

Tangible strides, clear reforms to build economy in Vision 2035



Nearing 100-day mark, Trump says milestone not 'meaningful'



Syrian refugees are New York tourists for the day



No hurry as inspirational centenarian wins gold



BARRAK URGES RECONCILIATION, REFORMS TO 'RESCUE' KUWAIT

FREED OPPOSITION LEADER EXTENDS OLIVE BRANCH TO GOVT



Min 23°
Max 35°
High Tide 11:07 & 23:29
Low Tide 05:05 & 17:27



RUSSIA INCREASES MILITARY SPENDING DESPITE SANCTIONS

STOCKHOLM: Russia became the world's third largest military spender in 2016 despite low oil prices and economic sanctions, as the global expenditure rose for a second consecutive year, a study said yesterday. Russia's military spending was \$69.2 billion in 2016, a 5.9 percent rise over 2015, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said in a report, adding this was the highest proportion of its GDP since it became an independent state. "This increased spending and heavy burden on the economy comes at a time when the Russian economy is in serious trouble due to low oil and gas prices and the economic sanctions imposed since 2014," (by the West over the Ukraine conflict), SIPRI said.

Saudi Arabia was the third largest spender in 2015 but dropped to fourth place in 2016 as its expenditure fell by 30 percent to \$63.7 billion, "despite its continued involvement in regional wars," it added. "Falling oil revenue and associated economic problems attached to the oil-price shock has forced many oil-exporting countries to reduce military spending," SIPRI researcher Nan Tian said — AFP (See Page 10)



KUWAIT: Freed opposition leader Musallam Al-Barrak addresses supporters at a rally yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Prominent opposition leader Musallam Al-Barrak called yesterday for national reconciliation to rescue the state just days after his release from jail. Barrak, 61, was freed from prison on Friday after serving a two-year sentence for insulting HH the Amir in public, a charge he had denied. The former lawmaker told thousands of supporters at a rally yesterday that the state had reached "the lowest point in its modern history".

"Kuwait is headed to catastrophe in all fields... It is so close to becoming a failed state," Barrak said. He called on the government to initiate talks to achieve compromise in the state which has suffered bitter political disputes in the past decade. "If the government makes a serious step towards political reforms, we are ready to make many steps," Barrak said.

He said that no one in the opposition was trying to overthrow the regime. "No one disputes the constitutional legality of the Al-Sabah family," he said. But Barrak said that for reconciliation to succeed, the government must reinstate revoked citizenships of opposition figures and scrap all freedom-curbing legislation issued in the past few years. He also demanded amnesty for all activists, that the judiciary should be allowed to handle citizenship cases and called for cleaning security agencies of "corrupt" elements.

As a result of lingering political disputes between the government and opposition groups, the National Assembly has been dissolved seven times since 2006, the last of which was in October. — AFP

QATAR AIRWAYS SLAMS 'BULLYING'

AIRLINE SEES 'MANAGEABLE' DECLINE IN FLIGHTS TO US

DUBAI: The chief of Qatar Airways yesterday accused American carriers complaining over alleged subsidies to Gulf airlines of "bullying", as he announced new US routes in defiance of mounting airport restrictions. US carriers Delta, United and American Airlines have accused Qatar Airways along with Dubai's Emirates and Abu Dhabi's Etihad of benefiting from government subsidies to expand their transcontinental networks. They have urged US President Donald Trump to take action against the Gulf airlines, who deny any form of subsidy.

Speaking to reporters at the annual Arabian Travel Market in Dubai, Qatar Airways chief Akbar Al-Baker said he didn't expect any action from Washington. "President Trump is a wise individual and a very good businessman, and I don't think he will buy into bullying by the three American carriers," Baker said. Qatar Airways was among the airlines affected by the ban imposed last month on electronic devices larger than a smartphone on flights to the United States from 10 airports in the Middle East and Turkey.

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DUBAI: Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al-Baker speaks at a press conference during the Arabian Travel Market exhibition yesterday. — AP

US BLACKLISTS 271 SYRIAN CHEMISTS OVER SARIN ATTACK

WASHINGTON: The US government put 271 Syrian chemists and other officials on its financial blacklist yesterday, punishing them for their role in the deadly chemical weapons attack on a rebel-held town in early April. In one of its largest-ever sanctions announcements, the US Treasury Department took aim at the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC), which it said was responsible for developing the alleged sarin gas weapon used in the April 4 attack.

The attack left 87 dead, including many children, in the town of Khan Sheikhoun, provoking outrage in the West, which accused Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad of being responsible. The sanctions include a freeze on all assets in the United States belonging to 271 individuals on the blacklist, and block any American person or business from dealing with them. According to the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a Washington-based think-tank, the SSRC is Syria's leading scientific research center, with close links to the country's military.

The center itself was already the subject of two sanctions declarations, in 2005 and 2007, due to its alleged role in developing weapons of mass destruction. The Treasury said in a statement yesterday that the SSRC is specifically behind the Syrian government's efforts to develop chemical weapons and the means to deliver them. The 271 either have specific scientific expertise for the program or have been involved in it since 2012, it said.

Continued on Page 13

OBAMA SAYS READY TO TRAIN NEW LEADERS IN FIRST SPEECH

CHICAGO: Former US president Barack Obama returned to the public spotlight yesterday, saying he hopes to spend the next phase of his life helping to "prepare the next generation of leadership". After three months off, Obama broke his silence in his adopted hometown of Chicago, speaking to high school and college students about the need for greater civic engagement. The 55-year-old Democrat, who ended his two terms at the White House in January - handing

power over to Donald Trump - said he was "incredibly optimistic" about the future, and that problems facing America could be solved.

"On the back end now of my presidency, now that it's completed, I'm spending a lot of time thinking about what is the most important thing I can do for my next job?" Obama said in his opening remarks at the University of Chicago, where he once was a lecturer

Continued on Page 13

'FLYING MACHINE' MAKER PLANS DELIVERIES

WASHINGTON: A Silicon Valley "flying car" startup, Kitty Hawk, reportedly backed by Google co-founder Larry Page, released a video yesterday of its airborne prototype and announced plans for deliveries of a "personal flying machine" this year. "Our mission is to make the dream of personal flight a reality. We believe when everyone has access to personal flight, a new, limitless world of opportunity will open up to them," said a statement on the website of the Kitty Hawk company, based in Google's home town of Mountain View, California. "Today we're announcing our first prototype of The Flyer, a personal flying machine that will become available for sale by the end of 2017."

The video showed the single-seat aircraft - with two pontoons and a spider web-like platform - taking off from a lake at an undisclosed location and hovering above the water, where it is meant to be used. The craft, propelled by eight rotors, takes off and lands vertically, like a helicopter. It is said to weigh about 100 kg, fly at speeds up to 40 kph and can hover at 4.5 m high. The company describes the Flyer as "a new, all-electric aircraft", which is "safe, tested and legal to operate in the

Continued on Page 13



Cimeron Morrissey, an outdoor sports enthusiast and freelance writer, flies on the Kitty Hawk Flyer prototype. — AFP

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PALESTINIAN LEADER LEAVES KUWAIT

KUWAIT: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has left Kuwait following a two-day official visit to the country, where he held official talks



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas walk hand-in-hand prior to the Palestinian leader's departure yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photos

with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Palestinian leader was seen off at the airport by His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, 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 Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh, and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, in addition to senior commanders of the army, police, National Guard and Kuwait Fire Service Directorate. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah bids farewell to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meet with Tawadros II, the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



Tawadros II, the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark meets with Rev Emmanuel Gharib, Chairman of the National Evangelical Church of Kuwait.



Tawadros II, the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark attends a mass in the Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Church in Kuwait.

AMIR MEETS TAWADROS II

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Tawadros II, the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark and his accompanying delegation. His Highness the Amir asserted on the importance of dialogue and understanding in all religions and to bolster a culture of forgiveness and tolerance among all people.

Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meeting. Pope Tawadros II expressed happiness over his meeting with His Highness the Amir as well as his visit to Kuwait, which is known for its tolerance and kindness of its people. Pope Tawadros II, in a mass in the Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Church, commended Kuwait-Egypt deep-rooted relations at the official and public levels.

"I have been longing to visit Kuwait which I knew through Al-Arabi Magazine; the gift offered by Kuwait for all intellectuals in the Arab world, which speaks to the mind and speaks about human knowledge," he said. Pope Tawadros II, whose mass was about 'love', said his love for Kuwait grew stronger following the meeting with His Highness the Amir and some citizens. He urged attendees to spread love in words and deeds.—KUNA

ARAB MEDIA FORUM OFFICIALLY KICKS OFF 14TH EDITION

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of and in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the 14th Arab Media Forum commenced in Kuwait Sunday evening. Addressing the audience during the opening session, Kuwait's Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah welcomed Arab and international guests participating in the two-day event. He highlighted the great impact of the information and telecommunication revolution on Arab media.

Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, in recognition of his patronage to the forum as well as his support to Arab media.

On the sidelines of the main session, His Highness Sheikh Jaber met several Arab media figures participating in the forum. The 14th edition of the forum, held under rubric of 'Media. Life' witnesses a number of seminars, workshops, and discussion panels related to media, featuring many of the event's most prominent attendees. The forum also features a special exhibition dedicated to media and technology communications, which is expected to witness the attendance of nearly 1,000 distinguished media personalities from Arab and foreign media institutions that were specially invited to this event. The Arab Media Forum was founded in Kuwait in 2003 with the aim of developing Arab media. — KUNA

As it evolved tools and approaches, the telecommunication revolution has also changed ways of thinking and behaviors. It was a surprise for all," he said. During the opening session, Secretary General of the Arab Media Forum Madhi Al-Khamis honored His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah during opening session of the 14th Arab Media Forum. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Secretary General of the Arab Media Forum Madhi Al-Khamis (left) honors His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah during opening session of the 14th Arab Media Forum. — KUNA

ZAIN PARTICIPATES IN ARAB MEDIA FORUM INAUGURATION

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its participation in the inauguration ceremony of the 14th edition of the Arab Media Forum. The company is the Diamond sponsor of the event, which came under the patronage and attendance of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah visited Zain's booth at the event, where he expressed

his admiration of Zain's strategic partnership of the Arab Media Forum during the past six consecutive years. The company is keen on enriching media involvement, being a leading private sector company in the country. The opening day witnessed the attendance of many Arab ministers, journalists, and media personalities, including the Bahraini Minister of Information Ali Al-Rumaihi, the Omani Minister of Information Dr Abdulmonem Al-Hosni, the former Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Benaissa, and more.

The first day program witnessed a number of seminars, workshops, and discussion panels related to media, featuring many of the event's most prominent attendees, including Saudi Professor of Psychology Dr Traq Al-Habib, Saudi media personality Lujain Omran, Emirati singer Ahlam, Lebanese media personality Raaghda Shalhoob, Jordanian media personality Ola Faris, and more. Zain participated in the forum through its dedicated booth, where the company hosted and interviewed a number of prominent

guests and live-streamed the interviews on its official YouTube channel. The company was keen on utilizing the latest telecommunications tools to document the event, further highlighting the big role social media plays nowadays in communities all around the world. Zain's strategic partnership of this forum highlights its social commitment, as the company believes in the importance of the role press and media plays in the development of communities. Zain will continue supporting

this very important sector which carries significant and informative messaging to the public at large and the communications world as a whole. The Arab Media Forum has proven itself to be one of the region's most prominent events that attend to Arab media. Since 2003, the event brought together many ministers, editors-in-chief of local and regional newspapers, media executives, journalists, academics, authors, actors, businessmen, and social figures from all around the Arab world.



KUWAIT: Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Bahraini Minister of Information Ali Al-Rumaihi, Omani Minister of Information Dr Abdulmonem Al-Hosni, and former Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed Benaissa pose at Zain's booth.



A picture taken from the live-streamed interview of Bahraini Minister of Information Ali Al-Rumaihi.

Special report



KUWAIT: Kuwait City skyscrapers seen from Al-Shaheed Park. —KUNA photos



This file photo shows His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivering a speech during the inauguration of the first session of the National Assembly's 15th legislative term, in which he addressed the need to take effective measures to mitigate the budget deficit's effects.



Ongoing construction works at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's clean fuel and integrated refining complex projects.

KUWAIT '35 VISION: TANGIBLE STRIDES, CLEAR REFORMS TO BUILD CONTEMPORARY ECONOMY

EMPOWERING THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO CONTRIBUTE TO NATIONAL ECONOMY

KUWAIT: Supporting and developing the national productive economic sectors are now one of government priorities to achieve an economy based on diversity, sustainability and modernity in 2035. This is part of a structural and economic reform plan, which has been drawn up in accordance with the 'Kuwait 2035' vision.

Kuwait's budget for 2035 will be different than the current ones as the oil revenues in that budget will be limited compared with the revenues collected from productive economic sectors like industry, technology, tourism, services, banking and investment, in addition to the activation of knowledge-based economy, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

After 18 years, the private sector will contribute to the national economy in accordance with several forms, including the partnership with the public sector, or through managing the State's utilities. For this purpose, several specialized bodies and authorities have been established, they include the Kuwait Authority

for Partnership Projects (KAPP), the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDI-PA), the Capital Markets Authority (CMA), and the National Fund For Small And Medium-Sized Enterprise Development.

Through these authorities, a sustainable and diversified economy will be achieved which is known as the economy whose pillars are based on empowering the private sector, increasing SMEs and attracting foreign investments so as to provide government with effective and stable financial sectors.

The pillar of sustainable and diversified economy affects citizens directly, therefore the State of Kuwait has paid much attention to it after His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had called for paying further attention for economic development.

Sharp decrease

During the inauguration of the first session of the National Assembly's 15th legislative term, His Highness the Amir stressed that the country is facing sharp decrease in the State's revenues, which hinder its march, due to the collapse of oil prices all over the world.

His Highness the Amir said this caused a large deficit in the state budget, calling for taking effective measures to address and mitigate the deficit's effects. His Highness the Amir reiterated that it is an inevitable option to reduce general spending through carefully-studied measures to address imbalances in the state's budget, stop waste in national resources, direct them towards the right purpose, and at the same time to alleviate burdens on the low-income class and take into account social justice. It is part of a comprehensive program of an economic reform, which give a vital role to the private sector, His Highness the Amir noted.

Kuwait seeks to achieve a sustainable and diversified economy based on:

- Empowering the private sector.
- Increasing small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- Attracting foreign investments.

Therefore, achieving the country's sustainable and diversified economy is an imperative matter amid such challenges to guarantee the provision of diversifying sources of national income and not depending on the oil as a main source of income, as it is unstable due to many external effective factors.

Diversification

The diversification of national economy is a shared goal to the parliament, government and the private sector. However, this faces some challenges, mainly the decrease of either foreign or national investments

Kuwait's financial and economic reform program seeks to achieve:

- Rationalizing spending and increasing investment efficiency by selecting projects with high development impacts.
- Increasing public revenues through developing tax system.
- Reviewing, rationalizing and restructuring the current subsidies.

that affected the country's status. Therefore, there is a pressing need to get a clear investment map to investors in the country that provides competitive chances and legislations necessarily required to offer an appropriate environment.

To overcome these challenges, which hinder the achievement of goals of a sustainable and diversified economy, five programs have been set and each one includes several projects in accordance with specific criteria. They are: creating business environment for the private sector, diversifying production base, developing national tourism, knowledge economy and the country's financial and economic reform.

Creating a business environment aims to overcome obstacles facing the private sector, and work on speeding up its contributions to GDP and creating new jobs for citizens. Diversifying production and increasing investment rates seek to raise contribution to non-oil sectors in GDP and reduce dependence on oil to diversify sources of income. Two bodies take part in this program, including Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), which provides some key projects like the clean fuel project and integrated refining complex.

Due to the importance of tourist sector as a main source of diversifying national income, there is a special program for this sector that pays much attention to develop national tourism, which targets encouragement of investment in different activities across the country and the optimal use of tourist services and utilities. The Ministry of Information contributes to this program through carrying out the marketing campaign.

The knowledge economy program aims to encourage relevant industries, marketing them, build capacities and promote skills

required to carry out scientific research programs, including the establishment of a global oil research center. Kuwait University and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research are carrying out these goals through some projects.

The fifth program seeks to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector through rationalizing spending and increasing investment efficiency by selecting projects with high development impacts, and increasing public revenues through developing tax system, reviewing and rationalizing the current subsidies, and restructuring them.

Through achieving the goals, programs and projects of the sustainable and diversified economy, citizens will find development effects through providing new jobs, increasing GDP, improving services and supporting financial stability. —KUNA

Five programs have been set to help overcome the challenges that hinder the achievement of goals of a sustainable and diversified economy:

- Creating business environment for the private sector.
- Diversifying the production base.
- Developing national tourism.
- Launching a knowledge economy program.
- The country's financial and economic reform plan.



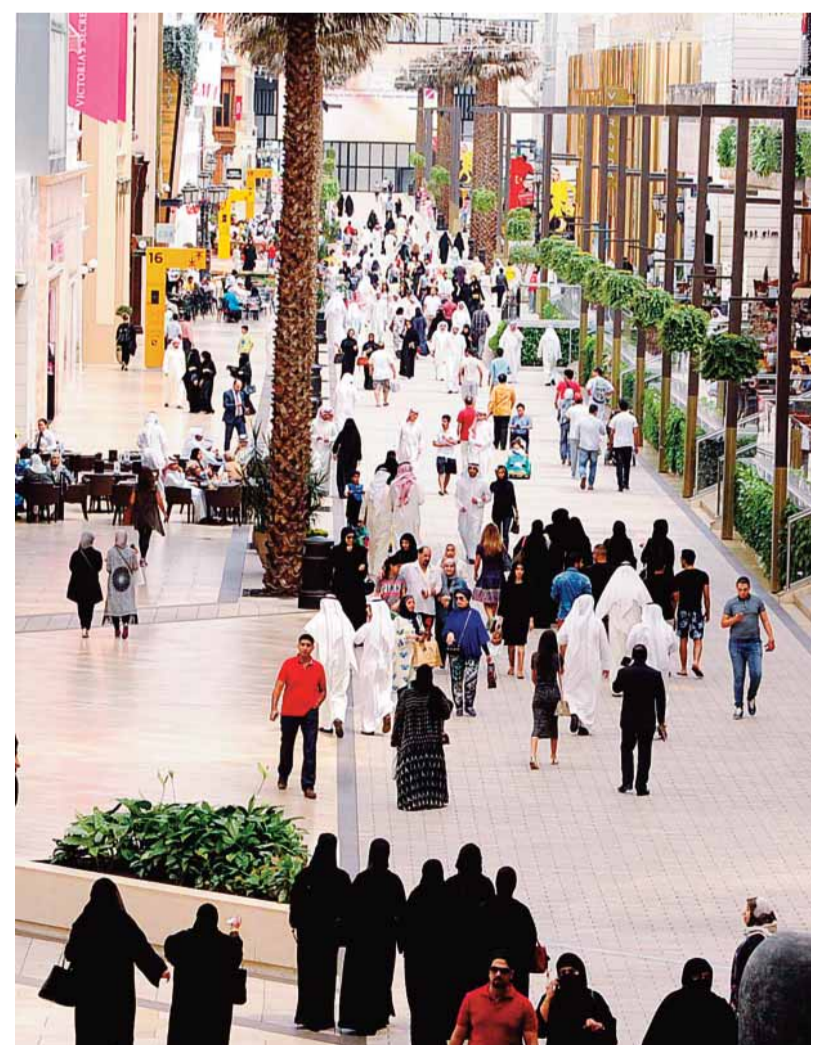
The Central Bank of Kuwait's new head office building.



Ongoing construction works at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's clean fuel and integrated refining complex projects.



The recently privatized Kuwait stock exchange (Boursa Kuwait).



The Avenues Mall, already one of the largest shopping malls in the region, is an example of how the private sector could contribute to the national economy.

Legalese

THESE ARE NOT EXCEPTIONS BUT THE NORM

By Mona Kareem

Migrant-Rights.org

We all saw the video of the Ethiopian worker who was holding the verge of a window before falling off the seventh floor of a building in Kuwait. People in Kuwait and elsewhere were shocked and angered by the fact that her employer was filming her, instead of trying to save her life. The woman screamed for help "hold me, hold me" and her voice was heard across the globe, reminding us of a bitter reality that domestic workers in Kuwait experience every day.

In videos that circulated on social media in the aftermath, many sympathized with the domestic helper but many more also claimed that she was trying to commit suicide or offered other justifications for the employer's failure to prevent the woman's fall. The helper recorded her own video, soon to be shared across social media, denying the suicide rumors and saying that she had tried to escape because the employer had kept her prisoner inside the home, even after she'd asked to be returned to the recruitment agency.

According to international human rights agreements and declarations, this is 'forced labor'. Reports varied on the details of the worker's circumstances, some reports said she hadn't been paid for months, others said she had only been in the house for 60 days.

Whatever the truth, this case is similar to thousands of others in the Gulf. Reports of mistreatment, forced labor, imprisonment, sexual, physical and verbal abuse, non-payment of salaries and other forms of exploitation against domestic laborers are as common as sunlight and sand in the Gulf Cooperation Council states.

A few months ago, a Kuwaiti doctor was sentenced to four years in jail for torturing her domestic worker. Her victim escaped and for weeks she stayed at a local shelter, where many others have arrived with horrific stories of exploitation, harassment, and torture. It turns out that the doctor in that case had allegedly committed prior violations of the same nature against domestic workers, but no case was filed. Last November, we read with horror about the case of a Bahraini woman who received two months in jail for torturing a Sri Lankan woman with an iron. Another Kuwaiti woman got only six months in jail for assaulting her worker. In the UAE, an Emirati woman allegedly tortured her domestic worker on various occasions using scissors, boiling water, and an iron.

This is routine violence. It's not an exception. It's not unusual. It's not a rare case. It's every day. Every hour, minute by minute, physical, emotional, verbal and economic violence against the weakest segments of our societies.

This happens because the law fails to protect domestic workers. This is specifically tied to the fact that domestic workers are confined to the household, and when they leave, they're frequently reported as "absconding" and become illegal workers.

When the Kuwaiti parliament was discussing the domestic workers' law two years ago, legislators ignored calls to revise these conditions that continue to make workers vulnerable to violations. They often excuse the lack of change by pointing to 'local culture or society'. The sponsorship system places a worker under the full power of his/her employer. Discourses on 'family values' or 'protecting society' are often deployed to justify the very limited freedoms and rights of domestic workers.

The social and legal structures deny the right of a domestic worker to her body; whether to refuse serving a certain employer, or to take a walk or make a trip outside the household, or to avoid being harmed and assaulted by employers.

Working as a domestic worker in the Gulf is becoming more of a risky adventure, as it lacks the least assurances for safety and wellness. In the Philippines, media documented the story of a Filipina domestic worker who now resides in a mental health clinic, as she tries to recover from years of exploitation and sexual harassment in Kuwait. We also heard about the Sri Lankan worker who had worked for a Kuwaiti family for 11 years without wages, only to be paid her wages in sum, and get deported without much compensation for her freedom and wellbeing.

A domestic worker might be harassed, raped, pushed towards suicide, or even forced to commit a crime. In such conditions, one cannot maintain sanity and good spirits. These are not exceptional scenarios, these are not individual cases. This is the norm. Nothing stops the employer from harming his worker, other than his/her own conscience.

Kareem, a stateless Arab from Kuwait, is a member of Migrant-Rights.org, a blogger and writer who lives in New York.

DOMESTIC WORKERS' RIGHTS DISCUSSED AT AUK SYMPOSIUM

'13,000 CASES OF UNPAID SALARIES RESOLVED IN THREE MONTHS'

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Center of Gulf Studies at the American University of Kuwait (AUK), in collaboration with the One Roof campaign, held a symposium called 'Domestic Workers in Kuwait between Local Laws and Social Attitudes' at AUK on Sunday.

Mohammad Al-Ajmi from the Domestic Workers' Department provided a legal view about the new domestic law. "This law was issued on July 23, 2015, and was applied from July 31, 2016. This law improves the rights of domestic laborers, as it allows them to file cases at the labor court, so they do not pay fees as they used to do at the regular courts. This law also gave our department the power to cancel the contract with the sponsor due to improper accommodation," he noted.

He provided some statistics. "Our department received 1,431 complaints that we resolved, while 41 were sent to the court. Also, in the past three months, we solved 13,000 cases of unpaid salaries. We canceled some contracts and allowed the domestic workers to go back home. There are 669,000 domestic workers in Kuwait, while the cases filed in the court by domestic workers are around 1,300, which is around five percent, which is not very high," added Ajmi. The new law brought more benefits for workers.



KUWAIT: A picture showing the keynote speakers at a symposium called 'Domestic Workers in Kuwait between Local Laws and Social Attitudes' held at the American University of Kuwait on Sunday. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

"This law specified the working hours of workers - not to exceed 12 hours with rest periods in between, and not work more than five hours continuously," he said. The Domestic Workers' Department (DWD) is part of the Residency Affairs Department of the Ministry of Interior that was founded in 1992. "We inspect domestic worker agencies even during holidays, and we shut

down 68 of these agencies for breaking the new law," said Ajmi.

Oppression

Bibi Al-Sabah from the Social Work Society said when she started working at the society in 2005, the new law was not issued yet and domestic workers were oppressed. "We had to beg the sponsor to

pay pending salaries to the maid. But the new law improved this situation through the DWD that forces the sponsor to give the domestic workers their rights, and this simplified our work," she explained.

Falah Al-Mutairi from the foreign workers' shelter said the shelter was founded in 2014 and is the biggest of its kind capacity-wise in the Middle East, but many people in Kuwait doesn't know about it. "Currently the shelter is for women only, but we are planning to expand it for men as well. We help domestic workers in need and even victims of human trafficking. We offer psychological services, accommodation, food and personal requirements, in addition to a fully-equipped clinic. It can accommodate 500 workers," he pointed out.

Taher Al-Baghli from the Human Line Organization highlighted some shortages in the new law. "The new domestic law 68/2015 brought many advantages such as forbidding cutting a worker's salary or setting penalties for forcing the workers to work overtime. But there is no mention of blackmailing, for instance. The law also didn't specify the penalties for the sponsor if the worker doesn't get healthcare or indemnity. The penalties for some violations are a six-month ban on getting a domestic worker, but the worker won't benefit from this penalty," he pointed out.

KIB SPONSORS LIGHT EXPO, SUPPORTING FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

KUWAIT: In line with its social responsibility mission to support youth initiatives and local small businesses, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced its sponsorship of the 4th 'Light Expo', the exhibition dedicated to showcasing local Ramadan products. This year's exhibition will take place at Al-Raya Conference Hall from the 24th through 27th of April, featuring the participation of a number of young, local female talents.

Light Expo is an annual event held prior to the holy month of Ramadan, which every year hosts a large collection of handcrafted Ramadan products, designed by local female entrepreneurs and small business owners.

On this occasion, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, commented: "This sponsorship comes as part our leading social responsibility program which aims to support a diverse number of social activities and initiatives, targeting all different segments of our local community. We are particularly proud to be part of an initiative that supports local female creative

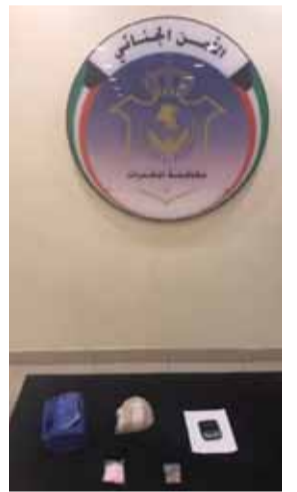
talents and entrepreneurs, as we have always dedicated a big portion of our social initiatives to supporting youth and empowering women." Najia also noted that a team from KIB will be present at a booth throughout the exhibition. KIB staff will be on hand to answer all questions related to the Bank's products and services, as well as its new campaigns and offers, which are designed to meet the various needs of all segments of the population.

It serves to note that KIB has continued to support and sponsor the Light Expo and its participants year on year, stemming from its belief in the need to provide moral and financial support to young entrepreneurs and their innovative ideas. The bank has always considered youth initiatives and entrepreneurial programs to be integral components towards empowering and nurturing future generations; by providing employment opportunities in the private sector for young men and women, nurturing the creative ideas of ambitious young minds, and all together helping build a brighter future for the country.

DUO ARRESTED WITH 2KG HEROIN

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Relations and Security Information Department at the Interior Ministry said Drugs Control General Department men arrested two Asians with possession of two kilograms of heroin. Tips were received about a lorry driver bringing heroin from a Gulf country, and he was arrested upon arrival with the 2 kg of heroin hidden in an oil container.



Crime

Report

Man lured to trap via social media

KUWAIT: Detectives put an end to the activities of two girls and three men, all Kuwaitis, who lured users of a social media app, then blackmailed them after filming them naked. A citizen was surprised by a request from a girl to be friends on social media. He obliged, and after some days, they agreed to meet. The girl said the first meeting should be in her flat. The man went there on time, only to find her with another girl she introduced as a friend, who left them alone. But she returned later pretending to be scared and told her that her husband was at the door. The man attempted to escape, but was surprised by the alleged husband, who was with two other men. They threatened him with a spray bottle containing a combustible gas, saying that they would set him on fire unless he takes off his clothes and handed over everything he had. He gave them KD 100 and stood in front of them naked as they took pictures of him, before they let him go. Afterwards, the man went to police and told them about what happened, then the case was referred to detectives who were able to arrest one of the suspects, and he led them to the rest. The two girls said they used social media to lure victims and blackmail them. All five citizens were sent to concerned authorities.

Missing girl found

A young girl and a man were taken to criminal detectives in order to continue interrogations after the girl admitted she was living with the man all the time she was absent from her family. Detectives had stopped the girl who was reported missing by her family. The girl said she befriended a man through Snapchat, and family disputes made her escape. The man put her up in several flats.

Stamps stolen

Criminal detectives in Jahra launched an investigation to determine the identity of thieves who broke into Jahra traffic department, pried open two stamp machines and stole stamps and money. They also attempted to steal the department's safe and took stamps and seals belonging to traffic department officials. Policemen who were supposed to guard the place were interrogated and cameras were checked. The possibility of the guards being away at the time of the theft still exists.

Brewery busted

Ahmadi security authorities busted a large illegal liquor brewery run by a Nepalese man in Sabah Al-Ahmad, where they found 150 liquor drums along with 480 bottles ready for sale. Distillation equipment was also found. Police asked the municipality emergency team to help them transfer the liquor drums to concerned authorities.

Dumpster fire

Jahra firemen had an exhausting day as a person deliberately set fire to another metal garbage dumpster every time firemen returned to the center. Fire authorities received a call about a fire in a garbage container near Wara Complex, so firemen responded and put out the fire. While on their way back, they received a call about another garbage fire in Qasr, and the same incident was repeated eight times. Detectives are investigating.

— Translated from the Arabic press



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In Brief

PRECIOUS METALS EXAMINED

KUWAIT: Kuwait has examined up to 30 tons of precious metals worth KD 300 million (\$986.5 million) in 2016, said Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan. The ministry testes and stamps gold and diamonds before they are offered for sale, Roudhan who also doubles as Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs added in a press statement after the opening of the 15th International Gold and Jewelry Exhibition 2017, with the participation of 140 local and foreign exhibitors. —KUNA



E-GOVERNMENT EXPO

SHARM EL-SHEIKH: General Manager of the Kuwaiti Nouf EXPO Yousef Al-Marzouq said Sunday it is imperative for Arab countries to share experience, information and programs in the e-government field. Speaking on the sidelines of Arab forum on e-government in Sharm El-Sheikh, Marzouq said the conference is hoped to come up with a set of recommendations that could contribute to developing e-government programs. E-governments have become part of the future, as conventional governments need some change in order to attain sustainable development goals, he added. — KUNA



AMIR SHOOTING CUP

ROME: Kuwait's Ambassador in Rome Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Sabah opened Sunday His Highness the Amir of Kuwait International Shooting Cup, a tournament co-organized by Kuwait Embassy and Italy's shooting federation. Sheikh Ali and president of the Italian shooting federation, Senator Luciano Rossi, opened the competitions, which were held at Umbriaverde shooting range in Todi, central Italy, the Embassy said in a statement. More than 460 shooters from Kuwait, Italy, Europe, South America and New



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Young Kuwaiti pearl divers participate in a cultural-themed sea voyage in Kuwait. — KUNA

WARBA BANK PARTICIPATES IN AUM'S JOB FAIR

KUWAIT: Warba Bank participated in the Job Fair organized recently by the American University of the Middle East (AUM). This position reflects Warba Bank's commitment to recruit Kuwaiti graduates and train them to work in Islamic banking, and to improve the capabilities of national cadres in this sector; thus, reflecting positively on enriching the local market with Kuwaiti manpower which is the backbone of solid economic development.

On that regard, Essam Al-Shaya, Chief Human Resources and General Services Officer at Warba Bank, said: "Our participation in the exhibition enabled Warba Bank to share its banking experi-

ence with new graduates seeking to enter the job market. The new graduates interacted with the bank's team that offered full demonstrations regarding the bank's operations and working environment. This also provides added value to staff members in terms of experience and other advantages. Furthermore, they gave students an idea about the skills and other requirements needed to apply for jobs in this field, and offered advice based on Warba Bank's experience in hiring, training, and qualifying national manpower."

Shaya further added: "This is not the first time that Warba Bank participates in career fairs. It has participated previously in several other

important fairs including GUST and Kuwait University job fairs held earlier this year. The bank believes that such exhibitions leave a huge positive impact on the ability to open new horizons for young people in order to enable them to gain advanced professional skills and attain a general idea regarding their future careers."

Warba Bank's participation reflects its commitment to help such activities succeed, considering that they contribute in enriching the labor market. These job fairs are considered a great platform in which job seekers and companies can directly meet and have discussions on the nature of work and other issues.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti and Iraqi borders officials met at Abdaly land border outlet yesterday. Director General of Land Border Security Department Maj Gen Fuad Al-Athari headed the Kuwaiti side, while Maj Gen Salam Kazem, commander of the fourth zone, headed the Iraqi side. Issues of mutual interest were discussed.

AHLI UNITED BANK PARTICIPATES IN CELEBRATING EARTH DAY

KUWAIT: As part of its social responsibility and support for environmental protection initiatives, Ahli United Bank (AUB) participated in the celebration of the anniversary of Earth Day, which falls on April 22nd each year. The bank's management extinguished all lights and unnecessary electric appliances in the bank's main building for six hours, from 6:00 pm to 12:00 am, in support of the environmental conservation process, as well as raising awareness of the importance of energy conservation and environmental protection in our daily activities.

On this initiative, AUB said in a press release: "The Bank's support for Earth Day is part of the Bank's desire to participate in spreading environmental awareness in rationalizing the use of electric power in private institutions, and its impact on the

rate of general consumption of electricity in particular, and its positive and environmental impact on the national economy in general."

The bank added "Earth Day is also an opportunity to raise people's awareness about the need to adopt different lifestyles and to contribute to the reduction in energy usage highlighting the simple actions that one can take to contribute to energy conservation today."

In the same context, AUB has unveiled the start of its project to transform electric lighting in Head Office and the bank's new branches into a power saving LED lighting system. The management of AUB said it would implement several initiatives aimed at supporting the environment and contributing to sustainable development this year.





Maoist rebels kill 24 police in central India

TRUMP DENOUNCES ANTI-SEMITISM ON ISRAEL'S ANNUAL HOLOCAUST DAY

REJECTED MAINSTREAM UNITES BEHIND MACRON
HOLLANDE: 'FAR-RIGHT WOULD DEEPLY DIVIDE FRANCE'

PARIS: France's political mainstream, shut out of the presidency by an angry electorate, united yesterday to urge voters to back centrist Emmanuel Macron in the presidential runoff and to reject Marine Le Pen's populist nationalism. Politicians on the moderate left and right, including French President Francois Hollande and the losing Socialist and Republicans party candidates in Sunday's first-round vote, maneuvered to block Le Pen's path to power in the May 7 runoff.

In a solemn address from the Elysee palace, Hollande said he will vote for Macron, his former economy minister, because the far-right Le Pen represents "both the danger of the isolation of France and of rupture with the European Union." Hollande said the far-right would "deeply divide France" at a time when the terror threat requires "solidarity. "Faced with such a risk, it is not possible to remain silent or to take refuge in indifference," he said.

European stock markets surged, and France's main index hit its highest level since early 2008, as investors gambled that the rise of populism around the world - and its associated unpredictability in policymaking - may have peaked. Voters narrowed the French presidential field from 11 to two on Sunday. The contest is widely seen as a litmus test for the populist wave that last year prompted Britain to vote to leave the European Union and US voters to elect Donald Trump president.

Only the defeated far-left candidate, Jean-Luc Melenchon, pointedly refused to back Macron. Le Pen's far-right National Front party, meanwhile, is hoping to peel away voters historically opposed to a party long tainted by racism and anti-Semitism. "The voters who voted for Mr Melenchon are angry voters. They can be in agreement with us," National Front Vice President Steeve Briot told The Associated Press, adding that those far-left voters sought choices "outside the system."

Choosing from inside the system is no longer an option. Voters rejected the two mainstream parties that have alternated power for decades in favor of Le Pen and the untested Macron, who has never held elected office and who founded his own political movement just last



PARIS: French centrist presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron, center, leaves his apartment, in Paris, yesterday. —AP

year. Macron's optimistic vision of a tolerant France and a united Europe with open borders is a stark contrast with Le Pen's darker, inward-looking "French-first" platform that calls for closed borders, tougher security, less immigration and dropping the shared euro currency to return to the French franc.

Le Pen went on the offensive against Macron in her first public comments yesterday. "He is a hysterical, radical 'Europeanist.' He is for total open borders. He says there is

no such thing as French culture. There is not one domain that he shows one ounce of patriotism," she said. Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie, made it into a presidential runoff against Jacques Chirac in 2002 and was crushed.

Many commentators expect the same fate for his daughter, but she has already drawn far more support than he ever did and she has transformed the party's once-pariah image. National Front vice president Louis Aliot insisted that Le Pen offers an alternative for anyone

skeptical of the EU and France's role in it. "I'm not convinced that the French are willing to sign a blank check to Mr Macron," he said. But Macron's party spokesman, Benjamin Griveaux, scoffed at the idea that Le Pen is a vector of change.

"She's been in the political system for 30 years. She inherited her father's party and we will undoubtedly have Le Pen's running for the next 20 years, because after we had the father, we have the daughter and we will doubtless have the niece," he said, referring to Marion Marechal-Le Pen. "So she is in a truly bad position to be talking about the elites." German Chancellor Angela Merkel wished Macron "all the best for the next two weeks."

Merkel's chief of staff, Peter Altmaier, tweeted that "the result for Emmanuel Macron shows: France AND Europe can win together! The center is stronger than the populists think!" Macron came in first in Sunday's vote, with just over 23 percent while Le Pen had 21 percent. Francois Fillon, the scandal-plagued conservative Republicans candidate, came in third with just shy of 20 percent of the vote, just ahead of Melenchon. Socialist candidate Benoit Hamon, whose party holds a majority in the legislature, got just 6 percent of the vote.

Turnout for Sunday's vote was 78 percent, down slightly from 79 percent in the first round of presidential voting in 2012. Protesters burned cars, danced around bonfires and dodged riot police overnight at the Place de la Bastille and Republique in Paris. Twenty-nine people were detained at the Bastille, where protesters waved red flags and sang "No Marine and No Macron!" in anger at the results.

"We are in a phase of decomposition, demolition, deconstruction," former Socialist Prime Minister Manuel Valls said. "We didn't do the work - intellectual, ideological and political - on what the left is, and we paid the price." Elaine Ganley reported from Henin-Beaumont. Lori Hinnant, Thomas Adamson, Angela Charlton et Philippe Sotto contributed from Paris. A previous version of this story has been corrected to show that the Socialist candidate was Benoit Hamon, not Manuel Valls. —AP

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NINE KILLED IN BRAZIL MASSACRE WERE SHOT, STABBED TO DEATH

RIO DE JANEIRO: Nine men, including an Evangelical pastor, massacred in a remote part of western Brazil were knifed and shot to death, police said Sunday after releasing the bodies for burial. No arrests were announced in the slayings which took place Thursday in a hard-to-access settlement in Mato Grosso state. A human rights group said the killings were part of a pattern of brutal pressure from rich landowners to displace small-scale farmers from lucrative territories.

The state's security service said in a statement Sunday that the victims, all men, ranged in age from 23 to 57. They were reported to be inhabitants of Gleba Taquarucu do Norte, which is near the border with Bolivia and only reachable on foot or by boat, with no cell phone coverage. One was a pastor from the popular Assembly of God church, police said. "Preliminary information is that the victims showed signs of stabbings and gunshots," the police statement said.

CBN radio and other Brazilian media reported that some of the dead had been found decapitated, while Globo news site said there were signs of torture and that some victims had been tied up. Contacted by AFP, a police spokeswoman would not confirm or deny this. Earlier, police described the raid as the work of "hooded attackers." Globo reported that the victims had been starting to work on unauthorized plots of land and that they were killed inside the huts they'd erected at the site.

The Pastoral Land Commission, which is linked to the Roman Catholic church, and acts on behalf of the rural poor, described a network of armed gangs employed by ranchers using "terror to get the small producers to leave the area." Gleba has been subjected to conflicts and violence for more than 10 years. Other murders and attacks have already taken place there, the commission said. According to the CPT's latest annual report, 61 people were killed in land conflicts in Brazil last year, the highest number since 2003. — AFP

GERMANY SEES RISE IN CRIMES BY FOREIGNERS

BERLIN: Germany recorded a sharp rise in politically motivated crimes by foreigners including jihadists and Kurdish militants last year, a trend branded "unacceptable" by Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere yesterday. Some 3,372 such cases were recorded last year, up 66.5 percent from 2015, according to the latest crime statistics unveiled by de Maiziere. They include "criminal offences carried out in the name of foreign extremists of the so-called IS, or the (outlawed Kurdish militants) PKK," said the interior minister.

Germany was hit by a string of jihadist attacks last year, with the deadliest being last December's assault on a Christmas market in Berlin. A Tunisian suspect had rammed a truck into the crowded market in the attack claimed by the Islamic State organization that killed 12. But beyond jihadist attacks, Germany has also seen a rise in violence pitting its sizeable minority communities of Turks and Kurds, as Turkey was increasingly split over President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's rule. Overall, the number of politically driven crimes was also up in Germany, reaching 41,549 such offences in 2016, 6.6 percent more than a year ago. — AFP

RUSSIA, EU FAIL TO MASK DIVISIONS ON MOGHERINI VISIT

MOSCOW: The top diplomats from Russia and the European Union struggled yesterday to overcome deep rifts that have plunged ties to a post-Cold War low despite calling for closer cooperation. In her first official visit to Russia, EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini insisted that cooperation between the sides was "not frozen" but said that progress was hampered by profound disagreements on subjects including Ukraine and Syria.

Crimea in 2014 and support for east Ukrainian rebels. Moscow responded with an embargo on agricultural products from the West. Mogherini said the EU's sanctions against Russia were "not an objective in themselves" but were meant to help end the crisis in Ukraine, which has claimed more than 10,000 lives since it erupted in 2014. Lavrov meanwhile said the two sides had reiterated the need to fulfill the stalled European-brokered Minsk peace agreements to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine. He also called for a "thorough, quick and transparent" investigation after an American monitor with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe was killed Sunday when a patrol vehicle hit a landmine in the rebel-held east. — AFP



MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, right, shakes hands with Federica Mogherini, the high representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy, after a joint press conference following their meeting in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

ITALIAN REPORTER FREED IN TURKEY

ROME: An Italian journalist arrested in Turkey while researching refugees near the Syrian border has been freed after two weeks in detention, Italy's foreign ministry said yesterday.

people who had fled the war-torn neighboring country for a book he is writing on the conflict and the birth of the Islamic State group. The blogger, writer and human rights activist began a hunger strike last week after claiming he had no access to a lawyer and had been "interrogated" on the content of his research.

Gabriele Del Grande, 34, was expected to arrive at Bologna airport in Italy yesterday and be met by his parents and Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano. "I spoke to him just now and he's on his way back to Italy. I had the great joy of telling his family. We are waiting for him," Alfano said. Del Grande was handcuffed by Turkish police on April 9 as he was interviewing

Del Grande, who comes from Lucca in Tuscany, was a co-author and co-director of a documentary on Syrian and Palestinian refugees, "Io sto con la sposa" ("On the Bride's Side"), that was presented at the Venice Film Festival in 2014. — AFP



ITALY: Gabriele Del Grande, left, is flanked by his partner Alexandra D, after landing at the Bologna airport, Italy, yesterday. — AP



PARIS: French presidential election candidate for the left-wing French Socialist (PS) party Benoit Hamon reacts after delivering a speech at the Maison de la Mutualite in Paris after the first round of the Presidential election. — AFP

FRANCE'S SOCIALISTS ON ROCKS AFTER HISTORIC DRUBBING

‘SOCIALIST PARTY NOT IN THE TOP THREE IS A DISASTER’

PARIS: A "drubbing" suffered by the Socialist candidate in France's presidential election on Sunday dealt a devastating blow to the century-old party, analysts said. Benoit Hamon, 49, who took up the Socialist mantle after the deeply unpopular Francois Hollande decided against seeking re-election, crashed out in fifth place in Sunday's first round of the two-stage vote, according to projections.

French voters return to the polls to elect a new parliament on June 11 and June 18.

years on, after Hollande failed to turn around a moribund economy and the country suffered a string of terror attacks, the PS heads just five of France's 13 regions, and 26 of its 101 departments. The worst defeat was to come in 2014 when the PS lost municipal elections in more than 150 cities of at least 9,000 inhabitants.

It was the first time the Socialists have lost in the first round since 2002, when Lionel Jospin fell at the first hurdle behind then far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. And it is the first time in modern history that neither of France's mainstream parties have made it past the first round of a presidential election. "Symbolically, the fact that the Socialist Party (PS) is not in the top three and not even the leading leftist party is a disaster," said political scientist Remi Lefebvre of the northern city of Lille.

PS chief Jean-Christophe Cambadellis said Friday that the party will be fielding candidates in all 577 of France's parliamentary districts, adding: "The party still has good days in front of it." Hamon proved unable to sustain the magic that won him the Socialist primary in January, ahead of former prime minister Manuel Valls, with proposals such as a universal basic income. Key Socialist stalwarts deserted him, led by Valls, who last month threw his weight behind Emmanuel Macron, the centrist former Socialist who came out on top in Sunday's vote.

Parties don't just disappear
As this year's campaign wore on, party infighting turned into open warfare between diehard leftists and the more centrist, economically liberal wing represented by Valls. The party failed to find a "third way... between social liberalism and the radical left," said Thibaut Rioufretey, a political scientist based in the central city of Lyon. "They broadly abandoned the intellectual work." The PS joins the ranks of other social-democratic forces in Europe that have recently suffered deep losses, such as in Greece, Austria, Spain, Ireland and the Netherlands.

The left is not dead
Scoring just 6.2 percent according to the projections, Hamon fared worse than Communist-backed Jean-Luc Melenchon, who was set to finish fourth behind scandal-scarred conservative candidate Francois Fillon.

Hamon's poll numbers went into a steady slide from a high of around 17 percent as the charismatic Melenchon steadfastly refused to join forces and Macron also siphoned off support. Melenchon, who enjoyed a late surge in the race after strong debate performances, scored 19 to 20 percent on Sunday.

"The problem with social democracy is that it does not have the answers to new changes in modern society such as globalization, the digital revolution and the ecological transition," Rioufretey said.

Hamon tried to put a brave face on what he admitted was a "historic drubbing" on Sunday. "The left is not dead," he said. "The fight continues... with the parliamentary elections." After the second round of the presidential election,

"Melenchon's political goal, which was to beat the PS, was unimaginable just a few years ago," Lefebvre said. The party founded in 1905, which first came to power in 1981 with Francois Mitterrand, fell from a great height since Hollande's 2012 victory brought the left back to power after three rightwing presidencies in a row.

But the June parliamentary elections held out some hope for France's Socialists, Lefebvre said. "Political parties don't disappear just like that. The PS has been around for 100 years, (with) an organizational structure, elected officials, activists, a tradition and a memory." — AFP

SOUTH AFRICAN PLEADS NOT GUILTY TO SLAYING HIS WEALTHY FAMILY

CAPE TOWN: In a case that has gripped South Africa, the 22-year-old son of a wealthy family pleaded not guilty yesterday to slaughtering his parents and brother in a frenzied axe attack. The trial, which opened in Cape Town after several delays, has attracted international interest as police failed to arrest anyone for the grisly killings until Henri van Breda handed himself in to police.



CAPE TOWN: Henri Van Breda arrives at the High Court in Cape Town, South Africa, yesterday. — AP

Yesterday, he said in his statement that he had passed out after disarming the attacker, who then fled the house. "I later woke lying on the stairs. I was unsure how long I was unconscious... I could see it was light. I then saw Marli moving. I could also hear what sounded like Rudi making gurgling sounds," he said. In a leaked tape of his call to emergency services, van Breda said his family members were "bleeding from the head" before he appeared to giggle briefly. Van Breda in his statement said he was in the toilet playing games on his phone when the intruder broke in.

Van Breda is alleged to have killed his brother Rudi and parents Martin and Teresa, and left his sister Marli struggling with near-fatal injuries to her head, neck and throat. The events took place on January 27, 2015 at the family's luxury home at an exclusive golf estate in Stellenbosch outside Cape Town, where they lived after returning from several years in Australia. At the Western Cape High Court, van Breda, dressed in a suit and tie, quietly said "not guilty" to three counts of murder and one of attempted murder.

He described his family as "fairly close-knit" who enjoyed boating and shark cage diving together. Before the attack, they had spent the evening watching a Star Wars movie, while their mother spoke on the phone. The run-up to the trial generated fevered interest over a privileged son allegedly unleashing a savage attack on his family, whose fortune has been estimated at \$16 million.

In a statement read out by his lawyer Pieter Botha, van Breda said that a masked intruder had entered the house and attacked his family with an axe in the early hours of the morning. The accused said he could "make out the silhouette of somebody" attacking his brother in the high-security property.

There is a continuing legal battle over whether the trial can be broadcast live on television. Local reports suggested van Breda had spent time in drug rehabilitation before the deaths. He was enrolled as a science undergraduate at the time. He handed himself in to a local police station 18 months after the attack, during which time the police had made no arrests. Since being arrested, he has been on \$8,000 bail while living with his girlfriend. The trial continued yesterday. — AFP

"I shouted for help, shouting to attract attention," he said. Van Breda said his father came into the room "trying to tackle the attacker." "My father was struck as he lunged towards the attacker. He was hit a number of times... I also

Disarmed attacker
Marli, then 16, was left in a coma after the attack and suffered memory loss, but she may give evidence during the trial. Van Breda himself had only minor bruises and scratches, which experts say may have been self-inflicted.

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US BLACKLISTS 271 SYRIAN CHEMISTS OVER SARIN ATTACK

Continued from Page 1

"These sweeping sanctions target the scientific support center for Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad's horrific chemical weapons attack on innocent civilian men, women, and children," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said. "The United States is sending a strong message with this action that we will hold the entire Assad regime accountable for these blatant human rights violations in order to deter the spread of these types of barbaric chemical weapons."

The Treasury's action followed the US military's firing 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian airfield on April 7 to punish the government and set a warning against any further chemical weapons attacks. "These sanctions are intended to hold the Assad regime and those who support it - directly or indirectly - accountable for the regime's blatant violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention and UN Security Council Resolution 2118," Mnuchin said.

The attack on Khan Sheikhoun was also debated in the UN Security Council. But Russia, a close ally of Assad,

vetoed a resolution on April 12 demanding the Syrian government cooperate with an investigation of the attack. Assad has denied the attack, branding it a "fabrication" by the West. The US Treasury already had imposed sanctions against 18 Syrian officials in January. The sanctions effectively aim to shut those targeted out of global financial networks, making it difficult for them to do business or even travel. Mnuchin said the administration "will relentlessly pursue and shut down the financial networks of all individuals involved with the production of chemical

weapons used to commit these atrocities".

The US has gradually been expanding its sanctions program against Syria since 2004, when it issued sanctions targeting Syria for a range of offenses, including its support of terrorism, as well as its occupation of Lebanon, efforts to undermine stability in Iraq and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. More recently, sanctions were expanded in connection with its civil war, now in its sixth year, to target offenses linked to the ongoing violence and human rights abuses. — AFP

'FLYING MACHINE' MAKER PLANS DELIVERIES

Continued from Page 1

United States in uncongested areas" under US federal regulations for ultralight aircraft. No pilot's license is required, and two hours' training is said to be all that is needed.

The website offered few details about the company, but several reports in recent months have said Page has poured millions of dollars into Kitty Hawk and another electric car startup. Kitty Hawk president Sebastian Thrun, a Stanford University computer science professor who has been called the father of Google's self-driving car, tweeted: "Changing the future of personal transportation. Join us @kittyhawkcorp to get information about #theFlyer prototype." The company announced it was offering three-year "memberships" for \$100 to be

placed on a waiting list and to get a discount on the price of the new transporter. The price is to be announced later this year.

The startup offered only limited details about the company. An email response to an AFP query said the lead engineers were Cameron Robertson and Todd Reichert, who created a startup called AeroVelo which aims to produce the fastest human-powered vehicle. Kitty Hawk said the flyer going on sale later this year will have a different design than the prototype.

A blog post by writer Cimeron Morrissey, who took the flyer for a test run, offered some clues on how it feels. "The prototype looks and feels a lot like a flying motorcycle. You mount the seat and lean forward, just like you would on a bike," she wrote. "I feel light and ecstatic and utterly free."

OBAMA SAYS READY TO TRAIN NEW LEADER...

Continued from Page 1

at the law school. "What I'm convinced is that... the single most important thing I can do is to help in any way I can to prepare the next generation of leadership to take up the baton and to take their own crack at changing the world."

Until yesterday, Donald Trump's Democratic predecessor had not given a public speech or an interview since leaving the White House on Jan 20. He has tweeted a few times and issued a few statements through a spokesman, notably to defend his signature domestic policy achievement, health-care reform - which Trump's Republicans are now hoping to dismantle. Obama also spoke up when his billionaire successor accused him of personally ordering the wiretapping of Trump Tower during the 2016 presidential campaign.

But for now, he has abstained from any substantive commentary on how Trump is doing, in keeping with presidential protocol which dictates that past residents of the White House do not step on the toes of the current occupant. That silence comes in the face of accusations by Trump on everything from Syria, with the Republican all but accusing Obama of bearing responsibility for chemical weapons attacks by the Damascus regime, to gang violence in America.

Youth civic engagement and community organizing are at the heart of the mission of the Obama Center, which is located on Chicago's South Side, where Obama started his career as a community activist. On Sunday, America's first black president privately met with

at-risk youth from the South Side to discuss gang violence, jobs and training, according to The Chicago Tribune.

The Obamas are currently renting a house in Washington, where their youngest daughter Sasha is finishing high school. Since leaving office, Obama has gone kitesurfing in the Caribbean with British billionaire Richard Branson. He then spent nearly a month in French Polynesia, where he vacationed on media mogul David

Geffen's yacht - and was reportedly working on his book.

But after yesterday, his public schedule will pick up pace. On May 7, he will receive the 2017 Profile in Courage award from the John F Kennedy Library Foundation in Boston. He will give a private paid speech during a visit to Italy. And then on May 25, he will deliver a speech at a Protestant church gathering at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, with Chancellor Angela Merkel at his side. — AFP



CHICAGO: Former US President Barack Obama smiles as he hosts a conversation on civic engagement and community organizing yesterday at the University of Chicago. — AP

QATAR AIRWAYS SLAMS 'BULLYING'

Continued from Page 1

Baker, whose carrier is offering free laptops to premium passengers in response to the ban, said Qatar Airways has faced some drop in business to US destinations. "There was some decline. Something manageable. We did not have massive declines," he said. "We still have robust business in the United States... and we will continue our expansion," he added. Baker announced San Francisco as a new route to be added to its 10 US destinations early next year. A route to Las Vegas will be launched in the second quarter of 2018, he said.

A pressure group called The Partnership for Open and Fair Skies - which includes American Airlines, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines - said the planned San Francisco expansion represents "another subsidized route into the United States". "Qatar Airways receives billions of dollars in illegal subsidies from its government in order to fly to our country and trash American jobs," said the group's spokesperson Jill Zuckman in a statement.

The blunt and plain-spoken CEO described the US competition as "wicked" for the way their passengers are treated and said they operate in cities where they "can swindle their customers". In a further dig, Baker

quipped that if a flight was full, he would travel on a jump seat where cabin crew often sit because the airline's policy is not to remove passengers. He was referring to an incident in which a United Airlines passenger was filmed being dragged off an airplane by airport security officers on an overbooked flight.

"We would never offload a passenger in Qatar Airways even if it is the CEO of the airline that wants to travel," he said. "We would not drag out people out of an airplane." He said Qatar Airways has plans to expand to 26 new global destinations, adding: "The United States is not the entire world." The airline, he said, also has plans to apply with Qatar's sovereign wealth fund for a license to operate a new domestic Indian carrier.

Emirates, the Middle East's largest carrier, said last week it was reducing flights to the United States in response to "weakened travel demand". The US ban went into effect on March 25 on nine airlines in Turkey, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Britain followed with a similar ban from five countries from the Middle East, northern Africa and Turkey. The fast-growing Gulf carriers have turned their home airports into major hubs for international travellers, capturing a sizable chunk of travel between the West and Asia and Australasia. — Agencies

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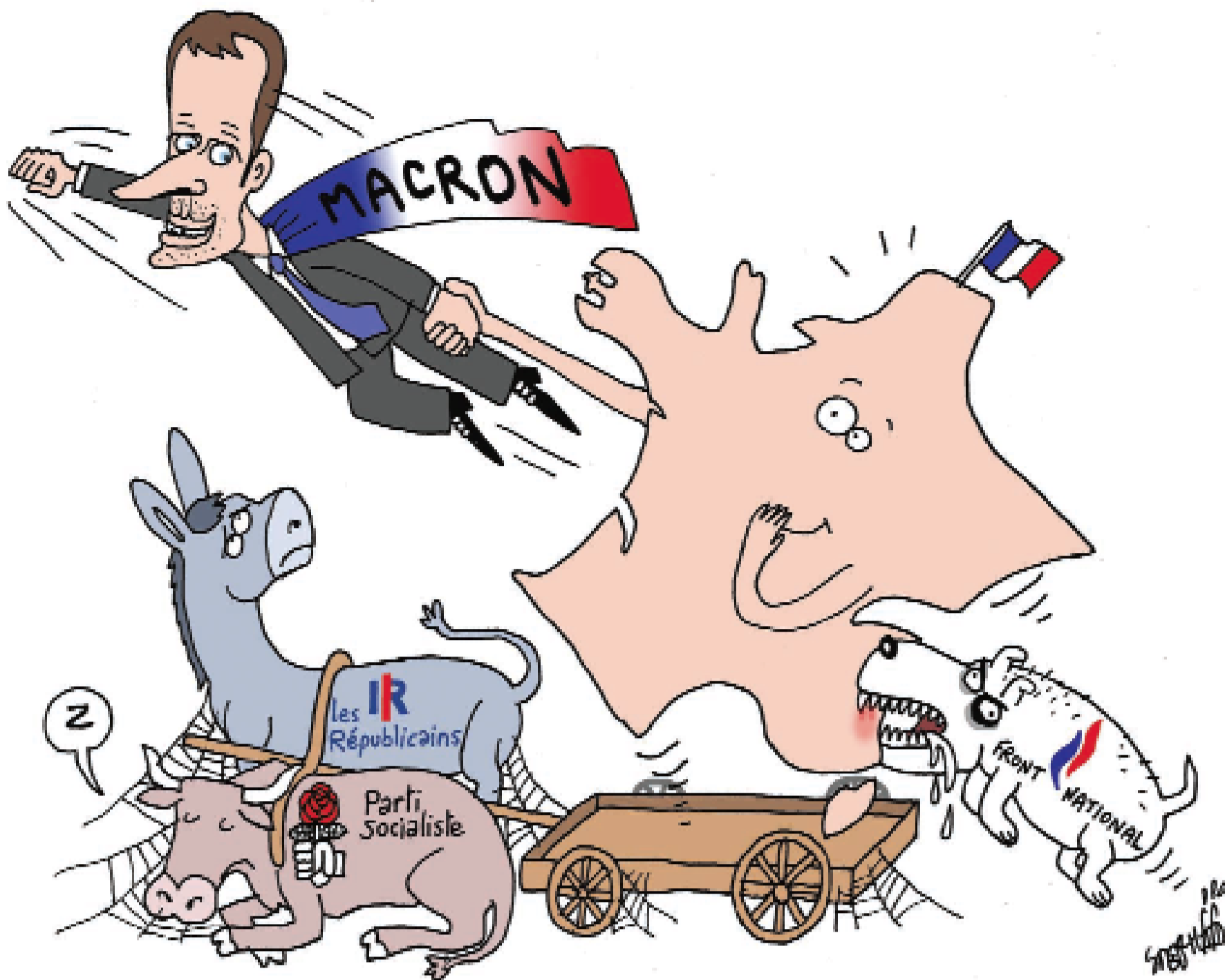
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A LE PEN WINS MORE ACCEPTANCE THAN EVER

Focus PENCE CLEAN-UP ACT IN TRUMP'S FIRST 100 DAYS

Mike Pence has spent many of his first 100 days as US vice president ironing out Trump-induced problems at home and abroad, but he's also been steadily building political capital of his own. Whether it's on an isolated runway in the South Pacific or in a hotel ballroom state-side, a positive meeting or a challenging, Seoul or Sydney, Mike Pence is always "honored" to be there. The 57-year-old former Indiana governor and congressman has spent much of the last 100 days shuttling around Washington and the world, happily representing an administration that seems to stagger from one crisis to the next.

On his travels, Pence is almost always carrying the political equivalent of a mop and bucket. His latest trip - a grueling nine-day swing through the Asia-Pacific - saw Pence try to reassure panicky allies that Donald Trump is not about to rip up decades-old mutual defense pacts that underpin the global order. "His job has been to clean up messes, try to assure foreign leaders and members of Congress and to present the image of governance in times of turbulence," Julian Zelizer, a political expert at Princeton University, told AFP. "He is trying to be the better half of this relationship."

At home, that task has meant trying to rescue Trump's healthcare and tax reforms from the legislative shoals. "He's been willing to do the shuttle diplomacy it takes to get things done in Congress," one Republican told AFP, pointing to Pence's talks with moderates in the so-called "Tuesday Group" and the hardline Freedom Caucus. "It's not uncommon to see Pence and his entourage making their way from one end of the Capitol to the other between meetings with House and Senate leaders. Members seem to like and trust him," the Republican source added.

Style and substance

In many ways, Pence is an unlikely messenger for Trump. A dyed-in-the-wool conservative, Pence is as down-at-home Midwestern nice as his trash-talking New York boss is brash. He rarely eats out, regularly goes to church and only has the odd sip of wine during a toast. While Trump loves action movies, Pence compels staff, Secret Service agents and traveling journalists on Air Force Two to watch "Hoosiers" - the tale of an underdog Indiana farm-boy basketball team made good.

While Trump's family has opted not to join him in the White House, Pence frequently brings his wife Karen and college-aged daughters Charlotte and Audrey on official trips. Many of his staff have worked for him for years, and show none of the stresses and strains from the back-biting that plagues their West Wing counterparts. Most notably, while Trump revels in saying what he really thinks - consequences be damned - Pence is almost painfully scripted.

His stock speech changes little from event to event, country to country - aides can recite it almost verbatim - yet the teleprompter often comes out for the most perfunctory remarks. During his travels, Pence has studiously worked not to eclipse the boss or show any hint of difference with him. "I bring you greetings from the President of the United States of America," he often says, stressing he is only there because Trump asked him to be.

If there is political daylight between the two men, then Pence and his staff do their best to make sure it is never seen in public. "The vice president's role, other than being the president of the Senate, is 100 percent defined by the president," said a senior administration official and aide. "I think you've seen up to this point that the two of them have built a very close relationship - they work very well together," the official said. "The president and the vice president are constantly talking about what message they want to be conveyed and while their styles may be a little bit different in how they do that, the message is the same."

And yet, there is a lingering sense in Washington that Pence's deference may mask a burning political ambition. After all, at just 57 years old, Pence is just a heartbeat away from the presidency. When the time comes, Pence's caution and hard work wooing allies may help him more than Trump can. — AFP

When France last put a Le Pen onto the threshold of the presidential Elysee Palace, one step from power, it could write off the 2002 election shock as a mere accident. Jean-Marie Le Pen squeezed into the winner-takes-all runoff against Jacques Chirac with just 17 percent of the vote, a record low. Ashamed and stunned by the ultra-right leader's breakthrough, French voters of all political persuasions regrouped for round two, filling the streets in protest and rallying at the ballot box to hand Le Pen a humiliating defeat from which his sulfurous political career never recovered.

This time, the presidential election success of another Le Pen, Jean-Marie's daughter, Marine, was anything but accidental. Voters propelled her Sunday into the decisive May 7 duel against Emmanuel Macron with their eyes wide open. The entire political establishment and every poll had forewarned and foretold of Le Pen's first-round breakthrough. That voters pulled the trigger anyway - giving her 1.2 million more votes than in 2012 and, with 21.5 percent of the total, the best score in a presidential race for a Le Pen - showed how ingrained her brand of anti-establishment "French-first" nationalism has become in areas most bruised by and fearful of globalization's blows.

A less divisive and more polished politician than her father, the mother of three has made voting for the National Front party that Jean-Marie founded in 1972

more socially acceptable than ever. Many of his voters kept their far-right political sympathies to themselves, afraid of being labelled racists and anti-Semites by association with the ex-Foreign Legionnaire convicted for describing Nazi gas chambers as a "detail of history".

Marine Le Pen's backers are far less inhibited. Although older voters on the left still sniff that the National Front remains a redoubt of "fachos" - or fascists - she has partially punctured that argument by sidelining much of the party's old guard, including her father in 2015. By consistently hammering on her populist themes that the European Union is straightjacketing and impoverishing France, that open borders are open doors for job-taking migrants and murderous extremism, and that the French political elite is guilty in all this and more, Marine Le Pen is more on-message than her father.

Sharp-tongued like him, she also jumps the tracks of respectability from time to time - for instance, with her denial earlier this month that France was responsible for rounding up more than 13,000 Jews at a Paris cycle track to be sent to Nazi death camps during the Holocaust. Overall, however, she is better packaged and more media-savvy than the cantankerous Jean-Marie ever was.

Macron quickly agreed to share the stage with Le Pen in the traditional televised debate between rounds one and two. That showed how she and her expanding

electorate are becoming an increasingly unavoidable force and feature on the landscape, however unsavory that reality is to mainstream politicians who immediately appealed for a repeat of the "all against Le Pen" second-round unity of 2002.

Uncharted Territory

By refusing to debate Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002, Chirac cast his opponent as a pariah and himself as a champion of French democracy. That Macron couldn't do likewise without looking undemocratic is another measure of how Marine Le Pen is fighting her way into France's political inner circle. By stopping both the mainstream right and left from reaching the second round - a first for modern France - Le Pen and the centrist, pro-EU Macron are redrawing the contours of that circle and taking the country into uncharted territory.

Fifteen years ago, Jean-Marie Le Pen's qualification to the runoff provoked massive street protests - voters' way of making amends for not turning out in sufficient numbers to keep him out in round one. There were scattered protests in Paris on Sunday night, with police reporting 29 arrests. But it appears less likely this time that more than 1 million people will take to streets across France on Monday's May Day holiday as they did against Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002.

With slow but sure gains at the ballot box since she assumed leadership of the

National Front in 2011, Le Pen is planting ever-deeper roots into a broader spectrum of voters - including 18- to 24-year-olds hit hardest by chronic unemployment and, despite her plans to roll back some of their rights, among gays. Those groups largely wouldn't have been seen dead voting for her father.

Sunday's outcome shows a France split almost down the middle. Le Pen outperformed Macron in National Front strongholds along the Mediterranean coast, on the front lines of Europe's efforts to control migration from Africa and the Middle East that she rails against, and in the east and northeast, with rust-belt pockets of despairing working-class voters who see success in "French first" economic and social protectionism. Le Pen is their whip to sanction the French and EU political establishment - even among some voters who don't otherwise share her politics.

As in 2002, voters probably will come together in sufficient numbers to keep a Le Pen from power. After election setbacks for rightwing populists in the Netherlands and Austria, a Le Pen defeat will signal a halting - at least for now - of the populist wave that crashed over the EU with Britain's Brexit vote last year to leave the bloc and, across the Atlantic, helped put Donald Trump in the White House. But polls suggest Le Pen won't suffer a beating as severe as that endured by her father. At 48, she still has time and, with each passing vote, perhaps a little bit more of France on her side. — AP

SHARAPOVA BACK IN BUSINESS, LIKE IT OR NOT

Maria Sharapova returns after a 15-month doping ban Wednesday, desperate to rediscover the glory which brought her five Grand Slams, the world's top ranking and a spectacular multi-million dollar lifestyle. The poster girl of women's tennis won't necessarily be welcomed back with open arms by rivals who were already suspicious of the towering Russian's ice-cold detachment even before her fall from grace. However, Sharapova isn't losing any sleep as the 30-year-old prepares for her first match since being defeated by Serena Williams in the 2016 Australian Open quarter-finals.

"That is the least of my concerns. I know that I am respected in my field. I see it in how my opponents play against me," said Sharapova who was controversially handed a wild card into this week's Stuttgart event, a clay court tournament sponsored by Porsche, one of her headline backers. She was even given a Wednesday start as that's the day her ban - imposed for testing positive for meldonium at last year's Australian Open - comes to an end.

Sharapova, who starts her Stuttgart campaign against Italian veteran Roberta Vinci, had been taking the over-the-counter cardiac supplement when it was within the rules, but was later reclassified as a prohibited drug. Far from being remorseful, Sharapova recently hit out at tennis authorities for failing to give her sufficient warning that meldonium had become a banned substance. The Russian will step onto center court at 1830 (1630 GMT) on Wednesday and could not have picked a better tournament for her return, having won the Stuttgart title three times, and suffering just one defeat.

If she gets through her opener, she could face Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska, one of her fiercest critics, in the second round. Radwanska, the sixth-seed in Stuttgart, expects a "fierce" return from the Russian, but says Sharapova should have had to qualify on merit rather than being given a free pass on a wild card.

Journeyman rivals

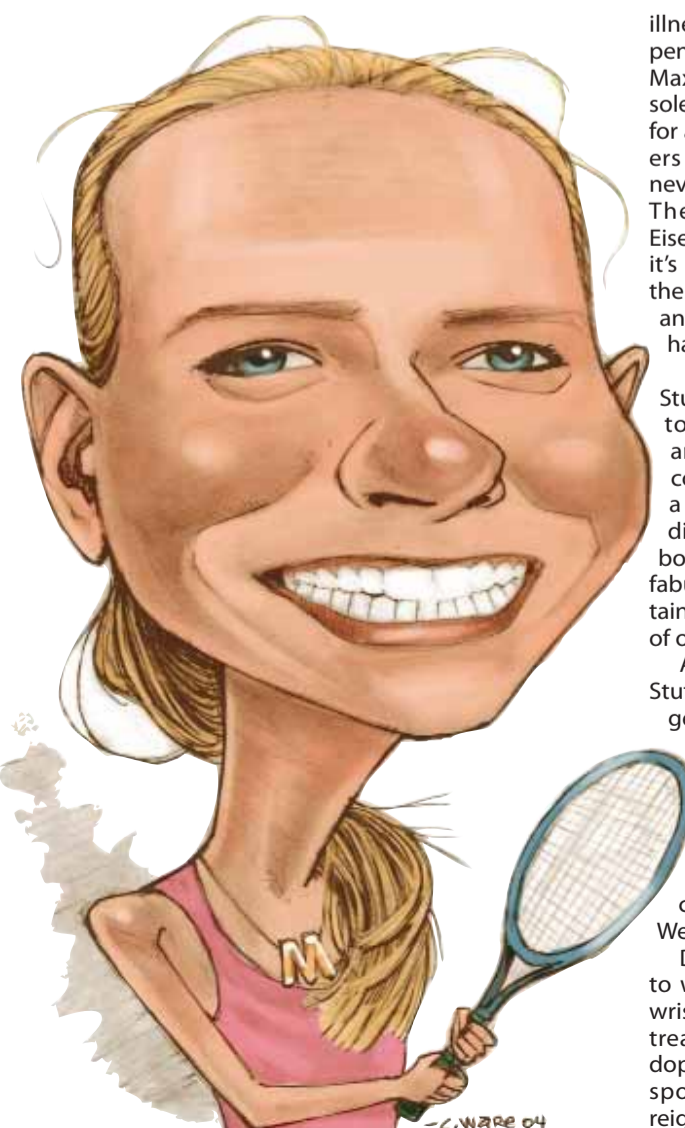
"This kind of entry into the tournament should apply to players who dropped in the ranking because of injury,

illness or some other random event. Not for those suspended for doping," said Radwanska. Sharapova's agent Max Eisenbud believes his client's rivals are motivated solely by jealousy especially with Sharapova battling also for a French Open wild card. "All those 'journeyman' players like Radwanska and Caroline Wozniacki who have never won a slam and the next generation passing them. They are smart to try to keep Maria out of Paris," Eisenbud said. "NO Serena, NO Maria, NO Vika, NO Petra, it's their last chance to win a slam," he added, a nod to the absence of pregnant Serena Williams, Petra Kvitova and Victoria Azarenka, expected to return in July after having a baby.

Sharapova can expect plenty of support from the Stuttgart organizers as her return is the highlight in the tournament's 40th anniversary celebrations. As an ambassador for Porsche, she is sure of a warm welcome. Her confectionary brand - Sugarpova - will have a stand in the tournament's retail village. Tournament director Markus Guenthardt knows her presence will boost ticket sales. "Her return in the Porsche Arena is a fabulous present for our fantastic spectators and is certain to be one of the sporting and emotional highlights of our anniversary tournament," he said.

As well as Radwanska, many of her other potential Stuttgart rivals have made it clear they disapprove of her getting a helping hand into the main draw. Germany's Angelique Kerber, this year's top seed and the only player to have beaten Sharapova in Stuttgart, said her place should have gone to local talent. "It's a German tournament, and we (have) so many good German players, so this is also a little bit strange," said Kerber. "It's also strange for the players, that she can walk on site on Wednesday and she can play on Wednesday."

Dominika Cibulkova, seeded third but who was forced to withdraw from the tournament yesterday due to a wrist injury, claims Sharapova is benefiting from unfair treatment. "It's not about her, but everyone who was doping should start from zero," said the Slovakian whose spot was taken by Spaniard Garbine Muguruza, the reigning Roland Garros champion. — AFP



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KUWAIT COMES FROM BEHIND TO BEAT INDIA

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ice Hockey National team came one step closer to winning the title after defeating India with the score of 8-5 in their second match. India scored three unanswered goals, before Kuwait's players came back strongly and scored four goals. Oman defeated Macao 2-1 in the previous match.

Kuwait National team player Fahad Al-Hunaidi said the win against India was possible because of the fighting spirit that distinguished all team members and the strong determination to win and get closer to grabbing the title. He said the most difficult stage of the match was

when the Indian team was leading with the score of 3-0, but our determination along with our coach's instructions enabled us to come back. Al-Hunaidi said the final match with Oman will be an opportunity to win the title, and solidify Kuwait's Ice Hockey supremacy which is evidently moving in the right direction.

The 2017 Ice Hockey Challenge Cup of Asia will be concluded today as Kuwait meets Oman at 8:00 pm. Kuwait only requires a draw to win the cup for the second time as they won its first two matches, while Oman needs to win by a large margin while hoping that India loses to Macao in the match that will be held at 4:30 pm.



CITY WILL BE STRONGER NEXT SEASON VOWS GUARDIOLA

LONDON: Pep Guardiola insists Manchester City will be a far more formidable force next season after their FA Cup semi-final defeat to Arsenal left the Spaniard empty-handed for the first season in his glittering career. Guardiola's side wasted their chance to reach the final as poor finishing and sloppy defending allowed Arsenal to come from behind and snatch a 2-1 victory in extra-time on Sunday.

With City trailing 11 points behind Premier League leaders Chelsea, their last realistic chance of silverware vanished at Wembley, leaving Guardiola to face the uncomfortable reality that he has failed to provide the trophies expected from him when he arrived last year.

Having dominated in the Spanish and German leagues with Barcelona and then Bayern Munich, while also winning two Champions League titles, Guardiola has found life much harder in the cutthroat world of the Premier League. The Spaniard admits this season has been a learning process and, with his ego clearly bruised, Guardiola promised City would be much improved next term once he has time to make changes to an underachieving squad.

"We will improve next season. We will be strong, especially in the games away against the Premier League teams," he said. "For what I have done in my past the pressure will be on my shoulders for the rest of my career. 'Always in my life and always in the rest of my life I try to be better. That is all. 'Some players will stay and some will come in. I will try to be proactive. 'That is what I want to do. I'm not a guy who complains.' After leading City to 10 successive wins at the start of the season, City have gradually fallen back into the bad habits that prompted the club's Abu Dhabi-based owners to axe Manuel Pellegrini and bring in Guardiola.

FRESH INDIGNITY

While City are always capable of dominating possession, too often poor finishing and a lack of killer instinct means that control doesn't bring enough goals, opening the door for a leaky defence to be fatally breached. City's 4-0 thrashing at Everton in January was the heaviest league defeat suffered by Guardiola in his managerial career, while their Champions League last 16 exit against Monaco was the earliest he had bowed out of that tournament. Losing to Arsenal was a fresh indignity and Guardiola is left with little time to pick up the pieces with City facing a vital derby against Manchester United on Thursday. —AFP

MASTERFUL MBAPPE LEADS MONACO TO LIGUE SUMMIT

PARIS: Teenage sensation Kylian Mbappe produced another stylish winning goal as Monaco climbed back to the top of Ligue 1 with a 2-1 victory at Lyon on Sunday. A seventh straight league win leaves Monaco level with Paris Saint Germain on 80 points but with a game in hand on the champions and a far superior goal difference.

PSG had climbed provisionally top for the very first time this season after their own 2-0 win over Montpellier on Saturday, serving a challenge that the Champions League semi-finalists Monaco rose to with gusto in Lyon. Colombian striker Radamel Falcao pounced on a loose ball for his 19th league goal of the campaign to break the deadlock in the 31st minute of a frantic first-half.

The opener came straight after Memphis Depay had fluffed a chance to give the hosts the lead as the Europa League semi-finalists threw everything at Monaco. Battling midfielder Bernardo Silva then hit the crossbar for Monaco as they flooded forward and the hosts hardly had time to breathe before the outstanding Mbappe made it 2-0. With a brilliantly timed run into the box, the 18-year-old's slick flick rounded off another lightning break from Leonardo Jardim's side, for whom the striker has emerged, mainly in the second half of the campaign, with 13 league goals so far. Lyon's Lucas Tousart however produced a thundering header on 50 minutes to convert a corner and peg Monaco back to 2-1 and ensure a tense struggle all the way to the final whistle. Monaco are looking for a first French title since 2000 and have five matches remaining in a tight race with PSG. "Everything can change

from one game to the next so it's straight back to work for us to prepare for our next game with Toulouse," Mbappe told French television after the game. Next weekend, third-placed Nice host PSG, while in the following midweek Monaco play Juventus in a potentially draining Champions League semi-final first leg. Earlier Sunday, Mario Balotelli started on the bench as Nice's own faint title hopes

were all but extinguished in a 1-1 draw at mid-table Toulouse. Fired by the goals of Balotelli, Nice had been the early pacesetters in the French league but they have drawn too many games—the stalemate at Toulouse was their 11th of the season—and Balotelli's form has dipped. A goal piece from Edinson Cavani and Angel di Maria gave Paris Saint-Germain a 2-0 win over Montpellier on Saturday. — AFP



RHONE: Monaco's French forward Kylian Mbappe Lottin (L) vies with Lyon's defender Mouctar Diakhaby (R) during the French L1 football match between Olympique Lyonnais and AS Monaco. — AFP

News

In brief

Giant smoke bombs interrupt PSV v Ajax

EINDHOVEN: Thick black fumes from smoke bombs engulfed stands at PSV Eindhoven's crunch home game against Ajax on Sunday, interrupting the match and leaving several fans with breathing and eye problems. Dozens of people scattered to take refuge as black smoke billowed through the Philips Stadion, forcing the referee to suspend play five minutes into the second half. Ten fans, four security guards and a steward suffered respiratory or eye problems, according to the Dutch press agency ANP. A 35-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of letting off the devices, it added. The game resumed shortly after the interruption but photos and videos of the huge cloud of smoke, spewing out from behind advertising hoardings near the touchline, were shared widely on social media. Players from both teams stood on the pitch watching the smoke cloud after referee Kevin Blom brought the game to a halt. Jurgen Locadia scored the only goal after 25 minutes as defending Eredivisie champions PSV won 1-0, dealing a blow to 33-time winners Ajax who are bidding for their first title since 2014.

Atletico Madrid to fight transfer ban

LAUSANNE: Atletico Madrid officials were at sport's highest court yesterday to challenge a FIFA transfer ban that prevents the club from signing any players in the coming off-season. The Court of Arbitration for Sport is hearing the appeal, but said a verdict is not expected immediately. Atletico and FIFA previously agreed to seek a CAS verdict by June, before the summer trading period opens. FIFA imposed a one-year ban on registering new players as punishment for Atletico breaking rules introduced to prevent child trafficking and luring youngsters from their home country. Atletico denies wrongdoing, though it agreed not to sign players in January while its appeal went ahead. By appealing to FIFA against the original ban last year, Atletico was able to delay it taking effect last off-season when the club completed the signings of forward Fernando Torres and Kevin Gameiro, and midfielder Nicolas Gaitan. Spain's soccer federation has been criticized for its role in player registrations, with Barcelona and Real Madrid also having served FIFA transfer bans.

4 arrested over Bastia violence

BASTIA: Four people were arrested in Bastia yesterday as part of an investigation into violence which marred the Corsican team's match against French Ligue 1 rivals Lyon, judicial sources said. A hardcore section of home fans at Bastia's Armand Cesari stadium targeted Lyon's players as they warmed up before the game on April 16, causing it to be delayed by more than 50 minutes, and then again as the two sides went in for the break. Two Lyon players Anthony Lopes and Mathieu Gorgelin have filed police complaints after being attacked by Bastia fans during the game. Bastia's next home game against Rennes on April 29 will be played at a neutral ground with no fans allowed. Other disciplinary measures against the club who are already bottom of Ligue 1 and facing relegation next season could follow on May 4. The violence followed crowd trouble several days earlier at Lyon who hosted Turkish team Besiktas in the Europa League quarter-final.

Toure 'mocks' referees

LONDON: Yaya Toure has said he would "prefer" Thursday's Manchester derby to go ahead without a referee after claiming his City side had been on the wrong end of decisions in their FA Cup semi-final loss to Arsenal. Referee Craig Pawson was in the spotlight after City were denied what appeared to be a legitimate goal before losing 2-1 to the Gunners at Wembley Stadium on Sunday. Sergio Agueero had a goal disallowed after the officials ruled Leroy Sane's cross had gone out of play before reaching the City striker, a decision which replays indicated was wrong and Toure said his side had been denied an early penalty as well. "I think the referees have to stop this. I am very disappointed," said Toure. "It is not the first time, there have been a couple of times." Asked if the ball had stayed in play, Toure was in no doubt: "Definitely, and it was a penalty and something more. 'But what can we do? If (we) talk about the referee the FA is going to come in for the punishment if we think like that, but I think I need to sleep and rest and forget this game.'" — Agencies

BAN REVERSAL OF KUWAIT SHOOTING RECOGNIZED BY GLOBAL FEDERATIONS



Shooter Abdallah Al-Raheedi



Obaid Al-Osaimi



Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Sport Club announced the organization of the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Saleem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah tournament at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex on Thursday 27/4 and will continue until Saturday. The tournament will include skeet, trap, double trap, 10m air pistol and rifle, 50m rifle in addition to Olympic archery. The closing ceremony of the tournament will be held on Sunday at the club premises. Secretary General of Kuwait and

Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi said the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Saleem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah Cup is one of the most important tournaments for shooters. It is also a great opportunity for junior shooters to gain experience by participating and learning from more experienced contestants.

Al-Osaimi said the club always commemorates those who had served the country and those who supported and cared for the sport of shooting, which is an integral part of Kuwaiti heritage. He added that the late Sheikh was one of the pioneers

of the sport and contributed to laying its foundation in the country.

Meanwhile, President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi received several congratulatory calls and letters for the ruling to lift the suspension of Kuwait Shooting from international events. A letter was received from the President of Asian Shooting Confederation Sheikh Ali Abdullah Al-Khalifa who congratulated HH the Amir and all the people of Kuwait and recognized the importance of KSF's role in all international, continental and Arab levels.

President of Egyptian and African Shooting Federations Brig Hazim Hosni also expressed his pleasure towards the ruling against the ISSF and recognized Kuwait's important role in the sport. President of the European Shooting Confederation, ISSF Vice-president Vladimir Lisin congratulated Kuwait Shooting and invited KSF to participate in the World Championship to be held in Moscow in August. ISSF Vice-president and President of the Italian Shooting Federation Senator spoke to Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi over the phone and congratulated KSF on the CAS ruling.

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Younis hits 10,000 runs as Pakistan builds reply

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INDIANAPOLIS: Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James (23) shoots against Indiana Pacers' Thaddeus Young during the first half in Game 4. —AP

JAMES HELPS CAVS SWEEP PAST PACERS

INDIANAPOLIS: LeBron James stuck to the old script Sunday. Again, he bailed out the Cleveland Cavaliers. And again, he sent the Indiana Pacers home for vacation. On yet another milestone day for basketball's king, James' crowning achievement was making the go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:08 to play and helping the defending champions hold on for a series-clinching 106-102 victory at Indiana.

"You have to mentally challenge yourself every year and go out and try to do what's right - putting your body on the line, putting your team on the line and trying to be successful," James said. "It's very hard." But the four-time MVP makes it look easy. He finished with

33 points, 10 rebounds, four assists, four steals and two blocks.

MILESTONES GALORE

By winning his 21st consecutive first-round game, James broke a tie with Michael Cooper, Magic Johnson and James Worthy for the longest streak under the NBA's current playoff format. By sweeping a series for the 10th time, James broke a tie with Tim Duncan for the most in a career, according to Elias Sports Bureau. By going 13 of 25 from the field, he pulled into a tie with Kobe Bryant for the fourth highest postseason field goal total with 2,014.

And by holding on for the win, James improved to 52-0 in the playoffs when

his team takes a double-digit lead into the fourth quarter. James considered the milestones a footnote on a day the Cavs blew a 13-point lead and allowed the Pacers to come all the way back and take a 102-100 lead with 1:31 to go. "They were giving it all they had," James said. "Obviously, a loss would have ended their season. We just had to weather the storm once again."

Of course that's when James took the cue and came to the rescue. He made the long 3 to give Cleveland the lead, poked the ball away from Young on the next possession, grabbed the rebound when Paul George missed a 3 with 1.9 seconds to go that could have forced overtime and, of course, made 1

of 2 free throws to seal the win. Now Cleveland takes a seven-game winning streak into the conference semifinals against either Milwaukee or Toronto.

CHAPTER OF TORMENT

For Indiana, it will go down as yet another tormenting chapter in their rivalry with James. James' teams have eliminated the Pacers four times in six years and completed the first-four game sweep in Indiana's NBA history. Cleveland finished the season 7-1 against the Pacers, winning the last four with a defensive stand, a rare 25-point game from three players, the largest second-half comeback in playoff history and now James' knockout punch. Lance

Stephenson led the Pacers with 22 points. George had a series-low 15. "It's real frustrating to continue on losing to the same team or same person," George said. "Ultimately, he (James) is who I'm always going to have to see and face." The Pacers sure didn't make it easy, though. They charged back from a 96-83 deficit with a 7-0 spurt early in the fourth quarter. Then they methodically continued chipping away until Young tied the score at 100 and then gave them the lead. But James answered with the go-ahead 3.

Now the Pacers' attention turns to the future of George, the 26-year-old All-Star who can become a free agent in 2018. He didn't drop any hints about

which way he's leaning after the game and there has been rampant speculation he could be traded this summer. "I'm not at that point yet. Next question," George said.

Things got physical and painful Sunday. James stayed down on one knee after taking a shot to the head in the first half. George was writing in pain after taking a knee to the groin. Teague also remained on the ground briefly when he got hit in the head, too. All three finished the game. Cleveland now gets some extra rest before finding out who it will play in the second round. Indiana embarks on a crucial offseason that could dictate the franchise's future. —AP



AUCKLAND: 101-year-old Man Kaur from India celebrates after competing in the 100m sprint in the 100+ age category at the World Masters Games at Trusts Arena. —AFP

INDIA'S INSPIRATIONAL CENTENARIAN WINS GOLD

AUCKLAND: With a jaunty victory dance, 101-year-old Man Kaur celebrated winning the 100 meters sprint at the World Masters Games in Auckland yesterday, the 17th gold medal in the Indian athlete's remarkable late-blooming career. Kaur clocked one minute 14 seconds as a small crowd cheered her on—ending a mere 64.42 seconds off Usain Bolt's 100m world record set in 2009.

In truth her dash became more of a gentle amble the closer the diminutive centenarian came to the finish line, with more energy spent beaming at spectators than running. But Kaur was guaranteed victory as the only participant in the 100-years-and-over category at the New Zealand event, which has attracted 25,000 competitors. Participation, not racing the clock, is the priority for Kaur, who has been dubbed the "miracle from Chandigarh" in New Zealand media. "I enjoyed it and am very, very happy," she told reporters via a Punjabi interpreter. "I'm going to run again, I'm not going to give up. I will participate, there's no full stop."

Late bloomer

Kaur only took up athletics eight years ago, at the tender age of 93. She had no prior sporting experience before her son Gurdev Singh suggested she join him in competing on the international masters games circuit. After a medical check-up she was given the all-clear and since then mother and son have taken part in dozens of masters athletics meets around the globe.

Kaur already has a swag of gold medals that would rival Michael Phelps' haul and also plans to compete in the 200m sprint, two kilogram shot put and 400 gram javelin in Auckland, taking her tally to 20. Her son told the Indian Weekender newspaper that Kaur was on a strict diet that included wheat grass juice and a daily glass of kefir (fermented milk).

World Masters Games 2017 chief executive Jennah Wootten said the Auckland organisers were delighted to host such an inspiration. "Man Kaur truly personifies the 'sport for all' philoso-

phy which World Masters Games is all about and we are thrilled to have her here," she told AFP. "I have no doubt that she and many of the other 24,905 athletes competing in these games are inspiring others to lead more active lifestyles and take up a sport."

While Kaur was the only 100-plus athlete to compete in Auckland, there are a surprising number of spritely centenarians still on the sporting stage. Japan's Hidekichi Miyazaki, 106, holds the 100m record in the category with a time of 29.83, earning him the nickname "Golden Bolt" after the Jamaican Flyer. Miyazaki, who credits his daughter's tangerine jam for his age-defying exploits, even mimics Bolt's signature victory pose and is keen to race against the Olympic superstar. Frenchman Robert Marchand, 105, set a cycling record for his age in January, riding 22.547 kilometers in one hour. Afterwards, the former fireman said he was not even tired and said he could have gone faster. — AFP

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VIVA and Huawei launch Huawei P10 and P10 Plus

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BEIJING: A man rides past a China Mobile store in an alley in Beijing yesterday. The International Monetary Fund on April 18 raised its economic growth forecast for China for this year and next but warned of serious longer-term problems unless it reduces its reliance on credit. —AFP

OOREDOO REPORTS 27% RISE IN NET PROFIT FOR Q1 2017 CUSTOMER BASE UP BY 5% TO REACH 25 MILLION

KUWAIT: National Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P - Ticker: OOREDOO, a member of Ooredoo Group, announced yesterday its financial results for the quarter ended 31 March 2017:

Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Chairman of the Board of Directors commented: "Despite a highly competitive environment, Ooredoo increased the customer base by 5 percent to



Sheikh Saud bin Naser Al-Thani

reach 25 million, testament to the company's award-winning network, a wide range of competitive products and good customer service. Ooredoo grew profitability levels during Q1 2017, with Net Profit increasing by 27 percent to reach KD 13 million. Growth for the period was mainly supported by our performance in

Ooredoo Algeria and Ooredoo Maldives.

"Driven by improved efficiency and cost optimization initiatives, Ooredoo increased EBITDA by 14 percent to reach KD 65 million and maintained a healthy EBITDA margin of 38 percent for the quarter ended 31 March 2017.

"Capitalizing on last year's launch of 4G and further expansion of the 3G network, Ooredoo Algeria increased its customer base to almost 14 million customers up by 5 percent over Q1 2016. Ooredoo Algeria also maintained a good grasp on operational efficiencies, increasing EBITDA by 14 percent to reach KD 33.4 million.

"Ooredoo Maldives delivered a strong set of results, increasing Revenues by 14 percent to reach KD 9.5 million and showed significant growth in profitability, with EBITDA up 20 percent to KD 5.6 million in Q1 2017. Ooredoo Maldives is well positioned to continue delivering growth as it is preparing to list on the local stock exchange at the end of this month."

Review of operations

The Group's operational performance can be summarized as follows:

Ooredoo - Kuwait

Ooredoo's customer base in Kuwait stood at 2.3 million at the end of Q1 2017, representing a 2 percent decrease compared to the same period in 2016. Revenues for Q1 2017 were KD 47.8 million, a decrease of 4 percent compared to KWD 50.0 million in 2016. EBITDA was KD 12.4 million versus EBITDA for Q1 2016 of KD 10.2 million.

Ooredoo - Tunisia

Ooredoo's Tunisia customer base stood at 8.0 million at the end of Q1 2017, an increase of 6 percent compared to the same period in 2016.



The most powerful network for your life

Revenues for Q1 2017 were KD 31.8 million compared to KWD 33.8 million in Q1 2016. However, in local currency terms revenue increased by 5 percent. EBITDA was KD 12.1 million compared to KD 11.4 million for the same period in 2016.

Ooredoo - Algeria

Ooredoo's customer base in Algeria increased to 13.9 million customers in Q1 2017, up by 5 percent compared with the same period in 2016. Revenues for Q1 2017 were KD 73.8 million compared to revenues of KD 76.9 million for the same period in 2016. EBITDA for Q1 2017 stood at KD 33.4 million, an increase of 14 percent on KD 29.2 million in Q1 2016.

Wataniya - Palestine

The total customer base for Wataniya Mobile Palestine at the end of Q1 2017 was 0.8 million, an increase of 10 percent from the same period in 2016. Revenues for Q1 2017 stood at KD 6.2



million, in line with the same quarter last year. EBITDA for Q1 2017 was KD 1.5 million compared to an EBITDA of KD 1.8 million for the same period in 2016.

Ooredoo - Maldives

At the end of Q1 2017 Maldives total customer

base was 0.4 million, an increase of 11 percent from the same period in 2016. Revenues for Q1 2017 were KD 9.5 million, an increase of 14 percent compared to KD 8.3 million for the same period in 2016. EBITDA for Q1 2017 was KD 5.6 million, an increase of 20 percent compared to an EBITDA of KD 4.7 million for the same period in 2016.

EMIRATIS, MALAYSIANS REACH DEAL OVER TROUBLED FUND

DUBAI: Emirati and Malaysian officials said yesterday they reached a deal to resolve a legal dispute over the indebted and troubled Malaysian investment fund 1MDB, with the United Arab Emirates set to receive \$1.2 billion over this year. The deal, which still would need to be approved by an arbitration panel in London, resolves merely one part of the sprawling, worldwide investigation into 1MDB. Money from the fund, which was to develop Malaysia's economy, instead found itself funneled through a global embezzlement and money-laundering scheme involving people close to Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, luxury properties and the production of the 2013 film "The Wolf of Wall Street," US investigators allege.

In 2016, the Abu Dhabi-based International Petroleum Investment Co alleged 1MDB defaulted on more than \$1.1 billion in debt it owed to the sovereign wealth fund and its subsidiary, Aabar Investments. It filed a case against the fund in the London Court of International Arbitration.

A filing yesterday on the London Stock Exchange said Malaysian officials agreed to pay the wealth fund \$1.2 billion this year, with

half being due by July 31 and the other half by Dec. 31. The filing said Malaysian officials also have agreed "to assume responsibility for all future interest and principal payments" on two \$1.75 billion bonds. The agreement is contingent on the arbitration panel making a consent award on May 31, the filing said.

1MDB released a short statement yesterday saying it was "pleased" by the agreement, saying it "represents the resolution of a significant challenge." Officials with the International Petroleum Investment Co., known as IPIC, could not be immediately reached for comment.

The resolution comes as 1MDB remains the target of investigators in Singapore, Switzerland, Luxembourg and the US American investigators allege officials at the fund diverted more than \$3.5 billion through a web of shell companies and bank accounts.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak started the fund shortly after taking office in 2009 to promote economic development projects, but the fund accumulated billions in debt. Najib has denied any wrongdoing, but the scandal sparked a mass rally in November against his government. — AP

GERMAN DAX INDEX HITS ALL-TIME HIGH

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Germany's blue-chip share index, the DAX, hit an all-time high yesterday, as stock markets across Europe reacted with relief to pro-business French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron's first-round success. The index of 30 leading stocks flirted with levels just below 12,400 points. It briefly touched 12,399.91, only slightly higher than the previous record of 12,391 reached in April 2015.

By 0915 GMT, it had fallen back to around 12,390 points, up 2.85 percent since trading opened in Frankfurt. "We don't expect a sustained jump above the old record," commented Wolfgang Albrecht of LBBW bank. "May is being seen as an especially weak month for markets and that could negatively impact investors' appetite for risk." With gains for almost all the major firms listed on the index, the biggest winners were lender Commerzbank, which gained 9.32 percent by 0915 GMT to trade at 9.09 euros (\$9.88), while bigger rival Deutsche Bank added 7.39 percent to reach 16.72 euros.

Stock markets across Europe shot up yesterday after pro-business outsider Macron reached pole position in the first round of presidential voting in France, quieting fears



FRANKFURT: The DAX curve on the display panel of the stock exchange is on a record high of 12417,09 points in Frankfurt yesterday. — AP

that the continent's second-largest economy could quit the EU and the euro single currency. While leftwing anti-EU firebrand Jean-

Luc Melenchon is now out of the race, Macron must still face far-right candidate Marine Le Pen in a runoff on May 7. — AFP



NBK OPENS SMART BRANCH IN KHAITAN

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launched its first smart branch in Khaitan recently, the first of its kind in Kuwait in terms of the technology it uses. The opening ceremony was held in the presence of

Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malik Al-Sabah, NBK CEO Essam Jassem Al-Sager, NBK's Personal Banking General Manager Suresh Pajpai and his Deputy Mohammed Al-Othman.

Speaking on the occasion, Al-Sager stated that this step comes within the bank's constant efforts to facilitate better services to its clients through its presence in important areas across the country, especially the

most-densely populated ones. Al-Othman stressed that modern technology is used in the new branch where tablets are made available to customers to carry out transactions.



MANILA: The Philippine National Police Civil Disturbance Unit prepares to reinforce other police officers near the entrance to the Philippine International Convention Center, the venue for the 30th ASEAN leaders' summit in Manila yesterday. The Philippines hosts the summit of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations with the theme: "Partnering for Change, Engaging the World," slated for April 26-29. —AP

LINKEDIN MEMBERSHIP REACHES HALF A BILLION

WASHINGTON: The professional social network LinkedIn said yesterday its membership had swelled to 500 million, as its user base showed steady growth following its acquisition last year by Microsoft.

"We recently crossed an important and exciting milestone," LinkedIn vice president Aatif Awan said in a blog post. "We now have half a billion members in 200 countries connecting, and engaging with one another in professional conversations and finding opportunities through these connections on LinkedIn."

Microsoft's \$26 billion acquisition of LinkedIn which was completed in December was the biggest-ever deal for a

social media company. At the time of the announcement last June, LinkedIn had 433 million registered users. The acquisition aims to position the former tech sector leader as a Facebook-like entity oriented to business, with an array of services centered around cloud computing.

Awan said LinkedIn has some 10 million active job listings, access to nine million companies, and more than 100,000 articles published every week. "A professional community of this size has never existed until now," he wrote. "The impact of half a billion professionals connecting and communicating is very real, and very accessible to anyone who wants to take part today." —AFP

LAFARGEHOLCIM CEO TO STEP DOWN OVER SYRIA PROBE

OLSEN DEPARTURE EXPECTED TO 'RESTORE SERENITY TO COMPANY'

ZURICH: French-Swiss cement maker LafargeHolcim said yesterday its chief executive Eric Olsen is stepping down following an internal investigation into the company's activities in Syria. His resignation will be effective on July 15, LafargeHolcim said in a statement, adding that its board had agreed to his departure even though an internal probe had determined he was not responsible for any wrongdoings. Olsen's departure follows an inquiry into the indirect financing by Lafarge of armed groups in civil war-ravaged Syria to keep one of its cement plants operational.

"My decision is driven by my conviction that it will contribute to addressing strong tensions that have recently arisen around the Syria case," said Olsen. "While I was absolutely not involved in, nor even aware of, any wrongdoing I believe my departure will contribute to bringing back serenity to a company that has been exposed for months on this case," he added.

'Unacceptable practices'

Last month, LafargeHolcim admitted that it had resorted to "unacceptable practices" to continue operations at one of its now-closed factories in Syria, and yesterday it said an internal probe had confirmed that finding. The admission came after sources close to the case told AFP in January that the French government had filed a legal complaint against Lafarge for buying oil in Syria to power the Jalabiya factory, in violation of sanctions.

French cement maker Lafarge bought the factory in 2007 and invested some \$680 million to get it working by 2010, representing the biggest foreign investment in the country outside the petroleum sector. The plant, located in northern Syria some 150 kilometres (95 miles) northeast of Aleppo, was finally evacuated in 2014, and closed down before Lafarge merged with its Swiss competitor Holcim in 2015. Lafarge is suspected of sourcing oil locally to operate the factory in defiance of a 2012 EU ban on purchases of Syrian

oil as part of a sanctions package targeting the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

According to an investigative piece published in French daily Le Monde last June, Lafarge entered into deals with armed groups in Syria, including the Islamic State group, to protect its business interests there.

Yesterday, LafargeHolcim published findings from an independent, internal investigation into the plant, commissioned by its board. "A number of measures taken to continue

agement, selected members of group management were aware of circumstances indicating that violations of Lafarge's established standards of business conduct had taken place," it added.

It stressed though that its internal investigation had "concluded that Eric Olsen was not responsible for, nor thought to be aware of, any wrongdoings that have been identified as part of its review."

Never again
The company, which said it

who is set to temporarily take over the chief executive seat after Olsen's departure, stressed yesterday that "we are absolutely committed to ensuring that events like those that occurred in Syria must never happen again at LafargeHolcim." Vontobel analyst Bernd Pomrehn meanwhile described Olsen's departure in a research note as "extremely disappointing" at a time when the recently merged company was "gaining traction and delivering on targeted synergies."

But, he said, his departure "high-



ZURICH: In this March 2, 2017 file photo Eric Olsen, CEO of Cement group LafargeHolcim, speaks during a press conference in Zurich, on the company's activities in Syria. —AP

safe operations at the Syrian plant were unacceptable, and significant errors of judgement were made that contravened the applicable code of conduct," it said.

"The findings also confirm that, although these measures were instigated by local and regional man-

agement, selected members of group management were aware of circumstances indicating that violations of Lafarge's established standards of business conduct had taken "remedial measures", including the creation of an "Ethics, Integrity and Risk Committee" to strengthen and enhance compliance with its ethics rules. Chairman of LafargeHolcim's board Beat Hess,

lights that especially companies being active in politically challenging regions such as Syria have to follow strict code of standard practices."

"LafargeHolcim's decision to create an Ethics, Integrity and Risks committee following the Syria issue came probably too late," he said. —AFP

KD 1,000

RECORD HOLDER

The Largest Prize Linked to a Bank Account

January 2017

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE AL-DANAH WEEKLY WINNERS

e-gulfbank.com

GULF BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-DANAH DAILY DRAWS

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its Al-Danah daily draws on 23 April 2017 announcing the names of its winners for the week of 16 April - 20 April 2017. The Al-Danah daily draws include draws every working day for two prizes of KD 1,000 per winner.

The winners are:
(Sunday 16/4): Ali Ismail Al-Houli, Rashed Abdullah Al-Rahmani
(Monday 17/4): Zahra Najaf Ramadan Mohammed Shah, Khaled Fahad Khaled Al-Otaibi

(Tuesday 18/4): Mona Abbas Ali Al-Hazeem, Bader Ali Mousa Mohammed
(Wednesday 19/4): Meshaal Issa Mohammed Al-Qattan, Hameed Ahmad Mohammad Al-Rasheed

(Thursday 20/4): Mervat Naser Ibrahim Al-Tuwaijri, Suaad Abdullah Mohammed Al-Failakawi

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 2017 draw lineup includes daily draws (2 winners per working day and each receive KD1,000). Al-Danah's 2nd Quarterly draw for the prize of KD 250,000 will be held on 29 June and the 3rd quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 will be held on 28 September. The final Al-Danah draw for KD1 million will be held on 11 January, 2018 whereby the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced.

Five reasons why the Al-Danah account is the Best:

- 1) Kuwait's single biggest yearly cash prize of KD 1 million
- 2) Kuwait's biggest quarterly cash prizes, up to KD 500,000
- 3) Two winners of KD 1,000 every working day
- 4) The most chances to win
- 5) Only Bank that transfers your chances to win from year to year

Only Al-Danah makes millionaires. 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. For assistance and guidance.

BRITAIN BACK IN FAVOR FOR CORPORATE DEALS DESPITE BREXIT

LONDON: Britain has reclaimed its place as one of the top five countries that firms look to make deals in, just six months after dropping off the list in the wake of the country's surprise to leave the European Union, according to a survey released yesterday.

In its half-yearly report of business executives, consulting firm EY said Britain has rebounded to be the third most attractive destination for mergers and acquisitions, behind the U.S. and China. Last October, in the wake of the Brexit vote, it had slumped to seventh and out of the top five for the first time in EY's seven-year history of assessing deal intentions.

Steve Krousos, EY's global head of transactions, said that irrespective of the Brexit vote, Britain remains a "major force in the global economy and a center of deal-making activity." In the City of London, Britain has the most comprehensive financial sector in Europe and most commentators think the government, whoever wins the upcoming general election, will seek to retain that status in the Brexit discussions and that Britain will remain an open and transparent place to do business.

Last month, before she called the general election for June 8, Prime Minister Theresa May formally triggered the two-year process by which Britain will leave the EU. There's now growing talk that whoever wins the election will be in a better position to get a transitional deal with the EU that might last around three years.

In all, Krousos thinks that elections can have a short-term impact on the appetite for corporate deals, but that longer-term issues such as rapid technological change are what really drive firms.

"Geopolitical and policy uncertainty is a permanent feature of the boardroom, but technology-enabled disruption poses a greater challenge to many business models," he said. "The exponential pace of disruption and transformation is compelling executives to engage in M&A. Companies need to innovate to follow rapidly changing customer preferences and buying assets can be the fastest way to radically reshape their business for future growth."

As a result, the interest in deals remains high. According to EY's survey of 2,300 executives across 43 countries, the majority of whom are CEOs, 56 percent of companies expect to actively pursue deals in the next 12 months. That's down a percentage point from October, but six points higher than a year ago and way above the survey's long-run average.

"Executives recognize that staying on the deal sidelines could mean they are sidelined from securing future-proofing assets," Krousos said. EY's findings echo those of specialist Mergermarket, which this month found that global deal-making has remained resilient this year in the face of uncertainties, with deals worth \$678.5 billion announced in the first quarter, 8.9 percent up on the previous year's value.

Already this year, Johnson & Johnson, the world's biggest maker of health care products, has announced its largest-ever acquisition - the pending \$30 billion purchase of Swiss biopharmaceutical company Actelion. And British American Tobacco has offered \$49 billion bid for the nearly 58 percent of rival Reynolds it doesn't already own.

Getting deals through isn't always easy and this year has shown that. Recent failures include the proposed \$30 billion tie-up between the London Stock Exchange and Deutsche Boerse and most dramatically Unilever's rebuff of a \$143 billion approach from Kraft Heinz. And Rupert Murdoch's attempt to consolidate his media empire with Twenty-First Century Fox's purchase of Britain-based Sky is no done deal following the British government's decision to give regulators more time to weigh the matter because of the election.

One concern that's risen in the wake of the Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump as US president is that the global economy is heading for a period of increasing protectionism. However, despite speculation about trade barriers, Krousos said cross-border M&A has already been a hallmark of 2017, with a resurgence of deals between the United States and Western Europe. According to the survey, only 36 percent of companies now plan to focus on domestic deals in the next 12 months. —AP

KUWAIT AIRWAYS ADDS 2 ROUTES TO ITS NETWORK FOR SUMMER

KAC ADDS VIENNA AND SHARM EL-SHEIKH AS INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS REACH 38

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways, the official national carrier of the State of Kuwait, has announced that Vienna and Sharm El-Sheikh have been added to its international network, for the IATA Summer Season (26 March - 28 October). These seasonal additions take the airline's total number of destinations up to 38.

Having recently announced a 16 percent increase in frequencies across its network for the Summer Season, the additional routes are in response to Kuwait Airways' increasing passenger numbers and market share, within its domestic market and with transit passengers.

"Vienna has long been a cultural capital, within Europe, and has proven to be a popular destination during the Summer Season. Kuwait Airways is pleased to resume this service for both our loyal passengers and an ever-increasing number of new passengers who are flying with us," said Shorouk Al-Awadhi, Director of Network Planning and Strategy, Kuwait Airways. "Sharm El-Sheikh is a renowned regional holiday destination and popular with Kuwaitis, GCC nationals and many other nationalities. It is a route that has been served by Kuwait Airways before and, because it continues to prove to be in seasonal demand, it is a commercially-viable route that makes a welcome return to our international network," Al-Awadhi added.



Established in 1953 as a private company, the airline was initially 50 percent owned by the Kuwaiti government; In 1962, the government assumed 100

percent ownership, making it the longest serving, official single-state carrier operating from the Arabian Gulf region.

In 2016, Kuwait Airways announced a five-year transformation strategy with a mandate of reasserting the official national carrier of Kuwait's proud legacy and status within the regional aviation market, while also reclaiming the position as the "preferred airline linking Kuwait to the world".

A member of the Arab Air Carriers Organization and employing over 4,800 people, Kuwait Airways' head office is situated in the heart of Kuwait City, close to Kuwait International Airport. The airline currently provides regular scheduled services to 38 international destinations in the Far East, Middle East, Europe and North America. In 2017, the airline is expected to cross the milestone of serving over three million passengers, per year (TTPM). Kuwait Airways' fleet of 25 aircraft currently consists of: 6 x B777-300ER; 7 x A320-200CEO (completed delivery Q2 2015); 5 x A330s (completed delivery Q4 2015); 4 x A340-300s; 2 x Boeing 777-200; and 1 x Boeing 747-400.

In December 2016, Kuwait Airways received the first of 10 Boeing 777-300ERs, with expected completion of delivery of the final aircraft in Q3 2017. Further additions to the fleet will include 15 A320neo's and 10 A350s (delivery to start in 2019).



Once the delivery of these 35 new aircraft are concluded, Kuwait Airways will boast the youngest commercial airline fleet in the world.

GULF BANK'S EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR PRIORITY CUSTOMERS FROM FAUCHON BOUTIQUES



EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR PRIORITY CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced yesterday that it is providing an exclusive offer for its Priority Banking customers from Fauchon Boutiques. The new offer will run for one month only, starting 22nd April until 21st May 2017.

Gulf Bank's Priority Banking customers are provided with 15 percent discount on all retail items from Fauchon Boutiques located in Prestige - The Avenues, Salhiya Plaza, and Crowne Plaza - Al-Thuraya City. By only using their premium credit cards including Visa Infinite, MasterCard World, Visa Signature, Visa Platinum and MasterCard Platinum, customers can benefit from the wide selection of premium chocolate gift items. The offer does not include dine-ins.

Gulf Bank is committed to offering its Priority Banking customers with a wide

selection of privileges that match their lifestyle as well providing access to Peacock Concierge's renowned local concierge services. With Gulf Bank Priority Banking, customers enjoy personalized and preferential treatment coupled with a suite of Banking and Investment products and services designed to meet their financial goals. A dedicated Relationship Manager is assigned to manage customers banking requirements in the comfort of dedicated private floors.

In addition, they will receive a branded ATM card that recognizes their status across Gulf Bank Network, premium credit cards with exclusive privileges, discounted fees and waivers on banking transactions and added-value benefits through the Bank's premium partner merchants.



TOYOTA GENUINE PARTS BRINGS EXCITING SPECIAL PROMOTION

AL-SAYER ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE FIRST RAFFLE

KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons Co (MNSS) Group Spare Parts Division, one of the Al-Sayer Group Holding Companies, held 1st raffle on Wednesday 19 April 2017 at their Canada Dry outlet, to select the winners of the first draw of Toyota Genuine Parts special promotion in the presence of Abdulaziz Ashkanani from Ministry of Consumer Protection Affairs, Mohamed Nasimi Senior Manager After Sales Marketing, Xavier Yesudas Manager Parts and Accessories Sales, Oommen Philip Deputy Parts Marketing Manager along with the members from Group Parts and Marketing.

Be a Winner with Toyota Genuine Spare Parts

Customers will be entitled to enter one draw every month for three months upon every KD 5 spent on Toyota Genuine Parts to win exciting prizes. The offer is only available at Toyota Al-Sayer parts outlets and service centers for all invoices issued between 19 March and 18 June 2017. Four lucky winners will be selected in each monthly draw who will be presented with cash prizes in total of KD 2,500. In addition to cash prizes all customers will also have a chance to win 2017 Toyota Yaris through the grand prize draw.

Names of the winners of the first raffle and the prizes won are as follows:

Names of first draw winners
 First Prize: Shaheen Abdullah Mohammed Al-Husseini - KD 1000,
 Second Prize: Othman Abdullah Al-Othman - KD 750,



Third Prize: Bassel Ahmed Al-Khatib - KD 500,
 Fourth Prize: Mohamed Haidar Aghaz - KD 250.

Show genuine love for your Toyota by taking care of it with Genuine Toyota Parts

Toyota Genuine Spare Parts reputation and trust among customers are grounded on their highest standards of quality, durability and performance. They are designed to fit



Toyota vehicle's exact specifications. Each part will fit perfectly and meet the high quality standards of Toyota.

All the winners can collect their prizes from Al-Sayer Group Head Quarters at Kuwait Free Trade Zone by presenting the official letter from Ministry. Last date to enter the draw will be the 18th of each month. The remaining draws of this promotion will be held on 21 May and 20 June 2017 respectively.

FLYDUBAI WINS AT 2017 BUSINESS TRAVELLER MIDDLE EAST AWARDS



KUWAIT: Dubai-based flydubai was named "Best Low-Cost Airline serving the Middle East" at the 2017 Business Traveller Middle East Awards held in Dubai on 23 April. Voted by readers of the magazine, the distinction reflects flydubai's comprehensive regional network, evolving business model and its role in



creating trade and tourism flows in previously underserved markets. flydubai currently has a network of 93 destinations in 44 countries, and carried 10.4 million passengers in 2016.

Ken Gile, Chief Operating Officer at flydubai, represented flydubai at the awards ceremony and is pictured with the award.

GE TIE-UP WITH SONELGAZ TO BOOST ALGERIA'S POWER SECTOR

ALGIERS: GE is collaborating with Sonelgaz SPE, a subsidiary of Sonelgaz, in a landmark deal that highlights its Fleet360 total plant solutions capabilities. The largest services contract in GE Power's history, the agreement will lead the digital industrial transformation of Sonelgaz's plants throughout Algeria and strengthen local industrial capabilities.

The landmark collaboration includes long-term operations and maintenance (O&M) services for 10 Sonelgaz plants throughout the country that generate 11 gigawatts of power, a capacity building system for Energy Efficiency that will deliver more than 420 megawatts of additional power with greater fuel efficiency, and the introduction of GE's digital solutions. Together, these capabilities will strengthen the operational efficiency and productivity of the plants. They will also help save up to \$2 billion in gas that can be made available for sale in international markets.

"The Algerian government and Sonelgaz have a clear vision for the future of the country's power sector," Steve Bolze, president and CEO of GE Power said. "The emphasis on building industrial capacity and the focus on the digital transformation of power plant assets are long-term investments in the future of the country. GE is honored to strengthen our collaboration with Sonelgaz and help create a vibrant local ecosystem for the power sector that will help meet the needs of people and various industries across Algeria."

Joint venture

The agreement was signed by president and CEO of Sonelgaz SPE, Sabri Lezhari; and president and CEO of GE Northwest Africa, Toufik Fredj, in the presence of the Prime Minister of Algeria, HE Abdelmalek Sellal; the Minister of Energy, HE Nouredine Boutarfa; the CEO of Sonelgaz, M Mustapha Guitouni; president and CEO of GE Power, Steve Bolze; president and CEO of GE Middle East, North Africa and Turkey, Nabil Habayeb; president and CEO of GE's Power Services business in the Middle East and Africa (MEA), Joseph Anis; General Manager Sales of GE's Power Services business in MEA, Adel Omrani and other high-level GE and government representatives.

The signing ceremony took place at the GE Algeria Turbines (GEAT) plant in Ain Yagout, a joint venture created in 2014 by GE and Sonelgaz, which will manufacture gas turbines and steam turbines for Sonelgaz's power generation needs.

The Ain Yagout site in Batna, covering an area of 20 hectares, was chosen by both partners to house this industrial complex, which will annually be able to manufacture equipment with the capacity to generate up to 1.5 GW of power.

GEAT will employ between 300 and 350 people and its construction will create about 600 additional indirect jobs. It will also offer opportunities to develop a local supply chain. GEAT will draw on GE's globally recognized

programs to train its workers, technicians, and engineers, and thus contribute to the development of local expertise and Algerian talent.

Activities began at GEAT a few months ago after Sonelgaz placed the first order of 4 gas turbines and 2 steam turbines. The equipment will be delivered between 2019 and 2020 and will be connected to the national grid by 2021.

Top priority

Speaking at the occasion, the Minister of Energy, HE Nouredine Boutarfa said, "The government's top priority is to strengthen power generation in the country through a highly efficient, sustainable, and productive infrastructure. The new GEAT facility, which manufactures high-end equipment for the power sector, and the development of the Maintenance Des Equipements Industriels (MEI) shop to manufacture spare parts are a strong value-add to the economy as they will boost our exports, enhance the efficiency of our power plants and create new jobs for Algerian youth. Further, the digital transformation of the power plants will enable us to optimize the use of our natural resources, and in turn, create added value for the economy. GE's expertise in digital industrial technologies will contribute to enhancing the efficiency of the power sector, as well as the skills of Algerian professionals through knowledge sharing and hands-on training." The collaboration with Sonelgaz also includes one of the largest

Industrial Internet software deals to date for GE Power. Sonelgaz has selected GE's Asset Performance Management and Operations Optimization software applications to monitor and analyze data drawn from thousands of sensors throughout its power plants.

The software leverages advanced data analytics to predict and eliminate unplanned downtime, and improve power plant productivity. GE's software is built on Predix, a data platform purpose-designed for the scale and complexity of industrial data. "Algeria is focused on building a diversified economy and strengthening the operational efficiency of its power sector and natural gas generation and distribution assets," said Mustapha Guitouni, president and CEO of Sonelgaz. "The opening of GEAT and the digital industrial transformation of our plants are significant steps forward in achieving our economic vision of industrial diversification, boosting productivity, and maximizing asset utilization. GE's advanced suite of digital technologies will help transform our power plants, build local talent, and strengthen the culture of localization."

In a significant contribution to the Algerian economy, the new agreement will drive the development of a local supply chain with MEI, an affiliate of Sonelgaz, to manufacture spare parts for GE's turbines in Algeria. The 'Made in Algeria' initiative will be a part of GE's international supply chain, and create up to 300 high technology engineering jobs for Algerians.

Furthermore, GE will work with Algerian Engineering Services Company's (ALGESCO) engineers to repair its 9FA gas turbine technology locally, creating more than 100 new engineering jobs and building a local center of excellence for turbine repairs. First established in 1993, ALGESCO is a joint venture of GE with Sonatrach and Sonelgaz. GE will also train up to 1,000 Sonelgaz field engineers and operators on industry best practices to strengthen their expertise and competitiveness, which will potentially enable Sonelgaz to collaborate with GE on future O&M projects in Africa.

This agreement builds on GE's long term presence in Algeria. In 2013, GE signed three major contracts to supply heavy-duty gas turbine and aeroderivative gas turbine technology for nine power plants throughout the country.

With over 40 years of presence in the country, GE is a strategic partner supporting Algeria's growth aspirations. Today, GE Power's technologies generate nearly 70 percent of the electricity distributed across the country. GE Aviation's jet engines power approximately 70 percent of domestic aircrafts and up to 3,000 advanced solutions from GE Healthcare are deployed in healthcare facilities across the country. GE has four offices and two facilities in Algeria and over 700 employees. Focused on strengthening the skills of its employees and nurturing business leadership skills, GE also provides several training programs in line with the government's vision to promote human capital development.



SPACE: In this Jan 13, 2017 file photo made available by NASA, astronaut Peggy Whitson, center, floats inside the Quest airlock of the International Space Station with Thomas Pesquet, left, and Shane Kimbrough before their spacewalk.—AP photos

TRUMP CALLS US ASTRONAUT WHO BROKE RECORD FOR TIME IN SPACE

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida: President Donald Trump made a very long distance phone call to the International Space Station, to congratulate its commander on breaking the record for the most time spent in space of any American astronaut. The president spoke yesterday with Peggy Whitson, commander of the International Space Station, and fellow astronaut Jack Fischer. Whitson, the first woman to command the International Space Station, surpassed the record of 534 days, two hours and 48 minutes for most accumulated time in orbit by an

American. That record was set last year by Jeffrey Williams.

Trump joked that the call was possible because of "great American equipment that works, and that is not easy." He said he's more impressed by the astronauts than by any of the politicians he deals with in Washington. Trump's daughter and close adviser, Ivanka Trump, and NASA astronaut Kate Rubins, joined him in the Oval Office during the call. Whitson says it's a "huge honor to break a record like this," and that it would not have been possible without the

support of NASA. Last month, Trump signed new legislation adding human exploration of Mars to NASA's mission. Whitson said she's excited about the new legislation and said there is equipment being made now in preparation for the launch.

Whitson already was the world's most experienced spacewoman and female spacewalker and, at 57, the oldest woman in space. By the time she returns to Earth in September, she'll have logged 666 days in orbit over three flights. The world record - 879 days - is held by Russian Gennady Padalka.—AP

MAN LUCKY TO ESCAPE CROC CLUTCHES IN AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY: A man who accidentally snorkeled headfirst into a crocodile in northern Australia escaped with minor injuries as wildlife officers yesterday worked to track down the reptile. The croc, measuring up to two meters (6.5 feet), "reacted defensively" when the swimmer "inadvertently" swam into it on Sunday near popular Lizard Island in Queensland state. "The man suffered minor cuts and abrasions to his head and was treated for his non-life threatening injuries on the island," a department of environment spokesperson said. "Wildlife officers are travelling to the area and will search the area for the crocodile responsible."

The waters surrounding Lizard Island are a known hotspot for crocs with signs in the area cautioning swimmers of the threat. In a separate incident Sunday, a crocodile was found decapitated near Innisfail in Queensland, prompting authorities to warn

it was illegal to kill the reptiles. "Based on an initial inspection, the four meter animal appears to have been deceased for some time," the department spokesperson said.

"(The Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection) would like to remind the public that it is illegal to deliberately interfere with, harm or kill crocodiles without authorization." Last month a fisherman was killed by a crocodile near Innisfail while a teenager was lucky to escape with only two broken bones when a croc latched onto his arm after he jumped into a river in the area. Repeated attacks have led to calls from some parts of the community for a cull of the animals, but the state government has so far resisted, saying it would have little effect on the animals' behavior and give people a false sense of security. People can be fined up to Aus\$27,425 (US\$20,700) for killing a crocodile, which are protected.—AFP

NEW ZEALAND: US DOCTOR MUST PAY REPARATIONS FOR DEADLY CRASH

WELLINGTON, New Zealand: A Wisconsin heart surgeon who was vacationing in New Zealand when he caused a highway accident that killed two people and injured four others was ordered yesterday to make reparation payments but avoided jail time. A district court judge ordered Kenneth Wolnak to pay a total of 165,000 New Zealand dollars (\$116,000) to the victims or their families. Last month, the 63-year-old pleaded guilty to six charges of careless driving after attempting a U-turn on a coastal highway near the town of Nelson. Several vehicles were involved in the ensuing accident.

According to a police summary of facts, Wolnak and his wife, Elizabeth, arrived in New Zealand in mid-February.

They rented an SUV and traveled extensively around the South Island before the Feb. 27 accident. Wolnak's lawyer Tony Bamford said his client suffered a concussion and has no memory of the accident. According to Bamford, the son of one of the victims who died read a statement in court that said: "I hope you are able to continue saving lives and making a real difference in the world. That's what Dad would have wanted, too."

As part of a legal process in New Zealand known as restorative justice, Wolnak met with some of the victims and their families. He also agreed at the request of a woman whose husband died in the accident to participate in an interview with Radio New Zealand. — AP



CALIFORNIA: In this file photo, a man carries a young boy over his shoulder as he walks along beach goes enjoying unusually warm winter temperatures in Encinitas, Calif.—AP

AT LEAST GLOBAL WARMING MAY GET AMERICANS OFF THE COUCH MORE

WASHINGTON: Global warming's milder winters will likely nudge Americans off the couch more in the future, a rare, small benefit of climate change, a new study finds. With less chilly winters, Americans will be more likely to get outdoors, increasing their physical activity by as much as 2.5 percent by the end of the century, according to a new study in yesterday's edition of the journal Nature Human Behavior.

Places like North Dakota, Minnesota and Maine are likely to see the most dramatic increases, usually the result of more walking. But that good global warming side effect is not likely to extend to the deep south and especially the desert southwest because hotter summer days may keep people inside. Arizona, southern Nevada and southeastern California are like-

ly to see activity drop off the most by the year 2099, the study found.

"It's a small little tiny silver lining amid a series of very bad, very unfortunate events that are likely to occur," said study lead author Nick Obradovich, who studies the social impacts of climate change at both Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and MIT. Global warming "almost certainly will be very costly on net for humanity." Any overall benefit for Americans as a whole will probably be far outweighed by many other ways that climate change hurts health, said both Obradovich and outside health experts. For example, deaths from heat waves are expected to increase, allergies are likely to worsen and infectious diseases will be more easily spread, said Dr. Howard Frumkin, a University of Washington environmental health

professor. Obradovich said he got the idea to look about what climate change will do to people's activities a few Octobers ago when he was living in San Diego and running regularly in the afternoon. There was a heat wave, temperatures broke 100, and he stayed home. Obradovich looked at government surveys about health activity habits, daily weather data from when they were interviewed and simulations of future climate conditions. The warmer it gets, the more people go outside, which he said makes sense. Until it gets too hot. At about 82 to 84 degrees (28 to 29 degrees Celsius) people start to go out less. For most of America for most of the year, the daily high does not hit 84, so the net effect nationwide is more exercise.

But the affect varies by month and location. Nearly all the country is

likely to be less physically active in July, August and September by the end of the century, but a similar majority would also likely exercise more in November, December, January, February, March and even April in the year 2099, the study finds.

Dr Jonathan Patz, director of the Global Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, faulted the study for not taking into account people who have jobs that require lots of physical activity nor the growing popularity of winter sports. Other outside experts said the study made sense, but the bigger picture is more important. "While milder winters will permit more exercise - a good thing - it's important to put the results of the paper in that broader context," Frumkin said in an email, emphasizing "climate change threatens far more than it benefits."—AP



KIRYANDONGO, Uganda: A patient rests on a bed after being discharged from the malaria ward at Panyadoli Health Center III in Kiryandongo refugee settlement, northwestern Uganda, on April 11, 2017.—AP

FIRST LARGE-SCALE MALARIA VACCINE TRIALS FOR AFRICA

NAIROBI: A new malaria vaccine will be tested on a large scale in Kenya, Ghana and Malawi, the World Health Organization said yesterday, with 360,000 children to be vaccinated between 2018 and 2020. The injectable vaccine RTS,S could provide limited protection against a disease that killed 429,000 people worldwide in 2015, with 92 percent of victims in Africa and two-thirds of them children under five. "The prospect of a malaria vaccine is great news. Information gathered in the pilot will help us make decisions on the wider use of this vaccine," said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO's regional director for Africa.

The vaccine should be used alongside other preventative measures such as bed nets, insecticides, repellents and anti-malarial drugs, the WHO said. "Combined with existing malaria interventions, such a vaccine would have the potential to save tens of thousands of lives in Africa," Moeti said. "This vaccine is a weapon amongst others, it is one of the tools at our disposal," she added. The vaccine, also known as Mosquirix, has been developed by the British pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) in partnership with the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative, and the large-scale three-country pilot will test it on children aged five to 17 months. The drug passed previous scientific testing including a phase three clinical trial between 2009 and 2014 — and was approved for the pilot program in 2015.

'Huge impact'

The aim of the trial is to assess the effectiveness of the vaccine as well the feasibility of its delivery to populations at risk as

four successive doses must be given on a strict timetable. The immunization cycle is not in sync with routine childhood inoculations against diseases such as hepatitis, measles and meningitis, with injections required at five months, six months, seven months and two years. Symptoms of malaria include fever, muscle pain and headache as well as vomiting and diarrhea. While RTS,S does not promise full protection against the mosquito-borne disease it is the most effective potential vaccine so far developed reducing the number of hospitalizations and blood transfusions.

Malaria episodes reduced by 40 percent in tests on 15,000 people in seven countries over five years of clinical trials, and could therefore save hundreds of thousands of lives. "It's an efficacy rate which is quite low, but given the amount of affected people, the impact will be huge," said Mary Hamel, who is coordinating the vaccine's implementation program. "There will be other vaccines and they'll be more efficient, but in the meantime, this will have a significant influence."

Moeti emphasized that while the dream is "a vaccine that replaces everything", insecticide-treated bed nets remain the most effective protection against malaria, which remain, "at the moment, our strongest preventive weapon". Kenya, Ghana and Malawi were selected for the trial because malaria rates are high and they have a long history of use of bed nets and other interventions. The large-scale pilot is the latest step in decades of work seeking to eradicate malaria with the numbers dying falling nearly two-thirds since the turn of the century.—AFP



BUJUBA, Uganda: An elderly woman gets tested for Malaria at FIMRC Health Center III in Bududa district, eastern Uganda.—AFP

UK COULD FACE LEGAL BATTLE OVER AIR POLLUTION DELAY

LONDON: The British government is seeking to postpone the publication of its keenly-awaited air-pollution plan due to elections, raising the prospect a legal challenge. The High Court had demanded ministers come up with a plan to tackle illegal levels of nitrogen dioxide pollution, largely caused by diesel emissions, by 3:00 pm (1400 GMT) yesterday. But the Downing Street office of Prime Minister Theresa May said yesterday it had applied to the courts "to publish this plan by 15 September" to allow for local election cam-

paigning, and then for general election campaigning ahead of the nationwide June 8 vote. "Following advice from the Cabinet Office, we sought a short extension to the publication of the draft plans" in order to comply with election rules, said a Downing Street spokesman.

"We remain firmly committed to further improving air quality," he added. ClientEarth, the environmental law firm which brought the original case, said it was considering a legal challenge to the extension. "The unacceptable last minute nature of the government's appli-

cation late on Friday night, after the court had closed, has meant that we have spent the weekend considering our response," said chief executive James Thornton. "We are still examining our next steps."

This is a question of public health and not of politics and for that reason we believe that the plans should be put in place without delay." Air pollution contributes to the death of more than 40,000 people per year in Britain, according to official figures, with nitrogen dioxide a particular problem.—AFP

GUATEMALAN LAND ACTIVIST WINS PRESTIGIOUS GOLDMAN PRIZE

GUATEMALA CITY: Rodrigo Tot, a 60-year-old farmer and activist, was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize yesterday for work in his Guatemala homeland, an honor that comes after two previous Latin American winners were murdered in the last year. The diminutive, soft-spoken evangelical pastor was recognized for defending his indigenous Q'eqchi community's lands against a mining company and the government. In a statement, Goldman praised Tot for "intrepid leadership of his people and defense of their ancestral land" and noted his fight has come at great personal cost: In 2012, one of his sons was shot to death in "an assassination that was passed off as a robbery."

In an interview with The Associated Press, Tot said he was grateful for the honor but remains the same leader and person as before. "I think this could be a stimulus for the work we do," he said, adding that he considered the award all to be recognition for "the struggle, because we are fighting hard for our land and our natural resources." Latin America is one of the most dangerous regions for environmental activists, with more than 450 of them murdered between 2010 and 2014, according to the London-based group Global Witness.

In March 2016, Goldman honoree Berta Caceres of Honduras was killed by armed men who invaded her home. And in January 2017, Mexican indigenous leader Isidro Baldenegro, another recipient of the prize, was slain in Mexico's northern state of Chihuahua. Tot, leader of the Agua Caliente "Lote 9" community in El Estor in Guatemala's eastern department of Izabal, has fought for decades to try to make the government recognize locals' right to fertile farmlands that are also coveted by mining interests for nick-

el and gold deposits that lie beneath. The struggle began in 1974 in response to a new law requiring landholders to pay about \$4,500 to receive property titles. In 1985 a provisional title was granted to Tot and 63 other indigenous farmers in the community while they completed payment.

But three years later, records of the community's ownership of the land mysteriously disappeared. And when the last payment was made in 2002, the government refused to hand over the legal title. In 2004, the Mines and Energy Ministry granted a mining license for a region covering 16 Maya communities including Agua Caliente, and those rights later passed to Compania Guatemalteca de Niquel. "That is why we defend it, because there are lots of natural resources," Tot said. "There are 10 springs that supply lots of communities. We are preserving the mountain because if it dies, there will no longer be any water." He and the community have fought in the courts to block mining on their land, arguing it poses environmental risks to forests and streams.

Many disappearances

"Tot indefinitely delayed mining in Agua Caliente," Goldman said in its statement. Mining companies have been accused of using violence against those who oppose their projects in Guatemala, often in poor and marginalized indigenous communities. Other lawsuits allege abuses including rape and forcibly removing farmers from their terrain. According to Calas, a Guatemalan environmental and social law nonprofit group, in every case where indigenous communities have opposed mining projects, the government has backed the companies. — AP



GUATEMALA: In this April 18, 2017 photo, Maya Q'eqchi leader Rodrigo Tot poses for photos during an interview in Guatemala City.—AP



FRANKFORT, Kentucky: In this undated photo released by Kentucky Gov Matt Bevin, Bevin takes a self-portrait of his family.—AP

INSPIRED BY OWN FAMILY, KENTUCKY GOV TACKLES FOSTER SYSTEM

'THIS WAS NEVER THE STATE'S JOB. THIS JOB BELONGED TO THE CHURCH'

FRANKFORT, Kentucky: The little girl was 11, living in a foster care group home, when she ended up playing tag in a Louisville park with the daughters of a wealthy investment manager who would one day be Kentucky's governor. Matt Bevin said he and his wife, Glenna, noticed how the girl attached herself to their daughters, "like she was just one of the kids." Moved by her situation, the Bevins started the process of trying to adopt her from Kentucky's child-welfare system. They had their fingerprints taken, took parenting classes, had their fingerprints taken again, opened their home to an inspection, and were fingerprinted a third time.

The state ultimately rejected their application because, the Bevins said, they had five children and officials worried the girl wouldn't get enough attention. So the Bevins "gave up" and went to Ethiopia to adopt four children, a process they called simpler and cheaper. That was eight years ago, before Bevin became well-known for his failed challenge to US Sen Mitch McConnell in the Republican primary and his surprising comeback win in the 2015 gubernatorial election.

Unnecessary requirements

Now Bevin's in charge of the system he says

failed them and the girl, an experience shaping one of his most ambitious initiatives: An overhaul of Kentucky's child-welfare system. A former state official said privacy rules prevent staff from commenting on the Bevins' case. Health and Family Services Cabinet Secretary Vickie Yates Brown Glisson, appointed by Bevin in 2015, said his "firsthand knowledge of the burdensome bureaucracy and unnecessary requirements" of the system is why it's being transformed. The Bevins and their children split time between their Louisville home and the governor's mansion in Frankfort, where he and his wife sat down with The Associated Press for an interview last month.

Bevin said he wants to "rethink the entire system," a process that - excluding a small raise for state social workers he signed in 2016 - will come without a significant increase in spending. That puts him at odds with many child-welfare advocates who say the program suffers from underfunding and inadequate staffing. "That's just impossible," said Democratic state Rep. Joni Jenkins, co-chairwoman of a committee studying child-welfare system changes. He's also picked a fight with family court judges, saying some "genuinely, I'm convinced, don't even care." "The judges should not have the latitude to

make the decisions that they are making. Because some of them are making terrible, terrible decisions," Bevin said. "They are not looking at what is best for the child."

It's unclear what a governor could do to alter judicial decision-making in child-welfare cases, which Bevin acknowledges would be difficult. He said he's asked his general counsel to "start looking at this." The strategy dovetails with Bevin's broader plans to shake up government, including his aggressive use of executive orders, many of which have been challenged and, in some cases, struck down in court.

Legislative leaders are pursuing their own review of foster-care and adoption policies. Republican House Speaker Jeff Hoover said he'd encourage the Bevin administration "to understand, it is the legislative body that makes the policy." Chief Justice John Minton said he's confident family court judges are qualified and dedicated, and said he and the governor should "provide positive leadership and encouragement." The latest federal review of Kentucky's child-welfare system found the state didn't meet government standards, including ones requiring that "children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect." — AP

AS ORBIT BECOMES MORE CROWDED, RISK FROM SPACE DEBRIS GROWS

BERLIN: Decades' worth of man-made junk is cluttering up Earth's orbit, posing a threat to spaceflight and the satellites we rely on for weather reports, air travel and global communications. More than 750,000 fragments larger than a centimeter are already thought to orbit Earth, and each one could badly damage or even destroy a satellite. Last year, a tiny piece of debris punched a gaping hole in the solar panel of Copernicus Sentinel-1A, an observation satellite operated by the European Space Agency, or ESA. A solar array brought back from the Hubble Telescope in 1993 showed hundreds of tiny holes caused by dust-sized debris.

Experts meeting in Germany this week said the problem could get worse as private companies such as SpaceX, Google and Arlington, Virginia-based OneWeb send a flurry of new

satellites into space over the coming years. They said steps should be taken to reduce space debris. Getting all national space agencies and private companies to comply with international guidelines designed to prevent further junk in orbit would be a first step. At the moment those rules - which can be costly to implement - aren't legally binding. ESA's director-general, Jan Woerner, told The Associated Press on Friday that so-called mega-constellations planned by private companies should have a maximum orbital lifetime of 25 years. After that, the satellite constellations would need to move out of the way, either by going into a so-called 'graveyard orbit' or returning to Earth.

That's because dead satellites pose a double danger: they can collide with other spacecraft or be hit by debris themselves, potentially breaking

up into tiny pieces that become a hazard in their own right. The nightmare scenario would be an ever-growing cascade of collisions resulting in what's called a Kessler syndrome - named after the NASA scientist who first warned about it four decades ago - that could render near-Earth orbits unusable to future generations.

"Without satellites, you don't have weather reports, live broadcasts from the other side of the planet, stock market, air travel, online shopping, sat-nav in your car," Rolf Densing, ESA's director of operations, said. "You might as well move into a museum if all the satellites are switched off." Even if future launches adhere to the guidelines, though, there's the question of what to do with all of the debris already in orbit. "We have to clean the vacuum, which means we need a vacuum cleaner," Woerner said. — AP



GERMANY: In this undated photo provided by the European Space Agency, ESA, analysts at work in the space debris facility located at ESA's ESOC mission control centre, Darmstadt, Germany.—AP

CLINIC PAGE



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AUTHENTIC TURKISH CULINARY EXPERIENCE IN GARDEN CAFE

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa, Kuwait's idyllic resort is continuing to host its popular Turkish Nights in Garden Cafe as part of the restaurant's widely-admired monthly themed nights. Guests are welcome to relish the essence of traditional Turkish cuisine expertly prepared by the resort's seasoned Turkish Chefs.

Every Friday, Garden Cafe features numerous traditional home-style Turkish dishes with live-cooking stations of grilled meats offering an expansive selection of delights, including the mouth-watering 48-hour braised lamb, baked rice with chicken and almonds, and Turkish spiced kebabs in different combinations such as pistachio, aubergine, adana and lamb.

Specialties also include Lahmacun and assorted Pides. For desserts, aromatic stations cover the signature Nutella flavored Baklava and Cezerye from Southern Turkey, made of

caramelized carrots and enriched with roasted walnuts, hazelnuts and shredded coconut.

The extensive buffet features cuisine from all Turkish regions, cooked by expert Turkish chefs using ingredients imported from their home country and combined with local flavors to enhance the taste for curious diners. The menu also features dishes inspired by the Ottoman Empire, such as dolma - a dish of stuffed vegetables - with five different options available.

Diners are welcomed with a traditional Turkish sherbet drink, while the night is rounded off with a serving of either a special blend of Turkish tea or freshly baked Turkish coffee. With more than 24 cold dishes, 34 hot and 24 delectable desserts there's something to suit all tastes. Turkish Nights are scheduled for every Friday from 7 pm to 11 pm for KWD 15 per person and offer indoor and outdoor seating.



GULF UNIVERSITY FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY RECEIVES FIFTH PRESTIGIOUS ACCREDITATION

Gulf University for Science and Technology announced this week that it has just received its fifth international accreditation, this time for its Mass Communication and Media (MCM) Department from the American Communications Association (ACA), at a press conference on its campus in West Mishref. Accreditation not only confirms the strength of the program to potential employers, but also distinguishes GUST as a respected, leading institution in the region and beyond.

In addition, the accreditation process itself provides very constructive guidance on how

the Department can improve for students, faculty, the whole University, and for Higher Education in Kuwait. The ACA is US-based non-profit professional association, committed to enabling the effective use of new and evolving technologies to facilitate communication instruction, research, criticism, and offer a technologically supportive venue for all who study how humans communicate. The GUST MCM Department is the first communication and media department in Kuwait, and one of only seven worldwide to receive an international accreditation of this kind.

Professor Donald Bates, GUST President, said, "As a university, our ambition to establish a strong reputation is clear. In 15 short years we have earned four full accreditations, and a ranking that places us as the 73rd university out of 971 in the Arab region, which translates into GUST being the number one private university in Kuwait. Our mission is to go from strength to strength, and continue to provide our students with the best educational experience possible." This accreditation is a demonstration of the international standards at which the department operates.

As a testament to the department's efforts, it has grown from approximately 380 students in 2013 to over 500 today, and faculty numbers have increased correspondingly. During this time, GUST students have broken a world record for charitable donation collections, volunteered in international aid work trips throughout Asia, won second place worldwide in an anti-extremism campaign judged by Facebook Inc. and the US State Department, conducted three national-level student-faculty

collaborative conferences, the most recent of which raised over USD\$60,000 for local children's charities, and have attended numerous national and international events to hone their skills and demonstrate their talents.

Dr Ali Ansari, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said, "Accreditation not only confirms the strength of the program to potential employers, but also distinguishes GUST as a respected, leading institution in the region and beyond. In addition, the accreditation process itself provides very constructive guidance on how the Department can improve for students,

faculty, the whole University, and for Higher Education in Kuwait."

In addition to the new ACA accreditation, GUST also holds accreditations from the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) for its English Foundation Program, the College Reading & Learning Association (CRLA) for its Student Success Center, the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) for its Computer Science Program, and the AACSB-International accreditation for its College of Business Administration.



ABK ANNOUNCES WORKING HOURS DURING AL ISRAA AND AL-MEARAJ

Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced that during the occasion of Al-Israa and Al-Mearaj, its branches and the Head Office will be closed on April 27, 2017, in line with the timing set by the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). The Bank will resume its regular working hours on April 30, 2017.

ABK's online services and Call Center will be available 24 hours a day during the holiday and can be reached by contacting a customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899. On the occasion of Al-Israa and Al-Mearaj, ABK would like to extend its warmest wishes to the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to Kuwait and its people.



LINDEN EDUCATION SERVICES GRADUATE FAIR

The Linden US University Graduate Fair will be held at the Marine Museum at the Radisson Blu Hotel tomorrow. The fair will take place from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. Prior to the fair, university representatives will give free, brief presentations from 4:00 - 5:30 pm on graduate study in the fields of computer science, business and engineering as well as on 'The Path to Graduate Admissions'.

The fair, organized by Linden Education Services in conjunction with the US Embassy, will host representatives from several universities throughout the United States. The Embassy Educational Adviser will be present to answer questions about applying to American universities. US Embassy Consular Officers will answer questions about the student visa process and will offer a presentation at 7.15 pm. Participating universities include: Ball State University (Indiana), St John's University (New York), University of Minnesota and University of Missouri-Kansas City. The Linden University Fair gives Kuwaiti students a chance to meet with representatives from accredited US institutions to explore the possibilities of higher education in the United States.

FOKE VANITHAVEDI HOLDS 'VANITHA FEST 2017'

Friends of Kannur Expats Association Kuwait (FOKE) Vanithavedi, an organization formed by the residents of Kannur currently in Kuwait conducted 'Vanitha Fest 2017' on April 21, 2017 from 9 am to 4 pm in United Indian School, Abbassiya. Several competitions including cookery contest and a variety of cultural programs were held providing an opportunity for Indians in Kuwait to prove their skills. The winners of the event were



honored and prizes were distributed at the closing ceremony which was inaugurated by Dr Reeni Korah MBBS, DVD, Metro Medical Care.

The function was chaired by FOKE Vanithavedi Chairperson Bindu Radhakrishnan. In her speech, she mentioned that Vanithavedi conducted many programs for the welfare of women back home and in Kuwait and the Fest 2017 was organized for a charity purpose. Vanithavedi, Gen Convener, Adv Rema Sudheer, gave a welcome speech and Vanitha Fest Program Committee Convener Leena Sabu proposed a vote of thanks.

The entire function was under the leadership of FOKE Program Committee Gen Convener Jithesh M P and Unit Committee members. Hamza Payanur, FOKE Vice President Xaviour Antony, FOKE Gen Secretary Saleem MN, FOKE Patron N Jayashanker, and FOKE Vanithavedi Treasurer Bindu Rajeev addressed the audience. Peravoor MLA Sunny Joseph and Shiny Frank, social worker and patron of VIVID Kerala-Kuwait chapter took part in the function and greeted the audience.





ENJOY THE MEMORABLE PERFECT WEDDING AT ARRAYA BALLROOM

Every couple wants their big day to be perfect, special, and truly memorable. What better place to celebrate this special occasion than at Arraya Ballroom - the epitome of elegance and breathtaking beauty. Located in the heart of the city close to Courtyard by Marriott Kuwait, Arraya Ballroom is one of the most popular wedding venues in the country.

Its idyllic location, aesthetic appeal and picture perfect grounds make it ideal for a regal wedding, leaving a lasting impression on you and your guests. The decor is superlative with mood lights that exude aura and create a serene and elegant ambience. The pre-function area, corridors and banquet lobby- all have been designed to offer a perfect setting for your wedding ceremonies.

Before and throughout your big day,

the professional wedding planners at Arraya Ballroom will guide you through every step to ensure your special day is truly unforgettable. From stunning flower

arrangements and customized wedding cakes to cutting-edge audio-visual technology and high speed internet, Arraya Ballroom offers a choice of packages and

options that will surpass everything you have ever imagined. When it comes to cuisine, we satisfy every taste with a wide range of buffet menus designed by our world class chefs.

To ease the stress and take care of every single detail, we offer tailor-made packages that can be individually designed to suit your special needs. The special wedding package includes a complimentary night in one of the deluxe rooms at Courtyard by Marriott Kuwait, a free use of the bridal suite, a customized wedding cake, an upgraded menu featuring an elegant buffet, free parking and a lot more. Whether you dream of an intimate gathering or a grand gala, our experienced team will craft the perfect celebration, allowing you and your guests to relax and enjoy the experience.



JORDANIAN COMMUNITY KUWAIT HOLDS 'JORDANIAN FAMILY DINNER'



Under auspices of the Jordanian ambassador to Kuwait and the community's honorary chairman, Mohammed Al-Kayed, the Jordanian community in Kuwait recently held its 'Jordanian Family Dinner' at Pescado restaurant at the Costa Del Sol Hotel. The dinner

banquet was also attended by embassy staff, the community secretary general, Ghassan Deyab and a large number of the community members of whom were honored for their efforts in serving the Jordanian community in Kuwait.



BURGAN BANK'S AIRPORT BRANCH TO SERVE ITS CUSTOMERS ON AL-ISRA' WAL MIRAJ



الإسراء والمعراج

Airport branch working hours during Al-Esraa and Al-Mearaj Holiday Thursday 27th of April from 8 am till 10:30 pm.

مواعيد عمل فرع المطار في عطلة الإسراء والمعراج، يوم الخميس 27 أبريل، من الساعة 8 صباحاً إلى 10:30 مساءً.

For more information on the Bank's products or services, customers may contact the call center on 1804080.

لمزيد من المعلومات عن منتجات وخدمات البنك، يرجى الاتصال ببنك برقان على الرقم 1804080.

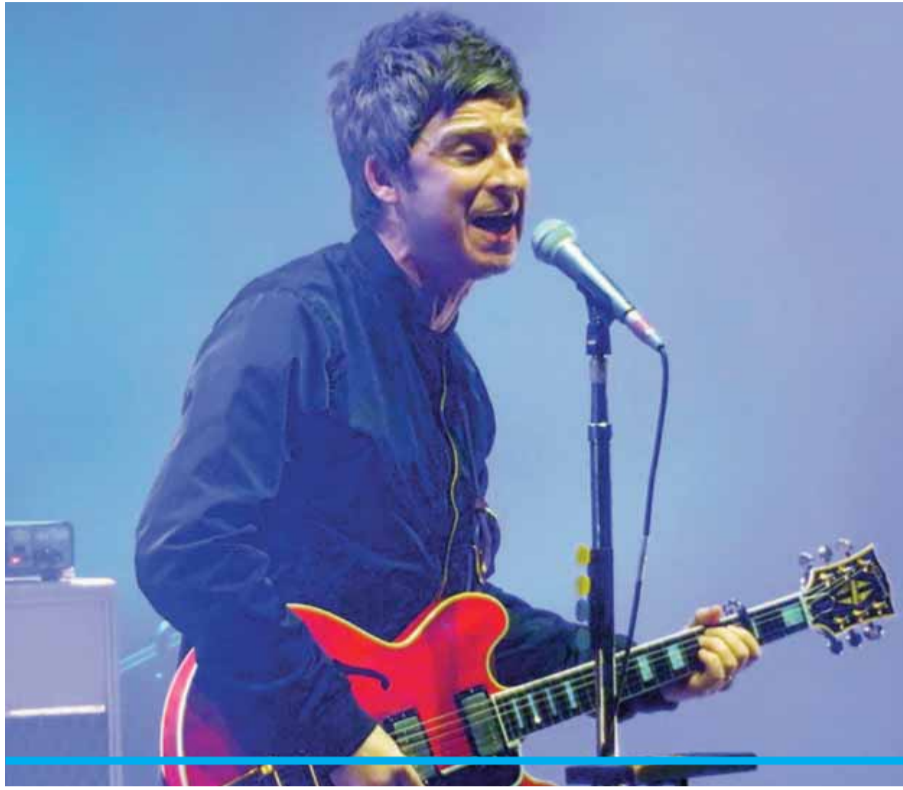
Burgan Bank takes the opportunity of Al-Esraa and Al-Mearaj to extend its best wishes to all its customers celebrating the Islamic Holiday.

يهنئ بنك برقان جميع عملاء البنك بحلول ذكري الإسراء والمعراج.

Burgan Bank takes the opportunity of Al-Isra' Wal Miraj to extend its best wishes to all its customers celebrating the Islamic Holiday and announces that its airport branch will remain open on April 27, 2017 in an effort to accommodate the banking requirements of regular customers and travelers during the Al Isra' wal Miraj holiday. The branch will be commencing operations from 08:00 am to 10:30 pm to ensure that it provides the utmost care to its customers.

GOSSIP

Gallagher's new album set for November release



Noel Gallagher says his new album is scheduled to be released in November. The former Oasis rocker has been working with producer David Holmes at the music maestro's home in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and at his private studio at his house in London and he has spilled that it will be out by November. Appearing on his close friend Russell Brand's Radio X show, he was quizzed by the comedian as to when fans can expect to hear his next batch of songs. He replied: "I believe it's slated for a November release." When pushed for a song title, he said: "There's one just called instrumental number three." Noel, 49, previously revealed that he expected the third High Flying Birds LP - the follow-up to 2015's 'Chasing Yesterday' - to be finished by June before he makes his annual trip to Glastonbury with his wife Sara MacDonald. And the 'AKA... What a Life!' hitmaker admitted he is very excited about unveiling the album to the world because Holmes - who is famous for his movie soundtrack work - got him to record in a totally different way for him. In a 2016 interview with BBC Radio 6, he said: "I think we're into the home straight now. I've been given the deadline which is to have everything finished - mastered,

artwork, videos, the lot done by the time I go to Glastonbury in June." "All the songs that I was writing towards making a record have not been used because when we decided to make a record with David Holmes the way he works is that all the writing gets done in the studio. So I started this record at his house in Belfast. The process is the complete opposite to the way that I've always worked. With this, you have no idea what you've got until it's there, and the end results are great because they're constantly evolving." Noel's younger brother and former Oasis bandmate Liam Gallagher is also putting the finishing touches to his own album. The 44-year-old singer is releasing his debut solo LP, titled 'As You Were', and the wild rocker has previously told the band's fans to expect 2017 to be "the year of the face off" between him and Noel - who he has barely spoken to since the guitarist quit Oasis in 2009 following a backstage fight between the siblings. In a Twitter rant, Liam posted: "2017 the year of the face off Wright vs wrong Real Vs fake Love vs Hate as you were LFKING x "He's not the messiahs he's a vet NORTY boy... Chill putter Carlo void man (sic)"

ED SHEERAN IS RUMORED TO QUIT THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

Ed Sheeran is rumored to quit the music industry to pursue a "more normal life". The 26-year-old vocalist made his comeback earlier this year when he released two new singles 'Shape of You' and 'Castle on the Hill' from his 'Divide' album after taking a one-year hiatus, but it has been reported the flame-haired musician is contemplating taking a more permanent break because he has "achieved everything there is to achieve". Speaking about the award-winning artist - who picked up the gong for Song of the Year at the 2016 Grammy Awards of 'Thinking Out Loud' - a source told the Daily Star newspaper: "Ed has pretty much achieved everything there is to achieve in music. He absolutely loves what he does and is riding the wave of his success at the moment, but at the same time he wants a more normal life." And it has been reported the 'A Team' hit-

maker, who is currently dating Cherry Seaborn, would gladly put his career on hold for his partner if their relationship was to progress on to the next step and he was to marry and start a family. The insider continued: "When or if he gets married he wants to put his wife and kids first and not his career. If that means going AWOL for years then so be it." Ed is set to headline Glastonbury festival this year, and he is also travelling around the UK as part of his latest tour, but it is rumored his busy work schedule will be a "big test" for him and his girlfriend because "every day" for the next 12 months he is believed to be "practically full". The source said: "The big test is if the relationship survives this album and the tour. When they go together Ed was on his year off but every day in his schedule for the next year is practically full."



Will Smith to join DJ Jazzy Jeff for UK festival

Will Smith and DJ Jazzy Jeff are reuniting to headline the LIVEWIRE Festival this summer. The 48-year-old actor-and-rapper is getting back on stage with his long-time friend - whom he performed with under the name DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince, a nod to his TV series 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' - to top the bill at the music event in Blackpool, England, which will be held over the weekend of August 25 to August 27. Not only will festival-goers see the pair perform their biggest hits, such as 'Summertime' and 'Boom! Shake the Room', but they will also be able to watch The Jacksons and some of the biggest pop hits of the 1980s as part of Pete Waterman's Hit Factory including the producer himself as well as Jason Donovan. A LIVEWIRE spokesperson said: "This is LIVEWIRE Festival's first year and we are thrilled to be launching this fabulous weekend of music. We can't wait to bring Will Smith and DJ Jazzy Jeff, The Jacksons, Jason Donovan and more to Blackpool, the best location in the UK for

entertainment." The festival will be held at the Blackpool Headland Arena and tickets go on sale on Tuesday at 10am from livewirefestival.co.uk. Jeff, 51, is a regular on the festival circuit and has made no secret of his wish to get his friend Will back on stage with him. Jeff's dream would be for the duo to bring their brand of hip hop to the world famous Glastonbury Festival. Speaking to BANG Showbiz previously, he said: "We've had interest in Glastonbury, whenever the decision comes down, I'm there. The hardest part of us doing this [reuniting] is the clearing of the schedule. I tour about 180 days out of the year but he makes movies so it's more on his side of having to clear a schedule for us to be able to rehearse and go on the road. Sometimes it gets a little hard with him being one of the biggest movie stars in the world to free up his time. But he absolutely, positively wants to do this."



Lady Gaga is always trying to 'expand' her creative bubble

Lady Gaga never stops trying to "expand her bubble" creatively, according to her visual director Richy Jackson. The pair started working together back in 2011 when Richy became her lead choreographer and he has been responsible for helping the pop megastar create some of her most iconic moments, including her unforgettable 'Telephone' video with Beyoncé, her Super Bowl half-time show and her headline performances at this year's Coachella Festival. Richy, 38, says the greatest thing about working with Gaga, is that she never wants to stall as an artist and is always determined to push herself and everyone who is part of her team. In an interview with Billboard, he said: "I think we've learned to continue pushing our creative bubbles. She'll challenge me to try this or go with that. I'll say, 'OK, how do we make it faster or slower? How do we turn it another way?' I always think about where we've come from and where we're going on. For instance, for 'John Wayne', I knew that was about her intense relationships with men, so I wanted the dance to feel rougher. I loved the couple section I created for her where she's hopping on the guy's back and still dancing and singing. That's the beauty of our organic, creative relationship: we both keep trying to expand each other's bubble." Richy - who has also worked with Usher, Will Smith, Katy Perry, Nicki Minaj, Missy Elliott and "NSYNC among many more big names - is very proud of the stage show he and Gaga created for Coachella. The dance expert was delighted when their rock vision for the annual event - which is held at the Empire Polo Club in Indio, California - was realized fully by Gaga for her fans. He said: "What we decided to do with this show [Coachella] is play with the many genres within [Lady Gaga]. She can go from a pop vibe to a rock style. We found a way to mix all her vibes with the set. When we performed 'Just Dance' it was more of her and the band, and she remixed it a bit at the top. Normally, we have her with all the dancers. It's usually more of a pop visual, as opposed to Coachella where [we made it] more of a rock visual that allows the band to soar." And Richy is excited for the rest of 2017 which will see Gaga take her 'Joanne World Tour' around the globe. He said: "With Lady Gaga, it's going to be the 'Joanne Tour', I'm really excited about that. It's going to be fun to bring that album to life, so people can see the vision. I love going on tour and seeing all the fans in different cities. They're so excited and welcoming."

LUPITA NYONG'O AND RIHANNA WANT TO STAR IN A MOVIE TOGETHER

Lupita Nyong'o and Rihanna want to star in a movie together. An old photograph of the '12 Years A Slave' star and the singer and part-time actress sat next to each other at a 2014 Miu Miu fashion show resurfaced on Sunday prompting Twitter users to invent a plotline for a potential heist movie featuring the pair. But the hysteria the imaginary project created on Twitter - with 79,000 likes and 28,000 re-tweets - has prompted the two stars to accept the invitation. Nyong'o, 34, tweeted: "I'm down if you are @rihanna (sic)" And Rihanna - who was most recently seen in TV show 'Bates Motel' as Marion Crane, the character who is murdered in the shower by Norman Bates - agreed to get on board for the film too. The 29-year-old Bajan beauty tweeted: "I'm in Pit'z (sic)" One Twitter user set the project in motion by tweeting the picture with the caption: "Rihanna looks like she scams rich white men and Lupita is the computer smart best friend that helps plan the scans (sic)". Many fans responded with potential plot and script lines, and even 'Whiplash' producer Helen Estabrook waded in on the filmmaking. She offered to produce, by tweeting: "@Lupita_Nyong'o @rihanna I will more than happily produce this movie". But fans will have to watch this space to see if anything comes of it.



Jon Favreau goes swimming with his kids if his films flop

Jon Favreau goes swimming with his kids if one of his films is a flop. The 50-year-old actor-and-director's last project was working on the remake of Disney classic 'The Jungle Book', a critical and box office success, but he accepts that not every movie he puts out will do so well. If the response to one of his projects is not what he was hoping for, then Favreau takes some time out with his three kids - son Max, 15, and two daughters, Madeleine, 14, and nine-year-old Brighton Rose, aged nine - and his wife Joya Tillem to get into a different head space. Speaking during a Q&A session at the Tribeca Film Festival where actress Scarlett Johansson was the interviewer, Favreau revealed that every time he "would start to get bummed out" by the reaction to his 2011 sci-fi film 'Cowboys and Aliens' he'd go swimming with his kids as a distraction. Favreau said: "By the end of the summer, I was so tanned. I would look in the mirror and I'd say, 'I'm going out to the pool a lot.' " 'Cowboys and Aliens' - which starred Daniel Craig, Olivia Wilde and Harrison Ford - was considered to be a financial disappointment, after it took just \$174.8 million at the box office, despite costing \$163 million to make. It received mixed reviews, with critics praising the acting and production but panning some inconsistencies in the plot. But when he does take the directors' seat for a film, Favreau admits he gets "completely immersed" in the project. He explained: "When you direct it, you have to love it, especially one of those that takes like two or three years to

do. Love it to the point of obsession. So there are things that I might want to see or be involved with or act in but that's a lot different than I have to live, breathe, sleep it, dream it. If I'm going to do my best work, I have to be completely immersed." Favreau has been entrusted by Walt Disney

again. So, I have to really examine all of those plot points. Also, the myths are very strong in that, so you're hitting something even deeper than the movie sometimes." And in order to tap into the viewers' best loved movie moments, Favreau said he tries to recall his own memories. He said: "I



Pictures to helm the remake of 'The Lion King', which stars the likes of Donald Glover as Simba and James Earl Jones as Mufasa, and he admits he feels the pressure for his work to live up to fans' "expectations" when re-working these Disney animated classics. He said: "What I'm trying to do is honor what was there ... There are certain expectations people have. 'The Jungle Book' was 50 years ago; 'Lion King' was 20, and people grew up with it in an age of video where they're watching it over and over

remember Mowgli and the snake. I remember Baloo going down the river and Mowgli riding on him like a raft. I made a big list, and I said those are the images we definitely need ... It's about the audience having the experience they're hoping they have, and if you can surprise them along the way, they'll enjoy it even more, but you gotta live up to what they want, so you get greater pressure with these beloved stories."

MUSIC & MOVIES



A woman having her hair done during an event for fans of China's boy band sensation TFBoys "The Fighting Boys" at a university in Beijing. — AFP photos



A woman holding her mobile phone carrying a picture of Roy Wang from China's boy band sensation TFBoys "The Fighting Boys" during an event.

FOR CHINESE FANS, POPULAR TEEN BAND ARE MAMA'S BOYS

Liang Shanshan considers herself a mother of two: one child is her biological son, the other is a 16-year-old Chinese teen pop star she has never met. She is a "mother fan" and part of a group of women in their mid-20s to 60s whose maternal instincts are set off by China's boy band sensation TFBoys ("The Fighting Boys"). The band has won millions of Chinese followers since their 2013 debut, rapidly amassing a following ardent enough to buy a giant ad in New York's Times Square for a band member's birthday. Liang insists her feelings are no fleeting fancy: Just like a real mother, her devotion to TFBoys singer Roy Wang (Wang Yuan) is unwavering.

"Our fandom isn't shallow," she explains, adding: "I intend to follow him through his entire career." While tween fans are attracted to the teenagers' boyish good looks, Liang and her friends are drawn to their cherubic personas and wholesome values, with songs that explore the trials of growing up ("Practise Book for Youth," "Imperfect Kid"). Some, like 24-year-old Yang Andan, even make annual pilgrimages to Wang's hometown of Chongqing in southern Sichuan province. "The more I learn about (Wang), the more I like him," Yang said.

Empty nest

Liang's family has embraced her fandom. Her four-year-old refers to TFBoys as his "big brothers," and her husband accompanies her to concerts to see Wang, describing him as their "kid". Anthony Fung, a Chinese University of Hong Kong professor who studies pop culture, said this trend of mothers who "worship young idols" began with teen stars of Korean dramas, which are hugely popular in China. TFBoys are "quite Korean in aesthetic," he pointed out, adding that so-called mother fans are "repeating the same kind of relationship where they will follow an idol... from the beginning to the end."

"They love that kind of healthy, cute boy image," he explained. Nearly a quarter of TFBoys fans are at least 30 years old-double the band members' age, according to a survey by Chinese media giant Sina. Fung says in some cases the obsession with TFBoys is a symptom of empty nest syndrome. "The older fans may have kids who are grown up, so now they're looking for someone else to be at the centre of their attention," he said. Affluent Chinese women, many of whom have



Woman handing out leaflets during an event for fans of China's boy band sensation TFBoys "The Fighting Boys".



A group of women reacting as a poster of Roy Wang from China's boy band sensation TFBoys "The Fighting Boys" blows over during an event for fans.

only one child to spoil thanks to decades of the one-child policy, are more than happy to splash out on their celebrity kids.

To celebrate the birthday of TFBoys member Jackson Yi (Yiyang Qianxi) in November, fans flew a cake-shaped hot air balloon over New York and held a party on a cruise ship in Shanghai. Sometimes, their loyalty is rewarded. On his 15th birthday, Wang debuted a song dedicated to his fans called "Because I Met You."

'My heart hurts'

A recent university graduate who works at a Beijing-based Internet company, Yang said she has learned a lot from the singer nearly ten years her junior. Every year, she gathers with fans in Chongqing to coat the streets with TFBoys posters in

celebration of Wang's birthday, spending several sleepless nights on enormous decorations. She has even seen her idol in person a handful of times, at meet-and-greets and as part of airport welcoming parties. "Every time I see him I feel like I haven't seen enough," Yang said. "But my heart hurts thinking about how hard he works. I hope he'll have more time to rest."

Aside from his entertainment career, Wang also works with several charities and represented China earlier this year at the United Nations Youth Forum in New York. The schedule doesn't leave him much time for his real family, which the star is only able to see a handful of times a year. "My dream has always been to make enough money to buy my parents and grandparents a house," Wang said during a TV interview in February.

Yang and Liang, who addressed each other by their fan aliases ("Mushroom" and "Goldfish," respectively), both vowed to remain loyal to Wang, whom they firmly believe is more talented and a better person than the other TFBoys. Even when her childlike icon is a child no more, Liang said in an echo of a TFBoys song—they can indulge in the "very joyful process of growing up together." Like young people everywhere, however, TFBoys's more traditional teenybopper fans are not always happy to share their idols with people of their parents' generation. "A girl at one of the concerts said my husband was too old to be there," Liang said with a shrug. — AFP



In this file photo, candles sit near the site where 21 people died and some 500 were injured in a stampede during the Love Parade in Duisburg, western Germany. — AP

German court allows trial over Love Parade disaster

A German court ruled yesterday that 10 people will face trial accused of negligently causing a catastrophic stampede at a 2010 "Love Parade" techno music festival that killed 21 people. Overturning a year-old ruling, the court decided that four event organizers and six officials of the city of Duisburg will face charges including negligent manslaughter and causing bodily harm. Prosecutors, victims' relatives and survivors have pointed to chaotic crowd management as the cause of the disaster in which revelers were crushed, trampled to death and suffocated.

More than 650 people were injured in the mass panic as pressure from a heaving sea of hundreds of thousands of young people squashed the victims against fences and walls. A Duisburg court a year ago dismissed the criminal case, casting doubt on an expert report on the disaster, in a ruling that angered victims' groups. But now, after an appeal, a higher panel in Duesseldorf overturned that ruling, saying there was a "sufficiently" high chance of convicting those responsible. It said in a statement there was "cause to believe" that shortcomings in organizers' duty of care caused the deaths and injuries.

The court did not set a starting date for the trial. Negligent manslaughter carries up to five years in prison. Prosecutors blamed serious planning errors for the July 24, 2010 tragedy at the site, a former cargo rail depot in the western industrial city. Eight men and 13 women were killed-included seven foreigners, from Australia, China, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. The city mayor at the time, Adolf Sauerland, became the prime target of public anger, accused of having ignored warnings that the summer festival was a disaster waiting to happen, and was forced to resign by a 2012 city referendum.

The Love Parade started as an underground event in the former West Berlin in 1989 and was held there most years until 2006, at times drawing over one million people. Following wrangling over permits and arguments over the mountains of trash left behind, the festival moved from Berlin to cities in western Germany's industrial Ruhr region until the tragedy of 2010. The deadly disaster led organizers to declare that the Love Parade would never be held again "out of respect for the victims". — AFP

Ivorian drummer boy turned globetrotting virtuoso

Paco Sery was a kibanging on tin cans before a job at a Club Med in Ivory Coast opened the way to drumming for Congo's rumba king Papa Wemba as well as Nina Simone and other jazz greats. The Ivorian drummer has performed with Manu Dibango and Dee Dee Bridgewater, displaying a talent and fervor that could only lead to Paris, a European hub for mixing and merging global styles. French jazzman Eddy Louiss, a genius of the Hammond organ, took him on for a tour. "That was amazing. People made me listen to all the great musicians. I also found myself playing in front of them," recalls Sery, now nearly 61 years old.

In his music career Sery became a core member of Sixun, an experimental jazz fusion band that saw the light of day in 1984 and made a dozen records by 2010, while the musicians also nurtured side-projects. He befriended Jaco Pastorius and Wayne Shorter, famed US members of the pioneering jazz-rock fusion band Weather Report founded by the late Austrian keyboard wizard Joe Zawinul. "Zawinul was a great guy," Sery says. "We played together often." He became drummer in the Zawinul Syndicate, an international ensemble whose release "My People" was nominated for a 1997 Grammy Award for Best World Music album.

In 2009, a live double album by Zawinul's band, called "75" and featuring Sery, won a Grammy for Best Contemporary Jazz Album. Born into a family of 18 children in Divo, a small town 180 kilometres (112 miles) west of Abidjan, Sery would accompany older sister Lucie to local dance contests. "She won little things, a bit of money, and I immersed myself in the music. I wanted to do everything like her," Paco recalls, but he was mostly infatuated with the glistening drums.

"In the end, I built myself a kit with boxes for the



This file photo shows Ivorian jazz drummer Paco Sery performing on a stage during an homage to the victims of March 13, 2016 terror attack at the resort of Grand Bassam, east of Abidjan. — AFP

bass drum, large cans of tomatoes for tom toms, lids for cymbals. I even made a pedal out of wood and elastic for the bass drum." From such makeshift beginnings, Paco was totally self-taught. "I watched the drummers, their movements, the way they did things and later I imitated them."

'Give it a try!'

The racket infuriated his father. "Every afternoon, since I couldn't play at my dad's, I went to play at my aunt's. That was fun for her with her alloco (fried plantain) business. She sold allocos with that!" Paco was just 10 when he tried his luck at a dance hall. "I managed to sneak into the hall and during the break, I asked the bandleader, who was also the drummer and the singer, if I could have a go. 'You're a child, you've got a cheek', he said. 'Give it a try!' So

I did. All the musicians were surprised. 'We'll hire you,' the bandleader said."

"I told myself that it wasn't worth asking my father and went off with them at the age of 10. We went to Dabou and I earned 30,000 CFA francs (45 euros) a month as well as board. In those days, that was enormous," he added. The child wonder frequented night clubs, concert venues and dances, and he was invited to perform on television. He played with artists of all kinds, from the stars of Ivorian pop to rumba musicians and singers covering American and French hits.

"These are super memories because every singer I played with was a new experience. That's how I got my musical training. When I was young, I didn't want to get stuck in a rut. I wanted to take everything in, discover and play it all. All styles. That hasn't changed. Today I still want to play everything: jazz, coupe-decale, hip-hop, rumba, rock, pop music, rap... it doesn't matter," the musician laughs.

Composing by ear

In the 1970s at Club Med Sery was a "drummer-DJ at the nightclub" and "water-skiing instructor by day", incidentally gaining a part in the cult 1978 French comedy film "Les Bronzes". He remained in Ivory Coast for another half-dozen years before trying his luck in Europe. He frequented the most renowned jazz dens of Paris from the Chapelle des Lombards to the River Bop and Le Chat qui Peche. Once he was established, he had a hand in launching the Sunset-Sunside club in the heart of town. While with Sixun, Sery toured with Pastorius and gained a painful insight into self-destruction with drugs. — AFP



This image released by Disney-Marvel shows Zoe Saldana, from left, Karen Gillan, Chris Pratt, Dave Bautista and Rocket, voiced by Bradley Cooper, in a scene from, "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2." — AP

James Gunn to write, direct 'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3'

Marvel's continuing space opera "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2" has yet to hit theaters, but plans are already in the works for the third installment.

Yesterday, James Gunn announced on Facebook that he would be returning to write and direct "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3." Gunn also wrote and directed the first and second "Guardians" films. The franchise stars Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista and features the voices of Bradley Cooper and Vin Diesel. In his post, Gunn said that "Guardians 3" will come after 2018's "Avengers: Infinity War" and conclude the story of this iteration of Guardians of the Galaxy, helping to launch Marvel's next 10 years. "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2" hits theaters on May 5. — AP

FEATURES



Atlantis, The Palm: A world full of luxury

By Faten Omar



Linda Abdul Hay, Director Public Relations of Atlantis, The Palm.

We all look forward to our yearly holiday, as it gives us the chance to relax, put our feet up and spend some quality time with our families. But choosing the right hotel is a trying task, and with the number of promotions and deals out there, it can be overwhelming.

Surrounding yourself with luxury and being treated like celebrities is part of the spoils at Atlantis, The Palm, the luxury hotel resort in the United Arab Emirates. "Atlantis, The Palm is a world full of luxury that everyone seeks. It offers adventure, diving, a water park, mall and hospitality services for families to enjoy," said Linda Abdul Hay, Director, Public Relations of Atlantis, The Palm.

Under the umbrella of Kerzner International Holdings Limited, a leading international developer and operator of destination resorts, Atlantis, The Palm is in Kuwait to meet travel and tourism agencies to discuss the needs of Kuwaiti citizens. "Understand your customer" is our motto to promote Atlantis, The Palm. Travel and tourism companies are communicating with Kuwaitis on a daily basis - they are our ambassadors in Kuwait who will give us a view of Kuwaitis' priorities," Linda said.

Designed with the theme of the Lost City of Atlantis, The Palm Atlantis Hotel has an underwater tunnel, which is a profound experience. Underwater sights such as ruins of lost civilizations and shipwrecks make it an amaz-

ing and memorable experience. Hotel Atlantis provides more than 1,539 rooms and suites, including seven signature suites. Every room offers a spectacular view of the artificial island.

Hotel visitors can also take advantage of Aquaventure Water Park, one of the top water parks in the Middle East and Europe. The Aquaventure Water Park consists of rides with cascades, tidal waves and rapids, and the Mesopotamian-styled The Tower of Neptune Temple, reaching over 30 m into the sky and featuring seven heart-throbbing water slides - two of which catapult riders through shark-filled lagoons. "At Atlantis we have a vet and specialist nutritionist and professional trainees to deal with marine organisms," Linda added.

The Ambassador Lagoon and The Lost Chambers Aquarium combined are home to over 65,000 marine animals and more than 250 species of fish at Atlantis. More than 100 team members care for marine animals at Atlantis. They include aquarists, water quality technicians, veterinarians and even chefs. The Ambassador Lagoon is an 11-million-liter marine habitat and one of the top 10 largest aquariums in the world.

It is also the largest open air aquarium in Africa and the Middle East at just over three million gallons. The fish in The Ambassador Lagoon have their favorite dishes. The baby white tip reef sharks love milkfish, angelfish devour romaine lettuce and bowmouth guitar sharks love blue crab.

With many different species of rays in The Ambassador Lagoon, they are a firm favorite with guests. Rays are amongst the oldest surviving group of jawed vertebrates, first appearing in the fossil record during the Lower Jurassic (about 150 million years ago) and during the Ancient Greek times, dentists used the venom from the stingray's spine as an anesthetic.

Since Dive Atlantis opened in July 2015, dive teams certified 159 divers in 2015 and 205 divers in 2016. The number of people that snorkel in The Ambassador Lagoon averages about 40 guests per day. On average, 20 guests are lucky enough to dive in The Ambassador Lagoon every week. In order to train, the divers log 110 hours of dives every month.

It is also a place to attract celebrities and important activities such as Redbull's water-slide skateboarding at Aquaventure. Shahrukh Khan, the king of Bollywood, had an amazing experience shooting 'Happy New Year' at the Atlantis. In 2016, three episodes of 'The Real Housewives of Melbourne' were based at the Palm Atlantis and 'Housewives of Beverly Hills' was also filmed here. Kim Kardashian West has also been known to stay at the hotel and this year filmed two episodes of 'Keeping up with the Kardashians'.



Weird clouds may have inspired 'The Scream'

The psychedelic clouds in Edvard Munch's iconic "The Scream" have alternatively been interpreted as a metaphor for mental anguish or a literal depiction of volcanic fallout. Yesterday, scientists hypothesized that the Norwegian painter's inspiration may in fact have been rare clouds which form in cold places at high altitude. The first version of "The Scream" was released in 1893. It depicts a dark humanlike figure clutching its head in apparent horror against the backdrop of a swirling, red-orange sky. In 2004, American astronomers theorized that Munch had painted a sky brightly coloured by particle pollution from the 1883 Krakatoa volcanic eruption.

But the new paper, presented at a meeting of the European Geosciences Union in Vienna, said he more likely depicted a rare sighting of "mother-of-pearl" clouds over Oslo. A volcanic outburst does not account for the "waviness" of Munch's clouds, Helene Muri, a researcher at the University of Oslo, told journalists in Vienna.

Furthermore, volcano-tinted sunsets tend to be common for several years after an outburst, "whereas Munch's scary vision was seemingly a one-time experience, the way he described it in his journal," she said. In his diary, Munch wrote of the sky turning suddenly blood red. Mother-of-pearl or "nacreous" clouds, require unusual con-

ditions to form-very cold temperatures in the atmosphere, in a high altitude band of about 20-30 kilometers (12-19 miles). They tend to appear at high latitudes in winter. Because they are thin, these clouds are typically not visible during daytime, but before sunrise or after sunset.

"We do know that there were mother-of-pearl clouds in the Oslo area in the late 19th century," said Muri. At least one scientist documented the phenomenon and wrote "they are so beautiful you could believe you are in another world", she added. Similar sightings of nacreous clouds over southeast Norway in 2014, and their striking resemblance to Munch's painting, is what sparked the latest research.

"Edvard Munch could well have been terrified when the sky all of a sudden turned 'bloodish red,'" the researchers concluded. "Hence, there is a high probability that it was an event of mother-of-pearl clouds which was the background for Munch's experience in nature, and for his iconic Scream." Muri conceded the latest was but "another hypothesis". "There are other hypotheses. But of course, we are natural scientists, we tend to look for answers in nature, whilst the psychologists have suggested it was inner torment that made Munch paint 'The Scream'." — AFP



Alia Adi, founder of YouTube cooking channel Basmaty World, poses with her YouTube award at her studio in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. — AP photos



Alia Adi works at her studio in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

FROM A SYRIAN KITCHEN TO TV CEO: AN ENTREPRENEUR'S STORY

For Syrian cook and entrepreneur Alia Adi, the kitchen is also a filming set. Here, she creates Arabic-language recipe videos, cooking food ranging from Middle Eastern specialties to all-around favorites like brownies and ice cream. Adi is the founder and CEO of Basmaty World, an Arabic-language cooking channel on YouTube that she is transforming into a network that brings cooks from across the region under one brand. Basmaty generates around 1 million views per month on YouTube and has more than 300,000 followers on Facebook.

She is part of a growing group of entrepreneurs who have chosen Dubai as a ground for growing their business. Two of the region's biggest success stories are based in Dubai. Valued at some \$1 billion, ride-hailing app Careem and Souq.com, which was acquired by Amazon last month, have given the local entrepreneurship scene a boost. Adi started her business in 2011 in her hometown of Damascus, Syria, working with a small team of videographers and Syrian chefs, known in the Middle East for producing some of the most complex and delicious Mediterranean dishes.

"As I was searching for recipes in Arabic, I saw that there was a gap, there was not much out there, so the idea emerged this way," she said. "I decided why don't I do a website that provides reliable and high-quality recipes in Arabic to serve the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region." Soon after the war erupted in Syria that same year, Adi left Damascus. To keep her business running, she quickly taught herself how to shoot and edit videos featuring herself as a passionate cook. For Adi, cooking means potentially big business with lucrative deals. In 2014, Japan's recipe portal Cookpad

acquired Lebanese cooking site Shahiya for a reported \$13.5 million.

Adi's videos take hard work behind the scenes, including collaborating with brands for recipe creation and product placement. She spends hours shooting video and photos of her recipe creations, before editing and posting the mouth-watering final results for her more than 180,000 subscribers on YouTube. On this particular shoot, Adi whips up a popular Levantine dip called lebnah, made fresh from yoghurt she strained overnight. She chops pistachios and apricots before drizzling honey on one lebnah dish. On another, she adds chopped olives, sundried tomatoes drenched in olive oil, and more olive oil for good measure.

Adi says she has saved thousands of dollars in licensing fees and other government-related costs for her business thanks to help from In5, a government-backed incubator that assists entrepreneurs. In5 also offers Dubai-based entrepreneurs access to work space, training and mentorship programs, networking events and investors. "I think one of the major challenges for young entrepreneurs here is related to funding... because ideas, there are a lot of ideas. There's a lot of creativity," she said. Adi initially relocated to London after leaving Syria, but despite it being easier and cheaper to establish her business there, she settled on Dubai to be closer to her customers and clients. "Dubai for me was the best location to do that. It's the country that provides most value for me, as a startup," she said. "Leaving Syria, I was looking for somewhere stable where I could continue and grow my business so Dubai was definitely the number one option." — AP



Alia Adi works at her studio in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.



This file photo taken on May 23, 2008 shows a visitor viewing Edvard Munch's painting "The Scream" at the Munch Museum in Oslo. — AFP

FEATURE



A group of mostly Syrian but some Iraqi refugee families take selfies in Times Square during a tour of Manhattan in New York. — AFP photos



Refugee families take photos as they walk toward Times Square.



Refugee families gather outside Madison Square Garden for a tour of Manhattan.



Tour guide Luke Miller talks to refugee families gathered outside Madison Square Garden.



A group of mostly Syrian but some Iraqi refugee families ride the subways.



One of the members of refugee families taking selfie near Madison Square Garden.



Tour guide Luke Miller shows a picture of King Kong on the Empire State Building as he talks to the refugee families gathered outside Madison Square Garden for a tour of Manhattan.



Refugee families take selfies in Times Square.

Syrian refugees are New York tourists for the day

'My family's happy and my children are happy, so I'm very happy'

After fleeing war in Syria and arriving in America with her family four months ago, for one day Mona Hafez is not a refugee. She is a tourist seeing the sights of New York. "Coming to the park was really fun. Riding the subway was awesome. I love all of New York City," says the 10-year-old, words tumbling out of her mouth in delight. Hafez was one of 150 refugees last week treated to free tours of the US cultural capital, complete with a pizza lunch, in a charity drive organized by a New York guide desperate to make refugees feel welcome at a time when President Donald Trump wants them banned.

So ugly and so polarized is today's US debate around immigration that organizer Luke Miller received death threats on Facebook while raising money to cover the cost of the day-long tours. "People wrote just really vitriolic, nasty, nasty things," said the 48-year-old, who owns family business Real New York Tours. "Overall the response has just been incredible."

For five days over spring break, he took mostly Syrians but also some Iraqis around the city, treating groups of children, teenagers and parents to stories about New York's history, fun facts and indelible memories.

For one day, the refugees could put aside worries about overcoming the language barrier and finding work, and just enjoy themselves after years of living in fear and uncertainty. The tour took in Madison Square Garden, Times Square—where a spot on the Marriott Marquis billboard costs \$2.5 million a month to rent, Miller tells the flabbergasted group—then Central Park to see the sea lions and ride the carousel, ironically operated by the Trump Organization.

'Wonderful'

Then it's back on the subway to head downtown to Battery Park to see the Statue of Liberty across the harbor and eat pizza. "You guys want to see something cool?" asks Miller, inviting the group to crane their necks up to the Empire State Building shrouded in cloud. He whips out pictures of King Kong clambering up the side in the 1933 movie to laughs and tells stories of construction workers laboring at dizzying heights who died in days of relaxed safety standards. Passers-by drop in to listen. Miller does magic tricks to put the children at ease. Five Arabic translators make sure everyone understands. Another volunteer has a bag of snacks—fruit, nuts, cookies and chips—to keep the children energized.

Strolling through Central Park, past lush grass, tulips and blossoms, a busker played "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" on the saxophone, and the children pose at the bronze Balto dog statue. Their parents filmed or took pictures on their phones or selfie sticks. Teenagers were already chomping on gum, US-style. "This has been the most wonderful day I've spent in America. It's been beautiful, it's been amazing," says Mona's mother Rawda, beam-

ing under a white headscarf and dressed in a sweater to fend off the April chill. The family lived through the first year of the war in Homs before fleeing to Damascus and onto Jordan where they lived for four years before their visas came through for the United States.

Trump carousel

In Syria her husband owned a shoe store. But like other refugees in the group they have yet to find jobs, first trying to learn English. But the children are flourishing. Mona, a beautiful child with long brown hair tucked into a bun, loves math and science at school in New Jersey. She wants to be a doctor when she grows up. "Now that they're picking up more and more of the language, I get very happy when they're able to communicate," says her proud mother. None of the refugees who spoke to AFP said they had experienced any prejudice in the United States. They live in Elizabeth, a diverse New Jersey town in the shadow of Newark Liberty International Airport.

Miller calls it "divine justice" that Trump's company operates the carousel, saying he did not know that before drafting the itinerary. Certainly the refugees don't care. "My family's happy and my children are happy, so I'm very happy," says Ammar Ahmed, 45, a father of four and accountant who fled war in Iraq by going to Syria, only to move back to Iraq to escape war in Syria. "It's my dream!" he said of living in America. Increasingly confident in English, his next task is to find a job. — AFP



Refugee families walk through Central Park.



Christian Borle, center, and cast appear on stage for the Broadway opening night curtain call of Roald Dahl's 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' at the Lunt-Fontanne Theater on Sunday in New York. — AP



These file photos show the members of the Between Music band performing with a custom-made instrument in a glass water tank during a rehearsal ahead of the AquaSonic underwater concert in Aarhus, Denmark. — AFP photos

Musicians in aquariums make sounds in a silent world

Talk about fluid tunes: A group of innovative Danish musicians submerged like fish in an aquarium have created an underwater concerto with instruments specially adapted to resonate in a silent world. In the central Danish town of Aarhus, a Godsbanen center concert hall looks more like a fish farm than a music set, with its jumble of water tanks, canisters, tubes, pipes and retrofuturistic objects. One after the other, the five members of the Between Music band—Laila, Robert, Morten, Dea Maria and Nanna—descend into their own individual glass-paned water tanks for their latest project AquaSonic, where they play the violin, cymbals, bells, a crystallophone with a pedal, and a kind of hurdy gurdy with a long neck.

Hydrophones, or special microphones that pick up the sound of the music in the water, amplify the soundwaves, producing music that resembles the sounds whales make. A pioneer in the field of aquatic music, Laila Skovmand wears several hats with the ensemble: She is artistic director, music and lyrics writer, and vocalist. She sings both underwater and at the water's surface. Like a siren, her lips at water level, Skovmand releases a captivating chant. "I'm an educated singer and I wanted to explore new songs. I got the idea that if I sang into the surface of the water I might get some other timbre, some delays, so I tried that," she explains.

The group collaborates with engineers and makers of musical instruments to develop water-resistant instruments whose sounds respect the harmonies composed by Skovmand. "There are a lot of musical limitations. There are so many things we can't play because of the struggle with the water, the struggle with the sound, but I think that what the water gives is that special kind of timbre that you can't get in air," she says.

Pink Floyd in slow motion

The resulting effect is a sound closer to an accompaniment for Tibetan meditation than it is to chamber music. And it's far from other well-known tributes to water such as Maurice Ravel's "Fountains" or Luciano Berio's "Water Piano". While the water transports the sound, it also stifles it and slows it down considerably: The effect is a bit like playing Pink Floyd or Jean-Michel Jarre in slow motion. Musician and producer Robert Karlsson plays the violin-made of carbon fibre—and the crystallophone, a distant relative of the glass harmonica invented by Benjamin Franklin. Nanna Bech performs the rotacorda, an instrument inspired by a traditional Byzantine hurdy gurdy. It has six stainless steel strings which can make sound either with a sustained pulling of the string or when fingered. "It's the only one in the world so I don't even have a teacher. And that's a shame!" she jokes.

Skovmand also plays the hydraulophone, a type of underwater organ. "We want to show that the impossible is possible, to discover a new element with live music," says Karlsson. The band spends the entire performance under water, surfacing regularly as part of the choreography to take breaths of air. Ahead of the recent Aarhus concert, the ensemble spent almost six hours in the tanks in one afternoon to prepare for that night's 50-minute performance.



A member of the Between Music band performing with a custom-made instrument in a glass water tank during a rehearsal.

The water is kept at 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit). "We do some diving training, practicing to hold our breath under water," Bech explains. And she has developed a special technique to sing under water. "I can't let the air bubbles get out of my mouth, because they will become bubbles (in the water) and that makes a lot of noise under water. So I can only make short notes." For Karlsson, making music in water has a magical effect on him. "I'm actually not very fond of water personally. I

can feel claustrophobic in a bathtub. But somehow when I get into this tank and am playing an instrument, I get calm and really secure," he says. Between Music is currently performing AquaSonic across Europe. After a world premiere in Rotterdam last year, the band is now touring Denmark, and will take part in the International Diaghilev Festival in Perm, Russia in May. — AFP



Members of the Between Music band performing with custom-made instruments in glass water tank.



A member of the Between Music band performing with a violin and a custom-made instrument in a glass water tank during a rehearsal.



A member of the Between Music band singing in a glass water tank during a rehearsal.