies in fields such as health care or law," said Lee Sang-wan, a professor of brain and cognitive engineering at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology. The Korea Baduk Association yesterday awarded AlphaGo an honorary professional 9-dan title, the highest possible rank and the same as that held by Lee, for exhibiting creative and brilliant skills and contributing to the game's progress. Go Ratings, a website that ranks Go players worldwide, placed AlphaGo as fourth best, with Lee Sedol following, in fifth place. — Reuters

MICROSOFT KUWAIT TO HOST 'INNOVATION BAZAAR'

KUWAIT: Microsoft Kuwait will showcase the latest innovative solutions at the "Microsoft Innovation Bazaar" on Sunday 20th March 2016 from 9:00 am-5:00 pm. The full day event will take place at Salwa Al Sabah Theatre & Hall where Microsoft will showcase its latest products and technologies including the latest solution for Internet of Things (IoT), Microsoft Azure, Office 365, Windows 10 in addition to showcasing great Windows 10 devices from Lenovo, Dell, Intel and Lumia. The Bazaar will bring together speakers from Microsoft, its industry peers and partners to provide the IT industry with insights into the empowering devices, apps and solutions that represent the future.



Charles Nahas

The event will include interactive sessions and demonstration stations in which Microsoft experts will provide insights into the ways in which Microsoft has been empowering businesses, educators, governments and individuals to make the most out of their key activities. Be a part of this exciting Bazaar and find out how

Microsoft can empower you to get ahead of what's next. Innovation bazaar is sponsored by Intel, Lenovo & Dell and local partners Diyar United Company & EBLA Computer Consultancy Company.

CHINESE HACKERS BEHIND US RANSOMWARE ATTACKS

NEW YORK: Hackers using tactics and tools previously associated with Chinese government-supported computer network intrusions have joined the booming cyber crime industry of ransomware, four security firms that investigated attacks on US companies said. Ransomware, which involves encrypting a target's computer files and then demanding payment to unlock them, has generally been considered the domain of run-of-the-mill cyber criminals.

But executives of the security firms have seen a level of sophistication in at least a half dozen cases over the last three months akin to those used in state-sponsored attacks, including techniques to gain entry and move around the networks, as well as the software used to manage intrusions. "It is obviously a group of skilled operators that have some amount of experience conducting intrusions," said Phil Burdette, who heads an incident response team at Dell SecureWorks.

Burdette said his team was called in on three cases in as many months where hackers spread ransomware after exploiting known vulnerabilities in application servers. From there, the hackers tricked more than 100 computers in each of the companies into installing the malicious programs. The victims included a transportation company and a technology firm that had 30 percent of its machines captured. Security firms Attack Research, InGuardians and G-C Partners, said they had separately investigated three other similar ransomware attacks since December. Although they cannot be positive, the companies concluded that all were the work of a known advanced threat group from China, Attack Research Chief Executive Val Smith told Reuters.

The ransomware attacks have not previously been reported. None of the companies agreed to be identified publicly. The security companies investigating the advanced ransomware intrusions have various theories about what is behind them, but they do not have proof and they have not come to any firm conclusions. Most of the theories flow from the possibility that the Chinese government has reduced its support for economic espionage, which it pledged to oppose in an agreement with the United States late last year. Some US companies have reported a decline in Chinese hacking since the agreement.

Smith said some government hackers or contractors could be out of work or with reduced work and looking to sup-

plement their income via ransomware. It is also possible, Burdette said, that companies which had been penetrated for trade secrets or other reasons in the past were now being abandoned as China backs away, and that spies or their associates were taking as much as they could on the way out. In one of Dell's cases, the means of access by the team spreading ransomware was established in 2013.

The cyber security experts could not completely rule out more prosaic explanations, such as the possibility that ordinary criminals had improved their skills and bought tools previously used only by governments. Dell said that some of the malicious software had been associated by other security firms with a group dubbed Codoso, which has a record of years of attacks of interest to the Chinese government, including those on US defense companies and sites that draw Chinese minorities.

Payment in bitcoin

Ransomware has been around for years, spread by some of the same people that previously installed fake antivirus programs on home computers and badgered the victims into paying to remove imaginary threats. In the past two years, better encryption techniques have often made it impossible for victims to regain access to their files without cooperation from the hackers. Many ransomware payments are made in the virtual currency Bitcoin and remain secret, but institutions including a Los Angeles hospital have gone public about ransomware attacks. Ransomware operators generally set modest prices that many victims are willing to pay, and they usually do decrypt the files, which ensures that victims will post positively online about the transaction, making the next victims who research their predicament more willing to pay.

Security software companies have warned that because the aggregate payoffs for ransomware gangs are increasing, more criminals will shift to it from credit card theft and other complicated scams. The involvement of more sophisticated hackers also promises to intensify the threat. InGuardians CEO Jimmy Alderson said one of the cases his company investigated appeared to have been launched with online credentials stolen six months earlier in a suspected espionage hack of the sort typically called an Advanced Persistent Threat, or APT. "The tactics of getting access to these networks are APT tactics, but instead of going further in to sit and listen stealthily, they are used for smash-and-grab," Alderson said. — Reuters



AVAYA INTRODUCES SMARTDXAAS

A UNIQUE APPROACH TO ENABLE BUSINESSES

DUBAI: Avaya introduces its concept of Digital Transformation-as-a-Service - SmartDXaaS - to emerging markets, with the company highlighting its range of cloud-based solutions and professional services, designed to help organizations achieve their digital transformation objectives more easily and cost-effectively, at the annual Avaya Technology Forum in Dubai. The flagship technology event, the latest round in a series that will move on to Ireland and the US, will also see Avaya host a complete "Smart City" ecosystem in Dubai, with real-world demonstrations from public and private-sector organizations.

While enterprise CEOs are increasingly placing digital transformation at the center of their corporate strategies, organizations need trusted partners that can help them navigate today's uncertain environments, while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow. According to IDC, by 2018 70% of silo-ed digital transformation initiatives will fail due to insufficient collaboration, integration, sourcing or project management, while by 2020 more than 30% of existing IT vendors will not survive in their current forms, requiring customers to realign their preferred vendor relationships.

Speaking at the start of ATF Dubai, Avaya executives outlined how the company has successfully aligned itself with customers' needs: software and services now account for 73% of revenue, with half of all sales coming from new and cloud-enabled technologies. Avaya is also seeing the strongest demand for solutions based on an OPEX model, posting 16% year-on-year growth in its managed services business, as enterprises increasingly look to cloud-based, customizable solutions. As the only company specializing in complex business communica-

tions, built on open and mobile software platforms, and supported by a robust underlying network infrastructure, Avaya is uniquely placed to help drive customers' digital transformation strategies.

NidalAbou-Ltaif, President, Europe, Middle East & Africa and Asia Pacific, Avaya said: "Avaya's successful transition to a software and services company enables us to help organizations achieve their own digital transformation goals. SmartDXaaS is about delivering digital transformation at customers' own pace and path, with less disruption than our competitors. By leveraging our vertical industry focus, expertise and innovative technology solutions, emerging-market organizations today can take charge of their own transformation curve, and position themselves effectively against global competitors."

Visitors to ATF Dubai will experience Avaya's vision for the endless possibilities of Smart applications, all of which can be customized to suit any sector or industry-specific needs. Today, innovative private and public sector players are utilizing the latest technologies, such as mobile, cloud, social, Big Data and analytics, and the Internet of Things, to build working environments that create the building blocks of a true "Smart City" development. By leveraging Avaya's vertical-industry experience, key foundation elements - including Smart Education, Smart Healthcare, Smart Public Safety, and more - can be combined to create a complete Smart City ecosystem that meets the needs of its stakeholders.

At ATF 2016, attendees can uniquely experience: In-depth technical sessions and tailored expert engagement that showcase vertical smart solutions for governments and private

sector businesses that streamline and simplify deployment. The showcase is presented in a "smart city" environment, with real deployment examples of key industry verticals, including smart public safety, education, hospitality, banking amongst others.

How customer engagement centers are using predictive analytics and artificial intelligence to gain valuable insights into their customers and employees, allowing creation of differentiated and personalized experiences. Avaya SDN Fx Fabric Networking architecture - the first in the industry to deliver "connect anything, anywhere" simplicity, allowing customers to more easily reap the benefits of network connectivity, reliability and security. SDN Fx enables enterprises to better leverage Avaya's communications capabilities, and deploy communications-enabled applications and services agilely across the network.

The Avaya Technology Forum, which is taking place at the Intercontinental Festival City Hotel, Dubai, on March 15-17, features keynote presentations from Avaya's global leadership team, industry experts, and key technology partners. Avaya will share and showcase roadmaps and solutions to help businesses improve operational excellence, enhance customer satisfaction and drive greater competitive differentiation. Through in-depth technical sessions and tailored expert engagement, ATF 2016 is focused on helping organizations achieve their digital transformation strategies. ATF 2016 is sponsored by Axis Communications, Integrated Research Limited, Plantronics, Senetas, Siemon, and Verint. The Official Broadcaster is CNBC, the Business Media Partner is Bloomberg Business week and the Technology Media Partner is CPI Publishing.

AMAZON SEEKS PATENT FOR BUYING ITEMS WITH A LOOK

SAN FRANCISCO: Online retail colossus Amazon is seeking a US patent on using selfies-instead of passwords for shopping when using smartphones. Seattle-based Amazon reasoned that combining sensor and camera capabilities in smartphones with face and gesture recognizing software results in higher security than passwords or identification numbers.

"Such approaches provide for user authentication without the user having to physically interact with a computing device, which can enable a user to access information by looking at a camera, performing a simple gesture such as a smile, or performing another such action," Amazon said in a patent application filed late last year. "Such an authentication can be user friendly, particularly with respect to

conventional approaches such as typing and remembering long passwords, and can provide enhanced security because it can be difficult for another person to replicate a user's face in three dimensions."

Smartphone cameras would capture video snippets to avoid being duped by a fraudster using someone's picture to impersonate them in an online transaction, according to the patent application. "The device can prompt the user to perform certain actions, motions, or gestures, such as to smile, blink, or tilt his or her head," the patent application said. Chinese internet giant Alibaba and payments firm Mastercard are reported to be working on incorporating facial recognition in transaction confirmations. — AFP



AL-SAYER MEDICAL COMPANY AND BBRAUN SPONSOR THE SECOND GULF GROUP CONFERENCE ON DIABETIC FOOT

Al-Sayer Medical Company, one of Al-Sayer Group Holding and the local distributor of BBRAUN wound Care Products, sponsored the 2nd Gulf Group Conference on Diabetic Foot which was held in Kuwait under the patronage of Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi, with the presence of Dr Mohamed Al-Khashti, Assistant Undersecretary Private Medical Services Affairs, Ministry of Health and Dr Tawfeeq Khaja, General Manager of the Executive Office of Health Ministers Council of GCC.

About 400 doctors from inside and outside Kuwait participated in the conference. This conference presents a great opportunity to meet specialists in Diabetic Foot treatment field through seminars, workshops and update on the

latest medical products. A large booth was allocated for Al-Sayer Medical Company and BBRAUN Company to display the latest high quality products for wounds and diabetic foot which are used widely in Europe and America.

According to Dr Hossam Afify, General Manager of Al-Sayer Medical Company: "First of all we would like to congratulate Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi and Honorary President of Conference Dr Marzouq Al-Bader, Head of vascular Department at Mubarak Hospital and the Chairman of Gulf Group Conference of Diabetic Foot and Dr Salma Khraibit, Specialist Surgery, Wound Care and Diabetic Foot Care on the success of the conference which is one of the important specialized conferences in the region to

raise the awareness of Doctors and nursing staff."

"One of the most important goals of Al-Sayer Medical Company is to support the efforts of Ministry of Health in order to develop medical services and provide the latest high quality medical products through our partnership with many leading international medical companies, in addition to increase the medical awareness in society specially in relation to diabetes and its dangerous complications like diabetic foot leading to foot amputation if neglected. World Health Organization latest statistics found that Kuwait ranks third in diabetes worldwide which requires spreading medical awareness to early check and detection of diabetic foot." Dr Hossam added.



ENVIRONMENT BEHIND NEARLY QUARTER OF GLOBAL DEATHS

GENEVA: One in four deaths worldwide are due to environmental factors like air, water and soil pollution, as well as unsafe roads and workplace stress, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday. An estimated 12.6 million people died in 2012 as a result of living and working in unhealthy environments, 23 percent of all deaths reported globally, according to the new study. "If countries do not take actions to make environments where people live and work healthy, mil-

lions will continue to become ill and die too young," warned WHO chief Margaret Chan in a statement.

The report defines environmental causes broadly, drawing links between a long line of environmental risk factors like pollution, chemical exposure, climate change, ultraviolet radiation and access to firearms and more than 100 diseases and injuries. As many as 8.2 million of the deaths could be blamed on air pollution,

including exposure to second-hand smoke, responsible for heart disease, cancers and chronic respiratory disease, the report said. Among the deaths attributed to environmental factors were 1.7 million caused by "unintentional injuries", including road accidents. The report also counted 846,000 diarrhoeal disease deaths among environmental mortalities, adding that many were linked to pollution and unsafe drinking water.

Road accidents, suicides

The WHO reported 246,000 deaths due to intentional injuries, including suicides, which it linked to among other things the unsafe storage and access to firearms, but also to pesticides, which are used in a full third of the world's suicides. The report found that most environmentally-linked deaths happened in South-East Asia, which accounted for 3.8 million such deaths in 2012, followed by the Western Pacific region with 3.5 million. The least affected region was the Americas, with 847,000 deaths blamed on environmental conditions. Europe had 1.4 million environmentally-linked deaths while Africa reported 2.2 million.

The WHO said that better environmental management could prevent the deaths of 1.7 million children under five, who are especially prone to serious illnesses arising from respiratory infections and diarrhea. "There's an urgent need for investment in strategies to reduce environmental risks in our cities, homes and workplaces," said Maria Neira, WHO's public health chief. "Such investments can significantly reduce the rising worldwide burden of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, injuries and cancers, and lead to immediate savings in healthcare costs," she said. The report is the second of its kind and follows an initial WHO study a decade ago. — AFP

STUDY REVEALS SCOPE OF WESTERN DRUG TESTING IN EAST GERMANY

BERLIN: Major Western drug companies conducted hundreds of clinical tests on citizens of communist East Germany during the Cold War, a report released yesterday said, but dismissed charges of widespread ethical abuses. The long-awaited report on a scheme designed to provide hard currency to the cash-strapped regime confirmed some allegations leveled in a 2013 article by news magazine Der Spiegel, albeit on a much smaller scale than first thought. But the Western companies "benefited from totalitarianism," and chronic drug shortages in the East, it said.

Berlin's Charite university hospital said it found that 320 clinical trials were carried out in the 1980s on people in the so-called German Democratic Republic. The research team led by medical historian Volker Hess found evidence of up to 900 studies by Western firms using East Germans between 1961 and 1990, the year Germany reunified. But Hess told reporters that the studies appeared to have been in line with the standards and laws of the time, noting that practices in the West were also more lax in those decades.

"What appears dubious to us today was not specific to the GDR, even though some of it appears ethically dubious now," he said. "We have seen no indication of a systematic violation of existing rules on consent." The tests were carried out for 75 companies from 16 countries, mainly from West Germany but also Switzerland, France,

the United States and Britain. Some of the biggest names in the industry were involved including Bayer, Pfizer and Roche. The study's authors dismissed speculation that the Western companies looked beyond the Iron Curtain for subjects because the trials would be cheaper there.

Rather, they saw the heavily centralized GDR as a more efficient testing ground, allowing quick completion of studies without the peering eyes of a critical public. "The companies benefited from totalitarianism," Hess said. Furthermore, the Western firms exploited chronic medication shortages in the East to offer experimental drugs. The Stasi secret police was particularly interested in the studies and kept close tabs on them, and a bureau under its auspices negotiated the contracts with Western companies. The first comprehensive study of its kind was financed by the German government and medical industry associations.

The researchers combed through Stasi and patient files as well as reports from the companies themselves and interviewed former test subjects. The Spiegel report had alleged that major Western drug companies used more than 50,000 people in the communist East as "human guinea pigs" for some 600 clinical trials, including for blood pressure and depression drugs, in the 1980s. It said many had been unwitting participants and some even died as a consequence of the tests-charges disputed in the findings presented yesterday. — AFP

BUSTED: FRANCE, CANADA HAVE MOST TEEN POT SMOKERS

PARIS: France and Canada have the highest percentage of 15-year-old pot smokers among 42 well-off nations surveyed by the World Health Organization, the UN agency said in a report yesterday. When it comes to policing marijuana, France is far from the most laid-back country in Europe, so the findings come as something of a surprise. Amsterdam flaunts its cannabis cafes and Barcelona its private reefer clubs, but neither the Netherlands nor Spain were among the top eight nations in which teens admitted they had used cannabis in the last 30 days, according to the study, based on data from 2014.

Fifteen percent of 15-year-olds in France—slightly more boys than girls said they had indulged, with Canada's young stoners close behind. Italy, Switzerland and Bulgaria rounded out the top five, with French-speaking parts of Belgium as well as Poland and Slovenia in low double digits for boys, and single digits for girls. "Young people in their teenage years are more likely to use cannabis if they have friends or older siblings who do so," the study found. Lax parenting or its opposite—"coer-

cive discipline"—also correlated with higher rates of marijuana consumption.

Conducted every four years, the WHO survey examines risky behavior and self-perception among 11-, 13- and 15-year olds in Europe, North America and Israel. In the most recent survey, France dislodged Canada as No. 1 nation for teen tokers, moving up from fourth place. The United States ranked second in the 2010 survey but was not included in the most recent edition. Among the countries with the fewest adolescent users was Sweden, with only two percent of 15-year-olds saying they had gotten high on ganja in the last month. "Scientific evidence proves that cannabis is a dangerous and harmful substance, especially for children and young people who use it regularly," the study notes. Marijuana is the most used drug in Europe, with 14.6 million young adults lighting up in 2014, according to the report. About a dozen countries in Europe have provisions for the medical use of marijuana, including Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. — AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199





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KUWAIT MALAYALEES GRAB TOP THEATER AWARDS

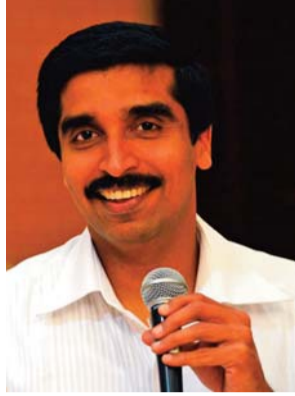
KUWAIT: Keralite expats in Kuwait won the best drama, best script writer and best director awards in the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi (KSNA), a Kerala government cultural wing for music and theater, Gulf amateur drama competition held in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar last month.

The play 'Murikku' won the best play award and its director, Suresh Tholambra won the best director award for the drama presented by Nirbhaya Theaters, Kuwait. Sunil Cherian won the best script award for the third time in a row for his play 'Laaj Een' (Arabic for migrants), presented by Kuwait Natakappadam. Deepu Vellimon won the special jury award for acting in the play 'Kayaantharanam' by Future Eye Theatre, Kuwait.

KSNA is a state wing under the ministry of cultural affairs in Kerala, south India. It is the third time KSNA is conducting theater competitions in the Gulf. The competition in Kuwait was held at the Indian Community School, Salmiya on February 25-26.

This year 13 plays - five from Kuwait, five from Bahrain and three from Qatar - were entered into the competition that is hailed as the touchstone for the the-

ater talents among Indian expatriates living in the Arab Gulf states. The judges are assigned by the government body and who travel to the Gulf States. The awards ceremony is on March 28 in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala's capital.



Sunil Cherian



Deepu Vellimon



Dean of Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Senegal to Kuwait Abdul Ahad Mbacke hosted a dinner recently in honor of the outgoing Ambassador of Cambodia to Kuwait Sman Manan. Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry officials, diplomats and other dignitaries attended the event, which took place at Crowne Plaze hotel.



As a part of celebrations on the occasion of International Women's Day on March 8, the lady staff members of NBTC Group portrayed a social message of GO GREEN by planting saplings along the road sides of Shuaiba industrial area. Saramma Abraham, patron of NBTC Ladies Wing, inaugurated the event. Saramma in her address highlighted the 2016 International Women's Day theme - Pledge for Parity and challenged all ladies to lead by example in support of the theme in the best possible manner.

Greetings



Hi Anu, We love you so much. We wish you a very Happy Birthday on 16th March 2016. May the Lord God showers His abundantly overflowing supernatural blessings upon you on this special day and always. May the Lord satisfy you with His everlasting love, rest, joy, peace, health, victory and increase in miracles. May you grow in the knowledge of God, knowledge of men, favor of God and favor of men. Have a wonderful and an awesome Happy Birthday. Best wishes from your uncle Ravi, lovely sons Joel Ravi and Ryan Ravi.



— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

STUDENTS OFFERED EXPERIENCE OF EDUCATION IN US AT USEG FAIR

By Faten Omar

The US Educational Group (USEG) held an education fair on Monday at Marina Hotel in Salmiya. The one-day fair offered students an experience of education in the US. Advisors and admission officers of participating universities addressed students' questions and explained issues like tuition costs, housing, admission tests (TOEFL, SAT, GRE, GMAT) and scholarship opportunities. The education road show was free of charge and open to the public.

Samar Khalif, country director of AMIDEAST, told Kuwait Times that AMIDEAST is helping USEG. "We have this educational fair every year, and Rola Fadlallah, the head of education outreach and placement services, helps USEG manage it in Kuwait," she said. "AMIDEAST helps students with their testing needs in English and most of the major exams required for study in the US, including TOEFL, GRE and SAT. We also offer training classes. AMIDEAST is able to quickly provide much-needed educational services to the country's students and professionals," said Khalif.

Khalif noted that 21 universities are participating in the fair from all over the United States, added that it is a great opportunity for students to know what suits them the best and what they need to do to get to the university they want. Representatives from USEG provided information about admission standards, financial aid opportunities, summer programs and student life at different US universities.

The US universities at the event were: Bradley University, Farleigh Dickinson University, Georgetown University Qatar, Kent State University, Indiana University Purdue University

Indianapolis, New School of Architecture and Design, Northern Kentucky University, Score Plus/ Princeton Review, Shoreline Community College, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, St John's University, St Ambrose University, State University of New York- University at Buffalo, University of Bridgeport, University of Colorado - Boulder, University of Evansville, University of Hartford, University of Illinois Chicago, University of Iowa, University of Michigan Flint, University of Missouri, Valparaiso University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) and West Virginia University.



Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) hosted an open day for journalists and their families at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village in Salmi, in cooperation with the Ministry of Information.

AMC TV schedule listing programs like State Of Grace, I Love Your Work, and The Aviator.

ANIMAL PLANET HD TV schedule listing programs like River Monsters, I Was Bitten, and Gator Boys.

BBC FIRST TV schedule listing programs like Doctors, Unforgotten, and Luther.

Bloomberg TELEVISION TV schedule listing programs like With All Due Respect and Charlie Rose.

CNBC TV schedule listing programs like Fast Money: Half Time Report and Inside China.

crime & investigation network TV schedule listing programs like Killer Kids and I Escaped My Killer.

Discovery CHANNEL HD TV schedule listing programs like Fast N' Loud and The Island With Bear Grylls.

Discovery world TV schedule listing programs like HMS Ark Royal and Zero Hour.

DISCOVERY SCIENCE TV schedule listing programs like Race To Escape and How It's Made.

Discovery world TV schedule listing programs like HMS Ark Royal and Zero Hour.

Discovery world TV schedule listing programs like HMS Ark Royal and Zero Hour.

Movie poster for 'The Devil's Rock' with the tagline 'WAR IS A BITCH.' and a quote from Peter Jackson's 'Braindead'.

THE DEVIL'S ROCK ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

Disney Junior TV schedule listing programs like Ladybug & Cat Noir, Fish Hooks, and Austin & Ally.

Movie poster for 'Rudderless' featuring Billy Crudup and Anton Yelchin.

RUDDERLESS ON OSN MOVIES HD

CCTV NEWS TV schedule listing programs like News Update, Dialogue, and China 24.

ID. INVESTIGATION DISCOVERY TV schedule listing programs like Who On Earth Did I Marry? and The Haunted.

Disney TV schedule listing programs like Violetta, The Hive, and Sofia The First.

OSN FIRST HD TV schedule listing programs like Coronation Street, Remember Me, and Hiding.

NAT GEO people HD TV schedule listing programs like Eat Street, Chasing Time, and Bondi Rescue.

HISTORY HD TV schedule listing programs like Swamp People, The Curse Of Oak Island, and Duck Dynasty.

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY TV schedule listing programs like Playing House, The Tonight Show With Larry Wilmore, and Married.

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY TV schedule listing programs like Playing House, The Tonight Show With Larry Wilmore, and Married.

OSN FIRST HD TV schedule listing programs like Bates Motel, Castle, and Supergirl.

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION TV schedule listing programs like The Devil's Rock, Oblivion, and Northmen: A Viking Saga.

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY TV schedule listing programs like 22 Jump Street, Happy Gilmore, and Bottle Rocket.

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL TV schedule listing programs like Mobius, Frank, and Diana.

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL TV schedule listing programs like Mobius, Frank, and Diana.

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL TV schedule listing programs like Mobius, Frank, and Diana.

OSN SPORTS 1 HD TV schedule listing programs like AFL NAB Challenge, NRL Premiership, and Golfing World.

OSN SPORTS 2 HD TV schedule listing programs like AFL NAB Challenge, NRL Premiership, and Golfing World.

OSN SPORTS 3 HD TV schedule listing programs like AFL NAB Challenge, NRL Premiership, and Golfing World.

OSN SPORTS 2 HD TV schedule listing programs like AFL NAB Challenge, NRL Premiership, and Golfing World.

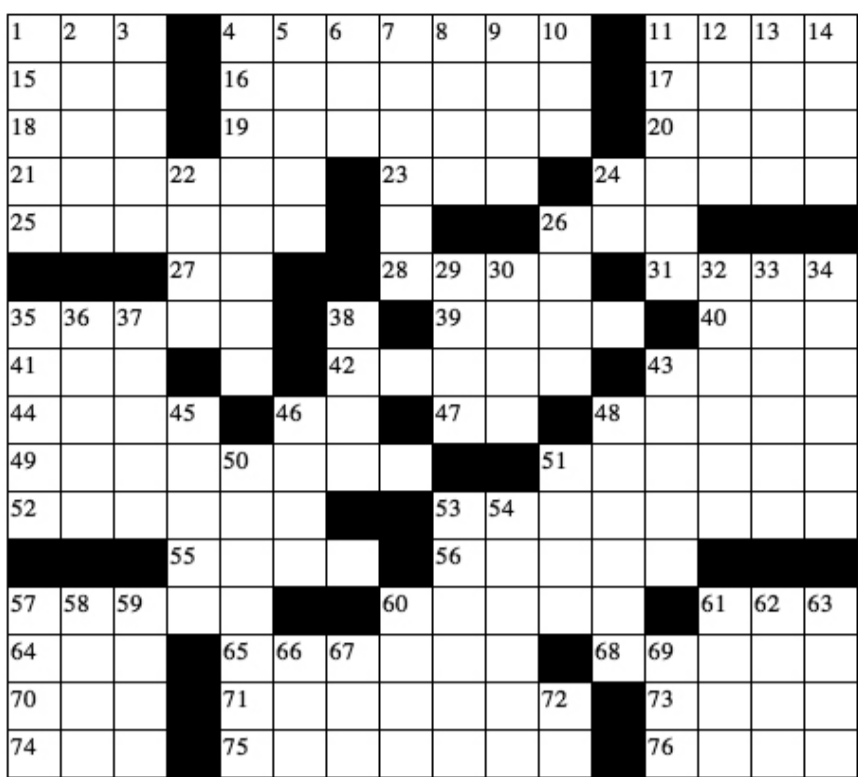
OSN SPORTS 2 HD TV schedule listing programs like AFL NAB Challenge, NRL Premiership, and Golfing World.

OSN SPORTS 4 HD TV schedule listing programs like Indy Car Highlights, Formula-E Championship, and Louis Vuitton America's Cup.

Movie poster for '22 Jump Street' featuring Jonah Hill and Channing Tatum.

22 JUMP STREET ON OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

CROSSWORD 1197



ACROSS

- 1. The unit of frequency.
4. Clearly apparent or obvious to the mind or senses.
11. Round object that is hit or thrown or kicked in games.
15. Alsatian artist and poet who was cofounder of Dadaism in Zurich.
16. One species.
17. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
18. Extinct flightless bird of New Zealand.
19. Used of skin roughened as a result of cold or exposure.
20. Utter a high-pitched cry, characteristic of pigs.
21. Enclose or enfold completely with or as if with a covering.
23. Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
25. A member of the Siouan people formerly inhabiting the Black Hills of western South Dakota.
27. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
28. A major god.
31. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
35. Marked by excessive enthusiasm for and intense devotion to a cause or idea.
39. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
40. A unit of electrical power in an AC circuit equal to the power dissipated when 1 volt produces a current of 1 ampere.
41. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
42. A foot traveler.
44. A island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
47. An associate degree in nursing.
49. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
52. Port city of Denmark in eastern Jutland.
55. Antibacterial agent (trade names Mandelamine and Urex) that is contained in many products that are used to treat urinary infections.
56. Of or relating to punishment.
57. Squash bugs.
64. An ugly evil-looking old woman.
65. Of or related to a musical scale.
68. Type genus of the Gavidae.
70. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
71. (Greek mythology) The Titan who was father of Atlas and Epimetheus and Prometheus in ancient mythology.
73. A short labored intake of breath with the mouth open.
74. Seed vessel having hooks or prickles.
75. In ceremonial attire and paraphernalia.
76. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.

DOWN

- 1. Engraving or carving in low relief on a stone (as in a brooch or ring).
2. A pointed projection.
3. A fragment broken off from the edge or face of stone or ore and having at least one

thin edge.

- 4. An act of scaling by the use of ladders (especially the walls of a fortification).
5. A more whose fertile portion resembles a bell and is attached to the stipe only at the top.
6. A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
7. Leave a camp.
8. (Sumerian) Water god and god of wisdom.
9. Period extending from Dec. 24 to Jan. 6.
10. A slight amount or degree of difference.
11. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
12. An elaborate song for solo voice.
13. A transparent optical device used to converge or diverge transmitted light and to form images.
14. A body of (usually fresh) water surrounded by land.
22. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
24. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
26. A human female who does housework.
29. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
30. Chief port of Yemen.
32. Evergreen Indian shrub with vivid yellow flowers whose bark is used in tanning.
33. An island in the south Pacific.
34. A genus of orb-weaving spiders including common garden spiders and barn spiders.
36. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
37. An imaginary elephant that appears in a series of French books for children.
38. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
43. A city in western Lithuania on the Baltic Sea.
45. Port city of Denmark in eastern Jutland.
46. Any of several related languages of the Celts in Ireland and Scotland.
48. 100 satangs equal 1 baht.
50. The land mass formed by the continents of Europe and Asia.
51. A Loloish language.
53. Presumptuously arrogant.
54. Recovery or preservation from loss or danger.
58. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
59. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
60. Evergreen trees and shrubs having oily one-seeded fruits.
61. Rounded like an egg.
62. (computer science) A kind of computer architecture that has a large number of instructions hard coded into the cpu chip.
63. Thin fibrous bark of the paper mulberry and Pipturus albidus.
66. 4-wheeled motor vehicle.
67. The month following March and preceding May.
69. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
72. A state in north central United States.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your approach to a pressing business matter this morning is quite impressive. A number of business communications require your attention. Despite all odds and detractors, you could be a conquering hero today. Do not rest on your laurels; however, your climb to the top is nearing completion. The way you handle things today could be significant to the future. Later this afternoon you can relax and enjoy the game of life as well as time away from the workplace. This is a pretty good time for your socializing in your personal life. Before setting off on a get-together with friends or family, be sure that you have not overlooked some detail, or your part of a deal within the workplace. A dinner or some fun activity can be enjoyed this evening.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Matters concerning a budget are on your mind today. Be patient with yourself. A plan and some patience are necessary ingredients to success. You may have trouble trying to express yourself to someone today-there is little logic and much emotion. This situation, however, makes you an excellent listener to all that seek your guidance. You not only can hear their words but you can empathize with their feelings. There is an increased desire to succeed in the world. You are full of wit and sharp insights. This could be a time for real breakthroughs in the idea department. You are in top form when it comes to mental activity. Remember your friends and family; try to include them in any of your good fortune.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You will benefit from a new, long-term project, not only in the workplace but in your home. You are the only one that can persuade the group to expand their thinking-you improve the finances. Change can be hard to contend with but sometimes it is absolutely necessary. Today is one of those days. To ignore the unexpected events of today is to open yourself up for disruptions you cannot control. It is better to control change than to have change control you. A relationship has you on a major high this afternoon. So much of you is reflected back to this other person. You are in the mood for intimate talks. The future has possibilities of moving into areas of opportunity regarding marriage and some positive marriage plans are easy to create.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Expect significant slowdowns today. Even if you push with might and main, you might end up with little to show for it except high blood pressure. It is a good time to lie back and let a subject or matter rest a bit. Your emotions are clear and calm. You work to remove any obstacles that might occur but you may be surprised at how things work out on their own. Remember, the obstacles are important but temporary. There is some time later today to sit down and take stock of how things develop and to perhaps, learn from the process. If there is a problem that should surface in the future, you will have some good insight. Your understanding of the needs of others is in perfect balance with your own knowledge. Enjoy your friends this evening.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You are thankful for the extra business that keeps you busy today. You feel as though you have the world on a string and that string is quite securely tied around your finger! A day like this comes only a few times during the year, so make the most of it now. There is no need to prove yourself to anyone. The only thing is to be careful about unrealistic expectations. An impractical way of thinking may lead you away from any progress you have enjoyed. Think through the outstanding opportunities that are present in your life now and move to bring them into reality. The urge for self-indulgence is strong. Do not restrain yourself but do not overindulge either. Keep a balance in everything you do and you will be happy, healthy and wise.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Group meetings, whether you are the teacher or the student, are enlightening this morning. You are in a good position to communicate. If you are asked to contribute information, you will be clearly understood. There could be an occasion to brainstorm with each other in new and interesting ways. With all the wonderful motivational speakers in the marketplace, you and your co-workers are in for a treat. Someone new to your group may need some guidance after the lunch break. You can demonstrate a great understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others, particularly just now. This evening you may only be interested in entertaining your lover. Being unpredictable is one of the things that attract your lover. Exercise will help you to relax tonight.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are enthusiastic to begin your day! You feel good and you feel in harmony with yourself, the entire world and everybody in it. Others can feel this as well and are drawn to you, making this a successful day for any kind of group endeavor. Best of all, relations with the opposite sex are at a peak. This is a super day to go on a date, be married or be in love. You concentrate now on purposeful work with plenty of possibilities for growth. You seem to get the attention and interest of powerful people and moreover, to persuade them to give you a break. You can also see that you have made some great strides in achieving your goals. The dreams of the past are now within your reach. Diet, exercise and work somehow mean more to you now.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Be your usual friendly self today; it is who you know that will help you in your professional life. This may mean better sales for this week or a word to some higher-up that you would be the best for a particular job. As you help someone, you will be helping yourself. A new contract brings much promise today. A physical attraction could turn into a lasting soul-mate partnership. If you are already married, your relationship will deepen. If you keep a notepad near you while you sleep at night, you will be able to review your dreams. You will be gaining some insights that will help you to contemplate your future. Don't be too surprised to find helpful information for your friends as well. Your ability to visualize new directions will help you realize your goals.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

Two-way communication should be the accent of this mentally stimulating day. Your mind is alive and curious and your lucidity will lead to easy understanding by others. Everyone in your workplace seems agreeable and willing to meet on common ground in order to come up with some kind of new working code or guidelines. Studies to identify the shortcuts that can be inserted in order to help eliminate frustrations and slowdowns are bound to be positive. This is an excellent day for group discussions that lead to good decisions. This is a busy time; business travel is possible soon. Enjoy your evening with friends. A faraway lover misses you and may contact you. Relax and enjoy some quiet times before you retire for the night.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Finish rather than start. Today you have the mental concentration and discipline to work out the final details of a past project, but you are not up to blocking out the broad borders of a new project. You may find yourself drawn more inward than outward these days. You might do better in service capacities than in leadership for now. Now and over the next few years you have the power to influence people-no matter what position you play. Special people just stand out in special ways and you are as you appear-honest, intelligent and willing to help others. If you are single, think about inviting yourself to a gathering or set up a little party of your own. Perhaps a group of your friends are meeting on the boardwalk or in town.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

It is good to keep track of your learning curve as well as how well you improve in your work progress. While it is true that you have much to offer to others at work, it is also true that if you offer your assistance twenty-four hours a day you can exhaust yourself needlessly. A little tempering of your need to be helpful would help your stress level. Your goals and objectives are very clear today and you proceed, not only with self-confidence, but with a clear understanding of the material resources and detailed hard work necessary to achieve them. If others are involved in your goals, you could accept a leadership role; otherwise, you prefer to work alone. Jazz may be your choice of music and with a special group in town you may enjoy being with friends.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You greet this day with a great deal of enthusiasm and a smile-enjoy the day. Take care with impulsive moods-it could lead to unwise choices. A volunteer project, whether at work or some other place, gets a successful start with your influence. If there is a push to sign contracts, make or give loans, etc., delay the action until another day. Some quiet time at home will help you to relax before a big party this evening. If you are sprouting herbs for indoor beginnings, try peppermint and dandelion. On reflection of a past class or book you may realize that you should give your gardening talent more attention. A social get-together or party this evening is the perfect touch for your special day.

Wordsearch Puzzle

The Raven

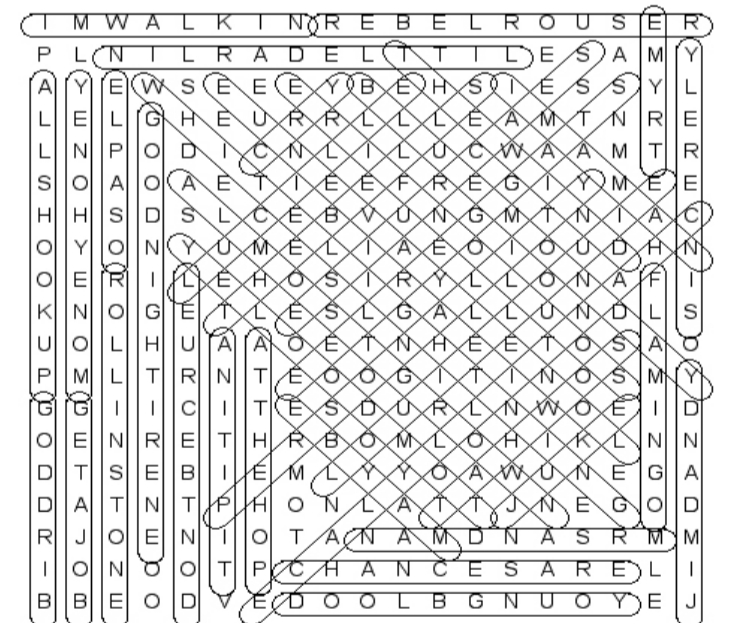
Find and circle all of the words from the poem "The Raven" that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an Edgar Allan Poe quotation.



- ANGELS DOOR GRIM NAPPING QUOTH
BEAK DREAMS HEART NEPENTHE RADIANT
BEGUILING DREARY HORROR NEVERMORE RAPPING
BIRD EBONY LATTICE OMINOUS RAVEN
BLACK ENTRANCE LENORE PALLAS RUSTLING
BLEAK EYES LORE PALLID SHADOW
BURNING FEATHER MAIDEN PERCHED SHUTTER
BUST FIEND MELANCHOLY PLACID SOUL
CHAMBER FLITTING MIDNIGHT PLUME TAPPING
CROAKING FLUTTER MORTAL PLUTONIAN VISITOR
DARKNESS FOWL MYSTERY PROPHET WEARY
DECEMBER GHASTLY NAMELESS QUAFF WIND

Yesterday's Solution

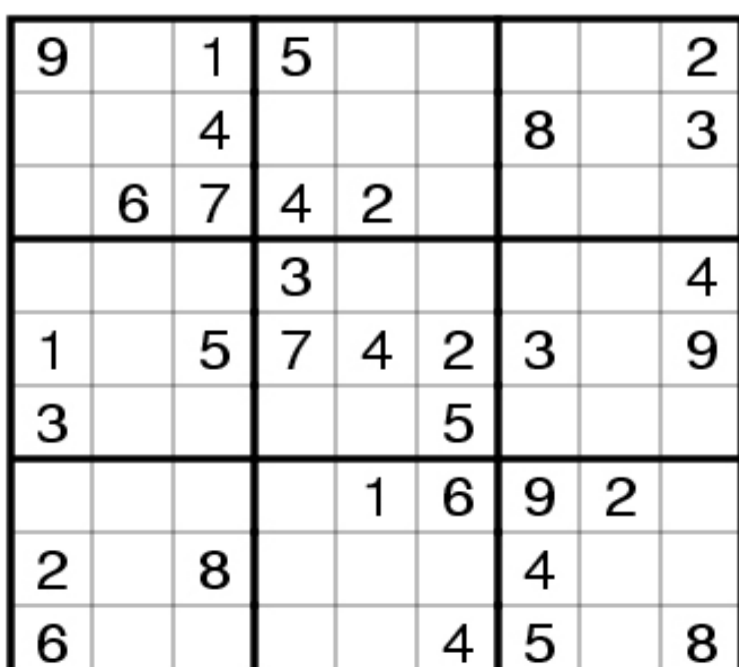
More 1950's Songs



- ALL SHOOK UP FLAMINGO LUCILLE SOUL ON FIRE
ALMOST DROWN GET A JOB MAYBE STAGGER LEE
AT THE HOP GOODNIGHT IRENE MONEY HONEY THE BELLS
BIRD DOG I'M A MAN MR SANDMAN THE WIND
BLUE MONDAY I'M WALKIN' PERSONALITY TIPITINA
CHANCES ARE JIM DANDY REBEL ROUSER TOM DOOLEY
CHANTILLY LACE JUKE ROLLIN' STONE TRY ME
CRY LITTLE DARLIN' SEA CRUISE WHITE LIGHTNING
DON'T BE CRUEL LONELY AVENUE SINCELY YOUNG BLOOD
EL PASO LOUIE LOUIE SO WHAT

The hidden sentence is: PLEASE SEND ME SOMEONE TO LOVE

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





Amber gives Chyna advice on love

Amber Rose has been giving Blac Chyna relationship advice. The 27-year-old model recently started dating reclusive reality TV star Rob Kardashian, 28, and Amber revealed she and Blac rely on each other for advice when it comes to love. She told *Mirror Celeb*: "I think us being best friends we give each other advice, it's not just me schooling her. We've both learned a lot from our past relationships and the mistakes we've made in life and the good things we've done in life. We're very loving and compassionate girls. I

feel like people don't really know that about us. We love really hard. We're good people. We learn as we go." Until recently, Amber had an acrimonious relationship with some of Rob's siblings as her ex Kanye West is now married to Rob's sister Kim Kardashian West. However, Amber and Kim recently put their differences behind them and Blac is reportedly so impressed she is hoping she can iron out her differences with Rob's younger sister Kylie Jenner, who is dating her ex-fiancé Tyga. An insider said: "Blac Chyna thinks what Amber and Kim did

was a real mature thing to do. Blac Chyna would like to do the same with the Kardashian family. "She would really like to talk to Kylie. She is fine with Kylie and Tyga dating at this point. She hopes they understand how she felt when it all happened between Tyga and Kylie."

Stewart inspired Wood to have more children

Rod Stewart claims he inspired Ronnie Wood to have more children. The 71-year-old rocker has taken the credit for his 68-year-old former Faces bandmate and his wife Sally Humphreys deciding to start a family, revealing he and his spouse Penny Lancaster talked them into it. Rod said: "I must admit it was me and Penny that was pushing for them to have children - I'm sure Sally wanted them but she just needed a spokesman and she got it in me." And the 'Maggie May' singer can't help but be amused at the thought of how much his old pal's life is going to change when he becomes a dad to twins very soon. Speaking on UK TV show 'Lorraine', he added: "He doesn't know what's going to happen to him. I laugh every time I

think of it." Rod has eight children with five women, and is an older dad to young kids himself as he has sons Alistair, 10, and Aiden, five, with Penny. Ronnie is already father to four grown-up children, son Jesse - his son with first wife Krissy - and Leah, Tyrone and Jamie whom he raised with second spouse Jo Wood. Rod has previously suggested The Rolling Stones guitarist should have a vasectomy once his twins enter the world so he cannot procreate any more. He quipped: "I have not had the snip. Ask Ronnie Wood, he should have the snip. I don't know what comes out when you have the snip. I think it is just dust."



Chris Klein to be a dad

Chris Klein is to become a father for the first time. The 'American Pie' actor revealed the happy news that he and wife Laina Rose Thyfault - who he wed last August - are expecting a baby together on his 37th birthday yesterday. Sharing a photo of Laina's bump on Twitter, he wrote: "My beautiful wife Laina and I are expecting our first child. 23 weeks along. Gratefully blessed on my 37th B-Day." Chris previously admitted he was "very grateful" to have married Laina. "Laina looked beautiful. She holds herself with such grace. I am a very grateful man." The newlyweds decided to get married at the Rainbow Ranch in Montana, even though they're both originally from Texas. Chris previously explained: "We fell in love with the area and the nature. Luckily, we have families who love to travel and also love nature, so it was the perfect spot for us." The Hollywood hunk - who was previously in a relationship with 'Batman Begins' actress Katie Holmes - first met Laina at a mutual friend's wedding and proposed to the blonde beauty in Venice Beach, California, back in December 2014.



Woodley doesn't watch movies

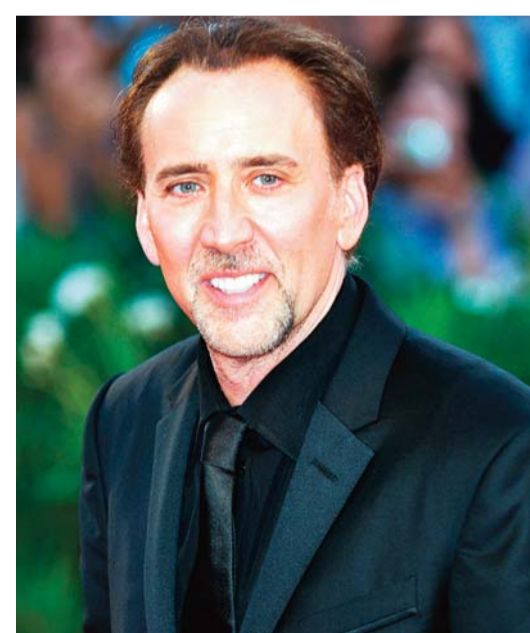
The 'Divergent' actress may have carved out a successful career by starring in a number of successful movies but she has admitted she prefers to snuggle up with a book after a long day on set rather than get engrossed in a movie. She explained: "I don't really watch any other things. I don't know how people find time to watch movies. I would love to watch more. At the end of the day it's either watch movies or read a book and generally the novel wins." But, if the 24-year-old star does find the time to slip on a film, she prefers to watch her movies because she can critique her performance in order to improve for her next role. She said: "I don't know if it's enjoyable but it's something I'm grateful for. It's a way of critiquing what I do, so I know better for the next round how I can adjust and grow my strengths." Shailene shot to fame after she starred in 'The Fault in Our Stars' as cancer patient Hazel Grace Lancaster in 2014 and, despite her down to earth attitude to life, she has admitted she was concerned fame would go to head and ruin her life. Speaking to the Metro newspaper, she said: "I think at first I was worried about my anonymity. Then I realized my life hadn't changed and as long as I could stay true to that I don't think any external force could really affect me."



West is considering joining Instagram

The 'Bound 2' hitmaker - who is known for his dramatic outbursts on Twitter - is toying with the idea of making an account on the photo-sharing site but under the condition his fans don't bombard him with requests on what to post. Taking to his Twitter account last night, he said: "I was thinking about getting an Instagram but only on one condition..... no one can ask me or try to tell me what to Instagram... It's my art..." "My tweets are a form of contemporary art only compromised by people trying to tell me what to tweet and not to tweet... Non artist trying to grab the paint brush... (sic)." The 38-year-old rapper's teasing remarks come just a week after his wife Kim Kardashian West, with whom he has two children North, two, and Saint, three months, attempted to break the internet by posting a raunchy selfie on the site. The brunette beauty, 35, was slapped with backlash after she uploaded the raunchy shot - her completely naked with two slim black bars strategically placed across her breasts and private parts - online. And this isn't the first time Kim has shocked her fans with a seductive picture as she also pulled a similar stunt shortly after giving birth to her baby girl North two years ago.

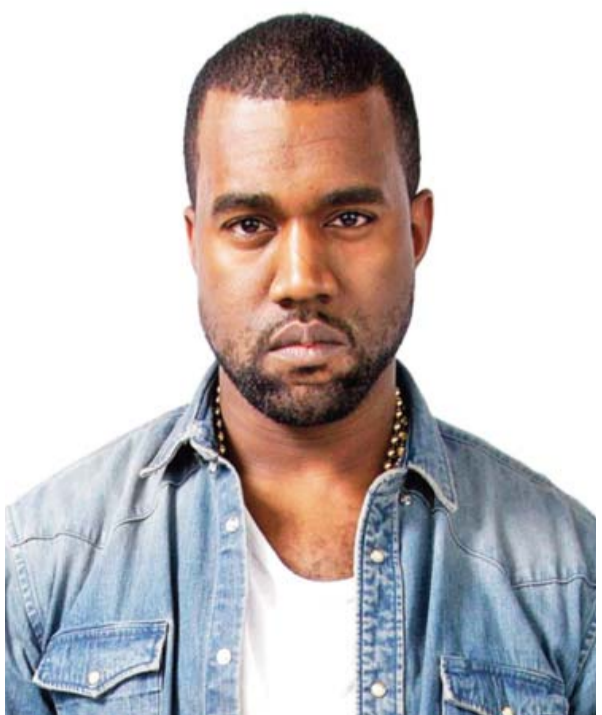
Cage skips the SXSW due to illness



Nicolas Cage skipped the SXSW premiere of his movie 'The Trust' after suffering dizziness and high blood pressure. The 52-year-old star was heading to Austin, Texas for the annual film and music festival but suddenly fell ill and was forced to cancel his appearance at the screening. A spokesman for SXSW said: "This was definitely unforeseen. He had dizziness before boarding and they checked his blood pressure, which was high." The 'Face/Off' actor was checked over by airport medical staff at Las Vegas, where he was due to take off in time to attend the premiere on Sunday at the Arts & Cinema Centre, but it was decided he shouldn't get on the flight, though he is now on the road to recovery. A representative for the star added: "We all felt it was better for him not to get on the plane since flying could make things worse. Thankfully he is now much better." The event was instead attended by co-star Elijah Wood and pop star Sky Ferreira, who has a supporting role in the movie, which is about corrupt cops who plan to rob a vault full of drug money. Meanwhile, Nicolas has just signed up to star in crime thriller 'Vengeance: A Love Story' in the role of a vigilante cop, and is set to start shooting later this year.

Elba has 'good grasp' of himself

Idris Elba finally has a "good grasp" of who he is. The 43-year-old actor - who has children Isan, 14, and Winston, 23 months, from past relationships - had a good time when he was younger but lacked direction in his life, and now he is secure in himself, he is having "real fun". He said: "I had a lot of fun in my 20s but I didn't really know what I was doing in my life back then. I started to grow into myself in my 30s. Now in my 40s, I have a really good grasp of who I am. It's more interesting when you feel things are falling into place. That's where the real fun comes from." The 'Jungle Book' actor credits his parents for helping him stay out of trouble while growing up in a deprived part of London. He said: "I had parents who were very protective and looked out for me. They knew what was going on in the streets and I wasn't allowed to hang out with any of those people. I always had a lot of respect for how hard they worked to provide for our family. I may have been a very big, strong kid but it was being mentally tough that really helped me succeed."



Mariah Carey's aides made a 3am trip to a supermarket when she touched down in Glasgow. The 'We Belong Together' hitmaker sent her assistants to a nearby shop to buy a stack of Disney DVDs for her four-year-old twins Morocco and Monroe as she rehearsed for her upcoming tour date in the Scottish capital. A source told The Sun newspaper: "Mariah didn't land in Glasgow until 10pm and went straight to the arena to get everything ready for tonight. She told her entourage to make sure the children - who were being cared for by a nanny while she did her thing on stage - had a huge stack of DVDs they could choose from. "She specially told them to

stock up on the most recent Disney flicks, including the Minions films, and warned no movies with violence. The kids headed back to the hotel at 4am, before Mariah herself rocked up an hour later. She slept pretty much all day yesterday and barely left her suite." And whilst she ensured her children had the best of everything, no expense was spared for herself either as she rented the penthouse suite at a five-star hotel in the city. Not one to scrimp, Mariah even asked for a crate of Moet champagne to be delivered to the venue ahead of her rehearsals. — Bang Showbiz



These pictures show Japanese techno DJ Ken Ishii performing at an art gallery in Tokyo. — AFP photos

From ninja to elder statesman: Japan techno king Ken Ishii

Japan's techno trail-blazer Ken Ishii rocks huge crowds the world over and leads a glamorous, jet-set life-but the superstar DJ insists he's a "bit of a nerd" at heart. Ishii, 45, burst onto the dance scene more than 20 years ago and has scooped up MTV awards, composed the theme song for the 1998 Winter Olympics and even appeared on the cover of Newsweek magazine. But new album "Leaps", released last week under his alter ego "Flare" and which draws heavily from 1980s influences Kraftwerk and Japan's Yellow Magic Orchestra, reveals a more introverted side to the Sapporo-born artist.

"Flare is more personal and experimental," Ishii told AFP in an interview. "It's like getting a new toy." But while he feels a sense of liberation, there is also a buzz of nostalgia that accompanies a return to "basics" Ishii experienced during his start in the industry as a producer. "My earliest music was experimental so it's like going back to my roots," he said. "I'm still like a kid when I'm in front of my computer. I guess you could say I'm a bit of a nerd when it comes to the creative process of making music."

Ishii's new 10-track record, which comes 23 years after he cut his first track, is a throwback to the 1980s and marks a subtle departure from his trademark techno voodoo. Industrial beats combine with squiggly synthesizers and video game bleeps to whisk the listener back in time: imagine Kraftwerk, Depeche Mode and an old Atari game console stuffed into a power blender. "When I was seven or eight, the first wave of video games like Space Invaders triggered my interest in electronic sounds," said Ishii, who fondly recalls pinching coins from his dad's pockets to spend at the video arcade after school.

"The album sort of harks back to what I used to listen to in the 80s," added Ishii, who became hooked on techno music after discovering Detroit overlords such as Juan Atkins, Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson. "Electronic music was a big influence, particularly Yellow Magic Orchestra, Kraftwerk and German industrial, new wave stuff." But for me Detroit techno was like punk music in the late 70s in London—it was a movement."

'Sexy ninja'

Ishii quickly shot to fame after signing to Belgian techno label R&S Records while still at university, tearing up dance floors in Europe before Japan knew what techno music was. "They brought me to Europe for my first ever gig and it was in front of 30,000 people in Amsterdam," he recalled. "Nobody knew me, they were all wondering who this Asian kid was. 'I'd only had one warm-up gig before that, in front of about 30 people. They had me come out on stage dressed in all black with these models in sexy ninja costumes.'"

A No. 1 on the techno chart of British music magazine NME in 1993 was followed in 1996 by an MTV video award for the single "Extra"—both firsts for a Japanese artist. His seminal album "Jelly Tones" came out in 1995 as his stock soared. Then the Japanese Olympic committee called, followed by television commercial work, a movie soundtrack and even offers to act. But at that point, Ishii slammed on the brakes, terminating his record contract and forming his own label in 2002.

"People stopped seeing me as an underground artist

because of the commercial success," he said. "The record company was pushing me to release hit after hit, to use female singers-stuff that had nothing to do with techno. 'I didn't want to cross that line, to sell out. I wanted to go back to the underground. I'm an old-school guy.' Ishii has a philosophical attitude towards today's generation of celebrity DJs who fly in for shows by helicopter and plug in pre-programmed sets they often play for an entire festival season.

"People get into this game now to be pop stars," said Ishii, who still gets driven to gigs in his manager's battered Toyota. "People are buying tickets to watch a guy who's just standing on stage waving his hands. 'I'll have a drink with the promoters and fans after a gig, but maybe some DJs now think it's a waste of time—that more gigs means more money," he added. "I'm not bothered about flashy cars. I don't care how I look when I arrive. I'd still be doing this even if I didn't make any money." — AFP



This file photo taken on December 30, 1999 shows a multi-colored Hollywood sign during the celebration of the new millennium in Los Angeles. — AFP

China buys soft power with hard cash in Hollywood

With cash flowing faster than the Yangtze river, Hollywood is awash with ever-expanding volumes of Chinese funding, but analysts are warning the film industry there's no such thing as a free lunch. The Beijing-based Wanda Group's record-breaking deal in January to buy US film studio Legendary Pictures finally confirmed the long-heralded emergence of the world's second biggest box office as a major player in Tinseltown. The \$3.5 billion agreement is the largest-ever cultural takeover by China, with US studios keen to capitalize on its burgeoning cinema market at a time when Beijing is pushing entertainment as a source of "soft power."

Legendary, the maker of "Jurassic World," "Godzilla" and the latest Batman trilogy, has grossed more than \$11 billion worldwide since it was founded in 2005, mostly with the kind of big-budget blockbusters popular with Chinese audiences. "It's a win-win situation... because the China market is really incredibly taking off and Hollywood has a real interest in that," Stanley Rosen, a political science professor at the University of Southern California, told AFP. It is an arrangement that benefits both sides financially, with movies becoming increasingly expensive to produce but the Chinese hungry for Western-made films.

But China, which has yet to make a global hit, is also buying expertise. "Hollywood has what China lacks, which is storytelling ability, marketing, distribution," Rosen told AFP. Wanda owner Wang Jianlin, who burst into the international spotlight in 2012 by buying US cinema chain AMC Entertainment for \$2.6 billion, says the Legendary deal makes his company the highest revenue-generating movie unit in the world. It also gives future Legendary films direct access to China's booming market, which has become crucial to foreign filmmakers, with North American ticket sales stagnant. PricewaterhouseCoopers has projected China's box office to rise from \$4.3 billion in 2014 to \$8.9 billion in 2019, meaning it would outstrip the US within two years.

Phenomenal growth

In 2014, 8,035 movie screens — 22 per day were installed in China and the screen count stood at 31,627 by the end of 2015, according to official sources. Underlining the shift in power, Chinese box office monitor EntGroup announced that cinemas took a record \$1.1 billion in February—a 70 percent year-on-year jump—overtaking the North American monthly revenue for the first time in history. The main driver of Chinese cinema's phenomenal growth is a steady emergence of a modern consumerist lifestyle among China's burgeoning middle class, expected to account for 75 percent of households within a decade.

Cumulative Chinese investment in the US since 2000 reached \$63 billion in 2015, with a \$4 billion going to the entertainment industry, according to research firm Rhodium Group. The trend looks set to accelerate, with Huayi Brothers

planning to produce at least 18 films with LA studio STX Entertainment, and Shanghai-based Fosun International taking a stake in US media company Studio 8. Both Wanda and tech firm Alibaba have been touted as possible minority investors in Paramount, while Hunan TV has signed a \$1.5 billion deal to fund Lionsgate movies and Perfect World Pictures is investing \$250 million in Universal's slate over five years. Beijing has pushed back against an invasion of "foreign culture," however, issuing an edict in 2011 discouraging movies featuring "fantasy" and "time travel" among other "bizarre plots."

President Xi Jinping has instructed artists to abandon "naive sensual amusement" and instead promote "true-to-life images to tell people what they should affirm and praise." Only 34 foreign films are given cinema releases in China each year under a quota set by Beijing, and all are subject to official censorship over content deemed politically sensitive or obscene.

Litmus test

Co-produced movies can bypass the quota as long as they contain significant Chinese elements, such as characters, plot devices or locations. But the strategy has backfired at times, most notably with "Transformers: Age of Extinction," which was derided for depicting characters drinking the Chinese version of Red Bull in Texas. Jonathan Landreth, managing editor of the New York-based online magazine China File, warned in a recent article that Wanda and Legendary were operating under Jinping's "looming encouragement" and said the deal could not have gone ahead without the approval of China's Communist Party.

"While Wanda invests in Hollywood to make money, the deal sees Legendary unwittingly becoming one of the most powerful channels for Beijing's worldview, a worldview that bars open discussion of the jailing of dissidents and the disappearing of book sellers," he wrote. The first co-production from the Wanda-owned Legendary will be the \$150 million sci-fi action movie "The Great Wall," starring Matt Damon, Willem Dafoe and Hong Kong Cantopop singer and actor Andy Lau. Directed by Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou and due for its China release in December, two months ahead of the US opening, the film will be entirely English-language.

Christopher Spicer, a film financing expert and partner at international law firm Akin Gump, said the film, the most expensive ever shot in China, could serve as a litmus test of public appetite for Chinese-American joint projects. "I've been doing film and television for eight or nine years and at different times in history primary funding sources of film and, to a lesser extent, television have come from different countries all over the world," he told AFP. "But certainly for the time being I would expect the trend of Chinese financing to continue." — AFP

Sony buys late pop star Jackson's music venture stake

Sony said yesterday it will pay Michael Jackson's estate \$750 million for the late pop star's share of a music venture that owns the rights to songs by some of the biggest names in music history. The deal will see the Japanese firm pick up Jackson's 50 percent stake in Sony ATV Music Publishing, which owns several million titles including those written by the Beatles, Marvin Gaye and Bob Dylan. Sony will now control all of the company, whose catalogue also includes hits by pop star Taylor Swift, rapper Kanye West, Sam Smith and Lady Gaga.

Sony ATV Music Publishing was formed in 1995 by the Japanese electronics giant and the late "King of Pop", who transformed music with iconic hits including "Thriller" and "Beat it". Jackson died in 2009 at the age of 50. His estate said it will still own his master recordings and the publishing company that owns all the songs he penned. It will also keep its stake in EMI Music. The singer, a notoriously profligate spender, turned to music publishing rights at the height of his stardom as he looked for a place to invest his burgeoning fortune.

The proceeds from the catalogue offered vital revenue for the star later in his life as he struggled to pay his expenses and released little new



In this March 5, 2009 file photo, US singer Michael Jackson announces that he is set to play ten live concerts at the London O2 Arena in July, which he announced at a press conference at the London O2 Arena. — AP

material. Jackson said he first learned of the music publishing business from former Beatle Paul McCartney, who bought the copyright to songs by Buddy Holly and other classic artists. The Beatles did not show the same business acumen early in their career, however, losing control of their catalogue under the company Northern Songs—which eventually came under ATV.

'Smartest investment in music history'

Jackson bought ATV Music Publishing in 1985 for \$47.5 million, or about \$105 million at 2016 value, from the brash South African-born Australian tycoon Robert Holmes a Court. The deal "is considered one of the smartest investments in music history", Jackson's estate executors said yesterday. In the negotiations, the businessman insisted on excluding a song from the deal so he could give it as a present to his teenage daughter. Catherine Holmes a Court was given the copyright to the song "Penny Lane," which she continues to own today, one of the few Beatles' tracks not part of ATV. McCartney was friendly with Jackson, collaborating on the track "The Girl is Mine" off "Thriller," but was unsuccessful in bids to wrest control of the Beatles catalogue. Jackson sold half of the stake in ATV to Sony in 1991 for a reported \$100 million.

His will called for his mother Katherine and his three children—Prince, Paris and Blanket—to be supported, although not his father Joe Jackson, whom he had accused of abuse. Yesterday, Sony said the deal underscored a focus on its entertainment division, which includes a music label and Hollywood studio. The company has been leaning on movies, music and soaring sales of the PlayStation video game console in its bid to scrap years of eye-watering losses linked to the consumer electronics that built its global brand. "The entertainment businesses have long been a core part of Sony and are a key driver of our future growth," Sony chief executive Kazuo Hirai said.—AFP



File photo shows singer of US heavy metal band 'Down' Phil Anselmo performing during the Hellfest Heavy Metal Music Festival in Clisson, western France. — AFP

US metal singer in racism row pulls out of Europe tour

A US metal singer who gave a Nazi salute at a concert has pulled out of a European tour even after a French festival came under fire for standing by him. A regional government in western France had cut off subsidies to Hellfest due to the festival's refusal to scrap a performance by Down, a New Orleans-based metal band led by Phil Anselmo. The singer has apologized after giving a Nazi salute and shouting "White Power!" at a charity concert in Los Angeles in January that was packed with musical celebrities.

Anselmo, best known as the former singer of the band Pantera, profusely thanked Hellfest's director Ben Barbaud in an open letter but said it was not the right time to tour. "My AWFUL mistake has taken a toll on my reputation, and justly so!" he wrote, crediting Barbaud with "know(ing) me better than this drunken incident could ever describe." "I BEG YOU, give me this time to get my brain clear, and to come back (if you will have me back) next year, my brother, I implore you!" he wrote. Anselmo said he was also suffering from a recurring knee injury and needed rehabilitation.

A member of Down's management on Monday confirmed the letter's authenticity and said the band would not tour Europe, but declined further comment. Besides Hellfest, the band

was scheduled to play at the Download festival's editions in both England and the Paris region, as well as metal events in Belgium and Italy. The only upcoming date remaining on the band's schedule is in Las Vegas. Barbaud had criticized Anselmo's actions at the Los Angeles show but said the singer had performed seven times at Hellfest without incident.

"I know him and he has a provocative personality which has nothing at all to do with anti-Semitism," Barbaud told AFP at the time. The government of the Pays de la Loire region cut funding to Hellfest over Down's inclusion, although it had contributed only 20,000 euros (\$22,000) to the annual festival's 16-million-euro (\$17.8 million) budget. "It is out of the question for the regional council uncritically to accept that incitement to racial or religious hatred take place on the stages it finances," said Laurence Garnier, head of the region's cultural commission. Anselmo has long faced allegations of racism and Pantera has incorporated the Confederate flag into band artwork. He had initially played down his "White Power" remark, saying he had been making an inside joke about band members drinking white beverage. — AFP

Review

'Midnight Special' is an electrifying mystery

"Midnight Special" is one of those rare, stimulating creations that grabs you and penetrates your bloodstream from start to finish. This unique tale about a kid with special powers skillfully melds mood and story, giving the entire experience the feel of a thrilling getaway chase — one that you're part of, too. Director Jeff Nichols dares you to get in, shut up and come along for the late night drive down some desolate Southern roads where the headlights are optional and the mission is life or death. As with his riveting 2011 breakout "Take Shelter," Nichols doesn't reveal details carelessly. It forces you to pay attention and give yourself to his vision.

Take the first scene. We hear about a child's abduction on a television broadcast. Then we discover that we're with two men (Michael Shannon as Roy and Joel Edgerton as Lucas) in a motel room. They're paranoid about something. Then we see a white bedsheet draped over the outline of what appears to be a child, and you realize you're with the abductors. It's an

unsettling milieu. But then Roy removes the bedsheet to reveal a child (Jaeden Lieberher) who is neither scared nor upset. He's calm. He's wearing noise cancelling headphones and pool goggles and there's even ordinariness about it. You realize that Roy isn't evil at all — there's an undeniable tenderness in his empathetic, haunted eyes, and it just makes you want to know more.

The boy's name is Alton and he is, to put it too simply, exceptional. He has powers that no one understands, but that inspire obsession, devotion and fear from those around him. Roy is his father. He's taken his son away from a religious cult led by Sam Shepard's Calvin Meyer, whose service that night is interrupted by federal investigators who have also become interested in the kid. A skeptical, curious NSA agent (Adam Driver) shows up too. The cult has been using Alton as their prophet. He goes into a trance and speaks in tongues and they take it for scripture. What is most compelling to the government, the leaders, and even his father, though, is a date and location that keeps

coming up. Friday, March 6. No one knows what will happen then, not even Alton, but they've seen enough to know that it's not worth questioning. But the kooks, the simpletons, the bureaucrats, the scientists, the law, and the devoted parents alike all know that they must go.



This image released by Warner Bros. Entertainment shows Jaeden Lieberher in a scene from 'Midnight Special'. — AP

Tokyo Fashion Week



Models display creations by Japanese designer Yu Amatsu in the finale at the 'Hanae Mori manuscrit' brand's 2016 autumn/winter collection show in Tokyo yesterday, during the Tokyo Fashion Week. — AP/AFP photos

Models display creations designed by Vietnam's Nguyen Cong Tri during the 2016 Autumn/Winter Collection.

Vicky Pattison is the new face of Ann Summers

The former 'Geordie Shore' star, who has raked in an impressive £1 million since she won 'I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!' last year, has reportedly been approached by the sexy firm to front their new raunchy lingerie campaign. A source told The Sun newspaper: "It [the news] will be confirmed soon. She's thrilled." The 28-year-old beauty sparked rumors she was teaming up with the British multinational retailer when she uploaded a photograph of her

posing in one of the brand's sex outfits. Meanwhile, news the brunette babe has nabbed a gig with Ann Summers comes just a few days after she announced she was turning her back on Newcastle in order to set up home in Essex so she's closer to London for work.

Taking to her Twitter account last week, she tweeted: "Big day... HUGE DAY FOR ME!!! New autobiography finally out AND my offer on my new property has just been accepted!!! ESSEX HERE I COME!" Since

her jungle stint in December, Vicky's career has gone from strength-to-strength as she recently became a regular panellist on 'Loose Women' and is reportedly being lined up for a guest appearance on 'The Only Way is Essex'. — Bang Showbiz

Erin Heatherton battled with her body image



Erin Heatherton

The blonde model landed one of the most sought-after jobs in fashion when she became a Victoria's Secret Angel in 2010, just two years after first walking for the lingerie giant. Erin hung up her wings in 2012 after feeling the pressure of having to look perfect all the time and becoming stressed with worry about her figure, but since she made the decision to stop working for the company she has felt empowered. The 27-year-old revealed her battle in an emotional post to her 695,000 followers on Instagram. Along with a sultry photo of herself in fuchsia underwear and a black tank top emblazoned with the logo 'Empowered by Failure', she wrote: "The breakdown to breakthrough moment in my life has allowed me to become the truest version of myself. In my moment of 'failure', I stood in the face of adversity. I was struggling with my body image and the pressures to fulfill the demands of perfectionism upon me. I am not perfect.

"Through this struggle, however, I found the strength to love myself. I stood in my power. I thought of one of my favorite quotes, 'Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him pow-

er' - Abraham Lincoln. "I look back on that moment now, and I embrace it. This feeling I once perceived as "failure" was, in truth, a powerful awakening for me to stand behind my purpose in life. I stepped away from hiding behind a fabricated version of myself. I no longer put actions behind my fears and insecurities. I made a choice to redirect my energy to be a catalyst for change. To create a channel for women to become the truest versions of themselves, along with me. (Stay tuned for more...) In the end, if you aren't being true to yourself, then what the the point. #rebelwacause #empowerment#womensempowerment#empoweredbyyou (sic)". Erin made her breakthrough appearing in Diane Von Furstenberg's catwalk show in 2006.

—Bang Showbiz

Iggy wants Kylie to release contours kit

Iggy Azalea wants Kylie Jenner to release a contours kit. The 'Black Widow' rapper is a big fan of Kylie's Lip Kit By Kylie line - with her sixth Kylie Cosmetics release selling out in just 15 minutes last week - and decided to pitch a new idea to her on Twitter. The 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star tweeted: "I'm already working on something, just wanted to get your opinion of course." To which Iggy replied: "@KylieJenner I think you should consider doing a contour kits." Kylie, 18, is open to Iggy's idea and told her she had just sent her some direct messages to discuss the contour kits. She tweeted: "I slid in ur dms (sic)" Iggy then wrote: "@KylieJenner cool, ill buy 100. lol! (sic)" Kylie - whose sister is model Kendall Jenner - has been thrilled with the reception to her makeup range, which includes lipstick and lip liner duo colours Kylie Candy K, Dolce K, True Brown K, Posie K, Koko K, Mary Jo K and 22.

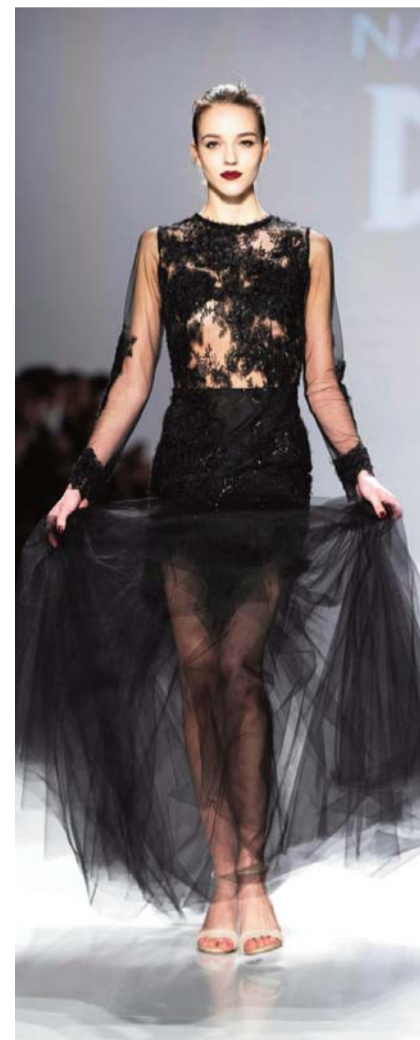
After her last release sold out in 15 minutes, Kylie took to Instagram to thank her fans, writing: "We sold out in 15 minutes today! And we only keep making more every time! Thank you for all the love and support, I will keep bringing beautiful and amazing quality products to you guys!"

— Bang Showbiz



Kylie Jenner

Toronto Fashion Week



Models walk the runway during the Narcès show at Toronto Fashion Week in Toronto, Monday. — AP photos

'Twist' Turkish couture opens its first branch in Kuwait



Under the patronage of the Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Murat Tamer, the Twist Turkish couture brand opens its first branch. The Turkish brand, which has been established since 1997, celebrates the occasion of the opening of its first branch in Kuwait, at the Avenues Mall. Newspapers and media representatives attended the ceremony, in addition to a large group of Kuwaiti ladies and Turkish luxury fashion lovers.

Twist's team welcomed the guests who expressed their admiration of the distinctive clothes after a tour in the store where everyone enjoyed the atmosphere of the Turkish originality. Practical, comfortable and affordable is why Twist brand is in big demand in addition that the collection inspires young women to express themselves freely.

The spring and summer 2016 collection of Twist shed light on the pulse of high end fashion. The collection has worked to achieve harmony between work life and standards of couture. It takes into consideration the development of time and its changes and invented the women's upscale designs and process which take us between the journey of the day and night smoothly and professionally.





A masked actor performs during the inaugural parade of the 15th Ibero-American Theater Festival in Bogota. The biennial festival's first edition took place in 1988 and is considered the largest theatre festival in the world. — AP

Away from tourist crowds, an older section of Tokyo beckons

Explore Tokyo beyond the crowded tourist highlights and you'll find many older parts of the city with a different look and slower pace. One of these, the area around the Metro station Kiyosumi-Shirakawa, is a convenient side trip if you're visiting the Tokyo Skytree, which is four stops away. There's a charming local history museum, public garden, coffee shops and a contemporary art museum. The neighborhood may not be picturesque in the conventional sense but there's a lot to see if you have an eye for detail and an appreciation for the charm of urban and slightly shabby locales.



Photo shows Kiyosumi Gardens in Tokyo, one of a number of things to see and do in the neighborhood around the Kiyosumi-Shirakawa metro station. — AP photos

Fukagawa Edo Museum

From the Metro station, head south and turn right onto an old shopping street marked by two small decorative towers. On your right you'll see an old-fashioned candy shop where the proprietor dresses in garb from the Edo period (including an entirely unconvincing wig of a topknot hairstyle). Farther along on the left is the Fukagawa Edo museum.

Most tourists with any interest in history end up at the Edo Tokyo Museum with its indoor re-cre-

ations of historic buildings from the Edo era, which began in the 1600s. The Fukagawa museum, which predates the Edo Tokyo museum, is much smaller and more charming, with a life-size Edo-period town re-created on its lower level. Be prepared to take your shoes off to go inside the little shops and homes, and a guide with adequate or better English will show you how the old-fashioned locks work and how ropes pull a skylight open over a stove.

You can even try a rice-pounding device. The guide will also explain how to tell the difference between a nice but tiny house for someone well-

off (note the tatami-covered floor) versus a poor person's home with a mostly bare wood floor and just a couple of rice straw mats. Lighting sets the mood through 15-minute day-and-night cycles with recordings of birds, merchants calling and the cry of the animatronic cat on a rooftop.

Coffee, the universal language

Walk the small streets and alleys around the museum and you'll find a mix of residences, shops, small businesses and light industrial spaces. You'll find much that is rather old-time Japanese, like

restaurants selling the local specialty of rice with clams. But the neighborhood is also something of a hot spot for coffee shops.

Don't think in terms of grabbing a morning cup of joe. Some of these don't even open till later in the day, and they're more about relaxing and making a ritual of it. Some are quite small and the menus may be limited. The one I visited, aside from coffee and tea, had just had two cakes and two flavors of small cookies, chocolate and sesame, but the cookies were exquisite.

There also an outpost of a US chain, Blue Bottle, that caused something of a stir when it opened, with lines reported to be two hours long. Its conspicuous modern building with an industrial vibe and huge coffee-roasting machinery was far calmer on a recent weekday, but it's still not a place to camp out with your laptop, though people did seem to stay to chat.

Museum of contemporary art Tokyo

If you're willing to walk a bit farther you can also have a completely modern experience in this old neighborhood at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo. Two exhibits that just opened are running through May 29: "Loose Lips Save Ships," exploring freedom of expression, and "Pixar: 30 Years of Animation."

Kiyosumi Gardens

Kiyosumi Gardens is easy to find on your way to or from the Metro, visible across the main street opposite the entrance to the shopping street near the Fukagawa Edo Museum. It's a beautiful typical Japanese garden laid out around a large pond, first opened for company use by the founder of Mitsubishi in 1880 (Mitsubishi was a shipping firm at the time), then donated to the city and opened as a public park in 1932. The garden is nice to stroll around or find a bench to gaze at the pond. — AP



Re-creations of Japanese homes and businesses from the Edo period, which began in the 1600s at the Fukagawa Edo museum.



Re-creations of Japanese homes and businesses from the Edo period.

Crafts: Gold-dipped eggs add shine to Easter decor



Wooden eggs that combine two fashion and decorating trends - color blocking and gold dipping - are arranged in a bowl for an easy Easter display. — AP photos

By Holly Ramer

Spray paint

Despite their rounded shape, Easter eggs can be edgy. Give them a modern boost by combining two fashion and decorating trends: color-blocking and gold-dipping. I found several different methods online for producing decorative eggs with bold or pastel blocks of color and just enough gold to provide a bit of flair. Piled in a bowl or displayed in a row on a mantle, they're an easy option for spring decorating.

I tested three approaches for cost, ease of execution and overall results. I started with wooden eggs purchased from a craft store, and for each technique I made two versions: For one, I layered the gold over a coat of colored paint, and for the second, I applied the gold directly to the bare wood. These techniques would work just as well, however, on papier-mache eggs or even real eggshells with the insides blown out.

Acrylic paint

This method is the least expensive and most straight-forward, and probably the easiest of the three to attempt with kids. I used instructions found at a blog called Oleander + Palm. Simply paint the eggs in your desired color, allow them to dry, and then paint one end of each egg with gold paint. Acrylic craft paint is cheap and easy to clean up with soap and water. The downside? The resulting gold color was not quite as vibrant or shiny compared to the other methods, and it did take multiple coats to achieve opaque coverage.



Two wooden Easter eggs decorated using acrylic paint.



Two wooden eggs decorated for Easter using a product called liquid gilding.

It was a little tricky to apply the tape in a way that resulted in a clean line all the way around the egg, and even a small can of spray paint costs about \$5, considerably more than a small bottle of acrylic craft paint.

Liquid gilding

Liquid gilding is a paint-like product that is supposed to produce an effect similar to gold leaf. A small bottle costs about \$7, making this the most expensive technique. And because the gilding is solvent-based, it must be handled outdoors or in a well-ventilated space. Brushes used to apply it must be cleaned with nail polish remover or enamel paint thinners, which makes it both more expensive and less convenient, and probably not a good option for kids. That said, it was easy to apply and produced a more authentic gold lustre and sheen than the other methods. I found this idea at a Canadian parenting blog, Frugal Mom Eh! —AP