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WAVE OF BAGHDAD BOMBINGS KILLS 77

BAGHDAD: At least 77 people were killed and more than 140 wounded by three bombings in Baghdad yesterday, extending the deadliest spate of attacks in the Iraqi capital so far this year and driving Shiite fighters into the streets to defend some areas. Powerful cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr blamed the government for failing to provide security and hundreds of militiamen loyal to him deployed in Sadr City and five other mainly Shiite areas where the worst of the recent violence has been centered.

Islamic State claimed a suicide bombing which killed 41 people and wounded more than 70 in the northern district of Al-Shaab as well as a car bomb in nearby Sadr City that left at least 30 dead and 57 wounded, police and medical sources said. Another car blew up in Al-Rasheed, south of the capital, killing six and wounding 21, the sources said.

Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi ordered the arrest of the official in charge of Al-Shaab's security, his office said in a statement, without giving a reason. Attacks claimed by Islamic State in and around Baghdad last week killed more than 100 people, the highest death toll in the capital in so few days so far this year. Security had improved in recent years as sectarian tensions waned and the city's perimeter was fortified. Islamic State, the ultra-hardline militants who control parts of northern and western Iraq, have not tried to take the capital but carry out increasingly regular suicide bombings there, hitting Shiite areas and government targets.

Continued on Page 13



BAGHDAD: Security forces and citizens inspect the scene after a suicide car bomb hit a crowded outdoor market in Baghdad's eastern neighborhood of Sadr City yesterday. — AP

KUWAIT: Yemen's government threatened yesterday to quit peace talks with Iran-backed rebels, giving the UN envoy a "last chance" to make them comply with UN resolutions. "We have informed the UN special envoy to bring a document signed by the rebels in which they recognize the basic references and UN Security Council resolutions," Foreign Minister Abdulmalek Al-Mikhlafi, who heads the government delegation, told a press conference. "If they sign and comply, we will go back to the talks ... If they don't comply, the talks will then have no meaning... They become a waste of time," Mikhlafi said.

He said the document should include a clear acknowledgment by the rebels of UN Security Council Resolution 2216 and of the legitimacy of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi and his government. The minister said his team will remain in Kuwait City until the weekend and then take a decision, adding this was a "last chance" for UN special envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed to salvage the talks. "The talks have made no progress" after almost four weeks of negotiations with the Houthi militia and their allies, he said.

The foreign minister's threat came hours after the government delegation suspended its participation in the UN-brokered negotiations for the second time this month. Mikhlafi said the rebels had repeatedly refused to discuss key issues and insisted on power-sharing first, in violation of UN resolutions.



Al-Mikhlafi

Continued on Page 13

OUTDOOR WORK BAN TO START JUNE 1

MP REJECTS PLANS TO GIVE BIDOONS COMOROS CITIZENSHIP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Manpower Authority said yesterday that a decision banning laborers from working under the sun between 11 am and 4 pm will commence from the beginning of next month. The decision was issued several years ago to spare laborers from having to work under direct sunlight in extremely high temperatures for three months between June and the end of August, acting director of the authority Ahmad Al-Mousa said in a statement. He said that authority's inspection teams will monitor companies and will issue penalties for those who make their employees work during these hours.

Kuwait is known for its harsh climatic conditions during the summer months, when temperatures in the shadow hit more than 50 degrees Celsius, especially in these three months. The temperature under direct sunlight is much higher. Mousa said that violations of the ban were very few in the past year, an indication that companies were complying with the ban. Kuwait is home to over two million expatriate workers, a majority of them unskilled menial laborers who work under harsh conditions.

Meanwhile, MP Mohammad Tana yesterday criticized a statement by the external affairs minister of Comoros, who said his country is prepared to consider taking in thousands of stateless people locally known as bedoons. Tana said bedoons are brothers of Kuwaitis and part of Kuwait's social fabric, adding that they are not for sale. He said that no one can force the bedoons out of their "second country" Kuwait, unless it is done with their approval, and said calls to evict bedoons from Kuwait should cease.

The Comorian external affairs minister Abdulkarim Mohamed was quoted as saying that his country is ready to consider taking thousands of bedoons if requested officially by the Kuwaiti government. In late 2014, assistant undersecretary for nationality and passports affairs Maj Gen Mazen Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah revealed that a plan to grant bedoons Comorian economic citizenship was under consideration.

Rapporteur of the Assembly priorities committee MP Ahmad Lari said yesterday the committee will discuss on Sunday with Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Planning Hind Al-Subaih a report about

Continued on Page 13

'BACHELOR BAN' TESTS RELATIONS WITH WORKERS

AL KHOR, Qatar: As Nami Hader, a 30-year-old gardener from Nepal, approached the entrance to a park outside Qatar's second city Al Khor one day last month, a security guard blocked his way. "No bachelors," the guard said. The newly-renovated park - its boating lake, miniature golf course and neatly manicured lawns - was off-limits to men unaccompanied by women or children, the guard said. "It's for families only."

So-called "bachelor bans" that bar lone men from entering malls and parks on certain days of the week and from living in residential neighborhoods are a common, often loosely-enforced, practice in the conservative Gulf. Local authorities say the measure, enforced by businesses and municipalities, allows families and women who live in crowded and male-dominated cities space to enjoy public facilities.

But a recent ramping up of family-only rules in Qatar is excluding the country's vast South Asian workforce, mostly young men who live as temporary residents away from their families, and cutting them off

Continued on Page 13



LONDON: Winner of the 2016 Man Booker International prize for fiction Han Kang poses for the media with her book 'The Vegetarian' following the award ceremony on Monday. — AP

FIRST SOUTH KOREAN WINS MAN BOOKER INT'L PRIZE

LONDON: South Korean author Han Kang won the Man Booker International Prize on Monday, sharing the £50,000 (\$72,000) award with her translator - who had only taught herself Korean three years before. Han Kang, 45, an author and creative writing teacher who is already successful in South Korea, is likely to enjoy a spike in international sales following the win for "The Vegetarian". "I'm so honored" she told AFP. "The work features a protagonist who wants to become a plant, and to leave the human race to save herself from the dark side of human nature. Through this extreme narrative I felt I could question... the difficult question of being human."

She was the first South Korean to win the prize. Described as "lyrical and lacer-

ating" by chairman of the judges Boyd Tonkin, the tale traces the story of an ordinary woman's rejection of convention from three different perspectives. It was picked unanimously by the panel of five judges, beating six other novels including "The Story of the Lost Child" by Italian sensation Elena Ferrante and "A Strangeness in My Mind" by Turkey's Orhan Pamuk. "This is a book of tenderness and terror," Boyd told guests at the award ceremony dinner at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Han Kang's first book to appear in English, "The Vegetarian" was described by newspaper The Guardian as a shock to the system. "Across the three parts, we are pressed up against a society's most

Continued on Page 13

LEBANON

Kuwait Times

SUPPLEMENT INSIDE



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa, Director General of Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Dr Sameera Al-Sayyed Omar and KISR members. — Amiri Diwan photo

AL-SHAGAYA RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT 'A GO'

KISR TEAM MEETS AMIR, CROWN PRINCE

KUWAIT: Director General of Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Dr Sameera Al-Sayyed Omar indicated yesterday that the ambitious Al-Shagaya Project for renewable energy has begun building a solar power station and a wind power station to be ostensibly completed toward the year's end.

Dr Omar revealed that in a press statement after having met today with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah along with Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Hamad Al-Essa.

She thanked His Highness the Amir for his support of the Al-Shagaya Project and for having taken under his care the 6th Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference

(MENAREC 6) which was held in Kuwait in April. She also thanked His Highness the Crown Prince for his interest in the Project.

Al-Shagaya Project is part of the Innovative Renewable Energy Research program at KISR, which, when completed, will be comprised of three main facilities, a concentrated solar power plant and two facilities for wind and PV research.

In a similar press statement, Dr Salem Al-Hajraf, Manager of KISR's Renewable Energy Program, said that a number of recommendations emanated from (MENAREC 6) urging governments to rely less on oil to produce electricity and more on solar and wind power. The recommendations also advised that at least 15 percent of energy should be produced from

renewable sources by the year 2030, he said. Dr Omar, Hajraf and other KISR teammates explained in their meeting with His Highness the Amir the upcoming second stage in the Al-Shagaya Project which will involve offering the private sector the opportunity to invest in a 500 megawatt renewable energy power stations. These stations will be built through a partnership between the public and private sectors. Also attending the meeting with His Highness the Amir was Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah and members of KISR. Minister Essa, Dr Omar and the KISR team also met with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and briefed him about the document. —KUNA

AMIR RECEIVES SOMALI DEFENSE MINISTER

KUWAIT REITERATES SUPPORT TO SOMALIA'S ANTI-TERROR EFFORTS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khalid Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, and visiting Somali Minister of Defense Major General Abdulkadir Sheikh Ali Dini. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah and the Somali minister's accompanying delegation.

Meanwhile, Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah reiterated support to the Somali Government in all efforts it is exerting to combat terrorism. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled made this remark during a meeting with the visiting Somali Defense Minister at the

Foreign Ministry's Diwan yesterday.

The Somali minister, meanwhile, expressed appreciation to Kuwait's ongoing backing to Somalia's efforts in securing stability in the country. The meeting was attended by Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Khaled Al-Kheder, his deputy Lieutenant General Sheikh Abdullaah Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Foreign Minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and a number of senior officials at the Foreign Ministry.

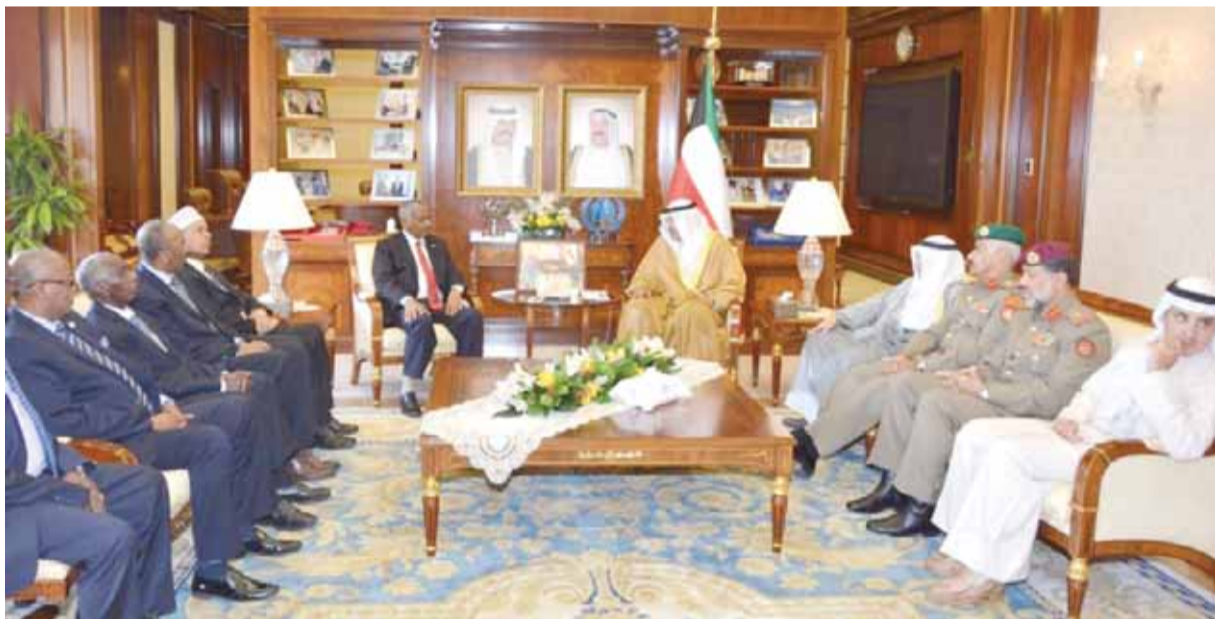
Separately, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received at the Foreign Ministry's headquarters credentials of the newly-appointed Comorian Ambassador

to Kuwait Dr. Al-Aref Sayed Hassan. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled wished the Comorian ambassador best of luck in his task, and better bilateral relations between both countries. The meeting was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocols Ambassador Dhari Al-Ajran, and senior officials at the ministry.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince separately received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul.— KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Somali Minister of Defense Major General Abdulkadir Sheikh Ali Dini. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Somali Defense Minister General Abdulkadir Sheikh Dini.



Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Comorian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Al-Aref Sayed Hassan.



KUWAIT: Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and his delegation concluded a three-day official visit, during which he held talks with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. A host of senior officials, headed by His Highness the Amir, were at President Rahmon's seeing off. — KUNA

SPEAKER RECEIVES KNG DEPUTY CHIEF

KUWAIT/CAIRO: National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem received yesterday Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guards (KNG) Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. MPs Adel Al-Kharafi Youssef Al-Zalzal, Mubarak Al-Hurais, Abdullah Al-Mayouf and Ali Al-Khamees attended the meeting.

In other news, a high-level of KNG, led by Major General Faleh Shujaa Faleh, met with Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army Major General Mahmoud Hegazy in Cairo yesterday. The KNG delegation is visiting Egypt in order to open different training channels on all levels and to launch training courses for the KNG in Egypt.

Faleh thanked the Egyptian Armed Forces for warm reception and hospitality, saying that the visit was instructed by the KNG's leadership. During the meeting, they discussed aspects of cooperation between the KNG and the Egyptian Armed Forces in the training field. — KUNA



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem and a number of lawmakers meet with Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guards (KNG) Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

YOUTH ACTION IMPORTANT IN FACING EXTREMISM: MINISTER

CAIRO: Kuwait's Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah stressed the importance of enhancing youth action to protect youngsters from extremist ideologies.

Sheikh Salman made his remarks in a statement Monday following the conclusion of the 39th session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth Affairs in the Egyptian capital. He thanked all participants at the session for expressing their keen interest in youth issues, particularly Arab League for launching a youth campaign on Sunday, entitled "No for violence, No for terrorism, No for extremism."

On meeting with Egyptian President AbdelFatah Al-Sisi, Sheikh Salman commended the 'distinctive' and 'fruitful' meeting, adding that it reflected Sisi's faith in the importance of Arab

youth's role in increasing activities, strengthening national identity, and protecting youngsters from radical and extremist ideologies.

President Sisi also stressed the importance of focusing on a number of axes, notably awareness and time investment, in addition to education and upgrading schools' curriculums for Arab youngsters, he noted. All these notes reflected Sisi's keenness in meeting with Arab youth and sports ministers and listening to their opinions on youth action development, said Sheikh Salman.

Meanwhile, the Council approved, in yesterday's session, a guiding framework for a unified strategy to improve Arab youth, upon which member-countries will study, establish national policies, and form plans to implement those policies. — KUNA



Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Australia to Kuwait Warren Hauck visited Kuwait Times yesterday, where he met with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan and discussed with him matters of mutual concern.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan (second from left) and Deputy General Manager Adnan Saad (left) honor Waleed Al-Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Corporate Communications and Relations Director, as Assistant Undersecretary of Youth Projects' Affairs at the Ministry of Youth Affairs Shafeeq Al-Sayed Omar (center) and members of the competition's judging committee look on.

ZAIN MAIN SPONSOR OF 'KUWAIT BEAUTIFUL AND GREEN' COMPETITION

ENCOURAGING YOUNG ARTISTIC TALENTS FOR THIRD YEAR

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced today its main sponsorship of the 'Kuwait Beautiful and Green' drawing competition for the third year running. The competition, organized by Kuwait Times, came under the patronage of Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs.

Minister of State for Youth Affairs' representative, Assistant Undersecretary of Youth Projects' Affairs Shafeeq Al-Sayed Omar, honored Waleed Al-Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Corporate Communications and Relations Director, for Zain's support of the competition. The honoring came during the winners and

sponsors honoring ceremony, which witnessed the presence of Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. Zain's support to this initiative for the third year running came in line with its Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategies towards the youth and education sector. Zain believes that the youth hold the keys to the future development of Kuwait and need to be well supported by private and governmental entities.

The competition witnessed immense participation that exceeded that of the last edition, with about 13,000 participating students from over 130 public and private schools, including special needs schools. The competition aimed at encouraging students to showcase their

artistic skills by drawing paintings that portray a beautiful and green Kuwait.

Zain believes the development of the communities in which it operates is a very important part of the company's overall success. The company considers education as a core element in the community development process, and it will continue to support it to contribute to the further progress of the education sector.

Zain's sponsorship of the competition for three years springs from the company's core belief that social responsibility is a significant corporate element. The company believes that supporting initiatives such as this one provides young people with skills and tools necessary to help them highlight and develop their skills.

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS' EXPERIENCE HELPFUL FOR DIVERSIFICATION: FORMER FM

KUWAIT: Kuwait has successful institutions across the globe with experience that could be of a great use for diversifying the state income resources, former foreign minister Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said Monday. Kuwait can benefit from the experiences of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and Kuwait Investment Authority to diversify income, Sheikh Mohammad said during a symposium jointly held by the IMF Middle East Center for Economics and Finance (CEF) and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) on 'The Path to Economic Diversification in Kuwait and other GCC Countries.'

He added Kuwait also can expand its pioneering experiment of the sovereign funds' overseas investments. Norway took advantage of these funds in the 1980s, he said. He viewed that creating new jobs is a serious challenge facing countries especially those using modern technology in the industrial sector.

Bold strategy

CEF's Director Dr Oussama Kanaan stated that the adoption of a bold diversification strategy has become particularly important in the face of low oil prices, and a critical one to prevent a marked decline in GCC countries' living standards. He noted that the symposium is the fourth in the series of events organized by the CEF jointly with the AFESD aimed at stimulating discussion on economic policies for Kuwait and other GCC countries to ensure durable development on the basis of a long-term strategy to reduce the dependence on oil.

Drawing on international country experiences, the panel discussion brought to the fore the core ingredients of successful economic diversification strategies, including infrastructure and human capital investments conducive to private sector growth and the development of sophisticated non-oil export industries.

Implications

Meanwhile, Dr Reda Cherif and Dr Fuad Hasanov, the leading IMF economists in the field of economic diversification have put into perspective the implications of the decline in oil prices from above \$100 to about \$40 per barrel today, which has made diversification such a pressing policy issue. They noted that such a drastic and persistent decline is raising the specter of a return of the oil slump of the 1980s-1990s. Citizens and policymakers from many oil-exporting nations still remember the ordeal their countries went through at that time. The promise of easy and swift development brought by large oil revenues failed to materialize, result-



KUWAIT: Former foreign minister Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (third from left) attends a symposium held by the IMF Middle East Center for Economics and Finance (CEF) and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD). —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

ing in unemployment, falling living standards, and heavy indebtedness in the 1980s and 1990s, they recalled.

Cherif and Hasanov indicated that, to achieve diversification, oil exporters must change the prevailing economic model. They added despite the complex choices involved, it is paramount for oil-dependent economies to become innovative economies. They will have to experiment and learn from the experiences of other countries on their path to diversification.

In the past, countries such as Brazil, Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore have made major strides in diversifying their economies, and their experiences carry important lessons for GCC countries today, they said. They stated that these countries' experiences reveal that incentives for firms and workers need to be realigned to develop technologically sophisticated export-oriented industries.

Not sufficient

Standard growth policy prescriptions may not be sufficient to achieve true diversification. In addition to addressing government failures, policymakers must address market failures by changing incentives for firms and workers to move toward more dynamic sectors. They noted that policymakers should focus on developing dynamic export markets, adding that diversification has to start somewhere and can begin by focusing on a more limited set of industries.

Facilitating entrepreneurship is essential while education and social development are paramount. The choice to diversify via the service sector versus the manufacturing sector depends on the potential productivity gains, they pointed out.

The frontier between services and manufacturing is fading, and there are more productivity gains to be had with service sectors that are more strongly linked to the manufacturing sector, they said.

Professor Ha-Joon Chang of Cambridge University, author of seminal work on the role of the state in economic development then discussed the key elements that characterized successful diversification strategies, and concluded with three main messages.

First, diversification does not need to be related to economic activities that the country is already engaged in—the experience of several countries indicates that new activities are created that are often unrelated to a country's traditional industries or its natural resource endowment. Second, even when diversification is related to a country's traditional industries, the challenge is to ensure that the products of that industry become increasingly sophisticated, at more advanced stages of manufacturing. Third, diversification requires an industrial policy that is highly selective, taking into account the particular economic and social conditions of the country. — KUNA



KUWAIT: (From left) Gilles Pargneaux, Michele Alliot-Marie and Alyn Smith from a European Parliament delegation attend a press conference yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

EU PARLIAMENT DELEGATION CALLS FOR CLOSER TIES BETWEEN EU, GCC

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A European Parliament delegation led by Michele Alliot-Marie (EPP/France), Gilles Pargneaux (S&D/France) and Alyn Smith (Greens EFA/United Kingdom) urged GCC countries to work together to achieve stability and peace in the region. Speaking with the local press yesterday, the delegation lauded the vibrant relations between the European Union and GCC countries. The group's head Alliot-Marie noted the EU is pleased with the result of the eighth inter-parliamentary meeting that took place on May 16-17 between the European Parliament and the Kuwaiti National Assembly.

"Kuwait and European Union relations are very important - they are deeply rooted at economic, human rights, legal and political levels. Because of geostrategic contacts with the region which we share, and the same threats and concerns against terrorism, we have to work together to achieve stability in the region. We have the same concerns about Syria and Yemen for example. On the economic side, the price of oil is now the biggest concern for all of us. It has repercussions for everyone in the region. On the legal side, Kuwait has a law inspired by European law, known as the Napoleon code. Within the framework of these relations, the EU Parliament has a very important role to play in the relations between EU and the GCC," Alliot Marie said.

The delegation had meetings with the highest authorities in Kuwait, notably His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, members of the National Assembly's foreign affairs and human rights committees, Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Awqaf and Justice Minister Yaqub Al-Sane and Chief of National Security Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah.

Very vocal

Pargneaux said Kuwait has been very vocal in its desire to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "We informed the parliament here that we in Europe have a strong will to finally

resolve the problem and come up with new proposals for peace. We agree on the observation that many are recruited by IS because of the problems they are facing in the region. We also want to improve the image of Islam in the EU. We want to hold some conferences about religion in order to achieve progress and portray a better image of Islam in Europe that has been tarnished by Daesh," he said.

Kuwait plays a very prominent peace-building role and acts as a force of stability in the region, notably in coordinating the international effort to provide humanitarian assistance to Syria and countries affected by the civil war. The delegation expressed its appreciation to the Kuwaiti government for hosting the talks between the parties in the conflict in Yemen at this critical moment and for investing a great deal of diplomatic effort. It commended the work carried out by United Nations' Special Envoy to Yemen Ismail Ould Sheikh Ahmed, and encouraged the parties to the conflict in Yemen to make the compromises needed to reach an agreement swiftly. This is crucial in order to avoid a humanitarian disaster and the fiscal and economic collapse of Yemen, it added.

Internal reforms

Smith said Kuwait deserves a great deal of praise for the internal reforms undertaken towards democracy and human rights. "I want to commend Kuwait for signing the recent climate change agreement. I am also fascinated in the very ambitious plan which was showed to us by your government on energy transition away from petrochemicals to renewables, which is a very important endeavor which we in Europe are willing to share and cooperate," he said. The European Parliament was the first EU institution to call for a strategic partnership between the two regional organizations. Relations are excellent, including at the inter-parliamentary level. According to EU delegation, there is space for more intense political dialogue, cooperation in security issues, closer economic and commercial relations and more extensive people-to-people contacts.

SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION VISITS KUWAIT TO ENHANCE ECONOMIC RELATIONS

KUWAIT: The Head of Invest South Africa, Yunus Hoosen will lead a delegation of Senior Officials from the Ministry of Trade and Industry (the dti) and the Western Cape Tourism, Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (WESGRO) from 20-22 May 2016. The purpose of the visit is to strengthen trade and economic relations between South Africa and Kuwait and to promote investment and trade opportunities in South Africa.

The Delegation's program will include bilateral meetings with relevant government authorities and institutions, a business seminar at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the morning on May 22nd, and meetings with business stakeholders and company visits.

During the Business Seminar, the delegation

will also share information on the business and investment environment in South Africa and present attractive investment opportunities in the following sectors: Agriculture and Agro-processing; Automotive and Components; Business Process Services (BPS)/Business Process Outsourcing (BPO); Logistics; Tourism (including Tourism Infrastructure); Real Estate; Mineral Beneficiation, Green Economy and Renewable Energy; Maritime Oil and Gas; Specialized Advanced Manufacturing (Nuclear, Aerospace and Advanced Materials and Niche Engineering); Pharmaceutical and Medical Technologies. WESGRO will also present Special Investment projects in the Western Cape Province in some of the sectors mentioned above as well trade opportunities for Kuwait companies, especially

fruits, vegetables, food products (including frozen and canned products, spices, sauces, beverages (including tea, coffee, juices), and dairy products, etc. In 2005, South Africa and Kuwait signed a Trade Agreement and an Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement which affirmed the two countries' commitment to build strong and mutually beneficial economic and commercial relations. Kuwait (and the Middle East), is an important trade and economic partner for South Africa. Kuwait is a significant investor in South Africa and the sixth largest export destination for South Africa in the Middle East. The forthcoming visit follows on the footsteps of a successful dti led business delegation that visited Kuwait in December 2015.

In Brief

AMIR GRACES TEACHERS' HONORING CEREMONY

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is set to sponsor a ceremony to honor a host of Kuwaiti teachers for the scholastic year 2014-2015. The event is set to be held today, coinciding with World Teachers' Day. The ceremony is scheduled for 10:30 am at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Auditorium in Kuwait University, Shuwaikh Campus. His Highness the Amir has deputized His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to represent him at the ceremony. — KUNA



KUWAIT COMMISSIONED FOR DIPLOMACY REPORT

KUWAIT: Secretaries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) legislative councils have commissioned the State of Kuwait to prepare a report on parliamentary diplomacy to be generalized on secretariats of other Gulf councils and assemblies. Kuwait has been tasked to prepare the report in the form of recommendations that would be sent to secretariats of Gulf councils, National Assembly's Secretary General Allam Al-Kandari said in a press statement following the 19th meeting of GCC secretaries of parliament, national assemblies, and Shura councils. — KUNA



ITALY HAILS KUWAIT SHOOTING TEAM

ROME: President of the Italian Shooting Federation Luciano Rossi and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Sabah hailed the advanced international expertise level of the Kuwaiti shooting team. The statements were made during the ambassador's visit to the team's training camp at Umbriverde facility in Todi city yesterday, in preparation for the upcoming second Olympics grand prix. Luciano noted that Kuwaiti shooters have been following his country's school in the sport and training with their Italian counterparts for years. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: A picture taken from inside the Arab Organizations Headquarters Building in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT HOPES AALCO PLAYS PROACTIVE ROLE IN RESOLVING GLOBAL ISSUES

NEW DELHI: The Kuwaiti delegation from the Ministry of Justice called on the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) to play a more proactive role in resolving issues pertaining to the international law and achieving peace and stability in Asia and Africa.

This remark was made yesterday by Chairman of the Appeals Chamber in the Justice Ministry of Kuwait Counselor Ali MUSAED Al-Dhabibi who arrived in New Delhi heading a delegation from the ministry to attend AALCO's 55th meeting. Delegates from a number of Asian and African countries are participating in the event which kicked off in New Delhi where AALCO is headquartered.

Dhabibi underlined the important role that AALCO is playing in dispute resolution and building international awareness about the issues Asian and African countries are facing. He hailed the organization for its continuous efforts to bring the Palestine issue at the international forums and to provide continuous support to the people of Palestine in addition to campaigning to end the Israeli violations.

AALCO has always kept the Palestine issue at the top of its agendas during the previous annual meetings. He expressed hope that the organization would further play key roles in achieving global cooperation, especially after the election of a new president from Africa during the current meeting. On behalf of the Kuwaiti delegation, Dhabibi expressed gratitude to the

Kuwaiti Ambassador Fahad Ahmad Al-Awadhi and Councillor Osama Al-Obaid for according them a warm welcome to India in addition to making all other arrangements.

He thanked the Indian government and people for extending its support to the Asian and African population especially the Palestine people by strengthening AALCO. Indian External Affairs Ministry Secretary (West) Sujata Mehta delivered the inaugural speech while President of the 54th Annual Session Liu Zhenmin from the People's Republic of China and Secretary General of AALCO Rahmat Mohamad welcomed the guests from member countries and other participating dignitaries.

Following the historic Bandung Conference, held in Indonesia, in April 1955 the Asian Legal Consultative Committee (ALCC) was formed in November 1956 with India, Iraq, Japan, Egypt, Syria, Indonesia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka as the founding members. However, increasing participation from the Asian countries and joining of many African countries led to renaming the organization as Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) in 1958. In a meeting held at New Delhi headquarters the name was changed to Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO). Kuwaiti delegation to the event include Legal Department Councilor at the Foreign Ministry Saud Abdullah Al-Harabi apart from Hiba Al-Abdul Jaleel, Hanadi Hamad Al-Homadi, Khaled Al-Essa and Yousef Al-Faikawai from the Justice Ministry. — KUNA



NEW DELHI: The Kuwaiti delegation attends AALCO's 55th meeting. — KUNA

TRAVEL AND TOURISM EXPO OPENS TODAY

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: For the best travel promotions, discounts on tickets, travel insurance and other deals, do not miss the first Travel and Tourism Expo at Marina Mall. The expo, held from May 18 to 21, 2016, is organized by Outer Limit Media Solutions in partnership with Atlas Global and Marina Mall.

About 30 booths representing 22 companies will be displaying their products and services related to travel. "This expo brings a range of travel related products and services to one place for visitors to choose from. Holding such an event allows customers to get new ideas about where and how they will travel during the summer holidays," said Tareq Bastaki, Managing Partner of Outer Limit, during a press conference held on Monday at the Holiday Inn hotel.

The expo will open today at 10:00 am under the patronage of Sheikh Duajj Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah. "The booths will be spread around the mall including the main dome and other spaces. This is the first complete travel and tourism exhibition held in Kuwait that brings together airlines, travel agents, services, products and even local tourism," stressed Salem Malalah, Managing Partner, Outer Limit.

Exhibitors have come up with special deals for the expo including airfares by Atlas Global. "During the four days of the expo, passengers can book a ticket to any European destination that Atlas Global flies to for only KD 99. This offer is only valid during the event.

We offer many special services and advantages onboard such as a flying chef who can prepare any dish. We also offer 40 kg baggage allowance and our prices are competitive," noted Ahmad Al-Safadi, Deputy Regional Director, Atlas Global.

Khalid Abdul Rahim, Regional Director of Atlas Global, provided more information about the airline. "Atlas Global is a Turkish airline with daily flights to Kuwait. We fly to 74 destinations in Europe in addition

to some destinations in the Middle East, and will launch a flight to Doha in July," he said.

Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Marketing Manager of Marina Mall, said that this is the first time a travel exhibition has been held in the mall. "We thought it's an interesting idea to host a travel expo in the mall to make it possible for all people including tourists to benefit from this expo, which is more accessible than holding it in an exhibition hall," he stated.



KUWAIT: The speakers attend a press conference yesterday to announce the Travel and Tourism Expo. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

SHEIKHA HESSA URGES WOMEN UNITY TO BUILD BETTER FUTURE

NEW DELHI: Chair of the Arab Businesswomen Council (ABC) Sheikh Hessa Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah urged on Monday the womenfolk across the world to unite to build a better future through entrepreneurship and businesses. In an exclusive interview to the Kuwait News Agency on the sidelines of Women Economic Forum, inaugurated in Indian capital New Delhi, Sheikh Hessa underlined the importance of building relations with women from different parts of the world.

This forum would present the best opportunity to share the experiences, wealth and expertise to empower women, she said. Sheikh Hessa added that the Women Economic Forum and similar platforms would be useful to unite the women, which in turn would result in overall development of the societies.

She also hailed the increasing number of Indian women entrepreneurs and CEOs while expressing satisfaction that the Forum presented a good opportunity to learn from the experiences of other women entrepreneurs from India and other countries. The Chairperson of Arab Businesswomen Council also hailed the increasing number of Arab women entrepreneurs and businesswomen. She underlined that Kuwaiti government has provided enough support and established a fund exclusively to promote business endeavors. This in turn has produced a number of excellent businesswomen and helped to empower them and their families substantially.

The event was attended by a number of leading



NEW DELHI: Chairwoman of the Arab Businesswomen Council (ABC) Sheikh Hessa Saad Al-Abdullah (center) is seen during her participation in the Women Economic Forum. — KUNA

women entrepreneurs from across India and other countries. Many of the participants shared their experiences of successfully establishing their businesses and how such efforts have helped to empower themselves and their fellow beings. Sheikh Hessa also hopes that all the countries should organize such events and expressed her wish that a Women Economic Forum

would be held in Kuwait. Meanwhile, Indian Minister for Urban Development M Venkaiah Naidu said in his inaugural speech in the presence of Sheikh Hessa as guest of honor that women empowerment cannot be achieved without making them strong financially. He also underlined that the Indian civilization has always held woman highly respected. — KUNA

HAWALLY GAME SALESMAN'S KILLER PLEADS NOT GUILTY

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti citizen accused of deliberately running over an Egyptian man during a fight at Rihab Complex in Hawally pled not guilty to voluntary manslaughter charges at the criminal court yesterday. Instead, he argued that he found himself surrounded by a group of Egyptian men who wanted to beat him, so he ran to his vehicle and drove off to escape, but one of them accidentally fell under its wheels. "It was they who picked up the fight outside the complex and I could not face them because they were too many," he claimed. The man is charged with killing a salesman in November 2015 by running him over with his vehicle following a brawl that escalated from a dispute over selling a video game.

Weapon's sale

The lawyer of a Kuwaiti citizen who offered his gun for sale after the weapons law was passed said that his client did not wish to throw his firearm away after he paid KD 1,000 for it. The man was arrested for offering a gun for sale for KD 1,100 online. The lawyer defended his client's actions, saying that his client wanted to recoup the money he paid and make a KD 100 profit. "Who will compensate him for his KD 1,000 loss?" he argued.

Citizenship withdrawal

The court of cassation temporarily suspended hearing the case of the withdrawal of citizenship of former MP Abdullah Al-

Barghash and his family members until a decision is made on his request to change the judges hearing his case following an argument with him.

Show banned

Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud ordered an investigation into why the 'Bamboo Stalk' TV series was banned and asked for a full report about the story, events and characters. Notably, The Bamboo Stalk, based on a book by Saud Al-Sanoussi, will be shown on Al-Rai TV during Ramadan, starring Suad Abdullah. Its shooting was banned in Kuwait.

Steel production

The Finance Ministry requested statistics from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry about the volume of local steel production over the past three years compared to local market demand pending increasing customs fees on imported steel from 5 to 15 percent. In another concern, despite Kuwait's official objection to adjust the minimum custom fees collected on tobacco products as recommended by the GCC financial and economic cooperation committee, the latter decided going ahead with the adjustment and doubling the minimum customs fees at most by Sept 1, said informed sources. The sources explained that Kuwait again rejected the decision and the ministry of commerce justified the rejection by noting that the decision contradicts Kuwait's commitments to the World Trade Organization (WTO).



KUWAIT: Firefighters inspect damage after tackling a blaze at Qairawan Health Center yesterday.



Some wood set ablaze inside a Sulaibiya farm.



Flames come out of a car on Salmi road.



Police inspect drivers' papers during a security campaign in Ali Sabah Al-Salem.

MAN ARRESTED FOR RUNNING FAKE DOMESTIC HELP OFFICE

TWENTY RUNAWAY MAIDS IN CUSTODY

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Residency affairs detectives arrested a man who ran a fake domestic help office and used it to harbor runaway maids. The arrest came following investigations after detectives received information about a suspect's activity in offering illegal domestic help services. The Egyptian man coordinated with maids to leave their original sponsors and then hired them to new clients in exchange of money. A total of twenty runaway maids, all Ethiopians, were arrested in the office. All detainees were sent to the concerned authorities for further action.

No injuries in fires

A fire broke out in Qairawan Health Center, prompting Sulaibkhat fire station to respond. The fire was discovered in the backyard of the center. The flames were tackled and no injuries were reported. Meanwhile, a fire broke out in some wood inside a Sulaibiya farm, and it was put out by Sulaibkhat fire station under the command of Major Abdelaiz Bouland, supported by major Abdallah Al-Haddad from Kabd fire station. Separately, a vehicle caught fire on Salmi road. Occupational Jahra fire station responded and put out the fire as no injuries were reported.

Security campaign

Investigations are ongoing in search for a man who escaped after attempting to run over police during a security campaign in Ali Sabah Al-Salem.

The man, who faces attempted murder charges, managed to escape after leaving behind his car, which was impounded. The man was in abnormal condition during the incident, according to police. The campaign had resulted in the arrest of 35 persons without IDs and five absconders. Meanwhile, 40 vehicles were impounded and 166 traffic citations were issued.

METEOROLOGISTS EXPECT 'EXTREMELY HIGH' TEMPERATURES DURING SUMMER

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Commenting on the rising temperatures over the past two days, a number of meteorologists officially declared the start of summer, noting that temperatures would be extremely high this year. Experts also warned of sunstrokes and heat stress, and advised people to stay hydrated, stay in the shade and out of the direct sun, wear loose white attire and hats and use umbrellas.

Blogger sued

The lawyer of Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah filed a case against a blogger, also a ruling family member, accusing him of slander by posting videos in which he criticized Sheikh Mohammad on social media networks.

Bachelors warned

Hawally municipality director Falah Al-Shemmari warned that 'bachelors' living in residential areas in the governorate would be immediately evicted unless they are living in the same address mentioned in their civil IDs. He added that he would meet the general security director today to discuss cooperation with the Ministry of Interior (Mol) and Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) in this regard. Speaking during a three-hour tour of

the governorate's areas escorted by municipal council member Abdullah Al-Kandari and the head of Hawally municipality emergency team Riyadh Al-Rabee, Shemmari said solving the problem of bachelors would be achieved by building special areas for them away from residential areas, such as Amghara and Subhan. He added that in collaboration with Mol and MEW, power would be disconnected in houses inhabited by bachelors in residential areas. Shemmari added that the tour aimed at exploring citizens' opinions and complaints. He also noted that bachelors were mostly found in Salmiya and Rumaithiya and promised to hold a weekly tour on Tuesdays to detect violations and solve problems.

New hospital

Chairman of the parliament's health, social affairs and labor committee MP Talal Al-Jallal urged the civil aviation department to hand over the land allocated for building a hospital in Mubarak Al-Kabeer to the health ministry as soon as possible. Jallal explained that Mubarak Al-Kabeer needed a hospital urgently, and urged Minister of Communications and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Essa Al-Kandari to see that the land was handed over and avoid bureaucracy that has been hindering some health projects.

KOC 11TH TRAVEL TOURISM KICKS OFF

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) 11th annual Travel and Tourism exhibition kicked off yesterday with a wide participation from different travel agencies, aviation companies and hotels and resorts. The annual exhibition is a great opportunity to offer the best services for

the national oil company's employees as summer season, which is closely tied with travel, is starting, KOC said in a press statement. The fair will open its doors to the public from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm during the three upcoming days in the company's tent in Al-Ahmadi City. — KUNA



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STATELETS AHEAD

By Hassan Al-Essa

The 100th anniversary of the Sykes-Picot agreement was marked recently. The agreement was made on May 16, 1916 to share the Ottoman Empire between France and Britain and demarcate the Arab region's borders we still know nowadays. On this occasion, the Economist published a full report about our region under the headline 'Wars Within'.

According to the report, the one good reason for Arab fragmentation and wars is tyrannically corrupt despotic regimes that keep reproducing an extreme radical religious ideology that races to fill the place in the absence of sovereignty and social care from governments to peoples. The reason can also be old or modern colonial intervention like what happened in Iraq in 2003, Libya or in the current proxy wars in Syria and those in Lebanon in the period of 1975-1990.

The truth remains that with all its history, the Arab region is a mix of opposing races, sects and tribes that found themselves ruled by alien regimes. Nevertheless, we cannot pinpoint one reason for our disaster and forget the others. When we only accuse regimes, we might be missing the real life in our societies that produced those regimes in the first place or kept silent about their practices. When we accuse foreign interference (like Israel and its aggression), we would be blaming it for our historic diseases, forgetting all about our own responsibility and simply falling for conspiracy theories, and then our common sense would take leave and get rid of the need to think and research. Conspiracies do have a role in our political history, but they are not to blame for everything.

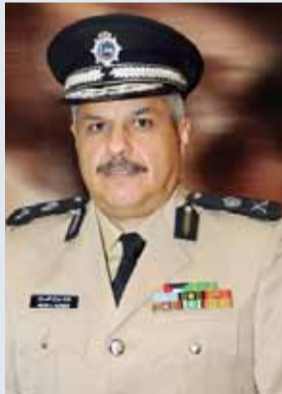
It is noteworthy here to mention that the Economist also published an editorial in the same month in 1990 with the headline "Tribes Hoisting Flags", in which it denied that, with the exception of Egypt, Turkey and Iran, the region included any real state or nation. It argued that the region was not yet mature enough to become states. And now, after 25 years, we find ourselves face to face with this prophecy coming true. Racial wars have erupted in a way that would place them all under the 'tribal state', through which people develop religious, racial, sectarian or nationalistic affiliations and prioritize them to loyalty to a state that is not as non-biased as it should be and comprises of the discrepancies of those communities.

The magazine also refers to our countries' current deteriorating economic situations and the reliance of most of its peoples on spending revenues, mainly made from selling oil, which opens wide for forming totalitarian states that own all sustenance and souls. The magazine, that can be classified as rightist, also recommends the market system with strict state control to avoid allowing open markets, leading to corruption and the domination of market 'barons' the way they do now.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

SOME BEGGARS MAKE UP TO KD 30,000 IN RAMADAN: JARRAH

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior's Assistant Undersecretary For Citizenship And Residency Affairs Major General Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah hoped to impose the new residency and visit visa fees as soon as possible "in order to stop some expats' manipulation of Kuwaiti laws." "We have submitted the fee increase proposal and the decision to approve it is up to Deputy Pime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah," he said.



Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah

Sheikh Mazen added that he had temporarily stopped all family and commercial visit visa extensions in order to foil attempts by some visitors to stay during Ramadan to beg in Kuwait. "Kuwait is a benevolent country and everybody seeks Allah's rewards during Ramadan, which is taken advantage of by some beggars who make KD 20,000 to 30,000 during this month," he underlined, noting that he had instructed immigration detectives to deport all beggars arrested in Ramadan because they should do this in their own countries. "Expats must respect Kuwait's laws. We will not tolerate manipulating them. Strangers must behave. We welcome expats who respect our laws the way we do with their laws when we visit their countries," he concluded. — Al-Rai

MANPOWER AUTHORITY TO DISCUSS LABOR ISSUES

KUWAIT: The Manpower Public Authority (MPA) will hold a meeting before the month of Ramadan to discuss several issues, informed sources said. These issues include a report on the authority's performance last year and study obstacles it faces, besides discussing the annual report of incoming labor and comparing entry and departure traffic. Other decisions and bringing in workers based on the higher committee's study of the population structure will be reviewed. The authority will decide whether to keep or reduce the current 25 percentage allocated to recruiting foreign laborers. The authority could also decide to suspend recruitment in the private sector for a specific period of time for demographic purposes, the sources said. — Al-Anbaa

KUWAIT AIRWAYS ALLOWS TWO CASES PER PASSENGER

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways has issued a new luggage policy that will be effective from May 16 until Oct 31, 2016. Passengers will now be allowed to carry two pieces of luggage instead of one, except for passengers to or from the US, France, Italy, Switzerland and Austria. The weight of each piece should not exceed 23 kg for passengers on economy class. Business class passengers can carry two pieces of luggage of 32 kg each. Any weight over this will require a payment of KD 60 for the extra piece of luggage and KD 100 for another one. — Al-Anbaa



KFH NAMES WINNERS OF BANKING CARDS CAMPAIGN'S THIRD DRAW

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) named seven winners of the third draw of the new banking cards promotional campaign themed 'Win Samsung Curved UHD 65" TV with KFH Cards' in an attempt to encourage clients to use KFH credit, prepaid and debit cards while making purchases in Kuwait and overseas.

The winners are Rashid Alhajri, Talal Alenezi, Rinad Albarjas, Salman Aldaihani, Fouad Alsalem, Mohammad Bu Alayan and Nasser Al-Mutairi.

Senior Manager Group Card Support, at KFH Zaid Al-Khateeb handed over some awards to the winners.

For every KD 10 spent on their KFH cards, clients will get a chance to enter a draw and win daily Samsung Curved UHD 65" TV for 50 days ending June 14th 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.

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 suc-

cess 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.



NO TAX ON EXPATS' REMITTANCES

KUWAIT: The government will not impose tax on money transfers made by expats, adding that the income tax law is not a priority for the time being. Meanwhile, the public prosecution exonerated the Ministry of Awqaf in a complaint against the Director of the Islamic Studies Department Mohammad Al-Omar and supervisor Fahd Al-Khizi, and dismissed the charges of violating public funds. It also exonerated the housing authority from the same charges.

High-ranking ministerial sources said the Cabinet did not approve the report of the subsidies committee on the new gasoline prices. The subsidy the govern-

ment will provide for one litre of super gasoline is 47 fils and 32 fils for premium, and this subsidy will be gradually rationalized during the next three years. As for ultra gasoline, a 15 percent profit was added per litre.

Sources said based on the prices submitted by the committee reviewing the study of various types of subsidies, citizens and expats of limited and middle income were not given additional burdens as the committee was keen to have the price of regular gas at 85 fils a liter, super for 105 fils and ultra for 185 fils, and these prices are based on the price of crude oil at \$50 a barrel. — Al-Anbaa

COST CUTTING MEASURES AT OIL SECTOR INEVITABLE: GOVT SOURCE

KUWAIT: Cost cutting measures in the oil sector are definitely coming, Al-Rai reported yesterday quoting government sources, adding that the government will present legal initiatives on that regard that guarantee workers' rights. The source added that the government and oil sector unionists will meet to discuss suitable alternative solutions to cut spending while at the same time maintain employees' benefits.

Al-Anbaa had earlier reported that following the government's confirmation to oil union and syndicate representatives that employees' rights would not be touched and its emphasis on the need to cut expenses and costs, in addition to an agreement that oil sector strikes have a direct effect on Kuwait's greater good, a ministerial committee meeting with representatives

came up with the following decisions:

- Considering the strike days as regular full official working ones without deducting them from those who took part in it.

- The government reaffirmed oil union and syndicate representatives that oil sector employees' rights and gains would not be affected.

- For national and patriotic reasons, everybody was urged to cut expenses as instructed by the Cabinet in all ministries.

- Agreeing on programmed cutting of expenses and rationalization in the oil sector, while at the same time, working on increasing revenues and profits.

- Seeking an alternative to the payroll strategic alternative project in view of recommendations made by the oil union.

Job opportunities

In other news, high-ranking oil sources revealed plans to employ nearly 1,000 persons in the oil sector during the current fiscal year. They said the jobs will be distributed over various sectors and specialties depending on vacancies available, in parallel with the sector's mega projects. Sources said that the number of vacancies changes daily because it is linked to the employment and resignations activity, adding that last year, the number of those employed equaled those who left the sector. The sources said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) keeps providing Kuwaitis with job opportunities and continually works to create more job opportunities and train Kuwaitis out of KPC's belief in the human element because it is the guarantee for the success of Kuwait oil strategy. — Al-Rai, Al-Anbaa

DNA TESTS PREVENT CITIZENSHIP FORGERY

KUWAIT: A bedoon man was caught when he used a Kuwaiti double and his sister to give DNA samples to receive Kuwait nationality. He and his accomplices were sent to the criminal court for forging official documents.

The bedoon man who wants Kuwaiti nationality has a Kuwaiti sister, and he is married to a Kuwaiti woman. But when he took DNA tests with his sister, their genes did not match, which meant a failure to prove their lineage. So he took the advice of a friend to use a Kuwaiti and his sister as doubles and impersonate them in giving the DNA samples. So he convinced his Kuwaiti wife and her brother to replace him and his sister to give the

DNA samples and get the Kuwaiti nationality.

It was agreed that the bedoon's wife and her brother would go the nationality department in the name of the bedoon and his sister for the DNA test. They gave the employees false information to get an official document and samples were taken, and they almost succeeded if it was not for the employees' vigilance when they noticed that the photos attached to the applications did not match the names given. So the citizen and his sister were detained, and they confessed to the plan. The bedoon, his sister, his wife and her brother were sent to the prosecution, which sent them to the criminal court. — Al-Rai

Crime

Report

Ex-con beats up driver in Adan

KUWAIT: A citizen told Adan police that a person stopped his driver, claimed to be a detective and took his ID. He beat him up, forced him to open the house's door and searched the driver's room. He then returned the ID to the driver before escaping. The case was referred to Adan detectives. Detectives took the victim's statement and identified the suspect as a Kuwaiti ex-convict, who was arrested after fierce resistance. He was found to have been released from jail recently. He confessed to the charges and was detained to be sent to the prosecution. In a separate case, a security source said that a citizen informed Salmiya police that unidentified persons attacked her as she was entering west Salmiya health center and stole her mobile phone after beating her. Meanwhile, a Sri Lankan said while he was standing in front of the house, a man who claimed to be a detective beat him and forced him into his room inside his sponsor's house, took the key to a car and escaped in it. Separately, an Egyptian man told Mina Abdullah police that an unidentified person beat him and robbed KD 81 and a mobile phone.

Ex-wife beaten

A female citizen accused her ex-husband and his sister of beating her for the second time in her Jabriya apartment due to differences that are still in court. The complainant handed police a medical report stating that she suffered several bruises, adding that this is the second time she was attacked by them, and that she had filed a complaint a few months earlier against them. Investigations are underway.

Three drug dealers arrested

Salmiya detectives arrested two male and a female citizens for selling drugs in Jabriya. They had marijuana and methamphetamine along with KD 3,600 collected from sales. Detectives learned that three citizens including a woman trade in drugs and arrange to meet their clients in Jabriya. The suspects were put under watch and policemen arrested them, finding marijuana and meth in small pouches. The drugs, money and suspects were sent to the Drugs Control General Department (DGC). Separately, a man who works at the traffic department was arrested and sent to the Drugs Control General Department after he gave a colleague a Captagon tablet to treat him of fatigue. The suspect had five tablets. The policeman was surprised to find what the tablet was and told his superior, so the Saudi was arrested and sent to the DCGD.

Hot pursuit

Jahra was the scene of a hot pursuit between several policemen and three persons, two of whom are brothers, and all were in an abnormal condition. A security source said that while a patrol was on duty, a man driving a sports vehicle told them that two persons were in a car and seemed abnormal, and the driver had pulled a gun in his face. The car was spotted in front of a grocery store, and a man came out of the store and got into the car. Police cut off the driver, but he escaped and a hot pursuit began until he hit a lamppost in Oyoun. The driver and his companion got out of the car and began running and were chased. The first suspect was arrested, but the second kept firing a weapon until he ran out of ammunition, and was arrested too. On the way back, an unidentified person appeared with a gun, took the suspects' car and escaped. The suspects were taken to the police station as the case was handed to detectives.

Hacker caught

Farwaniya detectives arrested a citizen for hacking. The suspect stole bank account details and financed purchases of electronics and perfumes worth KD 1,800. The suspect used smartphone applications to get the names and account information of his victims. He was sent to the public prosecution. — Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa

POWER LOAD INCREASES AS TEMPERATURES RISE

KUWAIT: As the summer season has arrived, the power load indicator of the main control center on the Fifth Ring Road drew the attention of many motorists. The indicator started to move from the safe color of green as temperatures started to rise, towards yellow, which precedes amber and red. The indicator moved to yellow, registering consumption of 11,404 MW, an increase of 350 MW over what it registered on Sunday when it reached 11,060 MW. Sources said the reason for the indicator to reach the yellow zone is rising temperatures, which reached 44 degrees C. It also affected water consumption, which reached 447 million gallons, 27 million more than the production rate, which prompted the ministry to compensate for the shortage from the strategic reserve, which currently stands at 311 million gallons. — Al-Rai

KD 35 MILLION FOR MOH CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS

KUWAIT: Well-informed health sources said KD 35 million of the Ministry of Health's (MoH) current budget has been allocated for contracts and agreements made by international and foreign colleges, health centers and universities. These contracts were signed to provide research, training, medical and pharmaceutical consultations, medical tests, dental preventive programs and bringing consultants over. The source explained that the aforementioned sum would include KD 155,000 for the Canadian Board Quality accreditation, KD 8 million for the mouth and dental health program treaty, KD 500,000 for medical tests, KD 100,000 for the Chinese protocol, KD 5 million for the Stuttgart agreement, KD 320,000 for the King Abdul Aziz University medical emergency agreement, KD 2.3 million for The Royal Canadian College agreement with Kuwait institute for medical specialties, KD 3 million for visiting consultants, KD 7.2 for locum doctors and KD 12 million for new future agreements. — Al-Rai



Brawl in S Africa parliament as opposition party was ejected

OREGON AND KENTUCKY CONTESTS PUT PRESSURE ON HILLARY CLINTON



VIENNA: US Secretary of State John Kerry (L) and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif attend a bilateral meeting yesterday. — AFP

POWERS FAIL TO AGREE NEW DATE FOR SYRIA TALKS

VIENNA/BEIRUT: Major power foreign ministers failed to agree a new date to resume Syrian peace talks at a meeting yesterday, and the opposition said it would not come back to Geneva negotiations unless conditions improved on the ground. A pessimistic atmosphere pervaded the meeting in Vienna between countries that support President Bashar al-Assad and his enemies, all of which have committed to reviving a ceasefire and peace process that have been unraveling since last month.

In a joint statement after the meeting attended by the United States, European and Middle East powers that oppose Assad as well as Russia and Iran which support him, the powers called for a full cessation of hostilities and access for aid.

In stronger language than in the past, they warned the warring factions that if they repeatedly broke the truce they risked foregoing the protection of the Feb. 27 cessation of hostilities agreement sponsored by Washington and Moscow.

They also directed the UN's World Food Program to air drop food, medicine and water to besieged communities starting on June 1 if humanitarian access was denied by either side. But they did not agree on a date for peace talks to resume. The Geneva talks broke up last month after the opposition delegation quit, accusing the government of ignoring the ceasefire, and recent weeks saw an intensification of fighting, particularly near Aleppo, Syria's largest city before the war.

UN envoy Staffan de Mistura told a news conference there was still a strong desire to keep the peace process moving. "We want to keep the momentum. The exact date I am not at the moment revealing it because it will depend also on other factors," he said. He noted that the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which begins in early June, was coming soon.

The main opposition High Negotiations Committee said it was not willing to return to negotiations without a full ceasefire and access for humanitarian aid. "I don't think there will be results, and if there are any results they will not be sufficient for the Syrian people," HNC chief negotiator Asaad al-Zoubi told Reuters ahead of yesterday's Vienna meeting.

"We are used to the fact that Russian and US foreign ministers are taking the world into an unknown direction," he said. "The HNC has said that if aid does not reach everybody, if the sieges aren't lifted and if a full truce does not happen, there

will be no negotiations." Washington, which wants Assad to leave power, has worked closely on diplomacy with Russia, which joined the war last year to support him. That has alarmed some of Assad's opponents and raised doubts among some of the countries that support them.

US Secretary of State John Kerry, standing beside Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and de Mistura at a news conference, made clear Washington still wanted Assad out. Russia needed to use its influence over Assad to secure a transition in Syria, Kerry said. "This war will not end for him or for his people without a political settlement."

Gesturing to Lavrov, Kerry said Assad had made a series of commitments to Moscow that he was prepared to negotiate, but had not kept his word. "I think he should never make a miscalculation about President Obama's determination to do what is right at any given moment of time where he believes he has to make that decision," Kerry said.

Lavrov repeated Moscow's line, that it was not fighting on behalf of any particular ruler in Damascus: "We don't support Assad. We support the fight against terrorism." France's Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said progress was needed urgently on the ground. "If nothing happens in terms of respecting the ceasefire or humanitarian aid, then it will no longer be about discouragement, but despair. We are in an extremely fragile period."

Aid, violence

The United Nations said this month that Syria's government, which has been on the front foot in the war since its ally Russia intervened last year, was refusing UN demands to deliver aid to hundreds of thousands of people.

Yesterday's talks discussed ways to stop the violence by separating al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda's wing in Syria, from other opposition fighters in some areas like Aleppo. Ayrault said France had told moderate opposition groups "they must be extremely clear with regard groups like al-Nusra. There must be no ambiguity." Nusra, along with Islamic State, is not party to the ceasefire. Western and Arab states accuse the Syrian government and Russia of using links between rebels and Nusra as a pretext to launch offensives against other opponents of Assad. —Reuters

AUSTRIA SWEARS IN NEW CHANCELLOR

VIENNA: Crisis-hit Austria appointed new Chancellor Christian Kern yesterday, with the ailing centrist government pinning its hopes on the ex-railway boss to help stem the surge of the far-right.

The 50-year-old, renowned for his glowing business achievements and snappy dress sense, was sworn in by President Heinz Fischer at Vienna's Hofburg palace shortly after 1500 GMT. "You are taking on a great and beautiful but also difficult role with a lot of responsibilities," Fischer said before the two men sat down to sign the official certificate of appointment.

True to his reputation as someone who takes pride in his appearance, Kern wore a perfectly tailored dark suit and stylish horn-rimmed glasses for his first appearance as head of state. The father-of-four replaces fellow Social Democrat Werner Faymann of the SPOe party who threw in the towel on May 9 after a string of poor election results. Kern faces the major challenge of uniting a fractious SPOe and smoothing over tensions with its coalition partner, the conservative People's Party (OeVP). He also has to convince Austrians unhappy about the arrival of migrants and rising unemployment to vote for his party at the next scheduled elections in 2018.

However, Kern's biggest headache will be to decide whether to ditch the SPOe's 30-year-old taboo on cooperating with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖe) dating back to when the late, controversial Joerg Haider became leader of the right-wing party. "We won't work with parties which stir up hatred against other people and minorities, full stop," Kern said at a press conference shortly before his swearing-

in ceremony. "From my point of view it's crystal clear that principles must come before keeping power," he added.

Headaches await

The appointment comes days before a presidential runoff vote, pitching the FPÖe's Norbert Hofer against the Green-backed candidate Alexander van der Bellen on May 22. In the first round last month, Hofer comfortably beat his rival by 35 percent to 21 percent.

Meanwhile the SPOe and OeVP were knocked out of the race with just 11 percent. The dismal performance means that for the first time since 1945, the president will not come from one of the two main parties. This heralds the risk of the new head of state taking advantage of some of the president's never-before-used powers, such as firing the government.

Mirroring trends elsewhere in Europe, Austria's main parties have been losing voters for years while the FPÖe now consistently scores more than 30 percent in opinion polls. As a result, the SPOe and OeVP could fall short of being able in 2018 to re-form their "grand coalition". In the last election three years ago, they only just scratched together a majority. "The task before Kern is Herculean," political analyst Thomas Hofer told AFP in a recent interview. Kern, dubbed a "pinstripes socialist" by German broadcaster ARD, grew up in a working class district of Vienna as the son of an electrician and a secretary. He joined the SPOe when he was young, climbing up the ranks before moving to an energy firm in 1997 and to national railways company OeBB in 2010. — AFP

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TUNISIAN GAYS LIVE IN LIMBO SHADOWLAND

TUNIS: The flying of the rainbow flag in Tunisia's capital is seen as a sign that homosexuality is finally emerging from the shadows in the conservative Muslim nation. But many of those affected directly prefer to keep their private lives a secret in a country where homosexuality is still considered a crime.

As the world yesterday marked International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, in the North African country homosexuals remain subject to both social and legal discrimination. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights, long taboo in Tunisia, have improved gradually since the 2011 revolution that sparked the Arab Spring.

After the uprising resulted in greater freedom of speech, several associations emerged including Mawjoudin (We exist) and Shams (Sun). However, being openly gay in Tunisia is still a no-no for most homosexuals in a country that hands down lengthy prison sentences for the "offence".

The debate burst onto the public scene last spring with calls for homosexuality to be decriminalized. Under Section 230 of the country's Penal Code, those convicted of sodomy or lesbianism face up to three years in jail.

After a court last September sentenced a youth to a year behind bars for homo-

sexuality, then-justice minister Salah Ben Aissa made a controversial call for Article 230 to be scrapped.

This was cited as one reason for his sacking the following month. "I don't see why we have to live in hiding. Our private life is our own business," Shams vice president Ahmed Ben Amor told AFP. At the age of 19 he was ostracized by his family and expelled from high school for declaring his homosexuality.

'Get out of here!'

Braving the open hostility of a large segment of the population, LGBT associations have now begun to emerge into public view and even hold open meetings. Iconic rainbow flag in hand, activists marched in Tunis on January 14, the anniversary of the 2011 revolution. But their presence was not welcomed by all: dozens of people shouted at the marchers to "Get out of here!" and police had to escort the activists to safety.

Today, homosexuality has become a recurring topic in Tunisian media. To hear people speak publicly of homosexuality was "unthinkable some time ago," said academic Wahid Ferchichi, who heads the Tunisian Association for the Defense of Individual Liberties.

According to sociologist Mohamed Jouiri, "the post-revolution context allowed

a minority to express and assert its existence". He said that "the situation for homosexuals in Tunisia is much better than in other Arab countries", despite remaining very difficult. "When you're gay in Tunisia, you live with two faces," a young homosexual in the northern city of Bizerte told AFP. "When you are with straight people, you don't show that you are different because of the risk of violence. And of course there is also another risk-the law".

In December, rights groups called on Tunisia to repeal anti-homosexuality laws after six students were jailed for three years after being forced to undergo anal examinations. NGOs have denounced the use of such tests as cruel, inhuman and degrading.

'Forced to dance naked'

In March, an appeals court reduced the sentence to one month in jail and also overturned a five-year ban on them entering the central city of Kairouan where they were first convicted. If President Beji Caid Essebsi judged the five-year ban to be archaic, before it was lifted, he did not speak out against the original prison sentence and categorically ruled out decriminalizing homosexuality. "That will not happen," he said in an interview with Egyptian television. "I reject it," he said of Article 230 being repealed.



TUNIS: Ahmed Ben Amor, vice president of the Tunisian "Shams" association for the decriminalization of homosexuality, poses for a picture during an interview in the capital on May 9, 2016. — FP

Every day, homosexuals in Tunisia suffer from profound social rejection and hostility. "Being gay in Tunisia is worse than having the plague," said Mohamed Ali, 22, one of the six students in the Kairouan case. He is still traumatized by the anal examination he

underwent in the presence of two police officers, as well as his treatment in prison in Sousse where he said he was attacked and ridiculed. "Inmates forced me to dance naked while amused guards looked on, doing nothing," he said. — AFP



DIYARBAKIR, TURKEY: Kurdish mourners pray as they gather around coffins yesterday. — AFP

TURKEY BURIES VICTIMS OF PKK BLAST LAST WEEK THAT KILLED 16

'WHY IS THE WORLD SILENT?'

DIYARBAKIR: Turkey yesterday buried over a dozen victims of a massive blast in its southeast last week that killed 16 people when a truck laden with explosives by Kurdish militants planning a major attack detonated prematurely.

The initial toll from the blast outside the southeast's main city of Diyarbakir on Thursday night was far lower and Turkish authorities only confirmed Monday 13 more victims had been identified and a total of 16 people lost their lives.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on yesterday for the first time spoke about the blast, saying Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants had been trying to transfer the explosives to Diyarbakir city with the aim of killing hundreds of people.

The body parts from the victims-described as local villagers-were scattered over such a wide area that identification on the spot was impossible and the remains were sent to Istanbul for DNA testing.

In a sign of the gravity of the incident, the funerals in the village of Sarikamis just outside Diyarbakir were led by Interior Minister Efan Ala and Development Minister Cevdet Yilmaz.

The coffins of the 13 victims were laid to

rest side-by-side in a joint plot at the village cemetery, an AFP photographer said. There were scenes of agony as the coffins were carried to the graveyard with men and women collapsing in grief and embracing the coffins in a final farewell.

'Why is world silent?'

Erdogan said the PKK militants had been seeking to move the consignment of explosives to Diyarbakir when it started being followed by suspicious Sarikamis villagers. The PKK militants then opened fire and detonated the truck, he said. "We are talking now about an attack plot by a terrorist organisation seeking to assassinate hundreds of innocent people and 16 citizens who paid with their lives by preventing it," he said.

He asked why the world was silent about the incident. "This should prompt firm condemnations from around the world," said Erdogan. On the night of the incident, Turkish authorities said four "bombmakers" from the outlawed PKK were killed when the truck filled with explosives detonated. But villagers said the death toll had been far higher from a gigantic blast

that was felt in Diyarbakir city and left a wide crater in the ground.

Official statements this week said three victims were buried on May 13, making the total death toll 16, and there has been no further mention of fatalities among the PKK.

Erdogan indicated that the PKK militants escaped in a car while detonating the explosive-laden truck. In a statement, the PKK acknowledged the incident, claiming the vehicle exploded when anti-PKK villagers opened fire on it. The group said the explosives were meant to be transferred to another location and not detonated. Turkey has been waging an offensive against the PKK after the collapse in 2015 of a two-year ceasefire declared by the group. Hundreds of members of the Turkish security forces have been killed in attacks since then although civilian deaths in the conflict have rarely been confirmed.

More than 40,000 people have been killed since the PKK took up arms in 1984 demanding a homeland for Turkey's biggest minority. Since then, the group has pared back its demands to focus on cultural rights and a measure of autonomy. — AFP

SAUDI EXECUTES PAKISTANI FOR SMUGGLING HEROIN

RIYADH: Yesterday Saudi Arabia put to death a Pakistani man convicted of drug smuggling, bringing to 93 the number of executions in the kingdom this year.

Mohammed Ishaq Thawab Gul had been found guilty of trafficking heroin into the kingdom, the interior ministry said. Most people put to death in the Gulf country are beheaded with a sword. Murder and drug trafficking cases account for the majority of Saudi executions, although 47 people were put to death for "terrorism" on a single day in January.

According to rights group Amnesty

International, Saudi Arabia had the third-highest number of executions last year-at least 158. That was far behind Pakistan which executed 326, and Saudi Arabia's regional rival Iran, which executed at least 977, said Amnesty whose figures exclude secretive China. Rights experts have raised concerns about the fairness of trials in Saudi Arabia and say the death penalty should not be applied in drugs cases. The interior ministry, however, said the government "is keen on fighting drugs of all kinds due to their serious damage to individuals and the society". — AFP

LIBYA UNITY GOVT SAYS IT WANTS WARPLANES TO FIGHT IS

TRIPOLI: Yesterday Libya's unity government called for warplanes and helicopters to fight jihadists as it hailed international support for granting it an exemption to a longstanding embargo on weapons sales.

On Monday, the United States, Italy and Libya's allies and neighbors agreed in Vienna to arm the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) to confront the threat from the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group. The agreement comes as rival Libyan forces prepare separate offensives against IS, which has taken advantage of the chaos since the 2011 revolution to establish a new stronghold across the Mediterranean from Europe.

International backing for an exemption to the embargo, in place since 2011, is "fundamental to the creation of a strong army... capable of fighting the jihadist Islamic State group and other extremist groups", GNA deputy head Mussa al-Kony told AFP. US Secretary of State John Kerry said a 25-member group agreed to exempt the GNA from the UN arms embargo imposed since the uprising against Moamer Kadhafi's regime five years ago. "State institutions have collapsed because the army itself fell apart. Our priority today is to unify this institution and revive it, but without weapons we cannot do this," Kony said.

"What we want is to acquire all sorts of weaponry... but our priority is aircraft," he said. "We want pilots, helicopters and warplanes." On Monday in Vienna, GNA chief Fayez al-Sarraj requested both equipment and training which the international ministers present were ready to support. World powers, Kerry said, will support the GNA's exemption "from the UN arms embargo to acquire those weapons and bullets needed to fight Daesh (IS) and other terrorist groups".

Sarraj has sought for the past month and a half to assert the GNA's authority in Tripoli. It comes as IS seeks to expand westwards out of its stronghold Sirte, Kadhafi's hometown on the Mediterranean coast which it has controlled since last June.

Europe fears the jihadists could use Sirte's port and airport as a springboard to attack the continent. The international community, particularly European powers, are also concerned about a stream of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean from Libya's unsecured coast.

'Creating chaos'

Libya was left with two rival administrations after a militia alliance took over Tripoli in mid-2014, setting up its own authority and forcing the elected parliament to flee to Tobruk in the country's far east.

The Tripoli-based unity government, formed under a December power-sharing deal agreed by some lawmakers from both sides, has announced the formation of a new military command to take charge of the battle against IS. But armed forces loyal to the other government based in the far east are also preparing to battle IS under the command of General Khalifa Haftar.

Ahmed al-Mesmari, a spokesman for Haftar's forces, said the decision to ease the arms embargo for the benefit of the GNA only was "illegal", adding that the forces of the unity government are "a new front for militias".

He said the decision will "create chaos, and we will turn to countries that support the army in order to arm ourselves". IS jihadists have this month advanced from Sirte into territory held by the unity government, capturing key checkpoints along the coast.

Forces loyal to the GNA, backed by fighter jets, yesterday fought IS as they attempted to recapture a major crossroads where the highway along the Mediterranean meets the main road south into the desert interior. The Abu Grein crossroads lies 120 kilometers south of the third city of Misrata and its seizure by IS this month prompted militia there to mobilize.

Four members of the pro-GNA forces were killed yesterday-three by a landmine and one in clashes, according to a Facebook page of the GNA forces. — AFP

TURKEY PARLIAMENT PREPARES TO DEBATE HOTLY-CONTESTED IMMUNITY BILL

ANKARA: The Turkish parliament yesterday began debating a hugely controversial bill that would strip dozens of deputies of their parliamentary immunity and which pro-Kurdish lawmakers say is directly aimed at driving them out of the legislature.

The bill has already led to unprecedented scenes at the committee stage with deputies exchanging angry blows with their fists and even feet rather than discussing the document. The day's parliamentary session began in the afternoon with the debates on the bill, which could prove fiery and go late into the night, set to get under way later.

A final vote is expected on Friday. Under current Turkish law, MPs in parliament have the right to full immunity from prosecution. If passed, the bill would lift the immunity of 130 deputies from all parties whose dossiers have been sent to the parliament speaker. But the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) says the bill is essentially a drive to expel its MPs from parliament.

HDP MPs are particularly vulnerable to prosecution on allegations of links or even verbal support for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which is fighting a renewed insurgency against the Turkish state.

'Destroy the HDP'

"What this motion seeks to destroy is the HDP in parliament," party co-leaders Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag, both of whom could face prosecution, said in a letter to European MPs.

Should a number of HDP deputies leave parliament, it would ease the path for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to realise his dream of changing the constitution to create a presidential system in Turkey. The HDP said the bill could lead to the prosecution of 50 HDP MPs out of its total contingent of 59. "If successful, this coup would be a most crucial step for Erdogan to replace Turkey's parliamentary democracy... with an absolutist presidential system," the HDP's co-leaders said.

Should the bill become law, it raises the prospect that the likes of Demirtas and Yuksekdag-already the target of criminal investigations could go on trial on charges of making "terrorist propaganda" for the PKK and even face time in jail. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) needs to win 367 votes in the 550 seat parliament-a two-thirds majority-to push the legislation through directly. A three-fifths majority — 330 votes-is enough to call a referendum on the issue. — AFP

EGYPT PRESIDENT BACKS FRENCH PROPOSAL FOR MIDEAST TALKS

CAIRO: Egypt's president yesterday declared his support for a French proposal to hold a Mideast peace conference later this year, citing it along with US efforts, an Arab peace plan first floated in 2000 and the international Mideast peace quartet as possible avenues to an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi also called on Israel and the Palestinians to seize what he described as a "realistic" and "great" opportunity to reach a peaceful settlement to their decades-old conflict, saying they need look no farther than the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty to see the positive outcome of peacemaking.

The animosity that existed between Egypt and Israel existed prior to their landmark accord, he said, was no different from how the Palestinians and Israelis feel now. Egypt was prepared to "make every effort" to contribute to an Israeli-Palestinian settlement, added the Egyptian leader in his most

detailed public comments on the issue since taking office nearly two years ago. France plans to host a ministerial meeting of 20 countries, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, as a first step ahead of an international conference tentatively scheduled for next month and aimed at reviving the dormant Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Addressing Israelis and their government, el-Sissi said there was a "real opportunity" for peacemaking although some in Israel did not think peace is now necessary given the turmoil in the region.

An Israeli-Palestinian deal, he said, would "give safety and stability to both sides. If this is achieved, we will enter a new phase that perhaps no one can imagine now." "I want to say to all those listening, Palestinians and Israelis: Please, there is now a great opportunity for a better future and life and greater hope and stability," he said. "Should not we seize the chance and move in that framework?" — AP



CAIRO: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, left, talks to Egyptian president Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi on May 9, 2016. — AP

NEW \$60M PROJECT TO FIGHT FOR 1ST AMENDMENT

NEW YORK: The First Amendment is getting a new champion, with some deep pockets. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Columbia University announced yesterday the launch of a \$60 million project, the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, which would use litigation as well as research and education to fight for freedom of expression in an ever-evolving digital era.

The last half of the 20th century saw court cases that really defined and pushed the First Amendment forward, said Alberto Ibarguen, president of Knight Foundation. But it's not the same environment, with the technology and tools of information gathering and dissemination changing rapidly, and there not being nearly the same number of newspaper outlets with the resources to take on the fights.

That's where the institute can make a difference, Ibarguen said. "So much is changing so fast that more voices, a bigger family of voices speaking in favor of free speech and free expression ... is more likely to lead to a more open societal attitude toward free speech," he said.

The amendment bars the government from establishing an official religion and enshrines Americans' rights to freedom to practice religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom to assemble peaceably.

The institute, which has started its search for an executive director, will conduct

research and scholarship on First Amendment issues, and develop a long-term view of how freedom of expression should be protected, said Lee Bollinger, president of Columbia. It would take on and support court cases that connected to that strategy.

Bollinger said the institute would be able to make use of a Columbia-wide commitment, with access to the university's law school and journalism schools and other departments. The Knight Foundation and Columbia are each putting \$5 million toward the institute's operating budget for the first five years, and \$25 million each toward its endowment.

The focus would be on how freedom of expression is defined in a digital age filled with advances in technology that judges who decided cases decades ago couldn't have seen coming, said Eric Newton, a consultant who was formerly a longtime journalism program leader at Knight and worked on the institute project. "A citizen who can carry a cellphone, which is a printing press and a broadcast studio, in his or her pocket has legal standing that courts have yet to sort out," he said, pointing out that whether that citizen has journalist protections currently varies from state to state.

"If everything gets re-litigated in a digital frame, that means that the First Amendment as we come to know it could change, and it could change dramatically," he said. "It's only the way it is because of some court cases that happened decades ago." — AP



LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY: A score board reads "Hillary Clinton 2016" as Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton speaks at a get out the vote event at Transylvania University on Monday. — AP

OREGON AND KENTUCKY CONTESTS PUT PRESSURE ON HILLARY CLINTON

FOCUS ON GENERAL ELECTION

WASHINGTON: Hillary Clinton is under pressure to do well in Democratic nominating contests in Kentucky and Oregon so she can turn her attention to the general election and the mounting attacks on her by Republican candidate Donald Trump.

The continued presence in the race of Bernie Sanders - who remains a long-shot to upset Clinton and win the Democratic nomination - is prompting concerns among Clinton allies that he will damage her ability to take on Trump and hurt the Democrat in the fall. But Sanders supporters shrug off that worry, arguing that Trump is such a flawed candidate that Clinton will easily dispatch with him if she faces him in the Nov. 8 election.

"Either way we're going to get a Democratic president," Alisha Liedtke, 28, a Sanders supporter from Ellensburg, Washington.

In interviews with 14 voters who back the US senator from Vermont, supporters said they did not believe Trump, who is all but certain to be the Republican nominee, could win the Nov. 8 general election. They said Sanders should keep fighting

until the Democratic National Convention in July, to push Clinton to the left and challenge her ties to Wall Street and support for free-trade deals.

Tough slog for Clinton

Allies of Clinton have held back from overt calls for Sanders to exit the race. Moves by her campaign to try to push him out could risk angering Democratic voters and backfire. So Clinton must continue her primary fight in Kentucky and Oregon, where analysts predict she will have a hard time winning. The Democratic race is unlikely to wrap up before California, New Jersey and several other states vote on June 7. Oregon, with a heavily white, liberal population, politically resembles its northern neighbor Washington, which voted for Sanders. Oregon voters cast their ballots by mail, meaning voting there actually began in the last week of April.

After Sanders won both West Virginia and Indiana this month, analysts said he has a good chance of taking Kentucky. Louisville and the western part of the state are more moderate politi-

cally, and Clinton spent Sunday and Monday campaigning there. Both Oregon and Kentucky are closed primaries in which only registered Democrats can vote, a stricture Sanders has criticized as discouraging independent voters from joining the party.

Sanders has insisted that he will stay in the presidential election until the Democratic convention on July 25-28 and planned two rallies in California for today. Democratic strategist Jim Manley said Sanders should be careful he does not wind up helping Trump. "I have no problem with Senator Sanders staying in until the end," said Manley, who supports Clinton. "If that's what he chooses to do, I just hope he plays it smart and doesn't give the Trump campaign any more ammunition than it already has to take on Hillary Clinton."

Some Democrats are concerned Trump could repeat any criticisms Sanders makes against Clinton. Clinton allies also worry that Sanders could so damage the former US secretary of state in the eyes of his supporters that they will choose not to vote in November if he is not on the ballot. — Reuters

KOCH GROUP PUTS ANOTHER \$2.2M INTO OHIO SENATE RACE

WASHINGTON: Political groups backed by billionaires Charles and David Koch are spending millions on television and online advertising in the Ohio Senate race - part of a broader plan to focus on the Republican-led Senate instead of the presidential race.

The latest wave of ads in the matchup between incumbent Republican Sen. Rob Portman and Democratic former Gov. Ted Strickland spotlighted taxes and fees Strickland raised while in office. The ads are paid for by Freedom Partners Action Fund. Other Koch groups, including Americans for Prosperity, have been knocking on doors and making phone calls to voters to boost Portman support. During an Ohio "day of action" last month, the groups made 625,000 calls and stopped at almost 17,000 homes.

Beyond that race, Koch groups have advertised in Senate contests in Nevada, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania and made a

small buy in New Hampshire before the Republican Sen. Kelly Ayotte said she did not want money from outside groups involved in her race.

Koch groups have reserved about \$30 million in commercial time for late this summer and fall, putting them at the top of a long list of outside groups planning to invest in Senate races.

The Ohio spending comes as the billionaire industrialists - and major funders of conservative causes and candidates - have distanced themselves from the presidential race and presumptive GOP nominee Donald Trump, at least for now. Charles Koch has said he doesn't like Trump's divisive comments, in particular his assertion he'd temporarily ban all Muslims from entering the country.

A Koch-funded data company used by most of the Republican Senate candidates refused to do business with Trump when his campaign inquired. — AP

PALL OF NEVADA FRACAS HANGS OVER DEMOCRATIC CONTEST

LAS VEGAS: As Oregon and Kentucky queue up to vote in the Democratic presidential nominating contest, the pall of a divisive state party convention in Nevada hangs over the race.

Supporters of Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders were accused of throwing chairs and making death threats against Nevada Democratic Party chairwoman Roberta Lange. They contended that the party leadership rigged the results of the convention, which locked in seven more delegates who pledged to support Hillary Clinton, compared with the five Sanders gained. The raucous affair ended Saturday night when security at the Paris Las Vegas casino said they could no longer ensure an orderly event.

"It was beyond the pale," said Democratic state Sen. Pat Spearman, a

On Monday, the ugliness continued as the Nevada Democratic Party kept its offices closed for security reasons and wrote a letter to the Democratic National Committee warning of what it called the Sanders campaign's "penchant for extra-parliamentary behavior - indeed, actual violence - in place of democratic conduct in a convention setting." The party's lawyer, Bradley S. Schrage, said that Sanders supporters may use similar tactics at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia this summer.

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department said Monday that it "is investigating threats being made to the Democratic office/members." Trump has repeatedly talked about how Sanders is being treated poorly by the party establishment, and his aides sug-

gest he could make inroads among some of the voters who have backed Sanders' insurgent bid. Sanders himself often criticizes Trump as a racist in his stump speech, but he has said the responsibility for Democratic unity lies largely with Clinton.

Clinton has been preaching unity. After notching a big win in Pennsylvania's primary on April 26, she said, "Whether you support Sen. Sanders or support me, there's much more that unites us than divides us."

Steve Schale, a Florida consultant who ran Barack Obama's campaigns in that state, said he thinks Sanders voters will return to the fold. He said that Clinton is winning a larger share of Democratic votes in current polling

than Obama did at this point in 2008. "Empirically, despite the public acrimony that's going on between volunteers, the data says we're going into this more unified than we were eight years ago," Schale said.

Nevada was the third state to vote in the Democratic nominating contest, but it has continued to be a flashpoint for months. Clinton won the February statewide Nevada caucuses 53-47. But Sanders supporters flooded county conventions that would select delegates to Saturday's state convention, hoping to give their candidate an edge on actual delegates who would be sent to Philadelphia.

Sanders issued a statement on Friday night calling for backers to work together "respectfully and constructively" at Saturday's convention. But Sanders' supporters did not seem to heed his advice. They booed when a set of convention rules was adopted over their objections, forcing Lange to bang the gavel in futile attempts to restore order.

"So many of these young people who have worked so hard want to make the country a better place, and I feel like they were shut out," said Erin Bilbray, a Sanders supporter who's one of Nevada's eight super delegates. "I was really, really heartbroken."

Anger swelled further after a credentials committee disqualified nearly 60 would-be Sanders' delegates, saying they didn't provide proper identifying information or were not registered Democratic voters by a May 1 deadline. The Clinton campaign turned out 33 more supporters to the convention than the Sanders campaign, enough to cement a 20-15 edge among Nevada delegates heading to Philadelphia.

As the event dragged on three hours past its scheduled end, hotel security said they could no longer staff the event and it was closed down. In a statement, the state party accused the Sanders campaign of "deliberately sharing misinformation about how the convention operates to get people riled up. And after starting this fire, they had no capacity ?_? and no desire ?_? to control their own supporters from hurling threats and insults and being disruptive to the proceedings."

Tick Segerblom, a Nevada state senator and Sanders backer, said in an interview Monday that he didn't think the state party did anything improper but that it needed to reach out to the Sanders' supporters. "They need to know the process was fair," Segerblom said. "When one side says it wasn't fair, you tend to listen to that." — AP



TRUJILLO ALTO, PUERTO RICO: Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., holds a town hall meeting at the Luis Munoz Marin Foundation on Monday. — AP

Clinton supporter who said she saw an elderly woman hit with a bottle amid the ruckus. "There's no reason to do that. That's the kind of shenanigans that they do on the other side."

The Nevada dissension does not change the likely outcome of the Democratic nominating contest, in which Clinton holds a commanding lead in pledged delegates and is expected to lock up enough to clinch the party's presidential nomination following primaries on June 7. But it points to the challenges Clinton will face in converting Sanders supporters to her side as Republican Donald Trump also targets disaffected Democrats who supported the Vermont senator.

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AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA LEADERS AGREE KARABAKH TRUCE

VIENNA: Azerbaijan and Armenia took a step back from the brink of open war on Monday as their presidents agreed to respect a ceasefire in the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh.

In their first encounter since fierce fighting erupted last month, Azerbaijan's Ilham Aliyev and his Armenia's Serzh Sarkisian also agreed to renewed peace talks in June. The deal was also a rare joint diplomatic victory for the United States and Russia, one day before the rival great powers were to co-chair crisis talks on Syria. The leaders of the bitter Caucasus rivals were summoned to Vienna by the "Minsk Group"-Moscow, Washington and Paris-after the worst ceasefire breach in two decades. Fighting erupted in Nagorno Karabakh in early

April, killing at least 110 people and wounding scores more. After meeting US Secretary of State John Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and France's Minister for Europe Harlem Desir, the parties issued a joint statement. "They reiterated that there can be no military solution to the conflict," said the statement, released to reporters by the Minsk Group delegations.

"The presidents reiterated their commitment to the ceasefire and the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The presidents agreed on a next round of talks, to be held in June at a place to be mutually agreed, with an aim to resuming negotiations on a comprehensive settlement."

The parties also agreed to beef up the Organization for Security and Cooperation

in Europe (OSCE) ceasefire monitoring mission which presently has only six observers. The Armenian presidency confirmed the agreement in a statement and, according to Russian news agencies, Lavrov welcomed the deal, saying:

"Compromise is always possible."

Russia, France and the United States hosted the talks in Vienna, the night before a similar crisis meeting of the 17-nation International Syria Support Group.

Before the Armenia-Azerbaijan talks, a senior US official said that a deal was possible because-unlike in the case of Syria-Moscow and Washington were in agreement. "This is a solvable conflict, there are some conflicts out there that simply have to be managed. But this is

one that can be solved," a senior US official told reporters. "This is an issue where we see eye-to-eye with the Russians. We have no differences of opinion." The crisis has long festered, with dozens killed every year, but April's fighting was the worst since a 1994 ceasefire turned it into one of Europe's frozen conflicts. Azerbaijan and Armenia have feuded over Nagorno Karabakh since Armenian separatists seized the landlocked territory in a war that claimed some 30,000 lives in the early 1990s.

With peace efforts stuttering to a halt in recent years, both sides in the conflict began rearming heavily, with energy-rich Azerbaijan spending vast sums on new weaponry. And yet, despite increasingly feverish rhetoric from the rivals, the

recent flare-up still appeared to catch the international community by surprise.

While the two sides accused each other of starting the fighting, analysts said it seemed Azerbaijan-suffering from falling oil prices-launched the initial attack.

In the first shift in the frontline since 1994, Azeri forces seized key positions, some of which they managed to cling on to despite a fierce Armenian counter-attack. Moscow, which has sold weapons to both sides but has a military treaty with its close ally Armenia, is seen as central to stopping a conflict that some fear could spread. Turkey-at loggerheads with Moscow since Ankara downed a Russian jet near its border with Syria last year-has pledged to support its ally Azerbaijan. — AFP



CAPE TOWN: Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF, in red) party members of parliament are physically removed from the South African parliament after repeatedly ignoring the instructions of the Speaker yesterday. — AFP

BRAWL IN S AFRICA PARLIAMENT AS OPPOSITION PARTY EJECTED

MEMBERS REFUSED TO LET ZUMA SPEAK

CAPE TOWN: A brutal fistfight broke out in the South African parliament yesterday as security guards ejected opposition lawmakers in an ugly fracas that underlined heightened political tensions over Jacob Zuma's presidency.

About 20 Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party members, who were wrestled from their seats by plain-clothed guards, had refused to let Zuma speak and furiously shouted down the Speaker, Baleka Mbete. As Zuma looked on impassively, the radical leftist lawmakers-dressed in their uniform of red workers' overalls-fought back to try to remain in the chamber until they were physically removed through a side door. Before the guards moved in, the EFF members, led by their firebrand "commander in chief" Julius Malema, yelled that it was the president who should be thrown out.

"He broke his oath of office. Zuma is the one who must go," they shouted. Outside parliament, Malema told reporters and cheering supporters: "These bouncers must know that if they give violence, we will respond with violence. We are not scared." The disruption was the latest in a series of showdowns in parliament as pressure mounts on Zuma to resign or be axed as president by the ruling African National Congress

(ANC). He has been urged to step down by a number of senior ANC veterans of the anti-apartheid struggle, which brought liberation icon Nelson Mandela to power in 1994. But he retains widespread loyalty in the party, and ANC lawmakers have regularly rallied to Zuma's defense. In April, they easily defeated an opposition move to impeach him. The EFF, which was also ejected from parliament two weeks ago in similar scenes, has vowed that it will not let Zuma speak in the chamber, saying that it does not recognize him as president in the wake of two recent court cases.

Corruption charges

In March, the country's highest court found that Zuma had violated the constitution over the spending of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on his private rural residence at Nkandla in the eastern province of KwaZulu-Natal.

In April another court said he should face almost 800 corruption charges relating to a multi-billion dollar arms deal, that were dropped in 2009, shortly before he became president. A packed public gallery watched the scuffles in parliament Tuesday, scores of them wearing black T-shirts emblazoned with Zuma's picture and the slogan:

"Accused No.1"

Zuma has been wounded by months of scandals, including the sacking of two finance ministers in four days in December which rocked the markets and saw the rand currency plummet.

After recovering some ground, the rand fell sharply again Monday after a newspaper report that the current finance minister, Pravin Gordhan, might be arrested by the Hawks, a special police unit seen as under Zuma's influence.

Zuma is believed to have reluctantly installed the respected Gordhan in December after intervention by senior ANC leaders concerned about the crashing economy. Gordhan has led efforts to try to restore confidence and avoid a looming downgrade of the country's debt to junk status by the ratings agencies.

Behind the debacle at the finance ministry are allegations of graft centered on a wealthy immigrant family from India, the Guptas, who are alleged to have such influence over Zuma that they could decide ministerial appointments.

The parliament chaos comes as the country heads towards local elections in August, and some analysts predict that if the party suffers a major drop in support, Zuma may not serve out the last three years of his final term. — AFP

LAUGH OR CRY? BOMB JOKE BARES CRISIS IN FIVE STAR MOVEMENT

ROME: Italy's acerbic Beppe Grillo may have hung up his political gloves to return to the comedy circuit, but backlash over a bomb joke targeting London's new mayor has aggravated an identity crisis within his populist Five Star movement.

Wild-eyed, outspoken Grillo took a swipe at Sadiq Khan in a Saturday night stand-up show, saying London's first Muslim mayor-whom he erroneously called "Bangladeshi"-would "blow himself up in front of Westminster".

The bushy-haired 67-year-old comic, famed for his outbursts against the political system and co-found-

ing Five Star, drew cross-party condemnation in Italy, with critics accusing him of fuelling xenophobic stereotypes and boosting the extreme right-wing.

Grillo's heir apparent Luigi Di Maio, 29, said the joke had been made on stage and should not be given a political twist, while another Five Star (M5S) member Manilo Di Stefano told journalists the comic was actually mocking Italian racists. "Beppe has always brought the news into his stand-ups. And seeing as in Italy there's rhetoric about Muslims blowing themselves up, he cracked the joke," he said, adding that the movement's guru was relishing now

being "free to say whatever comes into his head". But political rivals and commentators asked whether the populist movement can effectively claim to be Grillo-free. The Five Star has been rocked in recent weeks by scandals in two cities under its governance and Di Maio was forced to admit Monday that the movement's founder was the only one with power to suspend or expel party members.

'Confusion, contradictions'

"One day Grillo is the guarantor of the Five Stars, the next he is simply a comic who makes racist jokes. The M5S is in chaos and this is the proof," Claudio Martini, senator with the centre-left Democratic Party (PD) said.

Fellow PD senator Pina Maturani quipped "congratulations on the confusion and democracy, and goodbye at the polls". Franco Pavoncello, political science professor at the John Cabot University in Rome, told AFP the Five Star was clearly under strain and "the tension between the movement's identity when it began and after Grillo is destined to grow". "M5S was born of Grillo's desire to protest against a certain way of doing politics. But those elected by the movement's online community are young and relatively inexperienced politically," he added. Some commentators warned the bomb joke risked harming the movement's campaign to win Rome's mayoral election next month, coming as it does on top of investigations into the mayor of Parma for abuse of office and the mayor of Livorno for fraud.

The Five Star mayors of those two cities insist they are innocent but the probes have embarrassed a self-described anti-corruption movement, and the M5S is counting on winning in Rome to give it the boost it needs to challenge Matteo Renzi's centre-left government. — AFP



LONDON: Mayor of London Sadiq Khan (R) speaks with Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo as they meet at St Pancras Station on May 10, 2016. — AFP

KENYA RIPS DOWN SHODDY BUILDINGS AFTER COLLAPSE

NAIROBI: Kenya's authorities tore down a badly built residential block in a poor Nairobi district yesterday, one of more than 250 shoddy buildings that could now face demolition after a six-storey structure collapsed this month killing 51 people.

Nearby, residents of another condemned block in Mathare scrambled to wrap up utensils and other items in bed sheets and stuffed plastic bags with clothes as workers ripped out door and window frames to prepare for machinery to destroy the structure.

The Kenyan authorities have identified 258 buildings considered structurally at risk and which could be pulled down, leaving thousands of people to find new homes in a city already struggling to keep pace with its growing population. "We have tried to find another place to stay but we've not been able to," said Esther Awinja, carrying an infant on her back and hauling her belongings in a sheet out of the entrance where an X sprayed in red paint indicated the block's fate. "The only option I have now is to live in another home that is cracking and that is likely to put our lives in danger," she said, as workers moved in to pull out rudimentary fittings.

Kenyan authorities are stepping up evictions of poorly built buildings after a six-storey block in Huruma district - which lies next to Mathare - collapsed on April 29 after days of rain. Officials said it had been condemned before it crumbled and said it was not clear why it had not been pulled down. The death toll of 51 people could have been more if some residents had not seen cracks and fled shortly before it fell.

"For all those buildings that will be found to be defective, the owners will be required to demolish them," Land, Housing and Urban Development Minister Jacob Kaimenyi said in a May 5 statement. If owners failed to comply, the government would carry out the demolition and bill them, he added. Yet knocking down dangerous buildings also adds to the housing shortage in Nairobi, which is estimated to have a population of more than 4 million, almost double 15 years ago.

Sprawling cities

Keeping pace with housing for a growing population is a challenge afflicting cities



CZECH REPUBLIC: A memorial to the Roma Holocaust victims which was unveiled in 2000 at the Mirovce cemetery next to a huge industrial pig farm situated at the site of former concentration camp. — AFP

EU UNDER FIRE OVER CZECH PIG FARM ON ROMA HOLOCAUST SITE

PRAGUE: Czech anti-racism activists said yesterday that they had asked the EU to halt subsidies to a pig farm built on the site of a former concentration camp where hundreds of Roma prisoners died during World War II. "The fact that European taxpayers' money is heading to (the farm) runs counter to the values on which the EU was built," said activist Miroslav Broz, a coordinator at the Konexe anti-racism association. "When you arrive at the pig farm, you can see EU logos and flags and inscriptions saying the EU is subsidizing the operation and upgrades of this farm," he told AFP a day after May 16, which is the international Roma Resistance Day.

Jan Michal, head of the European Commission's representation in Prague, said it was up to EU member states to decide where subsidies were paid. "The European Commission manages the common agricultural policy but it is up to the individual member states to name the recipients of the support," he said. Broz said Konexe had already complained to the EU over the pig farm in 2014. "We hope that Brussels will adjust this system of financing so that this building on a genocide site cannot receive subsidies," said Broz.

Built in the 1970s in the southwestern village of Lety by the communist Czechoslovak regime, the pig farm has reaped criticism at home and abroad ever since the regime was toppled in 1989, four years before Czechoslovakia split into two states. Between 1940 and 1943, Nazi Germany and its Czech collaborators imprisoned close to 1,300 Czech Roma at the camp. Alongside European Jews, the continent's smaller Roma minority was also a target of Nazi genocide during World War II.

Some 327 Roma, including 241 children, died at the camp staffed by an ethnic Czech commander and guards, while more than 500 were sent to Nazi Germany's infamous Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in occupied southern Poland.

Of the 9,500 Czech Roma registered before World War II, fewer than 600 returned home after the Holocaust. The Czech Republic, an EU country of 10.5 million, has a Roma community estimated to number between 250,000 and 300,000. Of the roughly one million Roma who lived in Europe prior to WWII, historians believe the Nazis exterminated over half. — AFP

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PAKISTANI MAN CREDITS FAITH, FAMILY, MAN UTD TEAM FOR KIDNAP SURVIVAL

ISLAMABAD: The son of an assassinated Pakistani governor who was released more than four years after his kidnapping by Islamist militants said the Quran, memories of his family and hearing Manchester United soccer games on an illicit radio helped him survive.

In his first personal account, published yesterday, Shahbaz Taseer described torture, illness and drone strikes during his time in captivity, mostly with Uzbek militants inside Pakistan and later with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Shahbaz Taseer was abducted from his hometown Lahore in 2011, months after his father,

Salman Taseer, then governor of Punjab province, was killed by his own bodyguard over perceived blasphemy.

He was released outside the southwestern city of Quetta on March 8. Few details of how he was freed have been made public, nor of whether a ransom was paid. Taseer said he was held by militants from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in Pakistan's lawless tribal areas and later in a jail run by the Afghan Taliban across the border. "They (Uzbek militants) found perverse pleasure in torturing me," Taseer wrote in The Daily Times, owned by his family. "But I clung to my faith and

the Quran, the memory of my courageous father and the love of my family. "I could not go home, but I could bring my home to me. In my mind I visited familiar places. I conjured up my boisterous friends back home ... and imagined myself to be a stand-up comedian."

In the weeks since his return, Taseer's humor has won him many admirers on social media. Asked by a follower whether he was asked to formally join the Taliban, he said: "No, they didn't like my sense of style." His only friend, he tweeted on March 31, "was a spider called Peter." He also recounted how one of the guards, a Manchester

United fan like Taseer, brought him an illicit radio and they listened to soccer games together - saying the guard considered it both a sin and guilty pleasure. "Getting football news kept me sane," Taseer wrote. "I would tell myself, 'They are playing and winning for you.'" Taseer did not go into details of how he landed up with the Afghan Taliban but said a Taliban elder helped him escape and he rode a motorbike for eight days from inside Afghanistan to Pakistan's Baluchistan province. "Looking back, I can see that I was always free," he wrote. "No one can imprison you except yourself." — Reuters

RUSSIA'S PUTIN EXPECTED TO VISIT JAPAN AT END-2016

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to make his long-awaited visit to Japan at the end of this year, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov said yesterday. Before their meeting in Japan, Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe are likely to discuss "interesting, far-reaching and large-scale cooperation ideas" at an economic forum in Russia's Vladivostok in September, Ushakov told reporters.

Putin and Abe met in Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi this month and discussed a long-running territorial dispute over a Pacific island chain. The dispute, over a set of islands north of Hokkaido known as the Kuriles in Russia and as the Northern Territories in Japan, is one of the main factors complicating the signing of a Second World War peace treaty between Russia and Japan. — Reuters

DETENTION OF BRITON SPARKS CONCERNS OVER NEPAL DEMOCRACY

KATHMANDU, NEPAL: Nepal has detained a British man over his alleged participation in an anti-government protest, just two weeks after expelling a Canadian for criticizing the government on social media.

The detentions have sparked concerns over the Himalayan country's democracy, and suggest that the fragile coalition government is increasingly alarmed by ethnic minorities' demonstrations against the new constitution. The Home Ministry said Martin Travers, a British painter in Nepal on a tourist visa, was detained after being photographed Sunday wearing a red headband like other protesters who were shouting, "We want our identities recognized!"

Police official Bikram Thapa said Travers, 41, was released from detention late yesterday but would have to report back to the police station for more questioning. If authorities determine he participated willingly in the anti-government protest, he will likely be deported, ministry official Yadav Koirala said. Earlier this month, a Canadian man was expelled from Nepal for writing a critical social media post that the government said could disturb social harmony. "Foreign nationals who come to Nepal need to respect our laws," Koirala said. "When they are here under a tourist visa, they should be tourists. Or if they have a work visa, they should be working." He said Nepal and other countries clearly state when giving out visas that visitors should not be involved in anti-government activities. Rights groups said

authorities were going too far in punishing foreigners for speaking out on Nepalese political issues.

"Every human being in the country should enjoy basic rights," said Taranath Dahal of the Kathmandu-based Freedom Forum. "Being denied expression is a violation of their basic human rights."

Until this month, such detentions were rare in Nepal, where free speech is guaranteed by law. Criticism of the government is also nothing new from the multi-ethnic and largely impoverished population of 27 million. Since Nepal abolished its monarchy and became a parliamentary democracy in 2006, inflation has doubled to 12 percent while the economy has stagnated, and reconstruction after a set of massive earthquakes last year has barely made progress.

Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli's government struggled for months with protests led by ethnic Madhesis that blocked shipments at the southern border with India, leading to clashes that killed at least 50 people and caused severe shortages of fuel, medicine and other supplies.

Those protests ended in February, but were resumed over the weekend with huge rallies in Kathmandu. Earlier this month, Oli's 11-party governing coalition nearly collapsed when one member - the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) - threatened to withdraw support over Oli's failure to resolve the constitutional impasse with ethnic minorities. — AP



HONG KONG: Demosisto party chairperson Nathan Law being subdued by police during a demonstration yesterday. — AFP

TOP CHINA OFFICIAL PROMISES TO 'LISTEN' TO HONG KONG

THE CITY IS RESENTFUL OF BEIJING'S TIGHTENING GRIP

HONG KONG: One of China's most powerful officials said he would listen to political demands from Hongkongers in a conciliatory start to a visit yesterday that has stirred anger in a city resentful of Beijing's tightening grip.

The three-day trip by Zhang Dejiang, who chairs China's communist-controlled legislature, is the first by such a senior official in four years and comes as concerns grow in semi-autonomous Hong Kong that its long-cherished freedoms are under threat.

While Zhang is ostensibly visiting to speak at an economic conference on Wednesday, the trip is widely seen as a bid to take the temperature in an increasingly divided city with a fledgling independence movement. It has infuriated opponents, critical of a massive security operation that involves thousands of police and barricades protesters into designated areas out of Zhang's sight. Police shoved back protesters gathered near the residence of the city's leader yesterday night where Zhang was due to have dinner. Seven members of pro-democracy political party the League of Social Democrats were arrested earlier after putting up protest banners, with three still detained. A leading pro-democracy activist was also wrestled to the ground by police outside Zhang's hotel. Today will see several protest groups rally near the harbor front convention centre where Zhang is due to speak.

Zhang arrived just before noon at Hong Kong airport where he was met by city leader Leung Chun-ying and a brass band. In a short speech on the tarmac Zhang pledged to listen to a variety of political views. "(I will listen to) people from all walks of life about any suggestions and demands regarding the implementation of 'One Country, Two Systems,'" said Zhang, referring to the semi-autonomous system under which Hong Kong has been governed since being handed back to China by Britain in 1997.

He also said he would listen to "any suggestions and requests regarding the nation and Hong Kong's development". Zhang declared he had brought a "caring heart" as well as "hearty greetings and good wishes" from China's President Xi Jinping.

At a meeting with lawmakers later yesterday, Zhang said Beijing was satisfied with the work of the Hong Kong government. "I feel that the future is bright for Hong Kong," he added. He will meet four veteran pro-democracy lawmakers tonight, a rare move observers say is designed to defuse frustrations over stalled political reform.

'We won't back down'

Hong Kong has been semi-autonomous since it was handed back to China by Britain in 1997, with freedoms unseen on the mainland. But since mass rallies in 2014 for fully free leadership elections failed to win concessions, young campaigners have become increasingly frustrated.

Demosisto, a new party launched by student leaders behind the pro-democracy protests, is campaigning for a referendum to decide the city's future. It demanded in a statement posted on Facebook that Beijing allow Hong Kong "greater self-determination".

The party added "the Hong Kong people are resolute in determining our fate, and... any tokenistic diplomacy to beat us into submission will not be accepted as legitimate". Authorities have cordoned off the convention centre with water-filled plastic barricades and paving stones have been glued down to prevent protesters using them as missiles.

Police are even patrolling Lion Rock hill overlooking the city, where pro-democracy banners have regularly been unfurled. But activists from

the League of Social Democrats managed to hang a banner calling for universal suffrage on a nearby hillside yesterday morning.

Another, demanding the "end of Communist Party dictatorship", was hung on a highway from the airport into the city. After its members were arrested over the banners, a Facebook post on the party's website said it would not back down. "We are against the interference of Hong Kong affairs by the Chinese Communist Party," the post said. A small group of pro-democracy protesters including student leader Joshua Wong chanted and held up signs calling for universal suffrage and self-determination near Zhang's hotel.

High-profile activist Nathan Law tried to breach the barricade and was tackled to the ground by police. A rival group of pro-China demonstrators waved national flags nearby. Zhang's visit is expected to help Beijing gauge whether city leader Leung should stand for another term - his current stint ends in March 2017. Like all Hong Kong leaders, Leung was chosen by a 1,200-member committee stacked with Beijing loyalists. — AFP

INDIA MINISTER SLAMS POLICE OVER HORRIFIC RAPE, MURDER

NEW DELHI: Indian women's minister yesterday accused police and forensic experts of incompetence over the brutal rape and murder of a young student, a case that echoed the 2012 gang-rape of a Delhi student that sparked mass protests.

Women's and children's minister Maneka Gandhi accused police of dithering in their investigation into the attack on the student which was so vicious that she was found lying in blood, her intestines hanging out. Gandhi said an independent probe into the case by India's national commission for women found glaring problems with the way in which forensic experts were handling the assault. "The crime scene had been contaminated on all fundamental levels," Gandhi told reporters in New Delhi of the probe's findings.

The postmortem had been conducted by a junior staff member, the investigation found, and the suspected murder weapon improperly handled by numerous people, the minister said. The 30-year-old law student from the lowest Dalit caste was killed late last month in her home in southern Kerala state, sparking protests. The attack drew

comparisons with the fatal gang-rape of a student on a bus in Delhi in 2012, which shone a global spotlight on frightening levels of sexual violence against women. It led to an overhaul of India's rape laws, including the speeding up of trials, tougher penalties for offenders and improved policing, but high numbers of assaults persist. Gandhi said she was concerned about the way in which forensic experts were still handling such cases three years after the death of the Delhi student. "One of the things that should emerge from this is the need for strengthening of forensics."

Gandhi said the Kerala victim's family had complained to police before her death of threats and harassment from neighbors and others. "They (police) were told they were going to be raped, they were told they were going to be killed, they had reported it to the police and the police said just go away," Gandhi said. She said she feared police were dragging out the case because of the political implications in opposition-Congress ruled Kerala which has been holding state elections. Kerala police have said they detained three people for questioning over the attack. — AFP



KATHMANDU, NEPAL: Supporters of Nepal's minority ethnic group chant slogans against the government during a protest outside the prime minister's residence yesterday. — AP

TOKYO 2020 BID LEADER ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENT

TOKYO: One of the leaders of Tokyo's winning bid for the 2020 Olympics told the Japanese parliament yesterday that he cannot reveal the details of a contract with a Singapore firm that has enmeshed the bid in a French bribery investigation.

"We looked into the content of this contract but this is a confidential matter," Tsunekazu Takeda said under questioning from lawmakers. "So, I understand that I am not allowed to unveil the content without gaining approval from the counterpart."

French prosecutors have said that 2.8 million Singapore dollars (\$2 million) was apparently transferred from Japan to the Singapore account of a company called Black Tidings. The account holder, Ian Tan Tong Han, has been closely tied to the son of former IAAF

President Lamine Diack, who is facing corruption charges. Diack, once one of the most influential men in sports, was a member of the International Olympic Committee. He is under investigation in France, barred from leaving the country while the probe continues. Takeda, now president of the Japan Olympic Committee, acknowledged last week that the payments were made, but he said they were consulting fees for services such as bid planning, international lobbying advice and media analysis. Japanese Olympics Minister Toshiaki Endo urged the involved parties to explain the issue to the public. "I understand there is a matter of confidentiality but we would like for them to investigate this issue ... and handle it in a way that could gain understanding from the people of Japan," he said. — AP



SINGAPORE: The residential block where an apartment registered to a Singaporean company "Black Tidings" is seen. — AP

FILIPINA TEACHER KILLED IN MOZAMBIQUE REBEL AMBUSH

MAPUTO: A Filipina teacher was killed in an ambush on a passenger bus by Renamo rebels in Mozambique, police said yesterday, as insurgent unrest rises in the country's central region. The attack took place on Sunday in Murroto, near Mocuba town. The coach was ambushed by Renamo men, resulting in the death of a female foreigner who was Filipino, and four others were injured, local police spokesman Ernesto Serrote told AFP.

The Philippines embassy in neighboring South Africa identified the woman as a teacher who was working in Mozambique. "Her name

can't be revealed at this stage because we are still busy with internal processes," embassy spokesman Joselito Chad Jacinto told AFP.

According to local media, the attack was close to a base of the Renamo group, which has clashed regularly with government troops in recent months. The attackers signaled for the bus to stop but the driver did not comply, reported the CanalMoz newspaper.

Two other civilian vehicles have been attacked by Renamo in the last few days, according to reports. Restive central Mozambique has seen a spike in deadly clashes

between security forces and Renamo. Renamo, which operates as both the largest opposition party and an insurgent group, fought a 16-year war against the government that ended in 1992. The party rejected the results of 2014 elections, which were won by Frelimo, the movement that led the country to independence from Portugal in 1975 and has ruled ever since. Renamo rebel chief Afonso Dhlakama has vowed to win control over some provinces and has overseen the spate of attacks that started late last year in a bid to force the government to accede to their demands. — AP



A boy plays in a rapeseed colza field near the village of Svisloch, 30 km east of the Belarus capital Minsk, yesterday as spring arrives across Belarus. — AP

OUTDOOR WORK BAN TO START JUNE 1

Continued from Page 1

government departments that failed to implement the five-year plan. He said the Assembly will discuss in regular sessions next week a variety of issues including a law to grant up to 4,000 people Kuwaiti citizenship, the public tenders law, the pharmacy law and key amendments to a law combating money laundering.

Lari said the Assembly is also expected to debate important amendments to the labor law in the private sector with the aim to stiffen penalties against employers who trade in visas. The new amendments stipulate jail terms and fines for those who are caught trading in visas, he said. Lari added that the Assembly could hold a special debate on Thursday next week to discuss the continued suspension of Kuwaiti sports.

WAVE OF BAGHDAD BOMBINGS KILLS 77

Continued from Page 1

With the latest death tolls, fears are growing that Baghdad could relapse into the bloodletting of a decade ago when sectarian-motivated suicide bombings killed scores of people every week and set off revenge attacks against Sunnis. This has cranked up pressure on Abadi who is struggling to solve a political crisis or risk losing control of parts of Baghdad to Islamic State militants. Away from Baghdad, Iraq's military is waging a counter-offensive against Islamic State. Abadi has said a political crisis in Baghdad, sparked by his attempt to reshuffle the cabinet in a drive to tackle graft, is hampering the fight against Islamic State and creating space for more insurgent attacks on the civilian population.

The bombings also risk adding a dangerous new element to a power struggle within Iraq's Shiite majority, which has intensified in recent weeks as the attempts to form a new government flounder. In a statement, Sadr called the bombings "the clearest evidence that your government has become incapable of protecting you and providing you with security". Camouflaged fighters from his Peace Brigades deployed throughout Sadr City, riding in pickups mounted with

machine guns, preventing any cars from stopping and controlling key intersections.

A Reuters witness said they heavily outnumbered government security forces, which maintained a presence only at the main entrances to the neighborhoods. Sadr's fighters set up tents outside markets where women were searching female shoppers after initial investigations revealed that the bomber in Al-Shaab was a woman. A spokesman for the Baghdad Operations Command told state television the attacker in Al-Shaab had detonated an explosives-filled vest along with a planted bomb.

Police sources said they had defused another car bomb near a popular restaurant in Sadr City. Sadr's fighters also apprehended a suicide bomber in a crowded market there, but refused to hand him over to the security forces, according to militia and police sources. Islamic State said in a statement distributed online by supporters that one of its fighters had targeted Shiite militiamen with hand grenades and a suicide vest. It said separately that another fighter had detonated a car bomb amid Shiite fighters in Sadr City. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the third bombing. — Reuters

FIRST SOUTH KOREAN WINS MAN BOOKER...

Continued from Page 1

inflexible structures - expectations of behavior, the workings of institutions - and we watch them fail one by one," Daniel Hahn wrote in a review.

For the first time this year, the award went jointly to the translator, Deborah Smith, 28, who only started learning Korean three years before she embarked on the translation. "This was the first book that I ever translated, and the best possible thing that can happen to a translator has just happened to me," an emotional Smith told AFP. "When I was 22 I decided to teach myself Korean... I felt that I was limited by only being able to speak English. I'd always read a lot of translations, and you get the sense of this whole world being out there, very different perspectives, different stories," she said. "It felt as though I looked up almost every other word in the dictionary. It felt a bit like climbing a mountain. But at the same time just falling into this world that was so atmospheric and

disturbing and moving - it was a wonderful experience." The international edition of Britain's Man Booker Prize was introduced in 2005 and up to now has been awarded in recognition of a body of work by a living author whose work was written or available in English. But from this year, it will be presented annually for a single work of fiction that has been translated into English and published in Britain. Once the poor relation in the English-language literary world, translations are becoming increasingly popular.

New research by Nielsen for the prize organizers revealed physical book sales of translated fiction in Britain rose 96 percent between 2001 and 2016, despite the market as a whole falling over that period. Translated fiction is still a very small genre, representing just 1.5 percent of fiction and 3.5 percent of literary fiction, but it provided five percent of fiction sales and seven percent of literary fiction sales last year. Growth in translated Korean fiction in Britain was particularly strong. — AFP

YEMEN TALKS ON VERGE OF COLLAPSE OVER...

Continued from Page 1

Earlier, Mikhlafi charged on Twitter that the Houthis who control the capital had "torpedoed the talks completely" by backtracking on commitments.

The government wants the Houthis to comply with a Security Council resolution ordering them to pull out of territory they occupied in a 2014 offensive and surrender heavy arms they captured. Sources close to the government and rebel delegations confirmed to AFP that a session scheduled to take place yesterday morning was cancelled after the government team withdrew. The pullout comes two days after the UN envoy said he was opti-

mistic about achieving a peaceful settlement in the war-torn country.

The two delegations were on the verge of finalizing a deal to release half of the detainees and prisoners they hold before the start of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan in early June. The United Nations estimates that more than 6,400 people have been killed and 2.8 million displaced in Yemen since March last year. A major stumbling block at the talks in Kuwait City remains the form of government that would control Yemen in a transitional period. The rebels want to share power with Hadi while his delegation insists he is the legitimate UN-backed head of state. — AFP

'BACHELOR BAN' TESTS RELATIONS WITH WORKERS

Continued from Page 1

from society, rights groups say. "I wanted to visit the park but I was turned away," said Hader. "This says to me I am not welcome."

The small Gulf Arab state's reliance on foreign workers to power a \$200-billion construction boom ahead of the 2022 World Cup has drawn criticism from labor unions, who say migrants are exploited and forced to live in squalid conditions. A government official said Qatar was seeking to improve conditions for migrant workers. The tremendous influx of workers has also raised concern among Qataris - outnumbered by foreigners in their own country - that rapid demographic change threatens their way of life.

Qatar's population stands at 2.6 million, 75 percent of whom are male, according to the country's ministry of planning. No one knows exactly how many Qatari citizens there are as the government refuses to release a total but estimates say there are between 200,000 to 250,000. "Bachelor workers are eroding the privacy and comfort of families," Rashed Al Fadeh, a Qatari journalist, wrote in a column for local Arabic-language daily Al-Sharq last year, saying workers overrunning neighborhoods was damaging Qatar's social fabric. "Some Qatari families have abandoned habits inherent to them and no longer open their doors to visitors. This hurts us. We are accustomed to being generous towards outsiders ... but now the purity of our lives, sleep and rest is disturbed."

Unsettled by the ferocious pace of development and the strain it has put on resources in his home city of Al Khor, 50 km north of the capital Doha, Nasser Al-Mohannadi, a member of Qatar's only elected body the Central Municipal Council, is petitioning the government to introduce family-only days in malls across the country. "Going shopping without being stared at, enjoying a park not crowded with men who may look at women and not

respect traditions. Qatari families have the right to do these simple things," said Mohannadi. "Today if you go to Al Khor on the weekend you may not see one person wearing traditional dress, no Qataris ... You can feel like a stranger there now."

Authorities have in recent months taken steps to further separate workers from locals: ministry of interior maps which highlight in stark green and yellow Doha's "no-go" housing zones for migrant workers were plastered last month on billboards across the capital. In December, construction workers were turned away from a parade event along Doha's corniche marking Qatar's national day celebrations. "Honestly it's embarrassing for all bachelors around Doha," said Sudeep Paraaj, a steel worker from India's Kerala province. "Friday is a day off for us but if we go to the parks or the big markets we are turned away. It is sad. Doha is limited for us."

Migrant workers who live in labor camps in the desert outside cities often travel to air-conditioned shopping centers in the capital on weekends to transfer money home and escape the summer's searing temperatures. Other workers use plywood to partition villas in Doha into separate apartments, defying a 2010 law that rules it illegal for workers to live in "family areas." "Poor housing is part of the problem," said Paraaj. "People in camps who live six to a room want to leave to the city whenever they can."

A government official said relations between local citizens and expatriates were "harmonious" and "deeply respectful" and that Qatar was working to improve facilities for its more than 1.6 million workers including an open-air theatre recently built at a workers' sports complex near Al Khor. "We are exploring many options including reserving one day a week for workers in public parks when families would not be let in," said the official. "There is an old graveyard area near Grand Hamad Street [in Doha] which could be developed and set aside for low-income workers for their weekend gatherings." — Reuters

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Focus

BOOKER TRIUMPH
USHERS IN NEW ERA
FOR KOREAN WRITERS

By Hwang Sung-Hee and Giles Hewitt

South Korean writer Han Kang's Booker prize marks a major victory for a decade-long effort to drag one of Asia's oldest but, until recently, least-known literary traditions into the global market. Literary merits aside, the success of Han's novel "The Vegetarian" was aided by a number of factors that have coincided with South Korea's emergence as an increasingly prominent player on the global cultural stage.

An institute dedicated to translating new works, a fresh breed of writers with a more international outlook and a new generation of talented, dedicated translators have all played their part - and, publishing insiders say, will all share in Han's triumph. "It's going to have an enormous impact," Seoul-based independent literary agent Joseph Lee said. "For the writers, it will provide motivation and confidence that our literature has potential in the overseas market. "For the publishers, it will push them to focus on discovering good writers and strong works and to approach the foreign market with a clear strategy," Lee told AFP.

Han shared the £50,000 (\$72,000) cheque that accompanied the Man Booker International Prize with her British translator Deborah Smith. Described as "lyrical and lacerating" by chairman of the judges Boyd Tonkin, "The Vegetarian" traces the story of an ordinary woman's rejection of convention from three different perspectives.

Translator Deficit

A dearth of capable translators, coupled with an equally limited number of works suitable for foreign readers, had long stymied efforts to find a wider audience for Korea's literary output. "Korea is a high-context culture, with every Korean sharing a deep social, cultural, philosophical knowledge that can make its literature impenetrable to outsiders," said Charles Montgomery, who runs the website Korean Literature in Translation. A former professor at Dongguk University in Seoul, Montgomery said selecting works for translation used to be done by government officials who favored classic, representative fiction that fitted a national narrative but had little to no appeal for foreign readers. This changed with the Literature Translation Institute of Korea (LTI), which was set up in 1996 but only came into its own in the past 10 to 15 years, with an annual budget of \$10 million and 80 employees. Although still a government body, the LTI has championed new writers and, crucially, allowed translators to choose the books they would like to work on.

Opening Doors

"LTI has really opened the door to an awesome generation of new translators, and made it possible for them to come to Korea and study their craft," Montgomery said. The institute also holds annual workshops, flying in foreign publishers and editors from the United States, Russia, Japan, Singapore and Britain. LTI president Kim Seong-Kon has lofty ambitions, stating in an interview in 2012 that it was "about time" a Korean writer won the Nobel literature prize.

For some time, South Korea has looked, with a degree of envy, at the international celebrity of authors like Turkey's Orhan Pamuk or Japan's Haruki Murakami. Like Japan in the 1970s and 80s, the country is now riding something of a cultural wave with the growing visibility and popularity overseas of its TV dramas, pop music, cinema and food. "Literature perhaps is the last piece of that," said Montgomery. The first breakthrough came in 2012, with the Man Asia Literary Prize awarded to Shin Kyung-Sook's "Please Look After Mom". Some conservative Korean critics sniffed at Shin's success, arguing that her novel was overly sentimental and shamelessly targeted a foreign readership.

Tearing up the Rulebook

Han's translator Smith said a traditional Korean reverence for intellectualism had proved a heavy burden and a barrier to innovation and experimentation. "It produced somewhat austere prescriptions as to what constitutes 'proper' literature - a rulebook that the younger generation have been all too happy to tear up," Smith wrote in the latest issue of the Asia Literary Review quarterly. The Korean literary establishment still expects writers to follow a well-worn career path, starting with a "debut" short story published in one of a handful of influential literary journals.

The literary gatekeepers are, according to Smith, "too often older, male critics" whose tastes are firmly rooted in the 1970s and who struggle with the character-driven, direct-experience narratives of younger writers. "Despite all the dynamics surrounding contemporary Korean literature, one thing seems certain: the tide has well and truly turned," Smith said. — AFP

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VIPS FLY SOUTH TO DUTERTE'S SEAT OF POWER

By Ayee Macaraig

Business tycoons, turncoat politicians, celebrities and rebel leaders are descending on the long-neglected far south of the Philippines, hoping to gain favor with the nation's shock new powerbroker. The remote and dusty city of Davao has suddenly become the country's new seat of power after hometown hero Rodrigo Duterte won last week's presidential election in a landslide. The mayor has refused to travel to the nation's capital 1,000 km away, forcing VIPs to head to Davao for the time-honored Filipino political ritual of jumping on the bandwagon of the new president.

Movie star-turned-politician ER Ejercito was among the suitors, shifting effortlessly from his campaign support for Jejomar Binay - an early frontrunner in pre-election presidential surveys who finished a distant fourth. "My loyalty to my party ends where my loyalty to my country begins," said Ejercito, a former governor of Laguna province near Manila. Speaking to AFP in the lobby of one of Davao's top hotels that has suddenly become fully booked, Ejercito said he hoped to be appointed to head a national tourism agency. "I have to move forward. I cannot live in darkness. With my experience in local government and tourism, I can help the incoming administration," he said.

Ejercito said he waited nine hours at a private function centre which the president-elect had turned into his reception venue. Ejercito finally secured a 40-minute meeting that began just after midnight on Tuesday, but emerged without

a firm commitment. Others were more lucky. "I'm at a loss for words," veteran politician Manny Pinol told AFP yesterday after Duterte named him agriculture secretary in the new administration. Pinol, however, is a longtime friend of Duterte and also hails from the southern Philippines.

Political Outsider

Duterte's aides have said the president-elect is looking to fill top posts with people who have proved their loyalty to him in the past and whom he can trust. Until his stunning surge in the pre-election polls, Duterte was regarded as a hell-raising outsider without the national political network required to win the presidency. Outgoing President Benigno Aquino branded him a dictator, while other critics raged at his incendiary campaigning which focused on threats to kill thousands of criminals. Duterte was mostly known for ruthless law-and-order policies in Davao, a city of less than two million people that he had ruled for most of the past two decades. Rights group accuse him of running vigilante death squads in Davao that killed more than 1,000 suspected criminals, charges he has variously accepted and denied. Duterte's political party, PDP-Laban, has just one senator in the current Congress, which will remain in office until the new administration takes power on June 30. PDP-Laban does not even have a lawmaker in the House of Representatives.

But with victory comes powerful new allies. Manny Villar, the head of the country's oldest political party

Nacionalista, on Monday appeared at a media event alongside Duterte to sign an alliance with PDP-Laban. Others seen in Davao since the election include billionaire Lucio Tan, the nation's fourth richest man and a one-time crony of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Ghadzali Jaafar, a senior leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front that has waged a decades-long separatist rebellion, waited in line at the reception center on Monday. And national boxing champion Manny Pacquiao, a Binay supporter who won a seat in the Senate, planned to visit Duterte, an aide told AFP.

Switching allegiances is endemic in the Philippines, where politicians are often driven by self-interest rather than ideology, according to analyst Richard Javad Heydarian. "The constitution is extremely lax on the ability of candidates to switch parties at a snap of a finger," said Heydarian, an assistant professor of political science at Manila's De La Salle University. "The bandwagoning or 'butterfly effect' happens on a massive scale as soon as a new president is elected." Meanwhile, Duterte and his allies are enjoying having the spotlight finally on Davao and the southern Philippines for positive reasons. The region typically makes international headlines because of violence related to Muslim and communist insurgencies, or kidnappings-for-ransom by Islamic militants. Duterte, who will be the first president from the southern Philippines, pledged during the campaign to spread economic development outside of "imperial Manila." "We're happy that at long last they recognize Mindanao," said Pinol, the incoming agriculture secretary. — AFP

YEMEN 'UNTOUCHABLES' CAUGHT IN CROSSFIRE

By Ahmed Al-Haj

They are Yemen's untouchables. They call themselves the "Muhammasheen" or "the Marginalized", a dark-skinned ethnic group that for centuries has been consigned to the bottom of Yemen's social scale, faced with discrimination and racism, shunned by others. They live in shantytowns on the outskirts of cities, are often refused schooling and work menial jobs like shoe-shining or street cleaning or turn to begging. Other Yemenis have traditionally called them the "Akhdam", or "servants".

In a country where belonging to a tribe is vital to guaranteeing protection, status and livelihood, their community - which some estimates say numbers nearly 3 million people - is without a tribe and ignored by the government. As a result, they have been hit particularly hard in Yemen's civil war that is pitting the government, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, against Shiite rebels known as Houthis and forces loyal to Yemen's ousted president.

Their neighborhoods have been pounded both by coalition airstrikes and Houthi shelling, shattering their makeshift homes cobbled together from sheets of metal, cardboard and blankets. Many have been thrown into a state of constant displacement, with no one to take them in. Some tell of fleeing from strikes by one side, only to be hit again by another of the many factions and combatants in the conflict. Yemeni groups distributing humanitarian aid ignore them, they say.

"We are naked. We have nothing," Houssna Mohammed said, choking back tears as she stood at the charred remains of her shack in a slum of the Marginalized in the western city of Taiz. She said her home was burned down in March when a mortar hit her neighbor and the fire was blown to her shack. Walid Abdullah, a 20-year-old member of the Marginalized, said his home district in Taiz, Al-Jahmaliya, was hit early on in the war by shelling. The whole community of 200 families fled to Al-Rahda, another town in Taiz province. Later they had to flee again when Saudi airstrikes hit Al-Rahda. Now he is in Sanaa, the Yemeni capital, and he says his family is spread around multiple slums in the city. In the airstrikes, he lost his only source of income, a motorbike he offered for rent. "Now I have nothing," he said. An estimated 9,000 people have been killed in the past year of fighting in Yemen, and more than 2.4 million have been driven from their homes. The death toll among the Marginalized is difficult to verify because few pay attention to them. One advocacy group, the Yemeni Organization Against Discrimination, said it has documented more than 300 killed, including 68 children and 56 women. Yahia Said, the head of the organization, said the true number is likely much higher.

Origins

The origins of the Muhammasheen are unclear. Popular tradition has it that they are the descendants of Ethiopian soldiers who invaded Yemen in the 6th century. Other theories suggest they were African peoples who were among the first to inhabit coastal cities in Yemen. Official government statistics have put their population at around 500,000, but Marginalized activists say they number around 3 million. UNICEF has estimated they amount to about 10 percent of the



In this April 25, 2016 photo, Hassen Mohammed Najy, from a community who call themselves the "Muhammasheen" or "the Marginalized", who fled the city of Taiz due to the ongoing civil war, sits with his children inside their home in a slum area of Sanaa. — AP

population, or 2.6 million.

For generations, they have been treated as a permanent underclass. Yemenis call them unclean and tell their children not to mingle with them. One common proverb among Yemenis goes, "Clean your plate if it is touched by a dog, but break it if it's touched by a Khadem." Activists say schools and hospitals often turn them away. They say women in the community are vulnerable to sexual abuse by other Yemenis, who are confident courts won't prosecute them or that their tribes will intimidate the Marginalized into silence. In contrast, if a Marginalized man is believed to be fraternizing with an outside woman, his entire community can be driven from their homes as punishment.

The children of the Marginalized who defy social stigma and attend schools often face harassment from teachers and fellow students. Said recalled how, when he was in first grade, his teacher accused the blacks of Yemen of being the descendants of those who tried to destroy the Kaaba, Islam's holiest site, located in Makkah. It was a reference to a historical incident in which an Ethiopian Christian king of Yemen sent an army with elephants to destroy the Kaaba. "Imagine 70 students looking at me in disgust," Said remembered.

Saleh Al-Bair studied political science at universities in the Soviet Union and Cuba in the 1990s, one of the few Marginalized to gain access to education abroad. Yet he now works as a shoe shiner in Sanaa. He said that even before the war, his community had no rights. "If you go to court, the judge won't summon me using my name but would say, 'servant'. So what kind of justice would you expect after that?" he

said. In 2014, UNICEF conducted a survey of more than 9,000 Marginalized families in the city of Taiz, site of one of their largest communities. It found high levels of poverty and low levels of education, all far worse than national averages. Only half the children were in school, 80 percent of the adults and nearly 52 percent of 10-14-year-olds were illiterate. More than half the children under 1 year old had not been immunized.

Buthaina Al-Iryani, social protection specialist at UNICEF, said that the agency distributes cash to the families of the Marginalized in Sanaa and Taiz due to their urgent needs. But she acknowledged, "This is a drop in the ocean." Now after a year of war, they have completely fallen off the social hierarchy. More than ever, begging has become their only source of revenue. Barefoot children with matted hair, faces covered in dust, are seen sleeping on streets while their mothers cloaked in black extend their hands to pedestrians, begging for money.

"The humanitarian situation is miserable," said Noaman Al-Houzifi, the head of the National Union of the Marginalized. While others have tribes or wealthy relatives to help or host them if they have to flee their homes, "for the Marginalized, they have nothing." He and other Marginalized activists say local operators distributing humanitarian aid pass them over. "Even the blankets distributed by the aid and relief groups, the Marginalized are excluded from receiving such help," said Misk al-Maqmari, a 25-year-old Marginalized activist running a local group called Enough. At hospitals, Marginalized wounded in fighting are often not given beds or treatment and are left to die, she said. "As if they are animals. Even animals have rights." — AP

SUPERSTAR BOLT UNDERGOING TREATMENT FOR 'HAMSTRING'

KINGSTON: Jamaican sprint superstar Usain Bolt is undergoing treatment in Germany for what his coach described as an "aggravated hamstring injury" following his first race of the season, local radio reported Monday. Glen Mills, Bolt's coach, said the two-time Olympic 100m and 200m champion had tweaked the hamstring during Saturday's Cayman Invitational meeting. Bolt clocked a modest 10.05sec in the 100m, winning ahead of American Dentarius Locke and training partner Kemar Bailey-Cole. "If you noticed in the race he was grimacing towards the end," Mills told Jamaica's Hitz 92fm radio station on Monday. Bolt's injury is unlikely to prevent the world record holder from racing in Friday's meeting in Ostrava, the Czech Republic, Mills said. Bolt is being treated by Hans-Wilhelm Muller-Wohlfahrt, the Munich-based doctor who has treated the athlete for years. Speaking after Saturday's race, Bolt, who is targeting his third consecutive victories in the 100m, 200m and 4x100m at August's Olympics, said he was relieved to have emerged from his season-opening race unscathed. —AFP



CULT STAR GOROMARU SET FOR TOULON MOVE

TOKYO: Japanese World Cup star Ayumu Goromaru is expected to join French side Toulon next season, reports said yesterday, following a low-key stint with the Queensland Reds. The fullback, who is known for his distinctive goal-kicking stance and has a huge following in Japan, will likely play in the French Top 14 from August, the Sports Nippon tabloid said in its online edition. Japan's Kyodo News said the 30-year-old has already reached a basic agreement and a final deal could be announced this month with the three-time European champions. Goromaru's parent club Yamaha Jubilo was not immediately available for comment. The Reds denied earlier reports in February that he was set to move to Toulon. Goromaru shot to stardom after he kicked 24 points in the Brave Blossoms' 34-32 stunning upset win over South Africa at the World Cup last year. Some media reports rated him as the world's best paid player after he snubbed Japan's new Sunwolves team to join Super Rugby rivals the Reds this season. —AFP

HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION TYSON FURY APOLOGIZES FOR OFFENSIVE REMARKS

LONDON: World heavyweight champion Tyson Fury has apologized for offensive remarks he made in an online video last week, insisting he is 'not a bigot or a racist'. The outspoken Briton, preparing for a re-match with Wladimir Klitschko who he surprisingly de-throned in Dusseldorf in November to win the WBA, WBO and IBF belts, caused controversy with homophobic, sexist and anti-Semitic comments during an Q and A session with his uncle and trainer Peter Fury. "I apologize to anyone who may have taken offence at any of my comments," Fury said in a statement. "I said some things, which may have hurt some people, which as a Christian man is not something I would ever want to do." "I mean no harm or disrespect to anyone and I know more is expected of me as an ambassador of British boxing and I promise in future to hold myself up to the highest possible standard." Fury has made almost as many headlines with his behavior outside the ring as with his performances in it. In January, the British Boxing Board of Control (BBC) reminded him of his responsibilities after he made derogatory remarks about women and criticized homosexuality and abortion. — Reuters



TIGERS AVOID HUMILIATING LOSS, TROUNCE TWINS

ANGELS EDGE DODGERS 7-6 IN FREEWAY SERIES OPENER

DETROIT: Nick Castellanos hit a tie-breaking homer in the seventh inning and the Detroit Tigers avoided a humiliating loss Monday night by beating the Minnesota Twins 10-8. The Tigers led 8-0 after one inning with AL ERA leader Jordan Zimmermann on the mound, only to see the Twins come back to tie the game in the seventh. Detroit manager Brad Ausmus was ejected in the middle of the rally for arguing a called third strike. During the argument, he took off his sweatshirt and used it to cover up the plate. Castellanos homered off Pat Dean (0-1) in the bottom of the seventh to put Detroit back in front. Dean had entered the game in the first inning and threw 90 pitches in 5 1/3 innings. J.D. Martinez, whose dropped fly ball allowed the tying run to score in the seventh, homered in the eighth to give the Tigers a two-run lead.

Pujols went 3 for 4 with three RBIs.

MARLINS 5, PHILLIES 3

Marcell Ozuna and Justin Bour hit solo homers, Adam Conley threw six effective innings and Miami beat Philadelphia for its third straight win. Conley (3-2) gave up one run and eight hits, striking out five. A.J. Ramos allowed a run in the ninth but earned his 12th save in as many tries. Philadelphia's Jerad Eickhoff (1-6) allowed three runs and six hits in six innings. He's winless in his last six starts. Bour drove his seventh homer the opposite way to left-center to make it 3-1 in the sixth.

PIRATES 8, BRAVES 5

Matt Joyce homered among his three hits and drove in three runs, Gregory Polanco had three hits and three runs scored and Jon Niese pitched six effective innings to lead Pittsburgh over Atlanta. Joyce connected for his fifth home run, a two-run shot deep into the left field bleachers, off Alexi Ogando in the seventh. Niese (4-2) allowed two runs and five hits with six strikeouts and two walks. Mark Melancon pitched a perfect ninth inning for his 12th save in 13 opportunities. Williams Perez (1-1) gave up six runs and nine hits in six innings.

INDIANS 15, REDS 6

Yan Gomes hit a three-run homer in the sixth inning and had four RBIs, and Cleveland



LOS ANGELES: Los Angeles Angels' Johnny Giavotella (right) tries to evade Dodgers' Howie Kendrick sliding into second base during a baseball game in Los Angeles on Monday, May 16, 2016.— AP

ANGELS 7, DODGERS 6

Albert Pujols and Mike Trout combined to drive in six runs and the Angels beat the Dodgers for their fourth straight win in the opener of the Freeway Series. Matt Shoemaker (2-5) allowed three runs and six hits in five innings, struck out five and walked two. The right-hander made it past four innings for just the second time this season. Fernando Salas retired the side on 11 pitches in the ninth for his second save. Pujols singled in two runs in the seventh, extending the Angels' lead to 6-3.

rallied from an early four-run deficit to beat Cincinnati. Marlon Byrd hit a two-run homer in a five-run sixth and the Indians erased a 4-0 deficit while recording season highs in runs and hits. Cincinnati scored four times in the first three innings, but Cleveland tied it with a four-run third and added three in the fourth. Francisco Lindor, who was 3 for 5, Jason Kipnis and Mike Napoli all had two RBIs for the Indians, who had 19 hits. Kipnis' two-run single broke a 4-all tie and helped the Indians take a three-run lead in the fourth.

Mike Winters for arguing a called third strike in the fourth. It was the third ejection of the season for Gibbons and his second in two games - his was one of eight tossed in a game Sunday against Texas that included Rongued Odor's punch to the jaw of Jose Bautista. Toronto has lost three straight. Desmond Jennings also homered, and the Rays set season highs in runs and hits (17). Drew Smyly (2-4) allowed one run and four hits in five innings to win for the first time in four starts. The Rays roughed up Blue Jays left-hander J.A. Happ (5-1).

a gaudy 11.37 ERA. He gave up a run, walked one and struck out two. Texas starter Derek Holland (3-3) turned in a quality start, though the one bad inning cost him. He gave up two runs and three hits over six innings. Holland walked one and struck out one and is winless over his last three starts.

DIAMONDBACKS 12, YANKEES 2

Jake Lamb broke open the game with a three-run home run and Arizona snapped a five-game losing streak with a rout of New York. Paul Goldschmidt, 1 for 14 in the Giants series, also homered off Chad Green (0-1) in the Yankee right-hander's major league debut. Robbie Ray (2-2) allowed two runs on six hits in seven innings, his longest outing of the season, and got his first career RBI. The left-hander struck out six and walked one.— AP

RAYS 13, BLUE JAYS 2
Curt Casali hit a three-run homer, Tim Beckham and Steve Pearce each hit two-run blasts and Tampa Bay had four homers while beating Toronto. Blue Jays manager John Gibbons was ejected by home plate umpire

ATHLETICS 3, RANGERS 1
Marcus Semien homered in support of Sean Manaea, who allowed four hits over 6 2/3 innings, and Oakland beat Texas. Manaea (1-1) earned his first major-league victory in his fourth career start. He entered the game with

MLB Results/Standings

Cleveland 15, Cincinnati 6; Pittsburgh 8, Atlanta 5; Miami 5, Philadelphia 3; Tampa Bay 13, Toronto 2; Detroit 10, Minnesota 8; Arizona 12, NY Yankees 2; Oakland 3, Texas 1; LA Angels 7, LA Dodgers 6.

| American League | | | | | National League | | | | |
|-------------------|----|----|------|------|------------------|----|----|------|------|
| Eastern Division | | | | | Eastern Division | | | | |
| | W | L | PCT | GB | | W | L | PCT | GB |
| Baltimore | 23 | 13 | .639 | - | Washington | 23 | 15 | .605 | - |
| Boston | 24 | 14 | .632 | - | NY Mets | 21 | 16 | .568 | 1.5 |
| Toronto | 19 | 21 | .475 | 6 | Philadelphia | 22 | 17 | .564 | 1.5 |
| Tampa Bay | 17 | 19 | .472 | 6 | Miami | 21 | 17 | .553 | 2 |
| NY Yankees | 16 | 21 | .432 | 7.5 | Atlanta | 9 | 28 | .243 | 13.5 |
| Central Division | | | | | Central Division | | | | |
| Chicago White Sox | 24 | 14 | .632 | - | Chicago Cubs | 27 | 9 | .750 | - |
| Cleveland | 18 | 17 | .514 | 4.5 | Pittsburgh | 20 | 17 | .541 | 7.5 |
| Kansas City | 18 | 19 | .486 | 5.5 | St. Louis | 20 | 18 | .526 | 8 |
| Detroit | 17 | 21 | .447 | 7 | Milwaukee | 16 | 22 | .421 | 12 |
| Minnesota | 10 | 27 | .270 | 13.5 | Cincinnati | 15 | 23 | .395 | 13 |
| Western Division | | | | | Western Division | | | | |
| Seattle | 21 | 16 | .568 | - | San Francisco | 22 | 18 | .550 | - |
| Texas | 22 | 17 | .564 | - | Colorado | 19 | 18 | .514 | 1.5 |
| LA Angels | 17 | 21 | .447 | 4.5 | LA Dodgers | 20 | 19 | .513 | 1.5 |
| Oakland | 17 | 22 | .436 | 5 | Arizona | 18 | 23 | .439 | 4.5 |
| Houston | 15 | 24 | .385 | 7 | San Diego | 17 | 22 | .436 | 4.5 |



Abdulaziz Al Rashed

OOREDOO 'PROUD' TO SUPPORT ATHLETE ABDULAZIZ AL RASHED

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of international Ooredoo Group, announced that it is proud of sponsoring young Kuwaiti triathlete Abdulaziz Al Rashed. The young Kuwaiti sports champion has earned the silver medal in a triathlon that took place in Miami earlier this week. Commenting on this, Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait Mijbil Alayoub said: "We're proud of our young athlete Abdulaziz Al Rashed for his achievement in Miami, and we're certain that he will make more achievements in the future with the right support. Our sponsorship from Abdulaziz stems from our deep-rooted belief in enabling youth to reach their potential."

Abdulaziz Al-Rashed recently won first place in Kuwait's Triathlon which was held at the Corniche Club. He also won the third position in Sharm El-Sheikh ALAMEDA Triathlon, which represents the pinnacle of triathlon competitions in Egypt, providing recreational triathletes with a once in a lifetime opportunity to compete on the same course as Africa's and Arabs' known champions. The tournament attracted hundreds of audiences to watch both the amateurs and the professionals including Africa's best players. He is currently in Miami, where he is attending training after competing, to prepare for upcoming tournaments this season.

WORLD CHAMPION LOVCHEV SLAPPED WITH 4-YEAR BAN

MOSCOW: World champion weightlifter Aleksey Lovchev confirmed yesterday that he has been banned for four years for doping. "Yesterday I received documents from the international (weightlifting) federation about my four-year suspension," Lovchev told TASS state news agency, adding that he would appeal the ban.

The president of the Russian weightlifting federation, Sergei Syrtsov, confirmed to R-Sport news agency that the 26-year-old athlete had been suspended. Lovchev, who won gold in the +105kg category at the 2015 world championships, had

tested positive for the banned growth hormone Ipamorelin, prompting the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) to provisionally suspend him in December. Lovchev claims he had received permission to use the banned steroid for a knee injury ahead of the world championships where he broke the clean-and-jerk and total world records. Russia has been hit by a string of doping scandals in recent months.

The country is now scrambling to revamp its scandal-ridden anti-doping program in time for its track and field stars to compete at the Rio Olympics in August. Athletics' interna-

tional governing body, the IAAF, provisionally suspended Russia in November over a bombshell report by a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) independent commission that found evidence of state-sponsored doping and mass corruption in Russian athletics. The IAAF will rule on Russia's participation at the Rio Games at an extraordinary Council meeting next month. In a letter published in Britain's Sunday Times last week, Russian sports minister Vitaly Mutko apologized for the doping scandal and made a plea for Russia's track and field stars to be allowed to compete in Rio. —AFP

LIN VOWS TO 'FIND RHYTHM' AFTER THOMAS CUP SCARE

KUNSHAN: Chinese badminton legend Lin Dan vowed to find his Thomas Cup "rhythm" after scrambling to salvage a three-game win over an unknown French opponent at the world team championship in Kunshan, China. The world number three described his Monday night opening match as "tough", after dropping the first game to France's Lucas Corvee before storming back to win 20-22, 21-14, 21-8.

"I didn't expect to win this match in such a tough way," said Lin, according to Xinhua. "But it

doesn't mean that I played badly, this match will help me to get fit and find my rhythm." Following the sub-par performance the 32-year-old vowed to give his all during his eighth appearance at the team championships. "I will do my best," the two-time Olympic gold medalist said. Despite Lin's slow start, the Chinese men walloped the French national team 5-0, securing a spot in the tournament's quarter finals.

After sweeping France and Mexico, the tournament favorites and home nation are set to square

off with Japan on Wednesday, where they'll be hungry to avenge the shock 2014 defeat. The sport's pre-eminent nation were stunned two years ago in the semi-finals by Japan, who then beat Malaysia to secure the country's first Thomas Cup victory. However, the odds are not in the Japanese favor in Kunshan this week after the star of the 2014 Thomas Cup Kento Momota was axed by authorities in April over a gambling scandal. China's men won the Thomas Cup five times in a row until their defeat to Japan.—AFP

'SUPERHERO' VIRAT KOHLI SMASHES IPL RUNS RECORD

NEW DELHI: Red-hot Virat Kohli smashed an unbeaten half-century to break Chris Gayle's record for the most runs in a single Indian Premier League season. Kohli, captain of the Royal Challengers Bangalore, has racked up 752 runs in 12 matches so far this year including three centuries and five 50s. Kohli's 75-run blitz on Monday kept the Challengers' play-off hopes alive after they crushed the Kolkata Knight Riders by nine wickets. The Indian batsman overtakes the powerful Gayle, who scored 733 runs in 15 matches in 2012, while Australia's Mike Hussey tallied the same figure in 17 games in 2013.

Kohli, who batted with an injured finger, stitched together a 115-run unbeaten stand with AB de Villiers (59). Their partnership comes just two days after they recorded the highest partnership (229) in Twenty20 cricket history during the Challengers' match against the Gujarat Lions. Team-mate Gayle, who also found form at Eden Gardens with a 31-ball 49, paid credit to the in-form duo. "Those two guys are playing like Batman and Superman. They are in the form of their life," said the Jamaican.

Aussie Maxwell out of IPL

In another development, Glenn Maxwell yesterday became the fifth Australian to pull out of the Indian Premier League (IPL), but his injury is unlikely to keep him out of an upcoming West Indies tour. The hard-hitting batsman suffered a strain in his left abdomen playing for the Kings XI Punjab and is returning home as a precaution. Australia team physiotherapist David Beakley said it did not appear serious enough to prevent him playing in the West Indies tri-series, which Australia open in Guyana on June 6 against South Africa. "From the information we have so far, the injury doesn't appear to be something that will prevent Glenn from participating in

this tour," he said. "But we are keen to give him the necessary time to recover before departing to the West Indies at the end of this month."

Maxwell's departure from India follows Australian captain Steve Smith (wrist), Mitch Marsh (side strain), John Hastings (ankle) and Shaun Marsh (back) also returning home early. Smith and Mitch Marsh are also expected to be fit for the West Indies while Hastings has been replaced by Scott Boland. Shaun Marsh was not named due to the impending birth of his child. The round-robin tournament will see teams play three matches against each opponent, with the top two advancing to the final on June 26 in Barbados.

World T20 drama

England all-rounder Ben Stokes will learn from his dreadful World Twenty20 experience and come back a stronger player, team mate Stuart Broad has said. Stokes was hit for four successive sixes by West Indies' Carlos Brathwaite in the last over of the T20 final, the onslaught ending England's hopes of a second title. Broad, the world's top-ranked test bowler, was famously blasted for six sixes by India's Yuvraj Singh in the 2007 tournament but used the setback as motivation and has backed Stokes to follow suit. "I wouldn't be the bowler I am now without that experience," Broad told British media. "You're dead right, people would have been sat there thinking: 'Why did you go that way?' 'But you've got to go with what you feel is your strength, so as a player you'll always have things you are confident in. I prefer a player to get it wrong going for something they believe is their strength than going to something that isn't. 'Don't be surprised if Stokes now performs at a really high level because he'll realise what went wrong and channel it the right way—he has an amazing talent.'—Agencies

CYCLING - BEN KING WINS 2ND STAGE OF TOUR OF CALIFORNIA

LOS ANGELES: American rider Ben King scored a surprise victory in the second stage of the Tour of California on Monday, completing a remarkable comeback from serious injury that had placed a question mark over his season. The 27-year-old Cannondale rider's season had been thrown into turmoil in January after skidding on ice during a training ride and suffering a broken ankle which required surgery.

However, there was no sign of the injury's after-effects on Monday as King swept to victory on a gruelling second day of racing in America's most prestigious stage race, a 92.3-mile (148.5-km) course from South Pasadena to Santa Clarita. King prevailed after the peloton failed to reel in a breakaway involving the Cannondale rider, William Barta (Axeon Hagens Berman), Sindre Skjoestad Lunke (Giant-Alpecin) and Evan Huffman (Rally Cycling).

That group of four blasted away during a descent and soon built up a healthy gap of around 7min 30sec at around the

halfway mark. Lunke gradually faded leaving Huffman, King, and Barta at the front. Although the peloton eventually closed the gap, it was not enough to overhaul King and Huffman who took first and second. King crossed in a time of 3hr 52min 9sec, just clear of Huffman. Norwegian rider Alexander Kristoff (Katusha) was eight seconds back in third while overnight leader and defending champion Peter Sagan (Tinkoff) was fourth.

As well as the stage honors, King takes the yellow jersey into the third stage. King leads the general classification with a total time of 8:12:34, eight seconds ahead of Huffman and 14 seconds clear of last year's winner Sagan in third. Stage three is a challenging 104.1 mile ride northwest from Thousand Oaks, just outside Los Angeles, along the rugged California coast to the wealthy enclave of Santa Barbara. The route will see the peloton make an elevation gain of 10,639 feet as it finishes with a climb up the region's famed Gibraltar Road into the heart of the Santa Ynez Mountains.—AFP



American rider Ben King



PITTSBURGH: Andrei Vasilevskiy #88 of the Tampa Bay Lightning tends the goal during the third period against the Pittsburgh Penguins on May 16, 2016 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. — AFP

CROSBY ENDS SLUMP IN OT AS PENS EVEN EAST FINALS

NEW YORK : Sidney Crosby scored his first goal in nine games 40 seconds into overtime as the Pittsburgh Penguins beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 3-2 in Game Two of the Eastern Conference finals on Monday to even the series. The Penguins, who squandered a two-goal lead before getting the winner in overtime, now head to Tampa for Game 3 in the best-of-seven series today. Penguins coach Mike Sullivan shook up his lines late in the game to try to get his stars going, and Crosby came through by putting a shot under the crossbar to win it. Pittsburgh pressed from the start of the extra period, and Crosby emerged with his first overtime goal in 113 play-off games. Matt Murray won the battle of 21-year-old backup goaltenders, making 19 saves and not allowing a goal after giving up two in a span of 2:33 in the first period.

Lightning goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy was

exceptional, making 38 saves, but it was not good enough. Pittsburgh took all three of the shots in OT. The Penguins got off to exactly the start they wanted in what could be viewed as a must-win game, getting goals from Matt Cullen and Phil Kessel less than 10 minutes in. However, with Vasilevskiy turning aside several more excellent scoring chances—including Bryan Rust on a rush off the opening faceoff—the Lightning came back after killing off Alex Killorn's holding penalty at 13:23. Defenseman Anton Stralman, back in the lineup for the first time since breaking his left leg on March 25, got the comeback started by gathering a bouncing puck and lifting it under the crossbar at 16:37. Stralman needed only a moment to get open, and that occurred when Crosby and Conor Sheary bumped into each other just as Crosby was skating toward Stralman, who scored his fifth goal in four games against

Pittsburgh this season. Jonathan Drouin tied it 2:33 later, taking JT Brown's pass at mid-ice, skating to the top of the left circle for a wrist shot and beating Murray inside the far post.

Drouin, in the lineup because of Steven Stamkos' injury, has 11 points in 12 playoff games after getting 10 in 21 regular season games. Neither team scored in the second, when Murray kept the score tied with an excellent save on Killorn late in the period. Cullen, who is having an excellent postseason for Pittsburgh at age 39, scored his fourth of the playoffs at 4:32 of the first, off a rebound of an Eric Fehr shot. Kessel scored his 19th goal in 35 playoff games—and sixth of these playoffs—about five minutes later after Carl Hagelin's shot rebounded to Nick Bonino, whose pass deflected off Lightning defenseman Andrej Sustr's skate directly to Kessel.—Reuters

2 OLYMPIC MEDALISTS FROM RUSSIA DENY DOPING CLAIMS

MOSCOW: Two Olympic gold medalists from Russia have denied doping after they were identified in a newspaper report detailing state-sponsored cheating at the 2014 Sochi Games. Bobsled champion Alexander Zubkov and cross-country skier Alexander Legkov were among the athletes accused of doping by the former head of the Russian national drug-testing laboratory in a New York Times article.

"I considering it an accusation not supported by anything," Zubkov said, calling the story "simply lunacy." At a news conference in Moscow, Zubkov and Legkov sat on either side of deputy Sports Minister Yuri Nagornyykh, who denied Russia had ever operated a state doping program. Legkov waved a thick folder of papers that he said contained the records of all his doping tests over three years. The sheer number of tests was evidence enough that he could not have taken banned drugs without being caught, he said.

"You'd have to be a complete kamikaze to do that in Russia if you're an athlete representing our nation," Legkov said. The article also brought a strong response from the Kremlin. Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman denounced the allegations as "a turncoat's libel." Grigory Rodchenkov, the former head of the Russian lab now living in Los Angeles, told the Times he was given a spreadsheet of doping athletes by the Sports Ministry before the games. It allegedly bore the names of 15 athletes who later won medals, including Zubkov and Legkov.

The spreadsheet was not published and The Associated Press could not verify it. Rodchenkov

said he then switched tainted urine samples for clean ones at the doping lab used for the Sochi Games, with help from people he believed to be officers of the Russian security services. Zubkov and Legkov, who both threatened to sue Rodchenkov for defamation, are two of Russia's most prominent winter sports athletes. Zubkov carried the Russian flag at the opening ceremony for the Sochi Olympics and won gold in the two-man and four-man bobsled events at age 39, becoming one of the oldest pilots to win an Olympic event.

Legkov won gold in the men's 50-kilometer cross-country mass start on the last day of the games and was given his gold medal at the closing ceremony. Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Kremlin rejects the accusations that the Russian government oversaw a state-sponsored doping program and subsequent cover-up. "It just seems like, you know, some kind of a turncoat's libel," Peskov said, without mentioning Rodchenkov by name. "I wouldn't put trust in such unfounded claims."

The government continues to back Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko, Peskov added. He also said the Kremlin backs the idea of legal action against Rodchenkov. "We would potentially support such action to file lawsuits against this gentleman and against the publications, which are spreading this slander," he said. The deputy sports minister, Nagornyykh, said there is no way that Russia could have manipulated doping samples at the Sochi Games because of the presence of foreign observers. "(Russia) did not have the opportunity to influence in any way the sys-

tem of doping control procedures, storage and transport," Nagornyykh said.

He also denied allegations in the Times article that he had met regularly with Rodchenkov to discuss a secret doping program leading to the Olympics. The World Anti-Doping Agency is set to investigate Rodchenkov's allegations, and Rodchenkov himself has volunteered to identify which samples he tampered with. The IOC told the AP on Friday that "we are already in touch with WADA to discuss the offer of Rodchenkov to provide information on his claims." The IOC said it would "welcome any evidence that will help to determine the truth or otherwise of these allegations," adding that if wrongdoing is uncovered it "will not hesitate to act decisively to punish those responsible and to defend the clean athletes."—AP



Alexander Zubkov

THE YOUNG LIONS TO WATCH THIS YEAR

LONDON: The top of the men's game has been set in stone for a decade with first Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, then joined by Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray dominating the top of the ATP rankings. There are signs that a new generation are ready to carry the torch when time finally catches up on the Big Four. Here are the ones to watch as the French Open looms (world ranking in parentheses, age in brackets)

19-Nick Kyrgios - Australia (21)

Kyrgios was threatened with ban last year after making lurid remarks about the Stan Wawrinka's girlfriend but is letting his tennis do the talking this season. Won his first ATP title in Marseille and made semis at Dubai, Miami and Estoril. Pushed Rafael Nadal hard on clay at Italian Open and has reached a career-high ranking. "The key for him is maturity and being consistent week in week out," former top-10 player, leading coach and ESPN summarizer Brad Gilbert said. "He has the most talent of any of the

under 21s but can he put it all together to sustain what he needs to do?"

44-Borna Coric - Croatia (19)

Lacks the killer weapons of Kyrgios and Alexander Zverev but makes up for that with a maturity beyond his years. Has struggled to chalk up big results against players in the top 20 but did make finals in Chennai and Marrakesh. "He is the best mover of the younger players, a bit of a copy of Djokovic, but less talent than some of the other young guys," Gilbert said.

48-Alexander Zverev - Germany (19)

Nearly two metres tall and packing huge weapons with his serve and forehand, Zverev also boasts the kind of fluid movement that similarly tall players struggle with. Appears to thrive on the show courts and outplayed Nadal this year in Indian Wells before missing a match point and succumbing. Germany are looking for a new Boris Becker and Zverev could be their best hope, espe-

cially at Wimbledon. Coached by his father and former pro, also Alex. "Clearly he has a big game and nice technique and good attitude," Federer said recently.

72-Taylor Fritz - US (18)

The youngest member of the top 100. By reaching the Memphis Open final, he became the youngest American man to reach a Tour final since Michael Chang in 1989. He lost to Kei Nishikori. A completely different animal to Chang though, relying on a powerful first serve and a crushing forehand. His country's big hope also seems to have the work ethic to go far. "My philosophy is you work so hard that you want to quit tennis. You get to the point where you are so dead and tired. Then you come back and do it again the next day and do it again and again and again," he told the ATP website recently.

84-Kyle Edmund - Britain (21)

A member of the British Davis Cup team that won the trophy for the first

time in 79 years last November, the 21-year-old has benefited from spending time with compatriot Murray during an intensive training camp in Dubai before the start of 2016. Having picked up tips from Murray on how to improve his game,

Edmund battled through qualifying before reaching his first ATP quarter-final in Doha. "He's made great progress. He's a better athlete than I thought. He's got a huge forehand. He's got huge upside," American great John McEnroe said.—Reuters



Roger Federer



Group photo shows the winners displaying their trophies on the podium.

PSA CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL SEASON IN STYLE

KUWAIT: The Premier Sport Academy in association with Everton FC and under the sponsorship of Porsche Centre Kuwait, Behbehani Motors Company and Sports Direct, held their Gala Presentation Evening Season 2015-16 at the Marina Hotel this week. More than 450 players and guests filled the Salwa Sabah Al-Ahmad Theatre and Hall for the celebratory gathering, which was attended by the Guest of Honor Group Captain Finlay McLean, Defense Attache British Embassy.

The event convened with the playing of the national anthems of Kuwait and the United Kingdom. Several other prominent guests including Joey Hood, Deputy Chief of Mission, American Embassy Kuwait and representatives from the German and Spanish Embassies were in attendance. During the evening, more than 150 prestigious awards were presented to selected players, coaches and sponsors at the end of a tremendously successful season of training courses, matches, festivals, tournaments and special events involving over 500 young players.

Over 120 of these players, aged from 6 to 18 years, were nominated by their coaches to receive awards in several categories, including: Most Outstanding, Most Improved, Most Sporting, Top Goalkeeper, Top Trainer, Star Player,

Coaches Award and Centre of Excellence Team Player. These players demonstrated an abundance of hard work, dedication, commitment, high standards of performance and conduct over the course of the season to earn their rewards. Further awards were given to players involved in the Girls Coaching Courses and Community Program. All the players were presented with trophies by Group Captain McLean and Joey Hood, Deputy Chief of the USA Embassy. Many surprise gifts including Bicycles, Cameras, Watches, Sports Equipment, Gift Vouchers and Match Footballs were also provided by the awards sponsors, Porsche Centre Kuwait, Behbehani Motors Company and Sports Direct. Original dug out chairs from Manchester United FC and a set of EPL Champions, Leicester City shirts were also auctioned during the event.

Academy Director Mike Finn and Executive Director Baker Al-Nazer thanked the coaching team, sponsors and supporters for all their assistance in making the season such an enjoyable and successful one for everyone involved with the PSA, before a sumptuous buffet dinner was enjoyed by all. Further details of the Premier Sport Academy in association with Everton FC can be found on www.PSA-kuwait.com



Winners in the Girls Coaching Courses



A participant receives a trophy from an official



Coaching Team members display their certificates



A young girl partakes in the draw



A winner receives a prize from PSA Director Baker Al-Nazer



The audience sing the national anthem



A young boy performs during the event



PSA Executive Director Baker Al-Nazer (left) presents a prize to a winner.



Some of the guests pose with PSA officials



EURO 2016 - FRANCE DEPLOYING ANTI-DRONE TECHNOLOGY

STRETCHED AND STRESSED, POLICE PREPARE FOR SOCCER SPECTACLE

PARIS: France will deploy anti-drone technology to interfere with and take control of any flying machines that violate no-fly zones over stadiums at the European Championship, part of unprecedented measures to secure Europe's biggest sports event since the Paris attacks in November. In an exclusive interview with The Associated Press, Euro 2016 security chief Ziad Khoury said that no-fly zones will be declared over all 10 stadiums as well as training grounds for the 24 teams at the June 10-July 10 tournament. "We've noted the general proliferation of drone-usage in society," Khoury said in his Paris office. "So no-fly zones will be defined over every training ground and every stadium, and in most stadiums and for most matches anti-drone measures - which are quite innovative - will be deployed, working with the state, which will interfere with drones and take control of them if they are spotted."

French authorities have trained for the possibility of drones being used to disperse chemical weapons over crowds. A training exercise in April in Saint-Etienne, one of the 10 Euro 2016 cities, imagined that a drone carrying chemical agents had plunged into spectators at the Geoffroy Guichard Stadium, which will host three group matches in June and one game in the knockout round. "When you prepare an event of this size, you must imagine all scenarios, even the most unlikely," Khoury said.

He said authorities have no specific intelligence to indicate that drones are a threat, but are preparing for all eventualities. The anti-drone measures to be deployed by the French air force and police "aren't necessarily infallible, because the technology is new and the drone phenomenon is recent. Let's say it is a dissuasive measure that didn't exist at previous sports events," he said. "The idea is not to destroy the drones, because there could be collateral damage, notably if they crashed into the public. It is to prevent them from flying over the stadiums and perhaps to arrest their pilots," Khoury said.

Stretched police force

France's stretched police force has had to contend with two militant attacks in a year and regular street protests, and now it faces the task of keeping millions of soccer fans safe when the country hosts the Euro 2016 tournament next month. The French force of police and gendarmes numbers almost 200,000, having suffered around 13,000 job cuts since 2007 as the government sought to reduce public spending. Even before the Islamic State attacks on Paris in November, and the ensuing national state of emergency that increased their duties, officers had racked up a backlog of 20 million hours in overtime, equivalent to three weeks each. They are entitled to claim an hour of holiday for every hour of overtime worked, but there is little prospect of them being able to do so any time soon. They must police the June 10-July 10 Euro 2016, when about 2.5 million people are due to attend matches in 10 stadiums across the country and about 7.5 million are expected to converge on "fan zones" in cities, as well as the annual Tour de France cycling race which runs through most of July. "They are being asked to do a lot in the state of the emergency and it's clear that if we continue like this by the end of the year we'll start seeing people fall sick and get depressed," Denis Jacob, Secretary General of the Alternative police union told Reuters. "We are human at the end of the day."

The events also come at a time of civil unrest ahead of next year's presidential elections that has seen demonstrations against a labor reform law spill over into violence on a weekly basis this year. Since the protests began two months ago, several hundred police have been injured in clashes, often with hooded youths hurling stones and petrol bombs. Protest organizers have accused security forces of heavy-handed policing. Police unions have called for officers to stage a nationwide demonstration on Wednesday to highlight their strained conditions and also the rise in anti-police rhetoric from protest groups in recent weeks.

They say they are receiving a rising number of calls from officers complaining of the stresses they face and that ahead of next month's tournament there is no capacity or plan in place to give them respite. One officer, who was part of a Gendarmerie Mobile unit parked outside the lower house of parliament in Paris last week, said he was exhausted after being constantly moved from one event or incident to another over the past two years. He said he did not want to be named because he feared a public backlash.

The government acknowledges the strain placed on police. "I salute the commitment of our security forces, especially the police and gendarmes, who some seem to forget the sacrifices and responsibilities that weigh on their shoulders at the moment," Prime Minister Manuel Valls told lawmakers on May 12. Forces have been given new equipment and the government is trying to alleviate some of the staff burden. It has promised 9,000 new police recruits, with around 800 of them due to join in June, even though these will need time to gain experience.

State of emergency

The Nov 13 attacks, the worst on French soil since World War Two, killed 130 people and included suicide bombings near the national football stadium. The killings, which came 10 months after a militant attack on the Paris offices of satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, forced the Socialist government to push for tougher security measures. The measures include a state of emergency, which has seen a rise in house raids, street stop and searches, as well as arrests of suspected militants and those linked to them. An officer who has been a member of the police's anti-riot Compagnies Republicaines de Securite (CRS) for three years, said a typical eight to 10-hour day for him varied between foot patrol missions around sensitive sites such as train stations, to crowd-control duty during street demonstrations.

The officer said he did not want to be named because he feared a public backlash. He said it was rare that the prerequisite 11 hours recuperation time between shifts was met and that days off were often postponed, leaving little time to recover from a physical and emotional workday. Jean Krakowiecki, President of the France-based Research Institute for Stress, told Reuters the accumulated fatigue in the police force was beginning to have an impact. "We could see uncontrollable violence, depressions followed by suicide, divorces, lives completely destroyed," he said. "We're already seeing police officers breaking down after seeing their colleagues injured or after getting hurt themselves." Some union officials point to the fact that a record 77 officers committed suicide in 2014 and 70 last year, up from 53 in 2010.

Soldiers

In a reminder of the challenges facing security forces, a fake bomb left behind after a training exercise at Manchester United's stadium in Britain forced the evacuation of the 75,000-seater ground and the abandonment of a match at the weekend. It was the first time in 24 years that an English Premier League match had been abandoned on security grounds. French government officials say all measures are in place to ensure Euro 2016 runs smoothly. "Events like this have to happen otherwise the terrorists will win," Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said in an interview with French regional newspapers on May 13. "We've worked for months with the organizers and elected officials in the cities to ensure the highest level of security." Ultimately though, officials say, there just won't be enough officers to police the tournament given that the priority remains securing sensitive locations against potential attacks. Plans are afoot to ensure the French army, which has about 10,000 soldiers stationed across the country's cities as part of anti-terrorism measures, will be handed more responsibility to protect sites during Euro 2016, relieving some police officers. Tournament organizers are also drafting in between 10,000 to 15,000 security staff. Security experts and police officials have said the fan zones will be the biggest challenge. French employment authorities have approached more than 10,000 unemployed security agents to staff these areas. An emergency 40-hour course to replace the traditional 100-hour training was set up two weeks ago. "We're in the final countdown," Ziad Khoury, head of security for Euro 2016 said. "We're not stressed. The key is to remain calm and organize things well. Everyone is committed and it's a window to show our know-how on managing big events and our security. It's positive for our country." — Agencies



BIARRITZ: France's players arrive at their hotel in Biarritz as the French squad prepares for the Uefa Euro-2016. — AFP

FRANCE KICK-OFF EURO 2016 PREPARATIONS IN BIARRITZ



BERLIN: A combo picture shows (from up left to bottom right) German first division Bundesliga soccer team Leverkusen's goalkeeper Bernd Lenno, Leverkusen forward Julian Brandt, Bayern Munich's midfielder Joshua Kimmich and Dortmund's midfielder Julian Weigl. Lenno, Brandt, Kimmich and Weigl are the four youngsters in the German national soccer team provisional squad for the Euro 2016 in France announced by head coach Joachim Loew yesterday in Berlin. —AFP

GERMANY'S LOEW OPTS FOR YOUTH

BERLIN: Germany coach Joachim Loew has named four talented youngsters, including three uncapped players, in his preliminary 27-man squad for Euro 2016. Versatile midfielder Joshua Kimmich, striker Leroy Sane, Julian Weigl - another midfielder - and wide man Julian Brandt were all included when Loew announced his provisional squad yesterday. Sane, 20, is the only one of the quartet to have earned a senior cap, making his national debut as a substitute against France in November 2015. He scored eight times this season and his explosive speed and skills were rare bright spots in Schalke's otherwise disappointing season.

Twenty-one-year-old Kimmich, who played at both centre back and as a holding midfielder for champions Bayern Munich, earned repeated praise from his coach, Pep Guardiola, during his first season at the club. Borussia Dortmund's Julian Weigl enjoyed a superb Bundesliga debut season as his club finished second, while fellow 20-year-old Julian Brandt's nine goals earned Bayer Leverkusen third spot. "Now it is about forging a unit, to tune everyone towards the same, common goal," Loew told reporters at the French Embassy in Berlin, where the presentation took place. "The collective is more important than every single individual player ... We know we are strong but not invincible, so we have to work during our training camp."

Injured captain Bastian Schweinsteiger, who is racing to be fit for the tournament in France, was also included in Loew's provisional list, as were a dozen of their 2014 World Cup winners, including Mesut Ozil, Toni Kroos, Thomas Mueller and keeper Manuel Neuer. However, there was no room for some of the other World Cup winners, including Christoph Kramer and Matthias Ginter. Loew added: "There were some difficult phone calls I had to make but that comes with the job. Obviously those lads not going to France were bitterly disappointed." The final squad will be announced on May 31, he said. Germany face Ukraine, Poland and Northern Ireland in Group C of the competition, starting on June 10. — Reuters

BIARRITZ: Euro 2016 hosts France kick off preparations for next month's tournament with a first training camp from yesterday in Biarritz on the southwestern French coast. Coach Didier Deschamps, who comes from nearby Bayonne, opted to bring his squad here for five days and four training sessions at the Stade Aguilera, which is home to local rugby team Biarritz Olympique. The camp on the Atlantic coast is a first get together to regenerate after a gruelling season, undergo tests and get away from the national training centre at Clairefontaine, outside Paris, which will be the France base during the championship from June 10-July 10.

In theory, 16 players will be yesterday's flight to Biarritz-Benoit Costil, Hugo Lloris, Alphonse Aréola, Lucas Digne, Christophe Jallet, Laurent Koscielny, Eliaquim Mangala, Bacary Sagna, Djibril Sidibe, Samuel Umtiti, N'Golo Kante, Moussa Sissoko, Olivier Giroud, Dimitri Payet, Hatem Ben Arfa and Alexandre Lacazette. Forwards André-Pierre Gignac will join the squad during the week from his Mexican side Tigres UANL.

Other players are still involved in Cup finals with their league sides- PSG and Marseille in France (Blaise Matuidi, Adrien Rabiot, Lassana Diarra, and Steve

Mandanda); Barcelona and Sevilla in Spain (Jeremy Mathieu and Kevin Gameiro), Manchester United and Crystal Palace in England (Morgan Schneiderlin, Anthony Martial and Yohan Cabaye), Juventus and AC Milan in Italy (Paul Pogba and Patrice Evra) and Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund in Germany (Kingsley Coman). Those players will link up with the team at Clairefontaine from May 24 with Atletico Madrid's Antoine Griezmann and Real Madrid's Raphael Varane the final pair to join Les Bleus after the Champions League final in Milan on May 28.

The group will be complete for the first friendly on May 30 against Cameroon in Nantes. The following day the eight stand-by players-Areola, Sidibé, Ben Arfa, Lacazette, Schneiderlin, Gameiro, Rabiot and Umtiti-will leave the side unless called in to replace an injured player. France's final 23-man squad will then fly to Austria for a training camp until June 4 with a final friendly that evening against Scotland in Metz before returning to Clairefontaine, four days before the two-time European champions kick off their campaign against Romania on June 10 in Stade de France, before also facing Albania and Switzerland in Group A.—AFP



BIARRITZ: French national football team coach Didier Deschamps (2nd right), his assistant Guy Stephan (2nd left) and coach for goalkeepers Franck Raviot leave their plane after landing at Biarritz airport yesterday. — AFP

DIEGO COSTA OMITTED FROM SPAIN'S EURO 2016 SQUAD

LAS ROZAS DE MADRID: Chelsea striker Diego Costa was left out of Spain coach Vicente del Bosque's provisional 25-man squad for Euro 2016 yesterday. The nationalized Brazilian missed Chelsea's last two games of the season due to a persistent hamstring injury and has struggled at international level with just one goal in 10 games since declaring to play for Spain in 2013. "We didn't want to bring too many players with a certain doubt over their physical condition," Del Bosque said of Costa's omission from the two-time defending champions' squad. World Cup winners Fernando Torres, Juan Mata and Javi Martinez were also high-profile names left out by Del Bosque. The absence of Costa and the in-form Torres means Del

Bosque has only two central strikers to choose from in 35-year-old Arritz Aduriz and Juventus' Alvaro Morata.

Arsenal's Santi Cazorla was also excluded having just returned from a long-term knee injury. The uncapped Saul Niguez and Lucas Vazquez of Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid respectively have made the 25. Meanwhile, Villarreal captain Bruno Soriano was surprisingly included amongst 10 midfielders. Del Bosque also named 11 promising younger players to bulk up his squad for the friendlies against Bosnia and Herzegovina and South Korea on May 29 and June 1 respectively with Real and Atletico players set to take part in the Champions League final on May 28.— AFP

THOUSANDS TURN OUT AS LEICESTER PARADE TROPHY

LEICESTER: Leicester City's incredible Premier League fairytale reached a joyous crescendo as around 240,000 fans turned the city blue while reveling in the club's title parade on Monday. For two weeks since Claudio Ranieri's side were crowned one of the most unlikely champions in English football history, the city of Leicester hasn't stop celebrating and the party climaxed beneath sunny skies 24 hours after the Foxes finished their campaign with a draw at Chelsea. After starting the season as 5,000-1 outsiders for the title, Leicester defied the odds in stunning fashion and being hailed by a crowd estimated by the local council at nearly a quarter of a million was a fitting finale for Ranieri's squad and the club's Thai chairman Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, who soaked up the celebrations with his family.

"The city is here. It's something special," Ranieri said. "This is because the team played with their soul and their hearts. The people understood this. It's unbelievable. I can only say thank you to the people." Fans began congregating hours before the scheduled 1700 GMT start of the parade as they packed streets along the route and massed at Victoria Park, where cheerleaders and a gospel choir provided the entertainment on a stage set up to welcome the players at the end of the parade.

Thousands of the partying hoards came decked out in the team's blue home shirts, while hundreds of blue and white flags were waved by children with their faces painted in the club colors. With the streets so tightly packed, some brave fans clambered onto rooftops to get a better view and others hung out of windows to salute their heroes. Placards with images of King Richard III's head edited to fit a Leicester strip bobbed above the crowd. The reburial of the king in 2015 was the last time the city witnessed anything approaching these scenes, with some speculating the former monarch may have been a lucky charm for the team.

Ecstatic

Leicester's astonishing success, just a year after they narrowly avoided relegation, had captivated sports fans across the world and one group travelled all the way from Australia to join the celebrations. The crowd also included a party of mature students from Thailand who are studying English at Leicester's De Montfort University. Chaiya Noradechanunt, 48, said: "This is fantastic. I always watch the matches in Thailand. Leicester are very popular." Many supporters hadn't quite come to terms with the magnitude of Leicester winning the first title in the club's 132-year history, but it wasn't going to stop them celebrating in style. "My lad lives in Manchester and he asked me if Leicester would ever win the Premier League and I said 'not in my lifetime,'" one fan said. "So I am extremely amazed and extremely pleased. It's a wonderful achievement both for the club and for the city."

The first sightings of the blue open-top buses carrying the Leicester squad drew roars of delight from the ecstatic crowd, some of whom had been entertained by Ranieri and star striker Jamie Vardy pretending to ride on the police bikes that were escorting them through the city. Captain Wes Morgan and his team-mates, including Japan striker Shinji Okazaki and Algeria winger Riyad Mahrez, took turns holding the trophy on the top deck of one bus as England international Vardy said: "It's brilliant. Look at the scenes. It's carnage."

Once the bus reached its destination in Victoria Park, the raucous atmosphere was cranked up to the levels of a rock festival as players were interviewed while big screens showed Leicester goals from the season. Leicester-based band Kasabian made a surprise appearance to play some of their hit songs as the party went on long into the night. Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha, son of Vichai, was close to tears as he made his way onto the stage to tell the crowd: "I think we need a bigger stadium. You have been amazing and I hope we keep the support next season."—AFP

JAGIELKA WARNS OF MASS EXODUS AT EVERTON

LONDON: Everton's underwhelming Premier League campaign, which ended in manager Roberto Martinez being sacked last week, could have ramifications for next season with a number of players set to leave the club in the summer, defender Phil Jagielka has said. Martinez paid the price for failing to get the best out of a talented young squad, and England international Jagielka said anyone hired to replace him would struggle to keep hold of the team's best players. "There is going to be a lot of change in the playing squad," the 33-year-old centre back told British media. "I am not sure the squad is going to be big enough for the start of next season with the people who are leaving." Veteran goalkeeper Tim Howard has retired after a 10-year stint at Everton, while striker Romelu Lukaku and centre back John Stones are likely to be targeted by bigger clubs.

In addition, the likes of Leon Osman, Tony Hibbert, Steven Pienaar and Darron Gibson are all out of contract in the summer. "I am not sure exactly what will go on but there could be double figures leaving, which is a lot," Jagielka added. "We are not talking about young lads either. We are talking about established first-team players. It is going to be a big change of personnel and that will play a big part in who will get the chance to manage the club." Everton finished the season on 47 points and 11th in the table, and were knocked out in the semi-finals of both the Capital One (League) Cup and FA Cup.—Reuters



LIVERPOOL: Everton's US goalkeeper Tim Howard kisses his goalpost at the final whistle during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Norwich City at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England on May 15, 2016. —AFP



LEICESTER: Leicester City's Italian manager Claudio Ranieri (center) stands with the Premier League trophy as the Leicester City team take part in an open-top bus parade through Leicester to celebrate winning the Premier League title.—AFP

5 REASONS WHY SPANISH CLUBS DOMINATE EUROPE

MADRID: Sevilla look to continue the reign of Spain in European competition when they face Liverpool in the Europa League final today aiming to win the competition for a third consecutive season. An all-Madrid Champions League final for the second time in three years between Real and Atletico Madrid on May 28 will ensure a Spanish winner of Europe's premier club competition for a third straight year. Indeed, until Villarreal's defeat to Liverpool in the Europa League semis, Spanish clubs had won all 17 of their knockout ties against non-Spanish opposition this season. Here, AFP Sports looks at five reasons for Spain's prolonged domination of European competition.

Top two raise the bar

Barcelona and Real Madrid's sustained success is the easiest to understand. They are the two richest clubs in the world with the capacity to continually invest the world's best players. However, that also has a drip down effect that raises the standard of the league. Other clubs have the experience of facing the best in the world at least four times a season. Travelling to face the

best Italy, Germany or England has to offer isn't nearly as intimidating as a visit to the Camp Nou or Santiago Bernabeu. Moreover, many fine players brought through the Barca and Real academies are squeezed out by the competition they face for places, but go onto make their name with other Spanish clubs.

Coaching variation

The Spanish national team's success in winning three consecutive major tournaments between 2008 and 2012 was based around the "tiki-taka" short passing style also commonly associated with Barcelona. "Football in Spain is a very technical game. The best football is here," said Manchester City manager Manuel Pellegrini, whose side was dumped out of the Champions League semi-finals by Real Madrid. Yet, it is the tactical variety of a number of skilled coaches that has worked for Spanish teams in European competition. Diego Simeone's Atletico Madrid couldn't be more opposed to the Barcelona-model in terms of style, but their rock-solid defensive structure has stifled Europe's best. Real Madrid, Sevilla and Villarreal are all deadly on the counter-

attack, Athletic Bilbao - kings of the set-piece. That variation makes Spanish sides far more unpredictable than many of the European rivals.

Recruitment

Whilst Barca and Madrid can count on their multi-million euro budgets, the rest still have to consistently sell their best players to Spain's big two, or increasingly, England's cash-rich Premier League. However, the structure of long-standing sporting directors who oversee the clubs' recruitment—even as coaches come and go—has seen Atletico and Sevilla in particular continue to thrive. Sevilla's director of football Monchi has been a target for Liverpool and Barcelona in the past given his penchant to pluck outstanding talents from Europe's lesser leagues in France, Portugal, Ukraine and even Spain's lower divisions at knockdown prices. Atletico were previously serial users of the now outlawed third party ownership system, but continue to thrive in bringing in talent from Portugal and South America thanks to close ties with Portuguese super agent Jorge Mendes.

Spanish core

A key to all the Spanish sides who have gone far in recent years has been a reliance of a core group of homegrown players. Producing their own top class talent obviously saves the clubs money in the long run, but also fosters a unity and spirit often lacking when superstar talents from around the world are merely thrown into the same team. "Spanish teams work very well at the academy level," Spain coach Vicente del Bosque said. "From there, with the improvement of coaching too, it has improved the standard at club and international level."

European experience

Spain's thirst for the Europa League with six wins and three other runs to the final in the past 10 years has meant a series of clubs now know how to handle the eccentricities of European ties and how to balance those commitments with keeping their La Liga campaigns on track. In the last five years Atletico have played 63 European ties, followed by Real Madrid on 62, Barcelona 57, Sevilla 53, Athletic Bilbao 52 and Valencia on 48.—AFP



LEICESTER: Leicester City's Italian manager Claudio Ranieri (left) and Leicester City's English defender Wes Morgan hold the Premier League trophy as the Leicester City football team celebrate in Victoria Park, after taking part in an open-top bus parade through Leicester, to celebrate winning the Premier League title on May 16, 2016. —AFP

LEICESTER CITY'S RANIERI NAMED ENGLAND MANAGER OF THE YEAR

LONDON: Leicester City's inspirational manager Claudio Ranieri has picked up another piece of silverware after being elected Manager of the Year by England's League Managers Association (LMA). The 64-year-old Italian, who led Leicester to a 5,000-1 Premier League title triumph, becomes only the second non-Briton to win the award after Arsenal's French manager Arsene Wenger, who was honored in 2002 and 2004.

Ranieri, who was also crowned Premier League Manager of the Year, collected the award at a ceremony in London on Monday after a helicopter ride from Leicester's Premier League victory parade. "As a player I was not a champion, but I had great heart," he told the audience. "I told my players I wanted them to play English football and I put my little Italian tactics with their English heart and then we can do something special. They followed me. It is a

fairytale and I don't know what has happened. I don't know, believe me." Ranieri was also named Italian Manager of the Year in his homeland last month.

He succeeds Bournemouth's Eddie Howe, who won last year's prestigious LMA award after steering Bournemouth to promotion from the Championship for the first time in the club's history. "My congratulations go to the LMA manager of the year sponsored by Barclays, Claudio Ranieri, who, in his first year as manager of Leicester City, has achieved the most astonishing of sporting triumphs," said LMA chairman Howard Wilkinson, the former Leeds United manager. "He thoroughly deserves all the recognition and praise being bestowed upon him tonight." Ranieri was due to fly to Thailand with his squad yesterday for a post-season trip to the country of the club's owners, travel retail group King Power.—AFP

WOLFSBURG, GUILAVOGUI SEAL A THREE-YEAR DEAL

BERLIN: French midfielder Josuha Guilavogui says his goal is to see Wolfsburg play regular Champions League football after signing a permanent three-year deal, following two seasons on loan in the Bundesliga. The 25-year-old joined Wolfsburg on loan from Atletico Madrid at the start of the 2014/15 season and the German club has signed a contract with the Frenchman until 2019.

"I'm happy that I will continue to play at VfL Wolfsburg and can be part of his great club. It was always my wish to stay here longer," he said. "I want to help permanently establish VfL at the top of the Bundesliga, so that we can play regular Champions League football." Guilavogui has played in 30 of Wolfsburg's 34 league games this season and started their 2-0 win over Real Madrid in the

quarter-finals, first-leg, of the Champions League before bowing out after a 3-0 defeat in Spain. Guilavogui has made seven appearances for France, but has not been nominated for their Euro 2016 squad. "We are very pleased that we were able to sign Josuha permanently," said Wolfsburg's director of sport Klaus Allofs. "He has shown in the last two years that he fits Wolfsburg both as a person and an athlete. For us, it was always clear that we wanted to keep him, because his development isn't over yet." Wolfsburg finished as runners-up to Bayern Munich in the German league during Guilavogui's first season in 2014/15 and lifted the German Cup last season. But they finished only eighth when the current campaign was completed on Saturday, outside the European places. —AFP

BOCA JUNIORS TEAR UP OSVALDO'S CONTRACT OVER POOR DISCIPLINE

BUENOS AIRES: Italy striker Dani Osvaldo had his Boca Juniors contract terminated on Monday for disciplinary reasons, ending a short second spell with his favorite team, local media reported. Boca and Osvaldo agreed to end the former AS Roma, Inter Milan, Juventus, Southampton and Porto striker's deal after a fruitless stay, the state news agency Telam said. The club was not available to comment. Osvaldo, who has had several run-ins with the soccer authorities, including the English FA when he played for Saints in 2013/14, had already been kicked out of the Boca first team squad by coach Guillermo Barros Schelotto last Thursday. The 30-year-old was caught smoking in the changing rooms at the Centenario in Montevideo after Thursday's 1-1 draw at Uruguayan champions Nacional in the first leg of their Copa Libertadores quarter-final.

"It's a subject I don't need to talk about because it ended on Thursday," Barros Schelotto, who considered Osvaldo's behaviour a lack of respect towards him and the team, told reporters on Sunday. Argentine-born Osvaldo, who returned to Boca four months ago, had played the last five minutes, having just come back from a long foot-injury layoff, and went straight to the changing rooms without shaking hands with team mates or opponents and saluting the travelling fans. Boca, captained by former Juventus striker Carlos Tevez, are



Dani Osvaldo



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

Liverpool v Sevilla

21:45

beIN SPORTS 1 HD

beIN SPORTS 2 HD

Crosby ends
slump in OT as
Penguins even
East finalsThousands turn
out as Leicester
parade trophy

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OAKLAND: (Left-right) Klay Thompson #11 of the Golden State Warriors, Enes Kanter #11 of the Oklahoma City Thunder, Draymond Green #23 and Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors and Russell Westbrook #0 of the Oklahoma City Thunder look to rebound during game one of the NBA Western Conference Final at ORACLE Arena on May 16, 2016. — AFP

WESTBROOK STARS AS THUNDER STUN WARRIORS

DOMINANT WESTBROOK STEALS CURRY'S THUNDER

OAKLAND: Russell Westbrook inspired a second-half fightback as the Oklahoma City Thunder came from behind to beat the Golden State Warriors 108-102 in the opening game of the Western Conference finals on Monday. Westbrook poured on 27 points as the Thunder overturned a 60-47 halftime deficit to snatch victory in a pulsating clash between two of the most potent attacking units in the NBA. Westbrook also chipped in with 12 assists and six rebounds while team-mate Kevin Durant finished with 26 points as the visitors silenced the Golden State home crowd at the Oracle Arena. "It's a game of two halves, man," Westbrook said after the win. "We're a great team. We didn't play our best game but we came out with a win." Westbrook played a pivotal role on defense, time and again using his blistering speed to pounce on stray passes by the Warriors.

"He's probably the quickest guard in the league," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said of Westbrook. "I thought when we lost our aggressiveness and our momentum offensively in the second half, a lot of that had to do with his speed and aggressiveness," the Warriors coach added. Golden State looked to be sprinting away to a one-sided victory after blasting into a commanding early in the first half, converting a series of rash Oklahoma City turnovers into points. NBA MVP Stephen Curry—who finished with 26 points—rubbed salt into the wound on the stroke of half-time with a trademark long-range three-pointer to give the Warriors a 13-point lead. But the Thunder re-emerged after the halftime interval a different side, with Westbrook leading the charge to slash the Warriors' advantage with a virtuoso third quarter performance. Westbrook piled up 19 points in the third quarter to help put the Thunder within three points of the Warriors at 88-85 heading into the fourth quarter. With Oklahoma City's defense successfully neutralizing the threat posed by Curry, it was left to Durant and Westbrook to take control. Oklahoma City opened up a 101-93 lead in the final few minutes but the reigning NBA finals champion Warriors clawed their way back to within one point at 101-100.

Just when it looked as if Golden State were poised to pull off another Houdini act, the Thunder regrouped and edged clear once more. The visitors received a fortunate call when Westbrook avoided being called for traveling at 105-102 with 17 seconds remaining, and three more points sealed the win as time ran out for the Warriors. Kerr bemoaned a loss of composure in the final quarter, when the Warriors made only one of 10 attempted three-pointers—way below their normal levels of shooting accuracy. "There were a lot of quick shots, way too many quick shots," Kerr said. "Five minutes left in the game and we're down four points or whatever and we were acting like we had 20 seconds left. "Five minutes is an eternity. We know how we have to play. We have to pass and move and create rhythm for ourselves. "I just felt we took way too many quick ones which took us out of our rhythm." Curry said the Warriors were ready to respond after the opening loss. "It's a long series," Curry said. "It will be a different situation for us to try to bounce back at this point in the series having a deficit. So I think it's fun to be able to have this opportunity and show what we're made of."

Thunder head coach Billy Donovan meanwhile praised his side's problem-solving abilities after a first-half littered with errors. "I thought in the second half we did a much better job, took much better care of the basketball which enabled us to get back in transition and play better defense," Donovan said. "It's one game and we'll have to take a look at the film and figure out how we can play better on Wednesday. "We're not a perfect team but these guys really battle and fight and compete—when they see something that's a problem they really try to correct it." Game Two in the best of seven series takes place in Oakland today.—AFP

LIVERPOOL STAND BETWEEN SEVILLA AND EUROPA TREBLE

BASEL: Liverpool midfielder Emre Can believes the Reds' legendary battling qualities can help end their 11-year wait for a continental trophy against treble-chasing Sevilla in today's Europa League final. In their first European final since defeat by AC Milan in the 2007 Champions League, Liverpool are bidding to scupper the Spanish side's bid for an unprecedented third straight Europa League title at Basel's St. Jakob-Park.

It brings Liverpool's breathtaking journey through the competition under new manager Jurgen Klopp to a thrilling climax, following dramatic wins over Manchester United,

Borussia Dortmund and Villarreal in recent months. After seeing his side sink Villarreal brilliantly to reach the final, Klopp declared: "To go to a final you need a little bit of luck in decisive moments, but most of the time you need outstanding performances. "Now we are there, and it's a great opportunity and we will take it."

Liverpool's fans should be getting excited, but as the only team to successfully defend the trophy on two occasions, in 2007 and 2015, and with a record four UEFA Cup/Europa League titles, silky-smooth Sevilla are arguably under less

pressure. Can wants to seize his chance in his first final with the club, but says a collective show of force will be required against the tough La Liga side. "Sevilla know how to play in the Europa League," Can told Liverpool's website. "They've won the last two Europa League titles, and so it will be a very tough game, but if we show what we are able to do as a team then we can win the final."

Five-time European champions Liverpool, who have also won the Europa League and its predecessor the UEFA Cup three times, have often provided drama on the European stage. In their last Europa League success, in 2001, they triumphed after a nine-goal thriller against Deportivo Alaves only after Delf Geli scored a 'golden goal' own goal in extra time. Four years later, Liverpool staged arguably the greatest comeback in Champions League final history by overcoming a three-goal half-time deficit against AC Milan to force the Italians into extra time then penalty kicks, winning their fifth title 3-2 from the spot.

'Focused and hungry'

After Milan took revenge with a 2-1 Champions League triumph in 2007, Liverpool now have the chance to silver-line an encouraging first season for Klopp at Anfield. With a Champions League spot also offered to Wednesday's winners, the German has pulled out all the stops. He rotated his entire starting XI for the 1-1 draw at West Brom on Sunday, meaning he welcomes back the big guns.

Captain Jordan Henderson could start after returning from a knee ligament problem at West Brom, while Divock Origi, preferred to Daniel Sturridge up front in the Europa League, is available having come through training unscathed on Monday following a spell on the sidelines with an ankle injury. Sevilla may have the added pressure of facing Barcelona in the Spanish Cup final on Sunday, but coach Unai Emery insisted: "We have the chance to play two finals and, despite the difficulty our opponents will cause us, the team is determined and determined to enjoy it." In comments to uefa.com, he added: "The fact that this is our third consecutive final demonstrates how focused and hungry we have been to do well in the Europa League, and win it." Kevin Gameiro, Sevilla's top scorer this season with 28 goals—including seven in eight Europa League outings—believes his side's past experiences will prove decisive. "Liverpool are an historic club with great players," the French striker told Sevilla's website.

"It's exciting... and they'll make life hard for us, but we've been together for a number of years and we know how to play these games." Can, meanwhile, has one extra incentive. He already owns losers' and winners' medals from Champions League finals, but as part of Bayern Munich's squad the 22-year-old did not even get to lace up his boots, in 2012 and 2013 respectively. He added: "I want to win that final and my first trophy with Liverpool. I will give my best, the team will give its best and then we want to win the game and hopefully we will do it."—AFP



BASEL: Liverpool's coach Jurgen Klopp (center) touches the ball during the last training session prior to the Europa League final between Liverpool FC and Sevilla FC in Basel, Switzerland. — AP



AGAIN, HOME DEPOT RISES ABOVE THE RETAIL FRAY



DAMASCUS: A Syrian man picks Damask Roses (Rosa Damascena), which are used to make rose water, in the village of Marah. (Inset) A Syrian man displays picked Damask Roses (Rosa Damascena). — AFP photos

SYRIA'S FAMOUS DAMASK ROSE WITHERED BY WAR
ONE OF THE OLDEST FLOWERS IN HISTORY STARTING TO WITHER

DAMASCUS: Its fame is such that the damask rose features in Shakespeare, but for Syrian farmers growing the flower that produces the heady-scented oil used to flavor Turkish delight, tragedy may await. One of the oldest flowers in history, a staple of perfumers and known for its therapeutic properties, the damask rose is withering in the city and surrounding fields that gave it its name.

Farmer Jamal Abbas looks out over land in El-Mrah, some 60 kilometers northeast of the capital of a country ripped asunder by war for five years. "The damask rose is dying," he says in the Nabek area village known for growing the 30-petaled flower, but where cultivated land has decreased by more than half. The tradition of picking the crop has also faded as entire families have fled the fighting between regime forces and rebel groups.

War prevented access to the rose fields for a time and forced the cancellation of the annual rose festival, depriving El-Mrah of its main source of income. Rebels were routed from the area in 2014, and on Sunday the festival was staged again, despite the

production of damask roses at an all-time low. "We went from 80 tons in 2010 to 20 tons this year because of the war, in addition to a drought," says another farmer, Hamza Bitar. Now aged 43, Bitar says he "learned to walk in these fields" before the war erupted in 2011, "Lebanese merchants came to buy rose petals by the tens of tons for export to Europe," he says.

Exported since the Crusades

And "French perfumers distilled the dried petals to produce essential oil." Exported to Europe for centuries since the time of the Crusades, this ancient rose is also cultivated in countries including France, Morocco, Iran and Turkey. Thanks to its heady, rich and smooth scent, the damask rose-it flowers naturally in May but can also be grown throughout the year-is used to produce essential oils and cosmetics.

Experts swear by its therapeutic properties in fighting infection and as a relaxant, and rose water is used across the Middle East both as a refreshing drink, in Oriental sweets such as Turkish delight, to scent mosques and even to bestow luck at

weddings. It features in Western literature and poetry, notably that of William Shakespeare who died 400 years ago last month. The Bard writes in Sonnet 130, a parody of a conventional love poem addressed to a less than blooming mistress: "I have seen roses damask'd, red and white, But no such roses see I in her cheeks."

In and around Damascus and its eponymous province, the rose used to adorn gardens, balconies and roadsides, a symbol for residents of Syria's capital. But the decline in production and care make its presence these days more fleeting. For both farmers and traders, the decline of the damask rose is also a symbol of a people's agony and a country wracked by a conflict that has killed more than 270,000 people and created millions of refugees.

'A source of pride'

Abu Bilal, 52, had a distillery in Ain Tarma in the Eastern Ghouta area near Damascus where he made rose oil, but that is now a rebel stronghold. War closed him down in 2011. "Douma

used to smell of roses," he says of the besieged main town in Eastern Ghouta. "Now it reeks of gunpowder, they tell me." These days Abu Bilal works in a souk at a perfumery in the Old Town of Damascus.

According to merchants in the souk where there used to be eight distilleries of rose oil, of which just two remain, it takes three tonnes of dried rose petals to make a kilo (two pounds) of essential oil. "Today there are barely 250 grams (half a pound) of oil available to buy in the whole market," he says.

Despite also being cultivated elsewhere, the rose "from Damascus is unique because its smell is heady, its quality is better and it produces more oil," says Abu Bilal. "The companies (pharmaceutical and cosmetic) and our customers in the Gulf like to buy the original-it's a source of pride for them." Back in El Mrah, octogenarian Amin Bitar has spent his entire life cultivating the damask rose. "It's not just a business relationship we have with the flower, it's part of the family," he says sadly. For him, the damask rose "will not come back to life until this war is over." — AFP

OIL AIDS MOST GULF BOURSES, EGYPT LIFTED BY FOREIGN FUNDS

DUBAI: Shares in most Gulf bourses were firm yesterday as oil prices held near this year's highs, while Egypt's stock index climbed as international funds flowed back into the market. Saudi petrochemical shares were strong with the sub-index rising 1.3 percent, its fifth straight session of gains. The main stock index rose 0.6 percent.

Ethiad Etisalat (Mobily) jumped 4.6 percent after it said lenders who had not already agreed in December to waive breaches in loan terms had now done so. Najran Cement climbed 2.1 percent after it announced its board had approved the creation of a new mining company, although it still needs approval from authorities. It did not give details, but developing the mining industry is a major plank of Saudi Arabia's economic reform plan.

In Cairo, the main index jumped 1.9 percent on the heaviest volume for almost four weeks as international funds bought Egyptian shares, bourse data showed. Commercial International Bank, Egypt's largest listed lender, rose 1.6 percent to 44.48 pounds. Earlier this week the bank reported a 17 percent rise in net income to 1.29 billion Egyptian pounds (\$145.3 million).

"The bank has impressed on lower provisioning, higher deposit growth and if the sale of its investment arm CI Capital to Beltone Financial is concluded in Q2 2016, the transaction should result in a sizeable capital gain of 500 million pounds," said a note by Cairo-based Naeem Brokerage, rating the stock a

"buy" with a target price of 51.28 pounds. Another financial firm, EFG Hermes <HRHO.CA> surged 9.0 percent. Last week the company reported a net loss of 128 million Egyptian pounds in the first quarter, due in large part to the reclassification of its stake in a Lebanese bank, Credit Libanais. But EFG's core investment banking arm reported a net profit of 79 million pounds, an 18 percent rise. "Although we expect a slowdown in brokerage volumes because of the lower activity in Ramadan, we believe that the second quarter of 2016 will be just as strong, especially with the acquisition of the micro finance player Tanmeyah," said Nancy Fahmy, an analyst at Beltone Financial.

Dubai, Qatar

In Dubai the index added 0.4 percent with help from blue chip Emaar Properties, which climbed 2.3 percent. Arabtec closed flat at 1.45 dirhams; it gained as much as 2.8 percent during the day after it said its June 1 general assembly would aim to approve a plan to use "all the statutory reserve to extinguish part of the company's losses". It gave no details. The company has reported losses in the past six quarters, which it blamed on increased costs and tough market conditions. In the last few days analysts at Deutsche Bank cut their price target for Arabtec to 1.11 dirhams from 1.14 dirhams while maintaining a "hold" rating, and EFG Hermes raised its target to 1.13 dirhams from 1.07 dirhams while keeping a "sell" rating.—Reuters

SAUDI ARABIA AIMING TO SALVAGE WHITE ELEPHANT FINANCIAL DISTRICT

RIYADH: The plan to build a financial district from scratch was viewed by Saudi Arabia's neighbors as among the glossiest excesses of the kingdom's oil boom profligacy: a white elephant in the making, unlikely to attract tenants and possibly never even to be completed.

The creators of the King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD) envisaged a kind of mini-Dubai, a haven for foreign financial services and investors as well as local banks and companies currently doing business from offices all over Riyadh. But more than 10 years later-and a year after it was supposed to be finished-most of the 1.6-million-sq-metre district on the edge of Riyadh is still a construction site, and no businesses have moved in. Reform-minded Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said last month he wants to salvage the \$10 billion project. The Public Investment Fund, re-imagined as the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, will be based there and sources have said it will also own the project. According to the prince's "Vision 2030", KAFD will become a "special zone" with internationally competitive regulations, an easier visa regime and a direct connection to the airport, steps he hopes will "increase the chances of ... success".

Hopeful and skeptical

Another change is to increase the amount of residential use from the 1.7 million sq meters now designated for office space. According to a 2015 report by real estate analyst Jones Lang LaSalle, rents are bottoming out in Riyadh's current 2.5 million sq meters of office space but prices for residential units are rising. Potential tenants and investors are both hopeful

and skeptical about the plan. "The potential is amazing. The inside is impressive. I'd like to live there," said one Dubai-based expatriate who does business in Saudi and who has toured the site. "As an urban space it's interesting, with its design and architecture." He questioned how successful the project could be in the current economic climate, however. The main contractor is Saudi Binladin Group, the biggest construction firm in the kingdom, which has been struggling since last year.

"It will not be finished. Decision-making is very slow (on the project, and) people don't have cash," he said. Like other business people interviewed for this story, he didn't want to be named expressing an opinion about such an important royal initiative. A senior Saudi former banker expressed similar concerns. "If the plan does create a genuine free zone and makes things smoother for newcomers, it'll be 'bingo!'" he said, but added that a recovery in the oil-dependent economy was key.

Another senior Gulf banker said his firm had no plans to move into the complex despite its "impressive" looks, and expressed concern that banks might only be able to rent, rather than own, buildings there.

More residential space

Inside the district last week, swallows swooped between palm trees and sparrows pecked among decorative desert shrubs near the almost completed conference centre. The parts that are finished include sections of its stone-paved "wadi" walkway and distinctive glass towers. From high in one tower, swimming pools and children's playgrounds could be seen on other roofs.

Jacob Kurek, a partner at the firm responsible for the KAFD masterplan, Danish firm Henning Larsen, said the original plans were flexible enough to transform space earmarked for offices into residences or retail space. A direct link to the airport would be easy to install via Riyadh's new metro, which will have a station at KAFD, he said. Other changes, such as a different regulatory regime, visa exemptions and any blunting of Saudi Arabia's strict social restrictions, would be more complicated, however. At the moment, visas can take many days to arrange and require a complex process of invitation by a sponsor and plenty of supplementary documentation. Setting up a business means getting permissions from many government departments.

Mustafa Alani, a security expert with close ties to the Saudi Interior Ministry, said visa exemptions could work like the waiver program in the United States, or like residence permits issued by free zones in the United Arab Emirates. "It's not a visa, but it's not a free walk-in either. There might be a geographical restriction," he said, suggesting those who enter on the special visas might be forbidden to leave KAFD, or be limited to the Saudi capital.

According to rules dictated by Saudi Arabia's powerful conservative clerics, women must wear an ankle-length cloak in public and are forbidden from driving. Men and women who are not related may not mingle unchaperoned. Cinemas, music concerts and dancing are banned and alcohol and pork are illegal. Businesses must shut for half an hour during each of five daily prayers.—Reuters

BRAZIL NAMES NEW CENTRAL BANK HEAD, EYES REFORMS



BRASILIA: Brazil's Finance Minister Henrique Meirelles speaks during a press conference. — AP

BRASILIA: Brazil's interim government yesterday named economist Ilan Goldfajn as the new head of the central bank, a key post in the fight to ease the giant economy out of recession and inflation.

Acting president Michel Temer's new finance minister, Henrique Meirelles, was due to announce the rest of his team later in the day. Meirelles says his priority now is to scrutinize the country's battered finances to know the full extent of mounting macroeconomic problems.

Goldfajn, 50, will be a lynchpin in efforts to revitalize the economy in the wake of Temer assuming the presidency in place of Dilma Rousseff, who was suspended last week to face an impeachment trial that she says amounts to a coup.

Brazil is in its worst recession for decades, with the economy shrinking 3.5 percent last year and forecast by the IMF to do the same this year. Inflation is at around 10 percent and the central bank has maintained its interest rate at 14.25 percent for six consecutive months, stuck between fear of stoking prices and desire to stimulate the economy.

Brazil's inability to bridge a widening fiscal gap led to major credit rating agencies stripping Latin America's biggest economy of its investment grade rating last year. Temer says he is planning to start addressing that imbalance through pension system reforms and cuts to the country's bloated government. But Meirelles struck a cautious note yesterday, saying no measures would be taken before a forensic examination of the situation inherited from Rousseff's government.

"To establish a (fiscal) target it's necessary to know what the deficit is this year, what receipts will be, and whether any taxes are necessary. All this will be under analysis this week," he said. The finance minister has urged for the new government "to start telling the truth" about the state of accounts.

US-trained economist

Goldfajn, replacing Alexandre Tombini, is an MIT-trained economist who has already served in Brazil's central bank as economic policy chief between 2000-2003. The central bank described its new head, until now the chief economist at

Itau Unibanco, as "a recognized professional with wide experience of the Brazilian financial sector (and) a broad vision of the national and international economy."

In a column he writes for O Globo daily, Goldfajn said in early April that an interest rate cut is necessary, but must not be rushed. The bank's next rate meeting will be June 8. Meirelles said the central bank under Goldfajn would enjoy "autonomy of decision making." "The central bank will not have its autonomy questioned," he said. The government is planning to ask Congress to pass a constitutional amendment formalizing the central bank's autonomy "which today is by verbal agreement," Meirelles said.

Rousseff was suspended last Thursday by the Senate which will now open a trial, lasting up to six months, on charges that she illegally manipulated budget accounts to mask the depth of the economic woes during her 2014 reelection. Rousseff says the accounting practices were used by all previous governments and are not an impeachable crime. She accuses Temer of having mounted a constitutional coup. — AFP

DEFLATION AGAIN: JAPAN'S \$2 CUP NOODLE BINGE SIGN OF THE TIMES

TOKYO: Japanese consumers can't get enough of cup noodles, with spending on them surging by more than a quarter over the past year. That sounds like good news, but for a country still struggling to escape deflation it's a worrying signal. Weak consumer spending is fuelling speculation that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will again delay a planned sales tax hike, and Japan is expected to have dodged a recession at the start of this year by the smallest of margins - helped by an extra 'leap year' day in the January-March quarter.

Consumption, one of the few economic engines that fired when Abe launched his "Abenomics" stimulus plan more than three years ago, is faltering. And rising sales of cheap cup noodles is a worrying sign that consumers have little confidence that deflation is being banished.

"Consumers remain on guard against rising costs of food and living, refraining from spending on other items, and they're rebuilding savings spent during the last-minute buying spree," said Hiromichi Shirakawa, chief economist at Credit Suisse. Cup noodles, costing as little as 180 yen (\$1.65), are a favorite for penny pinchers. Average monthly spending on cup noodles surged 26.1 percent in January-March from a year earlier, government data show - the fourth straight quarter of double-digit growth.

Spending on noodles is growing at the fastest pace since Abe took office in late 2012. At the same time, data shows households are spending less on non-durable goods such as utilities, education, recreation, transport and communications. With private consumption accounting for roughly 60 percent of the economy, this renewed frugality is a signal that Japanese policymakers could struggle

with yet another year of disappointing growth and low inflation. Policymakers are worried. Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said this month that weakness is starting to show up in consumer spending, but he expects a tight labor market to support household spending in the future. In March, the government lowered its assessment of private consumption due to falling spending and weakening consumer sentiment.

Near-recession

Data today is forecast to show the economy grew at an annualized rate of just 0.2 percent in January-March, after an annualized 1.1 percent contraction at the end of 2015 - avoiding recession with the help of an extra day from the leap year to boost the numbers. Private consumption is forecast to grow by just 0.2 percent in the first quarter after falling 0.9 percent in the previous three months.

Those sort of numbers are feeding expectations that Abe will put on hold a plan to raise the sales tax hike to 10 percent from 8 percent next April, although the government's top spokesman denied a weekend report to that effect in the Nikkei paper.

The planned increase has already been delayed once after an increase to 8 percent from 5 percent in April 2014 hit consumption and knocked the economy into recession.

When Abe launched his administration with bold promises to shake Japan from its deflationary torpor, consumer sentiment surged and shoppers splashed out on big-ticket items. But now, opinion polls show a majority of voters are losing faith in "Abenomics", as well as in the BOJ's radical monetary stimulus, and consumer sentiment is weakening. — Reuters



BUCHAREST: In a picture taken on Friday, March 18, 2016 a platter of Ibanesti cheese, a feta-style cheese produced by farmers in the pastures in northwest Transylvania, together with olives and bell peppers is presented to the media during a press conference. — AP

TRADITION ROMANIAN FOOD GETS BOOST FROM EUROPE

EU OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED IBANESTI WHITE COW'S CHEESE

BUCHAREST: Traditional foods enjoyed by generations of Romanians - including Transylvanian cheese, plum jam and succulent salami, a favorite of the son of late Communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu - are getting an unexpected boost thanks to the European Union. Last month, the EU officially recognized Ibanesti white cow's cheese, a feta-style cheese produced by farmers in the pastures in northwest Transylvania. Earlier that month, Sibiu salami, the local king of the smoked sausages, also was recognized.

The specially cured sausage was first produced in Transylvania during the 19th century and was prized as an expensive delicacy in the late days of communism as food began to be rationed. Harder in texture than other salamis, it was first made in 1845 and commercially pro-

duced by Italian Filippo Dozzi in 1910 in the mountain resort of Sinaia, where it still is made today. Even now, it is the most expensive Romanian salami, costing about 90 lei (\$22.70) a kilogram, or \$10.32 per pound.

Prized products

It's often served on a platter with Ibanesti or other similar white cheeses together with olives or raw onions as appetizers at parties, weddings and celebrations. The first Romanian product to earn the coveted EU benefit was magiun of Topoloveni, a slow-cooked plum jam with no added sugar, which has been served to Romania's troops on NATO bases since 2009 instead of sugary preserves. Another traditional product hoping for EU recognition is smoked bighead carp from the Barsei region in

Transylvania. It's a rare piece of good news for Romanians to digest about their prized products. More often, Romanians get news of food controllers dishing out fines for expired meat and other fresh foods sold in markets and supermarkets, or salami that is found to contain soya, colorants and flour.

The benefit of the EU officially recognizing a food produced in a limited geographic area is that producers can apply for European funds to promote the item abroad. But only cheese produced from cows that graze in the rich pastures of Ibanesti or Sibiu salami, and made only by five designated factories in central Romania, are given the license. It's said that sow meat and a special mold give it a special taste. The EU has about 1,400 registered local food product brands, most in Italy, France and Spain. — AP

CANADA OIL PRODUCERS DISRUPTED ANEW AS WILDFIRE SHIFTS NORTH

ALBERTA: Canadian energy producers were hit with fresh disruptions yesterday after a massive wildfire burning around the oil sands hub of Fort McMurray, Alberta, shifted north, forcing the evacuation of about 4,000 people from work camps. Suncor Energy Inc, one of the area's biggest operators, said early yesterday that it started a staged and orderly shutdown of its base plant operations as a precautionary measure.

Suncor said there had been no damage to its assets and that it had enhanced fire protection around the facilities. Suncor and Syncrude Canada late Monday confirmed they had evacuated workers from the affected area. The sudden movement of the fire prompted the evacuation of some 4,000 people from work camps outside Fort McMurray, with all northbound traffic again cut off at the city, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo said on Monday.

The entire population of Fort McMurray, about 90,000 people, was forced to flee nearly two weeks ago as the uncontrolled wildfire raged through some neighborhoods and destroyed about 15 percent of structures.

On Monday, the blaze continued to burn uncontrolled, covering 285,000 hectares (704,000 acres), officials said. By Monday evening it was moving 30 to 40 meters (98 to 131 feet) per minute and had pushed a critical firebreak north of the city to jump into the oil sand camp areas. Roughly a million barrels per day of oil sands crude production was shut down as a precaution and because of disruptions to regional pipelines. Much of that production remains offline. Firefighters have managed to protect much of Fort McMurray but evacuated residents have not been allowed to return to their homes, partly because of hot spots around the community. — Reuters

FRENCH LABOR UNREST: TEAR GAS, BLOCKED ROADS, PRESIDENT FIRM

PARIS: Tear gas briefly choked a Left Bank neighborhood and truckers blocked highways in Provence and Normandy in new tensions over a French labor bill yesterday - but the president insisted that he won't abandon the contested reform.

France is facing a tense week of strikes and other union action against the bill, which has met fierce resistance in Parliament and in the streets. A peaceful march yesterday by union members through Paris was interrupted when masked protesters threw projectiles, and riot police responded with tear gas that rose up in the surrounding streets. A bus stop was scrawled with graffiti in English reading "Tourist go home, refugees come." The march later resumed.

Truck drivers joined in the protests yesterday, blocking roads around Marseille and the western cities of Nantes and Le Mans. They fear a drop in income because the bill cuts overtime pay. Marseille union leader Laurent Casanova said the goal "is to paralyze traffic ... and block the economy." Truck driver John Bosco in Vitrolles, near Marseille, said the law could cut 1,000 to 1,500 euros (\$1,130 to \$1,700) from his annual income.

"I will not back down" on the bill, President Francois Hollande said yesterday on Europe-1 radio, arguing that the new law is necessary to boost hiring and investment. "There are too many governments that have backed down, which is why I found the country in such a state in 2012," he said. France's economy has stagnated for years after successive governments tried

reforms but failed or ceded to street protests. A crowd of protesters followed Hollande to a pharmaceutical laboratory he was visiting yesterday, demanding the law be abandoned.

Protests against the bill have often turned violent. Hollande said those who come to protests just "to break things" would be punished, saying that 350 police officers have been injured in recent weeks and 60 people convicted.



NANTES: Demonstrators gather on May 17, 2016 in Nantes, western France, to protest against the government's planned labor law reforms. — AFP

ed. Paris police banned some people from taking part in yesterday's march through the capital, prompting some to file an emergency complaint for the alleged violation of their fundamental right to demonstrate. Hollande insisted he supports the right to demonstrate despite a state of emergency still in place after last year's deadly extremist attacks in Paris. "That's part of freedom," he said. — AP

BRITAIN'S VODAFONE LOGS FIRST EARNINGS GROWTH SINCE 2008

LONDON: British telecoms giant Vodafone yesterday posted its first annual rise in operating profits in eight years, boosted by growth in Europe and emerging markets. Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) grew 2.7 percent to £11.6 billion (\$16.7 billion, 14.7 billion euros) in the year to March, Vodafone said in a results statement.

That was broadly in line with expectations of £11.7 billion, according to analysts polled by Bloomberg. Revenue on an organic basis, which strips out the impact of takeover activity and currency fluctuations, rose 2.3 percent to £40.97 billion. The upbeat figures sent the company's share price rising 2.3 percent to 228.85 pence on London's benchmark FTSE 100 index, which was up 0.4 percent. Vodafone however faced a net loss of almost £4.0 billion last year, owing to a large accounting charge linked to the tax treatment of a revaluation of assets in Luxembourg. That contrasted with profit after tax of nearly £5.8 billion in the previous financial year. "This has been a year of strong execution for the group, returning to organic growth in both revenue and EBITDA for the first time since 2008," chief executive Vittorio Colao said in the earnings release.

'Commercial alliances'

Growth was aided by its operations in Europe, as well as Africa, Middle East

and Asia Pacific (AMAP), while its performance was buoyed also by cost-cutting. "We achieved the first quarter of positive revenue growth in Europe since December 2010 while growth in AMAP accelerated with strong performance in South Africa, Turkey and Egypt," Colao said. "EBITDA margins also grew year-on-year, supported by our cost efficiency programs."

Colao, speaking to reporters on a conference call, said he expected further jockeying among telecoms companies in Britain after the European Commission blocked Spanish giant Telefonica's blockbuster sale of British telecom giant O2 to Hong Kong group Hutchison on competition fears. "My prediction is that there will be commercial alliances, possibly deals, but it's very hard to see who with whom," Colao said.

He praised Brussels for blocking Hutchison's mega-deal. "It's good to have consolidation but it should not come at the cost of lower competition." Competition remains tough in Britain amid rapid consolidation in the sector. Telecoms and television broadcasting firm BT Group snapped up mobile operator EE last year in a deal that completed in January. Turning to the outlook, Vodafone forecast EBITDA in a range between £12.4 billion and £12.8 billion this year. Vodafone will however switch to reporting in euros in the current financial year which runs until March 2017. — AFP

AGAIN, HOME DEPOT RISES ABOVE THE RETAIL FRAY



HIALEAH, Florida: In this Monday, July 13, 2015, file photo, Vicente Aguiar loads garage door trims into his pickup truck outside a Home Depot. — AP

ATLANTA: Home Depot topped expectations for the first quarter thanks in part to mild weather and the company, riding a strong rebound in housing, lifted its outlook for the year. Shares neared an all-time high before the opening bell yesterday.

Americans are plowing money into homes as prices continue to rise. In its most recent report, the Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller 20-city home price index rose 5.4 percent and the National Association of Realtors' seasonally adjusted pending home sales index rose 1.4 percent to 110.5, the highest level since May 2015.

Yesterday the Commerce Department will report on April US home construction. Ground breakings are running ahead of last year's pace, largely because of a dramatic increase in the construction of single-family homes. For the three months ended May 1, The Home Depot Inc earned \$1.8 billion, or \$1.44 per share, easily surpassing per-share projections for \$1.33, according to a survey of analysts by Zacks Investment Research. It also topped last year's quarterly profit of \$1.58 billion, or \$1.21 per share.

Revenue increased to \$22.76 billion, from \$20.89 billion, better than the \$22.32 billion that Wall Street expected. Sales at stores open at least

a year, a key indicator of a retailer's performance, climbed 6.5 percent. They were even stronger, up 7.4 percent, in the US.

Those comparable-store sales are also running in the opposite direction of other retailers like Macy's and JC Penney. A host of retailers reported falling profits, falling revenues or outright losses over the past week. JC Penney last week, after reporting another quarter of losses, said it would begin selling home appliances, the first time it has done so in three decades, hoping to grab some of the profits piling up at Home Depot and its rival, Lowe's.

Some of the same variables that hurt most retailers even more this year, namely warm weather, also pushed Home Depot sales higher. Chairman and CEO Craig Menear said the company saw "week-to-week demand spikes caused by weather variability."

Home Depot now foresees 2016 earnings of \$6.27 per share. Revenue is expected to be up about 6.3 percent, with same-store sales now anticipated to rise approximately 4.9 percent. The company's previous guidance was for earnings between \$6.12 and \$6.18 per share, with revenue predicted to rise about 5.1 percent to 6 percent and same-store sales growth of approximately 3.7 percent to 4.5 percent. — AP

CHINA'S GEELY CARS THINK BIG WITH VOLVO MAKEOVER

GOthenburg: The Briton who smoothed out Volvo's boxy lines and put signature radiator grilles on Lincolns for Ford is aiming to give China's Geely range global appeal by ditching its utilitarian image. Peter Horbury is central to efforts by Geely - long seen as a cheap, no-frills brand in China and unknown in the western world - to push upmarket and go international by tapping European design and technology.

Zhejiang Geely Holding Group's purchase of struggling Swedish carmaker Volvo from Ford in 2010 has helped it leapfrog a decade of research and development. The tie-up has enabled Volvo to sell more vehicles in China than anywhere else and produced a common platform for Geely to widen its range. But at seventh place in China's light vehicle brands, it has a long way to go in a sector suffering from overcapacity and stiff competition.

Horbury, who headed up design at Volvo in the 1990s and oversaw it for Volvo, Jaguar, Aston Martin and Ford's other brands from 2002, says carmakers should play up their roots, citing what he called the "Hi, I'm Dave" all-American appeal of his Lincoln grille. "I'm not suggesting we'll do cars with pagoda roofs, but all new cars have a little signature somewhere that's Chinese," Horbury, Geely's chief designer since 2011, told Reuters at the Swedish design studio where he spends three weeks a month.

That means dashboard curves which he compares to a famous Chinese bridge in Hangzhou where Geely has its headquarters. "Here at a Chinese company, I think there is something special to sell, and if you just become anonymous, that's what you remain," said Horbury, 66, who spends a week each month in Shanghai. Geely cars range from 38,900 Chinese Yuan (\$6,000) to 249,800 for an electric vehicle. Its new flagship GC9 sedan, which Horbury worked on, starts at around 120,000 Yuan. "The product seems pretty good, styling wise, and they have got to get the core sedan product right which it appears that they have (with the GC9)," said James Chao, Asia-Pacific chief of IHS Automotive. "But that's just the start of the brand building exercise. It will take years for them to build this brand, whether it's this brand or another brand, to upgrade to the Volkswagen level," he said. "In the meantime, they'll have to price a bit more aggressively."

Volvo and Geely each sold about half a million cars last year while world leaders Toyota, Volkswagen and General Motors (GM) sold around 10 million each. In China, Volkswagen tops sales charts for all vehicles compiled by LMC Automotive, with the biggest homegrown manufacturer Changang in fifth place and Geely in 14th.

Competitive neighbors

Unlike neighbors Japan and South Korea, which are among the five top car exporting countries in the world, China is not even in the top 20, the World's Top Exports website shows. It exported fewer than half a million passenger vehicles in 2015, according to data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

At the heart of Geely's ambition to break into European and U.S. markets is the China Euro Vehicle Technology (CEVT) development hub, created by Geely in 2013 in Sweden to build the platform which will be used in all new Volvo and Geely models.

Volvo is set to unveil two new concept cars - the first to use the common platform. Sources have told Reuters Geely will launch a new brand next year, codenamed "L", with cars based on the platform. "Not even during my time at GM did I experience a more aggressive growth plan," said auto industry veteran Mats Fagerhag, who heads CEVT, a tech centre in Gothenburg with a staff of 1,700 in which Geely is investing several hundred million dollars a year.

Fagerhag said local production in Europe could be a future step, to enable Geely, which also owns the company that makes London's trademark black cabs, to get a complete range of brands the same way Volkswagen has. Horbury declined to comment on brands.

Looking at the numbers

After initial scepticism over whether Geely could make the most of European technology, it has proven to be a keen investor and collaborator. The joint development between the Swedes and Chinese appears to be paying off when looking at the numbers.

Volvo, whose ads play up its Swedish heritage, featuring football player Zlatan and musicians Swedish House Mafia, saw earnings triple last year thanks in large part to demand in China, now its largest market. "We went from zero to three factories, to 5,000 people, 200 dealers," Volvo CEO Hakan Samuelsson told Reuters.

Record sales are predicted this year as Volvo pushes into a premium sector dominated by German heavyweights such as Daimler Mercedes-Benz and BMW. Geely, which means auspicious in Mandarin, came through China's auto market slowdown with sales up 22 percent last year compared to 4.7 percent for the market overall.

"Both can learn from each other - the knowledge that we have that is in the bricks here of how to engineer a car the way Volvo has ... the way we approach design from a more human point of view perhaps, and the fact that the Chinese come with a spirit of 'Let's get it done,'" Horbury said. — Reuters



BEIJING: Performers prepare backstage to take part in rehearsals ahead of the First World Conference on Tourism for Development to be held this week. — AP

WHY APPLE PLUNKED \$1BN INTO CHINESE RIDE-HAILING

EXPANDING THE BUSINESS AS WELL AS CURRYING FAVORS

LOS ANGELES: Apple new \$1 billion investment in the Chinese ride-hailing service Didi Chuxing is as much about currying favor with regulators as directly expanding its own business, analysts said. Apple might need the help; it faces slowing iPhone sales and tougher restrictions on its services in the country.

The investment - one of Apple's largest to date - could serve other purposes as well. It helps the company put some of its giant overseas cash hoard to work without incurring taxes by bringing it back to the US. It might also inform Apple's own interest in the automotive business; several reports suggest it has begun work on its own self-driving car.

"It kills two or three birds with one stone," said Patrick Moorhead, principal analyst with Moor Insights & Strategy. Just last month, Apple was forced to shutter its iTunes Movies and iBooks Store in China, a company spokesperson confirmed. A few days later, the company reported that sales in mainland China - primarily of iPhones

- fell 11 percent in the first quarter, a big contributor to its first quarterly revenue decline in 13 years. "The Chinese government knows what they have access to this massive market," Moorhead said. "What they would like is for you to take China more seriously" by making major investments in the country, he said. With the global market for smartphones cooling, Apple has increasingly emphasized the money it makes from services such as music streaming and media downloads.

Strategic importance

"The investment in Didi highlights the strategic importance of China and the services segment for Apple's future strategy," wrote Jack Kent, an analyst with IHS Technology, in a report. "It could help Apple gain greater insight into the behavior of users beyond its own ecosystem." Apple CEO Tim Cook said in a statement that Didi "exemplifies the innovation taking place in the iOS developer community in China." Apple had no comment beyond Cook's statement.

Apple will become a strategic investor alongside Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group and Tencent Holdings Ltd, an online games and entertainment service, Didi Chuxing announced Friday. China's ride-hailing industry has grown rapidly, with competitors spending heavily to subsidize rides to capture market share. Didi Chuxing, previously Didi Kuaidi, operates in 400 Chinese cities and provides over 11 million rides a day. It claims to account for 87 percent of the private car-hailing service in China.

Uber, meanwhile, is losing \$1 billion a year in China, according to an interview with its CEO, Travis Kalanick, gave to the Canadian tech startup news website Betakit. Kalanick noted wryly in a tweet early Friday that his girlfriend owns Apple shares and is thus now invested in his chief Chinese rival. In September, Didi and Uber's US rival Lyft agreed to link their services so that travelers can use them in each other's markets. In December, their alliance added India's Ola and Southeast Asia's GrabTaxi. — AP

SINGAPORE INVESTIGATES HYUNDAI CARS FOR SUDDEN ACCELERATION

SINGAPORE: Singapore's Land Transport Authority said yesterday it is investigating Hyundai vehicles following reports of accidents involving sudden acceleration while reversing. In a statement, the authority said it was looking into

cases of Hyundai vehicles having "unintended acceleration in reverse gear." "It is premature to draw any conclusions at this point in time," it said. The statement gave no further details, but the local newspaper Straits Times cited recent inci-

dents involving taxis from operator ComfortDelGro, which leases Hyundai Sonata cars, among other models. It is Singapore's largest taxi operator with a fleet of 17,000 cabs. Hyundai Motor said it is looking into the matter.

"We will fully cooperate with LTA or any other authority in Singapore," it said in a statement. South Korean consumers have lodged complaints about accidents that they believed were caused by sudden unintended accelerations, not necessarily in reverse gear. But past government probes have found no evidence that this was linked to faulty vehicles.

At a public demonstration in 2013, the government tried to reproduce conditions that were believed to cause cars to suddenly accelerate without intention but those attempts failed. The ministry concluded that it was "reasonable" to conclude the phenomenon of "sudden unintended acceleration" does not exist.

Hairdresser Roger Choo, 45, said he experienced sudden acceleration while driving from the Thai cities of Krabi to Phuket in a rented Hyundai Sonata a few years ago. "I heard a loud revving from the engine compartment and thought it was turbo kicking in," he said. "But the car kept speeding even after we released the acceleration pedal." "Fortunately for us, the road was long and clear of traffic," said Choo, who managed to stop the car after putting it in neutral gear and switching off the ignition. "Once we calmed ourselves down, we started the engine and all was back to normal," he said. — AP



SINGAPORE: Singapore company ComfortDelGro Hyundai taxis drive through a road intersection. — AP



HIALEAH, Florida: Welder Gabriel Gonzalez welds a support beam at a local welding shop. — AP

US INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION JUMPS BY MOST SINCE NOVEMBER 2014

WASHINGTON: US industrial production in April posted the biggest increase since November 2014 as utility output surged, the Federal Reserve said yesterday. Industrial output - which includes factories, mines and utilities - rose 0.7 percent from March. It had dropped the previous two months. Fueling the improvement was utility production, which surged 5.8 percent in April. It was the biggest jump since February 2007. Demand for electricity and natural gas returned to more normal levels after unusually mild March weather.

Factory output rebounded 0.3 percent, the most since January, helped by a solid increase in auto and machinery production.

The dollar, which surged in 2014 and 2015, has been falling against major currencies since January. A lower dollar provides some relief to factories by making their goods less expensive in foreign markets.

Mining production dropped 2.3 percent, marking the eighth straight decline as energy companies reduced oil and gas drilling. Coal producers have also cut back in the face of lower-price competition from natural gas. Overall, American industry remains slack. Factories were operating at 75.3 percent of capacity last month, up slightly from March but well below their long-run average of 78.5 percent. — AP

MASTERCARD COMMITS UP TO \$1M TO ADVANCE FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN RWANDA

DUBAI: The MasterCard Center for Inclusive Growth commits up to \$1 million over the next three years to advance economic growth and financial inclusion in Rwanda. This was announced by Raghu Malhotra President, Middle East and Africa for MasterCard at the World Economic Forum on Africa (WEF) held recently in Kigali.

"The Rwandan story is one of triumph over adversity, and the country stands as an example on how embracing technology and striving for a financially inclusive society can overcome the challenges of poverty. MasterCard is committed

to helping develop a Cashless Rwanda, and the establishment of the grant is further testament to the importance we place in our collaboration with the Rwandan government," said Malhotra.

Rwanda has made important strides when it comes to financial inclusion. According to the World Bank only 16 percent of adults in Sub-Saharan Africa have bank accounts. In Rwanda, however, 42 percent of adults own a financial account, whether formal or informal, and 1.6 million people have opened accounts in the country's national SACCO savings and loan program.

Raghu pointed out that in Rwanda, small businesses comprise 97.8 percent of the private sector and account for 36 percent of private sector employment. Emphasizing how important it is for the private sector to get involved to offer assistance and expertise. The funds will be used to deliver a holistic mix of tools and resources, providing an opportunity to connect micro-entrepreneurs in Rwanda to the formal economy, thus helping them to expand their business.

"Igniting broad-based economic growth presents one of the most complex and urgent challenges of our time. We are in a unique posi-

tion to help provide business owners in Rwanda with access to useful market insights, expertise, technology and a global network of likeminded individuals," says Shamina Singh, Executive Director, MasterCard Center for Inclusive Growth.

"Partnering with MasterCard to drive growth in our business sector is another important step in empowering our citizens," says Francis Gatere CEO of the Rwanda Development Board. "This intention will go a long way in helping us reach our goal of creating full financial inclusion and a cashless economy in Rwanda."



YANGON: Myanmar construction workers partially demolish a foundation of a building under construction. — AFP

US EASES SANCTIONS ON MYANMAR IN BID TO PROMOTE GROWTH, REFORMS

WASHINGTON: The United States eased some sanctions on Myanmar yesterday to support political reforms and economic growth in the country but retained other measures to discourage human rights abuses and military trade with North Korea, US officials said.

The moves include easing restrictions on the country's financial institutions, removing seven state-owned companies from the US blacklist and extending a measure allowing shipments to go through ports and airports, the Treasury Department said in a statement. But the United States also strengthened measures targeting Steven Law, a man already blacklisted for alleged ties to Myanmar's military. Six companies owned 50 percent or more by Law or the company he controls, Asia World, were added to Treasury's blacklist.

The US moves followed a landmark November election in which the party of Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's Nobel Peace Prize laureate, won a landslide victory. A constitution drafted by the country's former military rulers bars her from

becoming president. US officials began lifting trade and financial sanctions against the country after military leaders launched reforms that led to a civilian government being formed in 2011, beginning its transformation from a half-century as an international pariah.

The sanctions decision, reported by Reuters on Friday, came before a visit to the Southeast Asian nation by Secretary of State John Kerry on May 22. President Barack Obama's opening to Myanmar followed its peaceful transition to an elected government and is seen as one of his foreign policy achievements.

Obama, in a letter to Congress, said he was extending for one year the legal underpinnings for those sanctions that remain and provided his justification for doing so. He said Myanmar had made significant progress on reforms since 2011, but that "concerns persist regarding continued obstacles to full civilian control of the government, the ongoing conflict and human rights abuses in the country, particularly in ethnic minority areas, and military trade with North Korea." — Reuters

AGRIHOODS TAKE ROOT: HOUSING TREND ROOTED IN AGRICULTURE

DAVIS: "How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm?" asks the old song. The answer may be: Build them an agrihood. Feeding off the continuing interest in eating fresh, local food, developers are ditching golf courses and designing communities around farms, offering residents a taste of the pastoral life - and tasty produce, too. The latest incarnation of harvest homes is The Cannery, a community designed around a small farm in Davis, about 20 miles west of California's capital, Sacramento.

Master developer The New Home Co was looking to build a neighborhood, not just homes, and market research showed that people wanted to connect to community. So "it made lots of sense to take this 7.5-acre piece of property and turn it into an urban farm, have that be the focus point," says Kevin Carson, New Home president.

Residents can sign up for a weekly box of produce from the farm, and no matter what their level of participation they get to feel part of something, says Carson. "They can see the pumpkins being harvested or the tomatoes being planted or the different seasons that happen on a farm." Building homes close to food sources isn't new. Back before refrigerated trucks and sophisticated delivery systems, it was the norm. But modern housing design took a different tack as suburbs sprouted around cities.

Big and expensive

Developers looking to distinguish their offerings began designing golf course communities. But it turned out many buyers weren't into golf so much as the view, says Ed McMahon, senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute in Washington, DC. Since golf courses are big and expensive, developers moved to open spaces, then orchards and pastures, and now gardens and/or urban farms.

It's still a niche; McMahon is tracking almost 200 projects of various sizes, a fraction of the overall market. Some agrihoods are big, some small. A few involve residents actually working on farms. Most, like The Cannery, have professionals handling the agricultural side of things. But the trend "is growing quite rapidly and there seems to be some interest in it," says McMahon. "I get a call literally almost once a day from some developer who wants to talk about this."

Nationwide, examples of agrihoods include Willowsford in Ashburn, Virginia; Agritopia near Phoenix, and Prairie Crossing in Grayslake, Illinois. In California, The Cannery opened in August 2015 and is planned to be a 547-home community, with prices starting in the \$400,000s for town homes.



MAINE: In this Friday, April 15, 2016, photo, Heather Retberg feeds chickens at the Quill's End Farm in Penobscot. — AP

The farm has produced tomatoes, sunflower and corn, which were harvested by volunteers and donated to a food bank.

Green thumb

Among those moving into The Cannery are Samrina and Mylon Marshall, who were attracted by the farm as well as the energy efficiency of their new home, which is equipped with solar panels. Mylon Marshall's grandfather was a farmer in California's Central Valley and he spent a little time in the fields. But he doesn't have much of a green thumb, so the idea of having fresh, local produce without having to actually work the land appealed.

Living in an area where the farm-to-fork movement is particularly strong, "we really have come to appreciate what it means to eat locally and to eat seasonally," says Samrina Marshall. "Just the concept of being more connected with how food is grown and produced - that's important to us." Figuring out how the farm will work and who will own it is crucial to success in an agrihood. "Everybody likes the outcome - fresh fruit, flowers, beehives - but you really need somebody who knows what they're doing to do the growing and the harvesting," says McMahon.

The plan at The Cannery is for New Home to deed the land to the City of Davis, which will then lease it to the Center for Land-Based Learning, which helps beginning farmers get their start. There are two farming businesses and three farmers at Cannery Farm who already have signed up customers for produce boxes and sold some food to area restaurants, says Mary Kimball, executive director of the center.

Although professionals will do the heavy lifting, there may be opportunities for residents to volunteer on the farm. And even if their participation is limited to talking to farmers and visiting the farm stand, "that's still going to be a lot more engagement at their local community level than they've probably ever had," says Kimball. "It's just a very different level of ability to be engaged when it's in your backyard or it's down the street and you drive by it every day."

That's something McMahon has observed at Prairie Crossing, a pioneering agrihood started 20 years ago. "It's a place that I would say has fundamentally changed the relationship of the residents with the land, particularly children," he says. "It's about a lot more than growing vegetables; it's really about growing community." — AP



LAGOS: In this Friday, Jan 13, 2012 file photo, people protest on a sign written on a major road saying 'No subsidy removal!'. — AP

NIGERIAN COURT BLOCKS UNIONS STRIKING OVER PETROL PRICES

ABUJA: A Nigerian labor court yesterday temporarily restrained unions from launching a national strike to force the government to reverse a 67 percent rise in petrol prices. The National Industrial Court made the decision against the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) after an application by justice minister Abubakar Malami.

The unions had directed workers to embark on an indefinite strike from Wednesday unless the government reversed a decision to raise petrol prices to 145 naira (\$0.72, 0.63 Euros) from 86.5 naira per liter.

"It is the order of this court that (the) status quo be maintained as at 17th May, 2016," judge Babatunde Adejumo said in his ruling. "The defendants are hereby restrained from carrying out the (strike) threat." The case was adjourned until May 24 when a full judgment on the dispute would be given, he added.

In court papers seen by AFP, Malami argued that if the strike went ahead, "the federal, state and local government will lose revenue worth billions of naira, thereby causing untold hardship and unimagineable security problems/challenges across the country". The unions had not

complied with the procedures for declaring a strike and had not given the government notice of its intent to walk out, he added.

Nigeria's Labor Ministry on Monday began talks with the unions to prevent the industrial action but no agreement had been reached by the time discussions broke up in the early hours yesterday. Talks were due to resume later yesterday. A strike is likely to increase the pressure on Africa's biggest economy caused by the global slump in crude prices, which has drastically cut government revenue from oil exports. Junior oil minister Emmanuel Kachikwu told parliament on Monday that renewed militant attacks on pipelines and facilities in the oil-producing south had cut output to 1.4 million barrels per day.

The government has budgeted this year for production at 2.2 million bpd. The petrol price increase has been seen as a removal of subsidies the government pays to fuel importers and a recognition of market forces. Most motorists have been buying petrol at 145 naira per liter or more for months because of a fuel shortage caused by importers being unable to source foreign exchange to buy supplies. — AFP

GULF BANK'S RED ACCOUNT HOLDERS ENJOY DISCOUNTED MOVIE TICKETS AT CINESCAPE

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is announcing exclusive discounts for its red(tm) customers to watch the latest movies at all Cinescape for only KD 2 instead of the usual KD 3.5 rate seven days a week. To benefit from the offer, red account holders need to just use their red(tm) ATM cards to purchase cinema tickets from ticket kiosks in all Cinescape cinema theatres.

The new 2016 red(tm) account is designed for high school, college and university students aged 15 to 25 years old and offer them monthly cash draw prizes of KD 1,000 and quarterly car draws for lucky winners to

win a new 2016 Cadillac every quarter. There is no minimum deposit required to open the account or a minimum balance charge. Gulf Bank is committed to providing its red(tm) customers with the right promotions that are tailored to meet their specific needs.

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

COMPANIES PROPOSE DEEP-WATER WIND FARMS OFF HAWAII SHORES

HONOLULU: As Hawaii pushes to meet its aggressive renewable energy goals, two companies have proposed offshore wind turbine projects for federal waters off Oahu. Their plans would use technology that floats the massive turbines in deep waters miles offshore. The proposals are in the early stages and would face years of environmental reviews and community meetings before possible approval. The federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the agency that would decide whether to approve ocean leases for the projects, held a meeting about the proposals Monday.

Two companies are proposing offshore wind farms. A.W. Hawaii Wind, a Texas company that's a subsidiary of Denmark-based Alpha Wind Energy, is proposing two offshore floating wind farms, each generating about 400 megawatts of energy with 50 turbines. One is proposed for the northwest side of Oahu 12 miles off the coast of Kaena Point, in waters about a half-mile deep. The company also is proposing a wind farm in waters 17 miles south of Diamond Head. A second company, Progression Hawaii Offshore Wind, is proposing a \$1.8 billion, 400 megawatt wind farm using 40 to 50 floating turbines off Oahu's South Shore, in waters that are also about a half-mile deep. A 400 megawatt wind farm could provide roughly a quarter of Oahu's power, said Chris Swartley, partner with Portland, Oregon-based Progression Energy.

WindFloat

Both companies are proposing to use a technology called WindFloat, where a turbine that stands about 600 feet is attached to a triangular platform

that floats near the surface of the ocean. The floats would be anchored to the ocean floor, and undersea cables would transfer the energy to power plants on land. Offshore wind farms are not new, but most use turbines anchored to the ocean floor, and floating turbines are rare.

There are many challenges to taking on a project of this scope in Hawaii, including cultural and environmental issues, deep water, a relatively small electric grid, and unexploded ordnance in the ocean waters surrounding the island, said Jens Borsting Petersen, owner of A.W. Hawaii Wind.

"This is by far the most difficult thing in wind that's ever been attempted on this globe," said Petersen. "When you talk about wind energy, trying to do something on Hawaii offshore is exceptionally complicated."

Progression Energy has held more than 140 meetings with environmental, tourism, Native Hawaiian and other stakeholder groups, using their feedback to choose a site, Swartley said. Looking out from the beach, most of the turbines would be over the horizon, he said. "You'll be able to see them if you really look for them, but it will be really tough," Swartley said.

Hawaii has set a goal for its utilities to use 100 percent renewable energy by the year 2045. Offshore wind farms could help the state meet that goal, said Mark Glick, energy administrator for the Hawaii State Energy Office. "We have to figure this out together, because the low-hanging fruit has been collected, and essentially the tougher decisions are before us...the next steps are going to be crucial," Glick said. — AP

STARTUP WANTS TO PUT SELF-DRIVING BIG RIGS ON US HIGHWAYS

SAN FRANCISCO: Picture an 18-wheel truck barreling down the highway with 80,000 pounds of cargo and no one but a robot at the wheel. To many, that might seem a frightening idea, even at a time when a few dozen of Google's driverless cars are cruising city streets in California, Texas, Washington and Arizona. But Anthony Levandowski, a robot-loving engineer who helped steer Google's self-driving technology, is convinced autonomous big rigs will be the next big thing on the road to a safer transportation system.

Levandowski left Google earlier this year to pursue his vision at Otto, a San Francisco startup he co-founded with two other former Google employees, Lior Ron and Don Burnette, and another robotics expert, Claire Delaunay. Otto is aiming to equip trucks with software, sensors, lasers and cameras so they eventually will be able to navigate the more than 220,000 miles of US highways on their own, while a human driver naps in the back of the cab or handles other tasks.

For now, the robot truckers would only take control on the highways, leaving humans to handle the tougher task of wending through city streets. The idea is similar to the automated pilots that fly jets at high altitudes while leaving the takeoffs and landings to humans. "Our goal is to make trucks drive as humanly as possible, but with the reliability of machines," Levandowski says.

That objective probably won't be reached for decades, despite the progress made with automated passenger vehicles over the past five years, predicts Steven Shladover, program manager for mobility at the University of California's Partners for Advanced Transportation Technology. He maintains that the technology is still a long way from being reliable enough to convince government regulators that a robot can be entrusted to steer a truck traveling at highway speeds without causing a catastrophic accident.

"I don't want to be on that highway when there is nobody there to take over a truck with 80,000 pounds of cargo and I don't think I know anyone else who would want to be," Shladover says. "The consequences of any kind of failure in any component would be too severe."

Google's self-driving cars have logged about 1.6 million miles in autonomous mode without being involved in an accident that resulted in a death or major injuries. Of the more than 20 accidents involving its self-driving cars Google has accepted the blame for only one - a February collision with a bus in Mountain View, California.

It would be easier to brush off robot trucks as a far-fetched concept if not for Levandowski's background. Levandowski has been working on automated driving for more than a decade, starting in 2004

with a self-driving motorcycle called GhostRider that is now in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. He also designed PriBot, a self-driving Prius that crossed the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge to deliver a pizza in 2008 before Google unveiled its fleet of autonomous cars.

Otto already has assembled a crew of about 40 employees experienced in self-driving cars to transplant the technology to trucks. With former employees from Google, Apple and Tesla Motors, Otto boasts that its team is made up of "some of the sharpest minds in self-driving technology." Although only four months old, Otto already has outfitted three big-rig cabs with its automated technology. The company completed its first extended test of its system on public highways in Nevada during the past weekend. Otto went to Nevada because California's self-driving regulations apply only to passenger cars, forbidding the technology from being used on public roads by commercial trucks or any vehicle exceeding 10,000 pounds.

Now, Otto is looking for 1,000 truckers to volunteer to have self-driving kits installed on their cabs, at no cost, to help fine-tune the technology. The volunteer truckers would still be expected to seize the wheel and take control of the truck if the technology fails or the driving conditions make it unsafe to remain in autonomous mode, mirroring the laws governing tests of self-driving cars on public streets

and highways. Otto hasn't set a timetable for completing its tests, but hopes to eventually retrofit all the US trucks on the road. That would encompass more than 4.7 million trucks, according to the American Trucking Associations.

The startup touts its technology as a way to make up for a worsening shortage of truck drivers as more of them retire without enough younger drivers to replace them. Last year, the shortage stood at 47,500 and, unless recent trends change, will rise to nearly 175,000 by 2024, according to the American Trucking Associations. The trade group hasn't taken a stand on self-driving technology, but may draw up a policy later this year, said Dave Osiecki, executive vice president and chief of national advocacy. "We are paying close attention because this could be huge for trucking in terms of labor costs and safety," Osiecki says.

Levandowski insists self-driving trucks aren't as scary as they might sound. Robot truckers are less likely to speed or continue to drive in unsafe conditions than a human, and will never get tired. Between 10 and 20 percent of the roughly 4,000 fatal accidents in the US each year involving trucks and buses are linked to driver fatigue, based on estimates gathered by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. "It's really silly to have a person steering a truck for eight hours just to keep it between two lines on the highway," Levandowski says. — AP



SHANGHAI: Visitors try a Huawei smart housekeeper robot during the first day of the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Asia in Shanghai. — AFP

HUAWEI LOOKS TO BUILD A GLOBAL STYLISH BRAND

SHENZHEN: Chinese tech giant Huawei wants Americans to start thinking of it as a stylish smartphone brand. Huawei Technologies Ltd, which pulled out of the US market for network switching gear four years ago due to security fears, became the No 3 global smartphone seller last year and passed Apple in China. This year, it launched a new flagship smartphone, the P9, and is positioning it to compete with Apple and Samsung. "China has yet to create a high-end consumer brand. We want to take that goal onto our shoulders," Eric Xu, one of Huawei's three rotating co-CEOs, told industry analysts at a meeting in April.

To do that, Huawei must succeed in the United States the second-largest market for handsets after China, accounting for one-sixth of global sales, according to industry analysts. There, it starts with almost no market share and a name that consumers, if they know it at all, might associate with anxiety about possible Chinese spying rather than technology and style. "It is more difficult than any other market they have ever entered," said Nicole Peng of research firm Canalys. "I don't think they have concrete plans yet."

Outside the United States, the company is cranking up a global marketing campaign for the P9 featuring Hollywood stars Henry Cavill and Scarlett Johansson. For markets from Bangladesh to Mexico, it has recruited pop singers and football teams. It partnered with German photography powerhouse Leica to develop the camera on the P9. The company has yet to say when it might sell the Android-based P9 to Americans or exactly how it will rebuild its US presence.

"We're definitely very patient with the US market," said Joy Tan, Huawei's president for

communications, when asked how it planned to connect with buyers. "We hope these phones will be accepted by American consumers." To meet its ambitious sales growth target of 30 percent a year, Huawei must increase its US market share to double digits from below 2 percent now, said Peng of Canalys. Huawei, pronounced "HWAH'-way," has big resources to back up its aspirations.

It made a 36.9 billion yuan (\$5.7 billion) profit last year on sales of 395 billion yuan (\$60.8 billion). That was equal to just one-quarter of Apple Inc.'s sales, but Huawei spent \$9 billion on research and development to Apple's \$8.1 billion. Huawei shipped 108 million handsets last year, the first Chinese company to pass the 100 million mark. That is a distant third behind Samsung Electronics Ltd.'s 325 million handsets and Apple's 231.5 million.

The company headquartered on a leafy campus in this southern Chinese tech hub adjacent to Hong Kong beat Apple and Samsung to market with a camera equipped with side-by-side lenses, one in black and white and one in color, that it says produces clearer images. The handset is slimmer than the iPhone 6s or Samsung's Galaxy 7 but its screen is bigger than the Apple's.

Huawei's phones now are sold in the US only through its website. But it has a potential opening with phone carriers that are the main sales channel and want more products, according to Gartner analyst Tuong H Nguyen. Its "deep understanding" of mobile technology "could be leveraged for quick product launches of good quality products," Nguyen said in an email. That depends on overcoming any lingering security fears. — AP

WAZE SQUEEZES INTO UBER'S LANE WITH CARPOOL FEATURE

GOOGLE-OWNED NAVIGATION APPLICATION TESTS CARPOOL FEATURE

SAN FRANCISCO: Google-owned navigation application Waze on Monday began testing a carpool feature that rolls near the home turf of Uber and Lyft. Waze Carpool stressed that it intended only to help commuters get to or from their jobs, chipping in to cover trip costs, and was not getting involved with the types of on-demand rides that Uber and Lyft offer. Still, Waze Carpool would serve as an alternative to ride-sharing services such as Uber or Lyft at least for people dealing with daily commutes. "Waze Carpool makes it easy to help a neighbor or colleague in your area," the company said at a website page explaining the service being tested in the San Francisco Bay area.

"Detours are minimal so your drive to work is

almost the same, you get to ride in the carpool lane, and the rider you pick up helps cover your commute costs—so why not?" Waze Carpool is in a pilot mode and available to Bay Area employees and their workers by invitation only, according to the website. If a person's employer is in the pilot program, the worker can use a carpool feature in free Waze smartphone applications.

"Schedule a ride and Waze Rider will look for the closest driver already planning a drive on your route," the company explained. Drivers opting in using Waze Carpool will have the option of accepting or declining requests from riders, who help pay for fuel in pre-arranged transactions handled automatically in applications. "Waze Carpool connects riders and drivers with nearly

identical commutes based on their home and work addresses," the company said. "Riders and drivers share the cost of gas for the trip."

Ride payment is set in advance and money is transferred from riders to drivers automatically. Waze stressed that the carpool feature is focused on letting people share the costs of commuting, and not as a way for drivers to make extra income. Waze last year began testing a similar carpool feature in Israel, where it got its start. Waze navigation goes beyond using satellite positioning data to incorporating real-time traffic information from its community of drivers. Google bought Waze three years ago in a deal valued at slightly more than a billion dollars. — AFP



NAIROBI: Decorated and refitted privately-owned public transport buses, popularly known as 'matatu' are seen at a drop-off point in Nairobi. — AFP

PIMP MY RIDE, KENYA-STYLE

NAIROBI: "Turn on the bass, yeah!" shouts Dennis, conductor and ticket tout onboard the Brain Freeze, an eardrum-bursting tricked-out Nairobi bus studded with blue neon lights. This commuter bus, or matatu as it is known in Kenya, is like a nightclub rushing down the jam-packed streets of the east African capital. Deafening music pumps from countless loudspeakers fitted into the vehicle, while clips of skimpily-dressed girls in music videos flash across flatscreen television screens. And among the 30 passengers there's neither a grey hair nor a balding head to be seen. "It's like a club, this matatu is really cool," says Mary Nicola, a 20-year-old student with long, bright red braids.

By night the Brain Freeze is still more striking, its mobile sound and light show winning approval on Facebook pages dedicated to customized matatus. Brain Freeze has only been on the road for a few weeks but it is already making an impression.

Around 90 percent of Nairobi's commuters use a matatu daily. Competition for customers is fierce and a pimped ride can make all the difference. For some, spray-painted matatus like the Brain Freeze are a glamorous stage on which to display social status, interests and what's cool. Matatus are named after Manchester United footballers, Alicia Keys, Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama and Pope Francis.

"Nice paint!"

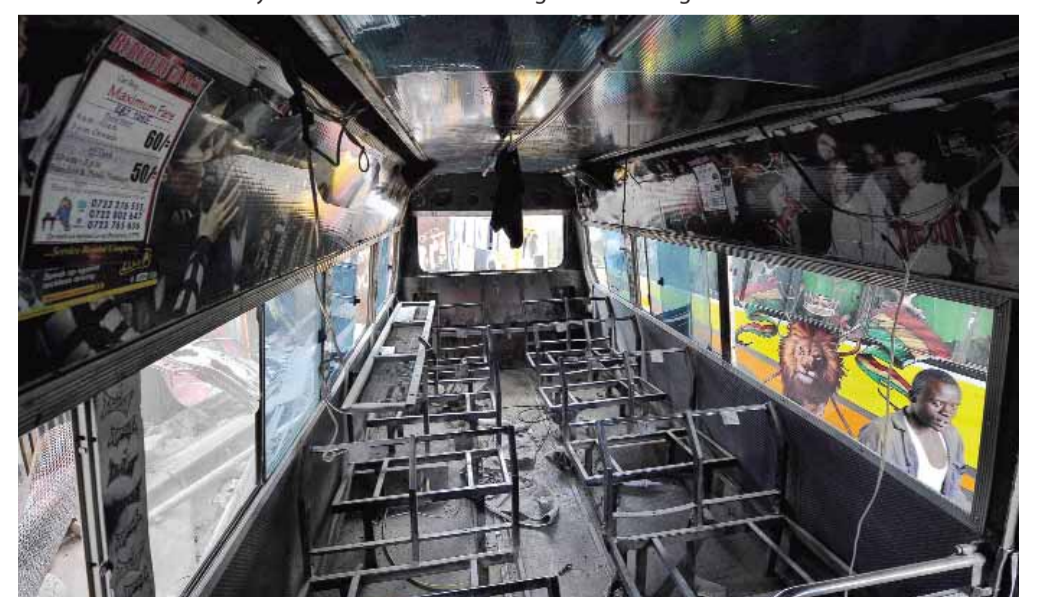
On the Brain Freeze, no detail is left to chance: Wheel rims and headlights are metallic blue, the radiator grille is stretched out like a snowplough and at the rear a string of red lights illuminate when the bus brakes. All in all it cost seven million shillings (\$70,000; 61,000 euros) to buy and customize. The owners were anxious to attract a large audience of the young and hyper-connected, so they put a trailer online showing the bus being redesigned. "This matatu is fashionable," says Casper, another tout, sunglasses

on his nose. He smiles and steals a sidelong glance at Nicola. "If good-looking girls come here, other young people want to come."

Kennedy Aina, a 22-year old student with four thick silver chains around his neck, fits the Brain Freeze's target audience. "The matatu was here when I was done with my class, it has wi-fi and it's quick," he says. Arriving at its destination in a neighborhood east of Nairobi, Brain Freeze stops a few metres from "Rolling Stone" which, like the 1960s and '70s era it pays homage to, is showing its age, its once-pristine white paint marked by the years. Nearby "Wayne Rooney" pulls past Brain Freeze. "Nice paint!" shouts Rooney's admiring tout, leaning dangerously out of his matatu's doorless entrance as it roars away.

Bob Marley pictures

Nearby, in a warehouse whose roof is riddled with holes, the smell of fresh paint assaults the nose, but Roy "The Great" Mungai—a much-in-demand matatu artist—is unfazed as he adds the finishing touches to a new Rastafarian-themed bus. The green, yellow and red exterior is adorned with an image of former Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie while inside are pictures of reggae icon Bob Marley beneath a ceiling decorated with old vinyl records. Nearby, "Gucci" is ready to go and its owner, Chris Nsungu, is delighted. "Tomorrow, it will slide along the road!" he says. Another day, another newly customized matatu, and for Brain Freeze and the rest the competition just got a little tougher. — AFP



NAIROBI: A man walks past a privately-owned public transport bus, popularly known as 'matatu', undergoing an extensive process of decoration and refitting at a workshop in a suburb of Nairobi. — AFP



CAPE CANAVERAL: An undated photo provided by NASA shows the International Space Station in orbit. The International Space Station made its 100,000th orbit circling of the world. NASA says these 100,000 orbits are akin to traveling more than 2.6 billion miles. — AP

SPACE STATION MAKES ITS 100,000TH ORBIT OF EARTH

CAPE CANAVERAL: It's 100,000 laps around Earth and counting for the International Space Station. The space station reached the orbital milestone - 17-1/2 years in the making - Monday morning. NASA said these 100,000 orbits are akin to traveling more than 2.6 billion miles. That's equivalent to 10 round trips to Mars, or almost one way to Neptune. Each orbit takes about 90 minutes; 16 orbits comprise a station day. Astronauts have been living continuously aboard the 250-mile-high complex since 2000.

Construction began two years before that. Since then, 222 people have lived or

visited there, the vast majority of them - 189 - men, according to NASA. Altogether, there have been 47 permanent crews representing the US, Russian, Canadian, Japanese and European space agencies. Two Americans, three Russians and one Englishman currently call the space station home. They recently achieved a photographic milestone, snapping the 3 millionth picture taken over the years from the scientific outpost. "One-hundred-thousand orbits, the journey continues," NASA astronaut Jeffrey Williams said in a celebratory video from space. — AP

CAN MAGIC MUSHROOMS DAMPEN DEPRESSION?

PARIS: Hallucination-inducing "magic" mushrooms could help some people blunt the anxiety caused by chronic depression, according to a small-scale study released yesterday. "This is the first time that psilocybin—a mind-altering chemical in several species of mushroom—has been investigated as a potential treatment for major depression," lead author Robin Carhart-Harris of Imperial College London said in a statement. The study only involved 12 people and did not use a placebo-taking control group. But the results, published in *The Lancet Psychiatry* peer-reviewed medical journal,

were encouraging enough to merit further trials, he said. All of the subjects had tried at least two standard drug treatments without success, and most had also undergone psychotherapy.

Clinical depression is a debilitating disease that affects tens of millions of people worldwide. Antidepressants and talk therapy don't work for about one in five patients, highlighting the need for alternate treatments. Psilocybin stimulates receptors for serotonin, a naturally occurring chemical in the brain that affects mood. Many antidepressants-known as SSRIs-are designed to boost serotonin levels.

In the experiment, Carhart-Harris and colleagues gave two doses of psilocybin, a week apart, to six men and six women suffering moderate to severe depression.

The first dose was small, to test for adverse side-effects. The next dose, 25 mg, was strong enough to cause hallucinations. Patients lay in beds in a quiet room, listening to classical music. They were encouraged to "explore their own mental space," or imagine a pleasant landscape. They all reported mild nervousness as the drug took hold within 30 to 60 minutes, but there were no serious side-effects. Each session lasted six hours with

"peaking" occurring half way through and was monitored by two psychiatrists. Doctors followed up at regular intervals following the experiment.

All patients showed some improvement one week later, and eight out of 12 showed "temporary remission." After three months, seven of the patients continued to show improvement, and five were still in remission. These results "are promising but not completely compelling," commented Phillip Cowen, a clinical scientist and professor at the University of Oxford. "Further follow-ups using detailed qualitative interviews with

patients and family could be very helpful in enriching the assessment," he wrote, also in *The Lancet Psychiatry*.

Another expert not involved in the study expressed greater skepticism. Given the small number of subjects and lack of a control group, "it is impossible to attribute clinical efficacy to the drug," said Jonathan Flint, a professor of neuroscience at the University of Oxford. Along with LSD and other hallucinogens popular as recreational drugs in the 1960 and 1970s, psilocybin is classified as a "controlled substance" and is illegal in most countries. — AFP



RICHMOND, Virginia: In this Dec 20, 2013, file photo, double hand transplant recipient, Lindsay Aronson Ess, works on her dexterity during a physical therapy session in Richmond. — AP

PENIS OPERATION HIGHLIGHTS PAST, FUTURE OF ORGAN TRANSPLANTS

CHICAGO: Add one remarkable case to the 30,000-plus organ transplants expected to be performed nationwide this year: A cancer patient who received a donor penis. Worldwide, there have been faces, tongues, hands, legs, uteruses - and now the third penis transplant, a first in the US. Could any body part be left to transplant? Research is ongoing for eyeballs and an Italian doctor has raised eyebrows with talk of a brain transplant. Still, the vast majority of operations involve more conventional organs.

Since the nation's first successful human organ transplant in 1954, involving a kidney, more than 700,000 organ transplants have been done nationwide. Kidneys are the most commonly transplanted organ - almost 18,000 U.S. operations were done last year, followed by livers - about 7,000, and hearts - nearly 3,000, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing. Some of the more rare transplants:

Face

Since the world's first face transplant in France in 2005 on a woman mauled by family dog, about 30 more have been done. These include a 26-hour operation last August at NYU Langone Medical Center on a Mississippi firefighter whose face was charred in a fire. Other US cases include a Connecticut woman who got a new face after a 2009 attack by a friend's chimpanzee.

Uterus

The first US uterus transplant failed shortly after the Feb. 24 operation at the Cleveland Clinic, but others are planned. About 14 have been done worldwide, said Dr. Vijay Gorantla, medical director of the University of Pittsburgh reconstructive transplant program. These include a 2013 operation in Sweden resulting in the first reported live birth from a transplanted uterus.

Hand and arm

Hand and/or arm transplants have been done in more than 85 people globally, according to Johns Hopkins Medicine, a leading transplant center. Its patients include the first US soldier to survive losing all four limbs in the Iraq War, who had a double-arm transplant in 2013. Gorantla said the first US patient, a New Jersey man injured in a fire-cracker accident, still has total use of his donor hand 17 years after an operation at Louisville's Jewish Hospital.

Leg

Only three total leg-foot operations have been done worldwide, Gorantla said, but the operations are still experimental. U.S. centers researching the procedure include Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, where doctors say potential candidates could include amputees injured in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings.

Tongue

Tongues have been transplanted in total face transplants and in at least one case, alone in an Austrian patient with mouth cancer.

Future

Gorantla and his team have a \$1 million-plus military grant to establish the nation's first whole eyeball transplant program, with injured veterans among the potential candidates. He calls this the "holy grail" in transplant medicine, but the operations would be tricky because they would require regenerating the optic nerve, which sends signals to the brain. Success in animal research suggests the procedure will work in humans, he said. A doctor in Italy has talked of attempting human head and brain transplants but that raises complicated ethical issues and many mainstream scientists are skeptical. — AP

STORING BABIES' BLOOD SAMPLES PITS PRIVACY VERSUS SCIENCE

INDIANAPOLIS: Two-day-old Ellie Bailey squirms in a hospital bassinet and cries as her tiny left heel is squeezed and then pricked with a needle to draw a blood sample. An Indianapolis hospital technician quickly saturates six circles on a special filter card with the child's blood. Ellie is among some 4 million newborns in the United States who will have blood drawn this year to screen them for serious inherited diseases such as sickle cell anemia, which can cause organ damage, and the metabolic disease phenylketonuria, or PKU, which can lead to mental disabilities. Newborn screening saves or improves the lives of about 12,000 newborns each year by swiftly identifying therapies they might need, said Jelili Ojodu, director of newborn screening and genetics with the Association of Public Health Laboratories.

But what happens to the dried blood samples on those cards after the testing that's mandatory in all 50 states is completed has sparked legal battles in some states. Minnesota and Texas have destroyed some 6.4 million samples following lawsuits. And in Indiana, the parents of a 9-year-old suburban Indianapolis girl are seeking the same for up to 2.5 million samples collected over two decades and stored in 600 boxes at a state warehouse. "Her parents' main concern is that down the road who knows what could happen with these samples?" said Jonathan Little, an attorney for parents of the girl, identified in court documents only as A.B. Doe.

The case poses a dilemma: How can society balance the right to privacy with the needs of science and medical research? The Indiana lawsuit was dismissed by a trial court last year and in April by the Indiana Court of Appeals. Both courts found the girl was in no imminent danger of suffering harm from the state holding onto her sample. Her attorneys plan to appeal to the Indiana Supreme Court next week. In an era of increasingly sophisticated genetic analysis, some privacy advocates fear insurance companies could access blood samples and charge higher premiums for people found to have a genetic predisposition to diseases such as Alzheimer's.

'Really a far stretch'

"The question is, 'These cards are being collected for a very specific purpose, and once they have met that purpose what's the necessity for keeping these blood stains?'" said Sheldon Krinsky, acting executive director of the Cambridge-Massachusetts-based Council for Responsible Genetics. He said law enforcement could also potentially access states' newborn blood stores to use them to create DNA databases of law-abiding citizens. Such worries are "really a far stretch" and not based on actual threats to a person's genetic privacy, said Natasha Bonhomme, vice president of strategic development for the Genetic Alliance, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit health advocacy group.

Scott Kelly, an attorney who represented some of the families who sued Minnesota over its blood-retention policies, said more than 50,000 of Minnesota's dried blood samples and



INDIANAPOLIS: File photo shows Jessica Bailey holds her newborn daughter Ellie Bailey after blood was collected at Community Hospital North in Indianapolis. — AP photos

test results were used for research, including third-party research by drug companies and manufacturers. That suit led Minnesota in 2014 to destroy 1.1 million newborn blood samples and another 900,000 test results.

In 2009, Texas destroyed some 5.3 million newborn blood samples as part of a settlement of a similar lawsuit, and Texas lawmakers also set



INDIANAPOLIS: File photo shows, Community Hospital North obstetric technician Sherron Harris collects a blood sample from newborn Ellie Bailey in the nursery at Community Hospital North in Indianapolis.

into law an opt-out policy for parents who object to the state using their child's blood for research. Attorneys for Indiana say the 2.5 million blood samples at the heart of the pending lawsuit won't be used for medical research, but argue the state has an interest in holding onto them, such as for evidence in missing persons or medical malpractice cases.

Starting in June 2013, Indiana tried to solve the dilemma by asking the parents of newborns

for permission to use their infant's blood for medical research. The parents of just over 63,000 infants - about a quarter of the babies born in Indiana in the past three years - have consented to that, said Jennifer O'Malley, an Indiana State Department of Health spokeswoman. Those now include 27-year-old Jessica Bailey - the mother of Ellie. She checked the "yes" box on Indiana's consent form and signed it Thursday, authorizing the state to use her daughter's blood for medical research.

She and her husband, Mark, said they don't share concerns about the blood's possible misuse and believe there's great potential in allowing its use for medical research. "I personally feel the benefits with the research outweigh the risks," Jessica Bailey said as she and Mark prepared to leave Community Hospital North in Indianapolis with their second child. "For us, it was kind of an easy decision because it might help somebody in the future."

Indiana has posted a form on the state health department's website allowing parents to request that their child's blood sample be destroyed, no matter when it was collected. That's not enough for the father of the 9-year-old girl who sued the state. He asked The Associated Press not to use his name because it would identify his daughter.

He said he supports disease-screening for newborns, and said his daughter has even taken part in a medical research project for stomach ailments. But he believes it's time for the state to dispose of the blood samples collected between 1991 and May 2013 that he had held onto without alerting parents. "Somebody obviously has some kind of plans for it, if they've gone to the expense of storing it and keeping it," he said. — AP

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IS A MEN'S ISSUE, SAY AFRICAN ACTIVISTS

COPENHAGEN: Female genital mutilation (FGM) will never end until men also throw their weight behind efforts to eradicate the potentially deadly practice, says Nigerian law student and anti-FGM activist Kelechukwu Nwachukwu. On the other side of Africa, Kenyan farmer and community worker Tony Mwebia agrees. "The main reason why girls in Kenya undergo FGM is to increase their marriageability. If men said no to FGM, trust me, families wouldn't get their girls cut."

Nwachukwu, who will speak on Tuesday at Women Deliver, a major women's health and rights conference in Copenhagen, said men are crucial to stopping FGM in Nigeria because it is a deeply patriarchal society. "It's almost impossible to end it without engaging men because they are the decision makers and gatekeepers in the community," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The global movement to end FGM has been galvanized by women activists across Africa who have risked death threats to speak out against a practice widely condemned as a serious human rights abuse.

But now a small number of men are joining their ranks. In Kenya, there is even a Maasai cricket team that campaigns against FGM. An estimated 200 million girls and women worldwide have undergone FGM, which is practiced in a swathe of African countries and pockets of the Middle East and Asia. The ritual involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia. In extreme cases, the vaginal opening is also sewn up.

The reasons for carrying out FGM vary between communities, but a key factor is the belief that a woman's sexuality needs to be controlled. The ritual is often considered a prerequisite for marriage. However, the practice can cause serious physical and psychological problems, including potentially fatal complications during childbirth later in life.

No one knows how many girls die from the cutting itself. "I've seen girls who have died, but the parents don't make the link. Many will tell you that it's just God's will," said Nwachukwu, 22, who co-chairs the Youth Network Against FGM in Nigeria. "Most men in Nigeria are quite naive about FGM and don't know what's involved. They support it

because it's a cultural practice but they don't know there are very harmful effects."

Nwachukwu said the horror of FGM was brought home to him five years ago when he was visiting a friend and heard a girl screaming. When he suggested going to help, his friend stopped him, telling him the girl was being initiated into womanhood. "It's prevalent in the community I come from so I decided to ask questions. I was worried because I hope to get married one day and have daughters and I don't want them to be cut," said Nwachukwu, who also works with The Girl Generation, a UK-funded program to end FGM in 10 African countries. Mwebia's journey to activism started when he was working on a UN project in Nairobi with refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia, where FGM is widely practiced.

"I heard things I could not imagine," said the 28-year-old campaigner. "Men spoke about how they'd lost loved ones because of childbirth complications, mothers told me how their daughters had bled to death. Women also talked about the pain they suffered every time they had sex. 'Their stories really moved me and I swore to try to end this cruelty.' Mwebia, who is also attending Women Deliver, now works in the southwestern Kuria region where he said FGM remains almost universal despite Kenya outlawing the practice in 2011.

Wake-up call

Nigeria banned FGM last year and Nwachukwu said the new law should be a "wake-up call" for men to speak up. A quarter of women have been cut in Nigeria, where it is particularly prevalent in the south. Some see FGM as important for preserving a girl's virginity or for cleanliness. Others say it increases sexual pleasure for the man.

The ritual is also perpetuated by myths. Some believe that when a woman gives birth the baby will die if the clitoris touches its head, and others say the clitoris will keep growing if it is not cut.

But Nwachukwu said the main factor in Nigeria is social pressure. Girls who are not cut risk ostracism, as do their mothers, he said. A striking feature about FGM in several countries is that women massively overestimate men's support for the practice. — Reuters



SIDOARJO, Indonesia: This picture shows a general view at a mud volcano area in Sidoarjo, East Java. — AFP photos



SIDOARJO, Indonesia: This picture shows statues standing semi-submerged in mud, a symbol of the human toll of the 2006 disaster, at a mud volcano area in Sidoarjo, East Java.

DISASTER TOURISM: BITTER LIFELINE FOR MUD VOLCANO SURVIVORS

SIDOARJO, Indonesia: Harwati forces a smile as she guides visitors around a bubbling mud volcano in Indonesia, pausing as they snap selfies on the bleak wasteland she once called home. These disaster tourists are a lifeline for the single mother who lost everything when the earth beneath a paddyfield near her village opened up without warning ten years ago, sending pungent, steaming mud bursting out, unabated. The mudflow buried villages, factories, shops, and even a major highway in the Sidoarjo district of Java island. Thirteen people died when an underground gas pipeline in the disaster zone exploded, while thousands were left homeless.

Today Harwati and many others scrape a meagre living from the curious visitors who flock to see rooftops and debris poking above the bubbling mud lake. "This is the only way to earn a living and afford school for my kids," said Harwati, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. "After my village was flooded, there were no jobs." Visitors pose next to faceless statues lying semi-submerged in the mud, a

silent reminder of the human toll of this disaster.

As victims prepare to mark 10 years since the start of the disaster, the mud geysers show no signs of stopping: The equivalent of 10 Olympic swimming pools of mud and water still spurt out daily. An area roughly equivalent to 650 football fields is now buried beneath up to 40 meters (130 feet) of sludge. Intrigue has surrounded the cause of the mudflow ever since it first gushed out in the densely-populated farming area on May 29, 2006. There are two main theories on what triggered it-drilling for natural resources or an earthquake. Mud volcanoes-which don't spew out lava or hot ash but instead water and clay-occur globally but Sidoarjo's is believed to be the biggest in the world. Efforts to plug it, including with huge concrete balls, have proved futile. The area was declared a disaster zone and sealed off, with warning signs dotting the perimeter.

Morbid fascination

Undeterred, visitors still came and an impromptu industry has sprung up. Busloads of tourists

arrive at weekends, and DVDs dramatizing the disaster are hugely popular souvenirs. "I was very intrigued. I really wanted to see how big the mud was, because I had heard many houses were buried," Andri, a tourist from Surabaya, told AFP. Debate about what caused the strange phenomenon has only fuelled fascination, and protracted the fight for compensation. Independent studies alternate blame between oil and gas company PT Lapindo Brantas, which was drilling in the area at the time, and an earthquake that struck two days earlier about 260 kilometers (162 miles) away.

Lapindo-part of a business empire controlled by Indonesia's powerful Bakrie family-was eventually ordered to compensate victims, but payments took years, triggering angry protests. The government finally intervened last year and loaned Lapindo the funds to expedite the remaining payments. Lapindo Brantas says on its website that after investigations, "it was determined that no correlation could be proven between the drilling activities and the mud eruption." — AFP

FISHING BAN URGED TO SAVE WORLD'S SMALLEST PORPOISE

MEXICO CITY: Mexican authorities face calls Monday to ban all fishing in the upper Gulf of California or permanently prohibit gillnets to save the vaquita marina, the world's smallest porpoise, from extinction. Concerns about the vaquita's fate rose on Friday when scientists warned that only 60 of the sea creatures were left and could vanish by 2022 even though the navy has been patrolling their habitat. In reaction, the World Wildlife Fund called for a full fishing ban in the vaquita's northwestern Mexico refuge.

The porpoise's population had already fallen to fewer than 100 in 2014, down from 200 in 2012, according to scientists at the International Committee for the Recovery of the Vaquita (CIRVA). The vaquita's fate has been linked to another critically endangered sea creature, the totoaba, a fish that has been illegally caught for its swim bladder, which is dried and sold on the black market in China. Poachers use illegal gillnets to catch the totoaba. The vaquita, a shy 1.5-meter-long (five-foot) cetacean with dark rings around the eyes, is said to be the victim of bycatch.

President Enrique Peña Nieto imposed a two-year ban on gillnets in April 2015 and increased the vaquita protection area tenfold to 13,000 square kilometers (5,000 square miles). Peña Nieto also deployed navy reinforcements to enforce the ban. The government is compensating fishermen to the tune of \$70 million over two years for giving up gillnets while new methods are sought.

Fishermen in 'crisis'

But Omar Vidal, Mexico director of the World Wildlife Fund, said the measures have been "insufficient" and that fishermen have "camouflaged" gillnets with other legal nets. An immediate fishing ban, he said, "can save the vaquita." "It's a drastic measure but maybe the most efficient way is to prohibit fishing

and obviously compensate fishermen," he told a news conference. Mexico's environment ministry did not respond to requests for comment on the proposal.

Sunshine Antonio Rodriguez Pena, president of the fishing cooperative of the port of San Felipe, said his group would lodge a complaint before the United Nations if a fishing ban were to be imposed. "They are completely crazy," he told AFP, noting that legal fishing includes corvina and clams and local fishermen are already in a "crisis." "They should just declare (the vaquita) extinct because fishermen are not killing it," Rodriguez told AFP, saying other factors are to blame, such as predators, red algae or toxins.

Hope remains

For its part, CIRVA is calling for the two-year gillnet ban to become permanent. Barbara Taylor, co-chief scientist of CIRVA's latest study, told AFP that it would take until 2075 to see the vaquita return to 1997 levels, when there were more than 500. While three were found dead in March, she said it is likely that more died this year because most carcasses are not recovered.

Taylor, a scientist at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said CIRVA members were "thrilled and relieved" when they spotted vaquitas last fall as "we knew there had been a catastrophic decline and feared we may see none." "However, it was clear that we had few sightings and that the new numbers would confirm the results from acoustic monitoring that illegal fishing had brought vaquitas to the brink of extinction," she said. CIRVA chairman Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho, of Mexico's National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change, said there's still hope for the vaquita as other national treasures have recovered in the past, such as elephant seals, which once numbered 20 and now number more than 150,000. — AFP



WAGENINGEN, Netherlands: Researcher Wiegier Wamelink inspects the plants grown on Mars and moon soil simulant in a research facility at the university in Wageningen, The Netherlands. — AFP

OUT OF THIS WORLD: 'MOON AND MARS VEGGIES' GROW IN DUTCH GREENHOUSE

'WE WANTED TO USE REAL MARTIAN AND LUNAR SOIL'

WAGENINGEN, Netherlands: Establishing a human colony on the Moon and travelling to Mars has been the stuff of dreams since the dawn of the space age. But these visions face many hurdles. How can humans survive for months or years in the ultra-hostile environment of space? What, for instance, will they eat? Agricultural researchers at a Dutch university say they are taking the first steps towards providing an answer. They are growing vegetables in soils similar to those found on the Moon and Mars, looking for ways of helping space pioneers grow their own crops. "When people go to the Moon and Mars they also have to eat, and it's easiest for them to grow their own food," said Wiegier Wamelink, surrounded by several dozen plants in a special greenhouse at Wageningen, an agricultural university in central Netherlands.

"We wanted to use real Martian and lunar soil," to see if plants would actually grow in it, Wamelink told AFP. Of course, getting real lunar and Martian soil is an impossible ask. But an Internet search revealed an unlikely supplier: NASA. The US space agency makes ground similar to that on the Moon from sand found in an Arizona desert, while Mars' crimson "soil" is scooped from a volcano in Hawaii, Wamelink told AFP. The first experiments started in 2013 after Wageningen received an order of 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of NASA's imitation "space soil" at a hefty price of 2,000 euros (\$2,285).

Wamelink stuck tomatoes, peas, cress and other plants in pots containing the simulated soil... and crossed his fingers. To work in this soil "was very special. Nobody, not even NASA, could tell us what would happen," even just by simply adding water, he said. The imitation ground at first was a little "reluctant" to absorb water, but soon turned out to be good potting soil. Like the actor Matt Damon in the science fiction movie "The Martian", Wamelink watched with amazement as his "space veggies" grew bigger day-by-day. "Especially in the Martian soil, plants were growing very fast and very good. They even started to flower, something that we never anticipated," Wamelink said. The 50-day experiment was written up in the science journal PLOS One in August 2014. An essential question however remains whether these unusual vegetables are safe to eat. Martian and lunar soil, including NASA's own imitation, may con-

tain heavy metals that are harmless to plants but could prove deadly to humans. Wamelink has come up with a possible solution. If analyses show that the vegetables contain arsenic, mercury or iron making them unfit for human consumption, the soil can be purified by growing other plant species such as violets which absorb the poisons.

Wamelink concedes that the experiment has a drawback-it is being conducted in non-sterile conditions on Earth where only the nutrient quality of the soil is being assessed. "There's much more to test," Wamelink admitted. Extremely cold temperatures dropping to minus 62 degrees Celsius (minus 79 Fahrenheit) on Mars-as well as a lack of oxygen means that lunar or Martian vegetables and fruit could only be grown in a closed and controlled environment. The facility would have to be pressurized to normal atmospheric conditions on Earth, heated and lit, and protected from cosmic radiation, which damages plant DNA. That points to a "space green-

house"-a type of container, buried underground and kitted out with solar panels and LED lighting. Water should be no problem as it is found as ice on both the Moon and Mars, said Wamelink. Other questions that need answers include the presence of friendly bacteria to help plant growth and what happens to plants that grow in low gravity.

'Long way to go'

NASA plans a human trip to Mars within the next 10 to 15 years or so but similar plans are also being pursued by billionaire Elon Musk and the Dutch company Mars One, tentatively aiming to set up human colonies on the Red Planet. Technology and the know-how to keep astronauts alive on Mars still has a long way to go said Christophe Lasseur, a European Space Agency (ESA) "Life Support" expert, who deals with metabolic aspects of space travel. Lasseur believed Wamelink's research of growing plants in space soils "is not a priority". —AFP



MEXICO: This handout photo shows a comparison between "Vaquita Marina" (below) (Phocoena sinus) and Totoaba fish (above) (Totoaba macdonaldi) apparently dead after having been caught by fishermen in their nets. — AFP photos



MEXICO: This handout photo shows a "Vaquita Marina" (Phocoena sinus) apparently dead after having been caught by fishermen in nets for Totoaba fish (Totoaba macdonaldi).

FIVE DIE CLEANING WELL IN PARCHED INDIAN VILLAGE

NEW DELHI: Five low-caste villagers have died trying to revive an unused well in a parched region of northern India, police said yesterday, as the country reels under one of the worst droughts on record. The five men, from India's lowest Dalit caste, were killed by toxic gas in the pit of the well in Haryana state's Jind district on Monday when they went in to clean it. "The well had not been in use for about five to six years and a poisonous gas had formed in its depths. The five men inhaled that and died," local deputy police chief Virender Singh told AFP.

Reports said villagers had complained local authorities were doing nothing to alleviate an acute shortage of drinking water in the area, forcing the men to go down the well. India is in the grips of its worst water crisis in years, with the government saying about 330 million people, a quarter of the population, are

suffering from drought after two weak monsoons. Poor rains have prompted extreme measures, including restricting water, stationing armed guards at reservoirs and sending water trains to the worst-affected regions.

Last week India's Supreme Court strongly criticized Haryana and two other states over their handling of the crisis, saying they had failed even to acknowledge the problem. Singh denied there was a shortage of drinking water in Jind and said the villagers had not formally complained, or asked for the well to be revived. "They did it hoping to restore water in the well for bathing purposes or washing utensils, for daily things, not for drinking," he said. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been meeting with the chief ministers of affected states as the national government comes under intense pressure to ease the crisis. — AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
ر. فهد علي المخيزيم

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LAMAR RESTAURANT TREATS PRESS MEMBERS TO KUWAIT'S FINEST SEAFOOD BUFFET

Lamar International Restaurant, the all-day fine dining restaurant located at Millennium Hotel and Convention Centre Kuwait, held an exclusive press event to showcase one of the country's finest seafood buffets.

Organized with the seafood connoisseur

in mind, Seafood Night offers an unprecedented dining experience brought to life by an outstanding selection, exciting live cooking stations and first-class service. The buffet features a choice of freshly-caught fish, prawns, lobster, and other deep sea delights, all delivered fresh from the finest sources.

Wednesday's press event comes as part of the hotel's PR strategy aimed at fostering closer ties with members of the media after opening to the public last year.

"It was a pleasure to welcome our valued media partners to Seafood Night, an evening dedicated to offering an unrivaled seafood

experience," commented Dani Saleh, Area General Manager of Millennium and Copthorne Hotels Kuwait.

Outside of Seafood Night, Lamar International Restaurant offers an exciting dining experience from entrée through to dessert. Guests can enjoy the sumptuous

breakfast, lunch and dinner buffets which offering a wide variety of international and oriental cuisines or choose from the delicious all-day la carte menu.



Group photo of NBK volunteers.

NBK LAUNCHES ITS ANNUAL BEACH CLEAN-UP CAMPAIGN

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launches its annual campaign to help keep Kuwait beach clean during the summer season, for the tenth consecutive year. NBK staff and volunteers clean up beaches littered with trash and other harmful waste. They also provide awareness initiatives to encourage people to keep Kuwait beaches clean. "As part of its corporate social responsibility program, NBK aims to help keep the environment safe and clean this summer," said Yaqoub Al-Baqer, NBK Public Relations Officer.

The cleanup campaign will run during the summer season and will cover different areas in Kuwait. More information regarding the cleanup and locations will be sent through NBK's social media network. "This Annual Nationwide Campaign for Kuwait's Beach cleanup and preservation will include an all-day beach cleanup undertaken by NBK staff and volunteers, where they will visit popular beaches and collect trash, food leftovers and other debris left by visitors," added Baqer.

NBK is an environment-friendly bank and has launched a range of initiatives -



Yaqoub Al-Baqer

including electricity conservation and paper recycling- aimed at promoting environmental awareness. For more information, visit: NBK Official Page on facebook or NBK Twitter and Instagram account @NBKPage.



MOOCs WORKSHOPS TO DEVELOP AOU COURSES

The Office of Vice President for Academic Affairs at The Arab Open University (AOU) organized three workshops entitled 'Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) Developments', which were delivered by Professor Stephen Brown from the UK in attendance and participation of a number of faculty members of AOU branches, which are operating in eight Arab countries, including Kuwait.

Professor Marwan Al-Akaidi, Vice President for Academic Affairs at AOU, stressed on the importance of these workshops, which came under the directive of AOU President, Professor Moudi Al-Humoud. He added those workshops aimed to make a qualitative leap in developing the University's educational process in the light of international trends being followed by the developed countries in developing their educa-

tion, in particular the electronic education. Therefore, AOU would be a leading university in that field at the regional level, he said.

Akaidi pointed out that these workshops addressed the means of preparing and developing courses, and transforming the general studies courses in education program and some courses of various programs to MOOCs according to internationally accredited standards of education. He added, "All MOOCs will be available for free for all. In addition, AOU students can also take these courses for regular fees as they take the examination online. The credits of these courses will be added to the total credits of the students."



The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity displayed a number of medical inventions that it helped turn into reality during its participation in the first youth conference for investment in the health sector, which was organized recently by the Ministry of Health.



DIVISION I TOASTMASTERS ANNUAL CONTEST HELD

The annual speech contest of the Division I of Toastmasters International Kuwait at Australian College of Kuwait on May 6th was a runaway success. The spectacular show which witnessed spell binding oratory was indeed an enriching experience to both participants and audience. One of the highlights of the event was a keynote motivational speech by

Dr Ahmad Madgy, founder of Pro Coach Academy and author of 'Success Dioxide'. The guest of honor was District 20 Program Quality Director Ali Shahbaz DTM from Bahrain who inspired Kuwait Toastmasters with his insights on great leadership. The golden moment of the evening was when the leaders of Division I team decided to felicitate the Division I Director, Dr

Mohammad Makhlof in the traditional Indian way of presenting a schal as a token of respect and appreciation for his relentless efforts to promote Toastmasters in the state of Kuwait and taking Division I to greater height. Dr Makhlof in turn felicitated his team of Area Directors TM Anup Dhand, TM Dileep Thomas and TM Najwa Salman and his assistant directors TM Alka

Kumra, TM Prathap Unnithan and TM Yasser AbdulRahman. The winners that will represent Division I, and Kuwait in district Annual Toastmasters Conference in Abu Dhabi May 2016 area: Muhsan Awad (Humorous Category), Biji Gittens (International Category), Lisa Waite (Evacuation and Table topics Category). The numerous guests who attended were

thoroughly entertained and curious to know more about and join the Toastmasters organization as they clearly saw what they stand to benefit by being part of Toastmasters. Joining Toastmasters to enhance and enrich your communication and leadership skills is much required for success in today's competitive world.



ESPRESSAMENTE ILLY INVITES MEDIA TO NEW MENU LAUNCH UNDER THE SLOGANS OF 'LIVE HAPP-ILLY'

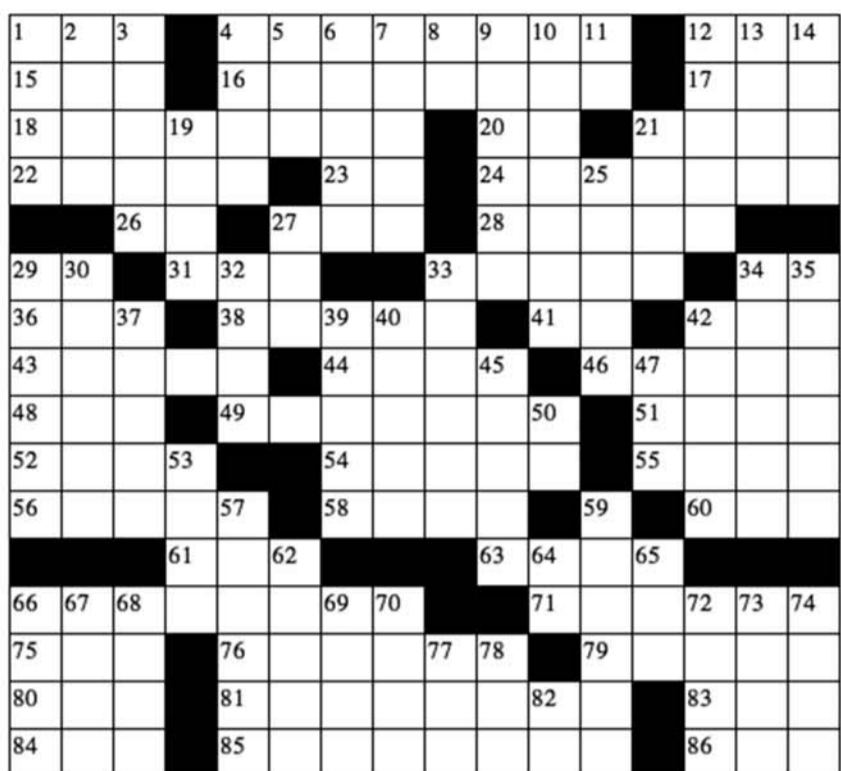
'Espressamente illy' invited the media to celebrate the launch of the new food menu with more than 60 items with variety of authentic Italian dishes and desserts that matches our Kuwaiti local market's needs. The soul of Italy's coffee lives in its coffee houses where centuries of tradition meet the modern barista's expertise and understated, elegant style. If you have been fortunate enough to enjoy a genuine Italian coffee experience, close your eyes, and take yourself back. It is an experience illy wants to share with the world, and one that gave rise to espressamente illy: a global network of cafés uniting the genuine Italian coffee house tradition with illy's design sensibilities.



The Charge D' Affaires of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Kim Jong Yol hosted a reception at the embassy to celebrate the 7th congress of the workers party of Korea. Official and media persons attended the event.

— Photos by Joseph Shagra

CROSSWORD 1257



ACROSS

- 1. A master's degree in library science.
4. An alkalating agent (trade name Leukeran) used to treat some kinds of cancer.
12. The law enforcement agency in the Justice Department.
15. Take in solid food.
16. Change into an ester.
17. A boy or man.
18. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
20. A radioactive transuranic element.
22. Express in speech.
23. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
24. Genus of New Zealand mat-forming herbs or subshrubs.
26. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
28. The principal evil jinni in Islamic mythology.
29. After noon.
31. North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
36. (computer science) Memory whose contents can be accessed and read but cannot be changed.
38. A seat for one person, with a support for the back.
41. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
43. A poplar that is widely cultivated in the United States.
44. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
46. A member of a seafaring group of North American Indians who lived on the Pacific coast of British Columbia and southwestern Alaska.
48. Being ten more than one hundred eighty.
49. Tranquilizer and antidepressant (trade name Trivril) sometimes used as an antiemetic for adults.
51. The eighth month of the civil year.
52. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
54. Sour or bitter in taste.
55. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
56. Optical instrument consisting of a pair of lenses for correcting defective vision.
58. The Fate who spins the thread of life.
60. Lacking in rigor or strictness.
61. Electronic warfare undertaken to prevent or reduce an enemy's effective use of the electromagnetic spectrum.
63. A wad of something chewable as tobacco.
66. Periodic maintenance on a car or machine.
71. A kind of heavy jacket ('windcheater' is a British term).
75. A column of light (as from a beacon).
76. Constituting the undiminished entirety.
79. Jordan's port.
80. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
81. A headlong rush of people on a common impulse.
83. A crystalline rock that can be cut and polished for jewelry.
84. The part of the nervous system of vertebrates that controls involuntary actions of the smooth muscles and heart and glands.
85. A great raja.
86. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.

DOWN

- 1. A state of confusion and disorderliness.
2. An inhabitant of Lapland.
3. French romantic writer (1766-1817).
4. Plant having a large slender white bulb and flat overlapping dark green leaves.
5. The rate at which red blood cells settle out in a tube of blood under standardized conditions.
6. A city in central New York.
7. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
8. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
9. Evergreen trees or shrubs of mountains of Australia and Tasmania.
10. Diffusing warmth and friendliness.
11. A Mid-Atlantic state.
12. Footwear (shoes or slippers) with no heel (or a flat heel).
13. Capital city of the Apulia region on the Adriatic coast.
14. The content of cognition.
19. A demon who swallows the sun causing eclipses.
21. The largest continent with 60% of the earth's population.
25. Muslim name for God.
27. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
30. Large high frilly cap with a full crown.
32. The universal time coordinated time on board the spacecraft.
33. Lacking even the rudiments of courage.
34. A member of an agricultural people in southeastern India.
35. A drug (trade names Atarax and Vistaril) used as a tranquilizer to treat anxiety and motion sickness.
37. A noisy riotous fight.
39. Of or relating to or characteristic of Asia or the peoples of Asia or their languages or culture.
40. Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
42. The basic unit of money in Saudi Arabia.
45. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
47. A resource.
50. 16 ounces.
53. Type genus of the Aceraceae.
57. Division of a group into opposing factions.
59. Fairly small terrestrial ferns of tropical America.
62. A blanket that is used as a cloak or shawl.
64. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
65. Pan with a convex bottom.
67. Characteristic of false pride.
68. An unfledged or nestling hawk.
69. A state in the western United States.
70. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
72. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
73. In bed.
74. God of love and erotic desire.
77. An emergency procedure consisting of external cardiac massage and artificial respiration.
78. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
82. A person who announces and plays popular recorded music.

Yesterday's Solution

A crossword puzzle solution grid with the words 'ANTYDOTE', 'HOLIDAY', 'PROTEGE', 'MAYABIRE', 'RECAARCB', 'KSCALAWAG', 'HYMENAEA', 'TUMUSDT', 'MARSARTIFACT', 'LEATATION' filled in.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Career choices may appear to be a bit challenging today. Stop and consider what you wanted as a profession and weigh the options of where you are at this time.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This could be the perfect day for the comforts that make you feel nurtured, safe and protected. Go ahead and baby yourself-you deserve it.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You have more of an interest today in cultural or literary affairs regarding the spending of money than with just merely collecting material goods.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Today is a good day for financial gains. This may mean that you purchase a product at a very good discount or... A raise is in the works.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Communicating to others is at a high and you love the art of communication. You will do well; you just need to get instructions or the needs of another correctly down in writing.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This time indicates great strides toward improvement in all areas of your life. However, you could be inclined to misapply your focus.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may be asked to do an employee review and the outcome is most positive-a raise is in the works. This is a time when the desire for financial success is great-you want to help everyone and provide for everyone.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Emotional regeneration could be useful, as it could be difficult to get yourself motivated. If you have really been as busy as the energies indicate, you should not feel guilty about making this a more relaxed day.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This morning may be the time of meetings in your office. All week you have worked on projects and now you make your presentations.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may be planning to start a new diet or some other personal improvement project and you put forth the effort that it takes to become organized and create a plan.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You have an inborn ability to see the positive side of life. You help someone rearrange his or her office this morning, which you may have wanted to do to your own office.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This day is an inspiring day. You will encourage others through a patient and empathetic way. It could be that you have volunteered to help in another department or area and are able to float into different job descriptions.

WORD SEARCH

Types of Music 1

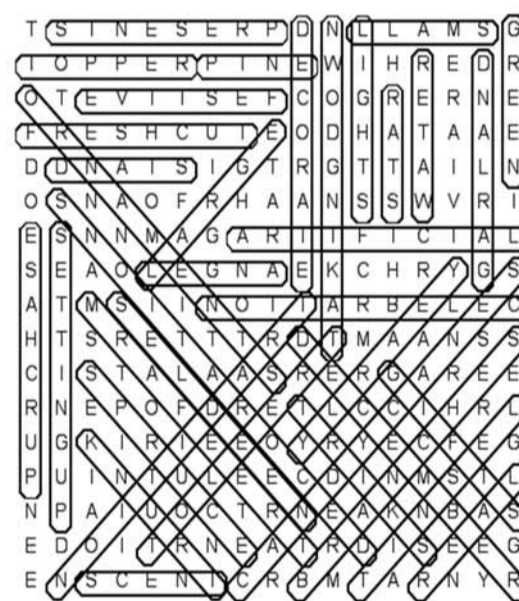
Find and circle all of the different types of music that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 14 letters spell an additional type of music.



- ACAPPELLA, ACID ROCK, ACOUSTIC, AMBIENT, AVANT-GARDE, BIG BAND, BLUEGRASS, BROADWAY, CABARET, CHORAL, CHRISTMAS, CLASSIC ROCK, DANCE, DISCO, ELECTRONICA, FLAMENCO, FOLK, GANGSTA RAP, GOTHIC, HEAVY METAL, HIP HOP, INDIAN, INDIE, JAZZ, LATIN MUSIC, LOUNGE, MERENGUE, MEXICAN, NEW WAVE, POLKA, PSYCHEDELIC, PUNK, ROCKABILLY, SAMBA, SOUL, TANGO, WALTZ, WORLD.

Yesterday Solution

Christmas Tree



- ANGEL, ARTIFICIAL BRANCHES, CANDY CANES, CELEBRATION, DECORATE, DECORATIONS, FESTIVE, FRESH CUT, GARLAND, GIFTS, GREEN, LARGE, LIGHTS, NEEDLES, ORNAMENTS, PINE, PRESENTS, PURCHASE, REAL, SCENT, SETTING UP, SKIRT, SMALL, SPRUCE, STAND, STAR, TAKING DOWN, TINSEL, TOPPER, TRADITION, TREE FARM, TREE LOT, TRUNK, WATER, YEARLY.

The hidden message is: THE TRADITION OF HAVING A CHRISTMAS TREE ORIGINATED IN GERMANY

Daily SuDoku

A 9x9 Sudoku puzzle grid with some numbers pre-filled.

Yesterday's Solution

A 9x9 Sudoku puzzle solution grid.



(From left back) Group photo shows Kuwait Times Deputy General Manager Adnan Saad, one of the jury members for 9-11 age category Abdulaziz Arti, General Manager of Arabian Business Machines Kamal Abo Al-Hasan and Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan with the winners.—Photos by Joseph Shagra

KUWAIT BEAUTIFUL & GREEN through children's eyes

Kuwait Beautiful & Green competition now is in its 11th edition and it is part of Kuwait Times' communal and social responsibility providing young talents with the proper avenue to enrich their skills and abilities. The event was sponsored by Zain Telecom, Al-Batel Watches, Arabian Business Machines and Marriott Hotel Kuwait.

Also in attendance were Zain Telecom Corporate Communications and Relations Director Waleed Al-Khasti, JW Marriott Hotel Kuwait General Manager George Oun, Al-Batel Watches Co CEO Khaled Al-Batel, Deputy General Manager of Arabian Business Machines Rabee Abdulhassan and Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-

Alyan. The panel of judges include: Amera Ashkhanani, Abdulaziz Arti, Svitlana Arndt and Abed Al-Kareem Al-Enezi. Here are the winners categories from 9-11 years and 12-14 years old.



First winner, Fatema Abedaziz Essa Ali, Maeath Al-Adawya School



Second winner, Suzana Abdulateef, Al-Jameel School.



Third winner, Maryam Ahmed Al-Asfor, Mushref Elementary School.



Nawoda Dilshani, Carmel school.



Sara Abdulatief Al-Shamary, Sulaibekhat Elementary School.



Zahrae Ahmed Hassan, Kuwait Academy School.



Helen Mariam Biju, Indian Educational School.



Jessica Mary Dias, Indian Learning Academy.



Yousif Essam Ebrahim, Al-Ekhlash School.





Painting by first winner, Fatema Abedaziz Essa Ali, Maeath Al-Adawya School.



Painting by second winner, Suzana Abdulateef, Al- Jameel School.



Painting by third winner, Maryam Ahmed Al-Asfor, Mushref Elementary School.



Painting by Nawoda Dilshani, Carmel school.

Category 9-11 years

First winner
Fatema Abedaziz Essa Ali, Maeath Al-Adawya School

Second winner
Suzana Abdulateef, Al- Jameel School

Third winner
Maryam Ahmed Al-Asfor, Mushref Elementary School

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Nawoda Dilshani Carmel school | 5. Helen Mariam Biju Indian Educational School |
| 2. Maryam Wadee Atteya Al-Naser Al-Ahleya School | 6. Jessica Mary Dias Indian Learning Academy |
| 3. Sara Abdulatief Al-Shamary Sulaibekhat Elementary School | 7. Yousif Essam Ebrahim Al-Ekhlash School |
| 4. Zahrae Ahmed Hassan Kuwait Academy School | |



Painting by Maryam Wadee Atteya, Al-Naser Al-Ahleya School.



Painting by Sara Abdulatief Al-Shamary, Sulaibekhat Elementary School.



Painting by Zahrae Ahmed Hassan, Kuwait Academy School.



Painting by Helen Mariam Biju, Indian Educational School.



Painting by Yousif Essam Ebrahim, Al-Ekhlash School.



Painting by Jessica Mary Dias, Indian Learning Academy.





(Back Left) A group photo shows Kuwait Times Deputy General Manager Adnan Saad, one of the jury members for the 12-14 age category Svitlana Ardnt, Assistant Undersecretary for the Youth Projects' Sector at the Ministry of Youth Affairs Shafiq Al-Sayed Omar and Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan with the winners.



First winner, Malak Hmoud Mahmoud, Al-Samya Intermediate School.



Second winner, Nouran Ashref Al-Kady, Gulf English School.



Third winner, Mohammed Hamed Al-Hajri, Khalifa Talal Al-Jari School.



Sarangi Smtha Sunil, Indian learning School.



Lumini Kumarage, Jabriya Indian School.



Meghna Palliserry Ravindran, Indian Educational Center.



Teaba Abdulla Al-Abdalla, Fatema bent Al-Yaman School.



Naema Ali Mahmoud, Hind Intermediate School.



Fatema Al-Rdwan, Mishref Intermediate School.





Painting by first winner, Malak Hmoud Mahmoud, Al-Samya Intermediate School.



Painting by second winner, Nouran Ashref Al-Kady, Gulf English School.



Painting by third winner, Mohammed Hamed Al-Hajri, Khalifa Talal Al-Jari School.



Painting by Lumini Kumarage, Jabriya Indian School.

Category 12-14 years

First winner
Malak Hmoud Mahmoud, Al-Samya Intermediate School.

Second winner
Nouran Ashref Al-Kady, Gulf English School.

Third winner
Mohammed Hamed Al-Hajri, Khalifa Talal Al-Jari School.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Sarangi Smtha Sunil Indian learning School. | 5. Teaba Abdulla Al-Abdalla Fatema bent Al-Yaman School. |
| 2. Lumini Kumarage Jabriya Indian School. | 6. Fatema Al-Rdwan Mishref Intermediate School. |
| 3. Meghna Pallisseray Ravindran Indian Educational Center. | 7. Verina Raed Najeeb Al-Jabrya Indian School. |
| 4. Naema Ali Mahmoud Hind Intermediate School. | |



Painting by first winner, Malak Hmoud Mahmoud, Al-Samya Intermediate School.



Painting by Teaba Abdulla Al-Abdalla, Fatema bent Al-Yaman School.



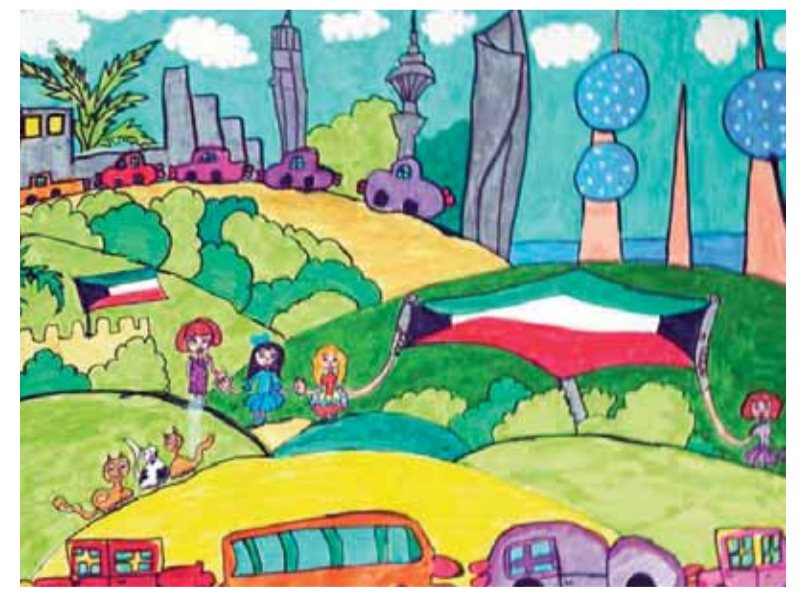
Painting by Fatema Al-Rdwan, Mishref Intermediate School.



Painting by Meghna Pallisseray Ravindran, Indian Educational Center.



Painting by Verina Raed Najeeb, Al-Jabrya Indian School.



Painting by Naema Ali Mahmoud, Hind Intermediate School.





People visit the large-scale public art installation titled Seven Magic Mountains by Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone near Jean, Nevada. The artwork, comprised of seven towers of colorful, stacked boulders standing more than thirty feet high, was recently completed in the desert south of Las Vegas.—AFP

Honors for De Niro, tears from legendary boxer Duran in Cannes

It has been a while since legendary boxer Roberto Duran had a crowd on their feet chanting his name, but they did in Cannes on Monday after a screening of a film on his life starring Robert De Niro. Both De Niro and Duran had tears in their eyes as they embraced to a standing ovation after the moving tale of the Panamanian's journey to boxing stardom in "Hands of Stone" in Cannes, where De Niro was honored for his five decade-long acting career.

"I don't know what to say, it's just great. All I can say is thank you," a visibly moved De Niro said after a clip was played showing many of his roles from "Casino" to "Taxi Driver." "It's a great honor to be honored here in Cannes. As I've said before and will say again: Thank god for the French," said the 72-year-old New Yorker. Producer Harvey Weinstein, said that De Niro had been "a mentor, a kick-in-the-asser, the guy who tells you the truth even when you don't want to hear it and the consummate actor."

"I will cry, I will," said an emotional Weinstein. De Niro cracked Panama tax jokes as he told of the journey to make the movie, which was eventually filmed in the country most recently in the news for the "Panama Papers" scandal.

Legendary Sugar Ray rivalry

Duran, known as "Hands of Stone", is a national hero in Panama, and the movie tracks his life as a child on the gritty streets of the country, where he was marked by riots over America's control of the Panama Canal. De Niro plays Ray

Arce, who trained 18 world champions and was tasked with turning the hothead, America-hating Duran into world champion. The film comes 36 years after his Oscar-winning performance as self-destructive boxer Jake LaMotta in Martin Scorsese's 1980 classic "Raging Bull".

"Hands of Stone" focuses on the rivalry between the Panamanian brawler (played by Edgar Ramirez) and Sugar Ray Leonard (played by the singer Usher Raymond). After winning the WBC welterweight title from Leonard in 1980, Duran shocked the world by quitting mid-fight in a rematch five months later, reportedly with the words "No Mas" (No More) — which he still denies saying. Duran—who began his professional career at 16 — fought on till he was 50.

The actor Ramirez also paid tribute to De Niro, whom he first met in Cannes five years ago when De Niro was president of the jury and Ramirez was presenting an award. "Cannes must be the city of dreams as today five years later I have him standing in my corner, not only in film, but most importantly in life," said Ramirez, also moved to tears by Duran's reaction after the movie was screened. De Niro starred in two films that won Cannes' top prize, the Palme d'Or—Scorsese's "Taxi Driver" in 1976 and "Mission" by the British director Roland Joffe 10 years later. "Hands of Stone", directed by Jonathan Jakubowicz, will be released internationally in August and September. — AFP



(From third left) Spanish actor Oscar Jaenada, Panamanian boxer Roberto Duran, US actor Robert de Niro and his wife Grace Hightower, US actor Usher Raymond IV and his wife Grace Miguel, Venezuelan actor Edgar Ramirez, Cuban actress Ana de Armas and Venezuelan director Jonathan Jakubowicz pose as they arrive for the screening of the film "Hands of Stone" at the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

Lebanese helmer Nadine Labaki preps 'Cafarnaum'

Lebanese actress-turned-helmer Nadine Labaki, whose latest film "Where Do We Go Now" won prizes in Cannes and Toronto, is set to direct her third pic, "Cafarnaum" (Capernaum), a \$4 million feature set in a Middle Eastern town. Labaki is reteaming with her regular French producer, Anne-Dominique Toussaint at Les Films des Tournelles—the Paris-based outfit behind this year's Directors Fortnight player "Tour de France" directed by Rachid Djaidani. Labaki and her husband, Khaled Mouzanar, who is a popular music composer, will co-produce via their newly-launched outfit in Lebanon.

"Cafarnaum" (Capernaum) will start shooting at the end of the summer in Liban. The script — now completed—is based on an original story penned by Labaki Jihad Hojeily whose credits include "Caramel" and "Where Do We Go Now" (pictured above). A political and contemporary fable in the vein of Labaki's first two movies, "Cafarnaum" centers around a child who rebels against the life he's been imposed and launches a lawsuit. "Cafarnaum" will have the same humor et humanity as Nadine Labaki's last films — it will mix fiction and documentary-style realism and will star all fresh new faces, mostly non-professionals," said Toussaint.

Although "Cafarnaum" will shoot in Lebanon, the story takes place in an undefined Middle Eastern region which is going through a political and social crisis. Toussaint is currently in talks to lock the distribution and international sales for the movie. "Where Do We Go Now" world premiered at Cannes' Un Certain Regard, won a special mention of the Ecumenical jury, and went on to play at San Sebastian and Toronto where it won the audience prize. Labaki's feature debut, "Caramel," opened at Directors' Fortnight and won three nods in San Sebastian, among a flurry of prizes. — Reuters



Nadine Labaki

Spielberg says 'BFG' is closest he's come to 'a love story'

Steven Spielberg, a giant in the world of cinema, landed at the Cannes Film Festival on Saturday with his gentle Roald Dahl adaptation "The BFG." The film, about a young orphan (Ruby Barnhill) taken away by a friendly, big-eared giant (recent Oscar winner Mark Rylance), marks a return for Spielberg to the magical kind of fable he has largely moved away from in recent years. It's also his second film with "E.T." writer Melissa Mathison, who died last November. Spielberg has dedicated "The BFG" (Big Friendly Giant) to her.

"It's a love story that children have for their grandparents. It's a love story that grandparents have for their children," Spielberg told reporters Saturday. "I think this probably the closest I've ever come to telling a love story." Sitting between his young star and his new favorite actor (Rylance is starring in the director's next two films as well), Spielberg said enchanting fantasies like "The BFG" are just as vital as more realistic tales.

"The worse the world gets, the more magic we have to believe in," said Spielberg. "Hope comes from magic and I think that's what movies can give people. They can give people hope that there will be a reason to fight on to the next

day. Hope is everything to me." Spielberg acknowledged his interest has recently drifted to historical dramas like "Lincoln" and last year's "Bridge of Spies," but he said making "The BFG" was liberating.

"It was revisiting something that I've always loved to do, which is just to tell stories that are from the imagination," he said. "It brought back feelings I had as a younger filmmaker." "The BFG," which drew warmly respectful reviews in its Cannes premiere, is largely faithful to Dahl's 1982 classic and was made in concert with the Dahl estate. (The author died in 1990.) Producer Kathleen Kennedy first obtained the rights in 1993 and later turned to Mathison for the script.

Spielberg called collaborating with Mathison again "a wonderful reunion and a very bittersweet time, as it turned out, for us." Dahl was famously anti-Israel and some considered him anti-Semitic. Asked about whether that was an issue for him, Spielberg said he wasn't aware of that, and was only concerned with adapting a book he frequently read to his seven children.—AP