

Mol bans Ramadan tents, cracks down on begging



Nokia to make mobile, tablets comeback



Black Panther, Marvel's African hero, in spotlight



Sevilla stun Liverpool 3-1 to retain Europa League title



AMIR URGES YEMEN FOES TO PRESS ON WITH PEACE TALKS

YEMEN PM REJECTS REBEL-PROPOSED UNITY GOVT



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conspiracy theories

DON'T SACRIFICE CHARITY



By Badrya Darwish

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The most bizarre news I heard yesterday was that mosques in Kuwait will not be allowed to set up tents during Ramadan. This is a normal practice known in the Arab world as Muwaed Al-Rahman (table of the Merciful), where mosques set up tents to serve iftar meals and allow more room for worshippers. Anyone who needs food can go to the nearest mosque and eat. And this is not just for the poor - it's for anyone who's fasting and happens to be traveling. At the azan, they can stop at any mosque and break their fast.

The report said the Ministry of Interior has taken this step for security reasons. Of course I am with the Ministry of Interior for any necessary security measures that protect Kuwait. We will never forget the heinous attack on our mosque last Ramadan and God bless all the souls who were lost.

But we should not let this security phobia destroy our lives and traditions, especially when it comes to charity. I know for a fact that many people, especially workers and laborers, really depend on the iftar at the mosques for their meals. As the Ministry of Interior has said they are more alert over protecting mosques and places of worship, it's not difficult to protect the tents that are adjacent to the mosques and provide iftar. We need to let charity prevail and not fear, especially in the holy month of Ramadan.

Anyway it's unclear even from the circular issued by the Interior Ministry if mosques will be allowed to serve iftar meals inside the mosques. It's not an ideal option to eat inside the mosque, because there is very little time between breaking the fast and prayers, and you need to clean the place and get it ready for worshippers. It is an easy option to have a tent adjacent to the mosque.

We are looking forward to the holy month of Ramadan and we pray for peace and tranquility for the whole world.



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets UN Special Envoy to Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT/RIYADH: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday urged Yemen's warring parties to press ahead with peace talks, a day after the government delegation threatened to pull out of the UN-brokered negotiations. The Amir called on the two sides to continue negotiating to "reach positive results", the official KUNA news agency reported. The appeal came after HH the Amir met separately with the two delegations and the UN envoy at Bayan Palace in an attempt to salvage the talks that began four weeks ago. During the meetings, Sheikh Sabah reiterated his call for the Yemeni negotiators to continue peace consultations to help restore Yemen's security and stability.

Senior officials from Kuwait have repeatedly mediated and sought to prevent the collapse of the negotiations aimed at ending nearly 14 months of bloodshed. Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdulmalek Al-Mikhlafi, who heads the government delegation, threatened on Tuesday to quit the talks with Iran-backed rebels, giving the UN envoy a "last chance" to make them comply with UN resolutions. He said the rebels should acknowledge their respect to UN Security Council Resolution 2216 which demands the insurgents withdraw from areas they occupied since 2014 and surrender arms.

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PANEL OKS BILL TO NATURALIZE 4,000

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's interior and defense committee yesterday approved a draft law to naturalize up to 4,000 people in the current year, but after rejecting all proposals to amend the bill. The draft law was passed in the Assembly in the first reading last week and the second and final vote was postponed until next week. It calls on authorities to grant Kuwaiti citizenship to up to 4,000 people in 2016. The law is considered as a tool to help authorities resolve the decades-old problem of over 110,000 stateless people or bedoons by naturalizing those who are

considered eligible for Kuwaiti nationality. But the committee rejected a proposal stipulating that all the people who would be naturalized must be bedoons, because it wants to open the door for naturalizing all those who deserve it regardless of their original nationality.

Bedoons or their ancestors have been living in the country for decades and claim the right to Kuwaiti citizenship. The government says that only 34,000 of the bedoons qualify for consideration for citizenship and asked the rest to produce their original identification papers to be granted long-term residence permits and allowed to seek jobs.

Meanwhile, MP Abdullah Al-Tameemi yesterday strongly criticized MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji for expecting that controversial MP Abdulhameed Dashti may be assassinated. He said Turaiji's behavior is a breach of moral standards and constitutional and Assembly charter principles. Tameemi said the comment by Turaiji is a clear instigation, a bad example and far from parliamentary manners, and distorts the image of the Assembly as a whole. He called on Turaiji to withdraw the statement and apologize to the Kuwaiti people for what he had said against Dashti.

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GIRL KIDNAPPED BY BOKO HARAM FOUND WITH BABY



DAMBOA, Nigeria: This handout picture shows Amina Ali posing with her 4-month-old baby Safiya after she was released by the Nigerian army. — AFP

KANO, Nigeria: One of 219 schoolgirls held hostage by Boko Haram for more than two years has been found, the military and activists said yesterday, the first rescue that has raised hopes for those still being held. Amina Ali was discovered on Tuesday in the Sambisa Forest area of Borno state by civilian vigilantes and soldiers on patrol and was brought back to her home town of Mbalala, near Chibok. "When her mother approached the car the girl stepped out and her mother exclaimed, 'Amina! Is that you?'" Ayuba Alamson Chibok, a Chibok community leader, told AFP. "They ran towards each other and hugged. The mother burst into tears."

The rescue is a rare positive in the ordeal of the schoolgirls, whose abduction sparked global outrage and brought world attention to a brutal conflict that has killed at least 20,000 since 2009. Nigeria's army said Ali was found with "a suspected Boko Haram terrorist, Mohammed Hayatu, who claimed to be her husband", as well as a four-month-old girl named Safiya. A photograph provided by the military showed a young woman sitting in a plastic chair, dressed in flip-flops, a patterned hijab and pink wrapper common in the region. She was cradling the infant in one arm and a plate of food in the other.

Yakubu Nkeki, head of the Abducted Chibok Girls Parents' group, said the teenager, who was 17 when she was abducted, was brought to his house where she was reunited with her mother. She was then handed over to the military and taken to the nearby town of Damboa, he told AFP. Army spokesman Sani Usman said Ali, Hayatu and Safiya were transferred to the state capital, Maiduguri for "further medical attention and screening".

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This file photo from Aug 21, 2014 shows an image of Earth. Last month was the hottest April in modern history. — AFP

APRIL BREAKS HEAT RECORDS

MIAMI: Last month was the hottest April in modern history, marking the 12th consecutive month that global heat records have been shattered, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said yesterday. "The globally averaged temperature over land and ocean surfaces for April 2016 was the highest for the month of April in the NOAA global temperature dataset record, which dates back to 1880," the agency said in a statement. "This marks the 12th consecutive month the monthly global temperature record has been broken, the longest such streak in the 137-year record."

The report, issued each month by NOAA, also pointed to a concerning spike in temperature last month, compared to the 20th century average. The combined average temperature over global land and ocean surfaces for April 2016 was 1.10 Celsius above the 20th century average of 13.7 C. This marked "the highest temperature departure for April since global records began in 1880."

Overall, 13 of 15 of these record spikes, or monthly temperature departures, have occurred since February 2015, signaling that global warming is accelerating. Unusually warm temperatures were seen across much of the world, but particularly in Russia and Alaska, where temperatures were 5.4 F (3.0 C) or more above average, said NOAA. Northern and central South America and parts of southern Europe, western and central Africa, southeastern Asia, eastern Australia, southern Alaska, and the Caribbean also saw temperatures climb. Cooler than average weather was seen last month in northeastern Canada and southern South America. — AFP

220 FAMILIES BURIED BY LANKA LANDSLIDES

ELANGAPITIYA VILLAGE, Sri Lanka: Soldiers and police used sticks and bare hands yesterday to dig through enormous piles of mud covering houses in three villages hit by massive landslides in central Sri Lanka, with hundreds of families reported missing. By evening, rescuers had pulled 37 bodies from the mud and debris unleashed by several days of heavy rain across the island nation. Officials said the extent of the tragedy was still unclear, but the Sri Lankan Red Cross said at least 220 families were unaccounted for.

"The task is to figure out what happened to them," the Red Cross said in a statement, noting that some people may have left after local officials warned earlier this week of possible landslides. Heavy fog, rain, electrical outages and the loose ground were complicating efforts to search for survivors. As night fell, the rescue operation was suspended

until dawn. Officials warned that, with rain still falling, more landslides could occur in the area.

Villagers said torrents of muddy water, tree branches and debris came crashing down around their homes Tuesday in the three villages, located at different heights on the same hill in Kegalle District, about 72 km north of Colombo. "I heard a huge sound like a plane crashing into the Earth," said 52-year-old A.G. Kamala, who had just returned to her house in one of the villages, Siripura, when the landslides hit. "I opened my door. I could not believe my eyes, as I saw something like a huge fireball rolling down the mountain."

Near the village of Elangapitiya - furthest down the hill - soldiers carried bodies to a school, where families waited for news of missing loved ones.

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News

in brief

Ramadan working hours announced

KUWAIT: Working hours during the holy month of Ramadan will be from 09:30 am to 02:00 pm for ministries, and from 10:00 am to 02:30 pm for those of special work nature, Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced yesterday. It added that institutions of special work nature that would like to change their working hours should contact the CSC. It noted that the following institutions will have the same working hours as those of the ministries: Public Authority for Housing Welfare, Ports Authority, Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, Public Authority for Youth and Sports, Environment Public Authority, Civil Aviation, Public Authority for Industry, Public Authority for Minors Affairs, Public Authority for Customs, Fire Service Directorate, Credit Bank, Zakat House, Municipality, Civil Service Commission and National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters.

Woman fined, deported for checking husband's phone

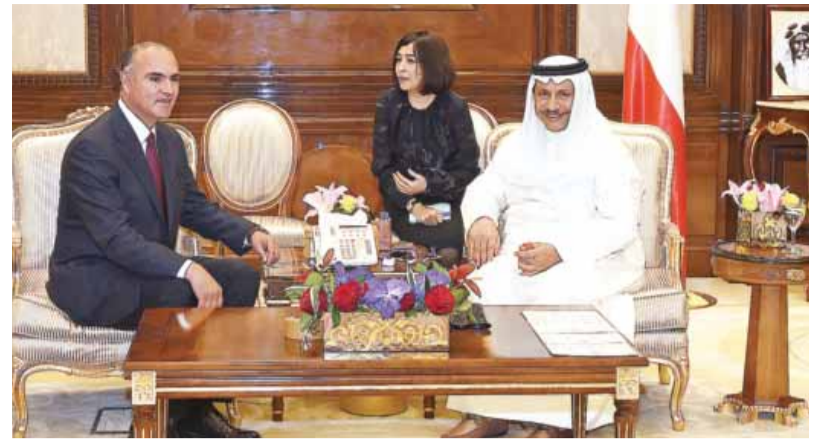
DUBAI: A woman was fined and ordered to be deported from the United Arab Emirates for breaching her husband's privacy by checking his cell phone to see if he was cheating on her, Gulf News reported yesterday. The unnamed Arab expatriate was fined 150,000 dirhams (\$40,843) by the criminal court in the emirate of Ajman, the English-language newspaper said. Her lawyer told the paper she had accused her husband of having an affair. She admitted she had accessed his phone without his permission and transferred photos to her device, the lawyer added. The husband lodged a complaint with the court which convicted her on Thursday last week under a cybercrime law which penalizes "the invasion of privacy of another person" using information technology, the paper said. It said the couple were in their 30s but gave no other information.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with head of the Lebanese Progressive Socialist Party Walid Jumblatt.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Mexican Secretary of Agriculture Jose Eduardo Calzada.

PREMIER MEETS AMIR AFTER RETURNING FROM ASIAN TOUR

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. The reception came on the occasion of His Highness the Premier's return from an Asian tour that included Bangladesh, Vietnam, South Korea, and Japan. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and First

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, in addition to Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Khaled Jarrah Al-Sabah. Also yesterday, His Highness the Amir received head of the Lebanese Progressive Socialist Party Walid Jumblatt, Lebanese

Minister of Public Health Wael Abu Faour and Chairman of the Children's Cancer Center of Lebanon Nora Jumblatt. The reception came on the occasion of the Lebanese delegation's visit to the country. Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meeting. The Lebanese delegation later met with His Highness the Prime Minister.

In other news, His Highness the Prime Minister received Mexican Secretary of Agriculture Jose Eduardo Calzada, in

attendance of Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Ali Saleh Al-Omar, and undersecretary of His Highness the Premier's Diwan Sheikhha Etamad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The visiting Mexican minister later met with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, in attendance of Mexican Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Angel Isidro. Ghanem also met with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq Ghassan Al-Zawawi. — KUNA



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Mexican Secretary of Agriculture Jose Eduardo Calzada.

MEXICAN MINISTER PROMOTES AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN KUWAIT

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Mexico can provide the best agricultural products to Kuwait, said Jose Calzada, Mexico's Minister of Agriculture, at the Agri-Food Forum yesterday. The Mexican minister took pride in Mexico's achievements, especially being the 12th largest producer of food products in the world. "We have invested a lot in technology and innovation when it comes to food and agriculture products, and can be a very good partner with Kuwait and the Arabian Peninsula in terms of agri-business. Currently, we only have trade worth \$4 million with Kuwait, but we know we can increase this amount by over 50 percent annually, by connecting buyers and sellers," Calzada said. "With Kuwait, our plan is to reach about \$1 billion in trade in the next 10 years. It's achievable and we want to start now," he added.

The minister noted most of Mexico's agricultural food products go to the United States; about 89 percent, and the rest goes to Canada, Europe, Japan and even China. "We are among the biggest food producers - for example, we are the fourth largest producers of tomatoes in the world, and the top producers of avocados and lemons," said Calzada. The minister also mentioned Mexico's huge investment in halal products. "Kuwait has a long friendship with Mexico, so I have brought many business-

men with me to showcase our agricultural products. I want to go home with good news for my president, especially over your interest in agricultural food products," he said. The event yesterday was also attended by Khalid Meshari Al-Khalid, member of the board of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI).

Successful visit

Miguel Angel Isidro, Ambassador of Mexico to Kuwait, reminded the audience that the visit by Calzada comes on the heels of a very successful visit by Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto in January this year. "The visit of Agriculture Minister Jose Calzada, along with the biggest delegation of businessmen, is a great example of our strong ties. The trade component of his visit was particularly relevant, including the business forum held at the KCCI hosted by Chairman Ali-Thunayan Al-Ghanem," Isidro said.

The envoy also hailed trade relations between Kuwait and Mexico, which have grown over the years. "The dynamism of the automotive sector, the metal-mechanic sector and the agri-food sector supports this steady development. In 10 years, our trade balance grew almost 180 percent, and we expect better figures this year. The agri-food forum in Kuwait truly represents a historic moment and the embassy is pleased to be a part of it," he said. The forum also served delicacies from Mexico.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is pictured with some of the teachers honored during yesterday's ceremony. — KUNA photos

CROWN PRINCE REPRESENTS AMIR AT TEACHERS' CEREMONY

KUWAIT: A ceremony to honor Kuwaiti teachers was held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday. His Highness the Amir deputized His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to attend the ceremony. The ceremony, which coincided with World Teachers' Day, was held at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Auditorium in Kuwait University's Shuwaikh Campus.

His Highness the Crown Prince convoy arrived to the ceremony where he was greeted by Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Hamad Al-Essa and a number of senior officials. National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah also attended the ceremony. The ceremony included a musical performance, a documentary and a short film titled highlighting concepts of patriotism. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem attend the ceremony.



KUWAIT: Mexico's Minister of Agriculture Jose Calzada participates in the Agri-Food Forum yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

DEFENSE MINISTER DISCUSSES COMMON ISSUES WITH GERMAN DELEGATION

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah discussed with Chairman of the German ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems Dr Hans Atzpodien, and his accompanying delegation, issues of common interest. The meeting also touched on bilateral ties, Ministry of Defense Public Relations Department said in

a press statement yesterday. The meeting was attended by senior officials at the Ministry of Defense. ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems is one of the leading system providers for non-nuclear submarines and high-end naval vessels. The company stands for marine competence, innovative technologies and comprehensive and reliable service. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of the German ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems Dr Hans Atzpodien. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met yesterday with Jouri Mohammed Saad Al-Azmi, a student who achieved first place in the Arabic Reading Competition. He also met with student Nasser Issa Al-Jimaz, who has won the silver award of the 44th International Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva (2016) for innovations in the field of environment protection. — KUNA



ASSEMBLY 'GREAT PLATFORM' TO DISCUSS HEALTH ISSUES: GHUNAIM

GENEVA: Next week's World Health Assembly will provide a great platform for Kuwait to highlight regional health issues, which is one of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals, Kuwait's permanent delegate to the UN Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim said yesterday. Kuwaiti Minister of Health Dr Saad Al-Obaidi will participate in the meeting that will take place in

Geneva on May 23-28. Ghunaim said that Kuwait will focus on "ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages" in the Middle East region and will discuss the negative impact of non-communicable diseases such as obesity and diabetes.

Ghunaim lauded efforts made by WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan in dealing

with health emergencies in the region, especially health crises that face the Syrian refugees. The Health Assembly is the supreme decision-making body of WHO. It is attended by delegations from all WHO Member States. Its main functions are to determine the policies of the Organization, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed program budget. — KUNA

NATO FMS TO DISCUSS COOPERATION WITH GCC FOR REGIONAL STABILITY

BRUSSELS: Foreign ministers of the 28-member NATO will discuss how to boost cooperation with the Alliance partners in the Gulf region during their two-day meeting in Brussels on Thursday and Friday. Speaking at a press conference at NATO headquarters yesterday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the ministers will discuss "as part of projecting stability in our wider neighborhood how we can work even closer with our partners in the Gulf region."

In reply to a question by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the NATO chief said he recently visited Kuwait and other countries in the Gulf region. "There was a very strong message in all my talks with different interlocutors that we need to step up cooperation between NATO and the Gulf Cooperation Council," he said.

"We are looking forward to the opening of a NATO regional training center in Kuwait," he said, noting that he visited the site during his visit to Kuwait in February. "It is a big, big building where we will have different kinds of training and capacity building activities and this is one example of increased cooperation with the Gulf," he added. The NATO foreign ministers will discuss ways to support regional countries like Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia to fight terrorism and the so-called Islamic State. Stoltenberg said that one of the main topics of this week's ministerial meeting and in the upcoming NATO summit in Warsaw in July will be "establishing security in the

neighborhood and which is very much about fight against IS." Stoltenberg said "we will discuss what more NATO can do to support Iraq. We are already training several hundred Iraqi officers in Jordan." "We have received a request from Prime Minister al-Abadi to expand our training mission into Iraq itself. And we will consider this request from Prime Minister al-Abadi," he said.

The ministers will also discuss support to the new government in Libya if so requested to train and build its military structures and institutions, he said and stressed that "we are not addressing any military intervention (in Libya)."

They will discuss the situation at the Syrian-Turkish border he said and added that "every effort to step up support to coalition fighting IS is also support to Turkey." They will also talk about Syria and the ongoing political efforts in Geneva to find a solution to the crisis, he said.

The NATO ministers will discuss future support for Afghanistan including plans for its Resolute Support mission, and continued financial support for the Afghan security forces, and also NATO-Russia ties. NATO foreign ministers will sign Thursday the Accession Protocol with Montenegro. "Following that ceremony, Montenegro will as of tomorrow participate in all NATO meetings as an observer, or 'invitee'. Once all Allies have ratified the Protocol, Montenegro will become the 29th member of the Alliance," said Stoltenberg. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah heads the Supreme Council for Planning and Development's meeting yesterday. — KUNA

PLANNING COUNCIL DISCUSSES NATION'S ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR 2017-18

280 PROJECTS WITH ESTIMATED COST OF KD 6 BILLION

KUWAIT: The Supreme Council for Planning and Development, headed by its President His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, met yesterday to discuss the nation's annual development plan for fiscal 2017-2018.

The Council, after deliberations and thorough vetting of the plan, endorsed it and turned it over to the government for its take on it, said Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Planning and Development Hind Al-Subaih, in a statement after the conclusion of the Council's meeting.

Subaih indicated that the fiscal plan encompasses no less than 280 projects with a cumulative cost estimate of six billion Kuwaiti Dinars. The plan anchors on several fundamentals, chief among them being a pro-active government eager to get things done through instigating legislations, e-government service, and supporting the use of information technology in all government ministries and agencies, she said.

Sustainable economy

Further, another fundamental requires a variegated sustainable economy buoyed by a hospitable business environment, increased rates of investment, financial reforms, diversified productivity of goods and services, and germinating the seeds of a well-nurtured tourism industry in the country, said Subaih.

She added that another bedrock of the fiscal plan is boosting the nation's infrastructure through expanding the capacity of Kuwait International Airport, increasing the production of electric power, developing roads and ports and air travel, and bolstering the use of information technology and advanced communications in the execution of infrastructure projects.

Moreover, she noted that the fiscal plan for 2017-2018 rests in a major part on sustainable living conditions for the nation's population through providing adequate housing to citizens, improving sanitation conditions in neighborhoods across the country, safeguarding the

environment from air and water pollutants, among other considerations. Also figuring high in the plan is providing optimum health care services through increasing the number of beds in hospitals, curbing the onset of long-term diseases, and streamlining all patient care assistance, said Subaih, noting that the plan focuses at the same time on improving education, addressing the needs of the labor market, supporting programs for the care of children and the elderly and the disabled, as well as empowering the youth.

She furthermore stressed that the plan seeks to promulgate a luminous image of Kuwait on the international scene and to give much support to culture, art, and media. She ended her statement by saying that the Council discussed today a follow-up report on the nation's development plan for fiscal 2015-2016, prior to turning it over to the government and subsequently to the National Assembly for eventual vetting or endorsement. — KUNA



KNPC: INVESTMENT UNTIL 2022 REACHES KD 12.630 BILLION

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation's (KNPC) total investment until the year 2022 amounts to KD 12,630 billion, deputy director of the company's projects Abdullah Al-Ajmi said yesterday, adding that the investments include various key projects. In a statement to the press on the sidelines of a seminar organized by an oil committee, Ajmi said that the sum allocated for the company's warehouses in the area of Al-Mutlaa ranges between KD 350 to 400 million.

Moreover, Ajmi noted that KNPC's planned Clean Fuel Project (CFP) is 53 percent completed as of last April and 55 percent finished by the end of the month, adding that the project's completion is expected to be around 75 percent by the end of the year.

Meanwhile, Ajmi revealed that a second reactor has been installed in Al-Ahmedi port, noting that a total of 11 tools have been purchased for the port, with two of them already

installed, while the remaining ones would be configured shortly. The deputy director of KNPC's projects also noted that a pair of electrical grids, part of numerous planned projects, has been activated with the aim of augmenting the CFP project, adding that those grids would fuel the CFP project.

In a series of seminars put together by KNPC, Ajmi disclosed some of the company's strategies to boost reliance on renewable energy, with the aim of producing 1.4 million per barrel on a daily basis to cope with local and international energy needs. Ajmi also said that the goal for the CFP project is to provide local and international markets with oil products that meet adequate supply, while being in line with environmental standards. He also added that work is in progress to modernize and develop Al-Ahmedi and Abdullah ports, part of efforts to bolster economic growth in the country. — KUNA

JARALLAH CLINIC ORGANIZES ORTHOPEDIC SEMINAR

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A medical forum was held yesterday at the Costa Del Sol Hotel organized by Jarallah German Specialized Clinic (JGSC). The forum highlighted the achievements of the international orthopedic unit at the clinic. Attendees saw presentations from orthopedic surgeons led by Dr Graham Sefton from the United Kingdom, Dr Christopher de Lavigne from France, Dr Ova Jins Farmhan from Germany and Dr Nizar Salahat, who has worked in China.

Former Kuwaiti health minister Ahmed Jarallah lauded JGSC for its achievements in orthopedic surgery. "We are really pleased to provide comprehensive and state-of-the-art facilities for Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti patients, especially in the orthopedic department. This is testament to our commitment to provide better healthcare services in the private sector and provide the services of the best doctors. Some of these doctors are here to present their expertise and credentials," he said.



KUWAIT: Former Kuwaiti health minister Ahmed Jarallah speaks during the forum.



Dr Graham Sefton addresses the forum. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

JGSC is an advanced, multi-specialty medical center located in a prime location in Hawally. Utilizing cutting-edge technology, its top-notch specialists, along with highly-trained medical

staff, offer a host of medical and surgical services through innovative medical practices in a serene and modern setting with friendly customer care.



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah (second from left) speaks during the workshop yesterday. — KUNA

DEPUTY FM INITIATES WORKSHOP ON WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Sulaiman Al-Jarallah initiated an introductory workshop yesterday on the forthcoming World Humanitarian Summit, slated for next week in the Turkish city of Istanbul. In a speech at the workshop, Jarallah asserted that the foreign ministry strives to showcase Kuwait's devotion to humanitarian causes, as the country is set to participate in the upcoming summit.

"Putting together this workshop is means of demonstrating Kuwait's unified and coherent efforts in the humanitarian arena," Jarallah noted. "Holding this workshop is an opportunity for us to discuss issues that are expected to be addressed at the summit, as well as expectations of certain outcomes that the summit would yield," he added.

Jarallah also thanked the United Nations' (UN) office of humanitarian affairs for its contributions to the workshop, saying their expertise in the field was of great value. Turkey, home to the biggest quota of refugees in the world, is set to host the World Humanitarian Summit, with representatives of more than 155 nations and organizations, in addition to 150 heads of states and governments. Some of humanity's most binding dilemmas and ways to boost cooperation in

humanitarian fields are amongst chief issues to be discussed at the summit.

Political leadership

In other news, spokesperson of the UN Secretary General's World Humanitarian Summit Herve Verhoosel said that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was delighted that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accepted an invitation to attend the summit.

"I am really pleased to see that His Highness the Amir of Kuwait has accepted the invitation to participate to the Summit," Verhoosel said yesterday. "This shows political leadership in the field of humanitarian support from His Highness the Amir and the State of Kuwait. We are living in the worst humanitarian situation since the end of World War II. One hundred and twenty five million people are in need of humanitarian support. It is time to put humanity first," he continued.

He added that the UN chief is looking forward to welcome the Amir in Istanbul on May 23-24. The Summit will be attended by representative of 155 countries and many organizations to discuss how the international community can do even more for those in need. — KUNA

KU'S 30TH ENGINEERING DESIGN EXHIBIT KICKS OFF

KUWAIT: The 30th engineering design exhibition for students of the Faculty of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University was inaugurated by Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul yesterday. The participating projects are creative and can contribute to development in Kuwait, the minister told reporters. He added that "we can benefit from some projects in building modern cities."

The faculty's Dean Abdullatif Al-Khulaifi said meanwhile that he was especially impressed by a project on reducing accidents caused by sand drifting onto Al-Sabiyah/Al-Salmi road. Meanwhile, head of the Center of Engineering Training and Graduates Ali Hajiya said there are 505 students participating in the exhibition with 129 projects. He added that it is sponsored by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, as well as governmental and academic institutions. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul attends the 30th engineering design exhibition held at Kuwait University yesterday.

In Brief

RAMADAN TV LINEUP

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah praised yesterday the preparedness of workers in his ministry for the Ramadan TV viewing season. The TV shows include soap operas exclusively run by Kuwait TV, including The Vendor of Beans, Stories, The Deceitful Lady, and A Special Case, in addition to religious and cultural and patriotic programs as well as children's programs and game shows. — KUNA



HUMANITARIAN TIES

KUWAIT: Promoting humanitarian and political relations of mutual interest was a focus of a meeting held on Tuesday between the National Assembly's Human Rights Committee and a visiting European Union parliamentary delegation. Some topics, including legislations pertaining to human rights and the law regulating workers at home, were discussed with the delegation today, MP Jamal Al-Omar, head of the committee, told reporters following the meeting. These legislations were lauded by the delegation, he stressed. — KUNA



35TH ANNIVERSARY

RIYADH: The Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) Secretariat marked on Tuesday the 35th anniversary of founding, in the presence of some senior Saudi officials, and Arab and Gulf diplomats. Addressing the celebration, GCC Secretary General Abdulatif Al-Zayani expressed his gratitude to GCC leaders for their efforts to achieve integration since the council was established in 1981. "It is a source of pride to witness further successes and achievements of the council over 35 years," he said. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Kuwait Towers seen through the window of the ruins of the Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Castle in Kuwait City. The castle used to host a museum during the 1970s. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL OPENS IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) opened the 19th edition of its international music festival on Tuesday evening with a function to honor Suleiman Al-Mullah, a Kuwaiti musician. The festival is part of the celebrations marking Kuwait selection as capital of Islamic culture for 2016. It takes place at Abdul-Mohsen Abdel-Redha Theater until May 24. It is being held under auspices and in the presence

of the Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

Addressing the opening ceremony, NCCAL's assistant secretary-general for the artistic and theatrical affairs sector Dr Bader Al-Duwaish said the festival is one of the most prominent activities listed on the annual agenda of the Council. "The event provides a platform for musicians from Kuwait and the Gulf region to compete

in offering their inspiring music," he said. Duwaish thanked Sheikh Salman who is also minister of state for youth affairs and NCCAL president for his kind patronage of the event. He said that Mullah's rich music contributed to the efforts to bring people with different cultures close to each other through building bridges of friendship among them.

Duwaish added that NCCAL's department of folklore

and popular heritage worked out a 73-item agenda for 2016-2017, including 12 activities at Al-Qurain Cultural Festival, eight activities at the popular heritage festival and 40 events at the Kuwait - capital of Islamic culture for 2016 celebrations. During the opening ceremony Sheikh Salman honored Al-Mullah along with the artists Abdullah Al-Ruwaished, Matraq Al-Matraq and Masha'el in recognition of their distinguished works. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah honors veteran Kuwaiti singer Abdullah Al-Ruwaished during the 19th edition of the international music festival.



Singer Meshael performs during the festival. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Abdullah Al-Ruwaished performs on stage.



NCCAL's assistant secretary-general for the artistic and theatrical affairs sector Dr Bader Al-Duwaish speaks during the event.



Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah honors Kuwaiti musician Suleiman Al-Mullah.



Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah honors singer Meshael.



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd chairs the meeting yesterday.

TENTS OUTSIDE MOSQUES BANNED DURING RAMADAN

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Setting up tents outside mosques will be banned altogether during Ramadan this year, the Interior Ministry announced yesterday. The decision was taken in order to guarantee the safety of citizens and expats.

Local mosques have in recent years set up tents during Ramadan in order to absorb the increasing number of worshippers during the holy month. The tents were also used to host daily 'iftar' or fast breaking feasts for people in need.

The agreement to ban the tents was reached during a meeting yesterday headed by Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-

Fahd, and included Health Ministry Undersecretary Dr Khalid Al-Sahlawi, Social Affairs and Labor Ministry Undersecretary Dr Matar Al-Mutairi, Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Ministry Undersecretary Farid Emadi, Acting Manpower Public Authority (MPA) Director General Ahmad Al-Mousa, and Acting Director General of Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) Maj Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad.

Fahd said the Interior Ministry's security vision relies on the cooperation of these departments so that efforts are unified and citizens and expats can see them in practice. He said the security plan includes security of worship places during the

holy month of Ramadan and religious events that follow. Fahd said the plan also deals with begging during Ramadan in cooperation with the awqaf and social affairs and labor ministries as well as MPA. Beggars' names and data will be announced over the media, while those who brought them to Kuwait will face legal action, in addition to banning cash collection inside or outside mosques during Ramadan. A mechanism to bring visiting speakers during Ramadan or religious events through coordination with those who submit the hosting request was also discussed, in addition to an organizational plan of parliamentary candidates' headquarters including tents and multipurpose halls, as well as development centers.

DUO ARRESTED FOR BANK TRANSACTIONS' FORGERY

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Capital detectives busted a gang that forged bank transactions to get loans and facilities for those who did not qualify to receive them. Capital detectives learned that two expats, a Lebanese named Mohammad Mustafa, born in 1974, and an Egyptian named Ashraf Khalaf, also born in 1974, forged seals of private companies, government establishments and various co-operative societies, through which they forged salary certificates for those who are over the maximum limit to borrow from banks and wish to get new loans. Investigations also indicated that the men had stamps of local banks by which they manipulated the salary amount in bank statements.

One of the suspects used his personal computer to issue forged salary and 'to whom it may concern' certificates and charged from KD 500 to KD 700 per transaction. Sources said based on this information and investigations, Mustafa was arrested and 50 seals were found with him along with two laptops, four printers, papers and transactions under process and KD 1,000. Detectives learned from the first suspect that the second suspect (Khalaf) made the stamps for KD 50 each, and used them to forge transactions. The suspects were sent to concerned authorities, while detectives are still working on the case to arrest those who used their services.



GHANEM VS HASHEM CASE ADJOURNED

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The court of misdemeanor yesterday referred a case filed by Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem against former MP Safa Al-Hashem to the comprehensive court to assign another judge for it. Ghanem is suing Hashem for defamation. Meanwhile, the criminal court adjourned a case filed by the state security against MP Abdulhameed Dashti for slandering Saudi Arabia to August 3, 2016. Separately, the court of appeal postponed hearing the Abdaly cell case till May 25 to allow the defense panel to resume its argument. Notably, the defendants' lawyer Khaled Al-Shatti demanded acquitting all his clients and only fining the first one. He also demanded rejecting the public prosecution's appeal.

intends to build a smart information technology building in Salam at a total cost of KD 14 million to unite all the ministry's non-central data system centers and provide a suitable environment for all central servers. The sources added that the project aims at providing a computer lab for training purposes, meeting halls, a workshop and offices to run and operate the center in addition to securing the ministry's database against security breaches or hacking. "The project will also provide a database capable of vertical and horizontal expansion for future development needed for the e-government," the sources explained.

Subhan cemetery

Municipal Council member and head of Hawally committee Yousif Al-Ghareeb urged Kuwait Municipality to take more care of Subhan cemetery because it needs repairs and maintenance. Ghareeb explained that many mourners had been complaining about the state of the cemetery's facilities compared to other cemeteries. Separately, Municipal Council member and head of Farwaniya committee Nayef Al-Sour suggested building a heritage market in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak, namely in blocks 1 and 2 where there is enough space, similar to the one already approved in Saad Al-Abdullah.

47 degrees

Commenting on the increasing temperatures over the past two days, meteorologist Essa Ramadan said today's temperature is expected to range between 44 and 47 degrees centigrade, adding that the temperatures are expected to return to normal during the weekend due to northerly winds.

Smart buildings

Well-informed Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) sources said as part of the ministry's development plans, it



KUWAIT: The Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) recently welcomed Albanian Daily News' Editor-in-Chief Genc Miloja, as well as a delegation from Aliwaa Lebanese newspaper led by Editor-in-Chief Salah Salam.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) hosted an event yesterday in which a demonstration was made for the 'fire sorb' product that is used in firefighting and isolation. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun



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KUWAITI BUSINESSWOMAN WINS GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AWARD 2016

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti businesswoman Muntaha Al-Ajeel expressed her happiness over winning the Global Leadership Awards 2016, recently held in Bali, Indonesia, in recognition of her work in fashion design. The event was organized by the American Leadership Development Association (ALDA) in cooperation with the GCC Chambers' Union, Ajeel said in a statement yesterday. She noted that she was selected by the UN to run a fashion show for wives of world leaders in New York.

She was also invited by Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the UN, to hold a show in celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Kuwait's membership. The businesswoman also added that she has previously received the GR8 Women Achievers Award and other awards specialized in fashion. The award aims to honor prominent achievers in 30 fields, focusing on individuals with contributions towards global growth in economic and leadership development. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti businesswoman Muntaha Al-Ajeel receives her award. — KUNA

Al-Anbaa

Al-Anbaa

MIND YOUR BUSINESS

By Thaar Al-Rasheedi

As if our own problems are not enough, we keep interfering in neighboring and brotherly countries' businesses and even import them. We have been interfering in all Arab countries' problems online, in person, over social media or through satellite TV channels. We are present in Egypt more than Egyptians themselves are. We have been showing much concern in Syrian problems, taking sides, and sometimes act as if we are more Syrian than Syrians themselves, which makes many of them wonder what do these people want?

Well, I cannot blame such exclamations because we have not been interfering out of humanity or supporting and aiding refugees. We instead talk about pure Syrian politics, take sides, accuse certain parties and mention information about Syria that nobody else knows. Would you believe that some Kuwaitis know the name of the Syrian intelligence chief and keep mentioning it when talking about Syria, while they do not even know the name of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer security director!

We have a finger in every pie and interfere even in the issues of calm Sudan. We keep commenting and analyzing Sudanese concerns and take sides, making Sudanese themselves wonder about this Kuwaiti 'political migration' into their own problems.

We also interfere in Egypt, Tunisia and Palestine, determining which party or group in each country is right or wrong. I remember years back when a political dispute took place in Palestine and all of a sudden, Twitter was full of Kuwaiti tweets cheering and supporting Hamas, Fatah or Islamic Jihad. Kuwait members of each team even exchanged accusations. Later, Kuwaitis were very concerned with Tunisian, then Moroccan issues, and started talking about political disputes going on there, mentioning information one cannot find in Moroccan or European magazines or press.

We are a people who discuss freedom of expression in France, while our own was struck by law and we only discussed it in a Tweet that only lasted for two hours. I am writing this after noticing the humongous participation of Kuwaitis in discussing political issues on Twitter, including me. We keep interfering in every political quarrel. We act as if we are more Yemeni than Yemenis themselves. Many of us now know Yemen's geography very well and keep talking about certain cities there and the latest battles, while we would fail to decide whether Yemen's capital is Sanaa or Aden, and even fail to know Kuwaiti landmarks and would easily get lost in Jahra.

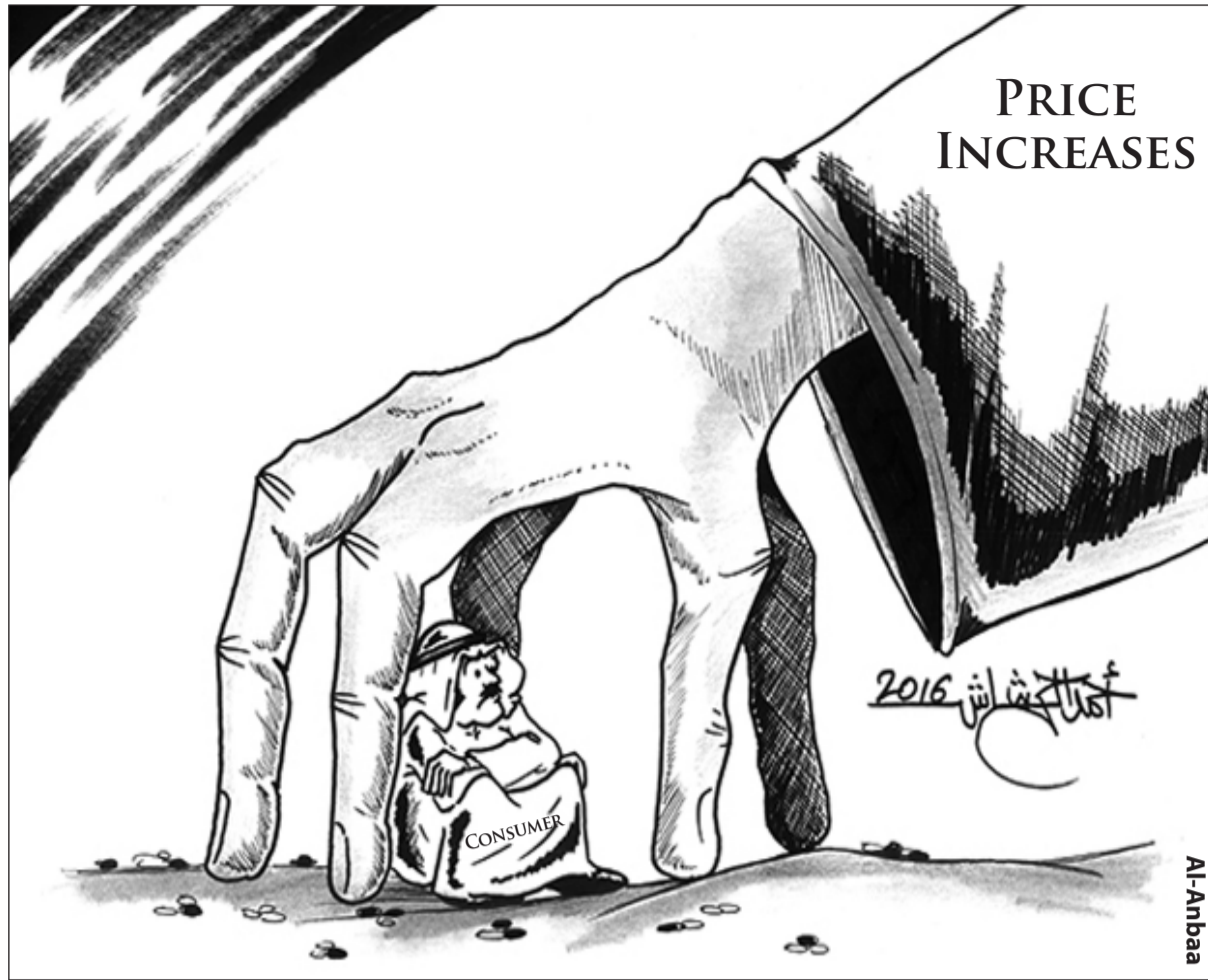
Our population is almost one million, but we have domestic political, sports, economic and social problems that are enough for 12 million - problems that we can export to five African countries and three European ones. Nonetheless, we keep interfering in others' businesses as if we do not have enough problems ourselves.

I do not recall any Egyptian, Tunisian or Saudi interfering in Kuwaiti political or sports disputes and even when this happens and an Arab does what we do daily, we Kuwaitis would aggressively respond 'What is it to you?' and end up telling them to 'mind their own countries' business'. We always justify our interference but others have no right to do the same about our domestic or foreign affairs!

— Translated by Kuwait Times

ELECTED MINISTERS OUT OF CABINET?

KUWAIT: Parliamentary sources said there is parliamentary coordination to get elected ministers out of the current cabinet during the parliamentary hiatus, particularly before the end of October, so that they can have time for the elections and not use their posts for election purposes. Only those who do not wish to run for reelection should stay in the cabinet, they said. The sources said several MPs believe the ministerial post should be neutral and away from the coming elections, by having elected ministers leave before the start of the next term. — Al-Rai



Al-Anbaa

Al-Anbaa

HEDGES OF FIRE

By Salah Al-Sayer

With their known wisdom and outstanding domestic solidarity, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states managed to immunize themselves from falling into the chaos created by the so-called Arab Spring that only proved to be nominally good, while it actually brought destruction and devastation to the area as we can all see on a daily basis. However, the threats against GCC states continually exist. They have and will never cease to exist, especially during this phase of major changes in the region.

Confusion and ambiguity of ongoing talks continue and there are no signs that it might come to an end in all four directions around us. Nobody can tell whether the conflict going on to the south in Yemen is coming to an end. To the north, Syria is getting closer to be divided. Eastwards, Iraqi conflicts seem to be

eternal. Westwards, somebody is still trying to pre-occupy Egypt and make all its development efforts go in vain. Meanwhile, the international community is suspiciously undependable and unpredictable.

I am not being pessimistic but I have previously written that our strength and progress in the GCC is in our own hands and not of others. That is provided that we are very cautious, alert and constantly work on modernizing GCC states and societies. This is in order to utilize our potentials, enhance our faith in our united destiny, discuss the worst possible scenarios very clearly and transparently and get ready for them in a way that would not distract or preoccupy believers and hard workers from construction and development.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

BURGAN BANK SPONSORS 'DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES' ILLUSION SHOWS

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced today its prime sponsorship of the highly anticipated and one of the largest illusion shows in the GCC region entitled 'Dreams and Nightmares'. The banks sponsorship is sprung from its keenness in fostering an award winning Kuwaiti talent and youngest illusionist in the Middle East, Abdulwahab Al-Failakawi. The event will be held on 2nd, 3rd, and 4th June 2016, at the Himilly Theater in Kuwait, the show will showcase 12 astounding acts.

It is worth mentioning that Failakawi received the 'Best Comedy Illusion Show in the World' award in 2015 from the International Magicians Society and is the only 'Best Magic Designer in the Middle East' titleholder. Failakawi is also a member in the International Magicians Society and the Society of the American Magicians. By fostering Failakawi's illusion



Abdulwahab Al-Failakawi is pictured with Fahad Al-Reshaid.

show, Burgan Bank aims to portray its firm belief in the ability and talents of young Kuwaiti talents is one of the key pillars of Burgan Bank's corporate social responsibility strategy.

Crime

Report

Couple fights, trade charges

KUWAIT: A dispute between an Egyptian man and his Filipino wife turned into a fight and ended at the police station. The woman claimed that her husband beat her, but he said she started the fight. He said the reason behind the fight was that she returned late at night and did not heed his request to return early. The case is under investigation.

Drunk driver arrested

A drunken man was arrested by Hawally police as he drove erratically in Nugra. He had a bottle of imported liquor, a cup and ice with him. He told police he was drinking because of psychological problems, and wants to forget them.

Fight

Farwaniya police broke up a fight between two citizens that resulted in wounding one of them in the head. Police received a call about the fight, so a patrol was sent, and found the injury was caused by a sharp object. Both men were taken to the police station after the injured man was treated at a hospital.

Beggars caught

Police arrested five women, four Jordanian and one Egyptian, for begging. They were sent to residency affairs detectives. The women were caught in front of mosques and had money they collected from begging. They had all entered the country on visit visas. — Al-Rai

RECOMMENDATION TO NOT RENEW FEMALE ETHIOPIANS' VISAS

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior's (MoI) criminal investigations directorate has recommended not renewing female Ethiopians' residency visas and completely ending their presence in Kuwait within two years, said security sources. The recommendation was made in a report signed by the assistant director Brig Mohammed Al-Sharhan and submitted to MoI assistant undersecretary for criminal security Maj Gen Abdul Hameed Al-Awadhi.

The sources added that the report highlighted the crimes committed by Ethiopians over the past few years, including the murders of a Lebanese woman in Nugra, a bride-to-be in Jaber Al-Ali and a notorious murder in Andalus. The report also mentioned that some Ethiopians, namely women, believe in making human sacrifices for redemption, forgiveness and blessings, as some of them claimed during interrogations.

In addition, the report explained that all the murders committed by female Ethiopian culprits had many common factors, such as: All the culprits worked as housemaids; they all used knives to kill their victims; all victims were women, victims were mainly unmarried (virgin) female citizens including one who was killed a day before her wedding; and all victims had been on good terms with the killers and none of them had been abusing or mistreating them. — Al-Anbaa

EXPAT FAMILIES IN PRIVATE RESIDENCES WON'T BE EVICTED

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi stressed that expat families residing in private residence areas would not be evicted provided no violations such as overcrowding or disturbance are involved. Manfouhi explained violations also include families sharing the same unit and construction-related ones. Manfouhi warned all bachelors residing in private residence areas to willingly leave before being evicted.

Meanwhile, well-informed municipal sources said the municipality would use buildings' civil ID numbers to identify people registered as living in them pending banning the renewal of any bachelor's residency visa if he is living in a private residential area. Further, the sources noted that the municipality will invite MoI to link traffic tickets to addresses to make it easier to discover where bachelors live. — Al-Rai



OOREDOO VISITS AHMADI BRANCHES, PARTNERS



Ooredoo's management team during the visit.

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait's executive management recently visited the company's branches and strategic partners in Ahmadi Governorate. The main purpose of the visit was to connect with the customers and the dealers.

During the visit, executive management were able to meet and interact with both customers and partners, in order to discuss ways to better improve the company's services in the area. The delegation also visited Rotana Al-Manshar, where the executive management held a meeting to discuss updates and ways to improve services.

Ooredoo Kuwait has recently organized a special ceremony to honor its official distributors, who have achieved the highest sales in 2015. The ceremony comes as a gesture of gratitude for their outstanding performance and achieving the desired results. Distinguished performers were awarded with trophies and certificates, in addition to cash prizes.

KFH TAKES PART IN 'WE CAN' FORUM AT GUST FINANCE CLUB

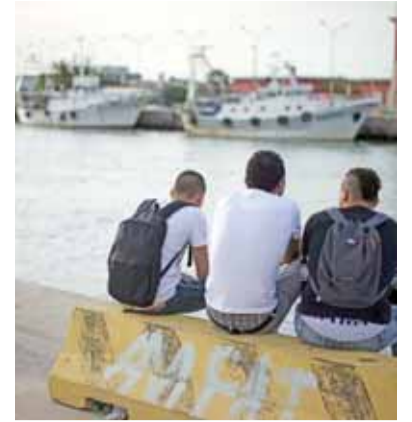
KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated as a strategic partner in "We Can" forum at the Finance Club at Gulf University for Science and Technology GUST in efforts to motivate the youth for further achievements and reinforce the spirit of initiatives and positive values.

The forum brought together a considerable number of entrepreneurs, international athletes and students who showcased their experiences and success stories, affirming the importance of determination, devotion and putting

efforts for the sake of achieving success.

Meanwhile, the Head of the Finance Club, Salem Alhubail said that the club is viewed as the first club at the university that attaches interest to the Islamic finance, expressing his appreciation and gratitude to KFH in recognition of its support that contributed in granting the club the Best Club award for two years in a row. KFH's participations in such events reiterate its endeavors to optimally assume the social responsibility and support the achievements of the youth.





Underage migrants living in shadows across Europe

TERROR STALKS CAMPUS AFTER B'DESH PROFESSOR'S MURDER



CARSON: Supporters of Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders attend a primary night election rally. — AFP

SANDERS TAKES OREGON, CLINTON CLAIMS KENTUCKY

WASHINGTON: Hillary Clinton claimed a narrow victory in Kentucky Tuesday as she sought to put away Bernie Sanders, but her resilient rival for the Democratic presidential nomination bounced back to snatch a win in Oregon.

With the Kentucky race too close for most US networks to call a winner, Clinton declared victory shortly after Kentucky's secretary of state Alison Lundergan Grimes announced on CNN that Clinton was the unofficial winner in her state. "We just won Kentucky! Thanks to everyone who turned out," Clinton tweeted.

With 99.8 percent of Blue Grass state precincts reporting, Clinton led Sanders by 46.8 percent to 46.3 percent—a margin of less than 2,000 votes. Should the results hold, the win would blunt Sanders's momentum and help Clinton move closer toward clinching the Democratic presidential nomination. But the psychological win was short-lived. Half an hour after polls closed in Oregon, US networks projected Sanders the winner there, besting Clinton 53 percent to 47 percent.

Hilary still ahead...for now

"We just won Oregon, and we're going to win California," Sanders told thousands of supporters in Carson, California as he predicted victory in the nation's largest state, which votes on June 7. Sanders, a self-declared democratic socialist, declared he would not be forced out of the race by narrow Clinton wins. "It appears tonight that we're going to end up with about half the delegates" in Kentucky, Sanders told the raucous rally. "Let me be as clear as I can be... We are in 'til the last ballot is cast," he said to a huge roar. Clinton has a commanding lead in the all-important national delegate count and is marching toward vying for the presidency in the November 8 general election despite her string of recent primary losses.

Victories in Kentucky and Oregon would have definitively halted her slide and helped reverse the narrative that her campaign is showing significant weakness ahead of an almost certain showdown with Donald Trump, the Republican Party's presumptive nominee. Trump—the last man standing in the GOP race—was projected Oregon's Republican winner, moving closer to the 1,237 delegates he needs to officially claim the party's mantle in 2016.

Sanders had counted on a Kentucky victory to build on his win last week in neighboring West Virginia as he battles

to keep his long-shot nomination bid alive. West Virginia and Kentucky are linked to coal, as is much of Appalachia—the largely white, long-struggling eastern US region where many feel they have been left behind in the lukewarm recovery from the 2007-2008 financial crisis.

Clinton saw Kentucky as an opportunity to appeal to working-class white men a demographic where the former secretary of state has lagged behind both the celebrity billionaire Trump and Sanders. John Spenlau, 28, speaking to AFP outside a voting station in Louisville, said he voted for Sanders because he represented the best hope for "continued change" and the fight against income inequality, among other problems. "Hillary would be a more stable candidate but I think that Bernie continues to push the envelope, towards a few more of the social programs that I believe in," Spenlau said.

Closing the deal

Clinton defeated Barack Obama in Kentucky's primary in 2008, and her husband Bill Clinton was the last Democrat to carry the Bluegrass State in a general election. Republicans were gleeful over her inability to close out the Democratic nomination race against Sanders, who at the beginning of the campaign was given long odds against the better-funded, universally recognizable former first lady.

"While Republicans move toward unifying the party for the general election, Hillary Clinton remains bogged down in a nasty, protracted primary fight and will have to rely on a rigged system of superdelegates to get across the finish line," said Reince Priebus, chairman of the Republican National Committee, in a statement.

On Sunday, playing up her husband's popularity, the former first lady appeared to indicate Bill would play a role in her administration if she were elected, promising to put him "in charge of revitalizing the economy." She later said she would not give him a cabinet position. As voting got underway, Trump fired off a series of nasty tweets at Clinton.

"Crooked Hillary can't close the deal with Bernie Sanders. Will be another bad day for her!" Trump wrote. The Clintons have struggled to contain the damage from comments Hillary made in March, when she said she vowed to put many coal miners "out of business" in the transition to cleaner energy. In recent appearances she has struck a more inclusive tone, and it may have helped her squeak by in Kentucky. — AFP

IVANKA TRUMP: MY FATHER IS NO GROPER

NEW YORK: Ivanka Trump is defending her father Donald against charges that he mistreats women, insisting that the presumptive Republican presidential nominee is "not a groper." Ivanka Trump, who has been one of her father's most effective surrogates, was interviewed yesterday on "CBS This Morning" and pressed about recent allegations from several women about her father's behavior.

The candidate's daughter denied that Trump frequently comments on women's bodies and appearances. She also said she did not believe a claim that her father had groped a woman in a business meeting. "Well, look, I'm not in every interaction my father has," said Ivanka Trump. "But he's not a groper. It's not who he is." Ivanka Trump had previously voted for and donated to Hillary Clinton. She says she believes Clinton is now making gender a major factor in the race and that she wouldn't vote

for someone solely because of gender. As Trump prepared to take on Hillary Clinton in the general election, his past treatment of women has come under renewed scrutiny and several polls have him with poor approval ratings with women. Ivanka Trump ducked questions as to whether it was appropriate for Bill Clinton's infidelities to be campaign trail fodder, saying "You will have to ask my father about it." But she insisted that Clinton was also making gender a major factor in the race.

"I think she's using gender as well," Ivanka Trump said. "I'm not going to advocate for a female leader who I'm voting for solely on the basis of gender. And I think a lot of people feel that way." Ivanka Trump - who has a successful apparel line and, along with her two brothers, has largely run her father's business during the campaign - had previously voted for and donated to Clinton. — AP



**Chairman and board members of
Kuwait Journalists Association
and the media community
announce the sad demise of our colleague
Dr Ayesha Mohammad Al-Rashaid,
Managing Editor of Tourism
and Aviation Magazine
and wife of our colleague
Saleh Nasser Al-Saleh Editor-in-Chief
of Tourism and Aviation Magazine
who died on Wednesday 18/5/2016.**

May Allah bestow His mercy on her

KERRY MEETS SISI AS EGYPT SEEKS MIDEAST PEACE ROLE

CAIRO: US Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Cairo yesterday to meet President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, after Egypt called for a renewal of the Middle East peace process. Even before Sisi had raised the issue, Kerry had planned a visit to discuss the crises in Libya and Syria and to raise concerns about Egypt's harsh crackdown on dissent.

But the top US diplomat is also keen to hear more from the Egyptian leader about how he intends to help broker peace between his Israeli and Palestinian neighbors. "He's interested in hearing a bit more directly from the president about what role he has in mind," a senior US official told reporters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

On Tuesday, in a televised speech, Sisi urged Israelis and Palestinians to seize what he said was a "real opportunity" and hailed his own country's peace deal with Israel. In 1979, Egypt was the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel after years of conflict, and today it remains an influential player in the region.

Washington believes the only way to end the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is a negotiated settlement resulting in two states side-by-side within recognized borders. But the US does not believe the time is yet ripe to resume a direct dialogue between the sides, preferring instead to lobby both to make confidence building measures to reduce violence and calm tensions.

Some in the international community are becoming

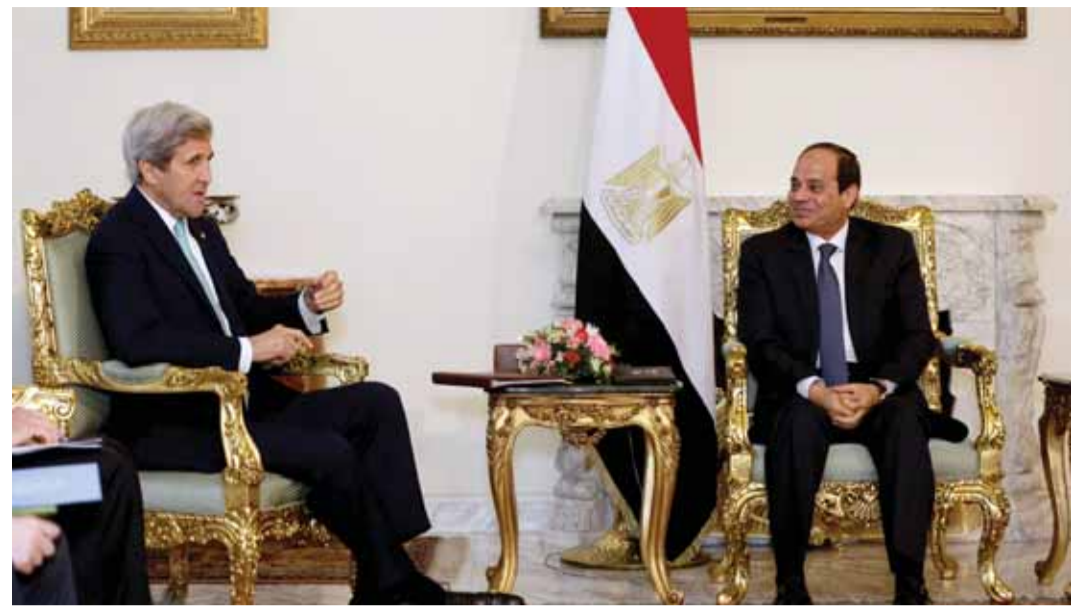
frustrated with that approach and France and now Egypt are pushing for a quicker resumption of efforts to seek a final deal. There is sympathy for that goal in Washington, and an acceptance that there is a risk that the process could become unsalvageable if it is allowed to fester, but there is also caution about pushing too fast.

"We've said repeatedly that we believe negotiations are the only way to solve the problem. We've also said that we're not ourselves trying to resume negotiations at this point," the official said. "The secretary is very interested in hearing some more about the details of what President Sisi has in mind," he added.

Settlement construction

Supporters of the peace process have been dismayed in recent months by Israel's ongoing construction of settlements on Palestinian land and by Palestinian knife and gun attacks on Israelis. Both these actions stir anger and boost support for hardliners on both sides of the dispute, making an eventual negotiated deal harder to imagine.

"I think we've also made very clear our concerns about some of the steps that have been taken on the ground that call into question the viability of a two-state solution," the US official said. "That will also be part of our discussion here." Kerry spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by telephone on Monday and to Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas earlier in the week.



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (R) meets with US Secretary of State John Kerry at the presidential palace. — AFP

There have been persistent but unconfirmed reports in Washington that US President Barack Obama is considering making a major speech to emphasize and better define US support for the two-

state solution. But with barely eight months left in office—the president, even if he decides to act, has little time and space to tackle a challenge that frustrated so many of his predecessors. — AFP



BAGHDAD: Mourners grieve by coffins of bomb victims, Saad Samed, 28, and his wife Mariam Aqeel, 22, and his sons Mohammed Saad, 7, and Ahmed Saad, 5, who were killed at an open-air market in Baghdad's northern neighborhood of Shaab, during their funeral procession. — AP

UNDER PRESSURE, JIHADISTS STRIKE BACK IN BAGHDAD

GAPS IN SECURITY INCREASE THE CITY'S EXPOSURE

BAGHDAD: The Islamic State group, on the defensive and under heavy pressure in Iraq, has struck back with bloody attacks in Baghdad, where persistent gaps in security increase the city's exposure. In doing so, IS can portray itself as still being on the offensive, draw attention away from the setbacks it has suffered, and obtain media attention unrelated to losses.

The spike in Baghdad attacks—which have killed more than 140 people in city over the past seven days—also comes at a time of high political tension in the capital that affords militants an opportunity to sow further discord. Carrying out bombings is not a new strategy for IS—it has been a key part of the jihadists' offensive and defensive tactics for years, and the group never fully stopped attacks in Baghdad.

But IS's attention was increasingly focused outside Baghdad after it overran large areas north and west of the city in 2014, and attacks in the capital decreased. "Baghdad is now being targeted because the group is on the defensive and they can still hurt the government in their capital," said Patrick Skinner, a former CIA case officer who is now with The Soufan Group consultancy.

"They still use (bombs) in assaults... But there's clearly some car and vest bomb makers in the Baghdad belt and in the capital, leading to the increased and likely sustained carnage," Skinner said. Colonel Steve Warren, the spokesman for the interna-

national operation against IS, cited jihadist battlefield setbacks as the primary motivation for the increase in Baghdad attacks. But he also said that IS may see political turmoil in the capital as "an opportunity they can try to exploit using truck bombs."

The increase in attacks coincides with a political crisis over Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi's efforts to replace the current cabinet. The crisis has paralyzed the legislature for weeks, and demonstrators angered by lawmakers' lack of progress stormed parliament last month. The deadliest of the recent attacks were triple car bombings that hit Baghdad last Thursday, killing at least 94 people, while attacks in three areas of the city on Tuesday killed at least 48 more.

Fake bomb detectors

Iraqi security forces performed dismally during the early days of IS's 2014 offensive, abandoning large quantities of weapons and vehicles as they fled. But Baghdad's forces have since regained significant ground from IS with the backing of US-led air support and training, retaking the cities of Tikrit and Ramadi as well as numerous towns and villages. While the coalition has trained around 22,000 Iraqi security personnel, its efforts have focused on readying troops for offensive operations against IS, not on the forces in Baghdad. Both Warren and Iraqi security spokesman Yahya Rasool said that coalition-

trained forces are not deployed in the capital. Though bombings in Baghdad decreased after June 2014, IS never lost the ability to carry out attacks in the capital. While no security forces can completely secure a city against bombings by militants, flaws in Baghdad security procedures make IS's task easier than it might otherwise be.

Fake bomb detectors are still in widespread use in Baghdad, even though James McCormick, the man who marketed them to Iraq, was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2013 for fraud in connection with the devices. Some Iraqi officials have been reluctant to admit the failure of the "detectors," and former premier Nuri Al-Maliki even insisted at one point that some of them were actually functional. The devices are often used as the primary means of detecting explosives and weapons at Baghdad checkpoints, checks of IDs and searches of vehicles in the city are cursory if they take place at all, and weapons are frequently not kept close to hand. Anger over the attacks adds to pressure on Abadi, who reacted Tuesday by directing Iraqi forces to step up efforts to uncover cells behind the bombings, and ordered the arrest of a security official responsible for one area that was targeted. "It's a bloody confluence of trends," Skinner said of the increase in Baghdad attacks. The jihadists are "under massive military pressure" while there is "a political crisis that they can tie into for maximum chaos," he said. — AFP

SOMALILAND'S INDEPENDENCE APPEALS FALL ON DEAF EARS

HARGEISA: The evening was well under way when a poet took the floor. "The youth have decided. We will never be part of Somalia!" he said as young men and women danced to traditional music. This scene would not happen anywhere in Somalia apart from Somaliland, a small, semi-autonomous, breakaway island of stability in a state plagued by civil war, instability and radical Islam.

"When we talk about the area of the Horn of Africa, people think about piracy and Al-Shebab," said Jama Musse Jama, director of the Hargeisa Cultural Center. "Here, every week, we have a major cultural event. We have a book fair. Somaliland is working hard to make normal life."

Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia 25 years ago on Wednesday, but no one outside of its self-described borders has recognized it as a country, rendering Somaliland an invisible country. With no foreign aid or loans, even in the capital paved roads are rare. Youth unemployment is around 70 percent and with the Somaliland shilling trading on the streets at 7,000 to the dollar, passersby pushing wheelbarrows full of cash are common sights. But Somaliland has largely avoided the Al-Qaeda-backed bombings that are routine in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, and has held regular elections and seen peaceful changes of government.

Compared to neighboring Somalia, the small self-proclaimed republic is a haven of peace. Yet while international aid and support pours into dysfunctional Mogadishu, Hargeisa's success is greeted with diplomatic indifference.

A land in limbo

"We are being punished for being too good," said Abdillahi Duale, a former foreign minister who, like many other Somaliland offi-

cial past and present, cannot hide his bitterness towards the outside world. "If we were a failed state, crooks, terrorists, troublemakers, then everybody would come here."

Without legal recognition Somaliland is in limbo. The government has a budget of \$250 million (220 million Euros) and its own currency but cannot access the World Bank or IMF loans needed to develop infrastructure. "It's like not having air to breathe. I want to be able to go where I want without having to get a foreign passport. I want to be able to expand my business but I have no access to banks," complained Hanad Hashi, a Hargeisa councillor.

As it has been for the last quarter of a century, the issue of recognition burns hot in Somaliland but barely smolders elsewhere. Anxious not to dismember Somalia—or encourage their own separatists—the African Union nations stick to the principle of "inviolability of borders" drawn by colonial rulers, and buried a 2005 report in favor of Somaliland's independence.

Meanwhile other world bodies and foreign states are unwilling to oppose the AU on an issue in its own backyard. "African states are concerned the right to secession would open a Pandora's box," said Alain Peloux, a former French diplomat in the region. "We too have big interests in Africa and we do not want to offend the African countries. We will recognize Somaliland if it comes first from the African Union."

And so Somalilanders are trapped and frustration is growing. "If the world continues to ignore what is happening we risk another Afghanistan," warned a government official worried by the growing influence of Gulf states that finance mosques, schools and medical services. "This policy of wait-and-see is not working." — AFP



HARGEISA: People sit on May 16, 2016 under a Russian-made MIG fighter jet that was used in 1988 displayed as a monument and reminder to the people of Somaliland of atrocities carried out by former dictator Mohamed Siyad Barre, who was toppled in 1991. — AFP

NETANYAHU CLOSE TO AGREEING ON ISRAEL UNITY GOVERNMENT

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is close to agreeing a unity government with the main opposition leader, Israeli media said yesterday, in a move that could help revive peace talks with the Palestinians. The head of the rightwing Likud has reportedly been engaged in intense negotiations with Labor Party chief Isaac Herzog in recent weeks in a bid to form a government of national unity.

Herzog, whose party forms the Zionist Union along with the centrist Hatnuah, could present a possible coalition agreement to his party in the coming days, the reports said. His entry into the government would be closely watched by the international community for its potential impact on the moribund peace process with the Palestinians.

An advocate of an independent Palestinian state, Herzog has been touted as a potential foreign minister—a role currently assumed by Netanyahu in a temporary capacity on top of his role as premier. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi on Tuesday urged Israelis and Palestinians to take historic steps to achieve peace, comments which some analysts interpreted as an attempt to boost the idea of Herzog joining

the government. If a national unity government is formed Netanyahu and Herzog could visit Egypt to launch a new peace initiative under the auspices of the Egyptian president, the Jerusalem Post cited anonymous officials from both parties as saying. But resistance to the coalition is strong within both camps and commentators stressed an agreement was far from certain.

Herzog's main rival in the Labor Party, Shelly Yachimovich, described the possible alliance as a "blood wedding". She promised on her Facebook page to fight for "justice, clean government, ideology, and the honor of the party". Within Likud, several members said they would prefer an alliance with the nationalist party Israel Beiteinu rather than Labor.

The Zionist Union was formed in the run-up to the 2015 election in a bid to unseat Netanyahu but failed, with the premier later forming one of the most rightwing governments in Israel's history. However Netanyahu's coalition has just a one seat majority in parliament and he would benefit from wider backing—with members of the coalition currently able to hold him to ransom. — AFP

US COMMANDER: IS MAY BE REVERTING TO ITS 'ROOTS'

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany: A series of deadly attacks by Islamic State operatives in and around Baghdad may be a sign that the militants are "reverting to their roots" as a terrorist organization, the top US commander for the Middle East said yesterday.

Army Gen Joseph Votel, the head of US Central Command, said this does not mean IS has given up its ambition to create a so-called caliphate. But he said it marks a new turn in tactics aimed at diverting attention from the group's recent battlefield losses. Speaking to reporters while traveling to the Middle East, Votel said the attacks that have rocked Baghdad over the past week, killing upward of 200 civilians, are an illustration of the dynamic nature of the war.

"We have to respect our enemies and respect their ability to adapt and adjust on the battlefield," he said. "In this regard, some of the attacks we're seeing in Baghdad—I think we are seeing a manifestation of that. We are seeing them see opportunities and take advantage of those opportunities," he added. "I think they believe it will cause the Iraqi government to divert forces, divert effort, divert intellectual horsepower to solving those problems" as opposed to priorities like recapturing the IS stronghold of Mosul in northern Iraq.

Now that IS has lost 40 percent or more of the terrain it once controlled in Iraq, "they may be reverting in some regards back to their terrorist roots," he said. Votel, who served in combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan, took over as head of Central Command

two months ago after serving as commander of Special Operations Command. In his new post he oversees not only US military operations in Iraq and Syria but across the greater Middle East, including in Afghanistan. His visit this week to the Middle East

comes amid concern about political unrest in Baghdad and the slow pace of Iraqi military operations to recapture Mosul. Votel said he sees reason for "a little concern" about political paralysis that has gripped the Iraq government in recent weeks. — AP



SADR CITY: Security forces and citizens inspect the scene after a suicide car bomb hit a crowded outdoor market in Baghdad's eastern Shiite neighborhood. — AP



CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro speaks during a press conference at the Miraflores presidential palace. — AFP

VENEZUELA PROTESTS AGAINST MADURO TO TEST STATE OF EMERGENCY POWERS

CARACAS: Public outrage over sweeping new emergency powers decreed this week by President Nicolas Maduro was expected to spill over onto the streets of Venezuela yesterday, with nationwide protests planned. The demonstrations mark the strongest challenge yet to Maduro's controversial declaration of a state of emergency.

Opposition-led marches in the capital Caracas and other major cities were to demand that authorities accept a recall referendum to determine Maduro's fate. The 53-year-old president on Tuesday dismissed the push against him as "not viable" and said a petition it was based on was riddled with "fraud," despite 1.8 million signatures seeking his ouster. The 60-day state of emergency was imposed beginning Monday to tackle what Maduro said were threats to security, as well as food and energy shortages.

Many of the measures rely on Venezuela's army and police being deployed to carry them out. It notably suspends many constitutional protections by opening the way to expropriations and almost any action deemed necessary to maintain public order. Individuals, companies and non-governmental organizations in Venezuela with links to foreign groups are also to be put under scrutiny and risk having their finances frozen, according to the decree. The opposition-controlled congress late Tuesday rejected the decree in a vote, saying it undermined democracy. But the Supreme Court may overrule that, as it has with other congressional decisions.

Claim of US plot

Maduro has accused Washington of having "imperial" designs on Venezuela, and said that a US AWACS surveillance plane had twice violated his country's airspace last week. Maduro has separately ordered military exercises for Saturday. Despite his decree, there have so far been no signs of increased mili-

tary presence in the streets. But yesterday's demonstrations could face a robust police deployment. A Caracas march last week, before the emergency decree, was halted in its tracks by riot police firing tear gas. Venezuela's opposition has urged the public to defy the state of emergency and called on the army to decide whether it sides "with the constitution or with Maduro."

The opposition, which controls congress but has little real power because of Maduro's sway over the government, Supreme Court and security forces, says the emergency decree is an attempt by the president to put himself above the constitution. "If Maduro wants to apply this decree he will have to bring out the warplanes and the tanks into the street, because he will have to apply it through force," opposition leader Henrique Capriles told a news conference on Tuesday.

Limited time

If the recall referendum does go ahead, it must be held before January 10, 2017 in order to trigger new elections, otherwise a successful recall vote would simply transfer power to vice president Aristobulo Istariz. The opposition accuses the electoral authorities who are still evaluating the validity of the petition of stalling.

With the country in the grip of hyperinflation, a shrinking economy, rampant crime, corruption, and food and electricity shortages, sentiment has turned against Maduro. Seventy percent of the population wants to see a new government, polls show. But Maduro said he and his government "are victims of a media, political and diplomatic attack that is behind the most serious threat our country has faced in the past 10 years." The United States has described reports of Venezuela's spiral downwards as "breathtaking" but has been careful not to make comments seen as meddling. — AFP

DEMOCRATS PRESSURE SANDERS AS GROWING RIFT THREATENS PARTY

WASHINGTON: After months when the story of the 2016 presidential campaign focused on divided Republicans, Democrats are now showing divisions in their ranks. Simmering tensions between Bernie Sanders backers and other Democrats, including party leaders, burst into the open following an ugly fracas at the Nevada Democratic Party convention over the weekend instigated by Sanders' supporters.

When top Democratic Party leaders pressured Sanders to denounce the night of chair throwing and alleged death threats he responded with defiance, terming some complaints "nonsense" and reminding the party: "Millions of Americans are outraged at establishment politics."

Sanders continued in that tone Tuesday night after he defeated front-runner Hillary Clinton in Oregon's primary and fought her to a neck-and-neck outcome in Kentucky. Clinton declared victory in

Kentucky, but the race was too close to call with a margin of just one-half of 1 percent separating the two Democrats.

'Sad, tragic option'

"The Democratic Party is going to have to make a very, very profound and important decision," he said during a rally in Carson, California. "It can do the right thing and open its doors and welcome into the party people who are prepared to fight for real economic and social change. ... I say to the leadership of the Democratic Party, open the doors, let the people in."

Sanders also warned of "a very sad and tragic option" for the party: "to choose to maintain its status quo structure, remain dependent on big-money campaign contributions and be a party with limited participation and limited energy. And a party which incredibly is allowing a right-wing extremist Republican Party to capture the votes of the majority of working people in this country."

Notwithstanding the outcomes in Oregon and Kentucky, Clinton remains a nearly prohibitive favorite in the delegate count and Sanders has no clear path to victory, especially with voting looming in early June in Clinton-friendly California and New Jersey. That situation is creating frustration on both sides. Sanders backers chafe at party rules they contend are sidelining their candidate, and leading Democrats comment increasingly openly about the need for unity to defeat Donald Trump, who is making a turn to the general election that Sanders' continued candidacy is complicating for Clinton. "Sen Sanders and all candidates should really focus on keeping this at a reasonable discourse level, and yes, I am concerned if our party becomes labeled with the notion that we have this kind of violence," said Sen Dick Durbin, D-Ill, the No 2 Senate Democrat.

Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid, D-

NeV., alarmed at the events in his home state on Saturday, finally succeeded in reaching Sanders by phone around midday Tuesday. Reid told reporters he impressed upon Sanders his concerns about the events in Las Vegas, including sexist and profane threats against party chairwoman Roberta Lange. "This is a test of leadership as we all know, and I'm hopeful and very confident Sen. Sanders will do the right thing," said Reid.

Yet within minutes Sanders released a defiant statement that, far from apologizing for anything his supporters did, repeated their complaints in detail and schooled Democratic leaders about the anti-establishment mood in the country.

Zero violence

"Our campaign of course believes in nonviolent change and it goes without saying that I condemn any and all forms of violence, including the personal harassment of individuals," Sanders said, while arguing it was "nonsense" for the Nevada Democratic Party to allege that some of his supporters had a "penchant for extra-parliamentary behavior - indeed actual violence." "Our campaign has held giant rallies all across this country, including in high crime areas, and there have been zero reports of violence," he said.

That statement angered Reid and other

Democrats. "Bernie should say something and not have some silly statement. Bernie is better than that," Reid told a reporter in comments released by his office. "He should say something about this, not have some statement someone else prepared for him." The Nevada party released a statement contending Sanders' campaign was being "dishonest" about the events in Las Vegas.

It comes as Donald Trump is wrapping up the nomination on the Republican side, yet Democrats remain divided and now some fear that Sanders' supporters are starting to mimic backers of Trump in their sexist and aggressive behavior. Democrats also fear that the unrest in Nevada could be a taste of what is to come at the Democratic Party convention in Philadelphia this summer.

Stephanie Schriock, president of EMILY's List, an influential political committee devoted to electing women that is backing Clinton, said in a statement: "These disgraceful attacks are straight out of the Donald Trump playbook, and Bernie Sanders is the only person who can put a stop to them. Sanders needs to both forcefully denounce and apologize for his supporters' unacceptable behavior - not walk away." Leading Democrats still stopped short of calling on Sanders to abandon his campaign, at least in public, training their concerns on the violence at the Nevada convention. — AP



CARSON: Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders addresses a primary election night rally. — AFP

TRUMP ENDS BITTER FEUD WITH TV JOURNALIST MEGYN KELLY

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump, not usually one to back away from a fight, made peace late Tuesday with US television news star Megyn Kelly after describing her in the past as a "bimbo" and worse. Trump during the primary campaign resorted to unusually extreme rhetoric including a distasteful reference to menstruation in his attacks on Kelly, one of the most powerful women in American television and the star of her own cable news show.

After being branded a misogynist and xenophobe during the bruising primary campaign, the apparent Republican nominee has been softening his image, and in a recorded interview broadcast late Tuesday publicly buried the hatchet with Kelly. "When

I'm wounded, I fight back hard," Trump explained when pressed by Kelly about the reason for his bare knuckles, no-holds-barred style, describing himself as a "counterpuncher" on the campaign trail.

Kelly, a former corporate litigator, joined Fox News in 2004 as a television reporter from Washington DC, rising rapidly through the ranks thanks to her good looks, fierce ambition and keen intellect. In 2014 she was the only female journalist listed on Time magazine's list of the world's 100 most influential people. Her run-in with Trump last August during the first Republican TV debate of the 2016 election catapulted her to even wider fame.

She and two male colleagues mod-

erated the debate, which attracted a record 24 million viewers. Trump took offense to her tough questions, insinuating that she treated him unfairly because she was menstruating. "You could see there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever," he told CNN after the debate.

Rough handling

In hindsight Trump conceded Tuesday that he might have been a little rough in his handling of Kelly and others at whom he has directed his attacks during the campaign. "I could have done certain things differently. I could have maybe used different language in a couple of instances," Trump said. But, having vanquished all 16 other Republican contenders and having brought an initially reluctant party establishment largely on side, "I have to be very happy with the outcome," he added.

As recently as March Fox News called out the brash billionaire for having a "sick obsession" with their glamorous marquee star. "Donald Trump's vitriolic attacks against Megyn Kelly and his extreme, sick obsession with her is beneath the dignity of a presidential candidate who wants to occupy the highest office in the land," Fox News said in a statement, accusing Trump of an "endless barrage of crude and sexist verbal assaults" against her.

The 45-year-old blonde mother of three who was attacked not only by Trump, but also online by legions of his followers took the initiative in trying to reach a truce. She requested a meeting with the billionaire real estate mogul one-on-one last month at his Trump Towers offices, ahead of Tuesday's prime-time interview. — AFP



IOWA: In this Jan 28, 2016 photo, Moderator Megyn Kelly waits for the start of the Republican presidential primary debate in Des Moines. — AP

POWERFUL EARTHQUAKE REPORTED IN ECUADOR

QUITO: A powerful magnitude 6.7 aftershock early yesterday rattled Ecuador near the Pacific coast area where a devastating earthquake hit a month ago, knocking out power and scaring still-traumatized residents as they slept but only limited damage was reported. The US Geological Survey said yesterday that the quake's epicenter was 35 kilometers from the town of Muisne. It struck shortly before 3 a.m. local time and had a shallow depth of 32 kilometers below the earth's surface.

President Rafael Correa said there was no tsunami alert and called on residents in Quito, where some residents poured into the streets, to return to their homes. The quake was strong enough to trigger a national disaster alert, but Correa deactivated the emergency response a few hours later when local authorities reported the situation was calm.

"These sort of aftershocks are normal but that

doesn't mean they're not scary and can cause damage," Correa said in a televised address, adding that aftershocks of this magnitude were normal for up to two months after a major quake like the one Ecuador experienced.

The president said that while some previously ravaged homes suffered more damage, most had already been evacuated and no buildings had collapsed. There were no reports of fatalities and only a few light injuries from people who tripped and fell in the dark, he said. Authorities were working to restore power in affected areas.

The magnitude 7.8 earthquake on April 16 was Ecuador's worst natural disaster in decades, killing 661 and leaving more than 28,000 people homeless. It has been followed by hundreds of aftershocks, at least five of them of magnitude 6.0 or higher. — AP

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CHIBOK GIRL FOUND, FIRST SINCE ABDUCTION BY BOKO HARAM

KANO: The first of 219 schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram from Chibok in northeast Nigeria more than two years ago has been found, activists, the head of a support group and a community leader said yesterday. Amina Ali was discovered on Tuesday in the Sambisa Forest area of Borno state by civilian vigilantes assisting the military and brought back to her home town of Mbalala, near Chibok.

"She met her parents, who recognized their daughter before she was taken to the military base in Damboa," Ayuba Alanson Chibok, a community leader in Chibok, told AFP. "Her father's name is Ali and the girl's name is Amina. I know the family very well because I have worked with them, being a spokesman for the families of the Chibok girls."

Yakubu Nkeki, head of the Abducted

Chibok Girls Parents' group, also confirmed her name and said she was 17 when she was abducted. He added: "She's the daughter of my neighbour... They brought her to my house." Tsambido Hosea Abana, a Chibok community leader in the capital, Abuja, from the Bring Back Our Girls pressure group, was the first to give details about the discovery. All three men said the teenager appeared to have given birth while in captivity while

Abana said other kidnapped girls were in the forest, which the military has been targeting for several weeks.

There was no immediate word from the Nigerian authorities. Boko Haram seized 276 students from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok on the night of April 14, 2014. Fifty-seven managed to escape in the immediate aftermath.

Nothing had been heard from the

219 still held captive since a video published by the Islamists in May 2014 until an apparent "proof of life" message was sent to the Nigerian government earlier this year. The abduction sparked outrage worldwide and brought global attention to the Boko Haram insurgency, which has killed at least 20,000 people and made more than 2.6 million homeless since 2009. — AFP

UN PUSHES 'GET-TOUGH AGENDA' ON PEACEKEEPER SEXUAL ABUSE

UNITED NATIONS: A former number two at the US Department of Homeland Security is forcing the United Nations to confront one of the worst crises in its history: Sexual abuse by peacekeepers. Jane Holl Lute, who also served on the White House's national Security Council, is pushing what she describes as a "get-tough agenda" to end a wave of allegations of child rape and sexual exploitation that has hit UN peacekeeping, in particular the UN mission in the Central African Republic.

"It is shocking," she said in an interview on Tuesday. "The things that we find ourselves speaking about in the halls of this house that have gone on in the field: it's stunning." Lute was appointed in February as the UN's special coordinator on improving the response to



NEW YORK: Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations' response to sexual exploitation and abuse, Jane Holl Lute answers a question during an interview with Agence France Press at the UN headquarters in New York. — AFP

sexual abuse in peacekeeping, a position created after an independent panel found the world body had grossly mishandled the cases.

She has made fact-finding visits to the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo since then and met several times with troop-contributing countries and UN officials at all levels. "We need to create an environment of intolerance for these kinds of actions," she said. Lute's trip to Bangui and Kinshasa gave her a close-up look at the two missions with the highest incidence of sexual

abuse by peacekeepers. "There was a breakdown in command and control for those units," she said of the many cases in the Central African Republic mission, known as MINUSCA. There have been 29 allegations of sexual abuse reported already this year in MINUSCA, up from 22 in 2015, although most of those date back to previous years.

"We fully expect that we will uncover more cases," Lute said, promising that any new incidents will "immediately get the senior-most attention" at the United Nations. The shift in approach involves tightening rules for military and police units serving in missions to impose non-fraternization rules, curfews and enforcing bed checks. Lute, who held several senior UN peacekeeping positions from 2003 to 2009, said she has come across "pockets of resistance" from some mission officials unwilling to take on the new responsibility of preventing sexual abuse. To those who deny problems in their missions or organizations, she says, "Baloney. We all have to worry about it."

Troop-contributing countries are under pressure to meet deadlines for completing investigations, setting up joint investigative teams with the United Nations and taking action to prosecute when allegations found are credible. Some are responding.

South Africa announced it will set up courts-martial in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where at least seven soldiers face allegations of sexual abuse. Egypt recently sentenced one of its soldiers convicted of sexual assault in the Central African Republic to five years in jail after a 29-day investigation the United Nations hailed as a record. Norway has contributed \$125,000 to a newly created trust fund to provide emergency assistance to victims, who are being urged to come forward and end their silence over abuse.

Sri Lanka has also made a one-time payment to a victim and her child to cover a paternity claim from a soldier who served in a UN mission in Haiti. UN officials are currently considering proposals for mandatory DNA testing and withholding the wages of peacekeepers facing credible allegations of sex abuse. "We have made a lot of progress," Lute said. "We have more to do." — AFP



ROME: In this photo taken on Thursday, April 21, 2016, unaccompanied minors from Egypt, from left, 16-year-old Fathi, 17-year-old Saied, 17-year-old Gamal, and 17-year-old Ayman, last names not available, sit next to the river Tiber after an interview with The Associated Press. — AP photos

AP SPECIAL REPORT

THOUSANDS OF UNDERAGE MIGRANTS LIVING IN SHADOWS ACROSS EUROPE

ROME: Outside the train station in Rome, teen migrants sell drugs from school backpacks and trade sex for cash or clothes. In the capital of Sweden, they steal food from supermarkets and sleep on the streets. From makeshift camps along the northern French coast, they try to hop at night onto the backs of moving trucks headed to Britain.

All across Europe, there is a growing shadow population of thousands of underage migrants who are living on their own, without families. They hide silently and in plain sight, rarely noticed in the crowd. Nobody even knows how many of them there are - Europol estimates broadly that at least 10,000 kids have gone missing from shelters or reception centers.

These unaccompanied minors are slipping through the seams of a European system strained to bursting, and they present one of the biggest challenges of the migrant crisis. The fact that accurate numbers are so hard to come by reflects the shortcomings of the bloc's 28 member states in implementing laws and guidelines that are supposed to protect asylum seekers in general and unaccompanied minors in particular. While the problem is not new, the sheer volume of migrants arriving last year has made it acute.

Like adult migrants, minors are flooding into Europe for both security and economic reasons, the AP found in interviews with more than two dozen. The question is where they end up. Imran, a 13-year-old from Afghanistan, has passed through at least eight countries, mostly on foot, and is now trying to make it from a squalid migrant camp in Calais to the UK. He dresses neatly in a donated sweat suit and tells his story politely. Only his gym shoes cracking at the seams and the cloud over his face hint at the hardship of his life, light years from his dreams of going to "doctor school."

The Taleban shot Imran's father when he was 8 or 9, and threatened to kill him too when he grew up. He says he started to receive letters at his house. Frightened, his mother sold the building that provided the family's income to pay smugglers for Imran to join his uncle in Britain.

Most nights Imran tries to sneak onto trucks to Britain - a dangerous venture which the Afghans call "going to the game." A 15-year-old Afghan died in January from sticking his head out and hitting an obstacle, and a 7-year-old who escaped Calais almost suffocated last month after the locked truck reached Britain. It is not uncommon here to see migrants with crutches or other injuries from failed efforts to jump onto moving vehicles.

During the day, Imran looks haggard from lack of sleep. He has not talked to his mother in four months, and he describes life in the camp residents dub the Jungle as fit for "dogs and cats." Imran is his nickname; the AP is not using the full names of children in this story to protect them. "The hardest for me, the first thing, is mother. The second thing is the life. This is a shit life," he says, in what he calls Jungle-speak English. "If my mother sees I'm in the Jungle, she will be very sad... I don't want to tell her."

Running away

In 2015, almost 90,000 asylum seekers in the European Union were unaccompanied minors under 18, according to Eurostat. That's up about nine times from just three years ago. About half run away from asylum centers or shelters within two days of their arrival, according to Missing Children Europe, which represents nonprofits in 24 countries. Sometimes they are discouraged by how long it takes to get legalized, or fear being sent home or to the country where they first arrived. And sometimes they join family members, or just try their luck at asylum elsewhere.

European Union officials say they have developed projects to improve the reception of minors, provide them with health assistance and relocate or unite them with relatives faster. Germany, for example, provides minors who stay at shelters with about 30 to 70 Euros (\$39-\$79) a month in pocket money.

"European legislation pays particular attention to the rights and needs of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum," European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos told The Associated Press. "Implementing these rules is therefore our priority." However, missing young migrants, most of whom are 14 or older, are treated very differently from missing children in general. For example, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency recommends they be assigned a guardian responsible for reporting disappearances to police, but that seldom happens. Even when cases are reported, police seldom have enough information to follow up, such as a photo of the child, personal data

or fingerprints. Suleiman, a 17-year-old from Morocco, ran away from a shelter several times before ending up on the streets of Stockholm in Sweden. Sweden gets by far the most unaccompanied minors applying for asylum - more than 35,000 in 2015. In October, officials in the port town of Trelleborg revealed that some 1,000 unaccompanied refugee children who had arrived over the previous month had gone missing. Suleiman, puffing on a cigarette, is one of dozens of Moroccan boys in Stockholm, where he and his friends steal food from supermarkets.

As a street kid in Morocco, he heard stories about how other poor people had left for Europe, and specifically Sweden. After several unsuccessful attempts, he managed to sneak aboard a boat leaving for Europe. He passed through several European countries before he got to Sweden. There, he was sent to a refugee shelter in Kiruna, a town of 20,000 people in the north, where the winters are dark and very cold.



CALAIS: In this photo taken on Friday, April 15, 2016, 13-year-old Imran, his nickname, an unaccompanied minor from Laghman in Afghanistan, leaves the Jungle Book Restaurant for Kids, set up by volunteers on the main passageway through the makeshift migrant camp.

The cold gave Suleiman back problems, he says. Also, used to big cities with many people around him, Suleiman now felt he had nobody. After running away from the shelter several times, he was placed in compulsory psychiatric care, which he seemed to see as punishment. "I hadn't done anything," he says. "First time I was there for two months, even though I wasn't guilty of any crime or taking drugs. Now I've managed to stay hidden on the streets of Stockholm for over a year."

At risk

The biggest danger for minors on the move is that they will fall into crime, trafficking or illegal labor, which Europol expects to increase rapidly. "They are vulnerable, no social network, weak links to national authorities, not understanding the legal procedures, sometimes being treated as illegals," says Robert Crepinko, head of the migrant smuggling unit. "You can see all the boxes ticked."

Abib, an Egyptian migrant who arrived in Italy as a minor and is now 18, acknowledges dealing drugs. "I buy 50 or 100 Euros of drugs, and I can earn 200 or even 300 Euros a day," he boasts. Sometimes, he says, people hire a minor to move big orders of drugs inside school backpacks for just 30 to 50 Euros. Sex trafficking also happens at the Termini station, he adds, in exchange for clothes or money.

Emanuele Fattori, police chief at the station, says minors are used for drug trafficking because both the penalty and the chance of arrest are lower for them. And recently, he says, a pedophile priest was arrested for paying underage migrants at the station.

The temptation of crime and illegal labor is greater because so many unaccompanied minors are in debt. All 11 Egyptian teens the AP interviewed say they feel an obligation to pay back the substantial sums of

money - usually around 3,000 Euros - their families paid for their passage to Europe with smugglers.

Kids who work at car washes can put in 12 hours for just two to three Euros per hour, according to Save the Children Italy. And those who work at the Guidonia fruit market load and unload up to 12 pallets in two hours for 10 Euros. Police have cracked down on illegal labor inside the market, with 10 people arrested and 50 minors found unloading fruit boxes.

"It is very difficult to find minors who report these situations of exploitation to the police, because they are aware that if they report they will never find a job again," says Antonio Di Maggio, a local police officer in Rome. "There is a big conspiracy of silence." Seventeen-year-old Ahmed woke up at 2 am, took two buses to the station and then hopped a train to get to his job at a car wash outside Rome. There he worked 12 hours a day for 30 Euros, for 10 days. When he quit, he was only paid for five. "Of course I have to send money home," he says. "But I don't have a job, so how can I?"

Said, his hair shorn close to the head, has to help pay back the 3,000 Euros his family spent on sending him to Italy. Said worked two days at the seaside west of Rome selling cold drinks to beach-goers from 8 am until 6 pm His daily take-home was just 15 Euros. When the summer was over, he spent some days - he won't say how many - moving crates of fruit for 5 Euros a day, well below the market rate. Both Said and Ahmed stay in a shelter at night. "As long as I am here in Italy, there is no future," he says, echoing a refrain of many young Egyptian migrants. "I have to go to France."

Life in the jungle

Yet France is not the haven for young migrants that Said and his friends imagine. Earlier this year, more than 325 migrant children were living without mother or father in the Jungle, which is widely considered Western Europe's largest makeshift migrant camp. The southern half of the camp was demolished in March, forcing those who remained to resettle in the north. In the process, 129 unaccompanied children went missing, according to a head count by British humanitarian group Help Refugees.

In April the Defender of Human Rights, Jacques Toubon, a state-appointed but independent watchdog, described "the alarming character" of the situation for unaccompanied minors in Calais and suggested French authorities have failed to keep count of them. It is not an easy task in an underground culture where each day is temporary because tomorrow, they hope, things might change. France Terre d'Asile, a major association, says that of 1,400 unaccompanied minors signed up in 2015 at a center in northern France, only 90 stayed.

Living conditions inside the camp have improved but are still "shocking," says Doctors Without Borders regional coordinator Olivier Marteau. "We're in a camp that doesn't have what you would find overseas." Many of the unaccompanied children here are traumatized. Some are wily, inattentive and unruly, while others are cautious and quiet. There are few smiles.

Shahzeb, a 15-year-old from Afghanistan, holds a distant gaze as he talks, then abruptly cuts off conversation. His older brother was forced to join the Taleban and then killed at the age of 15 or 16, he says. The Taleban came to his house day and night with guns. So his father sold the family's land to an agent to pay to send Shahzeb to Europe. The journey took about two months. Shahzeb has now spent about five months in the Calais camp - the past month in Container No 53, one in a fenced-off field of heated white containers holding up to 1,500 people. Kids on their own were given access only in late February, long after the start of the harsh winter.

Each night, he tries to slip into trucks making the ferry crossing to Britain. During the day, he sleeps. "The hardest moment is that every night, we are trying to cross the border. Living in the Jungle is too hard, but when I go there (at night) and face the failure, I'm feeling so bad," he says. He hasn't spoken to his parents in months. He imagines they think he is happy. He doesn't tell them the truth.

Izhar Ali in Container No. 54 tells a similar story. The 16-year-old's father, a school worker in Pakistan, sold the family house to pay \$13,000 for him to get to Britain and study. Izhar Ali says he missed up to five months of school a year in Pakistan because of the Taleban threat. Izhar Ali talks to his father every four to five weeks. "He says, 'Send pictures,' Izhar Ali relates. "This Jungle is bad. ... I go to England and send a picture." — AP



MAMOUTZOU, Mayotte: Evicted people sit on the Republique square at Mamoutzou. — AFP

FRANCE 'VERY WORRIED' OVER ANTI-FOREIGNER VIOLENCE

MAMOUTZOU: President Francois Hollande said yesterday that the situation on the French Indian Ocean island of Mayotte, where hundreds of foreigners have been kicked out of their homes, was "extremely worrying". Rising anti-migrant anger has seen groups of up to 100 men gather in villages with lists of houses belonging to foreigners and going from door to door forcing them to leave.

This weekend another 500 foreigners, mostly from the neighboring archipelago nation of the Comoros, were expelled from their homes. "We are in a situation which is extremely worrying," Hollande said in a statement through his spokesman Stephane Le Fol yesterday. In the island capital of Mamoutzou, a young woman, Mounira, told AFP she was kicked out of her home on Sunday with her husband and three daughters.

"I have a 10-year resident's visa, a perma-

nent contract job, my rent is paid-I don't understand," she said. She has been fortunate to find shelter with an ex-employer, but many hundreds have been left in the open in the capital's main square, looked after by the Red Cross and volunteers. For months, anti-foreigner groups have been whipping up hostility to migrants with leaflets accusing them of "clandestine immigration" and "daily thefts, assaults and murders."

Police have tried to prevent violence, but have been unable to stop the pressure mounting on foreigners-including many who are living on Mayotte legally-who have fled their homes in fear. A local rights group, Cimade, said yesterday that more than 1,000 foreigners have been forced from their homes this year. Mayotte opted to remain under French rule when the other islands in the Comoros archipelago chose independence in 1975. — AFP

REGULATOR SLAMS NEWSPAPER'S 'QUEEN BACKS BREXIT' CLAIM

LONDON: Britain's press regulator ruled yesterday that The Sun newspaper was "misleading" in suggesting that Queen Elizabeth II backs leaving the EU in next month's referendum-but the tabloid stood by the story. The top-selling newspaper sparked a rare complaint from Buckingham Palace with its front-page headline "Queen backs Brexit" on March 9, which challenged the monarch's long-held position of political neutrality.

In a ruling, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) said the claim that the monarch wanted Britain to leave the European Union in the June 23 referendum was not supported by the accompanying story suggesting she had expressed concerns about the bloc in 2011. "The headline-both in print and online - was not supported by the text and was significantly misleading," the IPSO regulator concluded. "The headline contained

a serious and unsupported allegation that the queen had fundamentally breached her constitutional obligations in the context of a vitally important national debate." As ordered by IPSO, The Sun ran a small headline at the bottom of its front page reporting the regulator's ruling. However, the newspaper's editor in chief, Tony Gallagher, said: "I don't accept that we made an error at all. We made a judgment that the headline was right and that it was backed up by the story."

He told BBC radio: "I don't think, were I doing this again tomorrow, I would act in any way differently whatsoever." "Given what I know about the detail of the sourcing and given what I know about the detail of the conversation, frankly, we would be better packing up and going home as journalists if we didn't actually put these things in the public domain." — AFP

DOZENS OF MYANMAR WORKERS ARRESTED IN RALLY CLAMPDOWN



TETKONE: A demonstrator demanding labor rights is arrested by police in Tetkone township yesterday during a workers protest march to central Naypyidaw. — AFP

NAYPYIDAW: Myanmar police yesterday arrested dozens of activists and factory workers as they broke up a labor rights march on the capital, the latest rally to test freedoms under Aung San Suu Kyi's new civilian government. Around 200 police moved in on the demonstrators, many wearing bamboo hats and waving banners calling for worker rights, as they entered the outskirts of Naypyidaw where they hoped to speak to the government.

"We arrested about 60 protesters today. We tried to do it without hurting anyone," Naypyidaw region police chief Ko Aung told AFP. "We will not take further action against all of them, just those trying to cause violence," he said. Suu Kyi's party is stacked with former dissidents who served prison time for their opposition to Myanmar's military governments during decades of repressive rule.

Since taking the helm following a landslide November election victory, the administration has freed scores of activists and political prisoners and signaled its determination to repeal oppressive laws. But police have launched legal action against activists involved in several recent demonstrations, and rights groups have expressed concern over efforts to amend draconian protest laws.

The protesters in Naypyidaw have been marching for about three weeks from northern Sagaing Region, where around 100 workers have recently been fired from a tim-

ber factory. They are appealing to the government to help reinstate many of those jobs and to recognize their newly-formed employment union.

The demonstrators were met by a wall of security forces as they tried to enter the capital and after a brief stand-off, officers began rounding up demonstrators, which led to scuffles. "We didn't do anything wrong by protesting. Arresting us is unfair," one of the activists called out to reporters as she was arrested.

Earlier this week police announced plans to take action against five leaders of an interfaith rally in Yangon because the campaigners had deviated from the agreed protest route. Yangon police have also begun legal action against seven leaders of an unauthorized protest by Buddhist nationalists outside the US embassy last month.

Rights groups have raised alarm bells over a number of provisions in a draft amendment to the Peaceful Assembly Act that is due to be debated in parliament in the coming days. They fear these will continue to penalize non-violent demonstrations, albeit with shorter jail terms. The proposed draft would mean protesters must still give local police 48 hours' notice of the place and time of any rally, as well as details of planned speeches and slogans. Those who protest without giving prior notice could be imprisoned for three months, while repeat offenders could face a year behind bars. — AFP

INDIAN MUSLIMS ANGRY OVER YOGA DAY'S 'OM' PROPOSAL

NEW DELHI: Muslim groups yesterday slammed a directive from India's Hindu nationalist government for participants in International Yoga Day to chant "Om", citing religious bias. The mass outdoor yoga session, to be held in June for its second year, is an initiative spearheaded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is seeking to reclaim the practice as an historic part of Indian culture.

"Yoga practise shall start with a prayer or prayerful mood to enhance benefits of the practice," read a note issued by Ayush ministry, which works for the promotion of yoga, as shown by television networks. The ministry said participants should chant the sacred sound "Om" and Hindu vedic hymns at the start and end of the 45-minute event on June 21.

Muslim groups reacted with anger, saying such chants were against their faith and accusing the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party of seeking to impose a hardline Hindu agenda. "We are not against yoga but India is a secular country and the state has no religion," Zafaryab Jilani, a member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board said. "If they are imposing a Hindu religious practice on the rest of us, it is unconstitutional."

The government waded into a similar controversy last year after it made the surya namaskar pose (sun salutation) part of the event. Muslim groups say cer-

tain yoga poses and chants have clear Hindu overtones and are against Islam. "They are again and again trying to impose a Hindutva ("Hinduness") agenda. This order should be cancelled immediately," Khalid Rashid Firangi Mahali, a top Muslim cleric said.

The opposition also weighed in, accusing the government of seeking to impose a narrow vision on the ancient tradition, which commands huge global popularity. "Yoga has achieved the status of an international art form and by imposing such conditions the government is killing its essence," Manish Tewari, a leader of the main opposition Congress party said. "People from different religions do it and the practitioner should decide what to chant."

Following the outcry, the Ayush ministry issued a clarification saying the directive was not compulsory. Indian scholars believe yoga dates back 5,000 years, based on archaeological evidence of poses found inscribed on stones and references to Yogic teachings in the ancient Hindu scriptures of the Vedas. In 2014 the United Nations accepted India's proposal to declare June 21 as International Yoga Day, highlighting its health benefits. Thousands gathered in dozens of cities around the world to celebrate the inaugural event last year, with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon performing yoga at Times Square in New York. — AFP



DHAKA: In this April 29, 2016 file photo, a Bangladeshi student holds a portrait of a University Professor AFM Rezaul Karim Siddique during a protest against his killing. — AP

TERROR STALKS CAMPUS AFTER B'DESH PROFESSOR'S MURDER
ISLAMIST BUTCHERY THREATENING INTELLECTUAL GROUPS

RAJSHAH: Days after his colleague was butchered by Islamist extremists at their university in Bangladesh, Mahbub Alam answered a call from a mystery number that made his blood run cold. "The person on the other side of the line said to me: 'Your life has come to an end. You've gone too far. Wait and see what happens to you,'" said Alam, a professor of public administration at Rajshahi University.

"I've never been connected to any type of activity except teaching. I've no idea what I've done to receive such a threat. 'It's OK when someone confronts you face-to-face. But if someone attacks you from behind, what can you do except live in fear?' Normally a hive of activity, the university campus has been largely deserted since English professor Rezaul Karim Siddique was hacked to death late last month while walking from his home to a bus stop.

His attackers ambushed the 58-year-old from behind before flaying him with machetes in broad daylight, nearly severing his neck in the process. It was the latest in a string of gruesome murders carried out by Islamist extremists in the last three years, with other victims including secular bloggers and members of the mainly Muslim country's religious minorities.

Extremist target

But professors teaching at Rajshahi in north-western Bangladesh, which has a reputation as one of the country's most liberal universities,

have been a target of extremists for more than a decade. Four have been killed since 2004 while more than 50 teachers say they have received threats from Islamist extremists.

After Siddique's murder, teachers went on an unofficial strike which prompted most of the university's 33,000 students to head home and begin their summer holidays early. When an AFP correspondent visited the 752-acre (300-hectare) campus last week, the lecture halls were empty and the only significant gathering was at a rally attended by teachers and students to protest Siddique's slaughter.

Much of the anger was directed at the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina which has been accused of showing little sympathy towards the victims and doing little to improve security.

Nearly all recent attacks have been claimed by Al-Qaeda's local branch or the Islamic State organization but the government insists neither group has got a foothold in Bangladesh, blaming its domestic opponents instead. "We are feeling very isolated and are all in a bit of a panic," sociology professor Nilufar Sultana told AFP.

"The authorities are not assuring any security. They aren't even saying that they're looking for the killers. It's deeply frustrating," Mamunul Habib, who was taught by Siddique, said that no one could concentrate on their studies for the moment. "We can't pick up weapons to protect ourselves and of course it's not for us to do that anyway," said Habib. "It's impossible mentally to

study and work in such a climate, especially as you can't help feeling that you could be the next target." After Siddique's killing, it emerged that a hit-list with the names of 10 people-including the university's vice-chancellor-had been distributed on a leaflet in the nearby town of Natore.

'We feel helpless'

The leaflet bore the name of an obscure group called the Islamic Liberation Front which said its objective was to establish an Islamic caliphate by toppling what it called the "repressive" government. No one has so far been charged with Siddique's murder although police have made four arrests and say one of those has confessed to taking part in the killing.

Rajshahi police commissioner Mohammad Shamsuddin acknowledged people felt nervous but said his officers were doing all they could to avoid a repeat. "This sense of panic will gradually fade and we are working very hard to provide security to everyone in the city," Shamsuddin told AFP. However the murder on May 6 of a local leader of the Sufi Muslim minority around 40 kilometers away has heightened fears that the killers may still be at large, with the victim also hacked to death. "We now feel very helpless," said Professor Moloy Voumik, another of Siddique's former colleagues who admits he is living in fear. "I know if these targeted killings continue, then my name will definitely find a place on their hit-list." — AFP

AFGHAN GOVERNMENT NEARS PEACE WITH MILITANT GROUP

KABUL: A draft agreement that could lead to a peace deal between the Afghan government and a militant group linked by Washington to the Taliban and al Qaeda will be signed yesterday, a senior official said.

Hezb-e-Islami, whose leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is a veteran of decades of Afghan war and on the US government's designated terrorist list, has played only a minor role in the insurgency in recent years and the deal is unlikely to have any immediate practical impact on security. But with little sign that the Taliban are ready to join peace talks, the deal offers President Ashraf Ghani's government a concrete sign that it is making headway in drawing insurgent groups away from the battlefield and into the political process.

Mohammad Khan, deputy to government Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, said the draft would be signed later yesterday by a delegation from Hekmatyar's party and officials from Afghanistan's High Peace Council but more work would be needed for a final deal. "We are optimistic about this agreement and we strongly support it," he told reporters in Kabul but added: "This doesn't mean it's finalized."

The announcement came as officials from Pakistan, the United States, China and Afghanistan held another round of meetings, in Pakistan, aimed at laying the

ground for peace talks with the Taliban, who have refused to join the talks. Human rights groups have criticized the move towards a deal with Hekmatyar's group, which is accused of widespread abuses, particularly during civil war in the early 1990s, when he briefly served as prime minister.

But the pressure on the government for some sign of progress in bringing peace appears to have outweighed their concerns. Under the terms of the draft agreement, members of Hezb-e-Islami would be offered an amnesty, similar to that offered in 2007 to warlords accused of war crimes as well as a release of prisoners held by Afghan authorities.

The Afghan government would also work to have the group removed from a UN black list.

The group, which for years had close ties with Pakistan, would not join the government but would be recognized as a political party and be involved in major political decisions. In 2003, the State Department included Hekmatyar on its designated terrorist list, accusing him of participating in and supporting terrorist acts by al Qaeda and the Taliban. His group was most recently blamed for a 2013 suicide attack in Kabul, in which two US soldiers and four US civilian contractors as well as eight Afghans were killed. — Reuters

SRI LANKA RECONCILIATION EFFORT SLAMMED ON WAR ANNIVERSARY



MULLAITTIVU: In this photograph taken on May 19, 2009, Sri Lankan soldiers carry the remains of Tamil Tiger rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. — AFP

COLOMBO: Pledges by Sri Lanka's president to bring about accountability and reconciliation following a bitter civil war remain largely unaddressed, a leading NGO said yesterday, as the island marked seven years since the end of the conflict. The Brussels-based International Crisis Group's report came as Colombo abandoned a controversial military "victory" parade for a more somber remembrance ceremony that was expected to include ethnic minority Tamils.

Government forces killed the Tamil Tiger rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran on May 18, 2009 after a brutal military crackdown, and declared an end to the 37-year conflict which claimed at least 100,000 lives. Maithripala Sirisena took power in January 2015 promising reconciliation, to reduce the military's involvement in public life and pledging that those guilty of war crimes would be held accountable.

But 16 months later many promises remain unfulfilled, the ICG said in its report, "Sri Lanka: Jumpstarting the reform process", with military involvement still visible in parts of the country. "The enormity of the crimes, especially in the final weeks of the war, makes them impossible to ignore but hard for the military and most

(majority) Sinhalese to acknowledge or accept responsibility for," the ICG said. The ICG called on Colombo to set a timeline for training judges, lawyers and investigators for special war crimes courts and for passing legislation to establish responsibility for war crimes. It said the government must end military involvement in running hotels and shops and vacate occupied private land in former war zones.

Sri Lanka's defense secretary Karunasena Hettiarachchi said that this year's commemorations-a restrained ceremony and a cultural show, "Footsteps of Reconciliation"-demonstrated the government's commitment to healing ethnic wounds. Previous parades celebrated the victory of the largely Sinhalese military over the minority Tamils, who were banned from remembering their dead as commemoration of fallen rebels was thought anti-state. "We are having a cultural show instead of the military victory parade that was practiced in the past six years," Hettiarachchi said. "This is to establish reconciliation among all races."

No longer pariah

Sirisena's tenure so far has adopted a far more conciliatory tone than that of his strong-

man predecessor Mahinda Rajapakse. The government has agreed to a UN call to set up a special court to investigate wartime atrocities, but has rejected requests for the involvement of foreign judges. It has secured international support for ethnic peace, while high-profile visits by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US Secretary of State John Kerry last year effectively ended Sri Lanka's pariah status.

The independent Sri Lanka Campaign, a rights group, noted that there had been an "undeniable" improvement in the country since the change in government, but more needed to be done. In war-affected regions "a combination of ongoing militarization and impunity mean that a climate of intimidation and fear persists," it said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam fought for independence for Sri Lanka's main ethnic minority and were known for their trademark suicide bombings. At the height of their power, the rebels ran a de facto separate state comprising a third of the Indian Ocean island's territory. Under Rajapakse's orders, the army defeated the Tigers in a no-holds-barred military campaign that attracted international censure. — AFP

BLOODY ANTI-CRIME PURGE COULD HAUNT NEXT PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT

DAVAO STILL AFFECTED BY DUTERTE'S DEATH SQUADS



HONG KONG: Pro-democracy activists hold a photo of Chinese Communist Party's third-highest ranking official, Zhang Dejiang, right, with Chinese words that read "Zhang Dejiang get lost from Hong Kong" during a protest outside the venue where Zhang gave a speech during a visit to Hong Kong. — AFP

HONG KONG PROTESTS AS TOP CHINA OFFICIAL VISITS

HONG KONG: Hong Kong protesters angry at a visit by a top Beijing official shouted pro-democracy slogans and demanded free elections yesterday but were kept away from talks seen as an attempt to bridge a growing political divide.

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 that freedoms are under threat in semi-autonomous Hong Kong as Beijing tightens its grip. Although Zhang's trip is ostensibly for an economic conference, it is widely being seen as a conciliatory mission and a chance to gauge whether Beijing should back the city's unpopular leader Leung Chun-ying to stand for a second term. It comes as frustration over lack of reform has sparked a fledgling independence movement, condemned by authorities in Hong Kong and China.

Zhang will meet with pro-democracy lawmakers yesterday evening in a rare move, after kicking off his visit Tuesday by promising to listen to political demands from across society. But opponents have criticized Zhang for what they called "tokenistic" diplomacy and slammed Hong Kong authorities for putting parts of the city into a security lockdown for his visit. Roads around Zhang's hotel and the convention centre hosting the economic conference have been cordoned off with water-filled barricades and protesters funneled into designated areas, out of sight.

Around 100 protesters marched to one of the areas yesterday morning before the conference started, vastly outnumbered by police—thousands of whom have been mobilized to protect Zhang. They called for the "end of dictatorship", fully free elections, and the release of Liu Xiaobo, a Chinese Nobel peace laureate jailed on the mainland, as well as the resignation of city leader Leung. One woman was moved along by police as she waved a large Tibetan flag by one of the barricades. "Our requests are very clear, we do not welcome Zhang," said John Leung, 30, of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions.

'Expression limited'

Rival groups of pro-China demonstrators waved national flags and heated shouting matches ensued between the two sides. "Despite all, we are Chinese. Every policy and every government has its own imperfections," said one pro-China protester who gave her name as Ms Yuan. Demonstrators said they expected higher numbers for an evening rally.

Some said fear of a backlash had kept numbers away in the morning. "I think more people are scared of the police," said Alexandra Wong, 60, a retired accountant. "They do what they want." Hong Kong police were criticized for heavy-handed treatment of protesters during massive pro-democracy rallies that brought parts of the city to a standstill in 2014.

Police arrested seven members of the pro-democracy League of Social Democrats party on Tuesday for unfurling protest banners on hills and flyovers. They also wrestled a leading pro-democracy activist to the ground near Zhang's hotel as he tried to breach a barrier. Human Rights Watch said yesterday authorities had "sharply limited" the public's opportunities to voice criticism of Zhang's visit. It also said Hong Kong officials should challenge Zhang "to make concrete commitments to respect Hong Kong's autonomy on human rights and democratic rule."

Hong Kong is semi-autonomous after being handed back to China by Britain in 1997 and enjoys freedoms unseen on the mainland, but there are concerns Beijing interference is growing. Speaking at the economic forum yesterday, Zhang said Hong Kong should participate more in China's national development strategy. "I hope that Hong Kong, with a broader mind and vision, will fully seize the major opportunities," he said. He emphasized the shared Cantonese culture of southern China and Hong Kong, an apparent bid to ease fears Beijing is trying to eradicate the city's identity. Hongkongers speak Cantonese, rather than the Mandarin dominant on the mainland, and there are concerns the language is being squeezed out. — AFP

MANILA: Nine years ago, Father Amado Picardal helped bury a teenager from a slum family who was gunned down by motorcycle-riding assassins in the southern Philippine city of Davao. The death was among hundreds in the large port city blamed on an anti-crime purge some believed was secretly run by its mayor, Rodrigo Duterte.

Memories of that violence flashed back in the Roman Catholic priest's mind when the tough-talking mayor triumphed in last week's presidential election on a pledge to replicate his Davao crime-busting style in the rest of the Philippines. "I felt sad and depressed," Picardal said of Duterte's rise.

A Duterte presidency is "very frightening," he said in an interview, adding that human rights groups will need to keep a close watch and document any violations, especially extrajudicial killings, in the next six years under Duterte's presidency. From his 22 years as mayor to the presidential campaign trail, Duterte has never minced words about his deadly objective for criminals. But he has generally denied the existence of death squads in his city. However, investigations by the Commission on Human Rights in the Philippines, a senior UN official, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and a group led by Picardal that opposed summary executions have concluded otherwise.

Clarita Alia, a vegetable vendor and the mother of the young man that Picardal helped bury in Davao in 2007, said she is willing to testify if a case against Duterte goes to court. Three other sons of hers who were suspected of crimes she said they did not commit were also killed by motorcycle-riding hitmen.

Bold campaign

Duterte's bold campaign pledge to end crime and corruption within six months, his iron-fisted approach to law and order and his public threat to kill all criminals helped catapult the longtime mayor into the presidency. But his tough anti-crime reputation may now haunt him as he comes under a national and international spotlight and tries to achieve his promise.

A former prosecutor who experienced the legal complexities of battling criminals, Duterte was first elected mayor in 1988. Nicknamed "Duterte Harry" after the Clint Eastwood character with little regard for rules, he served as hundreds of suspected criminals, drug dealers and addicts were gunned down or fatally stabbed in a wave of brazen attacks by motorcycle-riding gunmen dubbed by the media as the "Davao Death Squads," or the DDS.

On the final day of campaigning 10 days ago, he made clear he would continue to employ his hard-line approach to crime as president. "All of you who are into drugs, you sons of bitches, I will really kill you," Duterte told a huge crowd in Manila. "I have no patience, I have no middle ground, either you kill me or I will kill you idiots."

But he has denied any role in gangland-style killings, at one point blaming warring gangs for the violence. Investigators say they have found no hard evidence of a direct role by Duterte in the vigilante-style killings, saying not one witness has come forward to testify against him, possibly for fear of reprisals.

In a report, the Commission on Human Rights said 206 people, mostly suspected criminals and including 19 minors, were slain in shootings and stabbings attributed to the death squads from 2005 to 2009 alone, adding that there were witnesses to at least 94 of the killings.

"Nobody wanted to testify," said Loretta Ann Rosales, who headed the commission at the time. "There was a measure of fear. We can't prove his criminal liability because nobody would say that he ordered the killings." Phelim Kine of the US-based group Human Rights Watch said it found no hard evidence of any direct role by Duterte in 28 death-squad killings, mostly from 2007 to

2008, that it investigated. "What is unquestionable is that we found evidence that Davao city officials and police were directly involved and that evidence merits a thorough investigation by the Philippine authorities," Kine said, adding that his group wasn't aware if the government had acted on the findings.

Shocking predictability

In its 2009 report, Human Rights Watch said many of the killers were former Marxist rebel hitmen or targeted criminals who turned into DDS gunmen to avoid death. It said they were armed with .45 caliber pistols and paid to carry out the executions by their "boss." The boss "provides members of a death squad team with as little as the name of the target, and sometimes an address and a photograph. Police stations are then notified to ensure that police officers are slow to respond, enabling the

laws and international conventions that bind the Philippine government and its officials to protect human rights and effectively investigate and prosecute violators. That attempt failed, however, when Duterte was let off by a Philippine legal doctrine that absolves newly elected officials from administrative liabilities they may have committed in past terms, Rosales said. Duterte was reelected mayor in 2013.

The Supreme Court struck down that doctrine last year due to complaints that it had blocked the prosecution of officials accused of wrongdoing and corruption. Although Duterte was cleared, 21 high-ranking police officials who were not covered by the doctrine were found guilty of "simple neglect of duty" by the Ombudsman in 2012 for failing to stop death squad assaults in their areas that killed 720 people from 2005 to 2008.



DAVAO CITY: In this Wednesday, May 11, 2016 photo, residents walk past giant tarpaulins of presumptive President-elect Rodrigo Duterte at his hometown. — AP

death squad members to escape," the human rights group said.

"The motive appears to be simple expedience: Courts are viewed as slow or inept. The murder of criminal suspects is seen as easier and faster than proper law enforcement," it said. Philip Alston, then the UN special reporter on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions who looked into the Davao violence, said in a 2008 report that it would be a "polite euphemism" to describe the killers as "vigilantes" given the "shocking predictability" with which they killed their victims, adding many of them didn't even wear masks.

"One fact points very strongly to the officially sanctioned character of these killings: No one involved covers his face. The men who warn mothers that their children will be the next to die unless they make themselves scarce turn up on doorsteps undisguised," Alston said.

Rosales said the Philippine human rights commission asked the Ombudsman, who prosecutes officials for wrongdoing, to investigate Duterte in 2012 for possible administrative liability "for his inaction in the face of evidence of numerous killings committed in Davao City and his toleration of the commission of those offenses."

Her commission cited the country's constitution, local

'Checks and balances'

Each officer was fined the equivalent of one month of salary, according to the Ombudsman's office. Despite his brash campaign rhetoric, Duterte will find it hard to bring his Davao crime-fighting style to the rest of the country because of the oversight of Congress, the judiciary and other agencies that check abuses. The world will be watching too, said Picardal, who was assigned to Davao for many years until he moved to Manila in 2011.

"There are checks and balances," he said. "The eyes of the nation and the world are on him." The 61-year-old priest said he understands that the nearly 16 million Filipinos who voted for Duterte for president have a legitimate yearning for change because of their exasperation over crime and corruption. Some may not even be aware that the killings in Davao were real and not just Duterte's bluster, he said. But for those who were aware and glossed over the deadly violence that blighted Davao, Picardal said he hopes they will examine their conscience and not yield to desperation. "What I'm afraid of is that we'll become a nation where a lot of people have lost a sense of right and wrong," he said. — AP

TENSIONS RISE BETWEEN POWERFUL THAI BUDDHIST SECT AND POLICE

BANGKOK: Tensions between Thai police and a powerful Buddhist sect have spiked this week after an arrest warrant was issued for an abbot at the centre of an alleged multi-million dollar scandal. The controversy over the wealthy Dhammakaya temple, which is renowned for its influential allies and colourful displays of mass devotion, has revived fears over the state of Buddhism in a nation where 95 percent of the population adhere to the faith.

The kingdom's Buddhist clergy has been mired in controversies ranging from allegations of undeclared gifts of luxury cars to sex and drugs scandals. Critics say the Dhammakaya temple is closely linked to Thaksin Shinawatra, the billionaire former premier at the heart of the country's political rupture. They accuse it of trying to dominate the Thai faith with prosperity theology style teachings that promote donations in return for good karma.

A court late Tuesday issued an arrest warrant for Phra Dhammachayo, who has failed to report to police over accusations he received illegal donations worth 1.2 billion baht (\$33 million) that had been embezzled from a cooperative bank.

The temple, which boasts a sprawling and futuristic headquarters in northern Bangkok, refutes the allegations and insists the 72-year-old abbot is too sick to report to authorities. But that has not dimmed fears of a showdown between police and the temple, which says it has millions of supporters, some of whom clashed with soldiers in February.

"We regret that the authority has issued the arrest warrant... but Dhammakaya disciples do not want to use mob rule over rule of law," Ong-art Dhamnitha, a representative of the sect's followers, told reporters yesterday.

Last April the Dhammakaya temple returned some \$20 million given by a company executive later accused of embezzling the cash. It says the money was received in good faith and without knowledge of the executive's crime. The temple defends itself against its theological critics saying it provides a modern and accessible form of Buddhism. —AFP



HENAN PROVINCE: In this photo taken on April 9, 2016, a man (pays respects in front of a statue of the Yellow Emperor, or Huangdi, after a memorial ceremony in Xinzheng. — AFP

FROM LEGEND TO HISTORY: CHINA TURNS TO MYTHICAL EMPEROR

XINZHENG: Scarves emblazoned with red dragons draped over their black business suits, Chinese officials lit incense and bowed solemnly at the feet of a mythical ancestor known as the Yellow Emperor. The avowedly atheist Communist Party is promoting worship of the ancient figure as it seeks to bolster its legitimacy and emphasize Chinese blood ties, including with Taiwan ahead of the inauguration of Beijing-skeptical president Tsai Ing-wen.

Thousands gathered in the heartland province of Henan, where the Yellow Emperor—described in archaic annals and present day schoolbooks as the founder of Chinese civilization—is said to have been born 5,000 years ago. Shots from gold-painted cannon began the annual ceremony, and the crowd, many in replica antique costume, listened to a booming announcer heralding the "ancestor of the Chinese nation". High-ranking cadres—including the province's top official, and a former vice culture minister—processed up a red carpet, placed offerings in front of an altar and gazed into the statue's chiseled visage, before bowing. Lydia Zhou, an investment manager who flew from Shanghai to attend, told AFP: "I'm here to worship. He is our ancestor and this is his birthplace." The lauding of an individual comes as

Communist chief Xi Jinping is increasingly lionized in China's state-run media, and the announcer echoed his slogans: "Revive China, a one hundred year dream, ruling by law, moderate prosperity for all."

Mixed up

Historians say there is little evidence the Yellow Emperor actually existed, but school textbooks widely describe him as the founder of Chinese culture and ancestor of all Chinese people—including its 55 official ethnic minorities, some of whom chafe against identifying as Chinese. The same books assert China has existed for 5,000 years since his birth, though historians date the first Chinese dynasty—covering a tiny fraction of the present country—to around 1600 BC.

The Communist Party attempted to outlaw religion after taking power in 1949. Under Mao Zedong, "Yellow Emperor worship was seen as feudal superstition," Ren Dahuan, vice president of a state-run research association into the figure, told AFP. But now the party says religion can be harnessed for social good ahead of it eventually melting away with economic progress.

Searching for tourist and investment income, officials in the emperor's supposed birthplace of

Xinzheng revived offerings in the 1990s. The ceremony was endorsed by the State Council, China's cabinet, in 2008.

Flesh and blood

With economic growth slowing, the ruling party has turned to a grab-bag of traditions as it attempts to portray itself as a natural outgrowth of Chinese culture. "These events are becoming bigger and bigger, because the state needs them to explain its legitimacy," said Zhu Dake, a cultural critic at Shanghai's Tongji University.

At the same time it is looking to forge a single identity for an ethnically diverse population. "The state needs this bloodline," Zhu added. "It's a political strategy. China is a multi-ethnic country. Chinese people are a mixed-up thing, rather than descendants of a single ancestor." The message of unity applies to all ethnic Chinese, including the diasporas abroad and those in Taiwan, which split from the mainland in 1949 at the end of a civil war. Its new president Tsai from the traditionally pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party—will be inaugurated on Friday. Among those lighting incense in Xinzheng last month was the head of Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office, which handles relations with Taipei. —AFP

PHILIPPINE REBELS TO ENTER TALKS, NAME ALLIES TO DUTERTE CABINET

MANILA: Philippine communist rebels waging one of Asia's longest insurgencies said yesterday they would enter into peace talks with president-elect Rodrigo Duterte and ask him to add four of their political allies to his cabinet.

Duterte, who won a landslide victory in last week's elections, had offered four cabinet posts to the insurgents and expressed willingness to free ailing guerrillas from prison to jumpstart peace negotiations that had stalled three years ago. "We applaud the plans and programs announced by president-elect Duterte. We believe these would be key factors to achieving peace," Luis Jalandoni, the rebels' exiled chief peace negotiator told Manila radio station DZMM by telephone.

Netherlands-based Jalandoni said the rebels were expected to shortly exchange delegation visits with the Duterte camp "as part of the process for preparing the resumption of peace talks" as well as to iron out terms of cooperation. Duterte, the mayor of the southern city of Davao, on Monday welcomed plans by Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Maria Sison to end nearly 30 years of Dutch exile to take part in the peace talks. He said the return of Sison, his former political science professor at a Manila university, would be important in helping to end the rebellion, which has claimed an estimated 30,000 lives since the 1960s.

Both Jalandoni and Sison said no guerrillas would actually serve in Duterte's cabinet prior to reaching a political settlement, when the insurgents hoped to lay down arms and join a coalition government. "We have relayed to president-elect Duterte that (guerrilla) personnel themselves would not be taking up government posts, but we will recommend a list of qualified, competent and dedicated persons that could fill the posts," Jalandoni said.

He said this would include nominees to the labor, social welfare, environment, and agrarian reform portfolios that were offered to them by Duterte, who takes office on June 30. Jalandoni also told DZMM the rebels would consider a ceasefire and would ask the Duterte government to release 543 "political prisoners," the insurgents' term for imprisoned comrades. Incumbent leader Benigno Aquino ended talks with the communists in 2013 over the rebels' demand for the unconditional release of their detained comrades that his government was unwilling to grant. — AFP



ELANGIPITIYA, Sri Lanka: Landslide survivors walk through the mud after a landslide in this village in Aranayaka, about 72 km northeast of Colombo, yesterday. — AP

GIRL KIDNAPPED BY BOKO HARAM FOUND...

Continued from Page 1

The BringBackOurGirls campaign group said Ali "provided useful information that her other classmates are still held under heavy terrorist captivity in the Sambisa Forest area". But she was quoted as saying by Chibok community leader Tsambido Hoseana Abana that "six were already dead". The Sambisa Forest has long been known to contain Boko Haram camps. Other abducted women rescued from the former game reserve over the last year have reported seeing some of the Chibok girls.

Members of the BringBackOurGirls movement in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, were in ecstatic mood at the news but the group's leader, Oby Ezekwesili, said: "We still have 218 of them. We are going to use Amina as a symbol for calling the 218 until they come back. They have no reason to stay one extra day in (the) terrorist enclave." The group has mounted daily vigils in the capital since the abduction, calling for the girls and other hostages to be released.

Boko Haram has used kidnapping as a weapon of war, seizing thousands of women and young girls, forcing them to become sex slaves and even suicide bombers. Men and young boys have also been forcibly conscripted to the Islamists' ranks. UNICEF spokeswoman in West and Central Africa Helene Sandbu Ryeng said for Ali and others rescued, "being freed from Boko Haram and

returning home is only the first step". "Children in this situation typically require medical assistance and psychosocial support to help them cope with what they have been through while they were in captivity," she said. "Many of them need help to re-integrate their family and their community" with the risk of "mistrust, stigma and rejection" high when they return, she added.

Boko Haram, which opposes Western education, seized 276 students from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok on the night of April 14, 2014. Fifty-seven managed to escape in the immediate aftermath. Nothing had been heard from the 219 since a video published by the Islamists in May 2014, until an apparent "proof of life" message was sent to the Nigerian government earlier this year.

Fifteen of the girls, wearing black hijabs and apparently converted to Islam, were seen in the video, which was purportedly shot on December 25, Christmas Day, last year. But the government said it was cautious about raising hopes of their release after previous claims of talks with Boko Haram have come to nothing. Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau has said he would release the hostages if Islamist fighters held in Nigerian custody were released. The video gave weight to theories the girls were split up after the abduction and were being held by factions in separate locations, complicating any possible talks or a rescue bid. — AFP

220 FAMILIES BURIED BY LANKA...

Continued from Page 1

Farmer Hewapelage Lal said he had identified the body of his nephew, but that 18 other family members were possibly buried under the mud. He and his wife had left their home to take fruit to a daughter who lived elsewhere, but at some point his wife turned back. "That was the last time I saw her," Lal said, sobbing. When he heard of the landslide, he rushed home but found the area covered with thick, heavy mud. "All I could do was scream."

Officials could not give the populations of the villages of Siripura, Elangapitiya or Pallegage, but such villages typically include 1,000-1,500 residents. In Elangapitiya alone, where 14 bodies were recovered Wednesday, about 130 people were still missing, according to Maj Gen Sudantha Ranasinghe, who was coordinating rescue efforts. Hundreds of stunned villagers took shelter in four temporary camps set up in schools and a Buddhist temple, where they were being given food, blankets and basic medical treatment.

At the Vyaneliya Temple, about 300 villagers shared a meal of

brown bread and curried lentils. Local officials interviewed each one to learn about missing family members and possessions buried under the mud. Local media said President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe visited the disaster sites earlier yesterday. In Siripura, 70-year-old A G Alice said all nine of her children were unaccounted for. "I don't know what happened to me" after the landslides swept down, she said.

A man said his wife, mother-in-law, son and daughter-in-law were all in his house in Siripura when the landslides hit. "I still can't locate my family," M W Dharmadasa said. "I still don't know what happened to them." The same rains that unleashed the mudslides also caused severe flooding in cities including Colombo, the capital, where tens of thousands of homes were at least partially inundated. Schools were closed due to the bad weather. Sri Lanka's disaster management center reported 11 deaths from lightning strikes and smaller landslides elsewhere in the country on Monday and Tuesday. Nearly 135,000 people have been displaced and are being housed in temporary shelters. — AP

AMIR URGES YEMEN FOES TO PRESS...

Continued from Page 1

Mikhlafl said his team will stay in Kuwait until the weekend and then take a decision.

Meanwhile, Yemen's Prime Minister Ahmed bin Dagher yesterday rejected the unity government proposed by the Houthis rebels, whom he accused of bringing the country's economy to the brink of collapse. At a cabinet meeting in the Saudi capital, Dagher insisted that the rebels surrender their weapons and withdraw from seized territory in line with the UN Security Council resolution adopted in April last year.

The Houthi rebels and their allies overran the capital Sanaa in Sept 2014 and went on to seize control of several regions, forcing President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi to flee. "The retreat (of the rebels) from state institutions is non-negotiable," the premier said. The meeting was held inside a Saudi government hall where Dagher read from a statement, with cabinet ministers seated at a long table in front of him. At UN-brokered peace talks which began on April 21 in Kuwait, the rebels made a transitional government of consensus a precondition for applying Security Council Resolution 2216. But the prime minister attacked

"those who want a national unity government before handing over the weapons" which constitutionally belong in state hands. He added that the country was "in a terrible state of economic and monetary collapse" after the rebels spent \$3 billion, almost the entire monetary reserves of Yemen, "in their war efforts". He said the rebels also arranged to print more money, leading to a collapse in the value of the rial and a spike in prices. Residents say the cost of fruit and vegetables has risen by at least 20 percent in recent days, while essentials like flour are up by more than 30 percent.

One foreign diplomat told AFP he was "not optimistic", while raising the possibility of international pressure on the government to show greater flexibility over rebel disarmament and the transitional government proposal. Another diplomatic source was more positive. "I don't think we're looking at it really being over yet," although neither side had been particularly flexible, the source said. He added that Hadi's future appears to be a factor in discussion of the proposed "consensus" government. "My guess is that Hadi just doesn't feel that he would be part of that consensus government," the source said. — Agencies

PANEL OKS BILL TO NATURALIZE 4,000

Continued from Page 1

The head of the Assembly budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said yesterday the committee discussed the squandering of public funds in contracts signed by the state-owned Petrochemicals Industries Co (PIC). He said the Audit Bureau found that the financial framework for contracts in the company is loosely defined, which results in paying huge sums of money to contractors. He said for example, the value of one contract jumped to KD 1.8 million although its original value was just KD 100,000. He said this violation has been referred for investigation.

The Assembly human resources development committee yesterday approved a number of amendments to the appointment of senior officials in the government. Head of the panel MP Abdullah Abul said the most significant amendment stipulates that senior officials are appointed for a period of three years, which can be renewed for a similar duration only after evaluation and not automatically, as is the case now.

According to another amendment, all existing senior officials who served 12 years and more will have to step down after passing the law, said Abul, adding that the government has opposed most of the amendments.

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Focus

MISSION TO ENSURE
'SEXIST DATA' SHOW
WOMEN'S REALITIES

By Belinda Goldsmith

Data, once the domain of geeks, is being put at the center of women's rights by campaigners arguing current statistics are sexist and need to have "soul" that reflects women's real lives. While the 193 UN member states last year agreed a new set of 17 global goals aiming to end inequality and extreme poverty by 2030, campaigners are finding more and more holes in official data to track where and which women and girls need help. The need for better data - which can be used to assess needs, monitor progress and hold governments to account - emerged as a key theme this week at Women Deliver, the world's largest women's rights and health conference in a decade.

Melinda Gates, co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, led the charge when it came to faulting current data for being sexist and failing to show the real challenges facing millions of women who are often invisible in statistics. "We cannot know what to do for women and where to invest to have the greatest return unless we have good data...and we really don't have the data we need," Gates said. "We cannot close the gender gap without closing the data gap," she told Women Deliver, attended by more than 5,500 participants from over 160 countries, as she unveiled an \$80 million, three-year initiative to boost data collection.

While the lack of information on women is not new, the problem has been highlighted by growing pressure on governments to show progress in improving the lives of women and girls under the UN's new global goals. A 2014 report by Data2X, a multi-partner initiative housed at the United Nations Foundation, identified 28 key data gaps related to women and girls in five areas: health, education, economic opportunities, political participation, and security.

Better data is seen as key for accountability, a major buzzword in the development world particularly since UN members agreed the new Sustainable Development Goals as a blueprint to direct government policies over the next 15 years. Leaders of organizations working to improve the lives of women and girls said a lack of information about key issues was as a major hurdle towards getting better services and investment.

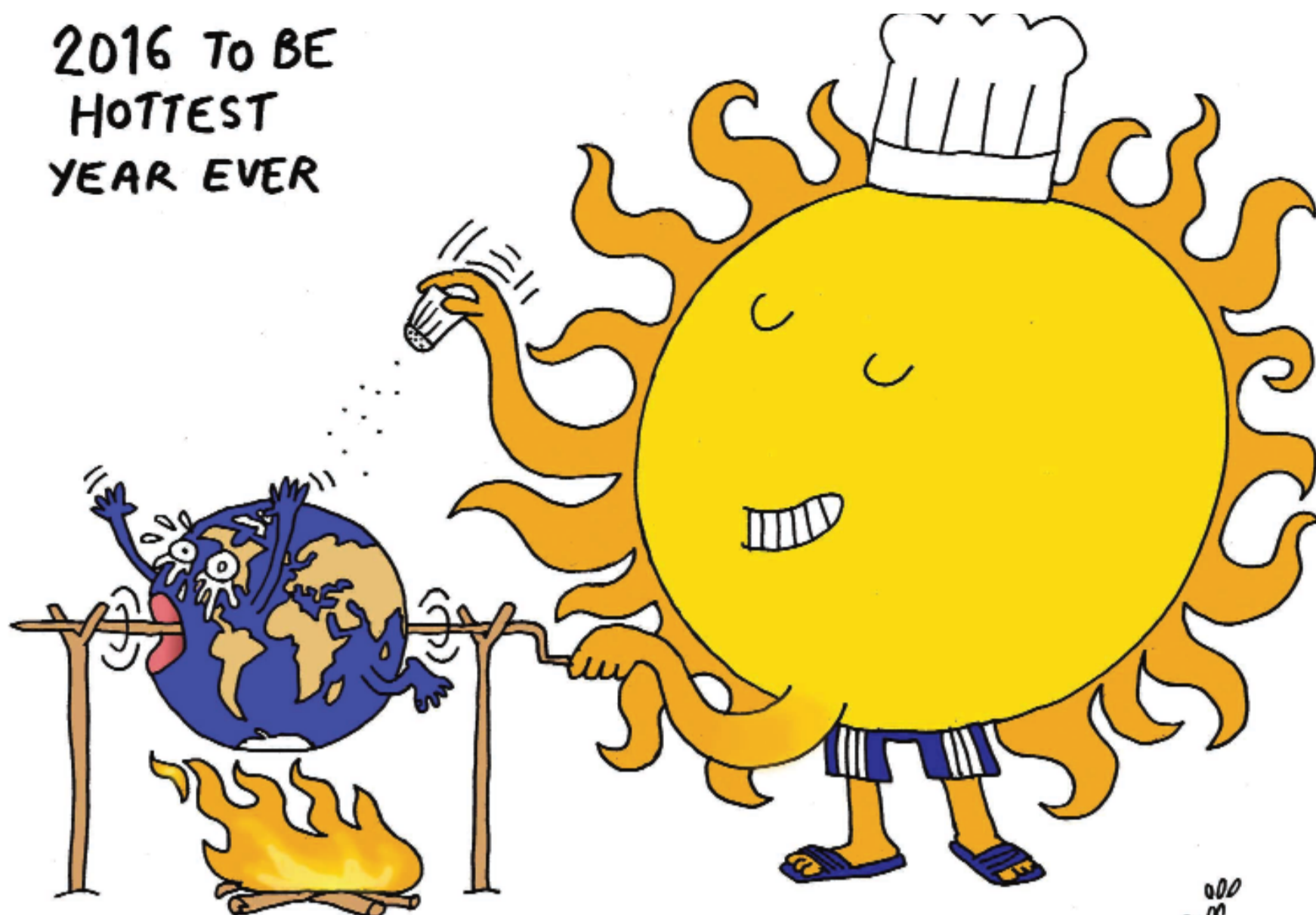
'Data With a Soul'

Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, chief executive of child rights organization Plan International, cited as an example the massive data gap when it came to recording the number of girls aged under the age of 15 who gave birth each year. Globally it is estimated over 2 million girls under the age of 15 become mothers each year, but the number is uncertain as official data tends to only track births of women aged 15 to 49 even though girls can get pregnant from age 11 or so onwards.

An estimated 70,000 girls aged 10 to 19 die from birth-related complications every year. "Hopefully over the next five to 10 years we will start to get much more sophisticated about what we measure and make sure every data set has a soul, that we bring forth the voice," Albrechtsen told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "There are human beings behind these statistics and if we can connect smart data that captures some of the intangibles, the fear, the violence... hopefully we can change the world as we can sit in front of policymakers and say this is the reality."

Plan International unveiled at Women Deliver a partnership with the International Women's Health Coalition, accountancy firm KPMG, ONE Campaign and Women Deliver, to find ways to compile better data on women. Former Malawi President Joyce Banda told the conference how she finally escaped a 10-year abusive marriage but was quizzed on her lack of data when she tried to raise the alarm for other women who were victims of abuse.

Banda, who was president of Malawi from 2012 until 2014, said this showed the importance of data to back up arguments. "It is important to track our achievements and also for those in leadership to be accountable," she said. Eloise Todd, global policy director from the ONE Campaign, said it was not exaggerating to say the world was facing a "sexist data crisis". "Data is about people but also about politics," Todd said. "We know we can't argue with governments until we can show them data and show them what is going on... and so much is missing to let us do the job." — Reuters

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Opinion

BEIJING HAS CASE FOR 'HISTORIC RIGHTS' AT SEA

By the Embassy of China in Kuwait

From time immemorial, traditional Chinese fishermen have continuously, reasonably and with certainty plied their trade in the semi-enclosed waters of the South China Sea. These traditional fishing practices date back a long time, have been invariable and unbroken, and conform to basic principles of justice and utility. In effect, these practices have acquired the force of law, crystallized into a privately-held "historic right" and constitute a local custom.

By way of the crystallization of this right in the possession of its nationals, the Chinese state too has acquired a vested interest in the perpetuation of this "historic right" in the South China Sea. And to the extent that the Nine Dash Line serves as the perimeter of this historically-consolidated right of traditional Chinese fishermen in the South China Sea, the line has a durable basis in international law and is fully deserving of its protections.

Manila's and Washington's assertion of the invalidity of the Nine Dash Line as a perimeter of the "historic rights" enjoyed by the Chinese people in the South China Sea is legally flawed. Far from being extinguished, recent case law since the entry into force of UNCLOS has decisively come down in favor of the independent existence and preservation by the convention of such privately-acquired and historically-consolidated rights in foreign exclusive maritime zones.

In a landmark ruling in the late-1990s, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) had authoritatively pronounced that there are special factors, notably traditional fisheries-related factors, that are capable of creating "historic rights" in maritime spaces. These "historic rights" can be exercised non-exclusively by a third state such as China in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of a coastal state, in this case the Philippines.

So long as these special factors qualify as giving rise to a local tradition or custom, these "historic rights" are not qualified by the provisions specified in the text of the UNCLOS. Rather, these rights are governed by the rules and principles of general and customary international law and continue to operate.

Subsequent jurisprudence has confirmed that such non-exclusively exercised access rights related to the traditional fishing regime were preserved by the convention and that it had never been the intent, in the first place, of the drafters of the convention to interfere with their exercise.

It is equally erroneous on the part of Manila and Washington to claim that from a procedural standpoint the UNCLOS is comprehensive in scope and that Beijing cannot derogate from the Convention's provisions on such matters by claiming "historic rights" under a separate head of general international law.

The preamble to the UNCLOS explicitly admits that the convention is not all-encompassing and that such

category of other rights that are not regulated by the Convention continue to be governed by the rules and principles of general international law.

Indeed, in spring 1982, at the time when the draft convention of the Third Conference on the Law of the Sea was on the verge of being provisionally adopted, the ICJ had observed that the convention contained historic rights-related references that were neither defined nor elaborated. As such, these references continued to be governed by the rules of general and customary international law and UNCLOS does not provide any guidance in their regard.

Further, to assert that UNCLOS only intended to preserve those rights that are explicitly provided for in its textual provisions is to interpret international law backward. As a matter of legal stability, general principles of international law do not allow such local custom or tradition-based privately-acquired rights to be terminated at will and without reparation, let alone by inference.

China, nevertheless, bears a responsibility to lay out this "historic rights" claim in a more recognizable manner. Its current formulation is ill-defined and vague. Until such time that such a recognizable claim is furnished, the Line will remain a possible "historic rights" line with a putative basis in modern international law.

NOTE: The author is a resident senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington, DC

MEET THE MAN WHO SELLS PROPERTY NOBODY OWNS

By Chris Arsenault

Brazilian lawyer Aluisio Cantalice has an interesting job: Brokering sales for real estate that nobody officially owns. Sitting shirtless and surrounded by untidy stacks of papers, Cantalice works from a sweltering office inside the sprawling favela of Rio das Pedras, on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. The shanty town is home to an estimated 170,000 people and when someone decides they want to move, buy or sell their home, even if it was built illegally, the lawyer is their go-to man.

"Most of the property trading is informal - between individuals in the community," Cantalice told the Thomson Reuters Foundation during an interview in his office. "These kinds of sales are happening frequently," he said, adding there are no official statistics on the number of black market deals in his community, let alone nationwide.

As Brazil prepares for the Olympic Games, millions of the nation's poorest residents continue to occupy homes and land that is not formally documented within the country's already archaic property system. This means it is difficult for them to prove ownership and they are unable to improve their lot by seeking a bank loan or accessing government services tied to property. Brazil's favela residents are even more vulnerable when it comes to disputes over land ownership. Most rely on community organizations for protection if their tenure is threatened by local militias or developers.

Booming Business

The lack of official deeds has not stopped a brisk business evolving which sees unofficial sales and rental deals being brokered for the thousands of cheap cinderblock homes clinging to the steep hillsides on the peripheries of Rio. A world away from the golden beaches, shiny new high-rise condominiums and trendy bars showcased on postcards, many residents of Rio das Pedras appear content to negotiate property outside the legal system. Mistrust of the state has seen the

growth of informal networks of family and friends who band together to protect their own property interests. "Most people do not want formal ownership, as it comes with high bureaucratic costs and few benefits," Cantalice said, echoing the views of other local residents. The Ministry of Cities, a government department responsible for urban affairs, including the favelas, did not respond to interview requests.

History of Exclusion

More than one in five of Rio de Janeiro's 6.5 million residents live in favelas, according to government data, including many construction workers, service employees and cleaners who keep business running smoothly. Densely packed, largely unplanned neighborhoods of small red brick homes connected by tangled webs of electric wire, favelas often occupy plots of undesirable land surrounding Rio and other Brazilian cities.

Children scamper through narrow alleyways littered with trash as a result of poor public services, and stray dogs search for food in neighborhoods that are often the only option available in a city where low cost housing is at a premium. In much of Rio, monthly rents of 7,000 Brazilian reais (\$2,000) can rival those in Los Angeles or Toronto while the local minimum wage is 880 reais per month.

The favelas first appeared in Rio in the late 19th century and expanded rapidly in the middle of the 20th century due to increased urbanization. Many grew from squatter communities created by new arrivals from Brazil's poor northeast who migrated to the city in search of jobs and opportunities. Following the collapse of Brazil's military dictatorship in 1985, the nation's new constitution of 1988 enshrined a form of tenure or squatter's rights. People who had lived on a plot of land for more than five years received some security against eviction.

These changes, however, did not provide residents with formal ownership. "Favela residents often don't have title, but they have rights," said Desmond Arias, a public policy professor at George Mason

University in the United States, who studies Brazil. "A lot of residents are reluctant to obtain title because they will have to pay taxes," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. In some communities, the residents' association acts as an informal mediator of deals, he said. In others, particularly in favelas dominated by militia groups, such as Rio das Pedras, gangs play a prominent role controlling the market, Arias said.

Extortion Anxiety

Joao and Juliana, the owners of a roadside restaurant in Rio das Pedras, have firsthand experience with these problems. The couple, in their mid-thirties, bought their small restaurant from another local business person in an informal trade. They did not seek the help of a lawyer or government officials and secured the deal without paying property taxes. While this is common within the favela communities, it also exposes residents to exploitation.

"There's intimidation from the militia," Joao told the Thomson Reuters Foundation without providing his last name, fearing reprisals. "All of the store owners must pay a 'security tax' of 25 reais per week." Business owners who refuse to pay face robbery by masked men, or having their stores destroyed, he added. Some residents view the militia and its leaders as Robin Hood like figures, protecting the poor and marginalized when no-one else will, he said.

But Joao does not see it that way. "I don't like the current system (of informal ownership)," he said. "We don't have autonomy to seek benefits from our property." But to resolve it would take a lot of work, and spending money we don't have," Juliana said. The couple estimates that it would cost around 10,000 reais to gain formal title to their property. This would include the bill an architect would charge to prepare a ground plan of their home - built on land informally owned by Juliana's grandmother - and the cost for lawyers and taxation to formalize their documentation. "All of these problems (a lack of formal title, the militia's power and little formal presence of the state) are connected," Juliana said.

Governance Questions

Inside the sparse office of the favela's community council, the elected body which acts as a de facto municipal government, Alexandre Pedro says residents have learned to live without much of a relationship with the state, including a lack of formal property ownership. But that does not mean they are happy about it. "About 80 percent of the problems here would be fixed if the state provided basic services," Pedro, the council's vice president, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Garbage collection service is poor and there are not enough elementary school places for the children of new arrivals to the community. Brazil's recession, described as the worst since the 1930s, has hit local residents hard, Pedro added. Despite job losses, the community's population has still grown by about 25,000 over the past five years. Attempts by the community council to track who owns which plot of land have not borne fruit. "The buildings are going up so fast," he said. "Prices in the informal market have risen by about one third."

This burgeoning demand for property has fuelled a brisk business for brokers like Cantalice who also acts as a de facto mediator for disputes between families and neighbors over increasingly lucrative land and houses. "When I am called to resolve a dispute, I try and get documents such as identification cards or electricity bills to help resolve the case," Cantalice said, leaning back on his swivel chair while his children study at an adjacent desk.

In most cases, favela residents are able to obtain power bills directly from the electricity company to help ascertain their claim to their home, he said. Proof of formal connection to water mains, however, is far more difficult to obtain as many residents siphon it directly from city pipes to avoid paying bills. After years of dealing with the informal market, favela residents and lawyers say it may not be ideal but they are used to it. "The system in Brazil is rather perverse," Cantalice said. — Reuters

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FREAK GOAL GIVES REDS THE EDGE OVER SEOUL

SAITAMA: Tomoya Ugajin's freak goal gave Urawa Red Diamonds a 1-0 win over FC Seoul and a great chance of reaching the AFC Champions League quarter-finals in their Round of 16 first leg yesterday. Ugajin was alone on the edge of the box when he received Ryota Moriwaki's raking cross, and he looked as surprised as anyone when his hopeful volley looped unstopably into the far corner. It was an unexpected but welcome dose of good fortune for the 2007 champions from Japan, who will hope it is a good omen for next week's return leg in the South Korean capital. Ugajin's cross-cum-shot carried shades of Dutch legend Marco van Basten's stunner in the Euro 1988 final apart from the huge dose of luck that put it into the net. FC Seoul created plenty in reply but Brazilian striker Adriano, after scoring 10 in the group stage, was out of sorts and ballooned a golden chance over the goal late in the first half. Seoul keeper Yu Sang-Hun saved sharply at the feet of Yosuke Kashiwagi early in the second half, before Osmar Barba blazed over at the other end on 67 minutes. With two minutes left, Adriano had another chance to level the scores. But his shot was smothered and a pulsating game finished 1-0, to the delight of the vocal Saitama crowd. — AFP



BARCA'S QATAR FRIENDLY SCRAPPED BY SPONSORS

BARCELONA: Spanish champions Barcelona's scheduled friendly against Saudi Arabian side Al-Ahli Saudi in Doha, Qatar, has been cancelled by the club's Qatari sponsors just six days before the game was due to take place. "Qatar Airways, the host and sponsor of the friendly match between FC Barcelona and Al-Ahli Saudi FC, which was scheduled to be played on May 24 in Doha, has opted to postpone the game," Barcelona said in a statement yesterday. "That same week, the region is also hosting the prestigious Emir Cup Final, as well as games being played in the AFC League. "The coincidence of the match with these major sporting events means that the game will now be postponed to a later date (to be announced shortly) in order to encourage the best possible attendance." The news comes as talks over extending Qatar Airways' shirt sponsorship of the five-time European champions continues to stall. Barca signed a 150 million euro (\$170 million) five-year deal with the Qatar Foundation in 2010 which runs out at the end of this season. — AFP

CARDIFF HIRE TROLLOPE AS NEW HEAD COACH

LONDON: Championship club Cardiff City appointed former Wales international Paul Trollope as their new head coach yesterday. Trollope was hired as successor to Russell Slade, who was removed as manager at the end of the season and has taken up a new role as the club's head of football. The 43-year-old former Bristol Rovers boss had been part of Slade's coaching team since February 2015 and had no qualms about accepting Vincent Tan's offer, despite reports the Malaysian owner has often been involved in first-team affairs. Cardiff missed out on the Championship play-offs after finishing eighth and Trollope promised he would do the job his way as he looks to steer the Bluebirds into the Premier League. "I'm honored to get this position, it's a good challenge and one I'm looking forward to getting started with," Trollope said. "It's a good club and it was an absolute no-brainer to do the job. "Every coach and manager has got their own philosophies, their own way of playing, handling players and preparation. — AFP



METS BLANK WASHINGTON NATIONALS 2-0

NEW YORK: Noah Syndergaard brought his 100 mph heat and struck out 10, Curtis Granderson homered on Max Scherzer's first pitch, and the New York Mets beat the Washington Nationals 2-0 Tuesday night to stop a four-game skid. Daniel Murphy returned to Citi Field with a major league-best .400 batting average and drew two early standing ovations, then got booed. The former Mets postseason star got one of five hits Syndergaard (4-2) gave up in seven innings. Michael Conforto also homered as the Mets sent the NL East leaders to their third straight loss. Jeury Familia worked the ninth for his 13th save in as many chances. Scherzer (4-3) also struck out 10 in his first start since fanning a record-tying 20 against Detroit in his last outing. Scherzer allowed just three hits in 6 1/3 innings but two of them left the ballpark.

ATHLETICS 8, RANGERS 5

Khris Davis hit a game-ending grand slam with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning for his third homer of the night, giving Oakland a victory over Texas. Ian Desmond hit a two-run homer off Ryan Madson (2-0) in the top of the ninth to put Texas ahead 5-4, but Davis and the A's weren't done. Pinch-hitter Stephen Vogt reached on an infield single and went to third on Coco Crisp's double. Two outs and an intentional walk later, Davis launched a drive to left field off Shawn Tolleson (0-2), handing the Rangers' closer his fourth blown save. With his excited teammates waiting at home plate, Davis stopped along the third base line and mimicked a pull-up jumper with his helmet as if he were Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry next door in the NBA playoffs. It was the first three-homer game for Davis, who matched his career high with six RBIs.

DODGERS 5, ANGELS 1

Clayton Kershaw improved to 4-0 in May, Joc Pederson hit two solo homers and the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Angels in the Freeway Series. Kershaw (6-1) allowed one run and four hits in eight innings, struck out 11 and walked none. The left-hander retired his final 13 batters in lowering his ERA to 1.67. Kenley Jansen retired the side in the ninth for his 14th save. Jered Weaver (3-3) gave up four runs - three earned - and 10 hits in seven innings, struck out two and walked two in his first start against the Dodgers since May 29, 2013.

GIANTS 5, PADRES 1

Madison Bumgarner threw a five-hitter and struck out 11 for his first complete game this season and Brandon Crawford homered and drove in all five runs to lead NL West-leading San Francisco to a victory against San Diego. The benches cleared after Bumgarner struck out Wil Myers to end the third.



OAKLAND: Khris Davis #2 of the Oakland Athletics and teammates celebrate after Davis hit a walk off grand slam home run against the Texas Rangers in the bottom of the ninth inning at O.co Coliseum on May 17, 2016. — AFP

Bumgarner stared at Myers as he walked off the field, and the two exchanged words. They had to be separated, but no punches were thrown. Bumgarner and Myers, the Padres' first baseman, appeared to laugh off their differences when the pitcher walked leading off the ninth. Bumgarner (5-2) came within three outs of a shutout before allowing Matt Kemp's homer off the third deck of the Western Metal Supply Co. building in the left field corner, his 10th. Colin Rea (3-2) allowed three runs and four hits in five innings, struck out three and walked two.

ASTROS 6, WHITE SOX 5, 11 INNINGS

Evan Gattis celebrated his return to the majors with a two-run homer in the 11th inning that lifted Houston over Chicago. Astros rookie Tyler White hit a pair of solo shots for his first multihome game and capped a three-hit night with a double. Gattis, who returned from Double-A Corpus Christi earlier in the day, lined an 0-2 pitch from

reliever Matt Albers (1-3) into the left-field bullpen for his second homer this season. Pat Neshek (1-0) pitched a scoreless inning for the win. Tony Sipp allowed Adam Eaton's RBI double in the 11th before earning his first save.

DIAMONDBACKS 5, YANKEES 3

Zack Greinke pitched effectively into the eighth inning and Arizona clinched its first regular-season series over New York. Arizona blew out the Yankees 12-2 in the series opener and withstood a late rally Tuesday to win a regular-season series against the Bronx Bombers for the first time in six tries. Jake Lamb hit a two-run homer off Michael Pineda (1-5) and the Diamondbacks, who beat New York in the 2001 World Series, had 10 hits. Greinke (4-3) looked the part of an ace the Diamondbacks were expecting after signing him to a six-year, \$175 million contract, striking out seven before appearing to tire late. Starlin Castro homered for New York.

BREWERS 4, CUBS 2

Chase Anderson took a no-hitter into the eighth inning and finished with 8 2/3 strong innings to lift Milwaukee over Chicago. The Cubs entered averaging 5.94 runs per game, but Anderson (2-5) stopped them almost cold to snap a personal five-game skid. Ben Zobrist ended Anderson's no-hit bid with a double on the first pitch of the eighth. Anderson was perfect through 5 1/3 innings before walking Miguel Montero on a 3-2 pitch. Jason Heyward and Kris Bryant spoiled Anderson's shutout with solo homers in the ninth. Cubs fans joined the hometown crowd with a standing ovation while Anderson walked off the field. Jeremy Jeffress got the final out for his 11th save. Hendricks (2-3) allowed four runs in 5 1/3 innings.

ROCKIES 3, CARDINALS 1

Chad Bettis took a shutout into the seventh inning and drove in a run to lead Colorado to a victory. Nolan Arenado and Dustin Garneau had RBI singles, and Bettis added a run-scoring grounder as the Rockies got their season-high fifth straight win and won for only the fifth time in 22 games at Busch Stadium since 2010. Bettis (4-2) didn't give up a hit until Jeremy Hazelbaker beat out an infield single leading off the fifth. The right-hander allowed five singles in 6 2/3 innings, walking two and striking out four. Jaime Garcia (3-3) allowed three runs and five singles with four walks in five innings for St. Louis.

PIRATES 12, BRAVES 9

Gregory Polanco doubled three times and Pittsburgh ruined Brian Snitker's debut as interim manager of Atlanta. John Jaso, Andrew McCutchen and Francisco Cervelli had three hits each for the Pirates, who led by nine runs early then held on after an extended rally by the Braves. Juan Nicasio (4-3) survived five innings to pick up the win thanks in large part to Pittsburgh's season-high 21 hits. Mark Melancon worked the ninth for his 13th save. Malle Smith hit two homers for the Braves, playing hours after manager Fredi Gonzalez was fired after five-plus seasons with Atlanta languishing in last place in the NL East. Rookie Aaron Blair (0-3) failed to make it out of the second inning as the Braves fell to a major-league worst 9-29.

ROYALS 8, RED SOX 4

Paulo Orlando hit a two-run homer, Eric Hosmer also went deep and Kansas City beat hot-hitting Boston. Orlando also tripled and had a two-run single. Omar Infante and Alcides Escobar drove in runs as Kansas City continued to slowly break out of its season-long offensive funk. Yordano Ventura (4-2), who has struggled with walks all season, issued one free pass in 5 2/3 innings for Kansas City. He allowed four runs and seven hits before exiting with a one-run lead. Rick Porcello (6-2) gave up five runs, four earned, on eight hits and two walks for Boston.

MARINERS 10, ORIOLES 0

Nelson Cruz homered and drove in five runs, Kyle Seager hit a three-run drive and Seattle cruised past Baltimore. Robinson Cano had three hits, two RBIs and scored three runs for the Mariners, who repeatedly circled the bases on a wet, chilly night at Camden Yards. Wade Miley (4-2) allowed two hits and walked three in six sharp innings. Baltimore starter Ubaldo Jimenez (2-4) allowed six runs and five hits in 4 1/3 innings. The Orioles managed only two hits.

RAYS 12, BLUE JAYS 2

Chris Archer pitched six innings to win his third straight decision, Brad Miller had three hits and three RBIs and Tampa Bay routed Toronto again. Logan Morrison had two hits and two RBIs for the Rays, who beat Toronto 13-2 on Monday night. Tampa Bay has scored in each of the first three innings in back-to-back games for the first time in team history. Blue Jays right-hander Marcus Stroman (4-1) allowed a career-worst 13 hits in 5 2/3 innings, and the slumping Blue Jays lost their fourth straight. Archer (3-4) allowed two runs and four hits.

INDIANS 13, REDS 1

Rajai Davis had three hits, drove in three runs and scored four, and Cleveland benefited from four straight bases-loaded walks from

reliever Steve Delabar to rout Cincinnati. Jason Kipnis, Carlos Santana and Mike Napoli each had two RBIs, and Francisco Lindor and Lonnie Chisenhall had three hits apiece. Danny Salazar (4-2) gave up one run and five hits in 7 1/3 innings, struck out eight and walked one. He retired 16 straight batters after Jay Bruce's one-out single in the second. Alfredo Simon (1-4) allowed a career-high 10 runs and 14 hits - one shy of his most - in 4 1/3 innings.

PHILLIES 3, MARLINS 1

Tommy Joseph hit his first major league homer as part of three-hit game to lead Philadelphia. Six Phillies pitchers combined to strike out 17 Marlins. Joseph hit a solo shot in the second inning off Marlins starter Wei-Yin Chen (3-2) and hit cleanup in just third big-league game. Vince Velasquez (5-1) struck out 10 in five innings, his highest total since he fanned 16 San Diego Padres in an April 14 shutout. Velasquez has not pitched out of the seventh inning since that game and was lifted against the Marlins after 103 pitches.

TIGERS 7, TWINS 2

Ian Kinsler and JD Martinez hit consecutive homers during a seven-run seventh inning, and Detroit beat Minnesota as Tigers manager Brad Ausmus served a one-game suspension. Jose Iglesias hit a tiebreaking two-run single for the Tigers, who have won three straight after losing 11 of their previous 12. Ausmus was suspended one game for his tirade Monday, when he was ejected during Detroit's 10-8 win, but since their manager's frustration boiled over, the Tigers have enjoyed mostly positive developments on the field. Minnesota's Phil Hughes took a shutout into the seventh but was lifted after allowing Miguel Cabrera's triple and Victor Martinez's sacrifice fly. The Twins needed three relievers to get the final two outs of the inning as Detroit broke through in a big way. Kyle Ryan (1-1) got the win in relief, and Michael Tonkin (1-2) took the loss. — AP

Want to be a Real Madrid star?
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VIVA OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN MADRID SOCCER ACADEMY

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, VIVA, announced an open invitation to all male youths with soccer skills between the ages of 12 and 16 years old, to join in Real Madrid Soccer Academy try-outs in Kuwait, held on 26 May 2016 from 4 pm to 5 pm at Corner Soccer field next to the Kuwait Towers. The try-outs will focus on different technical aspects, such as dribbling, short passing, turning and finishing. Professional Real Madrid coaches will select the best players to join Real Madrid's Soccer Academy during summer. Commenting on this occasion, Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Director of Corporate Communications at VIVA said: "VIVA is always keen to support local and international sport activities, as part of its CSR program to grant the youth in Kuwait

the chance to communicate between each other and enhance their skills, especially in soccer game, the most popular game in the world. In addition, to offer them the opportunity to get in touch with international coaches to learn the newest techniques and plans in soccer." Real Madrid Football Club is one of the most successful football clubs in the world, and has received many accolades, including: The best club of the 20th Century FIFA Trophy, 10 Champions League, 3 Intercontinental cups, 32 Spanish La Liga titles, 2 European Super cups, 2 Super European cup, amongst others. To find out more about VIVA's partnerships, latest offers and promotions, visit one of the 70 VIVA branches, or the VIVA website at www.viva.com.kw, or call VIVA's 24-hour call center on 102.

MLB results/standings

Cleveland 13, Cincinnati 1; Pittsburgh 12, Atlanta 9; Philadelphia 3, Miami 1; Seattle 10, Baltimore 0; Tampa Bay 12, Toronto 2; Detroit 7, Minnesota 2; NY Mets 2, Washington 0; Milwaukee 4, Chicago Cubs 2; Houston 6, Chicago White Sox 5 (11 innings); Kansas City 8, Boston 4; Colorado 3, St. Louis 1; Arizona 5, NY Yankees 3; Oakland 8, Texas 5; LA Dodgers 5, LA Angels 1; San Francisco 5, San Diego 1.

American League Eastern Division				National League Eastern Division				
W	L	PCT	GB	W	L	PCT	GB	
Baltimore	23	14	.622	-	Washington	23	16	.590
Boston	24	15	.615	-	NY Mets	22	16	.579
Tampa Bay	18	19	.486	5	Philadelphia	23	17	.575
Toronto	19	22	.463	6	Miami	21	18	.538
NY Yankees	16	22	.421	7.5	Atlanta	9	29	.237
Central Division				Central Division				
Chicago W Sox	24	15	.615	-	Chicago Cubs	27	10	.730
Cleveland	19	17	.528	3.5	Pittsburgh	21	17	.553
Kansas City	19	19	.500	4.5	St. Louis	20	19	.513
Detroit	18	21	.462	6	Milwaukee	17	22	.436
Minnesota	10	28	.263	13.5	Cincinnati	15	24	.385
Western Division				Western Division				
Seattle	22	16	.579	-	San Francisco	23	18	.561
Texas	22	18	.550	1	Colorado	20	18	.526
Oakland	18	22	.450	5	LA Dodgers	21	19	.525
LA Angels	17	22	.436	5.5	Arizona	19	23	.452
Houston	16	24	.400	7	San Diego	17	23	.425

FRENCH ENTHUSIASTS DEFY BAN ON MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

PARIS: Mixed Martial Arts is trying to shrug off its image as an ultra-violent, inhuman and even degrading sport in France, where it is banned for pros but loved by amateurs. "MMA isn't a hooligan's sport," insists Bertrand Amoussou, a trainer at an upscale gym in a quiet Paris neighborhood in Montmartre. Combining elements from boxing, judo, karate and wrestling, MMA is allowed across Europe except in France and Norway.

It is played barefoot and without a helmet, while hands are protected only with fingerless gloves. Despite the ban, the discipline has proved irresistible to tens of thousands of amateurs in France. "MMA suffers from its past image when it was pretty savage, with bloody fights resembling street brawls," said Taylor Lapilus, a former jujitsu champion. At age 24, he became one of the only French professionals to compete in the premier Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) in the United States, having trained in his home country but able only to compete abroad.

"Most people misunderstand the sport," Lapilus said. "It's not unusual for people to ask me if it's allowed to hit below the belt, or to bite, or to poke your opponent in the eye. MMA has strict rules!" The rules, which are internationally standardized, do allow contestants to be hit, even in the head, when they are on the mat. A player can win

through a knockout blow, submission-locking the opponent in one of many types of holds-or a referee's decision. The octagonal "cage" in which the fighting is held is designed to protect contestants-and spectators-when they are thrown.

'Chess for legs and feet'

"Once you get a taste of it you can't let it go," said Lisa Amghar, who swears MMA is the first sport she has played. "MMA is very complete. You leave the session feeling serene and calm," the 35-year-old said after sparring with Adams Soulaïmana, a hunk of a guy standing 1.93 metres (six foot three inches) tall and weighing 120 kilos (265 pounds), a professional dancer by profession. "MMA is great because there's no repetition," said Arnaud Colom, a 50-year-old orthopaedic surgeon who has long practised martial arts. "It's a mix of all the combat sports that uses techniques for both the feet and the hands."

Matthieu Quidu, a sports professor at Lyon's Ecole Normale Supérieure, a prestigious university, has begun attracting more and more enthusiasts to his MMA class. "For my students, it's a chess game for the legs and feet. It requires strategy (and) adaptability, which are important qualities in professional life," said Quidu, a researcher in sports sociology. As with



PARIS: People take part in a MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) training session in Paris. — AFP

any combat sport, MMA can be very dangerous. "When fighting is down on the mat, it uses submission techniques that are potentially fatal," Quidu said. "The art of it is to apply the right amount of force to make your opponent quit without hurting him," he added. "Statistically in terms of injuries it's behind gym-

nastics," says James Elliott, who represents the UFC in Europe, citing American studies.

'Humans are voyeurs'

The discipline is a sport, and as such the goal is not to hurt your opponent, he said. It is also a show that attracts millions of view-

ers on television, generating huge profits for broadcasters. "You never know what's gonna happen at an MMA event," Elliott adds. The fights can also be bloody. "Blood is always spectacular, but it's not that serious in medical terms," said psychiatrist Jerome Palazzolo, noting that "the eyebrow is one of the places that bleeds the most." "If you get hit hard in the head or are knocked out it can be much worse, but this doesn't happen with MMA," he said.

People have always been drawn to violent spectacles, he said, likening MMA bouts to "circus games." "Humans are voyeurs, and these spectacles perform a sort of exorcism. They reach certain emotions that are deeply rooted in us, like compassion and hatred." "But the ones who win at MMA are not the guys who hit hard but the ones with great technique," he added. And the true connoisseurs among the fans are fascinated by technique more than by staging because "MMA blends the best of all these sports," Amoussou said. Because of what Palazzolo called a "habitation phenomenon", the uninitiated may fail to understand and appreciate the violence of MMA. The danger is that young people "thirsting for violence" with no appreciation for combat sports may replicate the moves and the holds without containing their strength, he said. — AFP



LAS VEGAS: Brazilian Lyoto Machida (right) fighting with Sam "The Alaskan Assassin" Hoger of the US during their UFC 67. In the space of 15 years, two brothers from Las Vegas have transformed UFC from a little known, somewhat frowned upon brand into the dominant company in mixed martial arts. — AFP

UFC, THE BRAND TO BEAT IN MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

NEW YORK: In the space of 15 years, two brothers from Las Vegas have transformed UFC from a little known, somewhat frowned upon brand into the dominant company in mixed martial arts. So much so that it is even competing with more traditional sports. April 14 will go down as a historic date in the young life of the Ultimate Fighting Championship. That was the day New York became the last US state to legalize professional MMA fights.

Lorenzo Fertitta, a stocky, well-dressed man of 48 who is the co-owner of UFC, says this is perhaps the last big piece of the puzzle he has been assembling. "I think it means a lot, because historically, anybody who was a detractor, who was against the sport, first thing they were putting up was, 'well, you're not even legal in New York,'" he said. "So obviously, it takes that argument away." Coming from the casino world, Fertitta and his brother Frank paid a measly two million dollars in 2001 for a contest that was known for little more than how violent it was. Around the same time, the mixed martial arts world developed unified rules that got rid of dangerous fighting moves and set the stage for a new, more respectable image.

But it would be another four years before things really changed with the reality show "The Ultimate Fighter", in which UFC hopefuls took each other on. "The Ultimate Fighter drove casual viewers to watch MMA and the UFC that were never really interested before," said Joe Favorito, a sports marketing specialist. "They became very quickly educated so they then had a product on free television in the US and in Canada that drove towards their pay per view," he added. UFC president Dana White said UFC 196, an event held in March in Las Vegas and featuring Irish superstar Conor McGregor, broke all revenue records for the firm and was watched on TV by 1.5 million paying viewers. Fertitta said in late December that the company would post revenue of 600 million dollars in 2015.

70,000 people at a fight

Parent company Zuffa was reported earlier this month to be in advanced talks to sell the company-valued at between \$3.5 and \$4 billion to a Chinese conglomerate. But White denied the reports as "overblown," adding: "The UFC is not for sale." The more than 500 fighters the UFC has under contract are independent contractors. That gives it a big advantage: in traditional major US sports leagues, players belong to unions that are often quite powerful. UFC does not seem intimidated by its competitors-Bellator MMA, Cage Warriors or M-1 — even though media giant Viacom acquired Bellator MMA in 2011. UFC markets its product very well, managing to lure sponsors and strike a deal in 2014 with sports apparel manufacturer Reebok.

The fame of some UFC stars, led by American Ronda Rousey, has spread outside the octagon, the name given to the area where UFC fighters battle it out. Big name stars come to watch, such as actor Leonardo DiCaprio and singer Bruno Mars. And besides the fights themselves, the company now has UFC Gym, a network of workout spots open to the public. "I think at first females were a little timid to come in because of the name UFC," Rich Van Houten, who owns a UFC Gym outlet in Jersey City.

But the brand has done a good job of showing it's all about learning a new way to work out and that "you're not gonna get punched in the face," he added. UFC says that after TV, sponsorships and sports merchandising and gyms, the sky is the limit. It has fights planned for November 12 at Madison Square Garden, one of New York's holiest sports arenas. Lorenzo Fertitta is talking about staging fights at Yankee Stadium in 2017 with 70,000 spectators, which would be a record there. Then there is the contract for the right to broadcast UFC fights. It expires in 2018. UFC told AFP it is the only major championship whose broadcast rights are coming up for grabs before 2021. So interest will be keen. —AP

COOK EYES 'BIG MILESTONE'

LEEDS: England captain Alastair Cook said yesterday he was well aware that his looming membership of the 10,000 Test-run club would be a significant landmark in an already successful career. The 31-year-old left-handed opener needs just 36 more runs to become the first Englishman-and only 12th player overall-to score 10,000 runs in Tests and he will hope to get there during this week's first Test against Sri Lanka at Headingley, which starts today. "It would mean a lot and hopefully I can get there sooner rather than later so we can talk about something else," said Cook, speaking at Headingley, Yorkshire's headquarters in Leeds, northern England yesterday. "It's a big milestone in terms of the people who have done it previously so it would be great to try and score these 36 runs."

"I've just got to put that to bed after this press conference and try and do what I've done in the previous 10 years, which is just try and concentrate on that ball coming down and nothing else." The last time England played Sri Lanka in a Test at Headingley, two years ago, was one of the

low points of Cook's career. Sri Lanka, inspired by a brilliant hundred from captain Angelo Mathews-still their skipper-won a thrilling match by 100 runs off the penultimate ball of the game to secure their first Test series win in England. Cook's tactics were widely criticized and he pondered resigning the England captaincy.

Tough moment

But the Essex batsman decided to carry on and has since been rewarded with last year's Ashes success and a series win in South Africa during England's most recent Test series. "It was a game of fine margins and Sri Lanka came out on top and thoroughly deserved it," he said as he recalled the 2014 Test at Headingley. "It was a real tough moment for me as a captain, there's no doubt about that, but I'm glad I hung in there for what's happened since." "It's probably taken me three years to feel comfortable in the job and hopefully I can carry on for a bit, and while I'm still enjoying it and while the guys are still responding I'm staying there." —AFP

AMERICAN WOMEN EMBRACE MIXED MARTIAL ARTS, CRUSH STEREOTYPES

LOS ANGELES: Sweat glistens on Brooke Carlucci's brow as she drives home kicks and jabs. She and a dozen fellow Mixed Martial Arts students can crush anyone's notion that extreme combat sports are a man's thing. Focused and with her body in combat position, the 20-year-old journalism student pounds the bag hanging in front of her: she's here to learn how to defend herself, but also to keep fit, blow off steam and have fun. "People think it's just for boys, and it's not. Girls can do it too," she said at a gym in La Mirada, south of Los Angeles. "We can be strong, we can have fun and grow." "There is definitely the stereotype that it's violent, bloody and gross. On TV it's seen as bad, but girls can do it. And it doesn't have to be violent," she told AFP, exhausted but happy after a tough workout, rubbing the bandages that protect her hands.

Men ran the show for many years in the MMA world: a form of combat sport where anything goes-meaning a dizzying flurry of techniques and moves from judo, wrestling, boxing, kickboxing, karate and other martial arts. The point is to maximize physical contact. Its popularity started growing in the United States in 1993 when the firm Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) turned it into a multi-million dollar moneymaker. It shows the fights on a pay cable channel that is seen by 800 million people around the world.

Enter Ronda

The beginning of the end of MMA as a boys' club came eight years ago when Ronda Rousey, at the time an Olympic judo star who took a bronze medal in Beijing, found a new direction in the combat sport. Now 29, she is the world's most famous woman fighter. She is also the world's eighth most highly paid sportsperson, with an annual income of around \$6.5 million including \$3.5 from advertising. Rousey's powerful presence in the ring, her intelligent handling of her fame, her shrewd businesswoman's instincts, her wide appeal and her beauty all have helped turn her into one of the most influential figures in sports worldwide.

Strong, and proud of it

The "Ronda Rousey effect" has gone a long way in recent years toward sparking the surge in



CALIFORNIA: Students train in a Mixed Martial Arts class at the UFC Gym in La Mirada, California. — AFP

women around the country stopping into gyms to give MMA a go. "She has unquestionably brought an influx of young girls and women into MMA," said Josh Gross who has been covering the sport for years. "I don't think there's any question Rousey's influence has made women look at MMA and see it as not so much a thing of violence or reckless behavior or brutality." Rousey is adamant about encouraging women not to shy away from MMA. "They've never had the idea that it was possible to be there before. She's almost a superhero to them," Gross added.

Genevieve Soszynski can back that up. She has been teaching MMA at different Los Angeles area gyms for a decade. And every day, she has more women students keen to hone combat skills and feel stronger.

"It's great to see more women get comfortable with it and want to learn a new skill and be confident doing that," she said. "Some of them

are a little intimidated by the contact. (But) that initial intimidation quickly melts away once they get in." Abrey Martin, one of her students, is dead serious about her own training and progress.

Each blow to the bag, each lightning kick highlights her determination. She is clearly rushing on adrenaline as she pounds away looking for perfect hits. "I really wanted to do something that made me feel strong and not embarrassed to be strong. It can be passionate and fun, and something that gives you strength and growth and you can learn a lot from it. It's not violent," she said without catching a breath. Just like Martin, Carlucci is fine with her body showing her progress, and fine with her trim lines taking on fearsome new curves. "I think it's cool that girls can have muscles and be really strong and not have that stereotype of 'stick thin.' It looks awesome," she said. "You feel sexy." — AFP

DOG INVASION SPARKS CHAOS AT IPL MATCH BAILEY UNHURT AFTER 'TRUCK-LIKE' BOUNCER

NEW DELHI: A pitch invasion by a dog caused chaos at an Indian Premier League game between Pune and Delhi, sending bemused players scurrying around the pitch to try to shoo it away. Spectators cheered as the lively mutt led a series of fielders and groundstaff on a chase around the stadium in the western city of Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. Delhi Daredevils fielder Rishabh Pant initially tried to shoo away the invader after it settled down beside him five balls into the second inning.

But the dog, tail wagging, was enjoying its time in the limelight far too much to be ushered off the pitch. Delhi's South African import Chris Morris tried to lure it off the field as Australia pacer Nathan Coulter-Nile waved a blue towel at it. The brief interlude did little to disturb the concentration of Rising Pune Supergiants' opener Ajinkya Rahane, who drove the team home with his unbeaten 42 against a hapless Delhi in a rain-shortened game. India has thousands of stray dogs and it is not the first time a sporting event has been interrupted by a canine. In 2011, India was forced to halt its first Formula 1 practice session when a stray dog ran onto the Buddh International Circuit.

'Truck-like' bouncer

In another development, Australia's George Bailey was struck by a bouncer in the Indian Premier League that sent his helmet flying, an experience he said was like "getting hit in the face by a truck". Bailey, playing for the Rising Pune Supergiants on Tuesday night, was not injured by the bouncer that he top-edged onto his helmet, shattering parts and knocking it off his head. "Those watching on TV got a better picture than I did, because all I sort of remember was it was like getting hit in the face by a truck," Bailey said of the delivery from countryman Nathan Coulter-Nile. "It was pretty quick. I was quite glad to have one of the new helmets on," said Bailey. Helmets have been strengthened to meet stringent safety standards in the wake of the Phillip Hughes tragedy in 2014. The Australian batsman, who played 26 Tests, died



VISAKHAPATNAM: Delhi Daredevils player Chris Morris plays with a stray dog during the 2016 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Rising Pune Supergiants and Delhi Daredevils. — AFP

from bleeding on the brain after being hit on the base of the skull by a rising ball at the Sydney Cricket Ground during a domestic match. Bailey stayed on to see Pune outplay the Delhi Daredevils by 19 runs in the rain-hit game in the

eastern city of Visakhapatnam. "A couple (of players) were disappointed that the helmet did not roll on to the stumps but most people were checking how he was, said Bailey who remained unbeaten on eight runs.— Agencies

OLYMPICS

POST - 'LUCHA', ARGENTINA'S LEONAS
TARGET ELUSIVE OLYMPIC GOLD MEDAL

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina have the ability to win an elusive Olympic gold medal in women's hockey at the Rio Games despite losing talismanic, eight-times world player of the year Luciana Aymar, coach Gabriel Minadeo said. Aymar, famed and feared for her weaving runs and dribbling skills, retired at the end of 2014 after a medal-studded career - though without ever having won a gold. "Argentina must learn to play without her, she wasn't going to be eternal ... I think Argentina has potential and the players to be able to replace 'Lucha' with another gameplan," Minadeo said.

"We're going to be able to show Argentina are a power without having 'Lucha'," said Minadeo, whose team will take part in the Champions Trophy in England next month. "What she had was that she resolved things for you when they got complicated, with an individual move, pulling something out of the hat," he said after a practice at the Cenard national athletics training centre in the capital. However, for all her achievements, Aymar never managed to add the gold medal to two silver and two bronzes she won at the previous four Games starting with silver at Sydney 2000 when the team earned their nickname Las Leonas (lionesses). Forward Carla Rebecchi, who took over from Aymar as team captain, said they had set themselves the target of the gold medal after winning a second silver at the London Games in 2012. "We don't want to put pressure on ourselves but we know it's the medal we're missing and it's also a dream, we know it's difficult but we're doing everything we can ... to compete at the highest level," she said. Minadeo believes Argentina can take that final step without Aymar, who retired midway through an Olympic four-year cycle after winning the team's fifth and her sixth Champions Trophy on home soil in Mendoza. There was no discernible slump in the team last year when they won the world league and they are now building strongly for Rio.

Dynamic game

"Argentina has forwards who hurt rival teams. They have a passing game that is improving and is very dynamic and I think that's essential in hockey," said Minadeo, who picks his squad from the local amateur championship and nurtures them towards a higher level. "We've got to take out our 'chip' for national (league) hockey which is a lot slower, one-on-one," he said. "Internationally,



Luciana Aymar

you don't elude (opponents) so much, what eludes them is the pass (you make), so if Argentina improve that I think it will be fundamental. It's a key to breaking down rivals' defensive systems." Argentina may, however, still miss the dribbling runs that earned Aymar the epithet of the Maradona of women's hockey and were often a key to the team's successes. Minadeo said the newer girls in the team were being put through a crash course in matches so that they go into the Rio tournament with plenty of experience of top competition.

They started the season with six friendlies against touring New Zealand in the Atlantic seaside resort of Mar del Plata in February-March. This was followed by a tour of Belgium and Germany in April, friendlies at the Olympic venue in Rio in May and another trip to Europe for the

Champions Trophy in England from June 18-26. "In July, four countries will come here (to Argentina for more friendlies) so each player will get (to Rio) with at least 30-35 matches which is a very good playing base," said Minadeo, a former men's Olympic player going to his seventh Games and fourth as a coach.

Minadeo said taking part in the Olympics was the greatest experience for an amateur athlete. But competitors were isolated at a Games from what might be going on in the city staging them and Rio would be no different despite political turmoil and the Zika health risk to pregnant women. "One is kind of on the margins of those things," he said. "Today we don't think about (Zika) but we depend on the COA's (Argentine Olympic Committee) information to know how to watch out for ourselves." — Reuters



File photo shows a technician holding blood samples about to be tested at the French national anti-doping laboratory, in Chatenay-Malabry, outside Paris. US officials have opened an investigation into explosive allegations of a government orchestrated doping program in Russia involving dozens of its top athletes. — AFP

ATHLETES AND FEDERATIONS
FACE OLYMPIC DOPING BANS

KUALA LUMPUR: In this file photo, IOC President Thomas Bach speaks at a press conference after the 128th IOC session in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Bach said yesterday that the entire sports federations could be suspended if allegations of state-supported Russian doping at the 2014 Sochi Olympics are proven. — AP

LAUSANNE: IOC president Thomas Bach said yesterday that athletes and federations face tough sanctions up to a lifetime ban as he warned that doping has hit "an unprecedented level of criminality". The International Olympic Committee leader also stepped up calls on Russia to clear up accusations of interference in testing at its doping laboratory during the 2014 Sochi Winter Games. In a new sign of pressure on Russian sport, the New York Times said US prosecutors have started an investigation into doping by Russian athletes.

With 31 athletes from 12 countries already facing a ban from the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in August after new tests on samples from the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Bach warned of new punishment if accusations against Russia were proved. The allegations against the Sochi laboratory are "very detailed and therefore very worrying", Bach said in a commentary published in newspapers around the world. "Should the investigation prove the allegations true it would represent a shocking new dimension in doping with an ... unprecedented level of criminality," added Bach.

He said sanctions "could range from life-long Olympic bans for any implicated person, to tough financial sanctions, to acceptance of suspension or exclusion of entire national federations like the already existing one for the Russian athletics federation." The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) suspended Russia in November after the World Anti-Doping Agency said there was a "state-sponsored" doping campaign in Russian athletics.

Bach warned that a WADA inquiry into Russia's actions in Sochi in 2014 could "greatly influence" whether its athletes are allowed to return for Rio. "Should there be evidence of an organized system contaminating other sports, the international federations and the IOC would have to make the difficult decision between collective responsibility and individual justice," Bach even said sporting authorities would have to consider whether the "innocent until guilty" maxim should still be applied to the "contaminated" federations.

With doping scandals mounting, the IOC announced Tuesday that 31 athletes from the 2008 Beijing Olympics had failed tests after their samples were reexamined. The athletes are from 12 countries. Some 454

Beijing tests were re-examined and the results from 250 samples retested from the 2012 London Games will be announced in a week, IOC officials said. Bach said: "This decisive action will most likely stop some dozens of doped athletes participating in the Rio Olympic Games."

He said in a separate briefing that the new testing had uncovered athletes "who participated in Beijing and in London and may have qualified for Rio." The IOC executive board has demanded that WADA start "a fully fledged investigation" into allegations that Russia's secret services and sports ministry subverted testing at the laboratory for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. This has been alleged by a former head of the Russian anti-doping agency now in hiding in the United States. The IOC has instructed its lab in Lausanne to re-examine samples from Sochi "using the most modern and efficient methods at its disposal." The Sochi samples are stored for 10 years in the facility in Lausanne. Russian authorities have strongly denied any wrongdoing. But it faces a desperate struggle to get back into the IAAF so its athletes can compete in Rio. The IAAF is to take a decision on June 17 on whether to let the All-Russian Athletics Federation back into the global body. He said he had not had any communication from President Vladimir Putin over the sporting scandal however. Russia's Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko said on Sunday that his country was "sorry" and "ashamed" over the doping violations. But he added that it was "absurd" to believe that Russian athletes were involved in systematic doping at the Sochi Olympics.

Mutko insisted it would be unfair to stop Russian athletes competing in Rio. US authorities have meanwhile opened an investigation into the allegations of government-orchestrated doping in Russia, the New York Times reported, quoting two people with knowledge of the probe led by the US attorney's office in New York. Prosecutors are investigating Russian government officials, athletes, coaches, anti-doping authorities and others who could stand to profit, said the Times. Even though the case involves people living outside the United States, US courts allow prosecutors to bring cases against foreigners abroad if there is at least a tenuous connection to the United States. — AFP

IMPROVING INDIA TO KEEP
EXPECTATIONS IN CHECK

MUMBAI: Roelant Oltmans fully understands what a men's hockey medal would mean to India's success-starved fans but the Dutch coach will not burden his players with the pressure of bringing one home from the Rio Games. Once-mighty India are the most decorated nation in the sport's Olympic history but the South Asians collected the last of their eight gold medals way back at the Moscow Games in 1980.

The sport has been in steady decline since that success 36 year ago and its popularity hit a nadir when India failed to qualify for the Beijing Games in 2008. The team representing a nation of 1.25 billion people did recover to seal a spot at the London Games four years later but finished last among the 12 countries taking part. "We can only learn from past mistakes," Oltmans, who turns 62 next week, told Reuters in an interview. "Now we are going in a different direction and we are working hard to get the bit of glory back for the country and that's what I am here for. We are moving in the right direction."

Oltmans, who became India's high performance director in 2013, inherited the coach's job last July following the sacking of compatriot Paul van Ass. Under Oltmans, a

relatively inexperienced team finished second behind Australia at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup in Malaysia last month, fuelling renewed hope for a first Olympic medal in more than three decades. "I know it's (expectations) there, I can't change it," he said from the team's training camp in Bengaluru. "The only thing I can do is take the pressure off the players and encourage them to show the next level of quality."

Mental training

"I only hope the billion people and more are looking at the players who have worked their hearts out for the last couple of years to get back to that level again. I have seen their attitude and how they work every day to make that happen and that's what makes me happy." The team have spent six-to-eight hours working on all aspects of the game, including sports psychology, for six days a week at the camp. Oltmans also believes that seventh ranked India are getting closer to the world's top teams. "We excelled in the last two major tournaments we played-Champions Trophy and the World Hockey League final. In those tournaments we finished in the semi-finals," he said. — Reuters

GYMNASTICS

DOUBLE DOWNIES SHOW SISTERS
ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

LONDON: As a double Commonwealth Games gold medalist born more than seven years before her younger sister Ellie, gymnast Becky Downie would like nothing better than to pull rank on her equally talented sibling. "But it just doesn't work with Ellie!" exclaimed 24-year-old Becky in a telephone interview with Reuters ahead of next month's European Championships. The doppelgänger sisters, known as Double Downies, have become the face of British gymnastics after guiding the nation to their first team medal-a bronze-at the 2015 world championships. Watching them in competition, it is clear they are each other's biggest supporter, with one of them shouting words of encouragement as the other performs their gravity-defying routines on an apparatus.

But spending almost every waking moment in close quarters is not all about winning glittering medals and sharing celebratory hugs. "We do just irritate each other in general. Ellie can be quite slow and grumpy in the morning. Ellie's definitely not a morning person," Becky said with a smile. Her 16-year-old sister added: "We can get on top of each other because we're together all the time. We go to gym together, then we're at the gym together. We go back home together, then we're at home together and we travel away together so it can get claustrophobic and crazy. I can drive her insane," Ellie said impishly before dissolving

into laughter. Becky and Ellie know, however, that they must work together to have a shot at creating a unique piece of Olympic history in August-provided they are named in the British team for Rio. For according to the FIG, the sport's governing body, no sisters have ever won gymnastics medals at the same Olympics. While the sport is littered with successful brother acts- with American twins Paul and Morgan Hamm sharing a team silver in 2004 and the Tanaka brothers helping Japan to silver in 2012 - that achievement has so far eluded sisters. If the Downies achieve the milestone, it will mean the world to Becky, who suffered the heartache of failing to qualify for the 2012 London Games.

First sisters

"That will be amazing. We know what we're capable of and one of our best chances (of a medal) will probably be in the team," said Becky, whose collection includes an asymmetric bars gold from the 2014 Europeans. "After getting a medal at the last worlds, that is what everyone is pushing towards. It will be history as a female team from Britain has never done that at the Olympic Games." "For me and Ellie, there's a very good chance we could do it together as a team. It will be very special (to become the first sisters to win Olympic medals in gymnastics) if we can

achieve that." But to get the chance to accomplish that feat, they first need to make sure they both get selected for the five-woman team heading to Rio. In a sport where an out-of-place toe or the mistiming of a release-and-catch manoeuvre by a fraction of a second can make the difference between success and failure, nothing can be taken for granted. "It could be a win-win situation if both of us get on the team, if not, I'd like to think at least one of us will go," added Becky, who has a small tattoo of the Olympic rings on her left ankle. "But it will be very difficult if one makes it and not the other."

While Becky will draw on the experience of competing at the 2008 Olympics, Ellie is no slouch on the international scene either, having become the first British female to win an all-around medal (bronze) at the European Championships. If they both make it to Rio, there is one "annoying" thing the sisters know they cannot escape.

"People mix us up all the time. It wasn't so bad when Ellie was a bit smaller. But now that Ellie has overtaken me in height and she is the taller one, everybody just assumes she's the older one and addresses her as Becky," said Becky. "Everyone gets us confused. Sometimes it's just funny but at other times it can be really annoying." — Reuters

DENTIST SHARPSHOOTER AIMS
TO GIVE INDIA GOLDEN SMILE

MUMBAI: With one hand in her pocket and the other on the trigger, India's ace shooter Heena Sidhu is trying to keep it cool as she targets glory at the Rio Olympics. The 26-year-old, who is a qualified dentist, may be desperate to put a smile on the face of medal-starved fans back home but she knows that she must stay relaxed despite carrying the huge burden of an expectant nation.

"Everybody goes through pressure. That pressure comes from expectations," said Sidhu, who will compete in the 10 metre and 25 metre air pistol events at the Games in August. "I just don't want to add my personal expectations to that pressure which is already there and make it so hard on myself." India have only won three Olympic medals in individual women's events. None have been in shooting and no Indian woman has stood on the top step of the podium. But Sidhu, who has an International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup title and a Commonwealth Games silver medal to her name, is regarded as the best chance of filling that gaping hole with gold.

The Games will be Sidhu's second Olympics after competing in the 10 metre air pistol at London 2012. She endured disappointment four years ago though, finishing 12th in qualification and failing to make the final. Sidhu blamed her early exit on being too desperate to win but insists she has learnt from the experience and will do things differently this time around. "If I think about the medal from the first shot I won't even be able to release it-that's how the sport of shooting is. When I went to London it wasn't so enjoyable because I

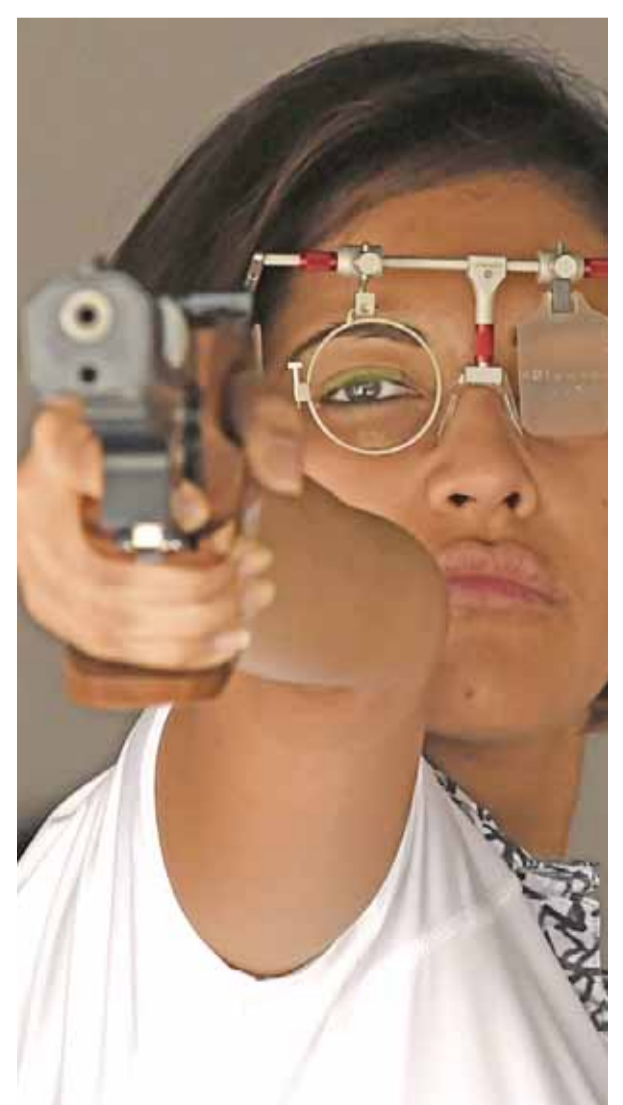
was under so much pressure that I put on myself, which I don't want this time."

'A new landmark'

Sidhu has gone from strength to strength since London, winning gold in the 10 metre air pistol at the ISSF World Cup in Germany in 2013. In January she grabbed 10 metre gold in Asia's Olympic qualifying tournament. "I've shot so many high-pressure matches since that (London) Olympics where I've gotten the medal so it gives you that confidence," she explained to AFP at Mumbai's Maharashtra Rifle Association.

Her husband and coach Ronak Pandit is confident Sidhu can achieve something special-the first individual Indian medal in women's shooting and perhaps breaking the world record en route. Male shooter Abhinav Bindra became the first Indian to win an individual gold medal when he triumphed in the 10 metre air rifle event in Beijing in 2008. "A world record. Yes, because she's that good," Pandit predicted confidently. "I won't be surprised that if we get things right on the day we will be able to make a new landmark in the sport."

Sidhu stares intensely at the target with her right eye, her left eye covered and her left hand tucked away in her pocket as she shoots. She has to enter an almost trance-like state, emptying her mind and thinking about nothing as she lines up each shot. "That's the best state to be in," she explains. Sidhu, originally from Punjab state, took up shooting when she was 17. Her father was a national shooter while her uncle was a gunsmith. "I'm in the sport because I used to love guns. Now I'm just OK about guns but I love the technique of shooting, the art of shooting." — AFP



MUMBAI: Indian shooter Heena Sidhu lines up a shot as she takes part in a training session at the Maharashtra Rifle Association firing range in Mumbai. — AFP

ICE HOCKEY WORLD PREVIEW

UNBEATEN FINLAND PREPARE FOR TOUGH DANISH TEST

MOSCOW: Two-time world champions Finland won all seven of their preliminary group matches, including against reigning champions Canada, but the upcoming play-off round will be a completely new test. Today, Finland will face Denmark in a quest for their first medal since 2014 and possibly a first title since 2011. Denmark, who have previously played in the world championship knockout stage only once in 2010, when they finished eighth, their best ever placing to date, seem to be the most favourable quarter-final opponents. However, the Finns expect a tough match on Thursday against the Danes, who managed to upset Group A winners the Czech Republic 2-1 on their way to the play-offs.

"Denmark are strong team," Finland forward

Aleksandr Barkov said. "They have three NHL forwards in their roster. No doubts they will battle tough but we're also intending to win. I expect an interesting game." When these teams last met at the 2014 world championship, Finland won 3-2. That year, Finland finished as runners-up. Meanwhile, the hosts Russia, seeking redemption for last year's humiliating 6-1 defeat in the final at the hands of Canada, will take on Germany for a place in the semis. Russia, who were beaten 3-0 by Czech Republic in the campaign-opener, brushed off their slow start to chalk up six wins in the next six matches.

Though Germany, winners of Olympic bronze medals in 1932 and 1976, along with silver medals of the world championships in

1930 and 1953, have not played in the play-offs since 2011, Russia take their opponents seriously. "Germany are a very mobile and very experienced team," Russia skipper Pavel Datsyuk said. "They're always dangerous. It will be a serious mistake to take them lightly." Germany, meanwhile are ready for the challenge. "Yeah, we're happy we've moved on to the next round. But we can't be satisfied with that," forward Marcel Goc said. "We're underdogs but we will throw everything against them that we have. We have to wait until we get our chances and hope we can bury some."

Canada look to bounce back

Defending champions Canada will clash with Sweden on the ice of Saint Petersburg's

Yubileiny Arena, which will be the two teams' 112th meeting at the worlds. Canada have won 55 games, while Sweden have 48 victories to their name, with eight draws. In their group, Canada scored 34 goals and only conceded eight, the preliminary round's best record. Canada manager Bill Peters said that despite the 4-0 defeat at the hands of Finland in the last Group B game he remains confident. "We play as a single unit and count on all of our players," he said. "The match with the Swedes is going to be a tough test and we need to show our best hockey on Thursday. But I believe we will be ready to do that." The Czech Republic will face the United States in Moscow's first quarter-final. Czech manager Vladimir Vujtek said he is ready for a tough

encounter with the Americans.

"We did not chose our quarter-final opponents, we just wanted to win our group," he said. "I'm pleased that we managed to do that, to finish ahead of strong Russian team. Now we need to prepare for the match with team USA the best possible way. No doubts it will be a hard match." The US meanwhile said that they were happy to avoid meeting Russia in the last eight. "We're happy we will not play Russia in the quarter-finals," Arizona Coyotes rear guard Connor Murphy said. "It's very hard to oppose Russians at their home ice. Anyway there are no weak opponents in the last eight, only the best teams managed to battle into the play-offs. And if we want to win the title we must be ready to beat any rivals." — AFP

SHARKS ROUT BLUES

LOS ANGELES: Brent Burns did not need to study the San Jose Sharks' postseason history to know going down 0-2 in a series is not desirable. Burns and goalie Martin Jones made certain that did not happen on Tuesday as he scored a pair of power-play goals and Jones stopped all 26 St. Louis shots to lead the Sharks to a 4-0 win over the Blues in Game 2 of the Western Conference final. The shutout was the second in the playoffs for Jones, who also shut out Nashville in Game 7 in the second round. The best-of-seven series is now tied at one win each as it heads to San Jose for Game 3 on Wednesday.

Had Burns looked into the Sharks' history, he would have learned that 10 times they have fallen behind 0-2 in a series and lost all 10. That list includes the franchise's three previous trips to the conference final, in 2004, 2010 and 2011. "We wanted to go home with a split and that's what we got," said defenseman Marc-Edouard Vlasic. The Sharks scored what would turn out to be the only goal they would need just 2:07 into the game, from Tommy Wingels, before Burns scored on the power-play in both the second and third periods, his fifth and sixth goals of the playoffs.

Both goals came while the Blues' Troy Brouwer was in the penalty box. "Guys came out with a good sense of urgency and got after it," said the Sharks' Joe Pavelski. "It was a great job by everybody." Dainius Zubrus added an empty-net goal with just 19 seconds left in the game to close out the victory. It was the first time the Blues were shut out at home in the playoffs since Game 2 of the conference quarterfinals in 2001, a 1-0 loss to the Sharks. "We feel good about what we have going on," Burns said, "and the way we're playing. We've had confidence all year."

The Sharks were 0-for-3 on the power-play in their Game 1 loss but converted two of their five chances in Game 2. The Blues

had allowed only two power-play goals in 23 chances over their previous eight games, dating back to the start of the second-round series against Dallas. "I thought we brought our good game to the rink tonight for longer periods," said Sharks' coach Peter DeBoer. "Getting the first goal was big, and I knew our power play would bounce back. It always has all year." One of the reasons is Burns' booming shot. "Best I've ever seen," DeBoer said. "I think just how he can get it off from every angle, how he can get it to the net off balance, in bad spots. He finds a way to get it there. If it's in the right spot, it's going in. That's a great weapon for us."

The Sharks also killed off all five Blues' power-plays. "We didn't play very well," said Blues' coach Ken Hitchcock. "I'm not sure why. I don't know if the players know why. They (the Sharks) were much better than us in every aspect, especially special teams. We tried to play the way we did in game 1 and we didn't get away with it. "We'll take 1-1 right now with the way we've played." The Blues, who had a combined 15 shots on goal through the first two periods, trailed 2-0 when the Sharks' Patrick Marleau received a double minor penalty for high-sticking just 32 seconds into the third period. Instead of using that chance to get back in the game, however, the Blues had just four shots on goal, all stopped by Jones, and Burns' second goal of the game midway through the period sealed the victory. "Our execution wasn't very good and I thought we let frustration creep in at certain times in the game," said the Blues' Alexander Steen.

"That can't happen at this time of the year. They had the little details in their game tonight that we didn't, unfortunately. We took a few penalties and that set us back a little bit." In all three of their playoff series' this year the Blues have been tied 1-1 after two games. — Reuters



CLEVELAND: Toronto Raptors' Cory Joseph (6) and Cleveland Cavaliers' Kyrie Irving (2) and Kevin Love compete for a rebound during the second half of Game 1 of the NBA basketball Eastern Conference finals on Tuesday, May 17, 2016. — AP

CAVALIERS CRUSH RAPTORS IN EASTERN CONFERENCE OPENER

LOS ANGELES: As 3-pointers fell at historic rates through the first two rounds of the postseason, LeBron James' message never changed: The Cleveland Cavaliers are not just a team of jumpshooters. In Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals, James and the Cavaliers proved it. On a night when the Toronto Raptors did their best to take away the 3-point arc, the Cavs instead attacked the paint and stormed their way to a 115-84 victory Tuesday and a 1-0 series lead.

It was the most lopsided postseason win in Cavs history and marked their ninth victory in as many playoff games this year. The Cavs are rolling, and James and Kyrie Irving are a big reason why. James scored 24 points and Irving had 27 as the Cavs made just seven 3-pointers but shot 55.4 percent and scored 56 points in the paint. "Tonight they wanted us to be in the paint," James said. "We tried to take advantage of that. I keep telling you we're not a jump-shooting team. We're a balanced team. We're able to do whatever the game dictates, and we're able to adjust to that."

Kevin Love had 14 points and four rebounds, his first game in this postseason without a double-double. The Cavs rolled anyway, becoming the first team to win their first nine postseason games since

the 2012 San Antonio Spurs, who won their first 10 before losing four straight to the Oklahoma City Thunder. DeMar DeRozan scored 18 points for the Raptors, but only six after the first quarter. Fellow All-Star Kyle Lowry scored eight points on a tough 4-of-14 shooting night after scoring a career-high 43 against the Cavs in a February victory at Air Canada Centre. Neither Lowry nor DeRozan attempted a free throw Tuesday. "We've got to come out of the gate with that mindset, being aggressive like we usually do," Lowry said. "I think we didn't try to do that until later on in the game."

After sweeping through the first two rounds of the playoffs by setting records with their 3-point shooting, the Cavs instead attacked the heart of the Raptors' defense.

Each of James' first nine baskets came near the restricted area. Cleveland went inside after averaging nearly 17 3-pointers per game through the first two playoff rounds. The Raptors scored the game's first seven points, although the Cavs had the lead within about seven minutes. Cleveland extended it to double figures within the first two minutes of the second quarter and rolled the rest of the night. The Cavs led by as many as 35 in the fourth quarter. Raptors coach Dwane Casey thought the defen-

sive rotations broke down once the Raptors denied the Cavs 3-point looks. "We've got to continue to keep those (3-pointers) down, work to keep those down, and also at the same time make sure we understand and be disciplined as far as how we take away their roll guy," Casey said.

"Because I thought that hurt us, especially in the second quarter." The sweeps in each of the first two rounds meant the Cavs played just eight games in the last 33 days, while the Raptors were stretched to seven games in each of their first two series. All the time off has done little to disrupt Cleveland's rhythm.

The Cavs beat the Atlanta Hawks by double figures in each of the first three games following an eight-day layoff, and nine days between games certainly didn't bother them Tuesday. The Raptors have been in this position before. They have now lost the first game in each of their three series, although they fought back to win the first two. This will be their toughest test yet. "I thought they were quicker than us tonight, and the reasons are not important. It's not an excuse," Casey said. "It's one game. But they were the quicker team tonight, and we've got to make adjustments of how we want to combat that quickness." — Reuters



ST LOUIS: Joe Pavelski #8 of the San Jose Sharks fights David Backes #42 of the St Louis Blues during the 2016 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Scottrade Center on May 17, 2016. — AFP

PIPE DREAMS: KAZAKHSTAN'S HOPES OF SPORTS EMPIRE HIT BY OIL CRASH

ASTANA: A quartet of state-of-the-art, government-built stadia rise out of former marshland in energy-rich Kazakhstan's futuristic capital Astana, but the Central Asian state's soaring sporting ambitions have been shot down by the global oil slump. Residents of the 900,000-strong city tasted the elite of European football earlier this season as FC Astana, backed by the country's sovereign wealth fund, made national history by becoming the first Kazakh club to reach the group stage of the UEFA Champions League.

Along with the Astana Pro Team cycling outfit-famous for doping scandals as well as successes in the Tour de France-FC Astana form the lynchpin of the image-boosting Astana Presidential Sports Club launched in 2013 by the country's veteran leader Nursultan Nazarbayev. Since then, however, prices for the ex-Soviet state's key crude export have more than halved from a high of above \$100 per barrel, while an economic crisis in neighboring Russia has only compounded cashflow problems.

"There is a gap in funding for the Astana Presidential Sports Club, we cannot deny this," Darhan Kaletayev, managing director of the Samruk Kazyna sovereign wealth fund said in his office overlooking the young capital's architecturally adventurous cityscape. Budgets for the club's basketball and hockey teams will be cut, Kaletayev explained, while funding for football and cycling has dropped in "real terms" after the national tenge currency shed half its value against the dollar amid economic volatility last year.

FC Astana surprised many by bowing out

of Champions League Group C unbeaten at their 30,000-capacity Astana Arena, securing draws against Portugal's Benfica, Spain's Atletico Madrid and Turkey's Galatasaray but only picking up one point on the road. But the money-spinning novelty of qualification-worth approximately \$13 million to the club-must now become habit if the team is to retain and attract top players. A recent game pitting FC Astana against their biggest domestic rivals FC Kaisar—a club from the former capital Almaty—testifies to challenges the government faces in making its flagship football team sustainable.

"We call this our Yel Clasico," jokes Abilaikhan Muzhubayev, a fan decked out in FC Astana's yellow and blue colours, punning 'el Clasico', the derby between Real Madrid and Barcelona, by substituting the Kazakh word 'yel' or 'people'. But the game Astana won 1-0 in front of an official crowd of 11,000 people that appeared even smaller feels a far cry from one of the world's most-watched sporting events. "There was so much energy and noise at the Champions League games," Muzhubayev said wistfully. "We need more of that for our domestic league."

The game's goalscorer Nemanja Maksimovic, embodies a recruitment blueprint that values up-and-coming talent over big names like ex-Arsenal star Andrei Arshavin, who cut a disinterested figure for the opposition. But the 21-year-old Serbian starlet, who scored the goal that fired FC Astana into this season's Champions' League, is also the type of player the club will struggle to keep in the new era of austerity. "What we see in Kazakhstan



ASTANA: Astana's players take part in a training session at a stadium in Astana. — AFP

football as a whole is that one club might have good finances one year and no finances the next," FC Astana's no-nonsense Bulgarian coach Stanimir Stoilov said on the sidelines of a training session at the arena. "That (instability) will kill any team immediately," said the coach, who was not allowed to discuss financial matters relating to FC Astana specifically.

Burnishing the brand

Before FC Astana's rise the Astana Presidential Sports Club was mostly famous for the Astana Pro cycling team that once included American Lance Armstrong, Spain's Alberto Contador and Kazakhstan's own Alexander Vinokourov. Yet those riders and the team as a whole featured prominently in the doping plague that has bedeviled the sport and triggered calls for a permanent ban on Astana Pro and other outfits found guilty of multiple doping violations.

Kaletayev of Samruk-Kazyna admits the scandals damaged Kazakhstan's reputation and claims the club has since turned itself around to become a "leader in anti-doping programs." Moreover, while new mega-projects have been ruled out as the country weathers its worst economic crisis in almost two decades, Kaletayev says Kazakhstan is only at the beginning of a "big journey" in sport. "We want to encourage more sport at grassroots level and build up our profile in paralympic sport. These are goals that are reachable for the moment," he said. "Of course, everything depends on finances but we are searching for co-sponsors and look to the future with much optimism." — AFP

FEARS RAISED OVER CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL PITCH

DOHA: A senior UEFA executive yesterday raised concerns about the quality of the Champions League final pitch just 10 days ahead of Europe's biggest club match of the season. Keith Dalton, senior match operations manager with UEFA, said organizers face "a lot of challenges" in getting the stadium ready at Milan's San Siro stadium for the game on May 28 between Spanish rivals Real and Atletico Madrid.

"We are facing a lot of challenges to get this pitch up to the level it needs to

be for the Champions League final," Dalton said in a speech at the World Stadium Congress conference being held in Doha. "The grounds keeper, with all due respect to him, is very junior and he is the only one with the technical expertise operating that stadium." "The rest of the guys can just hold a fork." Afterwards, Dalton, whose speech outlined UEFA's requirements for Champions League matches and also European Championship games, added that he was sure the pitch would be ready but UEFA

wanted it to be perfect for the final.

The Champions League final is the high point of the European club season, arguably the most high-profile annual football game in the world and is expected to draw in a crowd of some 300 million television viewers. Previous concerns about a pitch prior to a Champions League final included worries surrounding the 2008 final in Moscow between English sides Manchester United and Chelsea, which was played on a new grass surface laid on top of an artificial

playing area. However, there were no repercussions after the final which United won on penalties. The game later this month between the two Spanish clubs is the fourth Champions League or European Cup final to be held at the 80,000-capacity San Siro.

The last final to be played at the famous Italian venue was between Bayern Munich and Valencia, in 2001, which the German side won on penalties 5-4 after the sides played out a 1-1 draw. The May 28 clash will be the second final

between the two Madrid rivals. They met previously in 2014 when Real Madrid won 4-1 after extra time to secure the club's record tenth title in the competition. That was the first and-so far-only time two teams from the same city had contested a Champions League final. The game will be Real's 14th final and Atletico's third. Atletico are yet to win the trophy. The Madrid sides finished second and third in this year's La Liga, with Real Madrid claiming the runners-up position behind Barcelona. — AFP

EXTRAS

Chinese buyer closing in on Aston Villa deal

LONDON: Aston Villa owner Randy Lerner is closer to finding a buyer than at any time since putting the club up for sale in 2014, according to a BBC report yesterday. Midlands club Villa, relegated from the Premier League after a woeful season, are reportedly being lined up by a Chinese businessman offering 60 million pounds (\$86.49 million). The report says the unnamed prospective buyer is in the process of looking over Villa's financial record and could make an official offer by the end of the week. Villa, ever-present in the Premier League since it began in 1992-93, are preparing for life in the Championship (second tier) after finishing a distant last with only three wins. Former Cleveland Browns owner Lerner paid around 60 million pounds to buy Villa in 2006.

Chile kick-off a world record attempt for 120-hour match

SANTIAGO: Chile internationals Christopher Toselli and Bryan Carrasco joined forces with amateurs in a "crazy" attempt to set a new world record for playing the longest soccer match. The five-day fixture at the Bicentenary Stadium in Santiago will feature more than 3,000 players, local media said, as they aim to eclipse the current record of 105 hours set last year in Scotland. "To me it's a beautiful challenge. It's crazy, but let's hope this insanity can be accomplished," goalkeeper Toselli said. "It's many hours, over many days, evidently, but for the regular players, there is plenty of motivation to come out to be able to share in this with professional players." Each player will be on the pitch for at least one hour. The amateurs, who applied online to take part, were grateful for the unique opportunity to mix with the professionals in the 120 hour match that is scheduled to finish on Sunday. "It's a really great experience, in all truth," said Chilean engineer and participant, Alvaro Valenzuela. "It's extremely enriching, for me at least, as I practically don't play sports. It's a unique experience, valuable, and I would like it if there were more initiatives like this one."

Atletico extend Euro hero Niguez's contract to 2021



Saul Niguez

MADRID: Atletico Madrid midfielder Saul Niguez rounded off an excellent breakthrough season by extending his contract with the Champions League finalists to 2021, the club confirmed yesterday. "I am very happy to continue defending this shirt," said Niguez, 21, who famously scored a wonderful solo goal against Bayern Munich in the semi-finals to help lead Atletico to their second Champions League final in three years. That strike was one of nine goals in 47 appearances in all competitions this season. And Niguez's fine form was also rewarded with a call-up to Vicente del Bosque's provisional 25-man Spain squad for Euro 2016 on Tuesday despite being uncapped at 17 international level. The new deal only extends Niguez's contract by one year, but a significant wage rise is hoped to ward off interest from Premier League clubs with Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur reportedly interested. "We are all very happy with the agreement reached with Saul," said Atletico sporting director Jose Luis Caminero.

Strootman earns Dutch recall after knee injuries

AMSTERDAM: Kevin Strootman is set to play his first match for the Netherlands in more than two years after being added to the squad for three friendlies in the coming weeks, the Dutch football association said yesterday. The Roma midfielder has suffered two serious knee injuries, including one in his last game for the Dutch against France in March 2014 that ruled him out of that year's World Cup in Brazil. Strootman has been added to a preliminary squad named a fortnight ago that has now been trimmed to 26 players. Veteran Wesley Sneijder has also been belatedly included but will miss the match against the Republic of Ireland in Dublin on May 27 because it clashes with his club Galatasaray's Turkish Cup final date against Fenerbahce. Sneijder will be available to play against Poland in Gdansk on June 1 and Austria in Vienna on June 4. The Dutch, having failed to qualify for the European championship, are providing warm-up opposition for the trio of teams headed to France next month. Among those dropped from coach Danny Blind's initial squad are Manchester United teenager Timothy Fosu-Mensah, Vurnon Anita of Newcastle and Southampton midfielder Jordy Clasie.

Pedro 'has no regrets' over swapping Barca for Chelsea

LONDON: Spain midfielder Pedro has no regrets over leaving Barcelona in search of more playing time, despite failing to nail down a regular starting berth in his debut season at Chelsea. Consigned to life on the fringes of the starting side at the Nou Camp, Pedro joined the Blues in August and scored seven goals in 29 Premier League appearances as he struggled to adapt to life in England. Chelsea mounted a dismal defense of their title this season, finishing 31 points behind winners Leicester City in 10th place, while serial champions Barcelona won their sixth La Liga title in eight years when they beat Granada 3-0 on Saturday. "I am really happy here and have no regrets about the decision I made to join Chelsea," the 28-year-old Pedro told British media. "Is the best still to come from me? Absolutely. I always keep faith in myself and my abilities." Pedro, who was named in Spain's provisional squad for Euro 2016 earlier this week, backed Chelsea to come back strongly next season.



BANGKOK: Leicester City fans cheer as Leicester City FC players arrive at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok yesterday. — AFP

GARLANDS, AMULETS AND SELFIES GREET LEICESTER CITY IN THAILAND

BANGKOK: Thai fans mobbed newly crowned English Premier League champions Leicester City yesterday as they began a global publicity blitz after their fairytale title triumph. They also hoped to banish the memory of a sex tape scandal that marred a visit a year ago to the homeland of their billionaire owner. Scores of Thai fans—dubbed the "Siamese Foxes"—and a frenzied local media pack swarmed the champions at Bangkok's main airport yesterday morning, greeting them with requests for selfies and chants of "Leicester City, Leicester City!" Manager Claudio Ranieri, captain Wes Morgan and goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel led the team, beaming as they made a choreographed Thai bow—or "wai"—with garlands of jasmine around their necks. But star players Riyad Mahrez, Jamie Vardy and Danny Drinkwater were not among the yesterday morning arrivals, with the two English players called up this week for international duty.

Football-mad Thailand has fallen for Leicester after the astonishing success story of a club with deep links to the kingdom. The Foxes are owned by well-connected but publicity-shy Thai billionaire Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha. His duty-free King Power brand is emblazoned across the shirts of the team, whose home ground in the English Midlands is named the King Power Stadium. Speaking at a press conference later Vichai's son, Aiyawatt—or 'Top'—vowed to spend on "amazing" new summer signings. But "we're not going to spend crazy money and ruin everything we have created," said Top, who is the club's vice-



BANGKOK: Leicester City FC's Italian manager Claudio Ranieri (right), the club owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha (center) and his son and vice-chairman Aiyawatt 'Top' Srivaddhanaprabha applaud as they take part in a presentation of the English Premier League trophy at the King Power duty-free headquarters in downtown Bangkok yesterday. — AFP

chairman. His family's shrewd investment in players and club facilities has already brought a massive return on their \$57 million initial outlay. Now they can look forward to global visibility for a duty-free brand little-known outside of Thailand. Most Thais knew little about the one-time minnows before Vichai bought the club in 2010. But Thais are readily changing—or at least doubling-up—their allegiances from perennial English favorites Manchester

United and Liverpool. "Now I'm half Liverpool, half Leicester," Max Akkharapacha, a 20-year-old student dressed in Foxes' kit said. "It was a very exciting season, winning the premier league was just amazing."

Best behavior

Ahead of the tour, Top warned his players to be on their best behavior in a kingdom whose wild nightlife belies a deep-seated social conservatism. A tour last sum-

mer ended in a public relations disaster for the King Power family. Then, three young players including the son of former manager Nigel Pearson, were sacked after a racially charged sex tape featuring local women was leaked to British media.

Manager Pearson was quietly dismissed a few weeks later in an apparent dispute over his handling of the scandal, paving the way for the avuncular Ranieri to take charge and steer the club towards sporting glory. The unflappable Ranieri has added a degree of grace and humour to the club which has caught the attention of Thais. One elderly fan pressed a sacred amulet—a good luck charm in Thailand—into his hand and thanked the 64-year-old for his work. Speaking to reporters, Ranieri said he was ready to put aside the "fairytale" title win and focus on bargain-hunting in the frenzied summer transfer market.

"We want to continue doing this because if we go the other side (expensive signings), I lose the team," he said. "The team is very close. It's a family and it's important to bring into this family other brothers." The team are also likely to pay a visit to a famous Buddhist monk who was repeatedly flown by the devout Vichai to the UK to bless the players and stadium. But the highlight of the Thai leg of the tour is an open-top bus tour of Bangkok on Thursday, which will have to defy the searing heat and the capital's gridlock. The Foxes will also travel to Los Angeles and Sweden over the summer as they prepare for the new season and build their global brand. — AFP



CANDELLILLA DE LA MAR, Colombia: Handout picture shows a package of cocaine with images of football players Colombian James Rodriguez and Mexican Javier Chicharito Hernandez, seized inside a homemade semi-submersible boat captured in the Pacific coast offshore Candelilla de la Mar, Colombia. — AFP

IN-FORM CHICHARITO HEADLINES MEXICO'S COPA AMERICA SQUAD

MEXICO CITY: Bayer Leverkusen forward Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez headlines Mexico's 23-man squad named Tuesday to compete in next month's Copa America Centenario. PSV midfielder Andres Guardado and Porto full-back Miguel Layun are the other prominent picks, but coach Juan Carlos Osorio left former Arsenal striker Carlos Vela out of the lineup. Hernandez played at Manchester United and Real Madrid before joining Bayer for the 2015-2016 season, finishing fourth best scorer with 17 goals.

There are a total of nine Europe-based players. Veteran defender Rafael Marquez, 37, who was once a stalwart at Barcelona and now plays for Mexican club Atlas, was brought in because "he is very much needed on and off the pitch," Osorio said. "It's a team with several mixed and multi-pur-

pose players," Osorio, who is Colombian, said at a news conference. But Vela, who plays for Spain's Real Sociedad, and former Barcelona player Giovanni dos Santos, who now plays for Los Angeles Galaxy, were the biggest omissions. "Carlos is not going through his best moment and his absence was discussed with him," Osorio said. Vela only scored five goals this year, his worst return in four seasons at Real Sociedad. He was also sidelined by his club coach, Eusebio Sacristan, in March for missing practice after going to a concert in Madrid. Osorio said dos Santos had "declined the invitation" to join the team but the coach declined to elaborate. Mexico was drawn in Group C at the Copa to be played in the United States. They open against Uruguay on June 5, followed by Jamaica on June 9 and Venezuela on June 13. — AFP

TENSIONS RUNNING HIGH AS FRANKFURT FIGHT TO STAY UP

BERLIN: Tensions are running high as Eintracht Frankfurt prepare to host Nuremberg today in the first of a two-legged, winner-takes-all Bundesliga relegation/promotion play-off. In Germany, the team which finishes third from bottom in the Bundesliga faces the club which comes third in the second division in an end of season play-off. "It's effectively two finals, like you'd get in a European Cup," said Frankfurt coach Niko Kovac ahead of the first leg at Eintracht's Commerzbank Arena.

"Except we can't put everything into this first game, because there's a second leg just four days later." The return leg will be at Nuremberg's Grundig Stadion next Monday with the hosts bidding to return to the Bundesliga after two seasons in the second tier. This a clash of two sleeping German giants. Eintracht were last German champions back in 1959 while Nuremberg won the last of their nine league titles in the 1967/68 season, but were German Cup winners in 2007.

Frankfurt found themselves in the play-off after finishing 16th in the table following their dramatic 1-0 defeat at Werder Bremen last Saturday, when the winning goal was scored two minutes from time. Now they face 180 nerve-wracking minutes to avoid the drop after spending the last four seasons in the Bundesliga. They can take solace in the fact that a side from the Bundesliga has beaten their play-off opponents from the second tier in each of the last three seasons. "It is the losing team which has more to fear. We are positive, we must be stronger at home," said Frankfurt goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky. His opposite number, Nuremberg keeper Raphael Schaefer, is an expert in battling relegation, having been on the winning side in four relegation play-off matches in 2009 and 2010 without conceding a goal. "I'll try and take the pressure off the younger players," said Schaefer. The mind games have already started. "We aren't the favorites, but we have courage, confidence and we're really looking forward to it," said Nuremberg's coach Rene Weller. There is tension between the sets of fans, who have a history of bad blood, and 500 police will be on duty around the Frankfurt stadium. "We are aware of the explosive nature of the game," Frankfurt police spokeswoman Virginie Wegner told German daily Bild. — AFP

Sports

Dog invasion sparks chaos at IPL match



Cavaliers slaughter Raptors



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GARLANDS AND CROWDS GREET FOXES IN THAILAND

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BASEL: Sevilla's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the UEFA Europa League final football match between Liverpool FC and Sevilla FC at the St Jakob-Park stadium in Basel yesterday. — AFP

SEVILLA CROWNED EUROPA CHAMPIONS

COKE BREAKS LIVERPOOL HEARTS; SEVILLA SECURE A RECORD THIRD CONSECUTIVE TITLE

BASEL: Sevilla right-back Coke broke Liverpool hearts with a second-half brace in a controversy-filled 3-1 victory that secured a record third consecutive Europa League title yesterday. Liverpool travelled to St Jakob-Park with an army of fans and confident in their chances of a first Europa League trophy since 2001 after an impressive campaign in Europe's second tier competition. But Jurgen Klopp's men failed to build on Daniel Sturridge's superb 35th minute opener, and when Kevin Gameiro found Liverpool asleep to level seconds after the restart, it opened the floodgates.

Liverpool's heads went down and, as they began to sit back, Coke struck in six second-half minutes to give Unai Emery's men a 3-1 lead by the 70th minute. Coke looked offside, but after angry scenes that saw Klopp sprint down the touchline to confront the linesman, Swedish referee Jonas Eriksson pointed to the centre circle after consulting with his official. "We didn't do ourselves justice," Liverpool captain James Milner told BT Sport after a defeat which also denied the club a Champions League place next season. "We

never got started in the second half and it is devastating. We didn't show near our ability and that is the biggest disappointment.

"We were ready, we made sure we said the right things at half-time. We gave a sloppy goal away and never got back into the game. Milner added: "It is nothing to do with the referee, it is about us. We didn't do it on the night that mattered. "We didn't think about the Champions League, it was about winning this trophy. We didn't manage to get over the line. It is a double blow not to be in Europe next season." Emery had demanded a last push from some of the experienced players who had helped the Spaniards to four Europa League crowns since 2006, and they came good in a stunning second half.

Yet Klopp looked to have made the correct choice when he left Jordan Henderson and Divock Origi on the bench as both recently recovered from respective injuries. Sturridge stepped in for Origi to play in front of Coutinho, Roberto Firmino and Adam Lallana and spurned two half-chances before beating David Soria with a delightful shot with the outside of his left

boot on 35 minutes. It sent St Jakob-Park into raptures, although the massive army of Reds supporters-some of whom got into scuffles with Sevilla fans inside the stadium prior to kick-off-were conspicuously quiet after the interval.

Sevilla got off lightly when Liverpool twice saw penalty appeals waved away, while Dejan Lovren saw his header from Sturridge's corner ruled offside. Eriksson waved away the first, in the early stages, after the ball came off the hand of Daniel Carrico when Firmino turned inside the central defender. Carrico was even luckier to escape punishment when he deliberately put his hand down to slow the ball as Sturridge readied to run past him into the area. UEFA made history by using Hawk-Eye goalline technology in a Europa League final for the first time, but the organizers could have done with it around the penalty area as well.

Sevilla were kept on a tight rein in the opening half although Gameiro, with 28 goals this season including seven in eight Europa League games, had his first sniff with an ambitious overhead kick after Coke's cross

on the right following a corner. But Liverpool were beginning to fire, and when Coutinho found Sturridge unmarked to his left the England striker coolly beat Soria at his far post. Neither Firmino nor Sturridge could get to the ball when Lallana released Nathaniel Clyne down the right for the right-back to deliver an inviting ball across the face of goal just before half-time.

It would prove costly, because whatever Emery said at half-time worked wonders. When right-back Mariano Ferreira pounced on a poor clearance from Alberto Moreno seconds after the restart, the Sevilla right-back was allowed to power unchallenged down the right to deliver for Gameiro, who tapped home from yards out. Liverpool's confidence sunk and Coke got his first after a great combination with Banega, who dribbled through the Reds defence before seeing Coke ram the ball past Mignolet from 20 yards. It took several minutes for officials to finally decide whether Coke's second was valid, but it will take Liverpool's fans much longer to get over what was a poor second half display. — AFP

Europa League Champions

- 1958-Barcelona (Spain)
- 1960-Barcelona (Spain)
- 1961-AS Roma (Italy)
- 1962-Valencia (Spain)
- 1963-Valencia (Spain)
- 1964-Real Zaragoza (Spain)
- 1965-Ferencváros (Hungary)
- 1966-Barcelona (Spain)
- 1967-Dinamo Zagreb (Yugoslavia)
- 1968-Leeds (England)
- 1969-Newcastle (England)
- 1970-Arsenal (England)
- 1971-Leeds (England)
- 1972-Tottenham (England)
- 1973-Liverpool (England)
- 1974-Feyenoord (Netherlands)
- 1975-Borussia Mönchengladbach (Germany)
- 1976-Liverpool (England)
- 1977-Juventus (Italy)
- 1978-PSV Eindhoven (Netherlands)
- 1979-Borussia Mönchengladbach (Germany)
- 1980-Eintracht Frankfurt (Germany)
- 1981-Ipswich (England)
- 1982-IFK Göteborg (Sweden)
- 1983-Anderlecht (Belgium)
- 1984-Tottenham (England)
- 1985-Real Madrid (Spain)
- 1986-Real Madrid (Spain)
- 1987-IFK Göteborg (Sweden)
- 1988-Bayer Leverkusen (Germany)
- 1989-Napoli (Italy)
- 1990-Juventus (Italy)
- 1991-Inter Milan (Italy)
- 1992-Ajax (Netherlands)
- 1993-Juventus (Italy)
- 1994-Inter Milan (Italy)
- 1995-Parma (Italy)
- 1996-Bayern Munich (Germany)
- 1997-Schalke (Germany)
- 1998-Inter Milan (Italy)
- 1999-Parma (Italy)
- 2000-Galatasaray (Turkey)
- 2001-Liverpool (England)
- 2002-Feyenoord (Netherlands)
- 2003-FC Porto (Portugal)
- 2004-Valencia (Spain)
- 2005-CSKA Moscow (Russia)
- 2006-Sevilla (Spain)
- 2007-Sevilla (Spain)
- 2008-Zenit St. Petersburg (Russia)
- 2009-Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukraine)
- 2010-Atletico Madrid (Spain)
- 2011-FC Porto (Portugal)
- 2012-Atletico Madrid (Spain)
- 2013-Chelsea (England)
- 2014-Sevilla (Spain)
- 2015-Sevilla (Spain)
- 2016-Sevilla (Spain)

VAN GAAL BOOED AS MAN UNITED SIGN OFF IN FIFTH



MANCHESTER: Louis van Gaal was booed by his club's own fans after Manchester United ended their Premier League campaign by beating Bournemouth 3-1 in Tuesday's re-arranged Old Trafford fixture. In a game carried over from Sunday following a postponement caused by the discovery of a fake bomb accidentally left behind during a terror training exercise, United needed a 19-goal victory in order to steal past Manchester City into the fourth and final Champions League qualifying berth.

Goals from Wayne Rooney, 18-year-old Marcus Rashford, named in England's provisional Euro 2016 squad a day earlier, and substitute Ashley Young secured the three points, but it was only enough to lift Van Gaal's side above Southampton into fifth place. Introduced to the crowd for a post-match address, the Dutchman was booed by pockets of the home support, before declaring, somewhat ironically: "I want to thank you for your

unconditional support." As Bournemouth's fans goaded him with chants of "You're getting sacked in the morning!", Van Gaal added: "You never let us down. Thank you for that. We will bring the FA cup home to you. You deserve it. Thank you."

The result secured a Europa League group place for United, while Saturday's FA Cup final against Crystal Palace may yet yield a piece of silverware. But it was a tame end to the season, at a two-thirds full stadium, which laid bare United's stagnation under Van Gaal. The lap of appreciation that followed his address was cursory. His Bournemouth counterpart, Eddie Howe, has enjoyed a much more encouraging season. The south-coast club, who replied courtesy of a stoppage-time Chris Smalling own goal, finished their first ever top-flight campaign in 16th place. But Howe said that Sunday's events had proved problematic. "It was quite difficult, mentally," he said. "We did our best, but Man United were too good for us."

Fans arriving at Old Trafford spoke of their anger and frustration over Sunday's cancellation, which left visiting supporters facing two 500-mile (800-kilometre) round trips in three days. The atmosphere inside and outside the stadium was subdued and there were visible signs of dissent against the unpopular Van Gaal. One banner read held up by fans read: "TIME TO GO LOUIS! NOT GOOD ENOUGH!"



MANCHESTER: Bournemouth's Australian goalkeeper Adam Federici (center) fails to save a shot from Manchester United's English midfielder Ashley Young (2nd left) - leading to the team's third goal during the rescheduled English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Bournemouth at Old Trafford in Manchester on May 17, 2016. — AFP

Once again occupying a withdrawn midfield role, Rooney did his best to get United going by spraying passes around from deep, but it was not until the 32nd minute that the hosts threatened, with Michael Carrick just failing to get a telling touch on Rooney's free-kick.

United went ahead two minutes before half-time with a goal completely out of keeping with what had come before. Anthony Martial, as so often, was the instigator, swapping passes with Juan Mata and cutting the ball square

towards Rashford, whose clever dummy allowed Rooney to tuck home his first goal since February 2 and his 100th in the league at Old Trafford. United emerged from their slumber after the interval. Mata was unfortunate not to win a penalty after Steve Cook bundled into him from behind, while Carrick rattled the bar with a deflected 25-yard effort and Antonio Valencia drew a soaring save from Bournemouth goalkeeper Adam Federici from even further out. — AFP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

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MIAMI BEACH: People dine at outdoor cafes and walk along Lincoln Road Mall, a pedestrian area featuring retail shops and restaurants in Miami Beach, Fla. Americans are treating themselves with more restaurant meals after slogging through a dreary seven-year recovery from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. — AP

AMERICANS IN TWO MINDS ABOUT ECONOMY: POLL MANY WORRY ABOUT 'RISKS BEYOND THEIR CONTROL'

WASHINGTON: Americans are of two minds about the economy in the midst of an election race that largely hinges on the issue. They are strikingly pessimistic about the national economy yet comparatively upbeat about their own financial circumstances. Just 42 percent of adults describe the US economy as good, according to a survey released yesterday by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. But two-thirds say their own households are faring well. The divide suggests that despite their own financial gains, many people worry about risks beyond their control — from a volatile stock market to another economic downturn. Just a third say they'd be very confident of finding another job if they were laid-off — a sign of vulnerability even though the Great Recession officially ended nearly seven years ago.

Some of the difference also reflects political views and education levels: Republicans are far more negative about the economy as President Barack Obama finishes his second term. And college graduates are more sanguine about a recovery that rewarded them while largely neglecting workers without college degrees. The nation's unemployment rate has reached a healthy 5 percent, and workers' pay shows tentative signs of accelerating after years of barely budging. Auto sales hit a record in April. Housing and construction are rebounding. Americans are treating themselves to more restaurant meals.

But for every gauge of the economy that's pointing up, another has become cause for unease. Hospitals have become dominant employers in most cities, yet healthcare costs are outpacing pay. Foreign imports have kept clothing and home appliance prices affordable. But those low-priced imports have cost US jobs that in many cases haven't been replaced. Across the country, the low-educated are struggling.

Dreary recovery

And nothing has ignited the robust economic growth that Americans remember enjoying until the Great Recession struck in late 2007. The United States has endured a dreary recovery from the worst downturn since the Great Depression. Just 23 percent of Americans say they think the economy will improve this year. Some view the slow growth as a sign that the economy has never escaped the threat of another downturn. For years, they have seen the political class feud over how to accelerate economic growth and extend more opportunities to people who have been left out, with little to show for it.

"It's just real shaky right now," said Dorothy Mszanski, 60, a former steelworker who had to retire on disability. "It's like nobody can figure out what to do."

Living outside Youngstown, Ohio, Mszanski sees her family's situation as relatively stable. Her husband works an auto body and paint shop. The couple has built up retirement savings after years of work and raised three adult children. Yet Mszanski fears economic risks that could upend their lives.

A stock market crash would deplete her husband's 401(k) account. Her medical bills could keep soaring to impossible heights, a challenge she is already straining to handle.

"I've had chronic back pain, and I'm a diabetic and I'm on oxygen 24-7," she said. "If my medication keeps going up, there will be a time that I won't be able to afford to eat or buy my medicine. So what are you going to do?" That anxiety remains rooted in many communities even as Americans see some economic gains. The more than 40 percent who describe the economy as good compare with just 26 percent who said so in an October 2013 AP-GfK survey. Doubts about the economy lie at

the heart of the split over which presidential candidate is best equipped to lead the country: Donald Trump, the real estate mogul whose aggressive economic nationalism has made him the presumptive Republican nominee, or Hillary Clinton, the Democratic front-runner who has campaigned as a get-things-done policymaker.

Sentiments about the economy tend to parallel Americans' political views. With a Democrat having occupied the White House for seven years, Republicans with a dislike for Obama's policies tend to express discontent with the economy.

Pessimism prevails

Just 34 percent of Republicans call the national economy good, compared with 54 percent of Democrats. Thirty-eight percent of Republican supporters say they expect the economy to deteriorate this year, versus 18 percent of Democrats. Many Americans have seen their home values recover and have cut their mortgage bills by refinancing at ultra-low rates, thereby improving their personal finances.

Still, regardless of their own circumstances, history shows that voters tend to develop negative views of the economy during presidential election years, which typically dwell on economic shortcomings, said Diane Lim, a researcher at the Committee for Economic Development, a non-partisan think tank. "If you turn on the news, you're very aware that the economic recovery has not lifted everyone back to normal," Lim said. "The campaign talk, of course, is going to emphasize the negative on either side." The divide also reflects the uneven nature of a recovery that has favored the wealthier and better-educated. Just 2.4 percent of Americans with a bachelor's degree are unemployed,

compared with 5.9 percent of those with a high school diploma or less, according to the Labor Department. Nearly 60 percent of all income gains between 2009 and 2014 went to families in the top 1 percent of earners, according to analysis by Emmanuel Saez, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley.

The AP-NORC survey found that Americans with a bachelor's degree or higher are closely divided on whether the nation's economy is good (48 percent) or poor (52 percent). But those with a high school education or less are much more likely to consider the economy poor (63 percent) than good (37 percent) and less likely to feel confident about their finances. College graduates such as Walter Johnson, 77, are able to work past conventional retirement age. A civil engineer in Chicago, Johnson said he still works at his firm 35 hours a week, giving him a degree of financial security.

Yet he views the overall economy as struggling. Annual growth has averaged a mere 2 percent during the economic recovery, compared with the roughly 3 percent that was common for much of his lifetime. A registered Republican, Johnson said he thinks a key to faster growth is persuading local banks to support small businesses and entrepreneurship, instead of requiring them to follow regulations more suited to global financial firms. He considers Trump the candidate for voters who value good jobs, like the construction workers he sees in Chicago. "If he can tone his verbiage down a little bit and get some reasonable advisers, I'd vote for him, I really would," Johnson said. Many other Americans see Trump's bluster as a potential threat to the economy. "If Trump runs, I'll probably vote Hillary," said Pat Miller, a retired teacher in Winter Park, Florida. "I think he's unstable." — AP

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL WIN EU REPRIEVE ON DEFICITS

BRUSSELS: Spain and Portugal, in the EU's spotlight for failing to meet deficit targets, won a reprieve yesterday as Brussels delayed a decision to slap fines on the rule-breakers until July. The delay put off a potentially embarrassing decision for Spain until after elections on June 26 and gave more time for a new government in Portugal to get on its feet.

Inflicting penalties against an EU member state for public overspending would be an unprecedented step by the European Commission, the bloc's executive arm. At the urging of Germany, the commission won powers to monitor national budgets during the eurozone debt crisis when overspending in members of the single currency such as Greece and Spain nearly destroyed the euro.

"We have concluded that this is not the right moment economically or politically to take this step," European Economic Affairs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici told a news briefing in Brussels. "(In Spain) we do not have in front of us a government capable right now of taking the necessary measures," said Moscovici, a former French finance minister.

For the eighth consecutive year, austerity-weary Spain has overshot its fiscal targets, making it one of the worst performers in the eurozone. But with the election fast approaching, Spain's acting Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said on Wednesday he was eyeing more tax cuts if re-elected.

"We raised taxes at the start of our term in office, and we lowered both income and corporate tax in 2015," Rajoy told the Financial Times. "If tax revenues continue to rise, as they are doing now, we can plan another tax cut." Spain's public deficit came in at 5 percent of gross domestic product last

year, far higher than the 4.2 percent initially promised to Brussels and above the 3 percent limit set by EU rules.

'Unacceptable' delay

Madrid has also raised its public deficit target this year from 2.8 percent of GDP to 3.6 percent, which means Spain will once again overshoot the limit set by Brussels. "It is unacceptable that the commission caved to the lobbying by Madrid and Lisbon and offered the delay," said Markus Ferber, a German MEP from the right-of-centre EPP party.

"Spanish elections are not a valid argument," he said, warning that "we can always find a reason not to act." Spain is gearing up for another election on June 26 — the second in just six months after bickering parties failed to reach an agreement on a coalition government following inconclusive polls in December.

Bailed-out Portugal, meanwhile, will see its public debt hit 130 percent of GDP, over double the EU limit of 60 percent. In Lisbon, a left-wing government came to power last year on a pledge to reverse unpopular austerity measures, in defiance of the EU.

Last year Portugal's deficit sharply overshoot targets, landing at 4.4 percent of output. "After today's announcements, the European Commission will probably again be criticized for being too lax on the Eurozone's fiscal rules," said Carsten Brzeski, Economist at ING bank. But "at the current juncture, with most Eurozone countries desperately trying to revive growth and tackle unemployment, today's decision was in our view the right decision," Brzeski added. — AFP

GULF BOURSES LOSE STEAM, EGYPT RISES

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Foreign funds boosted the Egyptian stock market for a second straight day yesterday, exchange data showed, while Gulf bourses lost steam as investors took profits. Cairo's main index added 1.2 percent following its 1.9 percent jump on Tuesday, taking the bourse's gains for 2016 to 9.0 percent. Global Telecom Holding, a stock preferred by international managers, gained 1.1 percent. "For now foreign fund managers seem to be at ease with current FX prices, and find the market attractive at current levels compared to other emerging markets," said a Cairo-based fund manager.

In the Gulf, Riyadh's index gave up early gains in the final hour of trade. "For now the markets will continue to trade in a very narrow range, at least until further details concerning the Vision 2030 economic plan are announced," said a Jeddah-based trader, referring to Saudi Arabia's economic reform scheme. Advanced Petrochemical surged 2.0 percent after the company announced plans to increase its share capital by 20 percent to support future growth. The company also said it recommended distributing a cash dividend of 0.75 riyal per share for the first quarter.

"We expect the company will distribute 3.0 riyals per share for 2016. If annualised, the dividend yield will be 6 percent," said a note by NCB Capital. The range of dividend yields is between 4 and 9 percent for Saudi petrochemical producers, accord-

ing to Reuters data. Saudi International Petrochemical Co (Sipchem) also rose 2.0 percent after it said it had restarted three plants that were shut for maintenance earlier this month. Banking shares were the main laggards with heavyweights Samba Financial Group and National Commercial Bank each slipping 0.2 percent.

"In times of economic uncertainty investors should be more wary of banking shares, especially as non-performing loans will start to claw at their bottom lines," said an Abu Dhabi-based analyst.

Dubai's index also failed to hold onto early gains and fell 0.5 percent as investors booked profits in small and mid-sized companies. Arabtec dropped 0.7 percent. But Islamic insurer Takaful Emarat rose 6.7 percent in unusually high volume. Dubai Parks and Resorts edged up 0.8 percent; yesterday was the final day of trade in its rights issue, which will increase its share capital to 8 billion dirhams (\$2.2 billion). Abu Dhabi's index dipped 0.3 percent, dragged down mainly by mid-sized property-related shares such as Eshtaql Properties and RAK Properties, which were down 1.3 and 3.3 percent respectively.

Doha's index edged down 0.01 percent as Industries Qatar fell 1.4 percent. National Bank of Kuwait rose 1.6 percent as its KD137.6 million (\$473.2 million) rights issue was launched; the subscription period will close on June 16. Kuwait's main index lost 0.1 percent. — Reuters

OIL APPROACHES \$50 ON CANADIAN WILDFIRES

TRADERS AWAIT KEY US INVENTORY DATA

LONDON: Crude prices approached \$50 yesterday as escalating wildfires in Canada's oil sands region helped to reduce a global supply glut, while traders awaited key US energy inventory data.

Shortly after 1100 GMT, US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for delivery in June was 14 cents higher at \$48.45 a barrel. Brent North Sea crude for July delivery rose 12 cents compared with Tuesday's close to \$49.40 a barrel. Crude futures had zoomed Tuesday to their highest points so far this year, as the wildfires forced thousands more people to evacuate.

WTI rallied Tuesday to \$48.76 — the highest level since mid-October, 2015. Brent had touched \$49.75, not reached since early November. The oil market has

shot higher this week also after US banking giant Goldman Sachs said supply disruptions in Africa's biggest oil producer Nigeria—along with better demand—had created a surprising short-term deficit.

It described the situation in Nigeria as “systemic” and said production in that country is likely to remain curtailed for the rest of the year. “Prices are still being driven up by the high unscheduled supply outages in Canada and Nigeria,” said Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch.

“They amount to more than 2.0 million barrels per day and as such are entirely soaking up the oversupply on the global oil market.

“Without the rising supply from Iran, the oil market would be in significant deficit,” he added.

‘Sentiment picking up’

Oil output from Iran has rebounded strongly since Western sanctions were lifted in January following a deal over its nuclear program. IG Markets analyst Bernard Aw said traders are feeling “more bullish” following the Goldman Sachs report that was published last weekend.

“Based on the report, the demand has started to outstrip supply,” he said. “Sentiment is picking up quite a bit and perhaps prices may push above the \$50 mark in the next couple of weeks, provided the dollar does not strengthen further.” Dollar-denominated crude becomes more expensive for holders of rival currencies when the greenback strengthens.

The blazes around the oil sands hub of Fort McMurray in Alberta have meanwhile

escalated, with about 8,000 workers ordered evacuated overnight. Some 100,000 residents and oil workers had already been evacuated from Fort McMurray and its surroundings two weeks ago. According to the Conference Board of Canada, oil production was reduced by 1.2 million barrels per day on average. US energy inventory data released yesterday may show that crude stockpiles in the world's biggest economy have dropped for a second week running because of reduced exports from across the Canadian border. In Nigeria meanwhile, a major trade union on Tuesday vowed to defy a court injunction and press ahead with a national strike to protest against government rises in petrol prices. This follows several arrests by troops after armed attacks on an offshore oil facility. — AFP

News

in brief

Kuwait oil price up 50 cents to \$42.78 pb

KUWAIT: Kuwait oil price went up 50 cents yesterday, reaching \$42.78 per barrel (pb) against Monday's \$42.28 pb, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. International markets also so hiked prices due to forecasts of a US reserve decline and Canadian supply impacted by wildfire. Brent went up 31 cents and settled at 49.28 pb, so as did US crude; 59 cents up at 48.31 pb.

Blumberg Grain to sign wheat deal with Algeria

DUBAI: Blumberg Grain is looking to sign a deal within the coming weeks with Algeria's state grain agency OAIC to build high-tech wheat silos that can store up to 1 million tons of the grain. “We are looking to sign something within the next few weeks, before the start of Ramadan,” David Blumberg, CEO of Blumberg Grain Middle East and North Africa, told Reuters on the sidelines of the Global Grain conference in Dubai. The new storage facilities would help to lower post-harvest losses, that waste around 20 percent of Algeria's local wheat.

OPEC basket price up to \$44.82 pb

VIENNA: The OPEC daily basket price gained \$45 cents on Tuesday, standing at \$44.82 a barrel, compared to \$44.37 last Monday, OPEC announced yesterday. The annual average of the OPEC basket price hit \$49.64 pb, OPEC said in a press release. The new OPEC Reference Basket of Crudes (ORB) is made up of the following: Saharan Blend (Algeria), Girassol (Angola), Oriente (Ecuador), Iran Heavy (Islamic Republic of Iran), Basra Light (Iraq), Kuwait Export (Kuwait), Es Sider (Libya), Bonny Light (Nigeria), Qatar Marine (Qatar), Arab Light (Saudi Arabia), Murban (UAE) and Mery (Venezuela).

Egypt buys 3.25m tons of local wheat

CAIRO: Egypt's agriculture ministry has bought 3.25 million tons of local wheat since the start of the local procurement season on April 15, it said yesterday. Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer, plans to buy 4 million tons of Egyptian wheat in the 2016 season. The country's local wheat buying season usually ends around July. The ministry has said that the pace of procurement has accelerated since a decision by the government to open additional storage space.

KKR AMONG BIDDERS FOR UAE'S NATIONAL FOOD PRODUCTS CO

DUBAI: US private equity firm KKR and Dubai-based Fajr Capital have teamed up as one of four bidders that have been shortlisted to buy a majority stake in Abu Dhabi-based National Food Products Company (NFPC), sources familiar with the matter said yesterday.

NFPC, one of the largest food and dairy manufacturers in the United Arab Emirates, whose brands include Milco, Lacnor and Oasis bottled water, appointed Emirates Investment Bank in October to arrange the sale, aimed at raising up to \$1.5 billion. Saudi Arabia's Almarai, an international industrial firm, and an international financial firm are the three other bidders, with the four invited to conduct their due diligence audits of the business ahead of making a formal bid by June 9, the sources said.

NFPC and Fajr Capital declined to comment. KKR did not immediately respond to a request to comment. NFPC, which also has a joint venture with Danish dairy giant Arla Foods, was founded by Lebanese-born businessman Fady Antonios and the local Bin Hamoodah group.

Antonios, currently president and chief executive of NFPC, is looking to raise funds for the company's expansion as well as reducing his own stake in preparation for his eventual retirement, sources familiar with the matter have said. NFPC has already started work on the first phase of a \$400 million development of a production complex in Abu Dhabi's Khalifa Industrial Zone.

Almarai, the Gulf's largest dairy company, said on April 17 it was interested in buying a controlling stake in NFPC and had already been invited to conduct due diligence. In December, Reuters reported that Almarai was one of several companies to have shown an interest in NFPC, citing sources. KKR and Fajr Capital teamed up together in June to bid for fashion retailer Azadea Group. The deal was stalled by September due to difficulties because of agreements over valuations. — Reuters

NIGERIAN UNION FACTION ORDERS STRIKE OVER PETROL PRICE RISES

ABUJA: Nigeria's government yesterday warned against “illegal strike action” after some union members vowed to press ahead with a national strike over petrol price rises despite a court injunction.

A disgruntled faction of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) said it would ignore the order and walk out to force the government to reinstate prices at 86.50 naira (\$0.43, 0.38 euros) per litre. Prices were raised by 67 percent last week to 145 naira per litre because of a lack of foreign exchange for fuel importers to pay for supplies, which has caused pumps to run dry.

Talks broke up between the NLC, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the government late on Tuesday, with most delegates agreeing to back the rises, pending further discussions. But a group of disgruntled NLC members called the talks a “dead-end” and said the strike would hold.

There were some reports of disruption on Wednesday but businesses, including banks and markets, largely appeared to open as usual.

Attendance registers

Federal government secretary Babachir David Lawal said all workers should “respect the laws of the land and... desist from participating in an illegal strike”. Strikers would not be paid and attendance registers have been opened at all government offices, he said in a statement.

Lawal said Nigeria's security services had been ordered to “ensure unimpeded access to offices, work places and markets”. “Acts of intimidation, harassment, including barricading of gates, locking up of offices, blocking of roads and preventing workers from carrying out their lawful duties will be met with appropriate response by the law enforcement agencies.”

A judge at the National Industrial Court in Abuja on Tuesday issued a temporary injunction against strike action after an application by justice minister Abubakar Malami. Malami submitted in court papers that a strike would cost the country “billions of naira” and cause “untold hardship and unimaginable security problems/challenges”.

Rising prices

The global slump in oil prices since mid-2014 has hit Nigeria's economy hard, with the government dependent on crude export sales for 70 percent of its revenue. The situation has weakened the naira currency, caused a shortage of foreign currency that fuel importers require to pay for supplies, and driven up the cost of living. In April, inflation was 13.7 percent, accord-



LAGOS: Hundreds of people demonstrate during a nationwide strike following the removal of fuel subsidy by the government in Lagos, Nigeria. Militant attacks on oil installations and a threatened nationwide strike are driving Nigeria's petroleum production and its naira currency to new lows. — AP

ing to the National Bureau of Statistics. Renewed militant attacks on oil pipelines and facilities in southern Nigeria have led to a cut in production to 1.4 million barrels per day, well below budget estimates of 2.2 million bpd.

Nigeria consumes 45 million litres of petrol per day but a lack of domestic refining capacity means crude has to be exported and refined petroleum products imported. The government has kept prices low at the pump by paying the difference in market price to suppliers. But that subsidy policy has been seen as unsustainable because of the cash crunch and corruption in the system.

‘No other option’

Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo said on Tuesday the government had “no choice” but to raise petrol prices, adding: “What can we do if we don't have foreign currency, we have to import fuel”. Joe Ajaero, from the NLC faction that decided not to strike, said a committee had been set up to “iron out” outstanding issues with the government related to the hardships faced by ordinary people.

“We have asked the government to

cushion the effects of the price increase on the people as well as make petrol readily available since people were already buying above the 145 naira cap,” he said.

“Government has to increase the minimum wage to 90,000 naira because of the

multiplier effects of the petrol price hike on foodstuffs, goods and services. “If at the end of two weeks these issues are not resolved we may have to review our position and begin to sensitize and mobilize the people for a showdown,” he said. — AFP

TUNISIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH SLOWS TO 1%

TUNIS: Tunisia's economic growth slowed to 1 percent year-on-year in the first quarter as agricultural activity declined, the state statistics institute said yesterday. Tunisia is struggling with a drop in tourism after four major militant attacks over the past year and an outbreak of unrest over jobs and development at the start of this year.

Protests and strikes have hurt its phosphate industry, one of the main suppliers of hard currency. The North African country's economic growth was 1.8 percent in the first quarter of 2015. It is expected to reach 2.5 percent this year,

compared with 0.8 percent in 2015, Finance Minister Slim Chaker has said.

The statistics agency said industrial activity for the first quarter fell about 1 percent. Agriculture slowed by 2.5 percent. Tunisia is under pressure from international lenders to reduce public spending, including subsidies on basic foods and fuel, and cut its deficit. But social tensions make cost-cutting sensitive.

The International Monetary Fund said last month it has reached a tentative deal to assist Tunisia with a four-year loan program worth about \$2.8 billion tied to economic reforms. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.778
Indian Rupees	4.544
Pakistani Rupees	2.888
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.074
Nepali Rupees	2.837
Singapore Dollar	221.430
Hongkong Dollar	38.945
Bangladesh Taka	3.853
Philippine Peso	6.438
Thai Baht	8.590

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	80.643
Qatari Riyal	83.070
ani Riyal	785.473
Bahraini Dinar	803.110
UAE Dirham	82.335

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	32.300
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	34.427
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.214
Tunisian Dinar	150.370
Jordanian Dinar	425.970
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.015
Syrian Lira	2.155
Morocco Dirham	31.816

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	302.250
Euro	345.930
Sterling Pound	437.510

Canadian dollar	234.300
Turkish lira	103.510
Swiss Franc	313.210
Australian Dollar	223.360
US Dollar Buying	301.050

GOLD

20 Gram	258.180
10 Gram	132.010
5 Gram	66.850

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	301.900
Canadian Dollar	234.060
Sterling Pound	436.275
Euro	345.405
Swiss Frank	294.660
Bahrain Dinar	798.680
UAE Dirhams	82.435
Qatari Riyals	83.650
Saudi Riyals	81.185
Jordanian Dinar	425.285
Egyptian Pound	33.901
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.072
Indian Rupees	4.528
Pakistani Rupees	2.878
Bangladesh Taka	3.840
Philippines Peso	6.369
Cyprus pound	575.020
Japanese Yen	3.810
Syrian Pound	2.370
Nepalese Rupees	3.825

Malaysian Ringgit	76.225
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	46.795
Thai Bhat	9.570
Turkish Lira	103.200

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.429769	0.438769
Czech Korune	0.004661	0.016661
Danish Krone	0.041926	0.046926
Euro	0.0335672	0.0343672
Norwegian Krone	0.032932	0.038132
Romanian Leu	0.086774	0.086774
Slovakia	0.009011	0.019011
Swedish Krona	0.032576	0.037576
Swiss Franc	0.300957	0.311157
Turkish Lira	0.097203	0.107503
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.211771	0.223271
New Zealand Dollar	0.199013	0.208513
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.228284	0.236784
US Dollars	0.298400	0.302900
US Dollars Mint	0.298900	0.302900
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003438	0.004012
Chinese Yuan	0.044931	0.048431
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036929	0.039679

Indian Rupee	0.004302	0.004692
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002696	0.002876
Kenyan Shilling	0.003111	0.003111
Korean Won	0.000246	0.000261
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071639	0.07639
Nepalese Rupee	0.002883	0.003053
Pakistan Rupee	0.002682	0.002962
Philippine Peso	0.006394	0.006674
Sierra Leone	0.000067	0.000073
Singapore Dollar	0.217614	0.223614
South African Rand	0.013424	0.021924
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001695	0.002275
Taiwan	0.009255	0.009435
Thai Baht	0.008201	0.008751

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.795818	0.803818
Egyptian Pound	0.029166	0.034284
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000190	0.000250
Jordanian Dinar	0.422651	0.430151
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020804	0.044804
Nigerian Naira	0.001247	0.001882
Omani Riyal	0.779294	0.784974
Qatar Riyal	0.082378	0.083591
Saudi Riyal	0.079780	0.080730
Syrian Pound	0.001282	0.001502
Tunisian Dinar	0.143853	0.151853
Turkish Lira	0.097203	0.107503
UAE Dirhams	0.081378	0.082527
Yemeni Riyal	0.001367	0.001447

TAITRA TO LEAD TAIWAN TRADE MISSION TO QATAR, KUWAIT, IRAN

KUWAIT: Commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) led a trade delegation of 12 well-established Taiwanese suppliers representing beauty industry last May. 12 to 14, 2016. The purpose of this visit was to facilitate business cooperation between the 12 Taiwanese delegates and their counterparts in Kuwait. This upcoming trip also aims at furthering trade rela-

tions between Taiwan and Kuwait. Reaching the trade exchange between the two countries to \$8.6 billion, and import Kuwait from Taiwan arrived in the first quarter of year 2014 to \$ 230 million, while increased in the first quarter of 2015 year by 32 percent.

Having made great strides in strengthening its major industries, Taiwan is now considered a technologically advanced manufacturing power-

house. The nation is home to key manufacturers and suppliers of various products, including Beauty Industry.

For this event, TAITRA arranged a series of trade meetings in Kuwait to give the local buyers, small medium enterprises and beauty salons valuable platform to discuss business with the participating Taiwanese companies and corporate with them to exchange experience to developing,

Taiwanese suppliers will bring the latest products' information as well as the most innovative samples with them, including a variety of beauty products, cosmetics, body and hair care, makeup.

TAITRA by its permanent office in Kuwait (Taiwan Trade Center, Kuwait) which located in the second tower of Mazaya in Sharq, ninth floor, arranged trade meeting on May 11 at Sheraton Hotel.



KUWAIT: The delegation from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) at Sheraton Hotel recently. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

NBK'S CAPITAL INCREASE SUBSCRIPTION STARTS AT KCC

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) started yesterday the subscription period for its 6.5 percent capital increase at Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC).

The subscription process will be cut down to one-day instead of the three-day normal process by having NBK designated staff at KCC premises to facilitate the process for the shareholders. The subscription will be available for all shareholders in the bank's registry as of Tuesday 17th May 2016. The subscription period will conclude by the close of business on Thursday the 16th of June 2016.

Over and above their entitlement, eligible shareholders have the right to subscribe to additional shares that have not been subscribed to. Such subscription is made at the same offering price and during the

same offering period. NBK will issue 343.96 million shares at 400 fils per share. The issuance price includes an issuance premium of 300 fils per share on top of the par value of 100 fils per share. Following the capital increase, NBK's issued and paid-in capital will reach KD 564 million distributed over 5,635.66 million shares. This step is in line with the bank's plans to maintain healthy capitalization ratios following the implementation of Basel 3 and the regulations of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in this regard. Also, this increase will allow the bank to continue capturing growth opportunities, especially in Kuwait as the government's capital spending plan remains intact and as NBK continues to be the market leader in the project finance segment.

CHINA BACKS STEEL EXPORTS AS US IMPOSES HEFTY TARIFFS

US SLAPS 500% DUTIES ON SOME CHINESE STEEL PRODUCTS

SHANGHAI/WASHINGTON: China said it would persist with controversial tax rebates to steel exporters to support the sector's painful restructuring, defying a United States move to impose punitive import duties on Chinese steel products.

A worldwide steel glut has become a major trade irritant, with China under fire from global rivals who say it is dumping cheap exports after a slowdown in demand at home. In a marked escalation of the spat, the United States on Tuesday said it would impose duties of more than 500 percent on Chinese cold-rolled flat steel, widely used for car body panels, appliances and in construction.

However, China's Ministry of Finance said it would "continue to implement a tax rebate policy on steel exports" as it tries to finance a costly capacity closure plan. By far the world's largest steel producer, China plans to eliminate 100-150 million tons of annual production - more than the US produces per year - over the next five years. The cabinet said central government-controlled firms will cut steel and coal production capacity by a tenth in 2016-17.

The finance ministry said China was making special funds available to curb overcapacity in both steel and coal and would reward local authorities for exceeding their targets and meeting them early. The policy document, though dated May 10, was published just hours after the US tariffs were announced. It is the latest policy announced by different departments including the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security to push forward capacity cuts.

ON G7 MENU

The US Commerce Department said the new duties effectively increase more than five-fold the import prices on Chinese-made cold-rolled flat steel products, which totaled \$272.3 million in 2015. It found that products were being sold in the US below cost and with unfair subsidies.

China's Commerce Ministry expressed its "strong dissatisfaction" with the US ruling, and said the United States should rectify its mistakes as soon as possible. "The United States adopted many unfair methods during the anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigation into Chinese products, including the refusal to grant Chinese state-owned firms a differentiated tax rate," it said.

The Group of Seven rich nations plans to address the steel glut when it meets in Japan later this month, in a move seen likely to add to pressure on China. Analysts said the potential closing off of the US market would not substantially reduce China's exports, accounting for just 2 percent of its total shipments. "The duty will not have a big impact on China's overall steel exports because the volume to the United States is very small... but because of anti-dumping, export destinations are becoming more and more dispersed," said Kevin Bai, an analyst with CRU in Beijing.

CHINA DENIES FLOODING MARKETS

While a flood of cheap Chinese steel has been blamed for putting some overseas producers out of business, China denies its mills have been dumping their products on foreign markets, stressing that local steelmakers are more efficient and enjoy far lower costs than

their international counterparts. China has also denied there are any inducements in place that encourage steelmakers to sell their products overseas, saying trade flows are determined by the market.

"Global demand is increasing, and Chinese steel products are very competitive, so exports are increasing a little, but the steel sector is mainly used to satisfy domestic demand and there has never been any policy support for large volumes of exports," China Iron and Steel Association (CISA) chairman Ma Guoqiang said at a conference this week. However, a vaguely-worded statement from the central bank and several other government bodies last month said China would encourage exports and provide financing for steel and coal firms looking to move overseas.

While the government has offered as much as 100 billion yuan (\$15 billion) to help handle worker layoffs, China's debt-ridden steel sector cannot afford to abandon the financial lifeline provided by exports. Foreign sales reached a record 112.4 million tons last year, up 19 percent, though total value fell 10.5 percent to \$62.8 billion as a result of plunging prices. More than half of large steel mills still made losses last year, according to the CISA. Steelmakers have called on more proactive support for the export business, with Chen Ying, the general manager of Jiangsu Shagang, telling a conference on Monday that boosting foreign sales would help speed up the country's restructuring efforts.

"China should support exports - steel product exports and moving projects and plants abroad," she said. — Reuters

CURRENCY WARS, FISCAL STIMULUS RIFT IN FOCUS AT G7 MEETING

TOKYO: Finance ministers and central bankers from the G7 meet in Japan this week for talks likely to highlight a sharp divide over currency policy and how to breathe life into the wheezing global economy. The group-including US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew and European Central Bank President Mario Draghi-converge at a hot spring town north of Tokyo where two days of meetings kick off from tomorrow. Host Japan is keen to win an endorsement for its position that fiscal stimulus is the way to spur global growth, as a rally in the yen hits exporters and accelerates a slowdown at home.

But Tokyo's threat of a market intervention to reverse the rise has put it on a collision course with other G7 nations, including the

United States which rejected suggestions that Japan on a new currency watchlist, along with China and Germany. The G7 group-also including Britain, Canada, France, Germany, and Italy will use the meetings to hammer out their strategy for keeping a global recession at bay.

In April, the International Monetary Fund cut its forecast for world growth for the third time in six months, as a slowdown in China and other emerging economies raised fears that the worst was yet to come.

IMF chief Christine Lagarde is expected to attend this week's meeting in Japan. "There are many parts of the global economy that are uncertain," Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso said in Tokyo on Tuesday. — AFP

GERMAN WAGE DEALS MODERATE SO FAR, SEEN BOOSTING GROWTH

BERLIN: The wage rises sealed by German unions for more than six million employees so far in this year's pay negotiations are relatively moderate compared to last year's agreements and may not help propel growth as much as in 2015, analysts say. The wage deals are expected to further boost domestic demand as inflation remains at record lows. Europe's biggest economy is relying increasingly on private consumption rather than trade to drive growth because an economic slowdown in emerging markets is dragging on exports.

But there are questions whether this year's pay agreements will suffice to lift private consumption to propel growth as much as in 2015, when it contributed 1.0 percentage points to an overall expansion of 1.7 percent. "The wage deals so far are a bit below the levels of 2015," said Reinhard Bispinck, wage expert at the WSI think tank which is close to German trade unions. He added so far

no sector has managed to clinch an annual deal above 3 percent which was the benchmark for most sectors in last year's negotiations.

Roughly 19 million workers in Germany are represented by unions who negotiate pay agreements every one or two years. Early yesterday, about 785,000 German construction workers agreed a two-stage wage increase with employers over 22 months, the third significant pay hike sealed in recent weeks after similar deals in the public and metalwork sectors.

Under the agreement, reached after 14 hours of talks, construction employees in western states get a rise of 2.4 percent, starting retroactively from May 1, and another 2.2 percent from May 2017. Employees in eastern states get 2.9 percent more pay this year and 2.4 percent next.

Last week, the country's biggest trade union, IG Metall, agreed a landmark deal with employ-

ers, giving 3.8 million workers in the metalwork sector a pay hike of 2.8 percent from July 1 and then by 2.0 percent from April 2017. Last year, the union managed to reach a one-year pay hike of 3.4 percent.

In the public sector, more than 2 million employees won 2.4 percent for this year, starting retroactively on March 1, and another increase of 2.35 percent starting next February.

"RELATIVELY RESTRAINED"

The German central bank said in its latest monthly report published on Tuesday that the wage increases reached in the public and metalwork sectors were "relatively restrained". "The moderate wage agreements could send a signal for other sectors that are in negotiations," the Bundesbank said. It said it expected the strong rise in consumer purchasing power over the last two quarters to recede in coming months, also due to an anticipated rise in oil prices. Based on the deals so far reached, nominal wages will rise by roughly 2.5 percent in 2016, Commerzbank analyst Eckart Tuchtfeld and Sal. Oppenheim economist Ulrike Kastens said.

Last year, nominal wages rose by 2.7 percent on average. With consumer price inflation at 0.3 percent in 2015, this pushed up real wages by 2.4 percent, the biggest increase in more than two decades.

Inflation is expected to inch up but still to remain ultra-low this year, meaning most employees can count on a real wage increase of more than two percent, Kastens said. She also noted that rising employment is strengthening consumers' purchasing power, meaning overall disposable incomes were likely to increase by up to 3.0 percent. "Domestic demand will remain an important growth driver also this year," Tuchtfeld said. Among the sectors in which wage deals are still to be negotiated in the coming weeks is the chemical sector.

The IG BCE union has demanded a 5 percent pay hike for the 550,000 employees for twelve months. The talks will start on May 30 in the state of Hesse. — Reuters



PARIS: Banque De France governor Francois Villeroy de Galhau poses with the annual report during a press conference yesterday at the Banque de France in Paris. Francois Villeroy de Galhau called the executive to "amplify reforms" in the middle of a national debate on labor law, in order to "regain an economic growth stronger and which creates jobs." — AFP

FRANCE HIT BY RAIL STRIKE, DEMO BY WEARY POLICE

PARIS: Strikes by French railway and port workers halved train services and prompted cancellation of ferry links to Britain yesterday as labor unions sought to force President Francois Hollande's government into retreat on labor law reforms.

After weeks of protests in which hundreds of their number have been hurt, police held a rally of their own to vent frustration over the stresses of near daily clashes with violent youths on the fringes of the anti-reform movement. As they did so, a crowd chanting "police everywhere, justice nowhere" surrounded a police patrol car, which went up in flames after the police officers inside fled the scene, a few hundred metres from where their colleagues were rallying.

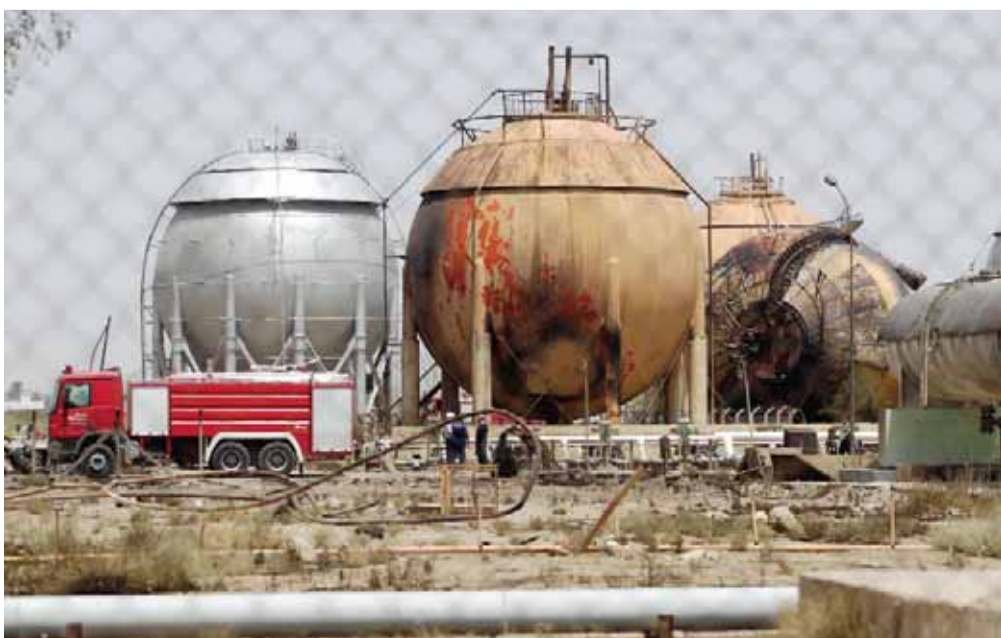
The public prosecutor's office said after the incident it was opening an inquiry into attempted homicide. Wednesday's rail strikes, set to run until tomorrow morning, reduced high-speed and inter-city services by 40 to 50 percent, also heavily disrupting local and suburban commuter lines, the

SNCF state railway company said. Strike turnout, the SNCF said, was about 15 percent, lower than in previous stoppages.

Brittany Ferries announced mass cancellations of connections between Britain and northern France, where port workers joined the industrial action.

Truckers maintained blockades set up on Tuesday in a bid to strangle deliveries in and out of fuel and food distribution depots. At issue is one of Hollande's flagship reforms a year from a presidential election - law changes designed to make it easier for employers to hire and fire staff and to opt out of cumbersome national rules in favor of in-house accords on pay.

Hollande says the change will encourage firms to recruit and combat an unemployment rate that has remained above 10 percent. The 61-year-old leader has said he will not consider running for re-election if he fails to make inroads against joblessness. Critics say the reform will totally undermine the standards of protection enshrined for decades in national labor law. — Reuters



BAGHDAD: A view of the Taji gas plant, 20 km (12 miles) north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad. — AFP

ASIAN STOCKS CHASE WALL ST DOWN, JAPAN GDP BEATS FORECASTS

WORLD STOCKS FALL DRIFT AHEAD OF FED MINUTES

LONDON: World stocks fell yesterday as investors awaited the release of the minutes to the Federal Reserve's last meeting for hints on whether it will raise interest rates again next month. France's CAC 40 shed 0.3 percent to 4,284 and Germany's DAX also eased 0.3 percent to 9,864. Britain's FTSE 100 lost 0.5 percent to 6,136.

Traders are waiting for the publication of minutes from the last meeting of the Fed, when it did not raise rates, for signs of how worried the policymakers are about inflation and the economic outlook. Some investors

expect it to raise rates again in June as the economy continues to improve gradually and inflation picks up. "We expect to gain more insight into the timing of upcoming rate hikes," said analysts from UniCredit in a note to clients.

Asian stock markets mostly fell yesterday after a two-day rally and strong US data that fuelled talk of an interest rate rise, while Tokyo swung back and forth following a better-than-forecast economic growth reading.

The world's number three economy expanded 0.4 percent in the first three months

of the year, or a 1.7 percent annualized rate, boosted by a pick-up in consumer spending. The country's benchmark Nikkei stock index spent much of the day in positive territory. But the upbeat GDP figure was offset by fears it could allow the Bank of Japan to delay any fresh stimulus.

Stimulus bets "may be drying up a little", Masahiro Ichikawa, a senior strategist at Sumitomo Mitsui Asset Management Co. in Tokyo, told Bloomberg News. "If the ... growth figure was a small increase, we might have seen more hopes for supportive policy, but

with the data being better than expected the view now is the size of the policy package may not be that significant."

Tokyo shares ended 0.1 percent lower, with profit-taking also a factor after the market rose for six of the previous seven sessions. The figures come days after local media reported that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to delay a sales tax rise next year over concerns it could damage the already fragile economy.

A tax rise in 2014 — seen as key to helping pay down Japan's enormous national debt—was blamed for ushering in a brief recession. Most other regional markets also retreated after a sharp sell-off on Wall Street Tuesday. US traders ran for cover after news that industrial production, consumer prices and housing starts all rose in April—fueling speculation the Federal Reserve could raise borrowing costs as soon as next month.

sharp losses on Wall Street's three main indexes, seeped into Asia where most stock markets fell.

Hong Kong closed down 1.5 percent, while Sydney ended 0.7 percent lower and Shanghai gave up 1.3 percent by the close. Seoul slipped 0.6 percent and Singapore was 0.3 percent off. In early European trade London and Frankfurt dropped 0.6 percent and Paris shed 0.5 percent. On currency markets the talk of a US rate rise lifted the dollar to 109.44 yen from 109.13 yen in New York. The greenback seasawed as traders considered whether the Bank of Japan would stand pat on monetary easing, which tends to lead to a stronger yen.

Energy firms again rode on the coattails of a crude rally, which has seen both main contracts push towards the \$50 mark. Brent was up 0.1 percent at \$49.31 and West Texas Intermediate gained 0.2 percent to \$48.39 as wildfires in Canada forced the evacuation of workers and the closure of the operations of the country's biggest oil company.

In Tokyo automaker Suzuki slumped 15 percent at one point on reports that it may have used improper fuel-efficiency testing, the latest bad news for a car industry shaken by scandals over deadly defects and emissions cheating. The firm managed to pare the losses slightly to end 9.4 percent lower. — AFP

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report																		
Wednesday 18 May 2016																		
Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low													
Price Index	▼ -4.18	5,363.10	5,367.28	5,399.29	5,338.41													
Weighted Index	▲ 1.27	361.81	360.54	361.81	359.27													
KSX 15	▲ 5.08	844.85	839.77	844.85	837.18													
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Volume</th> <th>Value (KWD)</th> <th>Number of Trades</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>129,637,506</td> <td>11,099,202</td> <td>3,153</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>						Volume	Value (KWD)	Number of Trades	129,637,506	11,099,202	3,153							
Volume	Value (KWD)	Number of Trades																
129,637,506	11,099,202	3,153																
Trades																		
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KWD)	Trades	Last	Change	Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KWD)	Trades	Last	Change			
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	104	0.0	0.0	SOKOUK	37.5	36.5	741605	27,316	20	37.0	▼ -0.5			
IKARUS	43.0	42.5	87,000	2,858	6	43.0	0.0	KRE	56	55	1,776,500	99,364	15	56	▼ -0.0			
IPG	350	350	1,200	420	1	350	0.0	URC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	91	▼ -0.0			
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	730	0.0	0.0	NRE	91	89	695,382	62,679	17	91	▼ -0.0			
ENERGYH	55	55	45,040	2,477	5	55	▼ -0.0	SRE	360	360	2,500	900	1	360	▲ 10.0			
GPI	45.5	43.5	12,970,959	573,926	244	43.5	▼ -2.0	TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	560	▼ -0.0			
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	98	0.0	0.0	AREC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	140	▼ -0.0			
Oil & Gas																		
			13,084,199	578,691	257	798.50	▼ -4.26											
KFOUC	186	184	50,940	9,454	8	186	▼ -2.0	ERESCO	60	59	435,000	25,666	6	60	▼ -0.0			
BPCC	530	530	2,155	1,142	3	530	▼ -0.0	MABANEE	780	780	298,566	229,265	29	770	▼ -10.0			
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	610	▼ -0.0	INJAZZAT	74	73	48,016	3,548	6	74	▼ -0.0			
ALQURAN	210	208	207,830	43,476	18	210	▲ 2.0	INVESTORS	22.0	21.5	706,128	15,225	26	21.5	▼ -0.5			
Basic Materials																		
			260,925	54,072	29	953.86	▲ 1.34	IRC	30.0	29.0	260,000	7,695	8	30.0	▼ -0.0			
KCEM	380	375	34,000	12,813	2	375	▼ -5.0	ALTIJARIA	77	76	1,122,450	96,409	14	77	▼ -0.0			
REFRI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	305	▼ -0.0	SNAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	35.5	▼ -0.0			
CABLE	430	425	25,000	10,635	7	430	▲ 5.0	AAYANRE	68	65	1,384,000	91,219	19	65	▼ -1.0			
SHIP	164	160	37,597	6,026	10	160	▼ -0.0	AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	60	▼ -0.0			
PCEM	1,020	1,000	26,535	26,538	4	1,000	▼ -0.0	ALAQARIA	22.5	21.0	52,000	1,140	3	22.5	▲ 0.5			
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	285	▼ -0.0	MAZYA	120	120	305,000	38,720	8	120	▼ -0.0			
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64	▼ -0.0	ADNC	15.5	13.5	13,653,221	193,507	233	14.0	▼ -1.0			
ACICO	305	295	128,240	38,332	7	305	▼ -0.0	THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	90	▼ -0.0			
GGMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	385	▼ -0.0	TUARA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	36.5	▼ -0.0			
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	134	▼ -0.0	TAAMEER	24.0	22.5	1,906,725	43,904	54	24.0	▲ 1.5			
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	▼ -0.0	ARKAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	94	▼ -0.0			
NICBM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	218	▼ -0.0	ARGAN	160	156	154,802	24,537	10	160	▲ 2.0			
EQUIPMENT	58	53	8,887,238	496,188	209	57	▲ 4.0	ABYAAR	25.0	25.0	1,820,000	45,500	13	25.0	▼ -0.0			
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	12.5	▲ 0.0	MUNSHAAT	55	55	233,000	12,815	14	55	▼ -1.0			
GYPSON	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102	▼ -0.0	FIRSTDUBAI	58	55	1,021,040	56,619	35	56	▼ -1.0			
SALBOOKH	75	75	83,762	4,782	2	75	▼ -1.0	KBT	42.5	42.0	1,357,100	57,111	28	42.5	▼ -0.0			
AGLTY	510	495	2,681,912	1,340,456	33	500	▲ 5.0	REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	146	▼ -0.0			
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	194	▼ -0.0	MENA	23.5	22.0	1,604,584	38,927	19	23.0	▼ -0.5			
CLEANING	40.0	38.5	144	6	2	40.0	▼ -0.0	ALMUDON	31.0	30.5	570,000	17,390	18	30.5	▼ -0.0			
CITYGROUP	510	510	144	73	1	510	▼ -0.0	MARAKEZ	24.5	24.5	3,000	74	2	24.5	▲ 0.5			
KL	49.5	47.5	240,000	11,480	3	47.5	▼ -2.0	REMAL	34.5	34.0	60,000	2,050	4	34.0	▼ -0.5			
KPC	204	204	6,450	1,316	1	204	▼ -2.0	MASHAER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	79	▼ -0.0			
HUMANSOFT	1,060	1,060	10,656	11,295	1	1,060	▼ -0.0	Real Estate						30,352,592	1,182,106	615	849.99	▼ -2.20
NAFAIS	184	170	4,100	698	3	184	▲ 4.0	KIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	96	▼ -0.0			
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	270	▼ -0.0	FACIL	180	178	26,500	4,714	6	176	▼ -10.0			
GFC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	33.0	▼ -0.0	IFA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	30.5	▼ -0.0			
MAYADEEN	22.5	22.0	1,318,200	28,993	24	22.5	▼ -0.5	NIN	118	116	2,053,189	238,172	42	118	▲ 4.0			
CGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	780	▼ -0.0	KPROJ	540	530	300,048	159,143	22	540	▲ 10.0			
MTCC	75	74	284,000	21,071	18	74	▲ 2.0	COAST	46.5	45.5	4,170,603	191,406	88	46.0	▼ -0.5			
UPAC	710	690	30,150	20,807	7	690	▼ -0.0	SECH	43.0	42.0	1,999,000	84,669	46	43.0	▲ 0.5			
ALAFCH	212	202	263,492	53,291	23	208	▲ 2.0	SGC	85	85	10,000	850	1	85	▲ 1.0			
MUBARRAD	65	63	560,018	35,844	17	64	▲ 1.0	ARZAN	33.5	32.5	724,109	23,675	24	32.5	▼ -1.0			
LOGISTICS	78	77	22,350	1,723	4	78	▼ -0.0	MARKAZ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	88	▼ -0.0			
SCCM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	79	▼ -0.0	KMEFIC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	25.0	▼ -0.0			
GCEM	78	77	51,000	3,928	2	78	▼ -1.0	ALAMAN	51	49.5	250,753	12,515	13	50	▼ -0.0			
QIC	72	70	59,511	4,270	5	72	▲ 1.0	ALOLA	53	52	509,000	28,709	14	53	▲ 1.0			
FCEM	77	75	371,000	28,096	9	76	▼ -0.0	ALMAL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	29.0	▼ -0.0			
RKWC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	94	▼ -0.0	GIH	28.5	27.0	945,576	28,291	29	28.0	▼ -0.0			
SPEC	70	69	37,000	2,574	5	69	▼ -4.0	AAYAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	37.0	▼ -0.0			
Industrials																		
			16,140,587	2,161,236	399	1032.87	▲ 0.78	BAYANINV	34.5	34.0	419,400	14,260	15	34.0	▼ -0.5			
KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	150	▼ -0.0	OSQUL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	45.5	▼ -0.0			
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64	▼ -0.0	KPIC	37.0	37.0	155,000	5,735	9	37.0	▼ -0.0			
PAPCO	106	100	1,150	117	2	100	▲ 1.0	KAMCO	80	78	15,500	1,193	8	80	▼ -0.0			
CATTL	158	156	103,300	16,236	10	156	▼ -10.0	NIH	57	53	54,500	2,974	13	55	▼ -0.0			
DANAH	96	93	5,012,785	474,513	142	96	▲ 5.0	ISKAN	31.5	30.5	3,041,784	94,288	39	31.0	▼ -0.0			
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	176	▼ -0.0	MADAR	15.5	12.0	73,950	1,054	10	15.0	▲ 0.5			
FOOD	2,280	2,280	2,967	6,765	1	2,280	▼ -0.0	ALDEERA	38.0	38.0	35,792	1,360	2	38.0	▼ -1.0			
Consumer Goods																		
			5,120,202	497,631	155	1076.74	▲ 3.76	ALSALAM	38.5	37.5	2,834,116	107,960	71	38.5	▲ 0.5			
MHC	200	200	100,000	20,000	2	200	▼ -1.0	EKTTAB	36.0	33.5	8,337,244	291,678	180	33.5	▼ -2.5			
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	▼ -0.0	ALMADINA	41.5	38.0	6,116,314	242,330	126	39.0	▼ -0.			

MITSUBISHI MOTORS PRESIDENT TO QUIT OVER MILEAGE SCANDAL



TOKYO: Mitsubishi Motors Corp President Tetsuro Aikawa listens to a reporter's question during a press conference in Tokyo yesterday. — AP

TOKYO: Mitsubishi Motors Corp President Tetsuro Aikawa said yesterday that he will step down to take responsibility for the mileage cheating scandal unfolding at the Japanese automaker.

Aikawa has denied personal involvement in wrongdoing, but it is common for executives at major Japanese companies to resign to show remorse. His resignation is expected to become final on June 24, upon shareholders' approval. A successor was not announced. But under a deal with Nissan Motor Co, which is acquiring a 34 percent stake in Mitsubishi, Nissan has been promised a major role in leading Mitsubishi.

Mitsubishi reiterated as part of its latest findings that top management had not ordered the mileage scam, but employees had been under tremendous pressure to get better mileage.

Mitsubishi also said it did not carefully inspect much of the mileage-testing work that was assigned to a subsidiary. Aikawa appeared with Mitsubishi Chairman Osamu Masuko, who helped engineer a deal with Japanese rival Nissan Motor

Co, to take the top stake in Mitsubishi for 237 billion yen (\$2.2 billion). Mitsubishi stock had plunged more than 30 percent after the scandal. Nissan found the faked mileage tests because of a discrepancy with its own tests on Mitsubishi-manufactured minicar models with tiny engines that had been sold under the Nissan brand.

Mitsubishi says rigging goes back 25 years, and may involve all models sold in Japan, including discontinued ones. It has denied any falsified data for overseas models. Just a couple of hours before Aikawa's news conference, Japanese automaker Suzuki Motor Corp apologized yesterday for improper road tests, but denied reports it illegally falsified mileage numbers.

Suzuki's dubious tests did not affect models sold abroad. The government had instructed all automakers to check on mileage tests after the Mitsubishi scandal surfaced. Suzuki shares fell in Tokyo trading yesterday on Japanese media reports the company might have cheated on mileage, but recovered to close down 9 percent. — AP

NEW US OT RULES FORCE SMALL BUSINESSES TO MAKE HARD CHOICES

NEW YORK: The government's new rules requiring overtime pay for millions of workers have small business owners facing some hard choices. The regulations being issued by the Labor Department yesterday would double to \$913 a week from \$455 the threshold under which salaried workers must be paid overtime. In terms of annual pay, the threshold rises to \$47,476 from \$23,660. The rules take effect Dec 1. Many businesses like restaurants, retailers, landscapers and moving companies will have to transition staffers, many of whom are low-level managers, to hourly pay and limit the number of hours these employees work. That can increase the workload for other staffers, have everyone scrambling to get work done in fewer hours and hurt morale. Some owners say they'll have to limit hiring, cut services or other costs. Others are turning to technology to try to get work done in less time. And some say they'll give staffers a raise to get them out of overtime territory.

Chad Brooks expects to switch managers at his eight franchise restaurants to hourly pay, and plans to send them home as soon as their shifts are over. Other staffers at the Pittsburgh-area Qdoba and Burger 21 franchises will have to pitch in to handle their work. Brooks already foresees problems, for example, if a customer wants to complain to the manager.

"Guests will be extremely frustrated when they ask, 'where's the manager,' and a worker says, 'he's not here,'" Brooks says.

Brooks has warned his managers that the change is coming. They're not happy because they'll work fewer hours and take home less pay. And hourly pay in the restaurant business is seen as entry-level compensation, not the salary that managers get as they move up the ladder. "Everyone coming to work for you wants to be salaried, have that cachet, that status," Brooks says.

The new rules, which will be revised every

three years, aim to increase pay for an estimated 4.2 million workers, including many who work 45, 50 or more hours in a week without extra pay. Businesses have been on notice about higher overtime costs since last summer, when the government issued proposed regulations. Companies are on the hook not just for time and a-half, but also for higher Social Security and Medicare taxes employers must pay on all of a staffer's compensation. The rules don't cover many employees who are office workers, computer programmers or professionals.

Small businesses lack the large revenue streams and credit lines of bigger companies, so they may struggle to afford the additional overtime costs, particularly those already facing higher minimum wages or increased health care costs. Some owners will decide that it makes sense to give staffers whose pay is close to the \$47,476 threshold a raise rather than face an uncertain overtime bill going forward, says Jonathan Sigel, a labor attorney with the law firm Mirick O'Connell in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Money isn't the only issue. Managers used to staying at work until a task is done may feel demoralized when forced to leave work unfinished, says Midge Seltzer, president of Engage PEO, a human resources provider based in Hollywood, Florida. "Most of the workplace consists of conscientious employees. It's going to be difficult for them to just throw their hands up and say, 'I'm done,'" she says.

Whether staffers will earn more or less under the regulations depends on the hourly wage each company sets. Many companies who expect to pay more are already looking at their budgets for other expenses that can be reduced or eliminated. Ben Walker is cutting his marketing budget to come up with the money he'll need for overtime for the four staffers at his phone call transcription service. — AP



TOKYO: A Shinkansen bullet train goes past a construction site in Tokyo yesterday. Japan sidestepped a recession with modest first-quarter growth, preliminary data showed, but the reading underscored how Tokyo's drive for a firm recovery in the world's number three economy is not gaining traction. — AFP

JAPAN SIDESTEPS RECESSION, RETURNS TO GROWTH IN Q1

GDP EXPANDS 0.4% IN Q1 AFTER CONTRACTION IN 2015

TOKYO: Japan sidestepped a recession after its economy grew in the first quarter, preliminary data showed yesterday, but efforts to cement recovery in the world's number three economy were gaining little traction. Gross domestic product expanded by 0.4 percent between January and March or 1.7 percent at an annualized rate after a contraction in the last three months of 2015.

A consumer spending rebound helped drive the better than expected figures, but the leap year added another day of production-and spending-to the economy's performance.

The fresh data will do little to buoy hopes for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's faltering growth blitz. His bid to revive Japan's once-soaring economy, dubbed Abenomics, was shaken by a bloodbath on equity markets at the start of the year and a resurgent yen which has taken a bite out of Japan Inc's profits.

Local media have suggested Abe will delay plans to raise Japan's consumption tax over concerns it could damage the already fragile economy. But the premier on Wednesday insisted his growth plan was making headway, and that no final decision has been made on the levy increase.

"I will make the appropriate decision at an

appropriate time," he told reporters. A consumption tax rise in 2014 — seen as key to helping pay down Japan's enormous national debt — was blamed for ushering in a brief recession.

This week the government approved a 778 billion yen (\$7.1 billion) extra budget in response to April's deadly earthquakes, which prompted factory shutdowns in southern Japan. "But even if the government delays the tax hike, it still needs to set a course for getting public finances on a sound footing, which is not an easy job," said Yoko Takeda, chief economist at Mitsubishi Research Institute. "The economy is in a tough situation with the strong yen hurting corporate earnings, stalled wages and a lack of confidence among consumers. There are going to be some tough times ahead."

Growth challenge

Yesterday's figures came days before Japan hosts a meeting of the Group of Seven finance chiefs, followed by a summit of their leaders next week. The finance group-including US Treasury Secretary Jack Lew and European Central Bank President Mario Draghi-converge at a hot springs town north of Tokyo, where two days of meetings kick off tomorrow.

Topping the agenda will be how the group of rich nations can help kickstart global growth, as the host struggles to light a fire under its own economy. Abe's growth plan-big government spending, central bank monetary easing and reforms to the highly regulated economy-initially appeared to bear fruit after he came to power in late 2012 elections. The yen weakened sharply, which boosted Japanese exporters' profits and sparked a huge stock market rally.

But sustained growth has been elusive and Abe's efforts to overhaul the economy have been widely criticized as half-hearted.

Key to the plan is a massive monetary easing campaign from the Bank of Japan aimed at dragging Japan out of years of deflation—a spiral of falling prices that held back growth.

In January the central bank shocked markets with a negative interest rate policy designed to boost lending to people and businesses. But the move was widely criticized as a desperate bid to prop up Tokyo's faltering economic plan. The uptick in demand for durable goods such as cars and household appliances is good news, but the GDP figures suggest the BoJ's rate policy was having little impact on the economy, said Shotaro Kugo, an economist at Daiwa Institute of Research. — AFP



DENVER: Ben Walker, owner of a company that transcribes phone calls for doctors, lawyers and other professionals, poses for a photo at his office in Denver. Walker has already shifted his salaried workers to hourly pay, knowing that his firm would be affected by the new overtime regulations the US Labor Department is expected to release in the next week. — AP

CRISIS FOR S KOREA SHIPBUILDERS AS GOLDEN AGE FADES

SEOUL: After more than a decade of global dominance, South Korea's shipbuilders face an unprecedented crisis that threatens the very survival of one of the flagship industries of Asia's fourth largest economy. South Korea's "Big Three" shipbuilders were once considered the holy trinity of Korea Inc.-controlling nearly 70 percent of the global market after seeing off their European and Japanese rivals in the 1980s and 1990s.

Year after year, the shipyards of Hyundai Heavy Industries, Daewoo Marine and Shipbuilding, and Samsung Heavy Industries churned out massive cargo ships, oil tankers and offshore drillers for shipping firms and energy giants around the world.

But a prolonged slump in oil prices and the global economic slowdown sapped demand for tankers and container ships, while overcapacity, regional rivalry and competition from cheaper Chinese shipbuilders squeezed profit margins.

The three firms racked up a collective loss of 8.5 trillion won (\$7.4 billion) last year, while outstanding orders among all South Korean shipbuilders hit their lowest level in 11 years in February.

"Orders are drying up. We are faced with an unimaginable situation at which our dock may soon be empty," Hyundai Heavy chairman Choi Kil-Seon said in a letter to employees in March. "Even banks are so reluctant to lend to us. This is the harsh, undeniable reality we are facing today," Choi said.

'Oversized and complacent'

Hyundai-the world's top shipbuilder by sales-has reported a net loss for two straight years, totalling 5.0 trillion won. It posted its first net profit for more than two years in the first quarter of 2016, but Choi said that was largely thanks to lower raw material prices and a weaker Korean currency.

The company became "oversized and complacent" during the boom years of the 2000s, he said, urging "bone-crushing efforts" to compete against Chinese shipbuilders that won more than half of all new global orders this year.

"If we can't compete against Chinese... our jobs will be eliminated," he said. Yang Jong-Seo, analyst at the Export-Import Bank of Korea, said the next two years would be the "worst years ever" for the shipbuilders as they embark on a period of painful, state-led restructuring.

In return for state aid and debt extensions, Seoul's financial regulators have pressed for more asset sales, mass layoffs, pay reductions and streamlined business plans. "I think the situation will hit the bottom in the latter half of 2017 and revive in 2018. The key question is whether the shipbuilders can manage to stay alive until then," Yang told AFP.

"If they end up falling apart, I'm afraid the pillar of the global shipbuilding industry will really shift to China," he said.

Storm to come

The knock-on effect of any such collapse

would be enormous. The southern port of Ulsan and Gejeo island-home to the three shipbuilders' main docks-are the bedrock of a regional economy that relies heavily on the industry for tax revenues and consumer spending by nearly 200,000 workers.

Hyundai shed more than 1,000 jobs at its Ulsan shipyard in 2015 and is reportedly planning to lay off around 3,000 workers this year. Their suppliers that hire tens of thousands of workers are being pushed to the brink of collapse. The situation is even bleaker at the number two shipbuilder Daewoo. The firm has failed to win a single

order so far in 2016, after suffering a record net loss of 5.5 trillion won last year.

Daewoo-partially owned by the state-run Korea Development Bank-has proposed laying off 3,000 workers by 2019 but the government is demanding an even bigger job cut.

"The whole city is a big community of shipbuilding workers and their families. And we are all feeling the pinch," an official at the Gejeo city council said. More than two thirds of the city's 250,000 population either work for Daewoo or Samsung or are family members of those who do. — AFP



OKPO: A general view of the deck of an under-construction Maersk triple-E class container ship at the Daewoo DSME shipyard in Okpo, 60 kms south of Busan. — AFP

DUTCH CABINET HAILS STRONGER ECONOMY AS ELECTIONS NEAR

AMSTERDAM: The Dutch economic recovery helped lower public debt for the first time in almost a decade last year, the government said yesterday, hailing the figures as a success of the conservative government's tight fiscal policy. With a parliamentary election less than a year away, Prime Minister Mark Rutte's office said it had steered growth to a level not seen since the financial crisis seven years ago, when a deep recession forced a wave of bank bailouts that sent public sector debt soaring.

The budget deficit came in at 1.8 percent in 2015, the lowest level since 2008, while total public debt declined for the first time since 2006 to 65 percent of GDP.

Both figures were helped by unexpectedly strong domestic growth of 2 percent that compensated for 4 billion euros less in income from gas revenue. The upbeat figures are welcome news for the government, which has seen voters flock to populist parties of the left and the right as austerity bit into standards of living in one of Europe's richest countries.

"The annual report for 2015 shows the fruits of the tough measures taken over previous years," Finance Minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem said in a statement to parliament.

His Labour Party, the junior coalition government partner, and Rutte's Liberals would lose more than half their seats in the 150-member parliament, from 79 to 31, pollster Maurice de Hond said on Sunday. The main beneficiary has been the right-wing Freedom Party of anti-immigration leader Geert Wilders, which is set to more than double the seats it holds to become the largest party if polls translate into votes.

"The Dutch have not benefited from economic growth," Wilders said in a statement. "Billions have been spent on asylum seekers, Brussels and Africa," he added.

"The Netherlands is a great place for foreigners, but it makes minced meat of its own people," he said. "Fortunately elections are coming." Elections are scheduled for March 15, 2017. — Reuters

INDIA SEES ROAD BUILDING AS ROUTE TO PROSPERITY

LONDON: India has embarked on a massive road construction program that both reflects and will stimulate increased ownership of cars and motorcycles and drive continued rapid growth in gasoline and diesel consumption. India has the second-largest road network after the United States, with 5.23 million km of roads, of which 3.17 million are surfaced ("Basic road statistics of India", Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, 2015).

The country's network has expanded at a compound annual rate of around 4 percent which has added more than 4.8 km of additional roads since 1951, but even so the network remains badly underdeveloped. National highways, the arterial roads connecting state capitals, ports and rail junctions, which the government calls the "economic backbone of the country", carry 40 percent of passenger and freight traffic but account for just 79,000 km or 1.5 percent of the total.

State highways, which provide trunk connections within India's states and territories, account for a further 170,000 km (3 percent). Urban roads add another 450,000 km (9 percent). But the majority of the network consists of rural roads, stretching for 3.2 million km, some 60 percent of the total. More than 60 percent of the rural road network is unsurfaced.

In theory, India's network is better than China's or Brazil's and compares favorably with many advanced economies, according to official statistics. But the fact that so much of it consists of local unpaved roads rather than major freight and passenger arteries is a "point of concern" according to the government.

Poor roads lead to immense problems moving freight between ports and the interior, as well as between different regions and states, holding back national integration and economic growth.

Road building has lagged behind motorization of the country. Between 1951 and 2013, the number of registered vehicles went up by 11 percent a year, nearly three times as fast as the 4 percent increase in the road network and five times as fast as the growth of national highways. Since 2012, the country has embarked on a massive road building program specifically aimed at upgrading the quality of the network.

The total length of the network rose 7.5 percent in 2012/13 but the number of kilometres of surfaced highway soared 17.5 percent. The massive road building program continued in 2013/14 and 2014/15 ("Embarking towards the horizon of success and prosperity", Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, 2015).

Thousands of extra kilometres of surfaced national highways are under construction as well as a host of smaller state highways and rural roads. Road building and upgrading is essential to the government's vision for economic modernization as well as providing short-term stimulus ("Better roads grease the wheels of India's economy", Wall Street Journal, May 17).

According to the government: "(The) road network is vital for sustained and inclusive growth of the economy. It facilitates the movement of passengers and freight across the country. It promotes efficiency in the economy by minimizing total transportation cost in terms of economies of production, distribution and consumption." In many ways, India is attempting to replicate the transformational impact of the US interstate highway system launched by the Eisenhower administration in 1956 ("History of the interstate highway system", Federal Highway Administration).

Past experience from the United States and other advanced economies suggests massive highway construction will promote the creation of a more integrated national economy and increase freight and passenger traffic further. That will in turn spur further rapid growth in the country's oil consumption, especially transport fuels such as gasoline and diesel. India's oil consumption has grown at an average annual rate of 5 percent over the last decade, hitting 4 million barrels per day in 2015/16 ("India's mobility revolution is driving global oil demand", Reuters, May 16).—Reuters

ABK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF ITS THIRD 'DOUBLE YOUR SALARY' WEEKLY DRAWS

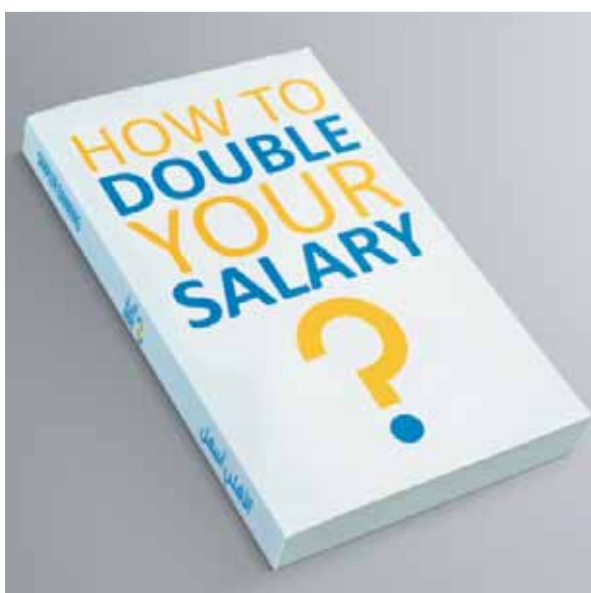
KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its third 'Double Your Salary' weekly draw on 17 May, 2016 at the Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, announcing the names of the winners for this week. The new promotion includes up to five monthly draws, with two winners per draw and will run from 1 May to 30 September, 2016.

The winners this week are:

- 1) Relin David Abraham, Sharq Branch.
- 2) Muneerah Abdullah Mohammed AlHayyan, Khaitan branch.

New customers who transfer their salary to ABK will receive KD 100 and automatically be entered into the weekly draws to double their salaries. Existing customers who are already transferring their salary to ABK will be entered into a separate draw.

The bank's next draw will be held on 24 May, 2016 where two new lucky winners will be announced subsequently. All winners will be contacted personally and a weekly announcement will be made through the media with the winners' names.



ARAB LUXURY WORLD CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS LUXURY IN TIMES OF CHANGE MEDIAQUEST TO HOLD TWO-DAY EVENT FOR INDUSTRY LEADERS

DUABI: The third edition of Arab Luxury World - the conference on the business of luxury in the Middle East - will see 700 regional and global professionals from the premium goods and services sector congregate in Dubai next month to discuss problems and offer solutions to all of the industry's stakeholders.

Organized by Mediaquest - one of the leading publishing houses in the UAE, with magazines such as Gulf Marketing Review, Saneou Al-Hadath and TRENDS, among others - this two-day conference at The Westin Dubai Mina Seyahi on June 1 and 2 will dissect in depth all of the facets of the luxury industry through more than 30 panel discussions, presentations and private sessions.

The annual gathering will be attended by high-profile individuals and international experts spanning the entire sector, including entrepreneurial businesspeople, distributors, fashion designers, manufacturers and retailers, as well as consumers and decision-makers, from across the GCC region and beyond. The collapse of old business models, disruptions from technological advances, strategic rethinks, rapid changes and the risks from an increasingly integrated global economy are just some of the factors that have led to 'The New Normal' in the industry worldwide. The conference will examine what this "New Normal" means for the premium goods and services sector in the wider Middle East in general, and GCC in particular. Julien Hawari, Co-CEO of Mediaquest, commented: "The 2016 Arab luxury world conference will



witness an assembly of basically anybody who is somebody in the business of luxury to discuss the challenges, opportunities and potential of the premium and ultra-premium goods and services markets." "For this year's conference, we've decided to have an overarching theme of 'The New Normal', with more than 30 separate activities spread over the two days. We've also invited luxury brands to provide us with an insight into their understanding of the luxury market," he added.

Some of the subjects and topics that will come up for debate in the panel discussions, presentations and private sessions are as follows: 'Digital Strategy,' 'Effective Data

Management,' 'Fashion Trends,' 'Focusing On The Core,' 'Luxury Hidden Codes,' 'Powering Saudi Arabia,' 'Taxes, VAT and Consequences' and 'The Rise Of Community Malls'.

First launched in 2014, last year's Arab luxury world conference saw approximately 750 industry professionals and 80 media representatives hear from 140 speakers. Now set against a backdrop of a global economy at risk of recession, this forthcoming edition will provide a platform for luxury industry stakeholders to prepare themselves for such challenges and still ensure growth regardless. This year's conference is sponsored by Chalhoub Group, INFINITI, OMD, Laha magazine and Jamalouki magazine.



MORAD YOUSUF BEHBEHANI GROUP BAGS LUXURY RETAILER OF THE YEAR AWARD

KUWAIT: One of the region's leading business publications, Arabian Business, recently awarded Morad Yousuf Behbehani Group its prestigious Luxury Retailer of the Year Award. This latest accolade comes in recognition of the company's efforts in delivering on its promise of an exclusive and refined retail experience across its locations in Kuwait.

The award was received by Behbehani Group's management team, Abdul Mohsen Behbehani (Director), Anfal Behbehani (Head of Product Development), Amthal Marafi (Head of Business Development) and Shahzad Gidwani (General Manager of the Trading Division). For the occasion, Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Al-Salem Al-Sabah handed over the award and thanked the company for its efforts.

Behbehani Group has invested heavily over the past year in improving and perfecting its retail offering, and this award is a demonstration of the company's success in bringing these efforts to fruition. From careful and studied showroom ambience to world-class design and displays, the Behbehani Group name has always been synonymous with luxury and style. The company is the exclusive distributor of a long list of premium timekeeping and accessory brands, thanks to its exceptional quality standards and rigorous management strategies.

Abdul Mohsen Behbehani, commented on this latest award, stating that "we are honored to be recognized by such an esteemed organization, and take our commitment to excellence very seriously. We will continue to remain focused on providing our customers and business partners with the best possible across all of our disciplines, and look forward to greater achievements in the future."

Arabian Business selects exceptional companies around the region for recognition periodically. This year, twelve companies and individuals from various sectors were recognized for outstanding business performance. A glorious journey of more than 80 years of experience in luxury retail business in Kuwait, Behbehani Group is well

versed with customer tastes and their cultural sensibilities. This empowers them to display a product line that truly satisfies a wide range of expectations in watches, jewelry and travel accessories. Knowing their market very well, Behbehani Group have geographically placed their showroom in the country in a manner where their target audience can have an easy access to their desired brands. Behbehani Group's boutiques and showrooms are located in Salhiya Complex, 360 Mall, Souq Sharq, the Avenues, Al-Kout Mall, Laila Gallery Mall, Marina Mall, Al Hamra Luxury Centre and now at The Gate mall.



GULF BANK NAMED 'BEST RETAIL BANK IN KUWAIT'

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank yesterday announced that it has won the 'Best Retail Bank in Kuwait' award from The Banker Middle East, the region's leading banking industry magazine, in recognition of its outstanding performance in the retail sector. The 'Best Retail Bank in Kuwait' award highlights the Bank's understanding of its customers' needs and its commitment to delivering superior services and products. The award was received during a ceremony held on Thursday 12 May, 2016 at Jumeirah Emirates Towers in Dubai, UAE.

Commenting on this achievement, César Gonzlez-Bueno, Gulf Bank's Chief Executive Officer said: "It is an honor to receive this award and to have our efforts recognized by such a distinguished publication. I would like to congratulate and thank the Consumer Banking Division at Gulf Bank on this award and for their efforts. We look forward to greater achievements in the future".



"I would also like to thank Banker Middle East and its panel of distinguished judges for this prestigious endorsement of our efforts and for selecting Gulf Bank as the 'Best Retail Bank in Kuwait,'" Gonzalez-Bueno added. The Banker Middle East Awards are held each year to recognize businesses in the region that have excelled in providing exceptional levels of customer service and innovation across a range of sectors, from basic banking products to high-end investment services. The awards were established to set the highest benchmarks for the industry. Every year, through a combination of in-depth analysis of financial statements and reader votes winners in various categories are selected. The nominees are selected by a panel of leading industry experts and eventual winners are decided by the more than 50,000 registered users of CPI Financial products and services.

Gulf Bank has received several other awards during 2016, underpinning the Bank's tremendous efforts. These awards include 'Credit Card Product of the Year in the Middle East' award from The Asian Banker; 'Best Treasury and Cash Management Provider in Kuwait' by Global Finance; 'Corporate Bank of the Year' and 'Best Banking Rewards Program' awards from The European, and the 'Best Retail Bank in Kuwait' and 'Best Retail Customer Service' awards from International Finance Magazine. The Bank has also received the 'Best Corporate Governance Financial Services Award for Middle East 2016' at the Ethical Boardroom Corporate Governance Awards, and has won the 'Finance and Banking' category at the Corporate LiveWire Global Awards 2016. Gulf Bank's General Manager for Consumer Banking Vikram Issar and Chief Information Technology (IT) Officer, Peter Roberts, have both been recognized in The Asian Banker's 'List of Leading Practitioners in the Middle East for 2016'.

The Banker Middle East Awards are held each year to recognize businesses in the region that have excelled in providing exceptional levels of customer service and innovation across a range of sectors, from basic banking products to high-end investment services. To learn more about any of Gulf Bank's awards, products and services, visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805, or log on to www.e-gulfbank.com, Gulf Bank's bilingual website.

APPLE CHIEF COOK UNVEILS APP DESIGN CENTRE IN INDIA



MUMBAI: Apple chief Tim Cook, center right, arrives at the Taj Mahal hotel in Mumbai yesterday. — AP

MUMBAI: Apple chief executive Tim Cook announced yesterday a new app design centre in India as he kicked off his first visit to the Asian giant seeking to tap into its roll-out of 4G networks.

Cook landed in the Indian financial capital Mumbai shortly before midnight on Tuesday by private jet from China, where he made a \$1 billion announcement. After an early morning visit to a Hindu temple in Mumbai, Cook announced the US technology behemoth was planning to build the app design facility in the southern city of Bangalore.

"India is home to one of the most vibrant and entrepreneurial iOS development communities in the world," the Apple boss said in a statement, adding that it would open early next year.

"With the opening of this new facility in Bengaluru, we're giving developers access to tools which will help them create innovative apps for customers around the world," Cook said, referring to IT hub Bangalore. Cook's four-day visit comes as Apple eyes India's fast-growing market as increasingly key to its fortunes, with sales in China and the United States slowing.

The 55-year-old made a trip to Mumbai's Shree

Siddhivinayak temple, according to the Indian Express newspaper, which posted a picture of Cook wearing a religious cloth around his neck.

While an Apple spokesperson refused to confirm Cook's schedule to AFP, local media reported he had lined up meetings with a number of prominent businessmen, including Tata Group chairman Cyrus Mistry. Cook will also reportedly meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while the Business Standard newspaper said he planned to hold discussions with Airtel CEO Sunil Mittal.

Airtel, along with other Indian telecom companies Reliance and Vodafone, are currently rolling out 4G networks across the country. Cook has previously stated that the onset of fast phone networks in India would boost sales of the Apple iPhone there.

In April the tech firm reported its first drop in global iPhone sales since launching the smartphone in 2007. But revenues from sales in India grew by 56 percent in the first three months of 2016 compared to the previous year. During his trip to China, Cook announced Apple had invested \$1 billion in Chinese ride-hailing app Didi Chuxing, the bitter rival of US-based Uber. — AFP

SUPERJET TECHNOLOGY NEARS REALITY AFTER AUSTRALIA TEST

SYDNEY: A two-hour flight from Sydney to London is a step closer to reality after the latest successful test yesterday of hypersonic technology in the Australian desert. A joint US-Australian military research team is running a series of 10 trials at the world's largest land testing range, Woomera in South Australia, and at Norway's Andoya Rocket Range.

"It is a game-changing technology... and could revolutionize global air travel, providing cost-effective access to space," Australia's chief scientist Alex Zelinsky said in a statement. Scientists have said hypersonic technology could cut travelling time from Sydney to London to as little as two hours for the 17,000-kilometre (10,540-mile) flight.

Hypersonic flight involves travelling at more than five times the speed of sound (Mach 5). Scientists involved in the program-called Hypersonic International Flight Research Experimentation (HIFIRE) — are developing an engine that can fly at Mach 7, Michael Smart of the University of Queensland told AFP.

"It's an exciting time... we want to be

able to fly with a hypersonic engine at Mach 7," said Smart, a hypersonics expert involved in the program which also includes US aerospace giant Boeing and German space agency DLR. He added that the scramjet was a supersonic combustion engine that uses oxygen from the atmosphere for fuel, making it lighter and faster than fuel-carrying rockets.

"The practical application of that is you could fly long distances over the Earth very, very quickly but also that it's very useful as an alternative to a rocket for putting satellites into space," Smart said.

The experimental rocket in the trial yesterday reached an altitude of 278 kilometres and a target speed of Mach 7.5, Australia's defense department said. Each test builds on previous ones, with the latest used to measure heat on the outside of a vehicle in hypersonic flight, Smart said. The next test, scheduled for 2017, would involve the scramjet engine separating from the rocket booster and flying on its own, he added. The first test was conducted in 2009 with the project expected to be completed in 2018. — AFP

GOOGLE PAYMENT SERVICE ANDROID PAY EXPANDS TO UK

NEW YORK: Google's mobile payment service, Android Pay, is coming to the UK, marking its first expansion outside the US. Google joins Apple Pay, yesterday which launched in the UK nearly a year ago. With both services, users merely tap a phone next to a store's payment reader to charge a credit or debit card. But it works only with stores that have newer wireless readers called NFC.

Another challenge has been persuading consumers that it's easier than pulling out a plastic card for payment. Apple Pay is also in China, Canada, Australia and Singapore, with Hong Kong and Spain to come. Google says Android Pay will expand to Singapore and Australia this year. Android Pay's expansion comes as Google holds its annual conference for software developers in Mountain View, California. — AP



SAN FRANCISCO: A Google employee gives a demonstration of Android Pay on a phone at Google I/O 2015 in San Francisco. Google's mobile payment service, Android Pay, is coming to the UK yesterday marking its first expansion outside the US. — AP



SINGAPORE: A Nokia N9 smartphone at the CommunicAsia exhibition and conference in Singapore. Finnish telecom equipment maker Nokia said yesterday it plans a global comeback into its former goldmine of handsets and tablets, by licensing its brand to a newly-created Finnish company. — AFP

NOKIA NAME TO RETURN TO MOBILE, TABLET MARKETS

MICROSOFT SELLS ENTRY-LEVEL PHONE BUSINESS TO HMD/FOXCONN

HELSINKI: The Nokia name will return to the mobile phone market after a company backed by one of its former executives teamed up with manufacturer Foxconn to buy the rights to the brand for mobile devices. Nokia, once the world's biggest maker of mobile phones, was wrongfooted by the rise of smartphones and eclipsed by Apple and Samsung. It sold its entire handset business to Microsoft in 2014 and now focuses on telecoms network equipment.

But it held on to its phone patents with a view to eventually striking a licensing deal, though it had to wait due to a non-compete deal with Microsoft.

Nokia said yesterday it had signed an exclusive 10-year licensing agreement for newly-formed Finnish company HMD global Oy to create Nokia-branded smartphones and tablets. HMD is owned by Smart Connect LP, a private equity fund run by former Nokia executive Jean-Francois Baril, and its management.

The products will be made by Taiwan's Foxconn and Nokia will receive an undisclosed royalty on sales, covering both brand and intellectual property rights.

Microsoft announced simultaneously it would sell its entry-level phones business to HMD and Foxconn subsidiary FIH Mobile for \$350 million. Nokia, whose global market share in handsets peaked at around 40 percent in 2008, said its brand remained widely-recognized, especially in developing markets.

"The areas where we believe the brand is strongest are Asia, South America and parts of Europe. Clearly China will be one of the target markets," Ramzi Haidamus, CEO of the Nokia Technologies unit, told Reuters. At 1320 GMT, Nokia stock was up 1.9 percent at 4.63 euros.

"Nokia seems to have put together a very elegant deal in order to maximize the potential to drive some revenue from the handset business, with no risk in terms of hardware," said Ben Wood, an analyst at research firm CCS

Insight. "The brand is strong in the feature phone space, but does it stand for a cutting-edge future proof smartphone? That's unclear ... It's a brand that has lost its lustre," he added. HMD, which will focus on branding and design in the partnership with Foxconn, said it would put 500 million euros (\$564 million) into marketing over the next three years.

Nokia declined to provide revenue targets related to the licensing deal, nor a timetable for new devices, which will use Google's Android platform. The deal between Microsoft, Foxconn and HMD is expected to close in the second half of 2016.

Jukka Oksaharju, a strategist at brokerage Nordnet, said annual licensing revenues for Nokia would likely be in the tens of millions. Microsoft has struggled with phones after the 2014 deal with Nokia, and last year it wrote off \$7.5 billion from the business. Microsoft said yesterday it would continue to develop its Lumia smartphones. — Reuters

SUZUKI SAYS IT USED WRONG FUEL ECONOMY TESTS IN JAPAN

TOKYO: Suzuki Motor Corp used the wrong methods to test the fuel economy of its cars in Japan, it said yesterday, widening a testing scandal that has already rocked smaller rival Mitsubishi Motors Corp. Japan's transport ministry ordered widespread checks to industry methods after Mitsubishi Motors admitted last month it manipulated fuel economy data for at least four mini-vehicle models, overstating their efficiency.

Mitsubishi Motors' president, Tetsuro Aikawa, said yesterday he would step down over that scandal, becoming the first senior departure since it broke, battering the company's reputation and wiping billions off its market value. Worries over similar damage for Suzuki sent shares in Japan's fourth-largest carmaker down as much as 15 percent during the day.

Suzuki said it would continue selling its minicars and saw no impact on its earnings. The correct readings, it said, were not significantly different to those it submitted.

Japanese authorities, however, have asked for further details from Suzuki before May 31, calling its use of non-compliant tests "outrageous." "The company apologises for the fact that we did not follow rules set by the country," CEO Osamu Suzuki told reporters, adding 2.1 million vehicles were affected.

The company denied using the tests to make its fuel economy data look better. It blamed the decision to cobble together readings from individual car parts — rather than a single reading — on its windy testing location on a coastal hill that made readings

erratic. The individual parts were tested indoors, it said. Suzuki specialises in mini-vehicles, which have engines of up to 660cc and get preferential tax treatment under Japanese law. It has roughly a third of the country's mini-vehicle market. It also has a successful Indian subsidiary, Maruti Suzuki.

MITSUBISHI'S WOES

The transport ministry, which had asked all automakers operating in Japan to re-submit fuel economy readings on all models by yesterday, said no other carmakers had manipulated data or used

improper tests. It is still awaiting further detail, however, from Suzuki. It said it has yet to decide whether to penalise Mitsubishi Motors and, if so, by how much.

Mitsubishi Motors' admission that it cheated on the fuel economy tests is its third major scandal in under two decades, and has prompted the automaker to agree to sell a one-third controlling stake to Nissan Motor Co. At a press conference yesterday, Mitsubishi Motors blamed excessive pressure, less time spent on research and development and high expectations for fuel efficiency. — Reuters



TOKYO: Suzuki Motor Corp Chairman and Chief Executive Osamu Suzuki (right) speaks as Vice President Osamu Honda (seated at left) watches during a press conference in Tokyo yesterday. — AP

EXPECT VIRTUAL REALITY, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FROM GOOGLE

SAN FRANCISCO: Google is expected to dive deeper into virtual reality and artificial intelligence yesterday during an annual conference that serves as a launching pad for its latest products and innovations.

Although Google keeps its plans under wraps until the big event, the conference agenda makes it clear that virtual reality and artificial intelligence, or "machine learning," will be among the focal points. That has spurred speculation that Google is getting ready to release a virtual-reality device to compete with Facebook's new Oculus Rift headset, as well as the Samsung's Gear VR and the Vive from HTC and Valve.

Reporters and bloggers from around the world will attend, ensuring that whatever the company unveils will also be featured in stories, pictures and video delivered to a vast audience of consumers. The three-day showcase also attracts thousands of computer programmers, giving Google an opportunity to convince them why they should design applications and other services that work with its gadgets and an array of software that includes the Chrome Web browser and Android operating system for mobile devices. Android powers about 80 percent of the world's smartphones, largely because Google gives away the software for free to device makers. Google can afford to do that because it designs Android to feature its search engine, maps and other digital services,

giving it more opportunities to show the digital ads that generate most of its revenue. But Apple's iPhone carries more cachet with affluent consumers and often introduces features that Android copies. Apple will hold a similar conference in June to unveil its fall software plans.

Google is holding this year's conference, called Google I/O, at an amphitheater a few blocks from its Mountain View, California, headquarters. With more than 6,000 seats, the amphitheater could potentially accommodate a larger crowd than the San Francisco venue where Google held I/O in past years.

Google's bare-bones entry into the still-nascent field of virtual reality came two years ago when it unveiled a cheap headset made out of cardboard. The company may now be poised to get more serious, given far more sophisticated options available for sale. Analysts are touting virtual reality, a technology that casts its users into artificial, three-dimensional worlds, as one of the industry's most promising areas for growth. Artificial intelligence, a term used to describe efforts to develop software that acts and behaves more like humans, has been a focal point of Google's for years. Progress in the field has helped Google's search engine comprehend the intent of people's inquiries more quickly and vastly improved the comprehension and responsiveness of its voice-recognition services. — AP

PASCAL SORIOT'S BIG EXPERIMENT: REINVENTING ASTRAZENECA

CRUCIAL PHASE FOR FIRM, TWO YEARS AFTER SEEING OFF PFIZER

LONDON: AstraZeneca Chief Executive Pascal Soriot is a big believer in science, and the biggest experiment of his career is the reinvention of the drugmaker. The \$500 million corporate headquarters and research hub emerging amid cranes on the southern edge of the university town of Cambridge symbolizes his aim to create a science-led company with uniquely close ties to academia. For employees, these are uncomfortable times. Thousands of jobs have been cut globally at the company in the past three years, with more to come. Some staff are also reluctant to move to Cambridge, with its high house prices, from north-west England where the company has a strong presence dating from its time as part of the old ICI chemicals empire.

Soriot, however, relishes the chance to shake things up by setting up home near world-renowned university labs - where he says the firm is better placed to hire the "best of the best" - while shrinking its operations to focus on core areas like cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular disease. "In the past, we've had too much stability," the CEO said in an interview with Reuters that gives some of the clearest indications yet of the

scale of the cultural change he intends to push through at the company. "We had people who never moved and turnover of 1 or 2 percent. That might sound good but it's actually not, because you don't have new ideas flowing through the place."

The stakes are high. Two years after spurning a \$100 billion bid from Pfizer, AstraZeneca is going through the biggest "cliff" of patent expiries the drug industry has ever seen, wiping off more than half of its sales - or \$17 billion - in 2011-2017. That has forced Soriot to seek new routes to profit and his overhaul of the company is now entering a pivotal phase, with make-or-buy trial results and drug approvals due over the next 12 months, coinciding with the move to Cambridge. As with any experiment, the outcome of Soriot's reinvention is uncertain - and investors are divided. Neil Woodford of Woodford Investment Management, the seventh largest AstraZeneca shareholder, is convinced the company will re-emerge as a successful player focused on specialty drugs like cancer treatments rather than mass-market medicines. He has added to his stake recently. But Andy Smith, chief investment officer at fund manager Mann Bioinvest,

says Soriot has yet to prove his plan will pay off. "The big question hanging over his tenure is how close he can get to showing actual value from the pipeline, rather than promised value," he said.

'Imploding'

No other pharmaceutical company has moved itself wholesale to an academic centre. Soriot argues the move is already paying off for some 1,600 staff, nearly a quarter of its UK workforce, now in rented space around Cambridge who are liaising far more closely with academic researchers. "It is fundamentally changing the way we operate," said the 56-year-old, who trained as a veterinarian in France. Most of the staff will move into the new building from late 2017. Soriot said he had no choice but to overhaul AstraZeneca when he took over in October 2012, due to the patent "cliff". "The company was imploding," he said bluntly. His answer has been to invest in internal research and bolt-on acquisitions, including more than \$7 billion of deals at the end of 2015, to rebuild the company's drug pipeline.

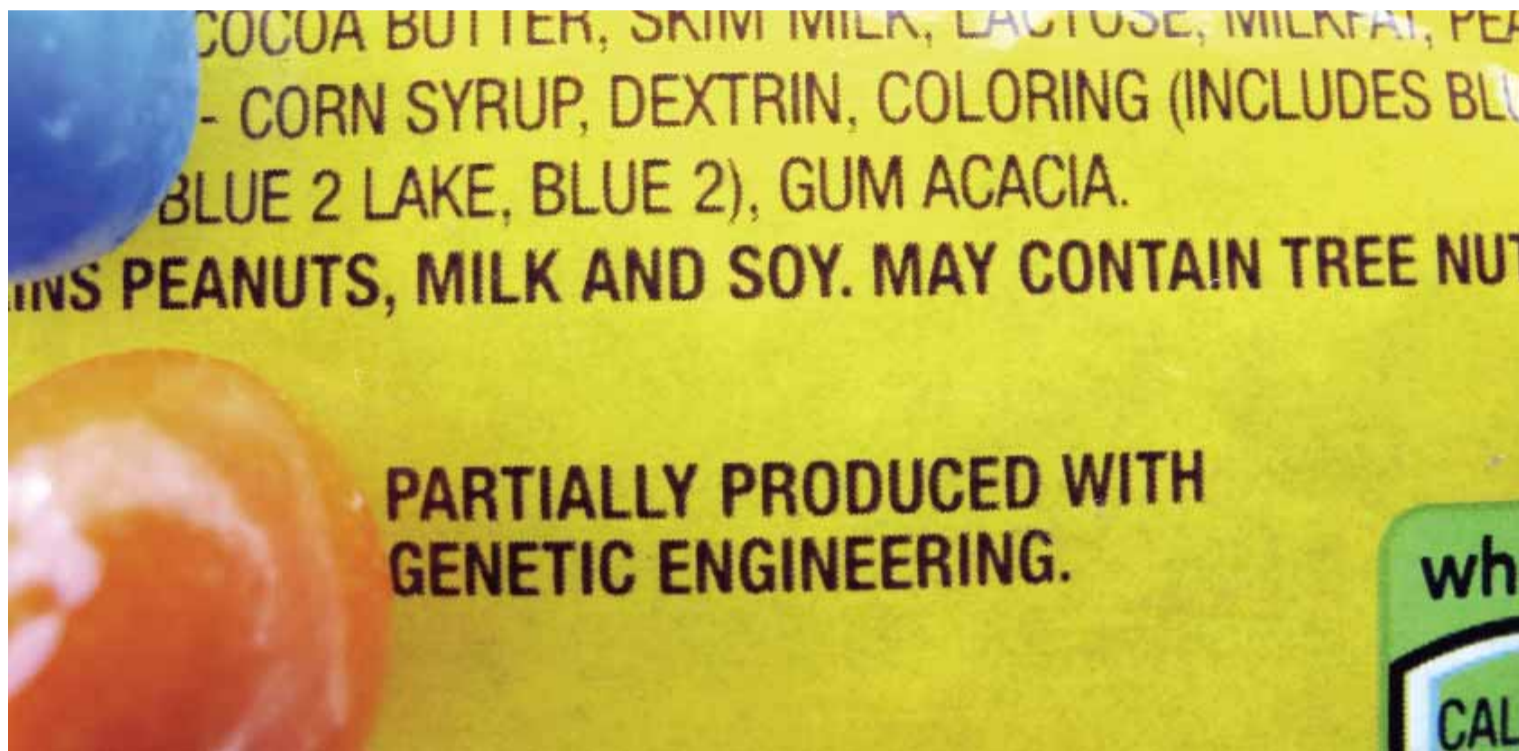
This includes cancer drugs that boost the immune system, which are the hottest



GOTHENBURG, Sweden: CEO of pharmaceutical and biologics company AstraZeneca's Swedish branch Jan-Olof Jacke (right) shakes hands with Chile's President Michelle Bachelet (center) as Sweden's Queen Silvia and King Carl Gustaf look on, during a visit at AstraZeneca in Gothenburg, Sweden. Bachelet was in Sweden for a three day official visit. — AFP

area of drug research right now, although AstraZeneca also has high hopes for other approaches to fighting tumors. That makes oncology the area with the greatest potential to drive future sales at AstraZeneca, as the company grapples with a wave of patent expiries on older products, such as

its cholesterol fighter Crestor and stomach acid pill Nexium. Investors are anxious for proof Soriot's prescription will work, since AstraZeneca shares are languishing 28 percent below the 55 pounds offered by Pfizer and earnings are expected to fall in 2016 and 2017. — Reuters



In this file photo, a new disclosure statement is displayed on a package of Peanut M&M's candy in Montpelier, Vt, saying they are "Partially produced with genetic engineering." Genetically manipulated food remains generally safe for humans and the environment, a high-powered science advisory board declared in a report on Tuesday, May 17, 2016. — AP

GENETICALLY MANIPULATED FOOD SAFE - BUT NOT CURING HUNGER

RESEARCHERS REJECT 'FRANKENFOOD' MONSTER CLAIM

WASHINGTON: Genetically manipulated food remains generally safe for humans and the environment, a high-powered science advisory board declared in a report Tuesday. The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine concluded that tinkering with the genetics of what we eat doesn't produce the "Frankenfood" monster some opponents claim - but it isn't feeding the world with substantially increased yields, as proponents promised. With the line between engineered and natural foods blurring thanks to newer techniques such as gene editing, the 408-page report said, regulators need to make their safety focus more on the end product of the food that's made rather than the nuts and bolts of how it's made.

Social and cultural factors

The report waltzed a bit around the hot political issue of whether genetically modified food should be labeled. The study's authors said labels aren't needed for food safety reasons but potentially could be justified because of transparency, social and cultural factors, somewhat similar to made-in-America stickers. That stance was praised by some environmental and consumer groups, but criticized by some scientists as unnecessary because the food poses no unique risks. There's no evidence of environmental problems caused by genetically modified crops, but pesticide resistance is a problem, the report said. Farms that use genetically modified crops in general are helped, but it may be a different story for smaller farmers and in poorer areas of the world, it said.

Most of the modified plants are soybean, cotton, corn and canola; in most cases, genetic tinkering has made them resistant to certain herbicides and

insects. When farms switched from conventional crops to the engineered varieties, there was no substantial change in the yield compared to non-engineered food. Production in general is increasing in agriculture, but US Department of Agriculture data don't show that genetically engineered crops are increasing at a higher rate, despite experimental results suggest that they should, the report said.

Farmers gaining

"Farmers in general are gaining," with less pesticide use and a bit higher yield, academy committee chairman Fred Gould said at a Tuesday news conference. The nuanced report first said it is important not to make sweeping statements on genetically engineered foods, which it called GE. Still, "the committee concluded that no differences have been found that implicate a higher risk to human health safety from these GE foods than from their non-GE counterparts."

The National Academy, established by President Abraham Lincoln to provide scientific advice, has issued reports before saying it could find no safety problem with eating genetically modified food. But the academy committee chairman Fred Gould of North Carolina State University said this study is different because his study team started by listening to critics of such foods and examined anew more than 1,000 studies. "To some extent we know more about some genetically engineered food than we do about other food," committee member Dominique Brossard of the University of Wisconsin said. "There are limits to what can be known about any food. That's something we're not used to hearing as consumers."

Many scientists who work on the issue but weren't part of the study team lauded the report as sensible,

but not surprising. Mark Sorrells at Cornell called it "very well balanced, accurate, and reiterates much of what has already been published many times." "Science is science, facts are facts," emailed Bruce Chassy, an emeritus professor of biochemistry and food science at the University of Illinois. "There's just no sound basis for their opposition just as there was never any scientific basis to believe GM plants should be viewed any differently than any other."

One dissenter was Charles Benbrook, who used to be at Washington State University but is now a private consultant. He said he feels the risks of genetically engineered food are more serious than more mainstream scientists do, and that the human health assessments aren't ample enough. Some groups critical of genetically engineering foods criticized the report before it came out. Food & Water Watch criticized the National Academy as taking funding from biotechnology firms and using "pro-GMO scientists" to write its reports.

The report was funded by the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the New Venture Fund, the US Department of Agriculture and the academy itself - none of which have direct connections to the agricultural biotechnology industry. It was peer reviewed by outside experts and committee members are vetted for financial conflicts of interests, said academy spokesman William Kearney. Unlike many scientists, Marion Nestle of New York University, who was a reviewer but not author of the report, said "the report reveals how little is known about the effects of GE foods." She said if the people behind the report wanted to end the polarization over these foods, "this won't do the trick." — AP

ALMOST HALF OF HEART ATTACKS ARE SILENT; THEY'RE STILL RISKY

CHICAGO: Almost half of all heart attacks cause no obvious symptoms, yet they can still be life-threatening, according to research on more than 9,000 middle-aged men and women. It's one of the biggest studies to examine so-called silent heart attacks, and to also explore them across racial and gender groups. Researchers at Wake Forest University's medical school led the government-funded study. Results were published online Monday in the American Heart Association's journal, *Circulation*.

The details

Middle-aged adults from four US communities were enrolled: Washington County, Maryland; suburban Minneapolis; Jackson, Mississippi and Forsyth County, North Carolina. The study's aim was to examine causes of age-related artery damage that can lead to heart disease. Whites and blacks were included. Participants had periodic clinic exams including electrocardiograms and phone interviews with the researchers. They were followed for about 13 years.

Results

Overall, 45 percent of heart attacks were the silent kind, which are usually discovered some point later when a patient has an abnormal EKG reading that suggests previous heart damage. Silent heart attacks were found on EKGs in 317 participants, or about 3 percent, who hadn't had suspicious symptoms. By contrast, 386

patients, or 4 percent, had full-blown heart attacks with symptoms. Symptoms often include chest pain, jaw and arm pain and shortness of breath. Silent heart attacks may cause mild fatigue or other vague symptoms that don't seem serious.

The risks

About 1,830 participants died during the study, 189 of them from heart disease. Those who had silent heart attacks were three times more likely to die from heart-related causes during the study than those without heart attacks. Among participants who had classic heart attacks, these deaths were five times more common than among those without heart attacks.

Comparisons

Both types of heart attacks were most common in men. Classic heart attacks were more common in white men; the rates were about equal in black men. Among black women, silent heart attacks were more common than classic attacks; among white women the rates were about the same. Previous studies on the prevalence of silent heart attacks have had varying results ranging from about 20 percent to 60 percent of all heart attacks. The authors of the current research note that many were on smaller, less diverse groups of patients. Smoking and family history of heart disease were slightly less common among silent heart attack patients but otherwise the groups were pretty similar. — AP

COAL SPILL RISK TO AUSTRALIA GREAT BARRIER REEF: STUDY

SYDNEY: Any major coal spill on Australia's Great Barrier Reef could kill some colorful corals within two weeks and stunt the growth of fish and seagrass, a new study revealed Tuesday. While coal spills are rare, environmentalists have been increasingly concerned about the risks to the reef from ships carrying the commodity mined in Queensland state through its waters.

The study, published in *Nature Scientific Reports*, is the first to examine the effect of fine coal particles on tropical marine organisms. "Results demonstrate that chronic coal exposure can cause considerable lethal effects on corals, and reductions in seagrass and fish growth rates," it said. In experiments in which marine species were exposed to varying levels of fine coal particles, the researchers found that it had a "smothering" impact on corals, co-author Mia Hoogenboom said.

Hoogenboom, from Australia's Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, said there was a stickiness to coal dust which formed that film on coral which light struggled to penetrate. "From our study it was the coral that was the most vulnerable, where we saw extensive mortality of the coral tissue," she said. "For the sea grass and the fish we saw lower levels of mortality but we did see significant impacts on their growth rates." Kathryn Berry, who led the experimental research, said corals exposed to the highest concentrations of coal dust died

within two weeks. "Corals exposed to lower concentrations of coal lasted longer, but most of them also died after four weeks of exposure," she said in a statement.

Berry said while some fish and seagrass died from coal dust exposure, it was more likely to stunt their growth by half compared to how they would have grown in clean water. The reef is suffering its worst bleaching in recorded history with 93 percent of corals affected due to warming sea temperatures. Any coal spill would add to problems caused by farming run-off, development and the coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish. A catastrophe was averted when the Chinese-registered coal carrier *Shen Neng 1* foundered in the marine park in 2010. But the huge ship gouged a three kilometer-long (1.8 mile) scar in the reef and was stranded for nine days before salvagers could refloat it.

Queensland state Environment Minister Steven Miles moved to reassure people, saying the reef was "the most strictly regulated shipping area in the world". The transit of coal through the World Heritage-listed marine park was not, he stressed, the biggest threat to the reef. "The main localized threats are sediment and nutrient run-off from the land and the big long-term threat is climate change," he said in comments cited by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. "Shipping is something we need to very closely regulate but we shouldn't let us distract us from what the main threats are." — AFP

AT SEA, SCIENTISTS DRILL INTO CRATER FOR DINOSAUR CLUES

GULF OF MEXICO: Sharks swim around a platform off Mexico's east coast as scientists drill deep into the ocean floor, extracting the remains of the asteroid widely blamed for the demise of the dinosaurs. Some 30 meters (98 feet) above the ocean floor, the researchers pull out cylinders filled with rocks that could unlock the mysteries of life and death caused by the cataclysmic crash in the Gulf of Mexico some 66 million years ago. The remains of the space rock might even give them clues about the possibility of life on other planets.

The \$15 million Expedition 364, an international team at sea since April, is the first to peer into the offshore side of the 200-kilometer wide Chicxulub crater. The crater is large enough to also straddle part of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. "One of the exciting questions is what caused the environmental changes that led to a mass extinction and what insights arise from biologic recovery in the Paleogene (period)," Sean Gulick, professor at the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Texas, told AFP in the first visit for journalists to the platform.

The search is like looking for a needle in a haystack because the asteroid was pulverized by its apocalyptic impact, which destroyed 75 percent of life on Earth. A team of 30 geologists, paleontologists and microbiologists from the United States,

Mexico, Japan, China, Australia, Canada and Europe are working on the platform, which is located 33 kilometers off the Mexican coastline. The scientists are drilling 1.5 kilometers (one mile) below the ocean floor, seeking microfossils and remains from the space rock.

Life in other planets?

Wearing helmets and protective gear, the scientists communicate with hand signals or by screaming over the loud noise from the heavy machinery as they work around the clock on the L/B Myrtle platform, a flat, seagoing vessel that jacks up on three pillars. As they removed dark rocks from a meter-long tube, Auriol Rae, a geologist from the Imperial College of London, could hardly contain his excitement. "These are the rocks we expected, but 30 meters shallower than we thought it would be," Rae said, staring at the material that will later be cleaned, refrigerated and analyzed.

The rocks will be sent to Bremen, Germany, when the mission ends in early June, so that scientists can write about their discoveries. For now, they know that the asteroid's impact was so powerful caused material to fly into orbit and fall back into Earth like fireballs. Later, ash covered the skies, turning the planet into a dark and cold place. "This created a

chain of extinction. Months later, the dust fell on the continents and oceans, changing the chemistry of the oceans," said expedition chief Jaime Urrutia, president of the Mexican Science Academy. While there are still debates about whether the asteroid is solely to blame for the disappearance of dinosaurs, scientists agree that it caused great destruction and had a role in how life evolved after its crash.

The scientists of the International Ocean Discovery Program (IODP) and the International Continental Scientific Drilling Program (ICDP) hope that Expedition 364 can provide more answers about how life was extinguished on Earth, and then revived following the asteroid's crash. They have extracted thin and clear or black and shiny rocky material, as well as yellowish or green sediment. Each layer corresponds to a moment in time between the Cretaceous-the last period of the dinosaurs-and Paleogene periods, said Ligia Perez, of the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

The crater has a circle of mountains known as the "peak ring" that are up to 500 meters high. The Myrtle platform's three pillars stand on top of one of those peaks. "There's so much fracturing of rocks inside the peak ring that you think hot fluids rushed through it, that we might anticipate that there's a great place for microbial life to occupy," Gulick said. — AFP



Sailors and workers load members' luggage onto the L/B MYRTLE Offshore Support Vessel - a scientific platform working in the Gulf of Mexico. — AFP

DIRTY AND DANGEROUS: STRIKE EXPOSES HAITI CRUMBLING HOSPITALS DOCTORS USING LIGHT OF THEIR CELL PHONES FOR OPERATION

PORT-AU-PRINCE: When a pregnant woman died outside one of Haiti's major public hospitals in Port-au-Prince last week, her family and neighbors lashed out in despair and anger. The expectant mother was an indirect casualty of a two-month strike by doctors no longer willing to tolerate a chronic lack of basic supplies and unsafe work conditions which they say endanger their patients' lives. Striking medical resident Joseph Herold shared in mourning her death, but he blames the government for starving the health system of essential funding and support.

Surgeons in Port-au-Prince, he says, have put up for too long with extraordinarily challenging work conditions. "Just imagine-you are in the middle of surgery and suddenly the power cuts out. Doctors have to finish operating by the light of their cell phones." Meanwhile, the anesthetic machine is losing pressure-your patient is waking up, in agony because the drugs aren't working any more, and you have to fight to pin him down on the operating table." Huddled in a little office in the University Hospital of Port-au-Prince, also known as the General Hospital, Herold and his fellow strikers-both interns and residents-reel off a long list of grievances.

They barely raise an eyebrow as a mouse scurries past underfoot. "That's nothing," says Herold. "There are rats in our living quarters, and flies in the operating room." Two months into the widely-followed strike, Haiti's five public hospitals stand near-deserted, unable to provide emergency services. "How can we think about providing emergency care when we don't even have a pair of gloves," asks Herold. "It's up to families to buy everything, and unfortunately, many don't have the means to pay for prescriptions. People often blame us and we are harassed all day long."



PORT-AU-PRINCE: A dead man is carried away by morgue workers in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Local authorities removed four bodies near the national palace in Port-au-Prince. They said three men on a motorcycle drove by and killed the four men. — AP

Authorities powerless

The lack of hygiene is well known among health authorities in the poorest country in the Americas. But they say they are powerless to help. "The problem

comes from the area surrounding the hospitals: neighbors dump garbage daily near health centers and those responsible don't pick up," says Gabriel Thimote, general director of the Haitian health ministry. In addition to improving sanitary conditions and

access to medical materials, the strikers are also demanding pay raises. Despite high inflation, salaries have not gone up since 1990. "People here think medical staff are privileged, but we earn less than textile factory workers," Herold complains.

After six years of higher education, interns make less than half the minimum wage, which is set by law at 240 gourdes (\$3.80) for an eight-hour workday. Residents physician in hospitals receive the equivalent of \$123 per month, and doctors make a monthly wage of \$390. Thimote admits the wages of medical staff are not commensurate to their skills and training. But he says his ministry is hamstrung after more than a decade of budget cuts-a downward curve that started well before the 2010 earthquake dealt a crippling blow to Haiti's infrastructure. Health expenditure currently accounts for 4.7 percent of the national budget-well below the 15 percent recommended by the World Health Organization.

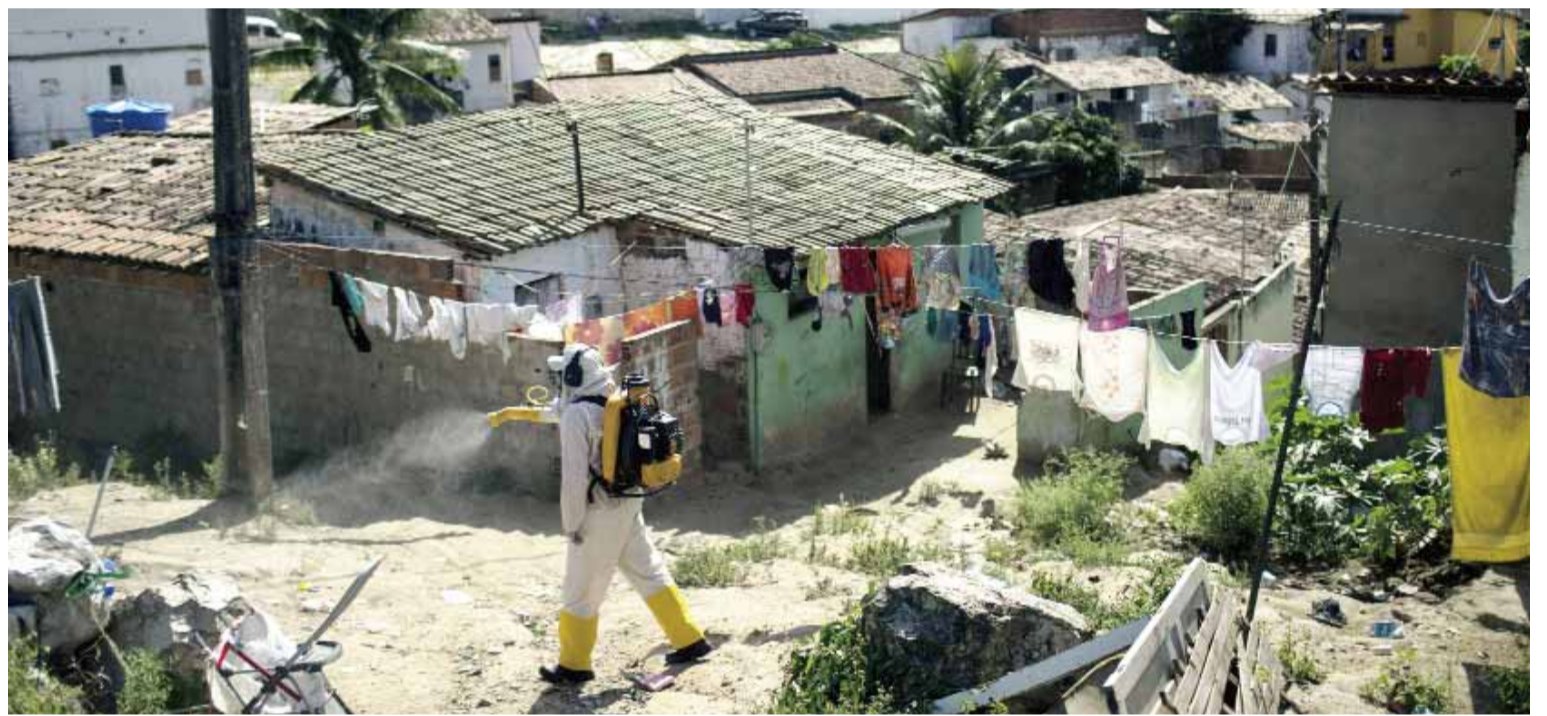
The \$38.7 million allocated to the national public health sector in the 2015-2016 budget is not enough to cover current operating costs in Haiti's hospitals. With Haiti in the grips of a drawn-out electoral crisis, the government has no more than a temporary mandate-and is refusing to take on the country's beleaguered health system. "We just can't," said presidential spokesperson Serge Simon. "The job of the provisional government is to organize elections to install an elected government-which can then take responsibility for the situation." The University Hospital in Port-au-Prince-which is still under reconstruction six years after the quake leveled a third of its buildings-is currently off limits to photographers wishing to document the health crisis. — AFP

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM EXPANDS AMID FLINT'S CRISIS

FLINT: The University of Michigan-Flint's early childhood education program will be offered for free to more Flint families amid the city's crisis with lead-tainted water, officials said. The program is ideal for lead-exposed children in part because of the emphasis on providing healthy food to students every two hours, Michigan-Flint early education teacher Starletta Rett-Henry said during a news conference at Holmes STEM Academy.

Lead can cause developmental delays, learning disabilities and health problems in children. "One thing that we do know about lead exposure is that having your bellies filled with fresh fruits and vegetables helps to deter or mitigate the lead," Rett-Henry said. The new early education offering at Holmes is called the Great Expectations Early Childhood Program. The university and the Flint public school district said the program offers the same teaching methods used at the university's on-campus Early Childhood

Development Center, which has a waiting list of more than 300 children. Bilal Tawwab, the superintendent of Flint Community Schools, said Great Expectations will initially accommodate up to 48 children. "We now have 20 children enrolled and plan to open our third and final classroom at Holmes STEM Academy on May 23," Tawwab said, adding that discussions are underway to expand the program within the district later this year to include birth to kindergarten and space for up to 250 children. Ashley Smith said she's thrilled at the progress her 4-year-old daughter, Tionna Nelson, has made in the brief time she has been enrolled in the program. "I have to bribe her to come home at the end of the day. She does not want to leave," Smith said. Great Expectations runs all year, including during the summer when school is not in session, and its hours of operation extend beyond the traditional school day, from 8 am to 5 pm. — AP



CAMPINA GRANDE: A municipal health worker sprays insecticide to kill *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, which spreads the Zika virus, in Campina Grande which appears to be the epicenter of the Zika virus outbreak in Brazil. — AP

HIGH RISK OF ZIKA VIRUS IN THE BLACK SEA AREA

COPENHAGEN: The Black Sea coastal areas of Georgia and Russia face a high risk of a Zika virus outbreak, the World Health Organization warned yesterday, while it also put Europe on alert ahead of the upcoming summer months. "The likelihood of local Zika virus transmission, if no measures are taken to mitigate the threat, is ... high in limited geographical areas: the (Portuguese) island of Madeira (off Africa) and the northeastern coast of the Black Sea," WHO said.

The reason for the high-level threat in those areas is the presence there of *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, which carry the Zika virus that health authorities say causes birth defects in newborns, the UN global health agency said. Another 18 countries in Europe

"have a moderate likelihood" of a Zika virus outbreak, WHO warned. "The overall risk of a Zika virus outbreak across the WHO European Region is low to moderate during late spring and summer," it said.

That was largely due to the presence of another mosquito species in those countries: the *Aedes albopictus*, which is less "prone" to causing outbreaks than its cousin in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to research by the Pasteur Institute. Within the "moderate likelihood" group, France, Italy and Malta had the top three transmission likelihood scores. The score was based on factors including climatic suitability for the mosquitoes, shipping and air connectivity, population density, urbanisation and history of previous outbreaks of

viruses transmitted by insects or other animals. "With this risk assessment, we at WHO want to inform and target preparedness work in each European country based on its level of risk," said Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe. "We call particularly on countries at higher risk to strengthen their national capacities and prioritize the activities that will prevent a large Zika outbreak." Recent scientific consensus is that Zika causes microcephaly, a form of severe brain damage in newborns, as well as adult-onset neurological problems which can lead to paralysis and even death. There is no vaccine or treatment for the virus, which in most people causes only mild symptoms-a rash, joint pain or fever. — AFP

SORRY! WEATHER AGENCY APOLOGIZES AFTER FAX TRIGGERS EARTHQUAKE ALERT

SEOUL: It was a bad day at the office for one unfortunate employee of South Korea's weather service yesterday, after a mistakenly-sent fax triggered an earthquake alert. The message warning of a 6.5-magnitude quake was part of a five-day disaster response exercise and should never have been faxed. International media including China's official Xinhua news agency ran the warning before the Korea Meteorological Administration issued a red-faced apology.

"We apologize deeply for causing inconvenience," the KMA said in a

statement quoted by South Korean news agency Yonhap, which also carried the initial alert. "The message was made for an exercise purpose, and an employee mistakenly clicked the button to send the message." The KMA released the message at 5:30 pm (0830GMT), calling on residents in the affected area of Hoengseong in Gangwon province to evacuate. Strong quakes are very rare on the Korean peninsula. Some seismological disturbances recorded in the South have been attributed to North Korean nuclear tests across the border. — AFP

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Kuwait Times
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FANTASY WORLD THANKS KUWAIT FOR ITS 20-YEAR FRIENDSHIP

Fantasy World has come a long way since its inception in Kuwait in 1996 as the first toys store that brought branded toys and consistently enjoyed the benefit of leading the industry for 20 years. The brand's philosophy is built around its passion to simply make customers happy. Fantasy World's presence in the local market would not have been possible if it was not for the local community's embrace and support throughout years. Today, Fantasy World announces its 20-year anniversary by thanking everyone in Kuwait for buying toys that turn out to be their children's best friend.

Fakhri Albalki, Fantasy World's Retail Manager, took this as an opportunity to thank the local community, "On behalf of the company, I would like to thank everyone in Kuwait for their ongoing support throughout our 20 years of business operation. 20 successful years in Kuwait is not only a happy occasion for us to celebrate but also for every child and parent in Kuwait. I am excited to share our celebration with the community."

Elaborating on being a best friend, Balki said "Fantasy World has been part of Kuwait's community for the past 20 years. Like a best friend, it has been part of many memorable moments which strengthened its strong friendship with every parent and child, and like every best friend who listens with care and concern, Fantasy World has always been all ears to its customers' needs. Fantasy World and its toys have turned out to be the ultimate play-time buddy incorporating, engaging and interacting with children within its stores. At Fantasy World you are not purchasing a toy, but also purchasing a best friend that accompanies children all the time and will never leave them alone as it will also help them stimulate their imagination all while enjoying a fun experience. Fantasy World continues to cherish in providing the community with an enjoyable experience for the past 20 years."



Insight

Balki also shared the company's insights in achieving success, "The toy industry moves in a rapid pace. To succeed in this field, a business must keep up with new market trends. At Fantasy World, our strategy revolves around a very customer-centric approach by which we quickly adapt to the changing market needs. Being the market leader has always pushed us further to improving the brand over the course of our 20 years of operation as we were able to control the market for the best interest of the community. Our prospect for the next 20 years is positive as we will continue with our approach to being the first-mover in the market that continuously changes according to our customer's needs and wants."

For two decades, Fantasy World has been the innovative trendsetter that surpasses market expectations. The company employs a team of dedicated research specialists that study the current international market trends and act immediately to being the first to introduce the newest toys and gadgets to Kuwait. All store items are purchased from all over the world, a factor that ensures product originality and quality. During new product releases, Fantasy World allows its customers value add of trying and experiencing new toys and gizmos to ensure that they are completely satisfied before making a purchase.

In parallel, Yousuf Anabtawi, Fantasy World's Social Media Specialist, commented, "We utilize our digital accounts efficiently as they are a



platform for direct communication with our customers. I believe that this is our real competitive edge: by listening to our customer's desires and inquiries, we are able to cater to their exact needs. Additionally, allowing for an open conversation with our customers fortifies the special bond of friendship that we share."

Educational basis

Not only does Fantasy World introduce the latest, best and trendiest toys from around the globe, it also offers items that have an educational basis and promote a healthy lifestyle. Fantasy World has a social responsibility towards its various target audience; the store has numerous products that broaden customers' knowledge in all aspects through an

entertaining and fun manner. Yousuf Anabtawi commented on Fantasy World's social responsibility, "As we believe kids truly deserve the best, we have a social responsibility towards the community to promote education and encourage healthy habits. This is shown by our continuous efforts that offer customers with products that integrate a foundation for learning and encourage physical activities." Customers are invited to visit any of Fantasy World's stores in Kuwait to explore and experience new toys, available at Al Rai, Bustan Mall, The Avenues and Souq Sharq. Voice any inquiries and concerns by visiting Fantasy World's social media platforms on Facebook (fantasyworldtoyskuwait), Instagram (fantasyworldtoys) and YouTube (fantasyworld Kuwait).



Moussa Bajad Al-Enezi recently celebrated the wedding of his son Khaled at the Fahad Al-Ahmad Hall in Doha.

SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION VISITS KUWAIT TO ENHANCE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL RELATIONS

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 on May 22nd, 2016 from 10:00am - 11:00am, 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.

UPDATE ON ELECTRONIC VISA WAIVER SCHEME FOR KUWAIT

A new electronic visa waiver (EVW) scheme was launched by the Home Office in February this year, making it easier for Kuwaiti passport holders to travel to the UK for business and tourism.

To cover the costs of the scheme a fee of £15 (equivalent) is being introduced from 23 May 2016, which is still significantly lower than the cost of a UK visit visa. The charge is being introduced to coincide with the roll-out of the new

electronic visa system to citizens of Oman, Qatar and UAE, and will be the same (low fee) for all four Gulf States.

The EVW allows Kuwaiti passport holders to travel to the UK for a visit of up to six months by filling in an online form at least 48 hours before they travel.

The scheme removes the need to give biometrics, attend a visa application center or hand in passports in advance of travel. It also allows

passengers to upload a copy of their passport biographic data page so that details can be checked for accuracy prior to travel, meaning the system is simple and secure. Since the scheme's successful introduction earlier this year, more than thirteen thousand Kuwaitis have benefited from using an electronic visa waiver to come to the UK. Further details on the EVW are available at <https://www.gov.uk/get-electronic-visa-waiver>.

THE SULTAN CENTER DEVELOPS FUTURE EXECUTIVE MANAGERS WITH ILM DIPLOMA

Driven by its commitment to constantly develop its people, The Sultan Center (TSC) has recently celebrated the graduation of its talented managers who have joined the ILM (Institute of Leadership and Management) Level 7 Certification and Development training program. The graduation ceremony was held at Wok Hay restaurant (one of TSC Group of Restaurants) in the presence of Victor Suarez TSC's Chief Executive Officer for Retail and member of Board of Directors and Hani Ismael - Group Human Resources Director for TSC along with the graduates and representatives of TSC management.

As Victor Suarez/CEO at TSC congratulated TSC's managers for their hard work and dedication, he confirmed that through ILM development training courses, TSC is in the process of preparing its managerial staff to be the next generation decision makers and top executives.

"Leadership, decision making, driving change, promoting operational excellence, performance management, coaching, creating a high performance culture, optimizing resources, etc. are the cornerstones in providing top-notch services to TSC's customers who are the main pillars in the company's track record of success, therefore we strive to maintain and boost their loyalty".

Suarez elaborated that to obtain and sustain market leadership, a market leader must ensure its operating model renders Operating Cash-flow sustainably, while to be highly effective in retail implies high doses of sacrifice, resilience, hard work and strict discipline.

"We must make it a continuous and relentless effort to outperform ourselves and our competition; to be recognized as leaders we must serve our customers and ensure their satisfaction".

Addressing the graduates at the ceremony, Hani Ismael - Group HR Director at TSC said: "At TSC, people development is at the core of our Human Resource strategy, this has always been the TSC way of building capabilities, since 2004 when we started investing in MBA and Executive MBA programs with world class business schools. Each and every TSC associate we invested in is very valuable to TSC and we certainly appreciate their caliber and continuous contribution towards the growth and success of our company". Ismael elaborated that ILM was selected as the



platform for TSC managers' development because it's Europe's market leader and UK's largest awarding body for leadership and management qualifications. TSC believes that this course will boost managers' personal portfolio as well as help them to add more value to TSC today and in the future. TSC managers who have been enrolled in ILM Level 7 program, experienced 15 straight months of work based projects, combining traditional seminars with e-learning, personal coaching with workplace mentoring, the program focused on key aspects of Leadership, Management, Change Strategy and Risk while preparing each graduate to excel in the fast moving business environment at TSC. The ceremony further celebrated the endorsement of TSC as the ILM Approved Center

and Recognized Provider. "With this achievement we can now deliver popular leadership and management qualifications that can be specifically adapted to TSC's needs and provides employees with internationally-recognized learning and development programs, all endorsed by ILM-branded certificates", stated Ismael. Another advantage is that all course content, delivery methods and trainers are approved by ILM to ensure an exceptional learning experience.

The graduation ceremony has been a true demonstration of professionalism as TSC prepares its workforce to excel within today's fast paced business environment delivering top-notch service to its customers and the community.



Lara Kayed along with her parents Aida Kayed & Heba Kayed on the occasion of her graduation ceremony. Lara Kayed belongs to the Class of 2016 graduating from the prestigious Kuwait English School. We wish Lara the very best in all her future endeavors & also wishing her a very Happy Birthday!



Elvisa Al-Duaij hosted a farewell reception for Anna Maria Wollfarth' the spouse of the German ambassador to Kuwait at Alduaij Diwan in Qadessiya yesterday. It was attended by a remarkable number of dignitaries. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



Elvisa Al-Duaij (right) and Anna Maria (left) during the ceremony.



Elvisa Al-Duaij



Elvisa Al-Duaij, Anna Maria and other dignitaries.



(From right) Najlala Al-Naqqi, Vera Al-Mutawa, Elvisa Al-Duaij, and Anna Maria



Guests are seen in attendance.



Elvisa Al-Duaij addresses the attendees.

AMC

04:20 The Aviator
05:55 If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium
07:35 Big Screen
07:50 The Garbage Pail Kids Movie
09:25 Puckoon
10:50 The Raven
12:15 Captain Jack
13:55 Impromptu
15:40 Geronimo: An American Legend
17:35 Race For The Yankee
Zephyr
19:25 The Aviator
21:00 Breaking Bad
22:00 A Dangerous Woman
23:45 Requiem For A Dream
01:25 Hair

ANIMAL PLANET HD

03:25 Africa's Trees Of Life
04:15 Gator Boys
05:02 Treeshouse Masters
05:49 Village Vets
06:13 Village Vets
06:36 Call Of The Wildman
07:00 Call Of The Wildman
07:25 Too Cute!
08:15 Village Vets
08:45 Village Vets
09:10 Treeshouse Masters
10:00 Tanked
11:00 Too Cute!
11:55 Bondi Vet
12:50 Village Vets
13:20 Village Vets
13:45 Gator Boys
14:40 Treeshouse Masters
15:35 Tanked
16:30 Africa's Trees Of Life
17:25 River Monsters
18:20 Austin Stevens: Snakemaster
19:15 Tanked
20:10 Animal Cops South Africa
21:05 Treeshouse Masters
22:00 Austin Stevens: Snakemaster
22:55 Gator Boys
23:50 River Monsters
00:45 I'm Alive
01:40 Austin Stevens: Snakemaster
02:35 Tanked

BBC FIRST

03:40 Orphan Black
04:35 Eastenders
05:10 Doctor Who
06:00 Doctors
06:30 Doctors
07:00 Doctors
07:30 Eastenders
08:00 Death In Paradise
08:55 37 Days
09:50 Doctor Who
10:40 Doctors
11:10 Eastenders
11:40 Death In Paradise
12:35 37 Days
13:30 Doctor Who
14:20 Doctors
14:50 Eastenders
15:25 Death In Paradise
16:20 Dickensian
17:10 Doctor Who
18:00 Doctors
18:30 Eastenders
19:05 Death In Paradise
20:00 Holly City
21:00 Stella
21:55 Unforgotten
22:45 Orphan Black
23:35 Doctors
00:10 Eastenders
00:45 Holly City
01:40 Stella

COMEDY CENTRAL

03:00 South Park

22:30 South Park
23:00 South Park
00:00 Owen Benjamin: High Five
01:15 South Park
02:05 Owen Benjamin: High Five
03:00 Owen Benjamin: High Five

crime & investigation network

03:00 The Haunting Of...
04:00 The Haunting Of...
05:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
06:00 The FBI Files
07:00 Beyond Scared Straight
08:00 The FBI Files
09:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
10:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
11:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
12:00 Private Crimes
12:30 Private Crimes
13:00 Homicide Hunter
14:00 The First 48
15:00 Beyond Scared Straight
16:00 The FBI Files
17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
18:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
19:00 Homicide Hunter
20:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
21:00 Ms. Homicide
22:00 Married, Single, Dead
23:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
00:00 Crime Stories
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
02:00 Ms. Homicide

Discovery CHANNEL HD

03:15 Superhuman Science
03:40 Game Of Pawns
04:05 Storage Wars Canada
04:30 Property Wars
05:00 South Beach Classics
06:00 Yukon Men
06:50 Wheeler Dealers
07:40 Fast N' Loud
08:30 Game Of Pawns
08:55 Storage Wars Canada
09:20 Property Wars
09:45 How Do They Do It?
10:10 South Beach Classics
10:35 You Have Been Warned
11:25 The Pop Illusionist
12:15 Superhuman Science
12:40 Superhuman Science
13:05 Game Of Pawns
13:30 Storage Wars Canada
13:55 Property Wars
14:20 Yukon Men
15:10 Wheeler Dealers
16:00 Fast N' Loud
16:50 South Beach Classics
17:15 How Do They Do It?
17:40 Salvage Hunters
18:30 For The Love Of Cars
19:20 The Weapon Hunter
20:10 Storage Wars Canada
20:35 Property Wars
21:00 Free Ride
21:50 For The Love Of Cars
22:40 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville
23:30 Fast N' Loud
00:20 Wheeler Dealers
01:10 Free Ride
02:00 For The Love Of Cars
02:50 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville

Discovery Family

03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Kids vs Film

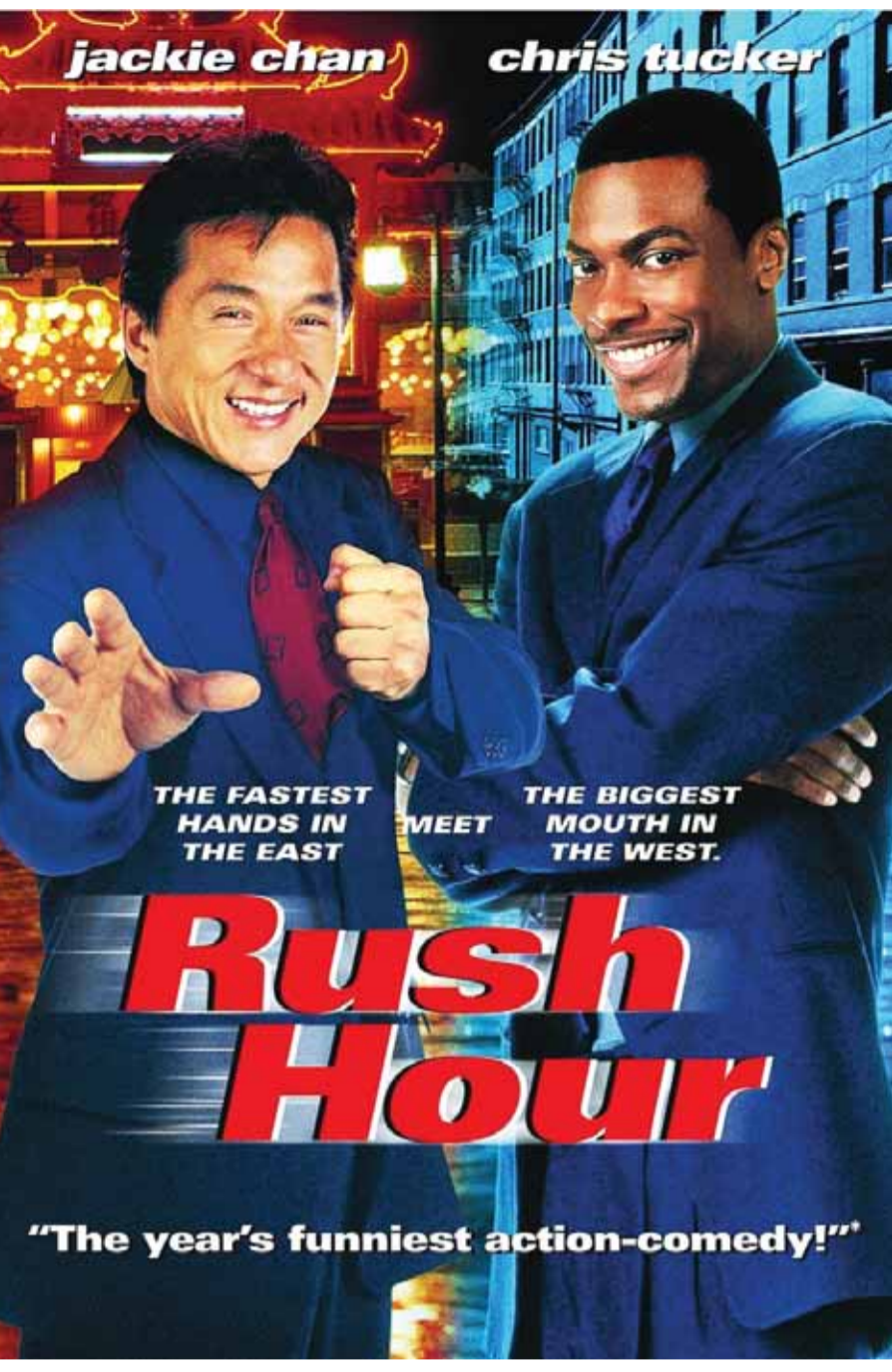
04:36 Blood Relatives
05:24 Nowhere To Hide
06:12 I Was Murdered
06:37 I Was Murdered
07:00 Blood Relatives
07:50 I Almost Got Away With It
08:40 Nowhere To Hide
09:30 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
10:20 I Was Murdered
10:45 I Was Murdered
11:10 California Investigator
11:35 California Investigator
12:00 Blood Relatives
12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
13:40 Nowhere To Hide
14:30 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
15:20 I Was Murdered
15:45 I Was Murdered
16:10 Southern Fried Homicide
17:00 Blood Relatives
17:50 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
18:40 Nowhere To Hide
19:30 I Almost Got Away With It
20:20 I Was Murdered
20:45 I Was Murdered
21:10 Murder Comes To Town
22:00 Web Of Lies
22:50 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
23:40 Your Worst Nightmare
00:30 Evil Kin
01:20 Web Of Lies
02:10 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen

Discovery SCIENCE

03:05 How It's Made
03:29 Mythbusters
04:16 Invent It Rich
05:03 How The Universe Works
05:50 Kings Of Construction
06:37 How Do They Do It?
07:00 How Do They Do It?
07:23 Mythbusters
08:08 How It's Made
08:30 How It's Made
08:53 Kings Of Construction
09:38 Through The Wormhole
10:23 Invent It Rich
11:08 How The Universe Works
11:53 Kings Of Construction
12:38 Mythbusters
13:23 Through The Wormhole
14:10 How It's Made
14:33 How It's Made
14:57 Food Factory USA
15:20 Food Factory USA
15:44 How The Universe Works
16:31 Kings Of Construction
17:18 How It's Made
17:41 How It's Made
18:05 Mythbusters
18:50 Secret Space Escapes
19:40 How The Universe Works
20:25 Through The Wormhole
21:15 How It's Made
22:00 Secret Space Escapes
22:45 How The Universe Works
23:35 Mythbusters
00:20 Through The Wormhole
01:08 Secret Space Escapes
01:55 How The Universe Works
02:42 How It's Made

Disney

03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Hank Zipzer
04:35 Binny And The Ghost
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mook
06:00 LOLirock
06:25 Sofia The First
06:50 Gravity Falls
07:15 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
07:40 Hank Zipzer
08:05 Shake It Up



RUSH HOUR ON OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Hank Zipzer
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Violetta

Disney JUNIOR

03:10 Henry Hugglemonster
03:20 Calimero
03:35 Zou
03:45 Loopdidoo
04:00 Art Attack
04:25 Henry Hugglemonster
04:35 Calimero
04:50 Zou
05:00 Loopdidoo
05:15 Art Attack
05:35 Henry Hugglemonster
05:50 Calimero
06:00 Zou
06:20 Loopdidoo
06:35 Art Attack
07:00 The Hive
07:10 Zou
07:25 Loopdidoo
07:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
08:05 Sofia The First
08:30 Goldie & Bear
08:45 Miles From Tomorrow
09:10 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
09:20 Doc McStuffins
09:35 Doc McStuffins
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Goldie & Bear
11:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
11:25 The Lion Guard
11:50 Handy Manny
12:15 Jungle Junction
12:30 Special Agent Oso
12:45 The Hive
13:00 Sofia The First
13:25 Miles From Tomorrow
13:50 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
14:15 The Lion Guard
14:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
15:10 Doc McStuffins
15:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
16:00 Sofia The First
16:25 Jungle Cubs
16:50 Aladdin
17:15 The Lion Guard
17:40 Goldie & Bear
18:05 Miles From Tomorrow
18:30 Sofia The First
19:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:30 The Lion Guard
20:00 Goldie & Bear
20:30 Sofia The First
21:00 Jungle Cubs
21:25 Aladdin
21:50 Gummi Bears
22:20 Lilo And Stitch
22:50 Zou
23:05 Henry Hugglemonster
23:20 Calimero
23:35 Zou
23:50 Loopdidoo
00:05 Art Attack
00:30 Henry Hugglemonster
00:45 Calimero
01:00 Zou
01:15 Loopdidoo
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Calimero
02:20 Zou
02:30 Loopdidoo
02:45 Art Attack

EHD

03:15 Christina Milian Turned Up
04:10 Christina Milian Turned Up
05:05 Christina Milian Turned Up
06:00 Fashion Bloggers
06:25 Kourtney And Kim Take Miami
07:20 Kourtney And Kim Take Miami
08:20 El News
09:15 Kourtney And Kim Take Miami
10:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:05 El News
14:05 Bolched
15:00 Fashion Bloggers
15:30 Bolched: Post Op
16:00 WAGS
17:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
18:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
19:00 El News
20:00 Dash Dolls
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 Bolched
23:00 El News
00:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
00:55 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
01:50 Bolched
02:20 El News

XD

06:00 Boyster
06:10 Super Matrak
06:35 Super Matrak
07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:25 K.C. Undercover
07:50 Supa Strikas
08:40 Lab Rats
09:10 Kirby Buckets
09:35 Pokemon Series Xy: Kalos Quest
10:00 Rocket Man-Man
10:25 Ultimate Spider-Man: Web Warriors
10:50 Marvel Avengers Assemble
11:20 Guardians Of The Galaxy
11:45 Pair Of Kings
12:10 Pair Of Kings
12:35 Lab Rats

food network

03:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
04:00 Man Fire Food
04:30 Man Fire Food
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Chopped
07:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
07:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
08:00 Chopped
09:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
09:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
10:00 The Kitchen
11:00 Anna Olson: Fresh
11:30 Anna Olson: Fresh
12:00 Chopped
13:00 The Pioneer Woman
13:30 The Pioneer Woman
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Man Fire Food
15:30 Man Fire Food
16:00 Chopped
17:00 The Kitchen
18:00 Anna Olson: Fresh
18:30 Anna Olson: Fresh
19:00 Chopped
20:00 Iron Chef America
21:00 Private Chef
22:00 Valerie's Home Cooking
22:30 Valerie's Home Cooking
23:00 Iron Chef America

00:20 Pawn Stars
00:45 Pawn Stars South Africa
01:10 Down East Dickering
02:00 Ice Road Truckers
02:50 Ax Men

itv CHOICE

03:25 Midsomer Murders
05:15 I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!
06:10 Coach Trip
06:35 Catchphrase
07:05 Callie-Anne Cooks Into The Wild
07:30 Midsomer Murders
09:20 The Jonathan Ross Show
10:10 I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!
11:05 Callie-Anne Cooks Into The Wild
11:35 Catchphrase
12:05 Coach Trip
12:30 Peter Andre's 60 Minute Makeover
13:25 Emmerdale
13:50 Coach Trip
14:20 Coronation Street
14:45 The Jonathan Ross Show
15:35 When Ant & Dec Met The Prince
16:55 Royal Stories
17:25 Raised By Wolves
17:55 Raised By Wolves
18:20 Emmerdale
18:45 Coach Trip
19:10 Coronation Street
19:35 When Ant & Dec Met The Prince
20:55 Royal Stories
21:25 Raised By Wolves
21:55 Raised By Wolves
22:20 Coronation Street
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Peter Andre's 60 Minute Makeover
00:10 When Ant & Dec Met The Prince
01:30 Emmerdale
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Jonathan Ross Show

NAT GEO people HD

03:05 Glamour Puds
03:30 Glamour Puds
03:55 Cruise Ship Diaries
04:45 Maximum Foodie
05:10 Tripping Out With Ailie & Georgia
05:35 Rustic Adventures Italy
06:00 Rustic Adventures Italy
06:25 Carnival Eats
06:50 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
07:40 Billionaire's Paradise
08:30 Tom's Istanbul Delight
08:55 Glamour Puds
09:20 Glamour Puds
09:45 Cruise Ship Diaries
10:35 Maximum Foodie
11:00 Tripping Out With Ailie & Georgia
11:25 Rustic Adventures Italy
11:50 Rustic Adventures Italy
12:15 Carnival Eats
12:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
13:35 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
14:00 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
14:30 World's Biggest Festival: Kumbh Mela
15:25 Cruise Ship Diaries
16:20 Testing The Menu With Nic Watt
16:45 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
17:15 Tripping Out With Ailie & Georgia
17:40 Rustic Adventures Italy
18:10 Rustic Adventures Italy
18:35 Carnival Eats
19:05 World's Biggest Festival: Kumbh Mela
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21:40 Tripping Out With Ailie & Georgia
22:05 Rustic Adventures Italy
22:30 Rustic Adventures Italy
22:55 Carnival Eats
23:20 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
00:10 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
00:35 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
01:00 Cesar To The Rescue

HISTORY HD

03:40 American Restoration
04:05 American Restoration
04:30 Pawn Stars
05:00 Lost Worlds
06:00 Mountain Men
06:50 Ice Road Truckers
07:40 Ax Men
08:30 Shipping Wars
08:55 American Restoration
09:20 American Restoration
09:45 Banger Boys
10:35 Counting Cars
11:25 Lost Worlds
12:15 American Pickers
13:05 Storage Wars
13:30 Storage Wars
13:55 Fifth Gear
14:45 Shipping Wars
15:10 Shipping Wars
15:35 Shipping Wars
16:00 Mountain Men
16:50 Ax Men
17:40 Ice Road Truckers
18:30 Lost Worlds
19:20 American Pickers
20:10 Pawn Stars
20:35 Pawn Stars
21:00 Duck Dynasty
21:25 Duck Dynasty
21:50 Pawn Stars
22:15 Pawn Stars South Africa
22:40 Grave Trade
23:30 Duck Dynasty
23:55 Duck Dynasty

01:50 Chefs Run Wild
02:15 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
02:40 David Rocco's Dolce Vita

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

04:00 Flightplan
06:00 The Bourne Legacy
08:15 Metro
10:15 Flightplan
12:00 Big Ass Spider!
13:30 The Bourne Legacy
15:45 Metro
17:45 Hercules
19:30 Let The Bullets Fly
21:45 Watchmen
00:45 Patrick
02:30 Hercules

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

04:00 Dunston Checks In
06:00 500 Days Of Summer
08:00 Rush Hour
10:00 Dunston Checks In
12:00 Garfield's Fun Fest
14:00 Down To Earth
16:00 Rush Hour
18:00 Sweet Home Alabama
20:00 Without A Paddle
22:00 The Five Year Engagement
00:15 Let's Be Cops
02:15 Sweet Home Alabama

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

03:15 Mighty Joe Young
05:15 Race To Witch Mountain
07:15 Pocahontas
09:00 Bedtime Stories
11:00 Postman Pat: The Movie
13:00 Three Wishes
15:00 Eragon
17:00 The Boxtrolls
19:00 National Treasure 2: Book Of Secrets
21:00 Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey
23:00 The Boxtrolls
01:00 National Treasure 2: Book Of Secrets

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

04:00 Powder
06:00 Les Miserables
09:00 Legends Of The Fall
11:30 Happiness
13:30 Les Miserables
16:30 Mood Indigo
19:00 Gattaca
21:00 Blue Sky
23:00 Starred Up
01:00 Cocaine Cowboys: Reloaded

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

03:15 Miss Julie
05:30 Veronica Mars
07:15 Boychoir
09:00 The Rewrite
11:00 Love, Rosie
13:00 Make Your Move
15:00 Parkland
17:00 Big Game
19:00 Ant-Man
21:00 Survivor
23:00 Horrible Bosses 2
01:00 Beneath

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

04:15 Ghatothkach - Master Of Magic
06:00 Zafra
08:00 Columbus In The Last Journey
10:00 Yellowbird
11:30 Daddy I'm A Zombie
13:00 Jungle Book: Mowgli's Adventure
14:30 Mamma Moo And Crow
16:00 Worms
18:00 Yellowbird
20:00 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
22:00 Mamma Moo And Crow
23:30 Worms
01:00 Columbus In The Last Journey



HERCULES ON OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

03:25 Tattoo Disasters
03:50 Hungry Investors
04:40 Workaholics
05:05 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
05:55 Tosh.0
06:20 Tosh.0
06:50 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
07:40 Workaholics
08:05 Workaholics
08:30 Key And Peele
08:55 Key And Peele
09:20 Tosh.0
09:45 Tosh.0
10:10 Nathan For You
10:35 Nathan For You
11:00 Lip Sync Battle
11:25 Lip Sync Battle
11:50 Workaholics
12:15 Workaholics
12:40 Key And Peele
13:05 Key And Peele
13:30 Tosh.0
13:55 Tosh.0
14:45 Nathan For You
15:10 Nathan For You
15:35 Lip Sync Battle
16:00 Workaholics
16:30 Workaholics
16:55 Key And Peele
17:25 Key And Peele
17:50 Tosh.0
18:15 Tosh.0
18:40 Nathan For You
19:05 Nathan For You
19:30 Hungry Investors
20:15 Lip Sync Battle
20:38 Lip Sync Battle
21:30 Owen Benjamin: High Five
01:25 Hair

07:25 Doki
07:50 Bad Dog
08:40 You Have Been Warned
09:30 How It's Made
09:55 How It's Made
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 Bondi Vet
12:00 Bad Dog
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Ultimate Survival
14:30 Dirty Jobs
15:20 Mythbusters
16:10 Kids vs Film
16:35 Doki
17:00 NASA's Greatest Missions
17:50 Mission Asteroid
18:40 You Have Been Warned
19:30 Mythbusters
20:20 How It's Made
20:45 How It's Made
21:10 NASA's Greatest Missions
22:00 Mission Asteroid
22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
23:40 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
00:30 Mythbusters
01:20 NASA's Greatest Missions

ID. INVESTIGATION DISCOVERY

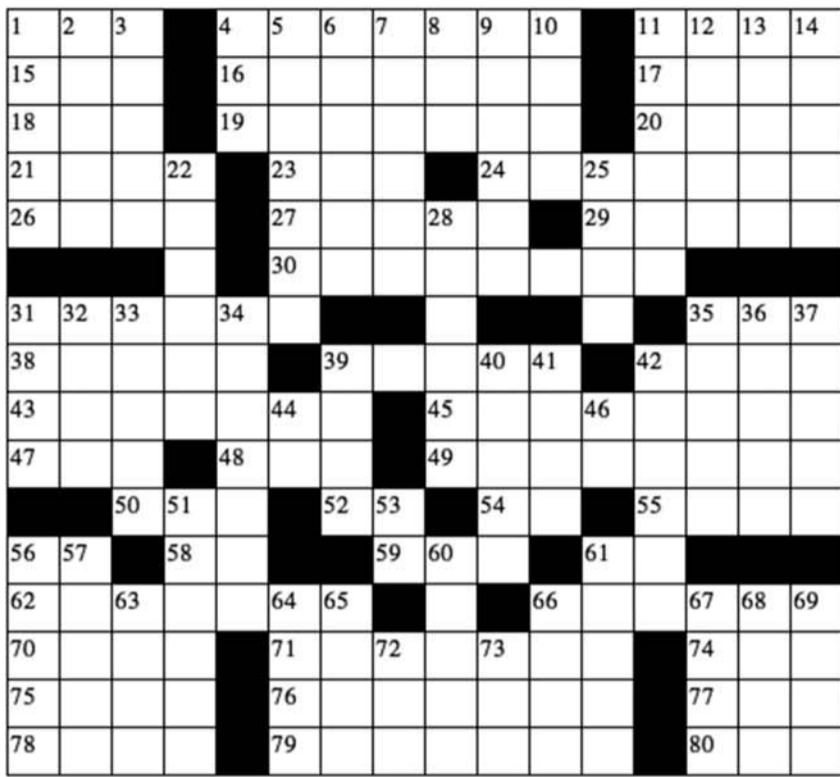
03:00 Discovery ID
03:00 Discovery ID
05:00 Discovery ID
05:00 Discovery ID
21:00 Discovery ID
Discovery ID Xtra
03:00 Murder Comes To Town
03:48 Evil Kin

08:30 Shake It Up
08:55 Hannah Montana
09:20 Hannah Montana
09:45 H2O: Just Add Water
10:10 H2O: Just Add Water
10:35 I Didn't Do It
11:00 I Didn't Do It
11:25 Jessie
12:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
12:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
12:45 Hank Zipzer
13:10 Austin & Ally
13:35 Austin & Ally
14:00 Liv And Maddie
14:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:30 Liv And Maddie
14:55 Dog With A Blog
15:20 Dog With A Blog
15:45 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
16:10 Violetta
17:00 The Next Step
17:25 Alex And Co
17:50 Jessie
18:15 Best Friends Whenever
18:40 Girl Meets World
19:05 Evermoor Chronicles
19:30 Liv And Maddie
19:55 Liv And Maddie
20:20 The Next Step
20:45 Good Luck Charlie
21:10 H2O: Just Add Water
21:35 H2O: Just Add Water
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Hank Zipzer
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



BIG GAME ON OSN MOVIES HD

CROSSWORD 1258



ACROSS

- A small drink.
- An individual portion of food or drink.
- Decapod having eyes on short stalks and a broad flattened carapace with a small abdomen folded under the thorax and pincers.
- 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.
- Congenital absence of the heart (as in the development of some monsters).
- French poet and novelist and dramatist.
- Experiencing or showing sorrow or unhappiness.
- A small pore especially one in the reproductive bodies of certain algae and fungi through which spores pass.
- In a competent capable manner.
- A pilgrimage to Mecca.
- Contemptuous name for a Black man who is abjectly servile and deferential to Whites.
- (Bible) The archangel who was the messenger of God.
- The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
- Squash bugs.
- An impure form of quartz consisting of banded chalcedony.
- A small family of tunicates in the class Thaliacea.
- A workplace where baked goods (breads and cakes and pastries) are produced or sold.
- (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
- The face veil worn by Muslim women.
- A central cohesive source of support and stability.
- Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
- American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
- Not worth considering.
- A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- A public promotion of some product or service.
- At or constituting a border or edge.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
- A federal agency that supervises carriers that transport goods and people between states.
- A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria and closely related to Hausa.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- Important European leguminous forage plant with trifoliate leaves and blue-violet flowers grown widely as a pasture and hay crop.
- A unit of electrical power in an AC circuit equal to the power dissipated when 1 volt produces a current of 1 ampere.
- The state of being covered with unclean things.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- A benevolent aspect of Devi.
- Suggestive of the supernatural.
- Genus of tropical trees.
- A member of a Mayan people of south-western Guatemala.

DOWN

- (Japanese) Rice (with raw fish) wrapped in seaweed.
- (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
- A genus of Ploceidae.
- 10 hao equal 1 dong.
- A state of being carried away by overwhelming emotion.
- Wife or mistress of Zeus and mother of Apollo and Artemis in ancient mythology.
- Serving as an essential component.
- An artificial language that is a revision and simplification of Esperanto.
- Large Indian antelope.
- (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
- (criminal law) A pleading describing some wrong or offense.
- Type genus of the Rubiaceae.
- Metal or plastic sheath over the end of a shoelace or ribbon.
- Irish chemist who established that air has weight and whose definitions of chemical elements and chemical reactions helped to dissociate chemistry from alchemy (1627-1691).
- Leader of the Nez Perce in their retreat from United States troops (1840-1904).
- Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
- Having the character or disposition harmed by pampering or oversolicitous attention.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- Boiled or baked buckwheat.
- The ninth month of the Moslem calendar.
- Sone or occurring in a brief period of time.
- The formation of frost or ice on a surface.
- An persistent and contagious disease of the skin causing inflammation and itching and loss of hair.
- Harsh or corrosive in tone.
- English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
- A town in north central Oklahoma.
- Apathy demonstrated by an absence of emotional reactions.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- A radioactive transuranic element.
- In a drab manner.
- The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
- Fatty pinkish flesh of small salmon caught in the Pacific and Great Lakes.
- A series of things depending on each other as if linked together.
- Jordan's port.
- The habitation of wild animals.
- The head of a branch of an organized crime syndicate.
- A large genus of dicotyledonous trees and shrubs of the family Aquifoliaceae that have small flowers and berries (including hollies).
- (old-fashioned) At or from or to a great distance.
- The female reproductive cell.
- A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
- The biblical name for ancient Syria.
- A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
- A digital display that uses liquid crystal cells that change reflectivity in an applied electric field.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Haplessness, hopelessness and what seems to be an impossible situation will be subjects to chuckle over as you look back in a few days. Your efforts are sincere and you exhibit the ability to rise above most any difficult situation. This day may just be a distraction from your regular duties; however, it is very important that your attitude is positive and upbeat. There is a feeling that you are appreciated for your talents in the workplace. This afternoon you are receptive, powerful and determined in what work you need to accomplish. Look for openings that may lead to advancement. Family takes precedence this afternoon and you enjoy involving yourself with the happenings of each person's day. Always allow time for closeness. Enjoy an evening walk.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Unexpected events could grace your life all through the end of this week. This could be anything from unexpected money to unexpected company. A lost animal may grace your presence this morning and you could find yourself trying to find a place for this animal to stay before leaving for work. Your ideas and presentations are well received this day. Your hard work does not go unnoticed. Focus your goals around money-making propositions. You will become aware of opportunities to benefit yourself and others through tax breaks, refunds, insurance claims, legal matters, etc. A loved one may cook for you today. Be ready, there could be plenty of surprises. A celebration is festive and emotionally satisfying.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You should find a constructive manner in which to release the tremendous passion that you feel inside. This is a good time to throw yourself into your work, though you should check the desire to hurry... Time can be your friend. It is best to listen to those around you before making an important decision today. You enjoy working with others and would make a good manager. It is easy for you to work with those in authority or those more experienced than yourself. You will enjoy some involvement in athletics, exercise or the out-of-doors this afternoon. You have a natural ability to express yourself and may find requests for your advice or input regarding the achievements in athletics. You are proud of and enjoy having a good body.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Take full advantage of your position now. It is an excellent time to solicit the help of others, though it is important that you truly know the needs of your company or business before asking. There is much reflection now about your past work. It looks as though this time will bring rewards. If you are up for advancement, now is the time. There could be personal accomplishments this afternoon that will help you in your place of business. This may mean a lecture or some public speaking. At home, it would be best to let others have their way. Demanding what you want could cause ill feelings among friends or family. Make sure you make yourself clear while communicating today in order to avoid any misunderstandings.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is a great time to work and play with others. There are requests for your helpful ideas and perhaps the ways you handle difficult situations. Your administrative abilities are in high focus. There could be some temporary changes in your plans; you may be coming to a turning point in your life. Now is the time to make any changes you have been putting off for so long. This afternoon you may have some time to think about your next vacation. It could be that two small vacations may be better than one large vacation. This way you will have an opportunity to learn more about the people in your family as well as to enjoy a different atmosphere. A fear of leaving home or job will finally fade away. Now all you need to do is ask, where?



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your interest in professional success is great and you may inspire co-workers and friends to great accomplishments as well. Others value you for your ability to make practical decisions concerning group issues. You seem to welcome the opportunity to share your knowledge. You find many ways to strengthen your career. Your organizational abilities and sense of responsibility will be a good guide. Your career could assume a much more determined and solid foundation. Sympathy for friends and family is great now and many turn to you for help. You may be of great help to someone today without even realizing it. You are very fortunate in being able to grow and progress throughout your life without major difficulties.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You exhibit good practical job-related thoughts. You are intelligent and thorough when communicating with superiors and with customers. Circumstances today will help you bring out your standards of working and make it easier to make your dreams a reality. You may find yourself examining and testing certain ideas. Deep and penetrating analysis may be in order, particularly with a group or in relation to some sort of experiment or project. Others could seek you out for your psychological insight. This could be a good time to make changes in your environment. You are at your most elegant tonight, particularly in social situations. You are family-orientated but learn quickly about keeping a balance.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You are always alert to any changes that are needed in the workplace and can be quite creative in your problem-solving abilities. Your disposition is warm and pleasant. You are willing to help others. Your self-confidence is good. Try and see the big picture in a romantic relationship now. It is easy to let your fantasies overtake your good judgment, although you may enjoy the experience of your dreams. Impulsive actions can be detrimental so be aware of this possibility. There will be ample opportunities for outdoor activities with your friends this afternoon-however, you will be wise to eliminate any chance taking; you could be presented with dares. Tonight you are ready for love and a little personal pleasure.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

The middle of the week may find you dragging your feet. This is not a great day to make plans or decisions. It could be hard to figure out the right move. Stay up-to-date on changes in your field of business and find ways to polish your skills. Walk outside during the lunch break or take a short trip. Perhaps purchasing a small surprise gift for a loved one will be a fun side activity. Harmony is what you strive to achieve in your life and the lack of it can be emotionally unsettling. Close personal ties to other people are a focal point for your feelings-marriage and other partnerships could be a key arena for this. This afternoon you will find that your inner resources are accented and any problem will have an easy solution with your creative mind.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

There is a more dynamic and outgoing quality to your way of life now. You may feel the urge to work extra hard today on a competitive project. Soon you will be taking on a leadership role. This may be very important to the next step in your career and you are right to feel it is important to show higher-ups how you handle a team of people. A personal project will distract you and help you with the transition on your route home. You can demonstrate great understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others and are in a good position to communicate with the needs of those that are less fortunate. This could mean a handicapped person or a friend that is in the hospital. You offer much support and help in this situation. Family life is good.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Working to build your finances or to hold on to what you have is a key interest today. Power is building up for you in family, home ownership, property and community interests and will continue to build throughout this month. Soon you will be planning a social affair. You attract very strong-minded people and your invitation list should consist of people that are lighthearted and easygoing as well. Your love relationship is becoming the supportive and strong relationship for which you had always longed. You receive signals that encourage you and you, in turn, encourage your loved one. Making plans for a vacation or a short trip may be beneficial toward the last week of this month. Smile-the world is moving with you and vice versa.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You should expend great zest in your moneymaking efforts but show caution as to what type of activities you engage in now. Mostly, though, you should avoid the desire to obtain material status symbols at this time. You tend to be extremely hard working. Independence, as well as anything unusual or different, is valued. Tonight may be the night you will direct a play or perform in a dance recital. Nothing is ordinary for you. This may be a difficult time to relax, so it may be best to look for ways to distract yourself from any intense situation for now. You enjoy those close personal ties that you have and will find a little phone conversation reviving and poignant. If you get a chance to step outside before dark, you will enjoy a beautiful sunset.

WORD SEARCH

Songs From the Year 2003

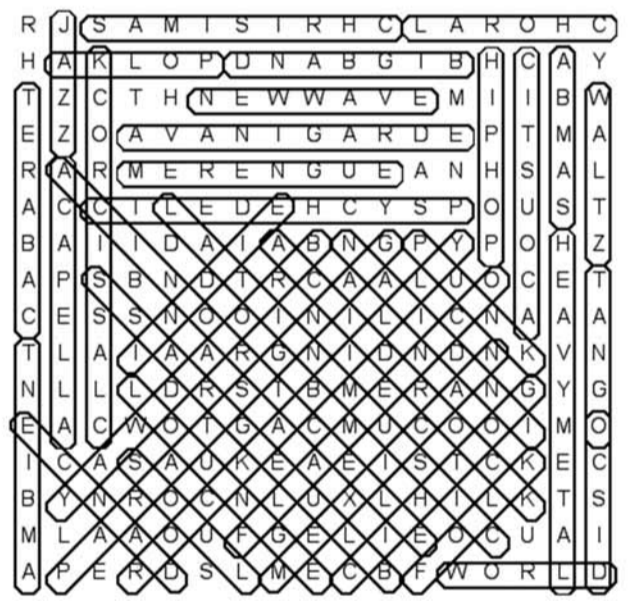
Find and circle all of the songs from 2003 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 22 letters spell an additional song title from 2003.



- | | | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| ALL I HAVE | GET LOW | LANDSLIDE | SO GONE |
| ANGEL | GOSSIP FOLKS | LIKE A STONE | SOMEDAY |
| BABY BOY | HEADSTRONG | LIKE GLUE | STAND UP |
| BEAUTIFUL | I CAN | MESMERIZE | STUCK |
| CLOCKS | I WANT YOU | MISS YOU | SUGA SUGA |
| COME OVER | I'M WITH YOU | PICTURE | SUNRISE |
| DRIFT AWAY | IGNITION | RAIN ON ME | SUPERMAN |
| FIGHTER | IN DA CLUB | RIGHT THURR | TROUBLE |
| FRONTIN' | INTO YOU | SAY YES | UNWELL |
| GET BUSY | INTUITION | SENORITA | |

Yesterday Solution

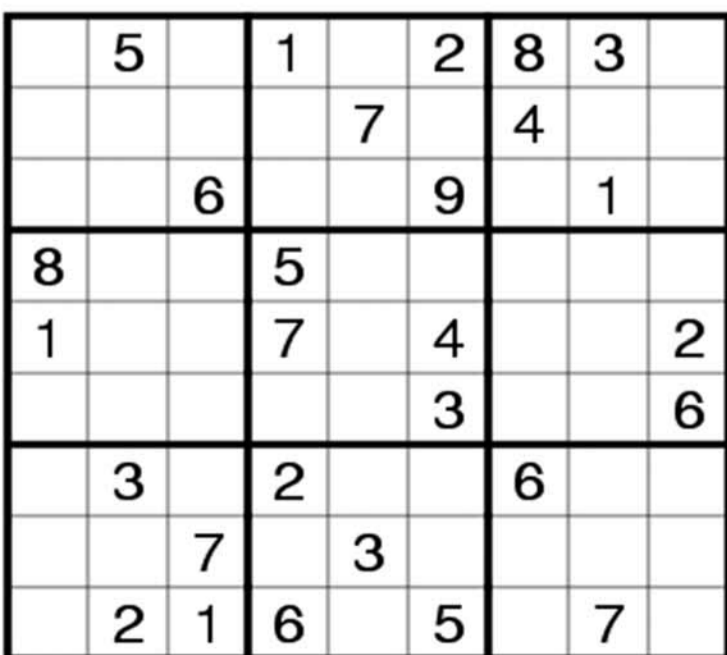
Types of Music 1



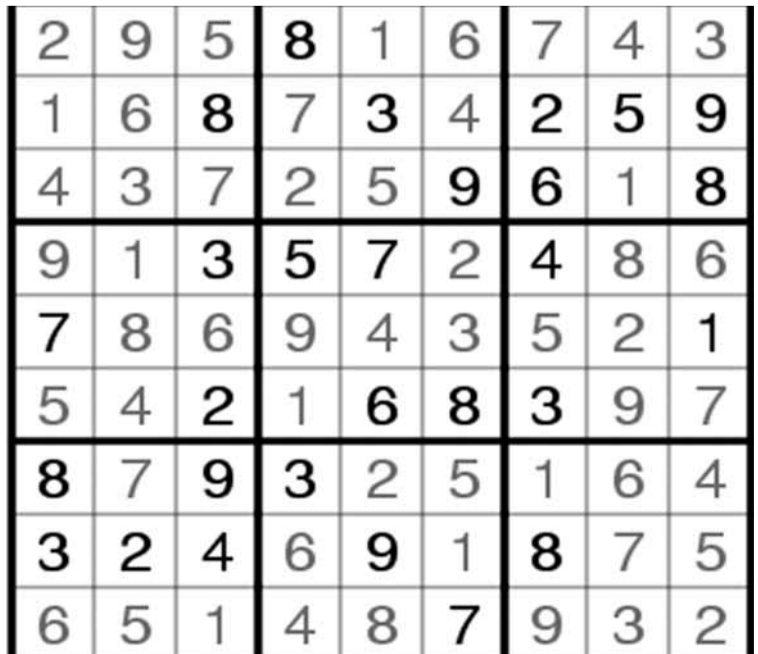
- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| ACAPPELLA | CHRISTMAS | HIP HOP | PSYCHEDELIC |
| ACID ROCK | CLASSIC ROCK | INDIAN | PUNK |
| ACOUSTIC | DANCE | INDIE | ROCKABILLY |
| AMBIENT | DISCO | JAZZ | SAMBA |
| AVANT-GARDE | ELECTRONICA | LATIN MUSIC | SOUL |
| BIG BAND | FLAMENCO | LOUNGE | TANGO |
| BLUEGRASS | FOLK | MERENQUE | WALTZ |
| BROADWAY | GANGSTA RAP | MEXICAN | WORLD |
| CABARET | GOTHIC | NEW WAVE | |
| CHORAL | HEAVY METAL | POLKA | |

The hidden message is: RHYTHM AND BLUES

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





Color me!



Floating Ball



What You Need:

- A straw
- A ping-pong ball, or small styrofoam ball from a craft store
- The top half of a plastic water bottle

Instructions:

1. Take the straw, hold it in your mouth, and point it straight up and stick the plastic bottle's top to the straw.
2. Blow pretty hard through the straw to make a good air stream.
3. Set the ball gently in the air stream. The ball should float in the stream!
4. Make sure you do not chase the ball, and just let it float in the steady stream.
5. It takes practice, but it won't go anywhere if you keep it pointed up in one place!

WORD SEARCH

Colors

Find and circle all of the colors that are hidden in the grid. The words may be hidden in any direction.

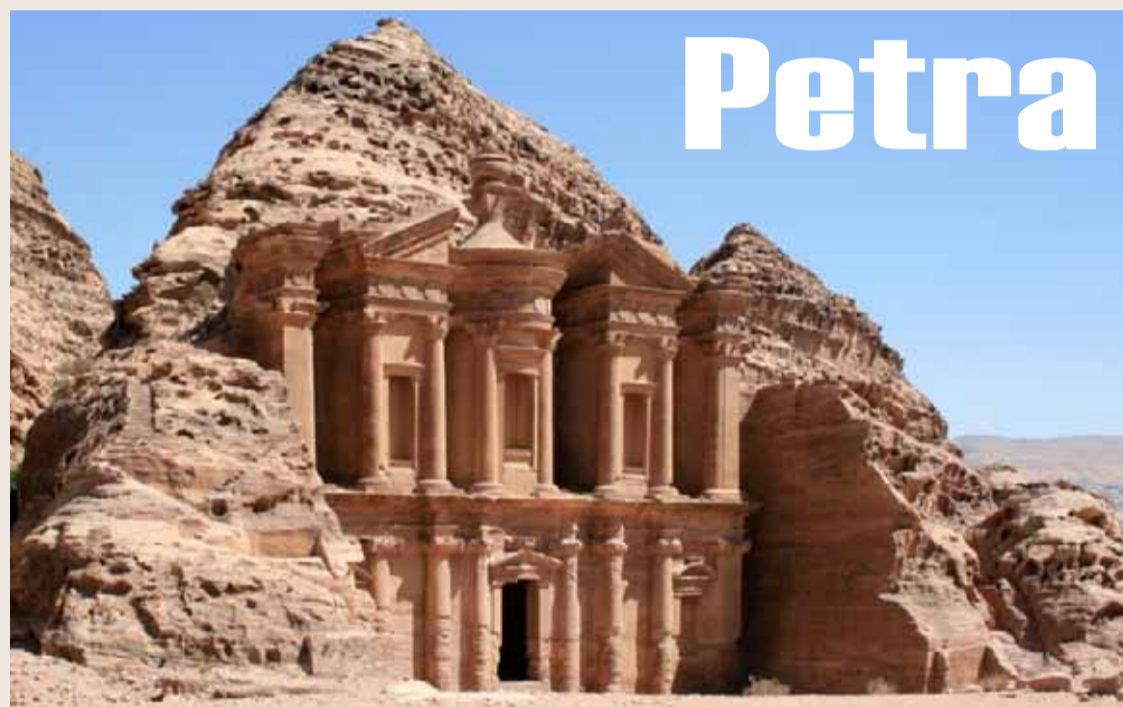
L	V	O	T	W	H	I	T	E	G	R	E	O	S	E	N
L	W	R	L	E	E	U	L	B	R	O	S	E	I	N	
V	A	A	W	E	I	D	U	R	U	E	I	G	A	W	
P	Y	N	L	E	V	L	O	S	G	E	K	P	A	O	
B	T	G	E	L	O	O	R	I	B	N	E	R	Y	R	
T	Y	E	R	E	R	G	E	L	I	L	R	B	E	B	
A	P	K	B	O	Y	B	I	P	U	O	A	L	E	R	
E	S	U	T	U	R	Q	U	O	I	S	E	C	G		
E	L	W	R	E	G	Y	S	Y	A	E	D	E	K	Y	
Q	I	W	O	P	E	I	A	B	U	R	E	L	E	S	
R	G	I	D	L	L	U	L	R	N	O	E	A	P	G	
S	T	H	L	V	L	E	N	L	G	U	I	D	R	I	
R	L	L	E	L	E	O	E	O	E	O	E	R	E		
E	I	R	P	O	G	G	Y	W	D	R	E	A	E	O	
T	E	L	O	I	V	K	E	U	N	A	V	I	U		

- | | | |
|-------|--------|-----------|
| BEIGE | GREEN | ROSE |
| BLACK | IVORY | SILVER |
| BLUE | ORANGE | TURQUOISE |
| BROWN | PINK | VIOLET |
| GOLD | PURPLE | WHITE |
| GRAY | RED | YELLOW |

Petra, originally known as Raqmu to the Nabataeans, is a historical and archaeological city in the southern Jordanian governorate of Ma'an that is famous for its rock-cut architecture and water conduit system. Another name for Petra is the Rose City due to the color of the stone out of which it is carved.

Established possibly as early as 312 BC as the capital city of the Arab Nabataeans, it is a symbol of Jordan, as well as Jordan's most-visited tourist attraction. It lies on the slope of Jebel al-Madhbah in a basin among the mountains which form the eastern flank of Arabah (Wadi Araba), the large valley running from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba. Petra has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985.

The site remained unknown to the western world until 1812, when it was introduced by Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt. It was described as "a rose-red city half as old as time" in a Newdigate Prize-winning poem by John William Burgon. UNESCO has described it as "one of the most precious cultural properties of man's cultural heritage". Petra was named amongst the New 7 Wonders of the World in 2007 and was also chosen by the Smithsonian Magazine as one of the "28 Places to See Before You Die".



Petra

Where is it?

Pliny the Elder and other writers identify Petra as the capital of the Nabataeans and the center of their

caravan trade. Enclosed by towering rocks and watered by a perennial stream, Petra not only possessed the advantages of a fortress, but controlled the

main commercial routes which passed through it to Gaza in the west, to Bosra and Damascus in the north, to Aqaba and Leuce Come on the Red Sea, and across the desert to the Persian Gulf.

Byzantine era

Petra declined rapidly under Roman rule, in large part from the revision of sea-based trade routes. In 363 an earthquake destroyed many buildings, and crippled the vital water management system. The last inhabitants abandoned the city (further weakened by another major earthquake in 551) when the Arabs conquered the region in 663. The old city of Petra was the capital of the Byzantine province Palaestina III, many churches were excavated in and around Petra from the Byzantine era, in one of them more than 150 papyrus were discovered which contain mainly contract the ruins of Petra were an object of curiosity in the Middle Ages and were visited by Sultan Baibars of Egypt towards the end of the 13th century. The first European to describe them was Swiss traveler Johann Ludwig Burckhardt during his travels in 1812. At that time, the Greek Church of Jerusalem operated a diocese in Al Karak named Battra and it was the opinion among the clergy of Jerusalem that Kerak was the ancient Petra. Because the structures weakened with age, many of the tombs became vulnerable to thieves, and many treasures were stolen. In 1929, a four-person team, consisting of British archaeologists Agnes Conway and George Horsfield, Palestinian physician and folklore expert Dr Tawfiq Canaan and Dr Ditlef Nielsen, a Danish scholar, excavated and surveyed Petra.

About Earth

Earth is the third planet from the Sun, the densest planet in the Solar System, the largest of the Solar System's four terrestrial planets, and the only astronomical object known to harbor life.

According to radiometric dating and other sources of evidence, Earth formed about 4.54 billion years ago. Earth gravitationally interacts with other objects in space, especially the Sun and the Moon. During one orbit around the Sun, Earth rotates about its own axis 366.26 times, creating 365.26 solar days or one sidereal year. Earth's axis of rotation is tilted 23.4° away from the perpendicular of its orbital plane, producing seasonal variations on the planet's surface with a period of one tropical year (365.24 solar days). The Moon is Earth's only permanent natural satellite. Its gravitational interaction with Earth causes ocean tides, stabilizes the orientation of Earth's rotational axis, and gradually slows Earth's rotational rate. Earth's lithosphere is divided into several rigid tectonic plates that migrate across the surface over periods



of many millions of years. 71% of Earth's surface is covered with water, with the remainder consisting of continents and islands that together have many lakes and other sources of water that contribute to the hydrosphere. Earth's polar regions are mostly covered with ice, including the Antarctic ice sheet and the sea ice of the Arctic ice pack. Earth's interior remains active with a solid iron inner core, a liquid outer core that generates the magnetic field, and a convecting mantle that drives plate tectonics.

Within its first billion years, life appeared in Earth's oceans and began to affect its atmosphere and surface, leading to the proliferation of aerobic and anaerobic organisms. Since then, the combination of Earth's distance from the Sun, its physical properties and its geological history have allowed life to thrive and evolve. The earliest undisputed life on Earth arose at least 3.5 billion years ago. Earlier physical evidence of life includes biogenic graphite in 3.7 billion-year-old meta sedimentary rocks discovered in southwestern Greenland, as well as "remains of biotic life" found in

4.1 billion-year-old rocks in Western Australia. Earth's biodiversity has expanded continually except when interrupted by mass extinctions. Although scholars estimate that over 99% of all species of life (over five billion) that ever lived on Earth are extinct, there are still an estimated 10-14 million extant species, of which about 1.2 million have been documented and over 86% have not yet been described. More recently, in May 2016, scientists reported that 1 trillion species are estimated to be on Earth currently with only one-thousandth of one percent described. Over 7.3 billion humans live on Earth and depend on its biosphere and minerals for their survival. Earth's human population is divided among about 200 sovereign states which interact through diplomacy, conflict, travel, trade and communication media.

What is the biosphere?

A planet's life forms inhabit ecosystems, whose total is sometimes said to form a "biosphere". Earth's biosphere is thought to have begun evolving about 3.5 Gya. The biosphere is divided into a number of biomes, inhabited by broadly similar plants and animals. On land, biomes are separated primarily by differences in latitude, height above sea level and humidity. Terrestrial biomes lying within the Arctic or Antarctic Circles, at high altitudes or in extremely arid areas are relatively barren of plant and animal life; species diversity reaches a peak in humid lowlands at equatorial latitudes.

Atmosphere

The atmosphere of Earth is the layer of gases, commonly known as air, that surrounds the planet Earth and is retained by Earth's gravity. The atmosphere protects life on Earth by absorbing ultraviolet solar radiation, warming the surface through heat retention (greenhouse effect), and reducing temperature extremes between day and night (the diurnal temperature variation).

By volume, dry air contains 78.09% nitrogen, 20.95% oxygen, 0.93% argon, 0.039% carbon dioxide, and small amounts of other gases. Air also contains a variable amount of water vapor, on average around 1% at sea level, and 0.4% over the entire atmosphere. Air content and atmospheric pressure vary at different layers, and air suitable for use in photosynthesis by terrestrial plants and breathing of terrestrial animals is found only in Earth's troposphere and in artificial atmospheres.

The atmosphere has a mass of about 5.15x10¹⁸ kg, three quarters of which is within about 11 km of the surface. The atmosphere becomes thinner and thinner with increasing altitude, with no definite boundary between the atmosphere and outer space. The Karman line, at 100 km, or 1.57% of Earth's radius, is often used as the border between the atmosphere and outer space. Atmospheric effects become noticeable during atmospheric reentry of spacecraft at an altitude of around 120 km. Several layers can be distinguished in the atmosphere, based on characteristics such as temperature and composition.

The study of Earth's atmosphere and its processes is called atmospheric science (aerology).

Riddle me this!

Who makes it, has no need of it.
Who buys it, has no use for it.
Who uses it can neither see nor feel it.
What is it?
A COFIN

What can travel around the world while staying in a corner?
A STAMP

What has an eye but cannot see?
A NEEDLE

What gets wetter and wetter the more it dries?
A TOWEL

Paul's height is six feet, he's an assistant at a butcher's shop, and wears size 9 shoes. What does he weigh?
MEAT

There was a green house. Inside the green house there was a white house. Inside the white house there was a red house. Inside the red house there were lots of babies. What is it?
WATERMELON

What kind of room has no doors or windows?
A MUSHROOM



What You Need:

- 2 slices of bread
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon

Instructions:

1. Prepare a frying pan with non-stick cooking spray and place it on the stove.
2. Mix together the egg, milk, and cinnamon in a shallow bowl.
3. Take a slice of bread and place it face down in your egg mixture. Turn the bread over and coat the other side.
4. Put the coated bread into the frying pan, and repeat for the other slice of bread.
5. When both pieces of bread are in the frying pan, turn the heat on to medium, and cook the French toast. Keep an eye on how it is cooking, and when one side has turned brown, flip the French toast to cook the other side.
6. When both slices of bread are brown on both sides, your french toast is ready to eat! Remember to cook it at a medium temperature and ask your parents for help when needed.

KIDS RECIPES

SUDOKU

	7					3		
1	3	6						
				2			6	
3		8		5	2	4		
								1
9	6		4	8		2		
5				1		6	2	4
				3		1	7	
			9		4			5

1	5	8	4	9	6	1	2	7
6	2	1	5	3	7	4	8	9
4	7	9	2	1	8	5	6	3
5	3	7	1	8	4	2	9	6
8	1	2	9	6	5	7	3	4
9	6	4	2	5	7	8	1	3
2	9	5	3	7	1	6	4	8
7	4	6	8	2	5	9	1	3
1	8	3	6	4	9	5	2	7





Anantara to launch the Middle East's highest five-star resort



Area Director of Sales and Marketing AABS, Firas Rashid.

Perched 2,000 meters above sea level on the curving rim of a great canyon, Anantara Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar Resort will welcome the world's most discerning luxury travellers from July 2016. Guests will hover over an extreme landscape of rugged beauty while they discover a cultured treasury of authentic indulgences and immersions in the destination's rich heritage. Upon its launch, the resort will be the highest luxury hotel in the Middle East and amongst the highest in the world.

Long inaccessible, Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar (Arabic for "The Green Mountain") is a towering massif on the Sultanate of Oman's vast Saiq Plateau. Dramatic peaks ring the setting. Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana once sought out its breathtaking heights by helicopter, alighting to revel in the scenic views. Today, the arrival journey takes guests on an adventurous drive - two hours from Muscat International Airport or four and half hours from Dubai - past date plantations, valleys known locally as wadis, and historical forts. The Anantara echoes this fortified architecture, placing guests in modern ramparts inspired the commanding indigenous citadels and re-imagined with sophisticated contemporary interiors.

Personal butler

A total of 115 rooms and villas overlook the drama of the canyon or tranquil gardens. Each features its own indigenous luxuries from custom-made Omani furniture to Amouage bath products evoking the region's priceless fragrances. The resort's 82 Premier and Deluxe Rooms boast a spacious bedroom, amongst the largest in the country, and a spa-like bathroom carved out of sustainable material from the local area, complete with a rain shower and separate bath alongside a terrace or balcony. Meanwhile, 33 villas grant guests an intimate escape each with personal butler services and its own private swimming

pool stretching infinity-edge over the cliffs or hidden in an exotic garden. Guests have the choice of either one or two bedrooms, including the exclusive Royal Mountain Villa. Each villa will include state-of-the-art interactive LED TVs and spacious walk-in dressing areas, all adding to a sense of sublime luxury.

Culinary desires are catered to in a collection of six restaurants and lounges. Diners are invited to rise above the courtyard with sheesha water pipes and

Ancient hammam rituals

Surrounded by majestic mountains and enjoying cool temperatures year round, Anantara Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar presents a range of inspiring moments in a perfectly chilled clime - a respite from the heat faced by the Gulf region for much of the year. The resort puts travellers in touch with the local culture, history and landscape in personalized arrangements including mountaintop sunrise yoga and stargazing

At the resort itself, a wealth of highlights awaits, from the cliff-edge infinity pool to a state-of-the-art fitness center, tennis court and world-acclaimed Anantara Spa. Harnessing the essence of Arabia, the spa welcomes with ancient hammam rituals, five soothing treatments suites, private outdoor relaxation areas and an indoor swimming pool. Catering to the youngest travellers, a dedicated kids and teens club speaks to youthful imaginations, while a lavish ball-



tapas, savour fine dining at the Arabian grill concept placed in a central fort tower as well as a Roman inspired kitchen with canyon views. For the most extravagant experience, Anantara's 'Dining by Design' invites guests to dine at the spectacular cliff's edge platform Diana's Point on the site of the royal visit. Another Anantara signature, the 'Spice Spoons' experience allows guests to accompany a chef to the local souq and resort's own Chef's Garden before being guided in the secrets of cooking Thai or Omani cuisine.

beneath the blanket of remote night sky. Other diversions include archery, quad biking and excursions to nearby heritage attractions such as the UNESCO World Heritage site Birkat Al-Mouz, an otherworldly deserted village cascading up a mountainside, and the ancient city of Nizwa, known as the 'Pearl of Islam'. Accompanied by a local guide, the Anantara's guests can embark on nature hikes into the area's most picturesque features or rappel down sheer drop-offs for a falcon's-eye-view surging with adrenaline.

room and meeting facilities will host memorable events and weddings. Adding extra atmosphere to the already amazing setting, a blazing courtyard fire pit will light the Anantara's own Friday night market, illuminating one-of-a-kind artworks by local village artisans and craftsmen.

Old Dogg, new tricks: Snoop reinvented as football coach

With a criminal career that takes in cocaine-trafficking, rolling with Los Angeles gangs, weapons charges and a murder trial, he may be an unlikely role model. But Snoop Dogg, infamous for violent, misogynous lyrics and a lifelong love of marijuana, is shaking off his bad boy image to reveal his softer side-as avuncular little league football trainer "Coach Snoop." The 44-year-old founded the Snoop Youth Football League more than a decade ago and has been quietly teaching thousands of inner city children teamwork, discipline and self-respect through sport.

Now his little-known community work is to be made public in "Coach Snoop," a reality show chronicling the rise of his Diamond Valley Steelers from a rag-tag bunch of 12-year-olds from the mean streets of LA to one of the top youth teams in the United States. "The experiences I give these kids, it's nothing to me but it means the world to them and I'm just privileged to be able to take my Snoop Dogg power and use it to sprinkle all this love to these kids," said Snoop. Sporting spectacles and his dreads tied back in a ponytail, Snoop comes across as an enlightened, urbane father figure, imparting wisdom to his proteges, many of whom come from single-parent families in tough neighborhoods. Most of the children know who he is, but the millionaire musician is at pains to keep his R-rated hip-hop persona away from the football field.

'True calling'

"I've never busted a rap for the kids. Thirteen years I've been coaching, I ain't never did one rap," Snoop said at a preview screening of "Coach Snoop" in Hollywood on Monday. "If a kid calls me Snoop Dogg they gotta do 20 push-ups. They know they don't get Snoop Dogg until they hit 19 or 20." The show was directed by multiple Emmy award-winning sports filmmaker Rory Karpf, who helmed the ESPN miniseries "Snoop and Son," about the rapper's relationship with his son, UCLA wide receiver Cordell Broadus.

"It was actually shocking-I didn't realize how involved he was. He's involved to the

point where he's sitting down with these kids talking about their grades and home life, and bullying," Karpf told reporters. "What he says on the series is this is his true calling, and he looks at music as a means to an end." The embodiment of the 1990s LA "gangsta" rap scene, Calvin Broadus Jr was raised in Long Beach, where he frequently ran into trouble with the law and spent three years in and out of jail after graduating high school. He came to notice under the name Snoop Doggy Dogg in 1992 through his drawled, laconic lyrics on Dr Dre's seminal album "The Chronic" before rising to worldwide stardom with his quadruple-platinum record "Doggystyle."

Changing lives

He has sold more than 37 million albums,



appeared in dozens of films-most famously as Huggy Bear in "Starsky & Hutch," (2004) and disabled drug dealer Blue in "Training Day" (2001) — and directed two hardcore porn movies. His notoriety was assured when he was arrested for murder and then acquitted along with his bodyguard over the drive-by shooting in 1993 of gang member Phillip Woldemarian.

His quarter-century career has been plagued by arrests and convictions for possession of weapons, marijuana and cocaine, as well as bans of various lengths from entering Britain, Norway and Australia. He has been accused of glamorizing binge-drinking and has attracted criticism for his various cannabis-related business ventures, including a lifestyle website, a delivery start-up and a line of branded paraphernalia. Less well known is the time he has dedicated to youth football since 2005, when his league launched with the participation of 1,300 children in the Los Angeles area.

It has expanded across California and beyond in the last decade and, in 2014, produced its first NFL players. The nine-episode "Coach Snoop," available beginning Thursday on AOL.com, tells the story of Snoop's inner-city Steelers, their triumphs and disappointments over the course of a season, and the lessons they learn on and off the field. "These kids surprise me, they shock me. We've had kids that went on to become lawyers, doctors, firemen," Snoop said. "It's not just the football players, it's not just boys in the league, it's cheerleaders, it's girls in this league-it's lives that we're shaping and changing and molding." — AFP

Calvin Broadus Jr, better known as Snoop Dogg, poses on arrival for the LA Premiere of AOL and First Row Film's Docu-Series "Coach Snoop" in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Abbas says new museum will 'preserve Palestinian memory'



Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas hailed yesterday's opening of a major museum in the occupied West Bank, saying it "will preserve the Palestinian people's memory" despite no exhibitions being ready. The Palestinian Museum was inaugurated in the university town of Birzeit near Ramallah, the seat of Palestinian political institutions in the West Bank. Dozens of prominent officials and business leaders attended the launch. "We are opening today a Palestinian monument, the Palestinian Museum, which will preserve the Palestinian people's memory and tell its story," Abbas said, noting it was a key part of building an independent state.

"What we have to do is build state institutions, this state and these institutions are being built now, thank God. The only thing left is declaring independence which you all will declare soon, God willing." Abbas has been working to get formal recognition of Palestine as a state at the United Nations, much to the chagrin of Israel. The museum, designed by Irish and Chinese architects also has lush gardens.

The building cost about \$28 million, financed 95 percent by Palestinians, organizers said. However the exhibition that was supposed to open it-which included photographs from Palestinians across the globe-was put on hold, so the museum is currently empty. Organizers stressed that they were just inaugurating the building, not the museum itself-with the first exhibition due in October. The idea for the museum dates back to 1997, four years after the Oslo peace accords established the Palestinian Authority and were in theory meant to lead to an independent Palestinian state. Organizers said they aim to create a place of memory for Palestinians, who often accuse Israel of rewriting history to justify their policies-including the expansion of settlements in Palestinian territories. — AFP

Film about homeless 'black devil' shows other side of Singapore



Director K Rajagopal

Robert De Niro famously gained 27 kilos (60 pounds) to play the boxer Jake LaMotta in "Raging Bull" while Leonardo DiCaprio slept in an animal carcass and ate raw bison liver in "The Revenant". But few actors have gone as far as to live on the streets to research their role. That is what Singaporean director K Rajagopal asked of the star of "A Yellow Bird", his film which touches on some of the wealthy city-state's most sensitive issues of race, migration and sex. Rising television star Sivakumar Palakrishnan spent his weekends living rough on the streets of Singapore's "Little India", exploring a rarely seen side of one of Asia's most ordered societies.

The delicately drawn arthouse movie, which premieres Wednesday at the Cannes film festival, follows an ethnic Indian man—or a "black devil" as one of the film's Chinese characters calls him—trying to rebuild his life and family after a spell in prison. "I made him go out and live and sleep in the streets because he doesn't come from that side of the tracks," director

Rajagopal said. "It was quite tough for him but he did it. I wanted a fresh response, for him to feel what it was really like to be homeless. That is why I like him so much as an actor, he's very open and intense."

The film, which is showing in the Critics' Week section of the world's top film festival, also touches on the "simmering tensions beneath the skin" of Singapore's supposedly harmonious multiracial melting pot. The struggling ex-con Siva has to sleep on the kitchen floor with his mother because she has rented out the bedroom of her tiny apartment to mainland Chinese migrants.

Taboos

"This is not unusual," the director said. "People rent rooms to foreigners to make money to pay the rent." It is very, very common, particularly among poor Indians. One of the great things about Singapore is that we are given a government-subsidized home, but 90 percent of us live in flats that are like pigeon-

holes." It also touches on another taboo subject—inter-racial relationships—throwing Siva together with a young migrant Chinese mother (Huang Lu) who is forced into prostitution. "It's really unnatural to see an Indian and a Chinese person together like this in Singapore, especially with someone from China, especially because he is so dark-skinned. It doesn't really happen."

Rajagopal admitted that many may be shocked by his portrayal of his homeland. "I was going for the underbelly, the marginal, because Singapore has a reputation for being modern and ordered. But there is this other side. It is a reality too."

Racial tensions

But perhaps the most sensitive subject the film deals with is the place of the country's Indian minority of which Rajagopal is a part. "I am seen as a foreigner in my own country. When I get into a tax office they ask me, 'Where are you from?' I was born here. But any

Indian is not supposed to be Singaporean but foreign," he said. "It affects your whole personal emotional space. Both Indians and Chinese are of migrant stock, and yet we are not very accepting of the new influx. We say these new Chinese are not like the Singaporean Chinese. I wanted to reflect that, which is also now a global issue with migration."

Rajagopal, 51, who has had a long career as actor and documentary maker, said "many people in Singapore will not agree with me on the whole racism thing. They will say it is not there. Even the minorities shy away" from the subject. He said all Singaporeans take an oath at school to defend its multiethnic makeup. "We stand by racial harmony, it is a pledge we all take." But despite that there is racism, the director insisted. "It is not in your face, it is simmering under the skin." — AFP



(From left) Filipino actor John Paul Duray, Filipino actress Maria Isabel Lopez, Filipino actor Jomari Angeles, Filipino actress Jaclyn Jose, Filipino director Brillante Mendoza, Filipino actress Andi Eigenmann, Filipino actor Neil Ryan P Sese and Filipino actress Ruby Ruiz pose as they arrive yesterday for the screening of the film 'Ma' Rosa' at the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

Director Mendoza holds up mirror to Philippines' dark side

Acclaimed Philippine filmmaker Brillante Mendoza is back at Cannes this year with another gritty take on his homeland, this time exploring drugs, poverty and corruption through shopkeepers trying to make ends meet. Mendoza, 55, is taking part in the world's top movie festival for the fourth time, having won the best director award in 2009 for another tale of Manila's dark underside.

His latest film, "Ma' Rosa", tells the story of a poor Manila neighborhood stall holder who sells drugs on the side with her husband to make ends meet. The couple get arrested, leaving their four children to try and buy their parents' freedom from corrupt policemen. Mendoza was an advertising industry production designer who only began making films in his mid-40s. In the decade since he has made a dozen full-length features.

He is known for choosing controversial topics, crafting stories of ordinary people in scenarios that range from prostitution to homosexuality and corruption. Known by his nickname Dante, Mendoza set up his own film production outfit in 2005 "that aims to reinvent Filipino cinema by producing meaningful and relevant films". His 2009 award-winner, "Kinatay" ("The Execution of P"), graphically depicted the rape, murder and dismemberment of a prostitute.

Mendoza refused to distribute the film commercially in the Philippines after Cannes because it ran into trouble with conservative government censors who initially prevented its showing at a Manila university. "I don't think the majority would appreciate this kind of film," he said at the time. "By their standards, it's too dark, it's not glossy, it doesn't have famous actors, the camera is a bit jerky." However, his films are highly appreciated in Europe, giving the continent's audiences a glimpse of contemporary Philippine society.

Mendoza's first Cannes entry in 2008, "Serbis" (Service), told the story of a family living in a porn movie theatre. His "Taklub", a fictionalized account of three survivors of the Super Typhoon Haiyan that devastated the Philippine city of Tacloban and nearby areas in 2013, was also shown at Cannes last year. "Thy Womb" won an award at the Venice film festival in 2012, while another film, "Tirador" (Slingshot), also won an award at Berlin in 2007. His Cannes victory earned Mendoza a knighthood from France. He was awarded the Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters) in 2014, the first Filipino director to earn it. — AFP

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A guest arrives yesterday for the screening of the film 'Ma' Rosa' at the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP



Brazil stars at Cannes stage pro-Dilma protest on red carpet

Brazilian director Kleber Mendonca Filho and the team who worked on his new movie "Aquarius" staged a protest at the Cannes film festival Tuesday in support of unseated Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff. The actors held up sheets of paper with the slogans "Stop the coup in Brazil", "Brazil is not a democracy anymore" and "54,501,118 votes set on fire" after turning to face the photographers as they walked up the red carpet for the screening of "Aquarius".

One opened his tuxedo shirt to reveal a T-shirt showing an image of "Super Dilma". The cast, which includes telenovela superstar Sonia Braga, were cheered when they entered the cinema to take their seats, where a few audience members also unfurled a banner saying "Stop the coup in Brazil". "One of the things that worries me the most is the way Brazil is divided. I can't remember Brazil ever being this divided," Braga told AFP before the film's screening. "We have to start doing things

together again. We have to realize that, in any case, in two years we will vote for a new president," she added.

Rousseff later tweeted to the cast, saying "Thank you for your support!" The left-wing leader was replaced by acting President Michel Temer last week after months of street protests calling for her to go. The Senate voted to open an impeachment trial on charges that Rousseff illegally manipulated the budget. But her ousting sparked more street demonstrations and controversy over the absence of female ministers in Temer's interim government. "Aquarius", a domestic drama which has been well received by critics, is one of 21 films in the running for the Palme d'Or at the world's most important movie festival. — AFP



Cast from the Brazilian film Aquarius hold placards protesting against the current political landscape in Brazil after departing the screening of the film at the 69th international film festival, Cannes, southern France. — AP

Hoping for a blockbuster, studios plan movie on Tetris game

It lacks the building blocks of characters and a plot for now, but a Chinese-American studio hopes to turn the Tetris video game into a blockbuster movie. Threshold Global Studios is budgeting \$80 million to strategically rotate, slide and drop the famed 1980s stacking game into a sci-fi thriller. The project is the first for the studio, a newly formed joint venture between Chinese entertainment investor Bruno Wu's Seven Star Works and producer Larry Kasanoff's California-based Threshold Entertainment Group, which produces live-action movies.

"For our debut project, Threshold Global Studios will bring one of the most beloved, cross-generational gaming brands in the world to the big screen as an epic, sci-fi thriller," Kasanoff said in a statement. The video game requires players to arrange and clear bricks that fall faster and faster into a rectangular matrix at the bottom of the screen before they run out of space. Tetris has survived the transition from desktop to console to smartphone better than most other popular video games from the 1980s, such as Pac-Man. Whether it will survive the transition to the big screen is less clear.

"The fact that I loved playing Tetris when I was an elementary student doesn't mean I will see the film at all. Actually, the idea of making it into a film sounds extremely silly," said personal trainer Xu Jie, 30, interviewed in downtown Beijing yesterday. A hairdresser who only gave his surname, Ju, said that although he played Tetris as a boy, that wouldn't be enough to entice him to watch the movie. "I don't think I will go to the cinema to see a film like that, because I don't see any interesting story there. It doesn't sound appealing at all," said Ju, 29.

Tetris was invented in 1984 by Russian Alexey Pajitnov, who drew inspiration from a puzzle board game. He named it after the Greek word "tetra," meaning "four," and "tennis," his favorite sport. In China, the game translates as "Russian Cube Block." The Sino-US co-production fits into Hollywood's own strategy of teaming up with Chinese companies in the hope of striking big with the fast-growing Chinese market, now the



Photo shows the puzzle video game Tetris at Barcade in the Brooklyn section of New York. — AP

world's second-largest box office behind North America.

The joint venture "will make cross-cultural movies for the global market," the studio statement released Tuesday said. Kasanoff added that the 32-year-old Tetris "is a perfect first project for this strategy." Shooting will begin next year and there are plans to film in China and feature Chinese actors. The movie, which wasn't named in the studio's statement, follows in the mold of such computer game-inspired film productions as "Resident Evil," "Tomb Raider" and "Mortal Kombat." Kasanoff produced two "Mortal Kombat" movies. Wu is founder and CEO of Sun Seven Stars Media Group, a private media and entertainment investment company in China. — AP

Cannes Film Review

'Inversion'

The title shot of "Inversion" is an image of a metropolitan landscape so thick with smog that the skyscrapers seem to be melting right into the chalky-white air. It looks like the establishing shot of downtown LA that we've seen in a thousand films—only this isn't Los Angeles, it's Tehran. Iran's capital city has yet to become a global icon of toxic air pollution on the level of, say, Beijing, but Behnam Behzadi's new film suggests that it may be fast on its way there. (The title refers to the state of "thermal inversion" that, on bad days, pushes the poison in Tehran's atmosphere to maximum density.) It's an oppressive situation the citizens of Tehran simply live with, like lousy weather (or government crackdowns), but in "Inversion," the pollution sets off a chain reaction of familial discord that closes in on the heroine, Niloofar (Sahar Dolatshahi), until it forces her to find a new source of air.

Niloofar, a very pretty woman who has never married, owns a tailoring shop that employs a dozen workers, and early on she goes on a date with a pleasant, handsome, middle-aged fellow (Ali Reza Aghakhani), and it's clear the two are smitten with each other. In her single-woman-in-the-city way, she seems to be living the Iranian version of the feminist dream. Her freedom, however, is illusory and provisional. She shares an apartment with her mother, Mahin (Shirin Yazdanbakhsh), who suffers from chronic pulmonary disease and is therefore not even allowed to walk through the city. But she's stubborn and does anyway, and after one too many polluted whiffs, she collapses and lands in the hospital.

Claustrophobic realization

The doctor's orders: She must leave Tehran, and permanently. It's decided that she'll move up north and live in the vacation villa owned by one of Niloofar's siblings. It's also decided that Niloofar will abandon her beloved Tehran and live there with her. But even as all this is happening, the heroine starts to come to the claustrophobic realization that her entire life is now being decided for her. Sahar Dolatshahi is a beautiful and dynamic actress with an open, laughing face and darkly expressive doe eyes that have a way of dominating every shot they're in.

Under her head scarf, her hair lays against her forehead in a way that gives her a striking resemblance to Audrey Hepburn—and this is one case where an actress's impish radiance serves a vital thematic function. The audience looks at Niloofar and feels so connected to her eager vitality that we want her to be everything that she can be. But she's living in a society where that desire must take a back seat...to just about everything else. Niloofar plans to keep running her business from out of town, but since she has agreed to leave the city, her brother, the petty brute Farhad (Ali Mosaffa), decides that he'll pay off his debts by renting out her shop.

Baby-steps transition

And with the support of his other, married sister and a few additional relatives, he does. Just like that, the business that Niloofar has nurtured for 10 years—and that has nurtured her-goes up in smoke. Starting in the '90s, the movies that emerged from the new wave of Iranian cinema—films such as Jafar Panahi's "The Circle" (2001) — often told the

story of the subjugation of women in Iranian society. "Inversion" depicts that same moral crisis in a moment of eager, precarious, baby-steps transition, with Niloofar forced to learn that as an unmarried woman seeking to go her own way, her desires have almost no value. Overnight, she loses everything, and since no one in her family appears to give a damn, this is all expressed in the storm clouds that gather across Sahar Dolatshahi's face.

Behzadi, who has made more than 20 films (including shorts and television productions), works in a vintage Iranian mode of what might be called the clandestine suspense of the everyday. Nothing that happens in "Inversion" is overstated or even overtly dramatized, yet there's an invisible tension that pulls us through the movie, and that's our investment in seeing how Niloofar can liberate herself from seemingly random events that suddenly add up to a fate that is pulling her down like quicksand.



(From left) Iranian director Behnam Behzadi, Iranian actress Sahar Dolatshahi and Iranian actor Ali Mosaffa pose yesterday during a photocall for the film 'Inversion (Varoonegi)' at the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

When she learns that her suitor is hiding the fact that he has a young son, the oppression of her life begins to look almost conspiratorial. How can she get herself back to a state of what felt like freedom? The missing element in her thinking, however, is her very own will; she must try to create her own "inversion." The film ends on a note of ambiguity that may leave some audiences as puzzled as they are uplifted. (The puzzlement derives from the fact that the uplift is there...but not, perhaps, as much we might want it to be.) Yet there's a resonance to "Inversion" that comes from the moment in Iran it captures, when women are more liberated than they've ever been, but not to the point where they can totally breathe free. — Reuters



(From left back) A group photo shows Kuwait Times Deputy General Manager Adnan Saad, Zain Telecom Corporate Communications and Relations Director Waleed Al-Khashti, one of the jury members for the 15- 17 age category Abed Al-Kareem Al-Enezi, 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. — 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-Khashti, 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: Amara Ashkhanani, Abdulaziz Arti, Svitlana Ardnt and Abed Al-Kareem Al-Enezi. Here are the winners category from 15-17 years old.



First winner, Aya Karem Mohammed, Al- Ekhlas School.



Second winner, Abu Amaan Pal, Indian Central School.



Third winner, Nada Abed Al-Hakeem Hatem, Al-Rawda Secondary School.



Rwan Hashim Al-Failakawi, Farea Bent Abi Al-Salt School.



Duha Khalil Yasser Al-Ali, Fatema Al-Sarawi Secondary School.



Nwaf Faisal, Khalifa Talal Al-Jari School.

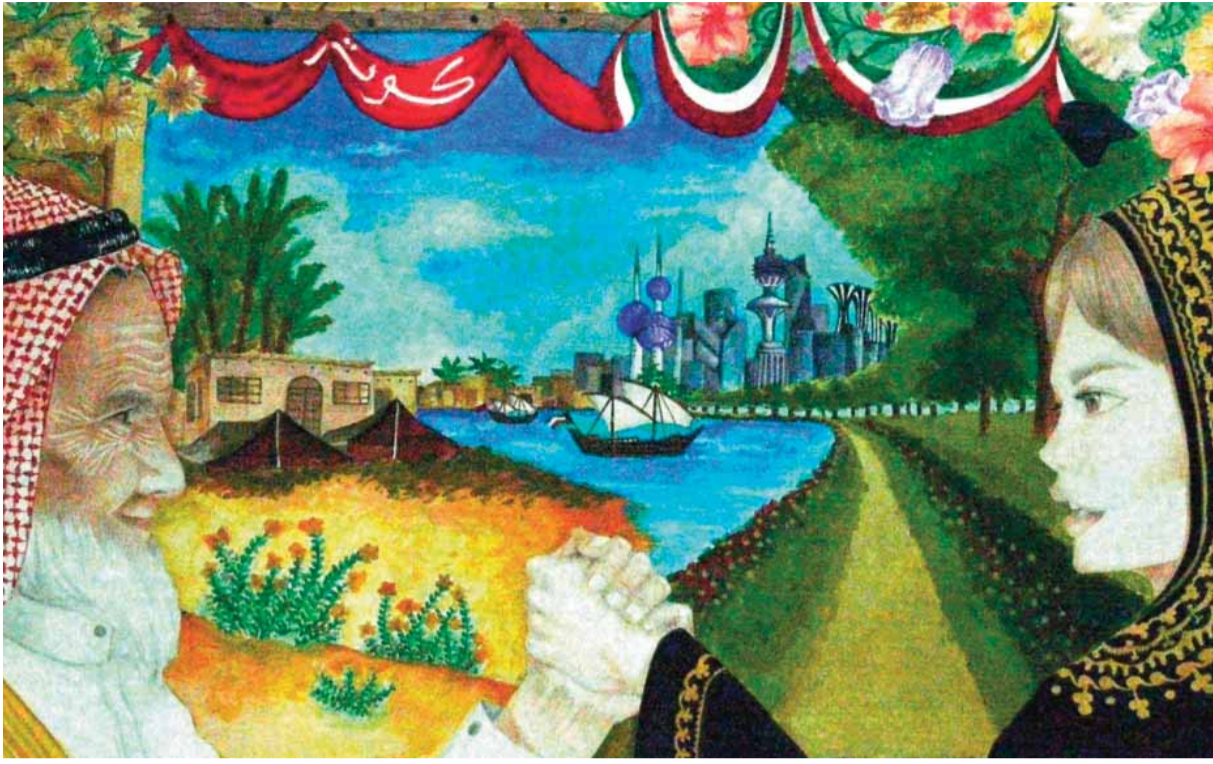


Hajer Rustom, Al-Doha Secondary School.

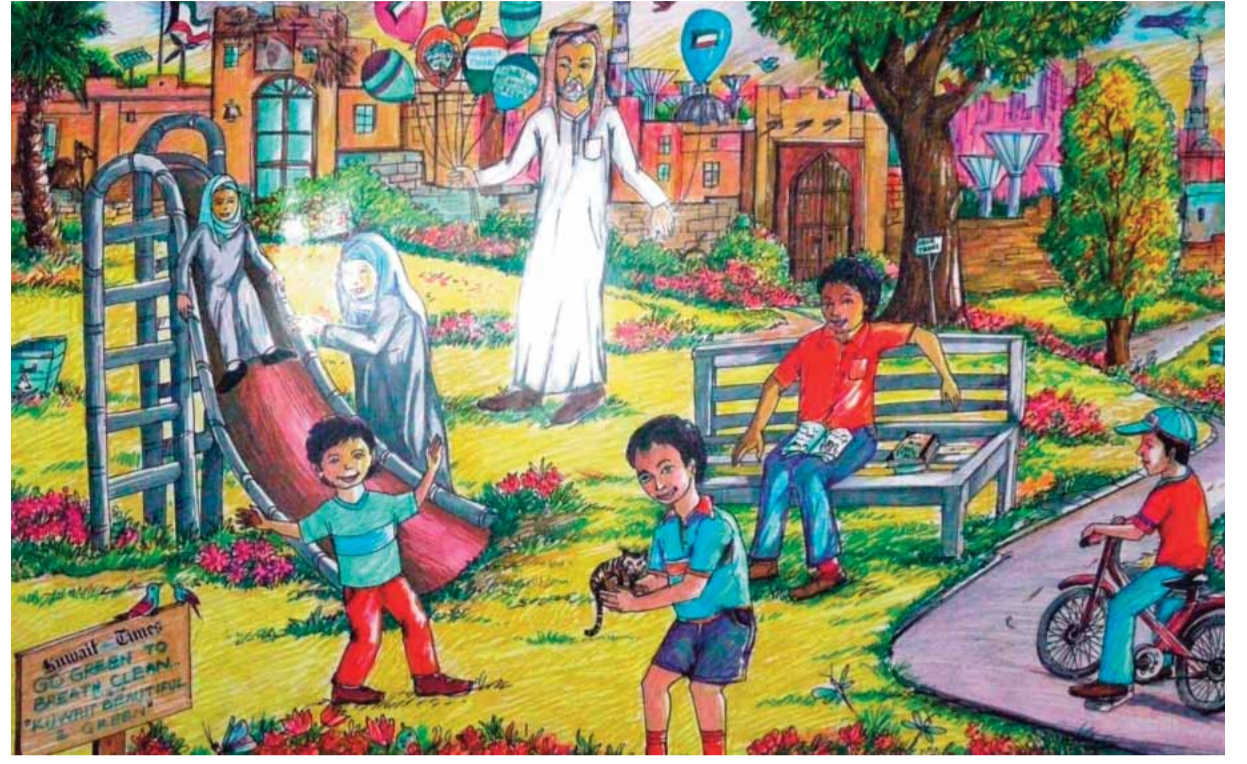


Jumana Fahed Al-Bloshi, Al-Salmiya Secondary School.

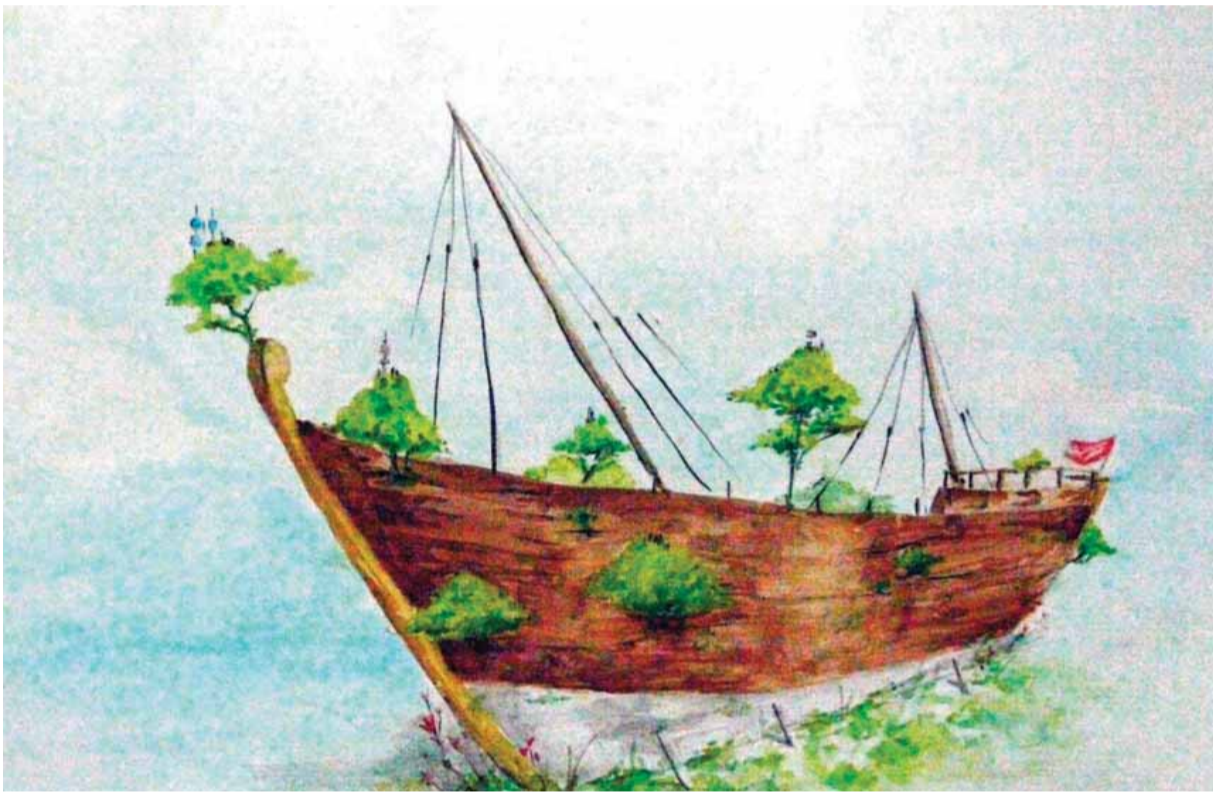




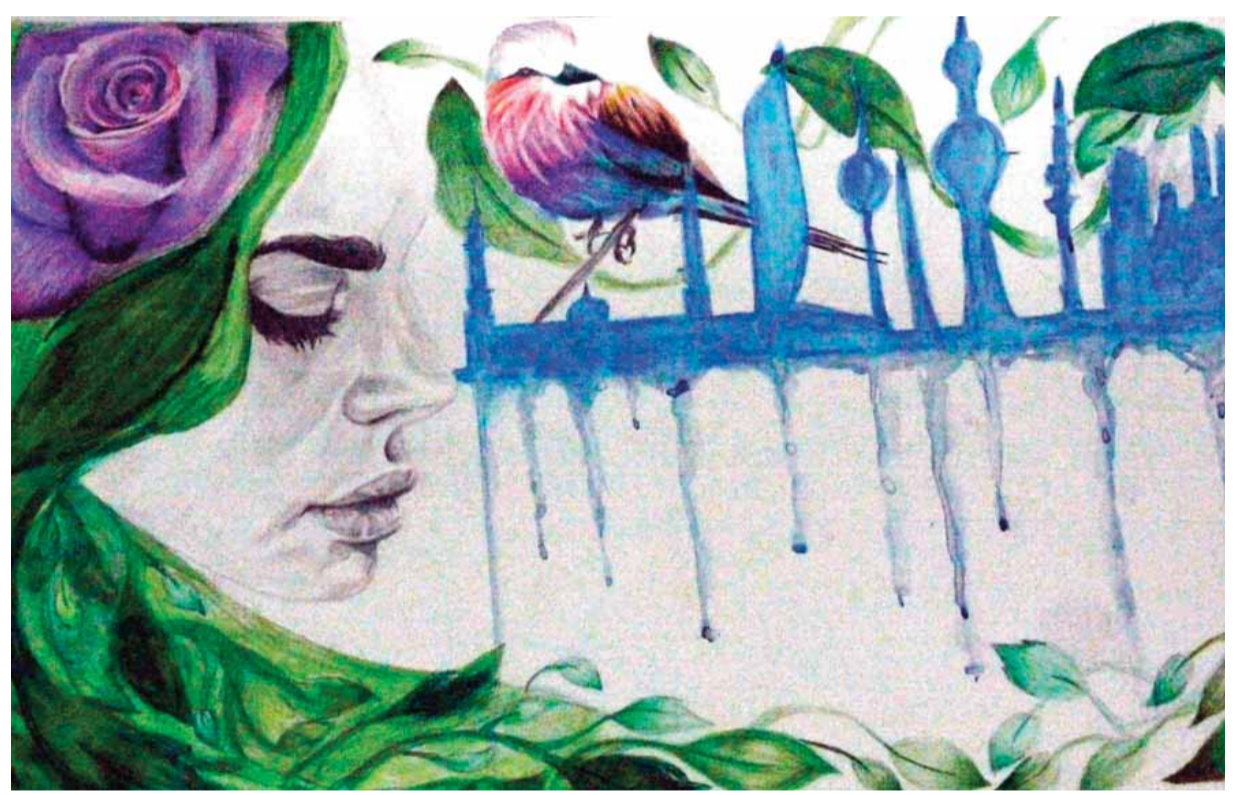
Painting by first winner Aya Karem Mohammed, Al-Ekhlash School.



Painting by second winner Abu Amaan Pal, Indian Central School.



Painting by third winner, Nada Abed Al-Hakeem Hatem, Al-Rawda Secondary School.



Painting by Rwan Hashim Al-Failakawi, Farea Bent Abi Al-Salt School.

First winner

Aya Karem Mohammed, Al-Ekhlash School.

Second winner

Abu Amaan Pal, Indian Central School.

Third winner

Nada Abed Al-Hakeem Hatem, Al-Rawda Secondary School.

Category 9-11 years

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Rwan Hashim Al-Failakawi
Farea Bent Abi Al-Salt School. | 5. Hajer Rustom
Al-Doha Secondary School. |
| 2. Jumana Fahed Al-Bloshi
Al-Salmiya Secondary School. | 6. Safiya Hadi
Fatema Al-Hashmeya School. |
| 3. Duha Khalil Yasser Al-All
Fatema Al-Sarawi Secondary School. | 7. Fatema Abed Al-Wahab,
Bayan Secondary School. |
| 4. Nwaf Faisal
Khalifa Talal Al-Jari School. | |



Painting by Jumana Fahed Al-Bloshi, Al-Salmiya Secondary School.



Painting by Duha Khalil Yasser Al-Ali, Fatema Al-Sarawi Secondary School.



Painting by Nwaf Faisal, Khalifa Talal Al-Jari School.



Painting by Hajer Rustom, Al-Doha Secondary School.



Painting by Safiya Hadi, Fatema Al-Hashmeya School.



Painting by Fatema Abed Al-Wahab, Bayan Secondary School.

CORRECTION



A photo of a painting was wrongly identified in yesterday's issue on page 39 and the correct caption is: Painting by Sarangi Smtha Sunil, Indian Learning School.



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2016

Kuwait beautiful and green through children's eyes

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Performers rehearse ahead of the First World Conference on Tourism for Development to be held this week in Beijing, China. State leaders and tourism ministers from various countries are expected to attend the four-day conference with the theme 'Tourism for Peace and Development!'. — AP

Black Panther, Marvel's African hero, in the spotlight

Captain America and Iron Man may be the stars of Marvel's latest comic-book blockbuster, but Black Panther-making his big-screen debut-is most definitely the superhero of the moment. Black Panther, the warrior king of the futuristic fictional African country Wakanda, is starring in a new comic book series that is doing booming sales, and will be the first black hero to get a standalone film, in 2018.

The new comic series-written by acclaimed author Ta-Nehisi Coates, a leading voice on race issues in America-debuted in April, and so far 330,000 copies of the first issue alone have been sold, according to Marvel. The character, celebrating his 50th anniversary, is a long-time member of the Marvel universe, but one of the few black heroes, a fact that has new resonance in an entertainment world consumed by a debate about diversity. "The Black Panther has always been a well liked character among fans," said Ben Saunders, the director of comics and cartoons studies at the University of Oregon.

But he's been given new life through the writing of Coates, who won a National Book Award for his "Between the World and Me," a letter to his son on how blacks fit into American society. "It was simply meant to be," Marvel Comics editor-in-chief Axel Alonso told AFP of Coates' participation, explaining that the author is a life-long comic book fan. "Ta-Nehisi is a wonderful storyteller with a masterful control of language and he has something to say about us-mankind, humanity-that transcends mere politics." Robert Battle, a store clerk at Midtown Comics in Manhattan, said Coates' popularity was a major factor in the book's popularity. "More people are excited

about the writer than the character; it's usually the other way around," Battle said. Coates "has attracted the attention of many people who would not normally read a comic book," Saunders noted. The man behind Black Panther's mask is T'Challa, who has a doctorate in physics and rules Wakanda, the imaginary land that is the most technologically advanced country in the world.

Coates has been able to showcase Black Panther's serious side in the new series, in which he is facing a popular uprising in his homeland.

"This is not a problem a superhero can punch into submission," Alonso said. Josh Johnson, another employee at Midtown Comics, said he loved the new Black Panther. "I'm more interested in the political side of his story. I got into him when I was young because I didn't know that there was any superheroes outside of New York," he said.

'Exception' to the rule

Black Panther was not the first black superhero, and is not the only one by a long shot. Falcon, the black Green Lantern (John Stewart), Black Lightning and Luke Cage have also blazed a trail. But for Jonathan Gayles, a professor of African-American studies at Georgia State University, Black Panther is "an exception." "He stands out because as an African superhero, in many ways he's exempt from the racial history of the United States," Gayles explains.

"The first African-American superheroes were dragged down by historical stereotypes about black men." Because he is a foreigner, Black Panther "doesn't represent the same level of threat that African-

American superheroes represent," said Gayles, who made a documentary about black superheroes. Alonso said while he hoped that the new comic series would attract black readers, he thought the story of T'Challa was a universal one. "Our fans don't fall in love with our characters because of their powers; they root for the person inside the costume, the person they relate to," Alonso said.

Film star

Before the new Coates comic made waves, Marvel green-lighted a standalone film in 2018 for Black Panther, who will be played by Chadwick Boseman, best known for his portrayal of black baseball legend Jackie Robinson in "42." Ryan Coogler, the young black director behind last year's successful "Rocky" spinoff "Creed," will be at the helm. Oscar-winning actress Lupita Nyong'o and "Creed" star Michael B. Jordan are already attached to the project. Filmgoers get their first taste of Black Panther in this month's "Captain America: Civil War," but he has a secondary role to the franchise's more established stars.

"There have been a lot of comic book titles that have featured people of color and they haven't been comparatively as successful as others. I think there's still a bit of hesitation to accept the idea that everyone has the right to be seen as powerful," Gayles said. "But if the movie 'Black Panther' is successful as other films have been, then I think that there will be a scramble to take advantage of that niche... It's about making money." — AFP



In this photo illustration a woman reads a copy of the Black Panther (T'Challa) a fictional superhero appearing in comic book published by Marvel Comics in New York.



A woman reads a copy of the Black Panther (T'Challa) a fictional superhero appearing in comic book published by Marvel Comics in New York.— AFP photos

Rare blue diamond aims for record price at Geneva auction

A dazzling blue diamond once owned by mining magnate Philip Oppenheimer could fetch a record sale price yesterday, with auction house Christie's hoping it tops the staggering \$48.4 million mark set last year. The 14.62-carat "Oppenheimer Blue" is the largest stone in the exceptionally-rare Fancy Vivid Blue category ever to go under the hammer, according to Christie's, which has valued the gem between \$38 million (34 million euros) and \$45 million.

But experts said it has a chance to beat the record set by Sotheby's in November with Hong Kong billionaire Joseph Lau's purchase of the 12.03-carat "Blue Moon of Josephine". The Oppenheimer Blue "is highly likely to break the \$50 million mark to become the most expensive polished diamond ever sold at auction," said Tobias Kormind, managing director at 77diamonds.com.

Sotheby's fetched a record price in the Fancy Vivid Pink Category on Tuesday, when a private buyer in Asia scooped up a 15.38-carat stone for \$31.6 million. Ehud Laniado, president of Cora International which sold the stone dubbed "Unique Pink", said he was "very happy with the sale price", and voiced confidence that the gem's value would rise over time. "When you buy a Picasso, you pay a lot, but you know you are going to sell it for even more," Laniado told AFP. Sotheby's also sold a blue diamond, weighing 7.32 carats, for \$17.1 million. A recent spate of eye-popping bids at Geneva's semi-annual magnificent jewel auctions has highlighted the surging value of precious stones, with some of the world's ultra-rich increasingly investing in hard assets as a safeguard against stock market volatility.

Mining family scion

Britain's Sir Philip Oppenheimer (1911-1995) led a powerful cartel called the Central Selling Organization for 45 years, tightly controlling roughly 80 percent of the international diamond trade in a bid to prevent wild price swings. De Beers, the giant mining company built by the Oppenheimer family, also flourished in the latter half of the 20th Century, thanks in part to Sir Philip's outsized influence in the sector.

The blue stone has passed through several hands since Oppenheimer's death and yesterday will mark its first appearance at public auction. But, there is always a chance that the jewel will not even meet its estimated floor price. That happened last month when a 9.54-carat blue diamond ring once owned by American child star Shirley Temple failed to sell at auction in New York after bidding closed at \$22 million, below the reserve price. Christie's has valued its total of 280 lots up for auction yesterday at \$113 million. The collection includes 46 pieces from German-born princess Gabriela zu Leiningen, who was married to the Aga Khan.

Sotheby's 495-lot auction brought in \$171.1 million, with 70 percent of the items selling above their estimated price, the company said in a statement. A quarter of auction participants were from Asia, Sotheby's said, underscoring the region's growing buying power, especially among tycoons based in Hong Kong. — AFP



This file photo shows a woman holding up the 'Oppenheimer Blue,' a rare fancy vivid blue diamond weighing 14.62 carat during a press preview by Christie's auction house in Geneva. — AFP