

Luabi: Iraq to supply gas to Kuwait soon



20 people tortured to death at Pak Sufi shrine



Fake news making headlines, but is it old news?



Oxford see off Cambridge to regain Boat Race crown



UN URGES GULF TO DO MORE TO HELP SYRIAN REFUGEES

KFAED, UNHCR SIGN AID AGREEMENT • KUWAIT'S CONTRIBUTIONS HAILED



Min 18°
Max 31°
High Tide 04:53 & 15:38
Low Tide 10:16 & 23:14



conspiracy theories

ABSCONDING ...

By Badrya Darwish

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Al-Rai newspaper shocked all expats in Kuwait when it reported on April 1 that article 18 visa holders can now be deported immediately if their sponsors file absconding cases against them. An absconder would be subject to deportation without any recourse to appeal or file a countersuit at the labor courts. What astonished me was that Al-Rai made this report their lead story. For a minute I thought maybe it was an April Fool's joke. But even if it was an April Fool's prank, I find it gross and a bit insensitive to play with people's feelings and situations.

As it is, expats in Kuwait have already been under intense pressure for the last few years, thanks to random statements and suggestions we hear every day by whoever it is - be it a lawmaker, government officials or even people who have nothing to do with law or government. As if the expat is a low wall to jump. They have no power, nobody to help them and no defense. Everyone who wants to become a hero in Kuwait will suggest something against expats. All he has to do is come up with a suggestion to deport or fine or take away their driving licenses, etc, etc, etc.

The worst part of the story is that the government did not come up with any statement to deny or endorse the report, which I find bizarre. In my opinion, in a serious situation like this, a quick response should have come out from the ministry of social affairs or the ministry of interior denying or clarifying the rules.

Till now, it's not clear what the full, actual rules are. I hope the ministry will take into consideration that this could create chaos. And some people could use it as a weapon against someone they don't like, or someone they don't want to pay financial indemnity to. Many people will abuse such a regulation. It will be easy for anybody to say 'so and so is absconding, deport him', regardless if it is true or partially true, or if there is wholly another intention. It could even create bad intentions in the minds of people in moments of anger, or lead to greed or blackmail. Because it is such a vague and easily abused idea.

I'm sure the people in charge in both ministries are wise enough and will not be fooled over such injustice. We, like the rest of Kuwait, are awaiting clarification.

Have a good day.



KUWAIT: KFAED Director General Abdulwahab Al-Bader and UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements sign a \$10 million aid agreement yesterday. —KUNA

KUWAIT: A senior United Nations refugee official yesterday called on Gulf Arab states to give more to help Syrians displaced by six years of civil war, saying she saw little sign that the crisis would end any time soon. Speaking during a visit to Kuwait to sign a \$10 million aid agreement with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) for Syrian refugees in Iraq, Kelly T Clements, deputy commissioner for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), also said the UN body lamented the "sad" fact that the number of refugees fleeing Syria's civil war had passed the five million mark.

"For us at UNHCR, we don't celebrate these milestones. We in fact try not to bring a lot of attention to it because it is not a good story," Clements told Reuters. "It means basically that we haven't seen a political solution to make it possible for people to go home safely and in dignity and voluntarily."

Syrians have poured across their borders into Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq since anti-government protests in 2011 descended into a full-blown conflict between rebels, Islamist militants, government troops and foreign backers. Clements said that apart from the 5 million refugees, there were some 13.5 million people who had been displaced inside Syria, some of them moved on twice, three or four times.

"They are not able to support their families. They are in harm's way in terms of mortar shells ... They are not able to put their kids through school. Statistics we have show that a million-and-a-half kids inside Syria are out of school," Clements said. "So for us, it is a sad time to see the number exceeding 5 million people," she added.

Continued on Page 13

HASHEM: ONE CAR FOR EXPATS, NO LICENSES

KANDARI: FINANCE MINISTRY SUSPENDS REFORM PACKAGE

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Safaa Al-Hashem, the only female member in the 50-seat National Assembly, yesterday filed yet another proposal targeting the expatriate population in the country by calling to prevent foreigners from owning more than one car and stop issuing driving licenses to newcomers. Citing traffic congestions and problems on most Kuwaiti roads, Hashem called in her proposal that the traffic department must stop issuing driving licenses to all expatriates coming to Kuwait for the first time for a period of one year until authorities have taken steps to ease the traffic problem. She however wants expats holding article 20 visas, mainly private drivers who work for families, to be exempted from the ban.

The proposal, which must be approved by the Assembly and accepted by the government to be effective, states that expatriates holding a valid driving license must not be allowed to own more than one vehicle and those who have no driving license should not be allowed to own their own cars. Hashem's proposal also calls for linking the driving licenses of expats to their work permits, where the profession is stated, to prevent forgery. She also wants that no expatriate

should be given a Kuwaiti driving license if he/she does not have one from their home country.

Two weeks ago, Kuwaiti lawyer Mohammad Al-Ansari filed a lawsuit in court calling to suspend all driving licenses held by expatriates and to stop issuing new ones until authorities resolve the traffic crisis. The lawsuit essentially called for keeping expatriate motorists off the roads to allow citizens a trouble-free drive.

Hashem is known for submitting a string of proposals against foreigners in the country. She had proposed to reduce the number of expatriates in the country, stop giving them free medicines at public clinics and hospitals despite paying annual health insurance and even taxing foreigners for walking on the road. She also proposed to charge expatriates for money transfers to their home country.

In a related development, MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said he proposed the establishment of a special department to be concerned with achieving a demographic balance between expats and Kuwaitis. He said the proposed body will also facilitate the replacement of expatriate employees with Kuwaitis and will also be responsible for setting quotas and percentages of each expatriate community.

Continued on Page 13

News in brief

Clouds of smoke as new fire hits central Dubai

DUBAI: Clouds of smoke billowed over central Dubai yesterday after a fire burned for several hours in a residential tower under construction near the city's largest shopping mall. The blaze erupted around 6:30 am (0230 GMT) at the Address Residences Fountain Views complex, which is near the Dubai Mall and a hotel ravaged by fire on New Year's Eve in 2015, authorities said. Civil defense services evacuated four people who were trapped by the fire, including one in serious condition, Lt Col Ahmed Ateej told Dubai television. The Dubai government said that firefighting crews had brought the blaze under control. It said the building was being constructed by local real estate giant Emaar. The property has three towers, each 60 floors high, and had been due to be completed in April of next year.

EGYPT COURT SUPPORTS SAUDI ISLAND TRANSFER

PAGE 8

TV SHOWS TEST LOVE IN SMARTPHONE AGE

PAGE 38

CONCERN OVER RETROACTIVE DEPORTATION OF ABSCONDERS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Responding to a report in Al-Rai daily on retroactively deporting expats reported as absconding, acting manpower authority director Abdullah Al-Motoutah said neither laws nor administrative decisions are imposed retroactively, and if a worker has already procured a sponsor's approval to transfer his visa or settle the dispute, the interior ministry would be contacted to cancel the absconding report. Motoutah denied taking any exceptional measures or retroactively applying any laws against workers who have legalized their stay, paid the fees and fines and have residency visas stamped on their passports.

He said absconding reports have to be filed by sponsors at the labor relations unit after filling up the needed forms and providing required documents as per article 42 of the labor law 6/2016. Motoutah added that accord-

ing to the regulations currently in effect, an employer is given a grace period of 90 days after filing the report to check with the interior ministry, and is given 15 more days to receive the formal report and possibly reach an amicable settlement with the worker. "The absconding report is transferred after 90 days and after the concerned labor department prepares a full inspection report stating that the worker is not actually working," he explained.

Motoutah said that if the report had been filed at the authority and the interior ministry before Jan 4, 2016 and a settlement had been reached, the absconding reports committee and Mol would have to be contacted to rescind the report according to regulations. "As for reports made after January 4, 2016, they can only be settled and annulled in two cases - by partners in company foundation contracts and Kuwaitis' children, husbands and wives," he explained.

Continued on Page 13

IMPORTERS PROSECUTED FOR MEAT PRICE-FIXING

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan yesterday referred several livestock importers to the public prosecutor upon directives from HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for colluding to suspend live sheep imports for a certain period to boost prices in the local market.

Investigations by the Competition Protection Authority (CPA) concluded that the agreement among the livestock importers promoted through social media was against the law, Roudhan, who is also acting state minister for youth affairs, said in a statement issued by the minister of commerce and industry. The CPA board also agreed that the authority's chairman will take legal action against the importers in line with item 23 of law 10/2007 on protecting competition, the minister said.

The authority's executive director has also been assigned with following up the customs data related to the importing companies and compare them with the documents they have submitted. The board will issue regular reports. The CPA summoned the colluding parties, who admitted it was true, and offered pledges that they would not repeat it in the future, as it contradicts the competition protection law, Roudhan said. The minister stressed the importance of enforcing precautionary arrangements by the CPA to uphold market mechanisms and guarantee free competition by providing various types of meat of better quality in line with sound and just rules and mechanisms provided by law.

Last month, the ministry of commerce and industry warned it will enforce stiff penalties against traders who hike or manipulate commodity prices after a



Khaled Al-Roudhan

Continued on Page 13

Film on extremism wins at Saudi festival

DHAHRAN, Saudi Arabia: A short film that tackles extremism has won the top prize at the Saudi Film Festival, organizers said yesterday, in an ultra-conservative kingdom that continues to ban public cinemas. "Departures", directed by Abdulaziz Al-Shalaei, won the golden palm award at the fourth edition of the festival, which featured 58 home-grown films including 12 directed by women. "The festival is growing as the level of films is improving," its director Ahmed Al-Mulla said, adding that several contenders this year addressed extremism. "Departures" features a conversation on a plane between an extremist thinking of blowing himself up and a terminally ill man who is tempted to commit suicide. Saudi-based Syrian actor Mohammed Al-Qass, who plays the role of the sick man, also won the prize for best actor.

Syrian actor Mohammed Al-Qass waves his award for best actor in the film "Departures". — AFP



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Naser Al-Roudhan and KDIPA President Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Naser Al-Roudhan and KDIPA President Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Adviser Yousef Jaseem Al-Mutawaa.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.

AMIR MEETS COMMERCE MINISTER, 'INVESTMENT PROMOTION' CHIEF AMIR OFFERS CONDOLENCES OVER COLOMBIA FLOOD VICTIMS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Naser Al-Roudhan, President of the Supreme Judicial Council, Head of the Court of Cassation and Head of the Constitutional Court Adviser Yousef Jaseem Al-Mutawaa, as well as First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, as well as State Minister for Cabinet Affairs and acting

Information Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos over the victims of recent floods and avalanches that hit Colombia and left scores of people dead or wounded. In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished swift recovery of the wounded and prayed that Colombian officials could overcome the aftershocks of this natural disaster. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to the Colombian President, while Ghanem sent cables of condolences to Colombian Senate President Mauricio Arango and Speaker of the House of Representatives Miguel Angel Hernandez. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees at the UN refugee agency Kelly Clements. —KUNA

DEPUTY FM MEETS UNHCR OFFICIAL

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met yesterday with visiting Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees at the UN refugee agency Kelly Clements and his accompanying dele-

gation. Clements hailed Kuwait's efforts in the humanitarian field and the support given in supporting international institutions working in that field. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign

Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar and Head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Kuwait Dr Hanan Hamdan. —KUNA

PATIENTS HELPING FUND DISCUSS COOPERATION WITH OCHA IN YEMEN

RIYADH: The Patients Helping Fund Society (PHF) discussed cooperation with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to coordinate humanitarian aid delivered in Yemen through 'Kuwait beside you' campaign. The society said in a statement on Sunday that President of the Patients Helping Fund Society Dr Mohammad Al-Sharhan met in Adan with the Head of Office for OCHA Yemen George Khoury.

Dr Sharhan is eager to see the outcome of this coordination that will benefit the humanitarian aid presented to Yemen, the statement added. The meeting was attended by a number of officials from Kuwait Relief Society (KRS), Kuwait's Patients Helping Fund Society and from OCHA.

OCHA's office is responsible for mobilizing and coordinating effective humanitarian cooperation in order to ease out the suffering of the Yemeni people in all aspects and to find permanent humanitarian solutions for all problems.

On Saturday, a medical delegation from the medical committee of the Kuwait Relief Society for Relief (KSR) and PHF inspected the health facilities in Aden governorate damaged by the ongoing conflict in Yemen. The delegation, led Sharhan, is made up of PHF Director General Jamal Al-Fawzan and Dr Abdulrahman Al-Kandari, according to a statement by the PHF. They

toured the emergency center in Al-Mansoura Health Directorate, Kuwait pediatric hospital, the artificial limb center, the mental hospital, Al-Hosini clinic, Makkah ophthalmologic hospital and 'Al-Sadaqa' (friendship) hospital. They took note of the occupancies of these facilities, their needs of medical supplies, the challenges facing the medical staff, and the extent of the damage resulting from the conflict.

At Al-Sadaqa hospital they were welcomed by Director General of Al-Mansoura Health Directorate Ahmad Al-Mehdhar and Director General of the Hospital Dr Jamal Abdulhamid. The delegation inspected the various wards of the hospital which was rehabilitated reequipped the KSR health committee, and reopened the auditorium there. Dr Al-Sharhan said the Kuwaiti aid workers and their colleagues in the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries spare no effort in filling the gap in the health sector in sisterly Yemen.

"The medical emergency plan for Yemen, being implemented by the Kuwaiti aid agencies at the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, is on the threshold of its third stage," the statement quoted him as saying. "The plan aims to rehabilitate the Yemeni health facilities and provide them with ambulances, medical equipment and power generators, and build the capacity of the medical and nursing staff," he added. —KUNA



HUMANITARIAN, DEVELOPMENTAL ROLE DEPICTS SPIRIT OF KUWAIT'S VISION 2035

KUWAIT: The government and the people of Kuwait play a major role in the humanitarian, developmental and relief fields for all countries and peoples of the world, without exception or discrimination. Kuwait's humanitarian assistance to all the world's poor countries and those affected by disasters,

wars and diseases reflects Kuwait's bright image among the countries of the world, thus, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has been chosen as a 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait as an 'International Humanitarian Center' by the United Nations. —KUNA



ADEN: The medical delegation from the medical committee of the Kuwait Relief Society for Relief and the Patients Helping Fund Society inspect health facilities in Aden governorate. —KUNA

IRAQ TO SUPPLY GAS TO KUWAIT SOON: MINISTER KNPC OFFERS OIL DEPOT STUDY TO BIDDERS IN JUNE

BAGHDAD/KUWAIT: Iraq will complete soon a project for supplying gas to Kuwait in line with an earlier agreement hammered out between both sides, Iraqi Oil Minister Jabbar Al-Luaibi said yesterday. The minister made the remark during the third Iraq Energy Forum held in Baghdad between April 2-3, lauding good cooperative relations between Iraq and Kuwait. "Iraq will supply around 200 million cubic feet of gas to Kuwait on a daily basis in the context of good cooperative relations between both countries," Luaibi addressed the two-day forum.

The Iraqi minister also unfolded Iraqi-Iranian talks on a partnership agreement pertinent to the production of joint border oilfields. He added that his country has invested 1.4 billion cubic feet of gas a day in 2017, compared with 650 million cubic feet last year.

Held under the title 'Towards an Effective Energy Sector and Economic Diversity', the Iraq Energy Forum allows people connected to energy industry to discuss the challenges and opportunities of the Iraqi energy sector in a cordial yet focused environment.

Oil depot project

In other news, Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) is expected to offer the initial study for the \$400 million Al-Mutlaa oil depot project for bidders in June, KNPC's Deputy CEO for Administrative and Commercial Affairs Basem Al-Essa said yesterday.

The project is to be completed in four years' time, including bidding, assessment, approvals and construction, Essa told the third session of the Consultation Partnership Advisory Council (CPAC) on behalf of the KNPC's CEO. He added that the company is hard at work to achieve the strategic vision of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) for supporting the national economy through offering the opportunity to the local private sector to act as a chief contractor in the state's grand projects.



BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi speaks during the Iraq Energy Forum in Baghdad yesterday. —AFP

The KPC has allocated several activities for the private sector to take part in such as the plant for mixing oils, in addition to establishing 19 fuel stations, out of a total of 100 ones to meet the needs of the urban expansion in Kuwait, Essa said. He stressed the importance of establish-

ing partnership with the local private sector, manufacturers, contractors, suppliers and consultants for the good of all. According to the statement, the KNPC has tasked its affiliate companies with six strategic initiatives for increasing the local components on the oil sector. — KUNA

FISHERMEN EVICTED FROM THEIR RESIDENCES SCHOOLS TO BE BUILT AS PPP PROJECTS

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Ezei

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fishermen Union (KFU) officials said that they were surprised that fishermen were kicked out of their residences. "There are those who want to eradicate the fishing profession by harassing fishermen since the past few years. Despite the problems we are facing, we will continue to back fishermen's just causes," it said. Fishermen had reportedly received eviction orders yesterday, and were given a 48-hour period to leave their temporary residence located in Sharq so that it can be demolished. President of KFU Thaher Suwayan said what is going on will force expat workers to go to neighboring countries that care for fishing and appreciate their efforts, adding the Kuwaiti government does not ignore fishermen's rights, but "there are those who hinder their necessary requirements." Suwayan appealed to Social Affairs and Labor Minister Hind Al-Sabeeh to intervene with concerned authorities to complete the fishermen's village to protect the fishing profession.

Tax information

Banks in Kuwait will soon start collecting tax information (from individuals and commercial entities) including profits, interest and income made from selling financial assets when the beneficiary is living outside the country, in order to activate the tax information data according to the joint disclosure system of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), informed sources said.

The sources said banks already made all preparations in this regard and prepared teams to contact clients and get the required information and make them fill a special form. This comes following the Central Bank's request to all banks and financial institutes in Kuwait to take the necessary action to implement the standards of the joint disclosure treaty that Kuwait joined on Aug 19, 2016. The sources said

the client will approve any accounts that must be declared with concerned authorities in Kuwait, and the date with the tax authorities in the country of residence. The client will be committed to inform the bank about any change that may affect the residency status for tax purposes within 30 days. He said banks have asked their employees not to open new accounts if the client refuses to fill in the self-declaration form for tax information exchange purposes, or if the form is not filled correctly.

Separately, Deputy Chairman of the indirect taxes project at the public authority for zakat and income in Saudi Arabia Suleiman Al-Dhuhayan said GCC countries are studying the expansion of the selective tax range to include additional projects. He said sugary products may be added due to the harm they cause. He said these items have not been discussed so far, adding that the selective tax will be borne by the end user according to a standardized list.

PPP projects

The Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) sent the government's program project and the development plan of the education ministry to the State Audit Bureau for approval, and informed source said. The source said the plan is about designing, building, financing and operating nine schools - including five kindergartens, three elementary and one intermediate - in addition to an Olympic-size swimming pool and faculty residence. He said the authority completed all procedures with regards to this project and awaits the bureau's approval so that the contract can be signed with the winning investor, adding that the project is the first of its kind based on the public-private-partnership (PPP) system and under the education sector in order meet increased demand for educational facilities. He said the capacity of these schools is estimated at 4,350 students in the Capital, Ahmadi, Hawally and Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorates.

In other news, the consultative offices committee discussed offers of the Sulaibkhat beachfront projects which the municipality will put out under the PPP system at an estimated cost of KD 1 million. Deputy General Manager for Projects Affairs Nadiya Al-Shareedah said the meeting that was held earlier is considered preliminary to receive questions of international consultants so that they decide the required cost of the study. She said the project contains main components such as hotels, flats, public beaches, shopping centers, residential compounds, an aqua park, sports areas, a marina, parks, general services and car parks.

Sports law

The Public Authority for Sports (PAS), chaired by Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan, will hold a meeting today that was initially scheduled for yesterday. The decision was to give the judicial committee more time to decide the issues between Kuwait and Arabi clubs and give its final decision. Sources said the board will make in initial review of the new sports law which will be implemented after approval by PAS to replace the current law (34/2016). This is considered the first step to lift the sports ban on the international level.

Allowances

Minister of Electricity and Water and Minister of Oil Essam Al-Marzouq gave instructions to cancel a decision that was made recently to suspend an allowance given to a number of Kuwaiti employees working in remote areas. Nawwaf Boyabes, Secretary General of the workers' syndicate at the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) announced the news after meeting the minister yesterday, saying that the received promises that the problem would be resolved soon.

Legalese

VISA ISSUES

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

As a Kuwaiti, I can say that I am really blessed that I grew up in a country like Kuwait. It is so diverse, and that makes me feel blessed because with differences we can prosper and learn more about others and ourselves. I went to a school with students from all walks of life. I had an Iranian, Croatian and Ghanaian best friends. I saw families that came to live in Kuwait (15 years later), and there diversity really impacted my life and my work ethic.

Although Kuwait has been a hub for many multi-cultural families, I still get a lot of questions and concerns from people through mail asking me about work in Kuwait, and are worried about their lives here. Of course not everything about Kuwait is perfect, and there is great space for improvement.

Fortunately though, I have seen legal improvement in the past few years as part of the Kuwait 2035 plan, which is the vision by the Kuwaiti government for Kuwait to be this thriving hub for commerce. I have seen positive changes in the past few years, even months to commercial laws in Kuwait. But I hope that we will see modifications to regulations concerning the work environment for expats in Kuwait because without them we cannot be this commercial hub.

Although we have a fair Kuwaiti Labor Law (6/2010), I personally hope to see strict punishments to those violating the labor law or bylaws that involve migrant workers. Today I will answer not-so-common questions and concerns from foreigners that want to work in Kuwait.

Mixed reviews

Question: I am worried about coming to work in Kuwait. I have heard many mixed reviews of positive and negative experiences, but what worries me the most is that visa laws and regulations are confusing. What should I watch out for?

Fajer: I understand why there are mixed reviews and why you would think that visa laws and regulations are confusing. There have been a few factors that brought about these thoughts and concerns; it is because there has been some negative coverage in the media, all going back to Kuwait's 2035 plan and deportation of expats in Kuwait, as well as the fact that the visa regulations have been changing regularly.

The important thing though, and I repeatedly say this to my clients, is to have things in writing. Please understand that if an employer is going to bring you to Kuwait and you agree with them to work a certain amount of years, it might be difficult to transfer to another employer unless they terminate your contract or you receive direct permission from them to transfer.

The new visa regulations have time limits before you can transfer depending on the type of visa you have and your education; some limits vary from one to six years. You also want to make sure that you sign a clear and concise contract before coming to Kuwait, stating your job description, your salary and other benefits like housing or travel allowances.

Tourist visa

Question: I have many friends working in Kuwait under a tourist visa or while they are on their husband's visa. Is that legal?

Fajer: No. It is not legal to work under a tourist visa in Kuwait or while being on a dependent visa. With that said, I have seen it many times especially for teachers. It does not make sense that schools are allowed to have such practices; teachers need to be qualified to be teaching our students and there has to be strict regulations in place. If you are going to do so, be prepared to be deported for violating visa regulations as it is a violation to work while on a tourist visa in many countries, resulting in deportation or even a ban from the country or a region.

For any legal questions or queries, email ask@fajrthelawyer.com.



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan delivers a speech during the inauguration of the Arabic Moot Court Competition. — KUNA

KUWAIT ENCOURAGES YOUTHS' CREATIVITY: MINISTER

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan said yesterday that Kuwait, represented by the Youth Ministry, supports talents and creativity of young people morally and materially.

Roudhan said in a speech at the inauguration of the Arabic Moot Court Competition 2017 hosted by Kuwait International Law School, that his ministry provides thoughtful support for youths and their creativity. He wished the competition to achieve its objectives and be able to qualify those talented young people for the future.

In a similar speech, President and Dean of KILAW Professor Mohammed Al-Moqatei said that his College sought to promote and develop law studies and human development in Kuwait by providing training and qualification opportunities at the highest levels. Kuwait International Law School

(KILAW) will host the Arabic Moot Court Competition 2017 in the period from 2-6 April 2017. The Arab Moot Court is a competition that was held between 17-21 April, 2016 in Oman, and on 29 April to 1 May, 2016 in UAE (Dubai). The Arab Moot Court is an Arabic competition in Criminal Law.

Around 13-14 universities have accepted the invitation to take part in this competition. The participating universities are: Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, University of Bahrain, Kingdom of Bahrain, The University of Jordan, Birzeit University, Palestine, University of Baghdad, Iraq, Beirut Arab University, Lebanon, Qatar Arab University, Saudi Arabia, Al-Ain University of Science and Technology, UAE, Cadi Ayyad University, Morocco, Alexandria University, Egypt, Kingdom University, Bahrain and Dar Al-Hekma University, Saudi Arabia. — KUNA



ABU DHABI: Members of Kuwait's vintage cars team are honored during the event. — KUNA

KUWAITI WINS CUSTOM CAR COMPETITION IN ABU DHABI

ABU DHABI: Kuwaiti cars amateurs won five prizes in the Custom Show Emirates in Abu Dhabi on Saturday. Head of Kuwait's vintage cars team, Tariq Al-Tariqi, said that Hamad Al-Kharji won the best design for the Custom muscle cars through his 1969 Chevrolet Camaro Z28. He added that Hamad Al-Khaldi won the second place in the Skyline category with his 1973 Nissan Skyline GT-R.

Tariqi was thrilled that two members of his team have won in this competition, adding that this exhibition is "the most prominent in the Middle East." In the same context, Ali Mishaan from Kuwait won the first prize twice through his Datsun Z manufactured in 1972, where he won the first prize in the competition of the best idea and creativity as well as the competition of drawing and painting on the car (Airbrush).

Moreover, the Kuwaiti Ahmad Buriki won second place in the Hot Rod category through his GMC 1953. Custom Show Emirates is a three-day event held from 30th March to 1st April 2017 at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. This event highlights the latest in auto customization products and services. — KUNA



Kuwaiti cars displayed during the Custom Show Emirates in Abu Dhabi.

Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: The reflection of a traditional 'boom' Kuwaiti dhow on a pond formed by rainwater. — KUNA

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The Middle East's Largest Students' Art Competition

KUWAIT BEAUTIFUL & GREEN STUDENTS ART COMPETITION

March 19th Till April 20th, 2017

HELLO ARTISTS...

Welcome to the Student's Art Competition. I hope you are ready to paint a beautiful painting and win wonderful prizes. The theme for your painting must be related to planting and greening, basically anything pertaining to our environment. We are looking for a great painting. So, please pick up your color pencils, paint brushes, crayons or whatever you prefer and start drawing and painting.
Good luck to you, our young artists.

- Competition is open to ages from (6 - 8) (9 - 11) (12 - 14) (15 - 17) and Special needs.
- The competition is open for all schools in Kuwait (Government and Private)
- **The competition will start on March 19th and will continue till April 20th 2017.**
- 10 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools participating in the competition will receive an appreciation plaque.
- Any school or individual interested to participate in this competition is welcome to visit the office of Kuwait Times and collect the drawing sheets.
- Drawing sheets will be given to schools FREE of charge.
- Only drawing sheets provided by the Kuwait Times will be allowed.
- You can use any kind of color pencils, paint brushes or crayons.

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OMNIYA PROJECT SPONSORED BY KFH ACHIEVES SUCCESS

KUWAIT: The plastic bottles recycling environmental project (Omniya) sponsored and supported by Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has achieved great success in increasing awareness among people to keep the environment safe, healthy and clean.

KFH contributed in the efforts of providing collection points for plastic bottles in different governorates in Kuwait. The project has three stages to recycle bottles that include spreading awareness of trash sorting, distributing carton boxes at schools, houses, universities, hotels, hospitals etc, and recycling the plastic bottles in cooperation with the industrial authorities in an attempt for the latter to produce grains of plastic used to manufacture plastic bottles or new packaging materials.

In collaboration with KFH, Omniya installed plastic bottles collection boxes at the main Cooperative Societies in different areas including Al-Adailiyah, Al-Salam, Sabah Al-Salem, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Saad Al-Aabdallah, and Abdullah Al-Mubarak. KFH attaches great importance to the environmental issues in Kuwait, and calls for boosting the synergy among all respective authorities to keep Kuwait clean and pollution free.



STREET ADS REMOVED



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality's Public Relations

Department said Hawally emergency team carried out a campaign to remove encroachments on state property, especially around power

transformers. A total of six encroachments were removed. Meanwhile unlicensed 446 advertisements were removed from streets.





USED, RARE BOOKS: A SPECIAL SPLENDOR AND IMPORTANT LEGACY OF KNOWLEDGE

KUWAIT: Used books, especially rare ones, have special splendor and important legacy, taking readers to a past where only the book was a reference to search for knowledge and culture. Researcher Saleh Al-Mesbah of the Kuwaiti Writers Association gave an oppor-

tunity for old books' lovers to acquire such books, hosting a five-day sale for used books offered for reasonable prices, reflecting from his belief in the importance of books being an ageless source for knowledge. — KUNA



YOUTH AND TOURISM FORUM CONCLUDED SUCCESSFULLY

KUWAIT: The First Kuwaiti Youth and Tourism Forum, held recently under the patronage of State Minister for Cabinet Affairs and acting Information Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, has concluded successfully, said Nabila Al-Anjeri, head of the organizing committee and General Manager of Leaders Group for Consultancy and Development (UNWTO representative in Kuwait).



Nabila Al-Anjeri

Participants agreed on a number of findings and made several recommendations during the forum, Anjeri added. These recommendations were made with the goal of linking the tourism sector with sustainable development, as well as youth ideas and modern technology. Further, Anjeri stressed that both officials and speakers agreed to link youth future with opportunities provided by small projects. They also agreed that tourism development has become a financial and economic necessity. "The speakers also stressed the need to encourage Kuwaiti youth to take initiatives and start their own small touristic businesses using digital tech-

nologies," she added. In addition, she noted that participants reviewed the work achieved in the state's fourth guiding plan, and recommended building new touristic sites and developing natural reserves and conservations, especially with expectations that Kuwait's population will grow to six million people by 2030. Moreover, the forum recommended founding a special authority for tourism, something that had already been included in the Tourism Strategic plan over ten years earlier.

In addition to herself and Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah, Anjeri said that the list of speakers also included Undersecretary of the Ministry of Youth Affairs Sheikh Al-Zain Al-Sabah, the Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary Major General Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Head of the Kuwait National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development Dr Mohammed Al-Zuhair, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research's Director Dr Samira Al-Sayyed Omar, UNTWO advisor on technology and innovation Professor Antonio Lopez De Avlia, Smartvel Founder and CEO Inigo Valenzuela Cossio, Engineer Phoebe Al-Salem, Fares Al-Enezi from the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP), Abdul Wahab Al-Essa from Al-Watan TV, Faith Capital CEO Mohammed Jaafar, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage's Advisor Dr Monther Al-Ansari and former director of Kuwait Small Projects Development Company Hassan Al-Qena'ee.

KUWAIT TAKES PART IN ARAB CULTURAL WEEK IN MEXICO

KUWAIT: The Embassy of the State of Kuwait to Mexico participated in the activities of the third Arab Cultural Week, which lasted for a whole week at the headquarters of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Senate, and included a display of cultural and literary publications and a photo exhibition. The Kuwaiti embassy said in a statement yesterday that the events were held under the auspices of Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray Caso and Chairman of the Mexican Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee for Asia Pacific, Senator Teofilo Torres Corzo.

The statement said that the activities of the cultural week were attended by Arab ambassadors accredited to Mexico and representatives of cultural institutions and a number of members of the Senate and House of Representatives in Mexico. In a speech during the cultural week, Videgaray stressed the depth of Arab-Mexican relations in all fields, pointing to the great synergy between the Arab and Mexican cultures and the importance of the role of the Arab community in the development and prosperity of Mexico's economy.

He praised the great rapprochement between Mexico and the Arab countries during the recent period, which was culminated by the visit of Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar in 2016. The statement pointed out that the activities of the cultural week included lectures at the Matias Romero Institute of Diplomacy and the University of Mexico, as well as a distribution of publications highlighting Kuwait's leading role in the international arena. — KUNA



MEXICO CITY: The Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Mexico participated in the activities of the third Arab Cultural Week. — KUNA



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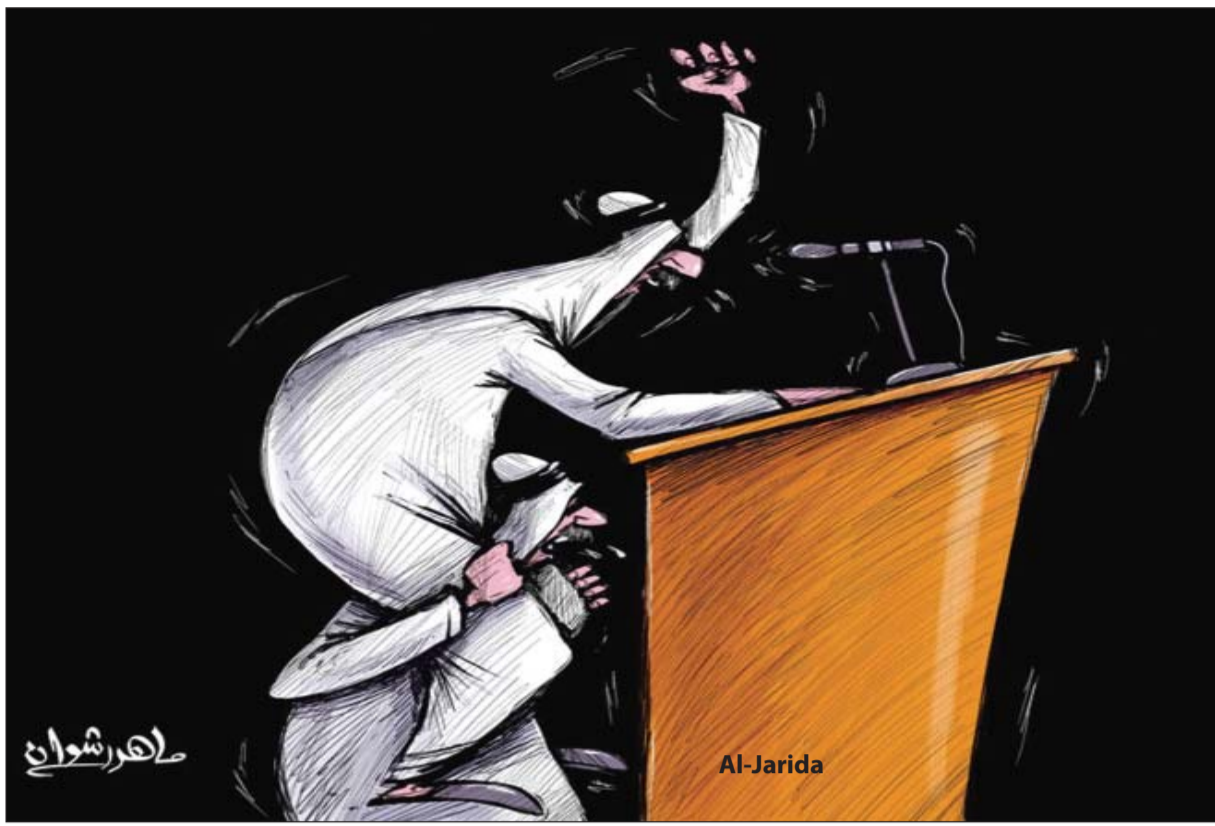
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BURGAN BANK SPONSORS BELGO-ALGERIAN WRITER MALIKA MADI

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank is delighted to announce its sponsorship of a lecture by the renowned Belgian writer Malika Madi as part of a collaboration with the Belgium Embassy. The lecture, which was held at the Multi-purpose hall in Al Shaheed Park, was part of the celebrations of the annual La Francophonie Day.

As a tribute to the special day by the Belgium embassy, Malika Madi, a well-known writer in Belgium and French speaking countries discussed "the paths of a woman with multiple belongings", one of her works. Malika Madi published her first novel 'Nuit d'encre pour Farah' in 2005 where she earned the Best First Work of the French Community of

Belgium. The bank's sponsorship is a testimony to its commitment towards building a society that embraces cultural diversity and encourages creative platforms that give exposure to worldly works of writing and art.

The sponsorship falls under Burgan Bank's full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.

Crime

Report

ROAD DISPUTE LEADS TO ASSAULT

KUWAIT: Arabi Sports Club water polo player Mohammad Najem was beaten in Dasma by six men for honking while driving. The player was driving in Kuwait City when a car steered towards him, so he honked to alert the driver, and kept driving. On reaching Dasma, men from the same car along with three others attacked him with sharp objects, leaving him with a head injury and other injuries before escaping. The victim was taken to Amiri Hospital as detectives are working on the case.

Robbery

Bayan detectives arrested an ex-convict for breaking into cars and stealing their contents. A citizen complained to Bayan police about the theft of smart phones from his car. Detectives identified the suspect and arrested him. The man admitted during questioning that he stole money to use for buying drugs.

Suicide bid

A woman swallowed 14 antihistamine tablets in a suicide attempt after her relationship with her boyfriend ended. The man informed police immediately, and paramedics rushed to the scene. They found the woman in bad shape and rushed her to Mubarak Hospital. Police are waiting for her to be cleared for questioning.

Drug abuse

A citizen and a beedon girl were found under the influence of drugs inside a stolen car. An envelope containing drugs was found with them. They were arrested and sent to concerned authorities.

Maids fight

Two maids fought following an argument after their employer ordered them to find a valuable object that was lost inside his house. The Kuwaiti man had threatened to cut 50 percent of the maids' salaries should they fail to find the object. The two ended up fighting, and one of them had to be sent to Adan Hospital for treatment.

— Translated from the Arabic press

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

TAREQ AND SAFAA

By Ali Mahmoud Khajah

It is alright to have diverse views about a single issue. It is also alright to strongly disagree with others' opinions. Yet, it is unacceptable to try to fool and underestimate us by telling silly stories and giving silly excuses such as those mentioned by Dr Tareq Al-Alawi and MP Safaa Al-Hashem in an attempt to justify their arguments. To support opinions about certain issues, individuals or groups of people may use real life examples so that their arguments would be accepted by the public opinion. This is a very effective method once the argument is genuine and really expresses their opinions.

However, those with weak argumentative skills would resort to making up stories that they hope people would believe and accordingly accept the ideas discussed by them. We often see and hear about public figures, mostly those describing themselves as clerics, making up lies and fairy tales to fool people and enhance their own views regardless of the cost.

A few days ago and coinciding with statements blaming expats for all the deterioration in Kuwait, I heard some funny as well as saddening fairy tales that were hilarious because they were naive and superficial, and saddening because they came from two people: someone who is supposedly an academic of high caliber and another, and a politician who represents the whole nation in parliament.

To underpin his story about the need to have expats pay for health services, Dr Tareq Al-Alawi said that an expat told his brother that whenever he found nothing to eat, he would fake illness to be hospitalized and get free meals at a public hospital, which means that this expat faking an illness managed to fool the doctors and medical examinations to get a free bed and meal.

Such a story mentioned by an academic looks like something taken straight from the famous 1987 Kuwaiti sitcom 'Mabrouka and Mahzouza'. In one episode, the two main protagonists could not find a shelter, and thus faked illness to be admitted into a private hospital, not a public one. This means that even the story writer did not dare claiming that those two Kuwaiti women managed to get a free bed at a public hospital.

However, in the story told by the academic Tareq (assuming it is authentic), an expat managed to get a free bed and meals at a public hospital, not to mention that Dr Tareq had unintentionally offended medical staff working at our hospitals including Kuwaiti ones, when he portrayed them as naive and incapable of telling the difference between a sick person and those faking an illness.

Meanwhile, to underpin her story, MP Safaa Al-Hashem claimed that some female expats come to Kuwait to give birth at a public hospital only for KD 2, which overcrowded the public maternity hospital and thus forced female citizens into private hospitals. The lawmaker behind this funny story assumes that we would believe that a female expat would take the risk of boarding a flight shortly before giving birth and paying a flight ticket fare of KD 150-200 only to give birth in Kuwait while she could use the same amount to give birth at a private hospital in her own country.

It is alright to have diverse views about any single issue or strongly disagree with others opinions. Yet, it is unacceptable to try to fool and underestimate us by telling such silly stories and giving such excuses. Therefore, I do beg Tareq and Safaa and those adopting their opinion to come up with more realistic stories to convince us instead of making up such funny stories. — Translated by Kuwait Times

القلم

Al-Qabas

ABSENT POLITICAL PLANNING

By Dr Khalid Al-Tarrah

The preludes that lead to a clash between the executive and legislative branches are not strange. Indicators of change in the parliamentary structure were very clear with the entrance of personalities who had well known stands during previous assemblies, and their return following their decision to end their boycott. It was also clear with the entrance of a group of youth, and if they were not a part of the political movement following the one vote system, they are a part of the intellectual and political change faction.

It is clear that there are points of agreement between the youth MPs group and their constituents with other members of Parliament who ended their boycott during the 2016 elections. This is shown evident by the current parliamentary activity, or rather the change in the path of political accountability that sometimes requires sharp parliamentary escalation against the government.

May be the messages that are being exchanged inside the National Assembly, which directed towards the executive authority, and to His Highness the Prime Minister in particular, confirms the points of agreement. The current political scene is not characterized by ambiguity as far as the demands of some MPs go, and it is not right to take that lightly, but it is possible to feel the government's lack of proper political reading of the total change in the new parliamentary structure, and the direction that grilling motions are taking, compared to the previous assembly.

There are deep political complications cumulated since the ministerial formations of previous cabinets, accompanied by failure in dialogue with the parliament, in addition to legitimate popular reservations over the nature of government action towards many projects, policies and humble performance by some ministers, especially in regards to policies that came under the banner of reform. An example of such policies is the gov-

ernment's economic and financial reform document, which continues to attracting severe opposition, both from the parliament and public, due to its weak aspects and total absence of effective media campaign, that should have been there before the document was first announced.

The government should have considered many indicators, then studied and analyzed them. The government has departments, some are new, like Kuwait's center for public policies and state ministry for economic affairs, and some are old such as state ministry for national assembly affairs, information ministry, and the cabinet's secretariat general. It appears that those bodies did not present any studies to gauge public opinion, or even the response of intellectual and political factions within the National Assembly.

Kuwait's center for public policies, which is considered a new product of the development plan, organized at the start of its activities a lecture on "the vision for the period after the US Presidential elections." However, we are yet to see any scientific analysis of the local political situation that determines the scientific means in dealing with all what is new. Studying and analyzing the local political scene is more deserving than analyzing the American elections, unless the goal is to export studies about America from Kuwait to the international research centers.

What is missing from us is a pragmatic scientific study of the current situation and the future of relations between the two authorities, in addition to the public opinion's directions, so that this study would help the government deal with future challenges without relying on its usual reaction policy. Political stability is not built on the action and reaction method, as planning and political monitoring must be institutional. If the situation remains as it is, then there will be a clash without a doubt.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

KIB HOLDS TRAINING PROGRAM ON CAPITAL MARKETS

KUWAIT: In line with its ongoing efforts to invest in the professional development of its employees, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently held a training program entitled 'Capital markets: Their tools and how to navigate them'. The training program was attended by a number of managers at KIB, from the fields of international banking and investment, financial regulations, and risk management.

Fourteen employees in total took part in the three-day training program, which proved to be a highly interactive and positive learning experience for the participants - all of whom successfully completed the training program.

On this occasion, Dr Hisham Abdulhay, Sharia

Coordinator in the Fatwa and Sharia Supervisory Unit at KIB, commented: "The training program addressed the concept of modern capital markets and its basic components, including: options, futures, Forex, Margin Forum and Indicators. Additionally, the program covered the technical and sharia compliance aspects of capital markets, and touched upon issues such as securities, trading commodities and sharia compliant alternatives."

Abdulhay also noted that the training program offered unique practical applications, thereby providing employees with value added expertise, both from a technical and sharia compliance perspective. The program also explored various

means of dealing in modern financial markets and the skills needed to detect market abuse in markets dealings.

Abdulhay concluded: "This training program comes as part of a series of comprehensive programs within the field of Islamic banking; which are being rolled out according to a systemized, phased plan, taking into account the diverse needs of each department at the bank. KIB believes that training is an ongoing endeavor, and as such constantly works to nurture employees' skills to meet the growing demand for Islamic banking products and services, both internationally and regionally."



DUBAI: Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) took part in the Dubai International Government Achievements Exhibition, which took place recently in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. It participated with three projects; 'Fireman in Every House', 'Online Query on People with Special Needs' and the 'Kuwait Academy for Fire Sciences' projects. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun



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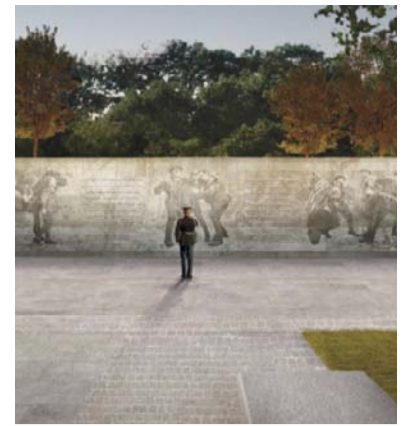
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Plans underway for WWI memorial in Washington

PUTIN, FRIEND OR FOE? RUSSIA LOOMS OVER FRENCH ELECTION



SARGHODHA: Pakistani volunteers and local residents gather around the bodies of people who were killed in a local shrine, outside the morgue of a hospital. — AP

20 TORTURED TO DEATH AT PAKISTAN SHRINE

VICTIMS WERE GIVEN INTOXICANTS BEFORE BEING SLAUGHTERED

ISLAMABAD: The custodian of a Pakistani religious shrine and two accomplices have been arrested for torturing and murdering 20 worshippers with knives and clubs early yesterday, police said. Four women were among those killed in the attacks at the Sufi Shrine to Mohammad Ali in Punjab province. Victims were apparently given intoxicants before being slaughtered and some of the bodies were nude. The motive was unclear but some officials said the chief suspect had mental health problems and had used violence on followers before. "The 50-year-old shrine custodian, Abdul Waheed, has confessed that he killed these people because he feared that they had come to kill him," regional police chief Zulfiqar Hameed told AFP.

control of shrine," Hameed said, adding that the investigation into the killings near the city of Sargodha was continuing. Local police station chief Shamshir Joya said the victims, whose clothes were torn and bloodstained, appeared to have been given intoxicants. "We suspect that the victims had been given some intoxicants before they were murdered, but we will wait for a forensics report to confirm this suspicion," he added. "The victims were brutally tortured to death and apparently the clothes of some victims were torn off during it," he said. Six of the dead were from the same family. Joya said the shrine was built some two and a half years ago. Waheed—a one-time employee of the national election commission—took it over upon completion. Local rescue service official Mazhar Shah said Waheed used to meet devotees once or twice a month and used violence to "heal" them. "Local people say that Waheed used to beat the visitors who came to him for treatment of various physical

or spiritual ailments," Shah told reporters in televised comments. "Sometimes he would remove the clothes of his visitors and burn them." Television footage showed scattered shoes, clothes, sheets and cots in the yard of the white-painted domed shrine as police vehicles and police commandos surrounded the premises, sited amid green farmland.

Sufi tradition

Visiting shrines and offering alms for the poor—and cash to the custodians—remains a very popular custom in Pakistan. Many believe this will help get their prayers answered. Punjab Minister for Religious Affairs Zaeem Qadri said intelligence agencies along with police and the local government were investigating all aspects of the case. Qadri said his department managed some 552 shrines in the province, but this one was not registered with it. "Investigators will also look into how this shrine was allowed to be set up on private land," he said. Pakistan for centuries was a land of Sufism, a

mystical branch of Islam whose wandering holy men helped spread the religion throughout the Indian subcontinent in the 13th century. Sufis believe in saints which they say can intercede for them directly with God. They have no hierarchy or organisation, instead seeking spiritual com-

munion through music and dance at the shrines of the saints. Several million Muslims in Pakistan are still believed to follow Sufism, although it has overtaken in recent decades by more mainstream versions of the faith. Hardliners such as the Taliban or the Islamic State

group have carried out major attacks on Sufi shrines because they consider them heretical. In February 88 people were killed and hundreds wounded in Pakistan's southern province of Sindh when a suicide bomber blew himself up among devotees at a Sufi shrine. — AFP

GRIM SEARCH RESUMES IN COLOMBIA AFTER FLOOD, DEATH TOLL HITS 200

BOGOTA: A grim search for the missing resumed at dawn yesterday in southern Colombia after surging rivers sent an avalanche of floodwaters, mud and debris through a small city, killing at least 200 people and leaving many more injured and homeless. People pried through piles of rocks and wooden planks that entombed homes. Streets were covered in thick sand, mud and tree limbs from the rivers and rainforest that surround the city. There was little drinking water and no power, which forced authorities to suspend the search and rescue effort during the night. The National Disaster Agency said Sunday that the death toll was at 200, with another 200 injured, but authorities conceded it could easily go higher because many people were still unaccounted for and dozens were airlifted to hospitals in other cities and were in critical condition. Bodies were being placed in a temporary morgue where three teams of medical examiners were working around the clock to swiftly identify the remains. Authorities and residents in the city tucked between mountains along Colombia's southern border spent Saturday tending to victims, trying to find homes on streets reduced to masses of rubble and engaged in a desperate search to locate loved ones who disappeared in the dark of night. Authorities expect the death toll to rise. Eduardo Vargas, 29, was asleep with his wife and 7-month-old baby when he was awoken by the sound of neighbors banging on his door. He quickly grabbed his family and fled up a small mountain amid the cries of people in panic. "There was no time for anything," he said. Vargas and his family huddled with about two dozen other residents as rocks, trees and wooden planks ripped through their neighborhood below.

They waited there until daylight, when members of the military helped them down. When he reached the site of his home Saturday, nothing his family left behind remained. "Thank God we have our lives," he said.

Disaster zone

President Juan Manuel Santos traveled to Mocoa and declared the city a disaster zone Saturday. The Air Force transported 19 patients to a city farther north and said 20 more would be evacuated soon. Medicine and surgical supplies were being sent to the city as the area's regional hospital struggled to cope with the magnitude of the crisis. Herman Granados, an anesthesiologist, said he worked throughout the night on victims. He said the hospital didn't have a blood bank large enough to deal with the number of patients and was quickly running out of its supply. Some of the hospital workers came to help even though their own relatives remained missing. "Under the mud," Granados said, "I am sure there are many more." Santos blamed climate change for triggering the avalanche, saying that the accumulated rainfall in one night was almost half the amount Mocoa normally receives in the entire month of March. With the rainy season in much of Colombia just beginning, he said local and national authorities need to redouble their efforts to prevent a similar tragedy. The crisis is likely to be remembered as one of the worst natural disasters in recent Colombian history, though the Andean nation has experienced even more destructive environmental catastrophes. Nearly 25,000 people were killed in 1985 after the Nevado del Ruiz volcano erupted and triggered a deluge of mud and debris that buried the town of Armero. — AP

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ROME: This undated file photo courtesy of La Tribuna, taken in Rome, shows Fabio Lobo, the eldest son of former Honduran President Porfirio Lobo. —AFP

HONDURAN DRUG LORD SPILLS BEANS ON ELITES BACK HOME

RIVERA CUTS DEAL WITH US

NEW YORK: To hear him tell it in court, he has the blood of 78 people on his hands and allegedly shipped 20 tons of cocaine to the United States. He also laundered millions of dollars, and, once imprisoned in America, started spilling the beans - and terrifying powerful people back home in his native Honduras. From 2003 to 2013, Devis Leonel Rivera Maradiaga and his brother Javier, along with their parents and other siblings, led a violent drug cartel called Los Cachiros, in Tocoa on the Atlantic coast of Honduras, a country with one of the world's highest murder rates.

But the brothers feared getting killed when the US Treasury Department put the names of their whole family on a black list in 2013 and the government of Honduras began seizing assets from them. So Leonel Rivera started secretly recording conversations with accomplices such as Fabio Lobo, son of former president Porfirio Lobo, who served from 2010 to 2014. He did this first on his own and later in cooperation with the US Drug Enforcement Administration starting in 2013.

Leonel Rivera, who turned 40 on Tuesday, is a man of short stature with a thin moustache and arched eyebrows that make him look angry all the time. Along with his brother he cut a deal with the US prosecutors in New York under which

the pair landed in prison more than two years ago - but the rest of their family did not. His mother, father, sister and a second brother live in the United States, presumably under a new identity and under the protection of the US government.

'A little window'

US authorities said this week that Leonel Rivera will be sentenced by Judge John Koeltl on April 14. Thanks to his revelations, the authorities in Honduras learned that the Cachiros gang had at least 22 contracts with the Lobo government, prosecutors in Honduras said Wednesday. They also said they would investigate the government officials named by Leonel Rivera. "This is what makes the Cachiros case so interesting, because it's a little window into the way organized crime and elites intersect in places like Honduras," said Steven Dudley, co-director of Insight Crime, a think tank that studies organized crime in the Americas.

"This is important because it sends the message that impunity is not total, that there is some accountability somewhere, there exists some system that is willing to hold even the highest powers accountable," said Dudley. "But does that transfer into real change? I am not sure yet."

22 meetings

From December 5, 2013 to September 21, 2015, Leonel Rivera met with US prosecutors 22 times to give them information and negotiate the terms of his plea bargain, according to court documents seen by AFP. The two brothers surrendered to the DEA in January 2015, Leonel in the Bahamas and Javier in Miami. In April 2016, they each pleaded guilty to charges including murder, leading a drug trafficking gang and conspiring to ship illegal drugs into the US.

The Cachiros gang took delivery of drugs from Colombia, which arrived either in planes or speedboats, and took it overland to Guatemala. From there it would move on to Mexico and then the US, Leonel Rivera said in his first testimony against Fabio Lobo on March 6. He said that in exchange for bribes the cartel was protected by the former president, his son, his brother Ramon "Moncho" Lobo, the current Security Minister Julian Pacheco, by the legislator Antonio Hernandez, brother of President Juan Orlando Hernandez, and by dirty cops and military people. All of these people deny the charges, except for Fabio Lobo, who was arrested by the DEA in Haiti in 2015. He has pleaded guilty to charges of drug trafficking and will be sentenced on May 30. — AFP

ECUADOR DECIDES FUTURE AND MAYBE ASSANGE'S IN RUNOFF

QUITO: Ecuadorans headed to the polls yesterday in a presidential runoff that will turn the page on a decade under leftist Rafael Correa and decide whether the nation follows Latin America's rightward shift. The election could decide the fate of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who has been holed up at the country's London embassy since 2012.

Polls opened with the socialist president's designated heir, Lenin Moreno, in a tight contest with conservative ex-banker Guillermo Lasso. Correa presided over an economic boom that has recently gone bust in the South American oil producer. With voters torn between continuity and change, the race remains too close to call. Lasso finished second in the first-round vote last month, with 28 percent to Moreno's 39 percent. But polls give him a slight edge heading into the runoff, with between 52.1 percent and 57.6 percent of the vote.

The race is also a barometer of the political climate in Latin America, where more than a decade of leftist dominance has been waning. Argentina, Brazil and Peru have all shifted to the right in recent months, as the region has sunk into recession and leftist leaders have been tarnished by a string of corruption scandals.

Boosted by high prices for its oil exports, Ecuador registered solid economic

growth of 4.4 percent per year on average during the first eight years of Correa's presidency, before tipping into recession in mid-2015. Correa won loyal fans among the poor with generous social benefits that helped reduce the poverty rate from 36.7 percent to 23.3 percent in this country of 16 million people. But he has also faced accusations of corruption and squandering the windfall of the oil boom.

Political analyst Napoleon Salto of the Central University of Ecuador said the election would be played out between "the vote against the government and the fear among certain parts of the population that they will lose what they gained over the past 10 years." Lasso, 61, appears to have gained the edge by uniting the opposition vote behind his promises to end tax-and-spend policies and create a million jobs. But Moreno, 64, has sought to co-opt the buzzword of "change" for himself. "We're heading for a change, yes, but a positive change, not a negative change, a change toward the past," he told AFP Wednesday. In another of the race's hot debates, Lasso has threatened to revoke the political asylum Ecuador has granted its most famous guest, Assange. Correa, an outspoken critic of the United States, let Assange stay at the embassy to avoid arrest and extradition to Sweden over a rape allegation. — AFP

EGYPT COURT RULING BACKS ISLANDS' TRANSFER TO SAUDI

CAIRO: An Egyptian court ruled yesterday that a judicial decision to block the transfer of two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia was invalid, lawyers said, in a blow for opponents of a handover. The urgent matters court in Cairo invalidated a verdict by Egypt's highest administrative court that went against the islands' transfer. Saudi Arabia has been a main financial backer of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi since the former army chief toppled his Islamist predecessor in 2013.

The deal to hand over the islands, signed during an April 2016 visit by Saudi King Salman during which Riyadh showed Egypt with aid, provoked accusations that Cairo had "sold" the strategic islands. Cairo said the two islands - Tiran and Sanafir - were Saudi territory to start with, but had been leased to Egypt in the 1950s. The accord has sparked street protests and a legal battle between the government, which insists along with Sisi that the islands are Saudi, and lawyers opposed to the measure.

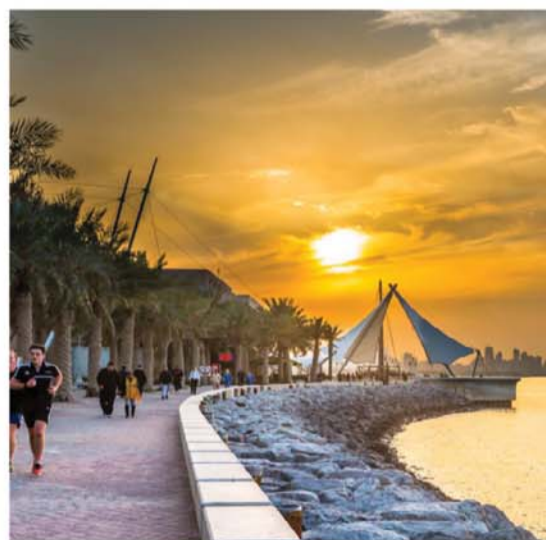
The urgent matters court ruled "in favor of disregarding the ruling of the high administrative court," as "the judiciary doesn't have the authority to interfere with matters of sovereignty," said Ashraf Farahat, the lawyer who filed the latest lawsuit. Khaled Ali, a lawyer who argued in the administrative court that the islands belonged to Egypt, said yesterday's verdict aimed to give the government "judicial cover" as it pushes to hand over the territory. "They are trying to forge false legitimacy through a court lacking competence to justify presenting the agreement to parliament," Ali told AFP.

Tarek El-Khouli secretary of parliament's foreign relations committee, said the government has submitted the case to the house but debates have yet to start. "There are extreme contradictions over the matter of competence. Some describe the issue as a matter of sovereignty and therefore should not be under the judiciary's competence," while others say the opposite, said Khoully. — AFP

Last day of receiving the photos 20 of April

Kuwait Times 2017 Photography Competition "Kuwait Scenery & Nature"

Sponsored by Zain, Jazeera Airways, Canon, Albumi; Hosted by Holiday Inn Salmiya



Kuwait Times hopes that its 2017 photography competition provides an opportunity for professional and non professional photographers to take rare photos that reflect quick response in documenting their surroundings. Capturing movement in photography is the best skill to match the "Kuwait Scenery & Nature" theme selected for Kuwait Times 11th annual photography competition, which takes place from March 12 to April 20 in cooperation

with Al Anbaa newspaper.

Adnan Saad, the competition's organizer and Kuwait Times Deputy General Manager, said photographers of all ages can take part with pictures of the Kuwait Scenery & Nature. Each contestant can provide photos as many as they can, photos with texts or processed through Photoshop or other photo processing software will be automatically disqualified. Only pictures taken correctly, snapped in

Kuwait and that carry the photographer's name are qualified to enter the competition, Saad added. Participants do not have to be professional photographers or use professional cameras to take pictures. Anyone can participate even with a cell phone camera, as long as the picture is taken in a creative way and in high resolution, Saad said.

The main objective of the competition is to encourage and improve photography in

Kuwait, and showcase the talents of Kuwaitis and expatriates in the field of photography, Saad indicated.

The photos must be put in an envelope that has the competition's coupon fixed on the back. The coupons are printed everyday in Kuwait Times and Al Anbaa newspaper. The winners will be awarded during a ceremony at the Holiday Inn Salmiya with valuable prizes.



SENATE GIRDS FOR BATTLE OVER TRUMP SUPREME COURT PICK

WASHINGTON: Senate Democrats are mounting a filibuster of US President Donald Trump's Supreme Court pick, a rare obstruction of high-court appointments. If the gambit proves successful this coming week, Republicans will likely go nuclear. The Senate faces an epic showdown today over whether to confirm Judge Neil Gorsuch. It is a very public game of political chicken that could shape the makeup of the Supreme Court for years to come, and unravel any remaining pretence of bipartisanship in the upper chamber of Congress.

Should Democrats block Gorsuch, Trump's Republicans are threatening to respond by altering longstanding Senate rules and bypassing the 60-vote threshold to advance nominees in the 100-member chamber. Such a maneuver is known as the nuclear option. And its results could be hugely consequential, on both sides of the political aisle.

"It churns our stomach," Senator Mike Rounds told reporters when asked about whether fellow Republicans were really prepared to change the rules. "Once they let the genie out, it's not going back in, unfortunately." All Senate confirmations for cabinet posts, to judgeships on a federal bench, to Supreme Court picks technically require a simple majority vote of 51 senators. That would not be difficult for Republicans today, given that they control 52 seats.

Bumping the threshold up to 60 for a Supreme Court pick has only occurred four times in modern history. Never has a filibuster derailed a Supreme Court nominee. "This would make history in a very bad way," White House spokesman Sean Spicer said Friday. Republicans would not be the first to go nuclear. Democrat Harry Reid unlocked the process in 2013 when he was Senate majority leader, changing the rules to lower the magic number from 60 to 51 on all presidential nominees except Supreme Court justices.

Republicans will need eight Democrats to break the filibuster and get Gorsuch onto the bench, which has been one justice short since conservative Antonin Scalia died in February 2016. That will be a tall order, especially given the volcanic anger many Democrats still feel over the treatment of Merrick Garland, then-president Barack Obama's pick to replace Scalia.

'One way or the another'

While Republicans blast Democrats' "unprecedented obstructionism" of Gorsuch, Senate Majority Leader Mitch

McConnell let Garland languish for eight months without a vote. When Trump won the election, Garland's nomination was dead. Just two Democrats—Joe Manchin and Heidi Heitkamp, both from states that backed Trump—have announced support for Gorsuch.

At least 36 have said they will join the filibuster, according to US media counts. If they reach 41, Gorsuch is blocked. But Republican leadership has signaled its readiness to change the rules if need be, a potentially toxic move. "The United States Senate will confirm Judge Neil Gorsuch, one way or the other," Vice President Mike Pence said Saturday in Ohio.

McConnell, who said he is "confident" Gorsuch will make it through, has set the final confirmation vote for next Friday, after Monday's vote in the Judiciary Committee. The all-important test vote to end debate is likely to come Wednesday. The bitter nominations battle is seen as a proxy for a broader war over Trump's policies, with Democrats anticipating political benefit in opposing the nominee of a deeply unpopular president.

The Gorsuch nomination has proved a unifying force for Republicans, more so than any other topic this year, including Trump's plans to revamp health care and reform the tax code. But some Republicans worry that changing the rules to ram Gorsuch through would mean an end to presidents seeking out consensus or mainstream candidates, further polarizing an already divided nation.

"The next president coming in will not in any way be bound by that, right? They can nominate... an extreme person" if there is no check on the president's choice, said Republican Senator Bob Corker. The chamber, he said, is in a "spiral downward." Other Republicans have warned about a boomerang effect—Democrats ramming through liberal justices once the GOP loses the White House.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said it was "complete hokum" for Republicans to portray the options as either confirm Gorsuch or exercise the nuclear option. "You don't need to change the rules if Judge Gorsuch doesn't get 60 votes," Schumer said Thursday. "You just need to change the nominee." Liberal activist groups demand Democrats stand their ground, warning that they will urge party leaders to not give campaign funds to any senator who supports Gorsuch. — AFP



This artist rendition courtesy of the US World War I Centennial Commission, shows the design of the World War I Memorial titled "The Weight of Sacrifice" which will be built in Pershing Park in Washington DC. — AFP

A CENTURY LATER, PLANS UNDERWAY FOR WWI MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON

'CAN YOU DO SOMETHING SO THAT MY GENERATION IS REMEMBERED?'

WASHINGTON: How should the United States honor the wishes of the last American World War I soldier, who asked for a national monument to the country's role in the conflict? The answer is more complicated than it seems. Frank Buckles, who was a teenage ambulance driver in the Great War, was dismayed to discover on a 2008 visit to Washington's sprawling National Mall that there was nothing to commemorate the pivotal role Americans played in the final two years of the 1914-1918 conflict.

The wheelchair-bound 107-year-old found memorials to wars in Vietnam and Korea, and a grand monument to the US victory in World War II. But for World War I, the best he and his entourage could find was an abandoned marble bandstand honoring Washington residents who died in the conflict. "Can you do something so that my generation is remembered?" photographer and filmmaker David DeJonge, who was in the group, recalls Buckles saying. "What do you say to the last World War I veteran when he asks that?"

Libraries and statues

Americans have long debated how to best remember influential people and events. Grand memorials in cemeteries were once popular, as were statues of war heroes on horseback. Others argued that memorial libraries and schools were more practical.

Memorials have also long been local affairs: there are some 10,000 WWI memorials across the country, including three in the US capital, according to the World War I Inventory Project. They usually honor local military units or hometown troops who fell in the war, and include statues, plaques

and bridges. Most prominent among them is the 217-foot Liberty Tower, on a hill soaring over Kansas City, Missouri. The city was a wealthy rail hub during the war years, and close to the birthplace of the top US WWI military commander, General John J. Pershing. Swept up in patriotic enthusiasm at the war's end, Kansas City residents raised \$2.5 million—the equivalent of \$35 million today—in just 10 days to build the tower.

"There was a huge amount of civic pride in the memorial," said Derek Donovan, who wrote a book on the Liberty Tower. "It was a local effort—private funds raised by little girls going door to door." When the Liberty Tower was inaugurated in 1921, some 100,000 people gathered for the ceremony which featured Pershing, the highest military commanders of wartime allies France, Britain, Belgium and Italy, and president Calvin Coolidge. The site however was never designated a national war memorial.

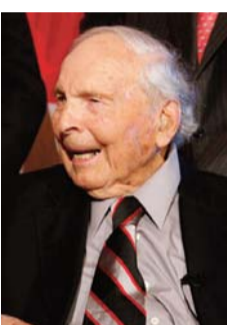
In the US capital, national war memorials date only to 1982 when the Vietnam War memorial opened on the National Mall. A Korean War memorial followed, and in 2004, after years of debate, a World War II memorial. The United States has been "walking it back ever since," said Edwin Fountain, co-chair of the World War I Centennial Commission. The biggest drawback, he said, is that "we don't have a living constituency of World War I veterans."

No room on the Mall

Buckles, along with DeJonge and Fountain, lobbied Congress for a national Great War memorial in Washington. But as Congress debated what to do, Buckles died in 2011 at the age of 110.

Lawmakers finally reached an agreement in 2014: there would be two national memorials, one in Kansas City—which includes the National World War I Museum—and one in Washington. But National Park officials said there was no more room to build on the National Mall. And the city of Washington, which cleaned up and repaired its own WWI memorial on the National Mall, refused to share the site. The World War I Centennial Commission eventually settled on Pershing Park, a site that features a statue of the WWI general located just blocks from the White House.

The Centennial Commission held a contest for the memorial design, and last year chose a proposal that features an open plaza of bas-relief panels depicting period soldiers titled "The Weight of Sacrifice." Work on the project is expected to begin by November 11, 2018, the centennial of the end of the war. DeJonge, who is Buckles's official biographer and has produced a documentary on his life, insists that the WWI memorial must be on the National Mall. "Pershing Park will forever seal the fate of WWI as a forgotten war that America did not care enough about to honor with a proper memorial," DeJonge said. But federal law doesn't allow for new memorials on the Mall. "We would have to get an exemption from Congress, which was a fight we chose not to do," Fountain said. — AFP



Frank Buckles

WHEN AMERICA JOINED WWI AND BECAME A GLOBAL POWER

WASHINGTON: When America entered World War I, a century ago this week, the European powers were bogged down in a grinding trench war that had killed millions and ravaged the European continent. Swinging its industrial might and vast manpower behind France and Britain against Germany and its allies on April 6, 1917, the United States tipped the balance of the conflict and marked its own emergence as a global power.

"World War I was clearly the turning point for developing a new global role for the United States, ushering in a century of international engage-

toward the Allies, most Americans nevertheless insisted on neutrality. Secretary of state Williams Jennings Bryan went so far as to resign in June 1915 over what he considered president Woodrow Wilson's excessively belligerent tone toward Germany—especially after a US probe found that the Lusitania had been carrying contraband guns and ammunition.

Still, thousands of Americans volunteered to fight for the Allied cause, joining the French, British and Canadian forces. US aviators even joined the French Air Service, forming what became known as the Lafayette Escadrille. People like Roosevelt wor-



This undated file photo taken during World War I shows the US Army Battery A, of the 15th US Field Artillery crossing Rhine River in Germany. — AFP

ment to promote democracy," said Jennifer Keene, a World War I expert at Chapman University in California. Americans had been keenly following the war ever since it broke out in August 1914, showing broad support for neutrality. But public opinion changed with the May 1915 sinking of the Lusitania.

The British ocean liner was en route from New York to Liverpool when a German submarine torpedoed it off the coast of Ireland, killing 1,201 passengers, including 128 Americans. "It seems inconceivable that we should refrain from taking action on this manner, for we owe it not only to humanity but to our own national self-respect," former president Teddy Roosevelt, an influential pro-allied hawk, told the New York Tribune at the time.

Pro-allied, but neutral

Although public sentiment swung

ried that an Allied defeat would result in Germany's occupation of parts of Canada, as well as British and French Caribbean possessions. Neutrality made German entry into the Americas more likely, Roosevelt argued in his influential newspaper columns.

"Americans had plenty of time to think about what they wanted to do, they just couldn't agree," said Michael Neiberg of the US Army War College. Wilson, who struggled to maintain neutrality, won re-election in November 1916 under the campaign slogan "He kept us out of the war."

A telegram, submarines and a revolution

Three events in early 1917 changed the equation. On January 16, German foreign secretary Arthur Zimmermann sent a telegram to his ambassador in Mexico asking him to propose a military alliance. Mexico

would recover land lost to the United States in an earlier war, including Texas, in exchange for German gold and weapons.

British intelligence agents intercepted the message, decoded it and passed on to Washington. Its publication outraged Americans.

Next, on February 1, Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare, sinking merchant ships without warning in international waters. The Germans calculated that if they could sink enough ships, they would starve Britain of food and supplies and tilt the war in their favor. They sank three US merchant ships in the subsequent days, adding to the anti-German outrage.

Even still, the Americans "will not even come," German Admiral Eduard von Capelle confidently told a German parliamentary committee on January 31, "because our submarines will sink them. Thus America from a military point of view means nothing, and again nothing, and for a third time nothing." Finally, as Russia imploded in chaos and revolution, Czar Nicholas II abdicated on March 15, surrendering power to what became known as the Provisional Government. Nicholas was "a figure that almost all Americans hated," Neiberg said. "It thus seemed—at least until the Bolsheviks took over in November 1917 — that the war might usher in democracy."

'Safe for democracy'

Germany's submarine war "is a warfare against mankind," Wilson said in his April 2 speech to Congress asking for war. "The world must be made safe for democracy," he proclaimed. "We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion." But the US military was ill-prepared for war, its small, under-equipped army having seen no major combat for decades. French and British trainers rushed over to train a force that grew at a breakneck pace, and by the war's end in November 1918, more than four million Americans had been mobilized for the conflict.

In a show of bravado, the US military commander, General John Pershing, landed in France in June 1917 with 14,000 soldiers. The next months saw the arrival of a steady stream of inexperienced but enthusiastic US troops. "The impression made upon the hard-pressed French by this seemingly inexhaustible flood of gleaming youth... was prodigious," Winston Churchill later wrote. — AFP

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BRITAIN WILL 'NEVER' CEDE GIBRALTAR WITHOUT CONSENT: MAY

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday insisted that she would "never" allow Gibraltar to slip from British control against the wishes of Gibraltarians as the issue took centre-stage in early Brexit wranglings. May told Chief Minister of Gibraltar Fabian Picardo that "we will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another state against their freely and democratically expressed wishes."

Her comments came as Spain pledged it would not close its border post-Brexit with the 6.7-square-kilometre British overseas territory on the southern tip of Spain. On matters of trade, the European Union has said that Spain would have to agree to extend any deal between the bloc and Britain to also cover Gibraltar. This means that Madrid could potentially block Gibraltar's access to

any trade deal, and politicians in "the Rock" fear that Madrid will use the veto to seek sovereignty over the peninsula.

May told Picardo that she would never "enter into a process of sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar is not content," according to a read-out of the phone call released by her Downing Street office. "The UK remains steadfastly committed to our support for Gibraltar, its people and its economy," it added. "We remain absolutely dedicated to working with Gibraltar for the best possible outcome on Brexit, and will continue to involve them fully in the process."

British foreign minister Boris Johnson earlier yesterday stressed that the territory "will not be bargained away". "Gibraltar is not for sale. Gibraltar cannot be traded. Gibraltar will not be bargained away," Johnson wrote in the Sunday

Telegraph. Johnson wrote that the policy of the government "remains fixed and firm. The sovereignty of Gibraltar cannot be changed without the express consent of the UK and the people of Gibraltar." "The status of Gibraltar has been unchanged since 1713. It made no difference when the UK joined the Common Market in 1973 and when Spain was not yet a member. It should make no difference today."

'No intention' to close border

The peninsula is home to about 33,000 people, with a key electronic gambling industry and offshore finance sector that deals with the whole of Europe. Spain said yesterday it had no post-Brexit plans to close its border with the territory, which depends on the crossing for much of its supplies and visitor flow.

Some 10,000 people also make the crossing to work daily from the Spanish region that surrounds Gibraltar called Campo de Gibraltar, and they fear that Madrid may make things more difficult at the frontier. "There is no intention to close the border. The idea is that Spaniards who live in the Campo de Gibraltar and who work in Gibraltar continue to do so," Spanish Foreign Minister Alfonso Dastis said in an interview published in daily newspaper El Pais.

Picardo on Friday hit out at the EU proposal, branding it "unnecessary" and "discriminatory." "This is a disgraceful attempt by Spain to manipulate the European Council for its own, narrow, political interests," Picardo said in a statement. Gibraltarians want to stay British, as demonstrated in 2002 when they rejected a referendum on shared sovereignty with Spain. — AFP



DEOLS: French presidential election candidate for the far-left coalition La France insoumise Jean-Luc Melenchon waves on stage during a campaign rally. — AFP

PUTIN, FRIEND OR FOE? RUSSIA LOOMS OVER FRENCH ELECTION

'A DIVIDED EUROPE MEANS THAT PUTIN IS THE BOSS'

PARIS: Russia looms large over France's presidential election, with candidates on the hard left, right and far right all promising to improve ties with the Kremlin, accused by some of meddling in the vote. As US authorities press their investigation into alleged Russian interference in favor of Donald Trump in America's election, officials on both sides of the Atlantic are warning of possible attempts by Russia to also sway the French vote.

This week, the chairman of the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence outright accused Russia of an "overt effort" to disrupt France's April 27-May 7 vote. "I think it's safe by everybody's judgment that the Russians are actively involved in the French elections," Senator Richard Burr told reporters. European Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans also rounded on Russia, accusing President Vladimir Putin—who hosted French far-right candidate Marine Le Pen for a visit on March 24 — of trying to weaken an already ailing EU.

"There is a reason why Mr Putin supports the extreme right all across Europe," Timmermans told lawmakers in Spain. "Because he knows the extreme right makes us weak, he knows the extreme right divides us... And a divided Europe means that Putin is the boss." Moscow has denied any meddling in France's affairs but Putin's meeting with Le Pen—who is forecast to go head-to-head with pro-EU centrist Emmanuel Macron in the election run-off—has

put Russia back in the campaign spotlight.

"There is undeniably a growing Russia syndrome in both our foreign and domestic policy," former French diplomat Pierre Vimont, a researcher at the Carnegie Europe foundation, said. Three of the five leading candidates—Le Pen, conservative nominee Francois Fillon and Communist-backed Jean-Luc Melenchon—want to bring Russia back in from the cold by, among other things, lifting sanctions imposed over its 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

The three have also expressed varying degrees of support for Russia intervention against anti-regime rebels in Syria's civil war. Macron and Socialist candidate Benoit Hamon take a more skeptical view of Putin. The two back continued sanctions on Russia and have insisted that Russian-backed Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad must go.

Divided on sanctions

In February, a Macron aide accused Russian state media of a "smear campaign" against the 39-year-old defender of open borders and immigration, whom polls show ultimately beating Le Pen. Macron's team also pointed a finger at Russia over a flurry of cyberattacks on his campaign website. Le Pen, whose party in 2014 received a loan from a Russian bank, dismissed the claims, declaring there was "not the slightest proof."

Russia had initially seemed keener on self-

described Putin "friend" Fillon, who is alleged to have been paid to arrange a meeting between the Russian leader and a Lebanese billionaire in 2015. In November, Putin hailed the Republicans nominee as "very principled" and a "great professional". But since January, when Fillon, 63, became embroiled in a damaging scandal over payments to his wife, the Russian leader appears to have shifted support to 48-year-old Le Pen.

The sight of a smiling Le Pen clasping hands with the Russian ranked France's Socialist government. "It's not up to Russia to decide who will be the next president of France," Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault declared on Friday. Fillon counselled against giving into "fantasies", while warning Le Pen that Russia was "dangerous". The candidates' pronouncements are being closely parsed for clues as to how they would tackle the Russian strongman.

Fillon believes the West "provoked" Russia by expanding NATO's presence into eastern Europe and has called for an alliance with Putin and Assad's regime against the Islamic State, which has claimed several attacks in France. Le Pen, who has predicted that the EU "will die" if she wins, has hailed Putin's nationalist world view. "A new world has emerged in the past years. This is Vladimir Putin's world, Donald Trump's world in the United States, Mr (Narendra) Modi's world in India," she said. Melenchon, by contrast, sees Russia chiefly as a bulwark against US "imperialism". —AFP

SERBIANS VOTE FOR PRESIDENT AS PM VUCIC AIMS FOR OUTRIGHT WIN

BELGRADE: Serbians went to the polls yesterday to elect a new president, with strongman Aleksandar Vucic looking to tighten his grip on power amid accusations he is steering the nation toward authoritarian rule. Vucic, the 47-year-old prime minister, is hoping to clinch more than 50 percent of the ballot, winning a five-year mandate as president outright. Most surveys tip Vucic for an easy victory in the face of a divided opposition. But if he fails to win a majority in the first round, a second round run-off will be held on April 16.

According to the electoral commission, some 10.5 percent of some 6.7 million eligible voters cast their ballot in first three hours of vote. The post of president has largely been ceremonial in recent times but analysts believe it would be a much more influential position if occupied by Vucic. Vucic has touted economic success since becoming prime minister in 2014, achieving growth of 2.8 percent last year and cleaning up public finances.

But the average Serbian earns a mere 330 euros (\$355) per month while unemployment is running above 15 percent. "I am thrilled with the way things are going on right now," Dzhelva Trikić, 76-year old pensioner, told AFP after casting her ballot. "Serbia will bloom" with Vucic, she said. But 26-year-old unemployed Vuk Rancic from the southern town of Nis said he voted hoping for a change. "If something changes fine, if not, I'm going out of here," Rancic said.

The opposition has been unable to field an united candidate to run against him, so Vucic faces a wide range of challengers. There are 10 opposition candidates bidding for president, including former ombudsman Sasa Jankovic, ex-foreign minister Vuk Jeremic and ultranationalist Vojislav Seselj. And shaking up the race is Luka Maksimovic.

He stands out on the campaign trail, in an all-white suit, with samurai-style ponytail and trim beard. His political style is as unusual as his fashion style, with a penchant for making outlandish pledges and using a made-up name—Ljubisa Preletacevic, nicknamed "Beli" (White) — that mocks politics as an arena of greed. Beli could even come second in the race behind Vucic, some analysts say.

'I will respect constitution'

Opposition candidates have presented the vote as a referendum on Vucic, whom they accuse of trying to consolidate power for himself. Ultranationalist Seselj argues that "all the power should not be concentrated in the hands of a single man, Aleksandar Vucic." But Vucic, who came to vote with his teenage daughter shortly after the polls open at 7 am (0500 GMT), rejected the opposition accusations as "ridiculous". "They can say whatever they want. I will respect Serbia's constitution. That is my obligation and that is what I will do," the 47-year-old told reporters after casting his ballot in New Belgrade.

Both the opposition and independent media monitoring groups have cried foul over the omnipresence of Vucic in the media. In the week leading up to the vote, national TV channels devoted 51 percent of their airtime to Vucic, more than all the other candidates put together, according to analysis by the Kipling research agency published in the Danas daily. On Thursday, the last day of the campaign, all but two of the dozen or so national dailies appeared wrapped in full-page ads reading: "On April 2, give a decisive vote to Aleksandar Vucic." Political analyst Boban Stojanovic said he "wonders if after such a campaign, the elections could be free and fair."

Second-round hopes

Ex-ombudsman Jankovic, seen as a key Vucic rival, has also claimed public sector workers have been intimidated ahead of the vote, citing testimony to that effect. The opposition hopes to force Vucic into a second round, which could be "dangerous" for the prime minister, according to political analyst Dusan Janjic. "After this (vote) nothing in Serbia will be the same any longer," Jankovic said after voting with his family in Belgrade. "We will begin to put things in order." Vucic has run a typically aggressive campaign, with a video showing a plane marked "Serbia 2017" about to crash for a lack of leadership. He has accused opponents of receiving "millions of euros (from) certain foreign countries", without offering specifying charges. The opposition fears electoral fraud, in particular in Albanian-dominated Kosovo where some 120,000 Serbs live. — AFP



AMATRICE: Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, visits the Italian quake-hit town of Amatrice as part of his European tour aimed at strengthening relations with EU allies post Brexit. — AFP

PRINCE CHARLES EMBRACES SURVIVORS OF ITALY QUAKE

AMATRICE: Britain's Prince Charles hugged tearful survivors in the quake-hit Italian town of Amatrice yesterday after seeing the "terrifying devastation" inflicted by last year's deadly disaster. The Prince of Wales walked alone in silent contemplation through parts of the abandoned "red zone" where collapsed houses lie next to the ruins of a 13th century Civic Tower in the historic hilltop town in central Italy.

"It was a scene of terrifying devastation," he said as he passed in front of the destroyed Church of Sant'Agostino, where the only signs of life were stray cats that roamed the gardens of buildings flattened by the August 2016 quake. Wearing a yellow protection helmet and a grey pinstriped suit, he met the town's mayor Sergio Pirozzi, who told him he had not been back into the red zone since the quake "and will not until the town is rebuilt. We have to look to the future."

"I wish I could do more for you, your resilience is amazing," the 68-year-old prince told one local man after shaking the hands of first responders and those helping with the reconstruction after the disaster that killed nearly 300 people, including three Brits who were there on holiday. Charles, who arrived by helicopter due to quake-damaged roads, placed a garland of yellow

and white flowers on a memorial in the park where survivors had slept in the days immediately following the quake. At the time, many of the survivors were still waiting for news of their trapped loved ones. "I told him I lost my husband that night, he was very moved, he embraced me," Marina Torredi, 65, told AFP.

'A hero'

"It was a hugely emotional moment. I introduced him to Agostino, a rescuer who pulled me from the rubble that night—he said he was a hero," she said. Survivor Carmine Monteforte, 75, who had been waiting for a glimpse of the prince along with a group of locals waving Union Jack flags, said he also got a big hug from Charles. "It was a lovely gesture of human warmth, I teared up. His visit has certainly raised morale here," he said.

The Amatrice visit was part of a European tour by the Prince of Wales and his wife Camilla designed to shore up relations with EU allies post Brexit. The charm offensive, which started in Romania and ends in Austria on Wednesday, comes just as Britain this week officially triggered the Brexit process. Charles's son Prince William and his wife Kate undertook a similar trip to Paris earlier this month. — AFP

OPPOSITION CRIES FOUL IN 'MILESTONE' ARMENIA POLLS

YEREVAN: Opposition parties denounced electoral violations as Armenians voted in legislative polls yesterday for the first time since the adoption of constitutional reforms transforming the ex-Soviet country into a parliamentary republic. The West sees the election as a key democratic test for the small landlocked nation of 2.9 million, which has no history of transfers of power to an opposition through the ballot box.

The vote is dominated by fierce competition between the ruling party of pro-Moscow President Serzh Sargsyan and an opposition coalition led by Gagik Tsarukian, a former arm wrestler who is one of the country's wealthiest businessmen. Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan told journalists he "voted for progress and security," urging ballots be cast in "a spirit of solidarity and tolerance."

Turnout stood at 33 percent six hours after polls opened, the Central Electoral Commission said. But opposition politicians reported violations at polling stations after previously warning that the government is preparing mass electoral fraud. "We have recorded numerous violations at polling stations—violation of ballots' secrecy and multiple voting," Hovsep Khurshudyan, a leader of Ohanyan-Raffi-Oskanyan, an opposition coalition, told AFP.

Armenia's interior ministry said it was probing 320 complaints of irregularities, while Justice Minister Arpine Hovhannisyani demanded parties "refrain from incorrect claims of mass violations." US-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty said its correspondent Sisak Gabrielyan "was attacked by government loyalists in Yerevan yesterday while covering Armenia's parliamentary elections."

Before the vote, the EU delegation to Armenia and the US embassy said in a joint statement that they were "concerned by allegations of voter intimidation, attempts to buy votes, and the systemic use of administrative resources to aid certain competing parties." Violence flared following Sargsyan's election in 2008 with 10 people killed in clashes between police and opposition supporters.

This time, the country aims to hold an exemplary vote to elect "a parliament trusted by society," the president told AFP in a March interview. He said his government "has made enormous efforts so that (Sunday's) milestone vote is flawless." —AFP



YEREVAN: A man casts his ballot at a polling station as Armenians vote for legislative elections, for the first time since the adoption of constitutional reforms aimed at transforming the ex-Soviet country into a parliamentary republic. — AFP

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SUU KYI'S PARTY WINS SEATS BUT REJECTED BY MINORITIES

YANGON: Aung San Suu Kyi's one-year-old government won a string of seats in Myanmar by-elections yesterday but was bruised by losses in ethnic minority areas. The voting to fill 19 seats in the national and regional parliaments was seen as a test of the democracy icon's popularity after a bumpy first year in office. Her National League for Democracy (NLD) stormed to power in a historic 2015 poll that ended half a century of brutal military rule. But disillusionment with the administration has grown as the young government struggles to push through democratic reforms, kick-start the economy and ease unrest along the borders.

The NLD's comfortable majority was never threatened by Saturday's by-elections, with less than five percent of the population eligible to vote in races held mostly to fill seats emptied by politicians who took on ministerial posts. Results that trickled in yesterday showed the party is still strong in its heartland areas. But it revealed a measure of discontent among Myanmar's ethnic minorities, who have long struggled under the rule of the Bamar majority to which Suu Kyi belongs.

The NLD fared well in its strongholds around the commercial capital Yangon and in central regions further north, winning seats in nine races, according to results announced by Union Election Commission chairman Hla Thein. But it faced losses in more remote areas, including in ethnic minority regions where insurgent violence has continued despite Suu Kyi's promise to bring peace after decades of strife.

Minority cultures

The most embarrassing defeat was in the southern state of Mon, where the NLD lost a lower house seat to its main opposition—the military-backed

Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). The NLD had comfortably won that race just over a year ago when it trounced the USDP nationwide. The NLD sparked mass protests in Mon last month by naming a local bridge after Suu Kyi's father—a move seen as emblematic of the Bamar elite's steamrolling of minority cultures.

The NLD also came up short in a race in Rakhine, a western state embroiled in ethnic and religious conflict. That lower house seat was taken by the chairman of the local Arakan National Party, a politician known for his hardline stance against the Muslim Rohingya. The one-million strong Rohingya live mostly in Rakhine and are loathed by many Buddhists, who see them as outsiders. Since October they have become the target of an army crackdown so brutal that UN investigators believe it may amount to a crime against humanity.

The crisis has posed a major moral challenge to Suu Kyi, who must contend with both international pressure to defend the Rohingya and hatred of the group by many at home. She has faced international criticism for not speaking out against the alleged abuses. Up in the northeast, an ethnic Shan party won several races held in areas where voting had been cancelled in 2015 because of unrest. The NLD and USDP also each took one regional parliament seat. Clashes between the army and ethnic insurgents have since moved further north but continue to thwart the NLD's peace bid. In a rare national address last week, Suu Kyi stressed her commitment to the nation but admitted that reforms had stalled in some areas. Striking an unusually conciliatory note, she said the NLD "would be more than happy and ready to step aside" if there were others "more qualified than us to achieve better results". — AFP



PESHAWAR: In this picture taken on Thursday, March 28, 2017, Pakistani lawyer Shandana Naeem, right, listens to a caller with her colleague Nayab Hassan at their office. — AP

PAKISTAN SETS UP A LIFE-SAVING HELPLINE FOR WOMEN IN NEED

RECORDING, AIDING THE HORRIFYING TALES OF DISTRAUGHT WOMEN

PESHAWAR: When Durdana married for a second time and to a man of her own choosing, her parents threatened to kill her if she tried to see her new husband. They imprisoned her in their home, but she still had her mobile phone and had learned that a helpline for women had been set up. She noted the number and then one day when she was alone in the house, she called.

Nayab Hassan was on the other end. She had been trained how to answer the call. "Be gentle. Listen. Let them speak. Let them tell you what they want. Sometimes they are very emotional," she said at the helpline center - located in the sprawling provincial parliament buildings in Pakistan's deeply conservative Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province, where tribal councils still hand over young girls to settle disputes.

Not far from the border with neighboring Afghanistan, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa became the first province in Pakistan to set up a hotline for women that feeds directly into the provincial legislature. It's still a small operation. It began March 1 and so far there are only two operators, Hassan and Mehran Akbar. They take the information from the women and Shandana Naeem, a lawyer, follows up with advice and a network of free legal services. They keep a careful log of all their calls, which average one a day so far, and while most have emanated from the provincial capital of Peshawar, several have come from more remote regions.

Durdana's call was from Swat, a picturesque mountain region of clear blue lakes that ramble through valleys surrounded by imposing peaks. The area's beauty is a stark contrast to its dark and violent history. It was in Swat where Pakistan's Taliban briefly ruled, beheading police in the town square and where Malala Yousafzai was shot in the head for advocating girls' education and criticizing the violent religious radicals as being frightened of female education. The log book is carefully kept. It

records names, dates, phone numbers and then their stories. Some are horrifying.

Developing a network

One woman, Aneesa, called to say that two years earlier her husband had thrown acid at her, stole her money and jewelry and fled to Saudi Arabia. She had moved in with her parents and now her eyesight was deteriorating from the acid attack; she needed medical assistance but had no money to pay for it.

Naeem said they helped her work through the red tape of getting a health card - the first step to health care. But Aneesa's call also made them realize the need to engage local health clinics and develop a network that would be willing to offer free health care, similar to their legal service network. Naeem said most of the calls have been over property disputes, where women were being denied their inheritance.

The helpline was developed by Meraj Humayun Khan, a 70-year-old parliamentarian who has taken on her male colleagues to organize a women's caucus in the provincial parliament. With the weight of the 22-member caucus behind her, Khan lobbied for the direct helpline to the legislature. "We need to be in touch with their issues," she said in an interview. "I can have a lot of ideas but it should come from them."

The original call that prompted the helpline was a property dispute, said Khan, explaining that Pakistan's inheritance laws - based on Islamic injunctions - allow male relatives priority and give a lesser share to women. And those women are often denied or intimidated by male relatives to forfeit even that lesser share. The reason for locating the helpline in the provincial parliament was to collect data from women that would in turn bolster arguments for legislative changes. Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province is already behind on women's right issues; lawmakers there have so far

refused to pass an anti-domestic violence law that other provinces have approved.

Hard-line religious parties hold significant sway in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. Jamaat-e-Islami and the Jamiat-e-Ulema Pakistan (whose madrassas or religious schools were favored by Afghanistan's Taliban) are partners in the provincial coalition government. The 22 women in the provincial parliament are there on quota seats reserved for women. No female candidate has been able to win a general election seat in the deeply conservative and tribal-dominated province. Khan says she plans to run on a general seat in the 2018 elections, but she admits even those men who have championed and endorsed her candidacy have been met with skepticism and resistance. "Everyone they talk to asks 'That's all well and good, but don't you have any men who can run?'" she said. "It's a humiliation for them to be represented by a woman. They think women don't know anything about politics, about economics."

Different paces

The chairperson of Pakistan's Human Rights Commission, Zohra Yusuf, says different provinces are making progress on women's issues at different paces. Southern Sindh is Pakistan's most progressive province in terms of laws to safeguard women, she said. Earlier this month the most populous province, Punjab, opened state-of-the-art shelters for women facing abuse at home. Last year Pakistan passed a bill that essentially closed a loophole which used to allow so-called honor killers to escape punishment. Yusuf said that despite the legislative progress, on-the-ground enforcement of these new laws still remains a significant hurdle. "I think the governments are realizing it's about time something needs to be done," she said in a telephone interview. "Laws were passed last year, the honor killing bill, rape, violence against women, but still it is about enforcement." — AP

FILIPINO YOUTH STAGE MUSICAL AGAINST DUTERTE'S DRUGS WAR

MANILA: A Philippine youth theatre club staged a musical at a Manila park yesterday, challenging President Rodrigo Duterte's bloody war on drugs. The 20-minute show features a casket salesman whose funeral parlor is doing brisk business as corpses pile up. But the salesman and his friends end up as statistics, falling to vigilante-style killings that have gripped the Southeast Asian nation and alarmed the international community. "The play talks about the problem in the community with the war on drugs and the irony of it, that a few earn money amid this war and all the killings," artistic director Jessie Villabrille told Reuters.

More than 8,000 suspected drug addicts

and dealers have been killed since Duterte took office on June 30, some in police operations but many others in mysterious circumstances. The authorities vehemently deny wrongdoing and blame vigilantes and drug gangs for the killings.

Criticism of the war on drugs does not sit with Duterte or his supporters. The brash leader chastised the United Nations and former US president Barack Obama numerous times or criticizing his anti-drugs program. Duterte won the presidency by a wide margin on the promise of wiping out drugs and criminality. The theatre group plans to take the musical to schools and stage a longer version next month. — Reuters

NEW TUNNEL OPENS IN KASHMIR FOR TRAVEL

SRINAGAR: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday opened a 11-kilometer tunnel through the Himalayan terrain to help ease travel on a highway linking the troubled Kashmir Valley with the rest of India. Modi drove in an open jeep through the all-weather route, which is expected to help trade and tourism in the region. The highway is blocked sometimes for hours and even days due to heavy snow, monsoon rains and landslides. It took engineers six years to build the tunnel, which cost 25 billion rupees (\$382 million).

However, separatist leaders fighting for the region's independence from India or its merger with neighboring Pakistan shut businesses and public transport in the region yesterday and said the construction of tunnels and roads would not succeed in appeasing them. Kashmir is a "political issue and not a problem related to governance, economic packages, incentives or law and order," they said in a joint statement issued on Friday.

They said Modi was visiting the state at a time when the situation was "extremely gloomy." Modi addressed a rally of thousands of people in the town of Udhampur and urged the youth of Kashmir to choose between "terrorism and tourism." He said

decades of insurgency had caused bloodshed and hit tourism, a mainstay of the region. The Indian portion of Kashmir is popular with tourists for its lakes, mountains, ski slopes, gardens and religious sites.

Modi promised to boost the region's tourism infrastructure, saying that the new tunnel would ensure that tourists were not stranded because of bad weather. Jitendra Singh, a minister in Modi's government from the region, said the connectivity through the tunnel would cut down travel time. "It is an alternative to the highway, which gets closed during snow and rain. It will boost trade and increase revenue in the state," Singh said.

Most people in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir favor its independence or a merger with Pakistan, which also administers a part of the territory across a heavily militarized de facto border through the mountains. Since 1989, at least 70,000 people have been killed in an armed uprising and ensuing Indian military crackdown. The rebel groups have largely been suppressed by Indian troops in recent years, and resistance is now principally expressed through street protests. India and Pakistan have fought two wars over control of Kashmir since they won independence from British colonialists in 1947. — AP



SRINAGAR: An Indian paramilitary soldier patrols at a closed market during a strike. — AP



BRISBANE: Kayakers paddle on the flooded Logan River, caused by Cyclone Debbie, as it flows over the Mt Lindesay Highway in Waterford West. — AFP

AUSTRALIA FLOODWATERS RISE, POLICE SEARCH FOR MISSING

BRISBANE: Rising floods plagued large parts of eastern Australia yesterday as emergency workers battled to restore water and electricity in cyclone-hit areas, with the recovery efforts expected to last several months. At least two people were dead and several missing after torrential rain inundated large areas of Queensland and New South Wales (NSW) states, flooding homes and forcing the evacuation of tens of thousands of people.

Category four Cyclone Debbie smashed into Queensland on Tuesday between Bowen and Airlie, ripping up trees and causing widespread damage that is still being assessed. It was downgraded to a tropical low as it tracked southeast through the week, packing high winds and dumping huge volumes of rain all down the east coast to Sydney before blowing out over the Tasman Sea.

Even as skies began to clear, numerous towns were still on flood alert and some regions remain under water. Logan just south of Brisbane reflected the varied situation, with rising floods affecting some areas while other parts swung into clean-up mode as waters receded. "This is unprecedented

for us," Logan city mayor Luke Smith said Sunday, warning that his city was still "in flux" with one key river remaining at high levels.

"The sky is the limit at this stage about what that means," he added about the potential damage bill. In Rockhampton in central-east Queensland, residents were bracing for the biggest floods they have experienced since 1954, with peak levels set to be reached late Wednesday or early Thursday. "Debbie is not done with us yet," Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said when visiting Rockhampton Saturday. "This one is going to be a big one," she added yesterday.

Fears for missing

The torrential rain also wreaked havoc south of the Queensland border in New South Wales, bringing severe floods to several towns. The bodies of two women were found in the state on Friday. Another three people were confirmed dead-two in NSW and one in Queensland-on Saturday but police were still investigating whether their deaths were flood-related.

"The water busted the door open and dad started to have a panic attack," the son of one of

the victims, a 46-year-old man from Murwillumbah in northeastern NSW, told the Courier Mail newspaper. "He fell down and it sounded like he was snoring, but he stopped breathing." Residents of Lismore and Tweed Heads near Murwillumbah were late day cleared to return to their homes as waters subsided, but face a tough clean-up ahead. "It's a disaster zone, it really is. Just mud and debris and concerned people everywhere—people cleaning out their businesses," Naomi Tarrant of Lismore told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. "Just so much loss. (It's) so inconceivable what's been lost downtown here." There were also fears for three other people missing in flood-hit areas in Queensland, with police searching for them yesterday.

The military and emergency personnel were working to restore essential services such as water and electricity in towns that were in the direct path of Debbie in northern Queensland. More than 500 homes were destroyed by the cyclone while almost 30,000 properties in that region remained without power, the state government said. In cyclone-hit Proserpine, Colin Ridgway's home of two decades was destroyed by Debbie. — AFP



Women take selfies outdoors to observe the ancient festival of Sizdeh Bedar, an annual public picnic day on the 13th day of the Iranian new year, at the Tochal mountainous area in northern Tehran yesterday. Sizdeh Bedar, which comes from the Farsi words for 'thirteen' and 'day out', is a legacy from Iran's pre-Islamic past that hardliners in the Islamic Republic never managed to erase from calendars. — AP

UN URGES GULF TO DO MORE TO HELP SYRIAN...

Continued from Page 1

Speaking to KUNA after the signing ceremony, KFAED Director General Abdulwahab Al-Bader said that the donation would be used to support the large numbers of Syrian refugees in northern Iraq, who are suffering hard living conditions. The comprehensive grant is the first contribution by KFAED to UNHCR to improve the services offered to refugees in five camps hosting up to 97,000 Syrians, he added.

Speaking after she signed the agreement, Clement said Kuwait was the sixth largest donor to UNHCR, providing some \$360 million between 2013 and 2015. "The other GCC countries have not managed to come any-

where close," she added, referring to the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council of mostly oil-rich Arab monarchies. "We would like that to change. In fact the resources that we need in order to provide humanitarian support throughout the world, including places like South Sudan and Somalia or Myanmar, Bangladesh, we are only meeting less than half of our budget," she told Reuters.

She said support from countries like Russia and China was still "much more nascent" than that of the Gulf Arab states, but was increasing. Asked if she saw an end to the flow of refugees from the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, Clements said: "Obviously we hope that there would be political solutions. I have to say that the outlook doesn't look good." — Agencies

CONCERN OVER RETROACTIVE DEPORTATION...

Continued from Page 1

Moreover, Motoutah noted that reports would be annulled for workers who filed grievances at the concerned labor department before Jan 4, 2016 and got an approval to transfer to other sponsors, while grievances filed after that date would be rejected, unless a worker has a final court order in this regard. In addition, Motoutah said Mol asks workers to provide certain documents on filing grievances (security clearance and fingerprint report) to check whether absconding reports had been filed against them and look into the complaint if the reports, if any, had been filed before Jan 4, 2016.

Mol's assistant undersecretary for citizenship and passports

Maj Gen Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah stressed that his office is open for humanitarian cases and to resolve problems to avoid damaging Kuwait's human rights record. But he warned that even humane considerations would be subject to laws. Sheikh Mazen said he receives several cases at his office and each case is separately reviewed in the presence of both the concerned sponsor and worker. "The interior ministry is keen on friendly solutions prior to taking any official measure that would lead to deportation," he added, underlining that thorough investigations and legal consultations are usually made to verify absconding reports. Notably, a number of lawyers have rejected the decision and called for cracking down on visa traffickers instead of investigating the entire society against expats.

HASHEM: ONE CAR FOR EXPATS, NO LICENSES

Continued from Page 1

In another issue, Kandari said he was informed by the minister of finance that the government has suspended the controversial economic reform package which stipulated hiking the prices of most commodities and pub-

lic services to finance the budget deficit resulting from the sharp fall in oil prices. Kandari quipped the minister as saying that the government will be issuing a new package. The lawmaker however warned that any set of reforms that calls for taxing citizens or hiking prices will be rejected.

IMPORTERS PROSECUTED FOR MEAT PRICE-FIXING

Continued from Page 1

meeting was held by relevant authorities to investigate monopolization in the local livestock market and ensure its stability as well as the stability of prices.

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri had also condemned the livestock importing compa-

nies that announced plans to increase prices of meat before the advent of Ramadan. The companies reportedly signed an agreement with each other calling for a collective increase in prices, something that the minister described as 'tampering with food security' in Kuwait. "Manipulating food security is a crime that will not go unaccounted for," he had warned. — Agencies

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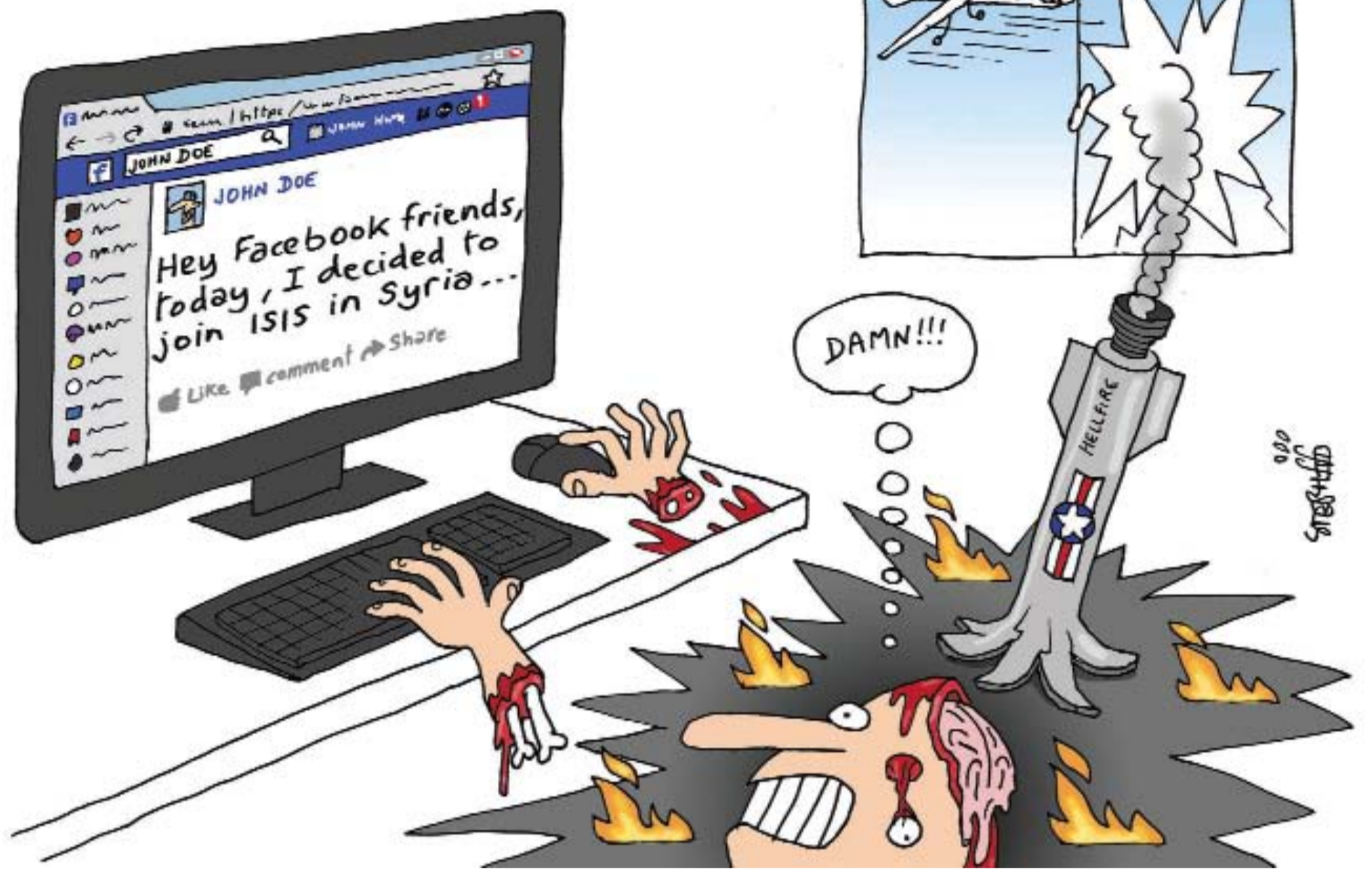
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 COMMERCIAL : 24835618

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WRONG CHOICE OF APRIL'S FOOL ...



IS FAKE NEWS OLD NEWS?

"Fake news" has rarely been out of the news since Donald Trump's unlikely election to the White House. Rarely a day goes by when the president doesn't take to Twitter to accuse, normally in capital letters, the mainstream media of misrepresenting the truth when reporting on his administration. US academics Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow define "fake news" as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers". But in fact, people have been spreading "fake news" for centuries in an effort to discredit political opponents, boost flagging circulations and even propel countries into war. In short, "fake news" is basically "old news".

Way back then

"Since ancient Athens and Rome, lies and damned lies have always been part of political discourse," says University of Houston professor Robert Zaretsky. Sixth century historian Procopius of Caesarea noted an "anecdota" or "secret history" of Roman emperor Justinian's private life. Lewd details were emphasised or simply invented, perhaps to tarnish the ruler's reputation were he ever overthrown.

Later examples were made possible by technological advances such as the Gutenberg printing press that increased distribution of written materials, including 18th century "libelles", or scandal sheets that defamed French officials and personalities. Another format dubbed "canards" helped fuel hatred of France's queen Marie-Antoinette ahead of her execution in 1793. The trend was picked up on the other side of the Atlantic where in 1835 the New York Sun unleashed The Great Moon Hoax, falsely citing astronomer John Herschel as claiming to have discovered life there. The Sun's circulation soared.

Even the term "fake news" appears to be nothing new. Robert Love wrote in the Columbia Journalism Review that the actual term "seems to have arisen in late nineteenth century America, when a rush of emerging technologies intersected with news gathering practices during a boom time for newspapers". The telegraph, trans-Atlantic and trans-continental cables, linotype process and photography boosted news gathering and circulation, sometimes with ominous results.

In the late 1890s, rival publishers William Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer wanted the United States to declare war on Spain, and manipulated news from Cuba into what Love says was "the first privately funded propaganda push to war in modern media history."

The Internet age

Fast forward to the Internet age and social media has provided a fresh palette of forums, with Trump and others now denigrating unfavourable reports as "FAKE NEWS!" and worse. On February 18, Trump tweeted: "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!"

French academic Pascal Froissart identifies three categories of fake news: Propaganda, electoral publicity, and hoaxes. Having won the election, "Donald Trump has acquired the copyright for 'fake news'", Zaretsky told AFP. "He uses the term to challenge not just the evidence-based claims of his critics, but to challenge the very notion of truth."

In particular, the US president seeks to disparage allegations that his campaign team colluded with Russia to win the election. "Intelligence agencies should never have allowed this fake news to 'leak' into the public," Trump tweeted. On March 20 he doubled down with: "This story is FAKE NEWS and everyone knows it!" Froissart estimates Trump used the term about 40 times in the 20 weeks following his election. "It's a winning strategy," Froissart told AFP, because his data show that tweets with the term "fake news" were repeated 14 percent more often than others and generated 89 percent more responses.

Allcott and Gentzkow concluded in a widely read study however that "fake news" during the election would only have changed vote shares "by an amount on the order of hundredths of a percentage point," far less "than Trump's margin of victory in the pivotal states on which the outcome depended." — AFP

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BRITAIN ATTEMPTS TO BURST FAKE NEWS BUBBLE

The rise of fake news has been a hot topic in Britain this year, with the lawmaker leading a probe into the phenomenon warning it was "a threat to democracy". As well as the inquiry, British journalism schools have begun to adapt their teaching while national broadcaster the BBC has issued prevention guidelines for children in an attempt to reverse the trend. Damian Collins, head of the parliamentary probe, told AFP that fake news undermined trust in the media in general, with the explosion of social media making political issues particularly sensitive. Fake news represents "a threat to democracy...if people are deliberately using it on social

media platforms to spread misinformation around an election", he said.

The panel is considering whether fake news spreaders could be blocked or closed down, or genuine news outlets given a special verification mark. Collins urged tech companies to help tackle the problem on social media platforms as they had done in combating piracy, illegal content sharing, cyber-bullying and hate speech. But the tech giants had only moved "in response to pressure, and reluctantly", the MP warned.

'Think before you click'

The impact on those too young to vote is also causing concern. BBC television's

"Newsround", a news bulletin for children, explained fake news to youngsters in February. The program created "think before you click" clips informing youngsters how to spot false stories, using invented tales of yellow pandas, robot headteachers and UFOs. Fake news is not a 21st-century phenomenon, but what is new is its scale, said James Rodgers, a senior lecturer in journalism at the City University of London.

"Before, being published relied on getting into an established medium. It no longer does," said Rodgers, whose university runs some of Britain's most prestigious journalism courses. The former BBC and Reuters journalist said three main factors seem to create the conditions for a fake news surge. "These spikes seem to occur at times of political uncertainty, armed conflict and new technology. We have all of those three at the moment," he told AFP. Rodgers said that as people got wiser to the ways of social media, they would grow more discerning and that journalists would become more adept at utilizing technology.

Key to fake news

In Britain, there is a fine tradition of humorous spoof news. It reaches a crescendo on April 1, April Fools' Day, when newspapers and broadcasters traditionally try to catch their audience out. The pick of Saturday's crop included Prince Harry's quickie wedding in Las Vegas and a new fashion range launched by former finance minister George Osborne. A Daily Express piece saying that the EU was to demand the recall of every British number plate fol-

lowing Brexit provoked anger amongst readers, with one commenter writing "the EU can shove their dumb number plates where the sun don't shine."

A fake news producer explained that, as demonstrated by the Express report, the key to getting stories to go viral was to appeal to people's emotion. The Southend News Network turns out topical satirical stories, often patently ludicrous, that nonetheless get shared worldwide - and occasionally picked up by mainstream news outlets. "A successful fake news story will always appeal to people's angers and fears," said the SSN's chief reporter.

In his mid-30s, he works in the teaching industry and does not reveal his identity due to threats of violence from angry readers in his native Southend, east of London. "The EU referendum was my busiest-ever time. It was such a twitchy subject, people were just going with it," he told AFP. A story about then prime minister David Cameron telling Southend supermarket shoppers he would ignore the referendum result if Britain voted out was viewed more than 400,000 times. "People were getting outraged, saying, 'I knew he was going to do this!'" the spoofster said. "They will literally read a headline and the first paragraph and share it without thinking."

However, he said there was a serious underlying message. "I'm encouraging people to either take fake news at face value as entertainment, or teach people that fake news is something that should be analysed before sharing," he said. "Everyone who's against stupidity on the Internet would appreciate what I do." — AFP



A journalist poses reading a satirical fake news story on the Southend News Network website in London on March 31, 2017. — AFP

FAKE NEWS IN ROMANIA FUELS EUROSCEPTICISM

Dogs paid to demonstrate against the government. A deadly nightclub fire ordered by an American billionaire. So-called "fake news" is prospering in Romania, fuelling euroscepticism in the former communist country. The Social Democrat government's attempt in January to weaken anti-corruption legislation unleashed a huge wave of protests that eventually forced an about-turn by Prime Minister Sorin Grindeanu.

But it also unleashed a wave of truth-stretching reports by pro-government broadcasters. The first major incidence of "fake news" was spotted in December - just two days before a parliamentary election - with privately-owned Romania TV reporting that the US business tycoon George Soros, a popular target of anti-globalists, had somehow "financed" a nightclub fire that killed 64 people in 2015.

Outrage over the blaze led to the toppling of the then-Social Democratic government and a follow-up investigation found that failure to respect safety regulations - rather than any foreign plot - was the cause of the tragedy. Nonetheless, in a country where the national media industry is dominated by five privately-owned 24-hour news channels, rival broadcasters were quick to jump onto the story and into the "fake news" fray.

'War on the streets'

When as many as 500,000 people marched in peaceful demonstrations earlier this year to defend the anti-corruption drive, some media reported a "war on the streets" or a "coup". Multinational companies, those reports claimed, were forcing their staff to join in the protests. Romania TV said some employees, and their pets, were being given money to protest. "Adults were paid 100 lei (\$24), children earned 50 lei and dogs were paid 30 lei," the broadcaster reported.

But anger at fake news also surged amongst viewers in the former Soviet satellite state, where memories of communist authoritarianism remain strong. The National Audiovisual Council of Romania received over 2,000 complaints in January and February alone, nearly 10 times the number in the same period last year, according to council member Dorina Rusu. The regulator fined Romania TV more than 6,000 (\$6,400) for making claims about Soros and 11,000 euros for broadcasting "fake information" about the "paid" demonstrators.

Press freedom organization ActiveWatch and a group of Romanian advertisers called the Art Directors Club also

criticized what they labelled biased reporting. Two of the broadcasters, Romania TV and Antena 3, temporarily lost two-thirds of their advertisers in February, according to industry observer IQads.

Corruption-tainted media moguls

Romania's media industry is vulnerable as it is largely under the control of moguls who "face corruption charges, have already been imprisoned, or harbor obvious political leanings", says Petrisor Obae, of the media watchdog Pagina de Media. Dan Voiculescu, founder of the channel Antena 3 and former president of a small party aligned with the Social Democrats, is serving a 10-year prison sentence for money laundering.

The head of Romania TV, former Social Democrat deputy Sebastian Ghita, faces four counts of corruption, money laundering and tax evasion, and has been on the run since December. Romania's anti-corruption drive, which has also targeted politicians and other oligarchs, has been met with press reports so negative they were denounced by the European Commission as "major media attacks" on the judicial branch.

In one Antena 3 report, the country's chief anti-corruption prosecutor, Laura Codruta Kovesi, was accused of having received one million euros from a local mobster to cover up charges against him. She pressed charges against the journalists, and a trial is under way. Over the past year Kovesi has lodged 15 complaints with the audiovisual council for "insults and defamation".

'Russian propaganda'

As in other countries formerly under Soviet influence, Moscow is seen by some as an invisible hand in the spread of false information - in particular on issues concerning the European Union and NATO. "The goal is to weaken confidence in the EU and NATO and weaken Romania's international position," said Corina Rebegea of the US-based Center for European Policy Analysis. Romania, one of the EU's poorest countries which has received 26 billion euros from the bloc since joining in 2007, has been falsely described by some journalists as a net contributor to the bloc. Another story making the rounds claimed, falsely, that foreigners controlled 70 percent of the country's farmland. — AFP



Employees of the National Audiovisual Council of Romania, the state authority that monitors TV and radio stations, are pictured at the main headquarters in Bucharest on March 31, 2017. — AFP

MORTAZA SUSPENDED FOR SLOW OVER RATE

COLOMBO: Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Mortaza has been suspended for one match for a slow over rate during the third one-day international against Sri Lanka, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said yesterday. This means he will be barred from playing in the first ODI against Ireland at a tri-nations tournament in May. The right-arm paceman was also fined 40 percent of his match fee, with the other players losing 20 percent of their fees. His team was two overs short of the target during Saturday's match at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo, which Sri Lanka won. The offence was Mortaza's second within 12 months regarding the over rate, triggering the suspension. The previous one was in an ODI against New Zealand in Christchurch. According to the ICC Code of Conduct, players are fined 10 percent of their match fees for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time. It was the second time Mortaza has been banned for a slow over rate since taking over as the ODI skipper in November 2014. —AFP



RUGBY

SMITH MAKE HIS POINT AS WARRINGTON GET OFF THE MARK

LONDON: Tony Smith hailed his Warrington side after they finally got going in the Super League this season courtesy of a gutsy 22-22 draw with high-flying Hull FC. But he was still frustrated with referee Jack Smith after a couple of decisions seemingly cost his bottom-of-the-table side a much-needed victory. Hull stormed into the lead through Albert Kelly's try and they were 20-8 ahead at the break, with Warrington seemingly on course for their seventh defeat in as many Super League matches so far this season.

But former Gold Coast Titans star Matty Smith scored a fine hat-trick for Warrington before Kurt Gidley secured their first point of the season with a nerveless kick.

However, Australian-born coach Smith was annoyed his side did not go on and win the game when Mike Cooper's try was disallowed and Daryl Clark had the ball stolen by two Hull players in offside positions. "It was an absolute penalty. But I've got to be happy about our second half," said Smith, a former England coach who took British citizenship in 2008.

"There was a lot of improvement, in the second half in particular. In the first half we were still way too guilty of self-inflicted harm. I thought Hull were a bit flat today and we let them off the hook in the first half—we gave them most of their points, either through penalties or intercepts," said Smith. "I said we just needed to be pretty strong and basic today to get a decent result and I wasn't far wrong."

"The boys are working hard and competing and they've got desire and unity. We've still got a few rough edges to knock off and, when we do that, we will be getting the two points and not the one."

Smith picked three of his players for special praise. "Matty Russell was back to some of his best and not just with his finishing because he was a handful with the ball," said Smith.

"Benny Westwood played himself to a standstill and Ryan Atkins was enormous."

HUDDERSFIELD HIDING

Elsewhere, Huddersfield coach Rick Stone was left nervously looking over his shoulder after the Giants were thumped 52-16 at league leaders Castleford.

Huddersfield have won just two of their eight games and sit 10th in the 12-team table after hat-tricks from veteran Australian Joel Monaghan and Luke Gale gave the Tigers victory.

"It was a good old-fashioned hiding," former Fiji coach Stone said. "They gave us a lesson basically."

Salford coach Ian Watson was left guarding against complacency after his side's fourth win in five games, a 22-14 success against St Helens. Michael Dobson scored two tries as Salford rose to fourth in the table. "We won't get carried away," said Watson. "The big thing for us is working hard and sticking to the process of getting where we want to be. We'll take it week by week." —AFP

VENTER JOINS BOK COACHING TEAM

CAPE TOWN: South Africa have added former Springbok centre Brendan Venter to their rugby team management as they continue to strengthen their coaching expertise in a bid to put a horror year of results behind them. The 47-year-old medical doctor, a member of South Africa's Rugby World Cup winning team in 1995, will work for the Springboks as their new defence and exits coach, a statement from South African Rugby said yesterday. Venter worked in a similar role with Italy during this year's Six Nations Championship where he is credited with the controversial tactic of not forming rucks in their match against England, putting the champions off their stride. It led to Italy being ahead at halftime in the match at Twickenham before England recovered their composure to win 36-15. But the Italian ploy was largely seen as a one-off, innovative idea that allowed them to be more competitive in a match in which they were expected to be handed a thumping. Springbok coach Allister Coetzee said he was delighted that Venter had agreed to join the Bok coaching staff. —Reuters

ENGLAND'S HAMEED FACES ANXIOUS WAIT AFTER INJURY

LONDON: England batsman Haseeb Hameed faces a nervous wait to discover the extent of the hand injury that forced him to retire hurt during his opening first-class game of the season for Lancashire. Hameed, who made a solid start to his England career during their tour of India, withdrew after facing 23 balls in Lancashire's game with Cambridge MCCU yesterday. The 20-year-old has been taken for a scan on his hand and will hope the damage isn't severe enough to stop him making a strong start to the English county season. Hameed scored 219 runs in three Tests against India before a finger injury forced him out of the final match of the five-game series, which England lost 4-0. He hit an unbeaten 59 from 156 deliveries while batting with a broken finger during the third Test in Mohali. Hameed also played three matches for England Lions in Sri Lanka in February, but managed just 78 runs in six innings. —AFP



BOSTON: Boston Bruins' David Backes (42) and Florida Panthers' Michael Sgarbossa (48) battle in the corner during the second period of an NHL hockey game in Boston, Saturday. — AP

NHL

DAVID KREJCI SCORES OFF BERRA'S GAFFE, LIFTS BRUINS OVER PANTHERS

BOSTON: The Bruins, keeping pace in their scramble for a playoff berth, completed a sweep of the five-game series with the Panthers with a 5-2 win. Goaltender Tuukka Rask said after making 24 saves, 13 in the third period, as the Bruins won their fourth straight game. The Bruins came into the game one point out of second place in the Atlantic Division and three points up in the wild-card race. David Krejci, whose giveaway led to Florida's first goal, cashed in on an egregious giveaway by goaltender Reto Berra to snap a 2-2 tie with 5:30 left in the second period.

Stars 3, Hurricanes 0

Kari Lehtonen made 25 saves as the Dallas Stars defeated the Carolina Hurricanes, severely damaging Carolina's late-season bid to make the playoffs. Jason Spezza scored in the second period while John Klingberg and Devin Shore added empty-net goals in a 22-second span. With Boston beating the Florida Panthers earlier, it left the Hurricanes six points behind the Bruins with five games remaining for the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference. Carolina goalie Cam Ward stopped 21 shots.

Canadiens 2, Lightning 1 (OT)

Alexander Radulov scored the overtime winner with a one-timer from the right circle 51 seconds into the extra period to give Montreal a 2-1 victory over Tampa Bay. The victory opened up an eight-point lead for the Canadiens, who sit atop the Atlantic Division ahead of Ottawa and Toronto. Tampa Bay remains ninth in the Eastern Conference standings, four points behind Boston with a game in hand on the Bruins. Carey Price finished with 21 saves for Montreal. Phillip Danault scored the Canadiens' first goal. Yann Gourde scored the tying goal for Tampa Bay in the third period. Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 32 shots in regulation and finished with 34.

Flyers 3, Devils 0

Rookie goaltender Anthony Stolarz turned aside all 22 shots he faced in emergency relief of Michal Neuvirth, who left the game after collapsing in his goal crease, to lead the Philadelphia Flyers to a 3-0 victory over the New Jersey Devils. Brayden Schenn, Colin McDonald and Jordan Weal scored goals for the Flyers, who won for the fourth straight time and remained six points behind the

Boston Bruins for the second wild-card playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Cory Schneider stopped 34 shots for the Devils.

Predators 3, Wild 0

The Nashville Predators set themselves up for their biggest game of the season with a 3-0 victory over the Minnesota Wild. Pekka Rinne earned his third shutout of the season by stopping 31 shots while Filip Forsberg and Kevin Fiala scored for Nashville. P.K. Subban added an empty-net goal.

The Predators' victory moved Nashville into a tie in points for third place in the Central Division with St. Louis. The Blues, who have a game in hand on the Predators, will host Nashville on Sunday. The team that finishes in third place will avoid a potential showdown with the red-hot Chicago Blackhawks in the first round.

Maple Leafs 5, Red Wings 4

Auston Matthews scored twice as the Toronto Maple Leafs edged the Detroit Red Wings. Matthews' 38th goal of the season at 18:51 of the third period gave the Leafs a 5-3 lead, but ultimately provided the margin of victory when Detroit's Mike Green scored at 19:15. James Van Riemsdyk's backhand past Detroit goalie Jimmy Howard at 17:34 of the

third snapped a 3-3 tie.

Jets 4, Senators 2

Eliminated from the postseason earlier in the week, the Jets won their fourth game in a row, posting a 4-2 victory over the Ottawa Senators. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 28 of 30 shots to post the victory, including a couple of nifty glove saves late in the game. Mike Condon turned aside 23 of 26 shots at the other end of the ice. Left winger Mathieu Perreault notched the winner with a quick shot from the slot at 7:46 of the third period before Nikolaj Ehlers put the game out of reach in the dying seconds with his 24th goal of the season into an empty net.

Oilers 3, Ducks 2 (OT)

The Edmonton Oilers took a step toward the Pacific Division title, as they rallied from a late 2-1 deficit to beat the Anaheim Ducks 3-2 in overtime. Leon Draisaitl scored off a pass from NHL leading scorer Connor McDavid, who had a goal and two assists. The Oilers and Ducks are tied on points for the Pacific Division lead, four points ahead of the San Jose Sharks. The Oilers hold the tiebreaker in regulation and overtime wins. The Ducks and Oilers each have four games left in their schedules. — Reuters

ASHTON DOUBLE HELPS SARACENS INTO EURO CUP SEMI-FINALS

LONDON: Chris Ashton scored two tries as holders Saracens booked their place in the semi-finals of the European Champions Cup with a 38-13 victory over Glasgow at London's Allianz Park yesterday. Ashton's double saw him move level with former France star Vincent Clerc's tournament record of 36 tries and was a fitting way for the ex-England wing to mark his final European appearance at Saracens' ground before he joins French club Toulon after the end of the season.

Victory saw Saracens set up an enticing semi-final away to Munster in Dublin later this month after the Irish giants beat Toulouse on Saturday. Saracens, also the English Premiership champions and bidding for a "double double", outscored Glasgow four tries to two, with centres Marcelo Bosch and Brad Barritt also crossing and the rest of their points kicked by England's Owen Farrell.

Saracens had won their last 12 home games in the tournament and they came into the match on a back of a 53-10 rout of Bath in the Premiership. But they were up against a Glasgow team who created the major shock of the pool stage with a 43-0 win away to English giants Leicester. This was Glasgow's first appearance in the knockout stages of Europe's premier club tournament and they had roughly half the support in a capacity crowd of 15,000.

Saracens nearly had two tries in the opening four minutes but Ashton and fellow wing Sean Maitland were denied in opposite corners by great cover tackles from Lee Jones and Stuart Hogg.

Saracens pressure led to a simple penalty in front of the posts for Farrell before Glasgow fly-half Finn Russell responded in kind. Glasgow suffered a setback when Scotland lock Jonny Gray was forced to leave the field permanently in the 11th

minute for a head injury assessment. Farrell kicked Saracens into a 6-3 lead with another easy penalty following a high tackle. He was off-target with a long-range effort but made it 9-3 in the 25th minute after England forward Maro Itoje won a breakdown penalty. The try Saracens had been threatening arrived in the 31st minute. Bosch and Barritt made ground before the ball was spun right to Ashton, who stepped inside Alex Dunbar.

Farrell missed the conversion but Saracens still led 14-3. Ashton almost had another try on the stroke of half time but another fine cover effort from Scotland fullback Hogg forced him into touch.

ASHTON DOUBLE

Shortly after the break, an over-ambitious pass by Billy Vunipola to Farrell saw Saracens lose possession.

Russell hacked the loose ball forward but with Saracens' Jackson Wray running back referee Jerome Garces ignored calls from Glasgow fans for an obstruction penalty. Nevertheless Glasgow got the score they needed when Jones regathered Russell's cross-kick and beat fullback Alex Goode and Ashton for a 48th-minute try.

Russell's conversion hit the post though and Saracens were still two scores ahead at 14-8. Just before the hour Saracens made the game safe with their second try. A box kick from Glasgow's Ali Price was held on the 22 by Ashton and the ball then taken up by Mako Vunipola and Richard Wigglesworth before Argentina's Bosch was sent in.

Farrell converted to make it 21-8 and then added a penalty before skipper Barritt went over for a 73rd-minute try after good work by his pack. Ashton and Glasgow's Ryan Wilson exchanged late tries but the game had already been decided. —AFP



Chris Ashton

MATSUYAMA EAGER TO DELIVER AUGUSTA JOY TO JAPAN

TOKYO: During a normal week on the PGA Tour, Hideki Matsuyama might find himself shadowed by five-to-10 Japanese media outlets tracking his every swing like unofficial scorekeepers.

But the US Masters is no more ordinary a week than world number four Matsuyama is a player, so Augusta National will be swarmed with Japanese coverage documenting golf's best hope of a first ever Asian-born winner at Augusta. The expectations are a lot to shoulder, even for the sturdy ones of 25-year-old Matsuyama who has reluctantly learned to live with the attention.

"Sometimes I wish I didn't have to report back to (the media) every day," Matsuyama told Reuters through a translator last month at the Arnold Palmer Invitational where he was flanked by reporters after an uneventful second round.

"But we're all family. I'm grateful they're here. They are doing their job and I'm doing mine." Matsuyama is steadily improving at his craft, but golfing form, like his anonymity on the course, can be elusive.

After earning two wins along with an unofficial victory at Tiger Woods' Hero

World Challenge to begin the 2016-17 campaign, Matsuyama has since fought his game and hardly factored over the last month and a half. "My preparation (for the Masters) is going slowly," Matsuyama said. "I'm not quite where I want to be yet but I'm working toward it." With four PGA Tour wins and eight on the Japan Golf Tour, Matsuyama has long seemed destined to realize a major victory. He won the 2010 Asian amateur championship to earn his place at Augusta National in 2011 where he finished in a tie for 27th in his Masters debut. Matsuyama has since developed

a strong rapport with the Masters, finishing fifth in 2015 and tying for seventh last year. It is his exceptional ball-striking ability that translates well at Augusta, and any venue for that matter.

And when Matsuyama is at his best he can dissect a golf course with machine-like precision while flashing his signature move - a backswing featuring a pronounced pause before transitioning forward with effortless strength.

"He's going to be one of the top guys to beat for a very long time," Woods said after watching Matsuyama dominate his tournament in December.

"Look at his swing, look at his game and look at the body that he has. It's built for a workload and it's built to handle the test of time." Matsuyama's most stern test, though, has always come on the putting green which is the only place he can appear powerless.

Augusta National's undulating greens are the course's greatest defense, and one Matsuyama knows he must solve if he wishes to challenge for a Green Jacket. "Augusta National is so demanding on and around the greens," Matsuyama said. "That's where I'm going to put a lot of work in." —Reuters

GOLF

SOGGY AUGUSTA BOOSTS MCILROY'S BID FOR ELUSIVE GREEN JACKET

LONDON: Rory McIlroy's bid for an elusive first US Masters title and the grand slam of golf's major championships has received an unexpected boost from the long-range weather forecast.

Heavy rain and storms are predicted to batter the Augusta National course, handing a potential advantage to the Northern Irishman whose four major titles have all come at tournaments afflicted by adverse weather conditions.

McIlroy, the world number two, is long overdue a Masters triumph on a course perfectly suited to his long driving and creative shot-making.

Six years ago, the 27-year-old took a four-shot advantage into the final round and shot 37 on the front nine to hold on to the lead. But he made triple-bogey on the 10th hole and four-putted for a double-bogey on the 12th en route to a final-round 80 that left him 10 strokes behind champion Charl Schwartzel in a tie for 15th place.

The experience hardly scarred McIlroy. A few weeks later he surged to his maiden major title with an eight-stroke victory in the US Open at a rain-sodden Bethesda, Maryland. McIlroy won the 2012 US PGA Championship and took that title again in 2014 two months after claiming his first British Open triumph at Royal Liverpool. But the former world number one has never conquered Augusta.

Moderate performances came in 2012 and 2013, when he finished 40th and 25th, before top-10 finishes in the past three

years. McIlroy tied for eighth place in 2014 and shot a closing 66 to finish fourth in 2015, six shots behind champion Jordan Spieth. Twelve months ago he rebounded from an ugly third-round 77 to close with a solid 71 which earned him a share of 10th, again six strokes adrift of the winner, Danny Willett. Although McIlroy's preparations for the Masters have been hampered by a six-week injury layoff, he has finished second, seventh and fourth in his three strokeplay events this year.

He suffered an early exit from the WGC-Dell Match Play in Texas last week, providing the opportunity to travel to Augusta early to get in some practice rounds.

"It's giving me a chance to prepare a little bit better," McIlroy told reporters.

"I feel like I've worked a lot on my short game. If anything I feel like that part of my game is as sharp as it has been ever going into Augusta, so that's a good thing." McIlroy has played only 10 competitive rounds since returning to action following his rib injury. "Right now I can't see a downside to not having played as much as I planned to. I feel really healthy. And freshness could help, especially mentally. Mentally, going in there and not being drained is a good thing as well."

A glance at the weather forecast should lift McIlroy's confidence even further and with the Augusta greens unlikely to be as lightning quick as usual he will fancy his chances of donning the Green Jacket at last. —Reuters



OUDENAARDE: (From L) Second-placed Belgium's Greg Van Avermaet of BMC Racing Team, winner Belgium's Philippe Gilbert of Quick-Step Floors and third-placed Netherlands' Niki Terpstra of Quick-Step Floors pose on the podium after the 101st edition of the 'Ronde van Vlaanderen - Tour des Flandres - Tour of Flanders' one day cycling race, 260km from Antwerp to Oudenaarde, yesterday. — AFP

CYCLING

GILBERT FINALLY WINS TOUR OF FLANDERS

OUDENAARDE: Belgian champion Philippe Gilbert carried his bike over the line above his head as he won the prestigious Tour of Flanders for the first time yesterday with a remarkable solo breakaway.

Gilbert, 34, attacked alone with 55km of the 261 km race to go and held on to win as world champion Peter Sagan and Olympic gold medalist Greg Van Avermaet crashed 17km from the end of the cobbled classic. Van Avermaet, the in-form rider this spring, picked himself up to take second place ahead of Gilbert's Quick Step Floors team-mate Niki Terpstra but the crash with Sagan and Oliver Naesen potentially robbed the race of a grandstand finish.

Instead, Gilbert's audacious solo breakaway paid dividends. Victory in Flanders added to the 2012 world champion's impressive resume that includes stage wins at all three Grand Tours and victories in two other 'Monument' races-Liege-Bastogne-Liege and the Giro di Lombardia.

Gilbert has also won major one-day classics including Amstel Gold, Fleche Wallonne and Clasic de San Sebastian, but this victory tops the lot. It was his seventh participation at Flanders and first for five years having previously come third in 2009 and 2010.

But while a BMC team-mate of Belgian compatriot Van Avermaet's he was forced to ride the Ardennes classics rather than the cobbled ones.

AFTER-BURNERS

He was part of a group of 14 riders who broke clear of the peloton around 90km from the finish as another team-mate, three-time Flanders winner Tom Boonen, accelerated up the iconic Muur climb. Both Van Avermaet and Sagan were caught out and left in the peloton, which quickly lost a minute.

They had started to close in when, with 55km to go and on the second ascent of the 2.2km-long Oude-Kwaremont climb, Gilbert turned on the after-burners and broke clear on his own.

A crash took out Belgian Sep Vanmarcke, third in 2014 and last year, also taking down Briton Luke Rowe and forcing Maciej Bodnar off the road. It slowed the breakaway allowing Van Avermaet and Sagan, amongst others, to catch the breakaway group.

But Gilbert remained out front on his own with a little over 30 seconds. The Belgian champion stretched out his lead to over a minute but he had a long way to go solo to try to hold off a group containing many of the favourites and strongest riders in the race.

On the Taaienberg climb at 37km from the finish, Boonen suffered a mechanical problem that ended his chances while Sagan and Van Avermaet went on the offensive.

They formed a seven-man chase group just under a minute behind as Gilbert hit the third and final ascension of the Oude-Kwaremont climb with 18km left.

Sagan attacked on that climb with only Van Avermaet and Naesen able to follow but suddenly, the world champion clipped the barriers separating riders from fans and went down, taking his two companions with him.

Those three looked the only ones capable of

catching Gilbert and their crash left the Belgian free to ride to victory. Van Avermaet did manage to climb back on his bike and form a chase trio with Dylan Van Baarle and Terpstra, who was merely sitting in behind the other two chasers.

Gilbert was tiring but with only two men working behind to try to catch him, the gap was too much to close. Van Avermaet took the sprint finish for second leaving him to wonder what might have been without his crash. — AFP

BADMINTON

SINDHU BEATS MARIN TO LIFT INDIA OPEN BADMINTON TITLE

NEW DELHI: India's PV Sindhu defeated top seed Carolina Marin of Spain in straight games to win the final match of the India Open badminton tournament in New Delhi yesterday. Third seed Sindhu beat the Spaniard 21-19, 21-16 in a match that lasted 46 minutes at the Siri Fort Sports Complex. The 21-year-old Olympic silver medalist took an early lead in the match and continued to dominate the game throughout in front of a cheering home crowd.

Sindhu took a crucial 5-1 lead in the first game but a fight back by Marin left the score 11-9 at the mid break. Marin came back strongly after the change of ends to take a one-point lead 18-17 before Sindhu rallied to seal the game at 21-19.

The lanky Indian raced to a 4-0 lead in the

second game and maintained a five-point lead at 15-10. She locked the game at 21-16 to lift the title.

The maiden title win helped the Indian shuttler narrow down her head-to-head record against the Olympian Spaniard to 4-5. Sindhu had last defeated Marin in the BWF Super Series in Dubai last year.

She won her semi-final clash against second-seeded Sung Ji Hyun of South Korea on Saturday. In the men's singles final, Viktor Axelsen of Denmark clinched the title beating Chinese Taipei's Tien Chen Chou in straight games.

Third seed Axelsen took just 36 minutes to edge past Chou 21-13, 21-10 to claim his maiden India Open title at the Siri Fort Sports Complex. —AFP



PV Sindhu



Rory McIlroy

THOMPSON TAKES 2-SHOT LEAD TO FINAL ROUND OF ANA INSPIRATION

RANCHO MIRAGE: One day after Lexi Thompson couldn't even tee off until shortly before sunset, she had to get back to the Dinah Shore Course before dawn to start a 28-hole day.

Thompson is excelling under unusual conditions at the ANA Inspiration, and it has put her in prime position to play for her second major title. Thompson claimed the tournament lead while completing her wind-delayed second round Saturday before moving two shots ahead of Norway's Suzann Pettersen with a third-round 67. After an extra-long day of play in wind and sun, Thompson is at 13-under 203 heading into Sunday's final round.

"I struggled a little bit off the tee and had a few more rough shots than I wanted, but you can't ever complain about a 5-under round," Thompson said. The 22-year-old Thompson's victory here in 2014 is her only previous major victory, but the US Olympian simply excels at Mission Hills Country Club. She smashed her drives and got great results from her inconsistent putter on the way to six birdies in the third round, keeping a competitive field squarely behind her.

"I just love this golf course," Thompson said. "I get to hit a lot of drivers, and it just sets up nicely for me all over." Thompson and Pettersen stayed ahead of a field posting unusually low scores, with the 2-over 146 cut matching the lowest cut score in tournament history.

They did it despite intermittent returns of the desert wind that called an early halt to Thursday's play and forced two days of catch-up, forcing 56 golfers to complete their second rounds on Saturday morning. The field got all caught up on a postcard-perfect desert Saturday, and warm weather is expected.

"It's definitely not a usual week, what

we're used to, but it's a major week," Thompson said. "We have to deal with the wind conditions and whatever weather we get." Pettersen shot a third-round 68 to reach 11 under, while Australia's Minjee Lee joined a South Korean trio - Inbee Park, So Yeon Ryu and Mi Jung Hur - at 10-under 206. Michelle Wie, Cristie Kerr, world No. 2 Ariya Jutanugarn and France's Karine Icher are five shots behind Thompson at 8 under.

"I think I've always said since the first time I saw this place, it really fits my eye," said Pettersen, a two-time major champion.

"I'm driving the ball well, and that's a major key on this golf course. I've got a big job to do (Sunday). The leaderboard is packed behind me as well. You've got to expect to go out there and shoot low. There's a lot at stake, but I'm all in for it."

Thompson debuted at the Dinah Shore Course as a 14-year-old amateur in 2009, and she won in 2014, the tournament's final year as the Kraft Nabisco Championship. She has finished seventh and fifth in the two years since the major's name change.

Thompson immediately took charge Saturday morning with back-to-back birdies, claiming the outright lead and surging to a second-round 67. After following two birdies with a bogey early in her third round, she settled in and finished the final 14 holes at 4 under.

Wie battled to a third-round 71 while struggling with a nagging back injury during her own 28-hole day. She repeatedly saved par to stay in contention.

"I just hit one shot that was a little bit out of sync and kind of threw my hips out of place," Wie said. "I think it was just a lot of golf. The two full warmups (and then) 28 holes. Just not a young stallion anymore, I guess." —AP

ATHLETICS

BANNED DRUG FOUND IN JAMAICAN SPRINTERS' 2008 SAMPLES

BERLIN: Small amounts of the banned substance clenbuterol have been retroactively found in the samples of Jamaican sprinters at the 2008 Olympic Games, according to a report yesterday.

German broadcaster ARD claims the International Olympic Committee (IOC) learnt of the discovery late last year, but no action has been taken as the levels detected by testing using updated techniques are so small.

ARD has not specified which Jamaican athletes' samples are affected from the Beijing Games, where superstar Usain Bolt won three gold medals, but said other athletes from other countries also failed retroactive testing.

The ARD report quotes Olivier Niggli, director of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), saying: "I am aware of the fact that there are Jamaican cases with very low levels of clenbuterol.

"If the amounts found are relatively low compared to direct intake of the substance, WADA accepts that such cases are not announced."

Jamaica originally won five golds in the sprint events at the 2008 Games. However, the 4x100m men's relay team had to give their golds back in January after Bolt's team-mate Nesta Carter retrospectively tested positive for the stimulant methylhexanamine. An IOC state-

ment has confirmed the ARD report that some samples taken at Beijing 2008 contained clenbuterol. "During the re-analysis of the stored urine samples from the Olympic Games Beijing 2008, the laboratory found in a number of cases of athletes from a number of countries and from a number of different sports, very low levels of clenbuterol," said the IOC in a statement. "All of the values were below 1ng/ml and therefore in the range

of potential meat contamination cases. "To protect these innocent athletes, we cannot reveal any more details about them and we expect that these athletes' rights are also respected by the media."

Clenbuterol is the performance-enhancing substance which saw Spanish cyclist Alberto Contador stripped of his 2010 Tour de France title and banned for two years after testing positive during that year's race. —AFP

FOXES BOSS SHAKESPEARE'S MID-SEASON DREAM CONTINUES

LEICESTER: Leicester City boss Craig Shakespeare moved within touching distance of achieving his main goal of top-flight survival and joined managerial royalty in the process as the Premier League champions beat Stoke City 2-0.

But the Foxes' boss admitted he has having to pinch himself after extending his perfect start to life at the helm of the Midlands club with a fifth successive win.

Saturday's home success at the King Power Stadium saw Shakespeare become the first Englishman to win his first four games as a Premier League manager.

In doing so he joined serial winners Jose Mourinho, Carlo Ancelotti, Guus Hiddink and Pep Guardiola as the only managers to achieve the feat. "I'm very proud," said Shakespeare, whose other win came in the Champions League.

"You sometimes have to pinch yourself in terms of the names being mentioned. "I'm at a very, very early stage in my management career but to be mentioned in the same breath of them makes me very proud.

"I realise there's a lot of people to thank along the way, in terms of my previous managers when I've been an assistant, but also the players." Having won his only game as caretaker manager at West Bromwich Albion, Shakespeare has a 100 percent record from six games as a boss after he was promoted from within the Leicester set-up following the controversial decision by the club's Thai owners to sack title-winning manager Claudio Ranieri. The Italian was axed after a dramatic slump in form left Leicester flirting with relegation.

NDIDI ROCKET

But Shakespeare admitted his latest victory had its nervous moments, despite goals from Wilfred Ndidi, with a 25-yard rocket of a shot, and Jamie Vardy clinching what looked like a straightforward success. "It never felt comfortable," he said. "I did feel that the first goal was going to be

important-and what a goal it was. "He (Ndidi) has scored one similar to it before. It gave us a foothold in the game, which was very important. "The timing of the second goal was vitally important to settle everyone's nerves down and allow them to express themselves."

Leicester continue their quest for Premier League survival when they host bottom side Sunderland on Tuesday, with Foxes captain Wes Morgan set for a third straight game on the sidelines because of a back injury.

Yohan Benalouane has deputised in central defence in the wins against West Ham and Stoke. Praising Benalouane's "very assured performances" in recent games, Shakespeare added: "He's had to be more patient than anyone at the football club, mainly because of the form of Robert Huth and Morgan, but he's taken his chance very well. "Wes is struggling to be fit for Tuesday."

Shakespeare hopes, however, that winger Marc Albrighton will recover from the sickness bug that kept him out of the Stoke win. Defeat extended Stoke's winless away run in the Premier League to four games and manager Mark Hughes admitted: "We were a little bit off the pace, probably half a yard short all day long."

It also proved another frustrating day for January signing Saido Berahino, who rarely looked likely to open his goalscoring account for his new club.

"Saido was well shepherded," said former Wales striker Hughes, whose impressive career up front took in spell at English giants Manchester United and Chelsea, as well as spells with Barcelona and Bayern Munich. "He didn't get much change out of the centre-halves."

Hughes added: "We need to be able to release him more often. It's a more a collective thing rather than Saido's limitations.

"It wasn't a case of him not being fit or up to speed." —AFP



DECINES-CHARPIEU: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian defender Thiago Silva (C) holds the trophy as he celebrates with teammates after winning the French League Cup final football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Monaco (ASM) on Saturday, at the Parc Olympique Lyonnais stadium in Decines-Charpieu, near Lyon. — AFP

SOCCER

DI MARIA SPARKLES AS PSG RETAIN LEAGUE CUP

LYON: Angel Di Maria scored one goal and set up two more as Paris Saint-Germain thrashed Monaco 4-1 on Saturday to lift the French League Cup for the fourth successive season. Julian Draxler fired PSG ahead with just four minutes played in the final in Lyon, but Thomas Lemar levelled for Monaco before the half hour. Argentine international Di Maria restored the lead for Unai Emery's side a minute before half-time and Edinson Cavani sealed a record seventh title for PSG with a clinical second-half brace. "We've had some difficult times, but we haven't given up. We've proved we're a great side. I think it's a deserved win and we can celebrate a bit," midfielder Marco Verratti told Canal+. "In four years here we've won everything. We have a great team and this is a victory for everyone involved. The league title is our goal now and we'll give it our all until the finish."

After the shock of their Champions League last 16 collapse against Barcelona in the second leg, a third meeting with Ligue 1 leaders Monaco this season presented an opportunity for redemption for PSG. Monaco's Radamel Falcao failed to shake off a nagging hip injury that has sidelined the Colombian since March 11, but Thiago Motta returned to the PSG line-up for his first start in six weeks.

PSG have dominated the competition in recent seasons-Monaco's last major trophy came when they won the 2003 final-and the holders stormed into an early lead albeit in controversial circumstances.

Verratti slipped Di Maria in behind the defence, with the Argentine electing to unselfishly slide the ball across for Draxler to tap home. Replays showed the Germany international was marginally offside, although unlike in Tuesday's international between France and Spain where a video assistant referee was used in the country for the first time there was no such help available at Parc OL.

TOWERING HEADER

Monaco shrugged off that setback as Lemar replied with a fine equaliser on 27 minutes.

Bernardo Silva's chipped pass found Djibril Sidibe inside the area and the France full-back laid the ball back for Lemar to expertly sweep home from the edge of the box.

Cavani thought he had put PSG back in front as he reacted quickest to Thiago Silva's towering back-post header, but the Uruguayan's goal-bound flick was superbly kept out by Danijel Subasic before the Croat smothered the rebound. However there was nothing the Monaco keeper could do as Di Maria stabbed low into the corner with half-time approaching after Draxler displayed remarkable balance to feed the unmarked Argentine. Joao Moutinho fizzed a shot just over the crossbar following the interval, but PSG landed the fatal blow on 54 minutes as Cavani hammered past Subasic after a sublime floated cross from Verratti.

Benjamin Mendy went close to halving the deficit with a stinging effort, but Cavani should have netted his second and sealed the outcome when he steered wide from Di Maria's delivery from the left. Substitute Irvin Cardona flashed a header just wide of Kevin Trapp's left-hand post,

while Subasic dived at full-stretch to palm away a Di Maria effort with the outside of the boot.

But the Argentine combined with Cavani in the final minute to add a fourth for PSG as the Uruguayan powered home Di Maria's cross from close range to cap a convincing triumph.

"We played a great match, with humility, consistency and sacrifice," said Cavani. Monaco boss Leonardo Jardim commented: "For several of our young players this was their first final. Just because we lost doesn't mean we will play less well in the competitions still open to us." —AFP

ROWING

OXFORD SEE OFF CAMBRIDGE TO REGAIN BOAT RACE CROWN

LONDON: Oxford won the men's Boat Race for the fourth time in five years as they defeated Cambridge to regain the title on London's River Thames yesterday.

Having lost last year, Oxford were determined to reestablish their recent dominance in the 163rd edition of the event, which went ahead after an unexploded World War II bomb was safely removed from near the course earlier in the day.

Police were called on Saturday after a member of the public spotted the device near Putney Bridge, yards from the start of the historic event. Marine experts examined the submerged bomb and it was removed by specialist officers.

Oxford led throughout for a final time of 16 minutes 59 seconds and their president Michael Disanto, who rowed for the United States at the Rio Olympics, was delighted to see the team rewarded for their hard work. "There is nothing like this. We were better on the day and we wanted it," Disanto told BBC Sport.

"In the autumn nothing was going our way and we have been building and it has

culminated in this." Pre-race favourites Oxford won the toss, and chose to start on the same Surrey station on the south side of the river as Cambridge's women, who had earlier won the women's race.

The Oxford boat boasted two brothers, Jamie and Ollie Cook, along with William Warr, who had to banish from his mind allegations of being a traitor after racing for Cambridge in 2015.

Oxford opened up a lead of almost a boat length at around two minutes. There was almost a clash of oars as the two boats fought for the more favourable water channels on the river, before Oxford surged ahead coming to the Hammersmith Bridge section.

Cambridge dug deep to stay as close as they could, even momentarily closing the gap, but Oxford found clear water at the end to win by a length and a half and reclaim the title.

After crossing the finish line, Jamie Cook clambered over his exhausted team mates to stagger down the boat and embrace his older brother. —AFP



LONDON: Oxford's Michael Disanto (Centre kneeling) poses behind the trophy as he celebrates with team mates cox Sam Collier, Vassilis Ragoussis, James Cook, Michael Disanto, Oliver Siegelara, Joshua Bugajski, Oliver Cook, Matthew O'Leary and William Warr and coach Sean Bowden (L) during the presentation after Oxford won the annual men's boat race between Oxford University and Cambridge University on the River Thames in London yesterday. — AFP

LETHAL LEWANDOWSKI FUELLING BAYERN CHARGE

BERLIN: Robert Lewandowski's hat-trick on Saturday brought him level in the race to be the Bundesliga's top scorer this season and Bayern Munich's Poland star is on fire for club and country. The 28-year-old striker netted his fourth hat-trick for Bayern this season in Saturday's 6-0 drubbing of Augsburg in a masterclass performance in which he also created goals for Thomas Muller and Thiago Alcantara. "He scored three goals and set up two more, what more can I say about him?" beamed Bayern coach Carlo Ancelotti after the Augsburg rout. "I am happy to have a striker like that who scores in more or less every game." Lewandowski has scored eight goals in five games for Poland in 2016/17 on top of netting 36 times for Bayern in all competitions. His hat-trick against Augsburg came after he also netted in last Sunday's 2-1 win over Montenegro to leave Poland six points clear in their World Cup qualifying group.

He is now level on 24 Bundesliga goals alongside Borussia Dortmund's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang in his bid to retain his crown as Germany's top scorer.

The lean, mean goal-scoring machine is

nicknamed "The Body" at Bayern and has developed into one of the world's top strikers. His toned physique comes from a strict diet and his pregnant wife Anna - a former karate international for Poland - is a personal trainer. "He is the most professional player I have ever met," enthused Pep Guardiola, Ancelotti's predecessor at Bayern.

"In his head, he thinks about the right food, sleep and training: 24 hours a day. "He is always there, never injured, because he focuses on these things. He always knows what is important to be in the best condition." There was always a top athlete lurking in Lewandowski's DNA. His father Krystof was a Polish judo champion, who also played football in the Polish second division, while his mother Iwona was a professional volleyball player. His professional career started when Lewandowski finished top scorer in the third and then second divisions at Warsaw-based Znicz Pruszkow, who won back-to-back promotions in 2007 and 2008.

A move followed to Lech Poznan and he hit 18 goals to help them win the 2009/10 Polish league title in his second season. —AFP



LISBON: Benfica's Luisao tackles Porto's Yacine Brahimi, right, during a Portuguese league soccer match between Benfica and FC Porto at the Luz stadium in Lisbon, Saturday. — AP

Sports

Gilbert finally wins Tour of Flanders

16



Canadians cap golden return at worlds

17



MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2017

RAMPANT CELTIC ROAR TO SCOTTISH TITLE

Page 19



LONDON: Arsenal's Chilean striker Alexis Sanchez (R) vies with Manchester City's Argentinian striker Sergio Aguero (C) and Manchester City's Spanish midfielder David Silva (L) during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Manchester City at the Emirates Stadium in London yesterday. — AFP

RESPITE FOR WENGER AS ARSENAL HOLD CITY

	Arsenal	2
	Man City	2

LONDON: Arsenal earned beleaguered manager Arsene Wenger a measure of respite by twice hitting back to hold Manchester City to a 2-2 draw at the Emirates Stadium yesterday. Pep Guardiola twice saw his City side go ahead, through Leroy Sane and then Sergio Aguero, but Arsenal responded each time via goals from Theo Walcott and Shkodran Mustafi.

Victory would have been a welcome tonic for Wenger, who has come in for heavy criticism from

Arsenal's fans, but after four defeats in five Premier League games, the point was welcome. "We were not completely at our best because of the pressure, but we showed mental strength and did not lie down," Wenger said.

His side remain seven points below City—who occupy the fourth and final Champions League berth—in sixth place, but they retain a game in hand.

City were prevented both from reclaiming third place from Liverpool and eating into Chelsea's advantage following the leaders' shock 2-1 defeat at home to Crystal Palace. But Guardiola's men, who have now drawn their last three league games, will have an opportunity to close to within eight points of the summit when they travel to Chelsea on Wednesday.

"We didn't play in the first half," Guardiola said. "After the goal, we forgot to play. The desire went. In the second half, we played more. We suffered a

lot in the first half because we did not make those passes together." Wenger again faced protests from some Arsenal fans, this time in the form of an advertising van parked outside the ground and leaflets about the launch of a #NoNewContract social media campaign. City's team featured the novelty of Jesus Navas at right-back, but there was nothing new about the huge boulevards of space they found between the members of Arsenal's back four. It took City less than five minutes to draw blood as Kevin De Bruyne's hopeful pass from deep inside his own half sent Sane scampering clear. The Germany winger outpaced Hector Bellerin and skipped past David Ospina deputising in goal for the injured Petr Cech—before rolling in his eighth City goal.

KOSCIELNY INJURY

When De Bruyne bent a low shot against the

post and David Silva forced Ospina to parry with the rebound, Arsenal looked set for a long afternoon. They worked a foothold, however, Mesut Ozil putting a tame shot straight at Willy Caballero, Nacho Monreal lashing over from a corner and Alexis Sanchez curling centimetres wide.

It took a last-ditch sliding challenge from Fernandinho, meanwhile, to prevent Sanchez applying the finishing touch to Ozil's flick. Wenger's men equalised in the 40th minute when former Arsenal left-back Gael Clichy played Walcott inside from Mustafi's header and the England man bundled a shot past Caballero. But in testament to Arsenal's recent travails, parity would exist for just 131 seconds.

De Bruyne's dart into the box was halted by the sliding Laurent Koscielny, but Silva collected the loose ball and laid it off to Aguero, who crashed a low, angled drive beneath Ospina. Koscielny was

forced off by an Achilles injury at the break, with Gabriel taking his place. Guardiola, meanwhile, tightened things up by introducing Yaya Toure for Raheem Sterling and moving De Bruyne to the right flank. Arsenal had threatened in first-half stoppage time, Walcott stabbing over from Sanchez's pass, and eight minutes into the second half they levelled when Mustafi rose to head in Ozil's corner.

While Wenger sent on Olivier Giroud and Alex Iwobi for Walcott and Danny Welbeck in search of a third goal, it was City who came closest to finding a winner. Ospina was obliged to parry a booming Fernandinho drive and field a header by Aguero, who had also headed wide from Navas's cross moments before Mustafi's equaliser. City wanted a penalty in stoppage time after the ball brushed Monreal's arm as he attempted a stooping header, but referee Andre Marriner said no. —AFP



KEY BISCAYNE: Roger Federer, of Switzerland, kisses his trophy after defeating Rafael Nadal, of Spain, during the men's singles final tennis match at the Miami Open, yesterday, in Key Biscayne, Fla.—AP

FEDERER DOWNS NADAL TO WIN MIAMI OPEN

MIAMI: Roger Federer defeated long-standing rival Rafael Nadal 6-3, 6-4 to win the Miami Open yesterday and continue his outstanding start to the year.

Since returning from his six month injury lay-off, the 35-year-old Federer has also won the Australian Open and Indian Wells and he heads into the clay season as, once again, the dominant presence on the ATP Tour.

Federer has beaten Nadal in all of those events this year and has now won his last four meetings between the pair. The Spaniard was playing in his fifth Miami final but remains without a win in the Masters series event.

The first set was a tight affair with both players having their opportunities to break but it was not until the eighth game and 10th break

point of the set that one of them was able to get ahead. Nadal could only find the net from a Federer backhand and the Swiss grabbed a 5-3 lead and he comfortably held the next game to secure the first set.

There has always been a marked contrast between Federer and Nadal's differing styles and with time it has become further accentuated. Nadal was working hard in the 83 degrees afternoon heat, thrusting himself into his shots while the elegant Federer's poise appeared almost casual.

The second set took an almost identical path, albeit with fewer openings to break for both players until Federer again pounced, to grab a 5-4 lead when Nadal went long returning a fine backhand. — AFP

REAL CONSOLIDATE FIRST PLACE WITH ALAVES WIN

BARCELONA: Real Madrid tightened their grip on top spot by beating Alaves 3-0 at home in La Liga yesterday to provisionally move five points ahead of nearest challengers Barcelona despite coach Zinedine Zidane making a string of changes in defence.

Karim Benzema put Real ahead in the 31st minute while appearing to be offside in the build-up to the goal but Alaves still caused the leaders a few headaches before goals from Isco and Nacho in the 85th and 88th minutes sealed the points.

Sevilla slipped out of the top three after being held to a 0-0 draw at home to struggling Sporting Gijon in the early game.

Real were dealt an early setback when Raphael Varane had to go off with a hamstring problem in the 11th minute which forced Zidane to rejig his defence, moving Nacho to centre back and switching Danilo from right back to left back to accommodate substitute Dani Carvajal, who set up the breakthrough goal.

Carvajal received a pass from Benzema on the right and cut inside to send the ball bouncing back to the Frenchman who lashed it into the net. Zidane had rested goalkeeper Keylor Navas, captain Sergio Ramos and Marcelo, and was missing Casemiro through suspension, but opted for a highly attacking formation, starting playmaker Isco in the midfield three behind his first choice attacking trio of Gareth Bale, Benzema and Cristiano Ronaldo. Alaves spurned two clear chances to level in the second half before Isco killed off their hopes by smashing home a perfectly weighted pass from Ronaldo on the counter, while Nacho bundled in the third goal moments later, pouncing after Bale had smacked the crossbar from a free-kick. Real top the standings on 68 points after 28 games although champions Barcelona, who have 63 also from 28, can peg them back when they visit Granada later on Sunday. Real will then have an extra game in hand against Celta Vigo due to be played in May. Sevilla find themselves outside the top three for the first time since November after being held goalless by relegation-threatened Sporting Gijon, with the hosts dropping points for the fourth consecutive league game. Jorge Sampaoli's Sevilla side dominated possession and had 17 goal attempts but lacked a cutting edge, particularly after the break when they launched repeated assaults on the visiting area but could not get past the impressive Ivan Cuellar in goal.

Sevilla slide to fourth spot on 58 points, level with Atletico Madrid, who leapfrogged them on goal difference after beating Malaga 2-0 on Saturday. Sevilla have surrendered a nine-point lead over Atletico in the space of four games. — Reuters



MADRID: Real Madrid's midfielder Isco (R) vies with Deportivo Alaves' midfielder Edgard Mendez during the Spanish league football match Real Madrid CF vs Deportivo Alaves at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid yesterday. — AFP



ZAIN LAUNCHES 'A BUNDLE OF JOY' POSTPAID CAMPAIGN



BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi speaks during the Iraq Energy Forum at Al-Rashid Hotel in the capital Baghdad yesterday. Leaders and the ministers of oil and electricity met to discuss Iraq's energy sector at the forum. —AFP

IRAQ VOWS TO FULLY COMPLY WITH OIL CUT DEAL

BAGHDAD TO BOOST CRUDE OIL PRODUCTION BY YEAR-END

BAGHDAD: Iraq has assured OPEC it will fully comply with an agreement to cut oil supply in order to bolster crude prices, OPEC Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo said yesterday in Baghdad. Barkindo told reporters that OPEC members would consider whether to extend the production decrease agreement at a meeting next month. The deal propped up the crude price to around \$50 per barrel. Iraq holds the world's fourth-largest oil reserves. This year, it added 10 billion barrels, bringing its total reserves up to 153.1 billion barrels.

Iraq's compliance stands now at 98 percent, the nation's Oil Minister Jabar Al-Luaibi told reporters, after addressing a conference in the Iraqi capital, also attended by Barkindo.

Compliance with the deal agreed by OPEC and non-OPEC producers at the end of last year to cut supply is "encouraging," Barkindo told the forum. General compliance with supply cuts by the oil producers was 86 percent in January and 94 percent in February, he added.

The market is already balancing, Barkindo said, adding stocks of crude were coming down. Luaibi said he was satisfied with the existing deal, but declined to say whether Iraq would support an extension, leaving it to an OPEC ministerial meeting planned in May. The current deal, he said, "contains many positive elements and achieved a lot of targets; work is ongoing to reach the



BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi (fourth right) and parliament speaker Salim Al-Juburi (third right) attend the Iraq Energy Forum at Al-Rashid Hotel in the capital Baghdad yesterday. —AFP

reduction of 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) agreed by OPEC and 11 other nations including Russia for their combined production in the first half of 2017.

The accord has lifted crude to about \$50

a barrel. But the price gain has also encouraged US shale oil producers, which are not part of the pact, to boost output. While Iraq is committed to achieving 100 percent of its target reduction, it will proceed with proj-

ects to boost oil production capacity to 5 million barrels per day before the end of the year, Luaibi said.

OPEC's second-largest producer, after Saudi Arabia, Iraq will proceed in parallel with exploration plans to increase its reserves by 15 billion barrels in 2018, to reach 178 billion barrels, he said.

Among the plans to increase output capacity from existing fields is a sea water injection plan which is in process of being tendered, he added. Iraq's oil production has averaged 4.464 million barrels per day (bpd) so far in March, a reduction of more than 300,000 bpd on levels before OPEC cuts were implemented from Jan. 1, state-oil marketer SOMO said on Thursday.

Average crude exports were 3.756 million bpd in March, versus a record of more than 4 million bpd in November, according to SOMO. Most of Iraq's crude is exported from southern ports, the region where it is produced. Exports from the south averaged 3.2 million bpd in March, Luaibi said.

Constructive meeting

Barkindo described as "very constructive" meetings he had on Saturday with Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi and other Iraqi leaders in Baghdad. Iraq's natural gas output will triple to 1,700 million cubic feet per day (cf) by 2018, as it implements projects to reduce flaring, Luaibi told the conference.

The minister said yesterday that his country plans to increase daily crude oil production to 5 million barrels by the end of this year, up from the current rate of about 4.4 million barrels per day, to secure sorely needed cash for its ailing economy.

Iraq, where oil revenues make up nearly 95 percent of the budget, has been reeling under an economic crisis since 2014, when oil prices began their descent from a high of above \$100 a barrel. The Islamic State group's onslaught, starting in 2014, has exacerbated the situation - forcing Iraq to divert much of its resources to a long and costly war.

Addressing an energy conference in Baghdad, Oil Minister Jabar Ali Al-Luaibi didn't give details on which of the country's oil fields would supply the increased output.

Late last year, Iraq joined a deal by OPEC and non-OPEC members to lower production for six months by 1.8 million barrels a day in order to prop up global oil prices. The mutual production decrease began on Jan 1. Iraq's share in the deal is to reduce output by 210,000 barrels a day to 4.351 million barrels.

"There are positive elements in that deal and we achieved a lot of its targets," Al-Luaibi told reporters on the sideline of the conference. "Work and cooperation are underway ... to reach the 1.8 (million barrels a day) reduction," he added, without divulging whether Iraq is going to support an extension to that deal. —Agencies

MAJOR ABU DHABI LENDERS MERGE TO CREATE UAE'S LARGEST BANK

DUBAI: Two major lenders in the United Arab Emirates, the First Gulf Bank and the National Bank of Abu Dhabi, have completed a merger to become the largest bank in the country under the name First Abu Dhabi Bank.

The new bank has total assets of \$180 billion and capital of nearly \$3 billion, making it also one of the largest banks in the Middle East. The First Abu Dhabi Bank began trading yesterday on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange under the symbol "NBAD."

The plan for a merger was first announced in July. The merger takes place as Abu Dhabi, the seat of the UAE's federal government and home to more than 90 percent of the country's oil reserves, grapples with lower oil prices.

The merger was seen as a precursor to more deals in the United Arab Emirates' financial services industry, where about 50 lenders compete in a market of about 9 million people. The emirate has also announced plans to combine two of its largest sovereign investment funds International Petroleum Investment Co. and Mubadala Development Company



ABUD DHABI: Officials of the First Gulf Bank and the National Bank of Abu Dhabi during the official ceremony marking the merger of the two lenders in Abu Dhabi.

PJSC, as well as mergers in industries from oil to education.

The deal between NBAD and FGB marks the country's first major banking-industry merger since National Bank of Dubai and Emirates Bank International combined to create Emirates NBD PJSC in 2007. Shayne Nelson, the bank's chief executive officer, has called for further

consolidation, saying too many banks are serving a relatively small population.

Abu Dhabi Investment Council, a sovereign wealth fund in the emirate, owns a 58 percent stake in ADCB and 50 percent of UNB, according to reports. The fund also holds a 7.6 percent stake in Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank and a holding in Al-Hilal. —Agencies

BOURSA KUWAIT SUSPENDS SHARES OF 13 COMPANIES

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait yesterday suspended trading of shares of 13 companies that failed to submit their annual financial statements for the year 2016. Boursa Kuwait said on its website that trading was halted over the shares of the International Financial Advisors (IFA), Arzan Financial Group For Financing And Investment, Al-Madar Finance and Investment Co.

The suspension also included Noor Financial Investment, Kuwait Bahrain International Exchange, Al-Dar National Real Estate Co, National Consumer Holding Co, Senergy Holding Company, Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport Co, Gulf Petroleum Investment and Palms Agro Production Co. —KUNA

DEAL WITH CREDITORS HINGES ON DEBT RELIEF: TSIPRAS

ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said yesterday that "significant steps" would be needed on reducing his country's debt in order for Athens to finalize a long-delayed deal with its international creditors. "The deal's closure and the vote on measures (demanded by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund) will happen... on the condition that there be significant steps in the meantime on (reducing) debt," Tsipras told the Greek daily Ethnos in an interview published yesterday.

Negotiations between Athens and its eurozone and IMF creditors have dragged on for months over disagreements on debt relief and budget targets for the country. Among the measures reportedly demanded by Greece's creditors are additional pension cuts, a reduced tax-exemption ceiling, and further deregulation of the energy and labor markets. They are also pushing for a major asset sale at the state Public Power Corporation, Greece's largest electricity provider and a near monopoly, in the interests of increas-

ing competition in the sector. The impasse has held up the latest installment of Greece's 86-billion-euro (\$91 billion) bailout, agreed in 2015, which it needs for debt repayments in July. "There will be new developments in the coming days," government spokesman Dimitris Papadopoulos told Greece's TV Saki on Sunday. "We are in the final stretch."

Representatives for Greece's creditors said progress had been made in certain areas but would not confirm that both sides were close to a deal. The last such deadlock over Greece, which followed the election of Tsipras in early 2015, nearly saw Athens expelled from the euro.

With the European Union already reeling from Brexit, Tsipras argued that Greece's current rescue program - its third since 2010 — would collapse if his government were to fall. His left-led coalition has just 153 Ms in the 300-seat parliament, which would make it difficult for Tsipras to push through another package of austerity measures. —AFP

Huawei 2016 annual report

SOLID GROWTH AND SUSTAINED INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

KUWAIT: Huawei yesterday released its audited financial results for 2016, reporting that its Carrier, Enterprise, and Consumer business groups (BGs) each achieved solid year-on-year growth. Group annual revenue was CNY521.6 billion (\$75.1 billion), an increase of 32 percent over 2015. Net profits were CNY37.1 billion (\$5.3 billion), an increase of 0.4 percent. In 2016, Huawei continued to invest in the future, with the company's annual spending on research and development reaching CNY76.4 billion (\$11 billion).

Eric Xu, Huawei Rotating CEO, remarked, "In 2016, Huawei maintained its strategic focus and achieved solid growth. As humanity continues to explore and make new breakthroughs in the digital world, digitization and increasing intelligence present huge business opportunities for all industries, and are also paving the road for new growth for the ICT industry. We will stay customer-centric and will support digital transformation in all industries, in order to create value for our customers and to grow sustainably."

In 2016, Huawei's Carrier BG generated CNY290.6 billion (\$41.8 billion) in revenue, an increase of 24 percent year-on-year. This was achieved by focusing on digital transformation and leveraging major opportunities in cloud, video, the Internet of Things, and operations transformation for carrier customers.

Working in close collaboration with its partners, Huawei's Enterprise BG delivered ICT infrastructure to support the digital transformation of key vertical industries, including finance, energy, government bodies, and public safety. This business generated CNY40.7 billion (\$5.9 billion) in annual revenue, an increase of 47 percent. Thanks to its increasingly innovative products and growing global recognition as a premium device brand, Huawei's Consumer BG shipped 139 million smartphones during 2016, and reported CNY179.8 billion (\$25.9 billion) in annual revenue, up 44 percent.

Sabrina Meng, Huawei's CFO, noted: "Huawei was operationally healthy in 2016, with ample cash reserves, a solid and sustainable capital structure, and high resilience against risk. In

2017, we will continue to boost the efficiency and quality of our operations to ensure solid growth."

Financial statements in the 2016 Annual Report are audited independently by KPMG.

Huawei is a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider. Our aim is to build a better connected world, acting as a responsible corporate citizen, innovative enabler for the information society, and collaborative contributor to the industry. Driven by customer-centric innovation and open partnerships, Huawei has established an end-to-end ICT solutions portfolio that gives customers competitive advantages in telecom and enterprise networks, devices and cloud computing. Huawei's 180,000 employees worldwide are committed to creating maximum value for telecom operators, enterprises and consumers. Our innovative ICT solutions, products and services are used in more than 170 countries and regions, serving over one-third of the world's population. Founded in 1987, Huawei is a private company fully owned by its employees.



NORTH ANDOVER: A customer buys lunch at Smolak Farms, in North Andover, Massachusetts. US consumers increased their spending at the weakest pace in six months, while the 12-month rise in consumer prices was the largest in nearly five years. —AP

GLOBAL REPORTS KD 14.7M TOTAL REVENUES, KD 3.5M NET PROFIT

KD 22.9M CASH DISTRIBUTION TO SHAREHOLDERS PROPOSED

KUWAIT: Global Investment House ("Global" or the "Company"), a regional asset management and investment banking firm headquartered in Kuwait, with offices in major capital markets in the MENA region, yesterday announced its financial results for the year ended 31 December 2016 reporting a net profit of KD 3.5 million (\$11.3 million), total revenues of KD 14.7 million (\$47.5 million), and fee and commission income of KD 11.5 million (\$37.7 million) representing 78 percent of total revenues.

During 2016, the Asset Management business remained resilient with KD1.0 billion (\$3.2 billion) of assets under management. Our asset management teams remained focused on launching products and services best suited to our clients' investment needs offering recurring income/yield accompanied with low volatility. During the year, the company raised approximately \$105 million of new money in various strategies, including income-yielding UK real estate and GCC & MENA listed equities. Several funds managed by the Company outperformed their respective benchmarks and peers.

During 2016, the Investment Banking team generated revenues from 9 different mandates, ranging from advisory to M&A mandates, four of which were successfully closed during the year. The team is currently working on several mandates and has an interesting pipeline of M&A and advisory mandates.

On the brokerage front, Global made focused efforts to grow the institutional brokerage business leading to gains in Kuwait market share. However, due to decline in the market turnover in most key markets where Global operates, the brokerage revenues declined. During the year, we completed exits from Egypt brokerage operations and also decided to close Oman brokerage operations.

The Company's continuous efforts to control and rationalize its cost base resulted in reducing our operating cost base from KD 13.3 million (\$43.6 million) in 2015 to KD 12.3 million (\$40.0 million) in 2016.

In backdrop of continued profitability in the past four years, accompanied with a conservative asset allocation, high levels of cash and other liquid assets on the balance sheet, the board of



directors has proposed a KD 22.9 million (\$75.0 million) cash distribution to shareholders by capital reduction. The BoD's proposal is subject to the regulatory and shareholders' approval in the extra-ordinary general assembly of the shareholders. The capital reduction will be implemented by cancelling 229,065,000 shares. The shareholders will be paid KD 0.100 cash for each share cancelled. The share cancellation will be applied pro-rata to the holdings of all shareholders excluding the Treasury Shares. On conclusion of the capital reduction, the authorized, issued and fully paid share capital of the Parent Company will be reduced from KD 79,923 million to KD 57,017 million and the number of issued and fully paid up shares will be reduced from 799,233,980 to 570,168,980. Following the distributions, the Company will have adequate capital and liquidity to fund its core fee business. The capital reduction would also improve the return on equity and book value per share. On a proforma basis, the book value per share would increase from KD 0.115 (115 Kuwaiti fils) as at 31 December 2016 to KD 0.121 (121 Kuwaiti fils).



Abdul wahab Al-Halabi



Hareb Al-Darmaki

business driven strategy. We are delighted by these financial results, which were generated during difficult times for the capital markets and the investment services industry in the region. Good operating performance, an excellent capital structure and highly liquid asset composition have facilitated the Board's decision to recommend a cash distribution of KD 22.9 million to shareholders through capital reduction."

The Board would like to thank Maha Al-Ghunaim, Vice Chairman and Group CEO and Bader Al-Sumait, CEO, who are retiring from their executive roles, for their contribution in founding the Company and effectively steering it in both good and challenging times. Al-Ghunaim will continue on the Board and Al-Sumait will serve as a board member after having recently joined the Board.

Al-Darmaki, also welcomed Abdul wahab Al-Halabi, director

who will assume the role of Chief Executive Officer. Al-Halabi has over two decades of experience in financial services, advisory and real estate industries and has held various leadership roles in the region and London.

Abdul wahab Al-Halabi, Chief Executive Officer, commented: "Despite the extremely volatile and challenging times, we successfully widened our client base, enhanced our product offering, signed new mandates, raised new money and maintained our profitability momentum. Furthermore, we reduced our operating costs by 8 percent in spite of expanded business activities. Being a MENA player, Global cannot be isolated from the regional headwinds; however, we remain committed to continue creating value to all our stakeholders, through our resilient and robust fee-based business model, innovative strategies and execution capabilities."

TRUMP TARGETS TRADE ABUSES WITH EXECUTIVE ORDERS

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump signed a pair of executive orders Friday focused on reducing the trade deficit just days before he holds his first meeting with his Chinese counterpart.

Trump's aides insist the timing is coincidental, but the administration is touting the moves as evidence of it taking an aggressive but analytical approach to closing a trade gap that is largely due to the influx of goods from China. Some experts say the orders suggest the president may be taking a softer tack on trade. The first order gives the Commerce Department 90 days to assemble a report on the factors behind the trade deficit, while the second seeks to increase collection of duties on imports.

In remarks in the Oval Office, Trump said he'd seen first-hand as he travelled the country how bad trade deals had hurt American workers.

"The jobs and wealth have been stripped from our country," he said, vowing to put that to an end. "We're bringing manufacturing and jobs back to our country." The president had been expected to sign the orders after giving his remarks, but left before he had. A White House official said he signed the orders later. Several economists said it's unlikely the planned report would address the broader economic forces behind the trade imbalance, since it would track trade deficits country-by-country and product-by-product. And the order on trade duties appears to duplicate the standards of a trade enforcement act signed into law by then-President Obama in 2016, according to congressional staff.

"It seems like there is less here than meets the eye," said Robert Scott, director of trade and manufacturing policy research at the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute. —AP

AL-TIJARI ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-NAJMA MEGA DRAW

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the mega draw for the 1st quarter and the daily draw yesterday. The draws were held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry represented by Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The winner of the mega draw of KD 100,000 is Wissam Koubeissi.

The winners of the Al-Najma daily draw are: Ahmad Mostafa Sokani — KD 7000, Carla Maroun — KD 7000, Mohammed Abdulrahim Mahmoud Hassan — KD 7000, Fahad Mesfer Al-Ajmi — KD 7000, Muhammed Saber Muhammed Din — KD 7000.

Al-Najma awards are now brighter and bigger than ever.

With the revamped Al-Najma account, all your dreams will be turned to reality. On top of offering the highest daily prize in Kuwait for KD 7,000, now our Mega prize draws got bigger to reach KD 250,000.

The new prizes scheme for Al-Najma account Daily draw to win KD 7000. Quarterly draws to win great prizes that would start from KD 100,000 to KD 250,000.

1ST QUARTER — KD 100,000, 2ND QUARTER — KD 150,000, 3RD QUARTER — KD 200,000, 4TH QUARTER — KD 250,000.

AUSTRALIA SEEKS TO BATTLE HOUSING BUBBLE WITH BLUNT INSTRUMENTS

SYDNEY: In their struggle to cool red-hot property prices in Australia's big cities, authorities are ratcheting up measures that could dent the whole market but avoiding more targeted steps that have had some success in New Zealand and China. Australian regulators first focused on reining in investment loans nationally in 2015, by imposing an annual limit of 10 percent on how much banks could expand their investor loan book. Those steps worked for a while, but the heat is on again in Sydney, where prices are rising almost 20 percent a year, having more than doubled since 2008, and Melbourne, where the pace is over 15 percent, according to property consultant Core Logic.

That and all-time high household debt prompted the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority (APRA) to move again on Friday, asking banks to limit new interest-only loans to 30 percent of total new mortgage lending, from 40 percent now, and promising a lot of "monitoring," "scrutinizing" and "observing." Industry

players doubt that will do the trick. "I personally don't think this will have a material impact," said Simon Orbell, director at Sydney-based mortgage broker Smartmove, as prices kept rising even though it was already a tough lending market.

"Maybe more needs to be done," he added. Behind-the-scenes pressure has already led the major banks to raise rates on investment loans, particularly for interest-only products favoured by speculators, according to sources with knowledge of the situation. Variable interest rates on investor loans from Commonwealth Bank of Australia - the country's top mortgage lender - are as high as 5.94 percent, compared with 5.25 percent for owner occupiers and an official cash rate of 1.5 percent.

There has been market speculation that the Reserve Bank of Australia will be forced to hike interest rates, a yet blunter instrument, though record low inflation and weak wages growth make that an unattractive option. There is also

political resistance to measures that could make prices actually fall, with two thirds of households owning their homes.

The uneven nature of the market means such measures, even if they cool the hotspots, can cause collateral damage elsewhere. "There is no one national housing market in Australia. So, what may impact in Sydney in one way can impact exactly the reverse in Perth," explained Treasurer Scott Morrison. "So, the use of big-stick, sledgehammer-type changes, one must be very cautious of that, because it can have quite negative impacts in markets."

Targeted response

Neighboring New Zealand had been grappling with a similar problem in Auckland until its central bank asked lenders to seek a greater deposit for home loans just in that city. The tactic seems to have worked. The explosive Auckland market has cooled since last September, with sales volumes at their lowest

levels in at least five years, according to the latest data from the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand. In China, the solutions are tailored to the locality, with some cities requiring deposits of 40 percent or more, others putting limits on how many homes an individual can buy or barring non-residents from buying.

More recently, the Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ) has been lobbying the government to get permission to add debt-to-income (DTI) limits to its macroprudential arsenal aimed at combating the brisk pace of home prices. "DTI policies can increase the resilience of households to income shocks, reducing the number of forced house sales in a downturn," the RBNZ said in March. Together with loan-to-value restrictions, the RBNZ said it hoped to achieve "a more targeted response to rising house market risks."

That remains just a proposal for now, however. "There hasn't been any real political appetite or enthusiasm for DTIs," said Christina

Leung, senior economist at the New Zealand Institute for Economic Research. "There's a lot of uncertainty as to ... what it would do to house prices." In Australia, such policies won't wash, said John Hewson, professor at the Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University.

"We have had a long history of deregulating our financial system, so there is a strong reluctance to start regulating banks with lending restrictions or interest rate caps," said Hewson, a former leader of the ruling Liberal Party. Regulators are also worried about the risks from a slowdown in the home-building boom. According to official estimates, every A\$1 spent on residential construction generates A\$1.31 worth of spending elsewhere in the economy, and every A\$1 million creates 17 full-time jobs.

And unlike in China, Australians still largely expect government to let the market take its course. —Reuters

US TRADE DEFICIT EDGES UP TO \$48.5BN IN Q4 2016

WEEKLY GLOBAL MARKETS UPDATE

US GDP growth for Q4 came in at 2.1 percent, after being revised up from 1.9 percent. This growth may have come from corporate profits having grown a healthy 9.3 percent. However, the US trade deficit, which stands at \$48.5 billion, confirms a growth in the deficit from \$44.5 billion. Imports have grown 2.3 percent stemming from a higher demand for oil and other consumer goods, while exports rose 0.6 percent. While inflation is finally meeting the Fed's target, the Fed now must be wary of the risk that they

might be behind the inflation curve. If the Federal Reserve increases the interest rate by more than 0.25 percent at the next meeting, markets may get affected as they have only priced in an increase 0.75 percent for the year. However, economically, growth of 2.1 percent and healthy corporate profits indicate that the US economy is moving in the right direction. To further highlight the health of the US economy, consumer sentiment remains high, supported by higher incomes and favorable job prospects.

Wages increased by 4.47 percent in January year over year, and retail sales grew 5.7 percent in February slightly higher than expected. The S&P 500 is up 0.90 percent for the week, and 4.65 percent for the year. In corporate news, Red Hat, which is a cloud and cyber security services provider, announced a stellar quarter as performance beat market expectations. Revenue growth of 15.7 percent year on year beat analysts' expectations by \$10 million. Red Hat projects to deliver revenue between \$2.72-\$2.76

Billion for 2018, and the stock is up 23 percent year to date. European markets For the quarter, which came to an end on Friday, the Stoxx Europe 600 index scored a 5.5 percent gain, its biggest quarterly advance since March 2015. This also marks the third consecutive quarter of gains in the index. However, eurozone inflation came in below analyst consensus at 1.5 percent vs. 1.8 percent expectation. This was mainly due to the Easter effect, which tends to push prices up for airfare and hotels. Easter was held in March last year, whereas it is in April this year. The March reading for inflation was also low due to a slower rise in food and energy prices. The fall in Eurozone consumer price inflation in March will further support the ECB's current monetary policy path of purchasing assets into 2018. The unemployment rate in Germany unexpectedly fell to 5.8 percent in March, and is the lowest rate since the beginning of the data series in January 1992. Jobless claims fell by 30,000 compared to February, referring to data adjusted for seasonal swings. This marked the strongest monthly fall since September 2011. Economists polled by The Wall Street Journal had expected a smaller fall in jobless claims of 10,000. Strong gains have been seen in public services jobs, education and healthcare. However, job losses are expected in the financial sector.

UK Market The FTSE 100 index has logged a fourth straight quarterly rise, its longest winning streak since 2011, as it finished the first quarter of 2017 up 2.5 percent. Much of this rally

has come thanks to a weak Pound. Investors will be cautious to see if a potential rally in the UK, especially companies that are heavily dependent on exports. British Prime Minister Theresa May invoked Article 50 on Wednesday, officially starting the country's withdrawal from the European Union. A letter of notification was signed late Tuesday, and it was delivered to European Council President Donald Tusk. GCC markets In the GCC, Saudi's Tadawul All-Share Index rose 2.18 percent for the week off the back of the rise in oil from \$51.1 at the beginning of the week to \$53.62 at the end of the week. Saudi Aramco announced the pricing for their Islamic bond sale of \$10 billion, priced at .25 percent over SAIBOR. Data from the UAE shows that inflation was flat on a month on month basis, after having risen 2.284 percent for the month of January. The United Arab Emirates General Index is down 0.49 percent for the week. This may be attributed to Aldar Properties posting a 6.2 percent share price decline, which dragged the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange index down, by 17.2 points. In positive news for the UAE, more demand for preventative healthcare solutions signals a growth in demand for healthcare in the UAE, which may decrease healthcare spending in the long run. Preventive care, a rise in specialist services and digital health applications will drive the UAE healthcare market from \$17 billion today to \$28 billion by 2021. Healthcare market has been growing around 10 percent year over year since 2015; however, niche subsectors focusing on preventative care are expected to grow at a faster rate.

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Sunday 02 April 2017

Table with 6 columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low. Includes Price Index, Weighted Index, and KXS 15.

Table with 2 columns: Volume (278,961,312), Value (KWD) (25,479,065), Number of Trades (6,044).

Large table listing stock indices and individual securities with columns for High, Low, Volume, Value, Trades, Last, and Change. Includes categories like Oil & Gas, Consumer Goods, Health Care, Telecomunications, Banks, Insurance, etc.

Large table listing individual securities with columns for High, Low, Volume, Value, Trades, Last, and Change. Includes various stocks like SOKOUK, KRE, URC, NRE, SRE, TAM, etc.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report

Table titled 'Global Stock Indices' showing previous close, last price, change, and performance metrics for various indices like Dow Jones, NASDAQ, S&P 500, etc.

Table titled 'MENA Stock Indices' showing previous close, last price, change, and performance metrics for regional indices like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, etc.

Table titled 'Global Currencies Exchange Rate' showing exchange rates for currencies like Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, US Dollar, Euro, etc.

Table titled 'MENA Currencies Exchange Rate' showing exchange rates for regional currencies like Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahraini Dinar, etc.

Table titled 'Global Interest Rates' showing interest rates for currencies like Kuwaiti Dinar, US Dollar, Euro, etc.

Table titled 'Global Bond Yields' showing yields for countries like United States, Europe, United Kingdom, etc.

Table titled 'Commodities' showing prices for Kuwait Oil, Brent, West Texas, Gold, Silver, etc.

For more information, call Global Investment House on 1 80 42 42, www.globalinv.net

AHLI UNITED BANK CONTINUES ITS SOLID PERFORMANCE AND MAINTAINS THE STABILITY OF ITS DIVERSE REVENUES

AGM HELD WITH 93.78% ATTENDANCE AND APPROVAL ON ALL CLAUSES

KUWAIT: Chairman Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf assured that "In 2016, Ahli United Bank accomplished a new achievement, adding distinction to the Bank's remarkable record. We successfully issued a \$200 million Additional Tier 1 Perpetual Sukuk, listed on NASDAQ Dubai and the Irish Stock Exchange. I am delighted to confirm that following strong demand for the Sukuk from investors in the Middle East, Asia and Europe, we enjoyed an over-subscription of the issuance by more than three times. This surely mirrored the investors' trust in Ahli United Bank and the generally positive economic climate in Kuwait". His speech came during the Bank's 2016 AGM held on 30 March 2017 with 93.78 percent attendance, which approved a cash dividend of 12 percent and bonus shares of 8 percent of issued and paid up capital (12 fils per share and 8 shares per 100 shares, respectively).

75 years of success

Ahli United Bank's journey dates back to more than 75 years, when the Bank opened on 28 February 1942 as the first bank in Kuwait. The Bank was the pioneer of the banking sector in Kuwait, assembling the first team of ambitious Kuwaiti bankers who promoted the development of the sector locally and in the Arabian Gulf region.

Dr Al-Mudhaf explained that "Through many decades and under varying political, economic and social circumstances, the Bank succeeded in developing and expanding its operations under different names, until the year 1971, when it became a 100 percent Kuwaiti-owned establishment, "Bank of Kuwait & Middle East". In 2002 the Bank became a member of the renowned and respected Ahli United Bank Group. However, a major event in the Bank's proud journey was the conversion to our revered Islamic Sharia as of 1 April 2010. "During these 75 years, the Bank was able to withstand and overcome various challenges of the Kuwait market, thanks to the trust and loyalty of our many customers and staff, who have remained with us over the years. For the past few years, the region's future has been unpredictable, adversely affecting all economic sectors as well as capital markets in Kuwait and the region", he added.

Moreover, the fall in oil prices has impacted the economy and government budget. Despite all of these challenges, Ahli United Bank has relentlessly striven to seize every growth opportunity it could, building on a set of factors, including: our long and proven track record; our customers' trust, passed from one generation to another; our financial strength and our solid capital base; and the efforts of our Executive Management, guided by the directives of the Board of Directors, adopting the latest technology and the best development models in the banking sector.

Strong financial index

The Bank maintained a Return on Equity (ROE) of 11 percent in 2016, which ranks among the highest rates in the domestic and regional markets. The Return on Assets (ROA) in 2016 recording a rate of 1 percent. As for the Earnings Per Share (EPS), this reached 25.9 Kuwaiti fils per share (27.4 Kuwaiti fils per share in 2015), which reflected the Bank's continued strong financial standing and ability to diversify and enhance its income sources.

He added, "In 2016, Ahli United Bank strove to decrease its credit concentration ratio avoiding relatively costly and concentrated deposits. The Bank's total assets dropped by 5 percent between 2015 and 2016, from KD 3.9 billion to KD 3.7 billion as a result of the regulatory changes in Finance/Deposit Ratio.

Based on all those positive results, the Board of Directors is recommending to the Bank's ordinary General Assembly a cash distribution of 12 percent and bonus shares of 8 percent of the issued and paid up capital to the shareholders (12 Kuwaiti fils per share and 8 shares for every 100 shares respectively), which was approved by the Central Bank of Kuwait on 9 February 2017.

Keeping high credit ratings

Dr Al-Mudhaf explained, "Ahli United Bank continues to enjoy high credit ratings given by renowned international credit rating agencies such as Fitch, Moody's and Capital Intelligence. Accordingly, the Bank maintained a credit rating of A+ on the long term and F1 on the short term with stable outlook by Fitch

Ratings Agency, and a rating of A2 on local currency with stable outlook by Moody's. As for Capital Intelligence, the agency fixed the Bank's long-term credit rating of foreign currency to A+ and enhanced the short-term foreign currency rating to A2. All these ratings confirm the strong credit standing, capital quality and stability of the Bank's growth rates in the future.

Supporting and developing banking products and services

Dr Al-Mudhaf pointed that, "the Bank's continuous quest to ensure it remains at the forefront of banking technology is in line with Ahli United Bank's development of new systems and software in 2016, including the launch of a new mobile banking application. The Bank also made many upgrades to its systems and services, including the upgrade of the Customer Service Management systems across its branches and the upgrade of the ATM and Customer Credit Card services and privileges, as well as the corporate website".

Awards received by the bank

Speaking of the awards the Bank received, Dr Al-Mudhaf said "As we reached our 75th year of operation, it gives me great pleasure to see the international banking community recognizing Ahli United Bank's long

The human capital

Dr Al-Mudhaf assured that, "Ahli United Bank's human capital is the institution's cornerstone. Accordingly, our top priority remains to maintain this capital's growth and development. Consequently, the Bank was keen on implementing the Toumouh program, aiming at recruiting the best national talent, growing their skills, and preparing them to hold leadership positions through advanced trainings. The program also aims at providing an attractive work environment for our competent national youth.

In 2016, many training sessions took place, including leadership, anti-money laundering, risk management, and cyber crimes fighting programs, in addition to general awareness workshops about health and safety."

Thanks and recognitions

Dr Al-Mudhaf ended by saying, "On behalf of all the members of the Board of Directors, the Bank's Executive Management and myself, please allow me to express my sincere gratitude to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (may God keep him safe and sound), and to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (may God keep him safe and sound), and to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad

Groves added, "The increase in operating profit underscored the strength of the Bank's core businesses of Corporate Banking, Retail Banking, Private Banking and Wealth Management, and Treasury, coupled with an effective risk and control framework."

Groves said, "Ahli United Bank remains committed to the successful implementation of its strategic 5-year plan (2015-2019), which aims at preserving and enhancing the Bank's leading position in the Islamic Banking sector by focusing on customer satisfaction and working according to the best international standards. Our vision is 'to become a leading innovative Islamic Bank that operates according to international standards, whilst placing customers first'; and this is the driving force behind everything we do."

He added, "Despite the regional and international challenges that have reflected on our business environment in 2016, we were able to enhance the Bank's capital by issuing a \$200 million Additional Tier 1 Perpetual Sukuk which has been listed on NASDAQ Dubai and the Irish Stock Exchange in October. Demand exceeded expectations, especially from investors in the Middle East, Asia and Europe, which resulted in an over-subscription of the issuance by more than three times, confirming once more the Bank's position as a

eventually help us provide high-quality banking services. As a proof of our successful commitment to this objective, the Bank received the Commerzbank Annual Award for Outstanding Performance in Straight-Through-Processing (STP) of Payments for the fifth year in a row. The award recognized the Bank's operational efficiency in processing financial and commercial payments in Euro. The Bank also won Citibank's coveted STP Excellence Award for the fourth year running, which recognized the Bank's excellence in SWIFT automated processing of transfers and deposits along with applying the latest ground breaking technologies to drive STP compliant services to best international standards".

Groves added: "In 2016, Ahli United Bank was also the first Kuwaiti Bank to receive the Health, Safety & Environment Excellence Award from the American Society of Safety Engineers - Kuwait Chapter (ASSE). This particular award recognized the Bank's efforts in terms of employees' safety, as well as health and environmental safety, confirming AUB's pioneering role and strategic planning in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility as well as its unconditional commitment to protecting the environment and ensuring its employees' wellbeing and the Kuwaiti society's welfare".

by the Bank. Furthermore, Ahli United Bank launched a service that enables customers to issue a Personal Identification Number (PIN) to access the Mobile Banking service via ATM. Multiple other updates were also made to the Call Centre's system with the purpose of improving customer experience in communicating with the Centre, which added further round-the-clock benefits and convenience to our customers. Additionally, the Bank introduced the new Arabic version of its official website".

In terms of new customers' offers and opportunities, Groves explained that, "Ahli United Bank delivered several attractive ideas including the 'Pearl Instant Discount' program that enables customers to benefit from special discounts upon using their Credit or Debit Cards at a select number of retail outlets included in the program. The Bank reinforced its branches' network while rearranging some branches' locations to ensure it remains close to customers across all Kuwaiti regions. Accordingly, the Bank opened a new branch in the Boulevard Complex in Salmiya to reach out to more customers during their recreational time. The Bank also moved its branch in Jahra area to a new location that accommodates a larger number of customers and has an all-women section, which allows for more privacy. Moreover, preparation has commenced for the opening of 3 new branches in Rawda, Bayan and Rumaithiya.

Online e-banking services

He added, "Seeking to attract all types of customers and based on the Central Bank of Kuwait's instructions, the Bank equipped 7 branches to serve people with special needs, namely in Farwaniya, Oyon, Sabah Al-Salem, Jahra, Qadsia, Mishref, Ahmadi and a part of the headquarters, to guarantee this segment's utmost convenience. The Bank also reduced its fees on several products and services offered to special need customers. The Bank has also fully upgraded its online e-banking services to fit the needs of blind and visually impaired customers in order to facilitate their online registration and login process, as well as their ability to track their accounts and credit cards online and perform banking transactions easily and securely.

Also, screen readers have been made available through online channels, smart phones and the Bank's website, and the mobile phone application has been updated to include a font enlargement option to provide visually impaired customers with a better user experience. Undoubtedly, all the Bank's achievements in 2016 were backed by a sound governance through which Ahli United Bank aims to retain the highest level of regulation, integrity and transparency standards across all procedures, in addition to abiding by the Central Bank of Kuwait's strict regulations.

The Bank carried on with its commitment towards investing in national talent through the offering of the best job opportunities in the marketplace for promising Kuwaiti professionals. Strengthened with a 75-year-old legacy and a highly-respected record of accomplishments in Kuwait, we believe that the Bank's commitment to positively contribute and help support and advance Kuwaiti society are equal in importance to our commitment to banking excellence. That is exactly why we invest a great deal in our Corporate Social Responsibility program, making sure we contribute actively to the support of all social segments.

Groves concluded by saying, "With such a legacy and so many recognized achievements, I am pleased to reiterate Ahli United Bank's determination to carry on in the same successful path and strive to upkeep its leading position among Islamic Banks, which we have achieved thanks to our stakeholders and customers' trust, and to the relentless efforts and commendable dedication of our employees".

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Board of Directors for their unstinting support and valued guidance throughout the year and similarly to our Fatwa and Sharia Supervisory Board. I wish to thank the Governor and staff of the Central Bank of Kuwait for the highly valued support and guidance given to the Bank and its management, and to the Head and staff of the Capital Markets Authority for their continued support and advice.

Finally, I would like to offer my deepest thanks to our many customers and the trust they place in us with their continued business, and to my colleagues in Ahli United Bank Kuwait for all they have done to ensure we have had both business growth and a sound financial result in 2016.



KUWAIT: (From left) Richard W L Groves, the Chief Executive Officer, Chairman Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf and Dr Abdulaziz Al-Qassar.

journey of remarkable achievements. In 2016, the Bank received many prestigious awards including but not limited to the "Best Islamic Bank - Kuwait" Award for the fourth consecutive year from the internationally renowned The Banker magazine, and the "Second Safest Islamic Bank in Kuwait and the Fourth in the GCC" Award from Global Finance magazine for the second year in a row. I'm sure you agree with me that such recognition from these prestigious entities of the international banking community which have granted these awards to the Bank for many consecutive years is the living proof of Ahli United Bank's ongoing success and a confirmation of its leading position among Islamic banks in the region".

Social responsibility

Regarding social responsibility, Dr Al-Mudhaf said "The Bank's social responsibility is an intrinsic part of its identity. Being the oldest bank operating in Kuwait, Ahli United Bank has a long record of social contributions stretching across many decades and implemented at various times. The Bank has put together an active social plan that tackles different social causes in Kuwaiti society with the aim of constantly improving citizens' lives and bringing valuable support to many social initiatives and events, whether educational, charitable or health related. It is important to mention that in 2016, the Bank paid particular attention to our special needs children. With this in mind, Ahli United Bank invested tangible efforts towards supporting those people and facilitating their life while helping their social integration, through social and health activities".

Al-Sabah (may God keep him safe and sound), for their continuous support to Kuwait's banking sector.

I would also like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Central Bank of Kuwait, headed by the Governor Dr Mohamad Youssef Al-Hashel, as well as to the Capital Markets Authority and all other supervisory bodies in Kuwait for their positive role in supporting Ahli United Bank.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Ahli United Bank's Fatwa & Sharia Supervisory Board for their untiring and supportive efforts, as well as the members of the Board of Directors, the Bank's staff, and all our stakeholders for their loyalty, trust, and many contributions which have come together to achieve the growth and success of this prestigious financial establishment.

Milestone events

Richard W L Groves, the Chief Executive Officer, added: "It is a great honor to be the Chief Executive Officer of the Bank during the 75th anniversary of its commencement of operations in Kuwait. One can look back at the many accomplishments and achievements, and many milestone events over the year with great pride, but perhaps more importantly, we can look forward to a promising and dynamic future in the years to come."

"Ahli United Bank, reported a further year of strong underlying growth, with an operating profit of KD 77.2 million. The net profit attributable to shareholders was KD 40.3 million as compared with KD 42.8 million in 2015. Again, the Bank had to apply additional precautionary provisioning reflecting a continued challenging operating environment."

leading Islamic financial institution in Kuwait. The success of the Sukuk issuance was cemented with a ceremonial ringing of the opening bell at NASDAQ Dubai in November, a proud moment for all involved.

Credit ratings

Groves added, "The international credit rating agencies, Fitch, Moody's and Capital Intelligence, have continued to favorably report on the Bank's credit rating in terms of credit standing, capital quality and the stability of growth rates in the future, thus recognizing the Bank's ability to maintain solid growth rates year after year. Accordingly, the Bank maintained a credit rating of A+ on the long term and F1 on the short term with stable outlook by Fitch Ratings Agency, and a rating of A2 on local currency with stable outlook by Moody's.

The Bank received many prestigious awards mirroring the Bank's positive business performance, which was a clear indicator of our sound approach and constructive efforts.

Groves pointed out that "In 2016, Ahli United Bank received the 'Best Islamic Bank - Kuwait' Award for the fourth consecutive year from the internationally renowned The Banker magazine, which counts as one of the most prestigious annual awards for excellence in Islamic Banking. The highly acclaimed Global Finance magazine also commended the Bank in 2016, as the 'Second Safest Islamic Bank in Kuwait' and 'the Fourth Safest Islamic Bank in the GCC' for the second year in a row".

Groves added, "Ahli United Bank has always aimed to improve its performance through the adoption of cutting-edge technologies that are aligned with fast-paced technological advances, which would

ZAIN LAUNCHES 'A BUNDLE OF JOY' POSTPAID CAMPAIGN COMPANY OFFERS TWO IPHONE 7 DEVICES WITH KD 40 POSTPAID PLAN

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the launch of "A Bundle of Joy", a new postpaid offer that introduces free smart devices, new features, and more options on its most advanced network.

Zain's new offer, specifically designed for postpaid customers, includes a number of great features, including free smartphones, reduced prices on smart devices, as well as the option to add more devices on the same plan. The

company is keen on launching the most competitive offerings in the market to meet the personal and professional needs of its customers.

As part of the new offer, Zain's postpaid customers subscribing to the KD 30 plan with 24 months commitment will get a FREE iPhone 7, FREE Platinum number, 500 GBs of 4G LTE, 5000 local minutes, as well as unlimited local SMS messages.

Additionally, postpaid customers who subscribe to the KD 40 plan with 24

months commitment will get a FREE iPhone 7, FREE Platinum number, router or hotspot device, an additional device (either iPhone 7 or a gaming console and a tablet), as well as 1 TB of 4G LTE, unlimited local minutes, and unlimited local SMS messages.

Zain's new offer on its most popular postpaid plans is part of the company's commitment to offer the most flexible and competitive offerings in the market, reinforcing its leadership position and its pledge in offering the best

services and offers to meet customers' practical and personal telecommunications needs.

The new offer was specifically designed to complement the needs and aspirations of the largest family of subscribers in Kuwait. By launching the new postpaid plans, Zain aims at creating a new concept for the services it offers, as well as offering convenience with flexible and convenient plans that meet the different personal and professional needs of customers.



IJGLOBAL MAGAZINE HONORS NBK-BAHRAIN FOR BEST DEAL

MANAMA: NBK Bahrain was presented with IJGlobal magazine's award for the best Mining and Metal deal in the Mena Region in 2016 for its participation and role in the success of ALBA Line 6 Expansion Project syndicated facility.

This extremely prestigious award acknowledges the bank's outstanding contributions to the successful closing of the largest corporate loan in the history of Bahrain. NBK Bahrain played the role of Lead Arranger of the \$1.5 billion facility, which comprises two tranches, Conventional Credit Facility in the amount of \$882 million and Ijarah facility for \$618 million.

IJGlobal Magazine is Euromoney Publications' flagship international infrastructure finance title, and its Middle East and North Africa Awards celebrates the best in class deals in energy and infrastructure over the past year. This year's award for the best Mining and Metal deal was presented to NBK-Bahrain General Manager Ali Al-Fardan, during a Grand Award Ceremony on March 21, 2017.

On receiving the award, Al-Fardan said: "We are extremely delighted that our efforts have been recognized by an independent agency like IJGlobal Award. The international award is a real testament to the role NBK-Bahrain plays in supporting major and strategic projects across the Kingdom benefiting from the support of NBK Group. It also reflects the growing role that NBK-Bahrain plays in the corporate

banking segment". He added that this award represents one of the highest possible accolades in the world of infrastructure and project finance and is considered a reward for the hard work and ingenuity our team has shown in 2016, noting that NBK Bahrain is honored to be the first branch across NBK Group to receive such a great recognition.

He highlighted that the importance of this award also stems from being associated with ALBA, Bahrain's national aluminum producer and one of the largest and most modern aluminum smelters in the world. The Company was established in 1971 to help diversify Bahrain's economy, and has been expanding since. Line 6 Expansion Project will have a big impact on Bahrain's economy as well as strengthen the Kingdom's position as the hub for the downstream aluminum industry in the GCC. The project which is expected to start metal production in early 2019, will boost the per-annum production by 540,000 metric tons upon its full ramp-up, bringing ALBA's total production capacity to 1,500,000 metric tons per annum to make ALBA the world's largest single-site aluminum smelter."

NBK Group is proud to be part of the growing Bahraini Aluminum sector, one of the key industrial growth driver in the region. The bank has been present in Bahrain since 1977 and enjoys strong and historical relationships with the major Bahraini and international companies.



KAMCO ACQUIRES AMAZON'S LARGEST BRITISH WAREHOUSE

ACQUISITION MAKES KAMCO THE SOLE OWNER OF THE PROPERTY

KUWAIT: KAMCO Investment Company, a leading investment company with one of the largest AUMs in the region, acquires Amazon's UK Services Ltd's largest distribution warehouse for approximately £61 million pounds.

KAMCO announced that the acquired property is leased to Amazon UK Services Ltd. on a triple net lease with an unexpired term of 15 years expiring on October 2031. Through this acquisition, KAMCO has become the sole owner of the property. KAMCO aims to achieve a targeted cash yield of 6.50 percent per annum, at an expected IRR of 7 percent per annum during the investment period.

Commenting on the acquisition, Faisal Sarkhou, Chief Executive Officer of KAMCO, said, "This achievement marks yet another step towards reaching our strategic objectives and future vision to enhance our operational performance and expand our real estate investments platform on a regional and international scale, in a way that is beneficial to our shareholders."

On the subject, KAMCO's Chief Investment Officer, Khaled Fouad said, "This transaction highlights the acquisition of a new category of income-generating assets that are leased to Amazon, in aim of diversifying sources of income." He added that, "Reaching a target of half a billion dollars is not far-off especially that KAMCO's alternative investment team currently manages more than \$250 million in real estate

across 11 regional and international properties." Fouad reiterated that the successful completion of the acquisition would have not been possible without the combined efforts of commendable advisers led by Rasmala Investment Bank as the investment advisor, Savillis Commercial Property Manager as the real estate and survey manager, Trowels & Hamblins, UK with Burness Paull (Scotland) as legal advisers. In addition to Ocorian as the offshore legal adviser (Jersey) & offshore administrator (Jersey), DekaBank Deutsche Girozentrale as the main debt financier, the Office of JLL as the buy side broker, and finally Ernst & Young as the primary tax advisers.

Property overview

The Property acquired by KAMCO is ideally located in Dunfermline, Scotland, where the proximity of the warehouse lies 15 minutes away from Edinburgh's Waverly Central Railway Station. As one of Amazon's primary distribution hubs in the UK, the Property is used to store and deliver a wide range of general merchandise. Amazon employs 2,100 staff in the subject asset who work on a 22.5 hour shift cycle. Of the 143 million packages that Amazon handles per annum, around 38 percent of these are handled in this center.

Amazon.com, Inc (NASDAQ: AMZN), the Fortune 500 company based in Seattle, has been assigned an 'AA-' credit rating by Standard & Poor's (S&P), whilst its subsidiary, Amazon UK Services LTD has a 5A1 Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) rating, the highest on the scale of UK credit ratings.

It is worth noting that the Property was purpose-built for Amazon's services due to its strategic location and close proximity to the main transport networks, Edinburgh and Edinburgh Airport, which offers easy access to neighboring Scottish cities.

The Property, which extends over an area of more than one million square feet, is fully automated with conveyor belts moving packages from the order receipt to fulfilment to packaging and finally the loading bays. The warehouse also features a 24-hour security system.



Faisal Sarkhou



ITHMAAR SHAREHOLDERS OK ADDITIONAL LISTING ON REGIONAL STOCK EXCHANGES

KUWAIT: Ithmaar Holding B.S.C. (formerly Ithmaar Bank B.S.C.) (Ithmaar) shareholders approved a proposal on listing Ithmaar on additional stock exchanges in the region.

The proposal, which was presented by a shareholder as an additional agenda item at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on Thursday (ed note: 30/03/17), was approved unopposed by the shareholders who welcomed the initiative.

Ithmaar Holding, which is licensed and regulated by the Central Bank of Bahrain, is currently listed on the Bahrain Bourse and Boursa Kuwait. At the Thursday meeting, shareholders authorised the Board of Directors and Ithmaar management to study additional listings in various stock exchanges in the region and to complete the additional exchange listing process.

The meeting was chaired by Ithmaar Holding Board member Sheikh Zamil Abdullah Al-Zamil and attended by Directors Dr Amani Khaled Boursesli and Nabeel Khaled Mohamed Kanoo, as well as Ithmaar Holding Chief Executive Officer, Ahmed Abdul Rahim, Ithmaar Bank Chief Operating Officer, Ravindra Khot, and Ithmaar Bank General Manager, Banking Group, Abdul Hakeem Khalil Al-Mutawa. Also present were members of the Ithmaar Bank Executive Management team, as well as representatives of the Ithmaar Holding Sharia Supervisory Board, the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB), the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism, statutory auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers, and the Bahrain Bourse.

At the meeting, shareholders praised the transformation witnessed in 2016 with the successful completion of a major reorganiza-

tion as well as a complete turnaround in Ithmaar's financial performance. The reorganized Ithmaar became fully operational with the start of 2017, concluding the full implementation of plans for a new group structure that was designed to provide greater insight into the strength of the core retail banking operations and further facilitate the focused management of investment and non-core assets. As a result of its focus on core retail banking business, Ithmaar reported a net profit of \$13.80 million for 2016, compared to a \$46.40 million net loss reported for 2015. Net profit attributable to equity holders for the year ended 31 December 2016 was \$3.28 million, compared to a net loss US\$60.80 million reported for 2015.

Ithmaar Holding B.S.C. (formerly Ithmaar Bank B.S.C.) ("Ithmaar Holding or Ithmaar") is licensed as an investment firm and regulated by the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) and is listed on the Bahrain Bourse and Boursa Kuwait. Ithmaar Holding retains 100 percent ownership of all assets formerly owned by Ithmaar Bank B.S.C., through two wholly-owned subsidiaries Ithmaar Bank B.S.C. (closed) (Ithmaar Bank), an Islamic retail bank subsidiary which holds the core retail banking business, and IB Capital B.S.C. (closed) (IB Capital), an investment subsidiary, which holds investments and other non-core assets. The two subsidiaries are licensed and regulated by the CBB. Ithmaar Bank provides a diverse range of Sharia-compliant products and services that cater to the financing and investment needs of individuals and institutions. Ithmaar also maintains a presence in overseas markets through its subsidiary, Faysal Bank Limited (Pakistan).

ABK GOLD SPONSOR OF KUWAIT FINANCIAL FORUM

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently announced the Bank's gold sponsorship of the Kuwait Financial Forum, whereby Michel Accad, ABK Group CEO and Somnath Menon, Group COO will be panelists at the event. The Forum will be held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on 4 & 5 April 2017, at the Sheraton Hotel-Kuwait.

Organized by the Kuwait Banking Association, in collaboration with Al-Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group, the Kuwait Financial Forum addresses new economic conditions, most importantly the falling oil prices and the entry of government budgets in the deficit phase. It also touches on the increasing signs of continued international economic slowdown and the increasing challenges of compliance with international laws and regulations related to fighting money laundering, terrorism financing, tax evasion and corruption.

Michel Accad will be speaking during the 'Outlook of Gulf Banking Industry' session. The session will address six major topics, namely; 'Challenges of the banking industry in an environment of slow growth'; 'Declining government and tight liquidity'; 'Challenges and opportunities of economic reform'; 'How can a bank face the risks of declining assets quality and rising NPLs?'; 'Prospects of banks mergers in the Gulf' and last but not least, 'Future of foreign banks in the Gulf markets'.

Somnath will be speaking during the session entitled 'GCC banks in the Era of Digital Transformation'. The session will address four main areas, which are 'Global trends and developments in digital banking'; 'GCC banks digital strategies'; 'Impact of electronic services and digital platforms on services, cost structure and customers'; and 'The rising threat of cyber security'.

ABK is keen to contribute to the development of the banking sector, by sharing its expertise and knowhow, and by participating in discussion forums that yield in effective solutions that add value on a national and regional level.



BURGAN BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF YAWMI ACCOUNT DRAW

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, the second largest in terms of assets, announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

1. Hussain Ahmed Maky Al-Sayrafi
2. Alia Mohammed Rasheed
3. Anoushiravan Nazariyan
4. Bahja Abdulhameed Marafi
5. Hanadi Hussein Mohammad Jawad

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win. For more information on opening a Yawmi account, the new quarterly draw or on any of the bank's products and services, customers are urged to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank



customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's

brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

The bank was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2008, making it the first bank in the GCC, and the only bank in Kuwait to receive such accreditation for the third consecutive year. The Bank also has to its credit the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twelve consecutive years.

Burgan Bank, a subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), is a strongly positioned regional Bank in the MENA region.

SAUDI TO HOST 'TOP CEO CONFERENCE AND AWARDS'

EVENT TO GATHER CEOS, CMOS, PRESIDENTS AND VPS FROM ACROSS REGION AND BEYOND

RIYADH: For the first time, Saudi Arabia will host the 'Top CEO Conference and Awards' - an event which will see CEOs, CMOs, Presidents and VPs from across the Arabian Gulf region and beyond gather together on 10th and 11th April 2017 at Bay La Sun Hotel & Marina, King Abdullah Economic City. The annual event, now in its third edition, serves to address the burning issues facing the corporate world today while also recognizing the very best in GCC business leadership. It is organised by TRENDS magazine and INSEAD - the leading international business school - and will take place under the theme 'Adapting to Disruption: New Roles, New Realities', to reflect the transformation in the way C-level executives and businesses prepare to make agile strides toward a sustainable future.

Julien Hawari, Co-Chief Executive Officer of Mediaquest, commented: "The Top CEO Conference has carved a niche for itself not only as a pioneering regional business conference and awards ceremony, but also as an essential leadership event. Our well-thought-of conferences will bring global issues to light in a regional context. Businesses in the GCC and the Middle East are at a turning point, with the era of abundance coming to an end, old business models changing and slow growth haunting the region. New technologies are being ushered in and the region is fast embracing the concept of a new reality. So, we are trying to put these perennial issues at centre-stage, initiate a dialogue and draft a roadmap for a smooth transition."



Global issues
The Top CEO Conference is an open discussion between thought leaders, executives and officials. Its purpose is to frame global issues - specifically disruptive leadership, innovative corporate strategies and changing dynamics of the business ecosystem - in a regional context, and help executives and leaders to navigate challenges, embrace a new reality, and take their organizations forward in the right direction. Plenary and breakout sessions are a key highlight, delving into the present and future of business in the

region, and exploring how business models in the GCC countries are reshaping themselves in this ever-changing world. The event will feature both on-record and off-record sessions, covering topics including New Technologies, Challenges of Slow Growth, The Broken Job Machine, Public-Private Partnerships, Leadership 2.0, Big Data & Artificial Intelligence, Vision 2030, Arab Image in the West, Women & Leadership, other sessions will explore investing in Saudi Arabia, the image wars and anti-trust laws... full agenda on www.topceo.me

For the first time the Society of Family Offices, the Singapore based association of family offices will hold its private meeting in Saudi during the Top CEO conference. The awards will also be presented on 11th April 2017 and honour the region's 100 best-performing CEOs based on an evaluation of their companies performance, growth, profitability, corporate governance, & transparency. The Top CEO Awards works with corporate governance institute Hawkamah to ensure that elements of good governance remain an integral part of the overall ranking system,

and with one of big four auditors, to ensure same level of rigor and transparency. This event is held under the sponsorship of Amex as the Strategic sponsor, King Abdullah Economic City as the Strategic partner, Maserati as the Official car sponsor, Panerai as the Timekeeper sponsor, DHL as the silver sponsor, Capital Club and Deloitte as Bronze sponsors and Arab News as the Official English media partner. This year, the Top CEO Conference & Awards will be held at Bay La Sun Hotel & Marina, King Abdullah Economic City, Saudi Arabia.



MERAS CONSULTING DELEGATES VISIT TAG-ORG HQ IN JORDAN

KUWAIT: A company delegation from Meras Consulting - Kuwait, which included Kawthar Abu Ghazaleh, Lama Jamalaldin and Ali Tabaja, visited the main headquarters of Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Org. in Jordan. Stemming from the pioneering developmental role of TAG-Org in the Arab world in the field of education, quality assurance, and training, and in-order to activate this role with closer cooperation and joint action between Meras Consulting- Kuwait, a series of meetings were held to discuss themes and mechanisms aimed at developing joint actions, especially in Quality assurance, education, and training. Moreover, the meeting aimed to take advantage of the expertise and the comprehensive services of TAG-Org and its vast network and partnerships both academically and professionally, to spread the principles of qualitative work in enhancing the

quality of educational services in accordance with internationally adopted criteria and indicators. These meetings culminated in a consensus on strategic cooperation and joint action through the signing of three Memorandums of Understanding under the patronage and presence of Dr Talal Abu-Ghazaleh founder and Chairman of the Board of Trustees. These MOUs included cooperation in educational quality and accreditation through joint action with the Arabic Organization for Quality Assurance in Education AROQA represented by Dr Salim AlAqtash, cooperation in education and training with the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh University e-learning TAGI-UNI represented by Salah Abu Osbah, and a training cooperation agreement with Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Professional Training TAGI-Train represented by Yousef Al-Rawas.

BREXIT SHAKES EUROPE WHILE FED REMAINS OPTIMISTIC

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

Now that the UK has handed the official divorce papers to the European Union, markets are likely to change their complacency over the UK current and future economic affairs. Indeed, economic data in the first quarter of 2017 continued to ignore the "Brexit" vote effects with unemployment and jobless claims continued to fall more than expected and UK real estate prices remain supported for now.

Now that the article 50 has been officially triggered, the "Brexit" effects are likely to start to show in the second quarter of the year. Leading economic responded rapidly showing signs of exhaustion with average weekly earnings falling for the first time in more than two years. In its attempt to calm markets, the Bank of England acknowledged the potential risk from higher inflation during the latest MPC meeting, however maintained the monetary policy in a status quo.

The currency was however the first to lead the way with pressure on the Pound increasing this week. Indeed, with the UK standing alone and with the beginning of long and tedious negotiations, markets are likely to ask for a higher risk premium over investing in the UK.

On the global side, the US dollar regained back some ground this week rebounding from a four month low after Trump's Health Care bill failure late last week. Indeed, last week's debacle raised questions over the ability of the new administration to push through the campaign promised tax cuts and the increase fiscal spending plans. The US dollar reversed course despite those worries on solid figures and optimistic comments from Fed officials.

Fed Vice President Stanley Fischer mentioned that two more increases to US overnight interest rates this year seemed "about right." Chicago Fed President Evans added that inflation looks "well on its way" to reaching the Fed's mandated target supporting further rate hikes this year. Dallas President Kaplan also added that he will likely support more interest rate increases as long as the economy continues to see job market gains and a continued move back toward a 2% inflation rise. Finally, New York Fed Dudley said that the fiscal stimulus outlook would shift US growth and inflation risks to the upside. After acknowledging the considerable uncertainty about the timing of fiscal policy and its potential contribution to economic activity, he said it was likely to shift over time to a more stimulative setting.

On the currencies front, the dollar was on track to register its strongest performance in seven weeks with almost 1 percent rise, benefiting from a weaker Euro and solid US economic data combined with hawkish comments contrasted with the cooling eurozone inflation. The US dollar index opened the week at 99.47 and closed at 100.58.

The British Pound started the week off on a strong note after better than expected inflation figures released last week. With all the negative press associated with the "Brexit" article 50 trigger, the currency quickly reversed its gains as markets dumped the currency after Wednesday. The GBP opened the

week at 1.2483 hit a low of 1.2375, and closed at 1.2558.

The euro joined the Sterling Pound as the weakest link for the week, losing about 2 percent of its value. The selloff was initially triggered by reports saying markets had over-interpreted the hawkish ECB's March message and then was weighed down even further after weak inflation data. Markets had assumed the ECB was moving closer to stimulus exit, however, newspapers quoted unnamed source saying that policy makers merely wanted to communicate reduced risks. After opening the week near the high of 1.0796, the currency dropped by the end of the week to close at 1.0655.

In commodities, oil prices were mixed this week on the back of potential production reductions. As OPEC output is likely to fall for a third straight month in March, supply disruptions in Libya and Nigeria also helped maintain prices higher. Brent Crude and West Texas Intermediate were last 52.18 and 50.59 respectively.

Strong US data

Consumer confidence Index increased again in March. The index now stands at 125.6, up from 116.1 in February. According to the report,

government spending that were partly offset by negative contributions from exports and federal government spending.

Europe and UK

Although the Eurozone economy is gathering strength, the ECB is not yet convinced that the recent acceleration of inflation will be durable, the ECB's chief economist Peter Praet said on Thursday. "The firming of the recovery has not yet translated into a durable strengthening of inflation dynamics. Headline inflation has increased, but for the most part this reflects rising energy and food price inflation," Praet said. "Underlying inflation pressures continue to remain subdued. We are not yet sufficiently confident that inflation will converge to levels consistent with our aim in a durable manner."

German Ifo

The German Ifo said its business climate index rose to 112.3 from an upwardly revised reading of 111.1 in February. The rise in the headline figure was driven by improved sentiment in manufacturing, construction and retailing as well as a renewed upturn in demand.

German business strength

the top two global financial centers. As May promised to seek the greatest possible access to European markets by establishing the UK's own free trade deals with countries beyond Europe, she vowed to impose limits on immigration from the continent. European leaders responded that the point of the negotiations was not to punish the UK, even though they could not afford to give Britain generous terms that might encourage other member states to follow its example and break away.

The terms of Britain's exit will have to be agreed by 27 national parliaments with the first batch of negotiations estimated to start between May and June. The time-frame allowed in Article 50 is two years and can only be extended by unanimous agreement from all EU countries. If no agreement is reached in two years, and no extension is agreed, the UK automatically leaves the EU and all existing agreements including access to the single market. For now, EU law still stands in the UK until it ceases being a member. The UK will continue to abide by EU treaties and laws but will not take part in any future decision-making.

Asia

Japan headline inflation rose up 0.3 percent on a yearly basis in February after +0.4 percent in January, while excluding food increased 0.2 percent, in line with estimates and up from 0.1 percent previously. Excluding food and energy, inflation was up 0.1 percent, down from 0.2 percent previously and in line with estimates. Other data were also upbeat with jobless rate falling to 2.8 percent in February from 3.0 percent in January. The consensus estimate was for no change. Also, overall household spending rose by 2.5 percent monthly against +0.4 percent consensus and declined by 3.8 percent yearly versus -1.7 percent consensus. Last but not least, industrial production rose 2.0 percent monthly in February against expectations of only 1.2 percent the fastest pace of growth in eight months.

The latest Japanese economic data continue to show an expansion in the first quarter of 2017, mainly led by solid exports and firmer capital expenditure. Even, the latest Japanese trade data showed a surplus rebounding in February as Japanese exports rose for the third straight month, by 11.3 percent.

On the monetary side, the latest Bank of Japan meeting in March resulted in a status quo keeping short term interest rate at minus 0.1 percent and vowed to continue buying Japanese government bonds at an annual pace of around 80 trillion Yen. As global inflation continued to edge higher in the beginning of 2017, speculation that the BOJ might hike its target level for the 10 year Japan government bond yield surfaced rapidly. Governor Kuroda attempted to dismiss these speculations after the BoJ meeting stating that the committee would not raise their yield target just because a central bank of another country has raised rates.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30500
The USDKWD opened at 0.30500 yesterday (Sunday) morning.

ETHICAL INVESTMENT TIDE LIFTS 'GREENWASH' CONCERNS

SYDNEY: Investors are ploughing ever more into ethical funds to back their views on issues such as global warming and gender equality, but such investments can be confusingly similar to standard funds, except for higher fees and 'green halo' marketing.

The \$23 trillion 'sustainable, responsible and impact' (SRI) investment sector has received a rush of money since the Paris climate agreement and, more recently, in protest against US President Donald Trump's plans to slash environmental regulations. Europe is the dominant region for such investments, with \$12.04 trillion, followed by the United States, with \$8.72 trillion, while Asia lags some way behind.

US investors have poured \$1.8 billion into actively managed US equity funds in the socially responsible category from November to January, according to Lipper data, while other funds saw a net outflow of \$133 billion. Even in fossil-fuel-rich Australia and New Zealand, SRI investment rose from \$148 billion to \$516 billion between 2014 and 2016, and from \$729 billion to \$1.09 trillion in oil-rich Canada, according to the Global Sustainable Investment Review released on Monday.

Gavin Goodhand, a portfolio manager at Sydney-based Altius Asset Management, said the company's sustainable bond fund tripled shortly after the 2015 climate accord, where nearly 200 countries signed up to measures designed to curb greenhouse gas emissions. "The Paris conference was the line in the sand for many of our retail customers, particularly the millennial generation, who want to do the right thing for the environment," said Goodhand.

GREENWASH MARKETING

Governments are also tapping the trend, selling green bonds to fund projects such as wind farms or low-carbon transport, with Poland, France and Nigeria making their debut this year. Some managers, however, are skeptical. "While environmental, social and governance factors should always factor into investment decisions, this is largely a

marketing exercise," said Steve Goldman, a global portfolio manager at Sydney-based Kapstream Capital, which has \$10 billion (\$7.6 billion) of fixed-income assets. Goldman said Kapstream did not have a responsible investment fund because its clients had not asked for it.

The bond market does not have commonly agreed standards or criteria for what constitutes a green bond, and there is no guarantee the proceeds actually go to the low-carbon project as claimed.

There are similar concerns over equity products. Stuart Palmer, head of ethics research at Australian Ethical Investment, said there was a danger that some marketing departments would "greenwash" their products to lure investors into funds that were little different to standard products. "The concern is, do they represent real change, or are they a marketing exercise?" said Palmer.

FREE PREMIUM

There are no agreed definitions on what is considered ethical, sustainable and socially responsible, but ethical investors are typically expected to cough up higher fees. For example, retail investors pay more than a third higher fees for the sustainability and ethical funds at Sydney-based BT Investment Management (BTIM) than for its standard share fund equivalent.

The three funds hold six or seven of their top-weighted stocks in common, including major banks Australia and New Zealand Banking Group, Westpac Banking Corp, National Australia Bank and miner BHP Billiton, according to December filings. A BT spokeswoman did not return requests for comment. For investors, it can be a minefield. "I find it difficult as a consumer to do the due diligence I would like to do because even the ethical funds are not always totally transparent about what they define as ethical," said retail investor Meraiah Foley, a Sydney academic. "One of the ethical funds I have invests very heavily in retail banks in Australia, and those banks themselves may be underwriting projects that the fund itself would not invest in." —Reuters



VENOM OF TINY FISH LEADS TO NEW PAIN TREATMENTS

WASHINGTON: Tiny fanged fish called blennies, which swim in the coral reefs of the Pacific Ocean, are armed with an unusual venom that could inspire new pain medications, British and Australian scientists said this week. The venom of these fearless 1.5-three inch swimmers—which are popular tropical aquarium fish—numbs would-be predators, rather than causing them pain, said the report in the journal *Current Biology*.

"The fish injects other fish with opioid peptides that act like heroin or morphine, inhibiting pain rather than causing it," said Bryan Fry, an associate professor at the University of Queensland. "The venom causes the bitten fish to become slower in

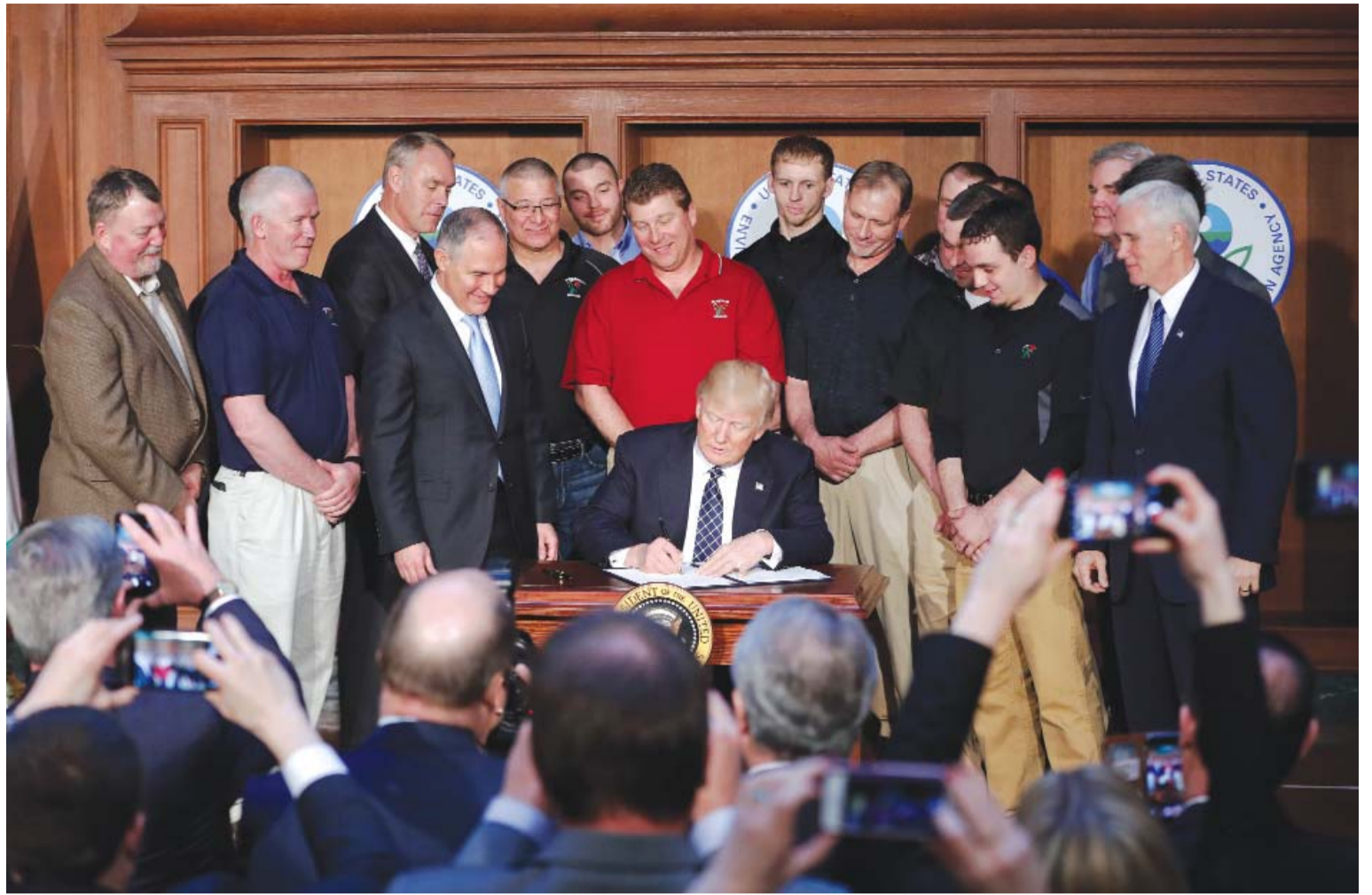
movement and dizzy by acting on their opioid receptors." Experiments using lab mice found the rodents showed no sign of pain once injected with the fish venom.

Fry said the venom is "chemically unique," and called the fang blennies "the most interesting fish I've ever studied." Their behavior is also intriguing, he said, for the way they appear unafraid of predators and fight for territory with similar-sized fish. Fry said the findings bolster the need to protect the Great Barrier Reef and other fragile ecosystems. "If we lose the Great Barrier Reef, we will lose animals like the fang blenny and its unique venom that could be the source of the next blockbuster pain-killing drug," he said.—AFP

VERMONT MOTORISTS ASKED TO AVOID SALAMANDERS ON ROADS

MONTPELIER: Vermont wildlife officials are warning motorists to drive with caution due to the seasonal migrations of frogs and salamanders. The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife says frogs and salamanders tend to cross roads in groups during rainy spring nights in search of breeding pools. The animals are often killed by cars, which factors into the species' overall decline.

Officials and volunteers will work to slow traffic and manually carry the amphibians across the roads during spring nights. Vermont also is working to build culverts and wildlife barriers around hotspots to avoid unnecessary amphibian deaths. Vermont works to track the animals' movement, but officials request that drivers call in if they see a large migration.—AP



WASHINGTON: In this photo, President Donald Trump, accompanied by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt, third from left, and Vice President Mike Pence, right, signs an Energy Independence Executive Order at EPA headquarters in Washington.—AP

GOP CONGRESS ROLLS BACK RULES ON HUNTING, BROADBAND PRIVACY

GOP USES LEGISLATIVE TOOL TO OVERTURN REGULATIONS

WASHINGTON: Hunters could soon target grizzly bears from the air on Alaska's federal lands. Internet providers may get to sell the browsing habits of their customers. States will be able to deny federal family planning money to Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers. Citing states' rights, jobs and the right to bear arms, congressional Republicans are reversing dozens of Obama-era rules affecting the environment, education and the energy sector.

The GOP is using a largely unknown but highly effective legislative tool that allows a simple majority in the House and Senate to overturn regulations that often took years to craft. Indeed, with an overhaul of health insurance going off the rails, Republicans are left pointing to the repeal of various government regulations as their crowning legislative achievement after some 70 days at work. The GOP casts the effort as overturning eight years of excessive government regulation and boosting business.

"These things will help get people back to work, and after years of sluggish growth, give a real boost to our economy," Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said this past week. The president has signed eight resolutions revoking regulations issued during the final months of Democrat Barack Obama's presidency. Six resolutions have cleared Congress and are awaiting the president's signature. A couple dozen more are on deck, with last Thursday the deadline for filing more.

Trump has signed measures eliminating requirements that mining and oil companies report payments made to foreign governments. The rule was designed to shine a light on how much money foreign governments received for their nation's resources, thus reducing the prospect of corruption. He also signed another measure reversing an Obama plan to prevent coal mining debris from being dumped into nearby streams.

"These actions from Congress and the president are giving hope to businesses that they haven't had in a long time," said Rep. Kevin

Brady, R-Texas, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi scoffed at the notion that Republicans were accomplishing anything with the regulatory repeals "because they do not meet the needs of the American people." "They are about trickle-down. Their life is about giving more money to the high-end and to corporate interests, maybe it will trickle down, that would be good, but if it doesn't, so be it, that's the free market," Pelosi said.

Robert Weissman, president of Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy group, said the

regulatory repeals Congress pushed through will actually damage the economy more than it helps. He said that eliminating the stream protection rule may help coal companies, but it hurts other companies that stand to gain through healthier streams and water supplies. "If you look across the terrain of the Congressional Review Act resolutions, they are repeals of public measures that help, consumers, workers and the environment in very substantial ways, but are opposed by powerful corporate interests," Weissman said.—AP



CZECH REPUBLIC: A rabbit jumps over an obstacle during a rabbit track and field competition on the sidelines of a hunting exhibition in Kromeriz, about 60 km east of Prague.—AFP

CHINA REPORTS SIX NEW BIRD FLU CASES, ONE DEATH

BEIJING: China reported six new cases of H7N9 bird flu including one death in Hunan after live poultry markets in the province were shuttered last month. The infections were reported in the last week of March by the provincial centre for disease control and prevention, according to a report by Xinhua news agency yesterday. A total ban on live poultry trading in the provincial capital of Changsha has been in effect since March 17 and will continue for another five days, the agency said.

In March authorities reported an outbreak of the virus in the province originating from a farm with about 29,760 infected birds. Over 170,000 birds were culled as a result. The number of human infections this season has surged to the highest level since 2009. At least 162 deaths have been reported since October. Health authorities said that cold and wet weather in Hunan played a role in the recent spread of the virus.—Reuters



MOSCOW: This picture shows a lizard in a garden outside the Russian capital Moscow.—AFP

CLINIC PAGE



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248 33 199

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CUTS STEAKHOUSE LAUNCHES NEW MENU TO CELEBRATE AUTHENTIC BRAZILIAN CUISINE



The contemporary Brazilian steakhouse, Cuts Steakhouse, launched recently its new menu in The Avenues branch- Grand Avenue, located in the 2nd floor in the presence of social media celebrities and bloggers as well as VIP guests and media delegates. Brazilian steak lovers had also the chance to experience



the Churrasco cuts of meat including the scrumptious home-made seasoned steak that is carefully prepared to be truly a one-of-a-kind. Not forgetting the live cooking station of grilled steak, beef, shrimps and chicken, as well as gourmet salads and desserts, where invitees enjoyed the House



specialty, pleasant music and the restaurant's inspirational decor that merges between the Brazilian and Kuwaiti styles. Cuts Steakhouse celebrates its authentic Brazilian culinary hospitality that offer both unmatched level of simplicity and luscious taste, offering high quality steaks

along with gourmet fish, salads, sandwiches and desserts. Serving tenderloin cuts of meat that is carefully prepared by renowned Chefs in Kuwait, the restaurant enjoys a prime location in a mall that has the highest foot falling town giving visitors the chance to enjoy a great dining experience.



KIB LAUNCHES 7TH QURAN MEMORIZATION COMPETITION

As part of its ongoing commitment towards promoting Islamic values across all segments of the community, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently opened registration for its 7th Quran Memorization Competition. The annual competition is set to take place during the Holy Month of Ramadan for the children of KIB customers. The competition will be taking place at KIB's head office, from June 11 to 15, and will be divided into five categories based on participants' ages. There will be four categories dedicated to children (7-9 years old, 10-12 years old, 13-14 years old and 15-17 years old). "As an Islamic financial institution, we are keen on fostering strong religious values and principles within our community. We have always been devoted to promoting religious traditions that target different segments of the population, particularly the youth segment," commented,

Dr Hisham Abdul Hai, the Shara'a Coordinator at KIB. "Within this context, we have always been firm believers in the importance of teaching and learning the Quran, and we actively seek to inspire the younger generations to uphold the traditions of proper Quran recitation." Participants in the first category will be asked to recite their assigned Quranic verses, while the rest of the categories will be asked to recite verses in addition to using proper tajweed. The first category will recite surat Al-Naza'at, Al-Infitar and Al-Aa'la, the second category will recite surat Al-Waqa'a, the third category will recite surat Yasin, the fourth category will recite surat Al-Kahf and the fifth category. Abdul Hai further added that those interested in signing their children up for the competition can register their children at KIB branches. He concluded by wishing all participants success during the competition.



GUST EXPANDS STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Gulf University for Science and Technology's (GUST) announced yesterday the expansion of its internship program to include over 20 prominent companies in multiple industry sectors. The program fulfills a major course requirement for the College of Business Administration every semester. It is designed to equip students with practical hands-on experience in a professional working environment to ensure an effective transition into the workforce after graduation. This year, the list of internship providers has increased to include companies from new sectors. YIACO Medical Company, Nestle, Agility, Commercial Bank of Kuwait, Warba Bank, Talal Abu Ghazaleh & Co., Grant Thornton, Ernst & Young, Arab Investment Company, AIESEC, LOYAC, and ATAHUB are now part of GUST's internship providers, bringing the total number of companies to 26. GUST President, Professor Donald Bates, said "Our job as educators is to make sure that our students are fully prepared to take on any challenge that comes their way, not only during their time at GUST, but also when they join the work force. It is through the success of such programs, that our graduates have developed a reputation as top-tier employment candidates." In line with GUST's corporate



President Professor Donald Bates



Nahed Al-Obaid, Deputy Director of Center of Business Development and Corporate Relations

strategy, the university has built and maintained effective collaborations with major companies and organizations in Kuwait. GUST internship providers include major entities in the oil sector, such as Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and Kuwait Oil Company, organizations in the financial sector such as the National Bank of Kuwait, Boubyan Bank, Gulf Bank, Kuwait Finance House, companies in the investment sector such as Global Investment House, as well as the public sector with the State Audit Bureau. These organizations are instrumental in creating opportunities for our students to learn as well as complement their academic skills with the hands-on experience required in the workplace. GUST Deputy Director of Business Development &

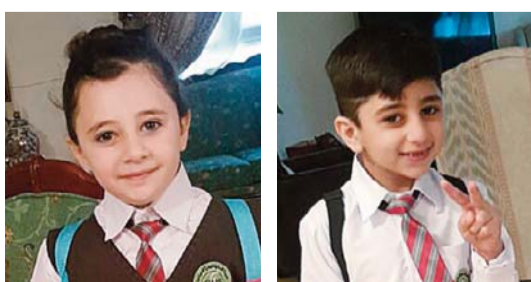
Corporate Relations, Nahed Al-Obaid said, "This internship program is a great opportunity for GUST to build relationships with the corporate sector and interact with industry leaders. This enables us to stay tuned to current market requirements. The program has been successful in creating an effective bridge between our students and potential employers." Over a thousand students have successfully completed the internship program in the past nine years. With such programs, GUST students gain essential experience that familiarizes them with professional working environments by offering the opportunity to participate in day-to-day work activities, and enables them to acquire specific skill sets in preparation for their future careers.

NSH CONDUCTS CULTURAL EVENT

The members' special talents in dancing made many raise their eyebrows, in the recently held cultural program. The welfare unit of NSH con-

ducted cultural events for the community. NSH has been conducting a series of events. The members believe that NSH is concerned about them as a whole person, not just a member, and are more productive and satisfied. These cultural events give them a sense of satisfaction, keeping their morale and motivation high. Satwan Singh who enthralled the audience with his Punjabi dance says, "We are thankful to NSH for conducting such events and giving us the opportunities. It is sure such community welfare centered efforts will serve many-fold better than any." The hall has become a pool of excellent performance in Hindi, Bhojpuri, Odiya, Punjabi and Telugu dance. It gives a special meaning for the continuous efforts of NSH. These are to bring forth a satisfied community, creates happiness in their workplace, said NSH Vice President Sabu, who recalls all sort of moral support from the Indian Embassy in Kuwait. NSH is organizing for the kids drawing, dance, music, extempore and quiz through the Future Pillars Program. The recently conducted quiz contest was won by Meghana and team. NSH was honored for its best welfare initiatives in 2016.

Greetings



Parents of Fadia Na'el Abolhuda and Wadhah Na'el Abolhuda congratulate them on their success.



MCDONALD'S HOLDS SCREENING OF SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE

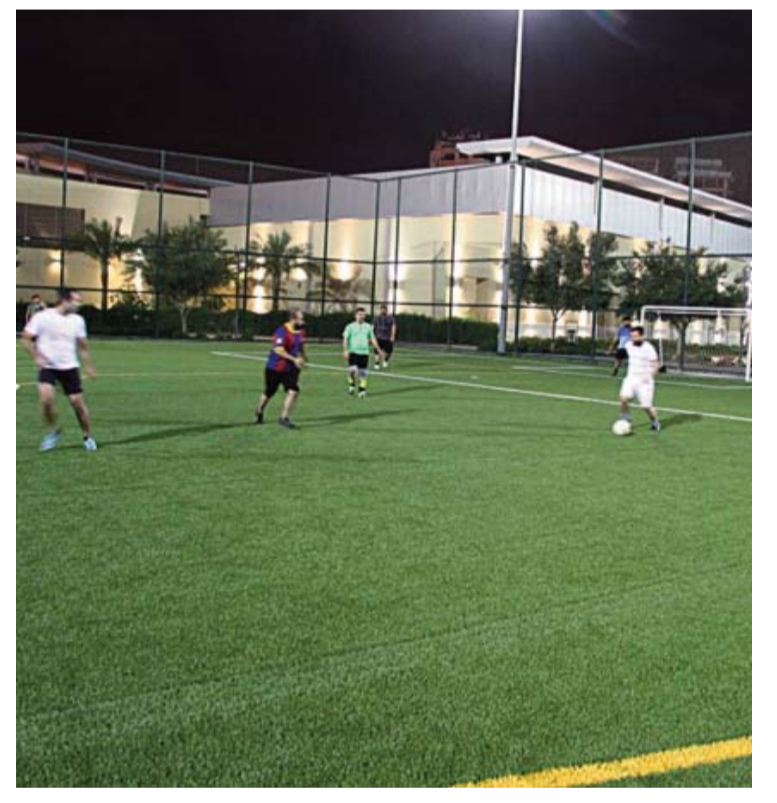
It was a night of movie magic for a special group of children, as McDonald's Kuwait held a private screening of the new animated blockbuster, "Smurfs: The Lost Village". Children from the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals (KACCH), the Kuwait Orphanage and Dasman Bilingual

School were invited to go on a fun and exciting journey into the wonderful world of the Smurfs, in an exclusive screening held this past Thursday at Marina Mall Cinescape. The highly-anticipated film gave the young audience a cinematic experience to remember, but the evening did not end there. Following

the screening, the audience was treated to a special movie-themed McDonald's dining experience, featuring Smurfs Happy Meals. At the end of the evening, the children left the screening wearing huge smiles and with goodie bags filled with fun gifts and Smurfs memorabilia. "Nothing makes us happier than drawing

smiles on the faces of our youngest fans, and what better way to do so than taking them on a journey into the magical world of film?" said Sherif Coutry, Marketing Director at McDonald's Kuwait. "These private screenings have become one of our most popular community initiatives over the past few years, and they have proven to

be a major hit with children and families alike." Coutry further added, "The McDonald's experience is all about bringing joy and laughter to our communities, and our Brand Promise is "simple, easy enjoyment". These movie screenings are simply one way on which we deliver on that promise."



PSA KUWAIT ORGANIZES PAKISTAN NATIONAL DAY SOCCER CUP 2017

On the Occasion of Pakistan National Day celebrations Pakistan Sports Association Kuwait (PSA) organizes Pakistan National Day Soccer Cup 2017 on March 23, at Salmiya Cricket ground. Soccer match was played between Pakistan green and Pakistan white teams to celebrate Pakistan National Day. Pakistan Green won the soccer cup by 1-0.

President of Pakistan Sports Association Kuwait Maqbool Ahmed, PSA Founder/Director General Muhammad Irfan Adil, Advisor M Irfan Shafiq, Executive members of PSA Zeeshan, Shahzad, Fiyaz, Sulaiman Manager of BEC, Ijaz, Zulfiqar, Umer Farooq and Shafiq Ahmed were among the guests. Many dignitaries and soccer lovers watched the thrilling game. Pakistan white team captain Taimoor Fayyaz received the runner up trophy while the Pakistan green team clinched the winner trophy which was received by Captain Kamran Kundi.

PSA Founder/Director General Muhammad Irfan Adil said that today's event was organized by PSA in connection of Pakistan National Day celebrations in order to promote its significance among

the youth. He stated that, Kuwait is our second home and we wish peace and prosperity to our Kuwaiti brothers and sisters.

PSA President Maqbool Ahmed said, Pakistan Sports Association Kuwait aims at engaging the youth and community in positive and healthy sports activities. It is an avenue for camaraderie and to develop a sense of belonging among individuals in the shared pursuit of sports and to provide an outlet for advanced participation and competition in a particular sport. PSA is a non-political, non partisan and non-governmental organization, founded by Muhammad Irfan Adil on August 14, 2013.

PSA has been organizing sports events and festivals, among community with collaboration of local sports authorities and will work together with local organizations and charities to enhance the standing and awareness of the benefits of sports and exercise. Both teams were appreciated for their excellent performance. The event ended with award giving ceremony. M Irfan Shafiq, Advisor of PSA, thanked all the guests for witnessing the game. Certificates of participations were presented to all players by distinguished guests.





- 00:45 Stranger Among Bears
01:10 Orangutan Island
05:02 Stranger Among Bears
05:25 Orangutan Island
05:49 Gator Boys
06:36 Gorilla School
07:00 Gorilla School
07:25 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
08:15 There's A Rhino In My House!

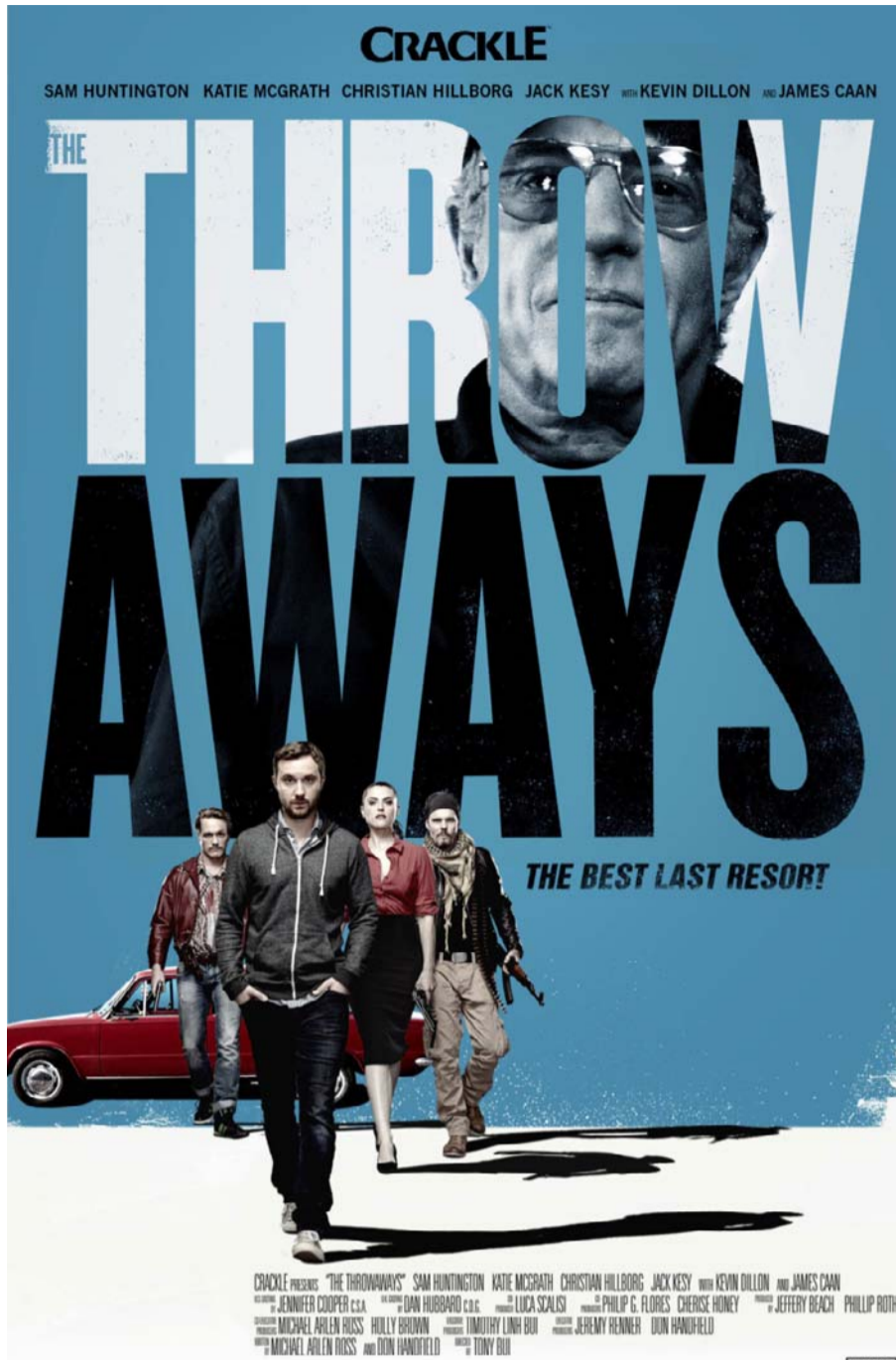
- 21:00 Gold Rush
21:50 Idris Elba: Fighter
22:40 Killing Fields
23:30 Fast N' Loud



- 00:00 Rob & Chyna
00:05 Famously Single
01:50 E! News
02:50 Celebrity Style Story
03:20 Celebrity Style Story
03:50 Botched By Nature
04:40 Botched By Nature
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Mariah's World
06:55 E! News
07:25 Mariah's World
08:20 Mariah's World
09:15 Mariah's World
10:10 E! News
10:40 Celebrity Style Story
11:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
14:05 So Cosmo
22:00 Botched
23:00 E! News
23:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians



- 00:00 Binny And The Ghost
00:25 Hank Zipzer
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Hank Zipzer
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Hank Zipzer
04:35 Binny And The Ghost
05:25 Hank Zipzer
05:45 The Hive
05:50 The 7D
06:00 Jessie
06:25 Jessie
08:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
08:55 The Zhuzhus S1
07:20 Elena Of Avalor
07:45 Bizaardvark
08:10 Bizaardvark
08:35 Stuck In The Middle
09:00 Stuck In The Middle
09:25 Disney The Lodge
09:50 Bunk'd
10:15 Bunk'd
10:40 Pocahontas
12:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
12:20 Jessie
12:45 Jessie
13:10 Austin & Ally
13:35 Austin & Ally
14:00 Liv And Maddie
14:25 Liv And Maddie
14:50 Sunny Bunnies
14:55 The Zhuzhus S1
15:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...



THE THROWAWAYS ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 23:20 Henry Hugglemonster
23:35 The Hive
23:45 Loopdidoo
09:05 California Investigator
09:30 Deadly Affairs
10:20 Southern Fried Homicide
11:10 I Am Homicide
12:00 Disappeared
12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
13:40 California Investigator
14:05 California Investigator
14:30 Deadly Affairs
15:20 Southern Fried Homicide
16:10 Your Worst Nightmare
17:00 I'd Kill For You
17:50 I Almost Got Away With It
18:40 California Investigator
19:05 California Investigator
19:30 Beauty Queen Murders
20:20 I Almost Got Away With It
21:10 Tabloid
22:00 Guns On Campus: Tamron Hall Investigates
22:50 How (Not) To Kill Your Husband
23:40 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil



- 00:00 The Haunting Of...
01:00 My Ghost Story: Caught On Camera
02:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
03:00 Killers
04:00 The Haunting Of...
05:00 My Ghost Story: Caught On Camera
06:00 The First 48
07:00 My Crazy Ex
08:00 Evil Up Close
09:00 I Killed My BFF
10:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
11:00 The First 48
13:00 My Crazy Ex
14:00 Evil Up Close
15:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
16:00 I Killed My BFF
17:00 The First 48
19:00 Evil Up Close
20:00 Britain's Biggest Heists
21:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
22:00 Homicide Hunter



- 00:20 Hoard Hunters
01:10 Pawn Stars
01:35 Pawn Stars Best Of
02:00 Storage Wars: Barry's Best Buys
02:50 Storage Wars
03:15 American Pickers
04:05 Pawn Stars
04:30 Pawn Stars
05:00 Mountain Men
06:00 Leupu And Pitbull
06:50 Shipping Wars
07:15 Shipping Wars
07:40 Counting Cars
08:05 Counting Cars
08:30 Pawn Stars
08:55 Pawn Stars
09:20 Storage Wars
09:45 Storage Wars
10:10 American Pickers
11:00 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
11:50 Time Team
12:40 Swamp People
13:30 Ax Men
14:20 Mountain Men
15:10 Ice Road Truckers
16:00 Leupu And Pitbull
16:50 Pawn Stars
17:15 Pawn Stars
17:40 Storage Wars: Barry's Best Buys
18:30 Pawn Stars
18:55 Pawn Stars Best Of
19:20 Mountain Men
20:10 American Pickers
21:00 The Curse Of Oak Island
21:50 Hunting Hitler
22:40 American Restoration
23:30 American Pickers



- 00:05 Destroyed In Seconds
00:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
02:10 Dirty Jobs
03:50 Ultimate Survival
06:20 How It's Made
07:00 Doki
07:25 Bear Grylls Survival School
07:50 Must Love Cats
08:40 How It's Made
09:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 Must Love Cats
12:00 Ultimate Survival
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Dirty Jobs
14:30 Doki
14:55 Bear Grylls Survival School
15:20 Mythbusters



- 00:00 The Great Food Truck Race
01:00 Tia Mowry At Home
02:00 Dinner At Tiffani's



- 00:00 Henry Hugglemonster
00:15 Calimero
00:30 Art Attack
00:55 Zou
01:05 Loopdidoo
01:20 Henry Hugglemonster
01:35 Calimero
01:50 Zou
02:05 Art Attack
02:30 The Hive
02:40 Loopdidoo
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:10 Art Attack
03:35 Loopdidoo
03:50 Calimero
04:05 Art Attack
04:30 Henry Hugglemonster



- 00:20 Guardians Of The Galaxy vs The Sinister 6
06:50 Atomic Puppet
07:15 Gravity Falls
07:40 Supa Strikas
08:05 Two More Eggs
08:10 K.C. Undercover
08:35 Milo Murphy's Law
09:00 Walk The Prank
09:25 Fight Now Kapow
09:50 Lab Rats
10:15 Two More Eggs
10:20 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
10:45 Mighty Med
11:10 K.C. Undercover



- 00:10 The Chase
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Emmerdale
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Queen's Worst Year
03:25 Don't Tell The Bride
04:25 Surprise Surprise
05:15 Home Fires
06:10 The Chase
07:05 The Queen's Worst Year
08:00 Don't Tell The Bride
09:00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
10:10 Home Fires
11:00 The Chase
11:50 The Queen's Worst Year
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 The Chase
15:10 Guess This House
16:00 Vera
17:50 Come Date With Me Australia
18:45 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Guess This House
21:00 Vera
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street
23:40 Coronation Street



- 00:10 Wicked Tuna
01:00 Top 10 Biggest Beasts Ever
03:00 Monster Fish
04:00 Wicked Tuna
05:00 Mega Breakdown
06:00 Last War Heroes
07:00 Apocalypse: The Rise Of Hitler
08:00 Apocalypse: The Rise Of Hitler



- 01:00 The Game Plan
03:00 Beyond The Mask
05:00 American Girl: Grace Stirs Up Success
07:00 Alone For Christmas
09:00 Kim Possible: So The Drama
10:15 Hercules (1997)
12:15 American Girl: Grace Stirs Up Success
14:15 Kim Possible: So The Drama
15:30 The Hunchback Of Notre Dame II
17:00 American Girl: Isabelle Dances Into The Spotlight
19:00 Emma's Chance
21:00 Chilly Christmas
23:00 The Hunchback Of Notre



- 00:20 Little Miss Atlanta
01:10 The Undeatables
02:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
02:25 Say Yes To The Dress: Bridesmaids
02:50 Love At First Swipe
03:15 Cake Boss
03:35 Save My Style
04:00 Save My Style
04:20 Little People, Big World
04:45 Little People, Big World
05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
06:00 Cuny Brides
06:25 Cuny Brides
06:50 Too Ugly For Love?
07:40 Outdaughtered: Busby Quints
08:30 Little People, Big World
08:55 Little People, Big World
09:20 Outdaughtered: Busby Quints

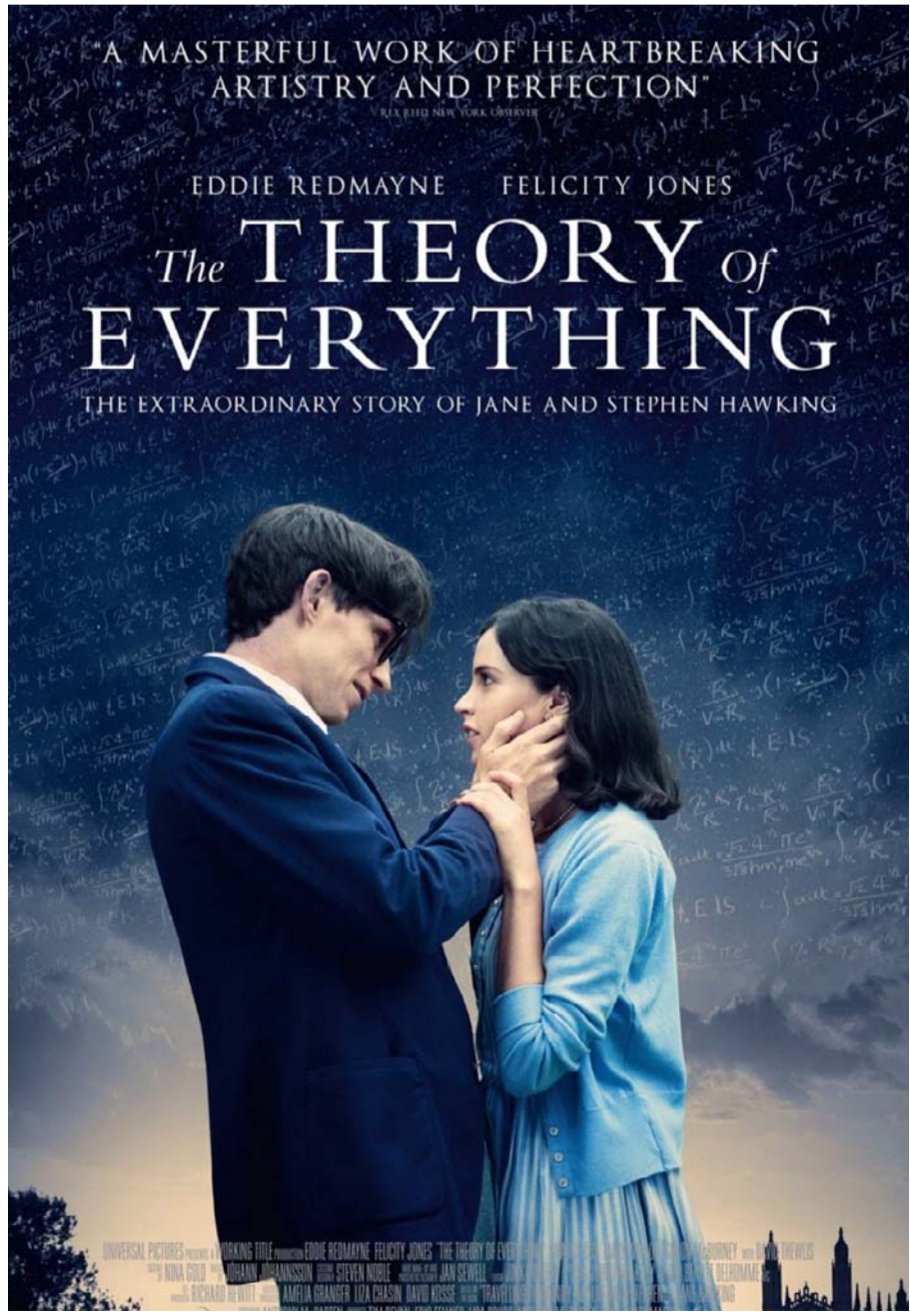
Advertisement for 'The Invention of Lying' featuring James Van Der Beek and a quote: 'YES, THAT DRESS MAKES YOU LOOK FAT'.

THE INVENTION OF LYING ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 16:10 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
17:00 Kids Do The Craziest Things
17:50 Pick A Puppy
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:30 How It's Made
20:20 Mythbusters
21:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things
22:00 Pick A Puppy
22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
02:30 Dinner At Tiffani's
03:00 Chopped
04:00 The Great Food Truck Race
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
07:00 The Kitchen
08:00 The Pioneer Woman
10:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
11:00 The Kitchen
12:00 The Pioneer Woman
13:00 Siba's Table
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Chopped
16:00 The Kitchen
17:00 The Pioneer Woman
18:00 Chopped
19:00 Iron Chef America
20:00 Restaurant: Impossible
21:00 Mystery Diners
22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
23:00 Guy's Grocery Games
04:45 Zou
05:00 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
05:45 Loopdidoo
06:00 Zou
06:15 Calimero
06:30 Loopdidoo
06:45 Henry Hugglemonster
07:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
07:25 Sofia The First
07:50 The Lion Guard
08:15 PJ Masks
08:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
09:05 Goldie & Bear
09:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
09:35 The Lion Guard
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Doc McStuffins
10:55 Miles From Tomorrow
11:20 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
11:50 Loopdidoo
12:05 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
12:30 Gummi Bears
12:55 Zou
13:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
13:35 PJ Masks
14:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
14:30 The Lion Guard
15:00 Sofia The First
15:30 Doc McStuffins
15:55 Goldie & Bear
16:20 Miles From Tomorrow
16:50 PJ Masks
17:15 Sofia The First
17:40 Doc McStuffins
18:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
18:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
19:00 Miles From Tomorrow
19:25 Miles From Tomorrow
19:50 Doc McStuffins
20:05 Goldie & Bear
20:35 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
21:00 Gummi Bears
21:30 Miles From Tomorrow
22:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
22:25 Goldie & Bear
22:55 PJ Masks
11:35 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
12:00 Hercules
13:30 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
13:45 K.C. Undercover
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 K.C. Undercover
14:40 Lab Rats
15:05 Lab Rats
15:30 Supa Strikas
15:55 Supa Strikas
16:25 K.C. Undercover
16:50 Walk The Prank
17:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
17:40 Milo Murphy's Law
18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:10 Gravity Falls
18:35 Mighty Med
19:00 Atomic Puppet
19:25 Game's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:55 K.C. Undercover
20:20 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
20:45 Mighty Med
21:10 Walk The Prank
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Marvel's Avengers Assemble
22:10 Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister 6
22:35 Boyster
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA

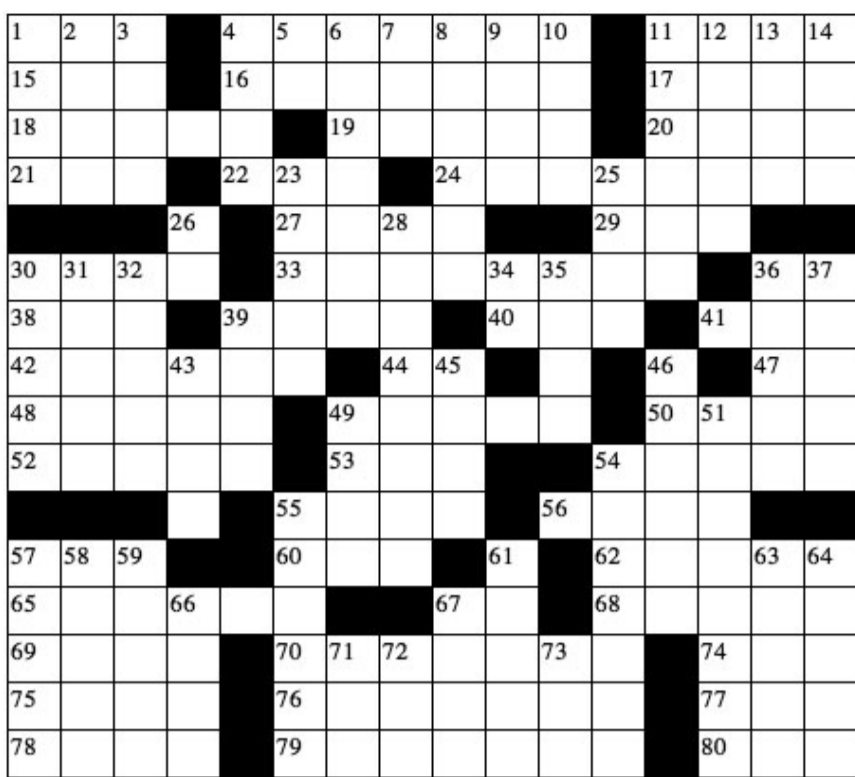


- 00:15 Hotel India
01:05 Lucky Chow
01:30 Dog Whisperer
02:20 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
02:45 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Med
03:35 East Street
04:00 The Wine Show
04:50 One Man & His Campervan
05:20 One Man & His Campervan
05:45 Street Food Around The World
06:15 World's Best Beaches
07:10 Lucky Chow
07:35 Dog Whisperer
08:30 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
09:00 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Med
09:55 East Street
10:20 The Wine Show
11:15 One Man & His Campervan
11:45 One Man & His Campervan
12:10 Street Food Around The World
12:40 Lucky Chow
13:05 Dog Whisperer
14:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
14:30 A Model Adventure
15:25 Fusion Forager
16:20 The Game Chef
16:45 Street Food Around The World
21:20 World's Best Beaches
22:10 Fearless Chef
23:00 Lucky Chow
23:25 Dog Whisperer



THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL HD

CROSSWORD 1567



ACROSS

- 1. The 13th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
4. Sparsely covered with stunted trees or vegetation and underbrush.
11. Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
15. A flat wing-shaped process or wing-like part of an organism.
16. Genus of North American herbs.
17. A manner of performance.
18. A port in western Israel on the Mediterranean.
19. An extreme state of adversity.
20. The capital and largest city of Japan.
21. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
22. Being one more than ninety.
24. Eel-shaped vertebrate without jaws or paired appendages including the cyclostomes and some extinct forms.
27. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
29. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
30. United States film maker (1896-1973).
33. A person who eats human flesh.
38. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
40. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
41. A transuranic element.
42. Type genus of the Tetraoidea.
44. A New England state.
47. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
48. Of or relating to or involving an area.
50. Denied of leaves.
52. (folklore) A corpse that rises at night to drink the blood of the living.
53. A proinflammatory cytokine that is produced by white blood cells (monocytes and macrophages).
56. A quantity of no importance.
57. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
60. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
62. United States computer entrepreneur whose software company made him the youngest multi-billionaire in the history of the United States (born in 1955).
65. Rapid and indistinct speech.
68. A statistical method for making simultaneous comparisons between two or more means.
69. A spread made chiefly from vegetable oils and used as a substitute for butter.
70. A sum of money paid in compensation for loss or injury.
74. (Irish) The sea personified.
75. Being or occurring in fact or actuality.
76. Continuing forever or indefinitely.
77. Water frozen in the solid state.
78. Fallow deer.
79. A Chadic language spoken in Chad.
80. Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.

- 3. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
4. The second largest city in Tunisia.
5. A hard brittle blue-white multivalent metallic element.
6. Nearly cosmopolitan family.
7. North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
8. Wish harm upon.
9. Two-masted sailing vessel square-rigged on both masts.
10. An account describing incidents or events.
11. The sodium salt of amobarbital that is used as a barbiturate.
12. German mystic and theosophist who founded modern theosophy.
13. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
14. A historical area and former kingdom in northwestern Spain.
23. Tropical American tree producing cacao beans.
25. The sixth month of the civil year.
26. Being one hundred more than three hundred.
28. Large arboreal boa of tropical South America.
31. A drama set to music.
32. Desert shrub of Syria and Arabia having small white flowers.
34. A state in midwestern United States.
35. A small cake leavened with yeast.
36. Make off with belongings of others.
37. Most important element.
39. Offering fun and gaiety.
43. A sudden short attack.
45. A soft porous rock consisting of calcium carbonate deposited from springs rich in lime.
46. A large Yoruba city in southwestern Nigeria.
49. A thrusting blow with a knife.
51. A peninsula in southwestern Asia that forms the Asian part of Turkey.
54. The dry dusty pulp that remains after juice is extracted from sugar cane or similar plants.
55. A native of ancient Troy.
58. Indigo bush.
59. At right angles to the length of a ship or airplane.
61. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
63. Expel from one's property.
64. A dress worn primarily by Hindu women.
66. A cord fastened around the neck with an ornamental clasp and worn as a necktie.
67. A fine grained mineral having a soft soapy feel and consisting of hydrated magnesium silicate.
71. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
72. The force of workers available.
73. The rate at which red blood cells settle out in a tube of blood under standardized conditions.

DOWN

- 1. Type genus of the Majidae.
2. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may try hard not to gossip or encourage others to gossip but today a bit of juicy news is hard to resist. Be a good citizen and keep it to yourself; you will see that the truth will come out soon anyway and it is fun knowing the inside scoop.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Surprised to find family members up early and ready to do things together this today morning, you may decide to join in the activities. Family togetherness will continue to deepen. Today, family members share pictures and purchase books and create a new tradition in your family called "picture update."



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Understanding yourself at the soul level will bring you a perception of humanity and the endless possibilities ahead. It is important to keep a tight rein on the purse strings now. In fact, this evening would be a good time to go over budgeting plans for this whole month.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Stay within your budget-after the twentieth you will be able to see relief with financial problems. A surprising development at the end of this next week influences your finances for the better. Meanwhile, quit trying to prove a point.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is a great day to be with others and to play together. If you begin a workout program or build up a program now, you will be happy with the results. We are talking endurance here, not necessarily body weight.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

There is much activity and involvement beginning with volunteer programs at this time. Remember to separate the two activities in your life; work in one avenue of life and volunteer in another avenue of life.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Be aware that the aggravations today are short-lived. There will be flashes of psychic insights to guide you. Remember these feelings and stay in touch with your own sense of direction. Be prepared to travel later this month.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Consciously, make your words positive today. Your highly critical eye is one of your strengths and when you express yourself in positive and practical ways, you move mountains.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Any activity you want to become involved with is enjoyable today. A short trip or the end of a long weekend travel plan may come to an end some time today. Minor irritations are short lived. You may feel intellectually competitive and could become irritated by trivialities-car games, perhaps.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today is the day to start a new adventure-you have good thoughts and ideas. The ability to communicate and describe what you see may be a reason for fine-tuning your thoughts into an outline for a book.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Personal popularity will come easily. This is a good time for surrounding yourself with friends and loved ones. You appreciate your particular situation and enjoy having support and giving support to those around you.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is a harmonious time-not much of anything happens. Romantic relationships are favored. Your personal magnetism is high. Marriage and other close relationships give rise to great expectations and you have an opportunity to create a little magic in your life.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Stephen King Movies

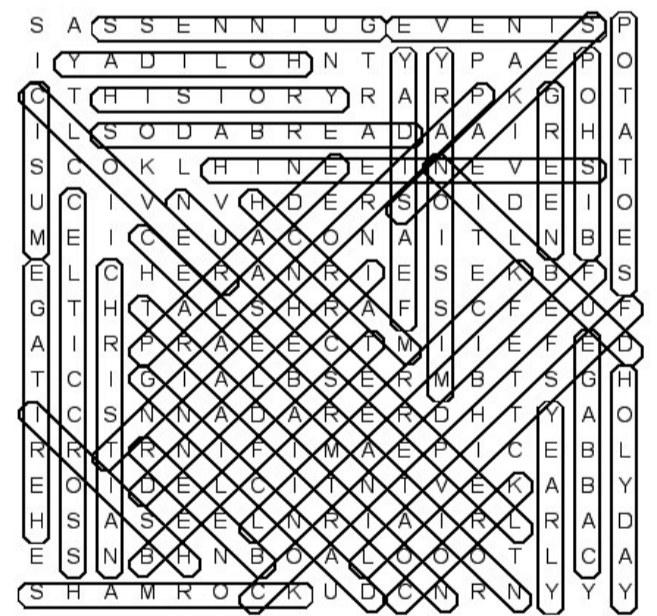
Find and circle all of the Stephen King Movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- APT PUPIL, CARRIE, CHILDREN OF THE CORN, CHRISTINE, CREEPSHOW I, CREEPSHOW II, CUJO, DARK HALF, DEAD ZONE, DOLRES CLAIBORNE, DREAMCATCHER, FIRESTARTER, GRAVEYARD SHIFT, GREEN MILE, HEARTS IN ATLANTIS, LANGOLIERS, MANGLER, MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE, MISERY, NEEDED THINGS, NIGHT FLIER, PET SEMATARY, QUICKSILVER HIGHWAY, ROSE RED, RUNNING MAN, SALEM'S LOT, SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION, SHINING, SILVER BULLET, SLEEPWALKERS, STAND BY ME, THE STAND, THINNER, TOMMYKNOCKERS, TRUCKS

Yesterday's Solution

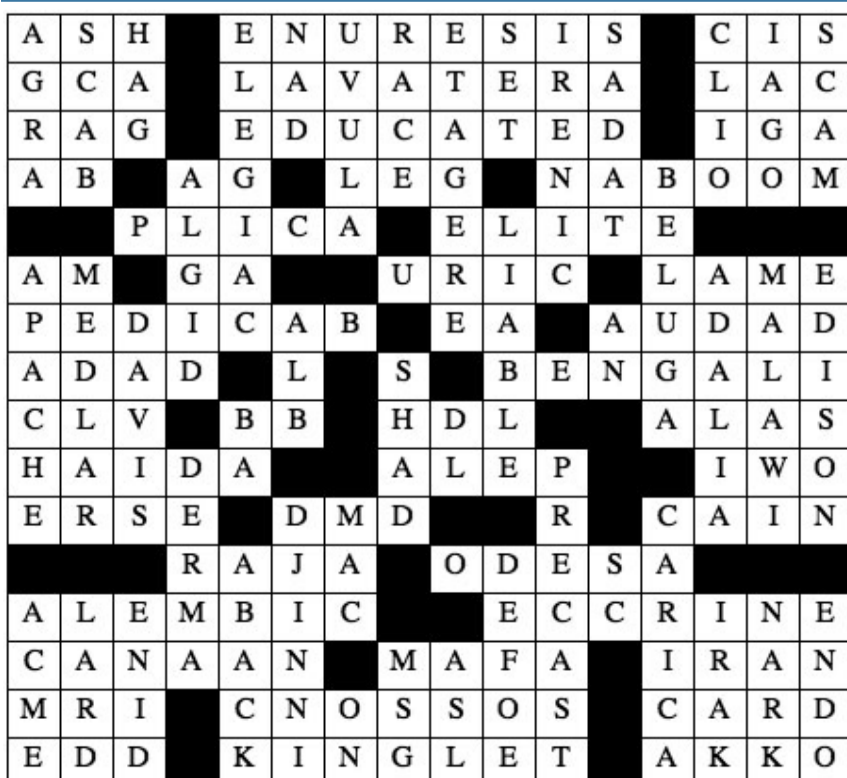
St. Patrick's Day



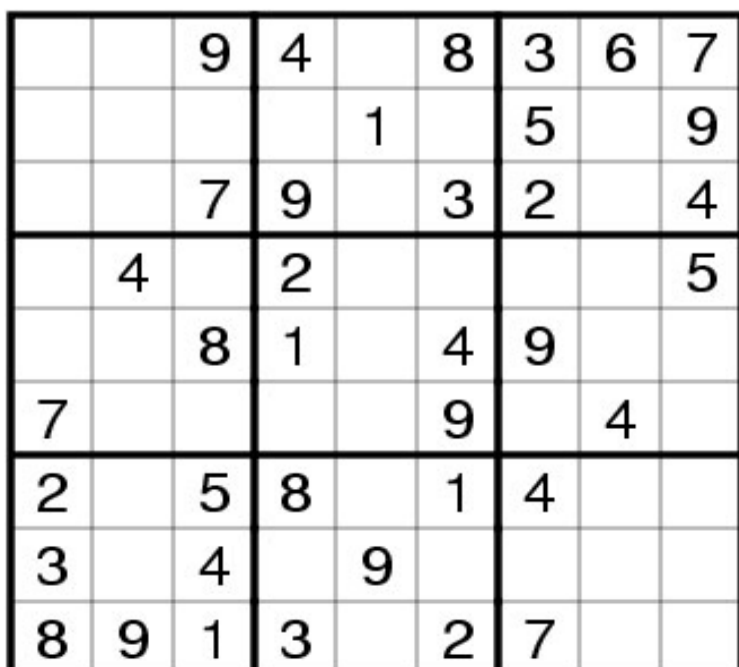
- BEER, BELFAST, BISHOP, CABBAGE, CELEBRATION, CELTIC CROSS, CHRISTIAN, CLOVER, CORK, CORNED BEEF, DANCING, DUBLIN, EVENTS, FEAST DAY, FESTIVAL, GREEN, GUINNESS, HERITAGE, HISTORY, HOLIDAY, HOLY DAY, IRELAND, IRISH, LEPRECHAUN, LIMERICK, MARCH, MISSIONARY, MUSIC, PARADE, PATRON SAINT, POTATOES, SEVENTEENTH, SHAMROCK, SNAKES, SODA BREAD, TRADITION, YEARLY

The hidden message is: SAINT PATRICK LIVED IN THE FIFTH CENTURY

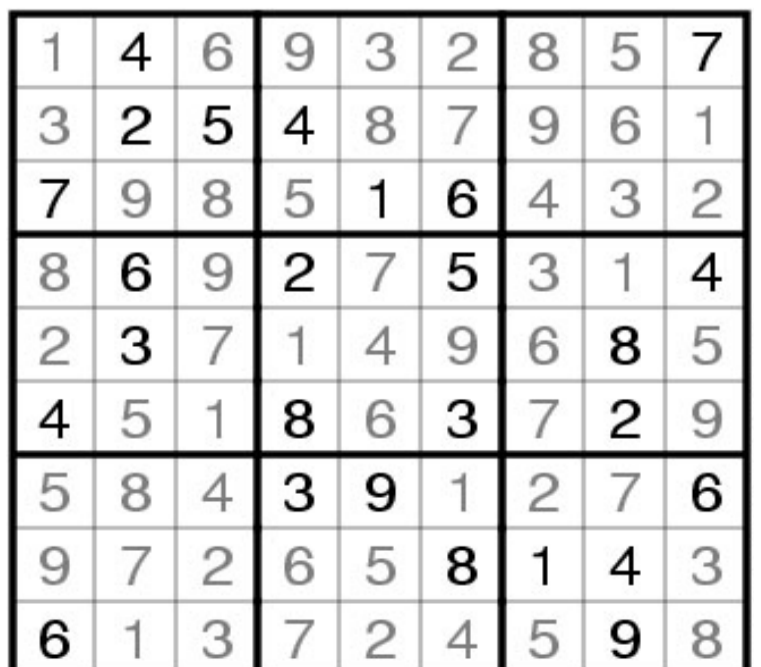
Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





Mariah Carey's tribute to George Michael

Mariah Carey honored George Michael at her concert in Dubai on Friday. The 'Hero' hitmaker paid a heartfelt tribute to the late singer - whose funeral took place last week, three months after he was found dead from natural causes on Christmas Day - with a cover of his 1987 ballad 'One More Try', which she described as "one of his greatest records". She told her audience: "I always loved it, I always loved him. He was a really great person." The 47-year-old singer asked the crowd to use their phones to shine lights in honor of George, and sighed before she said: "We'll make it through this." Mariah shared a video of the performance on Facebook, describing it as her "heartfelt tribute". She captioned the video: "We miss you, George Michael." This isn't the first time Mariah has honored one of her heroes at a concert. Shortly after Prince died from a Fentanyl overdose last April, she asked her audience in Paris for a moment of silence to reflect on the 'Purple Rain' hitmaker. She said: "He was a friend to me too and he talked me through sometimes I really, really needed somebody ... he was an incredible person if you didn't ever get to meet him and I'm sure his music touched every single person in here. So, let's have a moment of silence for Prince if we could please ... "It's a very sad day but we remember the life of somebody who will always be treasured ... It's such a loss that he's gone. I'll never get over it."



Luke Bryan: 'Brother's death helped me focus on success'

Luke Bryan says the death of his brother helped him to chase his dreams. The 40-year-old singer's sibling Chris died in a car accident in 1996, when Luke was just 19, and he admitted it helped to focus his desire for success. Speaking on NBC's 'Sunday TODAY With Willie Geist', he said: "When Chris passed away I was 19 years old, fixing to chase my dream and it just totally rocked our family's world, rocked my world. "It makes you appreciate chasing dreams, you know. You're like, hey you get one go-round at this thing called life and it's very fragile, so you better go after your dreams." Meanwhile, Luke recently performed the US national anthem at the 2017 Super Bowl and called it a huge honor. Speaking before the performance, he explained: "I said, 'Hell yes, I'll do it!' Is the anthem challenging? Yes. Is it nerve-wracking? Yes. But I moved to Nashville to follow my dreams and singing the national anthem on that stage doesn't get any bigger ... I feel like this is my way of honoring my country. It's a little chance to serve." In 2012, he performed the anthem at the event but was forced to apologize after complaints came in thick and fast after he had lyrics from the song written on his hand. In his apology five years ago, Luke insisted that only needed "key words" scribbled down as reminders and that he was honored to have been chosen to sing the song. He wrote on Twitter: "I had a few key words written down to insure myself that I wouldn't mess up. I just wanted to do my best. I promise it was from the heart. If I offended anyone with my approach I sincerely apologize ... Anytime I sing the anthem it is an honor and my heart beats out of my chest (sic)".

One Direction had 24m expenses



One Direction spent a staggering £24.3 million in the year before they went on hiatus. The 'History' group - which includes Louis Tomlinson, Harry Styles, Niall Horan and Liam Payne - splurged £46,321 on personal styling, £801,163 on travel and meals, and £150,034 on office admin, accounts filed for 1D Media in 2015 show. The bulk of the group's expenses were the £10.7 million cost of their 'On the Road Again' world tour, but other spending included £9,967 on bank charges, £814,001 on legal matters, £258,625 on crew costs and £97,065 on insurance. However, despite their vast expenses, the company recorded a £30.6 million profit, with the group, along with former member Zayn Malik, picking up £561,872 in directors' salaries. A source told The Sun on Sunday newspaper: "If you're going to be part of a musical juggernaut such as One Direction that makes £63million before tax then you're inevitably going to incur a few expenses along the way. "But it's fascinating to see just how and where the money was being distributed. "The next accounts will be for the first year the band didn't release any new music, so profits will inevitably be down. But so will hairstyling costs." The 'Night Changes' singers all resigned as directors of 1D Media in April 2016, and each of them made a huge £14 million from selling 10 shares in the company. Since going on hiatus, the quartet have been working on

solo projects, and Harry Styles revealed last week he will be releasing his debut single, 'Sign of the Times', on April 7. He wrote on Twitter: "SIGN.OF.THE.TIMES // 7.APRIL.17 // (sic)" And someone who has already heard the track is Union J's Josh Cuthbert and he said it will "block your socks off". He said: "Harry Styles' new music is gonna blow your socks off!! X (sic)" Harry previously teased his solo music with a teaser video that was broadcasted in advert breaks during 'The Voice' on ITV last weekend. The short clip showed the star, soaking wet, walking across a dark room and towards a door bathed in light. Piano music played in the background before the date "April 7" flashed up on the screen at the end.

JOHANSSON AND PITT SLAMMED FOR GHOST IN THE SHELL ROLES



Scarlett Johansson and Michael Pitt have been blasted by the Media Action Network for Asian Americans (MANAA). The pair star in the live-action adaptation of the hugely popular Japanese anime series 'Ghost in the Shell' and have been slammed for taking on roles which MANAA believes should have gone to Asian actors. MANAA President Robert Chan said in a statement: "Apparently, in Hollywood, Japanese people can't play Japanese people anymore. There's no reason why either Motoko [Scarlett's character] or Hideo [Michael's character] could not have been portrayed by Japanese or Asian actors instead of Scarlett Johansson and Michael Pitt. We don't even get to see what they looked like in their original human identities - a further white-wash." However, director Rupert Sanders recently praised Scarlett for doing an "incredible job" of portraying a human robot in the movie. The 32-year-old actress takes on the role of Major Motoko Kusanagi and the 46-year-old filmmaker was amazed by how well the star subtly acted out the droid's realization of their human qualities. British-born Sanders said he feels "so lucky" to have gotten the chance to work with the in-demand Hollywood star. He said: "At first, the human mind and the machine body was more encapsulated by the machine. "As the film develops, though, and as she understands more about who she is as a human, she starts to become a bit more human. "It's a hard one. Scarlett joked a lot about it. "She said, 'You've taken away everything that an actor relies on to create a character!' "But she did an amazing job of finding the nuance and subtlety of the humanity awakening within a robot. "It was a very hard performance but she's an incredible talent. I was so lucky to get the chance to work with her on this."

Zach Braff tried not to be in awe of cast

Zach Braff had to give himself daily "pep talks" to stop himself getting intimidated by his 'Going In Style' cast. The actor-turned-director knew the quality of the heist comedy - a remake of the 1979 film of the same name - would be affected if he let himself be too much in awe of screen legends Sir Michael Caine, Morgan Freeman and Alan Arkin. He said: "I knew I was doing a disservice to the film and to them if I was a deer in the headlights. "So I had to give myself morning pep talks, like, 'They're just actors. Direct them like you directed other actors.' "As a testament to them, they never once gave me the 'Who do you think you are, kid?!' treatment." Morgan, Michael and Alan were all impressed by Zach's ability behind the camera, but are unsure of his decision to take on TV series 'Start Up' as his next venture. Morgan said: "I think he has a great future as a director." Michael agreed: "Oh yeah - he's very visual. But what he's doing is, he's doing a TV series where he's directing and playing the lead. He's not doing a movie [next]. "I'd have done another movie. A TV series goes on forever, doesn't it?" Morgan said: "I wouldn't take that on. It's just non-stop. [But] they're short work periods... you work 13, 14, 15 weeks and you're done. They're intense." Alan added to Total Film magazine: "Yeah, but those 15 weeks take 25 weeks." Ann-Margret also appears in the film and compared the experience to working with legendary Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau on 'Grumpy Old Men'. She said: "Doing this film really reminded me so much of working with Jack and Walter, this warm feeling that we had. I loved coming to work."



Liam Gallagher's debut solo album is finished



Circa Waves' Kieran Shudall has hinted that Liam Gallagher's debut solo album is finished. The 29-year-old rocker is "intrigued" to hear how the former Oasis frontman's record, which is titled 'As You Were', has turned out as one of his close pal's has worked on it and he said it is "great". Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz, the 'Fire That Burns' hitmaker said: "I'll be intrigued to hear it. My mate worked on it and he said it is great, so I will be very intrigued to hear what it sounds like yeah." Kieran was "surprised" that his friend said the outspoken rock star was "down to earth" and not "arrogant" at all. He added: "He said that Liam was a really lovely gentlemanly person and not at all arrogant in any way, he was really down to earth. That was quite a surprise." Liam, 44, recently went to Paris to shoot the cover for the album's artwork and teased fans that "it won't be long" until the LP comes out. In a Twitter post to his 1.49 million followers posted on March 20, he said: "Of to Paris to do album cover it won't be long yeah yeah yeah LG x (sic)" And Liam recently dropped by to check on his band's rehearsals for his forthcoming live shows and said the shows are going to be "dangerous". He said: "Just popped into rehearsals and the lads are hitting on it 1 word DANGEROUS LG X (sic)" And Pete Doherty recently revealed Liam has swiped his bassist Drew McConnell, leaving The Libertines in the lurch so he can join Liam on tour. Pete said: "Stressification on the band front, Drew's playing the bass guitar for Liam Gallagher's new tour."

Gord Downie wins three Junos at music awards gala dinner Saturday night



The Strumbellas win Single of the Year with "Spirits" during the Juno Awards gala at the Shaw Centre in Ottawa, Canada. —AP/AFP photos

Drake struck out in the first round of Juno Awards that were handed out Saturday during a gala dinner at Ottawa's Shaw Centre. The rap superstar, who did not show up for the festivities, lost the artist of the year Juno to the late Leonard Cohen, watched single of the year go to the Strumbellas' tune "Spirits", and even failed to reel in the rap trophy. It went to Jazz Cartier, another Toronto hip-hop artist. That left the Tragically Hip's frontman Gord Downie as the night's big winner. The singer-songwriter, who is fighting terminal brain cancer, received three Juno Awards, including rock album of the year for the Hip's Man Machine Poem.

Downie's own album, Secret Path, a concept album about Chanie Wenjack, an Anishinaabe boy who died in 1966 while trying to return home after escaping from an Indian residential school, won two awards - the adult alternative album award and the award for recording package. Secret Path, which raised funds through its sales for the University of Manitoba's National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation project, came with a graphic novel. Downie was not in Ottawa to receive his Junos. Leonard Cohen, who died four months ago, was conferred a final honor

by the Junos. The legendary singer-songwriter-poet was crowned artist of the year, ahead of Drake, Alessia Cara, Shawn Mendes and The Weeknd.

Cohen's son, singer-songwriter Adam Cohen accepted the award on his father's behalf. "Many international artists find excuses to not participate in the Junos," he joked. "I think he's found the best one yet." Cohen added that his father was "suspicious of people who didn't understand how great Canada is. So thank you, Canada." He also said his father represented people who are still grieving, consoling themselves and him. As for his own loss, Cohen said: "I'm just taking my meds and suppressing my feelings and trying to speak as clearly and eloquently as possible, given my pedigree."

Huge and enormous

The Strumbellas, the Toronto-based, family-friendly indie rockers, were astonished when their song, "Spirits", not only beat Drake, but also Cara, Mendes and The Weeknd. In fact, they were so sure they didn't have a chance that frontman Simon Ward didn't bother wearing shoes when he went to the podium. He'd taken them off after dinner, and didn't think he needed to put them back on.

"We legitimately didn't think we were going to win," said band member Isabel Ritchie. "The nominees we were up against were so exceptional and huge and enormous." "We heard if you beat Drake, you become Drake," kidded the Strumbellas' Dave Ritter. Drake did win the trophy for international achievement. The

Weekend snagged the award for R&B/soul recording of the year for his album Starboy. He was not present to accept it. It was Jazz Cartier's Hotel Paranoia album that upset Drake's View as the year's best rap award, and also beat out Belly, Tasha the Amazon and Tory Lanez.

"I didn't expect to beat Drake, but y'all been snubbing him all night so it should go to me," the Toronto hip-hop artist joked as he accepted the award. Indigenous artists were celebrated at the gala, and not only in the indigenous-music category, which was won by Yellowknife duo Quantum Tangle for its album Tiny Hands. Earthly Days by Winnipeg-based indigenous artist William Prince, who performed at the gala, won contemporary roots album of the year. The award "validates me as a singer, not just as an identity," Prince told reporters.

Inspirational speech

The large-ensemble classical album of the year award went to Steve Wood and the Northern Cree Singers and Tanya Tagaq for their album Going Home Star - Truth and Reconciliation. "We did pretty good tonight," Buffy Sainte-Marie remarked to reporters backstage, after giving an inspirational speech to accept this year's Allan Waters Humanitarian award. The producer of the year award went to Ottawa-based DJ crew A Tribe Called Red, the Junos' breakthrough artist of the year in 2014. "Being a producer in the electronic world is different than an audio engineer, so to get recognition as an electronic producer in that world, it's pretty awesome," said ATCR's Ian Campeau.

Two of the Juno's jazz awards went to B.C.-raised female artists who for left Canada to pursue their music in New York. The vocal jazz album award went to Chilliwack-raised singer-trumpeter Bria Skonberg for her crowd-funded album. The solo jazz album of the year award went to North Vancouver-raised pianist Renee Rosnes, winning her fifth Juno for her album Written in the Rocks. At the podium, Rosnes gave a shoutout to her high school music teacher, Bob Rebagliati. "He has three Juno nominees here tonight," Rosnes said. "Thank you Reb, for everything you've given me." Metalwood, the veteran electric jazz group whose album Twenty won group jazz album of the year, includes a Vancouver-raised bassist, Chris Tarry, who lives in New York, and an Ottawa-raised drummer, Ian Froman, who lives in New Jersey. New York "is the mecca of our music," Rosnes told reporters. "And a lot of Canadian musicians go there and learn and end up staying. We have a great love for Canada, and we come back very often."

Jamaica-born, Toronto-based Exco Levi



Adam Cohen, son of Leonard Cohen accepts the award on behalf of his father for the Artist of the Year.



The Dirty Nil accept the award for Breakthrough Group of the Year.



Paul Langlois and Rob Baker of The Tragically Hip accept the Rock Album of the Year.



Paul Reddick and his wife joke around for photographers after he won the Juno award for Blues Album of the Year.



Bria Skonberg poses with a Juno award after winning the award for Vocal Jazz Album of the Year.



July Talk accepts the Alternative Album of the Year.



Kaytranada poses with a Juno after winning for the Electronic Album of the Year.

The winners are:

- Single of the Year**
Spirits by the Strumbellas
- International Album of the Year**
A Head Full of Dreams by Coldplay
- Artist of the Year**
Leonard Cohen
- Breakthrough Group of the year**
The Dirty Nil
- Adult Alternative Album of the Year**
Secret Path by Gord Downie
- Alternative Album of the Year**
Touch by July Talk
- Rock Album of the Year**
Man Machine Poem by the Tragically Hip
- Vocal jazz album of the year**
Bria by Bria Skonberg
- Jazz album of the year, solo**
Written in the Rocks by Renee Rosnes
- Jazz album of the year, group**
Twenty by Metalwood
- Instrumental album of the year**
Bird's Nest by The Fretless
- Rap recording of the year**
Hotel Paranoia by Jazz Cartier
- Dance recording of the year**
Off the Group ft Shae Jacobs, Bit Funk
- R&B/Soul recording of the year**
Starboy by The Weeknd
- Reggae recording of the year**
Siren by Exco Levi
- Blues album of the year**
Ride the One by Paul Reddick
- World music album of the year**
Okavango African Orchestra
- Video of the year**
Kill v Maim by Grimes
- Metal/hard music album of the year**
Coral Throne by Mandroid Echostar.



Okavango African Orchestra joke around as they pose for photographers after accepting the award for World Music Album of the Year.



Quantum Tangle pose for photographers after winning the Indigenous Music Album of the Year.



The Fretless joke with photographers after winning the award for Instrumental Album of the Year.



Mandroid Echostar pose with Juno awards after winning the Metal/Hard Music Album of the Year.



Diana Panton poses with a Juno award after winning for Children's Album of the Year.



Jordan Nobles poses with a Juno award after winning for Classical Composition of the Year.



Jonathan Shedletzky and Isis Essery poses for photographers after winning the Juno for Recording Package of the Year.



Sarah McLachlan accepts the award for Adult Contemporary Album of the Year.



Buffy Sainte-Marie poses for photographers holding the Allan Waters Humanitarian Award.



A Tribe Called Red pose after winning the Jack Richardson Producer of the Year Award.



Randy Lennox accepts the Walt Grealis Special Achievement Award.

Blockbuster nature series catches dynamite fishermen on film

Documentary filmmakers shooting a new blockbuster nature series in the Philippines said Sunday they chased men they saw fishing with dynamite. A camera crew working on the new four-part show "Big Pacific"—which is to start screening across the globe this summer—filmed as the coastguards they were with gave chase. "The illegal fishermen fled and crashed into the shore, abandoning their vessel," the series' executive producer Kyle Murdoch told AFP. He said his crew was in a lagoon in the Philippines shooting a dugong mother and her calf when they "felt a massive underwater explosion." "They rushed over to the other side of the cove where some people were dynamite fishing. Luckily we filmed the whole thing. The rack and ruin was incredible. "Our team was devastated by what they saw—but they were able to capture it all on film and show the real problems these animals face and what local heroes are trying to do," Murdoch added. Footage of the incident has been included in the "making of" episode of the big-budget series, which is being billed as the next landmark nature series in the mould of the BBC's "Planet Earth" and "Great Barrier Reef". It will be aired by public broadcasters from the US to China, Europe and Japan this year.

'All-out war'

"Unfortunately, the dynamite fishermen got away," Murdoch said after the series was premiered at the TV industry's top gathering, MIPTV, at Cannes on the French Riviera. Despite the Philippine government declaring an "all-out war" on rogue fishermen, the practice is still endemic and is estimated to have damaged 70 percent of the archipelago nation's coral reefs. The Philippines is part of the Coral Triangle, an area of water spanning Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands that is known as the global centre of marine biodiversity. Murdoch said "Big Pacific" was the first major TV series to tackle the world's largest ocean in an emotional cinematic fashion, telling the stories of some of its least-known creatures and showing sights that have never before been seen. It also challenges some of our most cherished assumptions, he said, including highlighting violence in the humpback whale world. "Whales have this reputation of being the gentlest of creatures. We turn that idea on its head," Murdoch said. "Some of the most amazing sequences come from the seas around China, which will just blow people away," he added.

'Massive tentacled beasts'

"For me the giant Nomura's jellyfish were incredible," Murdoch said. "These massive jellyfish bigger than people grow very quickly. In the space of a year they go from microscopic dots to massive tentacled beasts." His New Zealand-based company NHNZ also shot white dolphins off the southern Chinese coast. "The water quality was surprisingly clear. The white dolphins are an iconic species that need a lot of help and conservation," he said. "Huge efforts (are) being made now by the Chinese government so we were lucky to get incredible access." But the star of the "Mysterious Pacific," the series' third episode that was shown at MIPDoc, was the white-spotted puffer fish.

It took scientists 16 years to figure out what the beautiful intricate patterns on the seabed off southern Japan were until they discovered that the highly artistic male of the species sculptured them to attract a mate. The series was also the last worked on by pioneering underwater American photographer Bob Cranston, who died of cancer last year. "He was one of the very best there ever was," Murdoch said, "we were really lucky to have had him on board." — AFP

Singer Luke Bryan, jokingly, gets political about ACM Awards

The Academy of Country Music Awards will unite Democrats and Republicans, according to Luke Bryan, the show's host and a part-time comedian. The country star, hosting yesterday's show for the fifth straight year, joked - as usual - about his duties at the country music party held annually in Las Vegas and airing live on CBS. "Democrats and Republicans are going to get along on Sunday night. They're all going to watch the ACMs together and stuff's going to start happening in this country. It's going to change," Bryan said in an interview with The Associated Press. "Cats and dogs are going to make out."

"Coming to an election near you. Is politics your next career?" chimed in fellow country singer Dierks Bentley, who will co-host with Bryan. "Yes," Bryan replied. Their playful demeanor and carefree attitude will be a main focus Sunday night as country music's A-list players celebrate their success in the genre. Performers at the T-Mobile Arena event include Miranda Lambert, Jason Aldean, Lady Antebellum, Sam Hunt, Little Big Town, Maren Morris, Rascal Flatts, Chris Stapleton as well as Bryan and Bentley. The show will also feature collabora-

tive performances by Faith Hill and Tim McGraw, Florida Georgia Line and Backstreet Boys, Reba McEntire and Lauren Daigle, and Carrie Underwood and Keith Urban.

Underwood and Urban are competing for the top prize - entertainer of the year - along with Bryan, Florida Georgia Line and Aldean, who won the honor last year. Urban, who had success with his genre-bending, Grammy-nominated album "Ripcord," is the top nominee with seven. He will compete for album of the year, single record and song of the year with "Blue Ain't Your Color" and male vocalist of the year. In the latter category, he's up against Aldean, Bentley, Stapleton and Thomas Rhett. Nominees for female vocalist of the year are Kacey Musgraves, Kelsea Ballerini, Lambert, Underwood and Morris, who recently won a Grammy for her hit song, "My Church." Other performers during the three-hour show are Rhett, Ballerini, Brothers Osborne, Cole Swindell and Jon Pardi. Presenters include Darius Rucker, Miss America Savvy Shields, Jake Owen, Kane Brown, Lauren Alaina and Kellie Pickler. The 52nd annual ACM Awards start at 8 pm Eastern. — AP



In this file photo, Luke Bryan answers questions at a news conference for the NFL Super Bowl 51 football game in Houston. — AP

New TV shows test love in the age of the smartphone

A new wave of television formats are set to get into viewers' heads-and their private lives-like never before. An eye-popping Italian game show that allows couples to snoop into their partner's mobile phone and a Spanish dating program that uses hackers to spy on potential dates were unveiled at MIPTV, the world's top TV gathering, in Cannes.

The shows are part of a new generation of programming that analysts say uses technology to make TV more intimate and compelling. "The Phone Secrets" gives participants total access to their lover's phone messages and social media accounts. The couple that survives the ordeal with the least to hide wins. The makers of "Hacked Love", which will air later this year in Spain, claim that six out of 10 people lie on their first date. To counter this, they employ hackers to dig into contestants' pasts while out on a date, pointing out lies or potentially embarrassing information to the person they are dating, live on the air.

The new Israeli game show "Contacts" has found an

even more devilishly ingenious way of putting relationships to the test. Those taking part in the popular culture quiz must ring someone from their phone's contacts list for an answer to a question even if they know it themselves. If their contact gets it wrong, they lose. However, analyst Virginia Mouseler of the influential The Wit website, which charts trends in the industry, said other program-makers were using technology in less sensational situations.

TV 'guardian angels'

She said factual entertainment is moving away from raising goosebumps to providing a more feelgood vibe. "Life coaching and self-help is emerging as quite an important factor in quite a few of the new shows coming up," she told the MIPformat arm of the gathering at Cannes on the French Riviera. An upcoming BBC show "In Your Ear" pairs people going through crises or major moments in their lives with their own personal gurus, who secretly give them advice through an ear-piece.

The gurus range from psychologists to a real-life Indian guru, an Irish nun and American management experts.

These "guardian angels" follow their subject through the camera and give them the benefit of their support in all sorts of situations, Mouseler said. "The only catch is that they must never reveal even to their nearest and dearest that they are being helped," she added. "Yellow Card", a new Japanese show from Fuji Creative, goes one step further and employs a range of experts-from doctors to lawyers and etiquette experts-to follow participants and point out their failings. Rather than giving them a shoulder to lean on, experts are there to give "a yellow card to bad habits," the company said.

Stern dressing-downs

A financial expert ticks off a woman as she shops, scoffing at her naive bargaining skills, while a lawyer intervenes to stop a girl from giving a V-sign on a selfie because her fingerprints could be stolen from the picture. As well as stern dressing-downs, the show "con-

tains useful life-hacks and advice," Mouseler said. German TV channel RTL2 pulled on the heartstrings when it brought in health experts earlier this year to come to the aid of children of obese parents in "Help! My Parents are Fat!" The hit show features an overweight father who had not eaten salad in 20 years but signed up to change because of the emotional pressure from his children. The self-help theme continued in the new Swedish show "Sold!" which follows people trying to sell their homes online without help from estate agents. If last-minute repairs are needed, they could do worse than turn to the controversial show "Denmark versus Eastern Europe," which pits local tradesmen against migrant workers from poorer former Soviet states. Mouseler said the show has sparked huge debate in the Scandinavian country where immigration has become a hot political potato. The quality, price and safety of the work are ruthlessly compared, she said, with hidden cameras showing how differently both sets of workers are treated. — AFP



Models present creations by Malaysian designer Erma Fatima.



Models present creations by Malaysian designer Padusi Couture during the 2017 Asia Islamic fashion week in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

2017 Asia Islamic Fashion Week



Model presents creation by Malaysian designer Padusi Couture during the 2017 Asia Islamic fashion week in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP photos



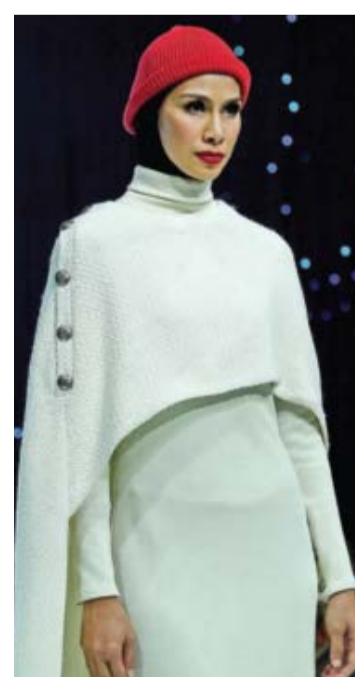
Models present creations by Malaysian designer Erma Fatima.



Model presents creation by Malaysian designer label Mak Cun.



Model presents creation by Malaysian designer Sawdaa.



Model presents creation by French designer Amjaad.

Dylan the Enigmatic accepts 2016 Nobel prize at last

After months of uncertainty and controversy, Bob Dylan finally accepted the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature at a jovial, champagne-laced ceremony on Saturday, the Swedish Academy announced. The academy, which awards the coveted prize, ended prolonged speculation as to whether the 75-year-old troubadour would use a concert stopover in Stockholm to accept the gold medal and diploma awarded to him back in October. They were handed to Dylan at a "private ceremony in Stockholm" attended by 12 academy members, Sara Danius, the academy's permanent secretary, said in a blog post.

"Spirits were high. Champagne was had," Danius confided. "Quite a bit of time was spent looking closely at the gold medal, in particular the beautifully crafted back, an image of a young man sitting under a laurel tree who listens to the Muse," she added. "Taken from Virgil's Aeneid, the inscription reads: 'Inventas vitam iuvat excoluisse per artes', loosely translated as 'And they who bettered life on earth by their newly found mastery.'" The first songwriter to receive the prestigious award, Dylan joins a celebrated group of laureates including Thomas Mann, Samuel Beckett, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Doris Lessing.

The meeting took place at a secret location ahead of Dylan's first concert in Stockholm, the first stop on a long-planned European tour for his latest album of cover songs, "Triplicate". Dylan had not been expected to deliver his traditional Nobel lecture at the meeting-the only requirement to receive the eight million kronor (837,000 euros, \$891,000) that comes with the prize. He has until June 10 to provide his lecture, which could be anything from a short speech to a performance, a video broadcast or even a song. Failing that, he risks losing the prize money. "The Academy has reason to believe that a taped version will be sent at a later point," Danius said on Wednesday.



This file photo taken on April 25, 2011 shows legendary American singer, songwriter, poet, artist and actor, Bob Dylan performing from his repertoire of over 400 songs and 50 albums at the 22nd annual Bluesfest music festival near Byron Bay, Australia. — AFP

No thank you

Several Academy members, including Danius, were present at the concert as Dylan, wearing a white hat, western-style black blazer and cowboy boots, performed "Love Sick" and "Full Moon And Empty Arms," part of a playlist of standards and self-penned hits. The American rock enigma's performance was met with a cheering crowd, which gave repeated standing ovations, especially when he played a harmonica. Dylan was tightlipped between songs and made no mention whatsoever about the Nobel prize. Lars Sjoblom, a 65-year-old sound and light technician, said he had grown up with Dylan's music but was "greatly surprised" that he had not said anything.

"I came here to listen to what he had to say about the Nobel Foundation and to the Swedish people," Sjoblom told AFP. "I think he could have shown Sweden the respect to say 'thank you.'" But Dag Hanners, a 65-year-old logistician, said Dylan never speaks with the crowd during performances. "You just have to live with that," he said with a chuckle.

'Senile hippies'

Dylan was honored "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition," the Nobel committee said when the award was announced last October. His long list of hits, ranging over decades, began in the early Sixties. He penned hundreds of songs in just a few years-an astonishing flurry that included "Blowin' In The Wind," "Hurricane" and "Mr. Tambourine Man." "Not once have I ever had the time to ask myself, 'Are my songs literature?'" Dylan said in a thank-you speech read out by the US ambassador to Sweden during the December Nobel ceremony in Stockholm. He skipped the event due to "pre-existing commitments". — AFP



Feathers fly as

People take part in the International Pillow Fight event on April 1, 2017, in Bucharest, Romania, Los Angeles, California and in Faneromeni Square in the old city of the capital Nicosia. — AP/AFP photos

PILLOW WAR

overtakes downtown Los Angeles



The feathers were flying in downtown Los Angeles. Hundreds of people traded soft blows in LA's Pershing Square in a giant pillow fight that dwarfed even the biggest slumber party slugfests. Children, teens, adults and seniors swung pillows at one another for over an hour on Saturday. The annual event is held to celebrate International Pillow Fight Day. Many wore pajamas, some wore masks and goggles. By the time it was over the ground was so covered with feathers it looked like it had snowed on a sunny April afternoon. — AP



Lifestyle

MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2017

Feathers fly as pillow war overtakes downtown Los Angeles

39



A picture taken on March 31, 2017 shows a detail of an installation, made out of quartz, by French artist Stephane Guiran during his exhibition titled "Immersion" at the Chaumont-sur-Loire castle, central France. Guiran's work is presented at the Centre of Arts and Nature at the Chaumont-sur-Loire castle, famous for its International Garden Festival, from April 1 to November 5, 2017. — AFP

What's in a Chinese name?

Ancient rites and growing business

In a one-room shop tucked inside a Beijing alley, a bearded 74-year-old fortune-teller in crimson tunic offers what Chinese parents have sought for centuries: An auspicious name for their newborn. But business has been tough lately for Mao Shandong and others in his trade as tech-savvy entrepreneurs have turned the ancient naming tradition into a lucrative online business. "We can't make a living these days," lamented Mao.

Chinese have for centuries believed that a

right choice has become even more imperative as they seek to help their children stand out in the world's most populous country.

"Parents care more and more about personal brand," said Zhang Ruxin, the 37-year-old co-founder of the Beijing-based naming service Qimingtong, which essentially means "Clear Naming." "They realise that the name will follow their child for their entire life, be judged by their employers and have an impact on their values." Qimingtong operates almost entirely online, with

Branding for babies

Zhang founded Qimingtong in late 2014 with her business partner, Chen Jun, after working for two decades as a newspaper reporter while pursuing a hobby helping friends and colleagues name their children. Qimingtong's software uses an algorithm to compile the best names for a child based on their parents' responses to a personality quiz. It has been used by more than 10,000 people. Zhang and her employees also help name dozens of newborns every day either via walk-ins or online consultations.

Rates range from 400 yuan (\$60) to 10,000 yuan for a private consultation with Zhang. Liu Qiang, a police officer in central Henan province, and his wife wanted to use a modern naming method that still accounts for "bazi"—the traditional belief in a destiny determined by one's date of birth. "Bazi" or "eight characters," refers to the eight digits denoting the year, month, date and hour of birth. It is believed to determine the natural elements present in one's life, such as metal, wood, water, fire and earth.

A name can compensate for the elements that a child lacks. Liu's son lacked a wood element, so Qimingtong named him "Bailin," combining the characters for cypress tree and a mythical, dragon-like creature from Chinese folklore to create a name which his parents hope will help him forge a unique identity. "We want him to realise his personal dreams," said Liu, 39.

A colleague called 'Eleven'

Chinese looking to move abroad or work for international companies may also seek help choosing an English name. At Lindsay Jernigan's first job in Shanghai, she worked alongside Apple, Yoyo and Eleven.

The last co-worker's English name, inspired by a Liverpool footballer's jersey number, regularly caused confusion. Was the meeting with Eleven, or at 11 am? Was she making a reservation for Eleven, or for 11 people? While her company was filled with "really smart, driven" professionals, Jernigan, a 27-year-old American, feared their names would hurt their prospects in English-speaking work environments. Two years ago she founded BestEnglishName.com, which charges 248 yuan for a 30-minute consultation via WeChat. Some clients request English names that still adhere to "bazi," forcing Jernigan to get creative. If someone wants a water element, she may suggest "Brook," "Morgan" (a water sprite in Welsh), or "Lindsay," which means "Linden trees by the water."

"Of course you can just get lists of names online, but we're the only ones that truly understand the Chinese mentality," Jernigan said. "Naming is a way of self-expression. The demand is definitely here."

Not everyone shares her optimism. Mao said he is ready to abandon his fortune-telling business, even as he scorns his rivals in the naming industry. "All those websites, they're the scams," he said with a sigh. "They don't truly understand Chinese tradition." — AFP



This picture shows Mao Shandong gesturing as he waits for customers in his shop in Beijing. — AFP photos

well-chosen name can ensure a lifetime of good fortune. Unlike in English, where one draws from a lexicon of Josephs and Richards, a Chinese name can be created from any combination of two or three characters.

And for many Chinese parents, making the

parents filling out web questionnaires and Zhang offering consultation services through the popular messaging app WeChat. A quick web search reveals more than a hundred such businesses in China, each promising names that will pave the way for future success.



A portrait of fortune-teller Mao Shandong hanging outside his shop in an alleyway in Beijing.

Bizarre News



Crayola's yellow crayon RIP

Crayola have gotten rid of their Dandelion coloured crayons. On Friday was the National Crayon day and to mark the day the popular brand have ditched their yellow shade in favor of a new one. "Our beloved Dandelion decided to announce his retirement early! There's no taming an adventurous spirit! #NationalCrayonDay (sic)" It has not gone down well with crayon fanatics. A new hashtag is trending on Twitter called #SupportTheCrayons. One art teacher wrote on Twitter: "So sorry dandelion is going. As an art teacher we LOVED using that color!" (sic)

According to The Boston Globe, Jan Polanik has filed a lawsuit against two owners of American sweet fast food chain because they didn't give him the real deal inside his bagel, and he has reportedly won the settlement.



Mr Polanik's legal representative, Thomas Shapiro, said that they realize it is "a minor thing," but wanted pursue the claim "to stop the practice of representing one thing and selling a different thing." The stores have now reportedly changed their fake butter for the real stuff.

Beyonce has been carved out of a slab of cheese

A man has carved the iconic Beyonce pregnancy pose out of a giant slab of cheese. Renowned sculptor David Bradley had a 'grate' time helping to hand sculpt the pop queen as training ahead of the E20 Cheese Carving Championships this weekend - taking the team a total of 28 hours, 20kg of mild Cheddar, one knife, a paint brush and a magnifying glass to complete. Three specialist cheese sculptors, including David, are set to go head-to-head to create the most 'Brie-lliant' sculpture - it's really something worth giving 'edam' about. There is still a space open for a member of the public to fine tune their cheese sculpting abilities, those interested in competing should email eastvillage@hope-andglorypr.com. A panel of judges will then select the winner. For Beyonce fans looking to get 'Drunk in Cheese', the E20 Cheese Carving Championships are set to take place at East Village's Cheese and Wine Festival on Saturday from 10am - 5pm. — Bang Showbiz



Man is tied to road sign after losing bet with mates

A man was left dangling mid-air after he was taped to a road sign after losing a bet. Drivers in northeast Houston had to do a double take on Wednesday when they spotted a man, named locally as Miguel Chavez, duct-taped to a yield sign after he lost a bet on the Rockets/Warriors game, according to 9News. Someone called the police and they arrived in time to see a man with a knife approach the man. One officer yelled: "Drop the knife or I'll Tase you." But the man was there to cut his friend down from the sign. Police helped get Chavez down and even gave him a lift home.

Man sues for not getting real butter

A man has sued Dunkin' Donuts because he was given a substitute to real butter.