



Lawmakers want Dashti citizenship revoked



Syrian soldiers pound Islamic State; capture strategic hilltops



Only 26.4% of 12 year olds in Kuwait are 'cavity free'



Jazz hand Kobe worst loss ever; 123-75 in last visit to Utah



150 FILLS
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KUWAIT, SAUDI TO RESUME PRODUCTION AT KHAFJI FIELD

MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS SIGNED FOR THE DISPUTED OILFIELD



Min 17°
Max 27°
High Tide 04:20 & 15:14
Low Tide 09:42 & 22:35

'CHILDHOOD ON THE BRINK'

YEMENI KIDS FACE MALNUTRITION

GENEVA: Hundreds of thousands of children in Yemen face life-threatening malnutrition, millions lack access to health care or clean water, and some have been drafted as soldiers in the year-old war, the United Nations Children's Fund said yesterday. A UNICEF report said all sides had "exponentially increased" the use of child soldiers in the conflict between Houthi forces, allied to Iran, and a Saudi-led coalition supporting Yemen's President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. It knew of 848 documented cases, including boys as young as 10.

"On average, at least six children have been killed or injured every day," said the report "Childhood on the Brink". UNICEF has confirmed 934 children directly killed and 1,356 injured, but says they are "only a tip of the iceberg". "Sixty-one percent of those (children) killed and injured were

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: Kuwait Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah (center) attends a parliamentary session in Kuwait City. The Acting Minister of Oil yesterday announced that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have reached a deal to resume production at the disputed Khafji offshore oilfield. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have reached a deal to resume production at the disputed Khafji offshore oilfield, Kuwait's acting oil minister said yesterday. "An agreement has been reached with the Saudi side at Aramco to resume production at Khafji field in small quantities," Anas Al-Saleh told parliament during a debate. Saleh, who is also the Finance Minister, said the quantities will increase "gradually" after resolving environmental issues over which the field was shut down. A number of maintenance contracts have been signed in preparation for the resumption of production, the minister said without saying when production will resume or how much oil will be pumped.

Production at Khafji, which pumped over 300,000 barrels per day and was jointly operated by the two countries, was halted in October 2014. Riyadh cited environmental issues for the shutdown. Khafji is part of the neutral zone which is operated jointly by the two Arab nations and production is divided equally. The other field is Wafra where production was also halted in May last year. Wafra pumped around 200,000 bpd. Kuwait had initially said that Saudi Arabia unilaterally stopped production due to pollution concerns even though it was entitled to five years' notice under the joint agreement.

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SIX STUDENTS HURT IN SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENT

KUWAIT: Six students were injured yesterday when the bus they were traveling overturned, an Education Ministry statement said. The students, all attendees of a special needs school, were on their way to campus when their bus overturned. All injured students were rushed to Amiri hospital and their par-

ents have been informed, the statement added. Five of the six injured were discharged after receiving necessary medical treatment, the statement said. The sixth student is expected to be discharged later today after receiving extra treatment, the statement concluded. — KUNA

EGYPTAIR HIJACK DRAMA ENDS

PASSENGERS FREED UNHARMED; SUSPECT ARRESTED

LARNACA: An EgyptAir plane flying from Alexandria to Cairo was hijacked and forced to land in Cyprus yesterday but the passengers and crew were freed unharmed and the hijacker, whose motives remained a mystery, was arrested after giving himself up. Eighty-one people, including 21 foreigners and 15 crew, had been onboard the Airbus 320 flight when it took off, Egypt's Civil Aviation Ministry said in a statement.

Conflicting theories emerged about the hijacker's motives, with Cypriot officials saying early on the incident did not appear related to terrorism but the Cypriot state broadcaster saying he had demanded the release of women prisoners in Egypt. After the aircraft landed at Larnaca airport, negotiations began and everyone onboard was freed except three passengers and four crew, Egypt's Civil Aviation Minister Sherif Fethy said. Soon after his comments, Cypriot television footage showed several people leaving the plane via the stairs and another man climbing out of the cockpit window and running off.

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LARNACA: A man believed to be the hijacker of the EgyptAir Airbus A-320, which was diverted to Cyprus, leaves the plane before surrendering to security forces after a six-hour standoff on the tarmac at Larnaca airport yesterday. — AFP



AJMAN, United Arab Emirates: Fire engulfs a tower at a residential cluster in Ajman, in the United Arab Emirates yesterday. — AFP

FIRE ENGULFS UAE TOWER

AJMAN: Firefighters extinguished a blaze yesterday that burned up the side of several towers in the United Arab Emirates city of Ajman, the latest in a series of skyscraper infernos in the Gulf nation, which is home to the world's tallest building. Civil defense workers sprayed water to cool down any remaining embers at the Ajman One development. The city is home to many commuters who work in the Gulf commercial hub of Dubai, further to the south.

The complex, developed for an estimated \$720 million by Aqar, includes 12 residential towers. Two sustained severe damage to their exteriors, while others appeared to have light damage. The cause for the blaze, which began Monday night, wasn't immediately clear. Civil defense officials declined to comment, while telephone numbers for Aqar rang unanswered yesterday. The state-run WAM news agency said Ajman's ruler, Sheikh Humaid bin Rashid Al Nuaimi, visited the complex yesterday and praised firefighters' efforts. He also ordered authorities to accommodate those affected until they find housing.

The fire started around 9 pm Monday at Tower No 8 in the complex, then spread to neighboring Tower No 6 when winds carried burning debris toward it, resident Syad Faisal Shah said. "No one knew that this was a real fire. No one understood," said Shah, a Pakistani expatriate. "When we got downstairs ... we saw that the building was on fire from every angle." Mina Fayeze, another resident, was stunned. "You are losing your things in front of your eyes," Fayeze, an Egyptian, said. "There is no feeling. I am just shocked."

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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

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AMIR MEETS PHD HOLDERS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Dr Hussein Mahdi Bahbahani, who dedicated to His Highness a copy of a doctorate thesis on breeds of cattle. His Highness the Amir then welcomed Dr Ghadir Rashed Al-Fandi, who gave him a copy of a doctorate thesis on capabilities of construction companies of managing risks in GCC member states. His Highness the Amir also received Dr Walid Mohammad Al-Hamad, who presented to him two books on Quran and Tajweed, the knowledge and application of the rules of reciting Quran. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received Mohammad Saud bin Thuwairan, who presented him with a book on poetry, and Anwar Bader Al-Mutairi.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received Dr Abdullah Yousef Al-Ghunaim on the occasion of winning the King Faisal international prize for Islamic studies 2016. His Highness praised Ghunaim's constructive and fruitful efforts in this domain aimed at serving the country and highlight Kuwait in the international, wishing him success. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Kuwait's Ambassador to Turkey Abdullah Abdulaziz Al-Thuwaikh. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Anwar Bader Al-Mutairi. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Walid Mohammad Al-Hamad.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Ghadir Rashed Al-Fandi.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Hussein Mahdi Bahbahani.

KUWAIT, EGYPT SHARE HISTORIC TIES: ENVOY

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is the highest ranking Arab leader to visit Egypt after the June 30 revolution, said Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Yasser Atif. In a seminar on the Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations held at Kuwait National Library late Monday, Atif said that Egypt was one of the first countries to open an embassy in Kuwait on December 23, 1961, upon the latter's independence.

Referring to the strong ties between the two countries, the ambassador noted that former Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser had opposed and refused Iraq's attempt to annex Kuwait. Moreover, he recalled the role of Egypt during the Gulf War to liberate Kuwait in 1991 and Kuwait's participation in the 1967 and 1973 war alongside the Egyptian forces against Israel. "Since the breakout of the January 25 revolution, Kuwait has been supporting Egypt's unity and freedom of political choice," said Atif. Kuwait also provided his country with \$400 million as an emergency aid after the June 30 revolution, while also donating an extra \$400 million to support Egypt's economy later on," he added.

Economic ties

Meanwhile, Atif said that economic ties are

continuously growing between the two sides, noting that trade has grown prominently in 2015. Kuwaiti-Egyptian petroleum trade was recorded at \$3.2 billion per year, he said, adding that Kuwaiti investments reached \$15 billion. As for the cultural and scientific ties, Atif said that thousands of Kuwaiti students study in Egypt and vice versa, pointing to the Egyptian cultural week which was held since March 20, which will be concluded by the end of this seminar.

History Professor at Kuwait University Dr Hamad Al-Qahtani said meanwhile that the Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations date back to 1839, during the time of former Kuwaiti Amir Sheikh Jaber bin Abdullah Al-Sabah and his Egyptian counterpart Muhammad Ali Pasha. The ties were established as Kuwait aided an Egyptian delegation which was in need for food in Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia, he noted.

Moreover, Al-Qahtani said that bilateral ties saw a boost in the time of former Kuwaiti Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who went on a historical visit to Egypt on 31st August 1935. Sheikh Ahmad then, introduced Egypt's educational experience to Kuwait. In the same context, the Egyptian Cultural Office in Kuwait inaugurated an exhibition showcasing Egypt's history through photos.— KUNA



KUWAIT: Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Yasser Atif tours an exhibition held on the sidelines of a seminar on Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah chairs a consultative committee meeting yesterday. — KUNA

JARALLAH, OFFICIALS REVIEW REGIONAL, INT'L DEVELOPMENTS

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah chaired yesterday the meeting of the consultative committee and reviewed the latest developments and their repercussions on regional and international arenas.

The committee was formed by a decree of First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, under the chairmanship of the Deputy Foreign Minister. It includes some former and current ambassadors as well as a number of academics. The committee is tasked with discussing situations and taking opinions to be submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Jarallah then chaired a meeting of the preparatory committee of donors' conference for supporting education in Somalia. The committee, which includes a number of senior officials at Foreign and Education Ministries, reviewed preparatory steps for the conference to be hosted by the State of Kuwait.

Russian envoy

Also yesterday, Jarallah met with Russian Ambassador to Kuwait Alexi Solomatini and discussed some aspects of bilateral relations. The two sides also focused on the latest developments on regional and international arenas.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah meets with Russian Ambassador to Kuwait Alexi Solomatini

Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar and deputy assistant Foreign Minister for Europe affairs Ambassador Rashed Al-Adwani.

In other news, Jarallah is set to leave for Riyadh today to attend the 15th GCC Ministerial Committee meeting to follow up on the imple-

mentation of resolutions related to inter-GCC cooperation. The GCC Ministerial Committee was established in 2008 to follow up on the implementation of joint resolutions. Jarallah leads a Kuwaiti delegation to the meeting that includes senior officials of the Foreign Ministry. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait Ghulam Dastgir hosted a reception at Crowne Plaza hotel on the occasion of his country's national day. Senior officials, diplomats, media personalities and cross section of the Pakistani community attended the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



LAWMAKERS CALL FOR REVOKING DASHTI CITIZENSHIP, MEMBERSHIP

GRILLING AGAINST COMMERCE MINISTER • DOMESTIC HELP BILL AMENDMENT APPROVED

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The case of controversial MP Abdulhameed Dashti completely dominated the National Assembly's session yesterday amid sectarian tensions and calls to revoke his citizenship and parliament membership.

The assembly overwhelmingly voted to reject a sick leave request from Dashti who is outside the country and later approved two requests by the public prosecution to lift his parliamentary immunity so he could be interrogated for allegedly insulting Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, both key members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Dashti replied on his Twitter account, describing what happened in the session as a "play" by pro-Saudi members and vowed he will respond to their accusations at a press conference.

The lawmaker however did not say where he is currently amid speculations he is either in Britain or Syria. Dashti is facing several warrants to arrest him issued by the public prosecutor to interrogate him on allegation he insulted GCC member states.

Some MPs defended Dashti, saying different viewpoints must be respected and all should be treated equally under the law. They called for applying the constitution and the law and not to politicize Dashti's case.

Several MPs accused Dashti of being an Iranian 'agent', others claimed he was travelling in Iranian diplomatic cars in London and that he had met leader of the Lebanese militia Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah even after the group was classified as terrorist by the GCC. Deputy speaker Mubarak Al-Khrajeh called for an investigation into claims that Dashti travelled in Iranian diplomatic cars and the lawmaker's ties with Iran and other countries.

Absence

The intense debate was triggered by a request by Dashti to consider his absence from the session as legal as his office claimed that the lawmaker was receiving medical treatment abroad. Dashti also abstained from the sessions on March 15 and 16.

But several MPs called on the speaker to reject Dashti's request and to consider him absent without reason while others called for revoking his membership from the house. Others urged revoking his citizenship. Dashti left the country a few weeks ago after the government launched legal action against him for harshly criticizing

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and the Saudi-led campaign on Yemen.

Despite objections from some lawmakers, the assembly voted 40 against five to reject Dashti's letter which means he is considered absent without reason. The move means that the assembly can initiate action to strip Dashti of his membership in accordance with the constitution and the assembly charter which stipulate that MPs who fail to attend five sessions in a row without a reason can be stripped of their membership.

But the main debate took place when the assembly began discussing two requests from the public prosecution to lift Dashti immunity so he can be interrogat-



KUWAIT: MP Adnan Abdulsamad speaks during a parliament session yesterday, as Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah (center) and Justice Minister Yaqoub Al-Sane look on. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

ed. In one of the two requests, Dashti will be interrogated in connection with a legal conviction in Bahrain on charges he supplied funds to families of activists detained in the kingdom.

MP Adnan Abdulsamad strongly criticized the attitude of other lawmakers in handling the case of Dashti, saying such moves "will not terrorize us ... and we will not be frightened". He called for applying the constitution and the law. MP Abdullah Mayouf said Dashti was not expressing a political viewpoint but was instigating strikes against Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and other Gulf states.

Grilling motion

In the meantime, MPs Ahmad Al-

Qhudhaibi and Mubarak Al-Hurais yesterday filed a request to grill Commerce and Industry Ministry Yousef Al-Ali for alleged administrative violations. Speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanem said the grilling has been listed on the agenda of April 12 session. The two lawmakers claimed that the minister violated the law in the distribution of industrial plots and failed to activate the fund for small and medium sized development enterprises (SMEs).

They said that the minister changed a ministerial decree to prevent withdrawal of a number of industrial plots despite clear violations by the owners and failure to respond to repeated warnings. They claimed that instead of withdrawing the

cent in profits of the overall cost of bringing in foreign domestic help.

Moreover, this version also allocates about 10 percent of the company's shares to each of Kuwait Investment Authority, The Public Institution for Social Security, Public Authority for Minors Affairs, Kuwait Airways Company, and 60 percent to Union Of Consumer Co-Operative Societies.

Yemeni parties

In other news, First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah expressed hope yesterday that Kuwait hosting of Yemeni peace talks will be fruitful, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported. He urged all Yemeni parties to adhere to all agreed upon initiatives, in order to reach a solution for the Yemeni crisis, the Foreign Minister added in his intervention during the regular National Assembly session.

He recalled the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) Initiative which prevents a bloody war in Yemen, noting that the Gulf initiative and its framework drove Ali Abdullah Saleh out of power and started a national dialogue among all Yemeni components.

He expressed happiness to represent Kuwait and the GCC in the celebration of the National Dialogue outcomes in Sana'a, noting that he is keen on continuing to implement the Gulf initiative. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet on the ongoing preparations for hosting the Yemeni talks, expressing hope that the negotiations would result in restoring security and stability to Yemen.

Diplomatic missions

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also indicated that Kuwait has a total of 104 diplomatic missions abroad out of 192 member countries in the United Nations (UN). He added during the session that there is a mutual understanding among GCC countries in the presentation of diplomatic missions. In case there is no diplomatic mission in a Gulf state, another GCC state carries out and takes charge of the interests of that country, he further indicated.

On whether there is interference from the diplomatic missions in the work of technical offices, the minister indicated that the Foreign Ministry is abiding by the Vienna convention on diplomatic intercourse which states that the embassy is in charge of the work of its affiliate health, cultural and military offices.

Frankly Speaking

CLINICS VS HOSPITALS



By Talal Al-Ghannam

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Good morning my honorable readers, and I wish you all a blessed day. In this article, I would like to shed light on some incidents that happened to me personally and to some of my friends at different clinics and hospitals in Kuwait. Clinics and hospitals must be the safe haven for sick people who want to hear soothing and assuring words, rather than feeling scared or unwelcomed.

Let me start with some incidents that happened to my friends at a number of public hospitals. A close friend of mine took his 5-year-old boy to a hospital near Hawally complaining from high fever. As soon as he entered the doctor's room, the doctor was busy with his smart phone and told my friend to wait outside until he is through with his call. My friend replied that his son had high fever and could not wait any longer. The doctor got angry, wrote the prescription without even inspecting the little one and went back to finish up his call.

Another incident happened to another friend of mine who told me that he had visited a clinic near his house in Sabahiya. He was diagnosed with a sore throat and was given some medicine to gargle with it, but there was no use. So he thought he would be better off going to the hospital near that area. When the doctor there saw him, he said there is nothing wrong with the sore throat. "Take this pain killer and you will be ok," the doctor said. My friend replied that he felt pain when swallowing, then the doctor replied by saying: "You teach me how to do my work?"

The third incident that I have personally encountered is when I took my six-year-old boy to be inspected for a small bump on his eyelid. I was told by the doctor at the clinic to put a warm piece of cloth on it till it is gone. I believed him and did so. A few days later, the bump started to become bigger and bigger. I decided to take him to the big hospital near Hadiyah, and when he was diagnosed, I was told that he needed a minor surgery that must be done within a week. My son underwent the surgery, and alhamdulillah everything is fine now.

What I wanted to say is that doctors must take enough time to diagnose their patients rather than being busy with their smart phones. They need to look you in the eye, smile and assure you that everything will be fine after making the necessary tests, instead of giving the well-known painkiller.

Patients need assurance, a smile, a word of relief, rather than getting the painkiller and being discharged very quickly. Doctors are angels of mercy and must remain like that forever and always look at the patient as their kids, fathers, mothers, sisters or brothers.

In the US, when I used to go to a public hospital, I felt as if I was in a five-star hotel after seeing how careful the doctors, nurses and staff used to take care of me and others as well, because they respected the oath they had taken prior to assuming this humanitarian post. May Allah bless us all.

Until the next article in sha Allah.

COURT REVERSES MINISTRY'S DECISION ON LAW STUDENTS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The court of appeal yesterday annulled a first instance court's verdict authorizing the Minister of Education and Higher Education to suspend Kuwaiti students studying law in Egypt. The decision reverses the Education Ministry's decision. The court also called for cancelling the decision and allowing the students to resume their studies.

MINISTRY INTRODUCE PROGRAM TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' SKILLS

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education (MoE) stressed the importance of the 'Progress' program launched yesterday in cooperation with the British Council, and Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp (HSBC) that aims to support and develop skills among students.

On the sidelines of the launching ceremony, Haitham Al-Athari, the MoE's undersecretary, told reporters that the program is a joint project between the ministry and the council, and will be funded by HSBC.

The program, which is introduced in English language with a participation of about 240 male and female students, will be implemented experimentally for seven weeks at 12 schools, he said, adding that it will be applied first at intermediate schools. If the program makes positive results, it could be implemented at primary schools, he said, noting that US and British teachers can teach English language of the program, if there is room for this.

Asked if there is a possibility to apply the program in other languages, he stressed that the ministry is currently focusing on implementing it in English so as to help students acquire skills needed to learn this language.

Meanwhile, British Ambassador to Kuwait Matthew Lodge said in a similar statement the program aims to help teachers develop their educational skills. The seven-week program will aim at evolving students' skills, which will later be evaluated through internet besides the development courses given by experiences trainers, he added. Also Grant Butler, British Council's director in Kuwait, said the program includes training courses on personality strength and soft skills like cooperation with one team work, innovative thought and organization skills. It seeks to establish principles of effective communications and targets, during its first experimental year, about 1,629 students aged between 15-16 years in Kuwait, Algeria, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Egypt and Lebanon, he added. — KUNA



This handout photo shows an American man arrested for running a gambling den in his residence.



A firefighter sits inside a vehicle stuck in mud near Um Al-Namel Island.

GASOLINE TRUCK OVERTURNS ON HIGHWAY

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firemen responded to a dangerous situation yesterday when a gasoline tanker, with a full load of gasoline, flipped over in Rigaiya. Ardhya, hazardous material and support centers responded to the accidents. Large amounts of fuel spilled onto the street, so firemen prevented more leakage, and contained the leaks by closing the manholes.

In another incident, two cars were rescued by Doha firemen when they were stuck in mud near Um Al-Namel Island. The drivers, who work with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), were touring the area during a high tide which almost covered one of the cars. People in the cars were taken out and the cars were towed from the mud.

Detectives catch forger

Residency affairs detectives arrested an Iranian man for forging official documents. Information had it that a company is suspected for having applied for a large number of visas. Detectives investigated the matter and found out that four visas were issued without the knowledge of the company owner, as she is the only one who can sign on her company transactions. When transactions were reviewed, it was discovered the suspect signed them and asked the mandooab (representative) to process them.

Gambling den busted

Criminal detectives arrested an American man for running a gambling den in his residence. Detectives learned about the American's activity, so investigations were conducted and proved the information was correct. The house, located in Egaila was raided, tools, money and liquor were found. He was sent to concerned authorities.

WORLD BANK MONITORS MUNICIPALITY TO IMPROVE FUNCTIONS, SERVICES

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Municipality yesterday launched a partnership initiative with the World Bank authorizing the latter monitor the municipality's executive body activities from now on. Following a meeting with the World Bank delegation headed by Kuwait's office manager Dr Feras Ra'ad, Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi stressed that the Municipality was on the verge of launching a 'revolutionary' reform and development process.

The aim will be to improve work efficiency with the ultimate goal of attracting foreign investments and improve Kuwait's rank in the World Bank's report about Doing Business, especially after Kuwait lost 35 places for various reasons including licensing and protecting investors. "This project aims at putting an end to a long period during which the Municipality was subject to severe criticism," he said, pointing out that the Municipality is Kuwait's oldest government body from which all other ministries and government establishments originated. Manfouhi added that the project involves automating various licenses and issuing them online.

Dr Ra'ad and his accompanying delegation watched a presentation showing how transactions were done before and after automation. "This project

dates back to the 1970s," he said, noting that the project involves four elements: the public sector performance, the private sector, human resources development and developing infrastructure.

Pay-related complaints

Acting Director of the Manpower Public Authority Ahmad Al-Moussa issued an administrative decision mandating employers in government contracts' projects to sign affidavits holding them accountable in case any of their laborers filed any pay-related complaints. Moussa added that, with the aim of facilitating transactions, salary certificates issued for those projects employers who are committed to depositing labor salaries to local banks would be now issued with 90 days validity instead of the usual one month validity.

Shadadiya industrial area approved

The Municipal Council's technical affairs committee yesterday approved a project to design, execute and maintain the infrastructure of Shadadiya industrial area. The committee also approved a request made by the Ministry of Power and Water to build a new junction between Qadisiya block four and Maghreb expressway (Highway 40) and deferred discussing a number of topics on the meeting's agenda to further meetings.

In Brief

MALAYSIAN HALAL PRODUCTS TO KUWAIT UP BY 22.1%

KUALA LUMPUR: Exports of Malaysian Halal products to Kuwait rose by 22.1 percent to reach \$22.31 million, compared to \$57.25 million in 2014, Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) revealed. Malaysian Halal products exports to Kuwait accounted for 6.1 percent of the total exports to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries, Matrade's senior Director Wan Latif Wan Musa said. — KUNA



SEMINAR ON CHILD PROTECTION KICKS OFF

DOHA: The Gulf regional seminar on protecting the best interests of the child in cross-border family disputes kicked off in Doha yesterday. The objective of the seminar is to promote dialogue and further engagement between regional government officials, judges, independent experts and other stakeholders on emerging cross-border family disputes involving children. The seminar aims to explore regional perspectives on children's rights in the context of cross-border family disputes. — KUNA



KUWAITI BUSINESSWOMEN 'PIONEERS IN GULF': ENVOY

MANAMA: Dean of Diplomatic Corps in Bahrain, Kuwait's Ambassador Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah described Kuwaiti Businesswomen as 'pioneers in the Arabian Gulf Region'. During a speech at the International Businesswomen's Forum and Exhibition yesterday, Sheikh Azzam said Kuwaiti Businesswomen's participation in this forum shows their high status and role they play in the Kuwaiti economy. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: A diver cleans the sharks' tank inside the aquarium at the Scientific Center in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

PAY SEEKS CLOSER TIES WITH GOVT BODIES TO HELP SERVE YOUTH

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Youth (PAY) strives to forge fruitful partnerships with all public and government bodies, chiefly, the Ministry of Education, to help youth better contribute to society, the PAY said yesterday.

In a statement to the press after the opening of an artistic exhibition, Director General of PAY Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said that PAY has a number of youth projects planned to give the youth the opportunity to showcase their prowess, adding that it is in line with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs' vision for the youth. Moreover,

Mutairi revealed that PAY would hold a series of panel discussions with the youth to get their views on a myriad of issues. The PAY will continue to support the youth, Mutairi noted, describing them as the hope for a better tomorrow. The exhibition "instills in us the confidence in the

youth's efforts to attain persistent prosperity," he added. The exhibition's supervisor Meshaal Al-Matouq said that the aim of the exhibition is to boost the youth's sense of nationalism, in an event set to unveil youth craft and creativity. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Director General of PAY Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi (right) attends the opening of an artistic exhibition. — KUNA

STATEMENT FROM INDIAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL KUWAIT'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES ON RECENT CRISIS

KUWAIT: The Board of Trustees of the Indian Community School Kuwait held a meeting at the Senior School (ICSK) premises on Monday, March 28, 2016. Chairman of the Board of Trustees, S K Wadhawan informed the members that the sponsor had returned the keys of the boardroom and the adjoining office on Sunday.

All the members present in the country including the Vice Chairman Bobby Mathew, Secretary Vijay Karayil, Treasurer Sunil Kumar and Joint Secretary Santhosh Mathew attended the meeting which lasted for nearly four hours.

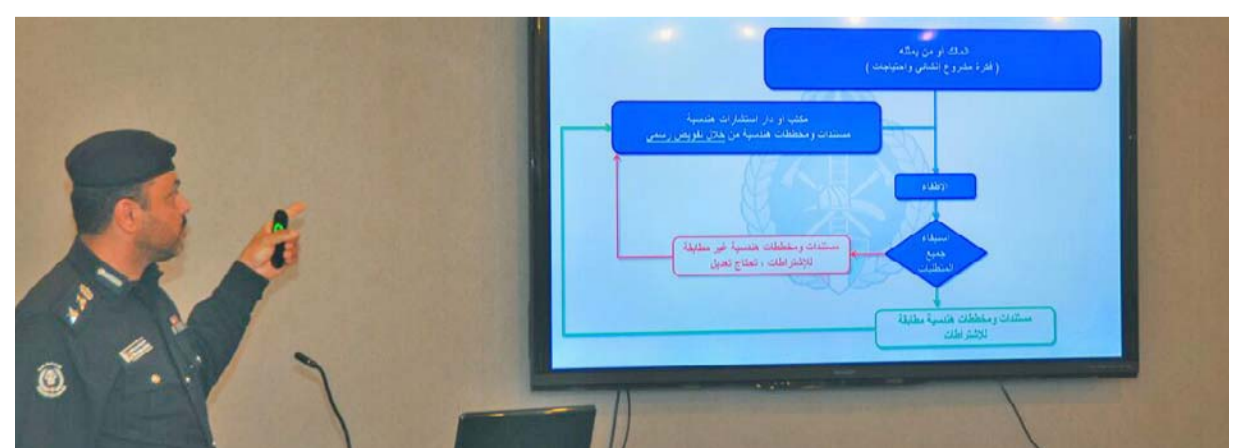
The extraordinary situation that had developed late last week was

discussed. The board reiterated that it was in close discussions with the Indian government and Embassy of India in Kuwait as well as the school's Council of Elders to amicably resolve the differences with the Kuwaiti sponsor. Further, the board has reassured all the staff members and the parents of all students that these developments would not affect the smooth functioning of the school in any way.

With regard to the differences with the sponsor related to the land allotted by the government of Kuwait for the construction of a new school, the board informed that all necessary measures are being taken

to resolve these differences.

It was also announced that the finances of the school are managed properly and no room exists for any misappropriation or manipulation. The school carries out yearly financial audits and the annual audited financials are posted on the school website every year. Any Indian citizen is welcome to visit the board room and review the financials. The Board of Trustees has reiterated its solidarity and commitment to serve the Indian community in Kuwait through diligent governance and expressed that it will continue to provide quality education at an affordable fees to the children of Indians in Kuwait.



KUWAIT: Acting Director General of Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) Major General Khalid Al-Mikrad opened the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) Engineers Workshop, who are supervising the design and execution of government projects under the ministry's supervision. The workshop is held to orient engineers with the documentary cycle for the prevention conditions of the KFSD, prevention sector from the submission of project licensing application, study stages, approval until the final handover. — By Hanan Al-Saoudon

GOVT EYES TOURISM AS NEW SOURCE OF INCOME: MINISTER TOURISM CONFERENCE KICKS OFF

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The government is keen to promote Kuwait's tourism sector and developing it as a way to diversify sources of income and create more opportunities for young people, a senior official said yesterday.

During a speech at the opening ceremony, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah made those statements at the inauguration of a conference on tourism titled 'Tourism and Development: Reality and Outlook' which kicked off at JW Marriott Hotel yesterday. The event, held under the motto 'Tourism is a need and a purpose,' is organized by the Information Ministry's Tourism Sector and Leaders Group for Consulting and Development.

Tourism strategy

The information ministry's tourism sector plans to activate the tourism field's role as well as form the 'Supreme Commission for Tourism' in order to put Kuwait's tourism strategy into practice, the minister said.

"This strategy includes participation from the private sectors, and aims to promote and develop new sources of national income other than the traditional methods that are based on oil," he added.

According to the minister, developing the tourism sector's infrastructure is required to achieve the vision of transforming Kuwait into a financial and commercial hub. "In 2013, a state body was set-up to encourage direct investment in order to improve the overall investment environment, enhance competitiveness and expand participation opportunities," the minister said. "It also contributes to the implementation of the goals of economic



KUWAIT: Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah (left) and Leaders Group's General Manager Nabila Al-Anjari speak at the conference. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and social policies of the country."

Vital projects

Minister Sheikh Salman further indicated that the Kuwaiti government has already started implementing many vital projects in that regard. It also showed interest in diverse cultural activities undertaken by the Ministry of Information's tourism sector and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL).

"[This] will have a significant impact on the direct development of the tourism sector in line with the national strategy for tourism," the minister said, adding that it would also help achieve the strategy's objectives of creating job opportunities and playing a role in diversifying sources of income sources.

Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud said meanwhile

that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has many tourism potentials, including the bases to become a global touristic destination with its historical, archeological, and cultural legacy. He pointed out the necessity of activating cooperation and partnership with the private sector and the development of human resources in the GCC region.

International factors

Nabila Al-Anjari, President of the Organizing Committee of the conference and General Manager of Leaders Group for Consulting and Development, said meanwhile that "international factors emerging in the field of oil and energy sources require efforts to move towards the process of mobilization of tourism in Kuwait."

She further highlighted the importance of tourism development on the economic level and to serve the country's developmental ambitions.

"Tourism is a strategic option to achieve several national goals economically, financially and developmentally, not to mention the importance of tourism and the entertainment industry as an outlet for the social, cultural and local sectors," she underlined.

Leading experiences

Anjari further stressed that the conference aims to take advantage of some of the leading touristic experiences and find out how to link between tourism development plans. She noted that the advancement of this sector locally has become an urgent necessity, especially since most countries worldwide adopt tourism as an integral part of their national economies.

"Kuwait must take advantage of the country's investment capabilities that exceed \$300 million, and employ them to make Kuwait an attractive touristic destination and to develop

the important national vision for the tourism industry in the country," She said. Participants at the two-day conference will present research papers about their visions and suggestions on organizational,

legislative and procedural topics relate to the theme of tourism and development. Proposals presented on that regard will be the focus of discussion by experts and specialists during the sessions.

RUSSIAN CINEMA FESTIVAL REFLECTS DEEP TIES WITH KUWAIT: MINISTER

KUWAIT: The Russian cinema festival in Kuwait represents the cultural aspect of the deep-rooted bilateral relations, Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah said late Monday. In a speech on the occasion of launching the festival at Abdulhussein Abduredha Theater, Sheikh Salman said historic visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Russian city of Sochi last November and meeting President Vladimir Putin had "instilled" cultural cooperation between the two countries.

He said the visit was crowned by signing a number of agreements, including a memorandum of understanding on cultural and artistic cooperation between the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) and the Russian Ministry of Culture. The NCCAL is organizing the festival.

On Russian cinema, Sheikh Salman, also Minister of State for Youth Affairs, commended its long histo-

ry, which dates back to 1896, as well as its professionalism and credibility that reflected reality lived by the Russian people. Sheikh Salman, who acts as Chairman of NCCAL, hoped that holding the event would open the door between 4Russian and Kuwaiti filmmakers to cooperate.

Meanwhile, the visiting Russian Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky underpinned significance of cooperation between the two countries, adding that art brings people closer and introduces them to different cultures. Then the film "Iron Ivan" was shown, as it follows the iconic strongman Ivan Poddubny, whose sporting career spanned 45 years, beginning in a circus and culminating in six World Championship and Olympic titles. It also tells the story of legendary wrestler who is remarkably trusting and easily deceived; experiences epic victories alongside enormous changes of fate. — KUNA



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الجريدة Al-Jarida

DISSOLVING THE PARLIAMENT

By Dr Hassan Jouhar

Rumors are going around about the possibility of dissolving the current parliament or, at least, about political pressure towards such an end. Yet, this pressure is not made by the opposition groups that have no gains in dissolving the parliament at this particular time. The pressure is rather made because no decision has yet been made about taking part in the next elections or because they are not yet ready.

Reasons for dissolving the parliament lie in the government's crisis concerning the deficit and lifting subsidies of goods and services on the one hand, and imposing more fees or even taxes, which requires a parliamentary approval on the other.

The government has politically and media-wise invested the current parliament as being a success of the single-vote electoral system, being a flexible and peaceful one through which many of its draft laws and projects were passed. The government has also successfully and easily survived all the nominal and non-nominal grilling motions it discussed with only one exception in the case of passing the government-proposed austerity plan, which would cost current lawmakers all support in the next elections due in fifteen months if it was passed. The government had everything passed through this 'weak' parliament.

So many of the current MPs might not accept being turned into a puppet in the hands of the government and influential political powers, their legislative side might be perceived as an achievement, but the monitoring side remains controversial because strong parliaments had never succeeded in toppling any cabinet or cabinet members. However, passing the fees increase and taxes is a publically important issue that directly affects people's lives and cannot be justified in any way.

In view of the current circumstances, dissolving the parliament might save so many current lawmakers and enable some of them to re-run during the following parliamentary elections and compete with veteran politically strong former MPs. At the same time, a constitutional dissolution might be needed to add value to this parliament and rank it among previous ones with wide public appeal, and which had been repeatedly dissolved and, thus, the single-vote electoral system would fade away and things would be more mixed.

Dissolving the parliament at this particular time and before concluding its constitutional tenure might ensure having a new one that is close in formation to the current one, even if many of its members were changed because the single-vote system would help include new figures that can be quickly contained. This will surely help keep current political icons in both authorities and will make it easy to pass decrees that might be issued while the parliament is dissolved and, thus, immune them forever. The government has no eternal friends nor enemies, and would make use of all political paradoxes and powers that have already grown weaker.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



KUWAIT PUSHES FORWARD WITH CCTV SECURITY MEASURES

KUWAIT: High ranking security authorities said the Interior Ministry asked all government bodies to install external surveillance cameras on their premises as a deterrent to crime. The request came following the surfacing of a video, widely circulated on social media, showing some young women breaking into cars parked before a government building.

On the instructions of Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the Health, Awqaf and Education ministries have all been requested to increase video surveillance of their respective domains. Moving forward, CCTV cameras will be used to monitor health clinics, hospitals, schools and mosques. Cooperative

societies will contribute to this security operation by providing all their branches and super markets with internal and external cameras. The next step will be to require all six governorates to install CCTV cameras on entrances and exits of residential areas, expecting 80 percent of Kuwait's inhabited area to be monitored, reported Al-Anbaba.

MUNICIPALITY REFERS BANK GUARANTEE FORGERY CASES TO PROSECUTION

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi announced that he has referred 15 bank guarantee forgery cases to the public prosecution.

Responding to an inquiry filed by Municipal Council member Fahad Al-Sane about fake bank guarantees, Manfouhi explained that the standard procedures followed in such cases is to submit a report made by a specialized team to the municipality's director, who refers it to the legal affairs department for investigation. The municipality's director would then refer the investigations' results to the public funds' prosecution department to conduct further

investigations, he added. "Most recent investigations resulted in referring 15 citations to public prosecution and three of them are being currently investigated," he explained.

Further, Manfouhi added that new strict measures were in effect now to prevent any further forgery cases by verifying the letters issued by the financial affairs' department, naming specific employees and substitutes to be responsible for those documents and keeping those bank guarantee letters in safe secured places, making sure they are not released until the release was officially approved. — Al-Qabas

Crime

Report

Domestic helper raped

KUWAIT: A Filipina expat told Sabah Al-Salem police that she was raped by a man. She said the suspect came to the domestic help office where she works, and agreed with the owner to take her to a house where his wife was supposed to be and paid the fees. She said he took her to a flat where no one else was and raped her. She said she was able to escape when the suspect went to sleep. Mistreatment and abuse of domestic helpers is common in Kuwait. There is also little to no oversight of domestic employment offices and in many cases, the foreign domestic helpers have no idea of who may be hiring them or what circumstances they will be thrown into when taken to their new places of employment.

Dead dolphin in Kuwait Bay

A sea environment patrol discovered the corpse of a dead dolphin in Kuwait Bay (east of Tabanat Um Al-Fahim). The dolphin weighed 70 kg and 160 cm long. It was handed to Kuwait Municipality for examination.

Drunk driver arrested

Policemen controlled a drunk man in Salmiya, after he attacked them when they wanted to place him in the patrol car, telling them "I am not the one who gets in patrol cars." He was placed in the detention cell despite several attempted mediations. The man was charged with drunkenness and insulting officers on duty. Policemen stopped the man for driving erratically and found him inebriated.

Men caught with captagon tablets

Security men in Jahra arrested a citizen and a Saudi national while under the influence of drugs. The men were found to be in possession of 41 Captagon tablets. Both were sent to Drugs Control General Department.

Car robbery faked

Criminal detectives discovered the lies of a citizen who attempted to relieve himself of a KD 36,500 debt, by claiming his car was broken into while parked at the Palace of Justice parking lot, and the money was stolen. Then later found out he was the one who broke the windows of the car to fake a robbery. Detectives charged the man with filing a false report and disturbing security authorities.

Citizen attacked by brother

A citizen from Qairawan area sought police help as his brother-in-law attacked him his house and beat him, threatening to kill him due to previous disputes. Detectives are investigating.

Murder attempt during drug raid

The Ahmadi prosecutor charged a citizen with attempted murder among other crimes. A security source said information received by the drugs control department regarding a citizen trading in drugs led to an undercover operation. Detectives attempted to lure the man to sell drugs but when this failed, they attempted to raid his house, and were surprised when he attacked an officer with an axe. The man was controlled and taken to Adan police station.

Fights lead to charges

Three persons including a Gulf national and a bedoon were sent to the public prosecution, over different charges. The Gulf national was charged with urging a woman to have vice acts and fighting, while his bedoon colleague was accused of fighting. Police received a call about a fight between a citizen and three security guards at the mall where they work. The citizen said he was walking behind his wife when he saw a guard harassing her, so a fight started then the guard's colleagues interfered and beat the citizen. — Al-Rai

STATE LANDS FEES WAIVED

KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry Minister Yousuf Al-Ali issued a decision waiving the fees charged to anyone who leases a state property, then rents the property to others or allows others to use it, although the two actions are a violation of the original contracts between the state and users of industrial, occupational and commercial lands. The decision places the land of ready-mixed concrete, asphalt and gravel storage in Mina Abdallah, Salmi and Nuwaiseeb under the fees of industrial lands which is increased every year from KD 0.400 per meter squared in the first year to KD 1 in the fourth year. — Al-Jarida



KUWAIT: A photo showing sewage pollution found at the Shaab beach. — Photo courtesy of Al-Qabas

SHAAB COAST FLOODED BY SEWAGE WATER

KUWAIT: It seems that the new environment protection law managed to stop a large number of environmental violations but failed so far to stop sea-water pollution created by sewage water pumped by Ministry of Public Works (MPW) rain drainage manholes into Kuwait Bay and on various coasts, said unnamed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sources quoted by Al-Qabas. The EPA has already referred Ministry of Public Works violations in this regard to the public prosecution.

The sources added that MPW has so far failed to solve the problem of draining sewage water into the sea, which was recently detected washed ashore at Shaab coast along the Sea Front number 2.

Kuwait law forbids the dumping of sewage water and industrial wastes into the sea. "The EPA has already filed a huge number of violations committed by MPW at seven different marine sites," the EPA source explained, noting

that during a meeting held by representatives from both sides, it was suggested to close the rain drainage outlets into the sea after the rainy season.

Article 35 of the environment law bans disposing of liquid sewage and industrial wastes through rain drainage systems. "The article also

mandates relevant authorities to build special plants for these areas within a maximum of seven years as of the issue of the law," added the source noting that violating this article was subject to a penalty of one to three years in prison and/or a KD 10,000-KD 50,000 fine.

KD 989 MILLION SPENT ANNUALLY ON COSMETICS

KUWAIT: A recent study found that 50 to 60 percent of Kuwaiti women aged between 15 and 55 spend considerable amounts of money every year on beauty, cosmetics and fitness products.

The study, conducted by Al-Qabas daily, showed that between 205,000 and 230,000 Kuwaiti women spend KD 350 to 400 per month on beauty which adds up

their total spending to KD 980 million a year. The study also stressed that, in view of their affluence, Kuwaiti women are keen on beauty and fitness, adding that they are always in seek of the latest products in cosmetics, skin care creams, hair care, manicure, perfumes, health, special diets, hair dyes, spas, massage sessions, plastic surgery, Botox and filler injections. — Al-Qabas

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

BELGIUM HUNTS AIRPORT SUSPECT AS CRITICISM MOUNTS

BRUSSELS: Under-fire Belgian authorities hunted a fugitive bomber yesterday, a week after the attacks on the heart of Europe, as the city's airport warned it could take months to fully reopen despite holding a drill for a partial restart.

As Brussels struggled to get back on its feet, criticism of Belgium's handling of the case mounted after the sole suspect to be charged over the metro and airport attacks was freed for lack of evidence linking him to the carnage.

Prosecutors had charged the suspect, known as Faycal C., with "terrorist murder" and were investigating whether he was the third airport attacker who fled after his bomb did not detonate. With his release on Monday, the hunt was back on for the so-called "man in the hat" seen in CCTV footage next to the two Islamic State suicide bombers at Zaventem airport.

The airport, closed since the blasts wrecked the departure hall, was ready to stage a test run Tuesday involving hundreds of volunteer staff to determine if it was ready to resume flights, albeit in a very limited capacity, today.

A temporary check-in facility has been set up and passengers will be subject to extra security checks. Brussels Airport chief executive Arnaud Feist told L'Echo daily it could take "months" for the airport to be fully operational again.

Telephone alibi

A total of 35 people died in the attacks at the airport and Maalbeek metro station and 340 were injured, 96 of whom remain in hospital. Many foreign nationals were among the victims, testament to the cosmopolitan nature of a city that is home to both the European Union and NATO. Nearly all the fatalities have now been identified. The Indian government yesterday confirmed that a 31-year-old Indian man was on the metro train blown up by a suicide bomber.

While Belgian authorities were quick to identify all three bombers, the inquiry has been dogged by accusations that Belgium missed a series of leads in cracking down on a jihadist network linked to the Brussels attacks as well as the November 13 Paris massacres that killed 130 people.

Adding to the recriminations, Brussels mayor Yvan Mayeur said he regretted the release of the man identified by Belgian media as Faycal Cheffou, who claimed to be a freelance journalist.

Hinting at suspicions that the man was a jihadist recruiter, he told French media: "There is a very thin line between an agitated radical and a radical recruiter, and in this case the judge probably didn't want to cross that line." The man's lawyer Olivier Martins told RTBF television that his client was let go because he had an alibi. "He gave an alibi based on telephone analysis which showed that he was at home at the time of the attacks," Martins was quoted as saying. Under pressure at home and abroad for an apparent series of missed clues in keeping tabs on criminals linked to jihadist networks, the Belgian government has admitted mistakes were made. In the most glaring such example, Turkey accused Belgium last week of ignoring a clear and present danger after revealing it had deported airport suicide bomber Ibrahim El Bakraoui as a "terrorist fighter" last year after arresting him near the Syrian border. —AFP



BRUSSELS: The press waits outside the home of Faycal Cheffou, the day after he was released following his arrest last week on suspicion of involvement in the attacks.—AFP

بلدية الكويت Kuwait Municipality

Announcement No. (252016/)

Regarding the extension of the period of accepting applications for the prequalification of cities cleaning companies and corporation.

Further to the announcement No. (92016/) issued by the official gazette issue No. (1273) on January 31, 2016

Kuwait municipality announces to extend the period of accepting application for the prequalified National, Gulf and international companies and corporation specialized in cleaning the cities for 2 months. Therefore all city cleaning-specialized companies and institutions that already has been prequalified by Kuwait municipality or those new companies wishing to get registered shall approach tenders and contracts departments at Kuwait municipality to obtain registration forms and conditions required against a fee of KD 200 (Two Hundred Kuwait Dinars Only) during official hours of work.

Bearing in mind that the deadline for admission applications has been postponed to Monday corresponding to 302016/5/.

Director-General
Kuwait municipality

TAIWAN BEHEADING SUSPECT BEATEN BY AN ANGRY MOB

TAIPEI: A Taiwanese man suspected of decapitating a four-year-old girl was beaten by an angry mob, as the case sparked fresh debate yesterday about the death penalty for child-killers.

The man grabbed the child as she cycled to a Taipei metro station with her mother on Monday, and beheaded her with a kitchen knife, police said. The suspect pushed away the girl's mother as she tried to save her daughter. Seven bystanders were also unable to stop the man, police added. The girl has been identified only by her surname Liu. Local media have used her family nickname "little light bulb". Police said the suspect, a 33-year-old surnamed Wang,

had previously been arrested for drug related crimes and had sought medical treatment for mental illness. The case, the second child killing in Taipei in less than a year, has sparked widespread public anger and criticism of calls to abolish the death penalty.

Taiwan resumed capital punishment in 2010 after a five-year hiatus. Executions are reserved for serious crimes including aggravated murder and kidnapping, but the political elite is divided over whether or not to retain it.

Parliament says it will on Thursday a review of a bill that would ensure those convicted of killing children under 12 are given the death penalty, or at least a

life sentence in the case of severe mental illness. "I am deeply saddened by the case... (the suspect) should be sentenced to death in the case of a stranger killing a child," said lawmaker Wang Yumin, who proposed the bill.

Children's welfare group the White Rose Social Care Association is planning to hold a rally in Taipei on April 10 to push for enforcement of capital punishment. "This kind of random killing shows that Taiwan cannot afford to abolish the death penalty," said chairwoman Eva Liang. The girl's mother, however, urged the public not to discuss the issue to allow the family time to grieve.

"If you are concerned about us or have sympathy, please respect us... I don't wish to see such discussions at the time being," she told reporters outside a funeral home, also asking people not to circulate photos of the girl's body.

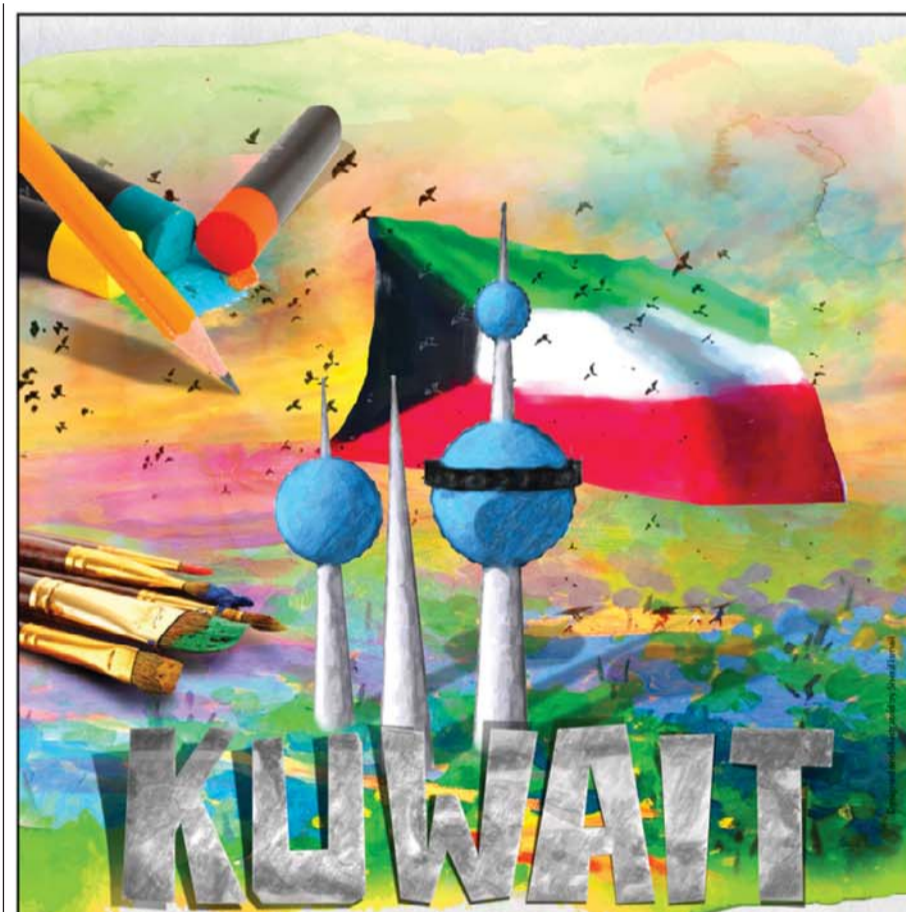
'Stop beating'

Television footage Monday showed dozens of angry people gathered outside a police station in Taipei where the suspect was being held. Some attacked the man as he was being transferred to the prosecutor's office for questioning. He pleaded with them to "stop beating".

Others came to lay flowers and toys at the spot where the girl was killed and her family held a religious ceremony for her there.

President-elect Tsai Ing-wen who will take office on May 20, also went to the scene to lay flowers.

"This incident deals a big blow to Taiwan's society. Many Taiwanese people are saddened and feel insecure... We should work together so parents don't have to worry and children can grow up safely," she said.—AFP



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BEIRUT AIRPORT NEEDS NEW SAFETY EQUIPMENT

BEIRUT: Beirut airport needs at least \$24 million to address pressing gaps in security, including a new wall and baggage inspection equipment, Public Works and Transport Minister Ghazi Zeaiter said yesterday.

Building a new perimeter wall - which will cost \$1.4 million is the most urgent priority, he told journalists at the airport while authorities in Cyprus, 200 km away, negotiated a safe end to the hijacking of

an Egypt Air flight. Beirut airport's decaying sea wall, protecting the western runway, is also a key concern and repairing it fully would cost up to \$54 million, he said. Zeaiter implied security and safety improvements had not been undertaken because financing approvals have been delayed. "Today we need rapidly to decide the financing for the airport," he said, adding that if a cabinet meeting on

Thursday did not authorize financing for the new wall he would directly instruct the contractor to begin work.

Lebanon's security concerns have escalated since the outbreak of war in neighboring Syria, which has heightened already strained sectarian relations in the country. A suicide bomb attack, one of many attacks to have hit Beirut and Tripoli since Syria's conflict began, killed at least

43 people four months ago in southern Beirut, where the airport named after the assassinated Prime Minister Rafik Hariri is located. Interior Minister Nohad Machnouk has said he is concerned about inadequate safety procedures at the airport. "There are security gaps in Beirut airport which must be plugged," he said last week. In those comments, he compared Beirut airport security to that at Egypt's

Sharm el-Sheikh, where a bomb planted on a Russian passenger plane killed 224 people in October. Zeaiter declined to comment on these remarks.

In spite of his list of concerns, Zeaiter sought to reassure travellers. "Rafik Hariri International Airport, despite these shortcomings at human or equipment level, is among the most secure airports in the world," he said. — Reuters

BAHRAIN COURT JAILS 10 OVER POLICE ATTACK

DUBAI: Yesterday Bahrain sentenced 10 people to between three years and life in prison for attacking police during a protest in a Shiite village, the prosecution said. The defendants were found guilty of involvement in "terrorist plots" and detonating explosives, the kingdom's public prosecution said in a statement. "Four were sentenced to life in prison, while the remaining defendants were jailed for between three and 15 years," it said.

The defendants were accused of detonating a roadside bomb when a police patrol passed in the village of Akr, south of Manama, in April 2014. Three police vehicles were damaged in the attack, the prose-

cution said. Bahrain has been shaken by unrest since it quelled a month-long Shiite-led uprising demanding reforms which erupted on February 14, 2011.

The tiny but strategically important kingdom is connected to regional Sunni powerhouse Saudi Arabia by a causeway. It lies across the Gulf from Shiite Iran and is home to the US Fifth Fleet. Despite the crackdown on the 2011 uprising, protesters frequently attack police in Shiite villages outside the capital Manama.

At least nine people were given jail terms of varying lengths earlier this month in cases involving attacks on police and a bus, as well as a "terrorist" plot. — AFP

ISRAELI SOLDIER WHO SHOT PALESTINIAN APPEARS IN COURT

BAR-LEV MILITARY BASE: An Israeli soldier caught on video shooting a wounded Palestinian assailant in the head as he lay on the ground appeared in a military court yesterday as dozens of his supporters protested outside.

Prosecutors were seeking to extend the remand of the soldier until April 7 in a case that has gripped the country and sparked political tensions. The 19-year-old soldier's identity has been kept secret under a gag order, granted at the request of his lawyers. The protesters called for the soldier's release despite video footage shared widely online showing him shoot the Palestinian in the head without any apparent provocation.

Military top brass have strongly condemned his behavior and Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon has pledged that the incident will be treated with "utmost severity". But far-right politicians have defended the soldier, and members of his family said he was being publicly "lynched" and would not receive a fair trial. Ex-foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman, currently a member of the opposition, was among those in court in support of the soldier.

Around a dozen of the soldiers' family

members were also in the public gallery, some of them in tears. Video of Thursday's incident in the flashpoint West Bank city of Hebron spread widely online and threatened to further inflame tensions amid a wave of violence that erupted in October.

It showed a 21-year-old Palestinian, who along with another man had allegedly stabbed a soldier minutes earlier, lying on the ground, apparently after being shot. The soldier then shoots him again, in the head, without any apparent provocation. The Palestinian, Abdul Fatah al-Sharif, was killed. "The suspicion emanating from the investigation is that the shooting was carried out intentionally and without need," prosecutor Lieutenant Colonel Adoram Rigler told the court. Defense lawyers said the Palestinian could have had an explosive device, even though he had reportedly been checked for a suicide belt before the shooting.

"There was no bomb-squad investigation, even if the officer kicked away the knife," said defense lawyer Ilan Katz. The hearing wrapped up on Tuesday afternoon and the decision was expected later in the day. — AFP



PALMYRA: Destruction is seen in the historical city yesterday. — AFP

ARMY PRESSURES IS IN CENTRAL SYRIA AFTER PALMYRA WIN

'PUSHING TO SECURE A 'FINAL VICTORY' OVER THE JIHADISTS'

BEIRUT: Regime troops were locked in heavy fighting yesterday with the Islamic State group in central Syria, where they dealt the jihadists a major blow by seizing the ancient city of Palmyra.

Just two days after seizing Palmyra from IS, pro-government fighters advanced southwest towards the jihadist-held town of Al-Qaryatayn, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. They captured a series of strategic hilltops overlooking the town, said the Britain-based monitor, backed by "intense" air strikes by both Syrian and Russian warplanes.

State news agency SANA said the army, backed by pro-government militia, had also seized rural farmland south of Al-Qaryatayn as they closed in on the town. IS had seized the strategic town in August 2015, kidnapping at least 230 people, including dozens of Christians, and razing its famed Mar Elian monastery.

The town lies on a key road linking Palmyra with the Qalamun region of Damascus province to the west. Sunday's capture of Palmyra, known as the "Pearl of the Desert" for its colonnaded alleyways and stunning temples, was seen as the biggest blow so far in the war against IS in Syria. Syria's government has hailed the victory as proof of its credentials in the anti-IS fight. Yesterday, Defense Minister

Fahed Jassem al-Frej said the armed forces would push their offensive against IS to secure a "final victory" over the jihadists, the SANA state news agency reported. "Bringing security and stability to Palmyra is an essential step towards a final victory over takfiri (extremist Sunni Muslim) terrorism," Frej told his Iranian counterpart Hossein Dehghan.

Syria's armed forces have pledged to strengthen their hold on Palmyra and press on towards IS's northern bastion in Raqa as well as the oil-rich province of Deir Ezzor to the east.

Russia deminers to Palmyra

The jihadists swept into Palmyra, a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site, in May 2015 and began a campaign to destroy tombs and shrines it considers idolatrous. The extremist group demolished the 2,000-year-old temple of Bel and also blew up the Arch of Triumph.

IS also used Palmyra's ancient theatre as a venue for public executions and murdered the city's 82-year-old former antiquities chief, Khaled al-Asaad.

Syria's head of antiquities, Maamoun Abdulkarim, told AFP that 80 percent of the site was still "in good shape" and the ancient ruins could be restored in five years with UNESCO's help. But UN expert Annie Sartre-Fauriat, who belongs to a group of experts on

Syrian heritage set up by UNESCO in 2013, said she was "very doubtful" that would be possible. As they retreated from Palmyra at the weekend, IS fighters planted roadside mines near some of the most celebrated ruins of the city.

Syrian army sappers have already defused dozens of the makeshift bombs and have conducted controlled detonations of others, a military source told AFP.

Yesterday, Moscow dispatched a group of Russian deminers, sniffer dogs, and advanced radar equipment to help the Syrian army secure Palmyra, Russia's state media channel Pervy Kanal reported. Moscow began its air war in support of President Bashar al-Assad's troops in September, carrying out strikes on "terrorist" targets across the country. Earlier this month Russia announced a drawdown but it said it would keep up its support for the regime's battle against IS and other jihadist groups.

Analysts say that only 10-25 percent of Russian forces have left Syria since President Vladimir Putin announced the withdrawal. "All the talk in the West that Russia was going to ditch Assad was nonsense," said Pavel Felgengauer, a Russian military analyst. "We are not planning to abandon him now. Russia wants Assad to stay in power and the goal is to give him a chance to win the civil war." — AFP



KIRYAT: Israeli citizens hold banners and Israeli flags during a demonstration in front of the Israeli Army Justice court in Kiryat Malakhi yesterday to support a soldier who was suspended after being caught on video shooting a wounded Palestinian assailant in the head as he lay on the ground. — AFP

SUICIDE BOMBER KILLS AT LEAST 7 CIVILIANS IN IRAQI CAPITAL

BAGHDAD: Iraqi officials say a suicide bombing in the capital has killed at least seven civilians and wounded 23. A police officer says the suicide bomber set off his payload among a group of day laborers in Baghdad's Tayaran Square yesterday. A medical official confirms the toll. Both spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to brief reporters.

The Islamic State group claimed the

attack in an online statement circulated by supporters, saying it targeted Shiite militiamen. In recent months the Sunni extremists have carried out a series of large attacks mainly targeting Iraq's Shiite majority and Shiite-dominated security services.

The attacks come as IS has lost ground on a number of fronts in Syria and Iraq, where it governs a self-styled Islamic caliphate. — AP



BAGHDAD: Municipality workers clean a street as civilians gather at the scene of a suicide bombing in Tayaran Square yesterday. — AP

TURKEY PROTESTS GERMANY OVER SATIRICAL ERDOGAN VIDEO

ANKARA: The German ambassador to Turkey has been summoned to the foreign ministry over a German television broadcast of a song that pokes fun at Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a Turkish official said yesterday.

Turkey condemned the satirical video to Ambassador Martin Erdmann during a meeting last week and demanded that the public broadcaster that aired it on March 17 cease showing it, according to a ministry official who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with government rules.

The German-language song, which can still be seen on broadcaster ARD's website and on social media, alludes to the imprisonment of opposition journalists, authorities' heavy-handed response to protesters and allegations that Turkey prefers to take action against Kurdish rebels rather than the Islamic State group. It features a clip of Erdogan falling off a horse.

Its lyrics include the line: "A journalist who writes something that doesn't suit Erdogan will be in the slammer tomorrow." Germany's Foreign Ministry confirmed in a statement that its ambassador in Ankara discussed the issue with Turkish diplomats Tuesday and "a few days ago." "He made clear in these conversations that the rule of law, independence of the judiciary and protection of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of the press and freedom of expression, are valuable goods that must be protected together," the ministry said.

The broadcaster made a similar point about freedom of expression. "That the Turkish government apparently has taken diplomatic action ... is not compatible with our understanding of freedom of the press and opinion," Andreas Cichowicz, the chief editor of NDR television, the ARD regional broadcaster that produced the song, told German news agency dpa.



ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses a meeting on Saturday. — AP

He said NDR hasn't yet received any complaint.

The German Federation of Journalists' chairman, Frank Ueberall, said that Erdogan "apparently has lost his grip." Ueberall added in a statement that the president's indignation is "laughable" but said people shouldn't overlook the fact that "the persecution of critical journalists is bitter reality in Turkey."

More than 1,800 cases have been opened against people accused of insulting Erdogan since he came to office in 2014, under a previously seldom-used law against insulting the president. Those who have gone on trial include celebrities, journalists and even schoolchildren.

The Turkish official said a number of foreign envoys are being summoned to the ministry for a formal protest about a group of diplomats who last week attended the trial of two opposition journalists.

Erdogan severely criticized the diplomats - including one who posted selfies from the courthouse - accusing them of violating their boundaries and siding with those he said wanted to carry out a "coup" against the government. Turkey is concerned over "postings on social media that amount to intervention in the independence of the courts and are contrary to the principle of impartiality," the ministry official said. — AP

BRUSSELS AIRPORT COULD 'AT BEST' REOPEN TODAY

BRUSSELS: Brussels Airport could "at best" resume very limited services today but it will take months to get back to normal after two suicide bombers destroyed the departure terminal, chief executive Arnaud Feist said.

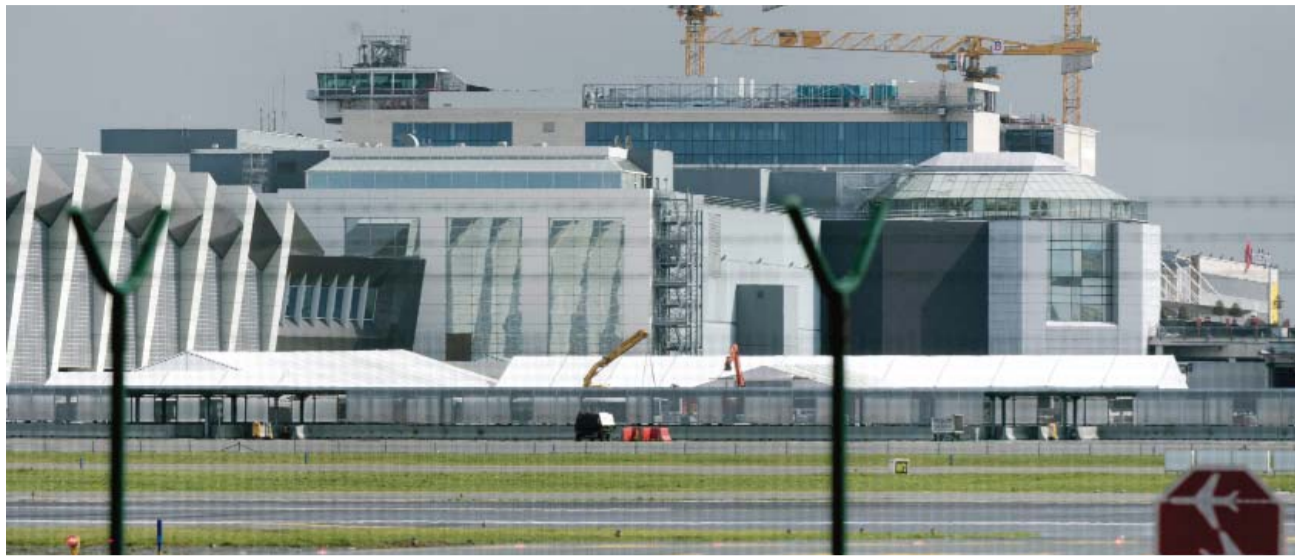
The airport is running a series of tests Tuesday to see if makeshift check-in facilities are good enough to restart some flights and that repair work and new security measures are adequate after the deadly March 22 attacks.

Feist told L'Echo in an interview published Tuesday that everything depends on the outcome of the tests at Zaventem, with some 800 airport staff going through the temporary facilities. "In principle, if everybody gives the green light, we would be near a solution. If that is the case and the airlines are ready and agree, we

could get going again on Wednesday," he said.

"I must stress, however, that that is just hypothetical." Brussels is a major European hub and has flights to destinations worldwide. Even if some services are possible, they would amount to about only 20 percent of normal, that is handling about 800-1,000 passengers an hour, Feist said.

For a full return to normal, "we will have to wait for months," Feist added. Two suicide bombers blew themselves up in the departure hall last Tuesday, wrecking the concourse, and shortly afterwards another bomber hit the Brussels metro, leaving 35 people dead in Belgium's worst-ever terror attack. In an effort to keep at least some services going, airlines moved operations to regional airports or even to neighboring countries such as the Netherlands and Germany. — AFP



ZAVENTEM: Tents at Brussels Airport, where authorities are running a series of tests to see if makeshift check-in facilities are good enough to restart some flights and that repair work and new security measures are adequate after the deadly March 22 attacks. — AFP

PAKISTAN DETAINED MORE THAN 5,000 AFTER EASTER BOMBING KILLED 70 'ALL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES INVOLVED'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani authorities detained more than 5,000 suspects, then released most of them, in the two days since a suicide bomber hit a park in the eastern city of Lahore at Easter, killing at least 70 people, a provincial minister said yesterday.

Investigators were keeping 216 suspects in custody pending further investigation, said Rana Sanaullah, a state minister for Punjab province from Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's ruling party. "After further investigation we will know more about them," he said. "...If someone is found to be guilty they will be charged." Details of the sweeping raids - aimed at anyone suspected of Islamist extremism - came as the Taliban faction claiming responsibility for the attack issued a new threat yesterday, singling out the media.

"Everyone will get their turn in this war, especially the slave Pakistani media," Ehsanullah Ehsan, spokesman for Jamaat-ur-Ahrar, tweeted. "We are just waiting for the appropriate time." The Easter bombing was Pakistan's deadliest attack since a 2014 school massacre claimed by the Taliban killed 134 students. Sunday's attack, which included 29 children among the dead, showed the militants can still cause carnage despite military raids on their northwestern strongholds.

"Let Nawaz Sharif know that this war has now come to the threshold of his home," tweeted Ehsan. "The winners of this war will, God willing, be the righteous mujahideen." Lahore is the capital of Punjab, Pakistan's richest and most populous province and Sharif's political heartland. Sanaullah said at least 160 raids were carried out by a mixture of police, counterterrorism and intelligence agents and confirmed that army and paramilitary forces would be used in.

Future operations

"This operation will include all law enforcement agencies," Sanaullah said. Military and government officials on Monday said that the military was preparing to launch a new paramilitary counterterrorism crackdown in Punjab. The move, which has not yet been formally announced, represents the civilian government once again granting special powers to the military to fight Islamist militants.

Jamaat-ur-Ahrar, which also previously declared loyalty to Islamic State, has carried out five major attacks in Pakistan since December. In a televised address to the nation on Monday night, Sharif vowed to continue pursuing militants.

"I am here to renew a pledge that we are keeping count of every drop of blood of our martyrs. This account is being settled, and we will not rest till it is paid," Sharif said. The government also announced



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif addressing the nation at his office. — AFP

that Sharif would be cancelling a planned trip to the United States to attend the Nuclear Security Summit, due to begin on Thursday.

Pakistan's security agencies have long been accused of nurturing some Islamist militants to use for help in pursuing objectives in Afghanistan and against old rival India.

In recent years, Pakistan has cracked down on movements that target its own citizens and institutions, including the Pakistani Taliban who are fighting to topple the government and install a strict interpretation of Islamic law.

Taliban taunts

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his powerful military chief have both vowed to bring those behind the attack to justice. "Terrorists cannot dent our resolve. Our struggle will continue until the complete elimination of the menace of terrorism," the premier said Monday after visiting victims in the provincial capital, a stronghold of his ruling Pakistan Muslim League.

But yesterday Ehsanullah Ehsan, spokesman for the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar faction, derided the prime minister on Twitter. "After the Lahore attack, Nawaz Sharif repeated old words to give himself false assurances,"

he wrote.

"Nawaz Sharif should know that war has reached his doorstep, and God willing the mujahideen will be the winners in this war." Kashir Nawab, a 32-year-old Christian from the Youhanabad district of Lahore, said a "pall of gloom" hung over the area as mourners visited the homes of those lost in the blast.

Nawab said he was working to help arrange funeral services. "Everybody is frightened and the Christians particularly feel unprotected," he said. The attack was the worst so far this year in a country grimly accustomed to atrocities, and will further fray inter-religious ties. 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 Taliban 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 was the lowest since the TTP umbrella grouping was formed in 2007. But analysts have warned the group is still able to carry out major attacks. — Agencies

INDIA CONFIRMS INFOSYS EMPLOYEE KILLED IN BRUSSELS

MUMBAI: An Indian man missing since last week's bombings in Brussels died in the attacks that killed 35 people, his employer and India's government have said. "It is with deep regret that we confirm the passing of our colleague Raghavendran Ganeshan in the terrible attack in Brussels," Indian software giant Infosys wrote on Twitter late Monday. "Our thoughts and prayers are with Raghavendran's family and with those who were injured or lost a loved one in these attacks," added the Bangalore-based software firm in another tweet.

India's Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj tweeted that the 31-year-old, who had been working in Brussels for four years, was killed in the blast at Maalbeek metro station. "Unfortunately, he was travelling in the same coach of the metro in which the suicide bomber blew himself up," Swaraj wrote. "His mortal remains are being handed over to the family in Brussels."

Indian media said Raghavendran was from the southern state of Tamil Nadu and

had recently become a father. His wife and young son are reportedly in India, while his parents and younger brother have travelled to Brussels.

On Monday, Belgian officials said the death toll from the March 22 Islamic State bombings had climbed to 35 after four people died in hospital. Some 340 were also injured in the attacks on the metro and Zaventem airport, Belgium's worst ever terror atrocity. The dead include four Americans as well as people from countries from China to Britain, Sweden to Peru, testament to the cosmopolitan nature of a city that is home to both the European Union and NATO.

An Indian flight attendant who was pictured covered in dust and blood after the attacks at the airport, making newspaper front pages around the world, is currently recovering in hospital. A haunting image of Jet Airways employee Nidhi Chaphekar, from Mumbai, showing her yellow jacket torn, became one of the most widely published images of the bombings. — AFP

WOMAN TO BE EXECUTED FOR CUTTING LOVER'S HEART OUT

DHAKA: A young woman who cut her lover's heart out and slashed his throat has been sentenced to death by a Bangladeshi court, a prosecutor said yesterday.

Fatema Akhter Sonali, 21, acted out of revenge after the man refused to marry her and secretly kept recordings of the couple having sex, prosecutor Quazi Shabbir Ahmed said. She had also found video footage of him having sex with other women on his laptop, Ahmed said. "It's rare for a woman to be sentenced to death. But her case was exceptional," he told AFP. "She admitted to the court she killed her lover, Emdadul Haq Shipon, for refusing to marry her and for keeping a recording video of their sexual intercourse in his laptop."

The judge delivered Sonali's sentence on Monday in a packed court in

the southwestern city of Khulna. In her confession, Sonali said she spiked a soft drink with 20 sleeping pills and gave it to Shipon, a 28-year-old part-time lift attendant at a hospital. When he fell unconscious, she bound his hands and feet before killing him by slitting his throat. Sonali then cut open his chest and removed his heart.

"She told the court that she was curious to see how big his heart was. She said a man must have a big heart to carry out such audacious crimes," said Ahmed, using a Bengali idiom. Sonali committed the murder in March 2014 and can challenge the sentence in a higher court. If her execution goes ahead she will be the first woman to be hanged in Bangladesh, according to Tipu Sultan, a deputy inspector general of prisons. — AFP

UK'S WILLIAM AND KATE SET TO VISIT TAJ MAHAL

LONDON: More than two decades after Britain's Princess Diana was pictured forlornly alone at the Taj Mahal, her son Prince William and his wife Kate will visit the Indian landmark next month, evoking memories of his mother's infamous 1992 trip.

The image of Diana sitting on a bench during a solitary sight-seeing trip to the Taj Mahal, a monument to love, made front page news worldwide and was widely interpreted as symbolizing the irreparable state of her marriage to heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles.

The couple divorced in 1996 after 15 years of marriage, a year before Diana was killed in a car crash in Paris. Charles has avoided the Taj Mahal on subsequent visits to India, but William, the Duke of Cambridge, and

Kate "cannot wait to see it" during their official six-day tour to India and Bhutan starting on April 10, said a spokesman for William on Tuesday.

"The Duke of Cambridge is of course aware of the huge esteem his mother, the late Princess of Wales is held in in India and he appreciates the iconic status of the images that exist of the princess at the Taj," the spokesman said. "He feels incredibly lucky to visit a place where his mother's memory is kept alive by so many who travel there," he added. "Twenty-four years on from her visit to the Taj, the duke and the duchess are looking forward to seeing this beautiful place for themselves and creating some new memories as they say 'thank you' to the people of India at the conclusion of this tour." — Reuters

ROMANIAN PREPAID CARDS USED IN EXTREMIST ATTACKS

BUCHAREST: Romania's prime minister says prepaid telephone cards from his nation have been used in extremist attacks. The government is trying once again to pass legislation to require buyers of prepaid cards to show an identity document.

Premier Dacian Cioloș, speaking yesterday, gave no details of which attacks were involved. However, an intelligence official speaking on condition of anonymity told The Associated Press pre-

paid cards had been used in terror attacks in Europe in the last year.

The Romanian Intelligence Service said in a statement yesterday that Romanian prepaid cards are currently used in Syria and Iraq and they could be "used to benefit terrorist organizations." Romania unsuccessfully tried to introduce a similar law in 2012 and 2014. Telecommunications Minister Marius Bostan said Monday that the government plans to try again. — AP

HUNDREDS OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS PROTEST IN PAKISTAN'S CAPITAL

ISLAMABAD: Hundreds of Islamic extremists resumed protests in Pakistan's capital yesterday over the execution of a man who killed a secular governor, in a show of defiance amid a government crackdown following a suicide attack two days earlier.

The rally by Pakistan's Sunni Tehreek group brought more than 10,000 protesters into the streets of Islamabad on Sunday, where they clashed with police. Yesterday, local police official Mohammad Kashif said some 700 remained, bringing parts of the capital to a standstill.

The protesters are demanding strict Shariah law after the hanging of police officer Mumtaz Qadri, who killed Gov. Salman Taseer in 2011 over his opposition to the country's far-ranging blasphemy laws. The protesters are also demanding the hanging of a Christian woman Taseer had defended against blasphemy allegations.

The government had vowed to crack down on extremism after a suicide bomber targeted Christians celebrating Easter in Lahore, killing more than 70 people. The attack was claimed by a breakaway Taliban faction that supports the Islamic State group. The army responded by launching raids on suspected militant hideouts in Pakistan's eastern Punjab province, of which Lahore is the capital.

More than 300 suspects have been detained in the past 48 hours, a security official said. Another official confirmed nearly 300 arrests and said most of those detained

were suspected members of outlawed extremist groups. The two officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to brief journalists.

Provincial law minister Rana Sanaullah told a televised news conference that troops and police had conducted 160 operations against militants in Punjab in the past 24 hours, saying they would

continue "until the last terrorist is eliminated."

Sanaullah, who has faced allegations of being soft on pro-Taliban militants, said police in recent months detained 5,221 suspects but freed 5,005 because of a lack of evidence. He urged citizens to assist authorities in tracking down militants. The military has been waging an offensive against militants in the

North Waziristan tribal region along the Afghan border since 2014.

The army claims to have killed hundreds of alleged terrorists, and overall violence has declined since then. But militants have still managed to carry out large attacks, including a Taliban massacre at an army-run school in Peshawar in December 2014 that killed 150 people, mainly children. — AP



ISLAMABAD: Protesters from Pakistan's Sunni Tehreek group chant slogans during a sit-in near the parliament building yesterday. — AP

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NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR THREATS SPOTLIGHT US MISSILE DEFENSE

WASHINGTON: As North Korea rattles its nuclear saber, threatening to bomb the US at "any moment," a nerve-jangling question hangs in the air: If Pyongyang did launch a nuclear-armed missile at an American city, could the Pentagon's missile defenses overcome their spotty test record and shoot it down beyond US shores?

America has never faced such a real-life crisis, and although officials say they are confident the defenses would work as advertised, the Pentagon acknowledges potential gaps that North Korea or others might be able to exploit, someday if not immediately. One possible vulnerability involves a foe's "countermeasures," or decoys carried aboard long-range offensive missiles to fool a US interceptor missile into hitting the wrong target.

The Pentagon has poured at least \$84 billion into missile defense over the past decade and is planning to spend another \$3.3 billion over the next five years for a single element of the system, known as Ground-based Midcourse Defense, or GMD. Its key part is a network of interceptor missiles designed to launch from underground silos, fly into the path of an enemy missile as it arcs through space and smash into it, destroying it.

That system has failed three of its last four intercept tests. The only success in that series was the most recent test, in June 2014. A congressional watchdog agency, the Government Accountability Office, said in February that the Pentagon "has not demonstrated through flight testing that it can defend the US homeland against the

current missile defense threat."

Adm. William Gortney, America's homeland defender as head of US Northern Command, told Congress this month that the nation needs "more capable forces and broader options." Key improvements are in the works, including a "long-range discrimination" radar for more effective tracking of incoming missiles.

The North Koreans' harsh rhetoric, including a threat in late February to deal "fatal blows at the US mainland any moment," is linked in part to its anger at US-South Korean military exercises, which the North sees as a rehearsal for an invasion.

No one is predicting a bolt-out-of-the-blue North Korean nuclear attack, but the threat looms larger as the Koreans seemingly stride closer to fielding a nuclear-armed missile that can reach US territory. Already this year they have claimed a successful H-bomb test, put a satellite into space orbit and claimed a successful simulated test of the warhead re-entry knowhow needed for a missile strike on the United States. On Thursday, the North claimed to have successfully tested a solid-fuel rocket engine which, if true, would mark a significant further technological advance. The use of solid fuel reduces launch preparation time and thus shortens warning time for US defenses.

And yesterday, North Korea fired a short-range projectile from an area near its eastern coast in what appears to be another weapons test seen as a response to ongoing military drills between Washington and Seoul. It was unclear



VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE: A long-range ground-based interceptor is launched on Monday. — AP

whether the projectile was a ballistic missile or an artillery shell, said a Joint Chiefs of Staff official who didn't want to be identified, citing media rules.

State-run media reported earlier this month that leader Kim Jong Un ordered preparations for a "nuclear warhead explosion test" soon and test-firings of "several kinds of ballistic rockets able to carry nuclear warheads." With increasing regularity, the North Koreans are claiming major advances on the nuclear front that have caught Washington's attention, even if they

are exaggerated.

President Barack Obama, who plans to address 50 heads of state gathered in Washington this week for a nuclear security summit, has said North Korea's pursuit of nuclear and missile programs "increasingly imperils the United States."

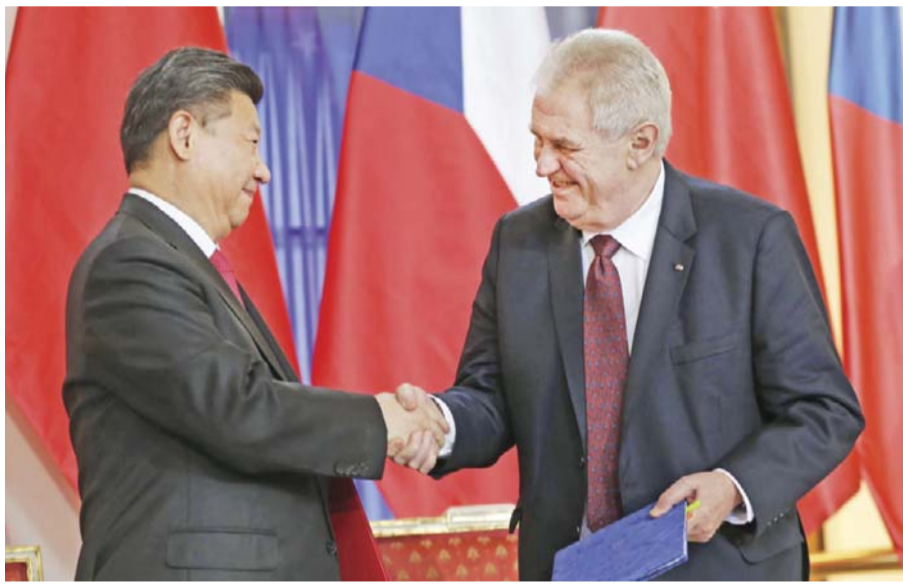
Of particular worry is a long-range missile under development in North Korea that the US calls the KN-08. The Pentagon's most recent public report on North Korea says the KN-08 has a range of more than 3,400 miles, putting it into the category of an

intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM.

Gortney said the KN-08 has "profound implications," especially if it is deployed as a road-mobile weapon, meaning it could be moved and launched from vehicles that make it less vulnerable to detection. Such mobility, he said, would enable the North Koreans to elude or confound traditional US pre-launch warning systems.

Gortney says the North Koreans may have figured out how to make a nuclear warhead small enough to fit atop a KN-08 missile. "While the KN-08 remains untested, modeling suggests it could deliver a nuclear (warhead) to much of the continental United States," Gortney told a Senate panel March 10. The segment of US missile defenses designed to stop a long-range North Korean missile are the interceptors based at Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Three years ago this month, then-Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced that the Pentagon would increase the number of deployed interceptors to 44 by putting an extra 14 at Fort Greely. The price tag for that expansion, initially put at \$1 billion, has jumped to \$1.5 billion.

None of the extra 14 interceptors has been deployed yet but all are to be in place by the end of next year. Defense Secretary Ash Carter told a House committee last week that the Pentagon also is working on a more effective "kill vehicle," which is the 5-foot-long device attached to the top of an interceptor; its internal guidance system helps steer it into an oncoming missile, destroying it by force of impact. — AP



PRAGUE: Czech Republic's President Milos Zeman, right, and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, left, shake hands after signing a bilateral treaty of strategic partnership at the Prague Castle yesterday. — AP

CHINESE PRESIDENT SIGNS DEAL WITH CZECH REPUBLIC

PRAGUE: Chinese President Xi Jinping signed a strategic partnership during his visit to the Czech Republic yesterday, a sign of improving relations with a country that once was a critic of China's human rights record.

Xi, who was greeted with a rare 21 salvos of artillery at the Prague Castle, the seat of the presidency, signed the document yesterday together with his host, President Milos Zeman. He said through a translator it "sets a political direction for the development of our relations in the future."

Xi's visit - his only stopover in Europe before flying to the US - is a result of a more business-oriented Czech approach to China than the one that prevailed under the late President Vaclav Havel, a prominent proponent of human rights. Unlike him, Zeman was the only European Union leader to attend China's celebrations of the end of World War II last year and said he

hoped his country becomes "an entry gate" for China to the European Union.

He said business deals to be signed during Xi's visit could bring some 95 billion koruna (\$3.9 billion) of Chinese investment this year. Details were expected to be announced today. Xi also backed a series of other deals on cooperation in health, transport, IT, sciences, tourism, banking and other fields as well as a partnership deal between the countries' capitals. He was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, the speakers of both chambers of Parliament and Prague's mayor yesterday.

Not everyone was happy with his visit. Several supporters of the Falun Gong group that has been banned in China were in the streets of Prague yesterday morning, while others waving Tibetan flags were gathering to protest the China's human rights record near a palace where Xi was meeting the Czech leaders. — AP



NARATHIWAT: Thai rangers inspect the site of a roadside bomb attack targeting a car carrying patrolling police officers and triggered by suspected separatist militants yesterday. — AFP

THREE POLICE KILLED IN THAI SOUTH VIOLENCE

NARATHIWAT: Three police officers were killed and six others wounded during an ambush in Thailand's insurgency-plagued deep south, witnesses said yesterday.

Shootings and explosions are a near daily occurrence in Thailand's three southernmost provinces where more than 6,500 people - the majority civilians - have died since an Islamist rebellion against Thai rule re-ignited in 2004. After months of relative calm that saw violence dip to a record low last year, there has been a palpable increase in attacks over the past few weeks.

The latest ambush occurred in Ra-Ngae district, Narathiwat province, with insurgents setting off a bomb as a police convoy passed by. "Three police were killed and six police were injured from bomb fragments," local investigator Police Captain Apichart Dolor told AFP. "Among the injured ones, four are seriously wounded," he added.

An AFP photographer on the scene saw a white truck riddled with shrapnel smashed into a tree with the bodies of three policemen

still inside. The insurgents are seeking greater autonomy from majority-Buddhist Thailand, which annexed the culturally distinct region more than a century ago.

The rebels employ brutal tactics including shootings, beheadings and bombings, often targeting perceived civilian collaborators such as teachers and Buddhist monks. Earlier this month insurgents briefly seized a hospital and used it to launch an attack on nearby troops during a night of multiple coordinated assaults.

The move sparked condemnation from the UN and a vow by Thailand's junta to ramp up security in the region. The Thai military also stands accused of routinely abusing human rights including torture and extrajudicial killings. The junta's vow to hold peace talks has borne little fruit. Rights groups say peace is unlikely while a tight security net remains over the region. Critics also cast doubt on the army's sincerity and the ability of their rebel interlocutors to control the revolt's foot soldiers. — AFP

THAILAND UNVEILS LATEST CHARTER PERPETUATING ARMY'S POWER

'THAT IS WHAT THE MAJORITY OF THAIS WANT'

BANGKOK: A panel appointed by Thailand's military junta unveiled yesterday a draft constitution touted as the solution to a decade-long political crisis, but derided by critics as undemocratic and divisive. Thailand has been controlled by the army since a 2014 coup overthrew the elected government of Yingluck Shinawatra, whose billionaire family has swept the last three elections but is hated by the Bangkok elite. If the charter is ratified, it will perpetuate the military's influence. A junta-appointed senate would check the powers of lawmakers for a five-year transitional period following fresh elections.

The document also enshrines a proportional voting system, a move that would likely reduce the majority held by any elected government once Thais regain the right to vote. The drafters insist their new constitution the kingdom's 20th in less than a century will end the cycle of elections, street protests and coups. "We see it as a return to a period where you don't have people confronting each other on the streets," Constitutional Drafting Committee spokesman Norachit Sinhaseni told reporters. "That is what the majority of Thais want." But critics say it is aimed squarely at breaking the Shinawatras' electoral stranglehold on the country.

The document is set to go to the public in a referendum on August 7. However the junta has warned it will not tolerate criticism of the charter in the run-up to the vote, making debate all but impossible. "I have laws in hand. Whoever violates those laws, legal action will be taken against them," junta chief Prayut Chan-o-cha told reporters after the draft was unveiled.

Two opposition politicians have already been detained by the military this week for voicing criticism of the document and the junta.

'Expands military power'

Paul Chambers a Thailand-based academic, said the document would in effect prolong army rule and establish a "frail democracy" easily con-



BANGKOK: Constitution Draft Commission (CDC) chairman Meechai Ruchuphan holds up Thailand's proposed new constitution at Parliament House yesterday. — AFP

trolled by a junta-stacked senate. "It is a charter which expands military and judicial power at the expense of democracy," he told AFP.

In the run-up to its unveiling the charter has been criticised by both sides of the political divide, even those who cheered the toppling of the government led by Yingluck's Pheu Thai party. Jatuporn Prompan, a prominent leader of the Red Shirt movement loyal to the Shinawatras, hit out yesterday. "If they (the military) want to return democracy to Thais, (they should) return whole-not partial-democracy," he told AFP.

Pheu Thai's bitter rival the Democrat Party has yet to say what it will advise voters but its leader, former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, has publicly criticized the charter.

Thailand is no stranger to constitutional rewrites but these have done little to calm its tur-

bulent politics. The general public often shrugs off the passage of a document seen as heavily biased and liable to change with the political winds. The latest chapter in the country's long struggle with democracy began in 2006 when Thaksin Shinawatra, Yingluck's brother, was ousted by a coup. That power grab sparked years of rival street protests and political chicanery by the Bangkok establishment.

Thaksin, who lives in self-exile to avoid a graft conviction he says is politically motivated, has pilloried the junta for bungling the economy and ruining the political landscape. The army claims legitimacy from the revered but ailing king. Analysts attribute the current political crisis to the monarch's ill-health and a bitter tussle for influence among competing elites once his reign ends. — AFP

JAPAN'S ABE SAYS NO PLANS TO POSTPONE CONSUMPTION TAX HIKE

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said yesterday that he has no plans to nix a consumption tax hike planned for next year, denying speculation that it will be postponed amid suggestions that Japan's economy won't be able to handle it.

Speaking at a news conference marking parliament's formal approval of the government's 96.7 trillion yen (\$850 billion) fiscal 2016 budget, Abe said the tax hike is needed to maintain Japan's welfare system and to secure confidence from markets and the international community.

"There is no change to the tax hike plan next year unless there are situations like the Lehman shock or a massive earthquake," Abe said. The tax was due to rise to 10 percent from 8 percent in October, but the hike was deferred until April 2017. Many in Japan are betting that with national elections looming this summer, Abe will be inclined to postpone the increase.

Abe has been meeting with renowned economists from in and outside Japan, including Nobel laureates Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz, who both suggested that he should delay the hike. Abe, by meeting the experts, is seen as laying the ground for another postponement. Japan's economy initially expanded under an "Abenomics" policy mix of monetary easing and fiscal stimulus, but the growth has remained below forecasts due to China's slowdown and lackluster spending by households and businesses. The economy is forecast to shrink in the current quarter following a contraction at an annual rate of 0.3 percent in October-December. — AP



TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks to the media during a press conference at his official residence. — AP



TOKYO: Demonstrators protest against the new security law as they rally outside the Diet building today. — AFP

JAPAN'S PM DEFENDS NEW SECURITY LAWS AS PROTESTERS DENOUNCE THEM

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that new security laws that took effect yesterday will strengthen Tokyo's ability to defend itself amid increasing threats as opponents took to the streets to say they risk hurling the country into war. Legislators in September passed the bills into law, a shift that could see Japanese troops fight abroad for the first time since the end of World War II. The approval was a milestone in Japan, where a constitution imposed by the United States after Japan's defeat renounces its sovereign right to wage war.

That clause, known as Article 9, is unchanged, but staunch nationalist Abe wants to revise the constitution to throw off what he and many conservatives see as outdated foreign-imposed constraints that hinder Japan from playing a more robust role in regional and global affairs.

"The security environment surrounding our country is becoming more severe," Abe told a nationally televised news conference, citing threats including from nearby North Korea, which this year has carried out fresh nuclear and ballistic rocket launches. "No country in the world can

protect itself alone," he added. As Abe spoke at his official office, an AFP journalist estimated that about 2,000 people rallied outside parliament nearby in a show of opposition to the laws that opponents fear could fundamentally reshape the proudly pacifist nation.

Fumiko Yamaguchi, who attended the demonstration, said she survived devastating US air raids on Tokyo as a child even as an aunt was killed. "I don't want Japan to be engaged in any war," she told AFP. "I don't want my children and our grandchildren to go to war." Abe says that the new laws are part of a normalization of Japan's military policy, which had been restricted to self-defense and aid missions by the constitution. The changes, which would allow Japanese troops to fight in defense of allies, drew tens of thousands of protesters onto the streets outside parliament or the prime minister's office in the run-up to their passage in September. Abe and his backers say the laws are necessary because of threats from an increasingly belligerent China and unstable North Korea. — AFP



LARNACA: The remaining passengers on the hijacked EgyptAir Airbus A-320, which was diverted to Cyprus, run on the tarmac after leaving the plane as the hijacker surrendered to security forces after a six-hour standoff at Larnaca airport's largely disused old terminal yesterday. — AFP

EGYPTAIR HIJACK DRAMA ENDS

Continued from Page 1

The hijacker then surrendered to authorities. "It's over," the Cypriot foreign ministry said in a tweet. Speaking to reporters after the crisis ended, Egyptian Prime Minister Sherif Ismail said the hijacker was an Egyptian national but that his motives remained unclear.

"At some moments he asked to meet with a representa-

tive of the European Union and at other points he asked to go to another airport but there was nothing specific," he said, adding that the man would now be questioned to ascertain his motives.

Cypriot foreign ministry official Alexandros Zenon told reporters during the crisis that the hijacker appeared to be "unstable". Egypt's Civil Aviation Ministry said the plane's pilot, Omar Al-Gammal, had informed authorities that he

was threatened by a passenger who claimed to be wearing a suicide explosives belt and forced him to divert the plane to Larnaca. Photographs shown on Egyptian state television showed a middle-aged man on a plane wearing glasses and displaying a white belt with bulging pockets and protruding wires.

Fethy, the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC) said the suicide belt was not genuine but treated the incident as serious to ensure the safety of all those on board. "Our passengers are all well and the crew is all well... We cannot say this was a terrorist act... he was not a professional," Fethy told reporters after the incident. In the midst of the crisis, witnesses said the hijacker had thrown a letter on the apron in Larnaca, written in Arabic, asking that it be delivered to his ex-wife, who is Cypriot.

But the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC) said the hijacker had asked for the release of women prisoners in Egypt, suggesting a political motive. EgyptAir also delayed a New York-bound flight from Cairo onto which some passengers of the hijacked plane had been due to connect. Fethy said it was delayed partly due to a technical issue but partly as a precaution. The plane remained on the tarmac at Larnaca throughout the morning while Cypriot security forces took up positions around the scene.

Egypt's image

While the reasons for the hijacking were not entirely clear, the incident will deal another blow to Egypt's tourism industry and hurt efforts to revive an economy hammered by political unrest following the 2011 uprising.

The sector, a main source of hard currency for the import-dependent country, was already reeling from the crash of a Russian passenger plane in the Sinai in late October. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has said the Russian plane was brought down by a terrorist attack. Islamic State has said it planted a bomb on board, killing all 224 people on board.

The incident has raised renewed questions over airport security in Egypt, though it was not clear whether the hijacker was even armed. Ismail said stringent measures were in place. There was also some confusion over the identity of the hijacker. Egypt's official state news agency MENA initially named him as Egyptian national Ibrahim Samaha but later said the hijacker was called Seif Eldin Mustafa. The Cypriot Foreign Affairs Ministry also identified the hijacker as Mustafa. Passengers on the plane included eight Americans, four Britons, four Dutch, two Belgians, an Italian, a Syrian and French national, the Civil Aviation Ministry.

Cyprus has seen little militant activity for decades, despite its proximity to the Middle East. A botched attempt by Egyptian commandos to storm a hijacked airliner at Larnaca airport led to the disruption of diplomatic relations between Cyprus and Egypt in 1978. In 1988, a Kuwaiti airliner which had been hijacked from Bangkok to Kuwait in a 16-day siege had a stopover in Larnaca, where two hostages were killed. Egypt said it would send a plane to Cyprus to pick up stranded passengers, some of whom had been traveling to Cairo for connecting flights abroad. — Reuters

'CHILDHOOD ON THE BRINK'

Continued from Page 1

in (Saudi-led) air strikes across the country," Julien Harneis, UNICEF's Representative in Yemen, told a briefing by telephone from the capital Sanaa. All sides have violated international law by using indiscriminate and disproportionate force that means "children die unnecessarily and wrongly", he said, citing multiple coalition strikes on outdoor markets.

Basic services and infrastructure are "on the verge of total collapse," the report said, noting attacks on schools, hospitals and the water and sanitation system. The UN said last week the warring parties had agreed to a cessation of hostilities from April 10 and peace talks from April 18, after a year of war that has killed more than 6,200 people. "We're hoping that the truce kicks in on the 10th and will allow parents and families to come and access health services and other services," Harneis said earlier. "In Sa'ada in the last week, there has definitely been a reduction of fighting in the border area. In

Sanaa, we have seen fewer (Saudi-led) air strikes," he said. Nearly half of Yemen's 22 provinces are on the verge of famine, the UN's World Food Program said last week. UNICEF delivers nutritional supplies and vaccines against measles, polio and other childhood diseases in the country of 24 million, but it is not enough, Harneis said. "We've got an increase in both severe acute malnutrition and chronic malnutrition," he said.

The report said an estimated 320,000 children risk severe acute malnutrition, which can leave a child vulnerable to deadly respiratory infections, pneumonia and water-borne diseases. For now UNICEF is only able to reach 200,000 of them, Harneis said. Nearly 10 million children require humanitarian aid to prevent a further deterioration. Chronic malnutrition can stunt growth and development. "UNICEF estimates that nearly 10,000 children under 5 years may have died in the past year from preventable diseases," it said, citing lower vaccination rates and declines in treatment. — Reuters

KUWAIT, SAUDI AGREE TO RESUME PRODUCTION...

Continued from Page 1

The two Gulf neighbors began talks in June to resolve the dispute. Khafji is jointly operated by Kuwait Gulf Oil Co (KGOC) and Saudi Aramco Gulf Operations, while Wafra is operated by KGOC and Saudi Arabian Chevron. Industry sources say Kuwaiti authorities were unhappy with Saudi Arabia for renewing an operating

agreement for the Wafra field with Saudi Arabian Chevron for 30 years in 2009 without consulting them. In response, it stopped issuing or renewing visas for Chevron foreign employees. The dispute has been a blow to Kuwait which, unlike its much larger neighbor, has little spare output capacity to compensate for drops in production. Kuwait is pumping around 3.0 million bpd. — AFP

FIRE ENGULFS UAE TOWER

Continued from Page 1

The Ajman blaze comes less than three months after a massive fire raced up the exterior of the 63-story The Address Downtown Dubai, one of Dubai's most prominent hotels. It is situated next to Dubai's biggest mall and the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest skyscraper. Similar fires have struck other high-rises built since the turn of this century in Dubai and Sharjah, which sits between Dubai and Ajman.

Building and safety experts have attributed the spate of fires to a material commonly used to cover the buildings known as aluminum composite panel cladding. Some panels used in buildings in the Emirates contain a flammable core that can burn rapidly once ignited, allowing fires to spread quickly on buildings covered top to bottom with the panels without sufficient fire breaks along the way. It was not immediately clear if the towers in Ajman had that type of cladding, but the fire appeared to burn in a similar fashion to the other blazes. — AP

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Washington Watch

US-TURKEY TIES FRAY
AS ERDOGAN HEADS
TO WASHINGTON

By Stuart Williams

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan heads to the United States for only the second visit of his presidency at a time when relations between the two key NATO allies are severely tested by widening differences over the Syria conflict and human rights. Erdogan, who became president in August 2014 after over a decade as premier, has yet to hold talks with President Barack Obama at the White House as head of state, and no such encounter is planned for this trip in a glaring symbol of the current troubles in relations.

Turkish officials insist the main point of Erdogan's trip is to attend the March 31-April 1 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington and also open a vast Ottoman-style mosque in Maryland, a new statement of Turkey's desire to spread its cultural and religious influence abroad. The White House said Monday there were no plans for bilateral talks between Obama and Erdogan, who last visited the United States for the UN General Assembly in September 2014.

Leaving for Washington Tuesday from Istanbul airport, Erdogan said he would meet Obama on the sidelines of the nuclear summit but indicated it was still open what form the encounter should take. A Turkish presidential statement did not even mention Obama but did say Erdogan would hold talks on the anti-terror fight following the Brussels attacks and those that rocked Istanbul and Ankara this month. According to the Hurriyet daily, Erdogan had wanted to open the new mosque in Maryland-touted by Turkey as the only one in the United States with two minarets-alongside Obama but the US leader had turned down the idea.

'Relationship poisoned'

Turkey-which joined NATO in 1952 as a US ally after staying neutral for almost all of World War II-has long been seen as the key Muslim partner of the United States in the Middle East. But tensions have grown over the conflict in Syria, with Washington urging Turkey to do more to fight Islamic State (IS) jihadists and Ankara growing ever more frustrated over US backing for Kurdish fighters. Whereas defeating IS is the main priority for the US in Syria, Turkey's number one aim is the overthrow of President Bashar Al-Assad, a prospect which has become less likely with the Russian intervention in his support. Meanwhile, Washington has been backing Kurdish Syrian fighters of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) as the best force in the fight against IS.

But Turkey categorizes the PYD as the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which has fought a decades-long insurrection against the Turkish state. "The relationship between the US and Turkey is strained generally because of the differing priorities of the two allies in Syria and more specifically due to their perceptions of the PYD," said Ozgur Unluhisarickli, Ankara Office Director of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. He said that Turkey and the United States were "stepping on each other's toes" in Syria. "Until either or both of the sides revise their approach to PYD, the US-Turkey relationship will continue to be poisoned by this issue," he said.

'Collapse of ties?'

Adding to the strains are US concerns over freedom of expression in Turkey under Erdogan, with tweets by the US embassy supporting prosecuted academics and journalists making ambassador John Bess a hate figure for hardliners. "We don't always agree on everything-media freedom is one of them," said US State Department spokesman John Kirby. Meanwhile, the surprise arrest in the US last week of Turkish-Iranian businessman Reza Zarrab who was implicated in a 2013 corruption scandal that also ensnared Erdogan's close circle, has been hailed by the president's foes.

In a lacerating attack on US policy on Turkey, the editor-in-chief of the pro-government Daily Sabah newspaper wrote Tuesday the Obama administration was putting the entire bilateral relationship at risk. Obama risks "being recorded in history as a failed president who oversaw the collapse of ties with Turkey," wrote Serdar Karagoz. As well as opening the mosque and hosting a dinner for business leaders, Erdogan will also meet with leaders of the US Jewish community, as Turkey seeks to repair its damaged ties with Israel. — AFP

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HOW CON MAN USED CHINA TO LAUNDER MILLIONS

By Erika Kinetz, Tia Goldenberg, Daniel Estrin and Raphael Satter

Gilbert Chikli was rolling in money, stolen from some of the world's biggest corporations. His targets: Accenture, Disney, American Express. In less than two years, he made off with at least 6.1 million euros from France alone. But he had a problem. He couldn't spend the money. A tangle of banking rules designed to stop con men like him stood between Chikli and his cash. He needed to find a weak link in the global financial system, a place to make his stolen money appear legitimate. He found it in China.

"China has become a universal, international gateway for all manner of scams," he said in an interview with The Associated Press. "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." A visionary con man, Chikli realized early on - around 2000, the year before China joined the World Trade Organization - the potential that lay in the shadows of China's rise, its entrenched corruption and informal banking channels that date back over 1,000 years. The French-Israeli man told the AP he laundered 90 percent of his money through China and Hong Kong, slipping it into the region's great tides of legitimate trade and finance.

Today, he is in good company. Criminals around the world have discovered that a good way to liberate their dirty money is to send it to China, which is emerging as an international hub for money laundering, an AP investigation has found. Gangs from Israel and Spain, North African cannabis dealers and cartels from Mexico and Colombia are among those using China as a haven where they can safely hide money, clean it, and pump it back into the global financial system, according to police officials, European and U.S. court records and intelligence documents reviewed by the AP.

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 the government "places great emphasis" on fighting crimes such as money laundering and is working to expand international cooperation. "China is not, has not been, nor will be in the future a center of global money laundering," he said.

Chikli is widely credited in France with inventing a con that has inspired a generation of copycats. Chikli's scam, called the fake president or fake CEO scam, has cost companies around the world \$1.8 billion in just over two years, according to the FBI. And the damages are rising fast. Security cameras poke over the high wooden fence that encircles Chikli's property, a sleek, three-story home in Ashdod, a port city on the Mediterranean. Beyond that, a swing set, pink-and-purple tricycle and orange ball jumble his lawn.

And then there is Chikli himself, tan and smiling at his massive front door. He was sentenced in absentia to seven years in prison by a French court last year and remains a wanted man, but here in Israel, he lives openly and talked about his criminal exploits with pride during four hours of interviews with the AP. "It's the power of persuasion," he said. "It's not easy to turn the head of a bank president." Dirty money has long washed through China, but has been viewed primarily as a domestic problem. Now, mounting evidence shows that non-Chinese criminals are learning to tap entrenched, sophisticated Chinese systems to move money illegally - largely beyond the reach of Western law enforcement.

China's underground financial systems are of rising concern to top policymakers there, who are struggling to stem massive capital flight as the economy slows. Despite strict currency controls, a record net \$711 billion gushed out of China last year, not counting foreign direct investment, according to estimates by Fitch Ratings. A lot of that money leaks out illegally. Corporations undervalue exports or overvalue imports to move capital abroad, for example.

Money changers and underground banks routinely help mainland Chinese slip cash out of the country in excess of the official \$50,000-a-year limit. Global Financial Integrity, a Washington-DC non-profit, ranks China as the world's largest exporter of illicit money.

"Wherever I go in the world, there is a growing Chinese presence," said John Cassara, a former financial intelligence agent at the US Treasury Department. "It's only natural that the Chinese are going to bring their financial systems with them - their above-board financial systems and their underground systems." "It's completely off the radar screen," Cassara said. "No one knows about it." But Chikli knew.

bag under the stall. Mission accomplished. Then she went to the bistro on Rue de la Paix and waited on the terrace. But where was Paul? After she went to the police, investigators eventually traced the calls to Chikli. Paul was, in Chikli's telling, just one of his many stage names. The woman who took the cash in the bathroom was Chikli's mistress. Chikli's brother, Simon, drove the getaway car, according to French court documents. Back then, it was a game to Chikli. But if he wanted to get more money than would fit in a sack, he had to take his criminal ambitions global.

Banks are supposed to know their customers - not just their identities, but also where

tels laundered more than \$5 billion in drug proceeds in part by exporting counterfeit goods from China, according to a US Justice Department indictment against three Colombians based in Guangzhou. Chikli ordered companies to send money to bank accounts around the world - often, he said, in Eastern Europe. Then, he'd bounce the funds to Hong Kong and China and arrange for them to be withdrawn in cash.

The money was used to purchase merchandise - shoes, gold, steel, textiles - in China. For a commission, the Chinese vendor then issued highly inflated receipts to Chikli's shell companies, creating a "legal" paper trail. Typically, Chikli said, he'd actually buy some goods, while forwarding most of his cash to another account he controlled. He might purchase, say, 20 tons of steel, but bribe the vendor to give him a receipt for 100 tons. Chikli sold the goods and then sent the money to Israel, where false invoices made the entire sum look like legitimate trading profits, he said. "Everything is clean," he said. "Give me the documents and everything is fine."

The washing machine

Chikli used to run a clothing company in Sentier, a late 18th-century Paris neighborhood built atop a medieval slum. Sentier was once a neighborhood for strivers - first Jews from Eastern Europe and North Africa, then Chinese who moved into the wholesale textile trade. Chikli forged the idea for his scam on these streets. The tools of his trade are simple: telephones. Chikli called the company that runs Disneyland Paris, pretending to be the CEO. He called French technology conglomerate Thomson SA and persuaded an employee to transfer millions to accounts in Russia, Switzerland and England.

He called Barclays, Galeries Lafayette, American Express. Eventually, French authorities caught up with him and put him on trial for dozens of attempted frauds, many thwarted only at the last moment. In 2009, Chikli posted 30,000 euros (\$33,500) bail. His passport was confiscated and he was ordered to remain in France to stand trial. Instead, he chartered a private plane, he claims, and fled to Israel.

A French court found him guilty last May of defrauding La Banque Postale, LCL bank and HSBC, along with Thomson and Accenture, out of 6.1 million euros, and attempting to extract over 70 million euros from at least 33 others. But by then, he was living by the sea in Ashdod. It was, perhaps, his most masterful con of all. Israeli authorities would not say whether France had made a formal request for Chikli's extradition. French judicial officials have not responded to repeated requests for clarification on the status of any extradition request related to Chikli. Israel and France share no bilateral extradition treaty, but Israel has surrendered French citizens in some cases. — AP



ASHDOD: Gilbert Chikli, 50, and his wife Shirly Chikli, 31, pose for a photo at their home in Ashdod, Israel. Chikli, a visionary fraudster, ripped off some of the world's biggest corporations, and then laundered millions in China, which is serving as a massive money laundering machine for foreign criminals, an AP investigation has found. — AP

"Gilbert Chikli knows that China is a springboard to be able to bounce money off of," said the con man, who often spoke of himself in the third person. "It's not a secret. The whole world knows that China is a hub for sending and receiving money."

The 'fake ceo scam'

The first con, the one that made Chikli realize he had "the gift," began in Paris on the afternoon of July 25, 2005, with a phone call. When Madame G, who ran a branch of La Banque Postale, picked up the phone, a man with a sure, powerful voice said he was the bank's CEO and needed her help on a top-secret terrorism investigation, French court documents show. He dropped details about past meetings that left Madame G, whose name cannot be published due to French privacy laws, convinced of his identity. The man told her a secret agent named Paul would be in touch. Following instructions, Madame G. bought a burner phone to communicate with Paul. Over the next three days, he hammered her with 43 calls.

Some of the bank's clients, Paul explained, were suspected of running money for terrorists. Less than three weeks earlier, four suicide bombers linked to Al Qaeda blew themselves up in central London, killing 52 people and injuring 700 more. Photographs of bloody, burned commuters staggering from the London Underground were everywhere. Paul told Madame G he needed the names of the bank's biggest clients. He wanted her to bring him cash. He would scan the bills to see if they were stolen, then they'd meet at a bistro on Rue de la Paix and he'd return the money. She was a key player in a major anti-terrorism operation. He was counting on her.

On July 28, Madame G. stuffed 358,000 euros (\$398,000) in a bag and took a taxi to a cafe in eastern Paris. She walked into a stall in the restroom. She heard a woman say the secret password. Madame G passed the cash-filled



ASHDOD: The house belonging to convicted con man Gilbert Chikli is seen in the port city of Ashdod, Israel. — AP

NEW POWER UNIT TO GET ALONSO BACK ON TRACK IN BAHRAIN

LONDON: McLaren's Fernando Alonso will use a spare chassis and new power unit to compete in Sunday's Bahrain Grand Prix, after a crash in Formula One's Australian season-opener wrecked his car. Alonso was fortunate to escape serious injury in Melbourne after colliding with the Haas of Mexican Esteban Gutierrez in an accident that halted the race. A three times winner in Bahrain, but unlikely to be chasing much more than a top 10 finish this time as McLaren battle back from a dismal 2015 season, the Spanish driver said the team and Honda had made a "massive effort" after the crash. "We're still pushing to bring upgrades to each race, so providing we can get everything to the car in time we'll be aiming to get as much track time as possible with the new chassis from the start of free practice," he said on Tuesday. Honda's F1 head Yusuke Hasegawa said the power unit had been recovered but initial investigations showed the engine and surrounding parts were too badly damaged to be salvaged. "We will be replacing the complete power unit in Bahrain," he said. Drivers are allowed five power units to last the complete 21 race season, with penalties if they exceed the allocation. — Reuters



LEWANDOWSKI EXTENDS BAYERN CONTRACT

BERLIN: Poland striker Robert Lewandowski has extended his Bayern Munich contract until 2021, according to a report in German magazine Sport Bild. The 27-year-old is having a stellar season for the reigning German champions having netted 25 Bundesliga goals and scored 36 times in all competitions. He has been linked to the likes of Real Madrid and a host of English clubs, including Manchester City, who current Bayern boss Pep Guardiola will coach next season. According to Sport Bild, Bayern have improved Lewandowski's contract meaning he is the fifth Munich player, along with Thomas Mueller, Jerome Boateng, Javi Martinez and David Alaba, tied to the Bavarian giants until 2021. Lewandowski trained with the Bayern squad on Tuesday having come off the bench in Poland's 5-0 drubbing of Finland on Saturday in Wroclaw after the Poles beat Serbia 1-0 last Wednesday in a friendly. Having signed for Borussia Dortmund in 2010, Lewandowski matured into one of the world's top strikers before joining Bayern Munich on a free transfer in 2014. — AFP

CHRIS EUBANK CONFIRMS BLACKWELL MERCY PLEA

LONDON: Former British boxer Chris Eubank confirmed yesterday that he told his son to stop targeting Nick Blackwell's head during a bout that left Blackwell in an induced coma. Blackwell, 25, has been in an induced coma and was found to have suffered a small bleed on the brain after collapsing at the end of his British middleweight title defeat by Chris Eubank Jr on Saturday. Television images appeared to show Eubank Sr telling his son not to aim for Blackwell's head during the fight, which was stopped in the 10th round by referee Victor Loughlin. "Even in sparring, I tell Junior to stay away from the head because his punching is fast, powerful and dangerous," Eubank, a former middleweight and super-middleweight world champion, told the BBC. "So most certainly I was saying this to protect the fighter." Eubank Jr, 26, has expressed concern over Blackwell's condition, but said that what had happened had not moved him to consider walking away from the sport. "No fighter wants to see the man after the fight in any type of serious condition," he said. "I'm not going in there to damage someone." —AFP



AL-ITTIHAD TO PLAY AL-SALAM FOR BASKETBALL TITLE

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Al-Ittihad team beat its Shuhada counterpart 20-18 in the basketball for the mentally handicapped competitions, during the second local handicapped games which started Sunday, at the handicapped club hall in Hawally.

Al-Ittihad will play Al-Salam team which beat Al-Taawon, for the title, while Al-Taawon and Shuhadaa will play for third place.

In the epee (fencing) competition Abdallah Al-Haddad was first, followed by Faisal Al-Kandari in second, then Atif Al-Dousari third.

In the junior fencing Fahad Al-Bastaki was first, Suleiman Al-Tamimi second and Sanad Al-Buloushi third.

In the Boccia (BC1) game Mohammad Sultan Al-Mutairi took first place, followed by Shareefa Mohareb, then Fahad Al-Babtain was third.

In the Boccia (BC2) Emad Al-Najdaifi was

first, followed by Shireen Al-Shaheen, then Hani Hussein third. Secretary General of Kuwait Handicapped Sports Club Abdallah Al-Azmi said the second local tournament is the best preparation for athletes who will participate in upcoming games especially the Boccia, fencing and basketball for the mentally challenged.

Al-Azmi expressed satisfaction at the highly advanced technical level the athletes have shown during the tournament which is among the most important the club organizes during the season.

He thanked the Public Authority for Sports, headed by its Director General Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour for providing all what is necessary for the club be it locally or abroad. He also thanked Al-Sheikha Sheikhha Al-Abdallah for attending all club activities.

The club plans to organize a local athletics tournament in April, then the team will participate in Fazaat tournament in UAE in May.



CHINESE SWIMMERS 'WARNED' FOR CLENBUTEROL USE

BEIJING: The Chinese Swimming Association has announced it will be issuing a "warning penalty" to swimmers Wang Lizhuo and An Jiabao after they tested positive for the banned substance clenbuterol.

According to a terse statement posted online late on Monday, the CSA said it would be also be warning and fining Wang's Chinese Navy team and An's Tianjin club as well as fining their coaches.

Wang and An's identities were revealed when the CSA announced last week that six Chinese swimmers had failed doping tests during the 2015-16 season.

It identified a third swimming as Chinese Navy's Zhao Ying, who also tested positive for clenbuterol in an out-of-competition test but has not yet been punished. Clenbuterol is a performance-enhancing substance sometimes found in weight-loss pills that is on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) banned list.

The use of doping stimulants in Chinese swimming caught worldwide attention last week when WADA announced it was inves-

tigating claims published by the Times newspaper that Chinese sports authorities were suppressing five positive tests to "avoid a storm".

The Chinese anti-doping agency (CHINA-NADA) denied it was "covering up" the tests, arguing that it was following protocols by protecting the identities of the swimmers while test procedures and hearings were still underway. The CSA have announced that three other Chinese swimmers tested positive for the prohibited diuretic hydrochlorothiazide in out-of-competition tests in January. The swimmers were not named.

Last week, the deputy director of the Chinese anti-doping agency (CHINA-NADA), Zhao Jian, told state media that the agency would "release results and punishments in 20 days after the relevant association makes its respective punishments". Monday's statement said Wang and An's coaches will each face fines equivalent to the cost of five stimulant detection tests, amounting to 5,000 yuan (\$767.94). —Reuters



CHARNLEY GRABS TREBLE CHANCE AS WIGAN BEAT ROVERS

LONDON: Josh Charnley's brilliant second-half hat-trick helped Wigan to eventually see off a spirited Hull Kingston Rovers 30-16 in the Super League on Monday.

With the game evenly poised at 16-14 midway through the second half, two quickfire tries from Dom Manfredi and Oliver Gildart saw the hosts surge clear before Charnley's third put a gloss on the victory.

Former Wigan player Iain Thornley responded with two tries of his own for the visitors, while Graeme Horne also touched down, but the score of the evening belonged to Charnley, whose first try was a length-of-the-field break-

away effort. The scoreline could have been more in Wigan's favour had former Parramatta Eels winger Ken Sio not held up Gildart, and the weekend's perfect four-point haul for the Warriors was perfect preparation for their top-of-the-table clash against Warrington on Friday.

Elsewhere on Monday, Toddy Carney inspired Catalan Dragons to a 41-22 victory over Castleford that moved the French club into the top four.

The former Sydney Rooster crossed for two of the Dragons' seven tries in Perpignan. Joel Monaghan bagged a double in defeat for Castleford, who slipped to eighth in the 12-team table on the back of this defeat.

Meanwhile Curtis Naughton crossed for a double as Hull FC ended leaders Warrington's unbeaten start to the season with a 26-24 victory.

Warrington stayed top of the Super League table following their win over previous leaders Widnes last Friday but it was Hull who emerged victorious at their KC Stadium.

The hosts staged a second-half comeback in the Hull derby two days earlier and Naughton inspired something similar against Warrington.

The Wolves had opened up a ten-point lead at the interval, with Tom Lineham one of the try-scorers against his former club. Jamie Shaul completed

a double of his own for the home side, however, and while Lineham looked to have sealed a victory for Warrington there was still time for Naughton to turn the game on its head.

Craig Hall's late score gave Wakefield their second win of the weekend with a 20-16 success over defending champions Leeds.

The Rhinos have now lost six of their first eight in Super League while the Wildcats secured their first victory at the Headingley home of their Yorkshire rivals since 2007.

St Helens bounced back from a derby defeat by Wigan to record a 20-12 victory at Widnes. First-half tries from Joe

Greenwood, Louie McCarthy-Scarsbrook and Tommy Makinson were enough for the Saints.

Huddersfield's disappointing start to the season continued as late tries from Justin Carney and Niall Ewalds gave Salford a 26-24 win over the bottom-of-the-table Giants. Two tries from Ukuma Ta'ai had helped establish a 24-18 lead with 12 minutes to play for the Giants.

But Carney and Ewalds both crossed in a three-minute spell late on to condemn Huddersfield to defeat in a match where the result threatened to be overshadowed by an altercation involving Salford players and some of their own fans after the final whistle. —AFP



KEY BISCAZYNE: Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria is congratulated by Andy Murray of Great Britain after their match during the Miami Open presented by Itau at Crandon Park Tennis Center on Monday in Key Biscayne, Florida. — AFP

SERENA, MURRAY OUSTED IN MIAMI SHOCKERS

MIAMI: World number one and three-time defending champion Serena Williams and second-ranked Andy Murray both crashed out of the ATP and WTA Miami Open on a Monday filled with upsets. Russian 15th seed Svetlana Kuznetsova stunned 21-time Grand Slam champion Williams 6-7 (3/7), 6-1, 6-2 while British world number two Murray dropped a third-round match to Bulgarian 26th seed Grigor Dimitrov 6-7 (1/7), 6-4, 6-3. Williams and Murray each made 55 unforced errors, fading in the third set when it mattered most.

"A lot of unforced errors crept in and he was a lot more solid than me," said Murray, who had 22 unforced errors in the last set alone. "I made many more mistakes than usual, especially in the third set." Williams' struggles prompted questions about her fitness and movement, irking the 21-time Grand Slam champion.

"I don't think it's appropriate to criticize my movement right now," Williams said. "I did the best I could. I can't win every match. These players come out and give their best. I have to give 300 percent every match." The 34-year-old American was seeking her ninth Miami crown but instead matched her earliest-ever exit from 2000 with a fourth-round departure. "It's obviously disappointing, but I have won here a lot, so it's OK," Williams said.

Also ousted were world number two Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland, eliminated by 20th-ranked Swiss Tímea Babos 2-6, 6-4, 6-2, and Spanish fourth seed Garbine Muguruza, who fell 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4) to 13th seed Victoria Azarenka of Belarus.

Only two of the top 12 seeds-number two Angelique Kerber and number five Simona Halep-remain on the women's side. Top-ranked Novak Djokovic is the last top-five man remaining and only three of the men's top eight made the last 16. Two-time Grand Slam champion Murray failed in his bid for a third Miami trophy and fourth final in five seasons.

The 28-year-old Scotsman dominated the tiebreaker but fell behind 4-0 in the second set and stumbled after leading 3-1 in the third, swatting a forehand long on match point to fall after two hours and 24 minutes. "It's the best result of the year for me," Dimitrov said. "I just played better in the good moments. That was it."

Williams, who said she was physically fine and not affected by the heat and humidity, arrived having lost back-to-back finals for the first time since 2004, falling to Germany's Angelique Kerber at the Australian Open and Azarenka at Indian Wells. "She struggled a little bit losing the final of the Australian Open, but she is still number one in the world," Kuznetsova said. "I don't see much to be depressed about."

But intensity only increases as Williams prepares to defend French Open and Wimbledon crowns in the next few months.

"There are expectations," she said. "There are also the expectations I put on myself. That's pretty hard to live up to, the expectations I put on myself."

KUZNETSOVA FEELS LIKE CHAMP

Kuznetsova, a two-time Grand Slam champi-



KEY BISCAZYNE: Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia returns a shot to Serena Williams during the Miami Open presented by Itau at Crandon Park Tennis Center on Monday in Key Biscayne, Florida. — AFP

on who lost eight of 10 prior matches to Williams, is starting to feel like she did when she won the 2006 Miami title. "I have so many people saying, 'Congratulations, I feel like I've won the title already,'" Kuznetsova said.

Kuznetsova, seeded 15th, next faces 30th-seeded compatriot Ekaterina Makarova, who ousted Ukraine's 12th-seeded Elina Svitolina 6-1, 6-4 Radwanska, the 2012 Miami champion, faded in the second set as well to Babos, a 2015 French Open semi-finalist.

Babos' quarter-final foe will be Romania's Halep, who eliminated 69th-ranked British wildcard Heather Watson 6-3, 6-4. Next

up for Azarenka is British 24th seed Johanna Konta. And Australian Open champion Kerber of Germany will face US 22nd seed Madison Keys after dispatching Hungary's Tímea Babos 6-2, 3-6, 6-4. Japanese sixth seed Kei Nishikori cruised into the fourth round by routing Ukraine's 27th-seeded Alexandr Dolgopopolov 6-2, 6-2. "I played a very solid match," Nishikori said. "It's not easy when you're in the top 10 and everybody is playing their best against you."

Nishikori, the top-ranked player remaining in his half of the draw, plays Tuesday for a quarter-final berth against Spanish 17th seed Roberto Bautista Agut. —AFP

BACK TO DRAWING BOARD FOR NEW FATHER MURRAY

MIAMI: Third-round exits from two elite ATP events since becoming a father have Britain's Andy Murray searching for answers as the world number two approaches the start of the claycourt season.

The 28-year-old Scotsman lost a 6-7 (1/7), 6-4, 6-3 shocker to 28th-ranked Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov on Monday at the Miami Open after having been sent packing at Indian Wells by Argentina's 48th-ranked Federico Delbonis.

"I was up a break in the third, same thing in Indian Wells as well," Murray said. "Then lost a run of games in both matches. So need to look at that and see where I go from there."

Murray, who fell to 0-5 in Australian Open finals with a loss to Novak Djokovic in January, became a father February 7 when his wife Kim gave birth to daughter Sophia and took a break until Indian Wells.

"I didn't know what to expect," Murray said. "I expected Indian Wells to be tricky. But here I had a long time to prepare, practiced pretty well. "Indian Wells, understandable. Here, not so much." Murray said becoming a father has given him a more relaxed perspective on tennis, but has not changed the amount of work he does.

"Win or lose, it's not irrelevant to me but it's not as important as it was before," he said.

"It's not as stressful." Four of the top five men's seeds and six of the top 10 at Miami are gone before the last 16, matching 2005's tournament record.

"It hasn't happened often," Murray said of such seeded attrition. "I'm not sure exactly why that is." But Murray is not ready to proclaim this the year for a change of the guard dumping himself, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer. "I hope it's not for my sake," Murray said. "I need a little more evidence than one or two weeks to support that."

But he does have respect for rising young talent and their potential for Grand Slam success. "The group of guys coming up behind are really, really good players," Murray said. "It depends a little bit on how they develop, too. A lot of them are huge guys, big guys with big games and move well." Murray, the 2012 US Open and 2013 Wimbledon champion, made the French Open semi-finals the past two years and is expected to be in the hunt again this year at Roland Garros.

But Murray knows he cannot make 55 unforced errors as he did against Dimitrov. "Grigor is a very good player but I had opportunities," Murray said. "It's not like I came out and played awful stuff the whole time. When you get your chances you have to put your foot down." — AFP

FORMULA ONES'S QUALIFYING FORMAT FACES MORE CRITICISM

LONDON: Formula One's much-derided new qualifying format faces more criticism in Bahrain this weekend after a disappointing debut in Australia. Mercedes motorsport director Toto Wolff said yesterday.

The Austrian warned also that the sport was "under scrutiny" and needed to think carefully to extricate itself from a self-imposed problem.

"This weekend we will see the new qualifying system continue after a less-than-impressive debut in Australia," Wolff said in a team preview for Sunday's second race of the season at the Sakhir circuit.

"The teams were unanimous in their opinion of it on Sunday in Melbourne and it wasn't a positive opinion. We haven't found the right format with this change and it's hard to see how it might be more entertaining for the fans this weekend in Bahrain."

Teams had agreed unanimously only weeks before the season started to change the qualifying format to create more excitement in the Saturday session, introducing instant elimination of the slowest drivers at timed intervals. While the first and second phases of qualifying saw more action, the

final eight car session proved a flop with drivers watching from the garages as the clock ticked away the closing minutes without anyone on track. Wolff, whose team qualified first and second with triple champion Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg, had said in Melbourne that the new format was "pretty rubbish" and needed changing. However, a subsequent meeting of teams and F1 stakeholders failed to find unanimity and decided to leave it in place for at least one more race rather than be rushed into a knee-jerk decision. "The sport is under scrutiny on this matter, so careful thought is required in order to make coordinated, intelligent steps forward from the position we are in right now," said Wolff on Tuesday.

"The fans want close racing, in a format they can understand, between the best drivers and cars in the world-in that order. We should be capable of delivering that to the people in the grandstands and watching around the world." Hamilton, who finished second to Rosberg in Australia, qualified on pole last year at Sakhir and will be chasing his third successive Bahrain Grand Prix victory on Sunday. — Reuters



BOSTON: Kana Muramoto and Chris Reed of Japan during the Ice Dance practice session yesterday during the 2016 ISU World Figure Skating Championships at Boston's TD Garden that runs March 28-April 3. — AFP

MYNGHEER, DEMOITIE DEATHS, A DOUBLE BLOW FOR BELGIAN CYCLING

PARIS: Belgian cycling suffered a double blow in 24 hours with Daan Myngheer's death Monday from a heart attack following that a day earlier of Antoine Demoitie, killed in an accident. "A very sad week for the world of cycling," said Swiss Fabian Cancellara in an outpouring of emotion among fellow riders.

Both riders were trained by the same coach Kristof De Kegel, who reacted with disbelief: "The cycling gods are too hard! I've lost two great talents but above all two very warm people." Myngheer, 22, the 2011 Belgian junior champion who only turned professional last year, suffered the heart attack on Saturday after pulling up in the first stage of the Criterium International in Corsica.

He passed away at 7:08 pm (1708 GMT) on Monday in a hospital in d'AJaccio, on the island's west, surrounded by his family and his partner Emely, his team Roubaix Metropole Lille said.

"It's with great emotion that we announce the death of Daan," his team said in a statement. "He lost his last race after battling like a great champion." "Rest in peace champion," it added. His death was another hammer blow to Belgian cycling after 25-year-old Demoitie was killed in a collision with a motorbike during the Gent-Wevelgem race through northern France on Sunday.

The 25-year-old member of Belgian second-division team Wanty-Gobert fell around 150 kilometres into the Gent-Wevelgem race, in Sainte-Marie-Cappel. He was then hit by a motorbike while on the ground, before being transported

to a hospital in Lille where he succumbed to his injuries.

INVESTIGATION

"Investigations will be undertaken into the rules applied during the Belgian race, the respect for safety distances. The collision did not take place at high speed," public prosecutor Eric Fouard told AFP. The motorcyclist was questioned by police in Dunkirk but later released.

According to the magistrate, emergency services were only called half an hour after the initial examination by race doctors, and arrived 45 minutes after the accident. Investigators will have to determine if this delay may have contributed to the cyclist's death.

Myngheer, who would have turned 23 on April 13, pulled up in difficulty after just over an hour of racing in the first stage of the race at Porto-Vecchio on Saturday.

"Daan couldn't breathe... he was perspiring a lot. The race doctors saw immediately that it was serious. We have to thank the organisers for the speed with which they reacted. Daan was conscious when he got into the ambulance," said team manager Daniel Verbrackel.

He suffered the heart attack while in the ambulance, before being transferred by helicopter to hospital in Ajaccio where he was put on artificial respiration and fell into a coma.

The young racer also had trouble during an amateur race in 2014, but doctors found no problems with his heart when they examined him immediately afterwards. He was also

required to take new medical tests that winter, in France and Belgium, to keep his licence.

"When he joined our team he was carefully examined from a medical point of view. There was nothing unusual, nothing to fear. Last year there was no problem (health)," Ivan De Schampelaer, the Verandas Willems team manager, told Flemish TV Sporza. —AFP



RICHMOND: A picture taken on September 24, 2015 in Richmond shows Belgian cyclist Daan Myngheer during a press conference at the UCI Road World Cycling championships. Belgian cyclist Daan Myngheer died on Monday in Roubaix Metropole Lille, after the 22-year-old suffered a heart attack during the Criterium International race in Corsica at the weekend. — AFP



ICC WORLD TWENTY20



NEW DELHI: New Zealand's captain Kane Williamson (C) watches as Grant Elliott bowls in the nets during a training session at Feroz Shah Kotla cricket ground in New Delhi yesterday, on the eve of the World T20 cricket tournament first semi-final match between England and New Zealand. — AFP

WILLIAMSON HAILS 'FEARLESS' KIWIS AHEAD OF T20 SEMI

NEW DELHI: They are the nearly men of world cricket, with a reputation for faltering at the business end of tournaments.

But a year on from the pain of losing the 50 over World Cup final, skipper Kane Williamson says his unbeaten New Zealand team are a relaxed and fearless unit as they hone in on Twenty20 cricket's biggest prize.

"At the moment the team is very relaxed, going about their business," Williamson told reporters on Tuesday on the eve of New Zealand's World Twenty20 semi-final clash against England in New Delhi.

"Up until now we have been playing fearless cricket and smart cricket and that's what we will try and do again and hope that holds us in good stead in terms of a result.

"But at the same time we are up against a very strong England team that will be trying their best to win the game. So we are looking forward to it. It's going to be exciting."

Williamson took over on the eve of the tournament in India as New Zealand's captain after the retirement of their talisman Brendon McCullum, who went some way to rewriting that reputation for underachievement.

While New Zealand have never won either of cricket's two major international trophies, they had made it to the semi-finals on seven occasions before McCullum took over.

But although they went one better last year by reaching the final of the World Cup, there was more heartache to come when they were steamrolled by Michael Clarke's Australian team at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

FAVOURITES TAG

Williamson insisted that defeat was not playing on the team's mind but he also resisted talk that the Black Caps' wins over India, Australia and Pakistan in the group stages put them in the rare position of

favourites. "We have made one final and lost, but we don't look at it that closely," said Williamson, who has been one of the stand-out performers in New Zealand's perfect run to the semis.

"I think it's almost impossible in T20 cricket to give someone the favourites tag. It's so fickle in its nature that on any given day the team that plays the best wins and England can beat anyone."

While England are playing their third match in a row at Delhi's Feroz Shah Kotla stadium, it will be the fifth different venue in five tournament matches for the Black Caps.

To date, New Zealand's spinners have taken to the different surfaces like ducks to water and have been so potent that both of the team's main fast bowlers-Trent Boult and Tim Southee — are yet to get a game.

Mitchell Santner and Ish Sodhi were the top wicket-takers in the group stages while even part-time medium-pacer Grant Elliott weighed in with figures of three for 12, bowling mainly cutters, in the last match against Bangladesh.

"The spinners have been brilliant on surfaces that have suited spin bowling," said Williamson, while holding back from confirming that all his spinners would again start the game.

"We are not quite sure at this stage what to expect. We have seen a few games played on it recently, but we still have to have a good look at the surface and decide.

"There are number of world class bowlers that haven't played a game, still been brilliant in the group and understand that we do the best we can in picking the side for the surface and opposition to try give ourselves the best chance. We have got all 15 players on board with that."

Apart from the question mark over whether off-spinner Nathan McCullum will keep his place, New Zealand are expected to recall key batsman Martin Guptill who was rested for their last group match against Bangladesh.— AFP

GAYLE HOPES FOR ANOTHER BIG KNOCK AGAINST INDIA IN W T20

MUMBAI: Chris Gayle hopes to smash another century when West Indies returns at the Wankhede Stadium tomorrow for its World Twenty20 semifinal against India.

Gayle's 47-ball century against England gave West Indies a winning momentum in the tournament before Afghanistan broke the three-match winning sequence of the 2012 champion on a turning wicket at Nagpur.

"This is a perfect opportunity to actually start the tournament and try and pick up where I left off, get a big one for the team and put them in a winning position," Gayle said yesterday.

A niggling hamstring injury denied Gayle a chance to bat against Sri Lanka before he was rested in a close win against South Africa on another turning track.

He returned against Afghanistan but lasted only two deliveries - flicking the first one for four before getting clean bowled off the next ball. But the batting-friendly wickets in Mumbai with short square boundaries ideally suits the power hitting of Gayle as West Indies raced to 183-4 against England with 11 balls to spare.

South Africa also twice scored over 200 runs at the Wankhede Stadium. However, first England denied the Proteas with the second highest ever successful chase of 230-8 and then Afghanistan put up a brisk start before losing by 37 runs in pursuit of South Africa's 209-5.

In the absence of at least two key players legspinner Sunil Narine and all-rounder Kieron Pollard, West Indies has ousted South Africa and defending champion Sri Lanka from the tournament.

"That goes to show the strength of West Indies cricket back home," Gayle said. "The guys who actually replaced the first picks, someone like Carlos Brathwaite, he won us the game against South Africa ... and the bench is still strong enough."

Gayle said that six-run defeat against Afghanistan has only increased the motivation of West Indies to do well in the semifinal.



MUMBAI: West Indies' Chris Gayle smiles as he leaves after a practice session ahead of their ICC Twenty20 2016 Cricket World Cup semi final match against India in Mumbai, India, yesterday. —AP

"The only positive you can look from the Afghanistan game is the motive," Gayle said. "We saw India bounce back from losing games as well, so it can put us in a strong position as well to actually lift our game and do better tomorrow."

Virat Kohli has been key in guiding the host into the semifinals with his two masterful half centuries against arch-rival Pakistan and an unbeaten 82 off 51 balls in the do-or-die last group match against Australia.

But Gayle was not surprised by the sublime form of India's master middle-order batsman, who has scored 184 runs at an impressive average of 92.00.

"No surprise there. I have said it over the years he is going to be the world beater he is today," he said.

"He has been fantastic right through the year. He has been in a great form. He can still get runs but in a losing cause. We'll be happy with that as well." — AP



KABUL: Afghan cricket fans dance and wave the national flag as they welcome the country's cricket team home at Kabul International Airport in Kabul yesterday. Hundreds of Afghan cricket fans welcomed the national cricket team home at the airport in Kabul after their exit from the T20 world cup cricket tournament. —AFP

HERO'S WELCOME FOR AFGHAN TEAM AFTER HISTORIC WIN

KABUL: Hundreds of dancing, flag-waving Afghan fans yesterday gave a hero's welcome to their cricket team as they arrived home after a historic triumph over the mighty West Indies at the World Twenty20. Afghanistan failed to qualify for the semi-finals but the underdog side notched up an impressive win against the West Indies on Sunday—their first ever Super 10 victory at a World T20.

"West Indies is one of the best teams in the world and we defeated it," gushed Afghan batsman Gulbadin Naib. "It is unbelievable, a matter of great joy that a small team like ours could defeat them."

A traditional Attan folk dance erupted at Kabul's international airport as hundreds of fans gathered to welcome the team. Many others lined up along the capital's main road cheering, whistling and waving the Afghan flag as the team drove through the war-scarred city. "I am ecstatic," said cricket enthusiast Sayed Kamal Sadat.

"In our war torn country such a victory has brought happiness and pride." Afghanistan had lost all of their previous Super 10 matches, but they have won new admirers in India with their aggressive and carefree brand of cricket that has caused some anxious moments for their opponents. "In the past five to six years, Afghanistan's cricket team defeated some powerful teams," said team captain Asghar Stanikzai. "Afghanistan will be a very successful team in upcoming years." Stanikzai had earlier said his side, who had lost three straight group stage matches, had learnt "so much" at the T20 and would now head home and "work on our weaknesses".

Cricket was banned during the Taliban's 1996-2001 rule but the sport has seen a stunning revival in recent years. The game is played on scruffy city parks and rural thoroughfares, with young boys often using discarded pieces of wood for bats and wickets. — AFP

PAKISTAN COACH WAQAR YOUNIS READY TO QUIT

LAHORE: Pakistan cricket coach Waqar Younis is ready to quit after the team's dismal performance in the World Twenty20 where it lost three matches and could only beat qualifier Bangladesh.

"If they think I am the problem sack me and send me packing, if this can offer a solution then I do it," Younis told reporters in the eastern city of Lahore yesterday. The Pakistan team came under criticism by local media and the country's former test cricketers after losing to New Zealand, India and Australia.

"I literally put my hands together and beg for forgiveness," Younis said. "It (the performance) should have been better but unfortunately the results were not positive. I know everyone is hurt but I am also deeply hurt." Younis identified the absence of international cricket and a weak domestic structure as the reasons for Pakistan's poor performance in India.

No major test playing country has toured Pakistan since the attack on the Sri Lanka team bus at Lahore in 2009 and since then Pakistan has been playing its 'home' matches in the United Arab Emirates.

"You have made Dubai or Abu Dhabi a home away from home but you will never produce good players like India and other countries are producing by playing at their home grounds."

After winning against Bangladesh by 55 runs, Pakistan's batsmen, bowlers and fielders struggled in the remaining three matches before making an early exit from the tournament. For Pakistan, Sharjeel Khan top-scored with 112 runs from four matches, followed by his opening partner Ahmed Shehzad's 108 from as many matches.

Both openers were not originally named in the squad. Left-handed Khan was included after he scored a century in Pakistan's first professional domestic T20 league in the UAE. Shehzad made his way when Khuram Manzoor was dropped after Pakistan failed to qualify for the final of the Asia Cup in Bangladesh.

Captain Shahid Afridi and Mohammad Sami took four wickets each in the tournament while left-arm fast bowler Mohammad Amir ended up with only three wickets in four matches.

"Nowadays everyone is discussing that the chairman (of the Pakistan Cricket Board), selectors and coaches should be removed, but the question is whether we are understanding the problems?"

"My future as coach isn't relevant ... Why there's a sense that Pakistan cricket is linked with my future. It's definitely not." — AP



Waqar Younis



NEW DELHI: England's Joe Root bats during a practise session on the eve of the ICC Twenty20 2016 Cricket World Cup semi-final match against New Zealand, at the Feroz Shah Kotla cricket stadium in New Delhi, India, yesterday. — AP

DU PLESSIS FINED FOR DISSENT AT WORLD T20

NEW DELHI: South African skipper Faf du Plessis was fined yesterday by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for showing dissent during his side's win over Sri Lanka at the World Twenty20. Du Plessis was fined 50 percent of his match fee for "occupying the crease for a period of time" after being given out lbw, before leaving the field while shaking his head in Monday night's match in New Delhi. It was the captain's second fine for dissent in less than a year. He faces suspension if he commits a third offence before October, 12 months

since the first, the ICC said in a statement yesterday. The 31-year-old, who has accepted the sanction, made 31 before being trapped lbw during South Africa's consolation victory over Sri Lanka in the group stages. The Proteas had already failed to reach the semi-finals going into Monday's match, their hopes once again dashed of winning a first World T20 title.

New Zealand take on England in the first semi-final today in New Delhi, while India play the West Indies on Thursday in Mumbai in the second. — AFP

REAL SHOULD TREAT RODRIGUEZ BETTER, SAYS ASPRILLA

BARCELONA: Real Madrid are not showing forward James Rodriguez the respect he deserves, according to former Colombia striker Faustino Asprilla. Rodriguez has had an underwhelming second season in the Spanish capital following his 80 million euros (\$89.7 million) move to Madrid from Monaco in 2014. Rodriguez put his domestic woes aside to inspire Colombia to a last-gasp 3-2 win at Bolivia in a World

Cup qualifier last week, opening the scoring and laying on a pass for Carlos Bacca to get the second. "James doesn't try harder for Colombia than Real Madrid, but here in Colombia he is given the true importance that a player of his character needs to perform," Asprilla, the former Newcastle United and Parma forward, was quoted as saying by Spanish newspaper Marca.

"He is a very young boy with an awful lot of talent but James hasn't been given the support he needs by his club. When he had that support from (Carlo) Ancelotti he showed his true value. "This season he hasn't been able to prove anything because they haven't given him the special treatment every player needs from their club." Rodriguez scored 17 times in 43

appearances in his first season in Spain under Ancelotti, but the 24-year-old has made only 13 league starts this campaign due to a combination of a thigh injury and falling out of favour with coaches Rafael Benitez and his successor Zinedine Zidane. The Frenchman has left him out of the starting line-up for Real's last four matches. Asprilla, his country's third all-time leading scorer with 20 goals, also

believes Benitez had a problem with Colombian players. "I sincerely believe that Benitez must have something against Colombians, because it's the only way to explain his attitude towards my compatriots," he added. "James had just had an exceptional campaign in his first year with the club, then this man turns up and puts him on the bench." — Reuters

MCILROY SKIPS 'HASSLE' OF US MASTERS PAR 3 CONTEST

LONDON: Grand Slam-chasing Rory McIlroy will not play the traditional Par 3 Masters on the eve of next week's US Masters because it is "just too much hassle".

The Northern Irishman described the relaxed nine-hole event as "a bit of a distraction" as he tries to land a fifth major and a first at Augusta to complete the set of all four of golf's main titles.

The 26-year-old last skipped the Par 3 contest in 2011, the year he led the Masters by four shots going into the last day before collapsing to a final-round 80 to finish 15th.

"The year I had my best chance at Augusta, 2011, I didn't play the Par 3 contest so maybe the decision not to play it this year can work in my favour," the world number three said.

The Par 3 event, played over Augusta National's short course around Ike's Pond, often features celebrities or players' children as caddies.

McIlroy had One Direction singer Niall Horan as his guest caddie last year and his then fiancée Caroline Wozniacki did the job in 2014.

McIlroy went to Augusta last year amid a frenzy of hype surrounding his first chance to complete the grand slam and he finished a career-best fourth, six shots behind champion Jordan Spieth.

This year he has opted not to visit Augusta for a scouting mission ahead of the tournament and will arrive on Sunday evening ready for practice

rounds on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

"Compared to a year ago and all the hype of winning the Grand Slam, I already feel a little more mellow and a lot more chilled," he was quoted as saying on Sky Sports.

McIlroy reached the semi-finals of the WGC-Dell Match Play in Texas on Sunday, but last won in November 2015 and has been overshadowed this year by a number of his rivals at the top of the rankings.

Australian Jason Day, who beat defending champion McIlroy in Austin to go back to world number one, won the Match Play the week after clinching the Arnold Palmer Invitational.

His compatriot Adam Scott, who clinched the Masters in 2013, has won twice in 2016 while double Masters winner Bubba Watson and defending champion Spieth have also triumphed this season.

"There's a lot more going on around others competing in the Masters this year already than the spotlight I found myself in a year ago," added McIlroy, who won the US Open in 2011, the British Open in 2014 and the US PGA in 2012 and 2014.

Only five players—Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods—have won all four of golf's modern majors since the US Masters was introduced in 1934. The Masters takes place at Augusta National, Georgia, from April 7-10. —Reuters



WASHINGTON: Marcus Johansson #90 of the Washington Capitals shoots on goalie Sergei Bobrovsky #72 of the Columbus Blue Jackets during the second period at Verizon Center on Monday in Washington. —AFP

CAPITALS CLINCH PRESIDENTS' TROPHY BY BEATING BLUE JACKETS

WASHINGTON: Fourth-liner Tom Wilson atoned for two penalties by scoring the winning goal early in the third period as the Washington Capitals clinched the Presidents' Trophy by beating the Columbus Blue Jackets 4-1 Monday night. The Capitals needed only a point to clinch the NHL's best record this season and wrapped up home-ice advantage throughout the Stanley Cup playoffs with seven games left. Justin Williams and T.J. Oshie also scored and Nicklas Backstrom added an empty-netter for Washington, which has an NHL-leading 113 points. Goaltender Braden Holtby made 21 saves to earn his 46th win, two shy of Martin Brodeur's single-season record. Cam Atkinson scored for the Blue Jackets, who lost for the ninth time in their past 13 games. Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 35 of the 38 shots he faced.

SHARKS 5, KINGS 2

Joe Thornton scored a tiebreaking, power-play goal early in the third period to help send San Jose back to the playoffs with a victory over Los Angeles. Justin Braun added two goals, Joe Pavelski and Melker Karlsson also scored and the Sharks will return to the postseason after their run of 10 straight trips was snapped last season. Martin Jones made 30 saves. Vincent Lecavalier scored twice for the first-place Kings, who had their lead in the Pacific Division cut to one point over second-place Anaheim. The Ducks are four points ahead of the third-place Sharks and have a game in hand over both of their California rivals. Jonathan Quick made 26 saves, including a brilliant one to rob Logan Couture in the closing moments of the second period. But he had little chance to stop Thornton's go-ahead goal in the third.

LIGHTNING 3, MAPLE LEAFS 0

Victor Hedman had a goal and an assist, Ben Bishop made 34 saves and Tampa Bay beat Toronto to move into a tie for first place in the Atlantic Division. The Lightning's other goals came from Mike Blunden and Ondrej Palat. Steven Stamkos and Erik Condra each had two assists. Bishop got his first career shutout against the Leafs. It was his sixth shutout of the season and 18th of his career. The Lightning and Florida Panthers are tied with 93 points. Florida faces Toronto on Tuesday night. Leafs goalie Garret Sparks made 15 saves.

DUCKS 2, OILERS 1

Corey Perry scored his 31st goal of the season and John Gibson made 27 saves to help Anaheim beat Edmonton. Brandon Pirri also scored for the playoff-bound Ducks, who are trying to catch the Los Angeles Kings for first place in the Pacific Division. Nail Yakupov scored in the third period for the Oilers, who have lost two straight. Cam Talbot made 23 saves.

FLYERS 3, JETS 2, OT

Claude Giroux scored at 4:46 of overtime, and Philadelphia beat Winnipeg for a crucial win for playoff positioning. Giroux also had an assist and Wayne Simmonds and Mark Streit scored in regulation for the Flyers, who began play tied with Detroit for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. The Flyers blew a two-goal lead and appeared to be headed for a shootout before Giroux's clutch play. Philadelphia is just 2-8 in the tiebreaker this season and 32-70 since its inception.

AVALANCHE 4, PREDATORS 3

Blake Comeau had a goal and an assist, and Colorado used a fast start to edge Nashville. Gabriel Landeskog and Jack Skille also scored in

the first, helping Colorado chase Pekka Rinne at 11:40 after giving up three goals on 10 shots faced. Shawn Matthias's goal in the third wound up the game-winner. The Avalanche played without centers Matt Duchene and Nathan MacKinnon because of knee injuries. But Colorado managed to stay close to Minnesota in the race for the second wild card in the Western Conference, pulling within three points of the idle Wild with six games left. Nashville had recorded at least a point in 10 straight home games. It needed a regulation win to clinch its second straight playoff berth.

RED WINGS 3, SABRES 2

Dylan Larkin, Riley Sheahan and Luke Glendon scored and Detroit held on for a victory against Buffalo. Detroit desperately needed the two points to boost its chances of extending the franchise's postseason streak to 25. The Red Wings pulled within a point of Boston for the third and final guaranteed spot from the

Atlantic Division. Both teams have six games left in the regular season. Detroit is tied with Philadelphia for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference, but the Flyers have one more game to earn at least a point. Philadelphia beat Winnipeg 3-2 in overtime on Monday night. Detroit's Jimmy Howard gave up goals to Zemgus Girgensons and Sam Reinhart in a 61-second span late in the game.

FLAMES 5, COYOTES 2

Sam Bennett scored twice, Sean Monahan had a goal and two assists and Calgary avoid a season sweep by Arizona. T.J. Brodie and Joe Colborne also scored for Calgary, and Micheal Ferland had two assists. The Flames went 2 for 3 on the power play while stopping a three-game losing streak. Calgary had lost all four previous meetings this season to Arizona. Anthony Duclair scored twice for the Coyotes, who had won three in a row. Louis Domingue stopped 16 shots. — AP

NHL Results/Standings

Philadelphia 3, Winnipeg 2 (OT); Washington 4, Columbus 1; Detroit 3, Buffalo 2; Tampa Bay 3, Toronto 0; Colorado 4, Nashville 3; Anaheim 2, Edmonton 1; Calgary 5, Arizona 2; San Jose 5, Los Angeles 2.

Western Conference					Eastern Conference							
Central Division					Atlantic Division							
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	
Dallas	45	22	9	247	218	99	Florida	42	24	9	216	184
St. Louis	45	22	9	203	185	99	Philadelphia	37	25	13	196	199
Chicago	44	25	7	212	188	95	Carolina	33	28	15	186	206
Nashville	39	24	13	213	194	91	New Jersey	36	32	8	171	193
Minnesota	37	28	11	206	189	85	Columbus	30	38	8	195	237
Colorado	39	33	4	204	215	82	Metropolitan Division					
Winnipeg	31	38	7	194	223	69	Washington	54	16	5	236	175
						Pacific Division						
Los Angeles	45	26	5	208	180	95	NY Rangers	43	24	9	219	199
Anaheim	42	23	10	196	178	94	Pittsburgh	42	25	8	214	186
San Jose	42	28	6	224	198	90	NY Islanders	40	25	9	208	192
Arizona	34	35	7	199	226	75	Philadelphia	37	25	13	196	199
Calgary	32	38	6	210	240	70	Carolina	33	28	15	186	206
Vancouver	27	35	13	171	217	67	New Jersey	36	32	8	171	193
Edmonton	30	42	7	194	234	67	Columbus	30	38	8	195	237

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss

KAGAWA DOUBLE HELPS JAPAN SMASH SYRIA 5-0

SAITAMA: Japan thrashed Syria 5-0 to finish top of their World Cup qualifying group yesterday but they needed a flurry of late goals to give the scoreline a flattering complexion. A freak own goal from Hamdi Al Masri after 17 minutes put Japan in front before Shinji Kagawa scored twice and Syria crumbled in the second half as the home side topped Group E in the second round of qualifying for the 2018 World Cup and 2019 Asian Cup.

Japan finished with 22 points from their eight games—four more than Syria, who will also advance to the next round as one of the four best-performing group runners-up.

The Blue Samurai scored 27 goals and conceded none from their eight home and away games with Syria, Singapore, Afghanistan and Cambodia.

But they struggled to stamp their authority on a Syria team missing four key players, axed by coach Fajr Ibrahim for breaking a team curfew after last week's 6-0 win over Cambodia.

And Japan survived a scare when Mahmoud Al Mawas smashed a long-range drive against the post, moments before Kagawa's volley on 66 minutes effectively put the game beyond Syria's reach.

Keisuke Honda headed Japan's third with four minutes left but there was still time for Kagawa to stab home his second and for substitute Genki Haraguchi to grab a stoppage-time fifth.

"We played a spectacular match," Japan coach Vahid Halilhodzic told reporters. "It will give us confidence and great strength to take into the final round of qualifiers."

Honda told Japan's NHK Television: "It was a goal to go through qualifying with no goals against so that was satisfying. "But there are still some things we need to work on. We got caught on the counter several times and stronger opponents will make us pay so we need to be wary of that."

"We don't want to be satisfied with this. All the players need to step up and improve in order for us to keep winning."

Shinji Okazaki, who provided the spark as Japan crushed Afghanistan 5-0 last Thursday, was handed the captain's armband on his 100th international appearance. But the Leicester City striker failed to add to his tally of 48 international goals, missing an open goal in the early salvos and volleying spectacularly off-target just before the interval.

Ibrahim's decision to drop rebel quartet Ahmad Al Saleh, Alaa Al Shebli, Fahd Al Youssef and Sanharib Melki was a tough one, given Syria's struggles amid their country's violent conflict, which has claimed an estimated 250,000 lives, including several footballers.

But his players produced a courageous display nonetheless and Japan goalkeeper Shusaku Nishikawa needed to produce a string of top saves to preserve his clean sheet. —AFP



TOKYO: Japan's Shinji Okazaki, center, leaps to control the ball against Syria's Omar Midani (12) and Ahammad Kalasi (5) during their World Cup qualifying match in Saitama, north of Tokyo, yesterday. Japan defeated Syria. — AP



TEHRAN: Iran's Saeid Ezatollahi (C) dribbles the ball as Oman's Ahmed Mubarak (R) defends during their World Cup Asia qualifying football match between Iran and Oman at the Azadi stadium in Tehran, yesterday. — AFP

Sports

Serena, Murray
ousted in Miami
shockers

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Capitals clinch
Presidents' Trophy
by beating
Blue Jackets

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SALT LAKE CITY: Los Angeles Lakers guard Jordan Clarkson (6) goes to the basket as Utah Jazz's Rodney Hood (5) and Shelvin Mack, right, look on during the first quarter of an NBA basketball game, Monday, in Salt Lake City. — AP

JAZZ HAND KOBE WORST LOSS EVER

SALT LAKE CITY: Rodney Hood scored 30 points and the Jazz turned Kobe Bryant's last visit to Utah into the worst loss of his career with a 123-75 victory on Monday night that matched the Lakers' largest defeat in franchise history. The Jazz had their biggest offensive night of the season and remained in the No. 7 slot in the Western Conference playoff race, one game ahead of the Houston Rockets. The 48-point defeat matched the margin in the Lakers' 142-94 loss to the Clippers on March 7, 2014, when Bryant was out with an injury. Hood and the Jazz put the game away early with a 17-2 start. The second-year guard was 5 for 5 from the field for 14 first-quarter points. He had 30 at halftime, including eight 3-pointers, and missed his career high for a game by two points.

THUNDER 119, RAPTORS 100

Russell Westbrook had 26 points, 12 assists and 11 rebounds in his 16th triple-double of the season, Kevin Durant scored 34 points and Oklahoma City beat Toronto for its eighth straight victory. Westbrook has seven triple-doubles in March, the most in a month since Michael Jordan had seven in April, 1989. He has the most in a season since Magic Johnson had 17 in 1988-89. Oklahoma City has the NBA's longest current winning streak and the team's longest since a 10-game run from Jan. 16-31, 2014. DeMar DeRozan had 19 points and Norman Powell added 18 for the Raptors, who lost at home for just the fourth time in 2016.

HAWKS 102, BULLS 100

Jeff Teague scored 26 points, including two free throws with just over six seconds to play, and surging Atlanta fought off a furious Chicago rally. It was the fourth straight win for the Hawks. Though the Bulls mounted a dramatic late comeback, they continued a late-season swoon, losing their fourth straight. The Bulls were down as much as 15 in the second half, but stormed back in the fourth quarter and were down three with the ball with eight seconds to play. Chicago's Mike

Dunleavy missed a layup, though, and fouled Teague, whose free throws sealed Atlanta's ninth win in 10 games. Dennis Schroder and Al Horford each added 14 points for Atlanta. Paul Millsap had 11 rebounds and Horford added 10 for the Hawks, who completed a season sweep of the Bulls. Derrick Rose had 20 points for the Bulls.

SPURS 101, GRIZZLIES 87

LaMarcus Aldridge had 31 points and 13 rebounds to lead San Antonio over Memphis. Aldridge connected on 11 of 16 shots and was 9 of 11 from the line as San Antonio won despite resting stars Tim Duncan, Tony Parker and Manu Ginobili, who did not make the trip to Memphis. Patty Mills finished with 17 points, while Kyle Anderson had 13 points and a career-best seven assists. Boris Diaw also added 13 points. Vince Carter led Memphis with 14 points, while JaMychal Green finished with 12. Matt Barnes had 11 points and nine rebounds for Memphis, which lost its third straight. San Antonio shot 51 percent from the field, while Memphis struggled at 40 percent.

HEAT 110, NETS 99

Dwyane Wade had 30 points and nine assists, Hassan Whiteside scored a career-high 27 points off the bench and Miami pulled away to beat Brooklyn. Josh Richardson finished with 16 points in a spot start and Justise Winslow added 13 for Miami, which clamped down defensively in the second half. Brook Lopez scored 26 points for Brooklyn, which had its streak of seven straight games with 100 or more points - the team's longest in two years - come to an end. Thaddeus Young made his first 10 shots and scored 20 for the Nets, who got 14 from Sean Kilpatrick. Wade is averaging 27.1 points in his last seven games against the Nets. He shot 14 for 19 from the field on Monday, helping ensure that Joe Johnson's first game against his former team would be a winning one.

MAVERICKS 97, NUGGETS 88

Reserve J.J. Barea scored 18 points and had 11 assists to help short-handed Dallas halt a three-game skid with a win over Denver. Dwight Powell had 10 of his 16 points in the fourth quarter as Dallas moved into a virtual tie with Houston for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference. It was a much-needed win for the Mavericks in a month that hasn't been friendly to them. They're 4-10 and have gone from five games over .500 on March 1 to two games below. The Mavericks had seven players score in double figures, including all of their starters. Will Barton had 23 points for the Nuggets, who finished with 21 turnovers. The Mavericks turned it over just three times.

TIMBERWOLVES 121, SUNS 116

Andrew Wiggins scored 32 points, Karl-Anthony Towns added 27 points and 10 boards and Minnesota beat Phoenix. Wiggins needed just 13 field goal attempts to score his points. He made 17 of 21 free throws and 3 of 5 3-pointers as the Wolves won for the third time in their last four games. Minnesota shot 50.6 percent and turned 12 of his 30 turnovers into 26 points. Devin Booker scored 12 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter as the Suns mounted a furious comeback from 20 down. Brandon Knight scored 30 points and tied a career high with seven 3-pointers, but the Suns lost for the eighth time in their last 11 games.

PELICANS 99, KNICKS 91

Jrue Holiday scored 10 of his 22 points in the fourth quarter and New Orleans snapped a three-game slide with a victory over New York. Returning from a two-game absence because of a toe injury on his left foot, Holiday took over a tight game in the final minutes, scoring six points during a 9-0 run that gave New Orleans a 93-85 lead. The Pelicans won for the first time this season when

scoring fewer than 100 points. New Orleans had been 0-33 in such games. Former Knick Toney Douglas scored 16 points and Luke Babbitt added 14 for the Pelicans. Carmelo Anthony scored 22 for New York, while Robin Lopez added 17 points. Knicks rookie Kristaps Porzingis had 16 points, 10 rebounds and three blocked shots.

CLIPPERS 114, CELTICS 90

DeAndre Jordan had 15 points and 13 rebounds, Chris Paul added 13 points and 14 assists and Los Angeles cruised past Boston. The Clippers won their third in a row and moved 5 1/2 games ahead of Memphis, which lost to San Antonio on Monday night, for fourth place in the Western Conference with nine games to play. The Clippers clinched a playoff berth on Sunday. Austin Rivers scored 16 points to lead the Clippers, who shot 52 percent. Jamal Crawford added 13, Wesley Johnson 11 and Jeff Green 10. Isaiah Thomas scored 24 points and Avery Bradley and Marcus Smart each added 13 for the Celtics, who shot just 35 percent and had a four-game winning snapped.

TRAIL BLAZERS 105, KINGS 93

Reserve Allen Crabbe scored 21 points and Portland beat short-handed Sacramento. CJ McCollum had 16 points, while Damian Lillard added 13 points and nine assists, before both sat out the fourth quarter. Portland, which led by as many as 28 points, remained sixth in the Western Conference with seven games to go. The Blazers have won 14 of their last 16 games at home, including five straight. Seth Curry had a career-high 21 points in just his third start of the season and Omri Casspi added 18 for the Kings, who have lost five straight to the Blazers. The Kings, all but out of the playoff picture, rested Rudy Gay, Rajon Rondo and DeMarcus Cousins. The starting lineup had Curry and Darren Collison in the backcourt, along with forwards Casspi and Quincy Acy and center Kosta Koufos. — AP

CAHILL BRACE AS AUSTRALIA TAKE ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS RUSSIA

SYDNEY: Tim Cahill scored a double and Robbie Kruse provided three goal assists as Australia trounced Jordan 5-1 to finish top of their 2018 World Cup Asia qualifying group yesterday. The 36-year-old veteran scored twice in the first half as the Socceroos broke down the Harry Redknapp-coached Jordanians to win convincingly. The win in Group B means they enter the third and final phase of Asian qualifying for the tournament in Russia.

Hangzhou-based Cahill has now scored 47 goals in 89 internationals for Australia, the current Asian Cup champions, and 22 goals in 27 World Cup qualifiers for them.

While Cahill again topped Australia's goalscorers, it was Germany-based Kruse who got a rousing ovation when he was subbed late in the second half after providing the final ball for three of the goals. Australia's other goalscorers were home-based midfielder Aaron Mooy, Glasgow Celtic's Tom Rogic and QPR youngster Massimo Luongo. "It's been two strong performances (including Tajikistan) and I think people are starting to appreciate the way the boys are playing now and the belief they have in what we're doing," said coach Ange Postecoglou. "Jordan was a dangerous opponent, they had everything to play for, yet there was never going to be anyone but us winning on the night." Former West Ham, Tottenham and QPR manager Redknapp, who was hired by Jordan's Prince Ali to help his country's World Cup qualifying bid, said: "They were a different class to us, they were a much better and stronger team than we were."

"So it was difficult, they had a bit too much quality and they looked a lot fitter than us, they were sharper... there was a big gulf in class tonight." The Socceroos needed patience to prise open the combative Jordanians, but once the home side scored their opener in the 24th minute the visitors broke wide open.

Bayer Leverkusen's Kruse delivered a pinpoint cross for stand-in skipper and unmarked Cahill to tap into an empty net in the 24th minute. Kruse was again the provider 15 minutes later when he released midfielder Mooy on the left and Mooy slotted past goalkeeper Amer Shafi for 2-0. Kruse made his third assist in the opening half with another lovely cross.

Cahill met it with his head for his second on the night. Australia led 3-0 at halftime after Jordan fell away in the second period of the first half, giving the visitors an insurmountable task in the final 45 minutes in Sydney. Rogic ensured there was no way back for Jordan with his third goal in the last two World Cup qualifiers and Australia's fourth in the 53rd minute. QPR starlet Luongo scored the Socceroos' fifth goal just five minutes after coming on as a substitute.

Yousef Al-Rawashdeh was fortunate not to see a red card when he scythed down Kruse in a vicious tackle which left the Socceroo clapping his left knee on the ground. But Kruse resumed before being subbed by Nathan Burns with 20 minutes left. Abdallah Deeb scored a consolation goal for Jordan in the final minute of regulation time. — AFP

CHINA STUN QATAR TO MOVE TO REVIVE WORLD CUP HOPES

HONG KONG: China breathed new life into their World Cup dream when they stunned Qatar 2-0 to move to the brink of the next round of qualifying yesterday.

Second-half goals from Huang Bowen and Wu Lei shocked Qatar, who had won all seven of their previous Group C games, on a dramatic night in Xi'an. China's win, together with the Philippines' surprise 3-2 victory over North Korea in Manila, put Team Dragon in the box seat to clinch a spot in the third qualifying round and the 2019 Asian Cup.

China have only qualified for one World Cup, in 2002, but President Xi Jinping is spearheading a drive to turn the giant Asian country into a footballing power.

Their chances of reaching Russia 2018 took an upturn in the 57th minute, when midfielder Huang

buried a shot from outside the penalty box into the corner after a goalmouth scramble.

This was followed by a close-range strike in the 88th minute by Wu, who had come close twice before.

Qatar, who will host the 2022 World Cup, were lacklustre and showed little threat despite their perfect record in their other qualifying games. China brought greater organisation and energy, boosted by a raucous home crowd in the ancient capital of Xi'an.

"My luck was good, it was a team effort," Huang told state broadcaster CCTV, before adding: "Chinese football is gradually improving."

As the final games unfold, China needs to finish among the four best-performing second-placed teams in eight qualifying groups to reach both the next stage and the 2019 Asian Cup. — AFP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

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SAUDI MONEY SUPPLY SHRINKS IN FEBRUARY

CB DATA POINTS TO SLOWING ECONOMY AS OIL PRICES PLUNGE

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's money supply shrank in February for the first time in more than a decade, central bank data showed yesterday, in a fresh sign the economy of the world's largest oil exporter is slowing sharply because of depressed oil prices. The broadest measure of money supply published by the central bank, M3, dropped 0.9 percent from a year earlier last month, its first annual decline since at least 2004.

Narrower money supply measures M1 and M2 also shrank. M1, which includes currency in circulation and demand deposits but excludes less liquid assets

such as savings and time deposits, contracted a hefty 5.1 percent. "This is part of a trend. It's concerning in that it reflects the size of banks' balance sheets ... The figures are generally an indicator of domestic demand," said William Jackson, senior emerging markets economist at London's Capital Economics.

Low oil prices pushed the budget into a deficit of nearly \$100 billion last year and the government has embarked since late 2015 on spending cuts and tax rises to narrow the gap, hitting consumer spending and companies' willingness to invest.

Money supply figures are often volatile, and the February data contained some moderately positive factors - bank lending to the private sector expanded 10.0 percent from a year earlier.

But cash withdrawals from automated teller machines, one indicator of consumer spending, sank 13 percent from a year ago in February. The year-earlier total was inflated by a two-month salary bonus for public employees to mark the accession of King Salman; such largesse looks unlikely to be repeated. More economic pain is expected in coming months because, in a

fresh austerity step, the government ordered ministries in mid-March to cut their spending on contracts by at least 5 percent.

Jackson said Riyadh's massive fiscal reserves meant it could probably manage the spending cuts to avoid an economic recession. Net foreign assets at the central bank, which acts as the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund, totalled \$584 billion in February, the data showed.

That marked a 17.3 percent drop from a year earlier, as the central bank liquidated reserves to pay the government's bills, but

the current level of assets suggests Riyadh could continue spending at its present pace for several years. However, Jackson said the country was in for a lengthy fiscal squeeze that would push economic growth down to 1.5 percent this year and 1.0 percent next year from an estimated 3.4 percent in 2015. Because of the austerity measures, inflation has risen sharply, which is expected to deter consumers. Annual consumer price inflation jumped to 4.3 percent in January, the highest in over three years, from 2.3 percent in December after the government cut fuel subsidies and hiked utility fees. —Reuters



PITTSBURGH: A shopper walks out of the Sephora store in the Shadyside section of Pittsburgh. The Conference Board reported on US consumer confidence for March yesterday.—AP

CONSUMERS MAKE TRAVEL PLANS WHILE DC PONDERES AIRLINE FEES

DALLAS: As families and individuals start to book summer travel, a debate is rising about whether airlines make it too hard to choose the most affordable options.

Airlines say the Internet has made pricing transparent and air travel is a bargain. Consumer advocates and lawmakers counter that comparing fees for things like baggage and extra legroom - a growing part of the cost of a trip - can be difficult, especially when travelers don't buy their ticket directly from the airline. No changes are coming in the short-term, leaving travelers to plot their own strategies for finding the best prices. As always, it helps to plan ahead and consider whether you need extra services that might add to your cost.

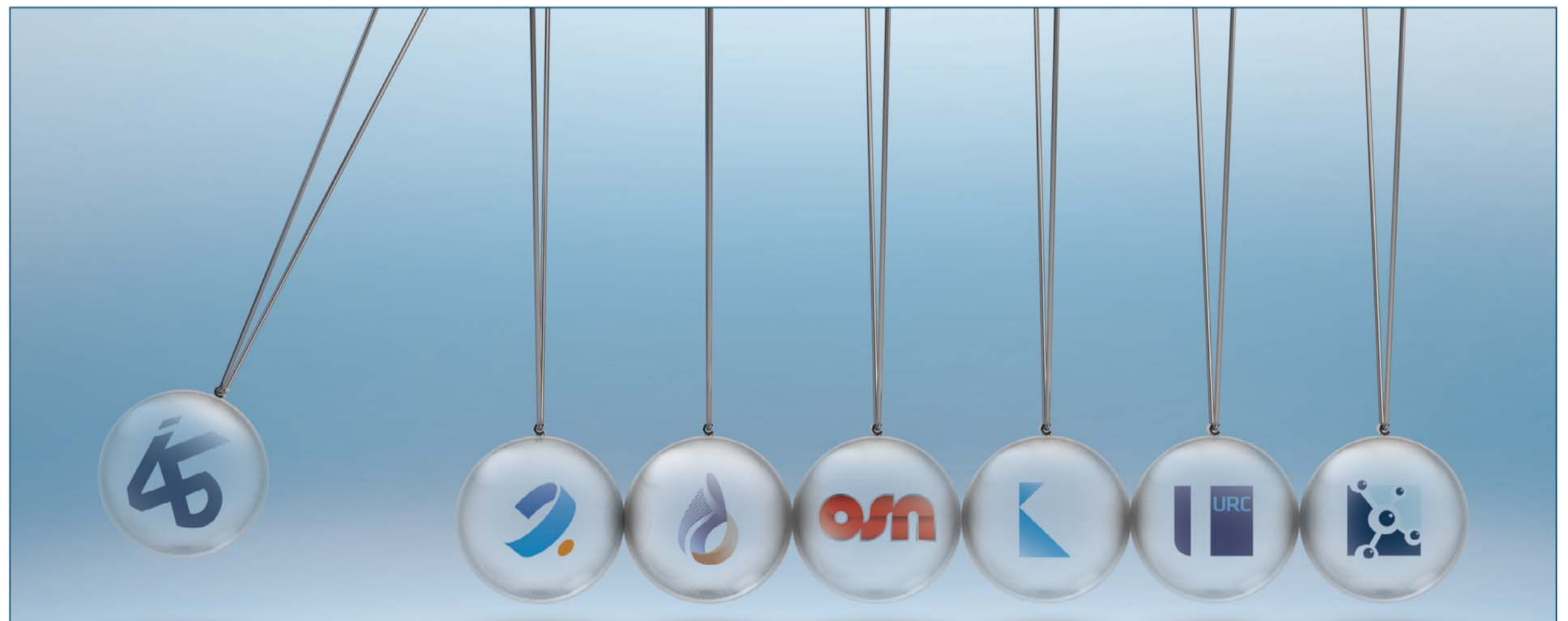
Some old strategies are losing value due to changes in the way airlines operate. The notion that Wednesday (or Tuesday) is the best day to buy your ticket isn't always true anymore. As more airlines base loyalty programs on how much you spend, not how many miles you fly, it has become harder for many leisure travelers to earn free flights.

Here are five tips from travel experts: Know what comes with your seat by reading the fine print on the air-

line website. A cheap ticket that doesn't include checked baggage might not be such a bargain. Delta Air Lines (and soon American and United) has a lower "basic economy" fare. "It looks cheap, but it's got a whole bunch of restrictions on it," says Patrick Surry, the chief data scientist at Hopper, a travel-research firm in Cambridge, Mass. "It's impossible to change it, you don't get a seat assignment, and you can't pay to upgrade. It's buyer beware - you need to do your homework."

Be flexible with dates and destinations. Flying to tourist destinations will almost certainly be cheaper and less crowded in September or even August than in July. That is of little help, however, to families with school-age children. Check the budget airlines. For example, if you're flying to Europe this year, Iceland's WOW air and Norwegian Air Shuttle have added routes across the Atlantic. "They may not be the most convenient or comfortable, but they may offer some attractive savings," says Henry Hartevelde, a travel analyst in San Francisco. He cautions that travelers wanting lots of optional services may find it's cheaper to stick with the older, more familiar airlines. If you haven't done so yet, follow the Twitter

accounts of the airlines on your intended route and sign up for alerts from fare-tracking services - there are several of those. That way you'll learn about a flash sale before it ends. Families should confirm free seat assignments right away when booking on American, Delta or United, says Summer Hull, author of the Mommy Points blog. She factors in the extra fee for advance seat assignments when flying on the discount airlines that won't let you pick a seat for free. Costs can rise quickly for a family. If mom, dad and two kids each have a suitcase, that's often \$100 each way within the US want to sit together on a low-fare airline? Seat assignments run \$2 to \$100 each round-trip on Spirit and \$12 and up on rival Frontier, although Frontier offers a discounted package of extras. If the family must reschedule, changing a nonrefundable U.S. ticket costs \$200 on American, Delta or United but is free on Southwest. Fees for certain seats and other items can vary widely - or be waived - depending on whether you belong to an airline's loyalty program and whether you're an elite member. Even using the airline's branded credit card can make a difference. Your fees might be waived on one airline but not another.—AP



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



HEDGE FUNDS SETS NEAR-RECORD BULLISH BET ON RISING OIL PRICES

LONDON: Hedge funds and other money managers have amassed a near-record number of bullish bets on increasing oil prices, helping push the main international benchmark well above \$40 per barrel.

By the close of business on March 22, money managers held a net long position equivalent to almost 579 million barrels in the three largest crude oil futures and options contracts. Hedge funds have more than doubled their net long position from just 242 million barrels at the end of last year, according to an analysis of data published by regulators and exchanges.

The net long position has passed the previous peak of 572 million barrels, set in May 2015, and is closing in on the record of 626 million, set in June 2014, when Islamic State fighters were racing across northern Iraq. Hedge funds have established a record net long position in Brent crude futures and options traded on ICE Futures Europe equivalent to 364 million barrels of oil.

At the same time, hedge fund managers

have largely closed out their previous record short position in US oil futures and options and started to accumulate long positions instead. Combined WTI short positions on the New York Mercantile Exchange and ICE Futures Europe have been cut from 261 million barrels at the start of February to 112 million barrels. The net long position in WTI has surged from just 60 million barrels in early February to 215 million barrels on March 22. The accumulation of a near-record net long position has coincided with a sharp rise in oil prices, with US crude up from \$26 per barrel to more than \$41, and Brent up from \$30 to \$42.

The closing out of the previous record short position in US crude futures and options has been accompanied by a predictable short-covering rally. There has been a close correspondence between hedge fund positions and the movement of oil prices since early 2014.

Just as record shorting of US crude futures and options helped push oil prices to

multi-year lows below \$30 per barrel in January and February, so the unwinding of those positions has sent prices sharply higher. This is the third time that hedge funds have established a large short position and then unwound it since the start of 2015 and each cycle has ended with a sharp short-covering rally.

But the current short-covering rally now appears over with hedge funds now fully exited from the record short position established since October 2015. With the hedge funds switched from a record short position to a near-record long one, the balance of risks in the market has shifted to the downside.

Instead of a short-covering rally, the main risk in the short term is now long liquidation if funds try to take some of their profits following the rise in prices. The current hedge fund long positioning puts the market at risk from a sharp drop in prices such as occurred after June 2014, May 2015 and October 2015.

There seems to be some awareness of the shifting balance of threats. In the last three

weeks, oil prices have risen by less than expected given the large reduction in hedge fund short positions.

The rally in WTI has stalled at or just below \$40, while the liquidation of hedge fund short positions implied it should have risen closer to \$50 per barrel.

PROFESSOR PANGLOSS

Hedge funds are betting growing consumption and shrinking oil output will swiftly rebalance the oil market. Like the optimistic Professor Pangloss in Voltaire's "Candide", hedge funds have established a near-record long position on the assumption the oil market will be in the best of possible worlds in 2016. The newfound bullishness has been based in part on the view that oil prices have already fallen so far (probably too far) that they must increase again in the medium term. Few analysts, traders and investors think that oil prices could be sustainable at \$30 in the medium and long-term so a correction was inevitable at some point.

Hedge funds have turned very bullish about the outlook for oil prices based on indicators showing that gasoline demand in the United States and India.

Investors appear more hopeful the US and global economies will avoid a return to recession in 2016, ensuring that oil consumption keeps increasing. US shale production appears to be falling swiftly based on state production data and the wholesale idling of drilling rigs, which should gradually help tighten the oil market. Sentiment about possible production restraint from members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries has also improved.

OPEC members appear to be inching towards agreement on a standstill production agreement in cooperation with key non-OPEC countries. Critically, the possibility of a standstill agreement is no longer being conditioned on adherence by Iran, which remains determined to increase its oil production to pre-sanctions levels. — Reuters

EGYPT CB SELLS \$120M AT REGULAR FX AUCTION

CAIRO: Egypt's central bank kept the pound steady at 8.78 per dollar at its regular auction yesterday, selling \$120 million to cover multinational companies' needs to clear payment backlogs for the import of staples and pharmaceutical goods. Egypt, which relies heavily on imports, has been facing a dollar shortage since a popular uprising in 2011 drove away tourists and foreign investors, both major sources of hard currency.

The central bank had been keeping the pound artificially strong through regular weekly auctions, giving the priority of dollar allocation to the imports of essential goods. But yesterday it specified that the dollars

would go to cover multinational backlogs for the imports of staples and pharmaceutical goods. Egypt's reserves more than halved to \$16.5 billion in February from around \$36 billion in 2011.

One black market trader said the pound had strengthened marginally on Tuesday to 9.9 pounds per dollar compared with around 10 pounds per dollar a day earlier. He did not give volumes of trade.

The central bank had devalued the pound to 8.85 per dollar from 7.73 on March 14 and announced it would pursue a more flexible exchange rate. It later strengthened the pound to 8.78 per dollar. — Reuters

GHANA CB CHIEF TO RETIRE END-MARCH

ACCRA: Bank of Ghana Governor Henry Kofi Wampan will retire at the end of March, he told Reuters yesterday, cutting short a four-year term during which he has struggled to rein in inflation and stem the decline of the national cedi currency.

Wampan, whose term officially ends on Aug. 5, said he had informed President John Mahama of his intention to leave early, adding that the decision was partly linked to presidential and parliamentary elections planned for November. "I told him I wanted to leave office early and we have agreed that I will exit at the end of March," Wampan said. "It

is just fair to leave early in order to give enough room for my successor, whoever it might be, to settle down before we get to the elections."

Ghana, which exports cocoa, gold and oil, is under a three-year International Monetary Fund aid program to stabilize an economy dogged by budget deficits, ballooning public debt and inflation that consistently tops government targets. Wampan said one of his two deputies, either Millison Narih or Abdul Nashiru Issahaku, was expected to serve as interim central bank governor until Mahama chooses a permanent successor. — Reuters



NBK-EGYPT REPORTS EGP 575.6M IN NET PROFITS IN 2015, UP 53.3%

TOTAL ASSETS GREW 35.7% Y-O-Y TO EGP 37.6 BILLION

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait-Egypt, the subsidiary of National Bank of Kuwait Group (NBK) in Egypt, reported a net profit of EGP 575.6 million for the year 2015 compared to EGP 375.5 million in 2014, an increase of 53.3 percent year-on-year (y-o-y).

As of end of December 2015, NBK-Egypt's total assets increased by 35.7 percent y-o-y to EGP 37.6 billion. Customers' deposits grew by 36.3 percent y-o-y to EGP 30.4 billion. Net loans and advances reached EGP 13.8 billion at year-end 2015, up 37.4 percent compared to year-end 2014.

Isam Al-Sager, NBK Group CEO and NBK-Egypt Chairman, said: "These strong results confirm NBK-Egypt's progress in strengthening its position in the Egyptian market. The Egyptian market remains a main pillar in NBK's international operations for its positive outlook and the growth potential it offers."

Yasser Hassan, NBK-Egypt's



Isam Al-Sager, NBK Group CEO and NBK-Egypt Chairman.



Yasser Hassan, NBK-Egypt Managing Director.

Managing Director, said: "The bank continues to post strong profits despite the challenging operating environment in Egypt, which reflects the bank's strength and solid financial position. NBK-Egypt has been able to maintain its strong performance thanks to its conservative approach as a subsidiary of NBK

Group. It has also benefited from the flight-to-safety, which is reflected in the growth in customers' deposits and other balance sheet indicators."

NBK-Egypt was established in 1980 under the name of Al Watani Bank of Egypt (AWB) and has a large branch network situated at strategic locations within the various Egyptian

governorates and cities, including Cairo.

NBK Group has the widest banking presence in 4 continents worldwide. NBK's international presence spans many of the world's leading financial centers including London, Paris, Geneva, New York and Singapore, as well as China (Shanghai). Meanwhile, regional coverage extends to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey. NBK continues to collectively enjoy the highest credit ratings from the three international rating agencies; Moody's, Fitch Ratings and Standard and Poor's. The bank's ratings are supported by its high capitalization, prudent lending policies, and its disciplined approach to risk management, in addition to its highly recognized and very stable management team. NBK also maintains its position among the 50 safest banks in the world for the tenth consecutive time.

OIL PRICES FALL AS INVESTORS' FAITH IN RALLY WANES

LONDON: Oil prices fell yesterday, reflecting growing concerns that a two-month rally may be in danger of fizzling, while analysts forecast another rise to record levels for U.S. crude stocks. The oil price has risen by more than 45 percent since mid-February ahead of a meeting next month of the world's major producers to discuss an output freeze to support prices. But there is growing scepticism about the outcome of the meeting. "The amount of verbal intervention, which has obviously helped the market greatly over the past two months, combined with a production slowdown in the US, has probably taken (oil) as far as it can, now the market really wants to see some action," Saxo Bank senior manager Ole Hansen.

"We're seeing more and more commentators raise the flag and saying 'have we seen too much, too soon?' in terms of the rally across the sector." Brent crude futures fell by \$0.96 to \$39.31 a barrel by 1124 GMT, having lost some six percent in the last six trading days, while US crude fell 78 cents to \$38.60.

OPEC and other major suppliers, including Russia, are to meet on April 17 in Doha to discuss an output freeze aimed at bolstering prices. But with ballooning global inventories, signs some OPEC members are losing market share, plus little evidence of a strong pick-up in demand, analysts said oil is likely to trade in a range. "There is a rebalancing on the way, but we are still running a surplus and stocks are building up as far as we can see," SEB commodities analyst Bjarne Schieldrop said.

"There is a clear risk for a pull-back in Brent crude oil with a return to deeper contango again. Long positioning in Brent is at record high and vulnerable for a bearish repositioning."

Data on Monday from the InterContinental Exchange showed speculators hold the largest net long position in Brent futures on record. US commercial crude oil stockpiles were expected to have reached record highs for a seventh straight week, while refined product inventories likely fell, a preliminary Reuters survey showed late on Monday. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.668
Indian Rupees	4.569
Pakistani Rupees	2.892
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.064
Nepali Rupees	2.851
Singapore Dollar	222.140
Hongkong Dollar	39.067
Bangladesh Taka	3.863
Philippine Peso	6.552
Thai Baht	8.590
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	80.843
Qatari Riyal	83.276
Omani Riyal	787.422
Bahraini Dinar	805.100
UAE Dirham	82.539
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	34.500
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	34.513
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.415
Tunisian Dinar	150.070
Jordanian Dinar	427.150
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.022
Syrian Lira	2.160
Morocco Dirham	31.563
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	303.000
Euro	340.570
Sterling Pound	432.840
Canadian dollar	230.510
Turkish lira	106.880
Swiss Franc	312.370
Australian Dollar	230.280
US Dollar Buying	301.800

GOLD	
20 Gram	246.640
10 Gram	126.240
5 Gram	63.970

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES		TELEX TRANSFER PER 1000	
Australian Dollar	201.91		
Canadian Dollar	219.82		
Swiss Franc	306.95		
Euro	336.85		
US Dollar	299.90		
Sterling Pound	431.04		
Japanese Yen	2.67		
Bangladesh Taka	3.817		
Indian Rupee	4.375		
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.083		
Nepali Rupee	2.732		
Pakistani Rupee	2.860		
UAE Dirhams	0.08161		
Bahraini Dinar	0.7970		
Egyptian Pound	0.03819		
Jordanian Dinar	0.4265		
Omani Riyal	0.7788		
Qatari Riyal	0.08269		
Saudi Riyal	0.07994		

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer		Selling Rate	
US Dollar	303.250		
Canadian Dollar	230.325		
Sterling Pound	429.535		
Euro	339.765		
Swiss Franc	297.075		
Bahrain Dinar	802.260		
UAE Dirhams	82.805		
Qatari Riyals	84.020		

Saudi Riyals	81.545
Jordanian Dinar	427.185
Egyptian Pound	34.053
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.063
Indian Rupees	4.538
Pakistani Rupees	2.891
Bangladesh Taka	3.857
Philippines Peso	6.540
Cyprus pound	577.595
Japanese Yen	3.675
Syrian Pound	2.375
Nepalese Rupees	3.835
Malaysian Ringgit	76.000
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	46.930
Thai Bhat	9.565
Turkish Lira	105.085

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.424354	0.433354
Czech Korune	0.004521	0.016521
Danish Krone	0.041426	0.046426
Euro	0.333274	0.341274
Norwegian Krone	0.031913	0.037113
Romanian Leu	0.086918	0.086918
Slovakia	0.090334	0.091904
Swedish Krona	0.032542	0.037542
Swiss Franc	0.303956	0.314156
Turkish Lira	0.100084	0.110384
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.220418	0.231918
New Zealand Dollar	0.198022	0.207522
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.224189	0.232689
US Dollars	0.298900	0.303400

US Dollars Mint	0.299400	0.303400
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003445	0.004019
Chinese Yuan	0.045094	0.048594
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036994	0.039744
Indian Rupee	0.004295	0.004685
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000019	0.000025
Japanese Yen	0.002590	0.002770
Kenyan Shilling	0.003107	0.003107
Korean Won	0.000251	0.000266
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071764	0.077764
Nepalese Rupee	0.002872	0.003042
Pakistan Rupee	0.002687	0.002967
Philippine Peso	0.006435	0.006715
Sierra Leone	0.000067	0.000073
Singapore Dollar	0.218190	0.224190
South African Rand	0.013605	0.022105
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001699	0.002279
Taiwan	0.009187	0.009367
Thai Baht	0.008253	0.008803

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.797144	0.805144
Egyptian Pound	0.030732	0.035850
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000192	0.000252
Jordanian Dinar	0.423359	0.430859
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000152	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020681	0.044681
Nigerian Naira	0.001250	0.001885
Omani Riyal	0.780593	0.786273
Qatar Riyal	0.082515	0.083728
Saudi Riyal	0.079913	0.080863
Syrian Pound	0.001284	0.001504
Tunisian Dinar	0.146339	0.154339
Turkish Lira	0.100084	0.110384
UAE Dirhams	0.081515	0.082664
Yemeni Riyal	0.001369	0.001449

PART OF STOLEN BANGLADESHI FUNDS IN PHILIPPINE CASINOS

MANILA: About \$6.9 million out of \$81 million stolen from Bangladesh's central bank and sent to fake bank accounts in the Philippines remain in local casinos and may still be recovered, the Philippine Senate heard in testimony yesterday.

Kam Sin Wong, a Chinese junket operator known in the Philippines as Kim Wong, told the hearing that the \$81 million was remitted by two casino junket agents and gamblers including a Beijing resident named Gao Shuhua whom he has known for eight years and a Macau resident named Ding Zhize he just met in February. The laundering of the stolen money in the Philippines has added pressure on the Southeast Asian country to close loopholes in its financial system. Wong volunteered to return \$4.63 million dollars that remains in a junket account in Solaire Resort and Casino, and another 40 million pesos (\$863,000) still in Midas Hotel casino under the account of his company, Eastern Hawaii Leisure Co. Silverio Benny Tan, corporate secretary of Solaire's operator Bloomberry Resorts Corp., told the hearing the casino has frozen 108.67 million pesos worth of chips and money in different denominations confiscated from the gamblers when the bank heist issue came to light.

Wong alleged \$17 million is still with remittance company Philrem, which the company owners denied during the hearing. Wong said Gao also paid him 450 million pesos (\$9.71 million) for a loan that covered Gao's losses in an earlier gambling spree in the country. He said if compelled to do so, he can also return that money.

Casino operators and government regu-

lators said it may be difficult to account for the rest of the money, which was used at gambling tables. Wong said \$370,000 in cash was withdrawn by the casino junket agents in violation of their agreement that all the money would remain in the casino accounts. The \$81 million was remitted to five accounts created with fictitious names at a branch of the Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation, consolidated then remitted to the casinos and junket operators through Philrem. Wong said Maia Deguito, the bank branch manager, and Gao met in May in his office to discuss opening the accounts for a big amount of money that will be brought in and invested by Gao. Wong said he had no role in the fake paperwork and that was all arranged by Deguito.

On Feb. 4, Wong said Gao told him that he and Ding would close their casino in Macau and invest the money in Manila. Gao also reportedly said he had money from the sale of his land in China.

On Feb. 5, the money was transferred in portions to the five fictitious bank accounts. Philrem then electronically transferred the money to the casino accounts while other amounts were delivered in cash to Wong and the junket agents, or received by Wong at the house of Philrem owners Salud and Concon Bautista.

Bangladesh also turned over to the committee a list of 30 other suspicious transactions that the Federal Reserve Bank of New York did not execute. The list showed another \$850 million would have been transmitted to the fake accounts in the Philippine bank had those transfers not been stopped. — AP



MANAMA: Ahli United Bank BSC yesterday held its Annual General Meeting and the Extraordinary General Meeting at the Bank's headquarters in Seef District, Kingdom of Bahrain.

AHLI UNITED BANK'S AGM APPROVES 18% CASH DIVIDENDS

MANAMA: Ahli United Bank BSC yesterday held its Annual General Meeting and the Extraordinary General Meeting at the Bank's headquarters in Seef District, Kingdom of Bahrain. The meetings were presided over by AUB's Chairman Hamad M Al-Humaidhi and were attended by shareholders representing 81 percent of Bank's shares.

AUB's AGM has approved the distribution of a cash dividend of 18 percent (\$ 4.5 cents per share) together with bonus shares of 5 percent (five shares per 100 ordinary shares) in respect of the financial year ended 31 December 2015 for shareholders registered as of 29 March 2016.

AUB's shareholders elected Abdulghani M S Y Behbehani as a Shareholder Director and approved the appointment of Ahmed Ghazi Al-Abduljaleel as a representative of Kuwait's Public Institution for Social Security and Mohamed Tareq M Sadeq as an expert director to the Board, subject to an approval by the Central Bank of Bahrain. AUB's AGM also approved the repur-

chase by AUB of its own shares up to a maximum of 10 percent of its issued capital in accordance with the terms and conditions set by the Central Bank of Bahrain.

In their EGM, AUB's shareholders voted to extend for a further two years their authorization for the Board of Directors to decide on the timing, pricing and terms of the issuance of up to \$ 4 billion in bonds, loans or any other similar subordinated financial instruments deemed required to support the growth plans of the Bank. Addressing the shareholders, Al-Humaidhi said: "Despite the global uncertainties and continuing challenges faced in its operating markets, AUB reported another robust performance in 2015, by achieving an 11.3 percent growth in net profit to \$537.2 million, on the back of strong operating income totaling \$1,091.9 million, thereby validating the resilience and viability of its core business model based on product and market diversification". "Our resilient performance during 2015 was only made possible thanks to the continued trust

and confidence of our shareholders, the strong support of our customers and business partners, the dedication and professionalism of our staff as well as the constructive guidance of the regulators in our operating markets".

"On behalf of the Board, I welcome and congratulate the incoming directors and look forward to closely working with them. I also join fellow members of the Board in paying tribute to our esteemed colleague, the late Mohammed Saleh Bebehani who passed away in January 2016. He not only brought extensive insights, experience and wisdom to the working of AUB over the years since its inception but also left his mark as an accomplished businessman, a distinguished citizen and a pioneer in Kuwait and the Gulf at large".

Al-Humaidhi concluded: "2016, as all years, brings its challenges which appear to be strong and increased. Our response will continue to be hard work, focus and a commitment to client servicing and prudent asset deployment".



STOCKHOLM: This file photo taken on February 14, 1989 shows IKEA furniture chain founder Ingvar Kamprad in front of the first IKEA store in Stockholm, Sweden. — AFP

IKEA'S ENIGMATIC FOUNDER, INGVAR KAMPRAD, TURNS 90

STOCKHOLM: Ikea founder Ingvar Kamprad, who built a global business empire with revolutionary flat-pack furniture and dallied with Nazism in his youth, turns 90 today.

Creator of the Swedish furniture empire famous for its thrift, style and convenience, Kamprad is also known for alleged tax avoidance. The contrasts at Ikea-an everyman's furniture store yet global behemoth illuminates his conflicting character. An admirer of the humble classes who bent over backwards to avoid paying taxes, Kamprad has been described as an obsessive penny-pincher despite being one of the world's richest people. He created a modern, visionary business model but never escaped the taint of his support for Sweden's fascists, despite dismissing the episode as "a folly of youth".

Born in 1926 to a farmer in Smaland-a poor region in southern Sweden known for its entrepreneurial spirit-Kamprad's ascent to wealth began at the tender age of 17. Backed with modest financial support from his father, Kamprad began selling pens, picture frames, typewriters and other goods, delivering orders on his bicycle. His early success arose from squeezing his prices to undercut more established competitors.

He christened the fledgling business Ikea, stringing together his initials and those of the Elmtaryd farm where he grew up in the town of Agunnaryd.

The self-assembly revolution

In 1947 the young Kamprad started selling furniture made by local artisans, and four years later began publishing the first of his mail order catalogues-now printed in 200 million copies and 33 languages annually. Ikea's revolutionary self-assembly model-which would cut transport and storage costs-was conceived in 1956 after an employee sug-

gested table legs be removed during freight so the package would fit into a car.

Two years later Kamprad opened Ikea's first store in Almhult, south of his hometown. He was proud of the egalitarian spirit that his company promoted, telling Sydsvenskan newspaper in 2008, "I belong to the people on the (shop) floor".

"The greatest intelligence within Ikea is on our floors. If I want to know something I don't approach a top manager, I talk to ten sales people," he added. But he had a tough side that helped him conquer the world. From 1970 on, Ikea conquered major markets in Europe, North America, Asia and the Middle East, thriving on the spending power of the emerging middle class in countries like post-Cold War Russia.

The tax hater

Despite his enormous success and wealth, Kamprad's modest spending habits bordered on obsessive. In 1973 he fled Sweden's higher tax structure for Denmark, before seeking even lower taxes in Switzerland. Ever frugal, Kamprad reportedly drove an ageing Volvo, and regularly used his supermarket loyalty card.

Reflecting Kamprad's dislike of taxes, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists in 2014 cited leaked tax files from Luxembourg in identifying Ikea as one of the giant multinationals fingered for corporate tax avoidance by shuffling money from high taxation countries to tax havens, minimizing his company's bill. At a time when the tax arrangements of multinational behemoths such as Amazon and Google are under the microscope, a report before the European Parliament accuses Ikea of avoiding more than a billion euros (dollars) in taxes. Ikea insists it complies fully with national and international tax regulations. —AFP



PARIS: Chairman of the Board of Directors of French marine, subsea and offshore oil industry services group Bourbon, Jacques de Chateauvieux presents the group's future perspectives yesterday in Paris. —AFP

US HOME PRICES RISE FASTER THAN INCOMES IN JANUARY

REBOUNDED MARKET HELPS LIFT CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

WASHINGTON: US home prices climbed at more than double the rate of incomes in January, a trend that could ultimately create affordability challenges for buyers.

The Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller 20-city home price index rose 5.7 percent from a year earlier, a slight increase from the 5.6 percent annual increase in December, according to a report Tuesday. "The pace of US home value growth has been picking up bit-by-bit over the past few months, driven in large part by stubbornly low inventory in most markets that creates competition and drives up prices for those homes that are available," said Svenja Gudell, chief economist at the real estate firm Zillow.

Home values have risen 2.6 times faster than average hourly wages, which have improved just 2.2 percent, according to a government report earlier this month. Tight supplies of homes on the market have fueled much of the price growth, as low mortgage rates and steady hiring have sparked demand.

Denver, Portland, San Francisco and Seattle each registered double-digit annual price increases. Home values rose in all 20 metro areas markets, which account for roughly half of the US housing stock.

The index remains more than 11 percent below its mid-2006 peak, when subprime mortgages pushed the market to heights that triggered the Great Recession in late 2007. Existing homes sold at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5.08 million in February, the National Association of Realtors said earlier this month. Sales dipped 7.1 percent from a relatively healthy pace in January, but an increase in the number of signed contracts to buy houses indicates that purchases should rebound in March.

Despite the demand, listings in February declined 1.1 percent from a year ago. Many homeowners are reluctant to sell, because they lack the equity to cover the down payment for upgrading to a new house. "The low inventory of homes for sale - currently about a five month supply - means that would-be sellers seeking to trade-up are having a hard time finding a new, larger home," said David Blitzer, managing director and chairman of the index committee at S&P Dow Jones Indices.

Consumers bullish

US consumers are feeling more confident in March, with a rebounding stock market brightening their outlook. The Conference Board said yesterday that its consumer confidence index rose to 96.2 this month after tumbling to a revised 94 in February.

Consumers' assessment of current economic conditions has dipped. But their outlook for the future has improved modestly. The US stock market got off to a dismal start in 2016, driven by fears of economic weakness overseas and plunging oil prices. The Dow Jones industrial average had plummeted more than 10 percent this year through mid-February. It has since recovered most of those losses. This month, 28.7 percent of consumers said they expected stocks to rise over the next year. That was up from 26.9 percent in February, the lowest share since July 2012.

"The rebound in stock markets more than offset the impact of higher gasoline prices in recent weeks," Steve Murphy, US economist at Capital Economics, wrote in a research note. Over the past month, the average US price of a gallon of



ATLANTA: Town homes stand under construction as a pedestrian walks along the BeltLine in Atlanta. Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller yesterday issued its 20-city home price index for January. — AP

gasoline has risen to \$2.04 from \$1.75, according to AAA. A year ago, the overall consumer confidence index stood at 101.4. But Americans have grown cautious about spending. Consumer spending grew up at a meager 0.1 percent annual rate in February, the government said Monday, matching January's unimpressive gain.

"Given the very disappointing real consumer spending results for January and February, this pickup in confidence is good news," said Jennifer Lee, senior economist at BMO Capital Markets.

Murphy at Capital Economics estimates that consumers' outlook is consistent with 2.5 percent to 3 percent annual growth in spending. Consumer spending last year increased 3.1 percent. The government said last week that the economy grew at the end of 2015 a bit faster than it had originally estimated. And employers added a healthy 242,000 jobs last month, helping keep the unemployment rate at an eight-year low 4.9 percent for a second straight month. — AP

SECURITY CONCERNS SEND TURKISH FOREIGN VISITOR ARRIVALS TUMBLING

ANKARA/ISTANBUL: The number of foreign visitors going to Turkey fell 10 percent in February, the biggest drop in a decade, amid security concerns for a country feeling the spillover effects from the war in Syria. Turkey has been hit by a spate of bomb attacks this year, including two in Istanbul - its biggest city and traditional tourist draw - blamed on Islamic State. In January a suicide bomber blew himself up in the city's historic heart, killing 12 German tourists.

Tourist traffic could drop further after another suicide bomber blew himself up on Istanbul's most popular shopping thoroughfare this month, killing three Israeli tourists and an Iranian. Israel has advised its citizens visiting Turkey to leave "as soon as possible", predicting possible follow-up attacks.

Tourism fell 10.32 percent year-on-year in February, to 1.24 million people, tourism ministry data showed yesterday, the biggest drop since October 2006.

The industry is also suffering from a chill in relations with Russia, a major source of tourists to Turkey, with Russian visitors down by more than half during the month. Turkey shot down

a Russian jet over Syria last year, prompting President Vladimir Putin to impose economic sanctions on Turkey, including a ban on charter flights. Russians have also been hit by an economic crisis that has weakened their ruble currency, driving up the cost of foreign holidays.

Economists have forecast that Turkey's tourism revenue will drop by a quarter this year, costing the country around \$8 billion. Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek, the minister in charge of economic matters, said that the dent in tourist numbers would be short-lived, pointing out that Turkey is the sixth most visited country in the world.

"This year we will have some troubles, but they are temporary," he said in a speech to the Ankara Chamber of Industry. Simsek said the economy grew by 4 percent or a little more in 2015, close to the 3.9 percent that economists are expecting when Turkey releases 2015 GDP data this week. GDP grew 2.9 percent in 2014. Separately, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told a meeting of his AK Party that the economy would perform better this year than it did in 2015. — Reuters

WORLD STOCKS MUTED BEFORE YELLEN SPEECH

LONDON: Major stock markets across the world were slightly lower yesterday as trading resumed after the Easter holiday weekend, with attention turning to a speech by US Federal Reserve chief Janet Yellen. US stocks were falling as energy companies tumble with the price of oil. Mining and metals companies are also in decline. Stocks overseas were mixed.

KEEPING SCORE: The Dow Jones industrial average gave up 35 points, or 0.2 percent, to 17,499 as of 10:05 a.m. Eastern time. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell three points, or 0.1 percent, to 2,034. The Nasdaq composite index lost three points, or 0.1 percent, to 4,764.

ENERGY: Benchmark US crude dropped \$1.27, or 3.2 percent, to \$38.12 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, used to price international oils, lost \$1.16, or 2.8 percent, to \$39.71 a barrel in London. The price of wholesale gasoline fell 3 percent and heating oil sank 2.4 percent. Drilling company Transocean lost 61 cents, or 6.6 percent, to \$8.70. Hess fell \$1.66, or 3.3 percent, to \$49.18 and Chevron gave up \$1.29, or 1.4 percent, to \$93.39.

MEDIVATION INQUIRY: Drugmaker Medivation fell after a group of legislators urged a federal agency to take steps that could cut the price of Medivation's prostate cancer treatment Xtandi. Xtandi is Medivation's only approved drug, and sales topped \$1 billion last year. The stock shed \$4.80, or 11.6 percent, to \$36.45.

HOMEBUILDERS RALLY: Homebuilder Lennar is rising after it reported strong quar-



NEW YORK: A Wall Street sign outside the New York Stock Exchange. Following a long week-end, European stock markets are trading in fairly narrow ranges yesterday ahead of a speech from US Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen. — AP

terly results, selling more homes at higher prices. Its stock gained \$1.57, or 3.4 percent, to \$48.27. Competitor PulteGroup added 45 cents, or 2.5 percent, to \$18.57 and D.R. Horton rose 79 cents, or 2.6 percent, to \$30.61.

CONN NOT: Retailer Conn's skidded \$3.15, or 20.1 percent, to \$12.50 after its quarterly profit came up short of estimates and its 2016 forecasts disappointed investors.

SUN DOWN: Solar power company SunEdison tumbled after the Wall Street

Journal said the Securities and Exchange Commission is looking into its financial statements. A company tied to SunEdison also said there is a substantial risk SunEdison will seek bankruptcy protection. The stock fell more than 40 percent, to 74 cents from \$1.26.

OVERSEAS: France's CAC 40 added 0.3 percent but Germany's DAX was lost 0.3 percent. The FTSE 100 index of leading British shares lost 0.5 percent. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 0.2 percent and South Korea's Kospi added 0.6 percent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 0.1 percent.

FED FOCUS: Investors are waiting for Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen to give a speech just after 12 p.m. Eastern. Yellen last addressed the public after the Federal Reserve's meeting two weeks ago and investors will look for more information about the Fed's interest rate intentions. The Fed left interest rates unchanged this month and it next meets at the end of April.

CURRENCIES: Bond prices rose and the yield on the 10-year US Treasury note slid to 1.86 percent from 1.89 percent. The euro was little changed at \$1.1202 after finishing at \$1.1200 on Monday. The dollar rose to 113.44 yen from 113.28 yen.

Asia retreats

Asian markets mostly retreated after a similar pause in trading. Around 1345 GMT, London's benchmark FTSE 100 index and Frankfurt's DAX 30 both were 0.2 percent lower, but the Paris CAC 40 bucked the trend with a 0.5 percent rise. On Wall Street, the

Dow Jones index dropped by 0.5 percent in early business.

"European bourses have made a rather muted start to the week," said Mike van Dulken, head of research at traders Accendo Markets, adding that news of an Egyptian airliner being hijacked Tuesday had a "negligible impact" on markets. All eyes were on Yellen in the hope that she will shed some light on the Fed's thinking about its interest rate policy in her speech Tuesday in New York.

A string of easing measures from central banks around the world provided some much-needed support over March. A recent series of strong US data-including better-than-forecast fourth-quarter growth-raised the prospect of a lift sometime soon, although disappointing inflation and consumer spending figures have dampened expectations once more. In the eurozone, the ECB has launched a raft of policy measures to get credit flowing, including a massive program to buy public sector bonds to pump liquidity into the system.

ECB data yesterday showed that loans to the private sector in the euro area grew faster in February than the previous month. Investors are meanwhile "in wait-and-see mode ahead of Fed chair Janet Yellen's speech at the European market close, with traders hoping for more clues on when the US central bank might next hike rates after mixed US data," said van Dulken.

Also on the agenda this week is the release Friday of a US jobs report that will give further insight into the state of the world's top economy. — Agencies

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Dow Jones	17,515.73	17,535.39	19.66	▲	0.11
NASDAQ	4,773.51	4,766.79	-6.72	▼	-0.14
S&P 500	2,035.94	2,037.05	1.11	▲	0.05
Financial Times	6,106.48	6,102.29	-4.19	▼	-0.07
DAX	9,851.35	9,852.30	0.95	▲	0.01
CAC 40	4,329.68	4,349.61	19.93	▲	0.46
Swiss	7,775.58	7,763.37	-12.21	▼	-0.16
Nikkei 225	17,134.37	17,103.53	-30.84	▼	-0.18
Topix	1,381.85	1,377.60	-4.25	▼	-0.31
Hang Seng	20,345.61	20,366.30	20.69	▲	0.10
Straits Times	7,830.29	7,819.08	-11.21	▼	-0.40

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Kuwait	5,252.26	5,265.81	13.55	▲	0.26
Saudi Arabia	6,268.71	6,165.02	-103.69	▼	-1.65
Dubai	3,266.31	3,275.11	8.80	▲	0.27
Abu Dhabi	4,281.52	4,318.52	37.00	▲	0.86
Bahrain	1,152.72	1,162.17	9.45	▲	0.82
Qatar	10,145.39	10,316.67	171.28	▲	1.69
Oman	5,546.24	5,540.90	-5.34	▼	-0.10
Lebanon	1,174.47	1,169.78	-4.69	▼	-0.40
Jordan	2,158.13	2,165.86	7.73	▲	0.36
Egypt	7,494.10	7,603.92	109.82	▲	1.47
Morocco	9,511.95	9,460.55	-51.40	▼	-0.54
Tunisia	5,474.52	5,444.07	-30.45	▼	-0.56

Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar		12.2970	3.2927	2.9363	2.3042	3.2068	373.92	4.3751
Saudi Riyal	0.08132		0.2678	0.2388	0.1874	0.2608	30.41	0.3558
US Dollar	0.30370	3.7346		0.8917	0.6998	0.9739	113.56	1.3287
Euro	0.34057	4.1880	1.1214		0.7850	1.0922	127.36	1.4901
Sterling Pound	0.43399	5.3367	1.4290	1.2739		1.3918	162.27	1.8987
Swiss Franc	0.31184	3.8347	1.0268	0.9156	0.7185		116.63	1.3643
Japanese Yen	0.00267	0.0329	0.0088	0.0079	0.0062	0.0086		0.0117
Australian Dollar	0.22856	2.8107	0.7526	0.6711	0.5267	0.7330	85.47	

Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dollar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30370	3.7346	0.3741	3.6261	0.3831	3.6574	8.7700
Kuwaiti Dollar	3.2927		12.2970	1.2316	11.9397	1.2615	12.0428	28.8772
Saudi Riyal	0.2678	0.08132		0.1002	0.9709	0.1026	0.9793	2.3483
Bahraini Dinar	2.6734	0.81192	9.9842		9.6942	1.0242	9.7778	23.4461
Qatari Riyal	0.2758	0.08375	1.0299	0.1032		0.1057	1.0086	2.4186
Omani Riyal	2.6101	0.79270	9.7479	0.9763	9.4647		9.5464	22.8910
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08304	1.0211	0.1023	0.9914	0.1048		2.3979
Egyptian Pound	0.1140	0.03463	0.4258	0.0427	0.4135	0.0437	0.4170	

Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month	6-Month	1-Year
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.00	1.19	1.44	1.63	1.94
US Dollar	0.39	0.43	0.63	0.91	1.23
Euro	-0.37	-0.33	-0.24	-0.13	-0.01
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.51	0.58	0.74	1.01
Swiss Franc	-0.83	-0.78	-0.72	-0.65	-0.54
Australian Dollar	2.10	2.19	2.08	2.05	2.01
Canadian Dollar	0.00	0.87	0.88	0.99	1.06

Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year
United States	0.85	1.34	1.86	2.63
Europe	-0.50	-0.34	0.14	0.82
United Kingdom	0.45	0.85	1.40	2.29

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Kuwait Oil	32.63	32.71	0.08	▲	0.25
Brent	37.48	36.82	-0.66	▼	-1.76
West Texas	38.21	37.76	-0.45	▼	-1.18
Gold	1220.65	1217.66	-2.99	▼	-0.24
Silver	15.22	15.08	-0.14	▼	-0.91



SHANGHAI: A worker leaves the Baosteel Group Corporation plant in Shanghai yesterday. — AFP

SAUDI FALLS AFTER WEAK DATA, MOST BOURSES RISE

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's stock market fell sharply yesterday as petrochemical stocks sagged and the central bank reported weak economic data, but most major markets in the region gained.

The Saudi index fell 1.5 percent to 6,177 points, closing below its mid-March low of 6,202 points, which suggested an uptrend since mid-February may have ended. Trading turnover shrank, a sign that investors were pulling out of the market. Petrochemical heavyweight Saudi Basic Industries tumbled 3.0 percent after the price of Brent crude oil fell back below \$40 a barrel.

Alinma Bank, the most heavily traded stock, tumbled 4.8 percent as it went ex-dividend.

Hospital operator Middle East Healthcare jumped its 10 percent daily limit to 70.25 riyals as it listed on the market, after raising 1.77 billion riyals (\$471 million) by selling 27.61 million shares or 30 percent of its capital at 64 riyals per share. It had originally intended to complete its initial public offer in early February but rescheduled the offer to March after the market plunged. Saudi IPOs are customarily priced attractively for retail investors, and the stocks often rise their 10 percent limits for several days after listing.

Central bank data released yesterday showed Saudi Arabia's M3 money supply shrank from a year earlier in February for the first time in more than a decade - a fresh sign that the economy is slowing sharply because of low oil prices. Dubai's stock index rose 0.3 percent to 3,275 points, holding technical support on its mid-March low of 3,253 points. But trading volume shrank to modest levels.

Dubai Parks & Resorts, the most heavily traded stock, rebounded 3.3 percent after tumbling more than 10 percent over the past two days 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.

Its rights issue, and similar moves by other companies in recent weeks, have created concern about the market's ability to absorb the cash calls at a time of slowing economic growth in the region.

Abu Dhabi's index climbed 0.9 percent as telecommunications firm Etisalat rose 2.5 percent. Aldar Properties rose 1.1 percent after telling local media that it planned to launch a

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

"major development" on Yas Island. Details would be announced later, it said. Qatar gained 1.7 percent as Barwa Real Estate, the most heavily traded stock, gained 4.0 percent in its heaviest trade since last July. Egypt's index rose 1.0 percent as the most heavily traded stock, Egyptian billionaire Naguib Sawiris's Orascom Telecom Media, added 2.6 percent.

It fell sharply early this week after Sawiris said its bid to acquire CI Capital was being held up by national security concerns, but stabilised in late trade on Monday after a source familiar with the deal told Reuters that the acquisition was expected to go ahead eventually. Mobile phone carrier Orange Egypt rose 1.0 percent after saying it had been awarded 285.19 million Egyptian pounds (\$32.1 million) by an arbitration body in a dispute over interconnection charges with other operators. — Reuters

GOLD RISES AHEAD OF YELLEN SPEECH

LONDON: Gold rose yesterday as a retreat in the dollar prompted buying ahead of a speech by Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen, which will be closely watched for clues on US monetary policy.

Gold is highly sensitive to US monetary policy, as rising interest rates lift the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding bullion, while boosting the dollar. The metal slid 3 percent last week after hawkish comments from a series of Fed officials.

Spot gold was up 0.6 percent at \$1,227.41 an ounce by 1333 GMT, after touching a one-month low of \$1,208.15 an ounce on Monday. US gold futures for April delivery were up \$7.50 an ounce at \$1,227.60. Last week's comments from several Fed officials put investors on guard for the possibility of at least two rate increases this year. Some officials said another hike could come as early as next month.

"We're looking at least one and more likely two (rate rises), which is going to put pressure on gold," ING's head of commodity strategy Hamza Khan said. San Francisco Federal Reserve President John Williams said yesterday the US economy remained on track for a gradual path of interest rate hikes, and that fears over the impact of a slowing global economy and

bouts of financial volatility were overdone. However, a run of soft data added to uncertainty over the pace of rate increases. The dollar eased to a one-week low against the euro and US Treasury prices hovered near session highs, after figures showing slightly weaker-than-forecast rises in home prices reinforced the view of sluggish economic growth in the first quarter.

Weak data on Monday, which showed US consumer spending barely rose in February and inflation retreated, had already dampened expectations that a rate hike is imminent.

"A shifting of expectations towards an earlier rate hike could see the dollar and Treasury yields move higher and gold under pressure once again, though on balance we believe the Fed will remain cautious," Mitsubishi analyst Jonathan Butler said.

Elsewhere, data showed net gold imports by China, the world's biggest bullion consumer, via main conduit Hong Kong rose in February from a 17-month low hit in the previous month.

Among other precious metals, silver was up 0.3 percent at \$15.23 an ounce, platinum was up 1.2 percent at \$955.10 an ounce and palladium was down 0.4 percent at \$565 an ounce. — Reuters

FED'S WILLIAMS URGES US CB TO STAY ON TRACK WITH RATE RISES

NEW YORK: The US economy remains on track for a gradual path of interest rate hikes and fears over the impact of a slowing global economy and bouts of financial volatility are overdone, San Francisco Federal Reserve President John Williams said yesterday.

"Others' economic fates do not spell our own," Williams said in a speech at the National University of Singapore on a trip to Asia. "My view is essentially, let's just stay on track. Let's not get sidetracked by the noise and distraction commentary can sometimes cause." The US central bank left interest rates unchanged two weeks ago and signaled its cautiousness by forecasting two

further rate hikes this year, down from four at its December meeting, when the Fed raised rates from near zero for the first time in almost a decade.

But Williams, who has been consistent in providing a more upbeat assessment of the US economy over the past few months, said he expects the unemployment rate to fall to about 4.5 percent by late 2016 and for inflation to return to the Fed's 2 percent target over the next two years. "We're not quite where I'd like us to be, but recent developments have been very encouraging and add to my confidence that we're on course to reach our (inflation) goal," he said, citing an uptick in oil prices and a sta-

bilizing dollar. Overall, the US economy "keeps chugging ahead," he said. Asked about the inflation outlook, Williams said there were some encouraging signs in core inflation data. "The last few months have actually been looking really good on CPI and PCE prices and I do want that to continue," he said during an audience Q&A session. "If it continues for the next few months, I will be pushing forward my inflation forecasts," Williams said. "There is some upside risk that we'll hit our inflation target sooner." On the global front, where some of his colleagues argue that the United States cannot uncouple itself from international economic and financial developments,

Williams stressed that forecasts for global economic growth are far from dire.

The International Monetary Fund predicts about 3.5 percent global GDP growth this year, down only one-half percentage point from a year ago, he said.

"I don't see a looming global crisis," Williams said, adding that he continues to think China will avoid a hard landing. Two Fed policymakers signaled last week that another rate increase could come as early as the Fed's next meeting on April 26-27.

However, lackluster consumer spending and inflation data on Monday curbed investor bets on when the next rate rise will be. If the US economy performs as well as it

did last year, it will be able to handle steady interest rate increases in 2016, Williams said. "If we have inflation moving clearly towards 2 percent, if the US economy continues to improve the way it did last year...I think the economy could easily handle two or more (rate) increases this year," he told reporters.

US interest rate futures currently suggest traders see a 12 percent chance of a rate hike next month, according to CME Group's FedWatch. As the global economy improves and policies normalize, there could be pretty large moves in long-term bond yields over the next several years, Williams said. — Reuters



INFINITI Q50 FROM 'AL-BABTAIN' FOR ALMOST KD 135 PER MONTH

0% PROFIT FOR FIVE YEARS
TILL THE END OF MARCH

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Co, the exclusive agent of the luxury vehicles Infiniti in Kuwait launched an exceptional promotion on the Infiniti Q50 valid till the end of March 2016. This promotion gives the clients a unique chance to own the Q50 for monthly installments starting from only KD 135 and 0 percent profit for five years.

The Q50 is available for a price starting from KD 9999, and the client can choose between two versions; the first is the 4 cylinder 2.0 liter turbocharged petrol engine producing 208 horsepower, or the second V6 engine utilizing 3.7 liters achieving a net system rating of 326 horsepower.

The sports design of the sleek sedan Q50 attracted new generation of young clients who seek the elegance of Infiniti, which combines strong performance with comfortable spaciousness. Infiniti Al Babtain invites its clients to benefit from this promotion through visiting its showrooms in all off Al Rai, Ahmadi, and the Infiniti pavilion at the Kuwait Finance House located in Shuwaikh.

The Company aims through this and other promotions that are being held during the year long to strengthen customers' trust

in the Company, and to provide best services that fits with Infiniti brand, which strongly became the equivalent of luxury in the local and international automotive market.

Infiniti Al Babtain is always keen to offer best promotions ever, not only for the sales of vehicles, thus also those related to after-sales services, which is a challenge due to the increasing demand on Infiniti vehicles in the local market. It also aims to achieve the Company's goals of systematic dedication to keep on top of leading automotive luxury brands.

The Infiniti family of vehicles includes different choices to meet the needs of all categories starting from the family vehicle, through sports and multipurpose sports vehicles. All these vehicles share the luxury designs of both the exterior and interior, which was equipped with latest technology, not forgetting the powerful engine and the most active safety and security systems.

By owning one of the Infiniti vehicles, its owner gains unique identity of belonging to a category that loves luxury and creativity. This motivated Infiniti Al Babtain to ensure promotions and campaigns that matches this high standard of special clients.

OOREDOO SIGNS MOU WITH KUWAIT CLEARING COMPANY

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo Group, has recently announced signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC) to assist with 2015 cash dividends transfer to the company's shareholders.

This agreement will allow an easy banking transfer and enable shareholders to get their dividends by visiting KCC website or any bank branch that is subscribed in the service to fill out the transformation form and submit it to the back for accreditation, in order to update their data and complete the transfer process effective from next October.

Ooredoo was keen on activating this service, as a proof of the company's intention in adopting all new and advanced services to save its shareholders time and efforts. The KCC service is considered to be a highly developed safe method to be used, instead of issuing cheques under shareholder names and receiving it should be in person.

Ooredoo's operations in Kuwait date back to

December 1999 when it launched wireless services as the second operator. The company today provides mobile, broadband internet and corporate managed services tailored to the needs of customers and businesses. Ooredoo is guided by its vision of enriching people's lives and its belief that it can stimulate human growth by leveraging communications to help people achieve their full potential.

Ooredoo is a leading international communications company delivering mobile, fixed, broadband internet and corporate managed services tailored to the needs of consumers and businesses across markets in the Middle East, North Africa and South-East Asia. As a community-focused company, Ooredoo is guided by its

vision of enriching people's lives and its belief that it can stimulate human growth by leveraging communications to help people achieve their full potential.

Ooredoo has a presence in markets such as Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq, Palestine, the Maldives and Indonesia.

The company was named "Best Mobile Operator of the Year" at the World Communication Awards 2013.

The company reported revenues of \$8.8 billion in 2015 and had a consolidated global customer base of 117 million customers as of 31 December 2015. Ooredoo's shares are listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange and the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange. —AFP



JAKARTA: Workers clean windows on one of the skyscrapers in Jakarta yesterday. Indonesia's central bank cut its key interest rate for the third straight month, encouraged by lower inflation and a stronger currency in Southeast Asia's top economy. —AFP

JAPAN PARLIAMENT OKAYS 2016 BUDGET, MORE STIMULUS EYED

TOKYO: Japan's parliament approved a record 96.72 trillion yen (\$851.5 billion) state budget for fiscal 2016 yesterday, paving the way for a fully-fledged debate on additional stimulus spending to spur the flagging economy.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wants to front-load spending in the annual budget for the coming fiscal year starting in April and to adopt a fresh extra budget, while speculation is rife that he may again delay a sales tax increase planned for April 2017.

The budget was given final approval by the upper house of parliament, with the ruling bloc's firm majority. "We need to quickly implement this budget. I'll instruct the finance minister to front-load spending where possible," Abe told reporters.

Abe needs to strike a delicate balance between conflicting needs to curb the industrial world's heaviest public debt burden and to revive an economy teetering close to another recession.

The government raised its initial budget spending estimate by about 400 billion yen for fiscal year

2016 from 96.3 trillion yen in 2015. But sources have told Reuters that the government already has begun considering a tax-hike delay and more fiscal stimulus, with people around Abe calling for additional spending of 5 trillion to 10 trillion yen to stimulate consumption.

Abe is expected to decide on the sales tax and stimulus spending around a May 26-27 Group of Seven summit that he will host, after analysing first-quarter GDP data due earlier that month.

Most economists expect a return to growth in the first quarter, albeit at very modest levels, but data released so far this year has been generally weak. "As policy coordination by G7 is being called for, Japan must fulfil responsibility as chair. To realise sustainable and strong growth in global economy, I want to discuss with world leaders on how Japan should make a contribution," Abe said.

He stopped short of declaring adoption of fresh stimulus, while sticking to the standard line that he

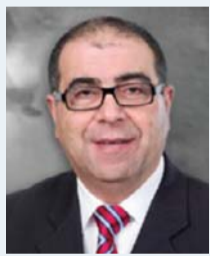
would proceed with the planned tax hike barring big economic shocks.

The April 2014 tax increase to 8 percent from 5 percent hit consumers hard, leading to a recession. It forced Abe to delay another tax increase to 10 percent - initially scheduled for last October - to April 2017. "If they decide to go ahead with the tax hike, an extra budget would likely be around 10 trillion yen. If they delay it, the stimulus would be smaller at about 5 trillion yen," said Kiichi Murashima, economist at Citigroup Global Markets Japan.

"Expectations for fiscal policy are rising worldwide due to a limit in monetary policy. But it would be quite hard for fiscal stimulus to boost the economy sustainably," Murashima noted. The 2016 budget features a bulging welfare outlay to cope with a fast-ageing population, with Abe taking advantage of higher tax revenue and low borrowing costs due to aggressive stimulus by the central bank, for boosting spending. — Reuters

NEGATIVE INTEREST RATES IS BAD FOR EVERYONE

By Hayder Tawfik



KUWAIT: Usually, banks park their surplus cash with their central banks so they can earn some interests. At present some central banks pay negative interest rates on those deposits. Those central banks that offer

negative interest rates are the Bank of Japan, The European Central bank, the Swiss Central bank, Denmark, Sweden and just recently Norway hinted at introducing negative interest rates. So why they are all punishing their banks? Simply, they are discouraging banks to hold cash and pushing them to lend more or invest in government bonds so to keep yields down. These central bankers hope that moving into negative territories will boost their economies in a number of ways. I believe this is just a wishful thinking.

In normal times it is a standard practice for central banks to cut interest rates when an economy is struggling or inflation is falling. They hope by doing so, it makes saving less attractive and borrowing more so, boosting the amount of money being spent and kick-starting an economic recovery. But it seems that we are not in normal times. Inflation is still falling and the global economy is still weak. Savers are panicking and instead of spending, they are actually hoarding more cash. Since the bank of Japan introduced negative interest rates the sale of Safes have sky rocketed. Because inflation is still falling so consumers are paying less for the goods and services they purchase so by default they are saving more. It is a vicious circle for the central banks.

Many big economies are now experiencing deflation, where prices are falling. If we consider inflation rates including food and energy then for sure we are still in deflation. I don't think it is any longer realistic to ignore food and energy prices in determining the actual rate of inflation. If inflation carries on falling then real interest rates will rise even more, choking off recovery rather than giving it a lift. Desperate to avoid this trap, ever more central bankers have waded into the unfamiliar territory of negative interest rates.

Negative interest rates is bad for everyone. I believe central banks are entering an uncharted territories and they are just hoping that either their economies recover quick-

ly or inflation starts rising. I believe this is a very dangerous policy. You just cannot force consumers or savers to spend more by introducing negative rates. It is for sure will back fire. The animal instinct will prevail at the end of the day. I think consumers first and as a natural reaction are not going to withdraw their savings from the banks but are going to save more. For every percentage negative interest rates they more likely to save the same or more. This is not going to be what the central banks wished for. It is very bad for banks. Let's say savers withdraw their savings and put them under the matters. This will create shortage of cash for banks and ultimately will push interest rates up. I don't see this scenario happening.

Negative rates may create financial instability in other ways. Some banks may not pass negative interest rates to their depositors for the fear of losing clients. Some others such as Mutual and Building Society banks rely 100 percent on savers to lend and operate. They are particularly dependent on their deposits, so they are reluctant to reduce deposit rates below zero. Their assets are mainly real estate loans or mortgages that based on fixed interest rates so they have to lower the rates they charge their borrowers but afraid to offer negative rates for savers. For these kind of financial institutions and some similar, negative rates would lead to lower profits and finally to erosion of capital. So, if negative interest rates are bad for financial institutions so how can they contribute to the economic recovery that the central banks wishing for.

I think the introduction of negative interest rates by some powerful central banks is a pure gamble or a path to the unknown. Negative interest rates should have big impact on the foreign exchange markets. Since the European Central bank introduced negative rates the euro depreciated by nearly 20 percent against the dollar. In normal times this big currency depreciation will make imports more expensive and ultimately push inflation rate up. The problem is that we are not in normal times. Most other central banks followed suit and devalued their currencies. So it has become a game of competitive devaluation. Everyone is devaluing against the US dollar. If currencies fall by enough then negative rates might work assuming that falling prices everywhere else is not pushing rates into more negative territories. Most global currencies have been and are getting devalued against the dollar and it is an election year in the US and it could turn nasty for everyone. — Rasameel Company

BURGAN BANK ANNOUNCES WINNER OF KD 125,000 CASH PRIZE

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced RAJAA MOHAMMAD GHANIM ALAZMI as the new KD 125,000 cash prize winner in the Yawmi quarterly draw. The winner expressed her excitement for being the winner of the cash prize with Yawmi Account from Burgan Bank.

The Yawmi Account offers customers more chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 cash prize every three months.

To enter Burgan Bank's Yawmi quarterly draws, customers should maintain a minimum amount of KD500 in their account for 2 months prior to draw date. Additionally, every KD10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of

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

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

subsidiaries in the MENA region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region.

Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

2016: HABIT-CHANGING TECHNOLOGY

By Thierry Sabbagh
Managing Director Ford Middle East

Poor decision-making on the road is a killer. Literally. Recent research has revealed the top causes of traffic-related accidents, deaths and injuries in the region, and you could argue that poor decision-making has a hand in the majority of incidences. Consider, for example, that in just one week of August last year, more than 45,000 drivers were fined by Kuwaiti authorities for non-compliance with traffic rules. That's an alarming number, no matter what way you dissect it.

From erratic lane-changing and sudden swerving, to not leaving enough distance to the car in front, and even things as simple as entering a road without checking if the way is clear, or having no lane discipline, contribute to the large number of road accidents that motivate the continued lauding of impressive campaigns such as GCC Gulf Traffic Week.

According to the 2009-2019 Traffic National Strategy, approximately 200 Kuwaitis are killed on the country's roads annually, with a further 6,000 estimated to be injured in traffic accidents. Those figures, related to its relatively small population of around three million, ranks Kuwait as the top country in the world for its number of deaths and injuries resulting from traffic accidents.

In a statement issued by Kuwait's Interior Ministry for Traffic, assistant undersecretary General Abdullah Al-Muhanna brought the plight to light, saying that "the ministry attached much attention to the traffic issue due to its paramount significance to the entire society. We are working within a clear strategy to preserve traffic discipline and limit the number of accidents and violations." Having the greater population understand the biggest issues we face each day we get behind the wheel should be straightforward. It's a tall order, but undoubtedly achievable if we can get everybody on the same page. According to a study conducted by the National Safety Council in the U.S., writing a text message takes about five seconds of the driver's sight from the road. That equates to a distance the length of a football field when driving at a speed of only 88 km/h, which is terrifying to think about. But this is a decision that drivers are willingly making, which has brought rise to this year's theme for Traffic Week: "Your Decision Determines Your Fate."

Driverless technology, even in its infancy, brings occupant safety to the centre of motoring focus. And while full autonomy could possibly be as little as five years away, it's the technology that we already have incorporated that will be at its core.

Potentially life-altering, at least in terms of driving, is the likes of Ford's Driver Alert System and Lane-Keeping System, and this is where the distracted driver really benefits. Detecting signs of fatigue, a car that provides a warning on the instrument cluster can be a life-saving machine.

The same can be said of alerting drivers who unintentionally drift from their lane; when influenced with a gentle steering assist, the chance of collision with a vehicle in another lane is greatly reduced. And let's not forget Adaptive Cruise Control, which, with Ford, now comes with Collision Warning and Brake Support; technology that uses sensors to detect when the car is approaching a slow-moving vehicle and adjusts cruise control accordingly.

Top of the list when it comes to driver assist technologies that change our habits is SYNC with MyFord Touch, which allows a driver to stay connected to his world and interact with vehicle systems via voice control, a touch screen tap or a conventional button. Both SYNC and MyFord Touch help reduce the potential for driver distraction through voice-controlled functionality, meaning drivers can keep hands on the wheel and eyes on the road.

We can't change a driver's belief in why it's wrong to use a phone while driving, but we can make it safer for other road users. It's frightening to think that despite the sheer number of accidents on our roads, some people still opt to risk it all to read a text message or check the latest on social media, and our goal for the future must be zero automotive-related fatalities.

Though the day will come when we have the ability to not pay any real attention to the road when travelling by car, we shouldn't get ahead of ourselves. We need to accept the technologies we have in the here and now for what they are: driver aids. The fact there are so many collisions on the road, largely caused by driver distraction, is worrying, and unfortunately the trend of texting or talking on the phone while driving isn't going anywhere fast. And while the advancements in semi-autonomy have not been created to cater to increased distraction, they still certainly help drivers avoid an imminent crash, or allow them to make better driving decisions.

Consider, perhaps, one of the most important developments in the automotive industry from recent times, Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC). It's the prequel to the likes of V2V (vehicle-to-vehicle) and V2I (vehicle-to-infrastructure), which is your car "speaking" to other cars, buildings and obstructions around to dictate when to slow down, accelerate, or manoeuvre. With your vehicle holding the ACC intelligence to maintain speed and keep distance from the car in front without so much as a depression of the brake, it inevitably changes the way you approach driving, changes your habits, bringing a greater level of comfort due to not needing razor-sharp awareness.

Taking more control, or responsibility, even, from your hands, there's the exceptionally smart technology like Active Park Assist that provides steering assistance to park the vehicle in a parallel or reverse perpendicular parking spot, and pull out from tight parallel parking spots.

This is technology that also includes side park distance control. As a driver, you control brake, accelerate, and move the shifter. Again, it adds a level of calm to your driving, negating the need to size up a parking space or worry about slotting between the lines.

The focus on key messages from GCC Gulf Traffic Week includes: the importance of seatbelts, risk of exceeding speed limits, and, crucially, using mobile phones when driving. If we have to take it in stages, let us aim for no road fatalities due to driver distraction, and the addition of these technologies can only help. It may not be a solution, but it's a pretty good start.

NREC ANNOUNCES 2015 FINANCIAL RESULTS

47.2% INCREASE IN NET PROFIT, FIVE-YEAR HIGH

KUWAIT: National Real Estate Company (NREC), a leading regional developer, yesterday announced the company's financial results for the year 2015 and reaffirmed a growth outlook for 2016. The company recorded KD15.4 million in net profit for the year, up 47.2 percent from 2014.

NREC CEO Samuel Sidiqi said, "We are pleased to report to our shareholders that the company recorded its highest profitability in five years and progress across geographies. In Kuwait, our commercial and retail portfolio continued to be a strong source of recurring revenue with rental income growing 4.6 percent in 2015 to KD10.4 million. In the UAE, where we are developing Reem Mall, we received the

final detailed planning approval from the Urban Planning Council, started enabling works on the site, and commenced the selection process for the main contractor. In Egypt, our 3.8 million square meter Grand Heights project generated KD11.0 million in sales in 2015 and the handover of Phase 1 units commenced in March 2016. The project is scheduled for completion between 2020 and 2021."

FY2015 Financial Highlights:

Operating Revenue: KD28.5 million, up 46.6 percent from 2014
Gross Profit: KD8.8 million, up 42.0 percent
EBITDA: KD22.1 million, up 41.8 percent from 2014

Net Profit to shareholders: KD15.4 million, up 47.2 percent
Earnings Per Share (EPS) of 17.21 fils
Balance Sheet Highlights:
Total Assets of KD579.9 million; increased by KD26.9 million from December 2014
Net debt to equity ratio: 0.7

Shareholders' Equity of KD216.8 million; increased by KD16.9 million from December 2014. Sidiqi added, "Our outlook for 2016 is positive. We forecast that our core business will continue to provide a strong cash flow for the company through our operations in Kuwait and Jordan. We expect our top line to grow, driven by continued strong sales in Egypt. Reem Mall progress will continue to exceed expectations."



NREC CEO Samuel Sidiqi

SHAREHOLDERS APPROVE PLANS FOR NEW ITHMAAR GROUP STRUCTURE



KUWAIT: Shareholders of Ithmaar Bank, a Bahrain-based Islamic retail bank, yesterday approved (ed note: 28/03/16) plans for a new group structure designed to further develop the growth achieved in the core retail banking business, the strategic focus of the Bank.

The plans, which were proposed by the Ithmaar Bank Board of Directors, and are subject to regulatory approvals, involve the creation of a new holding company that will be listed on the Bahrain Bourse and the Kuwait Stock Exchange and licensed and regulated by the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB). The new holding company will retain 100 percent ownership of all assets presently owned by Ithmaar Bank. These assets will be allocated into two wholly owned subsidiaries, an Islamic retail bank subsidiary which will hold the core retail banking business, and an investment subsidiary which will hold the investment assets. These two subsidiaries will also be licensed and regulated by the CBB.

The announcement was made by Ithmaar Bank Chairman, Prince Amr Al Faisal following the Bank's Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) with shareholders which followed the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Also present at the meetings, which were held at the Ramee Grand Hotel in Bahrain, were Directors and members of the Ithmaar Bank Executive Management team, representatives of the Bank's Sharia Supervisory Board, the CBB, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, statutory auditors Pricewaterhouse Coopers, and the Bahrain Bourse.

"On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to announce that the strategic decisions we took early in 2014, which were

designed to significantly transform the Group's operations, are continuing to deliver positive results, and the new group structure is the next key step in this transformation," said Prince Amr. "This new structure is designed to assist in realising our long-term strategy for growth by providing greater insight into the strength of our core retail banking operations and further facilitating the management of the Group's investment assets," he said.

"This new group structure follows extensive internal review and discussions, and is driven by our commitment to ensuring we are well positioned to benefit from new opportunities in the current market," said Prince Amr. "The new structure will help lower the risk profile of the new banking entity and enhance shareholder value by showing the growth and improved performance achieved in the core business. In the current structure, this growth is being adversely impacted by investment valuations and impairment provisions," he said.

Ithmaar Bank Chief Executive Officer, Ahmed Abdul Rahim, who delivered a detailed presentation to shareholders, said these plans build upon the significant improvements achieved due to the implementation of the key strategic decisions taken by the Board of Directors in 2014.

"The key decisions, which included initiatives for increased revenue, improved margins, the divestment of non-core assets, and cost reductions across the Ithmaar Group have, together with the continued growth of our core retail business, contributed in a big way to the Bank's continuously improving

financial performance," said Abdul Rahim.

"The 2015 financial results, approved on 28 February 2016, reconfirm that our efforts to significantly transform the Group's operations and focus on developing our core business are paying off, and that we are on the right track," said Abdul Rahim. "Our decision to reorganise the Group represents a further



Prince Amr Al Faisal

stage in this process, and underlines our commitment to becoming one of the region's leading Islamic retail banks," he said.

"By allocating our assets into separate subsidiaries, we will be able to better focus on our core retail banking businesses held in the new banking entity, including Faysal Bank Limited, Pakistan, a retail and corporate banking subsidiary of Ithmaar Bank. At the same

time, we will be able to facilitate independent and focused disposal of investment assets held by the investment entity, when suitable opportunities arise," said Abdul Rahim. "This new group structure will further consolidate Ithmaar Bank's position as a strong retail-focused premier Islamic retail bank under the Ithmaar brand, better allowing the Bank to take advantage of new growth opportunities, and help to generate greater value to our shareholders," he said.

During 2015, Ithmaar Bank's pioneering association with Eskan Bank continued to contribute to addressing the Kingdom's housing challenges by offering Bahraini citizens government-subsidized financing through Ithmaar Bank to help them buy their first homes as part of a national scheme. Ithmaar Bank also signed an agreement with Tamkeen, a Bahrain semi-government organization which works to make the private sector the key driver of sustainable economic development, and substantially increased its allocation to the joint Ithmaar-Tamkeen enterprise finance scheme portfolio. In 2015, to mark the Holy Month of Ramadan, Ithmaar Bank launched a first of its kind Qard Hasan (profit-free financing) for low income loyal customers and, later in the year, also introduced Bahrain's most rewarding Credit Cards loyalty program, Ithmaar Rewards.

During 2016, Ithmaar Bank continuing to expand its retail banking network, already one of the largest in Bahrain, and will shortly inaugurate a new, full-service branch in Galali - its eighteenth branch in the Kingdom. Ithmaar Bank is also in the process of adding two new ATMs, bringing the total number of ATMs to 48.

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ZAIN LAUNCHES EXCITING UNLIMITED ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY PLANS FOR POSTPAID CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced yesterday the launch of its latest entertainment offers catering to postpaid customers which allows them to enjoy 2 TB of Internet experience on the most advanced network in the country, and unlimited entertainment access with free devices for only KD 20 per month.

This offer, available for a limited time only, was specifically designed to meet the needs of online gamers and entertainment fans, as it includes free gaming and Internet devices from the biggest players in the entertainment industry. In addition, the offer includes a free router or hotspot device for an unmatched online gaming and entertainment experience.

Customers subscribing to the iTunes monthly plan of KD 20 will receive 2 TB of LTE-A Internet, free LTE-A router or hotspot device, free Apple TV, free iPad, and an

iTunes pass that allows them to enjoy a massive library of music, movies and their favorite TV shows without affecting the customer's Internet plan. Subscribers to the Gaming monthly plan of KD 20 will receive 2 TB of LTE-A Internet, free LTE-A router or hotspot device, free PS4 device with accessories, and a Gamer Pass that allows unlimited online gaming on PlayStation Network without affecting the customer's Internet plan. In addition, all the above plans include the option to add a Router or Netgear Hotspot device for a superior online experience.

In efforts of providing an optimum entertaining internet experience, Zain has specially customized the latest package to surpass customers' telecommunications experience. With this latest announcement, Zain reinforces its leading position in providing special services and offerings designed for the gaming and entertainment community.

KFH NAMES 7 WINNERS OF BANKING CARDS CAMPAIGN

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) named 7 winners of the eleventh draw of the new banking cards promotional campaign themed "Shop and Win Back Up to KD 50,000 with KFH Cards" that had been launched in an attempt to encourage clients to use KFH credit, prepaid and debit cards while making purchases in Kuwait and overseas.

For every KD 10 spent on their KFH cards, clients will get a chance to enter a draw and win back up to KD 500 of their daily spends for 100 days ending April 19th 2016. KFH Credit and Prepaid cards used in domestic and international retail spends and KFH Debit cards used in international retail spends are eligible for the daily draw.

The winners are: Ahmad Alsaidan, Madawa Alajmi, Abdullah Alrashidi, Abdulhadi Alajmi, Asmaa Alsalem, Sarah Alhajri, and Hadi Alajmi.

KFH strives to continuously offer its clients new promotions and discounts in order to distinguish them among peers, not to mention to further bolster bank's

leading position in the field of banking cards. KFH marketing campaigns play a significant role in underlining KFH's principles that include boosting sales, and benefitting clients and merchants.

This new campaign is part of KFH's efforts to reward its clients and grant them additional value; thus achieving customer satisfaction and boosting their confidence.

The campaign also aims at enhancing the bank's presence especially that it dominates the largest market share in the field of banking cards.

It is worth noting that KFH has won several awards in the field of banking cards which reiterates its success and efficiency in banking cards market. KFH enjoys high confidence and leadership in the market in addition to high quality products which have enabled it to achieve growth in cards market and increase the number of customers. KFH occupies the leading position as the issuer of banking cards and one of leading banks at the GCC level.

Shop and Win Back Up to **KD 50,000** with KFH Cards

Use any of KFH credit, prepaid or debit cards and win back the value of your purchases up to KD 500 daily for 100 days for every KD 10 you spend.

*KFH credit and prepaid cards (for purchases made inside and outside Kuwait) *KFH debit cards (for purchases made outside Kuwait)

kfh.com 180 3333

CISCO DIGITAL CEILING FRAMEWORK TO CREATE A SMART INDOOR SPACE SMARTWORLD DIGITALLY TRANSFORMS ITS HEADQUARTERS

DUBAI: Cisco announced that Smartworld, an Etisalat and Dubai South joint venture company, has deployed the Cisco Digital Ceiling framework to create a smart, highly secure and connected indoor space at its new headquarters in Dubai South. The implementation brings together Cisco's secure IT network with an advanced LED connected lighting system from Philips Lighting to enable Smartworld to deliver a more connected, comfortable and intelligent working environment for both employees and guests. Smartworld's headquarters will be the showcase model of the company's digital transformation and intelligent building capabilities for future developments in Dubai South, the UAE, and the broader region.

The Cisco Digital Ceiling deployment in Smartworld's new headquarters will serve people's dynamic needs in real-time, while also supporting the organization's drive for sustainable growth. By connecting Smartworld's building services onto a single converged IP network, the Cisco Digital Ceiling delivers multiple benefits that include human-centric environments, optimized workspaces, streamlined maintenance, and reduced energy consumption and operating expenses.

"We are proud to be one of the first in the region to deploy the Cisco Digital Ceiling framework. The potential of the Digital Ceiling goes beyond optimizing building systems and creates a platform for a new ecosystem of building applications and services. It gives us new opportunities for transformational applications, analytics and business intelligence, and delivers the essential capabilities needed to make cost savings a reality.

Our office building will act as a proof-of-concept for developers and organizations looking to build smart and intelligent buildings in Dubai South and the UAE," said Abdulqader Obaid Ali, Chief Executive Officer, Smartworld. Cisco's Digital Ceiling framework and solution sets accelerate digital transformation and extends the benefits of the IoT throughout Smartworld's facilities, delivering a smart and highly connected environment that maximizes efficiencies and optimizes space utilization.

The energy efficient Philips LED light fixtures are equipped with sensors that are connected to the Cisco Power over Ethernet network. Real-time information provided by the lighting system, such as energy use and room occupancy data,

help building managers to make informed business decisions, while workers can use their smartphones to adjust light levels and climate control. "We are excited to see Digital Ceiling come to life in our region with Smartworld. Its early adoption by a forward-looking organization sets a precedent for more deployments by demonstrating tangible business value and realizing the incredible potential the solution presents.

The result is a building that is not only smart but also seamlessly connected and highly secure. Smartworld will improve efficiency and sustainability at its headquarters while delivering highly personalized user experiences that improve productivity, safety and comfort of building occupants," said Frida Kleimert, Head of Channel and Commercial Sales, Cisco UAE. Cisco is working with industry leaders in lighting, building automation control, enablers and ISVs to deliver a rich set of solutions and a new information exchange powered by the network with its Digital Ceiling framework.

The Smartworld implementation includes Siemon's ConvergeIT cabling infrastructure and Philips' connected LED office lighting luminaires that use PoE



Abdulqader Obaid Ali - Chief Executive Officer Smartworld

and feature integrated sensors and smartphone applications for personal preference. "By combining our PoE LED connected lighting technologies with Cisco's network innovations, Smartworld employees are able to personalize their working environment with a swipe of their finger. At the same time, building managers are armed with a wealth of data on energy use and occupancy to optimize their workspace, reduce operational costs and create a more sustainable and pleasant environment.

On top of this the lighting system is expected to improve energy efficiency by up to 80%, compared to conventional office lighting," said Paolo Cervini, Market Leader - MET, Philips Lighting. "Structured cabling is critical to building strong IT infrastructures that form the foundation of IP based networks that are vital to the success of any business. By working closely with Cisco, Siemon provided Smartworld with high performance Intelligent Building cabling solutions to best support Smartworld's long-term digital strategy," added Steven Foster, Managing Director, Siemon.

Smartworld is a strategic Cisco Gold Partner in the UAE. The company plans to work with Cisco's expanding Digital Ceiling partner community to help other customers in the UAE and Middle East move to a Digital Ceiling using the most efficient connected IoT endpoints from proven innovators in lighting and other building control systems. Smartworld's unique alignment and differentiated strength with digital services in the UAE provides them a distinctive opportunity to be the lead master technology systems integrator for the major developments in Dubai leading up to Dubai Expo 2020.



Osama Al-Zoubi, Chief Technology Officer, Cisco Middle East



Shukri Eid, Customer Solutions Director, Cisco - Middle East, Africa, Russia & CIS

CISCO TO HIGHLIGHT ITS IOT SOLUTIONS

DUBAI: Cisco announced that it is participating in the second edition of Internet of Things Expo 2016 (IoT), which will be held from March 29-31, 2016 at the Dubai World Trade Centre. As the platinum sponsor of the event, Cisco will demonstrate 'real life' smart city scenarios as well as showcase its world-class IoT solutions including the Cisco Digital Ceiling framework at the technology exhibition.

Cisco Middle East's Chief Technology Officer, Osama Al-Zoubi, will deliver a keynote titled 'Limitless possibilities, imminent disruption: igniting innovation and exponential growth through Digital Transformation' on March 30, 2016 at 12:45 pm. Shukri Eid, Cisco's Customer Solutions Director, will speak on 'What can business do about their biggest IoT vulnerabilities?' at a panel discussion on March 29, 2016 at 3:15 pm.

"After our successful participation in the inaugural edition of IoT last year, Cisco is happy to participate in the event once again. Digitization and the IoT hold enormous potential to drive new experiences, cost savings, and revenues in every enterprise and IoT 2016 is an ideal platform for Cisco to demonstrate how IoT technologies are playing an increasingly important role in improving the quality of life today, and for future generations," said Shukri Eid, Customer Solutions Director, Cisco - Middle East, Africa, Russia & CIS.

At IoT 2016, Cisco will showcase the key business architectures and solutions that will be important for digital transformation including Security, Cloud, Data Center and Analytics, Mobility, Application Centric Infrastructure and Collaboration. The company will also demonstrate various 'real life' Smart City scenarios including Smart Energy, Smart Transportation, Smart Parking, Retail, Healthcare and Remote Diagnostics through video content and an animated city display. Cisco's partners,

Alpha Data and Philips, will also showcase their IoT solutions at the Cisco stand.

"Our recently launched Cisco Digital Ceiling framework is set to become the next frontier in the IoT. Digital Ceiling converges multiple building networks-lighting, heating, and cooling, IP video, IoT sensors, and much more-through a secure and intelligent network platform, thus unlocking new experiences and efficiencies for workers, lowering facilities operating costs and putting sensor data at the organization's fingertips, so they can gain deeper insight into their environment to make better business decisions.

Digitization and the IoT hold enormous potential to drive new experiences, cost savings, and revenues in every enterprise. Cisco Digital Ceiling can help businesses start capitalizing on it in their buildings today," said Osama Al-Zoubi, Chief Technology Officer - Cisco Middle East. Cisco's Digital Ceiling framework and solution unleashes the power of the IoT by linking building services over a single, converged IP network. It transforms the unobtrusive infrastructure in ceilings across the building's facilities into a secure, distributed, and standards-based architecture that delivers building intelligence at the edge of the network.

The result is a building that is not only smart, but also is seamlessly and securely connected. With Cisco Digital Ceiling, organizations can improve the efficiency and sustainability of their buildings and manage them more effectively. They can use the same platform to deliver highly personalized user experiences that improve the productivity, safety, and comfort of building occupants. Cisco's executives and technology experts will be available at stand B-65 in hall 6 to meet with customers, demonstrate their latest innovative technologies and share their global IoT and Smart Cities success stories.

THE MICROSOFT AXES CHATBOT THAT LEARNED A LITTLE TOO MUCH ONLINE

SAN FRANCISCO: OMG! Did you hear about the artificial intelligence program that Microsoft designed to chat like a teenage girl? It was totally yanked offline in less than a day, after it began spouting racist, sexist and otherwise offensive remarks. Microsoft said it was all the fault of some really mean people, who launched a "coordinated effort" to make the chatbot known as Tay "respond in inappropriate ways." To which one artificial intelligence expert responded: Duh!

Well, he didn't really say that. But computer scientist Kris Hammond did say, "I can't believe they didn't see this coming." Microsoft said its researchers created Tay as an experiment to learn more about computers and human conversation. On its website, the company said the program was targeted to an audience of 18 to 24-year-olds and was "designed to engage and entertain people where they connect with each other online through casual and playful conversation."

In other words, the program used a lot of slang and tried to provide humorous responses when people sent it messages and photos. The chatbot went live on Wednesday, and Microsoft invited the public to chat with Tay on

Twitter and some other messaging services popular with teens and young adults. "The more you chat with Tay the smarter she gets, so the experience can be more personalized for you," the company said.

But some users found Tay's responses odd, and others found it wasn't hard to nudge Tay into making offensive comments, apparently prompted by repeated questions or statements that contained offensive words. Soon, Tay was making sympathetic references to Hitler - and creating a furor on social media. "Unfortunately, within the first 24 hours of coming online, we became aware of a coordinated effort by some users to abuse Tay's commenting skills to have Tay respond in inappropriate ways," Microsoft said in a statement.

While the company didn't elaborate, Hammond says it appears Microsoft made no effort to prepare Tay with appropriate responses to certain words or topics. Tay seems to be a version of "call and response" technology, added Hammond, who studies artificial intelligence at Northwestern University and also serves as chief scientist for Narrative Science, a company that develops computer programs that turn data into narrative reports. — AP

US HACKS IPHONE, ENDS LEGAL BATTLE BUT QUESTIONS LINGER

FBI MYSTERIOUSLY HACK MASS SHOOTER'S IPHONE

WASHINGTON: The extraordinary legal fight pitting the Obama administration against technology giant Apple Inc ended unexpectedly after the FBI said it used a mysterious method without Apple's help to hack into a California mass shooter's iPhone. Left unanswered, however, were questions about how the sudden development would affect privacy in the future, and what happens the next time the government is frustrated by digital security lockout features.

Government prosecutors asked a federal judge on Monday to vacate a disputed order forcing Apple to help the FBI break into the iPhone, saying it was no longer necessary. The FBI used the unspecified technique to access data on an iPhone used by gunman Syed Farook, who died with his wife in a gun battle with police after they killed 14 people in San Bernardino, California, in December. The Justice Department said agents are now reviewing the information on the phone.

But the government's brief court filing, in US District Court for the Central District of California, provided no details about how the FBI got into the phone. Nor did it identify the non-government "outside party" that showed agents how to get past the phone's security defenses. Authorities had previously said only Apple had the ability to help them unlock the phone. Apple responded by saying it will continue to increase the security of its products. "We will continue to help law enforcement with their investigations, as we have done all along," the company added in a statement, while reiterating its argument that the government's demand for Apple's help was wrong.

"This case should never have been brought," the company said. FBI Assistant Director David Bowdich said Monday that examining the iPhone was part of the authorities' effort to learn if the San Bernardino shooters had worked with others or had targeted any other victims. "I am satisfied that we have access to more answers than we did before," he said in a statement. The dispute had ignited a fierce Internet-era national debate that pitted digital privacy rights against national security concerns and reinvigorated discussion over the impact of encryption on law enforcement's ability to serve the public.

Apple's security

Rep Darrell Issa, R-California, said in a statement that while it was "preferable" that the government gained access to the iPhone without Apple's help, the fundamental question of the extent to which the government should be able to access personal information remains unanswered. Issa, a critic of the administration's domestic surveillance practices, said the government's legal action against Apple raised constitutional and privacy questions and that "those worried about our privacy should stay wary" because this doesn't mean "their quest for a secret key into our devices is over."

The surprise development punctured the temporary perception that Apple's security might have been good enough to keep consumers' personal information safe even from the US government. And while the Obama administration created a policy for disclosing such security vulnerabilities to companies, the policy allows for a vulnerability to be kept secret if there is a law enforcement or national security rationale for doing so. The withdrawal of the court process also takes away Apple's ability to legally request



LOS ANGELES: An Apple iPhone 6s Plus smartphone is displayed at the Apple store at The Grove in Los Angeles. The FBI said it successfully used a mysterious technique without Apple Inc's help to hack into the iPhone used by a gunman in a mass shooting in California, effectively ending a pitched court battle between the Obama administration and one of the world's leading technology companies. — AP

details on the method the FBI used in this case. Apple attorneys said last week that they hoped the government would share that information with them if it proved successful.

The Justice Department wouldn't comment on any future disclosure of the method to Apple or the public. Denelle Dixon-Thayer, chief legal and business officer at Mozilla, which makes the Firefox web browser, said in a statement that "fixing vulnerabilities makes for better products and better security for everyone" and the "government needs to take that into account" and disclose the vulnerability to Apple. Jay Kaplan, a former NSA computer expert who's now CEO of cyber-security firm Synack, said it is likely Apple will pursue avenues to further lock down their operating systems and hardware, especially as a result of the public announcement of some new technique to crack their phones.

US Magistrate Sheri Pym of California last month ordered Apple to provide the FBI with software to help it hack into Farook's work-issued iPhone. The Justice Department relied on a 1789 law to argue it had the authority to compel Apple to bypass its security protocols on its phone for government investigators. While Magistrate Judge James Orenstein in New York ruled last month in a separate case that the US was seeking broad powers under that legal argument, the decision wasn't binding in the California case and the Justice Department is appealing.

Civil liberties

Technology and civil liberties organizations say they're concerned the case is far from settled, with some worrying that smaller compa-

nies might not have the resources to fight off similar demands. Apple CEO Tim Cook had argued that helping the FBI hack the iPhone would set a dangerous precedent, making all iPhone users vulnerable, if Apple complied with the court order. He as well as FBI Director James Comey has said that Congress needs to take up the issue.

Apple was headed for a courtroom showdown with the government last week, until federal prosecutors abruptly asked for a postponement so they could test a potential solution brought to them by a party outside of the US government last Sunday. The encrypted phone was protected by a passcode that included security protocols: a time delay and auto-erase feature that destroyed the phone's data after 10 tries. The two features made it impossible for the government to repeatedly and continuously test passcodes in what's known as a brute-force attack. But with those features removed, the FBI said it would take 26 minutes to crack the phone. A law enforcement official said the FBI would continue to aid its local and state partners with gaining evidence in cases - implying that the method would be shared with them. The official spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to publicly comment.

High on the waiting list for assistance likely is Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance, who told a US House panel earlier this month that he has 205 iPhones his investigators can't access data from in criminal investigations. Apple is also opposing requests to help extract information from 14 Apple devices in California, Illinois, Massachusetts and New York. — AP

MEDSTAR COMPUTERS DOWN FOR SECOND DAY AFTER VIRUS

WASHINGTON: MedStar Health's computer systems remained offline yesterday for the second straight day after the non-profit, one of the biggest medical service providers in the US capital region, shut down parts of its network to stem the spread of a virus. MedStar spokeswoman Ann Nickels said she did not know when the systems would be restored or what type of virus had infected the network. "Medical services continue," she said in an interview. When asked if elective procedures would be performed, she said that would be determined "case by case."

The non-profit, which runs 10 hospitals and

some 250 outpatient facilities in Washington and Maryland, said Monday on its Facebook page that its computer network was infected by a virus that prevented some users from logging into the system early that day. MedStar quickly decided to take down "all system interfaces to prevent the virus from spreading" and moved to backup systems for paper record-keeping, the post said. Nickels said she had no further information about the attack: "We are actively investigating."

The FBI said on Monday that it was looking into the incident at MedStar, which is one of the

largest medical providers to have operations interrupted by malicious software. The discovery came after several recent attacks on US hospitals by cyber extortionists using software known as ransomware, which encrypts data and demands that users pay to get it unlocked. Last month, Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital in Los Angeles paid \$17,000 to regain access to its systems after such an attack. Security blogger Brian Krebs last week reported that Henderson, Kentucky-based Methodist Hospital declared a state of emergency after falling victim to a ransomware attack. — Reuters



YIACO MEDICAL CO OPENS PHARMACY IN ARABIA MALL

HEALTHCARE LEADER INTRODUCES NEW RETAIL PHARMACEUTICAL CONCEPT

KUWAIT: In line with YIACO Medical Company's new strategic direction, the healthcare leader recently inaugurated its latest new scale model pharmacy featuring a brand new look and expanded pharmacy care services with an aim to enhance the retail experience of its customers. The newly opened YIACO pharmacy is located in Arabia Mall in the Eqaila district.

"We are thrilled to have this opportunity to introduce our integrated pharmacy services and healthcare expertise to our customers across Kuwait," commented Dr Bader Alzaid Altaraji, CEO of YIACO Medical Company.

"The way our customers engage with YIACO continues to evolve and as part of our strategic plan, we continue to listen and respond to their needs. Our efforts to innovate our pharmacy care services by going beyond the traditional pharmacy experience offer our customers with expanded wellness options and increased access to healthcare" commented Dr. Mohammed Barham, COO of YIACO Medical Company.

Dr Mahdi Mashharawi, Retail Pharmacies Manager, explained that the new YIACO pharmacy also includes a wellness and education corner that will also allow customers to seek advice and receive more educational insight from highly qualified pharmacists. Designed by an award-winning international design agency, the new look adopts new design shelving and retail displays which ensures a seamless and easy to navigate flow cycle for customers encouraging visits which



Dr Mahdi Mashharawi, Retail Pharmacies Manager, explained that the new YIACO pharmacy also includes a wellness and education corner that will also allow customers to seek advice and receive more educational insight from highly qualified pharmacists. Designed by an award-winning international design agency, the new look adopts new design shelving and retail displays which ensures a seamless and easy to navigate flow cycle for customers encouraging visits which promote precaution and wellness in a much warmer and friendly environment. Over the past 60 years, YIACO Medical Co. has



grown to be one of the largest healthcare networks in Kuwait, and caters both medical products & services to the private and public sectors.

One of YIACO's greatest milestones since 1953 is having one of the largest pharmacy chain in Kuwait.



This image provided by NASA shows Arctic sea ice at its maximum, the lowest on record. The winter maximum level of Arctic sea ice shrank to the smallest on record, thanks to extraordinarily warm temperatures, federal scientists said. The National Snow and Ice Data Center says sea ice spread to a maximum of 5.607 million square miles in 2016. That's 5,000 square miles less than the old record set in 2015, a difference slightly smaller than the state of Connecticut. — AP

ARCTIC SEA ICE REACHES RECORD LOW MARK FOR WINTERTIME

WASHINGTON: The growth of Arctic sea ice this winter peaked at the lowest maximum level on record, thanks to extraordinarily warm temperatures, federal scientists said Monday.

The National Snow and Ice Data Center says ice covered a maximum of 5.607 million square miles (14.52 million square kilometers) of the

Arctic Ocean in 2016. That's 5,000 square miles (12,950 square kilometers) less than the old record set in 2015 - a difference slightly smaller than the state of Connecticut. It's also some 431,000 square miles (1.1 million square kilometers) less than the 30-year average. That difference is the size of Texas and California combined.

Records go back to 1979 when satellites started measuring sea ice, which forms when Arctic Ocean water freezes. This year's ice didn't break the record by much, but it's "an exclamation point" on a longer-term trend, said NASA scientist Walt Meier, who helped calculate the data.

The sub-par showing doesn't necessarily mean that the minimum extent this summer will also break a record, scientists said. The summer minimum is more important for affecting Earth's climate and weather. Data center scientist Julianne Stroeve says winter temperatures over the North Pole were 16 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than normal, while other parts of the Arctic ran 4 to 11 degrees F warmer than normal.

Data center chief Mark Serreze said in a press release, "I have never seen such a warm, crazy winter in the Arctic." It was so warm that the Barents Sea was "pretty much close to ice-free for almost the whole winter, which is very unusual," Meier said.

Stroeve said early indications show that the sea ice is thinner than last year. A leading but still controversial theory says loss of sea ice in the Arctic may change the jet stream and bring more extreme weather to the United States, Stroeve said. The new report reveals "just the latest disturbing data point in a disturbing trend wherein climate changes are happening even faster than we had forecast," Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann said. — AP

PRIVATE VACCINES IN CHINA NEED MORE REGULATION: WHO

BEIJING: The World Health Organization yesterday urged tighter regulation of privately sold vaccines in China as a scandal involving out-of-date immunisation fuels public outrage in the country's latest safety scare. The case involves the illegal and improper storage, transport and sale of tens of millions of dollars' worth of vaccines-many of them expired-reports say.

"The vaccines that are in the private sector need to be managed, stored, handled, distributed and used in accordance with recognised standards," Lance Rodewald, a WHO expert on immunisation, told a briefing. "This is a very serious situation, it's being taken seriously. We take it seriously. We want to see the root causes identified so that remedies can be provided."

Standard vaccines such as those for polio, hepatitis B and measles are mandatory for all children in China and supplied by the state, while parents can opt to buy additional immunisations privately such as those for meningitis, influenza or rotavirus.

China's public vaccination system is fundamentally sound, Rodewald said, adding that the expired private-sector vaccines did not pose a threat to children who received them. "Parents should be comfortable knowing that their child will not have a toxic reaction," he said, although some children "may need to be re-vaccinated". Authorities have already arrested more than 130 suspects in the investigation into the sales. — AFP

FLORIDA DROPS COMPLAINTS AGAINST ABORTION CLINICS

TALLAHASSEE, Florid: Florida health regulators are dropping their push to fine three clinics operated by Planned Parenthood. Court documents show the Agency for Health Care Administration last Friday asked an administrative judge to dismiss complaints first filed last year against clinics located in St. Petersburg, Naples and Fort Myers.

The state alleged that the clinics had performed second-trimester abortions that violated their licenses. Planned Parenthood representatives have maintained that abortions were performed during the first trimester.

The move to drop the complaint came the same day Gov. Rick Scott signed a measure into law that changes trimester definitions. AHCA spokeswoman Mallory McManus said in an email that the new law made the complaints moot. Planned Parenthood said in a statement Monday that the decision to drop the complaints shows the charges were "politically motivated." — AP

GLOBAL ELDERLY POPULATION EXPLODING: US REPORT

WASHINGTON: The number of people globally aged 65 and over is expected to more than double by 2050 as the world's senior population continues to rocket, a US study said yesterday. The global population is aging at an unprecedented rate with 8.5 percent of people worldwide-or more than 600 million-now aged 65 and over, said the US Census Bureau report.

If the trend continues nearly 17 percent of the global population, or 1.6 billion people, will be in the 65-and-over age bracket by 2050. "People are living longer, but that does not necessarily mean that they are living healthier," said Richard Hodes, director of the National Institute on Aging (NIA), which commissioned the study,

"An Aging World: 2015." "The increase in our aging population presents many opportunities and also several public health challenges that we need to prepare for."

"NIA has partnered with census to provide the best possible data so that we can better understand the course and implications of population aging." By 2050, global life expectancy at birth is projected to increase by almost eight years, from 68.6 years in 2015 to 76.2 years, the study said.

The global population of the "oldest old"-people aged 80 and older-is expected to more than triple between 2015 and 2050, from 126.5 million to 446.6 million. — AFP



KENEMA, Sierra Leone: A girl suspected of being infected with the Ebola virus is being checked at the government hospital in Kenema, Sierra Leone. — AFP

WEST AFRICA EBOLA OUTBREAK NO LONGER POSES GLOBAL RISK

GENEVA: West Africa's Ebola outbreak no longer constitutes a threat to international public health, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday, declaring an end to a nearly 20-month emergency that has killed about 11,300 people. Dr Margaret Chan, WHO director-general, accepted the recommendations of a committee of independent experts who also called for lifting any travel and trade restrictions affecting Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. "The Committee provided its

view that Ebola transmission in West Africa no longer constitutes an extraordinary event, that the risk of international spread is now low, and that countries currently have the capacity to respond rapidly to new virus emergencies," the WHO said in a statement. All original chains of virus transmission have ended, but a new chain in Guinea has infected eight people including seven who have died, it said, adding that the virus persists in the semen of some men for over a year. — Reuters

ALASKA VOLCANO CALMING AFTER ERUPTION; ALERT DOWNGRADED

ANCHORAGE, Alaska: The activity level of an Alaska volcano has declined after the mountain erupted with a massive ash cloud that prompted the cancellation of dozens of flights.

The US Geological Survey said in a news release late Monday night that the intensity of the eruption had "declined significantly." Pavlof Volcano, one of Alaska's most active volcanoes, is 625 miles southwest of Anchorage on the Alaska Peninsula, the finger of land that sticks out from mainland Alaska toward the Aleutian Islands.

The volcano in the 8,261-foot mountain erupted about 4 pm Sunday, spitting out an ash cloud that rose to 20,000 feet. Lightning over the mountain and pressure sensors indicated eruptions continued overnight Sunday. By 7 am Monday, the ash cloud had risen to 37,000 feet and winds to 50 mph or more had stretched it over more than 400 miles into interior Alaska. "It's right in the wheelhouse of a lot of flights crisscrossing Alaska," said geologist Chris Waythomas, of the US Geological Survey, part of the Alaska Volcano Observatory, along with the University of Alaska and the state Division of Geological and Geophysical

Surveys.

In its statement late Monday, the USGS said that the volcano's activity decline began around noon Monday and that by late at night a continuous emission was no longer being observed by satellite.

Consequently, a volcano alert - that had been at its highest level, warning of hazards both in the air and on the ground - was downgraded from a warning to a watch. But the agency said that a significant eruption was still possible. Earlier in the day, Alaska Airlines said it cancelled 41 flights affecting about 3,300 customers heading to Fairbanks, Bethel, Kotzebue, Nome, Barrow and Deadhorse. The airline said it will resume its 54 regularly scheduled flights yesterday if conditions improve.

Volcanic ash is angular and sharp and has been used as an industrial abrasive. The powdered rock can cause a jet engine to shut down. USGS geologists have compared it to flying into a sand blaster.

An eruption of Mount Redoubt in December 1989 sent out an ash cloud 150 miles that flamed out the jet engines of a KLM flight carrying 231 passengers to Anchorage.

The jet dropped more than two miles before pilots were able to restart the engines and land safely. "We just simply will not fly when ash is present," Alaska Airlines spokeswoman Bobbie Egan said. Waythomas had received no reports of ash falling in communities. The closest community, Cold Bay, is 37 miles southwest of the volcano, opposite of where the wind was blowing ash.

Geologists call Pavlof an open-system volcano, Waythomas said. "The pathways that magma follows to the surface are pretty open in a volcanological sense," Waythomas said. "They can convey magma and gas very easily. Magmas can move to the surface whenever they feel like it, more or less."

The movement comes with little shaking of the ground, and the lack of earthquakes as an early warning of an eruption "makes us go crazy monitoring them," Waythomas said.

The volcano, about 4.4 miles in diameter, has had 40 known eruptions. Its conical, nearly symmetrical shape indicates its eruptions tend to be less violent than the kind that blows tops off mountains.

"It can erupt for periods of hours to days or



Pavlof Volcano, one of Alaska's most active volcanoes, erupts, sending a plume of volcanic ash into the air. The Alaska Volcano Observatory says activity continued Monday. Pavlof Volcano is 625 miles southwest of Anchorage on the Alaska Peninsula, the finger of land that sticks out from mainland Alaska toward the Aleutian Islands. — AP

it can go on for much longer periods of time," Waythomas said. "It won't erupt continuously for many months or a year. It will be intermittent. But the eruption cycle could go on for a

while, or it could abruptly shut off and be done tomorrow." This story has been corrected to show the volcano is on the Alaska Peninsula, not in the Aleutian Islands. — AP



7M AMERICANS THREATENED BY HUMAN-INDUCED QUAKES

WASHINGTON: Around seven million people in the United States live in areas at risk of damaging, human-induced earthquakes that are often linked to fracking, a report out Monday said.

Because the US Geological Survey is including the human-triggered earthquakes on its forecast maps for the first time, the odds of damaging shaking in certain parts of the country is much increased for 2016, it said.

The seven million people who are at elevated risk live in the central and eastern United States, which has seen the most significant increase in human-triggered seismic activity, according to USGS.

While some western regions are also experiencing induced earthquakes, these don't significantly change the hazard level there because natural earthquakes are already prevalent in the area.

The primary cause for human-induced earthquakes in many parts of the central and eastern United States is wastewater disposal, the USGS reported. Such wastewater is linked to hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, the process of shooting water mixed with sand and chemicals deep into the earth to crack rock formations and bring up oil and natural gas trapped inside.

The process has unlocked massive amounts of oil and gas in the United States over the past decade. But along with the oil and gas comes plenty of brackish water, which is disposed of by injecting it into separate wells that are dug as deep as a mile (kilometer) below ground. The unnatural addition of the water can change pressure along fault lines, causing slips that make the earth shake, experts say.

The USGS said the states at highest risk of induced seismic activity are, from highest to lowest: Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico and Arkansas. Oklahoma and Texas are the states with the largest population exposed to the effects of human-triggered earthquakes, it added.

"In the past five years, the USGS has documented high shaking and damage in areas of these six states, mostly from induced earthquakes," said Mark Petersen, chief of the USGS National Seismic Hazard Mapping Project.

"By including human-induced events, our assessment of earthquake hazards has significantly increased in parts of the US," he added. Monday's report is a supplement to the USGS's normal 50-year forecast, a timeframe that was established to help inform engineering designers and those setting building codes, because it is based on the average lifetime of a building. The USGS said it chose the short timeframe of one year for its 2016 supplement "because induced earthquake activity can increase or decrease with time and is subject to commercial and policy decisions that could change rapidly." — AFP

ONLY 26.4% OF 12 YEAR OLDS IN KUWAIT ARE 'CAVITY FREE'

GOSH TEAM OFFERS ADVICE FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN'S SMILES

KUWAIT: 621 million children, around the world, suffer from untreated tooth decay. This International Happiness Day, help protect your children's teeth as problems with teeth and jaws can have a serious impact on general health, well-being and self-esteem. Dental disease can affect a child's ability to eat and socialize properly. For the Maxillofacial and Dental Department at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children (GOSH) in London, seeing children from the Middle East with tooth decay is becoming a rising occurrence. In Kuwait, only 26.4 percent of 12 year olds are cavity free, with almost two thirds of 15-17 year olds in Dubai having tooth cavities and 80 percent of 12-15 year olds suffering from gum problems. Tooth decay can lead to pain, infection, difficulty eating and loss of sleep, often resulting in the extraction of teeth, which can deeply affect children, especially if they are young.

For children with medical problems, the consequences of tooth decay can be very serious. Dental infection can lead to endocarditis in children with congenital heart disease, or widespread life-threatening infection in children with poor immunity, either due to disease or medication. If children cannot eat due to dental pain, this can lead to weight loss and failure to thrive and have serious consequences for those with

metabolic disorders. Children who are anxious or very young, requiring extensive treatment, often need this to be provided under general anaesthesia, which may carry risks for the medically compromised.

Early diagnosis and management of dental disease is important for all children, but even more so for those with a wide range of medical problems. Dental disease is preventable and these children should have access to dental care, especially preventive regimens, from infancy. Fizzy drinks and sweets, as well as food that are naturally high in sugar have been linked to dental erosion and severe tooth decay, so maintaining a healthy, balanced diet is also important. With a proper oral hygiene routine in place, accompanied by regular check-ups from a qualified dentist, and a sensible diet, children can avoid dental disease and protect their teeth for life.

Sara, a 7-year old girl from Oman with congenital heart disease, was referred to Miss Carol Mason, Consultant in Paediatric Dentistry at GOSH, for a dental assessment. Sara's primary physicians were concerned about the risk of endocarditis and she was experiencing a lot of pain from her teeth. She was very anxious regarding any dental treatment and presented with extensive decay in all of her deciduous

molars and smaller cavities in her permanent molars. Following a full discussion with her physicians, all the necessary dental treatment was provided under one episode of general anaesthesia - cleaning, fillings, application of fluoride varnish, protective fissure sealants, and removal of all eight grossly decayed and infected deciduous molars. "She made a good recovery and a few hours later she was very happy that her painful teeth had gone!" Carol explains after the operation. "Sara is now following a preventive regimen - limiting sugar containing foods and drinks to mealtimes only, brushing her teeth twice daily with adult toothpaste (containing 1450ppm fluoride), and regular visits to her dentist every 4 months for application of fluoride varnish. Hopefully, no further dental disease will occur and treatment will not be required."

Miss Carol Mason is a GDC registered specialist in Paediatric Dentistry and is a member of the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry and the British Dental Association. In addition to dealing with dental disease, as a Paediatric Dentistry Consultant, Carol and her fellow consultants also see children with a wide range of dental anomalies for diagnosis and management. These include defects of enamel and dentine (amelogenesis imperfecta, dentinogenesis imperfecta), missing teeth (hypodontia), extra teeth (super-

numeraries) and teeth of abnormal shape and size. Many of these children require a multi-disciplinary approach with the other consultants in the team.

The Maxillofacial and Dental Department at GOSH cares for patients from the UK and overseas with a wide variety of medical and dental problems. A multi-disciplinary approach is often required, encompassing the specialties within the Department - Maxillofacial Surgeons, Orthodontists, Paediatric Dentists and Restorative Dentists and also medical and surgical colleagues from the rest of the hospital. The ethos of the Paediatric Dentistry Service at GOSH is to not only diagnose and manage any dental disease but to also prevent further occurrence by implementing preventive strategies, tailored to the individual.

Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) for children is one of the world's leading centres for treating sick children, with the widest range of specialists under one roof in the UK.

With the UCL Institute of Child Health, GOSH is the largest centre for paediatric research outside the US, and play a key role in training children's health specialists for the future. In 2014-15, the international unit of Great Ormond Street Hospital treated over 5000 children from all over the world.

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Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368



ADVENTURERS TO WITNESS ELECTRIFYING SHOW THIS WEEKEND

Those who love adventures, action and motorsports in particular are about to witness a super thrilling show over the weekend, as Red Bull athlete Brian Capper will be set on his motorbike to perform in various shows in Kuwait on Thursday and Friday. Brian Capper's discipline is Motor Trial Biking, born in South Africa; Brian started riding MX at the age of nine, started trial biking at 11, and won his first National

title at 18. He then spent a year in America competing in their National Championships, finishing seventh overall.

Brian Capper expressed his pleasure to be visiting Kuwait, saying: "This is my very first visit to Kuwait and I'm very excited to meet the Kuwaiti audience during the shows which I will be performing over the weekend. I invite everyone regardless of age to attend these exciting shows".

Mark your calendars for an electrifying motorsport show at Al Kout Mall near the water fountains on Thursday 31st March at 7:00 pm and at 360 Mall on Friday 1st April at 7:00 pm. Brian Capper will also be carrying out a Trial Biking Show during the Red Bull Car Park Drift event on Friday at 5:00 pm on 1st April at Bassel Al Salem Al Sabah circuit on the 7th ring road.



HOLIDAY INN SALMIYA CONDUCTS FIRE DRILL

Holiday Inn Kuwait Salmiya conducted a very successful fire drill as part of its ongoing commitment towards employees and hotel guest's safety.

The evacuation was organized in coordination with Civil Defense Authority, Kuwait Fire Department and Ministry of interior, as a refresher training and platform to

measure the Hotel staff response and ability to handle all circumstances that might arise during emergencies as well as to enhance the overall procedure.

The emergency response team evacuated the hotel employees as well as all guests in house to the designated assembly point located next to the hotel parking

space, while the fire brigade and emergency team practiced a rescue mission for two guests whom were trapped inside the hotel.

Monjed Salha, the General Manager of the hotel assured that the safety of all employees is of paramount importance to the hotel management and it goes in line

with the basic principles followed by the IHG to ensure the safety of hotel employees and valuable guests. He also commended the efforts of the members of the Ministry of the Interior, Kuwait fire department and ministry of health for their cooperation and contribution to the success of this training.



The Indonesian Embassy in Kuwait conducted a business meeting for an Indonesian trade delegation which visited Kuwait recently. The meeting was held at Regency Hotel in cooperation with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

STATEMENT FROM THE EMBASSY OF INDIA IN KUWAIT



Main points made during the Indian Prime Minister's address at the World Sufi Forum, New Delhi, on 17 March 2016:

- 1. Ninety nine names of Allah**
These are 99 names of Allah, none stand for force and violence. Allah is Rahman and Raheem. Sufism is the voice of peace, co-existence, compassion, equality & a call to universal brotherhood. As India became a principal center of Islamic civilization, our nation also emerged as one of the most vibrant hubs of Sufism. Sufism became the face of Islam in India, even as it remained deeply rooted in the Holy Quran and Hadis.
- 2. Muslim Leaders of India**
The tallest of our leaders, such as Maulana Azad, and important spiritual leaders, such as Maulana Hussain Madani and millions of ordinary citizens rejected the idea of division on the basis of religion. Now, India is moving forward as a united nation on the strength of its diversity. All our people, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Buddhists, the micro-minority of Parsis, believers, non-believers, are an integral part of India. Today Sufism from India has spread across the world.
- 3. Terrorism and Development**
Every year, over 100 billion dollars are spent on securing the world from terrorism. This money should have been spent on building lives of the poor. Terrorism uses diverse motivations and causes, none of which can be justified. Terrorists distort a religion whose cause they profess to support. The fight against terrorism is not a confrontation against any religion. It is a struggle between the values of humanism and the forces of humanity. Diversity is a basic reality of Nature and the source of richness of a society. It should not be a cause of misunderstanding.



(From left) Sundib, Anob, Raju, Farraj, Bader, Basel, Hussein and Osama.



(From left) Sundib, Hussein, Farraj, Osama and Basel.

AL-THIQA LAUNCHES NEW MONSTER SHRIMPS MEALS

MONSTER SIZE SHRIMPS NOW AVAILABLE AT SHRIMPY



Hussein El-Sayed, Marketing Manager, Al-Thiqa Restaurants Company.

Al-Thiqa Restaurants Company, a leading company in the food and restaurants management industry, launched the "Monster Shrimps" meals as the newest addition to the diversified menu offered throughout Shrimpy's restaurants.

The "Monster Shrimps" meals offered by Shrimpy, the first restaurant of its kind in the fast food industry, enable clients to order their favorite meal with the new supersized shrimps.

Commenting on the launch, the Marketing Manager, Hussein El-Sayed, said: "We strive to always offer the best for our clients through our rich range of meal choices, exclusive offers and meals, as well as with new meals made with fresh seafood."

Sayed added: "We spare no effort in pro-

viding the best quality of food served every day, and at competitive prices to satisfy our clients at every meal."

On another hand, the Brand Manager, Bassel Humaidan, said: "We work day in day out in developing the Shrimpy brand to become one of the leading chains of fast food restaurants and the most diversified at an international level. This is achieved by always reviewing our operational system and innovating, which translates today in our position as one of the strongest companies in the food industry in Kuwait."

The Shrimpy chain of restaurants was established in 1998. It owns today more than 20 restaurants in Kuwait. The company is working on expanding its footprint by working on launching the first Shrimpy restaurant in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.



A group photo of media personalities.



(From left) Farraj, Hussein and Osama.



(From left) Basel, Sundib and Hussein



(From left) Nellie, Rula, Nuha and Reem.



Group photo of the honored students



VP of Academic Affairs
Dr Salah Al-Sharhan



Dean of College of Arts and Sciences Dr Ali Ansari (left) with the minister.

GUST HONORS 54 STUDENTS FROM COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES AT DEAN'S LIST CEREMONY

Under the patronage of the Minister of Electricity and Water Ahmad Al-Jassar, Gulf University for Science and Technology's (GUST) College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) honored 54 of its distinguished students with GPAs of 3.5 and above. The Awards Ceremony

took place on campus and was attended by VP of Academic Affairs, Dr Salah Al-Sharhan, Dean of College of Arts and Sciences, Dr Ali Ansari, and the heads of CAS departments, as well as the parents and families of the honorary students.



TSC BRINGS TOGETHER EMPLOYEES, COMMUNITY TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT

In accordance to its social corporate responsibility and as part of "TSC Together" initiative, The Sultan Center (TSC) supported the "Give the Sand a Hand" campaign and held a beach clean-up in conjunction with Environment Public Authority, led by Dr Khalid Al-Anazi Director of Public Relations Awareness and his team, along with Red Crescent Team, headed by Akram Al-Nadi, Kuwait's Police Environment Team, Kuwait Diving Club Team and staff from TSC Head office and retail stores.

TSC's initiative stems from its deep commitment to protecting and preserving the environment. TSC staff along the company volunteered to participated in the beach clean-up at Al-Salam beach in Shuwaikh. Over the course of the morning the group collected vast amounts of debris comprised of food containers, soft drink cans, glass, plastics, bottles, shopping bags and fishing nets.

Lisa Al-Gharib, Marketing Manager at TSC commented: "TSC's beach clean-up campaign reflects the company's commitment to on increasing awareness about the importance of preserving and protecting the environment in which we live now and for future generations. As a Kuwaiti company, we are determined to exert our role in preserving and protecting



Kuwait's beautiful beaches and marine life from pollution, we encourage all individuals who visit Kuwait's beaches to do their part in properly disposing of litter and waste to safeguard and protect the environment."

Hani Ismael, HR Director at TSC, commented: "TSC beach cleaning campaign reflects the company's commitment to increase awareness about serious environmental issues and to shed lights on the importance of preserving and protecting the environment in which we live. We were glad to see the eager dedication of

our staff who willingly joined the campaign and worked hand by hand with volunteers in a true sense of team spirit."

The beach-cleaning campaign was a true demonstration of TSC full commitment to serve the community in which it operates; upon completion of the beach clean-up, TSC treated all volunteers with drinks and snack in a social atmosphere. The Sultan Center would like to thank all the those who contributed and took part in the beach clean-up.



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 Fahaeel city, more specifically, in a building owned by Khalif Al-Fulaj.

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 gentle-

man 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.

AMC

- 01:50 Seven Years In Tibet
04:05 The Secret Of Santa Vittoria
06:20 Movers And Shakers
07:40 One More Time
09:15 Hackers
11:00 It Runs In The Family
12:25 The Raven
13:50 Mirrormask
15:30 The Garbage Pail Kids Movie
17:05 A Guy Thing
18:50 Les Miserables (1998)
21:00 Mortal Thoughts
22:45 Raging Bull

- 14:30 Dialogue
15:00 News Update
15:15 China 24
16:00 News Update
16:15 Global Business
17:00 News Update
17:15 World InSight
18:00 Asia Today
18:30 Culture Express
19:00 News Update
19:30 The Heat
20:00 Africa Live
21:00 Global Business
21:30 Dialogue
22:00 News Update
22:15 China 24
23:00 News Update
23:15 World InSight

- 14:55 Fatal Encounters
15:45 On The Case With Paula Zahn
16:35 Murder Shift
17:25 I Almost Got Away With It
18:15 The Will
19:05 Deadly Affairs
19:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
20:45 California Investigator
21:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
21:35 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
22:00 Surviving Evil
22:50 Deadly Women
23:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:45 I Escaped Jaws 2
01:40 From WAGs To Riches
02:35 Tanked
03:25 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli
03:50 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli
04:15 Gator Boys
05:02 Treehouse Masters
05:49 From WAGs To Riches
06:36 Meet The Sloths
07:00 Meet The Sloths
07:25 America's Cutest Pets
08:15 From WAGs To Riches
09:10 Treehouse Masters
10:05 Tanked
11:00 America's Cutest Pets
11:55 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
12:50 From WAGs To Riches
13:45 Gator Boys
14:40 Treehouse Masters
15:35 Tanked
16:30 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli
17:00 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli
17:25 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)
18:20 Gator Boys
19:15 Tanked
20:10 Into The Pride
21:05 Treehouse Masters
22:00 Gator Boys
22:55 Gator Boys
23:50 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)

CNBC

- 00:00 Inside China
00:30 Managing Asia
01:00 U.S. Squawk Alley
02:00 Asia Squawk Box
04:00 Asia Street Signs
06:00 Fast Money: Half Time Report
07:00 Capital Connection
08:00 Squawk Box Europe
11:00 Europe Street Signs
12:00 Worldwide Exchange
13:00 U.S. Squawk Box
16:00 Squawk On The Street
18:00 U.S. Squawk Alley
19:00 Fast Money: Half Time Report
20:00 U.S. Power Lunch
22:00 U.S. Closing Bell

DISCOVERY SCIENCE

- 00:20 How It's Made
00:44 How It's Made
01:08 You Have Been Warned
01:55 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
02:42 Sci-Fi Science
03:04 Sci-Fi Science
03:29 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
04:16 You Have Been Warned
05:03 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
05:50 Building The Biggest
06:37 How Do They Do It?
07:00 How Do They Do It?
07:23 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
08:08 Sci-Fi Science
08:30 Sci-Fi Science
08:53 Building The Biggest
09:38 How It's Made
10:00 How It's Made
10:23 Mega Builders
11:08 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
11:53 Building The Biggest
12:38 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
13:23 How It's Made
13:46 How It's Made
14:10 Sci-Fi Science
14:32 Sci-Fi Science
14:57 Mega Builders
15:44 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
16:31 Building The Biggest
17:18 Sci-Fi Science
17:40 Sci-Fi Science
18:05 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
18:50 Food Factory
19:15 Food Factory
19:40 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
20:25 How It's Made



WANDERLUST ON OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 12:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
12:45 Fish Hooks
13:10 Austin & Ally
13:35 Austin & Ally
14:00 Liv And Maddie
14:25 Descendants Wicked World
14:50 Liv And Maddie
15:20 Dog With A Blog
15:45 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
16:10 Violetta
17:00 The Next Step
17:25 Austin & Ally
17:50 Dog With A Blog
18:15 Mako Mermaids
18:40 Gravity Falls
19:05 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
19:30 Violetta
20:20 The Next Step
20:45 Good Luck Charlie
21:10 Good Luck Charlie
21:35 HQ2
22:00 Binnie And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:20 Hank Zipzer
23:35 Binnie And The Ghost

- 06:00 Boyster
06:10 Super Matrak
06:35 Super Matrak
07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:25 K.C. Undercover
07:50 Supa Strikas
08:15 Annedroids
08:40 Lab Rats
09:10 Kirby Buckets
09:35 Guardians Of The Galaxy
10:00 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
10:25 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
10:50 K.C. Undercover
11:20 K.C. Undercover
11:45 Supa Strikas
12:10 Supa Strikas
12:35 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
13:00 Annedroids
13:30 Mighty Med
13:50 Mighty Med
14:20 Kickin' It
14:45 Kickin' It
15:10 Guardians Of The Galaxy
15:15 Rocket Monkeys
15:40 Guardians Of The Galaxy
16:30 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
16:55 Kirby Buckets
17:25 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
17:50 K.C. Undercover
18:15 Supa Strikas
18:40 Mighty Med
19:10 Annedroids
19:35 Phineas And Ferb
20:00 Kirby Buckets
20:25 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
20:55 K.C. Undercover
21:20 Pickle And Peanut
21:45 Lab Rats
22:10 Mighty Med
22:40 Disney Mickey Mouse

- 12:00 Chopped
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
13:30 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Man Fire Food
15:30 Man Fire Food
16:00 Chopped
17:00 The Kitchen
18:00 The Pioneer Woman
18:30 The Pioneer Woman
19:00 Chopped
20:00 Iron Chef America
21:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
21:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
22:00 Man v Food

BBC FIRST

- 00:35 Prey
01:30 Happy Valley
02:25 Happy Valley
03:20 Casuality
04:20 Stella
05:10 Father Brown
06:00 Eastenders
06:30 Casuality
07:30 Stella
08:20 Call The Midwife
09:15 Doctor Who
10:05 Casuality
11:05 Father Brown
11:55 Stella
12:45 Call The Midwife
13:45 Doctor Who
14:35 Casuality
15:30 Stella
16:15 Call The Midwife
17:10 Doctor Who
18:00 Doctors
18:35 Doctors
19:05 Father Brown
20:00 Ripper Street
21:00 Ripper Street
21:55 Silent Witness
22:50 Father Brown
23:40 Doctors

crime & investigation network

- 00:00 The Killer Speaks
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
02:00 Evil Up Close
03:00 The First 48
04:00 The Killer Speaks
05:00 Gangsters: America's Most Evil
06:00 The FBI Files
07:00 The FBI Files
08:00 Homicide Hunter
09:00 Beyond Scared Straight
10:00 Private Crimes
10:30 Private Crimes
11:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
12:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
13:00 The First 48
14:00 Homicide Hunter
15:00 Private Crimes
15:30 Private Crimes
16:00 The FBI Files
17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
18:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
19:00 The First 48
20:00 Homicide Hunter
21:00 Private Crimes
21:30 Private Crimes
22:00 Ms. Homicide
23:00 Killer Kids

Discovery world

- 00:30 Crashes That Changed Flying
01:20 Origins
01:40 Chasing Classic Cars
02:05 Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations
02:50 Tattoo Hunter
03:50 Disaster On K2
04:20 Extreme Engineering
05:05 Gunslingers
05:50 Modern Sniper
06:35 Origins
07:00 Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations
07:50 Bush Pilots
08:40 Extreme Engineering
09:30 Gunslingers
09:30 Origins
10:45 Chasing Classic Cars
11:10 Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations
12:00 Bush Pilots
12:50 Extreme Engineering
13:40 Gunslingers
14:30 Origins
14:55 Chasing Classic Cars
15:20 Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations
16:10 Bush Pilots
17:00 Extreme Engineering
17:50 Gunslingers
18:40 Origins
19:05 Chasing Classic Cars
19:30 Origins
19:55 Origins
20:20 Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations
21:10 Extreme Engineering
22:00 Origins

Bloomberg TELEVISION

- 00:00 Charlie Rose
01:00 First Up With Angie Lau
02:00 First Up With Angie Lau
03:00 Trending Business
04:00 Trending Business
05:00 Asia Edge
06:00 Bloomberg West
07:00 Charlie Rose



FAST & FURIOUS 6 ON OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 08:00 Countdown
09:00 Countdown
09:30 On The Move
10:00 On The Move
11:00 The Pulse
12:00 Bloomberg Surveillance
13:00 Bloomberg Surveillance
14:00 Bloomberg Go
15:00 Bloomberg Go
16:00 Bloomberg Go
17:00 Bloomberg Markets
18:00 Bloomberg Markets: European Close
19:00 Bloomberg Markets
20:00 Bloomberg Markets
21:00 Bloomberg Markets
22:00 Bloomberg Markets
23:00 What'd You Miss?

- 14:20 Outback Truckers
15:10 Wheeler Dealers
16:00 Fast N' Loud
16:50 Chasing Classic Cars
17:45 How Do They Do It?
18:30 The Island With Bear Grylls
18:30 Men, Women, Wild
19:20 Dynamo: Revealed
20:10 The Liquidator
20:35 Garage Gold
21:00 The Island With Bear Grylls
21:50 Men, Women, Wild
22:40 So You Think You'd

- 22:25 Origins
22:50 Gunslingers
23:40 Modern Sniper

CCTV NEWS

- 00:00 News Update
00:30 Dialogue
01:00 News Update
01:15 China 24
02:00 The Heat
02:30 News Update
03:00 Global Business
03:00 News Update
05:00 News Update
06:00 Dialogue
07:00 News Hour
08:00 Global Business
09:00 News Update
10:30 Sports Scene
11:00 Global Business
12:00 News Update
12:30 Culture Express
13:00 Africa Live
14:00 News Update

ID INVESTIGATION DISCOVERY

- 00:05 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
00:30 The Haunted
01:20 Ghost Lab
02:10 Swamp Murders
03:00 True Nightmares
03:45 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
04:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
04:30 The Haunted
05:20 Fatal Encounters
06:10 On The Case With Paula Zahn
07:00 Dr G: Medical Examiner
07:50 On The Case With Paula Zahn
08:40 Fatal Encounters
09:30 Murder Shift
10:20 Deadly Affairs
11:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
12:00 The Will
12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
13:40 California Investigator
14:05 Dr G: Medical Examiner

- 00:00 Violetta
01:40 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Hank Zipzer
02:05 Binnie And The Ghost
02:30 Violetta
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Hank Zipzer
04:35 Binnie And The Ghost
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Loulou
06:00 Loulou
06:25 Sofia The First
06:50 Gravity Falls
07:15 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
07:40 Jessie
08:05 Shake It Up
08:30 Shake It Up
08:55 That's So Raven
09:20 That's So Raven
09:45 Girl Meets World
10:10 Girl Meets World
10:35 Mulan 2
12:15 Cars Toons



GOOD PEOPLE ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Big Star's Little Star
03:25 Tracy Ullman's Show
03:55 Raised By Wolves
04:20 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
05:15 Come Dine With Me Couples
06:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
07:00 Eggheads
07:30 Tracey Ullman's Show
08:00 Raised By Wolves
08:25 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
09:20 Big Star's Little Star
10:15 The Chase
11:05 Eggheads
11:35 Come Dine With Me Couples
12:30 Who's Doing The Dishes?
13:25 Emmerdale
13:50 Eggheads
14:20 Coronation Street
14:45 Big Star's Little Star
15:35 Come Dine With Me Couples
16:30 Remember Me
17:25 Hiding
18:20 Emmerdale
18:45 Coach Trip
19:10 Coronation Street
19:35 Come Dine With Me Couples
20:30 Remember Me
21:25 Hiding
22:20 Coronation Street

- 19:30 I Hate My Teenage Daughter
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
21:00 Playing House
21:30 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
22:00 Married
22:30 The Brink
23:00 The League
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers

OSN FIRST HD

- 00:00 Bates Motel
01:00 Quantico
02:00 Rosewood
03:00 Allegiance
04:00 Good Morning America
06:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
07:00 Covert Affairs
08:00 Heroes Reborn
09:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
10:00 Quantico
11:00 Covert Affairs
12:00 Coronation Street
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 Live Good Morning America
16:00 Heroes Reborn
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 Heroes Reborn
19:00 The Voice
21:00 Castle
22:00 Supergirl
23:00 Better Call Saul

OSN MOVIES HD

- 00:15 As Above, So Below
04:00 Escapee
04:00 388 Arletta Avenue
06:00 Abandoned Mine
08:00 The Marine 4: The Moving Target
10:00 The X Files
12:00 Age Of Dinosaurs
14:00 Abandoned Mine
16:00 The Marine 4: The Moving Target
17:45 The X Files
19:45 Fast & Furious 6
22:00 Pawn Shop Chronicles

OSN MOVIES HD

- 00:00 Wanderlust
02:00 Chef
04:00 Planet 51
06:00 Cas & Dylan
08:00 Rush Hour
10:00 At Middleton
12:00 Chef
14:00 The Misadventures Of The Dunderheads
16:00 Rush Hour
18:00 Grudge Match
20:00 Textuality
22:00 Superbad

OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

- 02:00 Paradise
04:00 Begin Again
06:00 Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom
08:30 A Civil Action
10:30 Paradise
12:30 Great Expectations
14:45 The Alamo
17:00 A Civil Action
19:00 The Savages
21:00 Gattaca
23:00 Carlos

OSN MOVIES HD

- 01:00 Good People
03:00 Le Weekend
05:00 Accidental Love
06:45 The Fault In Our Stars
09:00 Blended
11:00 Edge Of Tomorrow
13:00 Pompeii
15:00 Step Up All In
17:00 Boychior
18:45 The Longest Ride
21:00 Perfect Sisters
23:00 The Equalizer

OSN SPORTS 1 HD

- 03:00 Premier League Darts
06:30 Top 14 Highlights
07:00 Golfing World
08:00 AFL Season Preview
09:00 Inside The PGA Tour
09:30 European Tour Weekly
10:00 Trans World Sport
11:00 Live AFL Premiership
11:00 NRL Full Time
14:30 The PGA Tour Champions Highlights
15:30 Golfing World
16:30 Inside The PGA Tour
17:00 European Tour Weekly
17:30 Live PGA Tour
20:30 Inside The PGA Tour
21:00 Live World Golf Championships

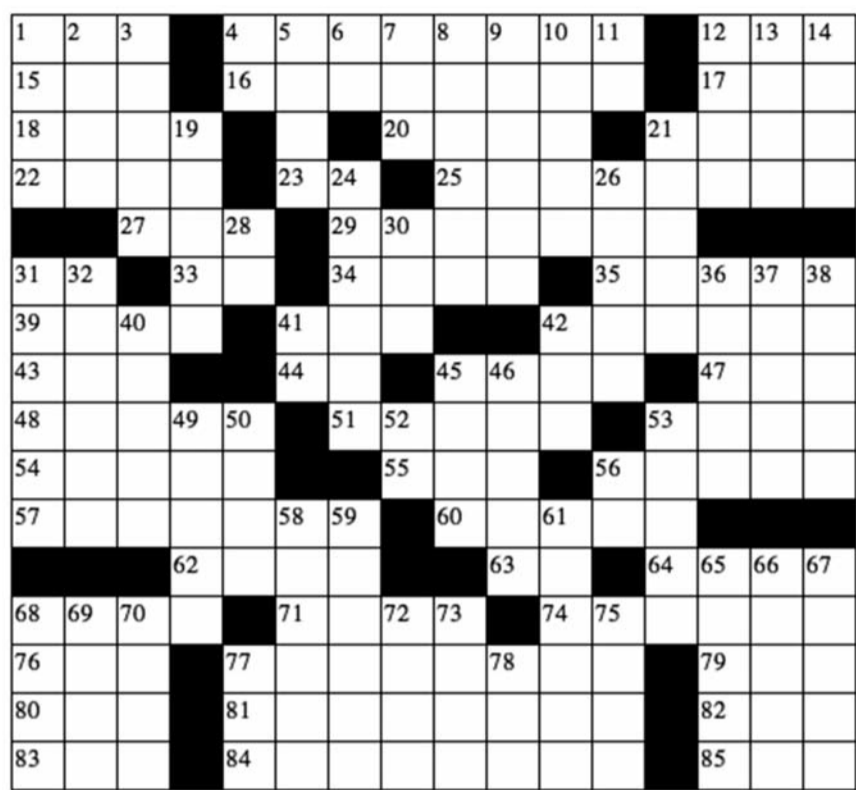
OSN SPORTS 2 HD

- 00:00 Trans World Sport
01:00 Super Rugby
03:00 PGA European Tour Highlights
04:00 The PGA Tour Champions Highlights
05:00 Super League
07:00 NRL Premiership
09:00 World Golf Championships
13:30 WWE Vintage
16:30 WWE Raw
19:00 WWE NXT
20:00 WWE Smackdown
22:00 Live Premier League Darts

OSN SPORTS 3 HD

- 00:00 NRL Full Time
00:30 Gillette World Sport
01:00 NRL Premiership
03:00 NRL Premiership
05:00 Inside The PGA Tour
05:30 European Tour Weekly
06:00 The World Sailing Show
06:30 NRL Full Time
07:00 Super Rugby
09:00 Premier League Darts
12:30 Gillette World Sport
13:00 Europro Tour
15:00 The Weber Cup
16:00 Super Rugby
18:00 AFL Premiership
20:30 Golfing World
21:30 Trans World Sport
22:30 Gillette World Sport
22:58 Live Super League

CROSSWORD 1211



ACROSS

1. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
4. A (temporary) relief from harm or discomfort.
12. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
15. A boy or man.
16. A puzzle where you fill a square grid with words reading the same down as across.
17. East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
18. The sixth month of the civil year.
20. The capital and chief port of Qatar.
22. Something causes misery or death.
23. A polyvalent metallic element that resembles chromium and tungsten in its properties.
25. Gum resin used especially in treating skin irritation.
27. (informal) Of the highest quality.
29. A spectator who uses standing room (as in a theater when there are no vacant seats).
31. Being or moving higher in position or greater in some value.
33. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
34. Any of several weedy vetches grown for forage.
35. Leafless East Indian vine.
39. A less than average tide occurring at the first and third quarters of the moon.
43. A former monetary unit in Great Britain.
44. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
47. A user interface in which you type commands instead of choosing them from a menu or selecting an icon.
48. (Greek mythology) One of the mountain nymphs.
51. Botswana statesman who was the first president of Botswana (1921-1980).
54. A woody climbing usually tropical plant.
55. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
57. Small toothless ant eater with prehensile tale and four-clawed forelimbs.
60. Of a yellowish brown color similar to olive drab n.
62. A brace that extends from the rear of the keel to support the rudderpost.
63. Before noon.
64. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
68. A small cake leavened with yeast.
71. The season when the leaves fall from the trees.
74. A nonmetallic bivalent element that is normally a colorless odorless tasteless nonflammable diatomic gas.
76. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
79. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
80. A bachelor's degree in theology.
81. Any amoeba of the genus Endamoeba.
82. The most common computer memory which can be used by programs to perform necessary tasks while the computer is on.
83. Grass mowed and cured for use as fodder.
84. A member of the Samoyedic people living on the Taimyr peninsula in Siberia.
85. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. Loose or flaccid body fat.
2. An informal term for a father.
3. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

For the next few weeks, you may be concerned about the health of a family member, perhaps an older relative. You may want to help provide some holistic medicine or just increase your attention and help with chores. This is your favorite time of year to travel and it may be that someone will step in and help you with your responsibilities so that you can travel and still remain in touch. Many friends and your family enjoy celebrating your special day today. You demonstrate a great deal of compassion to others and this may put you in a position to volunteer in some interesting areas. Lovers, children and other people or things dear to your heart are emphasized now. Someone will teach you a new dance this evening.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are motivated and your health is good. This is a time of self-expression. If you are living true to your ideals, then you will see great satisfaction. If not, then you could feel something is missing from your life. Get a grasp on the path you are taking and employ a bit of common sense and grace. This may simply be to create a plan and be patient with you. Patience is golden! This is the time to set aside doubts and initiate any changes that you feel are necessary. A meaningful message is delivered to you and you are encouraged and you enjoy encouraging others. Tonight you might get rid of the things that do not serve a purpose. This is becoming a most rewarding day-one in which much is accomplished, realized and understood. This evening favors romance!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You could be viewing the world with your spiritual thinking today. Your sensitivity to and with others' moods and emotions is extremely strong. If you think you have psychic abilities, this time could be the time you would be able to confirm that suspicion. Daydreaming alone or discussing these dreams with others may also be part of today's scenario. It may be best to stick with your more trusted friends for today, however. Any changes you may encounter now could be looked at as enlarging your experiences, not in losing something. You work through the day successfully and perhaps into the late afternoon. You may decide to initiate a change. Your hobby could be a topic of conversation with other hobbyists this evening. You light up with talk.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Life flows more smoothly now and you may find yourself more creative as well. Today will bring great opportunities to be with others and to work together. You may be requested for a new job opportunity. You organize and take care of any household business with expert swiftness. Take time today to make your communication to others clear. Quick answers, great wit and a surplus of insights and solutions are available. This afternoon is a good time to write and communicate with real originality. You enjoy learning more and expressing your thoughts. Perhaps if you need to study, or research, this is that time, for you have a real appreciation for ideas and thoughts. You may enjoy long conversations about your interests this evening.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Enthusiasm and creative energies are prevalent today. You are always ready to overcome obstacles and seek new challenges. The exchange of ideas becomes a focal point in your life now. Learning and knowing a little about many things, staying in touch and on top of the latest developments are the things that satisfy a need for mental stimulation. You have a strong desire now to lead the way for others, finish first and prove yourself more through actions and deeds than through words. As a rule, you may get your feet wet in many different things without realizing the commitment or giving the complete attention necessary to succeed. You can be extremely successful when you complete what you start or when you guide others.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This is a good day, and there is plenty of direction and instruction to guide you. Put your talents to work and complete any unfinished business that is before you now. You have a high desire for self-expression and originality. Get your ideas on paper with dates and witness signatures. Later you can show your boss or the group a new project that will benefit your company. Because you thought of it, you will want credit. Appreciate the law or what you know to be the truth. A loyal friend will boost your energy by providing support and advice. This is a good day to get things accomplished. Be yourself! You may have time to fulfill your romantic fantasies this evening. Perhaps a trip this evening to a romantic setting would be fun.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a favorable day to work but you might rather not-rest and relaxation seems more inviting. You are most persuasive with others however and may find yourself encouraging your co-workers to dive in and complete difficult projects that none would have attempted in previous months. A hint of good choices and good fortune fills the air. Stability and permanence satisfy a deep emotional need. Generosity, warmth and a desire to be at peace with the world go hand in hand. You are attracted to high-minded people and any new love relationship found today could grow strong, like a tree. Music is likely to play a more important role this evening. This may include a concert, new music or a new instrument with which to play the music.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This could be a favorable day to tend to some unfinished business. There is work to be done and you are good to complete everything before the close of your workday. Generosity, warmth and a desire to be at peace with the world go hand in hand. You are very much in demand in the workplace and might be able to get someone else to help you if you ask. You may think about running for some office or trying out for the lead in a play. It may be fun to be included in all the production excitement. If this does not work out you could settle for organizing some sort of ballgame with your working friends or even the neighborhood friends. Working out some of your great physical energy on the playing field helps you to focus better with clear thinking.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You prefer to enjoy this day with your family. You have been making the most of professional business meetings to network and let your viewpoint be known. Now, there are opportunities to hug this day as well as the friends and the loved ones that come into your life. A mature friend may give you advice today with regard to some family needs. You are agreeable and responsible and could do well to just go with your own instincts. All will be pleased with the results of your plans for the family. Perhaps there is some volunteer service in which everyone can contribute their talents. Care for humanitarian causes done as a family can be an activity that is good for everyone. Look for ways in which to rid yourself of the things that do not carry you forward.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today and tomorrow are high-cycle days, so do not give into negative feelings. Privacy may be hard to find just now and mental work may serve you best. Your awareness is sharp and your psychic abilities are in tune with the universe. If you are paying attention. You may become interested in improving your community through some information or through a continued problem that can only be solved when groups gather for problem-solving issues. Relating with old chums is easy and extremely pleasant later today. This is not the best time to make new friends, however. Discover something new about yourself. A look inside your heart uncovers some pertinent information. Don't accept any criticism unless it is constructive.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may meet someone today that will boost your energies. This is not a new friend but rather a visitor in your workplace that seems to have a grand sense of humor. Co-workers help to lessen your workload today. Laughter and friendships are at the top of the list this evening. Every few years there must be some changes in the type of social environment you enjoy. This could mean a move or a change of personalities with whom you communicate. Don't be too surprised if you are offered a job in another location outside your city. If possible, give yourself time to think through your options. Try to keep your emotions in check for now. Remaining objective is the best course of action. This evening is a good time to be with your friends or loved ones.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You appear perhaps more charming and refined than usual. Now could be the time to make that special date or apply for a weekend job or otherwise make yourself known. You could find yourself mentally acute and in a problem-solving mood. However, there is a real possibility that the decisions you make today and the solutions you find may have to be redone or renegotiated. Your current situation may demand some reevaluation or otherwise challenge your ideas. You may spend a lot of time balancing your commitments or schedule. Find ways in which to eliminate or allocate some of your responsibilities and you will relieve some of the stress. You may want to see intellectual stimulation through your social life or leisure time now.

WORD SEARCH

World Currencies

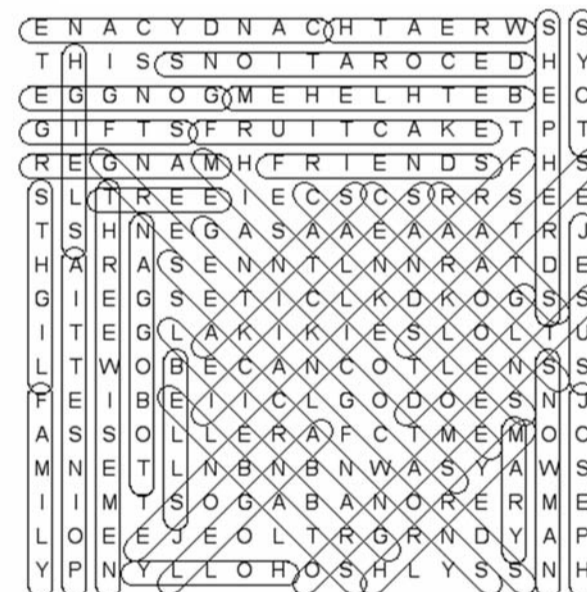
Find and circle all of the world currencies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a John Paul Getty quotation.



- | | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|------------|---------------|
| AFGHANI | EURO | KWANZA | NEW SHEKEL | RUPEE |
| ARIARYRY | FORINT | KYAT | NGULTRUM | RUPIAH |
| BAHT | FRANC | LEMPIRA | OGUIGUA | SHILLING |
| BALBOA | GOLD CORDOBA | LEONE | PATACA | SOM |
| BIRR | GOURDE | LILANGENI | PESO | SUCRE |
| BOLIVAR | GUARANIZ | LIRA | POUND | SYLI |
| BOLIVIANO | GUILDER | LITAS | PULA | TAKA |
| COLON | HRVYNIA | LOTTI | QUETZAL | TALA |
| DALASI | KINA | MANAT | RAND | TENGE |
| DENAR | KORUNA | METICAL | REAL | TOLAR |
| DINAR | KRONA | NAIRA | RIAL | VATU |
| DIRHAM | KRONE | NAKFA | RINGGIT | WON |
| DOLLAR | KUNA | NEW CEDI | RIVAL | YEN |
| DRAM | KWACHA | NEW DONG | RUBLE | YUAN RENMINBI |
| ESCUDO | | NEW KIP | RUFYIAA | ZLOTY |

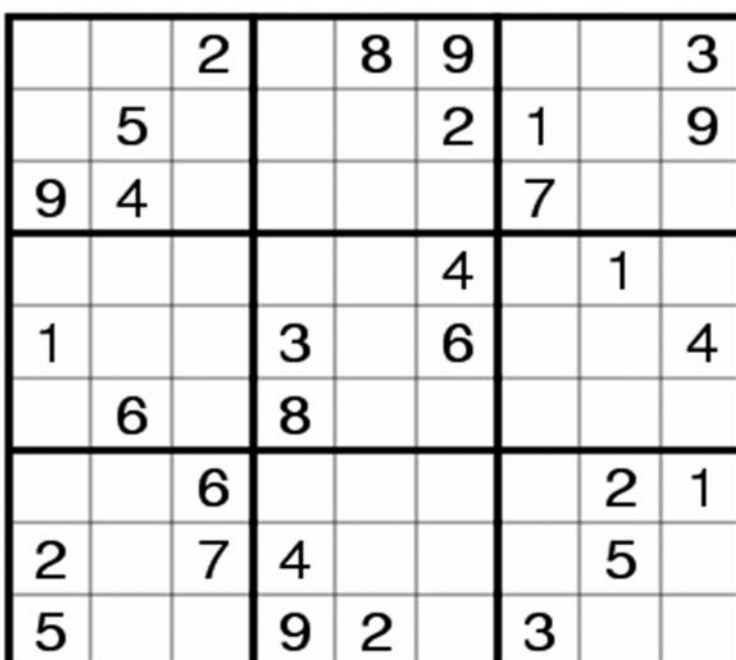
Yesterday Solution

Christmas

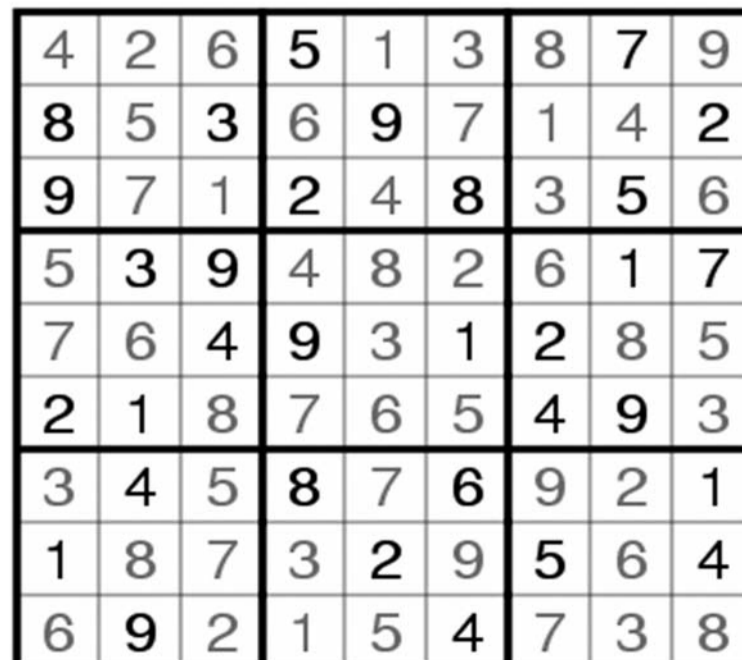


The hidden sentence is: TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOOLY

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omaria	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaee Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macao	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antiga	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Azerbaijan	00994	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lesotho	00266		

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



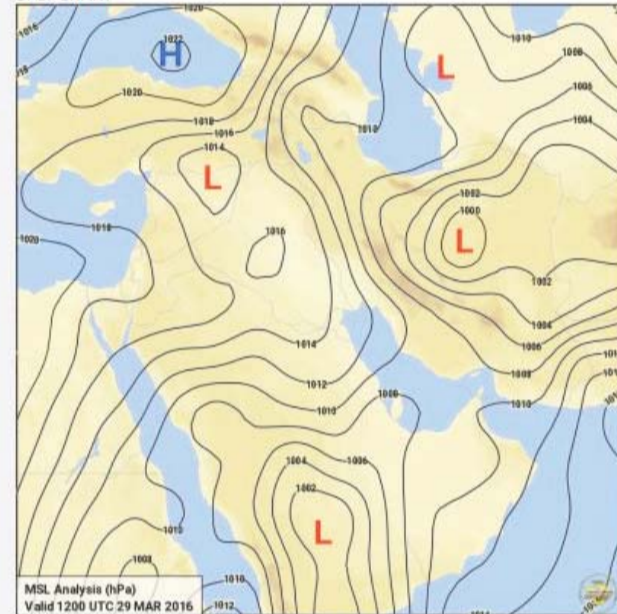
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours
Issued 29/03/2016- 19:00 LT UTC +3hr

MIN Temperature 16 °C

By Night :Partly cloudy with light to moderate northerly to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 38 km/h

By Day : Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening gradually at times northerly to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Expected Weather	partly cloudy	clouds to decrease	sunny	sunny
Min Temp °C	16	17	15	14
Max Temp °C	25	26	25	26
Wind Direction	northerly to north westerly	north westerly	north westerly	north westerly
Wind Speed km/h	15 - 40	12 - 35	10 - 32	10 - 30

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C EXP	Max °C REC
KUWAIT CITY	18	26
KUWAIT AIRPORT	16	26
ABDALY	14	26
BUBYAN	17	26
JAHRA	18	27
FAILAKA ISLAND	18	25
SALMIYAH	19	24
AHMADI	20	24
JAL ALIYAH	15	25
QAROH ISLAND	20	22
UMM AL-MARADEM	20	23
NUWAISIB	20	25
WAFRA	17	27
MANAGISH	15	25
SALMY	14	24
MUTRIBA	14	27

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	26
Min Temp (°C)	19
Max Rel Hum (%)	100
Min Rel Hum (%)	49
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	46 E
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	1.08 mm
Sunrise	05:41
Sunset	18:05

Prayer Times

Fajr	04:21
Sunrise	05:41
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:05
Isha	19:23



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists Dr. Abidallah Al-Mansoor 25622444 Dr. Samy Al-Rabea 25752222 Dr. Masoma Habeeb 25321171 Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy 25739999 Dr. Mohsen Abel 25757700 Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl 25732223 Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly 25732223	Plastic Surgeons Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf 22547272 Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari 22617700 Dr. Abdel Quttainah 25625030/60 Family Doctor Dr Divya Damodar 23729596/23729581 Psychiatrists Dr. Esam Al-Ansari 22635047 Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan 22613623/0 Gynaecologists & Obstetricians DrAdrian arbe 23729596/23729581 Dr. Verginia s.Marin 2572-6666 ext 8321 Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan 22655539 Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliytami 25343406 Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly 25739272 Dr. Salem soso 22618787 General Surgeons Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer 22610044 Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher 25327148 Internists, Chest & Heart Dr. Adnan Ebil 22639939 Dr. Mousa Khadada 22666300 Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan 25728004 Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra 25355515 Dr. Mobarak Aldoub 24726446 Dr Nasser Behbehani 25654300/3	Paediatricians Dr. Khaled Hamadi 25665898 Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed 25340300 Dr. Zahra Qabazard 25710444 Dr. Sohail Qamar 22621099 Dr. Snaa Maarouf 25713514 Dr. Pradip Gujare 23713100 Dr. Zacharias Mathew 24334282 Dermatology Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University 23845955 Dentists Dr Anil Thomas 3729596/3729581 Dr. Shamah Al-Matar 22641071/2 Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed 22562226 Dr. Abidallah Al-Amer 22561444 Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan 22619557 Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash 22525888 Dr. Abidallah Al-Duweisan 25653755 Dr. Bader Al-Ansari 25620111 Neurologists Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri 25633324 Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan 25345875 Gastrologists Dr. Sami Aman 22636464 Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly 25322030 Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali 22633135	Endocrinologist Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman 25339330 Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari 25658888 Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr 25329924 Physiotherapists & VD Dr. Deyaa Shehab 25722291 Dr. MUSAED FARAJ KHAMEES 22666288 Rheumatologists: Dr. Adel Al-Awadi 25330060 Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah 25722290 Internist, Chest & Heart DR.Mohammes Akkad 24555050 Ext 210 Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital 25339667 Consultant Cardiologist Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC 2611555-2622555 Inaya German Medical Center Te: 2575077 Fax: 25723123
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Psychologists /Psychotherapists

Soor Center
Tel: 2290-1677
Fax: 2290 1688

info@soorcenter.com
www.soorcenter.com

Kaizen center
25716707

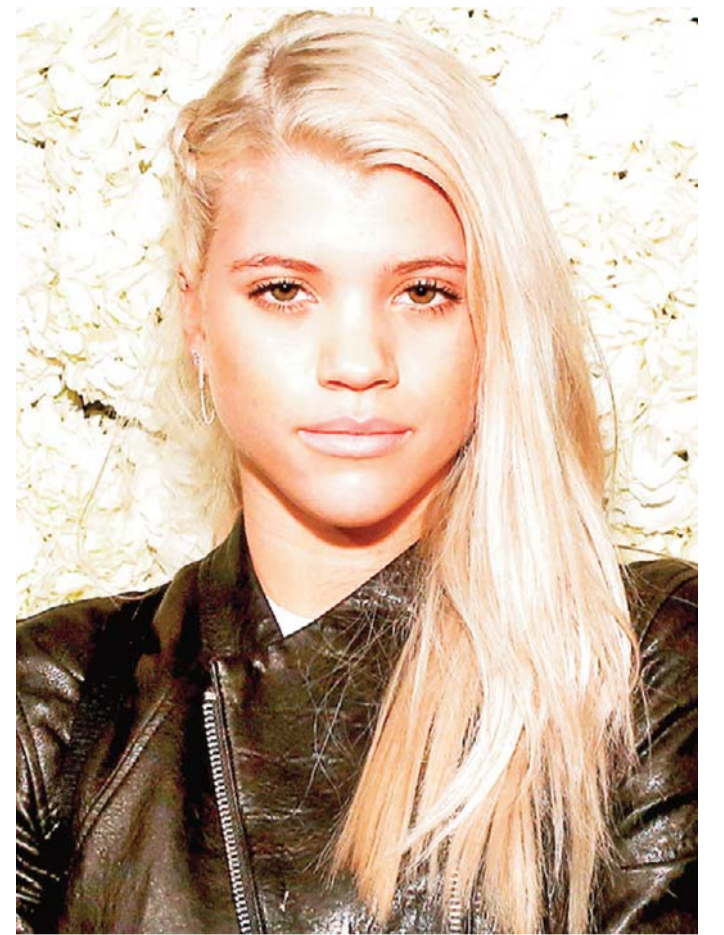
Noor Clinic
23845955

William Schuilenberg, RPC 2290-1677
Zaina Al Zabin, M.Sc. 2290-1677



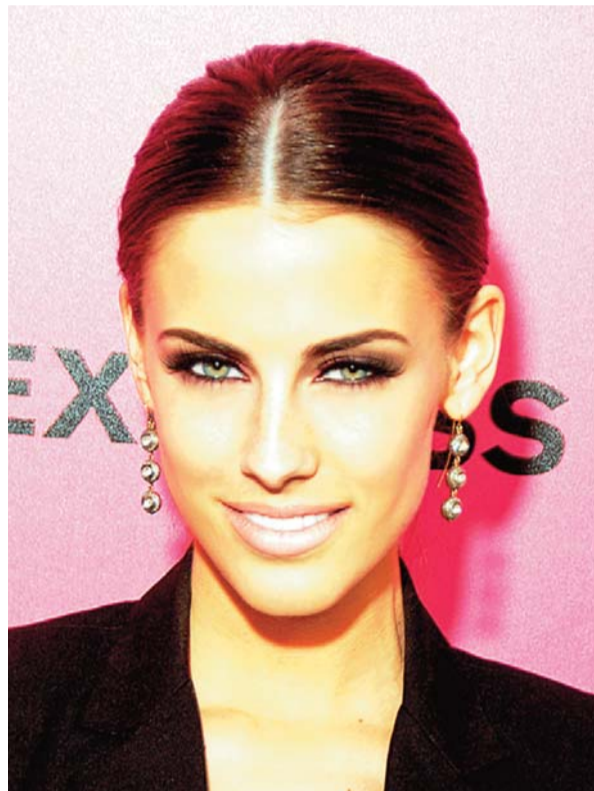
Sofia Richie's: My sister Nicole has warned me off drugs

Sofia Richie's sister Nicole Richie has given her advice to stay clear of drugs. The 17-year-old model - whose parents are Lionel Richie and his second wife Diane Alexander - has a very close bond with 34-year-old Nicole, who was adopted by the singer and his first spouse Brenda. Nicole has been very open with her sibling about her own struggles with heroin use and has warned Sofia to never give in to peer pressure and be tempted to experiment with illegal substances. Speaking to the new issue of ES Magazine, Sofia said: "People look at me thinking, 'Oh, you are probably going to go through the same thing.' (Nicole) says, 'Don't let people pressure you to do what they think is cool, like taking drugs. Be true to yourself.' When Sofia was growing up, Nicole would always take her out and let her younger sister do things their dad wouldn't let her. She added: "Nicole was crazy and fun. She would take me to places I wasn't supposed to go to, like fairs, and she would let me have foods that I wasn't allowed to eat, like cotton candy." Sofia - who also has an older brother Miles, 21 - admits she has learned so much from her music legend dad Lionel, 66. The budding fashion star doesn't think she would have the drive to succeed on the catwalk if it wasn't for the 'Hello' singer. Sofia said: "There are parents with wealth who just want their kids to be wealthy and then there are other parents with money who want to teach their kids how they got it. That's what my dad was like. He grew up in a small house and they didn't have much, so he is like, 'You guys are way more blessed than I was.' We go back to Alabama all the time. He still has the same house that he grew up in." The full interview with Sofia Richie appears in this week's issue of ES Magazine.



Khloe Kardashian will take a fan to prom

The 31-year-old star is holding a competition to find one lucky supporter, who is subscribed to her app, to take to a "dope" end of year celebration - which is usually held for high school students - because she never attended one herself. The blonde beauty teased the news on her blog 'Khloe With AK', writing: "I'm so excited to announce that, this year, I'm going to create a dope prom memory with one of my Los Angeles County-based app subscribers! "On the night of the big event, I will personally pick you (or you and your date) up in style and drop you off at your PROM!!! Because you know the best stuff goes down on the way to the party! "Did you know that I never went to prom?" The 'Kocktails with Khloe' host also took to her Twitter account to reveal she can't wait to pick one of her supporters to take to the event. She wrote: "I'm SO excited...I'm taking one app subscriber to PROM!!! Contest details are on khloewithak! (sic)" To win the prom date with Khloe, fans must download and register with her app on Monday or have done so beforehand. They must then fill in a form and answer the question: "If you had 30 minutes with Khloe, what would you want to talk about?" The competition ends on Friday.



Lowndes relationship with Lovitz was a prank

Jessica Lowndes has confessed she was joking when she revealed she was dating Jon Lovitz. The 27-year-old actress-and-singer fooled her fans into thinking she was engaged to the 'Saturday Night Live' star - who is 31 years her senior - when she was, in-fact, promoting her latest music video which features the 58-year-old comedian. Jon was seen in the '90210' star's Instagram posts as she referred to him as her "ice cream daddy". Her antics which included posting a picture of an engagement ring and pictures of her with her older boyfriend were all in promotion of her song 'Deja Vu'. She posted a video on Instagram yesterday coming clean about the truth. She said: "I know it's the last week of March but is it too early to say April Fools?" In a statement, she also said: "I love a good prank so happy early April Fools. Jon and I met in

Hawaii last year when we worked together on Hawaii Five-0. I fell in love with his humor and comedy so when I was looking for someone to be a part of my 'Deja Vu' remix, which is a nod to the 80s Mystery Science Theatre 3000 and 90s Pop Up Video, he was the first person to come to mind." In the video, the brunette beauty plays Jon's young lover, and the pair's relationship is hounded by the media. Talking about the video on Instagram Jessica wrote: "I love pop up videos and mystery science theatre 3000 and thought this would be a fun way to make fun of myself and entertain my fans. And what better partner in crime than comedic genius Jon Lovitz! (WARNING PG-13 ish) Directed by @randallsavin (sic)"



Whitehall 'consoled' Stallone

Sylvester Stallone was "consoled" about missing out on an Oscar by Jack Whitehall. The 27-year-old comedian claims he was a shoulder to cry on for the 69-year-old actor after he failed to triumph in the Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role category at the Academy Awards for his role in 'Creed'. He said: "I walked straight into Sylvester Stallone afterwards at the Governors Ball. I had to console him about missing out on his Oscar, telling him there was always next year. Or maybe if he did Creed 2 he might get a nod. I think it reassured him. "Also, because he knew I was English, I had to tell him who Mark Rylance was. I talked him through all of Mark's performances at the Globe theatre. Good old Sly, I loved him in Creed.

And I love Mark Rylance, so I had to remain pretty neutral about it." Meanwhile, Jack also admitted the Oscars were a "very odd experience". He added to the Daily Mirror newspaper: "The Oscars was a very odd experience. I went along to try to convince people that 'Bad Education' was nominated for an Oscar. Unfortunately, no one believed me. But it was fun, it's quite a surreal event. There's a bar, so you don't have to be in there for the full four hours. All the British nominees are there, propped up at the bar. "I felt like it was the Oscars, so I would be mad not to go once. I don't think the trajectory of my career is going to mean that I end up there on my own merit."

Goulding will never dye her hair black

Ellie Goulding will "definitely" never dye her hair black again. The 29-year-old singer opted for a dark goth style as a teenager, which saw her darken her blonde locks, wear baggy jeans and sport a lip piercing, but she'll never go back because to constantly color your hair is just too "heavy maintenance". Speaking to Marie Claire magazine about her beauty blunder in her younger days, she said: "I used to dye my hair black. That's definitely something I won't go back and do. No one encouraged me, I don't know where I got the idea from, but it was heavy maintenance. "When I was 14 I had my lip pierced too - where I grew up it was cool to wear big jeans, hoodies and Vans so that was my look." The 'Love Me Like You Do' hitmaker - who was raised in

small English village Lyonshall - got her fashion inspiration as a teenager from the look sported by American grunge rock band Pearl Jam. She said: "I was into a lot of rock bands like Pearl Jam and Incubus." Meanwhile, Ellie - who is the new face of Pantene PRO-V, appearing in the company's 'Strong is Beautiful' campaign - has admitted that her busy schedule, quick costume changes on her 'Delirium World Tour' and past hair experiments have had a damaging effect on her golden locks. She said: "I put my hair through a lot of heat styling and coloring, especially when I'm touring. Up until now, I only used salon brands, but now I've discovered Pantene PRO-V there's no going back. It is my ultimate hair savior as it keeps my hair strong and at its most beautiful."



Cox and McDaid back together?

Courtney Cox and Johnny McDaid have sparked speculation they are back together. The former 'Friends' star and the Snow Patrol rocker - who got engaged in June 2014 after several months of dating but split up last December - were spotted in Malibu, California, on Easter Sunday where they were enjoying a shopping trip with the brunette beauty's 11-year-old daughter Coco, whom she has with ex-spouse David Arquette. The 51-year-old actress and 'Chasing Cars' hitmaker called off their engagement four months ago because they couldn't decide on a place to live together. Johnny - who is originally from Northern Ireland - wanted to relocate from their Malibu home to the UK, but Courtney was adamant on staying in the US. The

pair were also reported to have been arguing over preparations for their nuptials which caused rows between them. A source previously spilled: "They were arguing over wedding plans, had one almighty row and she asked him to leave. But they are both devastated that it has come to this. Courtney was desperate to have relationship counseling." The pair first met through mutual friend Ed Sheeran and he said they were "crazy about each other" when they first met in 2013. He previously shared: "My housemate, who I've lived with for a year - I introduced him to Courtney Cox and they started dating. "They're crazy about each other and I ended up spending a lot of time in her beach house and just bumped into a lot of random people."



Backstreet Boys and *NSYNC unite for movie song

Nick Carter and A.J. McLean of Backstreet Boys fame have teamed up with *NSYNC hunk Joey Fatone and Chris Kirkpatrick to record single 'In The End' for their Syfy channel zombie movie, 'Dead 7'. The 90s boy band stars, who include O-Town's Erik-Michael Estrada and 98 Degrees' Jeff Timmons, all appear in the movie, which Nick helped to write alongside the makers of 'Sharknado'. Nick, 36, admitted the project is "pretty crazy" but is hoping the group's fans will unite to listen to the song and watch the upcoming film, which airs on April 1. He told BuzzFeed: "Think about it. Boy-banders, people from the late '90s, people who you

love, fighting zombies in a post-apocalyptic world. Pretty crazy, right?" The two-hour TV movie is set in the post-apocalyptic West, following a group of gunslingers trying to rid a small town of a zombie plague. Speaking previously about the project, Nick said: "It's a zombie Western futuristic horror movie. "I want it to be musically based. I might reach out to Jordan [Knight] from the New Kids on the Block." *NSync's Joey said: "Nick's vision is to bring some other people in that genre that have never really done a lot of film but that were in music in the '90s and 2000s."

Woody Allen's 'Cafe Society' to open Cannes film festival

Woody Allen's Hollywood love story "Cafe Society" will open the Cannes film festival in May, its organizers said yesterday. The movie starring Kristen Stewart and Jesse Eisenberg tells the story of a young man who goes to Los Angeles in the 1930s in the hope of working in the film industry. The 80-year-old New Yorker has already opened Cannes-the world's leading film festival-twice with "Hollywood Ending" (2002) and "Midnight in Paris" (2011), his love letter to the French capital. The film will not be in com-

petition for the festival's top prize, the Palme d'Or, which Allen has never won.

However, he will become the first director to have ever opened the festival three times. Allen has had a dozen of his films shown at the festival on the French Riviera since "Manhattan" in 1979, appearing in two of them as an actor. "Cafe Society", which also stars Parker Posey and Steve Carell, is being released by the Internet giant Amazon. According to the organizers, Eisenberg's character "falls in love and finds himself swept up in the

vibrant (Hollywood) cafe society that defined the spirit of the age."

Meanwhile, the cult Finnish director Aki Kaurismaki will be honored with the Golden Carriage award at Cannes, the French Society of Film Directors said yesterday. The famously lugubrious maker of "The Man Without a Past" and "I Hired a Contract Killer" twice boycotted the Oscars because of US foreign policy under former president George W Bush. The festival runs between May 11 and 22. — AFP



File photo shows US director Woody Allen posing for photographs during a photocall for the film 'Irrational Man' at the 68th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southeastern France. — AP



This file photo shows British actor Henry Cavill poses for a photograph after arriving to attend the European Premiere of the film 'Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice', in central London. — AFP

'Batman v Superman' gross revised down to \$166.1 million

Final box-office figures took a little wind out of the sails of "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice." Warner Bros on Monday revised down the film's weekend gross by \$4 million, lowering it from the Sunday estimate of \$170.1 million to \$166.1 million. Such corrections are common, though the difference for "Batman v Superman" was slightly more than normal and had an effect on the film's place in the record books.

The movie's Easter weekend debut now drops a notch on the biggest North America openings ever list to seventh, sliding in behind "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2." That film's \$169.2 million opening also retakes its place as Warner Bros' top debut. It's nevertheless a massive launch for "Batman v Superman," which set a record for biggest pre-summer debut despite withering reviews. It made an additional \$254 million internationally. Debuted 14 years after the hit original, Universal's "My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2" performed above expectations over the weekend, opening with \$17.9 million.

The top 20 movies at US and Canadian theaters Friday through Sunday, followed by distribution studio, gross, number of theater locations, average receipts per location, total gross and number of weeks in release, as compiled Monday by comScore:

1. "Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice," Warner Bros, \$166,007,347
2. "Zootopia," Disney, \$24,022,288, 3
3. "My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2," Universal, \$17,861,950
4. "Miracles From Heaven," Sony, \$9,694,581
5. "The Divergent Series: Allegiant," Lionsgate, \$9,435,173
6. "10 Cloverfield Lane," Paramount, \$5,940,154
7. "Deadpool," 20th Century Fox, \$4,897,941
8. "London Has Fallen," Focus Features, \$3,027,568, 2
9. "Hello, My Name Is Doris," Roadside Attractions, \$1,668,806
10. "Risen," Sony, \$935,025
11. "Eye In The Sky," Bleecker Street, \$932,450
12. "Whiskey Tango Foxtrot," Paramount, \$900,104
13. "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," Disney, \$816,484
14. "The Perfect Match," Lionsgate, \$682,647
15. "Kapoor & Sons," Fox International Productions, \$598,084
16. "Kung Fu Panda 3," 20th Century Fox, \$561,768
17. "The Revenant," 20th Century Fox, \$446,912
18. "The Young Messiah," Focus Features, \$274,236
19. "Gods Of Egypt," Lionsgate, \$273,030
20. "How To Be Single," Warner Bros, \$250,442. -AP

Bandmate plans tribute to keyboard great Keith Emerson

Pioneering synthesizer player Keith Emerson, who killed himself earlier this month, will be honored with a multimedia tribute show in Miami, former bandmate Carl Palmer announced Monday. Palmer-the drummer in the 1970s progressive rock band Emerson, Lake and Palmer-said the concert will take place on June 24 at Miami's Olympia Theater and include guest keyboardists, contemporary dance and an accompanying film. The concert will be the highlight of a summer tour, mostly of North America, that Palmer had initially planned to mark a half-century in music but has now dedicated to Emerson and their band's legacy.

"I will deeply miss Keith and I want you all to know I will carry on flying the ELP banner and playing the great music with my band for many years to come," the 66-year-old Palmer, who was also the drummer for the supergroup Asia, said in a statement. Emerson, an accomplished pianist who was among

the first to weave synthesizers into rock, shot himself at his home in the Los Angeles area the night of March 10-11, according to police.

Emerson, who was 71, was known for his flamboyant performances, most notably his closing set at the 1974 California Jam festival where he wowed a televised audience by strapping himself to a grand piano and playing it as it spun in the air. Palmer said that he had long wanted to pair contemporary dance with the group's music and had initially invited Emerson to take part in the project. He said the concert would include "Pictures at an Exhibition," the piano suite by Modest Mussorgsky that Emerson, Lake and Palmer turned into an album in a landmark fusion of rock and classical. — AFP



Keith Emerson

Judge to consider fate of Dickinson lawsuit against Cosby

A judge will consider whether to dismiss a defamation lawsuit filed by model and TV host Janice Dickinson against Bill Cosby. Cosby's lawyers are seeking dismissal of the case Dickinson filed last year after the comedian's then-lawyer denied her allegations that Cosby drugged and raped her in 1982. Dickinson contends the denials in which she was called a liar caused her to feel victimized. A decision on Cosby's motion had been delayed to give attorneys on both sides time to address questions by Superior Court Judge Debra Katz Weintraub.

Yesterday's hearing comes a day after Dickinson revealed she had been diagnosed with breast cancer and would have to undergo surgery and radiation treatment. Cosby's attorneys are seeking a dismissal of the case because they say Dickinson has given differing accounts of her interactions with Cosby over the years. They also contend letters Cosby's former attorney sent to reporters denying Dickinson's claims were protected legal communications. Dickinson's attorneys have said a jury should determine the outcome of the case, and the letters by Cosby's ex-attorney should not receive special protection.

Dickinson sued Cosby in May over his denial of her claims that he drugged and raped her in Lake Tahoe in 1982. She says she tried to include the story in a 2002



In this June 29, 2015 file photo, Janice Dickinson arrives at the Los Angeles premiere of 'Lord of the Freaks.' — AP

memoir, "No Lifeguard on Duty: The Accidental Life of the World's First Supermodel," but her publisher refused. She was also a cast member of VH1's "The Surreal Life" and UPN's "America's Next Top Model." Dozens of women have accused Cosby, 78, of sexual abuse, but the statutes of limitations in most instances have passed. The comedian has



In this Dec 30, 2015 file photo Bill Cosby arrives at court to face a felony charge of aggravated indecent assault, in Elkins Park, Pa. — AP photos

been charged with sexually assaulting a former Temple University worker at his suburban Philadelphia home in 2004. He remains free on \$1 million bail in the criminal case, which is on hold amid an appeal. — AP

Israel rejects 'delusional' claim John asked to declare loyalty

Israel has rejected as "delusional" a claim that superstar Elton John was asked to declare loyalty to the Jewish state before an upcoming concert. The "Rocket Man" singer's Israeli concert organizer Shuki Weiss issued the claim on Monday, saying the interior ministry initially made the demand as a condition for getting a visa. "Only two weeks ago Elton John was asked to sign a declaration of loyalty. That insane idea has been dropped," he said, according to Israeli media reports. His office pointed to a supposedly problematic clause in the visa form which reads: "I declare that I have never acted against the Jewish people or the security of the state of Israel," the Haaretz newspaper reported. — AFP



Elton John



Kamen Joshi

Japan's 'Masked Girls' seek fame under cover

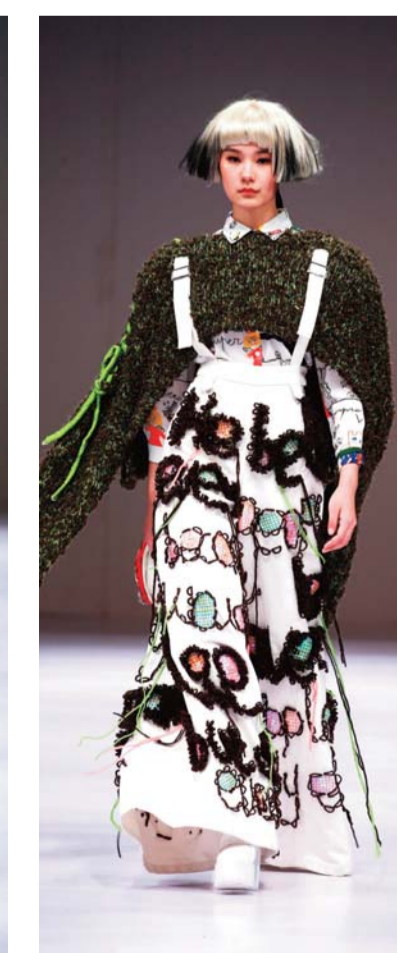
Standing out from Japan's myriad of girl bands can be a daunting task, but one group, the "Kamen Joshi", or "Masked Girls" in Japanese, has found the answer by hiding behind masks. As many as 15,000 people flocked to a concert by the band late last year, showing how its fan base has grown in the three years since it first started, when it struggled to fill a 400-seat theatre. One of its first breakthrough songs, "Genkidane", hit the top of the charts in January 2015, with more than 200,000 records sold in the first week of release, said music company Oricon Style, setting a record for a female indie band in Japan.

The band, made up of 18 members in three separate groups, is based in Tokyo and performs across Japan and in some Asian cities. The masks enhance the band's appeal, said

fans who attended a recent concert in the Japanese capital. "It is unique that even though they are idols, they perform while hiding their faces with masks," said one spectator, Akihiro Kuji.

Not all of the band's songs are performed in masks, but band members say they prefer to keep their faces hidden. "We are happier if we are asked to perform a live session with our masks on, rather than asked to take it off," said a band member who uses the stage name Nodoka Sakura. "These masks are like our lives. We can't go on stage live without them." What began as a promotional gimmick for the band has evolved into a kind of raison d'etre. "By wearing this mask, we become invincible. We can't live without it anymore," said a band member with the stage name Moea Tsukino. — Reuters

CHINA FASHION WEEK

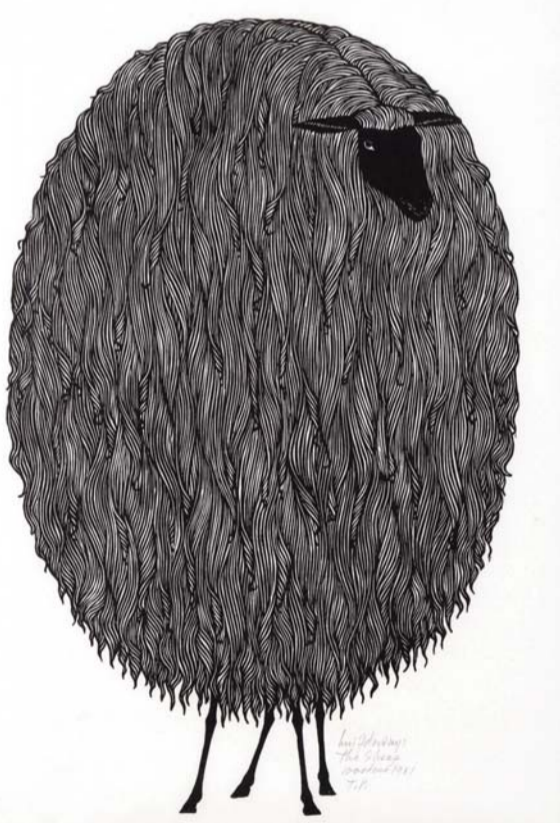


Models present creations for Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology Emerging Design Collection at the 'BIFT ELLASSAY' Scholarship Awarding Ceremony during China Fashion Week in Beijing yesterday. — AP/AFP photos



Models parade creations from the E-hoo & QUINNLIIN Zhang Lihui Collection, designed by Zhang Lihui, at China Fashion Week.

NYC exhibition explores works of woodcut artist Hnizdovsky



This picture provided by the Ukrainian Museum shows "The Sheep," a woodcut by Ukrainian-American artist Jacques Hnizdovsky. — AP photos

A new exhibition explores the prolific career of Ukrainian-American artist Jacques Hnizdovsky, a master of intricate woodcuts and paintings depicting an array of stylized flora and fauna. "Jacques Hnizdovsky: Content and Style" at the Ukrainian Museum in New York's East Village covers the breadth of his creative output, from 1944 until his death in 1985. "There are many times when original prints by one artist are more or less interchangeable with prints by other artists, but this is never the case with the woodcuts and linocuts of Jacques Hnizdovsky," said William Greenbaum, a Massachusetts art dealer and expert in 19th- and 20th-century fine prints.

Recognized especially as a woodcut artist, Hnizdovsky's works are in the permanent collections of many museums including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Minneapolis Institute of Art; the Library of Congress; and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The exhibition shows "how Hnizdovsky's career developed, his creative thinking and how it was influenced by his background," said Maria Shust, the museum's director.

Hnizdovsky found inspiration in the rich folk art tradition of his native Borshchiv region in western Ukraine that's especially evident in his intensely detailed woodcuts. After the outbreak of World War II, Hnizdovsky fled to Warsaw, Poland, and then Zagreb, in then-Yugoslavia, where he studied art. In 1944, he wound up in a displaced persons camp near Munich, Germany. One of his masterpieces from that period, "Displaced Persons," is on view at the museum. The painting depicts the cramped quarters of the DP camp with an image of six adult refugees and two children occupying three-tiered beds.

Hnizdovsky emigrated to the United States in 1949 and settled a year later in New York City, in the Bronx, where he began experimenting with printmaking, a medium for which he is best known. The nearby New York Botanical Garden and Bronx Zoo offered a place to observe plants and animals, the subjects of many of his works. His graphic work displays an immense clarity and intricacy, whether it's a singular tree, two rams lock-

ing horns or a hand-colored woodcut of string beans in a wood crate. He often imbued his works with humor as seen in a woodcut titled "7:45 AM" depicting a group of factory workers - naked and carrying their lunchboxes - heading to work.

"In addition to his brilliant design sense, his prints often display his immense patience with carving repeating patterns, his inventiveness in juxtaposing contrasting patterns and his delightful wit when portraying animals and birds," said Greenbaum. His still-life paintings possess the same simplicity and painstaking detail, as seen in a canvas of cabbages arranged in symmetrical rows inside a crate or a loaf of bread

or eggs in a basket. He also painted landscapes and cityscapes, among them "Avenue Breteuil," a large 1957 oil of a tree-lined Parisian boulevard.

"Hnizdovsky's prodigious oeuvre ... places him in a long, distinguished tradition of painters-printmakers from Albrecht Durer, whose woodcuts were Hnizdovsky's earliest inspiration, to the present," guest curator Jaroslaw Leshko writes in an essay accompanying the exhibition. The show runs through Aug 7. — AP



This picture shows 'Avenue Breteuil,' a painting by Ukrainian-American artist Jacques Hnizdovsky.



A woman looks at 'Escalator,' a 1960 painting by Ukrainian-American artist Jacques Hnizdovsky.



A woman looks at artworks by Ukrainian-American artist Jacques Hnizdovsky.



A woman looks at 'Displaced Persons,' a painting by Ukrainian-American artist Jacques Hnizdovsky.

Woody Allen's 'Cafe Society' to open Cannes film festival

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Members of the Giant Omelette Brotherhood of Bessieres cook a giant omelette as part of Easter celebrations, on the main square of Bessieres, southern France. — AFP photos



A member of the Giant Omelette Brotherhood of Bessieres poses with a basket filled with pieces of bread.



Members of the Giant Omelette Brotherhood of Bessieres cook a giant omelette.



A member of the Giant Omelette Brotherhood of Bessieres dumps egg shells in a pile.

France cooks up a **15,000-egg omelette for Easter**



Members of the Giant Omelette Brotherhood of Bessieres break eggs to cook a giant omelette.



Thousands gathered in France on Monday to watch dozens of cooks make a giant omelette to celebrate Easter in the town of Bessieres. The massive meal was made with 15,000 eggs in front of about 10,000 people who participated in the annual holiday tradition, according to local media reports.

Spectators watched as members of 'Giant Omelette Brotherhood' of Bessieres poured gallons of egg yolk into a large pan in the main square of Bessieres in southern France before beating and stirring the mixture with extra long baguettes. Other Easter festivities in France include the ringing of church bells and egg-rolling competitions.

—www.time.com



Members of the Giant Omelette Brotherhood of Bessieres carry a giant loaf of bread.

'Safe Paws' Japan pooch sets yoga ball speed record

A floppy-eared Japanese beagle with paw-fect yoga skills has scampered into the record books after setting the world mark for the "fastest 10 meters travelled on a ball by a dog." Ten-year-old female Purin the Japanese for "pudding" shot to fame last year when footage of the fluffy pooch breaking the Guinness World Record for the "most balls caught by a dog with the paws in one minute" went viral.

Not content with putting Japan's J-League goalkeepers to shame, Purin will have yoga fanatics sobbing into their yoghurt after nimbly steering an inflatable training ball over a distance of 10 meters in just 10.39 seconds to become a double world record holder. Purin, who lives with her owner Makoto Kumagai in Tokyo, broke her latest mark in some style, first produced her record-breaking bal-

ancing act on March 23 — when dog-lovers around the world celebrated National Puppy Day — clocking 11.9 seconds.

Ever the perfectionist, she went out and shattered that mark on Sunday. "Purin is a superstar in her own right now, having achieved double-record status with her latest exploits," said Guinness World Records editor-in-chief Craig Glenday. "Justin Bieber is the youngest artist ever to achieve five number one albums-but can he run 10 meters on a Swiss ball?" Purin made "Beliebers" of the doubters in September by saving 14 mini footballs in a minute by standing on her hind legs and catching them with her paws.

The fluffy keeper expertly brought the ball into her chest in textbook fashion-doubtless to avoid "ruff" tactics from opposing strikers. The multi-tal-

ented beagle can also skateboard, walk on two legs and skip with a rope, helped by Kumagai. Japan owns some of the strangest Guinness records, including the world's heaviest strawberry, tipping the scales at a whopping 250 grams (8.82 ounces), and the biggest-ever baby crawling contest, set by 601 bawling toddlers in Yokohama last November. — AFP

Picture released by Guinness World Records shows ten-year-old female Japanese beagle named Purin performing her skills balancing on a yoga ball in Tokyo. — AFP

