

Indian minister unveils Gandhi statue at embassy



Twinkle of success for Pak Christian powerlifting duo



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AMIR CALLS TO ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTMENTS TO CREATE JOBS

CROWN PRINCE HOPES KDIPA CONTRIBUTES TO BOOSTING ECONOMY



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MOI GRANTS TAXIS 1-MONTH PERIOD TO ADJUST METERS

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Hundreds of taxi drivers have been ticketed by traffic policemen for not using their meters or not adjusting them to the new fee structure set by the interior ministry after the recent hike in petrol prices. But owners of taxi companies are upset as they didn't get enough time to make the change, as this has to be done by special companies that are authorized by the interior ministry. Taxi owners yesterday met Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah to resolve the problem, and the ministry agreed to cancel the fines and give taxis a one-month grace period to adjust their meters.

Khalid Al-Mutairi, owner of a roaming taxi company, said the delay in adjusting the meters is not their fault. "Adjusting the meter needs some time, as this has to be done by special companies, which until now are not ready."

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KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousef Al-Ali, accompanied by the Director General of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and board members yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday urged attracting capital into the country to help diversify the economy and create work opportunities. Sheikh Sabah emphasized the necessity of taking action to attract capital, diversify the national economy, create labor opportunities and boost businesses in the state.

HH the Amir made the emphasis anew as he hosted, at Bayan Palace, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Yousef Mohammad Abdullah Al-Ali, accompanied by the Director General of the investment authority Sheikh Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and board members. The authority's officials delivered to the Amir the 2015 KDIPA annual report.

Al-Ali presented the Amir the latest accomplishments by the authority, namely stimulating local and external investments, in addition to the continuous work for creating new economic opportunities towards sustainable development. The authority was established with aim of attracting external investments. The move has been coupled with diverse and attractive administrative and legal facilities.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also expressed hope that KDIPA would play a role in bolstering Kuwait's economic status. The authority's officials delivered to Sheikh Nawaf the 2015 KDIPA annual report and briefed him about its accomplishments as well as future strategies. HH Sheikh Nawaf lauded their efforts, expressing hope the authority would contribute to strengthening Kuwait's economic status, in line with the state's strategy of attaining economic diversification for the sake of speedy growth and multiplying income resources. — KUNA



AL-AYYAT, Egypt: Egyptians check the wreckage of a train after it derailed near this village in Giza on the southern outskirts of the capital Cairo yesterday. — AFP

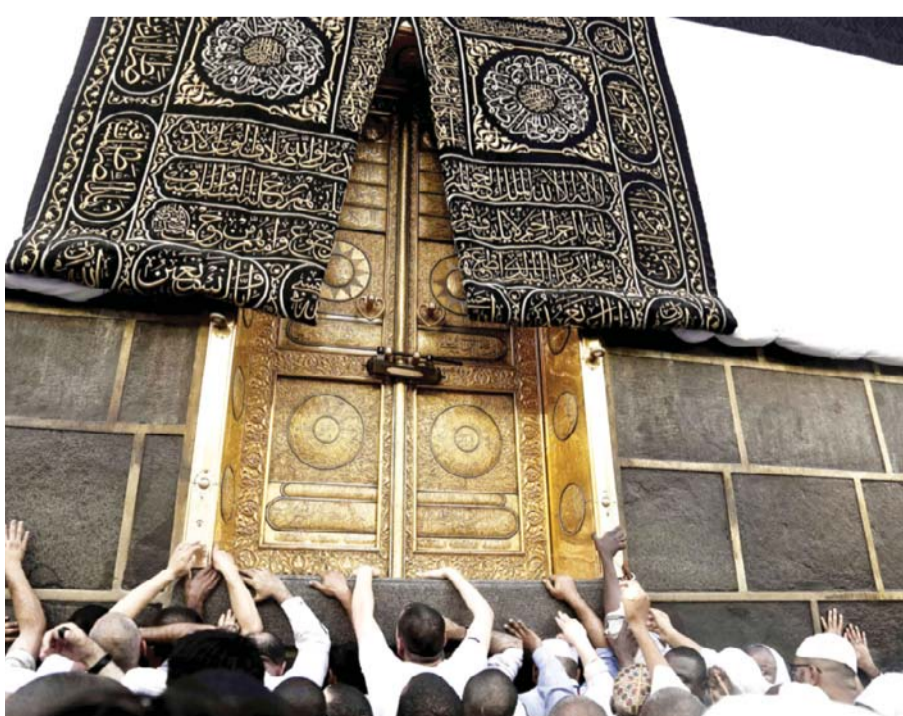
27 DEAD IN EGYPT BUS, TRAIN ACCIDENTS BEFORE HOLIDAY

CAIRO: At least 22 people were killed in a bus collision and five died when a train derailed in separate accidents south of Cairo yesterday during a busy holiday travel time. The bus collided with a truck in the southwestern province of Wedi El-Gedid, the Egyptian health ministry said. The number of passengers on the bus was not immediately clear. Traffic accidents are common in Egypt, where many of the country's roads are not well-maintained and regulations are laxly enforced.

The train, carrying about 60 passengers, derailed after leaving Cairo for the southern city of Aswan, police and medical officials said. The conductor hit the brakes

when he spotted a problem with the tracks, causing three carriages to overturn near the village of Al-Ayyat, officials said. Twenty-seven passengers were also hurt, with injuries ranging from abrasions to broken bones, the health ministry said.

Egypt's roads and trains are busier before national holidays, such as the Eid festival next week, with people working in Cairo and other major cities visiting their home towns and villages. Al-Ayyat was the scene of Egypt's deadliest rail accident in 2002 when a cooking gas cylinder exploded on a train and led to a fire that killed 361 passengers. Trains are often overcrowded in Egypt, adding to the safety risks. — AFP



MAKKAH: Pilgrims touch the golden door of the Kaaba, Islam's holiest shrine, at the Grand Mosque in this holy city yesterday. — AFP

NEW IPHONE 7 HAS NO HEADPHONE JACK POKEMON GO COMING TO APPLE WATCH

MOBILE WARS AS INDIAN TYCOON PLEDGES FREE 4G

MUMBAI: Outside a tiny Reliance store in a trendy Mumbai neighborhood, residents queued for hours this week for a new SIM card promising free data - and a dramatic reshaping of the Indian mobile landscape. Mukesh Ambani, India's richest man, announced his long-awaited Reliance Jio 4G network with an audacious free service for the rest of 2016, followed by vastly cheaper data plans and free voice calls for life.

Anticipating the shake-up, rival Airtel has already slashed 3G and 4G prices by up to 80 percent while Vodafone has heaped more data into its prepaid tariffs. Yet analysts say competitors will struggle to match the deep pockets of a startup backed by Reliance Industries, the energy-to-chemicals conglomerate. "I am hoping Jio can help me bring down my bills while providing unlimited internet usage," said Pushpraj Yadav, an e-commerce worker in Mumbai who complains he "incurs huge bills" for his data use. "Competition between Jio and other networks like Airtel is good for consumers."

India's mobile market is plagued by patchy reception, frequent call drops, erratic pricing and 3G Internet speeds that fluctuate wildly. "With Reliance Jio, I expect the data charges to be low and the connectivity to be better than other networks," said

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LOS ANGELES: Apple drew back the curtain on the iPhone 7, revealing several expected changes - including water-resistant features and the absence of a dedicated headset jack - marking an evolution rather than a stunning breakthrough for the flagship smartphone line. The official announcement at Apple's San Francisco event yesterday comes after weeks of leaks and speculation about the next iPhone. Instead of a headphone jack, the iPhone 7 will use Apple's proprietary Lightning charging port to connect a headset (included with the smartphones); alternatively users also can connect to wireless earbuds via

Bluetooth, and the iPhone 7 will also include an adapter to connect to analog headphones.

Apple also is introducing AirPods, new wireless earbuds that will be sold separately. The company's Beats division is launching Beats Solo3 and Powerbeats3 and the new BeatsX wireless headphones with the iPhone 7. The reason Apple is eliminating the traditional headphone port "comes down to one word: courage, the courage to move on to do something that betters all of us," said Phil Schiller, Apple's senior VP of worldwide marketing.

Continued on Page 13



SAN FRANCISCO: Apple CEO Tim Cook introduces the new iPhone 7 during an event at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium yesterday. — AFP

PAIN LINGERS A YEAR AFTER HAJJ TRAGEDY

MAKKAH: Despite being emotionally scarred by the death of two childhood friends during last year's hajj stampede, Muhammad Sani has still returned to Saudi Arabia for another pilgrimage. The Nigerian pharmacist, 46, says his faith remains unshaken even after the deaths of at least 2,297 pilgrims during the hajj stoning ritual last Sept 24. A year after the worst disaster in hajj history, Sani is among more than 1.4 million foreign pilgrims expected at this year's pilgrimage after the kingdom made safety improvements.

The event, one of the largest gatherings in the world, starts on Saturday. "I miraculously escaped unhurt, but the incident has left a scar in my heart that will never heal," Sani said after arriving in the kingdom with his wife. He and others are making the journey reassured within themselves that death can come anywhere - stampede or not - and with the expectation that safety has improved. The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, which capable Muslims must perform at least once, marking the spiritual peak of their lives.

This year's pilgrimage also follows a July suicide bombing which killed four security

officers outside Islam's second-holiest site, the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. No one claimed responsibility, but Islamic State group adherents have carried out other blasts in the kingdom. The stampede last year happened as pilgrims made their way to the Jamarat Bridge for a symbolic stoning of the devil in Mina, east of Makkah's Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest site. Pilgrims blamed the stampede on police road closures and poor crowd control, but Saudi officials said pilgrims had not followed the rules.

After the tragedy, King Salman, who holds the title "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques," ordered "a revision" of hajj organization. Public statements and Saudi press reports show that changes have been made even though no one was ever blamed for the stampede. The Arab News daily reported that roads in the Jamarat area were expanded and some pilgrims' accommodation relocated. More space was freed up when government facilities were moved out of Mina, Saudi Gazette reported.

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah is also taking a high-tech approach to improving safety. For the first time, pilgrims will receive electron-

ic bracelets storing their personal information. The timing of the Jamarat stoning has been restricted, and the hajj ministry says surveillance cameras and other electronic controls will monitor crowd flow, comparing it with computer projections. Pilgrims say they have already detected other changes, including speedier processing at the airport. "We notice a huge improvement in the services and care," said Asi Wat Azizan, an official with the Thai delegation. "We are not afraid of any accidents," said Najwa Hassan, a Sudanese pilgrim.

Saudi Arabia "is already taking action" to ensure last year's tragedy will never recur, said Indonesia's top official overseeing the hajj, Abdul Jamil. Oumou Khadiatou Diallo, a Malian pilgrim who survived the stampede but saw seven people die around her, says God has called her to return despite the trauma she suffered.

"I hope that the safety is going to be improved," she said before leaving Bamako for Saudi Arabia, burdened by her memories. "I think of all the dead from last year. What I saw often comes back to me, and that hurts." — AFP



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and senior Interior Ministry officials. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and senior Interior Ministry officials.

AMIR EXTOLS MOI'S EFFORTS TO PROTECT NATION'S SECURITY



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and senior Interior Ministry officials.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah commended Ministry of Interior (MOI) officials yesterday for their diligent efforts of upholding the nation's security and stability. His Highness the Amir received at Bayan Palace Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, MOI Undersecretary Sulaiman Al-Fahad and Director General of Investigation General Dr Fahad Al-Doussari.

Moreover, the three officials introduced to His Highness the Amir Major

General Asaad Abdul Rahman Al-Ruwaih and public prosecutors Jamal Al-Reesh and Fareaa Emadi, who have been assigned as deputies to the Director General of Investigation. Furthermore, Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled vowed that the MOI would spare no effort to repel all threats to the country's peace and security. The Interior Minister later introduced the new officials to 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. Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister, and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. —KUNA

PILGRIMS MUST WEAR E-BRACELETS FOR SAFETY: MINISTER

KUWAIT/MAKKAH: Pilgrims from the State of Kuwait must wear the identification electronic bracelets for safety reasons, Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane affirmed yesterday. These e-bracelets are quite necessary because they help in safeguarding the pilgrims' safety and locating their whereabouts in

headquarters to follow on the case. Last year, one pilgrim from Kuwait passed away and the expedition took a long time to locate him, he said. Saudi Arabia has recently announced that the faithful flocking to the hold lands must wear the e-bracelet, which contains personal information such as passport numbers and

operated in Kuwait, indicating that the data about the patients would help in following up on the case when the pilgrims return home. Also in Makkah, Khali Al-Uthaina, the head of the expedition, affirmed in a statement that all managers of the expedition are at the disposal of the worshippers. He made the remarks as he inspected residency sites of the groups that came from Kuwait. He also urged the pilgrims to abide by the local laws while performing the annual religious services.

Joint efforts

In other news, Head of the Kuwaiti hajj mission and Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Khlaif Muthib Al-Athaina received his Palestinian counterpart Dr Hassan Youssef Al-Saify in Makkah on Tuesday. The meeting focused on the joint efforts to facilitate the stay of pilgrims from both countries in the holy sites and enable them perform the pilgrimage rituals in a smooth and orderly way. The two sides also discussed ways to promote cooperation and share experience in various specialized areas relating to caring for the pilgrims.

At the end of the meeting, Athaina presented a model of Kaaba Al Musharrafah (the Holy Kaaba or the building at the center of Al-Masjid Al-Haram - the Muslim's most sacred mosque, in Makkah) to Saify as a gift. Saify, who serves as Undersecretary of the Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, expressed gratitude to the Kuwaiti official for the hospitality and the gift. —KUNA

MAKKAH: Head of the Kuwaiti hajj mission and Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Khlaif Muthib Al-Athaina meets with his Palestinian counterpart Dr Hassan Youssef Al-Saify in Makkah. - KUNA

the holy lands, the minister said at a news conference, attended by ranking Justice and Aqwaq officials.

Minister Sane revealed that ministry personnel and experts are currently seeking to develop a new e-technology to measure pulse of the faithful and transmit emergency aid calls to the expedition

addresses as well as medical information of individual pilgrims that will help authorities identify them and provide care.

Meanwhile in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, Dr Mubarak Fahad Al-Ajmi, the head of the medical services for the Kuwaiti expedition, said in a statement that the system of electronic medical files for ill pilgrims has been



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with newly appointed Deputies Director Generals in the Investigation Department.

NO ONE ABOVE THE LAW: INTERIOR MINISTER

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah stressed yesterday that there is no one above the law and that justice "does not discriminate."

According to a press release by the Security Media Department at the Interior Ministry, Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled, after meeting newly

appointed Deputies Director Generals in the Investigation Department, stated that enforcing the law is the way to protect society.

Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled expressed his gratitude for the appointed deputies, where he encouraged them not to hold on any efforts to develop the working structure, alongside serving justice. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addresses pilgrims at Kuwait International Airport yesterday.



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah tours Kuwait International Airport to inspect preparations for serving pilgrims.

MINISTER SHEIKH MOHAMMAD CHECKS PREPARATIONS FOR SERVING PILGRIMS



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah bids farewell to a pilgrim.

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah stressed on using all available capabilities to serve all pilgrims from or just passing through Kuwait. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled toured Kuwait airport yesterday to bid farewell the ministry's Hajj campaign and also to observe all preparations made by all of the ministry's sectors in the airport for the Hajj's season.

In a press statement, Sheikh Mohammad affirmed the readiness to receive the departing and arriving passengers in the airport and the importance to reflect the civil feature of Kuwait and treat travelers humanely. Sheikh Mohammad expressed his gratitude for all employees at Kuwait's airport on their effort made to execute all of their duties.

The Deputy Prime Minister listened to the Director General of Airport Security Brigadier Waleed Al-Saleh's presentation on preparations made by airport security for the Hajj season from the date the pilgrims leave the country to the holy lands until they are back. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah stands by the Interior Ministry's booth at Kuwait International Airport, dedicated to serving pilgrims.

INDIAN MINISTER UNVEILS GANDHI STATUE AT EMBASSY

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: India's Minister of State for External Affairs Gen V K Singh yesterday inaugurated a life-size bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi, India's Father of the Nation, at a solemn ceremony at the Indian Embassy. Addressing the gathering after paying a floral tribute to the new-installed statue, the minister said: "It is a historic occasion for the Indian community in Kuwait as we could install a statue of Gandhiji at the embassy." Speaking about the contemporary relevance of Gandhian principles such as non-violence and cleanliness, he said by following these ideals, "we can not only propagate how India has been able to gain because of him, but also we are able to create harmony within the community."

Congratulating the ambassador for taking this exemplary initiative,

the minister expressed hope that the statue would be able to inspire those who visit the embassy. The Indian embassy in Kuwait is the first Indian mission in the Middle East to install a Gandhi statue on its premises. Indian Ambassador Sunil Jain in his welcome address said it was a proud moment for the embassy. Deputy Chief of Mission Shubashis Goldar, First Secretary, consular (community) K K Pahel, Labor Attache Thomas Joseph and other embassy officials were present at the ceremony. A large number of Indian community members attended the function.

Reception

On Tuesday evening, the Indian embassy hosted a reception in honor of the visiting minister, who arrived here on a two-day visit. The reception was attended by several members of the Indian community. During the two-day visit, the minister held

discussions with several top officials in Kuwait. On Tuesday, Singh called on First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and other officials and discussed various issues regarding the Indian community in Kuwait. The visiting minister was expected to meet the interior minister and health minister later yesterday.

Singh attended a community session and interacted with Indian residents in Kuwait, which was held at the embassy yesterday. He heard concerns that were raised by members on various community issues and assured to look into the issues and find solutions. Representatives of registered Indian associations in Kuwait, representatives of Indian schools, Indian private sector companies, public sector undertakings and media representatives attended the community meeting.



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih meets with the UN's Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons Maria Grazia. —KUNA

KUWAIT KEEN ON PROTECTING EXPATS' RIGHTS: MINISTER

KUWAIT: Kuwait pays great attention to protecting rights of expat workers and their employers in line with international terms, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih said yesterday. Kuwait signed cooperation protocols with source countries of expat workers, and has established electronic link systems with them countries for a smoother sharing of information, said

Subaih, who is also Minister of State for Planning and Development Affairs, in a statement after meeting with the UN's Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons Maria Grazia yesterday. The two sides discussed several topics of mutual concern.

Meanwhile, Subaih pointed to establishing the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) and the Kuwaiti center

for sheltering foreign workers to resolve problems facing expats, and providing them with better living conditions. In the same context, PAM Acting Director General Abdullah Al-Motawtah also met with Grazia and an accompanying delegation, offering them thorough information on PAM's projects on human rights and fighting human trafficking. —KUNA



KUWAIT: India's Minister of State for External Affairs Gen V K Singh inaugurates a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Indian Embassy, Kuwait yesterday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



India's Minister of State for External Affairs Gen V K Singh speaks during the event.



India's Minister of State for External Affairs Gen V K Singh interacts with children during the event.



Indian Ambassador Sunil Jain (right) speaks during the event, as India's Minister of State for External Affairs Gen V K Singh looks on.



India's Minister of State for External Affairs Gen V K Singh speaks to reporters.

MINISTRY MARKS WORLD PHYSICAL THERAPY DAY

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health has announced opening a number of specialized physiotherapy centers for the elderly in various primary medical care centers nationwide. Director of Physiotherapy Services Department at the Ministry Dr Nabeel Al-Haneef

said in remarks yesterday on the occasion of World Physical Therapy Day, which falls today. This year's event is themed 'Movement for Health.'

Improving individuals' health and physical activity during the various

stages of life will create a new generation of healthy elderly, he said. The Department will be opening an elderly physiotherapy center at Al-Rouda Medical Center by September 19, to be followed by several other centers during the coming months. —KUNA

KUWAIT CUT LONG PATH IN ADULT LITERACY: OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: Kuwait enjoys pioneering experience in literacy which has benefited other countries, with adult illiteracy below 2 percent, mostly among women over 60, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Education Fatima Al-Kandari said yesterday. The statement comes on the occasion International Literacy Day, which falls today. Kuwait's government, represented by the Ministry of Education, have been making tremendous efforts to eliminate illiteracy, enacting a host of laws.

Kandari pointed out that the ministry has made great strides in literacy, adding that educational opportunities are available for all, for those who wish to enroll in adult education centers, regardless of nationality.

Kuwait has opened several centers for adult literacy "because education is a basic human right regardless of gender or nationality". She stressed that "when we invest in education, literacy, we are investing in building leading generations".

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education Assistant

Undersecretary for Planning and Information Dr. Khaled Al-Rushaid stresses the significance of planning as the key element for the developing the education process. Citing the ministry's statistics, Rushaid said that the number of literacy centers in recent years reached 85, with the number of students reaching around 19,000.

In the meantime, Director General of UNESCO Irina Bokova, said in her letter on the occasion that "There remain today 758 million adults who cannot read or write a simple sentence. Two thirds of them are women." She pointed to the need for bolstered international cooperation across the board, noting that UNESCO has launched a global coalition to strengthen coordination between all key partners.

"We have seen great progress since the proclamation of International Literacy Day by UNESCO in 1966. The world's population has increased substantially, but the number of young adults without literacy skills decreased by 25 percent between 1990 and 2015," Bokova added. —KUNA

Eid Mubarak

On the occasion of Eid Al Adha, the Bank will be closed from Sunday 11/9/2016 until Wednesday 14/9/2016. Work will resume on Thursday 15/9/2016 in the following branches:

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- Jahra
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DUBAI: (From left) The Egyptian litterateur and researcher Salah Al-Rawi, the Kuwaiti researcher Talal Al-Rumaidhi (the General Secretary of Kuwait Writers Association), the Bahraini writer and literary critic Fahad Hussain Hasan (the moderator), the Algerian writer and journalist Khalid Omar Bin Ghoffah, the Algerian researcher and novelist Dr Al-Yameen Bin Toumi and the Bahraini litterateur and literary critic Abdulqader Agheel.

SYMPOSIUM: THE ROLE OF ARAB INTELLECTUAL TODAY

SECOND RESEARCH SESSION

By Bader Abu Raghahah A-Otaibi

DUBAI: The General Conference of the Arab Writers Union, organized a second research session titled 'The Role of the Arab Intellectual Today' on September 5, 2016, and the symposium was held at Al-Bustan Rotana hotel auditorium in the emirate of Dubai in the UAE.



Kuwaiti researcher Talal Al-Rumaidhi, General Secretary of Kuwait Writers Association.

The program was chaired and moderated by the well-known Bahraini writer and literary critic, Fahad Hussain Hasan who welcomed the guests, participants and audience in the beginning of the session, then, he introduced the Five participants to the audience who were presented their papers respectively: the Algerian researcher and novelist Dr Al-Yameen Bin Toumi, the Bahraini litterateur and literary critic Abdulqader Agheel, the Kuwaiti researcher Talal Al-Rumaidhi (the General Secretary of Kuwait Writers Association), the Egyptian litterateur and

researcher Salah Al-Rawi, the Algerian writer and journalist Khalid Omar Bin Ghoffah.

Challenges

The first speaker was Dr Al-Yameen Bin Toumi (Algeria) who talked in depth on the current issues related to the Arab culture as a challenges our future and he emphasized heavily the



Bahraini writer and literary critic Fahad Hussain Hasan, the symposium's moderator.

importance of highlight the substantial role of intellectual in every single Arab country.

According to a view of Abdulqader Agheel (Bahrain) who was the second speaker in that symposium, there is no role for the intellectual in our life today especially in Arab region after the emergence of revolutions, and he added that "we want to revive the role of cultural elites".

Talal Al-Rumaidhi (Kuwait), the General Secretary of Kuwait Writers Association who was the third participant in that program, pointed out the permanent importance of the crucial

role of intellectual as a historical fact by tracing some biographies of pioneering Kuwaiti scholars such as late Yousef Bin Eissa Al-Jenaee, late Misaaed Bin Abdullah Al-Aazmi and late Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed.

The fourth speaker was Dr Salah Al-Rawi (Egypt), and he pointed out that the strategy as a term has always had a military background and the role of political authority in polarizing the intellectuals, and he also talked about the necessity of renewal both speeches, religious and cultural.

Individuality

Khalid Omar Bin Ghaghah (Algeria), the Executive Editor of Al-Kateb Al-Arabi (The Arabic Writer) magazine which published by the General Conference of the Arab Writers Union, was the fifth and last speaker in that session and emphasized that the identity has been regarded as one of the most strategic challenges confront Arab nation and he also spoke out against the individuality in terms of its different patterns, and he talked about his own experience with some Bedouins who were belong to Shammar tribe in the state of Kuwait and their relatives in Hayel city in Saudi Arabia.

Finally, Some of notable litterateurs and writers were presented among the audience at that session and enriched the debate by their questions in a brief interactive session followed the symposium such as the Egyptian litterateur Salwa Bakr who pointed out that the Arabic intellectual no longer productive in terms of ideas, Kuwaiti litterateur Bder Abu Raghahah Al-Otaibi who talked about the importance of translation as a deliverance for our most problematic cultural issues, Mauritanian Muhammad Weld Ahdullah the General Secretary of Mauritania Writers Union who pointed out that the Arabic intellectual should adopt his vision early, Omani Writer Bader Al-Aamri and Emirati journalist Ahmad Bin Muhammad Salem from Al-Khaleej newspaper (The Gulf).

KUWAIT FUNDS REHAB CENTER IN AL-QUDS UNIVERSITY

AMMAN: Kuwait Ambassador to Jordan Dr Hamad Al-Duaij handed over Tuesday financial assistance presented from the Zakat (alms) House to Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Open University, to fund establishment of a rehabilitation center for people with special needs.

Al-Duaij handed over some \$95,000 to the President of the University Dr Yunus Amro and director of its branch in Nablus, Dr Yusuf Awwad. Duaij said in a press statement that Kuwait's government and public charities were keen on supporting the Palestinian people in all domains, including education and social care. "The Palestinian cause has always been the number one issue for Kuwait and

the Arabs," said Duaij, and supporting the Palestinian people "is a duty."

Meanwhile, Amro said Al-Quds Open University has 20 education centers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, serving around 60,000 students. The university, he added, was allocating seats for sons of resistance people and those released from Israeli jails, as well as people with special needs.

The university, said Amro, was also active in scientific research in agriculture, training and continuous education. The Palestinian university officials commended the Zakat House support, saying it would provide much-needed care for the disabled children. — KUNA



AMMAN: Kuwait Ambassador to Jordan Dr Hamad Al-Duaij delivers financial assistance presented from the Zakat House to Al-Quds Open University. — KUNA

AMBASSADOR LODGE, BRITISH EMBASSY WISH EID MUBARAK

EMBASSY CLOSED 11-13 SEPTEMBER

KUWAIT: On the occasion of Eid Al Adha, Ambassador Matthew Lodge and his staff at the British Embassy would like to send their best wishes to all Muslims in Kuwait and worldwide. Her Majesty's Ambassador, Matthew Lodge said: "On the occasion of Eid-Al-Adha, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to all the people of Kuwait. I would like to express my gratitude to the people of Kuwait, who have made my family and me feel so welcome. I wish those

who are travelling for the Hajj pilgrimage a safe journey. Eid Mubarak."

In celebration, The British Embassy will be closed on 11-13 September. The embassy will resume its business on Wednesday 14 September. During this time, all British Embassy departments will be closed including visa services at the Visa Application Centre. The British Embassy Kuwait wishes you and your family Eid Mubarak!



RED PALACE: SYMBOL OF KUWAITIS' BRAVERY



KUWAIT: Al-Qasr Al-Ahmar (The Red Palace), a symbol of the bravery of Kuwaitis defending their land, stands lofty and glorious in Al-Jahra, since its establishment by the Kuwait's 7th ruler late Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. The palace, built using red clay, stretches over about 6500 square meters and has 33 rooms. The monument is famous for being a major part of the battle of Jahra in 1920, and is now considered a cultural and historic attraction. —KUNA



SHEIKH SALMAN RALLIES BEHIND ATHLETES COMPETING IN PARALYMPICS

RIO DE JANEIRO: Kuwait's Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah conveyed the nation's greetings to Kuwait Disabled Sports Club (KDSC) athletes, who are participating in the Rio 2016 Paralympics which kicked off yesterday.



Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah

Sheikh Salman underscored the monumental participation of KDSC in the Paralympics in a speech he gave to KDSC officials, including its honorary President Sheikh Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Deputy President of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee Duajj Al-Otaibi and Kuwait's Ambassador to Brazil Ayada Al-Saeedi. "We are certain that the KDSC athletes will do the nation proud as they have been accustomed to exemplary achievements," Sheikh Salman said.

Moreover, he commended KDSC for their diligent work and efforts that enabled them to take part in an event of such magnitude. "This is an opportunity for Kuwait to showcase its capabilities to the world, as a nation of peace and a bastion of humanity," he added.

Furthermore, the Kuwaiti Minister of State for Youth Affairs thanked officials at Kuwait's embassy in the Brazilian capital for their continuous support of the KDSC athletes. Meanwhile, Head of KDSC's delegation Anwar Al-Mutawaa noted that the nation's flag was raised aloft during the opening ceremony on Sunday, saying he is hopeful that the KDSC athletes would emerge victorious.

Closer ties

Sheikh Salman had stated late Tuesday night that the State of Kuwait seeks closer ties with all other nations particularly in the youth and sports fields. Speaking upon his arrival at Rio de Janeiro International Airport, Sheikh Salman said a six-member squad from KDSC are taking part in this event to be held on September 7-18.

"My presence here, alongside with the Kuwaiti sports mission, is a token of the appreciation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people and government for the Brazilian people and government," he said. "We seek to maintain close ties and cooperation with all friendly countries that host international sports events," Sheikh Salman pointed out.

On the preparations for the championship, he said the KDSC has held a 18-day training camp in Izmit city, north Turkey, recently with a view to enhancing the competitive edge of its squad during the competitions of this event.

"The State of Kuwait, represented in the Public Authority for Sports, spares no effort in offering all possible material and moral backing for the athletes and sportspeople to achieve the best results," he affirmed.

Sheikh Salman recalled the outstanding achievements of Kuwaiti athletes who won gold, silver and bronze medals at the Rio 2016 Olympics, held between August 5 and 21. He expressed the best wishes for the six Kuwaiti competitors, namely Mohammad Al-Odwani, Ahmad Naqa, Nasser Saleh, Mohammad Mejbel, Abdullah Al-Saif, and Atef Al-Dousary. He was received at the airport by Kuwait Ambassador to Brazil Ayada Al-Saeedi and Second Secretary of the Embassy Bashar Al-Dowsyan.

On a similar note, the Honorary Chairperson of KDSC Sheikh Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah affirmed that the Kuwaiti squad members are well-prepared for the event, citing their performance in the recent training camp in Izmit. "Several members of the Kuwaiti squad, males and females, are qualified for taking the podium since they were medalists in previous championships," she said in statements.

The KDSC delegation to the event arrived here from Izmit last Thursday, led by the Club's board member Anwar Al-Mutawaa. The Paralympic games gathered nearly 1,000 disabled athletes from various countries of the world. — KUNA



KRCS DISTRIBUTES 1,300 FOOD BASKETS TO DISPLACED FAMILIES IN IRAQ'S KURDISTAN

IRBIL: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) doled out 1,300 food baskets to a number of displaced Iraqi families in the autonomous region of Kurdistan yesterday, the latest in a flow of aid given by the humanitarian society. The batch of aid is the ninth installment of KRCS's humanitarian campaign launched this year, KRCS Director-General Abdulrahman Al-Oun said, adding that it aims to ameliorate the lives of the displaced.

Moreover, he noted that a total of

3,000 food baskets, which are a month's worth of supply, were distributed to displaced families in the northern Iraqi region, as the process was monitored by Kuwait's Consulate in Kurdistan and the Barzani Charity Foundation. Meanwhile, Diyar Khoter, an official from Barzani Charity, underscored the scope of the aid as he thanked KRCS for its assistance. Since the start of the year, KRCS has provided incessant aid to displaced families in Kurdistan, running the gamut from nutritive to medical assistance. — KUNA

COURT ADJOURNS PETROL PRICES INCREASE HALT PLEA

MPS INQUIRE ABOUT PRICES' FREEZE

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The administrative court adjourned a hearing held yesterday demanding suspending the new petrol prices until the government provides a copy of the decision and whether it has been published in the official gazette. In this regard, lawyer Nawaf Al-Fuzai, who filed the case, argued that petrol belongs to both the state and the people, and that the government is not free to do whatever it wants with it.

Freezing prices

Meanwhile, MPs Yousef Al-Zalzalah and Ali Al-Khamees filed two separate inquiries addressing Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousuf Al-Ali concerning prices in local markets. In his inquiry, Zalzalah reminded the minister that in a statement he made to KUNA on April 10, 2016, he promised to 'freeze' the prices of goods, services and craftworks, in addition to forming a special committee headed by his assistant undersecretary for commercial control and consumer protection to control prices and conduct checks if prices change. "Why did the minister liberalize the prices of goods and services by issuing his decision number 307/2016, cancelling the previous price freezing one numbered 164/2016?" asked Zalzalah. MP Ali Al-Khamees asked about the duties of the National Committee for Consumer Protection and whether it actually monitors prices in local markets.

Street maintenance

MP Faisal Al-Kandari expressed amazement at the statement made to the media by the Ministry of Public Work's Undersecretary Awatif Al-Ghunaim about not having a budget for road maintenance projects, which indicates the continuation of flying gravel. "Making such an excuse before winter and the rainy season will not stop us from holding the people responsible for this problem accountable," he stressed, rejecting Ghunaim's statements and reminding people of earlier official ones about promising to hold responsible compa-

nies and contractors legally accountable. "Ghunaim's statement is a confession that MPW is responsible for the problem and has to compensate all road users for damage the gravel caused to their vehicles," he concluded.

E-files

Head of the medical team accompanying



Yousef Al-Zalzalah



Ali Al-Khamees

Kuwait's hajj mission Dr Mubarak Al-Ajmi announced launching the e-files system in the mission's clinics and stressed that the system facilitates access to patients' data and health conditions. "The system is linked to the main one in various polyclinics in Kuwait," he added, noting that a visit was made to Makkah's health department to coordinate with it.

INSPECTORS BUST 150 USED TIRES SOLD AS NEW

HOUBARA HUNTER ARRESTED

By A Saleh and Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Through its emergency team in Siddeeq, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry raided a warehouse in Shuwaikh industrial area, where a large quantity of used tires was stored and ready for sale. Informed sources explained that over 150 used tires of various sizes had been stored in an attic to be sold as new ones. The owner was arrested and immediately referred to the public prosecution.

Houbara

Meanwhile, the Environment Police arrested a man who appeared in a video clip with a number of houbara bustards that are banned from being hunted or sold according to the environment law. The department said the suspect violated article 100 of environment protection law 42/2014 which calls for a one-year jail sentence and of fine of KD 500-5,000 or either punishment, with the confiscation of the birds and tools used in catching them. The suspect was sent to concerned authorities.

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Merkel warns parties against populist race

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PEACE BUT EXTREME POVERTY IN REMOTE REGION OF AFGHANISTAN

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OBAMA SLUR NO BAR TO DUTERTE'S POPULARITY

RECORD APPROVAL RATINGS WHILE SLUMS DRENCHED IN BLOOD

MANILA: Despite foul-mouthed tirades, international outrage and a public spat with Barack Obama, Rodrigo Duterte is the most popular politician in the Philippines. As the politically incorrect president enters the third month of his six-year term, the Asian nation's slums are drenched in blood from a brutal anti-drug campaign that has seen police and shadowy assassins kill nearly 3,000 people. But 71-year-old Duterte is riding high on record approval ratings, with the acid-tongued and irascible grandfather shrugging off repeated controversies including unprovoked and obscene attacks on the United Nations and the US president, whom he this week called a "son of a whore".

Dictator in the making

Critics said he was a dictator in the making, but 16 million people voted the former state prosecutor into office earlier this year, a landslide win fuelled by widespread disgust at conventional politicians in a raucous, corruption-ridden democracy. "He is probably saying things ordinary people would not say because they are fearful or ashamed," political scientist Antonio Contreras told AFP. "It's hard to explain. It's a machismo thing," said Earl Parreno, from the Manila-based think tank Institute for Political and Electoral Reform, explaining that Duterte represented many people's hope for genuine change.

"Despite his missteps, his insult... what they want really is for him to be given a chance to do something that will have an impact on their lives," Parreno told AFP. That sense of hope is embodied by Irving dela Cruz, an IT manager who spends at least two hours getting to work through Manila's gridlocked traffic. "Okay, I don't like his attitude, his swearing, his womanising, all his negative traits. But what he has done and what he continues to do outweighs everything," the 39-year-old told AFP. "He is transparent, nothing about his personality is faked, and he represents the common man. I feel safer actually," dela

Cruz added. Parreno said Filipinos generally backed Duterte's bloody anti-crime crackdown not because they were ignorant of their rights but that they were more concerned about their personal safety. "They really think we need this kind of action," he said. "It is sometimes embarrassing but that is the mind of the masses."

Scrambling for selfies

Manila pollster Pulse Asia said 91 percent of Filipinos supported Duterte in their last popularity survey in July, more than a month after he took 38 percent of the popular vote in the landslide May election. There have been no other surveys since then. Rights groups, church leaders in the mainly Catholic nation and some lawmakers have joined the US and United Nations in condemning the extra-judicial killings.

"This is a national emergency and the Philippine government particularly President Duterte are instead cheerleading and praising this campaign ... It's absolutely appalling," Phelim Kine, of Human Rights Watch, told Al Jazeera. "Lawyers, human rights activists understand these things but ordinary people on the streets are not likely to be familiar with that," Contreras said of concerns over democratic rights. "They (victims) are painted to be criminals, they are demonized as drug addicts," he told AFP.

Duterte's popularity-or notoriety-is extending beyond Philippine borders as he makes his first foreign trip to a summit in Laos this week, according to his spokesman Martin Andanar. Some foreign ministers as well as delegates at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations meeting have been scrambling to take selfies with the Filipino leader, Andanar told reporters Wednesday. "In spite of the colorful language that he uses, the Asians in the region seem to be able to get-and there seems to be an empathy towards-him," Ernesto Abella, another Duterte spokesman, added. — AFP



VIETIANE: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte attends the ASEAN Summit Retreat during the second day of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit. — AFP



HONG KONG: This file photo taken on June 18, 2013 shows a woman walking past a banner displayed in support of US intelligence whistleblower Edward Snowden. — AFP

SNOWDEN HID AMONG HONG KONG REFUGEES

HONG KONG: US intelligence whistleblower Edward Snowden sought shelter among Hong Kong refugees after he leaked a huge trove of secret documents in the southern Chinese city, reports said yesterday. The former intelligence contractor had quit his job with the National Security Agency and travelled to Hong Kong in May 2013 where he initiated one of the largest data leaks in US history, fuelling a firestorm over the issue of mass surveillance.

Although Snowden stayed in an upscale hotel before the leak, little was known of his situation afterwards. But a report yesterday revealed he had been given shelter by the city's 11,000 asylum-seekers. Many of Hong Kong's refugees are forced to live in slum-like conditions, the last place anyone would look for one of the highest-profile US fugitives. The 33-year-old stayed with at least four refugees, according to a New York Times report. It added they were all clients of lawyer Robert Tibbo, who helped hide Snowden.

"It was clear that if Mr. Snowden was placed with a refugee family, this was the last place the government and the majority of Hong Kong society would expect

him to be," Tibbo told the Times. One Filipino woman with whom Snowden stayed, Vanessa Mae Bondalian Rodel, described him as "scared and very worried". After she saw his story in local media, she described her shock. "Oh my God, the most wanted man in the world is in my house." Other refugees from Sri Lanka said they were not worried about

hosting Snowden, and felt he was taking a greater risk than they were. One family told how he left money for them under a pillow before he left. Snowden came to Hong Kong on May 20, 2013 and began a damaging series of leaks about the NSA eavesdropping of phones and computer systems that triggered concern from governments worldwide. — AFP

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NEWTON MAKES LANDFALL IN MEXICO AFTER KILLING 2

LA PAZ: Tropical storm Newton roared into northwestern Mexico early yesterday, making landfall a second time after leaving two people dead in Baja California, US forecasters said. Downgraded from a hurricane, the storm was still packing 110 kilometer-an-hour winds when it swept into mainland Mexico near Bahia Kino in the state of Sonora, the US National hurricane center said. The storm was expected to dump eight to 15 centimeters of rain, before passing into the US state of Arizona later in the day, the Florida-based weather center said.

After coming ashore for the first time

early on Tuesday, the storm uprooted trees and shattered windows, leaving two dead in Baja California, as thousands of tourists hunkered down in hotels in the Los Cabos resort area. But the region, which is very popular with American and Canadian tourists, managed to escape major damage, two years after Hurricane Odile ravaged Los Cabos, killing six people and causing \$1 billion damage.

"According to the latest reports, #Newton only caused minor damages in infrastructure," President Enrique Pena Nieto wrote on Twitter, saying there were no injuries. The storm

caused a large swell that sunk a shrimp fishing boat between the Sea of Cortez and the Pacific ocean, leaving two people dead and three missing, said Los Cabos civil protection director Marco Antonio Vazquez. The two bodies washed ashore on a beach. Vazquez said the boat had ignored warnings against going out to sea.

Looting attempts

Vazquez said Newton's winds took down trees and tin roofs from poorer neighborhoods but that a disaster was averted because the hurricane passed through rural, sparsely inhabited areas.

Some hotel windows broke, but 14,000 tourists in Los Cabos were "safe" in rooms made to shelter them, said state tourism secretary Genaro Ruiz Hernandez. Some 1,500 people took refuge in shelters in the resort town but many returned home, Vazquez said. Power was cut to parts of Los Cabos and La Paz and the phone service was also disrupted. Police confirmed arresting five people for trying to loot two convenience stores in Los Cabos, with officers stationed outside several shops to prevent the kind of looting seen after Odile. Local airports closed late Monday, while small boats were barred from

using the ports in case of a storm surge in low-lying areas. Schools were also shut. North of Los Cabos, trees also fell in La Paz and locals boarded up shop windows, with 400 people evacuated from vulnerable areas.

The storm is expected to bring up to 30 centimeters of rain in Baja California Sur and as much as 25 centimeters in several Pacific coast states, which could trigger flash floods and mudslides. The weather system caused damage in the country's south over the weekend before transforming into a tropical storm, flooding 1,400 homes in Guerrero state and leaving three dead in Chiapas. — AFP



LUANG PRABANG: US President Barack Obama pauses in the Ho Raj Rod, or Carriage House, as he tours the Wat Xieng Thong Buddhist Temple. — AP

SHOWCASING LAO CULTURE, OBAMA PUSHES BACK ON US ISOLATIONISM

CONSTRAINED BY THE TENDENCY TO LOOK INWARD

LUANG PRABANG: President Barack Obama ventured yesterday to a remote mountain town in Laos to tour a centuries-old Buddhist temple, gently chiding Americans to resist turning a blind eye to the world outside their borders. Obama used a visit to the mountainous northern city of Luang Prabang to push back against an America-centric world view promulgated by Republican Donald Trump. Questioned by young Southeast Asians, Obama said the US could be a great force for good but has been constrained by the tendency to look inward. "If you are the United States, sometimes you can feel lazy and think, you know, 'we're so big, we don't really have to know anything about other people,'" Obama said. "That's part of what I'm trying to change." Though he didn't mention Trump by name, Obama appeared to counter the isolationist approach epitomized by the Republican presidential nominee's "America first" rallying cry. An ardent opponent of Obama's efforts to boost global trade, Trump has questioned the US alliance with NATO and vowed to build a wall between the US and Mexico.

American multiculturalism

So when an Indonesian woman asked Obama about American multiculturalism and the edict "e pluribus unum" - out of many, one - Obama seized the chance to explain that when times are tough and people feel stressed "they turn on others who don't look like them." He said that's why it's critical for the US to promote principles that rise above any individ-

ual religion, nationality or race. "Not everybody in America agrees with me on this, by the way," Obama said. After a moment's hesitation, he added: "I'll leave it at that."

Throughout his visit to Laos, Obama has lamented that most Americans know little about the country or the devastating secret nine-year war the US waged here half a century ago. He sought to use his presence and the spotlight that follows him to bring attention to an unfamiliar corner of the world. In Luang Prabang, he showcased a rich cultural and religious heritage. A UNESCO World Heritage List site along the Mekong River, the city was a hub for Buddhist faith during the Lan Xang kingdom starting in the 14th century. Obama's first stop was Wat Xieng Thong, a 16th century complex of ornate gold buildings known as the "Temple of the Golden City." He removed his shoes before entering the carriage house, where he examined a line of golden statues. "It's gorgeous," Obama said.

Greeting the temple monks, Obama posed for a group photo with about 20 boys in bright orange robes after being informed they weren't supposed to shake hands. He bought gifts for daughters Sasha and Malia at an open-air shop and sipped from a coconut. On this first visit by a sitting American president, Obama has placed a particular emphasis on trying to heal wounds inflicted by the war the US waged here as part of the Vietnam War.

'Decisive step forward'

Obama paid tribute to survivors

maimed by some of the 80 million unexploded bombs America dropped on Laos during the war. Vowing the US will do more to help finally remove them, he touted his administration's move to double spending on ordnance cleanup to roughly \$90 million over three years. "For the last four decades, Laotians have continued to live under the shadow of war," Obama said as he toured a rehabilitation center in the capital of Vientiane that cares for bomb survivors. "The war did not end when the bombs stopped falling."

Some 20,000 people have been killed or wounded since the war ended, Obama said after viewing displays of small rusted grenades and photos of a child missing a foot. He insisted those were "not just statistics," but reminders of the heavy toll inflicted by war. "I'm inspired by you," Obama told Thoumy Silamphan, a survivor who uses a prosthetic after losing a hand to one of the bombs. The president did not come to Laos to apologize. Instead, he said he hoped the strengthened partnership on bomb clearing could mark a "decisive step forward" between the US and this landlocked communist nation.

The visit also served as a capstone to his effort to bolster relations with Southeast Asian countries long overlooked by the United States. The outreach is a core element of Obama's attempt to shift U.S. diplomatic and military resources away from the Middle East and to Asia to counter China in the region and ensure a US foothold in growing markets. — AP

VENEZUELA PROTESTS TEST MADURO'S GRIP

CARACAS: Venezuela's opposition has called new nationwide protests against President Nicolas Maduro yesterday, testing his grip on power six days after massive demonstrations showed the magnitude of anger over a raging crisis. The leftist leader has called his own supporters to hold rallies across the country, seeking to show his strength in the face of opposition pressure for a referendum on removing him from power by the end of the year.

With oil-rich Venezuela's once booming economy in melt-down and outrage mounting over shortages of food and medicine, the atmosphere is tense. The rival demos have raised fears of a return to the unrest that rocked Venezuela in 2014, when a wave of pro- and anti-government protests left 43 people dead. Maduro said Tuesday night his opponents were planning violence in an attempt to oust him in a "coup." But he assured supporters the protesters were "isolated."

The center-right opposition for its part accuses Maduro of an authoritarian crack-down. Dozens of protesters were arrested in the aftermath of last Thursday's rally, according to rights groups. The opposition says around one million people flooded the streets of Caracas that day, the biggest protest in decades. Maduro put the turnout at 30,000 people maximum. But there is no denying that the massive crowds, dressed in white and venting months of pent-up anger, gave the opposition new momentum in its drive to end 17 years of socialist rule by Maduro and his late predecessor, Hugo Chavez.

The coalition behind the referendum push, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), says it is seeking to build on that momentum with yesterday's protests, which will shift the focus from the capital to the rest of the country. "We want to accelerate the political and

electoral solution to this crisis," said spokesman Jesus Torrealba. Protests will be held nationwide outside the local offices of the National Electoral Council (CNE), which is accused of stalling a referendum. Electoral officials said their offices would remain closed as a precaution. In Caracas, the opposition called its supporters to stop all activity for 10 minutes at noon (1600 GMT). "The opposition's road map is to try to keep people participating. The challenge is to stay active and peaceful in the street while pushing a referendum," said political analyst Luis Vicente Leon.

'In war, anything goes'

Never the less, tensions are running high. The two sides "want to annihilate each other," said sociologist Maryclen Stelling. "And unfortunately in war, anything goes." The sharp drop in global oil prices since mid-2014 has pushed Venezuela's economy to the brink. Long lines and bare supermarket shelves have become the norm, inflation is forecast to top 700 percent this year, outbreaks of looting have erupted and violent crime is festering. Maduro blames the crisis on an "economic war" by Venezuelan elites backed by "American imperialism." The opposition won control of the legislature in a landslide election victory in December, but has had its powers hamstrung by a Supreme Court it condemns as loyal to Maduro. Desperate to get rid of the president before his six-year term ends in 2019, they turned to the strategy of a recall referendum. Venezuela's constitution provides for such referenda, but there is a lengthy bureaucratic obstacle course to get there. And time is on the Maduro camp's side. If he loses a recall vote before January 10 — as opinion polls predict he would-it would trigger new elections. — AFP

TRUMP FACES NATIONAL SECURITY TEST WITH SPEECHES AND FORUM

PHILADELPHIA: Republican Donald Trump is unveiling a plan for a major increase in defense spending as he works to convince skeptics in both parties that he's ready to lead the world's most powerful military. The New York businessman, who has struggled at times to demonstrate a command of foreign policy, will outline plans to "add substantially" to the nation's arsenal of submarines, ships and combat troops in a Wednesday morning speech in Philadelphia, according to a briefing provided by his campaign. Trump's address comes hours before his national security acumen is tested at a "commander in chief" forum on NBC.

The appearances mark an intense, two-day focus on national security by Trump, who has offered tough rhetoric on the nation's challenges abroad but few details. "I think my single greatest asset, of any assets I have, is my temperament," Trump declared in North Carolina on Tuesday, fighting to undercut arguments that his erratic disposition is a major liability. Democrat Hillary Clinton repeated just such an attack on Trump's ability to command America's military.

"They know they can count on me to be the kind of commander in chief who will protect our country and our troops, and they know they cannot count on Donald Trump," Clinton said en route to Florida. "They view him as a danger and a risk." While Clinton and Trump will be featured at the Wednesday night forum, they will appear at separate times and will not face each other on stage. The forum could serve as a warm-up to their high-



GREENVILLE, North Carolina: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks to an overflow crowd during a campaign rally. — AP

ly anticipated first presidential debate, scheduled for Sept. 26 in New York.

Military budget

Trump was set to deliver another speech yesterday evening, at the convention of New York's Conservative Party, also expected to feature a heavy national security focus. A late morning address at Philadelphia's Union League will outline his plans to eliminate deep military cuts, known as the "sequester," enacted when Congress failed to reach a budget compromise in 2011. A Trump adviser, speaking on the condition of anonymity to share details ahead of the speech, said Trump would ensure the additional spending is fully paid for. The adviser did not explain

how, but suggested there would be no need for structural budget cuts to pay for the billions of additional military spending over 10 years. Beyond new spending on troops and naval assets, Trump also will call for additions to sea-based missile defense. Trying to emphasize his military support, Trump's campaign released a letter on Tuesday from 88 retired generals and admirals citing an urgent need for a "course correction" in America's national security policy. It was aimed at rebutting Clinton's arguments that she would be best positioned to lead the military and reassuring Republicans who have openly worried that his provocative statements might undermine US alliances. — AP

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HK PRO-INDEPENDENCE STUDENTS PROTEST BAN

HONG KONG: Secondary school students pushing for Hong Kong's breakaway from China have threatened protests after staff stopped them from handing out political pamphlets, as the government puts pressure on independence activists. Since the beginning of term last week, teenage students have been distributing leaflets outside their schools advocating Hong Kong's independence from China as concerns grow Beijing is tightening its grip on the semi-autonomous city.

The city was returned from Britain to China in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" deal that guaranteed its freedoms for 50 years, but there are fears those liberties are disappearing. The fledgling independence movement has gained momentum in the face of staunch opposition from authorities in Beijing and Hong Kong, who have branded it illegal and unconstitutional. Several young campaign-

ers advocating independence or self-determination became lawmakers for the first time in weekend elections, despite a government ban on the movement's leading activists from running in the vote.

Secondary school students say they should have the right to distribute pro-independence pamphlets outside their schools, but have been stopped from doing so by staff. "School staff...banned students from taking media interviews and even led away those who were distributing pamphlets," said a statement from an alliance of groups from 21 schools. "If any more schools try to suppress members of the groups, we will definitely respond through escalated action," the statement said, without elaborating.

'Lay siege'

The South China Morning Post said student

leaders had claimed they were planning to "lay siege" to schools. The young activists say they want Hong Kong to have the option to split from China in 2047, when the handover deal expires. "When 2047 comes, those who are in secondary school now will be middle aged," 15-year-old Tony Chung, a convener of new school activist group Studentlocalism, told AFP. "We have to now discuss with students what is the way out for Hong Kong, and we think that way out is independence."

The "localist" movement of activists seeking more autonomy from Beijing first grew out of the failure of mass pro-democracy rallies in 2014 to win political reforms from Beijing. That movement has now spawned campaigners calling for an outright split. The government has warned teachers not to promote independence in schools, sparking

criticism they are quashing academic discussion and fuelling self-censorship. City leader Leung Chun-ying, seen by critics as a Beijing stooge, has likened promoting independence in schools to swearing. "It is not a matter of freedom of speech to promote independence in schools...school rules are more strict than law," he said last month. Secondary school students have in the past led major citywide campaigns.

Activist Joshua Wong, who became the face of the 2014 "Umbrella Movement" democracy rallies, first rose to prominence as a 15-year-old when he led student protests against a plan to introduce mandatory Chinese patriotism lessons at schools. The government was forced to scrap the plan after 120,000 demonstrators rallied outside the government headquarters in September 2012. — AFP

MERKEL WARNS PARTIES AGAINST POPULIST RACE TO THE BOTTOM

COMMENTS COME AFTER DEFEAT AGAINST ISLAMPHOBIC AfD



GIESSEN: A boy from Afghanistan sleeps on chairs at a reception centre for refugees in Giessen, western Germany yesterday. German Chancellor Angela Merkel urged German politicians against stooping to the levels of anti-immigration populists, days after her party suffered a stinging state election defeat against the Islamophobic AfD. — AFP

BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday urged German politicians against stooping to the levels of anti-immigration populists, days after her party suffered a stinging state election defeat against the Islamophobic AfD. In her first address to parliament since Sunday's election in the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Merkel defended her welcoming stance to refugees and called on all parties to unite against the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) garnered its lowest ever score in the northeastern, ex-Communist state, falling to third place behind the anti-immigrant AfD, which was running there for the first time. Merkel noted that not just her conservative party, but all mainstream parties from the left to the right, had lost ground to the AfD, which has railed

against Merkel's welcoming liberal refugee stance. "A party like the AfD is not only a challenge for the CDU... but a challenge for all of us sitting here," she told the Bundestag. But she warned politicians against deploying populist tactics such as blurring or ignoring facts in an effort to win back voters, saying Germany must stand by its core principles of freedom, security, justice and solidarity.

"Politicians like us have a responsibility to moderate our speech," she said. "If we begin to orient our speech and actions towards those who are not interested in solutions, we will lose our own direction in the end. If we resist that and stick with the truth, then we will regain what's most important—the trust of the people." In the run-up to Sunday's vote, Merkel had urged the electorate to resist voting for

the AfD, saying it offers "no solutions to problems" and was spreading a message based in "hate". Nevertheless, the right-wing populist party, founded only in 2013, clinched almost 21 percent of the vote, against 19 percent for Merkel's party.

'Slogans, easy answers'

The drubbing emboldened Merkel's critics, including within her own conservative Union alliance. Horst Seehofer, who leads the CDU's Bavarian sister party CSU, heaped on the pressure, saying "the situation is a serious threat for the Union". And Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel, who leads the CDU's junior coalition partner the Social Democrats, charged that Merkel's message of "we can do it" was empty words. In a response to the jibes, Merkel said squabbling within the ruling coalition only served their common enemy.

"If we seek small gains at each other's expense... then the only winners are those who rely on slogans and easy answers," she warned. Defending her refugee policy again, Merkel said a controversial EU-Turkey deal that she championed is in "both our interests." Under the deal, Ankara agreed to take back migrants who land in Greece in exchange for billions in aid as well as visa-free travel to the bloc. "It is right for us to fight the illegal trade of people smuggling... since we've had this deal, almost no one has drowned in the Aegean Sea," Merkel argued.

The EU-Turkey deal should also serve as a model for future agreements with Libya and Tunisia, said the German leader. Merkel acknowledged however that work remained to be done at home to integrate the newcomers, as well as beef up security to prevent attacks such as those carried out in July by asylum seekers in Germany. "Terrorism is not something new that came with refugees. But, given that not all refugees come with good intentions, we will take further (security) measures," she pledged. Germany in August unveiled tough new anti-terror measures after the IS-claimed attacks, including a controversial proposal to strip jihadist fighters of their German nationality. — AFP

MYANMAR'S ROHINGYA MINORITY WELCOMES KOFI ANNAN MISSION



THETKABYIN: Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, second left, listens to a Rohingya religious and community leader as he is explained the situation in the Internally Displaced People's camps as the Rakhine Advisory Commission visits a camp in Thetkabyin village, outside Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine state. — AP

SITTWE: Members of Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya minority expressed hope yesterday that a visiting panel led by former UN chief Kofi Annan will help end the discrimination and violence they face at the hands of the country's Buddhist majority. Annan is a member of an independent commission set up last month by State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi's government to help find solutions to a communal conflict in the western state of Rakhine that has seen widespread abuses and violence by Buddhists against Rohingyas. Many Buddhists in Rakhine and across Myanmar consider Rohingyas to be Bangladeshis living in the country illegally, though the ethnic group has been in Myanmar for generations. Hundreds of Rohingyas were killed and tens of thousands forced to flee their homes in 2012 unrest in Rakhine state, and many continue to be confined to squalid camps there. Rohingyas residents, including community leaders who met yesterday with Annan, said they have faith in the nine-member advisory commission headed by the former UN chief. Members of the Rakhine community, however, protested Annan's arrival Tuesday, saying they oppose foreign meddling.

Annan yesterday visited the Rohingya community in the Aung Mingalar quarter of Sittwe, where Muslims are kept in a gated area and not allowed to go outside. Annan later visited Rakhine and Rohingya camps in Thetkabyin village outside of Sittwe. More than 100,000 people in Rakhine state live in displacement camps, the majority of them Rohingyas who were forced to flee their homes after the 2012 rioting. Outbreaks of violence directed by Buddhists against Muslims later spread to some other areas of Myanmar, but were generally contained.

Future hopes

Journalists were not allowed to attend the community meetings, but some people who participated described them afterward. Aung Thein, a leader of the Aung Mingalar community, said the commission members spoke of their ideas for Rakhine's future and hopes for cooperation from all sides. "We trust this commission. We trust any organization that is trying to help us here and we welcome them here," he said. A fellow community leader, Hla Kyaw, said he believes Annan's panel "will be a fair commission because they have included Buddhists and Muslims in the commission. What we want is to live together as brothers and sisters in this community. We don't know if the Rakhine community will ever accept living together as before." "Because of the conflict, we have been suffering for more than four years," he said. "We really welcome that Kofi Annan is leading the Rakhine Commission and we trust that they will be able to solve the long, complex situation here."

In a six-day trip, the commission is supposed to address human rights, ensuring humanitarian assistance, rights and reconciliation, establishing basic infrastructure and promoting long-term development plans. — AP

MIGRANT-KICKING CAMERAWOMAN CHARGED WITH 'BREACH OF PEACE'

BUDAPEST: A Hungarian television camerawoman who made headlines last September after appearing to trip and kick migrants who were fleeing police has been indicted, prosecutors said yesterday. "The accused is charged by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Szeged with breach of the peace," said a statement from Csongrad county chief prosecutor Zsolt Kopasz. In the footage, which sparked global outrage, Petra Laszlo can be seen tripping up a man sprinting with a child in his arms, and kicking another running child near the town of Roszke, close to the border with Serbia.

"The violent actions of the accused did not inflict injury, however her behavior was capable of provoking indignation and outcry in the members of the public present at the scenes," according to the statement. It later emerged that Laszlo, who was fired over her actions, had been working for

N1TV, an internet-based television station close to Hungary's far-right Jobbik party. The incident on September 8, 2015 occurred as hundreds of migrants broke through a police line at a collection point close to the Serbian border.

According to the prosecutor, an investigation concluded that more serious charges would not be brought as there had been no reasonable chance of the accused causing injury. Nor was there evidence that "the conduct of the accused was motivated by ethnic considerations or by the migrant status of the victims," said the statement. Last September thousands of migrants crossed into Hungary each day as the country, a southern gateway into the EU's passport-free Schengen zone, became a temporary hotspot of the migration crisis. A week after the incident, Hungarian soldiers completed the closure of the 175-kilometre-long border with a fence reinforced with razor wire. — AFP



LIBREVILLE: A man traditionally dressed with banana leaves joins mourners paying their respects at an improvised altar for those who perished during the post-electoral violence in Libreville on September 6, 2016 at the headquarters of the Gabonese opposition leader Jean Ping. — AFP

DEFIANT GABON PRESIDENT HITS BACK AT EU CRITICISM

PARIS: Gabon's Ali Bongo yesterday rejected criticism of his disputed presidential election victory, accusing EU observers of bias towards his rival and insisting that only the country's top court could order a recount. Oil-rich Gabon has been in turmoil since the August 27 poll, in which Bongo's rival Jean Ping also claimed victory. Several people have been killed in violence triggered by the results, which showed Bongo winning a second term by a wafer-thin margin of some 6,000 votes.

On Tuesday, an EU election observer team reported a "clear anomaly" in voting in Haut-Ogooue province, Bongo's heartland. Official results gave turnout in the province at more than 99 percent, with 95 percent backing the incumbent. Reacting to the criticism, Bongo, 57, told France's RTL radio: "I would also have liked them to have noted some anomalies in the fiefdom of Mr Ping. If we're raising anomalies, we have to be clear, balanced and raise all the anomalies that have been noted."

The opposition has accused Bongo of rigging the vote and called for a recount—a call echoed by Manuel Valls, prime minister of Gabon's former colonial power France. A defiant Bongo ruled out any new tally unless the Constitutional Court ordered one. "I cannot violate the (electoral) law," he insisted. "African governments are often accused of not respecting the law. For once we're respecting the law and we're being told to circumvent it, it's strange," he said. Ping has yet to announce whether he will challenge the election in the Constitutional Court. The deadline for doing so is 1500 GMT on Thursday.

In their analysis, the EU election monitors said the number of non-voters and of blank and disqualified votes revealed a "clear anomaly" in the final results in Haut-Ogooue. "In an interview with Europe 1 radio, Bongo accused the EU observers of 'overstepping their mandate' and said he too was preparing to challenge some of the results."

AUSTRALIA THREAT IS REAL, AFTER ATTACKS URGED: PM

SYDNEY: The threat of a terror attack in Australia is "real", Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said after the so-called Islamic State group urged followers to target Sydney's beachside Bondi and the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Responding to an English-language online magazine that singled out prominent Australian locations at which to kill people, Turnbull said it was a "disturbing reminder" of the security situation.

"We have a threat level of 'probable', so it is a real threat," he said late Tuesday when speaking to reporters in Vientiane, Laos. "The capacity of Daesh, of course, is much less than they proclaim it to be but we do have to be very alert to the actions of these lone actors," he said, using another name for the Islamic State. The first edition of the magazine Rumiyyah released in English online on Monday called for attacks on the streets of Brunswick and Broadmeadows in Melbourne and Bondi in Sydney. "Kill them at the MCG, the SCG (Sydney Cricket Ground), the Opera House, and even in their backyards," it said.

Turnbull said IS jihadists would "resort to terrorist activities outside of the Middle East" as they came under more pressure on the battlefield in Syria and

Iraq. In relation to so-called "lone wolf" attackers, he said some individuals could be radicalized very quickly "and engage in very destructive, lethal conduct". But he added: "Every time there is a terrorist incident, wherever it is in the world, we learn as much as we can about it and then take those learnings to keep Australians more safe."

Australia's Justice Minister Michael Keenan said the latest threat did not change the fundamentals in Australia, where the terror threat was lifted to high in 2014. "This is not the first time that ISIL has called for attacks in Australia and I don't think it will be the last," he told the Nine Network yesterday. Officials say they have stopped 10 terror attacks in Australia in the past two years. Police chief commissioner for the state of Victoria, Graham Ashton, said while it was the first time such threats had been published in English rather than Arabic, the magazine "appears to be propaganda". Ashton said while police were taking the comments seriously, there was nothing to suggest any specific threat to the places mentioned. "If anything arises then we'll obviously be acting on it, but at this stage there is nothing of any concern," he told reporters. — AFP

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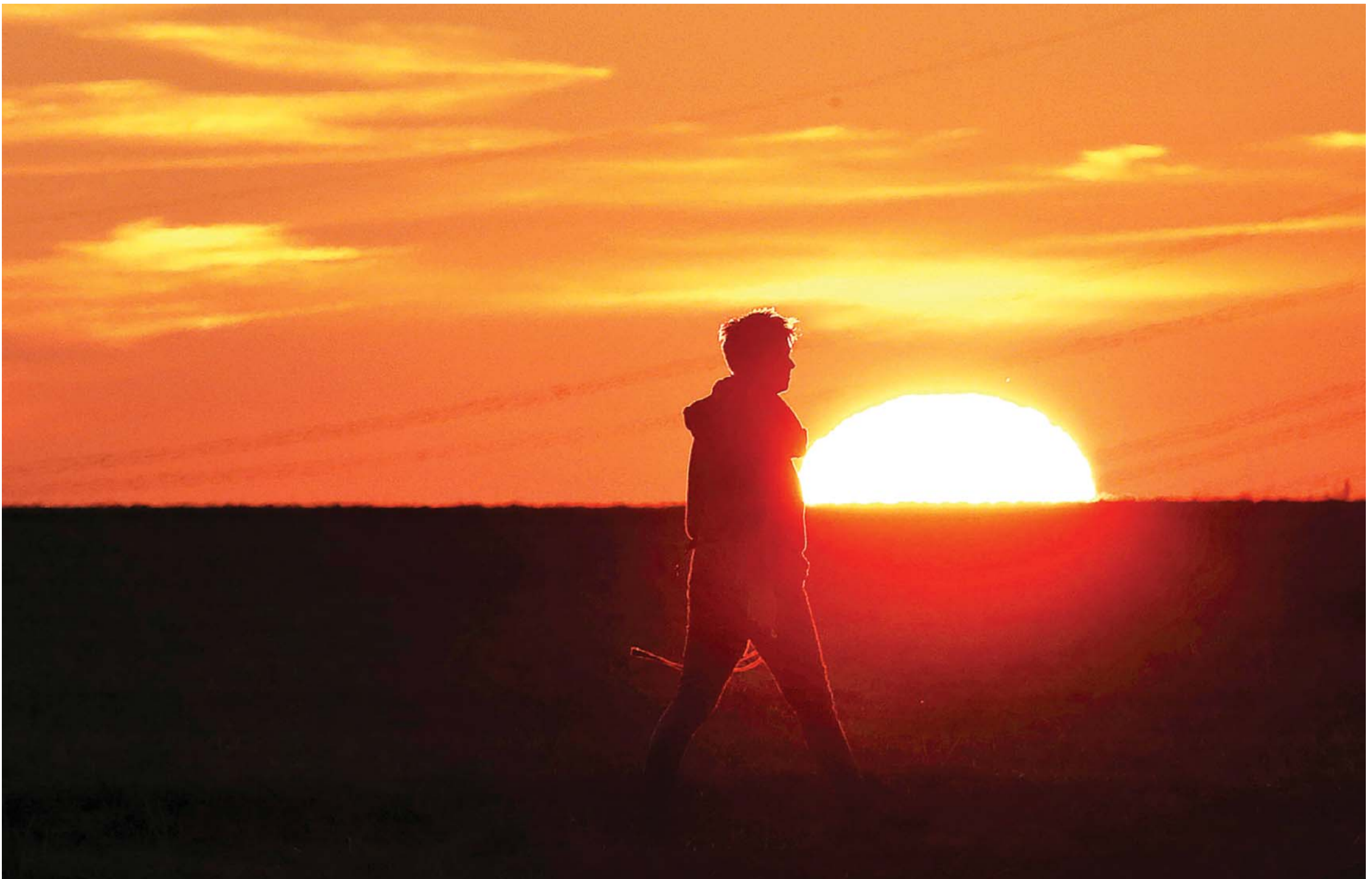
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A woman walks between fields as the sun rises in the outskirts of Frankfurt yesterday. — AP

MOBILE WARS AS INDIAN TYCOON PLEDGES...

Continued from Page 1

Amit Biswas, an Indian navy officer in Mumbai. "Mobile connectivity in some parts of the country is really bad." With his \$20 billion investment in mobile, Ambani is betting on a fast-evolving Internet landscape in a country where nearly a billion people are still not online. Public Wi-Fi is scarce and broadband access is weak, with many rural areas lacking the infrastructure to deliver high speeds. Most of the hundreds of millions of Indians coming online over the next decade will start with smartphones, something being avidly targeted by tech giants Google and Facebook.

Ambani hopes to win over those who have never had an Internet connection and for whom mobile data was previously unthinkable expensive, with a high-speed 4G covering 90 percent of India by March 2017. "This is going to change the dynamics of the game," said Bhasker Canagaradjou, head of research at Ipsos Business Consulting in Mumbai, adding that data use was already growing at an "exorbitant" rate.

Under the Reliance plans, a gigabyte of data costs as little as a tenth of the previous 250 rupees (\$3.70). He expects com-

petitors to slash their prices by 30-40 percent. Combined with ever-cheaper smartphones, the new 4G network will swell the number of Internet users and prompt those already using data, millions of them on sluggish 2G networks, to upgrade. "Indians are cost-sensitive. Even though they may have money, if they find something cost effective they will go and try it, it is in the DNA," Amresh Nandan, research director at consulting firm Gartner in New Delhi told AFP.

Competition hit full stride on Monday in the form of warring front-page newspaper advertisements by the main rivals - with Reliance controversially using an image of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to promote its offering. The newcomer seeks to upend a market at present two-thirds dominated by three players - Airtel, Idea and Vodafone - saying it aims to secure 100 million customers in the shortest possible time.

As the battle heats up, with mobile providers eschewing profitability to gain a foothold, analysts say smaller providers such as Tata Docomo or Aircel may be forced to merge or go under. "Jio will make a major dent and lure away consumers in the near future," said Nikhil Pahwa, founder of Medianama, a digital media news site.

MOI GRANTS TAXIS 1-MONTH PERIOD TO ADJUST...

Continued from Page 1

They have to import some machines as this is the first time to adjust the meters since they were first launched in Kuwait in 2002. They haven't even set the charges for this adjustment," he told Kuwait Times.

Only three companies in Kuwait are authorized by the interior ministry to adjust the meters of both roaming and call taxis. Hossam, an employee at Al Hada, one of these companies, noted that this process needs time. "In order to adjust the meters to the new fee, we need to import machines to do the programming. We also need to employ skilled technicians to operate these machines," he noted. "These new machines are expensive, in

addition to the shipping and manpower costs, so we have to charge the taxi companies accordingly. I'm still not sure about the exact price that we will set for them, but I assume it may be between KD 10-15. We will be doing this for both the roaming and call taxis," added Hossam.

Hossam also claimed a person in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh is installing meters and programming them, although he is not authorized to do so. "Our meters are imported from Austria, and are the same at all authorized companies, but this person brings used meters from Saudi Arabia and changes the currency to dinar. His work is illegal, and customers won't notice the difference in meters, unless they demand the card of the meter, which will show it's not the one authorized by the ministry."

NEW IPHONE 7 HAS NO HEADPHONE JACK

Continued from Page 1

He noted that the change reduces the components required in the iPhone 7.

However, on the water- and dust-resistant features, Apple is playing catch-up: Major rival Samsung Electronics has highlighted the waterproof features of its Galaxy S7 Android-based smartphones, which can sustain being submerged for up to 30 minutes in five feet of water. The iPhone 7 and larger-size iPhone 7 Plus will begin shipping Sept 16, according to Apple. The new models also have a 12-megapixel rear camera, which includes an optical image stabilizer, improvements for low-light photography, and the ability to capture a wider range of colors, among other features.

The iPhone 7 Plus features a dual-lens camera system (a wide-angle and one telephoto lens) designed to improve zoom capabilities and capture 3D-like images. Apple says the Retina displays for the new phones are 25 percent brighter than those in the iPhone 6s, and the iPhone 7 includes for the first time stereo speakers.

Apple is banking on the iPhone refresh - which has become an annual traditional - to boost sales of the flagship device line. Unit sales of iPhones declined 15 percent year-over-year during the quarter ended June 30, following a falloff in the prior quarter. Apple, the world's biggest tech conglomerate, posted iPhone sales of \$24.0 billion in the most recent quarter, representing 57 percent of total revenue. Still, it's not clear that the iPhone 7 enhancements will spur Apple's hoped-for upgrade rush among current iPhone users, who may be growing less inclined to toss out their existing devices on a yearly cycle.

Apple's removal of the iPhone headphone jack had been widely anticipated, as was the dual-lens camera. Reports prior to the launch also said Apple would increase storage for the iPhone, with the entry-level model includ-

ing 32 gigabytes of memory (up from 16 GB previously) along with a new 256-gigabyte version.

Apple also unveiled the Apple Watch Series 2, which is waterproof to be able to withstand submersion to a depth of 50 m and includes built-in GPS to provide location-based services. The new smartwatch lineup includes Apple Watch Nike+ model, a companion device for runners that tracks workouts. The Apple Watch Series 2 will be priced starting at \$369 (as will the Nike+ model). The original Apple Watch, now called Series 1, will start at \$269. According to CEO Tim Cook, Apple Watch was second in revenue in 2015 only to Rolex in the worldwide watch market. (The company did not reveal actual sales figures.)

An app for Niantic's "Pokemon Go" mobile game will be available for Apple Watch. Niantic CEO John Hanke said the game, released in July, has been downloaded 500 million times to date. Nintendo plans to launch its first mobile game based on its Super Mario Bros franchise, initially exclusively on Apple iOS. The "Super Mario Run" game will be available later in 2016 in time for the holidays, according to execs.

In a video at the outset of the event, Cook rode in a car with James Corden in a "Carpool Karaoke" setup, along with the singer Pharrell Williams. That gave Cook the opportunity to call out Apple's deal with CBS to debut episodes of "Carpool Karaoke" on Apple Music in 2017. Cook also noted that Apple Music now has more than 17 million subscribers, which he said was boosted by exclusive music deals with artists.

The excitement at the Bill Graham auditorium in San Francisco was not matched on Wall Street, where Apple's stock was down 0.3 percent. However, Nintendo Co Ltd's US-listed shares, jumped more than 20 percent to trade around \$35 on hopes its games would reach a new audience. — Reuters



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Issues

PROSTITUTION IS THE 'EASIEST WAY OUT' FOR ZAMBIA FARMERS

By Whitney Mulobela

Repeated failed crops caused by worsening drought have forced Christine Mwenda, a small-scale farmer in Zambia's central Mumbwa region, to do what was previously unthinkable. Since 2014, the 37-year-old has been selling sex in Zambia's capital Lusaka. The pay is better than growing maize, she said, and gives her a proper chance to feed her four children. "On average I make close to 500 kwacha (\$5) on a good day," said Mwenda, who agreed to be interviewed on condition that her real name was not used.

"This is the kind of money I could only make (once) in a year from farming," she said, explaining that once the cost of fertilizer, labor, transport and seeds was deducted, she was left with very little money from her harvest. Like millions of Zambians, Mwenda has been struggling with soaring food bills and power shortages caused by prolonged drought exacerbated this year by El Nino, a warming of the Pacific Ocean's surface leading to hot, dry conditions.

That weather phenomenon ended earlier this year, but drought persists across much of southern Africa. For many small-scale and subsistence farmers in the landlocked southern African country, longer spells of drought and increasingly erratic rains are becoming far more frequent. The changing climate, combined with costly fertilizer and seeds, means agriculture is becoming less attractive for many. "These days when you grow maize you are not sure about the yield. Most of the time you find that the crops end up drying and you only harvest just enough to eat as a family," Mwenda told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Meanwhile we need to send our children to school."

HIV Risk

About 54 percent of Zambia's 16 million people were living in poverty in 2015 - most of them women, according to Central Statistical Office data released in April. Much of Zambia's extreme poverty is concentrated in rural areas. According to a 2014 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, extreme poverty is estimated to be four times higher in rural areas than urban centers. The situation in the copper-producing country has not been helped by a drop in the kwacha against the dollar since April, as a result of depressed global commodity prices.

The hardships have caused more and more people to migrate from rural parts to cities such as Lusaka, Kitwe, Livingstone and Chipata. Others have moved to border towns. Lucy Bwalya, an academic at Cavendish University in Lusaka, said many women turn up in cities hoping to become traders, hawking clothes or groceries. However, a rising number turn to prostitution instead - risking arrest, violence and sexually transmitted diseases.

"Prostitution is the easiest way out and these women end up risking diseases such as HIV and AIDS," said Bwalya, a former programs manager for Tasinthu, a charity working with sex workers. According to the 2013/2014 demographic and health survey, the HIV prevalence rate among Zambians aged between 15 and 49 was 13 percent, compared to 16 percent in 2001/2002.

Climate-Resistant Crops

To encourage more women to stay on their farms, Zambian charity Enviro Green has been teaching them to grow climate resistant crops such as sorghum, which require less water than the traditional staple, maize. "We are generally concerned with this rural-urban migration of people, especially women who are ending up in sex work," said Enviro Green executive director, Martha Simukonde. The women farmers are also taught farming techniques to conserve soil and water to minimize erosion and water runoff. "We always teach them to plant their crops early so that with the early rains they can germinate. Even when the rains go, the crops once planted early have a chance to grow," Simukonde said.

For some women, however, these efforts come too late. Women in Law and Development in Southern Africa (WILDAF), a women's rights advocacy group, said the government should do more to address rural-urban migration. "There is need for the government to seriously put in place policies that will reverse this trend where women are coming to urban areas to engage in sex work, which is exposing these women to HIV and AIDS," said WILDAF programs officer Charles Sibeene. —Reuters

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THAILAND MISSING PIECE IN OBAMA PIVOT

By Andrew Beatty

US President Barack Obama attends a farewell dinner with Southeast Asian leaders yesterday, capping eight years of careful courtship that has created new friends, but left links frayed with America's oldest regional ally - Thailand. When Obama looks around the gala dinner table in Vientiane, he will find a bevy of new partners. His engagement with former Communist foes in Vietnam and now Laos is slowly easing the bloody burden of history, in much the same way as his opening to Cuba. More striking still will be the presence of Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who spent much of the last three decades held prisoner by a brutal military junta.

Obama's engagement with Myanmar - a country he has twice visited - has buttressed a political transformation, helping convince the generals to share power with Suu Kyi's democratically elected government. "Just sitting back and criticizing countries has a limit in terms of what it can achieve," said Ben Rhodes, an Obama aide who has worked closely on the US' policy to Myanmar. Where George W Bush routinely skipped meetings with Southeast Asian heads of state, Obama - perhaps unsurprisingly for someone who spent a chunk of his childhood in Indonesia - has been a regular visitor.

Bouquets and Brickbats

But the trips have not all been plain sailing, as Obama was reminded this week when he was labelled a "son of a whore" by firebrand Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte. Yet experts say it is Thailand that represents the starkest failure to leverage US diplomatic power in the region. Two military coups in quick succession have

damaged relations with Bangkok, a treaty ally and regional powerhouse whose relations with Washington date back more than 180 years.

The US has not been able to prod the generals into restoring elections or easing controls on dissent. Notoriously prickly junta leader, Prayut Chan-O-Cha, has also frequently bristled at US criticism of the darkening human rights environment in his country. Even the smallest diplomatic slight, perceived or imagined,

Department official had publicly berated his government's human rights record. A Thai official told AFP that public opinion in his country could ultimately swing against the United States. For their part, US officials point out that Thailand's latest coup left Washington with little room to manoeuvre. "We did the bare minimum we had to do under the law," said one former Obama official, referencing a near \$5 million cut in military aid immediately after the last coup in 2014.



US President Barack Obama drinks from a coconut as he makes a surprise stop for a drink alongside the Mekong River in Luang Prabang yesterday. —AFP

has the ability to sour relations further. When Prime Minister Prayut talked to Obama on the margins of the US-ASEAN summit in Sunnylands, California, this year, US and Thai sources said the junta leader felt bridges were being rebuilt following the coup.

But on landing in Bangkok he was furious when told a mid-level State

Department official had publicly berated his government's human rights record. A Thai official told AFP that public opinion in his country could ultimately swing against the United States. For their part, US officials point out that Thailand's latest coup left Washington with little room to manoeuvre. "We did the bare minimum we had to do under the law," said one former Obama official, referencing a near \$5 million cut in military aid immediately after the last coup in 2014.

But the US has not scrapped wider military cooperation, including annual war games held by the kingdom. Still, some American officials worry that Thailand is being pushed too far towards its powerhouse neighbor China. That could be particularly damaging given the context of a "once in a century reordering of political and economic power in Thailand," driven

by a looming royal succession, according to Ernest Bower, a Southeast Asia expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

With army power entrenched by a new constitution, the military are set to be a key player in the new political order. The Thai military used to be "partnered almost exclusively with the United States and that is changing," said Des Walton, a former defense attache in Bangkok. "They are expanding relations notably with China and Russia," he said. "At face value I don't see how that is consistent with US interests."

Too Late for Obama

Thailand remains strategically pivotal to US regional interests. "If you go from Korea all the way down to Thailand there is a huge swath which is basically all China, where the United States doesn't have access to mainland Asia. Thailand is it," he added. But fears Thai public opinion could swing against the United States, may be premature. While royalist conservatives hiss at any US condemnation of the junta, wider trade, education and diplomacy links remain strong.

Beijing does not criticize the junta, but it has so far failed to deliver on several gilded promises of support for major infrastructure projects. Some in Washington believe that provides an opportunity for rapprochement. But it may be too late for Obama. "I think only presidential intervention would make a difference and that is not going to happen with the Obama administration," said Bower. The White House says another pull-aside meeting with Prayut is unlikely to take place in Laos, even if they are in the same dining room together. —AFP

BRITAIN FACES LONG ROAD TO TRADE DEALS

By Kylie MacLellan

Prime Minister Theresa May wants to make Britain a global leader in trade after Brexit, but former negotiators say the country faces a long slog despite warm words from some world leaders over forging new relationships. With other countries reluctant to get involved in detailed discussions until Britain's future ties with the European Union are clear, and a lack of negotiators in London ready to begin talks, any firm deals could be years away. While the government says it can do the groundwork, Britain cannot formally sign trade agreements until it leaves the EU, and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has said EU member states should not even negotiate deals while still part of the bloc.

"Nobody with any sense from China, the US, Brazil or wherever is going to engage with the UK other than a friendly drink in the bar until the UK has a regime with the EU," retired British trade negotiator Roderick Abbott told Reuters. "That gives them the yardstick against which you negotiate," said Abbott, who during his more than 40-year career worked on trade for the British government, the European Commission and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

May and her team strike an optimistic tone, highlighting nations which have said they are keen to do deals. But behind the scenes, countries are pragmatic. A senior diplomat from a developed country with which Britain has suggested negotiating a deal said the EU was a more important partner, so any deal with Britain would depend on how it affected his country's trade with the EU. "They want to talk to us. We're always happy to talk trade. But frankly there isn't much we can seriously talk about in detail, which is really what trade deals are all about, until we know what their relationship will be with the EU," he said, on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the subject.

Japan has expressed concern over uncertainty surrounding Britain's future EU relationship, including its access to the bloc's single market, while US President Barack Obama quashed the prospect of a fast-track deal. Australia said on Tuesday that it would focus on pursuing a free trade agreement with the EU while it waited for Britain to be able to negotiate formally.

Pressure for Deals

According to government figures, Britain's total trade exports for June were worth £24.9 billion (\$33.3 billion), with the US its biggest export market by value. The government has said 3 million British jobs are linked to trade with the EU, while the EU estimates a further 3.9 million in Britain are supported by EU exports to the rest of the world. May has promised to deliver Brexit after 52 percent of Britons backed leaving the EU at a June 23 referendum. But she has also said she will not trigger Article 50, beginning the formal two-year divorce process, this year in order to allow the government time to prepare.

While Article 50 refers to "taking account" of the departing country's future relationship with the EU, many say detailed talks will have to wait until Britain has left, meaning it could be 2019 before substantial trade negotiations begin. "It is after Brexit that the UK ... would formally negotiate with the EU new arrangements on its relationship, such as trade, participation in the single market, and movement of labour," Jean-Claude Piris, former head of the legal service of the Council of the European Union, wrote in the Financial Times.

Britain's Brexit minister, David Davis, said on Monday it was nonsense to say that the negotiations could not run in parallel. With a British election due in 2020, May could feel under pressure to get deals done. At her first international summit this week, she said Australia, India, Mexico, Singapore, China and South Korea had all welcomed talks about post-Brexit trade. For now, the work of Britain's new Department for International Trade will likely be largely focused on diplomacy and, crucially, amassing a team of experts after decades of relying on the EU to negotiate its trade deals.

Before the department was created, then business minister Sajid Javid said he wanted to have 300 experts in place this year, up from around 40. A spokeswoman for the trade department said it would not give a running commentary on recruitment. Negotiators say there are usually teams of 20-25 in the room for talks and many more involved in support and preparation. Deals, involving detail on thousands of goods, take years to agree and Britain will want to pursue several simultaneously. "We are going to be very short of capacity," said Alan Winters,

director of the UK Trade Policy Observatory at the University of Sussex in southern England.

Intensive Training

Options include hiring experts from law firms, banks or consultancies, something which is likely to prove expensive. Then there are the Britons who work in the EU's trade directorate, although according to the European Commission website only 32 of the directorate's 596 staff are British. The government has also talked of using foreign negotiators, and Commonwealth allies such as Australia have offered to loan experts. But Britain has also been clear negotiators would not be involved in talks with their own home nations.

"Are we going to see cohorts of Australians, Canadians, Japanese walking in to Whitehall to carry on our international trade negotiations for us? Of course we're not," former UK government trade negotiator Michael Johnson told Reuters. "With the prospects so uncertain I don't see many other administrations being prepared to second people. So we'd better train up, you'd better have some pretty intensive crash training programs for indigenous Britons."

Keen to secure its first post-Brexit trade deal, Britain will be negotiating from a position of relative weakness, say trade experts. "Certainly the UK is going to need a free trade deal more than the other side because the UK market isn't going to be as attractive as the EU one used to be," said former negotiator Abbott. One of its biggest challenges will be incorporating substantial agreement on services - around 80 percent of Britain's economy - as trade deals tend to be more focussed on goods.

The EU's recently concluded deal with Canada only included limited provision for services and maintains some restrictions over financial services access, a crucial area for Britain. "Services is just technically more complicated ... just very, very difficult to work out what the value is, how much is it worth that you change your regulation a bit?," said Winters, adding that regulators would likely need to be involved in talks. "It is going to be a major issue for Britain. These are frictions, they are not always complete barriers ... they just become a matter of extra cost, but in a competitive world even a bit of extra cost is a big problem." —Reuters

MICHEL PLATINI TO ATTEND UEFA CONGRESS IN ATHENS

PARIS: Disgraced former UEFA president Michel Platini will attend the UEFA Congress in Athens next week at the invitation of the European football's governing body, but paying his own way for a final farewell. Platini "will travel there by his own means and will not give a press conference" at the Congress, when the UEFA executive committee will vote on his successor, a member of his entourage told AFP. The former French international, a three-time European footballer of the year, is the key figure in the scandal that brought down FIFA president Sepp Blatter. Platini was on the receiving end of the suspect 2 million Swiss franc (\$2 million, 1.8 million euros) payment that Blatter authorised in 2011. FIFA has said the payment amounted to an ethics violation and has suspended both men for six years. Blatter and Platini insist it was a legitimate payment for an unpaid balance that FIFA owed the UEFA boss for consulting work done a decade earlier. Platini lost his CAS appeal against his own FIFA ban earlier this year, but the court cut his suspension to four years. In Athens, the 55 UEFA member federations will vote between two candidates to succeed Platini: Aleksander Ceferin of Slovenia and Dutchman Michael van Praag. —AFP



FIFA HEAD TO DELAY-HIT WORLD CUP 2018 STADIUM

MOSCOW: FIFA yesterday said work on Moscow's flagship Luzhnik stadium for the 2018 World Cup appeared to be on course, ahead of a visit to the delay-hit arena in Saint Petersburg. "We're very pleased with the progress here in Luzhnik," the major stadium for the World Cup, Colin Smith, the FIFA chief competitions and events officer, said after checking up on construction. "Of course there's still a lot of work to be done but it's on track and on schedule." While all seemed on track in Moscow—which will host the opening and final games of the tournament—there are serious concerns over the crisis-hit construction of the stadium in Saint Petersburg. Contract disputes have seen work halted at the arena in Russia's former imperial capital—which is due to host a semi-final and the third place match in 2018 — amid doubts that it will be completed in time for the Confederations Cup next year. Smith insisted that there have been some "positive signs" of progress in Saint Petersburg after a new contractor was brought in to oversee construction. "We will go through all the details in Saint Petersburg and see it for ourselves," he said ahead of the FIFA delegation's visit to the city on Saturday. —AFP

PALACE INTERESTED IN SIGNING FLAMINI

LONDON: Crystal Palace are looking to sign former Arsenal midfielder Mathieu Flamini with the club's manager Alan Pardew saying the Frenchman's experience would benefit his squad. The 32-year-old has been without a team since leaving Arsenal at the end of last season but is having a medical at Premier League Palace, according to British media reports. "Yes, there is scope to bring one more into the squad - I did that on purpose as I thought there might be a player we can take who is not under contract, who might just fit what we're doing," Pardew told local media. "Mathieu is a player I am looking at, yes. He would give us a bit more experience to winning games." Flamini made over 200 appearances in two spells with the Gunners and won the Serie A title with AC Milan in 2011. "I like the fact whenever he played, he played in the big, big games at Arsenal when they needed someone to kind of lead the team over the line and get big results," Pardew added. "His age, 32, in my mind I signed Teddy Sheringham when he was 38, so the age isn't a problem for me. I think his experience is something I am looking at, yes." Palace, who have one point from their opening three league games this season, visit Middlesbrough on Saturday. —Reuters



TWINKLE OF SUCCESS FOR PAKISTANI CHRISTIAN POWERLIFTING DUO

LAHORE: Twinkle Sohail and Sonia Azmat have the weight of the Pakistani Christian world on their shoulders, but if anyone can bear the hopes of such a persecuted minority, it is these teenage champion powerlifters. Last year Twinkle became the first Pakistani woman to represent her country in powerlifting, taking a gold medal in the 57-kilogramme junior event at the Asian Bench Press Championship in her first attempt.

The next day, her teammate Sonia took a second gold medal for Pakistan in the 63-kilogramme category, earning her place in the history books alongside Twinkle. The achievements of the two young Christian women represent a rare bright spot for a minority who frequently find themselves the targets of extremist attacks—such as the one carried out in Lahore last Easter that killed 72 people, many of them children.

Christians also routinely fall victim to the country's controversial blasphemy laws, which carry the death penalty in the conservative Muslim country, and many are stuck in menial jobs such as sanitation or domestic work. But Twinkle and Sonia, both 19, are proving an inspiration after their triumph in Muscat last year—boosted by a third gold medal from their Muslim teammate, Shazia Kanwal, to see the Pakistanis outclass athletes from 12 countries. Pakistan, where cricket is the dominant pastime, is taking the rare opportunity to seek success in other sports, funding the women's return to the Asian Championships in Tashkent in October.

With luck they will go further: to the World Powerlifting Championships next year in Florida, in the US. It will be a long way from the tiny homes on narrow, congested streets in the impoverished Christian areas of Lahore where Twinkle and Sonia were both born.

'I WANTED TO BE LIKE THEM'

Twinkle began her career as a cyclist, but was spotted by weightlifting coaches while exercising in the gym and advised to take up powerlifting.

This is a branch of weightlifting using the squat, bench press, and deadlift techniques but without any moves lifting the weight vertically overhead.

Along with Sonia, Twinkle was taken on by coach Rashid Malik, a 2012 London Olympics official and himself an Asian medallist.

"These two were best," Malik told AFP while supervising his stars training at a shabby gymnasium in Lahore, abruptly plunged into darkness during another of the periodic power outages that afflict the country. To reach the top, Twinkle says she and her teammate had to work harder than their Muslim counterparts. "Whether it is at school or for sports, only by putting in twice the work can we ensure ourselves a better place than the majority Muslims," she says.

Sonia, whose father abandoned her family and whose mother worked several jobs to support her children, tells of female athletes going to work out at the Railway Stadium in Lahore.

She would watch daily, she says, as she prepared to go to work at a factory. "I wished to go with them, wear joggers like them and do what they do," she tells AFP in her modest Lahore apartment, tucked over a flight of narrow, dark stairs.

LIGHTING THE WAY

Now she and Twinkle have themselves become inspirations. They are not the first Pakistani Christians to scale new sporting heights, with previous trailblazers in cricket, hockey and athletics—including former Pakistan cricket captain Yousef Youhana, though he later converted to Islam.

But they are young, they are women—still a factor



LAHORE: Pakistani Christian female powerlifter Twinkle poses as she displays her medals at her residence in Lahore. —AFP



LAHORE: Twinkle lifts weights at a gym in Lahore. —AFP

against them in patriarchal Pakistan—and, unlike many of Pakistan's other athletes currently in the spotlight, they are winning.

"A gold medal is not a usual or ordinary thing," weightlifter Shetal Asif, another Christian woman aspiring to compete internationally, says.

"They have performed really well," she tells AFP, describing how her sister and cousins have also been inspired to take up weightlifting after Twinkle and Sonia's success. A lack of media attention means

the pair have not yet set the entire Christian community alight, Shetal admits. "But those who know are inspired," she adds.

"The rise of Twinkle and Sonia has renewed hopes of young Christian athletes and will encourage more youngsters to win laurels for the country and respect for themselves," says Shamaun Alfred Gill, a Christian activist. Hira Arshad, who attends the same college as Twinkle, says her achievements are inspiring not just Christians, but women as well. —AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: Olympic Committee of Ireland president, Patrick Hickey arrives at a police station to be questioned over alleged Olympic ticket touting, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Tuesday. —AFP

IOC WILL COOPERATE WITH BRAZIL OLYMPIC TICKET PROBE

LAUSANNE: The International Olympic Committee promised to cooperate yesterday with Brazilian authorities in the ticket scalping investigation that has targeted one of its executive board members.

The statement came as IOC President Thomas Bach missed the opening of the Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro, where police wanted to interview him about the case. Patrick Hickey, president of Ireland's national Olympic committee, was among 10 people charged by Brazilian prosecutors on Tuesday with ticket scalping, conspiracy and ambush marketing in a case that broke during last month's Rio Games.

Police investigator Aloysio Falcao said authorities want to speak with Bach about email exchanges between him and Hickey related to ticket allocations to Ireland.

Falcao said police had planned to "summon" Bach when he came to Rio for Wednesday's opening ceremony of the Paralympics, adding that authorities have no evidence that he knew of the alleged ticket scam.

Bach canceled plans to attend the opening. The IOC said he would be in Germany instead for the official state mourning ceremony for former West German President Walter Scheel, who died last month at the age of 97.

It's the first time an IOC president has missed the opening of a Paralympics since they were held in conjunction with the Summer Olympics in 1988. The Brazilian newspaper Globo said Bach would be subpoenaed as a witness if he came to Brazil.

"The IOC cannot comment on a newspaper story nor on the ongoing legal procedure against Hickey for whom the presumption of innocence prevails," the IOC said in a statement to The Associated Press. "For the IOC it goes without saying that it will cooperate on this matter."

It's unclear if Bach will go to Brazil for any of the Paralympics, which last until Sept 18. Hickey went to police headquarters in Rio on Tuesday, but declined to answer additional questions.

ILLEGAL TRANSFER

"We found enough evidence linking Hickey to this plot to sell tickets by a company that was not authorized," prosecutor Marcos Kac told The Associated Press. "These are tickets that were sold for up to \$8,000."

The 71-year-old Hickey was arrested on Aug 17 during the Olympics in a dawn raid on his Rio hotel room. After a two-day stay in a local hospital to undergo tests, he was held in a high-security prison complex.

Hickey was freed last week when a judge ruled that he wasn't a risk to the public or the investigation. His passport was confiscated, and he must remain in Brazil until the case is concluded.

Hickey has temporally "stepped aside" from all his Olympic roles - IOC member, IOC executive board representative, Olympic Council of Ireland president, head of the European Olympic Committees and vice president of the Association of National Olympic Committees.

Police have said that Hickey plotted with businessmen to transfer tickets illegally from a sports company called Pro 10 to hospitality provider THG Sports, which was a non-authorized vendor and allegedly sold them for very high fees. Police investigators said the scheme was planned to bring in \$3 million.

The head of THG Sports, Kevin James Mallon, was arrested on Aug. 5 in the case, but was set free, like Hickey. He faces the same charges and must remain in Brazil.

The eight other suspects are businessmen with Pro10 and THG Sports who are not in Brazil, including Marcus Evans, who owns THG Sports' parent company, as well as English soccer club Ipswich.

Investigators have also found evidence linking 35 other National Olympic Committees to the Marcus Evans group. Rio police will communicate this to other governments but are not expanding their own investigation. —AP

FRANK WINS VUELTA 17TH STAGE AS QUINTANA STAYS IN LEAD

LLUCENA: Switzerland's Mathias Frank conquered a gruelling summit finish to win yesterday's 17th stage of the Vuelta a Espana as overall leader Nairo Quintana remained comfortably ahead of Chris Froome.

Frank was part of a large group of escapees who burst free of the peloton early into the 177.5-kilometre stage from Castellon, with the IAM Cycling rider pulling clear on the Alto Mas de la Costa to finish in 4hr 34min 38sec.

Team Sky's Leopold Konig was second, six seconds behind the Swiss, while Dutchman Robert Gesink of Lotto came third. "I'm super happy, I've been really close to this victory several times," Frank, who had finished in the top 10 on three previous stages of this year's race, told Spanish TV channel Teledporte. "This season not much has worked for me. I came to this Vuelta to have fun and at last I picked up my first win in two years. To win a stage of a Grand Tour is a great feeling."

Colombian Quintana stayed 3:37 ahead of Tour de France champion Froome as the top four in the general classification, which includes Esteban Chaves and Alberto Contador, all crossed the line together over three minutes behind the stage winner.

Frank, who finished a creditable eighth at last year's Tour de France, found himself in a breakaway of 28 riders as the pack was content to let them go with the lead group posing no threat to the red jersey contenders. The 29-year-old teamed up with Astana's Dario Cataldo to distance their fellow escapees in the run up to the concluding category one climb, the first time it had featured on the Vuelta route.

With sections of the ascent topping out at over 20% gradient, Frank then dropped the Italian and soloed his way to the finish, while Contador launched an attack of his own to try and make up time on his GC rivals.

But Quintana and Froome, as well as Chaves, responded to the three-time former Vuelta winner's advances and reeled the Spaniard back in as the quartet finished 3:27 down on Frank.

Today's stage, which has just the one category two climb, is a relatively flat 200.6km trek from Requena to the coastal town of Gandia, south of Valencia.

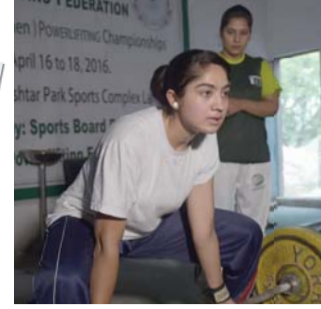
Froome's fading hopes of overhauling Quintana rest largely on his performance in Friday's 37km time trial, with a final summit finish to come on Saturday ahead of Sunday's procession into Madrid. —AFP



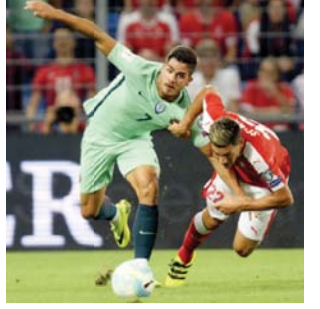
Tinkoff's Spanish cyclist Alberto Contador (center), Movistar's Colombian cyclist Nairo Quintana (left) and Sky's British cyclist Christopher Froome cross the finish line of the 17th stage of the 71st edition of 'La Vuelta' Tour of Spain, a 173.3 km route from Castellon to Llucena, yesterday. —AFP

Sports

Twinkle of success
for Pakistani
Christian
powerlifting duo



Portugal beaten in
World Cup opener,
France held



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TIGER WOODS SAYS HE HOPES TO RETURN NEXT MONTH

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NEW YORK: Karolina Pliskova, of the Czech Republic, returns a shot to Ana Konjuh, of Croatia, during the quarterfinals of the US Open tennis tournament, yesterday, in New York. — AP

PLISKOVA INTO US OPEN SEMI-FINALS

NEW YORK: Czech Karolina Pliskova blew past Croatian teenager Ana Konjuh 6-2, 6-2 yesterday to reach the US Open semi-finals and a possible clash with world number one Serena Williams. Tenth-seeded Pliskova, who survived a match point in her fourth-round victory over sixth-seeded Venus Williams, will face either Serena or fifth-seeded Romanian Simona Halep for a place in Saturday's championship match. The US superstar has won seven of eight career meetings with Halep, the Romanian taking a surprise 6-0, 6-2 victory at the 2014 WTA Finals. But Serena has looked formidable in surrendering just 20 games in four straight sets victories so far in Flushing Meadows. The 22-time Grand Slam champion, who has shown no sign of the shoulder trouble that

hindered her in the wake of her Wimbledon triumph, says she's slowly reaching her peak form.

"I just feel like I'm going out there doing what I need to do," she said. "I'm not overplaying, I'm not underplaying. I'm just trying to play my way into this tournament." Pliskova said she'd be watching the Williams-Halep clash with interest as she readies for her first Grand Slam semi-final today evening. "I'm so excited to be in my first semi-final," said the 24-year-old, who had failed to make it out of the third round in 17 prior Grand Slam appearances. Having broken through to the quarters she didn't waste her opportunity. With a quick break under her belt in the opening game she was able to swing freely and needed just 57 minutes to subdue

Konjuh, who upset fourth-seeded Agnieszka Radwanska in the fourth round.

"I think it was the serve," said Pliskova, who finished off the match with two of her three aces. "My serve was very good today." Konjuh said Pliskova was "just too good." "Her serve is just too good. She found her rhythm and took the opportunities that I gave her."

But Konjuh, who is projected to rise from 92nd in the world to 51, couldn't be disappointed with her fortnight's work.

"I cannot be sad after all of this," she said. "When I came here I could only imagine playing the quarters. I think it's been a great tournament." Despite her dearth of Grand Slam success, Pliskova is playing with confi-

dence after winning her biggest title to date on the hard courts of Cincinnati.

She beat Angelique Kerber in the final to deny the German world number two's bid to supplant Serena atop the world rankings. Kerber, who booked her semi-final slot on Tuesday with a 7-5, 6-0 victory over 2015 finalist Roberta Vinci, can still nudge Serena from the summit. No matter the outcome of Kerber's semi-final clash with former world number one Caroline Wozniacki, Serena must now reach the final to stretch her reign to a record-breaking 187 weeks.

If Kerber advances to the title match, Serena will have to beat her for a seventh US Open trophy to stay number one. — AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: Keita Sato, left, Atsushi Yamamoto, second left, Toro Suzuki, second right, and Hajimu Ashida, all from Japan pose on the Rio 2016 sign, in the Paralympic Village prior the Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Tuesday. — AP

DESPITE CRISES, PARA-ATHLETES READY TO ROCK RIO

RIO DE JANEIRO: The 2016 Paralympics begins with Rio's Maracana stadium again the iconic setting for the opening ceremony of a Games staged against a backdrop of austerity and doping.

Less than three weeks after the flame was doused on South America's first Olympic Games, Rio de Janeiro welcomes 4,300 Paralympians seeking their own slice of sporting glory. Stars include Iranian powerlifter Siamand Rahman, Britain's wheelchair racer David Weir and China's blind sprinter Liu Cuiqing.

Two new events—canoe-kayak and triathlon—make their appearance on the 22-sport menu, with competitors from 161 nations—but not one Russian amongst them. Russian para-athletes, who finished second behind China in the London 2012 medals table, were last month barred from the Sept 7-18 Games by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) following a World Anti-Doping Agency report which alleged a vast state-sponsored doping program. Six countries are sending athletes for the very first time—Aruba, Congo, Malawi, Somalia, Sao Tome and Principe and Togo. Syrian swimmer Ibrahim Al-Hussein, who lost a leg in an explosion in his nation's civil war, and Iranian discus thrower Shahrad Nasajpour make up a two-strong refugee team. With half-empty venues dogging last month's Olympics, Rio 2016 Paralympic organisers said Monday that 1.5 million tickets had been sold and they

hope that all 2.5 million will go.

The Games have been overshadowed by financial worries and the slow sale of tickets. But organisers have reported a dramatic turnaround in sales since the end of the Rio Olympics on August 21, when only 300,000 tickets had been sold. Organisers said the Olympics and hopes for Brazilian gold medals had boosted sales.

NEW HEROES MADE

Caught in political and economic crises, Rio 2016 organisers have skimped as far as they can on food, transport and accommodation.

Rio's problem is that it is following London 2012, hailed as the best Paralympics ever in terms of fervour and sporting performance.

To keep the Rio Games on track, city authorities had to promise 150 million reais (\$46 million, 41 million euros) in August while the government got state companies to inject another 100 million reais in sponsorship. Political and economic turmoil will be the last thing on the minds of the athletes however as Rio looks to produce new sporting heroes now that London 2012 sprint star Oscar Pistorius is in a South African prison for the killing of his girlfriend.

The 41 career gold medals won by blind American swimmer Trischa Zorn between 1980 and 2004 looks unbeatable, but the Paralympics will inevitably produce

new tales of courage. The 28-year-old Rahman, disabled since birth, is aiming to become the first Paralympian to bench press 300kg. His rivals in the powerlifting over 107kg category have already conceded the gold medal to the Iranian. China will have a record 308 athletes in Rio looking to beat their 95 gold medals from London when they topped the table for the third straight Paralympics.

They have swimmer Xu Qing competing in his fourth and possibly last Games, seeking to add to his seven gold medals.

QUICKER AND FASTER

His compatriot Liu last year inflicted the first defeat on reigning T11 400m champion Terezinha Guilhermina of Brazil in nine years. Liu, 23, won four golds at the world championships, stunning the Brazilian, 13-years her elder, each time.

And Britain's Weir is in Rio to add to his six gold medals. The 37-year-old, born with a spinal deformity that has kept him confined to a wheelchair since birth, is entered in five events. "It will be my last Paralympics and I just want to medal," he said. "If I come away with a medal, I'll be happy. My coach is telling me that I'm quicker and faster than I've ever been, so that gives me a lot of confidence."

IPC president Philip Craven says that despite the cuts, the show goes on. — AFP

ENGLISH FA BACK VAN PRAAG'S UEFA BID

LONDON: The English Football Association yesterday announced they will back Michael van Praag in the race to replace Michel Platini as UEFA president.

Van Praag, the president of the Dutch FA, is competing with Slovenian Aleksander Ceferin, after Spain's Angel Maria Villar Llona quit the contest on Tuesday. The 68-year-old will discover if he has won the role at next week's extraordinary UEFA congress in Athens.

FA vice-chairman David Gill, who also serves as a UEFA executive committee member, said: "While we note Angel Maria Villar Llona's withdrawal overnight and fully respect Aleksander Ceferin's credentials, we have agreed to support Michael van Praag."

"He is someone we have come to know very well and worked closely with in recent years, particularly because of our shared commitment to securing FIFA reform. "As UEFA president, Mr Van Praag would be able to provide the strong and credible leadership European football requires at a crucial moment for the global game."

Noting his long service for Dutch giants Ajax and his time in charge of the Dutch FA, Gill highlighted Van Praag's work in promoting the women's game and fighting discrimination.

"Mr Van Praag is also the right choice to bring all aspects of the European game closer together, particularly with his knowledge of club football, and will be able to foster close ties with other confederations," Gill said.

The FA's support for Van Praag comes at an important as Ceferin has been gathering support from across the continent to emerge as the surprise frontrunner. UEFA is seeking a new president after former France midfielder Platini quit in May after failing to overturn his ban from all football activities.

Platini was found guilty of ethics breaches over a payment he received from world football's governing body FIFA. Both Gill and former FA chairman Greg Dyke forged a close relationship with Van Praag when the 68-year-old Dutchman stood against former FIFA president Sepp Blatter last year.

Blatter won that contest, but his victory did not last long as he was soon forced to step down as FIFA's corruption scandal spread and he is currently banned from all football activities. — AFP

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SYDNEY: Tourist walk along the seafont near the Sydney Opera House yesterday. Australia's economy grew by 0.5 percent in the June quarter with an upswing in government spending offsetting a fall in net exports as the nation marked 25 years of unbroken economic expansion. —AFP

AUSTRALIA TOASTS 25 YEARS WITHOUT RECESSION

GOVT MARKS 25 YEARS OF UNBROKEN ECONOMIC GROWTH

SYDNEY: Australia's resource-rich economy expanded at its fastest annual pace in four years last quarter, clinching a remarkable run of 25 years without recession as surging exports more than made up for a patchy performance at home. The local dollar held firm at \$0.7662 after news gross domestic product (GDP) rose 3.3 percent in the year to June, up from around 2.9 percent the previous quarter.

The value of all goods and services rose 0.5 percent compared to the first quarter, when output climbed by an unusually strong 1.0 percent. Growth in the quarter was bolstered by a pre-election spurt in government spending combined with modest gains in household spending and home building. That helped offset another steep decline in mining investment, which has been dragging on the economy for more than three years now.

For the year as a whole, international trade was the biggest prop to growth as the hundreds of billions spent on mining projects yielded a bounty of resource exports. Trade accounted for no less than 2.2 percentage points of growth in the year to June.

That strength in exports belied a much more mixed picture at home, where domestic final demand grew by just 1.2 percent in the year and household consumption grew by 1.6 percent. The report also suggested the economy was not yet running hot enough to revive inflation, with the main GDP price indicator up only 0.3 percent for the year.

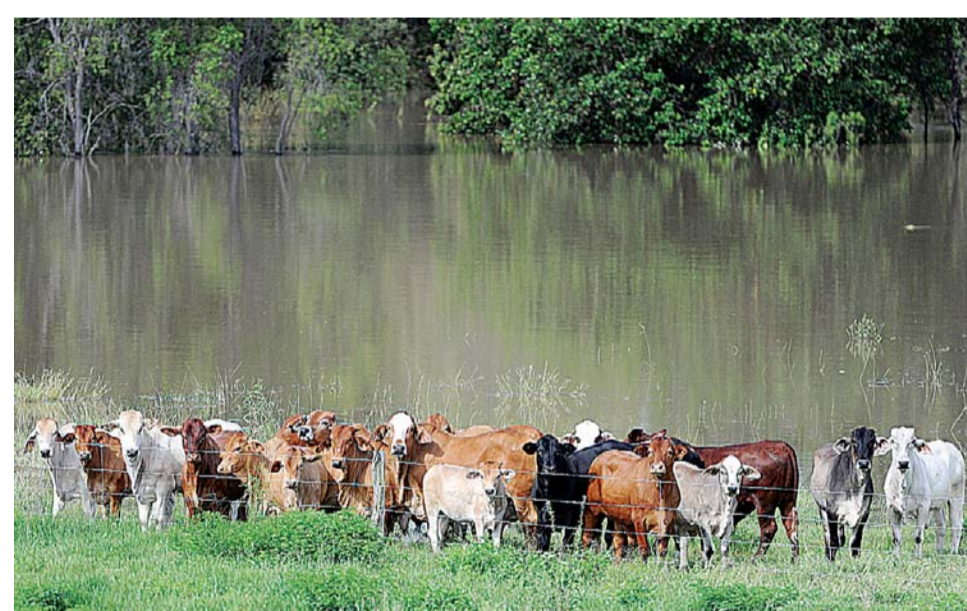
"If we didn't have a low inflation problem in Australia then these figures would argue against a rate cut," said Shane Oliver, chief economist at AMP Capital Investors. "Inflation has been too low for too long and that could argue for the next rate cut in November," he added. "But I have to say it's a close call." The need for even "stronger growth" was cited by the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) when it cut interest rates to record lows of 1.5 percent in August, and why it might yet ease again. Financial markets now imply around a 44 percent chance of a further rate cut by Christmas.

Leader of the pack

Overall, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated annual GDP was worth A\$1.65 trillion (\$1.26 trillion) in current dol-

lars, or around A\$68,929 for each of the country's 24 million residents. Annual growth was handily ahead of 1.2 percent in the United States, 1.6 percent in the European Union, 2.2 percent in the UK and even outpaced Germany's 3.1 percent. There was also a welcome pick up in the country's terms of trade as prices for its major commodity exports bounced following a couple of years of steady decline.

That in turn helped lift national income, while nominal, or current price, GDP climbed 1.3 percent in the quarter for its best performance since late 2013. "It appears that the income drag from falling commodity prices is over," said Michael Blythe, chief economist at CBA. "Some simple calculations show that just a leveling out in commodity prices would see income growth pick up from 2 percent a year, to 4-5 percent over the next couple of years." Such a turnaround will be warmly welcomed by the Coalition government of Malcolm Turnbull since it is nominal GDP that drives the tax take and an increase in revenues is desperately needed to rein in runaway budget deficits. —Reuters



QUEENSLAND, Australia: Photo shows cattle on a farm near Rockhampton in Northern Australia. Contrary to perceptions, British investors own far more agricultural land in Australia than Chinese nationals, an inaugural foreign land register showed yesterday as the government warned against the rise of protectionist sentiment. —AFP

GULF BOURSES FALL

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Stock markets in the Gulf declined yesterday as some investors stayed away ahead of market closures next week for Eid al-Adha holidays, and after recent gains in oil prices faded. Riyadh's main index retreated 0.8 percent in the lowest trading volume this year as investors sold shares indiscriminately, with losers outnumbering gainers 111 to 34. The petrochemical sub-index fell 0.7 percent with Saudi Basic Industries dropping 1.2 percent. Brent crude oil, which hit a one-week high of \$49.40 a barrel on Monday after Russia and Saudi Arabia agreed to cooperate on stabilizing the oil market, has dropped back to \$47.18.

A lack of liquidity in the stock market has plagued trade in the last several weeks, and many portfolio managers believe this will remain the case at least until third-quarter corporate earnings are published next month. "Investors are trying to

look for fundamental justifications to buy but there really aren't any at the moment, and so many of them will stay away until September ends," one Jeddah-based asset manager said. Emaar the Economic City rose 2.2 percent after it said an affiliate had obtained a 2.7 billion riyal (\$720 million) Islamic loan from banks to finance the second phase of building King Abdullah Port.

Amana Cooperative Insurance climbed 0.6 percent after the board recommended a 56.3 percent share capital reduction through a reverse stock split of 1.125 shares for every two shares held. Dubai's index pulled back 0.7 percent with investors booking profits in small caps. Drake & Scull dropped 1.7 percent. But Gulf Navigation added 1.7 percent after the company said it had signed a new settlement agreement in its long debt dispute with Nordic American Tankers and that its debt

to Nordic American had now been settled fully. It gave no details.

Abu Dhabi's index edged down 0.2 percent as the most valuable company, Etisalat, dropped 0.8 percent. Declines in blue chips weighed on Qatar's main index, which fell 0.7 percent. The top loser was Islamic lender Masraf Al Rayan, which lost 2.7 percent, while petrochemical producer Industries Qatar dropped 2.3 percent. But in Kuwait, the telecommunications and banking sectors lifted the main price index by 0.3 percent. Mobile operator Zain climbed 3.1 percent and Boubyan Bank rose 1.3 percent. Cairo's main stock index fell 0.7 percent in the lowest daily volume for six weeks. Orascom Telecom, a stock favored by local investors, declined 1.8 percent but Palm Hills Development, the most heavily traded share on the market, rose 0.4 percent. —Reuters

PALESTINIAN ECONOMY SAPPED BY ISRAELI CONFLICT, DIVISIONS

JERUSALEM: The conflict with Israel, the blockade on Gaza and internal political infighting have severely constrained the Palestinian economy, according to an International Monetary Fund report released yesterday. Palestinian gross domestic product (GDP) per capita would be between 37 percent and 130 percent higher were it not for political issues, the IMF said, using three different economic models to assess the impact. "Absent the political uncertainty and restrictions of the past 20 years, real GDP per capita would have been significantly higher in the West Bank and Gaza," the report said.

It predicted the Palestinian economy would grow by 3.3 percent in 2016, compared with 3.5 percent last year. The findings echo a Tuesday report from the United Nations, which found the Palestinian economy could double without Israel's occupation of the West Bank and blockade on Gaza. Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967 in a move never recognized by the international community. It has also fought three wars in Gaza against Hamas and other Palestinian groups since 2008 and maintains a blockade on the enclave.

The IMF report painted a gloomy picture of growth prospects, saying unemployment reached 26.9 per-

cent across the Palestinian territories by the end of June, up 2 percentage points on the previous year. In Gaza, the unemployment rate is over 40 percent, with close to two thirds of young people without jobs. "Political and security uncertainties weigh heavily on the prospects for growth," it said. "Israeli restrictions and continued (Israeli) settlement expansion impede economic activity and exacerbate social hardships," it said, adding that Hamas's control of Gaza and divisions between Palestinian factions were also hindering reconstruction.

The 2014 Gaza war killed more than 2,200 Palestinians and 73 people on the Israeli side, while causing economic losses close to three times the size of Gaza's GDP. The Palestinian economy is heavily dependent on international aid, though funding has been declining and could fall by 25 percent this year, the report said. Further cuts could lead to a "vicious cycle of political and fiscal risks." Only a "political breakthrough" could lead to "fundamental improvement in the outlook," it added, though it called such an occurrence "unlikely." The report said the Palestinian Authority, which runs the West Bank, should focus on developing a longer-term fiscal plan for the economy. —AFP

CHEVROLET SILVERADO: THE MOST FUEL-EFFICIENT IN ITS SEGMENT



With the recent spike in gasoline prices across the country, Chevrolet Alghanim recognizes that fans of performance-driven pickup trucks and light-duty vehicles might feel hesitant about owning a car that could cost them more than they had anticipated in the long run. The company's lineup of fuel-efficient vehicles addresses this issue; they are powered by EcoTec3 engines that feature three state-of-the-art technologies that make the most of power, torque and efficiency across a broad range of operating conditions such as direct injection, cylinder deactivation and continuously variable valve timing. The engines also use a compact overhead-valve design and weight-saving components such as aluminum blocks and cylinder heads, to reduce mass, for additional energy savings

The EcoTec3 engines are designed to offer customers enough power and torque needed to confidently handle the toughest jobs without denting their wallets on fuel. The new 5.3L V8 EcoTec3 engine that comes equipped with the 2016 Silverado is considered the best fuel-economy of any V-8 pickup

4.3L EcoTec3



truck available now, capable of generating 355 horsepower (250 kW) and 383 lb.-ft. of torque (519 Nm). The EcoTec3 lineup of engines also includes the 6.2L V8, which is best in class in towing capacity with power to tow up to 5443kg, and the 4.3L V6, which is best in class in torque (7600 lb.-ft).

5.3L EcoTec3



Engineered to make the toughest jobs easier with new technologies, the 2016 Silverado features integrated cruise control and powertrain grade braking to enhance control., powertrain grade braking and diesel exhaust braking to enhance control. Also included is the new Digital Steering Assist system that continuously adjusts the amount of hydraulic assist provided to the driver while steering. Not to mention the award-winning MyLink system that has been enhanced for the 2016 model to offer greater connectivity and improved performance. The new infotainment system includes a 7-inch-diagonal capacitive touchscreen with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto capabilities (also available in the 8-inch systems.) Silverado's exterior design blends strong Chevy truck heritage with a refined, modern aesthetic. The Silverado design is about much more than just looks,

however. The front end is engineered to improve airflow for more efficient engine cooling, while the roof and tailgate spoiler were shaped in the wind tunnel to smooth airflow over the truck for reduced drag.

Regular, double cab and crew cab models are offered across the lineup. 2500HD and 3500HD regular cab models are matched with an 8'box, and trim levels include Work Truck (WT), LT, LTZ and High Country. The LTZ trim is offered on double cab and crew cab models, while the High Country – Chevrolet's premium heavy-duty pickup – is offered exclusively on the crew cab.

Any customer who purchases a Chevrolet Silverado will receive the benefits of the Chevrolet Care Program, which entails new levels of post-sale support and trust. The Chevrolet Care is an exceptional customer service that is based on four main pillars: competitive and transparent service costs (especially for four-wheel drive vehicles), scheduled service appointment booking with same day delivery, quality service by certified technicians and 3yr/100,000km warranty and 4 years of 24x7 roadside assistance

6.3L EcoTec3





TOKYO: Former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi speaks during a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan on Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2016. —AP

JAPAN'S EX-LEADER BACKS SICK US SAILORS WHO BLAME RADIATION

TOKYO: Several hundred American service personnel who say they became sick from radiation after participating in relief operations for the 2011 tsunami that set off the Fukushima nuclear disaster are now getting high-profile support in Japan.

Junichiro Koizumi, prime minister from 2001 to 2006, told reporters Wednesday he has set up a special fund to collect private donations for the former service members, with the goal of collecting \$1 million (100 million yen) by the end of next March, mainly to help with medical bills. "I felt I had to do something to help those who worked so hard for Japan," he said at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan. "Maybe this isn't enough, but it will express our gratitude, that Japan is thankful."

Koizumi, 74, one of Japan's most popular prime ministers in recent decades, was in San Diego in May to meet with 10 of the former service members, who have joined a class-action lawsuit against Tokyo Electric Power Co., or TEPCO, the utility that operates the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant.

More joining the suit

The lawsuit, filed in 2012, is ongoing, and a California judge has ruled it will proceed. More Navy personnel and Marines are joining the suit, now numbering about 400, according to Koizumi. Some 70,000 Americans took part in Operation Tomodachi, or Friend, flying in aid from an aircraft carrier and other warships off the coast of northeastern Japan.

Since then, some servicemen and women have become sick with cancers, leukemia, thyroid ailments, brain tumors and other diseases, and they blame radiation. The ships to which they were assigned

were in an area of the ocean in the direction of the radioactive plumes spewed from the Fukushima plant.

Aircraft carriers routinely use drinking water from the ocean, which the lawsuit says was contaminated with radiation, and service members showered in and ate food cooked in such water. Some Navy personnel also flew on helicopters to the disaster zone. TEPCO denies any link between the illnesses and radiation, saying the radiation levels are too low. Koizumi acknowledged he is not a medical expert, but said he had "common sense." He questioned why so many healthy young men and women were suddenly sick with symptoms often associated with radiation exposure, such as nosebleeds.

The US command has said it was not told immediately about the reactor meltdowns at Fukushima. The lawsuit alleges that TEPCO withheld key information and caused the Americans to be sent in harm's way. Seven of those who joined the lawsuit have already died. Koizumi has already raised 40 million yen (\$400,000) by charging people 10,000 yen (\$100) to attend his lectures, with help from Pritzker Prize-winning Japanese architect Tadao Ando. Koizumi said he had been a proponent of nuclear power while prime minister, but living through the Fukushima disaster taught him that what experts said about atomic power being safe, cheap and clean was "all lies." Even after the nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island in the United States and Chernobyl in Ukraine, the experts insisted that Japan's nuclear plants were different, he recalled. "I became ashamed how I had believed such lies," Koizumi said. "They said Japan was safe. And that simply was not true." —AP

PROGRESS SLOWS ON UNINSURED AS HEALTH LAW BLAME GAME GOES ON

THE FUTURE HINGES ON THE OUTCOME OF ELECTION

WASHINGTON: Progress in reducing the number of people without health insurance in the US appears to be losing momentum this year even as rising premiums and dwindling choice are reviving the political blame game over President Barack Obama's health care law.

The future of the Affordable Care Act hinges on the outcome of the presidential election, and it's shaping up as a moment of truth for Republicans. If Donald Trump wins and follows through on repealing "Obamacare," Republicans will be judged on how many people are covered - or lose coverage - by the still-evolving GOP replacement plan. If Democrat Hillary Clinton wins, the single-minded Republican focus on repeal will look even more futile.

Underscoring the stakes, a national survey finds that progress reducing the number of uninsured has slowed dramatically. The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index shows that the uninsured rate among adults dropped by only about 1 percentage point from 2015 through this July. That's much less than measured in each of the past two years, since the law's big coverage expansion started in 2014.

Bellwether

The survey, which polls 500 people nearly every day, is seen as a bellwether. Overall, Gallup-Healthways found that the uninsured rate among adults dropped from 17.3 percent in 2013 just before the law's coverage expansion, to 10.8 percent currently. That translates to roughly 16.1 million adults gaining coverage over the entire period. "It's like box office results for a movie," said survey director Dan Witters. "It has a big opening weekend and then it slows down over time."

Only a change in the politics of health care can shift those numbers. That could happen, for example, if Clinton wins and Republican governors and legislators in big states such as Texas and Florida accept the law's Medicaid expansion. But in the thick of an election campaign, both sides have an interest in maintaining their fixed positions. The blame game has a familiar narrative. Democrats say the law would be working much better if not for GOP obstinacy. Dug-in Republicans fostered an illusion among their fervent supporters that "Obamacare" could be dispatched easily. They kept pushing for repeal even though they knew Obama would never sign such legislation. With repeal as their official dogma, Republicans left no political space for pragmatic adjustments, the kind that divided government has produced before.

Kathleen Sebelius, Obama's first health secretary, said Republicans have put ideology before people. She cited the failure of most GOP-led states to expand Medicaid, even with the federal government footing nearly all the cost. "It is morally offensive when we have government

blocking people from life-saving health care because of politics," Sebelius said.

Republicans say the White House and congressional Democrats designed an unworkable program and rammed it through Congress on a party-line vote using a special procedure meant for deficit-related legislation. If premiums are now jumping and major insurers are bailing out, Democrats have only their heavy-handed approach to blame, they say.

"It continues to offer a viable contrast between the two parties," said GOP pollster Bill McInturff, who is working to re-elect Arizona Sen. John McCain. That state has become a parable for "Obamacare" critics, with the first county in the nation in which no insurer has stepped forward to offer health law coverage for next year. Obama's law has reduced the nation's uninsured rate to a historic low through a combination of subsidized private insurance and expanded Medicaid for low-income people. But it's been no panacea for the twin problems of high health care costs and barriers to access.

29 million still uninsured

Six years after the law passed, about 29 million people are still uninsured, even if coverage is now a legal obligation for those who can afford it. Insurance plans provided through the health law's markets can be stingy,

prompting some liberals to call the law the "Unaffordable Care Act."

A poll this year by the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation found that consumers getting coverage through the health law's markets were split about whether they were getting their money's worth, a change from previous years when a majority said they were getting a good deal. That was before the bad news for 2017. Complaining of losses from sicker-than-expected customers, insurers are raising premiums by double-digit percentages in many communities. Some major insurance companies are exiting the markets or scaling back their roles, leaving many areas with less competition.

Republican health economist Gail Wilensky says both parties bear responsibility for the problems. If Clinton manages to stave off Trump, Republicans will have no choice but to accept the health overhaul, she said. "I know of no historical precedent to suggest a rollback of a major benefit program affecting as many millions of people," Wilensky said.

Just having a different president - even if it's Clinton - could shift the political dynamics, said Republican Mike Leavitt, health secretary for President George W. Bush. "A new president can change the game by being willing to negotiate on things the Obama administration was unwilling to." —AP



WASHINGTON: In this April 10, 2014 file photo, then-Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius listens while testifying on Capitol Hill. —AP

ZIKA CONCERNS COULD TEST EFFORTS TO BOOST BIRTH RATE

SINGAPORE: Singaporean pre-school teacher Siti is determined to try for a baby even as Zika infections spread across the Southeast Asian nation. She just does all she can to avoid mosquito bites.

"I really love kids and want to have one of my own," the 37-year-old who declined to give her full name said after a procedure at the fertility clinic of KK Women's and Children's Hospital, the largest facility for women's health in Singapore. "I'm not postponing my pregnancy plans but I'm taking all precautions I can."

The mosquito-borne virus has been linked to a spike in microcephaly, a rare birth defect, in Brazil, which has so far been the hardest hit by an outbreak affecting large parts of Latin America. Babies born with the defect have

undersized heads and brains. In adults, the virus - which can also be sexually transmitted - has been linked to a rare neurological syndrome called Guillain-Barre.

Economists say concerns about the birth defect could dent the Singapore government's efforts to boost the number of babies born to its citizens. The city-state, a major financial hub, has one of the world's lowest birth rates and a rapidly ageing society, while more than a third of its 5.5 million population are foreigners. "It could lead to some delay in people who are going to get pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant," said Michael Wan, an economist at Credit Suisse.

"But it's a bit too early to tell." The low birth rate, and a drive to wean the economy off foreign labour, prompted the government last

year to start giving out as much as S\$10,000 (\$7,400) in cash to Singaporeans who have a baby. Singapore health authorities have urged pregnant women or those trying to conceive to avoid mosquito bites and take precautions since the first case of locally transmitted Zika was detected on Aug 27. Since then, more than 280 people have become infected, of which two were pregnant.

In their guidelines, they highlight the risks for pregnant women that are associated with Zika. They do not urge women who are otherwise healthy, and whose partners also show no symptoms of infection, to postpone pregnancy. "Use insect repellent. Practice safe sex for the duration of your pregnancy if your partner has been exposed to Zika," reads the advice for pregnant women on the

Singapore government's main online portal. "Note that a positive Zika test may not mean your unborn child is infected or harmed."

Some expats consider relocating

Citing a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, Singapore's government portal says Zika infected women have a 1 to 13 percent chance of giving birth to a child with microcephaly.

There is currently no vaccine for Zika, and Singapore has said the virus is likely to be in the country to stay, given the prevalence of the Aedes mosquitoes that carry it in this small, tropical island. Singapore has been battling dengue, another mosquito-borne virus, for decades.

The World Health Organisation, which has

praised Singapore's handling of the Zika outbreak, recommends people considering pregnancy get counselled about the risks in Zika-affected areas, and are told that their options include delaying pregnancy.

In Singapore, some women are not taking any chance. "Some patients, particularly expatriates, are calling to ask if they should relocate back to their own home country," said obstetrician Kelly Loi of the Health and Fertility Centre for Women.

But Aude Vazart, a French engineer who gave birth in Singapore last week, told Reuters leaving the island to avoid Zika was "too extreme." "There are thousands of diseases I could get, even in France," the 29-year-old said. (\$1 = 1.3473 Singapore dollars). —Reuters

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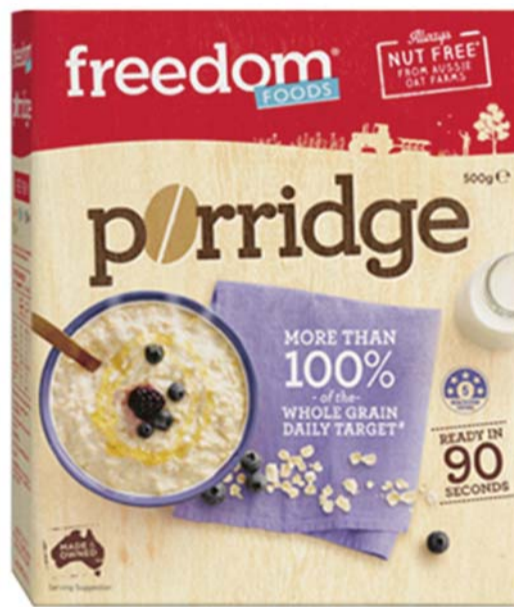
Kuwait Times

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SAVECO INTRODUCES AUSTRALIAN PRODUCTS



With the collaboration of the Australian Embassy, Saveco is proud to introduce wide range of Australian products in its store. Australian Week launched on 6th September 2016 with an opening ceremony by the Ambassador of Australia in Kuwait, His Excellency Mr. Warren Hauck.

Saveco began its operations in 2013 as the brainchild of its CEO, Mrs. Noor Al-Qatami, to bring one-stop mega market in

convenience and low-cost to the Kuwaiti customers and expatriates. Through in-depth research and dedication, the company began its accelerated development process, and now Saveco provides great prices through direct sourcing and by relying on its long-time business relationships with local suppliers. Australian products are available in the newly opened branch in Aswaq Al Qurain Area which is nearly 13,000 square meters in size. Departments avail-

able, include an incredible range of Grocery, Health and Beauty, Frozen, Non-Food, Kids Department, and Fresh products.

With a wide customer base of customers a day, Saveco makes it a priority that the products available meet our customer's standards, generally focusing on middle and upper class customers. Saveco's shopping experience is like no other Department Stores in the region as it holds to maintain the high standard of shopping experience, and focus keenly on

ambience and presentation throughout the store. Saveco is dedicated to assisting and promoting local products and offers customers the choice of imported items from the US, Europe many other countries and now from Australia. In addition, it caters to the health conscious consumer and feature organic, free from products, low fat, sodium free and other specialty products.

"Australia and Kuwait has always enjoyed a friendly and cooperative relationship, since

from Kuwait's independence and now relations are underpinned by our strong commercial ties and increasing people-to-people links. It will be a pleasure to work together with the Australian Embassy to expand our range of Australian Products in the nation. The quality of the products are of high standards in both aspects of taste and packaging. We are certainly proud to have expanded our range and will continue to do so." - Noor Al-Qatami, CEO Of Saveco.



FLOW HOUSE TO LAUNCH 'WATER SURFING' PROJECT

Flow House Kuwait (The House of Water Surfing)'s CEO, Mohammed Al-Khenaini said that the company would launch its 'Water Surfing' project on Thursday in Abu Halifa.

Al-Khenaini added that the project would be first of its kind in Kuwait and that would be made over an area of 10000 square meters. "The project will contain a family swimming pool and another for kids", he added noting that the project also includes 34 cabins for daily use around the pools from 10 am

till 10 pm. Further, Al-Khenaini added that the water surfing pools had been imported from California, USA and Canada with a total cost of \$ 2.5 million. "The project can serve up to 2000 visitors at a time for very reasonable prices", he underlined pointing out that visitors can enjoy the resort for a KD 12 comprehensive ticket including water surfing, swimming pools and kids games whereas the Oxygen Bar would be accessible for a separate KD 18 ticket.

Al-Khenaini added that the company

provides a 30 per cent discount for people with special needs and KD 3 ticket for maids. Moreover, Al-Khenaini explained that the resort would be open all week long for everybody while Fridays would be allocated for families only. "We are working on allocating a special day for women alone", he underlined. On her part, Flow House's PR manager, Maha Selem stressed that the project target all age categories with proper games. "We also have special offers for companies, corporation and banks", she highlighted.

CLASH OF GIANTS AT 3RD IBK-KBF GCC TOURNAMENT

Badminton is the second most popular sport in the world, and with the recently concluded Olympics in Rio, badminton has become a craze among badminton playing nations. Indian Badminton Association - Kuwait (IBAK) has been a pioneer of badminton in Kuwait, founded in 2010. IBAK has been on an upward projectile with a national badminton league, an invitational international tournament, an interschool tournament, an interclub tournament and four national tournaments featured in its annual calendar.

IBAK is currently preparing for its most prestigious tournament the 3rd IBK-KBF GCC international tournament which will be held on the 9th 10th and 11th of September

2016. This year 20+ international players are expected to participate, which includes Rupesh Kumar, a former Indian international whose patronage has been with IBAK for a long time, Shreyansh Jaiswal, a prodigy from India, Imam Adi Kusuma, an Indonesian international player who now is based out of UAE, Heri Setiawan based out of Bahrain and several top ranked players from UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia, Brazil, Philippines and India.

IBAK will field 3 teams this year, the IBK All Stars, IBK Challengers and IBK Commandos. The IBK teams will be constituted from among the following players: Aneef K Latheef, Bader, Dr Manimara Chozhan, Alen Jose, Sarin Joseph.

OOREDOO CELEBRATES EID AL-ADHA WITH 'IFTAH YA SIMSIM'

SPECIAL DISCOUNT FOR CUSTOMERS ON PLATINUM AND GOLD TICKETS

Ooredoo Kuwait, the fastest network in Kuwait for 2016, announced that it will celebrate Eid al-Adha with a production of Iftah Ya Simsim, the Arabic version of the beloved children's program Sesame Street. The play will be staged for three consecutive days in the Ice Skating Rink Theater in Kuwait City - Soor Street. Tickets can be found at Ooredoo's branches in 360 Mall,

Avenus Mall, and Gate Mall from 10 am to 10 pm.

The play aims to instill a number of values in kids, such as caring for the environment, recycling, conserving water and electricity, following the traffic laws, in addition to introducing them to a number of vocations and jobs. The play also teaches healthy habits, respect for parents and the elderly, and includes segments about

numbers and letters and colors.

The play is produced in cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council's Joint Program Production Institute, which is the main supporter of the Iftah Ya Simsim project since the 1970's.

The play is brought to Kuwait by EventMania, and directed by young Saudi theater director Yasser Al-Madkhali, in cooperation with Headline Productions.



Greetings



M. Ali Imran, Turns to 8, God Bless You & May you have Prosperous Future Ahead. Best Wishes & Love from Papa, Mama, Grand Parents, Aunties, Uncles & Cousin Brothers Abdullah, Osama, Umar, Hassan, Mohsin, Talha, & Sisters Fatima, Ayesha, Meeqat, Aamina.

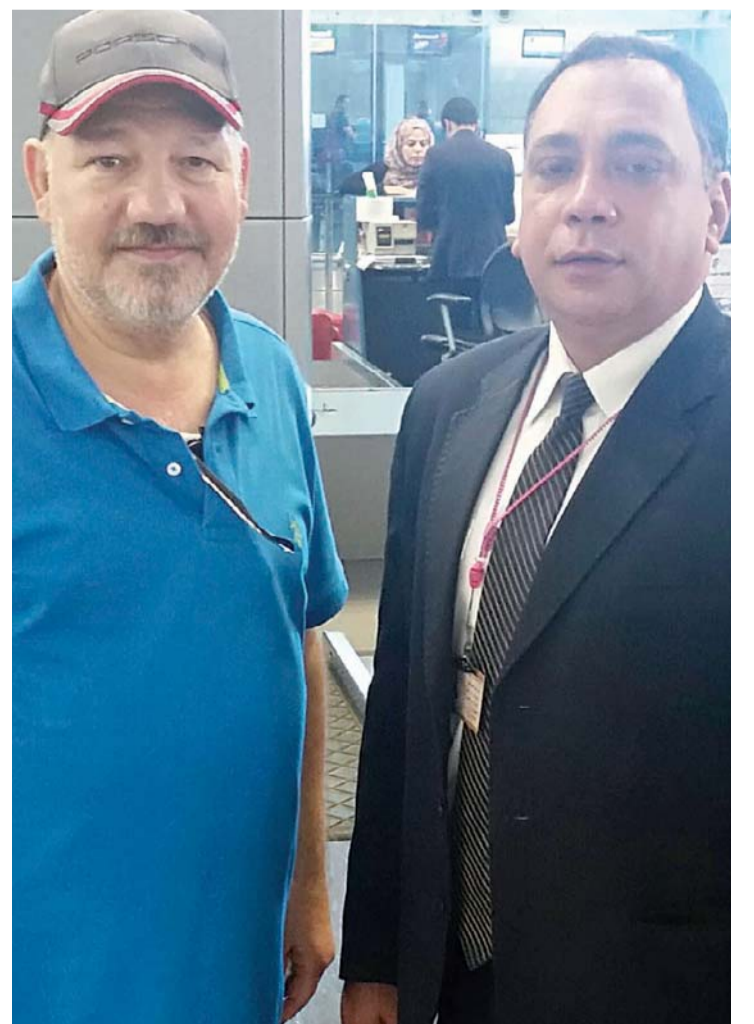
BANGLADESH EMBASSY

The Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in Kuwait will remain closed from 11-15 September 2016 (Sunday to Thursday) on the occasion of Holy Eid-ul-Azha.



INDIAN EMBASSY HOSTS RECEPTION IN HONOR OF VISITING MINISTER

Indian Ambassador Sunil Jain hosted a dinner reception in honor of Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Gen. V K Singh at the India House, Indian Embassy Kuwait on Tuesday. The minister arrived in Kuwait on a two-day visit. The reception was attended by several members of the Indian community in addition to the embassy officials.



Concluding the summer holidays and on her Egypt Air flight returning from Cairo with her grandparents to enjoy Eid Al-Adhah vacation in Kuwait then go back to school, child, Malak Aburrahman Khaled Fawzi visited the pilot's cockpit.

OSN MOVIES HD

ACTION

- 09:15 Brick Mansions
11:15 Dracula Untold
13:15 Ladder 49
15:30 Armageddon
18:15 Batman Unlimited: Monster Mayhem

BBC FIRST

- 09:25 Orphan Black
10:15 Doctors
10:45 Eastenders
11:15 Dickensian

Crime & Investigation Network

- 09:00 Celebrity Ghost Stories
10:00 Paranormal State
10:30 Paranormal State
11:00 Who Was I? My Past Lives

COMEDY CENTRAL

- 09:00 Lip Sync Battle
09:25 Catch A Contractor
09:50 Ridiculousness



ARMAGEDDON ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 14:05 Ridiculousness
14:30 Ridiculousness
14:55 Tosh.0
15:20 Tosh.0

- 11:05 How It's Made
11:30 World's Toughest Jobs
12:00 Mythbusters
13:25 Kids vs Film



- 09:00 Hostage: Deadly Demands
09:48 I Almost Got Away With It
10:36 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall



- 09:15 The Hive
09:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
09:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

- 09:15 That's So Raven
16:15 That's So Raven
16:40 Good Luck Charlie
17:05 Good Luck Charlie

- 09:35 Zou
09:45 Loopydoo
10:00 Art Attack
10:25 Henry Hugglemonster

- 12:00 Zou
12:25 Loopydoo
12:35 Art Attack
13:00 The Hive

- 12:00 Boyster
12:10 Super Matrak
12:35 Super Matrak
13:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil

- 09:40 WAGs
10:35 WAGs
11:30 WAGs
12:00 WAGs



- 09:25 Grantchester
10:20 Royalty Close Up
11:15 Murdoch Mysteries
12:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?



- 09:15 Magic Of Science
09:40 Fast N' Loud
10:30 Garage Gold
11:00 How Stuff's Made



Sometimes to keep the magic, you need to learn a few tricks.

Meryl STREEP
Tommy Lee JONES
Steve CARELL

Hope Springs

A new comedy from the director of "The Devil Wears Prada"



Fall in love again this summer

HOPE SPRINGS ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

- 20:20 Gold Divers
21:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
21:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier

- 09:40 WAGs
10:35 WAGs
11:30 WAGs
12:00 WAGs



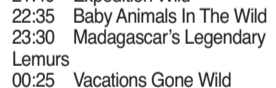
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10:40 Expedition Wild
11:35 Sumatra's Last Tiger
12:30 Bears Of Fear Island



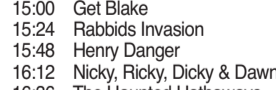
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09:30 Tales From The Bush Larder
09:55 Tales From The Bush Larder

- 15:45 Tales From The Bush Larder
16:10 Raw Travel
16:35 Raw Travel
17:00 David Rocco's Dolce India

- 09:45 Revenge Of The Lioness
10:40 Expedition Wild
11:35 Sumatra's Last Tiger
12:30 Bears Of Fear Island



- 09:01 Paw Patrol
09:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
09:35 Dora The Explorer



- 09:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
09:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
09:48 Henry Danger

- 19:55 Zack & Quack
20:05 Team Umizoomi
20:28 Louie
20:35 Louie

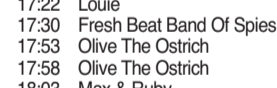
- 09:00 The Rover
11:00 Draft Day
13:00 Memories
15:00 Streetdance: All Stars



- 09:00 Dr. Ken
09:30 Hot In Cleveland
10:00 Hank
10:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon



- 09:01 Paw Patrol
09:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
09:35 Dora The Explorer



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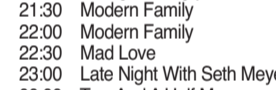
- 09:00 Mostly Ghostly: Have You Met My Ghoulfriend?
11:00 Dinosaur
13:00 Garfield's Fun Fest

- 20:40 Olive The Ostrich
20:44 Olive The Ostrich
20:49 Paw Patrol
21:01 Paw Patrol

- 09:00 The Rover
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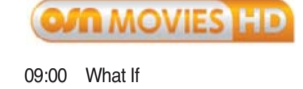


- 09:45 Revenge Of The Lioness
10:40 Expedition Wild
11:35 Sumatra's Last Tiger
12:30 Bears Of Fear Island



- 09:00 Mostly Ghostly: Have You Met My Ghoulfriend?
11:00 Dinosaur
13:00 Garfield's Fun Fest

- 15:00 Alice In Wonderland
17:00 Atlantis: The Lost Empire
19:00 Treasure Planet



- 09:00 What If
11:00 5 Flights Up
13:00 A Birder's Guide To Everything



- 10:00 Serial (Bad) Weddings
11:45 The Hundred-Foot Journey
14:00 Hope Springs



- 10:45 Go For Sisters
13:00 Listen To Me Marlon
14:45 Testament Of Youth



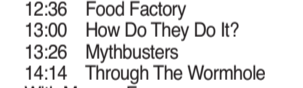
- 10:15 Hatching
12:00 Daddy I'm A Zombie
13:45 Black And Kanuto



- 10:00 So Undercover
12:00 Betrayed
14:00 Louder Than Words



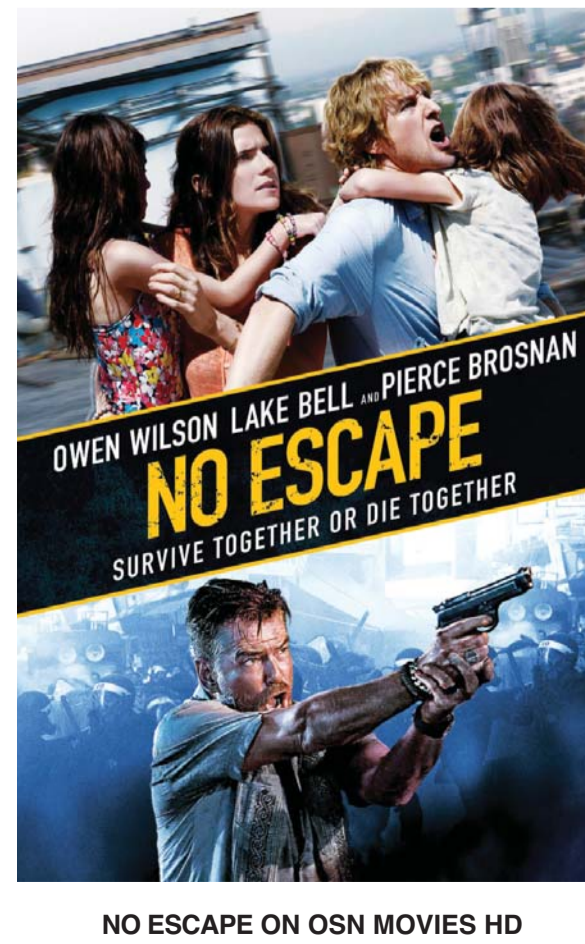
- 09:00 Super Skyscrapers
09:48 Mythbusters
10:36 Secret Space Escapes



- 09:00 Empire
10:00 Good Morning America
12:00 The Fosters
13:00 Bones



- 09:15 Cake Boss
09:35 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
10:20 Little People, Big World



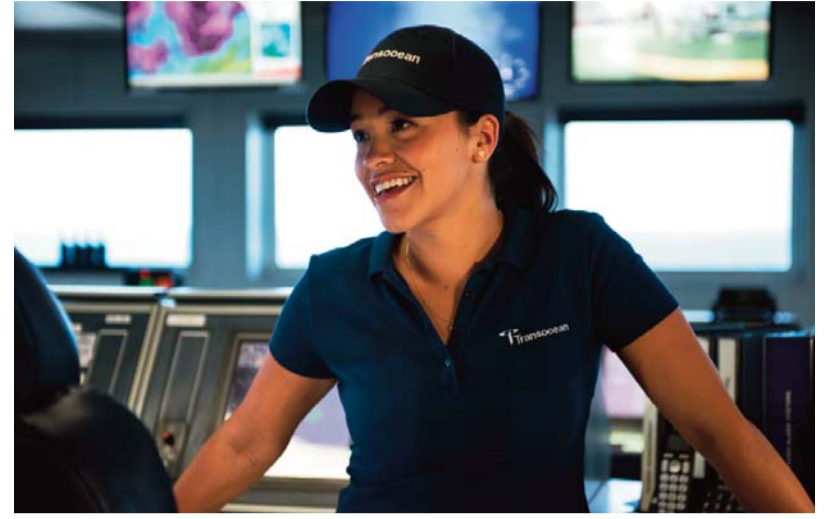
NO ESCAPE ON OSN MOVIES HD



In this image released by MGM/Columbia Pictures, Chris Pratt appears in a scene from, 'The Magnificent Seven,' in theaters on September 23.



An undated photo provided by Paramount Pictures shows Amy Adams, right, as Louise Banks in "Arrival" by Paramount Pictures.



This image released by Summit Entertainment shows Gina Rodriguez in a scene from 'Deepwater Horizon,' in theaters on September 30.

On view at Toronto Film Festival: The future of movies

Prophecy abounds at the Toronto International Film Festival. Pundits pronounce Oscar guarantees. Buzz, the most cherished commodity at the festival, is measured and speculated on like stock prices. But this year's festival, teeming with diversity on screen and behind the camera, stuffed to the gills with not just more than 300 films (138 of them premieres) but virtual reality and even a smattering of television, might just offer a broader vision of what's to come in movies.

"If you want to see the future of film, you need to come to Toronto this year," says Cameron Bailey, artistic director of the festival. "It feels like the range of the lineup in terms of the diversity of the stories that are being told and the storytellers that are telling them, the introduction of new technology, like the VR lineup we have, the way that the festival has pretty smoothly integrated television and long-form storytelling. All of those things, I think, are where film is headed." It may be an optimistic portrait of cinematic future put forth by the 41st Toronto Film Festival, but the strength of festival lineup lends a sense of inevitability. The festival kicks off Thursday with the premiere of Antoine Fuqua's "Magnificent Seven" remake, starring Denzel Washington and Chris Pratt.

Shared experience

"The industry can only benefit from seeing more diverse everything. Not just in front of the camera, behind the camera, executive positions," says Fuqua, the director of "Training Day." "It's good for everyone because movies are a shared experience. People go to the theater and we all get to laugh and have fun with each other." The movies at TIFF offer a compendium of the fall movie season, squeezed into a 10 day blitz. Many of them are awards-hopefuls, including most of the top films from Cannes, Venice and Telluride. And after a lackluster summer rife with blockbuster disappointment, the distance between seasons has never felt so vast.

No films come into Toronto with more heat than Damien Chazelle's Los Angeles musical "La La Land," starring Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling, and Barry Jenkins' "Moonlight," a striking coming-of-age tale of a gay black man. Both have drawn enthusiastic raves out of Telluride and Venice in recent days. Of the many TIFF debuts, few match the size of Peter Berg's "Deepwater Horizon," a visceral, big-budget rendering of the oil rig disaster, made with its own enormous



This image released by Summit Entertainment shows Ryan Gosling, right, and Emma Stone in a scene from 'La La Land,' in theaters on December 2. — AP photos



Oscar winner Lupita Nyong'o and newcomer Madina Nalwanga in Disney's Queen of Katwe, the vibrant true story of a young girl from the streets of rural Uganda whose world rapidly changes when she is introduced to the game of chess.

mock rig. Also on tap are courses of science-fiction (Denis Villeneuve's alien communication thriller "Arrival"), fantasy (J.A. Bayona's emotional "A Monster Calls," a drama filled with equal parts wonder and grief), and comedy (Kelly Fremon Craig's witty and honest coming-of-age movie "The Edge of Seventeen").

Intriguing titles

There are highlights from Sundance (Kenneth Lonergan's "Manchester by the Sea," Nate Parker's scandal-plagued "The Birth of a Nation") and Cannes (Jeff Nichols' "Loving," Andrea Arnold's "American Honey"). And there are dozens of intriguing titles up for sale, including a crop of atypical political dramas that feature Natalie Portman as Jackie Kennedy ("Jackie"), Devon Terrell as a young Obama ("Barry") and Woody Harrelson as Lyndon Johnson ("LBJ"). That's still not mentioning Terrence Malick's history-of-the-world documentary (in IMAX!), "Voyage of Time: Life's Journey," fashion designer Tom

Ford's "A Single Man" follow-up, "Nocturnal Animals" or the Miles Teller-led boxing drama "Bleed for This."

Good and bad

"The enthusiasm that runs through the people that make the decisions of what's going to be there is ridiculous," says Jonathan Demme, who will premiere his Justin Timberlake concert film, "JT and the Tennessee Kids." "They've got good taste and they show TOO many movies. I've got the press schedule in my pocket right now. I'm going to see as many movies as I can in between our screenings." David Oyelowo ("Selma") will bring two films to Toronto that reflect the festival in both the diversity of its casts and that they were each directed by women. A record 19 of this year's galas are directed by women. Oyelowo stars in Amma Asante's "A United Kingdom," about a Botswana royal's interracial marriage, and Mira Nair's "Queen of Katwe," about a young Ugandan girl trying to become a world chess champion.

For Oyelowo, a Brit of Nigerian descent, the two films are a kind of antidote to stories previously told about Africa. Oyelowo co-starred in 2006's "The Last King of Scotland," about Uganda dictator Idi Amin. "I did have this thought in the back of my mind, I went, 'This is great but I just know there's more. I know for a fact there's more in terms of how Africa could and should be represented on film,'" says Oyelowo. "I developed this desire to just have more breadth of you'd seen out of Africa. 'The Last King of Scotland' was part of a crop of films like 'The Constant Gardner,' 'Hotel Rwanda,' 'Blood Diamond' and they were all about the darker side of what happens on that continent. All of which is true. Like anywhere, there's good and bad. But there was almost nothing else balancing it out." — AP



Actress Natalie Portman and director Pablo Larrain attend the photocall of the movie 'Jackie' presented in competition at the 73rd Venice Film Festival on September 7, 2016 at Venice Lido. — AFP

Comedian Eddie Murphy gets serious in 'Mr Church'

Eddie Murphy swaps his usual comedy for drama in new movie "Mr Church" as he makes his return to Hollywood after a break. The "Coming to America" and "Beverly Hills Cop" actor plays a cook who develops a long-lasting friendship with a young girl he helps raise after her mother becomes sick. "It caught me off guard because I don't usually get offered things like this and I usually don't have an emotional reaction when I'm reading something," Murphy said at the film's premiere in Los Angeles on Tuesday.

"You're reading (films) 'Imagine That' or 'Daddy Day Care,' you don't cry ... You're crying while I'm reading this, I had never had that experience. "It was a small movie and I had never done that before ... I hadn't done a picture in five years so I was like that will be easy and fun to do," Murphy, 55, last year received the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor. "Mr Church" opens in US cinemas on Sept 16. — Reuters



Eddie Murphy, left, a cast member in 'Mr Church,' poses with Arsenio Hall at the premiere of the film at the ArcLight Hollywood.

Portman plays Jackie Kennedy, her 'most dangerous' role

Natalie Portman said yesterday that portraying a grief-stricken Jacqueline Kennedy was her "most dangerous" film role, as the piercing bio-drama "Jackie" entered the race for the Venice film festival's prestigious Golden Lion. Chilean filmmaker Pablo Larrain's first English-language feature is an intimate look at the woman who shaped her famous husband's legacy, offsetting public images and audio recordings with an exploration of Jackie's private side. The glossy drama starts a week after John F. Kennedy's 1963 murder in Dallas, as his new widow gives an interview with Theodore H. White of Life magazine (played by Billy Crudup).

"I felt like it was the most dangerous film I've ever done because everyone knows what Jackie looked like, sounded like, walked like," Portman told journalists at the world's oldest film festival. Larrain said they had drawn from the many biographies on the iconic first lady, as well as a source material gathered by historian Arthur Schlesinger, including recordings of Jackie chatting with her friends. "The challenge was having someone so well known as Natalie, playing someone so well known as Jackie. But I think cinema is connected to the old magicians, with someone pulling a rope here or moving a light there. "We created an illusion that talks of pain, loss and desire," Larrain said.

'Most unknown of the known'

The film is non-chronological, moving back and forwards between the mourning Jackie determined to control every word the journalist writes, to the blood-spattered one, sitting next to her husband when he is shot

dead. We go from her recording a tour of the White House for CBS News (real-life footage from 1962 recreated down to the smallest detail here), to her swallowing down pills and alcohol as she struggles to manage her grief. Through scenes with her priest, we learn of Jackie's struggle to mourn a man with roving eyes who she no longer slept with and whose death has left her fearing poverty, loneliness and social oblivion.

"You have all the records about everything, but a ton of things you will never know as it happens behind doors. Jackie was someone incredibly mysterious, the most unknown of the known people," Larrain said. "We tried to sneak a camera inside her private space, creating a fiction based on paradox, emotions and mystery," he said. The film peaks with Jackie's strategy of painting a fairy-tale picture of JFK by using "Camelot" as a sobriquet for JFK and the Kennedy Administration, an epithet which stuck. Her analogy with the 1960 Lerner and Loewe musical, which appears in the film's soundtrack, elevates the Kennedy kingdom to the level of the one ruled by the legendary King Arthur.

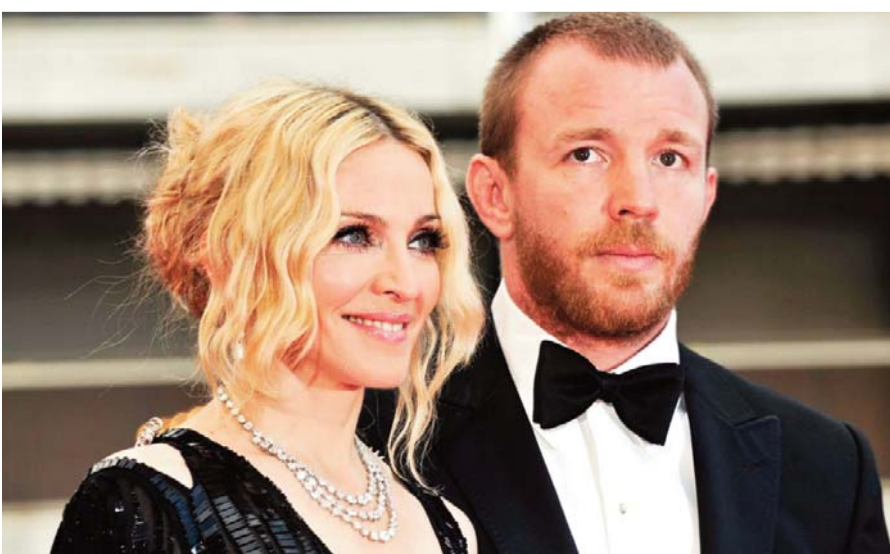
Jackie managed "to create an illusion of royalty, gathering together a whole nation" for the spectacular state funeral, with America's elite and foreign dignitaries alike processing in the wake of the horse-drawn coffin. "It's interesting because it's not something she got through a family name, through birthright. She was a queen without a throne," Larrain said. — AFP

Madonna, Guy Ritchie settle child custody dispute

Singer Madonna and her ex-husband, director Guy Ritchie, have settled a custody dispute over their 16-year-old son Rocco, a court official in New York said yesterday. It was not immediately announced with which parent the teenager would live. Madonna, 58, and Ritchie, 47, have been in a legal battle over their son since December, when the teenager ignored a court order to fly back from Ritchie's London home to live with his mother in New York.

The "Material Girl" singer and the director

of 2009 film "Sherlock Holmes" married in 2000. After they divorced in 2008, they agreed that Rocco would live with Madonna. Lucian Chalfen, a spokesman for the New York State court system, confirmed the case was officially settled yesterday but did not immediately provide further information. Details of the settlement also were not revealed in online court records. Attorneys for Madonna and Ritchie did not immediately return calls for comment. — Reuters



Madonna and Guy Ritchie

US-BASED IRANIAN AUTEUR AMIR NADERI ON MAKING 'MOUNTAIN' IN ITALY

US-based Iranian auteur Amir Naderi-who on Monday received Venice's Jaeger-Lecoulte Glory To The Filmmaker Award-says his new film "Mountain," shot in the Italian Alps, "is very much about pushing myself to the limit." And also about pushing his Italian crew. "I told them in the beginning: 'This will be like going to hell. But if you stick with me, I promise you, you will see heaven. And that heaven is cinema,'" he says. Set in the year 1350 in a semi-abandoned village at the foothills of an Alpine peak, "Mountain"-which world-premiered at the fest out-of-competition Monday — is a drama about a man who attempts to bring sunlight to the village, where his family is barely able to survive because of the prevailing darkness.

It stars Italian actors Andrea Sartoretti, whose credits include TV series "Crime Novel" and "Mission: Impossible III," and Claudia Potenza ("Basilicata Coast to Coast"). Naderi says the cast and crew had to endure adverse weather conditions, bad food, and other tribulations, including communication impediments. On the first day of shooting, the cast and crew asked him: "Do you speak Italian?" He replied: "I speak the language of cinema," which meant that he "gave directions with hand gestures and a few words in English." "They went through a lot," Naderi adds. "But when we wrapped, they told me it was worth it." "Mountain" follows Naderi's Japan-set "The Cut," and "Vegas: Based on a True Story," which was in competition on the Lido in 2008. —Reuters

FASHION



Part of Rihanna's 'FENTY' x Puma collection as seen at the Pop-Up Shop Opening on Tuesday.

Q&A: **Rihanna** on new fashion line, confidence and more

Rihanna says if the Addams Family worked out in the gym, they would sport her new collection for Puma. The singer's autumn/winter 2016 Fenty Puma by Rihanna line was launched Tuesday. The edgy collection of mostly black-and-white ensembles includes loose sweaters and oversized pants, maxi dresses, sneakers, slippers and sneaker heels. She called the clothes and items - wearable at the gym or not - "kind of haunting." "I kind of imagined if the Addams Family was working out, this is what they would be wearing," Rihanna said in an interview with The Associated Press.



File photo shows Rihanna arrives at the Billboard Music Awards in Las Vegas.

"This collection is kind of dark, but very oversized and long, everything is extra and I love it," she said. "It's something I definitely wear all the time and you either have to be into it or not." She launched the line at pop-up shops at Foot Locker and Bergdorf Goodman in New York, where her feverish fans awaited the pop star's arrival. She wore Puma head-to-toe, including white thigh-high boots, a long black skirt and a track jacket. Rihanna, 28, talked about the new line and how Japanese street culture inspired her style.

AP: Did you listen to music while designing this line?

Rihanna: I always listen to music no matter what I'm doing. Music is definitely always something that drives the mood and creating and helps you lock that in and escape to a whole other world, but I won't say any of these pieces were specific to certain songs or album - they just came from a feeling. I already knew what I wanted and I knew what I wanted to see and the direction, but to actually now apply that to silhouettes and things that had to still come back to athleticism, I had such a thrill with that challenge.

AP: What was it like designing a line versus shopping for yourself?

Rihanna: Oh my gosh, big difference! When you're shopping, too, you feel like you're designing as you're shopping. You're like, 'I love this, but I wish it was shorter or I wish it was purple. I wish it was a different fabric,' you know. It starts there, but then when you have to start from scratch, it really comes with an idea first, and then ... you want to tweak and then you come up with something else and you want to add to it or change. It's fun. It's like an ocean - you can do whatever. It's so, it's a big canvas and Puma definitely let me have a lot of freedom creatively so I was lucky with that.

AP: You said this line was inspired by Japanese street culture. Do you remember your first trip to Japan? What was that like?

Rihanna: Supertrippy. I felt like I was on a whole other planet. I felt like I was the only person of my kind there. It was so weird. And their fashion, I felt like I was watching a hip-hop music video, I remember. The guys all wanted to be like supergangster and oversized this, oversized that; they were so cool.

But the girls, they all walked around in thigh-high boots and tiny shorts, supercute outfits that I knew came from hip-hop culture. It was really cool actually to see that. Actually the worst part about that trip was none of the shoes could fit me. I have big feet and they don't. They stop at like a size six and that's it. But it was fun. And I've always been inspired since that day; I've always been inspired by Japanese style.

AP: You've always been bold and confident with your style, and people always say they like Rihanna "because she's so real." Have you always been confident?

Rihanna: I think ... I've always been shy.

AP: Really?

Rihanna: Yes. Yes. And still you wouldn't believe, but still I get shy and awkward and (have) stage fright. Even when I was coming here, I was at Bergdorf's earlier, I had this fluttering in my stomach 'cause it's like a stage even though it wasn't. ... I've always been that way, but ... I when you realize that nothing is wrong, even if it's awkward it's not wrong ... you kind of just are OK. Like you know it might be awkward for people or people might not understand it, but you're fine. I wouldn't change anything. I have to stay the same.

AP: They've been playing your songs and the fans have been singing along. What's it like to have them here?

Rihanna: That is what it's all about. I couldn't come to the shop and be by myself ... when they show up I mean that, that lets me know I'm doing something right and lets me know that they're sincerely interested and enjoy what I do. And that's the reward. — AP



Rihanna entering the opening of the FENTY Puma Pop-Up Shop. — AP photos

MARILYN'S 'HAPPY BIRTHDAY' GOWN GOING TO AUCTION IN THE FALL



The flesh-colored, skin-tight beaded gown Marilyn Monroe wore during her breathless rendition of "Happy Birthday" to President John F. Kennedy is going on the auction block this fall. Julien's Auctions is offering the sequined stunner at a sale in Los Angeles on Nov 17. The auction house believes the gown could fetch \$2 million to \$3 million. The sultry actress wore the barely-there dress at Kennedy's 45th birthday celebration at Madison Square Garden on May 19, 1962. Made of silk gauze and covered in thousands of rhinestone beads and sequins, the Jean Louis dress was so form-fitting that Monroe had to be sewn into it. She died less than three months later of an overdose of sleeping pills at age 36. Kennedy died the following year.

The custom-made, one-of-a-kind dress is "not only Hollywood, but political and historical," said Julien's president Darren Julien. The dress was first purchased 17 years ago at Christie's auction by the late financier Martin Zweig, who kept it in a climate-controlled display case at his Pierre Hotel penthouse in New York. It is being sold by his estate.

"She called it skin and beads," said Julien of the gown. And because the dress "was sewn on Marilyn Monroe, Zweig had it professionally mounted on a mannequin. It's never been off it, and is immaculately preserved." The dress was last sold at auction in 1999 for \$1.26 million, the highest auction price for a Monroe dress to date. The dress is among some 1,300 Monroe artifacts being offered by Julien's over three days. They include items from the estate of Monroe's acting coach Lee Strasberg and from David Gainsborough-Roberts, a British collector believed to have the largest private collection of Monroe costumes.

A sheer black beaded and sequined dress from the movie "Some Like it Hot" also is for sale. Prior to the sale, the custom-made "Happy Birthday Mr President" dress will be showcased at MANA Contemporary in Jersey City, New Jersey, as part of an exhibition focusing on Monroe as an artist, from Sept 25 through Oct 22. It will include some of her watercolors and handwritten poems, which will be sold by Julien's.

The dress also will travel outside of the United States for the first time for an exhibition at the Museum of Style Icons in Newbridge, Ireland, from Oct 29 through Nov 6. "This is the last auction of its kind. When she died Marilyn Monroe left everything to Lee Strasberg," said Julien. "We have the final of his estate items as they relate to Marilyn Monroe. It's literally going to be the last opportunity to ever experience a Marilyn Monroe auction like this again." — AP

This undated photo provided by Julien's Auctions shows the flesh-colored dress Marilyn Monroe wore during her rendition of 'Happy Birthday' to President John F. Kennedy. — AP



Splash signs superstars Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif as brand ambassadors

Splash, the Middle East's largest high-street fashion retailer today announced international icons Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif as brand ambassadors. The mega stars known for their acting finesse and their on-trend sartorial choices with a massive fan following will be seen representing the brand Splash through a series of brand campaigns across the Middle East.

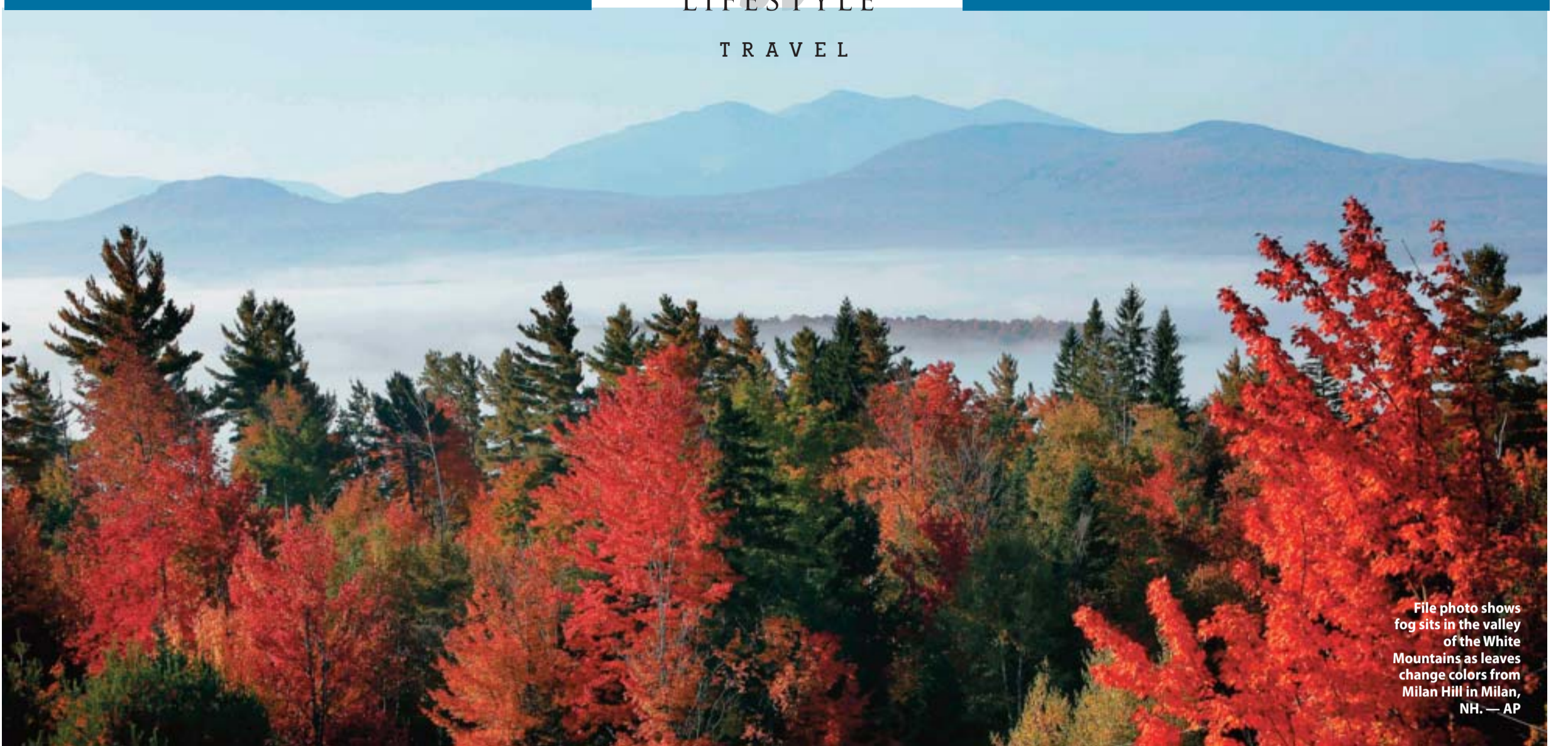
Synonymous with its philosophy of 'In Love with Fashion', Splash is well known for its trendy and fashionable collections with a broad appeal, its innovative events and campaigns while Salman is known for creating everlasting fashion moments and Katrina, as an aspirational youth icon thus making the three individual brands an instant fit.

Salman talking on his association with Splash, said, "I have now been working with Splash in the Middle East for the past three years both in the capacity of a brand ambassador and with my brand Being Human for which Splash is the exclusive retail partner. It has been an exciting & fruitful journey. Each season the brand ups its fashion quotient while still keeping the Arab & Asian consumer at heart which I most relate to. I look forward to this renewed journey and wish we continue to add many more fashionable moments in the life of our valued fans & customers."

Speaking on her association Katrina, an internationally acclaimed, multi-award winning actress, said, "As a brand to me Splash embodies effortless style & great fashion which is what I associate with personally. I am very happy to represent the brand as an ambassador for the Middle East, a region that has given me and my movies so much love and support. We are in the process of shooting this amazing, high-fashion campaign and I can't wait for you to see what's in store this season."

"Born and bred in the Middle East we at Splash understand the fashion sensibilities of the Arab consumer and to represent this fashion we have brought together mega stars Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif. This is Splash's second stint with Salman post a 6 month gap in which we received multiple requests from his Arab and Asian fans to bring the association back. Katrina was an obvious choice given her global appeal, her talent and impeccable style. Both together appeal to all generations and it is this love for them that we aim to capitalize on in their very first joint brand endorsement," said Raza Beig, Director- Landmark Group and CEO- Splash & ICONIC.

TRAVEL



File photo shows fog sits in the valley of the White Mountains as leaves change colors from Milan Hill in Milan, NH. — AP

'Leaf' the beaten path for stunning foliage, killer selfies

The Northeast's fall foliage dazzles locals and draws millions of tourists, but many flock to the same tired vantage points. Those willing to venture off the beaten path will be rewarded with stunning and comparatively uncrowded autumn vistas - and some killer selfies. Here's your guide to the best corners of New England and upstate New York for leaf-peeping:

Connecticut

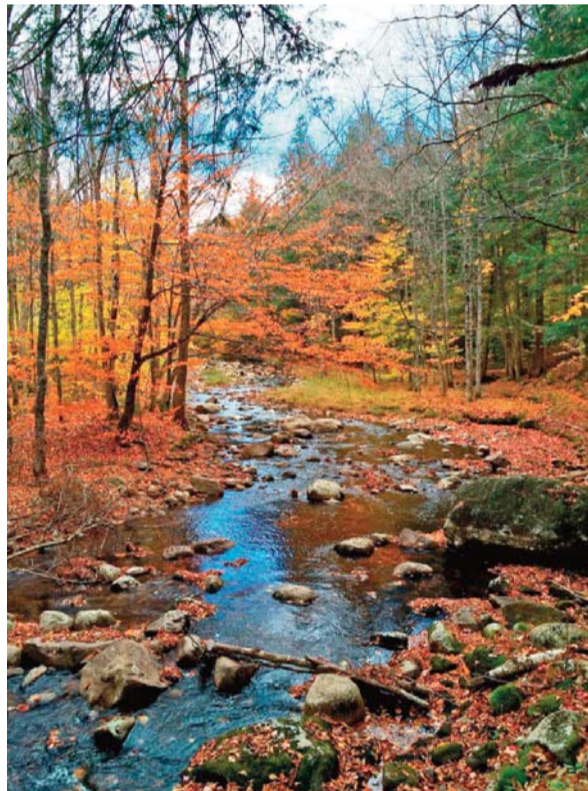
The Heublein Tower in Simsbury, Connecticut sits at the top of Talcott Mountain State Park. The 165-foot tower was built in 1914 by liquor magnate Gilbert Heublein as a summer home and offers spectacular views that on a clear day extend north to the Berkshires in Massachusetts and south to Long Island Sound.

Getting to the tower involves a relatively easy 11/4-mile hike up a foliage-filled trail that winds up the mountain with plenty of overlooks of the Farmington River Valley. There's also a nearby pumpkin patch where visitors can enjoy hayrides and pumpkin picking. — Pat Eaton-Robb

Maine

Nestled in tiny Turner in the foothills of Maine, Ricker Hill Orchards combines two of New England's most beloved autumn activities: picking your own apples and admiring the turning leaves. The orchard's hillside "u-pick" area offers a stunning view of Maine's western lakes and mountains region, with views of foliage stretching all the way to New Hampshire.

The ninth-generation orchard also offers fall staples such as cider and cider doughnuts along with its apples and views. It's about an hour's drive north of Portland - a ride with its own superb views of the fall spectacle. — Patrick Whittle



Fall colors along East Stony Creek in the town of Hope, NY, along a woods road off Route 30 in the southern Adirondacks.

New Hampshire

Don't want to limit your leaf-peeping to a single state - or, for that matter - country? Head to Milan State Park, where a fire tower offers simultaneous views of the mountain ranges of New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont and Canada.

Brilliant leaves in the foreground contrast beautifully with fog that settles in the valleys and the mountains in the distance. The recently renovated park, about 125 miles north of the state capital of Concord, includes a hilltop campground with a half-dozen campsites and four furnished yurts available to rent through Oct 24. Oh, and it's pronounced MY'-lin, not mih-LAHN. — Holly Ramer

New York

In the southern Adirondacks, the stony Sacandaga River and a series of forest-rimmed lakes reflect blazing orange and yellow leaves along a 50-mile stretch of Route 30 from Northville to Indian Lake, where the Great Adirondack Moose Festival is slated for Sept 24-25.

There are long stretches of unbroken wilderness between the hamlets of Wells, Speculator and Indian Lake, with hiking trails leading to secluded ponds, waterfalls and small mountains with big views. — Mary Esch

Rhode Island

For an urban leaf-peeping experience, there are few places more picturesque than historic Benefit Street in Providence, Rhode Island. Hundred-year-old elms and other mature trees provide a canopy of spectacular color over brick sidewalks.

The mile-long street runs past a collection of Colonial, Federal and Greek Revival-style homes, and several historic churches, including the First Baptist Church in America. Situated midway up the steep College Hill, it offers occasional glimpses of a more modern downtown, the Rhode Island Statehouse and rivers below. Above it is the main campus of Brown University, another lovely spot for fall color. — Michelle R Smith



Vermont

The top of Owl's Head Mountain, reached by a short hiking trail in the Groton State Forest off state Route 232, offers consistently world-class foliage displays. With an elevation of 1,958 feet, the view from the rock face near the peak includes spectacular views of Lake Groton, Kettle Pond, Peacham Bog and an unbroken expanse of forest that in late September and early October glows red, orange and yellow.

While the more adventurous can make a 1.5-mile hike that's rated as easy to moderate, it's also possible to drive to a parking area near the top for a short walk that makes it an ideal outing with kids. — Wilson Ring — AP

File photo shows fog sits in the valley of the White Mountains as leaves change colors, in this photo taken from Milan Hill in Milan, NH.



Fog sits in the valley of the White Mountains as leaves change colors, in this photo taken from Milan Hill in Milan, NH.

Massachusetts

Most people associate Cape Cod with summer, sand and surf, but the peninsula offers some postcard-perfect backdrops for foliage. Cross over the Sagamore Bridge and take the first exit onto rural Route 6A, which winds and twists through the scenic and historic town of Sandwich. The Old King's Highway, as it used to be known, hugs Cape Cod Bay and is lined with ancient stone walls, white picket fences, ponds and pastures.

Two worthwhile stops in Sandwich: Heritage Museums and Gardens, where you can meander paths bordered by stunning flora; and the Green Briar Nature Center, next to the conservation area where Thornton Burgess dreamed up Peter Rabbit and other characters. — William J Kole



A dog runs down a back road off Route 30 in Indian Lake in New York.



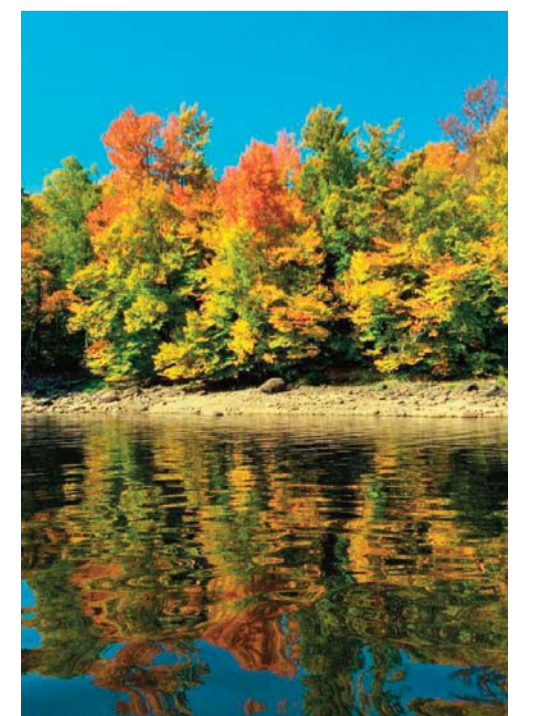
Fall colors reflect in the surface of Indian Lake in the Adirondacks in New York.



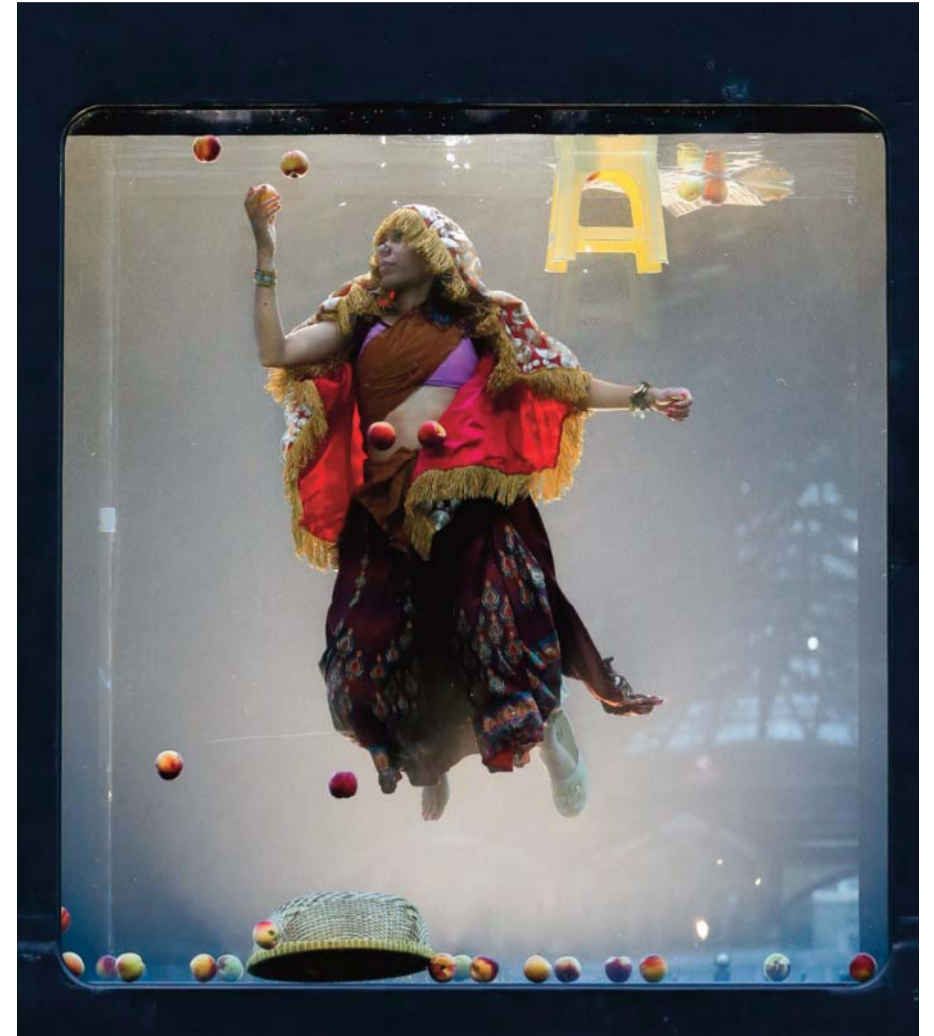
File photo shows fall foliage borders the smiling pond on Cape Cod, aptly named because it's shaped like a smile, adjacent to Green Briar Nature Center and Jam Kitchen and the famous "Briar Patch" of Thornton Bugess' stories, in Sandwich, Mass.



People take in the fall foliage from Owl's Head Mountain in Groton State Forest in Vermont.



Fall colors are shown along Indian Lake beside Route 30 in the southern Adirondacks in New York.



Performers from US based company Early Morning Opera performs daily routines inside a 13-foot tank during the rehearsal of 'Holoscenes' as part of the London's Burning festival of events commemorating the 350th anniversary of the Great Fire of London in London. Holoscenes is a six-hour underwater performance installation in which members of the Los Angeles-based Early Morning Opera struggle to perform daily routines and is inspired by concern over the potential contemporary threat of future flooding in major cities. — AFP



Perfumer Nenad Jovanov, center, sprays perfume on a customer in his small perfume shop in Belgrade, Serbia. — AP photos

Belgrade's old perfume shop holds back the years

On a cobblestone street in central Belgrade, amid designer boutiques and trendy snack bars, stands a small perfume shop that is the last keeper of a dying craft and a witness to the Serbian capital's turbulent history. The Sava Perfumery is the only one of its kind still remaining in Belgrade - a small family business of home-made perfumes and other beauty products, the kind that once thrived here but have vanished as mass-production has taken over.

Set up shortly before World War II, the perfumery has held on through the German Nazi occupation of Belgrade, the postwar Communist era and the 1990s bloody breakup of Yugoslavia. Nowadays, the small cherry-red shop still seems to defy time - its wood-rimmed shop window displays old glass jars, small perfume bottles - one of them in the shape of Paris' Eiffel Tower - and black-and-white photographs behind the blurred glass. The perfumery's old, slightly crooked door opens with a squeak, a door bell announcing a visitor. Behind the counter, a gray-haired man wearing a spotless white shirt greets the customers.

Lipstick-making

"Welcome to the time capsule!" Nenad Jovanov smiles. Almost everything inside Jovanov's shop dates back to the time when his father and uncle first opened in 1941, just months before the Nazi occupation of Belgrade began. Old wooden shelves are packed with glass bottles of all sizes and perfume-making equipment, an ancient lipstick-making machine is kept in the backroom.

Jovanov's uncle and father had started out ambitiously, creating a perfume line dubbed "L'amour" along with a series of French-style beauty products for glamour-hungry Belgrade ladies. The war soon imposed a totally different reality. "Many times, my father and uncle had to trade our products for cheese, eggs or a chicken," Jovanov said. "It was pure survival, we had to eat." Testifying to the German occupation period is a small, grayish-green French military typewriter that a German soldier sold to Jovanov's uncle claiming it had been confiscated at the Maginot frontline following the French surrender. "I would like these things to go to a museum one day. It would be a great pity to see them lost," Jovanov said. Tough times did not end with the war.

The Communist authorities closed down the shop in 1948 as part of a wider ban on privately owned businesses, and the Jovanovs had to rely on the help of relatives until the authorities in 1954 allowed them to reopen the perfumery. The business boomed during the 1950s and '60s, while there was still no mass production. Jovanov, who was born in

Sava for hours," said Vera Brankovic, an elderly Belgrade woman referring to Jovanov by the shop's name - a common mistake that he does not object to. "This shop has a soul. I could never return to the modern shops." For a couple living in Australia, the Sava Perfumery presented a curiosity and an opportunity to get a professional's advice about the kind of perfume that would suit them. "It is unique to be able to choose your perfume like this," said 42-year-old Rosanda Kovacevic. Jovanov said he finds it very hard to run a small business in the era of mass production.



Perfumer Nenad Jovanov speaks with a customer in his small perfume shop.



Perfumer Nenad Jovanov smells the mixture.



Perfumer Nenad Jovanov pours perfume into a small bottle.



Perfumer Nenad Jovanov sprays perfume on a customer in his small perfume shop.



Perfumer Nenad Jovanov mixes scents.



Perfumer Nenad Jovanov smells the mixture in his small perfume shop.

1949, played in the shop as a small boy and slowly learned the craft. "I spent my childhood and earned my first pocket money here," he recalled. Jovanov still mixes scents the old-fashioned way - adding various ingredients to the perfume base that he purchases from perfume producers. Long measuring tubes and bottles of all sizes capped with filters fill the working counter at the back of the perfumery, where Jovanov adds minute drops until he gets a perfect mixture.

Small business

Once a customer picks a scent, Jovanov fills a small bottle and offers a free spray to go, using a 1930s sprinker. The next time, a customer can save money by asking only for a refill. "I enjoy everything here, I could talk to Mr

Ingredients, bottles and anything else he needs for the perfumes are almost impossible to purchase in small quantities, and there are no other shops to chip in - they all closed down during the crisis years in the 1990s when Yugoslavia broke up in a series of bloody conflicts and Serbia was placed under international isolation. "My colleagues sold their shops to more profitable businesses such as betting or mobile phones," Jovanov smiled. Jovanov said that his craft has been erased from the state register, listed as "other products" or soaps and detergents. Asked whether his son plans to take over one day, Jovanov only smiled. "He is more than welcome," he said. — AP