

DIAMOND PENDANT SET KD 350

2GM FREE 2 GRAM GOLD COIN ON PURCHASE OF DIAMOND JEWELLERY WORTH KD 400

1GM FREE 1 GRAM GOLD COIN ON PURCHASE OF DIAMOND JEWELLERY WORTH KD 250

QUARTER GM FREE QUARTER GRAM GOLD COIN ON PURCHASE OF GOLD JEWELLERY WORTH KD 250 ONLY ON 28TH APRIL 2017

PAY 10% ADVANCE AND GET GUARANTEED GOLD RATE PROTECTION

0% DEDUCTION ON GOLD EXCHANGE

AKSHAYA TRITIYA CELEBRATIONS

Polki NECKLACE SET KD 1,000

THIS AKSHAYA TRITIYA BRING HOME GOLD LUCK

Joyalukkas
World's favourite jeweller

Panasonic Tower, Kuwait City - Tel: 22279460 • Fahaheel, Makkah Street - Tel: 2392 2148
Al Rai Branch 2, Near Lulu Hypermarket & Friday Market - Tel: 2220 2466

US WEIGHS MORE MILITARY AID FOR SAUDIS OVER YEMEN WAR

MATTIS SAYS US WANTS 'STRONG' SAUDI ARABIA, WARNS OF YEMEN 'HEZBOLLAH'



Min 19°
Max 34°
High Tide 07:12 & 16:57
Low Tide 11:38



conspiracy theories

PETTY PROBLEMS

By Badrya Darwish
badrya_d@kuwaittimes.net

Lately, I've noticed that since the past few years, corruption and petty bribery have become a way of life in Kuwait. We never experienced this in Kuwait in the previous decades. Corruption is now endemic in the public sector. When you go to process any paperwork - which is your right and required by law - it is the duty of the employee, whoever he or she is, to do it. But you feel that they are not encouraged to accomplish your task efficiently and quickly, unless you bring a small present or pay something. This is what is called petty bribery.

At a glance, you say OK - KD 5 or KD 10 - what's the big deal if I finish my paperwork quickly and avoid delays and the repeated comings and goings and wasting time, because this is what happens. You run to 100 departments to sign a paper and many times they tell you come back tomorrow or in the afternoon or after an hour. But if you know how to 'adjust' things, paperwork can get done more quickly, at the same moment.

This is where the danger lies. It starts like this, and slowly it becomes required. The employee psychologically starts to feel like it's not his duty to do this work - he needs an incentive outside of his salary. And he starts building his life on that 'extra' coming from here and there.

If you think about societies where petty official bribery takes hold, you will be saddened. They are impossible to improve. Many Third World countries suffer from a terrible infestation of petty bribery. The problem spreads quickly amongst employees and results in hindering advances in the society and efficiency on all scales.

I'm worried for the generations to come, because if this grows and continues to spread - it looks like it's escalating, not stopping - then the next generations will adopt it as the norm, a natural way of life or process. No ethics, no principles, no religion - whatever you want to call it. I don't think any religion approves of bribery, be it Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, etc. But me, as a Muslim, I know for a fact that bribery is totally forbidden and is a sin. According to a Sahih Al-Bukhari hadith, Abdullah bin Amur narrated that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "Allah cursed the briber (rashi) and bribe-taker (murtashi)."

EMIRATES TRIMS US FLIGHTS OVER WEAK DEMAND

DUBAI: Emirates, the Middle East's biggest airline, said yesterday it is cutting flights to the United States because of a drop in demand caused by tougher US security measures and Trump administration attempts to ban travelers from Muslim-majority nations. The decision by the Dubai government-owned carrier is the strongest sign yet that the new measures imposed on US-bound travelers from the Mideast are taking a financial toll on fast-growing Gulf carriers that have expanded rapidly in the United States.

Dubai was one of 10 cities in Muslim-majority countries affected by a ban on laptops and other personal electronics in carry-on luggage aboard US-bound flights.

Continued on Page 13



RIYADH: Saudi King Salman meets US Defense Secretary James Mattis yesterday. — AP

RIYADH: The United States is considering ways to boost military support for the Saudi-led fight against Iran-backed rebels in Yemen, believing military pressure is needed to prod the militants into a negotiated end to the conflict, US officials said yesterday. The US already is helping the Saudis by providing intelligence and aerial refueling of their combat aircraft. But the coalition, which also includes the United Arab Emirates, has failed to defeat the rebels known as the Houthis. The rebels seized the capital, Sanaa, and much of northern Yemen in 2014.

International calls for an end to the conflict are intensifying amid rising casualties. Health groups warn the Arab world's poorest country is on the brink of famine. But the Trump administration is considering how to help the Saudis advance their campaign, according to officials, who briefed reporters on condition they not be quoted by name. The assistance could involve more intelligence support but won't include a commitment of US ground troops, they said, adding that any moves would reflect the administration's effort to aggressively counter what it sees as Iran's malign influence across the region.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who met King Salman and other top Saudi officials Tuesday and yesterday, has complained about Iran sending missiles to the Houthis, who've then used them to fire across the Yemen's border into Saudi Arabia. "Everywhere you look, if there's trouble in the region, you find Iran," Mattis said after his meetings yesterday. "So right now what we're seeing is the nations in the region and others elsewhere trying to checkmate Iran and the amount of disruption and instability they can cause."

Before visiting Riyadh, Mattis said the administration's goal in Yemen was to help arrange a United Nations-brokered peace negotiation. A prospective coalition attack on the Houthi-held port of Hoedida, Yemen, has been put off amid concern it would cut off international relief supplies. US officials said yesterday work is underway to determine how to retake Hoedida without hurting aid efforts.

Continued on Page 13

PANEL FINALIZES SPORTS LAW

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's youth and sports committee and the government yesterday agreed on a draft sports law aimed at lifting the 18-month international suspension on Kuwaiti sports. Rapporteur of the committee MP Ahmad Al-Fadhli said the panel discussed with State Minister for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan the final details of the draft law after reviewing a government draft and six proposals by lawmakers.

He said it was agreed that the government will send a copy of the draft legislation to the International Olympic Committee before it is sent to the Assembly for approval. Fadhli expected that there will be no objection from the IOC, since its opinion is included in the draft law, adding that the legislation was prepared in such a way that it complies with international sports charters and at the same time does not contradict with the Kuwaiti constitution and laws.

Continued on Page 13

THE MONSTER IS BACK

Shrimpy

1802 662

SHRIMPYKW

Big MONSTER KD 5,000

Grilled MONSTER KD 4,750

Fried MONSTER KD 11,250



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other top state officials attend the closing ceremony of the Kuwait international Quran contest. —Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses after receiving an artwork presented to him as a memento.



A participant recites verses from the Holy Quran.



Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri delivers a speech.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah honors participants during the ceremony.

AMIR ATTENDS, PATRONIZES KUWAIT INT'L QURAN CONTEST CEREMONY

125 PARTICIPANTS FROM 70 COUNTRIES 'GATHERED FOR THE LOVE OF THE HOLY QURAN'

KUWAIT: The closing ceremony of the Kuwait international Quran contest was held in Bayan Palace yesterday, with the attendance and patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Upon arrival, His Highness Sheikh Sabah was received by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs

Mohammad Al-Jabri and members of the contest's committee.

The ceremony was attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, President of the Supreme Judicial Council, head of the Court

of Cassation and Constitutional Court Justice Yousef Al-Mutawa'a, Acting National Assembly Speaker Essa Al-Kandari, President of the Supreme Judicial Council, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah,

Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and senior military officials.

In a speech at the event, head of the contest's judging panel Mohammad Mandakar thanked His Highness the Amir for patronizing the competition. He noted that Al-Sabah ruling family had

always supported spreading the teaching of Islam and Quran memorization throughout the years. Meanwhile, Minister Jabri said the contest brought together 125 participants from 70 countries, gathering for the love of the Holy Quran. He added that the competition saw a large media coverage with about five million viewers and another 14 million followers on the internet. —KUNA



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the visiting Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and trade Peter Szijjarto exchange one of three documents they signed yesterday. —KUNA



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (right) speaks during a joint press conference with his German counterpart Sigmar Gabriel. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT, HUNGARY INK 3 COOPERATION MEMOS

AMIR RECEIVES LETTER FROM HUNGARIAN PRESIDENT

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait and Hungary inked yesterday documents stipulating organization of high-level bilateral consultations, cooperation in sports and education and sciences. The inking of the documents came after First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah hosted the visiting Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and trade Peter Szijjarto, holding official talks on cementing cooperation in key sectors, issues of joint concern as well as regional and international affairs.

The two sides during the concluded talks signed three documents; a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on holding bilateral consultations

between the State of Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commerce, another memo for cooperation in the sports sectors in addition to a program for educational and scientific cooperation between the Kuwaiti Ministry of Higher Education and the Hungarian Ministry of Human Resources for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019. Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled held a luncheon in honor of the guests at the Foreign Ministry headquarters. Senior ministry officials attended it.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, accompanied by Szijjarto. The Hungarian Minister

handed His Highness the Amir a letter from President of Hungary Janos Ader regarding bilateral relations. The letter also included an invitation for His Highness Sheikh Sabah to visit Hungary. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Later, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Szijjarto and his accompanying delegation, in the presence of Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled. The meeting was attended by head of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikhha Etimad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Ambassador of Kuwait to Hungary Dr Hamad Bu-Rahama. —KUNA

GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER HAILS ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH KUWAIT

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The German foreign minister hailed long-standing and distinguished economic relations between Germany and Kuwait, adding that Germany would like to strengthen this successful relationship. "Kuwait is important for the Federal Republic of Germany," Sigmar Gabriel said during a joint press conference with his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah at the foreign ministry on Tuesday, stressing the importance of selecting Kuwait as the first leg of his trip to the Middle East.

On bilateral talks with Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, he said opinions were exchanged on many issues in the region. "We have common positions regarding the Syrian crisis in finding a peaceful solution and involving all parties to the conflict," he said, referring to Russia and the United States, as well as Gulf-Iran consultations.

He stressed the great role and efforts exerted by Kuwait on the Yemeni crisis. He said Germany feels responsible for providing support, which would boost international and regional efforts to resolve the problem. "If the countries of the world contribute as much as Kuwait's contribution towards humanitarian action, progress would be significant," Gabriel said.

He said Germany wants to contribute to strengthening security in Iraq by training security and police forces to achieve stability in liberated areas and rebuilding and maintaining Iraq's unity. He revealed that there would be a chance during the Gulf consultative summit in mid-May to discuss means of creating a platform for this dialogue.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled lauded the strategic relations with Germany that were established more than 50 years ago. He also expressed appreciation for the key role by Germany in helping

Kuwait achieve development. He said Germany is Kuwait's strong trading partner in the European Union, where the average trading volume between Germany and Kuwait is about \$1.5 billion annually, while Kuwaiti investments in Germany hit \$31.5 billion. He stressed that Kuwaitis are looking forward to boosting cooperation in all sectors.

"Germany provided big contributions to help Syrians during the three conferences hosted by Kuwait in 2013, 2014 and 2015, in addition to the London and Brussels conferences," he noted. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled praised the German role in finding peaceful solutions to several regional and international issues. On Iran, he said: "We and GCC countries are convinced that Iran is a key country in the region, and the existence of normal relations between Iran and GCC states would benefit our countries and the region generally."



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Food Bank Assistant CEO Mishaal Al-Ansari speaks during the press conference.



Kuwaiti Food Bank Assistant CEO Mishaal Al-Ansari presents a memento to Saveco. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAITI FOOD BANK, SAVECO LAUNCH CLOTHES BANK PROJECT CHARITY COUPONS, TRAINING COURSES FOR 5,700 FAMILIES



Officials pose for a group photo.



Kuwaiti Food Bank Assistant CEO Mishaal Al-Ansari (center) speaks with Saveco's Martin Daly (left) as Kuwaiti Food Bank's Salem Al-Hamar looks on.

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Food Bank and Saveco have recently announced launching a charity project that aims to help 5,700 needy families. The project contains a clothes bank, charity coupons and training courses at Saveco's food academy.

Saveco's Chief Executive Officer Noor Faisal Al-Qatami said: "It is part of Saveco's social responsibility to give back to the community we are part of. There are many activities we have taken part in order to achieve this goal. Today, we are announcing a major community partnership with the Kuwaiti Food Bank to launch the clothes bank, where our customers buy clothes and put them in a dedicated box placed after the cashier counters at our stores, in order to be distributed by the Kuwaiti Food House to needy families, along with the charity coupons initiative. In addition to this, we are launching food academy training courses at Saveco Al-Rai and Al-Qurain. In these courses, family members will learn how to cook in a healthy way, which helps them to have a healthier lifestyle, since our slogan in Saveco is 'A Way of Life.'"

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Food Bank

Assistant CEO Mishaal Al-Ansari said: "The idea of the Kuwaiti Food Bank has been implemented in many Arab states and countries worldwide. It is a charitable idea aimed to achieve nutritional balance in the community." He further revealed the 'Food Feeding Project', where a KD 25 charity coupon will be distributed for each needy family in order to have basic food items. "Plus, we have clothes banks located at Saveco Al-Rai and Al-Qurain, and food academy training courses that aim to train young people and empower them for the benefit of the Kuwaiti society," he added.



KUWAIT: Head of the UNHCR office in Kuwait Dr Hanan Hamdan and Omar Al-Ghanim, CEO of Al-Ghanim Industries, sign the memorandum of understanding. —Photo by Joseph Shagra

UNHCR, AL-GHANIM INDUSTRIES SIGN MOU ON EDUCATING SYRIAN REFUGEES

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Al-Ghanim Industries yesterday signed a three-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) to educate Syrian refugees in MENA region through various key programs.

This took place following a high-level panel discussion held at UN House in Mishref on the role of Kuwait's private sector in humanitarian response to the refugee crisis in the MENA region. During her opening speech, head of the UNHCR office in Kuwait Dr Hanan Hamdan stressed the importance of supporting the private sector in Kuwait for humanitarian operations, pointing at the vital role of this sector to alleviate the suffering of refugees in the region.

Hamdan noted that the Government of Kuwait has been very generous in supporting the refugees, and the support of the private sector will increase the impact of Kuwait in preserving the dignity of refugees and provide them with sustainable opportunities to meet the increasing humanitarian needs. "Kuwait has always been a supporter of the refugee issue through donations and implementation of several international solidarity conferences to support them. Kuwait has hosted three international donors to support the humanitarian situation in Syria and nine meetings with major donors to support the international humanitarian response to the crisis in Syria," she said.

She added that the Kuwaiti private sector is a very promising sector, adding that they cooperated with private companies for almost a year. "Now we have cooperation with three com-

panies: Zain, Agility and Al-Ghanim Industries, and there is an ongoing discussion with other companies to cooperate with."

Long overdue

Omar Al-Ghanim, CEO of Al-Ghanim Industries, said that participating in this event and signing the memorandum of understanding with the UNHCR is a long awaited step. "We appreciate the efforts of UNHCR, relief agencies and other governments in this area, but as a private sector, we have a key role to play that can make a big difference for refugees in the region."

He stressed that the private sector, including Al-Ghanim Industries, should be more active "and the opportunity is right for all of us to start changing our mindset about a crisis." Ghanim added that hundreds of thousands of Syrian children suffer from lack of access to education. "Today, we face the risk of creating a whole generation of Syrian children without the skills, confidence, support and ability to build their future. Marketing with a humanitarian aspect to support the education of Syrian refugee children, will provide financial assistance to the educational activities of Syrian refugees, and we will continue our role as advocates of change during these difficult times."

Ghanim explained that Al-Ghanim Industries' project to support Syrian refugees in the field of education is based on providing good teachers for refugees because when they return to their country, the Syrians can contribute to the reconstruction of their state.

"The humanitarian cost of the war in Syria is great," said Tariq Sultan, Chief Executive Officer and Vice Chairman of

Agility. "There are more than five million refugees and more than six million internally displaced people in Syria. Agility, like many other companies, has supported people in need. 285 families were cared for as part of UNHCR's cash assistance program to donate logistics to transport relief supplies to refugees in Greece and Jordan."

He added, "as for the role of the private sector, we are seeking to provide funds to support people in the field, in addition to working within our network and encouraging the community to respond to the crisis, within the coordination between civil society and what we can offer through goods and involve people in various programs."

Unique initiative

Houssam Chahine, Senior Private Sector Partnerships Officer (MENA), UNHCR, affirmed that there is a great scope for partnership with the private sector, adding that the United Nations worked two years ago focusing on cooperation with companies in the private sector to deliver the message through several networks.

"This year, the Commission launched a unique initiative with multiple partnerships, the most important being the contribution of individuals and companies financially. The UN relies on transparency with this sector. We seek to raise awareness among the refugees about the importance of education so that the future of a generation of refugees will not be available, and the second is the monetary support program, where the United Nations is working to mobilize supporters from all over the world to provide cash support," he said.

SHOP & WIN

30 AUDI A3

ALSO GET FREE GOLD COINS WITH EVERY PURCHASE

PURCHASE GOLD WORTH KWD 50 GET 1 RAFFLE COUPON	PURCHASE DIAMOND OR UNICY JEWELLERY WORTH KWD 50 GET 2 RAFFLE COUPONS	PURCHASE GOLD WORTH KWD 200 GET 1 GOLD COIN FREE	PURCHASE DIAMOND OR UNICY JEWELLERY WORTH KWD 200 GET 2 GOLD COINS FREE
---	---	--	--

KALYAN JEWELLERS

THIS PROMOTION IS VALID ACROSS ALL OUTLETS IN INDIA, UAE, KUWAIT AND QATAR.
 THE CAMPAIGN WILL HAVE 3 WINNERS FROM KUWAIT, 8 WINNERS FROM UAE, 4 WINNERS FROM QATAR AND 15 WINNERS FROM INDIA.
 OFFER VALID TILL JUNE 9TH 2017.

AL DABBUS STREET, FANAHEEL - 23921533 | OPP. SOUK AL WATIYA, MALIYA - 22287633 | OPP. FRIDAY MARKET, AL RAI - 24752933
 AL SALAM MALL, GROUND FLOOR, SALMIYA - 22251534
 105 BRANCHES SPREAD ACROSS INDIA AND MIDDLE EAST / WWW.KALYANJEWELLERS.NET
 FOLLOW US ON @KALYANJEWELLERS

ARAB FORUM ACTIVITIES OF E-GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES SUNDAY IN SHARAM AL-SHEIKH

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF EGYPTIAN PRIME MINISTER

KUWAIT: Sharam Al-Sheikh City will witness on Sunday the launch of the Arab Forum of the ongoing E-government under the slogan "the Road to Sustainable Development" which will be under the patronage of the engineer Shareef Ismael, Prime Minister of Arab Republic of Egypt. This forum will be held from 23 to 25 of April in the Maritim International Conferences Hall with a joint effort between Akhbar Al-Youm Foundation and Nouf Expo Company from Kuwait in addition to the Arab Organization for Administrative Development (ARADO) which is one of the specialized organizations of the Arab League. The Forum brings together many of the leaderships of E-Government programs and Information Technology and communications from Arab Countries in addition to specialized Arab and International foundations and companies. It is worth mentioning that Yasser Al-Kadi, Minister of Communications and Major General Khaled Fouda governor of South of Sinai as well as a gathering of senior Arab officials will participate in the opening of this forum.



Yusuf Khalid Al-Marzouq

Government which is organized by Nouf Expo in Kuwait where its new session which will be held in next November will be the fifth consecutively.

The organizers have spared no effort to convey this outstanding experience to the Arab World through the window of the Arab Organization for the Administrative Development which is one of the specialized and relevant organizations starting from Egypt with basic contribution from Akhbar Al-Youm as it is the exclusive media partner and marketing partner.

The forum has also an official and outstanding support which is represented by His Excellency the Prime Minister Shareef Ismael and many other supports on the part of Ministry of Communications and



Yasser Rizk

Information Technology in the Arab Republic of Egypt which is represented by His Excellency the Minister Yasser Al-Kadi, and the support of both the High Authority for Tourism and the Egyptian Postal Authority.

Platform for convergence

In this context, the General Manager of Nouf Expo, Yusuf Khalid Al-Marzouq, said: "The organization of the forum in Shaam Al-Sheikh stems from the fact that it is a place distinguished by tourism of international conferences, being a safe haven to organize such a forum that brings together the governments of the region with major international companies. The organization of the forum outside of Kuwait also confirms the implementation of the Nouf Expo's strategy of regional expansion, after it has successfully achieved its local strategic objectives."

Marzouq added: "We aim to make this forum an Arab platform that enhances the opportunity to learn about the latest international technologies and the latest innovations and scientific solutions developed to help governments of the region in providing smart and innovative services to their people. Arab countries today need to launch their sustainable development programs based upon what is available by the new opportunities provided by information and communication technology (ICT) in various fields. Nouf Expo ensures that all the conferences and Forums that it organizes are keen to deal with the issues and activities that affect the growth and development of societies that would bring about development and prosperity. Information technology and E-government programs represent today a true window of hope for the desired change in the Arab world, and this is what the 'Arab E-Government Forum' seeks to achieve at the current and the subsequent sessions."

Important step

Leading Egyptian journalist Yasser Rizk, Chairman of Akhbar Al-Youm Institution, and the Editor-in-Chief of the Al-Akbar newspaper expressed his appreciation for the cooperation of all parties to ensure the success of the forum, in the belief of its importance in supporting the development of mechanisms of governmental work in Arab countries. He expressed his hope that the Forum will produce strong recommendations and new ideas through working papers that can uplift the Arab technological thinking



Dr Nasser Al-Qahtani

to keep pace with the rapid global developments in this field. He added that the participation of Dar Akhbar Al-Youm in organizing the Forum stems from its deep belief in the importance of supporting joint Arab action efforts in all various fields, especially in the technological field, pointing out the faith of Dar Akhbar Al-Youm in its social and national role which motivates it to support any effort that achieves Arab interests. He praised the close cooperation between the Akhbar Al-Youm Institution and the partners who participated in the organization of the forum, stressing his confidence that this cooperation will lead to the success of the Forum and achieve its objectives.

Community participation

The Director General of the Arab Organization for Administrative Development, Dr Nasser Al-Qahtani, stressed the importance of technology in achieving the aspirations of the Arab peoples.

He said: "Advanced technology is considered one of the most important channels to depart from the cycle of challenges that plague our countries, both in Egypt and in all other sister Arab countries. We recognize that we must use all the means of modern technology through e-government programs in activating programs of modernity and sustainable development to advance our societies towards the horizons to which we all aspire."

The Director General of the Arab Organization for Administrative Development said that preparations are currently under way to prepare for the forum so as to make it at the level of the prominence of such an event. He pointed out that the Forum enjoys excellent media patronage from Dar Akhbar Al-Youm, the Al-dara Al-Youm (Management Today) Magazine and a strategic participation by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, represented by the Minister Engineer, Yasser Al-Qadhi, as well as by the Supreme Commission for Tourism and the Egyptian Postal Authority and many other governmental companies and Agencies, by which participation contributed to enriching the topics of the forum.

Qahtani added: "The Arab Organization for Administrative Development, through holding the ongoing 'Arab E-Government Forum' aims at supporting E-government in Arab countries, which through advanced electronic and mobile



Essam Al-Saghir

services seeks to improve the relationship between citizens and their governments. Its main objective should be focused on providing services that are more efficient, accessible and responsive to people's needs.

An effective e-government can also help to enhance participation in decision-making and make institutions more transparent and accountable. All this is in line with the principles and objectives of the Arab Vision for 2030, and contributes to its implementation."

Customer satisfaction

Essam Al-Saghir, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Egyptian Post, said that the participation in the Forum comes as part of the strategic plan of the Egyptian Postal Authority, in being keen to utilize the latest technological applications and provide all services, whether postal, financial or governmental, in accordance with international standards. He pointed out that the Egyptian Post is currently utilizing the latest postal systems, such as tracking shipment routes and calculating its cost through its different rates through the website.

The National Post Authority has developed a 'call center' to make it an interface that reflects the interest that the Egyptian Post takes in its customers, in order to improve the service delivery and ensure customer satisfaction when dealing with mail. The Chairman of the Authority explained that the new call center employs 55 employees trained at the highest level to receive complaints and inquiries from customers. Moreover, the center employs the latest technology systems in customer relationship management (CRM).

The development is still ongoing and the future is full of new projects that contribute to the development and improvement of the services provided so that every citizen will receive all services in a decent and accessible manner. The activities of the Forum will be accompanied by an exhibition of technologies and services provided by Arab and international companies from the providers of telecommunication solutions and services. Some of the successful Arab and international experiences in the field of developing e-government programs will be presented through the forum sessions, with the participation of 12 countries, which are: Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, Sultanate of Oman, Palestine and Morocco.

Strategic Partner Sponsored By

TODAY LAST DAY

Organized By

Kuwait Times

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.

* For all Jazeera Airways tickets terms and conditions are applied

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:

For more information contact Kuwait Times Tel: 24835616/7 Fax 24835620/1 or send an email to: ads@kuwaittimes.net

* For more information and updates please visit

facebook/kuwaittimesc
 twitter/TimesComp

Sponsored By



KUWAIT: Frederick Carstens and Paul Zalloua pose after signing the MoU in presence of Dr Salah Al-Sharhan and Yousef Al-Ruwaieh.

KFH RENEWS AGREEMENT WITH GUST

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), in continuation of the efforts to further provide a framework for cooperation and coordination, while boosting a constructive connection between the two organizations.

Group Chief Human Resources Officer at KFH, Frederick Carstens, and AVP for Planning and Development at GUST, Engineer Paul Zalloua signed the MOU at KFH Headquarters in presence of VP for Academic Affairs at GUST, Dr Salah Al-Sharhan, Group Public Relations and Media at KFH, Yousef Al-Ruwaieh and officials from both sides.

"We are delighted to renew the long-standing collaborative links with GUST. It is envisaged that renewing the MOU will definitely foster development links between the two organizations for the best interest of KFH employees and GUST students" said Frederick Carstens.

He added, on the sidelines of inking the

MOU, that the framework of cooperation with GUST encompasses training programs, internships, full-time and part-time jobs, KFH sponsorship of GUST activities, career seminars, GUST facilities and space utilization, case studies programs including approaches and collaboration frameworks. He illustrated that pursuant to the MOU, KFH and GUST recognize each other as important organizations in the learning and development field.

Carstens reiterated that KFH is keen on maintaining high levels of services and benefits to its employees and new recruits, indicating the bank encourages them to be certified and highly qualified by providing them with all the tools they need to enable them to enjoy productive and satisfying careers.

KFH continues its efforts to be a leader in the field of talent development, particularly national labor by attracting, training and qualifying young graduates.

Meanwhile, VP for Academic Affairs at GUST, Dr Salah Al-Sharhan said "We look forward to continuing our cooperation with a leading institution in the private sector such as KFH, and we value their efforts in working with us in preparing our students for leadership positions. One of our top priorities is preparing our students to face the workplace with confidence, equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with skills that enables them to tackle everyday challenges."

"This MoU is important to the future of our graduates. Being proactive with KFH through our internship and placement programs, we offer our students yet another opportunity to join the workplace immediately after graduation. KFH has been supportive of our programs, and their feedback on the performance of our graduates is valuable towards preparing our students in aspects of workplace skill and productivity," Zalloua concluded.

JUDICIARY MEMBERS MUST SUBMIT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS BY MAY 13

OVER 9,647 ROAMING TAXI PERMITS IN KUWAIT

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Assembly Affairs Faleh Al-Azeb stressed that both members of the judiciary and the board of trustees will have to file their financial statements by May 13 and those who fail to do so would be held legally accountable. Speaking at an open meeting held at the diwaniya of former vice president of the Municipal Council Jassar Al-Jassar, Azeb stressed that as the head of the Public Anti-Corruption Authority, he would never hesitate to refer violators to prosecution. Responding to a question about the extradition of fugitive Fahd Al-Rajaan from Britain to Kuwait, Azeb said that he will be handed over soon to face a fair trial, because he had violated public funds. Azeb also stressed that grilling motions should be filed against the concerned ministers and not against the Prime Minister, and if a motion is found to be constitutional, the government has nothing to fear or hide.

He also said that the courts' notification representatives were not doing their jobs properly in terms of notifying prosecuted people about the hearings of cases filed against them. "Kuwait is a small country and it is not hard to reach any area," he said, warn-

ing that representatives failing to do their jobs properly would be held accountable along with their supervisors.

Taxi permits

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah said the total number of drivers holding valid roaming taxi permits was 9,647 as of March 28. In a response to an inquiry by MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari, Sheikh Khaled explained that ministerial decision number 182/2004 set some conditions for roaming taxi permits including limiting the permit to Kuwaitis. He added that the decision authorized the traffic licenses director to exempt non-Kuwaitis working for roaming taxi companies provided that the permits expire whenever the driver quits and changes companies, and that at least 30 percent of the drivers should be Kuwaiti.

Sheikh Khaled added that the conditions included holding a general driving license, having a good reputation, not being convicted for disgraceful crimes or felonies, not being involved in serious accidents or driving under the effect of drugs, alcohol or mind-altering substances, passing a test on Kuwait's geography, being able to speak both Arabic and English, work full time and renew the permit

annually. Sheikh Khaled stressed that the interior ministry regularly inspects these companies. He added that the ministry followed some measures to help reduce traffic congestions, including suspending the issuance of further roaming taxi commercial licenses and limiting the maximum number of taxis owned by a company to 30.

Island development

Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi issued an administrative decision forming a special team to study the Failaka island development project head by his deputy Faisal Al-Jumaa. According to the decision, the team will study all data about ownership on the island in order to overcome all the project's obstacles to help realize the development plan. The team will also include representatives from the ministries of defense, finance, electricity and water and public works, in addition to the housing, industries, and environment authorities as well as the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters.

Projects withdrawn

Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawwa decided withdrawing the Wafra and Bidaa roundabout projects from a com-



Justice Minister Faleh Al-Azeb

pany contracted for it because it failed to meet the execution schedule. The minister also mandated the company to execute the projects at its own expense as stipulated in the penal clause agreed upon in the contracts signed with it.

Free Trade Zone

The Manpower Public Authority plans to legalize the statuses of commercial establishments located in blocks 1 and 3 of the Free Trade Zone and treat them as Kuwaiti private sector companies.

SPEAKER GHANEM, WORLD BANK PRESIDENT DISCUSS KUWAIT'S ECONOMIC REFORMS

WASHINGTON: The National Assembly Speaker of Kuwait Marzouq Al-Ghanem and his accompanying delegation met with World Bank (WB) President Jim Yong Kim in Washington late Tuesday, discussing with him economic reform in Kuwait. During the meeting held on the sidelines of the Global Parliamentary Conference, the two sides affirmed the importance of joint cooperation between the bank and Kuwait to boost the country's economy.

Speaking to Kuwaiti media, Ghanem said his meetings with international parliamentary delegations during the conference were of great importance. The Kuwaiti delegation learned of the impact of political changes on the economy of different countries, he noted. They also shared experience in overcoming obstacles facing small and medium-sized enterprises, he added.

Ghanem took part in the global confer-

ence held in Washington from April 17 to 18, organized by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The Kuwaiti delegation also included MPs Safa Al-Hashem, Salah Khorshid, Abdulwahab Al-Babtain and Thamer Al-Suwai.

Meanwhile, Ghanem and his accompanying parliamentary delegation met with experts in the small and medium-sized enterprises from the World Bank (WB) in Washington late Tuesday as well. The meeting discussed the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises in allowing the private sector to boost Kuwait's economy. It also involved studying the experience of other countries in the field in order to overcome obstacles. Later that evening, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Washington Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held a dinner banquet in honor of Ghanem and his accompanying delegation.—KUNA



WASHINGTON: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with World Bank President Jim Yong Kim in Washington, DC.—KUNA

KUWAIT NATIONAL GUARD SIGNS PROTOCOL WITH JORDANIAN ARMY

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti National Guard yesterday signed a protocol of cooperation with the Jordanian Armed Forces for promoting cooperation and coordination, and sharing experience in training, security and technical fields. The guard's undersecretary General Hashem Al-Refaai said in a press statement following a meeting with visiting Jordanian Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff Major General Mahmoud Freihah that the protocol would lead to a further promotion and development of bilateral military and training domains.

The cooperation protocol would also enable Kuwait and Jordan to make use of each other's military experience, he added. He noted that the National Guard is eager to tap distinguished military experiences in Arab and friendly countries by means of consolidating cooperation in military, security and crisis-management domains. Meanwhile, the visiting Jordanian general said he was so hap-



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti National Guard's Undersecretary General Hashem Al-Refaai and Jordanian Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff Major General Mahmoud Freihah sign a protocol of cooperation.—KUNA

py to sign the cooperative protocol with the Kuwaiti National Guard. He hoped that the move would lead to

promoting and bolstering existing historical relations and bonds between Kuwait and Jordan.—KUNA



KUWAIT: The land borders security department held a field exercise yesterday in the presence of Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Land Borders Security Major General Abdallah Al-Muhanna. The exercise was also attended by Director General of Land Borders Directorate Major General Fouad Al-Athari, Assistant Director General Major General Faisal Al-Essa, Commander of the Sixth Bridge Colonel Mohammad Al-Khurainej, along with other officials.—By Hanan Al-Saoudon

In my view

AMERICA: GOTHAMIZED?

By Jeri Al-Jeri

Comic books, novels, and movies all reassure a sense of old school heroism. But let us not forget that heroes need their polar opposites: 'evil doers.' Batman's greatness is dependent on villains, with all their stereotypes, to punch in the face, and to defeat. He can only remain the Dark Knight and gain what vote-dependent politicians desire, popularity, when he is out 'fighting' the good fight.

The world's police, however, does not veil its 'muscles' with a stealth attire. Instead, it champions justice loud and proud, imposing [where necessary] basic 'good' worldwide. Without being called an empire, the US federal government took it upon itself to advance a number of intercontinental missions to secure territory across the globe, regardless of how debate-worthy it is, as Senator Ron Paul would argue.

For the time being, wherever there is evil, it is going to be its last place, the soaring eagle of the west will put the fear at rest. Yet, there are louder voices that disagree. Do US President Donald Trump's supporters have a point in calling the military as fictional as a DC Comic's character? What happens to the eagle if it nests in the west permanently, with no fear-worthy enemies left in the world?

The feathers are getting too expensive, the nest is crashing down economically, the multiracial demographics are in a state of antagonization, scientific progression is not living up to the standards of the past generation, the funding of NASA decreased, and yet Silicon Valley thrives. Tragically, race relations and religious tensions have been inflamed by the government's political rhetoric. Will New York City or Washington, DC transform into Gotham? Is the true American way of life lost? Will America be great, but only historically?

Michael Moore laid down all of the signs of how empires fall: Rudeness sexuality, aggression as entertainment, violence for the sake of itself, and the social disintegration of the 'nuclear' family (which is very unfamiliar concept for other nations). I find Moore's observation to be exaggerated. Still, I believe that there is a noble soul in the rib cage of each American, a genie in the lamp, an eagle to be. A kind of Batman that is not fictional.

For example, one blond teenage girl who 'could not take it': One sunny day, a hijab-wearing brown skinned Muslim woman was being kicked out of a shop by the cashier under a barrage of racial slurs when, in the far back, a white young girl came forward. She marched to this racist employee and lectured him on how America became great through racial acceptance. Then she hugged the Muslim lady in tears, and made sure she bought her groceries and escorted the woman to her vehicle.

This was on TV. Soon afterwards, a cameraman came in and the TV host appeared to thank the girl and shake her hand. And then 'gotcha': it was all an act! But to the girl who thought it was real - and to people behind the TV show who set up the prank - the idea of racism being allowed was too much. America does not need a new Batman, just ordinary people willing to stand up against the casual racism of their compatriots and their leaders.

Get Your Second Jewellery Piece Free

April 12 - April 29

Purchase diamond jewellery, pearl jewellery and watches, and get your second jewellery piece free. Also, avail special offers on purchases of gold jewellery when you visit Damas stores.*

ZERO
MAKING CHARGES

on select gold jewellery

ZERO
MAKING CHARGES

on 22k gold coins

ZERO
DEDUCTION

on gold exchange

ananya

+965 99694191 | damasjewellery.com

damas

*Terms and conditions apply.

الجريدة Al-Jarida

THE ARTICLES THIEF

By Ali Khajah

Weeks ago, a writer who is supposedly religious posted a video of an old man speaking the Kuwaiti dialect with an accent of Kuwaiti or Persian origins. The writer made sarcastic comments about the accent, and implying that he lives in a certain area inhabited by a majority of citizens with Persian origins. However, when followers warned him that the old man comes from a well-known honorable family 'Al-Kandari', that man, with religious looks only, who is famous amongst journalists for being an articles' thief, deleted his post. I personally believe that the disaster was not in the tweet that the 'articles' thief had posted, nor in the satirical remarks he made. The real problem lies in the fact that he deleted his post after realizing that the honorable old man belonged to Al-Kandari family. Personally, I believe there is no harm when people speak different accents in Kuwait because all of us have migrated here from various places surrounding Kuwait.

There are many accents of migrants originating from north, south, east or west. It is also alright to imitate those accents for comic reasons in drama such as the role played by comedian Dawood Hussein in the famous play 'Vote for Um Ali', the character of 'Nahhash Fata Al-Jabal' and many others. This is acceptable worldwide.

However, deleting the tweet reflects the ill intentions of the 'articles' thief. Why did he delete it? Has the man's accent disappeared on realizing he is a Kandari family member? Or did he intend to mock a certain sect before realizing that his attempt was useless and decided to delete the post? That is the bottom line of the whole issue because his motive was to get at a certain sect rather than mocking it. People have not noticed this, and focused more on the old man's identity. That has always been our problem. We are being too superficial without scrutinizing or comprehending, and that is the reason of all our everyday problems.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



ARTIST ARRESTED FOR SWINDLING

KUWAIT: Hawally detectives arrested a Gulf artist who swindled a Kuwaiti actress of KD 8,000 to design and make special sofas for an upcoming project. The Gulf national claimed that he own a company known for such works, but he did not deliver on his part of the deal. Detectives found out that he had no relations with the company he claimed he owned. Based on their findings, police headed to the man's house and arrested him there.

In another case, an investigator referred a citizen's com-

plaint to prosecution after she claimed that she was blackmailed by a man who practices usury. The woman's lawyer accused a citizen of loaning his client KD 900 after she signed a paper to borrow KD 1,600. Then when the woman was not able to pay it back, he asked her to sign for another debt of KD 1,500 in front of a notary public to postpone the time of payment, making the total debt KD 3,100, though originally it was KD 900. The man is being summoned for questioning. — Translated from the Arabic press

الجريدة Al-Jarida

PARTNERS IN CITIZENSHIP FORGERY

By Dr Hassan Jouhar

We had just finished with the dual citizens issue that preoccupied Kuwait's public opinion for over five years without actually reaching any accurate or official results about the credibility of such a dangerous issue, when another issue came out of the blue: the citizenship forgery cases. It came out with the same direction method, starting the same actors. This topic has become the talk of everyone, including bloggers, writers, Diwaniya visitors and MPs, but of course not the government, as if it is just standing by watching everybody fight.

What is remarkable about both issues is that the related documents have now reached the public who are analyzing numbers, scrutinizing IDs and defining the parties involved in the alleged forgeries, saying that their numbers are estimated at up to 400,000 out of one million Kuwaitis; that is 40 percent of citizens. All of this is happening without even a blink of an eye from the government's side to deny such serious accusations amidst a state of general chaos, shock, anger and public disputes.

The new scenario could indicate two things. Either the data are fake and the issue is nothing more than a new play to distract people from more serious issues such as multibillion-dinar deals to sell out the country, or is used to cover up horrifying financial violations that are beginning to unfold. Well, voices about this forgery will eventually fade away in due time the same way those about dual citizenship did, and that time might be the coming parliamentary elections.

The other possible motive behind creating this 'forgery' vortex might be accepted for political analysis reasons until the government declares its official attitude. Otherwise, how come some MPs get access to documents and information stating that the Interior Ministry gave around half a million 'fake' Kuwaitis the Kuwaiti citizenship illegally, and that the Cabinet is using fake identification documents, while at the same time fight fiercely to keep the right to grant and withdraw citizenships in the hands of the government, rejecting judicial monitoring?

What kind of logic are the new advocates using to instigate public opinion through loud threats, while at the same time fiercely defend the government and save it from any parliamentary political accountability? Shouldn't MPs, the ones showing that much care for Kuwaitis, truly attempt to straighten up the government's performance through grilling motions, or even refer it to public prosecution over what could be the largest forgery case in contemporary political history? Doesn't being silent about such violations make them accomplices and partners in crime?

— Translated by Kuwait Times

Strategic Partner Zain

Sponsored By Canon

TODAY LAST DAY

Shoot & Win **KUWAIT SCENERY & NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION**

March 12th, 2017 Till April 20th, 2017

Rules & Conditions

The photo contest begins on March 12, 2017 and ends on April 20, 2017. To ensure eligibility for the contest, please submit files in high resolution:

- **Photographic Camera:** Please submit original files (entries should include metadata if possible) in jpg format on CD or flash memory with hard copy on photo paper (size 300 x 400 millimeters or 11.81 x 15.75 inches)
- **Mobile phone or tablet Camera:** Please submit original files in jpg format on CD or flash memory with hard copy on photo paper (A4 size - 210 x 297 millimeters or 8.27 x 11.69 inches).
- **All photographs** should accurately reflect the subject matter and the scene as it appears. 'High Dynamic Range' images are acceptable. Photos that have been digitally altered beyond standard optimization (removal of dust, cropping, reasonable adjustments to exposure, color, contrast, etc.) will be disqualified.
- **Caption information should include:**
 - Location - Detailed caption of subject matter
 - If you choose to include people in your submission, you are responsible for obtaining the necessary permissions from the individuals depicted, and must be able to provide copies of these to Kuwait Times upon request.
- **Kuwait Times & Jazeera Airways** has all rights to use the photograph in internal and external communications materials including but not limited to websites and web publications, fact sheets, fundraising publications, advertising, multimedia, presentation and membership services, annual reports and Kuwait Times' magazines, or by other individuals and organizations for Kuwait Times' use in news stories, newsletters, reports, displays, web pages, videos, membership premiums and the like.
- **Winners** will be chosen by a panel of independent judges.
- **Original coupon should be stuck on the back of each photo with complete information of the participant.**

Prizes:

- First prize:** Canon Camera EOS 5D MARK II BODY + free Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
- Second prize:** Canon Camera EOS 80D + 18-55MM IS STM + free Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
- Third prize:** Canon Camera EOS 750D 18-135 IS STM + free Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
- Fourth prize:** EOS 750D 18-55 IS STM + Free Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
- Fifth prize:** EOS 750D 18-55 IS STM + Free Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
- Sixth prize:** Canon Camera Dsc bus 310 HS + Free Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
- Seventh prize:** Canon Camera PSD 30 BLUE + free Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
- Eighth prize:** Canon Camera PSD 30 BLUE + Camera Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
- Ninth prize:** Canon Camera IXUS 180 BLACK + free Camera Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
- Tenth prize:** Canon Camera IXUS 180 BLACK + free Camera Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.

* For all Jazeera Airways tickets terms and conditions are applied

Participation Form

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

Name: _____

Tel: _____ Civil ID: _____

e.mail: _____

DSLR Camera Mobile phone or tablet camera

Caption information: _____

For more information contact Kuwait Times Tel: 24835616/7 Fax 24835620/1 or send an email to: ads@kuwaittimes.net

For more information and updates please visit facebook/kuwaittimes twitter/TimesComp



ZAIN GOLD SPONSOR OF AUM CAREER FAIR 2017

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its sponsorship and participation in the American University of the Middle East's Career Fair for the year 2017, held in the main campus in Egaila. The event was organized by AUM's Tawteen Career Development and Recruitment center.

The AUM Career Fair, sponsored by Zain on an annual basis, witnessed high turnouts from both students and graduates who were eager to learn about the company's available job vacancies. Students of various business and engineering majors learned about Zain's leading experience in the telecom sector, as well as its internal policy and wonderful work atmosphere.

Zain participated in the career fair through its dedicated booth, where it high-

lighted the available job vacancies in the company, provided a detailed explanation of the nature of work at various departments and divisions, as well as answered questions and inquiries visitors had.

Zain participates in career fairs all year round as part of its Human Resources strategy, which closely focuses on supporting the educational sector hand in hand with various universities, colleges, and educational institutions in Kuwait to provide students and graduates with career opportunities in the private sector.

Zain is committed to playing an active role in the investment in the human capital of Kuwait. The company seeks to provide young and eager Kuwaitis with job opportunities that allow them to apply their practical skills, achieve their potential, and fully develop their capabilities.



ABK PARTICIPATES IN AUM JOB FAIR

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) yesterday announced its successful participation in the American University of the Middle East (AUM) job fair, which was held on the 17th and 18th of April 2017, at the university campus. ABK's participation reinforces its commitment to play an active role in the support of Kuwait's youth during the early stages of their work life. Commenting on the Bank's involvement, Hamza Enki, General

Manager - Human Resources at ABK said, "Our participation in university job fairs stems from our belief in the duty we hold to act as supporters of fresh graduates, who are in need of exposure to the opportunities that await them. We would like to nurture their skills and abilities by increasing their knowledge on what the banking industry entails and the requirements to pursue a career in the banking field through the 'ABK Academy'."

Crime Report

MAID ACCUSED OF STEALING KD 150,000 NECKLACE

KUWAIT: A well-known Kuwaiti businessman accused his domestic helper of stealing a KD 150,000 necklace from his Faiha house and then disappearing. Police are investigating. Separately, a Bangladeshi man told Maidaan Hawally police that a person chocked him then robbed KD 225 in cash from him as well as his smartphone then escaped. A case was filed for investigations. In Shamiya, a citizen lodged a complaint with police saying that her expensive watch was stolen and gave them its serial number. She said the theft took place in Wahren Park while she was playing with children, as she placed it next to her on a seat. Meanwhile, an Iranian man told Salam police that the backseat window of his sports-utility-vehicle (SUV) was broken and KD 2,500 in cash were stolen from inside it. The theft happened while the vehicle was parked in the parking lot of a Hitteen school, he said.

Mugging

Investigations are ongoing to identify suspects who reportedly mugged three different people in Nugra and Maidaan Hawally. Officials in those two areas were approached by three people who gave identical descriptions for the culprits they said were driving a black SUV. The suspects had pulled over next to the victim, stole their money and cell phone then escaped, according to the victims' accounts.

Generator stolen

An unknown person stole a power generator from a telecommunication company's relay station. The company's lawyer told police that technicians have discovered the theft when they noticed that the metal barrier was broken and that the generator was missing. Detectives are investigating.

Insult

A first Lieutenant in the fire department told Qairawan police that he was insulted while on duty. He said that while he was returning to the fire station, a driver obstructed his way, and when asked him to open the way, he pulled over next to him and verbally insulted him. The suspect, Iranian, was summoned for questioning.

Nonpayment

A company salesman filed a case against an Egyptian man, accusing him of disappearing after buying a large quantity of medicines for an estimated value of KD 2,500 without paying for them. The case is being referred to concerned authorities, although the suspect had already left the country.

Drug possession

Farwaniya police arrested two Egyptian women on drugs charges, while one of them is wanted for at least six cases. They had different types of drugs on them. Police stopped the two women who seemed abnormal while walking. The two were sent to concerned authorities.

Fight

Three friends beat five citizens in Hadiya and stabbed one of them three times in his back. Police responded to a call about a fight, and three of those involved escaped as soon as they saw the cops. Meanwhile, the five victims were taken to Adan hospital while suffering from various injuries. Detectives were asked to arrest the three who escaped for questioning. In another case, an Egyptian security guard, who was asked to guard a parking space, was beaten for refusing to do so. A resident in the building that the man was guarding asked him to watch out for his parking space, but he said "I am a security guard; not a parking space," which angered the citizen so he beat him up. The guard went to Adan hospital for treatment and then took a medical report to the police station where he lodged a complaint. — Translated from the Arabic press



Community renewed by refugees embraces Trump



WISCONSIN: US President Donald Trump holds a baby while greeting well wishers after arriving on Air Force One at General Mitchell International Airport. — AFP

TRUMP HAS EMBRACED AUTOCRATIC LEADERS

FROM EGYPT'S STRONGMAN TO IGNORING CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump congratulated Turkey's president for sweeping up more power. Trump hailed Egypt's strongman as a "fantastic guy." When China's president visited the United States, Trump cited a burgeoning friendship and made no public mention of Beijing's dismal human rights record.

Since taking office, Trump has displayed a striking willingness to embrace autocrats as potential partners in his "America First" agenda, even if it means ignoring their heavy-handed tactics and repression at home. It's a posture that Trump also took toward Russian President Vladimir Putin until a dispute over Syria led Trump last week to declare US-Russian ties at an "all-time low."

Trump is hardly the first US president willing to look the other way in dealings with governments that flout democratic values. For decades, Republican and Democratic administrations have cooperated closely with Saudi Arabia and China. President Barack Obama opened new diplomatic channels with Iran and Cuba, despite concerns about their repressive rulers. But rarely are US presidents as warm and unabashed about their relationships with autocrats.

Trump's comfort level seems to stem in part from his background in business, where the details of a deal mattered more than the negotiating partner and flattery can get results. When they were forced to deal with imperfect allies, Trump's predecessors, including Obama and President George W. Bush, made a point of using the moment to promote American ideals. They often followed

meetings with statements about human rights or gathered separately with advocates or opposition leaders.

Looking past abuses

On Monday, as international monitors and European allies voiced concerns about what they said was a slanted political playing field in Turkey's referendum, the White House said Trump called Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to congratulate him on a victory that grants Erdogan more power. The message was at odds with Trump's own State Department, which expressed unease about a referendum that allows Erdogan to fulfill his long-held ambition for a presidency with executive powers.

Erdogan's government has imprisoned scores of Turkish journalists. Since a failed coup last year, Turkey has arrested thousands of others accused of possible involvement. "The president's number one job is to keep Americans safe," Trump spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Tuesday. "And if he needs to work with countries like Turkey and others to do that, that's his priority and what his focus is."

The White House's readout of the Trump-Erdogan call focused its concerns on the Islamic State group and Syria's civil war, which the US and Turkey are coordinating efforts on. Turkey is a US key ally against IS, even if Turkey's poorly controlled border has been a contributing factor in the group's expansion across Syria and Iraq.

Turkey's foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, said yesterday that Erdogan and

Trump are planning to meet before next month's NATO summit in Brussels. The White House confirmed that it's in discussions with the Turkish government about arranging a meeting between the leaders. Rachel Rizzo, a NATO and Europe expert at the Center for a New American Security, said the Trump administration sees its Turkey relationship "purely as a national security issue in terms of needing their help fighting ISIS and with the migration crisis in Europe." "It seems they're willing to look past human rights abuses," she said. Trump has praised Chinese President Xi Jinping since hosting him at his Palm Beach, Florida, resort; as a candidate, Trump sharply criticized China's economic policies. He has linked his warmer approach toward Xi with his effort to secure greater help from Beijing in stopping North Korea's nuclear program. "A trade deal with the US will be far better for them if they solve the North Korean problem!" Trump said on Twitter, recounting what he told Xi. Trump has locked arms with Egyptian President Abdel-Fatah el-Sissi, a former general who toppled the democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi, a Muslim Brotherhood member. Obama never outwardly condemned el-Sissi's takeover. But Obama kept Egypt's leader at arm's length, assailing Egypt's human rights record and suspending some US military aid.

Different relationship

After winning November's presidential election, Trump offered el-Sissi a different relationship. When el-Sissi visited Washington this month, Trump told reporters the

Egyptian president would be someone "very close to me." A post-meeting statement cited their mutual commitment to fighting terrorism and strengthening Egypt's economy. It made no mention of el-Sissi's crackdown on domestic opponents that has been widely condemned by international rights monitors.

The pattern may have been set by Trump's vociferous support for Putin. As a candidate and in his first weeks as president, Trump said Putin had been a strong leader and expressed a desire to work closer with Moscow, despite the cloud of an FBI investigation into allegations of Russian meddling in the US presidential election.

Even before this month's Syrian chemical weapons attack and retaliatory US cruise missile strike, Trump's administration had been souring on the Kremlin. Last month, it condemned Russia's crackdown on anti-government protesters last month that included 1,000 arrests. "Detaining peaceful protesters, human rights observers and journalists is an

affront to core democratic values," a statement said at the time.

But Trump's tack on Turkey appeared to undermine his own State Department, which before the Erdogan phone conversation with Trump spoke of "irregularities" in the Turkish referendum and "an uneven playing field during the difficult campaign period." The White House's statement on Trump's call to Erdogan made no mention of those concerns. Turkey's strategic location between Europe and the Middle East, and its unique role as the only Muslim-majority NATO member, have long made it an indispensable American partner. Obama, too, sought a close relationship with Erdogan, viewing him as a possible model for a new generation of Muslim leaders. He traveled to Turkey in his first year in office and spoke frequently with the Turkish leader. But as Erdogan moved to consolidate power in Turkey, his relationship with Obama soured. —AP

ASWATHY PARK
 Independent Villas
 Near Technopark, Kazhakkottom, Trivandrum

READY TO MOVE-IN
 LOAN AVAILABLE

2500 sq. ft. | 4 cents | 4 Bedrooms | 4 Bathrooms
 (APARTMENTS ALSO AVAILABLE)

Visit us **20th - 24th in Kuwait** at Holiday Downtown, Abdulla Al Ahmed Street Dasman, Kuwait city

00965 51064354
 Aswathy Housing (P) Ltd.
 www.aswathypark.com // aswathyhousing@gmail.com

GEORGE HW BUSH SENIOR HOSPITALIZED IN HOUSTON

HOUSTON: Former US President George HW Bush has been readmitted to a Houston hospital for treatment of a mild case of pneumonia, his second bout of that respiratory illness in three months, but "is going to be fine," his spokesman said yesterday. Family spokesman Jim McGrath said the 92-year-old former president was hospitalized on Friday "for observation due to a persistent cough that prevented him from getting proper rest."

"It was subsequently determined he had a mild case of pneumonia, which was treated and has been resolved," McGrath said in a statement. "President Bush is in very good spirits and is being held for further observation while he regains his strength." McGrath furnished no immediate additional information except to say that Bush was at Houston Methodist Hospital, where he had spent more than two weeks in January after developing pneumonia.

Bush spent much of that time in the hospi-

tal's intensive care unit. His wife, former first lady Barbara Bush, 91, had an overlapping stay at the same hospital for treatment of bronchitis. The couple marked their 72nd wedding anniversary on Jan 6. Bush, the nation's oldest living ex-president, served a single term in the Oval Office as America's 41st commander-in-chief from 1989 through 1992. He is the father of former President George W. Bush, who served two terms in the White House from 2001 through 2008, and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, who unsuccessfully sought the 2016 Republican nomination for president. The elder Bush, a Republican like his sons, also served as vice president for eight years during Ronald Reagan's two terms as president before being elected to the White House himself, defeating former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, the Democratic nominee, in 1988. He lost his 1992 re-election bid to Democrat Bill Clinton. —Reuters

BITS Pilani
 Dubai Campus

ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMING LIVES

PROGRAMMES OFFERED:

FIRST DEGREE
 B.E. Biotechnology
 B.E. Chemical
 B.E. Civil
 B.E. Computer Science
 B.E. Electrical and Electronics
 B.E. Electronics and Communication
 B.E. Software Systems
 B.E. Mechanical

HIGHER DEGREE
 M.E. Design Engineering
 M.E. Microelectronics
 M.E. Software Systems
 M.B.A. (Master of Business Administration)

DOCTORAL PROGRAMME
 Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy)

Admissions Open

CONTACT US:
 BITS Pilani, Dubai Campus
 Dubai International Academic City

+971 4-2769700 | +971 4-2769711
 admission@dubai.bits-pilani.ac.in

facebook.com/bitsdubai
 Instagram.com/BITSPilaniDubai

THE BITS EDGE:

- Attractive scholarships for meritorious students
- State-of-the-art labs and smart classrooms
- 7½ months industry internship offered
- Degree awarded from BITS Pilani, India
- Campus placements at reputed organisations

APPLY NOW
www.bits-pilani.ac.in/dubai/

GUNMEN KILL COP NEAR EGYPT MONASTERY

CAIRO: Gunmen attacked security forces near St. Catherine's Monastery in Egypt's south Sinai on Tuesday, killing at least one police officer and injuring four others, the Health Ministry said, just a week after two deadly church bombings killed 45. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack on a police checkpoint about 800 meters from the entrance to the monastery, one of the world's most important Christian sites.

The attack comes just 10 days before Pope Francis is scheduled to visit Egypt and just over a week after two deadly suicide

bombings on Christian churches, also claimed by Islamic State, plunged the country into mourning and marked one of the bloodiest days for the country's Christian minority in decades. St Catherine's, founded in the 6th century and located at the foot of Mount Sinai, is one of the oldest Christian monasteries in the world and a UNESCO world heritage site. It is part of the Eastern Orthodox church.

Egypt's Christian minority, which makes up about 10 percent of the country's 92 million people, has increasingly been targeted

by Islamist militants, with three deadly church attacks in the span of four months. In February, scores of Christian families and students fled North Sinai province after a spate of targeted killings. A successful assault on St Catherine's would be the latest challenge to President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who has pledged to protect the religious minority as part of his campaign against extremism.

Egypt has for years been battling an Islamist insurgency in the rugged and thinly populated northern Sinai, which gained pace after the military overthrew President

Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013 following mass protests against his rule. Attacks in Egypt's southern Sinai, a popular destination for tourists dotted with Red Sea resorts, are by contrast rare. Security sources told Reuters that security had been put on high alert at tourist facilities across southern Sinai after the attack.

The attack in southern Sinai comes as Russia is expected to make a long-awaited decision on whether to restore flights to the Sharm el-Sheikh resort after a Russian airliner was downed in 2015, dealing a serious blow

to the area's tourism industry, which relies heavily on Russian visitors. Egypt's tourism industry, a crucial source of hard currency, has suffered in the years of turmoil that followed the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, as well as from the suspected bombing of the Russian plane, which killed all 224 on board. Israel took the unusual step earlier this month of barring its citizens from crossing into the Sinai peninsula, saying the threat of attacks in the area inspired by Islamic State and other jihadist groups was high. —Reuters

TURKEY DETAINS LEFTIST ACTIVISTS AFTER 'NO' PROTESTS, SAYS LAWYER

DETAINING PEOPLE QUESTIONING LEGITIMACY OF VOTE

ISTANBUL: Istanbul police yesterday detained 16 leftist activists involved in demonstrations against the 'Yes' victory in the referendum on expanding President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's powers, a lawyer said. There have been daily street protests in anti-Erdogan neighborhoods in Istanbul since Sunday's referendum, which the opposition claims was marred by blatant vote rigging.

The Freedom and Solidarity Party (ODP), a left-wing movement not represented in parliament, said police had detained its Istanbul chairman Mesut Gecgel on accusations of "agitating the public" by claiming the 'Yes' vote was illegitimate. Gecgel had himself written on Twitter that he was being detained for protesting against the 'Yes' victory. Gecgel's lawyer Deniz Demirdogun told AFP that anti-terror

police raided houses of the suspects before dawn, saying 16 people were detained so far but arrest warrants were issued for a total of 38 people.

Stop asking questions

Describing the accusations as "strange," he added: "They are accused of provoking people to question the legitimacy of the 'Yes' in the referendum. "But there's no such crime defini-

tion in the penal code." Demirdogun said those detained were being questioned at police headquarters in Istanbul and were awaiting a decision by prosecutors on the case. There was no immediate confirmation of the detentions by the police.

Speaking in Ankara earlier, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said the issue of the election result was closed and warned against street protests. "Turkey is a state of law... and there can be no talk of anarchy, activities in the street," he said. "I call on people not to give in to provocations or get caught up in incitement," he added. The 'Yes' camp won Sunday's poll with just 51.41 percent of the vote. But the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) has formally requested that the Supreme Election Board (YSK) cancel the result over to alleged violations which the opposition says swung the result.

The opposition is particularly incensed by a last-minute move by the YSK to accept ballot documents in envelopes without an official stamp. The YSK was considering the petition and was expected to make an announcement later in the day. CHP spokeswoman Selin Sayek Boke vowed that the party would use all means to challenge the result and could even consider withdrawing from parliament. "We will use all the legal paths, and all legitimate democratic rights for the millions (of voters), no one should doubt this," she told reporters in Ankara. "This can include withdrawing from parliament or continuing to work in parliament," she added, calling for the referendum to be re-run. —AFP



ISTANBUL: Supporters of the "No" march at Besiktas to submit their petition calling for the annulment of a referendum that approved sweeping constitutional changes boosting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's powers, claiming blatant vote-rigging had swung the result. —AFP

SOMBER MOOD AS IRAQ'S YAZIDIS MARK NEW YEAR

LALISH: Thousands of Yazidis flocked to a shrine in northern Iraq to mark the New Year yesterday, in the minority's biggest gathering since it was targeted for genocide by jihadists. Wearing traditional Yazidi clothes, holding candles and paraffin lamps, they started gathering in the holy town of Lalish on Tuesday for celebrations ahead of their New Year.

The event, known by the ethno-religious minority as "Carsama Sari Sali", is meant to commemorate the creation of the universe by the angels and celebrate nature and fertility. But the mood was sombre among the faithful gathered in Lalish, every one of whom was affected by the violence that erupted nearly three years ago when the Islamic State group took over their traditional homeland.

"I'm not happy, it's not like before, because there are those who are still in the hands of Daesh (IS)," said Zoan Msaid, a Yazidi woman from the Sinjar area who now lives in a camp for displaced people. "We cannot forget our customs and traditions but I just want those who are still held to come back, that's all. We ask for nothing more." Yazidis are neither Arab nor Muslim and when IS swept across northern Iraq in 2014, it carried out massacres against the minority which the United Nations said qualified as genocide. Most of the several hundred thousand members of the minority live in northern Iraq, mainly around Sinjar, a large town which anti-IS forces have now retaken but was extensively destroyed. IS jihadists captured Yazidi women and turned them into sex slaves to be sold and exchanged across their self-proclaimed "caliphate". Around 3,000 of them are believed to remain in captivity.

'We live in sorrow'

"Of course, after three years under the domination of the jihadists who killed Yazidis and imposed mass slavery, nothing is like before because we are all suffering," said Cheir Ibrahim Keshto, a professor and expert in Yazidi culture. "We live in sorrow now and the situation in the camps is catastrophic," he said.

Yazda, a charity supporting victims of the jihadists'

persecution of the Yazidis, issued a statement urging the community to continue defending its faith, a unique blend of beliefs. "Yazda calls on our people to continue to observe their religious events to preserve the ethno-religious identity and heritage of one of the most ancient peoples," its director Murad Ismael said.

Yazda voiced concern that even areas that were retaken from IS remained unsafe for Yazidis due to disputes between local forces for regional supremacy. Tensions have recently escalated between peshmerga forces from the main party in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region and forces from Turkey's Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). "This situation has resulted in creat-

ing the greatest danger facing the Yazidi community, which may ultimately be more dangerous than the ongoing genocide itself," the Yazda statement said.

Nadia Murad, a prominent Yazidi human rights activist who has been campaigning worldwide to draw attention to her people's plight, stressed in a New Year message delivered during a visit to Stanford University in California that the jihadists had not yet been held accountable. "Our hearts have been broken as we still seek justice, and we haven't found it yet," said Murad, who last year was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and awarded the prestigious Sakharov Prize jointly with Lamiya Aji Bashar, another Yazidi woman. —AFP



DOHUK: Iraqi Yazidis light candles and paraffin torches outside Lalish temple situated in a valley near Dohuk, 430 km northwest of Baghdad, during a ceremony to celebrate the Yazidi New Year. —AFP

IRAQ SAYS 'FRIENDLY' NATIONS CONTACTED OVER CAPTIVES

BAGHDAD: Iraq's prime minister says "friendly" neighboring countries have been contacted over the fate of Qatari ruling family members and others kidnapped in late 2015, adding that a Qatari official is in the country "to help in their release." Haider Al-Abadi's comments late Tuesday came as suspicion over the December 2015 kidnappings has fallen on Shiite militias, suggesting Iraq may have reached out to Iran

to secure their release. "We asked all friendly countries to Iraq and neighboring countries to Iraq to cooperate with us to find these kidnapped individuals," Al-Abadi told journalists. Al-Abadi also said Qatar's non-resident ambassador had come to Iraq to help in securing the captives' freedom. A Qatari aircraft used by the small, energy-rich country's ruling family has been in Baghdad since Saturday.

Qatari officials did not immediately

respond to a request for comment. Iranian state media did not immediately report on Al-Abadi's comments. The abduction took place at dawn on Dec 16, 2015, at a desert camp near the Saudi border in the southern Muthanna province, some 370 kilometers southeast of the capital, Baghdad. Gunmen kidnapped some two dozen Qataris and support staff who taking part in a falconry hunt. In April 2016, the Qatari Foreign Ministry

said one of the hunters and "his Asian companion" were freed, but no word of the hostages has been made public since. Muthanna is a predominantly Shiite province and is not a region where the Sunni extremists of the Islamic State group are known to operate. The Associated Press reported last week that a Qatari ruling family member paid \$2 million in an effort involving hackers to secure the hostages' release. —AFP



MOSUL: A man with a bullet wound from a sniper cries out in pain as he is transferred by Iraqi Special Operations Forces medics at their field hospital. —AP

IN MOSUL, SNIPERS TRACKING JIHADISTS AROUND THE CLOCK

MOSUL: A few hundred meters from an iconic mosque in west Mosul, Iraqi sniper Salah Al-Zuheiri has his eye glued to his scope as he searches for Islamic State group jihadists. Iraqi forces are battling to retake Mosul from IS, after the group overran the city in 2014 and its leader proclaimed a "caliphate" from the mosque in its Old City. IS "fighters are within range. We're tracking them day and night," says Zuheiri, a sniper with the Iraqi federal police who has taken up position some 300 meters from the Al-Nuri Mosque.

Inside a darkened room in a four-storey building retaken from the jihadists, Zuheiri tries to steady his rifle on sandbags. A map of the surrounding neighborhood, hand-drawn in red, hangs on the wall in front of him. Zuheiri and his colleagues stay in the same positions for up to 12 hours a day, he says, for two weeks straight. They "get food three times a day," he adds, and leave their positions "only when it's really necessary, like to go to the bathroom." "We kill between three and five jihadists a day," he says.

Nearby, Murtada Al-Lami lies on his stomach, the end of his barrel jutting out through a tiny hole in the wall in the direction of the Al-Nuri Mosque and the adjacent "Hadba", a leaning minaret that has long been Mosul's most recognizable landmark. IS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi made his only public appearance at the mosque in July 2014 to declare a self-styled "caliphate" in parts of Iraq and neighboring Syria.

To help the snipers find their targets, in a nearby room Iraqi soldiers take turns tracking IS fighters through binoculars. And on a screen, members of a special unit survey thermal footage sent in from aircraft above the city. "We're the ones who decide to shoot or not. We also have thermal binoculars, but we check the data with our colleagues to avoid an error," says Lami. An officer in the group, who asks to remain anonymous, says snipers recently killed an IS emir, or leader, in west Mosul. "Our snipers killed an IS emir on the west bank, creating great confusion in the Old City," he says, referring to the west bank of the River Tigris, which divides the city.

Fearing air strikes, jihadists went to the leader's funeral unarmed, the officer says, "but forced civilians to attend to act as human shields". The presence of civilians in the Old City is a major obstacle for Iraqi forces fighting to retake west Mosul after seizing the east in January. The United Nations says some 600,000 civilians remain in IS-held sectors, which include two thirds of the Old City, a warren of narrow streets. As military vehicles cannot advance in the historic city centre, last month, General Raed Shakir Jawdat said dozens of snipers had been deployed on its roofs to cover advancing troops. But IS also has snipers of its own. "A few days ago a jihadist fired at me, but he hit the wall behind me," says Zuheiri. "I located his position and shot him down quickly." —AFP

EVACUATIONS RESUME AFTER DEADLY BOMBING

RASHIDIN: Evacuations of thousands of besieged Syrians resumed yesterday with tight security in place after a weekend bombing against those leaving government-held areas killed dozens, including nearly 70 children. A large convoy of buses set out from the government-held towns of Fuaa and Kafraya in Idlib province, carrying 3,000 people to the rebel-held transit point of Rashidin near Aleppo, an AFP correspondent said.

At the same time, 11 buses carrying around 300 people left rebel-held Zabadani, Serghaya and Jabal Sharqi in Damascus province, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor said. In Rashidin, security was tight after a devastating bomb attack on evacuees at the site on Saturday that according to the Observatory killed 126 people, including 68 children. Most of the dead were from the two Shiite-majority towns, with a handful of aid workers and rebels guarding the convoy also killed. Dozens of wounded were taken to hospitals in nearby rebel-held territory, while others were taken to Aleppo, which government forces regained full control of late last year.

'I left for my children'

Armed rebels were standing guard at Rashidin yesterday and carefully inspecting vehicles arriving in the area. "We chose a different location as the gathering point for fighters from Fuaa and Kafraya with their families, because we are obliged to protect them until they leave here," said rebel fighter Abu Obeida Al-Shami.

Buses were parked in a semi-circle, forming a makeshift barrier around an area in the centre of a lot where evacuees including dozens of children milled. "Where do I even start? It would have been easier if we had just died. Death is so much easier than this humiliation," said elderly evacuee Abu Ahmad. He told AFP he was

preparing himself never to see his hometown of Fuaa again. "Someone like me, who is already 85 years old—I'm going to die tomorrow or the day after."

Pro-government militiamen among those being evacuated from Fuaa and Kafraya squatted next to one bus, smoking cigarettes. Standing nearby, 55-year-old Um Joud from Fuaa said it was difficult to describe how she felt. "I'm not afraid, because everything is in God's hands," she told AFP. "Of course I would have preferred to stay in my home, but I left for the sake of my children and their lives and futures."

The evacuations are part of a deal between government and opposition representatives that is also seeing residents and rebels transported out from several areas under regime siege near Damascus, primarily Madaya and Zabadani. It was brokered late last month by Qatar, a long-time opposition supporter, and Iran, a key regime ally, but its implementation had been repeatedly delayed.

When yesterday's evacuations are complete, a total of 8,000 people should have left Fuaa and Kafraya in exchange for 2,500 civilians and rebels from opposition areas. Zabadani and Madaya "are now empty of any rebel presence," said Mayyada Al-Aswad, a member of the coordinating committee for the operation on the government side.

Yesterday's evacuations mark the end of the first stage of the deal, with a second phase due to begin in June. Fuaa and Kafraya will be emptied entirely, with residents and fighters heading to Aleppo and then on to government-held Latakia or Damascus. All rebels are expected to leave Madaya, Zabadani, and other nearby opposition-held areas, but civilians who want to remain may do so. Those leaving rebel-held areas will head to Idlib province, which is held by an opposition alliance. —AFP

FRONTRUNNER LE PEN HARDENS TONE AS CAMPAIGN NEARS END

STRESSES THREATS OF IMMIGRATION AND TERRORISM

PARIS: Far-right presidential frontrunner Marine Le Pen said yesterday that French people felt "dispossessed" in their own country as she stressed the threats of immigration and terrorism in the final days of campaigning. The 48-year-old former lawyer has spent years trying to broaden support for her National Front party, but she has signaled a return to the core concerns of many of her supporters in recent speeches.

Speaking on BFM television yesterday, Le Pen emphasized how she would pull France out of the European Union, slash immigration, make it harder to get French nationality and crack down on suspected Islamists. "French people have the feeling of being dispossessed of their identity, of their social security system and their sovereignty," Le Pen told the channel.

Polls show a four-way race developing ahead of the first round of the election on Sunday between Le Pen, 39-year-old centrist Emmanuel

Macron, conservative Francois Fillon and far-left firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon. Two of them are expected to advance to a run-off vote on May 7. After a string of Islamist-inspired assaults in France since 2015, security concerns moved to the centre of the campaign Tuesday following the arrests of two French men suspected of preparing an attack to disrupt the election.

Le Pen has proposed expelling any foreigner convicted of a crime or suspected of being radicalized. Convicted extremists with dual nationality would also be stripped of their French passports. "The measures that I want to put in place would mean that many of these people (Islamist attackers) would not have been on our territory or living freely," she told BFM, repeating a claim from a speech on Sunday night.

French voters have so far been more concerned about unemployment and their spending power than terrorism or security, polls show, though analysts warn this would change quickly

in the event of violence. The two arrested suspects, who were found in Marseille with a cache of weapons and explosives, were being questioned in the southern city yesterday where Le Pen is set to appear later at a rally. Left-leaning Le Monde newspaper warned that Le Pen's claim that she would have prevented attacks that have claimed hundreds of lives was "absurd." "You don't seek votes on the backs of dead people. It's a sort of moral red line," the newspaper said.

Future of EU at stake

Some analysts have also depicted the French election as a sort of referendum on the European Union, with Le Pen proposing to pull France out of the 28-member club and scrap the euro common currency. On Tuesday night, she insisted that the TF1 television channel remove the blue-and-yellow European flag from behind her before an interview. But Melenchon, her



LONS-LE-SAUNIER: French presidential election candidate for the far-left coalition La France insoumise Jean-Luc Melenchon (C) poses for a picture as he visits "Trivolution", a workshop dedicated to industrial recycling. — AFP

euro-sceptic far-left opponent, sought to soften his position on Tuesday night, stating that he did not seek to end the European Union or the euro despite criticising the "ultra-liberal" trading bloc for years. "Don't believe what they tell you, 'He wants to leave Europe, the euro... let's be serious,'" he told supporters on Tuesday night.

The Communist-backed candidate has pledged to renegotiate some of the founding treaties of the bloc, however, which would cast serious doubt on the viability of the postwar project of integrating the continent. Polls show that a majority of French people still support the EU and the euro. — AFP

BRITAIN SET FOR ELECTION IN SHADOW OF BREXIT

LONDON: British lawmakers yesterday overwhelmingly backed Prime Minister Theresa May's call for a snap election, paving the way for a June vote she hopes will give her a "mandate to complete Brexit". The House of Commons voted by 522 to 13 to hold a general election on June 8 — plunging Britain back into political uncertainty just weeks before the start of negotiations on leaving the European Union. May stunned the country on Tuesday when she announced her plan for an early vote, despite having repeatedly said she would wait until the next election scheduled in 2020.

In fiery exchanges in the House of Commons yesterday, May said an early election would strengthen her hand against domestic critics seeking to "frustrate the process" of Brexit, which formally began last month. "I will be asking the British people for a mandate to complete Brexit and to make a success of it," the Conservative leader said, to cheers from her lawmakers sitting behind her. Riding high in the opinion polls, May is seeking to increase her slim majority of 17 in the 650-seat Commons before the battles begin with the EU over Britain's exit bill and future trade and immigration ties.

She insists an early election would provide "certainty and stability" in the negotiations, which will now start after the vote. In a sign of the key campaign issues ahead, May traded barbs in the Commons with opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, whose party is deeply divided and languishing up to 20 points behind the Conservatives. Corbyn accused the government of "broken promises" on health, education and the economy during its seven years in office. May hit back that Labour offered only "bankruptcy and chaos", but denied she was complacent, saying: "We will be out there fighting for every vote."

'Election landslide'

British elections are fixed in law but can be changed with a two-thirds majority in the Commons—a threshold easily passed during yesterday's vote. All sides are now gearing up for the fourth major election in four years, after last June's shock referendum vote for Brexit, the 2015 general election, and the 2014 Scottish independence vote.

Brexit will dominate the campaign, with May—who took office after David Cameron resigned following the EU vote-seeking public backing for her plan to pull Britain out of Europe's single market. A European Commission spokesman said the "real political" negotiations on Brexit will start after the election. Three weekend opinion polls put the Conservatives about 20 points ahead of Labour, and if translated into votes, this could give May an "election landslide" with a majority of more than 100, according to an analysis by The Times.

May, Britain's second female prime minister, also has strong popular support for her handling of the political earthquake unleashed by Brexit. By contrast Labour is wracked by divisions, over Brexit and Corbyn's left-wing leadership, which is opposed by many of his more centrist MPs. So far, Labour's stance on Brexit has been to allow the government to go ahead with the EU divorce, but only under certain conditions, such as retaining strong economic ties with the bloc.

That approach risks satisfying neither its traditional working-class supporters, many of whom backed leaving the EU, or its urban, pro-European members—leaving many commentators predicting an electoral bloodbath. Three Labour MPs have already announced they will not stand again. Former Conservative finance minister George Osborne, a powerful voice in favour of Britain's EU membership during the referendum campaign, also said he would not seek re-election. — AFP

MCDONALD'S ORDER TRIPS UP FACEBOOK SLAYING SUSPECT

CLEVELAND: Facebook slaying suspect Steve Stephens was undone by a 20-piece Chicken McNuggets and an order of fries. The man who police say shot a Cleveland retiree at random and posted video of the killing on Facebook pulled up to the drive-thru window of a McDonald's restaurant outside Erie, Pennsylvania, and waited for his order. It was late Tuesday morning, almost lunchtime, and authorities were in the third day of an intensive manhunt for Stephens.

Now, more than 100 miles from the shooting, his time on the run was nearly up. The attendant who took his money recognized the suspect and dialed 911. Stephens pulled up to the next window, where restaurant owner Thomas DuCharme Jr. and a supervisor tried stalling him by telling him his fries were delayed. Stephens didn't want to wait. He took his McNuggets and whipped out of the parking lot, nearly hitting Gail Wheeler, 54, a retail operations manager from Erie who was on her way home from the grocery store.

"Two seconds later, I hear these sirens, and they come whipping past me," she told The Associated Press. Wheeler followed behind for a couple miles. She said the chase slowed suddenly from 50 mph to about 20 mph when the road narrowed from four lanes to two. One of the pursuing troopers picked his spot — in front of an abandoned school — and hit Stephens' bumper to get him to stop. The Ford Fusion did a half-turn and came to rest at the curb. Police were starting to get out of their cruisers when "I heard a shot. It was loud and distinctive," Wheeler said. — AP

TOGETHER WE SOAR

Boeing's history in Kuwait dates back to 1968. Since then, Boeing has established enduring partnerships with the government and private sector that we are committed to grow.

Leading through partnership

Discover more at boeing-me.com/together

BOEING



LEWISTON: Trump supporter Stephanie Rodrigue, 17, picks up one of the campaign signs she's collected in her room. — AP photos



LEWISTON: Abdiaziz Shaleh, right, a Lewiston high school senior and co-captain of the soccer team, and Essa Gedi, center, both whose families emigrated from Somalia, sit with classmate Isiah Leach, left, during lunch in the school's cafeteria.

HOW A COMMUNITY REJUVENATED BY REFUGEES CAME TO EMBRACE TRUMP

A DIFFERENT TAKE ON PRESIDENT'S MORE 'CONTROVERSIAL' POLICIES

LEWISTON, Maine: Richard Rodrigue stood in the back of a banquet hall, watching his blond-haired, blue-eyed daughter mingle among her high school classmates. These teenagers speak dozens of languages, and hail from a dozen African nations. They fled brutal civil war, famine, oppressive regimes to find themselves here, at a pre-prom fete in this once-dying New England mill town, revived by an influx of some 7,500 immigrants over the last 16 years. Rodrigue smiled and waved at his daughter, proud she is a part of it. "It will help her in life," he said. "The world is not all white."

Rodrigue believes the refugees resuscitated his town - plugging the population drain that had threatened to cripple it, opening shops and restaurants in boarded-up storefronts. But he also agrees with Donald Trump that there should be no more of them, at least not now. His working-class community, built along the banks of the Androscoggin River in the whitest state in America, is a place that some point to as proof that refugee integration can work. And yet for the first time in 30 years, voters in Androscoggin County chose a Republican for president, endorsing Trump's nativist zeal against the very sort of immigrants who share their streets and their schools.

The mills that line the river sit mostly shuttered today, and a quarter of children grow up poor in the county of 107,000. So Trump's supporters here tie their embrace of his immigration clampdown to their economic anxieties. "There's got to be a point in time when you have to say, 'Whoa, let's get the working people back up. Let's bring the money in.' But they keep coming, keep coming," Rodrigue said. "I guess it just boils

down to: What's enough?" No one invited the Somali refugees to Lewiston. They fled bullets and warlords to eventually be chosen for resettlement in big American cities.

'We wanted to be safe'

In early 2001, a few refugee families struggling to afford housing in Portland ventured 30 miles north and found a city in retreat. Empty downtown stores were ringed by sagging apartment buildings. The refugees saw possibility in Lewiston's decay. Friends and families followed. The town morphed in a matter of months into a laboratory for what happens when culture suddenly shifts. Maine's population is 94 percent white, and its citizens were abruptly confronted with hundreds of black Muslims, barely able to speak English. Ardo Mohamed fled Mogadishu in the 1990s, when militiamen burst into her home and started shooting. She watched her father die, as the rest of the family escaped into the woods. They wound up in refugee camps, separated for years, then finally Atlanta, then Lewiston in 2001.

"We wanted to be safe," said the mother of five, "just like you do." When the refugees began arriving, Tabitha Beauchesne was a student at Lewiston High School. Her new classmates were poor, but Beauchesne was poor, too. It felt to her then, and it still feels to her now, that the refugees got more help than her family. "They just seemed to take over," she said.

Beauchesne doesn't consider herself racist, though acknowledges that race and religion likely played a role in her sense that the refugees overwhelmed her community. She's now a stay-at-home mother of two, and she left Lewiston to

move to another school district in the county because she believes immigrant students monopolize teachers' attention. Once a Barack Obama supporter, Beauchesne turned to Trump - and she cheers his efforts to curb the flow of refugees into the US. She wants Trump to design a tax system that funnels less of her money to aiding those from other countries.

"I just don't like giving money away that's not benefiting me and, not to sound selfish, but then seeing it benefit other people," she said. "As a business owner, my husband wouldn't donate \$500 to the Salvation Army if we couldn't afford

it. Our country needs to do the same thing." Taxpayers do help some of the immigrants, whose population exploded as Somali refugees gave way to those seeking asylum, from Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, a dozen nations in all. Still, many of the newcomers work, said Catherine Besteman, a professor of anthropology at Maine's Colby College.

Maine's immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa made \$136.6 million in income in 2014, and paid \$40 million in taxes, according to one report from a bipartisan think tank. But Besteman said they work invisible jobs: they take out trash at

hotels, do the laundry at the hospital. People don't see them working, so it's easy to assume they are living off handouts.

Republican leaders - from the president to the governor to the local GOP - have seized on the resentment that breeds. The county Republican party routinely rails against what it calls "the refugee racket," and complains that the school system is forced to accommodate 34 languages. Lewiston School Superintendent Bill Webster acknowledges that does cost money. But he has a statistic he likes to share with critics.

'Death spiral'

An average of 78.3 percent of immigrant students graduate from his district within five years, compared to an average of 73.3 percent of native-born students. And now some of those immigrant kids are going off to college to get degrees, as teachers, doctors, engineers. Two years ago, immigrant children led the high school soccer team to win the state championship - a moment heralded as a triumph of cultural cooperation. "If the immigrant population hadn't happened," Webster said, "Lewiston would be a community that was contracting, and potentially in a downward death spiral."

Yet many on the outskirts of Lewiston have quietly stewed over the change in their county - and Trump's "America First" message rings especially true with them. Thirty miles up the highway, David Lovewell stood in the parking lot of the paper mill where he used to work, before it shed hundreds of jobs. Now he runs a logging company with his sons just outside the town of Livermore Falls. A few months ago, business got so bad he laid off eight employees. — AP



LEWISTON: A worshipper takes his shoes off before entering the Lewiston Auburn Islamic Center for prayers.



ATLANTA: Democratic candidate Jon Ossoff walks with his girlfriend Alisha Kramer after speaking to his supporters as votes continue to be counted in a race that was too close to call for Georgia's 6th Congressional District in a special election to replace Tom Price, who is now the secretary of Health and Human Services. — AFP

GEORGIA HOUSE HEADING TO HIGH-STAKES RUNOFF

DUNWOODY: A Georgia congressional election is headed to a high-stakes runoff that's shaping up as a referendum on President Donald Trump ahead of crucial midterm elections next year. Democrat Jon Ossoff, a little-known 30-year-old former congressional staffer, fell a few percentage points shy of an outright victory Tuesday amid an 18-candidate scramble in Georgia's 6th Congressional District. His strong showing in the conservative district, driven by eye-popping fundraising numbers from out-of-state donors, underscored Democrats' eagerness to get a win against Trump as they strive to take back House control in 2018.

Republican Karen Handel, a former Georgia secretary of state, finished a distant second in the crowded field, qualifying for the June 20 runoff. Handel treated Trump gingerly throughout the campaign in a district he barely won in November. But the president called to congratulate her Wednesday morning, and Handel said she hoped he would come to campaign for her. "I would hope so," Handel said on CNN. "I mean look, all Republicans, it's all hands on deck for us."

Trump had attacked Ossoff in recent days and took to Twitter again Wednesday morning to crow about the outcome in Georgia following Democrats' failure to win a different special election in Kansas last week.

"Dems failed in Kansas and are now failing in Georgia. Great job Karen Handel! It is now Hollywood vs. Georgia on June 20th," Trump wrote, alluding to celebrity donations that

came in for Ossoff. The close outcomes in conservative Kansas and Georgia underscored Democrats' potential to capitalize on surging liberal energy following Trump's election, but also pointed to the limits of how far they can go in Republican-friendly districts.

Republicans hold a 237-193 majority in the House so Democrats would need to pick up more than 20 seats to retake control in the 2018 midterm, an uphill climb. Another special election is coming up in Montana next month.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez insisted Democrats have the momentum in the Georgia race, and made clear his party will not be shy about tying Handel to Trump. "She's the person who supports Donald Trump's efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act. I wonder if Donald Trump and she are going to campaign on that issue in her district," Perez said on CNN. "We have a lot of wind at our back. The progressive energy out there is palpable," he added. The winner in Georgia will succeed Republican Tom Price, who resigned the seat to join Trump's administration as health secretary.

Leaders in both major parties agree the race offers a prime test run for 2018 elections, because the affluent, well-educated Georgia district is replete with the kind of voters Democrats must attract to reclaim a House majority and win more gubernatorial and Senate races. For Democrats, Ossoff's near win encourages the opposition movement that has flourished since Trump's election. — AP

FRESNO SHOOTER WANTED TO KILL WHITE PEOPLE: POLICE

FRESNO: A man wanted in the slaying of a security guard set out to kill as many white people as he could on Tuesday, gunning down three men on the streets of downtown Fresno before he was captured and admitted to the shootings, authorities said. Kori Ali Muhammad, 39, was arrested shortly after the morning rampage that left three white men dead, police said. Muhammad, who is black, fired 16 rounds in less than two minutes at four places within a block, shooting men who appeared to be going about their day, authorities say.

During his arrest, Muhammad shouted "Allahu akbar," but Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer said the shootings had "nothing to do with terrorism in spite of the statement he made."

"This is solely based on race," Dyer told reporters. Authorities say Muhammad first walked up to a utility truck and shot a Pacific Gas & Electric Co employee sitting in the passenger seat. The driver of the truck, who is Latino, sped off to the police department for help, but the worker, a 34-year-old white man, died.

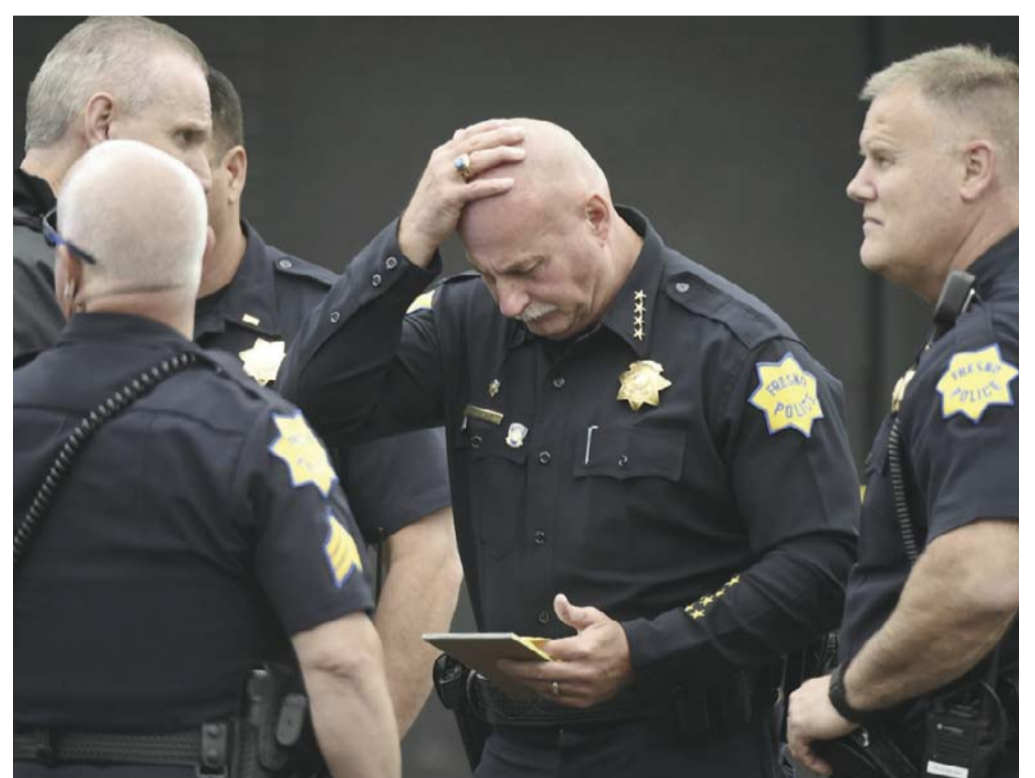
Sparing other races

Muhammad then shot at another person and missed, police said. He aimed at a third, killing the 37-year-old on the sidewalk as he walked with a bag of groceries in a neighborhood lined with tall trees, authorities say. The final victim, 58, was gunned down in the parking lot of a charity building. Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer said Muhammad approached a vehicle in between shootings, but he spared the lives of two women who were in the car with a child. The women were Latina, he said.

"These individuals who were chosen today did not do anything to deserve what they got," Dyer said. "These were unprovoked attacks by an individual that was intent on carrying out homicides today. He did that." Police had put out a news release hours before the shootings Tuesday, saying that Muhammad was armed and dangerous and wanted in the shooting death of a security guard at a Motel 6 last week. The guard, 25-year-old Carl Williams, was white. Muhammad told officers at his arrest that he was the guy they were looking for, Dyer said.

"I did it. I shot them," Dyer said Muhammad told officers. Police are searching for the revolver Muhammad said he tossed into a pile of clothing. The gun may have been picked up by someone else, Dyer said. Stephen Hughes, 66, said he and his wife rushed home Tuesday after receiving a frantic call from a neighbor. Hughes came home to see a body draped in a blanket on the sidewalk leading to his front door.

He first thought the shooting was gang-relat-



FRESNO: Fresno Police chief Jerry Dyer reviews notes on the triple fatal shooting before addressing the media. — AP

ed, but then he noticed the bag of groceries near the body. "It looks like a guy carrying his groceries home from the store," Hughes said. On what appeared to be Muhammad's Facebook page, he repeatedly posted "#LetBlackPeopleGo" and encouraged "black warriors" to "mount up." A flurry of posts emerged in the past day.

He wrote that his "kill rate increases tremendously on the other side" and also posted about "white devils." On several occasions, he wrote updates that included the phrase "Allahu Akbar," meaning "God is great" in Arabic. Muhammad has a criminal history that includes arrests on weapons, drugs and false imprisonment charges and making terrorist threats. He had been associated with gangs, but he was not a confirmed member, police say.

Bizarre beliefs

Muhammad was charged in 2005 with possessing cocaine with intent to distribute, court records show. Federal prosecutors said at the time that he was also in possession of a 9mm semi-automatic handgun and two rifles after being convicted of a felony. He claimed insanity, and his attorney requested a psychiatric exami-

nation for his client, saying Muhammad "appeared eccentric with some bizarre beliefs." A psychiatrist who examined Muhammad believed he had psychosis, Muhammad's attorney said in the court filing.

He also "suffered auditory hallucinations and had at least two prior mental health hospitalizations," according to court documents. His attorney said that Muhammad had "paranoia" and thought the justice system and his defense attorney were conspiring against him, court papers said. The attorney who represented Muhammad in that case did not return a call for comment Tuesday.

Public records list Muhammad as Cory Taylor and other aliases with addresses in Fresno and Sacramento. A woman who identified herself as Taylor's grandmother said Tuesday that the family last saw him on Easter Sunday. She hung up the phone before giving her name. Authorities spotted Muhammad running and took him into custody. Police are looking for the revolver. Police say two of the victims may have been clients of Catholic Charities, which provides a variety of services for refugees, the homeless and those with disabilities. — AP

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT INDIA'S MOSQUE DISPUTE

NEW DELHI: India's Supreme Court said yesterday three senior members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) should face trial over the demolition of a mosque a quarter of a century ago. Here are five things to know about the long-running dispute.

What is the dispute about?

Hindus and Muslims have for decades been bitterly divided over the 16th-century Babri mosque in Ayodhya, a city in India's northern Uttar Pradesh state. Hindus believe the mosque was built on the ruins of an ancient temple dedicated to their god Ram. Tensions boiled over in 1992 when a Hindu mob tore the mosque to the ground, sparking religious violence that left about 2,000 dead across India.

How long has it been a flashpoint?

Hindus believe a Muslim conqueror razed the Ram temple in the 1500s to make way for the mosque. The British erected a fence in the 19th century to separate places of worship so that

Muslims could worship in the inner court and Hindus the outer. But in 1949, idols of Lord Ram appeared inside the mosque, allegedly placed by Hindus. Muslims objected and both parties went to court, beginning a decades-long legal fight over the right to worship at the site.

Who was behind its destruction?

In 1984, a group of Hindus formed a committee to "liberate" the birthplace of Ram and build a temple-or mandir-at the disputed site. The movement was headed by L K Advani, a senior figure in the ruling BJP, now headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Its supporters began travelling to the site to demand a temple be built, and even today the cause remains a rally cry for Hindu nationalists.

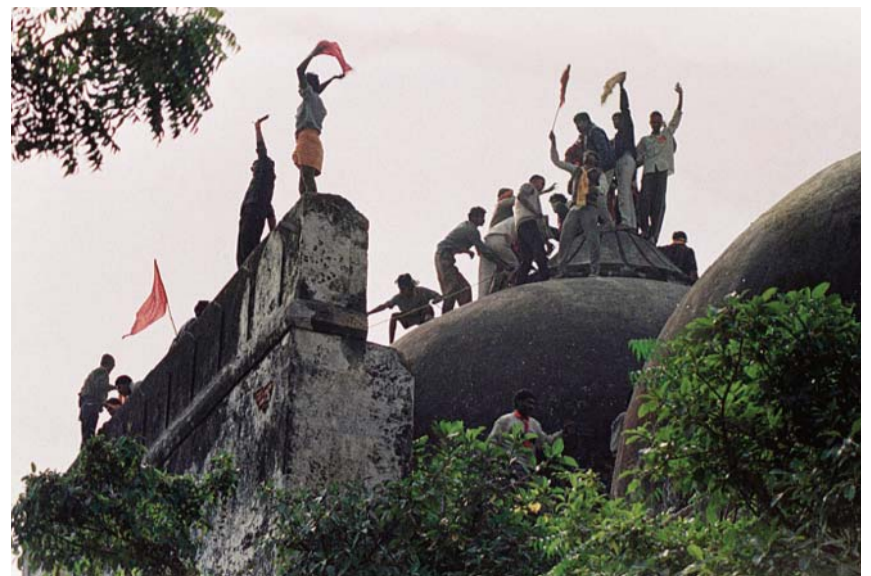
When did tensions escalate?

On December 6, 1992 a huge Hindu crowd converged on the mosque site to symbolically and provocatively lay the first stone of the new temple. The 200,000-strong mob broke through police cordons, first smashing three

domes to rubble before reducing the rest of the historic mosque to ruins. The destruction triggered some of the worst religious riots since India's bloody partition in 1947. The violence culminated in 2002 when a trainload of Hindu activists were burned alive as they returned from Ayodhya, sparking retaliatory riots in Gujarat state that left upwards of 1,000 mostly Muslims dead.

Where does it stand legally?

In 2002, three High Court judges began hearings to determine who could lay claim to the contested site. An important ruling came in 2010 when a High Court ruled that Muslims and Hindus should split the site-albeit unevenly, with Hindus granted the lion's share. A Muslim group appealed and the Supreme Court in 2011 overturned the lower court's ruling, leaving the issue unresolved. In March, the Supreme Court said charges against Advani and other top BJP leaders could not be dropped, indicating the case could be revived. —AFP



AYODHYA: This file photo taken on December 6, 1992 shows Hindu fundamentalists shouting and waving banners as they stand on top of a stone wall and celebrate the destruction of the 16th century Babri Mosque. —AFP



SHIMLA: Indian rescue personnel and volunteers stand amidst wreckage and victims after a bus accident, at the bottom of a ravine near the River Tons at Chopal, some 115kms north of Shimla. —AFP

BUS CRASH KILLS 44 IN NORTHERN INDIA

NEW DELHI: A bus has swerved off a mountain road and plunged into a deep ravine in a Himalayan region of northern India, killing 44 people, an official said yesterday. Only two of the 46 people on board the bus survived when it flew off a cliff and into a river in northern Himachal Pradesh state, around 115 kilometers from the capital Shimla. Ten others earlier believed to be aboard the bus had in fact lighted before the accident, said Rohan Chand Thakur, deputy commissioner of Shimla.

"Unfortunately there are only two survivors, including the conductor of the bus who managed to jump out in time. 44 others have died," Thakur told AFP. "We are now bringing the last four bodies out." Officials at the accident site near Nerwa village were trying to identify the dead, he added. Images of the scene showed luggage strewn around the mangled chassis of the bus on the ravine floor, as volunteers and local residents scoured the site.

DW Negi, senior police superintendent of Shimla, said 11 women and three chil-

dren were among the dead. Local television networks reported that the driver informed passengers shortly before the accident that the bus suspension was damaged. Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered his condolences to the families who had lost loved ones, and said he was "extremely anguished by the accident."

Compensation of 200,000 rupees (\$3,100) would be awarded to the families of those killed, and 50,000 (\$770) for the injured, Modi added. India has some of the world's deadliest roads with more than 150,000 fatalities annually due to poor roads, badly maintained vehicles and reckless driving. In February, 16 people were killed and more than 50 injured when a truck carrying churchgoers overturned in a hilly region of northeast India. Survivors said the driver was maneuvering recklessly and lost control of the vehicle in the rugged terrain. A month earlier 13 people—mostly children aged between seven and 14—were killed when a school bus collided with a truck in northern India. —AFP

PAKISTAN SET FOR SUPREME COURT DECISION THAT COULD REMOVE PM

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI: A looming Supreme Court decision that could disqualify Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif over corruption allegations had the country on edge yesterday, as a drawn-out investigation related to the "Panama Papers" leaks neared a conclusion. Disqualifying Sharif would leave his party in power, but it would cause intense turmoil at a time when Pakistan is experiencing modest growth and improved security after years of violence, and the civilian government and powerful military have appeared to come to uneasy terms.

Sharif has denied any wrongdoing, but the Supreme Court agreed to investigate his family's offshore wealth late last year after opposition leader Imran Khan threatened street protests. The Supreme Court could take a range of steps. It could clear the prime minister, or order a further judicial commission of inquiry or even declare him ineligible to hold office, as it did in 2012 with then-Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani over a contempt of court case. Pakistani stocks fell 1.5 percent in early trade after the news overnight that a decision would be announced today. The benchmark KSE 100 later rebounded and closed up 1.6 percent.

Both the government and opposition expressed confidence yesterday. "There is no chance that decision will come against our leadership. Our government and entire leadership are performing their duties as per routine," Talal Chaudhry a prominent leader of Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz told Geo Television. Naem ul Haque,

a spokesman for Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) said he expected a verdict against Sharif, but he made clear the opposition would not launch a new street movement if they were disappointed.

"Imran Khan has clearly stated that we will accept the decision of the Supreme Court, but we believe that enough evidence has been presented to remove the prime minister and that a verdict should be reached that is based on the evidence," he said. In 2014, Khan led a months-long protest that paralysed the government quarter in the capital, Islamabad, after rejecting Sharif's decisive election win a year earlier.

The case stems from documents leaked from the Panama-based Mossack Fonseca law firm appeared to show that Sharif's daughter and two sons owned offshore holding companies registered in the British Virgin Islands and used them to buy properties in London. Sharif told parliament last year that his family wealth was acquired legally in the decades before he entered politics and that no money was siphoned off-shore. Khan, however, has argued that the prime minister's lawyers have changed stories on the source of the offshore money several times and that it is up to Sharif to prove the offshore companies were not used for money laundering. Corruption is endemic in Pakistan, which ranks a dismal 116th out of 176 in Transparency International's annual index of the world's most graft-ridden countries. —Reuters

INDIAN POLITICIANS TO FINALLY FACE TRIAL OVER MOSQUE DEMOLITION

THREE ARE ACCUSED OF INCITING HINDU ZEALOTS

NEW DELHI: Three senior members of India's ruling Hindu nationalist party including a cabinet minister should face trial over the demolition of a mosque a quarter of a century ago, the Supreme Court ruled yesterday. The three are accused of inciting Hindu zealots to pull down the 16th century Babri mosque in Ayodhya in 1992, igniting one of India's most explosive religious disputes in which thousands died.

India's top court said government minister Uma Bharti, former deputy prime minister L K Advani, and M M Joshi—all senior members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—should face criminal conspiracy charges. The ruling came after a lower court dropped the charges brought against them by India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), kicking off a series of appeals and counter-appeals. "We have allowed the CBI appeal against the Allahabad High Court judgment with certain directions," the Press Trust of India news agency quoted the Supreme Court judges as saying.

The demolition of the mosque in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh sparked nationwide riots in which thousands were killed, most of them Muslims. It marked the culmination of a virulent campaign led by the BJP, which recently won elections in the state, India's largest. Many Hindus believe the Babri mosque was only built after the destruction of a temple that marks the birthplace of their god Ram and the issue remains hugely divisive.

'Ready to hang'

Some BJP leaders including Bharti want a temple to Ram to be built on the ruins of the razed mosque—an idea that horrifies Uttar Pradesh's significant Muslim minority.

Bharti, India's water resources minister, said after the ruling she was "ready to hang" for the temple cause and would travel to Ayodhya later yesterday. "There was no conspiracy. Everything was out in the open for everyone to see," she told reporters.

"I am absolutely clear about one thing—I have always been very proud of my participation in the Ram temple movement. I am ready to hang, to go to jail for this," Advani, now 89, has consistently denied a criminal conspiracy to destroy the mosque. The former leader of the BJP was in Ayodhya on the day of the demolition and his campaign for the temple came to define his political career.

But in a later interview with the

BBC, Advani said it should never have happened and described it as the saddest day of his life. He has been tipped to be India's president when the role becomes vacant later this year, but local media said the charges could scupper his chances. The Supreme Court ordered that the case, which has dragged on since charges were first filed in 1993, should be completed within two years.

However some legal experts expressed fears it would drag on longer. "There are hundreds of witnesses in the case and now all of them will have to be re-examined," said IB Singh, a senior lawyer who cross-examined Advani for the official enquiry into the Babri demolition. "I doubt if this will anyway get

over within the lifetime of Mr. Advani." The opposition Congress said the ruling party had "tried every trick in the book" to ensure that Advani, Bharti and Joshi did not face charges.

"What they (the Supreme Court) have said today means there's clinching evidence that needs to be now argued out in the court," said party spokesman Sanjay Jha.

The court also ruled that a fourth senior BJP politician, Kalyan Singh, who was leader of Uttar Pradesh at the time of the incident, should face criminal conspiracy charges. His trial, however, will be delayed until his stint as governor of Rajasthan state is over because the position of governor gives him immunity from prosecution. —AFP



UTTAR PRADESH: In this July 28, 2005 file photo, Indian opposition leader and President of the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) LK Advani, second right, senior BJP leaders Uma Bharati, right, Kalyan Singh, second left, and Murli Manohar Joshi wave to people during a public rally in Rae Bareilly, in the northern Indian state. —AP

DELHI BANS RED CAR BEACONS TO END ELITIST CULTURE



NEW DELHI: This file photo taken on May 8, 2015 shows an Indian politician's car with a red beacon on it outside Parliament House. —AFP

NEW DELHI: India said yesterday it will ban ministers and senior officials from using red beacons on their cars to cut through traffic, a longstanding privilege that has caused resentment and accusations of elitism. From May 1 only emergency services will be allowed to use the flashing beacons to move swiftly through India's notoriously congested streets. "We are removing the rule which allows state and central government to specify who can use the red lights," finance minister Arun Jaitley said at a news conference in New Delhi. "From May 1, no vehicle will have a red light. There will be no exceptions." The red beacon, perceived as a symbol of privilege and arrogance, is used by ministers and top bureaucrats to cut through traffic while on official business. But often even lower-level politicians and officials misuse the beacons to show off their importance, especially in smaller towns.

It is also common for policemen to put up barricades and block routes to allow free passage to dignitaries while the rest have to wait for the roads to open. "It's a huge democratic decision," said road transport minister Nitin Gadkari. Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal took the lead in 2015 by asserting he would not have the red beacon on his car. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the son of a tea-seller who takes pride in his humble beginnings, often breaks protocol to shake hands and pose for photos with the public. —AFP

COURT THROWS OUT CASE, NO ONE COULD UNDERSTAND

NEW DELHI: Anyone dealing with India's overburdened legal system knows that the wheels of justice move slowly. But in one case, they have ground to a halt completely after Supreme Court judges said they were throwing out a lawsuit that used so much jargon it was incomprehensible. "We will have to set it aside because one cannot understand this," the Hindustan

Times daily quoted MB Lokur and Deepak Gupta as saying yesterday.

Even the lawyers representing the two sides in the row between a landlord and his tenant said they were unable to understand the original order issued by a lower court. "We normally prepare an appeal in two days' time. However, in this case I took more than a week because the facts of the case were

unclear," the landlord's lawyer, EC Agrawala, told the Hindustan Times. The property dispute dates back to 1999 when the landlord filed a petition to evict his tenant for not paying rent.

In a nearly two-decade struggle, the landlord finally took his matter to the country's top court after the Himachal Pradesh High Court favored the tenant. But even that much would be hard to

glean from the original order. "(The)...tenant in the demised premises stands aggrieved by the pronouncement made by the learned Executing Court upon his objections constituted theretofore... wherewithin the apposite unfoldments qua his resistance to the execution of the decree stood discounted by the learned Executing Court," it read. —AFP

TAIWAN LEADER CALLS FOR CALM OVER PENSION REFORM CHAOS



TAIPEI: Government employees walk between barricades erected outside the parliament during an anti-pension reform demonstration. —AFP

TAIPEI: Taiwan's leader called for calm after violent protests over pension reforms outside parliament yesterday saw scores of demonstrators scuffling with police and politicians. The rallies were staged as parliament began reviewing controversial bills which are designed to stop the struggling pension system from collapsing but are expected to hit nearly 500,000 civil servants and teachers.

Several lawmakers and politicians said they were pushed, punched and had water splashed on them as they tried to enter the legislative complex in central Taipei, which was guarded by barbed-wire barricades and a heavy police presence. President Tsai Ing-wen vowed to press ahead with the changes despite a recent string of protests and said her government would not tolerate violence.

"Intentionally causing conflicts will not deter the government's determination for reforms... our urgent task is to bring the pension system back from the brink of bankruptcy," she told reporters. Anger has been

mounting among public-sector workers and retirees as the government unveiled draft bills aimed at reducing their pensions and phasing out a special savings rate for them which pays 18 percent interest. The government has warned that various pension funds are likely to go bankrupt within three to 14 years unless the system is overhauled.

Seized the podium

More than 100,000 civil servants, teachers and servicemen demonstrated last year against the planned reforms—the largest street protest since Tsai became president. There was also chaos inside parliament yesterday as opposition lawmakers temporarily seized the podium and demanded the government hold public hearings on the issue. The pension issue is the latest challenge to Tsai, who has seen her popularity ratings fall rapidly since taking the helm in May last year as her government tackles a range of domestic issues—from gay marriage to judicial reform.

The Pension Reform Oversight Alliance,

an organizer of Wednesday's protests, criticized the government's "rough and irresponsible" methods and vowed to stage bigger demonstrations. "The Tsai government blames us but it is their incompetence that is forcing many people, not just civil servants and teachers, to take to the streets," said Lee Lai-hsi, a spokesman for the alliance.

Last December parliament plunged into chaos with opposing lawmakers brawling in the chamber while labour activists set off smoke bombs outside in protest at proposed holiday cuts. Taiwan's parliament, once notorious for its mass brawls, had been relatively peaceful under the previous government, except for fights over a contentious China trade pact and a new nuclear plant. Taiwan's pension schemes vary for different occupations. Public-sector retirees typically receive more generous packages than other workers. The government also aims to improve the pension system for around 10 million non-public sector workers in its reform bills. —AFP

PENCE VOWS 'OVERWHELMING' RESPONSE TO NORTH KOREA

'STORM CLOUDS GATHER ON THE HORIZON'

YOKOSUKA: The United States will counter any North Korean attack with an "overwhelming and effective" response, Vice President Mike Pence vowed yesterday, as he stood on the deck of a massive American aircraft carrier docked in Japan. Donald Trump's deputy is in the region to reassure allies fretting over Pyongyang's quickening

growing. Aboard the USS Ronald Reagan, the vice president, adopting a Churchillian tone, told troops he was there as "storm clouds gather on the horizon" of Northeast Asia. "North Korea is the most dangerous and urgent threat to peace and security in the Asia-Pacific," Pence said. But, "we will defeat any attack and meet any

in Japan and South Korea, who would be at the sharp end of any North Korean response. Seoul, the South Korean capital, is just 35 miles (56 km) away from the military demarcation line that splits the Korean peninsula, and is within easy range of North Korean long-range artillery. The Ronald Reagan, whose home port is Yokosuka in

the Vinson was "on her way up" to the peninsula, while Trump said an "armada" had been dispatched, adding fuel to already rising tensions. But a defence official told AFP on Tuesday that the group of ships was still off the northwest coast of Australia and would soon begin heading to the Sea of Japan (East Sea). But it would not arrive until next week at the earliest given the vast distance.

At the time of the strike group's deployment, many media outlets reported the ships were moving towards North Korea, suggesting a looming showdown, when in fact they had temporarily headed in the opposite direction. Wearing a green flight jacket, Pence also sought to reassure jittery allies who have seen Trump call into question decades-old mutual defence treaties of America's commitment.

The United States, Pence said, would be unwavering in its alliances and unyielding in its resolve. In a veiled warning to China, Pence added that "our treaty (with Japan) covers all the territory administered by Japan, including the Senkaku Islands"—a disputed and uninhabited archipelago in the East China Sea that is controlled by Japan but claimed by Beijing. There was also a warning to China regarding the South China Sea, where Beijing has built reefs and islets into fortified islands capable of hosting military assets to bolster its claim to sovereignty over the sea.

Pence said the United States would defend the right to freedom of navigation through the waterway, one of the most important shipping channels on the planet. He also vowed that more of America's most advanced military assets would be deployed to the Asia-Pacific. About 47,000 US troops are stationed in Japan and a further 28,000 are in South Korea. —AFP



PYONGYANG: In this April 15, 2017, file photo, 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

missile program, and its apparent readiness to carry out another banned nuclear test in its quest to develop an atomic weapon that can hit the US mainland.

Pence, whose visit started in South Korea the day after the failed launch by North Korea of what analysts said could have been a new missile, described the threat from the isolated regime as

use of conventional or nuclear weapons with an overwhelming and effective American response."

Pence's comments come after a senior North Korean official warned the regime had no intention of dialing down its missile program, pledging weekly tests and threatening "all-out war" if the US took any action against it. That kind of rhetoric has unnerved allies

Japan, is part of the Seventh Fleet and is regularly deployed around the western Pacific.

Treaty allies

The Navy had said earlier this month that a strike group led by the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson had been ordered to "sail north" as a warning to Pyongyang. Pentagon chief Jim Mattis also said

CHINA: INTERPOL NOTICE ISSUED FOR BILLIONAIRE GUO WENGUI

BEIJING: China's foreign ministry said yesterday that Interpol has issued a "red notice" seeking the arrest of Guo Wengui, a Chinese billionaire who has threatened to expose corruption at the highest levels of the ruling Communist Party. Foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang gave no details about Guo's alleged crimes when announcing the Interpol notice.

The real estate tycoon disappeared from public view in 2014 but resurfaced in recent months, claiming in two interviews with overseas Chinese media and a stream of Twitter posts that he held damning information about party elites. Guo's case has been closely followed by Chinese political watchers, who say his leaks could be potentially damaging as internal factions jostle for power in the months leading up to the 19th Party Congress expected this fall, when a new generation of party leaders will be chosen.

Guo has been linked to Ma Jian, a former deputy head of China's intelligence service who was charged with corruption in February. He is believed to be in the U.S. or Britain, two countries that do not have extradition treaties with China. In brief messages to The Associated Press on Wednesday, Guo dismissed the Interpol notice as an empty threat from the Chinese leadership. "It's all lies, all threats," Guo said. "It shows they are scared of me leaking explosive information." He added: "Don't worry, this is a good thing."

Guo was not listed on Interpol's website and agency officials declined com-

ment, saying that Interpol does not comment on specific cases without the agreement of the member country involved as a matter of policy. A "red notice" for Guo would revive concerns over the election of a top Chinese police official as Interpol's president in November. Rights advocates had warned that the abuses and lack of transparency within China's legal system meant there was the potential for Interpol to be misused to attack Beijing's political opponents.

Political instrumentalization

"Our warnings about the risk of political instrumentalization of Interpol after putting high ranking (Chinese Communist Party) official at the top were not overblown," Nicholas Bequelin, Amnesty International's regional director for East Asia, wrote yesterday on Twitter. He noted that Guo had recently given an interview to the New York Times in which he repeated his claims to have evidence of corruption among high-ranking officials.

A "red notice" issued by the Lyon, France-based International Criminal Police Organization is the closest instrument to an international arrest warrant in use today. Interpol circulates those notices to member countries listing people who are wanted for extradition. China has sought to enlist Interpol in its ongoing campaign to capture Chinese officials and business people accused of corruption who have fled abroad.

Returning those suspects to China is

part of President Xi Jinping's broader campaign against corruption in the government and ruling party, which itself has raised questions about Xi's political motives. Guo said that earlier this week he and the US-government-funded Voice of America had received threats from Chinese agents warning them against releasing an interview in which he promised to dish information about Chinese leaders. The interview will be streamed late Wednesday in Beijing as planned, Guo said.

Despite his humble roots in the central province of Henan, Guo's transformation into a billionaire developer - and his bare-knuckle business tactics - have been the subject of sensational stories in domestic media. He reportedly worked with Ma, the disgraced intelligence chief, to obtain a sex tape of a deputy mayor of Beijing who blocked Guo's high-profile real estate project in 2006, leading to the city official's downfall.

At the center of Guo's recent corruption allegations are claims that relatives of He Guoqiang, a former member of Politburo Standing Committee, China's most powerful decision-making body, were secretly stakeholders in Founder Securities, a company that Guo sought unsuccessfully to purchase a stake in in 2014. Citing corporate registration documents and interviews with relatives, The New York Times reported earlier this month that He's family did indeed have extensive ties to Founder, substantiating at least some of Guo's claims. —AP



JAKARTA: Candidate for Jakarta governor, Anis Baswedan (L), his wife Fery Farhati Ganis (R) and daughter Mutiara Baswedan (C) gesture after casting their ballots. —AFP

CHRISTIAN GOVERNOR LOSES JAKARTA RUN-OFF: POLLSTERS

JAKARTA: Jakarta's Christian governor yesterday lost heavily to a Muslim former government minister in an election run-off, private polls indicated, after a divisive battle that has damaged Indonesia's reputation as a bastion of tolerant Islam. Anies Baswedan, who was accused of pandering to hardliners to win votes, and his supporters cheered as news came through that surveys showed him winning by over 10 percentage points against Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, who was fighting for his job while standing trial for blasphemy.

Official results are not expected until early May but the private pollsters, who count a sample of votes, are usually accurate. The vote was seen as a test of whether the moderate Islam traditionally practiced in the world's most populous Muslim country is under threat from hardliners, who have led a series of mass demonstrations against Purnama over allegations he insulted the Koran.

It came against a backdrop of rising religious intolerance that has tainted the image of the diverse Indonesian archipelago as a pluralistic country in recent years, with a surge in attacks on minorities. Baswedan, a former education minister, thanked Jakarta's voters for supporting him and hinted that he would move to heal the divisions in the capital after the bitter poll, if his victory was confirmed.

"We celebrate diversity... We are all ready to work together again," the 47-year-old said. Purnama, the city's first non-Muslim governor for half a century and its first ethnic Chinese leader, congratulated Baswedan and his running mate, adding: "We are all the same, we want a good Jakarta, because it is our

home." The defeat is also a blow for President Joko Widodo, whose party had backed Purnama.

'Stay unified'

The incumbent had long been a shoo-in to win re-election after gaining popularity due to his determined efforts to clean up Jakarta. But the governor-known by his nickname Ahok—lost a once-unassailable lead after a controversy erupted last year over claims that he had insulted Islam, a grave charge in Indonesia. His troubles began in September when he lightheartedly said in a speech that his rivals were tricking people into voting against him by using a Koranic verse, which some interpret as meaning Muslims should only choose Muslim leaders.

The allegations drew hundreds of thousands of conservative Muslims onto the streets of Jakarta in major protests, and led to Purnama being put on trial for blasphemy in a case critics see as politically motivated. Purnama won in the election's first round in February but Baswedan was seen as the favourite in the run-off because the votes from a third, Muslim, candidate who was knocked out were expected to go to him.

Opinion polls in the run-up to the vote indicated that the race was neck and neck but in the event Baswedan strongly defeated Purnama, the pollsters indicated. They showed him with about 57 percent to Purnama on 43 percent. More than 7.2 million people were registered to vote in the polls, which are also important as politicians view them as a potential stepping stone to the presidency in 2019. —AFP

PHILIPPINE LEADER MAY LAUNCH 'INVASION' OF ABU SAYYAF ISLE

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte warned yesterday he might "invade" an island stronghold of the Islamic State-linked Abu Sayyaf to "finish the game" following a thwarted attempt by the group to kidnap tourists on a resort island last week. Duterte offered cash rewards for the capture, dead or alive, of six Abu Sayyaf militants still at large following a day-long clash last week on Bohol island, which killed six rebels and four members of the security forces.

The shootout on Bohol followed warnings against travel to central Philippine islands by several Western countries, which cited unconfirmed intelligence of possible kidnap plans. The clash erupted after residents tipped-off authorities about the arrival of armed men on boats. The incident was highly significant, coming during Holy Week at a location far from Abu Sayyaf's traditional field of operations on remote Jolo, Tawi Tawi and Basilan islands. Duterte said Abu Sayyaf must not be allowed to extend its reach.

"I will, maybe, invade Jolo," Duterte told reporters after a security briefing in Tagbilaran City, Bohol. "All army, navy, will go there. It will be a fight. That's what

they want, I will give it." Referring to Abu Sayyaf's strongholds, he said: "They must stay there. My order to the navy ... is to blow them up, no surrender. Shoot cannons, destroy them." Abu Sayyaf has its roots in separatism and the military says some elements are in close contact with Islamic State radicals in the Middle East. However, most of its activities are banditry, like piracy and kidnap. It is notorious for beheading hostages when money for their release is not paid.

Duterte said he wanted civilians to support the manhunt on Bohol and offered a reward of 6 million pesos (\$120,668) for each of the six fugitives. He warned Abu Sayyaf might try to "create a disaster" at a meeting of trade officials of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Duterte said he wanted to arm civilians, and encouraged them to kill not only Abu Sayyaf, but drug addicts who were armed. Duterte's signature policy is a war on drugs, which has killed nearly 9,000 people in 10 months, mostly users and small-time peddlers. "My order is dead or alive ... My enemy is drugs and terrorists. These drug addicts, they have firearms. Almost all of them are really paranoid. They fight." —Reuters



Cows stand on a snow-covered meadow near Unterthuringen in Germany yesterday. — AP

EMIRATES TRIMS US FLIGHTS...

Continued from Page 1

Emirates' hub at Dubai International Airport, the world's third busiest, is a major transit point for travelers who were affected by President Donald Trump's executive orders temporarily halting entry to citizens of six countries. The latest travel ban suspended new visas for people from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, and froze the nation's refugee program. Like an earlier ban that also included Iraqi citizens, it has been blocked from taking effect by the courts.

Emirates said the reductions will affect five of its 12 US destinations, starting next month. It called the move "a commercial decision in response to weakened travel demand" in the three months since Trump took office. "The recent actions taken by the US government relating to the issuance of entry visas, heightened security vetting, and restrictions on electronic devices in aircraft cabins, have had a direct impact on consumer interest and demand for air travel into the US," the carrier said in a statement.

Emirates did not provide financial data for its US operations but said it had seen "healthy growth and performance" there until the start of the year. In the three months Trump has been in office, however, there has been what it called "a significant deterioration in the booking profiles on all our US routes, across all travel segments." "Emirates has therefore responded as any profit-oriented enterprise would, and we will redeploy capacity to serve demand on other routes on our global network," it said.

The cuts will reduce the number of US-bound flights from Dubai to 101, down from 126 currently. Twice daily Emirates flights to Boston, Los Angeles and Seattle will be reduced to once a day. Daily flights to Fort Lauderdale and Orlando will be pared down to five per week. Like its smaller Gulf rivals Qatar Airways and Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways, Emirates has ramped up its US presence in recent years and recently launched a new service to Newark via Athens.

Several big U.S. carriers have bristled at the Gulf airlines' US push, accusing them of flooding the market with capacity while receiving billions of dollars of unfair government subsidies. The Gulf airlines deny the allegations. Delta Air Lines and United Airlines both stopped flying to Dubai last year, leaving Emirates the only carrier to offer direct US flights to what has become the world's busiest airport for international traffic. — AP

US WEIGHS MORE MILITARY AID FOR SAUDIS OVER...

Continued from Page 1

The US and Saudi Arabia have been security allies since 1944. The retired four-star Marine general earlier met King Salman at Al-Yamama Palace in Riyadh, where he told the monarch: "It's good to be back." Mattis commanded troops during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He arrived in the kingdom on Tuesday afternoon to listen to Saudi leaders and learn "what are their priorities," an American defense official said.

As he met Deputy Crown Prince and Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman, Mattis appeared to allude to deteriorated relations during the Obama administration, which spearheaded a seven-nation nuclear deal with Iran that deeply upset the Saudis. "We can overcome any past frustrations," Mattis said while US journalists were in the room. "It is in our interest to see a strong Saudi Arabia," Mattis said at the start of talks, pointing to the country's "military security services and secret services". He said the

US would "reinforce Saudi Arabia's resistance to Iran's mischief" and suggested the possibility of President Donald Trump visiting Saudi Arabia. "We are not leaving this region," Mattis said.

Prince Mohammed told Mattis that Saudi Arabia and the United States are working to counter challenges in the region, including "the malign activities of Iran" and to bring stability "to the most important straits". Trump's Yemen focus has so far been on a major escalation of attacks against militants from Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. But after talks with Prince Mohammed, Mattis warned of Iranian efforts to create a Yemeni militia "in the image" of Lebanon's Hezbollah. Pentagon officials believe members of the Quds Force, the foreign operations wing of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, are in Yemen to help the Houthis. Hezbollah, a powerful political movement in Lebanon, is fighting alongside government forces in Syria and has been declared a "terrorist organization" by Riyadh. — Agencies

PANEL FINALIZES SPORTS LAW

Continued from Page 1

IOC and world football body FIFA, in addition to several international sports organizations, suspended Kuwaiti sports in Oct 2015 over alleged government interference in sports, which contradicts international sports charters. The world sports organizations cited changes introduced to the Kuwaiti sports law between 2012 and 2015 that gave the government the right to interfere in sports' internal affairs.

Former youth minister Sheikh Salman Hmoud Al-Sabah had rejected the demands by world sports federations and considered them as an interference in Kuwait's internal affairs. He even dissolved the board of directors of Kuwait Olympic Committee and several other federations, escalating tensions with international sports organizations. The situation changed following November's snap polls in which the opposition won half

of the 50 seats. A majority of the opposition lawmakers urged the former minister to respond positively to international sports bodies' demands to secure lifting the sanctions. The minister refused and he was grilled and forced to resign after a large number of MPs said they would support a no-confidence motion against him.

MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei said yesterday that he and a number of lawmakers have submitted a law proposing regulations on rents in the private housing sector in order to prevent rent from eating up most of the citizens' salaries. Tabtabaei said the proposal concerns rents in the private housing sector and not in investment or commercial housing (apartment buildings). He said the proposal aims to check the increase in rent, which forces many citizens to pay half of their salaries in rent while waiting for many years for a government house. Tabtabaei said they also submitted another proposal to establish a new city with all services to provide an efficient solution to the housing problem.

Kuwait Times

Premier Brands

To see your ad here, call:
+965 248 35 616 / 617
 E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
 ads@kuwaittimes.net
 Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

APRIL Explosive OFFERS

Midea
MST1MB1-18CR

18000 BTU/hr

1.5 طن

الآن 125,000 د.ك.
قبل 165,000 د.ك.

40% خصم

White-Westinghouse®
WANC18FNWHI

18000 BTU/hr

1.5 طن

الآن 139,000 د.ك.
قبل 175,000 د.ك.

36% خصم

- Quick Cool
- Active Carbon
- Superior Quality

YORK®
AUTHORIZED DISTRIBUTOR

YHFC18

18000 BTU/hr

1.5 طن

الآن 144,000 د.ك.
قبل 179,000 د.ك.

35% خصم

best بست
AL-YOUSIFI اليوسفي

Credit: Start from SKD • Up to 48 month • Instant approval

• Kuwait 1 (the New str.) • Kuwait 2 (Panasonic Tower) • Hawalli 1 (Tunis str.) • Hawalli 2 (Bin Khaldon str.) • Shuwaikh (4th Ring road) • Al-Rai (4th Ring road)
 • Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak str.) • Farwaniya (Behind police Station) • Fahaheel (Opp. General Parking) • Jahra (Opp. Main Co-op.) • Airport (Departure Hall)

Shop Online www.best.com.kw Free Delivery

1809 809

PEUGEOT PARTNER .. FOR UNEXPECTED PROFITS

From **K.D 95 Monthly**

- Service package
- Extended Warranty
- 3rd Party Insurance & Registration

MOTION & EMOTION

الشركة الكويتية لاستيراد السيارات ذ.م.م.
Kuwait Automotive Imports Co. W.L.L.

Working Hours: From Saturday - Thursday
From: 9:00 am - 9:00 pm

Call:
5501 5636 - 6902 4472

[/PeugeotKw](https://www.facebook.com/PeugeotKw)
www.kaico.net
info@kaico.net
fleet@kaico.net

Kuwait Times

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24835619
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
E MAIL : info@kuwaittimes.net
Website : www.kuwaittimes.net

Focus

DEAFENING LOOMS
MUFFLE DESPERATION
IN INDIA TEXTILE HUB

Udhiya Behera sat in a windowless room in the Indian textile hub of Surat, staring blankly at a small television as the ground shook with the noise of power looms on the floor below. For Behera, though, this was a moment of late-evening calm in a room he shares with 35 others, just off a lane crammed with frenetic, sleepless looms. "I operate 12 power looms through the day and the sound bothers me a lot. My head hurts," Behera, 45, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, speaking loudly to be heard over the din that enveloped the room. "It is quieter here."

Nearly 8 million people, mostly migrants from the eastern state of Odisha, like Behera, work on 600,000 power looms in the Western city of Surat in conditions that damage their hearing and often ruin their health. While the workers said they choose to work here due to a lack of jobs at home, campaigners also suspect that some are trafficked across India. "The older workers become the recruiters. These are poor people hit by crop failure and cyclones and need work," said Umi Daniel, a migrant rights activist with Aide et Action in Odisha.

The fabric they weave is durable, easy to care for and low cost, which has led to its popularity in both the Indian and international markets. India exports \$6 billion worth of synthetic fabric per year. This is used worldwide - in Europe and the United States for "wrinkle-free" school and hotel uniforms, and by the garment hubs of Bangladesh and Vietnam in high-street fashion.

Hearing Loss

Textile weavers are exposed to around 102-104 decibels of sound according to a study by India's National Institute of Occupational Health, much more than the legally permissible 90 decibels and putting them at severe risk of hearing damage. Sanjay Patel of migrant labour rights group Aajeevika Bureau said: "Those working here for 10 to 12 years are not able to hear well. Many are unable to work beyond the age of 45, and return to their villages." Patel said that many mill units do not fulfil basic safety guidelines such as giving out ear plugs.

Most units register as shops or other establishments rather than factories, which would mandate them to limit exposure to high noise levels to eight hours and pay extra for overtime. Yet labor department and local government officials said they had not received any noise-related complaints from workers. "We only get complaints of non-payment of wages that we settle," said P D Patel, an inspector with Surat's civic body, which is responsible for checking the units. The penalties for exploitation offer little deterrent however. Nearly 200 employers were penalized with fines between 25 and 750 rupees (\$0.40 to \$11.60) in 2016 for violating guidelines on work hours or not giving lunch breaks, Patel said.

Disease and Death

Bikes, trucks, vans and cars ferrying around colorful fabrics are a common sight on Surat's streets. But just a few miles from the bright, bustling markets are soot-covered buildings, surrounded by piles of rotting waste and filth, where the workers live. Poor nutrition, a lack of basic hygiene, long work hours and unsafe sexual habits have made thousands vulnerable to a cocktail of diseases - from HIV/AIDS to tuberculosis.

A local government office in Surat has received more than 40 death compensation applications from families of power loom workers over the last two years. "The deaths were recorded as natural. Those who died were in the 40-59 age group," an official said. Officials in Surat said most cases of tuberculosis involve migrant workers, who work on the looms until they fall ill. "There are no deaths in the power loom units. They occur only when workers go back home," said Gagan Sahu, a professor at South Gujarat University and textile industry specialist.

Moving Goalposts

When Vipra Padhyali, 40, started work in a loom unit 25 years ago, he worked four machines and found it manageable. "But about a decade ago, they told me if I operated more machines, I would produce more cloth and earn more money. So I agreed," Padhyali said, who now walks up and down all day between the 12 looms that he operates. Power loom workers here are paid less than 2 rupees (\$0.03) for every metre of cloth they produce. They make roughly 500 to 600 rupees (\$8-9) a day.

"When I worked on three machines, I was paid 80 paisa (\$0.01) per metre, but when they increased my machines to six, they cut the price to 70 paisa," said Debakar Behera, who is also a migrant from Odisha. Debakar quit and he now drives an auto rickshaw. But most people cling to their jobs out of desperation. "We found workers who had worked 72 hours at a stretch as they were covering for an unwell friend or a roommate," said Sahu. "Workers hardly have any bargaining power - their payments, working hours and living arrangements are compromised. They are leading miserable lives." — Reuters



FED UP BRAZILIAN VOTERS EYE OUTSIDERS

Brazilian voters are sharpening their pitchforks. As a corruption scandal washes over the political class, anti-establishment sentiment threatens a revolt ahead of next year's general election, analysts say. Around 100 politicians, including many leading figures, were placed under graft investigations last week. That was on top of many others already being probed in the so-called "Car Wash" scandal. And Brazilians - similar to large parts of the electorates in countries such as Britain, France and the United States - are fed up with the status quo.

"They want change," David Fleischer, professor emeritus at the University of Brasilia, said. "You've opened a big chance for people who can say 'I'm not a politician, I've never been a politician.'" The scale of the alleged corruption is staggering. One third of the Senate was put under investigation by Brazil's Supreme Court last week, as well as a third of President Michel Temer's cabinet, and nearly 40 lower house representatives. All five living former presidents are under suspicion.

That threatens to tear up the previously well established list of candidates vying to take over from Temer in the Oct 2018 election. For example, ex-president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a firebrand leftist, faces no less than five corruption trials. Centrist pro-business candidate Aecio Neves, who narrowly lost the 2014 elections to Lula's protégé Dilma Rousseff, is equally tarnished, facing five investigations, including into alleged bribetaking.

'Brazil's Donald Trump'

For now, Lula remains the easy leader in theoretical

match-ups. A February poll by the MDA institute gave him 30.5 percent of the vote, trouncing his rivals. Neves, for example, would get only 10 percent. But Lula faces the potentially fatal setback of being found guilty and barred from public office or even jailed. If voters then go looking for an outsider with clean hands, the big beneficiary could be Joao Doria, the newly elected mayor of Sao Paulo, Brazil's biggest city. Hugely wealthy, a good communicator, and one time host of Brazil's version of "The Apprentice" game show, Doria has drawn comparisons to another attention-grabbing, reality TV-loving, non-politician: Donald Trump. With the centrist PSDB party, Doria wrested Sao Paulo from Lula's leftist Workers' Party and presents himself as someone who gets things done. Crucially, he faces no corruption probe.

He has not declared a candidacy but other big beasts of the PSDB, like Sao Paulo state Governor Geraldo Alckmin, are tainted by "Car Wash". In a new poll published Tuesday - commissioned by a pro-Lula trade union and carried out by Vox Populi - Doria registered a measly five percent. Yet that's before he has taken a single step.

Far right?

Other candidates in that mold of center-right business leaders could appear. There's also environmentalist Marina Silva who scored 11.8 percent in the February poll and is a perennial outsider figure. But if change-hungry voters really want to go rogue, they may turn to federal congressman Jair Bolsonaro. He may be fulltime politician, but he is so radically rightwing that he comes across

as a wild outsider. Bolsonaro has enthusiastically insulted gays, defended the use of torture, spoken up for Brazil's two-decades long military dictatorship, and yelled at a fellow member of Congress that she would not "deserve" rape.

Nevertheless, Bolsonaro is not on the corruption list. And as a tough-talking representative of the ever-more powerful evangelical right in Brazil, he's seen by some as a man who'd drain the swamp. "We have to stanch the hemorrhage of corruption," he declares on his twitter profile. In the February survey Bolsonaro was polling at 11.3 percent, a number confirmed in Tuesday's poll.

An anti-establishment rebellion could also extend to the legislature. Brazilians will be voting next year for two thirds of the Senate and the whole lower house. In 2016, the long-dominant Workers' Party took a pasting in municipal elections. The same may happen to other mainstays such as the PSDB and Temer's PMDB, analysts say. "Fears are growing among members of Brazil's traditional parties that Operation Car Wash could destroy the political system as they know it," risk analysis group Stratfor said on Tuesday. — AFP



Joao Doria

KIM FAMILY VALUES ON SHOW AT PARADE

Before tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians marched before him, along with some of the most fearsome weapons at his command, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and his audience were shown portraits of his grandfather and father. Pyongyang's giant weekend parade was intended as a show of military strength aimed at Washington, Seoul, Tokyo and others with tensions soaring over its nuclear and missile ambitions. It was also a domestic affirmation of Kim family authority over the country, analysts say.

Banners hung from buildings around Kim Il-Sung Square, which is named for the founder of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea - as the North is officially known - and its ruling dynasty. One offered Kim Il-Sung "eternal glory", with another reading: "Let us safeguard with our lives the central committee of the party headed by the great comrade Kim Jong-Un". Despite dying in 1994, Kim Il-Sung remains the titular leader of the North, where he is "Eternal President", and his "Juche" or "self-reliance" philosophy centred on the concept that "man is the master of all things" - is proclaimed as its guiding tenet.

In a speech ahead of the march, senior Kim aide Choe Ryong-Hae declared it "a loyal report to the great president Kim Il-Sung and (his son and successor) the great leader Kim Jong-Il that we are maintaining the revolutionary cause". Pictures of the two men are ubiquitous throughout the country, where Supreme Leader Kim Jong-Un - still only in his 30s - is consistently referred to as the "respected general".

'Leader in rocketry'

The parade was "a big deal for the Kim family cult in the North", said senior Rand Organisation researcher Bruce Bennett. At the same time, Pyongyang was "sending messages of deterrence toward everyone", he added. The new US administration of Donald Trump has ramped up pressure on Pyongyang and declared that Washington's "strategic patience" is over. The North, which says it needs nuclear weapons to protect itself against the threat of invasion, failed with a missile launch the day after the procession and its exact military capabilities are shrouded in secrecy.

But it invites international media to observe the parades, and analysts scurry to examine pictures of the missiles on display - whether real or mock-ups - for clues about its progress. Choe told his audiences in the square, the country and abroad that the North was a "powerful nuclear-armed state" and "Asia's leader in rocketry". North Korean parades are a regular occurrence, said Jeffrey Lewis, of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California. "It's like Christmas, but for Juche instead of Jesus."

Sacred place

Religious terminology is prominent at Kim Il-Sung's birthplace, a heavily restored grave-keeper's cottage at Mangyongdae, a rural idyll overlooking islands in the

stream of the Taedong river outside the capital. "This is the sacred place that all the people of the world look up to," said guide Chon Hyon-Ran, who referred to April 15 as Kim's "birthdaymas". "Relics" of family life are on display, from Kim's great-grandfather's pipe to an inkstone used by the future president.

A steady stream of pilgrims come to pay their respects - the site receives 1.8 million visitors a year, Chon said - and drink "holy water" from the Kim family well. Kim was born when his country was a Japanese colony, and according to the official narrative, his first written phrase - at the age of four - was "The independence of Korea". Aged only 13, he left Mangyongdae "determined not to return before our Korea became independent", led the armed struggle against Tokyo's forces, and "finally liberated our country in 1945", still aged only 33.

No mention is made of the US' role in Japan's World War II defeat, or that of the Soviet Union in installing him in the North. At a pavilion on the estate, singers from the district women's league in flowing traditional dresses rehearsed anniversary praises for Kim. "In our country, even young

children commemorate the birthday of the president Kim Il-Sung," said Pak Won-Ae, her voice trembling with emotion. "Under the warm love of the president, I have found my truly happy life today."

Ordinary North Koreans usually express only officially sanctioned views when questioned by foreign news organizations. The Kim family is not without its black sheep - Kim Jong-Un's renegade half-brother Jong-Nam was murdered in Malaysia in February, with both Seoul and Kuala Lumpur blaming Pyongyang. The nationwide celebrations for the two men's grandfather are a means of control in themselves as well as a declaration of legitimacy, according to one Asian-based diplomat.

"They do these events because the events themselves are what they do. Pretty much everybody gets to do something for it and probably people quite enjoy it," he said. "It's a sign to the world of everything they wish to project about the regime," he added - apparent military power and a supposedly successful economy despite sanctions, along with "Kim's love of the people and the people's love of Kim". — AFP



North Koreans sit at the back of a truck as it drives along Mirae Scientists Street yesterday in Pyongyang, which just celebrated its late leader Kim Il-Sung's 105th birth anniversary with a military parade. — AP

All articles appearing on these pages are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein. Kuwait Times invites readers to voice their opinions. Please send submissions via email to: opinion@kuwaittimes.net or via snail mail to PO Box 1301 Safat, Kuwait. The editor reserves the right to edit any submission as necessary.

SERENA WILLIAMS HINTS SHE MAY BE PREGNANT



LOS ANGELES: Tennis great Serena Williams hinted yesterday that she's expecting her first child, posting a photo of herself on Snapchat captioned "20 weeks".

MONACO OFFERS DORTMUND A GIFT AS A SHOW OF SOLIDARITY

MONACO: In a show of solidarity before they face each other in the Champions League, Monaco has offered Borussia Dortmund a gift following last week's bus attack in Germany.

PHILANDER SIDELINED WITH GROIN INJURY

LONDON: South Africa all rounder Vernon Philander will miss Sussex's One Day Cup group stage fixtures after suffering a groin injury.



Kuwait national cricket squad

KUWAIT CRICKET TEAM READY FOR ICC WORLD CRICKET LEAGUE DIVISION

KUWAIT: Kuwait Cricket is the official governing body for the game of cricket in Kuwait and is an associate member of the International Cricket Council and a full member of the Asian Cricket Council.

Kuwait National cricket team under the incisive captaincy of Mohammad Khan left for Chiang Mai, Thailand yesterday to participate in the all important ICC World Cricket League Division 1 - Asia which is being organized by the Cricket Association of Thailand under the International Cricket Council.

The tournament will commence on April 22, when Kuwait will take on Qatar at the Royal Chiang Mai Golf Club. The tournament is of great significance to Kuwait Cricket as they have to win the seven-nation event in order to qualify for the Global World Cricket League - Division 5 scheduled to take place in South Africa in September 2017.

The 14 members squad consists of some of the most experienced players who have represented Kuwait at International level in many tournaments organized by ICC and ACC. The squad has been selected by the Kuwait Cricket Board based on fitness, domestic performances and ability to perform on the International platform based on valuable feedbacks from the local coaches.

Apart from Kuwait, the teams vying for the top honors will be host Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Bhutan, Qatar & China. The gruelling event has 50 overs back-to-back matches played at Prem Tinsulanonda International School Ground, Chiangmai Gymkhana and Royal Chiangmai Golf Club. The formidable Kuwait squad is beaming with confidence after an intense three months camp at Doha Cricket Ground and Sulaibiya Cricket Ground respectively.

With its increasingly adept aggression in batting, fast bowlers that are the finest in the region along with proven spinners and tremendous fighting spirit, Kuwait Cricket Board led by the President, Haider Farman is confident of an exciting result. "Winning or losing is part of the game, but when you lose, you have to gather yourself, support each other and make sure you comeback in the next match and win it, this is how champions are made and this is what we expect the Kuwait National team to do, keep up the fighting spirit and play bravely and my best wishes are with all of them".

Vice President, Faisal Al Marzouk, who is the former captain of Kuwait with excellent results under his belt during

his tenure has briefed the squad that "discipline and commitment is going to be the key to success, it doesn't matter what the end result is, all that matters is that you are able to tell yourself at the end of the day that I gave my 100%".

Chairman of the Council, Mahmood Bastaki, also a former captain of the Kuwait Nationals in the Asian Games where the Kuwaitis performed exceptionally well is going to head the delegation and has been an integral part of the ongoing three months camp where he has been actively turning up to each and every single session along with all the practice matches, "We have selected the best 14 based on health, fitness and performance and I am confident that the boys will go out there and play like tigers that they are and they have proved it in their domestic and international performances in the past and as the head of the delegation I will make sure discipline and commitment is at its best in ChiangMai". Director Domestic & Marketing, Sajid Ashraf, a former cricketer for Kuwait at U-17, U-19 and the national team at International level on numerous occasions is going to be managing the team in Thailand. "I would like to thank the Kuwait Cricket board led by the president for all the support to the boys over the past few months and with the kind of facilities, training and motivation we have provided to the entire squad, I believe it's time for the players to shine and give something back to Kuwait as a nation to celebrate inshallah".

Kuwait National Cricket team is sponsored by Reliance Worldwide Catering Co who are the official catering partners for Kuwait Cricket. MGA, the prime sponsor of Kuwait's Domestic Cricket has come forward and announced a cash prize of \$6,500 to be distributed amongst players if the Kuwait team goes on to win the tournament. Al Hafiz is the official print solutions and refreshments partner. Sports Equipment partners include Maahas Sports, Pro Sports, AHS and SAS apparel. Q7 Mobile company and Schneider have also shown their generous support as silver sponsors of the team.

The team has been undergoing vigorous training under the watchful eyes of head coach Ghayour Ahmed & senior coach Tahir Khan and the young outfit has game sense, flair and undoubted skill as a team to get to the top of the points table by the end of the tournament. "The spirit and commitment has been excellent from the boys over the past three months, and the board along with the manage-



Head of Delegation - Mahmoud Bastaki



President Haider Farman



Head Coach - Ghayour Ahmed



Senior Coach - Mohammad Tahir

ment has been supportive as always and we are now just focused on our mission to compete well and to play each and every match to the best of our ability and take each game at a time as we move on in the tournament", said the Head Coach, Ghayour Ahmed.

Muhammad Khan, the captain of defending champions Future Stars of KC Domestic 50 overs league is an extremely intelligent cricketer who bats middle order with responsibility and keeps behind the wickets ever since his representation in the first ACC trophy in 2000. "This is a very big opportunity for me as a captain to lead our beloved country Kuwait and in all honesty, we really have to prove ourselves in Thailand and all the boys strongly feel that we are more than capable of doing it".

Imran Ali who is born in Kuwait has an incredible stats of as many as 113 first class matches under his belt with a proven track record and is going to be the vice captain of the team. Imran will lead the pace bowling attack of Kuwait and his international experience will be of utmost significance to Kuwait's success and progress in the tournament along with all the other members of the squad.

Apart from the 14 members squad, three extremely talented Kuwaiti nationals will also be accompanying the squad for more international experience and exposure and they are Fahad Bastaki, Abdul Rahman Kandari and Abdullah Bastaki.

Kuwait's Top Order: Aamir Javed, Usman Waheed and Muhammad Irfan Mughal
Kuwait's Middle Order: Muhammad Amin, Ali Zaheer, Kashif Shareef and Mohammad Khan.

Kuwait's All Rounders: Adnan Idrees, Muhammad Asghar



Team Manager - Sajid Ashraf



Usman Waheed

and Sajid Kalam
Fast Bowlers and Spinners: Imran Ali, Fiaz Ahmad, Abdullah Khan & Haroon Shahid.

Head of Delegation: Mahmood Bastaki
Team Manager: Sajid Ashraf

Head Coach: Ghayour Ahmed
Senior Coach: Tahir Khan

Tournament Schedule:

22nd April: Kuwait VS Qatar at Royal ChiangMai Golf Club

23rd April: Kuwait VS China at ChiangMai Gymkhana

26th April: Kuwait VS Saudi Arabia at Prem Tinsulanonda International School

28th April: Kuwait VS Bahrain at Royal Chiangmai Golf Club

29th April: Kuwait VS Bhutan at ChiangMai Gymkhana

1st May: Kuwait VS Thailand at ChiangMai Gymkhana

Kuwait Cricket wishes the squad all the very best and all the fans and followers can catch the action live on www.kuwait-cricket.com and or @kuwaitcricketofficial.



Muhammad Khan



Abdul Rehman Al Kandari



Abdullah Bastaki



Abdullah Hussain Ghulam



Adnan Idrees



Ali Zaheer



Fahad Bastaki



Fiaz Ahmad



Haroon Shahid



Aamir Javed



Sajid Kalam



Imran Ali



Kashif Shareef



Muhammad Amin



Muhammad Asghar



Muhammad Irfan

CYCLING

VALVERDE EXTENDS FLECHE WALLONNE DOMINANCE

HUY: On-form Spanish veteran Alejandro Valverde notched up a record fifth win in the Fleche Wallonne yesterday, with Ireland's Dan Martin taking second at the summit finish on the Mur de Huy. The Movistar rider, who turns 37 next week, has made the Ardennes classic his own since 2014, winning four straight editions a decade after claiming

his first success in 2006. Luxembourg's Bob Jungels launched an attack before the Cote de Cherave but was caught on the third and final ascent of the Mur de Huy, leaving the seasoned Valverde to again claim the honours. He saw off Martin by one second at the end of the 204.5 kilometre ride with

Belgian rider Dylan Teuns completing the podium in third. "The Ardennes classics are courses that I love. I feel a bit like I'm at home here," said Valverde.

"I'm in excellent physical condition, I had to take advantage of it. The team worked right from the first kilometre, we had the belief we were going to win. It's a course that suits me very well, it's

made to measure for me." It was a remarkable 10th win of the season for the Spaniard, who vowed to return to Fleche Wallonne next year before throwing down the challenge to his rivals ahead of Sunday's Liege-Bastogne-Liege.

Valverde is a three-time winner (2006, 2008 and 2015) of the event billed as one

of cycling's five "Monument" races. For Martin, it was the second time in four years the Irishman was denied by Valverde and his third podium finish here. "I came second again, it looks like I'll have to wait for Valverde to retire," Martin said after the race. The Quick-Step rider was runner-up to the Spaniard in 2014 and came third a year ago. — AFP



DUESSELDORF: In this Nov. 29, 2015, file photo, Ukraine's Wladimir Klitschko, right, and Britain's Tyson Fury exchange blows during a boxing bout in Duesseldorf, western Germany. Fury won the bout. During Klitschko's rein as champion, every opponent was kept at arm's length. Punches were traded cautiously — probably with good reason, considering what Lamon Brewster did to him back in 2004. Klitschko never won any style points, though he kept winning against a series of opponents who could never seem to crack the code. — AP

BOXING

KLITSCHKO ADMITS WHAT BOXING FANS ALWAYS KNEW: HE WAS BORING

NEW YORK: Wladimir Klitschko was never really embraced by the average boxing fan, despite dominating a lackluster heavyweight division for the better part of a decade. He understands why, even as he looks to change his ways in what could be his last hurrah next week against Anthony Joshua in London. "It's not as boring as it was with me during all those years," Klitschko said. "You can like me or hate me but when one person conquers it all, it is boring. I totally get it."

It wasn't just Klitschko's dominance that soured boxing fans on him. It was the way he fought. Every opponent was kept at arm's length. Punches were traded cautiously — probably with good reason, considering what Lamon Brewster did to him back in 2004.

Klitschko never won any style points, though he kept winning against a series of opponents who could never seem to crack the code. Then Tyson Fury entered the picture, making Klitschko look slow and old in breaking his 11-year winning streak to win his heavyweight titles.

Now Klitschko challenges the unbeaten Joshua for the title once again. He does so as an underdog going into enemy territory, with 90,000 fans expected to be cheering their countryman on a week from Saturday at Wembley Stadium.

NEW FIGHTER

At the age of 41, he says he feels like a new fighter. Even better, he says he feels like really fighting.

"I understand I don't have titles anymore, but in a certain way I feel relieved," Klitschko told The Associated Press in a call from his training camp in Austria. "I feel calmer, more free. Before it was all defending and caution. Now it's different, and I like the feeling that I don't have any pressure."

The fight shapes up as a familiar boxing matchup, with the up-and-coming young slugger from England tested by the aging veteran who has piled up a deep bag of tricks over the years.

Both are Olympic gold medalists (Klitschko in 1996, Joshua in 2012). Both are massive heavyweights with the skills usually found in smaller fighters. Both have the kind of knockout power that may make it a short night in London.

And Klitschko now says it's time to throw caution to the wind. "I have nothing to defend so I need to bounce back and be the hunter," he said. "Joshua has the title and it's something I will need to get. It will be a totally different attitude. I will not hold myself back."

If experience is a key in the fight, Klitschko has a huge advantage against Joshua, who began his amateur career late and has only 18 professional fights.

After regaining a piece of the heavyweight title in 2006, Klitschko made 18 successful title defenses in a row before losing to Fury in a desultory effort. He's won 64 of 68 fights and has fought for the heavyweight title 28 times.

But with the wins came the criticism. Klitschko, who lost the title by knockout to Brewster in 2004, was widely panned in boxing for playing more defense than offense as he won fight after fight against a group of mediocre challengers.

"I think after so many years of defending the title, unifying the title, it built up the pressure," Klitschko said. "At some point, it cramps your style."

Klitschko plans to have his brother, Vitali, in the corner as he usually does for his fights. Vitali Klitschko, now the mayor of Kiev, was a dominant heavyweight champion in his own right, before retiring to take up politics in his native Ukraine.

Meanwhile, he's enjoying the preparations for a fight he never thought he would get after his rematch with Fury was derailed by Fury's emotional problems.

"I think I've been very, very fortunate with having Joshua as my opponent," he said. "For the first time in a long time I'm an underdog. He's either great, or I'm still great. The question marks on both fighters make this a fight for the fans." — AP

ATHLETICS

LONDON MARATHON'S OLDEST RUNNER STILL GOING STRONG AT 83 YEARS

LONDON: His times are getting slower. He says he sometimes gets "very lazy." He aches a lot after his training runs. This particular marathon runner can be excused all of that.

A month before his 84th birthday, Kenneth Jones will be running — or "trotting," as he describes his style — the London Marathon for the 37th straight year on Sunday. He'll be the one wearing tracksuit bottoms, a pair of old running shoes and a wide grin. He'll be the one getting interviewed by the BBC on Tower Bridge during the race. He'll be the one who still expects to be passing many runners in their 20s and 30s in the closing stages.

"At almost 84, to do 26 miles, it's not bad, is it?" Jones says. Jones is the oldest runner in this year's race, at 83 years and 339 days. He is one of 12 so-called "Ever Presents" who have run every single London Marathon since the first in 1981. So what is the secret to Jones' longevity and enthusiasm?

He puts it down to his love of the fresh air and nature, his longstanding passion for Tai Chi, and his wife's vegetable stew. In fact, Nora — who is aged 82 and has been married to Kenneth for 57 years — is his inspiration.

"Some days I get very lazy, so she encour-

ages me," Jones said in a phone interview. "She says, 'You'll never finish if you don't get out there and train.' Some days it can be grim, cold, not very nice, but she gets me out."

Jones lives in Strabane, a town in Northern Ireland near the border to Ireland. He moved there 14 years ago, having previously lived all his life in London, where he worked as a civil servant and first got a passion for running.

That passion exists to this day. On a usual week, he goes out on the country lanes near his home for two runs, getting plenty of well-wishes along the way. But the exercise regime has been ramped up ahead of the London Marathon, with Jones doing a long or short walk or run every day.

He also goes swimming twice a week. "I don't touch the sides or the bottom of the pool for an hour," he said. "Just keep going."

Jones, who was a torch-bearer at the London Olympics in 2012, has run more than 100 marathons since his first in 1966 and his personal best is 2 hours, 41 minutes. Last year, he ran 6:53 hours and is hoping to break the seven-hour mark on Sunday, with the plan to walk the first 2 miles, jog the next 20 miles and hang on at the end. — AP

PHELPS ON POSSIBLE COMEBACK: 'WE'LL SEE IF I GET THAT ITCH'

LOS ANGELES: Michael Phelps hasn't gotten the urge to return to swimming. Not yet anyway.

The winningest athlete in Olympic history is clearly enjoying marriage, fatherhood and a newfound willingness to speak out on contentious issues such as doping.

But, in a tantalizing concession that he hasn't totally closed the door on another comeback, Phelps told The Associated Press that it might be tough to stay away from the pool — especially if he attends the world championships in Budapest, Hungary, in July.

"The true test will be, if I do end up going over to the worlds this summer, do I have that itch again?" Phelps said Tuesday during a telephone interview.

He was already strongly considering his first comeback when he attended the 2013 championships in Barcelona, and there was no doubt he'd be back for his fifth Olympics when that meet ended.

"I was just like: 'This is a joke. How can these guys be swimming this slow?'" recalled Phelps, who was especially motivated by a disappointing performance from the men's relay team. "We'll see if I get that itch again."

For now, he's happy with his post-swimming life, which includes a new sponsorship deal with Colgate in which he is pushing water conservation. While Phelps still travels extensively, tending to various sponsors and business interests, he gets a lot more quality time with wife Nicole and their son, Boomer, who will celebrate his first birthday in a few weeks.

"He has started standing by himself a little bit from time to time," Phelps said. "He's on the move all the time now and loving it. He's killing it. It's so fun to watch him. Every day, it's something different, something special. It's a treat for me to see it face to face. It's wild. It's mind-blowing for Nicole and I. We still look at each other sometimes and go: 'Wow, we have a son. This is our son.'"

If Phelps returns to competitive swimming, the demands of training would surely cut heavily into his family time. That's why, if he tries to predict what the future might hold, it doesn't include a sixth Olympics at Tokyo in 2020.

"I'm having so many amazing experience, so many cool experiences, with my family," he said. "I don't see myself making a comeback. I have no desire right now to do it. I'm in the second chapter of my life. I have a lot of things I now want to accomplish. I'm realizing that more and more. This is a really cool opportunity for me to do some things I was not able to do when I was swimming."

That includes lending his still-considerable



LOS ANGELES: In this March 21, 2017, file photo, Michael Phelps and his wife, Nicole Johnson, smile during an NBA basketball game between the Los Angeles Lakers and the Los Angeles Clippers in Los Angeles. If Phelps returns to competitive swimming, the demands of training would surely cut heavily into his family time. That's why, if he tries to predict what the future might hold, it doesn't include a sixth Olympics at Tokyo in 2020. — AP

clout to issues that he considers important to swimming and the world. In the lead-up to the Rio Games, Phelps talked for the first time about the scourge of doping, saying he wasn't sure if he had ever competed in a totally clean race, even while winning a record 23 gold medals and 28 medals in all. In February, he took it a step further by testifying at a congressional hearing on improving anti-doping measures. He said athletes don't believe in the testing programs that are already in place, and he urged lawmakers to help "ensure the system is fair and reliable."

"Throughout my career, I never spoke out about anything," Phelps conceded. "I stayed in my lane and focused on what I was doing. To get out front and speak out on things that are passionate to me, to take different approaches to things I want to talk about in different walks of life, that's pretty cool and pretty special for me. The opportunities I have are absolutely amazing."

"Hopefully," he added, "I can change some things and make a difference." He's doing a

media blitz this week for his new deal with Colgate and the "Save Water" program, coinciding with Earth Day on Saturday.

"It completely blows my mind to think about how much you can waste when you brush your teeth twice a day," Phelps said. "If you leave the water running while you brush your teeth, it's wasting four to five gallons every time you do that. Every time. If we can get people to stop doing that, think how many millions of people in the world could contribute in just that small way." Phelps said this second retirement, coming after an Olympics in which he won five gold medals and a silver with his new family along for the ride, has enabled him to truly appreciate the enormous accomplishments of his career. He still feels like Rio was the perfect ending. "I never had that moment before to sit back and think about what I had done," Phelps said.

"I'm so stoked that I came back for (the 2016) Olympics. I finished exactly how I wanted." Is he really finished? Stay tuned. — AP

BOSTON MARATHON RETIRES BIB 261 FOR WOMEN'S PIONEER SWITZER

BOSTON: A line stretched the length of the block outside the Boston Marathon store on Boylston Street as runners waited to embroider their finishing times onto the jackets they bought to celebrate their achievement.

Inside, another line of runners was there on Tuesday to celebrate Kathrine Switzer.

A day after she returned to the course on the 50th anniversary of her 1967 landmark run, the first official female entrant saw her bib No. 261 retired by the Boston Athletic Association. It's the first number to be retired, though B.A.A. spokesman Jack Fleming said No. 61 has been held out of circulation in honor of Johnny Kelley, who started the race a record 61 times (and finished 58).

Fans crowded the brief ceremony, hugging and posing afterward for pictures with Switzer, a women's running pioneer. "People have such an appreciation for what running has done for them and how it's changed their lives," said Switzer, who named her 261 Fearless foundation after the bib number that was nearly torn from her back on the marathon course.

"It's beyond me; it's the number now," said Switzer, who ran the race on Monday along with 118 women and "seven intrepid men" who raised money for the charity that uses running to improve women's lives around the world. "We can make it happen through running. The number now stands for all of those things."

Switzer was a 20-year-old student at Syracuse when she entered the men-only Boston Marathon in 1967, using her initials on the registration form. Although Bobbi Gibb was also in the race for the second straight year, one of the unofficial runners known as bandits, race director Jock Semple fumed at the sight of Switzer in an official bib and tried to pull her off the course.

Pictures of that splashed across newspaper front pages, and Switzer somewhat inadvertently became a symbol of the women's movement. "It was the worst thing in my life at the time. It became the best thing in my life," she said Tuesday. "He inspired me to completely not only change my life, but to change millions of women's lives."

HISTORY

Switzer began organizing women's road races that helped persuade the Olympics to add a women's marathon in 1984. In 2011, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame

in Seneca Falls, New York, where they quote Laurel Thatcher Ulrich: "Well-behaved women seldom make history."

"It was a very good thing she wasn't well-behaved on that morning," said Joann Flaminio, the first female president in the 125-year history of the B.A.A. Switzer won the New York Marathon in 1974 and continued to run Boston until 1976 before providing TV commentary for the next 37 years. But this year, at the age of 70, she ran it again, finishing in 4 hours, 44 minutes, 31 seconds — only about 25 minutes slower than when she was 20.

"Fifty years before, it was so freezing," she said. "This time it was wall-to-wall cheering, and people not just congratulating me, but thanking me. It was extremely validating. It was a joyous experience. I was not only pushed by that tailwind, but also buoyed by the crowd."



BOSTON: Kathrine Switzer, middle with fist up, the first official woman entrant in the Boston Marathon 50 years ago, cheers at a news conference, Tuesday, in Boston, where her bib No. 261 was retired in her honor by the Boston Athletic Association. Switzer is surrounded by runners with her 261 Fearless foundation, and at far left is, BAA President Joann Flaminio. — AP



The unique Wings for Life World Run returns on global stage to battle spinal cord injury

Run for Those Who Can't at the Boulevard on May 7

The groundbreaking global charity run, Wings for Life World Run will return on May 7, 2017, with official start locations for the fourth consecutive event spanning six continents, including Kuwait where the run will take place at the Boulevard in Salmiya, in partnership with Boulevard Mall. Thousands of runners using the Wings for Life World Run App worldwide will hit the streets simultaneously, raising money to find a cure for spinal cord injury. Everyone can take part as the moving finish line, aka the Catcher Cars, gives chase and records fall.

The Wings for Life World Run was launched in 2014 in order to raise funds for the Wings for Life Spinal Cord Research Foundation, and more than 300,000 people have participated so far. The international event is a milestone of the sportive calendar for runners at every level, from beginners to dedicated runners and competitors in a regular, everyday wheelchair. Registration for the 2017 race is open on www.wingsforlifeworldrun.com.

Pioneering the concept of a synchronized race where participants across the world run simultaneously, the event introduced the exciting element of the Catcher Car format: at each location, a vehicle gives the runners a 30-minute head start, then chases the field at a predetermined pace as a moving finish line. Whether the Catcher Car rolls by them early or late, participants get a kick out of surpassing personal goals, and the last individual man and woman to get caught are declared Global Champions. In Kuwait, the application will replace the actual car, as the speed of runners will be detected via the app and will therefore

give runners the indication when the car catches them.

In this year's edition, held in May, 1,255,000 kilometers were run, and a staggering 6.6 million euros were raised for Wings for Life's single goal.

"The aim is to raise funds for the treatment of spinal cord injury, ultimately to make spinal cord injury curable. One hundred percent of the money raised from the entry fees goes towards this research," says Colin Jackson, an Olympic medalist from the United Kingdom who broke world records in the 110-meter and 60-meter hurdles and is the Sports Director of the Wings for Life World Run. "It's an incredible investment. The scientists working on this say to me that one day, one day, we shall find a cure."

Until that day arrives, the Wings for Life World Run will continue. Every step taken is a step in the right direction - to find a cure for spinal cord injury.

In Kuwait, runners are to join the Wings for Life World Run from regardless of their age and gender, first by downloading the app run and selecting Kuwait as their location. With a strong

belief in its noble cause, Kuwait's Red Bull athletes Mohammed Burbayea (Jet Ski) and Mansour Al-Safran (BMX) and Mohammed Jaffar (Motocross) are enthusiastically participating in the run this year. "I'm extremely proud to be supporting the spinal cord cure researches and I urge everybody to participate in this race and support this noble cause," expressed Mohammed Burbayea.

"It feels just great to be part of supporting this cause for the second year, or to merely be part of curing spinal cord injuries. I truly wish I could do more to those suffering this disability," said Mansour Al-Safran.

"I always look forward to this event to be part of it; my participation is a direct support for those suffering from spinal cord injuries, and particularly those who could be Motocross champions. I pray for their recovery for all spinal cord patients around the world," said Mohammed Jaffar.

It is time to sign up for the 2017 edition of the Wings for Life World Run on www.wingsforlifeworldrun.com.

About Wings for Life Spinal Cord Research Foundation

Worldwide, millions of people are dependent on a wheelchair after having sustained a spinal cord injury, most often as the result of a traffic accident or a fall. Wings for Life is a not-for-profit spinal cord research foundation with a single mission to find a cure for spinal cord injury. Since 2004, Wings for Life has funded life-changing research projects and clinical trials around the globe. While the cure is

still to be found, steady progress has been made. One hundred percent of the Wings for Life World Run entry fees and funds of this global running event will help work toward Wings for Life's ultimate goal. Every step taken at the Wings for Life World Run on an actual running location or via the app is a step in the right direction - www.wingsforlife.com



JOIN THE WORLD IN RUNNING FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T

BE A PART OF IT!

DOWNLOAD THE APP AND JOIN THE RUN

MAY 7, 2017, 2:00 P.M.

BOULEVARD, SALMIYA

100% OF ALL MONEY RAISED GOES TO SPINAL CORD RESEARCH

BFGoodrich



WINGSFORLIFEWORLDRUN.COM



MBAPPE HELPS FIRE MONACO TO CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMIS

MONACO: Teenage sensation Kylian Mbappe scored again to set Monaco on their way to a 3-1 second-leg victory over Borussia Dortmund yesterday that allowed them to win their Champions League quarter-final 6-3 on aggregate.

Radamel Falcao also netted for the home side in a whirlwind start at the Stade Louis II, and Dortmund were left with too much to do to save the tie. Their skipper Marco Reus pulled a goal back early in the second half but Valere Germain came off the bench to put the seal on a famous win for a brilliant young Monaco side, who go through to the last four for the first time since 2004.

Meanwhile, Dortmund bow out after a tie overshadowed by the bomb attack on the team's bus last week that forced the first leg to be postponed by a day. The Germans lost that match 3-2, their minds elsewhere, but their hopes of turning the tie around in the second leg were not helped when their bus was held up on the way to the Stade Louis II, leading to a five-minute delay to the kick-off.

UEFA blamed "heavy traffic" for the hold-up but, on their official Twitter account, Dortmund said they had been delayed in leaving their hotel by police for around 20 minutes "without justification".

While the appearance of Spanish defender Marc Bartra—who needed surgery for a broken wrist suffered in last week's attack at the stadium was a boost to Dortmund, the delay unsettled Thomas Tuchel's side and their hopes of turning the tie around were effectively ended in a terrible opening 20 minutes. The away defence backed off as Benjamin Mendy advanced and when the full-back's powerful left-foot strike stung the palms of goalkeeper Roman Burki, the 18-year-old Mbappe was on hand to convert the rebound. That strike meant Mbappe, who netted twice in the first leg, became the youngest player ever to reach five goals in the Champions League, beating Real Madrid great Raul by 41 days.

Nuri Sahin cracked a free-kick off a post at the other end and Monaco survived that scare to

increase their lead on 17 minutes at the end of a counter-attack.

The rampaging Mendy's initial cross came back to Thomas Lemar and he held up a ball that was headed home by captain Falcao, the prolific Colombian marking his 50th appearance in European competition with his 45th goal. Like in the first leg, Tuchel's decision to start with three at the back had backfired and he changed things up before the half-hour mark, bringing on Ousmane Dembele for Erik Durm and reverting to a four-man defence. Dortmund now needed to score three times without reply just to force extra time but they did not manage to get one back until three minutes after the restart, Dembele tormenting Mendy on the right before his cutback was lashed home first-time by Reus.

But it was Monaco who had the best chances to score again after that, with Burki tipping over Almaym Touré's looping header and Falcao squandering a fine chance before substitute Germain made sure of their place in the last four. — AFP



MONACO: Dortmund's defender Matthias Ginter (L) and Monaco's Colombian forward Radamel Falcao go for the ball during the UEFA Champions League 2nd leg quarter-final football match AS Monaco v BVB Borussia Dortmund yesterday at the Louis II stadium in Monaco. — AFP



BOSTON: Chicago Bulls forward Jimmy Butler, right, blocks a shot by Boston Celtics guard Isaiah Thomas (4) during the fourth quarter of a first-round NBA playoff basketball game in Boston, Tuesday. — AP

BASKETBALL

BULLS BEAT TOP-SEEDED CELTICS 111-97 TO TAKE 2-0 SERIES LEAD

BOSTON: Jimmy Butler scored 22 points, Rajon Rondo finished one rebound shy of a triple-double and the Chicago Bulls beat the Boston Celtics 111-97 on Tuesday night to take a 2-0 lead in their series against the No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference. Butler added eight rebounds and eight assists. Rondo's night ended with 11 points and 14 assists on a night when all five Bulls starters reached double figures. Dwyane Wade had 22 points, including 16 in the second half, and Robin Lopez added 18 points and eight points. The Bulls host Game 3 on Friday. After a better start by the Celtics, a familiar theme started to take hold as the Bulls took control by again dominating on the offensive glass. Chicago held a 43-38 rebounding edge for the game. Isaiah Thomas scored 20 points for Boston.

RAPTORS 106, BUCKS 100

Kyle Lowry scored 22 points, including the clinching basket with less than 10 seconds to play, and Toronto beat Milwaukee to even the first-round playoff series at 1-1. DeMar DeRozan had 23 points, Serge Ibaka added 13 of his 16 in the second half and Jonas Valanciunas had 10 points and 10 rebounds for the Raptors, who improved to 5-1 when playing Game 2 of a playoff series

on their home court. Game 3 is Thursday night in Milwaukee. Giannis Antetokounmpo had 24 points and 15 rebounds for the Bucks. Khris Middleton scored 20 points and Greg Monroe had 18. Lowry scored just four points in Saturday's Game 1 loss, missing all six of his 3-point attempts. He was much better in Game 2, going 6 for 12, including 2 of 5 from long range. His step back jumper with 8.9 seconds remaining gave Toronto a 104-100 lead.

CLIPPERS 99, JAZZ 91

Blake Griffin led a smash-mouth revival of Lob City with 24 points, DeAndre Jordan had a double-double and Los Angeles beat Utah to even their playoff series at 1-1. Jordan finished with 18 points and 15 rebounds, and Chris Paul added 21 points and 10 assists for the Clippers, who crushed the Jazz in the paint, 60-38. Los Angeles stormed to a 12-point lead in the first quarter, reeling off the kind of dunks that earned the team's Lob City moniker years ago. Jordan's tomahawk jam put an exclamation on the end of the period. Gordon Hayward led the Jazz with 20 points. Joe Johnson, whose floater at the buzzer gave them a two-point win in Game 1, added 13 points off the bench. Game 3 is Friday in Salt Lake City. — AP

EX-NFL STAR AARON HERNANDEZ HANGS HIMSELF IN PRISON CELL

BOSTON: Former NFL star Aaron Hernandez hanged himself yesterday in the prison cell where he was serving a life sentence for murder, taking his life on the same day his ex-teammates on the New England Patriots were set to visit the White House to mark their Super Bowl victory.

His death came less than a week after the 27-year-old athlete was acquitted in a second murder case. Guards found Hernandez just after 3 a.m., Correction Department spokesman Christopher Fallon said. The onetime tight end was taken to a hospital and pronounced dead about an hour later. Hernandez had been housed in a single cell in a general population unit at the maximum-security state prison in Shirley. He tied one end of a bedsheet to a window and tried to jam the cell door to prevent guards from opening it, Fallon said.

Fallon said he was not aware of any suicide note. He said officials had no reason to believe Hernandez might take his life, and if they had had any such worries, he would have been transferred to a mental health unit.

A star at the University of Florida who dropped to the fourth round of the NFL draft because of misbehavior in college, Hernandez was a productive tight end for the Patriots for three seasons.

In his second year, he caught 79 passes for 910 yards and seven touchdowns and helped the team reach the Super Bowl.

In 2012, he signed a five-year, \$40 million contract extension. But when the Patriots returned to the playoffs the next season, Hernandez was unable to even watch on television while he was in prison awaiting trial in one shooting and already a suspect in another.

The team released him in June 2013, shortly after he was arrested in the killing of Odin Lloyd, a semi-professional football player who was dating the sister of Hernandez's fiancée. He was convicted and sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. Last Friday, Hernandez was



MASSACHUSETTS: In this Monday, Dec. 23, 2013, file photo, former New England Patriots NFL football player Aaron Hernandez is led into his court appearance at the Fall River Superior Court in Fall River, Mass. Massachusetts prison officials said Hernandez hanged himself in his cell and was pronounced dead at a hospital early yesterday. — AP

acquitted in the deadly 2012 drive-by shootings of Daniel de Abreu and Safiro Furtado in Boston. Prosecutors said he gunned them down after one of the men accidentally spilled a drink on him in a Boston nightclub.

Earlier in the week, cameras spied Hernandez blowing kisses to the young daughter he fathered with fiancée Shayanna Jenkins.

His death was "a shocking and sad end to a very tragic series of events that has negatively

impacted a number of families," said Bristol County District Attorney Thomas Quinn, who prosecuted Hernandez in the Lloyd case.

Prosecutors suggested Lloyd may have been killed to keep him quiet about the 2012 Boston killings. Hernandez's lawyers did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Patriots had no immediate comment. Authorities opened an investigation into the death. — AP



Group picture of Gulf Bank's team

GULF BANK TAKES HOME THE KUWAIT BANKING CLUB FOOTBALL LEAGUE

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank proudly took home the Kuwait Banking Club Football cup, after an exciting finale against Boubyan Bank, which was held on April 14, at the Sabah Al-Salem Stadium in Al-Arabi Sports Club.

The renowned tournament, which Gulf Bank has won for the sixth time, was held under the patronage of Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, President of the Kuwait Banking Association and was attended by officials from both banks. Mrs Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager Human Resources at Gulf Bank, attended the final game and received the trophy on behalf of the bank's winning team, presented to her by Fadel Al-Mandi, Chairman of the Kuwait

Banking Club.

The Kuwait Banking Club also presented the members of Gulf Bank's soccer team with medals in recognition of their efforts, and honored Mustafa Izzat with a "golden boots" trophy for his outstanding performance throughout the tournament.

Gulf Bank encourages its employees to take part in sport activities to cultivate team spirit and to lead active and healthy lives.

For more information on Gulf Bank, please visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805, log on to www.e-gulfbank.com, Gulf Bank's bilingual website, or visit its social media channels.

SOCCER

WHERE NOW FOR MIRACLE CLUB LEICESTER?

LEICESTER: Their Champions League escapades ended by Atletico Madrid, Leicester City return to a normality they last experienced before their fairytale Premier League title win electrified world football.

"Life as a Leicester fan returns to normal, but it's been bloody brilliant fun," tweeted Gary Lineker, Leicester's most famous ex-player, after Tuesday's quarter-final exit at Atletico's hands. Leicester's Champions League bow, which featured a near-faultless group-stage performance and a stirring last 16 success over Sevilla, gave the club a thrilling feel for life among Europe's elite. But with Leicester currently 12th in the Premier League table, there are no expectations they will return to Europe's top table anytime soon.

"It's been a wonderful experience for everyone at Leicester and they'll remember this for the rest of their lives," said former Foxes striker Tony Cottee on Sky Sports.

"But can I ever see Leicester playing in the Champions League again? Not in my lifetime." In reaching the last eight in their maiden Champions League campaign, Leicester bettered the competition debuts of Manchester United, Arsenal and Manchester City (since the tournament's 1992 rebrand). Their battling display against Atletico, who prevailed 2-1 on aggregate after a 1-1 draw on Tuesday, won them universal praise.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone made a point of saluting each of Leicester's players at the final whistle, while the most commonly used adjective on Wednesday's British sports pages was "brave".

But after the giddy highs of the last 12 months, which fleetingly made the King Power Stadium the epicentre of the sport-

ing universe, Leicester now face an uncertain future. Manager Craig Shakespeare, who has revitalised the team since succeeding the sacked Claudio Ranieri, is out of contract at the end of the season.

Do Leicester's owners, Thai travel retail group King Power, reward him for his work or go in search of a more seasoned coach who might be able to lead the club to the next level? While they lost N'Golo Kante to Chelsea, Leicester managed to keep the rest of their title-winning squad intact, tying many of their players to new contracts.

'DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY'

But having had a tantalising taste of the big time, might players like Riyad Mahrez and Jamie Vardy be tempted to seek pastures new in search of more enduring exposure to European competition?

Clearly defined targets for the months and years ahead are needed to establish what sort of club Leicester hope to become. Two years ago, they were relegation battlers. A year ago, they were Premier League champions.

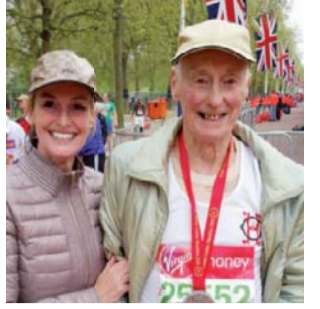
This season, they have enjoyed fine wins over such European nobility as Manchester City, Liverpool, Porto and Sevilla, but sat a point above the relegation zone as recently as two months ago. "I'm not looking too far ahead," Shakespeare said when asked what the future held for Leicester. "You've got to be careful that you don't get too carried away in football. "We have got to concentrate on points in the Premier League, on climbing up the league, so the focus can't be too far away. "The here and now is the important bit and Arsenal, a week on Wednesday, is the next game." — AFP

Sports

Kuwait cricket team ready for ICC World Cricket League Division 15



London Marathon's oldest runner still going strong at 83



THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2017

MURRAY, NADAL IN TOUGH WINS TO START CLAY SEASON Page 18

JUVENTUS HOLD FIRM TO KNOCK OUT BARCELONA



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Lionel Messi fights for the ball with Juventus' Mario Mandzukic, right, during the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Barcelona and Juventus at Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, yesterday. — AP

BARCELONA: Barcelona failed to produce another miraculous Champions League comeback as Juventus held out for a 0-0 draw at the Camp Nou yesterday to reach the semi-finals 3-0 on aggregate.

The Spanish champions had overcome a 4-0 first leg deficit against Paris Saint-Germain in the last 16 with a dramatic 6-1 win back on home soil. But Juventus showed why they boast the best defensive record in the competition as Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Neymar were blunted as the Italians gained revenge for their defeat in the 2015 Champions League final.

Juventus join holders Real Madrid, Atletico Madrid and Monaco in Friday's semi-final draw. Straight from kick-off the visitors seemed determined to learn from the French champions' mistakes. Massimiliano Allegri's men pressed high to prevent Barca dominating possession and enjoyed the better of the early chances.

Former Real Madrid striker Gonzalo Higuain volleyed over from the edge of the area before only a brilliant challenge from Gerard Pique prevented Juan Cuadrado's cross providing Higuain with a tap in. Barca had to wait 19 minutes for their first clear sight of goal as they intricately worked the ball around a packed Juventus box before Messi fired inches wide. Messi then Gianluigi Buffon's palms for the first time on the half hour mark. At the other end, Higuain threatened again when he just couldn't get enough power on Miralem Pjanic's dinked cross to beat Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

Neymar had been Barca's hero in a remarkable finish with two goals and an assist in the final minutes against PSG. Yet, he found it far harder up against friend and former Barca teammate Dani Alves and his frustrations at a perceived lack of protection from referee Bjorn Kuipers spilled over as he was booked just before half-time.

Juventus also had the first big chance of the second half as Cuadrado fired across Ter Stegen but wide of the far post. Ter Stegen was then forced to turn behind another driven effort from the Colombian.

Messi was being forced to come deep in search of possession, but he briefly had Juventus hearts in mouths with a low effort that was deflected inches wide.

Barca boss Luis Enrique forlornly turned to Paco Alcacer from the bench as the hosts played with four forwards for the final half hour.

Messi had another big chance after a rare Buffon handling error from a corner, but unfortunately for Barca it fell on his right foot and the Argentine fired well over. Sergi Roberto was Barca's unlikely hero with the 95th minute goal that sealed the 6-1 win over PSG six weeks ago.

He nearly delivered another important and rare goal, but when the right-back's effort flew inches wide 20 minutes from time so did Barcelona's hopes.

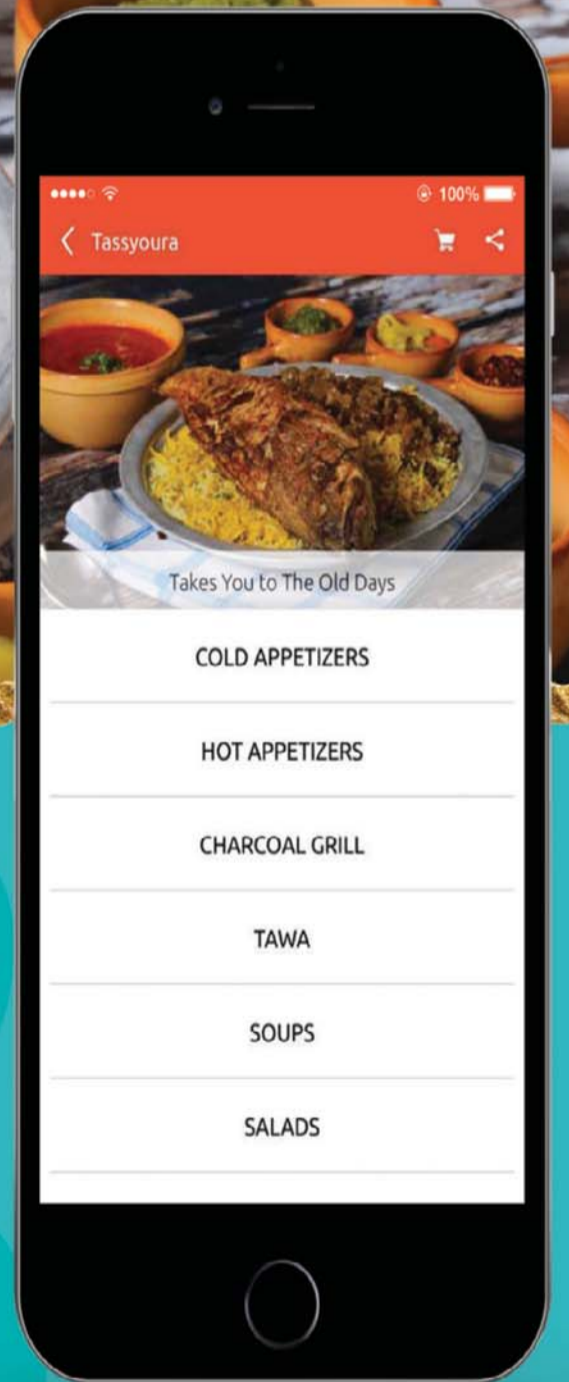
Juventus comfortably saw out the final stages to register their eighth clean sheet in 10 Champions League games this season.

And the only negative news of the night for the Bianconeri was a yellow card for Sami Khedira that will rule the German international out of the first leg of their semi-final. — AFP



FOR DELIVERY ONLY

- Chicken Machbous 3.25 KD
- Meat Machbous 4.25 KD
- Chicken Maqlouba 3.25 KD
- Meat Maqlouba 4.25 KD



ORDER NOW :

Home Delivery & Catering

2290 9999

Tassyourakw





Al Babbain launches the new Infiniti Q30

DEATH BY OVERWORK: JAPAN'S 100-HOUR OVERTIME CAP SPARKS ANGER



MARKAZ'S PROFIT UP 40% DESPITE CHALLENGES

MARKAZ'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

KUWAIT: Fluctuations in oil prices in 2016, have led to concussions in the local and regional financial markets and significant geopolitical events have caused major migrations and resulted in confusion of the free trade. All of this has contributed to pushing the global economy towards a direction that has not been seen over the past decades, represented in political rhetoric and protective policies in some of the most important economic blocs in the world.

For example, after the referendum, which resulted in United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union; the Euro area is currently experiencing more pressure caused by the growing threat of the public results of the elections of 2017 in countries such as France, Germany and Italy. As for the emerging markets, although their performance was better than performance of the developed markets, trading using high values and low liquidity by the markets may lead to fluctuations from time to time.

Following a structurally decline in the oil prices and a range of political and security unrest in the region, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries faced real options for economic reform regarding sustainability of its primarily model-based oil economy. However, these options had implications on welfare of citizens, markets and the system of the Gulf economy in general.

As a result of the economic and financial pressures faced by countries in the region during this year due to the drop in oil prices, Moody's downgraded its outlook for classification of sovereign debt of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as classification of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman, and reviewed classifications for Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE. Reflecting these developments, the liquidity in the capital markets in the region has dropped S&P Pan Arab Index fell by 17.3% in January 2016, but it rectified its losses by the end of the year by an increase of 7.93%.

In response to the financial pressures resulting from decline in oil revenues, the governments of GCC have embarked the application of economic reforms. Most notably was the issuance of government bonds that aim to mitigate the effects of the fiscal deficit in the budgets, welcomed by the market. GCC has announced a plan for the application of value added tax (VAT) in 2018. Most governments of the member states had separately reduced supports of fuel and announced a plan to raise the electricity tariff.

In Kuwait - with the exception of the last quarter of 2016 - there was a decline in investor confidence and poor corporate performance during the year, which led to significantly limited yields of stock markets and reduction of the daily trading volume in a historical manner. As is the case in the rest of the GCC countries, the Kuwaiti stock market has recovered from a loss of 5% in August as per S&P Kuwait Index to close in higher ratio by 4.2% by the end of the year.

Despite the emerging challenges facing the global and regional investment environment, Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz) increased by 40% in net profit for the shareholders in 2016 compared to the same in 2015. Several factors have contributed to improve the Company's profits, including diversity of the Company's total investment, higher operating income, fees and charges income, and flexible investment products of the Company and their adaptability on an ongoing basis along with the market conditions and the rich and huge record of the Company's activity in financial and financing services.

The Company also continued to gain confidence of many experts and specialists in the financial sector, as the Markaz had won last year's award of "Best Asset Manager in Kuwait" and "Best Investment Bank" by EMEA Finance, a magazine specializing in the financial sectors in Europe, Middle East and Africa. As well as, the Markaz in 2016 won the award of "The Most Innovative Investment Bank in the Middle East" and "Best Investment Bank in Kuwait" by Global Finance, a magazine specializing in the global finance and investment sector, issued from New York.

Financial Results for 2016

The Markaz in 2016 has achieved a net profit of KD 4.03 million for the shareholders; ie 8 fils per share, compared to a net profit for shareholders that amounted 2.88 million, ie 6 fils per share in 2015, with a net profit to shareholders rose 40% on an annual basis as a result of high investments of the Company's values and the growth of their income from fees and charges. The aggregated shareholders' equity reached KD 93.28 million by the end of 2016.

The Markaz's total operating income was KD 13.93 million by the end of 2016 with an increase of 24% compared to the total operating income for 2015, which amounted to KD 11.26 million. The Company's income from fees and charges of KD 7.80 million with an increase of 6% compared to 2015. On 19th December 2016, the Markaz paid the entire principal amount and accrued interest to holders of bonds issued in 2011 with a total value of KD 22 million on time. On 26th December 2016, the Markaz continued the issue of bonds with a nominal value of KD 25 million for a period of five years. The new issue was widely welcomed which reflects the confidence enjoyed by the Markaz, as well as the issue of quality and high creditworthiness enjoyed by the Company.

In terms of financial ratios set by the Central Bank of Kuwait, the ratio of the Company's total liabilities to total shareholders' equity stood at 0.36:1, which indicates the low ratio of the Markaz's borrowing than the ratio imposed by the Central Bank of Kuwait at 2:1. Also, the payable liquid assets ratio during this month to total obligation of the Markaz reached 21.21% compared to the minimum imposed by the Central Bank at 10%. These ratios reflect the Company's ability to fulfill its obligations and financial durability thanks to the availability of comfortable liquidity ratio.

Outlook

The Board of Directors recommended a cash dividend at the rate of 6% of the nominal value of the share, i.e.6 fils per share for the shareholders registered in the Company's records on the date of the General Assembly meeting, noting that the Board had recommended a remuneration to the Board members for 2016 amounted to KD 84,000. The Board of Directors confirms

integrity and fairness of all financial data as well as reports related with the Company's activities.

Given the unprecedented economic conditions in the region and the world, we expect that uncertainty in the investment climate will continue in the long term, with the emergence of new challenges in the medium term. Our strengths are still represented in the prudent policies, risk management, and flexibility of our investment operations and products and their ability to adapt to rapidly changing market conditions. To ensure that the Company continues to successfully pass the challenges and to take efficiently advantage of opportunities, we will continue to adopt a set of initiatives that are based on the philosophy of the Markaz to grow steadily and sustainably.

These initiatives include the following: To enhance the financial flexibility by diversifying the Company's long-term funding sources, through a set of common bonds and loans, which will contribute to the extension of the borrowing Company's long-term entitlement and to strengthen its credit rating; To create new sources of fees through the promotion and development of advisory services provided by the company through supporting the public and private sectors regionally and capacity development in the financing of major projects; To work on developing automation systems, which is one of the ongoing initiatives of the Markaz that represent the core of our operations strategy, qualifying us to continue raising the Company's efficiency by reducing our operating costs, improving risk management tools, and intensifying our activities at the lowest cost.

We expect that the turbulent conditions in the GCC stock markets happened in 2016 will continue throughout 2017 as well, with some attractive investment opportunities. We will follow a defensive policy in these markets to keep the total assets under the Company's management, targeting new investment opportunities to create positive returns. This is a strategy that has improved our performance in 2016.

For Global Real Estate, the conditions are still favorable to meet the needs of investors looking

for income-generating, and low-risk investments as well as those looking for low-risk short-term real estate development opportunities. We expect that 2017 will be a positive year, as investments we set out during the past three years will be sold. So this will generate attractive profits for our investors. We also expect to hold the first acquisition of real estate transaction in Europe in the first quarter of 2017, with a preference for Germany and other northern European countries with strong economic fundamentals and positive demographic factors.

In 2017, we expect that merging operations, acquisitions and consulting will attest growth driven by the government projects and projects of partnership between both public and private sectors and medium-sized companies' deals. This which will enable the Markaz reaping the benefits of a strong trademark and the process of building capabilities that have been refined significantly over the past years during the activity of financial and financing services.

We expect that prosperity of fixed income category will continue in 2017 benefiting from the sovereign bond issues and corporate bonds. However, the demand for the "Markaz Fixed Income Fund" would rise with increase in interest rates and expansion of the bond market in the region. Concerning issuing bonds, the Markaz will continue in attracting tasks of consultation, management and distribution of issues as a result of its track record.

In conclusion, we cannot fail to thank the staff of the Markaz for their tireless efforts to maintain the Company's position as one of the most stable, innovative and credible financial institutions in the region, while preserving the work ethics and values that embody one of the pillars of the success of the Markaz as a sustainable financial institution. We would also like to thank all regulatory authorities of the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Capital Markets Authority, the Kuwait Stock Exchange, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as public and private sector institutions and civil society groups for their trust and partnership with the Markaz aiming at achieving the common good.

HOW 'ISLAMIC' BAR BECAME FRENCH ELECTION SCANDAL

SEVRAN: Amar Salhi is still amazed at how his scruffy bar north of Paris sparked an election scandal after it featured on national television in December during a report about Islam and women. In footage shot with hidden cameras and broadcast during prime-time by state media giant France 2, two women activists were seen facing a hostile welcome as they tried to go for a drink in the Jockey Club. "There's no mixing in this bar," one client was heard saying. "You're not in Paris here... it's a different mentality, it's like the village back home (in north Africa)," said another.

One of the women left disgusted, comparing the situation in the multi-ethnic suburb of Sevran to Saudi Arabia. In a matter of hours of the report airing, social media lit up with comments, from members of the far-right National Front but also others across the political spectrum appalled by the sight of women's rights being trampled. In the minds of some, the report appeared to crystallize widespread fears about the impact of immigration or Islamists imposing their rules in a country traumatized by a series of deadly terror attacks since 2015. "Here's the result of decades of submission," wrote National Front vice-president Florian Philippot.

Salhi's business became a punching bag as the Socialist party selected its presidential candidate in January, and has been a feature in speeches and debates ever since. Even left-leaning centrist Emmanuel Macron, who talks admiringly of France's ethnic diversity, was still referring to the need to ensure "women can sit down on a cafe terrace" until recently. His wife, a former school teacher, is said to have been shocked by the report. "Everyone has been attacking me, everyone," sighs Salhi, a welcoming 59-year-old Frenchman of Algerian origin, his voice hoarse and his face lined by lack of sleep.

Things started changing at the beginning of last month when the French media began casting doubt on the original investigation. "It (the report) doesn't represent me at all!" the father-of-two added as several women mingled among his mostly male clientele who come to drink and bet on horse racing. He is still appalled at how his business-and not unemployment, poverty or housing problems-had drawn so much attention ahead of the two-stage election this Sunday and on May 7.

Minority within a minority

France has Europe's biggest Muslim community, estimated at around five million, a

legacy of its colonial history in Africa and its desire for cheap labor in the booming post-war years. Hakim El Karoui, the author of a major study on Muslims in France last September, believes the footage from the Jockey Club misrepresented the bar-but it was so explosive because it rang true. "There are segregated areas in France, segregated because there are only immigrants there... where the cultural norms are of Africa, not of France in the 21st century," he said. He believes successive governments have looked the other way as ghettos built up and an aggressive strain of political Islam took hold, particularly among disaffected young people.

According to a survey that formed part of Karoui's controversial study for the respected Montaigne Institute last year, 28 percent of Muslims in France reject the values of the French republic. "They are in favor of polygamy, they are against secularism, around 70 percent (of this minority) are in favor of women wearing the burka," he says, reeling off the problems. The study called "A French Islam is possible" also showed about half of Muslims in France (46 percent) were integrated fully, while another 25 percent were judged as conservatives somewhere between those two



SEVRAN: French bar owner Amar Salhi serves a customer at his bar in Sevran, northeast of Paris. — AFP

groups. Following three major Islamist-inspired attacks since 2015, most election candidates broadly agree on the need to continue cracking down on radical mosques and being stricter on foreign funding of the religion. But there is much wider, politically charged debate about French national identity and whether to go further with the country's strict secularism, which led to bans on veils and religious symbols in schools as well as the burqa

in public spaces. A separate survey in March by Ipsos showed that only 39 percent of respondents believed "the way Islam is practiced in France is compatible with the values of French society." Yasser Louati, a campaigner against Islamophobia in France, sees the Jockey Club footage as more yet more damaging stereotyping and warns about deepening the stigmatisation experienced by moderate Muslims. — AFP

TRUMP ERA A NEW CHALLENGE FOR THE IMF

WASHINGTON: In its 70-year history, the International Monetary Fund has been no stranger to financial crises and policy disputes but now faces a new challenge: a US administration fundamentally opposed to some of its most important positions. With the Fund's 189 members due to stage a semi-annual meeting in Washington this week, there has been no shortage of divergences with the White House. The Trump administration has vowed to dismantle much of the financial regulation put in place after the 2008 financial crisis. But the Fund warns darkly that excessive deregulation could "increase the likelihood" of another meltdown.

The IMF warns of the economic dangers of climate change. But the Trump administration casts doubt on its existence and seeks to revive its coal industry while threatening to withdraw from the 2015 Paris Agreement on emissions. It is nevertheless the volatile question of global trade that holds the greatest potential for friction between the IMF and its largest shareholder.

Rubbish

Since the US presidential campaigns, the IMF has repeatedly warned about the dangers of "inward-looking" protectionist measures and defended multilateralism. It is hard to see this as anything but an implicit

counter-argument to Trump, who has vowed to raise trade barriers and restrict immigration, who has assailed the free-trade promoted by the World Trade Organization and on Tuesday signed an executive action to promote US firms over foreign ones in federal contract awards. The IMF has so far escaped the president's barbs. Not so in the case of the Commerce Secretary. "Every time we do anything to defend ourselves...they call that protectionism," Wilbur Ross told The Financial Times. "It's rubbish." Washington, meanwhile, is calling on the IMF to pay closer attention to member countries' efforts to affect currency exchange rates and other imbalances, particularly in trade, that harm the United States. "Clearly, there are some in the Trump administration that have expressed enormous skepticism toward multilateralism and if their line prevails, institutions like the IMF will suffer," said Douglas Rediker, a former US representative at the Fund. Such antagonism cuts a stark contrast with the Obama years, when the IMF found a receptive audience at the White House in calling for raising the US minimum wage, combatting income inequality or giving a greater voice to emerging countries. "There will be some tensions but the weight of the US should not deter the IMF from being blunt and frank in its assessment of US policies,"



International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde.

said Nathan Sheets, former under secretary for international affairs at the US Treasury. For the moment, the IMF is holding its anti-protectionist line but also striking a conciliatory tone by hailing the Trump administration's plans to invest in infrastructure and cut corporate taxes. "As a result of an expected US fiscal stimulus and

an expected tax reform, there has been optimism, some unleashing of 'animal spirits,'" IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde said in an interview with several European media outlets published Tuesday.

Just before Trump took office, the IMF had also markedly revised its US growth forecasts upwards, expecting 2.3 percent growth this year. It reaffirmed this prediction in an outlook published Tuesday despite what it said was considerable uncertainty surrounding future US economic policies. The IMF is in reality faced with a delicate balancing act: maintaining its independence without alienating its powerful financial backer.

To be sure, the United States does not have the legal means to cut off the IMF's livelihood. But it can make things difficult for the Fund by slowing the institution's efforts to become more active on social and environmental questions and to give greater weight to China or Russia. "The Trump administration will be able to have some impact on what the Fund agenda is," said Sheets. The thorny case of Greece could also be affected. European governments are calling on the IMF to participate in the current aid plan for Athens but the Fund will have to convince Washington that this is wise. "The administration will be more reluctant to support IMF resources being used in Greece," said Sheets. — AFP

News

in brief

ECB's Coeure castigates isolationism in NY visit

FRANKFURT: Isolationism could leave the most vulnerable members of society even more exposed that they already are, European Central Bank board member Benoit Coeure said yesterday, defending globalization and urging more international cooperation. Speaking in New York, Coeure said openness, collaboration and tolerance have been key for economic growth while protectionism and unilateral deregulation would only yield short-term benefits at the cost of financial stability. With the US administration advocating "America First" protectionist policies, Britain leaving the European Union and several top French presidential candidates calling for an isolationist shift, the status quo is facing its biggest challenge in decades. "As the benefits and legitimacy of international cooperation are being called into question, it's essential to defend the values that underlie global economic governance," Coeure, a top lieutenant to ECB President Mario Draghi said. "In Europe, for example, younger generations have grown up in the belief that the free movement of people, goods, services and capital is an unqualified right," Coeure added.

BMW workers begin strikes over pension dispute in UK

LONDON: Workers at three British plants of German car giant BMW began a 24-hour strike yesterday over proposed changes to pensions, leading to a halt in production of the iconic Mini. Employees belonging to the Unite union picketed at the plants in Cowley and Swindon, in southern England, and in Hams Hall in the centre of the country, with eight more walk-outs promised over the next five weeks. The carmaker said Mini and BMW engine production had stopped for the day as workers protested against the closure of its two final-pension schemes for around 5,000 employees in Britain, according to the Press Association. Going ahead, the value of a worker's pension would be linked to the pension fund's performance in the stock market, and not salary. The carmaker announced the plan last year, and aims to make the change on May 31. "It is very much the last resort for a world-class workforce that takes great pride in making the iconic Mini and world-renowned Rolls-Royce motor cars and one which could have been avoided if BMW's bosses had been willing to negotiate meaningfully," Unite general secretary Len McCluskey said.

Morgan Stanley posts strong 1Q profit; 74%

NEW YORK: Wealth management and investment banking firm Morgan Stanley saw profits rise 74 percent in the first quarter, helped by its well-regarded trading desks. Morgan Stanley's wealth management arm, a part of the firm's business that management has been focusing much of its energy on, also grew profits in the quarter. The New York-based bank said yesterday that it earned \$1.93 billion in the first quarter, or \$1.00 a share, compared with \$1.13 billion, or 55 cents per share, in the same period a year earlier. The results topped analysts' expectations of 89 cents per share, according to FactSet. After Goldman Sachs reported a disappointing first-quarter profit on Tuesday, largely due to lackluster trading, there were concerns that Morgan Stanley might be in a similar position. That turned out not to be the case. Morgan Stanley's institutional securities division, which includes its investment bank and trading operations, had net revenue of \$5.15 billion compared with \$3.71 billion a year earlier.

Restaurant group joins suit against US president Trump

NEW YORK: An organization that advocates for restaurant workers has joined a lawsuit that claims Republican President Donald Trump is violating the Constitution by letting his businesses accept money from foreign governments. Restaurant Opportunities Centers United and a Washington, DC-based luxury hotel event booker were added to the lawsuit filed by the watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. Trump called the lawsuit "without merit, totally without merit" when it was filed in Manhattan federal court in January. A spokeswoman for the Department of Justice's civil division said the government had no comment on Tuesday. The lawsuit claimed that a constitutional clause prohibits Trump from receiving money from foreign governments for hotel stays or office leases. The rewritten lawsuit cites violations it says have resulted since Trump became president, including the leasing of the Trump International Hotel in Washington.

SRI LANKA BATTLES LABOR SHORTAGE AMID MASSIVE CONSTRUCTION BOOM

CONTRACTORS AT HOME DESPERATE FOR WORKERS

COLOMBO: Cheap Sri Lankan labor has built skyscrapers and condos across the Gulf for decades but now contractors at home are desperate for workers as the island nation experiences an unprecedented construction boom. The labor shortage has seen builders offer lavish incentives ranging from cash to vehicles to keep workers from heading overseas, and in some cases, illegally employ foreign tradesmen to man projects.



COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan construction laborer works on a new apartment building at a complex in Colombo. — AFP

Sri Lanka was left with a massive reconstruction task at the end of the civil war in 2009, with large parts of the north left in ruins by decades of fighting. Annual investment in new homes, roads and ports—which has hovered at around 600 billion rupees (\$4 billion) in recent years—is expected to almost triple to \$11.6 billion in 2017. But Sri Lanka needs 400,000 new workers—a two-thirds jump from

existing levels—to keep up with this surge, said Nissanka Wijeratne, the head of the Chamber of Construction Industry.

"We can't get that many overnight and we will have to import. We are now facing a serious labor crisis," he said. Private contractors are going to extreme lengths to stop the flow of tradesmen heading to the Gulf for construction jobs, offering bonuses like motorcycles and cars to laborers who choose to work on projects back home.

The government has taken a different approach and sought to put curbs on migration by raising the minimum wage requirements for workers heading overseas. Under their proposal, Sri Lankans will be barred from going abroad for work unless they can show evidence of future earnings amounting to more than \$400 per month. "We want to discourage those who go abroad for low pay. Some of these workers can get more money if they stay back in Sri Lanka," Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake said.

But it is a risky strategy. Roughly one in ten Sri Lankans work abroad and their remittances are the number-one foreign exchange earner for the island of 21 million. The pool of money flowing home is growing, with Sri Lankans sending \$7.24 billion last year compared with \$6.98 billion in 2015. The push to recruit local workers has also suffered due to a cultural stigma surrounding blue-collar labor, meaning that Sri Lankans living in the country often choose low-paying office jobs over better remunerated opportunities in masonry, carpentry and plumbing. "There is a social perception about construction industry labor, and that is why young people prefer public sector jobs even if they pay much less," Wijeratne said. "It is about social acceptance."

'Illegally employed'

The dearth has spurred some desperate contractors to look offshore themselves—not for work but workers. The government esti-



COLOMBO: Chinese construction team members look on at a new apartment building complex in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo. — AFP

mates roughly 200,000 foreigners are employed illegally in the construction sector. "Foreigners are illegally employed like this because we have a shortage of workers," urban development minister Champika Ranawaka said recently.

"I am proposing that the government come up with a policy on foreign workers to regularize this sector." One company, which declined to be identified, said it was employing foreign workers illegally but noted that many others were doing the same.

Chinese firms, unable to source local labor, have moved armies of construction workers to Sri Lanka to man their mega building projects. Along one of Colombo's main promenades, hundreds of Chinese workers wait every day for transport home after finishing a shift building towers for a new Shangri-La

Hotel. Across the street, their countrymen toil on a vast \$1.4 billion real estate development. Despite unemployment hovering at 4.5 percent at the end of 2016, the crippling labor shortage shows no signs of easing, raising fears that it will put the brakes on economic growth. A large-scale Sri Lankan contractor said he had stopped accepting commissions to build condos because he couldn't find tradesmen to finish the job.

The crisis is stretching beyond the construction sector. Sewage and water works projects are struggling to find laborers and are turning to neighboring India for workers. Sri Lanka's lucrative garment industry is also facing a shortage of 50,000 machine operators, and many companies have relocated to Bangladesh in search of cheap labor, according to industry officials. — AFP

'DEATH BY OVERWORK'

JAPAN'S 100-HOUR OVERTIME CAP SPARKS ANGER

TOKYO: Workaholic Japan has unveiled its first-ever plan to limit overtime, but critics want to give it the boot, saying an "outrageous" 100-hour-a-month cap will do nothing to tackle karoshi, or death from overwork. Tokyo's bid to ease a national health crisis comes after the top executive at advertising giant Dentsu quit late last year in response to the suicide of a young employee who regularly logged more than 100 hours of overtime a month.

The death of Matsuri Takahashi generated nationwide headlines, prompting the government to come up with a solution to punishing work hours blamed for hundreds of deaths due to strokes, heart attacks and suicides every year. A panel headed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has since come up with a plan calling for a maximum of 100 overtime hours a month. The conservative leader called it a "historic step for changing the way people work in Japan" but critics think the plan should be given its marching orders. The Labor Lawyers' Association of Japan has slammed the proposed cap as "extremely inappropriate" and "impossible to support". "It's tantamount to endorsing a limit that could cause overwork deaths," said Association head Ichiro Natsume. Others who have lost loved ones to karoshi agree. "We cannot accept this-it's outrageous," said Emiko Teranishi, who heads a group for relatives of karoshi victims.

"I thought the government was finally going to tackle the issue.... But this has turned out to be (a) step backward rather than a step forward," Teranishi's husband was the manager of a struggling soba noodle restaurant in Kyoto when he committed suicide in the mid-nineties after suffering from depression blamed on long working hours. "My husband worked for a total of 4,000 hours a year without weekends off. At most, he had two days off a month," she said, adding that he was pressured to work more by



TOKYO: A Japanese businessman, called salaryman rubs his eyes as he heads to his office in Tokyo. Workaholic Japan has unveiled its first-ever plan to limit overtime, but critics want to give it the boot, saying an "outrageous" 100-hour-a-month cap will do nothing to tackle karoshi, or death from overwork. — AFP

his recession-hit employer. "He was depressed. He told me he couldn't sleep or eat. I asked him to take a day off every morning, but he still went to work."

'How many more must die?'

The popular post-war image of a Japanese "salaryman" toiling long hours, drinking with the boss and then taking the last train home has evolved over the decades, but many still spend far more time at the workplace than their counterparts in other modern economies. Currently, Japanese firms can make full-time employees work far beyond the usual 40 hours a week during busy periods. Overtime is viewed as a sign of dedication at many firms, even if Japanese workers' productivity lags behind that of their US and European counterparts. And more than one in five Japanese companies have employees whose tendency to overwork puts them at serious risk of dying, according to a government survey published in October.

That survey was part of the nation's first white paper on karoshi. The new rules would limit monthly overtime and

levy penalties on firms that don't comply both firsts in a country notorious for its gruelling work schedule.

The scheme, hammered out by Japan's biggest business lobby Keidanren and the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, known as Rengo, officially says overtime should not exceed 45 hours a month. But the proposed changes to the labour laws, expected to be submitted this year, would let employers make workers put in as many as 100 hours of overtime if the office is busy-a determination made by managers.

Rengo's president Rikio Kozu praised the scheme as "the first step taken toward eliminating karoshi". But it does not do enough to tackle the problem, said Hifumi Okunuki, a unionist and teacher at Sagami Women's University, warning that the death toll was sure to mount unless more stringent action was taken. "It seems we have drifted further away from that day in the future when the word 'karoshi' becomes an historical footnote," she wrote in a Japan Times opinion column. "How many more workers must die before our country wakes up?" — AFP

MIKE PENCE THANKS CORPORATE JAPAN FOR BOOSTING US GROWTH

TOKYO: Vice President Mike Pence yesterday hailed Japanese companies for contributing to US economic prosperity, moving to ease fears over the protectionist agenda of President Donald Trump. Trump has criticized Japanese auto giant Toyota for planning to open a factory in Mexico, part of general broadsides against both foreign and domestic companies as he emphasises job creation in the United States. Last week his administration kept Japan on a Treasury Department watch list covering foreign exchange policies of US trading partners, exerting tacit pressure on Tokyo to buy more American-made goods and services. Such actions, as well as Trump's vow to root out alleged unfair trade practices around the world, have sent shivers through Japan Inc, which has a huge presence in the US. But addressing dozens of Japanese and US business executives on a visit to Tokyo, Pence described his country as "grateful" for Japanese investment and stressed the vibrant business ties between the world's number one and number three economies.

"The trade between us is an important factor to our success," he said, noting that the countries together account for a third of the world economy. "The economic partnership between the US and Japan will continue to grow and flourish," he added. Pence, formerly the governor of the state of Indiana, also lauded Toyota and other big US companies for contributing to US prosperity. "Your businesses create jobs and drive innovation in the United States and in Japan," he said.

In early January, while still president-elect, Trump in a tweet threatened Toyota with tariffs over a planned new vehicle plant in Mexico. Weeks later, Toyota said it would invest \$600 million and create 400 jobs at one of its US plants as part of some \$10 billion investments in the US over the next five years. Sadayuki Sakakibara, chairman of Japan's largest business lobby Keidanren, described a meeting Pence held with business leaders before the speech as "truly meaningful". Sakakibara said he explained to Pence how Japanese corporate activities have contributed to the US economy. "I think (Pence) more than fully understood what we said," Sakakibara told reporters.

On Tuesday the US and Japan kicked off talks aimed at achieving a new economic relationship-in line with Trump's vow to focus on bilateral trade deals rather than multilateral ones that he says have damaged the US. Pence and the Japanese Deputy Prime Minister led the talks and planned to meet again before the end of the year to assess progress. The US vice president said they could eventually result in a bilateral trade deal, though offered no specific time frame. Trump's decision to scrap the ambitious 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) deal championed by former president Barack Obama was a blow to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who expended substantial political capital to get the accord passed at home. — AFP

10 DAYS LEFT

KD 250,000

TO ENTER THE AL DANAH DRAW

The Largest Prize Linked to a Bank Account January 2017

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECORD HOLDER

e-gulfbank.com • 1 805 805

بنك الخليج GULF BANK

A CHANCE TO WIN KD 250,000 FROM GULF BANK'S AL-DANAH

DEPOSIT NOW, ONLY 9 DAYS LEFT UNTIL THE CLOSING DATE

KUWAIT: Only 10 days are left until the closing date for Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account's second quarterly payout in the world. The draw will be held on June 29, however, the last day to deposit and enter the draw is on Thursday, April 30. Gulf Bank invites its Al-Danah account holders to deposit today to increase their chances of winning the draw. The Bank also invites both Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis to open an Al-Danah account today and deposit in order to qualify for the next draw prize of KD 250,000.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 2017 draw line-up includes daily draws, quarterly draws, and the final and biggest draw of the year, which is the annual 1 Million Kuwaiti Dinars draw. For the daily draws, two winners are awarded with KD 1,000 each, for every working day in the week. The quarterly draws each include a large cash prize with the prize amount increasing every quarter. The quarterly prizes are as following: KD200,000 in the first quarter - which took place on March 30;

KD250,000 in the second quarter to take place on June 29; KD 500,000 in the third quarter, which will take place on September 28, followed by the largest yearly prize for 1 Million Kuwaiti Dinars, which will take place on January 11, 2018. In fact, our annual prize of KD

1 Million set a Guinness World Records achievement as the 'largest prize linked to a bank account payout in the world'. Overall, Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is the best because: Kuwait's single largest yearly cash prize of KD 1 Million in the world, according to Guinness World Records; Kuwait's biggest quarterly cash prizes, up to KD 500,000; Two winners of KD 1,000 every working day; Offers the most opportunities to win; Only account that transfers your chances to win from the previous year onto the following year.

Al-Danah also offers a number of unique services including: the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card which helps account holders deposit their money at their convenience; as well as the Al-Danah calculator to help customers calculate their chances of becoming an Al-Danah winner. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers who open an account and/ or deposit more will enter the draw within two days.

To take part in the Al-Danah 2017 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must have an Al-Danah account containing at least KD 200; customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, transfer on line for assistance and guidance.

HSBC REFUSES TO OPEN ACCOUNT FOR AI WEIWEI

HONG KONG: Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei said yesterday global banking giant HSBC Holdings Plc refused to open a personal bank account for him in Hong Kong for what he assumed were political reasons, a conjecture the bank dismissed. The burly, bearded artist, who was in the financial hub for three days to visit his exhibition, said he did not try to open accounts at other banks, but that he had no difficulty in the past when he opened a bank account in Beijing. Ai, arguably one of the world's most high-profile contemporary artists and a well-known critic of China, said an HSBC staff member told him he had provided all the necessary documents, but still rejected his application.

"I was surprised, I asked him why, he said it was for commercial reasons," Ai said. "He said you just can't open an account here ... It's very hard to imagine it's not due to a political reason. But I have no evidence," he added. Confidentiality concerns did not allow HSBC to discuss individual cases, the bank said in a written reply to Reuters. "However, HSBC does not decline to open bank accounts because of individuals' political views," it said. HSBC is among many banks in the region to have stepped up oversight of bank accounts to help guard against money laundering and terrorist financing.

Hong Kong leader-elect Carrie Lam has previously acknowledged the difficulties some foreigners and overseas businesses face in opening bank accounts there. Ai described his dealings with HSBC on social media, prompting criticism of the bank and renewed debate over whether big cor-



Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei

porations in Hong Kong are wary of offending China. The former British colony, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997, has experienced a tumultuous few years, with pro-democracy protests quelled in what many residents view as creeping interference by Beijing in its affairs.

In 2015, toymaker Lego refused a bulk order of toy bricks by the artist because it would not endorse their use in projects with "a political agenda." It later backed down, saying it would no

longer ask customers their plans for the product. Ai, who helped design Beijing's "Bird's Nest" stadium for the 2008 Olympics, lost favour with the Chinese government when he began campaigning for justice for children crushed to death by shoddily constructed buildings in an earthquake that year. Since leaving China in the summer of 2015, the prominent advocate for human rights has been based largely in the German capital of Berlin. —Reuters

AKZONOBEL PAINTS STRATEGY TO THWART US TAKEOVER BID

THE HAGUE: The world's leading paintmaker AkzoNobel yesterday unveiled plans to shed its specialist chemicals division as it fends off a hostile US takeover bid, buoyed by stronger-than-expected first quarter profits. "We will create two focused and high-performance businesses," chief executive Ton Buchner said, valuing the chemicals division at between eight and 12 billion euros (\$8.5 billion to \$12.8 billion). "Both businesses have skills and capabilities to stand on their own and to deliver a strong cash generation in the future."

The Amsterdam-based group also reported net profit of 240 million euros (\$257 million) in the period from January to March, relatively stable from a year earlier, but ahead of analysts' expectations. Sales of such household brand names as Dulux and Trimet were up 7.0 percent to 3.7 billion euros, the company said in a statement. The move to spin off the chemicals division within 12 months either via a sale or a separate listing comes after AkzoNobel rejected two bids from US rival

PPG last month-one which would have valued the whole company at 22.4 billion euros.

The bids did not reflect the company's potential long-term value, and would "lead to uncertainty for the thousands of employees around the world," AkzoNobel said at the time. AkzoNobel's paint-making business is seen as a broad barometer of underlying global economic activity. But the company has been under pressure in recent weeks amid the increasingly hostile bid by the Pittsburgh-based paints and coatings business PPG. Most of the profits from the spin-off of the chemicals will be returned to shareholders, Buchner vowed. Some 1.6 billion euros will also be paid out to shareholders in 2017, which includes a special one-billion-euro dividend to be paid in November. But the Dutch daily Volkskrant warned that "in order to make the chemicals division more attractive, AkzoNobel will whatever happens have to dismiss workers." The rejection of PPG's offer led to shareholders last week calling

for an extraordinary meeting to dismiss the chairman of the board, Antony Burgmans.

But AkzoNobel said the board still "strongly supports" Burgmans, adding his removal "would be irresponsible, disproportionate, damaging and not in the best interest of the company, its shareholders and other stakeholders." Fighting back, PPG sent an open letter to shareholders on Monday seeking to win them over, saying it had "a long and steadfast history of taking consistent strategic actions to grow our business". It said it invested "more annually in research and development than any other paint and coatings company".

A merger between the two companies would prove "a unique and attractive opportunity for the future," it argued. Formed in 1994 in a merger between Akzo and Nobel, the group employs 46,000 people in 80 countries. It says it makes a range of products including "chemicals which are essential ingredients in everything from ice cream to asphalt, soap to soap, and plastics to paper". —AFP

IVANKA'S BIZ PROSPERS AS POLITICS MIXES WITH BUSINESS

SHANGHAI: Since her father was elected president of the United States, global sales of Ivanka Trump merchandise have surged and the company has applied for at least nine new trademarks in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Canada and the US. The commercial engine of the first daughter's brand is stronger than ever even as she builds a new political career from her West Wing office. Sales hit record levels in 2017, despite boycotts and several stores limiting her merchandise.

Distribution is growing

US imports, almost all from China, shot up an estimated 166 percent last year. The brand, which Ivanka Trump no longer manages but still owns, says distribution is growing. It has launched new active wear and affordable jewelry lines, and is working to expand its global intellectual property footprint. In addition to applying for the new trademarks, Ivanka Trump Marks LLC has won provisional approval from the Chinese government for at least five since the inauguration.



Ivanka Trump wears an outfit she designed as she speaks to the audience prior to the presentation of her Ready-To-Wear Collection at the Lord & Taylor flagship store in New York. — AP

The commercial currents of President Donald Trump's White House are unprecedented in modern American politics, ethics lawyers say. They have created an unfamiliar landscape riven with ethical pitfalls, and forced consumers and retailers to wrestle with the unlikely passions now inspired by Ivanka Trump's mid-market collection of ruffled blouses, shifts and wedges.

Using the prestige of government service to build a brand is not illegal. But criminal conflict-of-interest law prohibits federal officials, like Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner, from participating in government matters that could impact their own financial interest or that of their spouses. Some argue that the more her business broadens its scope, the more it threatens to encroach on the ability of two trusted advisers to deliver credible counsel to the president on core issues like trade, intellectual property and the value of Chinese currency. "Put the business on hold and stop trying to get trademarks

while you're in government," advises Richard Painter, who served as chief White House ethics lawyer under George W Bush.

New trademarks

In fact, on April 6, Ivanka Trump's company won provisional approval from the Chinese government for three new trademarks, giving it monopoly rights to sell Ivanka brand jewelry, bags and spa services in the world's second-largest economy. That night, the first daughter and her husband sat next to the president of China and his wife for a steak and Dover sole dinner at Mar-a-Lago. The scenario underscores how difficult it is for the president's daughter, to separate business from politics in her new position at the White House.

In a statement Tuesday, a spokesperson for the Ivanka Trump brand said that all 2017 Chinese trademarks were defensive, filed to prevent counterfeiters or squatters from using her name. To address ethical concerns, Ivanka Trump has shifted the brand's assets to a family-run trust valued at more than \$50 million and pledged to recuse herself from issues that present conflicts. She is also no longer running her design business and has given day-to-day responsibility to Abigail Klem, president of the brand.

China ties

Meanwhile, her husband has taken steps to distance himself from his sprawling New York real estate business, divesting some of his business interests including his stake in a major Fifth Avenue skyscraper. "Ivanka will not weigh in on business strategy, marketing issues or the commercial terms of agreements," her attorney, Jamie Gorelick, said in a statement. "She has retained authority to direct the trustees to terminate agreements that she determines create a conflict of interest or the appearance of one." China, however, remains a nagging concern. "Ivanka has so many China ties and conflicts, yet she and Jared appear deeply involved in China contacts and policy. I would never have allowed it," said Norman Eisen, who served as chief White House ethics lawyer under President Barack Obama.

"For their own sake, and the country's, Ivanka and Jared should consider stepping away from China matters." Instead, the first daughter and her husband have emerged as prominent interlocutors with China, where they have both had significant business ties. Last year, Kushner pursued hundreds of millions of dollars in real estate investments from Anbang Insurance Group, a financial conglomerate with close ties to the Chinese state. After media reports about the deal, talks were called off.

Publicly, Ivanka Trump has taken a gracious, charming approach toward Beijing. During the Mar-a-Lago meetings, her daughter, 5-year-old Arabella, stood in a gilded room and sang a traditional Chinese song, in Mandarin, for China's president, Xi Jinping. The video, which was lavishly praised by Chinese state media, played over 2.2 million times on China's popular news portal qq.com. The week of the summit, 3.4 tons of Ivanka Trump handbags, wallets and blouses arrived in the US from Hong Kong and Shanghai. US imports of her merchandise grew an estimated 40 percent in the first quarter of this year, according to



SAN JUAN: Photo shows shoes including Ivanka Trump brand shoes being sold at the Macy's store in Plaza las Americas in San Juan, Puerto Rico. — AP

Panjiva Inc, which maintains and analyzes global shipping records.

Gorelick, Ivanka Trump's attorney, said that she and her husband would steer clear of specific areas that could impact her business, or be seen as conflicts of interest, but are under no legal obligation to step back from huge swaths of policy, like trade with China. Under the rules, Trump would recuse herself from conversations about duties on clothing imported from China, Gorelick said, but not broad foreign policy. "In between, you have to assess it case-by-case," she said. Trademarks can be signs of corporate ambition, though many countries - such as China, where "trademark squatting" is rampant - also allow for defensive filings to prevent copycats from using a brand.

Ethical implications

Trademarks pose ethical, and possibly legal, implications for government employees because they are granted by foreign states and confer the monopoly right to sell branded products in a particular country - an entitlement that can be enormously valuable. Intellectual property lawyers say trademarks are also a crucial prerequisite for cutting licensing deals, which form the basis of both Ivanka Trump's and Donald Trump's global business strategies.

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, a government watchdog group, on Tuesday expanded the scope of its federal lawsuit against President Trump to include trademark approvals from China in its list of alleged constitutional violations. The emoluments clause of the US Constitution prohibits federal officials from accepting anything of value from foreign governments without congressional approval.

As a White House employee, Ivanka Trump is also subject to the same rule. "She needs to be careful," said Painter, the former Bush administration lawyer, who is advising on the lawsuit.

"If her trademarks are anything but routine they also would be prohibited emoluments from the Chinese government." The

president has dismissed the suit as "totally without merit." In a statement, Klem said the trademarks are business as usual, and in some regions to prevent "trademark infringement." "We have recently seen a surge in trademark filings by unrelated third parties trying to capitalize on the name and it is our responsibility to diligently protect our trademark," Klem said.

Today, Ivanka Trump Marks LLC has 16 registered trademarks in China and more than 30 pending applications, along with at least five marks granted preliminary approval since the inauguration, according to China's Trademark Office database and gazette. Database filings are not immediately updated and may lag actual approvals. Altogether, they cover a wide range of goods and services, including cosmetics, jewelry, leather handbags, luggage, clothes, shoes, retail, spa and beauty services. There is no sign the recent approvals were particularly swift. China's Trademark Office did not respond to a request for comment.

Globally, the company has more than 180 pending and registered trademarks in countries including Canada, India, Japan, Israel, Mexico, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, as well as the US and Europe, public records show. In December, the company applied for five trademarks, covering handbags and wallets in Puerto Rico, and lingerie and other clothes in the US. After the inauguration, the company filed four more applications, for branded clothing and shoes in the Philippines, and perfume and other items in Canada.

Ivanka Trump did not sign off on the new trademark applications, her brand said in a statement, adding that they are "not necessarily an indication that the brand is planning to launch a category or a store in a specific territory." Whatever the future plans, right now sales are growing - helped, some argue, by the glow of Ivanka Trump's political rise. The G-III Apparel Group Ltd, which makes Ivanka Trump clothes, said net sales for the collection increased by \$17.9 million during the year that ended Jan 31.

Go buy Ivanka's stuff

The overall brand itself says revenues rose 21 percent last year, with early February seeing some of the "best performance ever," according to a statement by Klem. Because it is privately held, the brand does not have to declare its earnings or where revenues come from. The actual corporate structure of Trump's retail business remains opaque.

Kushner's financial disclosure form lists two dozen corporate entities that appear directly related to his wife's brand. Trump herself has yet to file a disclosure. Data from Lyst, a massive fashion e-commerce platform, indicates some of this growth coincided with specific political events. The number of Ivanka Trump items sold through Lyst was 46 percent higher the month her father was elected president than in November 2015.

Sales spiked 771 percent in February over the same month last year, after White House counselor Kellyanne Conway exhorted Fox viewers to "Go buy Ivanka's stuff." Conway was later reprimanded. The bounce appears somewhat sustained. March sales on Lyst were up 262 percent over the same period last year. "You can't separate Ivanka from her role in life and from her business," said Allen Adamson, founder of BrandSimpleConsulting. "Her celebrity status is now not only being fueled by her wealth and her family connection, but by her huge role in the White House. All that buzz is hardwired to her products."

That, he added, is a competitive advantage other brands just can't match - though it does come with risk. Things could easily cut the other way for the first daughter. Ashley King, 28 of Calabasas, California, bought Ivanka Trump black flats and a cardigan several years ago. But King, who voted for Hillary Clinton, said she believes Trump's role in the White House represents a conflict of interest. "This is bothering me more and more," she said. As for the Ivanka Trump items in her closet, she said, "I will be donating them." — AP

FASTTELCO ORGANIZES FRIENDLY GATHERING FOR STAFF

KUWAIT: FASTtelco, Kuwait's leading internet service provider, held a breakfast gathering in Jumeirah Hotel for its employees and upper management earlier this week. The friendly get-together was headed by CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Thani, who lauded the employees of FASTtelco for their hard work and dedication throughout the past months, culminating in the release of several customer-centric products and services that target different customers' needs.

The CEO also reiterated the company's commitment to developing its human resources, who are considered the main drive behind any company's success, adding that in light of current international trends, the telecom and digital services sector plays a vital role in the lives of many people from different sectors. FASTtelco recently launched new fixed high-speed internet plans on a postpaid basis, breaking away from the limitations of traditional prepaid yearly payment. Starting from KD 11 for an unlimited



capacity of internet, the plans range in speed from 10 Mbps to 100 Mbps, making use of the increase number of areas covered with fiber optics. Customers

who opt for the fixed internet service will enjoy an unparalleled reliable speed of internet at their home, with flexible payment mode on a monthly basis. All plans

offer an unlimited capacity of internet with no daily or monthly cap.

FASTtelco also launched a fully equipped state-of-the-art data center. The announcement comes to further reiterate FASTtelco's commitment to being one of the leading companies in information technology solutions, and the company of choice for prospective clients searching for ICT solutions, catering especially for the needs of corporate and businesses. FASTtelco will provide a suite of managed hosting services tailor-made to fit corporate and business needs.

These services are ideal for corporate and businesses looking to better manage their data, platforms and applications. The new data center provides end-to-end IT solutions to customers in various sectors including financial, healthcare, media, e-commerce, educational and governmental. The center is fully equipped to deliver an exceptional experience in services and solutions like managed CPE, cloud services, NOC and

operations, data center consultancy, and much more.

This is especially important today, where businesses are faced with growing challenges to respond efficiently to new digital trends in IT, security and control. FASTtelco strives to be the trustworthy choice among its growing customers as it continually transforms its services to meet the needs of the digital world, ensuring peace of mind with end-to-end solutions and 24/7 NOC, in addition to opportunities for scalability and maximum return of investment.

FASTtelco recently announced its new identity earlier this month, adopting a refreshed look with vibrant colors and a new design. The move comes to change the ISP's market by introducing innovative products and plans that fulfill customers' growing needs through technology. FASTtelco was recently acquired by Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo Group, in a move to bolster the telecom service provider's presence in the Kuwaiti market.



FRANCE: A picture taken in Cournon-d'Auvergne on the outskirts of Clermont-Ferrand, shows an hologram of French presidential election candidate for the far-left coalition La France insoumise Jean-Luc Melenchon gesturing during a campaign meeting. —AFP

FRANCE'S MELENCHON RETURNS WITH CAMPAIGNING HOLOGRAM

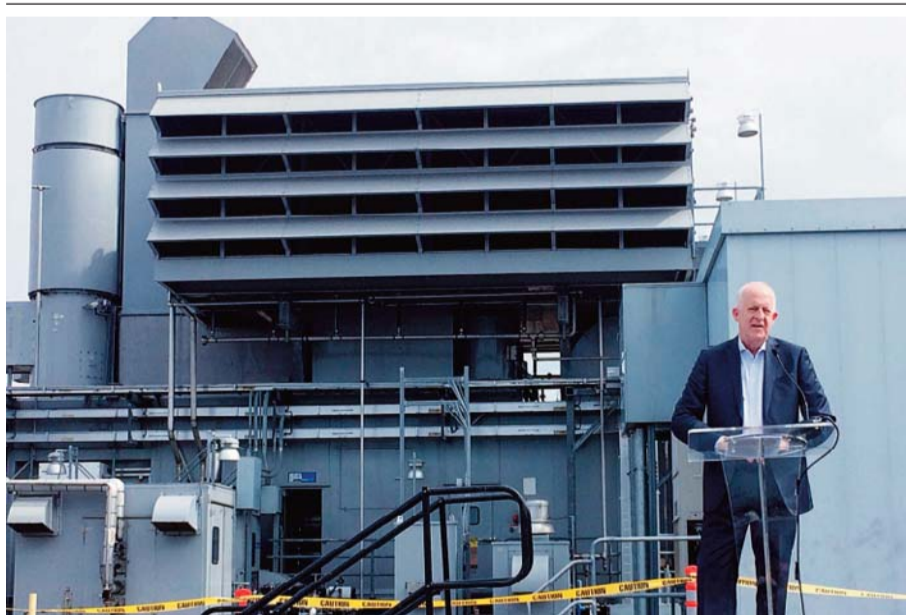
DIJON, France: French presidential candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon made a return to hologram campaigning Tuesday, beaming himself and his far-left message to six cities as far away as the overseas territory of Reunion. For his last major rally before Sunday's nail biting first-round vote, the resurgent left-winger killed seven birds with one stone by transmitting his onstage appearance in Dijon to crowds in Nancy, Grenoble, Montpellier, Clermont-Ferrand, Nantes and Le Port on the Indian Ocean island of Reunion.

The Communist-backed firebrand has made a surprise breakthrough in recent weeks, with polls suggesting he has a shot at a place in the May 7 run-off as the race has dramatically tightened. Far-right leader Marine Le Pen and centrist Emmanuel Macron have led for weeks, but polls now show a four-way race with the two frontrunners tied on 22-23 percent, conservative Francois Fillon on around 21 percent, and Melenchon surging as high as 20 percent.

Melenchon and his holograms used

Tuesday's rallies to hammer home his program, which includes huge spending increases and a pledge to renegotiate all European Union treaties, to crowds totaling 35,000 people across France, his team said. "The people's program is about being able to live off your work with dignity, to be looked after when you're sick, to be able to stop working when it's time," he said. And he took a swing at the super-rich, deadpanning: "Being a billionaire does nothing for personal happiness. It's just an accumulation of worries, which we'd want to take away."

Melenchon's program promises greater job protection and a 100-percent tax on personal earnings over and above 400,000 euros (\$430,000). He denied that his euro skeptic stance amounted to wanting to leave the bloc, saying: "Don't believe what they tell you." A tech-savvy campaigner with more than a million Twitter followers, Melenchon turned heads in February when he first made simultaneous hologram appearances at campaign rallies, a first for a French presidential campaign. —AFP



CALIFORNIA: Ron Nichols President of Southern California Edison (SCE), talks during a news conference at the SCE Center Power Plant in Norwalk, California. —AP

CALIFORNIA UTILITY LAUNCHES FIRST HYBRID POWER SYSTEMS

NORWALK: A California utility has launched unique systems combining a hybrid battery and gas turbine to produce and store electricity for use during hot summer months and other times when power demand soars. The new Hybrid Electric Gas Turbines are the first of their kind in the world, officials with Southern California Edison and manufacturer General Electric said during an event Monday near Los Angeles. The new systems will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution by 60 percent and save millions of gallons of cooling water annually, Edison said.

There were no numbers on how much consumers might save. But officials said increased reliability and the reduced environmental impact will lead to significant cost reductions for the utility, which will be passed on to customers in the form of low-

er bills. Edison President Ron Nichols said the twin systems that went online March 30 operate somewhat like a hybrid car - drawing first on the battery, then switching over to the gas turbine if power demands spike.

Energy output is combined between turbines and new 10-megawatt lithium-ion battery storage units. As a result, the systems do not burn fuel when they're on stand-by, significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. And they can be turned on immediately to push power into the grid to compensate for outages or increased demand. "The battery is there at the flick of a switch," Nichols said. The systems are running in Norwalk and Rancho Cucamonga at plants built to provide extra juice following an especially hot summer that strained the grid. —AP

FACEBOOK WANTS TO AUGMENT YOUR REALITY

COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGES INTO REAL-WORLD SURROUNDINGS

SAN JOSE: Facebook wants you to sit in your bedroom wearing a headset and take a virtual vacation with faraway friends and family. Or use your smartphone's camera to spruce up your dinky apartment, at least virtually. The promise of augmented and virtual reality was a big focus of Facebook's annual conference for developers on Tuesday. CEO Mark Zuckerberg kicked off the gathering of programmers and other tech folks by talking about augmented reality tools he envisions on Facebook. Augmented reality involves the overlay of computer-generated images into real-world surroundings. Zuckerberg said new phone-based applications might let you create a three-dimensional scene from a single two-dimensional photo or splatter the walls of your house with colorful digital art. (You'd see the digital additions by looking "through" your phone at the augmented physical world.)

Making chores more interesting

Facebook executives stressed that the technology is still in its early stages, and that the "journey to the future of augmented reality is just 1 percent finished," as Deb Liu, vice president of platform and marketplaces, put it. Zuckerberg envisions the marriage of augmented reality and Facebook's camera feature enabling people to make even mundane chores, like doing the dishes, look entertaining with digital effects. Of course, it could also result in people staring into their smartphones even more intently as they marvel at an alternate reality instead of their actual surroundings. "Over time, I think this is going to be a really important technology that changes how we use our phones," Zuckerberg predicted. Facebook also launched a virtual world, called Facebook Spaces, designed to let users of its Oculus Rift VR headset hang out with avatar versions of their friends in a virtual world. It's the first time the company has connected the Rift to its social network in a meaningful way, though it's a development Zuckerberg hinted at when the company bought Oculus back in 2014 for \$2 billion.

Coming your way... Eventually

While the new tools and features are impressive, analyst Jan Dawson of Jackdaw Research cautioned that "most of them won't be in users' hands anytime soon." That's especially true for the Spaces app, since relatively few of Facebook's 1.9 billion members are using



CALIFORNIA: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg speaks at his company's annual F8 developer conference in San Jose, Calif. —AP

Oculus's VR headset, which sells for about \$500 and requires an expensive computer to make it work. But Facebook could still have the edge on rivals such as Snapchat, which also launched some augmented reality features on Tuesday, likely to coincide with Facebook's news.

"Facebook has the resources to move fast in this area and the audience to spread those features much more widely than Snapchat," Dawson wrote in a brief research note. Snap representatives did not immediately respond to an email for comment on Tuesday afternoon. Facebook's focus on smartphones over high-tech glasses or headsets makes sense given how familiar they are, said Gartner analyst Brian Blau. "People already have cameras and are used to having fun and being creative with them," he said.

"This will give people a chance to experience augmented reality in a way that isn't so scary or off-putting." Until the past year or so, it seemed like it would be at least another decade before augmented reality would have a chance to become a widely used technology, said Ficus Kirkpatrick, Facebook's director of engineering.

But advances in image and object recognition, along with the ubiquity of smartphone cameras, "has put us on the course to bring augmented reality," Kirkpatrick said in an interview.

Chatting with companies

Facebook also announced a bevy of updates to Messenger, its increasingly independent messaging app. Messenger head David Marcus claims the app has become the de facto "white pages" of messaging, since people can find and chat with friends without knowing their phone number. Now, Messenger wants to do the same for businesses, creating a "yellow pages" of sorts that let companies communicate with their customers. Messenger will also let people chat with outside businesses as a group. That would, for instance, allow groups of friends to share Spotify playlists or to make a restaurant reservation through OpenTable that keeps everyone on the same page. The idea is simplify what might otherwise require a flurry of texts and sharing of links. —AP

ONLY 5% OF LARGE COMPANIES TO MEET IT REQUIREMENTS OF THE NEW DIGITAL BUSINESS

DUBAI: Dell EMC announced the results of a new study conducted by Enterprise Strategy Group (ESG), which revealed that a majority of senior IT leaders and decision-making managers of large companies surveyed around the world indicate their organizations have yet to fully embrace the aspects of IT transformation needed to remain competitive. While there is a clear imperative for companies to transform their legacy IT, digital transformation is becoming the driving force to making IT transformation a top priority.

However the ESG 2017 IT Transformation Maturity Curve study commissioned by Dell EMC shows 95 percent of survey respondents indicate their organizations are at risk of falling behind a smaller group of industry peers that are transforming their IT infrastructures, processes and delivery methods to accelerate their goals of becoming digital businesses. Many organizations still measure application cycle times in months, if not years; have isolated infrastructures; and continue to grapple with rigid legacy architectures - all barriers to undertaking a successful digital transformation.

"These findings mirror how the vast majority of customers are telling us they need to optimize their existing infrastructures to take advantage of digital-age opportunities," said Mohammed Amin, Senior Vice President, Middle East, Turkey and Africa at Dell EMC. "However, the

research shows that most respondents are falling behind a small and elite set of competitors who have cracked the IT Transformation code, and they're competing more vigorously because of it. As organizations progress in their IT Transformation investments, they can overcome the conflict between legacy IT and digital business initiatives to real-



Mohammed Amin

ize their goals, speed time to market and increase competitiveness."

The ESG 2017 IT Transformation Maturity Curve study was designed to understand the role that IT Transformation plays toward becoming a digital business. ESG employed a research-based, data-driven maturity model to identify different stages of IT

Transformation progress and determine the degree to which global organizations have achieved those different stages based on their responses to questions about their organization's on premise IT infrastructure, processes and organizational alignment.

Based on the global survey responses, the 1,000 participating organizations were segmented into the following four IT Transformation maturity stages: Stage 1 - Legacy (12 percent): Falls short on many - if not all - of the dimensions of IT Transformation in the ESG study. Stage 2 - Emerging (42 percent): Showing progress in IT Transformation but having minimal deployment of modern data center technologies. Stage 3 - Evolving (41 percent): Showing commitment to IT Transformation and having a moderate deployment of modern data center technologies and IT delivery methods. Stage 4 - Transformed (5 percent): Furthest along in IT Transformation initiatives.

The majority of respondents (71 percent) agree that IT Transformation is essential to ongoing business competitiveness. Of the "Transformed" companies, 85 percent believe their organizations are in a "very strong" or "strong" position to compete and succeed in their market over the next few years contrasted with 43 percent of the least mature companies. The "Transformed" organizations report the most progress in leveraging IT resources to speed product innovation and time to market; automating

manual processes and tasks; and running IT as a profit center rather than a cost center.

These companies: 96 percent exceeded revenue targets last year, more than two times the least mature. Are eight times more likely than the least mature organizations to report a highly cooperative relationship between IT and the business. Made "excellent progress" running IT as a profit center rather than a cost center (seven times more likely than the least mature). Are seven times more likely than the least mature organizations to have IT viewed by the business as a competitive differentiator. Leverage IT resources to speed product innovation and time to market (six times more likely than the least mature organizations).

According to ESG, the adoption of modern data center technologies, such as scale-out storage systems and converged/hyper-converged infrastructure, can improve the agility and responsiveness of infrastructure provisioning. IT project delivery and application development. The study found: 54 percent of all respondents use converged or hyper-converged infrastructure to support applications. 58 percent of all respondents have adopted scale-out storage systems in some capacity. Roughly 50 percent of respondents are committed to software-defined as a long-term strategy and have begun to implement, evaluate or plan for software-defined technologies

STUDIES QUESTION AUTISM LINK TO ANTIDEPRESSANTS IN PREGNANCY

MIAMI: Two scientific studies published Tuesday suggested the risk of children developing autism after their mothers used antidepressants while pregnant may be lower than previously believed. One of the studies in the findings in the Journal of the American Medical Association included 1.5 million infants in Sweden from 1996 to 2012, making it one of the largest populations ever analyzed to understand the impact of antidepressant use during pregnancy. The study found that mothers' use of antidepressants early in pregnancy did not increase the risk of their children developing autism.

The report said these findings ran counter to several previous studies, and the reason for the

discrepancy could come down to how scientists adjust for a variety of potential confounding factors. "To our knowledge, this is one of the strongest studies to show that exposure to antidepressants during early pregnancy is not associated with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or poor fetal growth when taking into account the factors that lead to medication use in the first place," said lead author Brian D'Onofrio, professor at Indiana University.

"Balancing the risks and benefits of using antidepressants during pregnancy is an extremely difficult decision that every woman should make in consultation with her doctor," he added. "However, this study suggests use of these med-

ications while pregnant may be safer than previously thought." Most of the antidepressants examined for the study were selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), a common class of drugs that includes Prozac, Zoloft and Celexa.

A second study looked at more than 35,000 children in Canada from 2002 to 2010 and found a slightly higher risk of autism among the children of women who took antidepressants, but the risk was no longer statistically significant after tweaking the adjustments for other factors, like genetics and environment. Both studies stopped short of proving any cause-and-effect. "Although a causal relationship cannot be ruled out, the previously observed association may be explained by

other factors," said the second study.

In 2015, a major Canadian study in JAMA, based on more than 145,000 pregnancies, found an 87 percent higher risk of autism when mothers took antidepressant medications later in pregnancy, a crucial time for brain development in the fetus. As many as one in 45 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder in the United States, according to a recent study by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Scientists still do not fully understand what causes autism, though both genetics and environment are believed to play a role. Around 10 percent of pregnant women are currently being treated with antidepressants. — AFP



CROATIA: This picture shows a small hydro plant on the Korana river, in Karlovac, Croatia. — AFP

BLUE HEART OF EUROPE AT RISK OF A HEART ATTACK

CROATIAN RIVERS FACE HYDROELECTRIC PERIL

KARLOVAC, Croatia: Swans glide peacefully over green river waters in the central Croatian area of Karlovac, a tranquil spot popular with fishermen and swimmers that environmentalists fear could be devastated by hydropower projects. Croatia faces a dilemma as it produces no more than 75 percent of the electricity it needs for its 4.3 million people each year, half of which comes from its dense network of rivers. But to build on its self-sustainability risks damaging the appeal of these picturesque waterways, in a country where tourism brings in 18 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

In 2016, the Karlovac region alone brought in almost 300,000 tourists. Several dozen small hydroelectric power projects are now planned across Croatia, built by either the state-run HEP national energy group or private companies. Activists fear they will have a far-reaching negative impact in a country that prides itself on its pristine nature. "Small hydro plants are nothing but misleading to the public, since it is implied that their impact is small," said Irma Popovic Dujmovic from the local branch of environmental watchdog WWF.

"In fact, their impact on small rivers is the same as the impact of large plants on large rivers, notably if dams are constructed," she said. In Croatia, the situation is most critical in Karlovac, known as the "town on four rivers" - one of which has already been damaged by hydropower. "The Lesce plant killed the Dobra river. The Korana,

Mreznica and Kupa (rivers) are now at stake," said Denis Franciskovic of Eko Pan, a Croatian environmental group.

Significantly fewer fish

The large Lesce plant was inaugurated in 2010 — the first in the former Yugoslav republic since it became independent in 1991 — with the aim of boosting economic activity in an area particularly hard hit during the 1990s Balkan wars. But barely a year later, authorities named a special team to deal with the plant's damage after it flooded a 13-kilometre stretch of one of Croatia's most beautiful canyons. Zeljko Capan from a local fishing club said he and fellow fishers had noticed "significantly fewer fish" since the plant was installed.

"We should concentrate on tourism. What else is there to do in Karlovac and its region?" Eight small hydropower plants are now planned in the area, where unemployment is high and communities are trying to revive their economies with activities for visitors such as canoeing and rafting. Forty percent of the region is also in Natura 2000, a European Union network aimed at protecting biodiversity across Europe.

Officials acknowledge that the Lesce plant's construction, based on a 1985 environmental impact study, gave hydropower a bad name, but say lessons have been learned. "The environment will not be destroyed, it will be preserved," said Marinko Maradin, head of Karlovac's department

for spatial planning and the environment. Hydropower has been used in the region for centuries without devastating nature, he said. "There is almost no waterfall without human intervention, from old watermills to modern plants."

Dangers are real

Advocates of small-scale hydropower emphasize the need to stabilize and distribute the system, bringing production facilities closer to consumers. Croatia's accession to the European Union in 2013 has also helped to improve regulations in the sector. But the financial benefits for local communities are often small. The town of Ozalj in central Croatia, for example, gets less than 10,000 euros (\$10,500) annually as compensation from a plant on the Kupa river.

Nikola Zivcic, a 57-year-old resident of the tiny town of Slunj on the Korana river, is worried about two plants planned in the area known for its picturesque waterfalls. "The benefits (of the plants) are small or negligible while dangers and potential damages are real," Zivcic said, stressing that tourism was crucial to the town's survival. Concerns about new projects go beyond Croatia's borders and across the Balkans, where there is a "tsunami" of plans to construct more than 2,000 plants in the next few years, according to Franciskovic. "The blue heart of Europe is at risk of a heart attack," warns Balkan Rivers, an ecological campaign group. — AFP

BATTLING OLD HABITS, THE MAYOR OF WARSAW LAUNCHES CLIMATE REVOLUTION

LONDON: When Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, the mayor of Warsaw, introduced bus lanes on one of the city's main arteries to cut travel times by public transport and to encourage more people to use it, not everybody in the Polish capital was impressed. "There was a lot of opposition," Gronkiewicz-Waltz said. "It's not easy to convince people to use public transport if driving a car is still quite an entrenched habit."

Eight years later, Warsaw's residents - or Varsovians - have not only got used to bus lanes but thanks to the city's growing network of bike lanes they can now also cycle around town using one of the 4,500 municipal bicycles available for hire. Gronkiewicz-Waltz, who took office in 2006 as the first woman to hold the position, says she wants to tackle Warsaw's pollution and make Poland's capital and largest city climate-friendly as a legacy for future generations.

"Everybody wants to live in a healthy environment," Gronkiewicz-Waltz told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview in Polish. "In my case it's also about my daughter and grandchildren - they are an additional motivation." Around the world, cities are increasingly at the forefront of action to curb climate change. Some have set ambitious emissions reduction goals, while others have pushed ahead with policies despite national-level foot dragging.

And increasingly, many of the cities leading in climate change - Paris, Washington, Sydney, Cape Town - are run by women. In two years, the number of women leading large cities that are at the forefront of climate action has risen from four to 16, according to the C40 Cities network of more than 80 cities

committed to addressing climate change.

But while Gronkiewicz-Waltz sometimes has to tell her husband off for not sorting rubbish properly, she doesn't think women are better climate defenders than men. "I don't want to sound sexist," she said. "Perhaps women pay more attention to green areas and cleanliness but men are sensitive, too."

Revolution of the mindsets

Changes happening in Warsaw are perhaps most visible on the banks of the Vistula, Poland's biggest river. One of its shores has been returned back to its natural state, allowing Varsovians to relax on a sandy beach, cycle, walk along its leafy banks and even enjoy cross-country skiing in the winter. "It's like being on holiday," said Gronkiewicz-Waltz. Following upgrading work, the city's wastewater plant now generates nearly 50 percent of its power onsite, while later this year Varsovians will be able to test a new car sharing scheme - another initiative aimed at making the capital's air cleaner.

Gronkiewicz-Waltz said many investments towards a greener environment in Warsaw have been possible thanks to funding from the European Union. "Modernizing old trams, SKM (rapid city trains) would certainly have been impossible without EU funds," said Gronkiewicz-Waltz, a former central bank head. She said while changing mindsets and cutting planet-warming emissions in coal-dependent Poland was a struggle, the country had emerged as a pioneer in the battle against climate change, in part thanks to support from young people. — Reuters



MANILA: This undated handout photo shows a scientist removing the top of the shell revealing a giant shipworm living inside, at a laboratory in Manila. — AFP

SULPHUR-POWERED SHIPWORM UNEARTHED IN PHILIPPINES

MANILA: An enormous black worm that lives in the mud of the sea floor and survives on the remnants of noxious gases digested by bacteria has been unveiled by scientists for the first time. The slimy giant shipworm can grow up to 155 centimeters in length, despite living a sedentary life in ocean sediment and apparently eating nothing more than the waste products of the micro-organisms that live in its gills.

"We are amazed. This is the first time we saw a shipworm as large as this. Usually, shipworms are only as short as a matchstick and are white," Filipino marine biologist Julie Albano said. The shipworm is a not actually a worm at all, but a bivalve-like mussels and clams and has its own brittle, tusk-like shell. Also known by its scientific name Kuphus Polythalamia, the mollusc is radically different from its smaller shipworm cousins, which burrow in-and digest-wood.

Researchers who analyzed the creature found that although it had its own diges-

tive system, this was shrunken and appeared to be largely redundant. Instead, Kuphus Polythalamia relies on bacteria that live in its gills, which digest hydrogen sulphide - a gas that smells of rotten eggs - from the mud and emits traces of carbon. The process is photosynthesis in plants, where they take carbon dioxide from the air, use the carbon to grow and expel oxygen as a by-product.

"We suspected the giant shipworm was radically different from other wood-eating shipworms. Finding the animal confirmed that," said Margo Haygood, a research professor at the University of Utah who also took part in the study. The discovery of the giant shipworm, a species never before studied, marked the first time scientists had live specimens in hand, according to an article published this week in American journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. "This remarkable species remains to be fully described and explained," the journal said. — AFP

BATTLE BREWS OVER WHERE TO KEEP LA ZOO'S ELEPHANT

LOS ANGELES: A city councilman said Tuesday that he wants to move an Asian elephant from its longtime home at the Los Angeles Zoo to a sanctuary where it can roam more widely. But zoo officials say the animal's state-of-the-art habitat gives him the range he needs for a good life. Councilman Paul Koretz and the group Voice for the Animals say Billy's habitat is constrained and that behavior by Billy in which he some-

times bobs his head is a sign of trouble. Koretz intends to introduce a plan for moving Billy at Wednesday's council meeting.

Billy, born in 1985 and a resident of the zoo since 1989, is part of the Elephants of Asia exhibit that includes two females, Tina and Jewel. They are separated from him by a fence. Advocates of moving Billy to an elephant sanctuary contend he cannot get enough exercise at

the zoo for his physical and psychological health. "I don't believe that the zoo can take the necessary care and give what the elephants need," said Melya Kaplan, founder of the Voice for the Animals Foundation, told reporters.

Zoo officials held their own news conference at the zoo to defend their care of Billy, who moved about in the background. "Billy is given free range," said Josh Sisk, curator of mammals. "He's given options each day. He has enrichment devices." The Elephants of Asia exhibit opened in 2010 and is the zoo's largest habitat, encompassing 6.5 acres. Almost half of it is open space and includes bathing pools, a waterfall and varied topography.

The habitat also includes a high-tech barn for care of all sizes of elephants. Zoo officials said the elephant's habitat exceeds state and federal standards, as well as those of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Opponents contend that Billy and the females cannot use the entire area set aside for them because they are kept separated. Zoo Director John Lewis said the separation is necessary. "There is a barrier between them. But they touch, they share food, they talk to each other, they socialize," he said.

"And the barrier is there because the two girls are post-reproductive cows, and we don't want to take the risk that they might be bred by Billy because that would be really bad for them." Billy displays the head bobbing behavior when he is aware he will be fed soon, Lewis said. "He uses the bobbing in anticipation of his keepers, when he hears them in the barn, when he knows it's time to get fed," he said. Voice for the Animals plans to raise funds for moving Billy at a May comedy fundraiser featuring celebrities including Lily Tomlin and Craig Ferguson. — AP



LOS ANGELES: Billy, a male Asian elephant, roams in his habitat at the Elephants of Asia exhibit at the Los Angeles Zoo. — AP

KENYANS PROTECT WETLANDS TO CURB WATER SCARCITY

BUSIA, Kenya: Armed with a hoe and Wellington boots, George Wandera planted bamboo seedlings in neatly dug holes along the banks of a stream on his farm that feeds a nearby lake in western Kenya. "I've never tried this on my farm before but it's the first step in protecting the stream," he said. "Before the last downpour a few days ago, the water source had completely dried up." Large swathes of Kenya - including parts of Busia county where Wandera lives - are experiencing severe water shortages, which have damaged crops and left 2.6 million people in need of aid.

The country's wetlands too have suffered in the drought, putting at risk communities who depend on them for fishing or irrigation, and who rely on them to act as a buffer from floods and drought. "Wetlands such as lakes and floodplains act as natural safeguards against disasters, by

absorbing excess rainfall during floods, with the stored water then available in times of drought," said Julie Mulonga, program manager at Wetlands International Kenya, a conservation charity in Busia.

During the current drought, farmers and herders have been drawing water from the wetlands, and streams feeding them have run dry. Unpredictable rainfall is not the only reason Kenya's wetlands are under threat. Local communities have also been draining them to grow crops, Mulonga said. Wandera remembers when large parts of the Sio-Siteko wetland, near the border with Uganda, were drained to make way for farmland. "We never thought our activities were harmful until we saw the consequences - that is, more floods during the rainy season and less water during the dry season, leading to a decline in vegetation and animal species," he said. — Reuters

CREATIVITY, A MATING BOOST FOR THE UNATTRACTIVE MALE

PARIS: In the ruthless world of the mating game, plain-looking men instinctively know that being funny, smart or poetic helps to compensate for a less-than-stellar exterior. That gut feeling has now gained scientific validation from an unusual study published yesterday. Average-looking men become more alluring when women sense the man has an imaginative spark, it found.

But for women, sadly, there may not be the same boost. Indeed, one experiment suggests that less attractive women even worsen their mating chances if they show mental zing. "Creative women with less attractive faces seem to be perhaps penalised in some way," said Christopher Watkins, a psychologist at Abertay University in Scotland, who carried out the research. Watkins first recruited a batch of volunteers who looked at pictures of men and women, rating each on the basis of their physical looks alone. Armed with this benchmark of beauty, he then submitted

the same pictures to another group of volunteers-but this time he provided clues about the subjects' creativity. Attached to each picture were mini exercises in the imagination.

Look at me, I'm clever

In one test, there was a 100-word text based on "The Lovers," a surrealist painting by Rene Magritte in which two lovers kiss, their heads strangely covered in white cloths. Half of these texts, attributed to the persons pictured, were dull or factual ("Are they being held hostage?"), and the other half were inspired or conceptual ("It is perhaps an indicator that looks fade and in the end it does not matter as you will always be left with the personality of someone").

In a second test, head shots were linked with an everyday object-a tire and a text describing an alternative use for it. Half of these descriptions were inventive, others less so. The results showed that men

with less attractive faces get a big boost in the popularity contest if they show a creative touch, Watkins found. "Creative guys with less attractive faces were almost identical in attractiveness to really good looking guys who were not as creative," he told AFP in a phone interview.

The top-ranked men were those considered to be both physically attractive and creative. For women, though, the news is not so good. Looks remain paramount. In one experiment, creativeness did nothing to boost the allure of attractive women-and it even reduced the appeal of less attractive women. However, another experiment on similar lines had conflicting findings, Watkins found: creativity showed an equally boosting effect for average-looking women and male counterparts.

He's a geek? Swipe left

Why would women rate creativity among men so

highly? Watkins pointed to evolutionary biology-the hidden criteria that drive us to seek the best mate for ensuring healthy offspring and their survival. "Women on average are a more selective sex when it comes to choosing romantic partners," he said. Imagination and inspiration may be "a proxy for intelligence," he suggested. "Creativity is thought to be a signal that an individual can invest time and effort into a particular task or can see things in novel ways that may be useful for survival."

That means nerds and poets are at a big disadvantage in online dating, where decisions to swipe left or right-to shun or show interest-are often based on just a glance. "Certain platforms that we have now for dating might not be favorable for assessing people on more complex attributes," Watkins said. The allure of creativity may not be limited to potential romantic partners, but extend to potential friends too, the study found. —AFP



SOUTH AFRICA: This handout picture shows a leopard at the Soutpansberg Mountains, South Africa. — AFP

KEY LEOPARD POPULATION CRASHING, STUDY WARNS

PARIS: The leopard population in a region of South Africa once thick with the big cats is crashing, and could be wiped out within a few years, scientists warned yesterday. Illegal killing of leopards in the Soutpansberg Mountains has reduced their numbers by two-thirds in the last decade, the researchers reported in the Royal Society Open Science journal.

"If things don't change, we predict leopards will essentially disappear from the area by about 2020," lead author Samuel Williams, a conservation biologist at Durham University in England, said. "This is especially alarming given that, in 2008, this area had one of the highest leopard densities in Africa." The number of leopards in the wild worldwide is not known, but is diminishing elsewhere as well.

The "best estimate" for all of South Africa, said Williams, is about 4,500. What is certain, however, is that the regions these predators roam has shrunk drastically over the last two centuries. The historic range of Panthera pardus, which includes more than half-a-dozen sub-species, covered large swathes of Africa and Asia, and extended well into the Arabian Peninsula. Leopards once roamed the forests of Sri Lanka and Java unchallenged.

Today, they occupy barely a quarter of this territory, with some sub-species teetering on the brink of extinction, trapped in one or two percent of their original habitat. Leopards were classified last year as "vulnerable" to extinction on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List of endangered species, which tracks the survival status of animals and plants. South Africa recently suspended trophy hunting of leopards,

though experts agree this is not a major cause of the population decline.

Bleak findings

A 2008 census of leopards in the 6,800-square kilometer Soutpansberg Mountains found a robust population of nearly 11 adult cats for each hundred square kilometers. To find out how the carnivores had fared since then, Williams and his team set up four dozen motion-triggered camera traps across the area, and left them in place from 2012 to 2016. The cameras captured a total of 65 individual leopards during the four-year period: 16 adult males, 28 adult females and 21 younger cats.

They also fitted eight adults with GPS collars to track their movements-or lack thereof. Only two of the GPS-tagged leopards survived the monitoring period. Three were done in by snares, one was shot by a local resident whose cattle had been attacked, and two went missing, probably killed since they also disappeared from camera surveillance. A statistical analysis of the results showed "a 66 percent decline over a period just over 7.5 years," the study concluded.

Ironically, the bleak findings helped conservationists and local officials raise money to hire a "community engagement officer." "One of the things he does is help local people adopt non-lethal techniques" to prevent leopards from attacking cattle and other livestock, including the use of guard dogs, Williams added. But the clash between humans and big carnivores, experts agree, is mostly due to humanity's expanding footprint, especially in Africa, whose population is set to expand by more than a billion before mid-century. —AFP

MICRODOSING TREND HAS AMERICANS TUNING IN WITH PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS

WASHINGTON: After a litany of prescriptions failed to control her stormy mood swings and deep depression, writer Ayelet Waldman finally found relief in a blue vial of diluted LSD. Feeling she "had nothing to lose," the San Francisco Bay-area former federal public defender deposited two tiny drops of the psychedelic drug under her tongue-and soon felt her gloom subside. "I was starting to feel, frankly, suicidal," the 52-year-old told AFP. "If the other option is death-or at least, misery that feels like death-then there's no reason not to at least try something different."

Waldman says she renewed her spirit by "microdosing," a modish-albeit illegal and potentially risky-trend that involves ingesting a nearly imperceptible portion of a psychedelic drug, often LSD or psilocybin mushrooms. The goal is not to hallucinate but to boost work performance and creativity or, as was Waldman's case, treat a laundry list of ailments including mood disorders.

"Within the first day I felt better," she said. "The depression was just gone-and that was astonishing." She credits her daily LSD regimen of some 10 micrograms of acid-about one-tenth of a full, far more kaleidoscopic hit-with improving her relationships and enhancing her work. "I would have access to 'that flow,'" she said, describing how subtle doses of LSD changed her writing habits. "Your mind moves swiftly but not erratically, with a kind of really delightful focus."

Microdosing has gained traction outside drug-enthusiast circles in recent years, particularly among young professionals in California's Silicon Valley looking to dial up their careers. Its growing popularity has been ushered along by several influential US podcasts and most recently Waldman's latest book, "A Really Good Day: How Microdosing Made a Mega Difference in My Mood, My Marriage, and My Life," in which she details how psychedelics helped her get off the manic-depressive rollercoaster.

More in touch

LSD, or lysergic acid diethylamide, is a potent synthetic drug that gained notoriety in 1960s counterculture. In large doses it can induce hallucinations and drastically alter perception and cognitive functions for prolonged periods of time. Carl, whose name has been changed for fear of legal repercussions, works in media in Washington and told AFP he has microdosed with LSD at work some half dozen times in the past year. He said the tiny hits help him stay focused.

"You've got more energy," the 29-year-old said. "The core of your consciousness is still there-you just might be a little bit more in touch." Oliver, whose name has also been changed, describes dropping microdoses as a "very mild euphoria-almost like anticipation of something good." The 25-year-old, who is also a

media professional in the nation's capital, has taken recreational tabs of acid-which he said have run him about 10 dollars each-in addition to tiny doses.

Rather than a full psychedelic experience, he said microdosing gives him "a slight sharpening of concentration, I think produced by the effect that LSD has of making everything feel textured and interesting." "I felt not on top of the world, but one percent more on top of the world than usual," he said. "Which kind of made me feel like I wanted to work." Oliver said he thinks of microdosing as "a cop-out way of doing psychedelics."

That classification brought mid-century studies on using psychedelics as medicine to a standstill. Obvious hazards include ingesting street drugs cut with harmful substances or incorrectly controlling dosage, Johnson said. And because intended doses are so small, perceived positive impacts might actually be placebo effects. Still, he said microdosing warrants controlled study as "it's absolutely interesting and very plausible that there could be effects of cognitive enhancement and anti-depression."

His own studies have yielded encouraging outcomes using psilocybin to help cancer



WASHINGTON: This photo shows LSD blotter tabs on top of a US quarter coin in Washington, DC. — AFP

"It's much less threatening," he said wryly. "And is less likely to like, cause temporary ego death, or make you spiral into soul-crushing confusion over the changing color of the sky."

A legal gamble

While microdosing has shown anecdotal medicinal and performance-enhancing promise, potential risks like long-term toxicity remain unclear, said Matthew Johnson, who studies drug abuse and addiction at Johns Hopkins University. Microdosing is "totally unstudied" for both funding and legal reasons, he told AFP: LSD was first criminalized in 1966 and in 1970 the US government grouped it, along with psilocybin, in the most legally restrictive category of substances alongside drugs like heroin and mescaline.

patients manage anxiety and depression, or to help tobacco smokers quit. In general, he said, researchers focused on psychedelics say overregulation is hindering progress. The legal gamble ultimately dissuaded Waldman from continuing to microdose. She received her initial 30-day LSD supply from a friend of a friend-but procuring more proved nerve wracking.

Drug penalties vary state by state, but are often similar to the federal ones: up to a year in jail and a \$1000 fine for a first offense of LSD possession. As a former lawyer who has defended clients on drug charges, Waldman said she couldn't justify the risk. Until LSD is legalized-unlikely anytime soon-she said she probably won't microdose again. Unless, Waldman said, "I start to become suicidal again." "If it's a choice to die or commit a crime, I'll commit a crime." —AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

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

GULF BANK AND AL SADU SOCIETY HOLD EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS FOR CHILDREN

Gulf Bank is pleased to announce its exclusive sponsorship of a year-long series of educational workshop in partnership with the Al-Sadu Society, a distinguished Kuwaiti institution. Entitled 'Fun with Textiles,' these workshops are designed for children to develop their skills in crafts and textile art techniques. The next session will be held on April 22, at Sadu House, followed by two more in May, and will resume in September and run until end of the year.

The workshops are free and open to children ages 6-12, although advanced registration is required. Each session is open to 12 attendees who will learn and develop creative skills in a relaxed and stimulating environment, with the assistance of professional bilingual instructors. The workshops are structured to ensure that it is fun, flexible and practical. Children will learn how to create modern, fun accessories for themselves. Additionally, the children will be able to explore the exhibits at the Sadu House Museum.

Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager

for Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank said: "In light of the fast-paced modernization of Kuwait Al-Sadu Society and its programs are important because they promote and preserve the beautiful traditions of Sadu weaving and handicrafts among the young generations. Gulf Bank strongly supports preserving Kuwaiti heritage, as well programs that are educational in nature. We are pleased to partner with Al-Sadu Society to encourage children to appreciate and understand Kuwaiti heritage and traditions. We thank our partners at Al-Sadu for their ongoing work and dedication to Kuwait, and we look forward to our ongoing partnership."

Sheikha Bibi Al-Sabah, Chair of Al-Sadu Society, highlighted the importance of preserving Kuwait's cultural heritage, saying, "One of Al-Sadu Society's objectives are to encourage everyone to experience our country's traditions, especially the younger generation. We are dedicated to documenting and promoting the rich and diverse textile heritage of Kuwaiti Bedouins, from the nomadic weaving of the desert to the urban weaving of the town. We are proud to

partner with Gulf Bank to deliver this year-long series of free children's textiles workshops."

During these workshops, children are given a guided choice of colors, designs and techniques, through which they will be able to develop their creative skills while having fun. Instructors will be present in each session to encourage children and teach them that crafts are a form of art. Based on Gulf Bank's sponsorship, all workshops are free of charge, and are divided into different and varied activities.

Al-Sadu Society started in 1978, as a private initiative, by a group of concerned Kuwaitis who wished to preserve a fast disappearing, yet intrinsic, cultural identity, the Al-Sadu Project was founded. It aims to promote and to celebrate Kuwait's cultural and textile heritage. Gulf Bank's sponsorship of Al-Sadu Society workshops comes in line with its CSR program that supports events and initiatives that are focused on promoting Kuwait's heritage and culture, supporting youth education, encouraging health and fitness, helping the underprivileged and empowering women.



LAPA PRESENTS 'SABILIYYAT ISMAIL' AT DASMA THEATRE

Within the activities of LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA), the 'Sabiliyyat Ismail' monodrama, that is based on a novel by Ismail Fahad Ismail and was recently presented in Kuwait at Dasma theatre, is currently representing Kuwait at the International Universities Monodrama Festival in Tunisia. The play is prepared by Fareah Al-Saqqaf, starred by actress Sherin Hajji and directed by Rasoul Al-Sagheer.

AUK RESTRUCTURES INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM

The American University of Kuwait conducted a developmental revision-with the approval of the Private Universities Council (PUC) and the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA)-of its Intensive English Program, which aims to strengthen and advance students' English proficiency to succeed in the university. The previously 3-level program has been restructured so students will be able to complete the course in 2 semesters.

Students will be instructed for approximately 23 hours a week on reading and writing, in addition to oral communication, pre-

sentations and special topic courses. "The notion that we can achieve excellence through the continued capitalization of the latest pedagogical approaches to learning and instructional delivery is what distinguishes us locally as well as regionally. We take pride in the successful integration of best practices as it advances the mission of our institution, and most importantly, promotes and enhances the education and knowledge experience of our students. Our constituents expect nothing less," said Dr Rawda H Awwad, AUK Provost.

The mission of the Intensive English Program (IEP) is to pre-

pare students seeking admission to the academic degree programs of AUK by enabling them to gain sufficient mastery of the English language and successfully apply the critical thinking skills they need to excel both during and after their formal studies. The IEP achieves its mission by training non-native English speakers in specific uses of English for academic purposes, by providing quality English language instruction to all who have chosen English as their medium of communication for academic pursuits and by promoting international, intercultural, and self-understanding.



AL-FADHEL BIN AL-ABBAS ELEMENTARY BOYS SCHOOL HOLDS SPORTS CLOSING CEREMONY

The closing ceremony of sports activities and physical education in Hawally Education Zone for the school year 2016-2017 was held yesterday under the patronage of the Acting General Director of Physical Education for

boys Dr. Ahmad Al-Fayez Al-Hazza, and in the presence of senior physical Education Director for boys in Hawally Dr. Istiqlal Al-Raqam. The ceremony was held at Al-Fadhel bin Al-Abbas elementary boys school in South Surra.





'Q8 PULSE' 88.8 FM UNVEILS PROGRAMS DURING THE HOLY MONTH OF RAMADAN

By Nawara Fattahova

The popular radio station 'Q8 Pulse' (Nabd Al Kuwait) 88.8 FM unveiled its plan of programs for the holy month of Ramadan during the media event held on Tuesday at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Talal Al-Yaqout, CEO of the 88.8 FM said that investing in human resources is the most important factor for any business. "From my long career in media I learnt that the factor of success of any business is in the investment in HR, and you are the best example. 88.8 FM is the most expensive radio station in the world, which cost KD 1.2 million, and they put their trust in me," he pointed out.



Khalid Habib, Executive Chairman of Adline Media Network, that financed 88.8 FM noted that he is proud and impressed with the great achievements of the radio station that were achieved in very short period. A report by IPSOS on the Kuwait Radio Scene 2017 was presented during the event. This study showed different information about 88.8 FM such as the percentage of listener from both genders as 63 percent are males, while 37 are females.

The study also showed that 85 percent listen to the station in their car, 13 percent at home, and 3 percent in the office. 75 percent of the listeners use radio sets, while 21 percent listen to the 88.8 through the internet, and 9 percent through TV. It also mentioned the main businesses advertising in 88.8 including banks, airlines, cars, commercial centers and others.

Al-Yaqout mentioned some figures highlighting the great success of the radio station. "88.8 FM reached over 58 thousand followers since its launch about five months back. We ranked as the number 1 commercial radio station in Kuwait according to IPSOS statistics within less than 6 months. The success is not just how we reached this position but how to preserve it," he explained. He then presented a review of the new programs that 88.8 FM prepared for the listeners for Ramadan.

These include; Gool, Rab'a Al-Diwaniya, Capture, Yam'aetna Gher, El Dinya b Kher, Bousesli A'ala Nabd Al-Kuwait, Abnaouna Fi Ramadan, Sana Al-Kuwait, Mousalsal Al-Marhoum, El Hayat, Sawalif Moza, E'isabat Mara'oub, Degayeg A'ala Nabd Al-Kuwait, Insta Cook, Low Battery, Hazawi Ramadan, Al-Bandeera, and Kanz FM. These programs will meet the taste of all age categories with its different subjects including history telling, cooking, fairytale, social discussions, sports debates, competitions, and many more.



BURGAN BANK GEARS UP FOR ITS TWO DAY TRI FESTIVAL

Burgan Bank is gearing up for the two-day sporting festival 'Burgan Bank TRI Festival', which will take place at Al-Corniche Club on April 21 and 22. The 'Big Weekend' encourages the participation of all communities and is part of the bank's ongoing commitment to encourage utilizing sports as an engaging avenue to healthier living, while supporting athletes' passion for running, swimming, and cycling.

With an expected outcome of 500 participants, the first of its kind festival in Kuwait is divided into 4 categories and is aimed at encour-

aging children and adults alike to train and participate in sports competitions. The festival commences on April 21, with a Sprint Aquathlon which includes a 2.5Km run, 500 meters' swim and a 2.5 Km run, for individuals.

The Junior Aquathlon will also take place on Friday, wherein children ages 6-9 will race for a 100-meter swim and a 1Km run. Additionally, a 200-meter swim race and a 2Km run competition for children ages 10 to 12 years old, followed by a Team Relay race for different groups. The festival also contains an entertaining program filled with

many activities and exciting draws. Burgan Bank is proud to engage in community-driven interactions, which further reinforces its pioneering social dedication to the wellbeing of the whole society.

It is worth mentioning that Burgan Bank's support of this nationwide initiative falls under its recently launched full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' -Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health



AL-REQQA SCHOOL CONCLUDES FIRST AHMADI ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS COMPETITION

Under auspices of Ahmadi governor Sheikh Fawwaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the presence of Ahmadi educational area director, Waleed Al-Oumi, Ahmadi security director, brigadier Saffah Al-Mulla, the first Ahmadi environment-Friendly Schools Competition was recently concluded and the third Ahmadi Governorate Environmental Exhibition was held at Al-Reqqa Secondary School for Girls; the first winner in the competition.

Speaking on the occasion, Al-Sabah stressed that competitions and co-curriculum activities were ideal tools of encouraging environmental awareness. Ahmadi educational area director, Waleed Al-Oumi said that preparations had been in progress for two years to promote environmental culture and awareness amongst the area 30 schools. The ceremony was also attended by the head of the environment-friendly schools project, Tareq Al-Shehab, the project supervisor at Ahmadi governorate, Ajmal Al-Ibrahim and Al-Reqqa school director, Safa Al-Saa'eed.



GOSSIP

Knightley's surprise return to Pirates of the Caribbean sequel

Kiera Knightley has made a surprise comeback to 'Pirates of the Caribbean'. The 32-year-old actress, who played Elizabeth Swann in the first three movies in the Disney fantasy film series, will reprise her role in the upcoming 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales' - which is also known as 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Salazar's Revenge' - though it is unclear how big a part she would play. Eager-eyed fans were surprised to spot the 'Begin Again' star in a new Japanese trailer for the film,

as it was previously thought she wouldn't be back, despite Orlando Bloom, who plays her onscreen lover Will Turner, also making a return to the franchise, and Brenton Thwaites cast as their teenage son Henry. The new trailer, which features Japanese narration, shows clips of the film scenes, including one of Knightley as Elizabeth, in which she can be seen doing something off camera wearing a corset dress with her hair in curls, although that is all that can be seen before the camera flicks back to Bloom. The film,

directed by Joachim Ronning and Espen Sandberg, is centered on Captain Jack Sparrow - played by Johnny Depp - and his war against old rival Captain Armando Salazar, played by Javier Bardem, with Sparrow searching for the legendary Trident of Poseidon in order to defeat him. 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales' is released in cinemas on May 26.



Pike to play war reporter Marie Colvin in biopic

Rosamund Pike is to portray war reporter Marie Colvin in an upcoming biopic. The 38-year-old actress is to star in director Matthew Heineman's upcoming movie about the US journalist, who braved danger to report from the frontline in conflict zones such as Chechnya, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka. The 'Gone Girl' is expected to wear an eye patch for part of the role, after Colvin lost her left eye due to a blast by a Sri Lankan Army rocket-propelled grenade in 2001 whilst crossing the field to a Government controlled area. The war reporter lost her life in 2012 at the age of 56 during a rocket attack whilst she was covering the civil war in Syria for the Sunday Times newspaper. The script, penned by Arash Amel, is based on a 2012 Vanity Fair article, written by Marie Brenner, entitled 'Marie Colvin's Private War' Meanwhile, producing is Thunder Road Pictures' Basil Iwanyk and Kamala Films' Marissa McMahon, as well as Denver & Delilah Films, Erica Lee is executive producer. Production is planned for an October start in both the UK and Middle East. Pike has just wrapped on filming Scott Cooper's 'Hostiles' opposite Christian Bale and Ben Foster. She recently admitted she barely spoke to Bale on the set of the period drama. She said: "He is intense in a wonderful way. We barely spoke off screen. He would keep a distance. Our characters in 'Hostiles' are quite dysfunctional but have this profound connection that we let happen without ever really talking about it." She added: "I loved working with Christian because of this strange thing where we didn't really communicate, but yet I knew I could throw anything at him and he was just there. I would work with him again, any actress would." In addition Pike stars in upcoming Jose Padilha-directed 'Entebbe' opposite Daniel Bruhl and the Brad Anderson-directed 'High Wire Act' opposite Jon Hamm. And she most recently starred with David Oyelowo in 'A United Kingdom'.



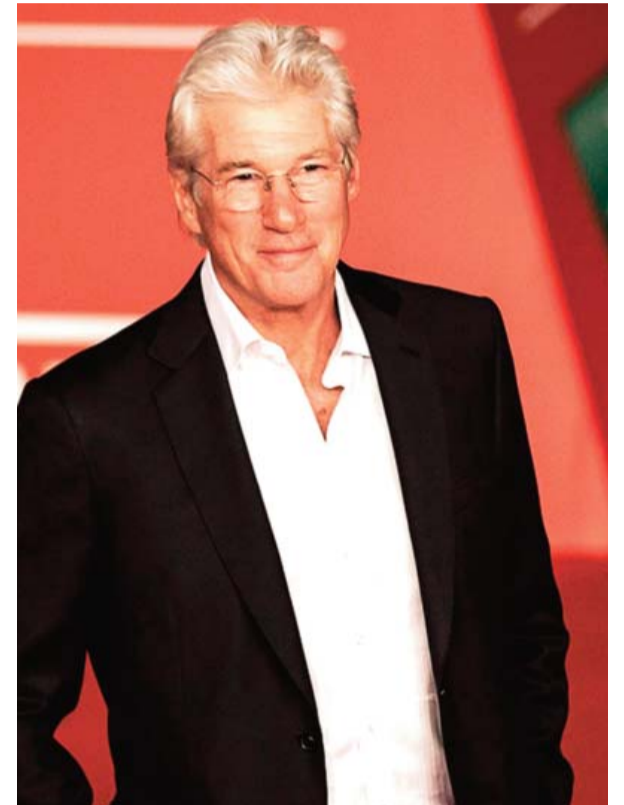
Queen + Adam Lambert announce UK shows

Queen + Adam Lambert have added UK and Ireland dates to their 2017 European tour. The shows, which kick off on November 1st at O2 Arena, Prague in Czech Republic and wrap up at London's The SSE Arena, Wembley on December 15, will feature a brand new state-of-the-art production and set list. It will be the 'Bohemian Rhapsody' rockers, Brian May and drummer Roger Taylor's first British tour with Adam Lambert in almost three years. They last stormed Britain in January 2015 when they played 10 sold-out shows. And in 2016 they got together for a one-off headlining set at the closing night of the Isle of Wight Festival last June. The new set list will no doubt acknowledge this year's 40th anniversary of Queen's biggest-selling studio album to date, 1977's 'News of the World', which included the mega hits 'We Will Rock You' and 'We Are The Champions'. Roger Taylor said the forthcoming shows "will look entirely different to the show we took around before. Production has really changed a lot, the things you can do now, you have a much broader palette, the technology has really come along. But we don't use it all. We don't play to click track. It's 100% live. We're planning on doing stuff we either haven't done before or haven't done for a long time. We started as an albums band, that's what we were. The fact we had hits was just a byproduct." While Brian teased they plan to incorporate Adam's different "dimensions" into what they do. He said: "The general public knows the hits, so you've got to cater for that, but we can chuck in a few things that people really don't expect. We'll do quite a bit more of that this time around. There are so many dimensions to Adam, which of course fits with our music. He can get down and do the rock stuff really dirty, and you have all those dimensions, and we can explore that even more." The 'For Your Entertainment' hitmaker - who takes on the late great frontman Freddie Mercury's lead vocals - is up for the challenge. He said: "What people should know if they came to the shows a couple of years back, is obviously we will still be playing the big hit songs you know and love from Queen, but we thought it would be good to challenge ourselves a bit. "Change it up a little bit, change the visuals, change all the technology, change the set list to some degree. We will probably be pulling some other songs out of the Queen catalogue which we haven't done before, which I am very excited about."

Richard Gere's views affected career

Richard Gere admits his support for Tibet has hindered his career. The 67-year-old actor broke from his script when presenting at the 1993 Academy Awards in order to protest China's occupation of the Far Eastern region and slammed its "horrendous, horrendous human rights situation" and later called for a boycott of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. And because China now has the world's second-biggest box-office market, Richard - who has a lifetime ban from the country - admits his big screen appeal has dramatically reduced in the eyes of studios. He said: "There are definitely movies that I can't be in because the Chinese will say, 'Not with him.'" "I recently had an episode where someone said they could not finance a film with me because it would upset the Chinese." In 1997, Richard appeared as a US businessman wrongly accused of murder in China in 'Red Corner', and while executives were initially happy with the film, it was suddenly dumped. He recalled to the Hollywood Reporter: "Everyone was happy with the film." "I get calls from the heads of the studio. Went on Oprah. Then, out of nowhere, I get calls saying, 'We

don't want you doing press.'" "MGM wanted to make an overall deal with the Chinese. China told them, 'If you release this film, we're not buying it.' And so, they dumped it." And on another occasion, the 'Pretty woman' actor was ousted from an independent, non-studio movie because of his forthright views. He said: "There was something I was going to do with a Chinese director, and two weeks before we were going to shoot, he called saying, 'Sorry, I can't do it.'" "We had a secret phone call on a protected line. If I had worked with this director, he, his family would never have been allowed to leave the country ever again, and he would never work." But Richard insists he doesn't care about being snubbed for Hollywood blockbusters as he still enjoys his work. He said: "The studios are interested in the possibility of making huge profits. But I'm still making the same films that I was making when I started. Small, interesting, character-driven and narrative-driven stories. It hasn't impacted my life at all."



Vergara to voice flamenco dancer in The Emoji Movie

Sofia Vergara will voice the flamenco dancer emoji in 'The Emoji Movie'. The 44-year-old actress-and-comedienne announced on Tuesday that she has joined the animated movie, which also stars Sir Patrick Stewart, TJ Miller and Ilana Glazer, as the red dress-wearing messaging icon. The 'Hot Pursuit' star is thrilled to have landed the role bringing the emoticon to life as she says people always tell her she looks like the woman. She told People magazine: "I thought it was going to be a perfect role for me because people are always saying that I look like her." Spilling details on what her character is like in the film, she added: "And she is always doing the Flamenco. She does it in the morning when she gets up, she does it when she's eating, she probably does it when she's sleeping. It makes things like driving or putting on her makeup very difficult." The Colombian-American beauty shared a picture of herself in a red dress next to her emoji on Instagram. Alongside the photo, she wrote: "Excited to be Flamenco Dancer in @emojiover!!! #emojiover (sic)" "The Emoji Movie" follows the story of Gene (Miller), an emoji born with multiple expressions, who joins forces with the notorious code-breaker Jailbreak (Glazer) and heads off on an adventure through a teenager's phone. The Sony Pictures movie's director Tony Leondis previously said of the concept: "I know what you're thinking - WTF. "What is their story? Emoji are expected to be one thing their whole lives. So I thought, what if one was born with not one, but lots of expressions ... and how would that affect the status quo?" "Everyone has felt different-it's everyone's story." Other cast members include Jennifer Coolidge as Gene's mother Mary Meh, Maya Rudolph as Smiler, and Jake T. Austin as the teenager named Alex. They will be joining a previously announced cast made up of James Corden, who will voice Hi-5, Steven Wright as Mel Meh, and Rob Riggle as Ice Cream. Tony Leondis wrote the script alongside Mike White and Eric Siegel, and Michelle Raimo is set to produce the feature. 'The Emoji Movie' is due to be released in August.

RUSSELL LOVED WORKING WITH STALLONE

Kurt Russell relished working with Sylvester Stallone on 'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2'. The 66-year-old actor has joined a star-studded cast for the much-anticipated sequel to the 2014 hit, and Kurt has admitted he especially enjoyed starring alongside Sylvester, who plays the role of Starhawk in the new movie. He said: "I was just talking to Sylvester Stallone, who's one of my favorite people, and he loved doing what he did in this movie too." Kurt also revealed he enjoyed working with actor Michael Rooker, having previously appeared alongside him in the Western 'Tombstone'. Kurt shared: "It's been fun seeing Michael Rooker again. We did 'Tombstone' together, and I haven't seen Michael since then. So there were a lot of positives in this project for me." Earlier this week, meanwhile, director James Gunn revealed the second movie in the Marvel series will barely feature the color purple, because he was keen to distinguish it from the first film. James explained: "I wanted to make the second movie have a very distinct visual look that was much different than the first movie. "One of the first things I did was ban the use of the color purple. "There's purple in the movie, but there's very little purple in the movie. Because purple was by far the dominant color in the first movie. "This movie is more about yellow and blue and teal and orange. "But I also really wanted to up the



ante with the pulp elements. "So we harken back a lot to 1950s/60s pulp novel colors and that look of 'Flash Gordon' - both the 1980s version and the earlier comics. Really grabbing onto this pulp feeling and bringing it alive in a bright, big, colorful way was important."



Lorde, Lana Del Rey and more for Radio One's Big Weekend

Lorde, Lana Del Rey and Kasabian are among those confirmed to perform at Radio One's Big Weekend in Hull. The UK radio station's annual music festival will be held at Burton Constable Hall in Hull on May 27 and May 28, and the full line-up has been unleashed featuring some of the biggest names in pop across the globe performing. Also joining previously announced headliner Katy Perry, Kings of Leon, Little Mix and Stormzy are Biffy Clyro, Rag'n Bone Man, London Grammar, Clean Bandit, Imagine Dragons and Emeli Sande. Zara Larsson, Shawn Mendes and Sean Paul are also on the bill with some artists which have been out of the spotlight for a while, including Plan B, Rita Ora and Haim, who must be about to drop new music. 'Body On Me' hitmaker Rita said of the announcement: "So excited I can't even tell you, it's so long overdue. It's the best news ever - I'm so happy. They're so up for it [Hull crowd]. I can always tell you that no matter what happens, Big Weekend is probably one of the funnest festivals I've ever performed at." 'Chained to the Rhythm' hitmaker Katy, will head up the main stage on the Saturday. The 32-year-old pop superstar is most looking forward testing out the Yorkshire city's local delicacies such as chip spice, savoury patties and Yorkshire puddings. Discussing her plans to visit the famous pudding factor, she previously said: "Radio

1's Big Weekend is always a blast and I'm so happy to be able to make it to Hull alongside the incredible line-up. Grimmy has told me all about Hull and we've already set up a date to the Yorkshire pudding factory!" Ben Cooper, Controller at Radio One said: "Radio 1's Big Weekend just got bigger. The young audiences in Hull and on the BBC are in for one of the planet's greatest performers." Martin Green, the Director of Hull UK City of Culture 2017, added: "It's awesome that Katy Perry is headlining Saturday night at Radio 1's Big Weekend. A superstar addition to a sensational event, as well as to Hull 2017's fabulous music program." Hosted by Radio One DJs, Radio One's Big Weekend is Europe's largest free ticketed festival, and will be heading to Hull to coincide with the UK City of Culture celebrations for Hull in 2017. Speaking about being on the bill, Kings of Leon said: "Looking forward to seeing you in Hull for Radio One's Big Weekend at the end of the May. Huge thanks to Radio One for leading the charge in helping us get our music to our fans, it's going to be a great show, can't wait!" The festival has completely sold out with the majority of tickets going to local people.



Greek musician Yanni poses for a photo before a press conference at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center in Kuwait City yesterday. Yanni is set to perform two shows this weekend for the first time in the Gulf state as part of his international tour. — Yasser Al-Zayyat

New Prince music released a year after musician's death



A set of previously unreleased tracks by Prince are going on sale to mark the one-year anniversary of the musician's death. One, "Deliverance," was put on iTunes and Apple Music on Tuesday. Five other tracks will be released on Friday and a disc version will be released on June 2. The overall EP, entitled "Deliverance," features six songs recorded by Prince between 2006 and 2008 with fellow musician Ian Boxill, who spent the last year completing the compositions, arrangements and production, independent record company RMA, which is releasing the music, said in a statement.

"I hope when people hear Prince singing these songs it will bring comfort to many," Boxill said in the statement. The songs were written and recorded when Prince was an independent artist, protesting what he saw as an unjust music industry, the statement said. Prince died on April 21, 2016, at age 57 at his Paisley Park, Minnesota estate. The official cause of death was given as an accidental, self-administered overdose of the painkiller fentanyl. Prince notably blended elements of jazz, funk, R&B, disco and rock in a prolific output of more than 30 albums that have sold over 36 million copies in the United States alone since 1978.

He was also known as fiercely determined to maintain creative control over his music, famously changing his name to an unpronounceable symbol for several years during a bitter contract battle with Warner Bros. The value of his musical legacy, including an extensive cache of unreleased recordings said to be locked in a vault, has been estimated by some to exceed a \$500 million, when factoring in future royalties, retail sales and commercial rights. — Reuters

ROBERTS NAMED PEOPLE'S 'MOST BEAUTIFUL' FOR RECORD 5TH TIME



This file photo Actress Julia Roberts poses for photographers upon arrival for the screening of the film Money Monster at the 69th international film festival, Cannes, southern France. — AP

Julia Roberts was named People magazine's world's most beautiful woman for a record 5th time yesterday, but the actress said she thought her best years were yet to come. Roberts, 49, was first given the annual honor in 1991, a year after she skyrocketed to fame in the romantic comedy "Pretty Woman." She was also named most beautiful woman in 2000, 2005 and 2010. "I'm very flattered," Roberts told People magazine, adding "I think I'm currently peaking." The actress, who won an Oscar in 2001 for playing against type in "Erin Brockovich," has been married for 14 years to cinematographer Danny Moder, with whom she has three children. Former "Friends" star Jennifer Aniston was last year's most beautiful woman for People magazine. — Reuters

Seth Rogen 'proud to be a Pike' after joining fraternity

Seth Rogen has gone from battling a fraternity to joining one. The actor who played a new dad doing battle with a rowdy fraternity in "Neighbors" has officially joined the Pi Kappa Alpha chapter at the University of Vermont. Rogen paid a visit to the fraternity Monday after the brothers raised \$32,000 for his Hilarity for Charity, which helps fund Alzheimer's research.

After going bowling with the fraternity, he was inducted as an honorary member in what the school calls a "top-secret ceremony." Rogen writes on Twitter that he's "proud to be a Pike." Video shows him sharing drinks with fraternity members. — AP



In this file photo, Seth Rogen arrives for "The Disaster Artist" at the Paramount Theatre during the South by Southwest Film Festival in Austin, Texas. — AP

For Tribeca film fest, a new political moment to reconcile

Political currents have always flowed through the Tribeca Film Festival, founded in the wake of the Sept 11 attacks. But this year, the festival has a slightly pugnacious edge to counter the policies of its midtown neighbor, President Donald Trump. Tribeca co-founder Robert De Niro, after all, has repeatedly said he'd like to punch Trump in the face. Trump's 100th day in office will fall during the New York festival, which opened yesterday with a Clive Davis documentary, "Soundtrack of Our Lives," and star-studded concert tribute to the legendary music producer. Tribeca, now in its 16th year, is the first big film festival to be programmed and substantially oriented in the political climate since last November's election.

And Tribeca organizers acknowledge it has shaped this year's festival all the way down to its slogan: "See yourself in others." It recently trotted out an accompanying video in which New Yorkers walk the streets with mirrored cubes for heads: an intended message of empathy, it says, for "a very divisive year." "We programmed the festival this year the way the current administration did their budget," Jane Rosenthal, co-founder of the festival, said tongue in cheek. "That said, we're also about entertaining - which this administration has also done for us." Tribeca, which runs for 12 days, is a particularly eclectic festival that encompasses celebrity talks (Springsteen and Hanks!), television premieres (this year Hulu's anticipated "The Handmaid's Tale" debuts there), an ever-expanding virtual reality component and several movie anniversary celebrations. This year, parts one and two of "The Godfather" will play at Radio City Music Hall, with the casts in attendance.

Conspiracy theories

So while defining a theme in an increasingly multi-screen, multimedia festival only goes so far, there's an undeniable presence of films that dig into the past for clues that lead to today. Many are documentaries that, though they've been in production for years, help articulate the populist unrest that pushed Trump to the White House. "A Gray State," by "Grizzly Man" producer Erik Nelson, is about an Iraq veteran from Minnesota named David Crowley who was trying to create a dystopian science-fiction film that gave voice to libertarian and right-wing fears. But his death, along with that of his wife and young daughter, led to their own conspiracy theories. It's a tragedy in which an intelligent but increasingly troubled man appears to internalize the fringe politics he consumes himself with. "It's really a core sample, to me, of what's going on today," says Nelson, whose film is executive produced by Werner Herzog. "David was speaking to that subcutaneous audience out there who are looking for truths that they don't see provided in the quote-unquote 'mainstream media. And on election night, we saw those people kind of come out of the shadows and tip a few elections." Crowley documented much of his disintegration on video and social media, and Nelson considers his obsessive self-broadcasting part of his sickness. "It's not the right film for the right time," says Nelson. "It's the right film for the wrong time." "The Reagan Show," by Sierra Pettengill and Pacho Velez, uses archival footage to show how extensively Ronald Reagan redefined the role of the US president through television. It shows the former Hollywood star's savvy manipulation of his media image: hitting his marks and sticking to the script.



This image released by the Tribeca Film Festival shows director David Crowley on the set of "Gray State," a film that will be shown at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Polished performer

After working on it for the last three years, the filmmakers completed it on inauguration day. "Which was surreal," says Pettengill. "The Reagan Show" will undoubtedly be watched as illuminating another TV veteran in the White House. "This is the roots. This is the formative moment that allowed us to get where we are," says Pettengill. "I don't think there would have been a Trump without a Reagan. The idea of having a media personality who millions and millions of people feel like they have access to, who they feel like has been in their living rooms?"

There is, naturally, much dissimilarity between the two. Reagan, who is seen in the film wondering how previous presidents managed without prior acting experience, is a clearly more polished performer. Pettengill suggest that's the difference between the skills of a movie star and a reality TV star. "What being a performer means is very different in those two different realms," she says. David Byars' "No Man's Land" tells the story behind the Oregon protesters who occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge last year. "Get Me Roger Stone," by Daniel DiMauro, is about the Republican self-proclaimed "trickster" and Trump associate currently under FBI scrutiny for his role in Russian interference in the presidential election.

There is a trio of films that dig into police brutality: "Frank Serpico," on the famous whistleblowing New York police officer; "LA92," on the Rodney King assault and its subsequent riots in Los Angeles; and "Copwatch," about a police-documenting organization. And there are also issues of equal rights (the trans icon investigation "The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson"), a number of environment-focused films and events scheduled around Earth Day, and even an appearance from Michael Moore for an anniversary of his 2002 documentary on guns and mass shootings, "Bowling for Columbine." The festival declares, "In the age of Trump ... there's no better time to revisit" the film. "What's interesting," says Rosenthal, "is that we have films that are looking back that show: How did we get here?" — AP



This image released by the Tribeca Film Festival shows Duane Ehmer in a scene from "No Man's Land," a film that will be shown at the Tribeca Film Festival. — AP photos

FASHION

CHRISTIAN DIOR'S SPRING-SUMMER 2017 HAUTE COUTURE COLLECTION



Models display creations of Christian Dior spring/summer 2017 haute couture collection to celebrate Dior's new shop at the Ginza shopping district in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP photos



Fatima Ismael: Winner of 2017 Most Creative Designer

The Kuwaiti designer Fatima Ismael and winner of 2017 Most Creative Designer is considered to be one of the most influential designers in the world of fashion.

Her original and distinctive creations and her outstanding participation in Lebanon Fashion Week and in Cannes Film Festivals prompted Mc Awards International to invite her to Lebanon to be honored and grant her the 2017 Most Creative Designer award among a constellation of winners comprising some of the most prominent personalities in the region who were given awards of appreciation and distinction in economic, medical, media and beauticians from various parts of the world. The ceremony hosted many politicians, media personalities and entertainers.



Photo shows Kuwaiti designer Fatima Ismael and host Dalida Khalil.



Kuwaiti designer Fatima Ismael while giving her speech.

THE ICONIC RADO CERAMICA

Watchmaker adds three new pieces to redesigned collection Swiss watchmaker Rado made waves last year with the relaunch of its iconic Rado Ceramica collection. Teaming up with renowned industrial designer Konstantin Grcic, the brand updated its well-known, starkly geometric timepiece with a contemporary new look for the current zeitgeist. Now three new additions to the Ceramica family have arrived and are ready to make a bold impact on the wrist.

With strong lines and gently curved silhouettes, these three new Ceramics are ideal for fans of minimalism. Following the success of the two matt Ceramics that were unveiled last year, another model in matt black high-tech ceramic has been added to the collection. For a softer look that is no less visually compelling, two models in grey high-tech ceramic are also available. The polished grey version features the same Super-LumiNova indexes as its matt black counterpart, while the dial of the matt grey version boasts a vertically brushed finished and concave dots that function as indexes. This collection marks the first time that automatic movements have been used in the Ceramica family.

Greyscale cool

As the name indicates, the Ceramica is made from high-tech ceramic, a material favored by luxury watchmakers for its incredible marriage of lightness and scratch resistance. The aesthetic properties of high-tech ceramic are no less impressive: An astonishing range of colors and finishes can be crafted from this futuristic material, which was first used in the medical and aerospace industries before Rado pioneered its use in watchmaking. High-tech ceramic is also hypoallergenic and adapts readily to the wearer's body temperature, making it gentle and comfortable against the skin.

Seven high-tech ceramic colors - black, white, plasma, grey, brown, green and blue - are now featured in Rado's collections. The launch of the grey Ceramica marks the first time that this high-tech ceramic color has been featured in the

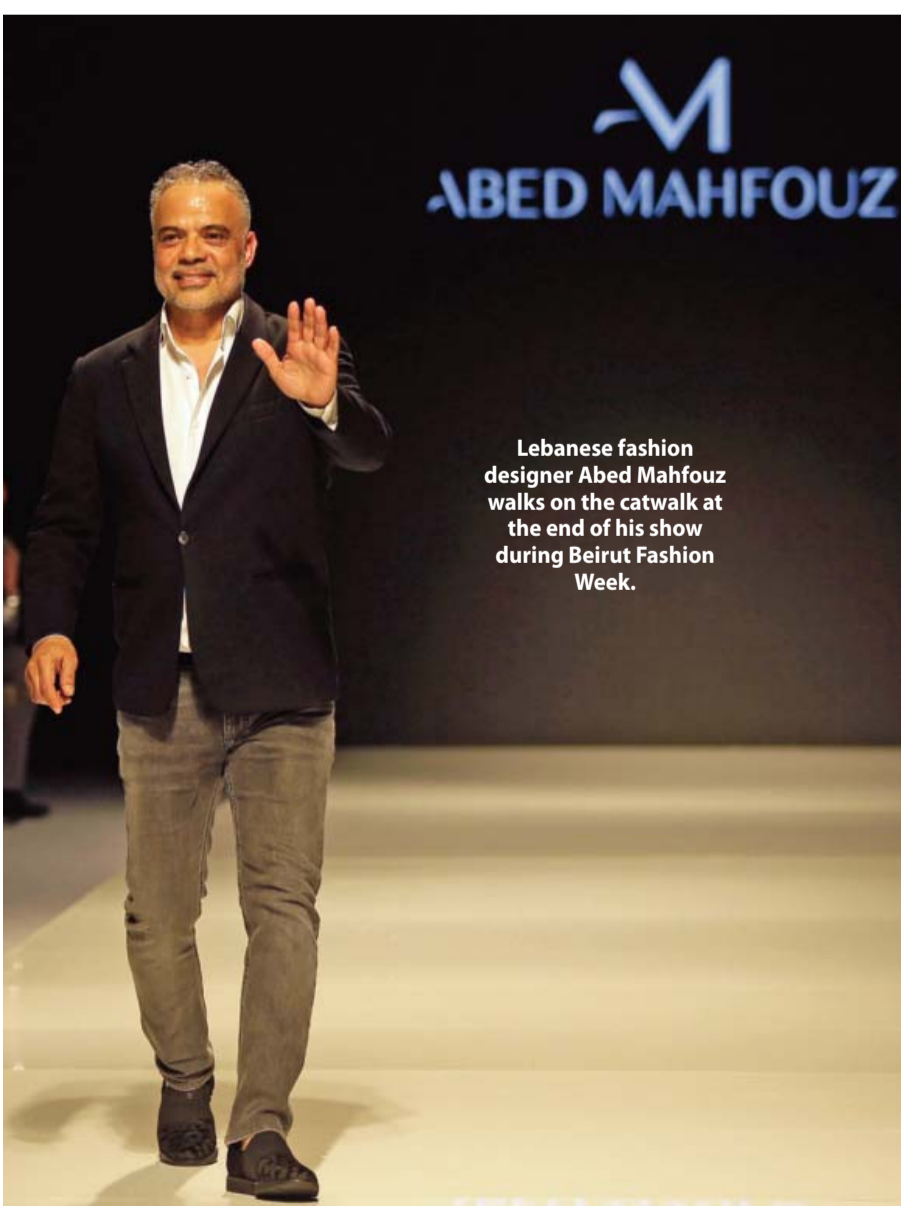


Ceramica family. Grey high-tech ceramic has debuted in the Ceramica collection with two finishes: a subtle, earthy sandblasted matt and a perfect high-gloss polish, a testament to the versatility of this remarkable material.

For designer Konstantin Grcic, color functions as a kind of coding: "Applied to an object, color is both functional and emotional. For example, a black watch is perceived to be elegant, but also quite masculine, professional. A grey watch, in comparison, is less gender specific. The color has a contemporary connotation. It feels younger, less classical." For Rado, color means not only something beautiful to behold, but also represents the brand's dedication to technical achievement and drive for innovation.



Elegant looks from Lebanese designer Abed Mahfouz during Beirut Fashion Week



Lebanese fashion designer Abed Mahfouz walks on the catwalk at the end of his show during Beirut Fashion Week.

Models display creations by Lebanese fashion designer Abed Mahfouz during Beirut Fashion Week on April 18, 2017. — AFP photos



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2017

Elegant looks from Lebanese designer Abed Mahfouz during Beirut Fashion Week

39



Models Lauren Green (left) and Abi Moore wear floral dress creations, representing an iris and a poppy respectively, by New Zealand artist Jenny Gillies as they pose on the eve of the opening day of the Harrogate Spring Flower Show at the Great Yorkshire Showground in Harrogate, northern England yesterday. The flower show, which features over 1,000 exhibitors and hosts the UK's biggest exhibition by flower arrangers and florists, opens today and runs until April 23, 2017. — AFP photos

Bizarre News

Woman gets hand stuck down toilet

A woman had to be rescued by firefighters after she got her hand stuck in the toilet. Gracie Henderson had just moved into her new home in New Caney, near Houston in America, when her toilet got blocked, and instead of using a plunger to clear the pipes she decided to get more hands on and use her hands instead. However, the watch Gracie was wearing on her wrist got caught in the U-bend of the toilet basin, which meant her arm was completely stuck down the loo. Firefighters were called to the property to help her, and in order to free Gracie's arm they had to detach the porcelain basin from her bathroom and take it outside, whilst Gracie's arm was still attached. The emergency services were able to free her arm by smashing the toilet bowl, and although Gracie remained uninjured she decided to share footage of the embarrassing ordeal on Facebook.

Women earn more than men on social media

Women have reportedly defeated the pay gap on social media, outperforming men by 35 percent. A study commissioned by influencer showed a female influencer with 100,000 followers can earn up to £41,600 by posting two sponsored social posts a week. However, the founder of the web platform, Ben Jeffries, was surprised by the outcome. The 21-year-old said: "It's no surprise that influential individuals on social media are monetizing their social feeds - they have been doing so for some years now - but it is a surprise to see that female influencers are commanding higher fees than their male counterparts, flipping the traditional pay gap on its head." The gender pay gap is currently at almost 14 percent in the UK, but this figure has been challenged when it comes to women using their social media outlets as marketing tools. And it is assumed the increased popularity in the fashion industry is thought to be the cause of their success. It has been reported a woman with 20,000 followers can ask for £160 for each sponsored post from brands, whereas men can only earn £120. And females with 50,000 to 100,000 followers can earn up to £400 per post, whilst male influencers with the same following are earning £300 per post, which means there is over 50 percent increase for women and a 13 percent increase for men against the average salary of £27,500 for full-time employees. The findings also show 73 percent of 18 to 30 year old's follow social media savvy stars including Zoella, Alfie Deyes and Tanya Burr.

A beaver helps herd cattle

A beaver was spotted herding cattle across a field. Adrienne Ivey and her husband Aaron were out visiting their 150 cattle at their ranch near Ituna, Canada, when they noticed their herd were following a semi-aquatic rodent. And it has been reported some of the animals even lowered their heads to take a closer look at the beaver, which was commanding them around. The farming couple are used to herding cows with horses or quad bikes and were left utterly gobsmacked at the site of one single animal calling the shots. Ivey uploaded a video of the beaver shepherding her cattle to Facebook because she thought her friends and family would get a "great chuckle" from it. She told the Canadian Press: "We knew that people would get a great chuckle out of it because you cannot get more Canadian than that. "We talk about how awesome our Canadian beef is, but a beaver leading cattle around? It's the most Canadian thing ever!"

Man wrongly arrested over cat litter

A man was arrested after police mistook his cat litter for illegal drugs. Ross Lebeau, 24, from Texas, was pulled over in his car by police who searched his vehicle and discovered the suspicious substance hidden in a sock, which they believed to be crystal methamphetamine. The officers arrested the driver on suspicion of possessing the forbidden substance and kept him in custody for three days before they discovered the alleged drug in the underwear garment was cat litter, which the driver used to prevent condensation forming in his vehicle. According to the Metro newspaper, police soon released Ross from his cell after realizing the mistake.

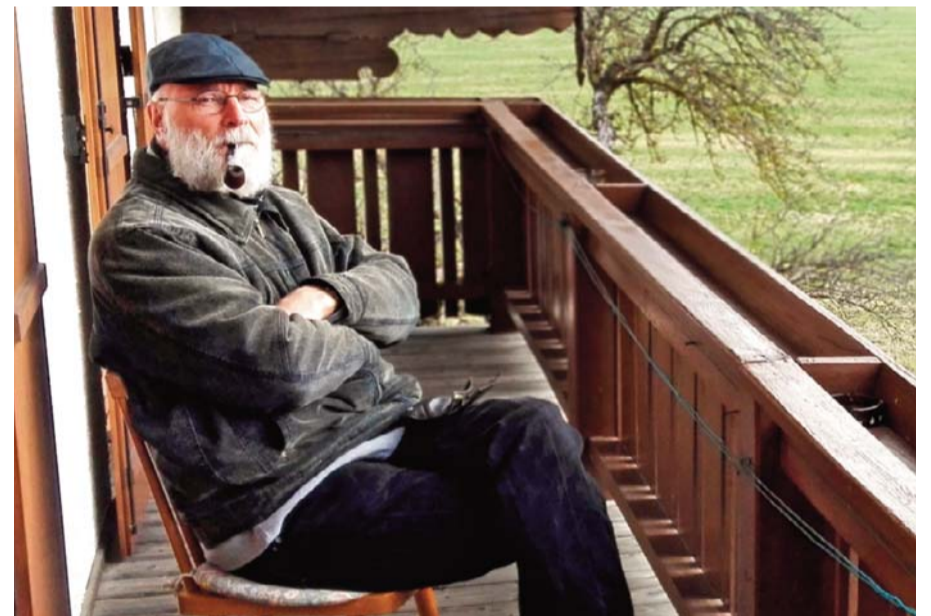
Stan's the man for Austrian hermit job

There's no running water, electricity or pay but 50 people from around the world still applied to be one of Europe's last hermits. Now there is a winner, Austrian officials said yesterday. "We opted for Stan Vanuytrecht because his personality appealed to us. He radiates calm and comes across as well-anchored," said Erich Rohrmoser, mayor of Saalfelden near Salzburg in the west. Vanuytrecht, a divorced, Trabant-driving former artillery officer, surveying technician and Catholic deacon from Belgium with a white beard and a pipe, said he was surprised to be chosen. "I thought I didn't have a chance," the Austria Press Agency quoted the 58-year-old retiree as saying. "When I read about the Saalfelden hermitage I thought to myself: that's the place for me."

Although the spartan 350-year-old hermitage is built into a cliff above the town, the job doesn't offer total solitude. People often hike up to enjoy the view and sometimes to confide in the hermit. But

Vanuytrecht said that he believes his previous experience working with the homeless, alcoholics, drugs addicts, prisoners and psychiatric patients will stand him in good stead. "It's important just to listen without talking oneself and without judging," he said. His ex-wife's mental illness and the poverty he experienced after their divorce also taught him important lessons, he said. His predecessor, former priest and psychotherapist Thomas Fieglmueller, returned to Vienna after just one season — the hermitage is only open from April to November — to write.

"Life in the hermit's cell is spartan but the nature is very beautiful. I met lots of nice people and had good conversations," he told the Salzburger Nachrichten daily. "But there was also criticism from apparently arch-conservative Catholics because I didn't have a cowl or a beard," Fieglmueller said. Vanuytrecht starts work on April 30. — AFP



This undated picture shows Stan Vanuytrecht, new hermit of one of central Europe's last hermitages, built into a cliff above the town of Saalfelden, Austria. — AFP photos



This undated file photo handed out by Saalfelden Leogang Touristik shows a large view over Saalfelden near Salzburg in Austria and one of central Europe's last hermitages (right), built into a cliff above the town.