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JACC concerts for the richest? Scalpers triple ticket prices



Court acquits US-Egyptian woman over charity abuse



N Korea missile test fails before Pence visit



Revenge for Mourinho as Man Utd stun Chelsea



MPs ADASANI, MUWAIZRI FILE SECOND GRILLING AGAINST PM

RAMPANT CORRUPTION, SQUANDERING OF PUBLIC FUNDS ALLEGED



Min 23°
Max 29°
High Tide 04:16 & 22:08
Low Tide 09:16 & 22:08



150 FILS
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40 PAGES

conspiracy theories

IT'S UP TO US



By Badrya Darwish

badrya_d@kuwaittimes.net

Social media has overtaken our lives. It's hijacking our privacies. Now it's the fashion or the norm, you could say, for people not to listen to the news on the radio or to read it from official sources or respected publications. Instead, what we are paying attention to is social media with all its forms and platforms - be it Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc. I don't know what they will invent next.

The problem is that how true and reliable is the information barraging us on these media? You don't even have to carry a computer - the smartphone in my hand has it all 24/7 wherever you are - be it in the sky or on the ground, in Britain or South Africa. But it's littered with fake news, with malicious gossip and stories that aren't sourced or credited - without respect for humanity, justice, individual rights or people's reputations.

Continued on Page 13

'YES' WINS KNIFE-EDGE TURKEY VOTE



ISTANBUL: Supporters of the Justice and Development (AK) party wave Turkish flags and hold a poster of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan outside its offices yesterday. — AP (See Page 13)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition MPs Riyadh Al-Adasani and Shuaib Al-Muwaizri yesterday filed the second grilling against the prime minister over allegations of failure to check rampant corruption and stop squandering of public funds. The two lawmakers also accused HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah of failing to rectify the imbalance in the demographic structure, providing billions of dollars in grants and loans to foreign countries while reducing public subsidies at home, and failing to diversify the economy to find other sources of income.

The new grilling is the second against the prime minister, who has been in power since 2011, and comes amid a looming political crisis in the country just under five months since November's snap polls in which the opposition won around half of the 50 seats. National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the new grilling will be listed on the agenda of the April 25 Assembly session to discuss setting a date for its debate.

The first grilling was filed on Wednesday by MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, Mohammad Al-Mutair and Marzouq Al-Khalifa, and charged the government of the prime minister of being responsible for widespread corruption, imposing charges on public services and petrol and for punishing opponents by revoking their nationality. The two grillings will be debated separately, but not before the Assembly holds an intensive debate on a number of question marks raised about a number of points in the first grilling. So far, there has been no comment from the prime minister or the government. Opposition MPs have strongly rejected any attempt to delay the debate or refer the grillings to the Assembly's legal and legislative committee to study if the grillings are in line with the constitution.

Continued on Page 13

THE MONSTER IS BACK

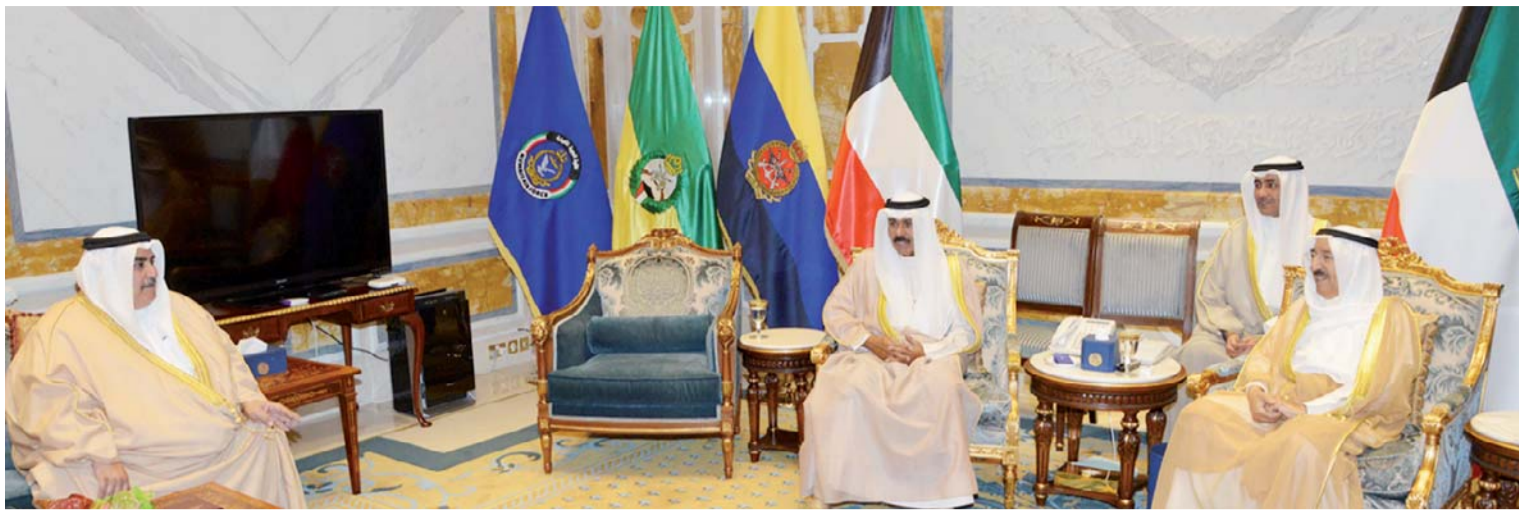


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KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa.

AMIR MEETS WITH BAHRAINI FOREIGN MINISTER

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace the First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, along with Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa and his accompanying delegation. Amiri Diwan Affairs Deputy Minister

Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah also attended the meeting. Later, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Hamad Al-Sabah accompanied by Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received the visiting Bahraini Foreign Minister and his accompanying delegation. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Hamad Al-Sabah, the Chief of Prime Minister Diwan Sheikh Itmad

Khaled Ahmad Jaber Al-Sabah, and Kuwait Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, and His Highness the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled,

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled and Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also received Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince received Sheikh

Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani over flood victims. In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere sympathies over the victims of the floods that hit different parts of Iran earlier on Saturday. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent the Iranian president similar cables.—KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa jointly attended the opening ceremony of the new Bahraini embassy in Kuwait yesterday.—KUNA



Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and his Bahraini counterpart Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa co-chair the 9th meeting of the Joint Kuwaiti-Bahraini Committee.

FOREIGN MINISTER REITERATES KUWAIT'S SUPPORT TO BAHRAIN AGAINST TERRORISM

KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday reaffirmed the country's support to Bahrain's efforts to counter terrorism. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled co-chaired the 9th meeting of the Joint Kuwaiti-Bahraini Committee, together with the visiting Bahraini counterpart Foreign Minister Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa. The official talks, held at the Foreign Ministry, reviewed cooperation among the various sectors in both countries.

Addressing the meeting, he emphasized the deep-rooted bilateral relations, lauding the positive outcome of the 9th session that translated into reality the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa. The 9th session of the committee comes amid very complicated regional and international developments, which prompt the Gulf, the Arab and the world's joint efforts to overcome them.

Meanwhile, the Bahraini foreign minister stressed the substantial support to the bilateral historical ties on all levels by the wise leadership in both countries. He also highly appreciated Kuwait's backing to the Kingdom. Up to 51 bodies representing the official and private sectors in both countries took part in the meeting that assessed the progress achieved since the 8th session, together with means of boosting cooperation in all fields.

Concluding the meeting, the two sides signed three memorandums of understanding on legislative coordination and cooperation

in electricity and central and popular markets. They also inked three executive programs for cooperation in education, culture,

arts and preservation of the environment. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled held a banquet lunch for the Bahraini delegation.—KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and his Bahraini counterpart Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa pose for a picture after signing an agreement in Kuwait City yesterday.—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa speaks during the 9th meeting of the Joint Kuwaiti-Bahraini Committee.



Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah speaks during the 9th meeting of the Joint Kuwaiti-Bahraini Committee.

Legalese

ABSCONDING

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

Absconding by definition, according to Merriam-Webster, is to depart secretly and hide oneself. The word absconding is a harsh word and is usually used for someone that is running away from something or even escaping from jail, but the general public seems to use the word in Kuwait to describe an offense of leaving an employment contract without agreeing with the employer on the termination methods. This can be very misleading. Also, from experience, I have seen employers misuse their power to file absconding cases against their employees unrightfully. Today, I will be talking about my experience handling legal cases related to absconding.

For lawyers, dealing with absconding cases is a nightmare. Many also say that the procedures and consequences for absconding cases in Kuwait are inhumane. Recently, the Kuwait Social Work Society spoke about absconding, and I hope to see more organizations and public figures speak about what is right for the people who live in Kuwait and make Kuwait a better place.

Power abuse

Question: I did not abscond from work - I was actually terminated verbally. I was told that I was not needed anymore and that I should just not come to work anymore. I have read your posts previously and I knew I needed a termination letter in writing. So I went back to my work and asked them for a written letter stating that I was terminated, but they refused to give it to me. They removed my desk and did not even give me a place to sit in, so I stopped going to work, and now I have an absconding case against me. What does this mean? Does it mean deportation?

Fajer: It is so unfortunate that this actually happens and it happens more often than you think. Some wicked employers have found a way against the system using legal loopholes to abuse their power. It is a sick power game that continues to happen. With this said, there are strict punishments for employers who abuse their power. Also, an absconding case can only be filed after three different inspectors are sent to your workplace and see that you are not there for seven consecutive days.

Unfortunately, absconding can very easily end with deportation. A very smart way of avoiding absconding when you are in this situation is to go and file a complaint at the Shuoon (Manpower Authority) when you are told that you are terminated. Going to a lawyer is important here, in order for you to avoid such issues. I know this means you have to bear costs, so I offer the following advice to those who are in such a situation:

1. If your salary is less than KD 150, you can call 1802-234.
2. If you cannot afford a lawyer for the case but can spare a consultation fee, then ask your lawyer how much the consultation fee is, and through the consultation they can guide you through the process.

I highly suggest that you continue going to work (even if it is difficult) until you file a complaint at the Shuoon about the situation.

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



MOTORIST KILLED, THREE INJURED IN ACCIDENT

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: An Egyptian man died and three others were injured when their vehicle flipped over and caught fire on King Fahd Road near Hadiya. Firefighters rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call, then worked on tackling the flames while helping the victims out of the burning vehicle. Paramedics pronounced one of the victims dead on the scene and left his body to be taken to the forensic department, then transported the injured people to hospital. A case was filed to investigate the causes of the accident.

GOVT EMPLOYEES, COMPANY REPS ARRESTED ON VISA TRAFFICKING CHARGES

ASSOCIATION URGES MORE INCENTIVES TO KUWAITI NURSES

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Ten public servants and 30 company representatives were arrested and referred to public prosecution in 2016 on charges of receiving huge bribes to add more laborers on fake companies' files and aid visa trafficking, according to a document issued from the office of Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh.

Every private company in Kuwait has a file in the Public Authority for Manpower's database which stipulates the number of employees a company can hire. Based on that number, a corresponding number of work visas is issued to serve the company's labor recruitment needs. But there has been many cases in the past in which some companies managed to bribe people working in the authority and who have access to the system in order to illegally increase the number of allowed employees; which is normally given after an evaluation study for a company's needs. Visas generated by the extra slots in this case are often sold to laborers looking for a job in oil-rich Gulf countries - a practice commonly known as 'visa trafficking.'

Local authorities have taken efforts to tackle this problem over the past few years, as hundreds of people were arrested and companies closed after they were dis-

covered to be involved in visa trafficking. Those efforts have been recognized internationally but they still fall short of being considered effective in limiting this illegal practice. "The Government of Kuwait does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so," reads the US Department of State's 2016 Trafficking in Persons Report, which ranks Kuwait in Tier 2 (Watch List).

In other news, minister Sabeeh reportedly gave new instructions to make it mandatory for a person to have a bachelor's degree or diploma in mechanics in order to be eligible to open a tire repair shop at any co-op society in Kuwait. Furthermore, the guidelines also stipulate that only a pharmacist who has a practicing license in Kuwait is granted a license to open a pharmacy.

Kuwaiti nurses

Kuwait Nursing Association's (KNA) Chairman Bandar Nashmi Al-Enezi urged the Cabinet to pass a special payroll cadre for nurses, which was already approved by the Civil Services Commission (CSC) three years ago. He also stressed that nurses in Kuwait had the worst salaries in all GCC states. "Approving the new payroll system will help encourage more Kuwaitis to join nursing, because there is already a paucity of 1,600 nurses from the entire nursing community of 24,000 from various nationalities," he explained, noting that the nursing field needs around 22,000 Kuwaitis to cover the shortage. Enezi said the profession annually needs 300 new nurses, who unlike other professions, can be directly recruited by CSC after graduation. He also noted that some Kuwaiti nurses have already completed postgraduate studies and specialized in certain areas such as pediatrics, maternity and surgical nursing.

Projects' requirements

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) Managing Director for Human Resources Bader Al-Sharad submitted the corporation's future projects' requirements of land and industrial sites to Kuwait Municipality. In a letter sent to the municipality, Sharad explained that as part of KPC's keenness on executing its strategic plan to help boost the national economy, Kuwait National Petroleum Company's (KNPC) wishes to conduct feasibility studies for projects such as expanding refineries' capacity and future petrochemical projects. Sharad explained that land was needed for expanding refining capacity by 1.7 million bpd by 2025, provided that the sites overlook the sea.

2,700 megawatts

The Ministry of Electricity and Water's (MEW) Assistant Undersecretary for Electricity Projects and Power Plants Operation and Maintenance Fouad Al-Oun said the ministry has so far accomplished over 80 percent of the maintenance operations at various power and water desalination plants, and expected producing 2,700 megawatts more than the predicted maximum power consumption during the summer. Assistant undersecretary for electricity distribution grids Jassem Allengawi stressed that his sector is well-prepared for the summer and that maintenance operations had been already done on over 20 percent of the secondary power transforming units.

Rotten fruits

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) commercial control and consumer protection sector raided a factory producing fresh juices, said assistant undersecretary Eid Al-Rasheedi, noting that the factory was using rotten oranges and a large quantity of inedible fruits in the process.



Social Affairs Minister Hind Al-Sabeeh



SMUGGLED ORANGUTAN REPATRIATED

KUWAIT: An orangutan that had been smuggled into Kuwait has been repatriated to Indonesia this week through the efforts of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Kuwait in cooperation with the Kuwait Zoo and Directorate of Biodiversity Conservation Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia as well as BOS Foundation.

The two-year-old male orangutan, named Taymur, was rescued in June 2016, after his owner was arrested. The animal was found to be in a very bad state, intoxicated and uncared for. He was transferred to the Kuwait Zoo where he has been cared for ever since. Taymur is the third orangutan found to be illegally brought to Kuwait within the last two years. The orangutan is an endangered species.

Keeping exotic animals as pets has become a popular trend in the Gulf states, though several have outlawed the practice. In January, the United Arab Emirates warned owners of exotic or dangerous pets that they have a six month amnesty to hand them over or face fines and jail time. Reports of individually-owned lion cubs, tigers and cheetahs roaming city streets or attacking their handlers are common.

In 2014, a Filipina domestic worker died in Kuwait after being attacked by her employer's pet lion. Nearly two years later, in 2016, a young Kuwaiti man died in Saudi Arabia after being attacked by a pet lion he was attempting to train.



The Internationally-renowned artist Yanni.

JACC CONCERTS FOR THE RICHEST? TICKET PRICES TRIPLED BY SCALPERS

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

KUWAIT: Internationally-renowned artist Yanni, who is famous for his modern classical music, will be performing in his first concerts in Kuwait at the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC) this weekend. The musician has a large fanbase in the Gulf region, but his fans were let down after tickets for his two concerts were all sold out within an hour of their release. Fans expressed their displeasure and suspected a mass ticket purchase by scalpers in order to sell them at sky-high prices. A recent report by Al-Rai newspaper said prices of tickets had reached KD 1,000.

So I decided to investigate by pretending to be willing to buy a ticket only a few days before the event. I tweeted my request with the hashtag Kuwait. In less than 30 minutes, private offers began to pour in by scalpers. It is clear that they keep a watchful eye on social media. Two of them were using bogus names - one of them had three VIP tickets, while the other offered me two.

Meanwhile, a third was using both Twitter and Instagram to sell the tickets publicly under an authorized website's name. However, if you want to make a purchase, you must do it through them privately. The account owner sent me a ticket price list ranging from KD 200 to KD 550. They also mentioned that VIP Premium/Premium Plus tickets are available on request and all prices are negotiable.

Later, another man sent me a direct message, offering one ticket, but with his name on it. He wanted KD 400, because, as he described himself: "I am not one of those scalpers." But the next day, he tried to remind me that I would miss the chance of getting the ticket at the same price, and that I have less than 24 hours before he raises the price!

The JACC ticket black market is not an illusion or a rumor spread by a bunch of people who could not afford them. It is a real crisis that must be addressed in respect for the status and the name of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Services Safety and Vocational Health Supervisor Lt Col Fayez Al-Nasser visited the Acting Chairperson of the Medical Council Fatima Al-Najjar to thank the council for its important role in dealing with all government ministries and authorities.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammed Al-Khader meets with Commander of the Iraqi Naval forces Major General Ahmed Jasim Maarj. —KUNA

KUWAITI ARMY CHIEF MEETS IRAQI NAVY COMMANDER

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammed Al-Khader met yesterday with the visiting Commander of the Iraqi Naval forces Major General Ahmed Jasim Maarj and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, they discussed several issues of mutual concern, mainly in the military field, the Defense Ministry's Moral Guidance and Public Relations said in a statement. The meeting was attended by Commander of the Kuwaiti Naval Forces Major General Khaled Ahmad Al-Kandari. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis write in the condolences book at the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church in Kuwait City yesterday, as people gathered to offer their respects to the victims of the twin blasts which hit two churches in Egypt last week. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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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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Kuwait Times Participation Form

If you are interested to participate fill the form and send it to Kuwait Times.

From: _____

We would like to confirm our participation in the above mentioned activity with the total number of participating student's so the corresponding number of drawing sheets can be delivered to our school.

School: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____

Address: _____

Total number of interested students are
 6 - 8 years 9 - 11 years 12 - 14 years 15 - 17 years Special need

Name: _____ Signature: _____

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KUWAIT: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr Mohammad Al-Khashti poses for a group photo with the participants in the conference. — KUNA photos

INVESTING IN HUMAN BASE OF MODERN HEALTH CARE: MINISTER

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi yesterday emphasized the significance of investing in the human element as the base of modern health systems. This was the essence of a statement delivered on behalf of the minister by the ministry's Acting Undersecretary Dr Mohammad Al-Khashti, also Assistant Undersecretary for Planning and Quality Affairs to a conference held on the occasion of the 2nd Biomedical Laboratory Science Day.

He added that the conference reflects the ministry's keenness on scientific and medical events to promote the performance of all staffs of

the medical profession. He noted biomedical laboratory professions are among "the biggest groups in the field of health care."

Meanwhile, the head of the ministry's Directorate of Medical Laboratories Services Dr Doaa Al-Khaldi addressed the event saying it was part of the efforts to keep pace with the latest scientific techniques in the field. The conference seeks through lectures and workshops to highlight the crucial role played by the laboratories professions, she added. Khaldi noted that the total 145 laboratories in the Kuwaiti hospitals are provided with the latest advanced equipment in the world. — KUNA



Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr Mohammad Al-Khashti speaks during the 2nd Biomedical Laboratory Science Day conference.



Head of health ministry's Directorate of Medical Laboratories Services Dr Doaa Al-Khaldi speaks during the event.



A general view of the audience.

In Brief

PAAET HONORS SHEIKH NASSER

KUWAIT: A delegation from the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) led by General Director Dr Ahmad Al-Athari visited His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at his residence in Shuwaikh yesterday. The team offered Sheikh Nasser a memento in appreciation for his continued support to PAAET activities. The delegation also comprised Dean of Students Affairs Dr Hussein Al-Mekaimi, Assistant Dean of Students Affairs Adel Al-Buraiki, Public Relations and Media Director Fatima Al-Azmi and Mohammad Al-Othman from the General Director's office.



1,500 SUFFER FROM PARKINSON'S IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: Some 1,500 people suffer from Parkinson's disease in Kuwait, says Dr Jassem Al-Hashel, neurologist at Ibn Sina Hospital. In a statement on the occasion of the World Parkinson's Disease Day, Dr Hashel indicated that his department has contributed to cutting number of patients who seek treatment abroad. The department staff have succeeded in programming and changing many simulation batteries for patients, without any foreign aid, he said. — KUNA



US DOLLAR EXCHANGE RATE STABLE AGAINST KUWAITI DINAR

KUWAIT: The US Dollar's exchange rate was stable against KD 0.304, but it went down against the Euro to reach 0.323, when compared to prices of last Thursday, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said yesterday. The CBK noted that the Sterling Pound was down to KD 0.381, the same case with the Swiss Franc, which went up to KD 0.303. The Japanese Yen stood firm at KD 0.002, CBK bulletin added. In the US, the Dollar went up against all major currencies in last Friday's trading. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Volunteers repair a traditional Kuwaiti pearl diving boat before it sets sail as part of a heritage-themed activity. — KUNA photo

KUWAIT'S PARTICIPATION IN IRBIL INT'L BOOK FAIR 'A GREAT SUCCESS'

IRBIL: Kuwait's partake in Irbil's 12th international book fair was a great success, a National Council for Culture Arts and Letters (NCCAL) senior official said yesterday. The Kuwaiti pavilion at the book fair, which lasted for ten days at Iraq's Kurdistan Region, witnessed a large turnout by visitors of all ages. In a statement, head of book fairs' department at the National Council for Culture Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Saad Al-Enezi stressed importance on

the success of Kuwait's participation in this exhibition at all levels. There are efforts to coordinate with Kuwait's Consul General in Irbil for a wider Kuwaiti participation in future exhibitions including different cultural and art activities, he said.

In a similar statement, Chairman of Al-Mada Group and the exhibition organizing committee Ghada Alamily praised the Kuwaiti participation, which considered the second at this

exhibition. Beside the distinctive participation of NCCAL, there was a remarkable presence for the Kuwaiti writers Saud Al-Sanousi and Bothayna Al-Essa who have a large audience at the book fair, she said. The book fair activities kicked off on April 5 with a participation from 310 publishing house from 18 different countries around the world, where Kuwait's first participation was in the exhibition eighth season in 2013. — KUNA



IRBIL: The National Council for Culture Arts and Letters' booth at Irbil's 12th international book fair. — KUNA photos



KRCS DISTRIBUTES MORE THAN 3,500 FOOD PARCELS IN MOSUL

IRBIL: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) distributed yesterday 3,500 food parcels in several liberated parts of Iraq's Mosul as part of 'Kuwait is by Your Side' campaign and was carried out in coordination with Al-Barzani Charity. Mohammad Bahaa-Eddine, who is in charge of supply distribution at the Kurdish charitable association, said that they have delivered over

3,500 food parcels in Mosul city, pointing out that most residents have just returned from refugees camps and they are in dire need of relief aid. KRCS had recently distributed more than 1,500 food parcels in Mosul. Moreover, KRCS has launched its humanitarian campaign 'Kuwait is by Your Side' in the Iraqi city of Mosul since the beginning of this year. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality workers removed 85 unlicensed billboards during recent crackdowns in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate. They also issued tickets concerning construction-related violations.



KICK KUWAITIS OUT OF KUWAIT!

By Dr Humoud Al-Enezi

I know, dear readers, that this article's title might be shocking, but what is happening nowadays by advocates of racism begets such a call. The best proof of this is what happened in Souq Mubarakiya a few days ago, right in front of Mubarak Kiosk, the historic and cultural landmark of Kuwait. We unfortunately watched how the symbolism of such a historic edifice was utilized, when according to her sick, racist and most ugly description, a woman described Kuwaitis protesting there as 'lafa' (newcomers). She even repeated this hateful description more than once on various occasions and on various media outlets. This woman acted very snobbishly without any consideration for Kuwaiti norms or traditions that have been known for generations.

The funny yet baffling thing is how official government bodies have been keeping silent about such an act that is incriminated by the national unity law number 19/2012, which includes "criminalizing any form of agitation and incitement of public through any means, instigating hatred and disdain towards any sect, initiating sectarian or tribal crises, and publishing ideologies to encourage racial, class or group discrimination or the superiority of a certain race, group, color, origin, doctrine or lineage to others." The law also penalizes whoever commits such a crime by "a maximum of seven years in prison and/or a KD 10,000-100,000 fine."

Well, it has been the fact that this law has not been imposed for years on any of the racist people that founded the 'Juwaihelish' ideology (named after hawkish former MP Mohammad Al-Juwaihel) based on undermining social security through classifications such as within and outside the Kuwait wall, Bedouin and urban, authentic (genuine) and newcomers, all the way to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti.

Things have become so bad that large segments of Kuwaitis are starting to feel a sense of estrangement in their home country because of such a sectarian-based exclusionary approach. It is also not strange, in view of the government's silence and lack of accountability, that we might someday hear a call to 'kick Kuwaitis out of Kuwait', just the way some people called for kicking expats out. The shameful thing is that the majority who make such a call are those who claim to be the 'Kuwaiti educated elite' - what kind of elite are we talking about, gentlemen?

Finally, I urge the Interior Ministry to firmly stop such atypical calls that are trying to tear the Kuwaiti society apart by foolish actions, threatening our unity and coherence at a time when we are going through regional and international challenges that call for more consolidation and unity!

—Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Jarida

WOMAN ATTEMPTS SUICIDE TO ESCAPE MARITAL PROBLEMS

KUWAIT: A citizen who wanted to put an end to her marital problems threw herself out of her boyfriend's balcony in Shaab, and was taken in critical condition to Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital.

Her boyfriend said that she was complaining about family problems before surprising him by jumping. Police will question her when her condition improves. Meanwhile, a citizen committed suicide by jumping from

the roof of his house in Farwaniya. A security source said doctors tried to save him at Farwaniya Hospital, but he succumbed to his injuries.

Separately, policemen had suspicions about two persons trying to open a car in a parking lot, so they were stopped and questioned. Illicit tablets were found on them, which they claimed were for their personal use. They were sent to concerned authorities. — Al-Rai

ABK SPONSORS 'AGAINST THE ODDS' FIRST KIMUN 2017 EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

REINFORCING ITS EFFORTS TOWARDS SUPPORTING KUWAIT'S YOUTH

KUWAIT: Building on its support for Kuwait's youth, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently announced its platinum sponsorship of the first Kuwait International Model United Nations (KIMUN) 2017 conference entitled 'Against the Odds'. The conference was held at the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) over three days, from 13 - 15 April, 2017.

KIMUN is a completely student-run non-profit organization that aims to foster global leaders and to create an environment for international students from around the globe to interact and share ideas on the world's pressing problems.

ABK's sponsorship of the KIMUN conference reinforces the Bank's keenness to contribute to the development of Kuwait's youth, specifically through new initiatives that expose students to a diverse range of subjects that depict the issues and challenges in today's world.

The conference focused on promoting education of youth in the fields of political science and international relations and enlightening individuals of their roles on the developing world.

ABK's efforts were recognized during the closing ceremony, which was held on the last day of the conference. Sahar Al-Therban, Senior Manager Corporate Communications, attended the ceremony and was honored on behalf of the Bank.



ZAIN HOSTS AL-ASMAA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT ITS MAIN HEADQUARTERS

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, recently hosted students from Al-Asmaa Bint Al-Harith High School at its main headquarters in Shuwaikh. The visit came in line with Zain's strategy towards supporting the education sector in the country.

The visit came as part of Zain's strategy to support the youth and develop the educational process. Through this strategy, the company is keen on actively developing the skills of high school and college students by conducting field visits, informative seminars, workshops, and more all year round and in collaboration with the various public and private educational institutions.

Zain took this opportunity to present the visiting students with a detailed explanatory session about its leading experiences and strategies in the fields of Public Relations, Editorial and Media Relations, Social Media, and Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility. Zain also showcased its leading experience in the telecom field by taking the students on a visit to the Networks Operations Center (NOC) to learn about the nature of work behind network operations, network infrastructure, as well as other technical areas.

The students were also introduced to

Zain's leading experience in customer service by participating in a tour at the company's contact center (107) and main Shuwaikh branch, where they listened to live customer calls and learned about the different services and solutions offered within the branch and how to respond to customers' needs.

Zain hosts seminars and student field trips regularly in line with its active Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy that caters to the youth and education sectors. Such initiatives focus on the development of school and university students' skills through a series of workshops, development programs, and informative seminars. Zain coordinates similar activities all year-round with students of various age groups to further increase their knowledge of the telecom industry in Kuwait.

The company is committed to offering school and university students with similar opportunities on an annual basis. Such programs are targeted at students in collaboration with public and private educational institutions in Kuwait, reflecting Zain's ongoing efforts in promoting the education and development of the country's youth.



I LOVE SHADI AL-KHALEEJ!

By Dr Najem Abdul Kareem

George Bernard Shaw once wrote a book titled 'I love Wagner', which was translated into Arabic by Tharwat Okasha, to express his admiration of the music virtuoso Wagner, who lived over a century before his time. So what about someone I have accompanied in most stages of his career and even years earlier, as his late brother Yousef use to be my friend in the late 1950s?

By the beginning of the 1960s, Kuwait saw its breakthrough art period - the era was marked by Shadi Al-Khaleej songs, Ahmad Al-Adwani's lyrics and Ahmad Baqer's tunes, who were all patronized by the head of the social affairs department at the time, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his undersecretary Hamad Al-Rujaib. So, how can I not love Shadi Al-Khaleej?!

He was an example of Kuwait's new artists following the traditional from of using some simple drums, an oud and a single violin

I once wrote an article about Shadi Al-Khaleej and how he managed to make a substantial shift in Kuwait's arts history when he used theatrical lyrics for the first time in the region, singing the 'Sinbad Story' of a mariner's diary, which was written by poet Mohammed Al-Fayez and was warmly accepted in the Arab world. Shadi Al-Khaleej's singing Al-Fayez's words gave them life.

I witnessed Shadi Al-Khaleej's years of studying music in Cairo in the 1960s. He was an example of Kuwait's new artists following the traditional from of using some simple drums, an oud and a single violin. This turned into a complete orchestra, with Shadi including scores of academic players and they all marvelled in playing and singing songs like 'Holo', 'Ya Sidrat Al-Oshaq', 'Hai Hal' and many others.

Personally speaking, I witnessed Shadi Al-Khaleej's first true love in Cairo and then his marriage to his classmate, who still has a wonderful smile on her face and a kind heart like all Kuwaiti mothers. Um Ali was his supporter all his life. We used to meet with some friends, including his life-long friend Mohammad Al-Sanoussi, once or twice a week. I wish Shadi was also an actor, because he has a great sense of humor and one would be damned if he decides making fun of him.

I was moved to tears by the devotion and dedication of His Highness the Amir and the people of Kuwait on welcoming back Shadi Al-Khaleej. Dear Abu Ali, you have given so much to your country, and please accept this humble greeting from your brother Najem. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Jarida

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Kuwait Times **55**

International

MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2017



Pope urges an end to Syria 'horror' in Easter address

FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS BATTLE IT OUT WITH A WEEK TO GO

Page 10

Page 9



JIDDAH: In this Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2007 file photo, a Saudi veiled woman enjoys a swing in a park during holiday. — AP

SAUDI WOMAN'S PLEA EXPOSES RISKS RUNAWAYS FACE

DUBAI: A young Saudi woman's plea for help after she was stopped in an airport in the Philippines en route to Australia where she planned to seek asylum has triggered a firestorm on social media and drawn attention to the plight of female runaways. For runaway Saudi women, fleeing can be a matter of life and death, and they are almost always doing so to escape male relatives.

Under Saudi Arabia's conservative interpretation of Islamic law, a male guardianship system bars women from traveling abroad, obtaining a passport, marrying or even leaving prison without the consent of a male relative. Most Muslim-majority countries do not have similarly restrictive guardianship laws. The mystery around what triggered Dina Ali Lasloom's cry for help has only added to concerns for her safety.

In a video that appears to be shot with a mobile phone, the 24-year-old says her passport was taken from her at Manila's international airport in the Philippines on Monday on her way to Australia. She alleges that Philippine airport officials confiscated her passport at the request of Saudi diplomats until her relatives could arrive to take her to Saudi Arabia.

'Please help me'

"If my family come, they will kill me. If I go back to Saudi Arabia, I will be dead. Please help me," she pleads in the video. Lasloom says she is recording the video at the airport so the public "know that I'm real and here." Wearing a beige coat, the woman does not show her face in the video. Most women in Saudi Arabia cover their face with a veil known as a niqab. Many do so believing it is a religious obligation, in addition to covering their hair and body. Some also cover their faces due

to social pressure.

"I am kept here as a criminal. I can't do anything," Lasloom says in the video. The Associated Press could not independently verify the video's authenticity. Women's rights advocates in Saudi Arabia say Lasloom was ultimately forced to board a plane to the kingdom with two of her uncles, who flew from Riyadh. They said authorities then took her to a women's shelter because of the attention around her case. She cannot leave, however, without a male guardian's permission. Activists say only officials and relatives can contact her there.

Although there are no official statistics, anecdotal evidence from cases reported in Saudi media and from human rights advocates suggest dozens of Saudi women - some with their children - have attempted to flee abroad in recent years. These publicized cases have brought increased attention to what activists say has become a "trend". This is despite gains made in recent years for Saudi women, including the right to run in, and vote in, local elections in 2015, and a government effort to increase women's participation in the workforce.

Women who have managed to flee abroad say they were barred from marrying or forced into marriages. Others have told rights groups that male relatives were abusive and confiscated their salaries. "Many of them, they just want to be free," said Moudi Aljohani, who says she spoke with Lasloom when she was at Manila airport. Aljohani herself fled the kingdom last year and is seeking asylum in the US.

Aljohani, 26, says her family felt she'd become "too Americanized" after a year of study in Miami. What was supposed to be a weeklong visit home turned into months of confinement, she says. "The eight months of being locked in

Saudi Arabia has created an angry, rebellious person inside of me that I don't want to be silent anymore," she said. "What happened to me in Saudi Arabia created a person who just wants to speak out."

For the past 15 years, four of the late King Abdullah's daughters, Princesses Jawaher, Sahar, Hala and Maha - all in their 40s - have allegedly been held in a royal compound in Saudi Arabia. Their mother, who lives in London, has spoken out in the British press to try and bring attention to their plight. Two of the princesses managed to release videos in recent years pleading for help. Saudi courts have heard numerous cases of women asking for a transfer of their guardianship to more sympathetic male relatives - in some cases to their own sons.

A Saudi women's rights activist reached by phone in Riyadh said Lasloom was apparently trying to flee relatives in Kuwait who threatened to send her to live in Saudi Arabia. "There have been a lot of Saudi girls who sought asylum abroad, but now it's a trend. A lot of younger girls in their 20s are seeking asylum," she said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. "When they say honor killings do not exist, it's not true. It's just invisible," she said, referring to the killing of daughters in the name of family honor.

'Honor Violence'

Sara Leah Whitson, the Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, says Saudi women fleeing their family can face so-called "honor" violence if returned against their will. She called on Saudi authorities to protect Lasloom from her family. According to the Philippines' Inquirer news website,

Lasloom was barred from her Australian-bound flight by Saudi Embassy officials in Manila who asked airport officials to stop her. The Saudi Embassy in the Philippines wrote on Twitter that what occurred was "a family matter in which a girl was returned with her family to the homeland." When asked by The Associated Press whether Saudi diplomats in the Philippines had requested that authorities in Manila stop Lasloom from boarding a flight to Australia, Foreign Ministry official Osama Nugali said: "Saudi embassies abroad respect the institutions and laws of host countries and do not interfere in their affairs."

Manila Airport General Manager Eddie Monreal told the AP he had no knowledge about the case. An immigration official reached by the AP said the airport's immigration officers neither detained nor held any passenger under that name. In Saudi Arabia, activists tracking her plea for help attempted to meet Lasloom at Riyadh airport overnight Wednesday. They say instead, another activist, Alaa al-Anazi was detained by security officials at the airport and transferred to a girl's detention center in the capital. The Interior Ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

A Human Rights Watch report released last year on guardianship laws in Saudi Arabia found that even with greater opportunities for women in the kingdom, a woman's life rests largely on "the good will" of her male guardian. Powerful clerics in the kingdom support male guardianship based on a verse in the Quran that says men are the protectors and maintainers of women. Other Islamic scholars argue this misinterprets fundamental Quranic concepts like equality and respect between the sexes. — AP

MASS EVACUATION TO PROCEED AFTER BLAST KILL 68 KIDS IN SYRIA

BEIRUT: More than 3,000 Syrians were expected to be evacuated yesterday from four areas as part of a population transfer that was briefly stalled a day earlier by a deadly blast that killed more than 120 people, many of them government supporters.

As the evacuations were expected to begin yesterday, shells fired by the Islamic State group on government-held parts of the eastern city of Deir el-Zour wounded two members of a Russian media delegation visiting the area, according to state-run Syrian news agency SANA. Russia is a main backer of Syrian President Bashar Assad and Russian journalists enjoy wide access in government-held parts of the country.

The United Nations is not overseeing the transfer deal, which involves residents of the pro-government villages of Foua and Kfarya and the opposition-held towns of Madaya and Zabadani. All four have been under siege for years, their fate linked through a series of reciprocal agreements that the U.N. says have hindered aid deliveries.

Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, and Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV said 3,000 people will be evacuated from Foua and Kfarya, while 200, the vast majority of them fighters, will be evacuated from Zabadani and

Madaya. Abdurrahman said Saturday's blast - which hit an area where thousands of pro-government evacuees had been waiting for hours - killed 126. He said the dead included 109 people from Foua and Kfarya, among them 80 children and 13 women.

No one has claimed the attack, but both the Islamic State group and the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Fatah al-Sham Front have targeted civilians in government areas in the past. A wounded girl, who said she lost her siblings in the blast, told Al-Manar TV from her hospital bed that children who had been deprived of food for years in the two villages were approached by a man in the car who told them to come and eat potato chips. She said once many had gathered, there was an explosion that tore some of the children to pieces.

After the blast, some 60 buses carrying 2,200 people, including 400 opposition fighters, entered areas held by rebels in the northern province of Aleppo, Abdurrahman said. More than 50 buses and 20 ambulances carrying some 5,000 Foua and Kfarya residents entered the government-held city of Aleppo, Syrian state TV said, with some of them later reaching a shelter in the village of Jibreen to the south.

UN relief coordinator Stephen O'Brien said he was

"horrified" by the deadly bombing, and that while the UN was not involved in the transfer it was ready to "scale up our support to evacuees." He called on all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and to "facilitate safe and unimpeded access for the UN and its partners to bring life-saving help to those in need."

Residents of Madaya and Zabadani, formerly summer resorts, joined the 2011 uprising against President Bashar Assad. Both came under government siege in the ensuing civil war. Residents of Foua and Kfarya, besieged by the rebels, have lived under a steady hail of rockets and mortars for years, but were supplied with food and medicine through military air-drops. Critics say the string of evacuations, which could see some 30,000 people moved across battle lines over the next 60 days, amounts to forced displacement along political and sectarian lines.

In eastern Syria, an airstrike by the US-led coalition on the village of Sukkariah near the border with Iraq killed eight civilians who had earlier fled violence in the northern province of Aleppo, according to Deir Ezzor 24, an activist collective, and Sound and Picture Organization, which documents IS violations. — AP



Syrians, evacuated from the besieged government-held towns of Foua and Kfarya, cry upon their arrival in Jibreen on the eastern outskirts of Aleppo. — AFP

ASSAD IS AN ARCH-TERRORIST: BRITISH FM

LONDON: Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad is an "arch-terrorist" and it is time Russia realized he is "literally and metaphorically toxic," British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said yesterday. Johnson said Assad's ally Moscow still had time to be on the "right side of the argument", in a Sunday Telegraph newspaper article. "Assad uses chemical weapons because they are not only horrible and indiscriminate. They are also terrifying," Johnson wrote. "In that sense he is himself an arch-terrorist, who has caused such an unquench-

able thirst for revenge that he can never hope to govern his population again.

"He is literally and metaphorically toxic, and it is time Russia awoke to that fact. They still have time to be on the right side of the argument." Johnson was widely criticised for failing to get the G7 to back his bid for new sanctions against senior Russian and Syrian figures following the chemical weapons attack in Syria's Idlib province that killed dozens and caused an international outcry.

But he said the chemical assault had changed

the West's stance on Syria. "The UK, the US and all our key allies are of one mind: We believe that this was highly likely to be an attack by Assad, on his own people, using poison gas weapons that were banned almost 100 years ago," he wrote. "Let us face the truth: Assad has been clinging on. With the help of Russians and Iranians, and by dint of unrelenting savagery, he has not only recaptured Aleppo. He has won back most of 'operational' Syria."

Before the April 4 chemical attack, the West was

"on the verge of a grim consensus", which had now changed, said Johnson. The consensus had been that it would be more sensible to concentrate on the fight against Islamic State jihadists and to accept reluctantly that removing Assad, "though ultimately essential-should await a drawn out political solution". A suicide car bomb attack on buses carrying Syrians evacuated from two besieged government-held towns killed 43 people on Saturday, as US-backed fighters advanced in their push towards the IS group's Raqa stronghold. —AFP

IRAQI FORCES MAKE MOSUL GAINS, BUT WAR WITH IS FAR FROM OVER

FINAL NEIGHBORHOODS WILL BE MOST DIFFICULT TO CAPTURE

BAGHDAD: Iraqi forces made major gains in the six months since launching the operation to retake Mosul, but the battle for Iraq's second city and the war against the Islamic State group are far from over. Tough close-quarters fighting in heavily-populated areas of Mosul is still ahead, and IS also holds territory in other parts of Iraq, as well as in neighboring Syria.

The jihadists will still be able to carry out attacks in Iraq even if they

But "the final neighborhoods will be the most difficult to recapture, especially the Old City and the remaining neighborhoods in northwestern Mosul," Martin said. Progress in the Old City-a warren of closely-spaced buildings and narrow streets where hundreds of thousands of civilians are thought to reside-has been difficult and slow.

"You cannot get vehicles in there, so it's gotta be a dismantled operation," Brigadier General Rick

earlier this year. Two special forces units-the Counter-Terrorism Service and the Rapid Response Division-have spearheaded the fighting inside Mosul, while soldiers and police have also taken part.

Lasting IS threat

Iraqi Kurdish forces were involved in the initial days of the operation but stopped short of the city, while pro-government paramilitary forces were tasked with mov-

ties in Mosul, while residents have been caught up in fighting between Iraqi forces and IS, and the jihadists are intentionally attacking civilians in the city. Losing Mosul would be a major blow to IS, but would not mark the end of the war against the jihadists. "Just because we're done in Mosul doesn't mean that Daesh is done in Iraq," Uribe said, using an Arabic acronym for IS. "There's still another significant number of areas within Iraq that will... need to be cleared of Daesh, and... the Iraqi security forces are getting themselves ready for that eventually-they know that it's coming," he said. "We will not leave any area under the control of the terrorist organization," Brigadier General Yahya Rasool, the spokesman for Iraq's Joint Operations Command, said at a recent news conference.

Thousands displaced

IS holds territory in Iraq's Kirkuk province, as well as areas west of Mosul, and in western Anbar province, and also controls territory including the city of Raqa in Syria. Losing these areas would still eliminate the threat of bombings and hit-and-run attacks by the jihadists. Iraqi "successes in Mosul obscure how (IS) has successfully been resurging in other provinces in Iraq," Martin said.

The jihadists have "reconstituted attack capabilities in Diyala and central Salaheddin," he said, referring to provinces where Iraqi forces had largely reasserted control after heavy fighting earlier in the war against IS. The end of the battle for Mosul will also leave Iraq struggling with thorny political issues including control of recaptured territory in the north that is claimed by both the country's autonomous Kurdish region and its federal government. And Iraq will still be contending with the effects of the war-citizens killed, wounded or missing, hundreds of thousands displaced, houses, shops and infrastructure wrecked, children years behind in school-for years to come. —AFP



MOSUL: A picture taken through broken glass on April 16, 2017 shows Iraqi forces preparing as they advance in the old city of Mosul during an offensive to recapture the city from Islamic State (IS) group fighters. —AFP

no longer control significant territory, while the impact of the war-widespread displacement of civilians, cities and towns devastated by the fighting, countless lives disrupted-will last long after the fighting ends. Iraqi forces and the US-led coalition supporting them "are nearing the end of the operation to recapture Mosul," said Patrick Martin, Iraq analyst at the Institute for the Study of War.

Uribe, a senior coalition commander, said of the Old City. That "makes it very difficult for any offensive manoeuvre in there, but it makes it very easy to defend," Uribe said. "Sometimes, 50 metres (yards) is a great day," he said of the Iraqi advance. Iraqi forces launched the Mosul operation in October, moving toward the city from the south, west and north before assaulting its eastern side, which was recaptured

ing on the IS-held town of Tal Afar, west of Mosul. After retaking east Mosul, Iraqi forces set their sights on the far side of the Tigris River, which divides the city. The battle for west Mosul-which was launched in mid-February-has taken a heavy toll on civilians, with hundreds killed or wounded in the fighting, and more than 200,000 displaced.

The coalition has said it "probably" played a role in civilian casual-



CAIRO: Aya Hijazi, center, a dual US-Egyptian citizen, is acquitted by an Egyptian court after nearly three years of detention over accusations related to running a foundation dedicated to helping street children. —AP

EGYPT ACQUITS AMERICAN DETAINED FOR THREE YEARS

CAIRO: An Egyptian court yesterday acquitted Aya Hijazi, a dual US-Egyptian citizen who has been held in detention for nearly three years over accusations related to a non-governmental organization she founded to aid street children. Authorities arrested Hijazi, her husband and six others in May 2014 on charges of abusing children that were widely dismissed as bogus by human rights groups and senior US officials, who called for her release.

The arrests came as part of a wider clampdown on civil society especially following the military overthrow of an elected Islamist president in 2013. Prosecutors provided little if any evidence to support the allegations. Several US congressmen have called on Egypt to release Hijazi, and Hillary Clinton reiterated the demand in a meeting with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi last September, when she was the Democratic presidential candidate.

US President Donald Trump did not publicly mention the case when he welcomed el-Sissi to the White House earlier this month, but a senior White House official had said ahead of the meeting that the case would be addressed. The court's decision to acquit surprised Hijazi's mother, Naglaa Hosny, who told The Associated Press "we were expecting the worst and hoping for the best."

Hijazi's lawyer, Taher Abol Nasr, said she would likely remain in detention another two to three days while her acquittal is processed. He expects all the defendants to walk free by the end of the week. It was not immediately clear if Hijazi would remain in Egypt.

Hijazi, 30, grew up in Falls Church, Virginia. She received a degree in conflict resolution from George Mason University in 2009, and then returned to her native Egypt.

Along with her husband, Hijazi established a foundation by the name Belady, Arabic for "our nation," in 2013 with the aim of providing shelter for street children. A few months later, authorities raided the foundation's office after a man alleged that his son was missing and blamed it on Belady. Egyptian authorities have clamped down on civil society, particularly human rights groups and other organizations that receive foreign funding. Such groups played a central role in the 2011 uprising that toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak, and pro-government media often present them as part of a conspiracy to undermine the state. The authorities also arrested thousands of people in the months following the 2013 overthrow of President Mohammed Morsi, mainly his Islamist supporters but also a number of secular and liberal activists. —AP

BORDER WALL COULD LEAVE FEW AMERICANS ON 'MEXICAN SIDE'

BROWNSVILLE: The last time US officials built a barrier along the border with Mexico, they left an opening at the small road leading south to Pamela Taylor's home on the banks of the Rio Grande. Taylor hadn't been told where the fence would be built, and she doesn't know now whether officials are coming back to complete it. "How would we get out?" asked Taylor, 88, sitting in the living room of the home she built with her husband half a century ago. "Do they realize that they're penalizing people that live along this river on the American side?"

Taylor's experience illustrates some of the effects that the border wall President Donald Trump has imagined could have on residents in the Rio Grande Valley, the sunny expanse of bilingual towns and farmland that form the southernmost point of the US-Mexico border. The wall could seal some Americans on the "Mexican side" - technically on US soil, but outside of a barrier built north of the river separating the two countries. Landowners could lose property, and those that already lost some for the existing fence are already preparing for a new battle.

'Ready to fight'

Even if they don't win, lawyers hope to tie up the wall in court long enough that politics could effectively stop it, either in Congress or after another election. "That's a fight that we've been ready to fight," said Efen Olivares, a lawyer with the Texas Civil Rights Project. The US government will select finalists to build pieces of wall in San Diego, then choose a company to complete the rest.

Ron Vitiello, chief of the US Border Patrol, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that a new barrier will eventually be built in the Rio Grande Valley, where sections of rust-colored poles 18 feet (5.5 meters) high already run through neighborhoods in Brownsville and nearby towns. Vitiello told an audience in San Antonio that the government plans to complete a wall or fence in towns that have long been under consideration.

"There will likely be (barriers) there if all of the plans come together, but I can't tell you where," he said. Trump said he would build the wall to stop migrants entering illegally and what he described as a flow of drugs and crime. The Border Patrol makes more apprehensions along the more than 300 miles (483 kilometers) of border in the Rio Grande Valley than anywhere else. In and around Brownsville, people

have lived next to the river for generations, and residents of both sides cross bridges to work or shop daily. Taylor and others who live closest to the river routinely see border crossers walking up to their homes.

Many people living in the valley say the fence doesn't work, and there's widespread opposition there to a bigger wall. While the region is one of the Texas Democratic Party's few strongholds in a deeply conservative state, many people here resent outsiders and politicians of both parties for using the border as a talking point. The 2006 law authorizing a fence passed with support from many Democrats, including then-Sen Hillary Clinton, who lost to Trump in November.

When the US government built the fence, it had to take hundreds of landowners to court to use its power of eminent domain. That's because unlike in other southern border states, most Texas border land is privately owned, and tough terrain and water use agreements with Mexico meant some fence was built a mile or more north of the river.

'Just compensation'

With court fights also expected over Trump's wall, the Texas Civil Rights Project has begun signing up landowners and identifying people who might be affected. Under the US Constitution, the government must prove it wants to seize land for public use and must offer a landowner "just compensation." While challenging the wall's "public use" would be difficult, those who believe they're not getting the full value of their land could take the case to court, setting up trials that could take years. Antonio Reyes said he's seen people scale the border fence that bisects his backyard and jump down in seconds. Sometimes they carry bales of what appear to be drugs. A higher wall is "still not going to stop them," he said. "They'll shootup it or whatever they have to do." In Roma, a town of 10,000 people, a visitor standing on the bluffs overlooking the Rio Grande can see traffic moving across a tiny bridge and hear chickens clucking on the Mexican side. The Border Patrol occasionally uses blimps to monitor traffic, with agents stationed nearby. —AP



In this March 22, 2017, file photo, Antonio Reyes of Brownsville, Texas, stands by the US-Mexico border fence near his home. —AP

SERIAL EXECUTIONS TAKE TOLL ON EXECUTIONERS TOO, CRITICS SAY

MIAMI: Putting a prisoner to death "stays with you for a long time," says Ron McAndrew. The former warden of Florida State Prison says his own mental health had begun to deteriorate by the time he left his position in 1998 after taking part in eight executions. Now, McAndrew is fighting against the death penalty.

He is particularly concerned about the psychological well-being of the handful of officials who would be involved if Arkansas were to proceed with the rapid-fire executions of several condemned men, originally set for April 17 to 27. Courts in that southern state have blocked those executions for now, as legal appeals continue.

"We wanted the governor (of Arkansas) to understand that he's sitting in his office very comfortable. And these men are going to be partaking in a killing of another human being," McAndrew told AFP. He doesn't use the word "execution," which he considers a euphemism. "These officers, they get to know these inmates," he explained. "Twenty-four hours a day they work with these inmates. They feed them. They take them to get their showers, they take them for exercise. They stand in front of their cells and they talk to them when they feel lonely," McAndrew said. "The only persons that the inmates know are the officers. Suddenly it's the same officer who's taking them to another room to kill them." "The experience is something that will stay with you for a long time; I don't think it ever goes away."

Five-person execution team

McAndrew, who took part in the deaths of eight convicts-three in Florida, and five in Texas as training-says that the executions in Arkansas will undoubtedly be carried out by the same five people. "You can't change the team," he said. "The officers that will carry out the executions, they have practiced the executions several hundred times. They do it over and over and over again," he said. An officer volunteers to play the part of an inmate, he said.

"They take him from the cell, they put them on the gurney, they strap him down, they put them on the IVs, or intravenous lines. Arkansas prison authorities have refused to divulge the makeup of their exe-

cution team, fiercely protecting the identities of those involved. "I can say that they are well-trained and qualified to carry out their respective responsibilities," said Solomon Graves, a spokesman for the Arkansas Department of Correction. In the view of anti-death penalty activists, everyone involved pays a price.

"We are concerned for the welfare of the prisoners, we are concerned for the victims' families, we are concerned for the welfare of the prison workers that have to do this," said Abraham Bonowitz, director of the New York-based Death Penalty Action group. "There's a broader range of collateral damage than simply the prisoner and the victim."

Risk of error

Arkansas's original packed schedule would place added pressure on the execution team, increasing the risk of error, critics say. And no one wants to see a repeat of the agony Clayton Lockett suffered during his botched execution in Oklahoma in 2014.

"The rapid schedule will put an extraordinary burden on the men and women required by the state to carry out this most solemn act, and it will increase the risk of mistakes in the execution chamber-which could haunt them for the rest of their lives," said Allen Ault, Georgia's former commissioner of corrections who has overseen five executions, writing in Time magazine's March 28 edition.

A group of former officials from all over the United States, including McAndrew and Ault, have written to Governor Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas urging him not to impose such a burden on prison staff. "Even under less demanding circumstances, carrying out an execution can take a severe toll on corrections officers' well-being," the letter said. "We are gravely concerned that by rushing to complete these executions in April, the state of Arkansas is needlessly exacerbating the strain and stress placed on these officers," increasing the chance of error. Arkansas's original plan to execute eight men in 10 days this month would have set a rate never seen since the United States resumed the death penalty in 1977, the nonprofit Death Penalty Information Center has reported. —AFP

EASTER CELEBRATED ACROSS CONFLICT-TORN MIDDLE EAST

JERUSALEM: Christians celebrated Easter yesterday across the Middle East, where many are struggling to maintain their embattled communities in the face of war, religious violence and discrimination. Thousands of worshippers flocked to Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built on the site where Christians believe Jesus was crucified and resurrected. This year the holiday was celebrated on the same day by both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox worshippers. The denominations, which jealously guard different sections of the church, held separate services one after another.

The church is located in Jerusalem's Old City. Worshippers lined up to admire the edicule, the chamber that tradition says marks Jesus' tomb. A Greek restoration team recently completed a historic renovation of the spot. The limestone and marble structure stands at the center of the church - a 12th-century building standing on 4th-century remains. The shrine needed urgent attention after years of exposure to water, humidity and candle smoke.

A service was also held in West Bank city of Bethlehem, in the Church of

Nativity, the place where Christian tradition says Jesus was born. Egypt's Coptic Christians meanwhile marked a somber Easter a week after twin bombings by the Islamic State group killed dozens of worshippers at churches in two separate cities. Coptic Christian Pope Tawadros II presided over Easter Mass late Saturday at St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, with several government ministers in attendance.

Heightened security

Tawadros had earlier announced during his Good Friday sermon that, as mourning for the attack victims was ongoing, the celebratory aspects of Easter would be canceled this year, including the Easter morning reception. Last Sunday, a suicide bomber was able to make his way to the front rows of a church in the Nile Delta City of Tanta before blowing himself up. In the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, another attacker detonated his suicide vest at the church gate's metal detector after being stopped by guards. The Islamic State group claimed the bombings.

Many of Iraq's Christians observed the holiday in camps for the displaced after

fleeing IS and the ongoing operation to drive the militants from Mosul, the country's second largest city. A number of Christian villages around Mosul have been retaken from the extremists since US-backed Iraqi forces launched the operation in October, but few residents have returned. Pakistan's tiny Christian minority celebrated Easter amid high security after last year's celebrations were marred by a suicide bombing that killed more than 70 people.

The bomber had struck in a public park in Lahore that was packed with Christians as well as Muslims. The attack was claimed by a breakaway Taliban faction. Pakistani security forces said Saturday that they had foiled a "major terror attack" against Christians when they killed a militant and detained another in Lahore hours after Christians marked Good Friday. Zubaida Amanat, who lost her 21-year-old son in last year's bombing, said the violence had transformed what should have been a joyous holiday into an annual reminder of her grief. "I just want this terrorism to end," she said. "All I can hope is that no other mothers go through the pain I did." —AP



BAGHDAD: Iraqi Christians celebrate Easter at Mar Youssif Chaldean Church. —AP



MOSCOW: Russian believers hold candles as they wait to take part in a religious procession during the Easter service at the Church of the Holy Martyr Tatiana just next to the Kremlin Wall. —AP

MILLION ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE A SOMBER EASTER

BUCHAREST: Millions of Orthodox Christians around the world have celebrated Easter in overnight services and with "holy fire" from Jerusalem, commemorating the day followers believe that Jesus was resurrected nearly 2,000 years ago. This year the Orthodox churches celebrate Easter on the same Sunday that Roman Catholics and Protestants mark the holy festival. The Western Christian church follows the Gregorian calendar, while the Eastern Orthodox uses the older Julian calendar and the two Easters are often weeks apart.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, who is the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christian faithful, delivered a message of peace during the midnight service at the Patriarchate in Istanbul. "Our faith is alive, because it is based on the event of the resurrection of Christ," Bartholomew said. In his official Easter message issued earlier in the week, Bartholomew urged strong faith in the face of the world's tribulations.

"This message - of the victory of life over death, of the triumph of the joyful light of the (Easter) candle over the darkness of disorder and dissolution - is announced to the whole world from the Ecumenical Patriarchate with the invitation to experience the unwaning light of the resurrection," his message said. In predominantly Orthodox Romania, Patriarch Daniel urged Christians to bring joy to "orphans, the sick, the elderly the poor ... and the lonely."

Late Saturday, Orthodox clerics transported the holy flame from Jerusalem by plane and it was then flown to other churches around the country. According to tradition the flame appears each year at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and is taken to other Orthodox countries. In Russia, where Orthodox Christianity is the dominant religion, President Vladimir Putin along with Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and his wife Svetlana attended midnight Mass at Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral.

The cathedral is a potent symbol of the revival of observant Christianity in Russia after the fall of the officially atheist Soviet Union. It is a reconstruction of the cathedral that was destroyed by explosion under dictator Josef Stalin. In Serbia, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Irinej, held a liturgy in Belgrade's St Sava Temple which outgoing president Tomislav Nikolic attended.

Irinej said in his Easter message that "with great sadness and pain in our hearts, we must note that today's world is not following the path of resurrection but the road of death and hopelessness." He also lamented the falling birth rate in Serbia as "a reason to cry and weep, but also an alarm." Irinej evoked Kosovo, Serbia's former province which declared independence in 2008. Hundreds of medieval Orthodox churches and monasteries are located there. Orthodoxy is also predominant in Bulgaria, Ukraine and Moldova. —AP

POPE URGES AN END TO SYRIA 'HORROR' IN EASTER ADDRESS

MASS HELD WITHIN TIGHT, HEAVY SECURITY

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis urged an end to "horror and death" in Syria and implored God to bring peace to the Middle East as he delivered the traditional Easter Day mass in Rome yesterday. The Easter mass, the highlight of the Christian calendar began under a cloudy sky where worshippers had gathered since the early hours to gain access amid tight security.

After a short bout of heavy rain, the pontiff gave his traditional Urbi et Orbi blessing, to the city and the world, in which he prayed for those suffering from war, famine and political unrest, highlighting Syria, but also Ukraine and conflict zones in Africa. He expressed hope that Jesus' own sacrifice might "sustain the efforts of all those actively engaged in bringing comfort and relief to the civil population in Syria, prey to a war that continues to sow horror and death."

And he prayed for peace "beginning with the Holy Land, as well as in Iraq and Yemen." He also spoke out against the hostilities and famine in Africa, notably in South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo "who endure continuing hostilities, aggravated by the grave famine affecting" parts of Africa. He further urged world leaders to hear the message of peace as they contend with "the complex and often dramatic situations of today's world," and to work "to prevent the spread of conflicts and to put a halt to the arms trade."

Without mentioning Venezuela by name, Pope Francis also alluded to political and social tensions in Latin America, expressing the hope that the "common good of societies" would prevail. "May it be possible for bridges of dialogue to be built, by continuing to fight the scourge of corruption and to seek viable and peaceful solutions to disputes, for progress and the strengthening of democratic institutions in complete respect for the rule of law," he said.

Bloody start to Holy Week

Turning his attention to eastern Europe, he asked that "the Good Shepherd come to the aid of Ukraine, still beset by conflict and bloodshed." Of the social and political upheaval in Europe, Francis prayed for God's blessing on "those experiencing moments of crisis and difficulty, especially due to high unemployment, particularly among young people."

The mass followed his Good Friday prayer in which he deplored the suffering of migrants, the victims of racism and the persecution of Christians around the world. Easter week got off to a bloody start last Sunday when 45 people were killed in attacks on two

Coptic churches in Egypt which were claimed by the Islamic State group.

The entire area around St Peter's Basilica was blocked off, with only several access points for those admitted after having their bags inspected. Access to St Peter's Square itself was only possible after security checks similar to those at airports. Hundreds of police and security forces stood guard. Yesterday also saw Francis' retired predecessor Pope Benedict XVI turn 90, marked by a quiet celebration at the restored convent where he lives within the Vatican grounds.

"There will doubtless be something on the menu to mark his birth-

day," former Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi told reporters last week. Benedict's brother will join a small group of old friends on Monday for a birthday party at which they will celebrate with a few "Bavarian songs," Benedict's personal secretary Georg Gaenswein told Italian media. "He will see his brother Georg, which will be the best present for him," he said. To mark the occasion, the Vatican stamp and coin office has released a series of stamps marking important events in the two millennia history of the church. Benedict stepped down in 2013 citing his increased frailty. He was the first pontiff to do so in 600 years. —AFP



VATICAN: This handout picture released by the Vatican press office shows Pope Francis during the "Urbi et Orbi" blessing for Rome and the world from the central loggia of St Peter's basilica following the Easter Sunday mass. —AFP

BOTH TRUMP SUPPORTERS AND OPPONENTS CLASH IN BERKELEY

BERKELEY: A melee erupted on Saturday in a Berkeley, California park where supporters and opponents of President Donald Trump were holding competing rallies, resulting in at least 20 arrests as police struggled to keep the two camps apart. As fist fights broke out between the two sides and people threw bottles and cans over a barricade separating them, police resorted to using an explosive device at one point in a bid to restore order.

Several people were observed by a Reuters reporter with bloodied faces and minor injuries, but there was no official word on casualties from authorities. Media, citing police, reported that at least 11 people were injured. Police said more arrests could follow after video shot during the melee was reviewed. The trouble unfolded when hundreds of Trump opponents staged a counter-rally alongside an event billed as a "Patriots Day" free-speech rally and picnic, organized by mostly Trump supporters.

Between 500 and 1,000 people were in the park as the rallies peaked, according to an estimate by a Reuters reporter. Among the Trump opponents were some counter-protesters dressed in black and wearing masks. The other side

included self-described "patriots" and "nationalists", Trump supporters, free speech advocates, and other groups. Daryl Tempesta, 52, who said he served in the US Air Force near the end of the Cold War, went to the rally to show his support for Trump.

"As a veteran, I like the track America is on, and that Trump is willing to stand and say we are still America and we are not going to be globalist, we're not going to be a communist country," Tempesta said. "That's a message I can get behind." A weekly farmers market was canceled ahead of the rally due to concerns about violence. Even so, a stall selling fresh vegetables was open for business amid the fist fighting, explosions from firecrackers and smoke wafting through the air.

"We decided to show up anyway because this is our livelihood," said Tim Mueller, a farmer who owns the stall, surrounded by protesters on both sides. At least 100 people from both camps eventually moved out of the park and into one of the city's main intersections, where they continued to fist fight, hurl insults and chant at each other. The police presence was light there, and only two or three officers were seen near the crossroads. —Reuters

VETERAN EVENT PLANNER IS FORCE BEHIND EGG ROLL

WASHINGTON: Anna Cristina Niceta Lloyd auditioned for the job of White House social secretary and may not have known it. The veteran event planner's creativity and handcraft were prominently on display at President Donald Trump's inaugural luncheon at the Capitol, the fifth one she has worked on. Maine lobster and Gulf shrimp, grilled Angus beef, and chocolate soufflé with cherry vanilla ice cream were on the menu. Sprays of roses in shades of pink, cream and melon spruced up Statuary Hall, the otherwise drab venue.

Among the roughly 200 guests taking it all in was Melania Trump. Less than a month after the Jan. 20 luncheon, the first lady announced she had hired Niceta Lloyd to fill one of the most coveted behind-the-scenes roles at the White House: social secretary. The post makes Niceta Lloyd the creative curator behind near-daily events for the president and first lady. It meant deciding what to serve at the recent get-to-know-you dinner between a new president and his Chinese counterpart. (Pan-seared Dover sole and New York strip steak were served, and Trump praised the "beautiful" chocolate cake they ate while discussing the US cruise missile strike on Syria.) And on Monday, it involves hosting no fewer than 21,000 children and adults for the annual Easter Egg Roll, a 139-year-old tradition and the Super Bowl of White House social events.

Master of events

For Niceta Lloyd, who goes by "Rickie," the job has the added challenge of collaborating with a first lady who is not yet living at the White House full time. In announcing the appointment, Mrs. Trump highlighted that Niceta Lloyd has more than two decades of experience in diplomatic, political and social entertaining in Washington. The first lady, who was a model, said she looked forward to "sharing my ideas and traditions of entertaining and social hospitality" with her new aide. She is mostly living at the family's Trump Tower penthouse in midtown Manhattan with the couple's 11-year-old son until school lets out. Niceta Lloyd was in her 20s when she was hired by Design Cuisine, an Arlington, Virginia-based special event caterer whose clients include the White House, State Department and several embassies. She also worked on the past five inaugurations of Republican and Democratic presidents. Now 46, the mother of two left the company after the White House made an offer she couldn't refuse. Bill Homan, a founder of Design Cuisine, praised his former employee's intelligence, creativity and organizational skill, as well as her sensitivity and discretion. "These are certainly very important in our business," he said.

Lea Berman, a social secretary during George W. Bush's administration who for many years relied on Niceta Lloyd to plan her private parties, said she is a "joyful person to work with" despite the stress that's built into event planning. "The best never lose their

cool; Rickie is like that," Berman said. "She's unflappable. Just what you'd hope for in a White House social secretary."

Niceta Lloyd's appointment to a job that paid her immediate predecessor \$119,000 closes the loop on a chapter in White House history, and her family's history, too. Her husband is Thomas Lloyd, a grandson of the late Rachel "Bunny" Mellon, an arts patron and political financier who was a confidante to Jacqueline Kennedy. Mellon helped Mrs. Kennedy redesign the White House Rose Garden. "Having that kind of background, it just made it like things had come full circle," said Bryan Huffman, a North Carolina-based interior designer who knew Mellon and knows Niceta Lloyd. A former social secretary recommended her to Mrs. Trump. The first lady had also attended events Niceta Lloyd had organized, including the inaugural luncheon, and is said to have come away impressed. "Sometimes, seeing is believing and seeing what she pulled off that day ... that might have definitely contributed to the decision," said Anita McBride, who was first lady Laura Bush's chief of staff.

Mrs. Trump's decision to hire Niceta Lloyd also shows that the first lady, a New Yorker who is slowly building her White House team, recognizes that she's unfamiliar with Washington's customs and needs experienced hands to help guide her. Lack of staff has already hampered some operations, such as the White House Visitors Office, which stayed closed for several weeks longer than usual following a change in presidents. —AP



TOULOUSE: Supporters of French presidential election candidate for the far-right coalition La France insoumise hold placards during a campaign rally at the Prairie de Filtres park. — AFP

FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS BATTLE IT OUT WITH WEEK TO GO

MOST UNPREDICTABLE VOTE IN THE COUNTRY'S POST-WAR HISTORY

PARIS: A week before France's high-stakes presidential election, the four top candidates began a final push yesterday to woo undecided voters who will determine the outcome of the tight race between the hard left, centre, right and far right. On April 23, the French go to the polls in the most unpredictable vote in the country's post-war history to choose two candidates from a field of 11 who will go through to a run-off two weeks later.

With a duel between far-right leader Marine Le Pen and Communist-backed radical Jean-Luc Melenchon, both eurosceptics, among one of six possible outcomes the election is being closely watched in Brussels and around the world. Opinion polls show one in three voters still undecided about who to back after a campaign characterized by scandals and upsets. In an interview in the Parisien newspaper on Sunday, 65-year-old Melenchon, who is threatening to quit the euro and massively increase public spending, vowed he would be a safe pair of hands on the eurozone's second-largest economy.

"I am not from the far left," the leader of the La France Insoumise (Unbowed France) movement said, insisting he was "ready to govern". Melenchon's surge has shaken up the race, with many hesitating between voting with their hearts

and a tactical vote for whichever candidate they see as best placed to keep Le Pen or Melenchon out of power. Le Pen, whom polls show leading the first round with centrist Emmanuel Macron on around 22-24 percent each, returned to her party's core themes of immigration and Islam Saturday to try to mobilize her base. The opinion polls had shown her virtually assured of a place in the May 7 runoff but Melenchon and the conservative Francois Fillon have narrowed the gap with her and Macron to about three points, blowing the race wide open.

Identity angst

In a speech in the southern city of Perpignan the 48-year-old National Front (FN) leader lashed out at Macron and Fillon, accusing them of being soft on radical Islam. "With Mr Macron, it would be Islamism on the move," Le Pen said, in a play on the name of Macron's En Marche (On the Move) party, calling the 39-year-old champion of diversity "unscrupulous".

Casting herself as the best defender against the jihadists who have killed over 230 people in France since 2015, Le Pen also tore into Fillon, accusing him of letting ultraconservative Islam gain ground when he was prime minister between 2007 and 2012. The election has

revealed high levels of angst over a perceived erosion of French identity, which Le Pen has pinned on immigration, particularly from Muslim North Africa.

In an Ifop-Fiducial poll for Le Journal du Dimanche (JDD) newspaper 86 percent of FN voters said they "no longer feel at home" in France and 73 percent considered Islam incompatible with the French Republic. But the poll also showed Le Pen, who has spent years trying to detoxify the FN's image, still struggling to win over the absolute majority of voters needed for victory in a run-off. Three-quarters of non-FN voters said the party as "dangerous for democracy" and four out of five found it "racist". Fillon, who is on the rebound from a damaging expenses scandal that had caused some of his voters to switch to Le Pen or Macron, used Easter to mobilise his traditionalist Catholic base.

"Patriotism is not a dirty word," he told supporters in the cathedral town of Puy-en-Velay on Saturday-borrowing from the songbook of Le Pen who styles the FN the "party of patriots". In an interview published yesterday, the 63-year-old former prime minister, who refused to bow out despite being charged with misusing public money over payments to his wife, said he was convinced the scandal was behind him. — AFP



PARIS: In this July 12, 2016 file photo, French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron attends a rally for his movement, En Marche! (In Motion!). — AP

MACRON: 39-YEAR-OLD FRENCH PRODIGY EYEING A PRESIDENCY

PARIS: "Neither of the right, nor the left" in his own words, Emmanuel Macron is a 39-year-old former banker hoping to convince the French to take a chance on his brand of youthful optimism. He has never been elected and only launched his party last April, but polls currently show Macron as one of the frontrunners for the two-stage election next Sunday and on May 7.

After quitting his job as economy minister under unpopular President Francois Hollande in August, he has concentrated on building up his own centrist political movement called "En Marche" ("On the Move"). The accomplished pianist and lover of poetry was initially dismissed by sceptics as appealing to a narrow group of young, urban professionals but his packed rallies and voter surveys show otherwise. "We can't respond with the same men and the same ideas," Macron said as he launched his presidential bid in November at a jobs training centre in a gritty Parisian suburb.

With frustration at France's political class running high, Macron has tapped into a desire for wholesale change that has also propelled far-right candidate Marine Le Pen and leftist Jean-Luc Melenchon. "I'm here because he's young, he's dynamic. It's like a breath of fresh air," 23-year-old shop worker Marine Gonidou told AFP at a rally in Brittany in January. At 39, Macron would be the youngest French leader in modern history, upending tradition that has seen voters tend to favour experience in their powerful presidents.

'Uber-isation'

Although positioned as an outsider, the brilliant student followed a well-worn path through elite French universities including

ENA, which serves as a finishing school for top civil servants and future leaders. After going into banking, where he earned nearly 2.4 million euros (\$2.6 million) from 2011-2012 at Rothschild, Macron became an economic advisor to Hollande in 2012 and then economy minister two years later.

During his time in government, he is best known for a free-market law that bears his name which liberalised the bus sector, allowed large stores to open at weekends and offered investment incentives to farmers. The legislation was strongly contested by France's powerful trade unions and had to be rammed through parliament using executive powers, but it helped cement his image as an economic reformer. "I want us to be able to start a business more easily, to innovate more easily" is one of his mantras, repeated at rallies and explained in his pre-election book "Revolution".

As well as wanting to improve the business environment, he stresses the need to improve education in deprived areas and has spoken out against stigmatizing Muslims with France's strict rules on secularism. His championing of tech firms and the "Uber-isation" of the economy, in which people increasingly work as independents rather than as employees, has helped burnish his image as a modernizer. After looking the most likely next president for the last few months, polls have shown support for him falling slightly in recent weeks. The outcome of the election will be the ultimate test of his claim that France is "contrarian"-ready to elect a pro-EU, pro-globalization liberal at a time when rightwing nationalists are making electoral gains across the world. — AFP

MELENCHON: FRANCE'S HARD LEFT CANDIDATE

PARIS: Jean-Luc Melenchon, a fiery Communist-backed eurosceptic vowing to return "power to the people" as France's next president, says he has mellowed after years spent giving the establishment a tongue-lashing. "I'm less of a hothead," said the bespectacled 65-year-old in a recent interview. "I'm becoming a reassuring figure." In an election season marked by widespread disillusionment with the political class, the head of La France Insoumise (France Unbowed) is now among the top four candidates in the April 23 first round of the two-stage vote.

Observers say strong debate performances showcasing a milder but still quick-witted Melenchon helped propel him into joint third place with the scandal-hit conservative candidate, Francois Fillon. Suddenly part of a close-fought four-way affair, they are nipping at the heels of joint frontrunners Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front (FN) and centrist former Socialist Emmanuel Macron. The two leaders of the first round will go through to a runoff on May 7.

Melenchon "invented political stand-up. He's become a showman," said former Socialist Party colleague Julien Dray. "This style keeps him from being too harsh. He's in teaching mode, the old professor giving lessons about the world and how to change it." Melenchon also has an internet edge, boasting more than a million followers on Twitter and his own YouTube channel-a way to circumvent the traditional media, which he accuses of bias.

And he has turned heads with simultaneous appearances at campaign rallies using holograms, a technological first for a French presidential campaign and a sign of renewed vigor. With the Socialist Party split between leftist and reformist camps under President Francois Hollande, its 49-year-old candidate Benoit Hamon is languishing at distant fifth place in the polls.

For many, Melenchon, after emphatically refusing to ally himself with Hamon, has emerged as the main voice on the left. Often appearing at rallies wearing a Mao jacket, Melenchon speaks without notes as he rails against the "neoliberal" European Union and stumps for his tax-and-spend agenda. But while he shares Le Pen's animosity toward the EU-they are both currently MEPs-Melenchon is her polar opposite when it comes to immigration.

"Today as yesterday, I am delighted that France is a mix of races and all the children are our children," he has said. An admirer of late Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez as well as Bolivian leader Evo Morales, he advocates a policy of non-alignment and wants France to withdraw from NATO. — AFP



MARSEILLE: In this April 9 2017 file photo, French hard-left presidential candidate, Jean-Luc Melenchon, speaks in Marseille. — AP

LE PEN: THE FAR-RIGHT HEIR AIMING TO TAKE DOWN EU

PARIS: Marine Le Pen was a daddy's girl growing up, and she wept for joy when her father-the bogeyman of French politics-beat his Socialist rival for a spot in the final of the 2002 presidential election. But while Jean-Marie Le Pen never seemed to truly covet the top job, his charismatic daughter is convinced that, come May 7, France will have its first woman president.

Over the past six years her rebranded "party of patriots" from both left and the right has gone from strength to strength, propelled by the kind of anti-globalisation, anti-establishment fury that drove Britain's vote to leave the EU and Donald Trump's election in the United States. "Against the moneyed right and the moneyed left I am the candidate of the French people," Le Pen declared in a TV debate with four rivals last month.

Since taking over the leadership of the far-right National Front (FN) in 2011 from her father, the telegenic 48-year-old former lawyer has promoted her efforts to purge the party of the anti-Semitism and overt racism that were its hallmarks. But her recent remarks about the roundup and deportation of around 13,000 French Jews during World War II may have set back those efforts.

Le Pen was criticised for declaring that France was "not responsible" for the roundup carried out by French police acting on orders from the collaborationist Vichy regime-despite three former presidents admitting France's guilt. Le Pen said she was thinking of France's youth. "I want them to be proud of being French," she said. But her remarks inevitably drew comparisons with the revisionism of her father, whom she booted out of the party for describing the Holocaust as "a detail of history". Le Pen suspended her father in 2015 from the party he co-founded for downplaying the Nazi gas chambers. A wounded Jean-Marie refused to go quietly, dragging the FN before the courts.

French first

The split marked a turning point in the career of Le Pen junior, a politician who developed a tough shell after a tumultuous childhood. When she was eight, a bomb ripped through the Paris apartment building where the family lived, slightly injuring

six people but sparing the Le Pens. Eight years later Marine's mother Pierrette walked out on her husband and three daughters, sensationally resurfacing shortly afterwards in Playboy magazine for which she posed nude.

"It was a huge shock," Le Pen, who did not see her mother for 15 years after the split, told an M6 television interviewer last year. Now herself a twice-divorced mother-of-three, she keeps her private life out of the spotlight, appearing rarely as a couple with her partner, FN vice-president Louis Aliot.

Le Pen, who has her father's gravelly voice and flair for sharp putdowns, started out as a lawyer defending illegal immigrants facing deportation as a state-appointed attorney.

Despite that experience she blames migration-and the European Union, which she has predicted "will die"-for France's economic woes. "We are not going to welcome any more people. Stop. We are full up," she insists. The FN has come a long way since it was launched in 1972 as a refuge for paramilitaries who opposed France granting independence to Algeria. It also drew apologists for the wartime Vichy regime's collaboration with Nazi Germany and ultra-conservative Catholics.

Under Le Pen junior, the party has shown a more progressive face by promoting openly gay politicians to its upper echelons and showing racists and anti-Semites the door. Critics, however, point to the role of several hard-right Le Pen aides who were once part of violent student groups-and the recurring chant of "This is our land" at FN rallies-as evidence that it still attracts hardliners.

Like Trump, Le Pen is proposing to pull up the drawbridge and restore French glory with a policy of "economic patriotism" that most economists see as a recipe for ruin. Her plans to ditch the euro and hold a "Frexit" referendum have caused particular alarm. Le Pen also wants to pull out of Europe's Schengen border-free area, adopt a French-first policy on jobs and public housing and tax products from French companies that offshore factory jobs by 35 percent. In the last presidential election in 2012 she finished third on just under 18 percent. — AFP



LYON: In this Feb 5, 2017 file photo, French far-right leader presidential candidate Marine Le Pen acknowledges applause. — AP

FILLON: BOWED NOT BROKEN IN ELECTION

PARIS: French conservative candidate Francois Fillon has seen his hopes of becoming president severely dented by a fake jobs scandal, yet he has clung on in the race and could still spring a surprise. Fillon was charged in March with misuse of public money and corporate assets, mainly over the employment of his British-born wife Penelope as a parliamentary assistant for 15 years.

It was a severe blow to the 63-year-old former prime minister, who clinched the nomination for the Republicans party in November by claiming he was unswayed by the scandals that surrounded his rival and former boss, ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy. The allegations that Penelope had done little work to earn 680,000 euros (\$725,000) were first reported by Le Canard Enchaîné newspaper in January.

Fillon's reaction to the accusations has been to deny that either he or his wife have done anything wrong and to claim his left-wing rivals are operating a "secret cell" to blacken his name. It is a line of attack that has drawn scorn from Socialist President Francois Hollande and surprised even some of Fillon's own allies.

Having backtracked on an early promise to withdraw his candidacy if he was charged, the erstwhile arch-conservative has found himself in the unlikely position of running as an anti-establishment rebel determined to defy the media, the government and magistrates he says are working against him. Subsequent revelations that a wealthy Franco-Lebanese lawyer bought handmade suits for Fillon worth 13,000 euros each have drawn further ire from his opponents. The charges have caused Fillon to slip from the position of clear frontrunner he occupied early this year.

Yet despite the charges, support for him is still hovering at around 19 percent, putting him tied for third in the race with the hard-left Jean-Luc Melenchon but behind co-leaders Marine Le Pen of the far-right and centrist Emmanuel Macron. Some observers believe Fillon is under-estimated in opinion polls and might perform far more strongly in the first round on April 23 than they show.

One of France's top pollsters, Jerome Fourquet of IFOP, said while many rightwing voters were "highly disappointed" by

the scandal surrounding Fillon, "it is not impossible that part of this electorate returns to his camp at the last moment".

Cuts and competitiveness

Fillon's policies are based on deep cuts in public spending and slashing hundreds of thousands of jobs from what conservatives believe is a bloated civil service. He also wants to attack one of the sacred cows of the French left, the 35-hour working week, raising it to 39 hours. A leaner, meaner France could, he claims, rival Germany as the foremost economy in the eurozone within a decade.



MONTPELLIER: French conservative presidential candidate Francois Fillon reacts after his speech during a campaign meeting. — AP

In TV debates, Fillon has stressed that only he among the candidates has experience of running a country. Supporters have also cheered his headline stance on immigration. Fillon raised eyebrows when he told immigrants in a TV debate that "when you enter someone else's house, you do not take over." His outspokenness stood in contrast to his image as prime minister, of a quiet and urbane man whose steady temperament contrasted with the impulsive Sarkozy who once dismissed him as "Mr Nobody". Once the youngest member of parliament at age 27, Fillon is a devout Catholic who voted against gay marriage when it was legalised in 2013. The self-declared "Gaullist"-a form of nationalism that proposes an independent and strong France-also has a close bond with Russian President Vladimir Putin. — AFP

PHILIPPINES SAYS ISLAMISTS BEHEADED FILIPINO CAPTIVE

MANILA: The Philippine army said Islamic State-linked Abu Sayyaf militants have beheaded one of four Filipino fishermen they took captive in December. Brigadier General Cirilito Sobejana, military commander on the southern island of Jolo island said the boat's captain had been executed in the jungle near the town of Patikul on Thursday but his remains have yet to be recovered.

Noel Besconde was abducted by the Abu Sayyaf group, along with three crewmen in December, while on board a fishing vessel in the Celebes Sea. Abu Sayyaf is a small but brutal militant group known for beheading, kidnapping, bombing and extortion in the south of the mainly Catholic country. Sobejana said it was likely the abductors beheaded Besconde because he was sick and had become a liability.

"The reason why he was beheaded is that he was delaying their movement," Sobejana told reporters. "They (Abu Sayyaf) are highly-mobile and we are pursuing them." Sobejana said the group had demanded 3 million pesos (\$60,648.94) ransom for Besconde but the government maintains its policy of refusing to pay ransom. The army has declared all-out war with Abu Sayyaf on the islands of Jolo and Basilan, but is hamstrung by its presence among large civilian communities.

Abu Sayyaf has its roots in separatism but its activities are mostly banditry and piracy and it has invested the profits of its business in modern weapons and fast boats. Sobejana said the Abu Sayyaf group is still holding Besconde's crew, along with more than a dozen foreign nationals in Jolo. The militant group last year beheaded Canadians John Riddell and Robert Hall. An elderly German, Jurgen Kantner, suffered the same fate in February when a \$600,000 ransom demand was not paid.

The army said on Wednesday that an Abu Sayyaf leader who was directly involved in the kidnap and execution of the Canadian and German nationals was among those killed by Philippine troops in a clash on a resort island last week.

Philippines, US to hold military drills

Meanwhile, the Philippine military said yesterday it would hold annual exercises with US troops next month, reaffirming its commitment to the alliance despite cooling relations under President Rodrigo Duterte. The 10-day exercises will be the first held under Duterte, who has suggested cancelling the drills and called for the withdrawal of American troops, putting into question Manila's 70-year-old alliance with Washington as he looks instead to court China. The outspoken Filipino leader, who has earned international censure for a war on drugs that has seen thousands killed, has since softened his stance on working with the US military. The annual military exercises, known as Balikatan (Shoulder-to-Shoulder), will now go ahead in May, focusing on counter-terrorism and disaster response as the Philippines battles Islamic militants in their lawless southern strongholds.

"It will be scenario-based like (preparing for) a big storm hitting the Philippines or the possibility of terrorism," Balikatan spokesman Major Celeste Frank Sayson told AFP. "We are safe to say there will be no more live-fire exercises. We (will) focus on humanitarian and civil assistance." In previous years Balikatan had evolved from counter-terrorism maneuvers against Islamic militants to simulations of protecting or retaking territory, as a dispute with Beijing over islands in the South China Sea escalated.

But Duterte, who took office last year, has sought



CAPAS TOWN: This file photo taken on April 14, 2016 shows US marines walking next to their transport and amphibious vehicles at a temporary camp for the "Balikatan" joint US-Philippine military exercise at Crow Valley. — AFP

improved relations with China and has set aside the maritime row in favor of economic concessions. Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana had said the exercises would refocus on fighting terrorism, which he described as the Philippines' top security problem. The Philippines is battling Islamic militants and pirates

in the conflict-torn south, where several groups have pledged allegiance to Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria. Security forces in the past week clashed with the Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group on a popular resort island, the first attack on a key Philippine tourist destination in recent years. — Agencies

JAKARTA ELECTION EXPOSES NATIONS DEEP POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS DIVIDE

POLL SEEN ALSO AS REFERENDUM ON SECULARISM

JAKARTA: Jakarta voters head to the polls on Wednesday to elect a governor for Indonesia's teeming capital after a campaign that incited political and religious tensions in the world's most-populous Muslim country. Surveys have shown the race tightening to a statistical dead heat, with incumbent Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, an ethnic Chinese Christian, closing in on rival Anies Baswedan, a former education minister.

Purnama is standing trial on blasphemy charges stemming from the divisive campaign that also featured mass rallies led by Islamist hardliners and alleged plots to overthrow President Joko Widodo, who is popularly known as Jokowi. The Jakarta election is viewed as a larger choice ahead of a 2019 presidential poll between the secular policies Indonesia has practiced since its post-World War Two independence and a hardline political Islam that has strengthened in recent years.

"This is a test case for Indonesian pluralism, if it can withstand the pressure of the religious groups, the populists," said Wimar Witoelar, a political analyst and an adviser to former Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid. "Indonesia is at a crossroads, and I mean Indonesia, not just Jakarta." A survey conducted April 12-14 by polling firm Indikator showed Anies with 48.2 percent support versus 47.4 percent for Purnama, with 4.4 percent undecided.

Worries about backlash

The business community is worried about a possible violent backlash from the losing side in the election, which could affect the investment climate and endanger Widodo's fit-and-start economic reforms. Southeast Asia's biggest economy grew 5.2 percent in 2016 and the government expects a repeat of that this year. Indonesian stocks are up 12.6 percent on the year, making the Jakarta market one of Asia's best performers.

Kartika Wirjoatmodjo, chief executive officer of the country's largest state bank, Bank Mandiri, said in an interview that whoever won "we (should) make sure it doesn't affect any of the long-term policies, especially on the openness and ... ease of doing business and attracting investment." Purnama, who replaced Widodo in 2014 as Jakarta governor after serving as his deputy, saw his popularity soar as he tackled decrepit infrastructure, chronic flooding and endemic corruption in the traffic-clogged city of over 10 million. His support plunged after an edited video circulated last September suggesting Purnama had mocked a



BANDA ACEH: A Hindu man (C) gets his cheeks pierced by a skewer during the annual Thaipusam festival at the Palani Andawer temple. — AFP

verse in the Quran used by his opponents to argue Muslims should not vote for a person holding different religious beliefs. Amid two rallies last year that drew hundreds of thousands of protesters, Purnama was charged with blasphemy, forcing him to make regular appearances in court during the campaign.

The hardline Islamists behind the rallies - led by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), a group known for attacks on religious minorities and extorting money from nightclubs - were cultivated by Purnama's rivals. Baswedan was accused of betraying his moderate Islamic roots when he met and sang with FPI leader Habib Rizieq, who was twice imprisoned for inciting violence in 2003 and 2008. Purnama recovered to win the first round on Feb. 15 with 43 percent of the vote, compared to 40 percent for Baswedan and 17 percent for Agus Yudhoyono, son of former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who drew support from conservative Muslims.

Chinese plots

The FPI was among groups circulating hoax news stories on social media during the cam-

paign of a pending invasion of Chinese workers and Chinese plots to decimate Indonesia's crops with contaminated chili. The FPI has vowed to stage further protests and a "revolution" if Purnama wins, according to flyers circulated by the group. A senior government official said a victory for Purnama could reignite religious tensions and China-baiting at a time when the government is chasing Chinese investment for much-needed infrastructure.

"I worry that if a sizeable portion of the electorate feels cheated there could be a very serious backlash," said the official, who asked for anonymity to speak freely about the political climate in Indonesia. However, political analyst Tobias Basuki also saw risks for the national government and its reform agenda if Baswedan won, given plans by his political patron Prabowo Subianto to challenge Widodo in the 2019 presidential poll. Baswedan was Widodo's campaign manager in the 2014 presidential election, when he beat Subianto. But Widodo sacked him as education minister last year. "Anies and Prabowo controlling Jakarta would impede Jokowi every step of the way," Basuki said. — Reuters

TERRORISM JOKES NO JOKING MATTER FOR SPAIN'S JUDGES

MADRID: When she posted jokes on Twitter about a 1973 assassination committed by Spain's Basque separatist group ETA, Cassandra Vera never for one moment thought they would land her a one-year jail sentence. But last month, one of Spain's top criminal courts found the 21-year-old guilty of "justifying terrorism" and humiliating its victims-the latest in a series of such convictions for social media pranks that has the country divided, and partisans of free speech worried.

"They ruined my life," Vera tweeted about the 13 posts about the 1973 murder of Luis Carrero Blanco, the prime minister and heir-apparent of dictator Francisco Franco who was killed in an ETA bomb attack that sent his car hurtling into the air. "ETA combined a policy against the use of official vehicles with a space program," read one of her posts. Another said: "Did Carrero Blanco also go back to the future with his car?"

Vera is unlikely to spend time behind bars, as offenders of non-violent crimes with a sentence of under two years do not serve time in jail. But she now has a criminal record that will prevent her from getting a scholarship for her studies. The National Court that sentenced her, which specializes in terrorism cases, ruled that her jokes did not form part of a "healthy humorous environment" and that her attitude was "disrespectful" and "humiliating." But Carrero Blanco's own granddaughter, Lucia, said in a letter sent to the El Pais daily that she was "scared of a society in which freedom of expression,

however regrettable it may be, can lead to jail sentences."

'Cult of hate'

Luis Conde, a historian of comic books, told AFP he remembered more lenient times, even under Franco's dictatorship when people would sing a song that featured the lyrics "Carrero flew," in reference to the attack. "And now, we can't say it anymore?" he asked. But Consuelo Ordóñez, head of the Covite association for victims of terrorism, said laughing at the expense of Carrero Blanco—a man associated with Franco's iron-fist rule that ended after he died in 1975 — was a big mistake. "If we had been serious about that fact that nothing justifies violence, we wouldn't be talking about more than 800 ETA deaths," she told AFP, referring to the 829 people killed during the group's four-decade campaign for Basque independence. "The cult of hate that always moved terrorists has not been defeated," she warned.

'Sensitive issue'

The number of court rulings involving alleged acts of "justifying terrorism" has risen from a dozen a year to 26 in 2015, 37 in 2016 and 12 for the first quarter of this year, according to judicial authorities. Most of them are linked to organizations that are now inactive, such as ETA, which declared a permanent ceasefire in 2011. In January, for instance, Spain's Supreme Court sentenced rocker Cesar Strawberry to a year in prison for tweets, including one that joked about the 1996-7 ETA kidnapping of a right-wing politician. — AFP

SENIOR TRUMP AIDE VISITS AFGHANISTAN

KABUL: US President Donald Trump's national security adviser met Afghan officials in Kabul yesterday, amid questions over the new administration's plans for the military mission in Afghanistan after American forces unleashed a huge bomb there on militants. The visit by HR McMaster, the first high-level visit by a Trump official, came just days after the US military sparked controversy by dropping a GBU-43 Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb, one of the largest conventional weapons ever used in combat, during an operation on Thursday against Islamic State militants in eastern Afghanistan.

While military officials said the strike was based solely on tactical needs, it led to speculation that Trump's defense advisers are planning to escalate the war against militants in Afghanistan. The strike was estimated to have killed nearly 100 militants and no civilians, according to Afghan officials, although this has not been independently verified.

McMaster met President Ashraf Ghani and other senior Afghan officials to discuss bilateral ties, security, counter-terrorism, reforms, and development, according to a statement from the palace. McMaster praised anti-corruption efforts and assured

Ghani that the United States would continue to support and cooperate with Afghanistan on a number of issues, according to the palace.

Ghani told McMaster that "terrorism is a serious issue for the security of the world and the region" and if serious steps are not taken it would affect "generations" of people, according to the statement. Illicit drugs and corruption also top the list of threats to Afghanistan's security, Ghani told the visiting officials. The Afghan government refers to both the Taliban and Islamic State as terrorists. Afghan forces have struggled to contain Taliban insurgents since most international troops were withdrawn in 2014, leaving them to fight largely alone.

At the peak in 2011, the United States had more than 100,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan. Nearly 9,000 US troops remain there to train and advise Afghan forces, provide close air support to soldiers on the ground and form a separate counter-terrorism unit that targets Islamic State, al Qaeda and other militant networks. The top US commander in Afghanistan has said he needs "several thousand" more troops to help the Afghans take on a resurgent Taliban and battle other insurgents, but no official plan has been announced. — Reuters



KABUL: Men from the Solidarity Party of Afghanistan wear masks of President Trump, President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah, carrying a hand made model of the "Mother of all bombs" during a demonstration, against the US government. — AP

GERMANY'S FORGOTTEN 'GUEST WORKERS' FROM AFRICA

DRESDEN: Long overshadowed by the more numerous and vocal Turkish "guest worker" community, Mozambicans who arrived in Germany decades ago still struggle to assert their rights in their adopted homeland. Faced with huge industrial production problems, pre-unification East Germany relied heavily on labor from communist "brother states" such as Cuba, Hungary, Vietnam and Angola. But the first from Africa were the Mozambicans, with around 15,000 eventually arriving in a deeply foreign, sometimes bitterly cold and often hostile new place.

After independence in 1975, their homeland plunged into civil war between Marxists who set up a one-party state after fighting Portuguese colonial forces and rebels backed by white Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. Many Mozambicans sought to flee the deeply poor, troubled nation to seek gainful employment in East Germany's steel, construction, manufacturing and textiles industries.

"We were also escaping the civil war," which engulfed Mozambique for 15 years until 1990, said 50-year-old Emiliano Chaimite, who lives in the eastern city of Dresden. Like the Turks who spurred West Germany's "economic miracle" in

the 1960s and 1970s, Mozambicans often accepted jobs East Germans were unwilling to do. But it hasn't been easy and they have faced repeated bouts of xenophobia and brutality.

'Foreigners out!'

Chaimite has worked since his arrival in Germany in 1986 to fight racism, but laments an anti-immigrant mood that has taken hold of late. He cites in particular the Islamophobic movement Pegida, which has been holding weekly marches in Dresden's city centre since October 2014. "After all the work we did before the arrival of Pegida to sensitize people, we feel like we've been sent back to square one," said Chaimite, who started off in a foundry and now works as a nurse. "If you look at the situation on the streets, it reminds you of the 1990s," agreed Morgado Vasco Muxlhanga, 56. He was just 19 when he came to East Germany in 1980 to labour in a slaughterhouse. Both he and Chaimite worked hard to learn German early on and ended up marrying local women.

But when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the two Germanys became one less than a year later, most Mozambicans found themselves stripped of their jobs and

housing. The majority said they never received full wages for work performed under difficult conditions and many were summarily sent home to a nation that had long been a Cold War proxy battlefield. In the tumult, racism reared its head particularly in the disaffected states of the east.

"The young guys we used to play football with started saying 'Foreigners out! Go to Auschwitz!' and colleagues would cross to the other side of the street," Chaimite said, contrasting attitudes with the warm welcome he said he first received in the German Democratic Republic after experiencing colonial-era racism at home.

A wave of violence culminated on April 6, 1991 when Jorge Gomondai, 28, a neighbor and colleague of Muxlhanga's, was thrown on to the tracks of a streetcar in Dresden after being attacked by 14 skinheads. His death is considered the first racist murder of the post-reunification era and led to a legal fiasco for lack of a serious investigation. "It was horrible. We got together in small groups in Berlin asking 'Do we really want to stay here?'" recalled former metal worker Augusto Vinhego, who was himself attacked in the German capital in 2001.

'Do everything you can'

Recalling those dispiriting years, they recounted the jeers and racist monkey noises, the fear of walking home, the desire to safeguard their children. But they also remembered with pride their patient claiming of a stake in a country devoid of a multicultural tradition. The Mozambicans' lesser-known story even drew the attention of graphic novelist Birgit Weyhe, who last year published "Madgermanes", named after a somewhat pejorative term used back home for the emigrants.

Chaimite, who tried in vain to open up a dialogue with Pegida, blamed the view-long mainstream in politics that "Germany is not a country of immigration". The United Nations in February condemned the "structural racism" faced by blacks in Germany "at school, at work and in the public sphere".

However many in the Mozambican community say they have found it possible to make inroads, even if it's been a struggle. On the advice of a pastor, Chaimite began studying nursing and in 2003 founded an "African-European" club. And Muxlhanga eventually became a computer programmer and wrote a book, "My Life In Three Countries". "You have to do everything you can to improve the situation," he said. — AFP

AFTER NORTH KOREA'S BIG PARADE, WHAT'S NEXT?

PYONGYANG: North Korea's big day, the anniversary of the birth of its founding leader, Kim Il Sung, came and went with no underground nuclear test by the North, and no pre-emptive strikes off the deck of the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier sent to waters off the Korean Peninsula by President Donald Trump. Just hours before Vice President Mike

Pence began his visit to Seoul yesterday, Pyongyang fired off a ballistic missile - but it appears to have exploded seconds after it got off the ground. So, all clear?

Well, yes and no. Though tensions had been rising dangerously between Washington and Pyongyang in the lead-up to the April 15 anniversary, the biggest holi-

day of the year in North Korea, the heightened rhetoric and saber-rattling on both sides could begin to cool down - a pattern that has been common in recent years, especially in the spring, when the U.S. and South Korea stage their huge annual war games.

But this year, there is a new issue. In an interview with The Associated Press, a senior North Korean official said Friday that Pyongyang has determined that Trump is "more vicious and aggressive" than his predecessor, Barack Obama. And Pyongyang is vowing it won't back down. A look at why Trump's North Korea problem isn't likely to go away anytime soon:

Missiles on parade

Though North Korea didn't launch any missiles to mark the anniversary day, it did show them off in a military parade - and in a surprising number and variety. Experts believe the arsenal displayed in Saturday's parade included a new kind of short-range cruise missile, probably for shoreline defenses. North Korea unveiled its latest submarine-launched ballistic missile and a version of the same missile that can be launched from land-based launchers - both of which use solid fuel and present a far greater challenge to find and destroy before they're fired off. And it showed off canisters that seemed in line with what would be required for an intercontinental ballistic missile, which is Washington's greatest concern.

That's a kind of two-fer for the North. The

canisters are used for "cold launches," meaning they protect the mobile launch vehicle when the missiles are deployed. But they also hide what's inside, so more analysis and guesswork from the parade display and future test launches will be required before conclusions are made about where North Korea's ICBM development really stands. Clearly, however, the focus on missiles large and small at the parade was meant to send a signal that the North is able to project its power well beyond its own borders. At the very least, to US military bases in Japan. At the most, to the mainland United States itself.

More, better nukes

Physicist and North Korea nuclear watcher David Albright, of the Institute for Science and International Security, estimated in a report last week provided to The Associated Press that through 2020, North Korea will have enough plutonium and weapon-grade uranium for about 25-50 nuclear weapons. But he also noted that the North has several options to diversify and expand its capabilities.

It could, for example, use its experimental light water reactor to have enough plutonium and weapon-grade uranium "for up to 60 nuclear weapons by the end of 2020," Albright said. "Significantly higher estimates are possible if North Korea significantly expands its gas centrifuge program and dramatically boosts its production and separation of plutonium over what is assumed in

the current analysis," he added. Moreover, Albright said, continued underground testing will provide the North with opportunities to significantly improve its ability to make weapons that require less fissile, are more compact and have higher explosive yields. Developing a thermonuclear weapon - an H-bomb - is a declared priority of North Korea. According to Albright, it appears capable of doing so. And, at the current pace, that could be on Trump's watch.

Another anniversary coming up

April 15 isn't the only big anniversary in North Korea this month. The country's military marks the anniversary of its founding on April 25, and some experts believe the chances of a nuclear test or missile launch around that date may be higher than they were on Kim Il Sung's birth anniversary. There are two reasons for that. April 15 is intended to be focused completely on honoring Kim Il Sung and by extension his son, Kim Jong Il, and grandson, current leader Kim Jong Un. A test or launch on that day could distract from that focus, especially if it were to fail.

The second reason is that the April 25 anniversary is explicitly a military observation. While a failure would still be embarrassing, it wouldn't be quite as bad. More likely, if there is still going to be a test or launch designed to make a political statement, it could be timed just before or after April 25 to further dilute the potential PR impact of a failure. —AP



PYONGYANG: In this Saturday, April 15, 2017, file photo, a soldiers march across Kim Il Sung Square during a military parade in Pyongyang, North Korea to celebrate the 105th birth anniversary of Kim Il Sung, the country's late founder and grandfather of current ruler Kim Jong Un. —AP

NORTH KOREA MISSILE TEST FAILS BEFORE PENCE VISIT

'THE MISSILE BLEW UP ALMOST IMMEDIATELY'

SEOUL: Visiting US Vice President Mike Pence described North Korea's failed missile test yesterday as a "provocation" and assured South Korea of Washington's full support against the threat from its volatile neighbor. Pyongyang launched the missile hours before Pence arrived in Seoul for talks on curbing the North's weapons programs as fears grow that it is planning another nuclear test. But US officials said the missile exploded seconds after it was fired.

siles-including a suspected new intercontinental ballistic missile.

"The missile blew up almost immediately," the US Defense Department said of yesterday's early-morning launch from near Sinpo on the North's east coast. The type of missile was not clear. The North has a habit of test-firing missiles to mark major dates such as Saturday's 105th anniversary of the birth of the nation's founder Kim Il-Sung, or as gestures of defi-

assure you that under President Trump's leadership our resolve has never been stronger, our commitment to this historic alliance with the courageous people of South Korea has never been stronger and with your help and God's help freedom will ever prevail on this peninsula," he said.

Tough stance

Last August a submarine-launched ballistic missile tested

will prevent Pyongyang from developing a nuclear-tipped ballistic missile capable of reaching the mainland United States. With speculation mounting that the North is preparing to conduct a sixth nuclear test, he sent an aircraft carrier-led strike group to the Korean peninsula. But a White House foreign policy adviser travelling with Pence played down Sunday's test, saying the missile-probably a medium-range one-failed after about four to five seconds.

While Washington had a "wide array of tools" at the president's disposal, "for this particular case, if they (North Korea) took the time and energy to launch a missile that failed, we don't need to expend any resources against that." The North has reiterated its constant refrain that it is ready for war with the US, and its army Friday vowed a "merciless" response to any US provocation. Recent satellite images suggest its main nuclear site is "primed and ready," according to specialist US website 38North.

China, the North's sole major ally, and Russia have both urged restraint. China's most senior diplomat Yang Jiechi and US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson exchanged views on the situation on the Korean peninsula by phone on Sunday, Beijing's official Xinhua news agency said. The White House adviser said Trump and China's President Xi Jinping had discussed a number of steps at their summit this month and "we've seen the Chinese already take some initial steps towards that"-citing the turning back of coal ships from North Korea.

The UN Security Council has imposed six sets of sanctions against the North since 2006, when it staged the first of its five nuclear tests. All have failed to halt its drive for what it insists are defensive weapons. On Monday Pence is scheduled to meet Acting President Hwang Kyo-Ahn for talks expected to focus on the North's weapons programs and a controversial US missile defense system known as THAAD. —AFP



SEOUL: US Vice President Mike Pence (C) and his wife Karen Pence (in white jacket) inspect the honour guard upon their arrival at the National Cemetery. —AFP

"This morning's provocation from the North is just the latest reminder of the risks each one of you face each and every day in the defense of the freedom of the people of South Korea and the defense of America in this part of the world," Pence told US military families at an Easter dinner. Some 28,500 US troops are stationed in the South. The latest launch came a day after the North held a defiant massive military parade in Pyongyang which showcased nearly 60 mis-

siles-including a suspected new intercontinental ballistic missile.

ance when top US officials visit the region. South Korea's foreign ministry said that by conducting the latest test just a day after displaying a series of missiles, "North Korea has threatened the whole world." US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said President Donald Trump had been briefed on the latest test but had "no further comment," while at the Easter dinner at Yongsan military base, Pence brought greetings for the troops from Trump. "Let me

from Sinpo flew 500 kilometers towards Japan. North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un hailed that test as the "greatest success" and said it brought the US mainland within range of a mobile delivery system. Pyongyang's rogue atomic ambitions have come into sharp focus in recent weeks, with Trump vowing a tough stance against the North and threatening unilateral action if China failed to help curb its neighbor's nuclear program.

Trump has repeatedly said he



COLOMBO: Sri Lankan men walk back after erecting a white flag on top of a garbage mound following the garbage dump collapse in Meetotamulla, on the outskirts of Colombo. —AP

HOPE FADES FOR SRI LANKA MISSING, DEATH TOLL AT 23

COLOMBO: Hopes of finding anyone alive under a collapsed mountain of garbage in Sri Lanka's capital faded yesterday as the death toll reached 23 with another six reported missing, police said. Hundreds of soldiers, backed by heavy earth moving equipment were digging through the rubbish and the wreckage of some 145 homes that were destroyed when a side of the 300-foot high dump crashed on Friday.

"The rescue is fast becoming a recovery operation," a senior police official at the site said. "It is difficult to imagine anyone could survive under these toxic conditions." He said six people were reported missing after Friday's disaster at Kolonnawa on the northeastern edge of the capital. The Colombo National hospital said four children aged between 11 and 15 were among the 23 people killed. Hospital spokeswoman Pushpa Soysa said a man and a woman pulled out of the dump on Friday were in intensive care while another 11 were also still in hospital.

Police have stepped up security in the area following reports of looting and said they arrested 18 men suspected of stealing victims' belongings. President Maithripala Sirisena ordered hundreds

of troops to search for survivors and bolster rescue efforts of the fire department. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is visiting Japan, said arrangements had been made to remove the garbage dump, but it came crashing down before relocation work could begin. Wickremesinghe said Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe offered help with the recovery effort and a technical team would be sent to Sri Lanka to evaluate the situation.

About 800 tons of solid waste is added per day to the open dump. Police said a total of 145 homes, mostly shacks, were destroyed when the garbage mountain came crashing down following heavy rain the previous day and a fire hours earlier. More than 600 people have been given temporary shelter at a government-run school in the area as authorities looked for alternative accommodation for those living near the dump. Many residents had evacuated their homes before the disaster because of the heavy rain. Sri Lanka's parliament was warned recently that the 23 million tonnes of garbage rotting at Kolonnawa was a serious health hazard. Efforts are under way to generate electricity using solid waste as fuel. —AFP

PAKISTAN PROBES CLERICS AFTER STUDENT KILLED FOR BLASPHEMY

PESHAWAR: Pakistani police opened a hate speech investigation involving two Muslim clerics yesterday after the killing of a university student over allegations he committed blasphemy. The clerics are accused of attempting to disrupt the funeral of student Mashal Khan, who was beaten to death by fellow students after a dormitory debate was followed by accusations of blasphemy being spread across a university campus in the northern city of Maradan.

University officials had issued a public notification hours before the murder naming three students being investigated for "blasphemous activities". Blasphemy is an extremely sensitive topic in Muslim majority Pakistan, where penalties range from small fines to the death sentence, and dozens of people are on death row in the country's jails. There have been at least 65 recorded cases of vigilante murders since 1990, according to figures from a Center

for Research and Security Studies report and local media.

'Shocked and saddened'

In a statement released to the press on Saturday, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said he was "shocked and saddened by the senseless display of mob justice that resulted in the murder of a young student, Mashal Khan, at Wali Khan University". Mardan police chief Alam Shinwari said 20 people had been identified as culpable in the killing on the basis of videos taken during the attack, and 15 had been arrested. He said they would be tried by anti-terrorism courts. Police say they are also investigating the clerics in Khan's hometown of Swabi, some 60 kilometers south of Mardan, for attempting to disrupt funeral proceedings and instigate hatred against the dead student's family.

"The two clerics ... the mosque loud-speaker for hate speech against the slain

student and his family and ... created hurdles for the people and another cleric to participate in the funeral," a senior Swabi police official told Reuters. He spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of being targeted by religious hardliners.

A local imam had refused to lead the funeral prayers at Khan's funeral on Friday, according to Swabi resident Salman Ahmed. A technician who was asked to do so in the cleric's place was confronted by several people afterwards. In his press release, the prime minister said the perpetrators of the attack would be brought to justice. "The nation should stand united to condemn this crime and to promote tolerance and rule of law in society," Sharif said. However, Pakistan's government has been vocal about blasphemy in recent months, with Sharif issuing an order in March for the removal of content deemed blasphemous online and threatening "strict punishment" for those violating the law. —Reuters

INDIAN METRO PROBES PORN SCREENED AT BUSY STATION

NEW DELHI: Hardcore pornography that flashed onto a giant screen at one of Delhi's busiest metro stations has prompted red-faced rail authorities to launch an investigation, an official said yesterday, after footage of the incident was shared widely online. Commuters were stopped in their tracks at the station in the Indian capital's central business district of Connaught Place last weekend when the x-rated footage began playing on a large screen that normally broadcasts advertisements for luxury property or credit card schemes.

Scores of people captured the moment on their mobile phones and the images have since gone viral on social media. Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) spokesman Mohinder Yadav told AFP Sunday that authorities were trying to identify three suspects believed to be behind the incident last Sunday.

DMRC said the offending screen was operated by a private company and had an unsecured WiFi network, leaving it accessible to others.

"As per CCTV footage, three men have run (the) porn clip through their mobile on this TV," the DMRC said in a statement late Saturday, adding that the contractor in charge of the screen would be required to have password protection from now on. The incident made headlines in a country where talk about sex or even public displays of affection are seen by many as taboo.

Mainstream cinema is stripped of raunchiness by India's socially-conservative censor board, which muted the word "lesbian" from a Hindi-language film, blocked the release of a toned-down version of the erotic movie "Fifty Shades of Grey" in 2015, and deemed two James Bond kissing scenes unsuitable for an Indian audience. —AFP

FIREWORKS IN ISTANBUL AS 'YES' SIDE CLAIMS VICTORY

ISTANBUL: With 97 percent of the ballots counted in Turkey's historic referendum, those who back constitutional changes greatly expanding President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's powers had a narrow lead yesterday night, the official Anadolu news agency said. The results from yesterday's vote are expected to have a huge effect on Turkey's long-term political future and on its relations with the European Union and the world.

Anadolu said 51.4 percent voted "yes" and backed the constitutional changes to replace Turkey's parliamentary system with a presidential vote, with 48.6 percent voting "no" against them. More than 55 million people in this country of about 80 million were registered to vote and more than 1.3 million Turkish voters cast their ballots abroad.

Officials said Erdogan was already thanking allies and supporters for the passage of the constitutional changes as the vote neared its end. Erdogan supporters were celebrating with fireworks in Istanbul as the president said he is "grateful" to the people who "reflected their will". However, the vice-chairman of Turkey's main opposition party said the party will contest 37 percent of the votes counted.

The opposition criticized the decision of the country's elections board to accept as valid ballot papers that don't have its official stamp. Republican People's Party deputy chairman Bulent Tezcan told reporters Sunday that the decision leaves the results of the constitutional referendum "faced with a serious legitimacy problem."

Turkey's Supreme Election Board announced the unprecedented move after many voters casting their votes in the country's historic referendum complained that they were given ballot papers without the official stamp. If the "yes" vote prevails, the 18 constitutional changes will replace Turkey's parliamentary system of government with a presidential one, abolishing the office of the prime minister and

granting sweeping executive powers to the president.

Erdogan and his supporters say the "Turkish-style" presidential system would bring stability and prosperity in a country rattled by last year's coup attempt and a series of devastating attacks by the Islamic State group and Kurdish militants. But opponents fear the changes will lead to autocratic one-man rule, ensuring that the 63-year-old Erdogan, who has been accused of repressing rights and freedoms, could govern until 2029 with few checks and balances.

Erdogan described the referendum as an opportunity for "change and transformation" as he voted yesterday in Istanbul, where black-clad bodyguards with automatic weapons stood guard outside the polling station. "We need to make a decision that is beyond the ordinary," Erdogan said. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of Turkey's main opposition party and top "no" campaigner, called the referendum a vote on Turkey's future. "We hope the results will be good and together we can have the opportunity to discuss Turkey's other fundamental problems," he said.

The ballots themselves did not include the referendum question - it was assumed to be understood. Voters used an official stamp to select between "yes" and "no". At one Istanbul polling station, eager voters lined up outside before it opened at 8 am. "We are here early to say 'no' for our country, for our children and grandchildren," said retired tax officer Murtaza Ali Turgut. His wife Zeynep agreed, saying: "I was going to come sleep here last night to vote at first light." Istanbul resident Husnu Yahsi, 61, also said he was voting "no". "I don't want to get on a bus with no brake system. A one-man system is like that," he said. In another Istanbul neighborhood, a "yes" voter expressed full support for Erdogan. "Yes, yes, yes! Our leader is the gift of God to us," said Mualla Sengul. "We will always support him. He's governing so well."



ISTANBUL: Supporters of the "Yes" vote in Turkey's historic referendum wave flags during celebrations yesterday. — AP

Anadolu reported that military helicopters flew ballots and elections officers to some districts of the southeastern predominantly Kurdish region of Diyarbakir due to security reasons. The proposed changes would grant the president powers to appoint ministers, senior government officials and half the members of Turkey's highest judicial body, as well as issue decrees and declare states of emergency. It sets a limit of two five-year terms for presidents and also allows the president to remain at the helm of a political party. The changes would come into effect with the next general election, scheduled for 2019.

Erdogan first came to power in 2003 as prime minister and served in that role until becoming Turkey's first directly elected president in 2014. He has long sought to expand the powers of the president. The campaign has

been highly divisive and heavily one-sided, with the "yes" side dominating the airwaves and billboards across the country. Supporters of the "no" vote have complained of intimidation, recording more than 100 incidents of obstruction to its campaign efforts, including beatings, detentions and threats.

The vote comes as Turkey has been buffeted by problems. Erdogan survived a coup attempt last July, which he has blamed on his former ally and current nemesis Fethullah Gulen, an Islamic cleric living in the United States. Gulen has denied knowledge of the coup attempt. Still, a widespread government crackdown has targeted followers of Gulen and other government opponents, branding them terrorists and a state of emergency imposed after the coup attempt remains in effect. — AP

IT'S UP TO US

Continued from Page 1

Yesterday I saw on social media that someone bombed the North Korean capital's airport. I rushed to check this information and confirm it, only find it's a hoax - another fake news report spreading across social media. At least in the North Korean hoax, it was not a matter of destroying a family's or some individual's reputation. But in other cases, rumors and gossip are spread as if they are fact and can ruin people's lives for years. Not only the individual's alone, but that of his family, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his tribe. How fair and just is this? Would any of us want this to happen to us?

Don't get me wrong. There are instances where the nation should know hidden information and sometimes whistleblowers save the nation. But these instances are typically not malicious and they do not spread rumors

through tweets or Insta posts. Instead, file real cases with documentation and enough evidence before the authorities. Many of them are people who are highly ranked and their conscience cannot support what they know to be wrong.

This is based on malicious, individual grudges and wars of interests. I know it's difficult to control. But we can start with ourselves. Don't spread, share or forward gossip and rumors. Maybe we cannot bring to justice those who start malicious rumors, because it's very difficult to know the source. But we can stop social media from overtaking our society by refusing to play their game. Social media is a double-edged sword - it can be a force for good but also a force of evil. And usually in human affairs, the force of evil is stronger. But the human being is very intelligent and he/she can choose to make that sword a force for good. It's up to us.

MPS ADASANI, MUWAIZRI FILE SECOND GRILLING...

Continued from Page 1

The two grillings have been submitted after the government and its supporters rejected last Tuesday amendments to the administrative court law that would have allowed those who have their citizenships revoked to go to court. At present, courts are not allowed to hear citizenship cases because they are a sovereign matter.

In their grilling yesterday, MPs Adasani and Muwaizri charged that the government has failed to safeguard public funds, citing a number of issues like the payment of the huge fine to Dow Chemical, losses at Kuwait Investment Authority and the social security establishment and suspicions around

huge arms purchases. They also criticized the government for resorting to foreign borrowing through a bond sale, while several state-owned firms like Kuwait Petroleum Corp are holding assets worth KD 20 billion, which should have been sent to the state treasury. The grilling said that had these establishments handed over the funds to the government, there would have been no need to borrow to finance the budget deficit.

Under Kuwaiti law, MPs can file a non-cooperation motion against the prime minister following the debate of the grilling. If the motion gets the required votes, it will be sent to HH the Amir, who will decide whether to dismiss the premier and appoint another one or dissolve the Assembly and call for early elections.

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 THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
 ESTABLISHED 1961

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EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
 ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
 FAX : 24835620/1
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 E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
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Focus

VOTERS UNDECIDED, DISAPPOINTED DAYS BEFORE FRENCH VOTE

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen is too extreme, but centrist Emmanuel Macron is too young. Conservative Francois Fillon cannot be trusted, Socialist Benoit Hamon is the establishment, and Communist-backed radical Jean-Luc Melenchon, too risky. Just a week before the French cast their first votes for the next president, this is how the many undecided voters view this year's cast of candidates: with abject disappointment.

Marc Jaurena lives in the northeastern city of Metz but drives nearly an hour to work in Luxembourg, 63 km away. "For me, working in Luxembourg, my job will be directly impacted by a Marine Le Pen election," Jaurena said, as the far-right leader has pledged that, if elected, she will pull France out of the euro currency and hold a referendum on whether the country should leave the EU. The 34-year-old Jaurena said he has also been scandalized by the fake jobs scandals that have embroiled not only Le Pen, but also Fillon.

Fillon's campaign has been rocked by multiple scandals over expenses and conflicts of interest, including allegations that he gave his wife suspected fake jobs as a parliamentary assistant, for which she was paid a total of A680,000 (\$725,000). As for Le Pen, the European Parliament has accused her far-right National Front (FN) of using funds allotted for parliamentary assistants to pay staff for party work in France. She has dismissed the investigation into FN's expenses, saying it is a plot to derail her campaign bid. Jaurena is also unmoved by the ethos of the Communist-backed eurosceptic Melenchon, and by what he called Macron's "brain-washing". "I know who I won't vote for, but I don't know who I'll vote for," he said.

'Rocked by scandals'

He is among the nearly 40 percent of voters who have yet to decide which way they'll vote - or even if they'll show up at an election day next Sunday. "This election is unusual. The campaign is rocked by scandals," political scientist Richard Kleinschmager told AFP. "The situation has become too complex to get people engaged". Voters' indecision has reinforced the uncertainty of this year's two-round presidential election, in which four candidates - Le Pen, Macron, Melenchon and Fillon - are neck-and-neck for the first round of voting on April 23. Polls give each between 19 and 23 percent of votes. The top two candidates from that vote will go forward to the second-round run-off on May 7.

"For me, it's unclear," said 41-year-old Fabrice Blanchard, a commercial agent in Lorraine. "Macron, we don't know if he is of the right or the left". As for Hamon, "he is from the outgoing government," which has been marked by high unemployment and low growth. Only 17 percent of voters questioned in an Ipsos poll in February gave high marks to France's democratic system.

'Outraged by scandals'

In the western city of Rennes, Pierre, 28, voted for the then president Nicolas Sarkozy in 2012, but he is leaning towards Macron this time around, "because he's young". But for retired teacher Jeannette, 77, who is among the undecided voters, said Macron is "too young". "Undecided voters are a feature of this election," Kleinschmager said. "Voters from the two major parties have been thoroughly weakened. Francoise, the daughter of a former mayor in the eastern province of Franche-Comte, said she would have voted for Fillon "if there hadn't been the scandals".

"Honesty in life and in politics, it's essential," the 54-year-old pharmaceutical worker said. "My father was mayor of a town, and when I made copies at city hall, he took out money to pay for them. So then when we see the Fillon family... I am outraged by the scandals".

There is a danger in having so many undecided voters at this late stage, said Kleinschmager. "The danger is when we don't know what to hold on to," he said. "So we grab a lottery ticket while telling ourselves 'why not'. That lottery ticket is Marine Le Pen". An Ipsos poll for the daily Le Monde out Friday showed Macron and Le Pen - who have been neck-and-neck for weeks at the head of the pack - on 22 percent for the first round. — AFP

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REFUGEES BRING ITALY VILLAGE BACK TO LIFE

In the foothills of the Aspromonte mountains in southern Italy, the silence of a once-dying village is broken by the laughter of a small group of refugees. Tiny Sant'Alessio has been welcoming families and vulnerable migrants here for three years in a project which not only provides humanitarian assistance but brings with it invaluable economic and social benefits. Over the years the village has dwindled to only 330 inhabitants, many of them elderly. The steep cobbled streets are deserted and most windows are shuttered, residents having left over the years for better work opportunities in Turin, Milan or as far away as Australia.

In an attempt to reverse the trend, however, since 2014 the council has been renting eight of these empty flats to house up to 35 migrants at a time as part of the national SPRAR network (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees). Everything is done to help the newcomers get back on their feet, from Italian lessons to legal, medical and psychological assistance, vocational training and social activities such as gardening, cooking and dancing classes.

The village is currently home to an Iraqi Kurdish family, a Gambian couple with a baby and young people from Ghana, Nigeria, Mali and Senegal. There is a special project for the most vulnerable, including HIV-positive people, diabetics, victims of prostitution networks, a deaf and dumb couple, and a young woman whose toddler son was shot dead in Libya and husband is feared drowned.

'Humane and humanitarian'
 "Our mission is both humane and humanitarian, that's the most important

thing," said Stefano Calabro, a 43-year-old police officer who has been mayor of Sant'Alessio since 2009. "But there is a significant economic benefit too." The state allocates up to A45 (\$47) a day for each migrant, most of which goes to the organizers to cover costs. The project has created full or part-time jobs in Sant'Alessio for 16 people including seven locals - from social workers to Italian teachers and cultural mediators.

And it has prevented the closure of the village's basic services - a bar, small supermarket, doctor's surgery and pharmacy. With funds to spend on services, the coun-

ty has been able to open a small gym open to all residents and upkeep a lush sports field overlooking the valley, where migrants regularly challenge the team from a nearby drug rehabilitation center. After six months to a year here, some of the refugees managed to find work in the region, others headed elsewhere.

Ghanaian Salifu, 23, decided to stay on and has been living off odd jobs like helping with manual work in the fields. Sant'Alessio may not offer bright lights or much in the way of career opportunities, but a cheerful Salifu says "we're not going anywhere". After months in Sicily's notori-

ous, overcrowded Mineo camp, just small things like quick doctor appointments here seem a luxury.

Vast areas depopulated

Sitting in the sunshine and watching the world go by from his front garden, 89-year old Antonio Sacca - who spent 54 years working in a Turin factory before returning home - says he likes his new neighbors. "They behave well. They live independent lives but often lend a helping hand," he said. Bar owner and widow Celestina Borrello, 73, whose son left years ago to find work in Belgium, says "the village was emptying, so if there's a little movement now, it's a good thing". "We know what it means to leave our land," she adds.

The project has been such a success that Coopisa, the association behind it, is opening others in four villages nearby. And there is another benefit: those that join the SPRAR network and take in small numbers of refugees are guaranteed not to have to host an emergency reception center, such as the one in the nearby ski-town of Gamberio, where 120 migrants are massed in a hotel. With just 26,000 places available, the network is only a small part of Italy's reception system, which hosts more than 176,000 people.

While most are housed in large groups, often angering or frustrating local communities, this dusty village is seen as a quiet triumph. "Sant'Alessio has been our prototype," said Coopisa head Luigi De Filippo, who points out there is scope for the project to go across Italy and beyond. "There are vast areas affected by the same depopulation in northern Italy and elsewhere in Europe." — AFP



A resident looks at a group of migrants walking in a street of Sant'Alessio in Aspromonte, a small village of 330 inhabitants in Calabria, southern Italy, on April 6, 2017. — AFP

'ISLAMIC' KINDERGARTENS CAUSE STIR IN AUSTRIA

A debate is raging in Austria after a study suggested that Islamic kindergartens in Vienna were helping to create "parallel societies" or even produce the dangerous homegrown radicals of the future. According to its author, Ednan Aslan, a Turkish-born Austrian professor at Vienna University, some 10,000 children aged two to six attend around 150 Muslim preschools, teaching the Holy Quran much like Christian ones do with Bible studies.

At least a quarter are backed by groups propagating archconservative strains of Islam like Salafism, or organizations that see religion not just as a private matter but integral to politics and society, Aslan believes. "Parents are sending their kids to establishments that ensure they are in a Muslim setting and learn a few suras (chapters from the Quran)," Aslan, a respected researcher into Islamic education, told AFP. "But they are unaware that they are shutting them off from a multicultural society," he said.

The study, published last year, has been jumped on by critics of immigration - not least the far-right Freedom Party - in the wake of attacks such as Paris and Brussels perpetrated by Muslims who grew up in Europe.

Undercover

But many reject Aslan's findings, questioning its methodology. The magazine Biber, which writes for and about minorities, sent a veiled Muslim reporter undercover posing as a mother looking for a place for her son at 14 Muslim kindergartens. She found no evidence to back up Aslan's suggestions that they were churning out "little Salafists" or that things like the children singing - frowned upon by ultra-strict Muslims - were banned. But around a third were according to the magazine "problematic", "cutting off or isolating children" from mainstream society. It also voiced concerns about the "openness" of some staff and the level of German spoken.

Vienna City Hall has since sought to calm the situation by commissioning an in-depth study involving a six-strong research team which will be published later this year. But the first problem is establishing how many Islamic kindergartens there are. Vienna has 842 registered kindergartens, 100 of them Catholic-run and 13 Protestant, but the number of Muslim ones is not known. Part of the reason is that there has been an explosion in the number that are pri-

vately run, stretching the ability of the authorities to keep tabs and allowing some to operate under the radar.

City of immigrants

Vienna is home to 1.8 million people, half of whom have a parent born abroad or who were born abroad themselves. Ever since it was the capital of a vast empire, it has been a magnet for outsiders, not all of them always welcome. "But what is new in recent years has been the religious aspect of the debate about integration," said Thomas Schmidinger, political scientist and Islam specialist at Vienna University.

Austria, a nation of 8.7 million people, has received more than 130,000 asylum applications since 2015 following the onset of the European Union's biggest migration crisis since World War II. The Freedom Party is riding high in

the polls. Surveys suggest that public attitudes to Muslims have hardened. Attacks on migrant shelters soared last year. The ruling centrist coalition has moved to the right with plans to ban full-face veils in public and oblige migrants to sign an "integration contract".

Organizations representing Austria's 700,000-strong Muslim population say that in this context, Aslan's flawed report has only fanned the flames. "This study feeds populism and forces Muslims to justify themselves constantly," said Murat Gurol from newly created pressure group the Muslim Civil Society Network. The 45-year-old IT worker said he sent his own son to a Muslim kindergarten in order to learn "the values of solidarity, humanity and responsibility". As a child he went to a Christian preschool, and "I don't see why that should be allowed for one religion and not for another," he said. — AFP



A family relaxes near the Islam Centre of Vienna on April 14, 2017 in Vienna. —AFP

'JAPANESE MESSI' BREAKS J-LEAGUE GOAL RECORD AT 15

TOKYO: Japanese media hailed wonderkid Takefusa Kubo yesterday after he became the youngest scorer in the J-League at 15 with a super strike for FC Tokyo's under-23 side. At 15 years, 10 months and 11 days, Kubo fired the winner in Saturday's 1-0 win at Cerezo Osaka's under-23s in a J-League third division game to beat the previous mark. That was held by Takayuki Morimoto, who scored for Tokyo Verdy two days shy of his 16th birthday in 2004 before going on to play in Italy. Kubo, a former YouTube sensation dubbed the 'Japanese Messi' during his time as a pint-sized member of Barcelona's youth set-up, broke the record in style, dribbling past two defenders before smashing the ball home from a tight angle. "I'm just really happy-hopefully I can continue helping the team win like this," Kubo told local media, with the popular Nikkan Sports daily likening the forward to Argentine and Barca wizard Lionel Messi in its match report. —AFP

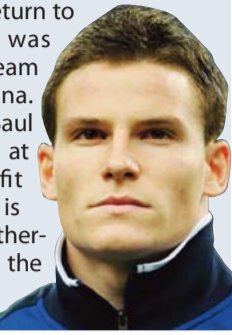


YAN'S MILESTONE MARRED BY CRUCIBLE STRUGGLES

SHEFFIELD: Yan Bingtao became the first player born this century to play in the World Championship, but the Chinese teenager's Crucible debut didn't go as he would have hoped yesterday. Yan, born in February 2000, arrived in Sheffield hailed as one of the brightest young stars in a growing band of Chinese players making an impact on the sport. The 17-year-old showed glimpses of the talent that many expect will bring him a host of trophies over the course of his career, making a fine 109 break in the second frame of his first-round tie against Shaun Murphy. But Yan still ended up trailing 6-3 at the end of the first session as Murphy's extra experience on the big stage proved crucial. Murphy, the 2005 world champion, has twice lost to Yan in three previous meetings but their first Crucible encounter presented a different challenge to the teenager. Although based in Sheffield, Yan had never played at the venue previously while Murphy has abundant experience of the famous theatre. Murphy rattled in 112 and 118 to surge 4-1 ahead, before shaking off the setback of losing the next two frames by taking control come the session's end. They play to a finish in the best-of-19-frame match today. —AFP

ATLETICO'S GAMEIRO FIT FOR LEICESTER RETURN

MADRID: French international Kevin Gameiro boosted Atletico Madrid's chances of reaching a third Champions League semi-final in four years as he was included in Diego Simeone's squad for tomorrow's quarter-final, second leg at Leicester City. Gameiro hasn't featured in Atletico's last five games, including their 1-0 first-leg win over the English champions, due to a groin injury. However, he and reserve goalkeeper Miguel Angel Moya have both been given the all clear to return to action, Atletico confirmed yesterday. Simeone was afforded the luxury of resting a host of his first-team regulars for Saturday's routine 3-0 win over Osasuna. Top scorer Antoine Griezmann, captain Gabi, Koke, Saul Niguez and Stefan Savic are all expected to return at the King Power Stadium. Whether Gameiro is fit enough to start in place of Fernando Torres up front is the only doubt in the Atletico side with Simeone otherwise expected to name the same team that started the first leg. —AFP



KUWAIT TENNIS U-18 JUNIOR TOURNAMENT

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Tennis U18 Junior Tournament concluded in the presence of Kuwait Tennis Federation Deputy Chairman of the Board Abdelsamad Al-Aryan,

Treasurer Faleh Al-Otaibi, Assistant Treasurer Ahmad Al-Qallaf, and Technicla Director Abbas Al-Busairi. The final results were Ahmad Khamees

from Yarmouk Sports Club was in first place, Essa Qabazard in second while Tameem Al-Hallaq from Kuwait Club was third. In the doubles Kuwait's Club Tameem Al-

Hallaq and Hussein Dashti took first place, while Yarmouk's Ahmad Khamees and Essa Qabazard second, and Kuwait's Ali Sadeq and Hussein Ali were in third.

The final results for clubs: Kuwait in first place with 276, followed by Yarmouk with 252, Salmiya in third with 149 and Kheitan in fourth with 16 points.

NSH HOLDS CRICKET TOURNAMENT FOR NSH EMPOWER TROPHY

KUWAIT: Knowing the passion for cricket, NSH top management headed by Sabu decided to host the cricket tournament in Kuwait for the NSH Empower Trophy - 2017. Several teams, irrespective of age and grade registered from different locations, Fahaheel, Mahboulla, Mangaf, Abu Halifa, Wafra, etc.

The surprising performance of captain Vivek led the Fahaheel team to

the driver's seat. Though the Mahbulla Lions gave a tough fight, could not reach the target. Vidaya Sagar's Roaring Lions found chasing away the Jackals that witnessed the growing enthusiasm. The joy had no limits when Surendra, a worker declared the senior managers 'out'. It is our social responsibility that leads NSH in bringing out numerous talents in sports and arts, said veteran Sabu.



Andy Murray

TENNIS

PLENTY ON THE LINE IN MONTE CARLO FOR MURRAY, DJOKOVIC

MONTE CARLO: The top two players in the world, Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic, both have something to prove as the pair return to the tour from injury to play this week's Monte Carlo Masters.

Both have been struggling with elbow injuries, but world number one Murray proved his fitness during a recent exhibition with Roger Federer in the Swiss city of Zurich.

Meanwhile, Djokovic showed good form in Davis Cup action last weekend, leading Serbia into the semi-finals.

"I feel great," the 29-year-old Serb said on Sunday's opening day. "It's nice to be in a place where I spend a lot of time training. It's home here. I spend a lot of time on these courts."

"It's normal for an athlete to go through (injury) ups and downs. I trust myself and the effort I put into my game. I have to believe I'll get the results I'm hoping for," added Djokovic, a two-time former winner of the event.

"All of my thoughts next week will be on this event, I won it in 2013 and 2015. I'm hoping this

is the place to have a new start to the season."

Federer is the in-form man on tour at the moment, but the winner of three titles already this season is skipping the clay-court season curtain-raiser. The prestige event in the Mediterranean principality could be another showpiece for Rafael Nadal, who will kick into gear on his favourite surface as he bids for an unprecedented 10th title at the Country Club overlooking the sea.

The fifth-ranked Spaniard has been pipped at the post so far in 2017 at the important moments, losing finals to revitalised rival Federer at the Australian Open and Miami while missing out on a title in Acapulco at the hands of American journeyman Sam Querrey.

HISTORIC EVENT

"Monte Carlo is unique for me, I'm here to adjust my game and be ready to play," Nadal said. "The season has started well for me. I'm happy with how I'm playing."

"This is an historic event for me, I'm working

to be ready. I'm excited to be here."

Nadal, 30, won his ninth title a year ago after a three-year gap, beating Gael Monfils in the final after dispatching Murray in the semis.

Monfils will be missing as he continues treatment on a knee injury which has bothered him for months. Also missing is the injured Canadian Milos Raonic, Japan's Kei Nishikori and charismatic Australian bad boy Nick Kyrgios, who is delaying the start of his clay campaign after a strenuous Davis Cup effort in Brisbane.

France's Richard Gasquet is still recovering after appendix surgery. Federer has said he will not play on clay until the French Open at Roland Garros in well over a month, taking advantage of his ATP privilege at age 35 to pick and choose his schedule with extra flexibility.

Murray and Djokovic take the top two seedings, with the tournament's top eight receiving byes into the second round.

The third seed is treble grand slam champion Stan Wawrinka of Switzerland, the 2014 winner, with Nadal seeded four. —AFP



MANAMA: Drivers take the start of the Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix at the Sakhir circuit in Manama yesterday. — AFP

MOTOR RACING

VETTEL HOLDS OFF LATE HAMILTON CHARGE TO WIN BAHRAIN GP

SAKHIR: Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel held off a tremendous late charge from Mercedes rival Lewis Hamilton to win the Bahrain Grand Prix yesterday and take the overall lead in the Formula One title race.

Hamilton was catching Vettel on every lap but ultimately ran out of time and finished about seven seconds behind.

Vettel and Hamilton were level with a win each heading into this race, but Vettel's second

victory of the season and 44th of his career puts him in command. Mercedes driver Valtteri Bottas finished third after starting from pole position for the first time in his career. It was his 11th podium. Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen was fourth. Bottas made a clean start but Hamilton was beaten for pace by Vettel, who overtook him heading into the first corner.

Hamilton's hopes were also hit when he was given a five-second time penalty early into the

race for driving too slowly in the pit lane and holding up Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo, who was fifth. Earlier, Stoffel Vandoorne failed to start the Bahrain Grand Prix yesterday, a year on from his Formula One debut at the desert track, as engine woes continued to plague former champions McLaren. McLaren said the Belgian rookie, who had qualified 17th, had been ruled out by a power unit problem similar to those he suffered in Friday practice. McLaren are last in the standings,

without a point from two races and hampered by woeful reliability and a lack of power from their Honda engine.

Double world champion Fernando Alonso, who also had an engine failure in qualifying, started 15th but with little optimism.

Honda's motorsport head Yusuke Hasegawa said on Saturday that the Japanese manufacturer was not sure of the exact cause of the failures.

"It is something around the bearings, it was

sticking. It happened (three) times here, which is very unfortunate," he told reporters.

Alonso, asked about the driveability of the engine, was withering in response: "I don't care too much about the driveability if I can't finish a race or a lap in qualifying now."

Vandoorne finished 10th on his debut in Bahrain last year as a one-off replacement for Alonso, who had been ruled out by a big accident in the opening race in Australia.—Agencies

Baseball results/standings

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

American League Eastern Division				National League Eastern Division					
W	L	PCT	GB	NY Mets	W	PCT	GB		
Baltimore	7	3	.700	-	Miami	6	5	.545	0.5
NY Yankees	7	4	.636	0.5	Washington	6	5	.545	0.5
Boston	6	5	.545	1.5	Atlanta	4	6	.400	2
Tampa Bay	6	6	.500	2	Philadelphia	4	7	.364	2.5
Toronto	2	9	.182	5.5	Central Division				
Central Division				Cincinnati	8	4	.667	-	
Detroit	7	4	.636	-	Chicago Cubs	6	5	.545	1.5
Minnesota	7	4	.636	-	Milwaukee	6	6	.500	2
Chicago White Sox	5	5	.500	1.5	Pittsburgh	5	6	.455	2.5
Cleveland	5	6	.455	2	St. Louis	3	8	.273	4.5
Kansas City	5	6	.455	2	Western Division				
Western Division				Colorado	8	5	.615	-	
Houston	8	4	.667	-	Arizona	7	5	.583	0.5
LA Angels	6	6	.500	2	LA Dodgers	7	5	.583	0.5
Oakland	5	7	.417	3	San Diego	5	7	.417	2.5
Texas	4	7	.364	3.5	San Francisco	5	8	.385	3
Seattle	4	8	.333	4					



LOS ANGELES: Nick Ahmed #13 of the Arizona Diamondbacks hits an RBI single in the fourth inning during the MLB game against the Los Angeles Dodgers at Dodger Stadium on Saturday in Los Angeles, California. All players are wearing #42 in honor of Jackie Robinson Day. — AFP

BASEBALL

VERLANDER GIVES UP 9 RUNS AS TIGERS LOSE TO INDIANS

CLEVELAND: Jose Ramirez was 4 for 4 with a pair of three-run homers for Cleveland, and Detroit Tigers ace Justin Verlander matched a career high by allowing nine runs Saturday in a 13-6 loss to the Indians. Ramirez had a career-high six RBIs with home runs in the first off Verlander (1-1) and in the eighth against Anibal Sanchez. Verlander (1-1) gave up 11 hits in four-plus innings, including home runs by Carlos Santana and Lonnie Chisenhall. Santana had three of Cleveland's 19 hits and four RBIs. Corey Kluber (1-1) struck out eight in 6 1/3 innings, allowing six runs and eight hits.

MARINERS 5, RANGERS 0

James Paxton extended his season-opening scoreless streak to 21 innings and Taylor Motter hit a three-run homer as Seattle beat Texas. Paxton (2-0) threw eight innings of two-hit ball, walking one and striking out nine. He hasn't allowed a run yet in three starts this year, and his scoreless stretch is a team record to open a season. He's the 10th pitcher in the majors ever to start a year with three scoreless starts of at least six innings. Andrew Cashner (0-1) lost in his first start since signing with Texas as a free agent.

TWINS 6, WHITE SOX 0

Ervin Santana (3-0) pitched a one-hitter for the first complete-game victory by a pitcher in MLB this season, stopping Chicago's three-game winning streak. Santana's (3-0) struck out eight, walked one and retired his final 18 batters. Chicago had just two runners: Omar Narvaez singled with one out in the third and Avisail Garcia walked leading off the fourth. Jose Quintana (0-3) gave up hits to six of his first seven batters in a 39-pitch first inning, including Max Kepler's two-run triple.

ROCKIES 5, GIANTS 0

Tyler Chatwood (1-2) pitched 5 2/3 perfect innings before Chris Marrero's single and finished with a two-hitter for his first MLB shutout in Colorado's win over San Francisco. Nolan Arenado had three hits, including a home run off Matt Moore (1-2), who allowed five runs, 10 hits and three walks in 5 2/3 innings.

DOGERS 8, DIAMONDBACKS 4

Yasiel Puig hit a three-run homer in the eighth inning and Los Angeles overcame a sloppy defensive game to beat Arizona. Alex Wood (1-0) pitched 3 1/3 scoreless innings of relief to earn the win and Kenley Jansen got the last four outs for his third save. Diamondbacks starter Patrick Corbin (1-

2) struggled in his six innings, giving up five runs - three earned - and nine hits with three walks.

YANKEES 3, CARDINALS 2

St. Louis ace Carlos Martinez (0-2) put on a historically uneven performance, walking a career-high eight while striking out 11 in 5 1/3 innings in the Cardinals' loss to New York. Martinez was the first pitcher since Randy Johnson in 1993 with at least eight walks and 11 strikeouts in a game. The Yankees won their sixth straight despite tying a team record by fanning 17 times. They got plenty of help from sloppy St. Louis, which at 3-8 is off to its worst start in 20 years and has the poorest record in the National League. CC Sabathia (2-0) took a shutout into the eighth.

BLUE JAYS 2, ORIOLES 1

Kendrys Morales homered off Tyler Wilson (1-1) leading off the bottom of the ninth, and Toronto (2-9) stopped a seven-game losing streak. Roberto Osuna (1-0) had allowed Jonathan Schoop's sacrifice fly in the top half.

REDS 7, BREWERS 5

Jesse Winker doubled home the go-ahead run in the sixth off Carlos Torres (0-1) with his first MLB hit, and Cincinnati overcame two more homers by Eric Thames and stopped Milwaukee's four-game winning streak. Reds left-hander Brandon Finnegan came out of the game after the first inning because of a strained muscle in the back of his left side. The Reds already have three starters on the disabled list. Raisel Iglesias (1-0) allowed one run in two innings as manager Bryan Price used five relievers after Finnegan's early departure. Michael Lorenzen walked a batter in the ninth while getting his first career save.

PIRATES 8, CUBS 7

Andrew McCutchen hit a go-ahead, three-run homer of Pedro Strop (0-1) in a five-run seventh as Pittsburgh topped Chicago. Pittsburgh has won two straight against the Cubs after going 4-14 against Chicago last season, including 1-8 at Wrigley Field. Francisco Cervelli and Starling Marte also homered for Pittsburgh. Chicago led 6-2 before Marte's solo drive in the sixth inning off starter Jake Arrieta. Trevor Williams (1-0) pitched a one-hit seventh.

RED SOX 2, RAYS 1

Chris Sale (1-1) struck out 12 over seven innings for his first victory with Boston, allowing one run and three hits. Sandy Leon's broken-bat, bases-

loaded ground out pushed across the tiebreaking run in the seventh. The Red Sox loaded the bases on two singles and a walk against Tommy Hunter (0-1). Mitch Moreland homered for Boston.

ASTROS 10, ATHLETICS 6

George Springer hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer in the eighth as Houston rallied from a 5-0 deficit. Sean Manaea and Ryan Dull combined to pitch six hitless innings for Oakland. Carlos Correa left after being hit by a pitch on his right hand in the ninth, and Astros said an X-ray was negative. Will Harris (1-0) struck out two in a scoreless seventh, and Santiago Casilla (0-1) was the loser.

PHILLIES 4, NATIONALS 2

Cesar Hernandez hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer off Joe Blanton (0-2) in the eighth to lead Philadelphia past Washington. Jeremy Hellickson (2-0) allowed two runs and four hits in seven innings. Hector Neris pitched a perfect eighth, and Joaquin Benoit a 1-2-3 ninth for his first save since signing with the Phillies as a free agent during the offseason.

MARLINS 5, METS 4

Christian Yelich and Giancarlo Stanton hit back-to-back homers against Fernando Salas (0-1) to cap a three-run eighth as Miami rallied from a 4-2 deficit. Justin Bour and Marcell Ozuna hit consecutive homers for Miami in the second off Jacob deGrom, who tied a career high with 13 strikeouts in seven innings. Asdrubal Cabrera hit a solo homer in the eighth against Junichi Tazawa (1-0) to put the Mets ahead 4-2. A.J. Ramos pitched a perfect ninth for his second save.

BRAVES 4, PADRES 2

R.A. Dickey got a victory in his first appearance in Atlanta's SunTrust Park, giving up seven hits and striking out six against San Diego. Atlanta has won three straight following a five-game losing streak, including the first two games at its new ballpark. Dickey (1-1) allowed consecutive home runs in the second to Hunter Renfroe and Austin Hedges. The 42-year-old knuckleballer was pitching in his third Atlanta ballpark.

ROYALS 3, ANGELS 2

Mike Moustakas' fifth home run this season, a drive off off Jose Alvarez (0-1), broke an eighth-inning tie. Ben Revere had knotted the score in the seventh with a two-out RBI single against Joakim Soria (1-0). Kelvin Herrera pitched a perfect ninth for his second save. —AP

TAIWAN'S TAI BEATS MARIN TO WIN SINGAPORE OPEN

SINGAPORE: Tai Tzu Ying cemented her status as the world's top female shuttler as she beat reigning Olympic champion and world number two Carolina Marin in straight games at the Singapore Open yesterday. World number one Tai took just 38 minutes to seal a clinical 21-15, 21-15 victory at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.

It was Tai's fifth consecutive Super Series title and her second victory over Marin in less than two weeks, having already tri-

dictated the pace and saw out the game comfortably.

Tai said she was pleased with her performance but unfazed by her Super Series streak. "I know I wouldn't be able to beat Marin easily, so I was very patient when playing with her. I felt that I played quite well today," she told reporters.

"I think everyone around me is more concerned about these five titles. But for me, I just want to play well in every tournament." It was Tai's first title in the city-state and she did not drop a game all tournament. In the men's singles title, India's B. Sai Praneeth beat compatriot Srikanth Kidambi 17-21, 21-17, 21-12 for the first Super Series title of his career.

Praneeth, the world number 30, said he was pegged back by a slow start but refused to give up. "When I got my strokes going good and I got some rhythm, I thought 'OK, the game is still on.'"

"This is the best feeling: I had been waiting for a long, long time," he added. In the opening mixed doubles match, China's Lu Kai and Huang Yaqiong beat Thailand's Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai 19-21, 21-16, 21-11. There was double joy for Denmark as they claimed both the men's and women's doubles. Christinna Pedersen and Kamilla Rytter Juhl beat Misaki Matsutomo and Ayaka Takahashi of Japan 21-18, 14-21, 21-15, while Mathias Boe and Carsten Mogensen beat Li Junhui and Liu Yuchen of China 21-13, 21-14.

The tournament saw its fair share of upsets early on, with defending men's and women's singles champions Sony Dwi Kuncoro of Indonesia and Ratchanok Intanon of Thailand dumped out on Wednesday.

Kuncoro succumbed to South Korea's Lee Dong-Keun while world number eight Ratchanok was beaten by Japan's Sayaka Sato. Olympic bronze medallist Viktor Axelsen of Denmark was shown the door on the same day, falling in three sets to Hong Kong's Vincent Wong. — AFP



SINGAPORE: Sai Praneeth of India poses after beating compatriot Srikanth Kidambi to win the men's singles final of the Singapore Open badminton tournament in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

umphed at the Malaysian Open final.

The usually unflappable Marin had no answers to Tai's excellent defensive work and quick smashes as the diminutive 22-year-old edged ahead at 13-10 and eventually took the first game.

The Spaniard still failed to find her rhythm in the second, as a composed Tai



SINGAPORE: Winner Tai Tzu-Ying of Taiwan (R) poses on the podium with second-placed Carolina Marin of Spain after their women's singles final of the Singapore Open badminton tournament in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

GOLF

CRISTIE KERR WINS LPGA LOTTE IN HAWAII FOR 19TH TOUR TITLE

KAPOLEI: Cristie Kerr won the LPGA Lotte Championship on Saturday for her 19th tour title, closing with a 6-under 66 for a three-stroke victory.

The 39-year-old Kerr broke the tournament record at 20-under 268, a day after shooting 62 at Ko Olina to match the event mark. She earned \$300,000 to top \$18 million in her career. Kerr hadn't won in 30 starts since the season-ending CME Group Tour Championship in 2015. She was a pedestrian 4 under halfway through Lotte, then made a made a big move. She birdied seven of the last eight holes Friday, soaring into contention with the 62 and growing comfortable walking in her birdie putts before they

fell in the hole. "People think that I do it intentionally," she said. "It never happens when I try to do it intentionally. It's just that once I know it's in, I walk after it."

Kerr called it "epic" and began to count the ways. She had complications with knee surgery in November, keeping her from hitting a shot for eight weeks, and from playing the first tournament of the year. "It feels so good to have overcome so many things to be sitting here," Kerr said. "I played great the last couple weeks coming into here, and I just have a different perspective on life now. I felt it on the golf course today. I was able to keep going forward because I didn't put that extra pressure on myself."

The American overcame sponsor invite Su-Yeon Jang, the South Korean player who led after the second and third rounds and was five ahead of Kerr after three holes Saturday.

Jang had a 70 to drop into a tie for second with top-ranked Lydia Ko (64) and In Gee Chun (67). Jang's first bogey of the week came at No. 6 and she suffered double-bogey two holes later, falling into a tie for first with Kerr.

Canadian Alena Sharp, looking for her first LPGA Tour win in her 241st start, bogeyed the final hole for a 70 to finish alone in fifth at 16 under, a shot ahead of second-ranked So Yeon Ryu (67). Third-ranked Ariya Jutanugarn (69) and Stacy

Lewis (6) were 14 under.

Ko was too far back to really challenge Kerr. "Going into the day eight shots behind there is a huge difference between eight shots and five shots," Ko said. "I knew that it would take the round of my life versus a mediocre round by everybody else. With how the girls are playing, it's just really hard to mend the gap. Considering where I was after the first day (73), I'm pleased with where I finished." Kerr, who was a rookie the year Ko was born, has Top 10s in her last three starts. "I can't remember in 2 1/2 days that I had made so many birdies in my life," she said. "That (first) day and a half that I had struggled a little with my

swing feel it was an unbelievable run."

She has four Top 10s at Lotte, and is the second American to win in the tournament's six years here, after Hawaii's Michelle Wie. Kerr also is the second American to win on the LPGA Tour this year. "Experience is huge," Kerr said. "Very few players are lucky enough like I am to have a career as long as I've had and be competitive as long as I've been competitive. Having that experience and being competitive, it's an advantage."

"I felt like I didn't have it on the first four or five holes, I didn't worry, I didn't rush, and soon as I made my first birdie it was kind of like off to the races. So experience definitely helps." — AP

NHL

MAPLE LEAFS BEAT CAPITALS FOR FIRST PLAYOFF WIN SINCE 2013

WASHINGTON: Kasperian Kapanen scored his second goal of the game 11:53 into the second overtime and Frederik Andersen made 47 saves as the Toronto Maple Leafs beat the Washington Capitals 4-3 Saturday in Game 2 to even the first-round NHL playoff series.

Kapanen also scored in regulation for Toronto along with James van Riemsdyk and Morgan Rielly, and Andersen made several big stops to keep the Maple Leafs alive. Alex Ovechkin, John Carlson and Nicklas Backstrom scored for the top-seeded Capitals, who are now feeling the heat going into Game 3 Monday in Toronto. Braden Holtby made 48 saves before being beaten on the overtime winner.

Not unraveling in a tough atmosphere, the young Maple Leafs showed they belonged on the same ice with the Capitals after losing Game 1 in OT. Brian Boyle made a slick backhanded pass to Kapanen, who put the puck into a wide-open net to give Toronto its first playoff victory since 2013.

SENATORS 4, BRUINS 3, OT

Dion Phaneuf scored at 1:59 of overtime and Ottawa rallied for a victory over Boston. The Senators rallied from a 3-1 deficit with a two-goal third period to force overtime. The Eastern Conference series is tied 1-1 and Game 3 is Monday night in Boston. Clarke MacArthur, Chris Wideman and Derick Brassard also scored for the Senators and Craig Anderson made 26 saves. Drew Stafford, Tim Schaller and Patrice Bergeron scored for the Bruins. Tuukka Rask stopped 25 shots.

The Senators started the overtime with the man advantage as the Bruins took a delay of game penalty with 12.5 seconds remaining in regulation. Trailing 3-1 to start the third, the Senators scored twice in a

span of 2:20 to tie the game.

PREDATORS 5, BLACKHAWKS 0

Pekka Rinne made 30 saves in his second straight shutout and picked up two assists, helping Nashville pound Chicago for a 2-0 lead in the first-round playoff series. Ryan Johansen had a goal and two assists as Nashville added a dominant performance to its taut 1-0 victory in Game 1 on Thursday.

Chicago coach Joel Quenneville shuffled his lineup, inserting rookie Vinnie Hinostroza and Dennis Rasmussen and benching veteran Jordin Tootoo and John Hayden. But it was more of the same for the Blackhawks, who once again looked out of sync against the Predators' active defense. Ryan Ellis, Harry Zolnierczyk, Colton Sissons and Kevin Fiala each scored their first career playoff goal. Game 3 is Monday night in Nashville.

DUCKS 3, FLAMES 2

Ryan Getzlaf scored the tiebreaking power-play goal with 4:46 to play on a bizarre deflection off Lance Bouma's skate, and Anaheim took a 2-0 lead in their first-round playoff series.

Getzlaf's attempted pass across the high slot banked off Bouma's foot and somehow arched through the air and past Calgary's Brian Elliott for the Anaheim captain's second goal of the series. Jakob Silfverberg and Rickard Rakell scored first-period goals and John Gibson made 35 saves in the Ducks' 29th consecutive victory over the Flames at Honda Center since April 25, 2006, extending the longest such streak in NHL history. Mikael Backlund scored a short-handed goal and Sean Monahan had a power-play goal for the Flames. Game 3 is Monday in Calgary. — AP



HONG KONG: Britain's Elinor Barker celebrates winning gold in the Women's Points Race Final on the fifth day of the 2017 Track Cycling World Championships in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

CYCLING

GOLDEN BARKER HAILS EMBATTLED BRITISH TEAM

HONG KONG: Elinor Barker praised the support she had received from her embattled British team after she won a morale-boosting gold medal at the Track Cycling World Championships yesterday.

Barker's victory in the points race was among the highlights on the final day as France celebrated two wins and Australia finished top of the medals table. Britain's second gold in Hong Kong came as they await an independent review into allegations of sexism and bullying levelled at team leadership last year.

But Barker, an Olympic gold-medallist and two-time world champion in the team pursuit, said she couldn't have had better support in her successful bid for a maiden individual rainbow jersey. "I've been unbelievably supported in order to try to win this," she said at the Hong Kong Velodrome, after securing a thrilling win over American great Sarah Hammer.

"After the Olympics I had a meeting with about four of the coaches and staff members and said 'I have a new goal, I want to win the points race at the worlds'."

"Instantly they were like 'Yeah, we think you

can do it'. They gave me the space and the focus I needed."

A leaked draft of the review reportedly described a "culture of fear and bullying" at British Cycling but Barker, 22, said many people had a false perception of the team. "I've been going on Twitter and been going 'Oh, really? Is that the case?'"

Because I think if I didn't have Twitter I wouldn't know about it," she said. Barker looked like she would have to settle for her third silver medal in Hong Kong before she pipped Hammer, an eight-time world champion, with a strong finish. The Briton crucially picked up 20 points for gaining a lap with just four of the 100 laps to go, winning the first individual world title of her career.

'TODAY WAS SO INCREDIBLE'

France also enjoyed a late rally as they won their second and third gold medals through Francois Pervis in the time trial, and Morgan Kneisky and Benjamin Thomas in the madison.

Pervis won the 1km time trial by 0.334sec from compatriot Quentin Lafargue and Czech

riders Tomas Babek, who shared silver after a rare dead heat. Thomas, who brilliantly won the four-event omnium on the last lap of the last race on Saturday, also crossed the line on the 200-lap madison to clinch his second gold in two days.

"It's not easy to stand on my legs," an exhausted Kneisky said, adding: "Everyone was motivated to give everything at the end of the week. Today was so incredible for us - now we'll be focused for the future."

But the championships didn't end happily for Hong Kong's former Olympic bronze-medallist Sarah Lee, who bombed out of the women's keirin in spectacular style. Lee finished fifth in her second-round heat but not before, in her haste to place among the leaders, she appeared to send South Korea's Lee Hye-Jin crashing on the last lap. German great Kristina Vogel eventually took gold in the keirin, picking up her ninth world title and her second in Hong Kong after the women's sprint. Australia were the most successful country, winning three gold medals alongside Russia and France but collecting five silvers and three bronzes for 11 podium places overall. — AFP



WASHINGTON: T.J. Oshie #77 of the Washington Capitals and Jake Gardiner #51 and Martin Marincin #52 of the Toronto Maple Leafs go after the puck in overtime of Game Two of the Eastern Conference First Round during the 2017 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Verizon Center on Saturday in Washington, DC. — AFP

RUGBY

CANADA WINS SINGAPORE SEVENS ALL-AMERICAN FINAL

SINGAPORE: Canada beat the United States 26-19 to win their maiden World Series Sevens title yesterday and cap a day of extraordinary upsets that culminated in the first ever all-American final. The Canadians regained their composure after squandering a 19-0 lead as their North American neighbours levelled the final at 19-19 to score the winning try through Lucas Hammond less than two minutes from the end, denying the US their second tournament success after winning at London in 2015. "We made a couple of mistakes but the character of the team came through," Canadian coach Damian McGrath told AFP.

"This is huge for Canadian rugby. We've lost \$1 million in funding, our 15s results have been poor, so this just gives us a shot in the arm. It's a big deal for us." For the US, it was a bitter-sweet moment. The Eagles made the final after losing in the semis at each of the last three World Series tournaments but coach Mike Friday told AFP the Americans lost the final because they gave Canada too big a start. "The long and short of it is this, you can't gift anyone 19 points and expect to win a cup final," Friday said. "They were always going to get another chance and even though we got back to 19-all, the game was really lost by us in that first five minutes." Canada had never won a World Series title before and earned their way into the final the hard way, beating traditional powerhouses New Zealand 26-14 in the quarter-finals then England 17-5 in the semis. The US also upset

rugby's established giants by beating Olympic champions Fiji 24-19 in the quarter-finals then Australia 40-7 in the semis but their slow start cost them dearly. Canada scored three tries inside the first five minutes through Matt Mullins, Harry Jones and Mike Fuailefau but a lapse in concentration let the US back in.

Perry Baker, the leading try scorer for the series, scored a brilliant solo try to ignite the US comeback and then Stephen Tomasini dived over in the corner to cut the margin to 19-12 at halftime.

"We had more chances but we needed to execute and we just didn't do it." Baker scored again shortly after the re-start to tie the scores as the US seized the momentum but Canada re-settled and got the winner through Hammond to seal the victory.

"It's awesome," Hammond told AFP. "It's pretty emotional for all of us because it's been a long time coming. It shows how far the sport has come, not just in Canada but also the States and it's only going to get better from here." South Africa extended their lead in the championship standings to 25 points with two rounds to go despite finishing sixth, the first time this season they have not made the final. "We were very fortunate to extend our lead," South Africa coach Neil Powell told AFP. "If you had said to me coming into Singapore that we'd extend our lead by another two points we'd have gladly taken it but we're not happy with our performances. We made a lot of mistakes and we were our worst enemies." — AFP



HONG KONG: Gold medalists Benjamin Thomas (3rd L) and Morgan Kneisky (3rd R) of France pose with silver medalists Cameron Meyer (L) and Callum Scotson (2nd L) of Australia and bronze medalists Kenny De Ketele (2nd R) and Moreno de Pauw of Belgium on the podium after the men's madison final at the Hong Kong Velodrome during the Track Cycling World Championships in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

CHAMPION THOMPSON ENJOYS FAST START TO SEASON

KINGSTON: Double Olympic sprint champion Elaine Thompson cruised to a wind-assisted 10.75 seconds to win the 100 metres at Jamaica's UTECH Classic on Saturday.

Thompson, who became the first Caribbean woman to win the Olympic 100m and 200m double in Rio last

summer, comfortably pulled away to cross the line ahead of Jura Levy (11.19) and Olympic finalist Christiana Williams (11.30). Thompson said she was surprised to run the time so early in the season. "Actually when I heard the time announced I was shocked but as I say, each time I race I always

surprise myself," she told Reuters.

"Honestly there was no plan coming in, I just wanted to work on the first 30 metres of my race because that is kind of my weak area. So I just wanted to execute." In the men's 100m, 2011 world champion Yohan Blake stumbled from the starting block and

Britain's Zhanel Hughes took full advantage, coming home in a wind-aided personal best 10.08. Olympic and world championship 400m bronze medallist Shericka Jackson clocked a personal best of 22.57 to win the 200, the second fastest time in the world behind the 22.29 run by Dafne

Schippers. Williams shaved 27 hundredths of a second off her previous best. Miguel Francis, who has switched allegiance to Britain from Antigua, won the men's race in 20.44 ahead of Jamaica's Commonwealth Games champion Rasheed Dwyer (20.45). — Reuters

SOCCER

BROWN OFF AS CELTIC HELD IN CONTROVERSIAL FINISH

GLASGOW: Celtic captain Scott Brown picked up a costly late red card when tempers flared as the Scottish champions were held to a 2-2 draw at Ross County yesterday. Goals from Kieran Tierney and substitute Patrick Roberts, either side of a Michael Gardyne effort for the hosts, had Celtic on course for all three points in Dingwall. But Liam Boyce scored a controversial last-minute penalty to make it 2-2 before Brown saw red for a lunge on the Northern Irishman in stoppage time. The sending-off rules Brown out of next week's Scottish Cup semi-final with fierce rivals Rangers as the Hoops chase down a domestic treble. "It's a very disappointing end to a game we dominated throughout," fumed Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers.

"We had good control and then the points are taken from us by a horrendous decision. I've seen some bad decisions up here but that's one of the worst." Despite being denied the victory, the result maintains Celtic's unbeaten record in domestic competition this season, while County are eighth, three points clear of the relegation play-off place with five games left. "It's not a penalty and I can fully understand Celtic's anger and disappointment," admitted County boss Jim McIntyre. "I thought we were better in the second half and we've picked up a great point."

The breakthrough in Dingwall came from an unlikely source in the 34th minute. Australian international Tom Rogic squared the ball across the edge of the box for Tierney who took a touch before rifling a low shot into the bottom corner.

County had hardly been in the game but a stunning header from Gardyne, once of Celtic, had them on level terms five minutes after the break. Ryan Dow delivered a fantastic ball from the left and Gardyne got in between two Celtic defenders to meet it near the penalty spot and bullet a header over Craig Gordon and into the net off the underside of the bar. However, a moment of magic from substitute Roberts saw the Hoops regain the lead in the 78th minute.

The on-loan Manchester City winger played the ball through the legs of Kenny van der Weg to cut into the box, then sent a low shot through the legs of Marcus Fraser and under Scott Fox to beat the goalkeeper at his near post. But there was controversy when Dutchman Alex Schalk threw himself to the floor in the box, with no contact from the nearby Erik Sviatchenko, and referee Don Robertson pointed to the spot.

Boyce sent Gordon the wrong way from the spot and Brown then let his anger at the decision get the better of him as he chopped down Boyce to earn himself a sending-off. — AFP

ATHLETICS

ETHIOPIA'S HAYLE TARGETS BOSTON MARATHON REPEAT

NEW YORK: Ethiopia's Lemi Berhanu Hayle and Atsede Baysa face daunting challenges today as they seek repeat titles in the Boston Marathon.

Hayle, defending the men's crown he won last year in a time of 2hr 12min 45sec, will have to contend with eight other men who hold lifetime bests under 2:07.

That includes the Kenyan duo of Emmanuel Mutai, who owns a personal best of 2:03:13, and Sammy Kitwara.

The Kenyan challenge also includes three-time Amsterdam champion Wilson Chebet, 2012 Boston winner Wesley Korir, and Geoffrey Kirui, who was third in Rotterdam last year. Three fellow Ethiopians will also challenge Hayle as he bids to become the first men's repeat winner since 2008, when Robert Kipkoech Cheruiyot of Kenya completed a treble.

Yemane Tsegay was third in Boston last year behind Hayle and compatriot Lelisa Desisa, who is absent this time around.

Dino Sefir won last year in Barcelona and Ottawa and Sisay Lemma has the 2015 Frankfurt title on his resume.

The United States have high hopes of a home runner on the podium with a strong contingent led by Galen Rupp and featuring 2014 Boston champion Meb Keflezighi

and Abdi Abdirahman.

Rupp earned Olympic bronze in Rio last year in just his second career marathon.

Baysa, who won last year in 2:29:19, will face a field that includes three women who have run under 2:20 in Gladys Cherono, Edna Kiplagat and fellow Ethiopian Buzunesh Deba, who set the Boston course record when she won in 2014. Baysa won in dramatic fashion 12 months ago, coming from behind to overtake the leaders in the final five kilometers. Two of those she passed will start on Monday: Valentine Kipeter, who finished fifth last year, and Joyce Chepkirui, who finished third.

Caroline Rotich, the 2015 Boston winner, is also in the field, while home hopes rest with Desiree Linden, who finished seventh in the Rio Olympic marathon last year.

The race will be the fourth Boston Marathon contested since two pressure-cooker bombs planted near the finish line of the race killed three people and injured 264 others in 2013.

Two brothers of Chechen descent, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were tracked down by authorities. Tamerlan was killed trying to escape capture while Dzhokhar was apprehended and convicted of the attack. —AFP



DAKAR: (From L) Second placed Naomi Tui, third placed Kenyan Jacqueline Nyetpei and first placed Kenyan Zeddy Limo compete during the Dakar Marathon, yesterday, in Dakar. — AFP

BASTIA FANS ATTACK PLAYERS

BASTIA: Dozens of Bastia fans invaded the pitch at their Armand Cesari stadium and attacked Lyon players as they warmed up for a French Ligue 1 game yesterday. Lyon players fled to the dressing rooms and the 1500 GMT kick-off between the two sides was consequently delayed by more than 50 minutes. Lyon's players were finishing their pre-game warm-up when about 50 Bastia fans targeted them, an AFP reporter at the scene said. Stewards and Lyon security staff rushed onto the pitch to intervene and for

a few minutes there was chaos and scuffles until the playing surface was cleared. Visiting Lyon initially refused to leave the changing rooms again, but eventually did so to warm up for a second time and the game kicked off soon after with stewards lined up on the edge of the pitch. Bastia were bottom of Ligue 1 going into Sunday's match against a Lyon side who are in the European places. It is the second time in a week that Lyon have been caught up in football violence.



CLEVELAND: Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James (23) drives around Indiana Pacers' Thaddeus Young (21) in the second half in Game 1 of a first-round NBA basketball playoff series, Saturday, in Cleveland. The Cavaliers won 109-108. — AP

BASKETBALL

CAVS ESCAPE PACERS, SPURS PUT BOOT TO GRIZZLIES IN OPENERS

LOS ANGELES: The NBA champion Cleveland Cavaliers escaped with a 109-108 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Saturday in the opening game of the 2017 playoffs. Indiana's C.J. Miles missed a wide-open jump shot at the buzzer after the Cavaliers, as they often did in the waning stages of the regular-season, let the game get complicated toward the end. "It doesn't matter how you get a win in the playoffs. We're one-up," said Cavs superstar LeBron James, who led all scorers with 32 points and also handed out 13 assists and pulled down six rebounds.

Elsewhere on Saturday, Kawhi Leonard equalled his career playoff high with 32 points as the San Antonio Spurs seized control in the third quarter en route to a 111-82 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies in game one of their first-round Western Conference series. James has now won 18 playoff openers, but he and the Cavs cut it close in this one. James missed a three-pointer with 20 seconds left and the Pacers had the ball coming out of a timeout.

Miles got loose, but his effort bounced off the rim. Pacers star Paul George finished with 29 points. His three-pointer with four seconds left had cut the Cavs' lead to one point, setting the stage for Miles's attempt at a game-winner. George complained after the game that he should have been the one to attempt the game winner. "Situations like that, I gotta get the last shot," George said. Kyrie Irving scored 23 points and Kevin Love added 17, 15 of them in the first half for Cleveland, who led by 12 points late in the third quarter and were up by 10 with 9:04 remaining before the Pacers rallied. Jeff Teague's three-pointer with 3:31 to play put the Pacers up by two after six straight empty possessions for the Cavs. But James immediately responded with a driving dunk and the Pacers wouldn't get ahead again. In San Antonio, the Spurs led 74-64 with just under two minutes to play in the third quarter but closed the quarter on a 10-0 run. The Spurs added the first nine points of the fourth quarter to compile 93-64 lead. Leonard seized control in the third quarter, pumping in 15 points—the same amount as the entire Memphis team—before sitting out the fourth with the game already in hand.

The Spurs are making their 20th straight post-season appearance, tied for third all-time. Game two of the best-of-seven series is Monday in San Antonio.

In Toronto, Giannis Antetokounmpo tallied 28 points and eight rebounds as the Milwaukee Bucks manhandled the Toronto Raptors 97-83 to open their Eastern Conference series.

Malcolm Brogdon delivered 16 points for the Bucks, Greg Monroe finished with 14 points and 15 rebounds, Tony Snell and Matthew Dellavedova added 11 points each for the Bucks.

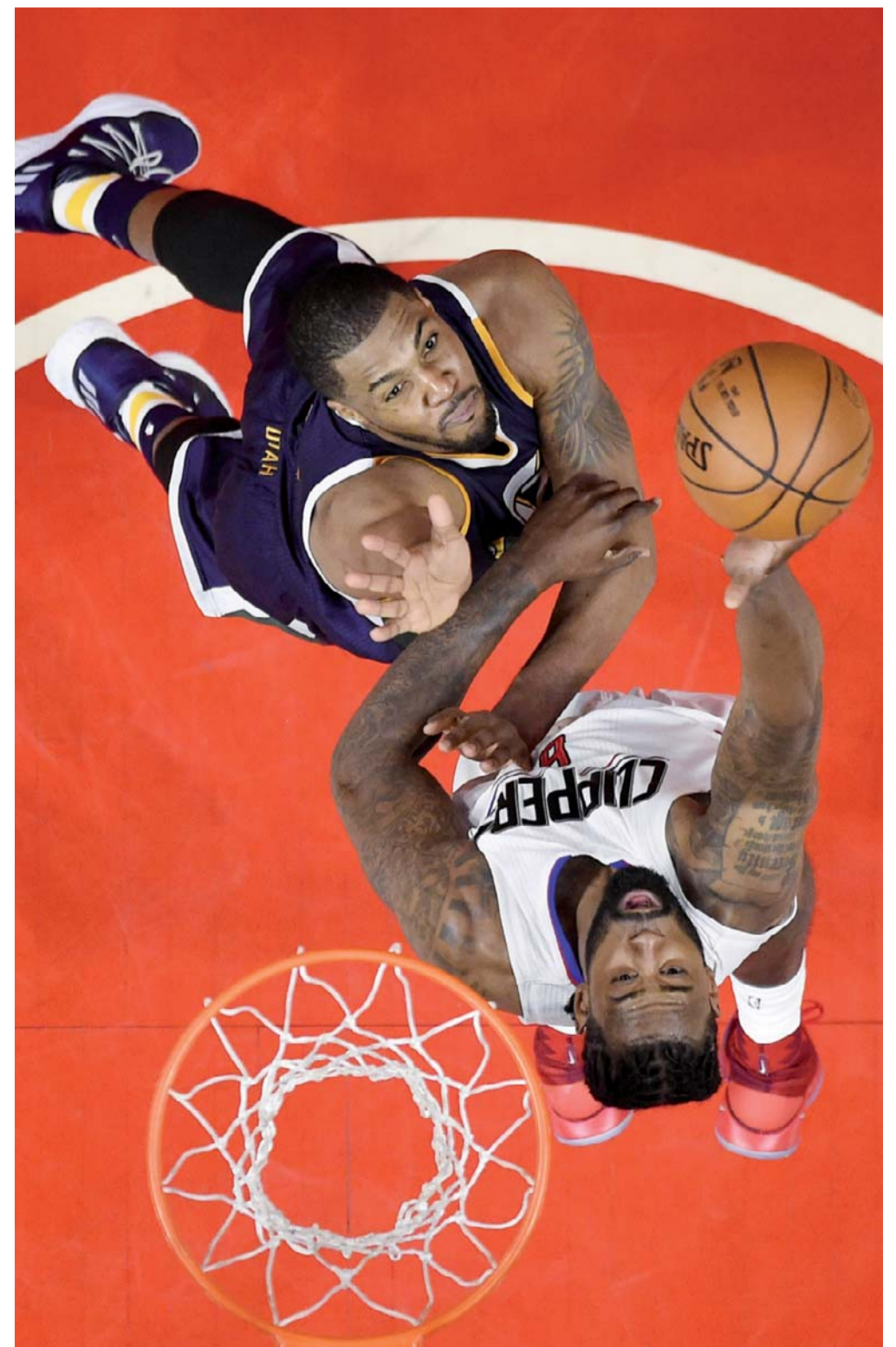
DeMar DeRozan led the Raptors with 27 points and grabbed nine rebounds, Serge Ibaka added 19 points and 14 rebounds, and Jonas Valanciunas had nine points and nine rebounds.

The Raptors' first-game woes continued as they fell to 0-9 in openers of first round playoff series. They are a dismal 1-10 overall in game ones.

JOHNSON STRIKES FINAL BLOW

In Los Angeles, Joe Johnson hit the clutch winner as time expired, lifting the Utah Jazz to a 97-95 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers

at Staples Center. Jazz star centre Rudy Gobert went down clutching his left knee less than 20 seconds into the contest after bumping knees with Clippers forward Luc Mbah a Moute. Gobert, who had to be helped off the court and carried into the locker room, is expected to undergo a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan Saturday night to determine the severity of the injury. —AFP



LOS ANGELES: Los Angeles Clippers center DeAndre Jordan, below, shoots as Utah Jazz forward Derrick Favors defends during the second half in Game 1 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series, Saturday, in Los Angeles. The Jazz won 97-95. — AP

PREVIEW

WENGER CONFIDENT ARSENAL READY FOR BORO BATTLE

LONDON: Arsene Wenger has insisted his Arsenal players have the character to halt a run of four successive away defeats when they visit Middlesbrough as they look to revive their bid to finish in the Premier League's top four.

Wenger's team could be at 10 points off a place among the leading quartet by the time they kick-off at strugglers Middlesbrough today. But whatever the outcome of that match, Arsenal know they need a dramatic improvement if they are to qualify for the Champions League for a 21st successive season.

The dismal 3-0 defeat at Crystal Palace last time out highlighted how far the team has fallen since the period before Christmas when they were viewed as genuine challengers for the

Premier League title. Theo Walcott's admission after that loss at Selhurst Park that Palace "wanted it more" reflected badly on a group of players who have lost their way and strengthened the belief of all those who believe veteran French manager Wenger should leave Arsenal when his contract expires at the end of the season.

Jack Wilshere, the Arsenal midfielder currently on a season-long loan to Bournemouth, offered his view that the players must take their share of responsibility for the club's current problems.

"Sometimes a manager can only do so much, as in prepare a team and then the team have to go out there and perform," Wilshere told Sky Sports. But despite the recent setbacks, Wenger has backed his players to turn the situation

around. "When things don't go your way you are tested on the mental front more than on technical quality," he said. "Our test at the moment is there-can we be united and not divided?"

"Top level sport is about character. I can find you hundreds of players with technical ability at the same level as our players, 'What makes the results is the character. These players are at this level because they have the character."

ARSENAL BANK

The manager has remained tight-lipped about his future although he did comment on speculation Alexis Sanchez could be offered a new £300,000 (\$375,630; 353,958 euros) per week contract to remain at Arsenal by insisting the Chile forward would not be

allowed to hold the north London club to ransom. "Some people tell me 'just give him what he wants', but then you cannot respect anymore any wage structure and you put the club in trouble as well," said the Arsenal manager.

Meanwhile Steve Agnew said second-bottom Middlesbrough could yet avoid relegation, despite not having won in the Premier League for four months, a run spanning 14 games.

The top flight's lowest scorers with 22 goals still have to face Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester City in the remaining six games after hosting the Gunners, and the caretaker manager said: "We're still confident we can stay up, we will keep believing we can get out of the bottom three." Arsenal loan defender Calum Chambers is ineligible

against his parent club, but midfielder Gaston Ramirez is available after an ankle problem, and full-back George Friend is set to make his first appearance for six weeks after recovering from an calf injury.

Boro have taken six points from the last 42 to put them in grave danger of an immediate return to the Championship, but Agnew feels his side can earn a much needed victory, with Arsenal conceding three goals in each of their last four consecutive away league defeats. He added: "It's massive to have George back, he brings great energy and ability to the side. He's a solid performer and an infectious character around the dressing room who we have certainly missed so his return helps us go into the game in positive mood." — AFP

Spanish La Liga Table

Spanish La Liga table after yesterday's early matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Real Madrid	31	23	6	2	82	33	75	Valencia	32	11	7	14	47	54	40
Barcelona	32	22	6	4	91	30	72	Alaves	31	10	10	11	29	38	40
Atletico Madrid	32	19	8	5	59	24	65	Las Palmas	32	10	8	14	51	57	38
Sevilla	32	18	8	6	56	39	62	Malaga	32	8	9	15	36	49	33
Villarreal	31	15	9	7	45	24	54	Real Betis	31	8	7	16	33	51	31
Athletic Bilbao	32	16	5	11	45	37	53	Deportivo La Coruna	32	7	10	15	35	50	31
Real Sociedad	32	16	4	12	48	45	52	Leganes	32	6	9	17	26	49	27
Eibar	31	14	8	9	52	42	50	Sporting Gijon	32	5	7	20	34	64	22
Espanyol	32	13	10	9	44	42	49	Granada	31	4	8	19	27	65	20
Celta Vigo	30	12	5	13	45	51	41	Osasuna	32	3	8	21	32	73	17

MESSI KEEPS BARCA ALIVE AHEAD OF EL CLASICO

MADRID: Lionel Messi kept Barcelona's title hopes alive with two goals and an assist to see off Real Sociedad 3-2 as Spain's top two edged five-goal thrillers ahead of next weekend's El Clasico. Earlier on Saturday, Isco struck at the death to keep Real Madrid three points clear and with a game in hand at the top of the table after twice coming from behind to beat Sporting Gijon 3-2.

Barcelona will need Messi on this form if they are to produce another miracle Champions League fightback against Juventus on Wednesday from a 3-0 first leg defeat suffered in midweek.

"I am more than happy with the performance of the players and their ability to manage the frustration after what we experienced in the Champions League this week," Barca boss Luis Enrique told Spanish TV station Movistar. The Argentine is now just two off his 500th Barca goal as he smashed home an effort from 25 yards to open the scoring.

Messi then took his tally to 45 goals in 44 games this season with a far less spectacular finish as he bundled home from close range after Geronimo Rulli had saved from Luis Suarez.

However, Barca passed up the chance to enjoy a comfortable evening in a three-goal spell in as many minutes just before half-time. Firstly, Samuel Umtiti turned Inigo Martinez's driven effort into his own net. Paco Alcacer, deputising for the suspended Neymar, briefly restored Barca's two-goal lead with a composed finish from Messi's pass. Yet, Sociedad scored again almost straight from kick-off as Xabi Prieto cushioned William Jose's cross into the bottom corner.

FIRST LEAGUE TITLE

Madrid can all but secure a first league title in five years with victory when they host Barca next weekend.

But not for the first time this season they needed a late show after Duje Cop and Mikel Vesga put Sporting in front early in both halves. Isco's fine individual effort and a towering header from Alvaro Morata ensured neither lead lasted more than a few minutes. And Isco sealed the comeback when he drilled home from the edge of the box.

"This is the spirit of Real Madrid," said Isco. "It is in the DNA of this shirt and this badge, we have shown it so many times and again today. Until the referee blows the full-time whistle it is not over."

The Spanish international is yet to agree a new contract with his current deal expiring at the end of next season.

And Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane insists he wants Isco to stay despite his lack of starts and interest from Barcelona.

"You know what I think of Isco, he is a player I like a lot and his place is here,"

Isco's late intervention bailed out his coach after Zidane made nine changes from the side that beat Bayern Munich in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final in midweek.

Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema were left out of the squad entirely alongside the injured Gareth Bale, while Toni Kroos, Luka Modric and Marcelo had to settle for a place on the bench.

"I feel like I am unfair with those that don't play," added Zidane. "There are 24 players that can play in all positions. It is the difficult part of this job."

Atletico Madrid warmed up for the second leg of their Champions League quarter-final against Leicester City with a comfortable 3-0 win over rock bottom Osasuna despite missing two penalties in the same game for the second time this season.

Coach Diego Simeone also left out a number of his first-team regulars with top scorer Antoine Griezmann on the bench for the full 90 minutes. Yannick Carrasco's low strike and back-post header put Atletico comfortably ahead either side of half-time.

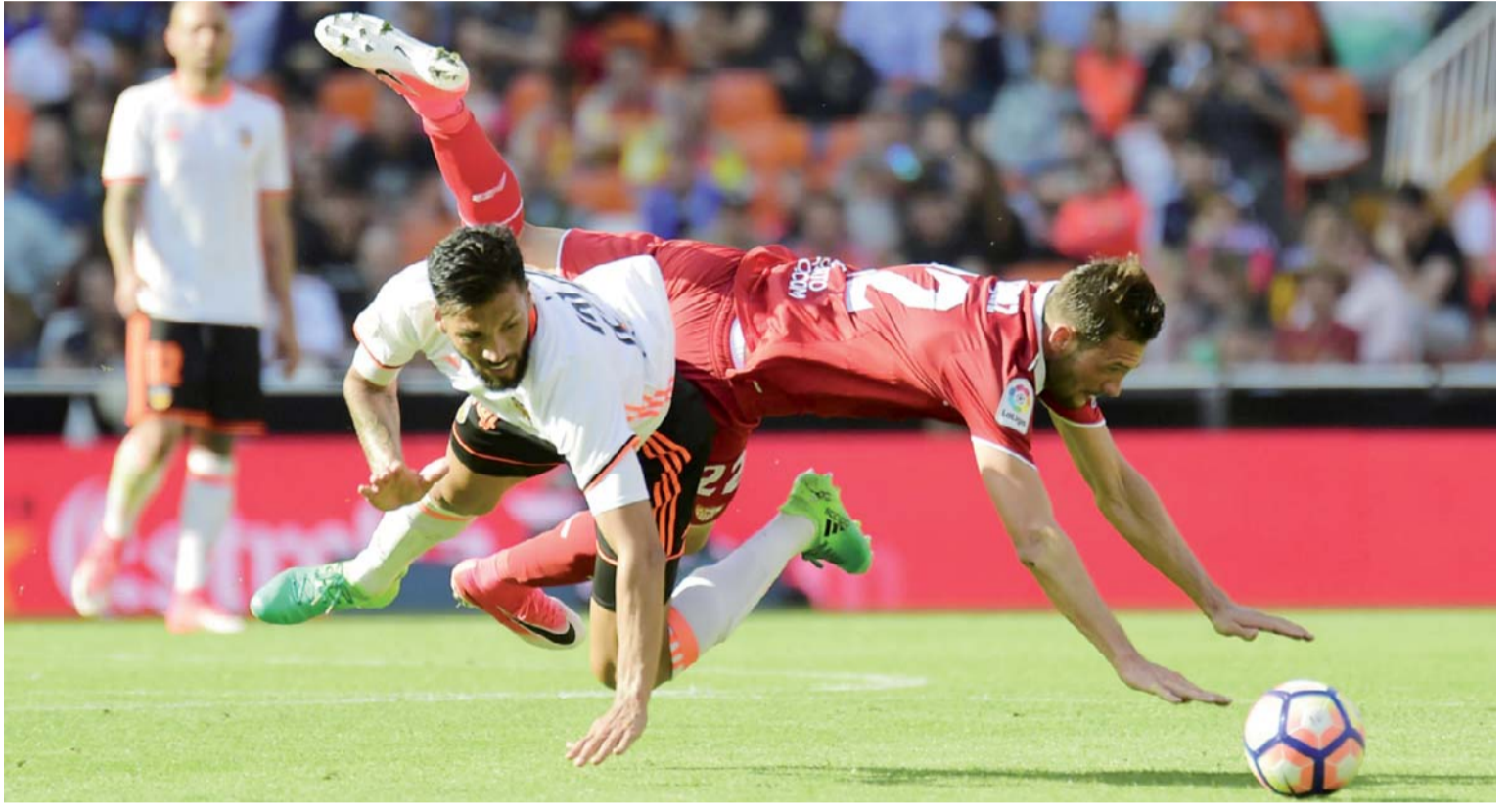
Left-back Felipe Luis then added his third goal in five games. However, Atletico's problems from the spot continued as they have now failed to score any of their last six penalties in La Liga. Carrasco was denied his hat-trick by a fine save from Salvatore Sirigu before the Italian 'keeper made an even better stop to deny Thomas Partey seconds later.

Victory takes Atletico four points clear of Sevilla in third. — AFP

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Middlesbrough v Arsenal **22:00**
beIN SPORTS HD 2

SPANISH LEAGUE
Deportivo v Villarreal **21:45**
beIN SPORTS



VALENCIA: Sevilla's Italian midfielder Franco vazquez (L) vies with Valencia's Argentinian defender Ezequiel Garay during the Spanish league football match Valencia CF vs Sevilla FC at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia yesterday. — AFP

SOCCER

SEVILLA STUMBLES AGAIN WITH 0-0 DRAW AT VALENCIA

BARCELONA: Sevilla drew 0-0 at Valencia yesterday as it continues to fade in its bid for an automatic Champions League berth.

Sevilla was mounting an outside challenge for the Spanish title through the first seven months of the season, but its goal now is just to secure a place in Europe's top competition for next season.

The draw meant fourth-placed Sevilla fell three points behind third-placed Atletico Madrid, which beat Osasuna 3-0 on Saturday. Sevilla has only one win in its last seven league matches, a slump that overlapped with its elimination by Leicester from the Champions League Round of 16.

The decline has also coincided with rumors regarding the future of coach Jorge Sampaoli, who tried to quash speculation this week that he was

linked to the newly vacated job in charge of the Argentine national team. The closest Sevilla went to scoring at Mestalla Stadium was when substitute Stevan Jovetic hit the post in the 17th minute, shortly after he replaced injured Victor "Vitolo" Machin.

Valencia likewise mustered very little beyond a header by Munir El Haddadi that Sevilla back Mariano cleared from his goal line before half an hour was up. Nani returned to the pitch for Valencia as a late substitute in his first match since recovering from a muscle injury that had sidelined him for almost two months.

The draw ended Valencia's streak of three consecutive victories, but extended its unbeaten run at home to seven matches under caretaker coach

Salvador "Voro" Gonzalez.

The top three finishers in la Liga go directly to the next season's Champions League, while the fourth-placed team faces a playoff to join the group phase

LEGANES 0, ESPANYOL 1

Substitute Leo Baptista scored a stoppage-time goal to keep Espanyol in the running for a Europa League berth. The Brazilian forward returned in the last round after a heel injury had sidelined him for four months. Baptista scored the winner by starting a counterattack with Gerard Moreno before chipping Leganes goalkeeper Iago Herrerin. Leganes was left clinging to the last spot above the relegation zone. — AP

RELIEF FOR MAN CITY GOALSCORER KOMPANY AFTER INJURY NIGHTMARE

 Southampton	0
 Man City	3

LONDON: Vincent Kompany's first Premier League goal for 20 months prompted an outpouring of relief and frustration after two injury-ravaged seasons for the Manchester City defender. The 31-year-old's 55th-minute header in a 3-0 victory at Southampton, in front of adoring City fans, sparked an emotional celebration from Kompany, who has started just 21 of City's last 102 games.

"For me it's always a long journey back," Kompany told BT Sport. "I would've liked to be injured less in my career but every single time I've put in the hard work (to get back).

"When this happens I feel I'm giving something back to the fans. I'm finally giving something back to the team and that's what you see in that moment..."

"It's ups and downs in football, but ultimately what gets you up is you keep looking towards your objective. If I had to work 15 years to have just one moment like this I would do. "I scored in front of the away fans and for me it was a great feeling. I feel like I want to give so much but I am restrained at times, but I keep positive and keep going no matter what." Kompany will have garnered many headlines for his goal but it was his calming, imperious and faultless defensive display that will have been most pleasing for City manager Pep Guardiola. Despite spending heavily in recent seasons, City's title aspirations have been hampered by an inability to build a consistent, reliable central defensive partnership in Kompany's absence.

John Stones and Nicolas Otamendi have arrived and, though each has shown glimpses of their undoubted quality, both are susceptible to the kind of mistake that was so rare for City when Kompany was at the peak of his powers. "Every manager Vincent Kompany has played under knows what an important player he is," Guardiola

told the BBC. "Finally, in recent games he has played he has delivered performances and hopefully he can stay fit. I want him fit enough to play every week—he has suffered for long periods but he

is a real, real central defender." After a run of four league games without a win City have registered back-to-back league victories and face Arsenal in the FA Cup semi-final next week. — Reuters

EPL results/standings

Manchester United 2, Chelsea 0; West Bromwich Albion 0, Liverpool 1; Crystal Palace 2, Leicester City 2; Everton 3, Burnley 1; Southampton 0, Manchester City 3; Stoke City 3, Hull City 1; Sunderland 2, West Ham United 2; Tottenham Hotspur 4, Bournemouth 0; Watford 1, Swansea City 0.															
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts		Pts		Pts		Pts		Pts
Chelsea	32	24	3	5	65	27	75	Stoke City	33	10	9	14	37	48	39
Tottenham Hotspur	32	21	8	3	68	22	71	Leicester City	32	10	7	15	41	53	37
Liverpool	33	19	9	5	69	40	66	West Ham United	33	10	7	16	44	59	37
Manchester City	32	19	7	6	63	35	64	Burnley	33	10	6	17	33	47	36
Manchester United	31	16	12	3	48	24	60	Crystal Palace	32	10	5	17	44	52	35
Everton	33	16	9	8	60	37	57	Bournemouth	33	9	8	16	45	63	35
Arsenal	30	16	6	8	61	39	54	Hull City	33	8	6	19	34	67	30
West Bromwich Albion	33	12	8	13	39	42	44	Swansea City	33	8	4	21	37	68	28
Southampton	31	11	7	13	37	40	40	Middlesbrough	31	4	12	15	22	37	24
Watford	32	11	7	14	37	52	40	Sunderland	32	5	6	21	26	58	21



SOUTHAMPTON: Manchester City's Yaya Toure, left, and Southampton's Dusan Tadic battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match at St Mary's Stadium, Southampton, England, Saturday. — AP



BARCELONA: FC Barcelona's Luis Suarez, left, duels for the ball against Real Sociedad's goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli, center, during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between FC Barcelona and Real Sociedad at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, Spain, Saturday. — AP

Sports

Vettel holds off late Hamilton charge to win Bahrain GP

16



Golden Barker hails embattled British team

17



MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2017

SEVILLA STUMBLES AGAIN WITH 0-0 DRAW AT VALENCIA

Page 19



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Argentinian defender Marcos Rojo (L) vies with Chelsea's Brazilian-born Spanish striker Diego Costa during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Chelsea at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, yesterday.—AFP

MAN UNITED BEAT CHELSEA TO OPEN UP EPL TITLE RACE

	Man Utd	2
	Chelsea	0

MANCHESTER: Ander Herrera scored one goal, set up another and executed the perfect marking job on Eden Hazard to set up Manchester United's 2-0 win over Chelsea that opened up the Premier League title race yesterday. United didn't even need rested top scorer Zlatan Ibrahimovic to consign the leaders to their fifth league loss of the season, which left

them only four points ahead of Tottenham with six games left. Marcus Rashford - Ibrahimovic's replacement up front - ran onto Herrera's through-ball to give United a seventh-minute lead. A constant menace for Chelsea's defense all game, Rashford ensured Ibrahimovic wasn't missed at Old Trafford. Herrera shadowed Hazard in a tactical plan by United manager Jose Mourinho that limited the effectiveness of Chelsea's main attacking threat. On a rare occasion he left Hazard's side, Herrera popped up in Chelsea's area in the 49th minute to smash a deflected shot high into the net from 18 meters. The result didn't just blow open the title race, it also left the battle for Champions League qual-

ification intriguingly poised. United moved up to fifth place, four points behind fourth-placed Manchester City with a game in hand, and is six points behind third-placed Liverpool having played two fewer games. United had conceded five goals and failed to score in its two losses to Chelsea this season - one in the league and one in the FA Cup - but Mourinho got his tactics spot on against his former team this time. Rashford excelled, stretching Chelsea's center backs with the kind of movement and pace that Ibrahimovic would not be able to offer. Winger Jesse Lingard was played out of position in attack and added more mobility alongside Rashford. Herrera and Matteo Darmian did brilliant stifling jobs in man-marking Eden Hazard

and Pedro, respectively. And United center backs Marcos Rojo and Eric Bailly succeeded in riling the combustible Diego Costa, who was booked in the first half and played on the edge throughout. As good a tactical masterclass as it was from Mourinho, there was a touch of fortune about both goals. In the build-up to Rashford's goal, Herrera blocked with his hand a pass from Nemanja Matic but the infringement wasn't picked up. The United midfield anchorman ran forward and split the defense with his through-ball to Rashford, who got in behind David Luiz and bobbed a finish past Asmir Begovic - starting in place of the injured Thibaut Courtois. Fans in the Stretford End chanted Herrera's name as he frustrated Hazard time and again in

the first half, and they did so again after he made it 2-0 with a shot that clipped off the heel of Kurt Zouma and span beyond an unsuspected Begovic. Chelsea produced possibly its sloppiest display of the past seven months, with the leaders not helped by left wing-back Marcos Alonso pulling out of the match during the warm-up to be replaced by a center back in Zouma. That succeeded in unbalancing the team. Chelsea is still the favorite for the title, with the only obvious stumbling block in its run-in being a trip to Everton on April 30. Its last four games are against Middlesbrough, West Bromwich Albion, Watford and Sunderland. Tottenham doesn't look like letting up, though, after winning its last seven games and scoring 22 goals in the process.—AP

FIRMINO LIFTS LIVERPOOL BACK TO THIRD PLACE

	West Brom	0
	Liverpool	1

WEST BROMWICH: Roberto Firmino fired Liverpool to a 1-0 victory at West Bromwich Albion yesterday that moved Jurgen Klopp's men back into third place in the Premier League. Firmino settled a scrappy game with a close-range header in first half stoppage-time to condemn Albion boss Tony Pulis to his first ever home league defeat against the Reds. The Brazilian converted a flick-on from Lucas Leiva to seal a fifth win in their last seven games for Liverpool. They are unbeaten since losing at Leicester in late February and now lead fourth-placed Manchester City by two points, although Pep Guardiola's team have a game in hand in the race for an automatic spot in the Champions League group stage. West Brom had the first opening when Liverpool failed to clear their lines and Matt Phillips picked up possession on the edge of the area. He struck a shot that deflected to Hal Robson-Kanu

but the Wales forward could not react quickly enough to turn it home. Liverpool began to dominate possession but Phillips tried his luck again with an ambitious effort from distance that went high and wide. However, Liverpool should have led on 15 minutes when they pounced on a hesitation from Claudio Yacob in the West Brom midfield, stole possession and broke with pace. Lucas fed Philippe Coutinho, who burst into the area and hit a cross-shot that flew narrowly wide of Ben Foster's goal. West Brom then missed a glorious chance from a well-worked free-kick that saw Phillips volley a cross towards Nacer Chadli at the far post. The Belgian was distracted by the slightest of touches by Emre Can, but Chadli should still have gobbled up the chance. Instead he missed his kick and Liverpool almost broke away and scored. Firmino crossed for Coutinho, who sent a difficult shot wide at the far-post. Coutinho then tried another long-range shot but it never troubled Foster. And Liverpool's defensive vulnerability was exposed again when Robson-Kanu raced onto a simple ball over the top but he snatched at his shot and Simon Mignolet made a comfortable save. After struggling to break down West Brom's resistance, Liverpool went ahead through a set-piece on the stroke of half-time.

STUBBORN Chris Brunt was penalised for a foul on Divock Origi, and from James Milner's free-kick the visitors took the lead. It was flicked on by Lucas to Firmino, who nodded home after reacting quicker than Craig Dawson. Origi could have doubled the visitors' lead early in the second half when he cut in from the left and curled a right-footed shot just beyond the far post. Milner should have scored moments later when he arrived late to meet a cross by Firmino, only to side-foot a volley over the crossbar. West Brom introduced three substitutes in an effort to change the pattern of the game but they were met with stubborn resistance from the visitors. In fact they almost fell further behind when a Coutinho free-kick took a double deflection on its way for a Liverpool corner. A rare chance for Pulis's side came with 12 minutes remaining as Jake Livermore dragged a shot well wide of Mignolet's goal. But two minutes later they should have been level after Liverpool gifted possession to Salomon Rondon, who moved towards goal before feeding Phillips. The winger connected well with his shot but it was smothered low down by Mignolet. Liverpool substitute Alberto Moreno angered Klopp in stoppage-time when, with Foster forward for a corner, he led a Liverpool counter-attack but opted to shoot from distance at an open goal and missed, with team-mates screaming for a pass.—AFP



WEST BROMWICH: West Bromwich Albion's English goalkeeper Jack Rose (L) chases back to tackle Liverpool's Dutch midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum (R) after going up to attack a corner kick in the dying minutes of the English Premier League football match between West Bromwich Albion and Liverpool at The Hawthorns stadium in West Bromwich, central England, yesterday.—AFP

BUSINESS

MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2017

Kuwait Times **55**
Small Times

Why should you add gold to your investment portfolio

Page 22

Markets digest another Trump volte-face

Page 25



Al-Mazaya Holding, Boubyan Bank sign partnership deal

26

AMAZON, FLIPKART BATTLE FOR E-COMMERCE'S 'LAST FRONTIER' IN INDIA

Page 27

NBK REPORTS NET PROFITS OF KD 85.4M FOR Q1 2017 NET PROFIT GROWTH OF 8.1% YEAR-ON-YEAR

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) reported net profits of KD 85.4 million (\$280.1 million) for the first quarter of 2017 compared with KD 78.9 million (\$259.0 million) for the same period in 2016. Net operating income grew at 9.0 percent year on year to reach KD 195.4 million (\$641.1 million).

Total assets as of end of March 2017 reached KD 24.8 billion (\$81.4 billion) up 0.6 percent compared to end of March 2016, while total shareholders' equity increased by 6.8 percent to KD 2.8 billion (\$9.3 billion). Customer loans and advances reached KD 14.0 billion (\$46.1 billion) as of end of March 2017, growing at 3.6 percent year-on-year, while customer deposits grew by 7.2 percent for the same period to reach KD 13.2 billion (\$43.2 billion).

NBK asset quality remained exceptionally strong with NPLs/Gross loans at 1.27 percent as of end of March 2017 compared to 1.32 percent a year ago, and NPL coverage increasing to 348 percent from 335 percent in March 2016.

Nasser Al-Sayer, NBK's Chairman, said "NBK's first quarter profits reflects the continuation of the improving operating environment along with NBK's strong financial position, conservative management and clear market dominance."

Al-Sayer affirmed that the strong set of results in 1Q 2017 are driven mainly by operating and fundamental banking revenue, confirming the Bank's strong position to seize growth opportunities locally and regionally. Al-Sayer also added that "Kuwait has not suffered from a slowdown in eco-

nomie activity similar to regional economies due to the large drop in oil prices. The need for infrastructure projects led to accelerated capital spending activity and strong macro-economic outlook backed by ample buffers and liquidity in the system which filtered down directly to creating business opportunities for banks."

Competitive advantage

Isam Al-Sager, NBK's Group Chief Executive Officer said, "A competitive advantage that NBK embraces is hav-



Nasser Musaed Al-Sayer

ing access to conventional banking in addition to Islamic banking in Kuwait since turning Boubyan bank into a fully consolidated subsidiary of NBK Group in 2012 with a 58.4 percent ownership. Boubyan Bank is a key element of the Group's strategy going forward as we focus on diversifying income sources and expanding market share. Boubyan Bank will continue to focus on implementing NBK's culture whereas NBK commits

to fully support Boubyan to increment and strengthen market position while preserving the independence of both banks."

Al-Sager also added that our non-Kuwait business delivered solid and sound financial performance and increased its contribution to NBK Group's total profits. Our International asset push was focused on profitable and stable markets with most of our operations creating added value to the Group. Contribution from outside Kuwait



Isam Al-Sager

reached 28.4 percent of total Group profits in 1Q 2017 affirming the Banks' successful strategy of regional and international diversification.

"We continue to see selective opportunities in some of the markets we operate in and continue to strengthen our position in those markets focusing on promising growth opportunities to achieve complementarity and integration across international operations" Al-Sager added.

During 2016, NBK increased its capital base through a 6.5 percent rights issue. The issuance is in line with the bank's plans to maintain healthy capitalization ratios following the implementation of Basel III and the regulations of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in this regards. Also, this increase will allow the bank to continue capturing growth opportunities, especially in Kuwait as the government's capital spending plan remains intact and as NBK continues to be the market leader in the project finance segment.

As of end-March 2017, NBK's capital adequacy ratio (CAR) reached 17.8 percent comfortably exceeding regulatory requirements. NBK continues to enjoy collectively one of the highest ratings among all banks in the Middle East from the three international rating agencies Moody's, Fitch Ratings and Standard and Poor's. The Bank's ratings are supported by its high capitalization, prudent lending policies, and its disciplined approach to risk management, in addition to its highly recognized and very stable management team. NBK was also named among Global Finance's list of the 50 safest banks in the world for the eleventh consecutive time and was awarded as the Best Bank in Kuwait in 2016 by the Banker, Euromoney and Global Finance.

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

Highlights

- **Al-Sayer: NBK continued delivering solid performance reflecting its strong financial position and successful strategy**
- **Q1 2017 solid results are primarily driven by core banking activity and strong business volume trends**
- **The impact of lower oil prices on the Kuwaiti economy has been limited compared to peers in the region**
- **Al-Sager: NBK continues to seek selective opportunities in all the markets where it operates, in line with the Bank's diversification strategy**
- **Total assets grew by 0.6% YoY to KD 24.8 billion and shareholders' equity by 6.8% to KD 2.8 billion**
- **Customer loans and advances reached KD 14.0 billion, up 3.6% YoY and customer deposits reached KD 13.2 billion, up 7.2% YoY**
- **NPLs/Gross loans at 1.27% and coverage ratio at 348%**

85.4

Million KD Net Profit for the 1st Quarter, 2017

31/03/2017

Net Profit

85.4
Million KD

Net Operating
Income

195.4
Million KD

Shareholders'
Equity

2.8
Billion KD

Total Assets

24.8
Billion KD

Moody's Aa3 FitchRatings AA- Standard & Poor's A+

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WHY SHOULD YOU ADD GOLD TO YOUR INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO

By Dr Wafaa Sbeiti

Investment demand for gold is expanding worldwide, according to statistics from both World Gold Council and IMF data. Total world gold holdings in 2015 increased by 702.5 tons, compared with 176.7 tons in 2014, reaching 32,733 tons in December, their highest level since 2002. As stated, much of the increase is due to China's upgrade coverage of its gold standard. Between January and April 2016, China bought monthly around 11 tons of gold.



Buying in 2016 was led by Russia, China and Kazakhstan. Together they accounted for around 80 percent of the full year purchases (383.6 tons).

The Official Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum's Global Public Investor 2016 report, states that "Gold has become increasingly attractive as an alternative to reserve currencies, with the euro, yen, Swiss franc, all weakening against the dollar while emerging market economies have also been keen to diversify away from US assets."

Here are some reasons, why gold is an attractive asset. First of all, we know that gold is rare. If you took all the gold in the world today and put it together, that cube would have 65-foot size and fit under the Eiffel tower. Today, there's an estimated 171,000 to 180,000 tons of gold that's ever been mined. The world's biggest gold holder is the US, with 8,000 tons, more than four times as much as China's 1,800 tons, more than five times Russia's 1,500 tons followed by Germany with 3,400 tons, Italy with 2,452 tons and France with 2,436 tons.

Universally accepted

Gold is universally accepted as money. You can sell a bar of gold anywhere in the world, in the United States, in Japan, Australia or Europe. Gold is universally recognized as real wealth. You can trade gold without worrying about counter party risks. You can go to any civilization around the world with a few ounces of gold and not even knowing the language you would be able to buy everything you need. You cannot say that about any of the paper currencies or assets that people use today.

Gold is safe haven buying

Gold is considered a safe-haven asset throughout history as it has been viewed as a store of value. It is essentially a currency that cannot be manipulated by

interest rate policies of any government and has been traditionally used as a hedge against inflation. So moving to gold make you take advantage of the potential inflation that may occur as a result.

"Gold is money. Everything else is credit" is the well-known statement by J.P. Morgan who was one of the most powerful bankers in the world. Gold is the purest form of money because everything else is credit. Literally, everything else you are taught to invest in is simply a paper asset with counter party risks. Stocks, bonds, derivatives and insurance policies and other paper assets, all at someone else's promises to pay.

The dollar and all other currencies in the world are debt-based currencies that only come into existence when debt is created. The real scary thing is that if all of the money in the world comes into existence like this where then do we get the money to pay the interest? It is a generational debt based, Ponzi scheme.

The only way this system functions is that more debt must be created every year in excess of the debt and the interest created the year before. Every generation ends up paying the debts the previous generation incurred. And obviously this can only lead to disaster as there always comes a point when the accumulated debt becomes so large that it becomes impossible to even pay the interest.

Gold is stored energy

Gold is really valued by the amount of energy that is put into finding, the mining and refining of it. It is concentrated labor and energy. Given that we are coming close to the end of an era of relative peace and abundantly cheap energy, it obviously makes sense to own some gold knowing that resources are declining and life will get more expensive and more dangerous.

Gold cannot be printed

The finding, mining and refining of gold is an incredibly difficult process. The bankers can create billions of dollars out of thin air to pay off their buddies but they cannot do that with gold.

Gold can be hidden.

Unlike all your paper assets, gold can be hidden for centuries if necessary. Having an ounce of gold in your hand is a very powerful way of taking back your sovereignty. More importantly it can be used to create generational wealth. Gold investments are extremely portable liquid and easy to store in one's home. So, gold is something that everybody should put some of their money in. If you got money in a property, some money in a bank, just put a little of your money maybe five or ten percent in gold.

Note: Dr Wafaa Sbeiti is an Associate Professor, Department Chair at the American University of Kuwait



SHANGHAI: People walk through an auto exhibition in Nanjing, in China's Jiangsu province. Global carmakers converge on China for the Shanghai auto show this week with the industry bracing for a sharp sales slowdown and potential price war as competition stiffens in the world's biggest car market. —AFP Photos



SHANGHAI: A Tesla Model S P85d car displayed at the 16th Shanghai International Automobile Industry Exhibition in Shanghai.



NANJING: People walk through an auto exhibition in Nanjing, in China's Jiangsu province.

GLOBAL CARMAKERS CONVERGE ON CHINA AS SLOWDOWN LOOMS

SHANGHAI INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW

SHANGHAI: Global carmakers converge on China for the Shanghai auto show this week, with the industry bracing for a sharp sales slowdown and potential price war as competition stiffens in the world's biggest car market.

Manufacturers have reaped a windfall as the fast-expanding Chinese middle class hits the road, but clouds loom as Volkswagen, Toyota, GM, and other top nameplates pitch their latest models starting this Wednesday at China's biggest auto showcase.

Passenger-vehicle sales have nearly quintupled over the past decade and logged another stellar performance in 2016, surging 14.9 percent to a record 24.38 million, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

But volume was skewed upward in 2016 by a government purchase incentive. As China's decades-long economic boom loses lift, sales growth will essentially be flat this year and could even shrink in 2018 for the first time in memory, consultancy IHS Markit said last week.

In a boon for consumers, IHS Markit said there is already "a major price war descending on the market" as manufacturers and dealers slash prices to move growing stock.

"The threat now for international automakers is that if local players begin cutting prices ... there will be a rampant price war across the market as automakers compete to attract new car buyers," it said.

Such troubles must be kept in perspective:

China is still El Dorado for carmakers. Last year's sales set a 26th straight annual high-water mark, handily beating the record 17.55 million cars sold in the United States, which China zoomed past eight years ago to become the planet's top market. But sales were boosted by the government's halving of a 10-percent purchase tax on small-engine cars in late 2015. That tax has been raised to 7.5 percent this year and will be restored to 10 percent in 2018, with an expected dampening effect on sales.

Death by suffocation

More broadly, analysts say China's automotive landscape is rapidly maturing as consumer tastes evolve, and success will depend on manufacturers' capabilities in meeting those tastes. China now has a crowded field of mostly domestic carmakers, many of which won't survive, said Johan Karlberg, a Shanghai-based partner with global consultancy Roland Berger.

"There's just not room enough for that many players any more. Many of the smaller ones will simply die a slow, suffocating death," Karlberg said. Major carmakers remain bullish, but are scrambling to introduce a slew of new models aimed at Chinese consumers during the Shanghai show, which IHS said has taken on "major importance" as the dynamics evolve.

Manufacturers are rushing in particular to capitalize on still fast-growing demand for sport-

utility vehicles and "new energy" cars. Chinese drivers have latched on to both domestic and foreign-made SUVs as leisure interests grow and rising incomes put a second family car in reach. SUV sales are expected to surpass sedans as early as this year.

Electric vehicle sales have been government-subsidized partly to help reduce China's notorious air pollution, and the Chinese market is now the world's biggest and growing quickly.

China market leader Volkswagen, along with giants GM, Ford and a host of electric-car upstarts, all have plans to ramp up their China offerings. Ford will even try to sell its American-legend pickup trucks, while expanding its electric offerings. "We think it's a huge opportunity for us to continue to build the Ford brand here in China and continue to grow our business in China," Ford CEO Mark Fields told Bloomberg News.

Analysts say other future drivers lie in China's seemingly never-ending stock of newly-minted middle-class consumers, particularly in populous and fast-growing lower-tier cities, plus the rapid growth in car-hailing and vehicle-sharing services.

"We still have a pretty good period of growth ahead in the Chinese market. It is THE strategic market for global carmakers," said Marc Mechali, an automotive analyst with Accenture in Paris. "But now, it remains to be seen with which vehicles, and how." — AFP

IRAN OPENS NEW SOUTH PARS GAS FIELD PHASES WORTH \$20BN

TEHRAN: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated five new phases of the South Pars gas field yesterday, the result of some \$20 billion in investment, local media reported.

The ribbon-cutting of phases 17-21 paved the way for Iran to surpass the production levels of neighboring Qatar, which shares half the offshore gas field, Iranian officials said. "Our production has reached 575 million cubic metres per day," said Rouhani. Iran's total gas production is 885 million cubic metres per day. "At the height of sanctions, with the help of Iranian engineers and workers, we succeeded in developing 11 phases of South Pars," added Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh.

South Pars is the largest known gas reservoir in the world. Iran has the second-largest gas reserves in the world after Russia, and the fourth-largest oil reserves. In November, French firm Total signed a preliminary accord worth

an estimated \$4.8 billion (4.5 billion euros) to help develop phase 11 of South Pars, but has since said it will wait for signals from Washington before finalizing the deal.

Although many sanctions, including on Iran's energy industry, were lifted under a nuclear deal with world powers in 2015, the US has maintained a raft of its own sanctions that continue to hamper investment and cause concern among foreign businesses. Since the nuclear deal came into effect in January 2016, Iran has increased oil production from 2.6 million barrels per day (bpd) to 3.9 million, while more than doubling its oil exports.

In January, Tehran approved 29 international companies to bid for oil and gas projects. However, it is still finalizing a new contract for foreign investors—a process that has proved controversial in a country with strong memories of past exploitation by global oil firms. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2,812
Indian Rupees	4,751
Pakistani Rupees	2,915
Srilankan Rupees	2,008
Nepali Rupees	2,973
Singapore Dollar	220.220
Hongkong Dollar	39.309
Bangladesh Taka	3,781
Philippine Peso	6,185
Thai Baht	8,910

GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.534
Qatari Riyal	83.977
Omani Riyal	794.049
Bahraini Dinar	811.880
UAE Dirham	83.245

ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	19,500
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16,845
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1,227
Tunisian Dinar	133,720
Jordanian Dinar	430,900
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2,037
Syrian Lira	2,179
Morocco Dirham	30,739

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	305.550
Euro	327,700
Sterling Pound	385,910
Canadian dollar	231,040
Turkish lira	83,260

Swiss Franc	307.090
Australian Dollar	234.510
US Dollar Buying	304.350

GOLD	
20 Gram	262.570
10 Gram	134.200
5 Gram	67.950

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfr	Selling Rate
US Dollar	305.200
Canadian Dolla	229.720
Sterling Pound	383.610
Euro	325.475
Swiss Frank	308.465
Bahrain Dinar	809.490
UAE Dirhams	83.490
Qatari Riyals	84.715
Saudi Riyals	82.280
Jordanian Dinar	430.367
Egyptian Pound	17,001
Sri Lankan Rupees	2,009
Indian Rupees	4,738
Pakistani Rupees	2,910
Bangladesh Taka	3,807
Philippines Peso	6,156
Cyprus pound	168.425
Japanese Yen	3,810
Syrian Pound	2,425
Nepalese Rupees	3,960
Malaysian Ringgit	70.275

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.740
Thai Baht	9,855
Turkish Lira	83.330

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.376892	0.386892
Czech Korune	0.004159	0.016159
Danish Krone	0.039567	0.044567
Euro	0.319513	0.328513
Norwegian Krone	0.031589	0.036789
Romanian Leu	0.084681	0.084681
Slovakia	0.009153	0.019153
Swedish Krona	0.029799	0.034799
Swiss Franc	0.297938	0.308938
Turkish Lira	0.077721	0.088021
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.223838	0.235838
New Zealand Dollar	0.208005	0.217505
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.224038	0.233038
Georgina Lari	0.138004	0.138004
US Dollars	0.301450	0.305850
US Dollars Mint	0.301950	0.305850
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003425	0.004009
Chinese Yuan	0.042906	0.046406
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037310	0.040060
Indian Rupee	0.004249	0.004937

Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002729	0.002909
Kenyan Shilling	0.003042	0.003042
Korean Won	0.000259	0.000274
Malaysian Ringgit	0.065600	0.071600
Nepalese Rupee	0.002958	0.003128
Pakistan Rupee	0.002727	0.003017
Philippine Peso	0.006088	0.006388
Sierra Leone	0.000068	0.000074
Singapore Dollar	0.213390	0.223390
South African Rand	0.016767	0.025267
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001639	0.002219
Taiwan	0.009782	0.009962
Thai Baht	0.008532	0.009082

Bahraini Dinar	0.803908	0.812406
Egyptian Pound	0.014683	0.020591
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000195	0.000255
Jordanian Dinar	0.425601	0.434601
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.00257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020089	0.044089
Nigerian Naira	0.001266	0.001901
Omani Riyal	0.787215	0.792895
Qatar Riyal	0.083116	0.084566
Saudi Riyal	0.080393	0.081693
Syrian Pound	0.001296	0.001516
Tunisian Dinar	0.129147	0.137147
Turkish Lira	0.077721	0.088021
UAE Dirhams	0.081765	0.083465
Yemeni Riyal	0.000993	0.001073

SENIOR CHINESE BANKING REGULATOR UNDER PROBE

BEIJING: A senior official at the China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) is under investigation for suspected links to a loan scandal, the financial magazine Caixin reported, citing sources close to the matter. Yang Jiakai, assistant chairman of CBRC, has been under investigation since April 9 in connection with the scandal in Hubei province, Caixin said late on Saturday, following days of rumors circulating online that Yang had gone missing.

China's graft watchdog on April 9 also announced an investigation into the chairman of the country's insurance regulator, Xiang Junbo, the most senior financial regulator to be investigated as part of a government fight against graft. Yang could not be reached for comment.

No official announcement of an investigation into him has been made.

His name and profile were still accessible on the CBRC website yesterday.

Caixin reported last Friday that Yang had been relieved of his duties, citing people with knowledge of the matter. CBRC did not respond to a faxed request for comment on Friday or to a second fax yesterday about the investigation. Yang's last public appearance was on April 7 speaking at a news conference about new risk control guidelines for lenders as part of efforts to contain risks from a rapid build-up in debt. China's top leaders have pledged this year to address financial risks and asset bubbles. President Xi Jinping has pledged to wage war on deep seated graft in the ruling Communist party until officials at all levels dare not be corrupt, warning that a failure to check the rot could threaten the party's existence. — Reuters

SAUDI TO SHELVE, REFORM BILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF UNFINISHED PROJECTS

GOVERNMENT COMPILING LIST OF UNFINISHED PROJECTS

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's government is ordering its ministries and agencies to review billions of dollars' worth of unfinished infrastructure and economic development projects with a view to shelving or restructuring them, government sources said.

Riyadh's Bureau of Capital and Operational Spending Rationalization, set up last year to make the government more efficient, is compiling a list of projects that are under 25 percent complete, the sources told Reuters. Many of these projects are relics of a decade-long boom of high oil prices and lavish state spending, which ended when oil began sliding in mid-2014, making it increasingly difficult for Riyadh to find the money needed to complete their construction.

Officials will study the feasibility of the projects in light of the government's reform drive, which aims to diversify the economy beyond oil exports, and decide whether to suspend them

indefinitely or try to improve how they are conducted. "Some projects could be retendered so they can be executed in partnership with the private sector, possibly through build-operate-transfer (BOT) contracts," said one source familiar with the plan, declining to be named as the matter is not yet public.

Under BOT contracts, private investors finance and build projects and operate them for a period of time to earn a profit before eventually transferring ownership to the government. Riyadh has said it is keen to begin bringing the private sector into projects to ease pressure on state finances.

"Other projects could be suspended if they do not meet the current economic objectives," the source said. Recommendations for some projects may be made within days, he added.

Seeking to close a huge budget deficit caused by low oil prices, the government clamped down on infrastructure spending last

year. Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan said in February this year that the efficiency bureau had so far saved the kingdom 80 billion riyals (\$21.33 billion).

The plan to review unfinished projects suggests the government is looking for large additional savings this year. In a report at the end of last year, it estimated the cost of completing all capital spending projects currently underway at about 1.4 trillion riyals. In a January report, consultants Faithful+Gould estimated at least \$13.3 billion of government projects were at risk of being cancelled in Saudi Arabia this year because of fiscal pressures and changing government priorities. The government is likely to prioritize projects with strong social welfare and business justifications such as power and water generation, while less essential "vanity projects" such as sports infrastructure, some transport systems and perhaps nuclear energy could be cut back, it said. — Reuters

TEARS AND CHEERS GREET CHINA'S ECONOMIC ZONE

XIONGAN: Business owner Hu Weibing weeps at the prospect of losing everything, including his home, after China's surprise announcement to transform a rural spot outside Beijing into a modern metropolis nearly three times the size of New York City.

Hu's family run-clothing factory in the northern province of Hebei could close at the expense of a new special economic zone similar to those in Shanghai and Shenzhen. The planned Xiongan New Area currently measures 2,000 square kilometres (772 square miles) and has less than one percent of Beijing's economic output, but last weekend's announcement sparked a real estate speculation frenzy as out-of-town home buyers from across the country descended on the previously unknown area.

"It's certainly good for Hebei and the regional economy, but it's a disaster for mid and small-sized business like ours," said Hu, staring at the bare concrete walls of the four-storey dream home he began building last year but will never be able to finish. Though authorities have not yet told him what is next, he is bracing for things to progress in the fashion that has become typical for government mega-projects: forced relocation and modest monetary compensation. The changes will scatter his 40 local employees, each painstakingly trained for two years to produce the winter jackets that Hu's Yuhua Clothing Manufacturing sells to clients in Moscow.

And land prices elsewhere are guaranteed

to be out of his reach. "To build another factory or another villa like ours will be impossible. It's a terrible shame," he said quietly, unable to stop tears sliding down his face after devoting decades of his life to the business.

"There will be no way to ever compensate us, but this is a huge national issue, so whatever comes we must support it."

'It's crazy'

There are some 19 national-level "New Areas" scattered across China, 13 of which have been established since 2014. But Xiongan stands out: President Xi Jinping personally designated its location during a February trip to the fields just outside Hu's village of Dawang, according to Xinhua News.

Following the announcement, housing prices doubled in a single day, as speculators queued outside real estate offices, clogging the streets with luxury vehicles as they battled to snap up properties for cash.

Shocked by the chaos, local authorities quickly imposed strict bans on home sales and ordered brokers to close up shop. By mid-week, offices across the area were closed, their metal grates pulled down and crosses of white tape over them for good measure. But individuals with properties for sale were still willing to approach potential buyers with prices that had gone up 300 percent in three days, they told AFP.

An investor surnamed Wang had come to check out opportunities from Beijing, 100 kilo-

metres away, but declined an offer to buy at a rate higher than the average cost of a home in the bustling port city of Tianjin. "I could've accepted some 13 or 14,000 yuan (\$2,000) per square metre, but 30,000 is simply too much for an investment of at least ten years where you don't even know how things will turn out in the end," he said. "It's crazy—they're still planting crops here! What if Old Xi steps down and they never build anything here at all?"

'Life-changing'

Currently, the flat fields of the three counties that make up the proposed Xiongan New Area are speckled with traditional tombstone-high mounds of dirt topped with fluttering paper offerings.

The two-lane roads that traverse them are lined with cement producers, factories noisily churning cobs into cornmeal and, thanks to a robust commercial network with Russia, shops selling mink and raccoon furs dyed garish shades of blue and pink. Yet authorities hope the area will flourish into a new centre for growth in the world's second-largest economy, which last year expanded at its slowest rate in a quarter of a century. Analysts, however, predict its overall economic punch will be "limited", as the venture lacks measures to spur the types of exciting new financial reforms that were the real drivers of growth for the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, established in the 1980s, and Shanghai's Pudong New Area, set up in the 1990s.



This file photo taken on April 3, 2017 shows a closed real estate agency in Rongcheng county in China's Hebei province. —AFP

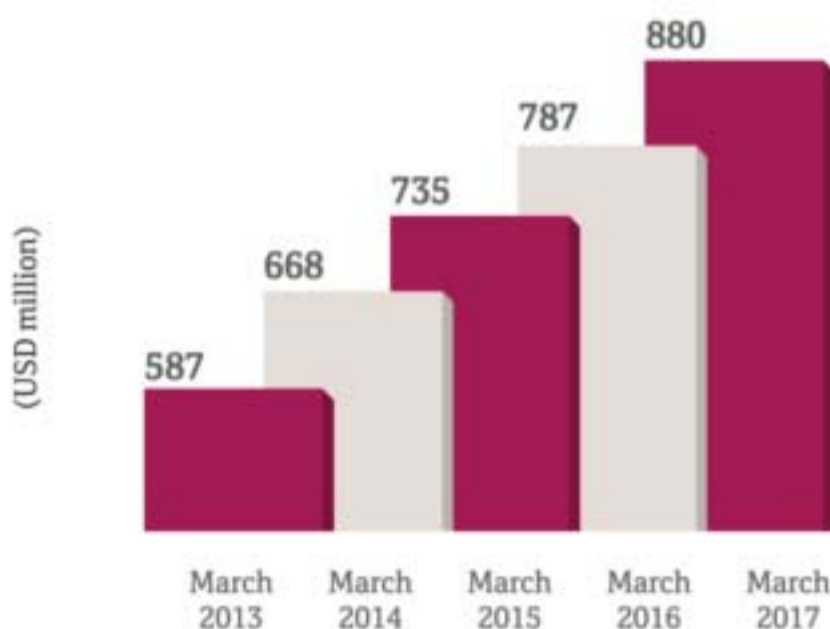
"The project is still effectively just a major push to improve the infrastructure and integration of the Hebei region, rather than a test bed for deeper market reforms that could have a much wider economic impact," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics.

But for many who've toiled in the fields around Xiongan for generations, the develop-

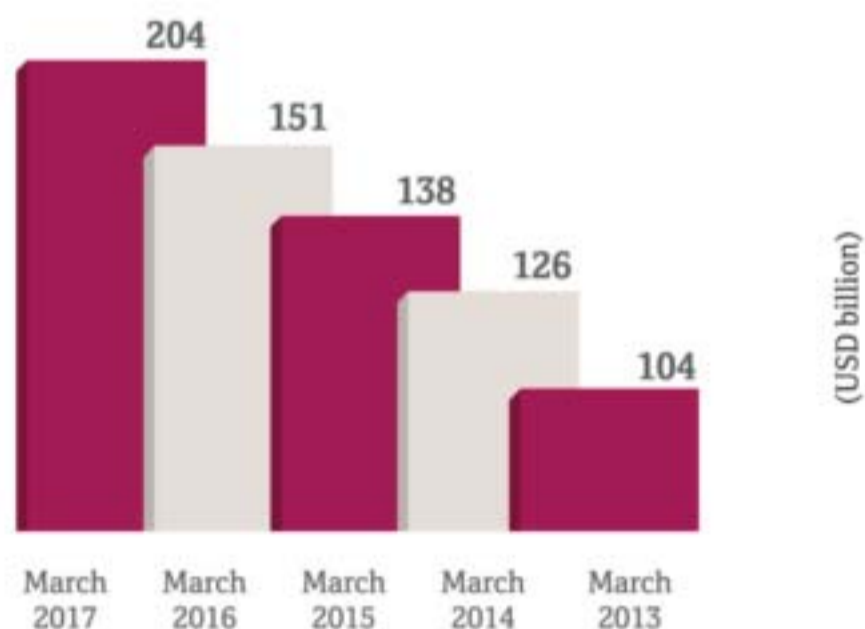
ment is guaranteed to be "life-changing", said a resident surnamed Zhang, 63, who recalled the extraordinary hardships of his childhood in the early 1960s. "It's such good luck—living here is better even than in Xiamen," he said, referring to a warm southern Chinese port city popular with retirees. "Now we're all special economic zone residents!" — AFP

QNB Group strengthens its position as the largest financial institution in the MEA region

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SEAFOOD JOINS FAIR TRADE REVOLUTION, ONE SCALLOP AT A TIME

PORTLAND: Fair trade coffee, bananas and ... scallops? Yes, very soon. Fair trade certification status, which is conferred by independent groups to denote environmental sustainability and fair working conditions, has been around for years. But it's just now on the rise among seafood products in the US, where consumer interest in the story behind the fish and shellfish they eat is growing.

Certification of seafood products, including tuna and shrimp, began in 2014, and the volume of imports of such products grew more than 350 percent last year to more than 1.2 million pounds (500,000 kilograms), said Fair Trade USA, a California-based nonprofit group. The first company to offer fair trade seafood

harvested from US waters will have scallops on the market this month.

The company, Bristol Seafood of Portland, Maine, is looking to capitalize on the growing interest in authenticity of seafood, said its president, Peter Handy. "There's a certain sanctity to food when it comes to the story about it," he said. "It tastes better the more you know."

Independent groups, including Fair Trade USA, provide certifications to a host of products that people buy in stores, ranging from fruit and nuts to home goods. The certification is most commonly associated with coffee, which launched the fair trade movement in the 1990s.

To achieve certification, companies need

to submit to an audit and interviews to make sure the food is produced with fair working conditions and environmental stewardship along the supply chain. Packaged products can then bear a "Fair Trade Certified" seal, which carries a price premium.

Fair Trade USA currently certifies shrimp from Mexico, yellowfin tuna from Indonesia, and skipjack and yellowfin tuna from Maldives. It is the only group currently certifying seafood as fair trade, representatives for the nonprofit said. Interest in the seafood supply chain has grown since an Associated Press investigation of slave labor conditions in Thailand's shrimp fishery, said Ashley Apel, senior manager of the seafood program for Fair Trade USA. Even

before that, a 2014 study by a pair of economists from the University of Kentucky said more than 80 percent of consumers were at least somewhat influenced by labels that tell the story of seafood.

"It was the right place and right time to show that the seafood industry needs a fair trade certification," Apel said. The standards for achieving the certification for seafood products focus on management of fish stocks and fishing habitat, as well as the wages and working conditions of the fishermen and others in the supply chain. Steps must be taken to eliminate forced labor and human trafficking, and workers must have the freedom to organize. At the same time, there must be documentation of things like proper waste management and protection of ecosystems, Fair Trade USA's materials state.

Food products

Fair Trade USA is one of a handful of major groups involved in certifying food products, with another prominent one other being Germany-based Fairtrade International.

They're banking on chefs and restaurants getting excited about the products. Barton Seaver, a chef and author in Freeport, Maine, said fair trade seafood is too new to be familiar to many restaurants but is part of seafood's future.

"It's currently in its infancy, but I think the products they are working with will quickly prove the model, and the value that it can offer," he said.

The economic, environmental and

humans rights impacts of fair trade labels are the subjects of debate and academic study. A 2014 study published in the Journal of Economic Perspectives stated that "there is overwhelming evidence that Fair Trade-certified producers do receive higher prices than conventional farmers for their products." The evidence for environmental protection and economic security of workers was more mixed, but benefits to both were observed, the same study said. Jason Potts, a senior associate with the International Institute for Sustainable Development located in Montreal, said the question of "are these things actually working?" remains a difficult one to answer.

"We're attempting to answer this question. My message to the world is we need more impact research, and more data. Better data," he said. One of the big incentives for fishermen to participate in fair trade certification, Apel said, is that sales generate "fair trade premiums," which are used for community development projects where harvesters live. The nonprofit delivered more than \$200,000 of these premiums to fishermen last year.

Erik Orman, who owns a pair of New Bedford scallop boats that harvest shellfish that will be certified fair trade, said he envisions the premium money being reinvested in fisheries science programs. The certification, he said, will also give the scallops an edge in the marketplace.

"For the consumer, they are socially conscious and able to choose the food they eat based on the criteria that are important to them," he said. — AP

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Sunday 16 April 2017

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price Index	▼ -38.70	6,969.18	7,007.88	7,014.85	6,960.69
Weighted Index	— 0.00	416.42	416.42	418.03	415.16
KSX 15	▲ 3.20	946.28	943.08	949.52	942.43

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
MARIN	60	60	60	23	414,000	▲ 61.0
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 425.0
NAPESCO	1,200	1,200	1,200	1	5	▲ 1,200.0
ENERGYH	52	53	51	35	556,976	▲ 51.0
GPI	48.5	49.0	48	106	6,197,877	▲ 48.0
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 93.0
Oil & Gas	1,359	165	7,168,858	982.39	▲ 2.40	

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
KFOUC	310	310	310	2	25,025	▲ 310.0
BPC	570	570	570	7	152,080	▲ 580.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	— 0.0
ALQURAIN	345	345	340	10	300,665	▲ 345.0
Basic Materials	1,220	19	477,770	1319.82	▼ -8.80	

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
KCEM	485	520	485	2	740	▲ 520.0
CABLE	475	475	465	13	99,054	▲ 470.0
SHIP	230	230	226	3	20,050	▲ 226.0
PCEM	960	960	960	7	64,972	▲ 960.0
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 430.0
MRC	78	78	78	1	50	▲ 78.0
ACICO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 290.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 208.0
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 146.0
NICBM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 214.0
EQUIPMENT	62	64	61	83	2,641,080	▲ 61.0
NCCI	91	91	91	1	9,500	▲ 91.0
GYPESUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	— 0.0
SALBOOKH	70	70	69	9	210,300	▲ 70.0
AGLTY	640	650	640	13	121,114	▲ 650.0
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 285.0
CLEANING	52	52	51	14	340,000	▲ 52.0
KSLL	65	65	65	3	52,500	▲ 65.0
KUMPS	174	174	168	3	10,000	▲ 168.0
HUMANSOFT	3,300	3,320	3,300	44	279,415	▲ 3,300.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 170.0
GFC	62	62	62	3	27,000	▲ 62.0
MAYADEEN	30.5	31.0	30	44	1,633,303	▲ 30.5
CGC	500	510	500	7	100,010	▲ 510.0

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
SOKOUK	54	55	51	289	22,417,807	▲ 51.0
KRE	67	67	65	29	2,005,765	▲ 67.0
URC	102	102	100	3	927	▲ 102.0
NRE	104	106	104	18	667,838	▲ 106.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 390.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 430.0
AREEC	170	170	170	1	350	▲ 170.0
MASSALEH	60	64	59	152	8,540,816	▲ 64.0
ARABREC	41.0	41.5	40	134	6,632,674	▲ 40.0
ERESCO	48.0	48.5	46	205	11,796,099	▲ 46.0
MBANEE	820	830	820	3	360,254	▲ 830.0
INJAZZAT	92	92	92	1	1,000	▲ 92.0
INVESTORS	28.5	29.0	28	117	11,803,346	▲ 28.5
IRC	39.0	39.0	38	19	468,500	▲ 38.5

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
ALTUARIA	77	79	77	12	273,950	▲ 79.0
SANAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 56.0
AAYANRE	87	88	87	2	113,000	▲ 88.0
AOAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 82.0
ALAQARIA	45.0	45.5	44	59	2,577,892	▲ 44.5
MAZAYA	122	122	120	8	324,600	▲ 122.0
ADNC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	— 0.0
THEMAR	90	90	90	1	60,515	▲ 90.0
TJARA	57	63	57	3	2,653	▲ 63.0
TAAMEER	52	53	49	519	29,285,114	▲ 50.0
ARKAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 84.0
ARGAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 190.0
ABYAAR	30.5	30.5	29	104	11,708,290	▲ 30.0
MUNSHAAT	64	67	63	214	11,482,034	▲ 64.0
FIRSTDUBAI	65	65	62	26	663,000	▲ 63.0
KBT	57	57	55	42	4,063,135	▲ 56.0
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 325.0
MENA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	— 0.0
ALMUDON	48.0	48.0	47	66	3,888,699	▲ 47.5
MARAKEZ	53	55	52	118	2,722,297	▲ 55.0
REMAL	79	81	78	332	16,183,724	▲ 80.0
AWJ	92	92	90	24	732,071	▲ 91.0

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
Real Estate						
KINV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 102.0
FACIL	186	186	182	26	378,891	▲ 186.0
IFA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	— 0.0
NINV	118	118	112	68	1,474,595	▲ 112.0
KPROJ	425	425	410	55	1,498,850	▲ 410.0
COAST	51	51	50	94	9,262,384	▲ 51.0
SECH	51	51	50	25	1,185,700	▲ 51.0
SGC	99	99	99	1	53	▲ 99.0
ARZAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	— 0.0
MARKAZ	100	104	100	2	10,600	▲ 104.0
KMEFIC	32.0	33.5	32	4	32,200	▲ 33.5
ALAMAN	51	52	51	3	32,099	▲ 52.0
ALOLA	50	51	50	17	823,550	▲ 50.0
ALMAL	21.0	21.0	21	53	3,124,202	▲ 21.0
GIH	49.0	49.5	48	89	3,372,540	▲ 48.5
AAYAN	51	51	50	214	24,044,712	▲ 51.0
BAYANINV	53	53	51	26	761,956	▲ 52.0
OSOUL	62	65	62	2	1,967	▲ 65.0
KFC	52	52	51	2	4,000	▲ 51.0
KAMCO	93	93	92	26	109,350	▲ 93.0
NIH	66	66	65	4	70,500	▲ 65.0
UNICAP	48.5	49.0	48	13	1,160,200	▲ 49.0
MADAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	— 0.0
ALDEERA	38.0	38.0	38	19	307,157	▲ 38.0
ALSALAM	54	54	52	18	681,549	▲ 52.0
EKTITAB	42.5	42.5	41	52	2,121,997	▲ 41.0
ALMADINA	53	53	52	20	966,850	▲ 52.0
NOOR	53	54	52	24	855,605	▲ 54.0
TAMINV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 315.0
EXCH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	— 0.0
KSHC	43.0	43.5	42	163	6,151,257	▲ 41.5
ASIYA	43.5	44.0	43	28	556,762	▲ 43.0
GNAHC	43.5	43.5	42	27	1,454,747	▲ 42.5
AMWAL	77	80	76	40	185,625	▲ 76.0
ALIMTIAZ	190	192	186	191	21,260,615	▲ 188.0
MANAZEL	60	61	58	120	8,824,742	▲ 58.0
NIND	126	126	124	18	660,139	▲ 124.0
BIHC	23.5	24.0	23	29	1,063,910	▲ 24.0
SENERGY	48.0	48.0	46	56	1,283,950	▲ 47.5
AGHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 106.0
KPPC	52	52	51	13	410,008	▲ 52.0
TAHSSILAT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 30.5
JEERANH	45.0	45.5	44	4	108,500	▲ 44.0
EKHOLDING	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	▲ 200.0
GPH	192	196	186	83	627,085	▲ 190.0
INOVEST	108	110	108	12	531,050	▲ 110.0

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
Financial Services						
Investment Instruments	0	0	0	0	0	▲ 1081.97
ASC	290	290	290	1	10	▲ 290.0
OSOS	150	156	150	6	30,005	▲ 154.0
HAYATCOMM	90	92	85	64	441,785	▲ 90.0

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
Technology						



AL-SAYER PARTNERS FOR EFFORTS TO ADDRESS AIR POLLUTION SCIENTIFIC WORKSHOP AND CONFERENCE TO RAISE ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS

KUWAIT: Al-Sayer Group Holding Company Corporate Excellence Occupational Health Safety and Environment (OHSE) in cooperation with Rental Cars Division, Group Marketing & Sales have sponsored the Indoor Air Quality Workshop & Conference at KISR (Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research).

The event was attended by Director General of KISR Dr Samira Omar, Eng Ibrahim Al-Fouzan Business Director Group Service Division Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons with the presence of a delegation of researchers and scientists from several countries who presented 35 scientific papers related to latest scientific research on indoor air quality.

The main objective of the workshop was to support and enhance cooperation and exchange of experience among scientific institutions in all parts of the world and to show the results of scientific research on indoor air pollution. On this occasion Dr. Samira Omar said "Any imbalance in the standards of internal air clarity and humidity will cause unhealthy conditions leading to permanent or temporary

diseases that will affect also the human productivity."

The workshop benefitted the participants to gather in-depth knowledge about different kinds of pollutants such as SO₂, NO_x, O₃, CO, CO₂, all particulate matters such as PM₁, PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀ and TSP) and their characteristics and effects on the indoor air quality.

Al-Sayer Group exhibited an exclusive Prius display stand along with a test drive session to-and-from KISR location offering visitors a spectacular opportunity to experience the revolutionary technology of Prius - world's first mass-produced hybrid.

According to Eng. Ibrahim Al-Fouzan "We highly appreciate the initiative of KISR in conducting this event to raise awareness about air pollution on the environment. Toyota, the pioneers of hybrid revolution in its Environmental Challenge 2050 also has adopted a long term strategic approach in this regard setting challenges that it will undertake to help reduce the negative impacts of automobiles on the global environment to as close to zero as possible, and to contribute to the creation of a

sustainable society." As of January 31, 2017, Toyota estimates that the use of Toyota's HVs in lieu of conventional gasoline-powered vehicles of similar size and driving per-

formance has resulted in approximately 77 million fewer tons of CO₂ emissions and has saved approximately 29 million kiloliters of gasoline.



MARKETS DIGEST ANOTHER TRUMP VOLTE-FACE

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

KUWAIT: If markets learnt anything new this week, it is that US President Trump does not favor a strong dollar, high interest rates, and may actually offer Janet Yellen a second term. He also recognized that China wasn't a currency manipulator, and last but not least has been struggling to enact policies that will boost US growth.

The failure of the healthcare bill along the mixed economic data and the latest geopolitical rising risks have done most of the damage since Trump's inauguration despite global equity markets continuing their march into new record highs. Another key change this week came after the meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday. In addition to all the praises for the Chinese President, Trump went on saying they had "very good chemistry" and that China was sincere in helping defuse the US showdown with North Korea.

As US yields have continued to slide since the peak achieved in the beginning of 2017, investors have received ample support to shift to higher-yielding currencies and to seek more risk despite global political risks on the rise. Add on this market expectations of a third Fed hike this year fading significantly this week, investors had sufficient reasons to push the US dollar down in search of higher yielding assets.

There are signs however that the deflation trade that was attributed to Trump have started to fade. As expectations had lifted major assets classes higher, the biggest beneficiaries have been emerging markets, commodities, and mainly banks assets prices. The biggest losers from the deflation trade have been US bond yields which have seen some of the sharpest increases in percentage terms in history. Historically, when yields have risen in percentage terms as fast as they have this time, that rise was typically followed by a recession.

In summary, markets were dominated this week by geopolitical risks on the rise as well as new contradictions from President Trump relative to his own campaign rhetoric.

The US dollar started the week at the highs after last week's FOMC minutes revealed the Fed's plan to reduce its balance sheet. After numerous campaign promises to remove Janet Yellen from the helm of the Fed, Trump mentioned this week that the dollar was too strong and that he would like to see interest rates remain low to support the economy. He even went on and said he was open to re-nominating Yellen for another term as Chair of the Federal Reserve.

These changes in rhetoric, combined with the recent failure in health care and the internal struggles within his administration, have led markets to question whether Trump would still be able to deliver on many of his promises.

On another secondary front, and less than two weeks to the first round of the French elections, the dovish ECB rhetoric and the increased anxiety around the election remain the two drivers of European economics this week.

As it is universally agreed, a Marine Le Pen win would be bad for the euro, and is likely to

drag EUR/USD below parity very quickly. Any other result is likely to support the currency. As we mentioned in the past, the ECB seems to be in a wait and see mode following the French elections results.

The Sterling Pound continues to defy gravity on the back of resilient economic data, even as Brexit negotiations get under way. So far, the Bank of England seems to be concerned about the soft wage growth, however upbeat over the resilience of consumer spending and further employment gains. In summary, the Pound rallied this week on the back of the US dollar's weakness. The positive inflation and labor figures, while marginal, also aided on the rise. The GBP/USD managed to rally over 1.25% starting the week at 1.2379 and closing at 1.2523.

The Japanese yen was one of the biggest movers this week in currency markets as investors fled to the safe haven as geopolitical tensions were on the rise. Furthermore, speaking to parliament, Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda offered reassurance as to what the bank will do with the government debt on its balance sheet when it has to exit its ultra-easy policy. "We have a lot of measures at our disposal" Kuroda said, and the BOJ would be able to manage its exit smoothly, including reducing the size of its holdings of bonds purchased in recent years to stimulate economic growth. The USD/JPY opened the week at 111.09 and closed at a five-month low of 108.64.

In the commodity markets, oil's longest rally this year stalled after government data Wednesday showed US output expanded to the highest level in more than a year, countering a decline in stockpiles from last week. While last week's drop in stockpiles was the biggest this year, and there's increasing confidence that global producers are likely to extend their output-cut deal beyond June, the increase in US production rapidly replacing those cuts.

Moreover, OPEC surprised markets earlier in the week as it revealed producers cut production in March more than pledged under their supply curb agreement. Brent and West Texas both gained around 1.25 percent to close the week at \$55.89 and \$53.18 respectively. Gold prices on the other hand, surged 2.64 percent on the back of heightened geopolitical tensions to close the week at \$1,285.

Yellen view

According to the Fed Chair Yellen, the plans to raise US interest rates gradually are aimed at sustaining full employment and near 2 percent inflation without letting the economy overheat. Unemployment, at 4.5 percent, is little bit below the rate that most Fed officials think signals full employment, and inflation is "reasonably close" to the Fed's 2 percent goal, she said.

With the economy expected to continue to grow at a moderate pace, she said, the Fed is now shifting its focus to allow the economy to "kind of coast to give it some gas but not so

much that we are pressing down hard on the accelerator". Yellen's comments did not offer details on the timing of the rate hikes, or of the Fed's eventual reduction of its \$4.5 trillion balance sheet. "We think a gradual path of increases in short-term interest rates can get us to where we need to be, but we don't want to wait too long to have that happen", she said.

Wages need to rise

The unemployment rate continues to drift lower, however wage pressures remain low, mainly a function of weak productivity growth. For wages to rise more meaningfully, the labor market needs to tighten further, and productivity growth needs to pick up. Without these two factors, wage growth is unlikely to expand at a significantly faster pace. Over the last five years, nonfarm business productivity has expanded at just a 0.7 percent annualized rate, the slowest pace of growth since the five years ending in 1982, a period which coincided with near double-digit annualized inflation gains.



On the consumer front, US sentiment advanced to a three-month high in April as Americans' optimism about their current financial situation and the economy reached the strongest point since 2000. 52 percent of respondents to the University of Michigan survey reported that their finances had recently improved and 82 percent showed favorable home buying attitudes. Perceptions of favorable conditions for purchases of durable goods and homes are signs of an improving labor market.

Retail sales fall again

Last but not least, sales at US retailers declined in March for a second month with sales declining in six of 13 major retail categories. The decline was led by softening automobile sales which fell 1.2 percent. Excluding automobiles, gasoline, building materials and food services, retail sales rebounded 0.5 percent after falling 0.2 percent in February. Total sales from January 2017 through March 2017

however, were up 5.4 percent from the same period a year ago.

Consumer Prices also took a dive this month and unexpectedly dropped 0.3 percent in March after months of progress. The biggest driver for the headline plunge was energy, which declined 3.2 percent, with the gasoline index falling 6.2 percent, and other major energy component indexes decreasing as well. Excluding food and energy, the Core index was expected to increase 0.2 percent however, that too saw a drop of 0.1 percent.

It is all about the French election

Less than two weeks to the first round of the French elections, the dovish ECB rhetoric and increased anxiety around the election are the two main drivers of European price action this week.

Although a market friendly outcome for the election could result in the currency moving back higher, the medium term will depend largely on the ECB. For now, the elections polls

BoE in a dilemma

UK labor market continue to demonstrate a strong employment picture, however a weak pay growth. Although the unemployment rate was unchanged at 4.7 percent, yet total and regular pay only just matched inflation in February rising 2.3 percent on a quarterly basis and 2.2 percent on a yearly basis against inflation of 2.3 percent in February.

As unemployment was unchanged at 4.7 percent, employment growth remained strong at 1.0 percent year on year, although this rate of growth has slowed from its peak in 2014.

According to the latest report from the BoE, equilibrium unemployment now stands at 4.5 percent. Although the current rate is almost at full employment, there seems little sign of that translating into stronger pay growth. In order to move to a more neutral stance over the monetary policy, the BoE has stated it would need to see pay growth picking up further.

As inflation increased to 2.3 percent in March on food prices rising at the fastest pace during the past three years, rising food and clothing prices are likely to start putting household budgets under pressure.

Australia employment

Employment in Australia greatly exceeded estimates in March increasing by 60,900. Economists expected a 20,000 increase only. The lift in employment was the largest since September 2015, and the sixth consecutive increase. From a year earlier, employment grew by 146,000, or 1.22 percent. Despite the increase in employment, the unemployment rate held steady at 5.9 percent due to a rise in the participation rate. Total employment now stands at 12.06 million, the highest level on record.

China trade surplus

China's March trade data came above expectations and reversed last month's deficit, as exports rose 16.4 percent y/y and imports were up 20.3 percent y/y, both in USD terms. China recorded a trade surplus of \$65.6 billion.

In details, Chinese trade surplus with the US rose in March to \$17.7bn and almost reached \$50 billion for the first quarter as a whole. President Trump has backtracked recently over his criticism of China's trade issues and said this week the US would not be labelling China as a currency manipulator. On a different front, Chinese consumer prices weakened in March, although little changed compared to a year ago, rising by 0.9 percent year on year while producer prices rose at a steady pace. Producer prices on the other hand had their biggest expansion since the financial crisis surging 7.8 percent. Producer prices have risen last seven months, overcoming more than four years of deflation.

Kuwait
Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30485
The USDKWD opened at 0.30485 yesterday morning.

KIB'S HEAD OF INFORMATION SECURITY WINS TWO MESA AWARDS



KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that Basil Al-Suwaidan, Head of Information Security at the Bank, recently picked up two awards at the Middle East Security Awards (MESA) 2017. Al-Suwaidan was named Information Security Executive of the Year in the Banking & Financial Services Sector by (ISC)2, a leading non-profit organization which specializes in information security education and certifications and also won the Most Recognized 100 — Chief Information Security Officer Award (CISO 100). - an award recognizing the top 100 heads of information security across the Middle East. Al-Suwaidan received his awards at a ceremony held in Dubai, which was attended by a number of information security spe-

cialists and experts from renowned banks, private and public organizations from across the Middle East. This is the second consecutive year that Al-Suwaidan has been honored by MESA, once again demonstrating KIB's commitment towards employing secure, high-quality Information Security Management Systems. On this occasion, Al-Suwaidan stated, "It is a great honor to be receiving these prestigious awards, Information Security Executive of the Year 2017 and CISO 100 for the second time. I am proud to say that the management at KIB constantly strives to maintain the highest security standards to safeguard customer data. Our team works to develop and maintain robust information security methodologies and

policies to ensure the utmost privacy and confidentiality in all our banking process, as well as to ensure the safety and security of KIB's alternate banking channels." Al-Suwaidan added that KIB continuously seeks to uphold the highest levels of banking security by implementing the best practices in information security; ensuring that KIB's banking services remain safe and secure for all customers. With this recognition, KIB adds another achievement to its outstanding track record, underscoring its commitment to implement the best and most innovative banking solutions that meet the highest international standards, especially with regards to reducing information security threats.

AL-MAZAYA HOLDING, BOUBYAN BANK SIGN PARTNERSHIP DEAL

PARTNERSHIP ENSURES AFFORDABLE OWNERSHIP WITH EASY CREDIT

KUWAIT: Al-Mazaya Holding and Boubyan Bank have signed a partnership agreement whereby the Kuwaiti bank will provide credit facilities of up to KD 70,000 for property ownership solutions across Oman, Dubai and Istanbul.

The agreement is the first such alliance between a real estate developer and a Kuwaiti Islamic bank to provide affordable proper-

ties will provide up to KD 70,000 and free debt insurance with no salary transfer required. This means that the credit is available to all, including those who do not have accounts at Boubyan, explained Al-Tuwajiri.

"This type of credit is subject to all standard loan-agreement terms and conditions, including minimum wage requirements. The repayment

market over the past few years by providing different investment solutions. This is especially evident in the countries where Kuwaitis are particularly top performers like the GCC states and Turkey," Al-Tuwajiri noted.

"Al-Mazaya Holding has a track record that includes significant real estate enterprises and boasts an enviable brand recognition," said Ibrahim Al-Saq'abi, Al-Mazaya

outside Kuwait has been taken following well-calculated, thought-out studies on the supply and demand mechanism compared with obstacles and challenges faced by clients.

"We have identified the consumer need for a reliable real estate product outside of Kuwait with easy, fast and long-term Sharia-compliant financing patterns," noted the CEO of Al-Mazaya.

Boubyan's clients and clients of other banks will be able to buy distinguished properties in Dubai, Istanbul and across Oman, which are all markets that have been carefully selected by us, following comprehensive feasibility studies. This partnership with one of the major local banks in Kuwait, provides Al-Mazaya untapped marketing opportunities and offer their clients better investment prospects with distinctive financing options, enabling them to own different types of property, said Al-Saq'abi. "Boubyan is a pioneering bank in Kuwait, boasting highly-qualified human resources and integrated management capabilities that have gained the trust of partners and clients alike," he added.

Al-Saq'abi concluded that the real estate products planned under the agreement include flats with different spaces in Dubai, Istanbul and Oman starting from KD 29,000. "The client can choose between completed flats, readily available for immediate delivery and others which are still under construction and scheduled to be delivered in one or two years. Therefore, we are providing opportunities for different segments of clients in accordance with their financial capabilities and readiness for immediate or future investment."



ties with easy and swift financing. It was signed on April 15th at the bank's premises in the presence of Boubyan CEO, Adel Al-Majid; Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Abdulla Al-Najran Al-Tuwajiri; Al-Mazaya Holding Board Chairman, Rashid Al-Nafisi; and Group CEO of Al-Mazaya Holding, Eng. Ibrahim Al-Saq'abi as well as the executive teams of the two parties.

Under the agreement, the bank

options are flexible and range from 12 months to a maximum of 15 years," he said. Such a partnership will provide clients with valuable investment opportunities in areas of real estate, considered now to be the best kind of business investment as well as an opportunity to own property outside of their country of origin, he added.

"Al-Mazaya Holding has proved its worth and value in the Kuwait

CEO. The company has successfully constructed 1,000 residential properties which has earned the leading developer a highly-acclaimed reputation for premium property handovers.

"Current market conditions require reliable, stable, trustworthy credit facilities for both developers and end-users," added Al-Saq'abi. The decision to provide financing for property ownership



AUB HOLDS EVENT AT THE GATE MALL ON AL-HASSAD ACCOUNT

KUWAIT: As part of the new marketing campaign organized by Ahli United Bank across various commercial centers in Kuwait to showcase the Al-Hassad account, the Bank announced a new activity at The Gate Mall between 13th and 15th April 2017.

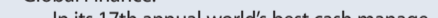
The activity, which focuses on the definition of the Al-Hassad account, the Islamic accountant Program, features interactive competitions for all age groups, in which cash prizes, instant coupons and iPhones will be distributed. The competitions are designed to be easy and simple, so that the largest number of participants have a chance to win any of the valuable prizes depending on their answers, which are related to the Al-Hassad account.

This activity comes after the success of a similar activity by the Bank in Avenues Mall, which was held twice during March. The participants expressed their satisfaction with the competition, prizes and surprises they received.

"This activity raises awareness about Al-Hassad Islamic Saving Account, which is considered the first reward program in Kuwait in line with Islamic Sharia law and which offers annual cash prizes worth KD 3.4 million. The prizes include, the grand quarterly prizes of KD 250,000, plus weekly prizes worth KD 50,000. Al-Hassad customers in Kuwait and Bahrain are eligible to participate in Al-Hassad draws under general terms and conditions." The Bank said in a press release.

GULF BANK BAGS COVETED GLOBAL FINANCE AWARD

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is proud to be named 'Best Treasury and Cash Management Bank 2017 - Kuwait' from Global Finance, one of the world's leading monthly financial magazines. This award recognizes providers who offer sophisticated solutions with an innovative technology backbone that is also client friendly.



Commenting on this international recognition, Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager-Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank said: "As technology continues to transform the treasury and cash management landscape, Gulf Bank has worked to improve its services and offerings to clients for cash management. We are pleased to be recognized from among our peers as the 'Best Treasury and Cash Management Bank in Kuwait' from Global Finance."

In its 17th annual world's best cash management and provider awards, Global Finance selected an overall global winner and a global winner in seven key sectors. It also selected winners in 55 countries and regional winners in North America, Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, Middle East, Africa and the Nordic region. Additionally, in each region, winning banks have been selected across five categories encompassing cash management, payments and collections, liquidity, working capital optimization and short-term investments/ money

market funds. Global Finance uses a multi-tiered assessment process which includes a readers' poll, input from industry analysts, corporate executives, technology experts and independent research in order to select the best providers of treasury and cash management services. A variety of subjective and objective stringent criteria were considered, including: profitability, market share and reach, customer service, competitive pricing, product innovation and the extent to which treasury and cash management providers have successfully differentiated themselves from their competitors around core service provision.

Global Finance, founded in 1987, is a monthly magazine that has a circulation in 192 countries.

It offers analysis and articles that are the heritage of 30 years of experience in international financial markets. Global Finance is headquartered in New York, with offices around the world. Global Finance awards and recognition programs are backed by a 30-year legacy of editorial integrity. Corporate and financial readers rely on them as the trusted standard of excellence for the financial industry.

مبروك اليوم يومك! Congratulations today is your day!

5000

دك KD

The winners for this week:

Sunday 9/4/2017 Kaleef Mahloot Drakh	الفائزون لهذا الاسبوع: الثلاثاء 2017/4/9 خليفة مخلوت دراخ
Monday 10/4/2017 Suhad Warsam Qaleenlah	الاثنين 2017/4/10 سهاد وارسام قالينله
Tuesday 11/4/2017 Ansam Abdullah Al-Mutawaa	الثلاثاء 2017/4/11 انعام عبدالله المطوع
Wednesday 12/4/2017 Ahmad Adel Al-Dulaimi	الأربعاء 2017/4/12 احمد عادل الدليمي
Thursday 13/4/2017 Abdullateef Mohammad Al-Hamad	الخميس 2017/4/13 عبدالله طيف محمد الحمد

BURGAN BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF YAWMI 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. Kaleef Mahloot Drakh
2. Suhad Warsam Qaleenlah
3. Ansam Abdullah Al-Mutawaa
4. Ahmad Adel Al-Dulaimi
5. Abdullateef Mohammad Al-Hamad

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.

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.

Amazing news from Al-Tijari...

Al-Najma account gives you the biggest daily prize in Kuwait!

KD 7000

AL TIJARI ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-NAJMA ACCOUNT DRAW

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the Al-Najma Account daily draw yesterday. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry represented by Abdullaziz Ashkanani.

The winners of the Al Najma daily draw are: Mahdi Yahya Shaker— KD 7000, Hassan Ahmed Mohammed Hassan— KD 7000, Wajdy Jaballah Jers Botros— KD 7000, Yacoub Nawaf Al-Enezi — KD 7000, Ahmed Mousa Ahmed Hefni — 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. With Al-Najma you have more chances to win greater prizes

* Each KD 25 kept in your account gives you one chance to win

* Each KD 25 kept in your account for one week will give you a chance to enter the daily draw.

* Each KD 25 kept in your account for 3 months will give you chance to enter the quarterly draw.

Additional features

- * ATM card
- * Issue a credit card against your account
- * Obtain all CBK banking services
- You deserve to win! Open an account now with just KD 500 and you will enter all draws.

2017 NISSAN ALTIMA 06 LOADED WITH FEATURES FOR JUST KD 5,999

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the authorized dealer of Nissan vehicles in the State of Kuwait, offers customers for a limited period of time the 2017 Nissan Altima with exceptional features for just KD 5,999, to break all norms.

Nissan Al-Babtain presents customers with a chance to purchase the new 2017 Nissan Altima with an exceptional price for a vehicle that surpasses others with a variety of valuable features and much more for a special price.

The 2017 Nissan Altima was debuted in Nissan Al-Babtain showroom, with its fresh new appearance the "Energetic Flow" exterior styling theme and "Gliding Wing" interior layout, "Class Leading Fuel Economy" and "Improved Driving Dynamics and Safety Technology" in mid-2016.

The KD 5,999 exceptional price for the 2017 Nissan Altima vehicle

includes, the most dramatic change with its energetic flow design, a 2.5L - 182Hp engine, a new 17-inch machine-finish aluminum-alloy wheel design, owners of this Nissan Altima can enjoy the comfort of front & rear parking sensor to always assist, remote engine starter, colored monitor with rear view camera and most importantly customers driving the Nissan Altima 2017 have the privilege to enjoy their ride with audio system & cruise control steering wheel switches with Bluetooth.

Nissan Al-Babtain is known for always providing customers with exceptional offers and its surprises throughout the year; customers are welcome now to take advantage of this special price available for a limited time at all Nissan Al-Babtain's showrooms located in Al-Rai and Al-Ahmadi area and enjoy all these valuable features.



www.burgan.com

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY CAN LEAD TO NEW WORLD ORDER

By Ziad Salameh

Technology and digital economies can help humanity emerge from many of its present-day challenges but partnership with government, business, citizens, consumer is crucial.



One of the most significant changes in the coming years will be the dramatic increase in global connectivity via the Internet. Internet of Things and related technologies will help to connect people, data and devices in all countries. Put together, the potential for countries to prosper in the coming decade is significant.

In this Digital Age that we have entered, 500 billion people and things will be connected by 2030.

Countries and regions that were left behind in the Information Age will have the ability to move forward. They will have data and knowledge to make the right decisions helping their lives to change for the better. Standards of healthcare, education, and transportation will improve in these countries, that were once left behind.

As an example, across Middle East and Africa where we are looking at the highest growth rate in the world, 2.4 billion new devices and connections and 445 million new Internet users will be added by 2020. However, all these changes cannot occur without the network. Digital networks have the capacity to connect every person, every country, and every connected device.

Fourth Industrial Revolution

Those countries that foster digital activity will see new industries emerge, and experience accelerated development of traditional markets. This is why Broadband Internet has been categorized as one of the world's most important general-purpose technologies, with the capability to dramatically impact social structures and economies.

But even with Broadband Internet, regions like

Middle East and Africa still have some way to go. Only 1 percent of the broadband connections will have a speed in excess of 100Mbps by 2020.

All these changes have brought the world to a tipping point. We are now in the process of transitioning into the Fourth Industrial revolution that is being built on digital economies and technology infrastructures. In this world, growth rates can be exponential and the way we live, work and relate to each other are going to change fundamentally.

Cisco has developed a Country Digitisation Acceleration strategy. Connecting the unconnected, accelerating GDP growth, creating new jobs, and building a sustainable innovation ecosystem are core principles that define digitisation. Country Digitisation Acceleration is a long-term commitment with national leadership, industry and academia to deliver outcomes faster and effectively.

By accelerating the national digitisation agenda, Cisco can help countries grow, create new jobs, provide innovation, and invest in a sustainable innovation ecosystem.

The challenges confronting the world are complex and cannot be solved by any single government, industry or organization. But these prob-

lems are not insurmountable, and one way to move forward is to connect social mindsets of young workers to power of technology.

Never before have people and companies been so motivated to help the world. A growing number of today's new workers believe that work and social responsibility go hand in hand. A large majority believe that business has at least as much potential as government to solve society's problems.

A new economy is taking shape, that requires innovation in governance and regulation. Offering it the right conditions will be crucial to ensuring sustainability. If we want people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information societies, where all have access to digital technologies, legal frameworks need to be put in place.

All stakeholders including governments, businesses, technical community, citizens, and consumers play a role in building trust and confidence in global networks. The global Internet must be allowed to further develop without obstacles.

— Ziad Salameh, Managing Director and General Manager, West Region, Cisco Middle East.

HYDROGEN FUEL CELL CARS FACE OBSTACLE

DETROIT: Hydrogen fuel cell cars could one day challenge electric cars in the race for pollution-free roads - but only if more stations are built to fuel them. Honda, Toyota and Hyundai have leased a few hundred fuel cell vehicles over the past three years, and expect to lease well over 1,000 this year. But for now, those leases are limited to California, which is home to most of the 34 public hydrogen fueling stations in the US. Undaunted, automakers are investing heavily in the technology. General Motors recently supplied the US Army with a fuel cell pickup, and GM and Honda are collaborating on a fuel cell system due out by 2020. Hyundai will introduce a longer-range fuel cell SUV next year. "We've clearly left the science project stage and the technology is viable," said Charles Freese, who heads GM's fuel cell business.

Like pure electric cars, fuel cell cars run quietly and emission-free. But they have some big advantages. Fuel cell cars can be refueled as quickly as gasoline-powered cars. By contrast, it takes nine hours to fully recharge an all-electric Chevrolet Bolt using a 240-volt home charger. Fuel cells cars can also travel further between fill-ups.

But getting those fill-ups presents the biggest obstacle. Fueling stations cost up to \$2 million to build, so companies have been reluctant to build them unless more fuel cell cars are on the road. But automakers don't want to build cars that consumers can't fuel.

The US Department of Energy lists just 34 public hydrogen fueling stations in the country; all but three are in California. By comparison, the US has 15,703 public electric charging stations, which can be installed for a fraction of the cost of hydrogen stations. There are also

millions of garages where owners can plug their cars in overnight. As a result, US consumers bought nearly 80,000 electric cars last year, but just 1,082 fuel cell vehicles, according to WardsAuto. That's why automakers will keep hedging their bets and offer electric vehicles alongside hydrogen ones. Honda began leasing the 2017 Clarity fuel cell sedan earlier this year; about 100 are already on the road. At this week's New York Auto Show, the company also introduced electric and plug-in hybrid versions of the Clarity. The plug-in hybrid can go 42 miles in electric mode before a small gas engine kicks in, Honda says. The all-electric Clarity can go 111 miles on a charge. Both will go on sale later this year.

Diverse market

"We think going forward the powertrain market is going to be very diverse," said Steve Center, vice president of the environmental business development office at American Honda. Hyundai's Genesis luxury brand also blended technology with its GV80 SUV prototype, which was revealed in New York. The GV80 is a plug-in fuel cell vehicle, which means it would get power from stored electricity as well as hydrogen. It's not clear when - or if - the GV80 will go on sale.

Fuel cell cars create electricity to power the battery and motor by mixing hydrogen and oxygen in the specially treated plates that combine to form the fuel cell stack. The technology isn't new. GM introduced the first fuel cell vehicle, the Electrován, in 1966. It only seated two; the back of the van housed large steel tanks of hydrogen and oxygen. It went about 150 miles between refueling, and its hydrogen tank exploded on at least one occasion. —AP

AMAZON, FLIPKART BATTLE IN INDIA FOR E-COMMERCE'S 'LAST FRONTIER'

INDIA MARKET SIZE SEEN BETWEEN \$50BN AND \$120BN BY 2020

NEW DELHI: With 100 million new internet users every year, Amazon is betting big on India, but a major new investment in homegrown rival Flipkart means the battle to dominate the fast-growing e-commerce market is set to heat up.

Flipkart announced this week that top international companies including Microsoft, eBay and China's Tencent had pledged investments totalling \$1.4 billion, among the largest sums ever raised by an Indian start-up. The 10-year-old e-commerce company needs all the help it can get to compete with Amazon after the Seattle-based giant made India's 1.25 billion inhabitants a global strategic priority, earmarking \$5 billion in investment funds.

"They need to have a substantial amount of cash in order to fight in the market with Amazon," said Jaideep Mehta, South Asia director at the International Data Corporation. Every three seconds, an Indian connects to the internet for the first time, according to Google. One in three Indians currently uses the internet, but the number is forecast to swell by 300 million by 2020, mainly due to growing smartphone use. McKinsey analyst Ashish Tuteja said 70 percent of online sales in India were done on a smartphone.

"It's very much a mobile-first market," he said. Projections for the size of the market by 2020 differ wildly, ranging from \$50 billion to \$120 billion.

But all agree that it will be worth considerably more than the current \$15 billion, thanks to an expanding middle class and rapidly growing internet use. Amazon only opened its doors in India in 2013, but quickly overtook local start-up Snapdeal to become the second-biggest player.



This file photo taken on October 30, 2015 shows Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder of Flipkart Binny Bansal speaking during the launch of Flipkart's Largest Fulfillment Centre on the outskirts of Hyderabad. —AFP

E-retailers in India typically adopt a "market-place" structure, acting as platforms that connect buyers and sellers rather than stocking their own products. Amazon marketed its services aggressively, touring markets around the country with its "chai carts" to sell the idea of e-commerce to small traders over a cup of tea. Under another initiative dubbed "Feet-on-Street", an Amazon employee would be sent to photograph their products and help them to sign up online.

Alibaba ambush

Flipkart, Amazon and Snapdeal are now engaged in a price war, with each Indian festival an occasion for aggressive cuts. "At some point, they will have to make money," said Mehta-something experts say will necessitate consolidation of the sector.

That process has already begun, with Flipkart absorbing two rival portals, Myntra and Jabong. According to Indian media, a deal for Flipkart to buy Snapdeal is next. India also represents a chance for a rematch after Amazon lost out to Alibaba in China. Although currently more focused on Southeast Asia, billionaire Jack Ma's group has made no secret of its interest in India.

The Chinese giant has taken a stake in Indian online payments company Paytm and has ambitions to develop as an online sales platform in its own right. For Amazon, India is the "last big frontier", said Mehta. "Amazon is a 100-billion-dollar-plus retailer. To keep driving growth, they need to keep leadership positions in large markets outside the US," he said. "They will continue to be very committed." —AFP

FINANCIAL FIRMS HIT WITH MILLION DOLLAR LOSSES PER CYBERSECURITY INCIDENT

DUBAI: The costs associated with cyberattacks on the financial sector are rising as organizations face increasingly sophisticated threats. New research by Kaspersky Lab and B2B International reveals the scale and impact of attacks, with financial firms facing losses of nearly a million dollars (\$926,000) on average for each cybersecurity incident they face.



Veniamin Levstov

The staggering figure is revealed as part of Financial Institutions Security Risks 2016, a survey of finance professionals highlighting the main security challenges for banks and financial institutions around the world and the financial costs of specific cyberattacks. The most costly type of incident for financial organizations are threats that exploit vulnerabilities in point-of-sale (POS) systems, in which an organization typically loses \$2,086,000. Attacks on mobile devices are the second most costly (\$1,641,000), followed by targeted attacks (\$1,305,000).

Compliance is the main driver for increasing investment in IT security in banks and financial institutions. However, the study found that 63% of organizations believe that being compliant is not enough to be secure. Another significant reason for spending more on security is growing infrastructure complexity. For example, an average financial firm adopts virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) and manages approximately 10,000 end user devices with roughly a half of them being mobile smartphones and tablets.

Insufficient internal expertise, top management directives and business expansion are also among the top reasons for a budget increase. In general, investing more in security appears to be inevitable to a clear majority of financial firms as 83 percent of them expect an increase in their IT security budgets.

Veniamin Levstov, Vice President, Enterprise Business at Kaspersky Lab commented: "Given the substantial monetary losses from cyberattacks, it is not surprising that financial organizations are looking to increase spending on security. We believe successful security strategies for financial organizations lie in a more balanced approach to allocating resources - not just spending on compliance, but also investing more in protection from advanced targeted attacks, paying more attention to personal security awareness and getting better insights on the

industry-specific threats." The study shows that financial firms seek to address security challenges by getting more threat intelligence and conducting security audits, with 73 percent considering this measure effective. However, organizations from the financial sector are less inclined to use third-party security services with only 53 percent of those surveyed perceiving it as an effective approach.

Kaspersky Lab's experts recommend five key considerations for security strategies adopted by financial organizations in 2017.

1. Beware of the targeted attacks
Targeted attacks on financial organizations are likely to be conducted through using third parties, or contractors. These companies can often have weaker or no protection at all and can be used as an entry point for malware or a phishing attempt.
2. Do not underestimate less sophisticated threats
Fraudsters can strike at mass and benefit from the scale using simplest tools. Social engineering might contribute to 75 percent of fraudulent incidents while only 17 percent could be caused by malware.
3. Do not pick compliance over protection
Budgets are usually allocated in favor of compliance, but strengthening security and introducing new protection technologies requires a more balanced approach to the allocation of resources.
4. Do regular penetration testing:
Unseen vulnerabilities are real nevertheless. With implementation of sophisticated detection tools and penetration testing, vulnerabilities and incidents will emerge. Ensure your eyes are open to all weaknesses and threats - before it's too late.
5. Pay attention to insider threats
Employees can be exploited by cybercriminals - or decide to become ones. Effective security strategies should go beyond perimeter protection to include techniques that can detect suspicious activity within organizations.

To learn more about financial organizations' losses from security incidents and effective security strategies to fight them, along with some other findings from the report by Kaspersky Lab, read the blogpost.

Kaspersky Lab, together with B2B International, conducted the worldwide survey of more than 800 representatives from financial organizations in 15 countries. Respondents, including 492 senior IT and business professionals from banks, were asked about their perception of cybersecurity matters and how they protect themselves from threats.

'SKINNY BUNDLES' STEP UP CHALLENGE TO US BIG CABLE

WASHINGTON: For years, US cable operators got rich by offering fat "bundles" of hundreds of channels and raising prices regularly for television consumers. Now the "skinny bundle" is disrupting that model with internet-delivered packages offering live and on-demand programs.

Google's YouTube TV is the latest to enter this market with its bundle of around 40 channels for \$35 monthly, challenging slim packages from Sony's PlayStation Vue, Dish Network's Sling TV and AT&T's DirecTV Now. More entrants are expected including one from streaming service Hulu.

These services offer easy interfaces like those of on-demand services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, let viewers digitally store programs in the internet "cloud," and toss in a limited selection of live channels to state news and sports or other interests. Skinny offerings are aimed at young viewers and "cord cutters" loath to pay \$100 or more to be force-fed hundreds of channels in hefty bundles and accustomed to streaming shows they want, when they desire.

A Parks Associates survey last month found 20 percent of American consumers dissatisfied with their pay TV service, leaving the market ripe for change.

Analyst Glenn Hower at Parks said the market is in flux, with some consumers taking advantage of the easy sign-up for skinny packages, even though some cancel just as quickly.

In addition to lower prices, he said, "you don't have to worry about sending out a technician, you don't have to worry about getting the equipment back." BTIG Research analyst Richard Greenfield, in a research note titled "the big bundle is doomed," says he expects skinny bundles to eat away at the established pay-TV providers.

Established media companies are focusing too hard on "protecting their legacy business model"

instead of giving consumers the flexibility they want, Greenfield wrote this month.

Leichtman Research Group found that the top US cable companies lost 277,000 subscribers in 2016, while internet-delivered services like Sling TV and DirecTV Now added about 845,000.

These shifts could lead to a huge upheaval in the television ecosystem, allowing more choices and lower costs for consumers in many cases, while leaving smaller, independent cable channels out in the cold. The skinny bundles "have made inroads in the past year," said Leichtman Research president Bruce Leichtman.

Digital platforms rise

Forrester Research analyst James McQuivey said Google's entry into the business is significant because "for the first time, the broadcasters are letting a powerful digital platform have the keys to its treasure room: live, first-run TV shows."

He noted that major tech firms like Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft "have tried to cozy up to TV for many years now, and all of them have been rebuffed" until now. "The digital platforms are indeed taking over the world, this time with permission from their former adversaries," he said in a blog post. While many consumers use on-demand options like Amazon and Netflix, they often keep cable or satellite subscriptions for live sports and local news. But live channels will make streaming options more attractive.

At the same time, popular channels such as HBO and sports programmer ESPN have been offering standalone subscriptions to allow consumers to watch without a bundle from cable or satellite.

But independent television analyst Alan Wolk argues that the major pay TV firms remain in good

shape despite these challenges. Some like AT&T already have a "skinny" offering, and others such as Comcast and Verizon are expected to enter the market to give consumers a choice.

Wolk said consumers don't appear to be flocking to skinny bundles because "they pay 30 percent less dollars but get 70 percent less content."

He added that "a lot of people think they want to cut back but when you ask them which channels they want to eliminate they have trouble cutting back to the bare minimum."

Striking back

Wolk noted that the large pay TV operators have an advantage because they offer broadband internet, and in some cases are the dominant provider in a region. This allows them to offer incentives which bundle internet and television. The large operators can also squeeze out rivals by using data caps or other means to favor their own streaming service, and will not likely face regulatory impediments from doing so in the current political environment, he said. Operators are also keeping customers with "TV everywhere" which allows subscribers to watch the same content on mobile devices or while traveling, he noted.

One impact from the shift to streaming is that providers will know more about customer habits, to be able to deliver advertising targeted to each user. That's positive for marketing, but could be a privacy worry as tech firms build up detailed profiles on consumers.

Google in particular can refine its ad model by using data on viewing habits, analysts note.

With streaming, Wolk said, Google and others "get a ton of data about users and what they are up to, and they can cross-reference that with your browsing habits." —AFP

SMALL IOWA SCHOOL DISTRICT EMBRACES BIG CHANGES FOR COLLABORATION

ELDON: Just miles from the simple farm house that inspired Grant Wood's "American Gothic," a small school district has outfitted itself with state-of-the-art technology and a forward-thinking curriculum.

Visitors to the rural, 800-student Cardinal Community School District don't expect its high-tech classroom or lounge area, Superintendent Joel Pedersen said.

"They oftentimes think it looks like a college classroom or like a Fortune 500 (company's) room," Pedersen said. " ... They're really shocked when they walk in - how nice and inviting it is and how much technology is infused in our buildings."

The "21st Century Classroom" in the district's shared middle and high school building has whiteboard walls and desktops for students to scribble on, wheeled desks and chairs they can rearrange and multiple TVs that can display class assignments. The space, paid for with funds from the state's penny sales tax, is meant to promote student collaboration, administrators said.

More and more of those types of spaces - known to educators as "student-centered" classrooms - are being built in Iowa schools. Laura Wood, a 21st Century Learning specialist for the area education agencies that oversee much of southern Iowa, has helped advocate for those spaces.

"That is the shift - when teachers and educators talk about 'the shift,' it's that student-centered model," Wood said. "I think it's just a matter of time before we move from small pockets of things happening to (having them) scaled and happening all over."

Similar student-centered spaces have popped up in Cedar Rapids, Waukee, Mount Pleasant and Hamburg, she said. "I think if we promote student agency," Wood said, "then I think you're going to see more of those open floor plans happening."

While students can collaborate in traditional classrooms, 21st century spaces treat group work as the default, said Cindy Green, Cardinal's director of curriculum and instruction. —AP



MOSCOW: A picture shows Viktor Karachun, one of the coordinators of the campaign at his house in the village of Vostochnaya Perlovka outside Moscow.—AFP photos

AS MOSCOW EXPANDS, PROPERTY BOOM SPARKS LOCAL IRE

'SOON PEOPLE WON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO GO FOR A WALK OR FRESH AIR TO BREATHE'

MYTISHCHI, Russia: Property developers are racing to build up prime land in Moscow's leafy outskirts with plans that involve razing entire villages and felling acres of forest. Now determined locals are fighting back to stop the developers in their tracks and preserve the environment, local heritage and their homes. And with some success, such as in the village of Vostochnaya Perlovka, a settlement ranging from simple wooden cottages to roomy brick family homes with some 4,000 residents, northeast of the capital. Local authorities announced a plan to demolish all of its 600 houses to allow a property developer to build high-rise blocks there, increasing the population to 25,000 people.

Horrified at the prospect of losing their beloved homes, the residents immediately teamed up to campaign against the demolition. "If the project goes through, the population density of this area will be more than 13,000 people per square kilometer—more than twice that of Hong Kong," which has close to 6,800 people per square kilometer, said lawyer Andrei Yumashev, who represents the residents. He urged the property company, at the very least, to discuss the details of its plans for Vostochnaya Perlovka with locals. "I couldn't live in a concrete building," said Viktor Karachun, one of the coordinators of the campaign, who works as a company's commercial director.

"Here, I have a large wooden house and an apple orchard. I have no problem parking and my children can spend the whole day outside." He published an online petition in July 2016 against the planned development by local com-

pany Zemelnye Resursy which has gained 2,000 signatures. But neither the petition nor dozens of letters and protests made any difference, forcing residents to go to courts. In December, the Supreme Court responded by reducing the scale of the project—banning the developers from building 20-storey blocks and massive shopping centers and reducing the number of residents to 10,000—something the locals view as a considerable victory.

Disappearing forests

With an already bulging population of at least 12 million, Moscow is a magnet for the upwardly mobile from all over Russia and the former Soviet Union. But commuting to central Moscow for work while living in the surrounding region is a more affordable option for most. Just six kilometers (4 miles) from Vostochnaya Perlovka, residents of another small settlement called Stroitel, or Builder, are fighting the felling of 255 acres (103 hectares) of forest, known as Chelyuskiy Wood, for house building. Residents accuse the local authorities of illegally selling the forest to a Moscow property developer called Novaya Zemlya, which wants to build a new district with 20,000 inhabitants.

In December, after MPs supported the residents' complaints, local prosecutors launched a probe and determined that the construction plan was against the law. But the developers have not given up their plans and are continuing to destroy the forest, say residents, who have seen trees felled in recent months. "We moved here (from Moscow) so our children could breathe fresh air. In this forest, every tree is dear

to us," said one resident, Maria Tyabut. The destruction of natural areas for construction is becoming increasingly common in Russia, said Mikhail Kreindlin of Greenpeace-Russia, since "property developers benefit from loopholes in the law".

"Housing construction is a sector that gives good returns, not just for the investors, but also for the local authorities," Kreindlin said. "Even if you rule out corruption—which is frequent—these projects fill up the coffers of the local authorities with taxes." But the problem is that "soon people won't have anywhere to go for a walk or fresh air to breathe," he warned.

Moscow expands

However officials and property developers argue that such construction projects are essential. "There is practically no free land left in Moscow," said Vladimir Voronin, who heads a large Russian property developer, FSK Lider. "Moscow region attracts people from other regions who want to earn money and make careers in the capital," said Voronin, adding that the economic crisis prompted by falling oil prices and Western sanctions over Ukraine had not stopped them coming. Last year, 8.8 million square meters of housing was built in the Moscow region, including 5.5 million square meters of high-rise blocks, according to the Moscow region's construction ministry, the highest rate in the country. In 2011 the municipal government massively expanded the area that is part of the capital by extending the limits of "Greater Moscow" by 1,500 square kilometers to the city's southwest.—AFP



KATHMANDU, Madhyamanchal: In this photograph vehicles and motorbike riders travel on a dusty road in Kathmandu.—AFP photos

THE BUS MAFIA CONTROLLING NEPAL'S SMOG-CHOKED CAPITAL

KATHMANDU: Nepal's government is trying to tackle rising pollution levels in the smog-choked Kathmandu Valley, but standing in the way is a powerful bus mafia that controls the capital's roads. The rulers of Kathmandu's streets are a web of transport syndicates made up of private bus owners who have repeatedly blocked official attempts to modernize the highly inefficient bus network. Critics say these associations have managed to win control over the roads and ensure laws stay favorable to them by making payments masked as political donations to key political figures. "There is no regulatory mechanism that is strong enough to control them," said Kanak Dixit, chairman of Sajha Yatayat, a cooperative bus company trying to break the hold of the transport mafia. "This sector has so much cash liquidity that they are able to influence the politicians and therefore they get their way."

A \$30 million six-year program mostly funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) aimed at cleaning up the system, by introducing larger buses in busy areas and redrawing overlapping routes, is gathering dust. Meanwhile more than 10,000 buses and minibuses in varying states of disrepair ply the streets of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur—three cities that bleed into each other, making up the largest urban area in the country. "We prepared a very excellent report with the help of donors, but when it came to the implementation phase we failed to materialize it," Bimal Prasad Subedi, deputy director of the Kathmandu Sustainable Urban Transport Project (KSUTP), told AFP.

"They (the bus syndicates) protested against our plans... They are private entities and don't want to lose their profit." Corruption in Nepal has flourished during the political instability that followed the end of the decade-long civil

war in 2006 and seen the country cycle through nine governments since then. The impoverished Himalayan nation is currently ranked 131 out of 168 countries in watchdog Transparency International's global corruption perception index.

Genie out of the bottle

Experts say the ADB plan would significantly reduce congestion and emissions in gridlocked Kathmandu where levels of PM 2.5—micro-



KATHMANDU, Madhyamanchal: In this photograph scooter riders wear masks as they ride along a dusty road in Kathmandu.

scopic particles harmful to human health—regularly surpass 150. That is far above the maximum threshold of 25 recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) for a 24-hour exposure. But Dharman Rijal of the National Federation of Nepal Transport Entrepreneurs—an umbrella group for the bus operators—said the modernization plans amounted to "bullying small investors". "I stopped going to these fruitless meetings," he said. "We have urged the government and KSUTP to enter open competition with us, but replacing our buses with their new buses is injustice."

Bus routes are allocated by the Department of Transport Management, but only on the recommendation of an association, and competition between operators over fiercely guarded routes has on occasion turned violent. Under pressure to be seen to be acting on pollution, which regularly makes the headlines of local newspapers, the government introduced a ban on public vehicles older than 20 years in February. So far the government says only four minibuses and one bus of an estimated 2,500 that fail to meet the new age requirements have been taken off the road.

Most bus owners have refused to retire their old vehicles without compensation, accusing the government of bringing in the ban at the behest of the new vehicle lobby. The deeply entrenched political patronage system that has been allowed to thrive will make it difficult for the government to now bring the bus mafia to heel, observers warn. "If you allow private sector to go unregulated on something that is supposed to be a public service then they will run amok for sure," Dixit said. "There is no way to put that genie back in the bottle."—AFP

INDIAN GREEN WATCHDOG: FESTIVAL MASSIVELY DAMAGED RIVER BANK

NEW DELHI: An expert panel appointed by India's top environmental watchdog has said that damage caused by a cultural festival held on the banks of the Yamuna River a year ago would need at least a decade to be fixed. The panel set up by the National Green Tribunal after the Art of Living Foundation's World Culture Festival said Wednesday that restoring the river banks would cost around 420 million rupees (\$6.5 million). It said construction of roads, ramps and a massive stage for the three-day spectacle damaged vast tracts of the river's flood plains.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and top Delhi government officials attended the festival hosted by Hindu spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar despite criticism from environmental activists about damage to the river banks. The festival to mark the 35th anniversary of the Art of Living Foundation drew some 3.5 million visitors who came to see thousands of singers, dancers and other performers. People filed complaints to the tribunal almost immediately after construction began, but much of the damage

was already done and the tribunal allowed the organizers to go ahead with the event. It did issue an immediate fine of 50 million rupees (\$740,000).

Afterward, the watchdog set up the panel comprising environmental engineers and biodiversity experts to assess the impact that the festival had. In their report, the experts said that an area comprising around 170 hectares (420 acres) had been "completely" destroyed and not simply damaged. "The ground is now totally leveled, compacted and hardened and is totally devoid of water bodies or depressions and almost completely devoid of any vegetation," the panel said.

The Yamuna is one of the main tributaries of the Ganges River. Art of Living Foundation has dismissed the findings of the panel as biased. The foundation was a "responsible and environment-sensitive NGO" that has consistently worked to preserve and revive the environment, Kedar Desai, a spokesman said.—AP



NEW DELHI: In this file photo, workers dismantle stadia temporarily erected for a massive three-day cultural festival organized by the Art of Living Foundation on the banks of the river Yamuna in New Delhi, India.—AP

HEALTH WORKERS END MONTH-LONG STRIKE IN MALI

BAMAKOL: Health workers in Mali called off a month-long strike yesterday that paralyzed hospitals after reaching an agreement with the government. The stoppage was called by the country's two main health unions, demanding raises for staff and jobs for contract workers, though a skeleton emergency service was maintained. "The demand for strike action is lifted because we are satisfied," said Youssef Maiga, a senior official with one the

unions, adding that eight of nine demands had been met.

Government spokesman and commerce minister Abdel Karim Konate confirmed to AFP the strike was over. "The strikers and the government have reached agreement," he said. The strike was the longest ever to hit hospitals in Mali's history and badly affected the majority of patients who could not afford private care, pushing them to seek help from traditional healers.—AFP

INSIDER Q&A: PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM CEO SWEATS OUT ACA DEBATE

CHICAGO: Cook County Health & Hospitals System, which handles more than 1 million patient visits in the Chicago area every year, has seen a significant financial boost from the Affordable Care Act. The federal law—whose future is up in the air—expanded the Medicaid program for the poor, giving most of the system's patients coverage for the first time in its 180-year history. As one of the nation's largest public health systems, it runs more than a dozen community health centers and two hospitals, including one on which the TV drama "ER" was loosely based.

About 70 percent of the system's patients were uninsured before the Affordable Care Act expanded coverage in 2014. Now, nearly the same percentage has coverage, and the system relies less on local tax dollars for support. The law's future is unclear as Republicans in Congress consider another push to replace it after failing last month.

Hospital system CEO Dr Jay Shannon, who has followed the debate closely, spoke recently with The Associated Press. Questions and answers have been edited for clarity and length.

Q: What are the biggest ways the ACA has affected your hospitals and clinics?

A: Most important is the impact for the patient. (They) now have access to care coordination, they have access to community mental health and substance use services if they need it, and ... we can give them preventive services including things like vaccinations.

Q: How has the influx of patients covered by Medicaid affected your bottom line?

A: The health system has been able to break even for the first time in our history. We always operated at a gigantic loss. It has been an increase in revenue to the system of somewhere between \$200 million and \$300 million a year for the past three years.

Q: Emergency departments are usually a main source of care for the uninsured. Have your emergency department visits changed since the law?

A: Actually, our volumes, our registrations, have not gone down.

Q: Has the nature of those visits changed?

A: We're seeing a decrease in what some health care researchers refer to as ambulatory sensitive conditions. That is, those things that ought to ... have been cared for if your primary care home was open and you could reach them. A sore throat, I've got a fever, I've got symptoms of a bladder infection, those kinds of things.

Q: You run a safety net hospital that treats people with little or no income, and you have clinics around the city. What is your top public health concern?

A: Repeal of the Affordable Care Act, absolutely, because that has been such a leg up for so many adults who previously weren't able to get insurance. For us, the growth in the proportion of people who have insurance post-ACA is almost exclusively because of growth in Medicaid expansion in Illinois and in Cook County, so that is the biggest concern that we have.

Q: Insurers have been pushing patients for years to seek care at less expensive locations outside hospitals. How is your business evolving to address that?

A: We actually embrace that. We have passed a strategic plan that marks an intentional pivot to moving ... to community-based ambulatory services. That's comprehensive services ideally, including primary care, specialty care, behavioral health, dental services. We want to make it ambulatory care if at all possible and reserve the expensive, higher-risk, (hospital) setting only for those people who absolutely need it.—AP



CHICAGO: This undated photo provided by Cook County Health & Hospitals System shows Dr Jay Shannon.—AP



AFAR IRDOOD, Ethiopia: A man mines blocks of salt from the Danakil Depression.



AFAR IRDOOD, Ethiopia: A camel caravan enters the salt mining area of the Danakil Depression.



AFAR IRDOOD, Ethiopia: The salt market in Berhale town in northern Afar, Ethiopia, is pictured.—AFP photos

MODERN LIFE INTRUDES ON ETHIOPIA'S ANCIENT SALT TRADE

'WE HOPE THERE WILL BE SOMETHING LIKE CARS'

LAKE ASALE, Ethiopia: Every morning, hundreds of men converge on a dry lakebed in a remote corner of Ethiopia, where they cleave the ground open with handaxes to extract salt, just as their fathers and grandfathers once did. They toil under the gaze of a caravan of camels who will carry their salt bricks to market, in a trek that historians estimate has gone on since the 6th century. But with the Ethiopian government opening the isolated northern region to investors and tourists by cutting new roads through surrounding mountains, the laborers, traders and caravan drivers that make up the industry say their traditional way of life could soon be lost.

"If it continues like this, it will stop our work," miner Musa Idris said as he stood on the cracked earth that fringes Lake Asale, where the miners work amid temperatures that can reach 50 degrees C (122 degrees F), making it one of the world's hottest places. Salt mining was once so vital to the economy of the depression that the seven-kilogram chunks of salt Idris and his colleagues hack from the ground were used as currency. While the trade is still important, it is no longer the only game in town.

Tourism moves in

Restaurants and hotels have sprung up in the area, also known as the Danakil depression, to cater to tourists who come from across the globe to visit the uniquely desolate landscape formed by the intersection of three tectonic

plates. The region has also attracted foreign firms that want to mine potash and send it to Asia. The presence of salt in the area has not escaped the attention of mining companies.

A handful of kilometers away from where Idris and his colleagues gather, an Ethiopian company has built a plant that sucks water from the lake into evaporation ponds, creating salt the miners say is of a better quality but costs more than the square blocks they mine from the lakebed. "The traditional way is quite different from ours. That one takes more toil and time," evaporation plant manager Maheri Asgedew said of the manual way of mining. Asgedew predicts that his plant, which only recently went into operation, would one day be the main supplier of salt in the area.

From camels to trucks

Perhaps no development has impacted the traditional salt industry like the new roads. Ethiopia is Africa's second most populous country and one of the continent's best-performing economies, with growth reaching nearly 10 percent in 2015. The government has made projects such as dams and road-building a priority as part of its strategy to end the poverty that afflicts around one in three of its citizens. Getting the salt-laden camels from Lake Asale to the nearest city Mekele used to be a four-day trek down rock-strewn gullies.

Now, the caravans terminate in Berhale, the region's main salt trading outpost which road

builders connected to Mekele by tarmac about five years ago. The journey takes only three days, an improvement that some of the camel drivers and laborers who help offload the salt bricks have welcomed, but which others worry is a sign that technology will soon put them all out of business.

About 5,000 blocks of salt arrive each day at a trading post situated on a dry riverbed at the edge of Berhale, from which they are loaded onto trucks that take them as far away as neighboring Kenya, said Ahmed Ali Ahmed, the deputy of an association of salt miners. "The road has brought a lot of change, because we can easily transport salt to Mekele," Ahmed told AFP. Ahmed is hopeful that, someday, they won't need to use camels at all. "We hope there will be something like cars," he said.

'We don't have anything else'

The Lake Asale miners like Idris have also grown tired of the industry's backbreaking labor and low wages, despite its long history in the area. "We have no water and sometimes we eat bad food," said Musa, whose daily pay of 500 birr (\$22, 21 euros) affords him a house in Hamed Ela, a ramshackle settlement of huts near the salt fields. "If technology comes and changes it, it would be better." But others embrace the traditional way. For them, it's simply the family business. "We see this as our farmland, so we don't have anything else but this," miner Idris Ibrahim said. "My children and grandchildren will hopefully mine in this area."—AFP



AFAR IRDOOD, Ethiopia : A man shaves blocks of salt from the Danakil Depression.



AFAR IRDOOD, Ethiopia: The landscape of the Danakil Depression is pictured.

PEDOMETERS TIED TO LESS FATIGUE FOR RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS PATIENTS

NEW YORK: Patients with rheumatoid arthritis who receive pedometers may be more active and feel less fatigued even if they are not told to use the trackers to aim for a specific number of steps, a small study suggests. All 96 study participants had rheumatoid arthritis, an immune system disorder that causes debilitating swelling and pain in the joints. Researchers randomly assigned patients to get a pedometer with or without a daily step goal, or to get only educational brochures with advice on becoming more active.

After 21 weeks, all of people with pedometers were walking more on average each day: 1,441 additional steps without a step goal and 1,656 extra steps with a goal. But the patients who didn't get pedometers actually got 747 fewer steps a day on average by the end of the study. Patients with pedometers reported statistically meaningful declines in fatigue during the study, but people who only got education did not. "We found that increasing activity just through walking decreased fatigue," said lead study author Dr Patricia Katz of the University of California, San Francisco. "Most of us probably don't realize how inactive we are until we start measuring our daily activity," Katz said by email. "Having a concrete goal, such as the number of daily steps, seems to help people become and stay active."

Every patient received the same educational brochure at the start. In the two groups that received pedometers, all of the participants were asked to keep a daily diary to record how many steps they logged. For one group with pedometers, researchers also assessed their activity levels at the start of the study and set goals for them to increase their average daily steps by 10 percent every two weeks.

Simple intervention

At the start of the study, participants were 54 years old on average and were

typically getting about 4,891 steps a day, which researchers classified as sedentary. Very few of them were getting at least 8,000 steps a day, which the researchers say is a healthy activity level. Beyond its small size, another limitation of the study is that researchers lacked data on how often participants wore the devices, which makes it difficult to get an accurate daily step count, the authors note in Arthritis Care and Research. It's also possible that the pedometer groups might not have improved as much if they hadn't also been recording their steps in a daily diary, which increases their engagement with the effort to be more active, said Dr Mitesh Patel, a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia who wasn't involved in the study.

"Research indicates that for most people, pedometers and wearable devices are more likely to help change health behaviors if they are combined with an engagement strategy," Patel said by email. Generally, pedometers are most useful for people who are sedentary and unaware of their own level of inactivity, said Dr Lucas Carr, a physiology researcher at the University of Iowa who wasn't involved in the study. "This relatively simple intervention helped a very sedentary group of rheumatoid arthritis patients increase their activity at a level that is considered clinically significant," Carr said by email. "The largest health benefits are realized when an individual changes from doing nothing to doing something." While the study included only people with rheumatoid arthritis, it's possible pedometers might be useful for people with other chronic medical problems, said Dr David Geier, an orthopedic surgeon sports medicine specialist in Charleston, South Carolina who wasn't involved in the study. "It seems reasonable to think they could help stimulate activity," Geier said by email. "Physical activity would be helpful for almost everyone."—Reuters

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Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
ر. فهد علي المخيزيم

استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368

ZAFRAN TURNS ONE

POPULAR INDIAN BISTRO CELEBRATES WITH GREAT FOOD



Shakespeare wrote, if music be the food of love, play on... The music played last night at Zafran Indian Bistro, but it was the food that was the real hero. The award-winning contemporary Indian restaurant celebrated its 1st anniversary by providing guests with a sneak preview of their 'Regional Flavors of India—regional curries menu', which will be officially launched in the restaurant this week.



Chef Gaurav Singh

From Gosht Vindaloo to Dhaba-style chicken curry and Kerala fish curry inspired by God's own country, each of the curries is classic and prepared individually using only the most authentic ingredients. Once again vegetarians have not been forgotten. The menu features dishes such as Rajasthani chakki ki sabzi, a popular gravy curry, Papad Ki Sabzi and Punjabi Baingan Bharta all very local and never been showcased commercially.

"Regional Flavors of India has been conceptualized to take diners on a culinary journey through curries. This menu presents the sheer diversity of Indian cuisine. A great representation of the regions they're from, each recipe has been subtly enhanced to fit Zafran's distinctive philosophy and palate, celebrating the subtle and complex flavors of Indian cuisine, yet remaining light on the stomach," said Chef Gaurav Singh, Brand Chef at Zafran. Guests enjoyed trying out these new dishes, all perfectly complimented with freshly baked Indian breads, homemade pickles and preserves and a range of signature drinks and desserts with their own distinctive Zafran flair. Entertainment on the night was provided by a local dance troupe.

"From its smooth and inviting ambience and friendly and engaging service to a menu created using the finest ingredients, Zafran has already become the first choice for Indian cuisine in Kuwait," said Rakshak Puri, General Manager - Asian Dining at Foodmark. "What better way to celebrate our 1st anniversary than with our new regional curries menu, which delights but doesn't overwhelm and is a perfect example of our 'big heart-light touch' founding principal," he added.

The 150-seat restaurant, which includes Zafran's signature 'wow' kitchen, is open to guests for lunch as well as dinner from 12 pm - 12 am every day. Located in the Lights complex, Zafran has fantastic external seating with ample parking and easy access.



Murg Haandi Korma



Chakki Ki Subzi



Gosht Vindaloo



Gosht Aur Kairi Keema



ADAAK ELECTS NEW COMMITTEE

Alappuzha District Association (ADAAK-Kuwait) elected its new committee for the year 2017-2018, in its Annual General Body held on 7th March, 2017 at Poppins Hall, Abbassiya. Prior to the election, General Secretary Vipin Mangattu, in his Annual Report explained the activities performed last year which wholeheartedly approved by the General Body, chaired by President B S Pillai. Patron Chacko George Kutty in his key note address appreciated the

Committee for the socio-cultural carried out last year.

The second round of membership campaign was then inaugurated by giving the membership form to Premsan Kayamkulam along with other 10 new members. Thereafter, Chacko George Kutty, being Election officer conducted the election process democratically for the year 2017 - 2018 and the General Body unanimously elected new officials.



AL-MULLA EXCHANGE'S HINDI COMEDY PLAY WELL RECEIVED BY CUSTOMERS

Al-Mulla Exchange Company organized a Hindi comedy play titled 'Tota Maina Ki Kahani' on April 14, 2017, at American International School which was presented for their loyal Indian customers. This was the 144th event by Al-Mulla Exchange. Al-Mulla Exchange not only provides instant remittance to the bank accounts but also a wide range of entertainment programs and promotions to customers as a token of gratitude for their loyalty and support.

The main sponsors of the play were Jet Airways, City Van, German Press Company and Holiday Downtown Hotel. Rakesh Joshi, General Manager Al-Mulla exchange thanked the sponsors for their support. "Without them this would not have been possible," he noted. Further he stated that the idea behind the organizing this play is to provide our guests a wonderful time that will help them relax their minds. Laughter is a good therapy and is very beneficial to our health, and this play served to be a health tonic.

Moreover, the play will be a nostalgic experience for

Indians who miss their homeland and will serve to bring back fond memories. Rakesh Joshi added that the Indian community are an important part of their customer base and "this part of our ongoing efforts to give our special guests quality events and programs that will be remembered."

The play, a comedy, tells the story of a young couple bumbling through their romantic pre-marital relationship followed by the usual bitter-sweet tiffs after marriage, punctuated by some slapstick rib-ticklers. Add to it a mix of troublesome neighbors, the groom's father, his lawyer and the bride's mother giving you a laugh-out-loud play. The unstoppable laugh riot is enriched with soothing music, and a production par excellence. One of the main highlights of the play is its star cast comprising of well-known faces from movies and television around the world. The director did a fantastic job to balance all these positives in the right proportion to provide a wholesome family entertainer that's just perfect for the audience.



ASAD KHAN TAKES CHARGE AT INDIAN FRONTLINERS

Indian Frontliners, Kuwait plans to release the IFL-Part 20 book in the function scheduled on 5th May 2017. In order to discuss about the program arrangements, IFL team organized a get-together meeting at Fahaheel. The gathering was graced by many dignified guests and patrons including Asad Khan of Kuwait Swedish Cleaning Co, Dr Anis Ahmed, Director of Salmiya Indian Model School, AN Natarajan and many more.

Mohandoss welcomed all and gave the brief about the on-going function preparations. Since it is the 20th year of the IFL, by the request of team members Asad Khan is kind enough to accept and preside the association as the President.

The Chief guests Vijaykumar I.P.S. (Senior Security Adviser in Ministry of Home Affairs (India), Former Director-general of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)) and Rangaraj Pandey (Chief Editor, Famous Tamil News Channel Thanthi TV) coming from India to participate in the annual Function were discussed. All the team members expressed their happiness to work jointly in IFL presided by Asad Khan and the make this year even a mega success. Asad Khan, explained about the forthcoming 20th year function and the chief Guests Vijaykumar IPS (former CRPF Director) and Rangarajan Pande a popular south Indian media news editor.

LOYAC PREPARES FOR 15TH ANNIVERSARY

Within its preparations to celebrate its 15th anniversary and LAPA's 7th anniversary, LOYAC recently held a press conference at its headquarters at the Qibliya School. During which musicians, Abdullatif Ghazi and Lolwa Al-Sahman were honored for their achievements in the international and music scene.

Speaking at the conference, LOYAC's chairperson, Fareah Al-Saqaf stressed that the word 'Enlightened' used in LOYAC's slogan of 'Enlightened Youth For Peace & Prosperity' reflects the foundation's vision and differs from the word 'educated' because someone might learn both useful and harmful things while enlightenment means awareness and having a vision, "Which can be achieved with LOYAC through

arts and volunteering", she stressed.

Further, Al-Saqaf highlighted how LOYAC's Academy For Performance Arts (LAPA) has managed to turn youth anger and mutiny into creation and moments of peace and love. On his part, clarinet player, Abdullatif Ghazi stressed that music was more like a spiritual journey into a world of creation that helped him challenge his blindness. "Disabled people are creative in so many fields", he added urging all governmental and non-governmental bodies to support them. In addition, honoree Lolwa Al-Shamlan expressed appreciation for LOYAC's support over the past seven years, which enabled her join London's oldest music schools, win more than an international competition and hold concerts at USA and Kuwait.



PEFK CELEBRATES 7TH ANNIVERSARY IN SPEECH & CREATIVE ART COMPETITION

Pakistan Employment Forum Kuwait (PEFK) celebrates seven years of success and community service in career development. On the occasion of 7th anniversary of the forum, PEFK team and management organize interschool speech and creative art competitions. The chief guest of this graceful event was Umer Jawaid, Community Welfare Attache from Embassy of Pakistan in Kuwait. A large number of families, students, teachers, principals and community heads participated in 7th anniversary event.

Event was graced by distinguished guests from all walks of life. Program commenced with recitation of holy Quran by Muhammad Rashid followed by Nasheed by Muhammad Ali Hassan and National anthems of Kuwait and Pakistan. This graceful event was conducted by Ms Nadiya Muhammad Arshad and Waqas Ahmed. Students from various schools including Pakistan School Mangaf, New International school Pakistan Hawally, Pakistan Excel School Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, International school of Pakistan,

Pakistan School Salmiya and Creators Academy participated in speech and creative art competitions.

Responsibility of judges was performed by renowned personalities Shamim Mozaffar and Mrs Mozaffar. All participants delivered excellent speeches and crafted beautiful art models in creative art competitions. National songs of Pakistan were presented by Abdul Aziz, Muhammad Ali Hassan and Famous singer in Kuwait Zagar Hussain. Beautiful tableau performance was presented by students of Pakistan Excel School and International school of Pakistan Khaitan. Wonderful poetry for Pakistan was presented by famous poet in Kuwait Syed Sadaqat Ali. Event was sponsored by VIVA telecom.

Anwar Ali, Vice President of PEFK addressed the audience and stated PEFK services are wonderful and their contributions to society in noble cause of career development are remarkable. PEFK maintains a realist outlook with regards to excellence, "which we do not view as an

achievement, but rather a challenge. The achievement is the future that we build for the people of our society; we are employing all resources and capacities at our disposal to that end, whereby we are assisting & guiding young, innovative talent, and providing them with the adequate environment to excel.

Dr UmerJawaid, Community Welfare AttachÉ from Embassy of Pakistan in Kuwait stated in his key note speech that Pakistan Employment Forum Kuwait services to the community in career developments are remarkable and I highly appreciate the efforts has been made by PEFK team in the field of career assistance, help and guidance. He stated that career development is a very technical and unique field of service which can be done by only a highly professional and dedicated team. He congratulates PEFK Team for successful seven years of community service in career development.

Judges of the speech and creative art contest Mozaffar

and Mrs Yasmeen Mozaffar highly appreciated the PEFK contribution and services to the community for job search assistance and career guidance to the students for their higher education. They mentioned that PEFK Team is doing a great voluntarily job to the society in noble cause of career development.

They announced the result of speech contest and creative art competition. In speech contest, Muhammad Ali Hassan of International School of Pakistan Khaitan secured 1st position, Eman Naeem of New Pakistan International School Hawally secured 2nd and Tasbeeha Javid from Pakistan School Mangaf secured 3rd position. In creative art competition, 1st position obtained by Safa Arshad from Pakistan School Mangaf, Eisha Irfan of Pakistan Excel School secured 2nd and Afnan Afzal of Pakistan school Salmiya secured 3rd position.

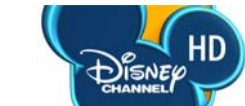




- 00:45 Mekong: Soul Of A River
- 01:40 Mekong: Soul Of A River
- 02:35 Mekong: Soul Of A River
- 03:25 Mekong: Soul Of A River
- 04:15 Running With Wolves
- 05:02 Mekong: Soul Of A River
- 05:49 Gator Boys
- 06:36 Swamp Brothers
- 07:00 Swamp Brothers
- 07:25 Pit Bulls & Parolees
- 08:15 Wildest India
- 09:10 Running With Wolves
- 09:15 Tanked
- 11:00 Pit Bulls & Parolees
- 11:55 Bondi Vet
- 12:50 Wildest India
- 13:45 Gator Boys
- 14:40 Running With Wolves
- 15:35 Tanked
- 16:30 Swamp Brothers
- 16:55 Swamp Brothers
- 17:25 Village Vets
- 17:50 Village Vets
- 18:20 Lone Star Law
- 19:15 Tanked
- 20:10 North America
- 21:05 Village Vets
- 21:30 Village Vets
- 22:00 Lone Star Law
- 22:55 Gator Boys
- 23:50 Swamp Brothers



- 00:00 Rob & Chyna
- 00:55 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
- 01:50 E! News
- 02:50 Celebrity Style Story
- 03:20 Celebrity Style Story
- 03:50 Botched By Nature
- 05:30 Celebrity Style Story
- 06:00 Botched By Nature
- 06:55 E! News
- 07:25 Botched By Nature
- 08:20 Botched By Nature
- 09:15 Botched By Nature
- 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 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 15:00 E! News
- 15:30 Celebrity Style Story
- 16:00 WAGs
- 17:00 WAGs
- 18:00 WAGs
- 19:00 Botched
- 20:00 Botched
- 21:00 Botched
- 22:00 Botched
- 23:00 E! News



- 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 Zucchini
- 09:20 Elena Of Avalor
- 09:45 Bizaardvark
- 09:35 Stuck In The Middle
- 09:25 Disney The Lodge
- 09:50 Bunk'd
- 10:15 Bunk'd
- 10:40 How To Build A Better Boy
- 12:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 12:20 Jessie
- 12:45 Jessie
- 13:10 Austin & Ally
- 14:00 Liv And Maddie
- 14:50 Sunny Bunnies
- 14:55 The Zucchini
- 15:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 15:45 Elena Of Avalor
- 16:10 Liv And Maddie
- 16:35 Descendants Wicked World
- 16:40 Girl Meets World
- 17:05 Stuck In The Middle
- 17:30 Bunk'd
- 17:55 Bizaardvark
- 18:20 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 18:25 Alex & Co.
- 18:50 Jessie
- 19:15 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 19:20 Backstage
- 19:45 Austin & Ally
- 20:10 The Next Step
- 20:35 Cracked
- 20:40 Disney The Lodge
- 21:05 Girl Meets World
- 21:55 Star Darlings
- 22:00 Good Luck Charlie
- 22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 23:10 Hank Zipzer



BERMUDA TENTACLES ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



- 06:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy
- 06:25 Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man 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 Right 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
- 11:35 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 12:00 Mark And Russell's Wild Ride
- 13:30 Star vs The Forces Of Evil



- 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
- 02:20 The Hive
- 02:40 Loopdidoo
- 02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
- 03:10 Art Attack
- 03:35 Loopdidoo
- 03:50 Calimero
- 04:05 Art Attack

- 09:30 Beauty Queen Murders
- 10:20 I Almost Got Away With It
- 11:10 Murder Comes To Town
- 12:00 I'd Kill For You
- 12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 13:40 Over My Dead Body
- 14:30 Beauty Queen Murders
- 15:20 I Almost Got Away With It
- 16:10 Nightmare Next Door
- 17:00 I'd Kill For You
- 17:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 18:40 Secret Lives Of Stepford Wives
- 19:05 Secret Lives Of Stepford Wives
- 19:30 Love The Way You Lie
- 20:20 Evil Stepmothers
- 21:10 Tabloid
- 22:00 Deadline: Crime With Tamron
- 22:50 In The Name Of Love: People Magazine Investigates
- 23:40 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil



- 00:20 Jobs That Bite!
- 01:10 Africa's Creative Killers
- 02:50 Viper Queens
- 03:50 Hunter Hunted
- 04:40 Expedition Wild
- 05:30 Extreme Animal Babies
- 06:30 Hunter Hunted
- 07:25 Expedition Wild
- 08:20 Extreme Animal Babies
- 09:15 Strangest Bird Alive
- 10:10 Snakes In The City
- 11:05 Predator Patrol
- 12:00 I, Predator
- 12:55 Night Of The Lion
- 13:50 Hunter Hunted
- 14:45 Africa's Deadliest
- 15:40 Extreme Animal Babies
- 16:35 Monster Frog
- 17:30 David Attenborough's Rise Of Animals
- 18:25 Africa's Deadliest
- 19:20 Dinofish
- 20:10 Extreme Animal Babies
- 21:00 Monster Frog
- 21:50 David Attenborough's Rise Of Animals
- 22:40 Africa's Deadliest

- 08:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
- 09:00 The Story Of God With Morgan Freeman
- 11:00 The Story Of God With Morgan Freeman
- 12:00 Mine Kings
- 13:00 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey
- 14:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
- 15:00 Inside
- 16:00 Riddles Of The Bible
- 17:00 Lawless Island
- 18:00 Primal Survivor
- 19:00 Mega Factories
- 20:00 Riddles Of The Bible



- 00:00 Ice Agent
- 02:00 Hitting The Apex
- 04:30 Apocalypse Pompeii
- 06:30 Licence To Kill
- 08:45 Bermuda Tentacles
- 10:45 Hitting The Apex
- 12:45 Licence To Kill
- 14:45 Echo Effect
- 17:45 Seventh Son
- 19:45 Golden Eye
- 22:00 No Tears For The Dead



- 00:00 StartUp
- 01:00 Scandal
- 02:00 Feud
- 03:00 Mistresses
- 04:00 This Is Us
- 05:00 How To Get Away With Murder
- 06:00 Good Morning America - Weekend
- 07:00 The Chew
- 08:00 The View
- 09:00 How To Get Away With Murder
- 10:00 This Is Us
- 11:00 Bones
- 12:00 The Chew
- 13:00 The View
- 14:00 Live Good Morning America
- 16:00 How To Get Away With Murder
- 17:00 This Is Us
- 18:00 Bones
- 19:00 Rosewood
- 20:00 Criminal Minds
- 21:00 American Crime
- 22:00 Code Black
- 23:00 Mistresses



- 00:00 Slung
- 02:00 A Merry Christmas Miracle
- 04:00 It Boy
- 06:00 Honeymooners
- 08:00 A Merry Christmas Miracle
- 10:00 It Boy
- 12:00 Honeymooners
- 14:00 Camp Nowhere
- 16:00 Love, Rosie
- 18:00 The Final Girls
- 20:00 Death At A Funeral
- 22:00 Road Trip



- 00:45 Child Of God
- 02:45 Experimenter
- 04:30 A Perfect Day
- 06:15 No God No Master
- 08:00 The Truth About Emanuel
- 10:00 Tracks
- 12:00 Experimenter
- 14:00 Trash
- 16:00 Grand Central
- 17:45 Spotlight
- 20:00 99 Homes
- 22:00 Carol



- 00:00 The Simpsons
- 00:30 New Girl
- 01:30 Saturday Night Live
- 03:00 Scrubs
- 03:30 Scrubs
- 04:00 10 Items Or Less
- 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 05:30 Superstore
- 06:00 George Lopez
- 06:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 07:30 The Last Man On Earth
- 08:00 10 Items Or Less
- 08:30 Scrubs
- 09:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 09:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 12:00 George Lopez
- 12:30 10 Items Or Less
- 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 14:00 Scrubs
- 14:30 The Last Man On Earth
- 15:00 Superstore
- 15:30 New Girl
- 16:00 New Girl
- 16:30 George Lopez
- 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 18:00 Scrubs
- 18:30 Scrubs
- 19:00 Dr. Ken
- 19:30 The Mindy Project
- 20:00 The Goldbergs
- 20:30 The Goldbergs
- 21:00 Two And A Half Men
- 21:30 Two And A Half Men
- 22:00 Baskets



- 00:15 Swordfish
- 02:30 The Taking Of Pelham 123
- 04:30 Dick Tracy
- 06:30 The Guardian
- 09:00 Finding Forrester
- 11:30 The Taking Of Pelham 123
- 13:45 S.W.A.T.
- 15:45 The Bucket List
- 17:45 Big Fish
- 20:00 Amelia
- 22:00 The Walk



- 01:15 Robosapien: Rebooted
- 02:45 Ghatotkach - Master Of Magic
- 04:30 Virus Attack The First Antivirus
- 06:00 When Marnie Was There
- 07:45 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
- 09:00 Blue Elephant 2
- 10:45 Robosapien: Rebooted
- 12:15 Ghatotkach - Master Of Magic
- 14:00 Cher Ami
- 16:00 Blue Elephant 2
- 18:00 Harriet The Spy
- 20:00 Memory Loss
- 21:30 Cher Ami
- 23:15 Ploddy Police Car On The Case



- 00:20 Little Miss Atlanta
- 01:10 The Undateables
- 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 Say Yes To The Dress: The Big Day
- 06:50 Little Miss Atlanta
- 07:40 Outdaughtered: Busby Quints
- 08:30 Little People, Big World
- 08:55 Little People, Big World
- 09:20 Little People, Big World
- 10:10 Love At First Swipe
- 10:35 Cake Boss
- 11:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 11:25 Say Yes To The Dress: Bridesmaids



- 00:30 Mars Needs Moms
- 02:15 Pooch's Heffalump Halloween Movie
- 03:30 D3: The Mighty Ducks
- 05:30 The Parent Trap
- 07:45 Pooch's Heffalump Halloween Movie
- 09:00 Pooch's Heffalump Movie
- 10:15 Gnomeo & Juliet
- 11:45 The Parent Trap
- 14:00 Pooch's Heffalump Movie
- 15:15 Duckyales: The Movie
- 17:00 The Secret Of The Magic Gourd
- 19:00 Secretariat
- 21:00 Little Women



- 00:10 Wicked Tuna
- 01:00 Ancient X-Files
- 02:00 Rebel Pope
- 03:00 Monster Fish
- 04:00 Wicked Tuna
- 05:00 Mega Breakdown
- 06:00 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey
- 07:00 Secret Service Files: Protecting The President
- 11:00 The Chase
- 11:50 Guess This House
- 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
- 18:20 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 The Chase
- 01:00 Emmerdale
- 01:30 Emmerdale
- 02:00 Coronation Street
- 02:30 Guess This House
- 03:25 It's Not Rocket Science
- 04:20 Surprise Surprise
- 05:15 Come Date With Me Australia
- 06:10 The Chase
- 07:05 Guess This House
- 08:00 It's Not Rocket Science
- 09:00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
- 10:10 Come Date With Me Australia
- 11:00 The Chase
- 11:50 Guess This House
- 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
- 18:20 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



- 00:15 Hotel India
- 01:05 Lucky Chow
- 01:30 Dog Whisperer
- 02:20 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 02:45 A Model Adventure
- 03:35 The Game Chef
- 04:00 Living Free With Kimi Werner
- 04:50 Street Food Around The World
- 05:20 World's Best Beaches
- 06:15 Fearless Chef
- 07:10 Lucky Chow
- 07:35 Dog Whisperer
- 08:30 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 09:00 A Model Adventure
- 09:55 The Game Chef
- 10:20 Living Free With Kimi Werner
- 11:15 Street Food Around The World
- 11:45 World's Best Beaches
- 12:40 Lucky Chow
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- 14:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 14:30 A Model Adventure
- 15:25 The Game Chef
- 15:50 Living Free With Kimi Werner
- 16:45 Street Food Around The World
- 17:15 World's Best Beaches
- 18:10 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
- 19:05 Raw Trac
- 19:30 The Game Chef
- 20:00 Living Free With Kimi Werner
- 20:55 Street Food Around The World
- 21:20 World's Best Beaches
- 22:10 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
- 23:00 Lucky Chow
- 23:25 Dog Whisperer



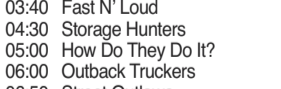
MARS NEEDS MOMS ON OSN MOVIES FAMILY HD

- 14:30 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
- 15:20 Troy
- 16:10 Dynamo A-Z Special
- 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

- 03:00 Chopped
- 04:00 The Great Food Truck Race
- 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 06:00 Barefoot Contessa
- 07:00 The Kitchen
- 08:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 09:00 Cooking For Real
- 10:00 Siba's Table
- 11:00 The Kitchen
- 12:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 13:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 15:00 Chopped
- 16:00 The Kitchen
- 17:00 Cooking For Real
- 18:00 Chopped
- 19:00 Chopped Junior
- 20:00 Restaurant: Impossible
- 21:00 Mystery Diners
- 22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 23:00 Guy's Grocery Games

- 04:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 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 & Pooch
- 07:25 Sofia The First
- 07:50 The Lion Guard
- 08:20 PJ Masks
- 08:30 Winnie The Pooh: Springtime With Roo
- 08:40 The Lion Guard
- 10:05 Sofia The First
- 10:30 Doc McStuffins
- 10:55 Miles From Tomorrow
- 11:20 My Friends Tigger & Pooch
- 11:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 12:15 Gummi Bears
- 12:40 Miles From Tomorrow
- 13:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 13:35 PJ Masks
- 14:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooch
- 14:30 The Lion Guard
- 15:00 The Return Of Jafar
- 16:10 Goldie & Bear
- 16:25 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 & Pooch
- 21:00 Gummi Bears
- 21:30 Miles From Tomorrow
- 22:00 Goldie & Bear
- 22:25 Goldie & Bear
- 22:55 PJ Masks
- 23:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 23:35 The Hive
- 23:45 Loopdidoo

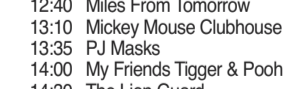
- 13:45 K.C. Undercover
- 14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 14:15 K.C. Undercover
- 14:40 Disney Cookabout
- 15:05 Lab Rats
- 15:30 Supa Strikas
- 15:55 Supa Strikas
- 16:25 K.C. Undercover
- 16:50 Walk The Prank
- 17:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 17:40 Milo Murphy's Law
- 18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 18:10 Gravity Falls
- 18:35 Mighty Med
- 19:00 Atomic Puppet
- 19:25 Gamer'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



- 00:20 Street Outlaws
- 01:10 Supertrucks
- 02:00 Snakeatactur
- 02:50 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
- 03:40 Fast N' Loud
- 04:30 Storage Hunters
- 05:00 How Do They Do It?
- 06:00 Outback Truckers
- 06:50 Street Outlaws
- 07:40 Fast N' Loud
- 08:30 The Island With Bear Grylls
- 09:20 Storage Hunters
- 09:45 How Do They Do It?
- 10:35 Wheeler Dealers
- 11:25 Diesel Brothers
- 12:15 Harley And The Davidsons
- 13:05 How Do They Do It?
- 13:30 Storage Hunters
- 14:20 Gold Rush
- 15:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford
- 16:00 Railroad Australia
- 16:50 Fast N' Loud
- 17:40 Street Outlaws
- 18:30 How Do They Do It?
- 19:20 Marooned With Ed Stafford
- 20:10 Storage Hunters
- 20:35 Storage Hunters
- 21:00 Gold Rush: Parker's Trail
- 21:50 Idris Elba: No Limits
- 22:40 Killing Fields B-Story
- 23:30 Fast N' Loud



- 00:30 Ecopolis
- 02:10 Mythbusters
- 07:00 How Do They Do It?
- 07:26 Prototype This
- 08:14 Mythbusters
- 09:02 Eco-Tech
- 09:50 How Do They Do It?
- 10:14 Food Factory
- 10:38 Mythbusters
- 11:26 Prototype This
- 12:14 Mythbusters
- 13:02 How Do They Do It?
- 13:26 Food Factory
- 13:50 Ecopolis
- 14:38 Prototype This
- 15:26 Mythbusters
- 17:02 Ecopolis
- 17:50 Prototype This
- 18:40 Mythbusters
- 19:30 How The Universe Works
- 20:20 How Do They Do It?
- 20:45 Food Factory



- 00:30 Ghosts Of Shepherdstown
- 01:20 A Haunting
- 02:10 Dead Silent
- 03:00 Hollywood Horror Story: People Magazine...
- 03:48 Hate In America
- 04:36 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
- 05:24 Murder Book
- 06:12 Grave Secrets
- 07:00 I'd Kill For You
- 07:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 08:40 Over My Dead Body
- 09:05 Over My Dead Body

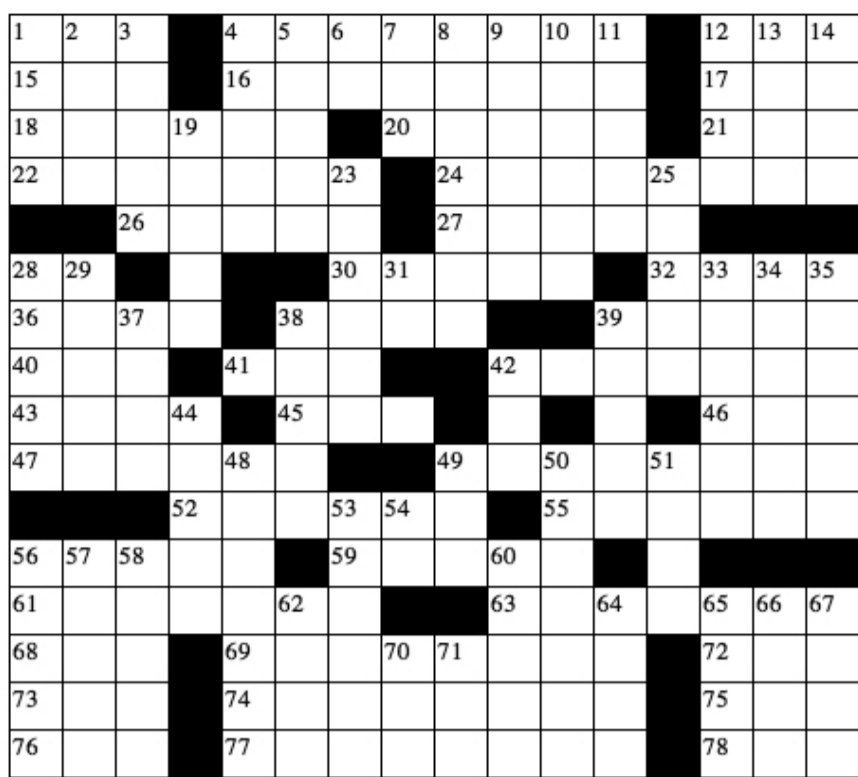


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- 09:05 Over My Dead Body



THE TAKING OF PELHAM 123 ON OSN MOVIES HD

CROSSWORD 1581



ACROSS

- 1. A conspicuous disparity or difference as between two figures.
4. An African amulet.
12. Canadian hockey player (born 1948).
15. Antibacterial drug (trade name Nydrizid) used to treat tuberculosis.
16. Worthy of adoration or reverence.
17. Perennial herb of East India to Polynesia and Australia cultivated for its large edible root yielding Otaheite arrow-root starch.
18. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
20. A mistake resulting from inattention.
21. (computer science) A coding system that incorporates extra parity bits in order to detect errors.
22. Having escaped, especially from confinement.
24. A naval spectacle.
26. Administer an oil or ointment to.
27. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
28. A unit of information equal to 1024 bytes.
30. Large tropical American tree of the genus Cordia grown for its abundant creamy white flowers and valuable wood.
32. A fine grained mineral having a soft soapy feel and consisting of hydrated magnesium silicate.
36. (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
40. Any of various units of capacity.
41. An informal term for a father.
43. Widely cultivated in tropical and subtropical regions for its fragrant flowers and colorful fruits.
45. A young woman making her debut into society.
46. The compass point midway between east and southeast.
47. Capital and largest city of Iraq.
52. A republic in southern Europe on the Italian Peninsula.
55. Conspicuously and tastelessly indecent.
56. Any of various herbaceous plants of the genus Atriplex that thrive in deserts and salt marshes.
59. Discrimination against middle-aged and elderly people.
61. An event (or course of events) that will inevitably happen in the future.
63. Something that wobbles.
68. Acute delirium caused by alcohol poisoning.
69. Shrubby lichens of the family Usneaceae having a flattened thallus.
72. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
73. A statement that deviates from or perverts the truth.
74. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
75. Informal terms for a mother.
76. Up to the present time.
77. Black-headed snakes.
78. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.

DOWN

- 1. An aggressive remark directed at a person like a missile and intended to have a telling effect.
2. Type genus of the Anatidae.
3. Type genus of the Phocidae.
4. Any of various juicy purple- or green-skinned fruit of the genus Vitis.
5. Used by northerners of Confederate soldiers.
6. A unit of energy equal to the work done by an electron accelerated through a potential difference of 1 volt.
7. The fatty flesh of eel.
8. The father of your father or mother.
9. The act of putting something in working order again.
10. Make certain of.
11. Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
12. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
13. Possessing material wealth.
14. Full of zest or vigor.
19. (law) The seat for judges in a courtroom.
23. A period of 10 years.
25. A theatrical performer.
29. A coffee cake flavored with orange rind and raisins and almonds.
31. A soft silvery metallic element.
33. Lustrous gray.
34. East Indian tart yellow berrylike fruit.
35. Bright and pleasant.
37. Large swift fly the female of which sucks blood of various animals.
38. A genus of Ploceidae.
39. A narrow headband or strip of ribbon worn as a headband.
42. (Old Testament) Adam's wife in Judeo-Christian mythology.
44. A legally binding command or decision entered on the court record (as if issued by a court or judge).
48. (usually followed by 'for') Extremely desirous.
49. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
50. Anticonvulsant drug (trade name Gemonil) used in the treatment of epilepsy.
51. Agency of the United States government charged with mediating disputes between management and labor.
53. Someone who is not a clergyman or a professional person.
54. A class of proteins produced in lymph tissue in vertebrates and that function as antibodies in the immune response.
57. Tie again or anew.
58. A useful or valuable quality.
60. The shape of something rotating rapidly.
62. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
64. A small cake leavened with yeast.
65. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
66. Very dark black.
67. Avatar of Vishnu.
70. The products of human creativity.
71. Flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers for ornamental purposes.

Yesterday's Solution

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

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A mate, family or friend has requested you consider several activities today that might please you. A walk in the park, a movie or a trip to the library may be just how you would like to spend your day.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Blocks and frustrations come from allowing too many interruptions into your personal business. While it is good to broadcast your overall goals, the way you are getting to those goals may be best left to you and your loved ones.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Cooperation, support and service will bring you to a new level of life experience. Be aware of what your motivations are and express yourself with no expectations of a return on your time or feelings.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are naturally the center of attention today. It seems you have the best ideas and successful methods of progress in your personal projects. You are admired and appreciated for your talents and your insight into creating calm where there may be clutter or confusion.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is a Monday for family and a renewal of relationships between family and friends. Phone calls, letters and all sorts of communication are possible. If you are going to break with tradition, insert a spirit of fun.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your family needs attention today. You are able to cut through to the basics and get at what is most important at this time. Conversations, as well as chores around the home, will go smoothly.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This beautiful day is a wonderful time for making amends or making peace with the past. Compassion for all living things is a spirit-evolving place to be, irrespective of any past or current events.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may see benefits today from your loyalty to a partner, colleague or organization. Keep your priorities intact and do not become involved in other people's gossip. It is easy for you to accomplish your work and then turn to help others.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may find yourself guiding a young person in your religious group today. This does not necessarily mean you are guiding them in religious matters, however. Teaching techniques or information for volunteer workers may take a great deal of time this day.



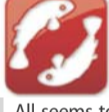
Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Dealings within partnerships are positive now. Working with a team of people, in order to gain fast results, will be successful. There is a short duration of frustration perhaps, but this is due to the refocusing of your energies into group work rather than solo work.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Facts need research and confirmation to avoid misinterpretation. You could be the editor of a newspaper or find yourself proofing a new script, book or play today. There are good practical thoughts and ideas.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There are benefits and progress in some home improvement project today. All seems to work together for the positive end result-whether the changes today are technical or physical.

Wordsearch Puzzle

USA State Capitals

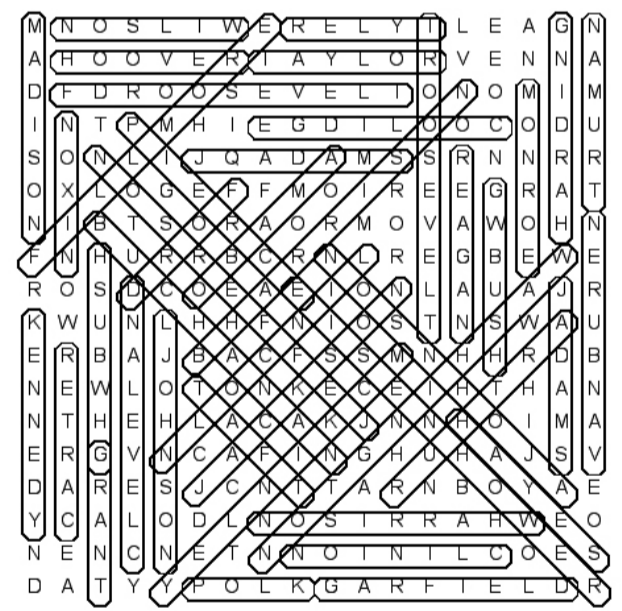
Find and circle all of the USA State Capitals that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Bill Vaughn quotation.



- ALBANY (New York)
ANNAPOLIS (Maryland)
ATLANTA (Georgia)
AUGUSTA (Maine)
AUSTIN (Texas)
BATON ROUGE (Louisiana)
BISMARCK (North Dakota)
BOISE (Idaho)
BOSTON (Massachusetts)
CARSON CITY (Nevada)
CHARLESTON (West Virginia)
CHEYENNE (Wyoming)
COLUMBUS (Ohio)
CONCORD (New Hampshire)
DENVER (Colorado)
DES MOINES (Iowa)
DOVER (Delaware)
FRANKFORT (Kentucky)
HANKSBURG (Pennsylvania)
HARTFORD (Connecticut)
HELENA (Montana)
HONOLULU (Hawaii)
INDIANAPOLIS (Indiana)
JACKSON (Mississippi)
JEFFERSON CITY (Missouri)
JUNEAU (Alaska)
LANSING (Michigan)
LINCOLN (Nebraska)
LITTLE ROCK (Arkansas)
MADISON (Wisconsin)
MONTGOMERY (Alabama)
MONTPELLIER (Vermont)
NASHVILLE (Tennessee)
OKLAHOMA CITY (Oklahoma)
OLYMPIA (Washington)
PHOENIX (Arizona)
PIERRE (South Dakota)
PROVIDENCE (Rhode Island)
RALEIGH (North Carolina)
RICHMOND (Virginia)
SACRAMENTO (California)
SALEM (Oregon)
SALT LAKE CITY (Utah)
SANTA FE (New Mexico)
SPRINGFIELD (Illinois)
ST. PAUL (Minnesota)
TALLAHASSEE (Florida)
TOPEKA (Kansas)
TRENTON (New Jersey)

Yesterday's Solution

USA Presidents



- WASHINGTON
J ADAMS
JEFFERSON
MADISON
MONROE
J Q ADAMS
JACKSON
VAN BUREN
W HARRISON
TYLER
POLK
TAYLOR
FILLMORE
PIERCE
BUCHANAN
LINCOLN
A JOHNSON
GRANT
HAYES
GARFIELD
ARTHUR
CLEVELAND
B HARRISON
MCKINLEY
T ROOSEVELT
TAFT
WILSON
HARDING
COOLIDGE
HOOVER
F D ROOSEVELT
TRUMAN
EISENHOWER
KENNEDY
L JOHNSON
NIXON
FORD
CARTER
REAGAN
G H W BUSH
CLINTON
G W BUSH
OBAMA

The hidden sentence is: LEAVE NOTHING FOR TOMORROW WHICH CAN BE DONE TODAY

Daily SuDoku

Grid for Daily SuDoku puzzle with numbers 1-9.

Yesterday's Solution

Grid for Yesterday's Solution SuDoku puzzle with numbers 1-9.

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaee Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antiga	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Azerbaijan	00994	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lesotho	00266		

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

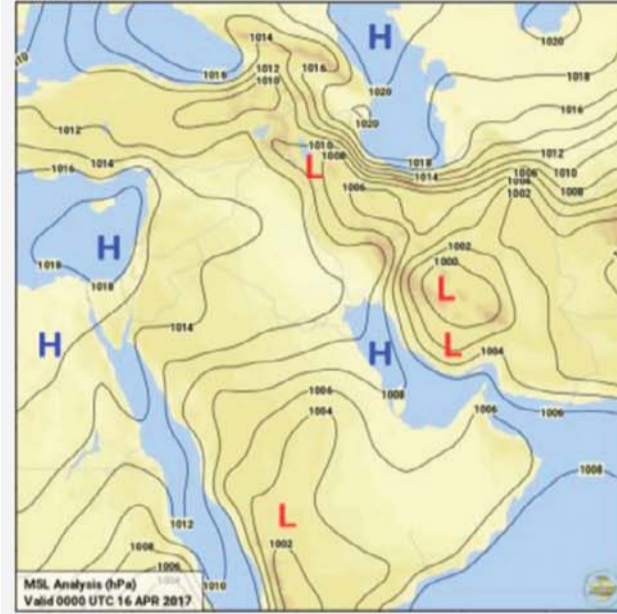
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 16/04/2017-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 31 °C

By Day : Partly cloudy to cloudy with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 45 km/h with a chance for scattered rain
By Night : Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 35 km/h with a chance for scattered rain

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Expected Weather	partly cloudy + scattered rain	partly cloudy + scattered rain	partly cloudy + raising dust over open areas.	sunny
Min Temp °C	24	23	24	22
Max Temp °C	33	34	36	35
Wind Direction	north westerly to light variable	north easterly to light variable	north westerly	north westerly
Wind Speed km/h	08 - 30	10 - 32	20 - 45	20 - 40

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C REC	Max °C EXP
KUWAIT CITY	24	31
KUWAIT AIRPORT	23	31
ABDALY	23	34
BUBYAN	23	33
JAHRA	24	34
FAILAKA ISLAND	24	33
SALMIYAH	24	30
AHMADI	25	31
JAL ALIYAH	22	35
QAROH ISLAND	23	27
UMM AL-MARADEM	23	28
NUWAISIB	25	34
WAFRA	24	35
SALMY	20	33
MUTRIBA	22	35

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	36
Min Temp (°C)	25
Max Rel Hum (%)	70
Min Rel Hum (%)	25
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	78 N
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	05:20
Sunset	18:15

Prayer Times

Fajr	03:58
Sunrise	05:20
Zuhr	11:48
Asr	15:22
Sunset	18:15
Isha	19:35



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaizeem	23926920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
DrAdrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliytami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisani	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisani	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammes Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	Te: 2575077 Fax: 25723123



HARRY STYLES BAGS UK NUMBER ONE

Harry Styles has ended Ed Sheeran's reign at the top of the UK Charts. The former One Direction singer has managed to score himself his first number one hit as a solo artist with his debut single 'Sign of the Times' which was released last week, as it climbed to the top of the UK Singles Chart on Friday. According to the Official Charts Company, the 23-year-old singer's track managed to rack up 40,000 downloads and 3.5 million streams in the week after its release, beating the number two track - Ed Sheeran's 'Shape of You' - by just 3,000 copies. Harry's chart-topping single brings an end to the 13-week run that 26-year-old Ed has had at the top spot, with 'Shape of You' slipping down from number one to number two, and pushing next single 'Galway Girl' down to third. And Harry's victory comes after it was recently reported

he could have faced a tight race to the finish line after a glitch on Spotify's search engine made it impossible for users to stream his track on the day of its release. A source said at the time: "This is a nightmare start for Harry's solo career and his record label won't be happy." The Spotify malfunction meant many of his fans simply couldn't find his song to listen to online when they searched for it. "The potential ramifications are big and it's likely he has missed out on hundreds of thousands of streams as a result. That could really affect his chart position come Friday." He is Number One at the moment but that's only because his streaming stats haven't been included yet, and they have more weight. "Harry's launch is one of the industry's biggest this year and everyone expected him to hit the ground running by topping the charts."

JOHN BOYEGA: FINN IS A 'BIG DEAL' IN STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI

John Boyega says his 'Star Wars' character is a "big deal" in 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi'. The 25-year-old actor plays Finn in the new trilogy of the popular sci-fi franchise which started with 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' in 2015, and has teased details about his character in the upcoming movie 'The Last Jedi', which is the eighth installment in the saga. He said: "Finn's a big deal. He's a big deal in the resistance now. I mean, you've got to think about it, between [episodes] VII and VIII, people have now heard about all the amazing things that he has done. And now he's, like, waving and saying hi to all the resistance ladies around. It is that kind of transition, it's crazy! It's a fun time." And John has also teased details of Finn's relationship with a new character named Rose,



who will be played by Kelly Marie Tran. He added to 'Entertainment Tonight': "Kelly's character is an absolute fan of Finn. She's so interested. It takes an interesting turn though as they get closer. The dynamic between them is very interesting. Finn sees a lot of him-

self in her, and she's still trying to figure out her place. She's not a soldier. She's not a pilot. She's trying to figure out what can she impart that's important to the good fight. And so they both have to figure that out together." Meanwhile, Kelly herself recently gave an insight into her character, and gushed about being given the chance to work on the popular film franchise. She said: "[Rose is] part of the resistance, she works in maintenance. Like [director] Rian [Johnson] said, she's kind of pulled into this journey, and someone who might not see herself as a hero, and that's kind of how she relates to me. I'm a total nerd. Part of me was like, 'Is this a dream? Pinch myself. Is this a dream?' That's kind of been the last two years of my life, a dream."

Anne Hathaway baffled by success



Anne Hathaway is "constantly baffled" by her own success. The Oscar-winning actress enjoyed working on her latest movie 'Colossal' because she knows the indie comedy isn't something she would have been able to work on when she was just starting out in her career. She said: "The fact I'm, like, a Hollywood actress - I'm like, seriously? Me? OK, I really did not expect any of this. I'm constantly baffled. "It's not like I've been trying to avoid making these movies [like 'Colossal'], you just wait for the ones that really speak to you. "And I felt very lucky because in my early career I couldn't have gotten a movie like this made." The 34-year-old beauty - who has 12-month-old son Jonathan with husband Adam Shulman - always "believes in" the movies she works on but admits she has other reasons for taking on a project than simply "artistic purity". She said: "I've yet to make a movie that I didn't believe in on some level, but somebody asked me, 'Do you do it to advance your career or do you do it for love?' I can't claim artistic purity. "I'm very conscious of making movies that will allow me to keep making movies, because I love this and I want to do it for the rest of my life." Anne is unsure as yet if being a parent will change the way she views her work. She told Britain's OK! magazine: "I don't know. It's all so new. I've done little pockets of different things, where I've worked a little bit on this project, or done a quick photoshoot. "Yesterday was the first day where I was gone all day, came home, and spent time with [Jonathan] then had to go out again at night. "And I'm not going to lie, it was hard. "I was so happy to be promoting the film and all I wanted to do was stay home with my baby."



Kathleen Kennedy: Carrie Fisher will not be in Star Wars Episode IX

Lucasfilm head Kathleen Kennedy has confirmed the late Carrie Fisher will not be appearing in 'Star Wars Episode IX' after her brother Todd Fisher hinted she would. The 59-year-old actor previously claimed the late actress - who passed away on December 27 - would still be making an appearance as Princess Leia in the movie using archive footage from previous ventures, but studio head Kathleen has now dubbed Todd as "confused" as she confirmed Carrie will not be featured in the final installment of the popular franchise. During an interview with ABC News, Kathleen said: "Sadly, Carrie will not be in nine. But we will see a lot of Carrie in eight." Previously, Disney had confirmed they would not be using CGI to create a likeness of the late star, but Todd had claimed that reusing old footage was a possibility. He said: "Both of us were like, 'Yes, how do you take her out of it?' And the answer is you don't. She's as much a part of it as anything and I think her presence now is even more powerful than it

was, like Obi Wan - when the saber cuts him down he becomes more powerful. I feel like that's what's happened with Carrie. I think the legacy should continue... To me, 'Star Wars' is the holy grail of storytelling and lore and you can't mess with it." Disney and Lucasfilm announced via a statement released in January that they had no plans to "digitally recreate" the character of Princess Leia for the movie. They said in a statement: "We want to assure our fans that Lucasfilm has no plans to digitally recreate Carrie Fisher's performance as Princess or General Leia Organa. "Carrie Fisher was, is, and always will be a part of the Lucasfilm family. She was our princess, our general, and more importantly, our friend. We are still hurting from her loss. We cherish her memory and legacy as Princess Leia, and will always strive to honor everything she gave to Star Wars." Carrie and her alter-ego will still appear in the upcoming 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi', because her scenes were already finished before the time of her death.



Damon Albarn wants to be hologram

Damon Albarn hopes to live on as a hologram after his death. The 49-year-old singer is fascinated by the fact his animated band Gorillaz have recorded with a number of now-deceased stars, including Bobby Womack, Lou Reed, Ike Turner and Dennis Hopper, but they will still be able to appear with his group in digital form, and hopes his own virtual likeness will be belting out his hits in the years to come. He said: "We could almost have a whole evening of people who aren't here anymore. "I love the idea that eventually when I am here no longer I'll be just a hologram. They'll just press that button and up I pop." As well as Gorillaz, Damon works with a string of other acts and projects, including Blur, The Good, The Bad and the Queen, and Africa Express, and compares his diverse career to being a farmer. He explained: "I'm like a

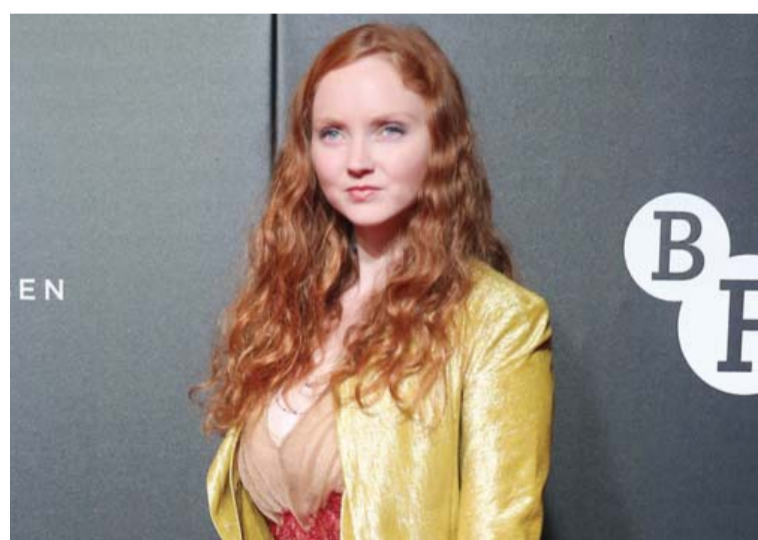
rotational crop farmer. I wanted to be a farmer as a child. "I don't think you should push anything unless it's fertile ground." Damon - who is joined by the likes of Jehnni Beth, Noel Gallagher and De La Soul on the new Gorillaz album - loves collaborating with new people and seeing what happens when they get into the studio. He said: "I love that journey of meeting someone, playing an idea, talking around it, and then starting to move towards your destination. "You've got to put people at ease. I never say, 'You've got to do this! Maybe that's the secret, just let people be themselves." Though the likes of Morrissey, Dionne Warwick and Sade declined the chance to appear on the new Gorillaz record, Damon didn't get upset. He told Q magazine: "I don't take rejection personally. The more people you put your arms around, the better it is."

Rat Boy thanks Lamar for track sampling



Rat Boy has thanked Kendrick Lamar for featuring him on his track 'Lust'. The 21-year-old musician - real name Jordan Cardy - was sampled by the hip-hop artist for the track which appears on his latest album 'Damn', and has taken to Twitter to say he's more than thrilled to be appearing on the record. 'Knock Knock Knock' from Rat Boy's 2015 mixtape 'Neighborhood Watch' is sampled on the new track by the 29-year-old rapper. Rat Boy wrote on the micro blogging website: "big up @kendrick-lamar for sampling me on lust hit me up in dm xx sounds sick "I'm on the new kendrick album... thats mad one of my favourite artists what a compliment damn. (sic)" The 'Get Over It' hitmaker - who is joined by his band Liam Haygarth, Harry Todd and Noah

Booth - previously said he would be open to working with former 'X Factor' contestant Honey G despite her causing controversy with her performances on the ITV talent and receiving mixed reviews. Asked if he would turn down the opportunity to have Honey G - whose real name is Anna Gilford - feature on a song with him, Jordan exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "Yeah why not? We would give anything a go. "I heard her on Radio 1 the other day. She was alright. A lot of people don't like her do they. I think it is good." Meanwhile, Rat Boy has teased that his debut album could be out early next year and will feature a lot of "weird stuff". Asked what fans can expect from it, Jordan said: "Lots of songs. Like radio bits and voice actors and weird stuff."



Lily Cole expected career prejudice

Lily Cole knew there would be "prejudice" when she moved into acting. The former model has always wanted to be an actress but because of her "accidental" success in the fashion industry, she knew there'd be people unwilling to take a chance on her, though she also appreciates having a famous name has opened some doors for her. She said: "It's like a double-edged sword. "I think the success I've had in fashion helped me get work in acting. "I've wanted to be an actor since I was six, so that was always my first desire. "Then by accidentally getting involved in modeling in fashion, I think in many ways that opened the doors for me to act and made it easier for me to get into that world. At the same time, I was totally aware that there is a prejudice against models who want to act." And though she hasn't been on the catwalk for years, the 29-year-old beauty still finds it hard to shake off her 'model' tag.

She added: "I stopped modeling years ago and I overheard someone this morning walk by and go, 'Oh, it's that model.' "That lingers for a long time. "I reckon one day people will stop referring to me as a model and I'll probably miss it. "I'll be like, damn it." The 'Snow White and the Huntsman' star won't do anything to deter her 18-month-old daughter Wylde - who she has with partner Kwame Ferreira - from following in her footsteps, but won't encourage it either. She said in a recent interview: "I'd definitely encourage children to watch the theatre, but no, I wouldn't encourage her to do anything. "I'd just give her the freedom to do whatever she wants. "If she did want to go into acting, I would probably give her as much advice as I could about why I love her and why it's great, what the challenges are and why I think it sucks sometimes, and let her make an informed decision."

Kendall Jenner worried about Vogue review

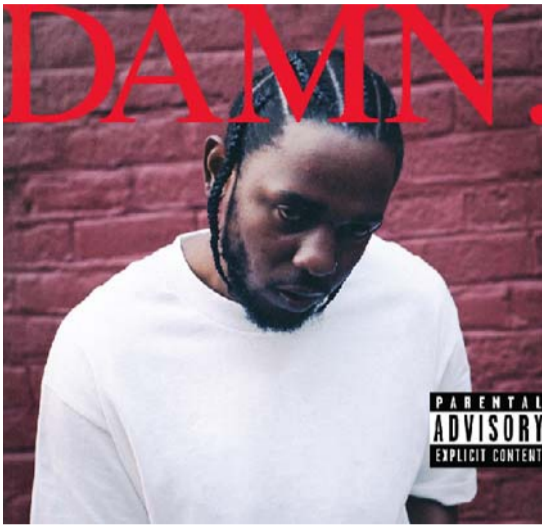


Kendall Jenner was worried about Vogue's reaction to her fashion line. The fashion bible decided to review the 21-year-old model and her 19-year-old sister's designs for their clothing range Kendall + Kylie, but Kendall admitted she was apprehensive about what Vogue's editors would say about it. In a clip for an upcoming episode of her reality TV show 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians', she said: "Everyone want an excuse to talk s**t and I don't want this to be that. "I worked really hard to be taken seriously and recognized in Vogue and in the fashion world. "If this doesn't go as well as we hope, it might tarnish some things in the modeling world." However, Kylie rushed to reassure Kendall saying that they worked so hard on the collection that "there's no way they're not going to love it". Meanwhile, Kendall was reported to have been "devastated" by the recent controversy surrounding

her Pepsi advert, which was slammed for undermining the Black Lives Matter movement. The model feared the situation could have tarnished her reputation forever, even though she was not involved with the message behind the commercial. A source said: "This is the first controversial campaign she has been involved with. "Even though she had nothing to do with the production and the message of the campaign, she will be blamed for this since she is the face." The insider also acknowledged that the drinks company had made a mistake in hiring the dark-haired beauty in the first place. The source explained: "The original intent of the commercial was to mirror all the global protests trying to make this world a more equal place for everyone. "But they shouldn't have had a celebrity face tied to it if they wanted to try and send a strong message like this." — Bang Showbiz

Review

Kendrick Lamar is darn good on new album



This cover image released by Interscope Records shows "DAMN" the latest release by Kendrick Lamar. — AP

Two years since the release of his Grammy Award-winning "To Pimp a Butterfly," Kendrick Lamar is back with an album as bold and declarative as its title: "DAMN." And while Lamar grapples with familiar subject matter - God, violence, survival and self-worth among them - the energy has shifted away from the jazz, funk-filled sound of his previous studio set. Sonically, that much is clear with lead single "HUMBLE," which begs repeat play, thanks in part to an irresistibly dark piano and bass-heavy beat from producer Mike WILL Made It, who also has a hand in the new album's "DNA" and U2-assisted "XXX."

The latter is one of the album's most gripping tracks, and finds Lamar on the receiving end of a call from a friend, whose only son has been shot and killed. "He was lookin' for some closure/ hopin' I can bring him closer/ to the spiritual," Lamar raps. "But I told him I can't sugarcoat the answer for you. If somebody kill my son/ that mean somebody getting killed." And, then, like a punch to the gut, Lamar adds: "Ain't no Black Power when your baby killed by a coward." The line is unexpected and, overall, "FEAR" is brave, in that it puts Lamar in a position to be criticized, just as he was for lyrics from 2015's hope-filled anthem "Alright." (On "DAMN" track "BLOOD," Lamar includes audio from a FOX news segment in which anchor Geraldo Rivera and a colleague take issue with the rapper's bars about police brutality.)

To his credit, Lamar continues to speak his mind, and his rawness is what makes "DAMN" so damn good. When Lamar raps, "I'll prolly die tryna buy weed at the apartments/ I'll prolly die tryna diffuse two homies arguin'/ I'll prolly die, 'cause that's what you do when you're seventeen," it's hard not to be moved. "DAMN" has the power to resonate, with tracks provoking thought without coming across as preachy. The set has its lighter moments, too. And guests make their contributions count, with Rihanna bringing a slinky vibe to the sexy (but not about sex) "LOYALTY." Up-and-coming singer Zacari also plays his part, teaming with Lamar, who sings his way through the pillow soundscape of "LOVE," produced in part by longtime collaborators Sounwave and Top Dawg Entertainment label-head Anthony "Top Dawg" Tiffith.

Those two are joined by producers DJ Dahi and Bekon for the easygoing groove of "YAH," in which Lamar exhibits one of his greatest strengths: the ability to speak of higher things in one breath, then acknowledge his humanity in the next. ("And Deuteronomy say that we all been cursed/ I know He walks the Earth/ But it's money to get, b(asterisk)(ches to hit).") It's clear that Kendrick Lamar isn't perfect. But his latest set "DAMN" gets pretty close. — AP

'Groundhog Day' show will go on, star a question mark

Producers of the Broadway musical "Groundhog Day" say it will open as planned, but injured star Andy Karl's status is unclear. Karl hurt himself during a preview performance Friday, forcing the cancellation of Saturday's matinee. Understudy Andrew Call was to fill in for Karl at the Friday night performance.

In a statement Saturday, producers said the musical is scheduled to open today, with further performance information to follow. They declined to address the question of whether Karl would appear. On Instagram, Karl posted that he tweaked his knee after a "poorly landed leap frog" and intended to see a medical specialist before going back on stage. He finished Friday's performance despite the injury, with help from a cane and his fellow actors. — AP

Lady Gaga, sensual and acrobatic, debuts song at Coachella



US pop singer Lady Gaga performs on stage at the Coachella Valley Music And Arts Festival on April 15, 2017 in Indio, California. —AP/AFP photos



US pop singer Lady Gaga performs on stage.

Lady Gaga debuted a R&B-tinged love song Saturday as she headlined the Coachella festival, where the pop diva cast herself as sensual rather than sensational. The first woman in a decade to top the lineup at the premier music event, Lady Gaga unleashed an action-packed spectacle of acrobatic choreography that culminated in confetti, fireballs and fireworks on her dance anthem "Bad Romance." Gaga seized upon the spotlight to introduce a new song, "The Cure," that is built off an unadorned R&B rhythm before rising into a pop chorus with the lines, "I can't find the cure, I'll fix you with my love."

She released the song commercially as she left Coachella in the California desert, marking her first new music since her latest album "Joanne" came out in October. Coachella offered a preview of the global tour the pop superstar will launch in August for "Joanne," an album that brought a more classic pop and even country sound to the 31-year-old artist long associated with synthpop. Gaga made clear at Coachella that her old spirit remained undiminished. On "John Wayne," one of her most country-driven songs in which she admits an attraction to rugged masculinity, Gaga paradoxically sang astride a human pyramid of her sweaty, topless and ethnically diverse crew of male dancers. Sensuality oozed throughout Gaga's set. She beckoned one dancer by grabbing his jeans in the waist, as both male and female dancers rubbed her leotard-clad body seductively. "Have you all found someone you want to sleep with yet?" she teasingly asked the 100,000-strong crowd, most of them young and many of them clad only in the bare minimum of clothing after a long day in the sun. Yet for a singer once talked about as much for her outrageous outfits as her songs, she stepped back and put the emphasis on her music-giving herself space to show off her glowing, rich voice on tracks such as "The Edge of Glory." Her biggest fashion message may have come as she played piano. She struggled to take off her sweater mid-song, in an endearing display of authenticity.

Surprise guests

Lady Gaga played her first Coachella after original headliner Beyonce canceled on doctors' orders as she expects twins. One of the most lucrative events on the global cultural calendar, Coachella takes place over back-to-back three-day weekends with identical lineups. In a Coachella hallmark, Saturday saw a slew of surprise performers-delighting fans who avidly posted to social media. The rap-

per Future, who recently made history with back-to-back albums debuting at number one on the US chart, drew cheers when he brought to stage Migos, the Atlanta trio behind the hit "Bad and Boujee." But an even bigger name soon came on-rap superstar Drake, a sometime collaborator with Future, who turned the crowd into a sea of waving arms as he performed his hit "Fake Love." Migos then crossed the lawn to make a cameo with DJ Snake, the successful but largely behind-the-scenes force behind megahits such as "Lean On." The French DJ pulled off a second surprise as Lauryn Hill walked on, singing the Fugees emblematic song "Killing Me Softly."

Non-Gaga fashion

Bon Iver, once a crowd favorite with indie folk tunes such as "Skinny Love," brought to stage the band's turn into deep experimentation in a set of loop effects and refer-

ences to numerological riddles from its latest album, "22, A Million." Frontman Justin Vernon performed in headphones at a soundboard but by the end of the set brought the crowd into a frenzy as he knelt before his sound pedals and clamped aggressively onto his electric guitar's bridge as abstract images flashed on screen.

While Lady Gaga toned down her outfits, one artist who embraced costumes was Róisín Murphy. The Irish trip-hop singer took the stage with her face covered by a mask made of interjoined dolls and later carried over her head a faceless, zebra-colored dummy. If Coachella handed out fashion awards, one could also go to frontman Will Toledo of Car Seat Headrest, the prolific indie rockers with a unique talent to work songs down to quiet and back up to intensity. The 24-year-old Toledo, long pictured as a scraggly younger, donned a tight, sky-blue suit with a black shirt and necktie. — AFP



Rappers Future (left) and Ty Dolla Sign perform on stage.

'CASH ME OUSSIDE' STAR CASHES IN AS VIRAL VILLAIN

When Barbara Ann Bregoli appeared on CBS's "Dr Phil" show in December to get advice about how to control her car-stealing teenage daughter, nobody could have predicted she would be giving birth to a villainous viral star.

In just a few months, daughter Danielle, now 14, has garnered 8.8 million Instagram followers. She has racked up brand sponsorships and become regular fodder for the tabloids with provocative poses and viral videos, despite her self-confessed penchant for stealing cars and using foul language in an accent she said she picked up "from the streets." She even has a catchphrase, "Cash me outside, how bow dah?" (Catch me outside, how about that?) that she regularly includes in social media posts after she challenged the audience to fight her while on Dr Phil's show.

Danielle Bregoli's infamy, including her catchphrase, has drawn endorsements from brands that experts say are likely paying her thousands of dollars to post about their products, a personal line of emojis and a deal for a reality TV show. A representative for Bregoli declined requests for an interview. Attempts to reach her mother by phone were unsuccessful.

"Danielle is the first of her kind in that she rode this singular TV experience and the catchphrase and profiles and memes that ensued have built a revenue-generating business," said Jonathan Davids, chief executive officer at influencer marketing platform Influicity. Yet, viral stars who become magnets for brands looking to quickly increase eyeballs may find that it is hard to find financial longevity in being a villain on social media, said Davids and other experts. So far, Bregoli's fan base has only grown after a slew of misdeeds, including an undated home video of Bregoli and her mother in a physical altercation, which started circulating last month and has now caught the attention of her hometown police in Boynton Beach, Florida.

Bregoli has endorsed products such as clothing company FashionNova, teeth grills and weight loss drink FitTea. Brands could be paying her up to \$50,000, said Rishabh Sharma, CEO of Poletus, which provides marketing tools to brands and influencers. Los Angeles-based clothing brand PizzaSlime, helmed by creative directors Nick Santiago and Matthew Hwang, partnered with Bregoli to create a line of merchandise that featured her catchphrase. "We



just thought she was funny," Hwang said of Bregoli. Most of PizzaSlime's nine Bregoli items, including t-shirts, blankets and totes bearing her face, are sold out online. Hwang said it was unlikely they would work with Bregoli again. "We like to work with interesting ideas and



people, and once we work together, we move onto the next thing," he said.

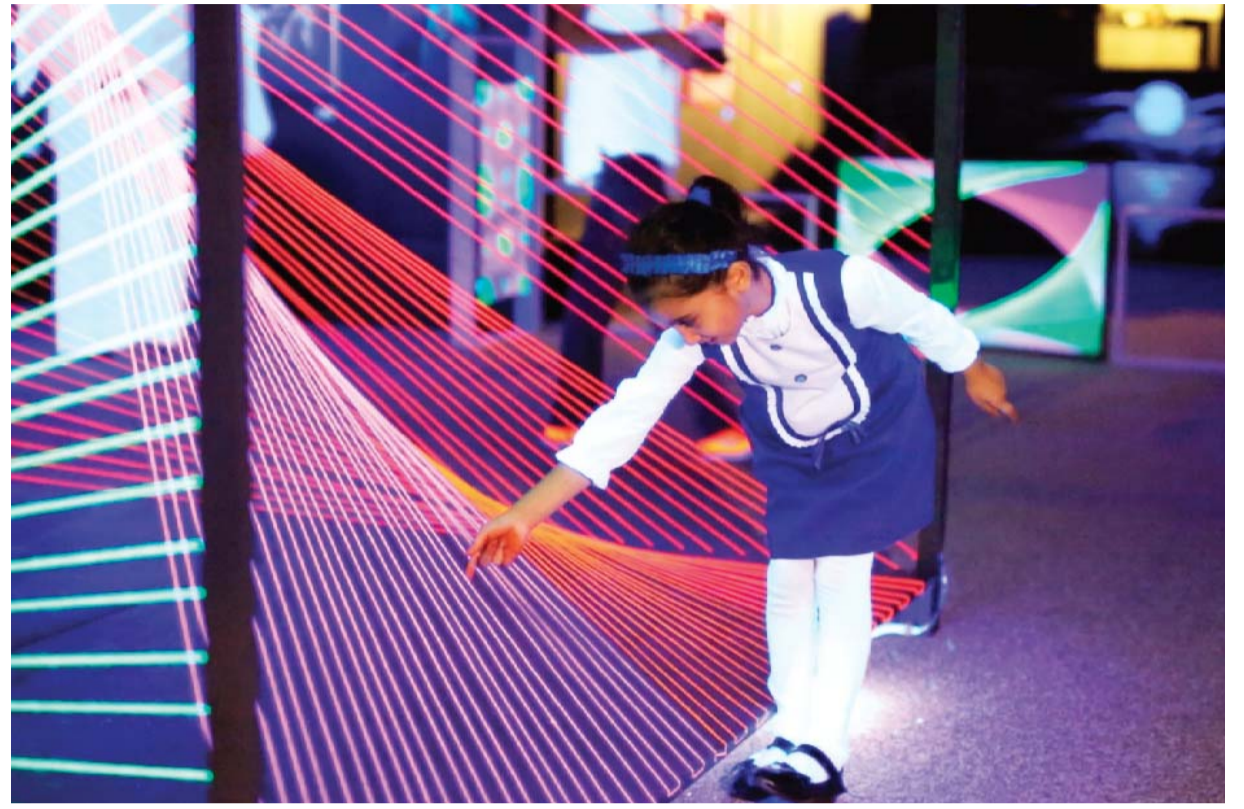
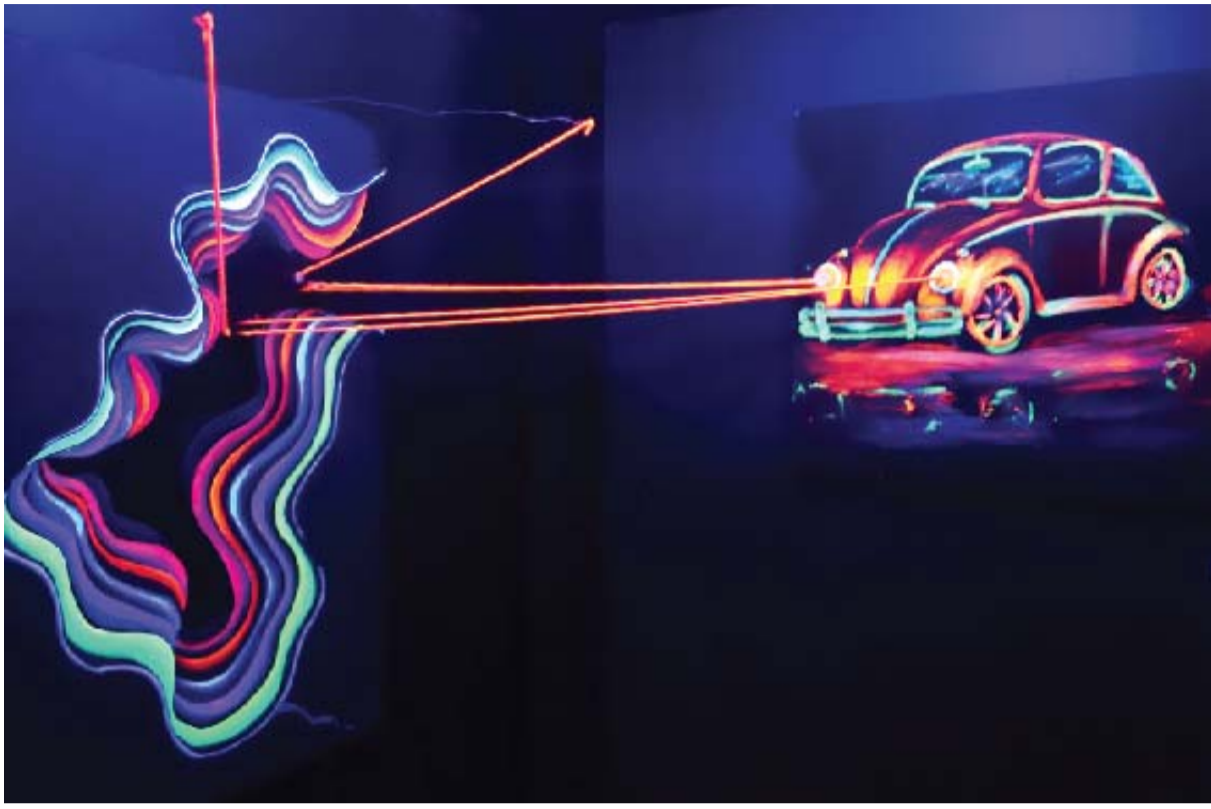
The longevity of controversy

Bregoli is not the only star to cash in on being a rebel but if she hopes to achieve long-

term social media success, she has to evolve beyond the controversy, said Sharma. Corinne Olympios, 24, a contestant who divided opinion on the recent season of ABC reality show "The Bachelor" for tactics that included going topless, walked away from the show with more than 720,000 Instagram fans.

The Miami native is moving on from "The Bachelor" with a clothing line launched this month and plans to write a book, create a beauty line and star in her own reality show. "I'm just trying to really build my brand right now," she told Reuters. For Bregoli to outpace her 15 minutes of viral fame, she would have to embark on a coming-of-age journey and perhaps transition from a rebel without a cause to a rebel with a cause, Sharma said. One such cause could be to speak out against cyber bullying, Sharma said.

Last month, Bregoli posted an image of the barrage of negative comments and insults she received on Instagram, captioning it, "Everyone want to point the finger at me." "Danielle can still retain the rebel side, but instead of rebelling against her mother, she can rebel against some of the social injustice being done," Sharma said. — Reuters



'Moonlight'

creative art
shines at Jaber Al-Ali School



By Hassan Abdel Bari

Amidst the nerve-wracking tension ruling the world today, the endless flow of news stories about wars, terrorism, killing, displacement and proxy wars tearing the region apart, and the prevalence of the culture of hate and blame, it was an absolutely mind-soothing experience to find a spot for enjoying tranquillity and peace of mind and appreciate some of the aesthetic aspects in this life. This was my experience at the 'Moonlight' art exhibition held at Jaber Al-Ali Secondary School in Mubarak Al-Kabeer educational area.

Held under auspices of the area's director Mansour Al-Daihani, and with the presence of the school director Khaled Al-Sager, the area's senior art education supervisor Fahad Al-Essa and art education supervisor Waleed Al-Taqi, the 'Moonlight' art exhibition initially opened for two days, but was extended for a week in view of the unprecedented number of visitors it attracted from various public and private schools and art-lovers around Kuwait.

In an exclusive statement to Kuwait Times, the head of the organizing committee and the school's art education's head of department Fahad Al-Najjar explained why the name 'Moonlight' was chosen. He said that all the paintings displayed at the exhibition had been painted using special phosphoric colours mixed with regular acrylic ones to glow under ultraviolet light (dark light).





"This is the same idea of moonlight, as the moon does not shine by itself but its light is only a reflection of sunlight," Najjar said, adding that the exhibition presented 'interactive art', where viewers feel united with the pieces on display.

"The exhibition is actually a combination of several art forms - painting, installation art, interactive art, design, special effects, a mime performance and live background music played by the creative music teacher Nizar Abdul Samee, who enchanted all visitors to the extent that a female visitor told me she could not control her tears in such a magical atmosphere," he said.

Najjar noted that some visitors initially thought the masked performers were actually a painting, before they started miming and shook hands with some of them. Najjar expressed special thanks to his colleagues Ahmed Abdul Mo'ez, Wael Mohammed and Hassan Ghadanfar for their relentless innovative efforts.

Also speaking to Kuwait Times, school director Khaled Al-Sager expressed deep appreciation for the efforts exerted by the art education department and its supervision and the cooperation of all school staff to make this unique exhibition one of the most successful ones.

"This exhibition managed to attract students and teaching staff members from all the area's schools, as well as from various schools in other areas and non-educational facilities such as PAAET and some private schools," he underscored, noting that he decided to extend the exhibition's duration to meet the growing number of visitors. He also said he was considering having the works displayed at a permanent section within the school.

"If you wish to be creative and distinctive, make the decision, select team members, plan, listen, take part and go for it," said Mubarak Al-Kabeer's senior art education supervisor Fahd Al-Essa, noting that the exhibition was an integrated, creative and educational process involving learners, teachers, HoDs, school administration and supervision to achieve ultimate success.

Finally, art supervisor Waleed Al-Taqi said several sessions were held with Najjar in the few months' preparation phase to come up with a genuine idea of holding an exhibition displaying all art techniques taught to learners, and at the same time create fascinating art teaching aids that would highly appeal to learners.

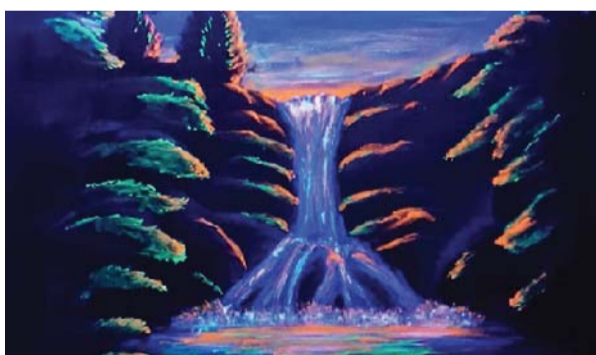
"We finally decided using phosphoric colours, which are usually used in parties," he said, expressing his amazement at the cooperation shown by various school departments in achieving the success of the Moonlight art exhibition.



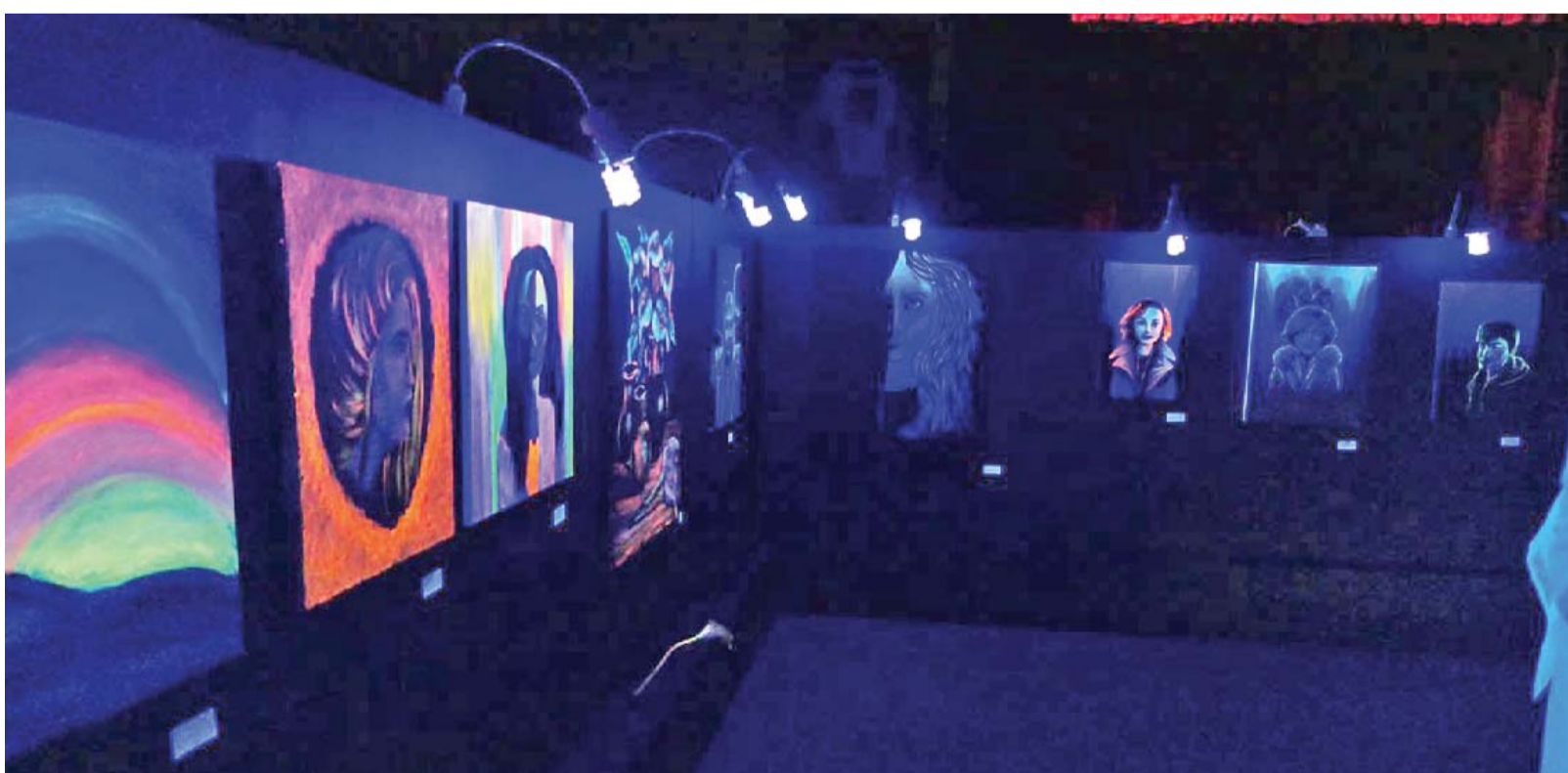
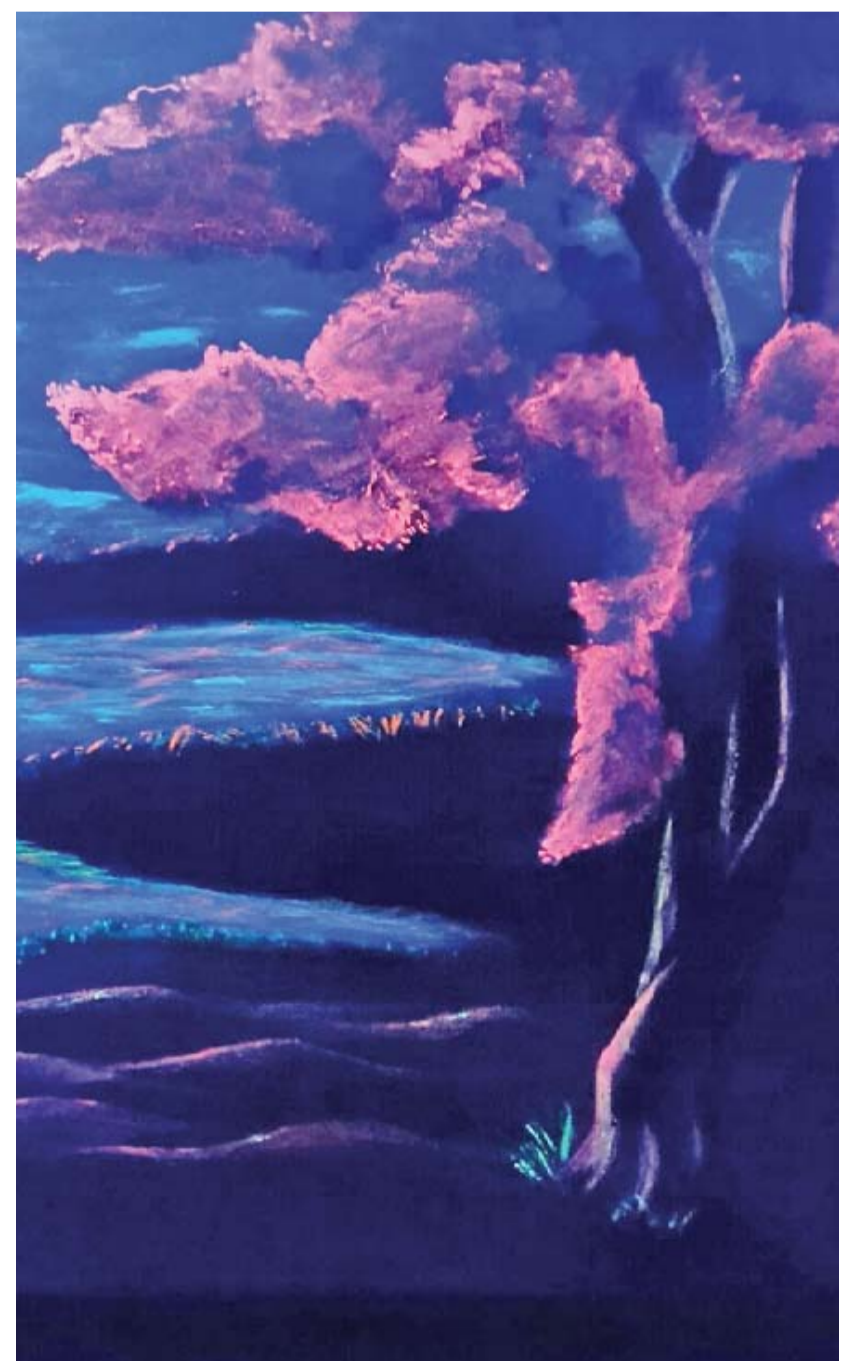
Photo shows Khaled Al-Sager, Fahad Al-Essa and Waleed Al-Taqi honoring Fahad Al-Najjar.



Photo shows art teachers Ahmad Abdul Mo'ez and Wael Mohammed with some of the participating students.



Charming live music by Nizar Abdul Samee.

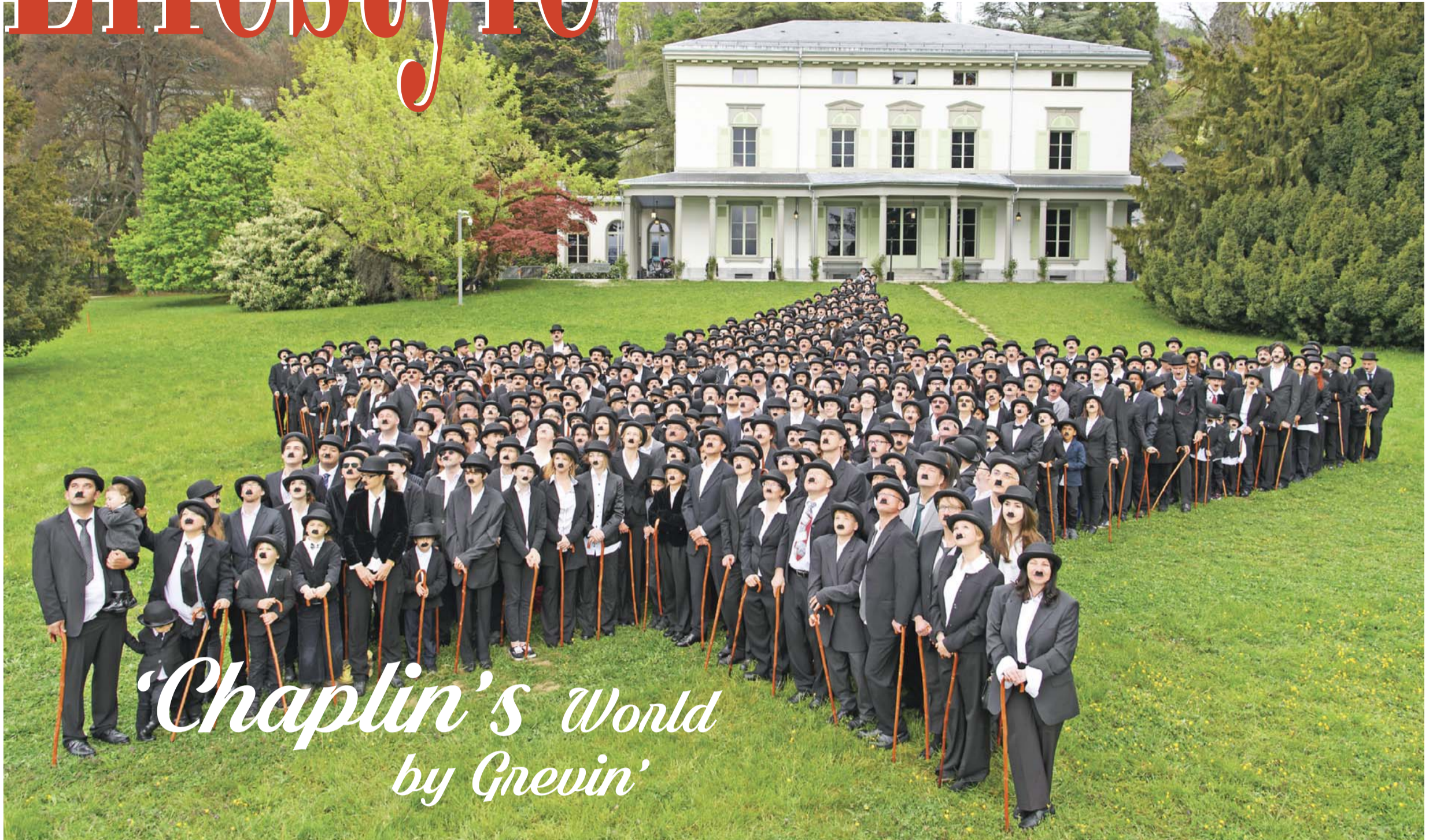


Lifestyle

MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2017

'Moonlight'
creative art shines
at Jaber Al-Ali

39



*'Chaplin's World
by Grevin'*

662 people dressed as Charlie Chaplin pose for a group photo in front of the Manoir de Ban during an attempt of the world's largest gathering of people dressed as The Tramp on the occasion of Charlie Chaplin's birthday, and to celebrate the first year of the museum "Chaplin's World by Grevin", in Corsier-sur-Vevey, Switzerland, yesterday. — AP photos



Musicians chase fame on west Africa's musical islands

Every April, the tiny island capital of Cape Verde is taken over for a week by musicians of all stripes, trailing dreams of record deals and sold-out stadiums.

Two events, the Atlantic Music Expo (AME) and the more established Kriol Jazz Festival, draw talent from as far away as Haiti and Brazil, intent on showing what they have to offer to international producers on an archipelago famed for its own rich musical heritage. "During this fifth edition of the AME, foreign producers showed a lot of interest towards Cape Verdian artists like Lucibela and Os Tubaroes," said Jose da Silva, the festival's executive director, as the week drew to a close.

Da Silva knows the world music industry better than most, having spotted the talent of Cesaria Evora, Cape Verde's "barefoot diva," who made the island nation's bittersweet "morna" ballads internationally famous. He describes Lucibela, a young artist who has been likened to Evora, as the hottest ticket at the festival so far, along with South Africa's Tribute "Birdie" Mboweni, whose honeyed tones blend seamlessly with a jazz/soul vibe. "I want to continue what

Cesaria started," Lucibela told AFP. "I want to sing Cape Verde's own musical styles like "morna" and "coladeira" all over the world, but I want to be known for my own talent." No style is discounted at the Atlantic Music Expo, but its African roots are proudly out front, with more than 500 music professionals attending, among them Afrojazz, soul, R&B, rap and traditional folk artists.

For many, it is a unique opportunity to perform and network in the beautiful island setting of Praia, the ordinarily sleepy capital. "We hope to meet tour organizers, because they are the ones who will allow us to show our music all over the world," said Pamela Byesadjogo, a Gabonese Afrojazz singer who also made waves at the event.

'Full of joy'

Singing, drumming and dancing are not limited to the performers in a nation that prides itself on producing some of world music's biggest stars, despite being home to fewer than 500,000 people miles off mainland Africa. "Normally I play behind closed doors because jazz concerts are usually intimate affairs," said Sylvain Luc, a

French guitarist performing at the Kriol Jazz Festival. "But what I see here is a public which is full of life, full of joy, and that's great," he said. Local heroes of international renown such as Lura and Bulimundo were also present to play old favorites to the crowds.

After giving birth just months ago, traditional Cape Verdean artist Lura said the crowds and new motherhood had electrified her performance. "I have more energy in my body since I became a mother," she said following a show where the applause barely stopped. "My new album will continue my mission to sing about Cape Verde, everyday life here and its traditions, blended with sounds from across the world."

Hybrids come naturally to a nation that has historical links to Portugal and Brazil, and has long been a stopping point for traders on their passage across the Atlantic. What remains is to export more of its artists for audiences who cannot make it to see them on the archipelago, said Culture Minister Abraao Vicente. "The intention of the government is now to work on ways of facilitating, in terms of costs, travel for these artists abroad," he told AFP. — AFP



The Roberto Fonseca Quartet from Cuba perform during the Kriol Jazz Festival at Praia.



Bizarre News

Man finds dead mouse in protein powder

A man has found a dead mouse in his protein powder. Adam Brenton, 25, had been using his chocolate flavored MyProtein pack for three weeks before he uncovered the body of the rodent buried inside. In shock, Adam - who is from Manchester - checked the packaging for holes or bite marks but found none - suggesting that the unwelcome visitor had been inside the pack when it was first sealed and had died inside. Although he has not suffered any illness, as a result, Adam claims he couldn't eat his dinner afterwards and his girlfriend is still having nightmares about the discovery. A child used YouTube to learn to drive then took a trip to McDonald's with his toddler sister.

Boy aged 8 drives sister to McDonald's

An eight-year-old boy stole his father's car and drove his four-year-old sister to the fast food chain for a snack. Police told The Wirrton Daily Times, the youngster had taught himself how to drive by watching clips on the video-sharing site and during the road trip from his home in East Palestine, Ohio County to the fast food restaurant, which was a mile-and-a-half, he obeyed the highway code and stuck to speed limits. He pulled up at the drive-thru and ordered a meal and paid for it using the money from his own piggy bank but staff thought the stunt was a prank. Patrolman Jacob Koehler said: "This kid learned how to drive on YouTube. I think there is a good teaching point here. With the way technology is... kids will learn how to do anything and everything. He probably looked it up for five minutes and then said it was time to go." Whilst the boy had his adventure, his parents were sleeping peacefully at home. Police received several calls from concerned people who witnessed the boy behind the steering wheel.

Man embarrassed with oversized boarding pass

A man was left embarrassed at the airport when his friends printed his boarding pass in A1 sized paper. Ryan tried to enter airport security with his document required to travel. One of the security staff joined in on the joke and made him attempt to scan the pass. However, because of the size of the paper he was unable to scan it and the staff member then asked him for his passport, and let Ryan through the gates while saying, "This is fantastic." His friends filmed the event and laughter was heard through the 43-second video, which has gone viral.

A pastry chef spends five days creating a 25kg chocolate sculpture

A group of pastry chefs spent five days creating a 25kg chocolate sculpture. Michelin-star culinary masterminds at Bohemia Bar and Restaurant in Jersey have worked solidly for 120 hours to perfect an artistic piece made out of the tasty treat to celebrate the Easter holiday. The design captures an octopus tentacle wriggling out of a treasure chest filled with golden miniature Easter eggs. Speaking about the creation, Head Pastry Chef Ellen de Jager-Smith said: "We wanted to create something a bit different this Easter so decided to do the lost treasure of Easter. We created a treasure chest with golden mini Easter eggs inside. Obviously lost treasure needs to be protected so we created the Jersey Kraken to protect it! The chocolate sculpture took five days to make and we used 25kg of chocolate." The mouth-watering design will be on show at the venue throughout the Easter weekend.