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KJA elects new board members, top officials



Born killers: French army grooms eagles to down drones



Pakistan's third sex seeks a reformation



Bye-bye 'Boom Boom' as Afridi ends int'l career



LAWMAKER PROPOSES GRANTING CITIZENSHIP TO NON-MUSLIMS

PANEL TO PROBE JAIL ATTACK • MP DEMANDS INVESTMENT REFORMS



Min 03°
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High Tide 08:40 & 18:44
Low Tide 01:57 & 12:46



150 FILS
NO: 17148
40 PAGES

POWS RECALL NIGHTMARE

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

KUWAIT: Retired Maj Gen Hassan Jassem Hussein and his son Ali were taken prisoner in the final months of the 1990-91 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In an exclusive interview with Kuwait Times, Hussein, who was a colonel then, recounts the horrors of the invasion and his incarceration. He speaks about the fear - and ingenuity - during the time he spent in an Iraqi prison along with hundreds of fellow



Hassan Hussein

Kuwaiti army officers.

His son Ali, a citizens band radio enthusiast, speaks about how his hobby led to his capture, and the harrowing time he spent with other Kuwaiti inmates in an underground cell. His mother, Makiya Al-Bannay, tearfully recalls the moment her husband and son were dragged away by Iraqi soldiers, and the months of trepidation that followed without any news whether they were dead or alive. (Full story on Page 3)

AMIR MEETS SULTAN QABOOS



MUSCAT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is received at the airport by Omani Sultan Qaboos bin Said after he arrived on an official visit to Oman yesterday. — KUNA (See Page 2)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Khaled Al-Shatti yesterday submitted a draft law calling to scrap a provision in the 1959 nationality law that prohibits granting Kuwaiti citizenship to non-Muslims. The lawmaker said that scrapping the provision will end what he called decades of discrimination against non-Muslims in the country's nationality law.

The proposed amendment must first be cleared by the National Assembly's legislative committee and approved by the interior and defense committee, before going to the Assembly for a vote. To become law, the amendment must be approved by the Assembly and then be accepted by the government.

Shatti said the provision wrongly bases citizenship conditions on religious affiliations and not legal bonds, as it should be. "This is an outdated provision and it's time that it is deleted from the nationality law," Shatti told reporters after filing the draft law. Under the current provision, Kuwaiti citizenship can only be granted to Muslims by birth or those who converted to Islam at least five years before applying. The provision states that Kuwaitis who leave Islam will have their citizenship revoked.

Meanwhile, member of the Assembly's human rights committee MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said yesterday the panel will investigate an attack on former MP and prominent opposition leader Musallam Al-Barrak in jail. Kandari said the committee plans to investigate conditions at the Central Jail and will focus on the incident, which took place on Sunday night. Barrak was hit in the face by another inmate jailed for a drugs offense.

Continued on Page 13

KIA CHIEF SAAD 'TO STEP DOWN'

KUWAIT: According to a Bloomberg report yesterday, Kuwait Investment Authority is set to name Farouk Bastaki as managing director, replacing Bader Al-Saad who ran the world's fifth-largest sovereign wealth fund for 14 years, a person familiar with the matter said. KIA is finalizing the appointment, said the person, asking not to be identified because the information is private. Al-Rai daily also report-

ed the appointment earlier yesterday, saying Saad will remain on KIA's board.

Bastaki was the fund's executive director for alternative investments after joining in 1989, the newspaper said. In that role, he was responsible for private equity, hedge funds, real estate and the KIA's representative office in China, according to the fund's website.

Continued on Page 13

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MUSCAT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying official delegation arrived in Muscat, Oman, yesterday for an official visit. They were welcomed by Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al-Said of Oman amid popular reception ceremonies by Omani troupes for popular and traditional arts.— Amiri Diwan photos



Bahraini Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and his accompanying delegation meet Bahraini Shura Council's Chairman Ali Bin Saleh Al-Saleh and other Bahraini MPs.

BAHRAINI CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES PARLIAMENT SPEAKER

'AMIR LEADING TALKS WITH ROUHANI ON BEHALF OF GCC LEADERS'

MANAMA: Bahraini Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa met yesterday with Kuwait's visiting National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the Bahraini Crown Prince hailed brotherly Bahraini-Kuwaiti relations, with their historical and social dimensions. He said the interest of Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in bilateral relations is based on firm foundations laid down by both brotherly nations for historical relations. He expressed belief that the Kuwaiti speaker's visit to Bahrain would lead to a further promotion and development of close bonds for the common interest of both sides. The Bahraini Crown Prince also appreciated Kuwait's support to Bahrain in different situations and events, while congratulating the Kuwaiti leadership and people on their country's national celebrations.

Meanwhile, Ghanem hailed the Bahraini Crown Prince's interest in continuously devel-

oping brotherly links between both Gulf nations, hoping that his visit would lead to upgrading the level of parliament-to-parliament cooperation and coordination. The meeting was attended by Kuwaiti MPs Faisal Al-Kanderi, Thamer Al-Suwait Al-Dhafiri, Dr Humoud Al-Khudair, Usama Al-Shahin, Majed Al-Mutairi, Nasser Al-Dosari, Abdulwahab Al-Babtain, Alhumaidi Alsubaiee, National Assembly General Secretary Allam Al-Kanderi, in addition to Speaker of the Bahraini House of Representatives Ahmad bin Ibrahim Al-Mulla.

Stronger cooperation

In the meantime, Bahraini Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa affirms that his country and Kuwait are bonded with mutual brotherly cooperation turning stronger with days. These solid relations are in the forms of family bonds, joint history and destiny, said the premier during his reception of Ghanem and his accompanying delegation yesterday. Prime Minister Prince Khalifa, during the reception of the Kuwaiti parliamentary

delegation, lauded stands by Kuwait, leadership and people, in support of the Kingdom, adding that the visit by Speaker Ghanem and the accompanying MPs would further cement the brotherly bonds between the two countries' peoples.

The premier underlined efforts exerted by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for achieving unity among Arab and Gulf states and role played by the GCC legislative assemblies for realizing aspirations of the GCC peoples. Ghanem expressed gratitude to Prince Khalifa for his keenness on boosting the Kuwaiti-Bahraini ties and overhauling the GCC to the level of the peoples' aspirations.

Deep-rooted

Earlier yesterday, Ghanem and his accompanying delegation met Bahraini Shura Council Chairman Ali Bin Saleh Al-Saleh. During the meeting, they stressed on the strong and deep relations that combine the people of both nations and the importance of



MANAMA: Bahraini Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA

increasing the coordination between Kuwait's National Assembly and Bahrain's Shura Council in all fields.

On Sunday, Ghanem reiterated "deep-rooted historic" relations with Bahrain. Ghanem, in a statement to reporters after a meeting with Speaker of Bahrain House of Representatives Ahmad Al-Mulla, said Kuwait and Bahrain were small in size but "characterized by openness."

The Kuwaiti people, he added, would never forget the "heroic and brotherly" support of the Bahraini people during the 1990-91 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Ghanem said they discussed a variety of issues of mutual interest,

adding that parliamentary diplomacy supported the foreign policies of governments.

Asked about Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's recent visit to Kuwait, Ghanem said His Highness the Amir "is leading talks with the Iranian president on behalf of all GCC leaders." Ghanem hoped these talks "produce positive results." Mulla said they reaffirmed importance of unity in the face of terrorism, as well as rejected foreign interference in the affairs of Kuwait and Bahrain. He said Kuwait has a long history in restoring international peace and security, citing relevant contributions of His Highness the Amir. — KUNA



A US Navy Grumman F-14 Tomcat from Fighter Squadron 114 (VF-114) Aardvarks flies over an oil well set ablaze by Iraqi troops during the 1991 Gulf War. Burning 'oil lakes,' seen in the foreground, also contributed to the smoke plumes. — US Defense Imagery

FATHER AND SON POWS RECOUNT INVASION ORDEAL

'I WAS TRULY BORN AGAIN'

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

KUWAIT: He was warned: Surrender or be dragged from his home, in front of his wife and children, and be humiliated. That was how Retired Maj Gen Hassan Jassem Hussein knew that the Iraqi occupation forces were looking for him.

Speaking this week at his home in Salwa, Hussain recalls his experiences during the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait. The former police officer served as the assistant director of security of the Hawally governorate in 1990 and after the invasion, was a supporter of the Kuwaiti Resistance and later taken as a prisoner of war.

After three months of phone calls from Iraqi military warning him to turn himself in, Hassan decided to go into hiding. He moved his family to his father-in-law's house in Khaldiya and assumed a fake identity as a teacher. But the subterfuge failed when the Iraqis started looking for his 23-year-old son, a citizens' band radio enthusiast. "As soon as we learned that Iraqi forces were invading Kuwait, I went to my office like other policemen to follow the situation, spreading our men in all areas of Kuwait on the first day of the invasion. We continued to operate from our sites for three consecutive days, until they took control of the whole country. So we had to withdraw and go back home," Hassan told Kuwait Times. "We helped the Kuwaiti resistance as much as we could, from distributing leaflets to supplying weapons. On January 13, just three days before the coalition airstrikes began, they arrested me with my son. We spent a night at the Jewan camp in Kuwait before they took us to Baghdad," he recounted.

Ali, the eldest son of Hassan, was a CB radio hobbyist along with his friends, and had no connection with the Kuwaiti resistance, unlike his father. "The soldiers sometimes spoke to us through the radio, but this didn't bother us at all. They wondered why we were using these radios, so I answered them quietly that it was simply a hobby and was allowed in Kuwait," Ali recalled. "But after the Iraqi intelligence discovered that some Kuwaitis were using CB radios to communicate with neighboring countries, they hunted us one by one, until

During our period of detention, our talents emerged in recycling and inventing the impossible

they found me and my father. They took us in front of my mother and my younger siblings," he added.

When the Iraqi soldiers arrived at their hideout, Ali's mother, Makiya Al-Bannay, rushed to tell her husband about the intelligence officers at the door. "Hurry, we're in peril. They have definitely found you," she

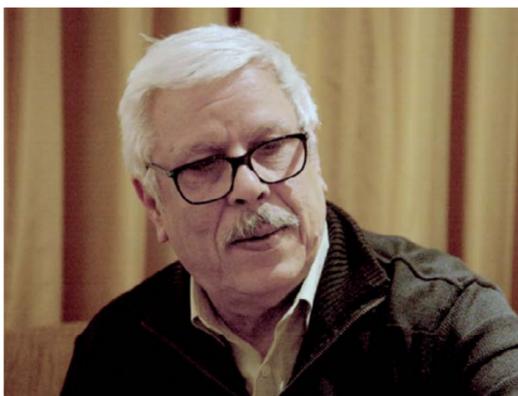
- We helped the Kuwaiti resistance as much as we could, from distributing leaflets to supplying weapons

- After the Iraqi intelligence discovered that some Kuwaitis were using CB radios to communicate with neighboring countries, they hunted us one by one

- Days and months passed with no news. I didn't know whether they were dead or alive

- My CB radio friends were tortured before me in order to force them to reveal the names of the people involved

- What an unforgettable image it was. Sadness hung over my country



KUWAIT: Retired Maj Gen Hassan Jassem Hussein.

told her husband. "I hid the radios inside the washing machine. But they searched everything in the house and found them. The world shattered in front of me, as my husband and my dear son were led away before my eyes amid the wails of my other kids," Makiya told Kuwait Times.

"The soldiers told me that I shouldn't worry, and claimed that it was only an investigation and my husband and son will be returned later. But they lied. Days and months passed with no news. I didn't know whether they were dead or alive. I cried a lot and couldn't eat. How could I eat while they were hungry?" Makiya said, fighting back tears as those memories were rekindled, as if they occurred yesterday. Even after 26 years, the pain is still there.

Imprisoned in Iraq

Hassan and his son were first taken to a police station. On the same night, they were transferred with other Kuwaiti prisoners to Arifan military base. One night before the airstrikes began, they were shifted to Baghdad, on Jan 17, 1991.

Thousands of Kuwaitis and expats were killed, beaten or tortured during the occupation. More than 600 Kuwaitis were taken prisoner - with most never to be seen alive again. Tens of thousands were forced to flee their home and live abroad as refugees during the entirety of the conflict.

"My CB radio friends were tortured before me in order to force them to reveal the names of the people involved. My good fortune was that I was the last to be interrogated, so there was no reason for them to

torture me," explained Ali. Ali was separated from his father, who had been placed with other Kuwaiti prisoners of war at the Rasheed camp. Meanwhile, Ali was remanded with 45 prisoners in a special detention center of the Iraqi intelligence in Baghdad, where cases were registered against them.

At the intelligence building, Ali and the other prisoners were held in a dark, narrow underground cell. They were only permitted to go to the bathroom twice a day - once in the morning and again just before sunset. They showered only once. "It was hard for us to move around and sleep in that cell. The only food we had was rice, cabbage soup and rock-hard bread. We were told that we were at the mercy of our cases and were destined for death. They had isolated us completely. No wonder no one could see us. Due to the lack of sunlight and malnutrition, our faces had yellowed. There was no means of entertainment besides our conversations with each other," Ali told Kuwait Times.

Meanwhile, Hassan was reunited with his fellow officers from the police, army, national guard, navy and air force at Baqouba prison. "Our numbers were between 600 to 700 prisoners. Among us were technical and electrical engineers, while others were artists and athletes. During our period of detention, our talents emerged in recycling and inventing the impossible. From some abandoned telephone cables, we managed to run electricity for lighting. Other prisoners invented a primitive water heater and connected it to our toilets using pipes. We also made rosaries and sculptures from date seeds," he narrated.

"Before I arrived there, families and



Ali Hussein — Photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

friends were permitted to visit the prisoners and give them food and a lot of Iraqi dinars. But, they stopped after the airstrikes."

Operation Desert Storm

A US-led coalition of 33 countries launched the Gulf War to oust Iraqi forces

from Kuwait. 'Operation Desert Storm' lasted from 17 January to 28 February 1991. In November 1990, the UN Security Council gave a deadline of 15 January 1991 to Saddam Hussein to withdraw his troops from Kuwait. After the deadline passed, coalition strikes targeted Iraqi army locations inside Kuwait and Iraq. The Baghdad intelligence building and Baqouba prison where Ali and his father Hassan were imprisoned were bombed. "I cautioned my colleagues not to go out to watch due to the danger of flying shrapnel," Hassan said. On the other hand, his son couldn't see anything. He could just hear the sound of explosions amid a state of severe panic and fear that their cell would be destroyed. "We were saved by Allah," said Ali.

Rescue and release

Relief came from the Red Cross a month after the victory of coalition forces. Hassan and his son had spent three months in detention. They were freed and set up for the return trip to Kuwait through Ramadi in Iraq, from where they were taken in buses to Arar in Saudi Arabia. Ali had still not seen his father. He arrived in Kuwait on March 26, while his father flew in to his liberated homeland.

"My mother was the first person I hugged. I was truly born again" Ali recounted. With tears in his eyes, Hassan recalled the moment he saw the skyline of Kuwait smothered in black smoke. "What an unforgettable image it was. Sadness hung over my country. He (Saddam) must have burnt Kuwait before he left," he realized. The Kuwaiti government managed to rebuild the country's infrastructure and save the natural environment in record time. But many still wonder if the Kuwaiti society learned a lesson from the invasion, or is it again repeating the same mistakes...



Retired Maj Gen Hassan Jassem Hussein and his wife Makiya Al-Bannay.

CABINET OKS DECREE ON SOCIAL CARE TO CITIZENS

CONSULTANT SOUGHT FOR FAILAKA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet has consented to a draft decree instructing the Ministry of Social Affairs to provide social care to citizens as part of social solidarity and better social activity. The move was taken upon a recommendation by the Cabinet's legal committee during its weekly meeting held at Kuwait International Airport under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Under the decree, the ministry shall provide social care services to all segments of the Kuwaiti society, and supervise non-governmental organizations (NGOs), children's care activities and cooperative societies and federations, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah said in a statement following the meeting.

The decree is mainly intended to revamp social services in general pursuant to the country's development drive aiming at promoting social security network and ensuring citizens' stability, added Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who doubles as Acting Minister of Information.

The cabinet also instructed the ministries of defense and oil, Public Authority for Manpower and Public Authority for Industry to take immediate moves to remove obstacles hindering the housing projects of South Al-Mutlaa City and

Saad Al-Abdullah City, the minister said. It further entrusted the Public Authority for Partnership Projects to contract an international consulting office to carry out the Failaka Island development project, he added. Moreover, the cabinet decided to ask the Public Authority for Partnership Projects to coordinate with the Ministry of Finance to issue the shares of Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula (a Kuwaiti shareholding company) due to be established for implementing Az-Zour North Independent Water and Power Project (IWPP) until public prescription procedures are completed.

National celebrations

At the onset of its customary meeting, the cabinet voiced sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and the Kuwaiti people on the occasion of the country's national celebrations, wishing Kuwait everlasting security, stability and prosperity under their wise leadership.

The cabinet was informed of a letter received by His Highness the Amir from Omani Sultan Qaboos bin Said, inviting him to visit Oman on February 20-22 as part of mutual keenness on promoting existing cooperation between both Gulf nations. The cabinet stressed the significance of the visit as a good

opportunity for both leaders to share views on several regional issues and developments. The ministers were then notified of a letter received by His Highness the Amir from President of Mexico States Enrique Pena Nieto, inviting him to attend the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction due in Cancun in May. They also reviewed a letter sent to His Highness the Amir from Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, handling the historic agreement reached by OPEC and non-OPEC producers in December and an expected summit of oil-producing countries' leaders to find a fresh plan to ensure stability and balance in the global oil market and to safeguard the interests of all parties.

Furthermore, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet on the outcomes of his participation in the 53rd session of the Munich Security Summit last Friday.

On regional developments, the cabinet commended Saudi security authorities for arresting four cells of the so-called Islamic State (IS) last week, voicing full support to Riyadh's anti-terror measures. The cabinet also condemned a recent bomb blast in southeast Turkey, which left several innocents dead or injured, reiterating Kuwait's unwavering rejection of violence and terrorism. —KUNA



Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh visits Zain's booth.



Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh honors Zain.

ZAIN STRATEGIC SPONSOR OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING CONFERENCE

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its strategic sponsorship of the Organizational Learning Conference in partnership with the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) and the Arabian Gulf Career Development Forum (CADEF). The event was held throughout three days at Salwa Hall - Marina Hotel.

Zain was present during the opening ceremony that witnessed the attendance of the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh, Secretary General of MGRP Fawzi Al-Majdali, as well as Zain Kuwait's Human Resources Director Nawal Bourisli. The event witnessed the attendance of many HR representatives from across the public and private sectors with the aim of exchanging expertise to develop HR performance levels across Kuwaiti organizations.

Zain's strategic support to this conference came to highlight its keenness in supporting the various developmental projects and initiatives in the country, as such partnerships showcase the collaborative spirit between the private and public sectors. The company heavily contributes to the

development of local human resources and talents that are the key element to the further progress of the country, especially that the event hosted a number of prominent speakers from across local, regional, and international levels.

The Organizational Learning Conference mainly aimed at strengthening the relations between governmental organizations and the leading private sector companies to further develop human resources strategies, organizational development approaches, employee performances, local job opportunities, and more.

Zain is keen on participating in developmental projects and initiatives as part of its Human Resources strategy, which closely focuses on supporting HR fields internally and externally hand in hand with various universities, colleges, and training institutions in Kuwait. The company is committed to playing an active role in the investment in the human element, and seeks to provide young and eager Kuwaitis with suitable job opportunities that allow them to apply their practical skills, achieve their potential, and fully develop their capabilities.

1.2 MILLION SQUARE METERS ALLOCATED FOR HOUSING PROJECTS

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: In an extraordinary session held yesterday, the Municipal Council approved a request made by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare to allocate 1.2 million square meters located east of Sabah Al-Ahmad residential area to build houses for citizens who had previously sold their government houses. The council also approved a request from the municipality's director to allocate a location to build renewable energy plants in Shaqaya.

The council further discussed allowing the municipality to recruit a third company to join two others in cutting and removing tires from Erhaiya. Kuwait Municipality's Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi said that the two companies found out after they started working at the site that more used tires were already buried underground. Based on those findings, the cabinet recommended hiring the services of a third company to work on the site in order to manage to remove the tires completely within the six-month timeframe.

The council's technical committee agreed to remove the site of solid wastes recycling outside poultry farming areas in Shaqaya. The council also agreed to allocate an extra location for

parking spaces in Jaber Al-Ahmad's Olympic Village project. Furthermore, the council referred a proposal made by member Fahad Al-Sane to use special tire restraints that are only removable after paying the fine by violating vehicle owners.

Court orders

The court of cassation yesterday acquitted a citizen who was previously charged of forging his Kuwaiti citizenship and being a dual citizen, which is illegal under Kuwaiti law. Separately, a court yesterday sentenced a fourth electoral constituency voter to two years in prison for photographing his ballot paper during the 2016 parliamentary elections; which he did to prove that he had voted for a certain candidate.

Renewable energy

Presided by the Ministry of Electricity and Water's (MEW) Undersecretary Mohammed Boshetri, a committee tasked with developing renewable energy projects met yesterday at MEW headquarters to discuss renewable energy uses as recommended by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's initiative aiming at using renewable resources to generate 15 percent of electricity by 2030.

KUWAIT LABOR TOWNS WILL BE ACCORDING TO INT'L STANDARDS

KUWAIT: Kuwait's planned labor towns will be built according to international criteria and moral responsibilities, a local authority affirmed yesterday. Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects said in a statement that the labor towns project in South Al-Jahra will include residential units, services for the workers "with humanitarian, environmental and health specifications according to international responsibilities and moralistic responsibilities." The statement said that the authority had organized a visual presentation on environmental and social impact of the mega venture in South Al-Jahra. The presentation was conducted by Shams International for environmen-

tal consultations in coordination with a conglomerate topped by Progress International.

The presentation showed field surveillance at the project zone, studies on air quality, wild life, and various forecast social and environmental impacts. The project, it says, will help in resolving traffic problems particularly where workers mingle with residents and will regulate security, health and social status of the expatriates. The labor towns project, forecast to accommodate up to 20,000 limited-income workers, will be promoted for investment by means of forming a Kuwaiti shareholding company, according to build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Officials speak during the 'Prevention is a Goal' conference which was organized yesterday in cooperation with the Ministry of Health. —Photos by Abdellatif Sharaa



HEALTH MINISTRY SPONSORS 'PREVENTION' CONFERENCE

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The 'Prevention is a Goal' conference opened yesterday under the patronage of Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi, who was represented by Assistant Undersecretary for Dental Health Dr Yousuf Al-Duwairi. The conference is organized by the 'Prevention is a Goal' voluntary team, in cooperation with the Health Promotion Department at the Health Ministry, Patient's Aid Fund and Copthorne Hotel in Jahra.

Dr Duwairi said the goals of the conference are based on cooperation between participants, who are keen on instilling the principle of disease prevention, as prevention is better than cure. "We

aim at promoting the principle of comprehensive health, which is the goal of the health ministry, to have the society enjoy comprehensive health security that covers physical, social, psychological, environmental and other aspects. He said Kuwait does not spare any effort or money for the sake of health promotion and care.

Meanwhile, President of the 'Prevention is a Goal' team Dr Mosaed Al-Enezi, said the team is celebrating the first year of its existence, and it comes during auspicious occasions, as Kuwait is celebrating its 56th National Day, 26th Liberation Day and the 11th anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's ascension to power. He said the team has worked in various fields including health,

environmental safety and other activities that promote the well-being of the society and its members. Dr Enezi thanked the sponsors and participants at the conference, adding success was only possible with their participation.

Meanwhile, Patient's Aid Fund representative Jamal Al-Fouzan said such events are very important to make people aware of the importance of health promotion and benefits of prevention. He said the fund helps patients receive treatment which they cannot afford, regardless of nationality. The opening ceremony of the conference included a patriotic performance by school boys and girls, as well as a video presentation that showed the achievements of the team in the past year.



FAKE DOMESTIC HELP OFFICE BUSTED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Police busted a bogus domestic help office run by a citizen in cooperation with an Arab man, the Ministry of Interior's (Mol) Relations and Security Information Department said yesterday. The two hired the services of eleven runaway Filipina maids and sent to houses to work in violation of the law. The department said the two confessed to employing workers from various nationalities in violation of the residency law. All were sent to concerned authorities.

Brewery found

Ahmadi security raided a liquor brewery in the camel pens area in Kabb, and found 147 liquor bottles in Mahboula. Patrol officers in Mahboula

noticed a crowd in an open area, but on approaching, they escaped. Bags full of liquor bottles were found. Meanwhile, a man who ran into an animal pen was chased and arrested. The pen was found to have been turned into a liquor brewery, and had a pool full of liquor. Police found 2,124 bottles, 62 drums, five evaporating drums, 60 empty drums and six gas cylinders.

Salmiya fire

Fire broke out in a Salmiya building, prompting Salmiya fire station to respond. People who were trapped on the eighth floor were rescued and evacuated to the roof. The fire, which was on the seventh floor, was put out and prevented from spreading. No injuries were reported.

MANPOWER AUTHORITY, PROGRAM MERGER TO BE COMPLETE IN JUNE

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The process of integrating the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) with the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) into one governmental entity has entered its final stages, and the merger will become official at June 1, 2017, announced Kholoud Al-Shehab, Deputy Director for Financial and Human Resources at PAM. Shehab added that many coordination meetings were held between officials from both state departments to discuss legal, procedural and organizational steps needed for the merger. The MGRP currently handles the process of hiring Kuwaitis in the private sector

while PAM handles labor-related issues in the private sector in general. Hiring in the public sector is handled by the Civil Service Commission.

Meanwhile, PAM's Deputy Director for Implementation Affairs Ali Al-Hubail said that the Cabinet agreed to accelerate the red tape process needed to provide labor forces required for the south Mutlaa project. Hubail added that coordination is in progress with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor to assess the total number of laborers needed for the project. Coordination is also in progress with the Ministry of Public Works to link the project with rain drainage and sewage grids, he added.

KJA HOLDS ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

KUWAIT: Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) yesterday held an ordinary general assembly meeting at its temporary quarters in Shuwaikh industrial area. The meeting was attended by Secretary Faisal Al-Qenae, Treasurer and Manager Adnan Al-Rashid, representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs

and Labor and a representative from Al-Buzi audit firm. The majority of the Assembly approved the board of directors' 2016 financial and administrative reports, before a Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's representative announced the names of the new board members, including

Fatima Hussein Al-Essa, Adnan Khalifa Al-Rashid, Jassim Mohammed Kamal, Duhairan Mermeh Abalkhail, Abd Al-Rahman Yousef Al-Alyan, Rabea Hussein Makki Al-Jumaa and Owayyed Ayed Al-Seleili. The meeting began with a welcome speech delivered by the eldest member, Fatima Hussein, who

welcomed the new members and called on the general assembly to vote on electing a new chairperson, secretary and treasurer. The general assembly elected Fatima Hussein as chairperson, Adnan Al-Rashid as secretary and Jassim Kamal as treasurer.



The new board members of Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA).



Faisal Al-Qenae (center), Adnan Al-Rashid (right) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's representative.



Members vote on the financial and administrative reports.



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ISN HOSTS EDU FAIR

KUWAIT: The International Student Network (ISN) will return to Kuwait for an educational fair at the Regency Hotel. The event will be held today from 6-9 pm. Senior Commercial Officer Jeff Hamilton will provide opening remarks. The fair will include representatives from seven Colleges and universities who will provide information about their schools and answer questions from students and parents about educational opportunities in the United States. The three-hour educational fair is organized by ISN in cooperation with the US Embassy.

The following universities will attend the event: Illinois State University, Eastern Kentucky University, University of Central Missouri, Grand Valley State University, University of San Diego, Drury University and University of South Florida.

EducationUSA advisers will be present at the fair to answer students' questions about higher education in the US, including the admissions process. Embassy consular officers will also be present to answer questions about the student visa application process. Additional information about the fair can be found at http://www.studentlane.com/en_us/. For more information about studying in the United States, visit <http://www.educationusa.gov/>.



عرض هذا الأسبوع

احصل على جهازين من اختيارك مع باقة الدفع الآجل الجديدة



40 د.ك. / شهرياً

- خط بلائتي مجاناً
- 1TB
- مكالمات محلية غير محدودة
- رسائل محلية غير محدودة
- هاتف ذكي
- جهاز ترفيه أو هاتف ذكي إضافي
- جهاز إنترنت

عروض فبراير
#بيازين_الكويت

اتصل على 107 لمزيد من المعلومات
عرض لفترة محدودة

زین - عالم جميل

Crime

Report

SUICIDE SUSPECTED IN MAN'S DEATH

KUWAIT: An Indian man was found hanging from a tree in Farwaniya under mysterious circumstances. Forensics inspected the body and it was sent to the coroner. Interior Ministry detectives are investigating to make sure no foul play is involved. Preliminary investigations indicated that the man had committed suicide.

Search for fake cop

An Egyptian deliveryman was robbed by an imposter. The victim was stopped by a person who claimed to be a detective and asked for his ID. He then took the wallet and asked him to go to Maidan Hawally police station. Police are investigating.

Rampage

A woman in her seventies called police as her son (in his forties) was destroying furniture at home. He was found to be in an abnormal condition. He was taken to the police station for further investigations.

Robbed at knifepoint

A Lebanese teenager was beaten up by a thief who stole his phone, after he tried to seek help from passersby in Salmiya. The 15-year-old boy was going to a grocery store when he was stopped by a man with a knife who demanded his phone and money. After the thief got hold of his phone, the boy started screaming, so the thief beat him and fled. A complaint was lodged at Salmiya police station.

Stabbings

An Iranian woman who had already taken KD 60,000, demanded KD 50,000 more from her husband, causing a fight that ended in stabbings. The citizen married the Iranian woman two months ago, during which he spent the KD 60,000 on gifts. But he had a dispute with her and she left the house and went to live with her brother, who demanded KD 50,000 more. When the husband refused, he made verbal insults before they exchanged blows and stabs. Both were taken to hospital, and police are investigating.

'Indecent' account

Criminal detectives are looking for two men wearing tight clothes and claiming to be policemen, who made threats while listening to loud music. Detectives who saw the video clips on an 'indecent' account are working on identifying the two to face legal action. —Translated from the Arabic press



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

THE PEASANT EGGS' PLAN

By Hassan Al-Essa

On her way home, a peasant was carrying a basket of eggs and dreaming about them hatching into chickens. She decided she would sell them and buy a ranch on which she could graze sheep. Suddenly, in the middle of her daydream, she fell and the eggs smashed on the ground. With them, her dreams had vanished. The same scene was evident when our cabinet members posed for propagandist photos at the Jaber Cultural Center. It was as if they were advertising buying a luxury vehicle without a down-payment, when they were in fact declaring Kuwait's vision for 2035.

Similar to how the peasant envisioned making profits out of selling the hatched chickens, the government discussed its strategic plan that it said would help increase "the national GDA, citizens' living standards and economic development of non-oil sectors." The government then went on talking in an academic manner that it itself and most of its interlocutors would fail to comprehend such as 'building Kuwaiti individuals.' The government then lectured the audience about development, its problems and the role of the private sector as if we do have an active private sector that is not part of the government spending!

The government then explained the situation, promoting bright hopes for a beautiful future. It is as though we were watching a governmental Superman, flying faster than the speed of light. Superman is trying to adjust things that had been upside down for long decades, ever since we produced and exported the first oil barrel to lay the foundations of a corrupt, revenue-based economy, while at the same time, destroying the values of true work and production, alienating the rule of law and institutions.

So, before the peasant slips and falls down, we have to remember the wisdom of the saying that says 'the deprived has nothing to offer.' To be fair to the current one, our governments since the 1960s have been the same and are expected to remain so. This is the result of our political structure, which selects a cabinet member from two candidates. The winner is then imposed on the people, who have to accept it for good.

We do hope the peasant will not fall and break the eggs. Those eggs are our kids, whose future we have every right to be concerned about. But previous experiences with the governments tell us that we 'Can't win them all!'

—Translated by Kuwait Times

الأنباء

Al-Anbaa

HAVE WE LEARNT OUR LESSON?

By Dr Abdul Rahman Al-Awadhi

We have absolutely learned nothing from the tragedy we suffered when the criminal Saddam Hussein unexpectedly invaded Kuwait. He fooled us with his sweet-talk and convinced all his listeners while hiding things behind the lines as if Satan himself was talking through him. The poor people were his first victims and only discovered that when he occupied Kuwait in the most criminal manner and practiced all sorts of torture, terror, theft and rape that made him look more like the Hulagu of his time.

When this crisis took place, we became victims to a fraudster whose crimes became exposed to the world. As a government and people, we had never suspected his intentions. However, Almighty Allah enabled us to overcome this plight when an international army of allied strangers defended us. Both Saddam and his people learned a lesson that they are still suffering. Iraq will never go back to its stable political situation because of the sectarian tumult that had claimed the lives of thousands of Iraqis. We will never know Iraq's fate in a world whose leaders are waiting to jump on us.

Throughout such confused and frightening international circumstances, we see that Muslim nations are at their worst condition. Our countries have been divided. They promoted tumults amongst us and claim to be protecting us. We know the truth behind phrases showing us friendship and affection while, as I see it, conceal the worst nightmares. They are hiding behind absolute disguise and we have become subjects to their threats, envy and conspiracies.

We have heard about US President Donald Trump's lectures during which he addressed us; the GCC states, as a master asking us to pay for the cost of their casualties, wars and new colonization done under the name of globalization to control the world's trade. We might accept those inevitable threats, but the worst is the Iraqi claim, that we have taken over a part of Iraq.

The question here is this: are we reassured about such accusations and provocative Iraqi acts? Are we ready to face such threats? Can we, without any help from major allies, stop the newly emerging trend in Iraq? I see those threats as serious ones. We ought to be alert and stop wasting time in useless parliamentary debates. We ought to expect the worst because the threats we are facing from the world's richest caucuses is much more dangerous than what we faced during the Iraqi aggression.

Never take statements of Iraqi officials lightly. Never underestimate Iraqi provocations because, despite GCC states' support to us, what we are witnessing is a war developing with major power's war drums beating. Things are more evident now after Arab countries managed to avoid the evil they sent us. However, they managed to decrease our national revenues by five percent but still believe that we are too rich and do not deserve our luxurious lives. So, beware of what is currently being plotted against Kuwait in Iraq. —Translated by Kuwait Times



ABK'S 20TH GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS GRADUATE FROM 'ABK ACADEMY'

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently congratulated the 20th group of students who graduated from the 'ABK Academy,' whereby a ceremony was held for the 15 participants who successfully completed the four week intensive program.

Commenting, Hamza Enki, General Manager

of Human Resources at ABK said, "ABK Academy has graduated a total of 468 candidates to date; preparing a substantial number of individuals to take on jobs within the Bank. This type of involvement and contribution is of tremendous value not only to national youth, who gain a wealth of insight into banking as a profession,

but also to the Bank who have the chance to train and employ local talent."

He continued saying: "Kuwait's youth have always been of primary interest to ABK. With the launch of the ABK Academy in 2009, the Bank has been able to encourage youth to consider a career in banking. The Academy covers

multiple areas in the banking profession, with particular focus on customer service, which is the backbone of any successful company. We look forward to supporting these young ambitious graduates and giving them the chance to achieve their career objectives."

The ABK Academy was launched as an edu-

cational platform that focuses on training students and individuals seeking a job opportunity in the banking sector. By engaging with these participants, the Bank is able to build on existing potential and talent, and better identify the areas in the bank, in which they could put this positive energy to work.

KFH KEEN ON SUPPORTING STUDENTS, YOUTH

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in opening the second semester at the College of Business Administration at Kuwait University. The bank was accessible to students through a special booth to educate them on the characteristics and benefits of 'Hesabi' account designed for the youth. This stems from KFH endeavors to support students and the youth, yet confirms the strategic partnership between KFH and the college.

KFH organized competitions and handed over prizes to the winners as part of its social responsibility. KFH participation witnessed huge students' turnout. Moreover, KFH Direct Sales team educated the students on KFH businesses, products and services. The team demonstrated the benefits of 'Hesabi' account.

It is worth noting that KFH is keen on participating in different activities and events of importance to the society and the economy. KFH raises the importance of reinforcing ties with the youth and students.



GULF BANK HONES SKILLS OF FIKRA PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank was pleased to lead a training session for participants in the Fikra Program, a nonprofit initiative that helps youth transform ideas into businesses. The Bank's session was on non-financial analysis and was conducted on Thursday, 16 February 2017, in Al-Hamra Tower.

Omar Al-Muhaisen, Relationship Manager - Business Banking at Gulf Bank, led the training and focused on helping the participants understand techniques to conduct analyses of and make informed strategic directions about how to establish their businesses.

The tools Muhaisen focused on were Porter's five forces and SWOT analysis. Porter five forces are used to analyze the competitive environment within an industry, often focusing on external forces, while a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities, Threats) analysis tends to look more deeply within an organization to analyze its internal potential.

Directly after the session, participants were surveyed and the responses were positive, with 100 percent of the atten-

dees indicating that they understood the subject better after attending. Furthermore, 100 percent said the trainer answered their questions; 80 percent said they had benefited from the session while 20 percent were neutral.

Highlighting the benefits of the training, one of the participants stated: "I would like to thank Gulf Bank and Omar Al-Muhaisen for conducting this training. It has helped me to be better able to position my project and analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within the market. The trainer brought great energy and knowledge to the session and Gulf Bank has been encouraging us every step of the way."

The main goal of Fikra Program is to empower a new generation of entrepreneurs to develop successful businesses and advance the local Kuwaiti market. It is an intensive entrepreneurship training that provides aspiring entrepreneurs with the technical skills and business knowledge needed to launch their own businesses such as leadership

skills, comprehensive business plan, investment opportunities and others.

Fikra is a non-profit program designed by Cubical Services- business incubator. It aims at turning young people's ideas into business projects and to help the youth achieve their aspirations and to overcome the obstacles of implementation. The program is supported by a range of governmental agencies and companies from the private sector in Kuwait and they are: the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, the National Fund for SMEs Development, Hamra Tower, Markaz, and Gulf Bank

Gulf Bank's sponsorship of Fikra comes as part of its corporate social responsibility program. The Bank is strongly committed to giving back to Kuwait as it supports numerous events and initiatives focusing on youth, education, health and fitness, helping the underprivileged, women's empowerment, as well as promoting Kuwait's heritage and culture.



Duterte 'ordered' death squad hits

'WE'RE NOT HERE FOR YOUR OIL', US DEFENSE CHIEF TELLS IRAQ

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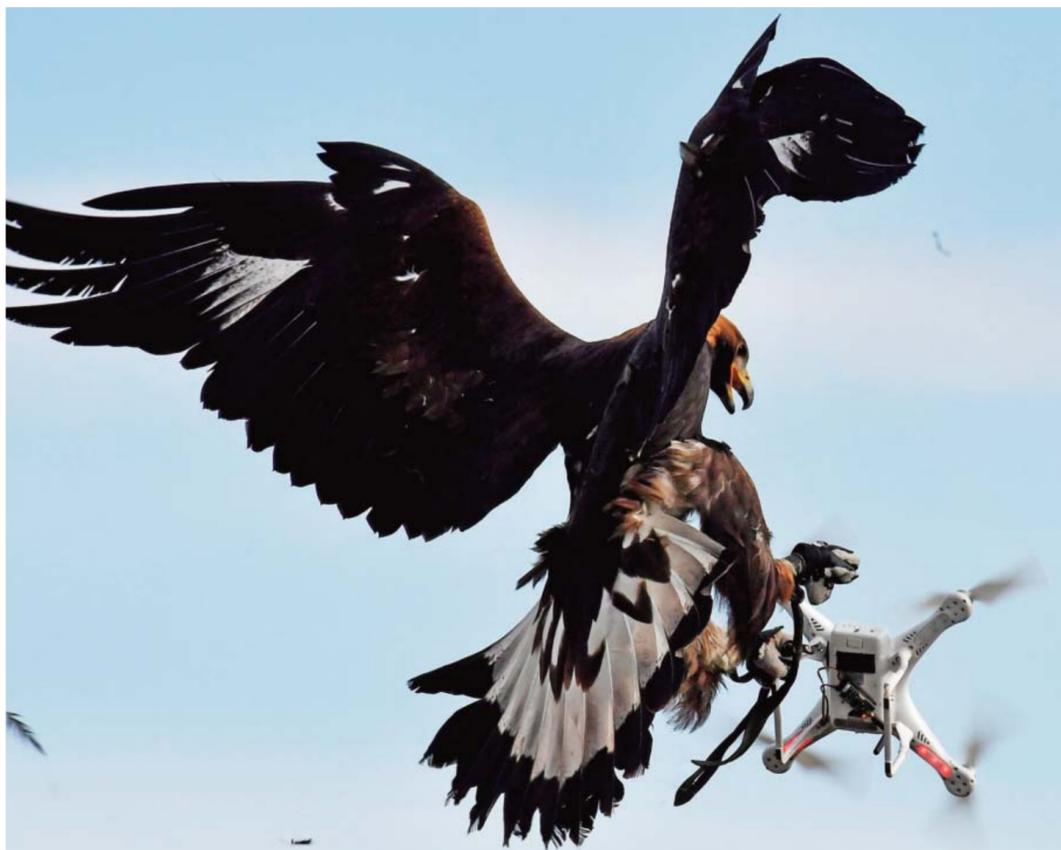
BORN KILLERS: FRENCH ARMY GROOMS EAGLES TO DOWN DRONES

MONT-DE-MARSAN: Faced with the risk of drones being used to snoop or carry out attacks on French soil, the air force is showing its claws. At Mont-de-Marsan in southwestern France a quartet of fearsome golden eagles is being trained to take out unmanned aircraft in mid-flight. The roar of a departing Rafale fighter jet gives way to the buzz of a drone lifting into the air on a runway at the air base, some 130 kilometers south of Bordeaux. Suddenly, a loud squawk fills the air as a beady-eyed eagle bears down at breakneck speed from a control tower 200 meters away.

In about 20 seconds the raptor has the drone between its talons, then pins it to the ground and covers it with its broad brown wings. The drone has been destroyed: Mission accomplished for D'Artagnan. The valiant bird is one of four feathered fighters-along with Athos, Porthos and Aramis, all characters in French novelist Alexandre Dumas's "The Three Musketeers"-being put through their paces since mid-2016. Mont-de-Marsan is one of five air bases in France to boast a falconry. Usually, the birds of prey-generally falcons or northern goshawks - are kept to scare birds away from the runway to reduce the risk of accidents during takeoff or landing. But with France on high alert after a string of jihadist assaults since January 2015, they are now sinking their beaks into national security. "The results are encouraging. The eagles are making good progress," said Commander Christophe, who heads the air safety squadron that is training the plumed predators. Like all French military personnel, he offers only his first name and rank to journalists. He says the birds are performing three to four months ahead of projections.

Hunting instincts

Police in The Netherlands were the first to come up with the idea of using raptors to intercept drones, inducting bald eagles into the service in late 2015. The French army followed suit last year, but it opted for the golden eagle a natural-born killer with a hooked beak, amber eyes and a wingspan of up to 2.2 meters



MONT-DE-MARSAN: A royal eagle catches a drone during a military exercise at the Mont-de-Marsan airbase, southwestern France. As malicious or poorly controlled drones are becoming more and more a security threat, the French army explores all options for defense. They train royal eagles for six months at the airbase to chase drones. — AFP

(seven feet). Like all birds of prey, the golden eagle has excellent eyesight, capable of spotting its target from two kilometers away.

At between three and five kilograms it also happens to weigh about the same as most of the drones that could be used for nefarious purposes or that simply go astray. And an eagle is devastatingly fast, clocking 80 kilometers an hour as it swoops in for the kill. Hatched in captivity, the four "musketeers" had their food served atop wrecked drones from the age of three weeks. Thanks to this technique, the birds very quickly began to seize remotely piloted aircraft for food. So when drones buzz above, their hunting instinct kicks in, with falconer Gerald Machoukow rewarding every successful interception with a hunk of meat.

Protective mittens

The birds begin with flights in a straight line, graduating to diving from a height. Soon they will be casting off from peaks in the nearby Pyrenees Mountains. The buzz around the project is palpable. A first progress report is due in June, halfway through the 24-month test program, but the initial feedback is positive. "The cost is very low considering the job at hand," said Commander Laurent, listing strategic sites such as airports, or events such as summits and football tournaments, among those where the eagles could be deployed. To prevent the birds from harming themselves on the job, the military is designing mittens of leather and Kevlar, an anti-blast material, to protect their talons.

"I love these birds," Machoukow said. "I don't want to send them to their death." He cautions against setting "impossible" tasks for his charges, like launching them against larger drones with potentially deadly propellers. Commander Laurent agrees that the birds are part of a palette of weapons available to the army in countering the threat from drones - not a fix-all solution. But the air force is already smitten enough to have ordered a second brood of eaglets. Mont-de-Marsan expects to welcome four more future aviator eagles by the summer. — AFP

Happy National and Liberation Days

Borgan Bank Group would like to extend its congratulations to Kuwait and its people on the occasion of the National and Liberation days. May every year bring happiness and prosperity to our beloved country.

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GLOBAL ARMS TRADE 'HIGHEST' SINCE COLD WAR

STOCKHOLM: Worldwide arms trade has risen to its highest level since the Cold War in the last five years, driven by a demand from the Middle East and Asia, a study said yesterday. Between 2012-2016, arms imports in terms of volume by countries in Asia and Oceania accounted for 43 percent of global imports, a 7.7 rise compared to the previous 2007-2011 period, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). "Transfer of major weapons in 2012-16 reached their highest volume for any five-year

period since the end of the Cold War, the independent institute said in a statement.

The share of Asia and Oceania in international imports was slightly higher (44 percent) between 2007 and 2011. The share of countries in the Middle East and the Gulf monarchies jumped from 17 percent to 29 percent, far ahead of Europe (11 percent, down seven points), the Americas (8.6 percent, down 2.4 percentage points) and Africa (8.1 percent, down 1.3 points). "Over the past five years, most states in

the Middle East have turned primarily to the USA and Europe in their accelerated pursuit of advanced military capabilities," said Pieter Wezeman, Senior Researcher with the SIPRI Arms and Military Expenditure Program. "Despite low oil prices, countries in the region continued to order more weapons in 2016, perceiving them as crucial tools for dealing with conflicts and regional tensions," he added. Sipri said worldwide arms imports and exports over the last five years have reached a record level since 1950.

Saudi Arabia was the second largest importer of weapons in the world (up 212 percent), behind India, which unlike China, does not have a production at national level yet. The United States remains the top weapons exporter with a 33 percent market share (up 3 point), ahead of Russia (23 percent, down 1 point), China (6.2 percent, up 2.4 points) and France (6.0 percent, down 0.9 points) passing Germany (5.6 percent, down 3.8 points). These five countries account for almost 75 percent of global

exports of heavy weapons. France's boost in the export ranking is a result of important contracts signed with Egypt, which acquired Mistral-style warships and Rafale combat aircraft. Aude Fleurant, head of the armaments program at Sipri said that "competition is fierce among European producers" with France, Germany and Britain in the lead. The United States and France are the main weapons providers for the Middle East while Russia and China are the main exporters to Asia. — AFP

SYRIAN ARMY RAMPS UP SHELLING NEAR CAPITAL

BEIRUT: Syrian government forces yesterday escalated their bombing campaign around Damascus, raining shells down on rebel territory and sending out a "bloody message" just days before renewed peace talks in Geneva. Representatives from the opposition and of President Bashar Al-Assad's regime are to head to Switzerland on Thursday for another attempt to end their country's brutal six-year war.

But regime forces yesterday escalated their bombing of the edges of Syria's capital, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and activists on the ground. "Regime air strikes killed four people and wounded another 15 in escalation on Barzeh," a northern rebel-held district of Damascus, the Observatory said. The Britain-based monitor said rockets also hit the northeastern opposition-controlled neighborhood of Qabun overnight.

Rebels and regime forces reached a local ceasefire deal in Qabun in 2014, but violence has built up in the neighborhood since last week. At least 16 people were killed on Saturday in government rocket fire on a funeral in Qabun, according to the Observatory. "This is the third day of bombardment-rockets, artillery, mortars, and air strikes," said media activist Hamza Abbas, speaking to AFP via internet from Qabun, where he said he could hear non-stop shelling. "The bombardment is targeting three neighbourhoods - Qabun, Barzeh, and Tishreen," Abbas said. A Syrian military source contacted by AFP declined to comment on the operations.

'Bloody message'

Syria's opposition on Sunday lambasted the government's renewed bombing campaign around the capital, calling it a "bloody message" aimed at sabotaging the peace talks. The High Negotiations Committee (HNC) said the attacks near Damascus and elsewhere across the country were "obstructing the efforts aimed at a political transition in Syria." "It is a bloody message from a criminal regime just a few days ahead of political negotiations in

Geneva that demonstrates its rejection of any political solution," the HNC said in an online statement.

The HNC-formed in December 2015 and which has emerged as the leading umbrella group for Syria's opposition factions has a new chief opposition negotiator for the Geneva talks, lawyer Mohammed Sabra. Sabra replaces Mohamed Alloush of the Army of Islam (Jaish al-Islam), a powerful rebel faction headquartered in the opposition bastion of Eastern Ghouta. Eastern Ghouta—which has faced a blistering army offensive in recent months—lies near to the opposition-controlled districts of Damascus being increasingly targeted by the government. Assad's regime is "bitterly determined to rid itself of the insurgent enclave, one way or another," wrote analyst Aron Lund in a post for the Carnegie Endowment's Middle East Center.

'Dagger' pointed at regime

"However weakened and contained, Eastern Ghouta remains a dagger pointed at the heart of Assad's regime and it ties down many thousands of soldiers," Lund said. Overrunning the area could have a significant impact on peace talks "since no opposition delegation would be of much value" without the Army of Islam, Lund added. The talks in Switzerland are the fourth round of UN-hosted peace negotiations. Since the last round in April 2016, rebels have lost their stronghold in east Aleppo and seen a new partnership form between their main ally Turkey and government backer Russia.

Ankara and Moscow teamed up in December to secure a truce deal between rebel groups and government forces, but the ceasefire is barely holding across Syria. Along with regime ally Iran, the two powers also hosted two rounds of talks between government officials and prominent rebels in the Kazakh capital. More than 310,000 people have been killed and millions forced to flee their homes since Syria's conflict broke out in 2011 with protests against Assad's rule. — AFP



CAIRO: Egyptian family members of victims of the Port Said massacre react outside the Court of Cassation following the court's ruling in the case in Cairo yesterday. — AFP

EGYPT'S COURT UPHOLDS DEATH SENTENCE OF 10 IN SOCCER RIOT

ONE OF THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST SOCCER DISASTERS

CAIRO: Egypt's highest Appeals Court yesterday upheld the death sentences against 10 people convicted over a soccer riot that killed over 70 fans in 2012, becoming one of the world's deadliest soccer disasters. The verdict by the Court of Cassation is final. The defendants were charged with murder, along with other charges. The court also upheld convictions of 22 suspects who received up to 10 years imprisonment over the rioting. A total of 11 defendants were sentenced to death but one remains at large and was tried in absentia.

The rioting erupted on February 2012, at the end of a league match in the Mediterranean city of Port Said between Cairo's Al-Ahly, Egypt's most successful club, and home side Al-Masry. In a shocking and unexpected turn, Al-Masry fans rushed to attack Al-Ahly supporters with knives, clubs and rocks. Witnesses and survivors described victims falling from the bleachers as they tried to escape.

Hundreds of others fled into an exit passage, only to be crushed against a locked gate with their rivals attacking from behind. The riot led to the suspension of Egypt's top soccer league for over a year. The league later resumed, but with matches played in empty stadiums.

The first Egyptian Premier League game in which fans were allowed back into the stadiums was played in February 2015, but that occasion was also marred by the death of 22 fans in a stampede outside the grounds. The stampede followed the use of tear gas by police to stop what authorities at the time said was an attempt by fans to storm the military-owned stadium in a suburb east of Cairo. In the Port Said disaster, most of the victims belonged to Al-Ahly's "Ultras Ahlawy," an association of hard-core fans now banned by authorities. In 2015, an Egyptian court ruled that the "Ultras" were a terrorist organization. Members of the "Ultras" have long been at

odds with the nation's highly militarized police, taunting them with offensive slogans during matches and fighting them in street battles. Hard-core fans of other clubs also identify themselves by going under variations of the Ultras' name. During the 2011 uprising that toppled autocratic President Hosni Mubarak, the Ultras often provided muscle at street rallies, directing protesters, leading chants and standing first in the line of fire as riot police unleashed tear gas.

Earlier this month, Egyptian police detained more than 100 Al-Ahly fans over a period of two days on suspicion they had planned to stage a protest on the anniversary of the Port Said rioting. The Ultras subsequently cancelled a planned commemoration. Five of those detained were charged with inciting protests and belonging to an outlawed group. Public gatherings without a permit are banned under Egypt's draconian anti-terrorism laws. — AP



DARAA: Fire and smoke billow following a reported car bomb explosion at a Syrian pro-government position during clashes between rebel fighters and regime forces to take control of an area in the southern city of Daraa yesterday. — AFP

ISLAMIC STATE TORTURES, RAPES SUNNI ARAB WOMEN TOO: HRW

BAGHDAD: Fighters from the Islamic State group, whose abuses against Yazidi women have been well documented, are raping and torturing Sunni Arab women too, Human Rights Watch said yesterday. The watchdog documented cases of arbitrary detentions, beatings, forced marriages and rape by the jihadists on women who have fled the town of Hawijah, which is still under IS control.

HRW recounted the story of Hanan, a 26-year-old whose husband had already fled Hawijah, who was captured by IS fighters along with other women when they also attempted to escape the town.

IS fighters told her that her husband's flight made her an apostate and that she should marry the local jihadist leader. When

she refused, she was blindfolded, beaten with plastic cables, suspended by her arms for some time and then raped. "The same guy raped me every day for the next month without a blindfold, always in front of my children," Hanan told HRW.

The group said the issue was not given enough attention and that too little was being done to tackle the stigma that prevents many more victims from coming forward. "Little is known about sexual abuse against Sunni Arab women living under ISIS rule," said Lama Fakhri, deputy Middle East director at HRW. "We hope that the international community and local authorities will do all they can to give this group of victims the support they need," she said. — AFP



HUSSEINIYAH: Iraqi security forces evacuate comrades, wounded in an explosives-laden vehicle attack claimed by Islamic State group, as the troops advance towards the village of Husseiniyah, south of Mosul yesterday, during the offensive to retake the western side of Mosul. — AFP

'ERDOGAN ASSASSINATION PLOT' SUSPECTS ON TRIAL

MUGLA: The trial opened yesterday of almost 50 suspects accused of plotting to assassinate Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at a luxury Aegean hotel on the night of the botched July 15 coup. Forty-four suspects, mainly soldiers, are under arrest, while three others still on the run are being tried in absentia at the court in the southern city of Mugla. The suspects, several smartly dressed in suits and ties, were led into the court by security forces in front of television cameras, AFP correspondents said.

Onlookers heckled them as they stepped out of the buses that took them from prison, shouting "we want the death penalty!" and "Allahu Akbar" ("God is Greatest"). Erdogan, who was holidaying at a hotel in the upmarket Aegean resort of Marmaris with his family on the night of the coup, has said the plot left him 15 minutes from death. Prosecutors have sought multiple life sentences for each of the suspects, who include an alleged hit squad of 37 soldiers suspected of seeking to carry out the plan. The trial was taking place under the highest security with snipers posted on rooftops and helicopters circling overhead. It is being held in a conference centre rather than a standard courtroom to accommodate the high number of suspects.

'Game over!'

Turkish officials say the plot to kill Erdogan was a key part of the plan to depose the elected government, a scheme they say was masterminded by the US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen and his so-called Fethullah Terror Organization (FETO). The plan was to "neutralize the president," Erdogan's lawyer Huseyin Aydin said outside the court. "If our president was neutralized as planned, the course of the coup would have been different. We would have been faced with a different Turkey," he said.

Ankara has repeatedly demanded that the United States extradite Gulen, who lives in a secluded compound in the US state of Pennsylvania. The preacher, who is on trial in several cases in Turkey, is one of the three suspects still at large in the assassination plot trial. Onlookers



MUGLA, Turkey: People, mainly Turkish soldiers, accused of trying to assassinate Turkish President during the July coup attempt, are escorted by security forces towards the courthouse in Mugla, western Turkey yesterday. — AFP

waving Turkish flags chanted slogans against the accused and Gulen, including "Execution!" and "Game Over, FETO." After the coup, there have been calls to reimpose the death penalty in Turkey, which was abolished in 2004. Its reinstatement would spell the end of Turkey's embattled bid to join the European Union. Despite this, Erdogan has repeatedly told crowds at rallies he would approve legislation reimposing the death penalty if it was approved by parliament. Getting the trial underway, judge Emirsah Bastog said the initial phase would last until March 15, with more hearings in April and then in June. Inside the tense court, suspects were placed at the centre surrounded by dozens of soldiers with batons.

'15 minutes from death'

Accompanied by close family members

including his son-in-law, Energy Minister Berat Albayrak, Erdogan managed to flee Marmaris and fly to Istanbul where he oversaw the suppression of the coup.

"If I had stayed 10 or 15 additional minutes there, I would have been killed or I would have been taken," Erdogan told CNN in an interview on July 18. Two Turkish policemen who were helping to guard Erdogan at the hotel were killed, according to the indictment. Some 43,000 people have been arrested following the coup attempt in a massive crackdown on followers of Gulen that has raised international concerns. Gulen vehemently denies being behind the plot. The Mugla trial is one of many now getting underway across the country to judge the coup suspects, the biggest legal process in the country's modern history. — AFP

'WE'RE NOT HERE FOR YOUR OIL', US DEFENSE CHIEF TELLS IRAQIS

MATTIS DISTANCES HIMSELF FROM TRUMP'S OIL COMMENTS

BAGHDAD: The US military is not in Iraq "to seize anybody's oil", Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said, distancing himself from remarks by President Donald Trump at the start of a visit to Iraq yesterday. Mattis, on his first trip to Iraq as Pentagon chief, is hoping to assess the war effort as US-backed Iraqi forces launch a new push to evict Islamic State militants from their remaining stronghold in the city of Mosul. But he is likely to face questions about Trump's remarks and actions, including a temporary ban on travel to the United States and for saying America should have seized Iraq's oil after toppling Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Trump told CIA staff in January: "We should have kept the oil. But okay. Maybe you'll have another chance." Mattis, however, flatly ruled out any such intent. "We're not in Iraq to seize anybody's oil," he told reporters travelling with him. His remarks are the latest example of his policy differences with Trump. Trump has acknowledged that Mattis did not agree with him about the usefulness of torture as an interrogation tactic but, in a sign of Mattis' influence, said he would defer the matter to his defense secretary.

Mattis has also been more critical than Trump of Russian President Vladimir Putin, and distanced himself from Trump's labeling of the media as "the enemy of the American people," saying he had no problems with the press. A retired Marine general who led American troops in Iraq, Mattis has also sought an exemption from Trump's travel ban for Iraqis who served with US troops, including translators. He said he had not seen a new executive order which the administration is considering. "But I right now am assured that we will take steps to allow those who have fought alongside us, for example, to be allowed into the United States," Mattis said.

Mosul campaign

Mattis is finalizing plans at Trump's request to accelerate the defeat of Islamic State and is expected to meet senior US and



BAGHDAD: US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis (second from right) is greeted by US Ambassador Douglas Silliman as he arrives at Baghdad International Airport, Iraq, on an unannounced trip yesterday. —AFP

Iraqi officials in Iraq. His visit comes a day after Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi announced the start of the ground offensive on western Mosul, where Islamic State militants are essentially under siege along with an estimated 650,000 civilians. The insurgents were forced out of the east of the city last month after 100 days of fighting.

The US commander in Iraq, Army Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend, has said he believes US-backed forces will recapture both of Islamic State's major strongholds - Mosul and the city of Raqqa in Syria - within the next six months. The defense secretary's strategy review could lead to additional deployment of US forces,

beyond the less than 6,000 American troops deployed to both Iraq and Syria today.

Experts say the Pentagon may also look at increasing the number of attack helicopters and air strikes and bringing in more artillery, as well as granting greater authority to battlefield commanders fighting Islamic State. The future for US forces in Iraq, and for Iraq's fragmented society, is unclear once the hardline Sunni group has been expelled from Mosul. Mattis told the Senate last month that the top US goal in Iraq should be "to ensure that it does not become a rump state of the regime in Tehran", which has close ties with the Shi'ite political elite ruling Iraq.

A power struggle appears to be

taking root between Iraq's Shiite leaders. Influential cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr, who is openly hostile to Washington's policies in the Middle East, has begun mobilizing supporters ahead of parliamentary and provincial elections. Sadr yesterday said the government should demand the withdrawal of US and allied forces after the battle of Mosul. "The Iraqi government has to demand that all occupying and so-called friendly forces leave Iraq in order to preserve the prestige and the sovereignty of the state," he said. Sadr's main rival is former prime minister Nuri Al-Maliki, a pro-Iranian politician re-emerging as a possible kingmaker or even for a return to the premiership itself. —Reuters



CALIFORNIA: Traffic passes along the scene, where a tractor trailer and a San Bernardino County Fire Department fire engine fell from southbound Interstate 15 in the Cajon Pass, Calif. —AP

TRAFFIC JAMS COST US DRIVERS \$1,200 A YEAR

DETROIT: Traffic jams cost US drivers an average of \$1,200 a year in wasted fuel and time, and much more in Los Angeles, the city with the world's biggest rush hour traffic delays, according to a study by INRIX Inc released yesterday. INRIX, based in Kirkland, Washington, aggregates and analyzes traffic data collected from vehicles and highway infrastructure. The company said the latest edition of its Global Traffic Scorecard report was based on 500 terabytes of data from 300 million sources. While Thailand was the world's most congested country in 2016, according to the study, the United States had the worst traffic among rich, developed economies. Five of the world's 10 most congested cities are in the United States, INRIX found.

US traffic congestion is not a new problem, but it could get renewed attention if President Donald Trump pushes for a large-scale infrastructure investment program as he has promised. Chronic traffic jams are a concern for global automakers, and some major cities have begun to limit private motor

vehicle access to central city areas. The INRIX study sliced data in different ways. Los Angeles drivers spent an average of 104 peak drive-time hours fighting slow traffic during 2016. That put Los Angeles at the top of the list of cities where drivers spent the most hours stuck in slow rush hour traffic.

But on a different measure, time stuck in congestion as a share of all driving, Moscow drivers had it worse. They spent 25.2 percent of their total driving hours on congested roads, while Los Angeles motorists spent 12.7 percent of their total driving time in slow traffic, the study found. In Bogota, Colombia, motorists spend 31.8 percent of their total driving time in traffic jams. The worst stretch of road in the United States is New York City's Cross Bronx Expressway, where drivers on the 4.7 mile road spent an average of 86 hours a year staring at the bumper of the car ahead. After Los Angeles, INRIX listed New York, San Francisco, Atlanta and Miami as the most traffic-choked US cities. —Reuters



QUITO: Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa (left) hugs Lenin Moreno, the presidential candidate of the governing Alianza PAIS party, at a hotel in Quito after the exit polls indicate that the leftist candidate won the first round of the elections. —AFP

ECUADOR HEADS TO PRESIDENTIAL RUNOFF VOTE

QUITO: Ecuador's presidential election looked headed to a runoff as partial results showed leftist candidate Lenin Moreno fell short of the lead needed to win outright in Sunday's first-round vote. The vote is a test of the legacy of outgoing President Rafael Correa, Moreno's ally and an outspoken critic of the United States. With 51.8 percent of the ballots counted, Moreno had 38.26 percent of the vote with 29.86 percent for his conservative rival Guillermo Lasso, the president of the National Electoral Council, Juan Pablo Pozo, said in a televised announcement. Moreno needed more than 40 percent and a 10-point lead over his rival to win outright without facing a runoff.

President Trump

If in the end Lasso wins the presidency, a pillar of the Latin American left will swing to the right. Correa says Latin America needs a strong leftist movement to resist US President Donald Trump's hard line on immigration and trade. But Lasso has shown more willingness to work with

Washington since Trump's election victory in November.

WikiLeaks' Assange

Lasso has also said he will end WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's asylum in Ecuador's London embassy. Assange is taking refuge there for fear of extradition to the United States for publishing leaked documents that embarrassed Washington. The busting of a commodities boom has hastened the end of two decades of leftist predominance in Latin America. Argentina, Brazil and Peru have all switched to conservative governments since late 2015.

Economic crossroads

Correa says Sunday's presidential and legislative polls are an opportunity to halt the "conservative restoration" in Latin America. The busting of a commodities boom has hastened the end of two decades of leftist predominance in the region. Economist Correa, 53, initially oversaw a boom in the oil-rich country of 16 million. Now, "what is at stake are two visions of society, two visions of development, two visions of the state," he said of Sunday's election. Voters were deciding whether to continue his tax-and-spend policies or give Lasso a mandate to cut spending and taxes. Lasso has slammed Correa's allies over alleged links to corruption.

Boom and bust

Ecuador exports half a million barrels of oil a day. Correa used the wealth to fund social welfare schemes and public works. But oil prices have plunged over the past three years. The economy shrank by 1.7 percent last year. "I want a change because it has been stronger than any economic crisis we have felt before," said Alexandra Orbe, 48, before voting in the capital Quito. But voter Nora Molina, 53, judged "these past 10 years have shown how the country has advanced. I think we are going to keep that going."

A close contest

Analysts said voters fed up with Correa may rally behind a conservative candidate if the vote goes to a second round. "Any party could beat the governing one in the second round, because there is major resistance to and rejection of the government," said political scientist Paolo Moncagatta of Quito's San Francisco University. But Michael Shifter of the Inter-American Dialogue think tank in Washington cautioned: "It is a mistake to underestimate the strength of support for Correa's side." Voters also cast ballots in a simultaneous referendum on whether to fire politicians who hold funds in tax havens while in office. —AFP

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NIGERIA SIGNALS NORMALITY BY PUTTING VP IN CHARGE

UNCERTAINTY OVER HEALTH OF PRESIDENT BUHARI

LAGOS: Nigeria's deputy leader is making wide use of powers granted by President Muhammadu Buhari, who is on extended sick leave abroad, as the country seeks to avoid a debilitating power vacuum while it confronts its first recession in 25 years. The West African oil-producing nation was gripped by instability in 2010 when then President Umaru Yar'Adua spent three months in a Saudi hospital while his aides shrouded his illness in secrecy. His deputy Goodluck Jonathan only took over after he died in the midst of a constitutional crisis. The Nigerian stock exchange, already hit by recession, has fallen to a nine-month low on the uncertainty over Buhari. But officials are keen to avoid the mistakes of the past and drive home the message that government work will continue whatever happens. Before Buhari left home almost a month ago to be treated in Britain for an undisclosed illness, the 74-year-old appointed his deputy, Yemi Osinbajo, as Acting President.

"The nation came to a political standstill because of the failure of Yar'Adua to submit a letter transferring power to Vice

President Jonathan," a government official said, asking not to be named. "In this present scenario this is not the case. No vacuum was left because President Buhari sent a letter to the National Assembly," he said. Osinbajo has thrown himself into his work, holding cabinet meetings and travelling to the Niger Delta in an attempt to end militant attacks on oil facilities which cost up to \$100 billion in lost revenues in 2016.

Investors welcome the fact that the government will not postpone a long-awaited reform plan intended to stimulate an economy hit by low oil prices. "Obviously the fact that the president is away creates uncertainty, but we believe Vice President Osinbajo is capable of running things in the meantime," said Cobus de Hart, senior economist at South Africa's NKC African Economics. Officials refuse to disclose what is ailing Buhari, saying only that he has been having tests and is not in a serious condition. Diplomats say Buhari has made several visits to Britain to see his doctor, routing official trips even to destinations as far afield as Asia via London so as not to have to declare medical leave all

the time. In contrast to Yar'Adua, whom officials cut off from the world on his sickbed in Saudi Arabia, the presidency publishes almost daily pictures of Buhari receiving visitors in his London drawing room. He took a phone call from US President Donald Trump on Monday, both administrations say.

In an indication that his British stay might drag on, the speakers of both of Nigeria's chambers of parliament flew to meet Buhari at Abuja House, a Nigerian government residence in west London, according to an official picture. "I thanked them for visiting. I am also grateful to Nigerians, Christians and Muslims alike, for their prayers and kind wishes for my health," a smiling but thinner-looking Buhari said, according to an official tweet late on Wednesday.

Uncertainty

Some Nigerians have been getting worried. "Nigerians are supposed to know the health condition of the president, just like the head of the family is sick and the doctor is holding back the health condi-

tion from his family," said Olugbolahan, an engineer from Lagos. The arrangement with Osinbajo ensures the day-to-day running of government business. But the long-term risk is that the Muslim north, where Buhari hails from, might not accept Osinbajo as a permanent solution if the president became incapacitated at some point. Osinbajo is a Christian lawyer from the commercial capital Lagos in the south. He has shown conspicuous loyalty to Buhari and given no sign that he plans to run for president himself.

Traditionally in Nigeria, the leadership rotates between north and south to ensure a balance in a country evenly split between Muslims and Christians. The capital, Abuja, is placed right in the centre as symbol of unity. Jonathan, a Christian from the south, upset many northerners by refusing to give way to a northern candidate. Northerners felt there should have been another northern presidential term after Yar'Adua's death. Hundreds were killed in riots after Jonathan's election in 2011. "The politics of rotation is always delicate in Nigeria," said Anthony Goldman of

Nigeria-focused PM Consulting. "But Nigeria has quite a good record of managing the worst crises in leadership."

Reforms

For now investors and Nigerian firms hope Osinbajo will enforce reforms to drum up badly needed investment. He took advantage of Buhari's absence abroad last year to float the idea of a more flexible foreign exchange policy, which paved the way for an overdue devaluation of the naira. Osinbajo has been always been in charge of the economy but Buhari has left him little space, subscribing to the view that a strong country needs a strong currency. Keeping the naira artificially high has deterred investors, who assume Nigeria will have to devalue again. This week, the naira hit a new low at 516 to the dollar on the black market, where importing firms need to go for their dollars, in contrast to the official rate of around 305.

"Some of his (Osinbajo's) statements have conveyed a more liberal approach to economic policy, which is a good sign," said de Hart. —Reuters



BENTIU: Women who fled fighting in nearby Leer in recent months, queue for food aid at a food distribution made by the World Food Program in Bentiu, South Sudan. —AP

S SUDAN 'SUFFERING A MAN-MADE' TRAGEDY

100,000 PEOPLE AFFECTED BY FAMINE

JUBA: South Sudan yesterday declared famine in some parts of the country, with more than three years of war leaving nearly five million hungry in what aid groups called a "man-made" tragedy. Isaiah Chol Aruai, chairman of South Sudan's National Bureau of Statistics, said some parts of the northern Greater Unity region "are classified in famine, or... risk of famine". Aid agencies said 100,000 people were affected by the famine, which threatened another one million people in the coming months. "A formal famine declaration means people have already started dying of hunger. The situation is the worst hunger catastrophe since fighting erupted more than three years ago," said the statement by the World Food Program (WFP), UN children's agency UNICEF and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

South Sudan, the world's youngest nation, was engulfed by civil war in 2013 after President Salva Kiir accused his rival and former deputy Riek Machar of plotting a coup against him. An August 2015 peace deal was left in tatters when fighting broke out in Juba in July last year. Violence—initially between ethnic Dinka supporters of Kiir and ethnic Nuer supporters of Machar—has since spread to other parts of the country, engulfing other ethnic groups and grievances. The United Nations has warned of potential genocide and ethnic cleansing and there is no prospect of peace in sight.

Humanitarians under attack

Oil-rich Unity State, a traditional Nuer homeland and Machar's birthplace, has been one of the flashpoints in the conflict and has flipped several times between government and rebel forces. "The convergence of evidence shows that the long-term effects of the conflict coupled with high food prices, economic crisis, low agricultural production and depleted livelihood options" have resulted in 4.9 million people going hungry, Aruai said. That figure represents 42 percent of the country's population. The famine classification is according to an internationally recognized sliding scale of hunger in which an extreme lack of food has led to starvation and death.

"The main tragedy of the report that has been launched today... is that the problem is man-made," said Eugene Owusu, the United Nations' Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan. "The underlying drivers have been there for some time and we have all known that we have a major food crisis." He said conflict and insecurity for humanitarian workers, who had suffered attacks while carrying out their work, and the looting of "humanitarian assets" had exacerbated the crisis.

In September last year, several aid agencies had to pull out of the famine-hit area of Leer because of escalating fighting between the two forces. "I would like to use this opportunity to call on the government, the warring parties and all actors to support humanitarians to provide the necessary access so we can continue to bring lifesaving services to those in need," Owusu said.

Agriculture disrupted

According to aid groups, the number of people facing hunger is expected to rise to 5.5 million at the height of the lean season in July if nothing is done to curb the spread of the food crisis. "Many families have exhausted every means they have to survive," said the FAO's representative in South Sudan, Serge Tissot. "The

people are predominantly farmers and war has disrupted agriculture. They've lost their livestock, even their farming tools. For months there has been a total reliance on whatever plants they can find and fish they can catch."

The famine declaration comes as millions across the Horn of Africa are going hungry due to a devastating drought following two failed rainy seasons. The drought has also affected food security in South Sudan, however the biggest contributor to the famine is the inability of aid agencies to reach areas where the economy has collapsed due to the war. Famine last hit the region six years ago, killing an estimated 260,000 people in Somalia. Famine early warning system FEWSNET has warned that if 2017 rains were again poor in Somalia—as forecast—"famine would be expected." —AFP

MONTENEGRO ACCUSES RUSSIA OF 'PLOT COUP'

PODGORICA: Montenegro's special prosecutor has accused Russia and its secret service operatives of plotting a coup attempt that included plans to kill the small Balkan country's former prime minister. Prosecutor Milivoje Katnic said an investigation into the alleged plot last October to overthrow Montenegro's government and prevent it from joining NATO has shown "that Russian state bodies were involved at a certain level."

Speaking in a conference call yesterday, Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, denied the claim as "absurd" and "irresponsible." "There can't be even talk about any sort of Russian officials' interference into Montenegro's internal affairs," Peskov said. "Russia hasn't interfered and isn't going to interfere into domestic affairs of other countries, and in particular Montenegro with which we have very good relations." Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also denied what he described as "unfounded accusations," adding that they "haven't been backed by a single fact."

The Kremlin, opposed to further NATO expansion in Europe, has repeatedly denied involvement in the alleged plot. But it has actively supported nationalist groups opposed to Montenegro's NATO membership. Some 20 people, mostly Serbian citizens, have been arrested in Montenegro over the alleged election-day plot. The Montenegrin prosecutor told Prva TV late Sunday that Eduard Shishmakov,

an alleged Russian military spy, was the main coordinator of the plot that included taking over of the parliament in the capital, Podgorica, and the killing of then-Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, who brought the small Adriatic nation to the threshold of NATO membership.

Shishmakov and another Russian operative reportedly coordinated the action from neighboring Serbia using encrypted mobile phones and other sophisticated spy equipment. They were allowed to return to Russia despite Serbian officials' acknowledgment of their activities. Shishmakov was deputy Russian military attaché in Poland before being expelled for espionage in 2014," Katnic said. In 2014 there were several tit-for-tat expulsions involving Russia and Poland but the people expelled were never named.

Katnic said that Shishmakov traveled to Serbia on a passport with another name, Eduard Shirokov. "So, the passport was given to him by certain Russian state bodies under another name, and he is a member of the Russian military structures," Katnic said. "It is clear that the passport on another name could not have been issued, as well as everything else... without the involvement of certain (Russian state) structures." US President Donald Trump's stand on NATO, which he has described as an "obsolete" organization, and his warming of relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has worried many in Montenegro and the rest of the war-torn Balkans. —AP

JAMMEH'S MISSING: TRACING THE GAMBIA'S DISAPPEARED

BANJUL: Pensioner Sarjo Manneh celebrated more joyfully than most when former leader Yahya Jammeh agreed to leave The Gambia in January. After a decade, he believed he might see his son again. But nearly a month later, he is still waiting. His son Chief Ebrima Manneh, a journalist for a pro-government newspaper, went missing in 2006 during a summit held in the tiny west African country. Agents of the feared National Intelligence Agency (NIA), which reported directly to Jammeh, appeared at the offices of the Daily Observer and took him away. His colleagues and family have never seen him again. In 2009 The Gambia's then attorney-general Marie Saine-Firdaus told parliament that Manneh was not in state custody, while others including the current chief of police claimed he was living in the United States. Jammeh's stunning electoral defeat in December after 22 years in power triggered the release of many political prisoners—but not the journalist. "My hope is shattered," his father said.

'Criminal action in court'

Despite the crushing sorrow he feels, Manneh is shaking off the fear that kept him from fighting a symbiotic system of secret police and trained killers that took an unknown number of lives.

"I want to institute criminal action in court against Yahya Jammeh and those responsible for the disappearance of my son," Manneh said. Gambian diaspora media regularly published lists of the unsolved crimes concerning the missing, appealing for details and circulating years' worth of rumours about the most high-profile cases. And there are nascent signs the new government of President Adama Barrow is determined to bring closure for families like the Mannehs, even while mired in a financial crisis and faced with reforming a state that Jammeh's critics say catered to the interests of one man.

Interior Minister Mai Fatty, one of the most vocal Jammeh opponents within the new administration, has said a body will be set up to look into forced disappearances

and to investigate "black sites" that may still be holding victims. "The responsibility lies on us to give an explanation to our people," he told AFP.

Pro-regime figures may still be holding Gambians incommunicado. "Some people may still be held and are not known because the previous government has so many detention centres that were not disclosed to the public," Fatty said.

Jammeh's 'death squad'

Barrow has promised to reform the NIA, changing its name, replacing its chief and promising training for staff whose work would be limited to "intelligence gathering, analysis and advice to the relevant arms of government". "An appropriate commission will be established to conduct inquiries into disappearances," he said. Almost every sector of society was targeted by the NIA and the "Junglers", a group of around 40 men described as Jammeh's death squad. Tumani Jallow, a 24-year-old soldier with the elite State Guards battalion that personally protected Jammeh, had an elevated status in Gambian society, but when the NIA came this suddenly meant nothing.

After he was arrested in September 2016, taken to NIA headquarters in Banjul, and then whisked to an unknown location, Jallow's family are painfully aware he may never return. "He and two of his colleagues in the Gambia Armed Forces were arrested by state security agents shortly after the arson attack on the ruling party's headquarters," said his brother Buba Sawo.

"We have searched for him everywhere, but the NIA said he is not in their custody," Sawo told AFP. "We are pleading with the current administration." Fredy Peccerelli, a world-renowned forensic anthropologist who has helped nations as varied as Guatemala and Sri Lanka identify scores of victims, told AFP the process would probably take several years. Work on genealogy, forensics, testimony and any documentation from the prison system would be required, along with the funds—potentially from international donors—to pay for it. —AFP



BANJUL: This file photo taken on January 21, 2017 shows former Gambian president Yahya Jammeh (center up), waving from the plane in Banjul as he leaves the country. —AFP

DELAY RISK AS UK'S LORDS BEGIN BREXIT BILL DEBATE

LONDON: Britain's House of Lords could delay a bill empowering Prime Minister Theresa May to trigger Brexit, with EU citizens campaigning for their rights to be protected as debate gets under way yesterday. The upper house of parliament was to start considering the draft legislation after it was overwhelmingly approved by the elected lower House of Commons earlier this month. But the bill's passage through the Lords may not be smooth as May's Conservative Party does not hold a majority in the unelected chamber, which may try to push through amendments to the law.

Peers are proposing changes, including measures to guarantee the rights of EU nationals in Britain, and defining how parliament votes on a final Brexit deal. May urged the Lords to follow the lead of the Commons and neither amend the bill nor delay it, although the government is still

expecting to stick to its timetable of triggering Brexit by the end of March. "There will be debate and scrutiny in the House of Lords, but I don't want to see anybody holding up what the British people want... which is for us to deliver Brexit, to leave the European Union," she said.

The bill gives May the right to trigger Article 50 of the European Union's Lisbon Treaty, the formal procedure to start negotiations on leaving the bloc. The government presented the short bill after losing a high-profile court battle in which judges ruled that May must have the consent of parliament before beginning divorce proceedings with Brussels. The legislation sailed through the Commons earlier this month by 494 votes to 122. In a June referendum, 52 percent of voters opted to leave the EU after four decades of membership, sending shockwaves across Europe. —AFP

News

in brief

Explosion at Colombia bullring injures dozens

BOGOTA: An explosion injured at least 26 people in the Colombian capital Sunday, most of them police guarding a bullring that had been targeted by protests on reopening last month, officials said. "We condemn the attack with explosives. An unacceptable use of violence. We are told police officers are injured. There are no mortal victims," Interior Minister Juan Fernando Cristo said on Twitter. The defense ministry said 26 people were injured, two of them civilians and the rest police. The city hall put the figure of injured at 30, saying four were civilians. Six of them had to undergo surgery and four of the police may lose eyes due to injuries from flying fragments, Defense Minister Luis Carlos Villegas told reporters after visiting the hospital where they were treated. The explosion struck near the Plaza Santamaria bullring in the Macarena district. Police cordoned off the area at the center of the blast, where fragments of rubble lay as police explosives experts inspected the site.

Cambodia's leader empowers court to dissolve rival parties

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's parliament passed a law yesterday giving judges sweeping powers to dissolve political parties, a move seen as a brazen attempt by premier Hun Sen to checkmate his opponents ahead of next year's polls. Hun Sen, who for three decades has led the country with force and political guile, has used the kingdom's pliant courts to ramp up a legal assault on the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), currently the only viable opposition party. The CNRP has been gaining in popularity, propelled by frustration over corruption and rights abuses under Hun Sen's rule, and is seen as a threat to the incumbent government in 2018 general elections. But the party has been hobbled by an onslaught of lawsuits that rights groups say is part of the strongman's crackdown on critics as he looks to extend his grip on power. The controversial new amendments passed on Monday empower the Supreme Court to dissolve any party which violates the constitution, "incites" the public or whose leaders are convicted of a crime.



UTTAR PRADESH: In this Feb 15, 2017 photo, women stand in a queue to cast their votes at a village near Amroha in Uttar Pradesh, India. —AP

How Indians will 'vote their caste' in election

NEW DELHI: The Indian state of Uttar Pradesh is voting in the biggest democratic election anywhere in the world this year. If it were a country, Uttar Pradesh - with a population of nearly 220 million - would be the world's fifth-largest. Even though India today is a vibrant democracy, politics in the battleground state is still influenced by the Hindu caste system, a social hierarchy with its origins in antiquity. Figuring out which party can win in Uttar Pradesh depends on a complex equation of so-called "vote-bank" politics. Or, as a famous Indian saying goes: "It's not how you cast your vote, but how you vote your caste." It's shaping up to be a three-cornered contest. Each party needs to shore up its core support - and grab votes from rivals - to stand a chance of winning. The ruling Samajwadi Party (SP), led by youthful Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, is seeking re-election in voting that is being held in seven stages - starting in the West and moving East - that run until March 8.

Pirates kill Vietnamese sailor, kidnap 6 others

MANILA: Pirates have attacked a Vietnamese-flagged cargo ship off the southern Philippines, killing one seaman and abducting at least six others in a region notorious for such attacks, officials said Monday. The MV Giang Hai was attacked by pirates Sunday near the southernmost Philippine island of Baguan near the Malaysian coast, said coast guard spokesman Armand Balilo. Philippine coast guard speedboats reached the scene but found one Vietnamese dead and at least six others abducted, said military spokesman Colonel Edgard Arevalo. Arevalo said it was too early to say if the attackers were members of the Abu Sayyaf, a Filipino Muslim extremist group that has been abducting people for ransom in the south for decades. The waters between Malaysia and the southern Philippines have become increasingly dangerous in recent years as Filipino Muslim extremists have taken to piracy, boarding ships and seizing seamen for ransom.

Pakistan airstrikes kill 'dozens' of militants

PESHAWAR: Pakistani airstrikes killed "dozens" of militants yesterday in a tribal region along the Afghan border, the military said. Pakistan had vowed to fight back after a series of suicide bombings last week killed more than 100 people, including 88 worshippers gathered at a famed Sufi shrine. The attacks were claimed by various Islamic militant groups, which have long operated in the porous border region. The warplanes targeted militant hideouts in the Wucha Bibi area of North Waziristan, the Pakistani army said in a statement. The information could not be independently confirmed, as media access to the region is heavily restricted. Pakistan carried out a blistering artillery assault on suspected terrorist camps in Afghanistan on Friday and Saturday after giving the Afghan government a list of 76 alleged Pakistani terrorists it said were sheltering there. The artillery assault displaced nearly 200 families, according to the Norwegian Refugee Council.

N KOREA, MALAYSIA ROW RAGES AS KIM'S KILLING FILM EMERGES

AIRPORT KILLING SEEN ON CCTV; PROBE STRAINS TIES

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak said yesterday his government's investigation of the killing of the North Korean leader's half-brother, Kim Jong Nam, will be "objective," as tension rose between the countries. Earlier yesterday, Malaysia said it has recalled its envoy from Pyongyang and summoned North Korea's ambassador in Kuala Lumpur, who again cast doubt on the impartiality of Malaysia's investigation into the murder and said the victim was not Kim Jong Nam. "We have no reason why we want to do something to paint North Korea in a bad light, but we will be objective," Najib told reporters in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur.

CCTV footage obtained by Reuters appeared to show Kim Jong Nam being attacked at Kuala Lumpur International Airport yesterday last week by a woman, who is believed to have wiped a fast-acting poison on his face. Reuters could not independently verify the authenticity of the video, and police officials were not immediately available for comment. Kim Jong Nam, 46, who had been living in the Chinese territory of Macau under Beijing's protection, had spoken out publicly against his family's dynastic control of isolated, nuclear-armed North Korea.

South Korean legislators last week cited their spy agency as saying the young and unpredictable North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, had issued a "standing order" for his half-brother's assassination, and that there had been a failed attempt in 2012. Malaysian police are hunting four North Koreans who fled from the country on the day of the attack, having already detained one North Korean man, a Vietnamese woman, an Indonesian woman, and a Malaysian man.

At least three of the wanted North Koreans caught an Emirates flight to Dubai from Jakarta late on the day of the attack, an immigration official in Indonesia said. Malaysia's Star newspaper reported that all four had returned to North Korea. North Korea had sought to prevent Malaysia from conducting an autopsy, insisting the body be handed over. Its envoy in Kuala Lumpur accused Malaysian authorities of "delaying" the release of the body. "At the moment we cannot trust the investigation by the Malaysian police," ambassador Kang Chol told reporters after talks at the foreign ministry.

He said the embassy had only identified the victim as Kim Chol, based on the passport found on the dead man, and suggested a joint investigation with Malaysian authorities. Kim Jong Nam had been caught using fake travel documents in the past. Malaysia's foreign ministry announced the withdrawal "for consultations" of its ambassador in North Korea and said the body would be handed over to the next of kin, although none had come forward. Malaysia's health minister said autopsy results could be released by Wednesday. Malaysia is one of the few countries that maintains ties with the reclusive state and the dispute could further isolate impoverished North Korea.

'Getting bolder'

South Korea, acutely sensitive to events in its volatile neighbor, convened a meeting of its National Security Council. Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn told the meeting that it was nearly certain that North Korea was behind the



KUALA LUMPUR: In this image made from airport closed circuit television video, Kim Jong Nam, (second from right) exiled half-brother of North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, walks with an airport security official towards a medical clinic (top right) after he was attacked at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Malaysia. —AP

killing. "The murder carried out in public at an international airport of a third country is an unforgivable and inhumane criminal act and clearly demonstrates the recklessness and brutality of the North Korean regime that will spare no avenues when it comes to perpetuating itself," Hwang said.

"The North Korean regime's terrorism tactics are getting bolder so we must be more vigilant," South Korean and US officials had earlier said the killing was probably carried out by North Korean agents. The grainy CCTV images showed Kim, wearing a light-colored jacket and trousers and with a backpack on one shoulder, heading for an automatic check-in counter in the airport departure hall. A woman approaches Kim from behind on the left and another - identified by Fuji as the Vietnamese woman, wearing a white shirt - walks rapidly up behind him from his right, before what appears to be a scuffle takes place.

In footage taken from another angle, the woman in the white shirt appears to lunge from behind and throw something over his head, locking her arms around him briefly.

As the woman in white quickly walks away, the second woman also moves off rapidly in another direction. Later footage shows the portly, balding middle-aged man stumbling, wiping his face, and seeking help from people while gesturing to his eyes before being escorted to a clinic. The mother of the detained Indonesian woman told Reuters that her daughter, Siti Aishah, had been duped into believing she was part of a television show or advertisement.

According to Malaysian media, the Vietnamese suspect, Doan Thi Huong, told police she had been tricked into taking part in what she thought was a practical joke. There is speculation that China's patience with North Korea could be tested by the killing because Kim had been living in Macau, where he was headed when he was attacked. China said on Saturday it had suspended coal imports from the North, a vital source of revenue. China is seen to be irritated by the North's repeated aggressive behavior, including two nuclear tests since early 2016 and a Feb 12 intermediate-range ballistic missile launch, the latest in a series of missile tests. —Reuters

SCUFFLES AT THAI TEMPLE AS POLICE HUNT FOR MONK

BANGKOK: Monks and police scuffled yesterday at a Buddhist temple in Thailand where security forces are trying to arrest an influential former abbot on money-laundering charges. The standoff at the scandal-hit Dhammakaya Temple represents one of the biggest challenges to the authority of Thailand's junta since it took power in 2014. Police said they would try to avoid violence while threatening arrest for followers of the sprawling temple who have defied orders to leave and instead flocked there, hampering the search for 72-year-old Phra Dhammachayo.

With tension rising four days after the military government ordered emergency powers to be used in the search, monks and police pushed and shoved at one of the temple gates. A Reuters photographer said there were no serious injuries. The actions by police were a violation of international law, the temple said in an open letter to Thailand's National Human Rights Commission. "They are a clear attack on religious freedom, putting Buddhist monks and laypeople at risk of arbitrary arrest and other punishments simply for the peaceful practice of their beliefs," it said.

The widespread belief that the temple has links to the populist government ousted by the army in 2014, and a brasher brand of Buddhism than the conservative traditions of king and army, make the temple a thorn in the side of the establishment. The temple claims millions of followers and, in a country

that is 95 percent Buddhist, assaults on saffron-robed monks are taboo. "If Phra Dhammachayo turns himself in, then this situation would be resolved, it would be over, because his disciples listen to him," National Police Chief Jakkhijinda told reporters. "Let us fight in a court of law instead."

Most police taking part in the search at the temple, on the outskirts of Bangkok, are not armed. Thailand's largest temple, it covers some 1,000 acres. The government used what critics call "the dictator's law" on Thursday to let police search the Dhammakaya Temple after months of failing to get it to hand over Phra Dhammachayo. He faces charges of conspiracy to launder money and receive stolen goods, as well as taking over land unlawfully to build meditation centres. His aides dismiss the accusations as politically motivated.

Police declined to comment on a report in the Bangkok Post newspaper that Phra Dhammachayo escaped the monastery on the first day of the search. Although the temple has no overt political affiliation, the abbot is widely believed to have had links with populist former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was overthrown in 2006. A government led by Thaksin's sister was toppled by the army in 2014. Slogans scrawled by disciples on makeshift cardboard placards in Thai and English also showed the politicization of the standoff. "Thai dictator try to invade the holiest stage of Buddhism," read one. —Reuters



BANGKOK: Buddhist monks of the Dhammakaya sect temple confront Thai policemen outside the temple in Pathum Thani, north of Bangkok, Thailand yesterday. —P



In this file photo, the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson sails out of San Diego Harbor leaving for a nine month deployment. The US Navy is planning a fresh freedom of navigation operation around China's man-made islands, the first under President Donald Trump, Navy Times reported, citing defense officials. —AP

SOUTH CHINA SEA

BANGKOK: A look at recent developments in the South China Sea, where China is pitted against smaller neighbors in multiple disputes over islands, coral reefs and lagoons in waters crucial for global commerce and rich in fish and potential oil and gas reserves:

Freedom of Navigation Mission

The US Navy is planning a fresh freedom of navigation operation around China's man-made islands, the first under President Donald Trump, the Navy Times reported, citing defense officials. The operation would most likely be carried out by the San Diego-based USS Carl Vinson carrier strike group, which began patrolling the South China Sea. It would involve sailing within 12-mile territorial waters of the island features China claims as its own, the report said.

According to newspaper, the plans are awaiting Trump's approval. China's Foreign Affairs spokesman Geng Shuang said he was aware of the reports. He said that while China respects freedom of navigation under international law, "we have firm objections to any country that impairs China's sovereignty and security interests in the name of freedom of navigation and overflight."

"We urge the US side not to take any actions that challenge China's sovereignty and security, and respect the effort made by regional countries in safeguarding peace and stability in the South China Sea," he told reporters. Navy warships have deliberately sailed close to Chinese-occupied features four times since October 2015, ignoring Beijing's sovereignty claims. The first three missions challenged China's requirement for ships to obtain permission prior to transit, while the last one challenged China's sovereignty over waters encompassing the Paracels.

Some criticized the Obama administration for curtailing freedom of navigation operations and allowing China to build military installations on seven artificial islands in the

disputed waters. Trump's Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said recently that such operations will continue while also ruling out any military escalation. "Any miscalculation from either side may escalate tensions, which could spin out of control," Zhiquan Zhu, who heads The China Institute at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, told the Navy Times. "China is unlikely to cave in no matter what the US military does in the South China Sea. Cooler heads are needed from both sides, not moves to unnecessarily provoke the other side.?"

China, US fleets

Just as the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier strike group begins its deployment in the South China Sea and the Western Pacific, China dispatched its own fleet for scheduled drills. The missile destroyers Changsha and Haikou and the supply ship Luomahu wrapped up week-long exercises on Friday. The fleet includes three helicopters and marines on board. According to the official Xinhua News Agency, the drills involved naval aviation forces and military garrisons from both the Spratlys and the Paracels, as well as elements of the Beihai and Donghai fleets. They practiced air defense, escorting, anti-terror, anti-piracy and defensive operations under real combat conditions, Xinhua said.

Revisions in maritime law

China is considering revisions in its 1984 maritime law that could bar foreign ships from passing through what it considers Chinese waters and require submarines to travel on the surface, display national flags and report to Chinese authorities. According to a draft that was published to solicit public opinion, foreign ships that violate Chinese laws would be expelled, state-run media reported. The proposed changes are in line with international maritime law, Beijing media said, but they could also set China up for conflict with Washington, which insists on freedom of navigation. —AP

PHILIPPINE LEADER DUTERTE OPERATED A 'DEATH SQUAD'

EX-COP SAYS DUTERTE PAID HIM, OTHERS TO KILL SUSPECTS

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte operated a "death squad" while mayor of Davao city, giving cash and orders for police and assassins to murder criminals, according to a former policeman who said he was involved in the clandestine killings. In remarks contradicting his denial under oath last year of the existence of such a "death

squad", Arturo Lascanas said he was one of the ringleaders of the group that began operating when Duterte became mayor of the southern city in 1988. Duterte has repeatedly denied involvement in vigilantism or summary executions, either as president or during his 22 years as Davao mayor. His police chief has denied there was ever a death squad in Davao, describing it as fic-

tion created by the media. Yesterday, Lascanas asserted that the Davao death squad was no myth and he was one of those who carried out secret killings of drug dealers and criminals at Duterte's behest. "It is true, the Davao death squad, or DDS, really exists," Lascanas told reporters at the Senate in Manila.

Martin Andanan said allegations that Duterte was linked to extrajudicial killings had been proved false by numerous independent agencies.

"Our people are aware that this character assassination is nothing but vicious politics," he told CNN Philippines. Lascanas said he had decided his "obedience and loyalty" to Duterte must end and had promised God that he would confess. He is the second man to go public with claims of involvement in murders allegedly ordered by Duterte, the hugely popular president nicknamed "the Punisher", whose ruthless approach to tackling crime has won public approval.

'Explosive'

The account given by Lascanas was similar to that of hit man Edgar Matobato, who testified in September he had also been a death squad member in Davao and he had seen Duterte shoot a man dead and give orders for police to kill criminals. Senator Antonio Trillanes, a critic of Duterte who appeared at the same news conference as Lascanas, said he would file a motion for a Senate investigation into the so-called Davao death squad.

Another anti-Duterte Senator, Leila de Lima, who led a Senate investigation last year into the Davao killings, described Lascanas' account as "a very, very explosive development". Human rights groups have documented about 1,400 suspicious killings in Davao while Duterte was mayor and critics say the war on drugs he unleashed as president has the same hallmarks. More than 7,700 people have been killed in the latest crackdown, some 2,500 in what police say are shootouts during raids and sting operations.

Most of the rest are under investigation and activists believe many were extrajudicial killings. Lascanas said death squad members in Davao got 20,000 to 100,000 pesos (\$398 to \$1,990) per hit, depending on the target's value. Some members, he said, were former Communist rebels. He confessed to the unsolved murder of a Davao radio show host who was staunchly critical of Duterte. Lascanas detailed his involvement in the bombing of a mosque and the killing of the family of a suspected kidnapper. The victims included a pregnant woman, a small boy and an elderly person. Both attacks were ordered by Duterte, he said. "This is how it began, all the killings we did in Davao, whether we bury or we throw in the sea, we are being paid by Mayor Duterte," he said.—Reuters



MANILA: Former police officer Arthur Lascanas (center) wipes his tears as he relates the death of his brothers, during a press conference next to lawyers from the Free Legal Assistance group Arno Sanidad (left) and Manuel Diokno III at the Senate yesterday.—AFP

squad", Arturo Lascanas said he was one of the ringleaders of the group that began operating when Duterte became mayor of the southern city in 1988.

Duterte has repeatedly denied involvement in vigilantism or summary executions, either as president or during his 22 years as Davao mayor. His police chief has denied there was ever a death squad in Davao, describing it as fic-

"When Mayor Duterte sat down as mayor for the first time, we started what is called 'salvaging' of people, these people are suspects committing crime in Davao." "We implemented the personal orders of Mayor Duterte to us," Duterte's legal counsel, Salvadore Panelo, said Lascanas' allegations were a "continuing fabrication" and "another false narration". Presidential Communications Secretary

JAPANESE MEN STRIP OFF FOR NAKED FESTIVAL

OKAYAMA: With only a skimpy loincloth to protect their modesty, thousands of men brave freezing temperatures to fight for lucky charms thrown by a priest at Japan's annual Naked Man Festival. A writhing mass of sweaty worshippers wrestled for elbow-room inside Saidaiji Temple in Okayama, western Japan, late on Saturday night in the hope of catching the sacred batons. Around 10,000 hardy souls celebrating the religious festival stepped under ice-cold fountains to purify their bodies before risking life and limb in a mysterious ceremony dating back some 500 years. "It can get very rough," 62-year-old auto mechanic Kazuhiko Nishigami told AFP, bare-chested and ready to rumble. "You have to write down your blood type on a form and tuck it into your loincloth in case you get seriously hurt."

Most who took on the 'Hadaka Matsuri', or Naked Festival, suffered no more than a few bumps and bruises after scrapping over a pair of wooden sticks, measuring 4cm (one and a half inches) in diameter and 20cm (eight inches) in length, believed to bring good fortune to whoever catches them. But revellers have been crushed to death in the past in a melee that makes Tokyo's infamous rush-hour trains look like a walk in the park. And it's easy to see how fatalities could occur when the lights suddenly go off and priests cast the mystical charms from the temple's rafters into the heaving crowd below. As holy water was splashed from above, camera flashes illuminated the sea of bodies

like disco lights at a rave-before all hell broke loose.

Dante's 'Inferno'

In a scene reminiscent of Dante's "Inferno", steam rises as thousands of groaning men, faces contorted with pain, thrust their arms upwards from the suffocating pit below, as if begging for forgiveness—or if not a pair of trousers and a shirt to keep warm. Those who snaffle one of the holy talismans tossed from above have to fight tooth and nail to keep hold of it as they come under attack by rivals desperate for the jujitsu it bestows. Fuelled by beer and sake, many festival-goers came to blows. "I was lucky to escape," said firefighter Kosuke Yasuhara, clutching one of the talismans.

"It dropped right in the middle of our group," added the 38-year-old. "I had to quickly slip it into my loincloth to hide it and then force my way out."

High priest Zenko Tsuboi insisted the festival was not an orgy of violence, even if wailing ambulance sirens have provided an unwanted soundtrack in previous years. "Those who catch the charms will prosper and receive a bumper harvest," he said. "We want to remind people this is a religious festival so we have become much stricter these days about alcohol and rough behavior." As revellers and the hundreds of police and firemen on call made their way back through the rice fields to the city, father-to-be Yasuhara broke into a wide grin. "This charm is a gift from the gods," he said. "I believe it will deliver us a bouncing baby when it's born in April."—AFP



SINGAPORE: Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (2nd left) and his wife Sara (left) look at a Dendrobium Benjamin Sara Netanyahu orchids, named in their honor, as Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his wife Ho Ching look on during an orchid naming ceremony at the Istana presidential palace in Singapore yesterday. Netanyahu is in Singapore on a two-day official visit.—AFP

ISRAEL PRIME MINISTER ON HISTORIC ASIAN TRIP

SYDNEY: Benjamin Netanyahu will become the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit Australia tomorrow on a historic Asia trip that also includes Singapore, but faces protests Down Under. The right-wing Israeli leader will meet with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in Sydney. But a group of 60 business leaders, academics, members of the clergy and former politicians signed a letter released yesterday saying that Australia should not welcome Netanyahu, claiming his policies "provoke, intimidate and oppress" the Palestinians. "Israel continues to defy all United Nations calls for it to comply with international law in respect of its illegal settlement building, and its treatment of the indigenous Palestinian population," the letter reads.

Demonstrations are planned in Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney during the visit. The letter also calls on the Australian government to reassess its "one-sided" backing of Netanyahu's government. Israel passed a new law this month that legalises dozens of Jewish outposts and thousands of settler homes built on private Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank. The international community sees the settlements as illegal and a major

obstacle to peace in the region.

Netanyahu has also long wavered on his support for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, that has been on the table for years backed by the US and other major powers, though President Donald Trump recently appeared to put Washington's commitment in doubt. Opposition Labor leader Bill Shorten said he would tell Netanyahu when they meet on Friday "that where settlement building is an obstacle to a two-state solution, it should be stopped".

Australia and Israel have traditionally enjoyed friendly ties but this is the first time that a serving Israeli prime minister has visited the country since the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948. Netanyahu yesterday met with Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in the city-state, also on a first-time visit. Israel played a key role in Singapore's history after the city-state became independent from Malaysia in 1965, helping to set up its armed forces after other countries declined. Netanyahu said both countries were "kindred spirits" being "small nations that have become in many areas global powers". He is set to arrive in Australia tomorrow for four days.—AFP



TANAY: Police and soldiers stand guard next to a tourist bus which hit an electric post in Tanay town, Rizal province, east of Manila yesterday.—AFP

14 ON PHILIPPINE CAMPING TRIP KILLED IN BUS ACCIDENT

TANAY: Fourteen people, mostly college students on a camping trip, were killed yesterday when the brakes on their chartered bus apparently failed on a steep downhill road and it smashed into an electric post and a tree, Philippine officials said. About 45 others were injured, many seriously, said Darlito Bati Jr, a disaster-response officer in Tanay town in Rizal province east of Manila. The dead included the driver and a professor, he said. Bati, who helped pull the victims from the wreckage, said many of the dead were piled in a heap of bodies at the front of the passenger cabin.

The impact was so strong it ripped off a large chunk of the roof of the bus and scattered the victims' belongings, including containers of rice, a stuffed toy, shoes and a neck pillow. "They were having fun along the way because the camp-out at a resort was to last for three days," Bati told The

Associated Press. The students, mostly taking computer courses, were less than thirty minutes from their destination when the crash occurred, he said. Some of the survivors said they smelled burning rubber before the brakes of the bus apparently failed. Some students screamed in panic as the bus went out of control.

Garbage truck driver Danny Gutierrez, who helped the victims into ambulances, said some of the survivors wept, while others suffering from broken legs and cuts were too shocked to speak. Parents and siblings later collected the dead from a funeral parlor, stunned by the tragedy. The bus was one of several vehicles transporting hundreds of college students to a camping resort when the accident happened in Tanay, about 50 kilometers east of Manila. A police investigation is underway.—AP

News

in brief

Saudi, Israel 'working together' against Iran

TEHRAN: Iran yesterday criticized what it said was coordination between Israel and regional Saudi Arabia, describing attempts to create an "international atmosphere" against Tehran. Foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi said the two countries "imagine they can compensate for their numerous defeats and failures in the region by creating an international atmosphere against our country." The alignment is "not accidental", he was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency. Israel and Saudi Arabia accuse Iran of fuelling regional conflicts by supporting armed Shiite movements in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Bahrain. Iran rejects the accusations and says Riyadh must stop its support for Sunni "terrorists" like the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Washington last week and said there were now "broader conditions for broad peace in the Middle East between Israel and the Arab countries".

British bomber strikes near Mosul, IS claims

BAGHDAD: The Islamic State group yesterday claimed responsibility for a suicide attack near Mosul it said was carried out by a British suicide bomber, the SITE Intelligence Group reported. "The martyrdom-seeking brother Abu Zakariya Al-Britani—may—Allah accept him—detonated his explosives—laden vehicle on a headquarters of the Rafidhi army and its militias in Tal Kisum village, southwest of Mosul," the claim quoted by SITE said. The IS statement did not say when the bombing occurred. The jihadist group uses the word "rafidha", which means "rejectionists", to refer to Shiite Muslims in a derogatory way because it considers them heretics. Forces from the Hashed al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilisation), a paramilitary umbrella dominated by Shiite militias backed by Tehran, are active in the area mentioned in the statement. They are fighting alongside other Iraqi forces—including the army and the federal police—as part of a push that started on Sunday to retake the west bank of Mosul.

22 migrants flee US to seek asylum in Canada

OTTAWA: At least 22 migrants fled the United States for Canada over the weekend, sneaking across the border in Manitoba province to request asylum, authorities said Sunday. Twenty-two people, mostly from Africa, crossed the border on foot overnight Saturday into Sunday, said Greg Janzen, a local official in the city of Emerson. Eight others had arrived on Friday. Emerson, 120 kilometers south of Winnipeg and close to the US states of North Dakota and Minnesota, has seen the porous border in many areas with no official crossings—drawing greater numbers of asylum seekers since US President Donald Trump's travel ban. The Republican took office in January and promptly signed an order to temporarily ban US entry for nationals of seven Muslim-majority countries, and for all refugees. Under a bilateral agreement, asylum-seekers from the United States are usually turned back at Canada's border crossings. But this does not apply to those crossing the border illegally in other places.

Norway Nobel Committee chairwoman dies aged 65

OSLO: Kaci Kullmann Five, the chairwoman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee which selects the Peace Prize laureates, has died aged 65 after a long illness, the organization said yesterday. Kullmann was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014 and underwent treatment. But her condition worsened, and she was forced to cancel several appearances last year. "She was a role model for many young women," Norway's Conservative Prime Minister Erna Solberg wrote on Facebook. Kullmann became a member of the Norwegian Nobel committee in 2003, and was elected chair in 2015. She was among the decision makers who honored former US vice president Al Gore (2007), former US president Barack Obama (2009), Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo (2010), and Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi (2003). The former businesswoman served as trade and shipping minister between 1989-1990 and was the leader of the Conservative Party between 1991-1994.



BEIRUT: France's far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen (left) meets with Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri in the capital Beirut yesterday.—AFP

Le Pen in Lebanon; first head of state meeting

BEIRUT: France's far-right leader and presidential candidate Marine Le Pen yesterday met for the first time with a foreign head of state, holding talks in Beirut with Lebanon's President Michel Aoun. "We discussed the long and fruitful friendship between our two countries," the National Front (FN) leader said after her 30-minute encounter at the presidential palace in the hilltop suburb of Baabda with Aoun, the Middle East's only Christian president. Le Pen, who is leading polls of voters' intentions for the first round of France's presidential election on April 23, said they also discussed the refugee crisis in Lebanon, where more than one million Syrians have fled their country's conflict, making up one in four of the Lebanese population. "We raised... the concerns we share over the very serious refugee crisis," she said. "These difficulties are being overcome by the courage and generosity of Lebanon but this cannot go on forever."

350 migrants storm the Morocco, Spain border

MADRID: Over 350 migrants stormed the border between Morocco and Spain at Ceuta yesterday, officials said, days after one of the largest rush of arrivals over the frontier in more than a decade. The young migrants forced their way through the high border fence into the Spanish North African territory, ecstatic to have finally crossed into a European Union state. Some kissed the ground and shouted "Thank you lord" and "Viva Espana", although several had bloodied hands and feet as well as torn clothes after making it through the barrier. Ceuta and Melilla, also a Spanish territory in North Africa, have the EU's only land borders with Africa, so are entry points for migrants who either climb the border fence, swim along the coast or hide in vehicles.



A boy flies a kite on the Red Sea beach near the landmark Jeddah fountain yesterday.— AP

KIA CHIEF SAAD 'TO STEP DOWN'

Continued from Page 1

The KIA, which started as a Bank of England account dedicated to receiving oil money in 1953, now has \$592 billion of assets, according to the Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute. Its most high-profile holdings include a 6.8 percent stake in Daimler AG, a 1.7 percent stake in BP Plc and stakes in Vodafone Group Plc and HSBC Holdings Plc, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

The fund may pull billions of dollars from external

fund managers as it seeks to manage more of its assets and take on more risk to boost returns, Saad said in an interview with Bloomberg TV in January. It wants to increase the allocation of funds managed in-house to as much as 8 percent from 1 or 2 percent at present, he said. Bastaki, who holds an industrial engineering degree from the University of Miami, is also on the board of the Kuwaiti investment firm National Technology Enterprises Co. and has been a board member of the Gulf Bank of Kuwait since 2009, according to the bank's website.

LAWMAKER PROPOSES GRANTING CITIZENSHIP...

Continued from Page 1

He was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was examined, and his injury was found to be minor. He was taken back to prison the same night.

Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Jarrah Al-Sabah ordered an investigation into the attack. A number of opposition MPs claimed the attack was planned. Barrak is serving the last two months of his two-year jail sentence for insulting HH the Amir and undermining his authority. He is due to be released around mid-April.

Separately, Islamist opposition MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei

said yesterday he has sent a series of questions to Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh about Kuwait's foreign investments, "which include major mistakes". The lawmaker said the minister has two weeks to answer the questions and start undertaking the necessary reforms, or he will be questioned in the Assembly. Tabtabaei said he has submitted proposals to establish a fourth mobile company, a new Islamic bank and a pharmaceutical firm. He also proposed establishing a company for solar energy, another for petrochemicals and a third for the planned metro project. The constitutional court meanwhile set May 3 to issue its verdicts on 54 challenges to November's Assembly election.

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FOCUS

CHINA WIELDS STICK
WITH NORTH KOREA

With the suspension of all North Korean coal imports, China has wielded a big stick against its reclusive neighbor, but there is no sign it will cut off all critical links and Beijing is still promoting talks to solve the dispute over Pyongyang's program to develop nuclear weapons. China has been getting increasingly fed up with what it sees as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's recalcitrance and unwillingness to show any sign of wanting to seek a peaceful resolution to the nuclear weapons issue, according to Chinese experts on North Korea. It has also come under increasing pressure from the United States to get tough with Pyongyang.

The Global Times, a widely-read Chinese state-run tabloid, said on Monday that the coal decision showed China's determination to work with the international community to stop North Korea's nuclear schemes but did not mean China's policy towards its neighbor had or would fundamentally change. "Despite participating in UN sanctions, Chinese society's friendship to the North remains unchanged. Chinese sanctions only target at its nuclear weapon program, and we are firmly opposed to Seoul's political fantasy against Pyongyang," it said in an editorial.

The fantasy reference related to speculation in the South Korean media that China may have halted the coal shipments to punish North Korea for the killing of leader Kim Jong Un's half brother Kim Jong Nam last week in Malaysia. South Korean officials say they believe that Kim Jong Nam was assassinated by North Korean agents. The economic impact of suspending coal imports would be severe and may force Pyongyang to the negotiating table, some of the Chinese experts said. China imported about \$1.89 billion of coal from North Korea last year, a significant proportion of the \$2.5 billion in total Chinese imports from North Korea that year.

"This is a very severe measure that has broken with previous convention, it shows just how much China has been antagonised by [Pyongyang's] recent missile tests," said Jin Qiangyi, director of the Centre for North and South Korea Studies at Yanbian University, who specialises in China's relationship with North Korea. "The situation is such that doing nothing will only see risks exacerbate; doing this still comes with some risk but it may force North Korea to negotiate."

Fears of Collapse

Still, Beijing will want to tread carefully to avoid upsetting Kim too much, according to a source with ties to China's military. One concern is that Kim could even point his missiles in China's direction, the source said. "Kim is like a dog who needs to be both loved and beaten to keep him in line," said the source, who has also visited North Korea. "But beat him too hard and he'll bite back. That's the quandary."

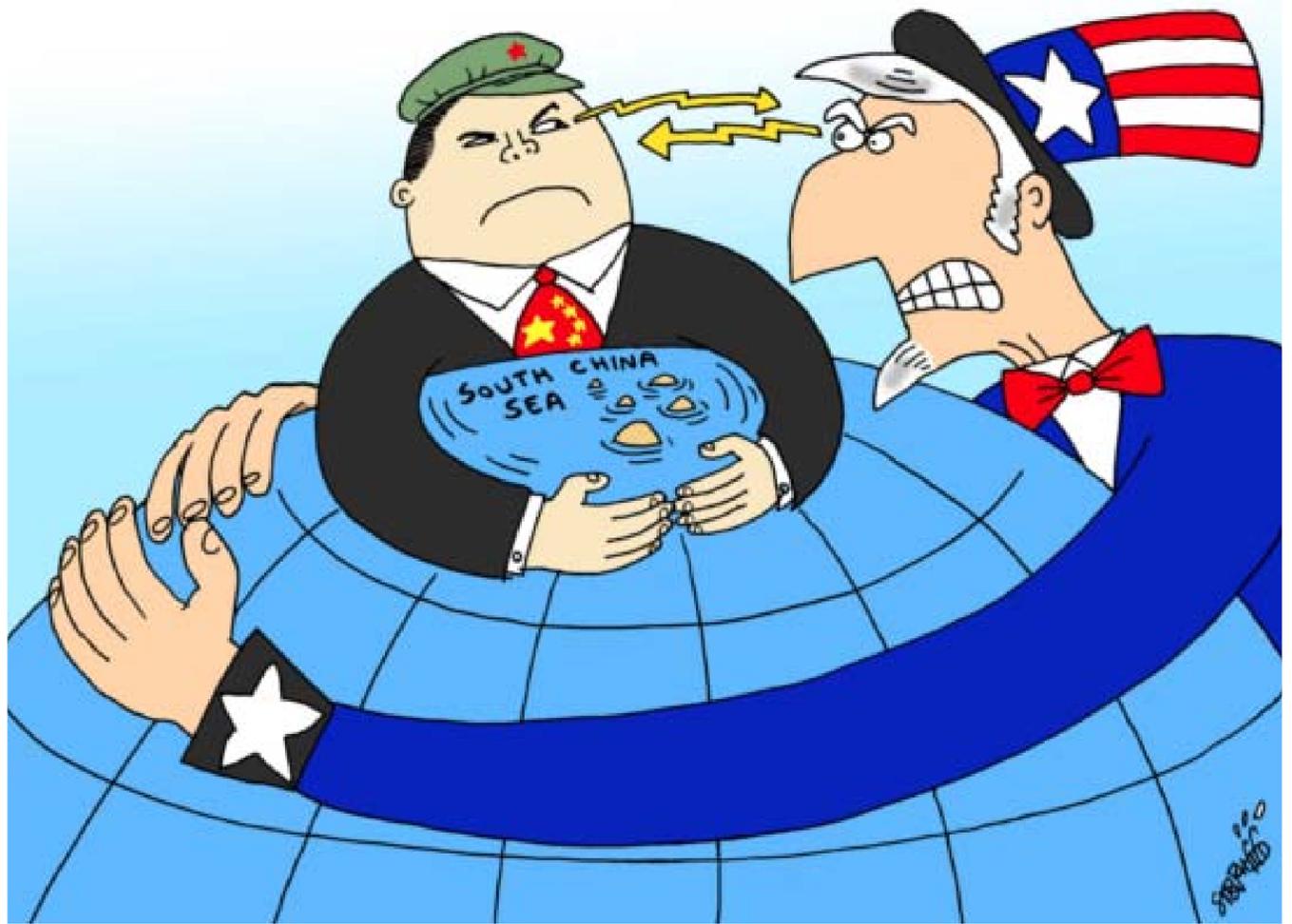
Among the Chinese government's other fears is the possibility of a sudden regime collapse in North Korea leading to chaos and the potential for hundreds of thousands of North Korean refugees to head across the Chinese border, diplomatic sources have said. In that scenario, Beijing would also be concerned that US and South Korean armed forces would move into North Korea and soon be on the Chinese border. If China really wanted to throttle Pyongyang, it could simply stop all trade with the country, including oil and food, ban flights to and from North Korea, and end all financial transactions with the country. At the same time as unveiling the coal measures, China has been promoting diplomatic efforts. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, speaking at a high profile security summit in Munich over the weekend, said China has not given up hope for a new round of diplomacy with North Korea, even as he pledged support for UN sanctions. Wang also took aim at the repeated calls from Washington for Beijing to step up the pressure on Pyongyang - and said the United States had its responsibilities too. "The United States and North Korea are the parties most directly involved, and they must as soon as possible be politically decisive," Wang said, adding China would continue to play a mediating role. Last month, before being sworn into office, US President Donald Trump criticized China for benefiting from economic ties with the US but not doing enough to curb North Korea's erratic behavior.

Residual support

While China is frequently called North Korea's only serious remaining ally, relations have soured steadily due to Pyongyang's nuclear and missile tests and Chinese President Xi Jinping has yet to meet with his North Korean counterpart. The killing of Kim Jong Nam has only underlined the unpredictability of the regime. Malaysian police have detained four suspects - a Vietnamese woman, an Indonesian woman, a Malaysian man, and North Korean man - and are on the hunt for four other North Koreans who fled the country on the day of the attack.

Unlike the US and South Korea, China has not pointed the finger at the North Korean leader for the killing. Chinese experts on North Korea said the decision to suspend coal imports would only have been taken after careful deliberation, and was unlikely to be a knee-jerk reaction to Kim Jong Nam's assassination. — Reuters

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SNAP BETS ON HARDWARE AS FACEBOOK LOOMS

Snap Inc takes to the road in London today to promote its initial public offering with a daring proposition: That it can build hot-selling hardware gadgets and ad-friendly software features fast enough to stay one step ahead of Facebook. No longer just a purveyor of a smartphone app for disappearing messages, Snap has hired hundreds of hardware engineers, built a secretive product development lab and scoured the landscape for acquisitions as it pursues its newly stated ambition to be "a camera company".

These efforts, which are aimed at developing hardware and so-called augmented reality technologies, are central to the strategy of a company that is seeking a valuation of up to \$22 billion in its early March IPO despite heavy losses and the specter of stiff competition for advertising dollars with a far-larger Facebook.

It is a big gamble and the odds against Snap are long. There is little precedent for a company with its roots in software and social networking succeeding in the notoriously difficult consumer hardware business. Few US firms aside from Apple have made big profits on hardware, and camera and wearable gadget makers have much lower valuations than Snap is seeking. Once-hot camera start-up GoPro is a cautionary tale: Its stock sits 61 percent below its 2014 IPO price.

More broadly, creating new products and features that have mass-market appeal and cannot be readily mimicked is a huge challenge, analysts say. "It's worrisome," said Paul Meeks, chief investment officer at Sloy, Dahl & Holst, which manages more than \$1 billion in assets. "Snapchat is going to have to continue to be really innovative and distinctive. It's going to be very tough to trump Facebook." Snap declined to comment for this story.

Snap first signaled its new focus with the September reveal of Spectacles, funky sunglasses with an embedded video camera for posting to the Snapchat app. The company spent \$184 million on research and development last year, nearly half its revenue. Augmented reality, which refers to computer-generated images overlaid on real surroundings and viewed through a smartphone or special glasses, is a big part of the plan. Snap's "lenses" image-overlay feature has been a hit, and gives Snap an advertising

format that's unique, at least for now. "If you're going to make the bet longer-term on Snap, you are betting they are going to come up with innovative products that Facebook can't copy," said Nabil Elsheshai, senior equity analyst at Thrivent Financial, who is considering whether to recommend that his firm buy Snap's IPO. Facebook-owned Instagram last year rolled out a feature called Stories, modeled after Snapchat's feature by the same name. Snapchat had about 100 million fewer downloads than Instagram in 2016, according to market research firm App Annie.

New gadgets

Snap had 158 million daily active users in the fourth quarter, up just 3 percent from the previous quarter, compared to 14 percent growth during the same period in 2015, according to Snap's IPO filing.

New gadgets that offer more ways to interact with Snapchat could help attract new users and get existing users to spend more time on the app.

"Ultimately, that's what advertisers are going to be looking at," said Douglas Melshimer, managing director at investment bank and consulting firm Bulger Partners. Snap, along with Facebook and host of online rivals ranging from Google to BuzzFeed, is capitalizing on the shift of video advertising dollars from traditional television to the internet. Snap's IPO filing reads "as if all the hard things in front of them that they have to do are already done," said Rett Wallace, cofounder and chief executive at Triton Research. But, he said, that's not the case. "How will they hold up against all the guys you don't want to be fighting against in the world - Facebook, Google and Apple?"

Hardware is part of the answer. Snap has recruited hardware experts from Apple, Alphabet Inc's Google, Nest and Motorola, according to an analysis of LinkedIn profiles. One former employee described ample resources and support from management for the hand-picked hardware teams. Last spring, Snap set out to hire up to 300 hardware, augmented reality and virtual reality specialists in a single month, according to another former employee. It also set up Snap Labs, a group dedicated to working on secretive projects. Its members have reviewed acquisition targets in areas including wearable cameras, facial recognition and

3D scanning technology, according to people close to the discussions.

Spectacles itself came from Snap's acquisition of startup Vergence Labs in 2014. The sunglasses surprised even Snap's earliest investors, who say hardware was not in Snap's initial pitch to them. "It was a disappearing messaging product, and that's it," said Jeremy Liew, a partner with Lightspeed Venture Partners, who made the initial venture investment into Snap. Like most Snap backers he lauded the Spectacles rollout. Snap has acquired at least 10 startups since 2014 according to firms tracking such deals, and M&A deal makers say Snap is one of the most active shoppers they have heard from.

'Amazon pass'

Snap's R&D investment as a percentage of revenue is far higher than what Facebook or Twitter were spending before they went public. One result of that investment has been a wave of patent filings - about 46 total, according to research firm CB Insights. They include eyewear patents for Spectacles, as well as patents for photo and video-capture devices, and object and facial recognition, which is key to developing augmented reality technology.

One former employee said Snap is working to figure out ways to turn the warehouse of data it collects from Memories, a feature for users to save photos on Snap's server, into augmented reality or facial recognition applications. Spectacles "opens the doors for augmented reality," Elsheshai said. "That's a different direction for the company than just adding more social media capabilities." The quirky popularity of Spectacles further endears users to Snapchat, he said, but doubted that such niche products can propel the user growth Snap needs in the long term.

The greatest impediment to Snap's innovation efforts, however, may be its hefty losses: the company lost \$515 million last year on \$404 million in sales. Revenue from Spectacles was "not material," according to Snap's IPO filing. Snap, like Amazon.com, is expecting public investors to allow the company to lose money for years on the promise that more investment in innovation will pay off later. "They are going to have to get the Amazon pass - investors that don't care in the short run," Elsheshai said. — Reuters

CAUCASUS 'LAND GRAB' FEARED IN REMOTE SITE

For the people of Upper Svaneti, a remote sliver of land nestled high in the gorges of Georgia, the last words uttered by the dying are portents of the future. And the future looks bleak. Residents say the same ominous rattle has echoed over so many of its death beds this past year - "The Svans are in danger, be careful" - that villagers are now braced for battle. The source of their deep unease - electricity.

They say a dam and hydro power plant proposed for the region could threaten the livelihoods of 17 villages perched among valleys and flanked by mountain peaks that soar to 4,000 m. In the Chuberi and Nakra communities, some residents fear flooding, others predict the loss of ancient stone houses that have been home to six consecutive generations of their family. A UNESCO World Heritage site, Upper Svaneti boasts spectacular mountain scenery, mediaeval villages and tower houses fit for a fairy tale.

The Svans - as the local people are called - actively nurture links with their ancestors and their isolation high in the Caucasus has cocooned its people and cemented traditions. The dead are buried in their own front yards and every January, a seven-course feast is cooked for 'lipanael' celebrations when the souls of the departed are invited back into their old homes for a week.

Against nature

More than 1,000 Svans live in Chuberi, another 400 in Nakra, and many fear the 280 megawatt Nenskra dam will destroy their ancient culture. Plans put the dam on the Nenskra river, using additional flows from the Nakra river brought in via a tunnel that would cut through the mountain separating the two communities. Giorgi Tsindeliiani from Nakra, whose family owns land near the tunnel path, is bitterly opposed. "This is a severe aggression against nature: they are diverting the whole river," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We already have mudslides here and, with no river to clean them, our lands will be covered in mud. We will be forced to move away." Projected to cost \$1 billion, the dam is just one of about 100 new hydro facilities planned by the Georgian government. Georgia's Deputy Minister of Energy, Iliia Elovshvili, expects electricity consumption to grow as the economy expands. He said the government must meet demand with domestically produced hydro power to avoid increased reliance on Russian imports.

'Up to the sky'

A 2015 impact report by the dam's major investor, the Korean state-owned K-water (Korea Water Resources Corporation) identified a need to relocate just two inhabited homes in the power house area.

The report said the reservoir would also flood almost 400 hectares of land, most "state forests" used "intensively by the local population for grazing, collecting firewood, gathering of wild fruits and other purposes."

In the earliest phase of planning, the Korean investor did not refer to the villagers' traditional land rights as these were not formally recognized by the Georgian state. However the Svan communities soon united and while very few had property deeds, they argued that the two valleys belonged to them, historically and culturally. Tradition dictates that households own their land from the fence round their house right 'up to the sky' while they shared forest lands on nearby mountains to graze animals and for logging.

The villagers' campaign to protect their livelihood was also supported by the European Investment Bank (EIB), which pressed the Koreans to recognize the Svans' traditional land rights. A spokesman for JSC Nenskra Hydro, the consortium in which K-water is majority stakeholder, said supplementary studies required by the EIB were complete and would be made public for consultations "in the first quarter of 2017".

Natia Turnava, Deputy CEO of the Partnership Fund, the Georgian investment fund with a minority stake in the project, said investors would offer compensation to all affected residents, whether they had official property rights or not. Turnava said the project had also been slightly modified to avoid relocating the two homes identified for the power house area and that all those who had been offered compensation "were satisfied".

What's in a name?

The Thomson Reuters Foundation has learned that late last year, when investors were negotiating compensation packages with locals, all the land identified for the dam was registered by the Georgian state under its own name.

This included 600 hectares of pasture and forest beneath the reservoir used communally by the Svans, the two homes in the power house and land owned by families. A law passed by the government last year allowed people to register up to

five hectares based on historic use by communities.

However Minister Elovshvili told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that land registration by individuals takes time and "for the government to start construction, it cannot just sit around and wait until people get property rights." "But we will compensate everyone who uses the land," he said.

Rekavz Tkavadze, a Partnership Fund lawyer, said the state's was "a primary registration" and the land belonging to the two earmarked houses would be given to families once they registered the plots.

He said the promise to re-register lands in the name of local families was not in writing, but would be upheld. Land flooded by the reservoir would be given by the state to the consortium "if not today then in one of the following weeks", he added.

Pandas in a zoo

In Upper Svaneti, residents described the difficult and costly registration process. They confirmed they had been offered compensation but did not know by whom while those who use land communally for pasture felt most vulnerable as they fear the loss of their livelihood. School teacher Tamar Chkhvimiani called it "shameful ... We rejected the compensation. We depend on the animals and, if we can't use that area, where will we go to feed them?" At the time of publication, no information had been made public about compensation or provision of alternative pastures.

Manana Kochladze of the Georgian environmental campaign group, Green Alternative, called the process "land grabbing". "On the one hand, the state acknowledges that this is people's land and they need to be compensated. On the other, it puts the land under state ownership leaving people no choice but to take the compensations offered or be left with nothing," Ombudsman Ucha Nanushvili, who oversees the observance of human rights in Georgia, said he would launch an investigation.

"They are using the old methods again ... previously (in the case of another dam, Khudoni) they gave it to the company not to people." Nato Subari, headmaster of the Chuberi school, questioned the state's right to decide the fate of communities built by "our Svani ancestors". "We are indigenous and our lands should get protected status. Otherwise, we will end up like the pandas: a few of us left in a zoo." — Reuters

INFANTINO TO TALK, PARTY IN S AFRICA

JOHANNESBURG: FIFA president Gianni Infantino will be in South Africa and Zimbabwe this week to meet African football bosses and attend a birthday party. He has invited all 54 African national football association presidents to Johannesburg for two days of meetings, starting today. The 46-year-old Swiss-Italian leaves for Harare Thursday to attend the birthday party of Zimbabwe football chief Philip Chiyangwa. Organisers of the two-day summit said Infantino will explain changes to the global game, including expanding the World Cup to 48 teams from 2026. African officials have long argued for more than the five World Cup places they compete for, even though teams representing the continent consistently underperform. No African team has reached the semi-finals and the first time two nations from the continent reached the knockout phase was in Brazil three years ago. Under the 48-team format, there has been media speculation that Africa could get up to nine slots. Chiyangwa, recently elected head of southern Africa football umbrella football body COSAFA, has come under fire over his birthday celebrations. —AFP



UK SPORT REJECTS FUNDING APPEALS

LONDON: UK Sport chiefs have rejected funding application appeals by seven sports that hoped for a cash boost ahead of the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. Archery, badminton, fencing, table tennis and weightlifting, and Paralympic sports goalball and wheelchair rugby will now receive no financial aid from the lottery-backed funding agency. Badminton is the biggest loser as it was given £5.7 million (\$7.1 million) ahead of last year's Rio Olympic. The sizeable cut comes despite the sport hitting its medal target thanks to a bronze medal in the men's doubles. In a press release, Rod Carr, chairman of UK Sport, said: "I'd like to thank all the sports for their professionalism and openness throughout this process. Our decision is in no way a reflection on them, their athletes or support personnel and everything that they have achieved to date. I appreciate that for the majority of national governing bodies that attended the representation meetings today's outcome is extremely disappointing. "We are operating in a tight financial envelope, and have responsibilities to both develop the system underpinning our best athletes as well as the sports and athletes themselves, and sadly our investment won't stretch to these sports for the Tokyo 2020 cycle." — AFP

JAPAN PRODIGY HARIMOTO SEEKS OLYMPIC DREAM

NEW DELHI: A 13-year-old Japanese table tennis prodigy has set his sights on the Tokyo Olympics after he narrowly failed to become the youngest champion in World Tour history in New Delhi. The 14th seed Tomokazu Harimoto lost to top seed Dimitrij Ovtcharov of Germany 11-6, 11-8, 11-4, 14-12 in the India Open final on Sunday but only took the defeat as his stepping stone to success. "Was amazing to have such a run to my first World Tour final at 13 years old," Harimoto said after going down against the 28-year-old Ovtcharov. "I am disappointed not to win today, but I will use this event as motivation to go home and train even harder to get my first World Tour win and then move on to my overall goal, which is Tokyo 2020 success." The reigning Junior World Champion though has still time to match his compatriot Mima Ito, who won the women's singles title in Germany in 2015 at 14 years and 152 days. "I am not worried about breaking records, but of course it is nice when they come," said Harimoto. However, aged 13 years and 237 days, Harimoto does have the privilege of being the youngest ever World Tour men's singles finalist after he clashed with his Ukraine-born rival at Delhi's Thyagaraj Sports Complex. —AFP



PAS SHOOTING TOURNAMENT CONCLUDES

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Public Authority for Sports (PAS) tournament concluded at Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex on Sunday evening with a closing ceremony that was attended by President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Eng Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi, secretary general of KSF and ASF Obaid Munahi Al-Osaimi, Director of Sports for all department at PAS Hamid Al-Hazim and KSF Assistant Secretary Mohammad Al-Ghurba.

The tournament organized by KSF in the trap and skeet events, so 80 shooters participate and the results were as follows:

In the Juniors Skeet:

1. Hamad Al-Banai
2. Ahmad Al-Awad
3. Hamad Al-Khaldi

While in the Trap Juniors:

1. Yousuf Tami Al-Rashidi
2. Bader Al-Adwani
3. Yousuf Al-Mutairi.



Adel Abdulla

FIA CONFIRMS NISSAN'S ADEL ABDULLA AS 2016 FIA T2 WORLD CHAMPION

DUBAI: Nissan's Adel Abdulla has won his FIA appeal and has belatedly been crowned the 2016 FIA T2 World Champion.

Running with support from Nissan Middle East, Nissan Qatar and the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF), the Qatari produced several stunning performances in last year's FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Rallies and finished second in the unofficial points' standings behind Saudi Arabia's Yasir Saaidan.

But Adel Hussein's TOK Sport team protested the legality of his main rival's car at the Rally of Morocco in October and the protest was upheld at a recent FIA Court of Appeal. This meant Saaidan lost the points he scored at the event and Adel Hussein was declared the FIA T2 World Champion, with Nissan's rugged Patrol on top of the championship for the second successive year, after Denis

Berezovskiy's victory in 2015.

In his first full season of cross-country competition, Adel Hussein claimed wins in Portugal, Abu Dhabi and Spain during a successful campaign in the world's toughest off-road championship.

"I would like to thank the FIA for confirming me as the 2016 FIA T2 World Champion and a special thanks to Nissan Middle East, Saleh Al-Hamad Al-Mana Co. and the QMMF for their support," said Adel Hussein. "I am very happy and am now looking forward to 2017 and a calendar that features an extra two events, where I hope to defend my title. I expect the competition to be even stronger this year. The timing of the decision was particularly poignant for me with the new season set to start in Russia at the end of February. "I am the number one ranked T2 driver in the world and it is the perfect start to what I know will be another challenging year."



KUWAIT'S EIGHTH OPEN TENNIS TOURNAMENT BEGINS MARCH 2

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Tennis Federation gives ranking points to clubs players participating in Kuwait's Eighth open tennis tournament as the deadline for registration in the event is approaching which is 27th February, 2017. The tournament will start on March 2nd and continues until March 14th, as the board of directors agreed to give ranking points to clubs players as the technical rules of KTA stipulates.

That was in a statement by Sheikh Ahmad

Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Board and President of the Higher Organizing Committee, who urged all sports clubs to have their players participate in the tournament.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber called upon all those who play the same to participate as well as current and former national team members to also be involved.

He said Kuwait Open Tennis tournament plays an important role to spread the game and develop it in Kuwait and wished it all success.



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah



GREAT EXPECTATIONS: INDIANS EYE SERIES TITLE AFTER '16 RUN

GOODYEAR: Above the small cactuses and flowering plants dotting the concrete blocked plaza outside the doorway to Cleveland's training complex is a new sign that serves as both a reminder and motivator.

"American League Champions 2016," it says. The Indians have some unfinished business. One swing away from beating the Chicago Cubs in an epic World Series last year, the Indians, who pumped up their payroll to nearly \$130 million by winning baseball's offseason with the surprise signing of free-agent slugger Edwin Encarnacion this winter, have their

sights set on a return to the postseason - and this time winning it all.

"Everyone is very proud of what we accomplished last year, but everybody wants that one more run," Indians second baseman Jason Kipnis said Sunday. "Everybody wants to get back. We finally got a taste of that fruit, and we want to be there and we want to stay there."

With one of baseball's best starting rotations, deepest bullpens and a lineup counting on the return of All-Star Michael Brantley from injury, the Indians, who lost 94 games in 2012, are positioned to make another run at ending a

World Series title drought stretching to 1948 - now the majors' longest.

Cleveland has vaulted from powder-puff to powerhouse. The Indians are determined to erase the memory of last year's Series when they gave away a 3-1 lead to the Cubs, who completed their comeback by winning an unforgettable Game 7 on Nov. 2

in extra innings. Chicago's victory not only triggered a celebration on the soggy grass in Progressive Field, but a national outpouring of affection for the lovable Cubbies and their fans, who waited 108 years to sip championship

champagne.

There was obvious heartache in Cleveland. But also hope. By going so far in the postseason despite not having Brantley, missing starters Carlos Carrasco and Danny Salazar and losing starter Trevor Bauer in the AL Championship Series when he sliced open his right pinkie while repairing a drone at home, the Indians showed resiliency, confidence and a glimpse of their potential.

They were one step away, and this year the Indians are better prepared to take it. Kipnis pointed to the Kansas City Royals, who bounced back from losing

Game 7 of the World Series in 2014 to winning it the following year, as a model for the Indians.

"They knew they wanted to be right back there," he said. "They knew what it might take or fill in the hole from what they were missing the year before and they went out and did it. We're kind of hoping to follow that path and there are guys who now know what it takes and what they need to work on and what they need to kind of fix to get back there. It gives you that past experience that now you don't have to ask any questions. You have that experience yourself." —AP

MOTOR RACING

HAMILTON HAS 'ZERO PROBLEMS' WITH BOTTAS

LONDON: Triple world champion Lewis Hamilton has clarified comments about not wanting to share data with Formula One team mates and says he has "zero problems" with new Mercedes arrival Valtteri Bottas. Hamilton told a Facebook Live session with F1 sponsor UBS last Friday that drivers should do their own "homework" rather than be able to copy a team mate's racing lines and braking points.

"I go out, do my laps, do all my homework and the other guy can see everything," said the Briton.

"When we're driving we're picking out braking points, bumps, tyre rubber marks on the track, all these different things to help get you through the corner quickest ... but because of this (shared) data they (team mates) can just copy you.

"They should be able to go out there on their own and find it all themselves, without you." Hamilton's comments were interpreted by some as Hamilton criticising Mercedes for insisting on shared data between team mates, but he took to Twitter yesterday to emphasise that was not the case.

"I wish to clarify, I have not hit out at my team at all. My point on data sharing is solely my feelings about the sport in general," said the 32-year-old, who made his

debut with McLaren in 2007 alongside double champion Fernando Alonso.

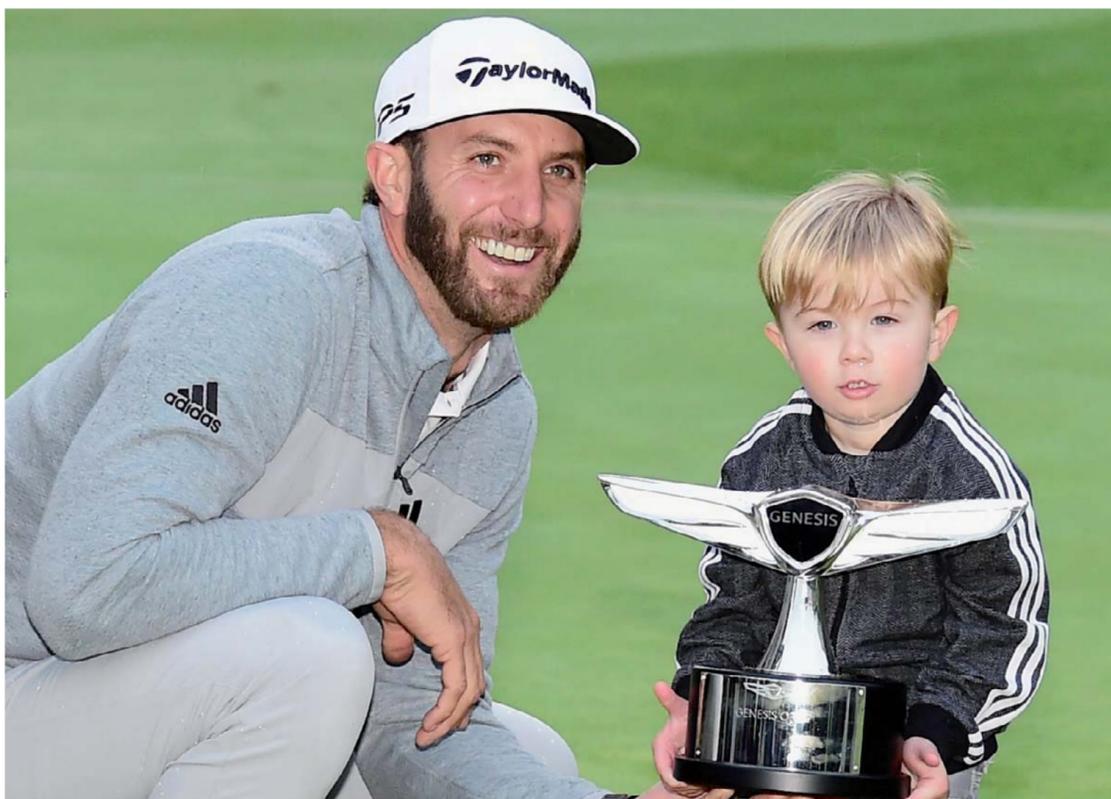
"It has been my feeling since the day I started F1 and still is 10 years later. There is zero problems in my team, zero problems with Bottas." Hamilton is favourite to clinch a fourth title this season after losing out last year to team mate Nico Rosberg, who promptly retired.

The German, a rival since their teenage years in go-karting, won fewer races than Hamilton (9-10) but enjoyed better reliability. Hamilton beat Rosberg to the title in the previous two campaigns.

The Briton has said it does not matter who his team mate is and spoke warmly of Bottas, who joins from Williams without having won a race so far.

"It is interesting to see how it's going to go, how quick he will be, how quick he adapts, how he does with pressure ... I would say the most fascinating thing is the mind of my competitors, what limits they'll go to," Hamilton said during the Facebook Live session. "Some people will sell their mum to win a race, sell your soul, and some people will do other things so it's really interesting to see where Valtteri will go."

The season starts in Australia on March 26 and Mercedes present their new car at Silverstone on Thursday. —Reuters



PACIFIC PALISADES: Dustin Johnson and his son Tatum pose with the trophy during the final round at the Genesis Open at Riviera Country Club on Sunday in Pacific Palisades, California. — AFP

GOLF

JOHNSON WINS AT RIVIERA, GOES TO NO 1 IN THE WORLD

LOS ANGELES: The only question about Dustin Johnson going to No. 1 in the world is: What took so long? The talent was never an issue.

Jordan Spieth once referred to Johnson as "a freak athlete," a term rarely heard in golf. Pat Perez was partly in awe and partly exasperated Sunday as he stood behind the 10th green during the final round at Riviera and said, "The guy hits it 40 yards by me, hits his short irons great and makes 30-foot putts. What do you do?"

Crown him. Finally.

Johnson looked like a world-beater against the strongest field of the year at the Genesis Open. He went 49 consecutive holes without a bogey. During the third round Sunday morning, when he shot a 7-under 64 and built a five-shot lead, his two longest par putts were from 4 feet. On the 606-yard 17th hole in the second round, on a day when no one could get it back to the flag, Johnson went over the green. With his five-shot victory, he became the 20th player since the world ranking began in 1986 to reach No. 1. And it never crossed his mind. Neither did the 72-hole scoring record at Riviera, set in 1985 by Lanny Wadkins at 20-under 264, making it the oldest such record on the PGA Tour schedule. Johnson didn't even know what the record was, nor did he care. He was at 20 under after making his 21st birdie of the week at the par-3 sixth, played it safe from there with a big lead and closed with three meaningless bogeys for a 71.

"Winning the golf tournament ... that's what I was here to do," Johnson said. That's what he's been doing ever since his rookie season. Johnson has won every year on the PGA Tour except for 2014, which was cut short when he stepped away for six months to seek professional help for personal challenges amid a published report he had tested positive twice for drugs.

CONFIDENCE

He found guidance from hockey great Wayne Gretzky - Johnson is engaged to the Great One's daughter, they have a 2-year-old son and Paulina Gretzky announced this week on Instagram that another one is on the way. Gretzky's words carry a lot of weight on and off the golf course.

"When an athlete of his stature ... thinks very highly of you, it definitely gives you a lot of confidence and gives you more belief," Johnson said.

Johnson won in his fifth tournament back from that six-month break to get back into the top 10 in the world, and it's been a slow rise ever since. He won his first major in the U.S. Open at Oakmont the following year, added his third World Golf Championships title, a FedEx Cup playoff event and swept all the big awards, starting with PGA Tour player of the year.

And now he's No. 1.

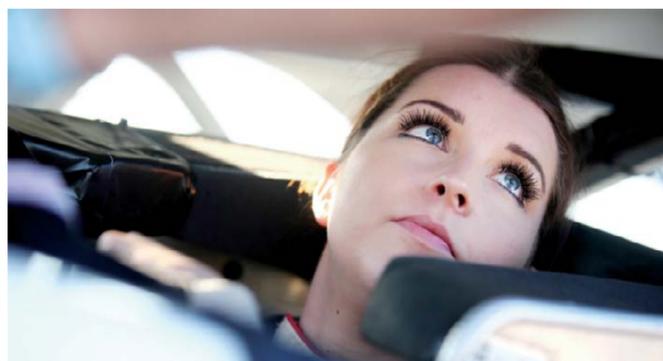
"No surprise to us players, and I don't think too much surprise to many others," Jordan Spieth said.

Dating to that US Open victory, Johnson has won four times in the last eight months against the strongest fields in golf. In 16 tournaments since, he has finished no worse than third place in eight of them. He could hear chants of "No. 1" when he walked up to the 18th green at Riviera, with fans crammed onto the hillside below the storied club-

house. When he tapped in for par, he headed for the side of the green toward his fiancé to pick up their young son.

"Little man" is what Johnson calls him, and there already are tales that he's a lot like his father. Gretzky told of the time Tatum was going through the house and banged his head on a table. The boy rubbed it for a second and kept right on run-

ning. Nothing fazed him, and the same is true of Johnson. Major setbacks? Johnson might be the leader in the clubhouse. He lost one major with an 82 in the final round, another when he grounded his club in sand without realizing it was a bunker. The most crushing was the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay, when Johnson had a 12-foot eagle putt to win and three -putted to lose. —AP



NEW SMYRNA BEACH: Amber Balcaen, driver of the #39 Shead Racing/Glen McLeod & So, looks on during qualifying for the NASCAR K&N Pro Series East Jet Tools 150 at New Smyrna Speedway on Sunday in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. — AFP

MERCEDES BOSS TOTO WOLFF SIGNS NEW DEAL

STUTTGART: Mercedes Formula One team boss Toto Wolff and Niki Lauda have extended their deals with the world champions until at least 2020.

Dieter Zetsche, chairman of the Daimler conglomerate that includes Mercedes, said that under Wolff and ex-drivers' champion Lauda: "The results have exceeded our expectations."

Mercedes, with Lewis Hamilton and the now-retired Nico Rosberg as lead drivers, have dominated the world championship since 2014. They have won the drivers' and team titles for three years in a row.

The announcement came ahead of Hamilton and new teammate Valtteri Bottas unveiling the new Mercedes car at Silverstone in England on Thursday. The first Formula One testing of the season starts in Barcelona next Monday, leaving one month before the season starts in Australia on March 26. Mercedes will be looking to extend their domination and see Wolff, who has a 30% shareholding in the Formula One team, in particular as a key element. "It's great news that Toto and Niki have extended their agreements," said Zetsche.

"In 2013, we restructured the management of the team with the clear goal of improving our performance. Since then, however, the results have exceeded our

expectations. "A key factor in this success has been the combination of Toto's entrepreneurial skills and Niki's experience. Their renewed commitment gives our programme important continuity for the next four years."

Wolff, who joined Mercedes from Williams in 2013, one year after Lauda became the team's non-executive chairman, has brilliantly kept the lid on the bitter Hamilton-Rosberg rivalry to steer the team to success. "Winning is never down to single individuals - it is about the right group of people coming together, aligning themselves with a common objective and then combining their talents to achieve that target," said the Austrian. "Each day I come to the factory, I am humbled to have the privilege of representing this inspiring group of people." Lauda, the three-time world champion who also has a 10 per cent holding in the team, added: "The last few years have been some of the most enjoyable I have had in Formula One.

"Toto and I formed a perfect partnership at Mercedes and we have a great team on every level that has delivered results."

Lauda and Wolff had formed a managerial triumvirate with Paddy Lowe, but the Briton left in January and since been replaced by James Allison, formerly of Ferrari. —AFP



Toto Wolff

SAUBER AIM FOR RETURN TO MIDFIELD WITH NEW F1 CAR

LONDON: Sauber presented their new Formula One car yesterday, celebrating the Swiss-based team's 25 years in the sport with golden lettering but little in the way of sponsorship branding on the blue and white machine.

"The anniversary car for a new era," said Sauber, which was bought by Swiss investment firm Longbow Finance last year, alongside pictures of the C-36 car posted on the team's website (www.sauberf1team.com).

The words '25 years in Formula One' were written in gold on the side of the airbox and in front of the driver but the car shown was otherwise a blank canvas in terms of sponsorship. The new livery is a change from last year's blue and yellow, the corporate branding of now-departed backer Banco do Brasil.

Ferrari-powered Sauber finished 10th of the 11 teams last season, scoring their two crucial points only in the penultimate round in Brazil to overtake now-defunct Manor.

"Together with Longbow Finance S.A., we have great opportunities to be competitive again and to return to previous successes in Formula One," said team principal Monisha Kaltenborn. "We want to position ourselves with a new approach, and we have already taken the first steps in order to build a solid foundation for the future."

Kaltenborn said Sauber had the resources to develop the car, which will use the reliable 2016 Ferrari power unit rather than the latest model, through the season and was aiming at a return to the team's previous place among the midfield. Sauber have only once won a race, in Canada in 2008 when BMW owned the team. The team has retained Swedish driver Marcus Ericsson this season but Brazilian Felipe Nasr has been replaced by Germany's Pascal Wehrlein.

The wider and lower car has no carry-over parts from last season, reflecting the new aerodynamic and technical rules that should see faster lap times. "We put greater emphasis on aerodynamic stability as opposed to maximising downforce," said technical director Joerg Zander, who returned to Sauber only last month after a previous stint at the Hinwil factory under BMW. "Basically, big teams also have an advantage when it comes to major changes in the regulations. But when the cards are reshuffled new opportunities always present themselves as well."

Testing starts in Barcelona next week, although Wehrlein is ruled out with a back problem. Sauber has yet to name a replacement. Monday marked the start of a week of Formula One launches, with Renault next up in London today. — Reuters



DAYTONA BEACH: Crew members push the #20 DeWalt Toyota of Matt Kenseth on the grid qualifying for the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series 59th Annual DAYTONA 500 at Daytona International Speedway on Sunday in Daytona Beach, Florida. — AFP

CYCLING

STATESMAN FROOME HAS RIDDEN ABOVE CONTROVERSY: BOARDMAN

LONDON: Chris Froome has emerged as a shining light from the anti-doping controversies that have engulfed Team Sky and British Cycling over the past year, former Olympic champion Chris Boardman says.

Team Sky, with whom Froome has won three of the last four Tour de France races, has been dogged for months by a row over Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs) and a package that was delivered to Froome's former team mate Bradley Wiggins in 2011.

Wiggins consistently denied any wrongdoing but the episode brought a sour postscript to a stellar career and is part of an ongoing UK anti-doping investigation in the sport.

Yet despite the controversies, Froome's reputation has been enhanced, according to former British Cycling technical advisor Boardman, who wore the yellow jersey in three separate Tours.

"What I've found interesting about the last few months is that Froome has become more of a statesman for the sport," Boardman told Reuters at the London Cycle Show.

"He is more comfortable in that role now. He's clear on what he thinks and doesn't contradict himself. I think Chris Froome has handled himself very well."

Froome has insisted "there are questions" to answer about Wiggins's use of TUEs after leaked World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) data revealed he inject-

ed corticosteroid triamcinolone ahead of his 2012 Tour de France win to treat asthma. Froome also reportedly distanced himself from Dave Brailsford after the Team Sky boss was grilled by British lawmakers in December about the contents of the package delivered to Wiggins.

"I think people have tried to infer things, spin what (Froome) said, which I think is unfair," Boardman said of a perceived cooling in the relationship between Froome and Team Sky.

"But what he has said has been bang on," Boardman said the sooner questions are answered the better. "I think people are going to have to come up with answers," he said. "I'm not 100 percent

about what I'm looking at and how I feel about that."

With Brailsford battling to uphold Team Sky's reputation and the British Cycling reeling from the resignations of head coach Shane Sutton, CEO Ian Drake and chairman Bob Howden in the space of nine months, the sport is facing testing times. Boardman said there was too much negativity though.

"Over the past two Olympic cycles the sport has been the most successful for Britain," he said. "Half the medals are coming from women. Yet everyone seems willing to shoot at it."

"People are riding bikes, it's on mainstream TV. I like the new chairman. We don't need more cyclists (in the organi-

sation). What we need are experts in managing people and big business."

Of far greater concern to Boardman is safe cycling in Britain and making cycling part of everyday life.

It is a subject especially close to his heart after his mother was knocked off her bike and killed.

"We have stalled," he said. "The government says it wants to double the amount of cycling by 2025. Well that's two percent to four percent which is hardly ambitious. They are ignoring it. There are 10 million people in London and they have to move around. Cycling is a logical solution but the acid test is providing spaces to ride that are attractive and safe." —Reuters

'THIS SHIP HAS SAILED',
BUDAPEST 2024 BID
CHIEF TELLS RADIO

BUDAPEST: The Hungarian capital has likely lost its chance to organise Summer Olympic Games in 2024, the bid's chief told local radio late on Sunday after a nascent political movement collected a quarter million signatures to force a referendum on the bid.

Budapest was considered a long-shot candidate next to powerhouses Los Angeles and Paris but the eastern European city pinned high hopes on the International Olympic Committee's new frugal bid concept, known as Agenda 2020.

A political accord behind the bid once included most parties, the government and Parliament, which voted to support the candidacy in 2015. That broad unity evaporated as the new political group, called Momentum, tapped into popular dissent.

Budapest Mayor Istvan Tarlos flagged he might withdraw from the 2024 race but rejected responsibility for allowing the bid to fall apart, saying it was always a national matter in Hungary.

Balazs Fúrjes, a government commissioner for special projects and the chief organiser of the 2024 bid, told Inforadio on Sunday that

he saw no chance for a Hungarian Games in 2024. "The Mayor is right, this issue belongs to all of us," he said. "The Hungarian Olympic family, the capital, Parliament, and the government have all made unified decisions. Now I see that cause ran aground, even though a 120-year-old Hungarian dream had a palpable chance of coming true."

He said Agenda 2020 and internal political unity were both necessary to allow any chance for a small, poorer country like Hungary to host the Games.

"Now that unity has gone up in the air, and lacking that we stand no chance against Paris or Los Angeles. This ship has sailed, it seems. The Budapest Olympics can soon wrap it in, although now it would have really had a chance," he said even a favourable referendum result would not save the situation now.

"I would have been the first to propose a referendum had it not been for the complete unity that formed in the Budapest city council and a decisive majority in Parliament," he said. "With no unity the Budapest bid suffers such a blow that a referendum to heal that would be too little too late." — Reuters

PELICANS ACQUIRING DEMARCUS
COUSINS IN MULTI-PLAYER DEAL

NEW ORLEANS: DeMarcus Cousins is on his way out of Sacramento - and right into an All-Star frontcourt pairing with Anthony Davis. The New Orleans Pelicans agreed to acquire Cousins from the Kings on Sunday, the same night the center was playing in the All-Star Game in their arena.

The Kings dealt one of the most talented but temperamental big men in the game along with Omri Casspi to New Orleans in exchange for Tyreke Evans, 2016 first-round draft pick Buddy Hield, Langston Galloway and first- and second-round draft picks this summer, a person familiar with the situation said.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the trade is not official and has not been announced by either team.

The deal pairs the 6-foot-11 Cousins, a frontcourt All-Star from nearby Mobile, Alabama, with the 6-11 Davis, who on Sunday night was the All-Star Game MVP after scoring 52 points, breaking Wilt Chamberlain's 1962 record of 42.

The move also sends a message that the Pelicans are more concerned with making a 25-game push for the playoffs this spring than where they'll be drafting next offseason. The deal was still in the works when Cousins spoke with reporters after the All-Star Game, when he played just two minutes as trade rumors swirled.

He said he was happy with the Kings, but would also be happy playing closer to home and alongside Davis.

"If I'm blessed enough to have a job here, absolutely," Cousins said. "If that's what happens," New Orleans (23-34) went into the All-Star break 2 1/2 games behind

Denver for the eighth and final playoff seeding in the Western Conference.

Cousins, like Davis a former collegiate star at Kentucky, is averaging 27.8 points and 10.6 rebounds this season. But he is due to become a free agent in 2018 unless the Pelicans can sign him to an All-Star caliber extension. New Orleans will also have to hope Cousins can dial back some of his after-the-whistle intensity and antics. He leads the NBA in technical fouls with 17, putting him one away from another one-game suspension.

While Davis said after the All-Star Game that he wasn't aware of an impending trade, he said he admired Cousins as a player. "He's a great player, dominant in this league, of course, with all the numbers he puts up," Davis said. "Of course, DeMarcus is an elite player in this league." But the Kings decided to move on without him, having not made the playoffs since taking Cousins with the No. 5 pick in the 2010 draft.

The Kings get a player with a lot of potential in the 6-4 Hield, although he has been inconsistent during his rookie season out of Oklahoma, where as a senior he was one of the best players in the nation.

Hield is averaging 8.6 points but has been explosive at times, with a season high of 21 points. The 6-6 Evans, who can play point guard, shooting guard or small forward, will be entering a second stint in Sacramento, where he was drafted in 2009 and went on to be Rookie of the Year. Galloway has been a solid reserve, providing scoring punch from the perimeter. The 6-9 Casspi has been playing about 19 minutes per game for the Kings this season, averaging 5.9 points and 4.1 rebounds. —AP



NEW ORLEANS: Western Conference forward DeMarcus Cousins of the Sacramento Kings (15) plays during the first half of the NBA All-Star basketball game in New Orleans, Sunday. The New Orleans Pelicans agreed to acquire Cousins from the Kings on Sunday, the same night the center was playing in the All-Star Game in their arena. —



NEW ORLEANS: Anthony Davis #23 of the New Orleans Pelicans celebrates with the 2017 NBA All-Star Game MVP trophy after the 2017 NBA All-Star Game at Smoothie King Center on Sunday in New Orleans, Louisiana. — AFP

BASKETBALL

DAVIS SCORES 52, WEST
TOPS EAST 192-182

NEW ORLEANS: Move over, Wilt. After 55 years, one of your records is no more.

Anthony Davis took care of that. At the defense-free dunkfest that now serves as the NBA's All-Star Game, Davis scored a record 52 points and led the Western Conference past the Eastern Conference, 192-182 on Sunday night. He made 26 of 39 shots, scored 20 points in the fourth quarter and became the first player since Kobe Bryant in 2011 to win MVP honors on his home floor.

"It was amazing," Davis said. "That's what I wanted to do ... get the MVP for this crowd, for this city. This one definitely means a lot to me."

Davis was the star of stars in a game where the teams combined for more points than in any other All-Star contest. It came on a night when Russell Westbrook and Kevin Durant provided a glimpse of the past, Giannis Antetokounmpo had more dunks - 12 - than his name has consonants and LeBron James became the first player to eclipse 300 points in an All-Star career.

Being linked to Wilt Chamberlain, who had 42 points in the 1962 game, only made it more special, Davis said.

"The next one I'm going to try to do is 100 points," Davis said. He even outdid Westbrook, who had 41 points in just 20 minutes - which ordinarily would have been enough to merit him what would have been a third straight MVP award. Not this time. It was Davis hoisting the trophy, thanks to his West teammates deferring to their host time and again. "It shows our guys recognize what the weekend is about," West coach Steve Kerr said.

Durant had a triple-double with 21 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists. Stephen Curry added 21 points for the West. And after the game, word came that Sacramento is trading All-Star center DeMarcus Cousins to New Orleans as part of a deal that will involve five players and two draft picks. Cousins played only two minutes. The New Orleans fans will see much more of him soon enough. Antetokounmpo had 30 points for the East. James scored 23 - including a 3-pointer from the midcourt logo - while Cleveland teammate Kyrie Irving added 22 points and 14 assists.

"There were a few too many transition baskets allowed," East coach Brad Stevens deadpanned. "But I think that was strictly coaching."

Davis became the story that overshadowed the game coming into this game, that being the Durant-Westbrook whatever.

If any animus remains between Durant and Westbrook, it was hidden. They passed each other the ball in the pregame layup line, and not long after Westbrook checked into the game the former Oklahoma City teammates provided one of the game's top highlights - a give-and-go, capped by Durant lobbing the ball to set Westbrook up for a dunk.

GAME BREAK THE ICE

'Oh My God! What Just Happened?' Curry shouted on the West bench, which moments lat-

er broke into celebration. Players jumped and threw hands skyward, Curry tossing a cupful of ice water onto a smiling Durant amid it all.

"It was a nice give-and-go, man," Westbrook said. Added Durant: "It was a great basketball play. He was open so I threw him the lob. He can jump really high so yeah, good play."

Kerr said that set the West up for the rest of the night. "I guess that's kind of the beauty of the game," Kerr said. "You just let the game break the ice, and that play, I thought, broke the ice."

Westbrook scored 12 points - all on 3s - in a 63-second span late in the third quarter, coming off the bench and firing over and over and over again. And then he opened the fourth quarter with another 3, giving him 34 points in just under 14 minutes played to that point.

It looked like he was a cinch for MVP honors, until Davis scored 20 points in the fourth.

"He did a good job," Westbrook said, "and got it done."

TIP-INS

East: Irving also led the East in rebounds with

seven. ... Isaiah Thomas scored 20 for the East.

Kyle Lowry scored 19 points and DeMar DeRozan added 16. ... No East player logged more than 24 minutes. West: Curry took cover in the third quarter, comically hitting the deck face-first as Antetokounmpo went in for yet another dunk. So later in the quarter, Antetokounmpo went over Curry for a rebound slam - one that left Curry staring at the scoreboard for a replay.

CELEB WATCH

A huge roar greeted Jon Batiste, who performed "The Star-Spangled Banner" pregame, when he started the song. It wasn't for him.

That happened to be the moment when John Legend - the halftime performer - and Chrissy Teigen were shown at their sideline seats on the video screens around the arena. And a louder cheer came not long afterward when Beyonce and Jay Z got on-screen. Among the other celebs in the seats: Guy Fieri, Dave Chappelle, Julius Erving, Alonzo Mourning, Bill Russell, Oscar Robertson and The Roots. — AP

OLYMPICS

ADMIT WOMEN OR LOSE TOKYO
GAMES GOLF, IOC TELLS CLUB

SAPPORO: The club scheduled to host the golf at the 2020 Tokyo Games must allow women to have full membership or organisers will have to find another venue, International Olympic Committee (IOC) vice president John Coates told Reuters yesterday.

The private Kasumigaseki Country Club in Saitama prefecture, which is set to host both men's and women's tournaments in July and August 2020, forbids women from playing on Sundays and excludes them from becoming full members. Coates, who is head of the coordination commission which oversees preparations for the Games, said he had only become aware of the issue on his last visit to Tokyo at the end of last year and that organisers were now aware of the IOC's stance.

"We made quite clear that there has to be gender equality," Coates told Reuters in an interview at the Asian Winter Games in the northern city of Sapporo.

"If they can't achieve the gender equality then we have to get another course, but the organisers are very confident that they will."

Japanese media reported that members of the club had met on Sunday to hear an explanation of the situation. The club was closed yesterday and nobody was available to comment. Coates said he was aware that discussions were underway.

"They either will or they won't," he said.

"There's plenty of time to move to another golf course if we have to."

REVISED BUDGET

Tokyo 2020 organisers unveiled a revised budget of \$16.8 billion in December and vowed to seek further savings in cooperation with the IOC. Coates said the budget issue should be resolved some time this year and the final figure would be nowhere near the 3.0 trillion yen (\$26.52 billion) that a Tokyo city government panel forecast last year.

"The costs that were being speculated were vastly over-specified," he said. "We haven't yet accepted a final budget. (It should be worked out) on this forthcoming visit or the one after."

Budget worries could put paid to Budapest's bid for the 2024 Games after a political movement collected a quarter million signatures to force a referendum on the proposal. The city's mayor conceded on Friday he might be forced to withdraw the bid, leaving only Paris and Los Angeles in a race which at one stage involved six cities.

"On the technical side and everything else, I've been very impressed (and) I'd be very disappointed if, as a result of a referendum, they didn't proceed," said Coates. "It's a very strong bid technically, and they have a large number of existing venues." —Reuters

REAL MADRID EXPECT RAMOS BOOST FOR VALENCIA TRIP

MADRID: Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos is expected to return from injury when his team plays at Valencia tomorrow, looking to move four points clear at the top of La Liga.

Ramos missed Saturday's 2-0 home win against Espanyol with a hip injury sustained in last week's 3-1 home win over Napoli in the last 16 of the Champions League. However, he trained on Monday.

Real have an opportunity to keep the

pressure on Barcelona, whom they lead by a point at the top of La Liga. Real will also have a make-up game to play against Celta Vigo.

Real coach Zinedine Zidane has used 19 players in the last two games and will continue his rotation policy, with a game at Villarreal to follow on Sunday.

Karim Benzema, Luka Modric and Keylor Navas all rested against Espanyol as part of seven changes made by Zidane to the side that beat Napoli, and

all are set to start at the Mestalla stadium. "We have a lot of games ahead and we need all the players," Zidane told his club's website after Saturday's win.

Gareth Bale could start too after impressing on his return from an ankle injury. The Welsh forward came off the bench and outpaced Espanyol's defence before scoring Real's second.

"He doesn't give the impression that he's been three months out," Zidane said. "He has a lot of power, makes a differ-

ence and that is why he is special."

The Valencia match was originally scheduled for December but was moved due to Real's involvement in the FIFA Club World Cup, which they won. Zidane wants his team to pull away from defending champions Barcelona as soon as possible.

"Only two teams can get points on Wednesday and this is important," he said. While Real set a club record at the weekend by scoring in 42 consecutive

games in all competitions, Valencia kept a clean sheet for a second straight game, while also ending their 262-minute goal drought thanks to Nani.

Valencia have slipped into relegation danger after enduring a season of frustration, but the players have a new spring in their step after Sunday's 2-0 home victory over Athletic Bilbao, a result that ended a three-game winless streak and lifted the team to 15th place. — Reuters

PREVIEW

GUARDIOLA'S MAN CITY FACE MONACO MOMENT OF TRUTH

MANCHESTER: A hotly anticipated staging post in Manchester City's Pep Guardiola era arrives today when Monaco visit the Etihad Stadium in the first leg of the Champions League last 16.

Guardiola was appointed to take City to the next level on the European stage and he has already masterminded a stirring 3-1 win over his former club Barcelona in the group phase. But Monaco have been rampant this season, powering to the Ligue 1 summit with a tally of 76 goals that is unsurpassed in Europe's five major leagues, and Guardiola is keenly aware of the danger they pose. "My impression against PSG and from what I've seen is they're a really strong team," he said recently of Leonardo Jardim's side, puffing out his cheeks for effect. "They score a lot of goals, they are physical. We have to go to the gym in the next days!" Guardiola and his assistant Mikel Arteta watched Monaco's game at Paris Saint-Germain last month, when a 92nd-minute equaliser from Bernardo Silva rescued a 1-1 draw.

Another Silva equaliser secured another 1-1 draw in Monaco's last outing, at Bastia on Friday, but in the main they have encountered scant resistance in the French top flight this season. Monaco have averaged 2.92 goals per league game, scoring four or more on no fewer than 10 occasions, and have already prevailed on English soil, winning 2-1 at Tottenham Hotspur in the group stage.

Three successive wins have lifted City to second place in the Premier League table, eight points below leaders Chelsea, but they remain a work in progress.

It is just over a month since their scarring 4-0 defeat at Everton—their fifth defeat of the campaign—and Guardiola's selection decisions continue to raise eyebrows.

Claudio Bravo, signed amid great fanfare to replace Joe Hart, has been axed after a string of weak displays, meaning Willy Caballero, City's nominal third-choice goalkeeper in August, is now the number one.

What City's defensive configuration will be against Monaco, meanwhile, is anyone's guess. A rotating cast of full-backs has seen midfielder Fernandinho fill in on both flanks of the defence of late, while Aleksandar Kolarov continues to flit between left-back and centre-back.

FALCAO RETURN

Yaya Toure has been successfully reintegrated into midfield alongside Kevin De Bruyne and David Silva, having previously been frozen out by Guardiola.

But the complicity that was developing between the front three of Raheem Sterling, Leroy Sane and Gabriel Jesus has been scuppered by the broken foot sustained by the latter.

Jesus's absence has allowed Sergio Aguero to reclaim his place up front, although he was unable to find a way past the Huddersfield Town defence in Saturday's 0-0 FA Cup fifth-round draw.

While uncertainty abounds regarding City's best XI, Jardim's Monaco team largely picks itself. Joao Moutinho, a European champion with Portugal, cannot get into the team and 18-year-old sensation Kylian Mbappe, whose 11 goals this season include two hat-tricks, begins most games on the bench. Both could start, however, if Jardim elects to ditch his habitual 4-4-2 formation in favour of a 4-3-3.

With Jemerson suspended, Andrea Raggi is expected to start at centre-back.

The trip to Manchester will have special significance for Radamel Falcao, who has rediscovered his shooting boots after two dismal years on loan with Manchester United and Chelsea. "El Tigre", 31, no longer bites with the force of his Porto and Atletico Madrid days, but, aided by a customised playing schedule, he has scored 22 goals in just 28 games. "I manage him differently to the others," says Jardim. "Because he's a top-level player. I said at the start of the season that I was sure he'd succeed. Quality is permanent." —AFP



ROME: Roma's Juan Jesus, left, challenges Torino's Andrea Belotti during a Serie A soccer match between Roma and Torino at the Olympic stadium in Rome, Italy, Sunday. — AP

SOCCER

ROMA ROUT TORINO TO KEEP TITLE DREAM ALIVE

MILAN: Edin Dzeko struck his 19th Serie A goal and Francesco Totti came off the bench with an assist as Roma kept their 'scudetto' hopes alive with a 4-1 win over Torino on Sunday. Roma's 18th win of the campaign saw Luciano Spalletti's men leapfrog Napoli, 3-1 winners at Chievo, and return to second spot to sit seven points behind leaders Juventus.

Napoli, nine points behind Juventus, are six points ahead of both Inter Milan and Atalanta with Lazio and AC Milan boosting their European hopes with wins over Empoli and Fiorentina respectively.

"We were great tonight," Spalletti told Premium Sport. "After our win at Villarreal we risked struggling to get into this game, but instead we showed our true qualities."

Fresh from hitting his second successive Europa League hat-trick in Roma's 4-0 romp at Villarreal, Dzeko got Roma off the mark on 10 minutes after collecting Radja Nainggolan's pass to coolly beat Hart at his far post from the edge of the area.

With 19 goals in 25 games, Dzeko is tied with Gonzalo Higuain at the top of the scoring charts after the Argentine striker struck once in Juventus's 4-1 win over Palermo on Friday.

A former teammate of Dzeko's at Manchester City, Hart was in for a busy night in the Torino goal. A Nainggolan volley was straight at Hart but he was powerless against Mohamed Salah's superb volley from Dzeko's failed attempt to control in the area.

Salah hit the far upright and Dzeko fired just over after the restart. Torino fought back, Sasa Lukic's volley coming close and Wojciech Szczesny forced to stop Marco Benassi down low. But all thoughts of a comeback were ended by Leandro Paredes's stunning long-distance volley that sneaked inside Hart's near post.

'RUNNING UP STAIRS'

Totti was applauded when he replaced Kevin Strootman on 82 minutes, prompting a tactical change by Spalletti.

It was enough for Maxi Lopez, sidelined by coach Sinisa Mihajlovic for several weeks for being overweight, to fire an angled drive past Szczesny into the far bottom corner for a late consolation. But when 40-year-old club captain Totti controlled a high ball in the area to lay off for Nainggolan, the Belgian unleashed a powerful curling drive that gave Hart no chance.

Spalletti added: "We need more leaders like Totti in this squad."

Mihajlovic was almost inclined to agree. "We were never going to cause an upset by winning here tonight because Roma are better than us and are undefeated at home all season," Mihajlovic told Sky Sport.

"The quality of their players made the difference, to the extent that Hart, who wasn't able to make one save, conceded four goals." Marek Hamsik moved to within three strikes of Diego Maradona's Napoli record of 115 goals in a 3-1 win at Chievo, while veteran Zdenek Zeman steered Pescara to a first win since August in a 5-0 rout of Genoa. The Slovakia midfielder's 112th was an easy tap-in seven minutes before half-time. Pescara, meanwhile, will now harbour hopes of escaping the drop after Zeman, who replaced sacked Massimo Oddo in midweek, led the league strugglers to their first win in six months. Zeman, however, said the task will be difficult and the players he inherited are unfit.

"I've only laid some basic foundations, but

from tomorrow we start working seriously, also with (running up) the stairs. They're not in great condition," said the chain-smoking Czech. Earlier, 20-year-old Brazil international Gabriel 'Gabigol' Barbosa came off the bench to hit his maiden Serie A goal for Inter Milan and secure a 1-0 win at Bologna that has boosted their Europa League qualifying hopes. "I'm really happy, for my first goal and for this important win," said Barbosa. "I hope it's the start of some-

thing special." In Sunday's late game, on-loan Everton midfielder Gerard Deulofeu struck a 31st minute debut winner as AC Milan edged Fiorentina 2-1 at the San Siro. Fiorentina striker Nikola Kalinic responded to Juraj Kucka's 17th minute headed opener with the leveller four minutes later.

But when Borja Valero lost possession in midfield, Deulofeu pounced to sweep a curling drive past Ciprian Tatarusanu. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Sergio Aguero during a training session at the City Football Academy in Manchester, England, yesterday. Man City play Monaco in a Champions League round of 16 soccer match in Manchester today. — AP

SEVILLA OFFERS LITTLE RESPITE TO STRUGGLING LEICESTER CITY

BARCELONA: Embattled Leicester City turn their attentions to the one competition they have had success in during a nightmarish season for the English champions when they visit high-flying Sevilla tomorrow for their Champions League last 16 first leg.

Europe's elite competition has been a welcome distraction for Claudio Ranieri's side, which has come crashing back down to earth after last year's logic-defying title win but keeps defying the odds in Europe.

Leicester finished top of their group and conceded just one goal in their first five games, and a brief escape is just what they need as their domestic woes show no sign of easing.

A winless start to 2017 in the league has left the club one point and a single place above the drop zone, and in danger of becoming the first team since Manchester City in 1938 to be relegated the season after winning the English championship.

On Saturday they endured an embarrassing exit from the FA Cup at the hands of League One side Millwall despite playing most of the second half with an extra man.

They will get little respite from from a transformed Sevilla side, however, which is enjoying its most exciting season in a decade as it chases Real Madrid and Barcelona in La Liga and mounts a serious challenge in the Champions League after winning the Europa League three times in a row. Argentine coach Jorge Sampaoli has brought a new speed and intensity to the Andalusian side's possession play that yielded its biggest ever points total in the first half of a season.

"He has very specific ideas that he has implanted in our heads and we have responded really well to them," midfielder Pablo Sarabia told newspaper Estadio Deportivo. "We're getting really good results too which is vital when you change your idea of how to play."

Sevilla lost a number of top players last summer last summer, including losing top scorer Kevin Gameiro and midfielders Grzegorz Krychowiak and Ever Banega.

Yet smart work by sporting director Monchi has helped them shrug off those high profile departures and build a dynamic squad around two former Premier League players, former Stoke City midfielder Steven Nzonzi and playmaker Samir Nasri. Stevan Jovetic has given them an extra lift in attack since joining on loan from Inter Milan last month and created both goals in Saturday's 2-0 win over Eibar which kept them on the heels of league leaders Real and second-placed Barcelona.

Sevilla's explosive form contrasts with Leicester's seemingly endless troubles, although Sarabia warned against his side thinking tomorrow's game would be a cake walk. — Reuters

LEVERKUSEN PROTECTIVE OF 17-YEAR-OLD JEWEL HAVERTZ

BERLIN: School aside, Kai Havertz has been learning a lot this season.

The 17-year-old midfielder is one of Bayer Leverkusen's brightest prospects, and he has a chance to put his skill on display to a wide audience today when his team faces Atletico Madrid in the last 16 of the Champions League. "We saw him in training. We tried to give him a bit of playing time in the last games to see how he reacts playing in a full stadium," Leverkusen coach Roger Schmidt said after Havertz played his first full game in November.

"He's an excellent footballer with outstanding technique, fast, robust in challenges, a good header of the ball and, yeah, he's a player that does us really well."

Havertz started the season with Leverkusen's under-19 team and was just over 17 years, 4 months old when he made his first senior team appearance as a substitute against Werder Bremen on Oct. 15. More playing time followed against Wolfsburg before his first full game against Darmstadt on Nov. 5.

Schmidt has been coming under pressure lately after several lacklustre performances in a disappointing season, but Havertz in particular starred in the team's last two games as Leverkusen dug out impressive wins over Eintracht Frankfurt and Augsburg in the league. Havertz started and set up goals in both games, as he did on his previous start against Cologne. But it's his overall play - his composure on the ball, his technical skill, his

perception to anticipate teammates' movement and ability to then play the ball right where they want it - that has the rest of the league sitting up and taking notice.

Against Augsburg last Friday, Havertz set up two scores, helping Karim Bellarabi score the league's 50,000th goal and then sending a perfect through ball for Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez to wrap up the 3-1 win.

Havertz was involved in seven of Leverkusen's efforts on goal, won more challenges (14) than any of his teammates, saw more of the ball than any of them, completed as many passes (40) as teammate Kevin Kampl, while he ran almost 12 kilometers - more than any other player on the field.

"He's so young and he plays so well," Bellarabi said of Havertz.

Leverkusen has been protecting its new star from the increased attention so he can concentrate on his schoolwork - he still has to complete his final secondary-school examinations. While he isn't giving interviews, words are left to others. "If he keeps his head clear, he can be a great one," Leverkusen goalkeeper Bernd Leno said after the game in Augsburg.

Schmidt's enthusiasm is tempered by an urge not to overburden the player with expectation. "Havertz has outstanding technical abilities and the gift of making very good decisions. That's why he plays for us," the Leverkusen coach said. "We don't want to praise him too much, though. Now we're really looking forward to Atletico." —AP



LEVERKUSEN: Leverkusen's head coach Roger Schmidt talks to the media prior to the Champions League round of 16 first leg soccer match against Atletico Madrid in Leverkusen, Germany, yesterday. — AP



UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Manchester City v AS Monaco FC 22:45
beIN SPORTS 1 HD
Bayer 04 Leverkusen v Atletico 22:45
beIN SPORTS 2 HD

Sports

Johnson wins at Riviera, goes to No 1 in the world



Davis scores 52, West tops East 192-182



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2017

BYE-BYE 'BOOM BOOM' AS AFRIDI ENDS CAREER



Steve Ott #29 of the Detroit Red Wings skaoers a goal against Matt Murray #30 the Pittsburgh Penguins at PPG PAINTS Arena on February 19, 2017 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. — AFP

TATAR, VANEK LEAD RED WINGS PAST PENGUINS

PITTSBURGH: Tomas Tatar and Thomas Vanek scored early in the third period to help Detroit skate past Pittsburgh at PPG Paints Arena. The Red Wings have won two games in a row following a five-game losing streak. They have beaten the defending Stanley Cup champions twice this season despite languishing at or near the bottom of the Eastern Conference. The loss ended a Pittsburgh string of nine games in a row with at least one point. They became the last team to lose in regulation since the All-Star break.

Blackhawks, Sabres 1

Patrick Kane had a goal and an assist to help lead the Chicago Blackhawks to a 5-1 win over the Buffalo Sabres. Kane reached 20 goals on the season, making him the first American-born player to ever score 20 or more goals in each of his first 10 seasons, according to STATS, LLC.

Ryan Hartman, Marian Hossa, Jonathan Toews and Artem Anisimov also scored for the Blackhawks, who dominated the Sabres from start to finish. Scott Darling made 25 saves. Kane has 14 points (eight goals, six assists) in 13 career games against the Sabres. Chicago (36-18-5) increased its winning streak against Buffalo to 11 games. Evander Kane scored for the Sabres, who had a three-game win streak end. Robin Lehner made 32 saves.

Rangers 2, Capitals 1

Mats Zuccarello's 12th goal of the season midway through the third period lifted New York past Washington.

Ryan McDonagh also scored and Henrik Lundqvist picked up the win after stopping 31 shots, including one from Evgeny Kuznetsov on the doorstep in the final minute. Alex Ovechkin scored his 27th goal of the season

for the Capitals. Backup goaltender Philipp Grubauer was strong in net but took the loss despite 28 saves.

Jets 3, Senators 2

Winnipeg scored two goals in the first period, then hung on to defeat Ottawa at Canadian Tire Centre. Dustin Byfuglien, Mathieu Perrault and Josh Morrissey scored the Jets' goals, while Mark Scheifele and Patrik Laine had two assists apiece. Mark Stone and Zack Smith had replied for the Senators, who got a pair of assists from Erik Karlsson.

Connor Hellebuyck made 32 saves for his second win of the weekend for the Jets. Mike

Condon stopped 17 shots in the Ottawa net.

Islanders 6, Devils 4

John Tavares and Jason Chimera scored in the first minute of the third period and New York prepared for the longest road trip in franchise history by holding off New Jersey at Barclays Center. Ryan Strome scored twice and Casey Cizikas and Andrew Ladd added a goal apiece for the Islanders. Miles Wood, Kyle Palmieri, Steven Santini and Taylor Hall each scored a goal for the Devils.

Predators 4, Blue Jackets 3

Mattias Ekholm's tiebreaking goal at 9:09 of

the third period lifted Nashville over Columbus at Nationwide Arena. Ryan Ellis, Kevin Fiala and Calle Jarnkrok also scored for the Predators, who got two assists apiece from P.K. Subban and James Neal. Juse Saros made 35 saves in the win.

Zach Werenski, Brandon Saad and Oliver Bjorkstrand scored for the Blue Jackets. Werenski, Alexander Wennberg and Seth Jones each had two assists, and Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 28 shots.

Maple Leafs 4, Hurricanes 0

Curtis McElhinney secured his first shutout as a member of Toronto in a win vs. Carolina at PNC Arena.

McElhinney, who joined the Maple Leafs last month when he was claimed off waivers from the Columbus Blue Jackets, made 37 saves in his sixth appearance with Toronto. His record is 3-3 with his new team.

Connor Brown scored twice, while Auston Matthews and Jake Gardner also found the net for Toronto, which won for just the second time in six games. Carolina goalie Cam Ward stopped 20 of 24 shots before he was replaced by Eddie Lack for the final 11-plus minutes.

Lightning 3, Avalanche 2 (OT)

Jonathan Drouin scored unassisted at 2:27 of overtime, and Tampa Bay beat Colorado.

Drouin got the winner when he stole the puck from Matt Nieto in front of Colorado's net and beat Pickard with a backhand for his 17th of the season. Ben Bishop made 27 saves, Brayden Point and Vladislav Namestnikov also had goals for Tampa Bay.

Mikko Rantanen scored early in the third period, Matt Duchene tied it in the final minute of regulation, and Calvin Pickard had 35 saves for the Avalanche.

Bruins 2, Sharks 1 (OT)

Brad Marchand scored a breakthrough goal 2:36 into overtime as Boston beat San Jose.

Patrice Bergeron won a defensive-zone draw from San Jose's Joe Thornton and Torey Krug lofted a lead pass to a breaking Marchand, who scored his team-leading 25th goal of the season. The Sharks lost for the sixth time in eight games but have picked up points in seven of those games. Boston is 4-0-0 under new coach Bruce Cassidy, and the Bruins own two victories over San Jose this month.

Ducks 1, Kings 0

John Gibson stopped 24 shots for his fifth shutout, and Josh Manson scored the only goal as Anaheim topped Los Angeles. The Ducks moved into a tie for second place in the Pacific Division with the Edmonton Oilers while giving the Kings their third consecutive loss and fifth in six games.

Manson scored 1:19 into the second period. Ryan Getzlaf stole the puck from Kings defenseman Brayden McNabb in the left corner, skated toward the left circle and passed to the onrushing Manson, who converted a wrist shot inside the right post for his second goal of the season.

Flyers 3, Canucks 2

The Flyers scored two power-play goals, Shayne Gostisbehere had three assists, and Philadelphia defeated the Vancouver Canucks 3-2 Sunday night. Wayne Simmonds, Jakub Voracek and Brayden Schenn scored for Philadelphia (28-24-7). The win snapped a two-game losing streak and was the Flyers' second victory in six games. Philadelphia is two points behind the last Eastern Conference wild-card playoff position. — Reuters

NHL results/standings

Toronto 4, Carolina 0; Chicago 5, Buffalo 1; NY Islanders 6, New Jersey 4; Nashville 4, Columbus 3; Winnipeg 3, Ottawa 2; Detroit 5, Pittsburgh 2; NY Rangers 2, Washington 1.

| Western Conference | | | | | Eastern Conference | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----|----|----|-----|-----------------------|--------|--------------|---------|---------|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Central Division | | | | | Atlantic Division | | | | | | | | |
| W | LOT | GF | GA | PTS | Montreal | Ottawa | Boston | Toronto | Florida | | | | |
| Minnesota | 39 | 13 | 6 | 195 | 133 | 84 | 31 | 20 | 6 | 156 | 152 | 68 | |
| Chicago | 36 | 18 | 5 | 172 | 151 | 77 | 30 | 23 | 6 | 159 | 156 | 66 | |
| St. Louis | 31 | 23 | 5 | 169 | 171 | 67 | 27 | 20 | 11 | 181 | 173 | 65 | |
| Nashville | 28 | 22 | 8 | 164 | 159 | 64 | 27 | 20 | 10 | 147 | 161 | 64 | |
| Winnipeg | 28 | 29 | 5 | 180 | 194 | 61 | 26 | 24 | 10 | 147 | 168 | 62 | |
| Dallas | 23 | 27 | 10 | 165 | 193 | 56 | 26 | 24 | 8 | 160 | 166 | 60 | |
| Colorado | 16 | 38 | 3 | 113 | 190 | 35 | 24 | 25 | 10 | 149 | 175 | 58 | |
| Pacific Division | | | | | Metropolitan Division | | | | | | | | |
| San Jose | 35 | 18 | 7 | 166 | 144 | 77 | Washington | 39 | 12 | 7 | 195 | 126 | 85 |
| Edmonton | 32 | 19 | 8 | 171 | 152 | 72 | Pittsburgh | 36 | 14 | 8 | 204 | 165 | 80 |
| Anaheim | 31 | 19 | 10 | 154 | 151 | 72 | Columbus | 37 | 16 | 5 | 187 | 143 | 79 |
| Calgary | 29 | 26 | 4 | 153 | 167 | 62 | NY Rangers | 38 | 19 | 1 | 196 | 152 | 77 |
| Los Angeles | 28 | 26 | 4 | 143 | 145 | 60 | NY Islanders | 27 | 21 | 10 | 174 | 174 | 64 |
| Vancouver | 26 | 28 | 6 | 142 | 172 | 58 | Philadelphia | 28 | 24 | 7 | 154 | 179 | 63 |
| Arizona | 20 | 30 | 7 | 137 | 181 | 47 | New Jersey | 25 | 24 | 10 | 138 | 170 | 60 |
| | | | | | | | Carolina | 24 | 23 | 8 | 141 | 162 | 56 |

MESSI'S 90TH MINUTE PENALTY GIVES BARCELONA 2-1 WIN

BARCELONA: Lionel Messi scored a 90th-minute penalty for his second goal of the night to give Barcelona a 2-1 win over lowly Leganes in the Spanish league on Sunday.

Messi's spot-kick, following a questionable penalty after Neymar tumbled in the area, saved Barcelona from a second demoralizing result this week after a 4-0 loss at Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League on Tuesday. Coach Luis Enrique, however, acknowledged that the match was far from uplifting for a team that is staring at elimination from European competition and is trailing Real Madrid in La Liga.

"We foresaw that it could be a complicated match given where we were coming from in the Champions League," said Luis Enrique, who has been heavily criticized for the loss at PSG. "Everything was difficult for us, and that after having scored at the start. It's clear we were lacking confidence for stretches. The game was finally decided by a penalty, but

considering how we are right now, we will take it." Leganes was clinging to a well-deserved point when Neymar stumbled over Martin Mantovani in the area. The contact was enough to secure a penalty and Messi's league-leading 19th goal of the season.

The match couldn't have started better for the hosts, when Messi tapped in Luis Suarez's cross after just four minutes. But Leganes, a modest club from Madrid that earned topflight promotion for the first time last season, never lost its poise and threatened whenever it emerged from defending its area.

Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen had to make four saves of goal-bound strikes before Leganes's Unai Lopez got one past him for the equalizer in the 71st.

"We wanted to leave here reinforced either way, with points or thanks to our showing," Leganes coach Asier Garitano said. "We didn't get the points, but I think we leave bolstered by the match. We competed well."

While Barcelona remained one point behind leader Real Madrid - which has two games in hand, few of its fans will take much solace from the drab performance against a side making its first visit to Camp Nou.

Barcelona had romped to a 5-1 victory at Leganes earlier this season, but this time around Leganes was by no means intimidated by Europe's biggest stadium. It remained disciplined in defense despite falling behind early and knew when to take its chances going forward.

Winter signing Nabil El Zhar was particularly dangerous. The attacking midfielder tested Ter Stegen three times before Miguel Guerrero cued the equalizer when he stole the ball from right back Sergi Roberto. Lopez then fired a shot past Ter Stegen after fellow substitute Darwin Machis found him arriving unmarked inside the box. "The match was a difficult one," Ter Stegen said. "It has been a complicated week. I hope these three points can lift our spirits." — AP



BARCELONA: FC Barcelona's Neymar, right, duels for the ball against Leganes' ligo Herrerin during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between FC Barcelona and Leganes at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, Spain, Sunday. — AP



LILLE, France: This file photo taken on January 11, 2017 shows people shop in Lille during France's annual winter sales period. Winter sales in France, which end today have been disappointing, experts say, due in particular to the increase of private sales. — AFP

OOREDOO KUWAIT NET PROFIT UP BY 75% Y-O-Y

CUSTOMER BASE GROWS BY 6% TO 25 MILLION • DIVIDEND OF 85 FILS RECOMMENDED

KUWAIT: National Mobile Telecommunications Company KSCP: NMTC (Ooredoo), a member of Ooredoo Group, announced yesterday its financial results for the year 2016:

Financial Highlights

- * Total customer base increased by 6 percent to 25.2 million in 2016, compared to 23.8 million in 2015.
- * Revenues for 2016 stood at KD 706.8 million, compared with KD 718.4 million for the same period in 2015, a decrease of 2 percent.
- * EBITDA for 2016 was KWD 240.2 million, compared to EBITDA of KD 250.2 million for the same period in 2015.



Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani

* The net profit attributable to NMTC in 2016 stood at KD 46.7 million compared with a Net Attributable Profit of KD 26.7 million for the same period in 2015. Good performances in the Maldives supported the increase. Additionally net profit in 2015 contained a non-cash KD 16.7 million impairment loss on investment in Tunisia due to the economic challenges in the market.

* The consolidated earnings per share was 93 fils compared to 53 fils per share earned for the same period last year.

* Ooredoo Kuwait (NMTC) acquisition of "FASTtelco", a Kuwait based ISP, to offer advanced fixed broadband and mobile services finalized in October 2016.

* Ooredoo Maldives is preparing for an IPO on the local stock exchange in 2017.

Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Chairman of the Board of Directors commented: "During the year 2016, Ooredoo consolidated its leading position across key markets, with customer base increasing 6 percent to reach more than 25 million. Ooredoo maintained a stable EBITDA of KD 240 million for the year ended 2016. In a highly competitive market, Ooredoo Kuwait cemented

its position as a leading ICT company with the acquisition of "FASTtelco", a Kuwait based ISP, through which it can expand its offer of advanced fixed broadband and mobile services. Ooredoo Kuwait delivered a 5 percent increase in Revenues and maintained a healthy EBITDA of KD 51 million. A significant development for the year, Ooredoo Kuwait deployed more LTE sites and by the end of 2016 it had successfully covered the entire populated area of Kuwait. In Algeria the 6 percent growth in our customer base was supported by successful marketing strategies, network upgrades and deployments. With the launch of 4G and continued expansion of the 3G network, Ooredoo Algeria covered a vast majority of the population by the end of the year. Due to continued currency depreciation and challenges associated with the slow-down of tourism, Ooredoo Tunisia saw a slight decrease in Revenue. Despite these challenges, we maintained our market leadership and grew our customer base by 6 percent to 8 million at the end of 2016.

In local currency terms Revenue actually increased by 4 percent year on year. Ooredoo Maldives increased Revenues by 33 percent to reach KWD 32 million and showed significant growth in profitability, EBITDA increased 56 percent to KWD 17 million in 2016. Ooredoo Maldives is well positioned to continue delivering growth as it is preparing for the public listing in 2017 on the local stock exchange. Wataniya Palestine also strengthened its market position, growing customer numbers by 10 percent number serving now more than three quarters of a million customers. Wataniya Palestine maintained profitability and delivered Revenues of KWD 25 million for the year ended 2016."

The Chairman of the Board of Directors declared that the Board decided to submit a recommendation to the AGM to distribute cash dividends to the Company Shareholders valued 85 percent of the nominal value of share, which is equivalent to 85 fils."

Review of Operations

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

Ooredoo - Kuwait

Ooredoo's customer base in Kuwait stood at 2.3 million at the end of 2016 a 3 percent increase over the previous year. Revenues for 2016 were KD 197.8 million, an increase of 5 percent compared to KD 188.1 million in 2015. EBITDA was KD 51.0 million versus EBITDA for 2015 of KD 51.3 million.

Ooredoo - Tunisia

Ooredoo's Tunisia customer base stood at 8.0 million at the end of 2016, an increase of 6 percent on the same period in 2015. The

Tunisian economy is still suffering from slow tourism and the KD results were impacted by the depreciation of the Tunisian Dinar. Revenues for 2016 were KD 142.3 million compared to revenues for the same period in 2015 of KD 149.0 million. However, in local currency terms revenue increased by 4 percent. EBITDA

significantly compared with the same period last year, impacting the results reported in KD. Revenues for 2016 were KD 309.8 million compared to revenues of KD 332.5 million for the same period in 2015. Revenue in Algerian dinar terms increased slightly (+1 percent). EBITDA for 2016 was KD 108.5 million, a

KD 25.4 million, an increase of 2 percent compared to KD 25.1 million for the same period in 2015. EBITDA for 2016 was KD 6.6 million compared to an EBITDA of KD 6.5 million for 2015.

Ooredoo - Maldives

At the end of 2016 Maldives total customer



| | Quarterly Analysis | | | Full Year Analysis | | |
|--|--------------------|---------|----------|--------------------|-------|----------|
| | Q4 2016 | Q4 2015 | % change | 2016 | 2015 | % change |
| Consolidated Revenue (KD m) | 173.9 | 170.5 | 2% | 706.8 | 718.4 | -2% |
| EBITDA (KD m) | 59.1 | 58.1 | 2% | 240.2 | 250.2 | -4% |
| EBITDA margin (%) | 34% | 34% | - | 34% | 35% | - |
| Net Profit attributable to NMTC (KD m) | 14.5 | (1.4) | - | 46.7 | 26.7 | 75% |
| Consolidated Customers (m) | 25.2 | 23.3 | 8% | 25.2 | 23.8 | 6% |

was KD 57.0 million compared to KD 61.6 million for the same period in 2015.

Ooredoo - Algeria

Ooredoo's customer base in Algeria at the end of 2016 was 13.8 million customers, an increase of 6 percent compared with the same period in 2015. The Algerian dinar depreciated

decrease of 11 percent on KD 121.8 million for the same period in 2015.

Wataniya - Palestine

The total customer base for Wataniya Mobile Palestine at the end of 2016 was 0.8 million, an increase of 10 percent from the same period in 2015. Revenues for 2016 were

base stood at 0.4 million, an increase of 14 percent from the same period in 2015. Revenues for 2016 were KD 31.6 million, an increase of 33 percent compared to KD 23.8 million for the same period in 2015. EBITDA for 2016 was KD 17.1 million, an increase of 56 percent compared to an EBITDA of KD 11.0 million for the same period in 2015.

NBK CAPITAL ACTS AS GLOBAL COORDINATOR FOR EQUATE SUKUK

KUWAIT: Watani Investment Co K.S.C.C. (NBK Capital) acted as Global Coordinator and Joint Arranger in the establishment of Equate Sukuk SPC Limited's (EQUATE SPC) \$2.0 billion Trust Certificate (Sukuk) Issuance Program and its debut \$500 million 7-year Sukuk offering, maturing in February 2024. EQUATE SPC is a wholly owned subsidiary of EQUATE Petrochemical Co K.S.C.C. (together with The Kuwait

international debt capital markets issuance, with their first time being their debut \$2.25 billion rule 144A/ Reg S dual-series bond offering in November 2016.

NBK Capital, Citigroup Global Markets Limited, HSBC Bank plc, JP Morgan Securities plc and KFH Capital Investment Company KSCC acted as Global Coordinators. NBK Capital, Citigroup Global Markets Limited, HSBC Bank plc, JP Morgan Securities plc, KFH Capital Investment Company KSCC, MUFG Securities EMEA plc, Mizuho International plc, National Bank of Abu Dhabi P.J.S.C. and SMBC Nikko Capital Markets Limited acted as Joint Arrangers. The issuance was well received globally by a diversity of both Islamic and conventional investors

including fund managers, government institutions/pension funds, financial intuitions and insurance companies, with an over-subscription rate of 7.4x times and a global order book exceeding \$3.7 billion. The issuance proceeds will be to refinance EQUATE Group's existing debt.

Mohammad Husain, EQUATE Group's Chief Executive Officer commented: "We are very proud of our debut Sukuk issuance which marks our second successful transaction in the global debt capital markets. We are especially proud of the strong investor reception, which is a true testament to the quality of EQUATE Group's credit." Faisal Al-Hamad, NBK Capital's Chief Executive Officer added: "We are incredibly honored to have advised EQUATE Group on

both of its debt capital markets issuances. The overwhelming demand from investors in Kuwait reflects on the importance of the Kuwaiti market in supporting both regional and global issuances. Furthermore, the successful execution of two landmark issuances for EQUATE further recognizes the EQUATE brand name as a reputable issuer on a global perspective and reflects on NBK Capital's ability to execute global transactions at the highest quality."

The Trust Certificates (Sukuk) have an ijara and Murabaha structure. The 7-year Senior Unsecured Sukuk were priced competitively at 100 percent of the issue price with a profit rate of 175 basis points over the 7-year mid-swap rate, returning a yield-to-maturity of 3.944 percent.



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NBK CAPITAL

Olefins Company K.S.C.C. rated "Baa2" by Moody's and "BBB+" by Standard and Poor's) (altogether "EQUATE Group"). This marks EQUATE Group's second

SCANDINAVIANS TAKE SWEEPING STEPS TO ENTER HOUSING MARKET

OSLO/STOCKHOLM/COPENHAGEN: Joakim Bakka, a 29-year-old shop worker, was so desperate to get into Norway's booming housing market that he was prepared to borrow money at 13 percent for a deposit to buy a home. It would have been risky but he felt he had no choice. Bakka, from the Norwegian city of Drammen, is not alone in considering such drastic steps.

Scandinavians are taking increasing risks on housing as prices have soared over the last decade, fuelled by low interest rates and tax perks that have encouraged people to buy homes rather than rent. Household debt levels have risen sharply, worrying governments that have tried without success to cool the market.

"Even though my partner and I have full-time jobs, we were not able to find enough cash for a deposit, so as an emergency solution, we applied for a consumer loan of 100,000 crowns (\$12,000)," Bakka told Reuters. "In the end we did not have to use it, as we managed to get a loan from a communal public bank at about 3 percent. But it was not difficult at all to get a consumer loan."

House prices show no signs of slowing. In Norway they grew 12.4 percent year-on-year in January after a record high of 12.8 percent in December. Swedish house prices rose 9 percent year-on-year in January.

In Denmark, prices of owner-occupied flats have risen between 50 and 75 percent in Copenhagen since 2012, according to mortgage lender Nykredit, compared with 37 percent outside the capital. Sofie Borbiconi, 29, is a radio host looking to buy a flat in Copenhagen. "It is crazy. When we visit flats, we have to queue in long lines to get in," she said. "You have to use unconventional measures," she added, although she preferred to keep them secret.

GROWING CONCERN

Governments are concerned. Denmark tops the OECD list of developed nations with the most household debt relative to disposable income, with Norway third and Sweden fifth. The International Monetary Fund has said Sweden's high household debt levels could stifle other areas of the economy.

"Swedish housing prices are historically high, implying downside risk to consumption, even as housing shortages lower the risk of a major decline," the IMF said in September.

Both Denmark and Sweden have seen house prices collapse before. In 2008, the global crisis punctured a Danish housing bubble, triggering a local banking crisis that wiped out over a dozen lenders. Swedish house prices fell 20 percent in two years in the early 90s, contributing to the nationalization of what is now the region's biggest lender, Nordea, which has since been re-privatized.

While high prices are encouraging new homebuilding in some parts of Scandinavia, easing upward pressure on prices, the shortage of housing, notably in Sweden, and high demand due to immigration is expected to keep prices high.

"What is special in Sweden is that we have negative rates and very, very strong growth. We are one of the few countries that has that or has ever had that," Erik ThedEen, head of the Swedish Financial Supervisory Authority, told Swedish radio last week. "This creates what I have called a greenhouse for growing debt."

CALMING MEASURES

Nevertheless governments have been trying to calm the market. Norway in 2015 reduced the amount of money housebuyers can borrow from banks to 85 percent from 90 percent of the purchase price.

This year the government introduced new rules, including capping borrowing at less than five times a householder's income and stipulating that buyers of second homes in Oslo must have a deposit of at least 40 percent compared to 15 percent elsewhere. In June, Sweden banned interest-only mortgages. Denmark has proposed new tax rules that should reduce swings in housing prices from 2020 onwards, something the central bank and economists have called for since a freeze on house taxes was imposed in 2001.

But the measures have had little impact. "People got very scared when the bank rules were changed last year. But now we sell flats at record prices and lots of people show up at viewings," said Fredrik Flodin, a real estate agent in Stockholm.

Norwegian home building is set to reach a 38-year high of 38,000 homes, up from a previous estimate of 33,000. Snorre Storset, the chief executive of Nordea in Norway, said some buyers were hit by rules restricting mortgages to five times their incomes. "But the underlying demand is so strong that we don't believe prices will stop rising in the short term," he told Reuters. Ultimately, raising interest rates may be the only tool left for central banks. But none of them can, partly because rates are low internationally and partly because they want to prevent their currencies from appreciating.

In Norway, the central bank expects rates to stay at their current record low of 0.50 percent, "in the period ahead" to help sustain a weak economic recovery, despite an overheating housing market.

In Sweden, the Riksbank says urgent measures are needed to cool housing prices. Still, its key deposit rate is set at a negative 0.50 percent, with more cuts possible as it fears a global recovery could be tripped up by Brexit, slower growth in Europe and a more protectionist United States. In Denmark, the central bank has left its key deposit rate at a negative 0.65 percent since February last year. Its top priority is maintaining the country's three-decade-old currency peg against the euro and so it dislikes anything that might push up the crown too much.

"Over the past year I have sold three parking spaces: one for 1,050,000 crowns, one for 900,000 crowns and one for 850,000 crowns," said Jonas Lind, a real estate agent in Stockholm. — Reuters



Khaled Fouad, Chief Investment Officer at KAMCO



Mohammad Al-Othman, Head of Alternative Investments at KAMCO

KAMCO REAL ESTATE FUND WINS 'BEST REAL ESTATE FUND, KUWAIT' AWARD

RECOGNITION FROM INTERNATIONAL FINANCE MAGAZINE

KUWAIT: KAMCO Investment Company, a leading investment company with one of the largest AUMs in the region, announced that KAMCO's Real Estate Yield Fund has been awarded the "Best Real Estate Fund - Kuwait" in 2016 from International Finance Magazine ("IFM"), a renowned financial publication that recognizes and honors individuals, as well as organizations, in the financial investment industry. The awards were presented to those who made a significant value addition to the industry through innovative products and services.

KAMCO Real Estate Yield Fund (KREYF) was selected from a pool of nominees who went through a reader and expert analysis process, followed by extensive scrutiny based on the sector, innovation, growth, sustainability and their contribution towards society.

Commenting on the award, the Chief Investment Officer of KAMCO, Khaled Fouad said, "This international recognition serves to affirm KAMCO's capabilities in delivering competitive and innovative services. The award highlights our successful approach over the past years, in appealing to a large segment of clients through delivering customized and sophisticated products, which serve the fluctuating market dynamics. Through this approach, we strive to set the standard of excellence in asset management and investment funds across the local and regional markets."

Fouad added, "Our model is based on a balanced investment policy which aims to minimize investment risks and preserve the Fund's capital through the diversification of assets across low-risk and income generating real estate opportunities. The model serves to maximize client returns and meet their investment objectives."

When commenting on the Fund's performance, Fouad said that KREYF achieved 5.33 percent returns during 2016 in comparison to 4.17 percent returns in 2015. The Fund increased by 116 basis points with a growth rate of 27.82 percent, and successfully distributed 4 percent dividends to investors in 2016 and 4.17 percent in the previous year. In terms of the Fund's size, assets under management (AUM) rose by nearly \$23 million, reaching \$63.24 million in 2016, in

comparison to \$40.50 million in 2015. Fouad further noted, "KAMCO's Alternative Investment team strives to deliver superior investment banking services which includes private equity, real estate and fixed income. Our objective is to cater to the growing demand for such services in

Kuwait by investing in and supporting companies that demonstrate strong growth opportunities. We target a wide spectrum of private equity deals in various regional and global sectors including telecom, technology, real estate, healthcare and traditional service companies."

NASHAR NAMED SAUDI ARABIA'S FIRST FEMALE COMMERCIAL BANK CEO

DUBAI: Rania Nashar was named chief executive of Samba Financial Group yesterday, becoming the first female CEO of a listed Saudi commercial bank in line with the government's economic and social reforms.

Nashar is a board member of Samba's global markets subsidiary and a Pakistani unit, and has nearly 20 years of experience in banking. Women, banned from driving in Saudi Arabia and subject to a system of male guardianship, hold few top posts in the financial sector.

But reforms which Saudi Arabia launched last year to make the economy more efficient and less reliant on oil exports include boosting the role of women in the economy.

The Saudi Stock Exchange last week appointed its first female chair, Sarah Al-Suhaimi, who became the first female chief executive of a Saudi investment bank when she took the helm of NCB Capital in 2014. The kingdom's top sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund, holds stakes in major companies and is at the centre of restructuring the economy. It is hiring Saudi women to help manage its assets, sources familiar with its operations said. Saudi Arabia's reform plans aim to have women account for 30 percent of the workforce in coming years, up from the current 22 percent. Samba is Saudi Arabia's third-largest bank by assets. — Reuters

VENEZUELA NAMES NEW MINING MINISTER

CARACAS: Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro named a new mining minister on Sunday, the latest of several appointments as he seeks to strengthen his position against opposition pressure to quit.

Announcing the appointment of Jorge Arreaza, 43, in a television broadcast, Maduro recalled that developing mining was part of his emergency plan to reboot the stricken economy.

Arreaza is a son-in-law of Maduro's late predecessor Hugo Chavez, father of the "socialist revolution" that is now floundering in crisis.

Venezuelans are suffering shortages of food and medicine as prices for the country's crucial oil exports have fallen. Fending off opposition pressure for a vote on removing him from office, Maduro has vowed to rescue the economy by boosting production in the countries' southern mining belt and other sectors. "Mining is one of the great sources of financing for development for the coming years," he said on Sunday. The president claimed that Venezuela is in the process of "authenticating what could be the biggest gold reserve in the world." — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

| | |
|------------------|---------|
| Japanese Yen | 2.707 |
| Indian Rupees | 4.571 |
| Pakistani Rupees | 2.920 |
| Srilankan Rupees | 2.029 |
| Nepali Rupees | 2.860 |
| Singapore Dollar | 216.710 |
| Hongkong Dollar | 3.438 |
| Bangladesh Taka | 3.845 |
| Philippine Peso | 6.105 |
| Thai Baht | 8.757 |

GCC COUNTRIES

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Saudi Riyal | 81.681 |
| Qatari Riyal | 84.128 |
| ani Riyal | 795.478 |
| Bahraini Dinar | 813.334 |
| UAE Dirham | 83.395 |

ARAB COUNTRIES

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Egyptian Pound - Cash | 23.400 |
| Egyptian Pound - Transfer | 19.394 |
| Yemen Riyal/for 1000 | 1.229 |
| Tunisian Dinar | 134.700 |
| Jordanian Dinar | 431.220 |
| Lebanese Lira/for 1000 | 2.041 |
| Syrian Lira | 2.185 |
| Morocco Dirham | 30.795 |

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| US Dollar Transfer | 306.160 |
| Euro | 326.460 |
| Sterling Pound | 381.710 |
| Canadian dollar | 234.740 |
| Turkish Lira | 84.910 |

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| Swiss Franc | 306.710 |
| Australian Dollar | 236.310 |
| US Dollar Buying | 304.900 |

GOLD

| | |
|---------|---------|
| 20 Gram | 252.410 |
| 10 Gram | 129.130 |
| 5 Gram | 65.410 |

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| US Dollar | 305.750 |
| Canadian Dolla | 234.165 |
| Sterling Pound | 380.970 |
| Euro | 326.190 |
| Swiss Frank | 306.650 |
| Bahrain Dinar | 810.520 |
| UAE Dirhams | 83.635 |
| Qatari Riyals | 84.860 |
| Saudi Riyals | 82.460 |
| Jordanian Dinar | 432.410 |
| Egyptian Pound | 19.487 |
| Sri Lankan Rupees | 2.028 |
| Indian Rupees | 4.564 |
| Pakistani Rupees | 2.916 |
| Bangladesh Taka | 3.853 |
| Philippines Peso | 6.093 |
| Cyprus pound | 167.905 |
| Japanese Yen | 3.710 |
| Syrian Pound | 2.425 |
| Nepalese Rupees | 3.850 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 69.620 |
| Chinese Yuan Renminbi | 44.950 |
| Thai Bhat | 9.725 |
| Turkish Lira | 84.620 |

Selling Rate

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| US Dollar | 305.750 |
| Canadian Dolla | 234.165 |
| Sterling Pound | 380.970 |
| Euro | 326.190 |
| Swiss Frank | 306.650 |
| Bahrain Dinar | 810.520 |
| UAE Dirhams | 83.635 |
| Qatari Riyals | 84.860 |
| Saudi Riyals | 82.460 |
| Jordanian Dinar | 432.410 |
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| Syrian Pound | 2.425 |
| Nepalese Rupees | 3.850 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 69.620 |
| Chinese Yuan Renminbi | 44.950 |
| Thai Bhat | 9.725 |
| Turkish Lira | 84.620 |

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY BUY SELL

| CURRENCY | BUY | SELL | |
|--------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| | | Europe | Australia |
| British Pound | 0.374773 | 0.384773 | |
| Czech Korune | 0.004081 | 0.016081 | |
| Danish Krone | 0.039867 | 0.044867 | |
| Euro | 0.320465 | 0.329465 | |
| Norwegian Krone | 0.032904 | 0.038104 | |
| Romanian Leu | 0.084833 | 0.084833 | |
| Slovakia | 0.009178 | 0.019178 | |
| Swedish Krona | 0.030506 | 0.035506 | |
| Swiss Franc | 0.299247 | 0.310247 | |
| Turkish Lira | 0.078565 | 0.088865 | |
| | | | |
| Australasia | | | |
| Australian Dollar | 0.227005 | 0.239005 | |
| New Zealand Dollar | 0.214804 | 0.224304 | |
| | | | |
| America | | | |
| Canadian Dollar | 0.228576 | 0.237578 | |
| Georgina Lari | 0.138253 | 0.138253 | |
| US Dollars | 0.302000 | 0.306400 | |
| US Dollars Mint | 0.302500 | 0.306400 | |
| | | | |
| Asia | | | |
| Bangladesh Taka | 0.003623 | 0.004207 | |
| Chinese Yuan | 0.043117 | 0.046617 | |
| Hong Kong Dollar | 0.037381 | 0.040131 | |
| Indian Rupee | 0.002681 | 0.004904 | |
| Indonesian Rupiah | 0.000018 | 0.000024 | |

| | | |
|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Japanese Yen | 0.002633 | 0.002813 |
| Kenyan Shilling | 0.003008 | 0.003008 |
| Korean Won | 0.000256 | 0.000271 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 0.064861 | 0.070861 |
| Nepalese Rupee | 0.002994 | 0.003164 |
| Pakistan Rupee | 0.002610 | 0.002900 |
| Philippine Peso | 0.006023 | 0.006323 |
| Sierra Leone | 0.000068 | 0.000074 |
| Singapore Dollar | 0.210922 | 0.220922 |
| South African Rand | 0.017565 | 0.026065 |
| Sri Lankan Rupee | 0.001681 | 0.002281 |
| Taiwan | 0.009673 | 0.009853 |
| Thai Baht | 0.008396 | 0.008946 |

| | | |
|------------------|----------|----------|
| Arab | | |
| Bahraini Dinar | 0.805365 | 0.813865 |
| Egyptian Pound | 0.013815 | 0.023068 |
| Iranian Riyal | 0.000085 | 0.000088 |
| Iraqi Dinar | 0.000187 | 0.000247 |
| Jordanian Dinar | 0.426072 | 0.435072 |
| Kuwaiti Dinar | 1.000000 | 1.000000 |
| Lebanese Pound | 0.000148 | 0.000248 |
| Moroccan Dirhams | 0.020147 | 0.044147 |
| Nigerian Naira | 0.001269 | 0.001904 |
| Omani Riyal | 0.789644 | 0.794324 |
| Qatar Riyal | 0.083267 | 0.084717 |
| Saudi Riyal | 0.080540 | 0.081840 |
| Syrian Pound | 0.001298 | 0.001518 |
| Tunisian Dinar | 0.130733 | 0.138733 |
| Turkish Lira | 0.078565 | 0.088865 |
| UAE Dirhams | 0.081915 | 0.083615 |
| Yemeni Riyal | 0.000995 | 0.001075 |

WANTED: A CEO WILLING TO HOLD GREEK BANKING'S 'POISONED CHALICE'

ATHENS: Wanted: A chief executive to run Greece's bank-rescue fund. Job description: work hard and pray for a miracle. Greece has failed to find a boss for its Hellenic Financial Stability Fund since July, when its three-member executive team resigned. A new CEO, offered the job in late October quit a week later. His predecessor, an interim boss, had lasted two months.

The fund, financed by eurozone and International Monetary Fund loans, has not explained its failure to find a new leader, but a source close to the recruitment process said the role was challenging and "less enticing than initially thought."

Former fund executives describe it as one of the most thankless jobs in banking. One called it a "poisoned chalice". The failure to find a new CEO means the fund lacks a strong leader to push banks to make painful reforms, such as tackling bad loans. Their huge burden of bad debt, totalling 106 billion euros (\$113 billion) or about half of all loans, inhibits them from providing credit to the shattered economy's vibrant firms. The CEO's role is to use the fund's leverage as a major investor in three of Greece's four major listed banks to help push through banking reforms designed by the European Union, the European Central Bank and IMF and to eventually divest its stakes, returning banks to private hands.

The job now comes with an annual salary of up to 270,000 euros (\$290,000), perhaps low by the international standards

of senior bank executives, but higher than two years ago when then-finance minister Yannis Varoufakis capped it at 132,000 euros. Moreover, the boss has to answer to several masters who are currently at loggerheads over the broader question of Greek reforms. The government, the central bank, the EU, ECB and European Stability Mechanism are all represented on a six-member selection panel, set up in 2010, to recruit fund executives. Athens and its key lenders are in disagreement over the terms of the latest bailout. If a resolution cannot be found by July, Greece again may face insolvency.

"At times you are the slave of 20 masters," a former fund executive said, adding that it was no job for a hard-driving chief executive accustomed to pushing through obstacles. The fund executives who discussed the job with Reuters declined to be identified. The selection panel has been trying to recruit a CEO to run the HFSF since the fund's previous three-member executive team was removed in an effort to beef up leadership, which in turn was a condition of Greece's third bailout deal with its lenders.

The source close to the selection process said the panel had studied more than 70 resumes in its latest search, which began in late December, but no suitable candidate emerged. The fund kicked off yet another search last week, advertising the job. Efforts to "give the fund a stronger role through new executive leadership proved



ATHENS: A man walks past a slogan on a wall in central Athens yesterday. Eurozone finance ministers will on February 20 seek the outline of a deal to unblock bailout cash for Greece before fraught elections across Europe endanger a quick fix. —AFP

more challenging" than envisaged, the source said of the difficulty in filling the vacancy.

PRAYING FOR A MIRACLE

The Hellenic Financial Stability Fund employs just 32 people and has total assets of around 8 billion euros, including 375 million euros in cash, based on Sept. 30 bal-

ance sheet data. It owns 40 percent of National Bank, 26.2 percent of Piraeus Bank and 11 percent of Alpha Bank, as well as a 2.4 percent holding in Eurobank.

However, the fund has lost about two-thirds of its original 25 billion euros investment, money Greece had borrowed from the EU and IMF, part of a mountain of debts for which Athens is now keen to get relief

in negotiations with its official lenders. The fund pumped the cash into banks in 2013 after an overhaul of Greek debt had forced them to slash the value of their government bond holdings. Later, they needed to raise more capital, dramatically reducing the value of the fund's stakes.

The HFSF once hoped to recoup the money, just as Washington did from its bank bailouts in the 2008-2009 financial crisis. Private investors who took part in the Greek bank rescues were given "call warrants" as sweeteners, allowing them to buy bank shares from the fund. That would have given the CEO of the fund an easy way to win back its 25 billion euros of investment. But the instruments are well out-of-the-money and due to expire by year-end. In the case of National Bank, the warrants, exercisable in June and December, carry strike prices of 78.5 and 81.1 euros. The bank's shares trade at just 0.23 euros.

Instead, the new CEO is probably going to have to hang on to the stakes and claw back whatever can be recovered of the state's investment the hard way, by pushing the banks to reform their way back to profitability. "It's safe to assume the warrants will expire worthless," said analyst Nick Koskoletos at Athens-based Eurobank.

"The HFSF has lost any chance of recouping the 25 billion euros, given the dilutions in the two rounds of recapitalization that followed. The sum will remain a part of public debt." — Reuters

KRAFT IN SWIFT REVERSAL ON UNILEVER BID, HITTING SHARES

LONDON: Kraft Heinz Co's rapid retreat from its surprise \$143 billion bid for Unilever in the face of stiff resistance from the company and politicians sent shares in the Anglo-Dutch group 8 percent lower yesterday. Kraft, which is backed by Warren Buffett and the private equity firm 3G, wanted to buy Unilever as part of its strategy to become a global consumer goods giant by buying competitors and cutting costs and jobs to drive profits.

However, the US food group had not factored in the resistance it received from Unilever Chief Executive Paul Polman, who dismissed its offer as having no financial or strategic merit, and requiring no further discussion. Britain's response was also a concern after Prime Minister Theresa May signalled she would take a more proactive approach to foreign takeovers, sources familiar with the matter said.

May, who had previously singled out Kraft's 2010 acquisition of another British household name, Cadbury Plc, as an example of a deal that should have been blocked, had indicated her government would want to examine the deal if it went ahead, according to a person familiar with the situation.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who used to work at Unilever, had also said he would examine what it would mean for the Netherlands in the "positive and the negative" sense. Unilever's London-listed shares, which jumped 13 percent to a record high when the bid was made public on Friday, fell 8 percent to give it a market value of 100 billion pounds after Kraft said in a statement on Sunday it had "amicably agreed" to withdraw its proposal.

The company's Dutch listed shares were down 7 percent and analysts at Macquarie said Unilever's stock should not give up all its gains following the approach. "Unilever's share price is still performing remarkably well as I suppose the argument that these stocks were cheap versus borrow costs is

still valid," a shareholder with one of the biggest 20 holdings in Unilever stock told Reuters. "A takeover at a later stage seems unlikely to me as Unilever will build their defenses and sharpen their focus on profitability," the shareholder added.

CULTURE CLASH

A combination of the two firms would have been the largest acquisition of a UK-based company, Thomson Reuters data showed and would have brought together some of the world's best known brands, from toothpaste to ice creams. While it would also have combined Kraft's strength in the United States with Unilever's in Europe and Asia, it would also have faced a potentially huge cultural clash. In 2013, 3G, which made its name in corporate America by orchestrating large debt-laden acquisitions and then slashing costs, teamed up with billionaire investor Buffett to acquire Heinz and then bought Kraft two years later.

It is now the second-largest shareholder in Kraft, behind Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway. Unilever feared that a merger with Kraft risked eroding the value of its brands and could impede its expansion in emerging markets, which requires more investment, people familiar with the company's thinking said.

"It was always going to be a difficult pitch to convince shareholders to relinquish their grip on Unilever, given the expectations for the company to keep churning out resilient growth in the years to come," George Salmon, Equity Analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown, said. Kraft's decision to pull the deal also removes a political headache for Prime Minister May who has been adamant that Britain should vet foreign takeovers. During her leadership campaign last year, May criticised Kraft's 2010 takeover of British chocolate maker Cadbury, following which it reneged on an earlier promise to keep a factory in south-west England open. — Reuters



BRUSSELS: (From left) German Ambassador Ruediger Luedeking, Finance Minister Johan Van Overtveldt, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schauble, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Employment, Economy and Consumer Affairs Kris Peeters and European Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans attend a conference organized by the Federation of Enterprises in Belgium (FEB/VBO), in Brussels yesterday. — AFP

EUROZONE TRIES TO AVOID ANOTHER GREEK DEADLOCK

BROAD AGREEMENT ON ATHENS' REFORM COURSE

BRUSSELS: The eurozone's 19 finance ministers will be looking to defuse the risk of another Greek crisis as they try to agree yesterday on what reforms Greece must still take to qualify for more loans.

Hopes of an imminent breakthrough that will unlock further bailout funds for the cash-strapped country were dashed in recent weeks due to disagreements between Greece and its creditors. Greece remains dependent on bailout loans from its partners in the eurozone to pay its debts. It has a debt repayment hump in July, and without new loans, it faces bankruptcy and a potential exit from the euro. Ahead of the meeting in Brussels, the eurozone's top official, Jeroen Dijsselbloem, said he hoped there will be agreement on sending back to Athens representatives from the institutions overseeing Greece's bailout back to Athens. Once there discussions will commence on what further reforms Greece will have to undertake in order to get its hands on more bailout money.

"We've had intense talks with the institutions and the Greek government to clear the ground for the mission to return to Athens and in the

eurogroup we will discuss whether we've come to that point," he said. "Because that is my goal: to get the mission back in Athens on the ground to talk about all the difficult stuff that needs to be sorted out."

As part of its most recent bailout agreement struck in July 2015, Greece committed to a series of economic reforms in return for the loans. There are a number of reforms still to be carried out, including to pensions, tax and the labor market. Agreeing on the next set of reforms will unlock the next batch of funds and potentially trigger the involvement of the International Monetary Fund in the Greek bailout program.

The IMF was meant contribute to the latest bailout program but has held off, saying that Greece's debt is unsustainable and the eurozone needs to write off some of its loans. The Europeans are hesitant, leaving the IMF's position in the balance. "The position of the IMF remains unchanged under the principle that they formally want to join this program, while informally, they continued to be involved," Dijsselbloem said. "It is still their intention but

their condition is that there are enough substantive reforms - not necessarily cuts, but reforms - so that things improve in Greece."

The stakes could hardly be higher as the last such crisis, which followed Tsipras's election, nearly saw Athens expelled from the euro. A possible default by Athens is still some months off but it needs enough money to repay seven billion euros in debt in July.

The elections in Europe are adding to the pressure, with Dijsselbloem himself at risk of losing his job if the polls are right about his party's position. Anti-EU candidates are leading polls in those elections and officials worry that Greece's future could get ensnared in the campaigning. "Absent political agreement on Monday, a deal ... is likely to drift until April or indeed May," said Mujtaba Rahman, an analyst at the Eurasia group risk consultancy. The delay would worry already jittery markets. Greece's two-year borrowing rates have risen as high as 10 percent in recent weeks while France has also come under some pressure as investors seek safety in German assets. — Agencies



A Heinz ketchup sign is shown on the side of the Senator John Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh. — AP

JAPAN RETURNS TO TRADE DEFICIT IN JANUARY

TOKYO: Japan logged its first trade deficit in five months in January, official data showed yesterday, as higher energy prices overwhelmed slower growth in exports due to the lunar new year.

The country routinely falls into deficit in January due to the lunar new year celebrations in key trade partners such as China, which sees an extended holiday. But Yuichi Kodama, chief economist at Meiji Yasuda Life Insurance Co in Tokyo, said that the export weakness would not last. "Exports are still on the recovery track," he told Bloomberg News. "The global economy is steadily recovering. There's no change to the view that Japan's economy is driven by external demand while domestic demand is remaining weak."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been trying to kickstart growth for more than four years with a policy of spending, central bank policy easing and structural reform, but the outcome has been mostly disappointing. Inflation and consumer spending are weak, and companies have been reluctant to boost wages in the world's third-largest economy.

For January, the trade deficit came to 1.08 trillion yen (\$9.6 billion), expanding 67.8 percent from the same month a year ago. The deficit was the first since

August and marked a sharp reversal from a surplus of 640 billion yen in December.

Japan's China-bound exports increased 3.1 percent in January, sharply lower than the 12.4-percent jump seen in December. Imports from China, meanwhile, rose 7.2 percent, resulting in Japan recording its 59th straight monthly deficit against Asia's largest economy. Overall exports rose 1.3 percent, falling short of the market expectation for a five-percent rise, which was the median estimate of economists surveyed by Bloomberg.

Imports increased 8.5 percent, the first rise in more than two years, and came in higher than the market expectation of a 4.8-percent rise. Increases in commodity prices, triggered by oil producers' agreement last year to reduce production, also boosted energy bills for Japan, which depends mostly on imports from the Middle East. The yen's relative strength compared with a year ago was also seen weighing on Japanese exports.

Japan's exports to the United States fell 6.6 percent, led by weaker automobile and semiconductor shipments, while imports rose 11.9 percent, driven largely by gas and grains. Asia-bound exports rose 6.0 percent, led by steel, ships and auto parts. — AFP

HEDGE FUNDS BET BIG ON OIL AS OPEC GIVES A FREE PUT OPTION

LONDON: Hedge funds and other money managers have amassed a very large bullish position in crude oil futures and options without so far having much impact on oil prices. Hedge funds raised their combined net long position in the three main derivative contracts linked to Brent and WTI by another 51 million barrels in the week to Feb 14.

Funds now hold a net long position equivalent to a record 903 million barrels of oil, according to an analysis of records published by regulators and exchanges. The combined net long position has a notional valuation of more than +ACQ-49 billion, which is the highest since July 2014. Hedge funds hold more than 9.5 long positions for every 1 short position in Brent and WTI combined, the highest ratio since May 2014.

Fund managers now have the most bullish view on oil since the first half of 2014, when Libya's exports were nearly halted by civil war and Islamic State fighters were racing across northern Iraq.

DOLLARS AND BARRELS

The scale of the net long position is puzzling and raises important questions about how it will eventually unwind. Fund managers have been able to increase their bullish bets with almost no distur-

bance to the market price of crude. Volatility has been most remarkable by its absence.

Funds have increased their net long position by 107 million barrels since Dec. 13 while prices have traded sideways in a narrow range of around +ACQ-55.50 +ACQ-1.25 per barrel.

Oil prices have been steady at around the +ACQ-55 level most energy professionals expected would be the average for the year at the start of 2017. The accumulation of a large long or short position by fund managers has normally been the harbinger of a sharp reversal in oil prices when it unwinds. So the massive net long position has triggered a heated debate about whether hedge fund managers are fully invested yet or have the potential to increase their exposure even further.

The record net position in barrels and high ratio of long to short positions both indicate the position may already have become stretched. But that has not stopped hedge fund managers from continuing to raise their combined position in four of the last six weeks. And while the notional value of the net long position has more than doubled from a recent low of +ACQ-20 billion in the middle of November it remains well below the peak of +ACQ-69 billion reported in July 2014. The halving of oil prices since

the mid-2014 means fund managers can run a net position twice as large in barrel terms for the same commitment of capital. Some analysts therefore insist funds still have scope to increase their exposure significantly in the weeks and months ahead. But that raises questions about whether the very large hedge fund position in mid-2014, immediately before the biggest slump in prices for 30 years, is the right baseline for comparison.

FLIGHTY AND STICKY MONEY

There have been suggestions that much of the increase in net long positions comes from pension funds and hedge funds pursuing inflation-linked macro strategies rather than specialist commodity funds and trend followers. Capital committed by pension funds and macro funds may be more sticky and less prone to abrupt reversals than commitments from commodity specialists and trend chasers. But there is no way to identify the different types of money managers separately in the published data from regulators and exchanges. There is no way to prove or disprove the hypothesis that the increase in net long positions is from sticky pension funds and macro tourists rather than flight-prone commodity funds. — Reuters

EUROPEAN STOCK MARKETS CLIMB BUT UNILEVER SAGS

LONDON: European stock markets rose yesterday, with gains in London capped by a sharp drop in the share price of Unilever following the collapse of a proposed mega-merger. Unilever shed 6.6 percent on London's benchmark FTSE 100 index to trade at £35.47 in morning deals.

Over the weekend, US food giant Kraft Heinz dropped a bid to buy Unilever just days after the Dutch-British consumer goods group rejected a \$143-billion buyout offer. "Although the Kraft Heinz deal for Unilever met a very quick end, the market has been quick to embrace the wider possibility of future potential mergers and acquisitions, which is giving equity markets a boost," said Rebecca O'Keefe, head of investment at stockbroker Interactive Investor.

Unilever's share price had surged 14 percent on news of a possible deal, while Kraft closed Friday with a gain of nearly 11 percent. Offsetting yesterday's losses for Unilever was a jump of 5.7 percent to 256.20 pence for shares in Royal Bank of Scotland. The British government late on Friday proposed plans for the bailed-out RBS to fund initiatives worth £750 million to improve competition in the sector, in order to meet its rescue conditions.

"RBS shares jumped... after it confirmed the EU is looking at alternatives to forcing the troubled lender to selling off around 300 Williams & Glyn brand branches," said Neil Wilson, senior market analyst at traders ETX Capital. Rolls-Royce meanwhile won more than 4.0 percent after a broker upgrade from Goldman Sachs, traders said.

In Asia yesterday, Shanghai's main stocks index won more than one percent by the close, with traders buoyed by reports that China's official pension funds may start investing.

Wall Street's strong performance last week continued to reverberate after US stocks hit new highs

Friday for the sixth time in seven sessions.

US markets were closed yesterday for the Presidents' Day holiday. In Tokyo, stocks overcame early losses to end modestly higher as yen weakness prompted late bargain-hunting. Shanghai gained 1.18 percent after a Chinese media report that a first tranche of investment into China's stocks by official pension funds was expected as early as this week. "This is great news for the mainland Chinese market. Investor confidence and trading enthusiasm was fired by this," Yingda Securities' chief economist Li Daxiao told AFP. Retail conglomerate Shanghai Bailian Group surged by its 10 percent daily limit to 17.82 yuan on Monday after the announcement of a tie-up with e-commerce giant Alibaba.

Shanghai stocks climb

Shanghai stocks closed more than one percent



TOKYO: People walk by an electronic stock board of a securities firm in Tokyo yesterday. Asian stocks were mixed in early trading yesterday as investors looked for fresh leads while they awaited economic and corporate earnings reports and Fed meeting minutes due out this week. — AP

| Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|--------------|----------|----------|--|
| Monday 20 February 2017 | | | | | | |
| Index | Change | Closing | Last Closing | High | Low | |
| Price Index | ▼ -11.10 | 6,779.83 | 6,790.93 | 6,798.18 | 6,756.74 | |
| Weighted Index | ▼ -2.79 | 423.99 | 426.78 | 426.75 | 422.96 | |
| KSX 15 | ▼ -7.72 | 961.83 | 969.55 | 969.53 | 960.26 | |

| Security | High | Low | Volume | Value (KD) | Trades | Last | Change |
|----------------------|------|------|------------------|----------------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| MARIN | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 63 | ▼ 0.0 |
| IFS | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 426 | ▼ 0.0 |
| NAPECO | 820 | 820 | 1,500 | 820 | 1 | 820 | ▼ 0.0 |
| ENERGYH | 45.0 | 42.5 | 605,822 | 26,382 | 34 | 44.5 | ▼ 0.5 |
| GPI | 54 | 52 | 2,468,810 | 129,950 | 76 | 52 | ▼ 2.0 |
| ABAR | 96 | 92 | 36,011 | 3,607 | 8 | 92 | ▼ 1.0 |
| Oil & Gas | | | 3,113,643 | 160,760 | 119 | 966.94 | ▼ 7.43 |

| Security | High | Low | Volume | Value (KD) | Trades | Last | Change |
|------------------------|------|-----|------------------|------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| KFOUC | 345 | 335 | 255,000 | 87,300 | 11 | 345 | ▲ 25.0 |
| BPCC | 590 | 580 | 533,995 | 309,721 | 20 | 580 | ▼ 0.0 |
| ALKOUT | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 790 | ▼ 0.0 |
| ALQURAIN | 325 | 320 | 2,276,326 | 736,765 | 60 | 325 | ▲ 5.0 |
| Basic Materials | | | 3,065,321 | 1,133,785 | 91 | 1335.01 | ▲ 28.69 |

| Security | High | Low | Volume | Value (KD) | Trades | Last | Change |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| KCEM | 495 | 495 | 15,656 | 7,750 | 1 | 495 | ▲ 10.0 |
| CABLE | 590 | 570 | 576,940 | 335,259 | 67 | 580 | ▲ 10.0 |
| SHIP | 230 | 220 | 70,413 | 15,755 | 10 | 230 | ▼ 0.0 |
| PCEM | 1,080 | 1,080 | 80,250 | 86,670 | 12 | 1,080 | ▼ 0.0 |
| PAPER | 460 | 450 | 15,395 | 7,052 | 5 | 460 | ▲ 25.0 |
| MRC | 87 | 87 | 35,000 | 3,045 | 4 | 87 | ▼ 5.0 |
| ACICO | 315 | 310 | 96,850 | 30,481 | 10 | 310 | ▼ 10.0 |
| GGMC | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 325 | ▼ 0.0 |
| HCC | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 170 | ▼ 0.0 |
| KIBMC | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 180 | ▼ 0.0 |
| NOCIM | 216 | 216 | 49,453 | 10,682 | 4 | 216 | ▼ 0.0 |
| EQUIPMENT | 64 | 63 | 732,983 | 46,675 | 28 | 64 | ▼ 1.0 |
| NCCI | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | ▼ 0.0 |
| GYPBUM | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 95 | ▼ 0.0 |
| SALBOOKH | 76 | 76 | 94,550 | 7,186 | 7 | 76 | ▼ 0.0 |
| ASLY | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 610 | ▼ 0.0 |
| EDU | 210 | 200 | 2,450 | 511 | 4 | 204 | ▲ 1.0 |
| CLEANING | 55 | 54 | 1,270,100 | 69,790 | 34 | 55 | ▼ 1.0 |
| KIL | 70 | 68 | 1,133,928 | 78,040 | 36 | 69 | ▼ 1.0 |
| KCPK | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 198 | ▼ 0.0 |
| HUMANSOFT | 3,100 | 3,090 | 1,100 | 3,370 | 2 | 3,060 | ▼ 0.0 |
| NAFAS | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 290 | ▼ 0.0 |
| GFC | 48.0 | 46.0 | 612,722 | 28,800 | 40 | 48.0 | ▲ 2.5 |
| MAYADEEN | 35.5 | 33.5 | 13,614,314 | 470,128 | 156 | 34.0 | ▼ 8.5 |
| COC | 500 | 500 | 500 | 250 | 1 | 500 | ▼ 0.0 |
| MTCC | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 56 | ▼ 0.0 |
| UPAC | 620 | 770 | 388 | 299 | 2 | 820 | ▼ 0.0 |
| ALAFK | 255 | 255 | 91,111 | 23,233 | 4 | 255 | ▼ 0.0 |
| MUBARRAD | 74 | 73 | 16,301 | 1,200 | 5 | 74 | ▼ 0.0 |
| LOGISTICS | 76 | 74 | 2,341,823 | 175,231 | 59 | 76 | ▲ 1.0 |
| SCEM | 86 | 85 | 252,911 | 21,620 | 8 | 86 | ▼ 1.0 |
| GCEN | 52 | 49 | 2,967,188 | 268,524 | 63 | 51 | ▼ 0.0 |
| QIC | 87 | 87 | 16,552 | 1,440 | 1 | 87 | ▼ 4.0 |
| FCEN | 89 | 88 | 416,150 | 36,829 | 11 | 88 | ▼ 0.0 |
| RKWC | 102 | 99 | 51,650 | 5,121 | 5 | 99 | ▼ 1.0 |
| SPEC | 98 | 93 | 966,630 | 95,477 | 37 | 96 | ▼ 2.0 |
| Industrials | | | 25,543,308 | 1,830,788 | 616 | 1519.42 | ▲ 2.30 |

| Security | High | Low | Volume | Value (KD) | Trades | Last | Change |
|-----------------------|------|-----|------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|---------------|
| KSH | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 180 | ▼ 0.0 |
| NSH | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 54 | ▼ 0.0 |
| PAPOC | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 190 | ▼ 0.0 |
| CATL | 224 | 216 | 17,500 | 3,786 | 9 | 224 | ▲ 1.0 |
| DANAH | 90 | 88 | 1,594,902 | 140,814 | 56 | 90 | ▲ 8.0 |
| FOOD | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,520 | ▼ 0.0 |
| Consumer Goods | | | 1,612,462 | 144,601 | 65 | 1138.18 | ▲ 7.05 |

| Security | High | Low | Volume | Value (KD) | Trades | Last | Change |
|--------------------|------|-----|----------|------------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| MHC | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 250 | ▼ 0.0 |
| ATC | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 920 | ▼ 0.0 |
| YIACO | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 290 | ▼ 0.0 |
| Health Care | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1225.37 | ▼ 0.00 |

| Security | High | Low | Volume | Value (KD) | Trades | Last | Change |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|------------------|----------------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| KCIN | 1,400 | 1,400 | 50 | 70 | 1 | 1,400 | ▲ 20 |
| KHOT | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 236 | ▼ 0.0 |
| SULTAN | 80 | 77 | 59,575 | 4,780 | 8 | 80 | ▲ 1 |
| CABLETV | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 47.5 | ▼ 0.0 |
| EYAS | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 385 | ▼ 0.0 |
| IFHR | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 192 | ▼ 0.0 |
| OLULAFUEL | 126 | 122 | 121,338 | 15,110 | 24 | 124 | ▼ 2 |
| MUNTATAHED | 88 | 87 | 501,809 | 81,113 | 15 | 87 | ▼ 1 |
| JAZEERA | 630 | 610 | 9,000 | 5,580 | 5 | 610 | ▼ 20 |
| SOOR | 126 | 122 | 101,273 | 12,490 | 22 | 124 | ▼ 0 |
| FUTUREKID | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 120 | ▼ 0.0 |
| ALRAI | 176 | 174 | 192,145 | 33,490 | 15 | 176 | ▼ 0 |
| ZIMAR | 68 | 66 | 1,151,322 | 77,322 | 59 | 66 | ▼ 2 |
| Mazzan | 950 | 950 | 81,895 | 77,800 | 4 | 950 | ▼ 10 |
| Consumer Services | | | 2,648,467 | 367,485 | 153 | 981.17 | ▼ 4.80 |

| Security | High | Low | Volume | Value (KD) | Trades | Last | Change |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------------------|------------------|------------|---------------|----------------|
| ZAIN | 500 | 480 | 15,705,705 | 7,728,208 | 319 | 480 | ▼ 15 |
| COREDOO | 1,240 | 1,200 | 47,808 | 57,711 | 25 | 1,220 | ▼ 40 |
| HITSTELEC | 59 | 57 | 3,262,752 | 193,823 | 83 | 59 | ▼ 0 |
| VIVA | 850 | 830 | 147,475 | 124,054 | 62 | 840 | ▼ 10 |
| Telecommunications | | | 19,253,544 | 8,103,096 | 489 | 967.64 | ▼ 11.34 |

| Security | High | Low | Volume | Value (KD) | Trades | Last | Change |
|--------------|------|-----|-------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| NBK | 740 | 730 | 865,278 | 632,653 | 32 | 730 | ▼ 0 |
| GBK | 250 | 248 | 1,370,791 | 341,865 | 24 | 248 | ▼ 2 |
| CBK | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 500 | ▼ 0 |
| ABK | 305 | 300 | 245,000 | 74,425 | 9 | 305 | ▼ 0 |
| ALMUTAHED | 440 | 430 | 53,620 | 23,317 | 10 | 435 | ▼ 5 |
| KIB | 250 | 240 | 10,471,520 | 2,555,252 | 256 | 244 | ▼ 6 |
| BURG | 320 | 315 | 593,391 | 188,707 | 21 | 320 | ▼ 0 |
| KFIN | 630 | 610 | 4,252,662 | 2,636,654 | 129 | 620 | ▼ 10 |
| BOUBRYAN | 415 | 410 | 239,497 | 98,210 | 30 | 410 | ▼ 0 |
| AUB | 230 | 228 | 754,000 | 172,024 | 21 | 230 | ▼ 0 |
| ITHMR | 64 | 60 | 24,223,450 | 1,513,227 | 397 | 63 | ▼ 0 |
| WARBANK | 275 | 270 | 4,314,020 | 1,194,686 | 193 | 275 | ▲ 5 |
| Banks | | | 47,363,259 | 9,421,020 | 1,122 | 979.48 | ▼ 3.53 |

| Security | High | Low | Volume | Value (KD) | Trades | Last | Change |
|------------------|------|-----|------------------|---------------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| KINS | 315 | 315 | 270 | 85 | 2 | 315 | ▲ 10 |
| GINS | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 600 | ▼ 0.0 |
| AINS | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 500 | ▼ 0.0 |
| WINS | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 190 | ▼ 0.0 |
| KLUWAIRE | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 186 | ▼ 0.0 |
| FTI | 74 | 64 | 1,026,460 | 71,963 | 92 | 70 | ▲ 1.0 |
| WETHAQ | 81 | 80 | 145,585 | 8,740 | 9 | 81 | ▲ 1.0 |
| BKWT | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 355 | ▼ 0.0 |
| Insurance | | | 1,172,315 | 80,788 | 103 | 1167.44 | ▲ 11.33 |

| Security | High | Low | Volume | Value (KD) | Trades | Last | Change |
|-----------|------|------|------------|------------|--------|------|--------|
| SOKOLK | 52 | 50 | 4648336 | 235,533 | 97 | 50 | ▼ 2.0 |
| KRE | 77 | 77 | 906,000 | 69,993 | 24 | 77 | ▼ 0.0 |
| URC | 108 | 100 | 142,158 | 14,612 | 11 | 108 | ▲ 2.0 |
| NRE | 114 | 112 | 2,122,085 | 240,032 | 62 | 114 | ▼ 2.0 |
| SRE | 400 | 390 | 41,980 | 16,382 | 3 | 390 | ▼ 0.0 |
| TAM | 460 | 445 | 11,100 | 4,941 | 4 | 460 | ▼ 0.0 |
| AREEC | 184 | 182 | 54,212 | 9,921 | 5 | 182 | ▼ 0.0 |
| MASALEH | 53 | 49.5 | 304,724 | 15,222 | 25 | 53 | ▼ 1.0 |
| ARABREC | 48.5 | 47.0 | 14,839,259 | 696,321 | 304 | 47.0 | ▼ 2.0 |
| ERESCO | 48.5 | 48.0 | 263,400 | 12,682 | 16 | 48.0 | ▼ 0.5 |
| MABANE | 840 | 840 | 159,265 | 133,783 | 9 | 840 | ▼ 0.0 |
| INAJZZAT | 84 | 82 | 102,000 | 8,368 | 3 | 82 | ▼ 2.0 |
| INVESTORS | 31.5 | 30.5 | 14,499,289 | 451,392 | 180 | 30.5 | ▼ 0.5 |
| IRC | 38.5 | 34.5 | 5,639,759 | 213,456 | 110 | 38.5 | ▲ 2.5 |
| ALTUARIA | 87 | 85 | 1,350,987 | 11 | | | |

ETIHAD AIRWAYS SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH KENYA AIRWAYS

ABU DHABI: Etihad Airways Engineering has signed an agreement with Kenya Airways to perform mandatory checks on its Boeing 787-8 fleet. This is part of an integration program for the newest additions to the airline's fleet.

The first of six scheduled Boeing 787 C-checks begins this month, with the last one planned for October 2017. The airline is also planning a number of product and reliability improvement modifications to systems and components during these heavy maintenance checks.

Jeff Wilkinson, Chief Executive Officer, Etihad Airways Engineering, said: "We are pleased to support Kenya Airways in optimising its fleet performance and building its technical know-how through our expanding Boeing 787 heavy maintenance capabilities."

Martyn Haines, Kenya Airways Technical Director, said: "We will use this opportunity to upscale and retool some of our technical department, who will be onsite to provide oversight of all work being done. The agreement also opens up other collaborative opportunities including training programs."

"We have an ongoing maintenance program of small and large checks across our other fleets, with all of these scheduled for completion within our maintenance facility." Etihad Airways Engineering is the largest commercial aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services provider in the Middle East and has served more than 100 airlines and aviation operators from around the world. The company was named MRO Service Provider of the Year - Middle East at the 2016 Aviation Business Awards.

Etihad Aviation Group (EAG) is a diversified global aviation and travel group comprising four business divisions - Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, Etihad Airways Engineering, Hala Group and Airline Equity Partners. The group has minority investments in seven airlines: airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Alitalia, Jet Airways, Virgin Australia, and Swiss-based Darwin Airline, trading as Etihad Regional.

From its Abu Dhabi base, Etihad Airways flies to, or has announced plans to serve, more than 110 passenger and cargo destinations in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas. The airline has a fleet of over 120 Airbus and Boeing aircraft, with 204 aircraft on firm order, including 71 Boeing 787s, 25 Boeing 777Xs, 62 Airbus A350s and 10 Airbus A380s. For more information, please visit: etihad.com.

CHINA'S GEELY TO BID FOR MALAYSIA'S AILING PROTON

BEIJING: Chinese automaker Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co is expected to bid as early as this week for a strategic partnership with struggling Malaysian carmaker Proton Holdings Bhd, two people familiar with the bidding process told Reuters.

As part of its pitch following discussions with Proton's owner, Malaysian conglomerate DRB-Hicom Bhd, Hangzhou-based Geely, which owns Sweden's Volvo Car Group, is expected to offer Proton some of the latest vehicle technologies it has developed with Volvo's input.

DRB-Hicom said earlier this month it was waiting for prospective foreign car makers to submit bids for a strategic partnership. Proton, founded in 1983 by former Malaysian premier Mahathir Mohamad, received 1.5 billion ringgit (\$338.2 million) in government aid a year ago on the condition that it implement a turnaround plan and seek a foreign partner to help its research and development.

Other potential bidders have included Peugeot maker PSA, Japan's Suzuki Motor Corp and French car maker Renault SA. In response to Reuters requests for comment, Mahmood Razak, DRB-Hicom's head of strategic communications, said: "We have nothing new to say," noting a previous statement about it being a complex process. It has said it expects to announce a decision in the first half of this year.

"We are evaluating the bids received. No disclosures until we have selected a FSP (foreign strategic partner)," he added. A Geely spokesman declined to comment. It was not clear whether Geely's pitch - part of what the sources said was the final bidding round - includes a cash offer for a stake in Proton. The

people with knowledge of the bidding said Geely is looking for at least a 51 percent stake.

Driving on the left

By offering Proton some of its own technologies, Geely hopes to help Proton's sales in right-hand-drive (RHD) markets, including Malaysia, the UK, India and Australia, the people said. The technologies include those Geely has used to engineer midsize vehicles such as its GC9 sedan and Boyue sport-utility vehicle, as well as small car technologies developed with Volvo, the people said.

Strong sales of the GC9 and the Boyue SUV helped Geely grow its China sales by 50 percent last year to 765,851 vehicles. Geely's investment would help Proton - which also owns British sports car maker Lotus - grow its sales overseas and recover some of the global presence it has lost in recent years, the people said. For Geely, a significant partnership with Proton would give the Chinese firm entry into the global (RHD) market.

"There are 8 million RHD vehicles sold every year globally," one of the individuals said. "Geely sells roughly zero RHD cars, so even if Geely cars were sold under Proton, if nothing else Geely would make a handsome license fee." "The overall plan is basically to invest in Proton to bring it back to global (sales) levels it had in the 1990s," the person added.

Geely's offer comes amid a thaw in often chilly ties between Malaysia and China. In November, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak returned from a six-day trip to China with about \$34 billion worth of deals - including an agreement to buy four Chinese naval vessels - which could help lift the economy ahead of elections due by mid-2018. — Reuters



A construction site in Lianyungang, China's Jiangsu province. Chinese banks lent more money in January alone than the annual GDP of South Africa, as borrowers rushed to take advantage of government policies intended to stimulate the economy with easy credit. — AFP

CHINA'S HUGE DEBT POSES MAJOR HEADACHE FOR CB

BANKS' LENDING IN JANUARY JUMPS

BEIJING: Chinese banks lent more money in January alone than the annual GDP of South Africa, as borrowers rushed to take advantage of government policies intended to stimulate the economy with easy credit. But the free-for-all has had unintended consequences, creating a tottering tower of unsustainable debt, with Beijing now trying to tighten monetary policy and reduce access to credit without bringing the entire edifice crashing down.

Chinese debt exceeded 270 percent of the country's GDP by the end of 2016, stoked by multiple interest rate cuts as well as the growth of the unregulated "shadow finance" credit sector which involves lending to already indebted companies. Thanks in part to the easy credit, China's economy - a key driver of global growth - expanded by 6.7 percent last year, with a construction boom and increased public spending on infrastructure.

But the world's second largest economy is now saddled with an unwieldy debt load, Andrew Fennell of ratings agency Fitch said in a January 23 note, adding that "China's stable growth reflects stimulus, not sustainability".

Standard & Poor's also warned that "reliance on credit-fueled growth poses the downside risk of a hard landing for the economy."

'The risk is immense'

The People's Bank of China (PBOC), the country's central bank, helped stimulate the out of control lending with multiple interest rate cuts between the end of 2014 and 2016, lowering the

cost of credit. The abundance of cheap cash has had unexpected consequences: the cost of garlic jumped 80 percent last year on speculation, investors poured money into bitcoin and real estate prices in some parts of the country have gone through the roof.

Last year the average price per square metre jumped 14 percent in Beijing, 38 percent in Nanjing and a staggering 49 percent in the southern city of Shenzhen. At the same time, empty apartment buildings have mushroomed across other cities where builders are struggling to find clients willing to invest in their speculative ventures.

The "monetary policy has only inflated the real estate bubble," economist Zhong Pengrong, CEO of Shiyi, told AFP. "If the market collapses, the risk is immense," he said.

Although a dozen municipalities have recently tightened rules on apartment purchases, overheating persists, with home loans accounting for a record one-third of bank lending in January.

Hamstrung by the need to prop up growth while also reining in speculation, the PBOC has sent mixed signals on monetary policy. It injected additional liquidity into the financial system before the Lunar New Year, when demand for cash is traditionally strong.

Then in early February the bank raised short-term rates in the money market by 10 basis points for the first time in four years. Societe Generale analyst Wei Yao said the bank was attempting a precarious balancing act. "The high debt level and the previously hasty expansion of banks' balance sheets make the financial system vulnerable to too abrupt a change," she said. "The tightening cannot be too harsh."

Thirst for liquidity

Authorities are also worried about the intensifying risk of corporate defaults, particularly in the unregulated "shadow finance" sector that covers loans to heavily indebted manufacturers and property developers. Social financing - a broad measure of credit including that offered by non-bank entities - soared to 3.740 trillion yuan (\$545 billion) in January, double that in December, according to the PBOC.

These unregulated schemes include company-to-company lending, which jumped 20 percent in 2016 to \$1.92 trillion, according to data firm CEIC. Commercial banks have traditionally been reluctant to loan money to small and medium-sized businesses, regardless of interest rate cuts, leaving owners with little choice but to turn to "shadow financiers" to quench their thirst for liquidity. A jump in interest rates is unlikely to affect the demand for this kind of lending, meaning there is no immediate solution in sight. Under these conditions, analysts say, it will likely take a long time to get China's debt monster under control as the country attempts to re-balance its economy.

"China economy is a bit like a high-speed train," Zhang Fayu, economist and manager for assets management firm Million Tons Capital in Shanghai, told AFP. "It must slow down well in advance before turning." — AFP

GERMANY SEES ENCOURAGING SIGNS ON JOBS IN OPEL TALKS

BERLIN: Initial talks between the German government and carmakers PSA and General Motors have led to some encouraging signals that jobs at Opel factories will be preserved, but no guarantees have been made yet, a top official said yesterday.

Europe's car industry has been dogged by overcapacity for years, and the planned sale of GM's European Opel/Vauxhall arm to Peugeot-maker PSA has raised the spectre of cutbacks in the wake of a deal. GM and PSA so far have not given binding guarantees to preserve German jobs and factories at Opel, Deputy Economy Minister Matthias Machnig said when asked to comment on media reports, but he added there had been some encouraging signals.

"This is why speculation is premature at this point," Machnig told German television station ARD. He expressed hope that a combination with France's PSA could form the basis of a better future for Opel. German newspaper Bild am Sonntag had reported that PSA had pledged to continue operating all four of Opel's German production sites. Germany is heading towards a federal election in September and any major job cuts at Opel could weaken the chances of Chancellor Angela Merkel getting re-elected for a fourth term.

Merkel is constantly being updated on the progress of talks between the government and the management of the carmakers, government spokesman Steffen Seibert said during a regular news conference in Berlin yesterday. An economy ministry spokesman reiterated the government's main goal was to preserve jobs. He added Berlin was also in contact with the British



Europe's car industry has been dogged by overcapacity for years, and the planned sale of GM's European Opel/Vauxhall arm to Peugeot-maker PSA has raised the spectre of cutbacks in the wake of a deal.

government and that both countries would not let themselves be played off against each other. Economy Minister Brigitte Zypries will discuss the planned deal in talks with her French counterpart Michel Sapin during her visit in Paris on Thursday, the ministry spokesman said.

Zypries, a senior member of Germany's co-governing Social Democrats, said last Thursday she expected the deal to go ahead. Germany accounts for half of GM Europe's 38,000 staff, while there are 4,500 in Britain where the company operates under the Vauxhall brand.

Two sources close to PSA said last Thursday that job and plant cuts were part of the tie-up talks, with the two Vauxhall sites in Britain in the front line. — Reuters

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COMMERCIAL BANK LAUNCHES AL-TIJARI OFFERS PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced the launch of 'Al-Tijari Offers' program for the year 2017 which comprises direct privileges and discounts up to 25 percent from reputable and renowned restaurants & coffee shops in Kuwait including the restaurants of Jumeirah, Radisson Blu, Movenpick and Symphony Style Hotels and many more restaurants and coffee shops. This program is especially designated for Al-Tijari credit and prepaid cardholders (Visa and Mastercard).

This program includes a large number of participating restaurants & coffee shops with diverse dining in order to attain customers' satisfactions with their different segments. The full list of participating restaurants & coffee shops and their dis-

counts offered to Al-Tijari credit and prepaid cardholders are available on the Bank's website www.cbk.com.

Additionally, a booklet has been issued as a manual of the offers provided by participating restaurants & coffee shops including their names, addresses and telephone numbers. These restaurants & coffee shops will be also posted on the Bank's social media networks.

Commercial Bank of Kuwait always endeavors to provide the best offers and discounts to its customers and reward them through cooperation with well-known companies to cater for their requirements and needs. The Bank also strives to meet its customers' expectations and banking needs that suit their lifestyles.

ECONOMY GOOD, BUT HOMES IN GERMAN CITIES OVERPRICED

FRANKFURT: Homes in large German cities are between 15 and 30 percent overpriced, the Bundesbank said yesterday, in a message that is likely to stoke further fears in Europe's strongest economy about the side-effects of monetary stimulus.

The German economy will stay on a strong footing in the coming months thanks to high industrial and construction activity, the central bank said, but it warned this could not fully account for the surge in residential property prices. "According to current estimates, there were price overshoots of between 15 and 30 percent in the cities last year," the German central bank said in its monthly report. "The deviations in prices were particularly pronounced in the case of owner-occupied apartments in the big cities."

Germans have been sceptical of the European Central Bank's policy mix of sub-zero rates and aggressive bond purchases, fearing it would eat into returns on their savings and inflate a property bubble. In recent years, many Germans, who traditionally are more likely to rent than buy a home, put their money into the property market to benefit from the low interest rates and put their savings to work. At the same time more people moved to bigger cities such as Munich, Frankfurt and the capital Berlin, a trend that led to rapidly increasing prices because the higher demand could not be met.

Residential property prices in German cities rose by 8 percent last year after increasing by 6.75 percent on average in each of the previous six years, according to Bundesbank calculations based on data from consultancy company Bulwiengesa.

Economy in good shape

The central bank said the German economy was in good shape and should run even better in the future, as the construction sector is buoyant, many

factories run at full capacity and companies invest more. Export activity should also benefit from strong demand, the Bundesbank said.

"Improvements in labor market conditions, favorable income prospects for workers and a good consumption climate let us expect a continuation of strong consumer spending, even if the higher inflation rate limits the scope for spending," the Bundesbank said. But the bank said a large US fiscal stimulus as promised by Washington could lead to a general rise in prices globally and fuel inflation rates in Europe and Germany. Inflation in Germany picked up further in January to 1.9 percent from 1.7

percent in December, hitting the highest level in three-and-a-half years and touching the European Central Bank's target for price stability of just under 2 percent. Jens Weidmann, the powerful president of the Bundesbank and a member of the ECB's rate-setting body, has argued recently the increase in inflation should be countered by exiting step by step from the ECB's unprecedented monetary stimulus. However, ECB President Mario Draghi and other members of the central bank's Governing Council want to see more evidence of a sustained raise of the inflation rate before winding down the bank's 2.3 trillion euros (\$2.44 trillion) stimulus. — Reuters



FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German central bank Bundesbank headquarters in Frankfurt am Main.

GULF BANK OFFERS FREE MOVIE TICKETS FOR ITS NEW RED CUSTOMERS IN CELEBRATION OF KUWAIT'S NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS



KUWAIT: On the occasion of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days, Gulf Bank will be present at the Avenues Mall to offer free movie tickets on the spot for all those who open a new red account! The Bank's campaign will run until February 27 2017 in all Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC) theatres.

Gulf Bank installed a corporate red booth in KNCC cinema at the Avenues Mall, to help potential customers open new red accounts instantly as well as to showcase the Bank's products and services and answer any question.

Upon opening a new red account at the booth in the Avenues Mall, Gulf Bank's new customers will receive free tickets to watch a movie

of their choice at KNCC. In fact, existing red customers receive a multitude of benefits by simply being a red account holder. They are actually entitled to automatically discounted movie tickets for KD2 instead of the customary KD 3.5 fee, applicable all year long, seven days a week in an unlimited way.

Gulf Bank invites all high school students, college and university students aged between 15 and 25 to visit its booth at the Avenues Mall and open a red account during this honorary celebration.

Eligible customers will get the chance to enter the red draw automatically and on a monthly basis, upon transferring

their student allowances. Each month, an iPhone 7, an iPad Pro, and an Apple Watch will be gifted to three lucky winners until December 31 2017. In addition to the Apple prizes, students will have the opportunity to win a Fiat 500-Model 2017 at the annual car draw; not to mention the exclusive offers from Edfa3ly, which is an international internet shopping services company.

The Bank seeks to provide new and interesting initiatives and reward its loyal customer base. By offering its red customers with the right promotions, tailored to meet their specific needs, the Bank is pleased to celebrate the National Liberation Day with the people of Kuwait.

URC'S ABDALI MALL TO DEVELOP SIGNATURE DESTINATION SPA WITH AL-ADNANI GROUP

KUWAIT: Kuwait's leading diversified real estate development company, United Real Estate Company (URC), has announced the signing of an agreement between its subsidiary in the Kingdom of Jordan, URC-Jordan, and Al-Adnani Group, to launch a new signature health spa in its Abdali Mall, in Amman, Jordan.

The 929 square meter women only spa will operate under the seven star Gaia Cocoon Spa brand and be one of the Al Adnani Group's largest in Jordan offering the only 7-star beauty center in Amman catering specifically to women's health and beauty services including skin care, make-up, hair & body products and signature therapies designed with advanced technologies and run by an internationally certified team of professionals.

Ahmad Kasem, Deputy CEO of United Real Estate Company said, "We are very pleased to be partnering with a true market leader and innovator such as Al-Adnani Group."

"URC's long-term strategy has always been to have strategic partnerships in the countries that we operate in and this agreement is another commitment to the delivery of excep-



Ahmad Kasem

tional customer experiences in our Abdali Mall.

We strive to set a new benchmark in retail and dining for the local market, and the addition of a seven-star, signature spa will complement the integrated shopping experience."

Located in Amman's inner city urban renewal hub 'Abdali', Abdali Mall is the first development of its kind in the country boasting an award-winning mix of over 111 tenancies including indoor-outdoor restaurants, open-air food courts, a multi-cinema complex and supermarket.

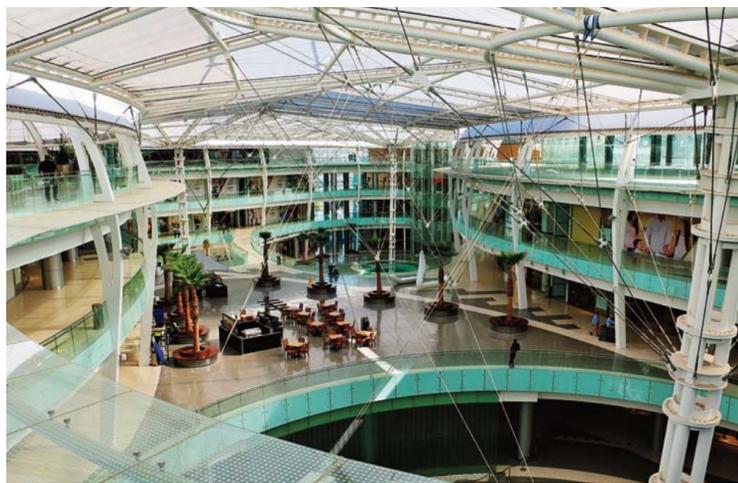
Abdali Mall was previously awarded 'Best Retail Project Award (BUILT)' in Emerging Markets category at Cityscape Global 2016 and Best Retail Project - Middle East in the Large-Cap category at the World Finance Construction Awards.

Note to Editors About URC

United Real Estate Company (URC) is one of the MENA region's leading real estate developers, with total assets of KD 571 million (US\$ 1.9 Billion) as of 30 September 2016. Headquartered in Kuwait, URC was founded in 1973 and was listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange in 1984.

URC primarily operates in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region through a number of operational subsidiaries and investment arms. The company's portfolio includes retail complexes, hotels, resorts, residential buildings, high rise office buildings, as well as mixed use developments. Operational assets include KIPCO Tower, Marina Hotel and Marina Mall in Kuwait, as well as Salalah Gardens Mall & Residences in Oman. Regionally, URC's assets include Abdali Mall in Jordan, Raouche View at 1090 in Lebanon, Aswar Residences in Egypt and Assoufid in Morocco.

URC's majority shareholder is KIPCO Group, one of the biggest holding companies in the Middle East and North Africa, with consolidated assets of US\$ 33 billion as at 30 September 2016. The Group has significant ownership interests in over 60 companies operating across 24 countries. The group's main business sectors are financial services, media, real estate and manufacturing. Through its core companies, subsidiaries and affiliates, KIPCO also has interests in the education and medical sectors.



Abdali Mall



QATAR AIRWAYS AWARDED FOR CONTENT INNOVATION

DOHA: Qatar Airways was recognized for content innovation at the fourth annual in-flight workshop and awards at Aircraft Interiors Middle East, held in partnership with F&E Aerospace. The award recognizes the outstanding array of the airline's on-board entertainment platform, Oryx One.

Qatar Airways was commended for offering a wide selection of content to enhance its global passengers' journeys, including regional content selection tailored to the Middle East market. The award, which the airline received for the second consecutive year, was presented at a ceremony during the exhibition held on 8-9 February at the Dubai World Trade Centre as part of the Inflight IFEC Pavilion Workshop.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, Akbar Al-Baker said: "We developed Oryx One to offer our passengers the highest standard in on-board entertainment, and we continually strive to innovate and expand our state-of-the-art entertainment library, unrivalled for its wide range of content in multiple languages. This award recognizes the extensive selection we offer to our customers, from the latest premieres, to classic movies, popular TV and special-interest programmes, providing them with a superior entertainment experience to enhance their journey around the world with Qatar Airways."

The content innovation award recognizes the airline's fantastic range of on-board entertainment options. Passengers can enjoy up to 3,000 channels of entertainment options.

Qatar Airways Senior Vice President Marketing and Corporate Communications, Salam Al-Shawa said: "This award is a testament to our continued commitment to enhancing our passengers' in-flight experience by providing them with the widest selection of high quality, on-board entertainment options. We are delighted to be honored with this award for the second consecutive year."

Qatar Airways continues to explore ways to deliver quality content on a dynamic platform through a choice of familiar, award-winning and hugely popular entertainment options that replicate

the experience many passengers enjoy at home. Frequent flyers are spoiled for choice, with more than 90 new feature films and 220TV shows being updated each month.

The library of on-board content includes full box sets of movies and TV series such as The Star Wars Collection, The X-Men Collection and the Marvel Cinematic Universe movies. TV Box sets are booked exclusively before any other airline. Qatar Airways was the only airline to feature the complete first season of the highly rated Turkish drama Sultana Kosem. Passengers can also select from a wide range of Bollywood movies and from more than 200 hours of Arabic content originating from Qatar, Gulf (Khaleeji) and the Middle East region.

Oryx One also offers an exciting array of kids' entertainment, including the entire Pixar catalogue of movies. Kids can also enjoy a fantastic range of content from the Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon and Disney branded sections.

Oryx One provides its passengers with up to 3,000 channels of entertainment options, including 500 blockbuster movies, 1,300 episodes of TV programs, 1,000 audio channels and 50 games, refreshed each month. Oryx One offers a huge variety of the latest audio and video content as well as star-studded world cinema in more than 30 languages, including award-winning, Hollywood premieres, Arabic hits, Bollywood blockbusters, modern favorites, classics and much more. A dedicated family channel offers younger passengers a wide choice of the latest movies and age-appropriate TV content.

Passengers flying on Qatar Airways flights served by its B787, A350, A380 and A319 as well as select A330 and A320 aircraft can also access on-board Wi-Fi. Qatar Airways passengers on all connected aircraft will enjoy free Wi-Fi for the first 15 minutes courtesy of a global partnership with Ooredoo. A simple-to-use portal makes it easy for passengers to log on and connect, and then browse the Internet or post on their social media channels directly from the comfort of their seats, reaffirming Qatar Airways' commitment to providing a superior on-board service.

BURGAN BANK CELEBRATES NATIONAL DAYS WITH ITS BUBA CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: On the occasion of Kuwait National and Independence days, Burgan Bank is eager to announce its latest offer tailored to its BuBa account holders. On both February 25 and 26, 2017, BuBa customers will benefit from entering "Trampo" Promenade Mall located in Hawally for free.

BuBa customers can avail the offer from 10 am to 11 am or 11 am to 12 pm during both days, and will in turn enjoy an array of activities including Jump, Climb, Leap and Slide, in one of the most fun and dynamic kids' places in Kuwait.

Burgan Bank always ensures to offer BuBa account holders exciting benefits that suit their lifestyle.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

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



www.burgan.com



GENUINE SPARE PARTS FROM CHEVROLET ALGHANIM HOLDS SECOND DRAW

KUWAIT: With the established popularity of the Genuine Spare Parts campaign, Chevrolet Alghanim, as well as the largest distributor of genuine spare parts from General Motors, held the second draw on February 16 under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce, and in the presence of Chevrolet management. iPhone 7 winners were announced, while another batch of phones, as well as the grand prize - the 2017 Chevrolet Trax - are still up for grabs. Clients who purchase in the value of KD25 can still receive 4 chances to enter the 3rd draw.

This offer is still valid until March 17, 2017, the promotion offers customers multiple chances to win valuable prizes. Customers will get the chance to win one of 30 iPhone 7 on a number of draws-the first of which already took place on January 17, 2017, and the second was on February 16, 2017. As for the grand draw

on the new 2017 Chevrolet Trax LT, the event will take place on March 20, 2017.

As the agent of GM in Kuwait, Chevrolet Alghanim provides its customers with world-renowned, genuine spare parts that enhance customers' safety and prolong vehicles' longevity and performance. Chevrolet Alghanim service facility is equipped with a modern and air-conditioned warehouse that stocks all the required parts using the latest global systems and processes, which include making deliveries to all parts locations in Kuwait.

Customers can purchase genuine spare parts from Chevrolet Alghanim [Shuwaikh 24967772, Canada Dry Street (tel. 24834822) - Faheehel, (tel. 23929849) - Sharq (tel. 22460972) and Jahra 24965935] open from Saturday to Thursday, from 8:00am to 7:30 pm, with the exception of the Shuwaikh Main Branch (tel. 24969772).

VIVA LAUNCHES 'DOUBLE YOUR BENEFIT' PROMOTION

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, and "Best Telecommunications Company of the year, Kuwait 2016" by International Finance Magazine, launched "Double Your Benefit" promotion, for postpaid, prepaid and internet customers, coinciding the annual Hala February festival.

This new promotion allows customers exclusively to subscribe in February with annual commitment in postpaid packages, KD 10, KD 15, KD 20 and KD 5 and get two times more calls, SMS and internet. Prepaid customers with all packages, KD 3, KD 5, KD 8, are eligible to double their minutes and internet balance and they can recharge their prepaid lines and enjoy 100 percent bonus on local calls and SMS. In addition, internet customers with package KD 6 can get two times their internet capacity, and enjoy the 4G LTE network and communicate with



their families and friends during the national celebrations. This promotion is part of "More" campaign that VIVA launched recently, built on the belief that while life can be enjoyable and rewarding, consumers are always seeking that little bit extra enrichment as they go about their daily lives.

CISCO TETRATION ANALYTICS SECURES BUSINESS APPLICATIONS

DUBAI: Cisco announces that Cisco Tetration Analytics now automates policy enforcement, enabling organizations to build secure environments for their business applications and also expands Tetration with new deployment options. Building on Tetration's original discovery and visibility capabilities, Cisco's latest software for Tetration Analytics now provides the industry's first consistent security policy enforcement applied holistically across each application. Policy is enforced regardless of where the application resides: virtual, bare metal, physical servers, or in private or public clouds, across any vendor's infrastructure. This new enforcement model binds policies to workload characteristics and behaviors while ensuring that the policy stays intact even as the workload moves.

"Enterprises worldwide are adopting multi-cloud strategies to realize their objectives for digital transformation, but these present ongoing challenges related to visibility and security. Although 80 percent of security spending is focused on the perimeter, only 20 percent of the breaches occur there. IT organizations are often under siege by a mix of elevated expectations and a rising tide of security threats, not to mention the need to show ongoing improvements in operational efficiencies," said Osama Al-Zoubi, Chief Technology Officer, Cisco Middle East. "Cisco Tetration Analytics addresses these challenges through pervasive visibility and application segmentation, which is designed to bolster security-policy enforcement across hybrid application environments."

Complex Applications Challenge Security

Today's complex business applications often span hundreds of servers residing on a wide array of heteroge-



neous infrastructure, both in the data center and in the cloud. This complexity is further compounded by virtualization technologies, application mobility and constant application changes due to modern DevOps environments. As a result, IT managers are challenged to understand an application's components, their communication pattern and dependencies - all necessary to meet security requirements for modern applications.

Enhanced Security through Application Segmentation

Tetration Analytics takes micro-segmentation - a security technique enabling workload separation - a leap further by delivering "application segmentation", which consistently drives policies across the application layer, regardless of where the application resides: virtualized, bare metal, physical servers, or in the cloud. Policies can be pushed to any vendor's firewall, and can be orchestrated at the network layer as well. Compared to static legacy solutions, Tetration provides actionable



Osama Al-Zoubi, Chief Technology Officer, Cisco Middle East

results dynamically based on behavior analysis of billions of flows, processes, and workload characteristics. Consistent

policy is enforced through the workload agent for any workload, anywhere.

New Tetration Deployment Options

Cisco is also delivering two new deployment models for Tetration Analytics. In addition to the original large scale platform, Cisco now offers a new smaller-scale platform, Tetration-M, suitable for deployments up to 1,000 workloads. Cisco is also introducing a new cloud appliance with software deployed in the public cloud on Amazon Web Services (AWS), Tetration Cloud - also suitable for deployments up to 1000 workloads. Regardless of the deployment model, Tetration can monitor workloads in private as well as public clouds.

Platform Extensibility through APIs and Apps

Tetration Analytics now enables customers and ecosystem partners the ability to write their own applications that access data stored on the platform. Users can bring their own analytics algorithms to Tetration to create apps

that generate customized data exports and notifications in open formats specific to their business needs. Cisco is continuing its tradition of open ecosystems by working with partner companies to build applications and integrations with their solutions: AlgoSec, Citrix, Dell EMC, F5, Infoblox, ServiceNow, and Tufin.

Cisco ASAP Data Center

Tetration Analytics is a key part of Cisco's strategy to help enable digital transformation, which starts with a Cisco ASAP data center. ASAP stands for Analyze, Simplify, Automate, and Protect. This architectural approach enables organizations to modernize their data center and IT infrastructure with a hybrid IT solution that maximizes application performance, mitigates risk, and increases operational agility in support of digital transformation. Cisco's comprehensive data center portfolio underscores its commitment to innovation: Cisco Nexus 9000 switches, Cisco ACI, Cloud Center, Tetration Analytics, Cisco UCS, and Hyper Flex.

IRAN BANS DRONES IN TEHRAN AFTER DEVICE SHOT DOWN

TEHRAN: Iranian officials have banned the flying of all private drones over Tehran after two recent incidents led to one of the devices being shot down near the supreme leader's office. "Based on a recent order regarding prevention of unlicensed flight by private drones, we have stopped these planes which had created security... problems," said Revolutionary Guards official General Alireza Rabii, whose department is in charge of the capital's security.

The order comes after two separate incidents of security forces opening fire on small camera drones flying over central Tehran. The first one, owned by Iranian state television, was shot down in December for entering "the no-fly zone" over Enghelab square, which is near the offices of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the

president and several other state institutions. Last month, anti-aircraft cannons were fired at another drone, footage of which was shared on social media. The unidentified drone left the area a few minutes later.

Rabii said media drones, equipped with cameras, had led some people to complain after the devices flew over their homes and disturbed their privacy. The drones can film "sensitive, vital and important places," which may be exploited by the "enemy", he added. Permits must be obtained to operate drones, he said, adding that authorization would not be given to individuals. The use of camera drones has significantly increased in Iran in recent years. They are mostly operated by photography studios, advertising agencies, filmmakers and aviation enthusiasts.—AFP

ATLANTA, OTHER CITIES EYE TEST TRACKS FOR SELF-DRIVING CARS

SELF-DRIVING VEHICLES SHOULD BE A NATIONAL PRIORITY

ATLANTA: Self-driving vehicles could begin tooling down a bustling Atlanta street full of cars, buses, bicyclists and college students, as the city vies with other communities nationwide to test the emerging technology. Atlanta would become one of the largest urban areas for testing self-driving vehicles if plans come together for a demonstration as early as September. Nationwide, 10 sites were designated last month as "proving grounds" for automated vehicles by the US Department of Transportation. They include North Carolina turnpikes, the eastern Iowa prairie and a Michigan site where World War II bombing aircraft were produced in a factory built by automobile pioneer Henry Ford.

Atlanta isn't on the list, but city officials nevertheless hope to make an impact. Backers of driverless cars say they could be part of a broader effort to rebuild the nation's infrastructure, something President Donald Trump has pledged to do. As roads and highways are rebuilt, "we think it would be very, very wise to build modern infrastructure with 21st-century capability in mind," said Paul Brubaker, president and CEO of the Washington, DC-based Alliance for Transportation Innovation. Self-driving vehicles, he said, "should be a national priority."

The Trump administration hasn't revealed its approach to the technology, but two US senators this month announced a bipartisan effort to help speed deployment of the vehicles on the nation's roads. Republican John Thune of South Dakota and Democrat Gary Peters of Michigan said they're considering legislation that "clears hurdles and advances innovation in self-driving vehicle technology." Atlanta has sought proposals from companies for a demonstration of an autonomous vehicle on North Avenue later this year, city documents show.

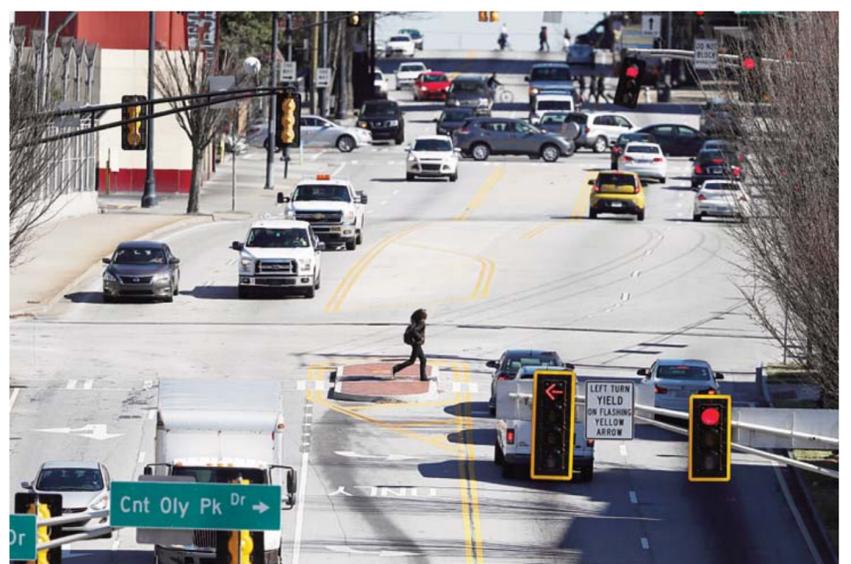
Key concern

The street, which connects the Georgia Institute of Technology campus to some of the South's tallest skyscrapers, would be among the busiest urban environments yet for such testing. In Atlanta, city officials say a key goal is to create optimal conditions on North Avenue for such vehicles to operate. The goal of September's demonstration is to show how such a vehicle would navigate in real-world traffic, though a driver will be inside and can take the controls if needed, said Faye DiMassimo, an Atlanta official involved in the North Avenue project.

"We still think that autonomous vehicles are sort of 'The Jetsons,' right?" DiMassimo said. "When you looked at all the information, you realize not only is this here and now, this has been in development for quite some time." North Avenue would first be equipped with devices and sensors, enabling vehicles to communicate with traffic sig-



AUSTELL: In this photo, a driverless shuttle sits on display at the Riverside EpiCenter in Austell, Georgia. —AP photos



AUSTELL: In this file photo, pedestrians and cars move along a busy section of North Avenue near the Georgia Tech campus in Atlanta.

nals and warning self-driving cars of red lights or treacherous conditions such as snow or ice, the city documents show. Cameras would provide live video of traffic, and computers would analyze data on road conditions, concerts or other events likely to clog streets.

Security is a key concern, however. "Imagine if these vehicles were hacked. Imagine if the system that controls them were hacked," said Jamie Court, president of Consumer Watchdog. "I don't think our society is going to want a robot glitch or a software hack to be responsible for mass deaths," he said. "If we sanction robots controlling these vehicles without really knowing the risks, I think the technology will go under when the first major catastrophe befalls us."

Smart city

Court's group worked with California transportation officials as

they developed rules for testing vehicles developed by Google and other companies. Now, Court and others are watching to see how often human drivers must take over to prevent accidents as vehicles are tested in California. Tying together massive amounts of data from so many sources "will pose myriad security challenges," Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed acknowledged in a report last year on a related initiative to transform Atlanta into a "smart city." Researchers at Georgia Tech, Reed said, will be key to that effort.

Public acceptance of the vehicles is among the main challenges to their widespread use on city streets and highways, Brubaker said. He and others see Atlanta as a logical base for the emerging industry. Atlanta's notorious traffic congestion could lead residents to welcome such vehicles, Brubaker said. "In any city that has that level of congestion,

people have a relatively open mind to embracing technology solutions that will improve the traffic flow," Brubaker said. However, critics say the cars are not yet able to safely navigate clogged streets with traditional cars and pedestrians.

"The technology really is not ready to be used on urban streets, unless they are going to be cleared of human drivers and dedicated strictly to autonomous vehicles," Court said. "The real problem is these technologies tend to fail when they're around pedestrians, cyclists, human drivers," Court said. The key obstacle, he said: "human behavior is really unpredictable." At one North Avenue intersection near Georgia Tech's football stadium, "students tend to jaywalk, so it can get a little bit messy over there," said Georgia Tech student Maura Currie, 19. She called it "a hectic stretch of road."—AP

MIMECAST COMBATS RISE OF INTERNAL EMAIL THREATS

DUBAI: Mimecast Limited (NASDAQ: MIME), a leading email and data security company introduced the latest capability of its Targeted Threat Protection service, Internal Email Protect, the first-to-market cloud-based security service providing threat capabilities for internally generated email. Internal Email Protect allows customers to detect and remediate security threats that originate from their users' email accounts. This capability includes the scanning of attachments and URLs, as well

some form of insider security incident in the past 24 months.

The newly launched Internal Email Protect service can address these threats by enabling customers to detect and remediate security threats that originate from their internal email system. This could include emails from the unassuming compromised insider, the careless employee inadvertently sending files and/or a malicious employee who wants to do harm to the company. According to the Forrester Technology Adoption Profile study, compromised accounts can cause the biggest headache, as three quarters of respondents described the financial impact of compromised accounts as moderate or significant, and 68 percent said they led to a moderate or significant productivity loss.

Internal Email Protect gives organizations the visibility they need to help reduce downtime and data and financial loss by detecting and remediating internally generated email-borne threats. Key benefits of Internal Email Protect include: Broader, more comprehensive protection from targeted threats: single cloud solution to inspect email coming into, going out from and staying within an organization. Detection of lateral movement of attacks from one internal system or user, to another. Identification of threats, or sensitive data leaving an organization, which could result in reputational damage.

Email from internal users can also be used to send threats laterally across an organization - through the distribution of malware, malicious URLs or impersonation emails. In fact, the recent Forrester Technology Adoption Profile study cited that within the last 24 months: 40 percent of respondents experienced business compromise/impersonation attacks; 36 percent experienced insider emailing sensitive data; and 44 percent experienced phishing attacks all due to internal threats.

"Not all threats are created equal; therefore, organizations need a cyber-resilience strategy to help organizations prepare for any type of attack - whether that be from outside or inside of the organization, malicious or accidental," said Neil Murray, chief technology officer at Mimecast. "Internal Email Protect is the only cloud-based email security service addressing internal-to-internal emails for malware, malicious URLs and the improper movement of sensitive content. With Internal Email Protect, organizations can get ahead of the attack and stop feeling like they're playing a never ending game of catch-up."



Neil Murray, Chief Technology Officer at Mimecast

as content inspections via DLP services. Additionally, Internal Email Protect includes the ability to automatically extract infected email or attachments from users' inboxes.

Mimecast Internal Email Protect is an add-on to the award winning Mimecast Targeted Threat Protection family of email security offerings which includes URL protects, Attachment Protect and Impersonation Protect. New research Mimecast commissioned from Forrester Consulting indicates that organizations need to move beyond basic email security capabilities. The research evaluated the state of enterprise understanding of insider security threats by surveying 253 Security and Risk Management experts from the US, UK, South Africa, and Australia. The results were compiled in a Forrester Technology Adoption Profile study which found that 99 percent of organizations surveyed had experienced

STRUGGLING COLLEGE STUDENTS GET A HAND TO GRADUATE

WASHINGTON: Getting through college isn't easy, and it can be even harder for low-income and first generation students with few support resources. A new tool involving big data can help those at risk. Researchers at Georgia State University spent four years analyzing students' grades, test scores and other information in order to identify those in potential trouble, and promptly assisted them. The study shows the number of students graduating has jumped by 30 percent and that students are spending less time and money to earn a degree.

"These are really encouraging gains," said Timothy Renick, the school's vice president for enrollment management and student success and the principal investigator in the study. "Because of these proactive interventions all students benefited, but the students who benefited the most were first generation, low-income and students of color." Renick presented the study at the American

Association for the Advancement of Science conference in Boston on Saturday.

Inspired by Renick's results, the Education Department awarded a four-year \$8.9 million grant that will significantly expand his study. The project, which kicked off last year, will involve 10,000 low-income and first generation students at Georgia State and 10 other large public research universities. While some students are good at keeping track of their academic progress, students from low-income backgrounds may find it more difficult to spot a problem, choose the right courses from an abundance of offerings and navigate the university bureaucracy.

That's because they may not have relatives or friends who had gone to college and could offer advice. Gabriella Salinas, a 21-year-old junior at Georgia State majoring in marketing, said she was doing well academically, but then received an F early in her finance class. She successfully com-

pleted the course with extra help from her professor. "Not everybody has somebody to turn to and when an academic adviser asks them 'Hey is there anything we can do, what's going on?' They feel as if they have somebody to turn to who actually cares about their success," she said.

Renick analyzed past student data at Georgia State to make forecasts about current students' academic outcomes, a type of study known as predictive analytics. For instance, a grade of C in an entry-level class in a student's major was a sign that student would struggle with more advanced courses. Scoring poorly in a math class meant problems for STEM majors. When such warning signs were spotted, academic advisers reached out to students to guide and counsel them. As a result, STEM degrees awarded to black students rose by 69 percent, to black male students by 111 percent and to Hispanics by 226 percent.

Band-aid on a headache?

The average time to a bachelor's degree at Georgia State decreased by more than half a semester, enabling the Class of 2016 to save \$15 million in tuitions and fees. "We are leveling the playing field not by doing academic work for the students ... but instead by giving them timely information about what might maximize their chances of graduation," Renick said. "We have a moral obligation to these students and their families, many of whom are taking out large loans to give them every chance to graduate."

Martin Kurzweil, director of the Educational Transformation Program at Ithaca S+R, a nonprofit research group tasked with evaluating Renick's study because it relies on federal money, called the result "pretty much unprecedented, it's fantastic." He stressed that it was important to keep the data protected lest it be used for commercial purposes or identity theft.

Some experts have voiced concern that the large amounts of student data collected could be used for profiling. But Ellen Wagner, a researcher who has studied predictive analytics in education, said it would be hard to help the students without first identifying their problems.

"Why would we want to put a metaphorical Band-Aid on a headache?" Wagner said. "If we can remove the guesswork of trying to support students to be the most successful they can be, then we owe them the respect to find where they are strong and where we can help them be stronger and get on with their lives." Ryan Baker, associate professor at University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education, said that similar algorithms have been proved successful in auto insurance and banking. "Any technology can get misused, but I tend to think that for students at risk, prediction systems are doing more good than harm," Baker said. — AP

TOUGHENING PENALTIES IF PETS ARE HARMED DURING CRIMES

FLORIDA: When Denise Krohn came home to find her golden doodle Kirby bleeding on the kitchen floor, she at first thought it was a terrible accident. But she soon realized that her home had been ransacked, and that her other dog, Quigley, was lying dead on his favorite blanket in the living room. Burglars who tore through her hill-top farmhouse north of Albany made off with several televisions, a laptop, some cheap jewelry and change.

And, police say, they apparently shot her friendly, goofy dogs on their way out the door. "It was just a mean, nasty thing," Krohn said. A year later, the crime remains unsolved. But what bothers Krohn is that police told her that if someone is caught, they would likely get 25 years in jail for burglary, but no additional punishment for killing the dogs. "It's just not right," she said. "I don't care about the TVs and other stuff. What hurts us every day is losing our dogs."

Krohn hopes to gain some measure of justice by making her pets the poster pups for New York state legislation that would make it a felony to harm a companion animal, even by accident, during the commission of a crime. Conviction would be punishable by a \$5,000 fine and two years behind bars on top of the jail time for the burglary or other crime. Dubbed "Kirby and Quigley's Law" for the slain dogs, the proposal currently faces an uphill fight among lawmakers. But if it does pass, experts say it would be one of the toughest animal-cruelty charges in the nation.

Diane Balkin, a former Denver prosecutor who's now with the Animal Legal Defense Fund, likened it to felony murder, a legal rule that allows someone to be charged with murder if they kill someone during the commission of another dangerous crime, even if the killing wasn't intentional. Sen. Jim Tedisco, a Schenectady County Republican who first introduced the bill five years ago, said he was originally

motivated by two cases in which heroin traffickers smuggled drugs in the stomachs of puppies and dogs and were charged with drug crimes but not animal cruelty.

"Attorneys said it had nothing to do with cruelty, they were just smuggling heroin," Tedisco said. "What this bill does is make it clear that if you harm a companion animal while committing another crime, you face an additional penalty." Tedisco's spokesman said the measure is intended to apply only to cats and dogs. But the bill says "companion animals," and a state appellate court once upheld a felony cruelty conviction under the current law of a man who stomped a goldfish to death.

The bill passed the state Senate 59-2 this month but has died in committees in the Assembly the past five sessions. Opposition has focused on whether such a law is really needed. In the case of Kirby and Quigley, Balkin said the criminal could probably be charged under the existing cruelty law because the shooting was clearly an intentional act. The new law would also cover an unintentional act, such as hitting a pet with a getaway car. "This bill is unnecessary," said Assemblyman Joseph Lentol, a Brooklyn Democrat. "It's already a crime to assault or kill an animal; it's already a felony if you do it with malicious intent."

Lentol said if the point of the law is to deter cruel acts; it makes no sense to expand it to include unintentional harm. Publicity about Kirby and Quigley led several breeders to offer golden doodle puppies to the Krohns.

They now have 8-month-old Porter and 7-month-old Tedi, who's related to the blond, curly Quigley and looks just like him, right down to the joyful grin. Krohn has already written a pile of letters to lawmakers and promised to keep fighting for the bill. "I never thought of myself as an animal activist," said Krohn, a retired teacher. "I just want to do what's right." — AP



BOSTON: Johanna Klein, an internal medical doctor, center, holds a placard and chants during a demonstration by members of the scientific community, environmental advocates and supporters in Boston. — AP

SCIENTISTS HOLD RALLY IN BOSTON TO PROTEST THREAT TO SCIENCE

SCIENTISTS RESPOND TO TRUMP'S ANTI-SCIENCE RHETORIC

BOSTON: Hundreds of scientists, environmental advocates and their supporters held a rally in Boston on Sunday to protest what they see as increasing threats to science and research in the US. The scientists, some dressed in white lab coats, called on President Donald Trump's administration to recognize evidence of climate change and take action on various environmental issues.

Geoffrey Supran, a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who studies renewable energy solutions to climate change, said scientists are responding to the Trump administration's

"anti-science rhetoric." "We're really trying to send a message today to Mr. Trump that America runs on science, science is the backbone of our prosperity and progress," Supran said.

The "Rally to Stand Up for Science" in Boston's Copley Square was held outside of the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting, one of the first major gatherings of scientists since Trump was elected in November.

Protesters held signs that read "Science Matters," "Scientists Pursuing Truth, Saving the World" and "Make America Smart Again." Some

of those who turned out criticized Trump's appointment of Scott Pruitt as head of the Environmental Protection Agency over the objections of environmental groups.

During six years as the attorney general of Oklahoma, Pruitt filed 14 lawsuits challenging EPA regulations. He previously expressed skepticism about scientific evidence showing the planet is heating up and that humans are to blame. However, during his Senate confirmation hearing last month, he said he disagreed with Trump's past statements that global warming is a hoax. — AP



FLORIDA: In this photo, Denise Krohn sits at her kitchen table with photos of her golden doodle dogs Quigley, left, and Kirby, right, in Florida, New York. — AP

DEEP SEA MINING GETS A SECOND LOOK

BOSTON: The risk of running out of rare earth metals that are essential to modern technology has led to a surge in interest in mining the deep seas. But fears have also mounted about the environmental impact of disturbing vast areas of the pristine ocean floor, experts said at the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual conference in Boston. Demographic growth and the acceleration of technological innovations in the past 40 years have doubled the quantity of minerals extracted worldwide, leading to shortages of certain key metals, according to a recent UN report.

"Mining is essential for modern life," said Thomas Graedel, professor emeritus of industrial ecology and chemical engineering at Yale University. "If global development proceeds at its current pace, traditional land-based supply of resources may be challenged to meet demand." When it comes to copper, an essential element for electrical equipment and numerous industries, a shortage could begin around 2050, he said. This uncertainty highlights the importance of considering deep-sea mining, even though the process involves environmental risks.

Cobalt, iron, manganese, platinum, nickel, gold and other rare earth minerals are generally found at depths ranging from a few hundred to several thousand meters. But just how much valuable material lies beneath the ocean floor remains highly uncertain, said

Mark Hannington, a geologist at GEOMAR-Helmholtz Center for Ocean Research in Germany. Observations so far indicate that seafloor deposits targeted for mining could include from 600 million to a billion tons of minerals, including 30 million tons of copper and zinc, resources which could help respond to growing global demand for electronics. He also said that nodules or rocky formations containing valuable metals on the ocean floor "are enormously abundant."

30 years is too late

But details on this potential remain poorly understood, because for the past three decades, exploration has been concentrated on certain areas near hydrothermal vents. "We have not found the large deposits yet," said Hannington. "We have got to figure out how to find them if we want to truly understand the resources," he added. "We've got to speed up the process dramatically because it has taken 30 years to get where we are now and 30 years from now it will be too late." He added that all the zones granted exploration permits so far represent only 0.5 percent of the total area that could be mined in the ocean. Until now, 27 countries including India and China have signed contracts to explore for these resources with the International Seabed Authority, the body charged with controlling exploration and exploitation of the areas beyond national borders. — APF

FDA ALERTS ABOUT POTENTIAL RISKS WITH FLUID-FILLED INTRAGASTRIC BALLOONS

The FDA has recently received multiple reports for two different types of adverse events associated with fluid-filled intragastric balloons used to treat obesity. We recommend that you closely monitor patients with these devices for these adverse events, and to submit reports to help us better understand any complications from the use of these obesity treatment devices. The first type of adverse event involves the fluid-filled intragastric balloon over-inflating with air or with more fluid (spontaneous hyperinflation) in patients' stomachs, resulting in the need for premature device removal.

The second type of adverse event is the development of acute pancreatitis, which has also resulted in the need for premature device removal. The FDA wants to ensure you are aware of these potential complications that have been observed in patients treated with FDA-approved obesity treatment devices, although the root cause and incidence of these complications is not known.

Background and summary of the two issues

Intragastric balloon systems are weight-loss systems to treat obesity, which function by taking up space in a patient's stomach. In 2015, the FDA approved two intragastric balloon systems in the US. The ReShape Integrated Dual Balloon System is manufactured by ReShape Medical Inc., and uses two balloons. The Orbera Intragastric Balloon System manufactured by Apollo Endo-Surgery uses one balloon. Both brands are fluid-filled balloon systems, and are indicated for use in conjunction with diet and exercise.

The balloons are placed into the stomach through the mouth, using a minimally invasive endoscopic procedure, while the patient is under mild sedation. Once in place, the Orbera balloon is filled with saline only, and the ReShape balloons are filled with saline and methylene blue dye. The maximum placement period for both brands is six months. In 2016, the FDA approved the Obalon Balloon System, which consists of up to three balloons that are delivered to the stomach inside a swallowable capsule. The capsule is attached to a thin inflation catheter used to inflate the balloons with air.

To date, the concerns addressed in this letter have only been observed with the use of fluid-filled intragastric balloons and have not been reported for the Obalon Balloon System. Over-Inflation - The FDA has received several dozen adverse event reports regarding balloon over-inflation of fluid-filled systems. Most have involved the Orbera Balloon System although this type of event has also been reported with the ReShape Balloon System. Symptoms of balloon over-inflation included intense abdominal pain, swelling of



the abdomen (abdominal distension) with or without discomfort, difficulty breathing, and/or vomiting.

The event may require premature removal of the balloon to resolve the patient's symptoms. The reports indicate that balloon over-inflation can occur as soon as nine days after implantation. As the current labeling for fluid-filled intragastric balloons does not address the issue of spontaneous over-inflation, health care providers, including ER professionals, may not be aware that the symptoms listed above could potentially be related to an over-inflated balloon. At this moment there is not enough information to determine what is causing the balloon to over-inflate.

Acute Pancreatitis - A separate set of reports involving both brands of fluid-filled balloons (Orbera and ReShape) indicate that acute pancreatitis developed in several patients due to the compression of gastrointestinal structures created by the implanted balloon(s). All of these cases required premature device removal, and four of the patients required hospitalization. Symptoms of acute pancreatitis in the presence of a fluid-filled intragastric balloon system included severe abdominal and back pain.

The reports indicated that pancreatitis can occur as soon as three days after implantation. Pancreatitis is not listed as a potential complication in the labeling information for the Orbera or for the ReShape balloon systems. Therefore, health care providers, including ER professionals, may be unaware that acute pancreatitis could develop following balloon placement. This could lead to unsuitable or delayed treatment for pancreatitis in patients with balloons who may have acute abdominal pain.

Recommendations

The FDA recommends that health care providers: Recognize that patients with implanted fluid-filled intragastric balloons may develop balloon related symptoms or other abnormalities following balloon placement, and throughout the duration of their treatment. Consider spontaneous over-inflation and/or pancreatitis in the differential diagnosis of patients presenting with the symptoms noted in this communication. If abnormalities are found, perform any confirmatory diagnostic studies. If the device is removed, follow the manufacturer's instructions for device returns or evaluations. Report any adverse events related to intragastric balloon systems that come to your attention. Voluntary reports can be submitted through MedWatch, the FDA Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting program. Device manufacturers and user facilities must comply with the applicable Medical Device Reporting (MDR) regulations. Health care personnel employed by facilities that are subject to FDA's user facility reporting requirements should follow the reporting procedures established by their facilities. Prompt reporting of adverse events can help the FDA identify and better understand the risks associated with medical devices.

FDA actions

The FDA continues to work with ReShape Medical Inc. and Apollo Endo-Surgery to better understand these issues of acute pancreatitis and over-inflation in patients with fluid-filled intragastric balloons. We are committed to providing additional information as our investigation continues.

SOLAR-POWERED AFRICA NEVER MORE POSSIBLE, LESS EXPENSIVE

ABU DHABI: A "solar revolution" is coming to Africa, comparable in scale and importance to the rapid surge in mobile phone use on the continent two decades ago, predicts the head of the International Renewable Energy Agency. Fast-dropping costs for solar power, combined with plenty of sun and a huge need for electricity on a continent where many are still without it, means solar has huge potential in Africa, said Adnan Amin, the director general of IRENA.

"Africa's solar potential is enormous," he said in an interview with the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The continent gets 117 percent more sunshine than Germany, which today has the highest installed solar power capacity, he said. "It has never been more possible and less expensive for Africa to realise this potential," he said. Both grid-connected solar power and off-grid solar energy now offer "cost-competitive means to meet rising energy needs and bring

electricity to the 600 million Africans who currently lack access", Amin said.

Innovations - including better transmission and storage for solar power, and new payment systems - also mean using more solar power in Africa could boost economies and create jobs for millions of people across the continent, he said. "Africa's vast solar potential presents a huge opportunity for people to engage in a range of economic activities such as irrigation and agro-processing, and it is already beginning to happen," said the Nairobi-born Amin.

More innovation, less cost

Solar can have high upfront costs, compared to traditional fuels, but a number of technological and financing advances - such as pay-as-you-go solar, with payments made by mobile phone - are helping deal with that problem, he said. Even

the higher initial costs are coming down, he said, with solar panel prices expected to continue falling. The price of producing power from solar mini-grids - installations unconnected to larger national grid systems - is expected to fall by at least 60 percent over the next two decades.

"The rapid rise of pay-as-you-go solar home systems and integration with mobile payment technology is an example of the speed of innovation that is taking place. In East Africa alone, over 450,000 such systems have been deployed," he said. IRENA estimates that up to 60 million Africans already may be using off-grid renewable electricity of some kind.

Right policy crucial

But for use of solar to dramatically expand further, countries will need sound regulatory frameworks, master plans that help draw in local investors, and a sufficient

number of entrepreneurs, Amin said. Government finance institutions will also need to help cut the risks investors face in financing large solar projects in order to keep interest rates for loans low, he said. That view is shared by Snehar Shah, director of solar company Azuri East Africa, which has sold over 100,000 solar home systems in East Africa over the last four years.

He believes the majority of people in East Africa living away from national power grids will need to rely on solar for energy - and that emerging innovations will persuade them to do that. "Just as landline telephones once were the preserve of elites in Africa but mobile telephones are now owned by nearly everyone, solar power presents much larger possibilities for expansion than grid power," Shah said. "Solar is cost effective when compared to the cost of getting connected to grid electricity in Africa and it is stable, ensuring

that outages, which are a daily thing with grid (power), are non-existent," he said.

Reliability "is one thing that is attracting people to solar", he said. Solar firms such as Azuri not only offer solar panels but also accessories to make the most of that power, such as efficient LED lights, televisions, torches, phone chargers and radios, Shah said. The company also provides finance for customers, cutting out the need to seek separate bank loans.

Crafting policies to support the growth of solar power will be a key for continued uptake of it, said Pavel Oimeke, director of renewable energy for the Kenya Energy Regulatory Commission. Some African countries have lowered or removed duties on the import of solar equipment and appliances, while others - such as Kenya - have set attractive feed-in tariffs for renewable energy to attract investment in solar power plants.—Reuters



SALT LAKE CITY: This file photo, Karrie Galloway, CEO of Planned Parenthood Action Council, laughs as the roar of the crowd drowns out her speech at the state Capitol in Salt Lake City.

UTAH'S ANESTHESIA ABORTION LAW UNENFORCED

SALT LAKE CITY: Last year, Utah enacted a first-in-the-nation law requiring that fetuses receive anesthesia or painkillers before elective abortions starting at 20 weeks gestation. Nine months later, the only licensed clinic providing those abortions in the state says no changes have been made in how doctors perform the procedures. The handful of doctors who do the abortions at the clinic run by the Planned Parenthood Association of Utah are trying to comply with the law passed last May but it contained no specific guidance on how to do so, said Karrie Galloway, the group's CEO.

Dr. Leah Torres, one of five or six licensed physicians who perform elective late-term abortions at the clinic, said she went to legislators, the governor's office and the attorney general's office seeking an explanation on what treatment she's supposed to give. She said they gave her none and recommended she speak to a lawyer. "I guess I'm breaking the law, but I don't know how to not break it because no one would tell me," Torres said in an interview.

Dr. M. Sean Esplin, a Utah physician who performs late term abortions in emergency situations, such as if the mother's life is at risk, which is not covered by the law, said a strict interpretation could force doctors to choose between two risky procedures: Administering anesthesia via a needle directly into the umbilical cord or giving women general anesthesia. The law, he said, "is, in my opinion, a waste of our money and our time by someone who is trying to make a political statement and really not worried about what's best med-

ically or what's best for people's health." Utah Gov. Gary Herbert told the AP that physicians should try to get directions from the attorney general's office if they don't understand how to follow the law.

Dan Burton, a spokesman for the attorney general's office, said that the office does not "specifically regulate doctors in Utah." He suggested asking Utah's Department of Health but the spokesman for that agency, Tom Hudachko, said it had no guidance for the doctors because the law "didn't task us with doing that."

Sixteen states ban abortions starting at about 20 weeks, according to Guttmacher Institute, a research organization that supports abortion rights. Utah allows such procedures, but last year passed the first law in the nation to require anesthesia or painkillers for fetuses after 20 weeks. Montana lawmakers passed a similar law in 2015 requiring fetal anesthesia before surgeries, including abortions, performed after 20 or more weeks of gestation, but its Democratic governor vetoed the measure. The Utah law has no definition of legal fetal anesthetics or whether doctors have complied if women receive anesthesia or painkillers during abortions with those drugs passing to the fetus. Burton said the attorney general's office is unaware of any investigations into doctors for alleged violations. He said any violations would probably be punishable by fines of up to \$750. The Republican lawmaker who sponsored the legislation, Sen. Curt Bramble, said in an interview that he did not know how the law is being implemented, but expects doctors to comply. — AP

ON FROZEN FIELDS, NORTH KOREAN FARMERS PREP FOR BATTLE AHEAD

HARSH LIFE AS A FARMER IN NORTH KOREA

PYONGYANG: Plug your noses and ready your "Juche fertilizer." It's time to prep the frozen fields in North Korea. North Korea relies on its farmers to squeeze absolutely all they can out of every harvest. It's a tall order in a country with 25 million mouths to feed that is mostly mountains, hamstrung by international trade sanctions and, beyond a handful of showcase cooperatives, hard-pressed to modernize its agricultural sector. Without doubt, life as a farmer in North Korea is harsh.

But there are some signs of change in how North Korea is treating its fields and its farmers. In typically propagandist fashion, the North's state media are already reporting that workers inspired by leader Kim Jong Un's New Year's address are heroically churning out "117 percent" of their production quotas of what they call "Juche fertilizer." A grain of salt is certainly in order. What exactly the patriotic-sounding Juche fertilizer is isn't all that clear, though it's likely a mix of largely organic components augmented with some chemicals.

Because of the general lack of livestock, human feces are a key ingredient. Juche refers to the North's longstanding but mostly inspirational policy of self-reliance. The battle in the fields, however, has certainly begun. With the ground still frozen as the North waits out its notoriously cold winters, farmers, joined by workers and students mobilized from the cities are in the process of transporting truckloads of pungent fertilizer to fields across the country for the planting season ahead. Kim Song Ryong, head technician at the Migok Cooperative Farm in Sariwon, south of Pyongyang, said it takes about 20 to 25 days to distribute the compost. In March, it will be spread over the fields in an even layer and then ploughed in below the surface. "Our respected supreme leader comrade Kim Jong Un instructed us that agriculture is the main approach to building a strong economy and country," he said in an interview with AP Television News. "To get the best harvest with scientific farming, all our farmers and workers are out in the fields to improve the quality of the soil."

In the past, the country's over-reliance on scientific magic bullets has had tragic results. Overuse of chemical fertilizers that began in the 1950s devastated the natural microbiotic soil environment and fueled a cycle in which its fields grew increasingly dependent on ever-more-artificial fertilization. In the 1990s, the fall of the Soviet Union and Pyongyang's other communist benefactors disrupted the supply of that fertilizer - which, coupled with other factors, led to widespread famine.

But Pyongyang appears to have learned



PYONGYANG: In this photo, women farm workers shovel locally-produced Juche fertilizer at Migok Cooperative Farm near Sariwon, North Hwanghae Province, North Korea. — AP photos

some lessons since. According to Randall Ireson, a private consultant and former nongovernmental program director in the North, farmers have shifted their emphasis since about 2000 to adding compost and organic fertilizers to rebuild the organic content in the soil and reviv-

ify microorganisms. "What I've seen and heard of is the use of effective rapid aerobic composting of plant residue and, where available, animal and human manure, with the composted material further augmented with some chemical fertilizer," he said. — AP



PYONGYANG: In this photo, a group of farm workers stand on locally-produced Juche fertilizer at Migok Cooperative Farm near Sariwon, North Hwanghae Province, North Korea.

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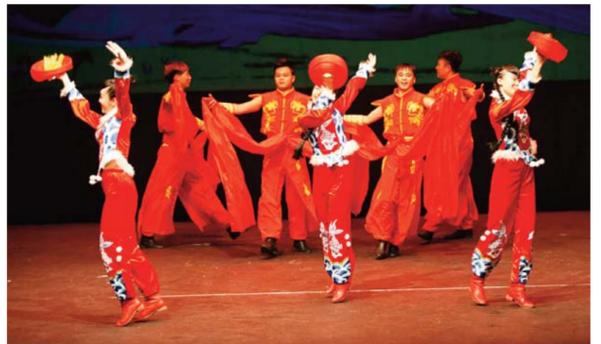


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CHINESE EMBASSY CELEBRATES CHINESE NEW YEAR, NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS

By Ben Garcia

A triple celebration of the Chinese New Year, the National and Liberation days was marked on Sunday at a jam-packed venue. The event was organized by the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait in collaboration with the

Ministry of Culture of China, the People's Government of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. The theme of Sunday's presentation was 'Oh, my beautiful grassland is my homeland!' The event was held at Abdulaziz Hussein Hall in Salmiya, graced by the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait

Wang Di, attended by various dignitaries.

It was held to enhance cultural cooperation between two countries, showcasing Inner Mongolia's unique cultural dance, song numbers. There were 14 mixed songs and dances demonstrated during the event performed by 20 artists who were invited from Inner Mongolia. Inner

Mongolia is a part of China which is also called as Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia of the People's Republic of China. Inner Mongolia is in the north of the country, containing most of China's border with Mongolia. Its capital is Hohhot, and other major cities include Baotou, Chifeng, and Ordos.



EXCLUSIVE OFFERS ON NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS AT HILTON KUWAIT RESORT

In commemoration of Kuwait National and Liberation Day, Hilton Kuwait Resort will host an array of exciting entertainment opportunities for parents and children alike from 24 to 26 Feb. For the celebratory weekend, the resort will also honour the Kuwait's rich history and culture by adorning the property in Kuwaiti flags and traditional Arabic decorations. On 24 and 25 Feb, families can enjoy various fun activities on the main beach, including but not limited to magic show, volleyball game, football tournament, bouncing castle, balloon twisting and face painting.

Furthermore, hotel guests are promised to witness a breath taking performance at the remote airplane show at the resort's beach side. Teatro, the resort's elegant dining restaurant overlooking the Arabian Gulf, will serve

brunch buffets of authentic Kuwaiti and international food, with live music and children's activities, on 25 and 26 Feb. For dinner, the restaurant's menu will feature international cuisines, Kuwaiti Ouzi and live music performances to wrap up the day's festivities.

Hilton Kuwait Resort is thrilled to offer families a great time by the beach in celebration of Kuwait's landmark days. From children's activities to cultured dining offerings, we look forward to providing a weekend of fun for everyone," said Ziad Tantawi, General Manager of Hilton Kuwait Resort. For those wishing to stay at the hotel, Hilton Kuwait Resort is offering a great opportunity to spend the holiday and revel in its unparalleled rooms. Families can choose to stay in the hotel's impressive chalets, Presidential villas and Royal villas.



KUWAIT NATIONAL ENGLISH SCHOOL EARLY YEARS TRIP TO KUWAIT ZOO

The Early Years children of Kuwait National English School took the opportunity to visit the Kuwait Zoo. The bear growled, the lion roared, the elephant trumpeted and the monkey played. The young children of KNES showed their understanding and compassion by

asking caring questions about the animals and shared what they knew. The Kuwait Zoo is a wonderful opportunity for children to discover and learn about animals and their habitats, helping children to build the skills and intellect to become Global Citizens. We were also very

proud of our young children's behavior while at the zoo, always being polite and considerate with strangers and the environment. KNES Early Years would like to thank the staff and the State of Kuwait for providing this wonderful opportunity for learning and caring.





INTERNATIONAL WOMEN GROUP MEETS MINISTER OF AMIRI DIWAN

The International Women Group recently visited the minister of the Amiri Diwan, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to extend congratulations on the anniversary of the National and Liberation days.



LULU HYPERMARKET LAUNCHES HALA FEBRUARY PROMOTION

Lulu Hypermarket, the largest retail shopping destination in the country, launched their Hala February promotion with an inaugural ceremony held on 19 Feb at their Al-Qurain outlet. The Manager coordinator of Mubarak Al-Kabeer govern-

orate, Jassim Al-Eraj and Lulu International Group CEO Saifee Rupawala, along with top management of Lulu Hypermarket, cut the ceremonial launch ribbon in front of a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

A traditional Kuwaiti cultural program was held to mark the occasion. Besides adding to the month-long Hala February festivities, the promotion will celebrate the upcoming National and Liberation Days by offering a host of products that are produced in Kuwait at

very special prices. Lulu Hypermarket's participation in the month-long Hala celebrations is a further indication of the brands ongoing commitment to connect and interact with the community and to engage in all activities that mark Kuwait's special occasions.

OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 01:15 I Am Soldier
- 03:00 Sharknado 2: The Second One
- 05:00 Escape
- 07:00 Escape
- 08:45 Dragon Blade
- 11:00 Six Days Seven Nights
- 13:00 The Throwaways
- 14:45 Fury
- 17:15 Pompeii
- 19:15 Tracers
- 21:00 Last Knights
- 23:00 Wild Card

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:00 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
- 00:55 Gator Boys
- 01:50 River Monsters
- 02:45 Bondi Vet
- 03:40 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
- 04:35 Tanked
- 05:25 Call Of The Wildman
- 05:50 Call Of The Wildman
- 06:15 Gator Boys
- 07:02 River Monsters
- 07:49 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
- 08:36 Going Ape
- 09:00 Going Ape
- 09:25 Groomer Has It
- 10:15 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
- 11:10 Call Of The Wildman
- 11:35 Call Of The Wildman
- 12:05 Tanked
- 13:00 Groomer Has It
- 13:55 Bondi Vet
- 14:50 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
- 15:45 Gator Boys
- 16:40 Call Of The Wildman
- 17:05 Call Of The Wildman
- 17:35 Tanked
- 18:30 River Monsters
- 19:25 Rugged Justice
- 20:20 Catching Monsters
- 21:15 Tanked
- 22:10 Call Of The Wildman
- 22:35 Call Of The Wildman
- 23:05 Rugged Justice

BBC FIRST

- 00:00 Orphan Black
- 00:40 Casualty
- 01:35 Line Of Duty
- 02:35 Line Of Duty

- 06:30 Gym Rescue
- 07:20 Catch A Contractor
- 08:15 Catch A Contractor
- 09:05 Disaster Date
- 09:30 Ridiculousness
- 09:55 Ridiculousness
- 10:20 Key And Peele
- 10:45 Disaster Date
- 11:10 Ridiculousness
- 11:35 The It Crowd
- 12:00 Gym Rescue
- 12:50 I Live With Models
- 13:15 Lip Sync Battle
- 13:40 The It Crowd
- 14:05 Catch A Contractor
- 14:55 Ridiculousness
- 15:20 Bondi Ink
- 16:10 I Live With Models
- 16:35 Ridiculousness
- 17:00 Ridiculousness
- 17:30 Disaster Date
- 17:55 Lip Sync Battle
- 18:25 Key And Peele
- 18:50 Life Or Debt
- 19:39 The It Crowd
- 20:03 Sweat Inc.
- 20:50 Disaster Date
- 21:13 Idiotsitter
- 21:37 Important Things With Demetri
- 22:00 The Daily Show - Global Edition
- 22:30 The Meltdown With Jonah And Kumail
- 22:54 The Jim Gaffigan Show
- 23:18 Broad City
- 23:42 Broad City

Discovery Family

- 00:15 Destroyed In Seconds
- 00:40 Ultimate Survival
- 01:30 Science Of The Movies
- 02:20 Baby Animals
- 02:45 Baby Animals
- 03:10 Pick A Puppy
- 03:35 Pick A Puppy
- 04:00 Destroyed In Seconds
- 04:25 Destroyed In Seconds
- 04:50 Ultimate Survival
- 05:40 How It's Made
- 06:05 How It's Made
- 06:30 Dirty Jobs
- 07:20 Mythbusters
- 08:00 Kids vs Film
- 08:25 Bear Grylls Survival School
- 08:50 Bondi Vet
- 09:40 How It's Made
- 10:05 How It's Made
- 10:30 Science Of The Movies
- 11:20 Mythbusters

- 13:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 14:00 Welcome To The Ronks
- 14:15 Gravity Falls
- 14:40 Hank Zipper
- 15:05 Star Darlings
- 15:10 Austin & Ally
- 15:35 Jessie
- 16:00 Bunk'd
- 16:25 Kirby Buckets
- 16:50 Rolling To The Ronks
- 17:15 Sunny Bunnies
- 17:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 17:45 Elena Of Avalor
- 18:10 Stuck In The Middle
- 18:35 Descendants Wicked World
- 18:40 Girl Meets World
- 19:05 Bizaardvark
- 19:30 Bunk'd
- 19:55 Best Friends Whenever
- 20:20 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 20:25 The Next Step
- 20:50 Austin & Ally
- 21:15 Star Darlings
- 21:20 Shake It Up
- 21:45 Backstage
- 22:10 Liv And Maddie
- 22:35 Cracked
- 22:40 The Next Step
- 23:05 Best Friends Whenever
- 23:30 Jessie
- 23:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts

Disney Junior

- 00:00 Sofia The First
- 00:30 Sofia The First
- 00:55 PJ Masks
- 01:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 01:35 The Hive
- 01:45 Loopdidoo
- 02:00 Henry Hugglemonster
- 02:15 Calimero
- 02:30 Art Attack
- 02:55 Zou
- 03:05 Loopdidoo
- 03:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 03:35 Calimero
- 03:50 Zou
- 04:05 Art Attack
- 04:30 The Hive
- 04:40 Loopdidoo
- 04:55 Henry Hugglemonster
- 05:10 Art Attack
- 05:35 Loopdidoo
- 05:50 Calimero
- 06:05 Art Attack
- 06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 06:45 Zou
- 07:00 Art Attack
- 07:30 Henry Hugglemonster

- 14:55 Storage Wars Canada
- 15:20 Alaska: The Last Frontier
- 16:10 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
- 17:00 Deadliest Catch
- 17:50 Fast N' Loud
- 18:40 Misfit Garage
- 19:30 How Do They Do It?
- 19:55 How Do They Do It?
- 20:20 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
- 21:10 Storage Wars Canada
- 21:35 Storage Wars Canada
- 22:00 The Island With Bear Grylls
- 22:50 Bear Grylls: Mission Survive
- 23:40 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown

Disney XD

- 00:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA
- 07:00 Danger Mouse
- 07:25 Gravity Falls
- 07:50 Atomic Puppet
- 08:15 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 08:25 Counterfeit Cat
- 08:40 Supa Strikas
- 09:10 K.C. Undercover
- 09:35 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
- 10:00 Lab Rats Elite Force
- 10:25 Lab Rats Elite Force
- 10:50 Danger Mouse
- 11:20 Supa Strikas
- 11:45 Supa Strikas
- 12:10 Counterfeit Cat
- 12:35 Pair Of Kings
- 13:00 Future-Worm!
- 13:55 Lab Rats
- 14:20 Lab Rats
- 14:45 Atomic Puppet
- 15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 15:15 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 15:40 Supa Strikas
- 16:05 Lab Rats
- 16:30 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 16:55 Right Now Kapow
- 17:25 K.C. Undercover
- 17:50 Future-Worm!
- 18:15 Gravity Falls
- 18:40 Lab Rats Elite Force
- 19:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 19:10 Supa Strikas
- 19:35 Right Now Kapow
- 20:00 Atomic Puppet
- 20:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 20:55 K.C. Undercover
- 21:20 Kickin' It
- 21:45 Mighty Med
- 22:10 Danger Mouse
- 22:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 22:45 Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution
- 23:10 Ultimate Spider-Man: Web Warriors
- 23:35 Boyster

EHD

- 00:00 E! News
- 00:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 01:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 01:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 02:55 LA Clippers Dance Squad
- 03:55 LA Clippers Dance Squad
- 04:50 LA Clippers Dance Squad
- 05:40 LA Clippers Dance Squad
- 06:30 Fashion Bloggers
- 07:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
- 07:55 E! News
- 08:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
- 09:10 E! News
- 10:10 Rob & Chyna
- 11:05 Rob & Chyna
- 12:00 Rob & Chyna
- 13:00 E! News
- 13:15 Fashion Bloggers
- 13:40 Fashion Bloggers
- 14:10 So Cosmo
- 15:05 So Cosmo
- 16:00 E! News
- 16:15 WAGS
- 17:15 WAGS
- 18:10 WAGS
- 19:05 WAGS
- 20:00 Fashion Police
- 21:00 Celebrity Style Story
- 21:30 Celebrity Style Story
- 22:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
- 23:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian

food network

- 00:00 Restaurant Stakeout
- 01:00 Mystery Diners
- 01:30 Mystery Diners
- 02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 03:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:30 Man Fire Food

- 04:00 Chopped
- 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 06:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 07:00 The Kitchen
- 08:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 08:30 The Pioneer Woman
- 09:00 Siba's Table
- 09:30 Siba's Table
- 10:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 10:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 11:00 The Kitchen
- 12:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 12:30 The Pioneer Woman
- 13:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 13:30 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 15:00 Chopped
- 16:00 The Kitchen
- 17:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 17:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 18:00 Chopped
- 19:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 20:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 20:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 21:00 Man Fire Food
- 21:30 Man Fire Food
- 22:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 22:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 23:00 Iron Chef America

itv HD CHOICE

- 00:15 Coronation Street
- 00:40 Coronation Street
- 01:10 The Chase
- 02:00 Emmerdale
- 02:30 Coronation Street
- 03:00 Coronation Street
- 03:30 Couples Come Dine With Me
- 04:25 Vera
- 06:15 Grantchester
- 07:10 The Chase
- 08:05 Couples Come Dine With Me
- 09:00 Vera
- 10:30 Callie-Anne Cooks Into The Wild
- 11:00 Grantchester
- 11:55 The Chase
- 12:50 Couples Come Dine With Me
- 13:45 Emmerdale
- 14:15 Coronation Street
- 14:45 Coronation Street
- 15:15 The Chase
- 16:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
- 17:00 Murdoch Mysteries
- 17:55 Him
- 18:50 Grantchester
- 19:45 Emmerdale
- 20:15 Coronation Street
- 20:45 Coronation Street
- 21:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
- 22:00 Murdoch Mysteries
- 22:55 Him
- 23:50 Emmerdale

H2 HD

- 00:00 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
- 01:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 02:00 Warriors
- 03:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 04:00 Missing In Alaska
- 04:50 Ancient Aliens
- 05:40 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
- 06:30 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 07:20 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 08:10 The Universe
- 09:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 10:00 Missing In Alaska
- 11:00 Ancient Aliens
- 12:00 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
- 13:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 14:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 15:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 16:00 Missing In Alaska
- 17:00 Ancient Aliens
- 18:00 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
- 19:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 20:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 21:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 22:00 Missing In Alaska
- 23:00 Ancient Aliens

HISTORY HD

- 00:30 American Pickers
- 01:20 Time Team
- 02:10 The Curse Of Oak Island
- 03:00 Hunting Hitler: Inside The Investigation
- 03:50 Storage Wars
- 04:15 American Pickers
- 05:15 Pawn Stars
- 05:30 Pawn Stars
- 06:00 Mountain Men

FROM THE PRODUCER OF 'PARENTHOOD'



When your Dad's an undertaker, your Mom's in heaven, and your Grandma's got a screw loose... it's good to have a friend who understands you. Even if he is a boy.

MY GIRL

- Dan Aykroyd
- Jamie Lee Curtis
- Maeaulay Culkin
- Anna Chlumsky

MY GIRL ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

- 01:00 Alaska: The Last Frontier
- 07:50 Shipping Wars
- 08:15 Shipping Wars
- 08:40 Counting Cars
- 09:05 Counting Cars
- 09:30 Pawn Stars
- 09:55 Pawn Stars
- 10:20 Storage Wars
- 10:45 Storage Wars
- 11:10 American Pickers
- 12:00 Search For The Lost Giants
- 12:50 Time Team
- 13:40 Swap People
- 14:30 Ax Men
- 15:20 Mountain Men - Closest Calls
- 16:10 Shipping Wars
- 16:35 Shipping Wars
- 17:00 Counting Cars
- 17:25 Counting Cars
- 17:50 Pawn Stars
- 18:15 Pawn Stars
- 18:40 Hunting Hitler: Inside The Investigation
- 19:30 The Curse Of Oak Island
- 20:20 Mountain Men
- 21:10 American Pickers
- 22:00 Ice Road Truckers
- 22:50 Leppu And Pitbull
- 23:40 Swamp People

NAT GEO WILD HD

- 00:30 River Jaws: Monster Catfish
- 01:20 Big Cat Games
- 02:10 Maneater Manhunt
- 03:00 Big Cats: An Amazing Animal Family
- 03:50 South Africa
- 04:45 Soul Of The Cat
- 05:40 Hidden Worlds
- 06:35 Big Cats: An Amazing Animal Family
- 07:30 South Africa
- 08:25 Soul Of The Cat
- 09:20 Hidden Worlds
- 10:15 Wild 24
- 11:10 Dead Or Alive
- 12:05 Soul Of The Cat
- 13:00 Squid vs. Whale
- 13:55 Leopard Queen
- 14:50 South Africa
- 15:45 Safari Brothers
- 16:40 Hidden Worlds
- 17:35 Wild 24
- 18:30 Dead Or Alive
- 19:25 Moody Beasts
- 20:20 Safari Brothers
- 21:10 Hidden Worlds
- 22:00 Wild 24
- 22:50 Dead Or Alive
- 23:40 Moody Beasts

NAT GEO people HD

- 00:20 Carnival Eats
- 00:45 Carnival Eats
- 01:10 Glamour Puds
- 01:35 One Man & His Campervan
- 02:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 02:25 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 02:50 The Shelbourne
- 03:15 Chocolate Covered
- 03:40 Poh & Co
- 04:05 Great Escapes
- 04:30 Miguel's Feasts
- 04:55 A Is For Apple
- 05:20 A Is For Apple
- 05:45 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
- 06:10 Sara's Australia Unveiled
- 06:35 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
- 07:00 Chocolate Covered
- 07:25 Poh & Co
- 07:50 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 08:15 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 08:40 The Shelbourne
- 09:05 Chocolate Covered
- 09:30 Poh & Co
- 09:55 Great Escapes
- 10:20 Miguel's Feasts
- 10:45 A Is For Apple
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- 12:25 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
- 12:50 Chocolate Covered
- 13:15 Poh & Co
- 13:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 14:05 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 14:35 The Shelbourne
- 15:00 Glamour Puds
- 15:30 Wineroads
- 15:55 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
- 16:25 Miguel's Feasts
- 16:50 A Is For Apple
- 17:20 A Is For Apple
- 17:45 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
- 18:15 Sara's Australia Unveiled
- 18:40 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
- 19:10 Glamour Puds
- 19:35 Cruise Ship Diaries
- 20:05 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
- 20:30 Miguel's Feasts
- 21:00 A Is For Apple
- 21:25 A Is For Apple
- 21:50 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
- 22:15 Sara's Australia Unveiled
- 22:40 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
- 23:05 Glamour Puds
- 23:30 Cruise Ship Diaries
- 23:55 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet

OSN MOVIES DRAMA

- 00:00 American Heist
- 02:00 Transcendence
- 04:00 The Haunting
- 06:00 The Frozen
- 08:00 Oliver's Deal
- 10:00 The Darkness
- 12:00 A Teacher's Obsession
- 14:00 The Haunting
- 16:00 The Intruders
- 18:00 The Harvest
- 20:00 A Good Marriage
- 22:00 The Pack

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

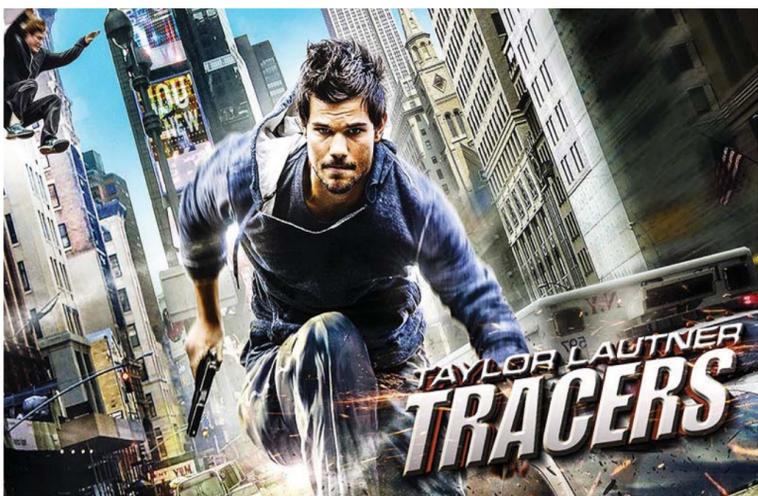
- 00:00 Atlantis: The Lost Empire
- 02:00 Snow Dogs
- 04:00 House Arrest
- 06:00 Treasure Planet
- 08:00 Toy Story 2
- 10:00 Atlantis: The Lost Empire
- 12:00 Treasure Planet
- 14:00 Toy Story 3
- 16:00 Atlantis: Milo's Return
- 18:00 Pooch's Heffalump Halloween Movie
- 19:30 Hocus Pocus
- 21:30 Jem And The Holograms
- 23:30 Atlantis: Milo's Return

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Magic Mike XXL
- 02:00 Paranormal Activity: The Ghost Dimension
- 04:00 Everest
- 06:00 Miracles From Heaven
- 08:00 Me And Earl And The Dying Girl
- 10:00 Everest
- 12:00 A Royal Night Out
- 14:00 Fathers And Daughters
- 16:00 The Peanut Movie
- 18:00 The Intern
- 20:00 The Jungle Book
- 22:00 The Boss

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

- 01:00 Are You Here
- 03:00 Hector And The Search For Happiness
- 05:00 The Final Girls
- 07:00 Take Care
- 09:00 My Girl
- 11:00 The Final Girls
- 13:00 Take Care
- 15:00 The Beautician And The Beast
- 17:00 Ana Maria In Novela Land
- 19:00 Undercover Brother
- 21:00 The Out Of Towners
- 23:00 Dance Flick



TRACERS ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 03:35 Ripper Street
- 04:30 Orphan Black
- 05:15 Casualty
- 06:05 New Tricks
- 07:00 Casualty
- 08:00 Casualty
- 08:55 Death In Paradise
- 09:50 Stella
- 10:35 New Tricks
- 11:30 Casualty
- 12:30 Death In Paradise
- 13:25 Stella
- 14:20 New Tricks
- 15:15 Casualty
- 16:10 Death In Paradise
- 17:10 The Coroner
- 18:05 New Tricks
- 19:00 Doctors
- 19:30 Doctors
- 20:05 Death In Paradise
- 21:00 Call The Midwife
- 22:00 Silent Witness
- 23:05 Silent Witness

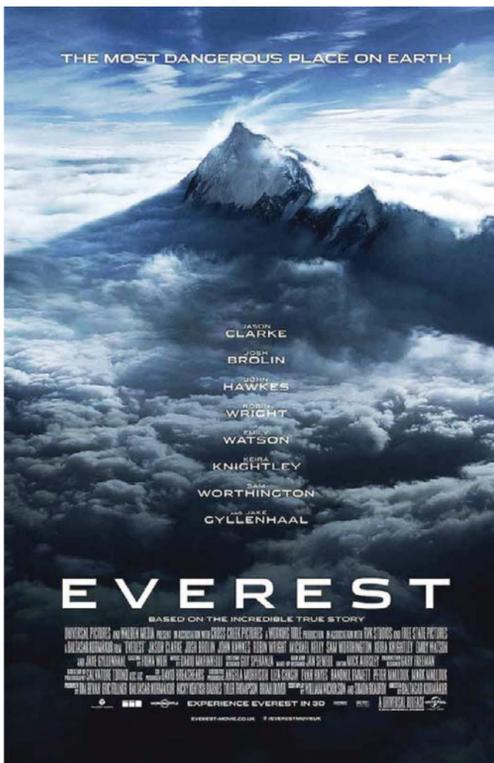
Disney Channel HD

- 00:00 Kirby Buckets
- 00:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 01:10 Hank Zipper
- 01:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 02:00 Violetta
- 02:45 The Hive
- 02:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 03:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 03:40 Hank Zipper
- 04:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 04:30 Violetta
- 05:15 The Hive
- 05:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 05:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 06:10 Hank Zipper
- 06:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 07:00 Violetta
- 07:45 The Hive
- 07:50 The 7D
- 08:00 Jessie
- 08:25 Jessie
- 08:50 Rolling To The Ronks
- 09:15 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 09:20 Elena Of Avalor
- 09:45 Bunk'd
- 10:10 Stuck In The Middle
- 10:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
- 11:00 Wizards Of Waverly Place
- 11:25 A.N.T. Farm
- 11:50 A.N.T. Farm
- 12:15 Good Luck Charlie
- 12:40 Good Luck Charlie
- 13:05 Shake It Up
- 13:30 Shake It Up

- 07:45 Loopdidoo
- 08:00 Zou
- 08:15 Calimero
- 08:30 Loopdidoo
- 08:45 Henry Hugglemonster
- 09:00 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 09:15 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 09:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 09:45 Goldie & Bear
- 09:55 The Lion Guard
- 10:20 PJ Masks
- 10:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 10:50 Doc McStuffins
- 11:00 Goldie & Bear
- 11:15 PJ Masks
- 11:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 11:35 The Lion Guard
- 12:00 Sofia The First
- 12:30 Doc McStuffins
- 12:55 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 13:20 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
- 13:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 14:15 Gummi Bears
- 14:40 Sofia The First
- 15:10 Little Mermaid
- 15:35 PJ Masks
- 16:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
- 16:30 The Lion Guard
- 16:55 Unbungleable
- 17:00 Miles From Tomorrow
- 17:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 17:55 The Lion Guard
- 18:20 Goldie & Bear
- 18:50 PJ Masks
- 19:15 Sofia The First
- 19:40 Doc McStuffins
- 20:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 20:30 Little Mermaid
- 21:00 Sofia The First
- 21:30 Sofia The First
- 22:00 Unbungleable
- 22:05 Goldie & Bear
- 22:35 Miles From Tomorrow
- 23:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
- 23:25 Gummi Bears
- 23:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons

Discovery Channel HD

- 00:30 Fast N' Loud
- 01:20 Misfit Garage
- 02:10 Gold Rush
- 03:00 Everest Rescue
- 03:50 Killing Fields
- 04:40 Fast N' Loud
- 05:30 Storage Wars Canada
- 06:00 How Do They Do It?
- 06:30 How Do They Do It?
- 07:00 Deadliest Catch
- 07:50 Misfit Garage
- 08:40 Fast N' Loud
- 09:30 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
- 10:20 Storage Wars Canada
- 10:45 How Do They Do It?
- 11:10 How Do They Do It?
- 11:35 Gold Rush
- 12:25 Everest Rescue
- 13:15 The Making Of Mandela
- 14:05 How Do They Do It?
- 14:30 Storage Wars Canada



EVEREST

CLASSIFIEDS



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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (16/02/2017 TO 22/02/2017)



| Channel | Time | Programme | Channel | Time | Programme | Channel | Time | Programme |
|-----------|----------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| SHARQIA-1 | 11:30 AM | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | 1:30 PM | MARINA-3 | 12:00 PM | RINGS | JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 |
| SHARQIA-2 | 12:45 PM | GOLD | ARSENAL | 3:00 PM | ARSENAL | 3:00 PM | ARSENAL | 3:00 PM |
| SHARQIA-3 | 12:45 PM | JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 | RINGS | 3:15 PM | JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 | 3:15 PM | RINGS | 3:15 PM |
| MUHALAB-1 | 12:15 PM | PET | PET | 2:15 PM | PET | 2:15 PM | PET | 2:15 PM |
| MUHALAB-2 | 12:00 PM | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | KAABIL- HINDI | 2:00 PM | JOLLY LLB 2 -Hindi | 8:00 PM | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | 10:00 PM |
| MUHALAB-3 | 12:45 PM | JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 | ARSENAL | 3:15 PM | JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 | 3:15 PM | ARSENAL | 3:15 PM |
| FANAR-1 | 11:30 AM | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | 1:30 PM | MARINA-1 | 1:00 PM | ARSENAL | 3:15 PM |
| FANAR-2 | 9:00 PM | PET | RINGS | 2:30 PM | PET | 2:30 PM | RINGS | 2:30 PM |
| FANAR-3 | 1:00 PM | KAABIL- HINDI | AL MOKHAYAM | 1:45 PM | DANGAL -Hindi | 3:45 PM | JOLLY LLB 2 -Hindi | 7:00 PM |
| FANAR-4 | 11:30 AM | JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 | GOLD | 2:00 PM | GOLD | 4:15 PM | GOLD | 6:45 PM |
| FANAR-5 | 11:45 AM | ARSENAL | ARSENAL | 1:45 PM | ARSENAL | 3:45 PM | RAEES- HINDI | 8:45 PM |
| MARINA-2 | 12:45 PM | DALIDA | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | 1:30 PM | FRI | 3:30 PM | SPLIT | 6:00 PM |
| MARINA-3 | 12:00 PM | RINGS | JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 | 12:05 AM | AVENUES-3 | 12:00 PM | RINGS | 2:15 PM |
| AVENUES-1 | 11:30 AM | THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE | THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE | 1:45 PM | THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE | 4:00 PM | THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE | 6:15 PM |
| AVENUES-2 | 12:15 PM | JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 -2D -4DX | THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE -3D -4DX | 5:00 PM | THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE -3D -4DX | 7:15 PM | JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 -2D -4DX | 12:05 AM |
| AVENUES-3 | 12:00 PM | RINGS | RINGS | 4:30 PM | RINGS | 6:45 PM | RINGS | 9:45 PM |
| AVENUES-4 | 1:00 PM | KAABIL- HINDI | RINGS | 1:30 PM | FRI | 4:00 PM | RAEES- HINDI | 6:15 PM |
| 360°-1 | 12:15 PM | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | 2:15 PM | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | 4:15 PM | EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic | 8:15 PM |
| 360°-2 | 12:45 PM | SPLIT | SPLIT | 12:45 PM | SPLIT | 3:00 PM | DANGAL -Hindi | 5:15 PM |

Dental Nurses

Already work in Kuwait for new opening dental center in Bneid Algar City,

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MATRIMONIAL

Jacobite parents invite proposals for their son, Post Graduate Engineer, 29/173, working in Kuwait. M4marry profile ID - 4178223. Email: scariahrej@gmail.com (C 5275) 18-2-2017

CHANGE OF NAME

I, GANIJI ZAINAB QURESH, wife of Murtuza Mustufa Jawadwala, holder of Passport No. J0366967 & Civil ID No. 283021503013 has changed my name to ZAINAB MURTUZA JAWADWALA hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by my new name ZAINAB MURTUZA JAWADWALA. (C 5274) 16-2-2017

We're Hiring

Restaurant located in Kuwait City

WAITER (Male, Female)

Send CV: wsushikw@hotmail.com
 TEL: 99812389
 99725066

PRAYER TIMINGS

| | |
|----------|-------|
| Fajr: | 05:03 |
| Shorook: | 06:22 |
| Duhr: | 12:02 |
| Asr: | 15:16 |
| Maghrib: | 17:42 |
| Isha: | 18:59 |



Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

| Arrival Flights on Tuesday 21/2/2017 | | | | Departure Flights on Tuesday 21/2/2017 | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|------------------|-------|--|------|------------------|-------|
| Airlines | Fit | Route | Time | Airlines | Fit | Route | Time |
| MSC | 405 | Sohag | 00:05 | AXB | 394 | Kozhikode | 14:10 |
| KAC | 776 | Riyadh | 00:20 | UAE | 872 | Dubai | 14:15 |
| KLM | 411 | Amsterdam/Dammam | 00:20 | JZR | 324 | Al Najaf | 14:25 |
| JZR | 267 | Beirut | 00:30 | KAC | 673 | Dubai | 15:00 |
| JZR | 539 | Cairo | 00:40 | KAC | 561 | Amman | 15:00 |
| THY | 772 | Istanbul | 00:55 | FDB | 060 | Dubai | 15:10 |
| MSC | 411 | Asyut | 01:00 | KAC | 785 | Jeddah | 15:15 |
| QTR | 1086 | Doha | 01:15 | PAL | 669 | Dubai/Manila | 15:20 |
| KAC | 102 | London | 01:25 | KAC | 513 | Tehran | 15:25 |
| THY | 764 | Istanbul | 01:50 | GFA | 222 | Bahrain | 15:25 |
| DLH | 635 | Doha | 01:55 | QTR | 1079 | Doha | 15:40 |
| PGT | 858 | Istanbul | 02:00 | SVA | 501 | Jeddah | 15:45 |
| AXB | 395 | Kozhikode | 02:00 | KNE | 530 | Jeddah | 15:55 |
| ETH | 620 | Addis Ababa | 02:05 | CLX | 784 | Dubai | 16:00 |
| GFA | 211 | Bahrain | 02:30 | KAC | 777 | Riyadh | 16:00 |
| UAE | 853 | Dubai | 02:30 | KAC | 745 | Dammam | 16:00 |
| KAC | 412 | Bangkok | 02:50 | KAC | 357 | Kochi | 16:20 |
| OMA | 643 | Muscat | 02:55 | ETD | 304 | Abu Dhabi | 16:20 |
| KKK | 6506 | Istanbul | 02:55 | ABY | 128 | Sharjah | 16:30 |
| FDB | 069 | Dubai | 02:55 | OMA | 646 | Muscat | 16:35 |
| RJA | 644 | Amman | 03:05 | JZR | 266 | Beirut | 17:05 |
| ETD | 305 | Abu Dhabi | 03:10 | JZR | 240 | Amman | 17:15 |
| MSR | 612 | Cairo | 03:10 | FDB | 052 | Dubai | 17:25 |
| QTR | 1076 | Doha | 03:30 | KAC | 615 | Bahrain | 17:35 |
| KAC | 358 | Kochi | 03:30 | QTR | 1073 | Doha | 17:40 |
| LMU | 5510 | Cairo | 04:00 | KAC | 343 | Chennai | 17:40 |
| KAC | 1544 | Cairo | 04:10 | UAE | 858 | Dubai | 17:45 |
| KAC | 418 | Manila | 04:25 | JZR | 538 | Cairo | 17:45 |
| THY | 6376 | Istanbul | 05:05 | RJA | 641 | Amman | 17:55 |
| JZR | 529 | Asyut | 05:15 | KAC | 331 | Trivandrum | 18:00 |
| KAC | 354 | BLR | 05:20 | SVA | 511 | Riyadh | 18:15 |
| DHX | 170 | Bahrain | 05:20 | GFA | 216 | Bahrain | 18:20 |
| KAC | 344 | Chennai | 05:35 | KAC | 283 | Dhaka | 18:30 |
| KAC | 332 | Trivandrum | 05:45 | JZR | 184 | Dubai | 18:40 |
| THY | 770 | Istanbul | 05:55 | NIA | 252 | Alexandria | 18:55 |
| KAC | 364 | Colombo | 06:05 | FDB | 064 | Dubai | 19:05 |
| KAC | 384 | Delhi | 06:05 | JZR | 124 | Bahrain | 19:15 |
| KAC | 206 | Islamabad | 06:20 | UAE | 876 | Dubai | 19:30 |
| KAC | 346 | Ahmedabad | 06:25 | MSR | 621 | Cairo | 19:30 |
| BAW | 157 | London | 06:40 | QTR | 1081 | Doha | 19:50 |
| PAL | 668 | Manila/Dubai | 07:00 | ABY | 124 | Sharjah | 20:05 |
| FDB | 5061 | Dubai | 07:15 | GFA | 218 | Bahrain | 20:15 |
| KAC | 284 | Dhaka | 07:35 | FDB | 058 | Dubai | 20:35 |
| FDB | 053 | Dubai | 07:50 | KAC | 361 | Colombo | 20:35 |
| KAC | 302 | Mumbai | 08:20 | KAC | 1543 | Cairo | 21:00 |
| UAE | 855 | Dubai | 08:40 | MSR | 607 | Luxor | 21:05 |
| KAC | 382 | Delhi | 08:45 | OMA | 648 | Muscat | 21:10 |
| ABY | 125 | Sharjah | 09:05 | KAC | 205 | Islamabad | 21:25 |
| ETD | 301 | Abu Dhabi | 09:05 | KAC | 345 | Ahmedabad | 21:30 |
| QTR | 1070 | Doha | 09:30 | QTR | 1089 | Doha | 21:35 |
| TXC | 1620 | FJR | 09:30 | DLH | 634 | Doha | 21:35 |
| FDB | 055 | Dubai | 09:40 | FDB | 5054 | Dubai | 21:50 |
| SVA | 512 | Riyadh | 10:00 | DHX | 171 | Bahrain | 21:50 |
| AVV | 651 | Asyut | 10:10 | KAC | 351 | Kochi | 22:00 |
| GFA | 213 | Bahrain | 10:40 | ETD | 308 | Abu Dhabi | 22:15 |
| IRA | 675 | Lar | 10:40 | KAC | 203 | Lahore | 22:15 |
| MSC | 403 | Asyut | 11:15 | KAC | 413 | Bangkok | 22:15 |
| JZR | 165 | Dubai | 11:30 | MEA | 403 | Beirut | 22:20 |
| MEA | 404 | Beirut | 11:55 | ALK | 230 | Colombo | 22:25 |
| QTR | 8511 | Doha | 12:00 | GFA | 220 | Bahrain | 22:30 |
| KAC | 286 | Dhaka | 12:25 | KAC | 301 | Mumbai | 22:45 |
| MSC | 401 | Alexandria | 12:30 | KAC | 381 | Delhi | 22:45 |
| JZR | 561 | Sohag | 12:40 | UAE | 860 | Dubai | 22:55 |
| FDB | 075 | Dubai | 12:50 | ETD | 310 | Abu Dhabi | 23:05 |
| UAE | 871 | Dubai | 12:50 | NIA | 152 | Cairo | 23:10 |
| KAC | 680 | Dubai | 12:55 | QTR | 1083 | Doha | 23:20 |
| | | | | KLM | 415 | Dammam/Amsterdam | 23:20 |
| | | | | PIA | 240 | Sialkot | 23:35 |

CROSSWORD 1528



ACROSS

1. A French abbot.
5. A member of a North American people formerly living in the Colorado river valley in Arizona.
12. The waging of armed conflict against an enemy.
15. A sudden short attack.
16. Vacuously or complacently and unconsciously foolish.
17. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
18. In bed.
19. Some unspecified time in the future.
20. The smallest multiple that is exactly divisible by every member of a set of numbers.
21. The month following February and preceding April.
23. French revolutionary who was prominent in the early days of the French Revolution (1749-1791).
26. Greek philosopher who believed that the world is a random combination of atoms and that pleasure is the highest good (341-270 BC).
28. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
31. A fraudulent business scheme.
32. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
35. In a murderous frenzy as if possessed by a demon.
38. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
39. Shape anew or differently.
42. The size of a book whose pages are made by folding a sheet of paper twice to form four leaves.
44. The cardinal number that is the sum of one and one and one.
45. Yellow-fever mosquitos.
48. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
49. An Eskimo hut.
50. Cloth covering that forms the part of a garment below the waist.
51. A person eating a meal (especially in a restaurant).
53. Serving as an essential component.
55. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
57. Scottish chemist noted for his research into the structure of nucleic acids (born in 1907).
59. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
61. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
65. Violently urging on by whipping or flogging.
69. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
72. The lofty nest of a bird of prey (such as a hawk or eagle).
73. Being one more than four.
74. Absence of the mammary glands (either through surgery or developmental defect).
76. A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.

DOWN

77. An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
78. Of or relating to Dante Alighieri or his writings.
79. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
1. The biblical name for ancient Syria.
2. A small cake leavened with yeast.
3. A coffin along with its stand.
4. A doctor's degree in education.
5. Having or prompted by wisdom or discernment.
6. A positively charged electrode by which electrons leave an electrical device.
7. A rapid escape (as by criminals).
8. Lacking vigor or energy.
9. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
10. An automatic signal (usually a sound) warning of danger.
11. The eighth month of the civil year.
12. Polish labor leader and statesman (born in 1943).
13. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
14. Tall New Zealand timber tree.
22. A coffee cake flavored with orange rind and raisins and almonds.
24. (pathology) An elevation of the skin filled with serous fluid.
25. A scented lozenge used to sweeten the breath (e.g. to conceal the odor of tobacco).
27. A unit of pressure.
29. Come out into view, as from concealment.
30. In a busy manner.
33. Tangled in a dense mass.
34. On a ship, train, plane or other vehicle.
36. A person with an unusual or odd personality.
37. A Scottish word.
40. A civil or military authority in Turkey or Egypt.
41. A morel whose fertile portion resembles a bell and is attached to the stipe only at the top.
43. A city in western Nevada at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.
46. Belonging to or governing a diocese n.
47. Arranged like rays or radii.
52. Unable to relax or be still.
54. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
56. An accountant certified by the state.
58. A confusion of voices and other sounds.
60. An association of nations dedicated to economic and political cooperation in south-eastern Asia.
62. An elaborate song for solo voice.
63. An island in Indonesia south of Borneo.
64. Large American feline resembling a lion.
66. A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
67. Pleasant or pleasing or agreeable in nature or appearance.
68. Footwear usually with wooden soles.
70. (informal) Roused to anger.
71. Standard time in the 6th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 90th meridian.
75. A state in midwestern United States.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Coordinating events for a company's executive conference or the like may take up much of your day. Research, ask questions and gather information about several prospects. Figuring out how to organize projects and people is apt to become a topic of special interest and a challenge at this time. As you make your presentation, prepare several ideas for approval-eliminating more research. Respect, status and achievement are central goals for you as a new phase begins in your life. A financial venture comes to your attention this afternoon. Obtain advice before obligating yourself. Your whole world may seem hypnotic or dreamy this afternoon. Poetry and art may be possible. Movies, books and all forms of escape prove enjoyable.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Much can be accomplished in the workplace today. Your instinctive orientation at this time is toward getting down to the basics. This is a time when you can expect a little boost, some sort of extra support or recognition from those around you. Learning how and why people do and think what they do is a fun pastime for you at this time. You may feel that you are in touch and in harmony with others; the lines of communication are open. You can demonstrate great understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others. Sex, power and money are compelling aphrodisiacs. Secrets, taboos and mysteries appeal to a deep instinctive yearning. You may be taking on an extra job today in order to earn that hide-away money for your emergency fund.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

If you are unhappy with one line of work you may want to consider another line of work. Many of you find that temporary job agencies fill your needs quite well. There are few bonuses, but if you are in demand, you could call your own shots. Wise investing, or just consistently saving on each payday, will do away with the need for bonuses and vacation pay. Family matters could come to your attention at this time and listening without commenting is important just now. If necessary, ask for time to think through a subject. This matter will work out before it is brought to your attention again. Financial opportunities may be tempting. This may be something you will want to mention to family members when appropriate.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Ambition and achievement are qualities you hold in special regard now. This is a time for getting ahead and for combining business and pleasure, a time to enjoy your career and savor its rewards. The social graces pave your path to success. Ideas to increase your income may come to you from your family and friends. You are full of ideas and ready to listen to other people's ideas as well. You are capable of handling a business yourself-you could consider this for one of your future goals. A work partnership should be thought through carefully. A temporary accountant could be your answer in the paperwork department. You will be shopping for items pertaining to your job today, perhaps a new suit or some luggage.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

There are some positive changes headed your way this morning. For whatever reason, you will have time to work with young people this morning. You may be a guest speaker or a new teacher; whatever the case you are helpful. You may have some ideas running around in your head that could be helpful in guiding these young people toward their personal choice of a future profession. Learning where they might want to use their talents and realizing they are very talented are very positive insights for them. Taking some of your ideas to the industry world, there may be future opportunities for young adults to work or observe the work within the professional field where they may have an interest. This is some action that progresses nicely.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Real insight into your own inner workings or psychology could surface today, and in a manageable form. You may be in the mood for deep and penetrating conversations. There could be an opportunity for a round-table discussion to answer office questions. Your viewpoint will be heard-patience. Expect a sense of support from those around you. You may want to create a beautiful space for a guest that will be visiting soon. This could be a family member or a very good friend. For more space, you might take the things you don't play with anymore and sell them on the internet. If you just can't seem to get rid of the excess you might store the items in a rental storage place. This way you can create a place for them over time.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Today is a natural for self-expression and lends itself to your particular ideas and thoughts. When some service-type person treats you poorly, you may wish you could find ways to show disapproval. There is someone who waits on you or serves you that deserves your praise and you will reward this person by writing a letter to the appropriate supervisor. A great many problems for that person will be lifted. Smart as a fox, you solve problems and sail through the day. There is an opportunity to encourage others in the benefits of seeing two sides of a problem. The example you show gives others a guide in thinking outside the box, so to speak. This evening, listening to family members tell about their day is fun. A few chuckles are likely to occur.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Creating a structure to empower and maintain your ideals and principles becomes a high priority, an article of faith. By taking on greater responsibilities of this kind, you become an inspiration to others. Remember to compromise your differences with customers, co-workers or higher-ups and you will see fast, positive results to what you are trying to achieve. Progressive people and idealistic groups or concepts play a more important role in your life now, as a new trend begins. This is a concern for something bigger than any one person-the good of the many outweigh the needs of the few. Dare yourself to smile at someone once an hour today, and see what happens-invite others to join you. Do not keep someone waiting this evening-good surprises are nearby.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may feel left out or passed over just now. Your own requirements may appear to stop you from going where the rest of the gang is headed. This is of short duration, however. Some quiet time can be enjoyed just now if you just go with the flow. Careful study will yield dividends today. The aspect between one astrological planet and another creates the right condition for some really good financial growth. Keep the pace steady and don't jump ahead too soon. You can waste right through any problems you might encounter this afternoon. You demonstrate great understanding of the needs of others and are now in a good position to communicate with difficult customers as well as higher-ups. If the weather permits, enjoy the outdoors this afternoon.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Be prepared: it is now time to sign up for a lecture, class or group that can give you some wonderful insights and stimulation toward mental growth. Intelligent conversations and the mental stimulation that is found in the atmosphere of a classroom, group conversation or a university create a boost to your energy. You are also coming to a time that you could comfortably take a vacation and set aside some time for healing through fun activities. Anytime between now and the end of this month is a good time to set aside for a short three- or four-day rest by the ocean or lakeside cabin, somewhere near water. To save a little extra money toward this trip, begin practicing a little price comparison. You may be very proud of your efforts.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You will find you have lots of energy and drive, perfect for starting something out or taking care of business. You may have been noticing the misuse of some funds that needs to be brought to a supervisor's attention-wait a while longer before making your report; there could be more to this than you know. A little detective work and some time may give you further information; easy does it. When an agreement is made today, make sure you do not leave someone out that would like to be included in some after-work plans. Meetings, conferences or business travel can be lucrative now. Attend to any turmoil on the job at this time and try to stay out of issues that do not affect you. Make a little extra effort to return a favor to a neighbor this evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may be reminded of how tedious it is to feel like you are doing all the work and getting no recognition from your professional state of being; patience, recognition is coming your way. Others will see the fine results of your hard work. Your leadership skills are excellent and this is a day when others would be more attentive to you than usual. You may find yourself a leader in matters of importance. If you are a teacher, your leadership skills will certainly help to teach the student teachers exactly how to get the best results. If you are working on a project, your determination to excel will take your group to the finish line with an excellent outcome. Rewards are scheduled. Tonight, there are plenty of hugs.

WORD SEARCH

Movie Actresses 2

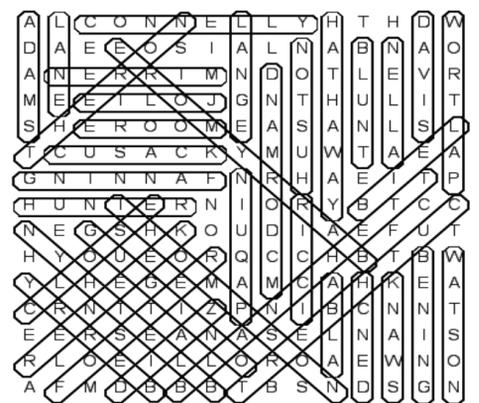
Find and circle all of the Movie Actresses that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a movie for which Louise Fletcher won an Oscar.



- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| BATES, Kathy | JOHANSSON, Scarlett | SPACEK, Sissy |
| BINOCHÉ, Juliette | KIDMAN, Nicole | STEENBURGEN, Mary |
| BRESLIN, Abigail | KNIGHTLEY, Keira | STEWART, Kristen |
| BULLOCK, Sandra | LINNEY, Laura | STREEP, Meryl |
| BURSTYN, Ellen | LOHAN, Lindsay | SWINTON, Tilda |
| CLARKSON, Patricia | MACLAINE, Shirley | THURMAN, Uma |
| CRUZ, Penelope | MCADAMS, Rachel | TOMEI, Marisa |
| DELPY, Julie | MOORE, Julianne | WALTERS, Julie |
| DESCHANEL, Zoë | PFEIFFER, Michelle | WATTS, Naomi |
| DUNST, Kirsten | PORTMAN, Natalie | WEAVER, Sigourney |
| FARMIGA, Vera | REID, Tara | WEISZ, Rachel |
| FLETCHER, Louise | ROBERTS, Julia | WINSLET, Kate |
| HAYEK, Salma | RYDER, Winona | WITHERSPOON, Reese |
| HEIGL, Katherine | SARANDON, Susan | ZELLWEGER, Renee |
| HUDSON, Kate | SMITH, Maggie | |

Yesterday's Solution

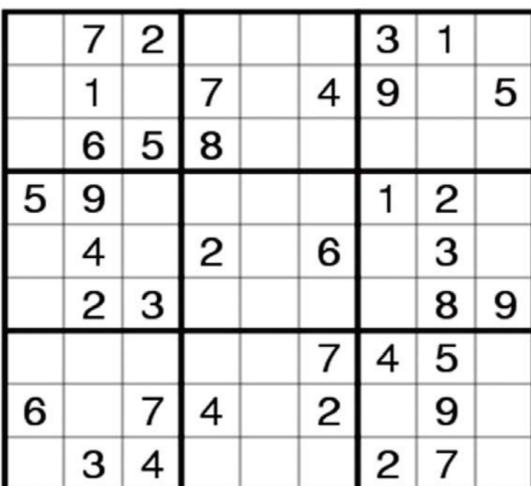
Movie Actresses 1



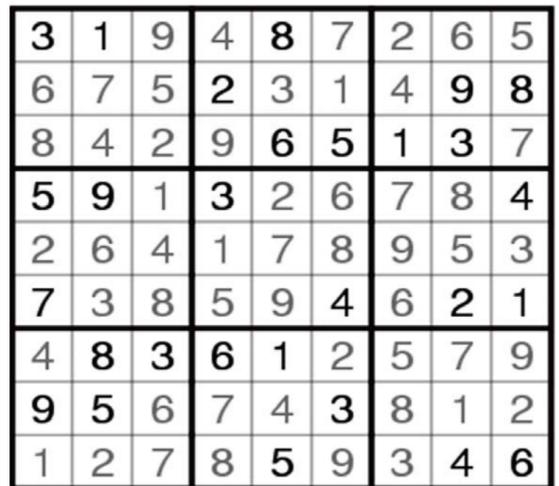
- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| ADAMS, Amy | CUTHBERT, Elisha | LANE, Diane |
| ALBA, Jessica | DAVIS, Hope | LANGE, Jessica |
| ALLEN, Joan | DENCH, Judi | MCDORMAND, Frances |
| BARRYMORE, Drew | DIAZ, Cameron | MIRREN, Helen |
| BENING, Annette | FANNING, Dakota | MOORE, Demi |
| BERRY, Halle | FOSTER, Jodie | PALTRIN, Gwyneth |
| BIEL, Jessica | GUGINO, Carla | PACQUI, Christina |
| BLANCHETT, Cate | HATHAWAY, Anne | RICCI, Christina |
| BLETHYN, Brenda | HUNTER, Holly | SWANK, Hilary |
| BLUNT, Emily | HUSTON, Anjelica | THERON, Charlize |
| CLOSE, Glenn | JOLIE, Angelina | THOMPSON, Emma |
| CONNELLY, Jennifer | KEENER, Catherine | WATSON, Emily |
| CUSACK, Joan | | |

The hidden movie title is: THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



GOSSIP

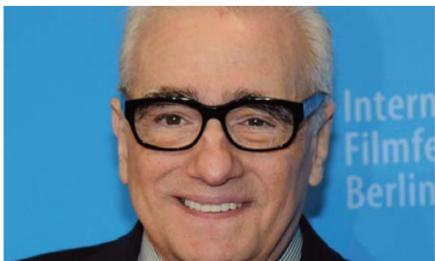
Angelina Jolie's son was big brother on set

Angelina Jolie's son was a "big brother" to the young actors in 'First They Killed My Father'. The actress-turned-director enlisted her oldest child, 15-year-old Maddox - who was adopted from Cambodia when he was a baby - to help with production on her latest movie and Loung Ung, whose book about the Cambodian genocide inspired the film, says he and his younger sibling, 11-year-old Pax, who was there shooting stills, were a great presence on set. Loung told People: "I have watched the young people grow into really kind, empathetic, curious human beings. Pax is a talented photographer and Mad is so kind and generous. The cast kids, they all looked up to him as a big brother." And the activist was "so proud" of her famous friend's sons because they were happy to make time to play with the young children on the set and "make them laugh." She added: "There were sad days on the set and there were difficult long hours. And to do it in an environment where people love and respect each other was exactly what we needed to get it done." 'First They Killed My Father' tells of how Khmer Rouge soldiers seized Loung's home town of Phnom Penh during the 1970s in a bid to purge the country of western influence, with those not killed sent to grueling labor camps, and how her parents and two sisters died during the horrors. And the author and her surviving siblings "love and respected Angelina so much" that they knew she'd do justice to their story. She said: "To have this beautiful film about family, to

have this beautiful mother doing a film about family, I had complete trust that our story was in good hands. And my siblings felt exactly the same way. We are so honored and proud that this wonderful mother made this film about family. "We all knew on set that this wasn't just a movie Angelina was making, but this is also in some respect her story-her son's story." And she takes that seriously... and so to make a film with somebody who truly loves this place, made the cast and crew, I think, allowed them to trust the experience." Speaking at the premiere of the movie in Cambodia at the weekend, Angelina - who was joined by her six kids, Maddox, Pax, Zahara, 12, Shiloh, 10, and eight-year-old twins Vivienne and Knox - admitted the film is her thank you to the country. She said: "I cannot find words to express what it means to me that I was entrusted with telling part of the story of this country. This film was not made to focus on the horrors of the past, but to celebrate the resilience, kindness and talent of the Cambodian people. Most of all, this film is my way of saying thank you to Cambodia. Without Cambodia I may never have become a mother. Part of my heart is and will always be in this country. And part of this country is always with me: Maddox."



Martin Scorsese no Hollywood film maker



Martin Scorsese doesn't think he could make it as a "Hollywood filmmaker". The legendary director feels like a "thief" with his success because he has "got away with" making movies "in the margins" that struck a chord with his own upbringing in New York's Lower East Side. He admitted to SBS Movies: "I kind of look back now and I say after all these years, I couldn't make it as a Hollywood movie maker. I was almost a thief who got away with making these movies in the margins of the book. Some were more in a marketable range... Others are not. I found I could only really get excited about stories that I wanted to tell and they seem to be more internal and personal." Scorsese's latest movie, 'Silence', stars Andrew Garfield and Adam Driver as two missionaries in 17th century Japan who are sent to find an older Jesuit (Liam Neeson) who is rumored to have renounced his faith - and is a project he has been wanting to work on since he was introduced to the story by New York Archbishop Paul Moore when his 1988 movie 'The Last Temptation of Christ' was released. However, he admitted that for many years he "didn't know how to express what [he] was feeling" and the film could have not happened. He said: "All of it came together but it took many, many years. There are many reasons why the film could not have been made, would not have been made but I decided to keep going and it put people around me through a lot of hardship and difficulties, and so if that 'means' anything it means that I really wanted to make it!"



McCartney and Starr reunite in studio

Sir Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr have reunited in the studio. The Beatles legends sent fans into a frenzy about a reunion of the iconic group yesterday, as the only two surviving members, but it appears McCartney was just laying down some bass guitar on Starr's forthcoming solo album. Alongside a photo of the pair, Starr, 76, wrote: "Thanks for coming over man and playing Great Bass. I love you man peace and love. (sic)" Starr also shared a picture with musician Joe Walsh, with the caption: "And look out Joe W came out to play. What a day I'm having. Peace and love. (sic)" The pair are working on the 'All You Need Is Love' drummer's follow-up to 2015's 'Postcard From Paradise' and it's the first time McCartney has recorded with his band mate since 2010, when he provided bass for 'Peace Dream' and 'Walk With You' on Starr's 2010 record 'Y Not'. It comes after McCartney - whose last releases were

2015's 'All Day' with Kanye West and 'FourFiveSeconds' with Kanye and Rihanna - was dubbed a "really talented magician". The 74-year-old musician was recently spotted showing off his trickery at a party in Los Angeles, and onlookers have described his act as "really good". Starr's forthcoming solo album. One fellow party-goer said: "Sir Paul is a really talented magician. He often performs tricks during any showbiz bash he attends. He's actually really good, people are always so shocked." It has been claimed that The Beatles legend is thinking about expanding his career prospects and making his magic tricks available for hire. The source added to the Daily Star newspaper: "He even mentioned that he would have to start hiring himself out for parties."

Metallica wants to perform on the moon

Robert Trujillo wants Metallica to perform on the moon. The 'Nothing Else Matters' group's bassist - who is joined by James Hetfield, Kirk Hammett and Lars Ulrich in the heavy metal band - wants to play live in some different locations this year and after performing in the Antarctic his next dream is to play live in space, which he's hoping they'll do on their forthcoming world tour. Speaking about the legendary metallers shows in support of their latest LP, 'Hardwired ... To Self Destruct', Trujillo told US radio station WRIF: "We're doing what we've been doing. We're celebrating the energy of the new music and working up the new songs, seeing what works. "It's an exciting time. We feel there's great momentum. This album has been embraced by the world. We didn't expect... I mean, we love that to happen; I don't know that we expected all this. And it's something that is always exciting for us. "We enjoy playing small shows, big shows, whatever. There's the energy of the visual production, and all that stuff starts to happen, so when you see it come to life, it's

pretty exciting. "We're gonna go to some really great places on this trip. Last tour, we went to Antarctica. And hopefully we'll get to the Moon this time. [Laughs] I don't know." Trujillo's aspiration to rock the moon comes after Metallica's plagued performance with Lady Gaga at the Grammy Awards. Frontman Hetfield, 53, was left "livid" after his vocals were completely inaudible on stage at Los Angeles' Staples Center last Sunday because his microphone was switched off, and although he overcome the difficulty by sharing the 'Poker Face' hitmaker's mic for the second part of the performance of 'Mojo Psycho Ninja', his bandmates had never seen him so angry. Drummer Ulrich said: "I haven't seen him like that in 20 years. I mean he was livid. I mean, he's aged really well and he's a pretty chill guy, but the first five or 10 minutes in that dressing room was not a lot of fun."



Michelle Williams dances with Hugh Jackman on set

Michelle Williams and Hugh Jackman love dancing together on set. The pair are playing husband and wife PT and Charity Barnum in new movie 'The Greatest Showman' and Michelle has embraced dancing and singing with her co-star on set. She told the Sunday Times Magazine: "I fell in love with singing and now I just want to sing. I find it terrifying, too, but once you do it, it's not like the dentist-it's kind of fun. And dancing there are just certain things that make me feel I'm a kid, that make me feel I'm a little bit free and a little bit unbound and I love it. I dance with Hugh Jackman." Michelle will also put her singing skills to the test when she plays the late Janis Joplin in a new biopic and although she is nervous, she can't wait to take on the role. She

said: "Nothing like a challenge. It's gonna get me going. "It's going to be a lot of work, but I'm thrilled. I do like to fight. Not with people, but for things that I want. I really enjoy the experience of wanting something and crossing the distance to get it. I don't want a lot of things, but the things I do want burn me up inside and I get very excited about trying to reach them. I don't mean I want objects-I want experiences and people. I wanted to play Janis badly and I reached for it. It's nice to want something and think about what you could do to pull that thing closer to you."



Gary Barlow in talks for Disney album

Gary Barlow is in talks to release an album with Disney. The 46-year-old Take That frontman is reportedly holding discussions to release a record consisting of tracks from his West End show 'The Girls', a collaboration with the legendary entertainment conglomerate. An insider told The Sun newspaper: "It's a massively exciting opportunity for Gary to take the music even further. "Working with Disney would be huge, and it is eager to develop future projects with him." It comes after Gary and his bandmates - Mark Owen and Howard Donald - unveiled lead single 'Giants' from their forthcoming album 'Wonderland' on Friday. The tune comes from the band's first album in over two years. With 'Wonderland', the group have teamed up with a host of well known producers including Tony Hoffer (Beck, Supergrass, Goldfrapp), Stuart Price (Madonna, The Killers, Gwen Stefani) and Mark Crossy (Arctic Monkeys, The Gaslight Anthem) and the group worked on 'Giants' with Mark Ralph (Clean Bandit, Years & Years). The LP will also mark the first album to be released on vinyl since their hit LP 'Everything Changes' in 1993. It comes after the band - who have no less than seven UK number one albums and 12 number one singles to their name - announced they would be heading out on tour across the UK, with the majority of the 32 dates already sold out. 'Wonderland' is slated for release on March 24.

Joe Manganiello acts for the cash

Joe Manganiello wouldn't be an actor if it didn't "pay the bills". The 'Magic Mike XXL' star - who is married to Sofia Vergara - insists his main priority is to be a "provider" for his family and he wouldn't have pursued his career if he didn't think he'd be a success. He said: "If acting didn't pay the bills, I would do something else. Bottom line is that being a man and provider always came first to me. I wasn't someone who was going to waste their life chasing an unrequited dream because I needed to be seen and heard by other people. "I've always believed in myself from

the beginning and I've been tested in ways you can't imagine when it comes to my career but I stayed the course because I made a better living at this than anything else I could think of doing." And Sofia - who has 25-year-old son Manolo from a past relationship - understands Joe's struggles as she's been through them herself but she believes a positive attitude is essential to survive in their industry. She said: "This career is hard. I've been working towards my dream for more than 20 years. "I think you can't be a victim in life. That attracts negative things - with men, with family, with work. A thousand things can happen, but that's life." When the couple aren't working, they love relaxing at home and each have their favorite parts of the house. Sofia told HOLA USA! magazine: "Joe seeps on the sofa, eats there, watches all his football games there on weekends. It's his favorite place. He loves it. "My favorite room is the bathroom - well, that and my closet. It's not as big as I wanted it to be, but I made some adjustments - I took over the man's side. I said, 'Joe, you don't need a big closet.' And he said, 'Yes love, just take it.'"



Hilton receives Fragrance of the Year award for Gold Rush scent

Paris Hilton's Gold Rush fragrance was recognized as the Fragrance of the Year at The 3rd Annual Hollywood Beauty Awards. The 36-year-old businesswoman won the prestigious accolade at the star studded event, which took place at the Avalon Hollywood in Los Angeles, California, on Sunday and the star is "so proud and honored" to have received the gong. The former 'The Simple Life' star publicly shared how grateful she was to be recognized for her entrepreneurial skill on social media. Alongside a picture of her adorning a silver embellished floor length gown as she clasped at her award, which was shared on her Instagram account, she wrote:



"So proud & honored to have won the #FragranceOfTheYearAward for my @GoldRushFragrance tonight at the #HollywoodBeautyAwards. Thank you to all my fans for your love & support (sic)." Whilst another post read: "#GoldRushFragrance#FragranceOfTheYearAward #YAS! (sic)." NuMe, owned by Sabrina Maren Schueppel, was credited as the Brand of the Year, whilst mogul Sarah Potempa's Beachwaver hair care and styling brand was announced as Product of the Year. And 76-year-old fashion designer Bob Mackie was awarded the 2017 Honouree for his Outstanding Achievement in Costume Design and Styling, after dressing musicians Cher, Diana Ross, Tina Turner and Beyoncé. Meanwhile, stars including former 'Glee' star and 'Step Up 3D' actress Alyson Stoner were among guests who attended the fashion extravaganza. And the 23-year-old blonde beauty has revealed she undertook a simplistic "three minute" make-over in preparation for her appearance at the event. Speaking about her routine on Twitter, she said: "Beauty Hack: slept in 3 braids, took em out, dry shampoo at root, hairspray for texture, 1 elastic, 1 bobby pin. 3 min. #wom-anontheho (sic)." — Bang Showbiz



FASHION



Models present creations from Preen by Thornton Bregazzi during their catwalk show on the third day of the Autumn/Winter 2017 London Fashion Week in London. — AP/AFP photos

Fashion takes London by storm with Preen, Topshop, Mulberry



London Fashion Week neared its climax Sunday with shows by Preen, Topshop, Mulberry and others taking place at many sites in the more-chic-than-usual British capital. A fleet of Mercedes-Benz sedans is ferrying VIPs from venue to venue as buyers, bloggers and wannabes gauge each show for that elusive dash of something special and off the wall. Not to be outdone, some have arrived at shows in a polished silver Rolls-Royce. The pace of shows is a challenge for anyone trying not to miss a thing. The Monday slate is full as well, topped by the long-anticipated Burberry show.

Aristocratic chic at Mulberry

Amid all the political debate on Brexit, British identity was the topic of the day - even on the catwalk. Designer Johnny Coca, who heads heritage brand Mulberry, on Sunday dished up his vision of British style - one that is aristocratic and traditional, though with some funky twists. Think horse riding and hunting while staying at an English country mansion: Tweeds, checks, nostalgic florals on faded wallpapers, pearls and heirloom jewelry. "It's all the things I like about the UK: the countryside, the hunting, the wallpaper, the checks and embroidery," Coca, who is Spanish, said backstage.

The show opened with models sporting head-to-toe brown and green checks, featured on box pleat skirts and mannish tweed blazers that look like they were borrowed from the models' fathers. Then came a series of large quilted capes, which Coca said were inspired by horse blankets and the equestrian styles of English country dress. There were vintage rose prints that came from sofa fabrics found in the brand's archive, and pearl chains and oversized cameo locket pendants adorned the outfits.

The handbags - which are coveted by fans worldwide and the brand's bestselling items - had a vintage feel, too, with structured shapes that recalled hatboxes and antique luggage.

Much of the collection brought to mind the 1970s, with its earthy tones, crochet dresses, rich brocade and loose flowing skirts. That's because the clothes drew heavily from Mulberry's 1970s archive, Coca said. In case things got too retro or stuffy, the designer inserted some modern and quirky touches. Models wore furry knee socks in bright green and mustard, and outfits featured bold clashing colors, such as an orange blouse paired with a purple skirt and turquoise boots.

Topshop unique does breezy bohemian

She's a bohemian soul, living in the moment - Topshop Unique's latest offering is all about clothes that give off that carefree, free-wheeling vibe. The outfits may look thrown on and eclectic, but the look is anything but effortless. Getting the dressed down cool girl look just right requires careful layering and thought. Staged in a basement hall in London's Tate Modern art gallery, the label's show featured models in figure-hugging, bias-cut slip dresses - some with high slits - that were layered under graphic sweatshirts, oversized sweaters and outdoorsy fleeces.

Elsewhere, super-short mini-skirts in high-shine primary colors and satiny, striped wide trousers were paired with sporty striped tops. As always with Topshop, there was plenty of fun and attention-grabbing party wear, too. A huge, fluffy orange coat stood out, as well as some silver sequined dresses adorned with bright floral embroidery.



Models present creations by TOPSHOP UNIQUE during a catwalk show on the third day of the Autumn/Winter 2017 London Fashion Week in London.

Models present creations by Mulberry during their catwalk show.

FASHION



Models wear creations during the Erdem Autumn/Winter 2017 London Fashion Week show.



Preen makes it mark in springtime setting
It's time for fall and winter collections, but the space set up by Preen by Thornton Bregazzi had a springtime feel more in tune with the British countryside with painted splashes of color suggesting flowers bursting into bloom. This cheerful feeling pervaded the collection, with many black outfits set off by floral themes relying on fine embroidery and other outfits featuring reds and blues.

The models wore smeared red lipstick (evocative of a kiss, the designers said) and the choices were unusual, including a black and white shearling coat worn over a black floral bra. Gowns were styled off the shoulder, and flat shoes and boots featured pale pink, a color seen in a number of outfits in the first few days of fashion week.

There was also a traditionally tailored tweed suit, as

might have been in style a century ago, but set off with an oversize, bright green color, and a lingerie-style dress. Designers Justin Thornton and Thea Bregazzi displayed photos of books they said had helped inspire the collection, including works by poet Carol Ann Duffy, the photographer Christina Boom and the artist Tracey Emin. "It's just a celebration of women throughout history and the importance of women who have something to say," Thornton said of the collection.

ultra-feminine dresses. Instead of exposing wide swaths of his models' flesh, as other designers are doing, he chose to emphasize the female form in its entirety, only rarely choosing to unveil a hint of cleavage. Most of the outfits featured high necks and long sleeves with elaborate detailing, intricate beadwork and delicate embroidery. Oversize coats or high boots seemed to explode with color. The beauty was in the detailing, which gave each piece an individual feel. Some were sparkly, some were subtle and subdued. Despite their differences, the pieces complemented each other, making the entire collection come alive. — AP

Full-length dresses take the honors at Erdem
The Erdem show at the Old Selfridges Hotel showed a remarkable unity of vision despite a wide range of colors, fabrics and mood. Canada-born designer Erdem Moralioglu focused almost entirely on long, tightly fitting,



Models wear creations by Pringle of Scotland during their Autumn/Winter 2017 show.



FEATURES



Revelers attend the ceremony to purify the Sambadome (known as Sapucaí).



Revelers take part in the ceremony to purify the Sambadome (known as Sapucaí) in preparation for the world-famous samba carnival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Revelers attend the ceremony to purify the Sambadome (known as Sapucaí).



Revelers take part in the ceremony to purify the Sambadome (known as Sapucaí) in preparation for the world-famous samba carnival.

BRAZIL'S ECONOMY PUTS DAMPER ON RIO CARNIVAL

The Rio carnival is a celebration of joyful excess but deep recession in Brazil means that samba schools are thinking about their budgets as much as their dance moves. "Here the key word is austerity," says Luiz Carlos Magalhaes, president of the Portela samba school, which has won the prestigious annual parade contest in the Sambodromo more than any other school. Like football teams, the samba schools are organized in divisions and their contests are judged on strict criteria where the slightest slip costs points.

That need to pay attention to detail is giving organizers at top-ranked schools a headache as they prepare for battle on February 25-26 at a time of increasingly thin budgets. "We're living day to day. We raise money with dinner dances at our headquarters and see how much we made before we go out to buy the feathers and sequins," Magalhaes said. Every school in the first division, known as the Special Group, gets six million reais (about \$2 million) from a mixture of city subsidies and proceeds from television coverage. They also raise money through sponsorship and - although none openly admit this - funding from illegal gambling rackets. Portela is in trouble, Magalhaes said, because "our main sponsor dropped us at the last minute. We've really had to bend over backwards to make it work." At another top-division school, organizers ended up giving free meals instead of pay to the small army employed to sew costumes.

Scrounging

Down in the second division, things are more complicated. They get only a third of the subsidies given to the top flight and sponsors have little interest in chipping in. "Not only do we have less funds but the materials are more expensive too. That's why we've had to innovate, trying to create an alternative carni-

val," said Jorge Silveira, artistic director at the Viradouro, which won the whole contest back in 1997. "By chance I've discovered real treasures in our props department and I've got around the crisis by recycling all sorts of things," he said, seated on a float made in the shape of a huge cake.

Even if Viradouro's hangar is smaller and less modern than the facilities used by Special Group schools, Silveira knows the conditions he is working in are a great deal better than those encountered by lower divisions. For the third to fifth levels, the contests are not held in the specially built Sambodromo stadium but along Intendente Magalhaes Road in the working class north of Rio. They do not benefit from television rights. "It's my fifth carnival and it's definitely the worst of the lot. It's a lot harder this year," said Tatiana Santos, president of the Arranco do Engenho school in the fourth division.

"Our subsidy comes in installments and we've not got more than 70 percent so far. The rest will only be paid after carnival - we'll use it to pay our debts," said Santos, 37, in the dusty hangar where her school puts together its show. One way of surviving this year was to make the parade a homage to first-division school Salgueiro, which was flattered and loaned the samba minnows costumes and a float. Fabio Augusto, president of fifth division Tupy de Vraz de Pina, has also had to go scrounging. "We're living from donations. We've gone from hangar to hangar at the big schools and got all sorts of things," he said. And things are not as bad as they were. "When I took over the school two years ago, we didn't even have drum sticks," he said. — AFP



The Christ is lit with special Led lights by French artist Gaspere Di Caro on the Corcovado hill.



A man wearing the Brazilian colors poses in front of the statue of Christ the Redeemer atop Corcovado Hill in Rio de Janeiro. — AP/AFP photos

In the wake of Viking explorers, a North Atlantic cruise

Looking out over the sea, you can almost see the Viking longboat at sail, far off in the distance. Or that may just be your imagination, teased by the whitecaps and swells, as you trace the route taken a millennium ago by so many intrepid seafarers. The image played out as we made our way across the North Atlantic on the Viking Star. Launched in 2015, the 930-passenger ship was the first ocean-going vessel to set sail for Viking Cruises, known for its fleet of longships plying rivers of Europe, Russia, China, Southeast Asia and Egypt.

Responding to a demand for more destination-oriented trips, Viking looked to the sea, offering itineraries to the Baltic, Mediterranean, Caribbean and North America. Just as the Norsemen ventured off into the unknown, Viking Cruises was sailing into somewhat uncharted territory with its "In the Wake of the Vikings" voyage, a 15-day trip first offered in the fall of 2016. The sailing will be repeated in September 2017.

New and intriguing

Last fall's itinerary began in Bergen, Norway (flights from the US were booked through the cruise line) and continued on to Lerwick, Scotland; Torshavn, Faroe Islands; Reykjavik, Iceland; Nanortalik and Qaqortoq, Greenland; L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland; Saguenay, Quebec City, and Montreal, Quebec. The stops appealed to me and my wife as out-of-the-ordinary ports. No palm trees and sandy beaches here. This was something new and intriguing, taking us to places not inundated by

tourists - at least not yet. In Scotland's remote Shetland Islands, hearty cheers of men clad in Viking outfits greeted passengers walking off the gangway in Lerwick. Those outfits are also worn when they torch a replica Viking galley as the highlight of the Up Helly A' winter festival, a local tradition. In Nanortalik ("Place of the Polar Bears"), a town of roughly 1,300 at the mouth of a fjord in southwestern Greenland, villagers delighted visitors with a church concert where they sang in Inuit. The cruise to the village featured breathtaking scene after scene of towering mountains and glaciers edging toward the fjord. The sun-splashed view was so awe-inspiring that the captain at one point stopped the ship and spun it 360 degrees so nothing was missed. Some passengers were invited into homes of locals who wanted to display their crafts and culture. In Qaqortoq, a young woman eager to practice English joined us as we walked in town and spoke of her dream to travel beyond her island home.

Milky-blue water

At L'Anse aux Meadows, the northern tip of Newfoundland where Leif Erikson arrived in the late 900s, we marveled at the remains of the Norse village unearthed in the 1960s, revising longstanding notions of who "discovered" Vinland. Just as the Vikings faced the Atlantic's mercurial moods, the Viking Star got a taste of what the ocean can dish out. After warm and sunny late-September weather in Bergen and Lerwick, rough seas prevented us from stopping at the Faroe Islands. It got even

rougher en route to Iceland, with 80-90 mph gusts and 45-foot waves. The motion took a toll on glasses, dishes, liquor bottles and some passengers' stomachs, but the nimble-footed servers (representing a diverse array of nationalities) performed admirably as they balanced loaded trays.

The storm gave way to sunny weather in Reykjavik, where we luxuriated in the Blue Lagoon, a geothermal pool of 102-degree mineral-rich, milky-blue water surrounded by walls of black lava. Then it was on to Greenland and our Canadian ports. In Newfoundland, persistent ocean swells delayed trips on smaller boats from the Star to shore. Trips to L'Anse aux Meadows ran so late that some passengers could not even board a launch. Disappointment, yes, but no mutiny. Viking acknowledged the weather-related curtailments and offered \$250-per-person credits for a future cruise.

Full-service restaurant

Although the northern route may elicit shivers from some, the weather for most of the voyage was pleasant and warm enough to sit on the open deck for meals or drinks. Even in less-balmly weather, some passengers took to whirlpools on deck (although we opted for opulent indoor spa, which also featured saunas and a snow grotto, where snowflakes descend through the chilled air). The ship's two swimming pools include one protected from the weather by a retractable glass roof. Dining options range from a cafeteria-style cafe to a full-service restau-

rant, plus specialty settings where reservations are requested. Entrees included European, Russian and Asian dishes. Reindeer consomme and poached Norwegian salmon were part of our five-course meal, each course served with a different wine, in The Chef's Table.

In addition to the shops, salon, theatre, bars, library, laundry and other amenities including verandas off all staterooms, the Viking Star offers space - enough room in public areas so that you don't constantly feel wedged in a crowd. There's no casino on board (for us, a plus). The Wake of the Vikings cruise featured excellent speakers on voyage-related topics. Among them: What causes the northern lights we saw last night? Why the geothermal springs in Iceland? What about Norse women? And the ultimate myth-buster: Did you know that Vikings didn't have horns on their helmets?

If you go

VIKING CRUISES: "In the Wake of the Vikings" 15-day itineraries depart Sept 9 and Sept 23 from Bergen, Norway. Prices listed in January began at \$5,749 with airfare \$1,095. — AP



This fall 2016 photo shows the historic waterfront, a UNESCO World Heritage site, in Bergen, Norway, where the Viking Star cruise ship began its two-week "In the Wake of the Vikings" cruise. — AP photos



Shows locals costumed as Vikings awaiting passengers from the Viking Star cruise ship in Lerwick, Shetland Islands, Scotland, where the ship called during its "In the Wake of the Vikings" cruise.



Iceland's famous Blue Lagoon, one of a dozen geothermal pools in the country.



A view of Qaqortoq, Greenland, overlooking the bay.



Shakeela (third right), a member of the Pakistani transgender community, cuts cake with guests during a party in Peshawar. — AFP photos



Members of the Pakistani transgender community dance at a party in Peshawar.



Paro, a member of the Pakistani transgender community, designing embroidery on dresses for their community members at her residence in Peshawar.

Pakistan's third sex seeks a reformation

Farzana draws all eyes when she dances, with the twist of her hips and hair — but today she is above all the voice of a Pakistani community with an ambiguous status: the khawajasiras. The 30-year-old is a guru, a matriarch at the head of a "family" of several hundred khawajasiras, an umbrella term in Pakistan denoting a third sex that includes transsexuals, transvestites and eunuchs. She is co-founder and president of TransAction, a rights organization launched in 2015 in Peshawar, capital of deeply conservative Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. Faced with brutal aggression and daily humiliation, this solid Pashtun, whose hoarse voice betrays her birth sex, "filed complaints in almost every KP police station"—but in vain.

"More than 50 khawajasiras were killed in 2015 and 2016 in KP alone," she says, recounting with fatalistic calm how she was repeatedly raped and blackmailed by police. The status of khawajasiras—also known as hijras—is opaque in Pakistan to say the least. Modern-day Pakistani transgender people claim to be cultural heirs of the eunuchs who thrived at the courts of the Mughal emperors that ruled the Indian subcontinent for two centuries until the British arrived in the 19th century and banned them. Later, Pakistan became one of the first countries in the world to legally recognize a third sex. They number at least half a million people in the country, according to several studies—up to two million, say TransAction.



Members of the Pakistani transgender community attend a party in Peshawar.

Since 2009, they have been able to obtain an identity card as "khawajasiras", and several have run in elections. A Lahore court has ruled they should be counted in the next census, set to be held this year. Like Farzana, many earn their living by being called upon for rituals such as blessing newborns or to bring life to weddings and parties as dancers—and, sometimes, in more clandestine ways. But despite these signs of integration they live daily as pariahs, often reduced to begging and prostitution, subjected to extortion and discrimination.

Media empathy

The catalyst for TransAction's mobilization in Peshawar was the exclusion of transgenders from aid to populations fleeing Talibanisation and fighting in the tribal areas on the border

with Afghanistan. Sohana, 24, fled in 2008 from Kurram tribal district, where the Taliban had banished dancing and music, and forced men to grow beards. "If I had stayed, I would be dead by now," she says. But in Peshawar, the UN helped only displaced families. "We had no help from anyone... We started protesting," says the young woman, concealing beneath her shawl the curves she has created with silicone implants. "Many people spoke out, saying that people like us also need to have our rights respected," says Sohana, who nevertheless despairs of ever being tolerated by her family.

TransAction now has 40,000 followers on its Facebook page, and local newspapers have become sympathetic in their coverage of hijras, reviving the debate on their status in Pakistan. "A lot of NGOs have worked with the transgender community, but mostly focused on HIV, whereas (TransAction's) priority was protection from violence, harassment, attacks and extortion," said Qamar Naseem, a women's rights activist who helped TransAction to be heard. Perhaps the most famous case to be highlighted was that of Alisha, who died after an assault in May last year because, her supporters said, she did not receive treatment at the gender-segregated hospital in Peshawar in time due to her identity.

Creations of Allah

Against all odds, conservative and Islamist lawmakers are sensitive to their cause. "They are a creature of God. Allah's creation. They should have their rights, as we have," said conservative MP Amina Sardar, who spearheaded legislation supporting political franchise for khawajasiras. "This is what I preach. Hijras are Muslim, same human beings (as us), with the same rights," said Mullah Tayyab Qureshi, imam of the main Peshawar mosque. Several support measures have already been voted in, and KP is working on a transgender protection program which, if passed, will become the second adopted by a province in South Asia, Nasim said.

But access to education and employment is a major challenge for these women. Most khawajasiras say they have been abandoned or bullied to the point of fleeing their families, often as they approach adolescence, when their effeminate behavior becomes intolerable in a patriarchal society where homosexuality is illegal. The community is also weakened by the practices of some so-called "gurus" who act as merciless pimps, exploiting disoriented young people instead of behaving as the protective adoptive mothers most pride themselves on being.

Paro, who left her parents and school aged 11, was prostituted, raped, and shot before joining TransAction. "I've liked dancing since I was a child, but nobody respects that," she sighs. She cut down on her dance performances and launched a small embroidery business after the killing of her friend Alisha. In her sweet pink room, she creates flamboyant outfits for other hijras. On the wall, two screens: one broadcasts music clips, but the other is the video surveillance she installed in front of her door—six TransAction leaders have been assaulted because of their activism. — AFP



Members of the Pakistani transgender community attend a party in Peshawar.



A member of the Pakistani transgender community dances next to Shakeela (right) at her party in Peshawar.



Shakeela (center), a member of the Pakistani transgender community, sits with community member guests at her party in Peshawar.

MARRIAGE, SEX, AND BEING LGBT IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan's transgender community, known as "khawajasiras" or "hijras", are now fighting for change. Usually shunned by their families, the victims of beatings and rapes, they are often condemned to a life of begging or prostitution. The situation is complicated by the deeply conservative, traditional Muslim country's views of sex and sexuality.

Sex in Pakistan

The law only permits heterosexual relationships within marriage. Sexual relations outside marriage are punishable by imprisonment. For women, virginity is an important condition for marriage, the vast majority of which are still agreed and arranged by parents and family members. The suspicion of an unlawful love relationship, or even regular communication with a man, could see a woman killed by her relatives in the name of "honor".

What if you're gay?

Homosexuality, prohibited by Islam, is punishable by 10 years imprisonment or even 100 lashes. While homosexuals are viewed with derision, in the case of men, few would identify themselves as gay so long as they are the "active" partner. Homosexuals identified as "passive" are ostracized in patriarchal Pakistan. Known as zenana, they wear men's clothes but display effeminate behavior. Some from this group form a community who are traditionally both close to and rivals of the hijras, the third sex. Lesbians, meanwhile, are all but invisible.

What is the third sex?

Hijras, or khawajasiras, are those born male but who identify as women. They are perceived as a third sex and have been able to hold Pakistani identity cards since 2009. There is no term for women who identify as men. In Islam, a Surah popular among the hijras says Allah "creates what He wants"—"girls", "boys", or "both boys and girls". Sexual intercourse between a man and a hijra is not considered homosexuality, even if it amounts to the same action.

How do hijras see themselves?

Almost all hijras claim they have been born in a man's body with "a woman's mind". They say they are cultural heirs to a glorious past as eunuchs during the Mughal dynasty, when they were part of the elite—as harem guardians, artists, but also generals, like Malik Kafur in the fourteenth century. Some Hijras use hormones and silicone to enhance their feminine features, often injected without proper medical supervision, to shape their bodies—but full, expensive sex-reassignment operations cannot be done in Pakistan. Their effeminate behavior can cause families to reject them, and they often end up in the power of a so-called "guru", with the risk of commercial sexual exploitation that implies. — AFP



Members of the Pakistani transgender community dance at a party in Peshawar.



Members of the Pakistani transgender community dance at a party in Peshawar.



Shakeela (second right), a member of the Pakistani transgender community, shares cake with guests at her party in Peshawar.



A member of the Pakistani transgender community dances at a party in Peshawar.



A member of the Pakistani transgender community dances at Shakeela's party in Peshawar.



A member of the Pakistani transgender community attends a party in Peshawar.

Lifestyle

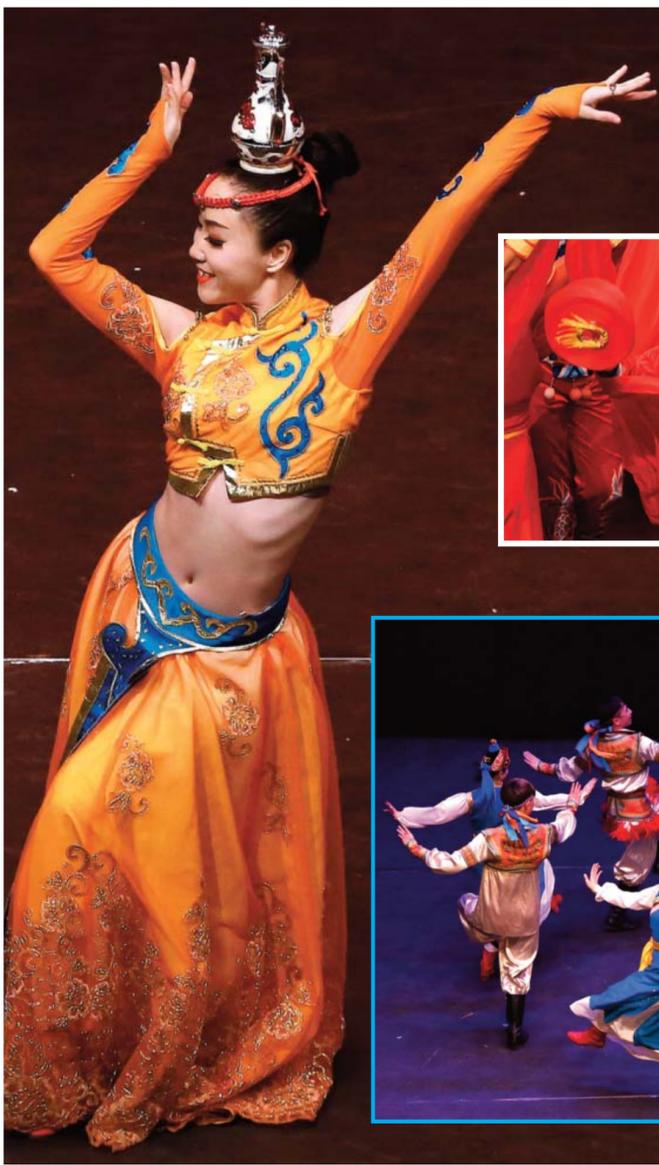
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China's Inner Mongolia Art Troupe



Dancers from China's Inner Mongolia Art Troupe perform at the Abdulhusain Abdulredha Theatre in Kuwait City on February 19, 2017. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Co-defendant in French art heist says, he destroyed paintings

A co-defendant in one of the world's biggest art heists testified in court yesterday that he destroyed and threw away five art masterpieces worth more than \$100 million that were stolen by a thief nicknamed "the spider-man." Yonathan Birn was among three people who went on trial in the case yesterday. The five paintings stolen in 2010 from the French capital's city Museum of Modern Art - a Picasso, a Matisse, a Modigliani, a Braque and a Fernand Leger - have never been found.



Chief suspect Vjeran Tomic faces the media at court for his trial in Paris, yesterday, accused of involvement in one of the world's biggest art heists. — AP

"I threw them into the trash," Birn repeated three times at the court bar, in tears. "I made the worst mistake of my existence." Neither the investigating judge nor other defendants at the trial believe Birn's claims. The investigators are convinced the five paintings have been taken out of France, but they have not been able to prove that, court documents show. Birn's co-defendants testified he was "too smart" to destroy the masterpieces.

Lead suspect Vjeran Tomic, dubbed "the spider-man" by French news media, has been convicted 14 times in the past, notably for thefts. Authorities found climbing gear at his home: gloves, ropes, harness, climbing shoes and suction cups. Tomic testified that around 3 am on May 20, 2010, he broke into the museum near the Eiffel Tower with apparent ease, taking advantage of supposed failures in the security, alarm and video-surveillance systems. "Spider-man" removed the glass from a bay window without breaking it, cut the padlock of the metal grid behind it, allowing him to then move from one room to another without arousing the guards' suspicions.

Tomic was there to steal a painting by Fernand Leger and possibly a Modigliani ordered by a third defendant, 61-year-old antiques dealer Jean-Michel Corvez, who confessed to being a receiver of stolen goods. Tomic said that when he came across the Picasso, the Matisse and the Braque paintings, he decided to take them as well. Several hours after the headline-making burglary, Tomic said, he offered the five paintings to Corvez, who said he was "totally stunned" by them.

Corvez said he initially gave Tomic a plastic bag containing 40,000 euros (\$43,000) in small denominations just for the Leger because he was unsure he would get buyers for the other paintings. Corvez became worried about keeping the artworks in his shop after several months and showed them to his friend Birn, a 40-year-old expert and dealer in luxury watches. Birn said he agreed to buy the Modigliani for 80,000 euros (\$86,000) and to store the others in his studio. The Modigliani was hidden in a bank safe, he said.

Birn said he panicked when police began investigating and finally one day in May 2011 he retrieved the Modigliani from the safe, returned to his workshop to break the stretcher bars on all the canvasses with fierce kicks and then threw them all into the building's trash. Tomic is charged with stealing public cultural property, while Corvez and Birn are accused of receiving stolen goods. The three men are also accused of taking part in a criminal conspiracy to commit the thefts.

Both Corvez and Birn can be sentenced up to 10 years in prison if convicted. Tomic faces up to 20 years in prison as a repeat offender. The trial is expected to resume later this week. After he was questioned, Tomic said he was sure Birn didn't destroy the paintings and wants him to say where they are located. "These are my artworks," he said. — AP



This file photo taken on May 21, 2004 shows a visitor looking at the painting "La Femme à l'Éventail" (Woman with a Fan) by Amedeo Modigliani during an exhibition at The Jewish Museum in New York. — AFP