

Kuwaiti explorer to participate in trips to North, South Poles



Austria to tear down Hitler's birth house



Aleppo to the Ivy League: Doctor preps for end of war



Westbrook, Adams power Thunder past Timberwolves



ELECTION FEVER GRIPS KUWAIT AS SNAP ELECTIONS SET FOR NOV 26

POLITICAL GROUPS, TRIBES TO NAME CANDIDATES SOON



Min 19°
Max 39°
High Tide 00:27 & 13:35
Low Tide 07:18 & 19:33

IRAQ FORCES LAUNCH MOSUL OFFENSIVE

AL-SHURA, Iraq: Iraqi forces advanced yesterday after launching an offensive aimed at retaking Mosul and dealing a death blow to the Islamic State group's "caliphate" in the city where it was declared two years ago. The start of the long-awaited assault raised deep concerns for hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in Iraq's second-largest city, with aid groups warning of a massive humanitarian crisis.

Some 30,000 federal forces are leading the offensive, backed by air and ground support from a 60-nation US-led coalition, in what is expected to be a long and difficult assault on IS' last major Iraqi stronghold. Iraqi forces could be seen readying weapons and ammunitions as columns of armored vehicles headed towards Mosul from the town of Al-Shura, some 45 km south of the city.

The Pentagon described the operation as a "decisive moment" in the fight against IS but the US-led coalition's top commander warned it could last weeks or more. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi announced the beginning of the assault in a televised address in the early hours of yesterday. "Today I declare the start of these victorious operations to free you from the violence and terrorism of Daesh (IS)," Abadi said. IS seized control of large parts of Iraq and neighboring Syria in mid-2014, declaring a cross-border "caliphate" and committing widespread atrocities.

The militants have suffered a string of territorial defeats this year in both countries, and the retaking of Mosul would all but end the group's presence in Iraq as a land-holding force. Iraqi forces have been closing in on Mosul in recent weeks but the battle launched yesterday could be the toughest yet in the fight against IS.

Continued on Page 13



KHAZER, Iraq: Kurdish security forces take up a position as they fight overlooking Islamic State-controlled villages surrounding Mosul yesterday. — AP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Snap National Assembly elections will be held on Nov 26, according to a decision by the Cabinet yesterday, a day after HH the Amir dissolved the Assembly over a row over the hike in petrol prices. The Cabinet's decision will be issued in an Amiri decree and published in the official gazette Kuwait Al-Youm to signal the start of the 40-day election campaign to elect 50 new members to the Assembly.

Under the election law, the Amiri decree must be published in the official gazette at least one month before the election date. Registration of candidates will start after the publication for 10 days, and withdrawal from the race will remain open until four days before the election date. Candidates must be Kuwaiti citizens by birth and at least 30 years of age on the day of the polls.

Almost all outgoing Assembly members are expected to seek reelection. So far, only Salafist MP Abdulrahman Al-Jeeran said he is not contesting because the Salafist group has unanimously elected ex-minister and former lawmaker Ahmad Baqer to contest in the second constituency. The three Cabinet ministers who are elected MPs - Public Works Minister Ali Al-Omar, Communications and Municipality Minister Essa Al-Kandari and Awqaf and Justice Minister Yaqoub Al-Sane - submitted their resignations in order to be able to contest the polls. Their resignations were accepted by the Cabinet. Under Kuwaiti law, the 16-member Cabinet must include at least one elected member from the Assembly.

This year's election is expected to attract huge attention and witness heated races after many opposition groups said they will field candidates after boycotting the previous two polls in protest against the change in the voting system. The Islamic Constitutional Movement, the Kuwaiti arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, said it will name its candidates this week.

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News

in brief

Court to look into

DNA law Dec 21

KUWAIT: The Constitutional Court yesterday set Dec 21 as the date to look into constitutional challenges to the DNA law. On June 13, the court received challenges to the law from citizens questioning the constitutionality of the bill. On July 1, 2015, the National Assembly passed the 13-article law making DNA testing mandatory for all people in Kuwait, with the aim of establishing a comprehensive database to be used to identify criminals and terrorists. People who refuse to take the test face a jail term of a maximum of one year and a fine of up to KD 10,000, or one of the two penalties. According to Article 11, the law applies to citizens, expats and anybody who enters the country.

Kuwait among 24 teams in Asian football cup draw

KUWAIT: Kuwait is among 24 football teams in the draw for the qualifying rounds of the Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) Asian Football Cup, the Kuwait Football Association (KFA) said. In a press statement released yesterday, the association said it received an official statement from the AFC on teams participating in the final qualifying rounds to be held in the UAE in 2019. The Kuwaiti team was among the best third-place winners, said KFA. AFC will announce the time of the draw later, the statement added.

Finance ministry to only use e-stamps from Dec

DUBAI: Kuwait's Ministry of Finance will stop dealing with traditional stamps and change to electronic ones from December, a step in line with the ministry's goal to modernize all financial services and transactions, the ministry's Undersecretary Khalifa Hamada said yesterday. The official's statement to KUNA came during his participation at GITEX Technology Week in Dubai. Hamada added that the new electronic system will be applied with best standards and will facilitate data extraction. The ministry is going ahead with some other projects, namely the state's unified electronic payment systems that aim at collecting fines and processing other transactions in one location.

Saleh expects production 'understanding' at OPEC

KUWAIT: Finance Minister and acting oil minister Anas Al-Saleh said yesterday he was optimistic that an understanding on production "at least" would be reached between producers at an OPEC meeting in November. He said expectations that oil prices would be between \$50 and \$60 over the next 10 to 15 months were "logical and acceptable". Saleh was speaking with journalists on the sidelines of the opening of the Ahmad Al-Jaber oil and gas exhibition.

RUSSIA ANNOUNCES BRIEF ALEPPO TRUCE

AIR STRIKES FLATTEN BUILDINGS • EU WARNS OF 'WAR CRIMES'

ALEPPO: Russia yesterday announced an eight-hour "humanitarian" ceasefire in Aleppo later this week, as the EU warned that the Syrian regime's Moscow-backed assault on the city could amount to war crimes. The United Nations and European Union welcomed the announcement, but said the planned pause in fighting

needed to be longer to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid. In the latest violence, dozens of civilians including 12 members of the same family were killed in heavy bombardment of rebel-held eastern sectors of the embattled city, a monitoring group said.

Continued on Page 13



ALEPPO: Members of the Syrian Civil Defense, known as the White Helmets, carry the body of a girl dug out from the rubble of a destroyed building following air strikes in the rebel-held Qatarji neighborhood of this northern Syrian city yesterday.— AFP

TRUMP RAMPS UP VOTER FRAUD CLAIM, SLAMS WOMEN ACCUSERS

WASHINGTON: Republican candidate Donald Trump said yesterday he expected widespread voter fraud in the Nov 8 US presidential election, ramping up his warning of a rigged election without providing any evidence and despite numerous studies that show the electoral system is sound. Trump has tried to whip up fears of a flawed election as he has fallen back in opinion polls against Democrat Hillary Clinton. He is also strongly denying allegations from multiple women that he has sexually assaulted or otherwise behaved inappropriately with them.

"Of course there is large scale voter fraud happening on and before election day. Why do Republican leaders deny what is going on? So naive!" Trump said on Twitter yesterday. Trump, a New York businessman making his first run for public office, has worried

a number of Republicans over his allegations of election fraud. Some of them have urged him publicly to show proof or drop the assertions. Early voting and voting by mail have begun in many states.

While Trump's vice presidential running mate, Mike Pence, and his campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, have tried to reshape the candidate's comments as being aimed at an unfair news media, Trump's own words have targeted the legitimacy of the election system. Even after Pence said in a televised interview on Sunday that Trump would accept the results of next month's election, Trump tweeted that the "election is absolutely being rigged by the dishonest and distorted media pushing Crooked Hillary - but also at many polling places - SAD."

Continued on Page 13

ENVOY: TOP FILIPINO DRUG KINGPIN ARRESTED IN UAE

DUBAI: A man named by Philippines' president as a major drug kingpin was arrested in the capital of the United Arab Emirates after apparently fleeing his country, a Filipino diplomat said yesterday. Rolando "Kerwin" Espinosa Jr was arrested Sunday night in an apartment in Abu Dhabi, Ambassador Constancio Vingno Jr told AP. Abu Dhabi investigators used intelligence gathered by the Philippine National Police to locate Espinosa, Vingno said. He said that his country hopes to extradite Espinosa soon.

Filipino media quoted local police as saying an overseas Filipino worker tipped off authorities. An Interpol red notice for Espinosa, the son of a mayor also accused of being a drug kingpin, says he is wanted on drug and weapons charges. It wasn't clear if he had a lawyer. Vingno said Espinosa hadn't requested consular assistance.

Espinosa and his father had been warned by Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte they faced potentially being shot on sight if they didn't turn themselves in.

It's part of Duterte's deadly crackdown on illegal drugs in his southeast Asian country that's seen more than 1,300 suspects killed in gunbattles with police - an average of 36 killings a day since he took office on June 30. Human rights groups criticize the campaign as condoning extrajudicial killings. Vingno said it was unclear if anyone else would face charges over Espinosa hiding in the UAE. Emirati officials did not immediately comment on his arrest. However, Vingno stressed that Espinosa's arrest shouldn't be taken as a stain on the reputation of the 600,000 Filipinos working across the UAE. "It should not reflect on the people we are," he said. — AP



NEW YORK: Activists rally during a protest against Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump over his 'treatment of women' in front of Trump Tower yesterday. — AFP



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and Director of the Board of Trustees of Abdulrahman Al-Sumait Prize for African Development Sheikh Sabah Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as the winners of the prize's first two editions. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos

AMIR RECEIVES AL-SUMAIT PRIZE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

2015, 2016 WINNERS ANNOUNCED

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and Director of the Board of Trustees of Abdulrahman Al-Sumait Prize for African Development Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and board members.

During the meeting that came on the occasion of announcing winners of Al-Sumait Prize for African Development for the years 2015 and 2016, His Highness the Amir recalled Sumait's exploits and his great services to Islam and charity on the continent.

Sumait has offered a civilized and honorable model for charity and humanitarian work of his country, devoting his life to assisting the afflicted and the needy. His Highness wished the board everlasting success. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Winners

Dr Kevin March of the Kenya-based African Academy for Sciences and Oxford University was awarded the 2015 health award for his relentless work to improve children's lives in the African continent. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled announced after chairing a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Prize. Meanwhile, the 2016 prize, also \$1 million and dedicated for food security, was shared by the Peru-based CIP's Sweet Potato for Nutrition Team and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), based in Nigeria.

He said Dr March, who would receive the \$1 million prize, won the award for his sustained efforts for around three decades in scientific research, training and building of institutions with the objective of controlling and eradicating Malaria, Sheikh Sabah said. He also indicated that Dr March has big contributions to addressing problems of respiratory system as well as malnutrition.

CIP's team, explained Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, had successful research in improving quality of nutrition especially by sweet potato in the African continent. The team, he added, developed new types of sweet potatoes rich with vitamin A thus improving food system of millions of African families, compensating severe shortage of this essential vitamin.

The IITA has successful application of research aimed at improving quality of basic food substances, corn and legumes. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said IITA succeeded in developing food security for millions of people in Africa through the development of major staple food crops, such as cassava, banana and maize. The winners will be officially awarded during the upcoming Arab-African Summit, due in Equatorial Guinea, next month.

Developments

At the beginning of the Board of Trustees meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, in a brief speech, called for collaboration of efforts to improve sustainable development plans of

developing countries, particularly the African continent to eradicate poverty, illiteracy and diseases.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, who conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to members of Board of Trustees, said Kuwait has long been supporting humanitarian and development domains all over the world.

He said Abdulrahman Al-Sumait prize was another addition to endeavors by the state of Kuwait towards development of needy communities. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled cited the UN honoring of His Highness the Amir as a "Humanitarian Leader," and Kuwait as a "Humanitarian Center." The Board of Trustees consists of Bill Gates, co-chair of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Dr Donald Kaberuka, Former President of the African Development Bank, Dr Kwaku Aning, Former Deputy Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Abdulateef Al-Hamad, Director General and Chairman of the Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, and Tareq Al-Mutawa, Executive Member of the Board of Public Gathering Charity Committee and others.

Discoveries

Dr Adnan Shihab-Eldin, Director General of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), which administers the awards, is the rapporteur. Shihab-Eldin, in a separate statement, said "we are deeply humbled by the efforts demonstrated by Al-Sumait prize laureates in the pursuit of scientific discoveries to meet the challenges of disease, nutrition, food production and climate change." The laureates were in the front-line of Africa's challenges, yet have succeeded despite limited resources," he said.

Al-Sumait prize honors individuals or institutions that help advance economic and social development, human resources development and infrastructure in Africa through their sustained research and or innovative projects that result in major impact on the lives and welfare of the people of Africa especially the poor and underprivileged.

The prize was announced by His Highness the Amir during the 3rd Arab-African summit that was held in Kuwait in 2013 in appreciation of Al-Sumait's humanitarian legacy in the African continent. "Each of the winners represent innovative, exciting initiatives being done to address the challenges facing Africa," said Shihab-Eldin. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Jordanian Senate President Faisal Akef Al-Fayez. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Jordanian Senate President Faisal Al-Fayez.

AMIR RECEIVES LETTER FROM JORDAN'S KING

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday visiting Jordanian Senate President Faisal Akef Al-Fayez at Bayan Palace yesterday, in presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. During the meeting, the Jordanian Senate President delivered a written letter to His Highness the Amir addressed from Jordanian King Abdullah II on bilateral relations and how to enhance them.

The letter also handled coordination and cooperation over various regional issues as part of Arab and Islamic integra-

tion. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah and Secretary-General of Kuwait's National Assembly Allam Ali Al-Kandari. Earlier, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received the Jordanian Senate President and his delegation. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, head of His Highness the Premier's Diwan Sheikhha Itimad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kandari, and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Duaij. —KUNA



First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Prize yesterday.



KUWAIT: Deputy Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, during a visit to the Thai Embassy yesterday, conveyed condolences from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the death of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. He also conveyed the condolences of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. —KUNA

KUWAIT'S NEW AMBASSADOR TO QATAR SUBMITS CREDENTIALS

DOHA: Kuwait's new Ambassador to Qatar Hafeeth Mohammad Al-Ajmi presented his credentials yesterday to Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. The Kuwaiti diplomat said that he conveyed the Kuwaiti leadership's greetings and well wishes to the Qatari Amir. Moreover, he underscored historic ties between both nations, saying that both countries strive to bolster Gulf and Arab cooperation.

Meanwhile, Ajmi had previously handed over a copy of his credentials to Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, subsequently discussing with him bilateral ties. The meeting was attended by the Kuwaiti embassy's counselor Nasser Al-Ghanem, along with secretaries Fahad Al-Awadhi and Mohammad Al-Omar. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani meets with Kuwait's new Ambassador to Qatar Hafeeth Mohammad Al-Ajmi. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly appointed US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Robert Silverman. —KUNA photos

CROWN PRINCE MEETS NEWLY APPOINTED AMBASSADORS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace the newly appointed US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Robert Silverman. His Highness the Crown Prince also received today the newly appointed German Ambassador to Kuwait. The meeting was also attended by head of the protocol at the Diwan of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince received Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa, as well as the outgoing Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Ali Saleh Al-Omair, and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of Communication Essa Ahmad Al-Kandari. His Highness also met with National Security Apparatus Chief Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT TO RECRUIT 400 PALESTINIAN TEACHERS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub said Education Minister Bader Al-Essa will visit Ramallah in November to sign an agreement to recruit 400 Palestinian teachers in various specialties. Speaking during a dinner banquet held to the honor PalSat Chairman Ahmed Assaf and his accompanying delegation, Tahboub said that the agreement was ready and only needs to be signed, but the visit was postponed because of Essa's tight schedule.

Labor shelter

Acting Director of the Public Authority for Manpower Abdullah Al-Motoutah received the Ambassador of the Philippines to Kuwait Renato Pedro Villa, who discussed labor-related cooperation between both countries. Villa expressed appreciation for hosting 160 Filipinos at the expatriate labor shelter and hailed the services they received. Both sides also discussed the problems of Filipino laborers at the embassy shelter and the possibility of transferring them to the authority's shelter.

Retirement

Health Minister Dr Ali Al-Obaidi yesterday referred more officials to retirement, including the ministry's public relations and media manager Faisal Al-Doussary, the undersecretary's office manager Dr Adel Al-Ali and four nursing staff members.

LICENSED COMPANIES CAN PROVIDE IPTV CABLE TV SERVICES

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Before submitting his resignation yesterday, Minister of Communications and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Essa Al-Kandari issued a decision allowing companies licensed by the information ministry to provide IPTV cable TV services through the NGN network and to reduce the cost of Internet services by 40 percent to KD 3,600 annually per 100 Mbps and KD 24,000 per one Gbps, plus KD 1,000 each ISP pays to the ministry for installation fees. Kandari also decided allowing bodies receiving IPLC Internet to increase their capacity by 10 percent for 25 GB capacity, 20 percent for 50 GB capacity, 30 percent for 75 GB capacity and 40 percent for 100 GB capacity. Kandari added that the decisions were made in collaboration with the public authority for IT and communications in order to provide cheaper high quality Internet services.

Naturalization suspended

Well-informed sources said that the Cabinet suspended a list of military bedoons, veteran oil

Infrastructure
Ministry of Public Work's undersecretary Awatef Suleiman Al-Ghunaim yesterday signed three infrastructure agreements for Garnada, Sabah Al-Nasser and Andalus, in addition to laying the main sewage line between Surra and Riggae at a total cost of KD 5,862,845.

Assessment

The 'Kuwait Needs' campaign's monthly reports for August and September showed the assessment of seven government bodies - the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL), Public Authority for Manpower, Ministry of Commerce (MoC), Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), Kuwait Municipality, Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) - were excellent in terms of these bodies' response to citizens' complaints. The report also showed that the finance and awqaf ministries were assessed as 'good', while the interior, health and public works ministries in addition to the Environment Public Authority (EPA) showed little response to complaints. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) lacked any response to public complaints. Commenting on the report, Minister Hind Al-Subaih said that it confirms the spirit of teamwork prevailing at MSAL that helps achieve success in providing better services to the public.

Sinai attack

Meanwhile, the cabinet condemned a recent terrorist attack targeting a security position in Egypt's North Sinai, which left several soldiers dead or wounded. The cabinet said that Kuwait stands by Egypt in its bid to safeguard its security and stability. It also reiterated Kuwait's principled and firm position based on the rejection of all forms and manifestations of ter-

Disabled club

The Municipality approved a request by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) to shift Kuwait Disabled Sports Club from MSAL to under the authority of Public Authority for Sports (PAS). Meanwhile, Director of the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Essa Al-Kandari transferring the administrative and technical authorities of cattle and poultry slaughterhouses from the Municipality to PAFN, effective Dec 1, 2016. Speaking to reporters yesterday, Kandari said that food and food supplements-related activities would be fully transferred to PAFN effective Nov 1, 2016.

KD 40,000 GUARANTEE FOR INDIVIDUALS TO LICENSE DOMESTIC HELPERS' OFFICE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Brigadier Adel Al-Hashash, Director General of the relations and security media Department at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced new licenses for domestic labor recruitment offices and companies are being issued. Hashash said the conditions to get the new licenses are available at MoI's website and include the following: Applicants must be Kuwaitis

with good reputation, have not been previously sentenced for crimes or disgraceful offenses (unless they have been rehabilitated) and aged 30-70. Hashash also noted that applicants must be healthy without any disability. Individual applicants have to present a KD 40,000 letter of guarantee from a local bank, while companies should present a KD 100,000 letter of guarantee.

In other news, MoI Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd yesterday received at

the final statement of the summit, topped with establishing an ACD secretariat to be based in Kuwait. He also apprised the cabinet of His Highness the Amir's speech to the summit, and his directives on commitment to the goals, role, and the principles of dialogue that contribute to achieving stability and sustainable development.



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

Nawaz Sharif to His Highness the Amir on means to enhance bilateral relations in all fields. Meanwhile, the ministers reviewed the outcome of His Highness the Amir's visit to Thailand where he attended the 2nd Asian Cooperation Dialogue Summit, themed 'One Asia, Diverse Strength'.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the meeting on the major points on

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled offered the meeting a brief account of His Highness the Amir's historic visit to the Sultanate of Brunei and his talks with Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah on boosting bilateral ties, besides regional and international issues and developments of common concern. Then, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister gave notice to the cabinet of his participation in the 5th session of

the GCC-Turkey High Level Strategic Dialogue, in Riyadh last week. The session brought together foreign ministers from the two sides, and the Turkish minister of economy.

Unlicensed mosques

In the meantime, the cabinet tasked the Kuwait Municipality, in cooperation with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and the committee in charge of removing encroachments on state property, with developing solutions to the issue of unlicensed mosques and similar prayer places. The cabinet consented two draft decrees approving a MoU for labor and social affairs cooperation with Tunisia, and a cultural and technical agreement with Algeria. The two decrees were referred to His Highness the Amir.

Afterwards, the cabinet eulogized former MP Falah Al-Sawagh who died last week. Reviewing the political developments on the Arab and international scenes, the cabinet eulogized King of Thailand Bhumibol Adulyadej who passed away on Thursday, expressing condolences to the Kingdom. On the other hand, the cabinet congratulated Antonio Guterres who will succeed Ban Ki-moon as the new UN Secretary General on January 1. The ministers recalled Ban's sincere efforts to serve peace, justice and humanity around the globe. —KUNA



Brigadier Adel Al-Hashash

EDUCATION REFORM IN KUWAIT: DOING IT DIFFERENTLY

WASHINGTON: The Kuwaiti Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa attended this week an event with a wide group of World Bank education experts in Washington DC to showcase a large education reform effort in Kuwait and to exchange views on relevant global experiences. The reform effort, launched in 2010 and supported by the World Bank, aims to modernize the public school system in the country.

During this remarks, Minister Essa mentioned that that "Kuwait recognizes the need for greater emphasis on quality in education and on institutional capacity, as well as for system-wide reforms." He also emphasized the importance of early childhood development and inclusive education - and said that the goal of the Ministry of Education is to "trans-

form Kuwait's entire education system towards becoming fully competence-based. The Ministry of Education, in partnership with the World Bank, experts worked very closely on designing a homegrown reform program, the most important investment Kuwait can make for its future", he further added.

At the event, World Bank's Practice Manager for Eastern Europe and Asia Cristian Aedo stated that "4.5 percent of Kuwait's GDP is spent on education, but outcomes are below expectations, so there is lots of room to improve efficiency of the system". Harry Patrinos, Practice Manager for East Asia and the Pacific stressed that "parents should be empowered to contribute to kids' school quality, and private schools should be accountable to the public system", in addition to investing in teachers and assessing

students, "if you don't know where you are, you can't improve".

The educational reform efforts in Kuwait encompass the introduction of a competence-based curriculum across public schools; developing a conducive environment for effective teaching; enabling schools to be active centers of learning; and strengthening systems for enhanced accountability and evidence-based decision-making.

One of the great successes of the program to date has been the development and roll-out of a competence-based curriculum in grades 1, 2 and 6. This process, led by local experts with technical assistance from the World Bank, has resulted in a nationalized curriculum that provides a balance of national values and traditions combined with international best-practice in curriculum design.

INDUSTRIES, CONSTRUCTION EXHIBITION SUPPORTS THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

ORGANIZED BY NATIONAL INDUSTRIES AND EXPO-TAJ

KUWAIT: Deputy Chairman and CEO of National Industries Company, Dr Adel Al-Subaih asserted that the Industries and Construction Exhibition is considered a national annual event aimed at supporting local industry and national products, pointing out that the success of exhibition during the past five years affirm the trust of the companies and competent authorities in this major event.

This was reported in a press statement for Subaih on the occasion of the announcement of the launch of the sixth session of the exhibition, organized by both National Industries and Expo-Taj for Exhibitions and Conferences under the auspices of the Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul, from December 5-8, 2016 at Jumeirah Messilah Hotel - Kuwait, with the participation of over 60 private and public entity.

Subaih said that the objective of the exhibition accomplished in the previous sessions are in line with the vision of his Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah the Amir, which emphasizes the importance of achieving industrial and economic revival in Kuwait and encourage industrial development, including the construction and housing sector.

Subaih added that the Industries and Construction exhibition comes as



Dr Adel Al-Subaih

a continuation of the role played by the National Industries Company regarding the manufacturing of construction materials, and using modern methods that saves as much energy as possible, such as thermal insulation of buildings, energy-saving lighting and solar energy lamps, in line with the government approach as part of the rationalization of consumption and the economic reform process of the State.

Latest developments

Furthermore, he explained that the exhibition seeks to introduce to the public, the latest developments of construction materials, especially the beneficiaries of the housing care provided by the State, and provide all that is needed in the construction phases.

The Industries and Construction 6th Exhibition aims to achieve its goals through a set of strategies, said Subaih. Mainly supporting Kuwaiti products through quality, price, and discounts competition and sophisticated display style, show of modern methods of energy-saving and the amount of savings realized for the State of Kuwait and its citizens, in addition to communicating with the Federation of GCC Chambers of Commerce by inviting them to attend the exhibition, consistent with the government's approach to creating investment and export opportunities for region businesses.

Moreover, he pointed out that Industries and Construction exhibition was able to confirm the important role it plays in supporting this sector, as the largest local gathering for construction, dEcor specialists from the private and public sectors, as the exhibition has sponsorships and participation from various relevant government authorities, as well as the presence of a group of specialized companies that provide the latest and finest products related to the construction process, in line with the taste of the Kuwaiti citizen; in addition to the participation and support of a number of local banks in the event offering its best housing related services.

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In Brief

KUWAIT-EGYPT RELATIONS

CAIRO: Kuwait Ambassador in Cairo Mohammad Al-Thuwaikh Sunday termed as strategic relations between Kuwait and Egypt, and that the two countries shared positions over vital issues of interest to Arab and Islamic worlds. Thuwaikh said relations between the two countries were witnessing further growth. Al-Thuwaikh said there were thousands of Kuwaitis studying in Egyptian colleges and universities, while over a 1,000 Kuwaiti companies working in Egypt. Kuwait, he added, was also hosting hundreds of thousands of Egyptians working in the country. —KUNA



ANTI-TERROR COOPERATION

CAIRO: Officials from the Arab ministries of interior, and justice discussed means to boost Arab and international cooperation for combating terrorism, and incriminating paying ransom to terrorists. The joint meeting, held at the Arab League in Cairo on Sunday, came upon an invitation from the League's Secretariat. The meeting discussed a proposal to incriminate the act of paying ransom to terrorists, in a bid to support the Arab vision on the issue seeking to block financing to such groups. —KUNA



ARAB MEDIA CONFERENCE

KUWAIT: Secretary General of the Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA) Dr Farid Ayar has underlined that the current federation's conference has a key role in promoting media cooperation amongst Arab news agencies on one hand and supporting Arab media generally on the other hand. Ayar made the statement yesterday after arriving in Kuwait to take part in the 44th General Assembly of FANA on October 17-19. "We are trying to address several pending issues like increasing sharing news amongst Arab news agencies," he said. —KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: A picture taken from inside the Arab Towns Organization's building in Kuwait City. —Photo by Joseph Shagra



KUWAIT: AUB executive management are pictured with LoYAC representatives.

AHLI UNITED BANK SPONSORS 'SERVICE IS MY JOY' IN COLLABORATION WITH LOYAC

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced the sponsorship of 'Service Is My Joy' Program within the framework of its strategic partnership with LOYAC Kuwait. The Bank's latest alliance reflects its effort to reinforce its extensive range of community activities and underlying support for the Kuwaiti society.

'Service Is My Joy' initiative aims at helping supporting various social segments. The initiative involves participants aged 16 and above taking part in volunteering committees and collaborating with a number of volunteering centers such as KAACH, Paradise Institute and Abeer 2. Throughout the program, activities range between learning how to perform first aid at the Kuwait Red Crescent Society as well as providing support services to the elderly.

On this occasion, Moataz Al-Rafi, AUB's Senior Deputy CEO, Banking Group, said, "We are delighted with the new partnership agreement between the Bank and LoYAC. This new tie up will result in a wide range of diversified activities in the near future, to further help in achieving our objectives in supporting Kuwaiti society through mean-

ingful partnerships between financial institutions and a promising younger generation."

Al Rafi confirmed that AUB has spared no effort to intensify its participation in the various initiatives that are in the interest of society. He promised more activities and initiatives that reflect the Bank's strategic plan for social responsibility as a financial institution.

Moreover, Fetouh Al-Dalali, LoYAC Kuwait board member said, "We are proud of our new partnership with Ahli United Bank, and excited about the team's overall positive spirit. The Bank is keen to support the youth and drive positive change, with an objective to spread positive values through a wide range of programs that enable the younger generation capable to achieve development."

LoYAC is a nonprofit organization and was established in 2002 as a positive initiative. The founding members of LoYAC recognized that youth can be led towards peace by providing them with opportunities for personal growth; experience the joy of service and developing their professional skills to qualify and enable them to join the workforce.

KUWAITI FEMALE EXPLORER TO PARTICIPATE IN NORTH, SOUTH POLES EXPEDITIONS

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti explorer Lamees Najim was chosen to take part in expeditions to explore the North and South Poles alongside fellow British explorer Felicity Aston. The trip, set for next April, will include 12 female explorers from different countries, aiming to share their experi-

ences and cultures, Najim said yesterday. The expedition will showcase the strong will of Kuwaiti and Arab women to face challenges and survive in extreme conditions, she noted. She said that Aston has over 20 years of experience in leading expedition in the poles, adding that

the trip participants will undergo a training course in Iceland on skating, facing extreme low temperatures and other natural threats. The trip will also include explorers from the UK, Slovenia, Sweden, Germany, France, Cyprus, Jordan, Oman, Saudi, Qatar, and the UAE. — KUNA



Kuwaiti explorer Lamees Najim





KUWAIT: Naser Al-Thaidi General Manager of 'Add-Effect' and Ahmed Al-Manfouhi General Manager of Kuwait Municipality sign the tender contract.

'ADD-EFFECT' SIGNS ROAD ADVERTISING CONTRACT WITH KUWAIT MUNICIPALITY

KUWAIT: 'Add-Effect Advertising' Company announced for its winning the tender of license and exploit ad billboards at Hawally governorate, such tender is considered the most recent invited for by Kuwait Municipality, being the largest governorate based on value, so it is the most important ad market in Kuwait, due to its distinctive location, population and commercial diversity.

On this occasion, Naser Al-Thaidi General Manager of 'Add-Effect' after signing tender contract with Ahmed Al-Manfouhi General Manager of Kuwait Municipality, told that total value of the tender has reached KD 8.8 million, the contract extends for three years as of expected date of commencement i.e. the beginning of 2017, knowingly that the said contract includes all roads billboards (Mega, Unipole, Mupi, TV screens).

"By signing the new contract 'Add-Effect' became the biggest operator for billboards in State of Kuwait, that represents 80 percent of total billboards spread all over Kuwait' Thaidi added. As 'Add-Effect' runs motorway billboards, in addition to Farwaniya, Jahra and Hawally governorates bill-

boards, along with it is the exclusive agent for billboards of Kuwait airport," Thaidi continued

'Add-Effect' success during previous years is thanks to almighty God then thanks to its distinguished relations with its clients, built during last five years through the distinctive Marketing and Advertisement teamwork at the Company. Such relationship enabled the company from building two sides trust with clients and advertisers," Thaidi confirmed.

Thaidi further indicated that 'Add-Effect' continues in developing its investments, works in roads billboards industry along with other advertisements means, the company seeks to develop this industry, its means to become in its shipshape, give the esthetic image of advertisement, in a way to achieve advertising effect aimed by advertisers either they are social or commercials by State ministries and authorities, commercial corporations and establishments, private sector bodies. Thaidi expressed his hope that such advertisement means would assist advertisers in achieving their goals, deliver their ad message to all members of the society.

'ROOTS AND LEAVES' DOCUMENTARY SCREENED AT AL-BABTAIN LIBRARY

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Al-Babtain Central Library for Arabic Poetry screened a documentary titled "Roots and Leaves" on Sunday under the auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. Al-Babtain Foundation produced the documentary as part of the national activities celebrating Kuwait as the 2016 Islamic Cultural Capital.

On the sidelines of the event, Sheikh Salman affirmed Kuwait's interest in the political leadership of culture and its role in supporting the march of civilization. The minister noted that the documentary showed the importance of Arab and Islamic cultures that are full of values. He praised the great work of the people of Kuwait in supporting social, humanitarian and charitable work in the education and health fields. He also praised the role of Al-Babtain Foundation in spreading the Arabic language and Islamic values through a dialogue of civilizations and seats the foundation grants at universities.

Chairman of Al-Babtain Foundation, poet Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain, said the documentary chronicles the history of Islamic culture in Kuwait. He added that Kuwait was chosen as the Islamic Cultural Capital for 2016 because of its efforts in the fields of education, science, literature and arts, and its remarkable impact on the development of Islamic culture.

Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation also



Poet Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain (left) honors an official (center) as Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah looks on.

launched a special book on this occasion called "Lights of Islam in Arabic Poetry in Kuwait". The book has more than 300 poems for Islamic occasions such as the Prophet's (PBUH) birthday, penned by 66 Kuwaiti poets.

The documentary "Roots and Leaves" shows the emergence of Kuwait and the daily life of the community, highlighting the first generation of Kuwaiti men and the gen-

erations that contributed to its development, and the growth of culture and civilization. A number of iconic national figures who played a key role at the cultural level were honored. They include Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Reshaid, Sheikh Yousef bin Isaa Al-Qinaee, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri, Sheikh Abdulrahman Al-Sumait and Sheikh Abdulmohsen Ibrahim Al-Babtain.



KUWAIT: Poet Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain, Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti businessman Jawad Bukhamseen and other guests attend the screening. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



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Crime

Report

TEEN ESCAPES FROM KIDNAPPERS

KUWAIT: A 17-year-old female citizen reported that four young men abducted her in the southern chalets area, but she managed to escape and hide from them in a deserted chalet. The girl added that the four kidnappers searched the area but could not locate her. The girl provided detectives with the alleged kidnappers' description.

Drug dealer

Following up the arrest of a popular actor and producer for drug trafficking, the suspect told detectives that he had ordered a new shipment one week before he was arrested, and it was due to arrive that day. Accordingly, detectives received the parcel that included drugs mailed to him by a Briton. The suspect also confessed that he had recruited seven juveniles to distribute the drugs for him in return for a sum of money and a bonus of one packet for each ten they manage to sell.

Harasser caught

A citizen was arrested for harassing a female citizen and insisting on giving her his mobile phone number and taking her outside a Fintas restaurant, despite her protests. The girl finally took his number and reported the matter to the police.

Fight

Two citizens were arrested for fighting in Salmiya, said security sources, noting that the two men used sharp metal objects during the fight. The suspects were referred to the proper authorities for further action.

Domestic violence

A female citizen called the police reporting that her husband beat her and threw her out of their house in Fintas. A case was filed and the husband is being summoned for further investigations.

Thief identified

Following up the robbery at a money exchange bureau in Fahaheel, detectives managed to identify the culprit through surveillance cameras and arrested him. The suspect, a 30-year-old Syrian, confessed to planning the robbery a month before with hopes that he would get away with a fortune.

Fugitive caught

An Asian wanted for a four-year prison sentence was arrested in Abu Halifa. Security sources said that on seeing a police patrol, the suspect ran and hid inside a garbage dumpster for a while before policemen found him. —Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa



Al-Anbaa

News

in brief

OIL SECTOR HALTS APPOINTMENTS

KUWAIT: Oil companies received verbal orders to stop appointments, promotions and transfers until further notice. This is a standard protocol followed whenever the parliament is dissolved or the cabinet resigns to insure that no violations are committed and maintain transparency and impartiality, sources said. Current vacant posts are not expected to be filled until a new parliament is elected, the sources added. —Al-Rai

Fertilizer plants closed

KUWAIT: The Petrochemical Industries Company informed its staff that fertilizers' plants will be closed between December 2017 and March 2018. A total of 360 Kuwaiti employees working at those plants will be transferred to other sectors, while 580 contracted expatriate workers are likely to be assigned to other duties such as operating the polypropylene and aromatics plants, the company said in a letter to employees. —Al-Anbaa

Production quotas

KUWAIT: Kuwait's OPEC Governor Nawal Al-Fuzai confirmed that Kuwait is committed to follow the production quotas to be specified during the organization's meeting in Vienna next November, indicating that Kuwait's currently produces 2,970 million barrels of crude a day. She said that oil prices are likely to be around \$50 per barrel until the end of the year, while the Kuwaiti crude's price is expected to be around \$45 per barrel. —Al-Anbaa

Health insurance

KUWAIT: A retired woman covered by a health insurance program approved this year for retired citizens gave birth to a healthy baby at a local private hospital, the first case of its kind since the program went into effect last month, Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi announced. A total of 21,000 citizens received treatment at private clinics through the 'Afiya' program, Obaidi said, adding that 52,475 retired Kuwaitis, or nearly 50 percent of eligible citizens have applied to receive their insurance cards. —Al-Anbaa

Municipal Council

KUWAIT: The Municipal Council is expected to lose some members who intend to run for parliament, and by-elections to fill their vacant seats are likely to take place following the National Assembly elections. The law stipulates that a Municipal Council member is considered resigned when he or she runs for parliament. At least seven members are expected to contest for parliamentary elections including Abdullah Al-Kandari, Meshal Al-Juwaisri, Mane Al-Ajmi, Yousuf Al-Ghareeb, Nayef Al-Sour, Dr Meshari Al-Mutawtah and Ahmad Al-Bughaili. —Al-Qabas



Al-Anbaa

RUBEI, BIN TAFLA AND HYPOCRITES

By Saad Al-Motesh

I still remember when the late Dr Ahmed Al-Rubei and Dr Saad bin Tafla used to argue with someone from the deposed Iraqi regime members, who demanded turning over a new leaf. Both of them stressed that all the problems Kuwait suffered were because of the Iraqi aggression, while hypocrites supporting that regime demanded to let bygones be bygones.

Both the true Kuwaitis were right in referring all regional sufferings to the Iraqi invasion, while those on the other side refused going back to the origin of the problem because they knew they were wrong and had no logical justifications to the invasion.

I recalled that maneuver while observing the remarks by some people expressing dissatisfaction with increasing fuel prices. I do agree with them, but why blame others instead of blaming those who were actually behind such an increase? It seems as if we are acquitting the real doers who authorized the

government to do so by powers of law.

Lawmakers in the 1995 parliament were the ones who fully authorized the government to review petroleum derivatives whenever it wished to do so. So, why don't those trying to blame things on others admit it and blame it on the real doers? It was the very same parliament that passed a law on debts worth KD 6 billion without even blinking. Have you forgotten all this?!

In the aftermath of the liberation, Kuwait adopted a general motto that goes 'Let Us Not Forget!' but it seems that we have already forgotten. Today, we need to revive that motto and will never forget those who voted for authorizing the government to increase fuel prices, though Saddam's supporters pretend they have. We will never forget the parliament that was described as 'The master of its own decisions' - decisions that we would have been far much better off without! —Translated by Kuwait Times



KUWAIT: SACGC General Director Dr Omar Al-Bannai speaks at the event.



Jahra Governor Lieutenant General Fahad Al-Amir speaks.

SABAH AL-AHMAD CENTER OPENS APPLIED EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

KUWAIT: The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC), a Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences institutions, hosted a ceremony yesterday to inaugurate applied education

workshops (Fab Lab). Jahra Governor Lieutenant General Fahad Al-Amir and other state officials attended the event. SACGC General Director Dr Omar Al-Bannai said in a speech that Fab Lab is

the first workshop of its kind that gives young people an opportunity to exchange ideas and utilize their time in a positive way. Furthermore, he spoke about the center's mathematics club "which

aims to turn mathematics from being an analytical subject to a tangible one using modern scientific tools and advanced educational skills. Meanwhile, Lt Gen Amir commended the cen-

ter's achievements, which he said were crowned with opening classrooms for gifted students at public schools in Jahra, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.





Woman screams in pain during caning in Indonesia's Aceh

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AUSTRIA TO TEAR DOWN HITLER BIRTH HOUSE

GOVT WANTS TO PREVENT BUILDING FROM BECOMING NEO-NAZI SHRINE

VIENNA: The house in Austria where Adolf Hitler was born is to be torn down to stop it from becoming a neo-Nazi shrine, the government said yesterday, after years of bitter legal wrangling with the current owner. "The Hitler house will be torn down. The foundations can remain but a new building will be erected. It will be used by either a charity or the local authorities," Interior Minister Wolfgang Sobotka told Austrian newspaper Die Presse. "In any case, there shall be no further connection with Adolf Hitler because otherwise the myth of the birth house will be upheld."

He said the decision was based on the recommendations of a 13-member expert committee tasked with deciding what to do with the controversial building in the quaint northern town of Braunau am Inn. The government hopes this will bring to an end a difficult chapter regarding the large yellow corner house where Hitler was born on April 20, 1889. Although he only spent the first few weeks of his life at Number 15 Salzburger Vorstadt Street, the address has become a pilgrimage site for Nazi sympathizers from around the world who pose in front of the three-storey building with the Hitler salute.

Stigma 'Not Deserved'

The property has been empty since 2011 when the government became embroiled in a dispute with owner and local resident Gerlinde Pommer. Her family has owned the 800-sq-m building for more than a century, except for a brief period during the Nazi regime when Hitler's private secretary Martin Bormann bought the building for four times its value in 1938. After the war, the house was returned to the Pommers in the 1950s. In 1972, the Austrian government signed a lease with Gerlinde Pommer in 1972 and turned the premises into a center for

people with disabilities.

But the arrangement came to an abrupt end five years ago when Pommer unexpectedly refused to grant permission for much-needed renovation works. The famously elusive owner also rejected a purchase offer made by the increasingly exasperated interior ministry. In July, the government approved a legislation amendment to seize the house from Pommer who continues to net Á4,800 (around \$5,300) in rent every month.

The interior ministry said yesterday that the expropriation bill would be debated in parliament this week and could enter into force by the end of the year. "There is now a clear perspective regarding the future of the building under the ownership of the Austrian republic," ministry spokesman Karl-Heinz Grundboeck told AFP. The issue has sparked heated debate among Braunau's 17,000 residents. Some wanted it to become a refugee centre, others a museum dedicated to Austria's liberation from Nazi rule.

A number of cultural organizations previously opposed the building's demolition because it is part of the historic city center and therefore under heritage protection. Every year on Hitler's birthday, anti-fascist protesters organize a rally outside the building at 15 Salzburger Vorstadt Street, next to a memorial stone reading: "For Peace, Freedom and Democracy. Never Again Fascism, Millions of Dead Warn."

But locals resent the attention, dismayed that their pastel-colored town is known for being the cradle of one of the world's most reviled political figures, rather than for its Gothic architecture or pretty river. "The people here don't deserve this stigma," district commissioner Georg Wojak told AFP in an interview last year. "Braunau's only crime was that Hitler was born here." — AFP



BRAUNAU AM INN, Austria: This Sept 27, 2012 file picture shows an exterior view of Adolf Hitler's birth house. — AP



NEW YORK: Jim Kowalczyk plays with Jimbo, a 1500-pound Kodiak bear, in this photo at the Orphaned Wildlife Center in Otisville, NY. — AP

MAN GRABS ATTENTION FOR HUGGING BEARS

OTISVILLE: Bear hugs are nothing. Jim Kowalczyk hugs bears. Kowalczyk lies on the ground as his 1,500-pound bear buddy, Jimbo, rests a heavy paw on his waist. He feeds Jimbo a marshmallow from his mouth and laughs as a big bear tongue slobbers on his ear. If that sounds suicidal, consider that Kowalczyk and his wife, Susan, have cared for Jimbo for almost 23 years, since the Kodiak bear first came to the couple's upstate New York haven for injured or unwanted animals as a bottle-feeding cub. "He'll play with you all day if you have the time," Kowalczyk says after a recent horseplay session, adding that it's fortunate the bear doesn't throw his weight around casually. "If he lays on you, you've got a problem."

Jimbo is among the 11 bears living at the couple's nonprofit Orphaned Wildlife Center 60 miles northwest of New York City. One of them, a black bear named Frankie, was born in the wild and found his way here in 2012 after being hit by a car. The rest of the bears here were born in captivity, eight of them Syrian brown bears or mixes that came from a breeding program. Jimbo came from a West Coast game farm with an injured leg. There are plenty of wildlife rehabilitators and other centers that care for bears. But Kowalczyk has grabbed attention for his hands-on approach.

One Facebook video of him playing with Jimbo has received more than 16 million views. Kowalczyk describes it as if it was something as natural as petting your dog. The bears are like his children, he says, and they have never injured him. "There's no false pretenses like there are with

people and stuff," Kowalczyk says. "What you see is what you get." The couple has been rehabilitating squirrels, ducks, deer, mink and other animals together since the early 1990s. The main goal is to release animals, but the bears here cannot be released because of injuries or because they are too accustomed to captivity.

Bears are in 57-year-old Susan Kowalczyk's bloodline. Her father, Albert Rix, was a well-known circus veteran from Germany who raised Syrian brown bears. Jim, 60, is a retired corrections officer. The Kowalczyks funded the venture out of their own pockets until creating the nonprofit last year, which allows them to take donations. It's still just them, plus director Kerry Clair, who handles administrative duties. The videos help with exposure. But experts are pretty clear: Do not get up close with bears, like Kowalczyk does.

Even with captive bears, there's a chance their instincts will take over, says Matt Merchant, senior wildlife biologist with New York's Department of Environmental Conservation. Plus, there are inherent dangers of rolling around with an animal that's three-quarters of a ton. "I don't think people get a lot of good information or education from that kind of behavior," Merchant says. "They'd be better off watching a naturalist show off bears in the wild, or just going out and hiking around and seeing them on their own." Sitting on the ground next to Jimbo, Kowalczyk shrugs at the thought of personal danger from his bear buddies. "They're content, they're happy. If they weren't," Kowalczyk pauses as Jimbo licks him, "you would know it." — AP

25 INMATES KILLED IN BRAZIL PRISON CLASH

SAO PAULO: At least 25 inmates died Sunday in clashes between two rival factions in a prison in far northern Brazil, the latest episode of violence shaking the country's underfunded and overcrowded prison system. Seven of the dead were beheaded and six burned to death in fighting at a prison in Boa Vista, the capital of Roraima state, the news site G1 reported, citing local police. The bloodshed began when inmates of one wing of the Agrícola de Monte Cristo prison broke into another wing.

Prisoners were armed with knives and wooden clubs, an inmate's wife who was in the prison when the riot broke out told G1. Roraima state Secretary of Justice Uziel Castro said that the fight erupted during visiting hours, and some 100 relatives of inmates were briefly held hostage. The rioters demanded that a judge come to hear their demands. Instead, Special Operations Police stormed the prison, released the hostages and regained control of the site by sundown. "All the hostages were released," Castro said,

adding that most of them were women. The prison, some 3,400 kilometers (2,100 miles) northwest of Rio de Janeiro, is in a state that borders Venezuela and Guyana.

Violent, overcrowded

Joana Moura, head of the union of Roraima penal workers, told the Folha de Boa Vista newspaper that the incident "is a reflection of the lack of interest from the state government" towards the prison system. According to Moura, "there is no security equipment, there are not enough per-

sonnel for the tasks, and the agents are working beyond their limits." Officials from the coroner's office were in the prison to take out the bodies, the newspaper reported. Fights and riots are frequent throughout Brazil's overcrowded prison system. As of the end of 2014, there were 622,000 people imprisoned in Brazil, according to a Ministry of Justice report, which added that most of the prisoners are black males. Brazil has the world's fourth largest prison population, the report said, after the United States, China and Russia.

Human Rights groups have long complained about the deplorable conditions in Brazilian prisons.

In late May, 14 inmates died in prisons in the northeastern state of Ceara, which led the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to issue a statement expressing their concern over prison violence and urged structural reforms. In a separate incident in September, some 200 inmates rioted and escaped from the overpopulated Jardimopolis prison in Sao Paulo state. —AFP

JUSTIN TRUDEAU, SOPHIE AND THE KIDS: CANADA'S POLITICAL FAMILY

MONTREAL: Justin Trudeau hasn't been alone as his star rises in the political world—whether visiting China's Great Wall, dining at the White House or marching in Toronto's gay pride parade, he's often joined by his family who have helped cement his reputation as a down-to-earth everyman. Upon taking office one year ago, the prime minister set the tone: Although he's Canada's leader, he's also a father with a young family. Wife Sophie, nine-year-old Xavier, seven-year-old Ella-Grace and two-year-old Hadrien have done their part to bolster dad's political career.

The children seemed unaffected by the glare of the media at Trudeau's swearing-in, while trick-or-treating on Halloween, or during foreign trips on government business. "Justin explored the world when he was young," when his father Pierre Trudeau was prime minister and similarly grew up in the limelight, said Alex Marland, a politics professor at Memorial University in Newfoundland. His carefree "flower child" mother and siblings were also used to bolster the prime minister's image, Marland said, shown at the elder Trudeau's side when he greeted Queen Elizabeth II or Fidel Castro.

"Justin Trudeau grew up with the media, and his wife (a former television host) has obviously a lot of experience with the media too," Marland said. Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau has a natural elegance and has helped promote Canadian fashions by wearing pieces by local designers. Days after the Liberals' election win, the couple were featured on the cover of Vogue magazine gazing deeply and affectionately into each other's eyes. "It's celebrity politics," said Myriam Durocher, a communications researcher at the University of Montreal. The couple and their three children evoke traditional family values, she said.

Please don't call me Madame

PG Forest, director of the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary, says Trudeau has what he calls "the Hollywood factor." "Part of his personal appeal and very high approval rating is his ability to relate to anybody," he added. "It's fascinating." In the spring, the Trudeaus traveled to Washington for a state dinner hosted by US President Barack Obama, which drew not only senior government officials but also stars from Hollywood and American music. Aged 44 and 41, Justin and Sophie embody a new generation in Canadian politics. At a Gay Pride event in Vancouver this summer, Justin pushed Hadrien in a stroller while Xavier and Ella-Grace marched alongside their mother seemingly unfazed by the gaze of the huge crowd around them. "Publicity and politics go hand in hand, and in order to have a public profile you must promote a public image," Durocher said. Trudeau, she says, has nurtured his image as modern leader. She also points out that Trudeau taps into deep emotions with the public, for example, when he stepped down from the plane that brought him to Washington with Hadrien in his arms, or when he and his wife dressed as Star Wars characters to take their children trick-or-treating on Halloween.

Trudeau uses social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram (or WeChat and Weibo during a visit to China) to reach younger generations. He poses willingly with strangers for selfies. His wife is now catching up, having launched Facebook and Instagram accounts only a few days ago. "Today is a first! For the past decade or so, I've resisted getting on social media in every way... It's time," she wrote in her inaugural post. Her Facebook cover photo is a goofy family photo, and she signed her first post "Sophie (please don't call me Madame)." — AFP

NORTH CAROLINA'S GOP LOCAL OFFICE SET ABLAZE

AN ACT OF 'POLITICAL TERRORISM'

HILLSBOROUGH: Authorities are investigating after a local Republican Party office in North Carolina was set on fire in what a state GOP official called an act of "political terrorism." A bottle filled with flammable liquid was thrown through the window of the Orange County Republican Party headquarters overnight, according to a Sunday news release from the town of Hillsborough. The flammable substance that was thrown into the office ignited and damaged the interior before burning out. No one was injured.

In addition to the fire, the news release said an adjacent building was spray-painted with the words: "Nazi Republicans leave town or else." Another business owner discovered the damage Sunday morning. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was working with local investigators. State GOP executive director Dallas Woodhouse said people sometimes work after-hours and he felt lucky no one was there at the time. He said the bottle appeared to have landed on or near the couch where volunteers sometimes take naps. "They are working around the clock. It is a miracle that nobody was killed," he said in an interview, calling the fire an act of "political terrorism."

He said Republican offices around the state were re-examining their security. On Sunday afternoon, the walls of the multi-room office were covered in black char, and a couch against one wall had been burned down to its springs. Shattered glass covered the floor, and melted campaign yard signs showed warped lettering. The graffiti had been covered in paint. The violent act in the key battleground state was condemned by public figures across the political spectrum. Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nomi-



HILLSBOROUGH: A burned couch is shown next to warped campaign signs at the Orange County Republican Headquarters in Hillsborough, NC. — AP

nee for president, said on Twitter that the attack "is horrific and unacceptable. Very grateful that everyone is safe."

Republican nominee Donald Trump blamed the act on Democrats in a Tweet and he also encouraged local Republicans, saying: "With you all the way, will never forget. Now we have to win. Proud of you all!"

At a news conference, Woodhouse urged Republicans to respond peacefully by turning out to vote in November. He said he'd received messages of support from Democrats.

Orange County GOP chairman Daniel Ashley told reporters no one had previously made violent threats against the office several miles from

the town's historic square. Tom Stevens, mayor of the town about 40 miles northwest of Raleigh, said it was fortunate the fire didn't burn the office and other adjacent buildings that are decades old to the ground. Stevens, a Democrat, said the act doesn't represent the character of Orange County, which also includes much of Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina campus. Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by a 3-1 margin in the county that picked President Barack Obama by a lopsided margin in the 2012 election. "I'd like to believe we aspire to respect hearing differing views," Stevens said in an interview. "This is very troubling." — AP



PODGORICA: Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic and leader of ruling Democratic Party of Socialists speaks to his supporters after parliamentary elections in Podgorica yesterday. — AFP

MONTENEGRO RULING PARTY AHEAD IN TENSE ELECTIONS

PODGORICA: Montenegro's veteran premier Milo Djukanovic appeared likely to extend his long term in office yesterday after coming first in elections marred by the arrest of 20 Serbs accused of planning attacks. With virtually all votes counted, Djukanovic's Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) had won more than 40 percent—more than double than that of the main opposition Democratic Front. However, he fell short of an overall majority, meaning he will have to begin long coalition negotiations, sparking fears of political instability in the country of 620,000 people.

Two other parties, Klijuc (Key) and the Democrats of Montenegro, won ten percent each, according to the results of Sunday's vote, which was seen as a choice between closer ties with the West or with long-time ally Russia. Tensions were already running high over Djukanovic's plans to forge closer ties with the EU and NATO and were further inflamed after the dramatic arrest of the 20 Serbs. Authorities said the Serbs—with retired police chief Bratislav Dikic allegedly at the helm—plotted to seize the prime minister and parliament and proclaim victory for the opposition. "We suspect that this criminal group was aiming to arrest the prime minister of

Montenegro," the prosecutor's office said. "The plan was to attack citizens gathered outside parliament, as well as police, during the announcement of the results, and then take control of parliament and proclaim victory for the opposition," it said. The pro-Russian opposition branded the arrests as propaganda, while Serbian Prime Minister Aleksander Vucic said he "personally did not believe" in the plot. "I would like to see and hear serious information that he (Dikic) was planning terrorist acts," Vucic said, according to the Tanjug news agency. Vucic had previously questioned the timing of the alleged plot. "I find it curious that this is happening today, and that's all I'll say... As for the rest, it would be better for me to bite my tongue."

PM under pressure

Djukanovic, 54, is the only Balkan leader to have held onto power since the collapse of Yugoslavia began in the early 1990s, serving several times as prime minister and once as president in the country. But analysts say he is now under pressure, with critics accusing his government of cronyism, corruption and links to organized crime. His win without a majority will likely usher in a lengthy period of negotiation and a "period of instabili-

ty," said political analyst Srdjan Vukadinovic. The results should hand Djukanovic 36 seats in the 81-seat parliament, meaning he will have to court parties representing Croatian, Bosnian and Albanian minorities. Turnout was around 72 percent and international observers were set to reveal their findings about the running of the election later. Barricades have been erected near parliament, apparently to protect the building against any post-election violence. Opposition leader Mandic urged his supporters to stay calm and Interior Minister Goran Danilovic, who belongs to an opposition party, urged voters not to head into the streets to celebrate.

'Russian colony?'

One of the six founding republics of the former Yugoslavia, Montenegro joined a loose union with Serbia after the Yugoslav breakup. This ended in 2006, when the country narrowly voted in favor of independence, and relations with Serbia have been fraught ever since. Montenegro was invited to join NATO in December, and ratification of the deal will be put to the next parliament. But the issue profoundly divides the country, prompting reminders of the bonds with Russia and the alliance's 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia. — AFP

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NOTORIOUS WARLORD KILLED IN EASTERN UKRAINE



DONETSK: In this file photo, Donetsk People's Republic platoon commander Arsen Pavlov, also known as Motorola, rides a bike at a checkpoint blocking the major highway which links Kharkiv, outside Sloviansk, eastern Ukraine. Separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine say a notorious warlord has been killed in a bombing in the rebel stronghold of Donetsk. — AP

DONETSK: Ukraine's pro-Russian rebels announced three days of mourning yesterday after notorious rebel commander Arsen Pavlov, known as "Motorola", was killed in a lift bombing. The 33-year-old Russian died late on Sunday when a homemade device exploded in the lift at the entrance to his block of flats in the de facto rebel capital Donetsk, separatist authorities said. It was the latest in a string of assassinations of insurgent commanders, with rebel chief Alexander Zakharchenko blaming it on Kiev, describing it as a declaration of "war" by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. But other separatists said the bombing may have been part of an internal power struggle among the rebels, who Kiev and the West say are directed by Russia.

"Either it's an operation staged by the Ukrainian services or it was one of us," said a fighter in the Sparta battalion which had been led by Pavlov. Ukrainian

military spokesman Andriy Lysenko said yesterday that Pavlov's death meant he had escaped "inevitable punishment in the form of life imprisonment." "He simply got lucky," Lysenko said. An army veteran from Russia's Komi region, Pavlov, who fought in the second Chechen war-joined the fighting that broke out in east Ukraine in April 2014 as a volunteer, rising to prominence after appearing on Russian TV broadcasts.

Flowers, glowing tributes

In a 2015 interview, he famously boasted of having shot 15 Ukrainian prisoners of war, prompting calls for an investigation by Amnesty International. And in June this year, he reportedly survived another assassination attempt. His death was widely reported by Russian state media, which paid glowing tribute to him. Yesterday morning, the crime scene was ringed by armed rebel fighters

who refused to let reporters through, saying investigators were at work. Several pensioners came to lay flowers outside the block of flats. Three people who witnessed the explosion told AFP Pavlov's bodyguard was also killed, although this has not been confirmed by rebel officials. Fighting in east Ukraine—which has claimed nearly 10,000 lives—has dragged on despite a peace plan brokered by Germany and France, which has run around amid acrimony between Russia and Ukraine. Kiev yesterday said one soldier was killed and seven injured in the latest clashes. Pavlov is the latest of rebel leader to be killed in the war-torn region controlled by heavily-armed militias. Earlier attacks have seen pro-Russian warlords blown up by car bombs and anti-tank missiles in spectacular mob-style hits that the rebel leadership blamed on Kiev but which many put down to separatist power struggles. — AFP

60 KILLED AS SOUTH SUDAN WAR RAGES

A WORRYING SURGE OF VIOLENCE IN WORLD'S YOUNGEST NATION

MALAKAL: At least 56 rebels and four government troops were killed in heavy weekend clashes in northeastern South Sudan, in a worrying surge of violence in the world's youngest nation. Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) spokesman Brigadier General Lul Ruai Koang said Monday that rebels aligned with former vice president Riek Machar attacked government troops near the country's second largest city of Malakal.

Violence between Machar's supporters and

Saturday.

"On our side we lost four SPLA fighters and twenty were wounded." Forces loyal to Kiir invited journalists to the region on Sunday to show they were in control of the area, and an AFP photographer reported seeing up to 40 bodies in the places he could access. However Major Dickson Gatluak with the rebel SPLA In Opposition (SPLA-IO) insisted his forces were in control of the two towns as well as the northern part of Upper Nile state. "What we are trying to

AFP photographer reported it was calm on Sunday. "It is just a matter of time (before) our forces will take Malakal ... we have realized that there is no political settlement in Juba, there is not any political space in Juba so we have to organize ourselves because the government has failed," he said.

'On the edge of a precipice'

South Sudan, which gained independence in July 2011, descended into war just two and a half years later when Kiir in December 2013 accused Machar—who he had sacked as his deputy-of plotting a coup. Kiir is a member of the Dinka tribe, while Machar is a Nuer, and fighting has split the country along ethnic lines. Numerous attempts to shore up a fragile 2015 truce have failed, and in a major setback to peace efforts, fierce clashes erupted in Juba on July 8 this year between Kiir's forces and those loyal to Machar.

The international community has expressed deep concern over a spread in violence since the July clashes, which pushed the number of refugees from the war-scarred nation past the one-million mark, according to the UNHCR. In a further blow to peace hopes, Machar last month urged "a popular armed resistance" against his rival's government. Machar, who fled to Khartoum after the July fighting, last week left for South Africa for medical tests. An influential group of South Sudanese politicians known as the "former detainees" after their arrest when war broke out in 2013, warned last week that "the country is on the edge of a precipice."

And in a sign of growing frustration in the region with the warring leaders of South Sudan, Kenyan lawmakers last week threatened sanctions. Defense and Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, Ndung'u Gethenji, said lawmakers were mulling sanctions "against those who are perpetuating war-like activities, genocide and killing (so that they) may no longer enjoy having their assets in our country, their children studying in our schools in relative comfort in peace and security while they continue to destroy the lives of their people back in their own country. "Kenya can no longer afford to have another failed state on its border," he said.— AFP



MALAKAL: Soldiers of the Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA) patrol near to dead bodies of rebel soldiers in Lelo, outside Malakal, northern South Sudan. — AFP

troops loyal to his bitter political foe President Salva Kiir, has blighted the nation for much of its hard-won independence from Sudan, achieved in 2011. "The rebels of Riek Machar attacked us in two places of our defense, that is Wajwok and Lelo, and we heavily impacted on them. The dead bodies of the rebels confirmed after count was 56," the spokesman said, adding that the clashes began Friday evening and ended on

do now is, our forces are trying our level best to try to march to Malakal town. So our forces are not yet displaced from those areas and this is not true," he said.

Malakal is the closest town to the oil fields in the Upper Nile region which bring in government's biggest revenue, and has changed hands several times since fighting broke out in 2013. Gatluak said fighting was ongoing, although the



ABS, YEMEN: An elderly man walks next to his donkey at a camp for internally displaced people near the town of Abs, located on Yemen's western coastal plain below towering desert mountains. — AP

TOWN DESTROYED, DISPLACED YEMENIS LANGUISH IN A FIELD

ABS, Yemen: The cornfield is dotted with tents, mud-brick shelters and huts made of sticks and plastic sheets, home to around 900 Yemenis who fled the front-lines of their country's war. Buried in the field's soil are the bodies of loved ones they carried with them as they escaped. Around 30 miles to the north near the border with Saudi Arabia, their hometown Haradh lies emptied of people and largely destroyed by fighting as Yemeni rebels and Saudi forces bombard each other with rockets and missiles across the frontier.

"I am still in disbelief," said Moussa Al-Shibani, a farmer now living in the cornfield, known as Al-Makhzan camp. "I was stable in my land, my town, among my family. I never thought to leave. My home is a piece of me." Al-Makhzan camp, located on Yemen's western coastal plain below towering desert mountains, is just one small corner of misery in the humanitarian crisis that has overwhelmed this country. More than 3 million of the country's 26 million people have been driven from their homes; entire towns have been wiped out under airstrikes; other cities have come under crippling sieges by Houthi forces. Hunger has become widespread.

The war began when the Shiite rebels known as Houthis based in the north seized the capital Sanaa. In March 2015, Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies launched a campaign of airstrikes against the rebels. More than 4,000 civilians have been killed in airstrikes or in ground fighting between the rebels and fighters backing the internationally recognized president. Haradh had once been relatively prosperous, benefiting from cross-border trade and smuggling.

Some 11,500 families

Now the main street is lined with leveled buildings, according to footage aired on Yemeni TV. Most residents - some 11,500 families - fled in the summer of 2015, scattering to various nearby areas. Some came to the field outside the town of Abs, and its owner let them set up shacks, which has since grown into Al-Makhzan camp. Leila, a grandmother with a traditional tattoo on

her forehead, said her home was flattened in an airstrike. As her family fled, they carried with them the bodies of two of her children and a friend killed in the strike.

They are now buried in the field. "We're worth nothing, not even the palm of a hand," she said, using a local expression that means a tiny amount. In Al-Makhzan, barefoot children roam the field. The men are jobless. There are no medical facilities. The closest hospital was in Abs, a half-hour drive away. Few could afford the car fare for that. Then in August an airstrike destroyed the Abs hospital, so now the nearest medical facility is even farther, three hours away. Several elderly people over 80 years bedridden in their shacks said they are just waiting to die, too weak to seek help for ailments.

Every three months, aid from UN agencies arrives. The residents need everything but most of all, food, said Al-Shibani, who now acts as an aid coordinator. Many are living on just bread and tea. Al-Shibani left the Haradh area with his and his brothers' families after an airstrike hit a gas station next to his house. He later returned to take care of his sheep and a plot of land where he grew vegetables. He found the whole area deserted, his land littered with munitions and cluster bombs. "I was the only one left," he said. "There is nothing but a battlefield." Rebel fighters told him it was better for him to leave.

Motta Ali Arafat built a mud-brick shelter with her own hands in Al-Makhzan for her family - her parents, husband and three children. Her brother lives nearby in a shack with his family. Now Arafat is four months pregnant with another child. "I don't want children anymore ... not at a time of war," she said. Her kids became terrified and unable to sleep when warplanes fly overhead. Yahia Gaber's four daughters have suffered psychological trauma from the bombings. His daughter Beshayer, nearly 15, bites people, tears her hair and slaps her own face. Doctors told them there's nothing that could be done, Gaber said, adding his own explanation: "They have been struck by devils." — AP

MITTERRAND MISTRESS BLAMES HER SILENCE ON SUBMISSIVE CHILDHOOD

PARIS: Former French president Francois Mitterrand's mistress and mother of the daughter he kept hidden for 20 years blamed her "submissive" upbringing for agreeing to "accept the unacceptable," in an interview broadcast yesterday. Anne Pingeot told France Culture radio that growing up in a conservative Catholic household in southwest France she was taught that "a woman should be submissive and have no intellectual life." "My family was one or two generations behind the times. This was the countryside, it was very reactionary, very right-wing... Farmers in the area were still harvesting with scythes."

The great love of Mitterrand's life, who last week published the 1,218 love letters she received from him over the course of their passionate 33-year affair, said it took the Socialist leader to "help me advance in another direction." "At the same time that submissive side led me to accept the unacceptable," the 73-year-old former museum director said. Pingeot was just 14 when her father, a car firm executive, brought Mitterrand home after a round of golf in Hossegor, a seaside resort in southwest France. Mitterrand, who was married to Danielle and had two children, was just a year younger than her father. But he and Pingeot were instantly smitten. "He left an indelible impression," she said.

Six years later they began an affair that continued throughout his 1981-1985 presidency until his death of prostate cancer in 1996. Mitterrand's intensely intimate, beautifully written letters to his lovers were published last week under the title "Lettres a Anne (Letters to Anne), 1962-1995." The intensely private Pingeot said she agreed to make the letters public to ensure they were not published "in the wrong way." "I don't know if I did the right thing," she said of the book, which has catapulted her back into the spotlight, more than 20 years after Mitterrand's death.

Silent heroine

Mitterrand's affair with Pingeot was an open

secret among reporters who covered his presidency, bound by an unwritten French code of respect for the private lives of public figures. The public was, however, oblivious to his double life as head of state and a man mad about a woman and a child with whom he spent much of his free time and holidays.

It was not until late 1994, a few months before he left office, that the existence of Mazarine was revealed in a picture on the front

cover of Paris Match magazine, on the eve of her 20th birthday. A little over a year later, Mazarine and her mother were among the mourners at Mitterrand's funeral, alongside Danielle. Mazarine Pingeot, now 41 and a professor of philosophy, broke her silence on her childhood in 2010 with a book "Bouche Cousue" (which translates as "My Lips Are Sealed"). In the book she described her mother as "the heroine of a film that no one will ever see." — AFP



PARIS: This file photo shows late French President Francois Mitterrand (3rd-left), standing beside Valery Giscard d'Estaing (left) and Françoise Cachin (right) as they listen to chief curator at the Musee D'Orsay Anne Pingeot (in Red) during the inauguration of the museum in Paris. The world has long known that Francois Mitterrand had a 33-year affair that produced his daughter Mazarine, but only now can the fervor of the love between the then French president and his mistress be revealed. — AFP

RWANDA LAST KING, KIGELI V DIES AT 80

KIGALI: The last king of Rwanda, Kigeli V, who ruled the east African nation for less than a year before being forced into exile, finally settling in the United States, died early Sunday according to his official website. He was 80. Born Jean-Baptiste Ndahindurwa, King Kigeli came to power in 1959 and was forced to leave the country the following year after clashing with the Belgian colonial power. In 1961, the monarchy was abolished. The king began a life of exile in east Africa, including Kenya and Uganda, before leaving for America, where he settled in the suburbs of Washington in 1992.

Details of his death were not immediately known. "It is with a very heavy heart that we announce that His Majesty King Kigeli V Ndahindurwa, the last King of Rwanda, died early this morning," read a statement on his website. "He was a devout and dedicated believer and the last anointed African Roman Catholic king to reign over a full country." Funeral arrangements, and details on the heir to

the throne will be announced at a later date, the statement said. King Kigeli had come to power after succeeding his half-brother Mutara III, who died in unclear circumstances on the eve of the Hutu "social revolution" which sent hundreds of thousands of ethnic Tutsi fleeing.

Most of them did not return home to Rwanda until after the 1994 genocide, which left some 800,000 dead, mostly from that minority. Kigeli V is a Tutsi, but the tradition is that the monarchy represent all Rwandans of all ethnicities. In September 1961, the monarchy was abolished by referendum and Rwanda gained independence the following year. While in the United States, the exiled monarch led the King Kigeli V Foundation to aid Rwandan refugees. A 2013 profile in Washingtonian magazine, found him living in subsidized housing, on food stamps and donations, in Oakton, Virginia, happy to hand out chocolates to neighbors' children. "They call me the King of Africa," Kigeli said of the neighbors, in that report. — AFP

WHO IS THAILAND'S 96-YEAR-OLD ROYAL REGENT?

BANGKOK: A 96-year-old former general has become temporary regent after Thailand's Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, in a surprise move, delayed his own proclamation as king following the death of his beloved father. So who is the regent, Prem Tinsulanonda?

A 96-year-old regent?

That may raise eyebrows outside Thailand but Prem is astonishingly spry, frequently attending royal engagements, delivering speeches and moving around without help. His installation as temporary head of the revered and influential monarchy further cements his status as one of the shrewdest and most powerful players in the Machiavellian game of Thai politics. Born in the southern province of Songkhla in 1920, he stormed up the army ranks during the Cold War and was promoted above his seniors to army chief in 1978. Two years later, he assumed power in what was widely viewed as a silent coup endorsed by the king and queen. His 1980-1988 spell as premier was a rare period of political and economic stability, contrasting with the tumultuous years of coups and counter-coups preceding it. Prem later led the Privy Council of late King Bhumibol Adulyadej who died last Thursday after a 70-year reign-making him the monarch's closest adviser and gatekeeper.

Why is he regent?

Because the law says so. Past dynastic changes often sparked periods of intense instability as competing princes battled for the throne. The 1924 suc-

cession law, and Thailand's constitution, attempted to end that by mandating that until the next king is proclaimed, the Privy Council's head automatically becomes acting regent until a solution is found. Senior junta official Wissanu Krea-ngam assured Thais over the weekend that Prem's elevation to regent was temporary and followed Vajiralongkorn's request to be given time to mourn his father and prepare for the trappings of kingship before being formally proclaimed.

Why does this matter?

Bhumibol was the only king most Thais had known and he was revered as a moral anchor in a country riven by political and class divides. So his death inevitably causes grief and anxiety among millions of subjects. A delay in proclaiming his designated successor doesn't help. The elite acknowledged these concerns on Saturday, when military junta leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha said the crown prince told him Thailand's people should not "be confused or worry about the country's administration or the succession".

How long will this last?

The prince has indicated his desired time to be proclaimed king at the "appropriate" time after mourning, but it remains unclear how long that will take. Prayut has said the proclamation will occur after religious and funeral rites are completed, but he gave no timeframe. The crown prince, who spends much of his time outside the kingdom, has yet to attain his father's widespread popularity.

Impact on Thailand

Both as prime minister in the 1980s and later as head of the Privy Council, Prem cemented the mili-



BANGKOK: This file photo shows Thai General Prem Tinsulanonda during a gala dinner for the Royal Thai Army Day at the Thai Army Club in Bangkok. The surprise decision by Thailand's Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn to delay being officially proclaimed the new king following the death of his beloved father has resulted in a 96-year-old former general becoming the temporary regent. — AFP

tary's self-designated role as protector of the monarchy through his remarkable relationship with Bhumibol. "He was able to make the military into a mechanism for the monarchy but keep the military as a powerful institution in Thai politics," Paul Chambers, an expert on Thailand's military said. Since the end of absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand has seen 12 successful military coups. Prem has instigated or had a hand in five of them, said Chambers. The most recent came in 2014, toppling the democratically elected government of Yingluck Shinawatra, sister of telecoms billionaire and former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra who was himself ousted in a 2006 coup.

Prem-Thaksin relations

They are believed to be bitter foes. Thaksin was loved by Thailand's rural and urban poor, especially in the long-neglected north and northeast, and won resounding election victories. But he was loathed by Bangkok's military and aristocratic elite who saw him as a corrupt populist threatening their power base. Pavin Chachavalponpun, a Thai politics expert at Kyoto University in Japan, said Thaksin became "the number one threat" to the royalist elite and that "Prem helped remove him" in 2006. For the next eight years Thailand was battered by political strife including deadly violence-pitting Shinawatra family supporters against the military-royal elite until the 2014 coup brought Prayut to power. The generals say they acted to restore stability, but critics say the coup was partly a move to ensure the military held control during the royal succession. — AFP

STUDENT WHO FOLLOWED IS LOVER TO SYRIA FACES TRIAL

MOSCOW: Police in bullet-proof vests guard a military court for the terrorism trial of Varvara Karaulova, a slim 20-year-old with braided hair who clutches a page of handwritten notes. Karaulova was studying philosophy at the renowned Moscow State University when she tried to enter Syria last year after falling in love online with an Islamic State fighter. Karaulova's trial on terrorist-related charges is the most high-profile yet of a Russian heading to Syria where Moscow warplanes are bombing in support of ally President Bashar Al-Assad and supporters say authorities are using her to send out a warning. A large number of the foreign fighters with the jihadist IS group in Syria are from Russia, and Moscow claims 2,700 of its nationals and citizens from other ex-Soviet republics have been killed in the anti-IS operation. But most of those from Russia fighting in Syria come from Muslim communities principally in the volatile North Caucasus region.

'I didn't join anything'

As an ethnic Russian woman from a privileged background, Karaulova is a rarity. She is charged with preparing to participate in a "terrorist organization" and if convicted faces up to five years in jail with the verdict expected in a week or two. She is pleading not guilty, arguing she never intended to fight but simply wanted to be with the man she loved. In court she is known as Alexandra Ivanova after changing her name to try to avoid media attention. "I didn't join anything, I'm not a terrorist and absolutely never intended to become one," she said at the opening of the trial on October 5, quoted by Interfax news agency. Her defense lawyer Sergei Badamshin said the justice system is making an example of her, even though "families of terrorists are not punished in our country." "This is undoubtedly a show trial," he said. "Unfortunately, they chose a victim who has nothing to do with IS's terrorist

activities." "Why it was her I can't say."

'Winner in life'

Karaulova grew up in a middle-class family in a leafy area of Moscow and left school with all A grades, Badamshin said. "She's a winner in life." Then Karaulova became interested in Islam and began wearing a headscarf, and on May 27, 2015, she disappeared. Her father reported her missing and traced her to Turkey, where she and a group of other women were caught by border guards as they attempted to cross into Syria. After her return to Russia in a blaze of publicity, investigators initially said she had committed no crime. But almost half a year later, she was detained and charged. She is being held in the notorious Lefortovo jail under tight supervision, her lawyer said. At the trial held in Moscow District Military Court, Karaulova speaks clearly but briefly, and keeps a copy of the Criminal Code on the seat in her glass cage. At one point a witness described her as weighing around 75 kilograms and she flares up: "Did the witness weigh me?" She refuses to answer questions about her religious views, but is now bare-headed and wears colorful dresses, her eyes ringed in dark liner.

First love

She says she got to know a man through a social networking site, who used various names including Vlad, Artur Sokolov and Adam, but whose real name is reportedly Airat Samatov, a Russian citizen, who investigators say is fighting with IS. Her lawyer says Karaulova was going through a period of teenage low self-esteem that made her vulnerable to such tactics. "She's a closed, reserved person... No one knew what was going on inside her, not her parents, not her friends," Badamshin said. For her, it was first love, he says, while raising the possibility that the messages to her were not even all written by the same person, due to stylistic differences. — AFP



MONYWA, Myanmar: Government rescue personnel from the Myanmar Fire Services Department transport a victim's body during a search operation after a ferry capsized on the Chindwin River near Monywa city in Sagaing region. — AFP

32 BODIES FOUND IN MYANMAR FERRY DISASTER; TOLL MOUNTS

A TOTAL OF 154 PEOPLE RESCUED

YANGON: Searchers have recovered 32 bodies after an overloaded ferry sank in central Myanmar and expect to find dozens more dead, officials said yesterday, as workers began raising the boat from the riverbed. A total of 154 people were rescued alive after the ferry sank early Saturday on the Chindwin River, about 72 kilometers north of the city of Monywa. But rescuers have found only bloated corpses floating in the water since then, and fear the toll could reach 100 once they raise the craft.

"So far we have recovered 32 dead bodies," said Sa Willy Frient, director of the local relief and resettlement department who is overseeing the operation. "We are trying to raise the boat using a crane after tying it with strong ropes. After we lift it out, the death toll will be higher." Sa Willy Frient estimated 240-250 people-around 100 more than its capacity-were on the boat, along with heavy cargo.

Survivor Hnin Lei Yee, a 27-year-old school-

teacher, was travelling with her husband and one-year-old daughter to celebrate the Buddhist Thadingyut festival with her family. Her baby was killed in the disaster. She still does not know her husband's fate. "It happened very fast," she told AFP. "The window was open so I had a chance to get out of the boat." "I cannot swim so I had to hold on to a plastic float and finally the rescue boat came to save my life." "In the morning, I heard there was a dead child in the hospital and I went there. I saw my daughter dead," she said, weeping. Some 30 teachers were thought to be among the passengers, along with dozens of students from Monywa university and workers heading home for Thadingyut.

Four arrested

"I am really so sorry," said Sai Khaing Myo Tun, vice president of Myanmar's teachers' federation. "This incident has terrified us very

much." "The teachers often have to use such unsafe transportation, especially when they (come to) get their monthly salary." Four of the boat's staff have been arrested and will face legal action. Authorities are still hunting for one crew member and the ferry's owner.

Local lawmaker Shwin Htay said people were devastated by the scale of the disaster as he called for the boat operators to face justice. "I have never known of a boat sinking where so many people have died in this area," he said. Boat accidents are common in Myanmar. People living along the nation's long coastline and flood-prone river systems rely heavily on often overcrowded ferries for transport. At least 21 people, including nine children, died in April after a boat capsized off the coast of Myanmar's western state of Rakhine. In March last year at least 52 people lost their lives off the west coast when an overloaded ferry sank in rough waters. — AFP



MOSCOW: Moscow State University student Varvara Karaulova sits inside a defendants' cage during a hearing at Moscow's District Military Court. — AFP

BANGLADESH ARRESTS SUSPECT IN SECULAR ACTIVIST MURDERS

DHAKA: Bangladesh police said yesterday they have arrested the main suspect in the murders of a gay activist and a secular blogger who wrote against radical Islam. They say Rashidun Nabi is the main suspect in the murder of 26-year-old law student and blogger Nazimuddin Samad and gay activist Xulhaz Mannan, who were brutally hacked to death in April. Bangladesh has seen a spate of gruesome attacks on secular activists, religious minorities, bloggers, gay rights activists and foreigners, many of whom have been hacked to death with machetes.

Counter-terrorism officers said they detained Nabi at a bus station in the capital Dhaka, alleging he was the ringleader in Samad's killing. "Five people including Rashidun Nabi took part in Samad's killing," said Monirul Islam, head of Dhaka police's counter-terrorism unit. "They all carried sharp weapons and one carried a firearm. They hacked Nazimuddin with the sharp weapons and later shot him

when people started to gather around," he told reporters.

Dhaka police spokesman Masudur Rahman said Nabi was also a suspect in Mannan's murder, and in an attack on publisher Ahmedur Rashid Tutul. A police statement said Nabi was a member of Ansar al-Islam, also known as Ansarullah Bangla Team, which purports to be the Bangladesh branch of Al Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent. Ansar is one of two homegrown extremist outfits accused in the recent wave of murders, and had claimed responsibility for Samad's killing. Nabi's arrest was announced hours after Bangladesh executed a militant leader of the outlawed Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) over a 2005 blast that killed two judges.

The government has blamed JMB for a deadly July 1 attack in an upmarket Dhaka cafe where 22 people, mostly foreigners, were killed by suspected militants. — AFP

SRI LANKA'S PROSECUTOR WICKRAMASINGHE QUILTS

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's top anti-corruption prosecutor resigned yesterday after President Maithripala Sirisena accused her of launching politically-motivated investigations into former military officials, including the brother of his predecessor. Sirisena, who came to power last year promising to end corruption and restore rule of law, took the unusual step of publicly condemning Dilrukshi Wickramasinghe last week over the prosecution of three retired admirals and the former defense secretary.

Yesterday Wickramasinghe resigned as head of the

Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC), commission member Neville Guruge said. Sources close to her said the president's public comments last week prompted her decision. Wickramasinghe, a senior prosecutor from the state Attorney General's department, has launched several high-profile investigations against members of the former regime and the family of former president Mahinda Rajapakse.

There was no immediate comment from Sirisena, who said last week that military commanders

who led the successful campaign to crush separatist Tamil Tiger rebels in 2009 should not be humiliated in such a manner. The president accused Wickramasinghe's CIABOC of working according to a "political agenda" and vowed to take unspecified "stern action" against it and two other anti-corruption bodies, the Financial Crimes Investigations Division (FCID) and the Crime Investigations Division (CID). Analysts said the president's remarks signaled a rift between him and the national unity government led by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, which oversees the FCID and the CID. The two men are

from rival parties, but made common cause to topple former strongman Rajapakse, whose entire family and closest associates face allegations of corruption as well as murder. Members of the former regime are accused of siphoning billions of dollars from the country during Rajapakse's decade in power that ended on January 8, 2015. The new government is yet to deliver on promises to the UN that it will investigate allegations that troops under Rajapakse's command killed at least 40,000 Tamil civilians while battling separatists in the final months of an ethnic war that ended in 2009. — AFP

WOMAN SCREAMS IN PAIN DURING CANING IN INDONESIA

BANDA ACEH: A young woman screamed in pain as she was caned yesterday in front of a jeering crowd in Indonesia's Aceh, the latest person to be punished for breaking the province's strict Islamic laws. Aceh is the only province in the world's most populous Muslim-majority country that imposes sharia law. People can face floggings for a range of offences-from gambling, to drinking alcohol, to gay sex. The woman was among 13 people-seven men and six women aged between 21 and 30 - who were caned Monday at a mosque in the provincial capital Banda Aceh, as a baying crowd cheered the spectacle.

Six couples were found guilty of breaking Islamic laws that ban intimacy, such as touching, hugging and kissing, between unmarried people. A man was caned for a less serious offence described as spending time with a member of the opposite sex in a hidden location in a fashion that could lead to adul-

tery. One 22-year-old woman due to be flogged was given a temporary reprieve as she was pregnant-but Aceh Deputy Mayor Zainal Arifin pledged: "The punishment will be handed down after she gives birth." The official added that he hoped the canings would serve as a deterrent: "We hope there are no more people in Banda Aceh who break the law in future."

More and more people are being caned in Aceh, with a particular increase in recent times in the number of women being flogged. Aceh, on Sumatra Island, began implementing sharia law after being granted special autonomy in 2001, an attempt by the central government in Jakarta to quell a long-running separatist insurgency. Islamic laws have been strengthened since the province struck a peace deal with the central government in 2005. More than 90 percent of Indonesians describe themselves as Muslim, but the vast majority practise a moderate form of the faith. — AFP



BANDA ACEH, Indonesia: A Muslim woman gets caned 23 strokes after being caught in close proximity with her boyfriend in Banda Aceh yesterday. — AFP

JAPANESE PM ABE SENDS OFFERING TO WAR SHRINE

PANEL STUDIES EMPEROR'S POSSIBLE ABDICATION

TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sent a ritual offering to a controversial war shrine yesterday, drawing fire from China which sees it as a painful reminder of Tokyo's warring past. The conservative premier—who has been criticized for what some see as a revisionist take on Japan's wartime record—sent a sacred "masakaki" tree bearing his name to Yasukuni Shrine at the start of a four-day festival. The shrine honors millions of Japanese war dead, but also senior military and political figures convicted of war crimes after World War II.

The site has for decades been a flashpoint for criticism by countries that suffered from Japan's colonialism and aggression in the first half of the 20th century, including China and the two Koreas. More controversial than the shrine is an accompanying museum that paints Japan as a liberator of Asia and a victim of the war. "The Yasukuni Shrine honors class A war criminals of WWII who were directly responsible for the war," said Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, speaking in Beijing. "We oppose this ritual offering and we urge Japan to reflect on its aggressive history and take concrete actions to win back the trust of its Asian neighbors and the international community."

South Korea did not immediately issue an official response. Abe and other nationalists say Yasukuni is merely a place to remember fallen soldiers and compare it with Arlington National Cemetery in the United States. Abe visited in December 2013 to mark his first year in power, a pilgrimage that sparked fury in Beijing and Seoul and earned a diplomatic rebuke from close ally the United States, which said it was "disappointed" by the action. But he has since refrained from going, sending ritual offerings instead. Scores of conservative lawmakers, possibly including cabinet ministers, are expected to go to the shrine to mark the autumn festival today.

Possible abdication

In another development, experts on a government-commissioned panel were set to hold their first meeting yesterday to study how to accommodate Emperor Akihito's apparent abdication wish, in a country where he is not supposed to say anything political. Unlike many European countries where abdication of kings and queens are relatively common, Japan's modern imperial law doesn't allow abdication, and Japan's postwar constitution stipulates the emperor as a mere "symbol" with no political power or say. Allowing Akihito to abdicate



TOKYO: A wooden plaque (left) showing the name of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is seen with a "masakaki" tree that he sent as an offering to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo yesterday. Abe sent the ritual offering to a controversial war shrine at the start of a four-day festival but did not visit, possibly avoiding an angry reaction from China and South Korea. — AFP

would be a major change to the system, and raises a series of legal and logistical questions, ranging from laws subject to change to the emperor's post-abdication role, his title and residence.

The six panel members - five academics and a business organization executive - are to compile a report early next year after interviewing specialists on the constitution, monarchy and history. Akihito, 82, suggested his wish to abdicate in a rare video message to the public in August, citing his age and concern that he may not be able to fulfill his official duties. His message was subtle and the emperor did not use the word "abdication," because saying that openly could have violated his constitutional status.

Current law, set in 1947, largely inherits a 19th-century constitution that banned abdication as a potential risk to political stability. About 80 percent of the general public supports Akihito's abdication, saying he should be allowed to retire and enjoy life while he is still in good health. In addition to receiving foreign dignitaries, Akihito still travels across the country to attend ceremonies and has repeatedly visited

disaster-hit areas to console survivors. The government reportedly wants to allow Akihito's abdication as an exception and enact a special law to avoid dealing with divisive issues such as possible female succession and lack of successors. Akihito suggested in his public message a need to consider how to make the succession process smoother. He recalled the difficulties he faced when his father, Hirohito, died in 1989 while he was largely serving as a substitute. He said he doesn't wish to cling to his title if his responsibilities have to be severely reduced and he has to rely on a regent.

The abdication issue has also renewed concerns about aging and shortage of successors in the 2,000-year-old monarchy, reflecting the overall concern about Japan's declining and rapidly aging population. Akihito and his wife, Michiko, have two sons - Crown Prince Naruhito and his younger brother, Akishino - as first and second in line to the Chrysanthemum throne. The couple has four grandchildren but only one - Akishino's son - is eligible to become emperor under Japan's male-only succession system. — Agencies

DAUGHTER OF FORMER PHILIPPINE DICTATOR CALLS FOR FORGIVENESS

MANILA: The daughter of late Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos called for forgiveness yesterday as she led a rally at the Supreme Court urging it to approve a controversial hero's burial for her father. About 1,000 supporters gathered with Imee Marcos at the court, which may announce today whether it approves President Rodrigo Duterte's order to allow the burial at Manila's National Heroes' Cemetery 27 years after the strongman died. Imee, governor of the family's northern stronghold of Ilocos Norte, cited Pope Francis as she called for human rights victims and other critics of the dictatorship to abandon their campaign against the burial plan.

"To those who are criticizing and who are not allied with us, I hope you set aside your grievances. All of us have anger and bitterness in our hearts but we should set that aside because, as the pope said: 'When we forgive, you will be free and happy,'" Marcos told reporters outside the Supreme Court. However she maintained her family's longtime position that her father, accused of plundering billions of dollars and overseeing widespread human rights abuses during his 21-year rule, was a positive force for the country. "If in our view my father was great, others have many criticisms, but let us no longer debate," she said.

The dictator and his wife Imelda led their family into US exile in 1986 after a military-backed "People Power" revolution toppled him from power. Marcos died in Hawaii three years later. His embalmed body was brought back to the Philippines in 1993 and placed in a glass-topped casket at his northern Philippine home. Presidents since then refused family requests for him to be buried at the heroes' cemetery, even as the Marcos clan enjoyed a remarkable political comeback. Imelda Marcos is a congresswoman and her son, Ferdinand Marcos Jr, remains a powerful politician with presidential ambitions after narrowly losing the election for the vice presidency this year.

Duterte, who was elected in a landslide this year, has close ties to the Marcos family and has pushed for the burial. Opponents of the Marcos regime have insisted this would just let to whitewash his crimes, and filed the petition with the Supreme Court to ban it. One prominent opponent who was detained under the Marcos regime, Satur Ocampo yesterday dismissed Imee Marcos's appeal for forgiveness. "It's unfair that they are asking people to forgive and forget without them making a formal acknowledgement of the crimes of the Marcoses to the people," he said. — AFP

INDONESIA TRACKS DOZENS OF 'MILITANTS FROM SYRIA'

JAKARTA: Dozens of Indonesians who joined Islamic State in Syria have returned home with combat experience and pose a major threat to the world's biggest Muslim-majority nation, the police chief said yesterday. Authorities are closely monitoring about 40 returnees and are concerned they could be linking up with existing networks to equip a new generation of radicals with the skills and equipment required to launch a major attack.

"We are getting in touch with them but they can evade our detection. We believe they are organizing secretly and building interactions with other (radical) networks," police chief Tito Karnavian told Reuters in an interview. About 10 were in custody for questioning and the rest remained free, Karnavian said, adding there was no evidence of an imminent attack. The vast majority of Indonesia's 250 million people practise a moderate form of Islam. Small extremist groups that have periodically mounted attacks against the state and foreigners in the country have been largely disbanded or driven underground.

But the country has seen a recent resurgence in militancy, inspired in part by Islamic State. Authorities believe Islamic State has more than 1,200 followers in Indonesia and nearly 400 Indonesians have left to join the group in Syria. Indonesia suffered its first militant attack in years in

January, when four pro-Islamic State militants launched a gun and bomb attack in the heart of the capital Jakarta. Eight people were killed, including the attackers themselves. Authorities said the assault was poorly planned and executed.

Karnavian also said a worrying new trend was emerging of teens being radicalized online and lured into carrying out small-scale attacks. A 16-year-old in August tried but failed to detonate a homemade bomb in a church in the northern city of Medan. The teen also tried to stab the priest leading the service but was subdued by members of the congregation. Authorities said the teen was obsessed with Islamic State leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi and had researched his ideology online.

"This is a new trend. It's more difficult (to track them) than existing networks...because they are what are called lone wolves that are being radicalized online," Karnavian said, adding police were aware of at least 10 such cases. Under anti-terrorism laws, police can detain suspects for questioning for up to seven days. The government has called for preventive detention and the stripping of known militants of their citizenship if they fight for extremist groups overseas. Revisions to the anti-terrorism bill are pending parliamentary approval. — Reuters

AMNESTY: AUSTRALIA REFUGEE CAMP 'AMOUNTS TO TORTURE'

SYDNEY: Australia's detention of asylum-seekers on a remote Pacific island "amounts to torture" under international law, Amnesty International said yesterday in a report that alleged widespread abuse and an "epidemic of self-harm". Canberra sends asylum-seekers who try to reach the island continent by boat to the Pacific islands of Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus, where they are blocked from being resettled in Australia even if found to be refugees. The Nauru facility—which holds just over 400 men, women and children—has been under scrutiny after allegations of thousands of incidents of abuse and self-harm were leaked to the Guardian Australia in August.

Amnesty's senior director for research Anna Neistat said interviews she conducted with more than 100 people, including asylum-seekers, refugees, and current or former detention centre staff, between July and October "paint a picture of people driven to absolute despair". The rights group's report said there was an "epidemic of self-harm" among those held on Nauru, with nearly all the asylum-seekers interviewed reporting mental health issues that many said started after being transferred to the camp.

Contributing to their feelings of despair were inadequate medical care, exposure of children to abuse, and attacks and threats by some Nauruans outside the centre, it said. Asylum-seekers on Nauru have been free to roam around the tiny nation since last year, no longer forced to remain locked up, but the report alleged that some who ventured outside the camp were attacked

and raped. "Australia's offshore processing regime fits the definition of torture under international law," Amnesty said in a statement, pointing to the refugees' "severe mental anguish" and the use of offshore processing as a deterrent.

Amnesty also accused Australia of operating the camp "behind a fortress of secrecy". Only a handful of journalists and refugee advocates, including Neistat, have gained access to Nauru in recent years. Some of those interviewed by Amnesty said their time on Nauru was more difficult than the conflicts they had fled in Iraq and Syria. "I cannot go back. But here I am dying a thousand times," said an Iraqi man, identified only as Edris. "In Iraq, you get just one bullet or a bomb, and it's over, and here I am slowly dying from the pain."

Another, 19-year-old Ali Kharsa, who was held on Nauru for three years, said: "We fled Syria, but Nauru was the hardest thing I ever had." The Australian government was not immediately available for comment. But Canberra has strongly defended its tough policies towards "boatpeople" in the past, saying it has prevented deaths at sea and secured the nation's borders. Nauru's government in August dismissed the leaked incident reports that asylum-seekers faced violence, abuse and humiliating treatment as "fabricated". Just over 800 asylum-seeker men are held in the Manus camp, with Australia in August agreeing to close it following a Papua New Guinea Supreme Court ruling declaring that holding people there was unconstitutional and illegal. — AFP



HANOI PROVINCE: This picture shows villagers in a boat transporting boxes of instant noodles they received as relief aid past flooded homes in a village in Huong Khe district in the central province of Ha Tinh. — AFP

VIETNAM FLOODS KILL 25

HANOI: Severe flooding in central Vietnam has killed at least 25 people and destroyed thousands of homes, officials said yesterday, as the country braced for further destruction with a typhoon barreling closer. Images from flood-hit provinces showed houses almost completely submerged and people paddling down waterlogged streets following heavy rain that started last week. Four people are still missing after the deluge, which has destroyed or damaged more than 240,000 homes in several central provinces since Friday, the Natural Disaster Prevention office said on its website.

Nguyen Khac Vinh, a resident in the hardest-hit province of Quang Binh, said there was still no water for drinking and cooking at his house which was totally flooded. "The water came so quick... our rice, chicken and ducks, our belongings were all swept away," Vinh said, standing in knee-deep water in the streets of Kien Giang township. State-run media earlier reported that at least one local hydropower plant suddenly released water from its reservoir, which contributed to some of the destruction over the weekend.

The government said it was looking into

whether the Ho Ho hydropower plant in Ha Tinh province should have released the water without warning. Meanwhile, Typhoon Sarika which lashed the Philippines over the weekend is expected to hit Vietnam Wednesday, with northern provinces on high alert. Local forecasters said they expect Sarika to be the biggest storm of the season. Authorities said they may issue evacuation orders and a ban on ships going to sea, according to reports. Vietnam is hit every year by up to a dozen tropical storms or typhoons, which often cause widespread destruction along coastal regions. — AFP

TRUMP RAMPS UP VOTER FRAUD CLAIM, SLAMS...

Continued from Page 1

Clinton is lying low ahead of the final debate tomorrow, apparently relying on Trump self-destructing. "She is trying to avoid issues for the next 22 days in the hopes that this will just end up being about Mr Trump," Conway told CNN yesterday outside Trump Tower in New York. Conway also added fuel to her boss' contention that the election could be stolen. "If there's compelling evidence of voter fraud, obviously as early voting goes on... certainly we would take action," she said.

Trump has tried to portray Clinton, a former US senator and secretary of state, as a corrupt lifelong politician who is vested in preserving the status quo. His campaign pounced on the release yesterday of FBI documents that cited an FBI official as saying a senior State Department official sought to pressure the bureau in 2015 to drop its insistence that an email from Clinton's private server contained classified information. Clinton's decision to use a private server while secretary of state from 2009-13 has drawn criticism that she was careless with national security.

The country's top elected Republican, House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan, has tried to counter Trump's message about election fraud. Spokeswoman AshLee Strong said yesterday that Ryan "is fully confident the states will carry out this election with integrity". Ryan last week distanced himself from Trump, saying he was going to focus his election campaign efforts on trying to preserve the Republican majorities in Congress.

In the traditionally closely fought state of Ohio, the top elections official, a Republican, said concerns about widespread voter fraud were simply not justified. "I can reassure Donald Trump: I am in charge of elections in Ohio and they're not going to be rigged, I'll make sure of that," Ohio Secretary

of State Jon Husted told CNN. Numerous studies have shown that voter fraud in US elections is very rare, according to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law. In a report titled "The Truth About Voter Fraud," the center cited voter fraud incident rates between 0.00004 percent and 0.0009 percent.

An August study by The Washington Post found 31 credible cases of impersonation fraud out of more than 1 billion votes cast in elections from 2000 to 2014. Arizona State University studies in 2012 and 2016 found similarly low rates. "Despite this overwhelming evidence, claims that voter fraud is rampant consistently garner media attention, because perceived threats to electoral integrity - even those with no basis in fact - frighten voters by striking at the core of our democracy," Brennan Center counsel Jennifer Clark wrote in a blog last month.

Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook told reporters that Trump's assault on the voting system was an act of desperation. "He knows he's losing and is trying to blame that on the system. This is what losers do," Mook told reporters. "It's not true. The system is not rigged." The RealClearPolitics average of national opinion polls put Clinton currently leading Trump by 5.5 percentage points, at 47.7 percent support to his 42.5 percent.

Trump's campaign has been struggling with sexual misconduct allegations from several women since a 2005 videotape emerged on Oct 7 showing him boasting about groping and making other unwanted sexual advances on women. "Can't believe these totally phony stories, 100% made up by women (many already proven false) and pushed big time by press, have impact!" Trump said in another Twitter post yesterday. Trump has repeatedly denied the allegations but has not provided any proof they are false. — Agencies



Members of the Syrian Civil Defense, known as White Helmets, search for victims amid the rubble of a destroyed building following air strikes in the rebel-held Qatari neighborhood of the northern city of Aleppo yesterday.— AFP

ELECTION FEVER GRIPS KUWAIT AS SNAP...

Continued from Page 1

The opposition group, which ended its boycott, is fielding six candidates. The Islamist Ummah Principles Group, another opposition group that will take part in the polls, is also fielding several candidates.

MP Ali Al-Khamees said he has decided to seek reelection mainly to confront the candidacy of controversial MP Abdulhameed Dashti, who said on Twitter that he is contemplating to run in the election. Dashti,

who has received total jail sentences of over 31 years for insulting Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, has been living outside Kuwait since March.

On Sunday, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah dissolved the Assembly at the recommendation of the Cabinet after MPs filed three requests to grill ministers for raising petrol prices and alleged financial and administrative violations. The Assembly has been dissolved seven times since 2006 over continued disputes between MPs and the government.

IRAQ FORCES LAUNCH MOSUL OFFENSIVE

Continued from Page 1

IS forces are vastly outnumbered, with the US military estimating that 3,000 to 4,500 jihadists are in the city and surrounding area.

But they have had months to prepare and will seek to use hit-and-run tactics, ambushes, snipers, bombs, berms and trenches to slow down and bleed Iraqi forces. In a statement released online after the beginning of the assault, IS claimed it launched a series of deadly suicide car bomb attacks against Iraqi forces. As the assault began, federal forces moved from their main staging base of Qayyarah, south of Mosul, while peshmerga forces from the autonomous Kurdish region advanced from the east.

Around 4,000 Kurdish peshmerga took part in a push to reclaim villages once inhabited by members of the Christian and Kakai minorities, a statement said. Several villages were promptly recaptured and peshmerga forces had moved to the edges of Qaraqosh and Bartalla, two Christian towns seized by IS in Aug 2014, commanders said. At a staging area near the village of Khazir east of Mosul, Kurdish forces could be seen firing artillery and rockets as smoke rose from houses in the distance.

The United Nations and other aid organizations warned that a huge number of civilians were in immediate danger. "I am extremely concerned for the safety of up to 1.5 million people," the UN deputy secretary general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief, Stephen O'Brien, said.

The UN's humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, Lise Grande, told reporters that an exodus could begin within a week. "It's a trickle right now," she said. But "our expectation, based on what the military has briefed us (on), is that if we start to see significant population movements, it's likely to be within five to six days."

The Norwegian Refugee Council said safe exits from Mosul must be provided or civilians "will be faced with the bleakest of choices: stay behind and risk their lives under attack, or risk their lives trying to flee". Iraqi forces advancing on multiple fronts are some distance from Mosul and

are expected to eventually take up positions on the edge of the city and lay siege before breaching its boundaries and directly engaging diehard jihadists.

"This operation to regain control of Iraq's second-largest city will likely continue for weeks, possibly longer," warned Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend, commander of the US-led coalition. Most of the coalition's support has come in the shape of air strikes and training but US, French and British special forces are also on the ground to advise local forces in battle. "This is a decisive moment in the campaign to deliver ISIL a lasting defeat," US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter said, using an alternative acronym for the jihadist group.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday indicated that Turkey would also play a role in the offensive despite concerns raised by Baghdad over Ankara's involvement. "We will be in the operation and we will be at the table," Erdogan said in a televised speech. "It is out of the question that we are not involved."

As the biggest Iraqi military operation since the 2011 withdrawal of US troops unfolded, a Turkish delegation arrived in Baghdad for talks and coalition defense ministers agreed to meet in Paris on October 25 to take stock. IS once controlled more than a third of Iraq's territory but its self-proclaimed "state" has been shrinking steadily. It lost its emblematic bastion Fallujah in June, the Anbar provincial capital Ramadi months earlier and on Sunday Syrian rebels retook the town of Dabiq, which held special ideological significance for the group.

If Mosul falls to Iraqi forces, only Raqqa in Syria would remain as the last major city in either country under IS control. But even the recapture of Mosul will not mark the end of the war against IS, which is likely to increasingly turn to insurgent tactics as it loses more ground. Just hours after the offensive was launched, IS claimed responsibility for a suicide car bombing targeting an Iraqi army checkpoint south of Baghdad that killed at least 10 people. The jihadists have claimed a string of deadly bomb attacks in Baghdad in recent days. — AFP

RUSSIA ANNOUNCES BRIEF ALEPPO TRUCE

Continued from Page 1

"We have taken a decision not to waste time and to introduce 'humanitarian pauses', mainly for the free passage of civilians, evacuation of the sick and wounded and withdrawal of fighters," senior Russian military officer Sergei Rudskoi told a press briefing in Moscow. The ceasefire would run from 0800 to 1600 local time (0500 GMT to 1300 GMT) "in the area of Aleppo", Rudskoi said. "During this period the Russian air force and Syrian government troops will halt air strikes and firing from any other types of weapons."

Russia's announcement, to which there was no immediate reaction from rebels, came as the EU condemned the ferocious air war waged on Aleppo over the past three weeks. "Since the beginning of the offensive by the regime and its allies, notably Russia, the intensity and scale of the aerial bombardment of eastern Aleppo is clearly disproportionate," EU foreign ministers said in Luxembourg. "The deliberate targeting of hospitals, medical personnel, schools and essential infrastructure, as well as the use of barrel bombs, cluster bombs, and chemical weapons, constitute a catastrophic escalation of the conflict... and may amount to war crimes," they said in a statement.

The EU ministers said they would also press ahead with extending sanctions against Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime, but stopped short of threatening measures against Russia. EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini called Moscow's announcement "positive" but not long enough to allow humanitarian aid to reach the besieged city. "It can be a start... for sure it is a positive step," she told reporters at the close of the ministerial meeting in Luxembourg. "The latest assessment from the aid agencies (however) is that 12 hours is needed so work is needed to find common ground," she added. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric also welcomed the truce announcement but stressed the "need for a longer pause in order to get the aid in".

Once Syria's thriving commercial hub, Aleppo has been ravaged by air raids and intensifying clashes as regime forces fight to capture the rebel-held east. Russian air support for the onslaught - which has destroyed hospitals and other civilian infrastructure - has spurred the accusations of potential war crimes. Yesterday's air strikes on Aleppo killed 13 civilians in the rebel-held district of Marjeh, including 12 members of the same family, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. "Nine of the family members were minors, including a 17-year-old girl and her newborn," said the Britain-based group's head Rami Abdel Rahman.

The deaths brought to 47 the number of people killed since Sunday morning in east Aleppo, the Observatory said. The deadliest raids were overnight on a residential block in Qaterji, where the Observatory said Russian strikes killed 18 civilians. "There are still families under the ruins. We pulled out seven or eight bodies and dozens of wounded," said ambulance driver Abu Mohamed. "The hospitals are full of casualties. It's a disaster."

More than 430 people have been killed in bombardment on the eastern half since the assault on Aleppo was announced on Sept 22, according to the Observatory. Another 82 people have died in rebel fire on government-held neighborhoods in the west. Further west in Aleppo province, Russian raids killed 23 people in the village of Uwaijal yesterday, said the Observatory.

US Secretary of State John Kerry met his counterparts from Russia, Iran, and Syria's neighbors in Switzerland on Saturday, and travelled on to London for meetings with the British and other European foreign ministers. Kerry said the Lausanne meeting produced new ideas on reviving a Syrian truce, after a ceasefire jointly brokered by Moscow and Washington broke down last month, but said high-level contacts to flesh them out would continue. Syria's war has devolved from a widespread protest movement against Assad's rule to a multi-front war between rebels, jihadists, Kurds and regime forces. — AFP



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BURGESS MADE ENGLAND CAPTAIN FOR 4 NATIONS

LONDON: Sam Burgess' successful return to rugby league after a nightmare spell in rugby union has been capped with his being named England captain for the first time yesterday. The 27-year-old-whose fast-tracking into the England World Cup rugby union squad last year proved disastrous for him and the team-will be the skipper for the upcoming Four Nations tournament announced coach Wayne Bennett. "Sam will be our captain. He leads from the front," said Bennett at a press conference yesterday. Burgess, who plays for South Sydney Rabbitohs in the National Rugby League, replaces Sean O'Loughlin, who has been ruled out because of injury. Burgess, though, will sit out the 'friendly' against France on Saturday as he is serving a suspension. However, he will lead out the team in the Four Nations-which England have never won-opener against New Zealand in Huddersfield the weekend after. England go on to play Scotland on November 5 and Australia on November 13. Burgess, whose twin brothers George and Tom are also in the squad, endured a dreadful time when he made a high profile switch to rugby union in 2014 when Bath signed him on a lucrative three year contract. — AFP



NIGERIAN FOOTBALLER SHOT DEAD IN OKAKI

ABUJA: Nigeria Premier League defender Izu Joseph has been shot dead in his hometown of Okaki in oil-rich southern Bayelsa state, it was reported yesterday. The player's father said Joseph was killed accidentally by troops battling Niger delta militants on Sunday. Initial reports said Joseph was killed at a restricted area by soldiers on a raid, with his identity as a footballer only established after he had been shot. The powerful central defender joined Shooting Stars from Bayelsa United when the Ibadan club were still in the second-tier Nigeria National League. He was man of the match at champions Rangers when Shooting Stars drew 1-1 this past season. The Sports Writers Association (SWAN) commented: "It is indeed a great loss not only to 3SC, but also to the football fraternity in Nigeria." It urged government to beef up security across the country to prevent a "recurrence of the avoidable incident that claimed the life of our valuable footballer, Izu Joseph." Nigerian troops are deployed to the Niger delta where militants have been attacking oil facilities since the start of the year, cutting output and hammering government revenue at a time of low crude prices. — AFP

DAN CARTER CLEARED BY DOPING PROBE

PARIS: Former All Black great Dan Carter has been cleared of doping following a probe implicating the star fly-half and two other Racing 92 players, L'Equipe sports paper said yesterday. Carter "has been cleared and was notified on Saturday," following an investigation by the medical commission of the French Rugby Federation, the newspaper said. Carter along with fellow former All Black Joe Rokococo and Argentinian winger Juan Imhoff were questioned by the commission last week after testing positive for corticosteroids following last season's Top 14 final in which Racing beat Toulon 29-21. Carter and Rokococo contributing 20 points between them. L'Equipe said that Rokococo and Imhoff "will probably have been informed of the same outcome". However, Racing said Monday neither the players nor the club had been informed of any decision as yet. The commission ruling is subject to appeal by the players or the French anti-doping agency AFLD which ordered the original tests in which traces were found of corticosteroids, which can be used against pain, inflammation or allergies. The substance is illegal when taken orally or injected in either the blood or muscle, unless accompanied by a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE). — AFP



Zain Jet Ski team 2016.

ZAIN WELCOMES NATIONAL JET SKI TEAM WORLD CHAMPIONS

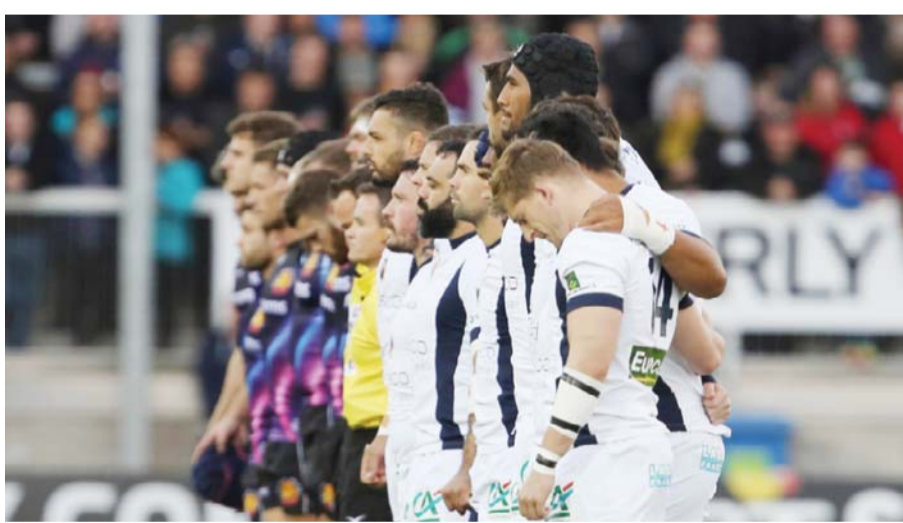
KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, welcomed Kuwait's National Jet Ski team champions in Kuwait Airport after the team achieved 10 titles during their participation in the recently concluded World Jet Ski Championship held in the United States, as the company is the main sponsor of the team for the sixth consecutive year.

Zain participated in the reception ceremony held in Kuwait Airport's Honoring Hall, where the team's sponsors and supporting organizations attended. The company expressed its keenness on encouraging Kuwaiti athletes to represent Kuwait in internationally renowned championships, and that its sponsorship of the team for sixth consecutive year falls under its strate-

gy towards supporting the youth and sports sectors. The company expressed its pride in the latest achievements the team accomplished, including 300 full points evenly with the USA competing with 32 other countries, as well as winning 10 medals, 4 of which are gold medals and 5 silver ones. Zain confirms its commitment towards Kuwaiti champions, which resembles the

company's endless confidence of the competencies of these young athletes and their capabilities in excelling in different fields. As a leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company will continue to put Kuwaiti National teams and individual athletes at the forefront of its priorities and

pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition they deserve. It is worth noting that the National Jet Ski team is authorized by the Kuwait Sea Sport Club to officially represent the country in regional and international Jet Ski championships. The team champions won a number of prominent titles during past and present participations.



EXETER: Players stand for a minute silence in memory of Munster head coach and former Irish international Anthony Foley who died on Sunday in a Paris hotel during the European Rugby Champions Cup rugby union match between Exeter Chiefs and Clermont Auvergne at Sandy Park Stadium in Exeter, south west England, on Sunday.—AFP

FLAGS AT HALF-MAST AS IRELAND MOURNS FOLEY

DUBLIN: Flags flew at half-mast yesterday in the southern Irish province of Munster as books of condolence were opened across Ireland with the country reeling from the sudden death of rugby great Anthony Foley. Munster head coach Foley, aged just 42, was found dead in his hotel room hours ahead of his side's European Champions Cup clash with French side Racing 92 on Sunday. Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Enda Kenny was among those to pay tribute to Foley who enjoyed an illustrious career as a player which saw him win 62 Ireland caps as a robust back row forward. "Anthony was a legendary figure in Munster and Irish rugby. It is tragic to lose such a fantastic man at such a young age," Kenny said. That warm tribute to a man who also captained Munster to the 2006 European Cup title and epitomised Munster's battle cry 'Stand Up And Fight' was typical of the outpouring of grief for the father of two. One of Foley's fellow former Munster legends Ronan O'Gara—who ironically is now a coach at Racing 92 — described himself as 'heartbroken'. O'Gara, who with Foley won the European Cup and a Celtic League with Munster and a Triple

Crown with Ireland in 2004, added "we have lost an incredible man". O'Gara's Racing head coach Laurent Labit paid Foley one of the greatest compliments one could in saying he was to Munster what the sublime fullback Serge Blanco had been in his day to Biarritz. "It was not just in Munster and Irish rugby that Anthony Foley is respected," said Labit. "It is a terrible shock. He is respected in France for his performances for Munster and Ireland. He is part of the history of Munster, he is Monsieur Munster, the same as Serge Blanco in Biarritz or Philippe Sella in Agen. It is a tragedy." Illustrating how deeply Foley had touched the rugby world in his playing days and then afterwards England's 2003 World Cup winning coach Clive Woodward tweeted his condolences. "Shocked & so sad to hear about death of Anthony Foley. A true legend & a man who had total respect of teammates & opposition," said Woodward. Within hours of the news breaking at Sunday lunchtime, Thomond Park, Munster's home stadium in the city of Limerick, had become a virtual shrine. — AFP

STEELE RALLIES TO WIN PGA TOUR OPENER AT SAFEWAY OPEN

NAPA: Right when Brendan Steele thought he might have a chance to win at Silverado, all he could think about was how he lost. A year ago, Steele had a 54-hole lead in the PGA Tour's season opener when he made a sloppy bogey on the 12th hole, shot 40 on the back nine and threw it away. He was two shots behind on Sunday in the Safeway Open with little room for error when he three-putted No. 12 for bogey and figured he was done.

"I thought that was it for me," Steele said. "I thought I would have to do something special. Last year, I tried not to make mistakes." This time, he made birdies.

Steele overcame a four-shot deficit in the final round, closed with three straight birdies on rain soaked Silverado for a 7-under 65 and won by one shot over a faltering Patton Kizzire. It was Steele's first victory in 141 starts on the PGA Tour dating to his rookie season when he won the Texas Open. "This is a little bit of redemption from last year," Steele said. "It's nice to close it off this way."

It was a tough ending for Kizzire, who had a one-shot lead going into the final round and looked like a winner when he stuffed his tee shot into 2 feet for birdie on the 11th hole for a two-shot lead. He struggled to hit fairways the rest of the way, and while he dropped only one shot on the 12th, he couldn't keep Steele from gaining ground. Steele hit 2-iron onto the green at the par-5 16th for a two-putt birdie. His 18-foot birdie putt on the 17th curled in the left side of the cup. And then he hit wedge into the par-5 18th and poured in a 7-foot birdie putt.

"You've got to really make something happen, especially when the conditions are soft," Steele said. "I wanted to be aggressive and I didn't want to just kind of coast in and just make sure that I had a decent week."

He had a great week, which sends him back to the Masters for the first time since 2012. Kizzire drove left into the base of trees on the par-5 16th and had to chip out sideways, eventually making a 15-foot par save from the bunker. With a wedge on the 17th, he left it short and watched it spin back off the green, forcing him to save par again. His final chance was to birdie the final hole and force a playoff.

He drove left again, had to lay up and then missed the green with a 9-iron and failed to chip in. Kizzire closed with a 70. "It was intense," Kizzire said. "I didn't finish it off. I'm really disappointed, but I played well. It's a building block, for sure." Johnson Wagner stayed close the entire back nine but had to settle for pars over the final eight holes. He closed with a 70 and tied for third with Paul Casey (69), former Cal star Michael Kim (67) and Scott Piercy (70).

LONGEST TIME

Casey has finished no worse than fourth in his last four tournaments dating to the FedEx Cup playoffs. "So close, isn't it?" Casey said. "I mean, I played great. I had another wonderful week." Steele, who finished at 18-under 270, won for the first time since the anchored stroke for long putters was outlawed at the start of the year.

He made the switch right after the new rule was proposed in 2014, and while he putted well at times, he still had doubts he could make the big putts when they mattered. Sunday at Silverado answered those questions, along with getting rid of that sour memory from last year when he made five bogeys in six holes on the

back nine. "You don't often get that chance in life to really redeem yourself in the same way at the same place, and to basically do just the opposite," Steele said. The final round was delayed two hours by rain that began soaking Silverado on Friday and led to delays the rest of the way. The third round was not completed until Sunday morning, and Kizzire made a birdie on the final hole for a 66 to take his first 54-hole lead. And for the longest time, he made it last. Piercy fell back with a pair of bogeys at the end of the front nine. Casey also dropped careless shots. Phil Mickelson had his chances, too.

In his first domestic fall PGA Tour event in a decade, Mickelson was poised to make a charge on the back nine until missing too many chances. He closed with a 67 and tied for eighth. Mickelson has finished in the top 10 in one-third of his 549 career starts on tour.

Kizzire did well to stay in the game. After his bogey from a fairway bunker on No. 12, Kizzire holed a 15-foot par putt on the 14th after driving under a tree, made another 15-footer on the par-5 16th and a nervy 5-footer for par on the 17th to keep his hopes alive. He just couldn't make birdie, and it cost him. — AP



NAPA: Brendan Steele lifts up his trophy on the 18th green of the Silverado Resort North Course after winning the Safeway Open PGA golf tournament, Sunday, in Napa, Calif. — AP

NFL PREPARES FOR FIRST LONDON GAME AT TWICKENHAM STADIUM

LONDON: Twickenham Stadium has seen its share of tackles and tries, field goals and forward passes. The NFL is about to bring some more, but with a twist. A sporting event other than rugby will be held at the venue for the first time in its 107-year history when it hosts a game between the Los Angeles Rams and the New York Giants on Sunday. After playing 15 games over 10 years at Wembley Stadium, the league is slightly broadening its international horizons, moving one of its annual international games to a different London location.

Forget about scrums and say hello to huddles. Keep an eye out for yellow flags, not yellow cards. Even for those who have made the trek to Wembley, Sunday's game will provide a different type of atmosphere. Think of it, in American terms, as Lambeau Field meets Wrigley Field.

"Twickenham is definitely a suburban, residential venue, and so it offers a very different experience for fans," said

Mark Waller, the NFL's executive vice president for international. "I think it's going to be fascinating and interesting for our fans to give us feedback on how that experience will compare to what many of them will already have seen and known at Wembley." To prepare Twickenham for Sunday's game, the NFL and the Rugby Football Union had to make a number of significant changes. For one, with football rosters twice the size of their rugby counterparts, the existing locker rooms will be insufficient. The Rams, the designated home team, will dress in a temporary facility in the Twickenham gym, while the Giants will utilize an adjacent reception hall. The coaching booths, located just above the access tunnels for rugby games, will be moved to the sixth level to provide coaches with an appropriate viewpoint. Those converted suites also will need to be fitted with replay and communications systems - something the NFL and RFU have been working to install.

TRANSPORTATIONS

Accommodations will also be needed for cheerleaders and the media, who will work from three sections in the southwest corner. Because of the stadium's location, a detailed transportation plan is also needed for buses transporting players and team personnel to and from Twickenham.

Some of those changes will be noticeable to longtime Twickenham attendees. In addition to the goal posts, which were installed last Monday, and the field markings, to be painted later this week, the capacity of the stadium will be reduced from 82,000 to 75,000 for NFL games. According to Charlotte Harwood, an RFU spokeswoman, that's because views from the front several rows of the lower bowl rise just above field level and will be obstructed by players and coaches on the sidelines.

The goal, of course, is to make sure that any potential issues have been addressed by Sunday. Those attending

the first games at Wembley - the Giants, coincidentally, played in the first game in London in 2007 - reported a number of hiccups that were ironed out in subsequent years.

Waller said the RFU's experience hosting the semifinals and final of the Rugby World Cup in 2015, has eased a number of concerns about the venue. "It's an important event for them in the same way that it's an important event for us," Waller said. "They're very focused on it being successful as well."

The Rams, who flew through the night after a 31-28 road loss to the Detroit Lions, arrived in London early yesterday. Per the terms of their relocation from St. Louis, they will play at least one home game in London every year until their new stadium opens in 2019.

That game is not guaranteed to always be at Twickenham. The league and the RFU reached an agreement last October to play a minimum of three games in three years at the venue, but

not necessarily one each season.

The NFL also has agreements to play at least two games at Wembley each year through 2020 and will begin playing at least two games a year at the redeveloped White Hart Lane, the home of English Premier League club Tottenham, beginning in 2018.

Thus, how successful Sunday's game is could play a role in the NFL's future at Twickenham. Waller said the league isn't considering games at any other venues in London, and the reason Twickenham and White Hart Lane were contracted is because Wembley hosts a number of other events.

"The most exciting thing for us is the ability for us to get a new experience, a new stadium experience," Waller said. "We're very happy and have always been very happy with Wembley, and so for us, it's never been about looking for something better than Wembley. It's, 'Hey, we need to give our fans the best experience available.'" —AP

UNFASHIONABLE MURRAY LOOKING GOOD FOR WORLD NUMBER ONE

SHANGHAI: Andy Murray has never been the most fashionable member of tennis's 'Big Four', but he finally looks the part as he zeroes in on the world number one spot.

Winning back-to-back titles in China without dropping a set tells its own story, and underlines the consensus that Murray is currently the world's best player. The 29-year-old swept past Roberto Bautista to win his third Shanghai Masters title on Sunday, lifting his sixth trophy in what has been his best season yet. It could get better for Murray, who can overtake Novak Djokovic at the top of the rankings with wins in Vienna and Paris, provided the Serb doesn't reach the Paris final.

It hasn't done Murray any harm that Djokovic has suffered a sudden and perplexing dip in form, and that Roger Federer is sidelined by injury. Rafael Nadal is also a fading force but Murray would be a deserving successor as the last of the four, who have 46 Grand Slam titles between them, to reach number one. What's more, Murray, often marked out for his anguished demeanour on court, is growing into the role of eminent tour-leader in the mould of Djokovic and Federer before him.

The one-time gawky kid still berates himself during matches but he is far more comfortable with the media, giving fulsome and intelligent answers to all questions. He is also prepared to defend and mentor younger players such as the wayward Nick Kyrgios, whose latest on-court meltdown resulted in a fine in Shanghai. Physically, too, Murray is at his peak, with supreme fitness and acceleration that can shift his now-hulking frame around the court at frightening speeds.

TOUGH LOSSES

He has reached three Slam finals this year, winning his second Wimbledon title and also becoming the first man to successfully defend Olympic singles gold.

Murray hired British coach Jamie Delgado this year and Ivan Lendl's return to his team in June was quickly followed by victory at Wimbledon. He hasn't looked back since.

"Winning Wimbledon was really a big boost to my confidence after I had had quite a few tough losses in the Slams the last few years," he said. "That kind of gave me a lot more belief in myself that I could win the major competitions again. It helped motivate me. I have obviously quite a different team this year with Ivan and Jamie. Since the French Open, I've played the best three months of tennis of my career."

Obstacles remain and Murray is wary of a return to form by Djokovic, conservatively predicting that February or March represent his best chance of reaching number one. "I will try and finish this year as strong as I can. And next year if the opportunity is there to reach number one, then I want to try and take it," he said. "But it's not going to be easy because Novak plays great tennis indoors, and also his record at the beginning of the year is phenomenal in Australia and Indian Wells, Miami. It's going to be a tough thing to achieve that. I'm aware of that. I'm close-ish right now, but it's going to be really tough still." It has been some journey for Murray, who survived the 1996 Dunblane school massacre when he was eight and moved to Spain to further his tennis career when he was 15. But if he keeps his current trajectory, it won't be long before he becomes Britain's first world number one under the ATP's computerised rankings, which were introduced in 1973. "I have never had success like I have had the last few months in my career, so to keep that going, I'm aware it's going to be a difficult thing to do," he warned.

"I need to keep myself motivated and be smart with my schedule and my time off, as well. But I believe I can get there. I definitely believe I can get there. "These last few months have proved that to me." —AFP



ESTORIL: This file photo taken on May 2, 2015 in Estoril shows Australian Nick Kyrgios celebrating a point over Spanish Pablo Busta during the semi-final Estoril Open Tennis tournament. Wayward tennis star Nick Kyrgios will seek psychological help to avoid an eight week ban ordered by the ATP for a tantrum at the Shanghai Masters, Tennis Australia said yesterday. —AFP

KYRGIOS TO SEEK PSYCHOLOGIST HELP AFTER ATP BAN THREAT

LONDON: Wayward tennis star Nick Kyrgios will seek psychological help to avoid an eight week ban ordered by the ATP for a tantrum at the Shanghai Masters, Tennis Australia said yesterday. The ATP ordered a \$25,000 (22,700 euros) fine and said a three week ban would be increased to eight weeks if the 21-year-old Kyrgios did not seek help for his temper.

The world number 14 gave away points and swore and argued with fans before being booed off court after his 6-3, 6-1 defeat by Mischa Zverev in his second round match last week.

Tennis Australia said in a statement that it would support Kyrgios. "Nick's health and wellbeing is a priority and the ATP has offered a reduced penalty on the provision that he seeks appropriate professional advice, which he has agreed to do," said a statement by the Australian body. Kyrgios apologised again for his behaviour in Shanghai. "The season has been a long one as I battled several injuries and other challenges towards the end of the summer," he said in a statement. "My body finally just gave out in Shanghai both physically and mentally. "This is no excuse, and I know very well that I need to apologise to the fans - in Shanghai and other parts of the world - as well as the tournament organisers in Shanghai who do an amazing job."

Kyrgios said he "regretted how his year was ending." "I do understand and respect the decision by the ATP and I will use this time off to improve on and off the court."

The \$25,000 ATP fine will be added to a \$16,500 penalty ordered last week. The Shanghai outburst was the latest in a long line of incidents involving the Australian. Last year he was given a suspended one-month ban for making comments to Stan Wawrinka about his wife.

"Nick's conduct in Shanghai was unacceptable, disrespectful to the sport and its fans," said ATP executive chairman Chris Kermode. "We take these matters very seriously and he has since apologised for his actions."

"Nick is a phenomenal talent and our hope is that he uses this time away from the tour constructively and, with some support, is able to return to competition with an improved mindset and stronger than ever before." The ATP said that after an investigation into the Australian's second round match in Shanghai, Kyrgios had been found guilty of conduct contrary to the integrity of the game.

This meant an additional fine and an immediate eight week suspension. "However, the suspension will be reduced to three tournament weeks upon agreement that the player enters a plan of care under the direction of a sports psychologist, or an equivalent plan approved by ATP." If Kyrgios agrees to see a psychologist he could return to the tour on November 7, after the three week ban.

As he would have no more tournaments to play, even the three week ban means that Kyrgios's year is effectively over.

"We have spoken to his management and

Nick has agreed to seek the help of a sports psychologist and will now be available to play in the

Hopman Cup in early January," a Tennis Australia spokesperson said. —AFP



SHANGHAI: This file photo taken on October 16, 2016 shows Andy Murray of Britain celebrating after winning his men's singles finals match against Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain at the Shanghai Masters tennis tournament in Shanghai. Andy Murray has never been the most fashionable member of tennis's 'Big Four', but he finally looks the part as he zeroes in on world number one. —AFP

KSSC PREPARES FOR SHOOTING TOURNAMENT

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Sports Club (KSSC) completed its preparations to hold HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Shooting Tournament, to start the 2016/2017 season. A large number of shooters of all categories will participate in the tournament including shooters from the National Guard, army and police, beside the club shooters.

The tournament will be held from 20/10/2016 to 22/11 KSSC held refresher courses for 15 shotgun referees and another course for 20 rifle referees in order to review the laws and update them on new developments.

Head of shotgun referees Hamad Al-Ruwaisan expressed thanks to the KSSF Board of Directors for their continued efforts to keep shooting sport at a prime level, besides backing Kuwaiti referees to officiate local and foreign tournaments. He appreciated the large number of shooters of both genders who will participate in HH the Crown Prince tournament including 100 in the shotgun events alone. Meanwhile Deputy Technical Director in the rifle pistol department Abdallah Barakat said he is pleased to have this important tournament at this time of year, and hoped results be as



Adnan Al-Ibrahim

good as they were last year. He said most shooters were getting ready two months earlier and training hard to compete for the top prize.

Member of the board, Assistant Treasurer Adnan Al-Ibrahim expressed thanks to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad for patronizing the tournament as it is one of the important events to launch this season.

He said that HH the Crown Prince contributed so much to supporting heritage sports, particularly shooting.

He said the organizing committee held several meetings, and made sure all ranges and equipment are ready, adding that the opening ceremony will be attended by representative of HH the Crown Prince and several dignitaries.



Serena Williams

SERENA WITHDRAWS FROM WTA FINALS

SINGAPORE: US superstar Serena Williams has withdrawn from the elite WTA Finals in Singapore, saying she's still working to recover from the shoulder troubles that hindered her in 2016. The WTA announced Williams' withdrawal from the event that starts on October 23 on their Twitter feed, posting a video of Williams explaining the decision.

It will be the second straight year that Williams is skipping the season finale in Singapore due to injury. "Hey everyone in Singapore," Williams said. "I'm really, really bummed that I won't be able to come compete this year."

"It's been a really tough year for me just dealing so much with these shoulder injuries. My doctor insists that I stay home and heal it every single day."

The 22-time Grand Slam champion earlier pulled out of two tournaments in China after being knocked out of the semi-finals of the US Open. That defeat saw Williams' 186-week reign atop the world rankings end as Germany's Angelique Kerber reached the sum-

mit and captured the Flushing Meadows title into the bargain.

Williams claimed just one Grand Slam title in 2016, at Wimbledon. After that, shoulder troubles hampered her in Rio where her hopes of a fifth Olympic gold medal were crushed in the third round.

WTA CEO Steve Simon said in a statement that organisers were "as disappointed as the fans". "We wish her a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing her back competing, fit and healthy," he added.

Williams' withdrawal opens up the eighth qualification spot to Britain's Johanna Konta, Spain's Carla Su-rez Navarro and Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova. Either Navarro or Kuznetsova must win the title in Moscow at the VTB Kremlin Cup next week in order to edge out Konta for the eighth and final qualifying spot.

The tournament in Singapore will see reigning champion Agnieszka Radwanska defending her title against current top seed Kerber. —AFP

NEW FA CHIEF VOWS TO BRING TRANSPARENCY TO ENGLISH GAME

LONDON: The next England soccer manager will have to pass strict behaviour protocol tests and vow 100 percent commitment to the job, FA Chairman Greg Clarke told British MPs yesterday. He would ideally be English and, if not, should be fully conversant with the game in England and have several years experience of managing at the top level. Clarke, who has been Football Association Chairman since early September, was grilled by the Parliamentary Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee following Sam

Allardyce's ill-fated 67-day reign as England manager. "Sam was in breach of his duties as an employee ... He let us down badly, because in the end we want an England manager whose sole priority is winning for the team," Clarke said. Allardyce, given the job in July, left after the Daily Telegraph reported that he had allegedly offered advice on how to get round FA transfer rules. He was in charge for one World Cup qualifier. The committee, concerned about corruption in English football, ques-

tioned whether the FA had delved deeply enough into Allardyce's past before appointing him, citing a TV investigation in 2006 into his transfer deals as a club manager. Clarke, who for six years was chairman of the Football League which governs the professional game below the Premier League, said no wrongdoing had been found. The story by undercover reporters published three weeks ago included allegations that Allardyce, hired for a reported 3 million pounds (\$3.7 million)

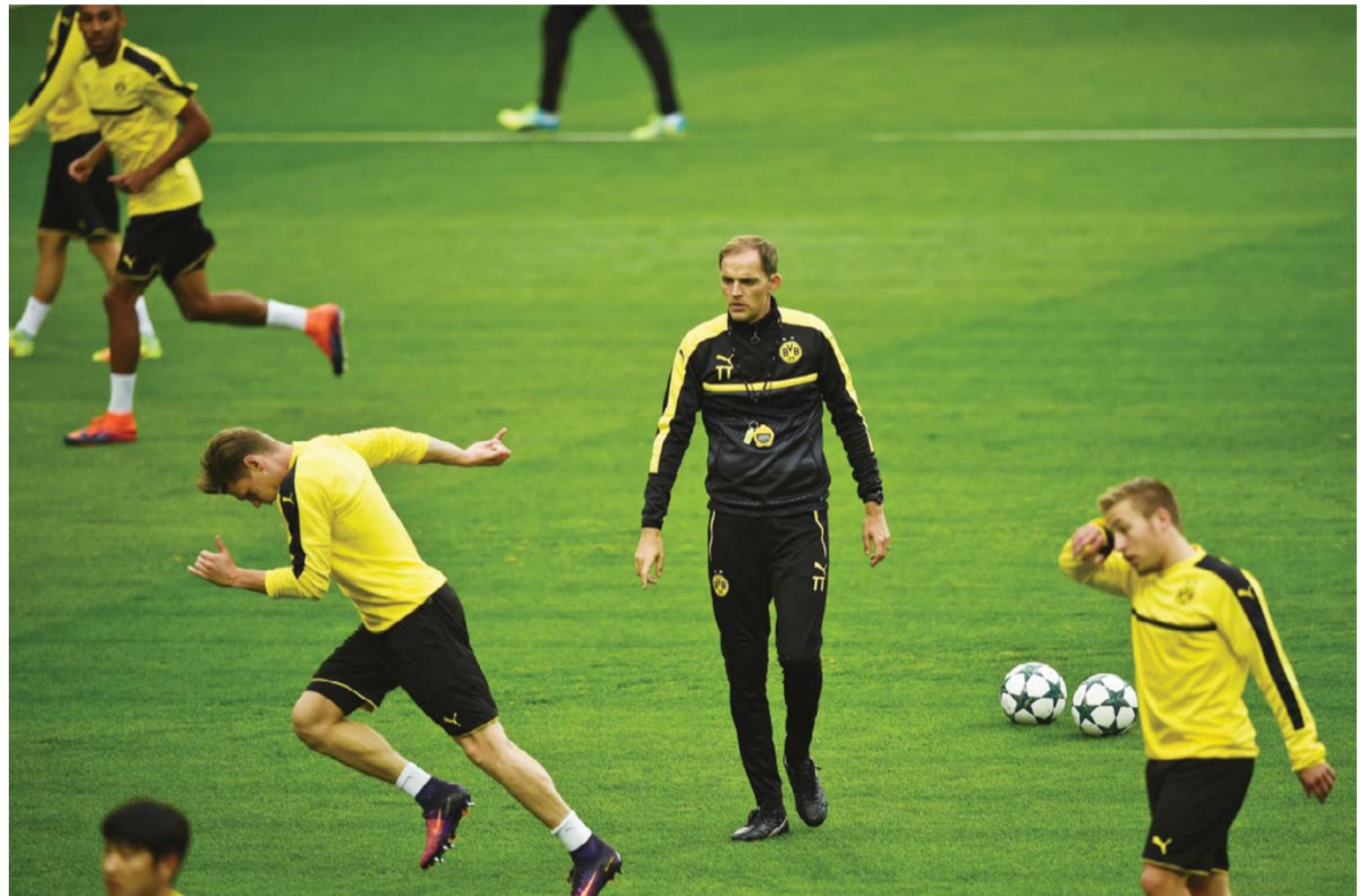
a year, was offered 400,000 pounds to represent a Far East firm interested in investing in the English game, if possible by circumventing rules. The committee focused on Allardyce's perceived greed and said it expected the FA to ensure the next England manager would be solely committed to improving the national team after years of under-achievement. Gareth Southgate was promoted from coaching the Under-21 side to fill the vacancy as caretaker manager and given four matches to try to earn the

position permanently. The first two games yielded a win and a draw. Clarke said the ideal candidate would be English but he did not rule out a foreigner provided he was well versed in the English game. The FA has long coveted Arsenal's long-serving French manager Arsene Wenger. Allardyce, whose has managed clubs including Bolton Wanderers, Newcastle United and Sunderland, was given the England job after the team failed miserably at Euro 2016 under Roy Hodgson. —Reuters

MOTORS IN DRIVING SEAT DESPITE BRIBERY STORM

SEOUL: Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors hope to ride out a bribery storm and reach the AFC Champions League final when they take a 4-1 lead into their semi-final second leg against FC Seoul. The K-League leaders were slapped with a nine-point deduction and a 100 million won (\$88,000) fine last month after one of their scouts was convicted of bribing referees. It recalled dark days for Korean football, after a match-fixing scandal in 2011 ended with a series of jail terms, bans and fines, and one player's alleged suicide. But Jeonbuk will be confident of reaching their third Asian final after scorers Leonardo, Ricardo Lopes and Kim Shin-Wook combined to devastating effect in the first leg. The winners of tomorrow's all-Korean clash will play UAE's Al Ain or Qatar's outfit El Jaish, who will try to overturn a 3-1 deficit in their second leg on Tuesday in Doha. "Our players have been impressive all season and I will continue to have faith in them," said Jeonbuk coach Choi Kang-Hee, according to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) website. "We have confidence for the second leg." Jeonbuk won the title in 2006 and they have hit form in this year's latter stages, smashing five past Shanghai SIPG to reach the semis before their four-goal

spree against Seoul. It leaves Seoul dangerman Adriano teetering on 12 goals for the competition, one away from equalling the record set by Guangzhou Evergrande's Muriqi in their 2013 title run. But the club from the Korean capital aren't giving up hope just yet, and with home advantage they will draw on memories of some heavy wins in the group stage. "We know that we need to score many goals to get the win," said Seoul coach Hwang Sun-Hong. "We will have to be clinical and aggressive going forward... There is still football to be played in this tie." In Doha, mop-haired playmaker Omar Abdulrahman will try to lead Al Ain into the final after he was among the scorers in the UAE side's 3-1 first-leg win. The top-rated Abdulrahman has previously attracted interest from Manchester City, and El Jaish coach Sabri Lamouchi was in no doubt about the threat he poses to his side. "Al Ain have, for me, absolutely the best player in Asia," the Frenchman said, according to UAE's The National newspaper. "He is an unbelievable player. "I love him a lot, but it's not only me. All coaches want a player like him. Because he fights with heart, and he is also a very nice playmaker with an amazing left foot." — AFP



LISBON: Dortmund's head coach Thomas Tuchel attends a training session at Alvalade stadium in Lisbon yesterday, on the eve of the UEFA Champions League group F football match Sporting CP vs Borussia Dortmund. — AFP

MIXED FORTUNES FOR GAMBIANS IN EUROPE

PARIS: Gambian footballers Modou Barrow and Ousman Manneh experienced mixed fortunes in Europe at the weekend. National team winger Barrow was a constant threat for Swansea in a 3-2 English Premier League loss at Arsenal before a brutal, red-card tackle forced him to limp off in the closing stages. Teenage striker Manneh scored his first goal for Werder Bremen four weeks after his Bundesliga debut, and it gave his club a 2-1 victory over Bayer Leverkusen.

ENGLAND
VICTOR MOSES (Chelsea)
The Nigeria international set the seal on Chelsea's 3-0 win over champions Leicester when he scored their third goal 10 minutes from time. After exchanging passes with substitute Nathaniel Chalobah, the winger ran clear into the penalty area and planted a low shot past Kasper Schmeichel before celebrating with an extravagant back-flip.

WILFRIED BONY (Stoke)
The Ivory Coast forward was up front as the Potters beat Sunderland 2-0 courtesy of two goals from Joe Allen for their first league win of the season. He went close to scoring himself after holding off Senegalese Papy Djilobodji and firing just wide of Jordan Pickford's left-hand post.

YANNICK BOLASIE (Everton)
A member of the Everton side that pushed leaders Manchester City hard in a 1-1 draw, the Democratic Republic of Congo winger tested the hosts' defence with some suring runs.

MODOU BARROW (Swansea)
The Gambia winger was a constant threat to Arsenal during a 3-2 defeat by the Gunners, but he was unable to see the game out after being on the receiving end of a brutal tackle from Granit Xhaka which saw the Arsenal man sent off with 20 minutes to go at the Emirates Stadium. Barrow limped off with his ankle heavily strapped minutes later.

SPAIN
CEDRIC BAKAMBU (Villarreal)
DR Congo striker Bakambu started for the first time this season and took just over half an hour to slot home his first goal of the campaign as Villarreal's unbeaten start to the season continued with a 5-0 thrashing of Celta Vigo. Bakambu scored 22 goals in his debut season in Spain, but had been limited to just two substitute appearances due to a long-running thigh muscle injury.

CARLOS KAMENI (Malaga)
A simple error from former Cameroon goalkeeper Kameni cost Malaga in a 1-1 draw at Alaves. Kameni flew off his line for a looping ball inside his box, but was beaten to it by Deyverson, who headed into an empty net to give the hosts a ninth-minute lead.

ITALY
MOHAMED SALAH (Roma)
Edin Dzeko hit a brace for Roma in a 3-1 win over Napoli, but Salah was the unsung hero for the Giallorossi as they moved up to

second, five points behind leaders Juventus. The former Chelsea winger's pace, in attack and defence, was a crucial element for Luciano Spalletti's men at the San Paolo. "The lad's pace is incredible," purred Spalletti. Salah was rewarded for a fine day's work with a goal, taking his league tally this season to four.

KALIDOU KOULIBALY (Napoli)
Koulibaly's performances for Napoli have drawn interest from some top clubs in England, but the Senegal defender had a bitersweet performance for Napoli as his title hopes were dented by a 3-1 home defeat to Roma. After thwarting a possible Roma opener on the quarter hour when he slid in to dispossess Dzeko, Koulibaly panicked under pressure from Salah, gave up possession and saw Dzeko sweep the Egyptian's delivery past Pepe Reina for a 43rd-minute opener. Koulibaly made amends shortly after the restart with a towering header from a corner that went in off the far post, but by that time Dzeko had added a second.

FRANCE
CASIMIR NINGA (Montpellier)
Montpellier collected their first win since the opening weekend of the season in large part to Ninga's brace in a 3-2 home victory over Caen. The Chad striker, who netted a hat-trick last time out, opened the scoring in the second minute and lashed home the winner 12 minutes from time.

STEVE MOUNIE (Montpellier)
The Benin international suffered a roller-coaster of emotions as he scored but was later sent off in Montpellier's win over Caen. The 22-year-old headed in Ninga's cross to give Montpellier a 2-1 lead on 65 minutes, but picked up a second yellow card just six minutes later for a foul on Tunisian Alaeidine Yahia.

YACINE BAMMOU (Nantes)
Moroccan forward Bammou ended an 11-month Ligue 1 goal drought with the opener in Nantes' 2-1 derby victory over Lorient. Only Angel di Maria had attempted more shots without scoring in the French top flight this term.

GERMANY
PIERRE-EMERICK AUBAMEYANG (Borussia Dortmund)
The Gabon striker missed a penalty and hit the bar before scoring Borussia Dortmund's equaliser in their 1-1 home draw against Hertha Berlin in the Bundesliga as both sides ended with 10 men. Aubameyang made up for his saved penalty when he converted at the back post with 10 minutes to go.

NABIL BENTALEB (Schalke 04)
The Algeria defensive midfielder, on loan from Tottenham Hotspur, made club history when his screaming 17-metre shot bounced over the goalline and out again to give Schalke the lead in their 1-1 draw at Augsburg. Hawkeye goal-line technology confirmed the ball had bounced behind the line and it was the first time Schalke have been awarded a goal by Hawkeye in Germany's top flight.—AFP

REAL MADRID AIM FOR GOAL FEST AS LEICESTER LOOK TO STAY PERFECT

PARIS: AFP Sports looks ahead to today's Champions League action as champions Real Madrid go on the goal trail against minnows Legia Warsaw.

Group E
At Leverkusen, Germany
Bayer Leverkusen (GER) v Tottenham (ENG)
Tottenham's surprise home defeat to Monaco on the opening day has put a spanner in the works in this group, putting both the English side and Leverkusen under pressure coming into their home-and-away series. Spurs bounced back with a win in Moscow over CSKA and are the only remaining unbeaten side in the Premier League. Leverkusen, on the other hand, have had a difficult start to the Bundesliga season and sit in the bottom half. They also drew their first two pool matches. Before the season began, these two would have been considered the group favourites but neither can afford to fail to pick up at least a win in these back-to-back encounters or they risk leaving themselves with too much to do in the final two fixtures.

At Moscow
CSKA (RUS) v Monaco (FRA)
Monaco will seek to build on their opening 2-1 victory over Tottenham when they travel to Moscow to tackle CSKA, who sit third in the Russian Premier League after a 1-0 win over Ufa at the weekend. Monaco dropped to third in Ligue 1, falling four points behind Nice after losing 3-1 at Toulouse on Friday night, while the leaders beat Lyon 2-0. CSKA are bottom of the group and need a win, while one suspects pool leaders Monaco would be happy to go home with a point.

Group F
At Madrid
Real Madrid (ESP) v Legia Warsaw (POL)
Given Legia, the first Polish qualifiers to this stage in 20 years, have already conceded eight goals in their first two group games, anything other than a Real avalanche would be a surprise. Madrid warmed up for this match with a 6-1 thumping of Real Betis, who are probably a better side than Warsaw. Real coach Zinedine Zidane praised his side for playing with "intensity" on Saturday and a similar display would likely blow away a Legia side that was thumped 6-0 at home to Dortmund.

At Lisbon
Sporting (POR) v Borussia Dortmund (GER)
In what could likely develop into a battle for second place behind Real, this match takes on crucial importance. Sporting came close to a stunning upset on the opening weekend, leading 1-0 at Real until late. They lost but will have been buoyed by that performance and a win at home to Dortmund would foster the belief that they have the ability to get through this toughest of groups. Borussia, though, have been regular fixtures in the knock-out stages in recent years. They've been banging in the goals for fun this season, too, behind only Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga on that count. They were unlucky to only draw at home to Hertha at the weekend, as Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang missed a penalty and hit the bar before notching a late equaliser.

If luck doesn't desert the Gabon striker in Lisbon, it could be a difficult night for Sporting.

Group G
At Bruges, Belgium
Club Brugge (BEL) v Porto (POR)
Pointless and goalless Brugge host Porto with both sides targeting a first win to keep tabs on Group G's pacesetters. The pair last met in the 1972/73 UEFA Cup, Porto prevailing 5-3 on aggregate. Belgian champions Brugge suffered heavy losses to Leicester and Copenhagen, but have a good home record against Portuguese sides. Brugge coach Michel Preud'homme has valuable insight into the Portuguese football mentality as a former Benfica player. Porto welcome back Jesus Corona, recovered from a thigh problem and among the scorers in their Portuguese Cup win at the weekend. Brugge line up after a league loss to Charleroi last Friday.

At Leicester, England
Leicester (ENG) v Copenhagen (DEN)
Leicester's season is developing a Jekyll and Hyde quality to it—struggling to defend their shock Premier League crown but flying high in Europe. Claudio Ranieri's men host Copenhagen top of the group with a perfect six points, a far cry from their domestic form, their four defeats already one more than they suffered over the whole of last season. Their Danish guests are placed second, two points adrift, so a third straight win for the Foxes would bring a ticket to the knockout stage in their first ever Champions League campaign significantly closer. Leicester will have to bounce back from a 3-0 loss to Chelsea at the weekend. Ranieri rested last season's player of the year Riyad Mahrez, one of three key players, for today.

Group H
At Zagreb
Dinamo Zagreb (CRO) v Sevilla (ESP)
Dinamo took decisive action after 3-0 and 4-0 losses to Lyon and Juventus, with former Bulgaria coach Ivaylo Petev replacing Zlatko Kranjcar as manager. In three-time Europa Cup

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

CSKA Moskva v AS Monaco	21:45
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
Bayer 04 v Tottenham	21:45
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Sporting CP v Dortmund	21:45
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
Real Madrid v Warszawa	21:45
beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
Leicester City v Copenhagen	21:45
beIN SPORTS 7 HD	
Club Brugge v FC Porto	21:45
beIN SPORTS 8 HD	
Lyonnais v Juventus	21:45
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Dinamo Zagreb v Sevilla	21:45
beIN SPORTS 9	

winners Sevilla they face no easy task, the Spaniards having drawn 0-0 with Juventus and beaten Lyon 1-0 to sit level on points at the top of the table. Sevilla are also sitting pretty in La Liga, one point off the summit after a win at Leganes on Saturday, their first away league win since the final day of the 2014/15 campaign.

At Lyon, France
Lyon (FRA) v Juventus (ITA)
Juventus are setting the pace in the Serie A title race, their 2-1 win—Paulo Dybala scoring both goals—over Udinese on Saturday placing them five points clear of Roma. Coach Massimiliano Allegri, who guided Juve to the 2015 final, cut a frustrated figure the last time out after a goalless draw with Sevilla as he tries to plot his team's path to a first Champions League crown in 20 years. Juve followed that draw with an emphatic 4-0 win at Dinamo to lead the table. The teams' last encounter came in the 2013/14 Europa League quarter-final, the Italians winning both legs. — AFP



TURIN: Juventus' forward Gonzalo Higuain from Argentina takes part in a training session on the eve of a UEFA Champions League football match against Olympique Lyonnais yesterday at the Juventus Training Center in Vinovo, near Turin. — AFP

Sports

Kyrgios to seek
psychologist help
after ATP ban threatReal Madrid aim for
goal fest as Leicester
look to stay perfect

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WESTBROOK, ADAMS POWER THUNDER PAST TIMBERWOLVES Page 17



ORLEANS: Carolina Panthers wide receiver Kelvin Benjamin (13) tries to pull in a pass as New Orleans Saints cornerback Ken Crawley (46) covers in the first half of an NFL football game in New Orleans, Sunday. — AP

BREES LEADS SAINTS PAST SLUMPING PANTHERS

NEW ORLEANS: Drew Brees passed for 465 yards and four touchdowns, Wil Lutz kicked a 52-yard field goal with 11 seconds left, and the New Orleans Saints pulled out a 41-38 victory over the Carolina Panthers on Sunday. With his 15th 400-yard game, Brees broke a tie with Peyton Manning for the most in the regular season. Brees also led the Saints (2-3) to a second straight victory while Carolina lost its fourth straight despite the return of quarterback Cam Newton, who missed last week's loss to Tampa Bay because of a concussion. Newton passed for 322 yards and two touchdowns. He also ran for a 2-yard score and threw a 2-point conversion to Devin Funchess that tied the game at 38 with 2:58 left, and completed a comeback from an early 21-0 deficit. However, he was also intercepted by Sterling Moore in the back of the end zone, stalling a promising drive in the first half - a turnover that came back to haunt the defending NFC champions, now 1-5.

COWBOYS 30, PACKERS 16

Rookie Dak Prescott threw for 247 yards and three touchdowns, and the Cowboys forced four turnovers. Prescott was 18 of 27, shaking off two fumbles and an interception - the first of his career - to lead the Cowboys (5-1) to their fifth straight win. He showed poise in the fourth quarter while marching the Cowboys on a seven-play, 75-yard drive that ended with a 4-yard touchdown pass to Cole Beasley for an 18-point lead. The score left Packers fans stunned at Lambeau Field. They were booing at times following another choppy game for the offense. The four turnovers were a season high for Green Bay (3-2). Even two-time NFL MVP quarterback Aaron Rodgers wasn't immune from the jeering. Rodgers finished 31 of 42 for a season-high 294 yards.

SEAHAWKS 26, FALCONS 24

Steven Hauschka's 44-yard field goal with 1:57 remaining capped the 20th career fourth quarter or overtime comeback for Seattle quarterback Russell Wilson. After watching Matt Ryan blitz the Seahawks for 21 third-quarter points, it was Wilson's turn in the fourth quarter. He led a 70-yard drive that was capped by Christine Michael's 1-yard run with 4:47 left, but a blocked extra point by Ra'Shede Hageman still had Seattle trailing 24-23. Seattle then got a needed big play from its defense. Ryan's pass slipped through Julio Jones' hands, was tipped in the air by Richard Sherman and eventually landed in the arms of Earl Thomas, giving Seattle possession at midfield with 3:48 remaining. It was the first time in the game that Jones was targeted and didn't make the catch. Seattle stalled at the Atlanta 26. This time Hauschka was perfect after missing a 29-yard attempt earlier in the fourth quarter, the result of a bad snap. Ryan was incomplete on his last four throws, including a breakup by Sherman on a

long pass to Jones on which the Falcons screamed for a pass interference flag.

CHIEFS 26, RAIDERS 10

Spencer Ware ran for a career-high 131 yards and a touchdown and Alex Smith picked apart Oakland's struggling defense. In their first game since getting blown out by 29 points in Pittsburgh two weeks ago, the Chiefs (3-2) efficiently handled a Raiders team that had overcome defensive shortcomings with a big-play offense to lead the AFC West. Smith completed 19 of 22 passes for 224 yards, Jamaal Charles and big defensive lineman Dontari Poe each ran for scores, and the Chiefs forced two turnovers by Derek Carr to dampen a fast start to the season by the Raiders (4-2), who are trying to end a 13-year playoff drought. Marcus Peters set up Ware's TD run with an early interception of Carr and Dee Ford forced a fumble from Carr in the fourth quarter to end any hopes of a late comeback.

TEXANS 26, COLTS 23, OT

Nick Novak made a 33-yard field goal in overtime to give Houston a comeback victory over Indianapolis. Brock Osweiler threw a 36-yard pass to Jaelen Strong to get Houston to the 12 and Novak's field goal came two plays later. Indianapolis (2-4) got the ball first in overtime, but Benardrick McKinney sacked Andrew Luck on third down to force a punt. Osweiler shook off a tough start to throw two touchdown passes in less than 2 minutes in the fourth quarter as Houston (4-2) erased a 14-point deficit to tie it at 23 with 54 seconds left. He found Lamar Miller on a 10-yard catch-and-run TD with 2:47 remaining and, after a stop by the defense, connected with C.J. Fiedorowicz on a 26-yarder that tied it.

REDSKINS 27, EAGLES 20

Kirk Cousins threw for 263 yards and two touchdowns and the Redskins ran roughshod over one of the NFL's top defenses. The three-headed running attack of Matt Jones, Robert Kelley and Chris Thompson combined for 231 yards and a touchdown as the Redskins (4-2) won their fourth consecutive game. After starting the season 0-2, Washington has its best record through six games since 2008, when it went 8-8. The Redskins put up 493 offensive yards against the Eagles (3-2), who came in allowing an average of 266.8 yards and 12.6 points as the league's second-best defense. Cousins connected with Jamison Crowder on a 16-yard touchdown and with Vernon Davis on a 13-yarder. Davis started at tight end in place of Jordan Reed, who was out with a concussion. Jones ran for a 1-yard touchdown and sealed the victory with a 57-yard run as part of his 135-yard day. Malcolm Jenkins intercepted Cousins and returned it 64 yards for a touchdown. Philadelphia also got an 86-yard kickoff return touchdown by Wendell Smallwood.

DOLPHINS 30, STEELERS 15

Ben Roethlisberger missed one series because of a left knee injury and was held to 189 yards passing. Jay Ajayi rushed for 204 yards and two scores on 25 carries for the Dolphins (2-4). The Steelers (4-2) had scored 74 points in their previous two games, but were outgained 474-297. Pittsburgh's Antonio Brown, the NFL's leading receiver, was held to four receptions for 39 yards. Teammate Sammie Coates, playing with a hand injury, didn't have a catch. Roethlisberger had only 83 yards passing with 5 minutes left before he drove the Steelers 97 yards for a touchdown. Miami recovered the ensuing inside kick to seal the victory, and on the next play Ajayi scored on a 62-yard run.

BILLS 45, 49ERS 16

LeSean McCoy scored three times and the Bills extended their winning streak to four. McCoy had 140 yards rushing and shook off what appeared to be a frightening injury to his right knee late in the second quarter. Tyrod Taylor threw two touchdown passes in helping Buffalo (4-2) win four straight for the first time since the start of the 2008 season. Colin Kaepernick provided the 49ers a spark in his first start in nearly a year. Blaine Gabbert was benched following a 33-21 loss to Arizona, and Kaepernick finished 13 of 29 for 187 yards, including a 53-yard touchdown pass to Torrey Smith. But San Francisco (1-5) couldn't finish drives, settling for three field goals by Phil Dawson, in losing its fifth straight game. Kaepernick was the target of numerous boos and chants when he kneeled during the national anthem in continuing his protest against racial oppression and police brutality.

PATRIOTS 35, BENGALS 17

Playing in his first game in Foxborough since the end of his "Deflategate" suspension, Tom Brady had three touchdown passes and went over 5,000 completions for his career. Brady finished 29 for 35 for 376 yards. Tight end Rob Gronkowski had seven receptions for a career-high 162 yards and a touchdown. Cincinnati dropped to 2-4 for the first time since 2010, when it finished 4-12 - its worst season under coach Marvin Lewis. The Bengals had their moments offensively, scoring on a 2-yard touchdown run by Andy Dalton and 5-yard pass from Dalton to Brandon LaFell. But New England (5-1) bounced back from some sluggish drives early with several big plays in the third quarter.

GIANTS 27, RAVENS 23

A banged-up Odell Beckham Jr. turned a short fourth- and 1 pass into a winning 66-yard catch and run with 1:24 to play as the Giants snapped a three-game losing streak. The win was the 700th in franchise history. Beckham gave it to the Giants with a career day despite going to the locker room with a hip pointer in the second quarter. Beckham returned before the half and made the Giants (3-3) a winner with a spectacular sec-

ond half. It featured a 75-yard touchdown catch and a 43-yard reception that set up one of Josh Brown's two field goals. The Ravens (3-3) lost their third straight. Beckham finished with eight catches for 222 yards. His late heroics saved the Giants, who were on the verge of a fourth straight loss after Terrance West scored on a 2-yard run with a 2:04 to play, giving the Ravens a short-lived 23-20 lead.

LIONS 31, RAMS 28

Matt Prater made a tiebreaking, 34-yard field goal with 1:29 left and Rafael Bush followed with a victory-sealing interception two plays later. The Lions (3-3) have won two straight games with Prater making the winning kick and a defensive back following up with an interception on the ensuing possession. The Rams (3-3) have lost two straight. Case Keenum completed a Rams-record 19 straight passes, but couldn't connect with Lance Kendricks on the long throw that Bush stepped in front of near midfield. Keenum finished 27 of 32 for 321 yards with three touchdowns - two to Kenny Britt, one to Kendricks - and an interception. Britt had season highs with seven receptions and 136 yards, 47 of which came on a highlight-reel catch. Matthew Stafford threw for four Detroit touchdowns. Golden Tate had eight receptions for a career-high 165 yards and a touchdown. Marvin Jones, Anquan Boldin and Andre Roberts also caught TDs for the Lions.

TITANS 28, BROWNS 26

Marcus Mariota threw for 284 yards and three touchdowns, and the Titans got their second straight victory - the first time they've won consecutive games since the end of the 2013 season. The Titans (3-3) matched their win total for all of last season when they went 3-13 and wound up with the No. 1 draft pick overall. They also beat a team other than Jacksonville on their own field for the first time since the 2013 season finale and improved to 3-16 in Nashville. Cleveland (0-6) is mired in its worst start since 1999 when the Browns lost their first seven as an expansion franchise.

JAGUARS 17, BEARS 16

Blake Bortles threw for 271 yards and hit a slipping Arelious Benn for a 51-yard touchdown in the closing minutes. The Jaguars (2-3) wiped out a 13-0 deficit in the fourth quarter in a matchup of last-place teams. And the go-ahead touchdown might have been helped by the oft-criticized turf at Soldier Field. Benn slipped as he caught a slant and so did Tracy Porter as he tried to tag the receiver. That allowed Benn, who spent the past three seasons on injured reserve, to get up and run untouched for his first touchdown in five seasons. That gave the Jaguars a one-point lead with 2:49 left and sent the Bears (1-5) to another loss after they dropped the previous game to Indianapolis on a late TD pass by Andrew Luck. Chicago came up short despite racking up 389 yards. — AP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

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OBG publishes The Report: Kuwait 2016

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Iran hopes to reach Qatar's gas output level by 2017

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WIBC 2016 to be held in Manama from Dec 5 to 7

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ZOMBIE BANKS ARE STALKING EUROPE'S ECONOMY: SURVEY

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NBK POSTS KD 219.3M NET PROFITS FOR 9M 2016

AL-SAYER: NBK'S SOLID RESULTS CONTINUE TO REFLECT GROWING BUSINESS VOLUMES

Total assets grew by 4.3% YoY to KD 24.8 billion and shareholders' equity by 8.3% to KD 2.9 billion

Al-Sayer: NBK remains the market leader and continues to be the key player in Kuwait's infrastructure development plan

Drop in oil prices remains a challenge but its impact on the domestic operating environment is relatively confined compared to other regional economies

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) reported net profits of KD 219.3 million (\$728 million) for the first nine months of 2016 compared with KD 227.9 million (\$756 million) for the same period in 2015. Adjusting for gains recognized in 9M 2015 from the sale of NBK's 30 percent stake in International Bank of Qatar (IBQ), net profits recorded a growth of 3.8 percent year on year.

Net operating income grew at 4.5 percent year on year, after adjusting for the sale of NBK's stake in IBQ, to reach KD 545.8 million (\$1,811 million).

Total assets as of end of September 2016 reached KD 24.8 billion (\$82.3 billion) up 4.3 percent compared to end of September 2015, while total shareholders' equity increased by 8.3 percent to KD 2.9 billion (\$9.7 billion). Customer loans and advances reached KD 13.9 billion (\$46.0 billion) as of end of September 2016, growing at 4.9 percent year-on-year, while customer deposits grew by 9.7 percent for the same period to reach KD 12.8 billion (\$42.4 billion).

NBK asset quality remained exceptionally strong with NPLs/Gross loans improving to 1.22 percent as of end of September 2016 from 1.41 percent a year ago, and NPL coverage increasing to 371 percent from 301 percent in September 2015.



Isam Al-Sager

Nasser Al-Sayer, NBK's Chairman, said "NBK's third quarter performance continues confirming our view of an overall improvement in Kuwait's operating environment. The Group is on track to deliver another year of strong financial performance and solid shareholder returns"

Al-Sayer affirmed that the strong set of results in the 9M 2016 is driven mainly by the core banking activities. "Our financial indicators continue to reflect the growing demand for core banking business as economic activity continues to pick up."

Al-Sayer also highlighted the role of the ongoing capital spending plan in the improved operating environment. "The Kuwaiti government



remains determined on its capital spending plan and we continue to see an accelerated trend of project tenders and awards. This has led to an improvement in the overall operating environment, a pick-up in business sentiment and consequently higher demand on bank credit" Isam Al-Sager, NBK's Group Chief Executive Officer said "NBK remains focused on its diversification strategy. We enjoy a highly diversified balance sheet and income sources, allowing the group to capture opportunities through various locations and across different business segments". "Domestically, NBK continues to play a leading role in financing Kuwait's infrastructure development plan while aggressive-

ly defending its market share on the retail front." Al-Sager also added that Boubyan Bank continues to deliver notably to the Group's profitability as the bank embarks on expanding its operations in Kuwait and making larger inroads in Kuwait's Islamic banking market.

Al-Sager also highlighted that the performance of NBK's international operations remains very lucrative despite the challenges that came with lower oil prices and uncertainty in global economic outlook. NBK Group generated 32.6 percent of the 9M 2016 profits from its branches, associates and subsidiaries outside Kuwait.

"Our diversified strategy, conservative risk management practices

and focus on core banking business remained the fundamental to NBK's operations" Al-Sager added. "These attributes have been continuously reflected in the Group's financial indicators year after year as the bank enjoys the best-in-class asset quality indicators and comfortable capitalization levels. We saw our NPL/Gross loans ratio dropping to 1.22 percent with a coverage ratio of 371 percent as of September-end 2016 while our Capital Adequacy Ratio remained very strong at 17.2 percent for the same period"

NBK continues to enjoy collectively the highest ratings among all banks in the Middle East from the three international rating agencies Moody's, Fitch Ratings and Standard



Nasser Mused Al-Sayer

and Poor's. The Bank's ratings are supported by its high capitalization, prudent lending policies, and its disciplined approach to risk management, in addition to its highly recognized and very stable management team. NBK maintains its position among Global Finance's list of the 50 safest banks in the world for the tenth consecutive time.

NBK enjoys the widest banking presence with a local and international network reaching 4 continents. NBK's international presence spans many of the world's leading financial centers including New York, Europe, GCC, Middle East, Singapore as well as China (Shanghai).

219.3

Million KD Net Profit for the 9 Months, 2016

30/09/2016

Net Profit

219.3
Million KD

Net Operating Income

545.8
Million KD

Shareholders' Equity

2.9
Billion KD

Total Assets

24.8
Billion KD

Moody's
Aa3

FitchRatings
AA-

Standard & Poor's
A+

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SAUDI SHARES HIT BY Q3 EARNINGS, REGION WEAK

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's stock market fell yesterday after another set of disappointing third-quarter earnings, while other markets in the region were also weak, in line with the global trend. The Saudi index slipped 1.2 percent as Alinma Bank, the most heavily traded stock, dropped 2.9 percent. Alinma was the latest in a string of Saudi banks to report weak quarterly earnings as the slow economy increases impairment charges on loans; it posted a 16.8 percent fall in third-quarter net profit to 312 million riyals (\$83.2 million). Analysts had an average forecast 409.1 million riyals.

Medical insurer BUPA Arabia, which had dropped 4.7 percent on Sunday after posting an 8.9 percent drop in its third-quarter net income, fell a further 2.9 percent. Najran Cement lost 3.1 percent after reporting a 52 percent year-on-year drop in third-quarter net profit. Petrochemicals generally outperformed, with top producer Saudi Basic Industries, which is expected to report quarterly earnings in the next few days, dropping only 0.6 percent. Saudi Company for Hardware was one of the few gainers, rising 2.3 percent after reporting a 10.1 percent rise in quarterly net profit. Dubai's stock index

fell 0.9 percent in a broad-based decline, although the two most heavily traded stocks, GFH Financial and builder Drake & Scull, rose 3.9 percent and 1.1 percent. Abu Dhabi's index sank 2.2 percent because of a steep decline by First Gulf Bank, which lost 4.9 percent. The only Gulf market to gain was Qatar, which rose 0.6 percent on the back of Qatar National Bank's 1.5 percent gain. The bank reported a 10 percent rise in third-quarter profit last week. Egypt's index lost 2.2 percent as investment bank EFG Hermes pulled back 2.9 percent. Shares in Beltone Financial were briefly suspended and then

resumed trading after the stock's fair value was misstated in a report given to the financial regulator on Sunday. They last traded at 10.71 pounds, level with Sunday's close. The stock has been dogged by controversy. In August, Egypt's regulator requested that Beltone appoint a third party to assess the fair market value of its stock after it jumped more than 550 percent. In June, Beltone filed a lawsuit against the heads of the Cairo stock exchange and the financial regulator over the repeated cancellation of trades in its stock. —Reuters



NEW YORK: Trader Thomas Cicciari (right) works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange yesterday. —AP

IRAN HOPES TO REACH QATAR'S GAS OUTPUT LEVEL BY 2017

TEHRAN AIMS FOR OIL, GAS FIELDS TENDER IN NOVEMBER

TEHRAN: Iran hopes by early next year to boost its natural gas production to Qatar's level, Iranian oil minister Bijan Zanganeh told an energy conference yesterday. He said Iran's priority was developing the giant South Pars gas field which it shares with Qatar, as well as shared oil fields.

Iran plans to increase its crude oil production to 4 million barrels per day in 2019 and 4.28 million bpd in 2020, while boosting condensate output to 1 million bpd as early as 2018, Zanganeh told the conference. Crude output is currently 3.8 million bpd and condensate output 688,000 bpd, he said.

The minister also said new oil and gas contracts for international and domestic companies would focus on enhancing rates of oil recovery. Earlier in the day, the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company, Ali Kardor, said Iran expected to tender the new contracts by the end of November. He gave a marginally different figure for current oil production, of 3.9 million bpd.

Iran will launch next month its first new style tender to develop oil and gas fields since the lifting of international sanctions, a leading oil official said yesterday, after months of internal discussions over the terms, intended to be more

alluring to foreign companies.

OPEC's third largest oil producer hopes to revive its energy sector following the lifting of the sanctions in January after years of under investment and to achieve production levels last seen in 2012.

Other US sanctions that remain in place, particularly on the banking sector, have dampened hopes for a rapid resumption of investment. Iran expects to tender new oil and gas contracts, known as IPCs, in November, Ali Kardor, the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said on the sidelines of an oil conference in Tehran. Oil companies will be able to bid for a contract to develop the South Azadegan oil field as early as November 19, and NIOC will award the contract by early 2017, he said. After South Azadegan, NIOC will start tendering one field month by month, Kardor said. There are total 11 oil and gas fields available for tendering, he said.

The launch of the Iran's new oil and gas contracts was postponed several times as hard line rivals of pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani resisted any deal that could end the so-called buy-back system, under which foreign firms were banned from owning stakes in Iranian companies.

NIOC signed the first oil output contract under IPC earlier this month with a company identified by the United States as part of a conglomerate controlled by Iran's supreme leader. NIOC began taking applications yesterday for its upstream oil and gas projects as Iran hopes to sign exploration and production contracts early next year. The oil companies will upload on to NIOC's website the pre-qualification documents. NIOC will then evaluate the companies within two weeks and will select some for the first tender in November.

Some analysts said Iran's IPCs do not seem to be attractive enough to raise billions of dollars in foreign direct investment at a time of low oil prices, especially when compared with neighboring Iraq's new oil contracts that enabled it to boost its output. However Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri said yesterday that Iran's security and business climate is better than other neighboring countries.

"Some countries are run by tribes, Iran is different than that," Jahangiri told the petroleum conference, addressing representatives of oil majors such as Total and BP. "Even if Iran's contracts are not as attractive as others signed in neighboring countries, Iran has its own advantages." —Reuters

UNION NATIONAL BANK Q3 PROFIT FALLS 15%

ABU DHABI: Union National Bank, 50 percent owned by the Abu Dhabi government, yesterday posted a 15 percent drop in third-quarter net profit, missing analysts' forecasts as interest income fell. It was the sixth successive quarter of weaker earnings, squeezed by government spending cuts in the United Arab Emirates and tighter liquidity due to lower oil prices.

The fifth largest lender in the emirate by assets reported a net profit of 410 million dirhams (\$110 million) in the three months to Sept. 30, compared to 483 million dirhams in the same period a year ago. Net profit attributable to equity holders in the third quarter was 406.64 million dirhams versus 480.59 million dirhams in the prior-year period, according to a bourse statement.

The average forecast of three analysts polled by Reuters had been for a quarterly profit of 456.7 million dirhams. Net interest income and income from Islamic financing in the quarter ending Sept. 30 fell 13 percent year-on-year to 667.20 million dirhams.

Net interest income was squeezed by the higher costs of deposits and also bad loans from the small and medium-sized enterprise portfolio, the bank said. Loans and advances reached 73.6 billion dirhams for the nine month period ending September 2016, up 7 percent from the same period of last year. Customer deposits edged up 2 percent to 74.8 billion dirhams over the same time frame.

Earlier this month, UNB sold a \$600 million, five-year international bond at 170bp over mid-swaps. —Reuters

US INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT RISES MARGINALLY, UTILITIES WEIGH

WASHINGTON: US industrial production barely rose in September as a rebound in manufacturing output was offset by a decline in utilities production, suggesting a moderate acceleration in economic growth in the third quarter. The Federal Reserve said yesterday industrial output edged up 0.1 percent last month after a downwardly revised 0.5 percent decline in August.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast industrial production gaining 0.1 percent last month after a previously reported 0.4 percent fall in August. Industrial production rose at an annual rate of 1.8 percent in the third quarter, the first quarterly increase since the third quarter of 2015. The report came on the heels of data on Friday showing a mild increase in core retail sales in September, which prompted the Atlanta Fed to lower its third-quarter gross domestic product estimate to below a 2.0 percent annualized rate. The economy grew at a 1.4 percent pace in the second quarter.

The industrial sector continues to be hobbled by the lingering effects of the dollar's surge and oil price plunge between June 2014 and December 2015. The sector has also been hurt by business efforts to reduce an inventory overhang, which has resulted in fewer orders being placed with factories. But with the dollar's rally fading and oil prices stabilizing, the worst of the industrial downturn is probably over. A survey early this month showed an acceleration in factory activity in



SEATTLE: A group of workers at the C C Filson Co manufacturing facility work at their sewing machines, in Seattle. The Federal Reserve reported yesterday on US industrial production for September. —AP

September, and new orders for manufactured capital goods have increased since June. While other data on Monday showed factory activity in New York State weakened further in October, manufacturers were more upbeat about the sector's prospects over the next six months.

The dollar rose slightly against a basket of currencies after the report, while prices for US Treasuries were little changed. Last month, industrial production was supported by a 0.2 percent rise in manufacturing output, which followed a 0.5 percent drop

in August. Manufacturing output was boosted by the production of goods such as textiles and plastics.

Motor vehicle and parts production edged up 0.1 percent, while the output of machinery and primary metals fell. Manufacturing production rose at a 0.9 percent rate in the third quarter.

In September, mining production increased 0.4 percent as gains in oil and gas well drilling offset a drop in crude oil extraction. That left mining output rising at a 3.7 percent rate in the

third quarter following six consecutive quarterly declines. Utilities production dropped 1.0 percent last month after slipping 0.3 percent in August.

With output barely rising last month, industrial capacity use edged up 0.1 percentage point to 75.4 percent, and is 4.6 percentage points below its long-run average. Officials at the Fed tend to look at capacity use as a signal of how much "slack" remains in the economy and how much room there is for growth to accelerate before it becomes inflationary. —Reuters



FLORANGE: Workers - members of French trade union CGT (Confederation generale du travail - General Confederation of Labour) stand during a demonstration yesterday outside the ArcelorMittal steel factory in Florange, eastern France. —AFP

JORDAN ISSUES LOCAL CURRENCY SUKUK IN BOON FOR BANKS

DUBAI: Jordan's government has raised 34 million dinars (\$47.9 million) in its first issue of a local currency sukuk for its own funding purposes, a deal that will benefit the country's Islamic banks, the government said yesterday. The Islamic bonds, which use a common sale and lease-back format known as ijara, have a tenor of five years and an expected profit rate of 3.01 percent.

Jordanian finance minister Omar Malhas said the issue, which was more than three times subscribed, priced inside the country's conventional bond curve - a sign of strong demand.

"The sovereign issuance is of great significance for the kingdom's four full-fledged Islamic banks, because it will give them a badly needed tool to manage

their excess liquidity, estimated to be 1.4 billion dinars," he said in a statement. The issue was conducted with help from the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector, an affiliate of the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank, which said Jordan would now be able to conduct more sukuk sales on its own using the same documentation.

Jordan has a small but growing Islamic finance industry. In 2011, the local company Al-Rajhi Cement issued 85 million dinars of seven-year sukuk, the first Islamic bonds in the country. In May this year, the central bank said it had auctioned its first sukuk, a five-year, 75 million dinar deal to help finance purchases by state utility firm National Electric Power Company. —Reuters

HAVANA: Havana's city government has temporarily suspended issuing licenses for new private restaurants in the city and warned existing ones to obey tough regulations, according to several owners of the businesses popular with foreign tourists.

The tougher line could put a crimp in Havana's food offering during the upcoming tourism season when both Americans and Europeans are expected to flock to the city in record numbers.

It is also a new sign that Cuba's Communist-run government is hesitant to further open up to private business in a country where it still controls most economic activity. Last year, Cuba backtracked on a series of market-oriented reforms in agriculture and this year has imposed price controls on private transportation services. Since President Raul Castro loosened restrictions on small businesses six years ago, private restaurants have flourished, especially in the capital where income is higher and an increasing flow of tourists demand better fare and service than

what is available in most state-run establishments. There are hundreds of private restaurants in Havana and more than 1,700 across the country, the tourism ministry says. Over the last six weeks, owners of some of the better-known eateries have been called to meetings where Havana city officials first praised their contributions to the economy and tourism, then listed all the regulatory violations some commit, warning them to cease and desist.

"Of course they are technically right, we all bend the rules, we have little choice," said the owner of one of Havana's more popular restaurants, like others asking to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals. "They were civil about it all and made no mention of what they planned to do, but we assume a big wave of inspections is coming," he said.

Paladares may only have a maximum of 50 seats and must buy all their supplies at state-run retail stores and markets, often at huge mark-ups, unlike state-run competitors which have access to whole-

sale markets and no seating restrictions. Many experts inside and outside Cuba consider the tax burden on successful small businesses onerous. The list of violations that officials read out included paladares not paying taxes, buying supplies on the black market, labor code violations and having more than 50 seats, according to two restaurant owners who attended meetings.

Other alleged violations were running bars masquerading as restaurants and contracting entertainment outside official channels, staying open after 3 am, disturbing neighbors, dubious sources of capital and illegal purchases of buildings.

Reading from notes, the local entrepreneur quoted the chair of one meeting stating: "We are not going to authorize licenses for now, so that when we do in the future these problems will have been taken care of." Neither the national nor local government responded to a request for comment. —Reuters

HAVANA SUSPENDS NEW LICENSES FOR PRIVATE RESTAURANTS

CHINA'S Q3 GROWTH FALLS TO 6.6%: POLL

BEIJING: China's growth slipped to a seven-year low of 6.6 percent in the third quarter, according to an AFP survey, despite ample stimulus and a red-hot property market in the world's second-largest economy. The median forecast for expansion in gross domestic product (GDP), based on a poll of 18 economists, represents an easing from the second quarter's 6.7 percent.

It would be the slowest quarterly growth since the first three months of 2009, in the middle of the global financial crisis. As the world's biggest trader in goods China is crucial to the global economy and its performance affects partners from Australia to Zambia.

GDP expanded 6.9 percent in 2015 — its weakest in a quarter of a century and the government has targeted growth in a range of 6.5-7.0 percent for this year. The AFP poll forecast China will just meet the goal, with the median full-year prediction at 6.6 percent.

"Our expectation is that growth will continue to slow. The largest headwind on the horizon is the housing sector, which peaked in April 2016 and thus is now in the correction phase of its cycle," Brian Jackson of IHS told AFP. Beijing is trying to execute a difficult structural transition away from dependence on low-end exports and heavy industry toward consumption and services, but entrenched interests have slowed progress.

At the same time, authorities have sought to combat a slowdown through hefty fiscal stimulus and loose home-buying policies that have fuelled property market booms in urban areas.

"Economic growth in the third quarter was better than market expectations," Rong Jing, a Beijing-based analyst with BNP Paribas, told AFP, but pointed to possible risks arising from the real-estate boom. "The property bubble risk will continue to balloon if the government does not take tightening measures, as it would cause a very negative impact on the economy and the financial system," she added. "The biggest restraint this year that prevents monetary easing is the real estate market." In recent weeks lawmakers have unveiled tighter

home-buying regulations in major cities to cool down galloping property prices.

Mixed signals

Recent indicators have painted a mixed picture of China's economic health. An official measure of manufacturing activity maintained its strongest level in nearly two years in September while auto sales grew at their fastest rate in three years in the world's biggest car market.

Data Friday showed that the price of goods at the factory gate rose in China for the first time in more than four years in September, a positive sign for demand after years of dropping prices battered manufacturers and put a damper on growth. "Recent economic data suggest that China's growth momentum has stabilised," said Raymond Yeung, an economist with ANZ. He pointed to recovery in private investment after "a period of massive decline". But exports sank 10.0 percent year-on-year in September, suggesting the Asian giant is yet to see the bottom of its years-long growth slowdown.

Imports returned to negative territory last month after a brief rise in August, with iron ore and copper volumes dropping, leading analysts to warn that the recent recovery in manufacturing activity could be short-lived.

Looking ahead, GDP growth faces the "downward pressure of a coming housing downturn, in particular in the first half of 2017" said Claire Huang of Societe Generale. Zhao Yang of Nomura expected China's yuan currency to be "much weaker" and forecast slower growth in the fourth quarter "due to the cooling down property market and waning demand from post-flood reconstruction". But Mizuho economist Shen Jianguang said that China's growth this year could be "stronger than the official data suggests", in contrast to last year when official figures probably overstated true expansion, he added.

Official Chinese figures are viewed with widespread skepticism, and in July the government altered its growth calculation method for the second time in less than a year. — AFP



FRANKFURT: The headquarters of Deutsche Bank is photographed in Frankfurt, Germany. Zombies are gnawing at Europe's underpowered economic recovery — zombie banks and zombie companies. — AP

ZOMBIE BANKS ARE STALKING EUROPE'S ECONOMY: SURVEY

GLOBAL BODIES CALL TO FIX WOES AMID GROWING CRISIS

FRANKFURT: The walking dead are gnawing at Europe's weak economy - zombie banks and zombie companies. Almost a decade after the financial crisis that ravaged the global economy, analysts and top officials are warning that too many banks in Europe are struggling financially, keeping them from lending to companies and fostering growth.

Calls to fix the problem have come repeatedly from the International Monetary Fund, US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew, and European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi. They say something has to be done if Europe's economy is to gain more traction and bring down unemployment. Here is a look at Europe's slow-burning banking crisis and how it hurts the economy.

BAD LOANS

Soured loans are one of the biggest problems, especially in Italy. They create a vicious cycle: the slow economy means businesses can't repay their loans. That leaves the banks short of cash to finance new business ventures, which holds back the economy even more.

Getting rid of the bad loans is a struggle. Italy's Monte dei Paschi is trying to offload 27.7 billion euros (\$31 billion) in such loans to investors who would buy them at a deep discount. The bank has to get rid of those problem assets before it can credibly ask investors for more money - up to 5 billion euros through a share offering. In Italy, one reason clearing bad loans can be difficult is that the courts are clogged, meaning it can take years to pursue the debtors and recover money. That makes the assets worth even less, and the lower the price, the bigger the financial hole the bank has to fill.

ZOMBIES

Banks under financial pressure, meanwhile, tend to prop up "zombie" companies by extending loans rather than pressing for repayment. A group of economists has found that banks under stress tend to maintain credit to companies they already have a relationship with, even if those companies are struggling. Yanking credit to such

companies would mean recognizing the bank's own losses on the loans. That leaves both bank and companies as walking dead, technically still in business but unable to grow, and gobbling up credit that could otherwise go to stronger companies. "Creditworthy firms in industries with a prevalence of zombie firms suffered significantly from credit misallocation, which slowed down the economic recovery," wrote the four economists: Viral Acharya at New York University's Stern School of Business, Tim Eisert from Erasmus University Rotterdam, Christian Eufinger at IESE Business School in Barcelona and Christian Hirsch at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. The economy of the 19 eurozone countries grew by a quarterly rate of 0.3 percent in April-June. That's not enough to bring down the 10.1 percent unemployment rate quickly enough.

FALLING STOCKS

Weak share prices for banks have compounded the problems, as they make it harder for banks to raise money from investors. The STOXX Europe 600 Banks index is off 21.9 percent this year, compared with a milder 7 percent drop for the broader STOXX Europe 600. Deutsche Bank is off 52 percent for the year to date; Monte dei Paschi is off 86 percent and Switzerland's Credit Suisse 37 percent. Deutsche Bank's shares plunged after it was reportedly facing a fine of up to \$14 billion dollars related to dealings in bonds backed by shaky mortgages before the financial crisis.

SKIMPY PROFITS, BIG PROBLEMS

All of this would be less of a problem if banks made enough money to build new capital reserves. But earnings have been sagging, too. Return on banks' loans and investments has not recovered to the levels seen before the crisis. Even banks in countries that have had fewer problems - Austria, France, and Germany - have seen returns rebound only to around 0.8 percent from 1.3 percent before the crisis. Deutsche Bank made a scant 20 million-euro profit in the second quarter despite 7.4 billion euros in revenue. That followed a 6.7 billion-euro loss in 2015.

If banks earned more money, they could attract investors more easily. "The answer is profitability," said Jan Pieter Krahen, a professor of finance at Frankfurt's Goethe University. "As soon as profitability is back there will be plenty of capital, because people will be happy to invest. Banks argue that part of the problem is that the ECB has slashed the interest rate benchmark to zero, which squeezes bank's profit margins.

TOO MANY BANKS

The ECB and IMF argue that European banks should fix their underlying business models: their costs are too high and they have too many branches. That's particularly true at a time when more banking is done online. In some countries, customers can withdraw cash at grocery stores and gas stations as they check out with the milk and broccoli - no teller involved.

The answer may be mergers and job cuts across national boundaries. "We have seen almost nothing in terms of restructuring the industry, which should have happened over a couple of years, and which is now even more urgent than before, not so much because of the crisis but because of technological change," Krahen said.

NO BAILOUTS PLEASE

The banks' situation is further complicated by new European Union restrictions on government bailouts. The new rules, which took effect this year, are meant to protect taxpayers from picking up the bill for rescuing banks - as happened during the financial crisis, overwhelming entire states' finances as in the case of Ireland. The restrictions raise the possibility that shareholders and junior bondholders - investors who loaned the bank money without getting collateral or a promise of priority repayment - would be required to take losses before government money could be used. However, in some cases, such as Italy's Monte dei Paschi, those investors are mom and pop savers. So a rescue could mean wiping out the life savings of thousands of small investors. — AP



BEIJING: A woman sits on her balcony as she watches bulldozers clearing the rubble of demolished buildings to clear the ground for a new property development project in Sanya. — AFP

CANTON FAIR EXPORTERS UPBEAT AS CHINA MOVES UP VALUE CHAIN

HONG KONG/GUANGZHOU: More than 80 percent of companies at China's largest trade fair expect to export more next year, helped by innovation and currency movements, according to a Reuters poll, raising hopes of a turnaround after more than a year of weak export data. Despite concerns at rising costs and feeble global growth, the mood was mostly upbeat at the Canton Fair in Guangzhou on southern China's Pearl River, where tens of thousands of mainland exporters and foreign buyers gather for what is regarded as a barometer of the country's foreign trade.

Chinese exports have been falling almost continuously since the second quarter of 2015, and showed an unexpectedly large drop of 10 percent in September, despite heading into what is usually the peak year-end shopping season. A third of the 103 companies polled said they expected a rebound in the country's exports soon, and 46 percent expect the slowdown to persist for between six and 12 months.

"The overarching environment is not that great, but we innovate so we remain competitive," said Hill Xing, sales manager at Kemage Power Machinery, which makes small power generators for household and agricultural purposes and employs 600-700 people. Andy Zhang, sales manager at Owatch, a virtual reality start-up, echoed that theme. "Traditional industries are lagging, but new innovative industries like us will do very well," he said. Struggling heavy industry helped pull Chinese growth to a 25-year low in 2015, and the country's foreign reserves fell by \$513 billion as the currency weakened and investors pulled out capital.

Nearly half of those polled in Canton said exports would be helped by the depreciation of the yuan, which has fallen 8.4 percent since August 2015, with another third expecting no impact. The fair, established in 1957, runs until Nov 4. Phase one, ending on Wednesday, features exhibitors covering electronics and household appliances, along with heavy machinery and building materials. Phase 2, from Oct. 23-27, covers consumer goods, gifts and home decorations, and the final phase includes textiles and apparel, office supplies, healthcare and foods.

Forty-five percent of companies said

they were upbeat on their order prospects, while 51 percent were neutral and 5 percent pessimistic.

FOOTFALL DOWN

On a list of eight issues polled, production costs were the biggest headache for most exporters at the bi-annual fair, which is attended by 24,553 exhibitors occupying more than 60,250 booths. This was followed by concerns over global economic growth, while rent was their least concern. Nearly 70 percent of exporters said hiring costs had climbed by up to 10 percent this year, though close to 60 percent said it was easy to get a loan for their business.

More than 65 percent of companies expect to increase investment spending by up to 20 percent next year, while 16.5 percent expect to raise spending by over 20 percent. Fixed asset investment in China grew just 8.1 percent in the first eight months of this year, the slowest pace since December 1999. Increasing labor and overall operating costs have hurt the competitiveness of China's exporters in recent years, with many switching to cheaper destinations in Southeast Asia, while others increase automation.

"We just installed a new production line from Korea to enhance automation. It will help to ease labor costs," said Juney Wang, manager at PVC floor manufacturer Rentier, based in Jiangsu province. Exporters said foot traffic at the fair, held in the provincial capital of Guangdong, nicknamed the workshop of the world for its manufacturing prowess, had dropped significantly from three years ago, while the buyer mix had also changed. "I'm seeing more buyers from emerging markets such as South America and Southeast Asia," said Jason Green, marketing director at Anhui Guofeng Wood-Plastic Composite Co.

Traditional markets such as Europe and the United States have been hurt by an economic downturn, and many buyers from these countries were increasingly buying over the Internet, he added. Jason Shen, general manager at KarrDiS, an armored door manufacturer from Zhejiang province in eastern China who has attended the fair since 2007, said footfall had dropped around 30 percent from two or three years ago. — Reuters



FALLS CHURCH: This file photo taken on December 30, 2014 shows a Bank of America sign in Falls Church, Virginia. — AFP

BANK OF AMERICA PROFITS RISE 6%, BEATS ESTIMATES

NEW YORK: Bank of America's third-quarter profits rose nearly 6 percent from a year earlier, helped by strong results in investment banking and trading as well as lower expenses. The profit growth came from all four of the bank's businesses and despite continuing low interest rates.

The consumer banking giant said yesterday it earned \$4.45 billion in the three months ending in September after paying dividends to preferred shareholders, up from \$4.178 billion in the same period a year earlier. The per-share figure rose to 41 cents versus 38 cents a year ago, easily beating the 34 cents per share analysts were expecting, according to FactSet.

BofA's consumer banking division earned \$1.81 billion in the quarter, up from \$1.76 billion from a year earlier. While revenue was relatively flat year over year, largely due to lingering effects of near-zero interest rates, BofA was able to cut expenses from \$4.711 billion in the third quarter 2015 to \$4.37 billion this quarter.

Investors took that as a positive sign, since BofA is primarily a US consumer banking company that is more exposed to low

interest rates than other banks with larger investment banking franchises. Part of the cost savings came from closing branches and laying off staff. BofA's branch count fell to 4,629 in the quarter from 4,741 a year earlier. The number of full-time employees fell to 209,009 from 215,193.

Noting the ongoing Wells Fargo sales practices scandal, Bank of America executives said they have seen no evidence of similar behavior at their bank.

"It's not the number of products we open, it's how they are used," Paul Donofrio, Bank of America's chief financial officer, said in a call with reporters. Bank of America's global markets division reported net income of \$1.07 billion, up from \$800 million a year earlier.

BofA's bond trading desks had a strong quarter, up 39 percent from a year earlier. Citigroup and JPMorgan Chase had reported similar gains in bond trading last week. BofA's balance sheet continued to recover as well. The bank's net charge-off ratio, or the proportion of loans the bank considers uncollectable, fell to 0.4 percent from 0.43 percent a year earlier. — AP

BULLISH BETS ON OIL HIGHEST SINCE 2014

LONDON: Hedge funds and other money managers have raised their bullish bets on US crude prices to the highest level since the slump started in the summer of 2014. Saudi Arabia and other OPEC members have successfully pushed oil prices back above \$50 by squeezing bearish fund managers ("Saudi Arabia squeezes hedge funds with bearish bets on oil", Reuters, Oct 10).

Hedge funds raised their net long position in the two main futures and options contracts linked to US crude WTI by 39 million barrels to 292 million barrels in the week to Oct 11. The combined position was the highest since July 2014, when WTI prices were still trading above \$100 per barrel and the long slide in prices was just beginning. Hedge funds have raised their combined position by 155 million barrels since the middle of September and by 212 million barrels since early August, according to data from the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission. Most of the adjustment has come from the short side of the market as hedge funds have covered short positions established earlier in the summer. Hedge funds have cut short positions in WTI-linked futures and options from a peak of 249 million barrels in early August to just 102 million barrels, a reduction of 146 million.

Over the same period, hedge fund long positions have risen from 329 million barrels to 394 million, an increase of just 65 million. Hedge funds have accumulated and liquidated short positions in four distinct cycles since the start of 2015. The accumulation and liquidation of hedge fund short positions has corresponded closely with the rise and fall in oil prices. The fourth and most recent cycle of short-selling began in early June when WTI prices were just over \$50 per barrel and the number of short positions in WTI was equivalent to around 78 million barrels. The cycle peaked at early August, when the number of short positions had risen to 220 million barrels, and WTI prices hit a low around \$39-42. Since then short positions have been reduced, somewhat unsteadily, and by Oct 11 the number of shorts had returned to 71 million barrels and prices were back just above \$50. The reduction in short positions has provided crucial support to prices over the last 10 weeks and explains why OPEC's relatively weak output agreement reached in late September had such a big impact on prices.

But the short covering process has now run its course, with relatively few more short positions to cover, and is likely to provide less support to prices going forward. US crude oil prices peaked at \$51.60 on Oct 10 and have since struggled to rise further, which is consistent with the short-covering rally being largely over. — Reuters

INDUSTRY TITANS TO ATTEND GLOBAL ISLAMIC FINANCE EVENT

WIBC 2016 IN MANAMA FROM DEC 5 TO 7

KUWAIT: The 23rd edition of the World Islamic Banking Conference (WIBC) will see a global participation with leaders from different regions across the world. The conference held in strategic partnership with the Central Bank of Bahrain will take place in Manama, Bahrain on the 5th, 6th and 7th of December 2016 and will feature a groundbreaking lineup of speakers.

The World Islamic Banking Conference is the longest running Islamic finance conference that speaks of a 23-year heritage with a robust platform that comprises of leading bankers, institutional investors, asset managers, policy makers, academics and other stakeholders. This year, WIBC will engage its audience in discussions on the challenges brought by the uncertainties in the global economic environment and highlight the need for Islamic finance to stay vigilant in order to maintain the current growth rates.

For 22 years, WIBC has been welcoming high profile delegations including regulators and government officials from various regions to discuss the future direction of this rapidly growing industry. This year, WIBC 2016 will welcome 3 high profile keynote speakers from leading emerging markets.

Saudi Arabia is one of the most active and influential markets in the Islamic finance space today as it is home to a number of dedicated Islamic Banks, as well as Islamic window operations offered through conventional banks. A great demand in Islamic finance products in this region, makes it one of the biggest markets in the GCC.

Dr Ahmed Al-Kholifey, who heads the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) and engages in research and international



Keynote speakers at WIBC 2016

affairs will provide a keynote speech at WIBC relating to the opportunities available in this region. Russia, being the latest entrant into this booming structure, is looking to use Islamic finance to further its efforts of exploring new ways of financing and develop its economy by welcoming international investors from emerging markets. Speaking to this effect is Alexander P. Torshin, State Secretary - Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Russia who will represent Russia's initiative in collaborating with Islamic finance institutions to pave way for the industry to tap into the opportunities in the CIS region.

Bahrain, the host nation of WIBC for the past 23 years has rapidly become a global leader in Islamic finance, playing host to the largest concentration of Islamic financial institutions in the Middle East. In particular, the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) continues to provide strong support to the financial industry which provides a significant percentage to the country's GDP and

economy as a whole. Rasheed Mohammed Al-Maraj, Governor, Central Bank of Bahrain has been an integral part of WIBC and will continue providing his support this year in a keynote speech, to help in furthering the ecosystem for Islamic finance entities to thrive and grow in the global markets.

Other confirmed speakers include:

* Khalid Hamad Abdul-Rahman Hamad, Executive Director - Banking Supervision, Central Bank of Bahrain
* Adel Abdul Wahab Al-Majed, Vice-Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Boubyan Bank
* Hamed Hassan Merah, Secretary General, AAOIFI
* Tirad Mahmoud, Group Chief Executive Officer, Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank (ADIB)
* Dr Anwar Al Sadah, First Group Deputy CEO, Al-Salam Bank
* Ahsan Ali Managing Director, Head of Islamic Origination, Standard Chartered Bank

* Dr Yahia Abdul-Rahman, Chairman & CEO, The LARIBA System- Bank of Whittier
* Farnida Bi, Head of Islamic Finance - Europe, Norton Rose Fulbright
* Mustafa Adil, Head of Islamic Finance, Thomson Reuters
* Mohammed Kateeb, Group Chairman & CEO, Path Solutions
* Cassim Docrat, Regional Director, DDCAP Group
* Kurt Lieberman, Chief Executive Officer, Magni Global Asset Management LLC
* Fadi Al-Faqih, CEO, Bank of Khartoum
* Fadi Al-Qutub, Chief Investment Officer, Al-Istithmar Capital
* Onur Takmak, Founding Partner & Chairman, RHEA Asset Management
* Hassan Amin Jarrar, Chief Executive Officer, Bahrain Islamic Bank (BisB)
* Ashar Nazim, Partner, EY
* Bashir Al-Natooq, Global Head of Islamic Finance, Fitch Ratings
* Lilian Le Falher, Executive Manager, Head of Treasury Kuwait Finance

House, Bahrain
* Dr Daan Elffers, Founder, Islamic Reporting Initiative
* Rehan Pathan, Head of Middle East and Malaysia, Arabesque Asset Management
* Dr Ashraf Gamal El Din, Chief Executive Officer, Hawkamah
* Najj Moukadam, Managing Director, SAB
* Samer Hijazi, Head of Islamic Finance, Grant Thornton UAE
* Marco Lichtfous, Partner, Deloitte Tax and Consulting
* Stuart Hutton, Chief Investment Officer, Simply Ethical
* Abdulla R. Shafeea, Head of Asset Management, The Investor for Securities Company
* Mohammad Raafi Hossain, Founder, Finocracy
* Tariq Al-Rifai, CEO, Quorum Centre for Strategic Studies
* Monem Salam, President and Fund Manager, Saturna Sdn Bhd
* Dr Hatim El-Tahir, Director Deloitte & Touche, Middle East
* Mark Smyth, Chief Investment Officer, Tawreeq Holdings
* Shabnam Mohammad, Head of Structuring MENA & Group Head of Islamic Finance, Tell Group
* Dr. Aishath Muneeza, Associate Professor, INCIIEF
* Nida Raza, Director Advisory Services, The Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD)
* Hamza Abu-Musa, Founder, SharedEq
* Dr Mohammed Abdel-Haq, CEO, Oakstone Merchant Bank
WIBC 2016 is a three-day gathering of the financial industry's leaders, taking place on the 5th, 6th and 7th of December at the Gulf Hotel in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain.



MELBOURNE: Etihad Airways' General Manager for Australia and New Zealand, Sarah Built, accepts the award for Australasia's Leading Airport Lounge from event hosts Greg Ohan (left) and Mai Anh Du (right).

ETIHAD AIRWAYS' MELBOURNE PREMIUM LOUNGE NAMED AUSTRALASIA'S BEST

ABU DHABI: Etihad Airways' Premium Lounge at Melbourne Airport has been voted Australasia's Leading Airport Lounge for 2016. The announcement was made at the 23rd Annual World Travel Awards Asia and Australasia Ceremony in Danang, Vietnam on 15 October.

Etihad Airways' Chief Executive Officer, Peter Baumgartner, expressed delight at the win, the airline's first ever at an Asia and Australasia World Travel Awards ceremony. "This award is a powerful endorsement of the superior quality of our Premium Lounge at Melbourne Airport and the hard work and commitment to excellence of the team."

"It attests to the competitive benchmark we have set in Melbourne and the high level of guest satisfaction with the world-class hospitality experience we deliver. "It's especially gratifying as it comes just months after the lounge opened in May this year and adds to the growing acclaim for our remarkable collection of premium lounges worldwide."

The award for Australasia's Leading Airport Lounge is one of the many the airline has received throughout 2016. Only last month, its new First Class Lounge and Spa at Abu Dhabi Airport was voted the Middle East's Leading Airport Lounge at the Middle East World Travel Awards.

Etihad Airways has a collection of 15 airport lounges worldwide. This includes the flagship First Class Lounge and Spa in Terminal 3; Premium Lounges in Terminals 1 and 3; a Premium Lounge within the unique US Customs and Border Protection facility; and a Premium Arrivals Lounge - all at Abu Dhabi Airport - plus Premium Lounges in Sydney, Frankfurt, London Heathrow, Manchester, Dublin, Paris, New York JFK, Washington DC, and Los Angeles. Its lounges resemble in style and ambience a luxury hotel or private members' club. They offer guests a tranquil environment where they can relax, re-energize, dine or be entertained, while

enjoying the intuitive service and hospitality for which the airline is world-renowned. In its lounges and in the air, Etihad Airways aims to provide a seamless hospitality experience with the same high levels of innovation, care, attention to detail and service delivery guests have come to expect from its people and brand.

Now in its 23rd year, the World Travel Awards celebrates excellence across key sectors of the travel and tourism industry. Votes are cast by travel industry executives and travel consumers.

The Etihad Airways Premium Lounge at Melbourne Airport opened officially on 9 May 2016. A natural light-filled space with floor-to-ceiling glass, it offers guests expansive views across the runway and surrounding countryside. At more than 800m² and with seating for up to 133, it is the airline's largest Premium Lounge outside Abu Dhabi.

Blending the essence of a fine-dining restaurant with a chic city cocktail bar, the lounge is a showcase of intelligent design and urban sophistication. Guests enjoy the comfort and luxury of top-quality custom furnishings and the hospitality, culinary excellence and cutting-edge beverage technology, which are the hallmarks of an Etihad Airways Premium Lounge.

Its features include an intimate 26-seat dining area and a fully equipped kitchen where a team of professional chefs prepares everything on the premises. The centerpiece is a sculptural showcase bar serving a wide selection of local wines, one-of-a-kind signature cocktails and mocktails developed exclusively for the airline by Fluid Movement, a world-leading London-based mixology consultancy; and more than 70 varieties of spirits. It also has an exclusive space for guests travelling in The Residence, the world's only private three-room cabin on a commercial aircraft, available only on Etihad Airways' A380.

KAMCO WINS 'BEST WEALTH MANAGEMENT CO' AWARD

INTERNATIONAL FINANCE MAGAZINE

KUWAIT: KAMCO Investment Company, a leading investment company with one of the largest AUMs in the region, has been awarded the "Best Wealth Management Company - Kuwait" from International Finance Magazine ("IFM"), a renowned financial publication that recognizes and honors individuals, as well as organizations, in the financial investment industry. The awards were presented to those who made a significant value addition to the industry through innovative products and services.

KAMCO was awarded the "Best Wealth Management Company - Kuwait" amongst a pool of nominees who went through a reader and expert analysis process, followed by extensive scrutiny on the basis of innovation, growth, sustainability and their contribution towards society. Commenting on the award, Sana Al-Hadlaq, Acting Chief Wealth Officer of KAMCO, said, "This award underscores KAMCO's ability to deliver superior and unique wealth management services and capabilities exceeding the expectations of our high net worth clients and the local industry. We strive to set the standard of excellence in our industry and in all that we do by providing personalized solutions, trusted advice, and professional expertise. The Wealth Management team's leadership and expertise has driven the success of KAMCO's active role in becoming one of the leading Asset

Management and Investment Banking providers in the local and regional markets."

Al-Hadlaq added, "We would like to dedicate this award to our loyal clients who believed in our ability to achieve their investment objectives. The trust and confidence they have placed in us indicates the close relationship we have built with our clients over the years. Our team is efficient in meet-



Sana Al-Hadlaq, Acting Chief Wealth Officer of KAMCO.

said that all Wealth Management services are based on a framework that includes extensive risk management, detailed financial advice, and access to KAMCO's network and capabilities.

The Wealth Management team caters to a wide client base that includes corporates, high net worth individuals, sovereign wealth funds, pensions, endowments, foundations and family offices, she added.

ing the diverse needs of our clients through customized innovative products and services." Al-Hadlaq further said that the Wealth Management team would continue to work closely with clients in identifying their investment goals and tailoring custom packages that suit their needs. She also



KFH ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF SECOND AL-RABEH DRAW

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the winners of the second draw of Al-Rabeh account that took place at 360 Mall amidst huge participation and attendance.

The draw was conducted under the supervision of representatives of the Ministry of Commerce where KFH revealed three winners of two 2016 Range Rovers and 3 kg of gold. The winners are Rafaa Hamad Alajmi and Amal Saud Alotaibi of 2016 Range Rover's for each, while Mohammad Abdulaziz Altamimi won 3 kg of Gold. Amidst exciting and suspense atmospheres, Private Banking General Manager at KFH, Waleed Khaled Mandani handed out the prizes to the winners. The big event also witnessed a number of competitions and winners in addition to some folkloric performance.

Al-Rabeh salary account, which was launched last February, is an investment savings account based on Mudaraba sharia principle that gives clients annual profit distributions. Clients can open this account at any of KFH 64 branches around Kuwait. It is noteworthy that the account is offered for clients wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts with the ability to save and invest. Al-Rabeh account is available for individuals in KD and it requires salary transfer as a prerequisite.

With regards to the prizes campaign terms and conditions, KFH gives away two Range Rovers 2016

HSE for the first two winners and a 3 KG gold for the third winner in quarterly draws to be held in the months of January, April, July, and October, providing that clients should have deposited 3 salaries in the three months prior to the draw, yet their minimum monthly balance is not less than KD 50 by the end of each month, bearing in mind that each KD 50 in the account entitles clients to one entry in the draw, thus more money in an account means more chances to win. KFH is keen on improving its bank-

ing products and services in line with clients' requirement in efforts to achieve customer satisfaction and cater more closely for their needs.

KFH endeavors to offer unique advantages and valuable prizes stemming from its continuing endeavors to offer outstanding products and services that address clients' requirements and meet their aspirations, yet consolidate Bank's prestigious status and excellence in offering products as per the highest standards of quality.



Waleed Mandani handing out the prizes to the winners.

SIGHTSEEING IN ULTRALIGHT AIRPLANES IN PYONGYANG

PYONGYANG: Until a few months ago, if you wanted a bird's eye view of North Korea's capital, there was basically only one option: a 150-meter-tall tower across the river from Kim Il Sung Square. Now, if you have the cash, you can climb into the back seat of an ultralight aircraft. With the support of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who has vowed to give North Koreans more modern and "cultured" ways to spend their leisure time, and with foreign tourism companies looking to entice visitors with unique things to do besides visit war museums and political monuments, a Pyongyang flying club has started offering short flights over some of the capital's major sights.

The tours, which began in late July, are operated by the Mirim flying club out of a fancy new facility on an old airfield adjacent to another of Kim's signature modernization projects: a sprawling equestrian club and horse racetrack. Officials say more than 4,000 North Koreans have gone up in the ultralight

fleet since, along with "hundreds of foreigners" from 12 countries.

The flights go directly over some of Pyongyang's most iconic spots, including the gargantuan May Day stadium, the torch-tipped Juche Tower and Kim Il Sung Square area, and the Munsu Water Park, yet another of Kim's leisure spot "gifts" to the city. Flights start off over a typically rural setting, with a mixture of farmland and small hamlets.

But that quickly transforms into what one would expect from a city of about 2.5 million: block after block of densely concentrated high-rise residential buildings, some in the drab gray color of concrete but many painted over in pink, beige or blue pastels. Toward the center of the city, spaces open up once again with large public plazas and the parks that surround Pyongyang's many monuments to its leaders and war memorials.

A different perspective
Considerations of places best not subjected to flyovers were almost cer-

tainly a factor before the tours could get off the ground. And, just to be safe, photographs taken from the air are screened by club officials after each flight. But seeing the city from a height of 2,000 meters or less while slowly pattering through the skies provides quite a different perspective from anything tourists, and even most Pyongyang residents, had ever been able to get before.

The flights aren't cheap - a 25-minute ultralight ride from the airstrip on the outskirts of the city to Kim Il Sung Square and the Juche Tower, which had previously been the best place to get an urban panorama, goes for around \$150. Shorter flights are offered at cheaper prices, starting from about \$65, but those only fly around the immediate vicinity of the flight club. Prices for North Koreans are much cheaper, though club officials wouldn't say exactly how much. Officials say the ultralight aircraft used for the flights were made in North Korea. —AP



An ultralight aircraft flies over the city of Pyongyang in North Korea. —AP



Shukri Eid, Managing Director - East Region, Cisco Middle East



Hani Nofal

CISCO AND GBM SHOWCASE THE FUTURE OF HOSPITALITY AT GITEX

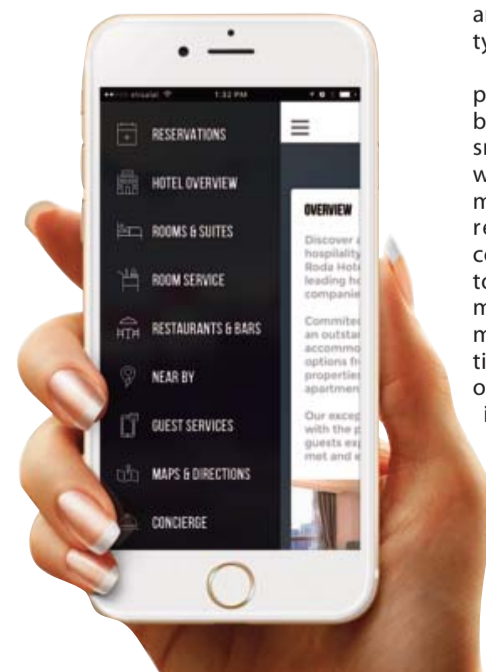
DUBAI: During GITEX 2016, Cisco introduced a suite of solutions which help hotels and resorts deliver superior experiences for guests and visitors, and which generate multiple revenue streams, greater productivity and reduced costs. Cisco also called for the regional hospitality sector to invest in innovative technologies to not only remain competitive but also differentiate their services to meet unique and fast evolving guest expectations.

The hotel industry estimates that over 300 new hotels will open in the Middle East and Africa in 2017. The UAE accounts for nearly 20 percent of this development, and with Expo 2020 and its expected 25 million visitors only a few years away, Dubai alone has over 130 hotel projects in the pipeline. Major regional events such as the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar are also driving hotel expansion. In this highly competitive environment, hotels are increasingly looking to technology to stand out and differentiate their offerings.

Latest technology solutions

At GITEX 2016, Cisco and GBM, a Cisco Gold Partner, are demonstrating the power of Cisco's latest technology solutions to deliver personalized guest experiences, improved management of operations, enhanced sales and marketing approaches, and reduced costs. One of the key solutions to be demonstrated is a new guest engagement platform for the hospitality industry, developed by IPera, a Cisco Developer Partner. The innovative 'mobile app' is built on Cisco Connected Mobile Experiences (CMX) technologies and allows hotels to recognize their guests and identify where they spend most of their time, delivering targeted messages based on their location.

"Now is the time for hotels in the region to evolve their technology strategies and take advantage of the impact digitization can have on their business. To meet evolving guest expectations, it is important for hotels in the region to use mobility in a smart way to build guest loyalty and increase room revenues through customized services and content," said Shukri Eid, Managing Director - East Region, Cisco Middle East. "We are excited to showcase a unique guest engagement platform built on Cisco's CMX wireless technologies that will help hotels deliver a personal, tailored and more easily integrated guest experience at all stages of their visit."



The fast pace of development is creating challenges for both existing players and new entrants in the hospitality sector and they are looking towards technology as an enabler to remain competitive, differentiate from other competitors and build loyalty amongst customers. Technology plays a crucial role in enabling better service and stronger operations. However, hotels will have to build analytics capabilities, keep up with advances in mobility and optimize existing touch point channels in order to apply technology strategically to create differentiated customer experiences.

"GBM's in depth understanding of the hospitality sector, its deep technical competency around Cisco wireless and mobile technologies, and its competency in building connected applications, are assets that can help leading hospitality end users achieve their business, financial and marketing objectives," explained Hani Nofal, Vice President, Intelligent Network Solutions, Security and Mobility, GBM. "Mobility is transforming the way we travel and spend our time while away from home. Guests now expect ubiquitous connectivity for all their devices and applications, along with customized offers, content and guest services."

Unique features

Most hotel mobile apps provide information services with some guest specific applications such as bill viewing and setting alarms. What sets out the guest experience platform being showcased by Cisco and its partners is its integration capabilities with smart WLAN infrastructure to deliver seamless location-based services. This allows for a number of unique features that include locating indoor positioning and the ability to quickly recognize guests when they arrive at the hotel lobby or dining outlets. It also offers guests and visitors enhanced customer experiences such as convenient way finding across the property and mobile payment options for restaurants, retail, and other service and food and beverage outlets.

The guest engagement platform presents hotels with additional revenue opportunities through cross-venue marketing, providing greater return on investment. Connected to facility operations at the back end, the platform also allows hoteliers to enhance their customer loyalty programs and develop their digital communication strategies based on guest profiles and location, otherwise known as proximity marketing.

The platform can be scaled across other properties operating under the same brand, is built for connected devices like smartphones and tablets, and provides a wide range of touch points and engagement features and can be used at hotels, restaurants, conferences, lounges, concierge desks, and other places of customer and staff engagement. It supports multichannel integration using SMS, social media platforms, email, mobile applications, push notifications and virtual word of mouth marketing. Emergency alerts issued by the venue will also be visible to all users while on-premises. Apart from the guest engagement platform, Cisco and GBM are also showcasing their latest solutions for the region's hospitality industry. Senior executives from both companies are available at Cisco's stand number Z-B40, Zabeel Hall at GITEX Technology Week 2016 to meet with customers and partners.

FRANKFURT FAIR SHAKES UP BOOK WORLD WITH ART, TECH GADGETS

LOGICAL STEP AS CREATIVE INDUSTRIES BECOME MORE CONNECTED

FRANKFURT: There will still be more books than you could ever read, but visitors to this week's Frankfurt Book Fair will also be invited to don virtual reality goggles, visit an interactive classroom and discover 3D-printed art as publishers plug into new technology. Organizers of the world's largest publishing event say the focus on art and technology is a logical next step as the creative industries become ever more connected. The fair, which opens on Wednesday and is expected to draw some 275,000 visitors, has always been about "content-regardless of its format", the event's vice-president Holger Volland told AFP.

Among the main draws at the five-day gathering will be virtual reality experiences, with several exhibitors unveiling projects that plunge visitors into a world that until then only existed on the page. Taiwanese artist Jimmy Liao's picture book, "All of My World Is You", will come to life once visitors slip on a VR headset that will allow them to interact with the main character, a mysterious young girl, and complete challenges to make her smile.

In the spotlight as guest of honor is the literary culture and language of Flanders and the Netherlands, who have created three separate VR experiences, including one allowing users to alternate between the perspectives of a father and his nine-year-old daughter who are mourning the loss of a family member. "Literature exists not just on the page," said Suzanne Meeuwissen of the Dutch Foundation for Literature, a co-initiator of the projects, pointing to recent Nobel Literature Prize winner Bob Dylan as an example.

Virtual reality is a brand new canvas, she said, and "writers

and artists are hungry to explore this unfamiliar territory". Educational publishers are also tapping into new technology, from text books that can be made interactive with the help of an app to 3D printouts of organs to use in biology lessons. In the "Classroom of the Future", visitors can watch students and teachers try out the latest innovations. It remains to be seen, of

the challenges and opportunities of working with digital technology-and show off some results. Volland described Arts+ as a place to "discuss new business models and synergies between art and technology".

One of the highlights will be a project called "The next Rembrandt" in which a Dutch team used artificial intelligence and a 3D printer to create a

British contemporary artist David Hockney, who will unveil an oversized, 500-page book illustrating his life's work, from the famous sun-soaked swimming pool paintings of the 1960s to his recent series of iPad drawings. The signed, limited edition tome is so large that it will come with its own stand and a price tag of 2,000 Euros (\$2,200).



FRANKFURT: This file photo taken on October 09, 2013 shows fairgoers visiting the Frankfurt Book Fair. —AFP

course, to what extent all these ideas can generate revenues for publishers and creators, a question that will be a hot topic in Frankfurt.

'Next Rembrandt'

Such is the focus on creative content across different media that there will even be a "fair within a fair" this year, called Arts+, where artists, architects and museums will talk about

"new" work by the master painter based on a computer algorithm that worked out the average features of a typical Rembrandt subject.

But at its heart, the Frankfurt fair is for book lovers and with over 7,000 exhibitors from more than 100 countries, visitors will get the chance to discover thousands of new titles in all imaginable genres. One of the biggest names to attend will be

Adding a touch of royal flair to this year's event will be Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Belgium's King Philippe and Queen Mathilde, who will open the Dutch-Flemish pavilion on Tuesday, on the eve of the official kick-off. The Frankfurt fair dates back over 500 years, with the first edition taking place shortly after the Gutenberg printing press was invented in nearby Mainz. —AFP

KASPERSKY LAB AT GITEX: CYBER THREATS THAT AFFECT EVERYONE

DUBAI: At GITEX Technology Week 2016, Kaspersky Lab presented an overview of the changing cyber threat landscape in the Middle East with special emphasis on the protection of critical infrastructures and smart cities.

According to Kaspersky Security Network, an average of 17.4% users in the Middle East encountered cyber threats originating from the Internet in the third quarter of 2016. The countries with the highest percentage of users affected by these threats were Qatar (24.4%), United Arab Emirates (22.8%), Kuwait (20.1%), Saudi Arabia (17.9%) and Egypt (17.1%). At the same time, an average of 47% of users in the region encountered malware that spread in local networks, via USBs and storage disks.

"Raising awareness about cyber threats is fundamental for smart environments. Rapid technological advances in recent years require threat intelligence research and a strategic collaboration between critical infrastructure and smart cities. A cyber incident can have a major impact on the economical, reputational and productivity aspects of an organization, it can also threaten human lives. Consequently, we have been making a lot of efforts at Kaspersky Lab towards securing the different components of smart cities, contributing our expertise within the Securing Smart Cities not-for-profit global initiative, and that's predominantly why we are highlighting these issues this week at GITEX," said



Mohammad Amin Hasbini

Mohammad Amin Hasbini, Senior Security Researcher, Global Research & Analysis Team, Kaspersky Lab.

The concept of a smart city involves bringing together various cutting-edge technolo-

gies and solutions to ensure the reliable and convenient provision of services to people, public safety, resources utilization, etc. However, these technologies also open the doors for serious cyber risks that must be addressed proactively. Smart city security should be top priority for the executives pioneering the smart city evolution.

"Our recent study investigated city kiosks as well as speed cameras and their supporting infrastructure. Our experts discovered that cybercriminals could easily compromise these cameras and manipulate the data collected. To prevent such situations in real life, there should be a comprehensive approach to the development and implementation of smart devices into a city's infrastructure," comments Hasbini.

In addition to sharing its expertise, Kaspersky Lab provides a range of solutions that cover major smart city elements, including smart terminals, mobile applications, data storage and security for commercial and industrial facilities. The company's portfolio of security solutions that can help in developing smart cities includes:

- Kaspersky Security Intelligence Services
- Kaspersky Industrial CyberSecurity
- Kaspersky Security for Data Centers
- Kaspersky Embedded Systems Security for ATMs and Point-of-Sale Terminals
- Kaspersky Mobile Security
- Kaspersky Anti-Targeted Attack Platform

NEW WAVE OF TV CARTOONS URGE CHILDREN TO SAVE SEAS

CANNES: Coral reefs may be dying off at an alarming rate and pollution and over-fishing emptying the seas. But fear not. Help is at hand in the form of a new wave of cartoon superheroes determined to save the oceans. While Disney blockbusters "Finding Nemo" and "Finding Dory" have been attacked for sparking a spike in the poaching of tropical fish, Muppets creators the Jim Henson Company said Sunday that their new animated children's series "Splash and Bubbles" would help mobilize a new generation to save the undersea world. The big-budget 40-episode series, which will screen on PBS in the United States next year, aims to "turn the tide of our world to save the planet".

Boss Lisa Henson, daughter of Jim Henson, the puppetry genius behind "The Muppets" and "Sesame Street", said the

series, which was premiered at the MIPJUNIOR festival in the French resort of Cannes, comes at a vital time. While four to seven-year-olds may not be able to do much now to tackle the millions of tons of plastic waste that have created the "Great Pacific Garbage Patch", she said it is "their generation who will be left to solve" such problems. The series comes in the wake of the huge success of "The Octonauts", the most watched cartoon by pre-school children in Britain, Ireland and Australia.

'Star Trek' meets Jacques Cousteau

The "edutainment" show has a team of animated animals rescuing sea creatures from their base in the Octopod. With its catchphrase slogans of "Explore! Rescue! Protect!" it has been described as "Star Trek" meets Jacques Cousteau. And now filmmakers are working with the Monaco

oceanographic museum which the legendary French marine explorer ran for decades to create another series about child heroes fighting for marine conservation.

"Pirates of the Abyss" will feature four friends who go off on aquatic adventures in an old submarine to right the wrongs of pollution and the overexploitation of the oceans. Producer Aymeric Castaing told AFP that the series-aimed at slightly older kids-would tap into their anger and impotence at what is happening to the environment. "The world we live in will soon be in the hands of these kids. It is they who will have to save the oceans," he added. Castaing said the children begin their quest after chancing upon a laboratory left behind by "some of the greatest brains of the past" including Jules Verne, the inventor Nikola Tesla, Gustave Eiffel and Prince Albert I of Monaco, an

early marine researcher. "These geniuses from the past are in a way helping them save the future," said Castaing, co-founder of the Bordeaux-based I Can Fly studio.

'Good values'

Henson said like "Sesame Street", "Splash and Bubbles" was also all about teaching children good values in a fun way. "You would not believe how diverse the ocean floor is... There are seahorse single dads with 499 children," she joked. "And it is the seahorse dads who give birth. There is so much weird stuff there." She said although the show took its mission to education seriously, with "today's Jacques Cousteau marine biologist Dr Sylvia Earle" among its advisors, she insisted it was "not preachy".

"We are opening up the weird and wonderful world" of marine science and

conservation through fun adventures and music. "And we are showing the oceans amazing diversity and interconnectedness," she added. Nevertheless, each 11-minute episode will be cut with a humorous documentary segment called "Get Your Feet Wet", where children will "find out for instance that octopuses have no bones". Henson's distribution boss Richard Goldsmith said it was in the "studio's DNA" to promote "good and solid values" and that "Jim Henson was thinking about ecology and diversity long before it was cool".

Far from overwhelming children with the planet's problems, he said the show's purpose was to empower them to confront them. "One of (lead character) Splash's favorite sayings is, 'There is only one way to get over the fear of the unknown and that is to go there and find out about it,'" Goldsmith added. — AFP



LOS ANGELES: In this Sept 9, 2015, file photo, Planned Parenthood supporters rally for women's access to reproductive health care on "National Pink Out Day" at Los Angeles City Hall. — AP

WHY IT MATTERS: ABORTION

NEW YORK: Persistent Republican-led efforts to restrict access to abortion and to curb government funding for Planned Parenthood have been hotly debated in Washington and in states, and will be shaped in some way by the next president.

WHERE THEY STAND

Democrat Hillary Clinton supports access to abortion and is an outspoken defender of Planned Parenthood, which is the largest provider of abortions in the US and also offers other health services. Republican Donald Trump, who in the past was a supporter of abortion rights, now says he isn't, although he's been somewhat inconsistent in his campaign statements on abortion. Numerous anti-abortion leaders, initially wary of Trump, now support him because of his pledge to nominate Supreme Court justices who are open to curtailing abortions and his choice of Mike Pence, a staunch abortion foe, as his running mate.

WHY IT MATTERS

The prime battleground over abortion is the Supreme Court, which regularly confronts legal challenges on the issue. The next president has one vacancy to fill on the high court and could have more. A Clinton victory could strengthen the court's current 5-3 majority that supports abortion rights. A Trump win could lead to a reconfigured court that would uphold tough state laws restricting abortion and possibly consider overturning Roe v. Wade, the 1973 decision that established a nationwide right to abortion. Advocates on both sides have singled out the presidential election as the key to where the issue goes next.

In June, the Supreme Court issued its most important abortion decision in many years, striking down restrictions in Texas that required doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals and forced clinics to meet hospital-like building standards. The court held that this placed an "undue burden" on

women seeking abortion because it would force closure of many clinics.

In the future, the court is likely to face the question of whether other types of abortion restrictions impose an undue burden. One example: Laws adopted by numerous states that ban most abortions after 20 weeks of gestation on the disputed premise that a fetus can feel pain at that stage. Republicans in Congress voted to impose a 20-week ban nationwide, but it was blocked by Senate Democrats. If Democrats gain more Senate seats in November, that would make federal anti-abortion legislation even less likely. Congressional Republicans also have sought to halt federal money to Planned Parenthood. Most of that money goes to provide non-abortion services to low-income women.

A Clinton presidency would be expected to carry on President Barack Obama's opposition to such defunding attempts, with veto power to back it up. Trump says he'd support the stripping of federal financing from Planned Parenthood, though he also has made positive comments in the past about the importance of the organization's non-abortion services. States, too, have sought to curtail public money for Planned Parenthood over the past year - blocked by courts in some cases, but elsewhere forcing Planned Parenthood to curtail some contraceptive services, health screenings and other programs.

Federal law, and the laws of most states, already prevent public money from paying for abortions except in rare circumstances. The recent defunding bills prohibit state money for any services by organizations that also provide abortions. Public opinion on abortion is sharply divided, and has barely shifted in recent decades. The latest Gallup poll on the topic finds 50 percent of Americans say abortion should be legal under certain circumstances, 29 percent want it legal in all cases and 19 percent want it outlawed in all cases - roughly the same breakdown as in the 1970s. — AP

TESLA HOPES TO WORK WITH PANASONIC ON SOLAR ENERGY

TOKYO: US electric car maker Tesla says it plans to start working with Japanese electronics company Panasonic Corp. on solar energy. Tesla's said on its corporate blog yesterday that the companies have signed a non-binding letter of intent to begin collaborating on Panasonic's production of photovoltaic cells and modules at a facility under



Tesla Motors CEO Elon Musk

construction by San Mateo, California-based solar-panel company SolarCity Corp. in Buffalo, New York.

The deal requires shareholders' approval of Tesla's planned acquisition of SolarCity. Panasonic confirmed it was studying a collaboration with Tesla to make solar products at SolarCity's Buffalo facility, but

declined to give details. Palo Alto, California-based Tesla said the cells and modules would be used with its energy storage products.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk says SolarCity's installation network and Tesla's global energy storage could provide customers a one-stop shop for sustainable energy and transportation. Shareholders are due to vote on the acquisition on Nov. 17. "We are excited to expand our partnership with Panasonic as we move toward a combined Tesla and SolarCity."

By working together on solar, we will be able to accelerate production of high-efficiency, extremely reliable solar cells and modules at the best cost," said JB Straubel, chief technical officer at Tesla. Tesla intends to provide a long-term purchase commitment for those cells from Panasonic, according to the company.

The collaboration extends the partnership between Tesla and Panasonic, which includes the production of electric vehicle and grid storage battery cells at Tesla's Gigafactory. Panasonic is a major manufacturer of home appliances, such as washing machines, refrigerators, TVs and microwaves, but its operations also encompass services and products for businesses, including health care and security camera systems. — AP

CHINA LAUNCHES ITS LONGEST CREWED SPACE MISSION YET

METHODICAL PROGRESS IN COMPARATIVELY SHORT TIME

BEIJING: Two Chinese astronauts began the country's longest crewed space mission yesterday, blasting off on a spacecraft for a 30-day stay on an experimental space station as China steadfastly navigates its way to becoming a space superpower.

Ahead of the launch, one astronaut shouted: "We are ready! Please give instructions!" in front of dozens of people dressed in colorful dress representing China's ethnic minorities, in footage shown prominently on Chinese TV. The commander-in-chief of the manned space program, Gen. Zhang Youxia, replied: "Proceed!" followed by blaring marching music as the astronauts boarded a bus to take them to the launch pad. China, Russia and the United States are the only countries that have independently launched humans into space, and while the others have more experience in manned space travel, China's military-backed program has made methodical progress in comparatively short time. The launch is China's sixth manned mission, the previous longest being about two weeks.

For this mission, the astronauts will dock their spacecraft with the Tiangong 2 station within two days, conduct experiments in medicine and space-related technologies, and test systems and processes in preparation for the launching of the station's core module in 2018. A fully functioning space station is on course to begin operating six years from now and slated to run for at least a decade.

'More deeply and more broadly'

The Shenzhou 11 space capsule blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on the edge of the Gobi Desert in northern China at 7:30 am (2330 GMT) aboard a Long March-2F carrier rocket. Zhang declared the launch a success 16 minutes later. Defense Minister Fan Changlong then read a congratulatory message from President Xi Jinping calling for China's astronauts to explore space "more deeply and more broadly".

Since China conducted its first crewed space mission in 2003, it has staged a spacewalk and landed its Yutu rover on the moon. The Tiangong, or "Heavenly Palace," space stations are considered stepping stones to a mission to send a rover to Mars by the end of the decade. Administrators suggest a crewed landing on the moon may also be in the program's future.

The Shenzhou 11 astronauts are Jing



JIUQUAN: In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, the Long March-2F carrier rocket carrying China's Shenzhou 11 manned spacecraft blasts off from the launch pad at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center. — AP

Haipeng, who is flying his third mission, and 37-year-old Chen Dong.

"It is any astronaut's dream and pursuit to be able to perform many space missions," Jing, who turns 50 during his time in space, told a briefing Sunday. China was excluded from the International Space Station mainly due to US concerns over the Chinese space program's strongly military character. Chinese officials are now looking to internationalize their own program by offering to help finance other countries' missions to Tiangong 2, which, at 60 tons when completed, would still be considerably smaller than the 420-ton ISS.

China's space program also opened a fourth spacecraft launch site at Wenchang on the island province of Hainan in June. It was inaugurated with the launch of the newly developed Long March 7 rocket that was hailed as a breakthrough in the use of safer, more environmentally friendly fuels.

China is developing the Long March 5 heavy-lift rocket needed to launch the Tiangong 2's additional components and other massive payloads. A source of enormous national pride, China's space program plans a total of 20 missions this year at a time when the US and other countries' programs are seeking new roles. — AP

COMPANY DEBUTS SOLAR SIDEWALKS

SANDPOINT, Idaho: Scott Brusaw has a vision for the nation's roads. He believes the solar-powered glass pavers his company makes could transform thousands of miles of pavement into a new energy source. His business, Solar Roadways, recently unveiled its first public installation, in a downtown plaza in this northern Idaho resort town. It's 150 square feet of hexagon-shaped solar panels that people can walk and bicycle on.

The company is working on proof that the panels, for which it has a patent, are strong enough and have enough traction to handle motor vehicles, including semitrailers.

"Our plan is to replace all the asphalt and concrete," said Brusaw, noting concrete occupies over 48,000 square miles in the US. "If you cover it with solar panels, we can make three times our energy needs."

Going green

Solar Roadways is among a growing number of companies embracing renewable energy as the U.S. aims to reduce carbon emissions by one-third from 2005 levels by 2030. But it is the only business receiving federal highway research money in pursuit of solar road panels, part of the Federal Highway Administration's efforts to fight climate change, said Doug Hecox, a spokesman for the agency in Washington, DC.

Brusaw and his wife, Julie, got the idea for their Idaho business after watching the Al Gore movie "An Inconvenient Truth" and deciding they also wanted to join the battle against global warming. They aren't the only ones eyeing roads and sidewalks as a potential energy source. A solar bike path was built in the Netherlands in 2014, and Germany and France have announced plans to build solar roads in the future. The Brusaws hope to beat them into mass production. Incorporated in 2006, Solar Roadways has received three FHA grants, totaling \$1.6 million, and funding from the state and a local economic development agency. It also drew 50,000 donors who raised \$2.2 million on Indiegogo, a crowd-sourcing site.

Can glass really support semis?

Solar Roadways has been testing the strength

of its half-inch-thick glass by dropping 1-pound steel balls on it from a height of 8 feet, a standard test for concrete. So far, the tests have been successful, Brusaw said.

The glass has a traction surface that is equivalent to asphalt. In tests, vehicles are able to stop in the required distance, he said. In strength tests, the panels can hold 250,000 pounds, three times the legal limit for a semitrailer.

What do the panels look like?

They are made of tempered glass, weigh about 70 pounds each and contain lights that can be programmed to direct traffic or alert drivers to problems.

Each hexagonal panel is about 31 inches point-to-point. The panels contain microprocessors that allow them to communicate with each other, a central control station and vehicles. They also are designed to be easily replaced if damaged.

According to Solar Roadways, heat produced by the panels keeps roadways snow- and ice-free, improving winter driving safety. The panels can currently be used for sidewalks, driveways and parking lots. The company is still seeking permission from the federal government to use them in roads.

What's next?

Solar Roadways wants to set up a manufacturing facility for the glass panels in Sandpoint as early as next year. "We want to get the cost down to where the average homeowner can afford it," Julie Brusaw said. For now, the Brusaws are doing custom jobs, but they envision do-it-yourselfers buying the panels at hardware stores. The next public installations will be in Baltimore and at a Route 66 rest area in Missouri, Scott Brusaw said. Both are surfaces for pedestrians. — AP



SANDPOINT: In this Sept 30, 2016, photo, Solar Roadways founders Scott Brusaw, left, and Julie Brusaw display a one-third sized replica of one of their solar pavement panels at a news conference. — AP

MARS EXPLORER DUO ON COURSE

PARIS: European-Russian spacecraft were on course for Mars yesterday after crucial deep-space maneuvers in preparation for a daring mission to find evidence of life on the Red Planet. The Trace Gas Orbiter (TGO) mothership dispatched the tiny Mars lander called Schiaparelli Sunday on a three-day trek to the Martian surface in a key phase of the joint ExoMars project. There were nervous moments for ground controllers when the TGO, designed to enter Mars' orbit to analyze its atmosphere for signs of life, stopped sending status updates for about an hour before coming back online.

In the early hours of yesterday, the TGO successfully completed a planned maneuver to change course to avoid joining Schiaparelli on the Martian surface, the European Space Agency said. "Firing its engine for about 1m 46s raised the TGO's orbit by several hundred km 'above' the planet, ahead of its planned orbit insertion on Wednesday," the agency wrote on its ExoMars blog. And deputy flight director Micha Schmidt tweeted from mission control in Darmstadt, Germany: "on track for next big event: orbit insertion #ExoMars".

The TGO and Schiaparelli, launched into space in March, comprise phase one of the ExoMars mission. The TGO, with 600-kilogramme Schiaparelli on board, travelled seven months and 496-million kilometers from Earth before Sunday's separation.

It then headed for Mars orbit while the paddling pool-sized lander began a million-kilometer descent to the surface, where it is scheduled to arrive on Wednesday.

ExoMars is Europe's first attempt at reaching our neighboring planet's hostile surface after its first failed bid 13 years ago to place the first non-American rover on Mars. The TGO's job will be to sniff the Red Planet's thin, carbon dioxide-rich atmosphere for gases possibly excreted by living organisms, however small or primitive.

Life underground?

Schiaparelli's purpose, in turn, is to test entry and landing technology for a subsequent rover which will mark the second phase and high point of the ExoMars mission. After a two-year funding delay, the rover is due for launch in 2020, arriving about six months later to explore the Red Planet and drill into it, in search of extraterrestrial life—past or present. While any life is unlikely to be found on the barren, radiation-

tion-blasted surface, scientists say traces of methane in Mars' atmosphere may indicate there is something underground, possibly single-celled microbes.

Mars has become a graveyard for many a mission seeking to explore a planet that has captured the human imagination for millennia. Since the 1960s, more than half of US, Russian and European attempts to land and operate craft on the Martian surface have failed. The last time Europe tried, the British-built Beagle 2 disappeared without a trace after separating from the Mars Express mothership in December 2003. It was finally spotted in a NASA photo in January 2015. Mars landers must be built to survive a long trip from Earth, then a supersonic, scorching journey through Mars' carbon dioxide-rich atmosphere.

Elongated orbit

They require protection against a heat of several thousand degrees Celsius generated by atmospheric friction, extreme braking, and a soft touchdown in terrain where jagged rocks or craters could spell doom. Schiaparelli should reach the atmosphere at an altitude of 121 kilometers and a speed of nearly 21,000 kilometers per hour on Wednesday.

The extreme ride through Mars' atmosphere will take six minutes. A discardable "aeroshell" will protect the lander against the heat generated by atmospheric drag, while a supersonic parachute and nine thrusters will brake it.

A crushable structure in the lander's belly is meant to cushion the final impact. It is the first time this entry and landing combination is used, and the lessons learnt will be crucial to plan a safe landing for the much bigger and more expensive rover to follow. With a 10-minute delay—the time it takes for a message to reach Earth—Schiaparelli will send data on temperature, humidity, density profile and electrical properties.

Battery-driven and without solar panels, the lander should last for two or three days. The TGO will on Wednesday enter an elongated and erratic Mars orbit. It will then start a 12-month process of "aerobraking"—skimming the Martian atmosphere to bleed off energy—to change its orbit into a more regular, circular one. Once this is achieved, in early 2018, it will begin its work of sniffing the Mars atmosphere from about 400 kilometers for methane. — AFP



HONOLULU: A Hawaiian monk seal, an endangered species, lies on a Waikiki beach.

MUCH ADO ABOUT POO: FECES FUELS HAWAII FELINE DEBATE

MONK SEALS UNDER THREAT FROM DEADLY KITTY LITTER

HONOLULU: Two wildlife issues have collided in Hawaii, pitting one group of animal defenders against another in an impassioned debate. The point of contention? Deadly cat poop and the feral felines that produce it. Federal researchers believe feces from the legions of feral cats roaming Hawaii is spreading a disease that is killing Hawaiian monk seals, some of the world's most endangered marine mammals. Some conservationists advocate euthanizing those cats that no one wants, and that's got cat lovers up in arms. "It's a very difficult, emotional issue," said state Sen Mike Gabbard, chairman of a committee that earlier this year heard and then abandoned a proposal to ban the feeding of feral cats on state land after an outcry. "It struck a nerve in our community."

The problem stems from a parasite common in cats that can cause toxoplasmosis, a disease that killed at least five female Hawaiian monk seals and three males since 2001, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "While eight seals may not sound like a lot of animals, it actually has pretty large ramifications for an endangered population where there's only about 1,300 seals in existence at this point in time," said Michelle Barbieri, veterinary medical officer for NOAA's Hawaiian monk seal research program.

Contaminated water

Scientists believe monk seals become exposed to toxoplasmosis by ingesting contaminated water or prey. Felines are the only animals that can shed *Toxoplasma gondii* eggs, or oocysts. The parasites enter their digestive tract through infected prey then multiply in the small intestine and produce the eggs. Outdoor cats excrete the eggs in their feces, which researchers say washes into the ocean. The eggs accumulate in invertebrates that live along the sea floor, where monk seals often feed. They can survive in fresh water, saltwater and soil for up to two years.

Any warm-blooded animal can become infected. California sea otters have died from toxoplasmosis, and it's one of the major reasons the Hawaiian crow, alala, is extinct in the wild. Toxoplasmosis is rarely problematic for people with healthy immune systems, but it's why doctors advise pregnant women not to handle kitty litter. Many cities struggle with feral cats, but the problem is particularly acute in Hawaii because of its sensitive ecosystem and at-risk native species, experts say. Only two mammals are



HONOLULU: Chris Allejo, the director of operations for the spaying and neutering program run by the animal welfare group Poi Dogs and Popoki, pets cats at feral cat colony. — AP photos

native to Hawaii: The hoary bat and the Hawaiian monk seal. "Everything else here—deer, sheep, goats, cats, mongoose—they're all invasive, they're all introduced," said Angela Amlin, NOAA's acting Hawaiian monk seal recovery coordinator, adding cats have no predators in Hawaii to control their population.

Native and invasive

Marketing research commissioned by the Hawaiian Humane Society in 2015 estimated some 300,000 feral cats roam Oahu alone. Marine debris, climate change, predation and human interaction all threaten the survival of Hawaiian monk seals.

But feral cats present their greatest disease concern, Amlin said. "As conservationists, what we really have to look at is this is what Hawaii's native ecosystem includes, and cats are unfortunately not part of that," Amlin said. "When it comes to the feral cat population, there should be a program in place to bring in these animals, adopt the ones that are adoptable and humanely euthanize those that are not." Others take offense to that notion.

Classifying animals with labels such as native and invasive creates a "hierarchy in which the protection of certain animals comes at the suffering of others," Hawaiian Humane Society

President and CEO Pamela Burns wrote in a letter opposing the state Senate bill that would have banned cat-feeding on state land. She contended the 300,000 figure overstates the problem because the study looked at how many cats people were feeding and might have missed instances where multiple people fed the same outdoor cat. Those who care for stray cats advocate trapping, neutering and spaying to help control their population.

The University of Hawaii's Manoa campus, in Honolulu, started a feral cat management program—with authorized feeders trained in tasks like trapping and feces disposal—after the stench and mess from hundreds of cats prompted complaints, especially when children at a campus daycare center got flea bites, said Roxanne Adams, director of buildings and grounds. The program started in 2011 and appears to have reduced the number of felines, she said. Euthanizing cats is unacceptable unless they're extremely sick, said Alicia Maluafti, board president of animal welfare group Poi Dogs and Popoki.

"I totally disagree with the ... generalization that cat people love cats more than these endangered species," Maluafti said. "What we just don't advocate is the wholesale killing, the extermination, of one species ... for one." — AP



This file photo handout photo taken from the European Space Agency website on March 1, 2016 shows an artist's impression depicting the separation of the ExoMars 2016 entry, descent and landing demonstrator module, named Schiaparelli, from the Trace Gas Orbiter, and heading for Mars. — AFP

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ACK HOSTS INTERNSHIP CEREMONY

The School of Engineering at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) hosted its first Internship Ceremony to recognize 25 students who participated in a pilot "Spring/Summer Internship Program". Among the attendees were employers from diverse industries who supervised and coached the students over a six-week internship experience. The employers who hosted student interns included Kuwait Oil Company, Kuwait National Petroleum Company, the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Refrigeration

Industries, Schlumberger, Kharafi National, Gulf Consult, Weatherford International, GOFSCO and Petroleum Coke Industries.

At the start of the 2016 academic year, the School of Engineering introduced a new internship model adapted from a Canadian post-secondary institution with a long standing history of generating work ready graduates. This model included employment preparation workshops and an internship assignment that enables students to reflect on their

capabilities as engineers. Joumana Tasse, Internship Coordinator- School of Engineering, stated: "Students were able to attain hands-on work experience while developing their confidence. ACK's Project Based Learning (PBL) model played a key role in preparing students to learn how to work in teams. Students demonstrated strength in competency and character which will benefit them in securing their future careers."

From his end, Engineer Nemer Abu Sara from Refrigeration

Industries stated: "The level of technical knowledge that ACK students demonstrated tied in seamlessly and practically with our operations. Their PBL training enabled students to work well with our staff of all cultures. The Refrigeration Industries Company observed good people skills and a passion to learn." The School of Engineering is pleased with its internship initiative that has ultimately shaped a new learning model. Bridging academic learning with applied work experience that enables students to develop necessary skills to attain success.



AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS GROUP ORGANIZES NETWORKING EVENT

The Australian Business Group in Kuwait organized a networking event followed by a lecture for Dr Usameh Jamali, Advisor to the Chairman at the Australian College Kuwait on "Middle East Issues: Palestine, Iraq & Oil" in the Australian Ambassador's Residence. Over 80 business leaders from a host of companies in Kuwait attended and engaged on key issues and business affecting them across the region.

The Australian Business Group was founded in 2009 with the support of the Australian Embassy in Kuwait and its commercial arm, AusTrade. It aims at promoting trade and other relationships between Australia and Kuwait through providing a networking forum for members to develop their business activities.

Annually the group hosts up to a dozen business or social events, with an emphasis on fostering networking opportunities for business leaders in the community, while embracing Australian culture and lifestyle. The Ambassador's residence currently plays host to a series of monthly business networking dinners at which leading local businesses deliver engaging presentations on a host of topics from the economic outlook for Kuwait to the latest market trends. Upcoming social events include the Melbourne Cup Garden Party at the



end of October, and the culinary celebration of Australian Day at the beginning of the year.

The group is made up of a host of nationalities, the majority of whom are either Australians working for Australian businesses here in the Gulf, or have a personal association with Australia. Currently the group has sixty members including

ten corporate members, and thanks to the support of our Australian Ambassador to Kuwait, Warren Hauck, it will continue to grow. To become a member of the Australian Business Group, please email our General Secretary Mr Bassem Al-Kassem on: ausbg-ku@outlook.com.

THE TASTE OF THE SEVEN SEAS AGAIN AT MILLENNIUM HOTEL

'Millennium' represents its limitless hospitality to welcome and entertain all who loved that rare, mouth flowing and unique seafood experience at LAMAR International Restaurant. "We can't ignore the repeated queries from our valued customers", observes Dani Saleh, the Area Manager-Millennium & Cophorne Kuwait "for the Wednesday Rare Seafood Theme Night at LAMAR."

LAMAR International Restaurant is once again set for that mind blowing

'Theme Night' every Wednesday. The rich, salubrious ambience pervading the night air at Lamar, that irresistible, salivating aroma of rare seafood specialties from master chefs; the live cooking stations where you can choose and enjoy priorities, the superb buffet and the motherly care that flares up your appetite and the radiant, moonlit luminescence that cools your eyes and spirits. Wednesday theme night is ready again. Book your seats not to miss what you have been waiting for!



Greetings



BIRTHDAY WISHES

Wishing our dearest Jera Matti a happy and joyful 22nd birthday. Best wishes from her parents and close friends.



MOVENPICK TO HOST COOKING CLASSES TO MARK WORLD DIABETES DAY

In the run-up to World Diabetes Day on 14 November, M'venpick Hotels & Resorts is raising awareness about the importance of healthier eating habits, better lifestyle choices and early screening. An estimated 415 million people live with diabetes today and according to the International Diabetes Federation, one in ten adults could be affected by 2040.

Across the Middle East and Asia, 21 properties of M'venpick Hotels & Resorts will host a cooking class in November, where participants will learn to make two Power Bites school lunchbox recipes. Power Bites is a selection of M'venpick's exclusive dishes for children that focuses on nutritional ingredients and healthy cooking methods presented in a surprising, fun way.

The two new entries have been especially created for this new initiative by blogger mum, Fathima Mansoor of @TableforFiveDubai.

"M'venpick has a long tradition of offering quality food and beverage and through the years, we've introduced specialist menus like our nutritious Power Bites for children. We've focused our awareness drive on helping to establish healthy eating habits among youngsters and recognize the important part that parents and caretakers play in this respect," said Andreas Mattm, Iler, Chief Operating Officer of M'venpick Hotels & Resorts, Middle East and South Asia. The classes will take place from 6-15 November 2016 and are open to children and parents.

K T MUHAMMED PADANAVEDHI, KUWAIT HOLDS AWARD NIGHT 2016

K T Muhammed Padanavedhi, Kuwait conducted 'Puraskara Sandhya-2016' on October 14 at United Indian School, Abbasiya. The function was inaugurated by Sathyan Mokeri, former legislative assembly member from Kerala and assistant state secretary of Community Party of India Kerala. Mokeri was delighted by the presence of eminent personalities from various socio-cultural fields in Kuwait. Mokeri handed over the awards to the winners and spoke about K T Muhammed and his contributions and as theatre writer and director to the society especially to the

common man. He appreciated the Padanavedhi for introducing K T Muhammed and his dramas to the new generation by conducting such events. He also congratulated the award winners. The event was presided by General Convener Shyji K.

The winners of K T Muhammed Padanavedhi awards-2016 are Sindhu Ramesh, C Bhaskaran, Joy Mundackatt, Sharafudheen Kanneth, Chacko George Kutty, Backer Thikkodi, Malayil Moosakkoya, P C Hareesh, Dr John Arts, Sajeev K Peter, Suresh Tholambra, Dileep Naderi, Deepu

Mohandas, Rafi Kozhikode, Rafi Kallai, Shaiju Pallippuram and Biju Thikkodi. Aboobacker K delivered October Memorial speech. Babuji Batheri introduced the award winners to the attendees. K P Balakrishnan (president, KSNA Kuwait Chapter) and V P Mukesh (advisory board member) delivered felicitation speeches. The award winners thanked K T Muhammed Padanavedhi and said in return that such awards are encouragement to their future endeavors and are the signs of their hard works. Also they appreciated the activities of Padanavedhi.

General convener Shyji K handed over a memento to Sathyan Mokeri on behalf of Padanavedhi. A short drama directed by Sunil Cherian was enjoyed by the attendees. The colorful performance by children like folk dance, dramatic dance, group songs and orchestra with drama songs were enjoyable. Program convener Hassan Koya welcomed the gathering, Haseena Ashraf anchored the event and Ragesh PD delivered a vote of thanks. The Padanavedhi honored Namitha Shivakumar, Sneha Das, Keerthana Pramod and Vismaya Briji for their valuable support to the event.

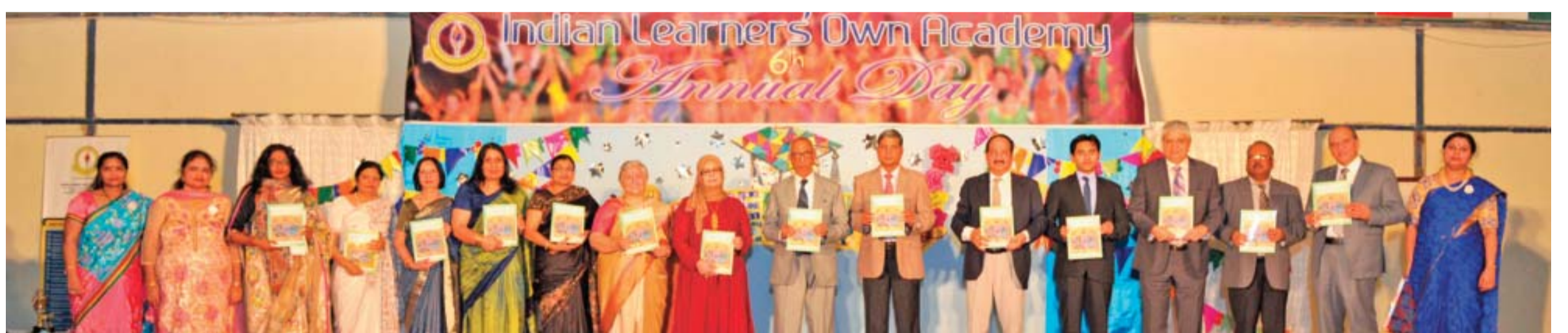




IWC LAUNCHES CULTURAL SEASON



The International Women Committee (IWC) recently started its annual cultural season with a workshop on South African culture, traditions and cuisine presented by the spouse of the South African ambassador who prepared a number of traditional South African dishes.



LOA ANNUAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

Schools wait for this event for the whole year; students anticipate the day; the teachers hold their breath for the day. The entire school works hard for this day. The Annual Function! Anticipation, hard work, wait ... it all reflected when Indian Learners Own Academy, Kuwait, celebrated its magnificent and reverberating 6th Annual Day with great pomp and fervor on Tuesday, 27th September, 2016. The day at the school displayed excellence, highlighting academic achievements of the school.

Zeal was in the air and it was felt all over the school premises. The school ground was packed with students from all the sections. The teaching staff, administrative staff and parents were also present to celebrate this day. The students displayed an astonishing variety of talents by putting up a breath taking cultural program that included dances, skits and songs.

LOA's musical ensemble enthralled the audience with the soulful

rendition of the music composed especially for the occasion and then the orchestra team performed, punctuating the evening with captivating array of tunes. The synchronized dance movements to the foot tapping music of 'Athithi Devo Bhava' enthralled the audience.

Mrs Asha Sharma formally welcomed the dignitaries in an eco friendly way. The progressive annual report was read by the Principal of the school, which was well supported with the power point presentation. In her report she highlighted the achievements of the school and students in various fields of excellence. Dr ShobhaVaddadhi appreciated the achievements of the school during her speech. And then the highlight of the most-anticipated day ... Prize Distribution!

Beaming faces were seen coming back from the stage as prizes were given away to meritorious and outperforming students by the guests of honor. Prizes were conferred to deserving students for their excellence in extracurricular activities, sports, cultural activities etc.

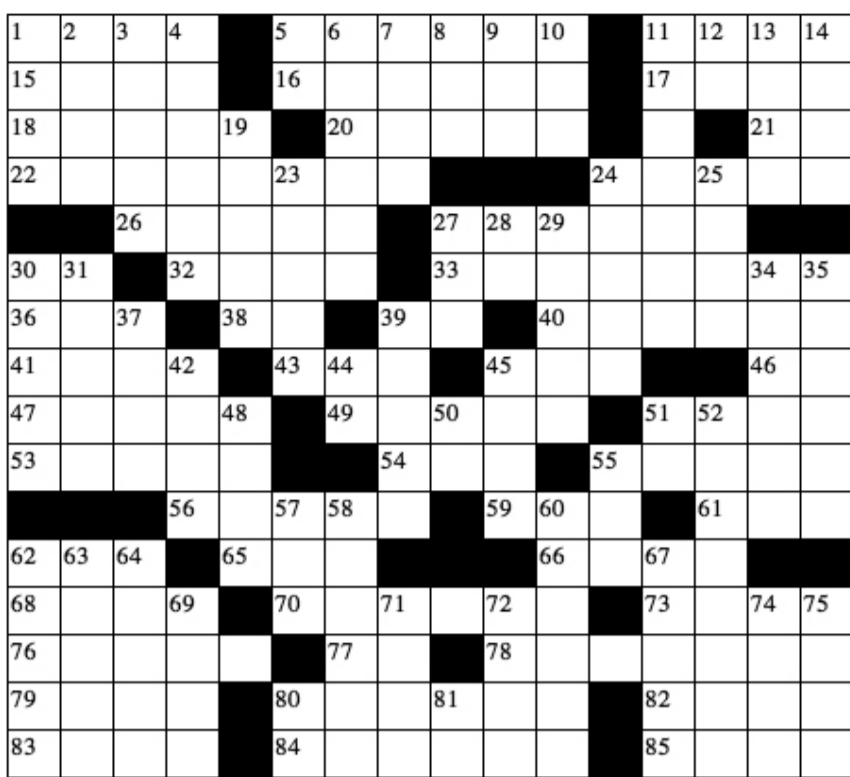
Meritorious students in academics and extra-curricular activities were felicitated.

The French department celebrated the culture, language and ethos of France by performing a skit in French. 'Nriya Natika', a dance drama was performed by the students under the guidance and leadership of the teachers of Hindi department. The students captivated the audience with their mesmerizing Arabic dance performance. A healthy mind lives in healthy body. Health is wealth. Such proverbs were explained and portrayed beautifully through an Aerobic dance.

On this occasion, 22 teaching and non-teachings staff members were felicitated for completion of 5 years of their dedicated service to the institution by Mr DK Sharma, the Chairman of LOA. The events of the eventful evening came to an end with the Vote of Thanks proposed by the Head Boy Shaikh Aymen and Head Girl! Merin Malyeckel.



CROSSWORD 1403



ACROSS

- 1. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
5. (pathology) Tending to become more severe or wider in scope.
11. At or constituting a border or edge.
15. A South American shrub whose leaves are chewed by natives of the Andes.
16. The music of Chopin.
17. Praise, glorify, or honor.
18. The part of the human body between the neck and the diaphragm or the corresponding part in other vertebrates.
20. A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicine (trade names Advil and Motrin and Nuprin) used to relieve the pain of arthritis and as an analgesic and antipyretic.
21. A public promotion of some product or service.
22. United States writer who created the Japanese detective Mr. Moto and wrote other novels as well (1893-1960).
26. A coffee cake flavored with orange rind and raisins and almonds.
30. A heavy ductile magnetic metallic element.
32. An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
33. Type genus of the Gavialidae.
36. The part of the nervous system of vertebrates that controls involuntary actions of the smooth muscles and heart and glands.
38. 16 ounces.
40. Cast again, in a different role.
41. The part of the eye that contains the iris and ciliary body and choroid.
43. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
46. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
47. A large number or amount.
49. Of or relating to a seizure or convulsion.
53. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
54. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
56. A republic on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean.
59. A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.
61. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
62. A person active in party politics.
65. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
66. The sixth month of the civil year.
68. An organic compound that contains a hydroxyl group bonded to a carbon atom which in turn is doubly bonded to another carbon atom.
70. A German city near Leipzig.
73. Fallow deer.
76. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
77. A state in southeastern United States.
78. Relating to or denoting or characteristic of Catalonia or its inhabitants.
79. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
82. Clean or orderly.
83. An aromatic ointment used in antiquity.
84. A large fleet.
85. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.

DOWN

- 1. Electronic warfare undertaken to insure effective friendly use of the electromagnetic spectrum in spite of the enemy's use of electronic warfare.
2. The capital and chief port of Qatar.
3. Sour or bitter in taste.
4. A port on the Gulf of Oman and capital of the sultanate of Oman.
5. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
6. Thorny shrub or small tree common in central Argentina having small orange or yellow flowers followed by edible berries.
7. Scottish chemist noted for his research into the structure of nucleic acids (born in 1907).
8. A poliovirus vaccine consisting of inactivated polio virus that is injected subcutaneously to provide immunity to poliomyelitis.
9. Being one more than six.
10. An inflammatory complication of leprosy that results in painful skin lesions on the arms and legs and face.
11. Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
12. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
13. Drought-tolerant herb grown for forage and for its seed which yield a gum used as a thickening agent or sizing material.
14. Edible starchy tuberous root of taro plants.
19. Of or relating to o occurring in a tube such as e.g. the fallopian tube or eustachian tube.
23. Jordan's port.
24. Not contained in or deriving from the essential nature of something.
25. Offering fun and gaiety.
27. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
28. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
29. Trade name for an oral contraceptive containing estradiol and norgestrel.
31. A brief stanza concluding certain forms of poetry.
34. Jewish republic in southwestern Asia at eastern end of Mediterranean.
35. A genus of Sterninae.
37. (used especially of vegetation) Having lost all moisture.
39. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
42. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
44. A heavy brittle diamagnetic trivalent metallic element (resembles arsenic and antimony chemically).
45. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
48. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
50. A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
51. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
52. Widely distributed genus of herbs or shrubs with glandular compound leaves and spicate or racemose purple or white flowers.
55. One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
57. Legal document setting forth rules governing a particular kind of activity.
58. Of or relating to the palm of the hand or to the area at the base of the thumb.
60. A percussion instrument consisting of a pair of hollow pieces of wood or bone (usually held between the thumb and fingers) that are made to click together (as by Spanish dancers) in rhythm with the dance.
63. Lake in northwestern Russia near the border with Finland.
64. Of or relating to or affecting a lobe.
67. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
69. Soft white semisolid fat obtained by rendering the fatty tissue of the hog v.1.
71. A ballistic missile that is capable of traveling from one continent to another.
72. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
74. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
75. (prefix) In front of or before in space.
80. The syllable naming the fourth (subdominant) note of the diatonic scale in solmization.
81. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.

Yesterday's Solution

Grid for Yesterday's Solution crossword puzzle with filled-in letters.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

We long for the simplicity of days gone by, while the complexity of modern life shrouds the truth in so much data we don't know what to believe. The sensible Taurus Moon motivates us to get back to basics. Meanwhile, a deceptive Sun-Neptune alignment pulls the rug out from under our feet and confuses us with illusions that look like facts. Ultimately, falsehoods give way to reality if we are persistent in our search by digging beneath the surface.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This afternoon good fortune will shine on you-opportunities become available in a very natural way. This is one of those days when things just seem to fall into place. You make your way through ideas and concepts. You express your ideas well. The secret to seeing an idea or concept to fruition is to make a presentation on paper with statistics that back your ideas. Young people or a loved one could bring you problems to solve this evening. You will have to slow your pace-give yourself time to think and present ideas about which to think. This way they will make the right decision for themselves. Challenges are great indications that a change is needed. This evening you enjoy putting your feet up and listening to your favorite type of music.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Science, philosophy or religion is likely to seem as if it holds the ultimate answers at this time. True wisdom lies in discovering that there are no ultimate answers, only good questions. Lectures and conferences are commonplace just now-there are plans to be made. Ideological crusades can set your head spinning; distant journeys can stir your soul. Avoid legal entanglements at this time. Your best path to fame, if that is what you seek, is through your social contacts. An unexpected invitation this afternoon is a treat and your mind may be busy pulling everything together so that you can accept this invitation. You are particularly thrilled to sit in on the making of a movie or to direct the band or speak about your book.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

For you, making career moves involves attending to a few troublesome details this morning-whether you or someone else may have neglected. However, this is all short lived and you will be pleased to know that success is close at hand. You often make correct decisions and find the right path to move forward. While you seem to be climbing out of the stormy waters and onto the bank, a co-worker friend of yours may feel completely overwhelmed. When a brother behaves insanely, you can heal him only by perceiving the sanity in him. Confidence and encouragement are what you exhibit this afternoon. Circumstances may augment and stimulate appreciation and enjoyment of your life situation this evening.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your workday is successful and the afternoon is filled with friendships and involvement in group activities. There is a feeling that one should accept invitations to upcoming events because the weather might not make it easy to travel at a later time. Friends are important to you and there is much satisfaction that comes with accomplishing things in cooperation with others. There is a lot of chatter this afternoon. When you settle down at home you will find yourself in a good position to write and communicate with real originality. Inventions and breakthroughs are possible if you are working with a hobby. This could be a period of great material gain; it is certainly a time when material things have an attraction. Everything that glitters is not gold.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Challenges in the workplace are fast moving. Time is limited and you must be able to get through one job in order to handle the next job. Laughter will come as people look back over the day. Surprisingly, successful results can be seen. This is a fun time of year and a fun time to tell stories to the young ones. The energies around you this evening are just perfect for telling one of your wonderful stories. Creating a regular story time each week to tell a little history or some family accomplishment to the young people in your family will help them understand their roots. Perhaps this could be a new tradition somehow... Create a picture board if you want to enhance this experience. What fun! Consider taking turns with other families from other backgrounds.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your ideas may not agree with the direction your career is taking. The price of success could mean that the ideas and methods of communication you use now may need adjusting soon. Today, the key to career moves involves attending to nagging details-whatever you have neglected or put aside. Attention to matters and performing efficiently are important. It can be easy this afternoon to separate out what does not serve you well. This includes ideas as well as collections of things. Your love life has never looked more promising-you may want to follow through with some leads for a new play that is in town. Keep working to gain a part in a play or movie... You will be pleased with the outcome. Family is the glue that binds; enjoy.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may not be able to keep your mind on your job today. It could be hard to make good job-related decisions. It is important to see the details in your work and not become lost in the why just now. It will be hard for you to do wrong, for all the cycles are working in your favor. Be patient with yourself; this can be a successful day for you, particularly if you just take the day as it comes. You may feel it is time to take on a new friend this afternoon. The people that live around you or the people in a hobby group you enjoy may present just such an opportunity. Let it happen naturally and you will know when that person is meant to be in your life. The secret is to pay attention. A family member may be visiting soon. Relax; this will be a good experience.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

This day is one of action and embarking on new projects. You will feel more and more confident and outgoing, a sense of confidence that grows stronger with each passing day. Projects that may have been suspended will now take on structure and shape. You should plan to work hard to bring out and give shape to the ideas you have pored over these last few weeks. You are beginning to move forward now and can expect reward for your hard work. There is an open door to the possibilities of travel. Short trips to nearby tourist sights might be fun. Perhaps there is a pumpkin or vegetable stand on the outskirts of your city that you might visit. A little walk around the area and you could find a bounty of beautiful leaves to gather for decorating at home.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You could find it easy to become carried away with some idea. Turn this into a positive outcome by making sure there is an interest in your idea. Positive things are happening in your career which depend upon your own ambition and drive, as well as your ability to be patient and bide your time. You are able to use good common sense and make all the right moves. Usually people create in the mind how they want to relate to someone before they even get to know a person. Everyone has a personality one shows to a parent and a personality one shows to a friend. Today is a good time to see your relationships with others in an unbiased manner. The insight may be an interesting one for you. Shopping after work is good if you are not hungry.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You are very trusting and idealistic when it comes to taking care of business and getting down to the basics. Others value you for your ability to organize and conduct business while surrounded by so much confusion. You are able to intuitively know just how to match each employee with the job he or she can do best. You also can see the best in a situation, making it hard for others to say no to you. You may be able to cut yourself the best deal in a financial situation today. You have a natural sense of what the public wants and you may find yourself solving customer needs this afternoon. Your word is good and you do not forget your promise to a family member this afternoon. Family and security are things that rattle your chain.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

The no-nonsense feeling today makes for wise choices when it comes to good business ventures. You are constantly stripping away the dross to reveal the truth or essence of a subject. You are in a very businesslike mind and can be caught in deep concentration many times. It is ideas that count for you now, more than narrowly personal concerns. Be patient with others that may not be on your level of thinking. You have a lot of energy for improving your skills and are very motivated to improve. You are in a good mood this evening and may even feel you have accomplished what you set out to accomplish this day. You feel particularly kind towards a friend or loved one this evening. Some favor he or she has done for you creates a deep affection.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Meryl Streep Movies

Find and circle all of the Meryl Streep movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 40 letters spell an additional Meryl Streep movie.

Wordsearch grid containing hidden Meryl Streep movie titles.

- A CRY IN THE DARK
ADAPTATION
BEFORE AND AFTER
DANCING AT LUGHNASA
DARK MATTER
DEATH BECOMES HER
DEFENDING YOUR LIFE
DOUBT
EVENING
FALLING IN LOVE
HEARTBURN
IRONWEED
JULIA
KRAMER VS. KRAMER
LIONS FOR LAMBS
MAMMA MIA
MANHATTAN
MARVIN'S ROOM
MUSIC OF THE HEART
ONE TRUE THING
OUT OF AFRICA
PLENTY
PRIME
RENDITION
SHE-DEVIL
SILKWOOD
SOPHIE'S CHOICE
STILL OF THE NIGHT
THE DEER HUNTER

Yesterday's Solution

Canada

Canada wordsearch grid with a hidden message.

The hidden message is: THE CAPITAL CITY OF THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC IS QUEBEC CITY

Daily SuDoku

Daily SuDoku grid with some numbers filled in.

Yesterday's Solution

Completed Yesterday's Solution SuDoku grid.



A visitor looks at an artwork by Egyptian artist Moataz Nasr displayed at a Christie's exhibition in Dubai. — AFP photos



Visitors look at Beyond the Fountain, a grouping of 19 artworks by the Iranian Saqqakhaneh movement, displayed at a Christie's exhibition in Dubai.

Christie's seeks more 'realistic' auction prices

The global economic slowdown combined with "selective demand" are pushing Christie's to seek more realistic prices on their collections, directors of the auction house said Sunday. "This year the market is not at the same level as it was one year or two years ago. We are facing a more challenging market," Guillaume Cerruti, Christie's president for Europe, the Middle East, Russia and India, told journalists in Dubai. "To face this situation, the key word for us is selectivity," he said, announcing two auctions this week in the glitzy Gulf emirate, one on Modern and Contemporary Art and another showcasing "Important Watches". "We want to have sales that are well curated, sales with maybe less objects but of high quality at... realistic estimates," he said. While he did not provide specific figures on the fall in overall sales, he said that

online-only sales "have been a real success". "For the first six months of the year, we have sold through our online-only sales of 20 million pounds (\$24.4 million) around the world," a 100-percent over the same period of 2015, he added. "We're making sure that we find good quality of works that are well priced to ride through this more challenging period," said Christie's Middle East managing director, Michael Jeha. In an auction today of 113 artworks, the highest estimated price has been set at \$180,000, far lower than the \$400,000 price tag on paintings sold in March this year. Around 150 watches go up for auction on Wednesday, with estimated prices reaching \$250,000. Among them are two Patek Philippe 18K white gold auto-

matic wristwatches with the Iraqi coat of arms and the name "Saddam", after executed Iraqi president Saddam Hussein who ordered the watches in 1974 and 1980 as gifts. Their prices are estimated at \$10,000 and \$18,000 each. London-based Christie's, which celebrates its 250th anniversary on December 5, says its sales at Dubai auctions have exceeded \$300 million since it opened a branch in the emirate 10 years ago. — AFP



A Patek Philippe rare 18K white gold automatic wristwatch with Iraqi coat of arms is displayed.



A visitor walks past art work by Iraqi painter Ismail Fatah Al-Turk.



A visitor takes a photo of artwork by Syrian artist Safwan Dahoul.



Visitors look at art work by Saudi artist Manal Al-Dowayan.



Visitors walk past artwork by Egyptian artist Khaled Hafez.

TV channels fight for 'brilliant' new cartoon 'Grizzly & the Lemmings'

Some of the world's top television channels were battling yesterday to acquire a "brilliant" new cartoon series "Grizzly & the Lemmings", which has already been proclaimed a classic that will "renew the whole slapstick genre". The show about a lazy brown bear and a band of lemmings who battle for the goodies inside a forest ranger's lodge in the Canadian Rockies got a rapturous reception at its premiere at the MIPJUNIOR market in the French Riviera resort of Cannes.

The US Cartoon Network giant Turner has already snapped it up for its Boomerang channel. Most of the series' rapid-fire gags turn on the titanic struggles between the grizzly and a horde of kamikaze lemmings for the ranger's pot of Nutella, games console and smartphone. The slapstick jokes and spectacular pratfalls from the cliff-top lodge into the ravine below has led to it being compared to a very smart mix of "The Road Runner", "Raving Rabbids" and "Mr. Bean". "What can you say, it is just fantastic. They really nailed it," Janine Weigold, who bought the show for Germany's Super RTL channel, told AFP.

"It's brilliant. Once you start you can't stop watching them... We

are glad that German kids are going to be able to enjoy it on free TV." And its non-verbal humor-with the bear and lemmings bombing each other in one episode with goods dropped from delivery drones ordered on the smartphone-had industry insiders predicting it would be "mega everywhere".

Classic family viewing

"It is a new classic that will gather families together again in front of the television," said Tiphaine de Ragueneil of France Televisions, which backed the French-based Hari studio to make the first 78 action-packed, seven-minute episodes. "It renews the whole slapstick genre," she added, speaking at MIPJUNIOR, an annual gathering for the world entertainment industry. The two men behind the cartoon, Josselin Charier and Antoine Rodelet, said they had been scratching their heads for years to come up with a duo to match "Tom and Jerry", "Road Runner" and the Looney Tunes greats.

They finally hit upon Grizzly and the lemmings after watching a 1958 Walt Disney documentary "White Wilderness", in which lem-

ings were shot jumping off a cliff. "We watched them jumping one after the other and thought, "Wow, what totally stupid animals. How cool!" "We learned afterwards it was actually the producers who were pushing them off. Yeah, damn producers," he joked. Rodelet said the show was character driven with the jokes spinning off the weaknesses of the bear and the lemmings, who "have only one collective brain between them".

"We tried to create really dense episodes for today's short attention spans with the rhythm mounting to a climax. In 'The Road Runner' it was often just a string of gags," he told AFP. He said he and Charier—who began working together in their garage a decade ago—had spent three years on the show, with 100 people between Paris and at Hari's studio in the French animation capital of Angouleme pitching in. Hari's head of sales Adeline Tormo said there was a real clamour for the show. "People want to see more and more episodes. Channels are fighting to have it." — AFP



This file photo shows German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld at the end of the Chanel 2017 Spring/Summer ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP

Lagerfeld checks into the hotel business

Fashion icon Karl Lagerfeld announced yesterday he planned to launch his own branded hotel chain, with the first property set to open in the Chinese gambling hub of Macau in 2018. The 83-year-old German-born designer has already collaborated with luxury Parisian address Le Crillon and the Metropole in Monaco, but the new business will see him and his company design entire hotels. Leading fashion houses from Dior to Diane von Furstenberg have developed a lucrative side-business away from the catwalk by designing suites and other interiors for hotel owners.

Lagerfeld intends to follow the example of rivals such as Armani, Bulgari and Versace which have gone one step further and opened properties under their own names. His first hotel is being built with a local partner in the luxury Lisboa Palace Complex in Macau, but the Lagerfeld group is "in the process of studying other opportunities to open other properties around the world," it said in a statement.

The current artistic director at Chanel will also lend his talents and trademark to luxury residences, restaurants and private clubs, the group said, as part of a push into the interior design business. The Lisboa Palace Complex in Macau—an enclave that is the only place in China where gambling is legal—will include casinos, restaurants and various hotels, notably the Versace Palace. — AFP



Halloween treat: A night at Dracula's castle in Transylvania



In this picture Bran Castle lies on top of cliffs in Bran, Romania.

Dracula's castle will have overnight guests on Halloween, marking the first time since 1948 that anyone has slept in the Transylvanian fortress. The site's actual name is Bran Castle, and two people will get to sleep there Oct 31 thanks to a promotion by Airbnb. The guests will be wined and dined, then left alone to lie down in red velvet-trimmed coffins just as Dracula did in the Bram Stoker horror novel that popularized the legend.

The castle is famous for its connection to Vlad the Impaler, a real-life prince who stayed there in the 15th century and had a cruel habit of using stakes to impale his victims. Vlad inspired Stoker's story of Count Dracula. The Airbnb contest to find guests for the night launched yesterday. Applicants were asked to use their "vampiric wit" to imagine what they'd say to Count Dracula if they met him. Winners will be flown to Romania and then taken to the castle set dramatically in the Carpathian Mountains. If they're too spooked to sleep in the coffins, beds are on hand.

Welcome to my house

The castle is one of Romania's top tourist attractions, with more than 630,000 visitors a year. Hosting the one-off Airbnb event is a descendant of Bram Stoker, Dacre Stoker. "I want to make it both realistic and show the legend in the wonderful country that birthed the whole thing," Stoker

said in a telephone interview. He'll play the role of Jonathan Harker, a character from the novel who encounters Dracula at the castle. When the winners arrive in a horse-drawn carriage, he plans to greet them using the same words Dracula used in his ancestor's story: "Welcome to my house! Enter freely. Go safely, and leave something of the happiness you bring!"

Stoker added that staging "Halloween night in Dracula castle" was a way of "re-creating the book, and giving people a good experience and a good scare." The winning pair will tour the castle, then be treated to a candlelight dinner of chicken paprikash, the same meal described in the novel. Airbnb's rules for the night are simple: no garlic or silver jewelry - both believed to ward off vampires - and this reminder: "The count is not a fan of mirror selfies." (According to legend, a vampire's image cannot be seen in mirrors.)

Bran Castle was originally a military fortress, strategically set on a highway that links Transylvania to southern Romania. Vlad the Impaler did not own the castle, but is believed to have used it briefly during his incursions in Transylvania. He is also believed to have been imprisoned in the castle for two months in 1462 when he was captured by a rival Hungarian king. Vlad impaled his victims as punishment for wrongdoing. His victims reputedly included all the elderly residents of one community to avenge the deaths of his father and brother.

Rented for weddings

Following World War I, the castle was given to Queen Marie in gratitude for her role in unifying Transylvania with the rest of Romania. She bequeathed it to her youngest daughter Princess Ileana. In 1948, the Communists seized it from Ileana. In 2006, years after communism ended, the castle was returned to Ileana's son Dominic Hapsburg, a retired New York architect. His sisters spent their childhood there.

A Romanian company manages the castle which is rented for weddings, soirees and corporate events. Hapsburg plays an active role in the site, but nobody has stayed overnight there since Hapsburg and his family were exiled from Romania. The castle is very popular with tourists. "We just love Halloween, so what drew us to Romania was Transylvania," said Gina Ricciardi of Boca Raton, Florida, visiting with her husband and friends. "We wanted to see Dracula's castle and just experience the whole Dracula." Might Count Dracula himself show up on Oct 31? "Did he really die at end of the novel when he was stabbed with knife? Bram leaves the question ambiguous," Stoker said. "But if he's still floating around, he would make an appearance." — AP



A portrait of Vlad the Impaler is hung on a wall in Bran Castle, in Bran, Romania.



Candles and books are arranged on a table before a photo shoot of a room in Bran Castle.



In this picture Bran Castle lies on top of cliffs in Bran, Romania. — AP photos



Two coffins are lit before a photo shoot in Bran Castle, in Bran, Romania.



Two girls light up candles before a photo shoot in Bran Castle, in Bran, Romania.

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Scorsese film about Japan's hidden Christians out for Christmas

Oscar-winning director Martin Scorsese told an audience in Tokyo yesterday his long-awaited film about the persecution of Christians in 17th century Japan will hit the big screen just before Christmas. The filmmaker, known for hits including Taxi Driver, Goodfellas, and The Wolf of Wall Street, said his latest film "Silence" be released for a limited run in the United States on December 23 — putting it in possible contention for an Oscar nomination. The movie's release, originally slated for last year, as been delayed several times, including after an on-set accident killed a construction worker and injured several others.

Scorsese, who picked up an Oscar for The Departed in 2007, made the announcement at a press briefing in Tokyo where he is to receive Japan's biggest arts award, the Praemium Imperiale, at a ceremony later this week. The film is based on the 1966 novel by famed Japanese novelist Shusaku

Endo, which tells the story of a young, idealistic Jesuit priest from Portugal who lands on the shores of Nagasaki in southern Japan—then the only part of the country open to foreigners. The novel, titled "Chinmoku" ("Silence"), depicts severe persecution inflicted on converts to Christianity—many of whom were impoverished villagers forced into hiding. The Christians came out of the shadows when Japan ended two hundred years of self-imposed isolation in the 1860s.

Before filming, Scorsese—who said he has wanted to do the film for over a quarter century—visited the areas mentioned in the book and interviewed descendants of these so-called hidden Christians. "What came out of that for me was the extraordinary power and sacrifice, the commitment and conviction of their ancestors who were martyrs to the faith," he said yesterday. "For me this was almost like meeting one of the hidden Christians from the 17th century and it changed my perception of how to deal with those scenes and the characters," he added.

The film stars Andrew Garfield, Liam Neeson, Adam Driver and Japanese actor Tadanobu Asano. Scorsese is one of five recipients of the Praemium Imperiale this year, which also honors American artist Cindy Sherman, French sculptor Annette Messager, Brazilian architect Paulo Mendes da Rocha and Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer. — AFP



(From left) US photographer Cindy Sherman, US director Martin Scorsese, French sculptor Annette Messager and Latvian-German musician Gidon Kremer, winners of the 28th Praemium Imperiale award, pose during a photo call after a joint press conference in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP photos.

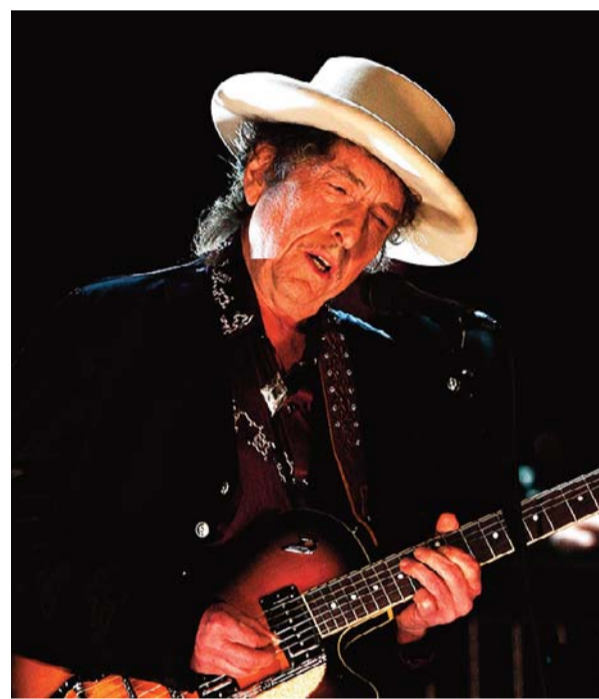


US director Martin Scorsese, winner of the 28th Praemium Imperiale award, smiles during a joint press conference.

Nobel panel gives up knockin' on Dylan's door

The Swedish Academy says it has given up trying to reach Bob Dylan, days after it awarded him the Nobel Prize for Literature. "Right now we are doing nothing. I have called and sent emails to his closest collaborator and received very friendly replies. For now, that is certainly enough," the academy's permanent secretary, Sara Danius, told state radio SR yesterday. So far the American troubadour has responded with silence since he won the prize on Thursday.

He gave a concert in Las Vegas that very night, but made no mention of the accolade. So-as an early Dylan song may have put it-how does it feel? "I am not at all worried," said Danius. "I think he will show up." Every December 10, Nobel prize winners are invited to Stockholm to receive their awards from King Carl XVI Gustaf and to give a speech during a banquet. The Swedish Academy still does not know if Dylan plans to come to the event. "If he doesn't want to come, he won't come. It will be a big party in any case and the honor belongs to him," said Danius. Dylan, 75, whose lyrics have influenced generations of fans, is the first songwriter to win the literature prize. Other contenders for this year's prize included Salman Rushdie, Adonis and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. — AFP



This file photo shows US singer Bob Dylan performing during the 37th AFI Life Achievement Award: A Tribute to Michael Douglas at Sony Pictures in Culver City, California. — AFP

Indian film festival drops Pakistani movie after threat

An Indian film festival dropped a Pakistani drama from its program yesterday after protesters threatened to disrupt the screening—the latest movie to fall foul of heightened tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors. Organizers of the MAMI Mumbai Film Festival said they would not show the 1959 classic "Jago Hua Savera" ("The Day Shall Dawn") following a complaint from an Indian NGO called Sangharsh, which means struggle in Hindi.

Sangharsh had said it was inappropriate to show the film, which was Pakistan's official Oscars entry in 1960, following an attack by militants that killed 19 Indian soldiers in Kashmir. "Given the current situation, the Jio MAMI 18th Mumbai Film Festival with Star has decided not to program 'Jago Hua Savera' as part of the Restored Classics Section," organizers of the festival said in a statement. The move comes after a group of Indian cinemas said last week that they would not screen any films featuring Pakistani artists in protest at the raid on an army base in Indian Kashmir last month.

The ban by India's Cinema Owners and Exhibitors Association (COEA) applies to single screen cinemas in four states and is likely to affect the forthcoming release of movies "Ae Dil Hai Mushkil", "Dear Zindagi" and "Raees". The ban came as Hindu nationalist groups pile pressure on the makers of "Ae Dil Hai Mushkil" ("This Heart is Complicated") to drop Pakistani actor Fawad Khan from the romantic drama. The fringe but noisy right-wing group Maharashtra Navnirman Sena has threatened to stall the October 28 release of the movie. India blames Pakistan for the raid on September 18 which saw the Indian army respond with "surgical strikes".

Following the militant attack the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association, which represents a number of Hindi film industry employees, passed a motion banning Pakistani artists until relations between New Delhi and Islamabad improve. MAMI runs from October 20-27. "Jago Hua Savera", a black and white film, tells the story of a fishing village near Dhaka, now the capital of Bangladesh. — AFP

Face saver: Surgical mask sworn at Japan speed dating sessions

Looks aren't everything. At least, that's what one Japanese dating service is trying to prove - by requiring participants in speed dating sessions to wear white surgical masks. "In order to achieve marriage, it is important to provide chances to know a partner's personality and values in the early stages," said Kei Matsumura, head of Tokyo dating service Def Anniversary. "We chose surgical masks as an essential tool for that."

White surgical masks covering most of the face are common sights in Japan, where people don them to avoid catching diseases, keep out pollen and, sometimes, just to keep their faces warm. Some women also opt for a mask on days when they haven't worn makeup. "Since I wasn't judged by my appearance, I think I was able to be more outgoing with women," said 28-year-old Yasumasu Kishi at a weekend speed dating event for 19 men and 18 women.

Dating services are booming in Japan as young people shy from tying the knot. The marriage rate has plunged by 50 percent over the last 40 years, from 10.1 per thousand in 1975 to 5.1 per thousand in 2014, according to a Health Ministry survey. Young people brought up in the digital era find face-to-face encounters daunting in ultra-polite Japan, while long work hours add still another hurdle. These make konkatsu - active "marriage seeking activity" - often the only option.

"I think I was able to find out more about their inner selves and not just judge them by their looks," said Chiharu Tsukahara, a 28-year-old office worker. "In this event, personality matters. I quite liked that," she added as she prepared to leave with Kishi and two friends for another date. This time, masks were optional. — Reuters

Israeli fashionista's fantasy footwear finds famous fans



A picture shows shoes created by Israeli shoe designer Kobi Levi at his workshop.



A picture shows a shoe creation called 'Banana'.



A picture shows the back of a pair of shoes called "Chewing Gum".

Israeli designer Kobi Levi's psychedelic shoes resemble everything from banana skins, flamingos and stretching cats—and they are all the rage among well-heeled stars like Lady Gaga. "My world is that of everyday glamour, the glamour that goes unnoticed, which I show in an extravagant and fun way," the 41-year-old says. Dressed in a t-shirt and black jeans, he works out of a modest studio at his apartment in Israel's commercial capital Tel Aviv.

He uses a vintage sewing machine and an old leather press to turn his designs from fantasies into shoes. "I see someone stepping in chewing gum on the way to work and getting annoyed about it," he tells AFP. "So I make shoes with a high heel shaped like stuck chewing gum." The result is a stylish black-and-white sneaker with an 11-centimetre (four-inch) pink dripping heel so realistic it could be mistaken for real gum. The bizarre creation, which sells for \$2,240 (1,949 euros) a pair, caught the imagination of actress Whoopi Goldberg, who wore them when she appeared with US President Barack Obama on talk show "The View" in 2012. American singer Fergie wore a pair of the same shoes in the video for her song "M.I.L.F. \$".

Going Gaga

The bulk of Levi's orders come through his website but one, in 2011, changed the course of his career—propelling his shoes onto the global pop scene. "I got an email from a fashion design studio that deals with Lady Gaga. They wanted a pair of shoes for a video," he says. "I was super surprised because at the time I had no studio, just a small blog with photos. I was making the shoes my size because nobody wore them and showing them to friends and then putting them in boxes," he says. Gaga wore the shoes in the video for her 2011 hit single "Born This Way".

Levi's designs are made to measure in very limited batches—as few as 20 pairs. They occupy, he says, the crossroads between



Israeli shoe designer Kobi Levi poses in his workshop with some of his shoe creations.

"design, art and fashion." It takes several months to create a new model, and several weeks to reproduce each one. Once he receives around 20 orders, he moves on to another project. The effort has paid off, winning Levi high-profile fans. Swedish stylist B Akerlund, who designs for the likes of Beyonce and Kim Kardashian, has put 13 of the Israeli's designs in her showroom. Goldberg has been a keen admirer for years, sporting a pair of his low heels shaped like a banana skin at the Paris premiere of the "Sister Act" stage show in 2012. The same year, Vogue Italia described Levi as "a genius, unusual, true creative talent, the captor of surrounding reality, of unpredictable objects, of animal appearances".

Madonna next?

Among his many creations are shoes shaped like playground slides, stretching cats and even a design with a miniature harp in the heel. "Everything starts with a fantasy, then it becomes a challenge," he says. "You

have to find technical solutions. I go through phases where I think I'm crazy, that it's impossible, then I'm afraid that in a second everything could tear or break." "Then suddenly it starts to look like the original sketches and then I get the heady feeling of having given life to a fantasy."

Levi stressed his creations—which sell for between \$800 and \$3,000 — are designed to be worn, not simply for display. Levi also plays on the sex appeal of heels, earning him an avalanche of fan mail from women, he says. He now hopes another glamorous and provocative star—who reportedly spent a recent birthday in Cuba with Akerlund—will fall for his creative madness. "Madonna" is his pair of gold stilettos with a fake microphone and blond wig, and he has high hopes for the shoes. "It would be great to see Madonna wearing them herself," he says. — AFP



Kobi Levi poses in his workshop with one of his shoe creations called "Miao".



A pair of shoes called "Blonde Ambition".

FEATURES



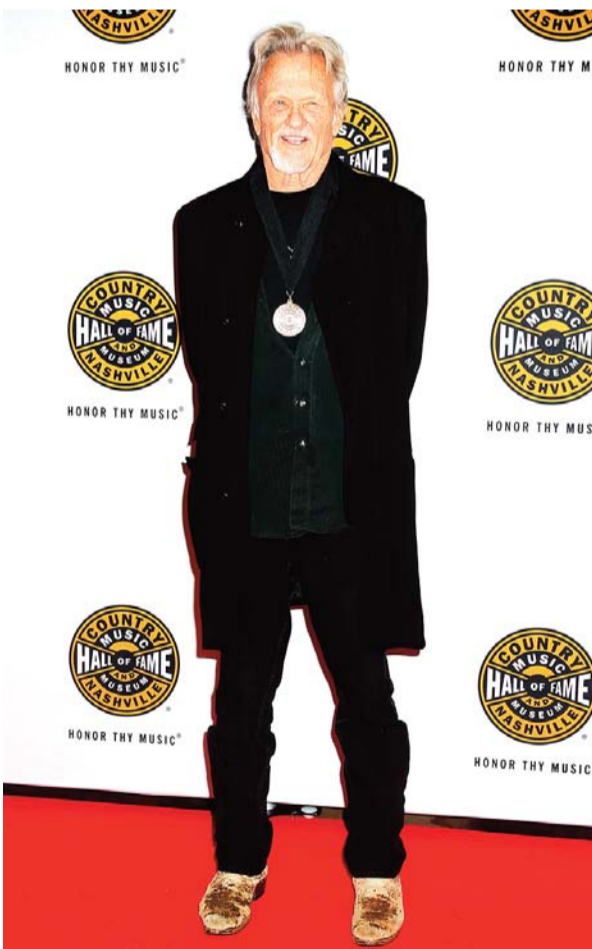
Third from left, Mary Travis and artist Randy Travis, seated, with family on the red carpet of the Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum on Sunday, in Nashville, Tenn. — AP photos



From left, artists Charlie Daniels, Duane Allen, Charley Pride, Joe Bonsall, Randy Travis, William Lee Golden, and Richard Sterban sing 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken?' at the close of the Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony.



Artist Garth Brooks performs on stage.



Artist Kris Kristofferson on the red carpet of the Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony.

Randy Travis stuns crowd, sings at Hall of Fame induction

Country singer Randy Travis found his distinctive voice three years after a life-threatening stroke and sang "Amazing Grace" during his induction Sunday into the Country Music Hall of Fame. The Grammy-winning baritone singer battled back from the stroke in 2013 to sing again during the medallion ceremony in Nashville, Tennessee. He was inducted along with fiddler Charlie Daniels and record producer Fred Foster. Fellow artists including Kris Kristofferson, Dolly Parton, Alan Jackson, Brad Paisley, Garth Brooks and more honored the three inductees with musical tributes.

But it was Travis' singing that brought a stunned silence and tears to the crowd after years of rehabilitation and therapy to regain his voice. Mary Davis-Travis, his wife, spoke about the numerous procedures and surgeries to save his life and a six-month stay in the hospital after a viral infection caused his stroke. "Randy stared death in the face, but death blinked," Davis-Travis said. "Today God's proof of a miracle stands before you."

The 57-year-old singer was honored for being the first country artist whose debut album "Storms of Life" went platinum in its first year and he ushered in a wave of neo-traditional singers like Alan Jackson, Clint Black and Brooks in the 1990s. Jackson, who performed "On the Other Hand," talked about going out on tour with Travis in the early '90s and compared him to Elvis. "When he sang, the women were screaming and fainting and it was crazy," Jackson said. "I loved it. Someone singing real country music and having that effect and selling all those records, it just made me so happy."

Daniels, the fiddler player behind the hit song "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," was honored for his multi-genre style blending Southern rock, bluegrass, gospel and country music. "A plaque on this wall is not just another award or accolade," Daniels said. "It's a page in a history book. An unending history book." Jamey Johnson performed his song, "Long Haired Country Boy," while Trace Adkins performed "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," with fiddler Andrea Zonn. Foster ran the influential Monument Records, which helped launch the

careers of Roy Orbison and Willie Nelson as well as Parton and Kristofferson. Kristofferson sang his iconic song "Me and Bobby McGee," which Foster helped co-write and produce, while Parton sang "Dumb Blonde," from her debut album produced by Foster.

She praised Foster for giving her a shot and still being a gentleman when Porter Wagoner stole her away to be on his television show. Vince Gill presented Foster with the medallion

and noted Foster was a lover of great songs and a champion of unique singers. "But everyone of us needs a champion," Gill said. "And you look like a man like Fred Foster and there's a man that has been a champion for all these years." The 85-year-old producer is still currently working and most recently produced a tribute album to Ray Price by Nelson. — AP



Far right, artist Dolly Parton sings to artist and Country Music Hall of Fame inductee Fred Foster, bottom left, at the Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony.



From left, artist Garth Brooks, artist Randy Travis and Mary Travis sing 'Amazing Grace' at the Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony.



From left, artist and Country Music Hall of Fame inductee Fred Foster is inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame by artist Vince Gill and Country Music Hall of Fame Director Kyle Young at the Country Music Hall of Fame Medallion Ceremony.

PHIL COLLINS ANNOUNCES EUROPEAN COMEBACK TOUR

Veteran British singer Phil Collins announced yesterday he is coming out of retirement with a comeback tour next summer, despite battling with injury and alcoholism. The former "Genesis" frontman will play five nights in London followed by two dates each in Paris and Cologne, as part of his European tour in June, titled "Not Dead Yet, Live." The 65-year-old, whose hits include "In the Air Tonight" and "Another Day In Paradise," has spoken openly about his struggle with alcoholism since his last tour almost 10 years ago.

"I stopped work because I wanted to be a dad at home. As bad luck would have it, as soon as I retired, my family split up," he told a press conference at London's Royal Albert Hall, where the tour will kick off. "I didn't have anything to go home to really. That's when I started drinking." The drummer and singer, who was one of the most popular British artists in the 1980s, last released an album in 2002, supported by his "First Final Farewell Tour." But he said "I've changed my mind" about retirement. "I'm living with my young kids and they want me to go out on the road, to do some new things and there's no reason why not."

Nerve damaged sustained through years of drumming means it is unlikely Collins will get back behind the drum kit next June. "I

play with my fingers a lot of the time... a lot of it comes from dexterity with fingers and that's the thing that's clammed up over the last few years," he said. His 15-year-old son Nicholas, who also plays drums, will be performing with him, he added. Collins, who is promoting a new book, also titled "Not Dead Yet", has sold more than 100 million albums during his solo career and 150 million with Genesis. In recent years he has worked on projects including writing songs for the musical "Tarzan" — AFP



Phil Collins

Toni Braxton back on tour following lupus hospitalization

Toni Braxton says she has been released from a Cleveland hospital after being admitted for complications with her battle against lupus for the second time in a month. The hospitalization forced her scheduled Saturday show in Cleveland to be cancelled. In announcing the hospitalization, a message on the singer's Twitter account said, "Lupus needs to be constantly monitored and this minor setback should not affect the rest of her tour."

Braxton announced that she was out of the hospital Sunday. She thanked her fans for their "well wishes and understanding." Braxton was released from a hospital in Los Angeles two weeks ago after spending several days being treated for the autoimmune disease. — AP



In this file photo, Toni Braxton poses in the press room at the BET Awards in Los Angeles. — AP

Randy Travis stuns crowd, sings at Hall of Fame induction



Georgian people and street artists walk under colored balloons as they attend the 'Tbilisoba' annual Arts Festival in Tbilisi on Sunday. The annual festival is dedicated to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi. — AFP

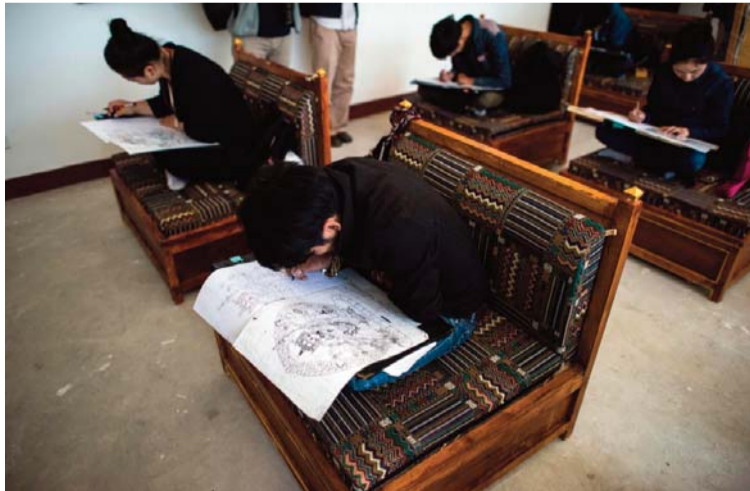
Tibet's thangkas find new fans across China



A student painting an example of the medieval Tibetan art of 'thangka', minutely detailed paintings depicting Buddhist deities or symbols, at the Danba Raodan art school in Lhasa.



A student painting an example of the medieval Tibetan art of 'thangka'.



Students working on examples of the medieval Tibetan art of 'thangka'.



Students working on examples of the medieval Tibetan art of 'thangka'.

Her eyes riveted to the canvas, Wulan meticulously applies color to an image of the Buddha, using pigments made of crushed pearls, turquoise and agate. The 34-year-old is one of dozens of students at a school in Lhasa learning the medieval Tibetan art of "thangka"—minutely detailed paintings depicting Buddhist deities or symbols, usually on cotton canvas or silk scrolls. But she is not Tibetan. Ethnically Mongol, she moved 2,500 kilometers (1,600 miles) to embark on seven years of studies. Beijing's forces took over Tibet in 1951 and the Communist government reviles the exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, but the region's traditional religious art is now increasingly being embraced by outsiders—including from China's Han ethnic majority—as both buyers and producers.

"Thangkas are captivating a growing number of people," said Wulan. "Traditional cultures are more and more recognized in China, which wasn't always the case in the past, during the economic boom." In their heyday centuries ago thangkas had patrons and practitioners in Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and northern India, and in 2009, UNESCO added them to its list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity, calling them "an integral part of the artistic life of people" on the Tibetan plateau. Now there are more than 100 apprentices—including some Han Chinese, the country's overwhelming ethnic majority—at Wulan's Danba Raodan school, who get free tuition in return for helping their teachers with their paintings. The students spend 10 hours every day learning how to trace figures in pencil, wield delicate paintbrushes and apply pigment to canvas.

Turbulent priest

The revival comes after a turbulent past—the Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959 after a failed uprising against

Chinese rule and the ravages of Mao's Cultural Revolution laid waste religious tradition and iconography as zealous Red Guards—including Tibetans—sought to destroy the "Four Olds": customs, culture, habits and ideas. "Beyond the destruction of artworks and monasteries ransacked, looted or burned, a lot of the expertise was lost. Many teachers disappeared or were in prison and could not train young people," said Amy Heller, a Tibetologist and art historian based in Switzerland.

"Even after the Cultural Revolution, it was difficult. The censorship had been such for 10 years that people were reluctant to bring out their thangkas, for fear of being denounced." Many Tibetans accuse Beijing of wanting to dilute their culture and the Dalai Lama says Tibet is the victim of "cultural genocide". Beijing considers the Himalayan region an integral part of its territory—a view disputed by the Tibetan government in exile and some scholars—and retorts that it ended serfdom and brought development.

The issue can find its way into art. In 2014, Chinese tycoon Liu Yiqian paid a record \$45 million for a 15th-century thangka tapestry believed to have been a gift from a Chinese emperor to a Tibetan Buddhist leader. At the time, Liu said: "If you look at it from the perspective of politics and diplomacy in ancient China it is... of great importance, because 600 years ago Tibet was a part of China already."

'Spiritual hole'

Once only made by artisans attached to Buddhist temples and monasteries and painstakingly produced according to strict rules, the creation of thangkas is now open to anyone passionate about the art. The vast majority of the Danba Raodan students are still Tibetans, but when it opened its doors in 1980 there were only 20

thangka painters in Lhasa, said its director Tenzin Phuntsok, who inherited it from his father. "Today there are a thousand. And nationally, about 10,000," he said.

Each painting requires between one month to three years of work, depending on its size and complexity. And while thangkas were traditionally offered to monasteries or sold to Tibetan families, the art has now secured a new, lucrative audience—Chinese collectors. "They come from the big cities of Beijing and Shanghai, and are becoming more numerous," said Tenzin Phuntsok. As interest grows, prices have soared, rising 10 percent a year according to the specialist Tiantangwu gallery in Beijing. "The thangka of a novice teacher is already worth several thousand euros," added the director, whose own works sell for nearly 200,000 yuan (\$30,000).

The older generation of painters "do not necessarily welcome this commercialization", acknowledged the 31-year-old, but said: "As a young person I find it inevitable. The main thing is to find a balance between the tradition and the market." Some specialists warn of wider risks. After decades of frantic economic growth and materialism, "Chinese sense a need to fill a spiritual hole with religion", said Wang Jingyi, professor of art at Taiwan Normal University in Taipei and market analyst. "And they are drawn to Tibetan Buddhism, which has more colorful art than what you find elsewhere in China." But Chinese collectors' "frenzy" for thangkas was "not necessarily beneficial for relations between Han and Tibetans", he added, as Han-owned galleries sometimes reaped huge profits from the works of Tibetan painters. "Ultimately, these are religious items," he said. "If they are too commercialized, they will lose their religious identity." — AFP



A student drawing an example of the medieval Tibetan art of 'thangka', minutely detailed paintings depicting Buddhist deities or symbols, at the Danba Raodan art school in Lhasa. — AFP photos



A student painting an example of the medieval Tibetan art of 'thangka'.