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## ASSEMBLY PANEL REJECTS PROPOSAL TO RAISE CHARGES

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By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The National Assembly financial and economic affairs committee yesterday rejected a government proposal to amend a 21-year-old law to give the government the freedom to raise charges on public services. The law issued in 1995 stipulates that the government cannot raise charges on public services without the prior approval of the National Assembly. In its proposed amendment, the government sought to rest the decision to raise charges on public services entirely in its own hands without the participation of the National Assembly.

Head of the panel MP Faisal Al-Shaye said the committee rejected the amendment because of suspicion that it violates the constitution as the Assembly's legal committee had said. The government's move was an attempt to increase charges on public services, mainly electricity and water, to boost non-oil revenues to finance a shortfall in the budget due to the slump in oil prices.

Shaye also said that the committee did not discuss the government economic reform program and the government's request to raise prices of electricity and water because the committee did not receive the two issues from the government. As a result, the two issues will not be debated at the assembly's next session tomorrow but likely on April 12, thus further delaying government measures to reduce subsidies on petrol and public services. The government has been discussing the sensitive issue with the National Assembly for the past two months. As part of a comprehensive economic reform program, the government wants to raise prices of petrol by more than 50 percent and has presented several scenarios for raising the prices of electricity and water.

Continued on Page 13

## 65 KILLED IN PAKISTAN BLAST

**LAHORE:** At least 65 people were killed and more than 200 injured when an apparent suicide bomb ripped through the parking lot of a crowded park in the Pakistani city of Lahore where Christians were celebrating Easter Sunday, officials said. Dozens of ambulances were seen racing to the Gulshan-i-Iqbal park, situated near the centre of the city of around eight million, with many women and children among the dead and wounded.

Lahore top administration official Muhammad Usman said the toll had reached 65 people. "The rescue operation is continuing," he said, adding that more than 50 children were among the injured. The army had been called in, he said, and soldiers were at the scene helping with rescue operations and security. Senior police official Haider Ashraf said the blast appeared to be a suicide attack, adding that ball bearings were found at the park.

A medical superintendent at Jinnah Hospital, who gave his name only as Dr Ashraf, told AFP the number of injured stands at more than 200 people, most of them are critical. "I fear the death toll will rise," he added. He described a nightmarish scene at the hospital, with staff treating casualties on floors and in corridors. Provincial health advisor Khawaja Salman Rafique told AFP meanwhile that authorities were asking citizens to donate blood.

Javed Ali, a 35-year-old resident who lives opposite park, said the force of the blast had shattered his home's windows. "Everything was shaking, there were cries and dust everywhere."

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LAHORE: A woman injured in the bomb blast is comforted by a family member at a local hospital in Lahore yesterday. — AP



PALMYRA: A general view taken yesterday shows part of the ancient city of Palmyra with the citadel in the background, after government troops recaptured the UNESCO world heritage site from the Islamic State (IS) group. — AFP

## SYRIA FORCES DRIVE IS OUT OF PALMYRA

**PALMYRA, Syria:** Syrian troops recaptured the ancient city of Palmyra from the Islamic State group yesterday and pledged to build on the win with an advance against other jihadist strongholds. President Bashar Al-Assad hailed the victory as an "important achievement" as his Russian counterpart and key backer Vladimir Putin congratulated Damascus for retaking the UNESCO world heritage site.

An AFP correspondent inside Palmyra said monuments destroyed by the jihadists-like the iconic Temple of Bel-were in pieces but that much of the ancient city was intact. Residential neighborhoods in the adjacent modern town were deserted and damage was widespread, the correspondent said.

A group of regime fighters took time off to celebrate their win and kicked

around a football in the middle of a street strewn with debris. The jihadists sparked a global outcry after seizing Palmyra in May 2015 and setting about destroying some of its treasured monuments.

But Syria's antiquities chief yesterday said the city's priceless artefacts were in much better shape than feared. "We were expecting the worst. But the landscape, in general, is in good shape," Maamun Abdulkarim told AFP from Damascus.

"We could have completely lost Palmyra... The joy I feel is indescribable." The Syrian army said that Sunday's victory meant the city would now serve as a base to "broaden operations" against IS, including in its stronghold of Raqa and Deir Ezzor further east.

Continued on Page 13

## AL-JAZEERA TO CUT AROUND 500 JOBS

### UAE FINDS 38 GUILTY IN TERROR CASE

**DUBAI:** The top security court in the United Arab Emirates yesterday sentenced 38 people to prison in connection to a cell accused of plotting terrorist attacks and seeking to overthrow the government to create an Islamic state. Prosecutors said the "Minaret Youth" cell included Emirati as well as non-Emirati members, though the nationalities and names of all the accused have not been made public.

The group had also been charged with forming committees to recruit young Emiratis and of planning to assassinate top government officials in the UAE, which is home to the Western-friendly city-states of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Some members had also been accused of being members of the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria and Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria, the Nusra Front.

The state-run WAM news agency reported that the Federal Supreme Court's state security chambers sentenced 11 of the defendants to life in prison, though two were tried in absentia. Another two were sentenced to 15 years, 13 were sentenced to 10 years, six to three years, two to five years, and four to six months in prison.

Seven others were acquitted, according to WAM. The official report did not give details on what the defendants had been found guilty of. The trial, which began late August, was not open to the public or members of the independent press.

Abu Dhabi-based The National reported on its website yesterday that only two defendants pleaded guilty in court.

Continued on Page 13

**DOHA:** Qatar's state-funded broadcaster Al-Jazeera yesterday announced a fresh round of job cuts with around 500 positions being lost, most of them at the network's Doha headquarters.

On top of existing losses of 700 jobs following an announcement earlier this year that Al-Jazeera America is to close, it means the broadcaster is set to shed more than 20 percent of its global workforce. In total, the job cuts will reduce Al-Jazeera's staff numbers from around 5,200 to 4,000.

The cuts come at a time when gas and oil-rich Qatar is readjusting its spending priorities as it grapples with the global slump in energy prices. Al-Jazeera said yesterday that after a management review it was "expected that around 500 positions worldwide will be impacted, the majority of which are in Qatar".

Announcing the job losses in a statement, acting Director General, Mostefa Souag, said the cuts would allow the network "to evolve our business operation in order to maintain a leading position and continue our recognized commitment to high quality, independent and hard-hitting journalism around the world."

"While our decision is consistent with those being made across the media industry worldwide, it was difficult to make nonetheless." He added: "However, we are confident it is the right step to ensure the network's long-term competitiveness and reach."

According to one Al-Jazeera official, up to 60 percent of the job cuts-300 positions-could come at the broadcaster's Doha base.

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DOHA: Al-Jazeera English Channel staff prepare for the broadcast inside the news room in Doha, Qatar. Al-Jazeera said yesterday it is slashing about 500 jobs worldwide little more than two months after shutting its US offshoot. — AP



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Mongolian Foreign Minister Lundeg Purevsuren. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Mongolian Foreign Minister Lundeg Purevsuren.

## AMIR RECEIVES MONGOLIA'S MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Mongolia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Lundeg Purevsuren. Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meeting, which took place at Seif Palace yesterday. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also receiving the visiting minister, in the presence of Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Undersecretary of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Itamad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Ali Al-Saeed and

Kuwait's Ambassador to Mongolia Khaled Al-Fadhli. Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled discussed with his Mongolian counterpart means of promoting bilateral ties. The meeting, held at the Foreign Ministry's headquarters, also shed light on the recent regional and international developments. The meeting was attended Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister at the minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Ambassador Saeed and Ambassador Fadhli. Later, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled held a lunch banquet in the honor of the visiting minister. Earlier yesterday, His Highness

the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, and Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. — KUNA



First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Mongolian Foreign Minister Lundeg Purevsuren.



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah meets with British Ambassador to Kuwait Matthew Lodge and head of the British embassy's liaison office Lance Lindsay. — KUNA



Ministry of Interior's Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahad meets with Japanese Ambassador in Kuwait Takashi Ashiki.

## INTERIOR MINISTER MEETS UK ENVOY, LIAISON OFFICER

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah has praised the deep-rooted cooperation ties with Britain. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled, British Ambassador to Kuwait Matthew James Lodge and head of the British embassy's liaison office Lance Lindsay also discussed a host of issues of common concern, the ministry's Security Media Department said in a statement yesterday.

Lodge handed over to Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled an official invitation from Home Secretary Theresa May to visit Britain, to enhance bilateral security cooperation, in light of regional and international developments. Date of the visit will be later set. The British envoy appreciated Kuwait's role supporting peace and security in the region.

### Japan

Meanwhile, means to boost bilateral security cooperation were the focus of talks held between Ministry of Interior's Undersecretary Lieutenant General

Suleiman Al-Fahad and the Japanese Ambassador in Kuwait Takashi Ashiki. Fahad and the Japanese envoy discussed bolstering ties, especially in training, the ministry's Security Media Department said in a statement, pointing to Japan's advanced expertise in the field.

The meeting also addressed regional and international security developments. During the meeting, ambassador Ashiki highly appreciated hospitality shown to the Japanese diplomatic mission and community, both on the official and the popular levels.

### United States

Also yesterday, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah discussed with United States' Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas A Silliman bilateral ties. The meeting, held yesterday, also shed light on the latest regional and international developments. Assistant Foreign Minister for North and South Americas' Affairs Reem Al-Khaled was present at the meeting. —KUNA



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah meets with US Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas Silliman.

## VISA WAIVER PROGRAM/ESTA, TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES

The US Embassy wishes to remind all nationalities who are able to travel to the United States via the Visa Waiver Program that as of 1 April, 2016 they must have a valid electronic passport. This rule applies even to those who possess a valid Electronic System for Travel Authorization. The US Embassy strongly recommends that all travelers check to ensure their passports are valid electronic passports before they make arrangements to travel to the United States on the Visa Waiver program. Electronic passports have this symbol on their cover:



You can check if your passport is valid for travel under the VWP by carefully reading the following page: <https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/visit/visa-waiver-program.html>.

Any traveler who does not have a valid electronic passport is still eligible to travel to the United States with a valid nonimmigrant visa issued by a US embassy or consulate. Such travelers will be required to appear for an interview and obtain a visa in their passports at a US embassy or consulate before traveling to the United States. Information on visa applications can be found at: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en.html>.

A full list of countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) can be found at the following link: <http://ice2016orlando.org/host-travel-hotel/visacustoms/vwp/>

Citizen or National of a VWP Designated Country: The following 37 countries are Visa Waiver Program participants (as of 13 August 2015):

Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan and United Kingdom.

## GCC CONFERENCE ENVISAGES BIGGER ROLE FOR YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT

KUWAIT: The GCC Youth Conference concluded Saturday with a series of recommendations to boost youth contribution to policy decision-making and state development in Arab Gulf countries. Speaking to reporters following the closing session, Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Zain Al-Sabah announced the conference has called for the foundation of GCC Youth Forum, to be affiliated to the GCC General Secretariat.

She stated that the forum is meant to allow youth to partake in drawing and enforcing development policies. She hoped the forum would be an effective partner to state institutions in materializing sustainable development goals. She added that the conference's outcome and recommendations would be referred to the GCC youth

ministers meeting, scheduled April 6 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for discussion and approval. Sheikh Zain thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his sponsorship of the conference.

### New philosophy

Meanwhile, Director of the Department of National Program for Preparing and Qualifying Young Leaders at the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs Dr Mashael Al-Janoubi said that the conferees have recommended working out a new philosophy for giving youth more spaces and opportunities to contribute to the development of education and culture. The conferees recommended a series of measures to expand partnership between the state institutions

and youth entities, he said.

Jaboubi noted that the conference called for launching an interactive portal for Gulf youth to facilitate interaction and exchange of expertise in entrepreneurship and development projects. He added that the conferees underlined the need for new mechanisms to strengthen national identity and harnessing the skills of youth cadres through a sophisticated training courses and programs. They urged governments to embrace and offer all financial and technical support to youth initiatives to ensure their success. They called for enhancing dialogue with youth to help enhance their sense of belongingness to their countries.

### Necessary measures

The conferees also emphasized the

importance of taking to all necessary measures to empower youth and enable them to participate in the state building and society development. Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah opened the first GCC Youth Conference on Wednesday evening. The four-day event was co-organized by the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs and the GCC Secretariat under the theme of 'Youth Spaces - Opportunities and Potential'.

In his inaugural speech, Sheikh Salman urged intensifying the effort to bring the youth of the GCC member countries close to each other and enable them to share experience for attaining the objectives of sustainable human development programs. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Zain Al-Sabah speaks at the conference. — KUNA

## APPROVED MARKET OFFERS MULTIPLE CHOICES TO ORGANIC FOOD FANS



Fahad Al-Yahya (left) and US Ambassador Douglas Silliman inaugurate the event.

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Eating healthy and organic food is becoming more popular by every passing day. The Approved Market, located at the Sanabil Tower is providing all kinds of healthy foodstuff. The grand opening of this store took place on Saturday and was attended by the American Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas Silliman, as well as people seeking healthy nutrition.



George Sassine, Altco General Manager (left) with Fahad Al-Dhafer, General Manager of Approved Market (center).

The grand opening took place after nine months following the soft opening. "This is the first healthy store in the Gulf Cooperation Council region," Fahad Al-Dhafer, General Manager of Approved Market told the Kuwait Times.

"All the available products here are approved by diet consultant Fahad Al-Yahya. We have over 2,000 items available in the store, from which around 70 percent are brought from the United States, while the rest are brought from different countries."



Staff of the Approved Market

"Our wide range of products include snacks and beverages, dairy, breakfast cooking and healthy oils, spices, proteins, frozen seafood, and many others," Dhafer added. "This is our only branch in the present time, thus we are planning to expand by the end of this year." As part of this event, an exhibition was held in front of the store inside the tower, where many of the items were on display. Different agents of various brands offered visitors a chance to taste their products and get free samples, in addition to fitness challenges.



Visitors seen at Altco's booth at the exhibition.



Rabie Qansou, General Manager of Food Vision (right) with George Sassine, Altco General Manager



US Ambassador Douglas Silliman tests a product at the event.

## ZAIN STAFF DONATE OVER FIVE TONS OF CLOTHES TO REFUGEES

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, launched an internal Clothes Donation campaign, where the company's employees donated over five tons of unused clothes throughout three weeks to Syrian refugees in collaboration with Kuwait Society for Relief.

This initiative aimed at delivering on Zain's commitment to continually support charitable causes as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategies, as well as encourage Zain employees to take part in the spirit of giving and donate their unused clothes to refugees who are in need of support.

Zain believes in extending a helping hand to support those who are less advantaged. The company strongly believes that similar charitable programs help infuse a sense of responsibility into members of the society, to help support those who are in need of help.

Zain's core values are built to give to the less fortunate, and the company is keen on participating in various internal and external charitable initiatives that promote the culture of giving and highlight how people can exert little effort while making a huge difference in others' lives.

The company's collaboration with Kuwait Society for Relief comes in line with its Corporate Social Responsibility strategy that seeks to contribute to the

welfare of the society in several ways. Zain prides itself on its long-track of records and contributions it has put in philanthropic areas. The company strongly believes that such initiatives help infuse a sense of responsibility into members of the society, to help support those who are in need of help.



**KUWAIT:** (From left) Faisal Al-Drea, Jassem Al-Habib and Nabila Al-Anjari speak at the press conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM FOR NATIONAL ECONOMY, DEVELOPMENT

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Leaders Group and the Information Ministry's Tourism Sector announced collaborating to organize a conference on tourism titled 'Tourism and Development: Reality and Outlook'. The event, held under the motto 'Tourism is a need and a purpose' takes place on 29-30 March at JW Marriott Hotel.

During a press conference held yesterday at KIPCO Tower, Jassem Al-Habib, Assistant Undersecretary for Tourism at the Ministry of Information, confirmed that the ministry's tourism sector is going to highlight in this conference the role of public and private sectors in promoting tourism in Kuwait. "Both sectors are interested in giving the best ways to deal with future challenges related to the future of Kuwait, about its economy and the process of development," he said. "Because of the drop in oil prices,

we believe that addressing this problem is not done by going and fixing the past, but by going forward toward the future and toward new resources."

"In the second half of the last century, Kuwait was a touristic destination for many of citizens of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries," he added. "It was seen known as the 'Pearl of the Gulf' at the time. Kuwait has a legacy in the field of tourism, and we can promote tourism again through the efforts of the public and private sectors, citizens and civil society."

### Dramatic impact

Nabila Al-Anjari, President of the Organizing Committee of the conference and General Manager of Leaders Group for Consulting and Development, said "The fluctuation of Oil prices worldwide left a direct and dramatic impact on national income, since oil represents more than

80 percent of Kuwait's income."

She added that Kuwait needs serious research and urgent solutions to diversify sources of income. "Tourism is a strategic option to achieve several national goals economically, financially and developmentally, not to mention the importance of tourism and the entertainment industry as an outlet for the social, cultural and local sectors," she said.

Anjari further stressed that this conference aims to take advantage of some of the leading touristic experiences and how to link tourism development plans, as well as discuss suggested ways and awareness campaigns on that regard. "We were keen to involve various agencies and most of bodies that have direct or indirect relations with tourism. A number of officials and representatives from these parties will participate to discuss the themes of the conference," she pointed out.

## TOURISM CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS NATIONAL VISION FOR DEVELOPED, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



Dr. Khaled Mahdi



MP Ahmad Lari



Huda Al-Shayegi



Saad Al-Muhailbi

**KUWAIT:** The Tourism and Development: Reality and Outlook Conference takes place on March 29 and 30, 2016 under auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. The conference has already attracted considerable attention from various sectors concerned with sustainable development, the organizing committee said in a statement.

The committee further stressed that officials from aviation, hospitality, recreation, services, culture, arts and media sectors have already confirmed their participation in the conference. The committee also stressed that speakers on the second day of the conference would include the Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Dr. Khaled

Mahdi, MP Ahmad Lari, Fatwa and Legislation Department Advisor Huda Al-Shayegi, Chairman of the Board of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Dr. Mohammad Al-Zuhair, Manager of the structural plan Saad Al-Muhailbi and the Ministry of Youth Affairs' Assistant Undersecretary for Youth Projects Affairs Shafiq Al-Sayyed. The second session will be presided by Leaders Group's General Manager Nabila Al-Anjari.

The conference will be organized by the Leaders Group Company For Consultancy and Development in collaboration with the information ministry's tourism sector, the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as local, regional and international partners.

## KUWAIT SPARED THE WORST, THANKS TO THE CENTRAL BANK

**KUWAIT:** Drastic fall of crude oil prices has brought to the surface enormous difficulties facing Kuwait economic and financial decision-making authorities. Not only so, the hardships have also revealed the efforts exerted to keep ripples of the international financial crisis at bay.

During recent times, when the oil prices were bullish hitting above the 100-point level, the national decision-making quarters and strategists were conducting studies and forecasting possible hazards. Much of the international praise for prudence and foresightedness has been heaped upon the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) - namely by World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and top rating agencies.

The CBK has won international quarters' confidence and acclamation for maintaining Kuwait financial stability, steadying the monetary policy, as well as the Kuwaiti dinar, the world's most valuable currency, trading at \$3.3.

Standard and Poor's rating agency, in a report issued on March 16, 2016, hinted that the CBK supervisory policy trimmed hazards facing the Kuwaiti banking sector, also noting amendments, introduced over the past years, on investment and banking regulations.

The CBK measures boosted the banks' ability to with-

stand negative repercussions of the sharp drop of oil prices. Standard and Poor's lowered rating for 10 regional banks, however it maintained a highly positive mark for the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK).

Meanwhile, Moody's Investors Service noted in a report on March 3rd that impact of Kuwait banking hazards on the State budget is very low noting that the Kuwaiti financial sector has trimmed debts since outbreak of the international financial crisis in 1988.

The Kuwaiti banks are well monitored by the CBK and Kuwait enjoys high credibility in terms of the financial policy, where inflation has dropped after peaking in 2008. Moreover, according to Moody's, the exchange rating in Kuwait is much more flexible than the financial operations in other GCC countries.

Fitch Rating said in a recent report that the CBK prudent policy has improved capitalization, liquidity and profitability in the Kuwaiti banking sector. The IMF echoed the same views in a report issued on December 2nd, also noting that the banking sector has proven it is capable of withstanding impact of the bearish oil prices. The international fund reported that irregular loans recorded in the Kuwaiti banking sector amounted to 2.6 percent of the overall loan portfolio, and allocations for covering the loans stood at 172 percent. —KUNA



The congregation at the National Evangelical Church.



KUWAIT: Pastor Gerald Golbeck accompanied by Pastor Nabil Atalla at the pulpit.



The traditional ritual 'salubong' held at the Holy Family Cathedral in Kuwait City.

# CHRISTIANS IN KUWAIT CELEBRATE EASTER SUNDAY

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** As Christians all over the world celebrated Easter yesterday, the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait also held its traditional sunrise service, this time with visiting pastor Gerald Golbeck. The new American pastor urged congregation to crucify their own personal interest, self-desire and leave them in the grave and rise up in victory. "Put to death what we all want; like the messiah, deny self and follow Him, nail all your personal interest, seal them in the grave and roll over with the

stone to locked them at the tomb," he told the congregation of more than a thousand attendees. The attendees were noticeably smaller than previous sunrise services in the past where late pastor Jerry Zandstra was yet a pastor. The pre and post war (invasion) pastor died in 2011.

Meanwhile, Golbeck was invited to see how he could help to win back worshipers. He said just leave everything to God, because He knows what our needs and wants in life. "You know, self-interest, causes partial hearing loss, and that is synonymous to partial death," He

said. The new pastor also recalled the time when Mary visited the grave and found the tomb empty. "Sir if you take the body away, please tell me where you put him so I will go and get him; but he did not realize that the person he was talking to was Jesus. She only recognized Him when he talked, only one word; Mary," he said.

"So He knows our name, and when he called Mary, who was at that time in deep sorrow so in second, her sorrows turned into joy, because God knows our names, and you know the joy when you are in deep sorrow and

names are called and when you will get unexpected call? He hears us even when we whisper and he hears us when we shout. If you are in the situation right now, just leave everything to God, call Him and He will hear you," he said. The service ended with the sharing of bags of breakfast complete with the traditional Easter eggs.

### 'Salubong'

In the Holy Family Cathedral in Kuwait City, the Filipino congregation also organized a traditional 'salubong' (encounter) to celebrate

Easter Sunday rituals. It is usually held every year to commemorate the first meeting or the encounter between Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ, and the resurrected Christ. It was attended by thousands of Filipinos and people from other nationalities, officiated by Filipino priest Reverend Father Ramon 'Monching' Atanacio. The ritual was followed by Sunday Easter Mass. "The encounter is not just a mere ritual, it is an activity to remember the suffering of Jesus Christ and the sorrow of a mother," said Atanacio in the ceremony leading to the official Mass.

## Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti youngsters participate in a cultural activity to celebrate Kuwait's heritage. — KUNA

## GCC CULTURAL COMMITTEE DISCUSSES MUTUAL TOPICS

**RIYADH:** The Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) General Cultural Committee discussed yesterday at its 43rd meeting some topics that interest mutual affairs of member states. On the sidelines of the meeting, Mohammad Abdel-Khalqi, a committee member and a senior at Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, said that the committee deals with a number of key cultural topics, including the program of enhancing the Gulf identity.

During the two-day meeting, conferees focus on steps and developments on regulations of the joint cultural action, in addition to executive procedures on organizing cultural activities and their plans for 2016/2017, he said. The meeting is expected also to discuss some other topics in this regard.

### Farm development

In other news, Saudi Minister of Agriculture Abdulrahman Al-Fadhli said that the agricultural sector is one of the key economic sectors that contribute to finding investment or productive

opportunities that enjoy GCC backing and stimulation. In a keynote speech at the 27th meeting of the Agricultural Cooperation Committee of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Saudi minister said the GCC member states are interested in the development and revamping of the agricultural sector. He wished that the meeting could come up with constructive recommendations to support and promote inter-GCC cooperation in the agricultural sector. Meanwhile, GCC Secretary General Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani said food security in the GCC enjoys attention of all the leaders of the GCC member states. Addressing the meeting, he emphasized that ensuring food security in the GCC is a fundamental element to the provision of secure, stable, prosperous and sustainable environment for the GCC citizens.

He added that the GCC Secretariat had conducted a draft study for water security in the GCC countries as part of ongoing efforts exerted by the GCC Agricultural Cooperation Committee to promote and develop agricultural, animal and fish resources. — KUNA



## DIVERS REMOVE WRECK FROM SOUQ SHARQ WATERS

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Dive Team of the Environmental Voluntary Foundation succeeded yesterday in the removal of three tons of shipwrecks, two tons of fishing nets and wastes from 'Niqaat Al-Shamlan' or Shamlan harbor close to Souq sharq.

The team was able to lift the sinking boats by using lifting belts and crane from the Kuwait Municipality as well as water suction pumps in order to remove them without damage, the team's marine operations' officer Waleed Al-Shatti said. These wrecks and waste from boats and fishing vessels affect the fish stocks in Kuwait and harm the marine environment, he said.

Shatti called on boat owners and fishermen to preserve the environment of the area, noting the ongoing efforts of Kuwait Municipality, Fishermen Union, Kuwait's Port Authority, Coastguard, EQUATE Petrochemical Company and volunteer divers. — KUNA



## INSTITUTE HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING RIGHTS DURING CONFLICTS

**KUWAIT:** Protecting human rights during armed conflicts is of paramount significance, Director of Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies (KIJS) Adel Abdullah Al-Essa said yesterday. In a speech at a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) course on international humanitarian law, Al-Essa said "the issue of human rights is of chief importance, at a time where the world is beset with rampant conflict and turmoil." Al-Essa noted that it is imperative, whilst in conflict, to choose certain modes of combat that would ensure the safety of civilians.

Moreover, Deputy Head of Operations of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Rania Mashlab said that Kuwait was amongst the first nations to contribute to humanitarian causes during the course of the last 50 years. Kuwait's humanitarian missions

have always aimed to assist victims of armed conflicts and civilians, who bear the brunt of the ill effects of war, Mashlab added.

She also underscored the importance of adhering to international laws, at a time where violations of these laws have become the norm rather than the exception, Mashlab noted. It is incumbent upon nations to disseminate the tenets of international laws, so that to ensure strict adherence to these laws, she said.

The session is a by-product of years of cooperation between KIJS and the ICRC, one that has yielded a number of fruitful programs and courses, Mashlab said. The five-day course, to feature participation of representatives of GCC nations, will tackle international humanitarian laws and ways to implement them. — KUNA

Legalese

NOTICE PERIOD, TERMINATION INDEMNITY AND TRANSFERS

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

Today I will be answering questions regarding the major concerns that I am receiving. I have discussed notice periods, termination indemnity and transfers on multiple occasions before and in more detail, but I still receive a lot of questions. So bear with me while I answer them.

But before I do so, before I lay out the law in front of you, I want to make one thing clear. No matter how many times I speak about these issues, you need to talk about them. You need to confront those that are not treating you right. I can always provide you with legal assistance and advice. The law is logical, it has no space for mistreatments. So I urge you to talk up to those that are mistreating you at the work field, peacefully of course.

Notice period

**Question: I have been working for a travel agency for two years, and now I want to leave. How many days' notice period do I have to give?**

**Fajer:** The answer to your question depends on a few factors. I can see that you work for a private company, so Kuwait's Labor Law number 6 for 2010 is applicable to your situation. With that said, the law differentiates between two different work contracts; definite and indefinite term.

For definite term, you can leave once your contract is over (make sure it is not automatically renewable).

As for indefinite term, if your contract does not state otherwise, the notice period is three months. I should also make clear that your notice should be in writing, either via email or on paper (no texts or whatsapp)!

Termination indemnity

**Question: is there an easy way of calculating my termination indemnity? Can you please explain how I can calculate it?**

**Fajer:** First of all, I would like to make it clear that it is not a lawyer's job to do the actual calculations. Even through the legal procedures, lawyers will not usually calculate. Instead, experts are called in to calculate the final amount (they are usually accountants).

With that said, the principle of the calculations is not that hard to master and I suggest that you calculate so you have a rough idea of your termination indemnity amount.

This will depend on whether you have been terminated or you have terminated the contract.

In the event where you are terminated:

\* Less than 5 years of employment = 15 days' pay of your salary.

\* Between 5 to 10 years of employment = 30 days' pay of your salary.

The total amount should not exceed an amount that is more than one year and a half of salary.

In the event where you have terminated your contract and it is an indefinite term contract:

\* 3-5 years of employment - half of the indemnity mentioned above.

\* 5-10 years of - two thirds of the indemnity mentioned above.

\* 10 plus years - you will be entitled to your entire indemnity.

Let me give an example. You ended your indefinite contract (with a three month notice period) and your salary is KD 450 a month. You have been working for seven years with this company. How much is your termination indemnity? I have answered this question by breaking it down to simple steps, as follows:

1. Break down your salary into daily pay. You have 26 working days per month. Therefore, you should divide 450 by 26. That will average to KD 17.310

2. Calculate your termination indemnity as if you were being terminated. That is 15 days' pay for the first 5 years and one month pay for the remaining 2 years.

15 x KD 17.310 x 5 = KD 1,298.10  
30 x KD 17.310 x 2 = KD 1,038.6  
Total = KD 2336.7

3. Calculate your termination indemnity according to the fact that you have terminated the contract. For 7 years, that is 2/3 of the total above.

Work transfer

**Question: I have been hearing in the news and from word of mouth that you cannot transfer anymore from one employer to another, and that the government is being strict because they do not want expats to live in Kuwait anymore. Is this true?**

**Fajer:** Well, it is true that the procedures and requirements for a work transfer are becoming more and more strict, but it is not just for expatriates, it is for nationals as well. I had to do a lot of paper work a few months ago at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor.

Now that does not mean that you cannot transfer according to the law. Only those coming in as government contractors or for work at the Free Trade Zone will have difficulty transferring. They will need signatures from both employers and the papers will need to be submitted in their own certain area at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. Also, transfers will be difficult for those who have worked for less than a year in Kuwait.

For any legal questions or queries, email ask@fajerthelawyer.com.



KUWAIT: A KFSF boat waits as a boat carrying a woman who entered labor while returning from a trip to Failaka arrives to Ras Al-Ardh.



A firefighter receives treatment after injuring his arm during the pregnant woman's rescue mission.



Firemen extinguish a fire at a Failaka island chalet.

WOMAN RESCUED AFTER ENTERING LABOR DURING BOAT CRUISE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A woman entered labor while she was in a boat in the middle of the sea as she was returning from Failaka island. The Kuwait Fire Services Department (KFSD) received a call about the incident, which happened as sea conditions were rough. Rescue men shortly arrived at the scene, but decided against transferring the woman from the boat as a safety precaution. Instead, they guided the boat to Ras Al-Ardh where paramedics were waiting to take the woman to the hospital. A fireman was injured when he fell in the boat and was taken to hospital.

No injuries in fires

Firemen evacuated a house in Salwa following a fire in a first floor apartment. KFSD received a call about the fire, and south Salmiya and Mishrif centers responded. The fire was put out and no injuries were reported. Meanwhile, fire-



Firefighters tackle a blaze at a house in Salwa.

men tackled a blaze in a Failaka island chalet. The fire was contained, put out and kept from spreading.

Suicide

Criminal evidence department person-

nel recovered the body of an Indian woman and sent it to the medical examiner for testing, in a case filed as suicide. A citizen had reported that his housemaid had committed suicide, so police were sent to the scene and found the woman hanging dead from a

rope tied to the ceiling of her room. Investigations are ongoing in the case.

Labor law violators

Residency affairs detectives arrested 22 Ghanaian nationals for violation of article 20 of the labor law. The suspects were arrested inside a Fahaheel restaurant following a report that they were holding an 'illegal party' there. A total of six men and 16 women, mostly domestic helpers, were arrested and sent to the proper authorities for further action.

Campaign

Kuwait Municipality's Public Relations Department said the Environment Affairs Department and Yarmouk Cleanliness Center participated in an awareness activity held in Yarmouk. The event took place as part of Kuwait Municipality's support of campaigns that are carried out by voluntary areas, government bodies and NGOs to protect Kuwait's environment.



The Palace of Justice

MAN SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR EX-WIFE STAB MURDER

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The criminal court yesterday sentenced a citizen to death for murdering his ex-wife in Salwa, said security sources. The man had stabbed the victim several times when she was inside her vehicle. He also caused hand injuries to his son while he was trying to stop him. The suspect had waited outside the house until the victim drove into the parking place and attacked her, according to investigations.

Medical error

A court yesterday sentenced a doctor and a nurse to six months in prison for negligence and committing medical errors that caused the death of a female citizen at a public hospital where they worked.

False news

The court of appeal yesterday acquitted a blogger who was accused by the state security department of posting false news about arresting a person and defusing a bomb in an oil facility.

Slander

The criminal court yesterday acquitted an Egyptian man who was charged with slandering His Highness the Amir. The ruling came after a mental assessment report indicated that the man was mentally unstable.

Sit-in

Local activists plan to stage a sit-in this afternoon in protest against the government's failure to establish housing projects at two blocks that the government repossessed in Khaitan last year. The two blocks have enough room to build 1,200 houses in addition to basic infrastructure, said Meshaan Al-Hajri, official spokesperson of a public campaign titled 'When Will We Get a House.' In other news, the South Metla' residents' committee recently met to discuss the latest developments concerning the area's infrastructure contracts and priorities for the near future. Separately, Head of Ahmadi committee at the Municipal Council Adel Allumai said that the committee agreed to adjust the Northern and Eastern expansions at Wafra houses.

PUBLIC WORKS MINISTRY TO BUILD BRIDGE IN ARABIAN GULF STREET

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Public Works will build a bridge linking Ta'awun and Balajat Streets with the major aim of addressing traffic, a ministry official said. The project, to cost KD 13.997 million (\$46 million), will reduce traffic congestion at the Bede' roundabout by building the 670-meter-long bridge over the roundabout and link Ta'awun and Balajat streets, Ahmad Al-Hassaan, Assistant Undersecretary for Road Engineering, said in a statement. He said the bridge will have four lanes in total in addition to safety lanes on both sides. Hassaan said the ministry was keen on maintaining safety of its projects. — KUNA

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**Taiwan's Nationalists elect their first female leader**

**POPE CRITICIZES 'REJECTION' OF MIGRANTS IN EASTER MESSAGE**



Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump

**TRUMP DETAILS FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS TO NYT**  
**'AMERICA FIRST'**

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump described his foreign policy as an "America first" approach that will stop the US from being systematically "ripped off," he said in a lengthy interview published Saturday.

The phone interview with the New York Times was the most in-depth discussion so far on foreign policy for the Republican frontrunner who has spent his entire career in business.

During the conversation, he detailed his views on issues ranging from East Asian security to Syria, the Islamic State group and relations with allies such as Saudi Arabia. Trump said he was not an isolationist, but described the United States as a poor debtor nation that disproportionately funds international alliances such as NATO and the United Nations.

Similarly lopsided relationships exist with allies such as Japan, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, he said. "We have been disrespected, mocked and ripped off for many many years by

people that were smarter, shrewder, tougher," he told the Times.

**His plan**

"So America first, yes, we will not be ripped off anymore. We're going to be friendly with everybody, but we're not going to be taken advantage of by anybody," he said. Asked if Japan should be allowed to have nuclear weapons to protect itself from North Korea, Trump suggested that would be an acceptable situation. "Would I rather have North Korea have them with Japan sitting there having them also? You may very well be better off if that's the case," he said. Trump also said he would withdraw US troops from Japan and South Korea unless the two Asian countries significantly increased their contributions to Washington for the military presence.

"We cannot afford to be losing vast amounts of billions of dollars on all of this," he said. He then slammed President Barack Obama's admin-

istration for seeking a political exit for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad while simultaneously fighting the Islamic State group as "madness and idiocy."

"I'm not saying Assad is a good man, 'cause he's not, but our far greater problem is not Assad, it's ISIS," he said. The real estate developer said he would instead target the oil that provides a significant portion of the extremist group's funding, cracking down on underground banking channels to cut off the flow of money.

Trump, who has repeatedly called for Middle Eastern allies to contribute boots on the ground in the fight against IS, said he would "probably" stop buying oil from countries like Saudi Arabia unless they did so or reimbursed the United States for its role in the fight. Trump added that he got most of his foreign policy information by reading various newspapers including the New York Times, which released a full transcript of the interview. —AFP

**OBAMA TELLS BELGIANS 'AMERICA HAS THEIR BACK'**

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama is offering his prayers for the families of the two Americans killed in the bombings in Brussels and telling Belgians that "America has their back" in the fight against terrorism. In his weekly radio and Internet address, Obama is renewing his vow to continue the campaign against the Islamic State, which took credit for the attacks. He says U.S. officials are working with allies to root out the group's operations in Europe. Obama says US officials have ramped up intelligence cooperation and that FBI agents are in Belgium assisting with the investigation into the bombings. The president says he and allies will review the US-led air campaign and special operations against IS when world leaders gather in Washington next week for a summit on nuclear security. —AP



ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE: President Barack Obama waves as he exits Air Force on Friday. —AP

**SANDERS CLAIMS MOMENTUM, EYES PARTY POWER BROKERS**

WASHINGTON: Fresh from Democratic presidential primary wins over the weekend in three US states, Bernie Sanders yesterday claimed political momentum he said could help him win the backing of Democratic power brokers in his race against Hillary Clinton. Sanders easily won nominating contests in Alaska, Washington and Hawaii on Saturday. His latest remarks reflect his plan to chip away at Clinton's commanding lead in the number of delegates needed to win the party's nomination. Interviewed yesterday by US broadcasters, Sanders said Democratic "super-delegates," who can change their allegiance, might rally behind him because some polls suggest he has a better chance than Clinton of beating a Republican candidate. "Momentum is with us. A lot of these super-delegates may rethink their position with Hillary Clinton," said Vermont Senator Sanders on CNN's State of the Union news program.

About 85 percent of the votes at the July 25-28

Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, where a party nominee will be chosen to face the Republicans in the Nov. 8 election, are being determined by state nominating contests.

The other 15 percent is held by party power brokers who are free to vote as they like, meaning they could hold the key in a tight contest. Super-delegates include party leaders and elected senators, members of the US Congress, and governors.

After Saturday's contests, the former secretary of state led Sanders by just under 300 pledged delegates in the race for the 2,382 needed to be nominated. Adding in the support of super-delegates, Clinton had 1,712 delegates to 1,004 for Sanders, according to a tally by RealClearPolitics.com. The US senator from Vermont needs to win up to two-thirds of the remaining delegates to catch Clinton, who will keep piling up delegates even when she loses under a Democratic Party system that awards them proportionally in all states. —Reuters



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## IRAQI CHRISTIANS FEAR EXTINCTION, SEE NO RELIEF FROM ISLAMIC STATE

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi Christians gathered in Baghdad this weekend to mark Easter but celebrations were tempered by fears Islamic State would eradicate their shrinking community, even as the army launched a US-backed offensive to retake Mosul, their ancestral homeland.

In mid-2014, Christians in Mosul were forced to flee when Islamic State seized the northern city and began destroying centuries-old religious sites, ending a presence that once numbered in the tens of thousands and dates back to Christianity's earliest years.

US-backed Iraqi forces launched an offensive against Islamic State last week touted as the beginning of a broader campaign to clear areas around Mosul, though progress has been slow. "We are threatened with extinction. This is a harsh word but every day we are being depleted. Our people are travelling, migrating," said Father Mueyessir al-Mukhalisi, a priest

at Saint George's Chaldean Church in east Baghdad.

Like millions of other Iraqis forced to leave home by the jihadist group's seizure of a third of the country, members of the Christian minority have moved from northern towns and villages to the capital or other cities, and many have joined the masses fleeing to Europe. Their numbers have fallen to a few hundred thousand from about 1.5 million before the US-led invasion in 2003.

Around 250 worshippers packed the pews for a Good Friday mass at the Catholic church fortified with concrete blast walls, concertina wire and armed policemen. Boys reenacted the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the congregation sang hymns alternating between Arabic and a variant of the ancient Aramaic language spoken by Jesus.

The church provides food and money to 45 families displaced from Mosul by

the ultra-hardline Sunni Muslim militants, who issued an ultimatum to Christians in 2014: pay a tax, convert to Islam, or die by the sword. The jihadists then stripped hundreds of Christian families of their possessions as they fled.

Huda Meti Saeed, 30, who attended weekend services with her husband and three young children, said her family left Mosul two years ago. An uncle living there was kidnapped and killed around the same time. "We cannot return. Our neighbours came and took our house. They wanted to take us hostage and take all our valuables," she said.

The family does not plan to emigrate but even if the militants are soon expelled, Saeed said she ruled out taking her family back to Mosul, the largest city in the north where Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, Christians and Yazidis once coexisted. "Very few people are thinking about returning to Mosul," she said.

### TURN THE OTHER CHEEK

Bishop Basilio Yaldo preached against retribution on Friday, telling worshippers that Jesus's message of forgiveness had never been more relevant than it is today in Iraq.

Some Christians fight with the security forces while others have taken up arms and formed militias to defend their lands against Islamic State on the plains of Nineveh near Mosul, but the cleric's message seemed to resonate with attendees.

"Since we were young, we were raised that there should be love and tolerance," Reem Paulis Saada, a 27-year-old church volunteer, said after the mass. "I will not seek revenge. What would I gain from revenge? It will come back to hurt me."

Saada, a pharmacist who devotes much of her free time to the church, added that although she was not hopeful about the future in Iraq, as one of the last members of her family still living in the

country she felt bound to stay.

Christianity in Iraq dates back to the first century, when it was said the Apostles Thomas and Thaddeus brought the Gospel to the fertile flood plains of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. The country is traditionally home to many different Eastern Rite churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, and their presence was once a sign of Iraq's ethnic and religious diversity. But now Christians say they are often denied freedom of expression in the predominantly Muslim country, and like many Iraqis, lack security, basic services and economic opportunity.

"The issue is: what comes after the liberation of Mosul?" said Mukhalisi, the priest, suggesting the Baghdad government needed to do more to protect Christians in areas under its control. "Thinking only about liberating Mosul does not provide relief to Christians." — Reuters



**MAKHMUR:** Iraqi families fleeing the violence in the northern city of Mosul arrive at the Kurdish checkpoint on Saturday. — AFP

## THOUSANDS OF IRAQIS FLEE FIGHTING SOUTH OF MOSUL

### 'IS WILL NOT ALLOW THE PEOPLE TO FLEE'

**MAKHMUR:** Thousands of desperate civilians were fleeing fighting yesterday on the new front opened by Iraqi forces against the Islamic State group south of the city of Mosul.

Families crammed in the back of pickup trucks, sometimes bringing dead and wounded with them, emerged from the dust after crossing the front line and were met by Kurdish forces. Iraqi army troops and allied paramilitary fighters on Thursday launched a major offensive aimed at retaking the northern Nineveh province, the capital of which, Mosul, is the

main hub of IS in Iraq. The forces have been advancing from their base in Makhmur towards the town of Qayyarah, about 60 kilometers south of Mosul.

Growing numbers of civilians have been fleeing the advance to Makhmur where they are being assisted by Kurdish peshmerga forces. "So far we have received around 3,000 people and the numbers are growing every day," Ali Khodeir Ahmed, a member of Nineveh's provincial council, told AFP in Makhmur. "But there are no services offered to them by the Iraqi government, we have to put them up in a stadium in

Makhmur," he said. The Iraqi government has described the advance as the first phase of what is expected to be a long and difficult operation to retake Mosul, the country's second city and the largest urban centre in IS's cross-border "caliphate". In the desert west of Makhmur, dust storms were whipped up by the line of vehicles fleeing IS-held territory, including a pickup carrying four women and 10 children in the back.

### 'Entire families have died'

A bearded man in a yellow dishdasha traditional gown emerged from the dust, holding the body of a young girl wrapped in a blanket. "She is dead, she is dead," he cried, his face caked in dust. His daughter, whose back was riddled with shrapnel when shells rained down on their escape, was covered in blood. "Some entire families have died," the father said.

The battle has so far focused on four villages west of Makhmur. Qayyarah, an area that includes a former air base and an oil facility, lies to the west, on the other bank of the Tigris River. Smain Nuweis fled the village of Kharbardan with his family of seven squeezed into the back of his Opel. "We have seen a lot of suffering," the 28-year-old said. "And it got worse now with the shelling." "IS will not allow the people to flee, they want them to stay," said Nuweis, using an Arabic name for IS.

The provincial council official urged the government to do more for the flow of displaced people, who were given little more than water upon reaching the peshmerga. "We need to open camps and provide urgent assistance. These people's situation is very bad, they were barely able to take any belongings with them," said Ali Khodeir Ahmed. More than 3.3 million people have been displaced by conflict in Iraq since the start of 2014, according to figures from the United Nations. — AFP



**MAKHMUR:** Relatives sit next to the body of a girl who died during clashes between Iraqi forces and Islamic State group jihadists on Saturday. — AFP

## NETANYAHU AT ODDS OVER PROBE OF SOLDIER IN HEBRON SHOOTING

**JERUSALEM:** An Israeli army murder inquiry into a soldier's killing of a supine and wounded Palestinian assailant, the first such legal proceedings in six months of street violence, triggered friction yesterday within Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet.

Video taken by Israel's B'Tselem human rights group showed the infantryman firing on Thursday into the head of a Palestinian as he lay on the ground, still moving, in Hebron in the occupied West Bank. Minutes earlier, the Palestinian had stabbed and wounded another soldier.

The soldier has been arrested on suspicion of murder, the military said, and could become the first member of the Israeli armed forces to be charged with murder since a wave of Palestinian attacks, often met with lethal response, erupted in October.

Education Minister Naftali Bennett, who heads the far-right Jewish Home party in the coalition government, cautioned against murder charges. Israeli media said Bennett sparred with Netanyahu over the issue at Sunday's cabinet meeting.

The Hebron incident brought to the boil a debate in Israel over whether excessive force has been used against Palestinian assailants. Palestinian leaders have accused the Israelis of routine extra-judicial killings - a charge that Israel denies. According to Army Radio, the soldier arrived on the scene after other troops determined the Palestinian no longer posed any danger, and twice told comrades he "deserves to die".

The infantryman's family said he had feared the Palestinian might set off a hidden bomb. Supporters circulated an online petition demanding that he be decorated for bravery. "I state here that this soldier is not a murderer, and that prosecution on a murder clause would be a total loss of con-

trol," Bennett told Israel Radio in remarks echoed by other ministers, including from Netanyahu's rightist Likud.

"Someone got confused between the bad guys and good guys... and I intend to ensure that the soldier has a just trial and not a show trial," Bennett said. Netanyahu, on Thursday, responded to the shooting with measured censure, saying the soldier's action "does not represent the values of the IDF (Israel Defense Forces)". He sounded even more circumspect on Sunday.

"IDF troops, our children, adhere to high moral standards as they bravely fight blood-thirsty murderers in tough operational circumstances," he told his cabinet in broadcast remarks. "I am certain that in any event, including the current incident, the inquiry takes all of the conditions into account."

The past six months has seen the worst period of sustained violence in the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Israeli interior since the second Palestinian uprising ended a decade ago. Palestinians have killed 28 Israelis and two US citizens in knife, car-ramping or gun assaults. At least 190 Palestinians, 129 of whom it says were assailants, have been killed by Israeli forces. Many others were shot during clashes and protests. Israel has stepped up training meant to keep troops' shooting accurate and restrained - including at nine hi-tech ranges where they respond with laser-firing rifles to simulated Palestinian attacks on an interactive screen.

"The first time the soldiers try it out, 30 percent fail - either by freezing up, or through improper shooting of bystanders or of terrorists who no longer pose a threat," Nadav Sheerit, who runs the Bagira Systems Ltd simulator at Camp Tsur infantry training base, told a visiting Reuters reporter. By the second try, the pass rate is 99 percent, he said. — Reuters



**HEBRON:** Relatives mourn next to the body of Ramzi al-Qasrawi, 21, a Palestinian man who was killed in a reported stabbing attack, during his funeral in the West Bank. — AFP

## CAIRO 'BOWS TO PRESSURE FROM ROME' OVER STUDENT DEATH PROBE

**ROME:** Egyptian detectives probing the murder of Italian student Giulio Regeni have agreed to extend the investigation after pressure from Rome, Italian interior minister Angelino Alfano said yesterday.

The Italian government vocally objected to Egypt's insistence on Thursday that they had identified a criminal gang linked to Regeni's murder, after killing four members and finding the student's passport in one of the suspect's apartments. Italian media and Western diplomatic sources in Cairo have voiced suspicions that Egyptian security services kidnapped and tortured to death the 28-year-old Cambridge University graduate student.

"It is important that in the face of our emphasis on the quest for truth, the Egyptians changed tack in a few hours and told us that their investigations are continuing," Alfano told the Corriere della Sera newspaper. "Our investigators should be directly involved, participating in questioning and evidence gathering... Our input is essential." I repeat to Giulio's parents and to the Italian public that the Italian government will get the name of the murderers."

Regeni disappeared in central Cairo on January 25. His body was found nine days later on the side of a motorway, badly mutilated and showing signs of torture. According to Italian government sources, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi promised the student's parents that Rome will continue to put pressure on Egypt to establish the facts of his death.

Quoted by Italian press, Regeni's parents previously said they were "injured and bitter" at the Egyptian authorities' latest attempt to explain their son's murder. — AFP

## WORRIES, JOKES AS TRIPOLI AWAITS NEW GOVERNMENT

**TRIPOLI:** Sitting outdoors at a quiet Tripoli cafe, Libyans wonder how a third government could possibly take up residence in a capital controlled by armed groups who reject it. "The mood is tense and people are tired," says Abu Ehab, sipping a cup of green tea. "Having three governments is causing great problems."

Tripoli's capital has been relatively calm since a militia alliance including Islamists seized it in mid-2014, but the expected arrival of a disputed UN-backed unity government has raised fears of renewed violence.

Both of Libya's rival authorities - the one in the capital and the other that in 2014 fled to the country's far east - have refused to cede power to the new government under prime minister-designate Fayez al-Sarraj. "If the (unity) government felt it had people's support here, it would come and things would get better," adds Abu Ehab, a 71-year-old biology professor. "But this will be difficult. We will have to be patient and pray."

Tripoli's unrecognised administration on Friday announced a "maximum state of emergency" after the

Tunisia-based presidential council headed by Sarraj said the government would soon start working in the capital. In a coastal city whose airport is controlled by forces loyal to a hostile local administration, some residents fear fighting will break out and have stocked up on

food in preparation. "No more than 10 cans of tuna per person," a sign in one shop reads.

### Giant fan and parachute

Others in the city can only imagine how Sarraj's government might enter the capital. Some say Sarraj



**TRIPOLI:** Libyans take part in a protest against the UN-backed unity government on Friday. — AFP

will arrive by helicopter and set up his government in the Palm City beach resort in the west of the city. Others picture him arriving by sea backed by international military forces.

Residents jokingly share the "news flash" that militias have set up a giant fan in the desert to create a sandstorm to prevent Sarraj's plane from landing. One caricature circulating on Twitter shows the prime minister-designate arriving in a UN-marked parachute.

UN special envoy Martin Kobler was on Wednesday prevented from travelling to Tripoli to work on installing the power-sharing administration. Libya has descended into chaos since the 2011 ouster of long-time dictator Moamer Kadhaafi, allowing jihadists including the Islamic State group to gain ground.

Western countries have agreed that military action is needed to remove IS from Europe's doorstep, but they want an installed unity government to request help before formally intervening.

### Disputed legitimacy

But Libya's rival parliaments have

failed to endorse the new government and observers question its legitimacy. The council headed by Sarraj earlier this month said it would start working on the back of a petition signed by a narrow majority of Libya's elected lawmakers.

In Tripoli, the prospect of a working unity government has at least raised hopes of a way out of a collapsing economy. Queues have formed in recent weeks from early morning outside Tripoli's cash-strapped banks and the cost of living has increased. Begging is increasingly common in the capital, much to the shock of its residents.

In one upper-class neighbourhood, Fathi hands money to a family who pulled up in a car outside his house asking for help. "How did we get here?" he asks. And even as the disputed unity government adds to the country's disarray, some Libyans have suggested a fourth alternative.

Around 100 protesters on Friday gathered in the capital's centre calling for a return to the monarchy that ruled the country before Kadhaafi seized power in 1969. "The Libyan monarchy unites us," reads one graffiti on the walls of the capital. — AFP





MEXICO CITY: Mexican's set fire to an effigy of US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump yesterday. —AFP

## TRUMP EFFIGY SET ABLAZE IN MEXICO EASTER RITUAL

MEXICO CITY: An effigy of US presidential contender Donald Trump—a hated figure for many in Mexico—was set ablaze late Saturday in a contemporary twist on a Holy Week ritual.

A smiling figure of the billionaire American businessman went up in flames during the Easter eve "Burning of Judas," a tradition in which Mexicans torch effigies of the devil—and of public figures they dislike.

In a neighborhood of the Mexican capital city, this year the devil took the form of Trump, who is notorious here for comments made during his presidential campaign accusing Mexican immigrants in the United States of being criminals and rapists.

About 200 people attended the event late Saturday, in which a six-foot (two-meter) papier-mache likeness of Trump wearing a blue suit, white shirt and red tie was torched. The figure was created by Felipe Linares, who has been making effigies for more than 50 years at a workshop founded by his father in the early 20th century.

This year he made likenesses of the devil, President Enrique Peña Nieto, Mexican goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa and Trump—all of which went up in flames. Linares told AFP the likeness of Trump was chosen "because we don't like him. He speaks ill of Mexicans."

He was referring to the real estate tycoon's remarks on the campaign trail describing Mexican migrants as criminals and rapists. The Holy Week tradition of burning effigies is believed to symbolically dispel evil, while torching the Judas figure exacts revenge for the death of Jesus.

Since making his remarks, Trump has become a figure of scorn in Mexico. Some have made pinatas resembling the Republican frontrunner, while one artist produced shirts decorated with his image along with a vulgarity.

An opinion poll this month found some 61 percent of Mexicans hold a negative opinion of Trump, who has vowed to force Mexico to pay for a huge wall across the US border to stop illegal migration. —AFP

## SOMALI PIRATES ON TRIAL IN FRANCE FOR HIJACKING

PARIS: Seven suspected Somali pirates are due in court in Paris on Tuesday over the hijacking of a French yacht that left the owner dead and his wife facing a hellish kidnapping ordeal. Christian and Evelyne Colombo had sold everything to make their dream voyage around the world. But around lunchtime on September 8, 2011, naval authorities received a distress signal from their "Tribal Kat" catamaran. They had left the port of Aden in Yemen five days earlier and were heading for Oman, a jour-

ney that took them through notoriously pirate-infested waters.

A German frigate found the boat several hours later. There were bullet holes in the deck and a pool of blood with a pair of glasses floating in it. No one was onboard. Two days later, a Spanish warship located the skiff suspected to belong to the pirates. They tried to approach but turned away when the attackers dragged Evelyne Colombo into view, a gun to her head. —AFP

# ATTACKING CRUZ'S WIFE COULD HURT TRUMP'S FEMALE VOTES

### RIVALS ENGAGE IN INCREASINGLY BITTER, PERSONAL BATTLE

OSHKOSH: Donald Trump's latest rude comments about Ted Cruz's wife are raising new alarms among Republicans about the party front-runner's ability to win over women, especially in a potential fall presidential match-up with Hillary Clinton. Trump is under fire for jobs at Heidi Cruz, as the rivals engage in an increasingly bitter, personal battle for the GOP presidential nomination. Hostilities reached a new high Friday when Cruz accused Trump and "his henchmen" of stoking false rumors that he'd cheated on his wife. "We don't want a president who traffics in sleaze and slime," the Texas senator told reporters in Wisconsin. "We don't want a president who seems to have a real issue with strong women." Trump's history of sexist comments, from his "Apprentice" television program to racy interviews with radio host Howard Stern, have long been seen by Republicans as a potential vulnerability, especially in a general election match-up with Clinton, who would be the country's first female president. The issue took off in the first GOP debate when Fox News' Megyn Kelly asked Trump about calling women "fat pig," "dog" and other names. Her question sparked a continuing quarrel between Trump and the network.

#### Multiple backlashes

Trump also faced a backlash after he was quoted in a "Rolling Stone" profile insulting businesswoman Carly Fiorina, who endorsed Cruz after she dropped out of the 2016 Republican race. "Look at that face!" Trump was quoted saying. "Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president?!"

The issue reignited Wednesday after an anti-Trump super PAC released an ad featuring a risqué photo of his wife, Melania, a former model, taken in a GQ photo shoot. "Meet Melania Trump. Your Next First Lady. Or, you could support Ted Cruz on Tuesday," it read. Trump responded by falsely accusing Cruz of running the ad and warning, "Be careful, Lyin' Ted, or I will spill the beans on your wife!" Cruz's wife is a former Goldman Sachs investment manager and White House aide, who served as economic policy adviser to President George W. Bush.

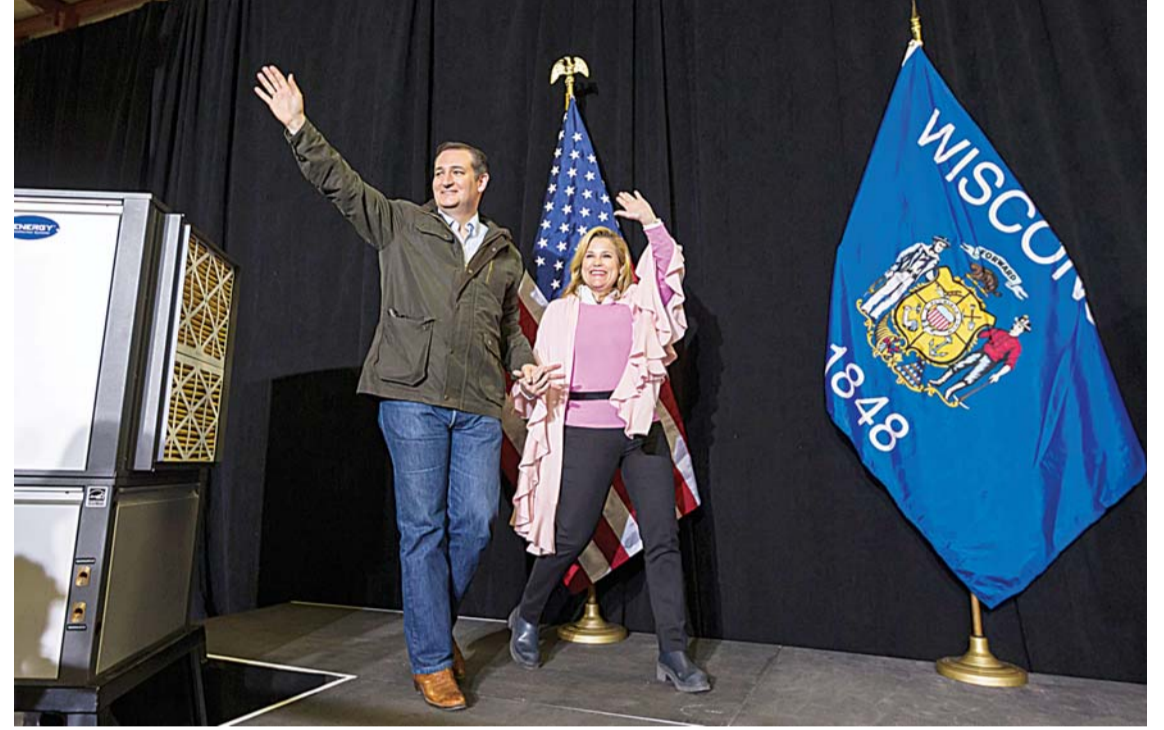
On Wednesday night, Trump escalated things when he re-tweeted side-by-side images of Cruz's wife, with an

unflattering grimace, and Melania in a gauzy, glamorous pose. "No need to 'spill the beans'" read the caption. "The images are worth a thousand words." At an event Thursday in Wisconsin, Cruz responded by calling Trump "a sniveling coward" who has a problem with women - particularly "strong women." Cruz continued to dig in Friday, painting Trump's comments as part of a larger pattern of misogyny. "He's directed these attacks at Megyn Kelly. He's directed these attacks at Carly Fiorina. He's directed these attacks at Columba Bush, Jeb

said Republican pollster David Winston. "The potential for that to be bigger now looms on the horizon."

Katie Packer, a former top aide to 2012 GOP nominee Mitt Romney, and the founder of the anti-Trump Our Principles PAC, said all this spells trouble for the general election. Packer, whose group was behind a recent ad that features women of various ages reading comments Trump has made about women, said Clinton remains vulnerable among many women. However, she said, "If he loses women by 10 points

pendent voters like her to Clinton. Cruz, meanwhile, worked to send a distinctly different signal Friday on a campaign trip ahead of Wisconsin's April 5 primary. At an Oshkosh manufacturing plant, Cruz was introduced by his wife, who praised him as her "best friend and partner." After the introduction, he gave her a long hug as the audience cheered. "In the last few days, Donald Trump has taken to attacking Heidi," Cruz told the group, sparking boos that echoed through the warehouse. "I'll tell you something," Cruz said. "I think Heidi is the most beautiful, brilliant,



DANE: Republican presidential candidate, Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas and wife Heidi walk on stage before the candidate spoke at a campaign stop. —AP

Bush's wife," he said. Though Trump continues to outdistance Cruz in the delegates that will decide the GOP nomination, recent polls have shown the billionaire's favorability on the decline, particularly among women.

#### Negative opinion

In a recent NBC/Wall Street Journal poll, 70 percent of women had a negative opinion of Trump. Nearly three quarters of women overall, and 39 percent of Republican women, had an unfavorable view of him in a recent CNN poll. "He already had a gender gap prior to all this,

more than Mitt Romney, it's not a question of whether or not he loses, it's a matter of who does he sweep out with him."

Indeed, Trump's latest tweeting struck a sour chord with some female suburban voters considered the key to victory in battleground states such as Colorado. "He makes all kinds of derogatory statements against women, and I just don't like to hear that," said Ilse Lucas, 70, a retired teacher's aide who doesn't consider herself a Democrat or Republican. Shopping in a suburb west of Denver, Lucas said Trump's comments could drive inde-

amazing, fantastic, loving mom, an incredible wife and she's my best friend in the whole world and I love you with all of my heart." It was a message that, for some voters, couldn't cover up the nasty fight between the two candidates. "I don't know what to say except that I'm disappointed in both of them," said Jennifer Churchfield, a 52-year-old Republican from a suburb south of Denver. "The conversation needs to be about the economy, jobs, education, foreign policy. You know, things that matter. This is a non-debate," she added. "What are they doing?" —AP

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## AUSTRIAN MINISTER CALLS FOR TIGHTER BORDER CONTROLS FOR EU CITIZENS

**ZURICH:** Austria's interior minister has called for tougher measures to protect the European Union's borders from returning jihadi fighters, Austrian newspaper Oesterreich reported yesterday.

"We know that more than 5,000 people traveled to Syria and Iraq to be trained or even to fight," Interior Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner told the paper. "So it's more pressing than ever that EU citizens be systematically controlled at the

outside borders in the future," she said.

Disagreement over immigration and border protection has divided the European bloc as suicide bombings in Brussels on Tuesday and attacks in Paris last November have heightened security concerns amidst a wave of incoming refugees.

Austria - the last stop before Germany, the top destination for migrants fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and

beyond - has come under fire for its tough immigration stance. Vienna has said it will introduce tougher checks at its border with Italy and has urged the EU to send soldiers to Greece to police the bloc's frontiers.

In a separate interview with Austrian newspaper Oesterreichische Nachrichten yesterday Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann said German Chancellor Angela Merkel's policy of

upholding Germany as an asylum magnet was unfair on Austria. He urged the German chancellor to speak out against migrants trying to break through various borders to access the country.

"Merkel's policy can cause damage to Austria. We don't want to be Germany's buffer zone," Faymann said. On Saturday, members of Merkel's conservatives said Europe urgently needed to improve the way its security agencies share informa-

tion, stoking a debate on how to tighten security while safeguarding data protection.

"Faster communication is important so that tips about possible attacks can be quickly assessed and terrorist acts can be prevented if possible before they take place or cleared up in a more focused way," Germany's EU Commissioner Guenther Oettinger told the daily Bild.—Reuters

## BELGIAN MINISTER SAYS NEGLECT HAMPERED ANTI-TERROR FIGHT

**BRUSSELS:** Belgium's government sought to contain criticism of its handling of the Brussels attacks yesterday but acknowledged that neglect over decades had caused deficiencies that have hampered an effective response to violent extremism.

Interior Minister Jan Jambon said the government has invested 600 million euros (\$670 million) into police and security services over the past two years but said its antiquated justice system and security services were still lagging behind. Jambon, whose offer to resign on Thursday was declined by the prime minister, said errors were made prior to the March 22 suicide bombing attacks in Brussels that killed at least 31 people and wounded 270 others.

But, speaking on the VRT network, Jambon said hiring anti-terror specialists and specialized equipment does not happen in weeks or months and insisted that new investments need time before they become visible to the public.

As international pressure on Belgium mounted for serving as an unwitting rear-base for extremist fighters who launched the Nov. 13 massacres that left 130 dead in Paris, the government has been forced to defend its choices and the actions of investigators. Lawmakers, meanwhile, are demanding an inquiry.

Belgian police and the army have been deployed, sometimes around the clock, at major buildings and sites in the capital in increasing numbers since November, when Brussels went into lockdown over fears that top Paris suspect Salah Abdeslam had returned and was hiding there.

As it turned out, Abdeslam did return, but police did not find and arrest him until March 18, four days before suspects from his network exploded suicide bombs in Brussels.

Belgian investigators have been slammed for not questioning Abdeslam long enough or hard enough after he was shot in the leg during his arrest. Police have

also been criticized for taking too long to get to Zaventem airport on Tuesday morning after two suicide bombers blew themselves up there - and left an even bigger third suitcase full of explosives.



**BRUSSELS:** People react as they gather at a memorial site at the Place de la Bourse on Saturday. —AP

"There have been errors," Jambon said yesterday, when questioned by VRT television about his offer to resign. Jambon and Justice Minister Keen Goens were grilled by lawmakers Friday over how authorities failed to

arrest suicide bomber Ibrahim El Bakraoui before he blew himself in the packed departure hall at Brussels Airport.

Turkey has said that Bakraoui - whose brother Khalid was the sui-

ties said they did not know he was suspected of terror-related activities until after he was deported to the Netherlands.

Jambon also said the Brussels subway network had been told to shut off services 20 minutes before the attack in the city's Maelbeek subway station - close to European Union headquarters and the U.S. embassy. He did not fully explain why it was not closed in time, raising more questions about the efficiency of Belgium's security services.

"It serves no purpose looking for polemics, considering the circumstances," Jambon said. Yesterday, Italian police in the southern city of Salerno said they had arrested an Algerian wanted in Belgium for an alleged false ID crime ring facilitating illegal migration linked to the attacks in Paris.

In the center of Brussels, a "march against fear" planned for yesterday was cancelled after Jambon asked people to stay away since police were too stretched to provide security and were needed for the ongoing investigations into the Brussels attacks.

At the Maelbeek subway station, messages of sadness, solidarity and grief left for victims of the bomb attack there were being collected for storage in the Belgian capital's archives. The messages were being laid out yesterday on absorbent paper to dry after overnight rain and carefully stacked for transport. Those that can't be taken for safekeeping were being photographed.

"We are trying to collect as many documents we can find and they will be preserved," promised head archivist Frederic Boquet. Marina Queralt, who often walks with her dog by the Maelbeek station, said the public response to the attacks has been spontaneous and focused on peace. "Every morning, every afternoon, (the site) was packed with people who wanted just one thing: that people stop killing each other," she said. —AP



**DUBLIN:** Thousands of soldiers march solemnly through the streets yesterday. —AP

## IRELAND RECALLS FATEFUL EASTER RISING AGAINST BRITISH RULE

**DUBLIN:** Thousands of soldiers marched solemnly yesterday through the crowded streets of Dublin to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Ireland's Easter Rising against Britain, a fateful rebellion that reduced parts of the capital to ruins and inspired the country's eventual independence.

The Easter parade through Dublin featured military ceremonies at key buildings seized in Easter 1916, when about 1,200 rebels sought to fuel a popular revolt against Ireland's place in the United Kingdom.

The planned five-hour procession paused at noon outside the colonnaded General Post Office on O'Connell Street, the rebel headquarters a century ago, where commander Padraig Pearse formally launched the revolt by proclaiming to bemused Dubliners the creation of a "provisional" Republic of Ireland.

A soldier in today's Irish Defence Forces, Capt. Peter Kelleher, stood in front of the restored post office yesterday to read the full, florid text of Pearse's 1916 proclamation.

"In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom," Kelleher said to an audience that included Ireland's leaders and scores of grandchildren of the rebels.

Many donned their ancestors' Easter Rising bronze service medals, which Ireland issued in 1941 on the rebellion's 25th anniversary.

British forces, among them many Irishmen focused on fighting Germany in World War I, were caught off guard by the seizure of largely unguarded buildings in 1916. Most officers were attending horse races in the Irish countryside. But Britain quickly deployed army reinforcements who were cheered by some locals as they marched into Dublin. Artillery based at Trinity College and a gunboat on the River Liffey which bisects the city shelled the post office and other rebel strongholds, forcing their surrender within six days.

The fighting left nearly 500 dead, most of them civilians caught in the crossfire or shot - by both sides - as suspected looters. Some 126 British soldiers, 82 rebels and 17 police were slain.

Many Dubliners opposed the insurrection as an act of treason in time of war, but public sentiment swiftly swung in the rebels' favor once a newly arrived British Army commander decided to execute Pearse and 14 other rebel leaders by firing squad in Dublin's Kilmainham Jail. A 16th figure, Roger Casement, who days before the Easter Rising was caught trying to smuggle German weapons by sea to Ireland, was hanged in London. —AP

## MIGRANTS RUSH TO GREEK CAMP ON RUMORS BORDER WILL OPEN

**IDOMENI:** Hundreds of hopeful refugees flooded back to Greece's overwhelmed Idomeni camp on the border with Macedonia yesterday following rumors that the closed frontier would be forced open.

The renewed influx came as Greek authorities were trying to evacuate an estimated 11,500 people who were stranded at the squalid camp after Balkan states slammed shut

movement is everybody's right." The wave of new arrivals appeared to be triggered by a rumor that international journalists and Red Cross officials would help them force their way across the fence into Macedonia, a young Syrian refugee told the Athens News Agency.

"We heard today that the border will open and we came here to cross," he said. "They told us the Red Cross and 500 journalists from all

the fields towards the Idomeni crossing, an AFP reporter said.

## 'Creating false hope'

"We are trying to step up our information campaign to the refugees. Some people, for reasons we don't understand, are creating false hope," said Giorgos Kyritsis, spokesman of the SOMP agency which is coordinating Athens' response to the refugee crisis.

Using loudspeakers, Greek officials told those gathering that the crossing would remain closed, repeating the message in both Arabic and Farsi, the Athens News Agency said.

Two weeks ago, hundreds of people were stopped by Macedonian troops after crossing a surging river on the border. Bypassing the regular crossing, they tried to wade through the swift-flowing water, clinging to a rope strung between the banks in order to cross the frontier.

Three Afghan migrants, including a pregnant woman, drowned. The rest were stopped by Macedonian troops and sent back to Greece, along with journalists travelling with them.

"Macedonia will not allow (the) reopening of the Balkan route," said Ivica Bocovski, a representative of President Gorge Ivanov in the wake of the incident.

The bottleneck has left a total of around 50,000 refugees and migrants stranded across Greece, which has stepped efforts to evacuate Idomeni.

On Friday and Saturday, 11 buses transported around 600 refugees from Idomeni to other camps in northern Greece. Those persuaded to board the first buses were mainly parents with children who can no longer tolerate the difficult conditions there.

But others are holding out at Idomeni. "People who have no hope or no money, maybe they will go," said 40-year-old Iraqi Fatema Ahmed, who has a 13-year-old son in Germany and three daughters with her in the camp. "But I have hope, maybe something better will happen tomorrow," she added. —AFP



**IDOMENI:** Migrants protest in front of anti-riot police at the Greek-Macedonian border yesterday. —AFP

their borders, cutting off the migrant route to the European Union.

By late morning, around 250 people of all ages had gathered by the railway tracks and the border fence, singing and shouting slogans, an AFP correspondent said, in a largely peaceful demonstration watched by around 50 Greek policemen in riot gear.

"No violence, we just want to cross," read one banner, while another said: "Freedom of

over the world will be with us," he said, without specifying the source.

Another young Syrian refugee said his sister, who is living in Germany, read the same claim on the Internet and alerted him. "People have been here for a long time. I think it's very dangerous to cross, especially for the children but what should we do?" 24-year-old Qasim Mosawy from Afghanistan told AFP. Dozens of other migrants could be seen heading through



**VATICAN CITY:** This handout picture released by the Vatican press office shows Pope Francis addressing the crowd from the central loggia of St. Peter's basilica during the "Urbi et Orbi" blessing for Rome and the world following the Easter Sunday mass yesterday at St. Peter's square. —AFP

## POPE CRITICIZES 'REJECTION' OF MIGRANTS IN EASTER MESSAGE

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis yesterday spoke out against the "rejection" of migrants and refugees during his Easter message as Europe struggles with its biggest migration crisis since World War II.

"The Easter message of the risen Christ... invites us not to forget those men and women seeking a better future, an ever more numerous throng of migrants and refugees... fleeing from war, hunger, poverty and social injustice. "All too often, these brothers and sisters of ours meet along the way with death or,

in any event, rejection by those who could offer them welcome and assistance."

The pontiff referred to Syria's "lengthy conflict, with its sad wake of destruction, death, contempt for humanitarian law", stressing his hope for peace talks set to resume next month between the government and opposition forces. "Good will and the cooperation of all will bear fruit in peace and initiate the building of a fraternal society," he said to the crowds gathered below the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica. —AFP

## AGENCIES HUNTING EIGHT LINKED TO BRUSSELS AND PARIS ATTACKS

**BERLIN:** Europe's security agencies are hunting for at least eight suspects believed to have assisted with the Islamist attacks in Paris and Brussels, Die Welt am Sonntag newspaper reported.

Citing security sources, the paper said the suspects, most of whom are French and Belgian citizens, are believed to be either in Syria or on the run in Europe. Die Welt said the suspects had been in contact with

Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the presumed ringleader of the Paris attacks who was killed by French police in a shootout on Nov. 18, and Salah Abdeslam, the prime surviving suspect of the Paris attacks who was captured in Brussels earlier this month.

Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) is involved in the manhunt, according to Die Welt. The BKA declined to comment. —Reuters

## PAKISTANI TEAM ARRIVES FOR AIR BASE ATTACK INVESTIGATION

**NEW DELHI:** A Pakistani team arrived in New Delhi yesterday to help investigate an attack on an Indian air force base that killed seven soldiers in January, a foreign ministry official said.

India has blamed Islamist militants from the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed for the assault on

Pathankot air base in the northern state of Punjab, which led to two days of gun battles. Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar told parliament earlier this month it could not have been carried out "without the (Pakistan) state's support".

It will be the first time Pakistan has taken part in a probe of this kind with

arch-rival India, an Indian foreign ministry source has said. India's Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj announced plans for the visit after meeting Pakistan's foreign affairs adviser Sartaj Aziz in Nepal earlier this month.

The foreign ministry official told AFP the five-member team had arrived from Pakistan and would start

work on Monday. The Hindu newspaper said they had been given 15-day visas.

Other local media reports said the team would be escorted by Indian investigators to the attack site and allowed to interview eyewitnesses. The rare targeting of an Indian military installation outside the disputed

region of Kashmir came days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surprise visit to Pakistan in December as a gesture of friendship.

The assault led to the postponement of planned peace talks. Modi urged his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif to take "firm and immediate action" over the raid. — AFP



**RAWALPINDI:** Supporters of executed Islamist Mumtaz Qadri retreat from smoke after tear gas shelling by authorities during an anti-government protest yesterday. — AFP

## PAKISTAN POLICE CLASH WITH AIDERS OF EXECUTED ISLAMIST ASSASSIN

'WILL NOT LET THESE FANATICS PREVAIL'

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistani police fired tear gas yesterday at thousands of stone-throwing supporters of an Islamist assassin, a month after he was hanged for killing a provincial governor for alleged blasphemy.

The execution of Mumtaz Qadri on February 29 was described by analysts as a "key moment" in Pakistan's long battle against religious extremism, but it has also exposed deep religious divisions in the conservative Muslim country of 200 million.

An estimated 25,000 supporters of the former police bodyguard gathered in Islamabad's twin city Rawalpindi in the afternoon to offer prayers, before turning toward the heavily-barricaded capital which was patrolled by hundreds of police and paramilitary soldiers.

Riot police carrying batons and shields fired tear gas to try to prevent them pushing closer to the city center. The protest has been almost entirely ignored by the Pakistani media, which has increasingly become subject to government-ordered news blackouts designed to prevent unrest from spiraling out of control.

Qadri was working as a bodyguard for Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer when he shot

him 29 times in 2011 over the governor's call to reform the blasphemy law, which critics say is frequently misused to oppress religious minorities.

On Saturday a group of angry men at a Pakistani airport assaulted a former pop star accused of insulting the Prophet Mohammed's youngest wife, in the latest case of vigilante violence linked to blasphemy.

Ex-singer Junaid Jamshed, who is now a prominent Sunni evangelist, was leaving Islamabad airport on Saturday night when he was set upon by a group of around six men who were waiting to attack him at the exit.

The incident was captured on mobile phone video and has been widely viewed. The men, some wearing Western clothes and others in traditional shalwar kameez, were seen throwing punches at the 51-year-old, who in addition to his preaching work runs a chain of high-end clothing boutiques.

"You have committed blasphemy, hit him, hit him!" shouted one of the men. "We were looking for you," said another. "He has disrespected the companions of Prophet Mohammed. He has blasphemed against the Prophet."

Jamshed was forced to flee back into the airport. In a later Facebook posting, he said it was time for the nation to decide if "will not let these religious fanatics prevail amongst us".

A local police official confirmed the incident and said the ex-singer had filed a complaint. Most Internet users condemned the violence on social media. "Get hold of the culprits and make an example of them. Enough of this madness in the name of love," wrote Facebook user Karami Elahi. Many pointed to the fact that police and security seemingly failed to intervene, despite the outbreak of violence at one of the country's busiest airports. A spokesman for the Airport Security Force was not available for comment despite repeated attempts.

A blasphemy case was brought against Jamshed by the Sunni Tehreek religious organization in December 2014, after a video of him appearing to make negative remarks about the Prophet Mohammed's youngest wife to make a broader point about women's inherent flaws was widely shared. He publicly apologized and sought forgiveness and the case did not proceed further. — AFP

## FOUR BANGLADESHIS SHOT DEAD IN LIBYA

**DHAKA:** Four Bangladeshis have been killed in gunfights between rival groups in the war-torn Libyan city of Benghazi, a minister said yesterday.

State minister for foreign affairs Shahriar Alam told AFP authorities did not yet have full details on the dead. Alam said embassy officials had received three bodies and they were being stored in a hospital in Libya. The fourth body had not yet been recovered.

"They died in clashes between two Libyan groups in Benghazi on Saturday," Alam said. An estimated 20,000 Bangladeshis are believed to be working in Libya even though Dhaka some six months ago banned the sending of work-

ers to the war-racked country.

Last year two Bangladeshi workers were abducted by suspected Islamic State militants from a southern Libya oil field. They were freed after more than two weeks. Libya has descended into chaos since the 2011 ousting of longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi, allowing jihadists including the Islamic State group to gain ground in the oil-rich country.

The country has had two rival administrations since mid-2014 when an armed alliance overran the capital, setting up its own authority. The government backed by the internationally recognized parliament fled east. — AFP

## MOB ATTACK FORMER PAKISTAN SINGER ACCUSED OF BLASPHEMY

**ISLAMABAD:** A video showing a group of angry men at a Pakistani airport assaulting a former pop star accused of insulting the Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) wife has gone viral, in the latest case of vigilante violence linked to blasphemy.

Junaid Jamshed, one of the pioneers of Pakistani pop in the 1980s, was leaving Islamabad airport on Saturday night when he was set upon by a group of around six men who were waiting to attack him at the exit.

The men, some wearing Western clothes while others are dressed in traditional shalwar kameez, are seen throwing punches at the 51-year-old, who is now a high-profile Muslim evangelist and also runs a chain of clothing boutiques. "You have committed blasphemy, hit him, hit him," shouts one of the men in the mobile phone footage.

"We were looking for you," says another. "He has disrespected the companions of Prophet Mohammed. He has blasphemed against the Prophet." Jamshed was forced to flee back into the airport, and later posted on Facebook: "Its about time v as a nation decide that v will not let these religious fanatics prevail amongst us. They will be exposed n brought to task."

A local police official in Rawalpindi confirmed the incident and said the ex-singer had filed a complaint. Most

Internet users condemned the violence on social media. "Get hold of the culprits and make an example of them. Enough of this madness in the name of love," wrote Facebook user Karami Elahi.

Many pointed to the fact that police and security seemingly failed to intervene, despite the outbreak of violence at one of the country's busiest airports. A spokesman for the Airport Security Force was not available for comment despite repeated attempts.

Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in the mainly Muslim country. The law is often invoked against minorities and the poor by those wishing to settle personal scores, according to rights group.

Jamshed's case is more unusual. A video of him appearing to make negative remarks about the Prophet Mohammed's youngest wife to make a broader point about women's inherent flaws was widely shared in late 2014, which led to a blasphemy case being brought against him.

He publicly apologized and sought forgiveness, and the case did not proceed further. Jamshed was once one of Pakistan's best loved pop singers, famous for hits such as "Dil Dil Pakistan". Now bearded and seen in traditional attire, he often appears on TV adverts to give products religious endorsements. — AFP

## AFGHAN OFFICIAL SAYS TALEBAN GUN DOWN PROVINCIAL JUDGE



**JALALABAD:** Taliban fighters hold their weapons before surrendering them to Afghan authorities yesterday. — AP

**KABUL:** An Afghan official says insurgents have killed the top judge on a provincial appeals court. Jawed Salangi, spokesman for the governor of the eastern Ghazni province, said yesterday that Mohammad Anwar was ambushed and shot while in neighboring Wardak province the day before.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the killing in an email sent to reporters. Insurgent attacks on Afghan security forces and officials have intensified across the country in the past year. Judicial officials have long been Taliban targets. Anwar's killing comes days after the nomination of a new attorney general, Farid Hamidi.

Hamidi is a former human rights commissioner whose appointment has to be approved by parliament. President Ashraf Ghani has struggled to fill key security posts, with ministers of defense and interior acting in their positions. — AP

## CHINESE WRITER LINKED TO PRESIDENT RESIGNATION LETTER FREED

**BEIJING:** A Chinese writer linked to the investigation of an online petition calling for the Chinese president's resignation has been released, his lawyer confirmed on Saturday.

Jia Jia, who was taken away by police on March 15 from a Beijing airport, on Friday night informed friends in a private social media group of his safety. His lawyer Yan Xin confirmed that Jia was free, had met his wife and - although he was staying in a hotel - could return home any time.

"Thank you, everyone," Jia posted in the social media. "I dare not forget your concerns." Jia, who has declined media interviews, apparently is part of a high-profile investigation into an anonymous letter that criticized President Xi Jinping's rule and called for him to step down. It briefly appeared on the government-controlled news site Watching.cn in early March. "We don't think Comrade Xi Jinping has the ability to lead the party and the country into the future. We don't think he's suitable to be the general secretary of the party," said the letter, which was signed by "Loyal Communist Party Members" and dated March 2016. It went to demand Xi's resignation, criticizing him for consolidating too much power and making wrong decisions that led to China's stock turmoil.

The president of Watching.cn, Li Wanhui, two top editors - including Editor-in-Chief Ouyang Hongliang - and two site technicians have been reported to be out of contact for days and believed to be under investigation. Nine other technicians working for a technology firm that provides support to the site also are reported missing.

China's State Internet Information Office referred inquiries about the letter and Watching.cn to the ruling Communist Party's propaganda committee for the western region of Xinjiang, which directly supervises the news site, but the propaganda office there claimed



**BEIJING:** In this 2005 photo released by Mo Shangshan, Chinese writer Jia Jia sits on a horse at a resort. — AP

no knowledge of the matter.

Li, the president of Watching.cn, also is the chief editor of ts.cn, the news site run by Xinjiang's propaganda office. Chinese overseas media, quoting inside sources, say the news site is falling apart, but its newsroom in a downtown Beijing office building appeared to be operating normally this week. Its journalists declined to speak to The Associated Press about their editors and the future of the site, which was launched last year to promote Xi's economic plan of "One Belt, One Road." The plan is aimed at increasing China's overseas investment and trade.

Wen Yunchao, a prominent overseas Chinese activist, said he had come under pressure from Chinese authorities to admit his connection to the letter. The New York-based critic said that authorities in his southern Chinese home county of Jiexi have been holding his elderly parents and a younger brother since Tuesday in an apparent act of coercion.

"But I cannot admit things that have nothing to do with me," Wen wrote on his Twitter account. Calls to the local police were unanswered on Saturday. On Friday, Amnesty International called on Chinese authorities to stop harassing dissidents' family members, saying such unlawful tactics made a mockery of China's claims to respect the rule of law.

Jia's friends believe the writer might have unwittingly implicated himself when he warned Ouyang, a close friend, about the publication of the letter. Yan said he hoped that Jia's release is proof that his client had nothing to do with the letter. For several days following Jia's disappearance, there was no word at all about the writer, adding to public anxiety about his whereabouts and raising questions over China's rule of law when authorities failed to account for Jia's situation in a timely manner. It was only five days later when Yan learned from airport police that Jia was taken away. — AP

## TAMPA OFFICER WOUNDED DURING SHOOTOUT EXPECTED TO SURVIVE

**TAMPA:** A police officer who was wounded during a shootout in a hotel parking lot in Florida is expected to survive. Tampa Police spokeswoman Andrea Davis said 53-year-old Jose Rodriguez likely owes his life to his bulletproof vest. The two suspects were both shot and killed. Rodriguez, who's been an officer for 13 years, was shot Saturday afternoon.

Officials received a 911 call from someone who saw two men fighting at a gas station. Police said Sunday that one of the suspects, 51-year-old Leroy King, was dead when officers arrived.

The other suspect, 46-year-old Patrick Matthew McManamon, fired at officers. They fired back. It wasn't known what started the initial altercation. — AP

## MAN RELEASED DUE TO FALSE IS ALARM

**VIENNA:** An Iraqi man hauled off an easy Jet flight in Vienna just before takeoff after a passenger thought he might be an Islamic extremist, has been released, officials said yesterday.

"There was nothing suspicious found and he has been allowed to continue his journey," interior ministry spokesman Karl-Heinz Grundboeck told AFP. "The only thing outstanding is a detailed analysis of his mobile phone," he said of the incident which took place on Saturday.

A woman sitting next to him on the London-bound plane had alerted cabin crew after seeing what she thought could be messages related to the extremist Islamic State (IS) group on his phone.

All passengers had to disembark while the Airbus and all bags were checked. It finally took off three hours later but without the man or the woman, who were questioned. The incident comes as Europe steps up security following Tuesday's bombings in Brussels, which killed 31 people and were claimed by IS. — AFP

## OPponents of Malaysian PM Step Up to Oust Him 'He No Longer Deserves to Be the PM'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Leaders from across Malaysia's political spectrum said yesterday they plan to present a petition to the country's Islamic royalty seeking the removal of scandal-plagued Prime Minister Najib Razak over a corruption crisis.

The highly unusual grouping of heavyweights from the ruling party, the opposition and civil society groups was formed in early March, when it issued a call to "save" Malaysia from disaster by removing Najib.

A succession of speakers pressed that demand during a rally attended by several hundred supporters yesterday, accusing Najib of using his office to thwart scrutiny of the graft allegations and avoid justice.

"(Najib's) leadership undermines the very existence of our institutions," said former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, around whom the movement has coalesced. "We want the rule of law and the actions of Najib has destroyed it. He no longer deserves to be the prime minister," he said at the gathering near the capital.

The 90-year-old Mahathir, who dominated

Malaysia as premier for 22 years before retiring in 2003, has for months spearheaded calls for Najib's removal. Najib, 62, is under pressure over allegations that billions of dollars were stolen from a state firm he founded, and over his own acceptance of a mysterious \$681 million payment from overseas. He denies accusations that the huge payment was siphoned off from the now-struggling state firm, 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), saying he is the victim of a political conspiracy.

### PM fuels anger

But Najib has fuelled anger and suspicion by curbing investigations, purging critics from the government and cracking down on media reporting on the subject. The outrage has been strong enough to unite formerly bitter political foes such as Mahathir and leaders of opposition parties in the push to remove Najib. There is as yet no indication that the movement will succeed. Najib has tightened his grip on the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the powerful

party that has dominated Malaysia since independence in 1957, and there have been no major UMNO defectors to the movement since it was launched.

Swiss authorities said recently up to \$4 billion may have been stolen from Malaysian state firms, mainly 1MDB, and that they were investigating possible fraud and money-laundering. American, British, Singaporean and Hong Kong authorities are also scrutinizing 1MDB-related money flows.

Najib at first denied receiving the \$681 million payment in 2013. But his government now says it was a gift from the Saudi royal family and most was given back. The Saudis have not confirmed that claim, however, and a Wall Street Journal investigative report in early March said the payment likely originated from 1MDB. Mahathir said the anti-Najib coalition had obtained 100,000 signatures for a petition demanding his removal. It would seek one million and then present the petition to a council of the Islamic sultans who serve as the ceremonial rulers of nine Malaysian states. — AFP



**SHAH ALAM:** Malaysia's former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (C) stands for the national anthem during a rally yesterday. — AFP



**HONG KONG:** Former Indonesian maid Erwiana Sulistyaningsih (C) speaks during an event yesterday. — AFP

## 'NOTHING HAS CHANGED' SAYS ABUSED HK MAID 'I STILL HEAR STORIES OF ABUSE'

**HONG KONG:** It is just over a year since Erwiana Sulistyaningsih's Hong Kong employer was jailed for horrific abuse of her maid in a case that made headlines around the world.

After pictures of Erwiana's extensive injuries went viral in 2014, the young Indonesian became the face of a movement determined to force change for the army of more than 300,000 migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong.

Although she never admitted her guilt, employer Law Wan-tung was jailed for six years, a triumph for quietly spoken Erwiana who was held up as a hero. Both she and migrant rights campaigners hoped the high-profile case would bring enough pressure on authorities in Hong Kong and Indonesia to improve conditions for migrant domestic workers, known locally as "helpers".

A year on, they say it has not. Visiting Hong Kong for the launch of a documentary about her case and the plight of other maids in the city, Erwiana broke down in tears in front of the audience of mostly Indonesian women, some of whom also wept, as she spoke of her ongoing frustration.

"I hear stories of abuse, cheating and exploitation by recruitment agencies, many different cases, and not just women," Erwiana, 25, told AFP in an interview. "We haven't seen any changes yet. There are still so many cases of migrants who never get justice." Most of Hong Kong's foreign domestic workers are from Indonesia and the Philippines.

Erwiana and fellow campaigners say workers' home countries and receiving countries must clamp down on the private recruitment agen-

cies that extract exorbitant fees from migrants, plunging them into debt before they even start their jobs.

Workers' passports are routinely kept by their agencies or employers, to stop them from running away. Abolition of the hated "live-in" rule in Hong Kong, which forces migrant domestic workers to live with their employers, making it almost impossible to escape abusive households, is another key demand.

Campaigners have argued these points repeatedly, even before Erwiana's case, but they have fallen on deaf ears with authorities. A report released earlier this month by Hong Kong's Justice Centre said one in six migrant domestic workers in the city—around 50,000 people—were in "forced labor".

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. "I feel sad. I remember my experiences. The cases keep coming and coming," says Erwiana.

### 'There is hope'

The new film launched Sunday, entitled "Erwiana: Justice For All", was shot by Hong Kong-based US filmmaker Gabriel Ordaz and will initially be screened at universities in the city.

Ordaz says he is taking the movie to film festivals in the hope of getting the message out internationally. The documentary recounts tales of women who have been pushed by poverty to leave their home countries in a bid to create a better life for their families.

It also revisits the horrors of Erwiana's experi-

ence, revealed during her trial—she was imprisoned, starved and when her body was so weak that she could no longer control her bodily functions she was forced to wear a diaper.

Erwiana is now studying economics and business back home and is working as a counselor and advisor to migrant workers. She says she finds it difficult to breathe through a still broken nose, her feet are scarred and she receives counseling.

She is no longer frightened of loud noises as she was in the immediate aftermath of the abuse, but says she has trouble focusing for more than 20 minutes. "My mind just goes blank," she says. It is speaking about her mother, who also worked as a domestic worker in Brunei, which brings her to tears at Sunday's screening.

"Every day I wished she could return so she could raise us, her own children... my mother, and millions of women and men, were forced to work overseas because of poverty and no decent jobs in our home countries," she told the audience. But despite her frustrations, Erwiana says there is still hope.

Hundreds of supporters gathered in Hong Kong's Victoria Park Sunday afternoon to chat with Erwiana in the sunshine. Since her case came to light, she says many migrant domestic workers have contacted her to discuss their own situations. Erwiana helps put them in touch with a network of NGOs in various countries. "They (the workers) feel that there is a way to help them," she told AFP. And while there are still many hurdles to overcome, Erwiana says campaigners must not give up. "If we don't take care of ourselves, no one will," she says. — AFP

## PHILIPPINE MOUNTAIN FIRE FORCES HUNDREDS TO FLEE

**MANILA:** A raging fire on the Philippines highest mountain forced hundreds of people to flee from the peak by foot, officials said yesterday.

Firefighters dug ditches that were seven-feet (two meters) deep in their battle to contain the blaze, which began Saturday afternoon and was ongoing 24 hours later, to stop it from spreading on the tourist hotspot of Mount Apo.

There were no reported injuries and nearly all of the 1,000 tourists who were on the mountain were evacuated by noon

Sunday, provincial disaster official Harry Camoro told AFP. Mount Apo towers over the main southern island of Mindanao, at 3,142 metres above sea level, and is home to forest reserves and the breeding ground for the Philippines' national bird, the endangered monkey-eating eagle.

It is common for searing summer temperatures to start fires on the mountain, Camoro said, however the cause of the blaze had not been determined. Air force helicopters were deployed on Sunday to survey the damage, he added. — AFP

## TAIWAN'S NATIONALISTS ELECT THEIR FIRST FEMALE LEADER

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan's China-friendly Nationalist Party has elected its first female leader after ousting her as its presidential candidate ahead of January elections that were won by pro-independence rivals.

The Kuomintang had ditched Hung Hsiu-chu as her abrasive style and strongly pro-China positions were seen as alienating voters. The veteran legislator and former teacher was elected as leader over three other candidates yesterday and likely faces a difficult time rebuilding the party after its January electoral defeat.

Hung takes over from Eric Chu, who was the party's eventual presidential candidate and who resigned as party chairman after the defeat. Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulated Hung from Beijing, saying he

hoped the two parties would continue to oppose "Taiwan independence," according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Beijing claims the self-governing island of Taiwan as its own, and relations between the two improved under the Nationalists, which governed Taiwan over the last eight years and promoted pro-China policies.

The independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party's candidate, Tsai Ing-wen, won the presidential election, and her party also gained a decisive parliamentary majority. Tsai, who will be inaugurated as president in May, has refused to meet Beijing's demand that she endorse its claim that Taiwan and the mainland are part of a single Chinese nation. — AP



**TAIPEI:** Then-Taiwan's ruling Nationalist Party presidential candidate Hung Hsiu-chu delivers a speech during a press conference on Oct. 6, 2015. — AP

## DEFENSE NO-SHOW DELAYS QATAR MURDER RETRIAL

**DOHA:** The retrial in a high-profile case of a Qatari man accused of killing a British teacher was adjourned yesterday after the defense lawyer failed to show up in court.

The case of Badr Hashim Khamis Abdallah Al-Jabar was adjourned until May 1 because of the legal no-show, despite the victim's mother flying 5,200 (3,200 miles) kilometres to attend the brief hearing. Jabar told the court that no defence team was present as "my lawyer was not informed about today's hearing". The judge then pushed the case back a further five weeks.

Jabar was initially sentenced to death two years ago after being convicted of stabbing and killing Lauren Patterson, 24, in October 2013 and burning her remains in a desert location. The victim was also sexually assaulted, according to evidence given in court. Last February, however, Qatar's

highest court, the Court of Cassation, threw out the conviction and sentence, ordering a retrial.

Jabar maintained he had accidentally stabbed Patterson after a row which she had started. Lauren's mother Alison told AFP she would attend the next hearing despite her disappointment yesterday. On her Facebook page, she described proceedings yesterday as "a joke". "Case deferred till the 1st May reason: the murderer turned up late spoke to judges saying he didn't realise he had to be here on this date and his legal counsel wasn't there," she posted online.

"Funnily enough I saw his lawyer in the corridor and this was confirmed by another party. Feeling upset, angry, frustrated yet again." She has raised more than \$37,000 (around 33,000 euros) through crowdfunding for her legal battle. — AFP

## NEW OPPOSITION PARTY LAUNCHED IN JAPAN AHEAD OF SUMMER ELECTION

**TOKYO:** Yesterday two Japanese opposition parties merged to form a new grouping intended to put pressure on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's conservative ruling party before the upper house election this summer.

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the main opposition party, and the smaller Japan Innovation Party merged to create the "Minshintō" party, which will have a total of 156 lawmakers in the upper and lower house.

It will still be far smaller than the coalition led by Abe's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which controls a majority of the

upper house and more than two-thirds of the lower house.

The new party's name in English will be the Democratic Party. The DPJ—a broad centre-left grouping—ousted the LDP after more than half a century of conservative dominance in a historic election landslide in 2009. But after coming to power it limped along under unpopular prime ministers and lost public support, with Abe's LDP regaining power in 2012.

"We must realize that this will be our last chance for a change in the regime," said Katsuya Okada, a former foreign minister who leads the new party — AFP



**TOKYO:** Katsuka Okada (C), leader of the main opposition Democratic Party, and the party's parliament members wave blue handkerchiefs during the party's inauguration ceremony yesterday. — AFP



**DUBAI:** Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the UAE Vice President and Ruler of Dubai presents an ancient ring discovered in UAE which inspired the new logo design for the Dubai Expo 2020, during an official ceremony in Dubai, United Arab Emirates yesterday. Reem Ebrahim Al-Hashimi, Emirati Minister of State and Managing Director for the Dubai World Expo 2020 Bid Committee stands at left. — AP

## WORKERS SUFFER IN SAUDI AS HARIRI FIRM FALTERS

**RIYADH:** He's had no salary for six months, he cannot pay his children's school fees and his permit to reside in Saudi Arabia has expired. But Robert still holds out hope that things might improve for him and thousands of other workers at Saudi Oger Ltd, the once-mighty construction giant led by Lebanon's billionaire former prime minister Saad Hariri.

Delayed receipts from a Saudi government whose oil revenues collapsed over the past two years have left employees of the company struggling to survive while they wait to be paid, Robert and other sources say. Other contractors are also affected, but sources say problems at the 38-year-old Saudi Oger go deeper than the kingdom's current economic strains.

"Already when I worked at Saudi Oger there were delays in salary payments to local employees," a former staffer told AFP. "It seems the situation got worse." Saudi Oger employs around 50,000 people of various nationalities, from managers to labourers, and Robert said the salaries of nearly all have been delayed. But at six months without a pay cheque, he is among the longest-suffering.

"I don't have money," he said. "It's hard." The veteran employee of Saudi Oger says he has "no choice" but to stay with the firm because he cannot find another job. Robert, whose name has been changed because he asked for anonymity, said the company promised in a letter that salaries will flow at the end of March.

"It's a desperate situation," a well-informed source said, describing expatriate families facing a similar plight to Robert's. "They can't pay for the tickets" to even fly home, the source said,

adding that many senior officers of Saudi Oger support families in Lebanon, meaning remittances to that country will be affected. He also noted the impact on Saudi Oger's lower-income workers. The informed source said poor management "is one of the main problems" at Saudi Oger, but this has been compounded by the economic challenges of a kingdom confronting a projected budget deficit of \$87 billion this year. France's embassy, concerned for the many French employees at the company, sent two letters to the firm, which responded with its promise to start paying the salaries.

"The thing is, do they have the funds to keep their promises?" the informed source asked. "The group's treasury has for a long time been badly run," said a Lebanese businessman who works in the kingdom.

He said the plight of the Hariri family company raises two questions: "Will Saudi local banks continue to finance Saudi Oger, and secondly, will the Hariri clan manage to enlist an investor willing to provide new investment?" The Hariris have been a political and economic force in Lebanon for decades.

Saad Hariri, whose political bloc is close to Saudi Arabia and the West, was catapulted into Lebanese politics 11 years ago after the assassination of his father Rafiq. Longstanding problems at Saudi Oger peaked as tensions escalated this year between Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia and its Shiite rival Iran, which back opposing sides in wars in Syria and Yemen. Tehran also supports Hezbollah, the Shiite militant group leading a powerful Lebanese political bloc in opposition to Hariri's faction. — AFP

## AL-JAZEERA TO CUT AROUND 500 JOBS

Continued from Page 1

The official told AFP that job losses could begin to be enforced within the next week, and most would be in non-editorial positions. Staff members were apparently told yesterday that Al-Jazeera English would be spared. One employee at the network, who did not wish to be named, told AFP that the job losses were expected but that had created "a lot of paranoia" among staff as they waited to be officially told. "We have been waiting for this announcement. Since the middle of January we were told next week, then next week, there was a lot of speculation."

Al-Jazeera media network broadcasts in several languages. It has around 80 bureaus worldwide and Al-Jazeera English reaches 270 million homes every day, says the broadcaster. Al-Jazeera Arabic is watched by 27 million viewers daily while its online channel "AJ+" has received some 1.2 billion views since launching last September.

The latest job losses come at a time when Qatar, a major gas and oil producer, has seen its revenues drop sharply as energy prices nosedived. Qatar has already forecast a budget deficit of more than \$12 billion in 2016, its first in fifteen years.

In addition, the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani warned last December of "wasteful spending, overstaffing and a lack of accountability" across Qatar. The current financial issues are probably the greatest the network has faced since it began broadcasting 20 years ago. Khaled Hroub, professor of Middle East politics and Arab media at Northwestern University in Qatar, said the broadcaster needed a "shake-up" but the cuts sent out a "bold message". "I think by this decision, Qatari officials attempt to deliver a bold message to everyone, including their own citizens, that a current policy of huge cuts and vigilant spending is very serious, due to the continuation decline in oil prices. "Applying these cuts even to Al-Jazeera, one of the most cherished institutions in the country, sends a warning that nobody and no institution could be spared." — AFP

## SYRIA FORCES DRIVE IS OUT OF PALMYRA

Continued from Page 1

Backed by a barrage of Russian air strikes, Syrian troops and allied militia launched a major offensive to retake Palmyra this month. The city is both a symbolic and strategic prize for Assad's forces, as it provides control of the surrounding desert extending all the way to the Iraqi border. At least 400 IS fighters were killed in the battle for the city, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. On the government side, 188 troops and militiamen were killed.

"That's the heaviest losses that IS has sustained in a single battle since its creation" in 2013, the director of the Britain-based monitoring group, Rami Abdel Rahman, told AFP. He said two cars packed with explosives blew up in the afternoon, one west of Palmyra and the other northeast of the city.

After seizing Palmyra last year, IS blew up two of the site's treasured temples, its triumphal arch and a dozen tower tombs, in a campaign of destruction that UNESCO described as a war crime.

The jihadists used Palmyra's ancient theatre as a venue for public executions and also murdered the city's 82-year-old former antiquities chief. A military source told AFP on Sunday that IS militants had retreated towards the east as the army made its final push.

Army sappers defused roadside mines in both the modern part of the city and in the old ruins.

Syrian state television broadcast footage from inside Palmyra's famed museum, showing jagged pieces of sculptures on the ground and blanketed in dust. IS, behind a string of attacks in the West including last week's Brussels bombings, is under growing pressure

from Syrian and Iraqi forces determined to retake bastions of its self-proclaimed "caliphate".

On Thursday, the Iraqi army announced the launch of an offensive to eventually recapture second city Mosul, held by the jihadists since June 2014. United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon told reporters in neighboring Jordan that he was "encouraged" by the recapture of Palmyra.

Russian forces, which intervened in support of long-time ally Assad last September, were heavily involved in the Palmyra offensive despite a major drawdown last week. Russian warplanes carried out 40 combat sorties around Palmyra in the last 24 hours, striking 117 "terrorist targets" and killing 80 IS fighters, Moscow's defence ministry said yesterday. Putin telephoned Assad to congratulate the Syrian leader, adding that "successes such as the liberation of Palmyra would be impossible without Russia's support," a Kremlin spokesman said. Assad said the victory was "fresh proof of the efficiency of the Syrian army and its allies in fighting terrorism".

IS and its jihadist rival, the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Nusra Front, are not party to a landmark ceasefire in Syria since February 27. The month-long truce has brought relative quiet to many areas across Syria, where more than 270,000 have been killed and millions had fled their homes in the last five years.

Palmyra, northeast of Damascus, drew some 150,000 tourists a year before Syria's civil war and is known to Syrians as the "Pearl of the Desert". Syrian officials, including antiquities chief Abdulkarim, have vowed to rebuild the ancient monuments. "Palmyra will return to the way it was," he said. — AFP

## UAE FINDS 38 GUILTY IN TERROR CASE

Continued from Page 1

The National said the group's leader, Khalid Abdulla Kalantar, had been a preacher at a mosque in Dubai who encouraged and promoted extremism. In recent

years, the UAE has clamped down on even nonviolent Islamist groups, sentencing dozens of opposition figures to prison. The UAE is part of the US-led coalition carrying out airstrikes against extremists from Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq. — AP

## 65 KILLED IN PAKISTAN BLAST

Continued from Page 1

"After ten minutes I went outside. There was human flesh on the walls of our house. People were crying, I could hear ambulances." He added: "It was overcrowded because of Easter, there were a lot of Christians there. It was so crowded I told my family not to go." Pakistan has been battling a homegrown Islamist insurgency since 2004, with groups such as the Pakistani Taliban routinely carrying out attacks as part of their struggle to overthrow the government.

But Lahore, Pakistan's cultural capital on the country's eastern border with India, has been relatively more peaceful in recent years. On social media Pakistanis were retweeting the call for blood donations, while Facebook activated its "Safety Check" for Lahore.

### Chaos in capital

Yesterday's blast came as the army was also deployed on the streets of the capital Islamabad after thousands of protesters clashed with police in chaotic scenes, throwing stones and setting a container on fire.

The demonstrators were supporters of Islamist assassin Mumtaz Qadri, who was hanged on February 29 for killing a Punjab governor over his call for blasphemy reform. Analysts called the execution a "key moment" in Pakistan's long battle against religious extremism. But it has also exposed deep religious divisions in the conservative Muslim country of 200 million.

Earlier yesterday an estimated 25,000 supporters of the former police bodyguard gathered in Islamabad's twin city Rawalpindi to offer prayers. They then turned toward the heavily-barricaded capital, which was patrolled by hundreds of police and paramilitary soldiers.

Riot police carrying batons and shields fired tear gas to try to prevent them pushing closer to the city centre. Some protesters set fire to a container while chanting slogans.

A military spokesman said late yesterday evening that the army had been deployed to secure the Red Zone around Parliament. Nationwide, overall levels of militant violence have fallen since the army began a major offensive against Taleban and Al-Qaeda strongholds in the country's northwest border areas in 2014.

Last year saw the lowest number of civilian and security forces casualties since 2007, the year the umbrella Pakistani Taleban group was formed. But militants are still able to carry out major attacks from time to time. At least 16 people were killed and more than two dozen wounded when a bomb blew up inside a bus in Peshawar, the main city of Pakistan's insurgency-wracked northwest on March 16.

And yesterday's blast in Lahore saw the highest number of casualties since a suicide bomber blew himself up, killing 55 people at the main Pakistan-India border crossing at Wagah in an attack claimed by the Jamat-ul-Ahrrar faction of the Taleban. — AFP

## ASSEMBLY PANEL REJECTS PROPOSAL TO RAISE...

Continued from Page 1

In another key issue, the National Assembly's legal and legislative affairs yesterday approved a request by the public prosecution to lift the parliamentary immunity on controversial Shiite MP Abdulhameed Dashti. The committee agreed to lift the immunity of the lawmaker on two accounts, one for criticizing Bahrain, a member of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the other for falsely accusing a foe in court.

The National Assembly will review the committee's recommendations and could approve or reject them. The Assembly has already lifted the immunity of Dashti on several occasions for the public prosecution

to be able to interrogate him on various counts, mainly for criticizing Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Last week, the public prosecutor issued a warrant to arrest Dashti, who is currently outside the country, to be interrogated for criticizing Saudi Arabia, the biggest GCC state. Dashti is believed to be in Syria currently as he was seen among a delegation of supporters for Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.

It is not immediately known whether or not Dashti will return to Kuwait where he is facing jail terms for several years on several charges, amid a debate on whether the National Assembly can expel him from the Assembly. Dashti's membership can be stripped if he fails to attend without a valid reason five consecutive Assembly sessions.

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## Issues

OBAMA SEES TIDE  
SHIFTING IN CUBA,  
BUT CAN IT LAST?

By Josh Lederman

For a few short days, President Barack Obama was America's man in Havana, his challenges to President Raul Castro stunning Cuban citizens who mused openly in the streets about the possibility of political change.

Obama's public call for a more democratic Cuban future marked a watershed moment in a country where questioning the government's authority is not tolerated. Decades of bitterness between leaders seemed to fade as Obama and Castro laughed it up at a baseball game. US businesses were flocking in droves, touting new approval to bring Americans and their dollars to Cuba.

As Obama's aides jubilantly boarded Air Force One, Castro showed up on the tarmac to see Obama off. The White House saw it as an affirmation that the visit was a success, even by Castro's admittedly different standards. Yet a key question remained unanswered after Obama departed the communist island: How much of it will last?

"We shouldn't kid ourselves that they're going to all of a sudden tolerate dissent," said Michael Posner, Obama's former assistant secretary of state for human rights and democracy. "This is a very ostracized regime. They've been in power a long time. They don't really have any instincts for reform. It's going to be a struggle." The first clues could come next month during the Communist Party Congress meeting in Havana, a forum for unveiling major changes. An announcement of greater political freedoms or reform-minded economic steps would suggest that Obama's strategy was starting to bear fruit.

Under the glare of global attention, Castro did little to publicly undermine Obama. After all, Obama enjoys immense popularity in Cuba. Images of a young black president strolling through Old Havana seemed to resonate with Cuba's racially diverse people, forming a powerful contrast with the aging Castro. In the days ahead, though, that public spotlight will dim, giving Castro an opening to return to business as usual should he so choose. Though he's taking modest steps to open up Cuba's economy and relax certain social restrictions, there are still no indications Castro plans to make any of the changes to Cuba's single-party system that Obama advocated.

"We will continue to speak out loudly on the things that we care about," Obama said near the end of his visit. Central to Obama's strategy is to raise the Cuban people's expectations, driving up pressure on Castro's government to accelerate the pace of change. Wary Cuban officials have picked up on the tactic, with some regarding Obama's entreaties as a post-Cold War attempt to coerce Cuba with diplomacy instead of the threat of force. Ahead of his trip, Obama's aides said a key goal was to make his rapprochement with Cuba irreversible. He left the island with plenty of indications that tipping point could be in sight.

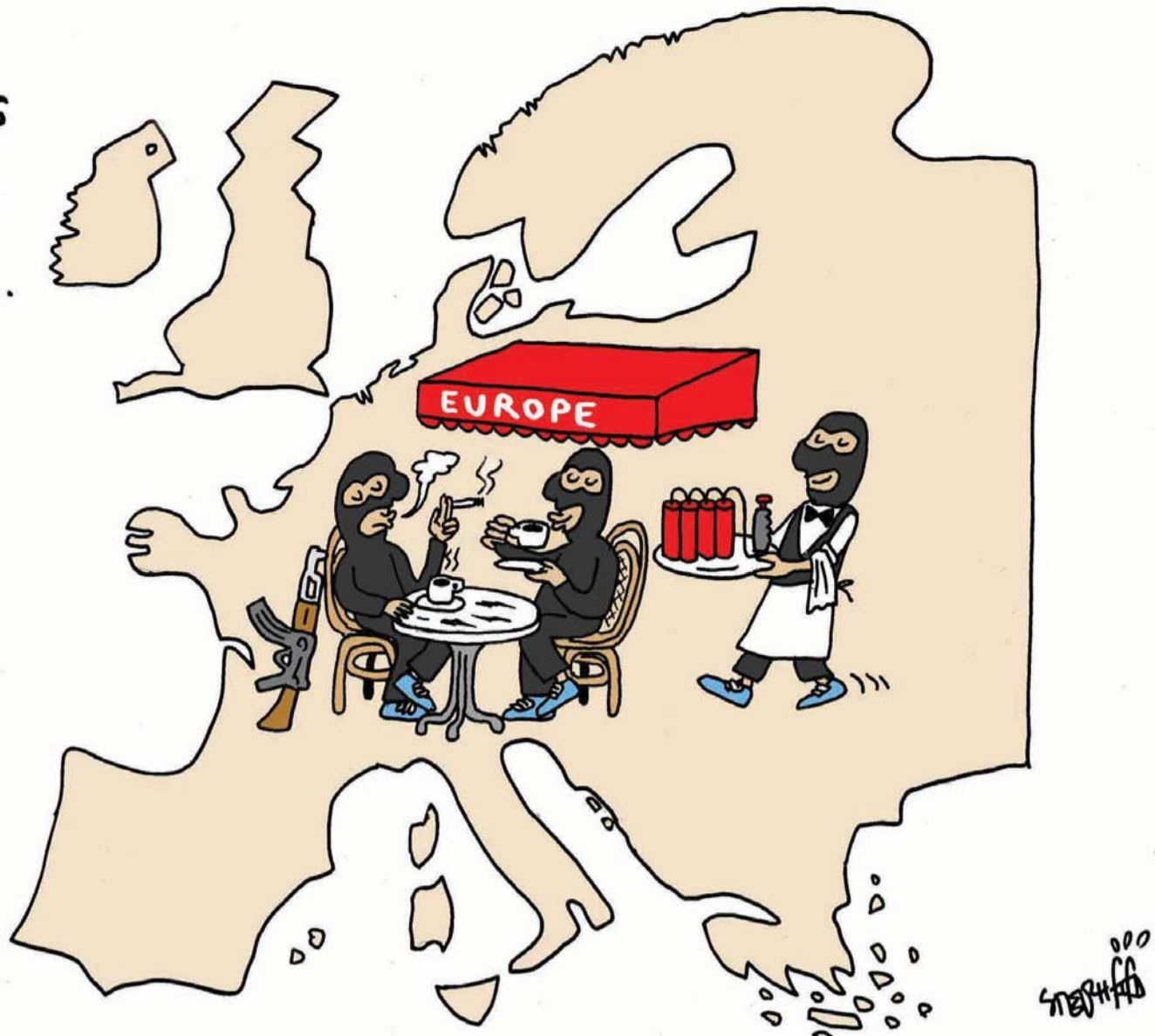
Soon, as many of 110 commercial flights between the US and Cuba will take off daily, bringing millions of Americans to the country and further exposing Cubans to the outside world. With Americans hungry for a taste of Havana, Obama is banking on the notion that it will be incredibly unpopular for the next president to tell them to cancel their vacations. Famed US hotel chains Starwood and Marriott are poised to take over hotels in Cuba after striking deals with Havana and getting permission from Washington, and Google is making a major play on the island as well. Brian Chesky, CEO of online lodging service Airbnb, told reporters in Havana that Cuba is his company's fastest-growing market.

"There comes a point where reversing it will seem like a very crazy idea," said former Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, a Republican who left Cuba as an exile at age six. "I think we're just about at that stage." Though Obama advanced his goal of normalizing US-Cuba relations, it wasn't without political risk. His visit was roundly derided by supporters of the US trade embargo, who accused Obama of rewarding a repressive government. It's an issue with resonance in the presidential race, where Republican candidate Ted Cruz, whose father is Cuban, is livid about Obama's policy while front-runner Donald Trump vows to negotiate a better deal.

"Today is a sad day in American history," Cruz said while Obama was in Havana. Both Democratic candidates, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, support Obama's approach.

Obama has also been unable to remove the key irritant for Cuban officials and citizens alike: The US embargo, which has squeezed Cuba's economy for generations. There are few signs Congress will accede anytime soon to Obama's calls for repealing the sanctions. —AP

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DAESH  
PLANNING  
MORE  
ATTACKS  
IN  
EUROPE...

## TERROR SUSPECT A STONE'S THROW FROM EU

By David Courbet and Claire Rosenberg

The sole person charged so far in Belgium's terror attacks, Faycal C, lived in a four-story townhouse on a quiet residential street a stone's throw from the EU's headquarters. Listed as an 'art nouveau' wonder by turn-of-the-19th-century Belgian architect Franz Tilley, it lies just a few hundred yards away from the huge European Commission buildings.

On a list of tenants by the door is scrawled the name "Faycal Cheffou", but no one answers the bell.

Until police showed up on Thursday to search the Cheffou flat, "it's always been calm around here," says a baker whose shop is a couple of doors away. "We'd never have imagined anything like this," she adds. It's all quiet otherwise "chez Cheffou" on this Easter Sunday. The neighbors are either out, on holidays or avoiding the press. A source close to the inquiry told AFP this weekend that Faycal Cheffou was the man charged with terrorist murder Saturday but named only as Faycal C. by the federal prosecutor. The source refused to comment however on whether he was the same man captured on video footage Tuesday in the company of the two airport suicide bombers, Ibrahim El Bakraoui and Najim Laachraoui.

So the question in everyone's mind is whether Faycal is or isn't "the man in the hat", glasses and light-coloured coat seen wheeling a trolley with a large black bag like the other two, but whose device did not go off. He is however the first and only person yet to face terrorist charges over the bloodiest attacks ever to strike the symbolic capital of Europe.

In the Brussels media world, Faycal Cheffou claimed to be a freelance journalist who took a special interest in refugees. But he was accused last year by Brussels Mayor Yves Mayeur of trying to recruit jihadists among asylum-seekers and migrants living at a refugee centre set up by local charities and NGOs at Maximilien

park near the northern rail station. Mayeur considered him to be "dangerous" and repeatedly tried without success to have him legally expelled from the centre. Finally in September the mayor issued a ban to keep him out of the park.

A YouTube video from 2014 shows him

are celebrating the holy Ramadan month of fasting but that the authorities are refusing to provide them with food after nightfall, which is the only time when they can eat. "After 10:00 pm these people find themselves with nothing to eat, completely forgotten by the rest of the world,"

with two others after their car was tailed by police, and "has been charged with taking part in a terrorist group, terrorist murder and attempted terrorist murder."

Police found no explosives or weapons at his home. The baker says she never met him but she thinks that the man in the



BRUSSELS: People gather to pay a tribute outside the stock exchange in Brussels yesterday which has become an unofficial shrine to victims of the March 22, terror attacks, was invaded by some 200 far-right football hooligans. —AFP

presenting himself as a freelance reporter concerned with the plight of hungry Muslim asylum-seekers at the Steenokkerzeel migrant centre.

His head shaved, wearing a slight beard and glasses, he says the refugees

he says on the video. "This is a lack of respect for human rights."

"I am concerned by the shouts and the noise I can hear as they are crying for help." Faycal was arrested late Thursday close to the federal prosecutor's office

middle of a picture the police showed her used to come regularly to the shop. Two of her customers who lived in the same building as the suspect told her he was "very nice" and that no one had any idea of what was going on. —AFP

## TERROR WAVE HITS FRAGILE TURKISH ECONOMY

By Clare Byrne

Six suicide attacks in eight months and a spat with Russia have added to concerns for the Turkish economy as tourists flee, taking billions of dollars in spending elsewhere, and foreign investors skirt the troubled country. Days after a suspected Islamic State jihadist blew himself up on a top shopping street in Istanbul, hotels, restaurants and retailers in the city are counting their losses.

Shops and restaurants on Istiklal Street, the usually bustling two-kilometre-long pedestrian artery targeted in the March 19 attack, complain of a sharp drop in business since the bombing, which killed four foreigners and injured dozens. The attack on Istiklal the beating heart of Turkey's biggest city-emphasised the security threat after three deadly suicide attacks in the capital Ankara.

While financial markets have so far reacted with relative sangfroid to the terror wave, analysts say the bloodshed is putting strain on Turkey which is already battling high inflation and mid-term economic uncertainty. "There could be large economic costs from these attacks, particularly in terms of long-investment and the tourism sector," William Jackson, senior emerging markets economist at Capital Economics in London, said.

## Tourism hit

Western tourist numbers have slowed since Turkey began to come under sustained attack from IS jihadists and Kurdish rebels last July. The industry's headaches worsened when Turkey shot down a Russian jet on its border with Syria in November, nearly eradicating the

key annual influx of Russian tourists.

Hikmet Eraslan, chairman of the upmarket Dossu Dossi hotel chain in Istanbul, told AFP he had been forced to halve room prices to try attract visitors. "We had to let people go to reduce costs. What else can you do? We have to live," Eraslan said.

The recently renovated Golden Age hotel, which lies just a few minutes walk from the scene of Saturday's blast, is also struggling to fill its 180 rooms, only half of which were occupied this week, mainly by Iranians celebrating New Year. "Our general manager just came back from (the International Tourism Trade Fair) in Berlin. He said no-one wanted to come to Turkey," an employee told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Inan Demir, an analyst at Turkey's Finansbank, said he expected tourism revenue to drop under 17 billion dollars in 2016, down from 21 billion in 2015 (3 percent of GDP), worsening Turkey's already gaping current account deficit and adding to unemployment of over 10 percent. Foreign arrivals in January were already down 20-percent year-on-year.

## Investor confidence shaken

Foreign investors, too, are likely to be "much warier about coming to Turkey, both physically and in terms of their portfolio allocations," Demir said, predicting "a significant adverse shock to the Turkish economy". Further tarnishing the image of the country of 78 million are concerns over the alleged authoritarian drift of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In dramatic scenes earlier this month, the authorities seized Zaman, an opposition newspaper linked to

Erdogan's arch-enemy the exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen while the military is battling the rebel Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in the southeast.

Capital Economics' Jackson said the crackdown was likely to further dent already declining levels of foreign investment. "When business and legal decisions appear to be politically motivated it is obviously very concerning for foreign investors because it creates uncertainty," he said. Yet the economy has also showed signs of resilience, with energy importer Turkey helped by the persistently low price of oil and gas.

Industrial production surprised to the upside with a 5.6 percent increase in January, while economic confidence rose in March after a three-month decline. But there are many pitfalls ahead and Finansbank's Demir said he believed investors would be closely watching who replaces Turkey's respect outgoing central bank governor Erdem Basci when his term expires next month.

Erdogan has repeatedly called for interest rates to be lowered, ignoring economists' calls for rates to be hiked to rein in inflation which stood at 8.8 percent in February. Amplifying the concerns of markets, the bank pruned a key interest rate by 25 basis points at its latest monetary policy meeting.

For Demir, the bank's failure to raise rates "is illustrative of the impact of politics on macro-economic policy making in Turkey". The choice of new governor would be a key test of the bank's independence, he said, warning that appointing someone who "plays to the tune of Erdogan's advisors" would likely "change investor sentiment for the worse." —AFP

## BRITISH BOXER IN COMA AFTER BRAIN INJURY



**LONDON:** British boxer Nick Blackwell has been placed in an induced coma after losing a domestic title fight. Saturday's British middleweight belt contest at London's Wembley Arena saw Blackwell stopped in the tenth round by Chris Eubank Jr, the son of former world champion Chris Eubank, after the ringside doctor ruled a closed left eye meant he could not continue. The 25-year-old Blackwell was subsequently carried out of the ring on a stretcher and was still in hospital, under observation, yesterday. British Boxing Board of Control general secretary Robert Smith said: "I spoke to one of the doctors yesterday morning and he said there is a bleeding of the brain. He's in intensive care, he's in an induced coma and he is resting and being looked after by the experts. It's a very normal procedure. They put you in a coma to get the swelling to go down. There's no time-scale. Now it's just a matter of waiting and seeing." World heavyweight champion Tyson Fury tweeted his best wishes to Blackwell on Saturday: "Will u all pray for @nickblackwell02 please ASAP as he has been taken to hospital, God be with him." —AFP

## COURT ORDERS EGYPT SOCCER BOARD CLOSE

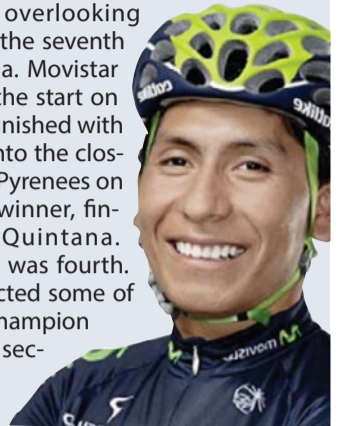
**CAIRO:** Egypt's top administrative court yesterday ordered that the board of Egyptian Football Federation be dissolved following allegations of rigging during the 2012 election of its members.

The judgement, which is final and can not be appealed, ordered Egypt's minister of youth and sports to dissolve the board. Two candidates who had participated in the October 11, 2012 election for the federation's board had filed a case alleging that the results were rigged at that time. Election for the federation's next board is scheduled for September 2016.

The same court also ordered on Sunday the dissolution of Cairo-based Al-Ahly club's board over similar reasons. In November, a lower court had ordered Al-Ahly's board be dissolved, but an appeal was filed against that order. Yesterday, the higher court upheld the earlier verdict. — AFP

## QUINTANA WINS TOUR OF CATALONIA

**BARCELONA:** Nairo Quintana of Colombia held on to his lead over Alberto Contador to win the Tour of Catalonia for the first time yesterday. Quintana successfully defended his seven-second advantage over the Spaniard in yesterday's final stage, an eight-lap ride through 136.4 kilometers (84.7 miles) up and down the Montjuic hill overlooking Barcelona. Russian rider Aleksei Tseitovich won the seventh stage in a sprint with Primož Roglič of Slovenia. Movistar rider Quintana stayed close to Contador from the start on Sunday and his lead was never in jeopardy. He finished with the same seven-second advantage he carried into the closing stage. Quintana took the overall lead in the Pyrenees on Thursday. Daniel Martin of Ireland, the 2013 winner, finished third overall - 17 seconds behind Quintana. Defending champion Richie Porte of Australia was fourth. The weeklong race in northeastern Spain attracted some of cycling's top riders, including Tour de France champion Chris Froome, who finished eighth overall, 46 seconds behind Quintana. — AP



# CRUSADERS, CHIEFS POST VICTORIES IN SUPER RUGBY

**WELLINGTON:** The Crusaders ended the Sharks' unbeaten record and the Chiefs overcame some serious travel-related obstacles to firm as favorites for a Super Rugby title after the weekend's fifth round of matches.

The manner of their victories was starkly different: the Christchurch-based Crusaders needed a last-minute try to beat the Sharks' 19-14 in Durban while the Chiefs ran in seven second-half tries in Hamilton to take a bonus point from a 54-10 win over the Western Force.

The Crusaders' only loss this season was to the Chiefs in the first round and their wins since over the Blues, the Kings and the Sharks have shown a steady improvement, especially in their attacking game.

After beating the Crusaders, the Chiefs stumbled in a 36-32 home loss to South Africa's Lions, but have since achieved the immense feat of winning successive matches in South Africa, Argentina and New Zealand.

Those wins have placed them atop the overall table after five rounds, a point clear of compatriots the Highlanders and two ahead of the ACT Brumbies, who recovered from last week's loss to the Stormers with a 25-18 win over the Cheetahs in Bloemfontein.

The Chiefs face the Brumbies next weekend in a top-of-the-table clash. After their unexpected loss to the Lions the Chiefs had to travel to South Africa where they beat the Kings in Port Elizabeth, cross the Atlantic to beat the Jaguares in the first-ever Super Rugby match in Argentina, then return home to beat the Force.

In the course of those matches they traveled more than 20,000 kilometers (12,000 miles) and they achieved Saturday's win at home though they had 12 front-line players out with injury. That left them with a makeshift bench, incorporating several players who had yet to play a Super Rugby match and veteran flyhalf Stephen Donald, recalled to the colors after a five-year absence.

### EARLY PENALTY

The bench still made an impact in the second half. American-born winger Tony Pulu scored a try with his first touch in Super Rugby and Donald kicked the last conversion. "I suppose a couple of weeks around the world with a pretty tough travel schedule bonds the boys together," captain Sam Cane said.

All Blacks captain Kieran Read scored the try in the 71st minute which clinched the Crusaders' win over the Sharks in Durban. The Crusaders had been stung by two intercept tries to winger Lwazi Mvovo but took control of territory and possession and proceeded to wear down the Sharks.

The Brumbies opened a 17-point lead over the Cheetahs but tired in the last quarter and just held on to win as the home side, with a try to Sergeal Petersen and a late penalty, took a losing bonus point. Brumbies coach Stephen Larkham hailed the contribution to the win of flanker and Wallaby David Pocock.

"I thought David Pocock had a tremendous game, one of the best games I've seen him have," Larkham said. "Both his work at the breakdown and in the contact area was outstanding."

The Highlanders had their second straight win in Australia, producing a superb defensive performance to beat the Melbourne Rebels 27-3.

Japan's Sunwolves were again narrowly denied their first win in Super Rugby, losing 30-27 to South Africa's Bulls in Singapore, two weeks after losing 32-31 to the Cheetahs at the same venue.

The Hurricanes led by only two points at halftime, 19-17, before going on to take a bonus point from a 42-20 win over the Kings, who remain winless after five rounds.

The Stormers took over in the South African conference lead with a 13-8 win over the Jaguares, handing the new Argentinian side its second home loss in a row at Buenos Aires. — AP



**BUENOS AIRES:** Jaguares' full back Joaquin Tuculet (2nd-L) vies for the ball with Stormers' centre Juan de Jongh (C), during their Super Rugby match at Jose Amalfitani stadium in Buenos Aires, Argentina on Saturday.—AFP

## JONES BRACED FOR ROUGH RIDE IN AUSTRALIA

**BAGSHOT:** Eddie Jones is expecting a hard time from his Australian compatriots when he returns in June aiming to lead England to more success.

But the tough-talking Tasmanian, who led the Wallabies for four years including a home World Cup final defeat by England before being ousted, is relishing the "intense" atmosphere of a tour down under and trying to build on England's recent Grand Slam success.

Jones knows all too well that while getting England to complete a Six Nations clean sweep in his first season in charge was a fairly difficult hill to climb, overcoming Australia in the first-ever three Test series there between the two nations will be considerably harder.

Asked if he expects to be targeted by the

Australian media as a potential 'traitor', Jones replied: "I am a target here (England) so it is not going to make much difference!"

"That's part of the game. If it does help take some of the pressure off the players then that can only be a good thing. It doesn't bother me."

"I think they will be respectful about what we have done regarding the Grand Slam. Well, as respectful as Australians can be! It definitely sets things up for a fantastic series on June 11 (the date of the first Test, in Brisbane), and that's very important."

Jones, who took over after hosts England were knocked out of last year's World Cup in the pool phase following a 33-13 defeat by Australia, added: "It's nice to go down there

with what they will see as a resurgent England team."

"Australia had France out there two years ago and, to be quite honest, the three Tests were quite morbid. They weren't great. France didn't front up at all. They were pretty poor events and the crowds were poor."

"But they are going to see an England side full of energy, full of life, that wants to play positive rugby and is going to take it to the Aussies. It is going to be a tough and intense tour but it will also be an exciting one."

With his England players back at their respective clubs for the run-in to the English Premiership season, Jones' biggest worry is avoiding any sort of injury crisis between now and the end of May when the squad fly out. Despite a first Grand Slam in 13 years, and installing a clinical winning attitude in a short time, Jones will not be happy unless he turns England into the global game's dominant force.

### HARTLEY WARNING

One man he both praises but warns is England captain Dylan Hartley, who must continue to prove his worth if he wishes to keep his place as the team's first-choice hooker.

Hartley must first complete his post-concussion protocol following the bang on the head that meant he missed the closing minutes of England's 31-21 Slam-clinching win against France in Paris on March 19 before he returns to club action with Northampton. The New Zealand-born front row missed the World Cup completely after former coach Stuart Lancaster kicked him out of the squad for the latest in a long line of disciplinary offences, only for Jones to make him captain.

"As a player he has been adequate but he has got to improve and keep improving," said Jones. "He's done very well as captain. It's not how well he speaks or what school he went to or can he write poetry. That has got nothing to do with leadership. It is all about the ability to influence people."

"When I took up the job, I spoke to people about Dylan and the captaincy and the general consensus was that he would be a positive choice."

"It was obvious England missed Dylan a lot during the World Cup. He's not the greatest player in the world but he plays with his heart on his sleeve and people follow him." — AFP

## WARATAHS EDGE PAST ARCH-RIVALS REDS

**BRISBANE:** The New South Wales Waratahs edged past arch-rivals Queensland Reds 15-13 in a dour Super Rugby clash in Brisbane yesterday.

The Waratahs scored two tries to one but trailed the Queenslanders until 12 minutes to go when Wallabies fly-half Bernard Foley kicked a penalty to put his side in front.

The win means the Waratahs stay in touch with runaway Australian conference leaders ACT Brumbies, but they had to use all their experience to see off a brave Queensland side that is yet to have a win this season.

The Reds have improved each week since they sacked coach Richard Graham and, on the back of a superior scrum and line-out, they almost pulled off an upset.

"It was a really tough grind," Waratahs captain Michael Hooper conceded. "We did some really good things but we were falling back on some poor things we've done previously. We're rolling on but hopefully we can get a snowball effect and go from there."

Hooper said the Waratahs had adapted to the conditions better than their opponents. "We changed our game plan which worked really well for us-kicking to the corners and playing for position."

The Reds have had a dominant scrum all season and they quickly took control in the

opening stages of yesterday's match.

They won a series of scrum penalties on the NSW line before New Zealand referee Ben O'Keefe eventually lost patience and awarded the home side a penalty try 10 minutes into the match. The Reds tried to push home the advantage but Waratahs fullback Israel Folau narrowed the gap with a try in the corner following a superb break up the middle from Waratahs No 8 Jed Holloway.

### FOLEY SEALS IT

The Reds looked like taking a 7-5 lead into half-time only to switch off while in attack and lose the ball at the back of the ruck.

Foley gathered the ball and set sail for the Queensland line. He was eventually brought down but NSW moved the ball quickly and Folau strolled over untouched to give the visitors a 12-7 lead at the break. The Reds continued to play through their forwards in the second half and caused some problems, but whenever they moved the ball to the backs the movement broke down. Jake McIntyre booted two penalties to put Queensland in front, but the experience of a NSW side featuring a host of Wallabies proved enough, and when the Reds forwards were penalised for failing to release a tackled player, Foley stepped up and made no mistake.—AFP

## AL ATTIYAH FLIES TO ALGERIA TO HEAD FIA MEETING - MENA

**KUWAIT:** Nasser Al Attiyah - FIA Vice President heads today for FIA meeting - MENA. The meeting will be attended by the presidents of federations and clubs of MENA, the meeting is expected to discuss many issues related to mechanic sport and the agenda of the 3 days meetings hosted by Algeria, in addition to a number of workshops pertaining the motorsport activities.

About the nature of the meeting, Al Attiyah praised the prominent role displayed by El Hady Weld Ali-Minister of Youth & Sport - Algeria and Chihab Baloul - president of FASM - and the members of FASM for facilitating all possibilities in order to have a successful event, which is considered the first of its kind in North Africa, such event would highlight the prominent role displayed by MENA federations and clubs to push the wheel of motor sport in the region.

Al Attiyah said that such a meeting is considered the first of its kind in North Africa and also considered one of the most important meetings in MENA, such as the meeting held before in Qatar, Jounieh and Kuwait, its importance lies also in the attendance of Jean Todt - FIA president, and the volume of files to be discussed in the meeting especially in this critical time and the hard circumstances that the region is currently witnessing.

Al Attiyah added that there will practical discussions for the regulatory rules and articles of these events which are organized in MENA, aiming at better future for the motorsport, such discussions are mainly based on FIA regulations. It is worth saying that Egypt, Yemen, Sudan, Oman and Qatar have apologized for attending the meeting.



**Nasser Al Attiyah**

## NADAL RETIRES IN 3RD SET AT MIAMI OPEN

**KEY BISCAIYNE:** Rafael Nadal slumped in a changeover chair, the blood pressure gauge strapped to his mighty left arm serving as a scoreboard. He was on the verge of defeat, and a few points later he retired from a match for the first time in six years.

Nadal faded in the subtropical heat and conceded after falling behind in the third set of his opening match Saturday at the Miami Open against Damir Dzumhur.

The No. 5-seeded Nadal trailed 2-6, 6-4, 3-0 when he called it quits after losing a point to fall behind 30-15. He had earlier consulted with a trainer between games three times, and had his blood pressure checked. Nadal said he started feeling badly at the end of the first set. "It was getting worse and worse and worse," the Spaniard said. "I get a little bit scared - too dizzy. I felt I was not safe, so I decided to go. I wanted to finish the match, but I seriously couldn't."

His departure left the draw without three of the five highest-seeded men. No. 4 Stan Wawrinka lost to Andrey Kuznetsov 6-4, 6-3, and No. 3 Roger Federer withdrew Friday because of a stomach virus.

In the night session, No. 2 Andy Murray won his opening match against Denis Istomin, 6-3, 7-5. Eight-time champion Serena Williams avoided the upset bug and seemed unfazed by the weather. The South Floridian earned her 20th consecutive victory at Key Biscayne and reached the fourth round by beating Zarina Diyas 7-5, 6-3. "I live down the street, and I'm used to these conditions," she said. "Even though it was a little humid, I'm used to it and I love this weather."

Nadal's match lasted less than two

hours, but the temperature approached 90 degrees and was even higher on the sun-baked stadium hardcourt.

Nadal said he felt fine before the match and wasn't sure whether he was contracting an illness. "Hopefully it's just the extreme conditions," he said. "It's tough for me, because I felt I was playing well. It's a hard accident. That's life."

Nadal later pulled out of doubles. The 14-time Grand Slam champion hasn't won a tournament since August. But it had been 443 matches since he retired - in the 2010 Australian Open quarterfinals against Andy Murray. Key Biscayne remains one of the biggest tournaments Nadal has never won. He's 0-4 in finals.

Dzumhur is a 23-year-old Bosnian who was a child actor before he decided to focus on tennis. Ranked 94th, he rallied with a variety of tactics, including half a dozen drop shots for winners and an occasional serve and volley.

Nadal had to work hard from the start, failing to convert nine break-point chances during a marathon second game before Dzumhur double-faulted to lose serve.

The heat also bothered the 154-pound Dzumhur, who consulted with a trainer following the first set.

"It was really tough to play," he said. "I felt really tired and heavy and in some moments dizzy." No. 30-seeded Thomaz Bellucci retired from his match after two sets because of dehydration. In other men's play, No. 13 John Isner double-faulted on his final two service points and lost to qualifier Tim Smyczek 6-2, 2-6, 7-6 (5). — AP



**KEY BISCAIYNE:** Andy Murray of Great Britain plays a match against Denis Istomin of Uzbekistan during Day 6 of the Miami Open presented by Itaú at Crandon Park Tennis Center on March 26, 2016 in Key Biscayne, Florida. — AFP

## MURRAY GETS ON THE BALL TO ADVANCE AT MIAMI OPEN

**MIAMI:** Something didn't look right about the tennis ball in Andy Murray's grasp and when he looked at it he discovered it was from the women's tour, not the men's.

That second-set revelation, and taking the ball out of play, helped the British number two finish off a 6-3, 7-5 triumph Saturday over Uzbekistan's 76th-ranked Denis Istomin at the ATP and WTA Miami Open.

Murray, the 2012 US Open and 2013 Wimbledon champion, seeks a third Miami title. He won in 2009 and 2013 and was runner-up to Novak Djokovic in 2012 and last year. The ball controversy began when Murray, trying to avoid being broken in the fifth game of the second set, noticed the ball in his hand bore a red logo used only on a WTA ball, not the black one on ATP balls. "I just saw it as I was about to bounce the ball," Murray said. "There was just a women's ball. I had just hit two balls long. They are smaller, livelier balls and when you are just about to serve at break point down, you don't want to use a completely different ball."

"I was a bit frustrated over that," Murray said he could not be certain that the women's ball

was the one used when he hit two crucial shots long to set up Istomin's break chance.

But the 28-year-old Scotsman did complain to chair umpire Mohamed Lahyani of Sweden that he and Istomin likely had been playing with the improper ball, one designed to go farther, for at least a couple of points.

The ball was taken out of play but some spectators whistled their irritation, seeing Murray's talk as a delay tactic. "I felt like he should say something to the crowd because it looked like I was stalling intentionally. I did have an issue," he said. "It's not his fault. He can't see if it's a women's ball or not. It's difficult."

An upset Murray netted a forehand to give Istomin the break and a 3-2 lead. Murray gave Lahyani an earful when he came to sit down. "For me, that's not good enough," Murray said. "Unacceptable. It's not right."

"I'm hitting the ball long because it's the wrong ball. You know how different the balls are." "The point stands," Lahyani replied. "It's the same for both." Murray responded by breaking back in the next game, denying Istomin on a break point in the 11th game with a backhand

drop volley and breaking again in the final game, Istomin netting a forehand to end matters after 98 minutes.

But Murray still had no idea how the women's ball got mixed among those used by the men, speculating that it lurked in flower beds near the court after a women's match and was found and inserted by ballpersons.

"I don't know where it came from," he said. "Throughout the day a bunch of balls end up in the flower beds. It could have come from them."

### DIMITROV NEXT FOR MURRAY

Next to face Murray is Bulgarian 26th seed Grigor Dimitrov. Murray has a 6-2 career record against Dimitrov, having won their past three meetings, most recently in last year's round of 16 at Cincinnati. "He had a match point and a bunch of chances to win that one but I was able to turn it around," he said. "I'll have to be a little bit more disciplined than I was tonight. It'll be a tough one. He's a top quality player." Dimitrov beat Murray in a 2014 Wimbledon quarter-final to end the Briton's reign as tournament champion. — AFP



**KEY BISCAIYNE:** Serena Williams, of the United States, returns a shot from Zarina Diyas, of Kazakhstan, at the Miami Open tennis tournament in Key Biscayne, Fla., Saturday. Williams defeated Diyas 7-5, 6-3. — AP

## SERENA TAKES ANOTHER STEP TO MIAMI TITLE

**FLORIDA:** Serena Williams won her 750th career match to stay on track for her ninth Miami Open title when she beat Zarina Diyas of Kazakhstan 7-5 6-3 in the third round in Florida on Saturday.

The world number one improved her career record to 750-125, seventh on the all-time list and just three match wins behind Lindsay Davenport's 753. Martina Navratilova sits atop the all-time list with 1,442 wins.

The 34-year-old Williams will meet Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova in the fourth round. The 15th seed defeated France's Caroline Garcia 4-6 6-2 7-6(6).

Unlike the last time they met, when Williams required 54 minutes and Diyas won just two games, the 22-year-old Kazak gave the American some trouble in the heat and humidity of Miami.

Williams jumped out to a 4-0 lead in the second set, only to see Diyas rally and win three straight games. But the 21-times grand slam champion steadied to close out the match.

"I think she called her coach and they used a different strategy," Williams said in a court-side interview.

"I was able to figure it out after a little bit. She played well, especially to be ranked 97th. She has a bright future because she's so young. But I really wanted to close it out." Williams and Kuznetsova were joined in the fourth round by Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska, Romanian Simona Halep, Swiss Timea Bacinszky, Russian Ekaterina Makarova and wild-card Heather Watson of Great Britain. Makarova, the 30th seed, upset eighth seed Czech Petra Kvitova 6-4 6-4. — Reuters

## KO SEIZES KIA CLASSIC LEAD

**CARLSBAD:** Lydia Ko took sole possession of the lead after shooting a bogey-free 67 and Lee Min-Jee aced a 275-yard par four in the third round of the Kia Classic. World number one Ko, of New Zealand, is at 14-under overall and has a three shot lead over Park Sung-Hyun (68), Brittany Lang (70), and Jenny Shin (71) in the LPGA Tour event.

"You don't get that many opportunities where you're going into the final round with a few-shot lead," Ko said. "But I'll take it. I'd rather be a couple shots ahead than a couple shots behind."

The day was special for Australia's Lee as she made a hole-in-one on the 16th at the Carlsbad course. Lee becomes just the second in history to hit a hole-in-one at a par-four on the LPGA Tour, following Jang Ha-Na's albatross earlier this year in the Bahamas. Park carded five birdies in a row before a stumble on the par-five 17th hole with a double bogey. Park rebounded and finished her round with a birdie on the 18th, putting her in a tie for second place. Ko holds the 54-hole lead for the 10th time in her career. She has won four of those tournaments.

If she holds on Sunday it will be her first title of 2016 and the 11th of her career. She has had two runner-up finishes this year. Lang is seeking her second career LPGA win. Second round leader Shin is looking for her first victory, as is Park.

World number two Park In-Bee shot a 70 and is in sole possession of fifth at 10-under, four shots adrift of Ko. Norway's Suzann Pettersen climbed up the leaderboard with a 66. She is tied for seventh place and Candie Kung shot the low round

of the day with a 65. Kung is in a tie for 10th place. — AFP



**KEY BISCAIYNE:** Timea Bacinszky, of Switzerland, celebrates after winning a point against Ana Ivanovic, of Serbia, at the Miami Open tennis tournament in Key Biscayne, Fla., Saturday. Bacinszky defeated Ivanovic 7-5, 6-4. — AP

## MCILROY BOOKS WGC MATCH PLAY S-FINAL AGAINST DAY

**LOS ANGELES:** Defending champion Rory McIlroy birdied four of the last six holes in a 4 and 3 win over Chris Kirk on Saturday to book a semi-final showdown with Jason Day at the WGC Match Play in Texas.

Day advanced with a 3 and 2 victory over Brooks Koepka. The victory means the Australian will regain the world number one ranking from American Jordan Spieth, who was ousted Saturday morning in the round of 16 by South African Louis Oosthuizen.

McIlroy, seeded third, reached the semi-finals of the elite event for the third time in his career. He took a quick lead over Kirk with an 11-foot birdie putt at the opening hole, but his three-putt bogey at the ninth let Kirk square the match.

McIlroy responded emphatically, with birdies to win the 10th, 12th, 13th and 15th-all with putts from within 10 feet. "I was a little annoyed going from the ninth green to the 10th-letting Chris get back into it with a three-putt on nine," McIlroy said.

"But after that I was four-under for my next six holes and that was enough to get the job done." McIlroy, who edged Zach Johnson 1 up to reach the quarters, admitted he has more than a title repeat on his mind.

"It's great for my confidence, especially with the Masters only a couple of weeks away," he said. "To get a good run in this tournament, which is my last competitive start before Augusta is really pleasing."

### Day's amazing week

Day, the 2014 winner, had three birdies and an eagle against Koepka. He took the lead with a seven-footer at the third, but Koepka birdied the next two to grab the lead.

The American couldn't find another birdie, however, and Day regained the lead with a seven-foot birdie at the 10th and added an eagle at the 12th before winning the 15th with a par.

Day, who had downed Brandt Snedeker 3 and 2 on Saturday morning, said he expected the clash with McIlroy to be "a lot of fun" although he's hoping the weather will be warm for the benefit of his injured back.

"It's been a bit of an up and down week, especially emotionally," said Day, whose back was so bad after his first-round win on Wednesday he thought he might have to withdraw. "It's been quite amazing to be able to start the week and not really thinking I'm going to be able to play with what happened Wednesday. And turn around I'm number one in the world on Saturday."

"It's a strange feeling," he said. "I'm glad I stuck it out." The other semi-final pits Spain's Rafael Cabrera Bello against Oosthuizen. Oosthuizen, seeded 16th, followed up his 4 and 2 win over Spieth with a 2 and 1 triumph over eighth-seeded American Dustin Johnson.

Cabrera Bello, who advanced to the quarters when South Korea's An Byeong-Hun retired with a sore neck while 4 down through 11, beat Ryan Moore 2 and 1 to reach the final four. The Spaniard, ranked 54th in the world and seeded 52nd, never trailed against Moore, who had just one birdie after producing four on the front nine in a 4 and 3 victory over Patton Kizzire in the morning.

Oosthuizen reached the semi-finals after losing in the quarters the last two years. He trailed Johnson much of their match, but sealed it with a 21-foot birdie putt at 17.

### SWING STRUGGLES

But it was Oosthuizen's morning match that made headlines. Spieth hadn't trailed in three round-robin matches. "I got to the range this morning and I was hitting some slices with my irons, which is bizarre," Spieth said. "I just tried to compensate somehow on the golf course. I got away with it on the first couple of holes and then it got the best of me." Spieth, who hadn't made bogey at the first six holes in his first three matches, bogeyed the fourth to fall 1 down. Oosthuizen held onto the

lead as Spieth scrambled through a stretch that included two birdies, two bogeys and a double bogey, with the South African nabbing three birdies in the last five holes to seal it. — AFP



**AUSTIN:** Jason Day of Australia makes birdie on the first hole during his semifinal match with Rory McIlroy at the World Golf Championships-Dell Match Play at the Austin Country Club yesterday in Austin, Texas. — AFP





# ICC WORLD TWENTY20

## AMLA INSISTS CURRENT SA STARS CAN STILL WIN A GLOBAL TITLE

**NEW DELHI:** South Africa batsman Hashim Amla insisted his team's World Cup dream lives on, saying the top Proteas stars are still hoping for glory in the near future. Apart from their Champions Trophy triumph in 1998, South Africa have never won a major International Cricket Council event since their post-apartheid return in 1991. Faf du Plessis' side have already exited the World Twenty20, even before their final group game against Sri Lanka today, their World Cup

jinx striking again. "Well listen, this team will win a World Cup or ICC tournament at some stage, I think we have won one in 1998," Amla told reporters at New Delhi's Feroz Shah Kotla. South Africa haven't enjoyed much success of late, with a T20 series loss against Australia heading into the world event, where the side have lost two of their three matches so far. "It's an unfortunate situation that we have found ourselves in. Certainly as a team we haven't played our best cricket," admitted

Amla. With Amla, AB de Villiers and Dale Steyn, the Proteas have seen the 'golden generation' fail to claim a global title. Amla assures the big boys will hang around for a while. "Lot of us feel we have a few more years left in us, so the Champions Trophy is next year and it would be great if we could make to the next World Cup, that will be ideal," said Amla. "We take it as it comes. As long as you are

fit and healthy, scoring runs and the form is good and you want to perform for the team then you can make it," he added. With the chokers tag hanging around their necks after a series of narrow defeats in the last two decades, South Africa didn't do their reputation any good after going down in crunch games this time around. The Proteas' hopes of clinching a first international trophy were dented in their opening match, when England chased down a record

230 runs to win. They survived a scare to beat minnows Afghanistan by 37 runs, but lost a thriller when the West Indies successfully chased 123 with just two balls to spare, and Sri Lanka's defeat to England on Saturday sealed their fate. "We haven't had a game where our batting and our bowling has clicked in the same game consistently enough and that has been our biggest downfall," Amla said. — AFP

## MATHEWS URGES PATIENCE AFTER S LANKA T20 EXIT

**NEW DELHI:** Skipper Angelo Mathews pleaded for patience from Sri Lankan cricket fans and administrators after the reigning champions crashed out of the World Twenty20 at the group stages. Sri Lanka's surrender of the trophy they won in 2014 is further evidence of their decline in the last two years, a process accelerated by the retirements of batting legends Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene. Now down at eight in the T20 rankings, Sri Lanka had a disastrous showing at the recent Asia Cup and came into the sixth edition of the World T20 tournament after recently changing their coach and captain. Following a less than convincing win over minnows Afghanistan in their opening match, they were then badly beaten by the West Indies before Saturday's narrow 10-run defeat to England. Mathews, who is already Sri Lanka's Test captain, was appointed skipper of the T20 team on the eve of the tournament after veteran fast bowler Lasith Malinga failed to shake off a knee injury. "It's been a disappointing few months for all of us. We have let down our fans, we let down the whole country. And we haven't played good cricket at all. We are really disappointed," he said at a press conference after Saturday's defeat. "All we can do is stick to the combination, not try and change the team too much. Try to pick about 20 players and, you know, revalue then after six months, give them the opportunity to settle down and then try and see what they have come up

with in term of performances." **MALINGA IRREPLACEABLE** Sri Lanka's selectors were all sacked just ahead of the tournament, adding to the sense of turmoil within Sri Lankan cricket after South African Graham Ford returned last month to take over as team coach. Ford has warned that Sri Lanka faces a "huge" rebuilding task with other veteran match-winners such as spinner Rangana Herath, 38, and opener Tillakaratne Dilshan, 39, also expected to step away in the near future. The retirements of Jayawardene and Sangakkara, the two highest run-scorers in the history of Sri Lankan Test cricket, have added to the burden on Mathews who is now the team's premier batsman. After playing a brave innings of 73 in the defeat against England after seeing his side reduced to 15 for 4, Mathews said that everyone had to accept that it would take time to fill such a big void. "Hasty decisions will not solve this matter, so we have got to try and be patient," he said. All-rounder Thisara Perera said on Friday that Sri Lanka could take years to get over the retirement of Sangakkara and Jayawardene while warning that Malinga was irreplaceable. Perera described the slinging Malinga as a one of a kind, saying a player such as him would "never, never come" again. Although they are out of the running for the semi-finals, Sri Lanka still have one last group match against South Africa, who are also eliminated in New Delhi. —AFP



**NAGPUR:** Afghanistan's cricketers celebrate their win over West Indies in the ICC World Twenty20 2016 cricket match in Nagpur, India, yesterday. — AP

## AFGHANISTAN'S STANIKZAI HAILS HISTORIC WIN OVER WINDIES

**NAGPUR:** Afghanistan skipper Asghar Stanikzai hailed his underdog side after their historic six-run victory over the powerful West Indies at the World Twenty20 match in Nagpur yesterday. Afghanistan had failed to qualify for the semi-finals heading into Sunday's match, but were determined to take home a consolation victory against the West Indies, who had already made the final four. Stanikzai paid credit to his never-say-die charges especially batsman Najibullah Zadran, named man-of-the-match, after Afghanistan notched up their first ever Super 10 victory at a World T20. Stanikzai said his side, who had lost three straight group stage matches, had learnt "so much" at the T20 and would now head home and "work on our weaknesses". "We knew the conditions but the bowlers and fielders played very well. We know about our team's strengths, we have experienced so much at this WT20." After being sent into bat, Stanikzai's side posted a respectable 123/7, with Najibullah smashing an unbeaten 48 against the 2012 World T20 champions. The West Indies, who had a perfect record heading into the match with three straight wins, warned that they were not going to let up against Afghanistan. But their run chase got off to a shaky start, with opener Evin Lewis dismissed for a duck, and some excellent Afghanistan spin bowling led by 17-year-old Rashid Khan (2-26) meant the wickets kept falling.

Afghanistan had lost all of their previous Super 10 matches, but they have won new admirers in India with their aggressive and carefree brand of cricket that has caused some anxious moments for their opponents. Opener Mohammad Shahzad made a confident 24, but was caught off leg-spinner Badree, trying to heave over the infield, just as he was looking exciting. Asghar Stanikzai also

made a handy 16. The skipper shuffled down the wicket to smash a six over long on, but was caught the next ball by Dwayne Bravo off Badree attempting the same shot. As the wickets started to tumble thanks to some strong fielding, 23-year-old Najibullah held his nerve, guiding Afghanistan past the 120 mark and to what proved a winning total. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

**NAGPUR, India:** Scoreboard Sunday from the World Twenty20 Group 1 game between West Indies and Afghanistan at Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium:

Afghanistan		West Indies	
Mohammad Shahzad c Benn b Badree	24	Evin Lewis c Khan b Hamza	0
Usman Ghani b Badree	4	Andre Fletcher not out	11
Asghar Stanikzai c Bravo b Badree	16	Marlon Samuels b Khan	5
Gulbadin Naib c Bravo b Sammy	8	Denesh Ramdin st Shahzad b Khan	18
Samiullah Shenwari c Sammy b Benn	1	Dwayne Bravo lbw b Nabi	28
Najibullah Zadran not out	48	Andre Russell run out	7
Mohammad Nabi c Samuels b Russell	9	Darren Sammy c Sami b Naib	6
Shafiqullah Shafaq c Fletcher b Russell	4	Carlos Brathwaite c Zadran b Nabi	13
Rashid Khan not out	6	Samuel Badree not out	2
Extras: (2lb, 1w)	3	Extras: (1lb, 2w, 2nb)	5
TOTAL: (for 7 wickets)	123	TOTAL: (for 8 wickets)	117
Overs: 20.		Overs: 20.	
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-33, 3-50, 4-52, 5-56, 6-90, 7-103		Fall of wickets: 1-17, 2-33, 3-38, 4-79, 5-89, 6-98, 7-107, 8-114.	
Did not bat: Amir Hamza, Hamid Hassan.		Did not bat: Suleiman Benn.	
Bowling: Andre Russell 4-0-23-2 (1w), Samuel Badree 4-0-14-3, Carlos Brathwaite 2-0-21-0, Suleiman Benn 4-0-18-1, Dwayne Bravo 4-0-28-0, Darren Sammy 2-0-17-1.		Bowling: Amir Hamza 4-0-9-1, Mohammad Nabi 4-0-26-2, Hamid Hassan 2-4-0-19-1 (2nb), Rashid Khan 4-0-26-2, Samiullah Shenwari 4-0-22-0 (1w), Gulbadin Naib 1.2-0-14-1.	
<b>West Indies</b>		Result: Afghanistan won by 6 runs.	
Johnson Charles b Hassan	22		



**NEW DELHI:** South Africa's Hashim Amla kicks a football during a training session on the eve of the World T20 cricket tournament match between South Africa and Sri Lanka at Feroz Shah Kotla cricket ground in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

## ENGLAND'S ROY, WILLEY FINED

**NEW DELHI:** England opener Jason Roy and fast bowler David Willey have been fined at the World Twenty20 after emotions spilled over during their win over Sri Lanka on Saturday. Both players gave solid performances during England's nailbiting 10-run victory over Sri Lanka in New Delhi to secure a place in the semi-finals. But Roy was fined 30 percent of his match fee for swearing and then throwing his bat and helmet upon leaving the field, after being given out lbw for 42 off 39 balls. The International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Sunday that Roy had shown "disrespect at an umpire's decision during an international match".

Willey, meanwhile, who took 2-26, was fined 15 percent of his fee after giving a colourful send-off to Milinda Siriwardana when the Sri Lankan was dismissed immediately after hitting the seamer for six. The ICC said he breached the code of conduct for "actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction" from a batsman on their dismissal. Both players admitted the offences during a meeting with match referee Jeff Crowe, the ICC said in a statement. England are now likely to face New Zealand in a semi-final encounter in Delhi on Wednesday, with the West Indies having already qualified from their group. —AFP

### SPECTACULAR, TUMBLING CATCH

With the West Indies needing 10 runs from the final over, Najibullah sprinted several metres along the boundary to take a spectacular, tumbling catch and claim Carlos Brathwaite for 13, just when he looked like bringing the West Indies home, as he had done against South Africa on Friday. Samuel Badree and an injured Andre Fletcher could only manage to push the total to 117 in the three remaining deliveries. Despite the loss, the West Indies still finished top of Group One, and will play either Australia or India, who clash later in Group Two, in the semi-finals. Captain Darren Sammy said the loss would not derail his side's campaign for the title, describing the loss as a "banana skid" on the road to the finals. "Obviously we are disappointed but we are not going to let this dampen our spirits, we played well, we just need to find a way to chase down those small totals," he said. "We have two more steps to take, and we just had a slight banana skid in the race, and we just have to regroup and come back again." After being sent in to bat, Najibullah top scored for Afghanistan, striking four fours and one six in his 40-ball knock to bring cheers from the small but vocal crowd.



**MOHALI:** India's Smriti Mandhana, center, walks back after being bowled out by Afy Fletcher of West Indies during their ICC Women's World Twenty20 2016 cricket match in Mohali, India, yesterday. — AP



## CAMEROON AND MOROCCO CLOSER TO NATIONS CUP QUALIFICATION

**JOHANNESBURG:** Cameroon twice came from behind on Saturday to take a giant step towards African Nations Cup qualification and Morocco are also on course for the finals after making a winning start under new coach Herve Renard.

Youssef El Arabi converted a 26th-minute penalty as Morocco won 1-0 at Cape Verde Islands, the leading African team in the world rankings, to go three

points clear in Group F as they kept up a 100 percent record.

Renard, who has won two of the last three Nations Cup titles, was appointed Badou Ezaki's successor last month.

Leaders Cameroon maintained a five-point advantage over third-placed South Africa in Group M after the two former champions slugged it out for a 2-2 draw in Limbe.

Nicolas N'koulou scored the second

for Cameroon, playing their first game under new coach Hugo Broos, after Hlompho Kekana had put South Africa 2-1 up early in the second period with a remarkable effort from inside his own half. Saturday's ties, marking the halfway point of qualifying for the 2017 finals in Gabon, also yielded victories for Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Namibia, Senegal and small Indian Ocean island nations Mauritius and

Seychelles. Jonathan Pitroipa's penalty handed Burkina Faso a 1-0 win over Uganda and a share of top spot in Group D alongside their opponents.

Democratic Republic of Congo are first in Group B after beating Angola 2-1 in front of 90,000 fans in Kinshasa thanks to a first-half penalty by Cedric Bakambu and a second-half scorcher from substitute Elia Meschack.

Angola replied with a late penalty.

Senegal have a 100 percent record after overcoming Niger 2-0 in Dakar with goals from Mohamed Diame and Oumar Niasse while Group K rivals Namibia triumphed 3-1 in Burundi. Mauritius beat Rwanda 1-0 and Seychelles also had a rare victory, 2-0 at home to Lesotho.

Qualifiers continue on Sunday through until Tuesday by which time four of the six rounds of preliminaries will have been completed.—Reuters

## ROONEY FACES BATTLE TO REGAIN ENGLAND PLACE AFTER BERLIN WIN

**LONDON:** Outstanding performances by three attacking players in England's 3-2 comeback win over Germany on Saturday has sparked renewed debate about where injured captain Wayne Rooney fits in for the Euro 2016 finals.

After Roy Hodgson's team fell 2-0 behind to the world champions in Berlin, the Premier League's two leading scorers this season, Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane and Leicester City's Jamie Vardy, brought England level with superb goals.

Many observers, including Germany's former World Cup-winning captain Lothar Matthaeus, made teenager Dele Alli the man of the match in what Hodgson called his best night as England manager.

Alli, 19, played in the 'No.10' role just behind the main striker, which is arguably Rooney's most effective position.

When playing as a lone striker, the Manchester United captain has often looked isolated and become frustrated by a lack of involvement, tending to drop too deep to seek the ball.

Before injuring a knee against Sunderland on Feb. 13 Rooney was on a good run, but still has only seven league goals this season-like Alli-compared to

Kane's 21 and Vardy's 19. "I am a big fan of Wayne Rooney, but today we didn't miss him in the game," Matthaeus said during live television coverage.

## SURPRISE PACKAGE

Geoff Hurst, whose hat-trick won England the 1966 World Cup final against West Germany, believes Vardy could be a surprise package in the European Championship finals in France.

"He's come from nowhere, a very good level-headed guy who's very sensible, very intelligent," Hurst told the BBC on Sunday.

"Either Harry Kane or Vardy definitely deserve their place with the season they've had. "And Alli has made an impact not just at club level but in internationals."

Under-achievers at recent international tournaments, England have often been criticised for taking players who were not 100 per cent fit-including Rooney at the 2006 World Cup.

Trevor Brooking, the FA's director of football development from 2004-14, told the BBC the most important thing for Rooney was to be fully fit this time.

"The starting point is get himself fit because he's not an automatic choice to come back in, with the side as they have done without him," he said. "He's not quite cracked tournaments for England.

## WARM-UP GAMES

"You've got three warm-up games in May and June and Wayne's got to prove he's worth his place," added Brooking.

"It's very tempting to have Kane and Alli as automatic choices if they stay fit and continue playing like they are. Then you've got the option to bring Jamie Vardy on."

With 51 international goals, Rooney is England's record scorer and his 109 appearances make him the country's fourth most capped player. Solutions to the selection dilemma could include playing him on the left of the midfield three, where he has sometimes operated for United, or dropping Alli deeper, which might limit the Tottenham man's effectiveness.

Suddenly, however, the prospect of Rooney catching Steven Gerrard (114 caps) and David Beckham (115), let alone goalkeeper Peter Shilton (125) looks less than a formality.— Reuters



Wayne Rooney

## KLINSMANN, USA UNDER SCRUTINY AHEAD OF GUATEMALA REMATCH

**WASHINGTON:** The pressure is on coach Jurgen Klinsmann and the United States as they host Guatemala tomorrow aiming to bounce back from an embarrassing 2-0 defeat in Guatemala City in 2018 World Cup qualifying.

Klinsmann blamed "lack of focus" for the defeat in Guatemala City, which left the United States in third place in Group C in the fourth round of qualifying in North and Central America and the Caribbean (CONCACAF). Guatemala outplayed the visitors throughout and took advantage of lethargic US defending to score both goals.

Klinsmann, already criticized in the wake of last year's semi-final Gold Cup exit and Confederations Cup playoff defeat, appeared unhappy with his team's effort.

But plenty of pundits pointed to his own puzzling lineup choices as a contributing factor.

Klinsmann, juggling after injuries to Matt Besler, John Brooks and Fabian Johnson, started Geoff Cameron at full-back rather in the more central role he often plays for Stoke.

DeAndre Yedlin, who plays at right-back with Sunderland, started in midfield and

Mix Diskerud was in an unfamiliar defensive midfield role. "I think it was a lack of focus, concentration, and wrong decisions," Klinsmann said. "We have to take responsibility for it, every one of us, coaches, players, and move on and get it done on Tuesday. "We always said that World Cup qualifying is a long road, a tricky road, a difficult road."

They'll get a chance to start moving forward again when they host Guatemala in Columbus, Ohio, needing a win to gain ground on group leaders Trinidad and Tobago, who with seven points lead Guatemala by one-and are heavy favorites hosting winless St. Vincent and the Grenadines on Tuesday. In other matches Tuesday, Group A leaders Mexico go for a fourth win in as many matches when they host Canada on the heels of their 3-0 victory in Vancouver on Friday. Honduras, bottom of Group A, will try to gain ground when they host El Salvador.

In Group B, leaders Costa Rica host Jamaica and Panama host Haiti. The top two teams from each of the three groups advance to the final six-nation round of qualifying.— AFP



**HERNING:** Denmark's Pierre Emile Højbjerg (L) and Ragnar Sigurdsson of Iceland vie for the ball during the friendly football match Denmark vs Iceland in Herning, Denmark.— AP



**BERLIN:** England's Harry Kane, left, is challenged by Germany's Jonathan Tah during a friendly soccer match between Germany and England in Berlin, Germany, Saturday.— AP

## ENGLAND STUN GERMANY, RUSSIA, POLAND CRUISE

**PARIS:** Eric Dier scored a dramatic stoppage-time winner as England rallied from two goals down to stun world champions Germany 3-2 in Saturday's international friendly in Berlin. Russia and Poland stepped up their preparations for Euro 2016 with thumping victories over Lithuania and Finland, while Austria overcame tournament newcomers Albania 2-1.

In Berlin, a minute's silence was observed in memory of the victims of the Brussels terror attacks, with both sets of players wearing black armbands in honour of Dutch great Johan Cruyff who passed away on Thursday at the age of 68. Toni Kroos gave Joachim Loew's men a 43rd-minute lead at the Olympic Stadium with a crisp left-footed drive that beat Jack Butland, who was then immediately stretched off with a leg injury, at his near post. After seeing a first-half effort incorrectly ruled out for offside, Mario Gomez doubled Germany's advantage on 57 minutes by heading home a Sami Khedira cross for his first international goal in almost four years. But Harry Kane halved the deficit four minutes later as the Tottenham striker produced a piece of skill befitting Cruyff to fire beyond a helpless Manuel Neuer.

Substitute Jamie Vardy made an immediate impact after replacing Danny Welbeck, with the Leicester City forward superbly flicking home Nathaniel Clyne's right-wing cross on 74 minutes.

England should have gone ahead after Vardy pounced on a loose pass inside the Germany area, only for Dele Alli to blaze over with the goal gaping. But Dier ensured Roy Hodgson's side weren't left to rue that miss as the Tottenham midfielder powered home a header from Jordan Henderson's corner in the 91st minute to complete a remarkable turnaround. "We played brilliant today. I thought we fully deserved the win," Kane told ITV.

"We had a lot of chances that on another day we probably could have scored two more. We're all buzzing. We never gave in and what a night." Earlier Russia, who will face England in their opening match of the European Championship, cruised to a 3-0 victory over Lithuania in Moscow with goals from Fedor Smolov, Aleksandr Golovin and Denis Glushakov. Poland have again been drawn alongside title frontrunners Germany at this summer's finals, having already faced them in qualifying, and strolled to a morale-boosting 5-0 demolition of Finland in Wroclaw. Rennes midfielder Kamil Grosicki and Verona winger Pawel Wszolek both netted twice apiece with Filip Starzynski also on target as star striker Robert Lewandowski came on for the final 27 minutes.

Austria co-hosted the 2008 finals with Switzerland and booked their place at this year's edition after dropping just two points during qualifying in a group that also featured Sweden and Russia.

In Vienna, Marcel Koller's side defeated an Albania team heading to their first major tournament courtesy of early strikes from Marc Janko and Martin Harnik, with Ermir Lenjani pulling one back for the visitors.

Hungary will also travel to France in June after a 30-year finals absence, and Balazs Dzsudzsak struck 11 minutes from time in Budapest to cancel out Mario Mandzukic's first-half opener in a 1-1 draw with Croatia.—AFP

## POLICE FIRE TEAR GAS AS GUINEA-BISSAU STUN KENYA

**JOHANNESBURG:** Kenyan police fired tear gas to disperse protesting spectators after a stunning 1-0 home defeat by minnows Guinea-Bissau yesterday in a 2017 Africa Cup of Nations qualifier. Trouble erupted at the Nyayo National Stadium in Nairobi when the visitors snatched a late lead through a disputed Sanchez Semedo goal. Harambee Stars players and supporters believed the ball did not cross the line and TV replays were inconclusive.

Play was temporarily halted by the Zimbabwean referee and Kenya are set to be punished by the African Football Confederation (CAF). Victory completed a double over Kenya for traditional whipping boys Guinea-Bissau, ranked 18 places lower in Africa, after a home 1-0 win four days ago.

Gaining maximum points lifted the team from the Portuguese-speaking West African country to the top of Group E, one point ahead of co-favourites Congo and Zambia, who drew 1-1 in Brazzaville.

The match produced the same result and the same scorers as the first meeting in Zambia last Wednesday.

Both goals came after goalmouth scrambles with Jordan Massengo giving Congo an early second-half lead and Winston Kalengo equalising. Zambia almost won at the death with a Christopher Katongo shot deflected on to

the roof of the net.

Guinea-Bissau have seven points with two qualifying rounds to come in June and September, Congo and Zambia six each and Kenya one. All group winners are guaranteed places at the 2017 tournament in Gabon, but just the best two of 11 runners-up in the four-team groups join them. The withdrawal of cash-strapped Chad Sunday after three consecutive defeats has reduced Group G to three teams, meaning only one from Egypt, Nigeria and Tanzania can make it.

Egypt have four points, Nigeria two and Tanzania one in the revised standings ahead of a Tuesday clash between the Pharaohs and Super Eagles in Alexandria.

Should record seven-time African champions Egypt win, Nigeria will be eliminated and miss the finals for the third time in four editions. Ghana, runners-up to Ivory Coast in the last Cup of Nations, surrendered a perfect 2017 qualifying record when held 0-0 by Mozambique in Maputo. A sleep-inducing affair produced hardly any clearcut chances with both teams showing the effects of having to play twice in four days.

Botswana avenged a midweek Group D loss in the Comoros by winning 2-1 in Francistown and Benin went top of Group C by trouncing South Sudan 4-1 in Cotonou.—AFP



**BRAZZAVILLE:** Congolese defender Arnold Davy Bouka Moutou (L) and Congolese midfielder Sagesse Babelo (R) try to contrast Zambian left winger Lubambo Musonda during the 2017 Africa Cup Nations qualification football match between Congo and Zambia at the Kintele Stadium in Brazzaville, yesterday.— AFP

# Sports

Murray gets on the ball to advance at Miami Open



Rooney faces battle to regain England place after Berlin win



MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2016

AFGHANISTAN'S STANIKZAI HAILS HISTORIC WIN OVER WINDIES Page 17



MOHALI: India's MS Dhoni, left, and Virat Kohli run between the wickets during their ICC World Twenty20 2016 cricket match against Australia in Mohali, India, yesterday. — AP

## KOHLI CARRIES INDIA TO WORLD T20 SEMIS

**MOHALI:** Virat Kohli smashed a masterful 82 to guide India to a six-wicket win against Australia in their final World Twenty20 Super 10 game yesterday and set up a semi-final against West Indies in Mumbai.

Kohli resurrected India with his unbeaten 51-ball knock from a seemingly tricky position as the hosts sprinted home in the end with five balls to spare.

"That performance certainly has to be in my top three but probably it is top right now because I'm a bit emotional," said Kohli. "A lot was riding on us playing at home and with the crowd you want to give them as much entertainment as possible." India's bowlers pulled Australia back from a blistering start to restrict them to 160 for six wickets after Australia won the toss and opted to bat.

Hosts India, inaugural World T20 champions in 2007, and reigning 50-over title holders Australia had won two matches each, with their only loss coming against New Zealand in the Super 10 stage. New Zealand face England in the other semi-final. India needed 39 from the last three overs when Kohli decided to show his class which has earned him accolades as one of the world's best current batsmen.

He smashed James Faulkner, who took Australia's best T20 figures during a five-wicket haul in the last match, for two fours and a six as the left-arm paceman leaked 19 runs.

Kohli then hit Nathan Coulter-Nile for four boundaries in the

next over to bring down India's target to just four runs off the final six balls with captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni finishing it off with another four off Faulkner.

Earlier, Australia's Aaron Finch (43) and Usman Khawaja (26) smashed the bowlers to all corners of the ground after Smith decided to bat on a pitch that was used for the women's game between India and West Indies earlier yesterday.

Left-handed Khawaja's first six scoring shots were all boundaries, four of them coming against paceman Jasprit Bumrah in one over, with Australia racing past 50 before the completion of the fourth over.

Finch, Australia's captain in the format before he was replaced by Smith shortly before the tournament, then launched into India's bowling mainstay Ravichandran Ashwin, hitting the off-spinner for two consecutive sixes over long-on.

But some smart bowling from left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja and part-timers Yuvraj Singh and Hardik Pandya, who picked up two wickets, in the middle overs halted Australia's progress as they struggled to hit the boundaries.

Dangerman Glenn Maxwell (31) took his time at the crease but got out just as he started opening his arms. Wicketkeeper Peter Nevill smashed Pandya for a four and a six off the last two balls as Australia, yet to win the World T20 title, took 15 runs in their final over to ensure India had to score more than eight runs an over in their chase. — Reuters

### SCOREBOARD

**MOHALI, India:** Scoreboard of the Australia and India World Twenty20 match at the Punjab Cricket Association ground in Mohali yesterday.

Australia:	India:
Usman Khawaja c Dhoni b Nehra 26	Rohit Sharma b Watson 12
Aaron Finch c Dhawan b Pandya 43	Shikhar Dhawan c Khawaja b Coulter-Nile 13
David Warner st Dhoni b Ashwin 6	Virat Kohli not out 82
Steve Smith c Dhoni b Singh 2	Suresh Raina c Nevill b Watson 10
Glenn Maxwell b Bumrah 31	Yuvraj Singh c Watson b Faulkner 21
Shane Watson not out 18	Mahendra Singh Dhoni not out 18
James Faulkner c Kohli b Pandya 10	Extras (lb3, w2) 5
Peter Nevill not out 10	Total: (4 wickets; 19.1 overs) 161
Extras (lb2, w11, nb1) 14	Did not bat: Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja,
Total (6 wickets, 20 overs) 160	Ravichandran Ashwin, Ashish Nehra, Jasprit Bumrah
Did not bat: Adam Zampa, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Josh Hazlewood	Fall of wickets: 1-23 (Dhawan), 2-37 (Sharma), 3-49 (Raina), 4-94 (Singh)
Fall of wickets: 1-54 (Khawaja), 2-72 (Warner), 3-74 (Smith), 4-100 (Finch), 5-130 (Maxwell), 6-145 (Faulkner)	Bowling: Hazlewood 4-0-38-0, Coulter-Nile 4-0-33-1, Watson 4-0-23-2, Faulkner 3.1-0-35-1, Maxwell 2-0-18-0, Zampa 2-0-11-0.
Bowling: Nehra 4-0-20-1, Bumrah 4-0-32-1, Ashwin, 2-0-31-1, Jadeja 3-0-20-0, Singh 3-0-19-1, Pandya 4-0-36-2	Result: India win by six wickets.

## RAPTORS TIE TEAM MARK WITH 49TH WIN, BEAT PELICANS 115-91

**NEW ORLEANS:** DeMar DeRozan scored 23 points and Patrick Patterson had 16 as the Toronto Raptors ended a two-game losing streak, beating the New Orleans Pelicans 115-91 on Saturday to tie a franchise record with their 49th victory of the season. Toronto was never pushed by the Pelicans, who were down to just nine players on the active roster because of injuries. The Raptors shot 53 percent from the floor and the defense was nearly as good, holding New Orleans to just 43 percent shooting. Norman Powell scored 15 points and Luis Scola 12 for the Raptors, who set the franchise mark for wins last season. With New Orleans' top five scorers on the bench due to injury, Alonzo Gee led the Pelicans with 18 points.

### CAVALIERS 107, KNICKS 93

LeBron James had 27 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his third triple-double of the season while Kevin Love added 28 points and 12 rebounds as the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the New York Knicks. James recorded his 42nd career triple-double and moved within three points of Dominique Wilkins for 12th place on the NBA's scoring list. Even with Kyrie Irving resting, the Cavaliers easily bounced back from a loss in Brooklyn on Thursday, shutting the Knicks down in the first half and pulling away when the lead got down to 10 in the fourth quarter. Carmelo Anthony scored 28 points after a brutal start for the Knicks, who were coming off a home-and-home sweep of Chicago. Kristaps Porzingis had 19.

### HAWKS 112, PISTONS 95

Paul Millsap had 23 points and nine rebounds as the Atlanta Hawks ended the Detroit Pistons' five-game winning streak. The Hawks have won 13 of their last 16 and moved a game ahead of Miami atop the Southeast Division. Tobias Harris scored 21 points, and Andre Drummond had 19 points and 17

rebounds for Detroit but the Pistons couldn't recover from a poor first quarter. Atlanta never trailed and led by as many as 20 in the fourth. Jeff Teague had 12 points and 12 assists and Kent Bazemore added 17 points for Atlanta.

### NETS 120, PACERS 110

Brook Lopez scored 23 points and Bojan Bogdanovic added 18 as the Brooklyn Nets beat the Indiana Pacers. Sergey Karasev scored a career-high 17 points for the Nets, who took a 104-102 lead on Bogdanovic's 3-pointer with 5:41 remaining in the game. Lopez then scored nine consecutive points for Brooklyn before Bogdanovic nailed a contested 3-pointer to put Brooklyn ahead 116-110 with 39 seconds remaining. Paul George then missed a 3-pointer with 25 seconds remaining, sealing the win for Brooklyn. George finished with 27 points for the Pacers.

### MAGIC 111, BULLS 89

Orlando journeyman center Dewayne Dedmon scored a career-high 18 points and grabbed 13 rebounds while Jason Smith added 14 off the bench as the Magic dealt the Chicago Bulls a blow to their fading playoff hopes. Elfrid Payton scored 15 points and had 10 assists and Evan Fournier added 12 points for the Magic, who ended a six-game losing streak. The Bulls (36-36), fighting to climb back into the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference, dropped their third straight game. Taj Gibson, who dominated in the paint, led the Bulls with 16 points on 8-of-9 shooting.

### JAZZ 93, TIMBERWOLVES 84

Gordon Hayward scored 16 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter as the Utah Jazz finished a five-game road trip with victory over the Minnesota

Timberwolves. Hayward had just two points on 1-of-6 shooting in the first three quarters. But he shot 6 of 9 in the fourth and Derrick Favors chipped in with 19 points and five rebounds to get the Jazz a much-needed victory as they make a push for the playoffs. The Jazz (36-37) entered tied with Dallas for eighth in the Western Conference and have won seven of their last nine. Ricky Rubio scored 23 points on 9-of-12 shooting for the Timberwolves, who missed a chance for their first three-game winning streak since Nov. 27. The Wolves shot 38 percent and fell to 2-12 on the second night of a back-to-back.

### THUNDER 111, SPURS 92

Kevin Durant scored 31 points and Russell Westbrook added 29 to help the Thunder defeat the short-handed San Antonio Spurs. Enes Kanter had 20 points and 10 rebounds and Serge Ibaka added 15 points and eight rebounds for Oklahoma City, which won its seventh straight. It wasn't the late-season showdown that was anticipated when the schedule first came out - the Spurs rested Kawhi Leonard, LaMarcus Aldridge, Tim Duncan, Manu Ginobili and Tony Parker. David West and Jonathon Simmons each scored 17 points for the Spurs.

### HORNETS 115, BUCKS 91

Nicolas Batum scored 23 of his 25 points in the first half as the Charlotte Hornets used a 3-point barrage to rout the Milwaukee Bucks 115-91. Marvin Williams added 21 points and Kemba Walker had 18 for the Hornets, who won three of four games in the season series. Charlotte connected on 16 of 29 3-pointers against Milwaukee in this one, a 55 percent clip. John Henson had 19 points and Jabari Parker 15 for the Bucks, who have lost five straight and six of seven. Milwaukee made just four of 16 (25 percent) from 3-point range. — AP



NEW ORLEANS: New Orleans Pelicans guard Toney Douglas (16) goes to the basket against Toronto Raptors center Jonas Valanciunas (17) in the first half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans, Saturday. — AP

# Kuwait Times BUSINESS

MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2016

**National Agencies  
Group receives Platinum  
Prestige Award**

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**ECB leads parade, Fed  
strolls the other way**

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**Mercedes-Benz  
new SUV range**

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## JOBS AT PRE-RECESSION LEVELS IN 10 US STATES

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**DJIBOUTI:** Casual laborers load goods in the port of Djibouti yesterday. The Port of Djibouti is located at the southern entrance to the Red Sea, at the intersection of major international shipping lines connecting Asia, Africa and Europe.—AFP

# MEET CHINA'S MOST AGGRESSIVE DEALMAKER

## TYCOON BEHIND SYNGENTA BID KEEPS LOW PROFILE

**BEIJING:** The tycoon who is offering \$43 billion for Swiss agrochemicals giant Syngenta keeps a low profile, but is China's most aggressive dealmaker. Ren Jianxin, chairman of state-owned ChemChina, is behind most of China's big foreign acquisitions, from Italian tire brand Pirelli to Norwegian chemical supplier Elkem and KraussMaffei, a German industrial machinery maker.

Since 2010, Ren has splashed out an eye-popping \$63.9 billion on foreign assets, some 60 percent more than the No 2 Chinese buyer, according to Dealogic, a financial data provider. It is unusually ambitious, but Ren is an unusual figure - a private entrepreneur who built an empire by gobbling up more than 100 state-owned enterprises. ChemChina, also known as China National Chemical Corp., already is one of China's biggest companies, with \$45 billion in 2015 revenue. Its 140,000 employees include 48,000 abroad in 140 countries. Its acquisitions reflect the appetite of cash-rich but young Chinese companies for foreign technology and brands. Some want to sharpen their competitive edge at home. Others want to get into more profitable global markets as Chinese economic growth slows.

**Drawing from experience**  
Chinese acquisitions include

### OMAN TO INCREASE AIR TRAFFIC FEES IN STATE REVENUE PUSH

**MUSCAT:** Oman's Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) will raise fees charged for air traffic through the sultanate, the authority's chief executive Mohammed Al-Zaabi told the official Oman News Agency. The decision is part of a series of steps by Oman to strengthen state finances as it grapples with a big budget deficit caused by low oil prices. In January it cut domestic gasoline price subsidies; earlier this month it raised prices of water for state, commercial and industrial users, and it is about to cut liquefied petroleum gas subsidies for such

users. The new aviation tariff is expected to increase PACA's revenues by more than 25 percent, improving the sector's contribution to the state budget, Zaabi said in a statement. He told Reuters by telephone late on Saturday that the new tariff would be based not merely on the weight of aircraft, as at present, but also on other factors such as distance. "This year we were expecting revenues of 50 million Omani Rials (\$130 million). With the new tariff we expect to add around 30 percent more. We expect another 15 million Rials." —Reuters

Swedish automaker Volvo, French tourism company Club Med and the American cinema chain AMC. Ren, 58, started out by founding a maker of solvents, Bluestar Co, with seven employees in 1984 in the northwestern city of Lanzhou, far from China's eastern industrial heartland. The Pirelli website calls him "the pioneer of China's modern cleaning industry."

Unlike other state industry managers who are career bureaucrats, Ren can draw on that experience to talk to foreign executives, said Andre Loesekrug-Pietri, chairman of A Capital, a private equity fund in Beijing. He said Ren also has recruited a handful of Western executives, bringing in knowledge of foreign business cultures.

At a news conference with Syngenta's president in February, Ren "looked like an investment banker. He talked to reporters. That makes a difference," said Loesekrug-Pietri. "They realize that today, money alone does not buy you love. It's the way you present your strategy that is key."

In the mid-'90s, Ren began taking control of a string of small government chemical producers. The state retained ownership while Ren was given management powers as the Communist Party tried to revive money-losing industries. According to

news reports, he avoided layoffs by transferring idle employees to noodle restaurants owned by his company.

In 2004, the party bestowed on Bluestar's patchwork empire the elite status of a national-level state-owned enterprise. Today, it is one of 106 companies controlled directly by the Cabinet, alongside PetroChina Ltd. and China Mobile Ltd.

In another pioneering move, ChemChina sold 20 percent of a subsidiary, China National Bluestar Group, to US private equity fund Blackstone Group for \$600 million in 2007. The company said it was the first direct foreign investment in a Chinese state-owned enterprise. Ren lacks the fame of e-commerce pioneer Jack Ma of Alibaba Group or of Wang Jianlin, the Wanda Group chairman who agreed in January to pay \$3.5 billion for Hollywood film studio Legendary Entertainment.

Last month, Hong Kong's South China Morning Post newspaper called Ren the "mystery man" behind ChemChina. He "may be the most important dealmaker you've never heard of," the newspaper said. Abroad, Ren's buying spree began in 2006 with Adisseo, a French maker of food additives, and Qenos, an Australian supplier of polyethylene. ChemChina bought France's Rhodia Global Silicone the next year, becoming the No. 3 producer of organic silicon.

In 2011, China National Bluestar Group paid \$2 billion for Elkem, a maker of silicon and carbon parts. In the United States, ChemChina has so far avoided major acquisitions. But China National Bluestar Group has manufacturing, sales or research sites in California, Georgia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. The company reported \$2.4 billion in US revenues last year.

#### Premium brands

ChemChina's approach shows Chinese companies are increasingly willing to pay what it takes to obtain premium brands, instead of bargain-shopping and possibly being stuck with underperforming assets. Last year, it stumped up \$7.7 billion for a

majority stake in Pirelli. ChemChina already has its own tire brand, Aeolus, but it is low-priced and little-known abroad, while Pirelli commands premium prices.

Ren's first offer of 449 Swiss francs (\$460) per share for Syngenta, valuing the company at about \$42 billion, was rejected, according to the South China Morning Post. Citing unidentified sources, it said he raised that to 480 Swiss francs (\$491), which the board endorsed. To pay for it, ChemChina has lined up \$50 billion in lending from Chinese and foreign banks, according to the business magazine Caixin.

ChemChina would gain access to Syngenta's advanced fertilizer and other agrochemical technology at a time when rising Chinese incomes are boosting demand for food, creating new profit opportunities for suppliers. Also, taking on Syngenta could help Ren stay in charge as Beijing carries out plans to cut the total number of major state-owned companies to as few as 53 through mergers. That can end the careers of managers at companies that wind up being absorbed by bigger rivals. "There is a race for size," said Loesekrug-Pietri. "The bigger and more international you are, the bigger the chance you will be the acquirer, rather than the target, in these mergers."

In a possible hurdle to the deal, members of the US Senate agriculture committee called for a review by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States. Led by the Treasury Department, it looks at possible threats to national security. The lawmakers asked Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew to include the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration in the review.

"We believe that any foreign acquisition of an important US agricultural asset should be reviewed closely for potential risks to our food system," the senators said in a letter Thursday to Lew. They cited possible "consequences for food security, food safety, biosecurity and the highly competitive US farm sector as a whole." — AP

### BANGLADESH ASKS NY FED TO HELP RETRIEVE STOLEN MONEY

**DHAKA:** The new governor of Bangladesh's central bank has sent formal letters to the New York Fed, as well as central bank and money laundering chiefs in the Philippines, asking them to help recover its stolen \$81 million, a senior central bank official said yesterday. The news came as Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith said the government was waiting to hear the recommendations of an investigation committee to decide whether the central bank should file a suit against the Fed after one of the biggest cyber heists in history.

Unknown hackers breached the computer systems of Bangladesh Bank in early February and attempted to steal \$951 million from its account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, which it uses for international settlements. Some attempted transfers were blocked, but \$81 million was transferred to accounts in the Philippines belonging to casino operators.

The central bank official told Reuters that Fazle Kabir, who became governor a week ago, had asked the NY Fed chief and the heads of the Philippines central bank and money laundering agency to assist Bangladesh in retrieving the funds. Kabir asked the Fed to investigate if there had been any lapses or whether it had any involvement in the heist, the official said.

Kabir sent separate letters to the ambassador of Bangladesh at the UN headquarters, and its permanent representative, urging them to pursue the NY Fed. The previous central bank governor, Atiur Rahman, resigned earlier this month after details emerged in the Philippines that \$30 million of the money was delivered in cash to a casino junket operator in Manila, while the rest went to two casinos.

"In his letters the new governor sought all kind of help from them to retrieve the stolen money as we are following multiple efforts for the sake of the country," the official said. Last week Bangladesh also formally sought assistance from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation to track down the cyber crooks.

Bangladesh has appointed law firms to weigh its options vis-à-vis the NY Fed. "We will wait till the recommendations of the government-formed investigation committee," Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith told Reuters yesterday, referring to a three-member committee headed by Mohammad Farash Uddin, a former central bank governor. "We will act as per its recommendations." Earlier this month Muhith said Dhaka might resort to suing the Fed to recover the money: "The Fed must take responsibility," he said. — Reuters





Eram Group CMD Dr. Siddeek Ahmed along with Ambassadors H.E. Prof. in Law. Nguyen Hong Thao (Vietnam), H.E. Dr. Bakhromjon Alov (Uzbekistan), H.E. Dr. Zubaydullo Zubaydov (Tajikistan), H.E. Mloni S. Dlamini (Swaziland), H.E. Prof. Dr. S. Enkhbat (Mongolia), H.E. Mzolisa Bona (S. Africa), Eduardo Nino (Minister Mexican Embassy), Horace Mtalimanja (First Secretary Malawi), Dr Rashed Al-Adwani (Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kuwait), H.E. Kujtim Marina (Albania), Angela Loan (Deputy Head of Mission - Australia), Colonel Thinley Dorji (Bhutan), Ondfej Karan (Deputy Head of Mission - Czech Republic), H.E Sunil Jain (India), H.E. Phouangkeo Lagsy (Laos).

# ITL World entrenches its leading position with new office in Kuwait



ITL Team with the Ambassadors of Mexico, Australia, Albania, India and Uzbekistan in the newly opened Kuwait office.



ITL team with Eram Group CMD Dr. Siddeek Ahmed.

**I**TL World, a leading travel-management company in the region, inaugurated their first office in Kuwait on 21 March at the Safat Center in Kuwait City. The new office was inaugurated by Dr. Siddeek Ahmed the Chairman and Managing Director of Eram Group, the parent company of ITL, in the presence of Ambassadors of Australia, Albania, India, Mexico and Uzbekistan, and country heads of leading airlines in Kuwait.

With the opening of their first office in Kuwait, and their 36th office in the region, ITL World is well on its way to achieving the company's ambitious plans of establishing a chain of fully owned and operated offices across the Gulf Cooperation Council states.

Successfully rated as the 5th most powerful travel-management company in the Middle-East by Arabian Travel News, ITL World has been catering to a wide portfolio of clientele across Asia and the Middle-East since the company's founding over thirty years ago.

"We are excited to have the opportunity to operate in Kuwait and offer ITL World's unique flavor of travel services to clients in both the corporate and leisure segments across Kuwait," said Dr. Ahmed at the inauguration.

A dinner reception to celebrate the inauguration was held later in the evening at the Al Hashemi II ballroom of the Radisson Blu Hotel. The event was attended by ambassadors of India, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Vietnam, Laos, South Africa, Swaziland, Albania and Uzbekistan, the Deputy Minister of Europe Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Rashed Al-Adwani, diplomats from Australia, Czech Republic, Malawi, and Bhutan, as well as airline representatives and top management of ITL, media personnel and a large gathering of well-wishers.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Ahmed said, "As a leading travel management company with presence across Asia, Middle East and Europe, we value



Dr. Rashid Al Adwani unveiling the Holiday Connoisseur brochure

this opportunity to begin our operations here in Kuwait."

"The Kuwait travel market is known for its high-value clients having distinct and discerning selections when it comes to travel destinations. With our new office in Kuwait offering ITL World's unique blend of travel products and services, we hope to attract clients from both the business and

leisure travel segments," he added.

ITL World deploys cutting-edge, in-house developed travel technologies, as well as the industry's leading Global Distribution Systems, so as to facilitate an enhanced 360 degree client experience. Reiterating this, Daniel Naoumovitch, CEO of Sabre Travel Network Middle East, the technology provider for ITL in the

region, noted, "We are proud of our valued partner, ITL's regional and global phenomenal expansion and we are delighted to be part of this success."

"Since our partnership, and their expansion in the region, ITL has proven to be a powerful global player with sharp vision and a successful technology strategy. Their new office launch in Kuwait is another example showing that continuous adoption of technology is one of the main ingredients for steady growth.

We are committed to support ITL throughout their journey and to provide them with the most innovative and effective technologies to further their business goals, deliver high level of services to meet the expectations and diversity of the tech-savvy travelers of today's world and to compete in our fast evolving market place," added Mr. Naoumovitch.

ITL World, which recently inaugurated its Regional Contact Centre in Dubai, has been a

preferred partner of several global travel brands and tourism boards in the region, including most recently by globally renowned corporate travel giant - CTM (Corporate Travel Management), which chose ITL World as their partner across the Middle-East.

During the dinner celebration, ITL World also unveiled its industry-leading travel product the 'Holiday Connoisseur', adding it to other valued travel and event management brands under its portfolio, such as the popular 'Miceminds', 'Arabian Experience' and 'EduVoyage' brands.

By establishing a strong presence across the Middle-East and Asia, ITL World is offering a bouquet of premium travel solutions to a wide range of clientele, from government entities and corporate travelers to Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Events (MICE) organizers, as well as to the luxury travel, sports travel, wellness travel, student travel and other niche segments of the travel industry.



ECB LEADS PARADE, FED STROLLS THE OTHER WAY

LONDON: When Morocco's central bank cut interest rates on March 22, it joined a parade of 46 others that have eased monetary policy at least once since the beginning of 2015.

the second month in a row. American exceptionalism should be on display the day after, with U.S. monthly jobs data showing continued, if perhaps not overwhelming, growth.

Year-on-year inflation

For the euro zone, a Reuters poll shows year-on-year inflation coming in at -0.1 percent, a smaller fall than the -0.3 percent in February, but still an actual fall in prices.

thing it has not had since early 2013. It is for that reason - as well as the fragility of growth - that the bank this month expanded its money-printing and cut rates.

The impact will for the most part not be seen in Thursday's data, but some are skeptical that anything will change soon, and another fall in prices will do little to encourage a belief that things are on the mend.



ATLANTIC CITY: In this Sept 10, 2014 file photo, job seekers create resumes at the NJ Department of Labor's resume clinic in the Atlantic City Convention Center.

Jobs and rates

The US payroll figure, meanwhile, is expected to come in at 200,000 new jobs - which is less than the previous month's 242,000 but still solid in terms of the past six years or so.

rate meeting but since then, other policy makers have been pretty forceful, leading to expectations of at least two more hikes this year.

How the jobs data plays into that was clear from the Fed's last policy statement on March 16. "A range of recent indicators, including strong job gains, points to additional strengthening of the labor market," it said, adding that inflation had also picked up.

There have been some mixed messages lately. Fed chair Janet Yellen sounded surprisingly dovish to some after the March 16

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Sunday 27 March 2016

Table with 5 columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low. Rows include Price Index, Weighted Index, KXS 15.

Table with 2 columns: Volume, Value (KWD), Number of Trades.

Trades

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes various stock symbols.

Trades

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes various stock symbols.

Basic Materials

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like KCEM, REFRRI, CABLE.

Real Estate

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like KINY, FACIL, IFA.

Industrials

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like KSH, NSH, PAPCO.

Financial Services

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like ASOUL, KFIC, KAMCO.

Consumer Goods

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like MHC, ATC, YIACO.

Investment Instruments

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like ASC, OSOS, FUTURE.

Health Care

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like KCIN, KHOT, SULTAN.

Technology

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like BAREEQ, AFAQ, ALSHAMEL.

Telecommunications

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like NBK, GBK, CBK.

Parallel Market

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like BAREEQ, AFAQ, ALSHAMEL.

Consumer Services

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like ZAIN, OOREDOO, HITSTELEC.

Insurance

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes symbols like KINS, GINS, AINS.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report

Global Stock Indices table showing indices like Dow Jones, NASDAQ, S&P 500, etc.

MENA Stock Indices table showing indices for Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, etc.

Global Currencies Exchange Rate table with columns for Currency, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, US Dollar, Euro, etc.

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate table with columns for Currency, US Dollar, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, etc.

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

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

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

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







## MERCEDES-BENZ NEW SUV RANGE: EXTRAORDINARY OFF-ROAD ABILITY MEETS HANDCRAFTED LUXURY

**KUWAIT:** The name long synonymous with exceptional automotive achievement, Mercedes-Benz continues to bridge the gap between on-road excellence and off-road dominance with its extended new SUV family. AR Albisher and Z Alkazemi Co, the authorized general distributor for Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait welcomes the new spring season with a showcase of the full SUV range in its showroom.

Mercedes-Benz's legendary all-wheel-drive technology allows driver confidence and control in any season or road condition. From a sandy incline to a challenging corner, 4MATIC all-wheel drive makes the most of available traction by precisely engaging all four wheels. More than letting all four tires do the work equally, 4MATIC features a number of advanced and quick-thinking innovations to empower each wheel individually as conditions change.

"Promising the superior safety, craftsmanship and performance of Mercedes-Benz with the capabilities of an off-roader; Mercedes-Benz SUVs have long been a favorite across the region," said Michael Ruehle, Chief Executive Officer, AR Albisher and Z Alkazemi Co "From the compact GLA to the uncompromising G-Class, the entire Mercedes-Benz SUV range artfully combines luxury and performance with all-round qualities of a tough, leisure-time companion. Now is the perfect time to enjoy the outdoors, and Mercedes-Benz SUVs and exploring go hand in hand," he added.

### G-Class: The legend lives on

Mercedes-Benz's classic off-roader is beginning another chapter in a success story that spans more than 35 years. With its continuously improved technology and high-class equipment specification, this all-terrain icon has consistently satisfied the highest expectations of off-road fans. True to this tradition, a new 4.0-litre directly injected V8 biturbo engine celebrated its world premiere in the G-Class with all models now offering up to 16 percent more power and up to 17 percent lower fuel consumption.

The 8-cylinder powerplant in the G 500 can

point to an exclusive heritage. It is based on the new generation of V8 engines developed by Mercedes-AMG that have already coaxed exceptional levels of performance out of the Mercedes-AMG GT and Mercedes-AMG C 63. For use in the G-Class, the V8 has been modified to deliver 310 kW (422 hp) with torque of 610 Nm. Other standout attributes include a spontaneous response and high tractive power made possible by two turbochargers, which instead of being configured on the outside of the cylinder banks, are now arranged between them in the V - the so-called "hot inside V". This layout allows a compact design and optimal response. Maximum strength with lowest possible weight is guaranteed by the aluminum crankcase of the V8 engine. The cylinder bore surfaces feature Daimler's NANOSLIDE(r) technology, which makes them twice as hard as conventional cast-iron liners. This minimizes both internal friction and fuel demand.

As is typical of the G-Class, the new models retain the familiar sturdy basis of body and ladder-type frame, which still offers generous reserves to cope with the increased power. Also retained is the unrivalled off-road performance with permanent all-wheel drive, low-range gearbox and three differential locks that can be engaged/disengaged while on the move.

### GLA: Fit for off-road excursions

Progressive in design, serene in day-to-day motoring and with good off road capability: a wanderer between automotive worlds, the Mercedes-Benz GLA reinterprets the compact SUV segment in convincing style. It light-footedly masters all day-to-day challenges and is also robust enough for off-road excursions.

The combination of powerful-distinctive design, exclusive appointments as well as superior engine power and driving performance is unique: the most powerful series-production four-cylinder engine in the world puts 265 kW (360 hp) and 450 Newton meters on the road. The new GLA 45 AMG high-performance SUV also shines with low

emission and fuel consumption figures.

The first Mercedes-Benz in the fast-growing compact SUV segment is highly maneuverable around town (length x width x height: 4417 x 1804 x 1494 millimeters), lively on country and pass roads and dynamic and efficient on the motorway (Cd figure 0.29). The high-quality appointments, developed with a loving attention to detail, and the flexible interior clearly position the GLA as a compact premium SUV.

As a serene day-to-day companion the GLA has a flexible and variable interior. The rear seat backrests can not only be folded down completely, but are also adjustable for angle if required. The large luggage compartment (421 - 1235 liters) is well laid-out and can be loaded without difficulty thanks to the low loading sill and the wide tailgate, which opens and closes automatically as an option.

### GLC: Comfort and space

The GLC is in top form. Under all operating conditions the new mid size SUV excels with the outstanding safety that is a hallmark of the brand, the latest assistance systems and energy efficiency. Fuel consumption has been cut by up to 19 percent compared with the previous model. At the same time, the AIR BODY CONTROL multi-chamber air suspension that is without parallel in this segment, the extended range of DYNAMIC SELECT dynamic transmission modes and the 4MATIC permanent all-wheel drive increase not only the ride comfort, but also the vehicle's sporty agility - whatever surface it is driving on.

The GLC may represent a departure from its progenitor - the G-Class - in terms of appearance, however, on a technical level it sets new benchmarks in all disciplines and the mid-size SUV's off-road capabilities remain as outstanding as ever. The paradigm shift in the area of design affects not only the outside appearance. The model change also signals a marked upgrade for the interior. The new design idiom combines sensual purity with dynamic sportiness and embodies a new interpretation of modern luxury. In addition,

a considerably more spacious interior awaits the occupants and their luggage.

Offering two engine variants, the GLC 250 4MATIC and the GLC 300 4MATIC offer a 4-cylinder petrol engine with direct injection and turbocharging. The former comes with the OFF ROAD Line exterior that includes 19-inch multi-spoke light alloy wheels, radiator grille with twin louvres and chrome inserts, bumpers with a chrome-plated underguard at front and rear, two chrome-plated tailpipes, polished aluminium trim and roof rails in anodized aluminium. The GLC 300 4MATIC comes with the sporty AMG Line exterior - with distinctive AMG body styling, 19-inch AMG wheels, chrome package, and enhanced performance and driving dynamics thanks to the sports. The nine-stage 9G-TRONIC automatic transmission comes as standard on the GLC 250 4MATIC and the GLC 300 4MATIC, offering an impressively high shift speed and perfect transitions for energetic sprinting as well as with gentle, barely perceptible gear changes for enjoyable cruising.

### GLE: Driving performance for any terrain

Updated name, extended model range and even more power: the new Mercedes- GLE is an SUV prepared for any occasion. Celebrated for efficiency, performance and its incredible range of equipment, the new GLE is more attractive than ever.

Thanks to the 4MATIC permanent all-wheel drive system available as standard, the GLE delivers outstanding dynamics and precise handling, even in tough driving conditions. The advantages of the new GLE include best on-road and off-road handling, outstanding spaciousness and high levels of active and passive safety. The new GLE is available in four models: The GLE 400 4MATIC and the GLE 500 4MATIC and the high-performance SUV models, the Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 4MATIC and the GLE 63 S 4MATIC.

Providing added sportiness and dominance, the GLE 63 is also available with AMG power, with a 5.5-litre twin-turbo V8 engine guaranteeing its driver an exclusive experience. Reaching from 0-

100 km/h in 4.3 seconds, it offers sports car agility and spontaneous throttle response. In addition to the basic variant developing 410 kW (557 hp), there is also the highly sporty AMG GLE 63 S-Model to choose from, which is rated at 430 kW (585 hp).

The fusion of CoupÉ and SUV, the GLE CoupÉ impresses with expressive proportions. Available in two models, the AMG GLE 63 CoupÉ and AMG GLE 63 S CoupÉ offer a powerful, hand-built AMG 5.5-litre V8 biturbo engine and a wealth of AMG-tuned enhancements that add unrivalled performance to its sleek coupÉ styling.

### GLS: First class under all conditions

Successor to the GL, the new GLS (coming in April 2016) also sets standards in the world of SUVs as it confirms its position as the "S-Class among SUVs". The only full-fledged seven-seater in the premium SUV segment boasts ample spaciousness and combines luxury with impressive levels of comfort, agile dynamics and also best-in-class safety. Whether put to everyday use or venturing off the beaten track - the GLS meets all requirements effortlessly and comfortably.

Compared with its predecessor, the new generation features improved efficiency, extended DYNAMIC SELECT transmission modes, the latest evolutionary stage of the air suspension system AIRMATIC with enhanced damping system ADS, the nine-speed 9G-TRONIC automatic transmission, state-of-the-art assistance systems and the latest telematics generation with internet access. More power, more dynamics and more equipment are also offered by the new Mercedes-AMG GLS 63 4MATIC. With a peak output of 430 kW (585 hp), discrete suspension and the revised AMG SPEEDSHIFT PLUS 7G-TRONIC transmission, it represents the pinnacle of the GLS model series. Features which come as standard include the AMG DYNAMIC SELECT transmission modes which provide optimum flexibility and the rear-biased AMG Performance all-wheel drive. The GLS 63 4MATIC also shows strength of character with its updated design featuring the AMG brand look and high-quality interior.

# 3

## DRAWS

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## 3 DAYS LEFT UNTIL THE QUARTERLY TRIO DRAW

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank has announced that its Trio Quarterly draw is scheduled to take place 3 days from today at 1pm, 31 March 2016, on Marina FM's Diwaniya Show. 3 Draws will take place at the same time and location. The Al Danah draw will be for cash prize of KD200,000. While the Salary & Red Account draws include a brand new Cadillac CTS and cash prizes up to KD1,000. The draw event will be held in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

To participate in the Al Danah draws, customers must have an Al Danah account containing at least KD 200. Customers can open a new Al Danah account at any one of the 55 Gulf Bank branches in Kuwait. Those who already have an account can increase their chances of winning by increasing their

deposits. This will also increase their chances of winning one of the two KD1,000 prizes, which are drawn each working day.

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

For further information about the Al Danah, Salary and Red accounts and prize draws, visit one of Gulf Bank's 55 branches, or call Gulf Bank's Customer Contact Center on 1805805. General information about Gulf Bank's products and services, can also be found at the Bank's website at www.e-gulfbank.com

## MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS CONTRIBUTES DH10 MILLION FUND TO AL JALILA FOUNDATION

**DUBAI:** Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the world's largest gold and diamond jewelry retailer, donated Dh10 million (US\$2.72 million) to Al Jalila Foundation to support research in genetic diseases and disorders, as part of the company's strong Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds operation is spread across 9 countries in the world. As a CSR strategy, they spend 5% of their earnings from the business back to the same society. In the UAE, as the basic necessities are taken care of by the government, the Group sees the need is in the field of medical research. The contribution for research will ultimately reach to the entire world population, in particular to developing countries where genetic diseases are more severe.

Genetic diseases and disorders, coupled with rare diseases are a major cause of concern for mankind. More than 350 million people worldwide - that is more than the total population of the Middle East and higher than the US population - suffer from rare diseases, 80 per cent of which are linked to genetic disorders.

MP Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Group, handed over a cheque of Dh10 million to the Board of Trustees of Al Jalila Foundation at a ceremony. "It gives me immense pleasure to announce our small and humble contribution of Dh10 million (US\$2.72 million) to Al Jalila Foundation to support research in genetic diseases and disorders in the United Arab Emirates - a nation that has developed so much in such a short time," MP Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Group, said.

"The move reflects our gratitude to the United Arab Emirates - a great nation of great people that are blessed with visionary leadership. As a major retailer in gold and diamond jewelry, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has benefitted from the world-class infrastructure, ease in doing business, safety and security

provided by the government of the UAE.

"Needless to say that we are also blessed with and inspired by the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai - who has created a safe haven for businesses and people to live and work in harmony regardless of their cultural, religious and social differences."

so hospitable to us," he added. "The contribution is part of our corporate culture of sharing and caring with our stakeholders - the customers and the society - and our continuous efforts in giving back to the society."

Al Jalila Foundation, a global philanthropic organization dedicated to transforming lives through medical education and research, was founded by His



Malabar Gold & Diamonds is the flagship company of Malabar Group, a leading diversified Indian business conglomerate. The company, owned by more than 1,700 shareholders, which excels in quality products and services, has more than 9,000 professionals working for its continued success. It was ranked among the top 5 jewelry retailers globally.

Dubai is a melting pot of cultures, societies and religions, Ahammed, himself a visionary entrepreneur, said. "This is our way of saying a big 'Thank you' to our brothers and sisters of the UAE - who have remained

Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Ruler of Dubai in April 2013, to position Dubai and the UAE at the forefront of medical innovation.

Al Jalila Foundation promotes medical education and research by investing in the UAE's medical treatment capabilities; it provides scholarships to nurture a home-grown generation of medical professionals and supports ground-breaking research that addresses health challenges prevalent in the region.



**DIMONDALE:** Michigan State Police Sgt Matt Rogers and Trooper Don Zinz bring the Aeryon SkyRanger in for a landing during a demonstration of the new Unmanned Aircraft System at the State Police training track in Dimondale, Michigan. —AP

## TRAFFIC BACKED UP? BRIDGE OUT? MORE STATES DEPLOYING DRONES

**BOSTON:** That buzzing sound overhead may soon signal the arrival of the 21st-century version of a guy in a hardhat and bucket truck. State transportation departments are increasingly studying the use of drones for everything from inspecting bridges to clearing car accidents.

Michigan transportation officials are set to begin a two-year study. Minnesota has tested a drone to help conduct safety inspections of bridges. Vermont is using federal grant dollars to study the use of drones to monitor river flooding and figure out how much material is needed to fix roads.

And in Massachusetts, a group has also been looking at the pros and cons of drone use, from potential threats to their possible use surveying construction projects. The states are among 33 that have studied or used drones, helped develop drone policies, or aided in drone research. That's according to a new survey by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, which represents departments of transportation in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.

The Michigan study is part of a longer review. In 2014, state transportation officials there conducted a study with the Michigan Tech Research Institute that found drones potentially useful for a range of transportation tasks, from assessing bridge decks and monitoring traffic to processing thermal data and inspecting confined spaces.

The first study determined that drones are safe, reliable, less expensive and help keep workers out of harm's way, said Steven Cook, a Michigan Department of Transportation engineer. "A traditional bridge inspection for example typically involves setting up work zones, detouring traffic and using heavy equipment," Cook said in a statement. "Drones can get in and get out quickly."

Michigan officials estimate that a standard bridge deck inspection takes eight hours, a crew of four people and heavy equipment at a cost of about \$4,600. The same inspection with a drone takes two people just two hours at an estimated cost of about \$250.

At the University of Vermont, researchers using federal grant money are developing

programs to let drones estimate how much fill it will take to repair a damaged roadway by feeding images collected from above the site through a computer program. Drones aren't welcome everywhere. The Massachusetts group includes representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Aeronautics Division, as well as the attorney general's office and the state highway division - an acknowledgement that drones and airplanes don't always mix.

Pilots are increasingly worried about drones operating too close to airports or in flight paths, fueling fears of a midair collision. A report released last year counted at least 241 reports of close encounters between drones and manned aircraft, including 28 in which pilots had to veer out of the way.

Massachusetts officials say that while they're exploring how to develop workplace applications for drones, they also need to work with the Federal Aviation Administration to resolve statutory and regulatory issues. All drone testing must be approved by the FAA.

According to the AASHTO survey, several states have said the application process to research drones can take months. The FAA has already been looking ahead to a time when drones are routinely employed for bridge inspections and other uses. Last year, the agency proposed rules to let small commercial unmanned aircraft - under 55 pounds - perform tasks like aerial photography and cell tower inspections. FAA Administrator Michael Huerta said at the time that the agency was trying to be flexible and maintain safety "without placing an undue regulatory burden on an emerging industry."

The proposed rules would require commercial operators to pass a knowledge test and federal security check. Operators would have to keep drones within eyesight. Cases of flyaway drones getting stuck in trees or hitting buildings have soared. Last year, a drone that its operator lost control of flew over the White House fence and crashed on the lawn before Secret Service agents could block it. New federal regulations for commercial drone testing could be released this summer. —AP

**WASHINGTON:** Stroll around the office or neighborhood six times a day, and earn \$1.50 toward your health insurance. Step up activity a bit more and bring the total to \$1,400 annually.

The catch: you need to wear a special activity tracker that monitors steps taken, "intensity" levels and other physical indicators. That's the offer in a new insurance product marketed by UnitedHealthcare, the second-largest US health insurer, one of many programs aimed at boosting physical fitness and reducing health insurance costs for employers and employees.

"One of the greatest challenges we have is how to incentivize and motivate individuals to be accountable for their own health and well-being," said Steve Beecy of UnitedHealthcare. He called the Trio Tracker device, introduced with technology partner Qualcomm, "a game-changer."

Across the US, employers are stepping up the use of technology in "wellness" programs that encourage healthier lifestyles. Wellness programs aren't new, but technology like activity trackers has transformed them with more precise measurements and automated uploads to verify activity.

A survey of more than 200 large employers by the National Business Group on Health found 37 percent used activity trackers in 2015 and another 37 percent planned to adopt the technology in coming years.

"There is a strong interest (in the use of technology) because of the impact on an employer's long-term health care costs," said Scott Marcotte of Xerox Human Resources, which participated in the study. Makers of activity trackers such as Fitbit and Jawbone have been expanding their efforts to be part of corporate wellness programs. One of the biggest tie-ups was announced last year when US retail giant Target said it would offer free or discounted Fitbit trackers to its more than 300,000 employees.

### 'Gamification'

As a further incentive, Target said it would allow teams of employees which log the most average daily steps to collect more than \$1 million for local non-profit organizations. This strategy of providing financial incentives for healthy activity is known in the industry as "gamification."

Jimmy Fleming of the consulting group Healthy Wage said financial incentives can make a difference in spurring healthier behaviors. "We have a lot of clients who want to subsidize the program and make it free, but it's less effective," Fleming said. "There has

to be both a carrot and a stick."

One program being offered through health services firm Vitality Group provides an Apple Watch for \$25, a fraction of the retail cost. But employees must "pay" for the device by completing workouts and gym visits each month.

Growth in such programs over the past few years coincides with

protections in place," said Bradley Shear, a Washington lawyer specializing in privacy.

"While some employee wellness programs and the data collected may be protected under (federal privacy law), others may not be." A report this year by the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab warned of potential problems. For example, there have been situations where

although insurers cannot sell or disclose personal health data, "they can put a score on your head and sell that." "It's not about making you healthier in the long run, it's about collecting more data to sell and to score you with," she said. Also, some employees will feel compelled to participate because they cannot afford the financial penalties if they don't, Duck said. Sales of wearable



**NEW YORK:** United Healthcare executives Jean McGann and Chuck Cerniglia (right) pose wearing special activity trackers at their office in New York. —AFP



incentives to meet Obamacare goals on preventive care, and with new research suggesting that more activity can ward off many medical ailments.

### Data mining

But the new programs raise questions about private data collected and stored by insurers. While employers and insurers must comply with US privacy regulations so that health data cannot be seen or used by employers, critics still worry. "Technology is outpacing the legal

fitness tracker-related information was introduced in sexual assault cases or personal injury claims.

"Such data, if it can be manipulated, brings such evidence into question as well as the broader trustworthiness of fitness tracker data ... there are also concerns that the radios in fitness trackers could be used to monitor their wearers' movements," the report said. Barbara Duck, a technology consultant who writes a blog on health privacy, said the financial incentives are not worth it. Duck said that

tech devices surged nearly 200 percent in the third quarter of last year to 21 million units, according to the latest IDC survey. Some surveys show as many as 20 percent of Americans use a fitness tracker. IDC analyst Lynne Dunbrack said it will take time to see if fitness trackers take hold in the workplace and achieve their goals. "Part of the challenge with these programs is that the ones who tend to use it the most and stay with it are not the target population for the chronic problems," she said. —AFP



**WASHINGTON:** A pedestrians text messages while crossing the street in downtown Washington. A New Jersey lawmaker is targeting distracted walking. The proposed measure would ban walking while texting and bar pedestrians on public roads from using electronic devices unless they are hands-free. —AP

## NEW JERSEY LAWMAKER: PUNISH PEOPLE FOR TEXTING WHILE WALKING

**TRENTON, NJ:** Jared Schumacher is among the hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans who routinely use electronic devices to text, listen to music or do other tasks as they walk outdoors.

But if a "distracted walking" measure recently proposed by a state assemblywoman eventually becomes law, the Trenton man and others like him could be facing fines or even jail time.

"I admit that I'm usually listening to music, talking on my phone or texting while I'm walking around," the 20-year-old said while responding to a text as he walked along a street in the state capital last weekend. "I've never hurt myself, but I've seen people walk into poles or trip over a big crack in the sidewalk."

Experts say distracted walking is a growing problem around the globe, as people of all ages become more dependent on electronic devices for personal and professional matters.

They also note pedestrian deaths have been rising in recent years. Eleven percent of all fatalities in 2005 involved pedestrians, but that number rose to 15 percent in 2014.

The rise in deaths coincides with states introducing bills that target pedestrians and/or bicyclists. For instance, a bill pend-

ing in Hawaii would fine someone \$250 if he or she crossed the street with an electronic device. In recent years, similar bills have failed in states including Arkansas, Illinois, Nevada and New York.

"Thus far, no states have enacted a law specifically targeting distracted bicyclists or pedestrians," said Douglas Shinkle, transportation program director for the National Conference of State Legislatures. But he added that "a few states continue to introduce legislation every year."

The measure recently introduced by New Jersey Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt would ban walking while texting and bar pedestrians on public roads from using electronic communication devices unless they are hands-free. Violators would face fines of up to \$50, 15 days imprisonment or both, which is the same penalty as jaywalking. Half of the fine would be allocated to safety education about the dangers of walking and texting, Lampitt, a Democrat, said.

Some see the proposal as an unnecessary government overreach, while others say they understand Lampitt's reasoning. But most agree that people need to be made aware of the issue rather than taking for granted that nothing bad will happen to them. —AP

## HOW CHATBOT LEARNED A LITTLE TOO MUCH ONLINE

**SAN FRANCISCO:** OMG! Did you hear about the artificial intelligence program that Microsoft designed to chat like a teenage girl? It was totally yanked offline in less than a day, after it began spouting racist, sexist and otherwise offensive remarks.

Microsoft said it was all the fault of some really mean people, who launched a "coordinated effort" to make the chatbot known as Tay "respond in inappropriate ways." To which one artificial intelligence expert responded: Duh! Well, he didn't really say that. But computer scientist Kris Hammond did say, "I can't believe they didn't see this coming."

Microsoft said its researchers created Tay as an experiment to learn more about computers and human conversation. On its website, the company said the program was targeted to an audience of 18 to 24-year-olds and was "designed to engage and entertain people where they connect with each other online through casual and playful conversation."

In other words, the program used a lot of slang and tried to provide humorous responses when people sent it messages and photos. The chatbot went live on Wednesday, and Microsoft invited the public to chat with Tay on Twitter and some other messaging services popular with teens and young adults.

"The more you chat with Tay the smarter she gets, so the experience can be more personalized for you," the company said. But some users found Tay's responses odd, and others found it wasn't hard to nudge Tay into making offensive comments, apparently prompted by repeated questions or statements that contained offensive words. Soon, Tay was making sympathetic references to Hitler - and creating a furor on social media.

"Unfortunately, within the first 24 hours of coming online, we became aware of a coordinated effort by some users to abuse Tay's commenting skills to have Tay respond in inappropriate ways," Microsoft said in a state-

ment. While the company didn't elaborate, Hammond says it appears Microsoft made no effort to prepare Tay with appropriate responses to certain words or topics. Tay seems to be a version of "call and response" technology, added Hammond, who studies artificial intelligence at Northwestern University and also serves as chief scientist for Narrative Science, a company that develops computer programs that turn data into narrative reports.

"Everyone keeps saying that Tay learned this or that it became racist," Hammond said. "It didn't." The program most likely reflected things it was told, probably more than once, by people who decided to see what would happen, he said.

The problem is that Microsoft turned Tay loose online, where many people consider it entertaining to stir things up - or worse. The company should have realized that people would try a variety of conversational gambits with Tay, said Caroline Sindors, an expert on "conversational analytics" who works on chat robots for another tech company. (She asked not to identify it because she wasn't speaking in an official capacity.) She called Tay "an example of bad design."

Instead of building in some guidelines for how the program would deal with controversial topics, Sindors added, it appears Tay was mostly left to learn from whatever it was told. "This is a really good example of machine learning," said Sindors. "It's learning from input. That means it needs constant maintenance."

Sindors said she hopes Microsoft will release the program again, but only after "doing some work" on it first. Microsoft said it's "making adjustments" on Tay, but there was no word on when Tay might be back. Most of the messages on its Twitter account were deleted by Thursday afternoon. "c u soon humans need sleep now so many conversations today thx," said the latest remaining post. —AP



**The Microsoft Corp logo outside the Microsoft Visitor Center in Redmond, Washington. —AP**

## FDA OUTLINES STANDARDS FOR ANTI-ABUSE GENERIC PAINKILLERS

**WASHINGTON:** Federal officials are encouraging generic drugmakers to reformulate their painkillers to make them harder to abuse, the latest in a string of steps designed to combat abuse of highly-addictive pain drugs like codeine and oxycodone. The Food and Drug Administration published draft guidelines outlining testing standards for harder-to-abuse generic painkillers. The agency has already approved five brand-name opioid pain drugs which are designed to discourage abuse. The current version of OxyContin, for example, is difficult to crush, discouraging abusers from snorting or dissolving the tablets to get high.

But these abuse-deterrent painkillers represent a small fraction of the market for opioid pain drugs, which is dominated by low-cost generics. The FDA draft guidelines released Thursday outline studies needed to show that generic opioids have the same anti-abuse properties as their brand-name counterparts. Generic drugs receive a streamlined



**WASHINGTON:** Dr Robert Califf, President Barack Obama's nominee to lead the Food and Drug Administration, testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington, before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing on his nomination.

review process at the FDA, which helps speed their path to market and reduce the prices passed onto consumers.

Generally, manufacturers only need show that their products are chemically equivalent to the original version, rather than conduct new clinical studies in patients.

Thursday's proposal comes just days after the FDA said it would add a new boxed warning - the most serious type - to some 175 immediate-release painkillers, including both branded and generics. That action is one in a series of measures promised by new FDA Commissioner Dr Robert Califf, who was confirmed by the Senate last month. Califf's confirmation was held up by Senate lawmakers who said the agency needed to do more to combat opioid abuse. For years, the agency only made modest changes to the drugs, emphasizing the need to keep medications accessible to patients with chronic pain.

In its announcement, the FDA acknowledged that evidence on the benefits of abuse-deterrent opioids is still emerging. "We recognize that abuse-deterrent technology is still evolving and is only one piece of a much broader strat-



**SILVER SPRING, Maryland:** File photo shows the Food & Drug Administration campus in Silver Spring, Md. — AP photos

egy to combat the problem of opioid abuse," Califf said in a printed statement. "But strongly encouraging innovation to

increase access to generic forms of abuse-deterrent opioid medications is an important element in that strategy." — AP



**KFAR PINES:** A woman works at the BOL (Breath Of Life) Pharma greenhouse in the country's second-largest medical cannabis plantation, near Kfar Pines in northern Israel. — AFP photos

## ISRAEL SEES HEADY FUTURE FOR MEDICAL MARIJUANA

'FOR CANNABIS, WE HAVE A GOOD CLIMATE AND PERFECT LEVELS OF HUMIDITY'

**KFAR PINES, Israel:** With its moat, wall, barbed wire, armed guards and security cameras, the facility could be mistaken for a military base if it weren't for the pungent odor of marijuana in the air. Here, on the outskirts of a quiet village in northern Israel, 50,000 plants of 230 varieties grow at the country's second-largest medical cannabis plantation. "For cannabis, we are in the promised land with a good climate, 300 days of sunshine each year and perfect levels of humidity," said Tamir Gedo, head of BOL Pharma, a company authorized by the Israeli health ministry to grow and distribute medical cannabis.

The recreational use of cannabis is illegal in the Jewish state, but for the past 10 years its therapeutic use has not only been permitted but also encouraged. Last year, doctors prescribed the herb to about 25,000 patients suffering from cancer, epilepsy, post-traumatic stress and degenerative diseases. The purpose is not to cure them but to alleviate their symptoms. The use of cannabis in medicine divides doctors around issues of addiction and behavioral problems such as aggression. Nevertheless, it has long been known to revive lost appetite and to help in treating sleep disorders, anxiety and inflammation, its supporters say.

They say much research remains to be done but it is advancing faster in Israel, where authorities allow human clinical trials, than in many other countries.

Entrepreneurs, investors and researchers are increasingly entering the business and searching for the holy grail of medicinal marijuana: a purified form of the drug with minimal side-effects and which can be administered in accurate doses. Inside the fortified premises of BOL (Breath Of Life) Pharma are laboratories and greenhouses, with each plant monitored by software that remotely controls its biochemical parameters.

Growing cannabis for medical use demands careful supervision of active ingredients such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which gives recreational users their high but is not recommended for all patients, particularly children. "With the support of the (health) ministry, which has always had a pioneering attitude to this issue, we have built up expertise in clinical trials and we can



**KFAR PINES:** A woman works on the BOL (Breath Of Life) Pharma greenhouse.

share it with companies in the United States and Europe," said Gedo. He cites initial results of trials on patients with Crohn's disease, which is characterized by chronic inflammation of the intestine, diarrhea and recurrent abdominal pain.

### A world hash hub?

Forbidden to export its cannabis plants, Israel is concentrating instead on marketing its agronomic, medical and technological expertise in the hope of becoming a world hub in the field. The prestigious Hebrew University of Jerusalem has just opened a cannabis research center joining 19 other teams from local academic institutions. About 200 industry players gathered in Tel Aviv this month for Canna Tech, an international conference on the industry.

Suited salespeople, some a little red-eyed despite a ban on consumption laid down by the organizers, exhibited products including elec-

tronic cannabis cigarettes, cannabis-based creams and ointments and a remedy for dry mouth. Some startups are focused on the plant's by-products, others on user accessories, but a few have bigger ideas. "Look at what has happened in the past two years, the speed at which legalization of cannabis is advancing," said Saul Kaye, head of the first Israeli incubator for cannabis industry startups.

"We're not going to miss this opportunity, and seeing what the first investors are putting on the table, we feel that it is going to be very big." In January, US tobacco giant Philip Morris ploughed \$20 million into Israeli company Syke, which produces precision inhalers for medical cannabis. At the same time, Israeli firm Eybna announced it had isolated therapeutic organic compounds from the plant without the psychoactive ingredients which make unprescribed use illegal. — AFP



**KFAR PINES:** A woman prepares marijuana plants for smoking at the BOL (Breath Of Life) Pharma laboratories.



**KFAR PINES:** A woman works at the BOL (Breath Of Life) Pharma greenhouse.

## CHILE REPORTS ITS FIRST SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED ZIKA CASE

**BUENOS AIRES:** Chile has confirmed its first case of the Zika virus having been sexually transmitted, the health ministry said in a statement on its website on Saturday. The virus is linked to thousands of suspected cases of birth defects in Brazil. The new case in Chile is that of a 46-year-old woman whose partner was infected while in Haiti. Chile, where the mosquitoes that transmit the virus are not found, has confirmed 10 cases of Zika involving people infected outside the country.

There is growing evidence that suggests a link between Zika and microcephaly in babies. The condition is defined by unusually small heads that can result in developmental problems. Brazil said it has confirmed more than 900 cases of microcephaly and considers most of them to be related to Zika infections in the mothers. US health officials recommend that women wait at least two months, and men at least six, before attempting to conceive after infection with Zika. — Reuters

## POPULAR MUSIC OFTEN TAKES NEGATIVE VIEW OF AGING

**NEW YORK:** Music can powerfully influence mood, and for older people, the negative depictions of aging in most popular music can be a downer, researchers say. They analyzed images of aging conveyed in 76 songs whose lyrics invoke the topic. Most images were negative, they found. "We're aware that the number of people over age 60 will probably double by 2050, and we're very keen that that aging experience is a positive one," said lead author Jacinta Kelly of Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, UK. In music, aging is often associated with dependency and frailty and physical decline rather than with attractiveness, Kelly told Reuters Health by phone.

"What we're trying to get across is that this kind of bitterness or hostility is promoted or conveyed and it's not a trivial thing to explore," she said. "You can absorb negativity and it can have consequences for your health." Harboring hostile attitudes toward aging can have negative effects on cardiac health, while a positive outlook can actually improve longevity by five to seven years, she said. The researchers searched lyrics databases for English language songs relating to age or aging, settling on 76 relevant songs, mostly from the US and UK, with an average of nine songs recorded each decade between the 1930s and today. The number of relevant songs increased sharply in the 2000s.

They found three major categories of depictions of aging: "contented and celebrated," "pitiful and petulant" or "frail and

flagging." Only 21 songs, including Dusty Springfield's "Goin' Back" and Bob Dylan's "Forever Young" took a positive view of aging, while 55 took a negative view, according to the results in the Journal of Advanced Nursing. The rest characterized older people as self-pitying and lacking in self-esteem, as in Kris Kristofferson's "Feeling Mortal" and Leonard Cohen's "Because Of" or with fear and loneliness, as in Celine Dion's "All By Myself."

The study "demonstrates one aspect of ageism in society and in popular culture," said Gerard M Fealy of the University College Dublin College of Health Sciences, who was not part of the new study. "We tend to identify older people with negative terms," Fealy told Reuters Health by phone. "And with chronological age as opposed to who they are as people."

Our society "valorizes youth" and marginalizes the aged, which can even shape public and social policy, he said, citing, for example, recent suggestions by economists in Ireland that older people whose children have left home could be incentivized to sell their homes to help ease the housing crisis, making more space available for younger people. "I would never wish to censor music lyrics, not in any way," Fealy said. "But we can create a counter discourse to redress some of the ageism." "Most older people had a past that was interesting, exciting, and valuable," and most young people, if they're lucky, will one day be old, Fealy said. — Reuters

## DRIVING TO WORK LINKED TO A FATTER MIDDLE AGE

**LONDON:** Choosing an active way to get to work could make a big difference in how much weight creeps on in middle age, a large UK study suggests. Studying tens of thousands of commuters over age 40, researchers found that people who drove to work weighed more and had a higher percentage of body fat than those who got to work by walking, biking or public transportation. Those who commuted by bicycle were the leanest of all, but even taking the train was linked to lower body weight and body fat, the authors report in The Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology.

"We know that exercise protects against obesity and chronic diseases. However, we all struggle to fit enough of it into our busy lives," said lead author Ellen Flint of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. "This study shows that people who manage to build physical activity into their daily commute have significantly lower body weight and healthier body composition than those who commute by car," Flint told Reuters Health by email.

In the US, about one third of adults are obese and no more than about 18 percent commute to work by walking or biking, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. To examine links between commuting mode and body weight, the study team used data from the UK Biobank on 157,000 middle-aged British adults, collected between 2006 and 2010. Body fat was assessed in two ways: body mass index (BMI), which is a ratio of weight to height, and body fat percentage.

Car travel was the most common method of commuting, with 64 percent of men and 61 percent of women reporting they drove for all or part of their commutes. Four percent of men and 7 percent of women exclusively walked to work, while 4 percent of men and 2 percent of women cycled or mixed cycling with walking.

Overall, 23 percent of men and 24 percent of women used an active commuting method either exclusively or as part of a mix of transport methods. Men and women who commuted to work by any means other than driving had lower body fat percentage and BMI compared to adults who commuted by car, researchers found.

### Cyclists and drivers

Even after accounting for a wide range of characteristics and lifestyle information about the participants, active commuting methods were linked to lower body weight and body fat. The biggest difference was seen between cyclists and drivers. Men who biked to work averaged nearly two BMI points less and were about 11 pounds lighter than those who drove. Women who biked were about 1.65 BMI points less and 9.7 pounds lighter than those who commuted by car. Factors outside of individuals' control can influence their commuting choices, noted Dr Lars Bo Andersen of Sogn and Fjordane University College in Norway, who wrote a commentary on the study. But, he said, people need to know that everyday health choices make a difference in the long run.

"The average person gains 1-2 pounds each year after the age of 30 years," Andersen said by email. "This trend will be prevented by simple things such as choosing the active travel, small changes in nutrition, etc." In his commentary, Andersen emphasized that communities need to help people make healthier choices. "The community can provide the environment and especially the infrastructure which makes it possible to cycle and walk," Andersen told Reuters Health. "Switching from car commuting to a less sedentary routine allows us to build more habitual physical activity into the daily routine," said Flint. — Reuters

## ARIZONA BRIDGE BECOMES FOCUS OF SUICIDE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

**FLAGSTAFF, Arizona:** A steel arch bridge amid a landscape known for its red rock formations has become the focus of a mental health and suicide prevention campaign after an increase in jumpers. Four people died after jumping from the historic Midgely Bridge last year - twice as many as any other year in the past decade. The parking lot next to the bridge now has a sign showing a hotline number for those contemplating suicide. The sign went up in September, and more are on the way.

City officials are urging the Arizona Department of Transportation to look into other options so that the site doesn't gain the same notoriety of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco or the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge in northern New Mexico. "What we're trying to do is throw a lifeline," Coconino County sheriff's Chief Deputy Jim Driscoll said. "If someone is there thinking about it, maybe they'll just stop and call the number. Maybe they just need someone to listen to them."

The bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is incorporated into Sedona's logo. It spans a chasm off Oak Creek Canyon with a rock formation that resembles a steamboat in the background. Local officials have been talking about ways to stem the

number of people who kill themselves at the bridge. The Mental Health Coalition Verde Valley formed a suicide prevention task force for increased awareness of mental health issues and training on crisis situations. The mayor and the fire district in Sedona reached out to the state, which owns the bridge, and suggested fencing along it or netting between it and the rocky ground below.

"There has to be some recognition at the state level that there is an absolute opportunity to mitigate the impact, whether it be as far reaching as expanding spending on mental health research or some sort of barrier device," Sedona Fire Division Chief Ed Mezulis said. Transportation spokesman Dustin Krugel said the department is committed to promoting safety but would have to consider the historical and structural limitations of the bridge in deciding what steps to take. Barbara Litrell, facilitator at the Mental Health Coalition, said the group is working with the community to talk to school children, residents and organizations about the effects of mental illness and warnings signs for suicide. "So much of the work has to happen before they get to the bridge," she said. "The bridge is almost like it's too late." — AP



ARIZONA: This undated photo shows Midgely Bridge in Sedona. — AP



CONNERSVILLE, Indiana: Paula Maupin, the public health nurse for eastern Indiana's Fayette County, holds one of the syringes provided to intravenous drug users taking part in the county's state-approved needle exchange program. — AP photos



CONNERSVILLE, Indiana: Paula Maupin discusses the county's state-approved needle exchange program, in the county courthouse.

## INDIANA COUNTIES MUST FUND NEEDLE EXCHANGES SANS STATE HELP

**CONNERSVILLE, Indiana:** One of Indiana's four legal needle exchange programs operates out of a cramped 10 foot-by-10 foot office in the basement of the local courthouse in Fayette County, which is struggling with a hepatitis C outbreak amid the state's growing opioid-abuse crisis. Though just seven intravenous drug users addicted to heroin are enrolled in the program, Paula Maupin, Fayette County's public health nurse, expects that to grow to 75 to 100 participants in the next year or so. The problem is, lawmakers banned state funding for the exchanges when they legalized them last year, even as Indiana's worst-ever HIV outbreak struck in another county.

The four counties - Fayette, Madison, Monroe and Scott - that won state approval for their exchanges after that law took effect last May are cash-strapped and in largely rural areas. They had to scramble to find money from nonprofits, foundations, donations or county coffers to run the programs, which provide intravenous drug users with clean syringes and collect used ones to reduce needle-sharing and prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis C and other diseases. But local officials are hoping federal funding can give them a boost.

Fayette County turned to the Comer Family Foundation and the Washington-based advocacy group AIDS United, which provided \$23,000. Although its exchange won state approval in August, it didn't open in Connersville, about 50 miles east of Indianapolis, until November. "What

we've got, it's fine for now," Maupin said Thursday as she stood next to baskets of clean syringes, packaged cotton balls and other supplies. "But when we have the amount of people I'm expecting, we're going to burn through that money pretty quick."

### Syringe exchanges

State Rep Ed Clere, a New Albany Republican, acknowledged that the state funding ban is "a real barrier" that counties must overcome, but that it's necessary to win the votes of lawmakers. "Without the change in law, syringe exchanges wouldn't have been possible, period," he said of the legislation he authored, which requires the state health commissioner to review and either approve or reject the creation of exchanges for counties that seek them.

Clere said he's hopeful that Congress' move in December to soften a longtime ban on federal funding for needle exchanges, made in response to the nation's opioid abuse crisis, will open a flow of federal dollars to help the county exchanges pay employees' salaries, rent office space and support other aspects. That money, however, can't be used to buy clean needles. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is still drafting rules for applications for federal funding. "The devil will be in the details" of the CDC's process to identify priority areas for funding, said Beth Meyerson, co-director of the Rural Center for AIDS/STD Prevention at Indiana University.

"Obviously they're not going to have funding for every county that wants to initiate a syringe exchange locally. And many of these counties are very poor," she said. Fayette County is among them, having seen several factories close in recent years. And Meyerson said she expects more than 20 other Indiana counties to seek approval for a needle exchange.

Scott County, about 30 miles north of Louisville, Kentucky, was at the heart of the HIV outbreak that spurred the change in Indiana's law. It's operated its exchange since April 2015 - initially under an executive order signed by Gov Mike Pence and later under the new law. Two hundred people are actively participating in the county's exchange, public health nurse Brittany Combs said, and nearly 400 have signed up to take part.

Combs said the HIV outbreak - the worst in Indiana history with nearly 190 people infected and driven largely by people abusing a liquefied form of the prescription painkiller Opana - has "definitely been stopped" by the needle exchange and robust local education efforts targeting IV drug users. It has remained afloat with grants and donations from several groups, including \$10,000 from the Indiana Family Health Council, but will need much more in the years ahead. She hopes federal dollars can arrive sometime this year to boost the county's efforts. "That would really be great. We're kind of in a waiting game right now," Combs said. — AP

## TINIEST PREMIES STRUGGLE WITH SCHOOL AND ADULT LIFE

**NEW YORK:** Although extremely preterm birth is no longer the death sentence it once was, many of the tiniest preemies still struggle in school and have a harder time as adults, two new studies suggest. One study focused on the most vulnerable subset of preemies: those born at no more than 28 weeks gestation. More than half of these infants went on to have moderate to severe cognitive deficits and had academic test scores well below average. The second study looked at babies born before 32 weeks gestation. By the time they reached adolescence and adulthood, these individuals were more likely than their peers born full term to think that health problems lowered their quality of life.

"In terms of extremely preterm infants, there are multiple reasons why we are seeing deficits and poor performance later," said Dr Margaret Kern, a researcher at the University of Melbourne who wasn't involved in the studies. "Biologically, there is a lot of key development that occurs across the cycle, and when that is cut off very early it raises risk - like an uncooked cake, there isn't enough time for things to come together fully," Kern said by email. Some of the same things that may have contributed to their early arrival may also make it harder for preemies to get help in overcoming developmental deficits, Kern added.

"There are a whole host of related issues involved, including less knowledge and education by the mother and father, if involved in the life at all, which often is not the case, and poor

nutrition and other health behaviors," Kern said. Soon after birth, premature infants often have difficulty breathing and digesting food. Some preemies also encounter longer-term challenges such as impaired vision, hearing, and cognitive skills as well as social and behavioral problems.

### Prolong pregnancy

The life-saving medical care these infants receive in neonatal intensive care units can contribute to developmental deficits, said Jill Zwicker, a pediatrics researcher at the University of British Columbia who wasn't involved in the studies. "At this time of rapid brain development, these infants are exposed to procedures for their medical care, such as heel pokes to draw blood, tube insertions to help them breathe, medications etc.," Zwicker said by email. "Exposure to these invasive procedures is associated with slower brain development and poorer cognitive outcomes."

Some drugs and procedures can prolong pregnancy to avoid early arrivals or at least help preterm infants arrive closer to full term, Robert Joseph, lead author of the study on academic outcomes, said by email. It's possible that inflammation may increase the risk of developmental problems, and scientists are working to understand how these things are connected and develop treatments to address the effects of inflammation after birth, Joseph added. The studies published in Pediatrics were not designed to prove cause and effect, however. — Reuters



FRANCE: Nikita, a 9-year-old Lion and his 3 white lions cub look at wrapped packages on Easter at the zoo in La Fleche, northwestern France yesterday. — AFP

# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times  
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## FRIENDS ELEVEN KUWAIT TO FACE TEAM ABBASIYA IN 'AL MULLA EXCHANGE CHAMPIONS TROPHY' FINALS

As the T20 world cup heats up in the sub-continent, Kuwait is witness to another cricket fever - the Al Mulla Exchange Champions Trophy 2016. The tournament saw the semi-finals clashes on March 18 at the Sulabiya Cricket Ground.

Friends Eleven Kuwait took on TCR to script a decisive win. After electing to bat, the TCR put on a competitive score of 93 from 15 overs. Friends Eleven replied in style spear-headed by an unbeaten 42 off 17 balls by man-of-the-match Umar. His blazing perform-

ance saw his team cruise to victory with 6 wickets to spare.

In the second match, tournament favorites, Team Abbasiya upended AMX Eleven. It was a dominating performance in all departments. In the first innings, Abbasiya bowlers made

short work of AMX restricting them to 84 for 9 in 15 overs. Their reply was a stunning display of batting prowess by Abbasiya captain, Sakeer. They scampered home with 8 wickets in hand.

Following the wins, Team Abbasiya will be

meeting Friends Eleven Kuwait in the much awaited finals. The tournament champions will receive a cash prize of KD 750. The runners up will get KD 500 and the second runners up KD 200. This is the biggest prize money given for any cricket tournament.



## GUST HOSTS EXPERT TO DISCUSS DECLINING OIL PRICES AND ITS REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Gulf University for Science and Technology's (GUST) Global Studies Center (GSC) organized a lecture on campus last week, entitled "Declining Oil Prices and Regional Implications". The lecture, which was delivered by Dr Bassam Fattouh, Professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, UK, provided insights to GUST students, staff, faculty, and the public about this pertinent issue.

Director of the Global Studies Center, Dr Martin Rosenstock, said, "The GSC organizes talks by local and

international experts on crucial and timely issues, and there are few matters of more importance for Kuwait than the developments in the international oil market".

Dr Bassam Fattouh examined the latest developments in the oil market and their implications by placing them within a broader historical context. He then discussed the role of OPEC and its current position of uncertainty, as well as the potential resilience of GCC economies to weather the low-price environment in both the short and long-term. Time was allotted at the end of the lecture for a Q&A

session to open a dialogue and share information.

Dr Fattouh is one of the leading experts on the international oil market, and the social and political implications of fluctuations in the price of oil. He has published widely on oil, energy, and security in the Middle East including a variety of articles on the international oil pricing system, OPEC pricing power, security of Middle Eastern oil supplies, and the dynamics of oil prices and differentials which have appeared in notable publications such as Energy Economics, The Energy Journal, Journal of

Development Economics, Oxford Review of Economic Policy, among others.

The GSC regularly holds sessions with renowned speakers on a variety of different, culturally relevant topics, including recent talks by Dr Daniel Brumberg of Sciences Po on "US-Arab Relations in a Time of Crisis", and another by Professor Toby Dodge, Director of the Kuwait Program at the London School of Economics on the "Rise of the Islamic State, the Future of Iraq, and Risks to the Gulf States".



The Tajikistan dance group (Lola) enthralled the audience with their superb performance at a packed hall of Salmiya theatre over the weekend. The two hour performance was held under the patronage of Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Homoud with the cooperation of national council of culture arts & letters. The performance coincided with Tajikistan new year called (Nowruz Festival) which means beginning of Persian new year. The 56 member team of the group has performed in twenty countries. —Photos by Joseph Shagra

### APPEAL FOR INFORMATION ABOUT KUWAITI RESISTANCE FIGHTERS

To whom it may concern

This is an appeal on behalf of Marshal Byiers, a Scottish gentleman who lived in Kuwait during the 1980s. While here, he lived with his family in Fahaheel city, more specifically, in a building owned by Khalif Al-Fulajji.

Marshal worked for a company called EW Sable, and was trapped in Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion. He was held hostage by the Iraqi forces for a brief period of time. He was eventually put in contact with members of the Kuwaiti Resistance by Larry Banks at the British Embassy. While Mr Byiers never met the resistance fighters in person, they spoke over the phone and they provided him with food, cigarettes, and a small radio at great personal risk to them self. The men who knew him would likely be in their 50s now. His personal friend was a Kuwaiti gentleman names Sami Al Dabbous, who we're having trouble locating.

After the war, Marshal returned to Scotland. We are a group of filmmakers who are currently working on a documentary that narrates Marshall's story, and, after 26 years, we are flying him back to Kuwait for the first time, for what will probably be quite an emotional closure to his journey.

Marshal would really like to meet the person that helped him during the Iraqi occupation. Marshall is due to arrive to Kuwait on April 4-9. The documentary tells his story and we would like the opportunity to tell the story from the side of the man who helped him. If you or anybody else has any personal history with this story or anybody involved in it, please contact us at the following email Hamadaam@vcu.edu or phone number (965) 6668-0061.



VISA WAIVER PROGRAM/ESTA AND TRAVEL TO THE US

The US Embassy wishes to remind all nationalities who are able to travel to the United States via the Visa Waiver Program that as of 01 April, 2016 they must have a valid electronic passport. This rule applies even to those who possess a valid Electronic System for Travel Authorization. The US Embassy strongly recommends that all travelers check to ensure their passports are valid electronic passports before they make arrangements to travel to the United States on the Visa Waiver program.

TSC CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL HAPPINESS DAY AT NBK CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL  
TSC PROMOTES HAPPINESS AND CELEBRATES WITH CUSTOMERS

As part of its ongoing commitment to the community, The Sultan Center organized a visit to NBK Children's Hospital to celebrate the International Happiness Day with children in hopes of spreading happiness, uplifting their spirits and putting smiles on their faces. The visit, held on Mar 21st 2016, provided a memorable day for the children and the TSC team. A rich entertainment program was organized with various activities including games, contests, magic show, balloon twisting, along with the children's favorite cartoon characters and an exciting clown

show. The TSC team spent quality time with children including those who could not be part of the activities due to ongoing treatment. The occasion was a true celebration for both children and parents who spent a memorable and fun-filled day. Commenting on TSC's initiative, Lisa Al Gharib, Marketing Manager at TSC expressed, "We wanted to bring the joys to the children, and we hope that with this visit we brightened their day with a gift of hope. They are an incredible group of children whose courage and determination inspire us all, she added. With its overall con-

tributions and efforts to the society, The Sultan Center has a long standing commitment to supporting the community in which it operates. In accordance to its social corporate responsibility and on the occasion of the International Day of Happiness, The Sultan Center organized a series of events across its stores to share this day of Happiness with all its customers and staff and be part of the worldwide day of happiness. TSC stores organized a variety of activities including, face painting, smiley characters, a selfie booth, balloons, and a 'Smiley Wall' where cus-

tomers had the opportunity to express themselves in terms of what makes them Happy, while the stores were themed for the occasion. TSC Head Office Staff also seized the opportunity to spend the day in the store helping and connecting with customers and staff, while joining in the festivities. Lisa Al Gharib, Marketing Manager at TSC commented: "TSC organized this event to take part in the International Happiness Day while celebrating with customers and staff, it is a day to celebrate the happiness that exists within each of us and

share it with those around us. Commenting on this initiative Hani Ismael Director of HR commented that this activity had a positive impact across the organization, staff was enthusiastic to participate fostering a true sense of team spirit". TSC initiative stems from its commitment to share this day with the community while seizing the opportunity to inspire and uplift people and make them smile. TSC has been at the forefront in its social commitment by designing events and activities for the communication which is operates.



KUWAIT SOCIETY FOR THE IDEAL FAMILY HOLDS AWARD CEREMONY FOR MOTHERS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

Chairlady of Kuwait Society for the Ideal Family, Sheikha Fareeha Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah stressed that the ideal mother award had come a long way in promoting its vision on family awareness and excluding all forms of violence and enhancing the concept of being a good citizen. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a special ceremony held to honor the ideal mothers for 2016 in the presence of HH the PM's spouse, Sheikh Sharifa Al-Jassim, Sheikha Fareeha said that the society showed a great deal of care for families by highlighting successful role models and encouraging related national initiatives made by NGOs with the ultimate goal of enhancing women's status.

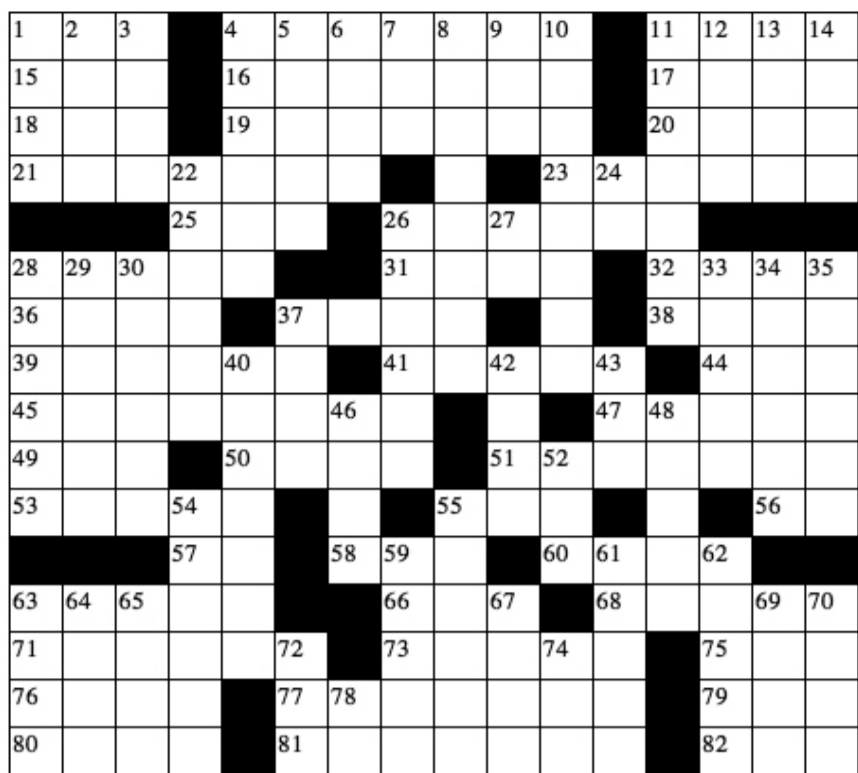








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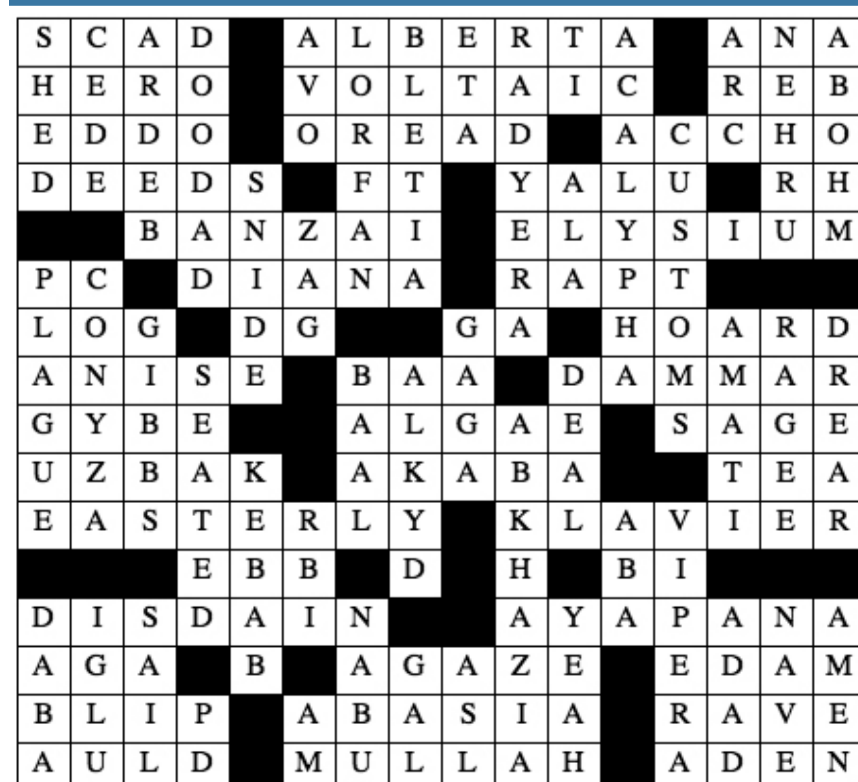
1. Type genus of the family Myacidae.
4. An observation station that is set up to make sample observations of something.
11. An aggressive remark directed at a person like a missile and intended to have a telling effect.
15. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
16. A member of the Caddo people who formerly lived in the Dakotas west of the Missouri river.
17. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
18. The syllable naming the sixth (submediant) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
19. Letter carrier's shoulder bag.
20. God of death.
21. Greek poet who is said to have originated Greek tragedy (sixth century BC).
23. Small tree of dry open parts of southern Africa having erect angled branches suggesting candelabra.
24. A doctor's degree in theology.
28. Tropical American tree producing cacao beans.
31. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
32. Type genus of the Anatidae.
36. Absent without permission.
38. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
39. Mercifulness as a consequence of being lenient or tolerant.
41. British slang.
44. (Norse mythology) One of the Aesir known for his beauty and skill with bow and skis.
45. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
47. (the feminine of raja) A Hindu princess or the wife of a raja.
49. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
50. Relatively small fast-moving sloth.
51. Call before a court to answer an indictment.
53. Alcoholic drink from fermented cider ('cider' and 'cyder' are European (especially British) usage for the fermented beverage).
56. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
57. Being one more than one hundred.
58. A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.
60. A lateen-rigged sailing vessel used by Arabs.
63. An ancient city on the Nile in Egypt.
66. United States musician (born in Japan) who married John Lennon and collaborated with him on recordings (born in 1933).
68. Squash bugs.
71. Having a gradual increase in width.
73. Given or having a specified name.
75. A sharp projection on an edge or surface.
76. A disorderly crowd of people.
77. A member of an Indian people formerly living along the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
79. A nucleic acid consisting of large mole-

- cules shaped like a double helix.
80. Look at with amorous intentions.
81. Of or relating to a basin.
82. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.

DOWN

1. A milkshake made with malt powder.
2. Not only so, but.
3. A dull persistent (usually moderately intense) pain.
4. The Greek lyric poet of Lesbos.
5. (botany) Relating to a plant of the family Araceae.
6. A young woman.
7. A proportion multiplied by 100.
8. The mints.
9. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
10. Myth about the ultimate destruction of the gods in a battle with evil.
11. Armor plate that protects legs below the knee.
12. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
13. A pen that has a small metal ball as the point of transfer of ink to paper.
14. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
22. Russian Soviet leader.
24. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
26. Soviet physicist who worked on low temperature physics (1908-1968).
27. A state in the eastern United States.
29. Physically and mentally fatigued.
30. English novelist (born in Poland) noted for sea stories and for his narrative technique (1857-1924).
33. A group of southern Bantu languages.
34. Report or maintain.
35. Any plant of the genus Silene.
37. The 16th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
40. Of or relating to or resembling a bull n.
42. English actor noted for his portrayals of Shakespeare's great tragic characters (1789-1833).
43. Canadian hockey player (born 1948).
46. A small cake leavened with yeast.
48. American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
52. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
54. A card game for 2 players.
55. A member of the Algonquian people of Maine and southern Quebec.
59. 1 species.
61. Relating to the deepest parts of the ocean (below 6000 meters).
62. Polish filmmaker (born in 1929).
64. Work doggedly or persistently.
65. Make high-pitched, whiney noises.
67. A strategically located monarchy on the southern and eastern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula.
69. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
70. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
72. A light touch or stroke.
74. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
78. A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

As you gather the mail and sort through the bills this morning you remain cautiously optimistic. You are smart to consider the long haul. Wait a little while before you decide to buy yourself a present. Meditation today brings about some real insight-positive. Refinement and relationships are the keys to emotional satisfaction for you now. Harmony and beauty are deeply satisfying-you may want to plant flowers, plant herbs and hang curtains that will let in more light around your living quarters. Again, wait for a few days after your birthday and then you can attempt these things. Close personal ties to other people are a focal point for your afternoon. When the time of celebrations are over this afternoon, more begin tonight!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

A light heart begins the day and others may find you especially witty and eccentric. You may have insights or breakthroughs with regard to your living situation or life circumstances. You may have heard a few perfect jokes recently and just can't wait to try them out on others-laughter happens. Be willing to adjust to changes and offer to help your lover with some project today. There may be more to your romance than you know right now. The wait could be worth the time. This should be an amorous time, with a genuine desire to both give and receive. Neither of you will feel whole without the other. There could be a temptation, however, to make too much or too little of the relationship-keep a perspective and be patient.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may want to discuss long-distance travel plans with your loved ones. If you ever had a day to make a great first impression-this is it. Additionally, this is a great day for working with others whether you are in a place of business, lecturing, performing or some other interesting activity. Your warmth can build confidence and helps solve problems. If anyone is watching, they could be favorably impressed. Spend more time this afternoon in making your relationship last. You have a lot to gain from a long-term commitment. You may need a big push to help this relationship meld together into one. This is not the best time to go looking for someone new.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Mental stimulation via a two-way communication should be a great deal of fun. You will have fun with any kind of repartee. You will feel especially close to a loved one, or any other kind of partner. You will find it easy to get something off your chest that may have been difficult before. Romance can make you a bit nervous. Come to think of it, romance can make us all nervous! You may discover the advantage of romance. You are ending a difficult time and a renewed love relationship can be a delightful way to become otherwise absorbed. It is amazing how the problems are very much thinned when a loved one is available for hugs and kind conversation. Things may not be as bad as you think. New skates will take you back to old and fun memories.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

There could be a disagreement concerning travel or home this morning; however, by this evening there will be compromises that make you happy. You could seek advice on any subject in question today and tomorrow. You can handle many subjects at once. Be wise however, in not extending your energies too far. You restrict your perspectives to areas of examination or study instead of action and you have a tendency to observe situations rather than actually doing anything about them. This opens you up to wonderful opportunities in some form of counseling. Success is available. Medicine, scientific research, psychology, psychiatry and electronics are good vocations for you to consider. Tonight you could consider adding to your music collection.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Creative visualization is one of the most positive ways to deal with change and you could teach others to use some of your techniques. Energy-follows-thought is one way to think of your ability to reach your goals. Once you make up your mind to accomplish something, you can do anything. This is one reason schools have cheerleaders to lead the sports team forward to a winning result. Use your creative visualization when you want to create a better life or when you need to adapt to changes. This positive thinking could also be used to help you find ways to increase your income. You have plans to enlarge the area in which you live and it might involve a spa or a sunroom or some other light and enjoyable place.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Close relationships have a big impact on your life. A partner has a mesmerizing impact on you... Very compelling. Encourage your partner to express his or her talents. You might be looking for ways to help a parent or loved one in an important way, or doing any number of wise and helpful things for others that eventually feels very, very good. After your responsibilities have been met and completed, it is likely that you will seek some fun activity that will include friends. You work and play hard and seem to go at a fast speed in whatever you choose to become involved. If you slow yourself just a bit, you will find loads of fun just waiting to happen. If you are married, it would be smart to invite your main squeeze along for the fun.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is another day that you will accomplish much, whether you are alone or with others. You are logical and can convince others of anything-almost. Strong-minded people are attracted to you because you are a winner in whatever you choose. You are very curious and enjoy challenges-today is a good day for new discoveries and new possibilities. This could mean travel, technical discoveries, hobby or entertainment, like magic or theater. Your influence on others will be phenomenal-a bit of a responsibility! You work as hard as you play and you can be angry as strongly as you are happy. Be wise now in your actions, as you are leading many. Careful, it would be easy to become impatient. Look for fun ways to relax.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

You may decide to take a break from your chores this Sunday to enjoy the great outdoors. Perhaps you would enjoy a short trip if you feel inclined to spend lots of money, don't. Wait a while longer before splurging-there are some forgotten or unexpected bills. You could be most persuasive with others at this time and you enjoy interacting with your friends. You are slow to judge and many of your friends appreciate and respect you. The situation is a natural for self-expression, allowing your particular thoughts and ideas to blossom. You show a great deal of interest in all family matters, particularly concerning your living environment. You may be encouraged to refinish some piece of furniture or to paint. You will have help.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This easy, calm day should find everything running in a smooth manner. Interaction with an older person may occur today. Creating helpful activities for this young-at-heart individual is a wise contribution to this person's needs. You are at the end of a major, long-term cycle in your life and could be heading into some changes while still clinging onto past memories. Faith and love will steer you through this time. Your completeness genuinely depends upon somebody else and you do not want to be alone. You will find the perfect marriage when you set aside the games of youth. If you want to be taken seriously, express yourself outwardly and show a grateful heart. Keep a tight rein over your extra expenses.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Others value you for your ability to make practical decisions, which means if you do not want to be volunteered to do something unpleasant, volunteer for something you will enjoy. Perhaps there are not enough teachers in your religious circle and you find yourself volunteering to help out today. Clear decisions affecting others could be made now. Your emotions or the feelings of those around you may be very clear-a nice time. You could find that you are appreciated or valued for your feelings or your ability to act and get things done. You may be moved to appreciate and discover the beauty in your life and in those around you. A new romantic possibility is around the corner-perhaps today. Enjoy the company of friends tonight.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your emotional orientation is in working with people. Your expertise may put you in a bracket of your own. You have been busy in the workplace this last week. One would think you would want to take a day off from all the problem solving. You, however, seem as busy as ever-helping family members or friends or your favorite group to make money-charity perhaps. This may involve a food drive, a garage sale or any number of other ways to earn money in fun ways. The end results are successful. Try to keep an open mind with others. If your mind becomes totally preoccupied with one particular thought, try to shake it loose by reading the phone book out loud or singing one of your favorite tunes. Where you are is where you need to be.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Old TV Shows 4

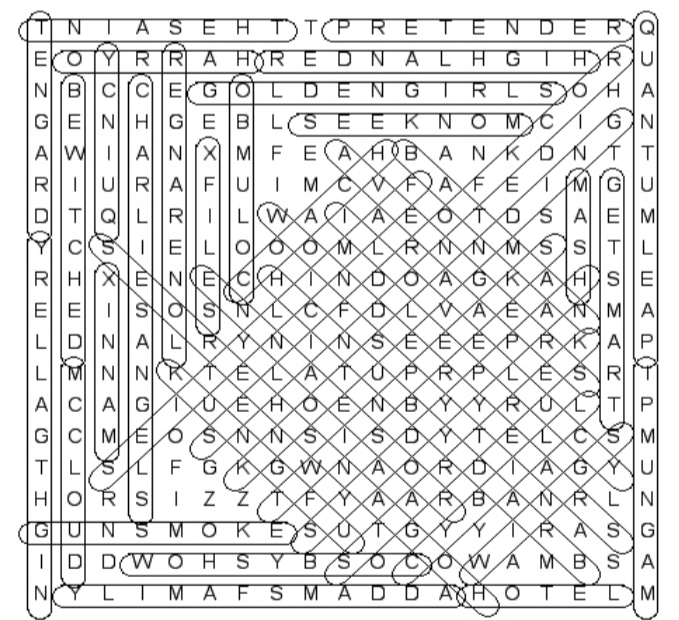
Find and circle all of the old TV shows that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of an additional old TV show.



- ALIEN NATION  
ALLY MCBEAL  
AMEN  
BANACEK  
BAYWATCH  
BLOSSOM  
CHICAGO HOPE  
CHINA BEACH  
COACH  
CYBILL  
DEAR JOHN
- DUE SOUTH  
ELLEN  
EMPTY NEST  
F TROOP  
FALL GUY  
FAMILY  
FELICITY  
FRAGGLE ROCK  
HART TO HART  
HAZEL
- HERE'S LUCY  
IN LIVING COLOR  
LARAMIE  
LOST IN SPACE  
LOU GRANT  
MAJOR DAD  
MARTIN  
MATLOCK  
MR BELVEDERE  
NASH BRIDGES
- PERRY MASON  
PEYTON PLACE  
RHODA  
RYAN'S HOPE  
SEA HUNT  
SPIN CITY  
THE ROOKIES  
VEGAS  
WISEGUY  
ZORRO

Yesterday's Solution

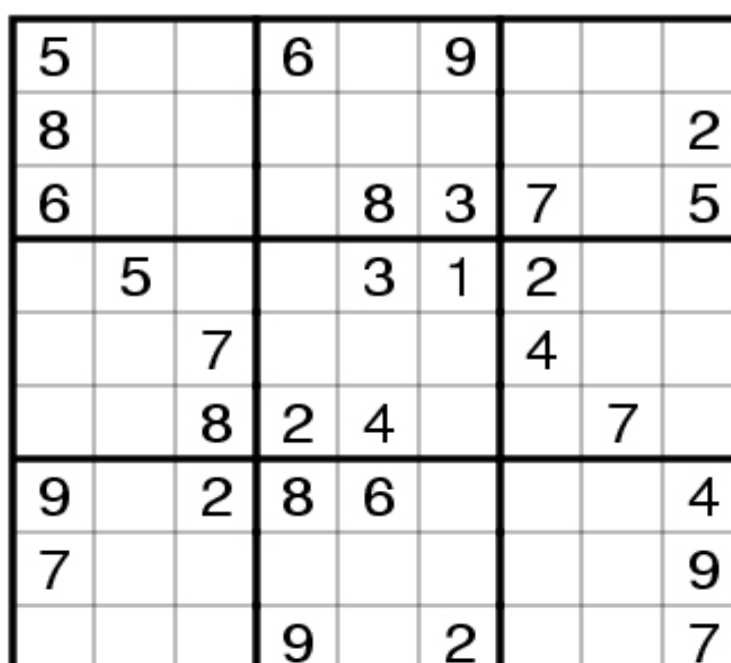
Old TV Shows 3



- ADAMS FAMILY  
AVENGERS  
BATMAN  
BEWITCHED  
BRADY BUNCH  
CHARLIE'S ANGELS  
COACH  
COLUMBO  
COSBY SHOW  
CYBILL  
DRAGNET
- FAMILY TIES  
GET SMART  
GOLDEN GIRLS  
GUNSMOKE  
HAPPY DAYS  
HARRY O  
HIGHLANDER  
HOGAN'S HEROES  
HOTEL  
I LOVE LUCY
- KNOTS LANDING  
KUNG FU  
LONE RANGER  
MAGNUM P.I.  
MANNIX  
MASH  
MCLOUD  
MONKEES  
NIGHT GALLERY  
PRETENDER
- QUANTUM LEAP  
QUINCY  
ROCKFORD FILES  
ROSEANNE  
STAR TREK  
THE SAINT  
TWIN PEAKS  
WINGS  
WONDER YEARS  
X FILES

The hidden TV show is: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GRIZZLY ADAMS

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution







# China

Models parading creations during "Asahi Kasei China Fashion Designer Creative awards" 2016/17 A/W collection Show designed by Liu Sicong at China Fashion Week in Beijing. — AP/AFP photos

## Fashion Week



Models parade creations from the d'nim Chen Wen Jeanswear Collection, designed by Chen Wen at China Fashion Week in Beijing yesterday.





US singer Janet Jackson performs during the Dubai World Cup horse racing event at the Meydan racecourse in the United Arab Emirate of Dubai. — AFP photos

# Janet Jackson returns to stage in Dubai



Janet Jackson on Saturday returned to the stage after a four-month hiatus for mysterious health reasons, bringing her energetic dance show to Dubai. The pop superstar performed in the Gulf emirate as the entertainer to close the Dubai World Cup, the world's most lucrative horse race. She went ahead with the show following a series of cancellations which included an abrupt delay of the entire European portion of her "Unbreakable" tour.

With a troupe of choreographed dancers gliding behind her, Jackson put on a medley of hits including her classic "Control" and the more recent and funkier "All Nite (Don't Stop)." Jackson-whose 2004 performance at another sporting event, the Super Bowl, was marred by the exposure of her breast-left open no chance of a similar "wardrobe malfunction" in the Muslim emirate, wearing an arms-length black jumpsuit with an oversized necklace.

Jackson last year released "Unbreakable," her first album since the death of her brother Michael Jackson in 2009, and embarked on a

major tour. But until Dubai, she had not performed since November 22 in Japan. On Christmas Eve, she announced a delay in her North American tour, saying that she needed an urgent operation.

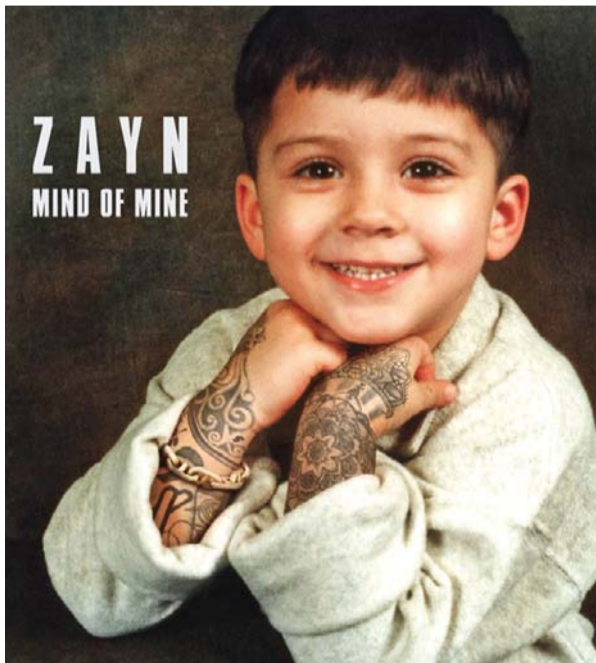
The 49-year-old revealed no other details about her health but later issued a statement to deny speculation that she was suffering from cancer. With her European tour off, she is not due to perform again until May 14 in Las Vegas as she resumes performances in North America.

Jackson has ties to the Gulf as she married Wissam Al-Mana, a billionaire businessman from Qatar, in a private ceremony in 2012. Her late brother moved temporarily to Bahrain at the invitation of a prince as the King of Pop tried to evade the media glare following his 2005 acquittal on child molestation charges.

Janet Jackson helped reshape the concert landscape in the late 1980s with her "Control" and "Rhythm Nation" tours, considered landmarks for their elaborate dance routines and messages of empowerment. — AFP

## Zayn, formerly of One Direction, is appealing on solo debut

Wait, Zayn was in One Direction? You'll ask yourself that question after listening to his solo album. "Mind of Mine" - which comes a year to the day he officially announced he was leaving 1D - is a mostly downbeat R&B-pop adventure that shows Zayn has some true star quality. It's a departure from the pop grooves One Direction have become known for, and Zayn's new songs - in the vein of Chris Brown, Frank Ocean and recent Justin Bieber - are appealing. There isn't a bad tune in the batch of 14 tracks.



"It's You" is a pretty, falsetto-heavy slow groove; "BeFour" is addictive and catchy; "Truth" feels like a neo-soul song of the early 2000s; and on "She" and "Fool for You," the singer reminds you why he did well on "The X Factor," where 1D formed in 2010. Malay, the producer who worked heavily on Ocean's Grammy-winning "channel ORANGE," also works his magic on Zayn's album, as do producers Levi Lennox, xyz, Alan Sampson and MakeYouKnowLove. It may be a group of names you don't recognize, but that's a good thing for Zayn. While his album's sound isn't particularly new, it's unique and tailor-made for Zayn. He's heading in the right direction. — AP

## Niro's Tribeca festival pulls anti-vaccination film



File photo shows Robert De Niro attends a news conference in Macau. — AP

Robert De Niro is removing the anti-vaccination documentary "Vaxxed" from the lineup of his Tribeca Film Festival, after initially defending its inclusion.

"Vaxxed: From Cover-up to Conspiracy," was set to be part of the film festival when it opened next month. The decision to include the film by anti-vaccination activist Andrew Wakefield came under fire, particularly since Wakefield's contention that the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine have a link to autism have been discredited.

While De Niro on Friday defended the decision to include the film, he released a statement Saturday saying he had reversed his decision. De Niro, who has a child with autism, said he had hoped to provide an opportunity for

conversation around an issue "that is deeply personal to me and my family." However, he said after he and Tribeca organizers reviewed it, "We do not believe it contributes to or furthers the discussion I had hoped for." He said members of the scientific community also had reviewed it with him.

"The festival doesn't seek to avoid or shy away from controversy. However, we have concerns with certain things in this film that we feel prevent us from presenting it in the festival program," he added.

A statement from Wakefield, the film's director, and Del Bigtree, its producer, decried De Niro's decision, saying they didn't get a chance to defend themselves against critics of the film. "We have just witnessed yet another example of the power of corporate interests censoring free speech, art and truth," the statement read. "Tribeca's action will not succeed in denying the world access to the truth behind the film 'Vaxxed.'" The Tribeca Film Festival runs from April 13 to April 24. — AP

### Film Review

## 'Ants on a Shrimp'

"Have you got a mouthful?" The dish in question is deep-fried fish sperm, which Rene Redzepi-owner of one of the world's top restaurants, Noma-is ordering his apprentices to taste. That's about as sexy as the culinary documentary "Ants on a Shrimp" gets. Chronicling Redzepi's project to create a 14-course menu in Japan, Dutch helmer Maurice Dekkers devotes most of his film to the celebrity chef's extensive foraging, while his abstemious staff harps on about the onerous pursuit of perfection; one crucial missing ingredient, however, is the joy of eating or cooking. Although gourmands may complain about too much foreplay and not enough food porn, it'll still be devoured by tube and on-demand platforms.

The 42-year-old, El Bulli-trained Redzepi is credited with reinventing Nordic cuisine through his daring use of freshly foraged ingredients; a signature dish consists of raw langoustine sprinkled with ants. Under his stewardship, the Copenhagen-based Noma was ranked the best restaurant in the world in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2014 by Restaurant magazine, despite having earned only two Michelin stars. At the start of 2015, Redzepi temporarily closed down Noma and decamped with his core team to Tokyo's Mandarin Oriental, his second stint since running a pop-up restaurant at Claridge's in London in 2012.

### Claustrophobic dungeon

On the first day of setting up, the team is rattled to find the kitchen located three floors below ground, while the layout of the dining area is less than appealing. "This is unbelievable, and I mean it in a bad way," Redzepi says. For a large part of the film, audiences have to stick with the staff in this claustrophobic dungeon, watching Redzepi raking his chefs Lars Williams, Rosio Sanchez, Thomas Frebel, Dan Giusti and Kim Mikkola over the coals for not meeting his exacting standards. "Our work is not to succeed but to fail day after day," says Thomas, with more pride than frustration.

There's not much footage of food preparation; nor can lay audiences gauge what exquisite flavors the chefs are aiming for, given the Masonic way they communicate: "This tastes

good but it's not working" is one of Redzepi's many cryptic pronouncements. Moments that open a window onto Noma's particularity over ingredients occur only during the team's ventures into the Nagano forest to forage for wild plants. However, watching them nibble on freshly picked leaves or mushrooms oozing slime-and licking bits of soil with the expression of someone fitted with new dentures-doesn't exactly fill one with wild anticipation to see them served a plate.

When you have one of the world's best chefs in a country where washoku (traditional Japanese cuisine) enjoys UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage status, one naturally wonders what synergy might emerge. However, when the chefs venture into the Tsukiji fish market, the results-ramen and fish grilled over an irori sunken hearth-are not exactly off the beaten path. Their interactions with locals, including restaurant patrons, gourmets and other chefs, are also kept to a minimum, and nothing said by Japanese individuals is granted enough significance to be subtitled.

### Okinawa wild roses

After so much anticipation, the presentation of the 14 courses flashes by in a hasty slideshow at the end. While all the dishes have a Japanese accent, such as cuttlefish soba with a dipping sauce of Nagano pine trees and Okinawa wild roses, few of them look mouth-watering-not even a tart piled with 45 freshwater clams that took 13 people four hours to shell. Others look and sound almost off-putting, like black garlic leather, birch cep and scallop fudge-the latter two looking like dry bark and a scrubbing sponge, respectively.

Apparently 50,000 bookings were received, though they were able to cater to only 3,000 over the five-week period-without a single shot of patrons' reactions as they savor the food, or any comments from food critics. One is supposed to just take it on good faith when Redzepi proclaims that responses are positive. It helps to have seen Pierre Deschamps' documentary "Noma: My Perfect Storm," which offers a more intimate picture of Redzepi's career and philosophy, depicting him as a sort of real-life version of Bradley Cooper's chef protagonist in "Burnt". — Reuters

## French rocker Johnny Hallyday brings musical solace to grieving Brussels



French singer Johnny Hallyday performs on stage in Brussels. — AFP photos

French rocker Johnny Hallyday's decision to press ahead with his concert in Brussels on Saturday despite security concerns was met with a deafening roar of approval from fans seeking respite from a traumatic week. The 72-year-old singer, known as France's answer to Elvis Presley, highlighted his Belgian roots as he took to stage for the latest leg of his "Staying Alive" tour, delighting a sold-out crowd determined to have a good time after the horror of Tuesday's airport and metro attacks. "Part of my blood is French through my mother and the other part is Belgian through my father," he told the 11,000-strong audience, which responded with chants of "Johnny, Johnny, Johnny!"

In a still shell-shocked nation, fans said the concert was their way of showing they would not give in to fear. "If we give in to panic, we'd never go anywhere anymore. I'm not worried, I trust the security services and... Johnny!" said Lindsey, enjoying the music with a beer in her hand. Coming just four days after Belgium's worst-ever terror attacks, which left 31 dead, security at the gig was boosted significantly, with police and even soldiers deployed at the Palais 12 venue.

"We have tripled the number of staff and are have police and army reinforcements," Stefan Feldbusch, security coordinator at Palais 12, told AFP. "Everyone is being searched, which is not necessarily the case usually." In stark contrast to Hallyday, US pop star Mariah Carey has cancelled her upcoming gig in the wake of the attacks, citing security fears. Living up to the old adage that the show must go on, Hallyday kicked off his gig in typically flamboyant fashion, stepping out of a giant skull as red lasers and smoke filled the stage, to loud cheers from the audience. Clad in his trademark leather trousers

and wearing sunglasses, France's favorite rock 'n' roller then belted out some of his biggest hits, including "Gabrielle" and "Quelque chose de Tennessee." Brussels resident Michel, wearing a Johnny Hallyday T-



French singer Johnny Hallyday (left) performs on stage.

shirt, said he had come to the concert to "forget this terrible week." "When you see Johnny, you're not afraid anymore." While Hallyday has never achieved widespread fame abroad, he is a musical icon at home and has sold more than 100 million records in his decades-long career. In a sign of the ageing star's enduring appeal, Saturday's performance was broadcast live in some 300 cinemas in France. — AFP



Nathalie Loriot from French Lafayette rock band holds a Belgian flag as she performs on stage prior to the concert of French singer Johnny Hallyday.

## 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows' debuts new trailer



The second trailer for "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows" has arrived with plenty of loud noise and feel-good brotherhood from the relentlessly upbeat terrapin crime-fighters. Laura Linney's character asks at one point, "Who are you-superheroes?" The response: "Just four brothers who love this city." The trailer comes two months before Paramount releases the film on June 3, on the same day that the movie took to the stage at WonderCon in downtown Los Angeles. Combat plus wisecracks abound as Raphael, Donatello, Michelangelo, Leonardo and Megan Fox return with Stephen Amell playing vigilante Casey Jones.

"Bringing back the mohawk-good for you," one of the turtles deadpans to the villain Bebop, who does indeed sport a purple mohawk. Dave Green directs and Michael Bay, Andrew Form, Bradley Fuller, Scott Mednick and Galen Walker are producing. Will Arnett, William Fichtner, Brian Tee, Tyler Perry and Brittany Ishibashi also star. Form and Fuller took the stage at WonderCon along with Fox and Amell on Friday, where they debuted an extended look at Casey Jones' introduction, in which Fox's April finds herself cornered by Shredder's goons, only to be saved by a few well-aimed hockey pucks courtesy of a masked Casey. A fast-paced fight-sequence

ensues, in which Casey still manages to find time to flirt with April. Form and Fuller also revealed some news on the panel: the villainous Krang, who will make his debut in "Out of the Shadows," will be voiced by Fred Armisen. The sequel also will introduce Tyler Perry's Baxter Stockman, a character that the producers always wanted to have in the film franchise. As "the lead scientist of TCRI, he's working with Shredder, and he's responsible for helping mutate Bebop and Rocksteady," Form said. They also discussed what went into making Bebop and Rocksteady, the Turtles' longtime adversaries.

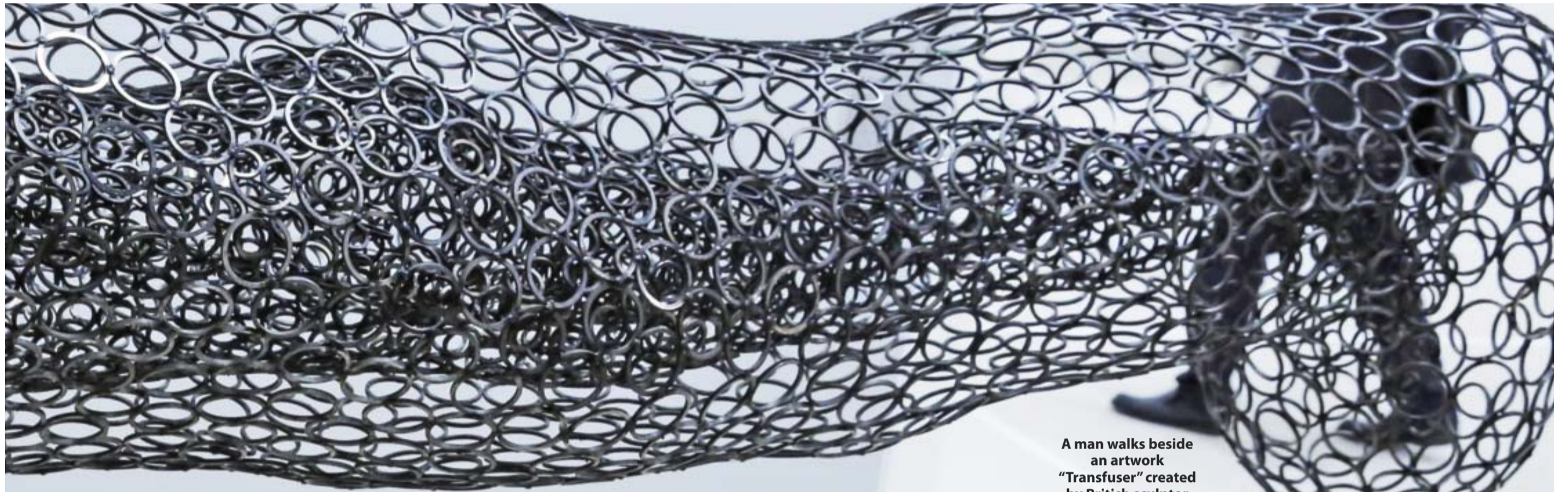
"They're dumb and fun, we call them the knuckleheads - they throw haymakers, that's it, it's easy to dodge them," Form said of Shredder's henchmen. Amell revealed that Casey "has beef to settle" with Bebop and Rocksteady, and that the vigilante is "a guy who feels like the system and doing things the right way have failed him, so he's lashing out." Since Casey is a corrections officer in the film, the producers eschewed the character's iconic long hair, but Amell assured fans that they have time to build towards all the Casey Jones iconography that fans have come to know and love over the years, and confirmed that he does get to wield a variety of sports equipment, from a hockey stick to cricket and baseball bats, over the course of the movie. — Reuters



A woman looks at an installation artwork created by Chinese artist Stella Zhang at Art Basel in Hong Kong. — AP photos



The artwork "Cloison a lames reflechissantes" created by Argentina artist Julio Le Parc is dismantled after the exhibition closing at Art Basel.



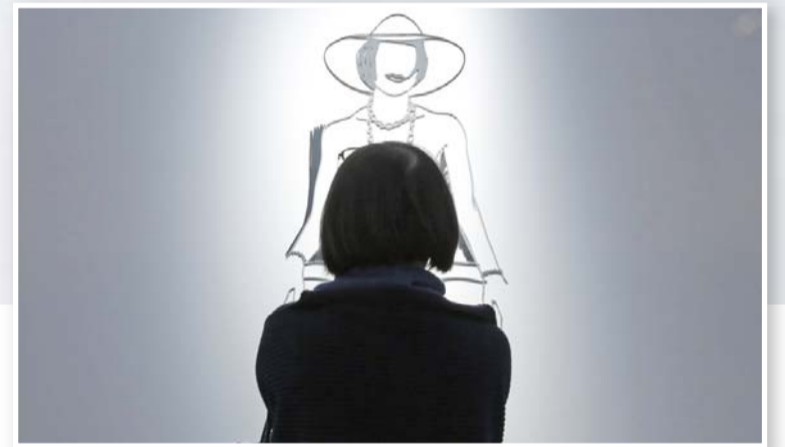
A man walks beside an artwork "Transfuser" created by British sculptor Antony Gormley.

# Art and art lovers blend together in Hong Kong

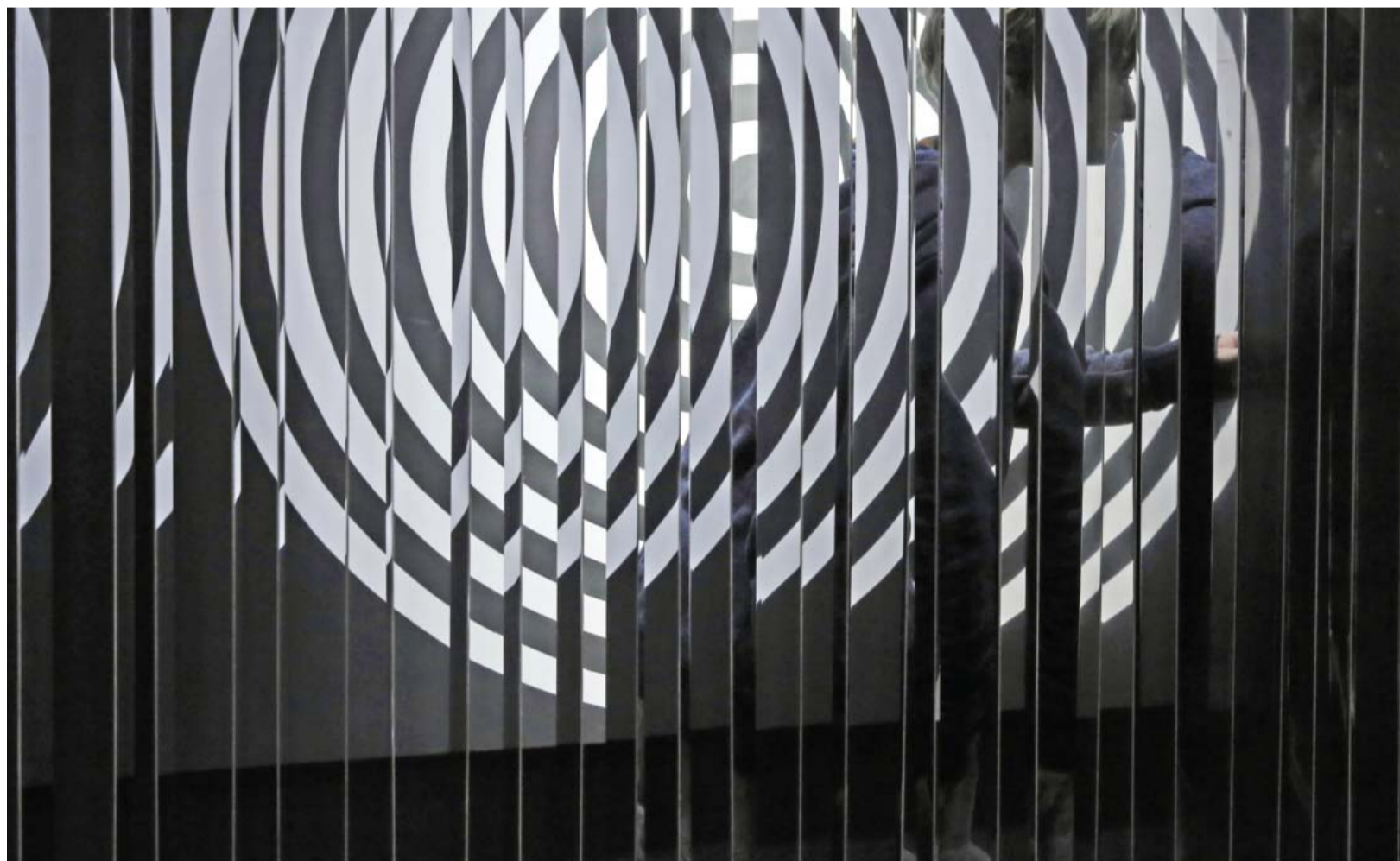
Asia's biggest exhibition of modern and contemporary art brought together 239 galleries from 35 countries and territories in Hong Kong, which has emerged as the region's top art trading hub. Organizers of Art Basel Hong Kong, which closed Saturday, shrugged off concerns about whether China's slowdown and a

shaky world economy are dampening global art demand. "Maybe I think collectors will ask a lot more questions before they agree to a sale, but I think ... it just feels like everyone is very excited about the art world," said Adeline Ooi, Art Basel's Asia director. The show is an offshoot of the annual

contemporary art fair in Basel, Switzerland. The show began in 2008 as ART HK and was bought three years ago by the same group that runs the Art Basel and Art Basel Miami Beach fairs. It's the biggest of a week of art-related events in Hong Kong that has attracted celebrities and billionaires from around the world. — AP



A woman looks at the artwork "Monica Cross Legged with Beads" created by Tom Wesselmann.



A woman walks behind the artwork "Cloison a lames reflechissantes" created by Argentina artist Julio Le Parc.



A woman walks beside "Warlord's Family," an artwork created by Chinese artist Xu Zhen.



A man looks at the artworks by Chinese artist Cai Lei.



A woman walks beside an artwork by Argentina artist Tomas Saraceno.



A man walks beside the artwork "Trans-Aimilios," bottom left, created by Japanese artist Kohei Nawa.



Two men walk beside an artwork "Laura" created by Spanish artist Jaime Plensa.

## Chocolate and drinks:

# Belgians fear attacks will hurt tourism

At the aptly named Planete Chocolat, the shelves are laden with enticing Easter treasures for shoppers: bunnies with bows, pastel-wrapped eggs and elegant boxes of pralines. Swanee Vranckx, a clerk at the shop near Brussels' main square, said she would normally have seen 50 to 100 customers by midafternoon in the days before one of the biggest holidays of the Christian year. But after the bombing attacks that shattered the tranquility of Belgium's capital, only

and wounded 270 are only Brussels' latest brush with violence. Just days before the bombings, Belgian and French police arrested Salah Abdeslam, the chief suspect in the Nov 13 attacks that left 130 people dead in Paris, in his Brussels hideout. In May 2014, three people were killed when a gunman targeted the Jewish museum of Belgium. The notion that Belgium, a small Western European nation of 11 million, might become known for terrorism is shocking to many here. This is a place where



a handful had come in search of Easter treats.

While the city's chocolatiers are quick to offer condolences to the victims of the tragedy, they are equally fast to express their concerns about the future. Their livelihoods depend on people from around the globe streaming into their shops to indulge in their world-famous goodies - and they know that tourists don't go places they don't feel safe. "I'm sure it will happen - people will cancel their trips," Vranckx said. "They think it is a place for terrorists."

The March 22 attacks that killed 31 people

US. President Barack Obama says it was "easy to love a country known for chocolate and drink."

### Belgian chocolatiers ship

And at Easter, the nation's sweet tooth is on full display: shop windows are crammed with chocolate. Belgians are said to eat more than 8 kilograms (17.6 pounds) of the stuff every year - ranking them among the world's top consumers. The country traces its love affair with chocolate to King Leopold II's control of the Congo in the late 19th century, which provid-



Photos show Chocolate Easter Eggs on display in a shop near the EU Commission in Brussels. — AFP photos

ed the country with a ready supply of cocoa. Things really began to take off after 1912, when the son of a Swiss pharmacist created the first filled chocolates, which he called pralines, at his family's Brussels factory.

Today, Belgian chocolatiers ship their wares around the world and Brussels shopkeepers compete with artistic window displays in hopes of luring in tourists on their way to the art museums or the Grand Place, the UNESCO world heritage site. This year, not far from there, residents and visitors alike gathered to remember the victims and scrawl messages of sadness and hope in the aftermath of the attacks. The bombings will cut consumer spending on recreation, leisure and tourism

but they are likely to have only a short-term impact on the whole Belgian economy, according to Francesca Peck, an economist at IHS Global Insight in London. The losses may be magnified because the attacks occurred so close to the long Easter weekend, when restaurants and bars are typically busy.

### Economic activity

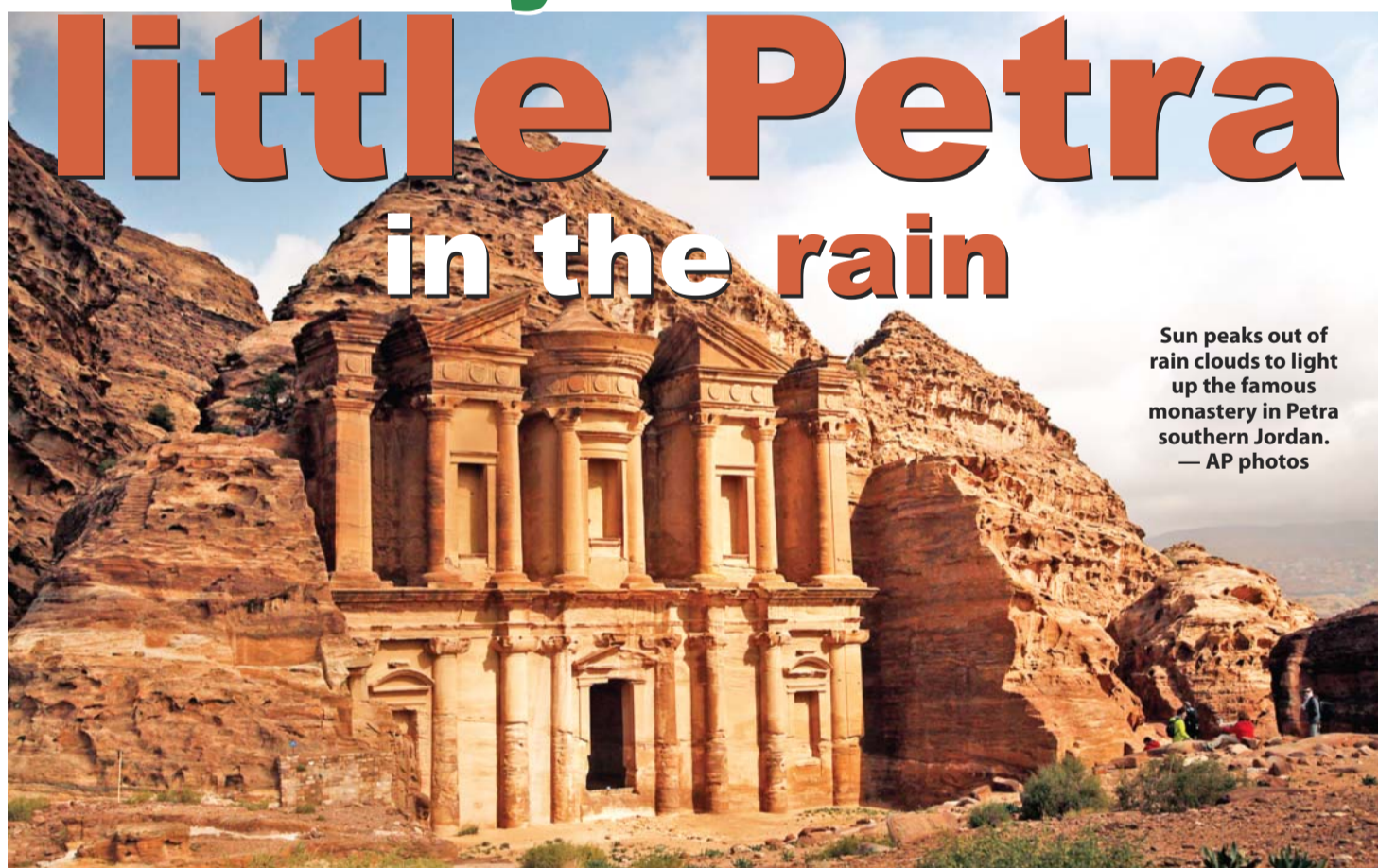
As a result, the Belgian economy is expected to grow 1.45 percent this year, down from a previous forecast of 1.6 percent, IHS estimated. But the slowdown will probably be temporary, as it was after the November attacks in Paris, where shoppers refused to change their habits in the face of terror threats, Peck said.

"As terrible as the events in Brussels have been, economic activity is typically pretty resilient to terrorist attacks," she wrote.

Belgians, though, are worried about what this means for the longer term - will people in Japan, the United States and China change their minds about visiting their beloved cobblestone streets and classic European cafes? Shopkeepers were just beginning to hope things were about to improve as the months after the Paris attacks had passed uneventfully. Now all bets are off. At the sleek Neuhaus chocolate shop near from the Grand Place, manager Tim Verstraeten could only shake his head. "We don't know what is going to happen," he said. — AP

## History revealed in

# Little Petra in the rain



Sun peaks out of rain clouds to light up the famous monastery in Petra southern Jordan. — AP photos

Recent heavy rains caused flash floods across the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, forcing authorities to close the gates of the famed Petra ruins to tourists who were soggy and surly from the downpour. The iconic site boasts gargantuan temples, canals and statues carved into red cliff walls nearly 2,000 years ago by Al-Anbat, an ancient Arab culture now known as the Nabateans. But on that day, water surged dangerously fast past the ruins. Yet still, a handful of adventurous tourists heard the siren call of the ancients, and struck out 9 kilometers north (5.6 miles) to Petra's smaller sister site, Little Petra.

Once, these sites were watering holes on the punishing desert route of traders laden with goods to the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Now, tourists travel the world to see the temples and hike the Nabatean routes recently connected to a 600-

kilometer (372-mile) path called the Jordan Trail. At Little Petra's entrance, locals sold plastic ponchos and umbrellas to bands of shivering tourists. White mist poured over the mountains, obscuring the temples inside into "the cold canyon," Little Petra's name in Arabic, Siq Al-Barid. A thin, submerged footpath through a crack in the rock was the only way in. During the storm, a calm silence resounded but for the rain's patter, the howling wind and visitors' giggles and splashing.

A French family gingerly forded a gurgling gully swollen with mud. An elderly woman from Milan plodded down the canyon in shoes wrapped in plastic bags. The only warmth was the smoky hearth of Aouath Amarin's hot mint tea served at his trinket shop atop the slick staircase at the end of the canyon. "A lot of people never see it like this," said Ian Weir, standing out of the rain inside one of the

Nabatean temples next to friend Graeme Kinkead. With Petra rained out, the two 28-year olds from Belfast, Northern Ireland, were pleasantly surprised by Little Petra's damp grandeur. Wrapped in hot pink and bright blue ponchos, the pair beamed at the well-worn carved stones. Kinkead said the rain revealed the Nabateans' long-lost secret.

They once carved channels and cisterns into the cliffs to catch and collect the arid region's scant rainfall, "so that life was possible here," he said. With this water-wealth, the Nabateans securely straddled trade routes until Romans conquered the area, and they began to fade into history.

What remains are ruins attracting tourists, roads used by hikers and locals, and cisterns still catching rain. Their desert adaptations still work today - if one knows where to look during a rainstorm. — AFP



Hikers gaze across a valley at sheep grazing on a steep slope near the village of Beit Edis and the Roman ruins of Pella along the Jordan Trail.



Jordan Trail cartographer Amjad Shahrour sits atop a donkey on the footpath between Little Petra and the famous monastery in Petra southern Jordan.



Chinese artist Cui Ruzhao (second left) waits with other artists during a press conference in Beijing.

## Painting by numbers: What value in China's art market?

The serenity of Cui Ruzhao's ink landscapes is a far cry from the turmoil of China's contemporary art market. But he can bank on his own status as the country's best-selling living artist. Cui's works reflect traditional Chinese forms and subjects, replete with largely monochrome mountains, lakes and trees. Little known in the West, his works fetched a total of more than \$120 million at public auctions last year, up 69 percent, even as the overall market plummeted, according to wealth publisher the Hurun Report's newly-released China art list.

"When an artist is creating, a very important point is to definitely be sincere and responsible towards your own art," Cui said at the launch of the document. "Do not just see your works as products," he added. Cui is in a position where he can afford to proclaim himself on the moral high ground. But he acknowledged that he watched the market "quite closely," before lauding multi-billionaire art collector Wang Jianlin as a man with "personal cultivation".

Connoisseurs fear that in a system where money dominates the conversation around value, artistic quality risks being sidelined. "China's art market is a chaotic mess. People are always looking for a standard by which to judge works, but art isn't like the Olympics," said artist, columnist and curator Xie Chunyan. "You measure a long jump in meters, but art isn't that simple-money is one metric, but it's not the only criteria." Hurun Report chairman Rupert Hoogewerf said that the art list was intended as a guide for someone like him, who loves "the idea of being interested in art" but "lacks a deep understanding of it." These people are looking to become more educated and cultured and are looking to get into the art world," he said of China's nouveau riche entrepreneurs, "but where to start?"

### Flying in circles

China's contemporary art market is riddled with systemic flaws and inconsistencies, insiders say. The country's system of museums remains weak, and critics are regularly offered "red envelopes" of bribe money in exchange for positive reviews, aiding unchecked speculation. Hoogewerf admitted that the auction

statistics his list depended on were "far from" perfect. "It's well known that a lot of the auction prices might be ramped, and some of the works are never paid for at the end of it," he said. "There are a lot of problems."

It is a phenomenon that threatens quality and development, according to artists and critics. "An art world that focuses on money can only spit out artists of high net worth-not profound or truly great artists," lamented Li Mo,



Chinese artist Cui Ruzhao poses in Beijing. — AFP photos

calligrapher and history researcher at Beijing University. "The art market and artistic creation are like two wings of a bird-if the creative wing is atrophied and the money-making one is strong, our art world can only fly in circles."

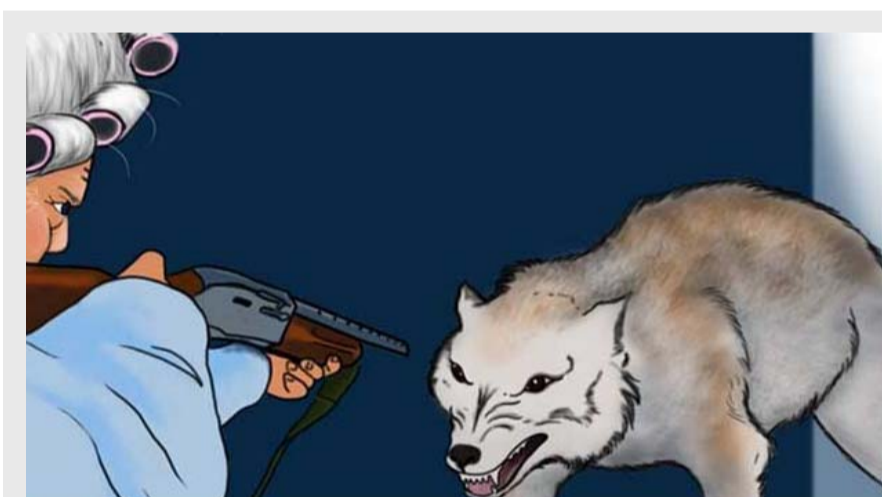
### Test of time

Auction sales for China's top 100 living artists totaled \$565 million last year, according to Hurun Report, down 45 percent on 2014. The fall was largely due to a collapse in volume, rather than average prices, with 6,863 works auctioned over the course of the year, compared to 15,921 in 2014. China's contemporary calligraphy and painting business remains immature and subject to individual distortions, said long-time art analyst Qi Jianqiu. The "deformed market" of years past, he said, was based heavily on gifting practices and had been hard hit by slowing economic growth and an anti-corruption campaign under President Xi Jinping. — AFP



Colorful skull figures are displayed for sale during Holy Week celebrations in Mexico City on March 26, 2016. For many years Mexicans have made cardboard figures representing all forms of evil, which are then torched commemorating the "Burning of Judas," a tradition in which Mexicans torch effigies of the devil, politicians and others they dislike on the eve of Easter Sunday. An effigy of US presidential contender Donald Trump—a hated figure for many in Mexico—was set ablaze late on March 26 in a contemporary twist on a Holy Week ritual. — AFP

## Nigerian businesswoman: A cut above in macho world of diamonds



The NRA has taken its efforts—controversially—a step further by reworking some of the classics from children's literature. — nrafamily.org

### Red Riding Hood packs heat in US gun group's reinvented fairytale

Here is Little Red Riding Hood, rifle slung over her shoulder, confidently striding through the forest. Now we see her granny, taking aim with a shotgun at the Big Bad Wolf. What's that? You don't recall your favorite Brothers Grimm characters packing heat? Then you must not have read the versions of classic fairy tales that have been reworked by the National Rifle Association, to help empower children by teaching them that well-armed citizens—even in the world of storybooks and make-believe—can protect themselves from those who would do them harm.

The powerful US gun lobby has long made initiatives for children—the next generation of future gun owners—a key part of its outreach. The NRA has taken its efforts—controversially—a step further by reworking some of the classics from children's literature. "Most of us probably grew up having fairy tales read to us as we drifted off to sleep. But how many times have you thought back and realized just how, well, grim some of them are? Did any of them ever make your rest a little bit uneasy?" the NRA wrote on its website. "Have you ever wondered what those same fairy tales might sound like if the hapless Red Riding Hoods, Hansels and Gretels had been taught about gun safety and how to use firearms?"

#### 'Twist' on the classics

The NRA enlisted writer Amelia Hamilton "to present her twist on those classic tales." The girl in the story stands little risk of being devoured by a wolf, armed with a firearm as she traverses the forest en route to her grandmother's house. "Red felt the reassuring weight of the rifle on her shoulder," when she crosses paths with the wolf. "His wolfish smile disappeared for a moment when his eyes fell on her

rifle," however. When he tries to engage her in conversation, "she shifted her rifle so that it was in her hands and at the ready. The wolf became frightened and ran away."

The girl's grandmother finds that a gun affords protection not just in the deep dark forest, but at home too, when the wolf shows up there looking to make her his meal. "The wolf leaned in, jaws open wide, then stopped suddenly," the story reads. "Those big eyes looked down and saw that grandma had a scattergun aimed right at him. 'I don't think I'll be eaten today,' said Grandma, 'and you won't be eating anyone again.'" Hamilton told US television that she was surprised that the tales have been criticized by some who fear they try to make guns seem appealing to children. "The stories are really also for adults and it's all about safety," the author told CBS television earlier this week. "I was surprised by the fact that it seems like a lot of people didn't read them before criticizing," she said.

#### Three Little Pistol-packing Pigs?

"Little Red Riding Hood" was the first fairy tale to be reworked, back in January. Next in line is an upcoming retelling of "The Three Little Pigs." The NRA also has put online Hamilton's reimagined version of the Hansel and Gretel tale. In her retelling, the impoverished brother and sister, eager to help find food for the family, head off into the woods. "Fortunately, they had been taught how safely to use a gun and had been hunting with their parents most of their lives," the NRA version of the fable goes. "They knew that, deep in the forest, there were areas that had never been hunted where they may be able to hunt for food. They knew how to keep themselves safe should they find themselves in trouble." —AFP

Nigerian Thelma West is a rare gem in the diamond world as a woman in a male-dominated sector with few Africans, despite the continent being the main source of the precious rocks. The first in her family to work in diamonds, West is used to being an outsider, having been raised in a Jewish family in a country where Jews number fewer than 50,000 out of a population of around 180 million.

"I'm the only Nigerian Jewish woman in the trade, and I don't know of other African women in the business," the 32-year-old told AFP at her London-based business as she greeted customers with a broad smile and sparkling diamonds on her hands and wrists. Discretion and security are essential, with the anonymous-looking building guarded by an encrypted intercom system and a reinforced door, all under the gaze of a bank of security cameras.

#### Lagos to Antwerp

After attending the most prestigious international school in Lagos, West travelled to Britain aged 16 to finish her education. "I wanted to become an engineer because at that time in Nigeria, you had to choose a solid career, such as doctor, lawyer, engineer," she told AFP. But, as the saying goes, "Diamonds Are Forever" and the sparkle of the stones, which had captivated West since childhood, was an irresistible allure. "My mum had loads of jewelry," said the daughter of a Guinness drinks company employee mother and a property developer and industrialist father.

"We were always playing with her jewelry box and she would always



Nigerian-Jewish diamond cutter and dealer, Thelma West, poses for a photograph with a selection of diamond encrusted rings in her office. — AFP photos

clean her jewels, and I would help." West headed for Antwerp, the world's diamond capital, aged 17 despite "not knowing anybody" in the Belgian city. There, she enrolled at the internationally renowned Hoger Raad Voor Diamant school to hone her skills. "Even though you go to school, most of your knowledge comes from working with diamonds day-to-day," she said.

After trying for six months in vain to secure an internship, she was eventually taken under the wing of an Orthodox Jew diamond dealer, who worked with her every evening after school for a year. She was then recruited by one of the biggest diamond suppliers in Europe based in Spain. "It was being sent in at the deep end," she recalled. "I was 19 and

I was responsible for every single diamond the company had." Teaming up with school friends from Lagos who had moved into investment banking, West set up her own business in London to trade the precious stone.

#### Exclusive client list

Metal tongs in hand, West explained the secrets of some of her stock. "Diamonds have fire," said West. "That stone is too flat but it's got a lot of life in it, it was cut about 100 years ago," she said, pointing to one tiny rock.

"This one cost just over £100,000 (\$141,000, 126,000 euros), it's got a low color but it has been cut perfectly so it reflects light in such an amazing way." Fewer than 50 clients, 12 of whom are investors, have access to

West's knowledge. "I can find a diamond and call them and say 'we have to buy this diamond, trust me' and they follow me," she said.

Her multinational client base introduced by word-of-mouth—includes Swiss, Russians, Ghanaians, Nigerians and "a handful of French". Helped by a 10-woman team, West creates all of her company's products, which come with a lifetime guarantee. Her most ambitious creation was a custom-made necklace worth around £2 million. She plans to open a workshop in Nigeria, "where I'll train girls in the art of making jewelry". West gives little away but also said she is creating "a revolutionary tool" that will help people in her business. "That tool should be part of every diamond dealer and every shop." — AFP



Nigerian-Jewish diamond cutter and dealer, Thelma West, poses for a photograph holding a cut diamond, valued at GBP 100,000, in her office.



Nigerian-Jewish diamond cutter and dealer, Thelma West, poses for a photograph with a selection of diamond encrusted rings in her office.