



Incorrect data on residency permits leave traveling expats confused



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News

in brief

MoH reviews exemptions

KUWAIT: The health ministry is reviewing its decision to exempt certain categories from the increased health fees for expats that will go into effect from Oct 1. MPs have been objecting to the exclusion of tens of thousands of expats from the new charges. Health Minister Jamal Al-Harbi formed a team to review these categories, which will submit its report by mid-Sept. Sources said the team will likely remove health ministry workers and their relatives from the exemption list due to their large numbers (more than 50,000), and lack of any justification to exempt them.

Call to free Kuwaiti

KUWAIT: MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari called on the foreign ministry yesterday to act to secure the release of a Kuwaiti citizen who has been jailed for the past 11 days in the Turkish city of Moul.

New Qatar maid law

DOHA: Qatar has approved a law limiting domestic staff to a maximum of 10 hours' work a day. The "Domestic Employment Law" also orders employers to pay staff wages at the end of each month and entitles workers to at least one day off per week and an annual leave of three weeks. They will also receive end-of-service benefits equating to a minimum of three weeks wages for each year of service when their contract ends. (See Page 11)



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (right) poses for a photograph with Senior White House Advisor Jared Kushner at the presidential palace yesterday. — AFP

CAIRO: Egypt's president and foreign minister met White House adviser Jared Kushner yesterday, just hours after the Trump administration cut or delayed hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Cairo over human rights concerns. Kushner, who is also President Donald Trump's son-in-law, was in Cairo as part of a Middle East tour aimed at exploring ways to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, which last collapsed in 2014. A modified version of Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry's schedule had earlier showed the meeting with Kushner cancelled, which was widely seen as a snub in protest at the aid cuts. But Shoukry later sat in on Kushner's meeting with

Continued on Page 11

ZAIN PUBLISHES ANNUAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

BADER AL-KHARAFI: ZAIN GROUP A PIONEER

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Zain Vice-Chairman & Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

Zain's 2016 report details the company's sustainability agenda, highlighting key partnerships and commitments with global entities such as the United Nations High

Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR), The Whitaker Peace Development Initiative, Child Helpline International (CHI), REFUNITE and Facebook. Additionally, the document communicates Zain's triple bottom line approach (social, environmental and economic) to all stakeholders.

Commenting on the release of the report, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi said, "Zain Group is renowned for being a pioneer across many of its different activities and this has also become true of our sustainability report. I urge as many corporate entities and people as possible to review this latest report and perhaps gain some inspiration for themselves of the types of activities that can be entered into to help uplift society." (See Page 3)

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INCORRECT DATA ON RESIDENCY PERMITS LEAVE TRAVELING EXPATRIATES CONFUSED

'3 NATIONALITIES MAY NOT TRAVEL, OTHERS MUST SIGN UNDERTAKING TO CORRECT DATA'

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Confusion over incorrect data on work visas left many expats stranded and unable to travel out of Kuwait for holiday recently. Continued confusion about who is affected, how to correct the

problem and if expats will be stopped from traveling continues to worry those planning for their leaves. In order to clarify the issue, Kuwait Times visited the Immigration Department in Mishref yesterday and spoke to immigration officials regarding the problem. The immigration

department has set up a special counter specifically to deal with the incorrect data problem.

"If they want to correct their data, applicants must come personally and submit to us a filled application form (to be completed at the typing department). They should attach copies of their passport and civil ID along with their marriage contract (if married) attaching copies of wife's or husband's civil IDs," explained the Immigration officer on duty. Earlier security sources clarified that expats with incorrect data will not be barred from leaving the country - but will be asked to sign an undertaking to correct their data once they are back from vacation.

However, three nationalities - those from Iran, Iraq and Syria - will be strictly prohibited and barred from leaving the country if there are discrepancies over date of birth or other information on their passports and residency permits. Last week, the Director General of Kuwait International Airport, Major General Walid Al-Saleh, said authorities discovered that many expats have conflicting data on their passports and residency permits. He announced to the expats community to

correct their records or they'll be barred from leaving the country.

Dudes Valiente, a Filipina national, is confused and concerned regarding the matter. "On my Civil ID it is clear August 22, 1988 but on my passport October 22, 1988. My real birth date should be October but my civil ID says August. It is not my mistake, it's a mistake by the immigration department. Now, it becomes a problem and I told them before they have not corrected it, but they said, it's okay," Valiente said.

Another expat expressed her concern regarding documents and transactions in case her number will be changed: "This is scary! I am scheduled to take a vacation this coming September and I am aware that my passport's birth date does not match the one in my civil ID. I tried to correct this a long time ago but the immigration department at that time told me it really doesn't matter. Should I go to the immigration department now to correct it or what?" a Filipina nurse asked. "I exist based on this national civil ID I've got here ever since, what is the assurance that my record since I entered Kuwait will not be compromised? I need to be assured of that," she said.



KUWAIT: Some expats are pictured at the Immigration Department. Confusion over incorrect data on work visas has left many expats stranded and unable to travel out of Kuwait for holiday.

News

In brief



Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance's Assistant Undersecretary for Economic Affairs Sulaiman Al-Abduljalil

Arab economic ties

CAIRO: Arab nations should work together as one cohesive unit to ensure that all strategies laid out by economic and social councils in the region ultimately come to fruition, said a Kuwaiti official yesterday. Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the 100th session of the Arab Economic and Social Council, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance's Assistant Undersecretary for Economic Affairs Sulaiman Al-Abduljalil, said that the session brought together senior officials from across the Arab economic spectrum. On issues discussed, Al-Abduljalil, who heads the Kuwaiti delegation to the session, said that talks centered on plans to boost cooperation between Arab nations in the economic realm. He pointed out that officials also examined how far progress has come on decisions made in previous meetings, all of which aim to provide Arab countries with the opportunity to work closely together in the economic arena. The Kuwaiti official added that a slew of forthcoming meetings are on the horizon, including an Arab-South American summit set to take place in Venezuela in 2018.

New electricity tariffs

KUWAIT: Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity and Water for Planning and Training Dr Mashaan Al-Otaibi said the new electricity and water rates will encourage consumers to rationalize consumption. The new rates, that came into force in the investment sector on Tuesday; are five fils (nearly \$0.016) per kWh and two dinars (\$6.63) per 1,000 imperial gallons of water, he said. "The new tariffs took effect in the commercial sector in May and the tariffs of the government sector will rise from two fils to 25 fils (some \$0.082) per kWh and from KD 0.8 to KD 4 (\$13.27) per 1,000 gallons as of November 22, 2017," Dr Al-Otaibi noted. "The ministry started implementing the new program of increasing the tariffs of water and electricity after finalizing all accounts of the investment sector and making sure that there are no consumers in debt. "The Ministry consumes 350,000 barrels of oil a day to generate power and this figure could hit two million bpd in 2035 if extravagant consumption continued," he added. He commended the Amiri vision for replacing 15 percent of Kuwait's total power consumption by renewable energy by 2030.

GCC, UN seal deal

RIYADH: The GCC and the United Nations Environment Program signed a cooperation agreement for four environmental conservation projects yesterday. The deal, signed by GCC Secretary General Abdullah Al-Zayani and UNEP Executive Director Erik Solheim, is in line with GCC ministerial decisions and UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, read a GCC Secretariat statement. The deal calls to implement "important environmental projects" across GCC countries, in cooperation with the UN agency, aimed at the conservation of natural resources in order to achieve sustainable development. It includes the study of the impacts of land fills on the marine environment, the development of data for air quality, the updating of sound management of chemicals guidelines and the preparation of a report on the state of the environment in the GCC.

Private housing business

KUWAIT: Stability of property deals and oil prices contributed to decline of the housing key index and checking inflation which edged up 1.4 percent in Q2 2017 as compared to Q2 2016, Kuwait Finance House said. KFH said in a report (covering Q2 2017) that inflation stood at 1.4 percent due to rise of its main components except for housing which dropped in Q2 by 2.3 percent on yearly basis. In light of abundant housing units, availability of more land plots and construction permits, prices of private housing stabilized relatively in this year's first and second quarters. Average price of a square meter in the private housing sector reached KD 700 (some \$2,000). Likewise, rates in the investment and commercial sectors had a measure of stability. Value of property transactions dropped in Q2 by 22 percent as compared to the same period last year, posting KD 518 million (some \$1.7 billion). Number of transactions reached 1,533 rising 21 percent.

INMATE COMMITS SUICIDE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Relations and Security Information said a Gulf national inmate hanged himself in his cell using prisoner's uniform. Investigations are underway to find out the circumstances of the incident and his motive.



KUWAIT: Residency detectives busted a bogus domestic help office that cheated citizens and expats. Asians who were running the office sold drugs and carried out vice activities. They were all sent to concerned authorities.

NO 'PLASTIC RICE' IN KUWAIT

MOH OFFICIAL TO BE PROSECUTED

KUWAIT: Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced yesterday that the Kuwaiti market is safe and free from any "plastic rice" products after receiving test results from the ministry's labs. Following rumors that were spreading on the social networks related to the "plastic rice," the ministry started to collect samples from various outlets all over the country, aiming to confirm safety and to ensure that only safe products are in the market, a statement by the ministry said.

All products that enter Kuwait are being closely inspected before reaching consumers, and Kuwait is one of the top countries in the area that applies the highest requirement standards on imported products, the statement added. It urged the people not to promote any false information on social networks, which is considered a strong media for news and information could create panic in the society. The ministry affirmed that all presented com-

plaint are being taken seriously to safeguard the consumers' safety, and to protect them from being victims of any commercial fraud. In another development, Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (NAZAHA) announced yesterday that a senior official of the Ministry of Health was referred to the Public Prosecution on counterfeiting charges. NAZAHA said in a statement that the official was referred to the prosecution, as part of continuing efforts aimed at combating corruption and punishing those involved in it.

The authority added that it had started inspecting, collecting evidences and listening to witnesses on the case, affirming "there are serious proofs substantiating the suspicions" surrounding the accused official. NAZAHA affirmed its readiness to receive any tip or information about suspected corruption cases or misappropriation with public funds and any other corruption offense. — Agencies



KUWAIT: Photo shows a bag of plastic rice. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced yesterday that the Kuwaiti market is safe and free from any "plastic rice" products after receiving test results from the ministry's labs.



The Eastern School for Girls was given the name of 'Museum of Modern Art'



OLD SCHOOLS - MONUMENTS OF HISTORICAL VALUE

KUWAIT: The old schools in Kuwait are no longer merely witnesses to an important era in the modern history of Kuwaitis, they have become monuments of historical and sentimental value which are linked to the renaissance of education in the country. As society of old showed admiration and love to these aged facilities, the current generation followed in their footsteps, believing it would be essential to turn such schools into museums.

The transformation of old schools into museums is a commendable step taken by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) for the preservation of antiquities, following the issuance of Amiri Decree No 1, the first law of archeology to be issued by the state in recognition of the

importance of preserving these buildings. "The council is keen to preserve the old buildings, including the schools that have been turned into museums," said Fatima Al-Qabandi, the supervisor of historic buildings at the NCCAL said in an interview with Kuwait News Agency.

She pointed out that the council started the process with the Mubarakiya school, which was established in 1911 by a donation from the people of Kuwait. It is considered the first regular school in Kuwait. She added that the school was named Mubarakiya after late ruler of Kuwait Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, noting that the school was managed by Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qena'i. She said that Astronomer Dr Saleh Al-Ajairi and Fahd Al-Askar were

students of that school. In 2012, the council celebrated the 100th anniversary of formal education by opening the Mubarakiya School as a museum of formal education in Kuwait, she stated.

She also recalled the Eastern School for Girls, which was established between 1938 and 1939, saying it started as a school for boys; however, after the increase in the number of female students, it was turned into a school for girls. The Council in 2001 started restoration and maintenance of the building, she said. Al-Qabandi said that the school was opened by the Council in 2008 within the framework of Al-Qurain cultural festival and was given the name of "Museum of Modern Art". It includes a collection of the

National Council, which kicked off with the beginning of the Kuwaiti fine arts. The museum also conducts courses, exhibitions and photography.

Al-Qabandi said that the Eastern School was established in 1946 to accommodate the increasing number of students, including His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and others who held leadership positions. In 2006, the council opened a school, which was given the name of "Maritime Museum", which displays marine life in ancient times. The museum consists of various sections including a section on the emergence of Kuwait as a maritime nation in the late 20th century, the manufacture of sailing vessels and other maritime professions. — KUNA



The National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) transformed Al-Mubarakiya school to the museum of formal education in Kuwait. —KUNA photos



Arts collections at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL)

ZAIN PUBLISHES ANNUAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

KUWAIT: Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator with a presence in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces the publication of its sixth annual sustainability report, entitled 'Innovate for a Sustainable Future'. The release of this latest report, which is aligned with the United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGP) and adheres to the G4 reporting guidelines set by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), reinforces Zain Group's position as one of the most consistently transparent mobile operators in the MENA region given the depth of information it openly shares.

Zain's 2016 report details the company's sustainability agenda, highlighting key partnerships and commitments with global entities such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), The Whitaker Peace Development Initiative, Child Helpline International (CHI), REFUNITE and Facebook. Additionally, the document communicates Zain's triple bottom line approach (social, environmental and economic) to all stakeholders.

Available exclusively online through an interactive interface that is user-friendly, and which also minimizes the company's environmental impact, this year's publication has a key new development. The report includes a section demonstrating the company's ongoing commitment to align its policies and activities with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting launched and established initiatives across all operating companies that address the goals.

2016 Report includes a new key section demonstrating the company's commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

economic development and promoting the innovative potential of the region, especially in regards to the youth. It is clear to us that the more we do in this area, the more that remains to be done, and we are up to the challenge of further implementing initiatives that are impacting all our stakeholders for a greater good."

Commitment to sustainability

Al-Kharafi concluded, "I would like to acknowledge all the Zain people across the Group and operations who are working so diligently to achieve our sustainability goals. It is not by accident that we have become one of the most recognizable and appreciated brands in the region, and we shall continue earning this accolade through our transparency and the initiatives we drive."

Zain's commitment to sustainability is reflected in the long list of activities and initiatives the company runs in any



in highly visible corporate sustainability pursuits such as Zain Jordan's collaboration with the UNHCR and Facebook to provide free hi-speed Wi-Fi connectivity for refugees and underserved communities in pre-selected centers across the Kingdom, with the project set to be in place for five years.

Supporting the underprivileged

Other examples highlighted, include flagship operator - Zain Kuwait donating a sizeable amount in 2016 to support the education of underprivileged children in Kuwait as part of its ongoing humanitarian strategic partnership with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society. This partnership aims to create and develop inclusivity when it comes to providing access to education for marginalized segments in Kuwait. Focusing on developing its 7,000-talented workforce, Zain provided more than 115,000 hours of training to its

titution that offers participants seed money, training, media exposure, and networking opportunities.

'Innovate for Refugees'

A record 6,000 teams (representing over 12,000 individuals) submitted to the competition. Additionally, Zain partnered the MITEF 'Innovate for Refugees' competition that invited entrepreneurs and refugees from around the world to come up with tech-driven, innovative solutions to help address the global refugee crisis. The initiative attracted over 1,600 applications from across the globe. Zain Iraq hosted a startup weekend in Baghdad, Iraq, which provided a workshop in which students and other young Iraqis were brought together to pitch their entrepreneurial ideas to assembled judges and members of the audience. While, in Sudan, Zain sponsored the country's first business accel-

Report highlights Zain's efforts in developing a youth-focused entrepreneurial environment

'Girls in Tech'

Established in 2014 Jordan's Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) is again highlighted in the report. A space dedicated to cultivating innovative ideas and startups, during 2016 ZINC hosted various events that aimed to address the skill mismatch that our region faces. One key initiative was centered around cyber security and women, with ZINC hosting the 'Girls in Tech' - Jordan Chapter for the first Tech Talk that covered cyber security, privacy, and what precautions women need to take when assaulted online. Overall, ZINC attracted 15,791 young aspiring attendees over the year.

Jennifer Suleiman, Zain Group's Head of Corporate Sustainability concluded, "Our latest report highlights that we continue to do the things that actually matter for our stakeholders and for the environment as we build strong links in the communities in which we operate. It is highly satisfying to see the mix between our more mature sustainability activities and the new initiatives, which continue to push the boundaries of what organizations such as ours can achieve in this area. We pledge to continue learning and improving, and sharing our experiences with the view to our successes being identified and replicated by other corporate entities across the region."

Zain's sustainability report, 'Innovate for a Sustainable Future' is published exclusively online and can be viewed on www.zain.com/social-responsibility/sustainability-reports/.



Zain Vice-Chairman & Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

Pioneering role

Commenting on the release of the report, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi said, "Zain Group is renowned for being a pioneer across many of its different activities and this has also become true of our sustainability report. I urge as many corporate entities and people as possible to review this latest report and perhaps gain some inspiration for themselves of the types of activities that can be entered into to help uplift society."

The Vice-Chairman and Group CEO continued, "We firmly believe that corporate entities should play a pivotal role by actively supporting socio-economic

development and promoting the innovative potential of the region, especially in regards to the youth. It is clear to us that the more we do in this area, the more that remains to be done, and we are up to the challenge of further implementing initiatives that are impacting all our stakeholders for a greater good."

With approximately 90% of the population unbanked in Iraq and a high percentage in Jordan as well, Zain Cash has a significant positive impact on the society as it helps address economic disparity. The company has also been involved

employees across operations with an average of 20 hours of training per employee during 2016. Zain Group has always been known as a strong contributor to employment across its markets, though this year's report identifies the extent to which its operations have a knock-on effect in their respective countries of operation creating a significant amount of jobs through its value chain by providing more business to local suppliers. During 2016, Zain also continued to focus on further developing the entrepreneurial and youth-focused ecosystem through initiatives such as its participation in the MIT Enterprise Forum (MITEF) Startup Competition, a regional startup compe-

tor program to promote a more startup friendly and innovative ecosystem in the country.

Addressing a major deficit of 'skills mismatch' in the region, Zain continued in its efforts to narrow the gap with Zain Bahrain holding a 'Youth City ICT Jobs' workshop to educate youth about job potential in the ICT sector that was attended by 80 high school students. Similarly, based on a Silicon Valley curriculum, Zain Jordan undertook 'ReBoot Kamp', a 16-week program designed to produce high quality software engineers that saw 17 students graduated from this course in 2016, with two students being refugees and all participants attaining quality jobs thereafter.

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi: 'Initiatives we undertake are impacting all our stakeholders for a greater good'

INNOVATE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2016



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met with the National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.



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



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

CROWN PRINCE MEETS TOP OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received the National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem at Bayan Palace. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also hosted His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. — KUNA



The World Bank's (WB) Country Manager in Kuwait Firas Raad speaking to reporters. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT ECONOMY TO 'REBOUND IN 2 YEARS'

WORLD BANK EXPECTS KUWAIT'S GDP TO GROW BY 3%

KUWAIT: The World Bank's (WB) Country Manager in Kuwait Firas Raad said the late 2016 OPEC and major oil producers' agreement, aimed to cut the glut in the global oil production, have added strains on the Kuwaiti economy in 2017. However, he expected Kuwait's GDP to grow by three percent in the coming two years thanks to the efforts of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to improve the business atmosphere and encourage the public-private partnership.

The competent agencies are working on investor guidelines, which will be issued soon, on the promising projects in the framework of the public-private partnership, Raad, a Jordanian national, said in statements to KUNA. The launching last week of Kuwait Business Center is a great achievement that testifies to the dedication of the sponsors of the Center, including the Ministry, Kuwait Direct Promotion Authority (KDIPA) and the parliamentary committee on the improvement of the business atmosphere, Raad noted.

Business atmosphere

The Center materializes the interagency cooperation to cut the red tape and facilitate the licensing of businesses, thus sparing much time, money and effort for local and foreign investors, he pointed out. The improvement of business atmosphere is closely related to economic growth and in consistency with the Amiri vision and the government development plans for diversifying the sources of national income and reducing dependence on oil revenues.

In addition, these efforts will help create more jobs for the citizens, increase the per capita income and encourage innovation and creativity, he went on. The efforts to improve business atmosphere, according to the World Bank observations, should include facilitating the issuance of construction licenses and provision of electricity for businesses, Raad said, commending the efforts of Kuwait Municipality in this regard.

Regarding the economic laws, recommended by the World Bank Group, he said the Kuwaiti government is working on a package of draft bills that include regulations for restructuring the insolvent companies, a bill voluntary restruc-



World Bank's (WB) Country Manager in Kuwait Firas Raad

turing, a bill on crediting information, and another one on secure transactions. The blueprint of the insolvency bill is being revised by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as a prelude to tabling it to the cabinet for endorsement, he said, voicing hope that the law will give a quantum leap to the business atmosphere.

Trans-border trade

The World Bank Group and the Kuwaiti government are working together to enhance the trans-border trade and facilitate the registration of real property. A recent survey shows that the insufficiency of investment land constitutes the main obstacle facing the industrial and commercial development in Kuwait in general, Raad said. The oil-rich Gulf economies were hard hit by the sharp decline of the oil prices between 2014 and 2015, which necessitated radical financial and economic reforms, including austerity measures and lending to bridge their budget deficits, he recalled.

Kuwait's economic growth rate slowed slightly in 2015-2016 to range between two and three percent due to two reasons; first, the continued government spending on mega projects and

measures adopted by the Ministry of Finance to cut current spending; Second, the continued activities in the non-oil sectors in this period as well as the OPEC deal to cut oil production in late 2016 that helped ratchet up the oil prices, he explained. The Kuwaiti economy faces the challenge of turning into tangible reality the Amiri vision and the government plans for economic reforms in order to revitalize the private sector and provide jobs for the coming generations, he underscored.

Coupled with slowed growth in the world's major economies and global protectionist trade policies, geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and beyond also pose formidable challenges to Kuwait's economic outlook in the coming three years, he cautioned. Regarding the World Bank programs for Kuwait, he said they consist of four axes; first, the private sector; second, the public sector; third, the improvement of infrastructure; and last but not least, the development of human resources.

The private sector

As for the private sector, there are programs for promoting the small enterprises, protecting competition, improving the business atmosphere, and boosting the private-public partnership. There are two programs relating to the revitalization of the private sector; these are the cooperation between the World Bank and the Ministry of Finance for better management of the public funds; and the mechanisms of land registration and state property, Raad went on. Regarding the infrastructure, he noted that the joint program with Kuwait Municipality for the management of waste was scrapped.

The human development program envisages the World Bank working with Kuwait's educational, health and social security sectors to build the capacity of workers through quality education. Nearly 50 percent of the joint programs focus on improving the quality of curriculums of education and higher education, he said, commending the efforts being made in the framework of the national program for educational improvement. Raad extolled His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to defuse the tensions in the region and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian refugees. — KUNA

INFLATION UP 1.26%

KUWAIT: The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose by 1.26 percent in July 2017 compared to the same month in 2016, the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) said yesterday. The index figure for July 2017 recorded a decrease of 0.09 percent, compared to June, the CSB added in its monthly report. The CPI increased in nine influential groups in July, and decreased in three others. The index for the first main group (food and beverages) went up by 0.28 percent, compared to the same month in 2016.

The figure of the second main group (tobacco and narcotics) was up by 1.70 percent on annual basis and dropped on monthly basis by 0.09 percent, as the third group (clothing and footwear) rose by 2.10 on annual basis and fell by 0.47 percent on monthly basis. Inflation of the fourth group (housing services) dropped by 2.26 percent on annual basis, and that of the fifth group (furnishing equipment and household maintenance) was up by 3.41 percent. The sixth group (health) declined by 0.68 percent year-on-year, and the seventh (transport) went up by 15.46 percent on annual basis.

Meanwhile, the index for the eighth group (communication) was down by 1.09 percent on yearly basis. The ninth group (recreation and culture) went up on an

annual basis by 3.38 percent and the 10th group (education) was up by 3.63 percent on annual basis. As for the 11th group (restaurants and hotels), it edged up 2.58 percent on annual basis, and the last group (miscellaneous goods and service) witnessed an annual rise of 2.15 percent.

In another development, a Kuwaiti government program paired up with Gulf Insurance Group (GIG) yesterday to interview some 50 young job hopefuls - 15 of whom were granted jobs almost instantaneously. Speaking to the press after signing a memorandum of understanding with GIG, the Secretary General of Kuwait's Manpower and Government Restructuring Program Fawzi Al-Majdali said that it was imperative to support the private sector as it looks to hire more national employees. He pointed out that the purpose of the government program was to ensure that the private sector would employ the lion's share of the national workforce. The government official added that the program has developed a close rapport with an array of companies and businesses with the aim of luring young Kuwaitis to the private sector. Kuwait has introduced numerous measures to encourage its youth to join the private sector in an effort to ease the burden on the government sector. — Agencies

CENTRAL LIBRARY ADOPTS A NEW ELECTRONIC SEARCHING SYSTEM

KUWAIT: Ministry of Education said yesterday its Central Library has adopted a new electronic searching system using optical technique for information and electronic inventory to save time and efforts. The library, which contains 35,000 books, was equipped with the latest technical means searching for books and saving information, said acting director of school libraries department in the Ministry of Education, Ahmed Al-Majidi, in a statement. The department will activate the project (share office), in cooperation with the educational development sector, Al-Majidi added.

He noted that the activation of the project would be through four materials, namely Arabic language, Islamic education, English language and science to be applied initially at the intermediate level. He explained that libraries in new schools were equipped with all supplies of books, novels, periodicals, furniture and electronic devices. The process will be supervised by



Acting director of school libraries department in the Ministry of Education Ahmed Al-Majidi

a special team formed from both technical affairs and periodic services monitoring departments. The administration is finalizing the project to complete the e-library through coordination with educational areas that have an infrastructure of internet networks. — KUNA

MINISTRY OF STATE FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS LAUNCHES A SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, in coordination with the College of Aviation Technology, launched a scholarship program for those who are interested in learning aviation science. "The ministry is keen to develop and educate youth in all fields. We had an agreement with the College of Aviation Technology to grant scholarships for those interested," said Director at the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs Abdullah Al-Adwani. Sending young people to study abroad will enhance their knowledge and will contribute to the development of Kuwait, he added. Applicants must be Kuwaiti citizens and have graduated recently from high school or have equivalent certificates, he revealed, adding last day of registration is August 29.

Director of Training and Academic Affairs at the College of Aviation Technology Saad Mishary said the college offered training courses to maintain aircrafts for a year. The

course enables trainees to receive a maintenance technician certificate, he revealed. Graduates will have more chances to find jobs in aviation companies locally and internationally as well as oil sector, ministries of interiors and defense, telecommunication companies, civil and military aviation, as well as other bodies, Mishary added.

The college is accredited by the council of private universities of the Ministry of Higher Education and the General Administration of Aviation. The College of Aviation Technology has made a wide development movement that makes it unique in Kuwait and Gulf region as it has modern teaching methods and a number of airplanes, jet engines and many mechanic and electronic workshops. It works in coordination with the famous Scottish training center (LIST) that awards students certificates of recognized internationally. — KUNA

Crime

Report

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

KUWAIT: "He provoked and angered me when he insulted my mother who is sick with cancer," was the response of an adolescent to detectives to justify his aggressive behavior after he slapped a child in a mall. The youth - caught on video - was identified, arrested and questioned, then released by the public prosecution.

Suspect nabbed

Jahra detectives were able to identify another main suspect in the fight between several youth on Monday. He was arrested after fierce resistance when they raided his flat in Salwa. The man was also found sentenced to 10 years in jail. Meanwhile, the condition of one of the injured men worsened and got very critical.

Salesman attacked

A Syrian beat a Bangladeshi salesman with punches and kicks, then picked up a stick and continued his beating. Shoppers in the area called police, who rushed to the shop along with paramedics and took the Bangladeshi to Sabah Hospital. Meanwhile, the Syrian told police they differed over prices, and things escalated to violence.

Suspicious death

A citizen called Interior Ministry operations and told them his friend had died in his car. Police had suspicions around the death, and the caller is being interrogated. The incident took place in Jahra. In another development, the body of a national guardsman was recovered by the coroner after he was found dead in his car in Qairawan. Material thought to be drugs were found in the car. He was in his 30s.



Al-Anbaa

القلمس

Al-Qabas

THE ERA OF 70'S

By Khalid A Al-Tarrah

The era of the 70's was not like the Arab Spring which took place lately in most Arab countries, rather it was a historical era that was stormed by revolutions and clashes between people and the authorities for the sake of freedom and historic achievements that were due to the sacrifices of the honorable in the Arab world. Kuwait was not isolated from these developments, as the people reacted to what took place in the Arab arena in the form of political clashes, rather Kuwaitis also had a history of struggle and achieving democratic gains.

Many suspicious opportunistic dignitaries, who claimed patriotic action during the seventies with their revolutionary tone and writings, seemed to be in opposition in appearance, at the time. This does not mean they were all patriotic, rather only for those who chose to "truly lie" about bogus stands regarding social justice and partnership in making the political decision. Today, we find them with a totally different opinion compared to their previous stand, after they smeared our brains with their lies and hypocrisy, so that they could create an intellectual halo around themselves, and have those victims of the political struggle follow them.

After the masks were removed during the 80's and 90's following years of political lies, the same people are now living in a friendly and generous way speaking in the language of money, forgetting their stands and those who stood with them during the claimed struggle. The power of money has a larger value than political struggle like a national and popular return that cannot be dispensed by banks.

Many talk about attacking the democratic gains in front of their sick surroundings under the banner of intellect and politics. They wish to satisfy people, who are chasing the distortion of democracy through the practice of new method of polluting the brains of people, twisting the truth and explaining it in a twisted form after criticizing symbols that were not attracted by money nor changed their stands.

With a pen that feels the pain and a living memory about a handful of rich people who piled wealth from retail political trade, I urge foreign and local writers to hit at the Kuwaiti democratic system, who have bogus claims and untrue goals, as an expression about self intentions that relies on lies to live between the halls of palaces and meals of the influential. In one of the conferences about the national identity, some people participated with totally different opinion from what they were saying in the seventies about alienation and social isolation, as they are the intellectuals of the past and present.

During the crises of the invasion I almost fell in the trap of these opportunists of the seventies, but a true advice from the Late Barja Al-Barjas to wait and think about making a decision and analysis rescued me from falling into the swamp of "lying truthfully" and the political retail trade. It is not important to name them, because they are known among the people of Kuwait who were not convinced with their claims of fearing for the national interest. The claims were clear that they are windows to reach what they have reached today among the influential.

Traders of political retail were exposed by time and their deeds. They were looking for attractive titles for their ties, but the body of the national work got cleansed from them. The best description to this distortion and dividing the truth or what is known as the truth is what French philosopher Paul Guillaume Gide Andre said "The true hypocrite is the one who does not realize his tricks because he lies truthfully". —Translated by Kuwait Times

الانبا

Al-Anbaa

WHEN MASKS FALL

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

This is not the title of an old or new play, or the title of a book or novel or story, rather it is the reality we are living in, with people most of whom have many deceiving masks hiding their true faces. These masks that come in different shapes fall off revealing their true selves and leaving us in shock. Many hypocrites, liars and clowns who make officials and decision makers' laugh use these fake masks for their personal interest and we do not discover them unless we need something from those who wear it, and "may Allah spare us from their need".

These masks do not reveal the truth; rather they are used to conceal the truth of their owners. A hypocrite wears the mask of honesty and virtue, a liar selects the mask of frankness and defending the right and we discover their reality when we are in a crisis or when a problem takes place or when we get closer to them and later discover that the masks they are wearing, have nothing to do with their behavior.

For example, we see many wearing masks in government departments and authorities, many worn by decision makers, those talk about transparency, haram and halal and sincerity in work and loyalty towards superiors, but when he is transferred or his superior retires, those masks fall off and the true face is revealed, as all what he has is insults towards the person who was his boss, and starts praising the new one only to stay on the job. These fake masks are not only limited to work, it includes many of our friends who we thought will remain faithful towards us. There are many friends from school, who we thought were loyal, but as soon as school days are over, we discover that those feelings were only for personal and study interests. Many that we lived and still live with wear these masks. "People are like books, there are those who trick you with the cover, while the others astonish you with its content." —Translated by Kuwait Times



KUWAIT: Hawally Municipality carried out inspections in Jabriya, Hawally, Mishref, Bayan, South Surra and Salmiya resulting in the removal of 31 tons of trash and trees in the streets. —Photos by Hanan Al-Saadoun



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah yesterday met with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman. During the meeting, they discussed the bilateral relation, in addition to regional and international developments. The meeting was attended by the Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Affairs, Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar, and Assistant Foreign Minister for Americas Affairs, Ambassador Reem Al-Khaled. — KUNA



Sadu describes an embroidery form in geometrical shapes hand-woven by Bedouin people. Sadu House in Kuwait was established by the Al Sadu Society in 1980 to protect the interests of the Bedouins and Sadu weaving. — KUNA

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Spain probe widens as suspect admits to big attack planned

ACTIVISTS FIGHT N KOREA WITH BALLOONS, DVDS AND LEAFLETS



PHOENIX: US President Donald Trump participates and speaks at a "Make America Great Again" rally. — AFP

TRUMP SLAMS MEDIA IN RAGE-FILLED RALLY

REVISITS HIS CHARLOTTESVILLE COMMENTS IN ANGRY SPEECH

PHOENIX: US President Donald Trump yesterday mounted an aggressive defense of his response to a deadly far-right march in Virginia, using a rally speech to condemn "dishonest" media coverage of his widely criticized remarks. Trump faced bipartisan outrage after blaming "many sides" for violence at the rally in Charlottesville, in which one anti-fascist protester was killed.

Re-reading his statements that followed the clashes, he railed at reporters at the rally in Phoenix, Arizona, for misrepresenting his remarks-but omitted the equivocation that had sparked the backlash in the first place. "The very dishonest media... and I mean truly dishonest people in the media and the fake media, they make up stories. They have no sources in many cases. They say 'a source says'-there is no such thing," he said. "But they don't report the facts. Just like they don't want to report that I spoke out forcefully against hatred, bigotry and violence and strongly condemned the neo-Nazis,

the white supremacists and the KKK."

Trump dedicated about half an hour of his 78-minute speech to attacking the "sick people" in the news media, before turning his fire on his own side. The speech was cheered raucously by supporters inside the conference center, though thousands of anti-Trump protesters, who had lined up under a blistering sun in Phoenix hours before Trump's arrival, later clashed with police outside the venue. Police deployed tear gas to disperse them, according to AFP reporters at the scene. Jonathan Howard, a spokesman for the city's police force, said that five arrests had been made and that protesters had thrown rocks, bottles and tear gas at police.

Shot across the bow

Speculation had been building that Trump would use the rally to formally endorse a challenger to Arizona Senator Jeff Flake, a moderate incumbent, in a shot across the bow of skeptical

Republicans. He mocked both Flake and fellow Arizona Republican Senator John McCain, implying that McCain had sabotaged Republican healthcare reforms, but elaborately avoided mentioning either by name. Veering off script, Trump shied away from issuing a pardon for Joe Arpaio a former sheriff in Arizona who was convicted of wilfully violating a court order to stop targeting Hispanics in immigration roundups.

But he gave strong hints that he was preparing a future pardon, saying: "I think he's going to be just fine, okay? I won't do it tonight because I don't want to cause any controversy." Trump voiced optimism over improvements in relations with North Korea following an escalation in aggressive rhetoric on both sides over Pyongyang's nuclear program. "I respect the fact that he is starting to respect us. And maybe probably not, but maybe-something positive can come about," Trump said of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un, though the president repeated his

opinion that he had not gone far enough in his condemnation of Kim. The freewheeling speech left some critics dumbfounded, with former national intelligence director James Clapper questioning Trump's fitness to lead and his access to the country's nuclear codes. "I really question his ability to be-his fitness to be-in this office, and I also am beginning to wonder about his motivation for it," he told CNN television early yesterday, adding that he found parts of Trump's rhetoric "downright scary and disturbing."

"In a fit of pique he decides to do something about Kim Jong-Un, there's actually very little to stop him," Clapper said. "The whole system is built to ensure rapid response if necessary. So there's very little in the way of controls over exercising a nuclear option, which is pretty damn scary." Trump's speech came at the end of a trip to Arizona that the White House hopes will energize core supporters who are cooling to his crisis-riddled presidency, and build momentum

for a controversial border wall. The president began his day in Yuma, touring a US Border Patrol operations base, where he met with border agents. He then traveled to Phoenix for the campaign-style rally in the evening, introduced to the crowd by Vice President Mike Pence.

His visit to the Republican state aimed to tout the benefits of a border fence with Mexico, turn up the heat on reluctant allies and demonstrate the president's determination to realize a central campaign pledge. Trump had insisted that Mexico would pay for the wall, estimated to cost about \$22 billion. Having failed in that bid, he has turned to equally reticent Republicans in Congress to get US funding. But with his plan running into political quicksand, Trump is trying to generate public pressure on reluctant lawmakers to support him. In Phoenix, Trump told the rally crowd his message for "obstructionist" Democrats was that he was building the wall "if we have to close down our government." — AFP

ANGRY PAKISTANIS LASH OUT AFTER US CONDEMNATION

ISLAMABAD: Angry and offended Pakistanis fired back yesterday against Donald Trump's accusations that their country harbors militants, highlighting the heavy toll they have paid fighting extremism and slamming his embrace of arch-rival India. The US president unleashed blistering criticism of Pakistan this week as he unveiled his new Afghanistan policy which paves the way for the indefinite deployment of more troops to the war-weary country.

Trump lashed out at US ally Pakistan, accusing the country of playing a double game as it accepted American aid but gave safe haven to insurgents who kill Afghan and NATO troops. "We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting," Trump said. Pakistan sees nuclear-armed India as an existential threat but cannot defeat its much larger neighbor on the battlefield, so has instead crafted a strategy of supporting militant proxies-including the Afghan Taliban.

Such groups tie down India in the contested Himalayan region of Kashmir and, in Afghanistan, help prevent the rise of an Indian-backed government. Pakistani civilians have little power over regional strategy but have lost homes and loved ones to militant violence which has killed thousands in their own country since 2007. Trump's remarks provoked hurt and outrage among many. "We have been fighting YOUR war for a decade



ISLAMABAD: Maulana Sami ul-Haq, head of Defense of Pakistan Council, a coalition of around 40 religious and political parties, speaks during a press conference. — AFP

now, we have lost numerous lives of civilians, our jawans, even our schoolgoing children as well," wrote Farhan Bashir on Facebook. "Today you are saying this to cover up your failures in Afghanistan?" Some residents in the capital Islamabad said their country was being treated as a scapegoat after being dragged into the conflict following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. "All the worst things that we are facing is only

because (we are) supporting the US in Afghanistan," said Ameer Hamza. "How could a country shelter terrorists which itself is under the grip of terrorism?"

In Pakistan's northwestern city of Peshawar, which has borne the brunt of vicious militant violence over the years, bank employee Suhail Ahmad said Pakistani troops and police had done their job and cleared the area of militants. "We Pakistanis were suffering from terrorism, but now the terrorists have either been killed or fled to Afghanistan," the 24-year-old told AFP. "The power is in the US hands in Afghanistan so why don't they go against terrorists and kill them there?" Others suggested ditching the US alliance altogether and embracing China, which has been pouring tens of billions into infrastructure investment in Pakistan in recent years. "They have always pressured us for doing more and more. There may be some pro-US voices but I think we should go closer to China," said Sakhawat Shah, a Peshawar college student.

Editorials in leading dailies urged Trump to be cautious after he called on Pakistan's arch-rival India to deepen its engagement in Afghanistan, a scenario the Pakistani military establishment dreads. Pakistan sees India as an existential threat, analysts say, and is unlikely to abandon its Afghan proxies-especially as the US tilts towards India, as Trump clearly indicated in his speech. — AFP

TALIBAN SUICIDE BOMBER KILLS FIVE IN AFGHANISTAN

KANDAHAR: A Taliban suicide bomber killed five people and wounded dozens of others, mainly children as young as five, after detonating a car packed with explosives at a police headquarters in southern Afghanistan yesterday. It was the insurgents' first major attack since US President Donald Trump announced in Washington late Monday that he was committing American troops to the war-torn country indefinitely.

"A suicide bomber detonated an explosive-filled car in a parking lot near the main police headquarters in Lashkar Gah," Omar Zhwak, a spokesman for the governor of Helmand province, told AFP. "Our initial information shows that five civilians were killed and 25 were wounded, including women and children," he added. The car park was full of people queuing to get into the police headquarters when the explosion happened, said Zhwak.

The attack occurred at 8:00 am (0330 GMT) when officials would have been arriving for work and civilians were preparing to lodge inquiries. Zhwak added that a nearby mosque, which was being used as a madrassa or Islamic religious school, had been damaged. Children-aged between five and 12, according to police — were studying

there at the time. Hospital staff gave a higher figure for wounded.

"We have received 38 wounded-mostly schoolchildren-and five dead, including two women and two soldiers," Mauladad Tabihdad, director of hospitals in Helmand, told AFP. Photos posted on Twitter by Afghan media outlets showed damaged Afghan military Humvee vehicles, including one apparently thrown into a drain by the force of the explosion. "The car bomb targeted a number of army vehicles parked in the parking lot. We have reports of some casualties to army soldiers," Salam Afghan, a police spokesman, told AFP.

Ismail Jan, whose shop was damaged by the blast, said the explosion happened when a white car rammed into a convoy of six armored military vehicles as they passed through a checkpoint inside the car park. "I was thrown [by the blast] and when I got up I saw women and children covered in blood," Jan told AFP. "I also saw a number of wounded children taken out of a nearby mosque." The attack occurred a little over 24 hours after Trump cleared the way for thousands more US soldiers to be sent to Afghanistan, reversing earlier pledges to pull out. — AFP

AIR RAIDS ON YEMEN CAPITAL KILL DOZENS

SAUDI-LED COALITION STRIKES HOTEL

CAIRO: The Saudi-led coalition carried out several airstrikes in Yemen early yesterday, hitting a small hotel near the capital of Sanaa and killing dozens of people, Yemeni officials and witnesses said. There were conflicting reports on the victims, with doctors saying they were farmers and officials and witnesses saying they included Houthi rebels.

The fighter jets targeted a two-story hotel in Qaa Al-Qaidhi district, located in the town of Arhab, about 35 kilometers north of Sanaa, officials said. The building sustained extensive damage and bodies were still being retrieved from under the rubble, witnesses said yesterday. Another airstrike hit a checkpoint manned by the Houthis, a few kilometers from the hotel, they added. The officials and the witnesses spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters.

Footage of the area aired on al-Masirah TV, a Houthi-run satellite news network, showed bodies hanging out of a simple cinderblock building. Bystanders wrapped mangled corpses into blankets to try to carry them away. The TV network said 41 civilians were killed and that the death toll was expected to rise further. Officials and witnesses told The Associated Press that the death toll had reached 60 and that the majority of those killed were Houthis rebels.

100 people inside

Physician Ali al-Rakmi who was helping at the site of the hotel strike, said there were more than 100 people inside at the time of the attack, all farmers who work in growing qat. The plant's leaves are chewed for a stimulant effect, a widespread tradition among Yemeni men. Al-Rakmi said they had retrieved 35 bodies so far, with

many only as pieces of bodies.

Fahd Marhab, head of the Umrah hospital about 10 kilometers from the site of the airstrike, said there were no wounded and that all the people in the hotel were killed in the 3 am airstrike. He also said that they were mostly farmers. It was not possible to reconcile the discrepancies in the accounts and the different number of fatalities reported by the officials and the TV. There was no immediate comment from the coalition.

The Saudi-led coalition has been waging an extensive air campaign against the Houthis and

forces loyal to ousted Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh since March 2015, seeking to push the rebels from lands they captured, including Sanaa, and restore the internationally recognized government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi to power. But the airstrikes have also hit civilian targets, such as schools, hospitals, and markets, killing thousands and prompting rights groups to accuse the Saudi-led coalition of committing war crimes. Activists have also called upon Western countries, including the United States and Britain, to cease military support for the coalition. — AP



ARHAB: Yemeni Red Crescent workers and civilians stand at the site of an air raid in the Arhab area, around 20 kilometers north of Sanaa, yesterday, where a Saudi-led coalition has been bombing Iran-backed Houthi rebels. — AFP



NAJAF: In this July 18, 2017 file photo, Shiite volunteer fighters from the Imam Ali Brigade, an armed faction with the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces, train at their camp. — AP

IRAQI FORCES ADVANCE TO HEART OF IS-HELD BASTION

TAL AFAR: Iraqi forces advanced yesterday towards central Tal Afar, one of the Islamic State group's last strongholds in the country, as aid workers braced for an exodus of civilians fleeing the fighting. Armored personnel carriers full of soldiers and fighters of the Hashed Al-Shaabi paramilitary coalition moved into Al-Nur district early in the morning as warplanes flew overhead, said an AFP photographer on the ground.

They encountered trucks parked across roads with earthen embankments aimed at stopping them, as well as sniper fire and mortar shelling. Six weeks after routing the jihadists from Iraq's second city Mosul, the Iraqi forces launched an assault Sunday on Tal Afar, where an estimated 1,000 jihadists are holed up. They retook three first districts of the city on Tuesday, but as with the grueling nine-month campaign to recapture Mosul, their convoys face an onslaught of suicide and car bomb attacks.

Yesterday they "entered the neighborhood of Al-Kifah North... and headed towards the centre of the city," said Ahmed al-Assadi, spokesman for the Hashed Al-Shaabi paramilitary coalition fighting IS alongside the army and police. "All the lines of IS defense outside the city have been

broken and the troops are advancing from all directions towards the inner quarters of the city," he added. As they advanced, troops said they discovered a network of underground tunnels used by the jihadists to launch attacks behind lines of already conquered territory, or to escape.

Leaflet drop

In a bid to counter these surprise attacks, the Iraqis dropped leaflets overnight calling on civilians to help by marking houses where the jihadists are located. The International Organization for Migration said "thousands of civilians" had fled Tal Afar since the offensive began. But around 30,000 civilians are trapped in the fighting, according to the United Nations.

Caught between the two sides, those still inside the city have been pounded by Iraqi and US-led coalition aircraft for weeks, as well as intense artillery fire since Sunday. The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) fears they could be "used as human shields" and that "attempts to flee could result in executions and shootings," said the spokesman for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. The United Nations and aid agencies are working to establish shelters for the displaced. — AFP



BRASILIA: Venezuela's fugitive ex-chief prosecutor, Luisa Ortega, arrives at Brasilia's International Airport. — AFP

VENEZUELA'S FLEEING PROSECUTOR TO USE BRAZIL EVENT TO SLAM MADURO

BRASILIA: Venezuela's fugitive former top prosecutor promised to use an international forum in Brazil yesterday to intensify corruption allegations against President Nicolas Maduro, who called for her arrest. Days after a dramatic escape from Venezuela, Luisa Ortega, 59, arrived in the Brazilian capital Brasilia late Tuesday, promising to dish dirt on Maduro, who in turn asked Interpol to put out a "red notice" warrant for his critic.

Ortega was taking part in a crime-fighting conference with representatives from the Latin American regional trading alliance Mercosur. The event will provide a high-profile stage for her claims that Maduro has enriched himself as Venezuela descends into economic collapse through a massive corruption scheme uncovered at Brazilian construction conglomerate Odebrecht. "I will talk about the Odebrecht scandal, corruption in Venezuela and my situation," she told reporters at Brasilia's airport where she flew in from Panama.

Brazil's prosecutor general said in a statement that he had personally invited Ortega, adding to the intrigue surrounding her fate since being fired by Maduro this month and charged with misconduct. She and her husband, German Ferrer, fled last Friday after the pro-Maduro Supreme Court ordered the arrest of Ferrer for alleged corruption and extortion. On Tuesday, Maduro said the couple had committed "serious crimes."

However, neighboring Columbia and Brazil have both firmly condemned Maduro's handling of the crisis and oil-rich Venezuela has been suspended indefinitely from the Mercosur group. "This is something that highlights the split between Venezuela and the majority of the neighboring countries," foreign policy expert Mauricio Santoro, at the Rio de Janeiro State University, said. Santoro said the Odebrecht allegations would have particular resonance in the regional setting, given the company's vast reach and the ever-expanding list of corruption suspects.

Allegations and anxiety

A loyalist of late socialist president Hugo Chavez, Ortega broke ranks with his successor Maduro to become his most high-ranking domestic critic as international pressure on the president mounted. Last month, Maduro set up a new constitutional body packed with his allies, which a few days later removed Ortega from her post.

She hit back on Friday by claiming she had evidence implicating Maduro and his close allies in the Odebrecht scandal, which involved enormous quantities of bribes paid to politicians around the region and in Brazil to win contracts.

"They are very worried and anxious, because they know we have details on all the cooperation, amounts and people who got rich," Ortega told a meeting of Latin American prosecutors in Mexico by video conference. "And that investigation involves Mr Nicolas Maduro and his inner circle," Maduro counter-attacked on Sunday, alleging on television that Ortega had received money for blocking corruption investigations that he had ordered.

Maduro was elected in 2013 after the death of his late mentor Chavez. Venezuela has since descended into chaos that has raised fears for regional stability. The fall in world prices for its oil exports has left it short of dollars for vital imports. Maduro's critics accuse him of clinging to power by hijacking the state institutions amid shortages of food and medicine. Clashes between protesters and police this year have left 125 people dead, according to prosecutors. — AFP

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ANGOLANS VOTE AS PRESIDENT DOS SANTOS ENDS 38-YEAR RULE

LUANDA: Angolans voted yesterday in an election marking the end of President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos's 38-year reign, with his MPLA party set to retain power despite an economic crisis. The MPLA, which has ruled since Angola's independence from Portugal in 1975, is expected to defeat opposition parties stifled by Dos Santos's authoritarian regime.

Dos Santos's unexpected retirement—reportedly prompted by poor health—has triggered the biggest political transition in decades for Angola, a leading African oil exporter. His chosen successor however is Defence Minister Joao Lourenco, a loyalist expected to avoid immediate change in a government often criticized for corruption and its failure to tackle dire poverty.

"I am calm, I am going to stay calmly at home while waiting for my party colleagues to inform me of the results," Lourenco said after voting in Luanda, adding the election was "going smoothly." Dos Santos's long reign has seen the end of Angola's bloody civil war that lasted from 1975 to 2002, and

a post-conflict investment boom as the country exploited its oil reserves. But the flood of money brought little benefit to Angola's poor, and government spending collapsed when oil prices fell in 2014. Inflation hit 40 percent at the end of last year, when annual growth was less than one percent.

'Transitional successor'

Lourenco, 63, has vowed to boost foreign investment, and said he wants to be recognised as the man who brought an "economic miracle" to Angola. At a weekend rally in front of thousands of MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) supporters, Dos Santos, a frail-looking 74, made a brief appearance to endorse Lourenco.

"Dos Santos brought forward his departure to after these elections due to his deteriorating health," Alex Vines, of the Chatham House think tank, told AFP. "Lourenco is an ideal transitional successor to Dos Santos. He is respected by the military and has not lived a flamboyant lifestyle of

many others." Dos Santos has been dogged by reports of illness. His regular visits to Spain for "private" reasons fuelled criticism that the state of his health was being hidden from ordinary Angolans.

Earlier this year, his daughter Isabel—who has become a billionaire and Africa's richest businesswoman under his rule—was forced to deny rumors he had died in Spain. In the face of ruthless security force crackdowns and a biased state-run media, the opposition parties—led by UNITA and Casa-CE—have sought to tap into public anger at the government. "You who are suffering, you who are in poverty, without electricity, without jobs or nothing to eat—change is now," Isaisa Samakuva, the UNITA leader told supporters on the campaign trail. Samakuva, 71, took over UNITA after longtime rebel leader Jonas Savimbi was killed in 2002, a death that marked the beginning of the end of the civil war.

'Appalling human rights record'

Dissent has often been dangerous under Dos

Santos, who has been a secretive but inescapable presence in Angolan life for decades. Angola's next leader "must guide the country out of the spiral of oppression," rights group Amnesty said in a statement. "Dos Santos' presidency is marked by his appalling human rights record. For decades, Angolans have lived in a climate of fear in which speaking out was met with intimidation (and) imprisonment." "I came to vote for the change," Jose Manuel, 23, told AFP at a polling station in the Talatona neighborhood of Luanda. "I do not have any work, we have a lot of things that we need here."

The MPLA—which won 72 percent in the 2012 election—has funded a rush of infrastructure projects including bridges and dams, apparently to shore up support levels among Angola's 9.3 million registered voters. Dos Santos to remain MPLA party chief, and new laws passed last month limited the unfettered presidential power he enjoyed. Polls are due to close at 6:00 pm (1700 GMT) with early results expected by Friday. — AFP



BARCELONA: People stand next to candles and flowers placed on the ground, after a terror attack that left many killed and wounded. — AP

SPAIN PROBE WIDENS AS SUSPECT ADMITS TO BIG ATTACK PLANNED

'IMAM WANTED TO BLOW HIMSELF UP'

MADRID: Police yesterday widened their probe into a terror cell that unleashed carnage in Spain last week, after a suspect admitted the jihadists were targeting monuments in Barcelona in an even bigger attack. Officers carried out new raids overnight to root out a possible support network for the men, accused of ploughing vehicles into pedestrians on Barcelona's busy Las Ramblas boulevard and a seaside promenade in the resort town of Cambrils, claiming 15 lives including a young boy and wounding more than 120 people.

The international connections of the cell of mostly Moroccan nationals have also come under scrutiny, with talks later yesterday between Spain and France's interior ministers expected to focus on the case. The scale of the assaults being prepared by the jihadist suspects emerged during a preliminary court hearing Tuesday, when Mohamed Houli Chemlal, 21, told the judge the group was planning "an attack on an even greater scale, targeting monuments" using bombs.

At least 500 liters of acetone, large quantities of nails and detonators as well as gas canisters have been found at a house in the town of Alcanar, court documents said. They are ingredients of TATP—the explosive of choice of the Islamic State group, which has claimed its "soldiers" carried out the attacks. But an accidental blast at the bomb factory in Alcanar on August

16, the eve of the Barcelona van attack, forced the cell to alter its plans and turn to vehicles as killing machines.

Another false start

After losing their bombs and two cell members in the blast that was so powerful that "the mushroom cloud that was generated was visible several kilometres around", the jihadists put plan B into action. They rented a van the next day, but again suffered a false start as it was involved in an accident not far from Cambrils. A second van was used two hours later in the Barcelona rampage.

The suspects then bought four knives and an axe that were used to slash at pedestrians in Cambrils in the early hours of Friday. After a full day court hearing, Chemlal and another suspect, Driss Oukabir, 28, were remanded in custody and charged with terror-related offences. A third man, Mohamed Aallaa, 27, who owns the car used in the Cambrils attack, was granted conditional release, with the judge saying evidence against him was weak.

The judge gave himself three more days to decide if the fourth suspect, Salh El Karib should be remanded or released. His shop, which allows people to make calls abroad, was among targets of police raids late Tuesday. An apartment in the village of Vilafranca del Penedes, 50 kilometres

(30 miles) west of Barcelona, was also searched, a police spokesman told AFP.

The men in court Tuesday were the only surviving suspected members of the terror cell, which Spanish police claimed they had dismantled after gunning down the last man at large, Younes Abouyaaqoub, on Monday. The 22-year-old Moroccan was the van driver in the Barcelona rampage which claimed 13 lives. While on the run, he also hijacked a vehicle and killed its driver.

Audi in Paris, imam in Belgium

Chemlal was injured in the Alcanar explosion that killed an imam, Abdelbaki Es Satty, who is thought to have radicalized him and other young suspects. He only survived because he was out on the porch when the blast occurred. He told the judge the imam had wanted to blow himself up. The judicial source said that among the four suspects, "two blamed the imam for the plot while another two denied knowing him".

In the rubble of the Alcanar house, police found a sheet of paper slipped into a green-colored book, which said: "A brief letter from the soldiers of the Islamic State on the territory of Al Andalous to the crusaders, the sinners, the unjust and the corrupters". Al Andalous is the name of the territories governed until 1492 by Muslims. — AFP

MIGRANTS STRUGGLE IN HOSTILE BULGARIA

ELIN PELIN: Syrian refugee Fahim Jaber hoped for a better life in Europe. But like hundreds of others, he is stuck in Bulgaria, the EU's poorest country—safe, but unwelcome and with few prospects. The average salary here is 510 euros (\$602), a third of the European Union average and a fraction of that of rich countries. State help to integrate the newcomers is virtually absent. Arriving from what remained of Aleppo in 2016, Jaber and his family found themselves in Elin Pelin outside Sofia facing a hostile demonstration by locals in the town's main square.

"They shouted 'We resisted the Ottomans and we will not accept you,' 'We will Christianise you,'" recounted the 57-year-old. The local mayor, a member of one of the ultra-nationalist, openly xenophobic parties within Bulgaria's governing coalition, refused to give the family a residence permit. "We came back to the house, locked the door and didn't dare to go out for two months," Fahim's wife Fatima Batayi said, recalling how frightened she had been. Luckily their son Mehmed—who has a job in Bulgaria—took care of them, buying food and other necessities while a long-established Syrian immigrant helped them get registered.

Since 2013, almost 60,000 migrants have applied for asylum in Bulgaria, having taken the land route out of Syria into Turkey and then over the border into Bulgaria. Most have then continued their journey westwards to Germany, France or Sweden, but a few hundred remain in Bulgaria—largely because they have no choice. While the Jaber family's experience was extreme, generally the welcome has been far from warm.

This is due to what analyst Yavor Siderov calls an "anti-refugee consensus" in Bulgarian society, incited largely through the media and shared across the political spectrum. "It creates fears and makes people feel scared about a shift in the population given the demographic collapse in this

country," Siderov told AFP. Like other Eastern European countries, Bulgaria has seen an exodus of workers seeking opportunities in wealthier parts of the EU. But the population has shrunk at a speed that has alarmed Bulgarians: almost two million citizens have emigrated in the past 23 years, leaving around 7.1 million—a rate of attrition that is one of the fastest in Europe.

No help

Bulgaria is shooting itself in the foot with its approach to migrants, Siderov argues, because its economy badly needs foreign workers. "Since Germans and Swiss aren't coming here, we have to look to other countries," he said. But a report by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) in April bemoaned the absence of "targeted integration support" from the government for the new arrivals.

"Integration services such as Bulgarian language classes, housing support, professional education classes or help with child care and enrolment of children in school (...) are not provided," it said. "The government here, they don't do anything for refugees," said Syrian Bilal Hasan, 44, who had all his money stolen by people smugglers and now has humanitarian protection status in Bulgaria. "If you want to do anything here—to search for a job, find a house, anything—you have to do it on your own. I was so lucky because I have made some friends and they help me a lot now," he added.

The story is similar for fellow Syrian Kaled Deyab, 36, and his wife and two children, some of the 1,000 migrants due to arrive in Bulgaria from Greece under an EU relocation scheme. "We left Damascus in 2015 and arrived in Greece in February 2016. It's been two years that we've been on the road already and that the children haven't been to school," he told AFP. Once they get refugee status, the Deyabs will have two weeks to leave the migrant centre in Sofia that is currently their home. They have no idea where to go. — AFP



SOFIA: Syrian refugees Fahim Jaber (L) and his wife Fatima Batayi show their Bulgarian ID cards on July 10, 2017 at a place they rent in the small town of Elin Pelin, outside Sofia. — AFP

CHARLIE HEBDO PUBLISHES PROVOCATIVE ISLAM CARTOON

PARIS: French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo published yesterday a provocative front-page cartoon about Islam and the recent terror attacks in Spain, leading to criticism that it risked fanning Islamophobia. The latest edition of the magazine, which was targeted by Islamist gunmen in 2015, shows two people lying in a pool of blood having been run over by a van next to the words "Islam, eternal religion of peace."

A dozen extremists of Moroccan origin are believed to have plotted last week's attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils, where 15 people were killed and over 100 injured after a van and car were driven into crowds. The attackers are thought by investigators to have been radicalized by an extremist Islamic preacher who died in a house where the group was trying to produce explosives.

Critics of Charlie Hebdo saw its front-page as tarring an entire religion, practiced by around 1.5 billion people worldwide, by implying it was inherently violent. As the cartoon became one of the top trending topics on Twitter in France, prominent Socialist MP and former minister Stephane Le Foll called it "extremely dangerous." "When you're a journalist you need to exercise restraint

because making these associations can be used by other people," he said.

Charlie Hebdo editor Laurent "Riss" Sourisseau explained the choice in an editorial, saying that experts and policy-makers were avoiding hard questions out of concern for moderate law-abiding Muslims. "The debates and questions about the role of religion, and in particular the role of Islam, in these attacks have completely disappeared," he wrote. Charlie Hebdo lampoons all religions and religious figures, but its depictions of the Prophet Mohammed—an act considered sinful under Islam—led to outrage, death threats and ultimately violence.

Two gunmen who claimed allegiance to Al-Qaeda killed 12 people in an attack on its offices in January 2015 which left many of its star cartoonists dead. Hundreds of thousands of people marched through the streets of France afterwards, rallying behind the slogan "Je Suis Charlie" ("I am Charlie") in defense of the right to free speech. Riss said in the wake of the violence that the magazine would stop depicting the prophet, leading one top journalist to quit and accuse its new management of going soft on Islamist extremism. — AFP

HEADLESS TORSO OF MISSING REPORTER FOUND IN WATERS

STOCKHOLM: The headless torso of a woman found at sea was identified yesterday as a Swedish journalist who likely died aboard a Danish inventor's homemade submarine. In a grisly case that has gripped the nation and drawn parallels with Nordic Noir detective fiction, Danish police confirmed they had made a positive identification of the body, which was found on Monday.

"The DNA of the torso matches that of Kim Wall,"

Copenhagen police announced on Twitter. Danish inventor Peter Madsen has been accused of the negligent manslaughter of the 30-year-old reporter who went to interview him aboard his 60-foot submarine on August 10. She has not been seen since. The torso, whose head and limbs were deliberately cut off, was found on in Koge Bay, some 50 kilometers south of Copenhagen, police say.

It also bore injuries which appeared to suggest

that air had been forced out of it, Copenhagen homicide chief Jens Moller Jensen told a news conference. He also said the torso had been attached to a metal object which was likely intended to weigh it down. The cause of death remains unknown and police are still searching for the remaining body parts, Jensen said.

Blood in the sub

Madsen, who has been in custody since August 12, has changed his story several times, with police saying they believe the 46-year-old "deliberately" sank the sub. Inside the submarine they found traces of Wall's blood. "We secured a hairbrush and a toothbrush to confirm her DNA. We found blood in the submarine and it was a match," Jensen said. But it would take two to three weeks before police could confirm if there were blood stains on the clothes Madsen was wearing at the time.

Wall, a freelance journalist who had reported for The Guardian and The New York Times, has not been seen since she was observed on board the sub with Madsen on August 10. Her boyfriend reported her missing a day later. The same day, Madsen was rescued from waters between Denmark and Sweden shortly before his submarine sank. Madsen, whose website describes him as an "inventorpreneur", initially told authorities he dropped Wall off on an island late on the evening of August 10. But he changed his story several days later when he appeared in court, saying Wall had died in an accident on board and that he dumped the body in the water at an undefined location in Koge Bay. — AFP



AMAGER: Police and other authorities search a waterway for body remains related to the ongoing Kim Wall murder investigation at the west coast of Amager close to Copenhagen. — AP

10-YEAR SENTENCE SOUGHT FOR FEMALE INDONESIAN MILITANT

JAKARTA: An alleged would-be suicide bomber arrested one day before the planned bombing of a popular family attraction in the Indonesian capital should spend a decade in prison, prosecutors said yesterday. Dian Yulia Novi and her husband Nur Solihin were among four suspected militants arrested in December after police detected a plot to bomb a guard-changing ceremony at the presidential palace in Jakarta.

Chief prosecutor Juhana Nurhisyam told the East Jakarta District Court that

Novi, a former migrant worker in Singapore and Taiwan who is nine months' pregnant, admitted during her trial that she took orders from Bahrin Naim, an Indonesian with the Islamic State group in Syria accused of orchestrating several attacks in Indonesia. Police say Novi, 28, planned to detonate a 3-kilogram bomb that would have exploded as crowds of people gathered to watch the ceremony, a popular family attraction in Jakarta. "She has been convincingly proven guilty," Nurhisyam said.

Novi said in a television interview after her arrest that she learned about jihad on social media and was influenced by articles written by Aman Abdurrahman, a radical cleric who police on Tuesday declared was the key suspect behind a suicide bombing and gun attack that killed eight people in Jakarta last year. Novi and her lawyers will respond to the prosecution's case tomorrow. One of the lawyers, Kasmi, who uses a single name, told The Associated Press that Novi didn't

become aware of her pregnancy until several weeks after being arrested.

IS-inspired militants have not made a big impact with their attacks in Indonesia because of effective counterterrorism policing, controls on gun ownership and lack of expertise in bomb making. But authorities fear that could change if Indonesians who fought with IS in the Middle East or in Marawi in the southern Philippines return home. In a separate trial at the same court, prosecutors are seeking five years in prison for

Tutin, who is accused of radicalizing Novi and encouraging her to become a suicide bomber. She was also the person who introduced Novi to Solihin.

Solihin, the alleged leader of a small extremist cell in Central Java's Solo city, told Indonesian TV following his arrest that he married Novi to facilitate her desire to become a suicide bomber. Prosecutors are requesting 15 years in prison for Solihin and eight years for a fourth suspected militant, Agus Supriadi. — AFP



HONG KONG: A woman uses her phone while wearing a plastic poncho along Victoria Harbor during heavy winds and rain brought on by Typhoon Hato. —AFP

4 DEAD AS TYPHOON SMASHES INTO MACAU AND HONG KONG

HONG KONG: Typhoon Hato left three dead in the gambling hub of Macau yesterday as it brought chaos and destruction to the enclave after sweeping through neighboring Hong Kong, where one man also died. Local media showed severe flooding had left cars underwater and people swimming in Macau's city streets, with the territory's mega-casinos running on back-up generators.

Three men aged 30 to 65 died, the Macau government said, while two people were missing. One of the men died after being injured by a wall that blew down, another fell from a fourth floor terrace and the last was a Chinese tourist hit by a truck. Apple Daily showed footage of people swimming through muddy water in what are usually roads, and being swept off their feet by winds. The sprawling Venetian casino resort was on back-up power and without air conditioning or proper lighting, according to one source.

One employee of Sands, which owns the Venetian and the Parisian, said power had been out across the whole of Macau but was beginning to return. "Because many guests come in the summer, a lot of them have been stuck in the major resorts and casinos," the employee said. "All transportations-air, ground, sea-have halted, so customers who have checked out cannot leave yet." Electricity was still down at the Grand Lisboa yesterday afternoon, with the casino and restaurants there out of action, a staff member told AFP.

Residents took to social media to complain about city-wide power and mobile phone network outages. Brian Chan, 31, said authorities had failed to give enough notice of the impending storm and were not properly prepared, describing the territory as "totally lost" in the typhoon. The water supply was also limited, authorities said, and 50 flights cancelled from its international airport. By evening, parts of Macau were still without power. "Some have no tap water supply. The city looks like after an attack,"

Harald Bruning, editor of the Macau Post Daily, told AFP, describing it as the worst typhoon he had experienced in 30

years. Hurricane winds and heavy rain had earlier hit Hong Kong, leaving an 83-year-old man dead after he fell into the sea, police said, and more than 80 injured. The typhoon shut down the stock market and forced the cancellation of hundreds of flights in the worst storm the city has seen for five years.

'Flying trees'

Meteorologists raised the Hong Kong's most severe Typhoon 10 warning as the storm hit, only the third time in the past 20 years. The typhoon passed as close as 60 kilometers and made landfall at noon (0400 GMT) in the southern mainland Chinese city of Zhuhai. Thousands of people were evacuated Tuesday in parts of south China in preparation for the typhoon's arrival, the official Xinhua news agency said.

Hato sent meters-high waves crashing into Hong Kong's shorelines with flooding knee deep in some areas. Swaths of marine rubbish washed up on beaches and in coastal residential areas, including white globs of palm oil which have been coming ashore since a massive spillage at sea earlier this month. Gusts of up to 207 kilometers per hour brought flying debris, tearing down trees and scaffolding and smashing skyscraper windows.

Fallen trees cut off roads to parts of the territory. More than 400 flights were cancelled, with flag carrier Cathay Pacific axing most of its departures until 5:00 pm (0900 GMT). The airline said it had begun to reschedule the flights with some taking off yesterday evening. As the storm moved away, the observatory gradually reduced its warning signal to a Typhoon 1, the lowest level, although it said there would still be strong offshore winds and the rain continued.

Hong Kong is regularly besieged by typhoons between July and October, but direct hits are rare. The city saw its strongest storm in 1962 when the eye of typhoon Wanda passed over and gusts of 284 kilometers per hour were recorded. It killed 130 people and destroyed thousands of residential huts, leaving 72,000 people homeless. —AFP

ACTIVISTS FIGHT N KOREA WITH BALLOONS, DVDs AND LEAFLETS

'THE QUICKEST WAY TO BRING DOWN THE REGIME'

SEOUL: Some send up plastic leaflets that weigh less than a feather and flutter down from the clouds with calls for democracy or blurry cartoons ridiculing North Korea's ruler. Some send flash drives loaded with South Korean soap operas, or mini-documentaries about the vast wealth of Southern corporations, or crisp new US dollar bills. One occasionally sends his empty food wrappers, stained labels showing noodles slathered in meat sauce, so Northerners can see the good life they'd find in the South.

They are self-proclaimed soldiers in a quiet war with North Korea, a disparate and colorful collection of activists taking on one of the world's most isolated nations - mostly using homemade hot-air balloons. To their critics in South Korea, they run quixotic and perhaps pointless campaigns. Some are scorned as little more than attention-hungry cranks who spend much of their time exchanging insults with the others. But the activists look across the border and see a country they believe they are already reshaping.

"The quickest way to bring down the regime is to change people's minds," said Park Sang Hak, a refugee from the North who now runs the group Fighters for a Free North Korea from a small Seoul office, sending tens of thousands of plastic fliers across the border every year. Fearing retaliation by Pyongyang, he goes nowhere without police bodyguards. "People are already wondering about their lives there," he said, with the spread of outside information letting them know that life is easier in China and South Korea.

'Blocking outside information'

Much of what the activists send - satirical cartoons, or teary soap operas wash in lost loves, curses and amnesia - doesn't look dangerous at all. But scholars and North Korean refugees say the outside information has helped bring a wealth of changes, from new slang to changing fashions to increasing demand for consumer goods in the expanding market economy. While the activists often disagree about what should be sent into the North - some believe in snarky cartoons, others in documentaries, others in dry political leaflets laying out the lies of Pyongyang's propaganda - all see themselves as warriors nudging along change.

"North Korea keeps control by blocking outside information," said Lee Min Bok, a North Korean who was swayed to flee his homeland when he stumbled across earlier generations of leaflets 30 years ago. He has spent nearly 15 years sending leaflets into the North. "To destroy it peacefully, the influx of information is necessary," Pyongyang detests the activists, decrying outside influences as a "yellow wind," even as its sends



POCHEON: In this June 15, 2017 photo, Lee Min Bok, a North Korean who was swayed to flee his homeland when he stumbled across earlier generations of leaflets 30 years ago, hold plastic leaflets condemning North Korean government during an interview at his house. —AP

thousands of its own leaflets south every year. "They are always trying to drop these pamphlets on us, near the border," said Kim Song Hui, a guide at the Class Education Center, a museum of anti-American and anti-Japanese propaganda in North Korea's capital. "But people in villages know that they should hand them in" to security officials. How much influence do the activists have? It's not clear, especially since some smugglers have been bringing South Korean TV shows and American movies into the North to sell for years, without the activists' support.

"The influx of external information doesn't shake the regime," said Cheong Seong-Chang, an analyst at South Korea's Sejong Institute. It may bring incremental change, by encouraging a few people to defect, for example, but he doubts it'll do much more.

There are also risks to the balloon campaigns. North Koreans caught carrying political leaflets or flash drives could be severely punished, and the balloon launches could throw a wrench into cross-border diplomacy. The South Korean government stopped sending balloons over the border years ago, partly as an attempt to decrease tensions. The South's new liberal president, Moon Jae-in, has reached out to the North since his election earlier this year, and a government spokesman told reporters recently that the

leaflets "could spark unnecessary military tensions, including a possible accidental conflict." Even some activists have curtailed their activities in recent years, with North Korea using specialized software to make it harder to share videos on mobile phones and other devices.

Sitcoms to dramas

Still, every year the activists send hundreds of thousands of leaflets across the border, and thousands of DVDs and thumb drives loaded with everything from Bibles to American sitcoms to South Korean historical dramas. Some are transported by hired smugglers via China. Some are sealed inside 2-liter water bottles tossed into the surf along the South Korean coast, then carried north by the current.

But most are carried by homemade balloons thousands of feet above the belt of razor wire and minefields that separate the two Koreas. If the winds behave, the balloons, typically about 3 feet wide and 25 feet long and made of thin translucent plastic, carry bundles of thousands of palm-sized leaflets over a country where almost no one has internet access or international phone service. Simple timers open the bundles after a set number of hours, scattering the leaflets. — AP

JUDGMENT DAY LOOMS FOR THAI EX-PM YINGLUCK, SHINAWATRA

BANGKOK: Clobbered by coups and courts, Thailand's Shinawatra political dynasty is bracing for another withering blow in its decade-long power struggle with the kingdom's establishment as judges decide whether to convict the clan's ex-premier Yingluck. The Supreme Court will on Friday rule if Yingluck is guilty of criminal negligence over a rice subsidy that showered cash on her family's rural political heartland, but was riddled with graft and led to billions of dollars of losses.

If convicted, Thailand's first female prime minister could be jailed for up to 10 years - although a sentence may be suspended. She is also eligible for bail pending appeal. The Shinawatras emerged as a political force in 2001 when billionaire family patriarch, Thaksin, swept to power. He energized the economy and provided the most extensive pro-poor welfare schemes in Thai history. But critics accused him

of abusing power and blurring the lines between business and politics, becoming as loathed by the Bangkok royalist elite as he was cherished by the rural poor.

A coup toppled him in 2006 and the Shinawatras' political fortunes have seen-sawed since. Paralyzing protests and court cases have hacked at their governments and finances, while another coup toppled his younger sister Yingluck in 2014. A guilty verdict for Yingluck on Friday would trigger a life ban from politics, taking out a key family member whose star power and adroit public relations stands apart from the dour elderly generals who currently rule Thailand.

She has pleaded innocent to the charges, saying she is the victim of a "subtle political game". But her enemies say a conviction would be just desserts for a dynasty accused of seeding the kingdom with graft and nepotism. "The Shinawatra family downfall is attributable to what

they have done in the past," Akanat Promphan, a key figure in the anti-Yingluck protests that resulted in the last army takeover, told AFP this week. "Hopefully the verdict will give an expensive lesson to future governments not to use government policy for narrow populist gain."

'Money and power'

While Yingluck faces judges on Friday, it is Thaksin the clan's rivals really want behind bars. The former cop from northern Thailand, who made a fortune in telecoms and once owned Manchester City football club, became the country's first elected premier to complete a full term. He was re-elected in 2005. But success stirred the ire of the conservative Thai elite and their army allies who feared their monopoly on power was threatened.

After he was bundled from office he was hit with a graft conviction and now lives in self-exile to avoid jail. Courts also seized some \$1.3 billion of his assets. After several years of political deadlock and competing protests-including deadly clashes and the occupation of Bangkok's main airports by anti-Shinawatra "yellow shirts"-Yingluck emerged as an unlikely successor, cruising to an election win in 2011.

A political novice, she charmed her party's base with the rice subsidy, paying farmers up to twice the market rate for their crop. But the policy failed and galvanized mass protests against her government and the ensuing bloodshed presaged another military coup. A civil court order is also seeking \$1 billion from her in damages for the scheme. While the walls are fast closing in, the Shinawatra clan has one last ace up its sleeve, says Pavin Chachavalpongpun, a former Thai diplomat and an academic at Kyoto University. "There's no other credible political alternative... they (the Shinawatras) are still number one" when it comes to popularity, he said. There is also the question of "money and power" with billions of dollars of family money in play. "No politician in the world would walk away from that easily." Since the 2014 coup the junta has made good on its vow to recast the kingdom's politics-without the Shinawatras. Loyalists have been sacked or transferred from provincial government and key police positions. Outspoken figures from the Shinawatras' Pheu Thai party have been knotted up in legal cases, while the pro-Thaksin "Red Shirt" street movement has been muzzled. — AFP



BANGKOK: This file photo taken on May 19, 2011 shows Yingluck Shinawatra (C), sister of fugitive Thai ex-prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, greeting her supporters after her registration as the Puea Thai party candidate in Bangkok ahead of elections. —AFP

INDIA TRAIN ACCIDENT INJURES AT LEAST 42

NEW DELHI: At least 42 passengers were injured yesterday after several cars of an express train derailed in northern India, police said, four days after another rail accident killed 23 people in the country. The train crashed into a truck in northern Uttar Pradesh before dawn, causing 12 carriages to flip over, Indian Railways spokesman Anil Saxena told AFP. "We have rushed emergency teams for rescue and relief operations and all the injured have been taken to hospital," Saxena said.

District police Chief Sanjeev Tyagi told AFP from the scene of the accident that "around 42 people were injured in the accident, most of them with simple injuries." The accident is the second to hit India's most populous state in less than a week after a high-speed train derailed and crashed into residential buildings on Saturday, killing 23 people and injuring 150 others.

India's railway network is the world's

fourth largest by distance and remains the main form of travel in the vast country, with 22 million passengers commuting daily. But the network is poorly funded and deadly accidents often occur, with experts blaming under-investment and poor safety standards for the frequency of incidents. Less than a year ago 146 people died in a similar accident in Uttar Pradesh.

A 2012 government report described the loss of 15,000 passengers to rail accidents every year in India as a "massacre". Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pledged \$137 billion over five years to modernize the crumbling railways and his government has signed numerous upgrading deals with private companies. Japan has agreed to provide \$12 billion in soft loans to build India's first bullet train, with Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe tipped to break ground on the project in September. —AFP

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Focus

TRUMP TOUGH TALK
WON'T MOVE PAK

In military terms, Donald Trump's long-awaited new Afghanistan strategy looks very much like the old one. But, on the diplomatic front, he took a risk in confronting unruly, nuclear-armed Pakistan. Washington has long been frustrated by Pakistan's provision of cross-border safe havens to some of the Taliban factions and armed Islamist groups fighting against US troops and their Afghan allies. Trump's predecessor Barack Obama risked triggering a breakdown in the long US alliance with Islamabad when, without forewarning, he sent commandos into Pakistan in 2011 to kill Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden.

But, rhetorically at least, Trump's much anticipated national address on Monday, in which he laid out a new strategy to win the United States' longest war, marked a dramatic increase in pressure on Pakistan. "We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting," Trump said. "That will have to change and that will change immediately."

While Washington may hope that this motivates Islamabad to crack down on the groups that launch attacks into Afghanistan and Indian-administered Kashmir, it does not come without risk. Pakistan holds the Muslim world's only known nuclear arsenal and its government is a sometimes shaky balancing act between elected civilians and a powerful military that maintains ties with the militants. Harsh US measures could provoke Pakistan and, if the government feels its Cold War-vintage pact with America is under threat, it could turn towards China - the great rival of both India and America. And, much more than the implied threat to cut military aid to Pakistan, Trump's request that India play a greater role in stabilizing Afghanistan will rattle New Delhi's most bitter and long-standing foe.

India's orbit

But, US experts agree, Pakistan is unlikely to step up its support for the Haqqani extremist group and the Afghan Taliban if that would mean the collapse of the Kabul government and driving out US troops. Instead, despite some of his more vainglorious rhetoric, Trump's revamped strategy could lay the basis for dealing with Afghanistan as a long-term chronic problem rather than an imminent threat. James Jeffrey, a fellow of the Washington Institute and former senior national security adviser to the George W. Bush White House, said: "There's really no way to pressure Pakistan."

Pakistan has made the decision that keeping Kabul out of India's orbit is more important than clamping down on cross-border militancy, and cutting aid would only be counterproductive, he argues. Beyond Afghanistan, the United States has an interest in preventing Pakistan from going to war with India or collapsing and allowing its government or nuclear weapons to fall into the hands of extremists. And, while the US footprint is smaller now that it was at the height of the occupation, its forces still need access to Pakistani supply lines and airspace.

"There's really very little we can do," Jeffrey said. "To cut all aid or, even more dramatically, to start striking the Haqqani network and all that ... doesn't guarantee that they'll do what we say." But Pakistan also has no interest in driving the United States out, and Jeffrey sees Monday's speech as confirmation that Trump has come around to the idea of a strategy of "long-term containment". "Other than the unfortunate reference to 'winning' there - that's something that nobody can promise because no one can achieve it - I think that this is basically sensible strategy," he said.

Stepping on toes

Sadanand Dhume, an Indian commentator and resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, argued that Washington has many tools at its disposal to turn up the pressure on the Pakistanis - from cutting military aid, to stripping them of allied status or declaring them a state sponsor of terror. But the biggest stick may be the outreach to India. "The US have always encouraged Indian involvement in Afghanistan, but it was careful not to step on Pakistani toes," he said. "What we're seeing now, is the US feeling it no longer needs to be that careful about Pakistani sensitivity," he said, admitting that, after 16 years of war, it is hard not to be skeptical about Trump's chances of success.

Seth Jones, a former senior Pentagon official and now director of RAND Corporation's International Security and Defense Policy Center, sees room for a more stable future with a better balance of power. "Pakistan certainly doesn't want Afghanistan to collapse and nor do they want an Afghan government that is strongly and closely tied to New Delhi," he said. "I think what they'd like is a relatively stable Afghanistan, and one whose government - and some of the tribal and sub-tribal actors near the border - have at least decent relations with Islamabad." And key to all of this, all experts agree, is that the US military remain in Afghanistan for the long haul. — AFP

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YEMEN REBEL ALLIANCE UNRAVELS IN SANAA

An alliance between Houthis rebels and Yemen strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh, which jointly controls the capital Sanaa, has begun to unravel, threatening to further splinter a country already ravaged by war. Witnesses say armed supporters of Saleh and the Houthis have spread across the city on the eve of a mass rally to mark the 35th anniversary of ex-president Saleh's General People's Congress, sparking fears of an intensification of violence in a country already ravaged by war, cholera and famine.

For three years, the Saleh-Houthi alliance has fought the Saudi-backed government for control of Yemen in a war that has decimated the lives of millions and brought the country to the brink of starvation. Tension between Saleh and the Houthis is at an unprecedented high, threatening an unlikely alliance that has long been viewed as tactical at best. The two sides have flung mutual accusations of treason over the past week, culminating yesterday in an open threat by the Iran-backed rebels who said Saleh would have to "bear the consequences" after he dismissed his allies as "militias" in a weekend speech.

Enemy of my enemy

Saleh's history with the rebels is long and complicated. The Yemeni strongman, now 75, has waged six wars against the Houthis since the late 1970s, when he was president of then-independent north Yemen and allied with Saudi Arabia, which leads the Arab coalition now backing President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi. Saleh was elected Yemen's first president when the country unified in 1990 and remained in power until 2012, resigning after a year of protests-turned-clashes in a deal brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council that guaranteed him and his family immunity.

He was succeeded by Hadi, then vice president, who emerged as his biggest political rival. Saleh pulled an about-face in 2014 and realigned himself at the side of Abdul Malik Al-Houthi, the Zaidi Shiite leader of the rebel Ansar Allah movement with ties to Riyadh's archrival Iran. The Houthis drove the Hadi government out of the capital and into Aden, Hadi's hometown in southern Yemen.

Saleh and Houthi continue to control the capital, where the former president's influence has not waned five years after his reluctant resignation. By 2016, Saleh had reached a power-sharing pact with the insurgents and ran a parallel government from Sanaa in an alliance insiders and analysts have long warned would not last. "On both ends, it has been a common enemy... keeping both sides together," said Adam Baron, a fellow at the European Council on Foreign

Relations. "With the expulsion of the Houthis from much of the south, that common enemy has disappeared; thus, it's not shocking that the grudging alliance between southern secessionists and the internationally backed government has devolved into deep tensions."

The common enemy began to come apart at the seams in April, when Hadi fired Aden governor Aidarous Al-Zoubeidi and Hani bin Breik, a member of his cabinet. Both Zoubeidi and bin Breik have historically favored reinstating southern Yemen's autonomy and went on to announce the establishment of the Southern Transitional Council, with

support from local communities and reportedly from the United Arab Emirates, a key player in the Arab coalition.

Saleh for his part is also drawing on his popular reach in Sanaa, which until 2014 had been largely off-limits to the Houthis, confined to the northern Saada province. Saleh and the Houthis have had a tacit agreement in sharing Sanaa: The ex-president lacks the muscle the insurgents can provide, and Saleh's structural and popular power in the capital is unparalleled. That delicate power balance may be tested in Thursday's rally, which Saleh has said will be a demonstration of support for "legitimacy" in Yemen. — AFP

SAUDI RENEWS IRAQ TIES
IN BID TO DISTANCE IRAN

Influential Iraqi Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr's visit to Saudi Arabia at the end of July signalled the Gulf Sunni power-holding's ambition to distance its Iranian foe from policy-making in Baghdad. In the wake of former dictator Saddam Hussein's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Riyadh severed relations with Baghdad and closed its border posts with its northern neighbor. Ties have remained strained even after Saddam's ouster in the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, since when successive Shiite-dominated governments in Baghdad have stayed close to Tehran.

But Sadr's rare visit to Saudi Arabia came at the invitation of Riyadh, which played up his meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Two weeks later, Sadr followed up by holding talks in Abu Dhabi with its Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahayan of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and close ally of his counterpart in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). "Hosting Sadr in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi shows regional rivals and particularly Iran that KSA/UAE are capable of tapping into and influencing intra-Shia politics in Iraq," said Fanar Haddad, a research fellow at the Washington-based Middle East Institute. For the Gulf monarchies, "Sadr would be a prize catch: authentically Shia-Iraqi, distrustful if not disdainful of Iran and with a genuinely organic and loyal grassroots following."

'Pulling the strings'

The pro-Western Arab states of the Gulf aim to show that Iran no longer holds a monopoly on influencing policy in Baghdad, according to Iraqi political scientist Hashem

Al-Hashemi. Tehran "prided itself on pulling all the strings among the Shiites (of Iraq) but it seems that several strings are now beyond its grasp, like that of the Sadrists", Hashemi said. In June, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, also a Shiite, held meetings in Saudi Arabia, four months after a visit to Baghdad by Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, a first of its kind since 2003.

For Michael Knights, a researcher at the Washington Institute, such interaction with Riyadh could come at a price. "Tehran will view the Saudi Arabian engagement by Abadi and Sadr as another reason that Abadi must be displaced as premier in the 2018 elections," said Knights. "And Iran will work hard behind the scenes with money, media and weapons to make that happen." But at the same time, Haddad warned that Riyadh and Abu Dhabi should not count too heavily on Sadr to restore their influence in Baghdad at the expense of Tehran. "They should moderate their expectations as to how much he will be willing to deliver," he cautioned. Tehran has played a major political, economic and military role in Baghdad since the end of Saddam's rule, during which Shiites were barred from powerful posts and Shiite-majority Iraq fought a 1980-1988 war against Shiite but non-Arab Iran. According to the Carnegie Middle East Center, Iranian exports, not including fuel, tripled between 2008 and 2015 to reach \$6.2 billion. Apart from military advisers on the ground in Iraq, Iran also sponsors several armed groups, in particular the paramilitary Hashed al-Shaabi units that are playing a key role in fighting the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group. — AFP

MADAGASCAR RIDES VANILLA PRICE BUBBLE

Hit by rampant speculation and a collapse in production following cyclone Enawo, the price of vanilla - Madagascar's largest export - has surged in recent months. Ice cream, aromatherapy, perfume and haute cuisine: all use the spice sourced from the Indian Ocean island which accounts for about 80 percent of global production. The sudden cash bonanza has threatened to fuel crime and slash quality. On the single paved road in Ampanefena, a rural community in the northeast of Madagascar, youths pass the time doing wheelies on their high-powered Japanese motorbikes.

"It cost 200 million Malagasy ariary (12,000 euros, \$14,000)," claimed Akman Mat-hon, 17, atop a Kawasaki too large for his frame. His father is "in vanilla" and bought the bike as a gift. Business is booming: since 2015 the price of the spice has soared relentlessly to "a never-before seen peak of between \$600 and \$750 a kilo," (\$510 and 640 euros) according to Georges Geeraerts, president of Madagascar's Group of Vanilla Exporters. Since the market was liberalized in 1989, the price has fluctuated wildly - from \$400 a kilo in 2003 to \$30 in 2005, where it stayed for roughly a decade.

But demand eventually outstripped the supply of around 1,800 tonnes-a-year, spurred on by resurgent calls for organic products, speculation by financiers - and by tropical cyclone Enawo which ravaged part of the production zone. Markets in the vanilla-producing Sava region were saturated almost overnight with motorbikes, smartphones, solar panels, generators, flat-screen televisions and gaudy home furnishings.

'It's a free-for-all'

"The banks struggled to keep up with the pace," said a French trader speaking on condition of anonymity. "Money no longer has any meaning, people think it's a free-for-all, it's becoming anarchy," added Vittorio John, a vanilla grower in his 40s. The price explosion has led to increased thefts from vanilla plantations. Some growers sleep in their fields

to guard their precious crop and several thieves have been beaten, imprisoned or even killed. "We pay two police to secure the village," said Patrick Razafarivo, 42, an intermediary between the farmers and the exporters who admits to hiding vanilla underneath his mattress. "The police made us pay for their 4X4s," said a French exporter.

The authorities admit that they were caught unprepared for the boom. "The root of all the problems is insecurity caused by a lack of capacity, staff, and force disci-

pline," said Teddy Seramila, the Sava region's development director. Fear of thefts in the plantations has also forced some growers to pick their pods prematurely, resulting in declining standards. "People are doing all sorts. They're vacuum packing vanilla that can go bad. Non-experts can be misled over the quality," said an exporter from Madagascar. "Nothing distinguishes a good pod from a bad pod, you can't tell the difference," exporter Lucia Rania Salveta told AFP. — AFP



This file photo taken on May 25, 2016 in Bemalamatra shows workers spreading "red vanilla" (vanilla which has been treated by special cooking) in the sun to be dried. — AFP



This file photo taken on Nov 14, 2015 shows a screen displaying "#prayforparis" in Berlin a day after deadly attacks in Paris. The hashtag celebrated its 10-year anniversary yesterday. — AFP

#HAPPYBIRTHDAY! HASHTAG TURNS 10

PARIS: The hashtag, the symbol attached to keywords to tag topics online, yesterday celebrated 10 years making social media just a bit more navigable. The sign has preceded the keywords that mark out all major events around the world since 2007, when it got its first outing on Twitter. Before long, it had spread to other social media including Facebook, Instagram and Tumblr. It was Chris Messina, an American designer and social media expert, who originally proposed using the hash sign (#) - pound sign in American English - to group tweets by subject.

He made the original suggestion in a tweet posted on Aug 23, 2007 before elaborating in a post online a couple of days later. He launched the first ever hashtag, #barcamp, to identify a set of conferences focused around technology and the web that he helped organize. Messina, who describes himself as an "avid Twitterer", has sent more than 39,500 tweets in 11 years. Yesterday's birthday celebrations, of course, are trending with #Hashtag10.

#Mobilization

Today 125 million hashtags are exchanged every day, often serving as a springboard to launch massive online campaigns. In April 2014 the abduction at Chibok in north-

eastern Nigeria of 276 schoolgirls by Islamists from Boko Haram led to the posting of the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag. The then US first lady Michelle Obama was among those who used it to draw attention to the fight against Boko Haram, which at the time seemed to have Nigeria's army on the backfoot. #BlackLivesMatter was another digital rallying cry, going viral during a wave of protests over the deaths of several black people at the hands of the police in the United States. Then there was #OccupyWallStreet for the American "indignant" movement that set up a protest camp in the heart of the New York's Manhattan to protest financial greed and corruption.

Hashtags have also sprung up in the wake of terror attacks to allow internet users to express solidarity for the victims and survivors. In 2015, #JeSuisCharlie was shared five million times in the two days after the January 7 jihadist attack on French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris, which killed 12 people. #PrayforParis was tweeted more than six million times after the November 2015 attacks in and around Paris which cost 130 lives. The slogan was adapted elsewhere, for example in Berlin - #PrayforBerlin - after a truck attack left 12 dead at a Berlin Christmas market in Dec 2016. — AFP

IRAN EXTENDS REACH WITH FIGHT FOR LAND LINK TO MEDITERRANEAN

BEIRUT: Thousands of Iranian-backed fighters in Syria's central desert region are advancing east, bringing Tehran closer to its goal of securing a corridor from its border, through Iraq and all the way to the Mediterranean and providing it unhindered land access to its allies in Syria and Lebanon for the first time. The land-route would be the biggest prize yet for Iran in its involvement in Syria's six-year-old civil war.

It would facilitate movement of Iranian-backed fighters between Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon as well as the flow of weapons to Damascus and Lebanon's Hezbollah, Iran's main proxy group. It also positions Iran to play a prime and lucrative role in what is expected to be a massive rebuilding effort in both Iraq and Syria, which have been devastated in their ongoing wars. The potential for a physical artery for Iran's influence across the region is raising concern in predominantly Sunni Arab countries and in Israel, the nemesis of both Iran and Hezbollah. It poses a challenge to the Trump administration, which has vowed to fight Iran's growing reach.

The route is largely being carved out by Iran's allies and proxies, a mix of forces including troops of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, Hezbollah fighters and Shiite militias on both sides of the border aiming to link up. Iran also has forces of its own Revolutionary Guard directly involved in the campaign on the Syrian side. Concerns over their advances are expected to come up when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu holds talks Wednesday in the Russian resort of Sochi with President Vladimir Putin, whose country is an ally of Iran and Assad.

The talks will focus "first and foremost (on) preventing Iran's military entrenchment in Syria," David Keyes, a spokesman for Netanyahu, said. "Iran's aggression in the region continues to grow. The regime is trying to entrench itself militarily on Israel's border. Israel cannot and will not allow this," he said. "Any cease-fire which allows Iran to establish a foothold in Syria is a danger to the entire region."

A corridor would be a boost for Israel's powerful enemy Hezbollah, which has an arsenal of tens of

thousands of rockets and missiles. Iran currently ships weapons to Hezbollah mostly by flying them to Syria to be shipped on the ground to Lebanon. Israel has warned it would do what it can to keep Iran from threatening its borders and has carried out airstrikes in Syria against suspected weapons shipments bound for Hezbollah. Israel pushed hard for a US- and Russia-brokered truce that came into effect recently in southern Syria to keep Iranian-backed militias at a distance from the Golan Heights, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

The land route is by no means a fait accompli. Any road link will likely be a frequent target by Sunni insurgent groups. But Iran's allies are making progress on both sides of the border, taking territory from the Islamic State group. In recent months, Syrian troops and allied militiamen have marched forward on three fronts toward areas bordering Iraq. One of their main targets is the IS-held eastern city of Deir el-Zour, where the militants have imposed a siege for years on a small government-held pocket.

Syrian troops and pro-Iranian Iraqi militiamen do already meet at one small area on the border - at the Jamouna region on the Iraqi side and Wadi Al-Waer on the Syrian side. But the area is too dangerous to be used as a corridor, since militants continue to launch hit-and-run attacks. Syrian troops reached another part of the border in June, but much of the adjacent territory on the Iraqi side is still IS-held.

Influence

Inside Iraq, Iranian-backed Shiite militiamen are gaining more influence in predominantly Sunni areas bordering Syria. Militiamen are involved in the battle to retake the Iraqi town of Tel Afar, which would boost the militias' hold on the nearby border region. The Shiite militiamen are also present in Iraq's western Anbar province bordering Syria. "Our aim is to prevent any barriers from Iraq to Syria all the way to Beirut," said Jaafar Al-Husseini of Iraq's Kataeb Hezbollah militia. "The resistance is close to achieving this goal." — AP

QATAR LIMITS HOURS, ENSURES PAY FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

DOHA: Qatar has approved a law limiting domestic staff to a maximum of 10 hours' work a day, the first such protection for thousands of household maids, nannies and cooks in the emirate. The "Domestic Employment Law" also orders employers to pay staff wages at the end of each month and entitles workers to at least one day off per week and an annual leave of three weeks, the Qatar News Agency reported. They will also receive end-of-service benefits equating to a minimum of three weeks wages for each year of service when their contract ends. The law prohibits staff being recruited from abroad who are older than 60 and younger than 18.

Hundreds of thousands of foreign workers have flocked to the gas-rich Gulf emirate in recent years, including almost 100,000 women working as house staff. Other domestic workers covered by the new law include cleaners, gardeners and drivers.

The legislation was issued on Tuesday by Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, QNA reported. Although Qatar has come under severe international pressure to improve its record on the treatment of construction workers in the run-up to the 2022 World Cup, until now domestic staff have not been protected by any legislation. Critics have long campaigned for legal protection for

domestic staff, with some claiming that they are subjected to working in slave-like conditions. These included physical and sexual abuse, no wages being paid and passports being confiscated.

In 2014 it was reported that hundreds of Filipino domestic workers had sought sanctuary at their Doha embassy complaining of harsh working conditions. The issue of ill-treatment of domestic staff stretches across the region. In 2015 Indonesia said it would stop sending domestic staff to 21 Middle Eastern countries in protests at the treatment of maids in those countries. Human Rights Watch backed the introduction of the law. "Tens of thousands of domestic workers in Qatar now have their labor rights protected in law including a limit to their working day and a weekly day of rest," Rothna Begum, women's rights researcher at HRW, told AFP.

But she added that new legislation must be rigorously imposed by the authorities. "However, Qatar should ensure there are strong enforcement mechanisms which are key to making these rights a reality." The legislation comes at a time when Qatar's laws remain under scrutiny from the International Labor Organization. The UN body has given Qatar until November to improve its human rights record or face sanctions. — AFP

EGYPT SLAMS US DECISION TO CUT AID OVER...

Continued from Page 1

President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi met with the American delegation separately at the Foreign Ministry. Kushner's delegation includes Jason Greenblatt, the US envoy for international negotiations, and Dina Powell, the deputy national security adviser.

The Trump administration on Tuesday cut nearly \$100 million in military and economic aid to Egypt and delayed almost \$200 million more in military financing, citing Egypt's poor human rights record and its crack-down on civic and other non-governmental groups. The move came as a surprise to many, given the close ties forged since Trump took office. The US president has repeatedly hailed Sisi as a key ally in the fight against terrorism. In a statement, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said Cairo regretted the US decision, calling it a "misjudgment of the nature of the strategic relations that have bound the two countries for decades". It said the move "reflects the lack of careful understanding of the importance of supporting the stability and success of Egypt as well as the size and nature of the security and economic challenges faced by the Egyptian people." The decision, it warned, may have "negative consequences for the realization of common US-Egyptian interests." It did not elaborate.

Egypt is among the top recipients of US military and economic assistance, receiving about \$1.5 billion annually. The \$1.3 billion in military aid and \$250 million in economic aid is linked to Egypt's 1979 peace treaty with Israel, and underpins a US-Egyptian security relationship that is now mostly aimed at fighting terrorism.

In recent years, Egypt has clamped down on civil society, particularly human rights groups and other organizations that receive foreign funding. Such groups played a central role in the 2011 uprising that toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak, and pro-government media often present them as part of a conspiracy to undermine the state.

The authorities have arrested thousands of people since Sisi led the 2013 military overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi, an Islamist who won the country's first freely contested election. Most of those in detention are Islamist supporters of Morsi, but a number of prominent liberal and secular activists have also been jailed. Trump made no public mention of human rights when he warmly welcomed Sisi to the White House in April, an omission that many took as a sign that the issue was not a priority for the administration.

But two months later, two senators from Trump's Republican Party slammed as "draconian" a new Egyptian law that effectively bans the work of non-governmental organizations and urged its repeal. Egypt has defended the law, which provoked an international backlash, saying it was drafted and approved according to its constitution.

Kushner has meanwhile been trying to revive Middle East peace talks, which last collapsed in 2014. He has made little evident progress, and has yet to lay out a

clear vision for what Trump has called the "ultimate deal". He and his delegation traveled to Jordan on Tuesday, where they met with King Abdullah II.

They also visited Saudi Arabia and Qatar, according to local media reports. The US delegation met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Jeddah, then flew to Doha to meet the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. Neither news agencies of the two countries mentioned the months-old row between Riyadh and Doha, which has defied Kuwaiti and US mediation efforts.

Apart from efforts to end Israeli-Palestinian hostilities, the two sides also discussed encouraging "security, stability and Middle-Eastern-prosperity", Saudi state news agency SPA said. Bin Salman and the official talked about ways to achieve "a real and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians" and stability in the wider Middle East and beyond, SPA said. In Doha, which hosts the political leadership of Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, Sheikh Tamim and the envoys discussed "the improvement of the humanitarian situation and living conditions in Gaza Strip," Qatar state news agency QNA reported. Today, the delegation is expected to hold separate meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, but no major breakthroughs are expected. Trump has yet to fully endorse a two-state solution, which has been at the heart of US policy for nearly two decades. He has said it's up to Israel and the Palestinians to decide the shape of a final settlement.

Separately, Iran and Saudi Arabia will exchange diplomatic visits soon, Tehran said yesterday, indicating a possible thaw in relations between the regional rivals since they severed diplomatic ties last year. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA) that the visits could take place after the hajj pilgrimage ends in the first week of September. "The visas have been issued for both sides to make this trip," Zarif said, according to ISNA. "We are waiting for the final steps to be completed so diplomats from the two countries can inspect their embassies and consulates."

Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are at their worst in years, with each accusing the other of subverting regional security and supporting opposite sides in conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Iranian protesters stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran in Jan. 2016 after a prominent Saudi Shiite cleric was executed, prompting Riyadh to close the embassy. Saudi Arabia and several other Arab governments have severed ties with Qatar, citing its support of Iran as one of the main reasons.

Iran has blamed Saudi Arabia for being behind deadly twin attacks on June 7 in Tehran claimed by Islamic State. At least 18 people were killed and more than 40 wounded in the attacks, in which Riyadh has denied any involvement. Thousands of Iranian pilgrims are currently undertaking the hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. — Agencies

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FORMER S AFRICA STAR SMITH TURNS T20 COACH

JOHANNESBURG: Former South Africa skipper and batsman Graeme Smith will be among the coaches when the maiden Twenty20 Global League starts in the republic this November. His appointment as coach of the Benoni Zalmi, one of eight teams in the nationwide tournament, was confirmed Tuesday by the owners of a franchise based in eastern Johannesburg. It will be the first senior-level coaching post for the 36-year-old since he retired from international cricket three years ago. Geoffrey Toyana, the successful coach of all-formats South African franchise the Highveld Lions, will assist Smith. Nicknamed "Biff", Johannesburg-born Smith played 117 Tests, 197 one-day internationals and 33 T20 matches for South Africa. Smith and Toyana will be in Cape Town this weekend for a player draft, choosing from more than 400 local and foreign cricketers. — AFP



EX-ALL BLACK ACCUSED OF ASSAULT IN FIGHT VIDEO

LA ROCHELLE: Former New Zealand international Jason Eaton has been accused of assault following a night-club brawl in France that was captured on video, a police source said yesterday. The 35-year-old La Rochelle lock and compatriot Romana Graham, a 31-year-old second row who left the French club at the end of last season, were involved in a late-night fight outside a club in the town last week. "A video is being studied and will be used to discern the facts from the fiction, because it seems that everyone involved was drunk," said the police source. Eaton, who won 15 All Blacks caps between 2005 and 2009, is one of La Rochelle's star players. He helped the unfashionable outfit top the regular 2016/17 standings and reach the Top 14 semi-finals last season. It is the second violent incident involving top-flight French rugby players during the off-season. Stade Francais' Fiji pair Josaia Raisuqe and Waisea Nayacalevu face trial over an alleged sexual assault and drunken violence last month. —AFP

JACKSON DENIES RAPE ALLEGATION

LONDON: Ireland's second choice fly-half Paddy Jackson denied a charge of rape through his lawyer at a court hearing in Belfast yesterday. The 25-year-old-widely seen as the man to replace veteran Jonathan Sexton when he retires from international rugby-has been charged along with Ulster and Ireland team-mate Stuart Olding, whilst two other men face lesser charges related to the alleged incidents. Neither the 25-times capped Jackson nor Olding, 24 and capped four times, appeared in court, their lawyers transmitting their pleas. Neither player is to be considered for selection by either club or country until the legal process is over, according to the Irish Rugby Football Union and Ulster Rugby. That is likely to see them miss the whole of the coming season. The short legal proceedings saw the charges lodged officially with a district judge. —AFP



CHAMP JON JONES FLAGGED FOR ANOTHER FAILED DOPING TEST

LAS VEGAS: Jon Jones could face a lengthy suspension from mixed martial arts after the UFC light heavyweight champion was notified Tuesday of his second potential violation of the promotion's anti-doping policy.

Jones is widely considered the top pound-for-pound fighter in the sport, but his potential violation stems from a sample collected after his weigh-in July 28 for his title fight against Daniel Cormier at UFC 214 in Anaheim, California.

Jones won the fight and reclaimed his 205-pound belt after sitting out the previous year for a failed doping test. The victory appeared to be a return to glory for a long-troubled fighter who has repeatedly hindered his stellar career with misbehavior outside the octagon.

Jones was stripped of his belt in 2015 after being involved in a hit-and-run accident. He was scheduled to fight Cormier for the title in July 2016, but was pulled from the UFC 200 card for what he claimed was a failed test due to a sexual enhancement pill. Jones hasn't yet been stripped of his title for a second time, UFC President Dana White said. Cormier held the belt for most of Jones' absence, and he had said he didn't

plan to retire after his second loss to Jones.

Jones' camp and his manager, Malki Kawa, released a statement: "We are all at a complete loss for words right now. Jon, his trainers, his nutritionists and his entire camp have worked tirelessly and meticulously the past 12 months to avoid this exact situation. We are having the samples tested again to determine the validity or source of contamination. Jon is crushed by this news and we are doing whatever we can as a team, to support him."

If the violation is confirmed, Jones seems likely to face a multiyear suspension from the sport, taking away even more of his fighting prime. The UFC also will be harmed by the lengthy absence of its best fighter and a burgeoning pay-per-view draw. The UFC also could lose its dream matchup between Jones and former heavyweight champion Brock Lesnar. The superstars both appeared eager to meet next year in a heavyweight fight that would be among the biggest events in the UFC's history.

The US Anti-Doping Agency administers the UFC's doping policy. The California State Athletic Commission has jurisdiction over Jones' test along with USADA. —AP



LAS VEGAS: Conor McGregor walks on stage during the arrivals for a boxing match Tuesday, in Las Vegas. McGregor is scheduled to fight Floyd Mayweather Jr in a boxing match Saturday in Las Vegas. — AP

TENNIS

PRETENDERS LINE UP IN US OPEN POWER STRUGGLE

NEW YORK: Serena Williams is about to have a baby, Victoria Azarenka will stay home with her baby and the US Open women's field is pregnant with suspense over who might win. A wide-open array of contenders for the world number one ranking and the last Grand Slam title of the year promise to make the Flushing Meadows fortnight that starts Monday a thriller even without two of the game's top stars.

Williams, who won her 23rd Grand Slam title at the Australian Open, announced in April she was pregnant and would miss the rest of the year. Two-time Australian Open winner Azarenka revealed she is in a custody fight over her baby son, who cannot leave California, and thus will stay with him. Former world number one Maria Sharapova, a five-time Grand Slam champion, will play as a wildcard in her first major tournament since a 15-month doping ban after testing positive for meldonium at the 2016 Australian Open. And while the Russian's return has been hit by forearm and thigh injuries, she remains a threat wherever she lands in the draw. Czech world number one Karolina Pliskova, Romanian world number two Simona Halep, Wimbledon champion and world number three Garbine Muguruza, Ukraine's fourth-ranked Elina Svitolina, Denmark's fifth-ranked Caroline Wozniacki and the defending champion, sixth-ranked German Angelique Kerber, are among the trophy favorites on the New York hardcourts.

Evergreen Venus Williams, the 37-year-old American who has won seven Grand Slam titles and was runner-up this year at Wimbledon and the Australian Open, is ranked ninth and a dangerous foe for all.

Muguruza has made herself an odds-maker's darling after taking last year's French Open, last month's Wimbledon crown and last week's Cincinnati title in the last major US Open tuneup. But she hasn't gone past the second round in four tries at

New York. "I'm looking forward to be there and feel I can improve what happened the past years, because I feel like I never really found my (rhythm)," Muguruza said.

"I want to change that. I want to find the recipe maybe this year, maybe that I have a little bit more confidence. The most important part is to recover, to be fresh because it takes a lot of energy, and then getting used to New York vibe again, because it's special." Pliskova has taken titles at Brisbane, Doha and Eastbourne this year but has never won a Grand Slam, although she reached her only Grand Slam final last year at New York.

"The energy of the city is huge. Obviously love to be coming back there, especially after the fantastic last year."

'MY FIGHTING SPIRIT IS BACK'

An early Cincinnati exit tumbled Kerber down the rankings race, but the 2016 US and Australian Open champion is feeling the same drive she did a year ago. "I'm thinking that my fighting spirit is back and I'm feeling that it's getting better and better," Kerber said. "Going, for sure, with good memories to New York."

Halep isn't after a 6-1, 6-0 drubbing by Muguruza in the Cincinnati final, her third and by far worst loss of the year with the world number one ranking just a win away.

But that didn't dim her hopes of claiming a first Slam title at the US Open. "I will go to New York and I will be with the confidence up," Halep said. "I played really good few months. So I don't have negatives to take." Svitolina, the youngest in the favored pack at 22, has won titles this year at Toronto, Rome, Dubai, Istanbul and Taipei City and matched her best Grand Slam showing with a French Open quarter-final run. Wozniacki, the 2014 US Open runner-up and three times a semi-finalist, has lost six finals this year since taking her last title in Hong Kong last year. — AFP



NEW HAVEN: Elise Mertens of Belgium serves to Daria Kasatkina of Russia during Day 5 of the Connecticut Open at Connecticut Tennis Center at Yale on Tuesday in New Haven, Connecticut. — AFP

BOXING

MAYWEATHER, MCGREGOR TRADE VERBAL JABS, COUNTDOWN BEGINS

LAS VEGAS: Floyd Mayweather and Conor McGregor traded verbal jabs Tuesday as the circus-like countdown to their money-spinning superfight cranked into overdrive on the Las Vegas Strip. Thousands of fans including a sizeable contingent of Irish supporters thronged the heart of the Nevada boxing capital to greet Mayweather and McGregor at their separate grand arrival ceremonies. Mayweather, the 40-year-old undefeated former welterweight boxing champion, has been lured out of retirement to face McGregor, a star of mixed martial arts' Ultimate Fighting Championship.

The two men meet in a 12-round contest under boxing rules on Saturday that is tipped to become the richest fight in history.

The cross-combat collision has appalled boxing purists, with many decrying the event as a farcical publicity stunt more in keeping with the choreographed traditions of WWE wrestling.

Mayweather and McGregor—who clashed repeatedly during an expletive-laden world press tour to drum up interest for the fight last month—insist however that they are ready to deliver a battle for the ages. McGregor, a massive underdog in what will be his first professional boxing fight, insisted Tuesday he was ready to stun the oddsmakers. "This is not even close to my toughest challenge ever. I will crumble him," McGregor roared.

"I have adapted perfectly to boxing, I am very pleased and ready. I'm a special man, I will prove that August 26, this will go one or two rounds, maybe I will bang him out and hurt him."

"If he survives, I will decide whether I embarrass or seriously hurt him. I'm calm and cool, same as I am in every fight. I'm fit, sharp and I'm gonna be ruthless in there. I believe he'll be unconscious inside one round." McGregor and Mayweather passed each other after their separate introductions, with McGregor taunting the American with a shout of "Why didn't you want to face off?"—triggering a melee between their two entourages.

'HE NEEDS TO SHUT HIS MOUTH'

A relaxed-looking Mayweather meanwhile had earlier encouraged fans to bet on the fight finishing inside 12 rounds.

"I talked to you before and said that this fight wouldn't go the distance," Mayweather said. "If you're going to bet, bet it won't go (the distance)." Mayweather did his best to play down his status as a heavy favorite, insisting that his two-year layoff from the ring had blunted his prowess. "That's what makes this fight so intriguing. I've been out a few years, feel like I've lost a few steps," Mayweather said. "So we'll just have to wait and see."

Earlier Tuesday, Mayweather had taunted McGregor over his fitness, telling the US website FightHype that he believed his opponent would struggle to make the 154-pound limit for Saturday's bout.

"Conor McGregor is extremely heavy right now," Mayweather said. "I think he's 164 so he's still got 10 pounds to go."

McGregor hit back at Mayweather's comments. "He needs to shut his mouth," McGregor said. "It is a fool of a thing. Let him keep praying, praying for weight, for fatigue, praying for me to take a backward step. All he is doing is praying, but he is praying to the new god of boxing."

McGregor could face a painful financial penalty if he is unable to tip the scales inside the limit. Boxers often have the option of cancelling a fight or collecting a larger share of the purse if an opponent fails to make weight. Estimates vary but some projections indicate Mayweather

could make as much as \$200 million from Saturday's contest, with McGregor collecting around \$100 million.

Mayweather has fought at 154 pounds before but is more used to fighting at welterweight (150 pounds). McGregor however has fought at 170 pounds in MMA. McGregor, 29, last week insisted he was in peak condition following a

gruelling training camp that had taken him to "hell and back" and left him primed to face either a long or short fight.

"There is no way in hell that I'm not ready to fight in the deepest of trenches in this contest," McGregor said. "We are ready for both scenarios. I'm ready to go to war for 12 rounds and I'm ready to put him away early on." — AFP

SHARAPOVA DETERMINED TO PROVE POINT ON RETURN

NEW YORK: Former world number one Maria Sharapova makes her first Grand Slam appearance next week since serving a 15-month doping suspension, bringing renewed passion and resolve to the US Open. The 30-year-old Russian was given a wildcard into the tournament by the US Tennis Association (USTA), a move critics complained about earlier in the season but another key step in the road back for the five-time Grand Slam winner.

"When it comes to tennis, good or bad—there's really only one thing that I know for certain—I've missed it," Sharapova wrote on the Players' Tribune website. "Though these last two years have been tougher—so much tougher than I ever could have anticipated... my passion for the game has never wavered. If anything, it has only grown stronger."

Sharapova was issued a two-year suspension after testing positive for the banned heart and blood boosting drug meldonium at the 2016 Australian Open, but the Court of Arbitration for Sport reduced the ban on appeal. She said that she had taken it for several years and did not know it had been placed on the banned list at the start of 2016. Sharapova made her return in April at Stuttgart, reaching the semi-finals as a wildcard, but such invitations sparked criticism from some WTA rivals, saying she should have to work her way back without such benefits, some suggesting a life ban. "I'm aware of what many of my peers have said about me and how critical of me some of them have been," she wrote. "If you're a human being with a normal, beating heart... I don't think that sort of thing will ever fully be possible to ignore."

Sharapova was refused a wildcard by French Open organizers and missed Wimbledon with a thigh injury, so the US

Open will be her first Grand Slam event since last year's Australian Open.

Shaking off criticism after the French Open snub, Sharapova tweeted, "If this is what it takes to rise up again, then I am in it all the way, everyday. No words, games or actions will ever stop me from reaching my own dreams. And I have many."

SHARAPOVA PLAYS CATCH-UP

Sharapova has missed three of the past four US Opens, her last visit ending in the 2014 fourth round. The USTA defended its wildcard offer, saying, "Her suspension under the terms of the tennis anti-doping program was completed and therefore was not one of the factors weighed in our wildcard selection process." "Consistent with past practice, a wildcard was provided to a past US champion who needed the wildcard for entry into the main draw." Former world number one Sharapova won the 2006 US Open as well as Wimbledon in 2004, the 2008 Australian Open and the 2012 and 2014 French Opens. "I'm sure this is a great moment for her to have an opportunity to be back to a place where she has done so well," seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams said. Sharapova was bolstered by fans with "Welcome back Maria" signs in Germany and cheering support last month in Stanford, her first US match in more than two years. "I feel like I just want to hug everyone and say thank you," Sharapova said.

Sharapova defeated American Jennifer Brady 6-1, 4-6, 6-0 in her Stanford opener but suffered a left forearm injury and has not played competitively since. "I feel like I'm playing catch-up against everyone who has had a head start," she said of being hurt during US Open tuneup events. — AFP



Maria Sharapova

CAVS TRADE IRVING TO CELTICS FOR THOMAS, MORE

CLEVELAND: Kyrie Irving was tired of being teammates with LeBron James. Now he has to figure out how to beat him. Cleveland's All-Star guard, who asked owner Dan Gilbert to trade him earlier this summer, was dealt Tuesday night to the Boston Celtics for fellow All-Star Isaiah Thomas, forward Jae Crowder, center Ante Zizic and the Brooklyn Nets' unprotected 2018 first-round draft pick.

"It's extremely rare to trade for a 25-year-old player that's done what he's done, the offensive weapon that he is," Celtics president Danny Ainge said. "We feel like his best basketball is still ahead of him."

"We have a player that's proven to be a sure thing. We know how unpredictable the draft can be. You do pay a heavy price for a player of that age and that caliber." Irving, whose late 3-pointer helped Cleveland win the 2016 NBA championship - and the city's first title since 1964 - is on his way to Boston, where he'll join a Celtics team that lost to the Cavs in last season's conference finals.

And as fate will have it, the Cavs will host the Celtics in their season opener on Oct. 17. "Of course we know who our competition is, and we know who are biggest threats are each year," Ainge said. "But we feel like this is a trade that can make us better, and that's why we did it."

The blockbuster deal caps a wild summer for the Cavs, who lost their title defense in five games to Golden State in June. Since then, general manager David Griffin left, the team failed to convince Chauncey Billups to join its front office and James has played with fans' emotions with veiled postings on social media about his future. Irving's trade demand cast a shadow over the entire organization. But Cleveland may have salvaged its offseason. "This trade needed to include both players and assets that we felt strongly could help us continue to compete for championships and we believe it does," said new general manager Koby Altman, who pulled off a deal that protects Cleveland's present and future. In Thomas, they're getting a proven playmak-

er with a stellar reputation. The 5-foot-9 guard is one of the league's most dynamic backcourt players with an uncanny ability to get to the basket. Irving may be the only better finisher among point guards.

The 28-year-old Thomas was taken with the final selection in the 2011 draft - 59 picks after Irving was picked first overall. But he has steadily scaled his way up to elite status. Thomas' reputation in Boston was cemented when he led the Celtics through the playoffs last season despite the death of his sister on the eve of the postseason. He also had a front tooth knocked out during the second-round series against Washington and a hip injury eventually forced the team to shut him down early in the East finals, won by the Cavaliers in five games.

"Isaiah had just an amazing season this year and entertained us all, the whole city of Boston. And everybody fell in love with him," Ainge said. "He's such an underdog because of his size and his heart and his spirit which he plays."

Thomas is eligible for free agency next summer and believes he is worthy of a maximum contract. He has been quoted saying, "They better bring out the Brinks truck." Cleveland also is getting Crowder, a solid perimeter defender, and a first-round pick that Boston got from Brooklyn. The package could help the Cavs reload if James opts out of his contract next summer and leaves Cleveland for a second time. The Cavs drafted Irving with the No. 1 overall pick in 2011. He struggled in his first few seasons but blossomed in recent years alongside James. However, that didn't seem to be enough for the 25-year-old, who has wanted to be the focal point on his own team. James wished Irving well on Twitter, calling him a "special talent/guy." "Nothing but respect and what a ride it was our 3 years together," James wrote. "Asked about trading a fan favorite who rose from the depths of the draft for a player who asked out of a team with the NBA's best player, one year removed from a championship, Ainge said he has done his homework."

"We feel comfortable with who Kyrie is and who he can be," he said. Minnesota showed some interest in Irving after his trade request became public, but were unwilling to part with young star Andrew Wiggins as the centerpiece of a deal. Wiggins is expected to sign a max contract extension in the coming weeks to stay with the Timberwolves.

The Phoenix Suns reportedly were not interested in parting with rookie Josh Jackson in a deal that also would have required Eric Bledsoe and the New York Knicks gave no indication that Kristaps Porzingis was ever on the table in a potential Irving trade.

Then the Celtics swooped in, landing the kind of star Ainge has long coveted. With the possibility of having to break the bank to retain Thomas next summer, Boston finally tapped into the treasure trove of assets that Ainge has assembled to get Irving, who is under contract for two more years. Irving got his wish to get away from James, but he's not free of him yet. — AP



SAN FRANCISCO: Milwaukee Brewers catcher Manny Pina, right, holds the ball for the home plate umpire to see after tagging out San Francisco Giants' Nick Hundley, left, during the eighth inning of a baseball game Tuesday, in San Francisco. — AP

BASEBALL

FISTER FIRES ONE-HITTER AS BOSOX ROMP INDIANS

CLEVELAND: Doug Fister gave up a leadoff homer in the first inning to Francisco Lindor and then nothing else, finishing with a career-best one-hitter, and Eduardo Nunez had five RBIs as the Boston Red Sox rolled to a 9-1 victory over the Cleveland Indians on Tuesday night. Fister (3-6) was facing AL Central-leading Cleveland for the third time in four starts, and the right-hander took advantage of his familiarity with the Indians' lineup. He allowed two walks and hit a batter, but was otherwise in control. Backed by two double plays, he pitched his first complete game since 2014 with Washington. Jackie Bradley Jr. homered in the fifth off Carlos Carrasco (12-6) and Nunez connected for two-run double in the seventh and three-run homer in the eighth. The AL East-leading Red Sox improved to 15-4 since July 31.

CUBS 13, REDS 9

Cubs star Kris Bryant exited after being

hit in the left hand by a pitch, and lefty Anthony Rizzo wound up playing third base as Chicago beat Cincinnati for its seventh win in nine games. The defending World Series champions moved a season-high 10 games over .500. Bryant was taken out as a precaution after being plunked in the ninth. Minus the NL MVP and ahead 13-6, manager Joe Maddon shifted Rizzo across the diamond from first base - the only other lefty third basemen in Cubs history played there in the 1800s. Rizzo didn't get any plays at the new position. Hector Rondon (4-1) won in relief. Wandy Peralta (3-4) took the loss.

BRAVES 4, MARINERS 0

Rookie Lucas Sims pitched three-hit ball over six innings and Atlanta scored on a crazy play that took three rundowns. Sims (2-3) won his second straight start. The 23-year-old righty from suburban Atlanta won for the first time in front of the home folks. Nick Markakis homered off Marco Gonzalez

(0-1). After committing four errors in the series opener, the Mariners botched two more plays defensively. Third baseman Kyle Seager dropped a throw during a rundown in the sixth, allowing Ozzie Albies to race home. Seattle made five throws on the slapstick play, ending when first baseman Yonder Alonso cut across the diamond with the ball chasing one runner, then tossing to catcher Mike Zunino for a tag between second and third.

ASTROS 4, NATIONALS 3

Matt Wieters hit a two-run homer, Howie Kendrick had a two-run triple and Washington beat Houston for the ninth straight time. Washington's winning streak over the Astros dates to 2012. The NL East-leading Nationals have won 13 of 14 against Houston since 2011. Tanner Roark (10-8) got the win and Sean Doolittle pitched a perfect ninth for his 15th save. Charlie Morton (10-6) gave up four runs in six innings for the AL West-leading Astros.

DODGERS 8, PIRATES 5

Chris Taylor had three hits and drove in three runs as Los Angeles beat Pittsburgh. Adrian Gonzalez doubled for his 2,000th career hit to help the NL West leaders. Former Pirates reliever Tony Watson (7-4) picked up the win with a perfect fifth. Kenley Jansen struck out the side in the ninth for his 34th save. Johnny Barbato (0-1) lost in relief.

YANKEES 13, TIGERS 4

Gary Sanchez hit two home runs - including a first-inning drive estimated at nearly 500 feet - and Masahiro Tanaka pitched seven tidy innings in his return from the disabled list to lead New York over Detroit. Sanchez's two-run shot in the first was estimated at 493 feet by Statcast. The Yankees led 2-0 after that and never looked back. Tanaka (9-10) allowed three runs and six hits in his first appearance since Aug. 9. He'd been out with right shoulder inflammation.

Matthew Boyd (5-7) allowed seven runs and seven hits in 2 1/3 innings. Aaron Judge singled and walked three times, ending his record-setting streak of 37 games with at least one strikeout.

ROYALS 3, ROCKIES 2

Danny Duffy and four relievers combined on a two-hitter, helping Kansas City hold off Colorado. Duffy (8-8) took a no-hitter into the sixth inning and retired the first two batters before walking DJ LeMahieu and allowing a homer to Nolan Arenado. The Rockies star hit his 28th home run. Jon Gray (5-3) dropped to 4-12 in 27 career road starts.

**MARLINS 12, PHILLIES 8, 1ST GAME
MARLINS 7, PHILLIES 4, 2ND GAME**

Marcell Ozuna hit a two-run homer, Christian Yelich had a three-run shot and robbed Nick Williams of a two-run drive as Miami completed a doubleheader sweep. Ichiro Suzuki's pinch-hit three-run homer broke a tie in the seventh inning of the opener and Giancarlo Stanton added his major league-leading 46th home run. The Marlins and Philadelphia combined for 14 homers in the two games.

TWINS 4, WHITE SOX 1

Jorge Polanco homered for the third time in two days as Minnesota beat Chicago. Polanco led off the fourth inning with his sixth homer of the season after going deep in both ends of a doubleheader Monday. Kennys Vargas and Eddie Rosario added home runs against rookie Lucas Giloito (0-1) in his White Sox debut. The Twins remained in playoff position with their fifth win in six games. Kyle Gibson (7-10) struck out a season-high eight over seven innings.

DIAMONDBACKS 7, METS 4

J.D. Martinez hit an early three-run homer, Patrick Corbin pitched eight smooth innings to win his third straight stingy start and Arizona coasted past sinking New York.

Adam Rosales also homered and Paul Goldschmidt doubled twice. Corbin (11-11) extended his shutout streak to 20 2/3 innings before rookie Amed Rosario homered in the fifth. Fernando Rodney earned his 29th save in 34 attempts. Pitching in place of injured Steven Matz, lefty Tommy Milone (1-3) gave up a three-run shot to Martinez in the first.

PADRES 12, CARDINALS 4

Yangervis Solarte homered and drove in a career-high six runs, Austin Hedges also went deep and San Diego beat St. Louis. Solarte capitalized on starter Lance Lynn's lack of control with a three-run double in the second. Hedges' three-run homer off Zach Duke capped a six-run seventh inning that also included three runs off Matt Bowman (3-5). Craig Stammen (1-2) got one out in the sixth for the victory.

ATHLETICS 6, ORIOLES 4

Ryon Healy homered twice, Jed Lowrie hit a two-run drive and Oakland beat struggling Baltimore. Manny Machado hit a two-run homer in the sixth for Baltimore and Jonathan Schoop singled in two runs in the eighth to make it 5-4, but Khris Davis blunted the comeback with his 34th home run in the ninth. Baltimore hasn't won consecutive games since Aug. 5-7. Ubaldo Jimenez (5-9) gave up three homers and has won only one of his last eight starts. Simon Castro (1-1) pitched two innings to earn his first win since Aug. 31, 2015 and Blake Treinen got four outs for his fifth save.

RAYS 6, BLUE JAYS 5

Lucas Duda and Corey Dickerson homered in the first two innings and Chris Archer struck out 10 for Tampa Bay. Alex Colome got his major league-leading 37th save. Toronto has lost four straight. Duda's 23rd home run (sixth with Tampa Bay) came off rookie Chris Rowley (1-1) in the first inning. Norichika Aoki had led off the game with a homer off Archer (9-7). — AP

MLB Results/Standings

Milwaukee 4, San Francisco 3; LA Angels 10, Texas 1; Kansas City 3, Colorado 2; San Diego 12, St. Louis 4; Minnesota 4, Chicago White Sox 1; Washington 4, Houston 3; Atlanta 4, Seattle 0; Miami 7, Philadelphia 4; Arizona 7, NY Mets 4; Boston 9, Cleveland 1; Chicago Cubs 13, Cincinnati 9; NY Yankees 13, Detroit 4; Tampa Bay 6, Toronto 5; Oakland 6, Baltimore 4; LA Dodgers 8, Pittsburgh 5; Miami 12, Philadelphia 8.

American League Eastern Division				National League Eastern Division					
W	L	PCT	GB	W	L	PCT	GB		
Boston	72	53	.576	-	Washington	75	48	.610	-
NY Yankees	67	57	.540	4.5	Miami	62	62	.500	13.5
Tampa Bay	62	65	.488	11	Atlanta	56	68	.452	19.5
Baltimore	61	65	.484	11.5	NY Mets	54	70	.435	21.5
Toronto	59	66	.472	13	Philadelphia	45	79	.363	30.5
Central Division				Central Division					
Cleveland	69	55	.556	-	Chicago Cubs	67	57	.540	-
Minnesota	65	60	.520	4.5	Milwaukee	66	61	.520	2.5
Kansas City	63	61	.508	6	St. Louis	63	62	.504	4.5
Detroit	54	70	.435	15	Pittsburgh	60	66	.476	8
Chicago White Sox	48	76	.387	21	Cincinnati	53	73	.421	15
Western Division				Western Division					
Houston	76	49	.608	-	LA Dodgers	89	35	.718	-
LA Angels	65	61	.516	11.5	Arizona	69	57	.548	21
Seattle	64	63	.504	13	Colorado	68	57	.544	21.5
Texas	62	63	.496	14	San Diego	56	69	.448	33.5
Oakland	55	71	.437	21.5	San Francisco	51	77	.398	40

WESTERN FORCE WIN RIGHT TO APPEAL SUPER AXING

SYDNEY: Western Force yesterday won the right to appeal their axing from Super Rugby, as the Australian Rugby Union rejected a major cash injection from a mining magnate to keep the club in the competition.

The Perth club's parent body, Rugby WA, lodged the appeal request with the New South Wales Supreme Court in last week after the ARU announced Force's removal from the southern hemisphere competition in early August.

Australia had to cut one of its five Super Rugby teams as the sprawling

trans-continental competition slims down from 18 sides to 15 next year. The Sydney court was set to hear the appeal on Wednesday after the hearing request was granted, although it was not clear if a ruling would be made this week.

The decision came after board representatives from the ARU met with billionaire miner Andrew Forrest, a heavy-weight backer of Rugby WA, on Tuesday.

It is understood Forrest offered up to Aus\$50 million (US\$39 million) to support Australian rugby if Western Force was retained in the Super Rugby compe-

tion. The ARU did not give details about the offer, but did not accept it.

"We were genuinely appreciative of Andrew's generous offer to back the Western Force and Australian Rugby, however, given the position we are in we are unable to work towards retaining five teams in Super Rugby," ARU chairman Cameron Clyne said in a statement late Tuesday. "We are at the final stages of this process and Australian Rugby's constituents have voted to reduce Australia's Super Rugby representation to four teams and we have made com-

mitments to SANZAAR," Forrest said in a statement via his Minderoo Foundation that he was "very surprised that there appeared to be no flexibility whatsoever to find a solution for the future of the sport". But he added that the ARU had committed to working with the Western Force and the foundation to "develop a new international competition" that was based in Western Australia state and focused on the Indo-Pacific region.

"This commitment was made regardless of the outcome of the appeal hearings in the Supreme Court," the state-

ment added. ARU chief executive Bill Pulver announced his resignation in the immediate fall-out from the contentious decision to cull the Force, while the body's director Geoff Stooke, from Western Australia, stepped down in protest. Western Force joined Super Rugby in 2006, but have never made the competition's finals series.

Their best finish was in 2014, when they only narrowly missed the finals. This season, the Force finished second in the Australian conference behind the ACT Brumbies. —AFP

NIGERIA RECALL FOR CHELSEA ACE MOSES

ABUJA: Nigeria have recalled Chelsea ace Victor Moses as well as China-based striker Odion Ighalo for next month's 2018 World Cup qualifiers against Cameroon. Skipper Mikel John Obi is also back in the squad after being sidelined by an abdominal injury for four months.

Meanwhile, there is an appearance for uncapped Israeli-based striker Anthony Nwakaeme and Ola Aina, who is on loan at Hull City from Premier League champions Chelsea. Mikel and Moses have missed the Super Eagles' recent games due to injury, while Ighalo was overlooked for several matches after he quit Premier League club Watford to move to China.

Nwakaeme, 28, has been prolific for Israeli champions Hapoel Beer-Sheva. Aina's inclusion would mean he has completed his change of international allegiance to play for Nigeria at full international level after he featured for several England age-group teams.

While 23 players will attend the training camp, six players have been placed on standby-Kenneth Omeruo (Chelsea), Uche Agbo (Standard Liege), Henry Onyekuru (Anderlecht), Alhassan Ibrahim, Ifeanyi Ifeanyi (Akwa United) and Aaron Samuel (CSKA Moscow).

Nigeria face Cameroon on September 1 in Uyo and three days later they clash again in Yaounde in a World Cup qualifying double-header. The Super Eagles are top of African qualifying Group B for next year's

World Cup in Russia with six points from two matches, while Cameroon are second on two points. Zambia and Algeria are on a point each.

The full squad

Goalkeepers: Daniel Akpeyi (Chippa United/RSA), Ikechukwu Ezenwa (FC Ifeanyiubah), Dele Alampasu (Cesarese/POR)
Defenders: William Ekong (Bursaspor/TUR), Abdullahi Shehu (Anorthosis Famagusta/CYP), Leon Balogun (Mainz/GER), Tyrone Ebuehi (Den Haag/NED), Elderson Echiejile (Sivasspor/TUR), Chidozie Awaziem (Nantes/FRA), Ola Aina (Hull City/ENG)

Midfielders: Mikel John Obi (Tianjin Teda/CHN), Ogenyi Onazi (Trabzonspor/TUR), Wilfred Ndidi (Leicester City/ENG), Oghenekaro Etebo (Feirense/POR), John Ogu (Hapoel Beer-Sheva/ISR), Mikel Agu (Bursaspor/TUR)
Forwards: Ahmed Musa, Kelechi Iheanacho (both Leicester City/ENG), Moses Simon (Gent/BEL), Alex Iwobi (Arsenal/ENG), Odion Ighalo (Changchun Yatai/CHN), Victor Moses (Chelsea/ENG), Anthony Nwakaeme (Hapoel Beer-Sheva/ISR)

Standby list: Uche Agbo (Standard Liege/BEL), Henry Onyekuru (Anderlecht/BEL), Kenneth Omeruo (Chelsea/ENG), Aaron Samuel (CSKA Moscow/RUS), Alhassan Ibrahim, Ifeanyi Ifeanyi (Akwa United), Stephen Eze (FC IfeanyiUbah). —AFP



DHAKA: This file photo taken on August 21, 2017 shows Australian cricketer Glenn Maxwell (L) sharing a light moment with teammates during a training session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka. Bangladesh's muggy conditions have taken a toll on Australia with batsman Maxwell revealing yesterday fell sick just days ahead of the two-Test series, the first between the sides in more than a decade. — AFP

CRICKET

PADS OFF FOR AUSSIES AS THEY PREPARE FOR BANGLADESH SPIN

DHAKA: Australian batsmen have been batting in the nets without their front pad on to combat a Dhaka pitch that will offer assistance to Bangladesh's spin attack. "I think the main thing is to basically use your bat," all-rounder Glenn Maxwell said. "If you don't have the safety of your front pad, it makes you get your leg out of the way and actually use your bat." "I think it is more about refining your defense and making sure you trust the fact that you can hit the ball and not hoping that your pads are there just to save you," he said. It's a tactic the Australians experimented with during Justin Langer's tenure as batting coach in 2012.

The first of two Tests in the series begins on Sunday in Dhaka. Maxwell said his team will be wary of the threat of Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman and left-arm spinner Shakib Al Hasan.

While he touted Shakib as the most influential player of Bangladesh, he said Mustafizur remains at his menacing best despite a drop in pace. Maxwell had the chance to watch the action of Mustafizur at the Indian Premier League in 2016.

"Mustafizur is obviously the exceptional bowler we faced during the IPL during his breakthrough season," Maxwell said. "I suppose his pace dropped off as he played a bit more Test cricket. He is still an outstanding bowler who has the ability to swing it and has an unbelievable change-up slower ball."

"He is not your conventional left-arm seamer. He is obviously got a very flexible wrist with which he can flick it in the last moment. It looks exactly the same either it is his bumper or his slower ball. It is a hard thing to pick up."

Meanwhile, Maxwell revealing yesterday he suffered heatstroke during training. "I caught a bit of heatstroke on the first day, which wasn't a good start," Maxwell told reporters in Dhaka.

"I think just doing some running outside, then going inside to do some fitness tests, and then going back outside didn't help too much. The body shut down a little bit but I was fine after the ice bath and plenty of fluids."

Australia, who arrived last Friday, limited themselves to light training yesterday after their two-day warm-up match on the outskirts of Dhaka was cancelled due to flooding. But 28-year-old Maxwell said conditions were still a little difficult for the newly-arrived squad. "Yesterday was obviously pretty tough with the overnight and morning rain, all the moisture coming out of the ground and making sweaty work for us," he said.

The tourists trained in Darwin, in Australia's tropical north, before their Bangladesh tour to prepare for the hot and humid monsoon weather.

"The wickets here are similar to what we faced in Darwin, where it was perfect," Maxwell said. "I think the guys are more than well equipped to handle whatever comes their way in the first Test." — Agencies

SEA GAMES

BRUNEI'S 'HOT ROYAL' SPARKS SELFIE STAMPEDE

KUALA LUMPUR: A polo-playing prince from Brunei set off frenzied scenes when he was mobbed by fans at the Southeast Asian Games in Malaysia, where a group of athletic royals has been in the limelight.

Dozens of spectators, mainly female, screamed and clamoured for selfies when Prince Abdul Mateen, sixth in line to the oil-rich sultanate's throne, strode out to meet them in his jodphurs.

The 26-year-old, who has more than half-a-million followers on Instagram, looked slightly bemused as he met his excited fans, separated from them by a barrier and closely guarded by minders.

It was an unexpected development at the 11-nation, biennial Games in Malaysia, where the region's pride compete in a diverse array of sports from swimming to petanque and wushu.

Prince Mateen, a favourite of gossip websites and dubbed "hot royal" by media, played alongside his 33-year-old sister, Princess Azemah, as they went down 12-4 to Malaysia.

Despite the defeat, one of the most memorable moments came when Prince Mateen unseated one of Malaysia's players-the home country's sports minister, Khairy Jamaluddin.

"We had a good battle on the field. He knocked me off my horse... but this is part of polo," Khairy said, noting the large num-

ber of spectators at the "celebrity match".

"It adds a bit of shine to the Games. We have never played in front of such a big crowd for polo," he said. Prince Mateen and Princess Azemah aren't the only Brunei royals at the SEA Games-Faiq Bolkliah, a nephew of the sultan, is representing his country in football.

Malaysia's Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin was crowned equestrian endurance champion after winning the 80km (50 miles) event in Terengganu, where he happens to be the state ruler.

"A very proud moment for all Malaysians!" tweeted Prime Minister Najib Razak. And in dressage, Thailand's Princess Sirivannavari Nariratana placed her team silver medal on a portrait of her late grandfather, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who died last year.

"I am close to tears," she said, according to the Bangkok Post. "I was so happy when I hugged the portrait of my grandfather and put the silver medal on it. It was like I gave the medal to him."

The 30-year-old is an accomplished athlete, winning badminton gold in the women's team event in 2005 before switching to equestrian competition. She has taken part in international events including the 2014 Asian Games, together with her trusty mount-who is fittingly named Prince Charming. —AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: Vietnam's Le Tu Chinh (left) crosses the finish line first to win the women's 200m athletics final of the 29th Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) at the Bukit Jalil national stadium in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP

ENGLAND TO FACE KIWIS IN WOMEN'S WORLD CUP FINAL

BELFAST: England will defend the Women's Rugby World Cup in the final against four-time winner New Zealand after beating France 20-3 on Tuesday. New Zealand's Black Ferns crushed the United States 45-12 in the other semifinal. The final is on Saturday in Belfast. The Black Ferns, who have never lost a final, beat England in three of them.

England won a match of attrition in the rain. The English made nearly 50 tackles in the first quarter alone to withstand a French siege. The first half finished 3-3, and England went through 20 phases to earn a second successful penalty kick. The English took another 14 phases before Sarah Bern scored the first try in the 61st minute, with a push from fellow prop Vicki Cornborough.

France inevitably rallied, and flanker Julie Anney appeared to score in the right corner, until video replay showed England replacement Megan Jones tackled her legs into touch. In injury time, Jones pounced on a dropped pass in the French in-goal.

In the end, France made 149 tackles, and England 119. "Our defense won that game," England captain Sarah Hunter said. "We had a white wall in. There was no way France was getting across our tryline tonight."

Winger Portia Woodman scored four of the Black Ferns' seven tries, improving her tournament-leading tally to 13. Her first try was the

best, a sensational solo effort from scrum ball 40 meters out. She broke four tackles in a weaving run to the posts.

After a competitive first half, in which the Eagles forced turnovers at the breakdowns, New Zealand applied all of the pressure in the second half. The Eagles, their lineup in disarray, finally succumbed in the last quarter, conceding four tries, two while they had an extra player when New Zealand replacement Linda Itunu was yellow-carded for a head-high tackle. While a player down, the Black Ferns increased the score from 28-12 to 38-12. Woodman bagged her fourth try, stepping US fullback Cheta Emba, and replacement hooker Te Kura Ngata-Aerengamate scored from a cross-kick.

Midfielder Kelly Brazier, who had helped to set up several tries, scored the last as the player of the match. "When we were down to 14, we knew we had to step it up another notch," Black Ferns captain Fiao'o Faamausili said.

New Zealand 45 (Portia Woodman 4, Victoria Subritzky-Nafatali, Te Kura Ngata-Aerengamate, Kelly Brazier tries; Kendra Cockedge 2 conversions, 2 penalties), United States 12 (Kris Thomas, Alev Kelter tries; Kelter conversion). HT: 15-7.

England 20 (Sarah Bern, Megan Jones try; Emily Scarratt 2 conversions, 2 penalties), France 3 (Shannon Izar penalty). HT: 3-3. —AP



BELFAST: England's Sarah Bern (L) is tackled by France's Safi N'Diaye during the Women's Rugby World Cup 2017 semi-final match between England and France at The Kingspan Stadium in Belfast on Tuesday. —AFP

ENGLISH SOCCER EMBRACES PAYBACK FOR ASIAN MONEY

LONDON: Perhaps it's just a clever ploy to sell the caffeine-packed drinks produced by the competition's title sponsor. Domestic supporters of English clubs wanting to instantly discover their next opponent in the League Cup will have to be awake at 4:15 am today.

The second-ranked cup competition's draw masters aren't pulling an all-nighter. Dancing to the tune of their Asian title sponsor, Football League officials are uprooting to Beijing to pick out the balls containing holder Manchester United's name and other Premier League powers. Fans can't even watch the draw on television because British broadcasters aren't committing

resources to a pre-dawn show.

There was inevitable wailing on social media from fans feeling disrespected and the growing influence of commercial interests on soccer. Followed, within hours of the original announcement, by a lengthy justification of the decision to take the draw to China.

"We understand that not everyone will agree on the timing," the Football League said, "...but in staging in this way it will give the competition both the maximum exposure in the UK, Chinese and South East Asian markets."

The Football League has cause to be grateful for those Asian markets. After

losing American financing firm Capital One as the title sponsor, Thai energy drinks firm Carabao was persuaded to fill the sponsorship vacancy.

That's why the draw has already been taken on the road this season to Bangkok, in June, albeit in daytime hours back in Britain. But it was a botched affair that saw Charlton drawn out twice and its manager ridiculing organizers. No wonder the Beijing event isn't being shown on television.

Yet, is British soccer really so wrong to sell out to the moneymen? The League Cup already faces a constant fight for relevancy as leading teams focused on European and Premier

League titles deploy weakened teams, and stadiums can feature thousands of empty seats.

Taking the draw abroad even isn't unique to this season, or the Premier League era. Go back 26 years and the draw balls were also flown abroad - to Trump Tower in Manhattan. Donald Trump picked out the teams in 1991 when the competition was known as the Rumbelows Cup after a now-defunct electronics retailer.

BENEFITED

While the Football League felt compelled to defend transporting the draw east, the English game happily accepts

investment from China and the wider region. Seven clubs in the top two divisions have benefited from an injection of Chinese capital - mostly recently last season's beaten League Cup finalist Southampton as well as 2016 winner Manchester City.

But double standards surrounding foreign intrusions into English football are nothing new. Once, the mission was to attract foreign stars to elevate the status of the Premier League. Once international supremacy appeared to be validated, by television revenue at least, it wasn't long before a backlash grew about hometown players being squeezed out of teams.—AP

AUSTRALIA CAPTAIN JEDINAK OUT OF WCUP SHOWDOWNS

SYDNEY: Australia's hopes of qualifying for next year's World Cup have been dealt a blow after injury concerns forced skipper Mile Jedinak out of a 23-man squad to face Japan and Thailand in crunch qualifiers.

Jedinak missed the Confederations Cup in June with a groin injury, and has yet to play for his English Championship club Aston Villa this season. Football Federation Australia (FFA) said on its website the 33-year-old was only now being eased back into action at Villa after battling injury woes over the past few months.

The Socceroos are unbeaten but lie third on their Group B table with 16 points,



ADELAIDE: This file photo taken on June 8, 2016 shows Australian captain Mile Jedinak leaving the field after their World Cup football Asian qualifying match against Saudi Arabia at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide. — AFP

behind Saudi Arabia on goal difference, with Japan top with 17 points. This means Australia are one spot outside the automatic qualifying spots for the World Cup in Russia next year, with a win over the Blue Samurai crucial.

Japan are due to face Saudi Arabia in Jeddah in their last group game. Coach Ange Postecoglou said he opted for experience for the games-against Japan in Saitama on August 31, and against Thailand in Melbourne on September 5 — with Awer Mabil and Danny Vukovic the only uncapped players.

"I believe that the players that we have named today are ready for these two very important matches," Postecoglou said. "Our focus is to get a positive result against Japan and then look to finish the group stage with a win on home soil in Melbourne against Thailand."

Australia: Mustafa Amini (Aarhus Gymnastikforening/DEN), Tim Cahill (Melbourne City/AUS), Milos Degenek (Yokohama Marinos/JPN), Alex Gersbach (Rosenborg/NOR), Jackson Irvine (Burton Albion/ENG), Tomi Juric (Luzern/SUI), Robbie Kruse (Bochum/GER), Mitchell Langerak (Stuttgart/GER), Mathew Leckie (Hertha BSC/GER), Massimo Luongo (QPR/ENG), Awer Mabil (Paços De Ferreira/POR), Jamie Maclaren (Darmstadt/GER), Ryan McGowan (Guizhou Zhicheng/CHN), Mark Milligan (Melbourne Victory/AUS), Aaron Mooy (Huddersfield Town/ENG), Tom Rogic (Celtic/SCO), Mathew Ryan (Brighton & Hove Albion/ENG), Trent Sainsbury (Jiangsu Suning/CHN), Brad Smith (Bournemouth/ENG), Matthew Spiranovic (Hangzhou Greentown/CHN), James Troisi (Melbourne Victory/AUS), Daniel Vukovic (Genk/BEL), Bailey Wright (Bristol City/ENG). —AFP



NICE: Nice's Italian forward Mario Balotelli kicks the ball during the UEFA Champions League play-off football match between Nice and Napoli at the Allianz Riviera stadium in Nice, southeastern France, on Tuesday. — AFP

SOCCER

NAPOLI, SEVILLA, CELTIC INTO CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP STAGE

PARIS: A Jose Callejon goal helped Napoli ease into the Champions League group stage on Tuesday, while Sevilla also went through and Celtic suffered a scare in Kazakhstan before winning their play-off tie. Third in Serie A last season, Napoli were too strong for Nice, winning 2-0 in France with Callejon and Lorenzo Insigne both scoring as they progressed 4-0 on aggregate.

Beaten by eventual winners Real Madrid in the last 16 last season, Maurizio Sarri's side took the lead when Marek Hamsik deposited a low cross from the left for Callejon to convert at the back post in the 48th minute.

The dangerous Dries Mertens then hit the post before Insigne sealed the Italians' win a minute from time. "Napoli must keep on playing in the Champions League every season, because this is where we belong. We are happy with the qualification," said Insigne.

Nice, for whom recent signing Wesley Sneijder started, were thoroughly outplayed over the two legs and will have to settle for a place in the group stage of the Europa League instead. Sevilla, who won the Europa League three years in a row before losing to Leicester City in the last 16 of the Champions League last season, survived an almighty scare against Istanbul Basaksehir to go through.

The Spanish side, 2-1 winners in the first leg in Turkey, drew 2-2 at the Sanchez Pizjuan to advance 4-3 on aggregate. They went behind on the night to an Eljero Elia goal but Sergio Escudero headed in a Jesus Navas cross early in the second half for the home side.

Great play from Nolito then set up Wissam Ben Yedder to seemingly end any doubt, but Edin Visca levelled the scores again on the night and an Emre Belozoglu free-kick struck the woodwork in the last minute as Sevilla came within a whisker of going out on away goals.

'MIXED EMOTIONS'

Celtic went through 8-4 on aggregate despite losing 4-3 to Astana in the second leg of their play-off in Kazakhstan as a second-half wobble gave their hosts hope of pulling off a miraculous recovery. Brendan Rodgers' side had won 5-0 in the first leg in Glasgow and a super Scott Sinclair strike in the 34th minute should have killed the tie. Astana, who had gone ahead on the night through a Kristoffer Ajer own goal, were given something to cling onto as a goal by Serikzhan Muzhikov and a Patrick Twumasi brace made it 4-1 on the night. But Olivier Ntcham ended Astana's hopes when his deflected strike made it 4-2 on the night before Leigh Griffiths reduced the deficit further in the final minute.

"I have mixed emotions because we didn't defend well enough," Rodgers told BT Sport after a scare that brought back memories of the same stage 12 months ago. Celtic beat Hapoel Beer-Sheva of Israel 5-2 at home in the first leg of the play-offs last year and then wobbled in the return, losing 2-0 to scrape through.

"We had our Beer-Sheva moment. I thought we were going to get through this campaign without the anxiety. The players were on the ropes for 15 or 20 minutes but then they regained composure."

Greek champions Olympiakos are also back in the group stage following a 1-0 victory away to Croatian champions Rijeka that took them

through 3-1 on aggregate. German international Marko Marin scored the only goal on the night.

Maribor of Slovenia also progressed, beating Hapoel Beer-Sheva 1-0 with a Mitja Viler strike as they won the tie on away goals. The remaining

five ties will conclude on Wednesday, with the highlight seeing Liverpool take a 2-1 lead into their play-off second leg against Hoffenheim at Anfield. The draw for the lucrative group stage will be held in Monaco today. —AFP

WATFORD SUFFERS EXIT IN LEAGUE CUP SECOND ROUND

LONDON: Watford suffered an embarrassing League Cup exit as Championship side Bristol City beat the Premier League club 3-2 in the second round on Tuesday. Marco Silva's side were the only top-flight outfit to perish on a night when clubs showed their disdain for the competition by making 274 team changes across the 19 ties.

Etienne Capoue put Watford ahead from Will Hughes' 47th-minute cross, only for Freddy Hinds to equalise from 30 yards 12 minutes later. Bobby Reid handed City a shock lead in the 67th minute and Watford were in deeper trouble when Jose Holebas was sent off in the 88th minute for a second bookable offence.

Niclas Eliasson made City's advantage pay with the killer third in stoppage-time before Adrian Mariappa hit an irrelevant reply for Watford. Frank De Boer got his first win as Crystal Palace manager as James McArthur's double sealed a 2-1 win over second-tier Ipswich at Selhurst Park.

After scoreless Premier League defeats against Huddersfield and Liverpool, Palace's first goal under De Boer finally arrived when McArthur slotted home in the 76th minute. Scottish midfielder McArthur scored again eight minutes later and Bersant Celina's 90th-minute reply for Ipswich couldn't stop De Boer going home happy at last.

West Bromwich Albion eased to a 3-1 win at fourth-tier Accrington as Salomon Rondon, Matt Phillips and Jay Rodriguez netted for the Premier League side.

Bournemouth came from behind to win 2-1 at second-tier Birmingham, ruining Blues boss Harry Redknapp's hopes of upsetting the club where he spent nine years at the start of his coaching career.

Maikel Kieftenbeld gave Birmingham an 11th-minute lead, but Ryan Fraser levelled in the 46th minute and Marc Pugh fired in off the crossbar in the 68th minute. On-loan Chelsea striker Tammy Abraham hit his first goal for Swansea in a 4-1 win over third-tier Milton Keynes Dons.

Ryan Seager put Dons ahead in the 17th minute, but Leroy Fer's double was followed by Abraham's 71st-minute tap-in and Jordan Ayew's 86th-minute strike. Islam Slimani bagged a brace as Leicester cruised to a 4-1 win at second-tier Sheffield Utd. Demarai Gray's fine solo goal opened the scoring in the 52nd minute, then, after members of the West Indies cricket team were introduced to the crowd at the interval, United were bowled over as Slimani netted in the 63rd and 67th minutes.

Caolan Lavery's 83rd-minute reply for United was followed by Ahmed Musa's stoppage-time fourth for Leicester. James Tilley, 19, came off the bench to give Brighton a 1-0 win against fourth-tier Barnet with his first senior goal in the 54th minute at the Amex Stadium.

Holders Manchester United, along with Chelsea, Arsenal, Liverpool, Tottenham and Manchester City, will enter the competition in the third round, with the draw to be held in Beijing today. —AFP



WATFORD: Watford's Richarlison, left, and Bristol City's Zak Vyner battle for the ball during the League Cup second round soccer match at Vicarage Road, Watford, England, Tuesday. — AP

SHANGHAI BEAT GUANGZHOU IN ASIAN CL Q-FINAL FIRST LEG

SHANGHAI: Two-time champion Guangzhou Evergrande faces exiting the Asian Champions League in the quarterfinals after losing the first leg to Shanghai SIPG 4-0 on Tuesday. Two goals from Wu Lei and one from Hulk put Shanghai on the brink of a first semifinal in the league at the expense of its fellow Chinese Super League side, the 2013 and 2015 Asian champion.

Hulk was influential throughout, and scored the opener close to halftime from the penalty spot, after Wu was fouled in the area by fellow China international Zhang Linpeng. On the stroke of halftime, Hulk crossed for Wang Shenchao to take advantage of poor marking to head Shanghai into a two-goal lead. Guangzhou, which moved eight points clear of Shanghai at the top of the Chinese Super League on Saturday to stay on course for a seventh successive domestic title, played better after the break in search of a vital away goal. But without midfielder Paulinho, who scored five goals in the run to the quarterfinals and transferred to Barcelona last week, the visitors couldn't sustain the effort or make a breakthrough.

Shanghai extended its lead with two counterattack goals in two minutes, both finished by Wu. The second leg is in September.

The winner of the quarterfinal will face Japanese opposition. Urawa Reds and Kawasaki Frontale play their first leg later.

In the West Asian half of the draw, Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates drew with Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia 0-0. A late equalizer by substitute Godwin Mensha gave Iran's Persepolis a 2-2 draw with Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli in the first leg of their quarterfinal, ahead of the return match in Abu Dhabi in three weeks' time.

Earlier, twinkle-toed Japan striker Yu Kobayashi scored twice yesterday as Kawasaki Frontale beat J-League rivals Urawa Reds 3-1 in their Asian Champions League quarter-final first leg. Kawasaki's captain proved a handful throughout for the overrun Reds, driving in a low left-foot shot after 33 minutes to cap a period of sustained pressure from Frontale. Kobayashi's pace led to a second goal for the home side six minutes into the second half when his stinging shot was blocked by goalkeeper Shusaku Nishikawa, allowing Brazilian Elsinho to volley home the rebound.

Urawa substitute Yuki Muto snatched an away goal against the run of play in the 76th minute that looked to have given the Reds a lifeline before the second leg in Saitama on September 13.—Agencies



KAWASAKI: Japan's Kawasaki Frontale defender Shintaro Kurumaya (R) fights for the ball with Japan's Urawa Reds midfielder Takuya Aoki during the AFC Champions League quarter-final football match between Kawasaki Frontale and Urawa Reds at Todoroki stadium in Kawasaki yesterday. — AFP

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2017

NAPOLI, SEVILLA, CELTIC INTO CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP STAGE

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LONDON: This is a Saturday, Nov. 15, 2014 file photo of England's Wayne Rooney, right, as he controls the ball in front of Slovenia's Branko Ilic, during their Euro 2016 Group E qualifying soccer match at Wembley Stadium, London. England striker Wayne Rooney announced his immediate retirement from international football yesterday. — AP

ROONEY CALLS TIME ON ENGLAND DESPITE RECALL

LONDON: England's record goalscorer Wayne Rooney announced yesterday he is retiring from international football with immediate effect after manager Gareth Southgate tried to recall him to the squad.

The 31-year-old-scorer of 53 goals in 119 appearances for his country-told Southgate of his decision during a phone conversation on Tuesday. Southgate had phoned Rooney—who had lost both the captaincy and eventually his place in the squad under Jose Mourinho at Manchester United last season—to congratulate him on his early season performances for new club Everton.

Rooney has looked rejuvenated and happy-scoring in both their Premier League matches so far—since he re-signed for the club that nurtured his talent as a teenager before he left for United.

"It was great that Gareth Southgate called me this week to tell me he wanted me back in the England squad for the upcoming matches. I really appreciated that," said Rooney in a statement sent to Press Association Sport. "Having already thought long and hard, I told Gareth that I had now decided to retire for good from international football.

"It is a really tough decision and one I have discussed with my family, my manager at Everton (Ronald Koeman) and those closest to me. "Playing for England has always been special to me. Every time I was selected as a player or captain was a real privilege and I thank everyone who helped me.

"But I believe now is the time to bow out," Rooney, England's most capped outfield player, said his sole purpose now in football is to ensure

Everton win trophies. He had alluded to his priorities in a post-match interview on Sky Sports on Monday after he matched Alan Shearer in scoring 200 Premier League goals—made sweeter as it came against Manchester United's local rivals Manchester City. "Leaving Manchester United was a tough call but I know I made the right decision in coming home to Everton," said Rooney. "Now I want to focus all my energies on helping them be successful."

'ICON OF HIS GENERATION'

Another former England great, Gary Lineker said earlier on Wednesday that Rooney had been unlucky to be the only world-class player in many England sides that struggled to make an impression on either the world or European stage. "One of my very few regrets is not to have

been part of a successful England tournament side," said Rooney, whose four goals in Euro 2004 propelled England to the quarter-finals before their hopes were extinguished when he broke a bone against Portugal.

"Hopefully the exciting players Gareth is bringing through can take that ambition further and I hope everyone will get behind the team. "One day the dream will come true and I look forward to being there as a fan—or in any capacity."

Rooney passed Bobby Charlton as England's all-time top scorer against Switzerland in September 2015. But despite being within touching distance of Peter Shilton's record of 125 caps for England, he opted against chasing yet another international milestone.

Captaining England to a 3-0 World Cup qualifying win over rivals Scotland last November

proved to be Rooney's final appearance for his country. Figures from English football were quick to pay tribute to the star.

"Congratulations to @WayneRooney on a magnificent international career. A player's player," said Lineker on Twitter. Greg Clarke, chairman of English football's governing body the Football Association (FA), said Rooney had earned the right to be termed a "legend".

"Today marks the end of an era in international football," said Clarke. "Wayne Rooney is an icon of his generation and an undoubted legend of the game." Former England captain Terry Butcher said Rooney had taken the right decision. "You do know as an international player when you have reached the point of no return," Butcher told the BBC. "Sometimes you want to jump before you are pushed." — AFP

SOUL-SEARCHING SCHOOLING SNAPS UP BUTTERFLY GOLD

KUALA LUMPUR: Olympic champion Joseph Schooling said he was searching for inspiration to get his career back on track as he swam to Southeast Asian Games victory in the 100m butterfly yesterday. The Singaporean, who won the event at last year's Olympics but dropped down to bronze at the world championships in July, said he needed a "different mindset" to chart his path forward.

Schooling won in 51.38sec, a new Games record but well outside his Asian mark of 50.39 from the Rio Olympics, when he stunned his idol Michael Phelps. Asked whether he had shaken off the complacency that he blamed for his disappointing showing at the Budapest worlds, Schooling laughed and shook his head.

"It's something that I'm going to have to go back and reassess and head into the new year with a different mindset," the 22-year-old said. "Right now I'm here to support my country, to support my team, and I'm not really too worried about what's going to happen next year. "I feel like I can do a lot better and this is a good test of my focus and how I can step up, not only for myself but for my team." Schooling, blowing hard after his race, said he was feeling the pace halfway through the meet, with three gold medals in the bag. After winning nine titles at the 2015 SEA Games, he is targeting six in Kuala Lumpur.

'NOT THE BEST TIME'

Longer-term, Schooling is sizing up next

year's Commonwealth Games in the Gold Coast and the Asian Games in Jakarta, with the 2020 Tokyo Olympics approaching the horizon. "Coming in to this meet it wasn't really all about times, it was about the effort that I can give and mentoring the young kids and just being a good role model for them," he said.

"So I'm pleased with the time, it's not the best time but I'm happy with the effort that I gave." Schooling is spearheading a strong meet for Singapore, which Quah Ting Wen continued when she won the women's 100m freestyle in a tournament-record 55.74, and then added gold in the 50m butterfly.

Singapore's Quah Zheng Wen, Ting Wen's brother, won the men's 200m backstroke in a new Games mark of 2:00.09, and Singapore also clinched the women's 4x200m freestyle in a tournament record of 8:10.41. Malaysia's Welson Sim won the men's 200m freestyle in 1:47.79, another new Games mark, adding to the hosts' table-topping gold-medal haul which stood at 40 after Tuesday's events.

Earlier on a busy day four, home gymnast Farah Ann Abdul Hadi-criticized by some Malaysians for wearing a "revealing" leotard when she competed in 2015 — won floor exercise gold. Malaysia's Jackie Wong hurled a Games-record 65.90m to win the men's hammer, and the hosts also picked up victory in women's trio bowling.

Vietnam's Le Tu Chinh won the 200m in 23.32 to complete the women's sprint double, while Anthony Beram secured the men's 200m title for the Philippines. — AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: Singapore's Joseph Schooling waves before the Men's 100m Butterfly Swimming final of the 29th South East Asian Games in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, yesterday. — AP

DE VILLIERS QUILTS AS S AFRICA ODI SKIPPER

JOHANNESBURG: Star batsman AB de Villiers quit as South Africa one-day international (ODI) skipper yesterday, but committed to representing his country in all three cricket formats. "Faf du Plessis has proved to be an outstanding captain of the Twenty20 and Test teams," he said in a statement.

"Bearing this in mind, I have informed Cricket South Africa that I would like to step down as ODI captain. "It has been an honour to lead the team for the past six years, but it is now time for someone else to take the ODI side forward.

"Whoever is chosen as the new ODI captain will have my complete support." De Villiers rejected media claims that he was cherry-picking when to play for South Africa and putting himself before the team.

"That is simply not true. That has never been true. Playing for South Africa is, and will always be, the greatest privilege of my life," he said. He missed the recent 3-1 Test series defeat in England. De Villiers said mental and physical tiredness and raising a young family had forced him to take a temporary international break. "I really do feel refreshed and revived," said the 33-year-old. "I want to get back on the field and today assured the national selectors that I will be available for selection in all three formats of the game during the coming season.

"There is plenty of hard work ahead in the nets and I must prepare properly, but I will be ready to play, if required, from the middle of October. "If I am lucky enough to be selected, I cannot guarantee runs and catches.

Nobody can do that. "But what I can absolutely guarantee is 100 percent commitment to the Proteas in every format of the game, as and when required. "That was my promise when I made my debut in 2004, and that is my promise today." South Africa host Bangladesh, India and Australia during the 2017-2018 season. —AFP

Bahrah scores a hat trick of awards from Hino Motors

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Mercedes-Benz 4MATIC celebrates 30 years of all-road confidence

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GCC ideal market for innovative companies, says Huawei official

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WALL STREET DROPS ON TRUMP THREATS

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PHOENIX: US President Donald Trump stands before speaking at a rally at the Phoenix Convention Center on Tuesday.—AP

TRUMP THREATENS TO TERMINATE NAFTA TREATY

MEXICO SAYS 'NEGOTIATING TACTIC'; CANADA SAYS WON'T BE DETERRED

PHOENIX: US President Donald Trump warned on Tuesday he might terminate the NAFTA trade treaty with Mexico and Canada after three-way talks failed to bridge deep differences.

The United States, Canada and Mexico wrapped up their first round of talks on Sunday to revamp the trade pact with little sign of a breakthrough coming. Trump reopened negotiations of the 1994 treaty out of concern US economic interests were suffering.

"Personally, I don't think we can make a deal. I think we'll probably end up terminating NAFTA at some point," Trump said at a political rally in Phoenix, Arizona. Suggesting a termination might help jumpstart the negotiations, Trump said: "I personally don't think you can make a deal without a termination."

Following Trump's remarks, Mexican foreign minister Luis Videgaray tweeted: "No surprises: we're already in a negotiation. Mexico will remain at the table with serenity, firmness and with the national interest ahead." In a joint statement issued at the end of five days of negotiations in Washington, the top trade officials from the three countries said Mexico would host the next round of talks from Sept. 1 to 5. The talks will move to Canada later in September, then return to the United States in October.

Trump's threat to scrap the NAFTA trade pact is little more than a negotiating tactic, aimed at his political base, that should neither scare nor surprise Mexico, the country's foreign minister said yesterday as the peso weak-

ened. In a speech in Phoenix on Tuesday night, Trump reiterated his threats to terminate the North American Free Trade Agreement, saying the pact's future looked bleak. Trump has long called the 1994 pact a bad deal that hurt American workers, saying it should be renegotiated or ended.

Following Trump's remarks on Tuesday, Mexico's peso weakened more than 1 percent in early trading yesterday before paring losses, as market jitters on the future of Mexican exports to the United States continue to plague the currency. Videgaray, speaking on local television, sought to brush off the threat, saying Trump's comments were simply a negotiating tactic and Mexico would keep negotiating as well. The comments were not a surprise,

nor would they scare Mexico, he added. "He's negotiating in his own particular style," Videgaray said.

He added that Trump's proposed wall along the southern US border with Mexico was not part of the bilateral agenda between the two countries. Mexico's currency fell to record lows in the wake of Trump's victory in the US presidential election last November, with investors scared he could hurt Mexican exports and cause a recession south of the border. However, the peso has recovered since then, as many of investors' worst fears seemed to subside.

In recent months, peso traders increasingly appeared to pay little heed to some of Trump's comments, helping a recovery in the currency.

But Trump's speech on Tuesday night showed traders remain skittish about the future of NAFTA, and highlighted the complexity of the talks to re-negotiate the treaty with Trump looming over proceedings.

Canada will not be deterred by Trump's threat to scrap NAFTA and had expected moments of drama during talks to renegotiate the treaty, a government official said yesterday. "This was always a card we knew the president would likely play ... it's not going to cause us to waver at all in our position," said the official, who declined to be identified given the sensitivity of the situation. The United States, Canada and Mexico opened negotiations on the North American Free Trade Agreement last week. — Reuters

WALMART JOINS FORCES WITH GOOGLE ON VOICE-ACTIVATED SHOPPING

NEW YORK: Walmart is diving into voice-activated shopping. But unlike online leader Amazon, it's not doing it alone. The world's largest retailer said yesterday it's working with Google to offer hundreds of thousands of items from laundry detergent to Legos for voice shopping through Google Assistant. The capability will be available in late September.

It's Google's biggest retail partnership - and the most personalized shopping experience it offers - as it tries to broaden the reach of its voice-activated assistant Home speaker. And it underscores Walmart's drive to compete in an area dominated by Amazon's Alexa-powered Echo device.

"Voice shopping is becoming a more important part of everyday shopping behavior," said Marc Lore, CEO of Walmart's US e-commerce business. The voice-activated devices are becoming more mainstream as they become more accessible. Even Apple has one coming out this year. Walmart has said Google's investment in natural language processing and artificial intelligence will help make voice-activated shopping even more popular.

And Lore said the personalization of the partnership means people can shout out generic items like milk, bread and cheese, and Google Assistant will know exactly the brands and the size that the user wants. Google introduced shopping to Home in February, letting people use voice to order essentials from more than 40 retailers like Target and Costco under its Google Express program. But that was far behind the

Echo, available since late 2014.

Walmart, which has more stores than any other retailer and the largest share of the US grocery market, is also working hard to close the gap online between itself and Amazon. It has overhauled its shipping strategy and is expanding store-curb pickup for groceries ordered online. But it's also had to look beyond itself and form partnerships. Walmart announced Monday that it's expanding its grocery delivery service with ride-hailing service Uber, and it's been testing same-day delivery service with Deliv at Sam's Club in Miami. Amazon generally has been building its network of services on its own, using its \$99-a-year Prime membership with same-day and even one-hour shipping options to develop loyalty.

It's also been drawing in customers with its Alexa devices. Amazon doesn't give sales figures for Echo, but Consumer Intelligence Research Partners estimated that it's sold more than 10 million Echo devices in the US since late 2014. That includes the core \$179 Echo as well as the less expensive and smaller Echo Dot and the portable Amazon Tap. To be more competitive with Amazon, Google Express is scrapping the \$95-a-year membership starting Wednesday, allowing shoppers to get free delivery within one to three days on orders as long as the purchase is above each store's minimum.

Walmart is integrating its Easy Reorder feature - which has data on both store and online purchases - into Google Express. Shoppers who want to reorder their favorites have to link their



In this combo of file photos shows, a Google sign at a store (bottom) and a Walmart sign in Hialeah Gardens, Fla.—AP

Walmart account to Google Express. With other Google Express retailers, personalization takes time as the assistant learns shoppers' preferences, says Brian Elliott, general manager of Google Express. So the quick personalization with Walmart should make

voice-activated shopping more attractive, he says.

While one of Walmart's biggest advantages over Amazon is its massive number of stores, Amazon's nearly \$14 billion offer for Whole Foods could shake up the landscape. — AP

EGYPT PINS EXPORT HOPES ON NEW LEATHER PRODUCTION CITY

CAIRO: Just beyond the outskirts of Cairo on a desert road to the Suez Canal, a sprawling industrial zone is coming to life as Egypt's leather industry leaves behind its ancient tanning quarters for modern workshops of Robiki Leather City. The new complex is part of a major expansion drive of a sector Egypt considers as one of its most competitive and the trade ministry has set an official target for leather exports to reach over \$1 billion a year in 2020, from about \$200 million a year currently.

By mid-2018, Robiki should house the entire supply chain, from animal slaughtering to finished leather production, allowing global manufacturers to source materials and export final goods in a single location, said Mohamed El Gohary, chairman of a state firm marketing the site. "The value-added of our exports will increase five times when we reach the stage where we're exporting final products like shoes and bags," Gohary said. Foreign investors can begin purchasing space in Robiki in 2018 and the zone has received strong interest from Italian companies, Gohary said.

Egyptian exports were given a boost when Egypt floated its pound currency last year as part of an International Monetary Fund loan program. With projects like Robiki, Egypt hopes to pull back capital that fled after its 2011 political uprising. In the fiscal year ending in June it netted \$8.7 billion in foreign direct investment and is targeting above \$10 billion this year. Around 220 tanneries are being relocated to Robiki, said Mohamed Harby, head of a leather tanning industry group. They are moving under the orders of the government, which is paying for the transfer of machinery, constructing subsidized housing for workers and facilitating low interest loans for businesses looking to expand.

The tanners' centuries-old home of Magra Al-Ayoon in Old Islamic Cairo, which runs along the city's ancient aqueduct, will likely be developed into a tourist site, though plans have yet to be finalized, said Omar Khorshid, a trade ministry adviser to the Robiki project.

There workers dye animal hides in small, ramshackle buildings without infrastructure for absorbing hazardous waste byproducts. "Egypt a long time ago was a leader in leather tanning, and for a period of time everyone wanted to expand but there was just no space to," managing director of Al-Rowad Tannery Ahmed Al-Gabbas said at his factory floor in Robiki. Al-Rowad, one of the country's three largest tanneries, will complete its relocation over the next month. Gabbas said the company is using the space to scale up and triple exports over the next year. — Reuters

OVERALL GCC EARNINGS DROP BY 1% IN H1-2017: MARKAZ

SAUDI, BAHRAIN AND KUWAIT REPORT SOLID CORPORATE EARNINGS

KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" stated that during H1-2017, GCC corporates posted a negative 1 percent growth compared to the same period last year. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait were three countries to put up positive earnings performance growing by 7 percent, 6 percent and 2 percent respectively. Saudi Arabia's earnings growth was largely helped by the positive momentum in its non-oil private sector while Kuwait was largely helped by the positive performance in the commodities sector and its real estate sector.

Lower oil prices continued to persist, despite the humongous efforts taken by the OPEC cartel to reduce the supply glut. Brent crude declined by 9.3 percent in Q2 2017 closing at \$47.92 compared to \$52.83 at the end of Q1 2017. Overall, IPE Brent crude has tumbled 15.7 percent from the start of 2017 making it the worst performing first half for oil since 1998. Lower oil prices results in lower deposits being made into the banks and as result lowers credit being pumped into the economy. As a result of this, banking sector earnings have declined by 1 percent during H1 2017 compared to the same period last year. Going forward, we expect GCC corporate earnings to expand by 8.1 percent for the full year in 2017 based on stabilizing oil prices and resilience in margins.

Saudi Arabia
Saudi Arabia witnessed a 7 percent increase in its overall earnings during H1 2017 largely prompted by the earnings increase in its commodities and telecommunications sector. Saudi Arabia's commodities and telecom sector witnessed 13 percent and 12 percent increase in its earnings respectively. Surprisingly, the banking sector witnessed a 2 percent decline in earnings. Al-Rajhi Bank and Alinma Bank were the only banks in the country to witness positive earnings growth at 8 percent and 14 percent respectively. Construction related sector was the most affected and has been plagued by delayed cash cycle leading to significant losses as a result the earnings fell by 61 percent.



Kuwait

Kuwait's banking sector suffered a 2 percent decline in its earnings during H1 2017 owing to difficult credit situations and subdued growth in its local market. National bank of Kuwait, Boubyan Bank and Burgan Bank posted double positive earnings growth of 9 percent, 15 percent and 23 percent respectively. Among the telecom players, Zain posted a negative growth of 8 percent owing to one-off extraordinary currency devaluation in Sudan. Ooredoo Kuwait witnessed a 21 percent increase in earnings driven by customer addition and cost-cutting efforts. Kuwait's commodities sector performed well driven by increasing commodity

prices and posted a 20 percent increase in its earnings.

United Arab Emirates

UAE's overall earnings declined by 2 percent during the 1st half of 2017. UAE's banks managed to increase their earnings by 1 percent during H1 2017 while the other two major sectors of the economy - telecom and real estate posted 7 percent and 37 percent decline in earnings.

Qatar

All of the Qatar's sectors with the exception of banking witnessed declines in their earnings during H1 2017. Telecom, Commodities and Financials witnessed a decline of 26 percent, 32 percent and 17 percent respectively. Banking sector witnessed a 1 percent increase in earnings driven by good performances in Qatar National Bank and Qatar Islamic Bank. Qatar's telecom sector was the worst performing sector as Ooredoo witnessed a 26 percent decline in net profits while Vodafone Qatar is yet to turn profit since its inception.

Figure: 1 – Half Yearly Earnings Trend – GCC – 2017 (USD Mn)

Country	H1 2017	H1 2017 Vs H1 2016	H1 2017 vs H2 2016
Saudi Arabia	14,723	7%	15%
UAE	8,645	-2%	152%
Qatar	5,374	-12%	19%
Kuwait	2,680	2%	25%
Oman	839	-30%	-9%
Bahrain	1,004	6%	-1%
GCC	33,265	-1%	34%

Source: Reuters Eikon, Markaz Research



BAHRAH SCORES A HAT TRICK OF AWARDS FROM HINO MOTORS

KUWAIT: Recently, HINO Motors Middle East held "2017 Regional & 3 S Mangers' meet" in Dubai which has been a grand convergence of distributors across the region from the Levant to Oman.

The meeting provided an excellent platform for interactive sessions among distributors and ample of opportunity for discussions with the principals. A team from Bahrah Trading Company (BTC) one of the Al-Sayer Group Holding Companies and authorized distributor of Hino in Kuwait, actively participated in the event led by Hamza Melakandy General Manager along with members from HINO Sales, Service & Parts departments respectively.

A major highlight of the event has been the recognition of distinguished performance by dealers during 2016 by HINO Motors where BTC became the proud winner of 3 awards for excellence across the operations backed by its consistent performance:

- 1 Best Growth in Sales
- 2 Best Service Dept. of the year
- 3 Best Parts Dept. of the year

Bader MUSAED Al-Sayer, Business Director conveyed his happiness on learning of these awards and complimented Team HINO BTC on the achievement.

Ichiro Hisada, Senior Managing Officer, Hino Motors' Overseas Sales & Marketing Total Support, congratulated all the winners for their excellent performance and assured full support from Team HINO to keep up the momentum. Highlighting BTC's achievement, Hamza Melakandy encouraged Team HINO BTC to keep up the great team efforts and aim to achieve more.

Yoshihiro Koyama Managing Director, Hino Motors Middle East coordinated the program and commended the participants' spirit of cooperation and proactive approach.

LG'S ULTRA-PREMIUM BRAND 'LG SIGNATURE' DEBUTS IN GCC

DUBAI: The new LG SIGNATURE brand from LG Electronics (LG) that combines the finest of LG's cutting-edge technology and world-class design with an exquisite attention to detail for today's most discerning consumers, was launched yesterday across the GCC. The ultra-premium brand was unveiled at a gala ceremony at the Dubai Opera. The rich and exquisite design of the Dubai Opera that bridges the gap between the past and the future made it the ideal venue to launch LG's ultra-premium brand that will re-define the future of luxury home appliances and entertainment solutions.

The innovative and exquisitely designed LG SIGNATURE family consists of four products. This includes the world's thinnest and stunning OLED television, which takes the immersive viewing and listening experience to the next level; a sleek refrigerator with a beautiful InstaView Door-in-Door feature to keep food fresher; a bold new black stainless steel washer and white all-in-one washer/dryer unit, and an intuitive Air Purifier designed to filter the air in any home in any environment in order to protect your family from pollutants and allergens in the air.

"From conception to the final user experience, the LG SIGNATURE products were designed to highlight true essence - focusing on each product's basic yet efficient functionality whilst maintaining the brand's modern, premium and artistic signature design," said Kevin Cha, President, LG Electronics, Middle East & Africa. "The LG SIGNATURE products are an extension of the user's personality, ambition as well as status and also marks the very first time that individuals residing within the region can experience the most aesthetically beautiful home appliances turning their living spaces into a highly functioning and visually stunning masterpieces."

Several prominent members within the region's retail industry alongside highly influential and prominent Emirati personalities attended the launch event. Amongst them included Hala Kazim, a highly respected and



admired Emirati life coach, artist, social entrepreneur and the brand ambassador for LG SIGNATURE. Also present were Emirati entrepreneur and the youngest board member of the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce, Her Excellency Sara Al Madani; well-known TV personality Mahira Abdelaziz and a rising Emirati celebrity chef - Bader Najeeb, accentuating the premium image of the LG SIGNATURE brand.

"It is an absolute honor to be awarded the title of brand ambassador for LG SIGNATURE," said Hala Kazim. "The amount of passion, energy and effort that LG has put into developing each of these home appliances to bring out the true essence of everyday living in the UAE and across the region is simply breath-taking. In this region, we appreciate art and style and I am confident the LG SIGNATURE products will be a great success whilst enriching lives enabling timeless memories."

LG SIGNATURE represents the pinnacle of design, performance and usability in home appliances. It has been designed to make life better for consumers by offering the highest performance, minimalistic design, and innovative usability. Each LG SIGNATURE premium

product is thoughtfully designed to be visually astounding, while staying true to its essence: delivering the most elegantly curated human experience. The visualisation of "essence" was the inspiration behind the design philosophy of the LG SIGNATURE brand. By eliminating unnecessary elements, LG SIGNATURE represents the ultimate in elegant simplicity. Its radical design heightens the intrinsic purpose of the product and streamlines usability.

Products available in the LG SIGNATURE brand for the GCC include:

The LG SIGNATURE OLED TV W

LG SIGNATURE OLED TV W (77/65-inch), the winner of over 45 prestigious awards including the 2017 CES Best of Innovation Award, embodies breakthrough innovation in television technologies and exquisite premium design, demonstrating that simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication. The innovative design of the W7 series follows LG's "less is more" philosophy, stripping away everything to emphasize the beauty of the screen alone. The W7's sleek razor-thin profile makes the TV appear to be levitating in mid-air, adding to

the sense of immersion. W7 series models are less than 4mm thick when measured from the wall without any gap between the TV and the wall. The sense of immersion is completed through up-firing speakers which produce Dolby Atmos sound. W7 series live up to LG OLED TV's unrivalled ability to reproduce the most lifelike images of any TV product with perfect black infinite contrast and an expanded colour gamut. Additionally, they offer up to one billion possible colours and use ULTRA Luminance technology to deliver greater brightness according to the content being displayed. The W7 series feature Active HDR to render brighter scenes and greater shadow detail for HDR content. In addition, the series support multiple HDR formats, including Dolby Vision, HDR10, HLG (Hybrid Log Gamma).

LG SIGNATURE Refrigerator

The LG SIGNATURE refrigerator represents the visualisation of essence with a fresh take that is both intuitive and revolutionary. As a nod to its innovative spirit, LG has taken its award-winning Door-in-Door(tm) design one step further by adding the InstaView Door-in-Door(tm) feature that makes the opaque Door-in-Door(tm) compartment transparent with two quick knocks. The transparent surface allows customers to peer inside the refrigerator without having to open the door, offering significant energy savings by limiting cold air loss.

Even more innovative is the new Auto Open Door feature which activates as a user approaches the refrigerator, allowing for quick and easy hands-free access. The LG SIGNATURE refrigerator is powered by LG's Inverter Linear Compressor which automatically adjusts its cooling capacity based on conditions inside the compartment. It also generates less internal friction due to its unique design and is backed by a 10-year warranty.

The LG SIGNATURE Washing Machine

The unique-looking LG SIGNATURE washing machine is an advanced version of the LG TWINWash(tm) washer. The premium 24-inch

front load washing machine is more durable, more convenient and more sophisticated than ever and features the unique pedestal TWINWash(tm) Mini under the main unit.

The minimalistic design of the LG SIGNATURE washing machine is highlighted by the beautiful touch-enabled Quick Circle(tm) User Interface which is embedded in the glass door. Positioned at a 17 degree angle, the panel is easy to see when standing. The Push Open washing machine door can be opened with a slight push, even when the user's hands are full. Meanwhile, the washer's enamel coating not only gives it a sleek, sophisticated look, but also repels fingerprints and corrosion.

The LG SIGNATURE washing machine comes equipped with LG's proprietary Centum System(tm) which improves the washing machine's durability and energy efficiency with an advanced suspension system. Noise emitted while the washing machine is in operation is greatly decreased because the Centum System(tm) minimizes the tub's vibrations during a wash cycle.

The LG SIGNATURE Air Purifier

LG believes that nothing is more important than clean air. The exquisitely designed LG SIGNATURE air purifier allows the air cleaning process to be a visual experience with its innovative transparent panel. Equipped with an advanced Watering Engine(tm), this air purifier harnesses the power of water to filter out harmful chemicals and contaminants while quickly bringing the room to comfortable humidity levels.

The unit is equipped with LG's SIGNATURE Black Filter System, allowing consumers to reuse the filters for up to 10 years, saving money. While fine dust particles are totally invisible to the naked eye, customers can see the air quality of their indoor environment by simply glancing at LG's Smart Indicator(tm). Positioned on the control display, the indicator shows air quality with quantitative figures. PM10, PM2.5 and even PM1.0 can be detected.

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.759
Indian Rupees	4.746
Pakistani Rupees	2.870
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.971
Nepali Rupees	2.981
Singapore Dollar	223.020
Hongkong Dollar	38.695
Bangladesh Taka	3.737
Philippine Peso	5.988
Thai Baht	9.127

GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	80.787
Qatari Riyal	83.207
Omani Riyal	786.772
Bahraini Dinar	804.440
UAE Dirham	82.482

ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.200
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.972
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.216
Tunisian Dinar	127.210
Jordanian Dinar	427.490
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.018
Syrian Lira	2.159
Morocco Dirham	32.414

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	302.750
Euro	356.940
Sterling Pound	395.540
Canadian dollar	239.710
Turkish lira	85.890

Swiss Franc	316.020
Australian Dollar	240.230
US Dollar Buying	301.550
GOLD	
20 Gram	249.070
10 Gram	127.450
5 Gram	64.570

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfr	Selling Rate
US Dollar	302.350
Canadian Dollar	241.007
Sterling Pound	390.710
Euro	357.167
Swiss Frank	293.338
Bahrain Dinar	802.247
UAE Dirhams	82.716
Qatari Riyals	83.861
Saudi Riyals	81.477
Jordanian Dinar	427.428
Egyptian Pound	17.055
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.972
Indian Rupees	4.723
Pakistani Rupees	2.869
Bangladesh Taka	3.742
Philippines Peso	5.877
Cyprus pound	17.991
Japanese Yen	3.765
Syrian Pound	1.585
Nepalese Rupees	2.948
Malaysian Ringgit	71.344

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.765
Thai Bhat	10.094
Turkish Lira	86.281

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.381334	0.391334
Czech Korune	0.005614	0.017614
Danish Krone	0.043754	0.048754
Euro	0.350181	0.359181
Georgian Lari	0.124634	0.124634
Norwegian Krone	0.034180	0.039380
Romanian Leu	0.077463	0.077463
Russian ruble	0.05111	0.005111
Slovakia	0.009023	0.019023
Slovenia	0.033277	0.038277
Swedish Krona	0.305922	0.316922
Swiss Franc		
Australian Dollar	0.230438	0.242438
New Zealand Dollar	0.212699	0.222199
Canada Dollar	0.234798	0.243798
US Dollars	0.298650	0.303070
US Dollars Mint	0.299150	0.303070
Bangladesh Taka	0.003261	0.003845
Chinese Yuan	0.043853	0.047353

Hong Kong Dollar	0.036597	0.039347
Indian Rupee	0.004161	0.004849
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002679	0.002859
Korean Won	0.000257	0.000272
Malaysian Ringgit	0.066904	0.072904
Nepalese Rupee	0.003021	0.003191
Pakistan Rupee	0.002685	0.002975
Philippine Peso	0.005811	0.006111
Singapore Dollar	0.216704	0.226704
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001598	0.002178
Taiwan	0.009870	0.010050
Thai Baht	0.008760	0.009310
Bahraini Dinar	0.796481	0.804981
Egyptian Pound	0.014358	0.020266
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000190	0.000250
Jordanian Dinar	0.422401	0.431401
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000150	0.000250
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020832	0.044832
Omani Riyal	0.779944	0.785624
Qatar Riyal	0.078868	0.083808
Saudi Riyal	0.079647	0.080947
Syrian Pound	0.001283	0.001503
Tunisian Dinar	0.120854	0.128854
Turkish Lira	0.081498	0.091798
UAE Dirhams	0.081002	0.082702
Yemeni Riyal	0.000984	0.001064

ALL GERMANY'S GOLD RETURNED FROM FRENCH VAULTS

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: The Bundesbank, Germany's central bank, said yesterday it had returned to German soil all of its gold kept in Paris and some reserves from the US, three years ahead of schedule. Some 374 tons of the metal, 11 percent of the German stock, left the vaults at the Banque de France, or Bank of France, while 300 tons have been removed from the Federal Reserve in New York to the Bundesbank vaults in Frankfurt, board member Carl-Ludwig Thiele told journalists.

The secret shipments were finished far ahead of the 2020 deadline at a cost of some 7.7 million euros (\$9.1 million), bringing the share of German gold stored at home to 50 percent. Shipments have been underway since a 2013 board decision to return the precious ingots home.

Germany began securing its reserves abroad during the Cold War, when the Bundesbank preferred to keep most of its gold safe from the prospect of a sudden Soviet invasion. New York was a favored location as home of the world's most vital currency, the US dollar, while London's deep gold market could allow the metal to be quickly converted into

cash in an emergency.

Meanwhile, the share of the cache in France was built up during the decades of Germany's post-World War II "economic miracle", as the Bundesbank converted the country's trade surpluses with its neighbor into gold stored in the Parisian vaults of the Banque de France.

But at the height of the eurozone crisis in 2012, eurosceptic voices began pressing for an audit of the precious metal kept abroad, in case it might have been tampered with, lent out or sold off.

The Bundesbank responded to the calls for greater transparency by bringing a larger share home.

After extensive tests upon arrival, "there were no issues with the authenticity, fineness or weight of the bars," Thiele said. Germany holds the world's second-largest gold reserves after the United States, at 3,378 tons or 270,000 ingots of around 12 kilograms each for a market value of around 120 billion euros. Some 1,710 tons are now kept in Frankfurt, with 1,236 remaining in New York and 432 in London. — AFP



In this March 18, 2008 file photo, gold bullion and bullion coins are seen on this zoomed photo in the German BW-Bank in Stuttgart, Germany. — AP

GCC IDEAL MARKET FOR INNOVATIVE COMPANIES, SAYS HUAWEI OFFICIAL

HUAWEI UPBEAT ABOUT FUTURE PROSPECTS IN THE REGION

KUWAIT: The GCC is an ideal market for an innovative company like Huawei as consumers in the region are highly receptive to change and open to new products. The consumers are quick to adopt new technologies from smartphones to smartwatches to fitness trackers, said Gene Jiao, President of Huawei Consumer Business Group, Middle East & Africa.

In an exclusive interview, Jiao said, "MENA is still experiencing rapid growth in the sales and penetration levels of smartphones. Huawei is very optimistic about its future prospects in this region," he said. Excerpts:

Kuwait Times: According to your experience in the telecom sector, can you give us an overview of the telecom and mobile industry in the region, where does Huawei position itself compared to the competition?

JIAO: The telecom and mobile industry in the region is thriving due to recent trends in consumer buying patterns. There has been a widespread shift away from feature phones towards smartphones, resulting in a boom in the market. The UAE in particular is leading this trend in the GCC—there are currently 5.3 million smartphone users in the UAE, more than in any other country in the region. A recent study published by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) found that mobile phones are so widespread in the UAE that there are now 228.3 phones per 100 people. And this trend promises to hold—MENA is still experiencing rapid growth in the sales and penetration levels of smartphones, which are currently the most coveted devices in the 18-34 age group. In addition to this, regional focus on eGovernment, Smart Cities, M2M technologies all point to continued growth in the telecom industry in the future. Huawei is very optimistic about its future prospects in this region.

The Middle East is an ideal market for an innovative company like Huawei: consumers in the region are highly receptive to change and open to new products. Consumers in the GCC are quick to adopt new technologies from smartphones to smartwatches to fitness trackers. We are confident in our ability to distinguish ourselves from the pack through our extensive research and development teams which ensure that Huawei is always ahead of the curve. Our phones are state-of-the-art, and we are always incorporating pioneering technology like our Leica dual lens camera and Kirin 960 chipset, which guarantee that consumers will keep coming back to us for a premium experience.

Moving forward, our goal is to grow Huawei's expansive retail network, reaching 56,000 retail stores worldwide by the end of 2017 - an increase from 35,000 in May 2016. These stores reflect the high-end, premium image that Huawei has cultivated around the world. This year on year growth was reflected in Huawei's rise as a globally recognized premium brand. In 2017, Huawei was named number 49 on BrandZ's Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands, number 88 in Forbes World's Most Valuable Brands and number 40 on the Brand Finance Global 500 Most Valuable Brands lists. In this year's Fortune 500 that came out in the evening of July 20th, HUAWEI climbed up the list to the 83rd place from the 129th of last year with a revenue of \$78.51 billion, making the top global 100 for the first time.

KT: Technological and digital advancement, how is it reflected on your efforts to innovate, and provide consumer products with ground breaking technologies? And how important is the research and development department?

JIAO: Huawei takes pride in always being a step ahead of the industry. We set the trends that the world follows. Our passion for innovation is demonstrated by our heavy investment in R&D: we spend \$11 billion on R&D annually to operate 16 R&D center, 36 joint innovations centers and 45 training centers around the world. This investment has already led to impressive results: Huawei P10 and P10 Plus's dual lens camera (co-engineered with Leica) has set a new industry standard for smartphone photography. Our latest hero product, Nova 2 Plus, with its 20 MP front camera will boast the highest-definition selfie camera in the region. It also comes equipped with a 12MP and 8MP rear dual camera, as well as a revolutionary LCD flash, ensuring Huawei maintains its edge as a leader in the field of

smartphone photography. Not satisfied with providing users with 20MP selfiestar camera, Huawei outfitted the phone with the best sound system currently on the market. The phone will also support aptX wireless Bluetooth technology, which has the shortest time lag of all Bluetooth audio coding; a battery that only takes 30 minutes to power up 43%. Huawei is a consumer-centric brand. That means we are always anticipating our customers' needs and tailoring our products to their desires.

KT: What are consumers in the region looking for in the mobile phone, what are the specifications that mostly interest them?

JIAO: Consumers in the region are not dissimilar to consumers worldwide: they place high importance on premium design, exceptional camera capabilities, high-speed, and powerful, long-lasting battery. Huawei strives to satisfy these needs with our flagship phones. The P10 series was crafted to provide users with an elegant design as well as brilliant photography capabilities thanks to our Leica dual-lens camera. Our Mate series has a powerful Kirin 960 chipset in order to provide consumer with a high performing device with long lasting battery. Consumers today demand an exceptional performance and battery life with quick charging solutions, and Huawei will provide just that with the recent launch of the Nova 2 Plus. The HUAWEI nova 2 Plus' chic design and trend-setting selfie functionality is backed by the HUAWEI Kirin 659 chipset powerhouse. The combination of the Kirin 659 chipset with EMUI 5.1 and Android 7.0 ensures that the series will not slow down over time, and will continue to produce flawless performance.

In addition to its thin and lightweight design, the HUAWEI nova 2 Plus sets itself apart on account of its exceptional battery life and quick charging solution. It takes the HUAWEI nova 2 Plus just 30 minutes to power-up to 39 percent and 43 percent respectively, a feature that is crucial for busy lifestyles. Long-lasting battery life is further ensured through Huawei's Smart Power Saving 5.0, which can prolong battery life by up to three hours. The new series is also equipped with features including Eye Comfort 2.0, Phone Clone and Huawei Share, making the user experience more comfortable and efficient.

Yet consumers do not care exclusively about phone specifications—though these are undeniably important, people are also looking for a reliable brand with excellent customer service. Huawei is dedicated to satisfying that need through its many service centers, Live Chat Support, Happiness Meter, and soon, its first experience store in Dubai. We aim to provide consumers in the region not only with a premium phone, but also with a premium customer experience.

KT: How was Huawei's performance in the Middle East region and what is the importance of the GCC for your business? What is your market share in the region and what are the most important markets for you?

JIAO: Huawei Consumer Business Group recently announced its 2017 first half year financial results: sales revenue for the first six months of 2017 increased by 36.2 percent year-on-year to CNY105.4 billion. Smartphone shipments also rose to 73.01 million, a year-on-year increase of 20.6 percent. The Consumer Business Group continued to deliver extraordinary growth, beating the industry average and penetrating high-end markets around the globe. This ongoing growth is testament to the strength of the Huawei brand and the momentum we've built through delivering premium, market-redefining devices that resonate with today's discerning consumers. In Q1 2017, Huawei's market share rose to 9.8 percent of the global smartphone market, according to industry analysts IDC. This growth was driven by a significant increase in sales of mid-range and high-end smartphones in key geographies.

This year on year growth was reflected in Huawei's rise as a globally recognized premium brand. In 2017, Huawei was named number 49 on BrandZ's Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands, number 88 in Forbes World's Most Valuable Brands and number 40 on the Brand Finance Global 500 Most Valuable Brands lists. In this year's Fortune 500 that came out in the evening of July 20th, HUAWEI climbed up the list to the 83rd place from the 129th of last year



Gene Jiao, President of Huawei Consumer Business Group, Middle East & Africa.

with a revenue of \$78.51 billion, making the top global 100 for the first time.

KT: Competition is strong in the region, how can you keep up to it?

JIAO: We are confident of our ability to compete with our competitors due to our innovative, consumer-centric approach to technology. Since we have entered the market in the Middle East, we have seen rapid growth in sales. Though 2016 was a slow year for smartphone manufacturers globally, Huawei bucked the trend and experienced an annual revenue increase of 32 percent, achieving a company record revenue of USD 75.1 billion. We attribute our success in part to our rapid growth in MENA.

We believe Huawei has become one of the leading brands in the market through our technological innovation and consumer-centric approach. Our P10 series was hugely popular due to its pioneering Leica dual lens camera, and we hope to continue to raise the bar in photography with our NOVA 2 Plus. We also have opened more than 33 service centers in the MEA region in order to ensure that customers have access to quality, direct and transparent communication channels with Huawei. We believe that these two pillars are the foundation on which our future brand dominance will be built, and are confident in our ability to distinguish ourselves from our competitors on these bases.

KT: You have a various range of products, which one is the most important? How did smart watches affect the sales of smartphones?

JIAO: Huawei does not pick favorites. We value all of our consumers, which is why we have created different products to satisfy the needs of different demographics. Our two flagship phones are the P10, P10 Plus and the Mate series. The P series is intended for consumers looking for a device with a high-end lifestyle experience. The typical purchaser is highly fashionable and design centric and places importance on their phone's photography ability. We focused on seamlessly blending style and technology through our lightweight phone and pioneering dual-lens camera. By contrast, the Mate series is more performance focused. We equipped the phone with a powerful Kirin 960 chipset to ensure long-lasting battery and seamless performance. Moreover, our HUAWEI nova 2 Plus is one of the most sought-after products among

young consumers as a result of its innovative aesthetics and superior usability. With this device we've drawn on our most dynamic users' style and attitude as inspiration to take the HUAWEI nova 2 to the next level. Featuring breakthroughs in selfie functionality and a distinctive design, these devices celebrate the individuality, energy and optimism of today's consumers. We want to ensure that all of our customers can find what they seek with Huawei.

We are very excited about the future of our Huawei watches. They are the most recent addition to our collection and though we cannot provide exact figures yet, we are quite optimistic about their performance in the market and we expect the trend to continue alongside rising global demand for smartwatches. The HUAWEI WATCH 2 goes far above and beyond in terms of functionality and design. It is a lighter, more compact design, making it more comfortable and more suited to exercise. The introduction of independent connectivity (4g version) makes the product far more than just a partner for a smart phone; it becomes a flexible way to stay connected without your phone. The new fitness and wellbeing functions are also a vast improvement on the first generation, with smarter analysis and new training programs. Overall, the product is more efficient, more effective, and provides more functions to help enrich a user's everyday life. We do not expect that smartwatch sales will negatively impact our smartphone sales—the two technologies are not in competition as they are complementary products that satisfy different consumer needs.

KT: Huawei will soon open its store in Dubai Mall, why did you chose this location, what will the store add to your company, what are your expectations for the store performance in the next 3 years?

JIAO: As I have said previously, the UAE is a key area of focus for Huawei. Sales figures have been strong in recent years and we expect the trend to continue. For this reason we wanted to open an experience store in the country, and we needed a location that would be conveniently accessible to as many consumers as possible across the region. Dubai is by far the most connected city in the UAE, so it was the obvious choice. The Dubai Mall is a popular destination for locals, expats, and tourists alike, and it is located in the most prestigious area of Dubai. Recently billed as the most prestigious square kilometer of real estate in the world; Downtown Dubai is best described as the new heart of the city and 'The Centre of Now'. At Huawei, we constantly seek to position ourselves in the best locations to provide user with a premium experience. The Dubai Mall represents this for us and this is why we have selected it for our first regional experience store.

Consumers can enjoy an immersive experience to engage with the full range of Huawei's offerings. We hope the store will fill this gap, and provide loyal customers with a sleek, modern background to experience our premium technology and engage with our brand.

CAMBODIA, KRISENERGY SIGN DEAL TO DEVELOP OFFSHORE OIL FIELD

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia signed an agreement with Singapore-listed KrisEnergy Ltd yesterday to develop an offshore oil field that could finally see Cambodia produce its own oil after years of delays.

Cambodia has struggled to develop oil fields in the Gulf of Thailand, as few companies are willing to invest in the area following the 2014 global oil price slump. The agreement between Cambodia and KrisEnergy covers 3,083 sq km (1,190 square miles) of the Khmer basin in the Gulf of Thailand known as Block A, the company said in a statement. Oil will be produced from the Apsara field within the block and output is expected within 24 months of the official launch of the project. "Shortly after signing, we will declare a final investment decision and proceed to deliver first oil in 24 months - sometime in 2019," said KrisEnergy Chief Operating Officer Kelvin Tang at a signing ceremony in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh. Tang

said that KrisEnergy is looking for partners to invest in the project and that Cambodia will receive around \$500 million in fees, taxes and royalties over the project's lifespan.

Cambodia's Finance Minister Aun Pormmoniroth said the area is estimated to yield over 30 million barrels over a nine-year period and that Cambodia was ready to learn from other countries' lessons and would not become oil-dependent. "It will not allow itself to become a heavily oil dependent economy," Aun Pormmoniroth said. "It will instead use oil revenue to fuel structural transformation to sustain economic growth." According to the agreement, KrisEnergy will own a 95 percent interest in the field while the Cambodian government will own the rest. The first phase of development of the Apsara field will start with a single production platform and could potentially expand to 10 platforms depending on a final oil output determination, KrisEnergy said in their statement. — Reuters



In this March 1, 2017 photo, new home construction is underway in a housing plan in Zelienople, Pa. The Commerce Department reported on sales of new homes in July yesterday. — AP

US NEW-HOME SALES FELL IN JULY, STILL AHEAD OF LAST YEAR

WASHINGTON: Sales of new US homes plummeted 9.4 percent in July, the sharpest one-month drop in nearly a year. But the decline followed strong sales in previous months, and sales so far this year are outpacing last year's. The Commerce Department said yesterday that new-home sales fell to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 571,000 in July, down from 630,000 in June. Last month's figure was the weakest since December.

Still, sales in the first seven months of the year are 9.2 percent higher than in the same period last year. More buyers are turning to newly built houses as the supply of existing homes for sale has fallen steadily. The housing market overall is mostly healthy, but sales have stumbled this summer as a supply crunch has elevated average home prices nationwide. The rising prices have made homes too expensive for some would-be buyers, even as healthy hiring has lowered the unemployment rate to a 16-year low of 4.3 percent.

Builders are ramping up the supply of new homes, providing a crucial outlet. But the number of newly built properties available is still below historical levels. Even so, the supply of new homes for sale ticked up 1.5 percent in July from June to 276,000. That's 16.5 percent higher than a year earlier.

That level is considered enough to last 5.8 months at the current sales pace - near the 6 months that is typical in a healthy market. By contrast, the number of existing homes for sale plunged 7.1 percent in June from a year earlier. The larger supply of new homes has kept prices from rising as much as in the market for existing houses. A typical new home sold for \$313,700 in July - below the \$316,200 typical price for all of last year. Prices for existing homes rose 5.6 percent in May from the previous year, the latest data available, according to the S&P Case-Shiller home price index. — AP

SCOTTISH BUDGET DEFICIT FALLS BUT STILL TRIPLE UK GAP

EDINBURGH: Scotland's budget deficit narrowed in the year to March but the gap is still more than triple the size of that for the United Kingdom as whole, official data showed yesterday, potentially hampering arguments for Scottish independence. Scotland's heavily oil-dependent economy is struggling to cope with an oil sector downturn following a peak in prices in 2014, tax cuts for the industry and lower production, as well as a longer legacy of high government spending.

Scotland's budget deficit, including a share of North Sea oil revenues, was 8.3 percent of GDP in the 2016/17 tax year or 13.3 billion pounds (\$17.0 billion), down from 9.3 percent in 2015/16, Scottish government data showed. That compares with a deficit of 2.3 percent of GDP in the UK as a whole.

"We are seeing an improving picture in Scotland's economy, although there are still big challenges to be overcome," pro-independence First Minister Nicola Sturgeon told reporters.

The Scottish data included the first rise in North Sea revenue since 2011, proof of partial recovery for the sector as oil prices rose from an 11-year low struck in early 2016.

Clouding the horizon, however, is the uncertainty of Britain's decision to leave the European Union and what it will do to Scotland's economy, which represents about 8 percent of the UK as a whole.

"The big risk we face for the medium to long term, in common with the rest of the UK, is the challenge that Brexit poses to that picture of recovery," Sturgeon said. Scotland voted to keep Britain in the EU, increasing tensions with the UK government over the deal it must negotiate with the EU and putting the UK's four-nation union under strain.

Spending per head for Scotland is higher than for the UK as a whole - by around 1,400 pounds per person - pushed up by more spending on health, education and economic development, among others.

On the revenues side, Scotland raises slightly less than the UK per head in tax, by about 300 pounds per person. "I make no apology for spending decisions we make, you don't have to look very far to see the damage that is being done to lives because of the austerity agenda," Sturgeon told reporters. — Reuters

WALL STREET DROPS ON TRUMP THREATS OF SHUTDOWN, NAFTA INVESTORS LOOK FOR CLUES FROM JACKSON HOLE

NEW YORK: US stocks opened sharply lower yesterday, giving back some gains from a day earlier, after President Donald Trump warned of a government shutdown to build the Mexico border wall and also threatened to scrap a trade agreement with Mexico and Canada.

"If we have to close down our government, we're building that wall," Trump said at a rally in Phoenix, Arizona on Tuesday evening. The comments came as lawmakers face a late-September deadline to raise the US debt ceiling or risk a default, and hours after a lawmaker said there was "zero chance" of the US not raising the ceiling.

Investors have grown increasingly concerned about Trump's ability to legislate his pro-growth agenda, especially those of tax cuts and infrastructure spending, given the near constant political rumblings in the White House.

"You can have a tax cut, but if you have a trade war, that is going to impact the economic growth," Cardillo said. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 77.83 points, or 0.36 percent, at 21,822.06 and the S&P 500 was down 8.3 points, or 0.34 percent, at 2,444.21.

Investors are also jittery ahead of the annual gathering of global central bankers in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen's Friday speech will be scrutinized for clues on the central bank's stand on monetary policy.

Bigger rival Home Depot dropped 1.34 percent, weighing the most on the Dow. Shares of advertising firm Omnicom dropped nearly 5 percent, while Interpublic Group fell 4.3 percent after WPP cut its sales forecast for the second time in 6 months.



SEOUL: A currency trader works at the foreign exchange dealing room of the KEB Hana Bank headquarters in Seoul yesterday.—AP

11.2 percent. Declining issues outnumbered advancers on the NYSE by 1,793 to 715. On the Nasdaq, 1,646 issues fell and 671 advanced.

European and US stocks slid yesterday as investors looked ahead to a meeting of central bankers for insights on monetary policy. A sense of anticipation can be felt across the financial markets ahead of the Jackson Hole Symposium later this week, which could offer an opportunity for central banks to signal policy shifts.

Investors will be hoping for fresh clues from US Federal Reserve boss Yellen about the bank's plans to reduce its huge bond holdings. European Central Bank chief Draghi's speech will also be closely watched as Frankfurt-based policymakers move towards cutting back their bond purchases.

London stocks were down 0.2 percent in afternoon trading, while Paris was off 0.3 percent and Frankfurt lost 0.4 percent. The Dow

dropped 0.4 percent in opening trading. US stocks are lower in early action following yesterday's solid advance, with global trade concerns and Friday's looming speeches from Fed Chair Yellen and ECB President Draghi likely keeping conviction in check.

But Shanghai ended 0.1-percent lower and Sydney slipped 0.2 percent. Hong Kong's stock market was closed as powerful Typhoon Hato brought the southern Chinese city to a standstill. The euro gained against the dollar following well-received eurozone data, analysts said.

Commentary

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM AT NAFTA TALKS

WASHINGTON: The first round of long-awaited talks on modernizing NAFTA finished Sunday, with Canada, Mexico and the United States issuing a statement that they had made "detailed conceptual presentations" of their positions.

Donald Trump's promise to renegotiate trade deals was a key plank of his "America First" campaign platform. One of his first acts in the White House was to withdraw the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) with countries in Asia-Pacific and the Americas, including Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

Speculation now centers on the future of the North American Free Trade Agreement, typically seen by many economists as at least a qualified success story. Since 1994, trade between the United States, Mexico and Canada has more than tripled, forming a trading bloc with a combined GDP of around 20 trillion dollars.

However, prominent representatives of both the left and right, from Bernie Sanders and Ralph Nader to Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan, have long criticized the agreement for contributing to a hollowing out of the country's manufacturing industry and lost US jobs, partly because of increased trade deficits with Mexico and Canada.

From a different standpoint, even some previous advocates of NAFTA have become less enthusiastic about the deal. This is partly because the three countries have been unable to fully address challenging issues like tightened border security. NAFTA is also seen to have stalled because Mexico, Canada and the United States have increasingly preferred to push bilateral solutions rather than addressing opportunities and problems trilaterally.

Trump jumped into this cauldron of criticism in the 2016 election campaign by calling NAFTA "the worst trade deal maybe

ever signed anywhere, but certainly ever signed in this country." In key electoral states like Ohio and Pennsylvania, his championing of an anti-international trade agenda helped win him significant support last November. (In April, Trump told Reuters that he had been "psyched" to terminate NAFTA, but changed his mind after Canada and Mexico asked for it to be renegotiated instead.)

The renegotiations have high political stakes for Canada and Mexico too. If agreement cannot be reached before the Mexican presidential election on July 1, 2018, negotiators could have to deal with NAFTA skeptic and current poll favorite Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. The left-wing populist has positioned himself as a critic of Trump and the US president's "campaign of hatred" against Mexico since the 2016 US presidential campaign.

Uncertainty over NAFTA, the TPP and Trump's trade policies in general, could create a significant political vacuum. That, in turn, could give China a gap to exploit - a gap Beijing is waiting to take. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Li Baoding said last year, "protectionism is rearing its ugly head...China believes we should set up a new plan to...sustain momentum for the early establishment of free trade areas."

Beijing's alternative vision includes a Free Trade Area of Asia Pacific (FTAAP), a long-term goal to link Pacific Rim economies from China to Chile that has been debated since 2004. In the shorter term, Beijing is also pushing a free trade pact, for which discussions have been underway since 2012, known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

While Chinese President Xi Jinping has asserted that RCEP and FTAAP do not "go against existing free trade arrangements," Beijing and Washington have for years had contrasting visions of shaping the regional order through formulation of NAFTA and TPP on one hand, and RCEP and FTAAP on the other.

From China's perspective, RCEP and FTAAP would be more conducive to its national interests. — Reuters



LONDON: A company plaque is cleaned outside the offices of British advertising giant WPP in London yesterday. The British advertising giant WPP has downgraded its growth forecast for 2017 because of a slowdown in the market, causing a fall of over 10 percent in the company's stock price. —AFP

WPP SHARES PLUNGES AFTER GROUP CUTS SALE TARGET

LONDON: WPP, the world's largest advertising group, cut its sales target for the second time in six months yesterday after consumer goods giants curbed spending, putting its shares on track for their worst day in 19 years.

Facing its weakest underlying revenue growth since the financial crash in 2009, WPP saw its shares fall as much as 13 percent, wiping some \$2.6 billion off its market value.

Much of the problem stems from a move by packaged goods groups including Unilever, Nestle and Procter & Gamble to respond to weak growth by cutting back on advertising products such as washing powder, drinks and food. Like its rivals, WPP has also been hit by an ultracompetitive environment in the United States where it lost two major contracts - VW and AT&T - meaning the group missed its first-half net sales target by some margin.

"It is difficult," Chief Executive Martin Sorrell told Reuters. "Most of our shrinkage came in the second quarter and we couldn't adapt fast enough for that. But we feel good about the way we've controlled the costs."

Sorrell noted the growing influence of activist investors in the consumer goods sector, which he felt was adding to the pressure to rein in spending and boost margins. Consumer goods clients make up around a third of WPP's revenue. Analysts at RBC said eight of the 10 consumer goods companies which detailed their marketing approach in the first half of the year reported a decline as a proportion of sales. Unilever, a WPP client which fought off a \$143 billion takeover bid from Kraft Heinz in February, said it was looking to cut the number of adverts created by 30 percent. In the first half of the year, its spending with ad agencies fell by 17 percent.

GLOBAL GIANT

One of the best known businessmen in Britain, Sorrell built the advertising group from a two-man operation in a London office in 1985 to one that now dominates the industry with 205,000 people, including associates, working in 112 countries.

It provides advertising, data analytics and consultancy work to brands including L'Oreal, IBM, AstraZeneca and Vodafone. While it outperformed its peers for several years after the financial downturn, it has been showing signs of strain in the last year as rivals fight for every dollar of ad spend. On Wednesday it reported first-half like-for-like net sales down by 0.5 percent, below a consensus of 0.7 percent growth. It cut its full-year underlying net sales growth target to between flat and 1 percent, from a previous forecast of 2 percent. Like peers Omnicom and IPG, net sales were particularly weak in the U.S. French group Publicis, recovering from several years of subdued trading, is one of the few ad groups to fare better in the U.S., posting decent results in July. —Reuters

DOLLAR SAGS IN A RISK-AVERSE MARKET

NEW YORK: The dollar fell yesterday in a generally risk-averse market after US President Donald Trump's threat of a government shutdown and comments about the possible termination of a North American trade agreement. Trump warned late on Tuesday he might terminate the NAFTA trade treaty with Mexico and Canada after three-way talks failed to bridge deep differences.

This was not the first time Trump has threatened to scrap NAFTA, but it was the first time that he did so after negotiations started, analysts said.

"No one can be sure whether the comments are a way for Trump to influence the negotiations, or whether he thinks that the negotiations are just a formality and he means to scrap NAFTA completely," said Thierry Albert Wizman, global interest rates and currency strategist at Macquarie Group in New York. In any case, Wizman said Trump's remarks pushed the safe-haven yen higher amid a "general risk-off tone."

In mid-morning trading, the dollar fell 0.4 percent to 109.17 yen, with the dollar index slipping 0.3 percent to 93.272. The euro was propped up by strong German and French PMI survey

readings, although analysts warned the single currency's gains could be short-lived due to concerns about heavy one-sided bets. The euro rose 0.4 percent to \$1.1804 and hit a fresh 10-1/2-month peak against the British pound, near 92 pence. PMI data from Germany and France showed both countries registering strong private-sector growth in August, separate surveys showed. That boosted confidence that the euro zone's biggest economies are likely to maintain their momentum in the September quarter.

Investors awaited speeches from Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen and European Central Bank President Mario Draghi at the Jackson Hole summit tomorrow, though neither was expected to announce new policy messages. In a speech in Germany yesterday, Draghi steered clear of market-sensitive comments. FXTM research analyst Lukman Otunuga said the threat of Draghi verbally intervening to weaken the currency at Jackson Hole was likely to limit the euro's upside.

"With July's ECB meeting minutes already revealing concerns over how a resurgent euro is obstructing the central bank's efforts to hit the 2 percent inflation target, Draghi's speech on Friday will be in sharp focus," he added. —Reuters

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. Includes tables for Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, and Global Bond Yields.

MERCEDES-BENZ 4MATIC ALL-WHEEL DRIVE CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF ALL-ROAD CONFIDENCE

KUWAIT: Mercedes-Benz 4MATIC is celebrating 30 years of all-season, all-road confidence in 2017, having first debuted in the W124-series E Class models in 1987. Today's 4MATIC is available on nearly 50 models around the world, from cars to SUVs and vans.

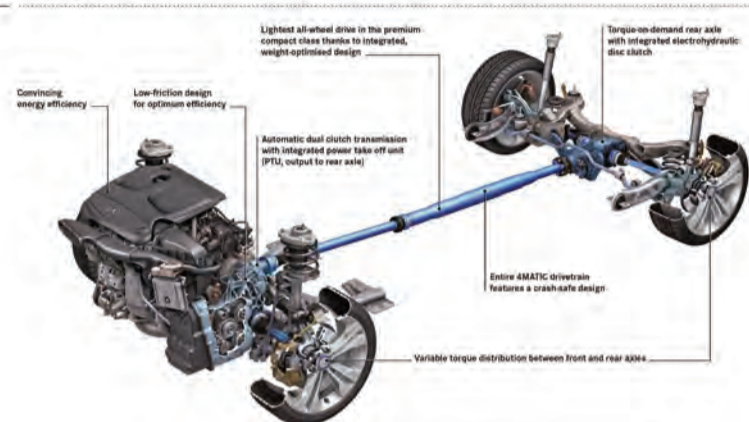
From a looming sand dune to a challenging corner, 4MATIC all-wheel drive makes the most of available traction by precisely engaging all four wheels. More than letting all four tires do the work equally, 4MATIC features a number of advanced, and quick-thinking innovations to empower each wheel individually as conditions change.

handling of a Mercedes-Benz, helping optimize how each wheel turns torque and traction into confidence and control, to provide the best driving experience," added Mr. Michael Ruehle, CEO of A.R. Albisher & Z. Alkazemi Company. With each wheel fully engaging, 4MATIC enables far greater control and gripping results. It is fully integrated, not just with the drivetrain, but with the many safety and driving assistance systems of a Mercedes-Benz. Under normal conditions, the compact, lightweight system channels the engine's torque to the front and rear wheels through a centre differential, for



New GLA

All-wheel drive for all: the new 4MATIC from Mercedes-Benz
Modern, permanent all-wheel drive with variable torque distribution



"Whether starting out on a slippery patch, encountering a sudden change in terrain, or even rounding a dry curve, 4MATIC has been instrumental in helping Mercedes-Benz drivers put their best foot forward for the past three decades. The advanced 4MATIC all-wheel drive is available on virtually every model we make, and comes standard on all SUVs in Kuwait, enabling more confident driving regardless of the conditions," said Mohammed Abdul Rahman Albisher, Director of A.R. Albisher & Z. Alkazemi Company, the Authorized General Distributor of Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait. "Its lightweight design and quick reflexes enhance the



Mercedes-Benz 4MATIC

sporty balance and agile handling. When traction demands change, 4MATIC reacts instantly and expertly to maximise control.



Mercedes-Benz GLC Coupe, 4MATIC suspension

By sending power to the wheels that can use it best, it helps you feel a rewarding sense of confidence in any season.

Elegantly Simple: The core components of 4MATIC

A transfer case integrated within the 7-speed automatic transmission feeds power to the front axles. A limited-slip centre differential provides balanced power between the front and rear axles. And the 4-wheel Electronic Traction System (4-ETS) uses sensors already in

the vehicle for its Antilock Braking System (ABS) and Electronic Stability Program (ESP), to precisely manage the torque demands of each wheel.

Four points of contact

Virtually every element of braking, steering and accelerating is carried out through the four patches where tires meet the road. The friction between the tires and road surfaces turns grip into go. The laws of physics limit the total force that a tire can manage, especially as road conditions change, so 4MATIC is designed to achieve the best balance of these forces in every situation.

Weight distribution

When braking, 4MATIC shifts the vehicle's weight toward the front wheels, making them work harder. Acceleration shifts it rearward, while cornering transfers it toward the tires on the outside of a turn. In addition, the road conditions can affect how each wheel grips at any time. 4MATIC responds to all of these factors at once,

optimizing the torque at each wheel to the conditions.

Wheel speeds

When driving in a straight line, all four wheels normally rotate at the same rate. Rounding a corner, however, forces the two outside wheels to travel a longer path than the inside wheels. That means the left and right wheels must be able to rotate at different speeds. 4MATIC continually monitors the speed of each wheel to know when it's turning at the proper speed, or not, in every situation.

Mixed friction surfaces

On a dry, paved road, the traction available to all four tires is generally the same, however a puddle, a patch of ice, or even a loose gravel shoulder can vary the grip of each wheel, all at once. 4MATIC uses a combination of individual brakes and reduction of excess engine output to balance, helping to send the optimal amount of torque to each wheel. Mercedes-Benz 4MATIC all-wheel drive comes standard on all Mercedes-Benz SUVs.

Another Exclusive by Jazeera Airways:

Fantastic Friday

Only available on www.jazeeraairways.com

From Kuwait

Istanbul Sharm El Sheikh Baku

JAZEERA AIRWAYS BRINGS 'FANTASTIC FRIDAYS' TO KUWAITI CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading air carrier operating regionally and internationally, announces 'Fantastic Fridays', an exclusive weekly offer to reward its online customers. A first for Jazeera Airways and for all those travelling from Kuwait, the special offer takes place every Friday, providing unmissable opportunities to book discounted tickets to select popular destinations through Jazeera's newly redesigned website. The offer starts on tomorrow and is valid between 12:01 am until 11:59 pm. This week's destinations

from Kuwait are to Baku, Istanbul and Sharm El Sheikh.

The new Jazeera website has been designed to the highest e-commerce standards, providing a more personalized experience with every click, easy navigation options, a simple four-step booking process, enhanced browsing, online check-in services and several add-ons. Travelers are encouraged to avail of the exclusive 'Fantastic Fridays' deals every Friday by simply booking their tickets through the new website (jazeeraairways.com).

ABK-EGYPT REPORTS HEALTHY NET PROFIT OF EGP 161M FOR H1 2017

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait-Egypt (ABK-Egypt) announced its results for the first half of 2017, posting an after-tax net profit of EGP 161 Million. Assets soared by 26 percent to reach EGP 18.91 Billion, while its loans and credit facilities portfolio expanded by 35 percent, reaching EGP 9.85 Billion. Deposits grew by 27 percent to a total of EGP 15.69 billion.

objectives, we are moving forward with confidence. I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has made a contribution to these positive results."

CEO & Managing Director of ABK-Egypt, Khaled El Salawy, stated that the efforts exerted in the past period positively reflected on ABK-Egypt's solid results, and that it would further strengthen its position as one of the promising banks in Egypt.

El Salawy said: "The progress we have made is due to the diligent work of our employees and the business decisions we have taken thus far. We look forward to enhancing competitive advantages of our services, providing unique banking solutions that meet the needs of individuals and companies, as well as supporting small and medium enterprises as part of our commitment to advancing Egypt's economy."

ABK-Egypt has been recognized by a number of credible entities for their growth & positioning over the past year. In 2017, ABK won the "Best New Brand in Egypt" by Banker Middle East and the "Best New Bank in Egypt" by the European Magazine - a Thomson Reuters affiliate.



Ali Marafi



Khaled El Salawy

QATAR AIRWAYS CELEBRATES SERVICE TO CZECH REPUBLIC

LAUNCH OF SERVICE TO KIEV, UKRAINE TO FOLLOW NEXT WEEK

KUWAIT: To celebrate the launch of Qatar Airways' inaugural flight to Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Akbar Al-Baker hosted a press conference yesterday at the Hilton Hotel Prague.

At the press conference Al-Baker discussed the award-winning airline's ongoing expansion plans and its commitment to providing passengers a truly unique travel experience. He emphasized Qatar Airways' dedication to bringing more visitors from around the world to Prague and to increasing tourism in the already popular European destination.



Al-Baker said at the press conference: "Prague has long been a highly sought after destination by our passengers. We have listened to their requests and we have responded by proudly bringing them this daily service from our hub in Doha to the city of Prague. We are happy to support the Czech Republic's tourism industry to grow to even greater heights by giving more global travellers the opportunity to visit this iconic city."

Vaclav Rehor, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Prague Airport said: "We expect the new route between V-clav Havel Airport Prague and Hamad International Airport in Doha to be used by up to 90 thousand passengers a year."

Prague, with its rich history, culture and spectacular medieval architecture, is one of the most



PRAGUE: Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Akbar Al-Baker addresses a press conference yesterday at the Hilton Hotel Prague.

visited cities in Europe. Qatar Airways is expediting its expansion in Eastern Europe, with service to Kyiv, Ukraine set to commence next week. Last month, the airline inaugurated its first service to Skopje, part of a significant network expansion of new destinations by Qatar Airways. The award-winning airline is committed to connect its passengers to more than 150 destinations on its global network via Hamad International Airport in Doha.

Following the launch to Prague, the 2017 Airline of the Year, as awarded by Skytrax, will be adding flights to more exciting destinations on its network in 2017 and 2018, including Abidjan, Ivory Coast; Accra, Ghana; Canberra, Australia; Chiang Mai, Thailand; Chittagong, Bangladesh; San Francisco, United States; Mombasa, Kenya; and Utapao, Thailand.

Qatar Airways will operate services to Prague with the Airbus A320, featuring 12 seats in Business Class and 120 seats in Economy Class. The award-winning airline has recently added additional frequencies to several of its key destinations, in an effort to meet high demand. Qatar Airways has brought the total frequency to 21

flights per week between Doha and Moscow, five daily flights to Sri Lanka, a direct daily flight to Hanoi, 10 weekly flights to Ho Chi Minh City and a daily service Krabi.

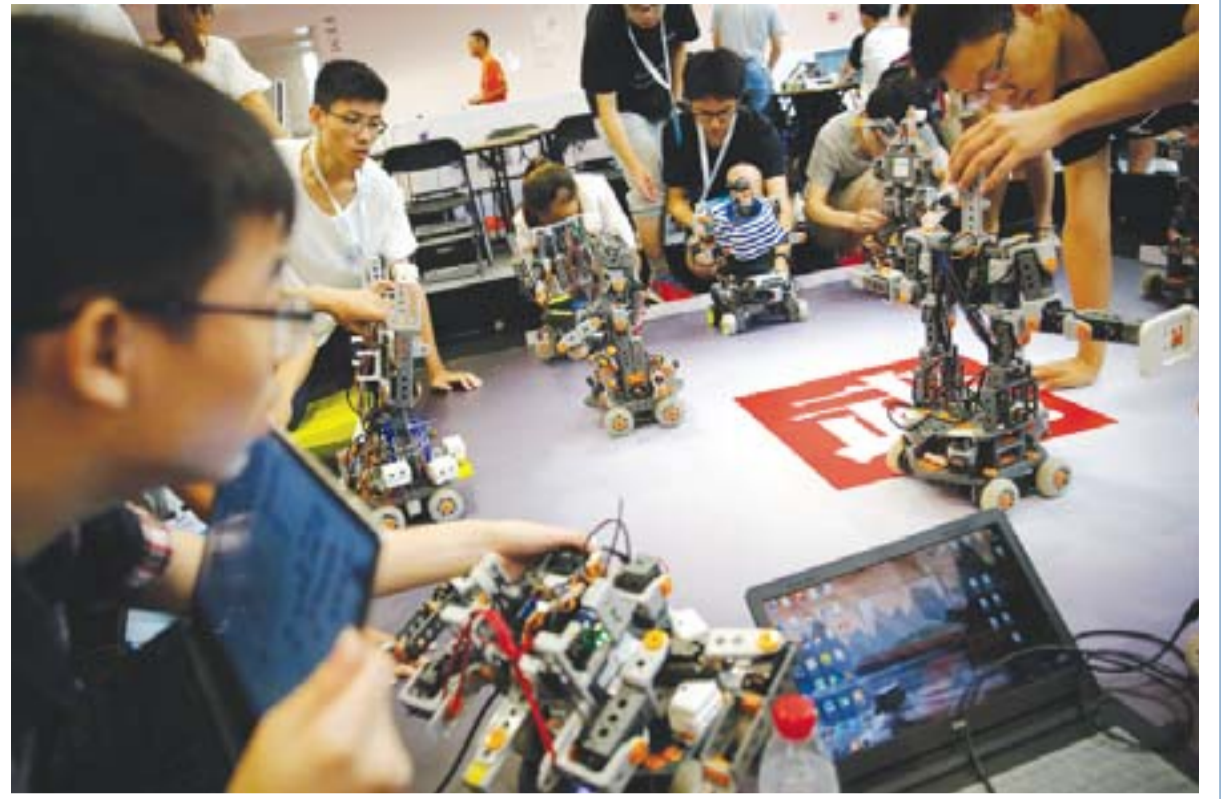
Qatar Airways, the national carrier of the State of Qatar, this year celebrates 20 years of Going Places Together with travellers across its more than 150 destinations business and leisure destinations. One of the world's fastest growing airlines, the carrier will continue to add a number of exciting new destinations to its growing network in 2017 and 2018, flying passengers on board its modern fleet of 200 aircraft. Qatar Airways has received a number of accolades this year, including Airline of the Year by the prestigious 2017 Skytrax World Airline Awards, held at the Paris Air Show.

This is the fourth time that Qatar Airways has been given this global recognition. In addition to being voted World's Best Airline by travellers from around the world, Qatar's national carrier also won a raft of other major awards at the ceremony, including Best Airline in the Middle East, World's Best Business Class and World's Best First Class Airline Lounge.





A robot called 'Teotronico' plays the piano at the 2017 World Robot Conference in Beijing.



College students set up their robots on a stage to compete.

WORLD ROBOT CONFERENCE



A college student carries his robot dressed with Monkey King costume.



A robot demonstrates how a surgery is done.



Robots powered down are lined up awaiting an engineer to prepare them a day before the opening.



A giant robot displayed at the World Robot Conference.



BEIJING: An exhibitor applies eye make-up to a human-like robot on display at the World Robot Conference at the Yichuang International Conference and Exhibition Centre in Beijing yesterday.—AP/AFP photos



A child holding an entrance ticket watches a smart self-learning robot.



A boy watches as robots perform a dance.



Visitors are reflected on a glass panel as they watch a product demonstrator dive with an underwater drone.

MYANMAR'S STARTUPS MAP PAST, SHAPE FUTURE WITH VIRTUAL REALITY

YANGON: Gasps echo across the hall as the Myanmar school kids trial virtual reality goggles, marveling at a device that allows some of Asia's poorest people to walk on the moon or dive beneath the waves. "In Myanmar we can't afford much to bring students to the real world experience," beamed Hla Hla Win, a teacher and tech entrepreneur taking virtual reality into the classroom. "If they're learning about animals we can't take them to the zoo... 99 percent of parents don't have time, don't have money, don't have the means," she added.

Few countries in the world have experienced such rapid discovery of technology than Myanmar which has leapfrogged from the analogue to the digital era in just a few years. During the decades of outright junta rule, which ended in 2011, it was one of the world's most isolated nations, a place where a mobile phone sim card could cost up to \$3,000.

For half a century its paranoid generals cut off the country, restricting sales of computers, heavily censoring the Internet and blocking access to foreign media reports. But today phone towers are springing up around the country and almost 80 percent of the population have access to the Internet through smartphones, according to telecoms giant Telenor.

Budding startups

Tech startups are emerging around the commercial capital Yangon, many seeking to improve the lives of rural people, most of whom still live without paved roads or electricity. "The increase in activity from last year till now-new startups, more people deter-

mined to become entrepreneurs and working in the tech sector in general-is significant," said Jes Kaliebe Peterson, CEO of community hub Phandeeyar.

Virtual reality is the latest advance to cause a stir, with a handful of entrepreneurs embracing tech for projects including preserving ancient temple sites to shaping young minds of the future. The Phandeeyar incubator works with more than 140 startups. Among them Hla Hla Win's virtual reality social enterprise 360ed which is using affordable cardboard VR goggles attached to smartphones to break down barriers in Myanmar's classrooms.

She founded the non-profit last year after 17 years working in the woefully underfunded education system in a bid to bring learning to life. "I see it as an empathy machine where we can teleport ourselves to another place right away," she said. And it's not just school children who benefit from stepping into places they could only ever dream of visiting. 360ed has used virtual reality to help Myanmar teachers attend training courses in Japan and Finland and is working on setting up deals with schools in India, Pakistan, China and Bangladesh. "With VR there's no divider, there's no distance," Hla Hla Win said.

Mapping the past

While 360ed is thinking about the future, Nyi Lin Seck is obsessed with the past. Some 600 kilometers north of Yangon, the budding tech entrepreneur and founder of 3xvivr Virtual Reality Production launches a large drone into the skies above Bagan, one of Myanmar's most famous tourist sites. The drone, which carries a 360-camera, circles one of the many ninth-to-thirteenth century temples that dot the landscape of what was once a sprawling ancient city.

The data it records allows those with virtual reality headsets to explore the tem-

ples, their crumbling centuries-old walls so close it feels like you can touch them. A former head of the local TV station, Nyi Lin Seck says he makes most of his money providing virtual reality footage for hotels and luxury apartments.

But after an earthquake damaged the Bagan site last year, he vowed to use the tech to preserve a digital replica of Myanmar's archaeological treasures. "A lot of artworks on the pagodas collapsed and were lost. Using this technology, we can record up to 99 percent of the ancient art," he says.—AFP



YANGON: In this photograph, Nyi Lin Seck reaches to grab a drone carrying a 360 degree 4K video camera after flying it over the ancient city of Bagan to document the crumbling 700-year-old walls of the ancient city.—AFP photos



YANGON: In this photograph, a 360 degree video camera records the grounds of the crumbling 700-year-old ancient city of Bagan.

TOOTHLESS, DWARF DOLPHIN, A CASE STUDY IN EVOLUTION



PARIS: A handout photo from the Royal Society shows a life restoration of Inermorostrum xenops dolphins. — AFP

PARIS: Scientists unveiled an extinct species of toothless, whiskered and objectively cute mini-dolphin that plied Earth's oceans some 30 million years ago. With only a fossilized cranium-found in a river near Charleston, South Carolina-to work with, the researchers were able to reconstruct the snub-nosed mammal's evolutionary saga, describe its facial features and figure out what it snacked on. Just over a meter from snout to tail, Inermorostrum xenops was half the size of the common bottlenose dolphin.

Ironically, the pint-size Flipper was an early offshoot from one of the two main groupings of cetaceans called Odontoceti, or "toothed whale", that includes sperm whales and orca. This group also developed a radar-like capacity to navigate and detect objects by emitting sounds, called echolocation. The other branch, baleen whales, are filter feeders that strain huge volumes of ocean water to net tiny, shrimp-like krill or plankton-think humpback or the gargantuan blue.

"Inermorostrum took only four million years to evolve from ancestral whales with precisely occluding teeth"-matching top and bottom-"into a toothless, suction feeding specialist," explained Robert Boessenecker, a professor at the College of Charleston and lead author of a study in the British Royal Society journal Proceedings B. During those four million years-

a brief interlude on the evolutionary clock-I. xenops lost its pearly whites, saw its snout and mouth shrink and developed super muscular lips.

"This last feature is perhaps the most critical," said Boessenecker, who deduced the dolphin's powerful smackers from a series of deep artery channels clearly designed to nourish extensive soft tissue. "Short snouts typically occur in Odontoceti that are adept at suction feeding-the smaller the oral opening, the greater the suction," he said in a statement. Absent dentition, I. xenops' diet would have consisted exclusively of small fish, squid and other soft-bodied creatures. Because its nose was bent downward, the researchers suspect it prowled the ocean floor in search of prey.

The dwarf dolphins were not the only "toothed whales" undergoing rapid evolution at that time. During the Oligocene age, 25 to 35 million years ago, other echolocating cetaceans developed long, toothy snouts specialized in catching fish. The researchers also found that both short and long snouts evolved independently numerous times, suggesting that natural selection is not an arbitrary process. Some dolphins, such as the modern bottlenose, settled on a happy medium between the extremes, "the optimum length as it permits both fish catching and suction feeding," Boessenecker added. — AFP

LAB-MADE MINI ORGANS HELP DOCTORS TREAT CYSTIC FIBROSIS

ORGANOIDS MIMIC FEATURES OF FULL-SIZE ORGANS

UTRECHT, Netherlands: Els van der Heijden, who has cystic fibrosis, was finding it ever harder to breathe as her lungs filled with thick, sticky mucus. Despite taking more than a dozen pills and inhalers a day, the 53-year-old had to stop working and scale back doing the thing she loved best, horseback riding. Doctors saw no sense in trying an expensive new drug because it hasn't been proven to work in people with the rare type of cystic fibrosis that van der Heijden had.

Instead, they scraped a few cells from van der Heijden and used them to grow a mini version of her large intestine in a petri dish. When van der Heijden's "mini gut" responded to treatment, doctors knew it would help her too. "I really felt, physically, like a different person," van der Heijden said after taking a drug -

and getting back in the saddle. This experiment to help people with rare forms of cystic fibrosis in the Netherlands aims to grow mini intestines for every Dutch patient with the disease to figure out, in part, what treatment might work for them.

It's an early application of a technique now being worked on in labs all over the world, as researchers learn to grow organs outside of the body for treatment - and maybe someday for transplants. So far, doctors have grown mini guts - just the size of a pencil point - for 450 of the Netherlands' roughly 1,500 cystic fibrosis patients. "The mini guts are small, but they are complete," said Dr. Hans Clevers of the Hubrecht Institute, who pioneered the technique. Except for muscles and blood vessels, the tiny organs "have everything you would expect to see in a

real gut, only on a really small scale."

These so-called organoids mimic features of full-size organs, but don't function the same way. Although many of the tiny replicas are closer to undeveloped organs found in an embryo than adult ones, they are helping scientists unravel how organs mature and providing clues on how certain diseases might be treated. In Australia, mini kidneys are being grown that could be used to test drugs. Researchers in the US are experimenting with tiny bits of livers that might be used to boost failing organs.

Too expensive

At Cambridge University in England, scientists have created hundreds of mini brains to study how neurons form and better understand disorders like autism. During the height of the Zika epidemic last year, mini brains were used to show the virus causes malformed brains in babies. In the Netherlands, the mini guts are used as a stand-in for cystic fibrosis patients to see if those with rare mutations might benefit from a number of pricey drugs, including Orkambi.

Made by Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Orkambi costs about 100,000 euros per patient every year in some parts of Europe, and it's more than double that in the US, which approved the drug in 2015. Despite being initially rejected by the Dutch government for being too expensive, negotiations with Vertex were reopened in July. Making a single mini gut and testing whether the patient would benefit from certain drugs costs a couple of thousand euros. The program is paid for by groups including health insurance companies, patient foundations and the government.

The idea is to find a possible treatment for patients, and avoid putting them on expensive drugs that wouldn't work for them. About 50 to 60 patients across the Netherlands have been treated after drugs were tested on organoids using their cells, said Dr. Kors van der Ent, a cystic fibrosis specialist at the Wilhelmina Children's Hospital, who leads the research. Clevers made a discovery about a decade ago that got researchers on their way. They found pockets of stem cells, which can turn into many types of other cells, in the gut. — AP



ALASKA: In this file photo, the National Science Foundation research ship Sikuliaq is seen moored in Seward, Alaska. — AP

ARCTIC RESEARCHERS TO STUDY WIND EFFECTS ON MARINE LIFE

ANCHORAGE, Alaska: A federal research vessel will launch on a cruise this week to study how Beaufort Sea wind affects plant and animal life in a changing Arctic Ocean. The Sikuliaq (see-KOO'-lee-ak), owned by the National Science Foundation and operated by the University of Alaska Fairbanks, will depart tomorrow from Nome for the trip through the Bering Strait to waters on and off the continental shelf in the Beaufort.

Climate warming in recent decades has resulted in far less summer seasonal ice in the Beaufort, which stretches from the northeast coast of Alaska across Canada. East winds that formerly blew over sea ice now blow over open water, said Steve Okkonen, a physical oceanographer at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Wind drives water at the surface of the shallow continental shelf, at depths of about 300 feet, north to water off the shelf, which drops to depths of more than 10,000 feet.

The result is a phenomenon called "upwelling." Deep, cold water rises toward the surface carrying large concentrations of plankton, which scientists hypothesize will attract fish, especially Arctic cod. Large numbers of cod in turn attract beluga whale and seabirds that prey on cod. Aerial surveys

have shown belugas congregating on the shelf break, said Carin Ashjian, a senior scientist at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, who will serve as chief scientist on the cruise. "What we hope to do, and what we're planning to do, is to basically document and describe how the physical forcing of the wind produces this favorable feeding environment for the beluga whales," she said Tuesday. "It's one thing to say, 'Oh, they can find food along this shelf break. But we want to find out why they find their food along the shelf break, with numbers.'" Upwelling events in the Beaufort are projected to increase as sea ice continues to trend downward, Okkonen said.

Last year the minimum sea ice for 2016 was recorded Sept. 10, when ice covered 1.6 million square miles, tied with Sept 18, 2007, for the second lowest minimum on records since satellite measurements began in 1978. The lowest year on record was Sept 17, 2012, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado, when sea ice fell to 1.31 million square miles. Wind covering a greater distance over open water becomes a greater force on the ocean. "We have a much bigger fetch," Okkonen said. — AP



NETHERLANDS: Samples of mini organs are magnified with microscope at the Hubrecht Institute in Utrecht, Netherlands. — AP

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KUWAIT MARRIOTT HOTELS OFFER NEW PROMOTIONS FOR EID AL-ADHA

Marriott Hotels in Kuwait are offering their guests exclusive deals on rooms during Eid Al-Adha. The exciting array of promotions includes a 20 percent discount on suites at JW Marriott Kuwait City, Courtyard by Marriott Kuwait City and Residence Inn by Marriott Kuwait City. In addition to 30 percent discount in all restaurants, complimentary buffet breakfast, free Wi-Fi and free meals for children under 6 years old.

To add to the exclusive benefits, guests can enjoy free access to the swimming pool and health club. Free valet parking and shared airport transfers will also be available along with early check-in and late check-out, subject to availability. It is also worthy to note that JW Marriott Hotel Kuwait and Courtyard by Marriott Kuwait have direct exclusive entrances to "Salhia" and "Arraya" shopping malls, where guests can shop between an array of world-class retail brands.

A superb dining experience can be enjoyed at Terrace Grill restaurant at the JW Marriott Kuwait. The restaurant offers an extensive menu of the finest meat cuts and seafood. Other

interesting cuisines can be tried at the Japanese Kei restaurant offering sushi and Teppanyaki. In addition to a wide range of buffets from different cuisines at Crossroads restaurant, including Italian, Chinese, Indian and Mediterranean.

The much-celebrated Indian restaurant Soul and Spice in Courtyard by Marriott is well known for serving flavorful Indian dishes, in addition to Sushi restaurant which offers a wide array of mouth-watering Japanese delicacies. Moreover, Blendz restaurant, located at the lobby of Residence Inn by Marriott Kuwait City, offers its guests a unique flavor of modern recipes in a very relaxed ambience making it a perfect place to spend time with family and friends.

"During this special time, friends and families unite over good food and entertainment to celebrate Eid. We spare no efforts in ensuring that all our guests are well served and satisfied with our diversified offerings. On behalf of Kuwait Marriott team, I would like to wish everyone a wonderful and blessed Eid," said George Aoun, Cluster General Manager of Kuwait Marriott Hotels.



KGL PROVIDES LOGISTICS SERVICES TO SRI LANKA 2017 FLOOD VICTIMS



Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport Company (KGL) and the US military Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office in Kuwait have partnered together to provide different services and means of aid to the victims of the flooding that took place in Sri Lanka.

The Senior Manager of Government Services at KGL and Board Member of the American Business Council of Kuwait (ABCK), Pete Swift, stated that in addition to the support provided by KGL, the company also offered their logistics services to transfer the donations collected to the hospitals, schools and orphanages affected by the floods that have left more than 600,000 people temporarily homeless and caused 500 deaths, mostly of which were children.

Pete Swift praised KGL's willingness to provide logistical support and aid to the people affected by natural disasters. In the past, the company has provided numerous types of relief to victims of natural disasters including people in Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan and Nepal. KGL is committed to implementing a purposeful social responsibility program covering the environmental, health, educational and community development fields in co-operation



Pete Swift

with local and international non-profit organizations.

Advisor of the Podujana Peramuna Committee, Susantha Williams, expressed his appreciation and thanks to KGL on behalf of the Sri Lankan population, noting that committee members were facing logistical operation difficulties to transfer the donations. Through coordination and initiative, KGL's transportation of the donations had a positive impact on those affected by the floods. Williams also conveyed his appreciation to the KGL Sri Lankan drivers who had exerted great effort voluntarily to transport the donations.

LOYAC, ESCWA ORGANIZE NATIONAL WORKSHOP

Loyac had recently organized with the United Nations Social and Economic Committee for West Asia (ESCWA) a national workshop to enhance the participation of youth in public issues and taking decisions. The national workshop which took place at the Shaheed Park lasted for three days and certificates were distributed to the participants at the end of the workshop. On her part, Member of Loyac board Fotouh Al-Dalali thanked the ESCWA for its pioneer role at presenting such workshops that will have a fruitful impact on the youth.





00:45 Treehouse Masters
01:40 Bad Dog
02:35 Gator Boys
03:25 The Bronx Zoo
04:15 Insane Pools: Off The Deep

12:15 Hank Zipzer
12:40 Dog With A Blog
13:05 Star Darlings
13:10 Good Luck Charlie
13:35 Austin & Ally

14:15 Future-Worm!
14:40 Kirby Buckets
15:05 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
15:30 Good Luck The Prank

19:00 Clash Of Warriors
20:00 Missing In Alaska
21:00 Ancient Aliens



00:20 Counting Cars
00:45 Counting Cars
01:10 Forged In Fire
02:00 Hunting Hitler

05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 Get Blake
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants

14:25 Suburgatory
14:50 Mom
15:15 The Last Man On Earth

04:36 How Do They Do It?
05:00 Food Factory
05:24 Invent It Rich



00:30 EastEnders
01:00 Poldark
01:55 Last Tango In Halifax
02:50 Prime Suspect: Tension



00:00 Escaping Polygamy
01:00 Celebrity Ghost Stories
02:00 My Haunted House
03:00 Psychic Kids: Children Of The Paranormal

00:00 Henry Hugglemonster
00:15 Calimero
00:30 Art Attack
00:55 Zou

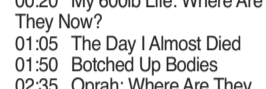
00:50 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
01:50 El News
02:50 Celebrity Style Story

00:20 Counting Cars
00:45 Counting Cars
01:10 Forged In Fire
02:00 Hunting Hitler

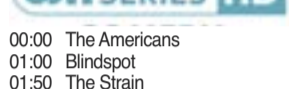
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 Get Blake
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants



00:40 Better Call Saul
01:35 The Americans
02:30 Blindspot



00:20 My 600lb Life: Where Are They Now?
01:05 The Day I Almost Died



00:00 The Americans
01:00 Blindspot
01:50 The Strain



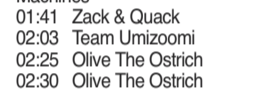
00:05 Australia Smashes Guinness World Records
00:30 Playhouse Masters
01:20 World's Toughest Expeditions With James Cracknell

00:00 Henry Hugglemonster
00:15 Calimero
00:30 Art Attack
00:55 Zou

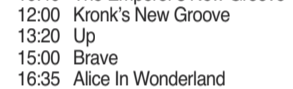
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01:50 El News
02:50 Celebrity Style Story



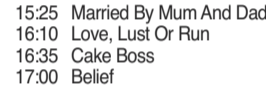
00:45 Testing The Menu With Nic Watt
01:10 Sinful Sweets



00:01 Max & Ruby
00:25 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:36 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom



01:35 Marvel's Iron Man & Captain America: Heroes United



01:35 Tracers
03:20 The 5th Wave



00:00 WWE Vintage
01:00 WWE Raw
03:30 FIBA 3 X 3 Basketball World Tour Highlights



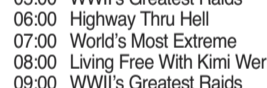
00:30 Vanity Fair Confidential
01:20 Evil Online
02:10 Murder Comes To Town



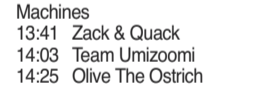
00:20 Wheeler Dealers
01:05 Last Chance Hospital
02:35 X-Ray Mega Airport



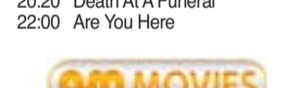
00:00 Don't Tell The Bride
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street



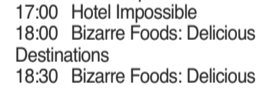
00:10 Surgery Ship
01:00 Jfk: Seven Days That Made A President



01:10 Helicopter Mom
02:40 Christmas Eve
04:20 The Grand Seduction



01:10 Helicopter Mom
02:40 Christmas Eve
04:20 The Grand Seduction



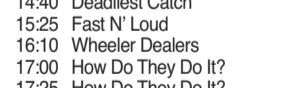
00:00 Bizarre Foods: Delicious Destinations
00:30 Bizarre Foods: Delicious Destinations



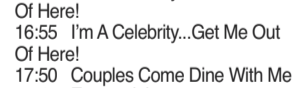
00:00 Indy Car Highlights
01:00 Legends Football League
02:30 Inside Glory



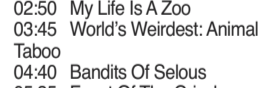
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles



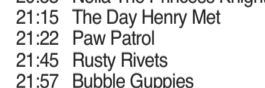
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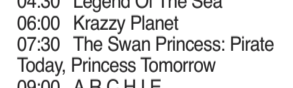
00:00 Don't Tell The Bride
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street



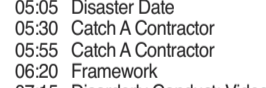
00:20 Lion Battle Zone
01:10 Hooked
02:00 Feast Of The Grizzly



00:25 25th Hour
03:25 The Wave
04:30 Experimenter



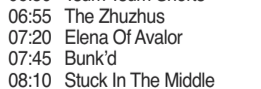
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01:35 Marco Macaco
03:00 Poo's Heffalump Movie



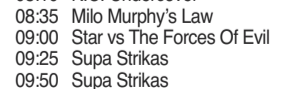
00:05 Inside Amy Schumer
00:30 Inside Amy Schumer
00:55 Broad City



00:30 PGA European Tour Highlights
01:00 Golfing World
02:00 Asian Tour Highlights



00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles



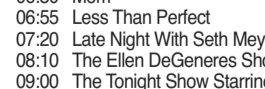
00:20 Wheeler Dealers
01:05 Last Chance Hospital
02:35 X-Ray Mega Airport



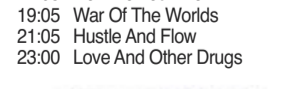
00:00 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
01:00 Clash Of Warriors
02:00 Missing In Alaska



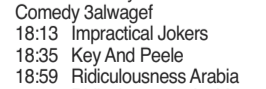
00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion



00:15 The Middle
02:15 The Middle
03:15 The Middle



00:10 Indecent Proposal
02:10 Con Air
04:05 Ghostbusters

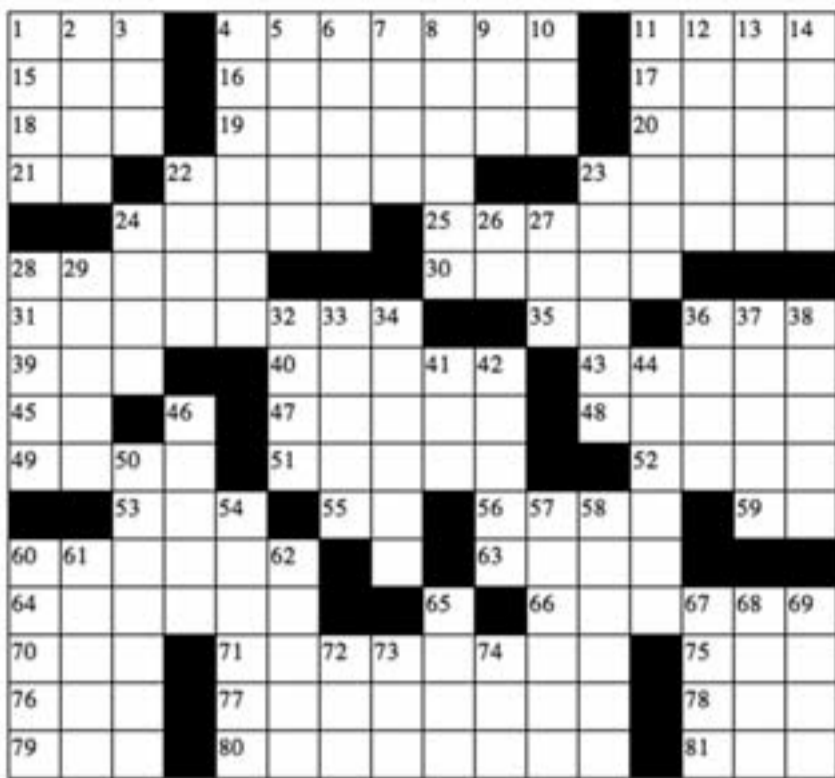


00:05 Inside Amy Schumer
00:30 Inside Amy Schumer
00:55 Broad City



00:00 Caribbean Premier League Highlights
00:55 Live Caribbean Premier League

CROSSWORD 1694



ACROSS

1. Wet spongy ground of decomposing vegetation.
4. A negatively charged electrode that is the source of electrons in an electrical device.
11. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
15. A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
16. Someone who arrives (or has arrived).
17. Report or maintain.
18. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
19. A barrier consisting of a horizontal bar and supports.
20. A loose material consisting of grains of rock or coral.
21. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
25. Any fern of the genus Davallia.
28. The Mongol people living the the central and eastern parts of Outer Mongolia.
30. Any compound of oxygen with another element or a radical.
31. The quality of being the same in quantity or measure or value or status.
35. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
39. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
40. Relating to or containing diazonium.
43. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
45. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
47. Not the same one or ones already mentioned or implied.
48. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
49. Having or denoting a low vocal or instrumental range.
51. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
52. Acquire or gain knowledge or skills.
53. The 22nd letter of the Greek alphabet.
55. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
56. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
59. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
60. A percussion instrument consisting of a pair of hollow pieces of wood or bone (usually held between the thumb and fingers) that are made to click together (as by Spanish dancers) in rhythm with the dance.
63. Material used to daub walls.
64. Used improperly or excessively especially drugs.
66. Favoring one person or side over another.
70. The extreme end of something.
71. A region of central Spain.
75. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
76. A lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the blood.
77. Relating to bees or beekeeping.
78. Light informal conversation for social occasions.
79. The seat within a bishop's diocese where his cathedral is located adv.

DOWN

80. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
81. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
1. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
2. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
3. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
4. Of deserts of northern Africa and southern Asia.
5. An edible seaweed with a mild flavor.
6. The cardinal number that is the sum of one and one and one.
7. A local and well-defined elevation of the land.
8. A city in northwestern Spain near the Cantabrian Mountains.
9. The habitation of wild animals.
10. A cgs unit of work or energy.
11. Speak in a nasal voice.
12. A means of serving.
13. 100 penni equal 1 markka.
14. Type genus of the Ardeidae.
22. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
23. A state in southeastern India on the Bay of Bengal (south of Andhra Pradesh).
24. (Welsh) A warrior god.
26. An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
27. Compete for something.
29. Jordan's port.
32. A material effigy that is worshipped as a god.
33. The concentration of a solution as determined by titration.
34. A name for the Old Testament God as transliterated from the Hebrew YHWH.
36. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
37. The hair growing on the lower part of a man's face.
38. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
41. The 26th letter of the Roman alphabet.
42. (Greek mythology) One of the mountain nymphs.
44. West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
46. Goddess of dawn.
50. A unit of apothecary weight equal to 20 grains.
54. A mass of ice and snow that permanently covers a large area of land (e.g., the polar regions or a mountain peak).
57. 1 species.
58. A geographical region of northeastern South America including Guyana and Surinam.
61. Dwell (archaic).
62. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
65. A genus of Mustelidae.
67. An narrative telling the adventures of a hero or a family.
68. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
69. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
72. Term of address for a man.
73. Of a light yellowish-brown color n 1.
74. Being two more than fifty.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find yourself awake at an early hour this morning. You could be helping someone move or driving someone to the airport. Whatever the case, you are available to help. Sympathy and understanding are emotional qualities that take on a greater importance now. Even though it is the top of the morning when you help this person, you are reflective and may be a mirror for this person's focus. You are equality-minded and easy to talk with—a good mediator as well. As a sociable and slightly frivolous orientation sets in this afternoon, you may find yourself planning a neighborhood get-together. There is time to relax—perhaps a massage or some leisure time in a pool. You are driven to excel in any form of physical or creative expression today.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are good at relations regarding politics, diplomacy and sales—not to mention considerate and helpful. This is a good day for you to deal in sales or presentations. You have an inner urge to be all things to all people and would rather bend than argue. You will be helping a friend today because you are willing to listen and not criticize. You are a natural diplomat, always concerned with the comfort and welfare of others. You stay in the background, but are able to manipulate and bring out cooperation in others every time. A real estate profession is something you might seriously consider. This is a day you should enjoy—relax. With your strong drive to do and accomplish, every bit of relaxation you get will be beneficial.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Progressive people and idealistic groups or concepts play a more important role in your life now—a new cycle begins. There is a concern for something bigger than any one person—perhaps an interest in civic affairs or even some new recycling technique. You are very communicative, flexible, mental and other-oriented today. You will find many, particularly young people, listen to your ideas and advice. Your laser-like mind makes conversations fast-paced and illuminating. A ready wit and a great sense of humor create a rewarding day. You may join a self-help group or find yourself talking about a self-help book to a close friend this evening. Whatever the case, you have insight into your own emotions and drive. You can be a good mentor.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Easy does it—this is one of those busy days. If you need to concentrate on a particular chore, it would be a good idea to suggest that others either help you or leave you alone to do your work. This way, you will not get as many interruptions—and who knows—someone might help you with your special chore or project. A family gathering may be planned for later this day, perhaps a picnic. Tonight could complete your little gathering with a nearby outdoor concert. A music festival or some other type of fun activity with lots of children and unique exhibits just gives everyone the perfect opportunity to get to know each other better. There are opportunities to teach young people a sense of sharing and support of each other.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Having and appreciating things of beauty and value plays a big role in your life at this time. Making the most of what you have, striving for security and stability; that's the impulse that stirs in you now. You find yourself talking about investing and may even have a personal plan. Provided you do not spend the entire budget on the fancy things that catch your eye, a shopping expedition can be a financially favorable one for you now. Circumstances may expand your appreciation and enjoyment of your life situation. Your system of values may deepen, providing you with a better sense of discrimination and good taste. There is a desire to purchase items and you might forget when to stop adding to your basket. You are inspired to write poetry.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You are not bound by relationships and are thus not much of a domestic. You find it easy to work with other people and tend to pour a lot of energy into those around you. Foreign affairs may catch your attention at this time. Perhaps an investment you are thinking about is beginning to show quite an upswing in potential. You will find support from others when you turn your attention to health, food, nutrition and areas where service or attention to detail is in high focus. You may enjoy working with a group of people that have similar thinking or politics. With your powerful spirit, you enjoy your strong emotions and have an active social life. There are opportunities to show off your charming side this evening at an upscale social affair.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are very much the creature of habit. The encircling network of friends and relationships are crucial to your success or lack thereof from time to time. You are nourished in great measure by the atmosphere and conditions you are able to set up. You may, however, tend to fluctuate between uninspired routine and crazy binges. For the next few days you may want to spend some time in organizing your thoughts and goals-making lists. Do not forget to walk around your home and make any necessary notes about updates. This is a good time to change the air filters, set out a soaker hose, clean vents, etc. Enjoy a bit of time away from work and responsibilities, perhaps by short trips to fun places this weekend. Consider creating a butterfly garden.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

It is easy for you to express yourself to others—you always manage to make a good appearance. You have an easy manner and find it easy to communicate with just about anyone. You like beautiful surroundings, everything that is calm, tasteful and harmonious. You may be planning a water garden for those hot summer days—maybe a few goldfish. This afternoon you will find yourself involved in several fun conversations with those you love. You are very giving, conciliatory and even flattering in relationships, able to adjust to any situation. Budget restraints are definitely needed so that some item you want in the future will become more attainable. Suggestions by young members in the family will give you new ideas.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You would like your conversations and thinking to stay somewhere near the surface today. This is a day of rest, and deep problem-solving conversations are certainly not on your to-do list. You can create new subjects easily with all the interests you have. You will enjoy your friends today—you love to interact with them. There may be an occasion to teach someone how to write music or to put one of your poems to music. You appreciate change, variety and making local connections—there may be an open house or opening day for some new business. You have many avenues to explore this weekend and many positive things to accomplish. You are more attractive than usual. Intimacy with a person you love will go beyond the usual.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Circumstances may press you and tend to bring out the rebel in you. A little bicycle ride or just a change of scenery for a short while will help to bring your emotions back in balance. Self-control is the accepted and admired behavior, and you are able to respond in positive ways. Circumstances work together to bring out your ideals—making it easier to make your dreams real. You are very original when it comes to home and surroundings—the environment you build around you. This could also manifest in new ideas for unusual ways of supporting yourself in the future. Get outside and be with friends this afternoon—enjoy a breath of fresh air! This evening, literature is on your mind. That book you want to write or read may hold your attention.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

There are changes around your household that may not be the most pleasant for you. Change would be easier if you could have more control. However, if you are paying for these changes, you have the power! This doesn't mean you could be bossy, but it does mean you could become more influential with the price, color, style, etc. If you do not care about any of these, the changes will probably stay. Progressive people and idealistic groups or concepts play an important role in your life. This may be a special day when you have been looking forward to a trip to a museum, art show or the opening night of a play where a family member is performing. You enjoy a bit of culture from time to time and this experience is special.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Everything points to your taking the lead in today's activities. You could feel great support from those around you. You feel healthy and natural. You will find that today is packed full of communication with friends, especially those you may not have seen in some time. Perhaps it is time for a reunion. Practical and effective ideas are the ones that make the most sense—putting them to good use is a focus for you. Material things are foremost on your mind in many respects; an emphasis on the real rather than the ideal. This is the time you may decide to install a porch instead of a deck. Now when company comes, there will be a place to put them. If it is a porch with wide windows, you will enjoy sitting out there for meditations.

WORD SEARCH

Photography

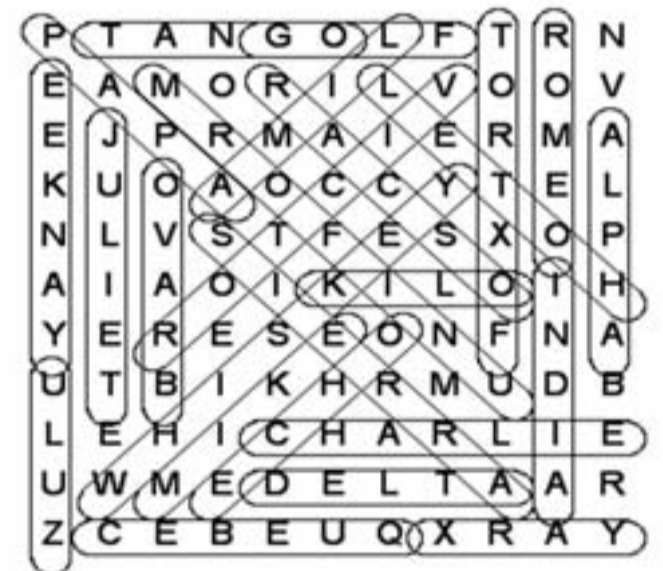
Find and circle all of the Photography terms that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a type of camera.



- | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| APERTURE | ENLARGEMENT | OVEREXPOSURE | SATURATION |
| BALANCE | ENLARGER | PANNING | SHUTTER |
| BELLOWS | FILTER | PANORAMA | SLIDE |
| BLOWUP | FIXING BATH | PARALLAX | STOP BATH |
| CAMERA | FLASH | PHOTOFINISHER | TELEPHOTO LENS |
| CLOSE UP | FOCAL LENGTH | POSITIVE | TINT |
| COLOR | FRAME | PRINT | TOPE |
| CONTRAST | HOT SHOE | PROCESSING | TRIPOD |
| CROPPING | LIGHT METER | RANGEFINDER | UNDEREXPOSURE |
| DARKROOM | LIGHTING | RETOUCHING | VIEWFINDER |
| DEVELOPER | NEGATIVE | SAFELIGHT | ZOOM LENS |

Yesterday's Solution

Phonetic Alphabet



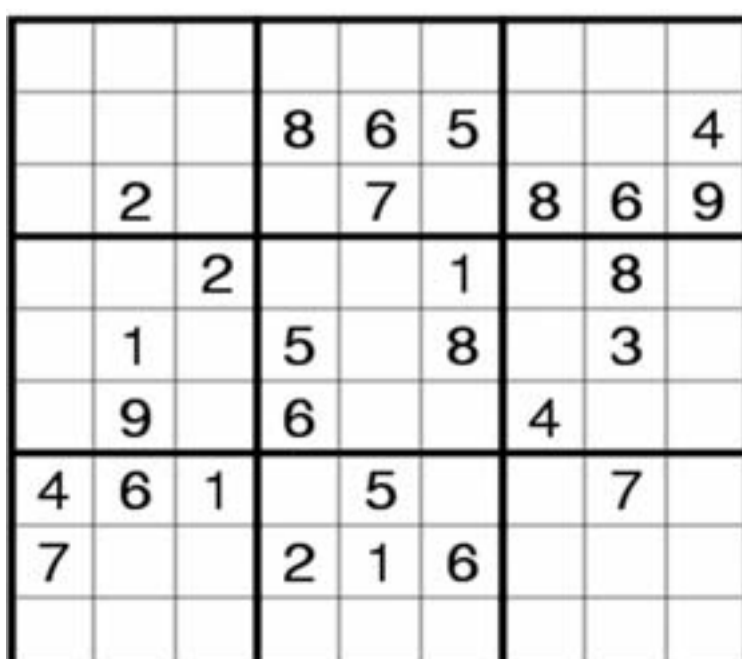
- | | | | |
|---------|--------|--------|---------|
| ALPHA | HOTEL | OSCAR | UNIFORM |
| BRAVO | INDIA | PAPA | VICTOR |
| CHARLIE | JULIET | QUEBEC | WHISKEY |
| DELTA | KILO | ROME | X-RAY |
| ECHO | LIMA | SIERRA | YANKEE |
| FOXTROT | MIKE | TANGO | ZULU |
| GOLF | | | |

The hidden word is: NOVEMBER

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot and Humid specially over coastal areas with light variable wind changing to light to moderate south easterly wind later on, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot and Humid specially over coastal areas with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for mist forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 23/08/2017 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	45 °C	34 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	46 °C	32 °C			
ABDALY	44 °C	32 °C			
BUBYAN	43 °C	33 °C			
JAHRA	48 °C	33 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	43 °C	33 °C			
SALMIYAH	41 °C	33 °C			
AHMADI	41 °C	33 °C			
NUWAISIB	42 °C	32 °C			
WAFRA	48 °C	31 °C			
SALMY	46 °C	31 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	08/24	Very hot	47 °C	32 °C	NW-N	12 - 32 km/h
Friday	08/25	Very hot	48 °C	31 °C	NW	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	08/26	Very hot	48 °C	33 °C	NW-N	10 - 30 km/h
Sunday	08/27	Very hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	47 °C	32 °C	NW-NE	08 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:57
Sunrise	05:21
Zuhr	11:51
Asr	15:25
Sunset	18:21
Isha	19:42

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	49 °C
MIN. Temp.	29 °C
MAX. RH	66 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	E 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

AIRLINES

American Airlines	22087425
Kuwait Airways	22087426
Jazeera Airways	171
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Air Slovakia	22434940
Olympic Airways	22420002/9
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
Reservation	22433388
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Alitalia	22414427
Balkan Airlines	22416474
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Czech Airlines	22417901/2433141
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

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 for office secretary work.

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info@technocraftkuwait.com

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- ◆ 3 bedrooms
- ◆ Saloon
- ◆ Kitchen
- ◆ 3 bathrooms

Free services for you and your family

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Toyota Corolla 2015 Model XLI, 2.0 CC, white pearl color, excellent condition, well maintained, with full option, alloy wheel rim, LED log lamps, bluetooth, rear sensor, remote key, price KD 3250. Please interested person call only.
 Contact: 67031555.
 (C 5340) 22-8-2017

Indian, male, MBA (finance), pursuing CFA (USA) having 12 years experience in Kuwait, presently working as finance manager, is looking for similar post for immediate placement. Please call 90073251 / 55584351.
 (C 5339)

EMERGENCY
 112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw) DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 24/8/2017				Departure Flights on Thursday 24/8/2017			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	574	Mumbai	00:05	JAI	574	Mumbai	23:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:10	THY	772	Istanbul	23:00
KAC	102	London	00:15	KAC	102	London	23:00
SVA	502	Jeddah	00:20	SVA	502	Jeddah	23:00
SVA	514	Riyadh	00:25	SVA	514	Riyadh	23:00
KAC	786	Jeddah	00:30	KAC	786	Jeddah	23:00
JZR	267	Beirut	00:35	JZR	267	Beirut	23:00
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	KAC	504	Beirut	23:00
DLH	635	Doha	01:00	DLH	635	Doha	23:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:15	PGT	858	Istanbul	23:00
JZR	539	Cairo	01:20	JZR	539	Cairo	23:00
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30	SAI	441	Lahore	23:00
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	UAE	853	Dubai	23:00
RJA	642	Amman	01:45	RJA	642	Amman	23:00
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	THY	1464	Istanbul	23:00
KKK	6506	Istanbul	01:55	KKK	6506	Istanbul	23:00
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	AXB	395	Kozhikode	23:00
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:05	KLM	446	Bahrain	23:00
PGT	830	Istanbul	02:10	PGT	830	Istanbul	23:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:10	QTR	1086	Doha	23:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	GFA	211	Bahrain	23:00
THY	768	Istanbul	02:35	THY	768	Istanbul	23:00
KAC	418	Manila	02:50	KAC	418	Manila	23:00
OMR	643	Muscat	03:05	OMR	643	Muscat	23:00
MSR	606	Luxor	03:05	MSR	606	Luxor	23:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	23:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	MSR	612	Cairo	23:00
FDB	069	Dubai	03:15	FDB	069	Dubai	23:00
KAC	382	Delhi	03:15	KAC	382	Delhi	23:00
QTR	1076	Doha	03:45	QTR	1076	Doha	23:00
KAC	1544	Cairo	03:50	KAC	1544	Cairo	23:00
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	LMU	510	Cairo	23:00
QTR	1090	Doha	04:05	QTR	1090	Doha	23:00
JZR	555	Alexandria	04:05	JZR	555	Alexandria	23:00
UAE	873	Dubai	04:15	UAE	873	Dubai	23:00
KAC	358	Kochi	04:50	KAC	358	Kochi	23:00
FEG	931	Alexandria	05:00	FEG	931	Alexandria	23:00
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:00	KAC	784	Jeddah	23:00
THY	1414	TZ	05:05	THY	1414	TZ	23:00
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	DHX	170	Bahrain	23:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	THY	770	Istanbul	23:00
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	KAC	344	Chennai	23:00
JZR	529	Asyut	05:35	JZR	529	Asyut	23:00
KAC	362	Colombo	05:50	KAC	362	Colombo	23:00
BAW	157	London	06:05	BAW	157	London	23:00
KAC	204	Lahore	06:20	KAC	204	Lahore	23:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:25	KAC	678	Dubai	23:00
QTR	8511	Doha	06:35	QTR	8511	Doha	23:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:35	KAC	284	Dhaka	23:00
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:40	KAC	206	Islamabad	23:00
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:55	KAC	302	Mumbai	23:00
KAC	156	Istanbul	07:05	KAC	156	Istanbul	23:00
JZR	1541	Cairo	07:10	JZR	1541	Cairo	23:00
JZR	503	Luxor	07:25	JZR	503	Luxor	23:00
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	FDB	053	Dubai	23:00
KAC	354	Bangalore	07:50	KAC	354	Bangalore	23:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	384	Delhi	23:00
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KAC	332	Trivandrum	23:00
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	UAE	855	Dubai	23:00
IRA	673	Ahwaz	08:35	IRA	673	Ahwaz	23:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	23:00
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	ABY	125	Sharjah	23:00
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:05	IRA	667	Esfahan	23:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25	QTR	1070	Doha	23:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	FDB	055	Dubai	23:00
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	SVA	512	Riyadh	23:00
FDK	803	Damascus	10:00	FDK	803	Damascus	23:00
JZR	561	Sohag	10:10	JZR	561	Sohag	23:00
AHY	5101	GYD	10:15	AHY	5101	GYD	23:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	GFA	213	Bahrain	23:00
KAC	774	Riyadh	10:45	KAC	774	Riyadh	23:00
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	MEA	404	Beirut	23:00
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	QTR	1074	Doha	23:00
PAL	668	Manila	11:00	PAL	668	Manila	23:00
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	SYR	341	Damascus	23:00
MSC	403	Asyut	11:15	MSC	403	Asyut	23:00
KAC	614	Bahrain	11:15	KAC	614	Bahrain	23:00
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:30	RBG	553	Alexandria	23:00
JZR	165	Dubai	11:50	JZR	165	Dubai	23:00
JZR	239	Amman	12:25	JZR	239	Amman	23:00
SAW	709	Latakia	12:30	SAW	709	Latakia	23:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	UAE	871	Dubai	23:00
THY	766	Istanbul	12:50	THY	766	Istanbul	23:00

GOSSIP



Carly Rae Jepsen's mystery game plan

Carly Rae Jepsen says it's a "mystery" as to when she'll release her next record. The 'Call Me Maybe' hitmaker hasn't given fans a studio album since 2015's 'Emotion' and is in no hurry to drop music right away, but she says she has a "game plan" starting to take shape. She told Vulture: "I'll say this: I have my own little game plan, but life's a mystery, and you never know what could happen. "I'm open to a little flexibility in that, obviously. I don't run the show in terms of what happens [when], but I definitely feel like I'm starting to have a game plan, yes." The 31-year-old beauty - who is set to join Katy Perry on her 'WITNESS: Tour' in September - says the most important thing to her is to make music of a high standard that she can leave behind as a legacy, as she doesn't measure her success through record sales. Asked if her fans are getting the "real" her, she explained: "I feel like every year, I'm painfully stripping closer and closer. "Also, I've made some changes in the way I look at the business and my place in it. "I don't care that much about maybe some of the things that I should care about, but the ultimate thing for me is caring about leaving something good after I die. "So I'm not really worried about how well it sells or how well it does. "The game is fun, yes. "I understand the game. But I'm never going to sacrifice what I think is the quality of something to win. I think the only way to really win at the game-and by the game, I mean the business-is to win it authentically, almost by accident, because it just was a true version of yourself. "I'm not going to be satisfied if something works and felt like it wasn't me, you know?"

Kasabian axed Belfast gig due to frontman's severe vomiting

Kasabian axed their Belfast show after Tom Meighan was rushed to hospital with "severe vomiting". The band say they had "no option" but to pull out of the gig moments before they were due to go on stage at Custom House Square in the Northern Irish capital city on Tuesday night, because the frontman became poorly and was unable to stand up. The 'God Bless This Acid House' hitmakers angered their fans by giving little notice, but have reassured them they will be rescheduling the performance and that the 36-year-old singer is resting up. Taking to Facebook to reveal the illness which caused them to cancel the performance, the band wrote: "Absolutely gutted to have to cancel last night's show in Belfast. We were all at Custom House Square, ready to go on stage when Tom suddenly went down with severe vomiting and could hardly stand up let alone sing. He was taken to hospital, put on a drip and told to rest up. We had no option but to cancel and we're sorry to our fans and anyone that travelled a long way. Thanks so much for all your messages of support. Details on the rescheduled date to follow soon xx (sic)" Fans were

urged to keep hold of their tickets as they will be valid for a rescheduled date when that is announced. Last night a statement from the organizers read: "We are working on scheduling a new date for Belfast. We will communicate with all ticket buyers via Ticketmaster and on the Custom House Square social media. "Tickets remain valid for the new date. We apologize for any inconvenience caused." Many at the concert were outraged by the last-minute cancellation, claiming they had been waiting in the rain for hours and buying pricey drinks. One fan tweeted: "10 mins before your supposed to come on! I've been paying 5 quid pints for 2 hours! (sic)" Another wrote: "Why wait until 20:50 to tell the fans... we've been stood in the rain for nearly 3 hours! (sic)" One supporter posted: "Clearly not that buzzing for the gig tonight!! Fans standing in the p***ing rain waiting to see you's!! Bad craic lads (sic)" That appeared to be referencing a tweet Kasabian sent out on Monday, which stated they were excited for the Belfast concert. It read: "Tokyo to Belfast, buzzing for tomorrow! (sic)".



Payne, Lipa and more for Radio 1 Teen Awards

Liam Payne, Dua Lipa and Camila Cabello are among those set to perform at the 18th Radio 1 Teen Awards. The trio will be joined by The Vamps and Rita Ora, who is also co-hosting alongside Radio 1 Breakfast Show host, Nick Grimshaw at The SSE Wembley on October 22. For 'Strip That Down' hitmaker Liam, 23, it's the second time he would've played at the annual ceremony after One Direction performed in 2015 before their hiatus. He said: "It's always a great day with a brilliant line-up. "I'm looking forward to performing my new songs and returning to the stage - but as a solo artist this time." Dua, 22, said: "I'm thrilled to be invited back to perform this year. Can't wait to see you there!" The Vamps - who have played twice before - can't wait to return. They said: "The Teen Awards is always a great time to celebrate incredible young individuals and we are extremely proud to be a part of such an important celebration." The likes of Stormzy, Little Mix, Ed Sheeran, Harry Styles, Drake and Justin Bieber have all been nominated for awards. Radio 1 will be streaming live on Radio 1's BBC iPlayer channel, BBC Red Button and Radio 1's website. Tickets go on sale at 9am tomorrow.

T-Pain announces acoustic tour

T-Pain has announced his first-ever acoustic tour. The 'Buy You A Drank' rapper has decided to give his fans what they asked for after being flooded with compliments for a special 'Tiny Desk Concert' performance he did for NPR in 2014, which saw him ditch his trademark auto-tune style in favor of going fully acoustic. He said: "I wanted to do something different for you guys ... performing some of my favorite songs in a way you've never seen or heard. "The love and respect I've received from my NPR performance has not only shown a different side of me to fans, but it also has introduced me to a whole different set of fans. "All I see on social media is how all my fans want to see this in person, live, with their own eyes." T-Pain - real name Faheem Rashad Najm - will kick off the mini six-show run in San Francisco on October 4 and wrap it up in Washington on October 30. Asked what fans can expect, he said: "Ya know, in case of people screaming requests from the audience before promising. "The fans can expect a good time and nostalgia out the wazo!" Not only did the NPR show inspire the 31-year-old star to do something fresh with his music, but it also convinced him to quit smoking, and he has been reaping the health benefits ever since. Speaking to the station, he explained: "I know for a fact that I could've sounded better that day if I hadn't been smoking so many cigarettes beforehand and because of that, I quit a week later and haven't touched a cigarette since. "My heart problems have gone away. I feel great. I can breathe again. A lot came from this performance."



Stormzy to perform at the Hyundai Mercury Prize Awards Show

Stormzy will be among the performers at this year's Hyundai Mercury Prize Awards Show at the Eventim Apollo, Hammersmith. The chart-topping star has enjoyed an incredible 2017, with his debut studio album 'Gang Signs & Prayer' becoming the first grime album in history to reach number one in the UK charts, and he's now poised to perform at the awards bash on September 14. As well as Stormzy, the show will also feature performances from the likes of Alt-J, Blossoms, Dinosaur, Glass Animals, J Hus and Kate Tempest. The bash - which is designed to celebrate and promote the best of UK music - will conclude with the announcement of the overall winner of the 2017 Hyundai Mercury Prize for Album of the Year. BBC Music will be providing live TV and radio coverage of the event on BBC Four and BBC Radio 6 Music, with BBC Four showing performances from the artists on the night and building up to the announcement of the award winner. Meanwhile, BBC Two will broadcast a 30-minute documentary that will preview the shortlisted artists for the 2017 Prize, interviewing current acts and past Mercury winners. Tickets for the bash are now available and can be purchased online at www.mercuryprize.com.

Ioan Gruffudd: James Cameron was possessed filming Titanic

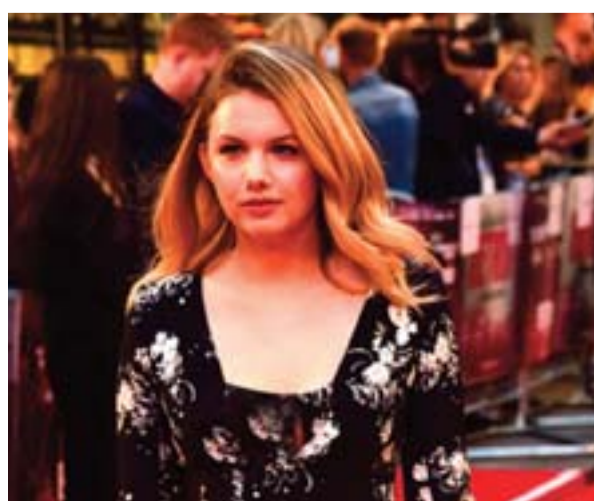
Ioan Gruffudd said James Cameron was like a "man possessed" while filming 'Titanic'. The 43-year-old actor - who starred in the award-winning movie as officer Harold Lowe - admitted the atmosphere on the set of the 1997 blockbuster was always "tense" because the director was under a lot of pressure from two studios to finish the movie. Speaking to the Daily Telegraph newspaper, the actor said: "If James Cameron was here now, he'd be delightful. But oh, my goodness, on 'Titanic', he was a man on a mission. "There were two studios breathing down his neck... he was a man possessed so the atmosphere was so tense, but he was just getting this movie done." Gruffudd also starred in the 2005 Hollywood superhero movie 'Fantastic Four' and the subsequent sequel 'Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer' as Mr Fantastic but found making a superhero film isn't the most "satisfying experience" because there's so much CGI involved. He said: "Making those movies isn't the most satisfying experiences, it's all green screen and technical stuff but once it's put together it's extraordinary, doing the promotion, travelling the world first class. "It was just brilliant for a chap who grew up in Aberdare." Now the actor is older he believes he gets considered for more roles because he doesn't look like a "leading man" anymore. He said: "It's exciting because there are all sorts of parts I'd never have been considered for in the past because I was too young and looked too much like a leading man. "Now, I've got a bit of weathering. I've put on a bit more weight, I'm a bit more jowly. I can play a character a real person." Gruffudd's name was also thrown into the mix about who could replace Daniel



Craig as the next James Bond but the actor has confirmed he was never approached for the iconic role. He said: "I defy any British actor to deny they've not stood in front of the mirror and said 'Bond, James Bond!'"



Murray reveals **Detroit** cast didn't get full scripts



Kathryn Bigelow refused to give all her cast the full 'Detroit' script. Hannah Murray stars as Julie Delaney in the director's new movie - based around the real life murder of three African American men during the 1960s race riots - and she revealed the filmmaker wanted everyone's performance to be "fresh", so kept the knowledge of who survived until the end as secret as possible. Speaking to the i newspaper, the actress said: "Kathryn doesn't like people to over prepare. "She likes things to feel spontaneous and fresh. Some people never got the full script, particularly the guys in the movie, she didn't want them to know if they survived or not, so the stakes felt genuinely high." Bigelow, who is the first female filmmaker to win an Oscar, has a number of successful movies to date and before they met Murray thought she would be an "intimidating presence". She said: "I had this idea, because of 'The Hurt Locker' and 'Zero Dark Thirty' and the intensity of those films, that Kathryn might be an intimidating presence, but she is totally the opposite. "She is really kind

and really gentle and put me at ease straight away, so it felt like an easy audition." The film - which also stars John Boyega, Will Poulter and Anthony Mackie - was written using court reports and eye-witness accounts of the incident in the Algiers Motel. One of the eye-witnesses was Julie Delaney - who is played by Murray in the movie - and the actress revealed Delaney was a consultant on the set, though they didn't really speak about the events depicted in the film. She said: "We didn't talk about the incident much. It was more about getting to know her as a person and connecting with who she was. "She said a couple of things that were really helpful. One was 'I was a spoilt only child and I felt that I could get away with anything' and the other came after I asked her various questions about why she was there at the motel. 'I was just looking for a good time and I'm really not that complicated', and I found it interesting that someone sees themselves like that."

FEATURES

Michael K Williams cut from Han Solo movie



Michael K Williams has been cut out of the untitled Han Solo movie. The 50-year-old actor's commitment to 'The Red Sea Diving Resort' and TV show 'Hap and Leonard' meant he was unavailable for the reshoots new director Ron Howard - who was brought on board the 'Star Wars' spin-off following the departure of Christopher Miller and Phil Lord - wanted for his version of the film, so it has been decided to drop his unnamed half-human, half-animal role from the project completely. He said: "I felt great about what I created with the directors that I worked with. We created a kick-ass character, in my opinion. I'm proud of it. When Ron Howard got hired to finish out the film, there were some reshoot issues that needed to be done in regards to my character, in order for it to match the new direction which the producers wanted Ron to carry the film in. "And that would have required me on a plane a month ago to London, to Pinewood, to do reshoots. But I'm here, on location in Africa. It's scheduling. I'm not going to be back on the market until the end of November after 'Hap and Leonard',

and for them to wait that long for me, that would have pushed back the release date, which I believe is in May 2018. They wanted me now; I couldn't go. So they had to clip-clip-clip." However, Michael teased he could find a part in the 'Star Wars' universe in another film at a later date. He told Deadline: "I don't think that me not being in the 'Star Wars' family in final. I left with a very good taste in my mouth about the whole family, and I hope that I left a good taste in their mouth. "They're a great group of people, the Lucas family." The 'Han Solo' spin-off movie is set to follow a younger version of the titular character, with Alden Ehrenreich taking over the iconic role from Harrison Ford. Han and his wookiee sidekick Chewbacca will be seen first meeting Lando Calrissian - played by Donald Glover - and they will also encounter Woody Harrelson's alter ego Beckett, who is believed to be a mentor to young Han who guides him on his journey to becoming a space smuggler. The untitled Han Solo film will be released in May 2018.

Scorsese to produce The Joker movie



Martin Scorsese is set to produce a movie based on 'Batman' villain The Joker. The Hollywood legend will be joined on the production team by 'The Hangover' helmer Todd Phillips, who is in line to direct the motion picture and co-write a script alongside '8 Mile' scribe Scott Silver. According to Deadline, Warner Bros. and DC are in the early stages of putting the 'Batman' spin-off together and it will be the first movie under a new banner which is yet to have been given a name. While plot details are yet to be revealed, it is thought the movie could focus around The Joker's origin story and be different to any other iteration. It is expected to be a "gritty and grounded" crime movie set in the early 1980s of Gotham City. Jared Leto is set to reprise his role as the character in the upcoming 'Suicide Squad' sequel but he is not due to play the part in the new Joker standalone project. The

studio are thought to be looking to a different, potentially younger, actor. The Joker has been famously portrayed by Jack Nicholson in the 1989 film 'Batman' and Heath Ledger - who died in January 2008 - in the 2008 film 'The Dark Knight', for which the latter won a posthumous Best Supporting Actor Oscar for his performance. Scorsese has helmed some epic movies over the years, including 'Taxi Driver' and 'Raging Bull', and The Joker film is expected to be similar to those rather than a usual DC motion picture. This comes just days after Karen Gillan - who plays blue-skinned alien assassin Nebula in Marvel's 'Guardians of the Galaxy' - admitted she would love to join DC as a female Joker. She said: "Oh can I say something DC? Okay, I'm going to say something DC, and I'm going to play the Joker. "Maybe a female Joker. This is my calling! Somebody make a call for me and let them know I'm available."

Snow was allowed to improv on Pitch Perfect 3

Brittany Snow was allowed to "improv" while filming 'Pitch Perfect 3'. The 31-year-old actress thought it would be "hard" to make a third film in the series, so she was delighted that producers found a way, and after so long working on the musical movies, new director Trish Sie allowed her cast to just "be" their characters. Brittany - who plays Chloe - said: "It seemed like it was going to be hard to bring all those girls back together because they've all left college and grown up now but they've managed to do it, they go on a tour. "I haven't seen it yet but I've heard it's really great and Trish Sie, our current director, really let a lot of us improv and be our characters." Before the release of 'Pitch Perfect 3' later this year, the actress can be seen in the new action-thriller

'Bushwick' by Cary Murnion and Jonathan Milott alongside 'Guardians of the Galaxy' star Dave Bautista, but she was initially "hesitant" to take part in the film. She told the Metro newspaper: "At first I was really hesitant to even do the movie - I thought it had a B movie premise. "But then I talked to the directors and they explained they wanted a single-take action video game feel and they wanted to take a stab at what was going on in the current climate. "What appealed to me was the idea that I only had one or two takes to do a 20-minute scene and it was almost like rehearsing and doing a play. "I'd never done a movie like that before." 'Bushwick' follows Lucy (Snow) who arrives in the Bushwick neighborhood, in Brooklyn, and militia forces have entered New York to claim it as an East Coast base of

operations. Taking shelter in the basement of Stupe (Bautista), the two have to find a way to get Lucy to reach her destination through the dangerous streets. The actress admitted she needed to work on her character and give her a backstory because she couldn't play a girl who is "clueless". She said: "When we got the script, my character Lucy was very much a damsel in distress. She was asking 'what is going on?' probably about, no joke, 30 or 40 times. "As a 29-year-old woman at the time, I said, I can't feasibly do this, play a girl who is this out of the loop and this clueless. "She has to have some sort of arc and backstory so we tried to incorporate that as much as we could and make her a fighter." — Bang Showbiz



An archaeologist works on part of a 1,500-year-old mosaic floor bearing the names of Byzantine Emperor Justinian, at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem, yesterday, after they unearth a portion of ancient mosaic near the city's Damascus Gate. — AFP photos

'RARE' BYZANTINE MOSAIC REVEALED IN JERUSALEM'S OLD CITY

Israeli archaeologists yesterday unveiled a 1,500-year-old portion of mosaic floor bearing the names of Byzantine Emperor Justinian and a senior Orthodox priest. David Gellman, director of the excavation in east Jerusalem's walled Old City, said that while the area was rich in archaeological finds, few such inscriptions had been found. "Direct text and letters from people back then are relatively rare," he told AFP. The Greek inscription, dated at 550 or 551 AD, commemorates the founding of a building thought to be a hostel for pilgrims near the city's Damascus Gate. Constantine, the Orthodox priest who founded it, was abbot of the Nea Church, dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the largest church in Jerusalem when it was built in 543 AD. Gellman said the rectangular section of mosaic, 1.14 meters (3 foot 7 inches) on its longest side, "tells us about the way churches and monasteries worked back then. It makes

this piece very unique". "It tells us that the abbot, the head of the big church in Jerusalem, was not only the head of that specific church," he said. It was discovered intact about a meter (three feet) below street level as Gellman and his team made a routine exploratory dig ahead of the arrival of workers to lay communications cables. "We were very close to closing the excavation when I noticed that a few of the mosaic stones, which were otherwise plain white, were at a different angle and seemed to be a little darker," he said. "I cleaned up that small corner... and found that it was the bottom left corner of the inscription itself," he added. "At that moment I realized that we have a very unique find here." The Old City lies in east Jerusalem, seized by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed in a move never recognized by the international community. — AFP

Dora no Explorer: TV network axes Philippine resort plan after outcry

American children's television network Nickelodeon said yesterday it had abandoned plans for a themed resort on an island known as the Philippines' last ecological frontier following a backlash from environmentalists. Nickelodeon said in January that it would build an "undersea attraction and resort" on Palawan island that would let fans "interact with the brand and the iconic characters they love", including SpongeBob SquarePants and Dora the Explorer. The announcement triggered fierce criticism from environmental campaigners who said it would destroy the area's world-famous marine ecosystem, and an online petition calling for the project to be scrapped attracted more than 260,000 signatures. Viacom International Media Networks, which owns Nickelodeon, said Wednesday it had abandoned the project. "(Viacom) and Nickelodeon will no longer be involved with this proposed development," the company said in a statement sent to AFP. Viacom said the decision was "mutually agreed" with its Philippine partner, Coral World Park. The statement did not say why Viacom had pulled out and its regional spokeswoman would not elaborate when contacted by AFP. Conservation groups call Palawan "the last frontier" because of its pristine coastlines and forests, which are among the oldest and most diverse in Southeast Asia. It is home to two UNESCO World Heritage-listed sites, a subterranean river and the Tubbataha coral reefs. Viacom's initial statement in January promoted the project as its first resort in Southeast Asia that "would give a significant business opportunity for our partners across multiple platforms." However Viacom and Coral World Park also highlighted the project's "ocean conservation focus" and plans for a giant marine sanctuary. Environmental group Greenpeace on Wednesday hailed Viacom's decision as a victory. "We commend Viacom for heeding the call of more than 200,000 online petitioners and the offline community campaign," Vince Cinches of Greenpeace Southeast Asia told AFP. "They were able to dodge the bullet that has a huge reputational backlash for Nickelodeon which has been claiming it is children orient-



ed." The Nickelodeon resort was meant to be part of Coral World Park's 400-hectare (1,000-acre) development. Coral World Park said in a statement on Wednesday it planned to continue with its project, while describing reports the development would harm the environment and a local tribal group as "misleading information". "We are converting a former mining site into a tourism development contrary to reports that we are building on pristine land," it said. The executive director of environmental group Save Philippine Seas, Anna Oposa, told AFP the campaign against the development would not let up. "Our position and strategy will not change: we'll continue to call on the local government of Coron and provincial government of Palawan to reject the project," she said. — AFP

Antiques can add personality, focal point to a garden

Adding antique garden ornaments to the landscape blends horticulture with history. One-of-a-kind pieces will personalize your property, and over time may grow into something richly rewarding - financially as well as artistically. "Really outstanding good old pieces such as a swan bench, unusual large decorative urn or piece of sculpture will continue to go up in value, but really more important to my client is the same artistic pleasure that placing a certain piece in their garden gives to them," said Aileen Minor, owner of Aileen Minor Garden Antiques & Decorative Arts in Centreville, Maryland. Some of her garden antiques have been installed in the US Capitol, the Smithsonian Institution, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and in private collections around the United States, Germany, England and France. The definition of "antique" is somewhat elastic but generally applies to objects more than 100 years old. "What makes a piece worth collecting? I would say rarity, design detail, all original parts and age," Minor said. Garden antiques are most commonly made of wicker, metal or stone, and range from pergolas and gazebos to cemetery headstones and fountains, from ironwork, fencing and gates to outdoor furniture and windows. Family heirlooms certainly qualify. Each person has his or her own idea about what constitutes a collectible, said Troy Rhone, owner of Troy Rhone Garden Design in Birmingham, Alabama. "Typically, I look for pieces that are over 120 years old and have a unique history," Rhone said. "I'm not as concerned about the price because I'm usually looking for a specific item for my gardens." Rhone studies each piece to determine if there are markings to determine who made it, signs of wear and tear, and areas that might deteriorate quickly. "Not many pieces can stand the test of time when exposed to weather, so using pieces that have proved their sustainability is something most people are drawn toward," Rhone said. Many people shape their garden antique collections around



In a private garden in rural Belgium shows an antique bird bath being used to focus attention on an array of blooming bulbs.

a theme. Some may want to match a Victorian-era setting, highlighting the looks of their home and neighborhood. Others simply want practical antiques spotted tastefully around their landscape. "Collectors do collect pieces based on forms such as antique hitching posts or interesting sculpture," Minor said. "But more often they are looking to find unusual pieces such as a fountain for a focal point in a garden, or are looking for an



Photo taken in a private garden in rural Belgium demonstrates how eye-catching statuary can be used to personalize flower gardens. — AP photos

attractive antique or vintage bench or settee for seating in their garden." Estate sales, auctions and antique dealers are good places to look, Rhone said. "They can be a great resource when searching for a specific item. Most of the time it's pretty easy to have shipping arranged." Living at a time when so much is mass-produced, it's nice to have something that no one else has, Rhone said. "That is easily

accomplished with an antique that was handmade," he said. "No one else is likely to have that exact piece so it allows a space to have individuality, which is what makes one garden stand out from the rest." Secure them, though. High-end antique pieces are prime targets for thievery. — AP



Linkin Park plans public memorial for late singer

Rockers Linkin Park said Tuesday that they were planning a public memorial for frontman Chester Bennington, a month after he committed suicide. The band in a Facebook post revealed only that the "special public event" would take place in Los Angeles, saying that more details would be announced later. "Just wanted to say thank you to all our fans around the world for the tremendous outpouring of love, which has strengthened our spirit during this incredibly difficult time," the band wrote.

Bennington-whose raw, angry metal voice duelled with guitarist Mike Shinoda's hip-hop asides to create the band's "nu metal" sound-was found hanging at his Los Angeles home on July 20. The 41-year-old had struggled throughout his life with drugs and alcohol and the trauma of child abuse. Fans around the world have organized dozens of events to remember Bennington after his death, with his shocked bandmates voicing support but not taking part. — AFP

TONY-WINNING WRITER OF 'ANNIE' DIES

Three-time Tony Award-winning book writer Thomas Meehan, best known for transforming the Little Orphan Annie cartoon strip into the smash Broadway musical "Annie," has died at age 88. Meehan, who had been ill for about five months and had undergone surgery, died at his home in Manhattan late Monday or early Tuesday, longtime friend and "Annie" collaborator Martin Charnin said. Charnin visited his old friend about 10 days ago. "There's a hole in my heart," Charnin said. "It's a gigantic loss, not only to the industry but also to us. We've been together and so close since the 1950s."

Meehan wrote the books for three shows that ran over 2,000 performances on Broadway: "Annie" with 2,377 performances, "The Producers" with Mel Brooks at 2,502 performances and "Hairspray," which he wrote with Mark O'Donnell and which reached 2,642 performances. "I wrote stories that were serious, very somber, trying to be in the style of William Faulkner," Meehan told the Observer newspaper in 1999. "My career has always been that every time I try something really serious, it's no good, but if I try to be funny, then it works."

Tributes poured in on social media, including from "Hamilton" creator Lin-Manuel Miranda, who called Meehan "one of the best around," and from actress Kate Shindle, head of the Actors' Equity Association, who called his death a "great loss." Meehan's other shows include "Young Frankenstein" with Brooks, "Cry-Baby" with O'Donnell, "Elf" with Bob Martin, "Chaplin" with Christopher Curtis, "Bombay Dreams" with Meera Syal and the musical "Rocky" with Sylvester Stallone.

Meehan began his career as a writer with The New Yorker's "Talk of the Town" section and later earned an Emmy Award nomination in 1964 as one of the writers of the TV series "That Was the Week That Was." Charnin said Meehan was "really very unique." "He was somebody who you could literally call a wit," Charnin said. "There are not a lot of wits left in comedy, and Tom was a wit. I have no problem calling him that."

Meehan made his Broadway debut with "Annie," alongside Charnin and songwriter Charles Strouse. The 1977 original won the Tony as best musical and ran for 2,300 performances, inspiring tours and revivals that never went out of style. "Annie" almost died at the Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut in

1976. But Charnin brought in noted stage and film director Mike Nichols, who signed on as a producer, and helped him revise the show. With actress Andrea McArdle replacing Kristen Vigard as the red-haired moppet Annie and Dorothy Loudon added as Miss Hannigan, the production went on to open in New York in April 1977 with a bang. The 1982 film version, which featured Carol Burnett in Loudon's role, was not nearly as popular or well-received. A stage sequel called "Annie Warbucks" ran off-Broadway in 1993. The original show was revived on Broadway in 2012 and was made into a film starring Quvenzhané Wallis in 2014. Meehan is survived by his wife. — AP



In this June 8, 2003 file photo, Thomas Meehan, left, and Mark O'Donnell pose with their Tony awards for best book of a Musical for "Hairspray" during the 57th Annual Tony Awards at New York's Radio City Music Hall. — AP



Russian singer Miriam Sekhon, center, performs as Paul Heartfield, one of London's most experienced and respected portrait artists, second right, records a music on an X-ray film during a concert at the Bone Music exhibition at Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow, in Moscow, Russia. — AP photos



A music recording on an X-ray film is displayed at the Bone Music exhibition at Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow.



Paul Heartfield, one of London's most experienced and respected portrait artists starts to record on an X-ray film during a concert at the Bone Music exhibition.

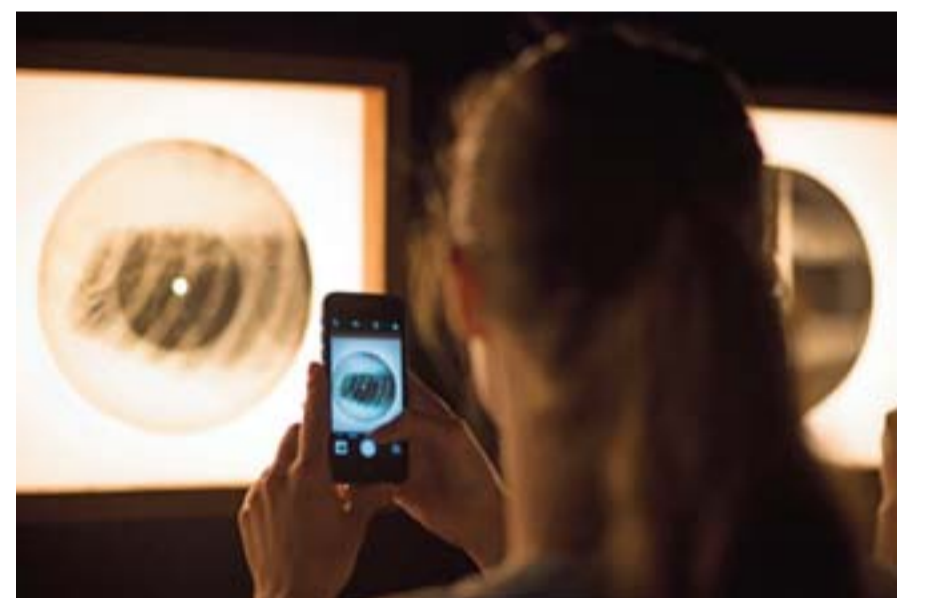
Forbidden Soviet-era music on X-ray snapshots

An exhibition describing a unique chapter in the history of Soviet culture - bootleg music recordings made on used X-ray film - has opened in Moscow. From the late 1940s to the early 1960s, ingenious Soviet music lovers made bootleg copies of banned music on used X-ray snapshots, bypassing strict official controls over recordings people were allowed to listen to. They are played on normal record players.

The Bone Music exhibition, which opened in Moscow's Garage Museum of Contemporary Art last week, presents research by X-Ray Audio, a project

by Stephen Coates and Paul Heartfield from London. Coates, a composer and music producer, described the recordings as "images of pain and damage inscribed with the sound of forbidden pleasure; fragile photographs of the interiors of Soviet citizens layered with the ghostly music they secretly loved." The clandestine recordings weren't limited to jazz and rock-n-roll, vilified by Communist propaganda as manifestations of Western decadence. They also featured Russian folk music, as well as popular prison and Gypsy songs also tabooed by Soviet ideologists.

The industry that put bootleggers at risk of arrest gradually died out in the mid-1960s with the appearance of reel-to-reel recorders. Along with the original recordings on X-ray film, the exhibition tells the stories of people who made, distributed and played them. The installation produced for the Moscow exhibition immerses the audience in an atmosphere that mixes underground technology, forbidden culture, Cold War politics and human ingenuity. — AP



A visitor takes a photo of a music recording on an X-ray film is displayed at the Bone Music exhibition at Garage Museum of Contemporary Art.

'SUPERHEROES' CELEBRATE STAN LEE'S CREATIVITY

Stan Lee was the subject of a love fest Tuesday night, as actors, directors, artists and illustrators lauded the Marvel Comics legend for creating a vast universe of fantastic, flawed, righteous and relatable superheroes. Mark Ruffalo, Aisha Tyler, Lou Ferrigno, RZA and comics creator Todd McFarlane were among the speakers at "Extraordinary: Stan Lee," a tribute hosted by Chris Hardwick and broadcast into more than 150 movie theaters across the country.

The two-hour program mixed live appearances with video tributes and animated segments that told the story of Lee's career. The 94-year-old dreamer behind Spider-Man, Iron Man and scores of other superheroes sat center stage at the Saban Theatre in Beverly Hills as one artist-admirer after another shared how his characters and creative energy inspired them. "I've patterned my life after yours," "Guardians of the Galaxy" writer-director James Gunn said in a video message.

Ruffalo, Tyler, J.K. Simmons and Kaley Cuoco also appeared via video, though Lee confessed after the first clip played: "I can't hear or understand anything on that screen." Ferrigno was there in the flesh, posing like the Hulk as he took the stage. "I wouldn't be alive today if it wasn't for Stan," he said, adding that he was inspired by comic books long before he played "The Incredible Hulk" on TV in the late 1970s.

McFarlane compared Lee to Walt Disney. Hardwick described him as "Hugh Hefner for nerds." "Batman" producer Michael Uslan read a loving letter he had originally written Lee on his 90th birthday. "I owe you a big thanks, in a way that nearly matches my thanks to my parents and teachers, who tried to convey the same precepts to me, only they could never do so in such an entertaining and effective way as you did through the magic of your comic book stories," Uslan said, thanking Lee "on behalf of every generation of comic-book reader."

Animated clips told of Lee's early days as an assistant at Timely Comics. Lee eventually became publisher, and Timely eventually became Marvel. Along the way, he created such characters as Thor, the X-Men, Black Panther and the Fantastic Four, cheered along by his wife, Joan, who died last month at age 93. RZA, a filmmaker and co-founder of Wu-Tang Clan, performed one of Lee's "Stan's Soapbox" columns. Originally pub-

lished in 1968, Lee posted the editorial denouncing bigotry on Twitter last week after the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia. RZA recalled buying comic books as a kid and being inspired by characters like Silver Surfer, Luke Cage, Spider-Man and Storm. "Those characters inspired me and took me to a place where there was a world, a Marvel universe, where there wasn't no bigotry; where there was heroes that looked like me, and where I could think that justice and fun would prevail over all," he said. "Wouldn't that be the greatest world in the world?" Lee said. Other Lee disciples appearing onstage included documentarian Morgan Spurlock and actors Alan Tudyk, Hal Sparks, Kelly Hu and Michael Rooker. Lee was in his typical quick-witted good spirits. When show sponsor Fila presented him with a jacket embroidered with his name, Lee quipped, "In case I get amnesia." He also offered advice for aspiring cameo actors and said he's waiting for the film academy to create a category for such roles. Lee has cameoed in 38 Marvel productions.

Hardwick, who at one point sweetly tied Lee's shoe, said it's impossible to quantify his pop-culture contributions: "When you go back and look at 70-plus years of working in the comics industry - not just the characters he's created but the people he's inspired - there should be a class at MIT to calculate the ripple effect that Stan has had on pop culture." — AP



Comic book writer Stan Lee, right, is joined by actor Lou Ferrigno onstage at the "Extraordinary: Stan Lee" tribute event at the Saban Theatre on Tuesday. — AP

Arkansas' Silver Moon host rockabilly pioneer tribute

No one knew what to call Sonny Burgess' music when he mixed rhythm and blues, gospel tunes and country riffs in the 1950s, but it was clear where it came from. "It all came from our heart," drummer Bobby Crafford said Tuesday. "They told us we were original; we played from our heart."

Burgess died Friday in Little Rock after suffering a fall last month amid complications from diabetes. On paper, he was 88. While he was performing what came to be known as rockabilly with his band Sonny Burgess and the Pacers, it didn't show. "He continued playing until the start of July. When he was on stage, he didn't play like he was 88 years old. He was a young man when he was on stage," said Anthony Allen, the funeral director at the Dillingham Funeral Home in Burgess' native Newport. Allen has set up visitation for Thursday night at Newport's Silver Moon club - where Burgess launched his career in 1954. "He started out playing there. We didn't think there would be anything more appropriate," Allen said.

Initially known as the Moonlighters, taking their name from the club, Burgess' group grew into the Pacers as it added more members - including a trumpet player after the band failed in its search to hire someone who could play saxophone. Their initial songs for Sun Records, "Red Headed Woman" backed with "We Wanna Boogie," were both hits. Later songs included "My Bucket's Got a Hole in It" and "Thunderbird," named after the fortified wine. "We took a break while recording it and all had Thunderbird wine," Crafford said.

For five years, Burgess and his group played honkytonks and high schools along and near US 67, which Arkansas designated as its "Rock 'n' Roll Highway" in 2009. Also on the bill at times: Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis. "Back then it was crazy how the people who worked every day went out and partied every night," Crafford said. "We played clubs on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, then the colleges on Friday and Saturday. How these people went to work the next day, I don't know." Burgess left the Pacers in 1960 to begin playing for Conway Twitty, but by the mid-1960s, as the country's musical tastes changed, he left the stage and worked in sales positions around

Newport. A rockabilly revival in the late 1980s brought him back to the stage, and he and some members of the original band formed Sonny Burgess and the Legendary Pacers in the mid-1990s.

"We got back together and this thing started getting big. We're getting calls from Europe," Crafford said. Over the past two decades, the group split time among sites in Europe, festivals in the US and clubs similar to those they played along US 67 when they first set out. Playing together over 63 years came so naturally that they are in the Rockabilly Hall of Fame in Jackson, Tennessee.

"We blended together," Crafford said. "We didn't have to rehearse hardly ever. The Silver Moon was our rehearsal. If we were playing there Saturday night, we'd get together Saturday afternoon and run through things." Allen said he'd have Burgess' music playing during Thursday's visitation at the club, which can accommodate about 800 people. — AP



In this March 20, 2009 file photo, rockabilly musician Albert "Sonny" Burgess, right, and Arkansas Gov Mike Beebe jam on guitars before a bill-signing at the Capitol in Little Rock, Ark. — AP

FEATURES



Irregular karst outcroppings provide the backdrop for a countryside scene reminiscent of a Chinese watercolor near Club Med's Guilin resort.— AP photos



Ducks paddle along a canal near Club Med's resort in Guilin, China.



Water buffalo graze amid birds in a field set against a backdrop of irregular karst peaks near Club Med's resort.



A sign welcomes visitors to Club Med's resort in Guilin, southwestern China.



An instructor leads guests in a fitness class at the Club Med resort.

Western brand, Chinese' characteristics: Club Med at Guilin

By Kelvin Chan

After 10 days of crisscrossing southwestern China by high-speed train with two young children in tow, exploring minority villages amid rugged scenery and often sleeping in grimy hotels, it was time for a break. And what better way to decompress from our fascinating yet grueling family trek through one of China's less touristied regions than with a stay at a familiar Western holiday staple: Club Med. We booked a four-night stay at the Club Med in Guilin, in the Guangxi region, an area best known for its otherworldly limestone karst outcroppings and a fishing tradition that uses cormorants to snare catches - scenes so famous they're depicted on China's 20-yuan notes.

My wife and I were experienced China travelers but Club Med newbies, and we were curious about how the brand would translate there. The country is a relatively new but expanding market for the company, which was taken over in 2015 by China's Fosun, a conglomerate with big ambitions for the global leisure industry. Club Med has opened three other resorts around China since 2010, in the Yabuli ski resort, Hainan's Sanya and in Beidahu in the northeast. It plans to open a Joyview branded resort in Anji, famed for tea-growing and bamboo, later this year. For us it was a no-brainer: We knew that as we made our way back home to Hong Kong, we'd appreciate the all-inclusive package and chance to relax after our hectic sightseeing trip.

It turned out to be a good call. The resort, an hour outside of Guilin city, was serene, relaxing and contemplative, a feeling enhanced by the more than 100 contemporary sculptures scattered around the grounds. It turns out a Taiwanese tycoon bought the site and set it up as an open air art museum in 1998 before Club Med moved in. Some of the collection is housed inside an art gallery that also featured photos of celebrity visitors, including, strangely, Afghanistan's former President Hamid Karzai on a visit in 2014.

Behind the gallery, there's a zen lake, where guests could be seen meditating on the sandy shore as its still waters reflected lush foliage, irregular karst peaks fading into the distance and an arched walkway known as a moon bridge.

Big Mountain Base

Besides art, we kept ourselves entertained at the resort's three swimming pools, one with the requisite swim-up bar, or with activities like rock climbing and trapeze for the kids and gym class for the adults. I joined mountain bike excursions that took us off campus as a trip leader led us down a gravel track into the park surrounding the resort, through quiet groves of trees and past grassy fields, with hardly another soul in sight.

apart from a handful of foreigners, mostly European. The company has made some tweaks to please its biggest market, equipping its bar area with mahjong tables and karaoke rooms. The artificial pond was stocked with koi - said to be good for feng shui.

The multinational staff included Mexicans, South Koreans, French and Indonesians, mostly veterans of the brand's other resorts around the world. Evenings featured live shows - a Club Med signature. They started on the early side, before 9 pm, in line with a Chinese preference for early nights. (At Club Meds elsewhere, shows can start as late as 9:45 pm).

One night a circus-themed act put on by some of the staff G.O.'s, or "gracious organizers" in Club Med parlance, performed with the trapeze, rope straps and hula hoops. One performer used his chin to balance



A woman meditates beside a lake at Club Med's resort.

On another day, we left the resort's opposite end, passing through the village next door, called Dashandi, or Big Mountain Base. The group stopped to snap photos of a mother duck leading ducklings down a canal. Down the path, we stopped to take in what seemed like a Chinese watercolor brought to life: water buffalo grazed in a field alongside long-legged birds, as the karst peaks loomed in a hazy background. Almost all the resort's guests were Chinese visitors,

bowling pins, a guitar, a wooden bench and even an extension ladder, an act that drew the biggest cheers of the evening. A Moulin Rouge-style burlesque show on another evening, with show tunes and raunchy costumes, seemed not to appeal much to the Chinese audience, many of whom drifted away after a few songs. — AP

Traditional Palestinian costumes



A Palestinian woman displays an outfit during a fashion show exhibiting traditional Palestinian costumes in old city of the West Bank city of Nablus.— AP photos



A Palestinian woman displays an outfit.



Palestinian women wearing traditional attire attend a fashion show exhibiting classic Palestinian costumes.



Palestinians attend a fashion show.



Palestinians attend a fashion show.



A Palestinian man stands in front of a painting.



Palestinians play music as they attend a fashion show.



Palestinian women perform during a fashion show.



Guests attend the annual New York City Diner en Blanc, on Tuesday, held this year at the plaza at Lincoln Center. The Diner en Blanc, the world's only viral culinary event, a chic secret pop-up style picnic from France, the outdoor site - always a landmark location - is revealed at the last-minute. Guests are asked to dress entirely in elegant white, bring a picnic basket of food, fine china and silverware, white tablecloths, table and chairs. — AFP

POP-UP NEW YORK CITY DINNER DRAWS THOUSANDS, ALL IN WHITE

A pop-up dinner featuring white-clad guests who brought their own tables, chairs and food has drawn thousands to the plaza outside New York City's Lincoln Center. The event, known as Diner en Blanc, French for Dinner in White, is an annual foodie tradition. Organizers say there were 45,000 people on the waiting list for Tuesday's dinner. Tickets started at \$42. Ticket holders were

told to show up at one of several designated spots, where the secret venue was disclosed. When the dinner began just before sunset, guests were asked to wave their white napkins in the air. Organizer Sandy Safi says the dinner is "a unique night out in the city." The event began in Paris 29 years ago and is now in 79 cities in 28 countries. — AP



A boy celebrates the World Day of Laziness in Itagui, near Medellin, Colombia. — AFP photos



People celebrate the World Day of Laziness in Itagui, near Medellin, Colombia.



A woman celebrates the World Day of Laziness.



A couple celebrates the World Day of Laziness.

Colombians combat stress with 'Day of Laziness'

Colombians in the city of Itagui hauled mattresses and hammocks into the streets Sunday to mark the annual "World Laziness Day," a quirky effort to urge overstressed workers to slow down. The daylong celebration of relaxation has been held annually since 1985 in this small city of some 200,000 in northwestern Colombia. The city is known, rather paradoxically, for its bustling commerce and its thriving industrial park.

But 32 years ago, one resident, Carlos Mario Montoya, had the idea that the city should celebrate not just the hustle-bustle of business, but also slowing down and enjoying life. "We wanted to draw attention to the importance in any community of free time and leisure activities," said Montoya, 65, who helped put together this year's event as well. Organizers said festivities include a competition for the best-looking pajamas, a pillow-juggling contest,

and a race for the fastest bed on wheels.

Those taking part in the annual fete say laziness gets a bad rap. Far worse, they say, is the wear-and-tear of workaday life, and all the physical and emotional ailments that often go along with it. "The biggest illness we have today is stress-the hustle-bustle of everyday life," said Jhon Jairo Alonso, reclining in his pajamas in the midday sunshine. Flanked on a wide mattress by his wife, his mother, and a family friend, they made a cozy group, even if surrounded by curious onlookers. "Please don't disturb us," Alonso joked. "We're going to be spending the whole day in bed!" — AP



People celebrate the World Day of Laziness.



People celebrate the World Day of Laziness.



People celebrate the World Day of Laziness.



A woman takes part with her dogs in the celebrations of the World Day of Laziness.