

Bloom Expo promotes environmental awareness



Pakistan death toll mounts as Taliban targets Christians



Bangladesh court rejects scrapping Islam as state religion



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SPEAKER, OIL WORKERS HOLD TALKS AS SALARY ROW RAGES

CABINET APPROVES, REFERS DRAFT ELECTRICITY BILL TO AMIR



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanem meets representatives of the oil workers unions yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Representatives of the oil workers unions yesterday met with National Assembly Speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanem, who vowed that the unified scale will not be implemented before being thoroughly studied by the National Assembly. MP Faisal Al-Kundari said a number of MPs also attended the meeting adding that Ghanem told the unions that the pay scale will not be applied before meeting with the unions and hearing their demands.

Head of the oil workers trade union Saif Al-Qahtani said Ghanem called the Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh and asked him not to take any decisions regarding oil sector salaries before the issue is discussed and an amicable solution is reached. Qahtani said that the Speaker also called on all sides to cooperate to face the current economic situation and that another meeting will take place soon.

In the meantime, rapporteur of the Assembly Human Resources Committee, which will study the new pay scale, MP Awdah Al-Awdah stressed that if the new scale is not applied to all sectors equally, it will fail. He said the proposed scale

achieves justice and equality among employees and does not hurt any section.

Last Tuesday, more than 3,000 workers and the heads of several unions from Kuwait's different oil companies gathered at the OPIWC headquarters in Ahmadi to protest government plans to cut benefits and possibly wages, known as the 'Strategic Alternative'. "We are against the Strategic Alternative which is death to the oil sector. Also we are also against privatizing the oil sector which will put us under the power of private sector and the businessmen," Qahtani said at last Tuesday's protest. Several lawmakers including MPs Kandari and Abdullah Al-Tamimi were present at the unions' rally.

Kuwait's government-run oil sector employs nearly 20,000 workers. The Strategic Alternative as outlined by the government would implement a new salary scale that would 'unify' the salaries and benefits for all state employees including those in the strategic oil sector, though diplomats, doctors, military personnel and engineers would be excluded under the current proposal.

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Min 17°
Max 27°
High Tide 03:31 & 14:44
Low Tide 09:08 & 22:35

News

in brief

Manpower to allow some visa transfers

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Manpower Public Authority is considering a plan to allow the transfer of visas of expatriates on government contracts without the sponsor's approval. The transfers would only be allowed in specific cases. The authority explained the conditions needed for a laborer to transfer his or her visa from one government contract to another without the sponsor's approval. They include; having the laborer file a labor dispute complaint that the contract tenure is concluded; making sure the employer does not need the laborer and paying a transfer fee of KD 300.

Lankan cop critical; man bites genitals

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan police officer was in a critical condition yesterday after a man he was trying to arrest over a drunken brawl bit his genitals. The unidentified sub-inspector was trying to break up the fight at a coastal resort 70 kilometers south of Colombo on Sunday night when the man bit him ferociously through his khaki trousers. "The officer is in intensive care. He underwent emergency surgery to re-attach a part that was bitten off," a senior officer in the area said. "The suspect had been intoxicated at the time, but he is now in custody and will be charged for causing grievous hurt to a police officer."

Israel advises citizens to leave Turkey citing risks

JERUSALEM: Israel yesterday advised its citizens to leave Turkey citing the potential for jihadist attacks after three Israelis were among four people killed in a March 19 suicide bombing in Istanbul. "It has been decided to upgrade the existing travel warning vis-a-vis Turkey from a basic concrete threat to a high concrete threat, and to reiterate our recommendation to the public to avoid visiting the country and-for Israelis currently in Turkey-to leave as soon as possible," a government statement said. The statement said the bombing highlighted the threat from Islamic State group militants "against tourist targets throughout Turkey and proves high capabilities of carrying out further attacks". "Terrorist infrastructures in Turkey continue to advance additional attacks against tourist targets-including Israeli tourists-throughout the country," it said.

Belgian police hunt suspect; toll hits 35

BRUSSELS: As the number of victims in the Brussels suicide attacks rose to 35, Belgian police released a video of a mysterious man in a dark hat seen in the company of the bombers who attacked Brussels Airport, indicating that he is still at large. "Police are seeking to identify this man," the Belgian Federal Police's website said yesterday. The video's release came as a Belgian magistrate also ruled that a man identified as Faycal C, who was arrested during the police raids that followed the March 22 attacks, could be released.

KUWAIT TO DEPORT 60 LEBANESE

THOSE CLASSIFIED 'DANGEROUS CASES' HAVE JUST 2 DAYS TO LEAVE



KUWAIT: Photo shows a general view of the Fahad Al-Salem Street in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Kuwait is to deport 60 Lebanese for alleged links to Hezbollah in the latest Gulf Arab move against the militant group, a newspaper reported yesterday. Those to be deported "all had permanent residency which has been revoked", Al-Qabas daily said. Those classified as "dangerous cases" were given just two days to leave the country, it added. It is the second wave of deportations from Kuwait reported since Gulf Arab states blacklisted Hezbollah as a "terrorist" group earlier this month. Last week, Kuwait reportedly deported 11 Lebanese and three Iraqis for alleged links to the group. Around 50,000 Lebanese live and work in the oil-rich state, providing remittances that are vital to the domestic economy.

The terror blacklisting was the latest step taken by Gulf states, led by Sunni powerhouse Saudi Arabia, against Hezbollah, the leading force in Lebanon's governing bloc which is backed by Riyadh's Shiite rival Tehran. Last month, Saudi Arabia halted a \$3 billion program of military aid to Lebanon to protest what it said was "the stranglehold of Hezbollah on the state". It also urged its citizens to leave Lebanon and avoid travelling there. Qatar and Kuwait followed with similar travel advisories, while the United Arab Emirates banned its nationals from travel to Lebanon.

Hezbollah is fighting in support of the government of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad against Gulf-backed rebel fighters and extremist militants.

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DUBAI AMUSEMENT PARK TO ADD \$454M SIX FLAGS

DUBAI: A massive Dubai amusement park project still under construction plans a \$454-million addition to include a Six Flags, the company said yesterday, yet another major bet on tourism by the attraction backed by the city-state's ruler. The new spending by Dubai Parks & Resorts, which already includes Bollywood and movie themed parks, as well as a Legoland, will put the cost of the entire project in the sprawling desert southwest of the city at well over \$3 billion.

And by adding the Six Flags, it appears the company hopes to exorcise the lingering memory of another massive amusement park planned here to include it before the emirate's 2008 property crash. Dubai Parks & Resorts said its board of directors agreed to issue shares worth 1.67 billion dirhams (\$454 million) to raise money for the Six Flags Dubai park.

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DUBAI: An architectural model of the Dubai Parks and Resorts complex is displayed at their site office in Dubai. — AP

SAUDI, YEMEN REBELS EXCHANGE PRISONERS

RIYADH: Rebels who control the Yemeni capital Sanaa have released nine Saudis in exchange for 109 Yemenis, the Riyadh-led coalition fighting them said yesterday, in the latest sign of tensions easing before peace talks. "Nine Saudi prisoners have been recovered and 109 Yemenis who were arrested in the military operations zone" near the border have been

handed over, the coalition said in a statement. It did not specify whether the prisoners were combatants or civilians.

The swap follows another exchange of one Saudi soldier for seven Yemenis earlier this month amid tribal mediation that has helped reduce violence along the Saudi-Yemeni border.

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On the occasion of World Autism Awareness Day

Autism Partnership Kuwait (APK) invites you to Support kids with autism

(Walk-A-Thon) WALK WITH US

To raise awareness for this noble cause

Saturday April 2, 2016

MEETING TIME: 8:00 AM

WALK TIME: 9:00 AM

From Scientific Center to Marina Crescent

Tel: 2296 9868 - 6906 6668

Autism Partnership Kuwait | APK.Center | @APK_Center



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah chairs a meeting for Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences yesterday. —Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Justice Minister Yaqoub Al-Sana, as well as the newly-appointed chairman and members of the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (PACA).

AMIR CHAIRS KUWAIT FOUNDATION FOR ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCES MEETING



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with President of the Kuwaiti Studies and Research Center Professor Abdullah Yusuf Al-Ghunaim.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah chaired a meeting for Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) at Seif Palace yesterday. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received President of the Kuwaiti Studies and Research Center Professor Abdullah Yusuf Al-Ghunaim, on the occasion of his winning the King Faisal International Prize (KFIP).

His Highness the Amir praised Ghunaim's prominent role and continued excellence in the research and studies field, wishing him long lasting success in attaining more achievements. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Ghunaim expressed his honor for meeting His Highness the Amir, who congratulated him on gaining King Faisal International Prize, which is considered one of the most important international and Arab prizes. His Highness the Amir has always supported and encouraged Kuwaitis to achieve the highest levels in all fields, he added. Ghunaim later met with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as well.

Anti-Corruption Authority

Also yesterday, His Highness the Amir received Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sana, who presented the newly-appointed chairman and members of the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (PACA). They include Advisor Abdulrahman Al-Namash, deputy chairman Advisor Riyadh Al-Hajeri and members Mishari Al-Mutairi, Dawoud Al-Jarrah, Mohammad Al-Subaie, Abdulwahab Al-Muzaini and Louai Al-Saleh. They took oath in front of His Highness the Amir. Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meeting. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah separately received Chairman of the Public Authority for Sport Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Chief of Kuwait's National Security Bureau Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Russian Minister

In other news, His Highness the Amir and His Highness



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Russian Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky.

The Prime Minister have separately received Russian Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky, in the presence of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. Later, Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah and the Russian minister discussed boosting cultural and touristic cooperation between the two countries. The meeting discussed renewing a cultural blueprint agreement to replace a previously signed one between the two sides in 1967. Moreover, it discussed the activation of the memorandum of understanding signed in Sochi during the recent visit of His

Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Russia.

Meanwhile, the ministers also discussed developing cooperation in the field of tourism through establishing a Russian travel agency in Kuwait. In addition, the talks involved the ceremony to be held this evening to showcase the Russian cinematic activities at Abdul Hussein Abdul Redha Theater. The meeting was attended by top NCCAL and Ministry of Information officials, as well as Russian Ambassador to Kuwait and other senior Russian officials. —KUNA

RANDI ZUCKERBERG KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT 'WOMEN IN CORPORATE WORLD' CONFERENCE

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries and Gulf Bank are pleased to announce they are holding a conference entitled "Women in the Corporate World: Beyond the Glass Ceiling" on Wednesday, 4 May 2016 at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel.

This non-profit conference will bring together key influential international, regional, and local leaders together to discuss the important issue of gender diversity in the workplace. The format of the conference will include keynote speakers and panel discussions. This is also intended to create a networking platform to exchange various ideas on achieving success in the corporate environment. The results of a Kuwait survey on key motivating factors and challenges for women in Kuwait's workforce will be released at the conference and help enrich understanding the drivers that incentivize women to work.

The international keynote speaker will be entrepreneur Randi Zuckerberg. She is the Founder and CEO of Zuckerberg Media, a boutique-marketing firm and production company working for high profile organizations and Fortune 500 companies. Randi is

the bestselling author of Dot Complicated and Editor-in-Chief of a digital lifestyle website by the same name. Each week, Randi hosts "Dot Complicated" a weekly business talk show on SiriusXM Business Radio. Randi sits on the board of Directors of the Professional Diversity Network, a publically traded company that helps with diversity staffing and training for Fortune 500 companies. She previously served as Director of Marketing at Facebook, leading major marketing initiative for the tech giant.

Zuckerberg will be delivering a keynote speech on the topic of gender diversity in the workplace. She is highly passionate about elevating women in the workplace and has mentored several successful businesswomen and entrepreneurs. She will share her advice, expertise, and inspiration for women in business. For information about the conference and registration, please visit: www.womeninthecorporateworld.com and follow Instagram account: @GDC2016. For inquiries and partnership opportunities, please contact events@alghanim.com.

KUWAIT GAVE KD 11 BILLION IN FOREIGN AID OVER LAST 24 YEARS

KUWAIT: Kuwait, adopting aid for people in need as a stable factor of its foreign policy, has provided more than KD 11 billion to stricken nations between 1990, the year it witnessed the Iraqi aggression, and 2014.

The Foreign Ministry, in the first State report about external relief operations and activities, quoted the Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah as affirming Kuwait's keenness, since independence and throughout its history, on hefty humanitarian grants to various nations.

Kuwait has given assistance to peoples afflicted with catastrophes, natural disasters and crises without discrimination and the work has largely developed to the extent that it has turned into a feature of the country's external policy, Jarallah said.

Enormous efforts have been exerted at this level under the guidance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, prompting the United Nations to honor him with the title, the "Humanitarian Leader," and designated the State of Kuwait as the "Humanitarian

Center." The Kuwaiti economic-development assistance constitutes a tool of a stable foreign policy that has been maintained despite difficult times namely the 1990 Iraqi aggression. Under occupation, Kuwait allotted six loans to Arab countries, three to African states and two to two Asian nations. "This unique humanitarian role which is part of the State foreign policy is the prime reason for the global support for Kuwait during the occupation months," he said.

The report included information about the aid that had been given via various departments and agencies throughout the country's 50-year independence namely the Ministry of Finance, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, Al-Zakat House and International Islamic Charitable Organization.

During 1990-2012, Kuwait's total aid to Arab countries amounted to KD 2.915 billion, to non-Arab countries KD 6.676 billion and to various international and regional agencies and associations; more KD 197 million. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's meeting yesterday. —KUNA

CABINET CONDEMNS TERRORIST ATTACKS IN BELGIUM, PAKISTAN

KUWAIT: The cabinet has strongly condemned the attacks that recently hit Belgium and Pakistan. During a routine meeting held at Seif Palace and chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday, the ministers also reiterated utter rejection of such crimes, said Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

The cabinet reaffirmed Kuwait's stance rejecting all forms of terrorism, which run against all religions and human values and norms, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah added. The ministers offered condolences to the two friendly countries. More than 30 people were killed in last Tuesday's incidents in the Belgian capital of Brussels when suicide bombers attacked the airport and a subway. On Sunday an attack targeted Lahore, East Pakistan's biggest city, killing about 70 people and injuring over scores others.

Visa exemption

The cabinet also approved two draft decrees bearing on two agreements between Kuwait and Kyrgyzstan on visa exemption for holders of diplomatic and special passports and bilateral economic and technical cooperation.

The ministers also consented to a draft decree amending some provisions of Law 34/2000 on establishing private universities. Meanwhile, the cabinet congratulated chairman of the Kuwaiti Studies and Research Center Professor Abdullah Yusuf Al-Ghunaim for being awarded King Faisal International Prize in Islamic Studies, 2016.

At the onset of the meeting, the cabinet was briefed on letters received by His Highness the Amir from Yemen's President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia Hassan Sheikh Mahmood, Mauritania's President Mohammad Ould Abdelaziz and Norway's Prime Minister Erna Solberg. The messages were related to relations between the

State of Kuwait and these countries, and means of developing them in all domains.

Letters

Ministers were apprised of a joint message received by His Highness the Amir from French President Francois Hollande, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, and President of the Paris Climate Conference Segolene Royal, inviting Kuwait to endorse the agreement on the Conference to be held in New York next April.

The ministers were briefed on a letter received by His Highness the Amir from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on cooperation between Kuwait and the organization.

Then First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the ministers on the results of

recent visits to Kuwait by Mauritania's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Isselkou Ould Ahmed Izid Bih, Malaysia's Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman and Mongolia's Foreign Minister Lundeg Purevsuren.

During the visits, they reviewed distinguished relations between Kuwait and these countries in all fields and means of promoting them, as well as the latest regional and international developments and issues of mutual interest.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled kept the ministers posted on Kuwait's current preparations for hosting Yemeni parties' dialogue to be held next April, in presence of UN representatives. The cabinet expressed its hope that the meeting would lead to positive results aiming to stop the bloodshed in Yemen so as to help the country restore its role, stability and security. —KUNA



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received former Kuwaiti soccer players Jassim Yagoub and Abdulaziz Al-Anberi at his office yesterday. Ghanem congratulated Yagoub for his nomination by FIFA as a football legend. He also congratulated Anberi for being honored at the 14th Gulf Radio and TV festival for his pioneering role in sports and media. —KUNA

SPENDING GREW FOUR-FOLDS IN LAST DECADE: MP ABDULSAMAD



MP Adnan Abdulsamad

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Head of the National Assembly Budgets Committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad yesterday criticized the Finance Ministry for failing to adjust the budget in the wake of the sharp drop in oil prices, adding that public spending grew by four-folds in less than 10 years. Speaking after the committee met with Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh and other officials to discuss the budget, Abdulsamad said tools used in preparing the budget are not in

line with the changes in spending and revenues.

He said those tools have weakened the Ministry's ability to control both spending and revenues - evidenced by the fact that despite the sharp slump in revenues, spending, which swelled four-folds in less than a decade, was reduced by only KD 279 million. Abdulsamad said that advanced countries create a special ministry for treasury which monitors the spending and revenues of various government departments and which sets government spending

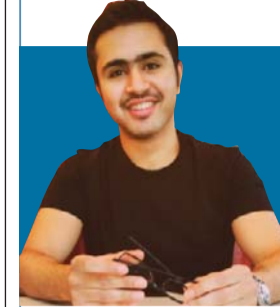
policies. He said it is time for the Finance Ministry to at least appoint an Assistant Undersecretary for Treasury Affairs to carry out those duties. Abdulsamad stressed on the need to restructure the various government departments which number 64 with lots of overlapping duties, in addition to nine programs and 18 committees under the Council of Ministers. Kuwait is forecast to record its first actual budget deficit in this 2015/2016 fiscal year, which ends March 31, due to the sharp fall in oil revenues which

made up over 95 percent of public revenues. In the meantime, MP Abdulhameed Dashti continued his attack on Saudi Arabia and Bahrain as he will not attend the national assembly sessions for the second time in a row. Dashti is facing a large number of cases in Kuwait and is currently outside the country, believed to be in Damascus. The public prosecution has already issued a number of warrants to arrest him after the national assembly lifted his parliamentary immunity to allow his interrogation.

Frankly Speaking

THE 'SOFT POWER' OF KUWAIT

By Bader Al-Dehani



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On a recent Saturday, 12th of March to be exact, at 22:30, while I was having dinner with some friends at one of London's central hotels, a revealing insight hit me: Kuwait is one of the masters of soft power in the Middle East. As I was having dinner with two Emiratis, two non-Kuwaiti Arabs were having dinner at a table beside ours; the two non-Kuwaiti Arabs were stuck to one phone watching the second episode of "Swar Shuaib," Kuwait's Shuaib Rashed's popular talk show. Later that night, after returning back to the apartment, I rethought my insight - and will elaborate on it further throughout the article. What is soft power? Where does Kuwait stand on the global soft power scale? Are we really long-term influencers or just temporary masters of that persuasive instrument? Those are the central questions that this article will deal with; the article will, after examining those central questions, conclude with emphasizing a need to develop a new foreign policy strategy.

Professor Joseph S Nye of Harvard University, the scholar who termed not only "soft power" but also, in 2004, "smart power," the latter refers to the simultaneous usage of both forms of power, "soft" and "hard," defines the former form of power as the power of nonviolent, forceful persuasion. That is, the power to persuade through being attractive - and being attractive on a personal level, former American Secretary of State Henry A Kissinger played this pretty well, as well as on a state level is beneficial. Now, it is important for us to answer two essential questions: How does one state become attractive and why is being attractive beneficial?

The second question, though I perhaps will not elaborate on the two questions as deep as I would want, is more straightforward than the first. Being attractive increases the likelihood of one state to win the "hearts and minds" of certain peoples. Simply put, states could better pursue certain policies in - socially, at least - acceptable environments. To answer the first question, I will propose a series of questions: Why did the people of the Occident, or the West, have a preconceived understanding of how the Orient, or the East, the non-West, act and interact? How do people in the Middle East today view America - why do some Kuwaitis like the United States while other Syrians, or Saudis, or Yemenis dislike America that hosts Hollywood, Silicon Valley, 'the American dream' and Donald Trump? Why did Indian foreign minister Jaswant Singh, unprecedented before, according to the Times of India in 2005, distribute vast amounts of Bollywood films and music tapes to innumerable Afghans in Kabul after the downfall of the Taliban in 2001? Why is China well respected in certain parts of Africa? Answering those questions will help you answer the primary question set above. Power, as Professor Nye defines it, is the ability to affect others to get what you want.

While doing secondary research on Bahrain's respectful Kanoo family, I came across a talk by Mishal Kanoo that took place at the Centre for Leadership Performance in April 2012. Good power, Mishal Kanoo noted, is "leadership through persuasion without force." Proponents of "soft power" could not agree more. Kuwait should develop a new foreign policy strategy that takes advantage of the vibrancy of the Kuwaiti civil society to tactically compliment the shifting Middle Eastern region while gradually and smartly strengthening its regional role.

MPs CONFLICTED OVER WHETHER BEDOONS WERE DISCUSSED DURING COMOROS VISIT

COMORIAN OFFICIALS 'AGREED IN PRINCIPLE' TO NATURALIZE BEDOONS

KUWAIT: Two lawmakers who recently arrived back from the Comoros gave conflicting statements on whether the issue of stateless residents was discussed or not, adding even more uncertainty surrounding the fate of Kuwait's population of 'bedoons'.

MP Saud Al-Hurajji, head of the parliamentary delegation that visited the African nation last week, denied on Sunday that Kuwaiti lawmakers had any discussions with Comorian officials related to the bedoon issue. However, delegation member MP Hamdan Al-Azmi was quoted by the press yesterday confirming that such discussions took place.

Not only that, but Azmi told Al-Anbaa daily that Comorian officials 'agreed in principle' on the possibility of giving the African country's citizenship to stateless residents in Kuwait. Hurajji himself was quoted by the press ahead of the visit as saying that the delegation would attend workshops on the settlement of bedoons in the Comoros, and probe the credibility of recent talks in that regard.

The governments of Kuwait and the Comoros had reportedly discussed in the past the possibility of granting the African nation's citizenship to stateless residents in Kuwait. However, the issue of resettling 'bedoons' in the Comoros was not addressed. One Comorian official has recently confirmed that. According to

Azmi, the Comorian interior minister informed the Kuwaiti delegation that negotiations took place with Kuwait over the possible naturalization of 'bedoons' based on an initiative from the Comoros.

"The Comoros expressed agreement in principles over the issue," Azmi said, "and they need specific legislations to be passed in (the Comorian) parliament for that purpose. A delegation from the Comoros had discussed this issue during a previous visit to Kuwait, and negotiations have been ongoing for over a year."

Naturalization

Azmi, meanwhile, reiterated his rejection to such proposals, demanding that the Kuwaiti government naturalizes deserving 'bedoons'. Kuwait first entertained the idea of providing the Comoros' citizenship to 'bedoons' in 2014, following in the footsteps of the United Arab Emirates. Under a plan reportedly discussed between the governments of the two nations, illegal residents would obtain Comoros' citizenship and retain the rights to reside in Kuwait under Article 22 (self-sponsorship), to free education and health care, and to employment. Meanwhile, Kuwait would build schools, institutes and houses in the island-nation. Kuwait insists that no stateless resident would be forcibly deported as a consequence of this plan.

The ambiguity in lawmakers'

most recent comments is reflective of the way that both government and parliament have approached this dilemma since Kuwait's independence over half a century ago. Kuwait is home to more than 100,000 illegal residents who seek Kuwaiti citizen-

ship as well as civil and social rights. However, the government says that only 34,000 are qualified for consideration while the rest are Arabs or descendants of Arab people who moved to Kuwait following the discovery of oil and deliberately disposed of their original passports to seek citizenship in the oil-rich country.



MP Saud Al-Hurajji



MP Hamdan Al-Azmi

Last November, Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Citizenship and Passports Affairs Major General Mazen Al-Jarrah confirmed that the issue pertaining

prove they were registered in the 1965 census - a prerequisite for consideration to receive citizenship - further filtering could render some files disqualified due to security and other reasons.

Recommendations

The National Assembly approved recently several recommendations pertinent to the conditions of illegal residents. The recommendations included the naturalization of worthy illegal residents, mainly the children of martyrs, Kuwaitis' relatives and

INDIAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL CRISIS BLOWS OVER

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: A crisis at the Indian Community School Kuwait (ICSK) has blown over on Sunday following an amicable settlement with the school sponsor, said S Kumar Wadhawan, the Chairman of the school's Board of Trustees.

A piquant situation was created on Thursday after the sponsor locked the boardroom of the school over a dispute regarding a piece of land for a new school building. The government has leased a piece of land in Mahboula where the fifth branch of ICSK is expected to be completed by 2016.

The dispute had unnerved the Indian community in Kuwait, particularly the parents of the students. "The keys of the boardroom were given to us today and we are in the boardroom now," said Wadhawan on Sunday evening adding that he had convened an emergency meeting of the board of trustees today to discuss the situation. "Certainly, we will address all the concerns raised by certain members of the community and clear their doubts," Wadhawan added.

"The ICSK is the oldest Indian school in Kuwait. It is the biggest school and the most affordable school for the Indian community. If there are any problems, let the parties involved sort them out in the better interest of the community and the students," said Sunil Jain, the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait prior to the settlement.

'Vested interests'

Earlier, expressing hope that the dispute would be settled amicably, the parent community shared its concerns. Many even suspected the hand of some 'vested interests' behind the developments who wanted to create confusion in the minds of people and tarnish the reputation of the school and the community.

"It is unfortunate to note that certain people within our community themselves are working to undermine the interests of the school. Currently, the school is running smoothly. Academically, it is one of the best Indian schools in the Gulf region," said Manoj Mathew, a member of the school Parents Advisory Board (PAC) echoing the sentiment of the parent community.

The ICSK, formerly the Indian School, was founded in 1959 with only 28 students. Today, 6,854 students are studying in the four branches of the school which has a staff strength of 480.

"Technically, it is the school of the community. But the parents, teachers and students are the real stakeholders, because they will only be affected if something happens to the school," said Ravindran, a parent. "To my knowledge, the school is functioning smoothly and efficiently. By and large, the parents, students and teachers are happy," he added.

Crucial time

The teaching staff also voiced their concerns over the unsavory developments surrounding the school especially at a time when students appear for their board exams. "The functioning of the school has improved remarkably over the last few years," said a teacher at the ICSK Senior branch on condition of anonymity. "This is a crucial time for our students. It is the responsibility of the community to keep the morale of the students high when they write their board examinations," said another teacher.

The 10,000 square meter land was given to the school by the government with an approval for construction on 8,000 square meter land. It was for the first time that the Kuwait government provided land to any foreign schools to construct own building. The school was overhauled in 2001 under the guidance of the Indian Embassy after a major scandal that broke out in the school.



KUWAIT: Water bottles suspected to contain alcoholic drinks, busted with three people who were arrested in Mahboula yesterday.

TRIO ARRESTED WITH SUSPECTED LIQUOR POSSESSION

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Police arrested three persons in Mahboula for suspicion of liquor possession. Police found 100 water bottles with the Indian men suspected to be containing alcoholic drinks. They were sent to concerned authorities. Separately, Jahra police campaigns resulted in the arrest of a person in Taima with possession of 1,230 tablets, with KD 2,248 in cash. Another person was arrested in the same area with possession of 65 tablets and KD 490.

Drug trade

Farwaniya detectives sent an Egyptian man to the Drug Control General Directorate for trading in Tramadol. A source said the man was arrested after an undercover agent was sent to him to buy drugs. A total of 840 tablets were found with him.

No injuries in fire

A fire broke out in a vehicle in Salmiya yesterday. South Salmiya firemen responded to an emergency call reporting the fire, and managed to put out the flames before they could spread to nearby vehicles. No injuries were reported.

Reckless driving

Ahmadi police patrols arrested a Kuwaiti man for reckless driving in Aqila. He is an officer cadet at the fire department. His vehicle was impounded as he was detained in Fintas police station.

New flyover

The Interior Ministry's General Traffic Department announced the opening of a flyover on Nuwaiseeb

road, also known as the King Fahad Highway or Road 40, near the 84th kilometer mark. The flyover will be opened today. Drivers heading from Nuwaiseeb to Kuwait City can use the flyover and return to the opposite direction.



A firefighter tackles flames that engulfed a vehicle in Salmiya yesterday.

News

In brief

AL-BARRAK FINED KD 3,000

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The court of appeal yesterday fined former MP Musallam Al-Barrak KD 3000 and acquitted him in a case accusing him of slandering the judiciary. Al-Barrak is serving a two year time in a state security case filed against him over a speech he delivered.

Drug suspect acquitted

A court yesterday acquitted a suspect who had been accused of drug abuse and discarded the charges because the suspect was a good son towards his disabled mother. The mother, who attended the hearing in a wheelchair, cried before the judge swearing that her son was the only one who looks after her on daily basis remarking that he was plagued with drugs. "Is he a good son with you", the judge asked. "Yes, he is. He washes my feet everyday", said the mother before the judge passed his verdict.

Fintas Group case adjourned

The criminal court yesterday adjourned the Fintas group case till April 11 so that the defendant attorneys could prepare their arguments.

Communication towers

Minister of electricity and water, Ahmed Al-Jassar recently signed a two-year contract to build special communication towers and lines at various control units with a cost of KD 10.79 million. The project aims at building a modern, smart, flexible and fast communication grid providing various services in controlling power plants and major power transfer units.

In Brief

KUWAIT SPONSORS TEACHERS IN CAMBODIA

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwait has donated a sum of \$123, 255 to sponsor a total of 79 teachers of 14 schools in Cambodia, Kuwait's embassy announced. Head of operations at the Kuwaiti embassy Mitab Al-Osaimi said that the donation, from Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, has been presented to the Higher Council of Islamic Affairs of Cambodia. Moreover, Osaimi underscored Kuwait's firm commitment to philanthropic and humanitarian efforts in Cambodia. Cambodia's General Mufti Sheikh Qamar Al-Deen Yousef said that he is grateful to Kuwait for its endless contributions to the country's development. — KUNA



KRCS AIDS REFUGEES

AMMAN: A convoy of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) arrived in Amman yesterday in order to deliver humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees hosted by Jordan. Mohammad Al-Enzi, head of KRCS's delegation in Jordan, said the 74 tons of aid will be handed over, until April 1, to about 1,300 Syrian refugee families across Jordan. Aid includes about 2,250 blankets, clothes for different ages, cleaning materials and other foodstuffs like rice and dates, he said, adding that the program will cover refugees in different areas like Amman, Ruwashed, Ajloun and others. — KUNA



MILITARY OFFICIAL EXTOLS TIES WITH UAE

ABU DHABI: Kuwaiti National Guard Chairman's Diwan Chief General Jamal Al-Thiab affirmed yesterday the deep-rooted bilateral relations between Kuwait and United Arab Emirates in various fields, particularly in military cooperation. Thiab, who is heading a National Guard delegation on a visit to the UAE, said that the visit would facilitate exchange of military expertise amongst Gulf nations. Thiab also met Lieutenant General Isa Saif bin Ablan Al Mazrouei, and they highlighted the need for increased military and security cooperation. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: A botanical garden bursts with colors during spring in Kuwait. — KUNA

GERMAN MOSQUE BUILT BY KUWAITI DONATION

BERLIN: Al-Noor Mosque in Hamburg, built by a Kuwaiti donation, has been completed to be the biggest in northern Germany. Head of the youth committee at Al-Noor Mosque and Society Ali Khalid addressed an Islamic conference yesterday commending Kuwait's leading role for building the Muslim house of worship as well as organizing today's event. The country also offers moral and financial support to those in charge of the mosque and the society.

Khalid appreciated the Kuwaiti embassy's participation in the conference, represented by Second Secretary Mashari Saleh Al-Muzaini, commissioned by ambassador Monther Bader Al-Issa. The conference is themed "Islam unites us", and is held for the fifth year in a row. The embassy's backing to the event reflects Kuwait's keenness on manifesting the true image of Islam, and support to Islamic charity projects.

The conference organized by Al-Noor Mosque calls for unity among Muslims in Germany, and the neighboring Deutsch-speaking countries. Participants will address problems of the Muslim communities and a host of issues on Islam existence in these countries, highlighting the religion's moderation. One other goal is to activate youth participation in social activities, developing a moderate Islamic dialogue in German to reveal the bright image of the religion and serve as a reference for researchers. Kuwait offered \$1.5 million for building the mosque. — KUNA

INFO MINISTER OPENS ARABIC POETRY FESTIVAL

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah said Sunday evening the State of Kuwait is now a glittering beacon of cultural enlightenment in the Arab region.

The country has become a main destination for Arab intellectuals and literary people, Sheikh Salman, also president of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), said at the opening ceremony of the ninth session of the Spring of Arabic Poetry Festival.

The three-day event is being organized by Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation under the auspices of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at the theater of Al-Babtain Central Library.

"The festival highlights Kuwait's contributions to culture, civilization and humanities at the behest of the country's political leadership at the core of which are His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah," the minister said.

He noted that poetry, in its various forms, had a remarkable impact on the literary, intellectual and political lives, and expressed the concern, hopes and aspirations of the nations during different stages of time.

Sheikh Salman added that the agenda of cultural activities in Kuwait, under NCCAL supervision, includes a host of poetic symposia and seminars with celebrated poets from across the Arab world taking part. He welcomed the Arab poets to the festival and appreciated the role of the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation in promoting cultural enlightenment.

Islamic Culture

Meanwhile, Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain, board chairman of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation, said the ninth session of the Spring of Arabic Poetry Festival coincides with the celebration marking Kuwait's selection as Capital of Islamic Culture for 2016. "This year's festival features three poetic seminars with the first being entitled "In love of Kuwait," he said.

"It is a tradition for the Foundation to celebrate during this annual event a Kuwaiti poet and a poet from another Arab country; this time we are celebrating the late poets Sulaiman Al-Jarallah, from Kuwait, and Bader Shaker Al-Sayyab, of Iraq," he pointed out.

The first seminar on Al-Sayyab, to be moderated by Dr Salem Khoddadh, will be addressed by Dr Nasimh Al-Ghaith - Kuwait, and Ahmad Al-Harishi - Morocco. The second seminar, to discuss the poetic experience of Al-Jarallah, will be addressed by the son of the late poet Khaled Sulaiman Al-Jarallah - the Deputy Foreign Minister, and Dr Abdulmajeed Falah - Syria; it will be moderated by Dr Soad Abdulwahab.

The participants in the festival include Abdullah Ali Al-Enezi, Faleh bin Tafra, Waleed Al-Qallaf, Raja Al-Qahtani, Nada Al-Ahmad Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, Abdullah Al-Faikawi and Ali Alhbashan Al-Mutairi - Kuwait; Dr Mohammad Al-Omari and Jassem Al-Saheeh - Saudi Arabia, Mohammad Al-Buraiki - the UAE, Hsber Mahmoud - Iraq, Ahmad Al-Harishi - Morocco, Dr

Said Shwareb, Ahmad Hejazi and Nadi Hafedh - Egypt, Qais Taha Qoukzh - Jordan, and Mohammad Al-Hariri - Syria.

Book fair

On the occasion of the festival, the Foundation organizes a book fair featuring latest publications on the two celebrated poets Al-Jarallah and Al-Sayyab. The Foundation has also released the following books: "Collection of poems of Suleiman Al-Jarallah" (in five volumes), "Bader Shaker Al-Sayyab - poet of the twentieth century," a study with selected poems prepared by Dr Majed Saleh Al-Samarrai, and "Review of Sulaiman Al-Jarallah poetry" written by Dr Nouria Saleh Al-Roumi.

The publications also include "Kazma in the Arabic poetry" prepared by Ahmad Zaki Al-Anbari, "Bader Shaker Al-Sayyab - his sense and sensibility" written by Dr Ali Haddad, "Mirrors of Contemporary Arabic Poetry - criticism views" written by Dr Abdullah Ahmad Al-Muhanna, "Poems for Aylan Abdullah Kurd" by a group of poets (in two volumes) prepared by the General Secretariat of the Foundation, "Greeting and Commemorating Ahmad Shawki as a the prince of poets" poems selected and analyzed by Dr Mohammad Mustafa Abushwareb, and finally "the proceedings of the spring poetry festival in eighth season (March 2015)" prepared by Reem Mahmoud Maarouf.

The opening ceremony gathered former chairman of the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Haris Silajdzic, Algerian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Tahar Hadjar, and Tunisian minister of state for foreign affair Attohami Abdouli. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah (left) is seen during the inauguration ceremony. — KUNA



Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah tours a book fair held as part of the event.

OFFERING ARAB STUDENTS COLLEGE FINANCIAL AID

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: "Creating a better world is our mission," Prof Dr Ishaq Al-Qutub, president and one of the founders of Arab Student Aid International (ASAI), said. The Arab Student Aid International celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. It has helped more than 8,000 graduates, at a cost of \$34 million, 67 percent of who hold PhDs, 33 percent hold master degrees while the rest hold bachelor degrees in the fields of medicine, natural and applied sciences, humanities and social sciences from well-known universities.



KUWAIT: Prof Dr Ishaq Al-Qutub, president of Arab Student Aid International speaks to Kuwait Times. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Qutub told Kuwait Times that ASAI not only helps needy students from all over the world but also conducts research on Arab educational needs.

"ASAI is trying to fill the Arab countries with students that can help creating a better place to live," he said. "We try hard to help needy students to complete their studies and spread their talents in Arab countries with interest-free loans. We also develop their talents and educational experience by training courses that the institution provides."

He added "Ten years ago, we started sending our best students in the Gulf according to the market's need to spread awareness, culture, knowledge and technology to develop Arab countries. We send our students to universities specializing in a variety of scientific fields that you will not find here."

Qutub explained that not all students receive the same amount of money "We pay \$5,000 to those studying in the United States, \$4,000 to students in Europe, \$3,000 to stu-

dents studying in Far Eastern countries and \$1,500 to students in Arab countries every year," Qutub said, adding that ASAI only covers tuition fees and not the cost of living there because it wants to help more students.

Independent organization

ASAI is an independent, non-profit, non-political and tax-exempt educational organization without any prejudice over religion, sex and ethnic and racial backgrounds. It was started in 1976 by a group of businessmen and academics, part of the process of building human resources and the development of highly specialized and qualified scholars in the Arab world, with the objective of enhancing social, economic and peace progress.

ASAI is keen on providing specialists, both qualitative and quantitative, for an effective role in supporting development processes, especially in lesser-developed Arab states. It has funded a variety of programs through the continued support of Saudi Prince Turki bin Abdel Aziz, the generosity of contributors, the perseverance of benefiting students, the supporting trustee members and the dedicated staff, graduates as well as hundreds of individuals, businessmen, institutions and banks.

ASAI has made an agreement with the Arab Orphans Committee to act on its behalf to administer loan repayments from ASAI graduates residing in Jordan and distribute 90 percent of proceeds as interest-free loans to enable orphaned students to enroll at Jordanian universities, providing they meet the qualification criteria.

To apply for an interest free loan, students must visit the ASAI website, review and fill the applications and the required documents, be an Arab citizen (permanent resident or dual nationals of a non-Arab country do not qualify), have a student visa of the country of study and intends to return to serve the home country, have an outstanding academic record, be enrolled for a masters or PhD program at a credited university, provide proof of active full-time enrollment in an accredited university, finish one academic semester at least in the field of study to be eligible to apply for an interest free loan, must achieve "B" average or "very good", a transcript record of university grades of previous years (original), letter of enrollment for the new academic year from the registrar (original), provide any change in contact information, two guarantors and provide revised financial statement/financial status for the academic year.

BLOOM EXPO TO PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Going to malls and restaurants may be a fun way to spend the weekend, but not for Noor Al-Hudaib and Rawan Al-Shati. Environmental awareness is a rare topic to talk about in Kuwait, but to understand the fragility of environment and the importance of its protection, Hudaib and Shati are holding the Bloom Expo on the 1st and 2nd of April at Dahiyat Abdullah Al-Salem Park, Block 3.

The Bloom Expo aims to promote environmental awareness in an easy way to become an 'environmental agent' and participate in creating a brighter future for Kuwait. "We started our campaign four months ago," Hudaib said. "We go by the name 'Lamah'. We will be organizing a flowering and gardening exhibition about environmental and greening awareness at Abdullah Al-Salem park, which is located in a strategic area close to the city and the suburbs at the same time, which connects all the communities. We also are going to give a percentage to charity."

She added that the expo is focusing more on flowering shops and nurseries "because family members are going to come, and they will need a place for their children. We are going to make a section for art crafts and more gardening activities for kids."

Shati told Kuwait Times that their vision is to encourage people to visit local gardens and to raise awareness on greening. In addition, their goal is to boost individuals' appreciation to natural beauty and motivating them to protect the environment. Bloom will be a gardening and flower expo bringing together local nurseries and florists to showcase their beautiful creations and settings. It will also include a mix of different participants and activities to the interest of both adults and children.



Noor Al-Hudaib and Rawan Al-Shati

'Lamah' believes that environmental awareness is an integral part of the movement's success. By teaching our friends and family that the physical environment is fragile and indispensable we can begin fixing the problems that threaten it. 'Lamah' group will focus to have a different theme subjects every expo they make.

KUWAIT READIES FOR NEW TAX SCHEMES

KUWAIT: Governments in the Middle East and North Africa are experimenting with new taxation methods in a bid to ratchet up their assets and maintain economic stability, an international tax expert said yesterday.

Speaking at a lecture entitled, "New Taxation Developments in Kuwait," Tax Advisory Service agent at Ernst Young (EY) Alok Chugh said that a new law of government-imposed corporate taxes is in the works, adding that he expected the law to be referred to parliament within months. Companies will be given a heads-up prior to implementation of the law, he noted.

Member of EY's Kuwait Bureau Waleed Abdulfadheel said that the government seeks to implement corporate and value-added taxes as part of impending economic reforms. Moreover, Director of Union Investment Companies (UIC) Fadwa Darwish described the lecture as a preparatory measure that would assist the financial market in dealing with a looming Cabinet approved law that would impose a 10 percent corporate tax, in addition to a 5 percent value-added tax. In her speech, Darwish also elaborated on the latest developments of taxation laws in the country. — KUNA

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INITIATIVE HELPS IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

KUWAIT: The 'Ibtikar Al-Kuwait' Initiative for Innovation, dedicated for researches and projects of public schools' female teachers and students, has emphasized the importance of training teachers and students to best improve their skills and sufficiency to improve the educational process.

General Director of the initiative Dr Fatma Al-Hashim said yesterday that programs, training courses and activities provided by the initiative during the year contribute to boosting the skills of the students and teachers.

"This reflects the vision of Chairman of the Board of Directors Sheikha Fadya Al-Saad Al-Sabah in investing in the human resources and achieving the highest level of educational efficacy of the students and prepare them to deal with the latest educational and technological tools", she added. She added that "the woman is a key player in the development of our societies and thus needs an appropriate qualification to best serve it", Sheikha Fadya said.

This initiative contributes to making a remarkable leap in the educational system, move from the tradition methods into a more innovative and creative ones based on acquisition of skills and expertise to cope with the latest educational developments, she said.

'Ibtikar Al-Kuwait' aims at spreading awareness in the education field, she noted, adding that the initiative has organized a number of free training courses for a number of public education female teachers.

It already offered three courses titled "Creative Thinking Skills" by international trainer Muna Refaat, "How To Make Our Teaching More Interesting" by Dr Abdullah Al-Failakawi from Kuwait University (KU), as well as another dubbed "Being Creative" by international trainer Baheya Al-Thifiri. — KUNA



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Crime

Report

Woman raped after friend lures her to trap

KUWAIT: A woman went to a location where a friend had invited her to a party. Instead, she found herself soon after arrival left alone with a man, who raped her and stole her belongings before escaping. The 28-year-old Filipina told police that she left her residence in Saad Al-Abdullah and went to a Fahaheel apartment where her friend called her to come over. When she arrived, she found her friend, also Filipina, alone in the apartment. Her friend then left her and said she wanted to go out to buy some stuff. Soon afterwards, a man that she has never met before entered the apartment, raped her then stole her phone, IDs and KD 350 in cash from her before escaping, she told officers. A case was filed for investigations.

Marital disputes

A citizen was surprised to find out that his wife and the mother of his children is married to another man, and had a baby girl with the other guy. The woman reportedly married again while she and her first husband were still in the process of divorce. The husband's lawyer told police that he received documents showing that his client's wife married another man and had a daughter with him though she was still legally married to his client. Calling her actions 'criminal', the lawyer said that she would pursue legal action to have his client's wife tried for adultery and forgery in official documents.

Attempted murder

A lawyer accused a citizen of attempted murder, saying that the man fired from a firearm at his direction. He pressed charges at Jahra police station and investigations are ongoing in the case. According to a security source, the complainant said that he was in his car when the suspect suddenly appeared and tried to stop him. When the lawyer did not stop, the man pulled a pistol and shot at him but missed.

Thief overpowered

A thief who attempted to rob an Egyptian man in Fahaheel area was beaten hard by the would be victim, then he handed him over to police. A security source said the man was jumped by the thief who attempted to rob him. The man resisted, exchanged blows with the suspect and managed to overpower him, before handing him over to a police.

Drug abuse

Patrol officers pulled over a vehicle near Kuwait Towers for reckless driving. The driver as well as two passengers were found to be under the influence of drugs, and with possession of drug paraphernalia. Police sent the suspects to the Drug Control General Department (DCGD), where they were discovered to be third-year students at Saad Al-Abdallah Security Sciences Academy. The three were sent to the academy for legal action.

NO CASH DONATIONS IN RAMADAN

KUWAIT: Official sources at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) said that the ministry was currently considering three options to collect charity donations during the next Holy month of Ramadan including POS (K-net), bank deduction and online e-transfers. The sources added that all charities had been informed that all forms of cash donations would be banned in this year's Ramadan, which means there would be no receipts.

In addition, the sources explained that MSAL inspection teams were ready to start working with the first day of the holy month, adding that MSAL has already coordinated with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to ban cash donation collection in various mosques. The sources also explained that MSAL's permission and approval would be conditioned before organizing any charity sale. — Al-Anbaa

STUDENTS PERFORM LOW IN ARABIC, SCIENCE, MATH

KUWAIT: Education and Higher Education Minister Dr Bader Al-Essa said students levels in general are low in Arabic, science and mathematics, and hoped to improve them in the next five years, within the framework of curricula improvement campaign.

Essa was speaking during the opening of the first photography exhibition at Um Harth Al-Ansariya Secondary School, he said "We are into the second year of the plan, and there will be teachers' training and development of school curricula headed by the said subjects."

About the disappointment from the supervisory jobs exams and low scores of the final results, Essa said the results created much misunderstanding and question marks, adding that the ministry will review the quality of the tests, and their preparation. He said the Arabic language tests will be done again. — Al-Qabas

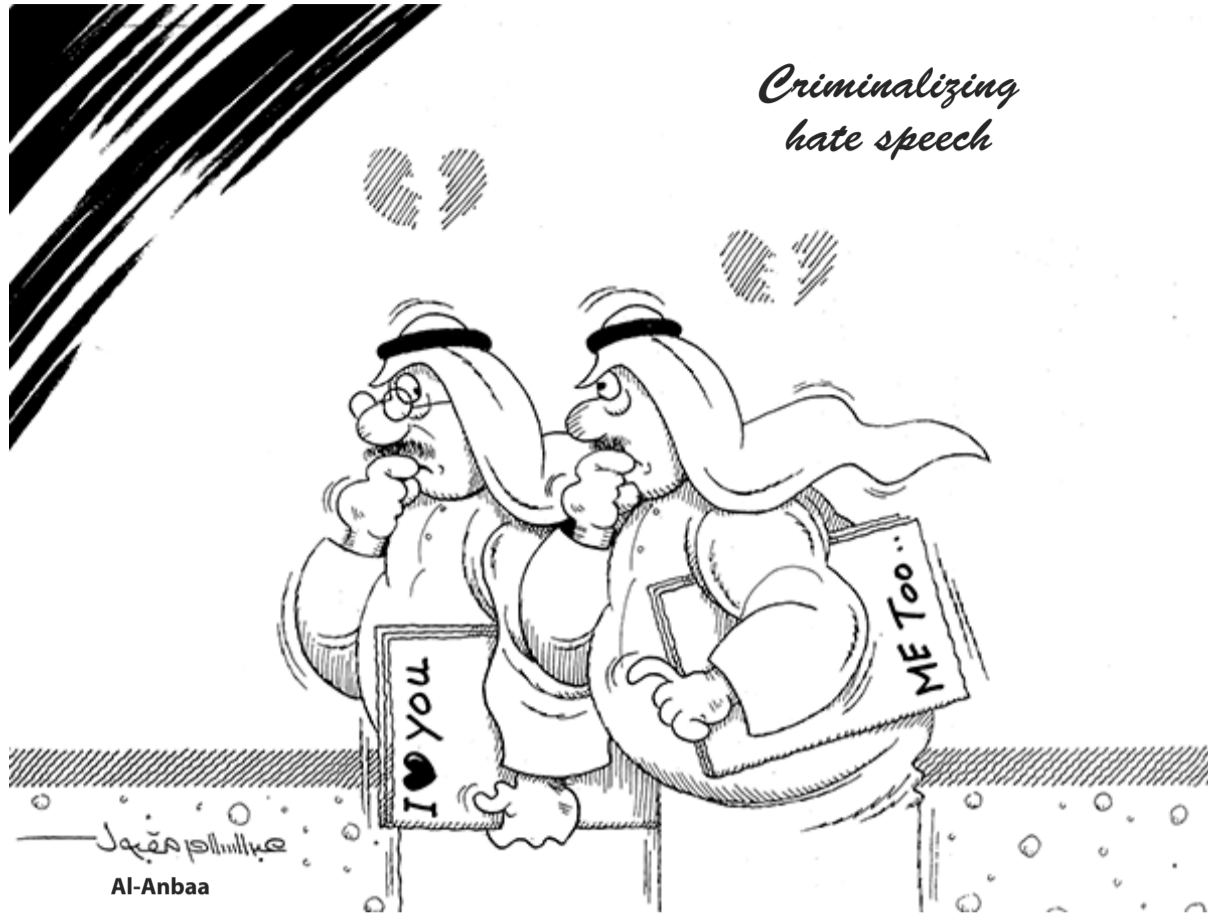
NO RAILWAY WINDFALL FOR FARM OWNERS

KUWAIT: The Finance Ministry has returned the GCC railway project to "square one" said unnamed sources quoted by Al-Anbaa. The situation developed, according to the Arabic newspaper, after the ministry failed to compensate the owners of the farms through which the railway line was planned to run. The sources added that ministry replaced the financial compensation with providing farm owners with alternative lands, which was rejected by the owners.

The project has been in the planning stages for years. The GCC railway project is supposed to start from Kuwait then push down through Saudi Arabia via Dammam to reach via a rail causeway Bahrain. It would then link up with Qatar via the Qatar-Bahrain Causeway (still to be built) and on through Saudi Arabia to the UAE Abu Dhabi and Al Ain before reaching Oman across Sohar to Muscat.

However progress in Kuwait has effectively stalled out with internal disputes over the route, financing, tenders and other matters limiting implementation. Kuwaiti minister of parliament Faisal Al-Kandari recommended Kuwait follow a system similar to that followed internationally, and within the Gulf, where a unified body tenders, awards, and manages rail projects. Kandari added Kuwait must strive to catch up with its GCC neighbors, most of which have "started the implementation of the railway project to link the entire Gulf."

The costs of the 1940-km regional network was to be shared by all six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and originally aimed to be operational by 2017. No realistic new date has been set for its implementation.



PUBLIC PROSECUTION ALERTS BORDERS TO ARREST DASHTI UPON HIS RETURN

KUWAIT: The public prosecution issued a directive to all exit borders to execute an arrest warrant issued nearly a week ago for MP Abdul Hameed Dashti on arrival to Kuwait, Al-Jarida daily reported. Dashti faces charges of slander, filed against him by Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and the judges in the Abdali cell case. Notably, Bahrain's Public Prosecution had issued a directive including an Interpol arrest warrant against Dashti.

Commenting on the arrest warrant issued by the Public Prosecutor,

Dashti, who remains abroad, stressed that such a measure was unprecedented. He said that the Public Prosecution had dealt with him differently in three previous cases. "Things are obviously different this time and the Public Prosecution made a decision to summon a lawmaker over opinion-related issues," Dashti added, describing what happened as an unprecedented disaster for civil liberties in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary legislative and legal affairs committee agreed to lift Dashti's immunity upon

the public prosecution request, said informed sources.

The sources explained that Kuwait cannot execute the prison verdict passed on Dashti by a Bahraini court because Riyadh Legal Agreement was only restricted to judicial cooperation without including verdict executions. Kuwait has witnessed a dramatic decline in free speech and civil liberties in the last few years. Several activists, journalists and politicians had their citizenship revoked or been jailed for political dissent.

OOREDOO REVEALS NEW SHAMEL WEBSITE

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo Group, revealed its new Shamel website, which allows customers to get all the needed information about the new revamped packages in a simple interactive way.

The website employs the latest technology to offer customers an interactive easy-to-navigate experience, paying attention to all the details to communicate the information in a concise way. It divides the features of the new Shamel into various eras, spanning from the 1980s, to the present day. Upon choosing any of the eras, the television commercial lead character explains to the customers directly one of the new Shamel features. Customers who are interested in getting the new Shamel plans can leave their contact details on the website and will be contacted by a customer care agent.

The interactive videos of each era use



the fashion, style, and dEcor used in that specific period, while the character explains the features in a concise, down-to-earth and comical way.

The new Shamel packages give customers more flexibility, allowing them to freeze contracts up to three months a year while traveling. Customers can also enjoy unlimited local voice calls on Ooredoo network, a feature included in all packages. They can also transfer contracts at any time and carry forward unused Internet data to the following month, which will provide customers with more freedom to use the web. Customers can also get the latest device from Ooredoo, even if they have existing contracts, which allows them more freedom and flexibility in use. For more information about the new Shamel website, kindly visit the following website: shamel.ooredoo.com.kw.



Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah honors KFH

KFH HONORS GCC DELEGATES AT YOUTH CONFERENCE

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) patronized the honoring ceremony of the GCC delegates participating in the first GCC Youth Conference in presence of Youth Affairs Ministry Undersecretary Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, as part of the bank's social responsibility and keenness to patronize the youth. Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah hailed KFH's efforts in supporting the youth and sponsoring their activities emanating from its firm belief in the importance of this key segment in the society and its role in achieving the comprehensive human development.

The conference was held under the auspices of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, under the theme of "Youth Spaces - Opportunities

and Potentials". It revolves around the importance of drawing up the best plans for youth empowerment that hone their skills and enable them to enhance the development process in the country.

The conference co-organized by the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs and the GCC Secretariat comes in response to His Highness the Amir's call for activating the role of youth in the development of their communities and shedding light on conditions and aspirations of the youth, yet it promotes the socio-economic GCC integration based on joint destiny. The conference includes workshops, seminars and panels that tackled subjects of importance to the youth.

'HUGE EQUIPMENT' ARRIVE FOR CLEAN FUEL PROJECT

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) completed the transfer of huge equipment to the site of the clean fuel project in Mina Abdallah and Ahmadi refineries. Sources said the huge equipment include two boilers for the project site in Mina Abdallah, while the four others will arrive over the next few weeks.

The sources said, there are three boilers, each weighing 500 tons, for the clean fuel project in Ahmadi refinery, which are expected to arrive next month. All boilers are made by the Italian company Macchi Stam and Power Generation, they added.

The sources appreciated the role of the Interior Ministry and Kuwait Ports Authority in transporting the gigantic equipment from the port of the project sites. Deputy CEO for clean fuel and projects 1 and 2 at KNPC Abdallah Fahad Al-Ajmi said the achievement percentage in the clean fuel project is 50 percent. — Al-Rai

CUSTOMS DEPT TO RECEIVE PART OF FREE TRADE ZONE

KUWAIT: The Customs General Department prepares to receive parts of the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) in the Shuwaikh port area. It plans to fence off the customs area and establish an inspection station on it in order to relief congestion and ease the flow of goods. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry asked the Kuwait Ports Authority to coordinate with the customs department in order to decide which pieces of land will be taken from the FTZ to establish a customs inspection area, as per a Cabinet decision made on that regard on March 18th. — Al-Rai



The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) concluded its fifth annual 'Ya Zain Turathna' (our beautiful heritage) cultural campaign in a ceremony held recently at Al-Shaheed Park.



Al-Anbaa

FAILURES LEAD TO SUCCESS

By Dr Mutlaq Al-Qarawi

The title of this article was suggested by a friend. It really caught my attention and made me think about those four words so long because they start with 'failure' and end with 'success', and there is really a huge difference between them, and a long way of hard work, patience and determination.

Success can only be achieved by perseverance and overcoming all obstacles and defeats regardless of how big they are. It is not achievable by giving up or relaxation.

Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) is a well-known brand name in international restaurants. Nonetheless, when its founder Colonel Sanders first invented his secret recipe which was later on named after him, he took his

It is so normal that a strong-willed person might fail once or twice, but he would never give up

invention to over one thousand restaurants in America for several years without finding anyone to accept it. The man faced so many failures, but he faced them all until he succeeded. Nowadays, KFC's recipe is so famous worldwide even after over 35 years since Sanders' death.

The problem with so many people is that they would give up after the first and slightest failure. Even if they were persistent, they would never go through their second failures, and would thus lose everything.

Determination is the way to success. It is so normal that a strong-willed person might fail once or twice, but he would never give up. Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) challenged Nimrod to prove Allah's power and was not deterred by Nimrod's false allegations that he would win the challenge.

This is a message to every strong-willed person, namely the youth, to explain that achieving goals cannot be done by wishes and hopes. It requires hard work, patience, overcoming hardships and ignoring failures. This is how success can be achieved.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Bangladesh court rejects the removal of Islam as state religion

CHINA OFFICIAL SAYS DALAI LAMA 'MAKING A FOOL' OF BUDDHISM

PAKISTAN ARMY CRACKDOWN AS FAMILIES BEGIN TO BURY VICTIMS OF EASTER BLAST

DEATH TOLL HAS RISEN TO 72

LAHORE: Pakistan's army launched raids and arrested suspects yesterday after a Taleban suicide bomber targeting Christians over Easter killed 72 people including many children in a park crowded with families.

Hundreds more were injured Sunday when explosives packed with ball bearings ripped through the crowds near a children's play area in the park in the eastern city of Lahore, where many had gathered to celebrate Easter.

Anguished families spent Easter Monday burying their dead. "I tried to pump my son's chest and give him CPR but he was no more. He died right in front of me," Javed Bashir told AFP as relatives wailed at his son Mutahir's funeral. "My son, my son, nobody should lose their sons," sobbed the mother of another victim as other women restrained her.

A spokesman for the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar faction of the Tehreek-e-Taleban Pakistan told AFP the group had carried out the attack as "Christians are our target", and vowed more assaults on schools and colleges. The attack was the worst so far this year in a country grimly accustomed to atrocities, and will further undermine fractious inter-religious ties in the Muslim-majority nation.

In response the country's powerful army announced it had carried out raids in Lahore as well as in Faisalabad and Multan, two other major cities in Punjab province. More were planned. "Number of suspect terrorists and facilitators arrested and huge cache of arms and ammunition recovered," army spokesman Asim Bajwa tweeted.

Witnesses told of children screaming as people carried the injured in their arms in the aftermath of Sunday's attack, while frantic relatives searched for loved ones. Rescue spokeswoman Deeba Shahbaz said the death toll had risen to 72 yesterday, with 29 children among the dead.

A spokesman for the Lahore city administration put the number of Christians killed at "10-15" as authorities scrambled to identify the dead. Bits of human flesh and torn cloth could be seen yesterday around the bloodstained swings and merry-go-round.

Authorities said the park had seen a surge of visitors thanks to Easter and the warm spring weather. Some 8,000 were still there when the bomb was detonated in the early evening, park officials said.

"The militants went for a softer target

because there was tight security for churches in Lahore," said Cecil Shane Chaudhry, executive director of the National Commission for Justice and Peace, a Christian organization.

Mourning period

There were frenzied scenes at hospitals in the immediate aftermath, with staff treating casualties on floors and in corridors as officials tweeted calls for blood donations.

Lahore's top administration official Muhammad Usman said around 100 of the wounded were either treated at the scene or quickly discharged. He said a further 180 had been admitted to hospital.

Schools and other government institutions were open yesterday but three days of mourning were announced in Punjab. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressed "grief and sorrow over the sad demise of innocent lives".

The US labeled the bombing "cowardly" while Russian president Vladimir Putin branded it a "crime". The Vatican condemned the attack, calling it "fanatical violence against Christian minorities", and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called for Islamabad to

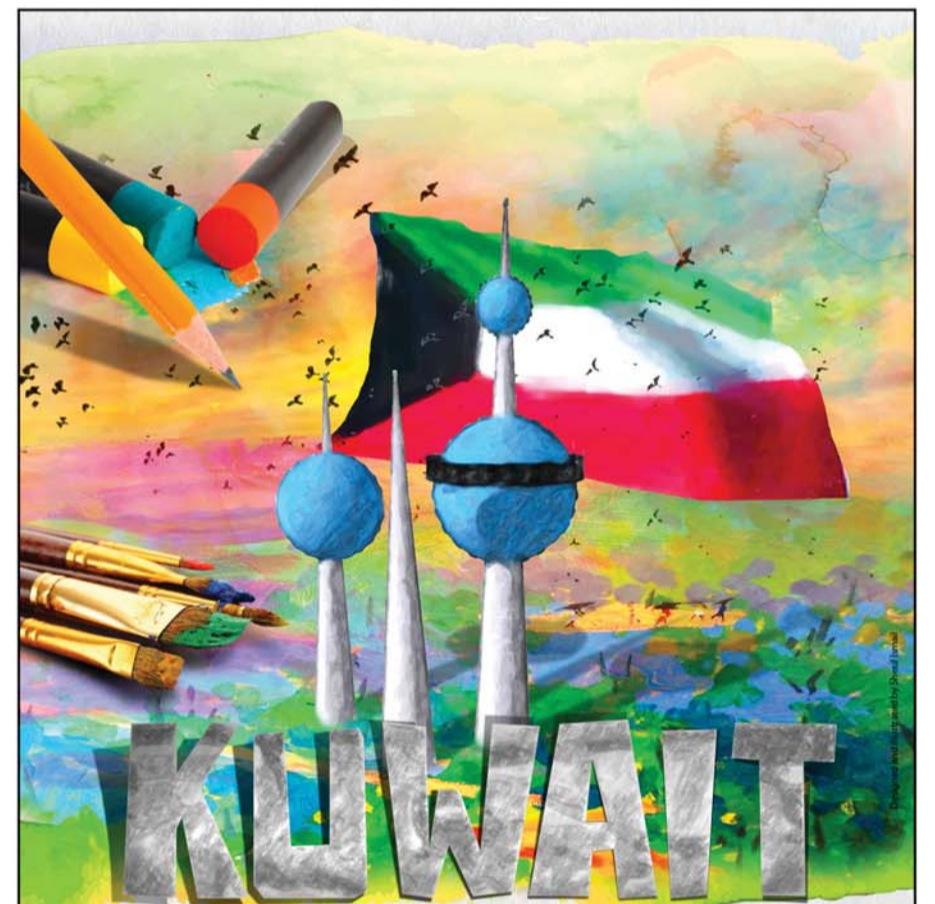
protect religious minorities.

Pope Francis also appealed for tighter security for religious minorities. Christians make up an estimated 1.6 percent of Pakistan's 200 million people and have long faced discrimination. Twin suicide attacks against churches in Lahore killed 17 people in March last year, sparking two days of rioting by thousands of Christians. The country is still scarred by a Taleban assault on a Peshawar school in 2014 that killed 150 people, mostly children.

A military operation targeting insurgents was stepped up in response. Last year the death toll from militant attacks fell to its lowest since the Pakistani Taleban were formed in 2007. But analyst Imtiaz Gul said despite significant progress in military operations against the Taleban, the group was still able to carry out major attacks. "Even if they are 50 people they can plan an attack of this scale and execute it," he said. "They're all over: they have affiliates, sympathisers and supporters." —AFP



LAHORE: Pakistani civil society members sing the national anthem at the site of a suicide blast yesterday. —AFP



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SANDERS WINS 3 STATES, CLINTON STILL RETAINS BIG DELEGATE LEAD

WASHINGTON: Bernie Sanders scored three wins in Western caucus contests, giving a powerful psychological boost to his supporters but doing little to move him closer to securing the Democratic nomination.

While results in Washington, Alaska and Hawaii barely dented Hillary Clinton's significant delegate lead, Sanders' wins on Saturday underscored her persistent vulnerabilities within her own party, particularly with young voters and activists who have been inspired by her rival's unapologetically liberal message.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Sanders cast his performance as part of a Western comeback, saying he expects to close the delegate gap with Clinton as the contest moves to the more liberal northeastern states, including her home state of New York. He also said his campaign is increasing its outreach to super delegates, the party insiders who can pick either candidate and are overwhelmingly pro Clinton.

What's next

"The Deep South is a very conservative part of the country," he said. "Now that we're heading into a progressive part of the country, we expect to do much better." He added: "There is a path to victory." With Clinton far in front, however, it is a difficult path. Clinton anticipated the losses: She barely campaigned in the three states, making just one day of stops in Washington state, and was spending the Easter weekend with her family. —AP

IRAQ'S PARLIAMENT GIVES PM UNTIL THURSDAY ON NEW CABINET

BAGHDAD: Iraq's parliament yesterday gave Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi three days to present a new non-party cabinet to fight corruption or potentially face a no-confidence vote amid street protests piling on the pressure for action. A flash on state television called Thursday the "final deadline" for Abadi, who said more than six weeks ago that he would replace ministers with technocrats unaffiliated with political parties.

Yet other politicians, including some within his own party, have pushed back against a reshuffle, fearing it could weaken the political patronage networks that have sustained their wealth and influence for

more than a decade. Powerful Shi'ite Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr on Sunday launched a personal sit-in inside Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, which houses embassies and government offices.

His supporters extended a week-old sit-in just outside the district's gates, huddling in tents and under umbrellas in heavy rain. They also demonstrated in the southern city of Basra. Sadr, who commands the loyalty of tens of thousands of supporters, including Shi'ite fighters who helped defend Baghdad against Sunni Islamic State militants in 2014, has re-emerged as a leader in matters of state in recent months. "If Abadi does not

present his new government by Thursday, then he will be questioned in Saturday's (parliamentary session)," said Sadr bloc MP Yasir al-Husseini. "This will be the start of a number of steps leading to a no-confidence vote." Failing to deliver on long-promised anti-corruption measures could weaken Abadi's government just as Iraqi forces are gearing up to try and recapture the northern city of Mosul from Islamic State.

Academics and bureaucrats

Support in parliament for withdrawing confidence from Abadi did not appear unanimous yesterday. Abbas al-Bayati, an

MP from Abadi's ruling National Alliance coalition, said lawmakers would want an explanation for any further delay of reform steps but had not agreed to pursue a no-confidence vote.

"Between now and Thursday is sufficient and if he cannot do it by then, he should come and clarify why in order to convince the blocs and the street," Bayati told Reuters. He said Abadi had composed a preliminary roster of candidates for the new cabinet and coalition leaders were consulting with Sunni, Kurdish and other Shi'ite politicians "to create a balanced list that has the standards of professionalism

and technocratic experience".

It was not clear which ministers were likely to be replaced but analysts doubted that substantive change was in the works. An US-based Iraqi academic, Abbas Kadhim, tweeted last week that he had been short-listed for foreign minister, and a government source said senior ministry civil servants might be elevated to fill some positions.

Political analyst Fadhil Abu Ragheef said new technocrat ministers would likely come from Iraq's existing parties and blocs. "They will not bring anything new," he said. "This is about changing the facade only; the core will remain the same." — Reuters



KABUL: Afghan security personnel keep watch at a security gate near the newly built parliament complex yesterday. — AFP

TALEBAN FIRE ROCKETS AT AFGHAN PARLIAMENT

KABUL: Taliban insurgents fired a barrage of rockets at Afghanistan's newly built parliament complex in Kabul yesterday, as top security officials including the intelligence chief prepared to address the assembly. Multiple rockets smashed into the sprawling compound, blowing out windows in one building. But no one was reported hurt and the parliament session continued uninterrupted.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, with spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid saying the rockets inflicted heavy casualties. The militant group is known to exaggerate battlefield claims. "While we discuss insecurity around the country, it is worrying that the enemy is able to strike the parliament in the heart of the capital," lawmaker Mohammad Abdou

said during the session broadcast live on TV. Taj Mohammad Jahed, the caretaker minister of interior who was due to address parliament along with the intelligence chief on the worsening security in Afghanistan, was apologetic. "This should not have happened," Jahed said. "I will order new security measures for the parliament complex." The swanky complex, built by India at an estimated cost of \$90 million, was inaugurated by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December. Last June Taliban militants attacked the old parliament building, sending lawmakers running for cover in chaotic scenes relayed live on television. The attack ended two hours later when all seven attackers, including a suicide car bomber, were gunned down by Afghan forces. — AFP

IRAN VOWS TO PURSUE MISSILE PROGRAM DESPITE US SANCTIONS

DUBAI: Iran will pursue its development of ballistic missiles despite the US blacklisting of more Iranian companies linked to the program, a senior Revolutionary Guards commander said yesterday. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) test-fired several ballistic missiles this month, drawing condemnation from Western leaders who believe the tests violate a United Nations resolution.

The US Treasury Department blacklisted on Thursday two Iranian companies, cutting them off from international finance over their connection to the missile program. Washington had imposed similar sanctions on 11 businesses and individuals in January over a missile test carried out by the IRGC in October 2015.

"Even if they build a wall around Iran, our missile program will not stop," Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC's aerospace arm, was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency. "They are trying to frighten our officials with sanctions and invasion. This fear is our biggest threat." US officials said Iran's missile test would vio-

late UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which calls on Iran not to conduct "any activity" related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. However, Washington said that a fresh missile test would not violate a July 2015 accord under which Iran has restricted its disputed nuclear program and won relief from UN and Western financial sanctions in return. That agreement between Iran and six world powers was endorsed in Resolution 2231. The Revolutionary Guards, Iran's elite fighting and security force, maintains dozens of short and medium-range ballistic missiles, the largest stock in the Middle East. It says the missiles are solely for defensive use with conventional, non-nuclear warheads.

President Hassan Rouhani, a pragmatic conservative, said on Sunday that boosting Iran's defense capabilities is a "strategic policy" though Iran should take care not to provoke its enemies. "We will pursue any measure to boost our defence might and this is a strategic policy," Rouhani was quoted as saying by Press TV in the first cabinet meeting in the new Persian year. — Reuters

COLOMBIA ARRESTS GENERAL FOR EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

BOGOTA: Colombia has arrested an army general for his role a decade ago in the extrajudicial killing of civilians presented as guerrillas killed in combat, the highest-ranking military officer to ever be detained for such crimes. Gen. Henry Torres, who currently holds an administrative position in the armed forces, turned himself in yesterday as soon as the arrest order on charges of homicide against him was issued.

The chief prosecutor's office also announced it would seek the detention of retired Gen. Mario Montoya, a close ally of former President Alvaro Uribe who headed the army when the so-called "false positives" scandal broke in 2008. The revelation that security forces killed thousands of civilians to inflate body counts on which bonuses and vacations were based tarnished the US-backed military but so far has led to only a handful of charges against high-ranking officers. Torres' arrest comes as a leading human rights group warned that a deal between the government

and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia to end the country's decades-long conflict would allow top officers to escape jail time, or avoid prosecution altogether.

Human Rights Watch said in a report Monday that many of those accused of implementing or carrying out the extermination policy will likely have their cases heard in a special peace tribunals set up to implement a peace accord being negotiated in Cuba. Under the proposed terms of the accord already agreed to by both sides, rebels and state agents who confess their crimes will be spared jail time and sentenced to a maximum eight years of labor in projects to rebuild communities torn apart by the conflict.

Given the agreement's ambiguities, there's a high risk of impunity and some perpetrators currently detained could even be released, Human Rights Watch said. "The agreement is a checkmate against justice," Jose Miguel Vivanco, Americas director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement. — AP

US SUPREME COURT TAKES UP PUERTO RICO BRIBERY CASE

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court yesterday agreed to consider a former Puerto Rico state senator's claim that he cannot be retried on corruption charges involving a trip to Las Vegas to watch a boxing bout after his original conviction was thrown out.

The court said it would hear an appeal filed by Hector Martinez Maldonado, who served in Puerto Rico's Senate from 2005 until his 2011 conviction, and businessman Juan Bravo Fernandez, the former president of a private security company. Bravo Fernandez sought to bribe Martinez Maldonado in order to win passage of bills that would benefit his business, according to prosecutors. The case focused in

part on allegations that Bravo Fernandez paid for Martinez Maldonado to travel to Las Vegas in 2005 to watch a boxing match involving Puerto Rican fighter Felix "Tito" Trinidad.

In 2011, both were convicted for their role in the alleged bribery scheme, but the Boston-based 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals threw out their convictions in 2013.

Federal prosecutors said they would seek a new trial. But Martinez Maldonado and Bravo Fernandez said a new trial should be barred because it would violate the constitutional protection against "double jeopardy," which prevents people from being tried on charges for which they already have been acquitted. — Reuters

KREMLIN BACKS CHECHEN FOR STABILITY'S SAKE

'NO SURPRISE IN PUTIN'S DECISION'

MOSCOW: Moscow's endorsement of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov for another term is a bid to ensure stability in the crucial region, in a move analysts said turns a blind eye to the strongman's faults.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday said Kadyrov, in power since 2007, would continue as acting leader until elections in September after long remaining silent on the fate of the Chechen leader, who has faced mounting criticism from opponents.

Kadyrov's call to eliminate Russia's "enemy" opposition and the alleged involvement of his circle in the murder of Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov in February 2015 stirred talk that Moscow's loyal vassal had gone rogue and could be dismissed.

But in a televised meeting with Kadyrov on Friday, Putin ended speculation by praising the 39-year former rebel fighter for having "transformed" the region, ravaged by two separatist wars in the 1990s and early 2000s. "There were simply no other candidates for the position," said Alexei Malashenko, an analyst at the Carnegie Center in Moscow. "There is nothing surprising in Putin's decision." With carte blanche and unlimited funds from the Kremlin in exchange for loyalty to Moscow, Kadyrov has built a system that has brought Chechnya under his thumb at the expense of human rights and freedom of expression.

Authorities in Moscow have done little to confront violations perpetrated in the region, including recent attacks against activists and journalists, knowing that dismissing or simply rebuking Kadyrov could destabilise the region. "The Kremlin understands that if Ramzan Kadyrov wasn't there, unpredictable things could happen in the region," including internal fighting that could fuel armed conflict, Malashenko said. "He keeps the situation under control and those who don't like him at least respect him."

Columnist Maria Zheleznova of Vedomosti business daily argued that replacing Kadyrov would be "too costly" for the Kremlin, which is counting on him to smother extremism in the region and ensure it remains loyal to Moscow.

Out of control?

Although he praised Kadyrov as a "good manager", Putin advised him to act in "closer coordination with federal organs of power" and "observe Russian law in



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) meets with Chechnya's leader Ramzan Kadyrov at the Kremlin. — AFP

all spheres of life".

Putin's recommendations come as concern grows within the federal security forces that Chechnya-whose police force answers to Kadyrov-is increasingly beyond the state's control. Last April, Kadyrov ordered his security service to "shoot to kill" officers from other Russian regions carrying out operations in Chechnya without his consent.

"Federal security forces have been trying to even out the inequalities so that Kadyrov-who constitutes an exception among the country's regional leaders-will have fewer real powers," political analyst Alexei Makarkin said. "In this power competition, the president is the arbitrator. He has to make sure not to offend either side." But in catering to Kadyrov, the Kremlin has effectively undermined human rights in the region, setting the bar low for acceptable treatment of the opposition and rights activists. "Kadyrov's

re-appointment gives the feeling that the opinion of rights activists counts very little-if at all-for authorities," Makarkin said.

Earlier this month, masked men in the Chechen capital of Grozny threw eggs, flour and disinfectant at Igor Kalyapin, head of the Committee to Prevent Torture, a rights group which oversees activists in Chechnya. The Kremlin rights council, an advisory body to Putin, condemned the attack on Kalyapin as "a disgrace". In a separate incident earlier this month, a group of journalists on a tour of Chechnya organised by Kalyapin were attacked by masked men speaking Chechen. The NGO's office was raided hours later. But even Kalyapin recognises that, despite permitting gross human rights violations, Kadyrov could well be the Kremlin's only option. "If someone was to replace Kadyrov now, there would be bloodshed," Kalyapin told Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper. — AFP

GEORGIA GOVERNOR SAYS HE WILL VETO RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION BILL

ATLANTA: Yesterday Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal said he will veto legislation shielding opponents of same-sex marriage, after a groundswell of opposition from companies threatening to boycott the state if it became law.

The Republican announced his decision during a news conference in his office at the Georgia Capitol, saying, "I have examined the protections that this bill proposes to provide to the faith based community and I can find no examples of any of those circumstances occurring in our state." Deal added, "I do not think that we have to discriminate against anyone to protect the faith-based community in Georgia."

Republican majorities passed the bill to broadly protect people whose actions were rooted in their religion. It also would have protected clergy who won't perform gay marriages and people who won't attend a wedding for religious reasons. Churches and affiliated religious groups could have used their faith as an argument for refusing to serve or hire someone.

The opposition

The bill's opponents said it excused discrimination and could trample local ordinances protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Coca-Cola and other big-name Georgia companies joined the NFL, prominent Hollywood figures and film studios urging Deal to reject the proposal. Some threatened to boycott the state if Deal didn't veto.

Deal, in his second and final term, heatedly said that those threats and questions about "my convictions and my character" from some in the religious community were misguided. "I do not respond very well to insults or to threats," he said. "The people of Georgia deserve a leader who will make sound judgments based on solid reasons that are not inflamed by emotion."

Deal said he would sign the bill had it passed in its original form, which was limited to protecting clergy who declined to perform same-sex marriages. He said his decision to reject the bill was "about the character of our state and the character of our people. Georgia is a welcoming state; it is full of loving, kind and generous people." Georgia's General Assembly already has left the Capitol for the year, adjourning after midnight on Thursday. Lawmakers can ask the governor to convene a special session, but need a three-fifths majority in both the House and Senate. If they can reach that threshold, overriding a governor's veto requires a two-thirds vote in each chamber. Republicans don't hold that margin in either the House or Senate, and all Democrats voted against the bill. Several Republicans in the House and one in the Senate also cast dissenting votes.

At least one Republican state senator, Mike Crane of Newman, called for a special session to override the veto. Crane is running for a congress-



ATLANTA: Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal speaks yesterday during a press conference to announce he has vetoed legislation allowing clergy to refuse performing gay marriage and protecting people who refuse to attend the ceremonies. — AP

sional seat. Another supporter of the bill, Republican Sen. Josh McKoon of Columbus, wouldn't make any guess about whether there is enough support for a special session.

"I'm just disappointed," McKoon said. "Governor Deal ran for office as someone the faith community could rely on." Representatives for House Speaker David Ralston and Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle didn't immediately respond to

request for comment on Deal's veto or their next steps. National gay-rights organizations immediately hailed Deal's decision. "We thank Governor Deal for doing the right thing," said Matt McTighe, Freedom for All Americans executive director. "The governor understands that while our freedom of religion is of critical importance, it doesn't mean there's a need for harmful exemptions that can lead to discrimination." — AP

EL SALVADOR POLICE REJECT TALKS WITH GANGS DECLARING CEASEFIRE

SAN SALVADOR: Police in El Salvador yesterday rejected talks with gangs which on the weekend unexpectedly announced a halt to their rampant murders that have turned the country into one of the most dangerous on the planet.

"There is no negotiation of any sort with any type of criminal organization," the country's police chief, Howard Cotto, told a media conference. "We have nothing to talk about with members of criminal organizations. Our job is to investigate and bring to justice those who commit crimes," he said.

Three of the most brutal gangs operating in El Salvador on Sunday issued a video statement saying they had ordered a stop to killings by their members. In exchange, they asked the government to hold off applying new and exceptional tactics to combat them, arguing they were an integral part of society. "We have made the government understand that it can't get rid of the gangs, because we are a part of the community in our country," said a masked man on the video speaking on behalf of

the feared Mara Salvatrucha gang and two factions of the rival Barrio 18 organization.

El Salvador is considered the most deadly country in the world outside of a war zone, based on its per capita murder rate. More than 6,000 people were slain in the Central American nation last year. The government this month moved to harden its militarized crackdown on the gangs after the March 3 massacre of eight electricity workers and three sugar cane cutters in a rural area just west of the capital. The proposed measures being put before the country's Congress include boosting the army's role in the fight, adding restrictions on gangs inside prisons, and a plan to increase control over areas under gang rule. El Salvador along with neighboring Honduras and Guatemala make up what is known as Central America's "Northern Triangle"-a trio of countries scarred by civil wars that once raged in the region and prey to ultra-violent gangs imported from Los Angeles' mean streets and US prisons. — AFP

LAWSUIT CHALLENGES NC ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW 'VIOLATES BASIC GUARANTEES OF EQUAL TREATMENT'

RALEIGH: Two transgender people and a lesbian law school professor filed a federal lawsuit yesterday to challenge a new North Carolina law that blocks local governments from passing anti-discrimination rules and requiring transgender students to use bathrooms assigned to their biological sex.

The three people, along with several civil liberties groups, wasted little time challenging the law, which was approved last week by the legislature and signed by Republican Gov. Pat McCrory. GOP lawmakers wanted to overturn an impending Charlotte ordinance that allowed transgender people to use the restroom aligned with their gender identity. But the new law also prevents all cities and counties from extending protections covering sexual orientation and gender identity at restaurants, hotels and stores.

"By singling out LGBT people for disfavored treatment and explicitly writing discrimination against transgender people into state law, (the new law) violates the most basic guarantees of equal treatment and the US Constitution," the lawsuit reads. The American Civil Liberties Union, Lambda Legal and Equality North Carolina scheduled a news conference in Raleigh yesterday to

discuss lawsuit details. Corporations have criticized the law, but McCrory and allies are defending it.

More against Discrimination

In addition to enabling transgender people to legally use restrooms aligned with their gender identity, the Charlotte ordinance would have provided broad protections against discrimination in public accommodations in the state's largest city. With the law, North Carolina became the first state to require public school and university students to use only those bathrooms that match their birth certificates, according to the National Conference on State Legislatures.

Advocates for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender rights say state legislators demonized them with bogus claims about bathroom risks. Supporters say the new law protects all people from having to share bathrooms with people who make them feel unsafe. Lawsuit defendants include McCrory and the University of North Carolina system, where one plaintiff works and another attends college. The system's 17 campuses also must comply with the law.

Another defendant is Attorney General Roy Cooper, a Democrat who has criticized the law and wants it repealed. He is challenging McCrory this fall for governor. Cooper is a defendant because his office defends the state in litigation. Two plaintiffs — UNC-Chapel Hill employee Joaquin Carcano of Carrboro and Payton Grey McGarry, a student at UNC-Greensboro — were born female and now consider themselves male but have not changed their birth certificates.

The lawsuit says Carcano used a designated men's restroom at work and McGarry used a campus locker room without any problems before the law was passed. Using women's restrooms could cause them anxiety and fear, the lawsuit reads. Now they'll have to search for bathrooms in other buildings or at local businesses, according to the lawsuit.

Forcing McGarry "to use the women's restroom would also cause substantial harm to his mental health and well-being," the lawsuit reads. "It would also force him to disclose to others the fact that he is transgender, which itself could lead to violence and harassment." —AP



RALEIGH: People protest outside the North Carolina Executive Mansion on Thursday. —AP



RECIFE: A supporter of Brazil displays a poster against Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff during the Russia 2018 FIFA World Cup South American Qualifiers' football match between Brazil and Uruguay on Friday. —AFP

BRAZIL'S ROUSSEFF FACES THREAT OF A COALITION IMPLOSION

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff could see her coalition disintegrate this week amid a political crisis that threatens to topple her government, as a congressional committee ponders impeachment proceedings against her.

Already the Brazilian bar association has said it will file a new request Monday to Congress for her impeachment. But Rousseff's real troubles begin today, in the capital of Brasilia, when her major coalition partner, the centrist PMDB party, will in all likelihood formalize its break with her government. The PMDB, which has 69 deputies and is the biggest party in Congress, is led by Vice President Michel Temer, who would serve out the rest of Rousseff's term if she is impeached, until the winner of the 2018 presidential election takes office.

The 75-year-old politician has not done so much as lift a finger to defend the president in recent weeks, even as her impeachment proceedings unfolded against a backdrop of deep recession and mass protests. Instead, he met last Monday with opposition leader Aécio Neves, who narrowly lost the 2014 election to Rousseff, to discuss the future of the nation.

Since the beginning of March, millions of Brazilians—especially those skewing whiter, wealthier and better-educated, who are clustered in the megacities of Brazil's southeastern industrial corridor—have marched to demand Rousseff's ouster. Her backers from the left have held their own demonstrations, with much smaller crowds.

According to O Globo newspaper, 80 percent of PMDB's leadership members could vote in favor of a break from the coalition. And other parties could follow suit, including the Progressive Party (PP), which has 49 deputies. The impeachment

case is based on accusations that Rousseff doctored the government's accounts to boost public spending during her 2014 re-election campaign and hide the depth of a recession last year.

Lula complicates things

With her coalition splintering, Rousseff called her predecessor and mentor, former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, to the rescue, naming him her chief of staff. But the move blew up in her face when a judge released a wire-taped phone call suggesting that the appointment—which would have given Lula ministerial immunity—was really aimed at saving the ex-president from arrest on pending money-laundering charges linked to Brazil's ongoing Petrobras scandal.

The episode caused a new wave of anti-Rousseff protests and has driven the country's executive and judiciary branches into a standoff. The full Supreme Court is expected to issue a definitive ruling on Lula's appointment sometime after it reconvenes on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, if the congressional committee weighing Rousseff's impeachment decides to bring a motion against her, the matter would go to the full house where two-thirds of deputies — 342 out of 513 — are required for impeachment to be upheld. At this point Rousseff would be suspended and the issue would go to the Senate. The upper house, overseen by the president of the Supreme Court, then votes, with a two-thirds majority — 54 of 81 — needed to force Rousseff from office. Rousseff last week condemned the "fascist methods" of opponents seeking her ouster and said the rolling crisis would leave a "scar" if not resolved democratically. —AFP

BAIL SET AT \$50,000 FOR SEATTLE TREE MAN

SEATTLE: A man who perched near the top of an 80-foot sequoia tree in downtown Seattle for a day was ordered held on \$50,000 bail. Cody Lee Miller, 28, was arrested on suspicion of mischief. A judge set the bail amount Friday, a day after Miller declined to appear in court.

Miller climbed to the top of the conifer on last Tuesday and stayed for about 25 hours, ignoring police efforts to coax him down much

of the time. He threw apples and branches at responders. The drama sparked intense interest online, with new Twitter accounts and the hashtag #ManInTree trending on Twitter and Facebook. A probable-cause statement from the police made public Thursday says an urban forester with the city's Transportation Department pegged damage to the tree at about \$7,800. —AP

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

'IT'S GOING TO BE A STRUGGLE'

WASHINGTON: 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? Fidel Castro, the revolutionary leader of Cuba, whom Obama did not see on his visit, weighed in yesterday with a long, bristling letter recounting the history of US aggression against Cuba and saying, "We don't need the empire to give us any presents."

The 1,500-word letter in state media was Fidel Castro's first response to Obama's three-day visit. But the 89-year-old also said, "My modest suggestion is that he (Obama) reflects and doesn't try to develop theories about Cuban politics."

Michael Posner, Obama's former assistant secretary of state for human rights and democracy, said, "We shouldn't kid ourselves that they're going to all of a sudden tolerate dissent. 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.

Castro's view

Under the glare of global attention, Raul 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

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 this 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

crazy idea," said former Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, a Republican who left Cuba as an exile at age 6. "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



HAVANA: President Barack Obama shakes hands with Cuban President Raul Castro during their meeting at the Palace of the Revolution. —AP

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.

The strategy

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

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

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

TRUMP READY TO VISIT WISCONSIN, BUT CRUZ ALREADY HAS HEAD-START

OSHKOSH: Donald Trump is planning to make his first campaign visit to Wisconsin today, where the upcoming Republican presidential primary could mark a turning point in the unpredictable GOP race. But rival Ted Cruz has gotten a head-start on the contest, racking up influential endorsements, campaigning in key regions and supported by bullish advertising campaign.

A solid Cruz win in Wisconsin would narrow Trump's path to the nomination, heap pressure on the billionaire to sweep the remaining winner-take-all primaries this spring, and increase the chances of a contested party convention in July. "The results in Wisconsin will impact significantly the primaries to come," Cruz told The Associated Press after a rally in Oshkosh Friday. "Wisconsin, I believe, will play a critical role continuing to unify Republicans behind our cam-

paign. The only way to beat Donald Trump is with unity." Cruz is positioning himself to win Wisconsin, next Tuesday's only contest, and the first primary since he began collecting the backing of establishment Republicans, such as former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, adamant about eliminating Trump.

As Cruz campaigned across the state ahead of the Easter holiday, he was following a winning roadmap drawn by Wisconsin governor - and former 2016 presidential hopeful - Scott Walker in 2010, up Wisconsin's rural and working-class midsection - the same demographic that has driven Trump's success thus far.

Cruz has mined the GOP vote-rich swath of farms and factories from south-central Wisconsin, up the Fox River Valley's corridor of paper mills, small towns - among them, some of the most swing-prone counties in the country.

The Fox River Valley, suburban Milwaukee and the rural counties outside Madison are home to 75 percent of Wisconsin's most reliable Republican primary voters, said Keith Gilkes, a veteran Walker adviser who worked for his 2010 GOP primary campaign. "How Gov. Walker won was basically by winning the lower Fox Valley down through the Southeast," Gilkes said. "That's the holy grail demographically for the Republican Party in Wisconsin."

Trump's leadership

Trump has slightly fewer than half of the Republican delegates allocated so far, short of the majority needed to clinch the nomination before the party's national convention this summer. Cruz has more than a third of the delegates, but is focused equally on stopping Trump and uniting most of the party against him. —AP



JANESVILLE: Republican Presidential candidate US Senator Ted Cruz making a stop at the Armory restaurant in downtown on Thursday. —AP

US SOLDIER SHOOTS BOY NEAR AFGHAN BASE

KABUL: A US soldier shot and killed an Afghan boy yesterday near an American airfield close to the capital Kabul, a senior Afghan police officer said. The boy, whose age is unknown, had been carrying what looked like an automatic rifle near the Bagram Airfield, 50 kilometers from Kabul in neighboring Parwan province, said the provincial police chief, Gen. Zaman Mamozai.

An American soldier had warned

the boy from a watchtower to stop, he said. Local people gathered near the base to protest the killing, but dispersed once they were told about the circumstances, Mamozai said. He said the incident is being investigated.

Bagram officials could not immediately be reached for comment. The US military in Kabul said it was looking into the incident. Earlier, an Afghan official said overnight attacks by the Taliban on two police checkpoints in

the volatile southern Helmand province killed at least eight police.

Col. Almas Kahn, deputy police chief in Helmand, said the attack happened in the Gereshk district around midnight. Though Kahn blamed the Taliban, the group did not immediately claim responsibility for the attack. Afghan forces have been trying to reduce the number of checkpoints as they are vulnerable to insurgent attacks.

In the southern Uruzgan province, an official said that two days of fighting between police and insurgents in the Charchino district had left 12 police and 20 Taliban dead. District police chief Wali Dad said around a dozen police check points had been attacked by Taliban gunmen, leaving a further 27 policemen wounded. Fighting was still going on.

"If we don't get support and reinforcements soon we might lose the

whole district," he said. Taliban spokesman Qari Yousaf Ahmadi claimed responsibility for Uruzgan attacks. Separately, the Taliban claimed responsibility for firing a series of rockets at Kabul's new parliament building early Monday. No casualties were reported. Rockets are occasionally fired at government and diplomatic areas in Kabul, but casualties are rare and the capital has seen few deadly attacks in recent months. —AP

BANGLADESH COURT REJECTS THE REMOVAL OF ISLAM AS STATE RELIGION

'THE JUDGES SIMPLY SAID THE RULE IS DISCHARGED'

DHAKA: Bangladesh's high court yesterday rejected a petition by secular activists to scrap Islam as the state religion in the wake of nationwide protests by hardline Islamist groups. A special bench of three judges threw out the petition within moments of opening the case and without allowing any

sented the secular activists in the case.

The court did not allow the petitioners to state their case or present any arguments, he said. "The judges simply said the rule is discharged." Bangladesh was declared officially secular after the 1971 war of independence from

with Bangladesh's secular charter and discriminates against non-Muslims. More than 90 percent of Bangladesh's population is Muslim, with Hindus and Buddhists the main minorities.

'Victory'

The country's largest Islamist

rescuing the country from a massive disaster," Hefazat's organising secretary Azizul Hoque Islamabadi told AFP.

The court's decision to throw out the case threatens to heighten tensions between secularists and hardliners in the conservative nation, which has recently seen a spate of killings of atheist bloggers, religious minorities and foreigners.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for many of these incidents, but the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina blames the banned domestic group Jamayatul Mujahideen Bangladesh for the upsurge in deadly violence.

Some 7,000 activists had taken to the streets of the capital Dhaka after prayers last Friday, chanting anti-government slogans and holding banners to protest against the high court's move to hear the plea.

Bangladesh has been plagued by unrest in the last three years and experts say a long-running political crisis has radicalised opponents of the government. The secular government launched a nationwide crackdown on Jamaat in 2013, detaining or prosecuting tens of thousands of activists.

A controversial war crimes tribunal has ordered the execution of several top Jamaat leaders, dividing the country and sparking deadly protests. Constitutional changes dating back over three decades have put Bangladesh in the unusual position of being officially secular while still having Islam as a state religion.

Hasina's government has brought back secularism as a pillar of the constitution, but promised it would not ratify any laws that go against the central tenets of Islam. —AP



DHAKA: Bangladeshi hardline Islamists gather to protest outside the national mosque Baitul Mukarram in on Friday. —AFP

testimony, an AFP correspondent at the court said.

The petition, which was first launched 28 years ago, has triggered countrywide protests by Islamist groups in the impoverished nation. "We are saddened (at the ruling). It's a sad day for the minorities of Bangladesh," said Subrata Chowdhury, who repre-

sented the secular activists in the case. Pakistan which created the nation from what was previously East Pakistan.

In 1988 the then-military ruler, General Hussain Muhammad Ershad, elevated Islam to the state religion in an attempt to consolidate power. Secularists have argued for decades that having Islam as the state religion conflicts

party, Jamaat-e-Islami, responded to the court's decision by withdrawing a call for a nationwide strike. It described the outcome as a "victory of 160 million people".

Hefazat-e-Islam, a hardline Islamist group that has staged violent demonstrations in recent years, also welcomed the court's move. "We thank the high court for

their flights before traveling to the airport.

The Port of Dover was closed by the winds and rough seas Monday morning and ferry services linking France and Britain were suspended. The port has since reopened but ferry companies are reporting delays as vessels are slowed by heavy weather.

Roughly 100,000 homes in Britain have been left without power as winds of up to 106 mph (170 kph) hit parts of the country. The Met Office forecasting service warned of potential heavy flooding across southwestern England and issued 136 flood alerts.

Several highway bridges were closed as a precaution. Wind warnings were issued for London and parts of southeastern England. There was heavy rain in parts of northern England and Wales.

Road conditions were hazardous with several weather-related accidents reported. The Central Motorway Police Group, which patrols roads in the Midlands warned of "horrendous" conditions and advised people to stay inside on Easter Monday and eat chocolate.

In Brittany, in western France, 35,000 customers lost power because of the storm, according to regional power grid official Bernard Laurans, who spoke to French news channel iTele. France's meteorological service warned of a "very unsettled" situation, issuing wind or wave alerts for 10 coastal areas and warning of gusts of up to 140 kph in exposed coastal areas.

British police continued to investigate the death Saturday of 7-year-old Summer Grant, who was playing on an inflatable bouncy castle that was swept away by a sudden gust of wind. An autopsy showed she died of multiple injuries after being carried some 150 yards (meters) by the winds. A man and woman with the bouncy castle company have been released on bail after being arrested on suspicion of manslaughter. —AP

HIGH WINDS BATTER IN BRITAIN, FRANCE; SOME FLIGHTS DIVERTED

LONDON: High winds battered Britain and western France yesterday, wreaking havoc with flight schedules, ferry transport across the English Channel and closing the Port of Dover.

Passengers reported frightening attempts to land at London's airports in extreme high winds as Storm Katie caused some 130 flights at Gatwick and Heathrow airports to be diverted or canceled. Dan Prance told Britain's Press Association that passengers on his flight from Budapest to Gatwick were so terrified that many burst into tears with relief when

they finally touched down after being diverted to Birmingham.

"You could see from the windows there was a massive storm happening outside, the wind and rain was smashing against the glass," he said. "We got closer to the ground at Gatwick until the captain suddenly aborted the landing and we went shooting back up into the sky to attempt again."

Gatwick also reported some disruption on the road leading to the North Terminal and both airports advised passengers to check the status of



UNITED KINGDOM: Police and forensic officers attend the scene Sunday, March 27, 2016, where a seven-year old girl died after she was blown by the wind about 150 metres on a bouncy castle on Saturday. —AP

INDIA LOOKS TO BURY ITALY FEUD TO ACHIEVE BIGGER AMBITION

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi heads to a European Union summit this week, seeking to patch up a four-year diplomatic feud with Italy that has grown toxic enough to threaten New Delhi's ambitions to become a bigger global player.

India hopes the Brussels summit will bring a thaw in ties with Italy, and keep it from blocking the Asian nation's membership of a key glob-

al group on missile technology, after Rome single-handedly scuppered India's bid to join last year. "We have always wanted a vibrant, robust partnership with Italy," said Indian foreign ministry official Nandini Singla. "We see Italy as a key EU partner."

The row between the two nations stems from India's arrest of two Italian Marines to stand trial for the killing of two fishermen off the

southern Indian coast in 2012, a crime Italy said was beyond the jurisdiction of Indian courts. One of the men has been allowed to return home for medical treatment, while the other is confined to the Italian embassy. Italy has sought international arbitration of the case, with a United Nations tribunal set to hold hearings this week.

An Italian government source said Italy seeks the return of the

second Marine held at its New Delhi embassy, since the trial process in India had effectively ended after both parties agreed to international arbitration.

"There's no reason for him to stay in India for the arbitration. We have asked that he be allowed to follow the proceedings from his own country," said the source, who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the case. —Reuters



TRAUNSTEIN: Local residents dressed in traditional Bavarian clothes ride during the traditional Georgi (St. George) horse riding procession on Easter yesterday. —AP

BAVARIAN RIDERS TAKE HORSES TO CHURCH IN EASTER PARADE

BERLIN: Yesterday hundreds of riders in southeastern Germany have taken part in a traditional Easter procession, taking their horses to a church to receive blessings. The Bavarian town of Traunstein's horseback Georgiritt parade dates back to at least the 18th century. Some 400 horses, led by riders in traditional local costume, process to a

church in nearby Ettendorf where both riders and animals are blessed.

Along with the procession, the town in Germany's southeastern corner also stages a saber dance that is meant to symbolize the victory of spring over winter. Riders were greeted by bright sunshine on Monday after braving snow during last year's parade. —AP



TABANOVCE: A refugee child holds a ball while walking between tents at the transit center for refugees yesterday. —AP

GREECE TO TACKLE 'OPEN BORDER' RUMORS AMONG REFUGEES

ATHENS: Greece's government is appealing to volunteers and aid groups working with desperate refugees on the border to make sure the migrants don't get misinformation like reports that led hundreds to leave a refugee camp on a failed, hours-long trek to try to enter Macedonia.

Migration affairs spokesman Giorgos Kyritsis said yesterday that the government was trying to communicate directly with

refugees in the Idomeni camp on Greece's northern border and was sending in a team of interpreters. The move comes after refugees said activists in Idomeni had been urging people over the weekend to march on the Macedonian border, saying it would be reopened. Two weeks ago, similar rumors saw more than 1,000 people attempt to enter Macedonia by crossing a swollen creek, only to be arrested and sent back. —AP



PALMYRA: The site of the ancient city of Palmyra, Syria, an archaeological gem that Syrian troops took back from Islamic State fighters on Sunday, March 27, 2016. —AP

RUSSIA TO START CLEARING PALMYRA OF MINES THIS WEEK

MOSCOW: Russia will be sending troops and equipment later this week to demine the archaeological site in the ancient Syrian town of Palmyra which was recaptured from Islamic State fighters last week. Russian news agencies on Monday quoted Gen. Valery Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff, as saying that Russia will be sending troops, robots and demining equipment in the next few days.

The recapture of Palmyra by Syrian troops under the cover of Russian airstrikes was an important victory over IS extremists who waged a 10-month reign of terror there. It was the first major defeat for the group since an international agreement to battle terrorism in the fractured nation took effect last year. President Vladimir Putin earlier this month ordered the bulk of Russian forces in Syria to withdraw. —AP

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Global Bilingual Academy
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Rock Paper Scissors
KSA

You will be responsible for liaising and communicating with different retailer about order and product replenishment and monthly sale record, following up on payment, tracking inventory for replenishment and reproduction, entering sale and expense data on the system, as well as, allocating new retailers and expanding our geographical reach.

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Mattex Group
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Qatar

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Menasa And Partners
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Qatar

You will be responsible for meeting and greeting customers in a friendly manner and ascertain their needs and requirements, achieving personal sales in line with targets, selling and promoting the company's products at all times, exceling at delivering and growing the brand in the stores local market place, as well as, ensuring that customer service standards are exceptional at all times.

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JAPAN'S ABE HOSTS MUGABE AS TOKYO AND BEIJING VIE FOR AFRICA INFLUENCE

TOKYO: Yesterday Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe welcomed Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe—the 92-year-old former guerrilla fighter who is widely shunned in the West but frequently courted in Asia. Mugabe, whose country is subject to sanctions by the United States and European countries over its tainted human rights record, was visiting Japan for the fourth time as president and holding his third meeting with Abe.

The Japanese Prime Minister said he wants to work with Mugabe, who chaired the African Union last year, to help with Japan's push to reform the UN Security Council. "By closely coordinating with Mr Mugabe... we wish to help promote reform" of the global body, Abe told reporters, in remarks carried by Jiji Press, referring to Mugabe as an esteemed African elder.

After their talks, Japan announced development aid worth 600 million yen (\$5.3 million) for the nation to buy equipment needed to build roads.

The welcome for Africa's longest-serving ruler comes as Japan tries to compete with China for influence in the continent's fast-growing economies and as Tokyo prepares to sponsor a major conference on African development this August.

Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed Mugabe in 2014, calling him a renowned African liberation leader and an "old friend" of the Chinese people—one of the country's highest compliments for visiting foreign leaders.

Abe met Mugabe at the last round of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, or TICAD, held in 2013 in Yokohama. This year's TICAD, slated for Kenya, will be the first to be held in



TOKYO: Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe (L) speaks as Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe listens on, during a press conference after their talks at the latter's official residence yesterday. — AFP

Africa. They also met last year during a UN disaster conference held in Japan. Mugabe's latest visit comes as Japan has tried to maintain cordial ties even with states controlled by leaders who have antagonized Western nations, most notably Iran. Abe has also reached out to Russian President Vladimir Putin — under intense criticism in the West for the annexation of Crimea and fighting in eastern Ukraine—as Japan tries to solve a territorial row dating to the close of World War II.

Mugabe has led Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, with his rule marked by vote-rigging, mass emigration, accusations of human rights abuses and economic decline. His government has been accused of systematic human rights abuses and tipping the country into a severe crisis through a campaign of violent land seizures. — AFP



TOKYO: Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga speaks to the media during a press conference at the prime minister's official residence. — AP

JAPAN STICKS TO NON-NUCLEAR ARMS PLEDGE AFTER TRUMP REMARK

TOKYO: Japan's government said yesterday that it will stick to its policy of not possessing nuclear weapons, after US presidential hopeful Donald Trump said he would be open to the idea of Japan and South Korea having their own atomic arsenals.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters that the country's "three principles" of not owning, making or allowing nuclear weapons "remain an important basic policy of the government."

Trump said in an interview with The New York Times published Sunday that asking Japan and South Korea to pay more for their own defense "could mean nuclear."

He said the issue "at some point is something that we have to talk about." Suga, Japan's top government spokesman, declined to comment specifically on Trump's statement, saying he is only run-

ning for the presidency at this point. Suga expressed confidence that the US-Japan alliance will remain a pillar of Japanese policy, no matter who wins the US presidential election in November.

The US stations tens of thousands of troops in Japan and South Korea, and both are key US allies in the Pacific. Trump said he would withdraw those troops if Japan and South Korea don't contribute more to their cost.

South Korean Defense Ministry spokesman Moon Sang Gyun said he had no comment on Trump's remarks. Asked in general about a US troop withdrawal, he said South Korea believes that its alliance with the United States remains strong. North Korea's development of nuclear weapons has prompted questions about whether other Asian nations would feel the need to follow suit. — AP

CHINA OFFICIAL SAYS DALAI LAMA 'MAKING A FOOL' OF BUDDHISM

'HE HAS NO WAY TO COMPEL ADMIRATION'

BEIJING: Exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama is "making a fool" of Tibetan Buddhism with suggestions he may not reincarnate, or reincarnate as something inappropriate, and the faithful are not buying it, a Chinese official wrote yesterday. The comments came as early election results put the leader of the Tibetan government-in-exile, Lobsang Sangay, on course for a second term, part of a strategy to sustain a decades-old struggle for greater autonomy for its Chinese-ruled homeland. China says the Dalai Lama, who fled into exile in India after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959, is a violent separatist. He denies espousing violence and says he only wants genuine autonomy for Tibet.

The animosity between the two sides, and their rivalry for control over Tibetan Buddhism, is at the heart of the debate about reincarnation. Tibetan Buddhism holds that the soul of a senior lama is reincarnated in the body of a child on his death. China says the tradition must continue and its officially atheist Communist leaders have the right to approve the Dalai Lama's successor, as a right inherited from China's emperors. The Nobel Peace Prize-winning monk has suggested his title could end when he dies. China accuses him of betraying, and being disrespectful towards, the Tibetan religion by saying there might be no more reincarnations.

Writing in the state-run Global Times, Zhu Weiqun, chairman of the ethnic and religious affairs committee of the top advisory body to China's parliament, said the Dalai Lama had to respect tradition. "The Dalai Lama continues to proclaim his reincarnation is a 'purely religious matter' and something only he can decide, but he has no way to compel admiration from the faithful," wrote Zhu, known for his hardline stance on Tibet.



MCLEOD GANJ: His Holiness the Dalai Lama (R) greets his former physician Dr Yeshe Dhondup during the Centenary celebration of the Men-Tsee-Khang (Tibetan Medical Institute) on March 23, 2016. — AFP

"He's been proclaiming he'll reincarnate as a foreigner, as a bee, as a 'mischievous blond girl,' or even proposing a living reincarnation or an end to reincarnation," he added. "All of this, quite apart from making a fool of Tibetan Buddhism, is completely useless when it comes to extricating him from the difficulty of reincarnation," wrote Zhu, who was involved in the past in Beijing's failed efforts to talk to the Dalai Lama's representatives.

A senior aide to the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Taklha, said there was "no way" Tibetans would accept a successor appointed by China.

"The Chinese are following an absurd agenda and we continue to reject it," he said. In 2011, the

Dalai Lama called on exiled Tibetans to nominate an elected leader, or "Sikyong," to lead the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). Sangay was on track to win re-election with over 65 percent backing in the March 20 vote.

"I hope to do much better. Both on political terms, by holding dialogue with the Chinese, and working on welfare issues in the next five years," he told Reuters.

China does not recognise the CTA, which is based in India's Himalayan town of Dharamsala and represents nearly 100,000 exiled Tibetans living in 30 countries including India, Nepal, Canada and the United States. — Reuters

CHINA HOLDS WRITER'S SIBLINGS, DEMANDS RETRACTION OF COLUMN

BEIJING: A Chinese dissident writer said yesterday that police in his hometown are holding three of his siblings in retaliation for an article he wrote condemning the detention of a fellow writer linked to the investigation of an anonymous letter online calling for the Chinese president's resignation.

Zhang Ping, better known by his penname Chang Ping, said by phone from his home in Germany that his two younger brothers and a younger sister were detained after they returned to the southwestern town of Duofu to celebrate their father's birthday Sunday and pay respects at the tombs of their ancestors. Zhang said police were demanding that he cease his political writing and give up his column on the website of German international broadcaster Deutsche Welle. He said police also told family members that they want him to remove the critical essay about the detained writer from the website. "It's horrific that a local Chinese police station should stretch its arm toward German media and demand an article be removed," Zhang said. "That's interference with press freedom."

Asked by phone about Zhang's siblings, Duofu police said they were holding several people on suspicion of causing a fire while paying their respects to their ancestors but refused to give details. Zhang said it was common for people to set off fireworks when visiting ancestors' tombs and believed there was no real damage. He said police were simply

using that as a pretext to hold his brothers and sister.

Zhang had criticized the disappearance of writer Jia Jia over suspicions that he was linked to the posting of a letter that criticized President Xi Jinping's rule and called for him to step down. The letter, signed by "loyal Communist Party members," briefly appeared on the government-controlled news site Watching.cn in early March.

Beijing appears to have launched a concerted hunt for those responsible for the letter, in a reflection of the leadership's anxiety about any form of dissent, including within the party itself. Jia was later confirmed to be in police custody and released after 10 days. He has since declined to speak to the media about the case.

The president of Watching.cn, Li Wanhui, two top editors and two site technicians have also dropped from view for days and are believed to be under investigation. Nine other technicians working for a technology company that provides support to the site also are reported missing.

Similar to Zhang, another prominent overseas Chinese activist, Wen Yunchao, also has 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 attempt to pressure him into admitting involvement in posting the letter. — AP



PHNOM PENH: The Torso of Rama, a 10th century stone statue, is displayed during a handing over ceremony yesterday. — AP

US MUSEUM RETURNS 10TH CENTURY STATUE TO CAMBODIA

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia yesterday welcomed home a 10th-century Khmer statue that was looted during the country's civil war before spending the past three decades at an American museum.

The sandstone Torso of Rama statue, which stands 62 inches (157 centimeters) high and is missing its head, arms and feet, was formally handed over at a ceremony in Phnom Penh attended by government officials, the US ambassador and the director of the Denver Museum of Art.

The museum said it acquired the statue in 1986 from the Doris Weiner Gallery in New York City but only recently learned new facts about its provenance. "We were recently provided with verifiable evidence that was not available to us at the time of acquisition, and immediately began taking all appropriate steps ... for its return home," Christoph Heinrich, the museum's director, said in a joint statement with the Cambodian government.

Cambodia's Secretary of State Chan Thani thanked the museum for voluntarily returning the piece, which he said shows its

sensitivity to Cambodian culture. "The return also highlights the serious looting in the past that had occurred in our country and the government's efforts to repatriate those artifacts that left the country illegally, which are parts of our soul as a nation," he said in the statement.

The statue will be returned to its home at the Prasat Chen temple on the Koh Ker temple complex in Siem Reap province, which is also home to the famed Angkor Wat complex. It is the latest artwork returned to Cambodia in recent years. Among the galleries that have repatriated art are the Guimet Museum in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Cleveland Museum of Art, Sotheby's auction house, Christie's auction house and the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California.

Yim Nolson, an official in charge of Cambodian culture, said the statue was stolen during the civil war in the 1970s and later transported to the US "Now after a long journey, he is finally back home," he said. — AP

LOS ALAMOS TEAM TO RESEARCH ATOMIC BOMB IMPACT IN JAPAN

SANTA FE: A group from Los Alamos, once the building site for an atomic bomb, is making an unprecedented trip this month to a country that was devastated by the weapon.

Los Alamos Historical Museum representatives are traveling throughout Japan to gain that country's perspective on the impact of nuclear warfare for a planned exhibit. Museum director Judith Stauber, along with a museum registrar and a student intern, flew to Japan Thursday. The team will visit Tokyo, Kyoto and the two cities that were targeted with the bomb — Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

They will meet with a bomb survivor, researchers and leaders from the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, Stauber said.

The trip has been in the works for two years. It is partially funded by a \$10,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Santa Fe New Mexican reported. It also has gotten support from the New Mexico Japanese Citizens League.

The planned exhibit will open in December. Aside from visiting Japan, Stauber plans to col-

laborate with Japanese-Americans on a display on World War II internment camps in New Mexico.

Los Alamos, known as Atomic City, is home to the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The community is considered one of the wealthiest in the US because of an economy tethered to one of the nation's largest science laboratories. It's a city where colorful symbols of atomic energy are displayed almost everywhere. Bo Jacobs, a researcher at the Hiroshima Peace Institute who will meet with Stauber, said the history surrounding atomic energy is not a story of scientific discovery in Japan. Instead, it's a story of "people who were killed, who lost family members, who were injured." In an email, Jacobs said the bomb's invention took a human toll of anywhere from 129,000 to more than 200,000.

"The differences between the US and the Japanese narratives of the attack — they couldn't be more different," Jacobs said. Stauber said she hopes this visit will help build an exhibit that can bridge that gap between narratives. "What do we know, and how do we know it?" she said. "And how are we remembering?" — AP



In this photo by Ahn Young-joon, workers at South Korea's agency for recovering and identifying soldiers killed in action prepare to put the remains of Chinese soldiers into coffins as Chinese military officers watch during rites at a temporary columbarium in Paju, South Korea. The remains of 36 Chinese soldiers killed during the 1950-53 Korean War will be returned home on Thursday for permanent burial. Communist China supported North Korea during the war, and thousands of Chinese soldiers were among the more than 1 million believed to have died from both sides. South Korea has returned several small groups of Chinese remains as a humanitarian gesture. — AP



BRIGHTON: A tree that fell in high winds brought by Storm Katie lies across a car in a street in Brighton yesterday. — AFP

DUBAI AMUSEMENT PARK TO ADD \$454M SIX FLAGS

Continued from Page 1

Shareholders will vote on the deal in April, it said. It offered no other details about what will be planned for the park, though a mock-up on display earlier this month at the resort's main office showed a possible addition to the park on its eastern corner.

In a statement, Dubai Parks & Resorts' CEO Raed Kajoor Al-Nuaimi said the addition of the Six Flags park would "further establish Dubai Parks and Resorts' position as the Middle East's largest leisure and entertainment destination." "This means we will be able to strengthen the appeal of our destination, attracting thrill seekers of all ages," he said. Officials hope to open the Six Flags park by late 2019. Approval of the plan by shareholders appears likely. The park's majority owner, with 60 percent of the company, is Meraas Holding, a firm backed by Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

Previous listings on the Dubai Financial Market showed

the Kuwait Investment Authority, that country's sovereign wealth fund, owned a 5-percent stake, as did Bahrain's Mubasher Financial Services, though that information was no longer listed on the exchange's website Monday. Shares in Dubai Parks & Resorts closed at 1.21 dirhams (\$0.33) in Monday trading. Six Flags Entertainment Corp "will be heavily involved in managing" the Dubai park, said Nancy Krejsa, a spokeswoman for the Grand Prairie, Texas-based company. She declined to discuss the financial terms of the deal. Annual reports for over the last two years for Six Flags included mentions of it making licensing deals overseas that don't require it "to make any capital investments," while reaping fees while any park is under development or opened. Six Flags signed a 2014 deal with Meraas to build a theme park on Dubai's outskirts, and the Dubai Parks & Resorts' announcement is "the next stage of the agreement," Krejsa said in an email. It also announced a partnership last week with private firm NaVi Entertainment to lend its name to a theme and water park in Vietnam, without dis-

closing financial terms of the deal.

While still mostly desert, the site of Dubai Parks & Resorts is close to where Dubai plans to host the 2020 World Expo, or world's fair, as well as Al Maktoum International Airport at Dubai World Central, which officials hope someday will handle over 200 million passengers a year. Investors hope to gain from the growing number of tourists visiting Dubai, home to the long-haul airline Emirates, the world's tallest building, luxury malls and other attractions. In 2015, Dubai saw 14.2 million overnight visitors, up from 13.2 million the year before, according to the emirate's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing.

But challenges remain for the park, which is scheduled to open its other attractions this October. Low global oil prices have pinched the United Arab Emirates and other

neighboring Gulf countries, which supply a ready stream of tourists to Dubai. Meanwhile, the memory still remains of a massive planned amusement park known as Dubailand, which collapsed when property values in the emirate crashed and Dubai had to accept multibillion-dollar emergency aid packages from Abu Dhabi to stay afloat.

Stefan Zwanzger, a German amusement park enthusiast who blogs about the industry and has lived in the Emirates, said that while amusement parks likely would do good business in the UAE, adding so many of them at once through this project and others could prove problematic. "I have no idea who's writing the feasibility study for the UAE to build so many theme parks at the same time," Zwanzger said. "It's as if you go in a Lamborghini and you accelerate from zero to 100 in four seconds. It's probably fun, but you can hit a lamp post." — AFP

KUWAIT TO DEPORT 60 LEBANESE

Continued from Page 1

Other Gulf states have also taken measures against alleged Hezbollah supporters since the terror blacklisting. Bahrain said it had deported several Lebanese residents for

alleged links to the group. Saudi security forces arrested a Shiite preacher accused of glorifying the group, the kingdom's Al-Watan newspaper reported last week. And the United Arab Emirates has reportedly put seven people on trial for allegedly forming a cell linked to Hezbollah. — AFP

SPEAKER, OIL WORKERS HOLD TALKS AS SALARY...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Cabinet yesterday appreciated the positive corrective steps taken by the oil sector in order to cut spending in light of the current financial situation in the country. The Cabinet said during its routine meeting presided by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah that such moves are compatible with the current orientations aiming to reform the financial and economic condition, while keeping oil workers' basic rights and gains intact. The retrenchment measures are applied to workers at all state agencies and bodies, the cabinet said, reiterating that such efforts reflect the aspired cooperation in order to overcome this critical stage.

In this context, the Cabinet listened to a briefing by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh on measures being taken within

the framework of financial and economic reforms. Such measures include a fresh clear-cut, transparent and fair mechanism for raising the charges of public property exploitation.

The Cabinet then reviewed the report of the Kuwait National Competitiveness Committee, which analyzed the competitive aspects of the Kuwaiti economy based on the findings of the Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016 - issued by the World Economic Forum. The report showed that Kuwait came 34th in the Global Competitiveness Index, which reflected good improvement compared to the situation over the past years.

The Cabinet further approved and referred to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah a draft bill on modifying electricity and water charges. The bill that will later find its way to the National Assembly, aims at slashing the imbalances caused by the excessive demand and consumption rates. — Agencies

SAUDI, YEMEN REBELS EXCHANGE PRISONERS

Continued from Page 1

Efforts have been building to bring an end to the devastating conflict in Yemen, a year after the Saudi-led coalition launched air strikes against the Iran-backed Shiite Houthi rebels. UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed announced last week that the combatants have agreed to a cessation of hostilities from midnight on April 10, followed by talks in Kuwait on April 18.

Previous negotiations have failed and earlier ceasefires were not respected, but analysts say a more conducive atmosphere prevails ahead of the new round of talks. Andreas Krieg of the Department of Defense Studies at King's College London said the prisoner swap is "a sign of Saudi goodwill" before the Kuwait negotiations. It signals to the Houthis that Riyadh and its allies are "willing to make compromises to bring these talks to a successful end," said Krieg, who also teaches at the Qatari Armed Forces Staff College. Adam Baron, a visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said "there is widespread hope that the upcoming Kuwait talks will function as a step in the right direction."

'Immeasurable suffering'

The coalition said yesterday that border areas remained relatively calm. It said it hoped to see the lull "spread to combat zones in order to facilitate the sending of humanitarian aid to all of Yemen's territory" and to support UN

efforts to reach a political settlement. In a rare incident that broke the calm, the Saudi Civil Defense agency said on Sunday that eight people, including four children, had been wounded by fire from Yemen. More than 90 people have been killed on the Saudi side of the frontier by shelling and in skirmishes over the past year.

The Houthis seized Sanaa in September 2014 then advanced south, raising fears in Riyadh that the rebels would extend the influence of Shiite Iran in the kingdom's southern neighbor. Local forces backed by coalition ground troops have since pushed the Houthis out of five southern provinces and second city Aden, where President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi has established a temporary capital. But the rebels-allied with elite troops loyal to Hadi's ousted predecessor Ali Abdullah Saleh-have held on elsewhere including the capital.

The United Nations says about 6,300 people have been killed in the war, more than half of them civilians. On Sunday the World Health Organization said Yemen's civilians were undergoing "immeasurable suffering", including almost 2.5 million internally displaced. Sunni extremists of the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda have exploited the chaos, widening their footholds in Yemen's south and carrying out deadly attacks against both the Shiite rebels and Hadi's loyalists. Human rights groups have criticized the high civilian death toll from the coalition's bombing campaign and have called on Western governments to stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia. — AFP

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Issues

AFTER BRUSSELS TERROR ATTACKS, SPIES DEBATE SECURITY RISKS OF BREXIT

By Alice Ritchie

The Brussels attacks have pushed security to the forefront of Britain's EU referendum campaign this week, as intelligence experts came out of the shadows to press the benefits and disadvantages of membership. A claim by the former head of foreign spy agency MI6, Richard Dearlove, that leaving the bloc would have few security implications sparked interventions from key figures on both sides of the Atlantic.

Prime Minister David Cameron has repeatedly stated that EU membership makes Britain safer and a so-called Brexit would divide the West as it faced global threats from the Islamic State group and Russia. But Dearlove painted an unflattering image of the quality of intelligence provided by Britain's EU allies. That position was supported by former CIA chief Michael Hayden, who said the 28-nation bloc could even be a security hindrance.

The former head of communications spy agency GCHQ, David Omand, hit back, arguing that Britain had "the best of both worlds" in both controlling its own borders and having strong security ties with other EU nations. Another ex-CIA chief, David Petraeus, a former commander of coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, warned that leaving the EU "would only make our world even more dangerous and difficult to manage". Security was already shaping up to be a key issue ahead of the June 23 referendum, given Britain's heightened state of alert against Islamist terrorism, and the events in Brussels brought many concerns to the fore.

Security is "the one and only issue that is a draw between the two sides", with an even split between people who think Britain is better off in and out, Professor John Curdice of Strathclyde University said. Joe Twyman, head of political and social research at pollsters YouGov, said the debate could see a short-term shift towards the "Leave" campaign but it would not last. "Security is important, borders are important but the economy is more important," he said, adding: "I think it would be different if, God forbid, there were to be an attack on Britain."

'Uneven' EU intelligence

The anti-European UK Independence Party (UKIP) was quick to blame the EU's passport-free Schengen zone of which Britain is not a member-for allowing the Brussels attackers to travel freely. Dearlove, who was head of MI6 from 1999 to 2004, also said there would be a "security gain" from bringing greater control over immigration by pulling out of the EU, although he did not clarify.

He said Britain "gives much more than it gets in return" in terms of intelligence sharing with EU partners, and said cooperation would be unlikely to end if Britain left the bloc. "The truth about Brexit from a national security perspective is that the cost to Britain would be low," he wrote in Prospect magazine. Former CIA chief Hayden agreed, telling BBC radio: "The (European) Union is not a natural contributor to national security of each of the entity states and in some ways gets in the way of the state providing security for its own citizens." He said the capabilities of EU states' intelligence agencies were "very uneven".

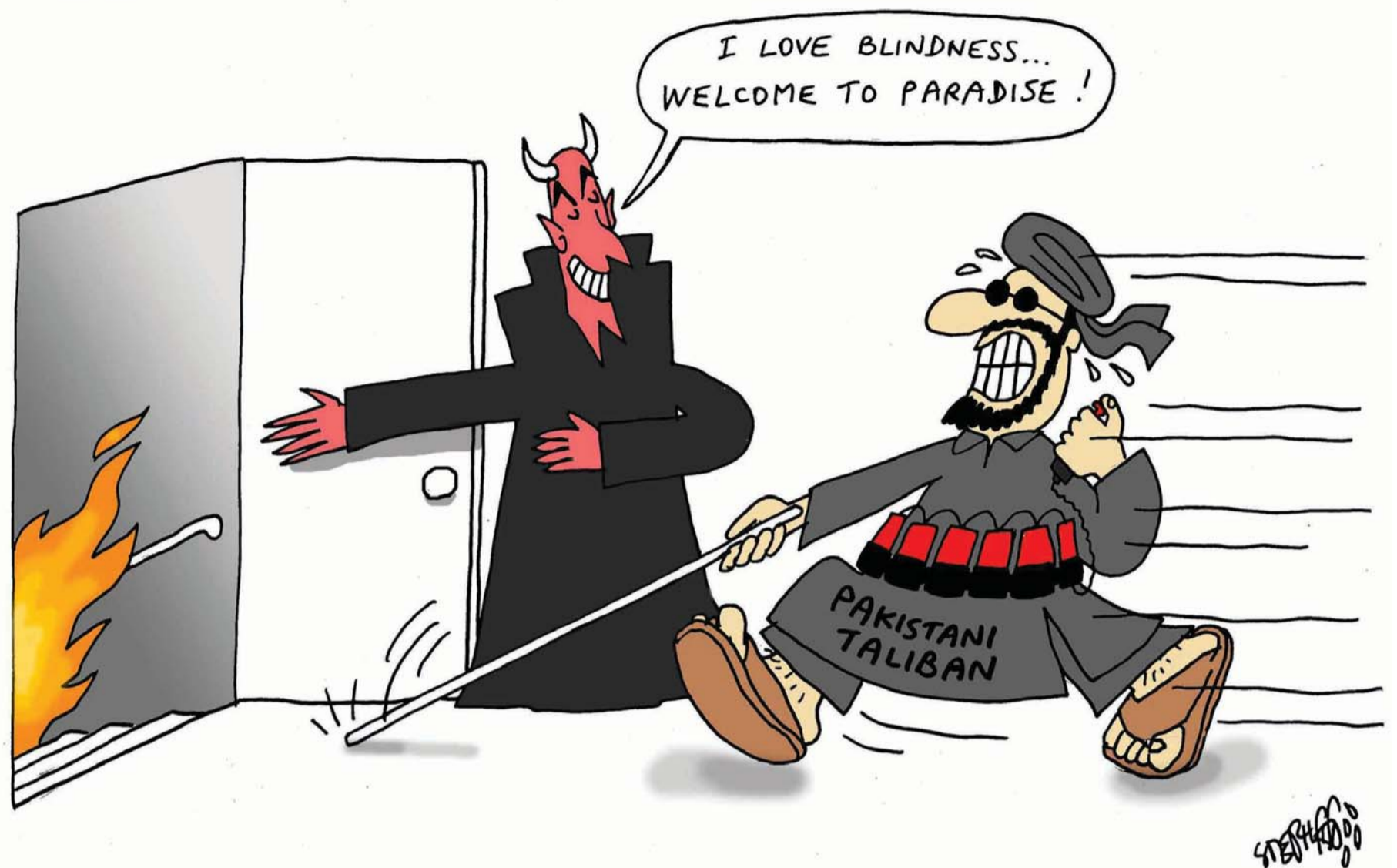
EU 'a vital player'

Campaigners to leave the EU insist that intelligence cooperation through the NATO military alliance would be unaffected, as would key relations with the US. But Rob Wainwright, director of the EU law enforcement agency Europol, highlighted Britain's reliance on EU crime and intelligence databases. Other "Remain" campaigners have also emphasized the importance of the European arrest warrant in bringing British terror suspects back to face justice.

Twelve former military chiefs last month signed a public letter emphasizing the EU role in dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions or Russian aggression in Ukraine. And Petraeus warned in an article in The Sunday Telegraph, that a Brexit would deal a "significant blow to the EU's strength and resilience" at a key moment. "The best way to defend ourselves is precisely by deepening military intelligence and diplomatic cooperation across the Western world... the EU, for all its imperfections, is a vital player in this effort," he wrote. —AFP

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PAKISTAN BOMBING



WORST FEARS COME TRUE FOR PAKISTAN'S CHRISTIANS

By Gohar Abbas

The worst fears of Pakistan's Christians came true with the carnage in Lahore on Easter Sunday, said activists who had braced for a backlash since thousands took to the streets over the execution of a murderer feted as an Islamist hero. Taliban militants said they were targeting Christians with the suicide bombing which killed at least 72 people, nearly half of them children, in a crowded park in Lahore as thousands marked Easter on a warm spring evening. Christian leaders said they had been filled with foreboding ever since the government executed Mumtaz Qadri, who murdered a liberal governor calling for reform of the country's blasphemy laws.

Their fears grew when Islamists announced on Friday that they would hold prayers for Qadri over the Easter weekend, four weeks after his hanging. "The Christian community had the feeling that there would be backlash from Qadri's execution, especially on festivals like Easter," said Shamoan Gill, a Christian activist and spokesman for the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance. "We feared that something might happen."

The Taliban did not mention Qadri in their claim of responsibility. But the attack came as thousands of his supporters clashed with police in Islamabad, several hundred

kilometers away, with activists attacking the government's apparent tolerance of the demonstrators. "People are calling for an assassin to be declared a hero and the government is giving them space," said Cecil Shane Chaudhry, executive director of the National Commission for Justice and Peace, a Christian NGO.

Persecution

Sunday's blast was the latest in the "long history of persecution of Christians in the country", leading human rights activist Hussain Naqi said yesterday. In Rome, Pope Francis appealed to Pakistani authorities to step up security for religious minorities after the "abhorrent" suicide bombing. Christians are frequently the target of militant attacks, including a double suicide bombing that killed 82 people at a church service in Pakistan's northwestern city of Peshawar in 2013. They also often face discrimination at work and routinely fall victim to the blasphemy laws, which rights groups say are often used to wage personal vendettas. Blasphemy can carry the death penalty in Pakistan and is a hugely sensitive issue in the Muslim nation of around 200 million.

Even unproven allegations can stir mob violence. Christians, who make up 1.6 percent of the population, are often the target. "We are teaching our kids a distorted, rather false history where the mullah is pious and the minorities are

evil, and this is a very dangerous trend," Naqi said. "It's not only with Christians, we are doing the same with Hindus and Ahmadis and that's why they take every possible step—either legal or illegal to leave the country."

Chaudhry agreed. "There is a growing sense of insecurity among minorities in Pakistan, and whoever is not a Muslim is not safe in this country," he said. Activists pointed to officials who appeared to dismiss the militants' statement they were targeting Christians, accusing them of downplaying the threat. "The target was not the Christian community in particular," senior police official Haider Ashraf said yesterday despite the Taliban statement, adding that Muslims were among the dead.

Naqi branded the statement a "cover-up" and said the government was in denial, "trying to downplay the incident to hide its own failure at protecting Christians and minorities". On Monday around 3,000 of Qadri's supporters were still holding a sit-in near main government buildings in Islamabad. Their demands include the execution of Asia Bibi, a Christian mother-of-five who has been on death row since she was convicted of blasphemy in 2010. They are also calling for Qadri to be officially declared a martyr and want the immediate imposition of Sharia Islamic law. "Didn't the government know what their demands would be? Why did the government not stop them?" asked Chaudhry. —AFP

MALAYSIAN PUNK ARTIST CLOWNS WITH SCANDAL-HIT LEADER

By Satish Cheney

A Malaysian designer's caricatures of the scandal-plagued prime minister as a sinister clown have become a viral phenomenon, spurring a wider protest-through-images movement and making the artist a target of authorities. The parodies of Prime Minister Najib Razak have rapidly become Malaysia's most controversial images, earning designer and activist Fahmi Reza comparisons to street-art provocateurs like Banksy.

Shared widely on social media, they have sparked copycat variations and struck a chord with Malaysians outraged by corruption allegations levelled at Najib and his moves to thwart investigations. "Our country is being governed by fools and crooks," Fahmi, a punk-rock aficionado, said in an email interview while on an extended trip overseas. He seeks to "point out the hypocrisies (of Malaysian politics), to draw attention to these absurdities, and get people to laugh at it."

But Malaysian authorities are not amused. Fahmi, 38, who has been arrested previously for his activism, was questioned by police and told to stop posting the images, which show Najib in powder-white clown make-up, with evilly arched eyebrows and a garish blood-red mouth. He said police were investigating possible violations of multimedia laws that could bring five years in prison. Last year, a Malaysian political cartoonist famed for skewering the government was hit with multiple sedition charges that lawyers say could see him jailed for up to 43 years.

'You can't jail the rebellion'

Fahmi, who calls art his "weapon", remains undeterred. "They can jail a rebel, but they can't jail the rebellion," he said. Najib is battling accusations that billions of dollars were stolen from a state-owned company he oversees, and is under pressure for accepting a mysterious \$681 million overseas payment. He denies accusations that the huge payment was funneled from the now-struggling fund, but has fuelled anger by curbing investigations, purging government critics over the scandal, and clamping down on media

reporting of it. Allegations of a cover-up crescendoed in January when Najib's hand-picked attorney general abruptly absolved him of any wrongdoing in taking the huge payment. Shortly afterwards, Fahmi—already angered by a wave of sedition charges against government critics in recent years—began circulating his clown caricatures on Malaysia's hyperactive social media.

The images, and copycat iterations, have been widely shared online, while posters and stickers have begun appearing on public walls, which authorities quickly remove. The guerrilla campaign has highlighted social media's emergence as a political battleground. With mainstream media controlled by the long-ruling regime, the opposition has harnessed the Internet in a run of recent election successes,

aided by a new generation of voters. Authorities promised years ago not to censor the Internet, but have displayed increasing unease, recently forming a police unit to scour cyberspace for "seditious" content.

Punk rebel

The government has also sought to use the Internet to its advantage, but drew scorn for a recent #RespectMyPM campaign that was savagely pounced upon by Twitter users, with trolls changing it to #SuspectMyPM. Fahmi, a Muslim, cuts an unusual avant-garde figure in Islamic-majority Malaysia with his all-black ensemble of jacket, jeans, thick-rimmed glasses, shoulder-length hair and beret. Educated in the United States as an electrical engineer, his art is largely self-taught. He counts the

Atelier Populaire movement, which produced powerful posters during 1968 strikes and demonstrations that gripped France, as a major influence, and punk rock provides his soundtrack while working.

Fahmi stresses that his work typically skewers not just Najib but all sides in multi-ethnic Malaysia's politics, where an entrenched ethnic Malay ruling elite is struggling to fend off a fractious pan-racial opposition promising to end money politics and democratic abuses. Denouncing the "childish" bickering and race-baiting, Fahmi is piously pleased with the movement he has started. "When people are emboldened to defy and stand up against injustice, against corruption, it chips away at the power structure that keeps people docile," he said. —AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: A man rides his motorbike past a poster denigrating Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak in Kuala Lumpur. A Malaysian designer's caricatures of the scandal-plagued prime minister as a sinister clown have become a viral phenomenon, spurring a wider protest-through-images movement and making the artist a target of authorities. —AFP

IBRAHIMOVIC CONFIRMS PREMIER LEAGUE CONTACT

STOCKHOLM: Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic confirmed Sunday that Premier League clubs have indicated an interest in signing him from French champions Paris Saint-Germain. The 34-year-old has been linked with a move to the likes of Manchester United, Chelsea and Arsenal and is out of contract with PSG at the end of this season. "There is an interest, yes. I can confirm that and we will see where it leads," Ibrahimovic told reporters on Sunday in Stockholm where he is preparing for today's friendly international against the Czech Republic. "I think the Premier League is the most high-profile league in the world. It is making most of the headlines. "But it would have to be like a marriage-both sides have to want it as much." Ibrahimovic has won league titles in four different European countries. He arrived in Paris in July 2012 from AC Milan but after helping PSG to a fourth successive league title earlier this month he appeared adamant that he would not be in the French capital next season. "For the moment I am not at PSG next year," he said before cheekily adding: "If they replace the Eiffel Tower with a statue of me, I will stay at PSG. I can promise that!" —AFP



GREEK GOVERNMENT CANCELS GREEK CUP

ATHENS: Deputy Sports Minister Stavros Kontonis said yesterday he will accept a delegation from FIFA and UEFA on Wednesday to discuss his decision to indefinitely postpone the Greek Cup competition, but insists his actions were justified. "We will battle to confirm our decision. It was founded on legal terms and is a measure which solves the serious problem of public order," Kontonis told a press conference. Greek media reported that FIFA and UEFA officials will try to convince Kontonis to withdraw his decision or the country's teams may face disqualification from European and international competitions. "The government is here. We will come into conflict with not only those with interests, but all those who think they can blackmail or intimidate the government. There is no other road for us except the courts. We will support our decisions in the courts of the country," Kontonis said. He said the government is doing "whatever it can" to stop the plague of violence at sporting events and added that never before have so many hooligans been taken to court for their actions. —AFP

ENGLAND GOALKEEPER BUTLAND HAS FRACTURE

LONDON: England goalkeeper Jack Butland fractured his ankle in Saturday's friendly victory over Germany and is a major doubt for the European Championship. The Football Association announced the extent of the 23-year-old keeper's injury on Sunday, adding in a statement that Butland had returned home and would miss today's friendly against the Netherlands at Wembley Stadium. The FA said "there will be no further call-ups to the squad at this moment in time," as England prepares for Euro 2016 in France, from June 10-July 10. Butland later wrote on Twitter: "Today's scan revealed I've fractured my ankle, absolutely devastated! I'll be doing everything I can to get back fit as soon as I can!" Butland sustained the injury shortly before halftime in England's 3-2 victory on Saturday. Playing in place of the injured Joe Hart, Butland earned his fourth cap in Berlin before being replaced by Fraser Forster. Burnley goalkeeper Tom Heaton is also in the England squad and could feature in Tuesday's game against the Dutch. — AP



SECOND HANDICAPPED TOURNAMENT BEGINS

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The second local handicapped games tournament was launched on Sunday evening at Kuwait Handicapped Sports Club in Hawalli.

The tournament includes three games, bocce, fencing, basketball, mainly for the mentally handicapped, yet it is expected the games to be very competitive.

HSC Deputy Chairman Nasser Al-Ajmi said the tournament included all age groups, which appeared in a good technical level on its first day, and there was notable excellence by several players particularly those of young age.

Al-Ajmi said the club seeks the development and improvement of players as best as possible for the coming foreign championships. Al-Ajmi appreciated the support of Public Authority for Sports under its Director General Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to the club and holding such events, which are considered among the most important reasons for the outstanding performance of the club athletes, which was evident by several players winning first place in various foreign tournaments.



HSC Deputy Chairman Nasser Al-Ajmi (centre) seen with other officials during the tournament.



CLERC CLOSES IN ON TRY RECORD AS TOULOUSE ROUT STADE

PARIS: Veteran winger Vincent Clerc closed in on the French try-scoring record on Sunday as Toulouse routed old rivals Stade Francais 36-3 to stay on course for the Top 14 play-offs. Clerc, 34, scored twice to take his club career try total to 97, just three behind the all-time record of 100 held by Laurent Arbo. In all, Toulouse ran in five tries for a bonus-point win which allowed them to open up an eight-point gap on seventh-placed Castres and well-placed for the end of season play-offs.

Earlier Sunday, Clermont went five points clear at the summit by coming from 19-0 down to defeat Bordeaux 24-19.

Toulouse had been co-leaders of the Top 14 at the end of January but with a host of stars away on Six Nations duty, they suffered a five-game run without a victory to fall badly off the pace.

In stark contrast, defending champions Stade remain third from bottom although they do have the attraction

of a European Cup quarter-final against Leicester on the horizon. Their chances on Sunday were not helped by having 15 players sidelined through injury.

"After a complicated period, five points against the champions-albeit they were under strength and have priorities elsewhere-it was a successful evening," said Toulouse coach Ugo Mola.

"We had been in crisis but our enthusiasm has returned."

Stade back-rower Rafael Lakafia was blunt in his assessment. "We have to be conscious of our reality today-reaching sixth place and a play-off place is mission impossible."

PENALTY TRY

Springboks fly-half Morne Steyn gave Stade an early lead with a penalty which was quickly cancelled out by Luke McAlister. Steyn was then yellow-carded on the half-hour mark as Stade buckled in front of their posts with the referee awarding a penalty try

as the home forwards hammered away.

Sebastien Bezy added the extras before Clerc slalomed to a second try of the first half after being smartly set up by forwards Louis Picamoles and Imanol Harinordoquy carving out the opening.

It was Clerc's 96th career club try, taking him just four away from the all-time record held by former Montpellier and Castres star Arbo. Bezy again hit the conversion as Toulouse led 17-3 at the break although their joy would have been curtailed by seeing Picamoles-just back after suffering a groin injury in France's Six Nations opener against Italy-limp off.

Toulouse grabbed a third try 10 minutes into the second half. Full-back Maxime Medard caught a slumbering Stade defence napping with a quick tap penalty, sprinting away before freeing Alexis Palisson who spun off two tackles for the score and 22-3.—AFP

WITH BLACKWELL IN COMA, BRITISH BOXING EXPERIENCES DEJA VU

LONDON: As Nick Blackwell lies in an induced coma in a London hospital following a brutal middleweight title fight, a heavy sense of deja vu is hanging over British boxing.

In 1991, Michael Watson suffered a near-fatal brain injury in an all-British world title fight against Chris Eubank. Watson needed six operations to remove the blood clot that had formed on his brain, leaving him partially paralyzed.

Twenty-five years later, the long-retired Eubank was a central figure in another dark night for the sport in Britain. And it might be that his memories of that fight against Watson prevent-

ed the worst of scenarios in Saturday.

Eubank was in the corner of his son, Chris Eubank Jnr., who was handing Blackwell a beating in their fight for the British title at Wembley Arena. By the end of the eighth round, Blackwell was in a bad state with his left eye closed and swollen. Eubank Sr. saw the gravity of the situation and entered the ring to speak to his son before the ninth round began, telling him to stop taking head shots to Blackwell.

"If the referee doesn't stop it, then I don't know what to tell you," Eubank told his son. "But I will

tell you this: If he doesn't stop it and you keep on beating him like this, one,

he is getting hurt, two, if it goes to a decision, why hasn't the referee stopped the fight? I don't get why.

"So maybe you shouldn't leave it to the referee. But you are not going to take him out to the face. You are going to take him out to the body. OK?"

The fight continued to the 10th round, when it was stopped after the ringside doctor advised the referee that Blackwell was unable to see through his left eye. Minutes later, Blackwell fell to the floor in the ring and was taken to hospital.

He suffered bleeding of the brain and is in intensive care, sparking an outpouring of heartfelt messages from the box-

ing fraternity. "Will u all pray for Nick Blackwell please ASAP," world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury said on Twitter. The BBC reported late Sunday that surgeons are not planning to operate on Blackwell. Watson said he "went down memory lane in many senses" as the Blackwell-Eubank Jnr.

fight unfolded. Unlike during Watson's darkest moment 25 years ago, there were medical professionals on hand for prompt treatment for Blackwell.

"I went through a lot when it happened to me, and it makes me feel happy that what I went through led to a change in the medical provision laid out for boxers," Watson told Monday's edi-

tion of British newspaper The Daily Telegraph. "Young Chris need not blame himself for what has happened. It was not his intention to bring harm to his opponent, as strange as that sounds. It was an accident." Robert Smith, general secretary of the British Board of Boxing Control, defended the decision of the referee, Victor Loughlin, to let the fight continue despite Blackwell's condition.

"Every boxer who gets into a ring knows the risks," Smith said. "We have everything in place as best we can. But we're never going to make it 100 percent safe. We do everything we possibly can, we are very strict in this country.

"But it's the nature of the sport." — AP

TONY FINAU WINS PUERTO RICO OPEN

RIO GRANDE: Tony Finau won the Puerto Rico Open on Sunday for his first PGA Tour title, beating Steve Marino with a birdie on the third hole of a playoff at windy Coco Beach.

The 26-year-old Finau won with his third straight birdie in the playoff on the par-5 18th, blasting out of the back bunker to 3 feet. "I think I'm still a little bit overwhelmed," Finau said. "It probably hasn't all sunk in."

Marino was just off the back edge of the green in two, but left his putt from the fringe 4 1/2 feet short and missed his birdie try to the right. "I finally played the hole like you're supposed to," Marino said. "I hit the fairway and then hit it on the back fringe. I didn't think that putt was going to be that slow and then I just hit a poor putt on the second putt. Pretty disappointing, played really well."

Finau and Marino each shot 2-under 70 to finish at 12-under 276. Marino birdied the 18th to tie Finau, and got into the playoff when Finau missed a 6-foot birdie putt. "In regulation, it was a putt that I kind of dreamed of making my whole life," Finau said. "It's a putt that you practice for your first PGA Tour victory or just for any PGA Tour victory, so I was a little bit bummed that that sneaked by the hole because I hit a really good putt. But I was happy I had another chance at it and was able to make the second one."

Finau and Marino each birdied the 18th on the first two playoff holes. On the first extra hole, Marino got up-and-down from the left bunker, blasting to 8 feet. Finau pitched to a foot from left of the green. On the second, Marino hit a flop shot over the right-side bunker to 10 feet, and Finau pitched to 6 feet from in front of the green.

Marino is winless on the PGA Tour. He also lost in a playoff in the 2009 Colonial. Finau birdied four of the first 10 holes to

reach 14 under, then dropped back with bogeys on the par-3 11th and par-5 15th.

The long-hitting Finau, a 6-foot-4 former Utah high school basketball star, is in his second full season on the PGA Tour. He's the cousin of Milwaukee Bucks player Jabari Parker. "I tried to just stay in the moment really," Finau said. "That's what I learned from last year. You can never look too far ahead and you can't look back, either. You've got to focus on the here and now. I did a really good job of that today even though that putt slipped by in regulation for the win, I knew I still didn't lose the tournament. I needed to refocus and get ready to play 18 again. That's what it takes out here I feel like to win. And now that I have that feeling, it's pretty special."

Ian Poulter and Mexico's Rodolfo Cazaubon finished a stroke out of the playoff. Poulter closed with a 72, missing an 18-foot birdie putt on 18. Playing the event for the first time after failing to get into the Match Play tournament in Texas as the first alternate, the Englishman took a one-stroke lead into the final round.

"It's a shame. Just slightly disappointing," Poulter said. "I'm continuing to work on the game to try and improve, and I know if I rectify a couple of poor shots, then my game will improve. Obviously, hitting shots slightly too far right at certain times is costly."

Cazaubon shot a 68. The Web.com Tour player was making his third PGA Tour start. "I'm really happy," Cazaubon said. "I guess I feel really comfortable since the beginning. I didn't have anything to lose because I play on the Web. I just came here to have some fun here."

Andres Romero (67), Nick Taylor (70) and Scott Brown (71) tied for fifth at 10 under. Puerto Rico's Rafael Campos, the leader after each of the first two rounds, was another stroke back after a 72. — AP



AUSTIN: Jason Day of Australia holds the Walter Hagen Cup with Tim Finchem the PGA Tour Commissioner after his 5&4 victory over Louis Oosthuizen in the championship match of the World Golf Championships-Dell Match Play at the Austin Country Club Sunday in Austin, Texas. — AFP

DOMINANT DAY WINS MATCH PLAY, HITS STRIDE FOR MASTERS

TEXAS: Jason Day continued his sensational streak with an emphatic victory at the WGC-Dell Match Play in Texas on Sunday and the new world number one could not be happier with his game heading into next month's Masters.

The Australian beat South African Louis Oosthuizen 5&4 in the afternoon final at Austin Country Club to clinch his sixth win in his last 13 tournaments worldwide.

Day, who sank a 12-foot par putt at the final hole to beat defending champion Rory McIlroy one-up in a morning semi-final, was already assured of regaining the world number one ranking from American Jordan Spieth.

"It's been an amazing week. I played wonderfully this afternoon," Day, 28, said at the victory presentation, adding that he had only been a "50-50" chance to continue in the event after tweaking his back during the opening day of competition.

"I've been able to not only utilise the great short game that I've had from last week to this week, but to be able to play the way I did from tee to green and then on top of it hit the clutch shots has been really fantastic."

Oosthuizen, the 16th seed, qualified for the final when he beat Spaniard Rafa Cabrera-Bello 4&3 in the other semi.

Day lost the first hole of the final, but that was his only setback as he relentlessly kept up the pressure on Oosthuizen and turned the back nine into a victory march.

Day's ninth career PGA Tour victory was his second in as many weeks after he triumphed at the Arnold Palmer Invitational last Sunday.

It was also Day's second win in three years in the only World Golf Championships event that uses the match play format.

MAN TO BEAT

He also made it four wins in five weeks for Australian players on the PGA Tour, after Adam Scott won twice in Florida at the Honda Classic and WGC-Cadillac Championship.

Day's hot streak stretches back to last July. After missing out on a playoff spot at the British Open by one stroke at St. Andrews, Day won the Canadian Open the following week before picking up his first major victory at the PGA Championship in August.

He will now have a week off to recharge before the first major of the year, the Masters, where he will be the man to beat.

"It's never easy winning," he said. "I can't get too complacent with how I'm playing. I need to focus on the little things that make me great and go into Augusta and prep the exact same way I have in the past."

Runner-up Oosthuizen tipped his hat to the champion. "I couldn't buy a birdie. Up against a guy like Jason, you need to go out three-to-four- under to have a chance," said the 2012 Masters runner-up. "Game is shaping up really nice for Augusta. That's everyone's focus right now."

In the match for third place, Cabrera-Bello beat McIlroy 3&2.

Cabrera-Bello's strong week elevated him into the top 50 in the world and earned him a spot at the Masters. McIlroy struggled in the consolation match, frustrated after losing his semi-final against Day. "Today I just didn't hole the putts I needed to and Jason wasn't giving me anything either," said the Northern Irishman.

"I think that just shows how well Jason is playing at the minute." — Reuters

KIWI KO CRUISES TO KIA CLASSIC CROWN

CARLSBAD: World number one Lydia Ko captured her 11th USLPGA Tour title as she cruised to a four-stroke victory at the Kia Classic tournament on Sunday.

The 18-year-old New Zealand teenager fired a five-under par 67 to finish at 19-under 269 and earn \$255,000 in first place prize money. She will remain number one for the 23rd straight week.

The win puts Ko in the driver's seat heading into next week's ANA Inspiration, the first major championship of the season. "I've been playing consistently well, so I'm really happy about that. But who knows what's going to happen tomorrow," Ko said. Ko maintained the lead throughout the fourth round as she went into the final day holding a three-shot lead.

She finished with seven birdies, including birdies on each of the final three holes.

South Korea's Park In-Bee shot a five-under 67 to finish alone in second place at 15-under 273. She had birdies on three of her first eight holes Sunday to apply some pressure on Ko.

"I took a peek at the leaderboard and saw that In-Bee was making a lot of birdies," Ko said. "I knew that I had to focus until the last moment. Fortunately, I made some birdies down the stretch, and that really helped." Japan's Ai Miyazato shot a six-under 66 in the final round to finish in third place at 276, while two South Koreans, Park Sung-Hyun and Jenny Shin, finished tied for fourth at 277 after both shot even par on the final day.

Four players tied for sixth at 10-under 278, comprising Gerina Piller, China's Feng Shanshan, Jessica Korda and South Korea's Kim Hyo-Joo. — AP



CARLSBAD: Lydia Ko, from New Zealand, holds up the winner's trophy after her four shot victory at the Kia Classic women's golf tournament Sunday, in Carlsbad, Calif. Ko finished at 19-under-par after a final round 67. — AP

BURGAN BANK CONTINUES ITS SPONSORSHIP OF WORLD CHAMPION WHEELCHAIR FENCER TARIQ

KUWAIT: Borgan Bank is proud to be the title sponsor of Tariq Al Qallaf, Kuwait's world champion wheelchair fencer, for the third time in a row on his journey to the prestigious USA Fencing Championship. The championship will take place in Michigan during October, 2016.

The bank's sponsorship reflects its commitment and active dedication towards its young Kuwaiti talents as well as its belief that Al Qallaf's talent has defied all odds and has led him to win top accolades at international championships.

With just over six months to go until the big event, training for Al Qallaf will soon commence with regular boot camps in Athens, Greece and Kuwait City, Kuwait during the months of March and April 2016 and following that in Pennsylvania, USA during September 2016 to gear up for the championship in October.

It is worthy to note that Al Qallaf participated in more than 70 international tournaments during his tremendous 30 years long career, bagging more than 40 gold medals and a sword of honor for being the best player in the world through his participation in international championships along with receiving 26 gold medals during his participation in international championships in the United States.

Touching people's lives is a philosophy that the bank strives to implement by supporting local talents that contribute positively to the society as a whole. As a firm believer of the ability of local athletes, Borgan Bank spared no effort in helping these Kuwaiti talents to the local community.

Borgan Bank's support to this initiative falls under its recently launched full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives. Borgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.





ICC WORLD TWENTY20

KOHLI MASTERCLASS PROMPTS TENDULKAR COMPARISONS

NEW DELHI: Indian great Sachin Tendulkar remains the gold standard of batting in the post-Bradman era but Virat Kohli's latest masterclass in Sunday's World Twenty20 shootout against Australia has prompted comparisons with his famous compatriot.

Not for the first time in the tournament, it took Kohli's masterly knock to get India across the line in a virtual quarter-final against the reigning 50-overs world champions. Kohli remained unbeaten after a sublime 82, burnishing his reputation as arguably the best chaser in limited-overs cricket with a knock that reminded many of Tendulkar's 143

against Australia in a 1998 one-dayer at Sharjah dubbed "desert storm".

Shane Warne was at the receiving end of Tendulkar's wrath in that match and 18 years since the contest, the Australian spin great saw Tendulkar's shadow in Kohli's latest knock. "Great knock by @imVkohli Reminded me of one of your many special innings buddy," Warne tweeted to his great rival Tendulkar after Kohli secured India a place in the semi-finals on Sunday.

Kohli bejewelled his knock with two sixes and nine boundaries and sprinted tirelessly between wickets in a flawless display of limited

overs batting under tremendous pressure.

He middled every ball, timed his shots with surgical precision and found gaps with eerie regularity to stamp his class.

"Of the modern players, I've always thought that Brian Lara was the best placer of the ball," former Australia captain Ian Chappell told www.espn.com. "I think I have got Brian in second spot now."

LARA'S PRAISE

The West Indian batting great was also bowled by what he saw and requested videos of Kohli's early days, hailing the Indian

as the "best timer of a cricket ball" that he has seen. At 27, Kohli stands on the brink of batting greatness with 36 international centuries against his name and averages of 44 in tests, 51 in one-dayers and 55 in Twenty20 matches. It has been a fascinating transformation of a Delhi cricketer perceived initially as yet another brash brat from the streets of a city long accused of inculcating aggression in its youth. Since Kohli's international debut in a one-dayer against Sri Lanka eight years ago, Mahendra Singh Dhoni has closely watched the tattoo-wearing, blunt-speaking, heart-on-his-sleeve youngster transform into a

mature match-winner.

Kohli hates the idea of an on-field confrontations that doesn't include him and Dhoni argued it suits the player who succeeded him as India's test captain.

"He will always be the same," Dhoni said after the victory in Mohali. "He will be an aggressive character who will be ready to take on challenges and he will be aggressive on the field. But he will also improve. He is shifting in the right direction but he is a tremendous character. He should not lose his character because that's what his strength is." —Reuters



NEW DELHI: A spectator cheers for South Africa ahead of the T20 cricket tournament match between South Africa and Sri Lanka at The Feroz Shah Kotla Cricket Stadium in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP



MPHALI: India's Virat Kohli plays a shot during the World T20 cricket tournament match between India and Australia. — AFP

STOKES REVELS IN ROLE AS ENGLAND DEATH BOWLER

NEW DELHI: Ice-cool allrounder Ben Stokes said yesterday he was relishing in his role as England's death bowler after his nerves of steel once again kept his side in the World Twenty20.

With Sri Lanka needing 15 runs to win and their captain Angelo Mathews hitting England's bowlers around the park in Saturday's crunch match in New Delhi, Stokes was handed the ball at the start of the 20th over.

But after spinners Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid were splattered for 21 in their final overs, Stokes bowled a string of near perfect yorkers and conceded only four runs to secure England's place in the semi-finals.

Stokes also held his nerve in England's previous match against Afghanistan, taking the final over as the minnows fell 16 runs short of their target.

While other England bowlers have come unstuck on the global stage—including Stuart Broad who was hit for six sixes by India's Yuvraj Singh in the 2007 World T20 — the 24-year-old Stokes is relishing the responsibility.

"I would much rather be doing that last over thing rather than hoping that whoever is bowling it gets us through. I'd rather be the man doing it," he said in the build-up to Wednesday's semi-final against New Zealand.

"Yes, I love being involved in the game and being in high pressure situations. I think it probably brings the best out of me in terms of my cricket. I enjoy getting into the big moments of the game."

England's passage to the semis was hampered by defeat to the West Indies in their opening match, meaning they had to win all of their other three games against Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and South Africa.

The West Indies also beat England in 2010 but Paul Collingwood's side went on to win the tournament in the Caribbean, the first time that the team had ever won a major international tournament.

Collingwood, who has captained Stokes back home in Durham, is currently in India as a consultant for the England team.

GOOD OMEN

"Colly actually did say that at the start of the tournament that we got beaten by the West Indies in the first game. It's a good omen because that's what happened to him," Stokes told reporters in New Delhi.

Under the captaincy of Eoin Morgan, a young England side is developing a reputation for aggressive strokeplay which has surprised many observers.

Stokes is one of the more seasoned members of the team after making his international debut in 2011.

He said that as "one of the least experienced teams out here", England have an opportunity to "prove a lot of people wrong".

Stokes was born in Christchurch on New Zealand's South Island and his father was a New Zealand rugby league international.

But while admitting that he might have dreamed of playing for New Zealand as a youngster, he rejected any notion of split loyalties.

"Ever since I made a choice of having a career of a professional cricketer, ever since getting picked for the England under-15s, I've just wanted to play for England."

Stokes insisted England would not underestimate the unheralded Black Caps, but pointed out that they did beat them in a World T20 warm-up.

"They're obviously the in-form team, they haven't lost a game yet. We played them in a warm-up game and beat them and we still take confidence from that and we obviously beat them in the English summer when we had the series against them," said Stokes.

"So we just know that if we play to our capability like we did against Sri Lanka, no matter who we face, we can give any team a good run."

While it will be the fifth different venue for New Zealand in the tournament, England should have an advantage by playing their third match in a row in Delhi, with Stokes saying that "it's a home game even if we are in India". — AFP



NEW DELHI: England's Ben Stokes (L) watches as Afghanistan's Shafiqullah Shafiq successfully reaches the crease during the World T20 cricket tournament match between England and Afghanistan at The Feroz Shah Kotla Cricket Stadium in New Delhi. — AFP

INDIA HAILS 'GENIUS' KOHLI AFTER STUNNING AUSSIES

MOHALI: Virat Kohli was hailed as a batting genius yesterday after his brilliant innings led India to an improbable victory over Australia and sealed a semi-finals berth for the hosts at cricket's World Twenty20.

Kohli hit an unbeaten 82 off 51 balls that mixed classic strokeplay with raw power in Mohali on Sunday night, as India chased down Australia's total of 160-6 in a pulsating final group match. With three overs to go, India were still 39 runs short of their target but they cantered home with five balls to spare as Kohli and skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni laid into the Australian attack. Kohli hit four boundaries in the penultimate over off Nathan Coulter-Nile before Dhoni finished the job with another four. Had India been knocked out, it could well have been Dhoni's last innings amid widespread expectations that he will call it quits after the tournament.

Kohli, 27, has already replaced the 34-year-old Dhoni as Test captain but his regard for the older man was underlined when he paid tribute to India's "Captain Cool" for helping him keep his head at the finale. "MS in the end kept me calm, I could have got over-excited," said Kohli after being named man of the match.

"Trust me, you don't like these situations very much, (but) they improve you as a cricketer."

Dhoni said Kohli, who was also the match-winner in a high-octane clash against Pakistan earlier in the tournament, was learning how to stay calm in pressured situations while not losing his natural aggression.

'GENIUS'

"I think it was an incredible innings, especially the fact that the wicket was not easy to bat on," said Dhoni. "A lot of things pop into your head at that point of time (the last overs) and when you're calm it just helps you to pick the right one... and not be too impulsive." "He will always be the same. He will be an aggressive character who is willing to take on challenges and he will be aggressive on the field, but he will also improve," Dhoni added. Kapil Dev, who captained India to victory at the 1983 World Cup, praised Kohli for resisting the temptation to slog, instead playing orthodox shots that would have graced a Test match. "Hats off to this genius with a bat," Dev wrote in the Mail Today newspaper.

"I have always believed that T20 cricket is not just about slamming the ball or indulging in ambitious shots. You can play your normal cricket strokes and win your battles against the bowlers. Virat's exhibition proved it." India, who now play the West Indies in the second semi-final in Mumbai on Thursday, are hoping to become the first team to win the World T20 twice, and the first on home soil. Former all-rounder Ravi Shastri, who is now India's coach, said that Kohli's "fabulous" innings had proved that the team was hitting its stride at the crucial moment. "From India's point of view, I think they'll get stronger as this tournament progresses," said Shastri. — AFP

AUSTRALIA PRAISES WORLD T20'S 'VIRAT SHOW'

MOHALI: Australian commentators were full of praise for Virat Kohli's thrilling batting yesterday, even though his heroic 82 sent Steve Smith's team crashing out of the World T20. India triumphed in the do-or-die showdown in Mohali as they successfully ran down Australia's 160 for 6 to win with five balls to spare as Kohli put on a batting masterclass.

"Steve Smith called it the 'Virat show' and he was right," wrote Chris Barratt in The Sydney Morning Herald, acknowledging the dejected skipper's post-match remarks.

"With one of the greatest ever Twenty20 international innings India's batting maestro all but single-handedly sent Australia home from the 20-overs world championship."

"One man wins it," agreed The Daily Telegraph's Ben Horne as he described the match which crushed Australia's hopes of a World T20 title and puts India through to the semi-finals. "I think it's safe to say there is no talent in world cricket at the moment quite

like Virat Kohli," Horne said in a podcast. Writing in The Australian newspaper, Gideon Haigh said Kohli's unbeaten 82 off 51 balls had "made an awkward chase look like simplicity itself". "Not a stroke, by the way, would have looked out of place in a Test match," he wrote.

"Much as the marketers would like to take the cricket out of T20, Kohli keeps putting it back." While Geoff Lemon, writing for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation said it was hard to feel disappointed at being knocked out by such an impressive innings.

"It is hard to feel anything but awe," he wrote. Cricketing greats also heaped praise on Kohli, who with skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni put on 67 runs to take the team to the finish line. "Wow, that was absolute class from Virat. Congrats India on your win," tweeted spin master Shane Warne.

Former Australia captain Michael Clarke added: "Looked like a class performance from @imVkohli#T20WorldCup". — AFP



AMRITSAR: Indian cricket fans pose with a flag of India as they celebrate in a hotel in Amritsar after India beat Australia in a World T20 cricket tournament match. India reaches in the World T20 cricket semi-finals. — AFP

PETROVA DENIES WRONGDOING AFTER POSITIVE MELDONIUM TEST

SOPIA: Bulgarian triple jumper Gabriela Petrova, runner-up at the 2015 European indoor championships in Prague, has denied any wrongdoing after testing positive for the banned substance meldonium.

"I have not violated, in any way, the anti-doping rules and I can move on with my head held high," Petrova told a news conference at the Vasil Levski stadium on Monday. "I stopped taking this medication in September. I haven't

touched it in 2016."

Meldonium, which helps boost blood flow and increases the amount of oxygen taken in by the body, allowing athletes to recover faster while training, was added to the World Anti-Doping Agency's list of banned substances on Jan. 1. Since then, more than 100 athletes have been found to have used it.

Petrova, who also finished fourth at the world outdoor championships in

Beijing last year, failed an out-of-competition drug test on Feb. 6. The 23-year-old has joined a long list of athletes, including former world tennis number one Maria Sharapova of Russia, who have recorded positive tests for meldonium. "It has nothing to do with the Sharapova case," Petrova said. "She said she took the medication in 2016 to treat a health problem."

The Bulgarian pulled out of the world indoor championships in

Portland, Oregon earlier this month. "She was ready to win the world title but I decided it was better not to participate because we received the information about the positive test several days before the championship," said coach Atanas Atanasov.

Petrova, named Bulgaria's Athlete of the Year in December, is hoping she will avoid a suspension and be able to compete at the Rio Olympics in August. "I believe the truth will be revealed,"

she said. "It doesn't sound logical for 150 athletes to have taken the banned substance in an Olympic year."

The use of meldonium was widespread before the ban. One study showed 490 athletes at last year's European Games in Baku had taken it.

Grindeks, the Latvian company that is the main supplier of the drug, says the substance could protect athletes from cell damage but is unlikely to improve their performance. —Reuters

DJOKOVIC POWERS INTO MIAMI LAST 16

MIAMI: World number one Novak Djokovic advanced to the fourth round of the ATP and WTA Miami Open on Sunday, defeating Portugal's 38th-ranked Joao Sousa 6-4, 6-1.

Two-time defending champion Djokovic, trying to match Andre Agassi's record of six career Miami titles, needed only 78 minutes to win his 12th match in a row at the hardcourt event and 26th in his past 27 Miami starts. "That first set could have gone either way," Djokovic said. "I managed to hit the right balls at the right moment and make it to the finish." The 28-year-old Serbian, who won his 11th Grand Slam crown at the Australian Open two months ago, also has crowns at Doha and Indian Wells this year and hopes to complete the Miami-Indian Wells sweep for the third consecutive year.

Djokovic's next foe will be Austrian 14th seed Dominic Thiem, who dispatched 124th-ranked Japanese qualifier Yoshihito Nishioka 6-2, 6-2 in 64 minutes.

"He has one of the most powerful baseline games in tennis," Djokovic said of Thiem. "He likes to construct his points so I will try and take away his time. He's had one of the best years of his life. He's beaten Nadal on clay. He's one of the players in the next generation we should all look out for." Thiem captured his fifth career ATP title last month by beating Australia's Bernard Tomic in the Acapulco final and downed 14-time Grand Slam winner Rafael Nadal on the way to a Buenos Aires claycourt crown. "I'm sure he wants to showcase all that he's got in his arsenal but I will be sure to be ready for him," Djokovic said.

Sousa fell to 0-3 against Djokovic and 1-21 against top-10 foes with his 19th such loss in a row since beating David Ferrer in Kuala Lumpur in 2013. "He came out with a clear game plan," said Djokovic. "He wanted to take his chances. He did not have much to lose. It can be dangerous. I know the importance of stepping up a few levels and delivering my 'A' game."

KERBER, AZARENKA ADVANCE

Reigning Australian Open champion Angelique Kerber and last week's Indian

Wells winner Victoria Azarenka, who each upset world number one Serena Williams in the final to win those titles, reached the last 16 on the women's side. German second seed Kerber advanced 1-6, 6-2, 3-0 when 108th-ranked Dutch qualifier Kiki Bertens retired due to illness.

"I was not finding a rhythm at the beginning of the match," Kerber said. "I had to stay strong, believe and keep fighting. I hope she gets well soon but I'm glad to be in the next round."

Kerber next faces Hungary's 49th-ranked Tímea Babos, who ousted 18-year-old Japanese 104th-ranked wildcard Naomi Osaka 7-5, 6-0. Eighth-ranked Azarenka, a 26-year-old from Belarus who won 2009 and 2011 Miami titles, eliminated Polish qualifier Magda Linette 6-3, 6-0. She next faces last year's Wimbledon runner-up, Garbine Muguruza. The Spanish fourth seed ripped 74th-ranked US wildcard Nicole Gibbs 6-1, 6-0 in 55 minutes.

Two-time Australian Open champion Azarenka is trying to become only the third woman to take Indian Wells and Miami in the same year after Graf in 1994 and 1996 and Kim Clijsters in 2005.

FEDERER FILL-IN WINS AGAIN

Argentina's Horacio Zeballos, a lucky loser who replaced Roger Federer in the draw when the 17-time Grand Slam champion withdrew due to illness, advanced to the fourth round by overcoming Spain's Fernando Verdasco 1-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4). Zeballos, ranked 112th, had not won a match since last July before beating countryman Juan Martin Del Potro in the second round. After winning two in a row for the first time in more than two years, he faces Indian Wells semi-finalist David Goffin for a quarter-final berth. "Life changed for me a lot here," Zeballos said. "Beating 'DelPo' and Verdasco, two better players than me, I greatly improved both the ranking and economically."

The South American is assured \$67,590, which will help since his wife is due to give birth to their first child on April 10. "I am living happy moments," he said. —AFP



VANCOUVER: Vancouver Canucks' Sven Baertschi, left, of Switzerland, scores against Chicago Blackhawks' goalie Scott Darling, second right, as Teuvo Teravainen (86), of Finland, and Viktor Svedberg, right, of Sweden, defend during the third period of an NHL hockey game in Vancouver, British Columbia, Sunday. — AP

CROSBY NETS OT WINNER, PENGUINS TOP RANGERS 3-2

NEW YORK: Sidney Crosby scored on a deflection at 4:30 of overtime and the surging Pittsburgh Penguins beat the New York Rangers 3-2 Sunday night in a potential first-round playoff preview. Matt Cullen and Phil Kessel also scored for the Penguins, who have won eight of nine. Marc-Andre Fleury made 25 saves. Eric Staal scored twice for New York, which had won three straight. Kevin Hayes and Jesper Fast assisted on both of Staal's goals. Henrik Lundqvist stopped 29 shots.

Derick Brassard was called for high-sticking with 1.4 seconds left in regulation to give Pittsburgh a power play in the extra period. But the Rangers killed it off before Kris Letang's wrist shot from the point ricocheted in off Crosby in front. Staal entered with one goal in 13 games with the Rangers since joining the team at the trade deadline in a deal with Carolina. It was his second multigoal game of the season.

The Penguins took advantage of a Penguins turnover to take a 2-1 lead early in the second period. Staal took a pass from Fast and sent a loose puck past Fleury at the right faceoff circle at 2:07. The Penguins tied it again when Carl Hagelin used his speed to chase down a loose puck and put a shot on Lundqvist. Kessel backhanded in the rebound for his 23rd goal of the season at 8:36. Kessel, who had a goal and four assists in Saturday's win over Detroit, sent a shot off the crossbar a couple of minutes later.

The Rangers opened the scoring in the first period. Hayes took the puck up the left side and sent a pass in front to Staal, who fended off defenseman Trevor Daley and deflected the puck past Fleury at 4:19. The Penguins tied it late in the period. Derrick Pouliot took a pass from

Daley at the left faceoff circle and shot from the point. Cullen tipped the rebound past Lundqvist at 15:49. It was Cullen's 13th goal of the season.

HURRICANES 3, DEVILS 2

Goalie Cam Ward came up a big after a midgame rough stretch, and the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the New Jersey Devils 3-2 Sunday at PNC Arena. Ward finished with 23 saves, stopping all nine shots in the third period. Victor Rask scored twice and Ron Hainsey had a goal for the Hurricanes (33-28-15). Bobby Farnham and Travis Zajac scored for the Devils

(36-32-8), who had a three-game points streak snapped.

BLACKHAWKS 3, CANUCKS 2

Andrew Ladd scored the winning goal with 2:27 left in the third period as the Chicago Blackhawks used a 3-2 win over the Vancouver Canucks to clinch a playoff spot Sunday. Jonathan Toews and Marian Hossa had a two-on-one breakthrough. Instead of shooting, Toews dropped the puck back to Ladd, who beat Vancouver goaltender Ryan Miller for his 23rd goal of the season. —Reuters

NHL Results/Standings

NY Rangers 2, Pittsburgh 3 (OT); Vancouver 2, Chicago 3; Carolina 3, New Jersey 2.

Eastern Conference						Western Conference							
Atlantic Division						Pacific Division							
W	L	OT	GF	GA	PTS								
Florida	42	24	9	216	184	93	Dallas	45	22	9	247	218	99
Tampa Bay	43	27	5	211	182	91	St. Louis	45	22	9	203	185	99
Boston	40	28	8	222	207	88	Chicago	44	25	7	212	188	95
Detroit	37	27	11	192	206	85	Nashville	39	23	13	210	190	91
Ottawa	34	33	9	217	234	77	Minnesota	37	28	11	206	189	85
Montreal	34	36	6	201	221	74	Colorado	38	33	4	200	212	80
Buffalo	31	34	10	179	202	72	Winnipeg	31	38	6	192	220	68
Toronto	27	36	11	181	217	65	Central Division						
Washington	53	16	5	232	174	111	Los Angeles	45	25	5	206	175	95
NY Rangers	43	24	9	219	199	95	Anaheim	41	23	10	194	177	92
Pittsburgh	42	25	8	214	186	92	San Jose	41	28	6	219	196	88
NY Islanders	40	25	9	208	192	89	Arizona	34	34	7	197	221	75
Philadelphia	36	25	13	193	197	85	Calgary	31	38	6	205	238	68
Carolina	33	28	15	186	206	81	Vancouver	27	35	13	171	217	67
New Jersey	36	32	8	171	193	80	Edmonton	30	41	7	193	232	67
Columbus	30	37	8	194	233	68	Note: Overtime losses (OT) worth 1 pt and not included in loss column (L).						



KEY BISCAJNE: Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns a shot to Joao Sousa of Portugal during the Miami Open presented by Itau at Crandon Park Tennis Center on Sunday in Key Biscayne, Florida. — AFP

POLLUTED HEBEI PROMISES CLEAN-UP FOR 2022 GAMES

BEIJING: The top official in China's northern province of Hebei, one of the country's most polluted, has vowed to use the staging of the 2022 Winter Olympics to drive efforts to cut smog, promote clean energy and ease dependence on heavy industry.

The city of Zhangjiakou, around 200 km (124 miles) from Beijing, will stage skiing and snowboarding events during the 2022 winter games, awarded to China last year. But the plan has fuelled concern, as Beijing is prone to air pollution and Hebei was home to China's seven smoggiest cities last year, largely because of its dependence on heavy industries, such as coal-fired power and steel production.

Speaking at a weekend meeting on preparations for the Olympics, Zhao Kezhi, the provincial Communist Party chief, said Hebei would work to meet targets for cutting cut industrial overcapacity, coal consumption and air pollution. "We must use the staging of the Winter Olympics as an opportunity to stimulate economic and social development, speed up our transformation and upgrading, expand effective investment and strengthen poverty alleviation," Zhao said, in an account of the meeting published on Hebei's government website (<http://www.hebei.gov.cn>) on Monday.

Hebei aims to cut coal consumption by 40 million tonnes over the period from 2013 to 2017 and slash its 2013 levels of small particulate matter in almost half by 2020. It will also reduce annual crude steel capacity below 200 million tonnes by 2020. Zhao said the plans included the planting of new forest and the creation of an ecological conservation zone around Zhangjiakou, where a "renewable energy demonstration zone" would also be set up.

Zhangjiakou plans to boost total renewable electricity capacity to 1.28 gigawatts by 2017. It is already the site of 500 megawatts of wind capacity, 100 MW of solar panels and 70 MW of power storage capacity at a renewable energy demonstration project run by the China State Grid Corporation. The facility tests new renewable equipment models, with fuel cells designed to offset the intermittent nature of wind and solar power for safer connection to transmission lines.

China has repeatedly pledged to hold an environmentally-friendly Winter Games. Beijing hosted the 2008 Summer Games to wide acclaim, but its bid for the Winter Games was dogged by concerns over issues ranging from the city's notorious smog problem to a lack of snow and the country's poor record on human rights. — Reuters

JAMIE SET FOR BRITISH FIRST IN DOUBLES RANKINGS

LONDON: Jamie Murray will become Britain's first world number one professional tennis player since computerised rankings were introduced in the 1970s after the ATP World Tour confirmed on Sunday he will take top spot in doubles from Marcelo Melo.

The 30-year-old, whose brother Andy is ranked world number two in singles, will take top spot from the Brazilian when the new rankings are published on April 4.

Britain's Lawn Tennis Association hailed Murray on Twitter as a history maker. Murray won the Australian Open doubles title in January alongside Brazilian Bruno Soares. Melo's failure to reach the doubles quarter-finals in the Miami Open on Sunday means he will drop points and fall behind Murray in the rankings, despite the Briton's earlier elimination.

"He really deserves it," the BBC quoted Melo as saying. "He made the final in Wimbledon, final U.S. Open, won the Davis Cup, won the Australian Open, so he deserves it a lot. I'm happy for him."

Murray posted a picture on his Instagram account of himself sitting on a beach with the number one written in the sand.

"Last night I went to bed wondering if that was the closest I would ever get," he said. "Today driving in my car my phone started to go crazy." Britain's Virginia Wade was also world number one in women's doubles in 1973, before computer rankings were introduced. —Reuters



KEY BISCAJNE: Simona Halep, of Romania, returns to Heather Watson during their match at the Miami Open tennis tournament, yesterday in Key Biscayne. — AP

EX-PRESIDENT OF HONDURAS ADMITS TO BRIBERY IN FIFA SCANDAL

NEW YORK: A former president of Honduras pleaded guilty to conspiracy charges yesterday and admitted to taking bribes in the wide-ranging FIFA football scandal over lucrative broadcast rights.

Rafael Callejas, a member of FIFA's television and marketing committee, entered the plea to racketeering conspiracy and wire fraud conspiracy in federal court. Each charge includes a maximum of 20 years in prison; he also agreed to

forfeit \$650,000. He told the judge that he had accepted bribes and distributed some of the money to others. He said he knew it was wrong. Callejas, who was president of Honduras from 1990 to 1994, will be sentenced Aug. 5.

Initial arrests in the case last May resulted in charges against 14 people, including seven top FIFA officials arrested at a Swiss hotel. His surrender came after 16 additional defendants, most from Central and South America, were

charged in the fall in a second wave of the prosecution that focused on a generation of football leaders in South America, a bedrock of FIFA and World Cup history.

In that crackdown, five current and former members of FIFA's ruling executive committee were arrested at the same Zurich hotel where the similar raid on FIFA officials occurred a half-year earlier. Those arrests came just before FIFA's executive committee met to approve

reform and transparency measures that gained support after the scandal was revealed. In all, about 20 soccer officials have been indicted on charges related to the U.S. investigation of corruption in the sport.

An indictment returned in Brooklyn in November charged Callejas for his alleged role in a bribery scheme involving lucrative broadcasting and hosting rights for the World Cup and soccer's other biggest events.

In a lengthy indictment, prosecutors allege that hundreds of millions of dollars in illegal payments made over the past quarter-century involved the use of U.S. banks and meetings in the United States. The Justice Department has said that numerous guilty pleas in the case have resulted in agreements to forfeit over \$190 million, and another \$100 million has been restrained in the US and abroad. The US has sought to restrain assets in 13 countries. —AP

STURRIDGE BACK FOR ENGLAND AS MILNER IS NAMED CAPTAIN

LONDON: Daniel Sturridge is to play his first international for 18 months while James Milner will captain England from the start of a game for the first time when the Euro 2016 finalists host Netherlands at Wembley today.

Liverpool goal poacher Sturridge has been plagued by injuries since winning the last of his 16 caps against Norway in September 2014.

"We're pleased to welcome him back after his long layoff from England duty," manager Roy Hodgson told a news conference on Monday.

Experienced midfielder Milner, who will lead the side in the continuing absence of injury victim Wayne Rooney, said Liverpool team mate Sturridge had worked hard to get back.

"No one doubts his quality," said Milner. "Goals win you tournaments."

Hodgson is expected to make several alterations to the side that rallied from 2-0 down to beat world champions Germany 3-2 in Berlin on Saturday.

"There will be some changes. How wholesale those changes will be, you'll have to wait and see," he said.

England delighted their supporters with victory against Germany but Hodgson is refusing to let his young squad rest on their laurels.

"We should be rightly proud of it but

that moment of satisfaction has now passed," said the manager.

FEEL-GOOD FACTOR

"Our heads are concentrated on the task ahead. The feel-good factor is always short-lived for me and the players."

Milner, who will win his 58th cap on Tuesday, takes over as skipper from Chelsea defender Gary Cahill who captained the team against Germany.

"To get the chance to lead out your country is a massive honour and something you'll never forget," said the Liverpool player.

Milner echoed Hodgson's words by urging his team mates to focus on the task ahead against Netherlands who have failed to qualify for the European Championship in France in June.

"It's exciting to see the amount of young talent coming through but we don't want to get carried away," he said. "If we don't perform tomorrow night everyone will forget about Saturday and that momentum will be lost."

The only sour note against Germany was the fractured ankle sustained by Stoke City goalkeeper Jack Butland that could keep him out of the European Championship.

Hodgson called the injury "a devastating blow" but said Butland had told him he would "come back stronger". — Reuters



LONDON: Netherlands' midfielder Ibrahim Afellay (L) and Netherlands' midfielder Memphis Depay take part in a team training session at Wembley Stadium, in west London, yesterday, ahead of their international friendly football match against England today. — AFP

BELGIAN DEMOITIE DIES IN RACE MOTORBIKE SMASH

LILLE: Belgian cyclist Antoine Demoitie has died after he was struck by a motorbike following a fall during the Gent-Wevelgem race in Belgium, police said.

The 25-year-old, a member of Belgium's Wanty-Gobert team, was involved in a fall along with three other riders around 150 kilometres (90 miles) into the race on Sunday as it lopped briefly out of Belgium into northern France.

He was then hit by a race motorbike while on the ground, before being transported first to Ypres hospital and then being transferred to an intensive care unit at Lille, where he succumbed to his injuries.

"The rider died. An inquiry is under way to determine the circumstances," Frederic Evrard, spokesman for the Nord-Pas-de-Calais regional gendarmerie in France, said late on Sunday.

A witness quoted by Belgian daily SudPresse said four riders were involved in a fall in front of the motorbike, which "literally fell on top of" Demoitie.

Other witnesses said the Belgian rider was hit on the head.

The cyclist's team earlier said Demoitie was taken to hospital in "extremely serious condition". "His wife and his family are at his side," the team wrote on Twitter.

The International Association of Professional Cyclists (CPA) said yesterday that they wanted "light to be shed upon the circumstances" of Demoitie's accident.

"In this moment of grief and sorrow we do not want a debate, but we do feel a lot of frustration," said CPA president Gianni Bungo.

"We have always maintained that the cyclists' safety must be first in the discussions of the different key players in cycling.

"We do not want to accuse anyone, but to reflect on the responsibilities of every-

one to ensure that attention, awareness and control over safety standards are maintained to a very high level."

The Gent-Wevelgem cobbled classic lived up to its gruelling reputation on Sunday, with riders battling strong winds as they tackled 10 climbs over a 243 kilometre route.

Former Belgian national champion Jens Debusschere was also hospitalised after he sustained a concussion following a heavy crash, his Lotto-Soudal team said.

The race, which includes two ascents of the hills of Kemmelberg, was won by Slovakia's Peter Sagan.

A number of accidents have struck the sport this year, including the death of young hope Romain Guyot.

The 23-year-old Frenchman died on March 3 when he was hit by a truck at a crossroads in the west of the country.

In January, six racers from the Giant-Alpecin team, including German John Degenkolb and French Warren Barguil, were injured in a collision with a car during a training ride south of Valencia.

In 2011, Demoitie's compatriot Wouter Weylandt died from injuries suffered in a crash during the third stage of the Giro d'Italia.

On Saturday, 22-year-old Belgian rider Daan Myngheer suffered a heart attack during the Criterium International race in Corsica. He was put on artificial respiration and was said to be in a coma.

Demoitie joined the Wanty-Gobert team in early 2016 after three seasons at Walonnie-Bruxelles

An excellent sprinter, particularly in uphill finishes, he won the Tour of Finistere in France in 2014, and was second in the Handzame Classic and GP Stad Zottegem in Belgium in 2015. — AFP



HARELBEKE: A picture taken on March 25, 2016 shows Belgium's Antoine Demoitie of Wanty-Groupe Gobert competes during the 59th edition of the E3 Prijs Vlaanderen Harelbeke cycling race, 215,3km from and to Harelbeke on Sunday. Belgian cyclist Antoine Demoitie has died after he was struck by a motorbike following a fall during the Gent-Wevelgem race in Belgium, police said. — AFP

EBULLIENT ENGLAND GUNNING FOR DUTCH

LONDON: Invigorated by Saturday's thrilling 3-2 friendly win over world champions Germany, England tackle the Netherlands today seeking to sustain the feel-good factor ahead of the European Championship.

Goals from Harry Kane, Jamie Vardy and Eric Dier saw an England team inspired by Dele Alli come from 2-0 down to beat Germany and while manager Roy Hodgson was quick to downplay the result's importance, there was no disguising the ebullience of his youthful team's display.

Tuesday's game is Hodgson's last chance to experiment before he announces his squad for Euro 2016 on May 12 and with Daniel Sturridge, Danny Welbeck and Theo Walcott also candidates for attacking roles-not forgetting injured duo Wayne Rooney and Raheem Sterling-he has plenty of options. "I am sure he wants that," said Tottenham Hotspur striker Kane, who took his international tally to four goals in nine appearances. "He wants everyone on top form and applying themselves well. You want the best players to be on form come the Euros.

"I am sure it is a problem he enjoys having. All we can do is keep doing what we are doing, to keep playing, as we have great belief. "Wayne and Raheem are great players and I am sure they will be back in the squad. Everyone is fighting for places and it is what this country needs. It will only make us better players."

Hodgson always intended to make wholesale changes for the encounter with Holland, who have not qualified for Euro 2016, and injuries have already forced his hand.

Fraser Forster is expected to start in goal, having come on as a substitute for Jack Butland in Berlin after the Stoke City goalkeeper-himself deputising for the injured Joe Hart-fractured his ankle. Vardy will hope to start after scoring his first international goal with a brilliant back-heeled equaliser against Germany and his Leicester City team-mate Danny Drinkwater should win his first cap as a starter in central midfield.

CRUYFF TRIBUTE

Fit-again Liverpool striker Sturridge is also in contention for a place in the starting XI, having missed the entirety of England's Euro 2016 qualifying campaign with a succession of injuries.

Everton pair John Stones and Phil Jagielka, meanwhile, could be given a chance to demonstrate that they can plug the defensive holes that almost proved England's undoing at the Olympiastadion.

The match will feature a tribute to late Dutch great Johan Cruyff in the 14th minute-a nod to his iconic shirt number-with an image of the former Ajax and Barcelona star displayed on Wembley's big screens, but play will not stop as it did during Holland's 3-2 loss to France on Friday. The original Wembley held special meaning for Cruyff, for it was there that he won the first of his three European Cups with Ajax as a player in 1971 and led Barcelona to their first European crown as manager in 1992. Holland won 3-2 in their last game at Wembley in February 2012, courtesy of an Arjen Robben brace, and prevailed by the same scoreline against Wales on their most recent trip to Britain in November.

Robben also netted twice in Cardiff, but he is currently absent with a thigh problem and

coach Danny Blind lost another stalwart in the game against France when Wesley Sneijder succumbed to a hamstring injury. Goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen and midfielder Davy Klaassen have also withdrawn from the squad-the former after breaking his nose in training, the latter after injuring his knee-with Michel Vorm and

Marco van Ginkel called up as replacements.

Meanwhile, Daley Blind, the coach's son, is a doubt with a hamstring problem of his own. "My hamstring is stiff," said the polyvalent Manchester United defender. "I didn't want to take any risks in view of the upcoming games. We have to look how it goes." — AFP

BRAZIL WITHOUT NEYMAR, LUIZ FOR PARAGUAY TRIP

MONTEVIDEO: Brazil will be without Barcelona star Neymar and Paris Saint-Germain defender David Luiz today when they face a tricky 2018 World Cup qualifying trip to Paraguay with renewed uncertainty swirling around their campaign.

The Brazilians are licking their wounds after the disappointment of Friday's 2-2 draw with Uruguay, when they squandered a two-goal lead and finished the game clinging on for the point.

For the opening half hour in Recife, Brazil were irresistible, attacking with precision and purpose in what looked like being their best performance since their 2014 World Cup semi-final debacle against Germany.

But Uruguay's fightback, begun with Edinson Cavani's superb volley and completed by Luis Suarez's predatory strike after half-time, has reawakened all of the old concerns about Brazil's brittle defence, humiliated in the 7-1 thrashing by the Germans two years ago.

The frustration of allowing Uruguay back into the game eventually got the better of Neymar, who was cautioned for a petulant kick on Alvaro Gonzalez, meaning he will now be suspended for Tuesday's trip to Asuncion.

Former Chelsea centre-back Luiz also earned a booking on Friday that will see him miss the game against Paraguay, who are level on eight points with third placed Brazil after five matches.

'GABIGOL' CALL-UP

Brazil coach Dunga has called up Santos's exciting teenage striker Gabriel Barbosa, a star of

the Olympic team, to replace Neymar while Corinthians defender Felipe will come in for Luiz.

Gabriel, 19, known widely as "Gabigol" and regarded as the heir apparent to Neymar, will be making his first senior appearance for Brazil after starring for the Under-23s last year where he scored six goals in four matches.

"I will be realizing a dream that I did not expect so soon," Gabriel said. "I'm happy for the opportunity." Paraguay meanwhile will be looking for all three points against opponents whom they have caused repeated problems in recent years. Paraguay knocked Brazil out of the Copa America quarter-finals in 2015 and 2011 and will be quietly confident of another win today.

The Paraguayans were deprived of what would have been a deserved victory against Ecuador on Thursday when a dubious late equaliser saw the surprise qualifying leaders snatch a 2-2 draw.

Coach Ramon Diaz believes the performance against Ecuador augurs well for the clash with Brazil. "We showed that we're a competitive team who can fight against anyone," Diaz said. "I hope that the team will continue to grow." In other matches today, Argentina face Bolivia in Cordoba aiming to continue their recovery with a third consecutive victory following away wins over Colombia and Chile.

Argentina are currently fifth in the standings with eight points from their opening five matches, but will be strong favourites to notch another win against a Bolivian side who are second bottom with three points from five games. —AFP



ASUNCION: Brazil's football team players celebrate Easter with children following a training session, in Viamao, Brazil, yesterday. Brazil will face Paraguay today in Asuncion, in a FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 South American qualifier match. — AFP

Sports

Dominant Day wins Match Play, hits stride for Masters



Ebullient England gunning for Dutch



TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2016

STOKES REVELS IN ROLE AS ENGLAND DEATH BOWLER

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NEW DELHI: Sri Lanka's wicket keeper Dinesh Chandimal (L) watches as South Africa's Hashim Amla plays a shot during the World T20 cricket tournament match between South Africa and Sri Lanka at Feroz Shah Kotla cricket ground in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

AMLA SECURES S AFRICA'S DEAD RUBBER WIN

NEW DELHI: Opener Hashim Amla struck an unbeaten 56 for South Africa in its eight-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the last World Twenty20 Group 1 game yesterday.

Amla hit five fours and one six off 52 balls as South Africa scored 122-2 in 17.4 overs after winning the toss and dismissing Sri Lanka for 120 in 19.3 overs. Amla added 60 for the second wicket with captain Faf du Plessis (31) to help South Africa control the chase from early on.

South Africa finished third in the group behind first-place West Indies and England, which were already through to the semifinals. Defending champion Sri Lanka finished the tournament with a solitary win over Afghanistan.

South Africa had little problem in chasing the moderate total as Amla struck a fifth half-century and called the shots in the company of his captain. Du Plessis scored three fours in his 36 balls but was trapped leg before wicket by pace bowler Suranga Lakmal when he was batting fluently.

In a game lacking lots of big shots, the crowd of more than 10,000 saw A.B. de Villiers strike two sixes, including the winning smash over mid-wicket off Lakmal's full toss.

"It's always tough when you are playing South Africa," said Sri Lanka's stand-in skipper Dinesh Chandimal. "Batting has let us down in this tournament." Earlier, Kyle Abbott, Farhaan Behardien and Aaron Phangiso grabbed two wickets to restrict Sri Lanka. Left-arm spinner Phangiso produced a twin-strike in the fifth over after which Sri Lanka failed to get partnerships going. Opener Tillkaratne Dilshan, who had smashed an unbeaten 83 in Sri Lanka's win against Afghanistan, scored 36 off 40 with four fours and one six. He added 45 runs for the first wicket with Chandimal, who led the side after Angelo Mathews pulled out due to a hamstring injury suffered during his fighting knock of 73 not out against England.

Chandimal was bowled with a straighter delivery from Phangiso for 21 and left-hander Lahiru Thirimanne was bowled first ball with one that came in sharply.

Behardien then dismissed Shehan Jayasuriya (1) and Dilshan, while Abbott came on to take two late wickets and ensure there was no fightback from the tail-enders.

"It was a great pitch, the ball was stopping and turning," said man-of-the-match Phangiso. "It's been a bit tough. We prepared well coming from home and I think we just needed luck on our side." — AP

SCOREBOARD

NEW DELHI: Scoreboard yesterday from the World Twenty20 Group 1 game between Sri Lanka and South Africa at the Ferozeshah Kotla Stadium:

Sri Lanka		South Africa	
Dinesh Chandimal b Phangiso	21	Hashim Amla not out	56
Tillakaratne Dilshan lbw b Behardien	36	Quinton de Kock run out	9
Lahiru Thirimanne b Phangiso	0	Faf du Plessis lbw b Lakmal	31
Milinda Siriwardana run out 15		AB de Villiers not out	20
Shehan Jayasuriya c du Plessis b Behardien	1	Extras: (2lb, 4w)	6
Chamara Kapugedera b Tahir	8	TOTAL: (for two wickets)	122
Thisara Perera c Behardien b Steyn	8	Overs: 17.4	
Dasun Shanaka not out	20	Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-75.	
Rangana Herath c de Kock b Abbott	2	Did not bat: David Miller, Farhaan Behardien, Aaron Phangiso, Kyle Abbott, David Wiese, Dale Steyn, Imran Tahir.	
Jeffrey Vandersay b Abbott	3	Bowling: Shehan Jayasuriya 1-0-9-0, Suranga Lakmal 3.4-0-28-1 (3w), Rangana Herath 4-0-21-0, Jeffrey Vandersay 4-0-25-0, Dasun Shanaka 2-0-17-0 (1w), Thisara Perera 2-0-15-0, Milinda Siriwardana 1-0-5-0.	
Suranga Lakmal not out	0	Result: South Africa won by eight wickets.	
Extras: (4b, 2lb, 2w, 2nb)	10		
TOTAL: (all out)	120		
Overs: 19.3			
Fall of wickets: 1-45, 2-45, 3-75, 4-78, 5-85, 6-85, 7-96, 8-109, 9-120, 10-120.			
Bowling: Dale Steyn 4-0-33-1 (1w), Kyle Abbott 3.3-0-14-2			

THOMPSON SCORES 40, GREEN WITH TRIPLE-DOUBLE IN WARRIORS WIN

OAKLAND: Klay Thompson scored 40 points in consecutive games for the first time in his career. Draymond Green posted his franchise-best 12th triple-double and the Golden State Warriors beat the Philadelphia 76ers 117-105 on Sunday night. Stephen Curry had 20 points and eight assists and Green contributed 13 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists as Golden State (66-7) stayed a game ahead of the pace set by the 1995-96 Bulls' during their record 72-win season. Chicago was 65-8 through 73 games. Backup big man Marreese Speights added 17 points and seven rebounds in the Warriors' 53rd straight regular-season victory at Oracle Arena and 35th consecutive at home this season. Carl Landry scored 22 points for the lowly Sixers, who lost their ninth in a row and 22nd in 23 while playing a back-to-back.

CLIPPERS 105, NUGGETS 90

DeAndre Jordan had 16 points and 16 rebounds and Los Angeles beat Denver to become the fourth Western Conference team to clinch a playoff spot. Chris Paul added 14 points, six rebounds and nine assists, Jamal Crawford also had 14 points, Jeff Green and Wesley Johnson each added 13, and J.J. Redick had 12. The Clippers had a 25-8 edge in fast-break points. Jusuf Nurkic had 19 points, and D.J. Augustin added 18 for Denver. Gary Harris finished with 11 points, Joffrey Lauvergne had 10, and Darrell Arthur grabbed 12 rebounds. The Nuggets, 10th in the

West with eight games remaining, fell 1/2 games behind the Utah Jazz and Houston Rockets in the race for the conference's eighth and final playoff berth.

PACERS 104, ROCKETS 101

Paul George scored 16 of his 25 points in the first quarter and Indiana overcame 34 points from James Harden to beat Houston. Monta Ellis had 23 points and Ian Mahinmi tied his career high with 19 points for the Pacers, who have won three of four. Harden also had eight rebounds and

Trevor Ariza had 14 points for the Rockets, who have lost two straight. Ellis scored the go-ahead basket with 4:46 left to give the Pacers a 96-95 lead and Mahinmi scored back-to-back baskets to put Indiana ahead 100-95. The Pacers took a 16-point lead in the third quarter and appeared to have the game put away before the Rockets went on a run and took a lead early in the fourth quarter with a dunk by Ariza.

KINGS 133, MAVERICKS 111

Rookie Willie Cauley-Stein followed a breakout offensive performance with 21

points and DeMarcus Cousins had 20 points and 12 rebounds to lead Sacramento over Dallas. The Mavericks have dropped three straight and 10 of 12. They are ninth in the Western Conference and trail Houston by half a game for the final playoff spot. Cauley-Stein, the sixth overall pick in last year's draft, set a career high with 26 points on Friday night against Phoenix and followed up with just his second 20-plus point game. Darren Collison had 17 points and Seth Curry and Ben McLemore each had 14 for the Kings. Rajon Rondo had 11 points and 11 assists. Raymond Felton had 15 points and both J.J. Barea and Dirk Nowitzki had 14 for the Mavericks. Wesley Matthews and David Lee each scored 12 points.

WIZARDS 101, LAKERS 88

John Wall had 22 points and 13 assists and Marcin Gortat added 16 points and 10 rebounds in Washington's victory over Los Angeles. Kobe Bryant scored 17 points in 23 minutes for the Lakers, who have lost seven of eight to fall to 15-58. Bryant has four home games remaining in his 20-year NBA career, and the Staples Center crowd serenaded him with cheers and chants while the Lakers listlessly lost again. Otto Porter Jr. scored 14 points in the Wizards' balanced performance during the opener of a four-game West Coast swing with their playoff hopes in peril. Washington has won six of eight overall, but dropped two straight home games before the trip. — AP

NBA results/standings

LA Clippers 105, Denver 90; Indiana 104, Houston 101; Sacramento 133, Dallas 111; Golden State 117, Philadelphia 105; Washington 101, LA Lakers 88.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	49	23	.681	-	Oklahoma City	51	22	.699	-
Boston	43	30	.589	6.5	Portland	38	36	.514	13.5
NY Knicks	30	44	.405	20	Utah	36	37	.493	15
Brooklyn	21	51	.292	28	Denver	31	43	.419	20.5
Philadelphia	9	65	.122	41	Minnesota	24	49	.329	27
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	52	21	.712	-	Golden State	66	7	.904	-
Indiana	39	34	.534	13	LA Clippers	45	27	.625	20.5
Detroit	39	35	.527	13.5	Sacramento	29	44	.397	37
Chicago	36	36	.500	15.5	Phoenix	20	53	.274	46
Milwaukee	30	44	.405	22.5	LA Lakers	15	58	.205	51
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Atlanta	44	30	.595	-	San Antonio	61	12	.836	-
Miami	42	30	.583	1	Memphis	41	32	.562	20
Charlotte	42	31	.575	1.5	Houston	36	38	.486	25.5
Washington	36	37	.493	7.5	Dallas	35	38	.479	26
Orlando	30	43	.411	13.5	New Orleans	26	46	.361	34.5



OAKLAND: Klay Thompson #11 of the Golden State Warriors shoots a three-point shot over Carl Landry #7 of the Philadelphia 76ers during an NBA Basketball game at ORACLE Arena on Sunday in Oakland, California. —AFP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2016

**Banks and consumers offset
dismal corporate earnings**

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**China launders cash
of foreign criminals**

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**GIG Group achieves
net profit of
KD 14.09m**

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ZAIN KUWAIT TEAMS UP WITH HUAWEI ON B2B SERVICES

AMID SLOWDOWN, UAE BANKS EASE LOAN REPAYMENTS

BANKS AGREE ON 'MINI INSOLVENCY LAW' TO HELP STRUGGLING SMEs

DUBAI: Banks in the United Arab Emirates will suspend legal action against small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) struggling to repay debt for up to three months to prevent a surge in defaults that may jeopardize the economy. The initiative, which involves businesses working with lenders to restructure their loans, is intended to give breathing space to SMEs, which contribute around 60 percent of UAE's gross domestic product.

The group of banks are offering the plan under which they would suspend legal action against small- and medium-sized businesses

struggling to repay loans for up to three months amid a Gulf-wide economic slowdown. The plan was offered yesterday by the UAE Banks Federation, a group of the country's 49 top banks. The banks say they are seeing a spike in loan defaults as crude oil prices have dropped drastically in recent months.

Banks have been hit by a spate of defaults, especially from traders of foodstuffs and oil, as a result of weakness in prices of commodities, as well as a gradual easing of bank liquidity.

"What we have put on the table is a mini

insolvency law," said Abdul Aziz Al-Ghurair chairman of the UAE Banks Federation, the industry body representing 49 banks. "We will give the customer time and space as long as they're genuine."

The federation was lobbying the government to "expedite" the new insolvency law, said al-Ghurair, also chief executive of Dubai-based lender Mashreq. Fearing jail for unpaid debt, many cash-strapped expatriates opted to depart, making it hard for banks to recover payment.

The debts left behind by those so-called

"skips" had reached around 5 billion dirhams (\$1.4 billion), al-Ghurair estimated in November. On Monday, he said he was unsure what the latest figure was.

The plan will be open to companies that have borrowed 50 million dirhams or more from a number of banks and were showing signs of financial stress, typically leading to an inability to make repayments. The federation will coordinate requests from companies with the lending banks, resulting in the signing of a standstill agreement ensuring that no lender will take pre-emptive action for a peri-

od up to 90 days. Led by the bank with the largest exposure, the lenders will then agree how to manage or restructure the borrower's debt.

The initiative had the backing of the central bank, as well as the unanimous agreement of banks, said Al-Ghurair. SMEs made up about 3 percent of banks' total lending, he said. "We will lend as long as the economy is in good shape and the customer is in good shape. If the economy slows and the customer slows the bank will also slow its lending," he added. —Agencies



HANOI: Day laborers sit waiting for employers to hire them for the day, along a road in Hanoi yesterday. Vietnam's economy slowed in the first quarter of 2016, hampered by low oil prices and an ongoing drought that has hit the agricultural sector hard. —AFP

MARKETS MIXED, DUBAI HOLDS CHART SUPPORT

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Middle East stock markets were mostly mixed in narrow ranges and moderate trading volumes yesterday, as Dubai tested and held technical support and petrochemical shares supported Saudi Arabia.

The Dubai index closed 0.4 percent lower at 3,266 points, off a low of 3,248 points. It has chart support on its mid-March low of 3,253 points and any break would trigger a minor double top formed by the March peaks and indicating a fresh leg down. Dubai Parks & Resorts tumbled 6.9 percent in heavy trade. On Sunday it had pulled back 5.1 percent after proposing to boost its capital by 1.68 billion dirhams (\$458 million) through a rights issue to finance development of a Six Flags theme park.

Builder Arabtec added 1.3 percent after it scheduled a board meeting for Wednesday to discuss its business. Abu Dhabi fell 0.4 percent as telecommunications firm Etisalat dropped 0.6 percent. It appointed Saleh Abdullah al-Abdooli, a veteran of the company who headed its United Arab Emirates and Egyptian operations, as its new chief execu-

tive; Etisalat said Abdooli would oversee restructuring of the group but gave no details.

The Saudi index edged up 0.2 percent as petrochemicals blue chip Saudi Basic Industries climbed 1.0 percent. Saudi Research and Marketing rose 6.1 percent after it said it expected to book a capital gain of 28.85 million British pounds (\$41.1 million) in the first quarter from the sale of a British real estate asset. Qatar's index fell 0.8 percent as telecommunications firm Ooredoo, which had been suspended for its annual general meeting as the overall market slid on Sunday, dropped 2.2 percent.

Gulf Warehousing rose 2.2 percent in very heavy trade, however. It has been active since last Tuesday, when the Qatar Central Securities Depository raised the maximum foreign ownership percentage in the company's shares to 49 percent of capital.

However, actual foreign ownership has not increased significantly since Wednesday and is still standing at 25.6 percent, according to the latest bourse data. Kuwait Finance

House rose 4.1 percent after saying it had received an offer from investors to buy its stake in affiliate Aref Investment Group. The Kuwaiti stock index edged up 0.2 percent.

Egypt's index fell in early trade as Egyptian billionaire Naguib Sawiris's Orascom Telecom continued sliding. It had dropped 3.8 percent on Sunday after Sawiris said a bid to acquire CI Capital, the investment arm of Commercial International Bank (CIB), was being held up by national security concerns. Sawiris also criticised state meddling in business that he said would put off investors.

On Monday, a source familiar with the deal told Reuters that it was expected to go ahead eventually, but that if it did not, CIB would put CI Capital up for sale again.

Orascom Telecom rebounded in late trade, closing 1.3 percent higher and helping the Cairo index finish 0.2 percent higher. CIB shares rose 0.3 percent while Beltone Financial, the Orascom Telecom subsidiary that is to be the vehicle for the acquisition, gained 3.5 percent. —Reuters



KIPCO.. Leaders in transparency

KIPCO's 2016 Shafafiyah (Transparency) Forum will take place after the company's General Assembly meeting. KIPCO will present a review of 2015 and guidance for 2016 to shareholders and institutional investors. The event will be broadcast live on the company's website: www.kipco.com

The event will take place on Wednesday, 30 March, 2016 at 1:00 p.m., 56th floor, KIPCO Business Center, KIPCO Tower, Sharq, Kuwait City

For further information, please call 2294 3477



GIG GROUP ACHIEVES NET PROFIT OF KD 14.09M

GROUP ANNOUNCES DISTRIBUTION OF 40% CASH DIVIDEND

KUWAIT: Gulf Insurance Group (GIG), held its 54th ordinary general assembly meeting. The group announced that it achieved net profit KD 14.09 million (\$ 46.9 million), equivalent to 78.60 fils per share for the year ended December 31, 2015, reflecting a double digit growth of 17 percent compared with profit KD 12.0 million (\$ 39.9 million) for the same period last year.

The General Assembly approved cash dividend of 40 per cent (40 fils per share) for the year ended December 31, 2015 for the registered shareholders in the company's records on the day of the General Assembly subject to the approval of concerned regulatory authorities.

After the completion of general assembly, the group held its Shafafiyah forum. During Shafafiyah the Group presented a review for 2015 results and 2016 outlook to the shareholders, financial analysts and investors. Commenting on the group results during 2015, GIG's Group Chief Executive Officer Khaled Saoud Al-Hasan Said, "Despite the challenges facing the insurance industry in the Middle East and the difficult economic & political conditions of the Arabian countries that we are operating in, GIG was able to achieve good results supported with double digits growth in revenue, underwriting results and net profit and the group successfully maintained its leading position in terms of the gross written premiums in Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan and Egypt." He added: "In 2015, AM Best affirmed GIG's rating of A- (Excellent)/Positive outlook and gig is rated



KUWAIT: Gulf Insurance Group (GIG) 54th ordinary general assembly meeting in progress.

BBB+/stable outlook by S&P after restructuring the group position.

On the other hand, our subsidiaries in Kuwait and Bahrain successfully maintained A- from AM Best as well as our subsidiaries in Egypt and Jordan maintained B++ by AM Best."

He also added: "The group successfully finalized the process of acquiring majority stake in 2A and the group completed all the arrangements & recruitments to establish AGLIC. Thus the Group have strengthened its position in the Algerian insurance market & the reflection of their operating results will be added to the group's operations during 2016. This achievement has

been done with the support of KIPCO - Kuwait Projects Company and Fairfax Financial Holding Ltd. which I would like to thank all of them for their permanent support and cooperation".

Commenting on group's outlook for 2016, Khaled Saoud Al-Hasan also said: "The Group is working extensively to meet customers' needs and requirements, exceed their expectations, and maintain our leadership position in the key markets we operate in. We will continue, through perseverance and commitment to excel & work towards improving our position across the Arab insurance sector, achieve solid & persistent growth rates in the com-



ing years and preserve the interests of our shareholders, customers, and our employees. Moreover, GIG will continue to seek the best investment opportunities to widen its expansion regionally, invest in the human resources to enhance and refine the technical and administrative expertise of the group's staff.

Develop marketing plans & campaigns and promote distribution channels and sales with an overall objective of improving the good standing, brand and reputation of the group, maximize the shareholders' value and protect the policyholders' rights and improve the credit rating for the group. GIG will continue to implement and develop

corporate governance & the transparency and to respect the principles of moral work, legislation and control regimes in all of the group companies as well as it will continue to improve its internal and external network and use the modern and latest technology to develop its operations."

"On this occasion, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of our clients, shareholders, employees, reinsurers and insurance brokers and the official regulators on the continued trust and cooperation with the group. Asking Allah to perpetuate Kuwait with the blessing of security, safety and prosperity under the wisdom of Kuwait's leaders."

EGYPT'S GASC CANCELS TENDER TO BUY RICE

ABU DHABI: Egypt's state grain buyer, the General Authority for Supply Commodities (GASC), said yesterday it had cancelled an international tender to buy an unspecified amount of rice. GASC Vice chairman Mamdouh Abdel Fattah did not give a reason for the cancellation. Traders said GASC had received only two valid offers for the tender, all for Indian origin rice.

A third offer had been rejected for lack of necessary paperwork. Another tender seeking an unspecified amount of rice will be held with deadline for offers on April 2, Abdel Fattah said. The tender was the second since Egypt announced in October it was lifting an export ban on rice and placing a 2,000-Egyptian-pound-per-tonne (\$225.23) export tariff on the crop. GASC cancelled its first tender on Jan. 27 saying it needed to give more time to suppliers to issue necessary paperwork.

Egypt is attempting to import rice to fill a

supply gap in subsidised domestic goods despite having a surplus of the crop.

The North African country produced 3.75 million tons of rice in the 2015 season and carried over 700,000 tons from 2014. With consumption at 3.3 million tons, that leaves a surplus of more than 1 million tons. But the government's failure to stockpile rice earlier in the season has left it at the mercy of traders, who are unwilling to sell to the state and choosing to stockpile instead as domestic prices of rice are rising daily. Previous governments have stockpiled 200,000 to 500,000 tons of rice at the beginning of the season to prevent traders from stockpiling the grain to raise prices, but current Minister of Supply Khaled Hanafi did not buy a strategic reserve.

GASC's attempt to import cheaper Indian rice is seen as a way of tackling the stockpiling problem as it would force local traders to lower their prices. — Reuters



DHAKA: Bangladeshi laborers unload watermelons at a dock in Dhaka yesterday. — AFP

FEDERAL OIL, GAS LEASES STALL OVER BIRD CONCERNS IN US WEST

BILLINGS, Mont: Concerns over a bird that ranges across the American West continue to delay federal oil and gas lease sales, five months after Interior Secretary Sally Jewell proclaimed the Obama administration had found a way to balance drilling and conservation.

The Interior Department said it will defer the sale of almost 60,000 acres of leases that were nominated by companies in eastern Montana as the agency works on new policies for greater sage grouse. More than 8 million acres of leases previously were deferred in Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. It remains unclear when those will be freed up for sales or removed from consideration.

Jewell said in September that Endangered Species Act protections were not needed for the grouse, a chicken-sized bird that inhabits sage brush ecosystems spread across 11 Western states. Grouse numbers declined significantly over the past several decades

because of the loss of habitat.

Officials said the decision to forgo protections avoided the need for draconian restrictions on drilling, livestock grazing and other activities that help drive the region's economy. It followed a sweeping overhaul of federal public land management plans to limit drilling near grouse breeding areas and allowing oil and gas exploration to proceed elsewhere.

The US Bureau of Land Management still is crafting policies to put those plans into effect, agency spokesman Al Nash said. Completion of that work is several months away, he said.

A lawsuit challenging the plans as too weak is pending in U.S. District Court in Idaho. Environmental groups behind the lawsuit contend the land plans are riddled with loopholes that could further drive down the bird's numbers. Erik Molvar with WildEarth Guardians said the block on new leases over the past several years - coupled with low oil and gas prices - was doing more to protect grouse than any other factor. — AP



The logo (L) of NTT DATA Corporation is displayed in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

DELL SELLING IT UNIT TO NTT DATA FOR \$3BN

NEW YORK: Dell Inc is selling its Dell Services information technology unit to NTT Data Inc. for just over \$3 billion as part of its ongoing reorganization plan. Dell had purchased the business for \$3.9 billion in 2009 when it was Perot Systems, founded by billionaire and onetime presidential candidate Ross Perot.

The sale comes as privately-held Dell prepares to buy data storage provider EMC for \$67 billion and tries to reinvent itself as more than just a personal computer company. That deal was announced in October and

was initially targeted to close in the second or third quarter of Dell's fiscal year ending Feb. 3, 2017. Japan-based NTT Data focuses on information technology in the medical field, including medical records and billing.

In a statement, NTT Data said the acquisition will help "strengthen its leadership position" in the services market, while also initiating a relationship with Dell. The company has been expanding its services globally, recently making deals that give it greater reach into the Philippines, Taiwan, and Costa Rica, among other initiatives. — AP

US CONSUMER SPENDING POSTS SCANT FEB INCREASE

PENDING HOME SALES REBOUND IN FEBRUARY

WASHINGTON: US consumer spending posted a tiny gain for the third straight month in February while income growth slowed sharply.

Consumer spending edged up 0.1 percent in February, matching similar lackluster gains in January and December, the Commerce Department reported yesterday. Personal incomes rose a modest 0.2 percent in February after a much stronger 0.5 percent rise in January. The slowdown reflected a 0.1 percent drop in wages and salaries, the first drop in this key category since September.

Economists noted that consumer spending, after removing the effects of inflation, rose a slight 0.2 percent in February while January was revised from an initial estimate of a 0.4 percent increase to a flat reading.

Sal Guatieri, senior economist at BMO Capital Markets, said this downward revision for January coupled with the weak showing for February prompted him to trim his expectation for overall economic growth to around 1.5 percent in the first quarter, down from 2 percent.

Chris Rupkey, chief financial economist at MUFG Union Bank in New York, said, "The consumer turned cautious at the start of the year and chose to save more of their paychecks rather than spend it. The stock market turbulence and increasing downside risks from the world economy did affect the consumers' mood apparently." Despite the recent weakness, economists are still looking for consumer spending to accelerate as the year moves forward, reflecting solid gains in employment boost incomes and fuel more spending.

A key price gauge followed by the Federal Reserve showed prices fell 0.1 percent in February and are up just 1 percent over the past 12 months. The weakness seen in spending had been expected given an earlier report which showed that retail sales fell in February, pulled down by falling gasoline sales.

The government on Friday revised its estimate for overall economic growth, as measured by the gross domestic product, to show the economy growing at an annual rate of 1.4 percent in the fourth quarter, an improvement from a previous estimate of 1 percent.

The Federal Reserve at its meeting this month left a key rate unchanged while signaling that it now expected to boost rates only two times this year, down from a previous expectation of four

rate hikes. One thing the Fed is closely watching is the performance of inflation, which for nearly four years has remained below the Fed's target of an annual price increase of 2 percent per year. While overall inflation was up just 1 percent in February, prices excluding food and energy rose 1.7 percent for the 12 months ending in February. Fed Chair Janet Yellen will discuss her views on the economy in a highly anticipated speech Tuesday before the Economic Club of New York. The spending report showed that the saving rate edged up slightly to 5.4 percent of after-tax income in February, compared to 5.3 percent in January.

Home sales

US pending home sales jumped to a seven-month high in February after falling in January, and remained above the level a year ago, the National Association of Realtors said yesterday.

The NAR's pending home sales index rose 3.5 percent month-over-month to the highest since July, led by a large increase in the Midwest and more modest gains in the South and West. The Northeast was the only region where sales

declined. February pending home sales data, based on contract signings that suggest future sales, was much stronger than the 1.1 percent rise analysts had expected after a poor showing in January blamed in part on severe winter weather.

"The large rebound suggests that last month's downturn was not the beginning of a protracted slump in housing activity, but rather just monthly noise," said Barclays analyst Jesse Hurwitz. "We continue to view the US housing market as in a mode of gradual improvement."

Year-over-year, pending sales were up 0.7 percent in February, the smallest annual gain in an 18-month streak of increases. "After some volatility this winter, the latest data is encouraging in that a decent number of buyers signed contracts last month, lured by mortgage rates dipping to their lowest levels in nearly a year and a modest, seasonal uptick in inventory," Lawrence Yun, NAR chief economist, said in a statement. According to NAR, sales of existing, or previously owned, homes-the bulk of the US housing market-are expected to reach about 5.38 million this year, up 2.4 percent from 2015. — Agencies



PITTSBURGH: A couple walks past the Shadyside Variety Store in the Shadyside section of Pittsburgh. — AP

MOST ASIA MARKETS FALL BUT TOKYO RALLIES WITH DOLLAR

HONG KONG: The dollar extended a recent recovery yesterday and Japanese stocks climbed as a better-than-expected jump in US growth raised the prospect of another Federal Reserve rate hike...

faster than the 1.0 percent initially recorded. The increase came on the back of a surge in consumer spending, which was also much stronger than first thought...

for interest rate rises this year, citing the possible impact on the US of a slowdown in the world economy. "We're now more conscious that there's strength in the US economy," Yoshinori Ogawa, a market strategist at Okasan Securities, told Bloomberg News...

cent off and Taipei fell 0.2 percent, while Singapore, Manila and Jakarta were deep in negative territory. Shanghai closed 0.7 percent lower, having started on a high after official figures this weekend showed profits at China's key industrial companies rose almost five percent...

Weaker US data supports the view the Fed would raise interest rates at a gradual pace, weighing on the dollar and in turn helping gold. Spot gold was up 0.2 percent at \$1,218.62 an ounce by 12:53 GMT, after touching a session low of \$1,208.15, its cheapest since Feb. 23...

Gold edged up yesterday, as the dollar retreated after weaker-than-expected US data, but stayed close to a one-month low as investors focused on speeches by Federal Reserve officials that could give more clues on potential interest rate increases...

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Sunday 28 March 2016. Includes sections for Price Index, Weighted Index, KXS 15, Trades, Security, and various market indices like Global Stock, MENA Stock, Global Currencies, MENA Currencies, Global Interest Rates, and Commodities.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. At 02:00 PM Previous Day. Includes a line chart and a table of Global Stock Indices and MENA Stock Indices.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report (continued). Includes Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, Global Bond Yields, and Commodities tables.

CHINA'S ANBANG RAISES OFFER FOR STARWOOD TO \$14 BILLION

BEIJING: China's Anbang Insurance Group Co has raised its offer for Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc to almost \$14 billion in its latest challenge to the US hotel operator's merger with Marriott International Inc.

The bidding war for Starwood has pitted Marriott's ambitions to create the world's largest lodging company with about 5,700 hotels against Anbang's drive to create a vast investment portfolio of high-yielding US real estate assets. The acquisition of Starwood, owner of the Sheraton and Westin brands, by Anbang would be the largest ever by a Chinese company in the United States.

Anbang's consortium, which includes private equity firms JC Flowers & Co and Primavera Capital Ltd, has offered \$82.75 per share in cash, in what is reasonably likely to lead to a proposal that is superior to the deal with Marriott, Starwood

said yesterday. Reuters had reported earlier on Monday that Anbang had raised its offer. Marriott's latest cash-and-stock offer, which was announced on March 21, is currently worth around \$78 per share. Starwood's board has not yet changed its recommendation to its shareholders in support of the company's merger with Marriott, Starwood said. A vote for Starwood shareholders to approve the Marriott deal is scheduled for April 8.

Marriott declined to say on Monday if it would raise its offer further. In a statement, Marriott said it was confident that the previously announced amended merger agreement with Starwood is the best course for both companies. "Starwood stockholders should give serious consideration to the question of whether the Anbang-led consortium will be able to close the proposed transac-

tion, with a particular focus on the certainty of the consortium's financing and the timing of any required regulatory approvals," Marriott said in its statement.

In any deal with Anbang or Marriott, Starwood shareholders will also receive stock in Interval Leisure Group Inc, which is getting Starwood's vacation ownership business, currently worth \$5.91 per Starwood share.

Starwood shares were trading up 2.54 percent at \$84.20 in morning trading in New York yesterday. Marriott shares were up 4.1 percent to \$71.46, as some investors hoped Anbang's move would prompt it to walk away from an expensive deal.

"Marriott has the financial capacity and the wherewithal to push its bid up higher. However, so much of the transaction is based on Marriott's current share price, I think investors would be less than

thrilled if it increased its offer materially at this juncture," said Bill Crow an analyst at Raymond James.

Anbang's latest offer values Starwood at 13.5 times earnings. By comparison, peers Hyatt Hotels Corp and Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc are trading at around ten times earnings.

To be sure, the Anbang offer is still cheaper than some of large real estate deals seen in the run-up to the 2008 financial crisis. Buyout firm Blackstone Group LP's \$26 billion leveraged buyout of Hilton in 2007 valued that company at 15 times earnings.

CFIUS REVIEW

Marriott said last week it believes it could achieve \$250 million in annual cost synergies within two years after closing the deal with Starwood, up from \$200 million estimated in November 2015

when it signed its original merger agreement. An acquisition of Starwood by Anbang would probably face scrutiny by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), an interagency panel that reviews deals to ensure they do not harm national security. However, sources have said both Starwood and Anbang believe that deal would receive CFIUS clearance.

Under its latest merger agreement with Marriott, Starwood would pay a breakup fee to Marriott of \$450 million. Lazard and Citigroup Global Markets Inc are financial advisers to Starwood, and Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP is its legal counsel. Deutsche Bank Securities and Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher are advising Marriott. PJT Partners Inc is Anbang's financial adviser, while Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP is its legal counsel. — Reuters

FIST-BUMP AUSTERITY EXPOSES STRAINS ON FINLAND'S CONSENSUS MODEL

HELSINKI: If one fist bump could endanger Finland's increasingly stressed tradition of consensus politics, then Prime Minister Juha Sipilä and a cabinet colleague may just have achieved this dubious distinction.

In a nod to popular culture, a smiling Sipilä and his finance minister Alexander Stubb punched each other's fist to celebrate a breakthrough in negotiating one of Finland's toughest austerity deals in decades with trade unions. The unions, whose members face de facto wage cuts in the name of reviving economic growth, were deeply unimpressed by the public show of exuberance earlier this month.

"Members were very upset. They thought that they were mocking workers, saying something like: 'now we can drive them into the ground,'" said PAM union leader Ann Selin, who represents 232,000 workers. The first bump wasn't a first in international politics. Barack and Michelle Obama exchanged one at the Democratic party convention before his election to the US presidency in 2008.

But Sipilä and Stubb are hardly the golden couple of Finnish politics. Before becoming prime minister, Sipilä was a millionaire businessman while Stubb has the image of a jet setter with a liking for fine suits. This made the gesture all the more difficult to stomach for union leaders after what was only a preliminary deal, with a detailed agreement still to be hammered out in the coming months. "It did not help at all," said Selin. Unions were outraged at politicians who appeared out of touch, underlying the fragility of the Nordic model under which parties of the centre-right and centre-left, organised labour and business strive to reach consensus deals without conflict. The danger is that the preliminary accord may still collapse as the Finnish consensus is tested by rising debt, unemployment and lengthy economic stagnation.

Relying on traditional consensus politics, Sipilä wants to persuade the unions to cut labour costs by 5 percent. It is part of his push to raise the competitiveness of the Finnish economy after three years of recession with some of the deepest austerity and welfare since World War Two.

With unemployment at 9.4 percent, Stubb insists the fist bump was to celebrate the new jobs that he believes the reforms will create. He has heralded a Finnish spring of "three big decisions that need to be taken to change the course of the country" - the labour deal, a parliamentary vote on budget cuts and reforms to cut the cost of health care.

NOT VERY FINNISH

At stake is the consensus that has grown across the high-cost Nordic welfare states out of the realisation that small, export-dependent economies can ill afford polarisation and policy stagnation. Nowhere is that consensus under such risk as in Finland, called "the sick man of Europe" by Stubb and now facing the same dilemma as many other euro zone economies of how to promote growth while also pursuing fiscal austerity. Having long lectured southern European countries such as Greece on tackling their problems, Finland is belatedly coming to reform itself.

The demise of Nokia's phone business and the electronics industry has shaved 3 percent off Finnish gross domestic product since 2007, with the shrinking wood industry cutting another 0.75 percent, according to OECD economists. Economic crisis in neighbouring Russia, a close trade partner, has cut another 1.5 percent off Finnish output in the last three years, they say.

This year, Finland has lost its triple-A credit rating. The European Commission has warned Helsinki about its rising debt and budget

deficit, although last year the shortfall was equal to 2.7 percent of GDP, within the EU limit. Still, public spending is 58 percent of GDP, the highest in the OECD group of developed economies. Exports remain 20 percent below their peak reached in 2007 before the global crisis erupted. Resistance to austerity is considerable. In the last few months, parts of Helsinki have been brought to a standstill by protesting farmers driving tractors, while thousands of pensioners and students have also taken to streets. Selin described the preliminary labour deal as "the lesser of two evils", but said: "I have never seen the consensus model under such pressure. I have never seen so many demonstrations." "It's not very Finnish," she added.

NO REVOLUTION - YET

Stubb acknowledges no one wants to bear the brunt of the reforms. "There is consensus in Finland that we need to turn the tide of debt, but there's clearly no consensus on where we do those cuts," he told Reuters. He made clear the government dislikes "revolution" - forcing through reforms that could polarise society. "We decided that we'll go through evolution, a bit by bit. But ... you have to be pretty sure that you meet those targets, otherwise at the end of the day you'll have to go for the revolution."

Planned budget spending cuts would save 4 billion euros (\$4.5 billion) by 2019, equal to 2 percent of GDP. Social and health reforms would cut 3 billion euros, or 1.5 percent of GDP, according to the OECD. Stubb has warned that if the labor reforms are watered down when unions and employers negotiate the final deal, the government could try to force through more radical cuts.

Sipilä and Stubb have to walk a political tightrope on each of the three reforms, facing infighting within the three-party centre-right coalition government and voters' anger with planned spending cuts from education to child benefits.

Critics say Stubb is part of the problem. Many Finns are wary of the extrovert and social media-savvy politician, mistrusting his image as a right-wing ideologue. He even faces a possible challenge to his party leadership. Stubb's cherished labour deal cuts to the heart of Finnish welfare. If he gets his way, employees may work an extra 24 hours a year for no extra pay but with increased pension contributions. Beloved benefits, such as a 50-percent bonus on monthly pay in the summer holidays, may be trimmed.

CLUELESS ON GROWTH

"Finland has lost its values," said Arto Annila, a physics professor who was among 75 academics at Helsinki University to be made redundant. Aged 53, it was the first time he has lost his job. "Before you had a sense these were jobs for life." Anger with these cuts - altogether about 980 jobs are going from the university's staff - has helped the opposition centre-left Social Democrats rise to top in polls.

They advocate less austerity and more investment. "Europe has generally done too much cutting," said Sanna Marin, 30-year-old SDP vice-chairwoman, who warns the coalition could fall before its term ends in 2019.

Her hometown suffers 18 percent unemployment. "I think we have the fiscal room to invest," she said. However, few economists see any magic wand to boost growth, given how few new industries are making up for weakness of Finland's electronic and forestry exports. "We are all clueless on how to get long term economic growth," said Markus Jantti, a professor of public finances at Helsinki University. — Reuters



PARIS: People walk in a Chinese wholesale clothing district in Aubervilliers, north of Paris, France. France's financial crimes squad in June busted a money transfer network in Aubervilliers, where Chinese merchants are accused of laundering money for North African drug dealers. Sign in Chinese reads "China Europe Trade and Commerce City". — AP

CHINA LAUNDERS CASH OF FOREIGN CRIMINALS

SCAM ARTISTS, DRUG CARTELS AND GANGS FIND A NEW HAVEN

ASHDOD, Israel: Scam artists, drug cartels and gangs from around the world have found a new haven for laundering money: China. The country's well-developed underground financial networks have caught the attention of foreign criminals who are using China to clean their dirty money and pump it back into the global financial system - largely beyond the reach of Western law enforcement, an Associated Press investigation has found.

As China globalized, sending people and money abroad, so too did its criminal economy. Gangs from Israel and Spain, cannabis dealers from North Africa and cartels from Mexico and Colombia have laundered billions in China and Hong Kong, slipping their ill-gotten gains into the great tides of legitimate trade and finance that wash through the region, according to police officials, European and U.S. court records and intelligence documents reviewed by the AP.

Gilbert Chikli, a convicted French-Israeli con man, understands China's allure. He is widely credited with devising a scam so successful that it has inspired a generation of copycats. Called the fake CEO, fake president or business email compromise scam, the fraud has cost thousands of companies, many of them American, \$1.8 billion in just over two years, according to the FBI.

"China has become a universal passageway for all these scams," said Chikli. "Because China today is a world power, because it doesn't care about neighboring countries, and because, overall, China is flipping off other countries in a big way."

China's central bank and police refused repeated requests for comment. In a regular briefing with reporters Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said "is not, has not been, nor will be in the future a center of global money laundering." Chikli made millions by impersonating top executives and intelligence agents and convincing employees at some of the world's largest companies to transfer money to his bank accounts, according to French legal documents. He told the AP he laundered 90 percent of that stolen money through China and Hong Kong.

"It's immense," he said in an interview at his sleek, three-story home in Ashdod, a port town on the Mediterranean. A French court convicted Chikli last year of defrauding five companies of 6.1 million euros - La Banque Postale, LCL bank, HSBC, Accenture and Thomson, a French technology company. He was also convicted of attempting to extract over 70 million euros from at least 33 others, including Barclays, American Express and the company that runs Disneyland Paris. He was sentenced in absentia to seven years in prison and fined 1 million euros.

Today he remains a wanted man, but lives openly in Israel, where authorities refused to comment on his case. Israel and France share no bilateral extradition treaty, but Israel has surrendered French citizens in some cases. Chikli told the AP his preferred method for laundering money was import-export schemes.

He would bounce stolen funds to front companies in Hong Kong, then have the cash withdrawn and used to buy merchandise in China. He'd purchase, say, 20 tons of steel, but bribe the vendor to



HONG KONG: People walk beneath a sign for foreign currency exchange in Hong Kong. China and Hong Kong are emerging as a global hub for money laundering, with criminals from around the world slipping their dirty money into the region's great tides of legitimate trade and finance, taking advantage of entrenched corruption and informal banking channels that date back over 1,000 years. — AP

give him a receipt for 100 tons. Then he'd sell the goods and send the money to Israel, where the false invoices made the entire sum look like legitimate trading profit.

"Give me the documents and everything is fine," he said. Such trade-based money laundering is a growing concern to US authorities. Three

Colombians based in Guangzhou, China, led a global money-laundering network that moved over \$5 billion for Spanish and Mexican drug cartels, according to a US Justice Department indictment unsealed in September. The network allegedly spanned the United States, Colombia, Spain, Ecuador and Venezuela. — AP

ETIHAD AIRWAYS ENGINEERING TO HOST AE&M CONFERENCE IN ABU DHABI

ABU DHABI: Etihad Airways Engineering will be the host sponsor of MRO Network's upcoming Airline Engineering & Maintenance: Middle East conference, taking place in Abu Dhabi on April 26-27, 2016. Exploring MRO growth is at the heart of the discussions at this conference which has a 20-year history of gathering key stakeholders in the MRO value chain - airlines, OEMs, MROs and suppliers - to network and discuss a range of aftermarket issues.

Topics range from the developments in the Middle East Air Transport Market, an MRO industry forecast and how airlines engage with their MRO partners and suppliers. Among the industry leading speakers is Jeff Wilkinson, Etihad Airways' Senior Vice President, Technical, who said: "It is our pleasure to host delegates of Airline Engineering & Maintenance in Abu Dhabi - the emerging hub of aerospace and aviation in the Middle East."

Off the back of a successful show last year, Etihad Airways Engineering will once again be holding a tour of its facility exclusively for conference delegates at the conclusion of the conference, introducing delegates to the Etihad Airways Engineering management team and offering the opportunity to visit hangars and various workshops within the facil-

ity. "We are organising an escorted tour of Etihad Airways Engineering state-of-the-art workshops and hangars, one of the largest MRO facilities in the region. This will include Hangar 6 which accommodates up to three A380 aircraft simultaneously."

MRO Network, part of Penton's Aviation Week Network, is a media outlet which gives a voice to the global MRO community - people working within commercial aviation engineering and maintenance at airlines, MROs, OEMs, lessors and financiers, suppliers and others allied to the field.

MRO Network brings together a wide range of opportunities for networking, learning, news, analysis and opinion - in print, face-to-face and online - covering engineering and maintenance as well as broader aviation developments.

Etihad Airways began operations in 2003, and in 2014 carried 14.8 million passengers. From its Abu Dhabi base, Etihad Airways flies to or has announced plans to serve 113 passenger and cargo destinations in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas. The airline has a fleet of 120 Airbus and Boeing aircraft, and more than 200 aircraft on firm order, including 66 Boeing 787s, 25 Boeing 777Xs, 62 Airbus A350s and five Airbus A380s.



SRINAGAR: A Kashmiri shepherd leads his flock of sheep near a mustard field in full bloom on the outskirts of Srinagar yesterday. According to the Directorate of Agriculture of Jammu and Kashmir, the Kashmir valley comprising six districts has an estimated area of 65 thousand hectares of paddy land under mustard cultivation, which is about 40 per cent of the total area under paddy. — AFP



LEXUS 'ANTICIPATION' AT MILAN DESIGN WEEK 2016

KUWAIT: Lexus will present its "Lexus - An Encounter with Anticipation" exhibit as part of Milan Design Week 2016, the world's largest design exhibition, also known as Salone Del Mobile. The exhibit, which will take place at Spazio Lexus - Torneria in Tortona, from April 12 to 17, 2016, features a unique collaboration between the widely acclaimed design team from Studio Formafantasma and Michelin Star winning chef Yoji Tokuyoshi.

Anticipating societal needs and desires, this exhibit conveys how Lexus imagines what is yet unseen and delivers new forms of surprise and enchantment. Takayuki Yoshitsugu, Chief Representative of Middle East & North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said, "Through this exhibit, Lexus will offer an unexpected and unmatched

encounter that invites visitors to a unique world full of Anticipation. Visitors will discover the essence of Lexus craftsmanship, and behold how Lexus technology and design philosophy translate into an aesthetic and emotional experience. As always, at Lexus, we are striving to demonstrate unique design concepts and give a platform for talented designers to showcase their creativity and individual sensibilities. We sincerely appreciate the support from our customers for such design related initiatives."

Formafantasma will design and install the exhibit space. The young designers behind the success of this Amsterdam based studio, Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin, have already earned wide acclaim for their product designs, receiving a nomination for Designer of

the Year in the Wallpaper* Design Awards 2014. Similarly, Chef Yoji Tokuyoshi is a rising star in the culinary world, renowned for his creativity and innovation. His new restaurant in Milan, Ristorante Tokuyoshi, was awarded a Michelin star just 10 months after opening. The collaboration of these Europe-based, acclaimed creative geniuses is perfectly paired with the aspirations of the "Lexus - An Encounter with Anticipation" exhibit to explore new design possibilities.

Formafantasma spoke of the inspiration found when they visited Lexus in Japan. "We were impressed by how Lexus is committed to excellence in craftsmanship, integrity in its production and responsibility in its use of technology. We felt the openness and honesty of the brand come alive as the foundation of antipa-

to reach common goals of sustainable behavior and a progressive lifestyle."

On the subject of transparency, Chef Yoji Tokuyoshi, said: "Transparency is not just about being clear and lucid. Being transparent is sometimes an invisible thing and makes you think. This builds anticipation, and increases the joy of the reveal. I would like to express this concept through the tasting experience." Anticipation is also the theme for this year's Lexus Design Award; an international design competition to foster the growth of ideas that contribute to society and support up-and-coming creators whose work can contribute to shaping a better future. Creative works by the 12 finalists of the Lexus Design Award 2016 will also be displayed at the same venue during Milan Design Week.

LEXUS DESIGN AWARD

tion. This led us to the design concept of transparency. Transparency anticipates a future that is open and honest, and that engages society

QATAR AIRWAYS COOKING THEATRE TAKES DINING TO NEW HEIGHTS

DOHA: The Qatar Airways Cooking Theatre has once again proved to be a great hit at the ongoing Qatar International Food Festival, with celebrity chefs sharing their culinary skills, favourite recipes and professional insights in to the art of fine dining through live cooking demonstrations.

Food lovers in Qatar have been treated to fantastic fare and entertainment over the past few days thanks to a stellar line-up of award winning chefs from across the globe, celebrated for their unique skills and modern approach to culinary classics.

The Qatar Airways Cooking Theatre got underway with an opening to remember on 22 March, as world-famous chef and television personality, Martha Stewart, served guests a spectacular meal to mark the first day of the gastronomic event, of which Qatar Airways is official co-host along with the Qatar Tourism Authority.

Martha, renowned for her cooking expertise, delivered a delectable menu during her one hour live cooking demonstration. Dishes included healthy salads and side dishes including quinoa and salmon and an energising juice made of grapefruit, carrot and ginger.

Qatar Airways' signature food festival event proved extremely popular with festival-goers, who also enjoyed watching George Calombaris, chef, restaurateur, and judge of MasterChef Australia. Regarded as one of Australia's top chefs, the MasterChef lifted the lid on kitchen secrets and entertained the audience with his highly influential style of cuisine

that has earned him many accolades and respect from culinary aficionados across the globe.

George spent his time in the kitchen serving mouthwatering dishes including a Spanakopita; a traditional Greek savoury pastry cooked with spinach and chicken, served alongside some of his most popular dessert recipes of apple shisha mouse, bitter chocolate sorbet and smoked apple fluid gel.

Salam Al-Shawa, Senior Vice President, Marketing and Corporate Communications at Qatar Airways, said: "We couldn't have asked for a more spectacular line-up for the Qatar Airways Cooking Theatre. Martha created delicious cooking on the stage kitchen, serving up food that was truly cooked with passion and George took fine dining to a new level sharing his rich insights that transform everyday food into art. This year's Qatar Airways Cooking Theatre satisfied the taste buds of hundreds of thousands of guests, who experienced the global cuisine styles of our carefully selected culinary experts."

Also entertaining visitors to QIFF in MIA Park and The Pearl was multiple award-winning Vineet Bhatia, Qatar Airways' exclusive on board chef; Chef Massimo Capra, creator of the Qatar Duty Free's Soprafino Restaurant at Hamad International Airport; Michelin star-rated talents Tagaki Kazuo, Paul Bentley, Tim Butler, and Jes's Escalera, plus Francisco Ruano and a number of fabulous chefs from the Arabic food channel Fatafeat, such as Salma Soleiman, and Mohamad Orfali.

ZAIN KUWAIT TEAMS UP WITH HUAWEI ON B2B SERVICES

DIGITIZATION OF KUWAIT ECONOMY OPENING UP NEW OPPORTUNITIES

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, has announced a strategic cooperation with Huawei - a leading global ICT solutions provider - to work together to enhance Zain's business-to-business (B2B) service offerings for organizations across the country. The memorandum of understanding (MoU) recognizes that the digitization of the local economy is opening up new business opportunities, and that telecom operators will play a major role in supporting a hyper connected and intelligent digital world.

As part of the agreement, Zain Kuwait and Huawei will mutually explore opportunities related to public safety services, industry IoT applications, and emergency communication services. Leveraging Zain's advanced mobile network, the two companies will jointly test technologies such as NB-IOT and LTE-integrated trunking to realize these new ambitions. The latest announcement builds on Zain's launch of machine-to-machine services for Kuwait's enterprise and government sectors in the fall of 2015 - part of the company's strategic vision to enrich the bundle of solutions that Zain offers to corporate customers.

Eaman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait CEO said, "As the largest operator in the country offering nationwide 4G services, we recognize that to meet our business customers' ever-increasing demand for services, we need to continually invest in network upgrades for the future prosperity of the company and the wider economy at large. Cooperating with Huawei in the B2B offerings, and eventual expand for services targeting organizations across the country, will ensure that Zain Kuwait remains at the



forefront of technology, providing our customers especially corporate sector with a superior telecom experience."

"Collaborating with Zain to explore a new generation of B2B applications and services is a significant move in connecting more businesses, cities, and communities across the country. New value chains can thus be developed that benefit local organizations and citizens alike," says Li Dafeng, president of Middle East and Africa.

The proposed technical trials will ultimately help to widen Zain's service portfolio in Kuwait and leverage recent investments in the operator's ultra-

fast 4.5G mobile network. Zain announced the successful testing of the Middle East's first 4.5G mobile broadband technology in December 2015 with services reaching 1 Gbps speeds.

Zain and Huawei have been strengthening their strategic partnership in various fields to provide customers with a superior telecommunications experience. In recent years, the companies have started running a first-of-its-kind Joint Innovation Center based in Kuwait which serves as a research hub from which Zain is able to advance its mobile broadband network, services, and applications offered to customers across the region.

AL-MAZAYA OKAYS 7% CASH DIVIDEND TO SHAREHOLDERS

KUWAIT: Al-Mazaya Holding held its Ordinary General Assembly Meeting of 2015, on 28 March 2016, at Al-Murqab District, Sharq, at Al-Mazaya Tower 1, one of its 3 Towers in the heart of Kuwait capital with a quorum of 70.77 per cent.

Rashid Yaqoub Al-Nafisi, Chairman of the Board, called the meeting to order, in the presence of shareholders, members of the board, Group CEO Eng. Ibrahim Al-Soqabi, a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and representatives from the company's external auditors. Investors and media representatives, from across the GCC, were also in attendance.

The General Assembly began with a documentary film titled "Al-Mazaya 2050", after which, Al-Nafisi presented the Board's report on the fiscal year ended 31 December 2015. The overall message being that Al-Mazaya Holding continues to realize steady growth, based on solid internal and external foundations.

Al-Nafisi said: "Al-Mazaya Holding was able to maintain steady performance levels and positive results, in 2015, proving an exceptional ability to be immune from economic and geopolitical fluctuations, in the surrounding region. The company has continued to achieve positive leaps in its financial results and reported a net profit of KD 9.32million, by end of 2015, a 15.2 per cent increase from KD 8.09million, by end of 2014. Earnings per share (EPS) was calculated at 15.04 fils per share, by end of 2015, compared to EPS 13.05 fils, by end of 2014."

Al-Nafisi said: "During the last year, Al-Mazaya Holding was able to maintain healthy performance in its projects' sales and in increasing occupancy at its income-generating projects. This led to a 258.9 per cent rise in the operating revenues to KD 59.82 million, by end of 2015, up from KD 16.66 million, by end of 2014. This significant leap in revenue is credited to a combination of the marketing plan, the huge demand for the units available for sale, and growing investor confidence in the company's brand. This has resulted in a 385.6 per cent growth in sales revenue, from KD 10.97 million, by end of 2014, to KD 53.27 million, by end of 2015. Total rental revenues jumped by 16.4 per cent, from KD 5.3 million, in 2014, to KD 6.17 million, in 2015."

"As a result, the company was able to achieve an increase of 157.6 per cent in gross profit, generated from operating activities, amounting to KD 16.14 million, compared to KD 6.27 million, in 2014," he added. "In light of the excellent revenue achieved last year, Al-Mazaya Holding's Board of Directors has recommended 7 per cent cash dividends to all shareholders - a sign of its commitment to share the

company's success with shareholders, as well as proof of the company's financial strength, solvency and evidence of the company's balanced future plan. We submit this recommendation to the Annual General Assembly for approval, having first fulfilled all the requirements of the Capital Markets Authority and the concerned government regulators," he said.

"By the grace of Allah, Al-Mazaya has become stronger than ever," he concluded.

Al-Nafisi extended his heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all the board members, executive management, engineering staff, technical and vocational personnel, and all employees, for their contribution in the company's success. He also assured attendees that Al Mazaya would remain one of the best and

branches, in 2016, in accordance with Article No. 197 of the Companies Law No. 1 of 2016, and Article No. 20 of the Statute of the Company. Furthermore, the Board was authorised to purchase or sell company shares at no more than 10 per cent of the total shares, as per law no. 7 of 2010 and its executive by law and its amendments thereafter.

The General Assembly also approved to discharge the Board Members from legal liability for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2015. Approval was also given to deduct 10 per cent of net profits for the statutory reserve requirement, in accordance with Article No.222 of the Companies Law No.1 of 2016, and an additional 10 per cent of net profit for the voluntary reserve, which will be used for any

* Abdulhamid Muhraiz
* Mohammed Khalid Othman
* Rasha Abdullah Al Qunaie

Company achievements

In a statement prepared for the meeting, Group CEO of Al-Mazaya Holding, Eng. Ibrahim Al-Soqabi, said that the company was able to maintain a balanced growth in profit and financial position through entry into new projects, completion of ongoing projects and the regular delivery of existing projects. He added that the company has made a series of administrative, operational and financial achievements, during 2015, of which all the company's employees have a right to be proud.

Al-Soqabi added that Al Mazaya was able to launch its CRM software in Kuwait and Dubai, and this unprecedented step means the establishment of a direct link for sales, rent and customer service operations between the parent company and its subsidiaries. The company has also activated the first phase of its ERP accounting system - at the group level. "At the operational level, the company was able to achieve a high sales rate in terms of projects and properties offered for sale. These included its projects in the UAE and Turkey. The company has also managed to increase its revenue from rental activities, which accounted for over 96 per cent of the company's total operating profit," he said.

"At the financial level, the company was able to achieve impressive results, with a significant increase in gross profit generated from operating activities. I am also pleased to inform you about the company's latest achievements in terms of credit facilities. Al-Mazaya was able to convert 100 per cent of its loans into Islamic financing products, as well as reducing the cost of financing and converting all its loans from short-term to medium and long-term arrangements - further demonstrating the company's solid financial standing and its credibility in the market," he added.

2015 Accomplishments

Al-Soqabi said that Al-Mazaya's major achievements in 2015 included:

1. The acquisition of a commercial tower in Riyadh, through a subsidiary company. The tower is situated in the Al-Olia area and was acquired for KD 10.5m with an annual investment yield of up to 9 per cent.

2. Through one of its subsidiaries (Al-Mazaya Real Estate Development), a plot of land, located in the Sharq area of Kuwait City, worth KD 8 million was purchased. The master plan and concept of the proj-

ect is currently being developed and an engineering firm will soon be appointed to commence the design and licensing works.

3. Al-Mazaya has awarded construction works for its 17-storey medical facility, in Sabah Al-Salem, Kuwait, to a leading contractor. Drilling and piling works on the 2,000 square metre project has commenced in preparation for the structure, which will take 20 months to complete.

4. As a result of its increased promotional campaigns for the Ritim Istanbul development (a joint venture project with Dumankarya Real Estate), over 70 per cent of the units were sold, 2015. The project is now over 85 per cent completed and the handover of project is expected next April. [2016 or 2017].

5. Al-Mazaya continued its extensive promotional campaigns to sell its Queue Point property, in Dubai. The project is over 85 per cent completed, with over 80 per cent of the units sold and it is expected for delivery by end of 2016.

6. Al-Mazaya completed its Logistics Services Project in Bahrain; the current occupancy rate is 45 per cent.

7. Al-Mazaya awarded construction works for the Al-Mazaya Residence project, in Al-Mawaleh, Al-Seeb Governorate, Oman, to a leading contractor.

8. Al-Mazaya achieved 45 per cent completion on the first phase of its Queue Line residential project, which consists of four new buildings in Dubai Land, Dubai. Construction works are progressing and the handover is expected by end of 2016.

9. Al-Mazaya boosted income generated from existing (fully occupied) projects by renewing lease contracts and increasing rates to reflect the current market prices and the quality services provided, by the Property Management Department. This step helped increase operating revenues generated from lease operations.

10. NBK Capital estimated the fair value of Al-Mazaya stock at KD 0.165, after taking all the precautionary measures and evaluation standards into consideration. This followed an in-depth study of the company's projects and balance sheet.

Al-Mazaya is currently studying many investment opportunities in the markets in which it operates, particularly in the GCC and Turkey. These markets are seen as the most appropriate avenues to explore, in helping realise the company's expansion strategy. Al-Mazaya has gained confidence in these markets following its proven track record of completed real estate projects. The company's growth in these markets will include many strategic partnerships and joint ventures with elite investors to achieve the highest returns that serve the interest of the company and shareholders alike.



most influential firms in the GCC and Arab region.

Agenda of the General Assembly Meeting

Al-Nafisi presented the agenda of the Ordinary General Assembly Meeting of 2015, which were approved, with attendees reviewing and approving the Auditor's Report and the Financial Statements of the fiscal year ended 31 December 2015. The Board's recommendation to distribute seven per cent of the paid-up capital as cash dividends - equivalent to seven fils per share.

The General Assembly further permitted Members of the Board to trade from their own accounts or others' accounts at any of the company's

future obligations, in accordance with Article No.225 of the Companies Law No.1 of 2016.

In addition, the General Assembly approved the reassignment of the external auditors for the fiscal year, ending on 31 December 2016, and to authorise the Board to determine their fees, provided that the auditors are already registered with the Capital Market Authority.

Election of new Board Members

The General Assembly elected a new board of directors for a three-year term. They are:

* Rashid Yaqoub Al Nafisi
* United Circle Company

CISCO TO ADDRESS CYBER SECURITY RISKS INHIBITING DIGITAL AMBITIONS

DUBAI: Cisco announced its participation in the Gulf Information Security Expo & Conference (GISEC 2016), which will take place under the collective banner of Future Technology Week, to be held at Dubai World Trade Centre from March 29-31, 2016. As a high level sponsor, Cisco will showcase its strategy of 'Threat-centric



Adam Philpott

Security', which includes threat detection, defense and secure remote access. The global technology leader will use the GISEC platform to highlight its next-generation security solutions that deliver advanced threat protection across the entire attack continuum before, during, and after an attack.

With businesses in pursuit of sustainable differentiation and new sources of growth through digital strategies, organizations are exposed to increased risks in the cyber domain. Although digitisation is upon us, 71% of executives feel that cyber security risks are inhibiting their digital ambitions. At GISEC, Adam Philpott, Director of Cyber security at Cisco EMEA, will address issues related to digital transformation and how businesses can accelerate their digital strategies, whilst reducing the associated risks in a unique, scalable way. His keynote, titled 'Accelerate the Digital Journey, Securely', will be delivered on March 31, 2016 and will also examine challenges in providing cyber security for the real world.

"Attackers today are so resilient and are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Since

we know that breaches are now the new normal, the good news is that all businesses have started to think: how do we do security differently? Technologies must provide market-leading levels of security effectiveness to detect and block threats and this begins with visibility. We also have to acknowledge that security by design has got to be part of everything that is being built, so that customers can ultimately trust it. With a threat-centric architecture, security can definitely be everywhere.

As our customers embrace the move to digital, security becomes truly a front and center concern, not only in their infrastructure but as they connect more and more devices that are not connected today," said Adam Philpott, Director of Cybersecurity at Cisco EMEA. The recently unveiled Cisco Annual Security Report 2016 (ASR 2016) estimates cybercrime to cost businesses \$2.1T globally by 2019, which is four times more than the estimated cost in 2015. The ability to recognize and respond to security threats in real time is becoming a business imperative.

Today, businesses are struggling to keep pace - not only with the attacks but also the amount of technology and solutions that have to be deployed with only 45 percent of organizations worldwide confident in their security posture as today's attackers launch more sophisticated, bold and resilient campaigns. At GISEC 2016, Cisco plans to demonstrate how integrated threat defense can truly help businesses address their biggest security risk, advanced and zero day threats, while extending Security Everywhere with new capabilities and services that deliver greater visibility, context and control from the cloud to the network to the endpoint, for organizations of all sizes.

Cisco will also showcase how its products and solutions can support its customers safely and securely through digital transformation and how they can weave in the security techniques and deployment as part of it. The value of Cisco architecture is its emphasis on embedding security spanning the extended network - including routers, switches and the data center - closing gaps across the attack continuum - and significantly reducing time to detection and remediation. Cisco security specialists and partners will be available at their stand #C-100 to meet with customers and partners and share their global experiences and success stories with them.



MICHIGAN: 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. —AP

TRAFFIC BACKED UP? BRIDGE OUT? MORE STATES DEPLOYING DRONES

THE PROS AND CONS OF USING 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 bridge decks 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.

Monitoring traffic

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.

AASHTO survey

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



HAWTHORNE: An independent drone delivery company shows the first fully autonomous, FAA-approved urban drone with a box with bottled water and a first aid kit in a residential setting without the help of a human to manually steer it in Hawthorne, Nev. — AP

EQUINIX TO LAUNCH NEW DATA CENTERS

REDWOOD CITY: Equinix (NASDAQ: EQIX), the global interconnection and data center company has announced its 2016 expansion plan. In addition to its acquisition of Telecity, the company will open four new International Business Exchange (IBX) data centers in Tokyo, Dallas, Sao Paulo and Sydney, to create more capacity for global companies to connect to their partners, customers and employees. Equinix will invest more than \$4.5B in acquisitions and organic growth in 2016 which includes the Telecity purchase price. This adds more than 3M square feet of colocation space in 37 data centers, expanding Equinix's global interconnection platform to nearly 150 data centers by the end of the year.

This expansion builds on the significant global growth Equinix experienced in 2015 in which the company organically grew its footprint with the addition of five new data centers in key economic centers including New York, London, Singapore, Melbourne and Toronto. Since then the company has made two significant acquisitions - Bit-Isle in Japan (for \$275M) in November 2015 and Telecity Group in EMEA (for \$3.8B) which was completed in January 2016.

As a result, Equinix has added seven new markets to increase the scale and reach of its data center platform. By providing additional capacity in the coming year, Equinix continues to play a central role in advancing the digital economy's interconnected era, in which businesses are demanding increasing levels of interconnection to accelerate business performance.

"Global businesses are increasingly realizing that interconnection is essential to deliver a rich, ubiquitous user experience, with the agility and actionable insight to enable new business models and enhanced productivity. This will be even more apparent as businesses locate their data closer to the edge to support the Internet of Things. Our focus on continually expanding our global interconnection platform means that wherever you grow, we'll be there," said Steve Smith, president and CEO, Equinix.

Interconnection platform

In the coming weeks and months Equinix will bring four new data centers online on four continents, adding over 4,000 new cabinets of capacity. These sites will add nearly 200,000 square feet of new data center space at full build. This brings Equinix's total global footprint to 14 million square feet, increasing the scale of Platform Equinix(tm) by more than 27 percent year-over-year.

Tokyo

Equinix's state-of-the-art Tokyo data center, TY5, will be in close proximity to TY3, near Tokyo's financial district. Together, these two IBX data centers will further strengthen Equinix's financial services ecosystem and offer a full range of



Steve Smith, president and CEO Equinix

premium colocation, interconnection and support services to the greater Tokyo area which is the most populous metropolitan area in the world.

Dallas

The Dallas-Fort Worth region has long been a major Internet and peering exchange point for the southern US, as well as a major communications hub between North and South America. Equinix's DA7 data center will support global enterprises that require high power density, as well as connectivity to leading NSPs and CSPs in this increasingly strategic market.

Sao Paulo

Equinix's new SP3 data center will address increasing demand for colocation in the State of São Paulo, as Equinix's SP2 facility in Tamboré is nearing capacity. SP3 will double the company's capacity in Brazil, as more businesses outsource IT and leverage the cloud.

Sydney

The new SY4 data center will enable Equinix's Australian customers to continue to take advantage of IT innovations including hybrid cloud architectures and help Australian customers safeguard their mission-critical data. Additionally, SY4 will be located near the central business district with access to Southern Cross Cable Head, providing extensive network interconnection in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

As global data centers continue to drive consumption of the cloud, Equinix data centers in these four markets will provide access to the Equinix Cloud Exchange(tm). Available in 21 markets globally, Cloud Exchange provides access to private, direct connections to many of the leading cloud service providers including: Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure and Office 365, Google Cloud Platform, SoftLayer, and Oracle Cloud (availability may vary by market).

SHADOWY HACKING INDUSTRY MAY BE HELPING FBI CRACK AN IPHONE

NEW YORK: Turns out there's a shadowy global industry devoted to breaking into smartphones and extracting their information. But you've probably never heard of it unless you're a worried parent, a betrayed spouse - or a federal law enforcement agency. Now one of those hacking businesses may well be helping the FBI try to break into the iPhone of one of the San Bernardino killers.

Late Monday, the FBI abruptly put its legal fight with Apple on hold, announcing that an "outside party" had come forward with a possible way to unlock the phone. In an update for reporters Thursday, FBI Director James Comey said the method "may work." If so, it could render Apple's forced cooperation unnecessary. The announcement has thrown a spotlight on a group of digital forensics companies, contractors and freelance consultants that make a living cracking security protections on phones and computers. Comey said the publicity around the Apple case encouraged such people to come forward with new ideas.

Most such companies keep a very low profile. Since the bulk of their business is with governments and law enforcement, there's no reason for them to advertise their services. In addition, it's in their interest to keep exactly what they do under wraps, said Christopher Soghoian, principal technology expert for the ACLU. "The companies won't share their secrets. It's their special sauce," Soghoian said. "And they certainly won't tell Apple how they're doing what they're doing." For the moment, no one outside the Justice Department appears to know who the FBI's white knight is. A great deal of speculation centers on Cellebrite - an Israel-based forensics firm that says it does business with thousands of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, militaries and governments in more than 90 countries - though it remains one of several possible candidates. A company spokesman declined to

comment. Cellebrite, founded in 1999, has contracts with the FBI dating back to at least 2013. The firm makes devices that allow law enforcement to extract and decode data such as contacts, pictures and text messages from more than 15,000 kinds of smartphones and other mobile devices.

It also makes commercial products that companies can use to help their customers transfer data from old phones to new ones. Apple even uses Cellebrite devices in some of its stores. In the cybersecurity arms race, Apple has managed to stay ahead of these forensics companies. Cellebrite's website says its commercial tools work with iPhones running older operating systems, including iOS 8, but not the latest version, iOS 9, which is on the San Bernardino phone.

Of course, it's possible that one of these companies has made a breakthrough. "Anything is crackable - it's just how much time do you have and how much money do you have to spend," said Jeremy Kirby, sales director at Susteen, a Cellebrite competitor in Irvine, California, that says it's not the FBI's outside party. Susteen started as a software developer that made tools for cellphone companies. Kirby said his firm began developing forensic products for law enforcement about 10 years ago, after the FBI asked it to produce a tool that could preserve cellphone data for criminal investigations.

Now the company says its products are used by the Defense Department and hundreds of law enforcement agencies nationwide. It also sells a less-powerful data-extraction tool for consumers who want to check up on their kids or spouses by seeing their text messages, emails, smartphone photos and even deleted files. Forensics companies maintain their own research staffs that probe target devices for weak spots, but for tough jobs, they sometimes turn to freelance hackers, some of whom will work for the highest bidder.—AP

LOOKING FOR CALORIE LABELS ON MENUS? NOT UNTIL 2017

WASHINGTON: Wondering how many calories are in that hamburger? Chain restaurants still don't have to tell you, despite a 6-year-old law requiring calorie labels on menus. Passed as part of the health care overhaul in 2010, the rules will eventually require restaurants and other establishments that sell prepared foods and have 20 or more locations to post the calorie content of food "clearly and conspicuously" on their menus, menu boards and displays.

This month, the Food and Drug Administration said it will delay the rules - again - until 2017. The years of delays have come as supermarkets, convenience stores and other retailers that are covered by the rules but never wanted to be part of the law have fiercely lobbied against them. The move will leave the final step to a new president, despite the Obama administration's staunch support of menu labeling and other food policy to help Americans eat more healthfully. And it will give opponents more

time to gather support for legislation that would roll back some of the requirements.

Restaurants and other retailers originally had until the end of 2015 to comply. Last summer, the FDA pushed that deadline back to the end of 2016. This month, they pushed the deadline back again.

Grocery stores and convenience stores have said the rules would be more burdensome for them than they would be for restaurants, which typically have more limited offerings. Pizza chains like Domino's have also opposed the rules, saying they don't make sense for companies that take most of their orders online.

Margo Wootan is a lobbyist at the Center for Science and the Public Interest who was part of the original coalition and has pushed for the supermarkets to be included. She says she is frustrated that consumers are still waiting for the calorie information. "Not only is it simple and straightforward but so many states and localities

have already done this," she said. Menu labeling is already required in a handful of places, including Vermont, New York City and Montgomery County, Maryland. But several other states put off their laws in anticipation of the federal rules.

California, for example, passed a law in 2008 but put that on hold after the federal standards became law in 2010. Today, menu labeling still isn't enforced there.

"We are very frustrated," says Harold Goldstein of the California Center for Public Health Advocacy. "We call on the federal government to issue its regulations immediately and allow both state and federal law to go into effect." The latest delay came after Congress included language in a year-end spending bill in December that allowed FDA to put off the December 2016 date until a year after it publishes the final guidance for retailers who have to put the rules in place. This month, the agency said it is still working on those guidelines.

"The FDA cannot speculate on the timing on when final guidance will be issued," said spokeswoman Lauren Kotwicki. Retailers have said compliance takes time. Robert Rosado of the Food Marketing Institute, an association that represents grocery stores, said the delays only seem fair as some of the rules are complicated. In grocery stores, for example, the labeling rules apply to prepared foods, but exclude those that are typically intended for more than one person. That could mean cut fruit or other foods would be labeled in a salad bar, but not in a larger container for sale.

"The anxiety is that they're going to get it wrong," Rosado said. "Maybe the font size isn't right for their label or they rounded the calorie count the wrong way."

The Food Marketing Institute is backing legislation that passed the House earlier this year that would make it easier for some businesses to comply with the rules. It would narrow labeling requirements for

supermarkets by allowing stores to use a menu or menu board in a prepared foods area instead of putting labels on individual items. It would also allow restaurants like pizza chains that receive most of their orders remotely to post calories online instead of at the retail location. The bill also seeks to ensure that establishments aren't punished for mislabeling due to inadvertent human error.

The House bill passed in February with some Democratic support, but the Senate has yet to move on the issue.

The Food Marketing Institute, pizza companies and other groups which have pushed back on the rules are working to gather more support. Meanwhile, as Washington delays, some companies have already put the labeling in place. Consumers can find the labels by individual items on menu boards at McDonald's, Panera, Starbucks and Au Bon Pain. Others are waiting for the deadline. — AP



BANGKOK: (Top) Two Department of Royal Rainmaking employees depositing a sodium chloride-based material from the hold of a Cessna 208 Caravan aircraft in Nakhon Sawan to stimulate the production of rain. (Above) A pair of Cessna 208 Caravan aircraft from the Thai Department of Royal Rainmaking depositing a sodium chloride-based material above clouds in Nakhon Sawan in an effort to produce rain.

DROUGHT-HIT THAILAND SENDS UP THE ROYAL RAINMAKERS

BANGKOK: When drought strikes, Thailand turns to its Royal Rainmakers-an airborne team which seeds the clouds over the kingdom. The country is the grip of its worst drought for decades, with 22 of its 76 provinces affected. So the Thai Department of Royal Rainmaking is sending up its planes to try to cajole the clouds into producing rain.

"The first step is making clouds by spraying salt-powder," according to Wiraphon Sudchada, a scientist who is part of the team. "Then we mix calcium chloride and calcium oxide and spray it into clouds carry-

ing humidity to make them bigger," he added. "We also spray ice beneath the clouds so that it will rain faster." The current drought has hit northern Thailand hardest, raising fears of taps running dry as levels in reservoirs dip to record lows. Last year's rains came late and infrequently and desperate farmers hope the heavens will open come the arrival of the monsoon season in June.

Rainmaking has a storied history in Thailand. People credit their revered current monarch King Bhumibol Adulyadej with driving rainmaking projects back in the late 1960s. — AFP

METEOROLOGISTS MAY SOON GIVE 50-DAY NOTICE FOR EXTREME HEAT

WASHINGTON: Meteorologists may soon be able to predict likelihood of extreme heat in the Eastern United States as much as 50 days in advance, according to a new study. A team of scientists looking for links between heat waves and the water temperatures in the north central Pacific found a correlation strong enough they said it could be used to make "skillful prediction" of extra warm and dry weather about seven weeks before the temperatures rise. And they will start trying to forecast Eastern heat waves starting in May, said climate scientist Karen McKinnon, lead author of a study published Monday in Nature Geoscience.

Such warnings can help farmers, utilities and big cities prepare for periods when they'll need more irrigation, more electrical power generation, and more cooling centers for the poor and elderly, experts said. "There are many possible health, economic and other impacts of these hot temperatures and advanced warning can only help," said Jonathan Overpeck of the University of Arizona, who wasn't part of the study but praised it.

The team is looking at Eastern US temperatures when at least 80 weather stations are at least 11.7 degrees warmer than normal for that day - basically, the top 15 percent of warmest summer peak temperatures going back to 1982. The key is a large area in the Pacific north of Hawaii (which is not where El Niño

forms). When the southern part of the region is unusually warm and the northeast of that region is unusually cold, the conditions are what McKinnon and colleagues call the Pacific Extreme Pattern. They looked at that pattern in summers from 1982 through 2015 and found that when they saw the most glaring PEP signal, the odds of a heat wave increase to one in four at 50 days out. By 40 days out, the odds have increased to one in two.

What's likely happening is a train of waves moving from the PEP region to the United States with high pressure systems parked over the Eastern United States. High pressure systems in summer usually bring clear, dry and warm weather.

The scientists concentrated on the East - basically east of the Mississippi River, plus Iowa and minus Florida - because heat waves tend to hit the region as a whole, and that's an area where high heat and little rain have consequences for farming and for a large population. The team also only looked at the peak 60 days in summer, which in a leap year like 2016 run from June 23 to Aug. 21.

"The physical mechanisms underpinning the results of their study make sense," said Victor Gensini at the College of DuPage, who is working on long-range tornado forecasting but wasn't part of this team. "It is exciting that there is some skill demonstrated as far out as 50 days as this also gives us hope for linkages to other extreme weather events." — AP

PRESERVED ICE AGE PUPPIES AWE SCIENTISTS ACROSS WORLD

CAVEMAN'S BEST FRIENDS?

MOSCOW: The hunters searching for mammoth tusks were drawn to the steep riverbank by a deposit of ancient bones. To their astonishment, they discovered an Ice Age puppy's snout peeking out from the permafrost.

Five years later, a pair of puppies perfectly preserved in Russia's far northeast region of Yakutia and dating back 12,460 years has mobilized scientists across the world.

"To find a carnivorous mammal intact with skin, fur and internal organs-this has never happened before in history," said Sergei Fyodorov, head of exhibitions at the Mammoth Museum of the North-Eastern Federal University in the regional capital of Yakutsk.

And the discovery could contribute to the lively scientific debate over the origin of domesticated dogs. When the hunters stumbled on the first frozen pup in 2011, they alerted Fyodorov who immediately flew out to the remote Arctic tundra, about 4,700 kilometres (2,900 miles) from Moscow and only 130 kilometres from the Laptev Sea, which borders the Arctic Ocean.

Last year he returned for a more thorough look and found the second puppy close to the same spot, farther down the slope. Both had died when they were about three months old. They most likely come from the same litter, said Fyodorov. Last week he oversaw the removal of the second puppy's remarkably well-preserved brain-"the first in the world," he said.

"Puppies are very rare, because they have thin bones and delicate skulls," he said. The duo have been named the Tumat Dog, after the nearest village to the site. Fyodorov said a preliminary look at the mammoth remains also found at the dig suggested some had been butchered and burned, hinting at the presence of humans. It remains to be seen, however, whether the puppies were domesticated or wild.

The answer can only be determined by reconstructing their genomes, which would take at least a year.

Grass-eating dogs?

"Thus far, the lineages of wolves that likely gave rise to dogs have not yet been discovered and it's possible that these puppies could be on that lineage, which would be very exciting," said evolutionary biologist Greger Larson of University of Oxford, one of the scientists behind a collaborative project aimed at finding out when and where dogs became the first domesticated animals.

What makes the dog particularly intriguing is that it managed to become "man's best friend" even before humans became settled farmers. It is still unclear whether dogs were domesticated in one place or in several places independently, and whether the process started when humans took in cubs or whether wolves themselves gradually drifted to human sites in search of food. Whatever their precise lineage, the Tumat pups will keep Fyodorov and other scientists busy for some time. The second puppy's preserved brain will be compared with that of modern dogs and wolves. Parasites found on its body will be analyzed, as will the contents of its stomach, which Fyodorov is particularly excited about. "When we opened it, we were very surprised. The second puppy's stomach is mostly full of twigs and grass," he said, wondering if perhaps the animals



MOSCOW: A handout shows scientists extracting the brain of a puppy, which died 12,460 years ago and was discovered in Russia's northern Yakutia, at the North-Eastern Federal University. — AFP photos

were not exclusively carnivorous or whether they started eating grass after they were trapped by a mudslide and began to starve.

"This material is really exceptional and unique," said Mietje Germonpre, a palaeontologist from the Royal Belgian Institute who partnered up with Fyodorov on the project and came to Yakutsk to oversee the autopsy of the second puppy earlier this month.

"The fact that soft tissue is preserved will give much more information compared to information that can be obtained from 'normal' fossils," she said, meaning bones and teeth.

Permafrost secrets

Fyodorov lamented the long time it takes to get ancient biological material to suitable labs due to financial constraints, the rugged terrain and red tape which sometimes means that samples reach laboratories only six months later.

"Everyone understands that the tissue of mammoth fauna loses its structure with every

passing second, even in the freezer," he said. Yakutia's melting permafrost is likely to yield up even more treasures in the coming years, he added, saying the number of reported prehistoric finds has grown "severalfold" in the last decade.

Warm and wet weather and flash floods have been a big contributor to the thaw, he said. "Right now it's 0 degrees (Celsius) here. That should not be the case in March." As better transport and technology becomes affordable, he said, locals are embarking on expeditions to more and more remote corners of Siberia to look for the precious and lucrative mammoth tusks, which can sell for tens of thousands of dollars and are increasingly prized by Chinese carvers given trade bans on elephant ivory.

In Russia, indigenous tribes are allowed to hunt for ancient remains on their ancestral lands. "Our land is locked in by permafrost, but little by little it is revealing its secrets," Fyodorov said. — AFP



MOSCOW: A handout shows a scientist performing an autopsy of the remains of a puppy.

ZIKA LANDED IN BRAZIL 2 YEARS BEFORE IT WAS DETECTED

NEW YORK: The worrisome Zika virus apparently has been in Brazil at least a year longer than experts previously thought, according to new research. Some experts have speculated the virus first came to the Americas sometime in 2014. But the new study - led by Brazilian researchers - concludes Zika landed in Brazil a year earlier.

The researchers coupled cutting-edge genetic sequencing of the virus with an analysis of human travel patterns. They succeeded in piecing together "a very compelling story about both the route and the date of introduction of this virus into the Americas," said Dr. Ian Lipkin, a prominent infectious disease specialist at New York's Columbia University.

The sequence information may also help in future understanding of how the virus causes disease, Lipkin said. But it remains a mystery why the virus is increasingly linked to serious birth defects and other health problems, he added. The study was published online Thursday by the journal Science. Zika virus was first identified in Uganda in 1947. It is spread mainly by mosquitoes that bite infected people and then spread it to others. Most infected peo-

ple suffer no symptoms. Others get only a mild, week-long illness.

For decades it was considered exotic and non-threatening. The virus began to pop up in other parts of the world in the last decade, but it was not detected in the Americas until last year, when it was reported in Brazil. The new research is based on blood and brain tissue samples taken last year from seven Brazilians. One was a blood donor from the southeast part of the country. The other six were from northern Brazil, where Zika virus disease outbreaks - and Zika-associated birth defects - have been most pronounced.

The researchers extracted genetic and found the virus specimens were similar to each other, and most closely related to Zika virus found in French Polynesia in 2013. Some scientists have speculated the virus first landed in Brazil in 2014. But viruses mutate over time and from place to place. The small amount of genetic change suggests it arrived in 2013, and at a single location, the researchers concluded. A good bet is the virus landed in June 2013 in the city of Recife, around the time of the 2013 Confederations Cup soccer tournament in

Brazil, said one of the study's lead authors, Dr. Pedro Fernando da Costa Vasconcelos of Brazil's Health Ministry.

The tournament included a team from Tahiti, part of French Polynesia. Tahiti played in Recife in northeast Brazil and in two cities in southern Brazil. It could have been carried by one or more infected travelers from French Polynesia. Or perhaps the virus was introduced to Brazil and French Polynesia at about the same time - carried by people from some third location, said the University of Oxford's Oliver Pybus, another study co-author, in an email.

Also on Thursday, U.S. health officials said 273 lab-confirmed Zika infections have been reported in the 50 states in the last year - a count that includes 19 pregnant women. Almost all of them

were travelers, but six caught it from sex with recent travelers. Officials blame mosquito transmission for nearly all of the 341 cases reported in Puerto Rico and two other US territories. The kind of mosquito that spreads Zika is found on the southern United States, so experts think it's likely the pests will spread the virus there, too. — AP

FEDERAL OFFICIALS, ADVOCATES PUSH PILL-TRACKING DATABASES

WASHINGTON: The nation's top health officials are stepping up calls to require doctors to log in to pill-tracking databases before prescribing painkillers and other high-risk drugs.

The move is part of a multi-pronged strategy by the Obama administration to tame an epidemic of abuse and death tied to opioid painkillers like Vicodin and OxyContin. But physician groups see a requirement to check databases before prescribing popular drugs for pain, anxiety and other ailments as being overly burdensome. Helping push the administration's effort forward is an unusual, multi-million lobbying campaign funded by a former corporate executive who has turned his attention to fighting addiction.

"Their role is to say what needs to be done, my role is to get it done," says Gary Mendell, CEO of the non-profit Shatterproof, which is lobbying in state capitals to tighten prescribing standards for addictive drugs.

Mendell founded the group in 2011, after his son committed suicide following years of addiction to painkillers. Previously Mendell was CEO of HEI Hotels and Resorts, which operates upscale hotels. To date, Mendell has invested \$4.1 million of his own money in the group to hire lobbyists, public relations experts and 12 full-time staffers.

A new report from Shatterproof lays out key recommendations to improve prescription monitoring systems, which are currently used in 49 states. The systems collect data on prescriptions for high-risk drugs that can be viewed by doctors and government officials to spot suspicious patterns. The aim is to stop "doctor shopping," where patients rack up multiple prescriptions from different doctors, either to satisfy their own drug addiction or to sell on the black market. But in most states, doctors are not required to check the databases before writing prescriptions.

Last week, the White House sent letters to all 50 US governors recommending that they require doctors to check the databases and require pharmacists to upload drug dispensing data on a daily basis. The databases are "a proven tool for reducing prescription drug misuse and diversion," said Michael Botticelli, National Drug Control Policy Director, in a statement.

But government health officials say virtually all state systems need improvements, including more up-to-date information. "There isn't yet a single state in the country that has an optimal prescription drug monitoring program that works in real time, actively managing every prescription," said Dr. Tom Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and

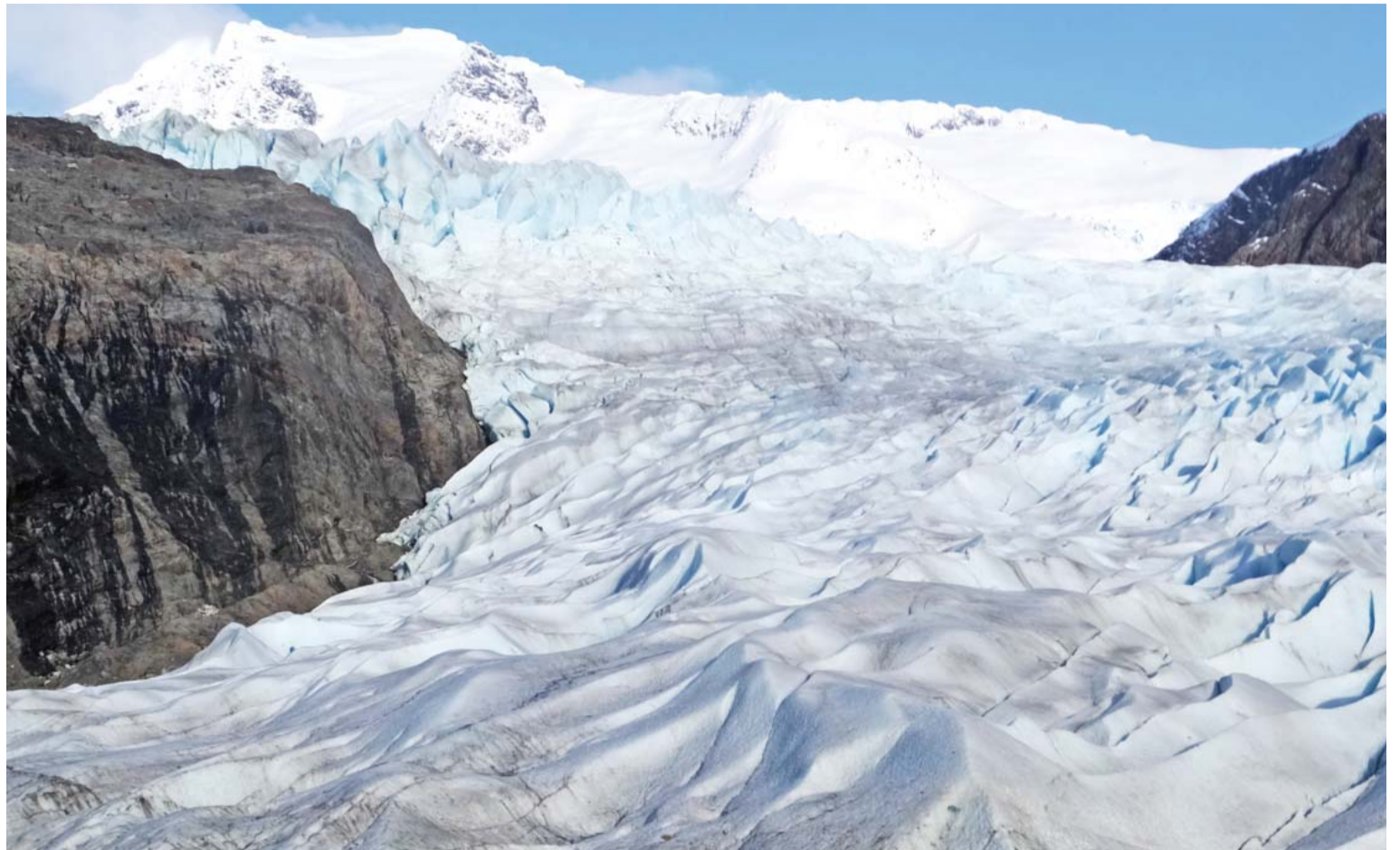
Prevention, in a press conference last week. Physicians warn about the unintended consequences of mandating use of programs that can be slow and difficult to use. Patients may face longer waits and less time with their physicians, says Dr. Steven Sacks, president of the American Medical Association. "There really is a patient safety and quality-of-care cost when you mandate the use of tools that are not easy to use," Sacks said. The report from Shatterproof highlights the gaps in current prescribing systems. When doctors are not required to log in, they generally only do so 14 percent of the time, according to data from Brandeis University.

The report points to positive results in seven states that have mandated database usage: Kentucky, New York, Tennessee, Connecticut, Ohio, Wisconsin and Massachusetts. In Kentucky, deaths linked to prescription opioids fell 25 percent after the state required log-ins in 2012, along with other steps designed to curb inappropriate prescribing. The same information can be used to prevent deadly drug interactions between opioids and other common medications, including anti-anxiety drugs like Valium or Xanax. Opioids are highly addictive drugs that include both prescription painkillers like codeine and morphine, as well as illegal narcotics, like heroin. Deaths linked to opioid misuse and abuse have increased fourfold since 1999 to more than 29,000 in 2014, the highest figure on record, according to the CDC. Earlier this month the CDC released the first-ever national guidelines for prescribing opioids, urging doctors to try non-opioid painkillers, physical therapy and other methods for treating chronic pain. But pain specialists fear requiring pill-tracking databases will discourage doctors from prescribing the drugs even when appropriate, leaving patients in pain. Dr. Gregory Terman says it takes him three minutes to log in to the system used in his home state of Washington.

"If it was easier to use, more people would use it," said Terman, who is president of the American Pain Society, a group which accepts money from pain drugmakers. Like many physicians, Terman says he supports the technology but doesn't think it should be required.

Last week, two states targeted by Shatterproof signed into law database-checking requirements: Massachusetts and Wisconsin. Mendell says his staffers are lobbying now in California and Maryland.

"I don't think we can afford to wait decades for this to slowly get implemented into the system," he says. "I think we need to take action now." — AP



Snow-covered mountains are seen behind the Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau, Alaska. The massive Alaska ice field that feeds Juneau's Mendenhall Glacier, a tourist attraction viewed by hundreds of thousands each year, could be gone by 2200 if climate warming trends continue, according to a new University of Alaska Fairbanks study. — AP

CHINESE HERBALIST'S FAMILY OF 3 KILLED, MAN ARRESTED

LOS ANGELES: A popular practitioner of Chinese herbal medicine was found shot to death and wrapped in plastic along with his wife and 5-year-old daughter in their palatial two-story home in upscale Santa Barbara County. More than 170 miles to the south, a 27-year-old suspect was arrested in the San Diego area.

Investigators were exploring the links between the two men on Saturday, which would have been the little girl's sixth birthday, authorities said. The two men were recently involved in a business deal, and financial gain could have



27-year-old Pierre Haobsh. Haobsh, a business associate of a popular practitioner of Chinese herbal medicine was arrested Friday in connection with what California authorities say was the "horrific" slaying of the herbalist, his wife and the couple's 5-year-old daughter. — AP

been a motive in the slayings, authorities said.

Pierre Haobsh, 27, of Oceanside was taken into custody at gunpoint at a gas station in San Diego County, Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bob Brown said Friday. A loaded handgun and property belonging to one of the victims was found inside the car, the sheriff said.



SANTA BARBARA: A sheriff's deputy lifts crime scene tape to allow a Coroner's Bureau van to proceed up Greenhill Way as the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office opened a homicide investigation after deputies discovered the remains of three people in a home on the street in unincorporated county territory between Santa Barbara and Goleta, California. — AP

Deputies who went to check on the welfare of 57-year-old Dr. Weidong "Henry" Han on Wednesday found the bodies of the physician, his 29-year-old wife, Huijie "Jenni" Yu, and the couple's 5-year-old daughter, Emily Han, in the family's multimillion-dollar home on the outskirts of Santa Barbara. They had last been seen the night before, and two associates had been alarmed when Han failed to show up for a meeting. Haobsh is a US citizen, authorities said, but few other details about him were released.

Nadine Jolie Courtney, a beauty blogger and author, told The Associated Press in an email message Saturday that Haobsh was her brother. She condemned the killings and extended her prayers to the Han family. "We cannot wrap our minds around this tragedy and are in a state of shock," she wrote on behalf of herself and her husband. The killings shook Santa Barbara, where Han, who owned and operated the Santa

Barbara Herb Clinic, was a popular figure. Han had owned and operated the Santa Barbara Herb Clinic since 1991, according to the clinic's website. Public records show he is a licensed acupuncturist.

A biography on his website says he earned degrees in Oriental and Western medicine from a Beijing university in 1982, graduating at the top of his class. He moved to the US a few years later to study psychology. Han came from a family of Chinese doctors and provided traditional treatments including acupuncture, cupressure and herbal formulas from an on-site Chinese pharmacy.

He is co-author of the book "Ancient Herbs, Modern Medicine," and he was working on a volume about how to integrate Chinese and Western medicine. At the clinic, he created individualized herbal formulas for each patient that were filled at an on-site pharmacy. — AP

CHINA NEEDS TOUGHER ENFORCEMENT OF VACCINE REGULATION: WHO

SHANGHAI: China must strengthen regulation of its market for vaccines, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday, after a bust of an illegal black market drugs ring this month underscored the country's regulatory weaknesses. Police have arrested more than 130 suspects over a scandal in which 310 million yuan (\$48 million) of illegal vaccines was sold onto the market. The value of the illegal trades could be as much as \$90 million.

"This incident has highlighted the need for much stricter enforcement of vaccine management regulations across the board," WHO China representative Bernhard Schwartz%onder said in an emailed statement. The vaccines, some targeting meningitis and rabies, are suspected of having been sold in dozens of places around China since 2011. Chinese vaccine production itself was safe, as was distribution of vaccines through the government's Expanded Program on

Immunization, the WHO said, but regulatory loopholes remained to be tackled in the private sector. "The problem that last week's events has brought to light, is that distribution of vaccines for the private market does not follow the same high standards," the WHO said.

Some crucial vaccines for children are only available on the private market, such as those aimed at pneumonia and meningitis, pneumococcal and rotavirus.

The scandal has stirred angry debate, casting a shadow over government ambitions to bolster the domestic drug industry and underlining the challenge it faces to regulate a widespread and fragmented medicine supply chain. It has also drawn the ire of senior leaders, prompting regulators to point to a lack of resources. The head of the food and drug watchdog's drug supervision department admitted last week there were "certain loopholes in our regulatory work." — Reuters

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368



ULTIMATE SOCCER ACADEMY GETS BRONZE MEDAL IN BARCELONA SPONSORED BY NISSAN AL-BABTAIN

Ultimate soccer academy sponsored by Nissan Al-Babtain, the exclusive agent for Nissan cars in the state of Kuwait, came back from Barcelona with the bronze medal after winning the third place in the

international championship.

Nissan Al-Babtain is firmly committed to encourage young generation to improve their creativity and develop their skills. This was the reason behind sponsoring and supporting the

Ultimate Soccer Academy, as they believe that supporting such activities gives young generation the opportunity to express themselves individually and in groups, which will prepare them to start their career with great confi-

dence and the ability to communicate with others. The Ultimate Soccer Academy provides well-studied program for its trainees, consisting from three training classes per week. Nissan Al-Babtain continues in following its

roadmap that was set since it was founded, which focuses on seeking the opportunities for supporting and sponsoring as part of the social responsibility that was always one of its slogans.



OBSERVANCE OF 45TH INDEPENDENCE AND NATIONAL DAY OF BANGLADESH

The 45th Independence and National day of Bangladesh was observed in Bangladesh Military Contingent Headquarters at Subhan Cantonment with due festivity. The day was observed with series of events. At the very outset, an enchanted

photo exhibition on war of Liberation and BMC to Kuwait activities was organized. It was followed by a welcome speech by Commander BMC Brigadier General S M Shamim-Uz-Zaman, BSP, ndc, psc, where the contribution of the Father of the Nation

Bangbondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in liberating Bangladesh was recalled with due respect. The sacrifice of Bangladeshi nationals from all walks of life were also highlighted before the august gathering. Later, a cake cutting ceremony was held in presence of the dis-

tinguished guests which was followed by a lunch. Major General Ibrahim S Al-Omaire, psc, Kuwait Armed Forces attended the program as chief guest. Besides, a good number of senior officers from Kuwait Armed Forces, few Defence Attaches, officers from

Bangladesh Embassy, few civil dignitaries and BMC members were also present. All invited guests expressed their deep felicitation for people of Bangladesh and congratulated the hosts on the occasion of independence and national day.



Kuwait Society for the Handicapped recently organized a national celebration with senior citizens and people with special needs at the society. The event took place under the auspices of Sheikha Omniya Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah and in collaboration with the Indian Women Association (IWA).



Group photo for CBE faculty and students with Marzouq

AUK COLLABORATES WITH KFH TO ENHANCE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The Dean of the College of Business and Economics at the American University of Kuwait (AUK), Professor Jin Wang and Dr Ali Aljamil, Chair of the Department of Economics, met with Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq, Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH), in January to explore possible venues for collaboration. The meeting was arranged following a lecture by Chairman Al-Marzouq at AUK last October entitled "Islamic Banks vs. Conventional Banks Differences and Similarities."

During his lecture, Marzouq highlighted principles of the Islamic financial system, some key differences between Islamic banks and conventional financial and banking systems in terms of philosophy, mission and risk treatment. He also discussed recent trends in terms of growth and development of Islamic banking and financing. President Nizar Hamzeh received the Chairman and attended the lecture along with crowds of faculty, students and members of the general public.

KFH, as a global leader in Islamic banking and finance, plays an important role not only in the Kuwaiti economy, but the regions as well. This event bridges the divide and provides AUK faculty and students with opportunities to remain abreast in this vital sector in Kuwait and the Gulf and offers venues for



Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq, Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH). (Right) AUK President, Professor Nizar Hamzeh with Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq.

collaboration in teaching, research, and experiential learning programs. This comes in line with AUK's commitment to obtaining prestigious programmatic accreditations, such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation.



"The lecture by the KFH Chairman in October and our subsequent meeting with him in January provide opportunities for future conversations and engagement with the leaders in the Islamic banking sector, which will enrich and strengthen our portfolios for earning AACSB accreditation as

AACSB accreditation demands evidence of continuous quality improvement in three vital areas: engagement, innovation, and impact," said Dean Wang.

"We are on the lookout for opportunities to establish ties and relationship with the very business community we serve. This out-

ward orientation pays dividends on all levels. It enables us to develop academic programs responsive to the needs of the job market, advances our research and scholarship, and enriches learning experiences of our students," said Dr Aljamil.

Following the inaugural presentation of Marzouq, KFH offered to hold a "Sukuk Seminar" for students and AUK stakeholders in April, as part of their corporate social responsibility. The seminar, which is free of charge and open to all AUK students, is on practical applications of Sukuk in the Financial Markets by Mohammad Al-Duwailah, Chief Dealer of Capital Markets at Kuwait Finance House. The "Sukuk Seminar" will take place on 13 April 2016 in AUK's Multipurpose Room. It will be hosted by the Center for Continuing Education in collaboration with the College of Business & Economics and will be held during AUK Career Week.

Events such as these foster interaction between CBE and students on one hand and the business world and its leaders on the other. It is part of CBE's mission to establish closer ties and meaningful relationships with industry leaders in order to remain informed of their needs promote scholarship and engage in research that can pay dividends to our community and its stakeholders.



Ambassador of Democratic People's Republic of Korea So Chang Sik presenting a book about respected Kim Jong Un to Kuwait Times Marketing Director Taleb Kanjo during his recent visit to Kuwait Times. The ambassador thanks the staff of Kuwait Times Printing Press for their cooperation. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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-Fulajj.

Marshall 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 Kuwait 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, Marshall 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

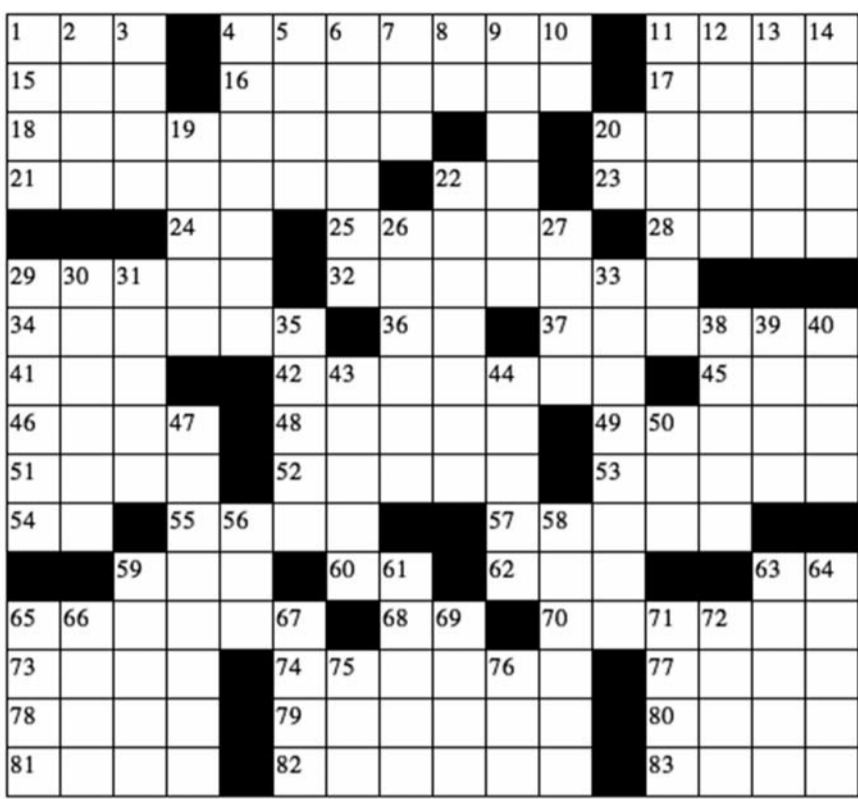
the first time, for what will probably be quite an emotional closure to his journey.

Marshall 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.



Al-Furat Kindergarten invited Major General Ibrahim Al-Tarrah, the Interior Ministry's Acting Undersecretary Assistant for General Security Affairs, to an event held to show gratitude to the ministry's efforts to maintain public safety and security. Retired Lieutenant General Abdulfattah Al-Ali attended the event.

CROSSWORD 1210



ACROSS

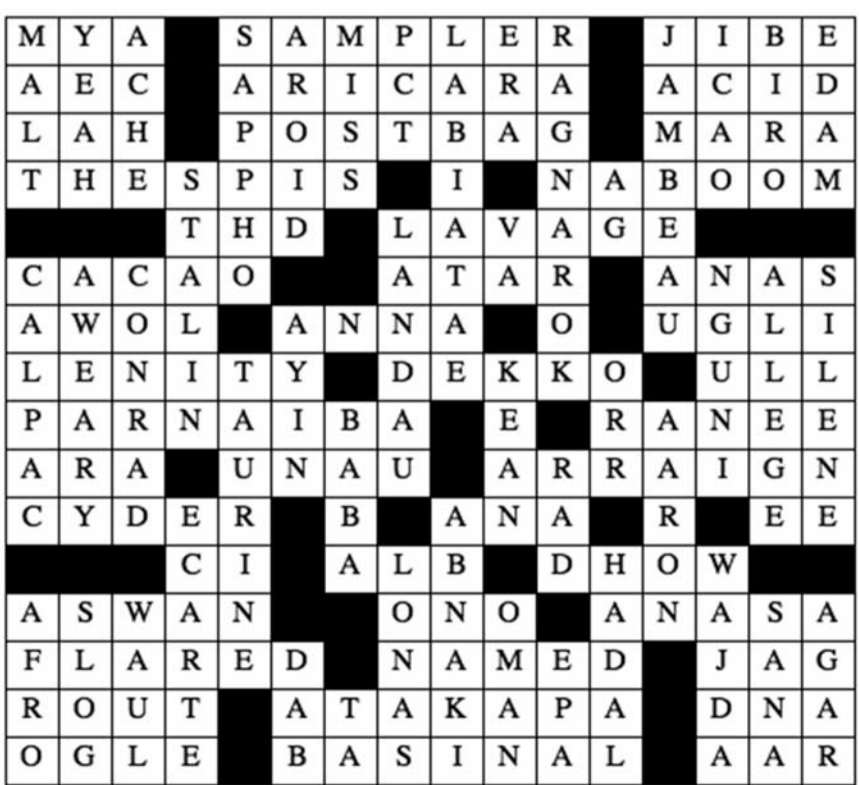
- 1. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
4. A member of an Indian people formerly living along the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
11. Found on a farm.
15. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
16. Someone who perpetrates wrongdoing.
17. (informal) Being satisfactory or in satisfactory condition.
18. Seed of amaranth plants used as a native cereal in Central and South America.
21. Large genus of tropical American vines having showy often spotted umbellate flowers.
23. An early form of modern jazz (originating around 1940).
24. A light strong gray lustrous corrosion-resistant metallic element used in strong light-weight alloys (as for airplane parts).
25. A river in southeastern France.
28. A narrow way or road.
29. A fully differentiated structural and functional unit in an animal that is specialized for some particular function.
32. Merchandise issued for sale or public showing (especially a record or film).
34. Transparent anterior portion of the outer covering of the eye.
36. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
37. Containing sugar.
41. Any of various systems of units for measuring electricity and magnetism.
42. A person who lowers the quality or character or value (as by adding cheap metal to coins).
45. A state of southwestern India.
46. ('lief' is archaic) Very willing.
48. Any of numerous low-growing cushion-forming plants of the genus Draba having rosette-forming leaves and terminal racemes of small flowers with scapose or leafy stems.
49. A glancing rebound.
51. The capital and largest city of Norway.
52. Goods (or wreckage) on the sea bed that is attached to a buoy so that it can be recovered.
53. Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
54. The fifth day of the week.
55. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
57. Affect with wonder.
60. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
62. An associate degree in applied science.
65. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
68. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
70. Someone who is tested (as by an intelligence test or an academic examination).
73. A city in northern India.
74. A member of the Circassian people living east of the Black Sea.
77. A sock with a separation for the big toe.
78. Thick end of the handle.
79. Valuable timber tree of New Zealand

- yielding hard reddish wood used for furniture and bridges and wharves.
80. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
81. Not only so, but.
82. Sewing consisting of a link or loop or knot made by drawing a threaded needle through a fabric.
83. A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

- 1. Taken or to be taken at random.
2. Fabric dyed with splotches of green and brown and black and tan.
3. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
4. Mite or tick.
5. A succession of notes forming a distinctive sequence.
6. Double star 15.7 light years from Earth.
7. The ratio of the distance traveled (in kilometers) to the time spent traveling (in hours).
8. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
9. Capital of the state of South Dakota.
10. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
11. The front limb of a quadruped.
12. Jordan's port.
13. A device that, on receiving radar signals, transmits coded signals in response to help navigators determine their position.
14. A person with myopia.
19. A switch made from the stems of the rattan palms.
20. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
22. A loose cloak with a hood.
26. A cylindrical drawing bag used by sailors to hold their clothing and other gear.
27. Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.
30. Of or relating to or supporting Romanism.
31. A thin porridge of usually oatmeal or cornmeal.
33. A stopping.
35. Mix up or confuse.
38. Be in accord.
39. An area within a building enclosed by walls and floor and ceiling.
40. God of the Underworld.
43. Any plant of the genus Erica.
44. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
47. A small bathtub for warming or washing or disinfecting the feet.
50. An edge tool used to cut and shape wood.
56. Seed of a pea plant.
58. Brittle flat bread eaten at Passover.
59. The large trunk artery that carries blood from the left ventricle of the heart to branch arteries.
61. The female or generative principle.
63. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
64. Tropical American trees with palmately compound leaves and showy bell-shaped flowers.
66. A fit of shivering.
67. Informal or slang terms for mentally irregular.
69. An informal conversation.
71. A thrusting blow with a knife.
72. A village in eastern Ireland (northwest of Dublin).
75. Botfly larva.
76. Electrical conduction through a gas in an applied electric field.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

As frustrations mount, you may find a break most welcomed and magically, everything has an answer. Funny thing how a little breath of fresh air revives the mind enough to see things differently and find better solutions. You encourage focus and continued productivity but you also know that a little break can do wonders to the outcome of a difficult project.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today you may feel that you are stuck in a rut and everyone is conspiring to keep you there. Look! It just could be that you have become a little lax and you are not giving your plans the extra push necessary for success. Heave ho! You will find it easier in the future to follow through with your plans.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This may be a day that would be best to just goof off-or maybe not. Rather than succumb to gloom, why not display all your best qualities if you are feeling disgruntled, be obliging. If you would like to cut a few corners, be meticulous instead.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Good communication in business is the key to success-think before you speak. While you are not comfortable discussing subjects like debts and collections, it's probably unavoidable now, especially if you are married, divorced or sharing resources in a partnership.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A merger could be ahead that includes the company for which you work. Take time out and plan your next steps carefully. Be sure to have your facts in order, even to the point of double-checking. Financial gains might be part of the picture.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

A group meeting at work this morning may require everyone's opinion or input. An active exchange of ideas will result in the most positive outcome. Don't be dismayed if there is no recognition immediately; it takes time to weed through the suggestions.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are excited about some scientific or humanitarian discovery and enjoy comparing notes with colleagues, teammates or co-workers. Your mind could be quite clear and natural just now. Ideas are flowing and come with ease.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You are ready to begin your day, full speed ahead. In fact, there are new opportunities to accomplish tasks that you may never have thought you would attempt. You may feel that you need to throw yourself into a situation where your talents are tested.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This is a great year for your professional advancement-a blowout time for an amazing career success-possibly overwhelming you a little. Career goodies are just waiting for the asking and in some cases will be presented to you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This will be a great day at the workplace! Your vitality and enthusiasm combine to get a lot accomplished, whether alone or as the leader of a group. You could be given an important new responsibility, perhaps leading to a promotion.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Taking care of business is a major theme where your emotional orientation is concerned. Everything points to your taking the first step toward gathering some of your inventive friends to a rap session.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Today is a great time to be with others and to work together. This is a time when you can expect a little boost, some sort of extra support or recognition from those around you.

WORD SEARCH

Christmas

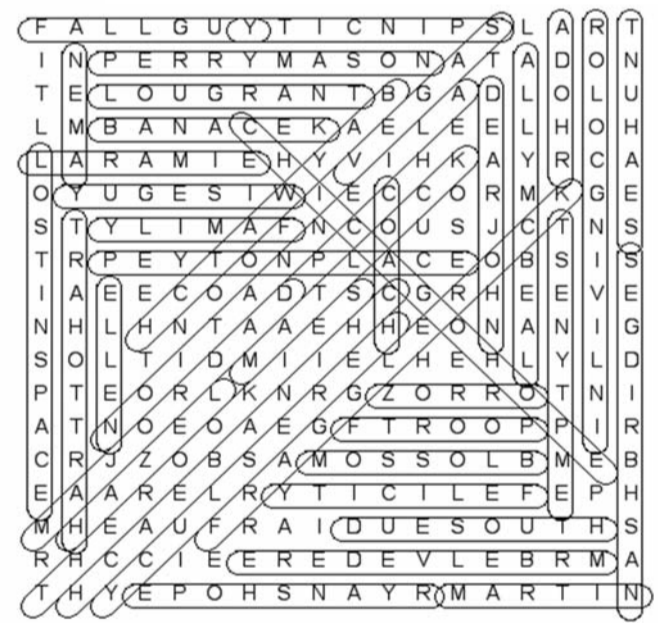
Find and circle all of the Christmas words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- ANGEL BELLS BETHLEHEM CANDLES CANDY CANE CAROLS DECORATIONS EGGNOG FAMILY FRANKINCENSE FRIENDS
FRUITCAKE GABRIEL GIFTS GOLD GREETING CARDS HOLLY ICICLES JESUS JOSEPH LIGHTS
MANGER MARY MISTLETOE MYRRH ORNAMENTS POINSETTIA SANTA SHEPHERDS SKATES SLEIGH
SNOWFLAKES SNOWMAN STABLE STAR STOCKING THREE WISE MEN TOBoggAN TOYS TREE WREATH

Yesterday Solution

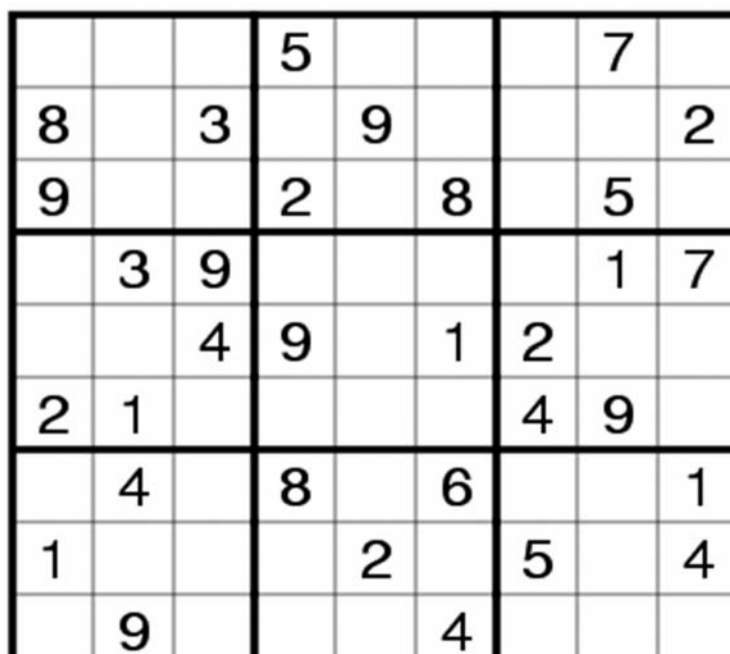
Old TV Shows 4



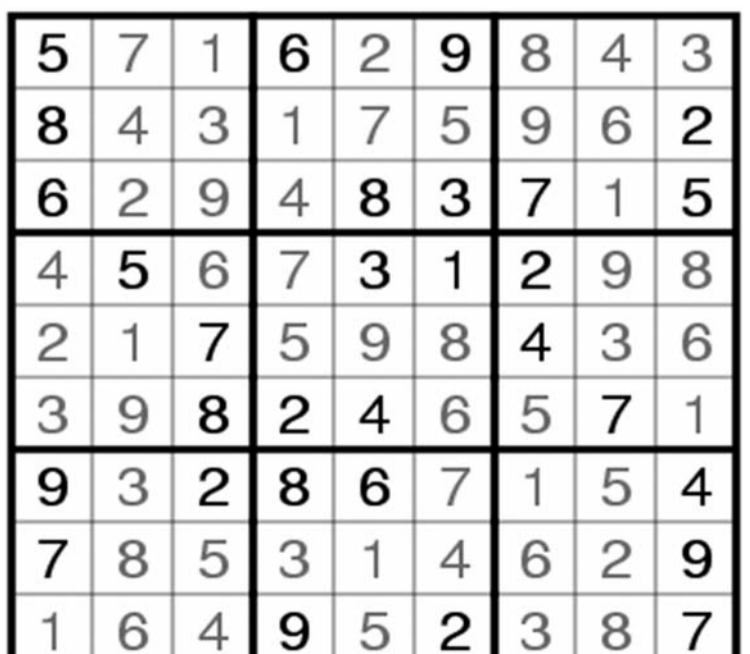
- ALIEN NATION ALLY MCBEAL AMEN BANACEK BAYWATCH BLOSSOM CHICAGO HOPE CHINA BEACH COACH DEAR JOHN
DUE SOUTH ELLEN EMPTY NEST F TROOP FALL GUY FAMILY FELICITY FRAGGLE ROCK HART TO HART HAZEL
HERE'S LUCY IN LIVING COLOR LARAMIE LOST IN SPACE LOU GRANT MAJOR DAD MARTIN MATLOCK MR BELVEDERE NASH BRIDGES
PERRY MASON PEYTON PLACE RHODA RYAN'S HOPE SEA HUNT SPIN CITY THE ROOKIES VEGAS WISEGUY ZORRO

The hidden TV show is: LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Table listing hospitals such as Sabah Hospital, Amiri Hospital, Maternity Hospital, etc., with their respective contact numbers.

Clinics

Table listing clinics such as Kaizen center, Rawda, Adaliya, etc., with their respective contact numbers.



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

Table listing pharmacies across different Governorates (Ahmadi, Jahra, Capital, Farwaniya, Hawally) with details on pharmacy name, address, and phone number.

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Large table listing international call numbers for various countries, including Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, etc.

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



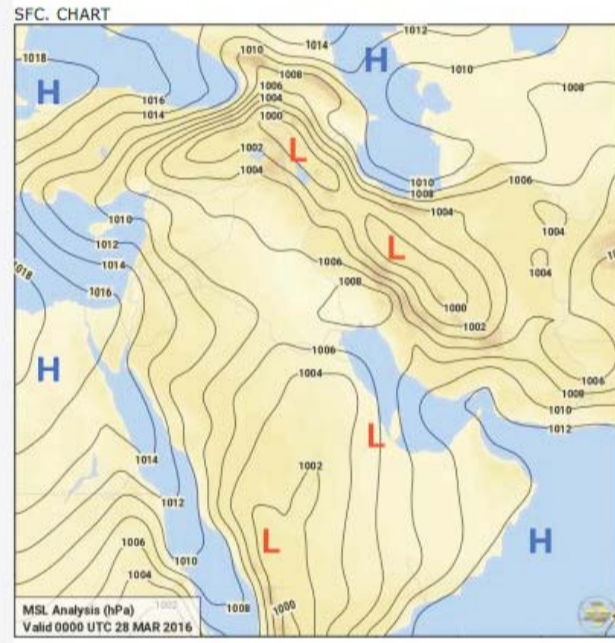
Contact information for the meteorological department: Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630, Fax: (+965) 24348714, www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 28/03/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature +30 °C

By Day: Partly cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly wind, with speed of 25 - 45 km/h with a chance for scattered rain. By Night: Partly cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 45 km/h with a chance for light rain.



Four-Day Forecast

Table providing a four-day forecast with weather icons, temperature ranges, and wind directions for Tuesday through Friday.

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Table showing the forecast for various stations in Kuwait, including MIN and MAX temperatures and wind directions.

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Table showing recorded weather data for yesterday, such as Max Temp (30°C), Min Temp (19°C), and Wind Speed (68 SE).

Sunrise

Sunrise at 05:42, Sunset at 18:04

Prayer Times

Table listing prayer times for Fajr, Sunrise, Zuhr, Asr, Sunset, and Isha.



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists

- List of ophthalmologists including Dr. Abidallah Al-Mansoor, Dr. Samy Al-Rabea, etc.

General Practitioners

- List of general practitioners including Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi, Dr. Yousef Al-Omar, etc.

Plastic Surgeons

- List of plastic surgeons including Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf, Dr. Abdul-Redha Lari, etc.

Family Doctor

- List of family doctors including Dr. Divya Damodar, Dr. Esam Al-Ansari, etc.

Paediatricians

- List of paediatricians including Dr. Khaled Hamadi, Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed, etc.

Dermatology

- List of dermatologists including Dr. Mohammed Salam, Dr. Anil Thomas, etc.

Dentists

- List of dentists including Dr. Anil Thomas, Dr. Shamah Al-Matar, etc.

Endocrinologist

- List of endocrinologists including Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman, Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari, etc.

Physiotherapists & VD

- List of physiotherapists and VD including Dr. Deyaa Shehab, Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees, etc.

Rheumatologists

- List of rheumatologists including Dr. Adel Al-Awadi, Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah, etc.

Internist, Chest & Heart

- List of internists, chest, and heart specialists including DR. Mohammed Akkad, Dr. Mohammad Zubaid, etc.

Psychologists / Psychotherapists, Soor Center Tel: 2290-1677

Psychologists / Psychotherapists, Soor Center Tel: 2290-1677

Psychologists / Psychotherapists, Kaizen center 25716707

Psychologists / Psychotherapists, William Schuilenberg, RPC 2290-1677

Bob Geldof considered suicide

Bob Geldof considered suicide after the death of his daughter Peaches. The 64-year-old singer was left devastated following the untimely passing of the TV presenter - who died from a drugs overdose in 2014 aged 25 - and while in mourning he started to make lists of the "upsides" and "downsides" of being alive, but a phone conversation with a pal ultimately saved him. He said: "I'd make lists and keep working at the writing of those lists until the upside overwhelmed the downside. In my case I wrote down, 'What's the upside of being alive?' and 'What's the downside of it?' Was it ever really serious? Overall, no. In that moment, though, perhaps it was. "I had the sanity, luckily, to phone a friend and tell him, 'Look I think I'm just starting to get rationally irrational'. He almost slapped my face (with his tone) and said, 'Don't do anything stupid, stay exactly where you are' and came around very quickly. People talk you through these things." Bob also admitted proposing to and eventually marrying his long-term lover Jeanne Marine helped him through his grief after losing

Peaches. He said: "Peaches had just died and I decided that John Lennon, in all his glorious naivety, was right; love is all you need. "There's one of my own songs that goes, 'To live and love is all there is, life without love is meaningless.' "[Marriage] didn't make us love each other anymore but I asked her in front of all our friends and family. And I married her on her 50th birthday, so what an amazing present that was." Following the death of Peaches - who left behind sons Astala, three, and two-year-old Phaedra, who she had with husband Thomas Cohen - Bob admits he "dreads" what could be "coming next". Speaking to Irish newspaper Sunday Independent, the Boomtown Rats frontman - whose ex-wife Paula Yates, Peaches mother, also died of a drugs overdose, in 2000 aged 41 - added: "It's not as if there isn't anything coming, and you sort of dread what is coming next. I don't know what it could be. "It seems to me to be a bizarrely episodic life. The trick, for me, is to remain incessantly busy."



T.I. becomes a father for seventh time

T.I. has become a father for the seventh time. The 35-year-old rapper - whose real name is Clifford Joseph Harris Jr - and wife Tameka 'Tiny' Cottle welcomed their third child together, a daughter, into the world on Saturday, but the star was less than impressed that the news leaked online before he had chance to announce the birth. He wrote on Facebook: "What really annoys me is that I'm in South Carolina & my wife just had our baby in Georgia which is really not something anybody could help & the fact that everybody gets to announce that "T.I. & Tiny welcomed their baby into the world" EXCEPT T.I. & Tiny. Couldn't even wait until we properly announced it but ?#Lucky?? is here! (sic)" But he seemed to have calmed down later in the day, posting: "I have a heart of gold for real... And I love really hard. But my attitude and temper gets the best of me sometimes (sic)" The couple also have two sons, Clifford 'King' Jr, 11, and Major Philant, seven, but they tragically lost a daughter, Leyah Amore, in March 2007 after she was stillborn six months into Tiny's pregnancy. T.I. also has sons Messiah, 16, and Domani, 15, with Lashon Dixon and daughter Deyjah, 14, with singer Ms Niko, while Tiny has another daughter, Zonnique, 19, with Zonnie Zebo Pullins.

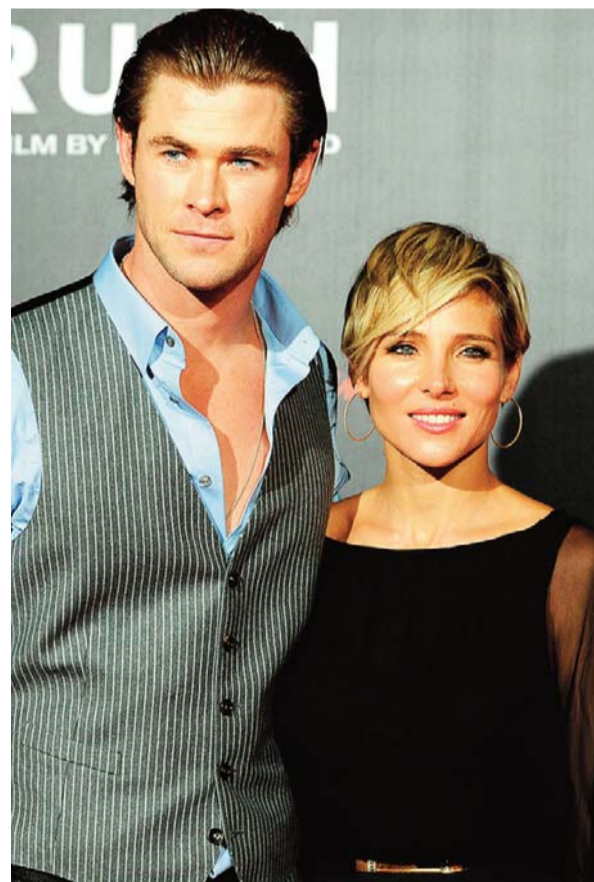
Ivanka gives birth to baby boy

Ivanka Trump has given birth to a baby boy. The 34-year-old former model and her husband Jared Kushner welcomed son Theodore James Kushner into the world on Easter Sunday, and the couple are "so excited" to have added a third child to their brood. Ivanka - who also has daughter Arabella Rose, four, and two-year-old son Joseph Frederick with Jared - wrote on Instagram: "Jared and I feel incredibly blessed to announce the arrival of Theodore James Kushner. Jared, Arabella, Joseph and I are so excited to welcome this sweet little boy to our family!" She shared a picture of an "it's a boy" sign which confirmed the youngster's name and time of birth, 5:43pm. The blonde businesswoman - whose father is US presidential candidate Donald Trump - also posted a picture of herself holding the little one in hospital and added the caption: "Baby Theodore. My heart is full #grateful (sic)" Ivanka's brother Donald Trump Jr. took to Twitter to congratulate the couple on their new arrival. He wrote: "Congrats to my amazing sister @IvankaTrump & Jared on the birth of their third child Theodore. Can't wait to meet! (sic)" Ivanka announced she was pregnant in September, saying: "Jared and I are thrilled to announce that we'll be welcoming baby number 3 to our family early next year. It's an incredible blessing. We feel so grateful - and so excited!"



David Banda's dad voices Madonna concern

The biological father of Madonna's adopted son David Banda has voiced concerns over the star's "shocking" lifestyle. Yohane Banda - who gave David up for adoption in 2006 - is worried the 10 year old is getting caught in the crossfire between the singer and her ex-husband Guy Ritchie's "bitter" custody battle over their 15-year-old son Rocco. He said: "Madonna and Guy's custody battle turning bitter and nasty is a huge concern. "I'd like to know what's going on behind closed doors and why Rocco wanted to leave his mum and live with his dad like that. "What I have heard about Madonna's lifestyle since her divorce from Guy sounds quite shocking." Yohane has become worried after hearing Rocco stayed in London after visiting Guy last autumn and then refused to go back to America to live with his mum. The Malawian farmer claims Guy "never showed any interest" in adopting David so hopes his son doesn't follow in Rocco's footsteps in wanting to live with the filmmaker in the UK. He added to The Sun newspaper: "I don't want David to follow Rocco's decision to go and live with Guy now either. I never got the impression that Guy was interested in adopting David. "It was Madonna who wanted to take David to live with her. "The only reason I let Madonna adopt David was because she promised me she would give him a good education and then he could come home to live with me. "Guy never showed he had any interest in David when I met him in court." Earlier this month, Madonna and Guy - whose divorce was finalised in 2008 - were told by a judge to not use up any more of the "fast receding days" of their son Rocco's childhood with their custody dispute. Mr Justice MacDonald urged the former couple to try and reach an "amicable solution" to their custody arrangements for the teenager before he grows up and becomes a man.



Hemsworth and Pataky happy with three kids

Chris Hemsworth and Elsa Pataky won't be having any more children. The couple are parents to three-year-old daughter India and two-year-old twin sons Sasha and Tristan, and the actress admits it is "hard work" enough raising the young trio, and she will be ready to return to her career once they're a bit older. She said: "We're not thinking of having any more. I'm making a stand. Three children is enough, it's hard work. "For me it is very important to spend all the time I can with them when they're at this age but now that I can see the growing up a bit, I also want to work and get back to what I like. If we had more children it would complicate things." Elsa admits seeing her husband with their children makes her love the 'Thor' actor even more. She added to HELLO! magazine: "I'm struck every day by what a wonderful father he is. The bond he has with his children is amazing. "They're the most important thing in the world to him. He finds it hard to be away from them and is involved in every part of their lives and that makes me love him more. "I love watching him change nappies, feeding them and putting them to sleep at night and getting their clothes ready for school the next day."



Matt Healy: I can't be friends with women



Matt Healy can't have "platonic" relationships with women. The 1975 frontman always likes to be close to females, but struggles to build a friendship without romantic feelings getting in the way. He said: "I think I've always really struggled to have platonic relationships with women. Because once I get close to women I'm... I don't know, it gets really complicated for me. And it doesn't even have to be based on attractiveness - it's once I get close to somebody. I find it really confusing with women." While he can't have platonic relationships with women, Matt - whose parents are actors Tim Healy and Denise Welch - finds it important to be surrounded by females and grew up "obsessed" with his mother's friends. He added: "I've always really wanted women around. I've always trusted women. "I was always obsessed by my mum's friends. I'm not necessarily a mummy's boy, but I've always been comforted by the women in my life." The handsome singer doesn't mind that his group have a huge female fanbase because he thinks it is "nice" and has a "divine" fascination with women. He told Q magazine: "It was never important for us to be a band that young girls like. But I always thought that I love girlie things, I love teen movies, I love the music that is imbued with that. So I'm not surprised we make music for women because it's very lush and nice, isn't it? "But I've always been fascinated by women, in this divine sense. Women pull me closer to God than anything else. But you can't say something like that without sounding like a weirdo."

Underwood wants 'American Idol' return

Carrie Underwood hopes to be involved in the 'American Idol' finale. The 33-year-old singer - who won the show in 2005 - is upset the show is coming to an end after 15 seasons next month and is keen to be a part of the finale so she can bid it a "fond farewell". She said: "I understand why they're wanting to put it to rest after 15 years. "But I hope to be able to do something in or around the finale and bid it a fond farewell." Carrie loves performing live and finds it very "freeing" to be someone else on stage. She added: "It's almost like getting to play a character on stage - it's very freeing. "When you know peo-

ple have spent their money to come and see you, it means a lot." But away from the spotlight, the 'Before He Cheats' hitmaker leads a low-key life with husband Mike Fisher and their son Isaiah, 12 months. She told HELLO! magazine: "We're just normal people. When we're at home, we're sitting around in our sweatpants. "We don't lead a glamorous life. Here [in Nashville] country music singers are just like everyone else, dropping their kids off at school and picking up their dry-cleaning. It's a great place to raise your family."



Gossip



Emily Blunt: Motherhood has changed me

Emily Blunt says motherhood has changed her. The 'Devil Wears Prada' star insists she is more selective of what film roles she takes on since giving birth to two-year-old daughter Hazel, who she has with husband John Krasinski. She said: "Too racy would be one thing I wouldn't go for now. I'm not so keen on doing nudity, because I'm not 22 anymore. And actually it's not so much a moral thing as 'I've done it before and do I really want to do it again?'" "Does it serve the film or is it gratuitous and seeing someone's body for the sake of it? Because I don't think it's necessary most of the time. Also playing violent or racist characters would be hard for me now." The 33-year-old actress used to find it hard to be away from her little girl but has learned to deal with it better because she's "in love" with her job. She added to The Telegraph newspaper: "I feel so completely fulfilled. I'm in love with this job so I come home enlivened and emboldened by the work I've just done. "And although life is a juggle and I have to spend a few days away from Hazel here and there, when I'm not working I'm with her all the time. I do think it will get harder to leave her as she gets older, but a friend once gave me a good piece of advice. Instead of saying, 'Mummy has to go,' I say, 'Mummy has to go, but I love what I do. I just love it!'"

Malik 'understands pressures of fame



The 'Pillowtalk' hitmaker insists he has "kept a little bit of [his] sanity" throughout his music career and claims he is labelled as mysterious because he didn't want to get caught up in the hype of fame. He said: "I've kept a little bit of my sanity. I understand how the media works. Journos gotta earn their money. Paps have got to earn their money." When asked if he had discovered this in the first few months of his career, he added to NME magazine: "I think so. I think that's why it came across as being mysterious or detached. I just didn't want to get caught up in something that wasn't real. "You can be the biggest band in the world for a certain time, but that ends. I'm not saying that [I knew at the beginning]. But if I did ... then I've got a great brain." Meanwhile, the former One Direction star previously admitted he considers himself to be a "Big celebrity all round". He shared: "I'm a pretty big celebrity all around. But when it comes to TV, that's the worst. I hate the whole setup. When it's interviews like this, I don't mind. I'm just talking to a normal person. It's when you are fully glammed up and you're sitting with a hundred lights in your face and someone is asking you questions in front of a crowd of people - that's when it becomes a bit strange for me. "I'm not a public speaker. I'm a singer. Those two things are very different in my brain. I'm not an extrovert in everyday life. I'm a performer. When it comes to stage I can sing and do that, but when I'm in normal-day life I'm very reserved. I guess that's my downfall."

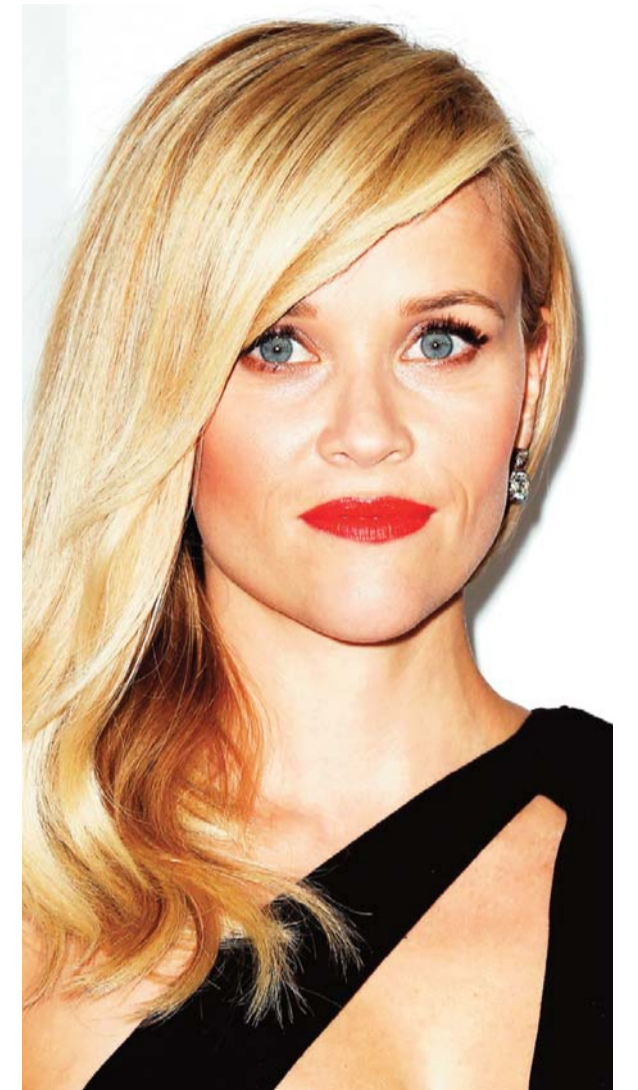
Aniston's morning routine

Jennifer Aniston works out at five in the morning. The 'Horrible Bosses' star gets up early in the morning so she can do her "pretty intense" exercises. She said: "If I'm working, I'm up at 4:30, 5 am If not, between 8 and 9 am, because I'm a late-night person. But usually when I wake up, I'll make my standard cup of hot water with a slice of lemon in there. "Then I'll go do a workout of some sort. I have a trainer, a wonderful woman who I do this spin-yoga class [with]. We spin for half an hour, and then do yoga for 40 minutes. That's pretty intense. Then I go to a gym, where I do strength training or just my own thing on the treadmill, the bike, or the elliptical, just to change things up." The 47-year-old actress also shared details about her breakfast routine, revealing she is a big fan of protein shakes. She told Well + Good: "Usually I'll have a shake, with some sort of pure protein, then bananas, blueberries, frozen cherries, stevia, a vegetable mix of dynamic greens that goes in there, maca powder, and a little cacao. "If I don't have a shake, I'll just have some toast and poached eggs with some avocado. Or millet cereal with almond milk and bananas - it's really yummy, and you can get it hot for winter months."



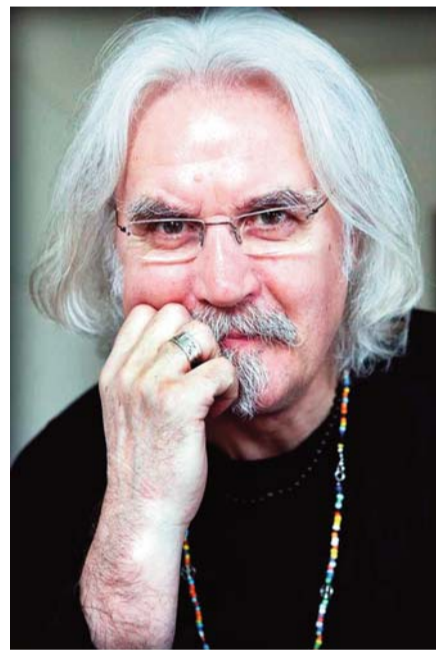
Witherspoon celebrates fifth wedding anniversary

Reese Witherspoon has paid tribute to her "sweet husband" on their fifth wedding anniversary. The 'Wild' star has taken to Instagram to share a sweet message for Jim Toth as they mark five years of marriage. Captioning a picture of the pair, she wrote: "Happy anniversary to my sweet husband! I love you, JT! #5years (sic)" Meanwhile, the 40-year-old actress - who has three-year-old son Tennessee with Jim and 16-year-old daughter Ava and son Deacon, 12, from a previous relationship - recently revealed she is taking a step back from acting to make her family her top priority. She explained: "My family comes first. I haven't made a movie probably in a year and a half. I'm focused on my business, but also I want to spend time with my teenage daughter. It's terrifying that my oldest child is about to leave [home to go to university]. I can't imagine not sitting at the foot of her bed, saying, 'So what happened at school today?' "You hope you're saying the right things - but also, as a kid becomes a teenager, you feel like there's a ticking clock to tell them everything they need to know. My kids make me laugh every day. And they're so supportive. As I get older, they understand things I worried about - the guilt of being gone - in a way that's so healing for me, when they say, 'Mom, we know you love what you do. We love to watch you do what you do.'"



Janice Dickinson has breast cancer

Janice Dickinson has been diagnosed with breast cancer. The 61-year-old model's doctor found a lump in her breast on March 12 during a routine examination and after an urgent mammogram and biopsy she was found to have a common form of the disease known as ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS). Despite the diagnosis, the raven-haired star insists she is going to be around for a "long, long time". She told Daily Mail Online: "Just two weeks ago I was diagnosed with breast cancer, it's hard for me to say this, but I have been diagnosed with breast cancer. "It's still quite shocking. Today I got very scared ... I just get very scared and it hit me. But I am not gonna let that define me, the fear. I'm going to get through this, I'll be just fine kiddo. "Don't feel sorry for me, this is not a pity party, I'm Janice Dickinson and I'm gonna stick around for a long, long time, you ain't getting rid of me yet." Janice - who lost her mother to cancer - went to seek medical advice after experiencing stomach trouble but knew she had cancer as soon as her doctor found the lump. She recalled: "The doctor noticed it immediately. She said, 'This doesn't feel right.' And she said, 'We have to be real comprehensive with this and have it checked out.' "I'm always optimistic, initially when the doctor found the lump it hurt, it became quite painful when you touch it, that's the point when I knew this is serious, when the doctor touched this little lump in my right breast, about the size of a pea, and I went, 'Bingo, I have cancer.'" Janice admits she went into "a world of fantasy" as she tried to deal with the diagnosis and she was worried about how her kids, son Nathan, 28, daughter Savannah, 22, and 68-year-old fiancé Rocky would react upon hearing the devastating news. She added: "I became fearful for my two children, my loving fiancé Rocky, we have a grandson, aged four, his name is baby Aby. I just thought they are gonna flip out."



Connolly's 'shaken psychologically' by Parkinson's disease

Billy Connolly's wife says he has been "shaken psychologically" after being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease - but is able to make light of the situation. The 73-year-old comedian was first treated for the early symptoms of the degenerative disorder in September 2013 and while he has in shock initially, Pamela Stephenson insists he is "doing really well" and often jokes about his condition when the disease forces his arm into a crooked position. Writing in Woman & Home magazine, she explained: "There is no doubt he has been shaken psychologically by the idea of having a creeping disease for which there is no cure. "But physically we had seen very little change in him. Even now, I rarely notice his hand shaking and we have been informed that the disease is on his left side, a blessing for a right-handed person. Even Billy's specialist

remarked that the average person would never know he had it. "He was upset but after a while began to joke about it. He now talks about carrying an 'invisible raincoat' - referring to how his arm goes into a crooked position as if he is carrying a garment. All in all, we are enormously blessed because Billy is actually doing really well." Pamela, 66, insists the 'Man Who Sued God' actor is "as funny as he's ever been", but she never accompanies him on his tours for fear of being the target of some of his quips. He added: "He hates me showing up when he's on tour. I imagine that's because on stage he's often funny at my expense." She joked: "Billy was diagnosed with Parkinson's in the same week he was told he had prostate cancer and had two hearing aids fitted, but recently admitted he goes to work to 'stay positive' about his battle with the disease."



Adele has grown a beard - and calls it Larry

The 27-year-old singer grew some celebrity stubble while pregnant with her son Angelo - who is now three years old - and insisted during a concert at Glasgow's SSE Hydro Arena on Friday night that she is "proud" of her facial hair. She told the crowd: "When I got pregnant I had so much testosterone in me that I grew a beard. "I only cropped it last night. It's actually true. I'm not telling a joke. I actually have a beard, but I'm proud of it. I call it Larry." Adele admitted having some whiskers on her chin has enabled her to relate to her partner Simon Konecki even more because she knows what he has to go through when his facial hair gets irritable in hot weather. She said: "My man's got a good beard. He trims it sometimes in the summer. I do have a beard myself so I can understand when it gets hot in the summer." As well as her beard revelation, Adele entertained the Scottish crowd with another tale about her hairy body. She said: "If anyone gets a glimpse of my really hairy legs I'm really sorry but I've got a weekend off, so no need to shave my legs."



Kendall Jenner's Instagram secrets

Kendall Jenner says the secret to her Instagram success is being spontaneous. The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star doesn't like to plan her posts on the photo sharing site too much and says the secret is to be "organic". She explained to Vogue magazine: "I mean, it's so crazy to me, because it's so not real life - to stress out about a social media thing. "It has to be organic ... It means you can't totally plan it out. You don't want to do too many posts. You

want to leave them wanting to come back. Mystery!" Meanwhile, the 20-year-old model - who has over 52 million followers on the site - previously revealed she refuses to read any negative comments posted about her on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as she doesn't want to put herself in that "position". She said: "I don't read anything of that nature. If you put yourself in that position, you're not going to be happy. "I think that for us, we kind

of grew up with fame. We've grown up around it our entire lives, so we kind of understood what it was a bit. So I think that that helped a lot, for the point we're at now. I think that helped a tonne." — Bang Showbiz



Kendall Jenner

CHINA FASHION WEEK



This photo taken on March 27, 2016 shows models parading creations from the Tao LouLan Collection designed by Tao Tao at China Fashion Week in Beijing. — AFP

Klum keeps her shoes for her children

H Heidi Klum hoards her clothes for her children to inherit. The 42-year-old supermodel - who landed her first modeling contract after winning the 'Model 92' contest in 1992 in Germany - has admitted she keeps all her old footwear, still in their boxes, for her two daughters, Leni, 11, and Lou, six, to wear when they are older - but only if they can grow into them. Speaking to Vogue magazine, the blonde beauty said: "Well, I'm a hoarder, but I have two girls so I feel like I have an excuse. I have all my shoes in boxes, all photographed on the front, so I'm a hoarder but I'm an organized hoarder. "I wear a size 41 so my girls are hoping for big feet. They'll say, 'Oh but your feet are big mum,' but I tell them, 'Who knows, let's see what's gonna happen.'" However, the

'America's Got Talent' judge - who also has sons Henry, 10, and Johan, nine, with ex-husband Seal - has admitted that if her children can't inherit her fashionable footwear heirlooms, there are other luxury garments at their disposal. She explained: "There's sunglasses and belts and bags and dresses, so the shoes aren't the end of the story. There's a lot to choose from." Despite, the entrepreneur's hope her children will wear her shoes, she does not want them to actually follow in her footsteps - although one wants to take over her "empire". She previously said: "I'm not pushing my kids in any direction. They should right now first of all be children, and learn everything that they have to learn in school." But for the first time, my daughter maybe like two months ago, she said, 'Mumma what

do I have to do to take over your empire?' I was like, that's the cutest thing. I was like, 'Well, you go to school first and let's get good grades first', but I thought that was funny and she was like, 'Maybe I should do modeling or designing things.'" Meanwhile, Heidi - who has launched the lingerie brand, Heidi Klum Intimates - will expand on the collection later this year with an additional swimwear range. — Bang Showbiz



Heidi Klum



Photo shows 'Go' teacher Jo Gyung-Ho (center) watches over students at the Lee Se-Dol School for 'Go' in Seoul. — AFP photos

A student drinks water before trophies displayed at the Lee Se-Dol School for 'Go'.

Students practice their skills at the Lee Se-Dol School for 'Go'.

Dreams of fame at the School of Go

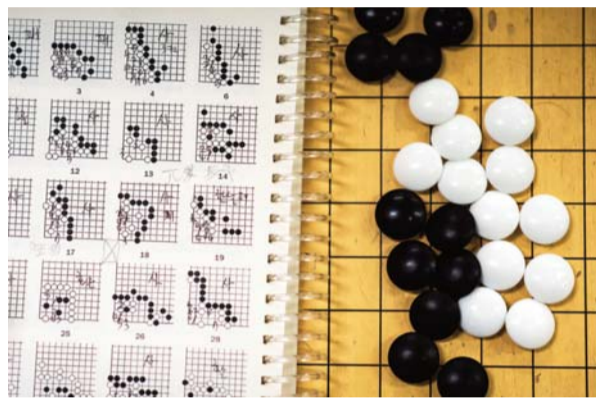
For the past two years, 12-year-old Cho Sung-Bin has spent nearly all his waking hours focused on a wooden board covered with black and white stones, honing the skills he hopes to translate into a lucrative career as a professional Go player. "It's fun. I never get tired," said Cho, one of dozens of pre-teeners sitting at rows of desks topped with playing boards at the Lee Se-Dol School of Go in central Seoul.

Many spend 12 hours a day practicing match play with each other in the small, neon-lit, largely windowless rooms of the school named after the grandmaster they all hope to emulate. Already well known in East Asia, Lee achieved global recognition earlier this month when he took on Google's artificial intelligence AlphaGo program in a five-match showdown. The 33-year-old lost the series, but the battle gave an unprecedented boost to the ancient board game's international profile.

Go originated in China 3,000 years ago and has been played for centuries mostly in China, Japan and South Korea, with more than 40 million fans worldwide. The rules are simple—two players take turns placing black or white stones on a square board with a 19x19 grid. Whoever captures the most territory wins. But the strategies needed to secure victory are complex, with reportedly more possible move configurations than atoms in the universe.

'An art form'

"Go is not just an entertainment. It's an art form and a natural philosophy as much as a sport," said professional player Seo Kon-Woo. The game is also seen as a tool to help children improve their focus, with hundreds of private Go schools across South Korea offering after-hours tuition. For those who show a special skill and affinity for the game, Go also offers a possible career path which, in the case of top players like Lee Se-Dol, can lead to fame and fortune. "Many talented kids are discovered



Strategic diagrams and stone pieces are displayed on a 'Go' board.

when they are five or six, and turn pro before they're even 12," said Kim Jung-Youl, a veteran coach and head of the Lee Se-Dol School.

Considered one of the greatest Go players of the modern era with 18 international titles, Lee started playing at the age of five and turned pro seven years later. South Korea has around 300 professional players certified by the national Go association, and even those who don't become star names can make a decent living from tournaments and teaching. Dozens of competitions—both for individuals and "professional teams" sponsored by companies—are held in East Asia each year, with star players earning millions of dollars.

Too old at 20

Joining the professional tour requires at least a decade of



A student places pieces on a 'Go' board at the Lee Se-Dol School for 'Go'.

tough training and the Korean Go Association, which only accepts 15 new members each year, estimates there are around 1,000 children currently studying in schools specializing in the discipline. Potential professionals are usually identified when they are very young, and then pushed hard through a relentless streaming system that quickly ejects those not considered up to the mark. Those who have failed to break through by the end of their teenage years are generally dropped from consideration by the association.

"It becomes nearly impossible to go pro once you're aged over 20," Kim said. Cho Sung-Bin said he had been on "temporary leave" from his normal school for two years, after begging his parents to let him go full-time at Lee's school. "I meant to stay here only during school break, but playing Go is so much fun ... much more than computer games," he told AFP. When his

parents gave their consent, he swapped his home for a school dormitory he shares with dozens of other Go-playing children. All major Go schools in the South Korean capital run their own dormitories, allowing them to attract the best students from around the country.

Cho has already taken a big step forward after being selected by the Go Association for an elite league, in which 132 students compete on a weekly basis and are ranked on their performances. Those at the top of the table are on course for professional status, while the lower ranked players—or those who turn 19—are unceremoniously replaced by better or younger players every two months.

Crushing pressure

For Jo Min-Soo the expectation to perform was so great he almost had a mental breakdown after he joined the elite league aged 12. "I couldn't handle the stress so didn't play well," he said. Even a prodigy like Lee Se-Dol suffered from the pressure—which brought on temporary aphasia when he was 12, leaving him with a high-pitched shrill voice that made him reluctant to speak in public for years. Jo has dreamed of being a professional player since he was six, dropping out of school in 2013 to focus on his training.

But at 18, time is running out—a point brought home every day by the younger kids like Cho he shares a dormitory with. "Compared to them, I'm too old...I'm feeling a bit desperate," Jo said. "I started this because I love playing the game so much," he said. "Now I'm not entirely sure...but this is the only thing I can do." — AFP



A handout picture released by the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) shows destruction in the museum of the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra.



A handout picture shows destruction and looted items in the museum of the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra.



A handout picture shows destruction at the entrance to the museum of the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra.

Recapture a blessing but much of Palmyra is lost

Historian of the ancient world Maurice Sartre explains what Syria's capture of Palmyra from the Islamic State group will mean for the UNESCO World Heritage site.

Q: What is your initial response to the news that the Syrian army has recaptured Palmyra?

A: One can only rejoice at the ousting of IS, which is founded on extreme violence and organized the systematic destruction of ancient artefacts. It's a blessing both for the site and the people who live nearby. There's no question about that—even if we know the city is now in the hands of another dictator, (Syrian President) Bashar al-Assad.

Q: What now?

A: First we need a precise record of the destruction. The Syrian director general of antiquities left for Palmyra from Damascus this evening to complete a survey. There will be two types of destruction. First, the most famous and visible, which we know about because IS made a point of showing us: the destruction of the two major Temples of Bel and Baal Shamin, the triumphal arches, the seven tower tombs.

Then there will be what is not visible, by which I mean the destruction of underground tombs and everything that has been pillaged from the site. The Syrian regime will obviously try to pin all of the blame on IS, but some of this will not have been their fault. We are well aware that before the arrival of IS, Assad's army also pillaged Palmyra.

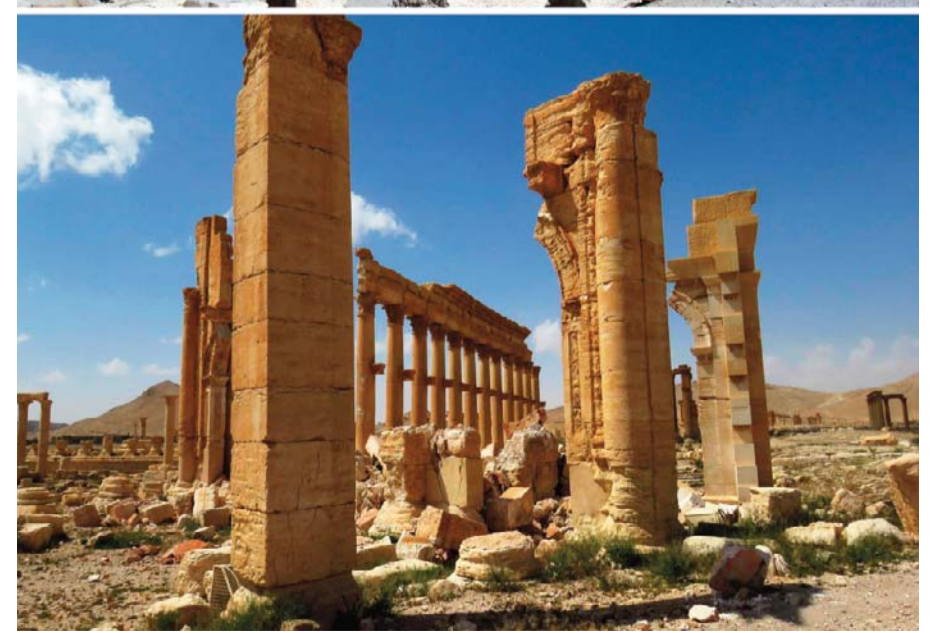
The tombs of the south-eastern necropolis, which were brilliantly restored by Japanese architects in the 2000s, were totally destroyed. There are photographs of soldiers carrying busts from the site. My fear is that we will focus on the destruction of the major sites, which is obviously extremely serious, at the expense of what has been lost through pillaging, especially those artefacts which are not known. One mustn't forget that only around 15 to 20 percent of Palmyra had actually been excavated, and so there was an enormous amount yet to discover. All the tombs we hadn't excavated and have now been totally pillaged are lost to science forever.

Q: What purpose will the survey serve?

A: We must see what can be recovered. I've watched videos posted by journalists on the scene, and it's clear that we will likely be able to completely reconstruct the main arch, which was bulldozed by IS, because all the blocks are still there. What we don't know, however, because journalists couldn't get there—there are probably mines—is the state of the stones that made up the two temples. If they've been reduced to dust, as is well possible, there is nothing we can do, but if the stones themselves remain we can reconstruct the temples. It would be extremely expensive, but it's possible. — AFP



A general view shows part of the remains of the Arc de Triomphe (Triumph Arc) monument that was destroyed by Islamic State (IS) group jihadists in October 2015 in the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra. — AFP photos



A combination of images shows a general view (top) taken on June 19, 2010 of the Arc de Triomphe (Triumph's Arc) prior to being destroyed by Islamic State (IS) group jihadists in October 2015 and the remains of the iconic structure.

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2016

Dreams of fame at the School of Go

39



A Bangladeshi woman shuts her eyes as colored powder is smeared on her face during celebrations marking Holi, the Hindu festival of colors, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The festival of colors, by painting each other in bright pigments, distributing sweets and squirting water at one another. The holiday celebrated mainly in India and Nepal marks the beginning of spring and the triumph of good over evil.

Indian Hindus celebrate the festival of colors or Holi in Kolkata, India. The holiday, celebrated mainly in India and Nepal, marks the beginning of spring and the triumph of good over evil. — AP photos



A woman with a political-themed hat walks along Fifth Avenue near St. Patrick's Cathedral.



Tom Nickel, Allison and Adrian Devereux, and Jane Pastrana show off their floral-themed Easter clothes as they pose for photographers and members of the public during the annual Easter parade along Fifth Avenue in front of St Patrick's Cathedral in New York. — AP photos



Two women who were part of a Chinese designer's fashion shoot pause between photographs.

Creative hats, costumes at NYC's Easter Parade

Top hats with bunny ears and elaborate costumes have gotten a showing in New York City's Easter Parade. The event runs along Manhattan's Fifth Avenue every Easter Sunday. It started in the 1880s as a strolling display from people wearing their finery outside churches.

It has morphed into an expression of the creative and sometimes zany. Hats in an assortment of colors were bedecked with flowers Sunday. Even the animals got into it, with at least one dog wearing its own pastel-colored outfit. — AP



Two women pose for photographers.



People look at an elaborate and colorful hat created and worn by Queens resident Ray Stankes.



Maxwell Kalba and Judith Stuck, of West Hempstead, NY, pose for photographers.



Dace Anderson, right, of Latvia, holds her daughter Ava, 4, close to a dog named Coco Chanel for a kiss.