

Hit-and-run accidents at 3-year high in Kuwait



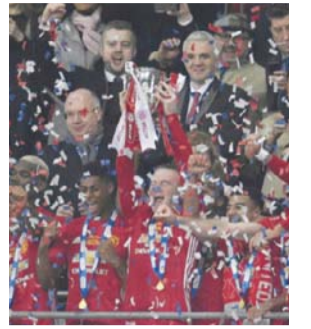
Muhammad Ali's son asked, 'Are you Muslim?' by US border agents



Stargazers applaud as moon eclipses sun



Ibrahimovic double downs Saints in thriller at Wembley



## AMIR CONGRATULATES KUWAITIS, EXPATS ON NATIONAL OCCASIONS

SHEIKH SABAH HAILS PARTICIPATION IN CELEBRATIONS

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KUWAIT: Citizens and expats take part in celebrations marking Kuwait's 56th National Day and the 26th Liberation Day. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (More pics on Page 4)

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday congratulated the citizens and residents of the country on the 56th anniversary of the National Day and the 26th anniversary of the Liberation Day. The Amir expressed appreciation for the manifestations of jubilation made by the nationals and the residents on these two dear national occasions through their participation in the celebratory festivals held throughout the country.

He lauded the civic conduct "that spread pleasure to the hearts of everyone, thus depicting the Kuwaiti family spirit; that is a spirit of compassion and solidarity", urging everybody to feel thankful for the heavenly blessing, the liberation of "our dear homeland, as well as the blessings of security, safety, stability and prosperity".

HH the Amir called for sincere and constructive action to serve the dear homeland, gearing up all potentials for its development, promotion and prosperity, lauding the wide-scale coverage of the festivities by the official and private media, thus promoting the great efforts exerted by the Ministries of Interior and Defense and the National Guard to secure a comfortable atmosphere for the revelers. He also heaped praise upon the departments that joined efforts in arranging the celebrations.

HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad recalled on the occasions the martyrs who honored the homeland with their pure blood, praying for heavenly blessing for their souls. He also thanked leaders of the other GCC states and Arab countries who expressed good wishes during Kuwait's celebrations, expressing good wishes to them and their nations.— KUNA



GAZA: Mossab Abu Toha, who is collecting English books for his "Library and Bookshop for Gaza" project, reads English books with children in the garden of his family home in Beit Lahia in northern Gaza on Feb 20, 2017. — AFP

### FIRST GAZA ENGLISH LIBRARY TO OPEN WINDOW TO WORLD

GAZA CITY: Mossab Abu Toha has never actually left Gaza, instead devouring books as an escape. Now he is struggling to open the first English-language library in the beleaguered Palestinian territory. "Send us books in English, new or used," says the 24-year-old reading enthusiast on his Facebook page. Abu Toha, like so many Gazans effectively trapped in the Palestinian enclave by Israeli and Egyptian restrictions, dreams of travelling.

English literature from the Islamic University of Gaza, who shares his passion by teaching Shakespeare at a United Nations school. "I have read dozens of books in English, and with them I can travel to every country in the world and through all periods. I feel like I am in another world."

Israel has maintained a blockade on Gaza for a decade, while the border with Egypt is also largely closed. Those who manage to take advantage of the rare

"Freedom begins when one frees one's mind," said the young graduate in

Continued on Page 13

## KING SALMAN BEGINS ASIA TOUR

SAUDI FM IN FIRST VISIT TO IRAQ SINCE 2003

### ZTE LAUNCHES WORLD'S FIRST 5G SMARTPHONE

BARCELONA: Chinese telecoms giant ZTE unveiled yesterday what it said is the world's first smartphone compatible with the lightning-fast 5G mobile internet service that networks expect to have up and running by 2020. The company said the Gigabit Phone is the first smartphone capable of download speeds reaching up to 1 gigabit per second (Gbps) - up to 10 times faster than the first generation of 4G services widely in use today.

The device, unveiled in Barcelona in northeastern Spain on the eve of the start today of the Mobile World Congress, the world's biggest mobile fair, will allow for 360-degree panoramic Virtual Reality video and fast downloads of ultra Hi-Fi music and videos. "With the new device, the way people stay connected will be changed forever. Focusing on 5G technologies will be one of the key priorities of ZTE's global development," a ZTE spokesman said.

Tech firms are racing to develop products that will be compatible with 5G, shorthand for the fifth generation of networks, which promise blazing fast connectivity for a generation used to streaming movies and TV directly to phones.

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KUALA LUMPUR/BAGHDAD: Malaysia welcomed Saudi Arabia's King Salman yesterday for the start of a rare, month-long Asian tour, where the monarch will build ties and seek to draw more investments to the oil-rich gulf nation. The visit is the first by a Saudi king to Malaysia in more than a decade, as the Arab nation courts Asian investors for the sale of a 5 percent stake in state firm Aramco in 2018, expected to be the world's biggest IPO.

Malaysian state television yesterday showed live footage of the king descending from his plane on an escalator. He was received by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak before being whisked away in a heavily guarded convoy for a state ceremony at Malaysia's parliament grounds. The leader was greeted in parliament with a 21-gun salute, local media reported.

Continued on Page 13



KUALA LUMPUR: Saudi Arabia's King Salman stands next to Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak after inspecting an honor guard during a welcoming ceremony at Parliament House yesterday. — AP



NEW YORK: People take part in a protest against US President Donald Trump's media coverage outside the New York Times yesterday. — AFP

## TRUMP TO SKIP PRESS DINNER

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump has ratcheted up his feud with the US media by announcing he will skip the annual White House correspondents' dinner, the first US president to do so in 36 years. By boycotting the event Trump breaks a tradition that began in 1921 in which journalists invite the US president for a light-hearted roast. "I will not be attending the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner this year. Please wish everyone well and have a great evening!" Trump wrote Saturday on Twitter.

The last time a president missed the event was in 1981, when Ronald Reagan was recovering after being shot in an assassination attempt. Reagan however phoned in with friendly remarks. Richard Nixon, who despised the media, skipped the event in 1972. Trump frequently blasted the mainstream US press during the election campaign, and as president has intensified his media-bashing. He ripped the New York Times on Sunday for a television ad that the newspaper will air during the Oscars ceremony stating "The truth is more important now

than ever." "For first time the failing @nytimes will take an ad (a bad one) to help save its failing reputation. Try reporting accurately & fairly!" Trump tweeted.

Over the years the dinner organized by the White House Correspondents' Association has evolved - or devolved, depending on one's point of view - into the self-described "Nerd Prom" packed with Hollywood celebrities. The WHCA said it will proceed with this year's dinner, set for April 29. The event "has been and will continue to be a celebration of the First Amendment (on freedom of the press) and the important role played by an independent news media in a healthy republic," WHCA president Jeff Mason tweeted.

Some news groups have already pulled out of events related to the dinner. Conde Nast, publisher of The New Yorker, Vanity Fair have all cancelled their exclusive before- and after-parties, and Bloomberg is reportedly pulling out as a party co-sponsor. The New York Times has skipped the dinner itself for years to avoid charges that its reporters are too close to the White House.

The dinner normally features a big-name comedian to rib the president, but this year a funny person has yet to be booked. Comedian Samantha Bee earlier announced a "Not the White House Correspondents' Dinner" on the same night at a nearby hotel to raise money for the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Trump's cancellation comes after the White House denied access Friday to an off-camera briefing to several major US media outlets, including CNN and The New York Times. Smaller outlets that have provided favorable coverage however were allowed to attend the briefing by spokesman Sean Spicer. The WHCA said it was "protesting strongly" against the decision to selectively deny media access. The New York Times said the decision was "an unmistakable insult to democratic ideals," CNN called it "an unacceptable development," and The Los Angeles Times warned the incident had "ratcheted up the White House's war on the free press" to a new level.

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Legalese

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

**H**appy National and Liberation days! I hope you and your families had a lovely holiday celebrating everything red, black, white and green. I personally think that Kuwait has a very unique history, from the traders and ship merchants, to the oil boom and natural resources and the Gulf wars. The history has therefore been reflected in the Kuwaiti culture. We are very similar, yet different than the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and you can see this in this year's National and Liberation day ads by companies.

The ads refer to Kuwaitis as food lovers, easygoing ones (and loud ones too), the business men and women, and most importantly the creative individuals of the region. Therefore, it is no surprise that the culture is reflected in the laws and legislations. Today I will be discussing laws that make Kuwait's culture unique and how the laws affect us in very simple terms.

### Constitution

**Questions:** I heard that Kuwait has one of the first constitutions in the region and that the constitution is very advanced. Is this true? How does it affect our lives?

**Fajer:** Yes, Kuwait's constitution came into effect on November 11, 1962, and although the day is not a public holiday, it is celebrated in Kuwait. The constitution has articles that promote good health, education, prosperity, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, equality, protection of the environment and other morals that appreciate the community and life in general. The most popular article is article 29 that states: "1. All people are equal in human dignity and in public rights and duties before the law, without distinction to race, origin, language, or religion. 2. Personal liberty is guaranteed."

Constitutions are the baseline for laws, so thankfully in Kuwait we have a constitution that is progressive. But we cannot say that we have not had legislations in Kuwait that are deemed unconstitutional or in other words stood against freedoms and rights in the constitution. When such a situation happens, the laws can be taken to a constitutional court and the court can make the law unenforceable.

### Parliament

**Question:** Is it true that Kuwait has a very fair and democratic parliament or National Assembly compared to other countries in the region? Can you explain more on how the parliament works?

**Fajer:** This question is political as well as legal and there are different perspectives to look at. I will need to answer this question through research if I really wanted to put together a thorough answer. In general though, it is fair to say that Kuwait's National Assembly is different to other GCC countries. The people of Kuwait do take part in a fair election. Many scholars state that Kuwait has a stronger parliament compared to other GCC countries and attribute this to our history. There are multiple papers and books written on the matter, so I do not want to get into a lot of detail, but let me explain generally how it works.

The Kuwaiti National Assembly is made up of 50 parliament members that are voted for by the public. The parliament members then can suggest laws and vote for them along with the ministers, who are chosen by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait. The ministers can only be a third of the number of parliament members and since we have 50 members, ministers usually at 15-16. When they vote collectively, depending on the type of law, a certain quota must be met, but generally speaking if the majority vote for the law then the law comes into effect after following a certain process.

I am very proud to be Kuwaiti and I am also grateful for the laws that we have (even though we still need to improve). I hope you all appreciate the country you live in whether you are Kuwaiti or not, and be grateful for the rights and freedoms that we have. Regardless of the law though, let us all treat each other with love and respect, making Kuwait a better place.

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

## 674,000 PATIENTS VISITED FARWANIYA HOSPITAL'S OUTPATIENT CLINICS IN 2016

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Farwaniya Hospital's deputy director Dr Mohammed Al-Rasheedi said the total number of patients the hospital's outpatient department received in 2016 was over 674,000, including 108,882 citizens during morning hours and 565,140 expats during afternoon hours. Speaking on the sidelines of a special ceremony organized by Farwaniya Hospital to commemorate the national and liberation days, Rasheedi hailed the efforts exerted by the hospital's medical, nursing and technical staff to provide healthcare round the clock. Rasheedi said Farwaniya Hospital receives the largest number of patients in Kuwait, adding 43,967 patients were hospitalized in 2016 and around 50,582 surgeries were done in the same period.

join the 30 currently in service, said Najeeb Al-Awadhi, the general record department's manager. Awadhi added that the devices were monitored by CCTV cameras round the clock to make sure employees respect working hours, especially on days before and after vacations and holidays. He added that employees not showing up to work without due cause receive administrative inquiries and that strict measures have made the majority of employees show more commitment to working hours, starting from 7:00 am to 2:00 pm, as per Civil Service Commission (CSC) regulations.

### Ramadan fundraisers

Three special teams were formed to follow up the execution of fundraising conditions during Ramadan, said Munira Al-Kandari, director of the charities department at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL). She added that each team consists of 10 members representing the commerce, awqaf, interior and social affairs min-

istries, in addition to the Public Authority for Manpower and Kuwait Municipality.

### Resignation

Some members of the pilots' selection committee at Kuwait Airways, including the panel's chairman, resigned only two months after the committee was formed on Dec 5, 2016. The resignations came in protest over the executive committee's alleged interference in the committee's work. They also accused the executive committee of interviewing candidates applying for a job as pilots at Kuwait Airways jointly with a Turkish recruitment agency without notifying it.

### Control room

Acting customs director Adnan Al-Qossaibi said the customs directorate has built a new control room at Shuwaikh Port to analyze incoming shipments' data and routes and meticulously check all imports.

### Fingerprint devices

Fifteen new fingerprint devices will be installed in various Ministry of Health (MoH) departments soon to



## MANPOWER AUTHORITY DIRECTOR MEETS WITH US ARMY OFFICIALS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Acting Director of the Public Authority for Manpower Abdullah Al-Motoutah received

Camp Arifjan representatives Lt Col Michael Lang and Maj Shawn Brown. Motoutah also received two criminal investigators from the US Army troops stationed in Kuwait,

where both sides discussed topics related to government contracts and the labor needed for companies providing logistics services to US camps.



## MUNICIPALITY CRACKDOWN AT AMGHARA FACTORIES

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality's Public Relations Department said three departments in Jahra (general cleanliness and road occupancy, municipal services licensing and emergency team) continued their campaigns at

major contractors' factories in Amghara, resulting in issuing citations for four signboard violations, and issued five storage warnings. They also hauled 34 loads of garbage and removed 40 abandoned cars. Director of Jahra municipality branch Mohammad Al-Aradhi said these campaigns are held periodically at all governorate factories to enforce the

law. Meanwhile, Rai food center carried out several field campaigns against stores in Rai to make sure about the validity of foodstuff sold to citizens and expats. The campaign resulted in confiscating and destroying half a ton of expired food, besides issuing four tickets for dealing with food without meeting health rules.



**KUWAIT:** The Medical Emergency Department at the Ministry of Health handled a total of 369 cases during the period between Thursday and Saturday, including 26 cases for people who were hospitalized due to traffic accidents (6), medical conditions (19), fights (1).

Local Spotlight

## KFAED'S IMPORTANT ROLE



By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

**W**e occasionally read about criticism against the activities of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), because it ignores the needs of the Kuwaiti society, especially with regards to education, housing and infrastructure projects, at a time it offers massive aid, loans and grants to many countries around the globe.

I have never written on this subject, although the activity of KFAED is not a secret or hidden and is often mentioned as a matter of pride and success, because we as a geographically small country crossed the borders many years ago and moved out of the box to support many poor countries, even ones that we do not have diplomatic relations with. This did not prevent Kuwait to work on such missions, which I believe deserves praise.

Kuwait has done well in the establishment of this fund since the 1970s, as there is always a need for rich countries to support poor countries, whether we know the name of the state or the project, that is often related to electricity or health services. The process of this aid is not random, but goes with a study, agreements and follow-up operations by the staff of the fund. Also, the money is spent within a specified budget and stages until the completion of the project.

Even faraway states that Kuwait does not have political, economic or cultural ties with, this kind of relationship with KFAED is more than enough. Even the political goal to enhance the country's position is acceptable. KFAED supports poor nations with projects that finance themselves in the end.

Some accuse KFAED of never stopping its activities or falling into a loss, whatever the circumstances, while the state budget has a deficit. Also, some claim that some countries that benefited from the fund's grants stood against Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion in the 1990s.

But we should not mix between the aid we offer by our free will and out of our humane perspective with a demand that an entire state should be loyal to us for good. Any political leadership can have a different perspective towards our cases, even the ones we believe are right.

Let us remember that many rich countries sell weapons and military protection systems to small states to defend themselves. International trade, whether humanitarian or military, is permitted for all those who need it and there is no need to complain.

# HIT-AND-RUN ACCIDENTS AT THREE-YEAR HIGH

NEARLY HALF DRIVERS UNAWARE THAT FLEEING SCENE IS ILLEGAL



Accidents in 2013							
Type of accident	Kuwait City	Hawally	Farwaniya	Jahra	Ahmadi	Mubark Al-Kabeer	Total
Collision with solid objects	433	761	344	272	332	96	2238
Fatal cases	16	7	31	95	60	2	211
Checking vehicles	1	3	6	25	6	4	45
Rollover	39	34	35	137	108	30	383
Run over	53	57	46	86	25	8	275
Against anonymous	1446	2643	1383	546	1818	208	8044
Collision between two or more vehicles	1450	2273	1077	872	1289	597	7558
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,438</b>	<b>5,778</b>	<b>2,922</b>	<b>2,033</b>	<b>3,638</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>18,754</b>

Accidents in 2014							
Type of accident	Kuwait City	Hawally	Farwaniya	Jahra	Ahmadi	Mubark Al-Kabeer	Total
Collisions with a solid object	378	825	348	236	306	117	2210
Fatal cases	24	8	33	91	56	5	217
Checking vehicles	6	3	14	28	3	9	63
Rollover	47	29	48	131	109	28	392
Run over	48	84	60	52	10	7	261
Against anonymous	1456	2326	1209	451	1885	279	7606
Collisions between two or more vehicles	1902	2291	1068	751	1616	654	8282
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,861</b>	<b>5,566</b>	<b>2,780</b>	<b>1,740</b>	<b>3,985</b>	<b>1,099</b>	<b>19,031</b>

Accidents in 2015							
Type of accident	Kuwait City	Hawally	Farwaniya	Jahra	Ahmadi	Mubark Al-Kabeer	Total
Collisions with a solid object	295	578	268	125	248	59	1573
Fatal cases	8	5	13	71	55	5	157
Checking vehicles	2	9	12	18	1	5	47
Rollover	43	41	48	82	76	16	306
Run over	41	64	43	42	11	14	215
Against anonymous	931	1966	740	360	1211	2014	5422
Collisions between two or more vehicles	1346	1737	731	573	1020	512	5919
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,666</b>	<b>4,400</b>	<b>1,855</b>	<b>1,271</b>	<b>2,622</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>13,639</b>

By Faten Omar

Almost half of all hit-and-run drivers claim that they were not aware that they were breaking the law by failing to stop. The findings will alarm police at a time when the number of hit-and-run accidents is at a three-year high.

"In 2015, a total of 110,892 traffic accidents were recorded, resulting in the death of 429 people," Head of the Public Relations and Traffic Awareness Department Lt Col Nawaf Al-Hayan noted. He said the traffic sector works to ensure the safety of road users through the deployment of field patrols round-the-clock and applying the law to everyone without exception. He also said strict traffic campaigns will continue to be organized in all governorates to punish violators of traffic laws.

#### Law enforcement

Hayan stressed the importance of enforcing the law to deter offenders and protect the lives of road users, motorists and pedestrians. "Everyone must be aware that driving is an art and requires good manners to achieve the

desired goals to reduce traffic accidents, which cast a gloomy shadow on individuals and the society and cost the nation to treat the injured in hospitals, which ultimately has an impact on the economy of the state and on families," he added.

On the use of emergency lanes on certain roads, Hayan reiterated it is permitted to drive on the left shoulder only under certain circumstances as specified by the General Traffic Department. He said the speed limit should not exceed 45 km/hour and the lane can be used only during peak hours or from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm. On another note, he said 146,859 traffic citations were recorded against motorists for not complying with rules regulating driving on the left shoulder lane, while 4,291 offenders were punished for driving on the right shoulder.

#### High rate

Kuwait marks one of the highest rates of traffic accidents in the world, though it has seen a slight decline in recent years. A total of 2,437 people died in traffic accidents in the five years ending April 26, 2016, according to a statistical report produced by the Ministry of

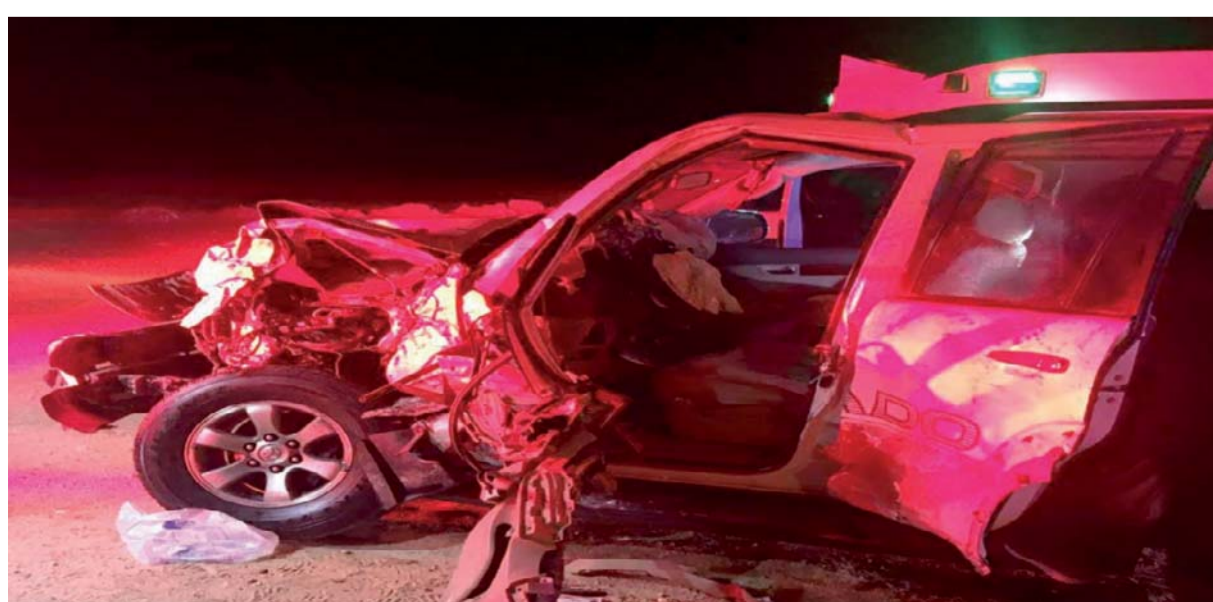
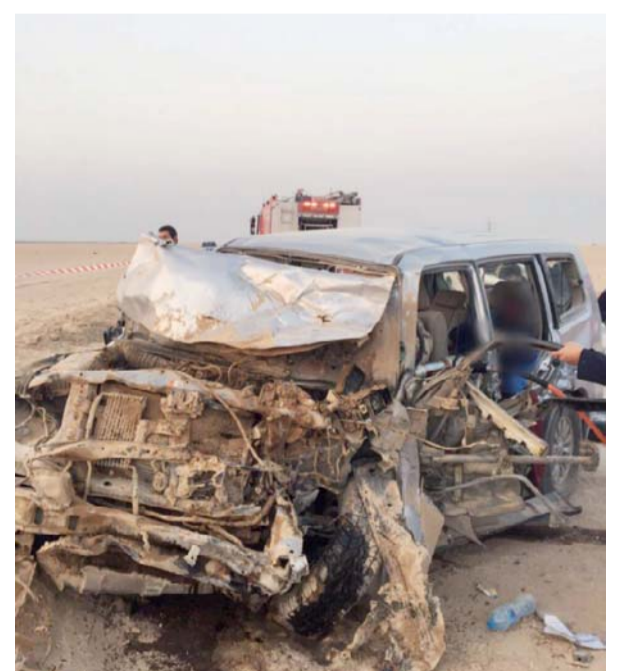
Interior. The report states that the number of road deaths dropped from 493 in 2011 and 461 in 2014 to 429 in 2015. The data also showed that traffic fatalities totaled 454 in 2012, compared to 445 in 2013.

Some 155 people died in road accidents in the first four months of 2016, noted the report. It stated that the highest number of fatalities recorded this year was in Ahmadi governorate (53 cases), followed by Jahra (52), Hawally (20), Farwaniya (13), Capital (12) and Mubarak Al-Kabeer (5). In 2015, Ahmadi governorate also topped the list with 167 fatalities, followed by Jahra with 122, Farwaniya (54), Hawally (31) Mubarak Al-Kabeer (28) and Capital (27).

#### Youth are number one victims

The report revealed that people aged between 21 and 30 years suffered the highest fatality rate in 2015, accounting for 119 of 429 of recorded deaths. Ninety victims were aged between 31 and 40, 73 between 41 and 50, 40 between 51 and 60, while 25 were aged over 61. There were 19 fatality cases amongst the 0-10 group and 60 amongst those aged 11 to 20. Data also showed that 80,827 accidents were registered in 2015. A lack of attention while driving caused 95 percent of those accidents, stated the report. Surprisingly, exceeding the speed limit was blamed for a tiny fraction of fatalities in 2015 - just 0.46 percent. The report added that 6,338,066 traffic violations were registered in 2015, including 3,523,241 speeding violations, 1.1 million parking violations, 533,931 driving license-related violations, 363,584 for running the red light and 205,872 safety violations.

**People aged between 21 and 30 years suffered the highest fatality rate in 2015**



KUWAIT: File photos released by the Interior Ministry showing traffic accidents reported this year around Kuwait.



# KUWAIT CELEBRATES NATIONAL, LIBERATION DAYS

KUWAIT: Kuwait celebrated the 56th Independence Day and the 26th Liberation Day with various activities held around the country, including the Arabian Gulf Road parades which have become a staple of national celebrations in recent years. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Joseph Shagra



## FEB 27, 1992, FIRST FLAG HOISTING AFTER LIBERATION



**KUWAIT:** It was a day full of pride and emotions when Kuwait celebrated on February 27, 1992, the first anniversary of liberation from the Iraqi invasion and the 31st anniversary of Independence, which witnessed the flag hoisting on the mass flag square in down town Kuwait, attended by the late father Amir, Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, at the time he was the Crown Prince and Prime Minister amid official and large presence of Kuwaitis.

The Square here is the main center for hosting national celebrations and is located near the Arabian Gulf Street, and do host the longest flag of Kuwait with 36 meters in length. It is currently the arena known as Jaber Al-Ahmad cultural center, which was inaugurated by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on October 31, 2016. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Officials and members of martyrs' families pose for a group photo during the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## MARTYRS' FAMILIES HONORED DURING NATIONAL, LIBERATION DAYS CEREMONY

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Author and researcher in the biography of Al-Sabah family members Abdullah Buwair hosted a celebration last Thursday at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on the occasion of the 56th National Day and 26th Liberation Day. During the event, he honored the families of martyrs, in addition to a number of ambassadors and other personalities.

Sheikh Sabah Thamer Al-Sabah said that this occasion showed the love that the Kuwaiti people have towards their country. "We remember our martyrs who sacrificed their lives for our country. They are living in our minds in the form of memories. We will never forget them. We should always hold such events to tell new generations the heroic stories of the martyrs," he noted.

Buwair presented a historical preview of the independence and liberation. "For 56 years we are celebrating the National Day on February 25 which was the day that then Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah assumed power, although the actual Independence Day took place on June 19, 1961 after the protection treaty with Great Britain was canceled and Kuwait became independent," he explained.

He also spoke about the Iraqi Invasion. "On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait; an invasion that lasted for almost seven months. The Kuwaiti people resisted this occupation and stopped their daily life, by not going to schools or offices in protest. Many Kuwaitis were tortured, arrested and detained, and hundreds were killed. Today we remember this and it is our duty to honor the families of the brave heroes who protected our country," added Buwair.



Author Abdullah Buwair presents a copy of his latest book to Sheikh Fariha Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Mustafa Behbehani noted that nations choose important days to celebrate their history, and we in Kuwait celebrate the National and Liberation Days. "Former Amir of Kuwait late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem set democracy in Kuwait after adopting the constitution and establishing the parliament. The life of Kuwaitis changed during his reign as oil revenues were high, and new schools and hospitals were built. Late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also continued building the country, as well as his successors late Sheikh Jaber -Ahmad Al-Sabah and the present Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-

Ahmad Al-Sabah," he explained. "The former Amir late Sheikh Jaber played a heroic role in liberating Kuwait. He brought the allied forces to liberate Kuwait and after the liberation, he worked on rebuilding and reconstructing Kuwait. The people of Kuwait were also compensated for the damages and losses during the invasion. We must remember the martyrs for the great role they played during this hard period," Behbehani further said. A documentary about the national celebrations was presented. Sheikh Fariha Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah concluded the ceremony by honoring diplomats.

## ABK CELEBRATES NATIONAL DAY WITH AL-KHARAFI KIDS CENTER

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently celebrated National and Liberation days with children at the Al-Kharafi Kids Center. The celebration, which took place on Wednesday, February 19, 2017, featured singing, Kuwaiti decorations and flags, face painting, coloring and competitions with prizes for all the children present. The day was attended by 300 children, relatives, staff from the center and employees from ABK and was designed to help children engage with the public and strengthen their understanding and sense of nationalism and joy on this special occasion.

The Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center is an important facility which gives children with disabilities new opportunities to learn and

play within a secure and nurturing environment. The aim of the center is to assist children with their confidence and encourage them to develop their physical, social, verbal and emotional abilities so that they are better equipped to engage with the local community. ABK is a committed member of Kuwait's community, actively engaged in supporting a wide variety of events, especially those that focus on special needs.

ABK had marked the start of its National and Liberation day celebrations earlier this month by lighting up its headquarters with the colors of the Kuwaiti flag. The bank celebrated with its staff members on this occasion by distributing Kuwait flags and themed pins as well as traditional sweets across all branches.



## GULF BANK MAKES SPECIAL SCULPTURE FOR KUWAIT

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank is proud to celebrate the National Day and Liberation Day holidays of our beloved country. This year the bank decided to pay tribute to Kuwait by creating something unique for everyone in the country to enjoy.

Gulf Bank commissioned a sculpture, exclusively crafted for this special event to commemorate the State of Kuwait. Displayed in front of Gulf Bank headquarters on Mubarak Al-Kabeer street, the sculpture says 'Kuwait' in Arabic, and is made of steel and wood. Everyone is invited to enjoy the sculpture and to participate in our social media competition by posting their of the Gulf Bank 'Kuwait' tribute sculpture. You must mention @Gulf\_Bank and use the hashtag #Ana\_Kuwaiti. The competition runs through 16 March and three winners will be selected; each winner will receive a KD100 prize.

Additionally, as in previous year, the Gulf Bank's headquarters on Mubarak Al Kabeer street is lighted with the

colors of the Kuwaiti flag lighting up the entire area. The Bank has also installed flags around its entire building which complement the 'Kuwait' structure.

Laila Al Qatami, Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank said: "Gulf Bank was established in the heart of Kuwait in 1961, the same year our country became independent. This year the Gulf Bank family decided to create something special to share with all of Kuwait's people. Our Kuwait sculpture was designed and created in Kuwait, and is a gift and token of appreciation to Kuwait, its leadership, and its people. We are happy to celebrate Kuwait's 56 Years of Independence, 26 Years of Liberation, and 10 years since the ascension of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Gulf Bank conveys our sincerest congratulations and best wishes to all the people of Kuwait on this special occasion."



Gulf Bank employees celebrate the national holidays.

## NBK FAMILY SHARES THE SPIRIT OF NATIONAL DAY WITH CHILDREN AT NBK'S HOSPITAL

**KUWAIT:** On the occasion of Kuwait's National and Liberation days, National Bank of Kuwait's (NBK) Family paid a visit to NBK Hospital at Sabah Medical district to share happy moments of Kuwait's national celebrations



with the children and their families.

"NBK staff have always devoted a considerable part of their time to comfort children, congratulate them and gift them as part of NBK's corporate social responsibility program," said Joanne Al-Abdul Jaleel, NBK Public Relations Officer.

Abdul Jaleel added "Sharing happy moments with children are our pleasure. We are proud that NBK devotes such attention to the Kuwaiti society and provide compassion and support to those in needs, including children. NBK's commitment to shoulder its corporate social responsibility was the basic motive that led NBK to build its children hospital at Sabah Medical district many years ago."

NBK's visits to hospitals and care centers reflect the bank's high sense of duty and responsibility towards all different sectors of the society. It is a well rooted tradition that has been carried out by NBK each year in its efforts to continuously have an active role in the Kuwaiti society. The visit to the hospital was emotional and overwhelming for both the children and NBK family.

**Heartiest & Warm wishes to**  
**H.H. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah**  
 Amir of the State of Kuwait

**to the Government & Citizens of Kuwait**  
 on the occasion of  
**Kuwait's 56th National Day**  
 &  
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Crime

Report

TWO HOSPITALIZED AFTER FAMILY FEUD

**KUWAIT:** A bedoon (stateless) man received two stabs when he went to rescue his relative who was stabbed five times by his uncle. The fight took place in Reqqa between two bedoon relatives. Paramedics took both men to Adan hospital in critical conditions. Both will be questioned when their condition allows.

In-law threatened

A 23-year-old citizen told police in Ahmadi governorate that his brother-in-law threatened him. The suspect was summoned and he did not deny the charges, claiming that his in-law was not treating his sister well and beat her. He was detained and is waiting for legal action.

Suicide

Interior Ministry operations received a call from a security guard at a government facility saying that he found a laborer hanging dead from an air conditioning unit. Police arrived to the scene shortly afterwards accompanied by paramedics; who pronounced the man dead. Forensics lowered the body, examined it then sent it to the coroner. Preliminary investigations indicate that the man had committed suicide.

Marital dispute

An Egyptian woman beat her husband, tore his clothes and papers, then damaged their furniture. The man resorted to the police station and told officers there about the incident. The woman was summoned for questioning.

Drunk man arrested

Ahmadi detectives arrested a drunken man who is being questioned about his companions' locations. Policemen stopped a car with two men and a woman inside. They all were discovered to be intoxicated. One man was arrested after he got out of the car while holding two bottles, and told officers to catch him if they could. When policemen went after him, the other two escaped.

Hotel fire

Firemen evacuated 185 tourists from a hotel in Salmiya, as fire started in one of the rooms. Three of the tourists suffered smoke inhalation. The fire was put out and stopped from spreading. Investigations are underway to find out the cause of the fire.

False alarm

A call about a girl's kidnapping in Sabah Al-Salem had the police on alert only to find out that she went on a date. Police received a call from a citizen who said that he saw an unknown person kidnapping his neighbor in front of her home. The police spotted the car described in the emergency call after it was located on the seafloor, and arrested the driver. The man, Egyptian, said that he fell in love with the Filipina girl after they met on social media, adding that she went with him at her consent. Both were taken to the police station to face legal action. — Translated from the Arabic press



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

PARTICIPATION

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

I had conversation during my visit to a government hospital. It was not a medical conversation, but an educational one. Here is the entire story:

On Monday, I went to hospital to have an X-ray on my foot, and while I waited for the result, I had a casual conversation with an official. I asked her how many children she has and how she manages her time between work and parenting. She has four children and does not face any difficulty raising the ones in secondary school. She does, however, face problems with her youngest son in first grade; all her time is consumed by him.

I was surprised, so I said: "Excuse me, you mean your older son?" She replied: "No, I mean the youngest." So I asked her if it was not strange that a child in elementary school consumes all her time. Why? What are they giving him?

The official smiled and said it is not with what he takes, but what they ask from him. Had I heard about something called "participations"? No, I had not. What are participations?

At the start of every subject taught in elementary school, students are asked to participate in class. It

starts from the first stage, in which children do not have any knowledge or awareness of what is asked from them. When teachers are asked why, their answer would be: "we instill those principles in the child's mentality from the first stage, so he will benefit from it at the university stage when the student is asked to do what is called 'participation'."

"Participation is supposed to be a student's work, but is basically done by the parents," the official said. "Whoever has enough money presents work done by 'student offices' (agencies that prepare homework for students). This is the situation, and I ask you to write an article and ask officials at the education ministry: Is it not better to do that work during school hours, because participation means the students participate together."

Through their participation, the teacher explains the meaning of the word through work. This is what we learned in the past, but today, participation is only exhausting parents morally and materially, without any educational benefit to the student."

— Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Anbaa

AL-MULLA GROUP GOLDEN SPONSOR OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

REAPS THE AWARD OF TRAINING EXCELLENCE OF 2016

**KUWAIT:** Al-Mulla Group has successfully attained its participation in the 'Organizational Education Conference' organized by the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program under the title of 'Effective training for employment and career advancement in the private sector', held from 12th to 14th February, 2017, at Salwa Auditorium, Marina Hotel.

The conference was held under the sponsorship of Sheikh Mohamed Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, and in the presence of Hind Al-Sabeeh, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and the Minister of State for Economic Affairs. During the opening ceremony, the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program awarded all participating companies; Al-Mulla Group Holding was conferred with the award of "Training Excellence for a New Participant Company with Peculiar Plan."

Isam Al-Othman, Deputy General Manager - Human Resources, expressed his happiness on receiving such award granted to Al-Mulla Group, and announced that the Group is determined to provide the national manpower with sufficient training which may help diminish the gap between training outcomes and the actual requirements of business market. "Such conferences are of great importance for the organizational levels and for planning the future and effectiveness of human resources; especially in the private sector," Al-Othman added. He also exhorted new and present employees to be always ambitious for success and prosperity of their country.

At the end, Othman extended deepest thanks to Fawzi Al-Majdali, the Secretary General of the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program and his team for their outstanding efforts and continuous cooperation at all levels. Al-Mulla Group expressed its sincere thanks to Taqat Projects Management Company, our strategic partner in training for their cooperation to achieve intended targets throughout the year.



KFH COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING KUWAIT RED CRESCENT SOCIETY

**KUWAIT:** "Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has been assuming the social responsibility since its inception as a leading Islamic financial institution. This emanates from its firm belief in developing businesses and projects targeting the interest of society and reflects the efforts in inking strategic partnership with the official bodies to support the significant charitable activities in the society," said Chief Executive Officer at Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Mazin Saad Al Nahedh.

He added on the sidelines of the visit of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society KRCS delegation to KFH chaired by the Chairman Dr Hilal Al Sayer, that KFH spares no efforts in supporting the charitable organizations mainly the Red Crescent Society and the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital KACCH. KFH strategy seeks to improve the level of services and maintains the pioneering position of the bank in the Islamic finance industry, yet it emphasizes the commitment towards supporting the official bodies, institutions, ministries and public welfare societies in their projects and activities that benefit the society. This is in line with KFH adherence to sharia provisions and keenness to optimally assume the social responsibility.

Meanwhile, Al Sayer praised KFH contributions in supporting the charity work. He applauded the keenness in supporting the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital KACCH, indicating KFH has a long track record of humanitarian achievements that made KFH a model example of the private sector. Also, this incarnates the country's priority as per the directives of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah



KFH CEO Mazin Al-Nahedh and KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al Sayer at KFH Headquarters.

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He added that the KRCS organizes several campaigns and humanitarian programs such as aiding people in the war-torn countries, and supporting the widows and orphans in the displacement camps. The KRCS shoulders the responsibility of sponsoring several humanitarian projects inside and outside Kuwait, which reflects the bright image of Kuwait and its people.

It is worth noting that KACCH aims to reduce the stresses of hospitalization on children and their families by providing a supportive child-friendly environment with appropriate play opportunities to facilitate optimal growth and development and to prepare children and their families for their medical procedures by using play to help them understand their experiences in hospital.

EQUATE CELEBRATES KUWAITIS' RESILIENCE AND PRIDE WITH MEDIA PRODUCTION FOR NATIONAL DAYS

**KUWAIT:** EQUATE Petrochemical Company, a global producer of petrochemicals, launched a new media production in celebration of the Kuwait's National and Liberation Day. This media production comes as an homage to the essence of Kuwait based on its people's resilience, progressiveness, patriotism and pride.

The film is based on one of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah's memorable speeches that has surprisingly never been used in any communication. On this occasion, EQUATE shares this film with the Kuwaiti people to help them understand the inspiring words of Kuwait's founder. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem's speech is the one he made on the occasion of Kuwait's independence as a British protectorate in 1961. In it, he expresses his gratitude and hope for Kuwait, its citizens and promising future. The film merges Abdullah Al-Salem's words, voice and a few clips of his original speech with images of Kuwait's milestones throughout a course of 56 years that complement what the visionary leader is saying.



Dr Abeer Sulaiman Al-Omar

Corporate Communications and Government Affairs, Dr Abeer Sulaiman Al-Omar, said, "In this nostalgic and inspiring TVC, we have used emotional scenes from the past that reflect the essence of Kuwait and thus, its people. This interpretation means a lot to us at EQUATE because it embodies our country's innate progressiveness, tolerance, democracy, resistance and patriotism."

The scenes include those from Kuwait's liberation from the Iraqi invasion that shows Kuwaitis celebrating and parading in the street, the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's arrival

to Kuwait after the war as he memorably and humbly kneels on his nation's precious ground, Kuwait Football Team's legendary win of the Asian Cup in 1980, Kuwaiti women's role as symbolized by Fatima Hussein during the cultural and artistic movement that was chaperoned by the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Kuwait's resilience and bravery during the Gulf War which is epitomized in the Al-Qurain House.

Moreover, historical events that are shown in the film, highlights Kuwait's democratic political system, a fact that is shown by political figures such as Khaled Al-Ghunaim and Abdullah Al-Naibari and finally, Kuwait's solidarity in the face of terror after the bombing of the Al-Sadeq Mosque in 2015, a catastrophe that not only unified the Kuwaiti people but left the entire world in awe as the country's leader, the current Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, entered the bombed mosque less than an hour afterward. All of these moments are complemented by a voice over of Kuwait's founder, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem.

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

I AM NOT SECTARIAN

By Ali Alriz

I am a secular liberal Shiite, known for my writings that raise human affairs and civil values above sects and sectarian differences. Those who follow me know how much I believe in the humanity values, and that anyone who harms another human insults his Creator by doing so. Those who follow me know that I am not a Zealot; I wrote about the concentration of Arabs and Muslims on social issues including teaching, health, aging and technological advancement.

I am not a sectarian, but I did not utter one word about Bashar Al-Asad's destruction of Syrian cities, or the riddling of its boys and girls with shrapnel. I did not use one word to criticize the departure of the Shiite sectarian "Hizbullah" militia from Lebanon to Syria, with its claims to protect the Lebanese at the borders, and then finally to fight the extremist ideology represented by "Daesh" and "Al-Qaeda" before it expands and reaches Lebanon.

I am not a sectarian, but I did not attack Iran's entry into Syria to kill its people who rose against a dictator regime. I did not comment on the presence of Al-Quds Brigade that belongs to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, a totally ideological brigade that carries out flash operations in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. I was not drawn to the picture of brigade commander Qasem Soleimani on top of the rubble of every destroyed Syrian city, or in front of the advancing Iraqi troops near Mosul.

It did not mean anything to me, the presence of Aseab Haq, the Nujabaa group and Shiite Militias from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Hashd forces storming into Iraq and Syria. It was a similar scene to the holy mobilization that came to the region during the crusader wars; the death of those is martyrdom wherever it can be geographically and with whom it may be humanly.

I do not know why I did not write to criticize Iran's groups in the Arab world, while shouting insulting slogans against Arab countries who confronted Iran's expansion into Yemen. Arab countries where people look like me... really, I do not know why I did not write about them. But I know that I am not a sectarian.

I am also a Liberal, secular Sunni, known for my progressiveness and inclination to modernity, and my constant call for an enlightened Islam free of impurities. I am not a sectarian, but I do not know why I was not provoked by the scene of some brothers celebrating the destruction of the twin towers on September 11 by Al-Qaeda pirates. I do not know why I sometimes say "Sheikh" Osama bin Laden, or why I consider that "he went astray from the message of forgiveness that is represented by our religion", and I pray for his followers to get on the right path.

To be fair, I do not feel that they represent me, but I did not write about terrorism a quarter as much as I wrote about other topics.

I am not a sectarian, but I consider fighting extreme religious ideology, and the terrorist method to be the responsibility of the Americans and Europeans. I was not affected by any operation by Al-Qaeda. In fact, there was something in me that sympathized with those who carried out the operations, even when I was giving opposite statements on Western televisions. The same applies for terrorist operations against civilians in Baghdad, Sader City, Najaf and Karbala. We condemn but not with the same emphasis.

When I meet a Western official I warn him against the "Shiite danger", and I make comparisons with the sectarian struggle in the region. It was possible, of course, to say that the danger is Iran, but it may be that the nation's interest requires that we put all Shiites in Iran's basket, in turn creating an opposition that may increase our base areas.

"Daesh" scares me when it strikes near to where I am, but I do not feel the same disappointment towards when it is fought by international and regular Iraqi forces and other Hashd Shiite sectarian forces. Instead, in my columns and tweets I concentrate on the "crimes" of Sectarian militias and forget its crimes. Also, I do not know why I did not criticize Al-Joulani, "Al-Qaeda's Amir" in Syria, when I consider that Syria is far from removing Al-Asad, and the true essence of it goes back 1400 years ago... to the difference with Shiites. True... I do not know, but I am not a sectarian.

I am not sectarian, I speak in my propagation lessons about differences between us and Westerners and I recommend understanding it and respecting its character; that is the shortest way for civilized cooperation, but I do not do that when the matter is related to those closest to me. I do not know why I lecture on visiting graves more than talking about pure hearts, and the superficial differences with the Jaafari (Shiite) sect, more than the basic characteristics we share. True, I do not know, but I am not a sectarian.

I am a Secular Liberal Christian known for my progressiveness and my humanitarian vision, and without making it long, the same story, I am also no sectarian. Thank God that you believed me!

— Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai



**India demands 'strongest action' from Trump after killing**

REGIONAL RIVAL TAKES ON MODI AT HIS OWN GAME

# YES, LE PEN COULD WIN IN FRANCE

BREXIT, TRUMP MAY LEAD CONSERVATIVE LEADER TO POWER

**PARIS:** With the polls narrowing and one of her main rivals embroiled in an expenses scandal, far-right leader Marine Le Pen could feasibly become French president in May, senior politicians and commentators say. At the headquarters of her National Front (FN) party in Nanterre outside Paris, officials believe the same forces that led to the Brexit vote in Britain and Donald Trump's victory in the United States could carry Le Pen to power.

Even some of her rivals concede a victory for the far-right firebrand is possible. "I think Madame Le Pen could be elected," former conservative Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin said this month. Another former premier, the Socialist Manuel Valls, has also warned of the "danger" of assuming that Le Pen cannot win.

Polls show that support for the 48-year-old anti-immigrant and anti-EU candidate has been consistent for four years now. Since 2013, surveys have shown she will progress through the first round to reach the runoff stage in France's two-stage presidential election. Pollsters now note that although Le Pen is not currently forecast to win the all-important showdown on May 7, she has whittled down the projected gap between herself and her main challengers.

**The woes of others**

The legal woes of her conservative challenger Francois Fillon have especially played into Le Pen's hands. When Fillon saw off pre-contest favourite Alain Juppe to clinch the rightwing nomination in late November, polls showed he would win 67 percent of the vote in the runoff to 33 percent for Le Pen.

Then in January allegations surfaced that Fillon had paid his wife hundreds of thousands of euros for parliamentary work she might not have done. Surveys now show Le Pen would score 44 percent to 56 percent for Fillon if the second round was held yesterday. The pressure on 62-year-old Fillon moved up a notch on Friday when prosecutors announced he would face a full judicial investigation into the claims.

A similar picture emerges when Le Pen's projected second-round score is compared to that of Emmanuel Macron, the pro-business centrist who has moved from outsider to genuine contender in the space of a few months. Although Macron's performance against Le Pen has only been tested since January, the winning margin has dropped from 30 points to around 20 in a month.

The latest Ifof poll gives Macron 61.5 percent to 38.5 for the far-right standard bearer. Le Pen is also caught up in an expenses scandal and faces accusations she has misused European Parliament funds. Yet unlike Fillon, who once led the race, the allegations have not damaged her support. Experts caution however that predicting the second-round scores in a contest that has already thrown up a host of surprises is fraught with risk. And the polls have been wrong in election after election over the last two years. When canvassed by L'Opinion newspaper in mid-February, polling experts were divided on whether Le Pen could win.

**'She has a chance'**

Bernard Sananes of the Elabe polling group said it was "both possible and improbable". Jerome Sainte-Marie of Polling Vox nuanced his answer, saying: "Against Macron, she has a chance of winning." Ifof's Jerome Fourquet told AFP that if on the eve of the second round, the polls show



**SAINT-HERBLAIN:** French far-right Front National (FN) party candidate for the presidential election Marine Le Pen acknowledges applause after speaking on stage during a campaign rally at the Zenith de Nantes venue. — AFP

Le Pen at 40 percent to 60 percent for a rival, "the gap is too big for there to be a surprise". "But if it's 55-45, it could be a different matter," he said.

Fourquet said Le Pen's performance in the first round would be crucial to see if she can gain the momentum to snatch a win in the runoff. In the 2002 presidential election, Marine's father Jean-Marie Le Pen rocked the political establishment by reaching the runoff. But in that second round, voters of various political stripes reluctantly got behind conservative candidate Jacques Chirac to block the far right.

Regional elections in December 2015 give a more recent precedent. Both Le Pen and her 27-year-old niece Marion Marechal-Le Pen were soundly beaten in the second round despite high scores in the first round, as the mainstream parties joined forces to block them. Since then, "Le Pen has cleared another hurdle, but the barrier she still has to clear is very high," Fourquet said. Researcher Joel Gombin, a specialist on the FN, believes Le Pen is still some way short of getting the keys to the glittering Elysee Palace. "As things stand, where are the votes necessary to move up from 25 percent or even 30 percent to 50 percent?" he said. — AFP

## GERMAN POLICE PROBE DRIVER'S MOTIVE IN DEADLY CAR RAMMING

**FRANKFURT AM MAIN:** Investigators are probing the motives of a 35-year-old German student who rammed his car into a group of pedestrians, killing one person and injuring two others, officials said yesterday, ruling out terrorism. The suspect is being formally held on suspicion of murder and attempted murder over Saturday's incident in the picturesque southwestern city of Heidelberg, local police and prosecutors said in a statement.

The accused, who was shot and wounded by police after fleeing the scene on foot while wielding a knife, is in hospital recovering from surgery. A 73-year-old German man died from his injuries hours after being hit by the car. A 32-year-old Austrian and a 29-year-old Bosnian woman, both Heidelberg residents, were lightly hurt while a fourth person was able to jump out of the way, according to the statement.

The driver was questioned by investigators for the first time yesterday after waking up from surgery but did not comment on the accusations against him, the officials said. "His motive remains unknown," they said, adding

that it had yet to be determined if the suspect had acted with diminished criminal responsibility. Media reports have suggested the accused may suffer from psychiatric problems, but the authorities have so far not commented directly on those claims.

"At this point in the investigation there are no indications of a terrorist or extremist background to the case," the officials said. A video taken by a bystander in the immediate aftermath of the car attack shows a number of armed police officers apparently confronting the suspect on the street, before a shot can be heard.

According to the statement, a policeman fired his gun after the suspect ignored repeated calls to put down the knife and began charging at the officers who had unsuccessfully tried to stop him with pepper spray. The suspect, who has not been named, did not have a police record prior to the incident. According to the authorities, he comes from the Heidelberg area and hired the car used in the attack from a rental agency about two weeks ago. — AFP



**HEIDELBERG, Germany:** Police officers stand around a car in front of a building, where a man ploughed into pedestrians before being shot by the police on Feb 25, 2017. — AFP

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## SYRIAN CIVIL ACTIVISTS DEMAND TALKS ON TRANSITION, CEASEFIRE MONITORS

**GENEVA:** Syrian activists called yesterday for the Assad government to engage in serious talks on political transition and for the United Nations to strengthen the fragile ceasefire as violence engulfed parts of the country. UN mediator Staffan de Mistura said a militant attack in Homs on Saturday was a deliberate attempt to wreck the Geneva peace talks, while the warring sides traded blame and appeared no closer to actual negotiations.

"Our hopes are not high given the incidents on the ground and the continuous violations by the regime forces and its backers of the ceasefire," Mutasem Alyoufi of 'The Day after Syria' campaign that supports democratic transition, told Reuters in Geneva. Warplanes bombed rebel-held areas around several Syrian cities on Sunday including in the Al-Waer district of Homs,

and in towns around Damascus, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor said.

### 'Duty of the UN'

"One person was killed in the Damascus suburb of Douma and three in Al-Waer, the Observatory said, while shells and rockets were launched at insurgent districts in Deraa and Idlib provinces. Rebels fired several shells at a suburb of government-held Aleppo. Under Security Council resolution 2254, de Mistura is meant to develop a plan to monitor the ceasefire and sanction those who violate it, Alyoufi said. "So this is a duty of the UN."

On the government delegation led by Syrian Ambassador Bashar Ja'afari, Alyoufi said: "We believe that they are not serious to engage here in serious political discussion, rather they are gaining

more time and continuing their military strategy on the ground." De Mistura handed a working paper on procedural issues to delegations on Friday but there appears little prospect of moving to the key political issues that he had hoped to begin addressing.

He is set to hold talks on Sunday with two opposition groups that curry favor with Russia, President Bashar Al-Assad's main backer. The UN envoy indicated to the High Negotiations Committee, which is leading the opposition delegation that he would like to unify the disparate groups to facilitate face-to-face talks with the government to end the nearly six-year-old conflict.

A diplomat and opposition member told Reuters the working paper included an agenda based on resolution 2254 with focus on a new constitution and UN-supervised elections that would

be discussed in three working groups. Nothing would be agreed until everything is agreed, an opposition official said, citing the document.

His paper reiterated that issues related to the ceasefire and fighting terrorism are to be the focus of separate talks in the Kazakh capital of Astana, which are sponsored by Russia and Turkey with the support of another Assad backer, Iran. Dr Mazen Kewara, director of the Turkey operation of the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), said it was important to have a UN ceasefire monitoring mechanism and safe, unhindered access for aid workers to reach Syrian civilians. "We prefer a ceasefire, a complete ceasefire in all Syria. "But if it's not possible we would like to see safe areas where we can provide our services freely with complete protection for civilians and our health care workers," he said. — Reuters



This file photo taken on October 13, 2010 shows a view of the Roman period ancient fortress city of Hatra that dates to more than 2,000 years ago and is located in a desert area about 60 miles southwest of Mosul. — AFP photos

## IN MOSUL, A LONG BATTLE TO REPAIR IRAQ'S HERITAGE

THE ROAD AHEAD WILL BE HARD AND LONG

**PARIS:** The city of Mosul is intertwined with human history, tracing its roots to 4,400 years ago when civilization rose in fabled, fertile Mesopotamia. Today, as Iraqi forces backed by an international coalition inch forward in their fight to recover Mosul from the Islamic State (IS) group, historians are looking at how to save, repair or retrieve precious heritage after the jihadists' three-year reign.

At a meeting in Paris last week, Iraqi officials and dozens of experts from around the world agreed to coordinate efforts to restore Iraq's cultural treasure. But, they admitted, the road ahead will be hard and long. "The main challenge is for Iraqis to deal with this task by themselves. It is important to empower the people," said Stefan Simon, director of global cultural heritage initiatives at Yale university. "It is a heart-breaking situation," he added. "(...) Rehabilitation will take a very long time. They need patience."

In 2014, at the zenith of IS' self-declared "caliphate" in Syria and Iraq, more than 4,000 Iraqi archaeological sites were under the heel of the Sunni fanatics. In the Mosul region alone in northern Iraq, "at least 66 sites were destroyed, some were turned into parking lots, Muslim and Christian places of worship suffered massive destruction and thousands of manuscripts disappeared," Iraq's deputy minister for culture, Qais Rashid, said at the conference, hosted by Unesco.

The most grievous blow has been suffered by the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud, believed to be named after the biblical hunter Nimrod. Eighty percent of the site has been destroyed, by jihadists driving bulldozers and detonating explosives. Nineveh, once the largest city in the world, has been 70-percent destroyed.

### 'Idolatry'

As for Mosul itself, historians are quailing at the likely fate of the city's museum, the second largest in Iraq and a treasure house of ancient artifacts. After suffering looting during the 2003



An ancient statue of a winged bull with a human face, an indication of strength in the Assyrian civilization, at the archaeological site of Nimrud that lies on the Tigris River.

Iraq War, the museum was on the point of reopening in 2014 when IS took over.

The jihadists immediately set about destroying objects from the Assyrian and Greek period, which they claimed promoted "idolatry." Grim discoveries by the Iraqi army in its advance towards the jihadists' bastion of west Mosul have prompted some specialists to fear the worst. In mid-January, Iraqi troops in Neneveh liberated the reputed tomb of the Prophet Yunus-known to

Jews and Christians as the Prophet Jonah.

"(It is) far more damaged than we expected," Culture Minister Salim Khalaf said. The site could collapse, because the jihadists dug tunnels underneath, both to hide from attack and to dig for artifacts, he explained. More than 700 items have been looted from the site to be sale on the black market, he estimated.

Iraq is turning to Interpol and other world agencies to track down the lost treasures. Under UN Security Council resolution 2199, all trade in cultural artifacts from Iraq and Syria is illegal. "Daesh tried but will never erase our culture, identity, diversity, history and the pillars of civilization," Iraqi Education Minister Mohammad Iqbal Omar said, referring to another name for IS, also called ISIS or ISIL. France Desmarais, of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), a professional museum group, said there was a long and tragic history of trafficking in cultural objects from northern Iraq. However, "successive wars in Iraq since 2003 have created additional opportunities" for the trade, Desmarais said.

### Universal values

The long-term needs of preserving Iraq's ancient history are many. They start with securing and monitoring sites, drawing up an inventory of items that are safe or missing, restoring and digitizing manuscripts—a task that is dozens of years in the making, and with a bill to match. But culture embodies universal values, and there is a deep well of goodwill for this venture.

"Culture implies more than just monuments and stones—culture defines who we are," says Unesco chief Irina Bokova. That's a point of view shared by Najeeb Michael, an Iraqi Dominican monk who saved hundreds of manuscripts from the 13th to 18th century, spiriting them to safety in Kurdistan just before IS began its destructive grip on the plain of Nineveh. "We have to save both man and culture," Michael said. "You cannot save the tree without saving its roots." — AFP

## PENTAGON SEEKS TO EXPAND FIGHT AGAINST EXTREMISTS IN SOMALIA

**WASHINGTON:** The Pentagon wants to expand the military's ability to battle Al-Qaeda-linked militants in Somalia, potentially putting US forces closer to the fight against a stubborn extremist group that has plotted attacks against America, senior US officials said. The recommendations sent to the White House would allow US special operations forces to increase assistance to the Somali National Army in the struggle against Al-Shabab militants in the fragile Horn of Africa nation, the officials said. They said the proposal would give the military greater flexibility to launch airstrikes against extremists that appear to be a threat.

Beefing up the military effort in Somalia fits with President Donald Trump's broader request for a Pentagon plan to accelerate the US-led battle against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, and defeat other extremist groups, including al-Qaeda and its affiliates. US concerns about al-Shabab escalated in recent years as young Americans from Somali communities traveled to training camps in Somalia, raising fears they might return to the United States and conduct terror attacks.

### 'Fresh perspective'

Somalia was one of the seven predominantly Muslim countries included in Trump's travel ban last month. The executive order has since been suspended by federal courts. Somalia is "our most perplexing challenge," Gen Thomas Waldhauser, the head of US Africa Command, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

The United States is "trying to take a look at Somalia from a fresh perspective in the way ahead," he said, describing the need to weaken the decade-old Al-Shabab insurgency so that the African nation's military forces can defeat it. Waldhauser declined to provide details of the new options that have been proposed. But other officials said elements include giving US special operations forces greater ability to accompany local troops on military operations against Al-Shabab and easing restrictions on when the US can conduct airstrikes against the group.

The officials weren't authorized to publicly discuss the confidential review and spoke on condition of anonymity. Currently there are about 50 US commandos rotating in and out of Somalia to advise and assist the local troops. The new authorities could result in a small increase in the number of

US forces in Somalia, officials said.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has approved the recommendations and sent the plan to the White House earlier this month, they added. But no final decisions have been made, and the proposal could prove politically sensitive because of the disastrous downing of two US helicopters over Mogadishu in 1993 that killed 18 American troops.

The White House declined to comment, deferring questions to the Defense Department. Somalia has been without a truly functioning government for two-and-a-half decades. After warlords ousted dictator Siad Barre in 1991, they quickly turned on one another, making Somalia infamous for its extreme rates of violence and the proliferation of pirates operating off its coasts. Security has improved in recent years as international efforts against Al-Shabab gained ground.

### Black Hawk Down

After the bodies of American soldiers were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu when the helicopters were shot down, the US withdrew from the country. Since then, Islamist hard-liners have vied for power and Al-Shabab's attacks have spread to Uganda and Kenya. Some of the US officials with knowledge of the new military proposal said it is aimed at improving the US advisory mission because the African Union is planning to pull out its 20,000 peacekeeping forces in Somalia in 2020. Observers say Somali troops are unprepared to fight the extremist threat on their own.

Currently, US forces can transport and accompany local troops. But they must keep their distance from front lines and can only engage the enemy if they come under attack or if Somali forces are in danger of being defeated. The new proposal would give US forces the ability to move along with Somali troops into the fight if needed.

While the American military right now can conduct airstrikes in self-defense or to protect Somali troops if they come under attack and request help, the new authorities would be broader. Officials said that under the new recommendations, the military would be able to launch airstrikes against militants on a more pre-emptive basis. For example, the US could target Al-Shabab fighters gathering for an attack rather than waiting until friendly forces were under fire. — AP

## EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANS FEARING TERROR FLEE SINAI FOR 4TH DAY

**ISMAILIA:** Egyptian Christians fearing attacks by Islamic State group militants fled the volatile northern part of the Sinai Peninsula for a fourth day yesterday, after a string of sectarian killings there sent hundreds packing and raised accusations the government is failing to protect the minority. Over 100 families from the town of el-Arish and nearby have come to the Suez Canal city of Ismailia, 120 kilometers east of Cairo, since Friday, Nabil Shukrallah of the city's Evangelical Church said.

Families arrive scared and in need of supplies, which are being stockpiled at the church via donations from several parishes, he said. They are then transported to be housed in and around the city, in private homes and now also accommodation provided by the government. "They're exhausted, with urgent needs for food and children's clothing," he said, as one father carried off a sick infant to be evacuated by ambulance. "They're terrified of the violence and brutality of the terrorists."

Northern Sinai has for years been the epicenter of an insurgency by Islamic militants, and the area's few Christians have slowly been trickling out. But departures rose in earnest after suspected militants gunned down a Christian plumber at home in front of his family on Thursday in el-Arish. It was the seventh such killing in recent weeks and stoked panic among Christians.

**Devastating bombing**  
No militant group has claimed responsibility for the attack. But Egypt's Islamic State group affiliate, which is based in north Sinai and which in December carried out a devastating suicide bombing against a Cairo church, vowed in a video earlier this week to step up attacks against Egypt's embattled Coptic Christian minority. It described them as "infidels" empowering the West against Muslims.

The Cairo church bombing and the recent killings point to a shift in IS' tactics in Egypt, with the group now also attacking Christian targets that are less protected than military installations, in an attempt to

isolate them and embarrass the government. At the Ismailia's main youth hostel where authorities were putting up 45 families, luggage, boxes of food and new displaced arrived throughout the day.

"I don't want to stay there and die as a casualty in the war that has hit el-Arish," said Reda, a civil servant who arrived two days earlier with six family members including grandchildren. "If they allow us we will stay here until the terrorism is over and the government makes peace." Before Egypt's 2011 Arab Spring uprising, some 5,000 Christians lived in northern Sinai, but the number has since dwindled to fewer than 1,000, priests and residents say. Egypt does not keep official statistics on the number of Christians in cities or across the country.



CAIRO: In this Dec 11, 2016 file photo, an Egyptian Coptic nun weeps as she looks at damage inside the St. Mark Cathedral. — AP

Many rights activists say the displacement is a clear sign the government has failed to provide a minimum of security for the embattled minority in the volatile region, where they have faced public threats before. The government only agreed to put up the fleeing Christians in government housing in Ismailia after pressure on social media, which they underline as another disturbing sign. — AP

## MOROCCO SAYS TO WITHDRAW FROM WESTERN SAHARA TENSION ZONE

**RABAT:** Morocco said yesterday it will pull back from a zone of the contested Western Sahara that has raised tensions with Algeria-backed Polisario Front separatists. "The Kingdom of Morocco will proceed from today with a unilateral withdrawal from the (Guerguerat) zone," the foreign ministry said in a statement. It said the decision was taken by King Mohamed VI at the request of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. Rabat now "hopes the secretary general's intervention will allow a return to the previous situation in the zone concerned, keep its status intact, allow the flow of normal road traffic and thus safeguard the ceasefire," it said. In a telephone call to Guterres on Friday, the king called on the United Nations to take urgent measures to end "provocation" by the Polisario Front threatening a 1991 ceasefire.

Morocco insists that the former Spanish colony is an integral part of its kingdom, but the Polisario is demanding a referendum on self-determination. The two sides fought for control of the Western Sahara from 1974 to 1991, with Rabat gaining control of the territory before the UN-brokered ceasefire took effect. In the phone call, Mohamed condemned "repeated incursion by armed Polisario men" in the Guerguerat district. Tensions flared last year after the Polisario set up a new military post in Guerguerat district near the Mauritanian border, within a stone's throw of Moroccan soldiers. The move came after Morocco last summer started building a tarmac road in the area south of the buffer zone separating the two sides. — AFP

## MUGABE SAYS WILL NOT IMPOSE SUCCESSOR, PARTY WILL CHOOSE

**MATOBO:** Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe said on Saturday he would not impose his successor and that if the ruling ZANU-PF party felt he should retire, it would hold an extraordinary congress to choose a new leader. The world's oldest leader, who turned 93 this week, has maintained a tight grip on power in Zimbabwe since independence from Britain in 1980. He is due to stand for re-election next year and says ZANU-PF has no viable alternative candidates.

Mugabe was joined by thousands of supporters to celebrate his birthday at a school in Matobo just outside the second biggest city Bulawayo, and a short distance from the grave of colonialist Cecil John Rhodes. Rhodes was an imperialist, businessman and politician who played a dominant role in Southern Africa in the late 19th century, driving the annexation of vast swathes of land.

"Others are saying 'President, choose a successor before you retire'. Is that not imposition? Me imposing someone on the party? No, I don't want that," Mugabe said. "This is an issue for the congress to choose. We can have an extraordinary congress if the president retires but you said I should be your candidate in the next election." Matobo is one of the areas that suffered

heavy casualties during the 1980s crackdown by an elite North Korean-trained brigade against rebels loyal to Joshua Nkomo, Mugabe's then rival. Rights groups say 20,000 civilians died during the so-called Gukurahundi offensive.

Critics say Mugabe's policies, like the seizure of white-owned farms for blacks and his black economic empowerment drive have ruined the once promising country. Mugabe, a pariah in the West, said he agreed with US President Donald Trump's "America for Americans" approach and criticized Zimbabweans seeking jobs in America. Mugabe attributed his long life to what he said was God's mission to "fulfill the needs and demands" of Zimbabweans.

"I thank the Lord and say I accept the mission my Lord," said Mugabe, who wore a black cowboy hat with national colors and a print shirt designed by his wife Grace. Mugabe said he only had one sister left and missed his siblings, adding that "when I look back I say aah, oh Lord, why were these taken before me and why have I remained so long, alone and alive. I cannot answer that." A local bakery donated a 96 kg cake designed in the shape of the Zimbabwean map, while party officials jostled to give Mugabe gifts ranging from sculptures to cattle. — Reuters



# OBAMA-ERA VETERAN PICKED TO LEAD DEMOCRATIC PARTY

WASHINGTON: Opposition Democrats on Saturday chose Tom Perez as their new leader, tapping an establishment figure to lead the fight against President Donald Trump and the Republican Congress. Perez, a labor secretary under former president Barack Obama and the party's first Hispanic-American leader, immediately named the contest's runner-up, leftist lawmaker Keith Ellison, as the party's deputy chairman.

"Someday, they're going to study this era in American history... and ask the question, of all of us, where were you in 2017 when we had the worst president in the history of the United States?" said Perez, 55. "And we will all be able to say, the united Democratic party led the resistance, ensured this president was a one-term president and elected Democrats across this country." Ellison, an 53-year-old African American who is the first Muslim elected to the US Congress, warned that "we don't have the luxury to walk out of this room divided."

The fight over who would chair the Democratic National Committee (DNC) appeared at times to be a proxy battle between the supporters of defeated 2016 Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and her leftist primary rival Bernie Sanders. Perez, who won 235 votes against 200 for Ellison - a strong Sanders supporter - was seen as the establishment pick.

Democrats prepare for next year's midterm elections and the 2020 presidential vote.

### Perez 'will unite us'

Perez succeeds interim chair Donna Brazile, who took over after Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz was ousted in mid-2016 when leaked emails showed that some DNC members, who are pledged to be neutral in presidential primaries, favored Clinton over Sanders. The progressive group Democracy for America was upset with the "incredibly disappointing" vote result.

Choosing Perez "is another missed opportunity for a Democratic Party desperately trying to regain relevance, and proves... how out of touch party insiders are with the grassroots movement currently in the streets," said the group's chair Jim Dean, an Ellison supporter. But Obama, who has largely been silent since leaving office in January, called for mending rifts. "What unites our party is a belief in opportunity—the idea that however you started out, whatever you look like, or whomever you love, America is the place where you can make it if you try," he said. "I know that Tom Perez will unite us under that banner of opportunity, and lay the groundwork for a new generation of Democratic leadership for this big, bold, inclusive, dynamic America we love so much." — AFP



ATLANTA: Former Labor Secretary Tom Perez, who is a candidate to run the Democratic National Committee, speaks during the general session of the DNC winter meeting. — AP



LAS VEGAS: In this undated photo provided by Kranti Shalia, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, left, poses for photo with his wife Sunayana Dumala. — AP

## INDIA DEMANDS 'STRONGEST ACTION' FROM TRUMP AFTER KANSAS KILLING

### 'THEY SHOULD COME OUT OPENLY TO CONDEMN SUCH ACTIONS'

NEW DELHI: India demanded the "strongest action" from the US government yesterday after an Indian expatriate was killed and another wounded in a suspected hate crime in the mid-western state of Kansas. Indians at home and in the United States have expressed shock at the shooting of the two young engineers by a drunk white man who allegedly screamed "Get out of my country!" The two men, who had been living in the US for the last few years, were targeted at a bar in Olathe, a suburb of Kansas City, late Wednesday.

"USA should respond to this incident. American President and people of America, they should come out openly to condemn such actions... and then take strongest action," Information and Broadcasting Minister M Venkaiah Naidu was quoted by the Press Trust of India as saying. Srinivas Kuchibhotla, 32, was killed and Alok Reddy Madasani, 32, wounded in the attack. Both worked as aviation systems engineers for GPS manufacturer Garmin.

"These kind of incidents involving racial discrimination are shameful," Naidu said in the southern city of Hyderabad where the victims' families live. "They will dent the image of USA. So the US President, administration and civil societies should unequivocally respond and condemn such incidents." US authorities late Wednesday detained 51-year-old Adam Purinton at a restaurant after he claimed he had killed two Middle Easterners.

### Indian Community comes together

The Indian community in the United States reached out over the weekend in solidarity with the victims of an apparent hate crime in which an Indian engineer was shot dead in a Kansas bar. Many community members remain in shock over the late Wednesday shooting in Olathe, a suburb of Kansas City, when a drunk white man allegedly opened fire on two young Indian engineers, screaming racial slurs and telling them "Get out of my country."

"There's no place for senseless violence & bigotry in our society," tweeted Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, one of the most prominent Americans of Indian descent. "My heart is with the victims & families of the horrific shooting in Kansas," he

wrote on Saturday. One of the engineers - Srinivas Kuchibhotla, 32 - was shot dead at the bar. His friend, 32-year-old Alok Madasani, was wounded in the shooting. He has since been released from the hospital.

A white bar patron who tried to help and is being hailed as a hero, identified as Ian Grillot, was wounded and remains hospitalized. Local police said the suspect, Adam Purinton, 51, is under arrest and faces an initial court hearing on Monday. Purinton was arrested after police got a tip from a bartender in a nearby town that the suspect boasted of having killed two Middle Eastern men, the Kansas City Star reported.

A GoFundMe online fundraiser page was quickly set up after the shooting, and as of yesterday had collected more than \$600,000, much of it in small contributions of \$5 and \$10. The money is to help with the funeral expenses "and other ongoing grief / recovery support costs" for Kuchibhotla's widow Sunayana Dumala. — Agencies

## AT BORDER, MUHAMMAD ALI'S SON ASKED, 'ARE YOU MUSLIM?'

LOS ANGELES: Muhammad Ali's son, who bears the boxing great's name, was detained by immigration officials at a Florida airport and questioned about his ancestry and religion in what amounted to unconstitutional profiling, a family friend said Saturday. Ali Jr, 44, who confirmed his Muslim faith, was detained about two hours, despite telling officials that he's Ali's son and a native-born US citizen, said Chris Mancini, a family friend and attorney.

Returning from a Black History Month event in Jamaica, Muhammad Ali Jr. and his mother, Khalilah Camacho Ali, were pulled aside and separated from each other on Feb 7 at the immigration checkpoint at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, said Mancini. Camacho Ali was released a short time later after showing a photo of herself with her ex-husband, the former heavyweight boxing champion, Mancini said. But Ali Jr. was not carrying a photo of his world-famous father - a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

It was the first time Ali Jr. and his mother have ever been asked if they're Muslim when re-entering the United States, Mancini said. "From the way they were treated, from what was said to them, they can come up with no other rational explanation except they fell into a profiling program run by customs, which is designed to obtain information from anyone who says they're a Muslim," Mancini said in a phone interview. "It's quite clear that what triggered her detention was his Arabic name and his religion."

### Arabic sounding name

US Customs and Border Protection spokesman Daniel Hetlage confirmed Saturday evening that Ali Jr. was held for questioning by customs officers, but said "it wasn't because he's

a Muslim and it wasn't because of his Arabic-sounding name." The agency said in a statement that its officers process more than 1.2 million international travelers daily with "vigilance and in accordance with the law." It said it does not discriminate based on religion, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. "We treat all travelers with respect and sensitivity," the agency said. "Integrity is our cornerstone. We are guided by the highest ethical and moral principles."

During his detention, Ali Jr. was asked repeatedly about his lineage and his name, "as if that was a pre-programmed question that was part of a profile," Mancini said. Ali Jr. and his mother have been frequent global travelers. The family connects their treatment to President Donald Trump's efforts to restrict immigration after calling during his campaign for a ban on Muslims entering the US.

"This has never happened to them before," Mancini said. "They're asked specifically about their Arabic names. Where they got their names from and whether they're Muslims. It doesn't take much to connect those dots to what Trump is doing." Camacho Ali and Ali Jr live in Florida. They have not traveled abroad since, and are considering filing a federal lawsuit, he said.

Asked why the matter was just now coming to light, Mancini said: "Khalilah had prior commitments as did I and when she finally got in to see me for a legal opinion of what they did, I brought it to the media immediately." Ali, the three-time heavyweight champion and humanitarian, died last June at age 74 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. People lined the streets of Louisville, Kentucky, to say goodbye to the city's most celebrated son before a star-studded memorial service watched worldwide. — AP

## REFUGEES CROSSING FROM US TO CANADA

MONTREAL: Most of the hundreds of people streaming over the US border into Canada in recent weeks are asylum-seekers, coming from Syria, Yemen, Turkey or Sudan, according to the United Nations' refugee point man in the country. In an interview, Jean-Nicolas Beuze, the representative in Canada of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said it was too soon to know whether the cross-border flow of people is an uptick or signals a longer trend.

The UNHCR led a mission to the border at Lacolle, about 70 kilometers south of Montreal, and the surrounding area, where entire families have been trekking with suitcases and strollers along Roxham Road that connects to the United States. The UN mission was coordinated with the border police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. For weeks, people have been braving bone-chilling cold to walk across the US border, trudging through snow-covered prairies in the dead of night to make a claim in Canada.

"These people are most refugees than migrants," he told AFP. For the United Nations the term "migrant" designates someone who has freely chosen to leave their country of origin-unlike refugees who are driven from their homes. "They are not necessarily coming to Canada to have a better life but simply because they risk persecution in their country of origin." Illegal crossings have always existed, Beuze noted, and it remains unclear "if this phenomenon is growing significantly."

However, because of the hostile US political climate towards immigrants in general, and refugees in particular, following the election of President Donald Trump, it appears many are choosing to cross into Canada to demand asylum. "People are afraid they will find themselves in the end in a situation where they wouldn't have access to a fair system," Beuze said.

An agreement between the two countries prevents asylum seekers from lodging claims in Canada if they first landed in the United States, but it only applies to people arriving at border checkpoints, airports and train stations. If there is no record of a family

crossing the border, they can apply for refugee status, which explains why so many people are making the journey on foot, and off the official radar.

### 'Well-prepared'

The US president has indicated he would shortly issue a new decree to replace his controversial immigration order-which is currently blocked by a federal court.

The original decree barred people from seven Muslim-majority countries from traveling to the United States for 90 days, as well as all refugees for 120 days. Refugees from Syria were banned indefinitely.

According to the UN refugee official, the people encountered on the US-Canada border in recent days "are middle-to-upper class, well-educated, knowing what they were doing after having well-prepared their trip." "Most of them were in transit in the United States, coming from their country of origin with, for various reasons, a valid visa for the United States," Beuze said.

Whether from Sudan, Syria, Turkey or Yemen, most are families and "above all people who had a good reason to leave their country with strong prospects of being recognized as refugees," he said. Among the would-be refugees are men between 18 and 35 years old who are at risk of being called up to fight in their country of origin and "don't want to be enlisted by the regular army or by an armed opposition."

Thanks to information available online, almost all had "figured out themselves" how to seek asylum and did not necessarily need the help of a smuggler, he said. Beuze suggested that the cost of clandestinely entering Canada could climb as high as Can \$5,000 (US\$3,800). The uptick in migration comes as Canada faces calls for stricter border controls, in line with the "rhetoric to close borders that is being heard almost everywhere, in Europe and North America, and elsewhere," Beuze said. Beuze himself takes the long view on migration. "Movements of people have always existed and will always exist," he said, adding that often it is the only solution "when people are desperate." — AFP



An extended family of 8 people from Colombia are detained by Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers after they illegally crossed the border near Hemmingford, Quebec. — AFP

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## SWEDES PUZZLED ON FOX NEWS' SWEDISH 'SECURITY ADVISOR'

**NEW YORK:** A trans-Atlantic wave of puzzlement is rippling across Sweden for the second time in a week, after a prominent Fox News program featured a "Swedish defense and national security advisor" who's unknown to the country's military and foreign-affairs officials.

Swedes, and some Americans, have been wondering about representations of the Nordic nation in the US since President Donald Trump invoked "what's happening last night in Sweden" while alluding to past terror attacks in Europe during a rally Feb 18. There hadn't been any major incident in Sweden the previous night. Then, Fox News commentator Bill O'Reilly convened an on-air faceoff Thursday over Swedish immigration and crime between a Swedish newspaper reporter and a man identified on screen and verbally as a "Swedish defense and national security advisor," Nils Bildt.

Bildt linked immigration to social problems in Sweden, lamented what he described as Swedish liberal close-mindedness about the downsides of

welcoming newcomers and said: "We are unable in Sweden to socially integrate these people," arguing that politicians lacked a systematic plan to do so. But if viewers might have taken the "advisor" for a government insider, the Swedish Defense Ministry and Foreign Office told the newspaper Dagens Nyheter they knew nothing of him. Calls to Swedish officials Saturday weren't immediately returned.

### Unknown but so what?

Bildt is a founding member of a corporate geopolitical strategy and security consulting business with offices in Washington, Brussels and Tokyo, according to its website. His bio speaks to expertise on defense and national security issues, saying his experience includes serving as a naval officer, working for a Japanese official and writing books on issues ranging from investment and political climates to security issues in working in hostile environments.

But security experts in Sweden said he wasn't a

familiar figure in their ranks in that country. "He is in not in any way a known quantity in Sweden and has never been part of the Swedish debate," Swedish Defence University leadership professor Robert Egnell said by email to The Associated Press on Saturday. He and Bildt - also known then as Nils Tolling - were in a master's degree program in war studies together at King's College London in 2002-2003, and Bildt moved to Japan soon after, he said.

The executive producer of "The O'Reilly Factor" said Bildt was recommended by people the show's booker consulted while making numerous inquiries about potential guests. "After pre-interviewing him and reviewing his bio, we agreed that he would make a good guest for the topic that evening," executive producer David Tabacoff said in a statement.

The network said O'Reilly was expected to address the subject further on today's show. Bildt didn't respond Saturday to email inquiries; a person who answered the phone at his company agreed to relay one. He told Dagens Nyheter on Friday that he

was a US-based independent analyst, and Fox News had chosen its description of him.

"Sorry for any confusion caused, but needless to say I think that is not really the issue. The issue is Swedish refusal to discuss their social problems and issues," he added in a statement to the news website Mediaite, explaining his profession as being an independent political adviser. Trump's initial remark about "last night in Sweden" stirred a burst of social media mockery, while Trump explained on Twitter that he was referring to a Fox News piece on immigration and Sweden that he'd seen the night before.

Trump and his supporters, though, saw vindication when a riot broke out Monday after police arrested a drug suspect in a predominantly immigrant suburb of Stockholm. Cars were set on fire and shops looted, and one policeman was slightly injured. Trump took to Twitter again Monday to declare that large-scale immigration in Sweden was "NOT!" working out well, upsetting many Swedes. — AP



**NANTES:** Protesters take cover behind a makeshift shield during clashes with riot police on the edge of a demonstration against the visit of French presidential election candidate for the far-right Front National (FN) party. — AFP

## NO LEGAL RELIEF AS LEFT AND RIGHT FRENCH CANDIDATES FACE PROBES

### PARTIES PORTRAYING INVESTIGATIONS AS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED

**PARIS:** France's presidential frontrunners Francois Fillon and far-right leader Marine Le Pen can expect no let-up in legal investigations targeting them ahead of elections two months away, the justice minister said yesterday. The independence and neutrality of the justice system is under scrutiny ahead of a two-stage presidential election in April and May amid several high-profile probes into Fillon and Le Pen.

Both are accused of misusing public money by using fake parliamentary aides, while Le Pen faces a separate investigation into the funding of election campaigns in 2014 and 2015. They deny wrongdoing and have sought to portray the investigations as politically motivated, saying they should be delayed or abandoned altogether. "Imagine that during the presidential campaign you can't investigate?" Justice Minister Jean-Jacques Urvoas told the Journal du Dimanche newspaper. "There is no law allowing a suspension like that. What would be the reason? In the name of what exception? In my opinion, nothing could justify it."

He said that in the past judges had sometimes taken into account the electoral calendar when fixing trial dates, but that judicial investigations had never been put on ice. Polls currently show anti-EU, anti-immigration Le Pen winning the first round of the two-stage election on April 23, with either Fillon or centrist candidate

Emmanuel Macron coming second. In a run-off vote on May 7 between the top two candidates, Le Pen would lose to both of her rivals if the vote were held today, polls show. A peaceful demonstration against Le Pen in the western city of Nantes on Saturday afternoon degenerated into violence when groups of youths threw rocks and firebombs at police, injuring seven officers. Shop windows were also smashed and public property was vandalized.

### Legals woes

Support for the 48-year-old former lawyer, who took control of the National Front party from her father in 2011, appears to have increased slightly in recent weeks despite the legal problems surrounding her campaign. Le Pen's personal assistant Catherine Griset was charged on Wednesday with breach of trust in a probe into allegations the party defrauded the European Parliament of about 340,000 euros (\$360,000).

On Saturday, legal sources told AFP that a confidant had been charged with making an illegal loan to her party. Fillon meanwhile faces a fraught two months ahead of the vote after French prosecutors decided on Friday to launch a full judicial inquiry into claims he paid his family for fake parliamentary jobs. Fillon, who was once the clear favorite to be France's next leader,

will be investigated by three magistrates over allegations of embezzling public funds and misappropriating corporate assets.

An editorial in Le Parisien newspaper on Saturday said the move from a preliminary probe to a full investigation represented a "surge in the pressure" on the 62-year-old former prime minister. The devout Catholic won the conservative nomination by campaigning as a "clean" candidate unswayed by the scandals of his rivals.

Since January he has been fighting claims by Le Canard Enchaîné newspaper that he used allowances to pay his British-born wife Penelope at least 680,000 euros (\$720,000) over some 15 years as a parliamentary aide. Although French lawmakers are allowed to employ family members, it is unclear what work Penelope did and she did not have a pass for the parliament building.

Lawyers for the couple said they were confident the investigators would find them "innocent, at last". Fillon's lawyers have called the probe an abuse of process and the candidate himself has attacked Hollande in harsh language, accusing him of being behind an "institutional coup". Justice Minister Urvoas again denied accusations that Socialist President Francois Hollande was behind the investigations. "To imagine that investigations could have been ordered on Fillon or Marine Le Pen is completely absurd because it's illegal," he added. — AFP

## WOMAN JOURNALIST TARGETED BY SUDAN ISLAMIST HARDLINERS

**KHARTOUM:** A Sudanese female journalist and critic of government policies said yesterday that she is under fire from hardliners who have accused her of "insulting Islam" in one of her columns. Shamael Al-Nur said she has become a target of a radical Islamist and a section of Sudan's hardline media for criticizing government public health policies in a column published on February 2 in Al-Tayar newspaper.

Nur, 36, wrote that Islamic regimes were increasingly busy with "matters of virtue and women's dress rather than health and education issues". "It is easy to cut spending on health in the state budget, but it is very difficult for the ministry of health to distribute condoms," she wrote in the column on a sardonic note. Less than three percent of Sudan's budget was usually allocated for health and education, according to Nur.

Nur said she has written several articles criticizing the government but that this particular column had triggered a campaign against her. "Because I am a woman, the attacks have increased," she told AFP at her newspaper's offices in Khartoum. "In the Sudanese community it becomes a problem when a woman speaks of such issues or criticizes Islamic scholars," said Nur, dressed in a leather jacket and jeans.

A Khartoum-based radical Islamist, Mohamed Ali Al-Ghazouli, said Nur's writings were against Islam. "What Shamael Al-Nur has written is insulting to Islam and

Islam's main virtues," Ghazouli, wearing a business suit, told AFP. "She says that those who pray can't build modern states... Such writings are also against Sudanese law and the constitution," he said.

Ghazouli has filed a case against Nur and also approached the Sudanese press council. "They will now decide whether this amounts to apostasy," he said, a charge which can carry the death penalty in Sudan in case of conviction. Ghazouli has condemned Nur in one of his sermons at a Friday prayer gathering in a Khartoum mosque.

Nur said she is also being targeted by Mustafa Al-Tayeb, editor of the hardline newspaper El-Sina and an uncle of President Omar Al-Bashir. Nur had to be prevented from corrupting Sudan's values, Tayeb wrote in his newspaper last week, urging his readers to "protect their religion". Nur's own newspaper, an independent daily, is backing her. "Shamael Al-Nur is a young journalist with a great future. She is active and has a strong will," said Osman Mirgani, editor of Al-Tayar. "She has strong views about journalism and that makes her different from others." The Paris-based Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has also raised her case. "We urge the authorities to do what is necessary to protect Al-Nur and the rest of Al-Tayar's personnel and to condemn these calls for hate and violence," RSF said last week. — AFP



**KHARTOUM:** Sudanese journalist Shamael Al-Nur speaks to an AFP journalist on February 25, 2017, in the capital. — AFP

## THOUSANDS MARCH IN MOSCOW 2 YEARS AFTER PUTIN FOE KILLED

**MOSCOW:** Thousands of Russians marched through central Moscow yesterday in memory of slain opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, two years after he was shot dead near the Kremlin. The assassination of the former deputy prime minister on February 27, 2015 was the highest-profile killing of a critic of President Vladimir Putin since the ex-KGB officer took charge in 2000.

Five Chechen men from Russia's volatile North Caucasus are currently on trial for carrying out a contract hit, but those who ordered the killing have not been brought to justice. "We came to pay tribute to the honesty and bravery of Boris Nemtsov," pensioner Galina Zolina told AFP, clutching a bunch of red carnations. "We want to show the authorities that we haven't forgotten."

Charismatic Nemtsov—who went from Kremlin insider under Boris Yeltsin to one of Putin's fiercest foes—was hit in the back by four fatal shots as he walked home across a bridge by the Kremlin with his girlfriend. The march yesterday was permitted by the authorities but not allowed to include a makeshift memorial officials have repeatedly sought to dismantle at the spot Nemtsov was killed.

Some 15,000 demonstrators, organizers and AFP estimated, surrounded by a heavy police presence waved Russian flags and posters criticizing the Kremlin and Moscow's intervention in Ukraine, which Nemtsov had fiercely opposed right up to his death. "The march can maybe get the attention of the authorities," said unemployed biologist Alexei

Kuznetsov. "It might be able to influence the investigation, show that the case resonates in society even if the authorities try to ignore it."

### Masterminds untouched

Last October five men—including a member of an elite interior ministry unit in Chechnya—went on trial in a military court in Moscow for carrying out the contract killing for 15 million rubles (currently \$250,000, 240,000 euros). But despite claims from officials that the case has been solved Nemtsov's family and allies insist that the probe into his death has left the masterminds untouched.

They insist he was killed to stop his political activities and the murder trail leads to those close to Chechnya's Kremlin-loyal strongman Ramzan Kadyrov. "The investigation stopped at the level of those who carried out the murder but nothing has been done to find those who ordered it," Vadim Prokhorov, the lawyer for Nemtsov's family, told AFP.

Nemtsov's slaying sent a chill through Russia's marginalized opposition, which has already been sidelined under Putin's authoritarian rule. The march—which was accompanied by events in other Russian cities—came as authorities released prominent activist Ildar Dadin from jail in Siberia. Dadin, who spent 15 months behind bars, was the only person to be convicted under a controversial law against public protests that has helped snuff out demonstrations against the Kremlin. — AFP

## EU LAWMAKERS PULLING PLUG ON 'RACIST' TALK

**BRUSSELS:** With the specter of populism looming over a critical election year in Europe, the European Parliament has taken an unusual step to crack down on racism and hate speech in its own house. In an unprecedented move, lawmakers have granted special powers to the president to pull the plug on live broadcasts of parliamentary debate in cases of racist speech or acts and the ability to purge any offending video or audio material from the system.

Trouble is, the rules on what is considered offensive are none too clear. Some are concerned about

manipulation. Others are crying censorship. "This undermines the reliability of the Parliament's archives at a moment where the suspicion of 'fake news' and manipulation threatens the credibility of the media and the politicians," said Tom Weingaertner, president of the Brussels-based International Press Association.

After Britain's decision to leave the European Union, the rising popularity of anti-immigrant candidates like Geert Wilders in the Netherlands or far-right Marine Le Pen in France is worrying Europe's political mainstream. Le Pen, who is

running for the French presidency this spring, has promised to follow Britain's lead. At the European Parliament, where elections are due in 2019, many say the need for action against hate speech, and strong sanctions for offenders, is long overdue.

### Language police

The assembly—with its two seats; one in the Belgian capital of Brussels, and the other in Strasbourg in northeast France - is often the stage for political and sometimes nationalist theater. Beyond routine shouting matches,

members occasionally wear T-shirts splashed with slogans or unfurl banners. Flags adorn some lawmakers' desks.

Yet more and more in recent years, lawmakers have gone too far. "There have been a growing number of cases of politicians saying things that are beyond the pale of normal parliamentary discussion and debate," said British EU parliamentarian Richard Corbett, who chaperoned the new rule through the assembly.

"What if this became not isolated incidents, but specific, where people could say: 'Hey, this is a fantastic platform. It's broad, it's live-streamed. It can be recorded and repeated. Let's use it for something more vociferous, more spectacular,'" he told The Associated Press. In a nutshell, rule 165 of the parliament's rules of procedure allows the chair of debates to halt the live broadcast "in the case of defamatory, racist or xenophobic language or behavior by a member." The maximum fine for offenders would be around 9,000 euros (\$9,500).

Under the rule, not made public by the assembly but first reported by Spain's La Vanguardia newspaper, offending material could be "deleted from the audiovisual record of proceedings," meaning citizens would never know it happened unless reporters were in the room. Weingaertner said the IPA was never consulted on that. — AP



**BRUSSELS:** In this April 15, 2015, file photo, members of European Parliament hold signs during a plenary session at European Parliament. — AP

## PAKISTAN AIRLINE DENIES SEVEN PASSENGERS FORCED TO STAND

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's national carrier said yesterday it would investigate allegations that a plane flew from Karachi to Saudi Arabia carrying seven extra passengers, but denied they stood in the aisles for the three-hour journey. The probe was ordered after a report in the English-language daily Dawn.

The paper said the January 20 flight to Medina carried 416 passengers, seven more than its capacity of 409 including jump seats, in a serious breach of air safety regulations. The newspaper quoted

sources as saying that in case of an emergency, passengers without seats would not have access to oxygen masks and could block any emergency evacuation.

Pakistan International Airlines' spokesman Danyal Gilani said media reports that some passengers travelled standing "are exaggerated and baseless. It is not possible for anyone to travel like that in an aircraft, regardless of the duration of the flight." But he said: "The matter pertaining to the travel of more passengers than the booked load...is

under investigation," and the airline had ordered a "thorough probe into it, and all concerned are being questioned."

"PIA is committed to ensure the safety of the passengers and cannot allow any incident to happen which compromises safety," he added. It was the latest embarrassing incident for the airline, considered a global leader until the 1970s but plagued by controversies over recent years and saddled with billions of dollars of debt.

A PIA turboprop built by European manufacturer

ATR plummeted into a mountain in a northern region on December 7, bursting into flames and killing all 47 people on board. The airline was later mocked after its staff were photographed sacrificing a goat on a runway to ward off bad luck. Domestic flights are often delayed for VIPs while flight employees have been caught smuggling goods ranging from iPhones to narcotics. In 2013 one of its pilots was jailed for nine months in Britain for being drunk before he was due to fly from Leeds to Islamabad with 156 people on board. — AFP



**YANGON:** Myanmar's State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi speaks during a memorial ceremony for murdered lawyer Ko Ni and taxi driver Ne Win. — AFP

## SUU KYI BREAKS HER SILENCE ON KILLING OF TOP LAWYER

**YANGON:** Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi has broken a month long silence on the daylight assassination of her advisor, calling his killing a "great loss" for the country's democracy struggle. Ko Ni, a prominent Muslim lawyer and critic of Myanmar's powerful military, was shot dead on 29 January outside Yangon airport in a murder that sent shockwaves through the country's young civilian government.

A taxi driver, Ne Win, was also killed trying to stop the gunman who was arrested. Authorities say he was hired by a former military officer now on the run. Suu Kyi's ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party branded the killing a political assassination and "terrorist act" against their policies. But Suu Kyi, a close friend of Ko Ni, remained silent in the wake of the incident.

Yesterday she made a rare public appearance at a memorial service organized by her party for the two victims. "Losing U Ko Ni is a great loss for our NLD. He worked together with us for many years through his beliefs," she told a packed hall in Yangon, describing both he and the taxi driver as "martyrs". A constitutional expert, Ko Ni was a prominent critic of the military's continued political influence including their control of key security ministries and guaranteed seats in parliament, something the NLD hopes to one day overturn.

**Increasing Islamophobia**  
He also condemned the increasing

Islamophobia that has swept through the nation in recent years, stirred up by hard-line Buddhist nationalists. That Suu Kyi said so little about the killing surprised some observers, but since her government took power last May after years of army-led rule, her administration has taken on something of a bunker mentality. Suu Kyi rarely gives policy speeches, releases statements or holds press conferences. Her young administration has had to deal with both soaring expectations of the electorate and a series of crises. Some of the worst fighting in decades has broken out between the military and ethnic rebels, hampering her dream of forging a nationwide ceasefire.

Meanwhile, the UN says security forces have "very likely" committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing towards the Muslim Rohingya minority in a security crackdown last year. Suu Kyi has defended the military's Rohingya crackdown, much to the dismay of many of Myanmar's western allies, who saw the country's transition from dictatorship to quasi-democracy as a rare success after the failures of the Arab Spring. At the memorial, Suu Kyi stayed clear of politics but she did appeal for patience, arguing her government has only been in power for 10 months after decades of junta rule.

"Our citizens who have been struggling hard for many decades may think it's a very long time. But for the history of a country, for the history of a government, 10 months or one year is not much. This is just a short period," she said. — AFP

## REGIONAL RIVAL TAKES ON MODI AT HIS OWN GAME

### STEALS PLAYBOOK THAT PROPELLED MODI TO POWER

**LUCKNOW:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi out-campaigned all-comers in the 2014 general election but, as he faces his biggest midterm test, he is up against a rival determined to beat him at his own game. In Uttar Pradesh his opponent, Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, has been repackaged as a youthful and media-savvy go-getter who seeks to steal a unique selling point of Modi's - development.

"I am taking it a bit beyond Modi: I work," Yadav told Reuters in an interview in Lucknow, capital of the state of 220 million that is holding the biggest democratic election anywhere in the world this year. "My work speaks for itself. Modi's empty promises do not," said the 43-year-old leader of the Samajwadi, or Socialist, Party. Yadav entered the vast election, being held over the course of a month, as a narrow favorite: He had just emerged from a power struggle with his domineering father and struck a pre-poll alliance with the Indian National Congress.

While Modi excels as a stump speaker who can deliver an hour-long address without notes, Akhilesh has sought to connect with the youth vote via new media, taking personal control over his social media accounts and doing a Facebook Live with one of India's best-known TV journalists. He has even climbed on a bicycle - his party's symbol - for another prime-time interview that gave him a chance to showcase the newly landscaped riverfront in the state capital.

Yadav's campaign has been backed by his wife Dimple, a federal lawmaker, who has courted women voters and helped create an image as a political 'power couple'. Throughout, Yadav has stayed firmly on message. Asked about endemic crime, he says he has set up a new police hotline that is ensuring quicker response times. On developing his poor state where incomes average less than \$750 a year, he highlights his achievements in building an expressway to Agra, site of the Taj Mahal, and a new city metro in Lucknow.

#### Winning and losing

Yadav became the youngest-ever chief minister of Uttar Pradesh with a slim mandate, winning just 29 percent in the 2012 state poll. But in the general election two years later he was swept away by a Modi 'wave' as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 42 percent of the vote in the battleground state. Yadav, who received a university education in Australia yet became typecast as the ineffectual scion of a political patriarch, decided he needed a makeover.

"It was at this point Yadav took a cue from Modi's image as a technology-loving modern man," said RK Mishra, an independent political analyst in Lucknow. Yadav commissioned the construction of a mansion behind his old party headquarters to operate as his campaign "war room". He met two dozen Indian and interna-

tional political scientists, and roped in Harvard graduates and marketing gurus from Mumbai. They set up a big data operation - cloning the backroom setup used by Modi in his own rise to national power.

"The recruitment brief was clear: Everyone working in the war room should be in their thirties and have family in Uttar Pradesh," said Aashish Yadav, a campaign manager who previously worked at BBC Media Action, a development charity. Aashish Yadav manages a team of 100 young men and women who compose jingles as well as messages that are circulated via

By teaming up with Rahul Gandhi of Congress - another forty-something politician - Yadav hopes to prevail in the three-cornered contest with the BJP and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) led by Mayawati, a former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. "There is a great deal of ease between the two leaders and this is making Modi nervous," said an aide to Gandhi, who is the son, grandson and great grandson of Indian prime ministers.

Pre-election polls put the Yadav-Gandhi alliance and the BJP in a close race, but no surveys are allowed during voting held over seven



**UTTAR PRADESH:** A rural Hindu woman displays the indelible ink mark on her finger after casting her vote at a polling station on the outskirts of Allahabad. — AP

WhatsApp and community radio services. "Modi's campaign looks jaded compared to our blitzkrieg," said Aashish.

#### Gangster rule

It's been a tough sell for a party that under founder Mulayam Singh Yadav, Akhilesh's father, was criticised for breakdown of law and order. Many resented corruption that favored the Yadav community - a "backward" caste that makes up 9 percent of the population of Uttar Pradesh. "Akhilesh had to dismantle the existing perception about himself and his party," said one close aide, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

stages. Results are due on March 11. Gandhi and Yadav have both turned for advice to Prashant Kishor, the strategist who stage-managed Modi's triumphant 2014 march on New Delhi.

Kishor later switched sides to help a similar opposition alliance defeat the BJP in Bihar, another big northern state, in late 2015. He now divides his time between advising Congress and Samajwadi. The BJP's state leader in Uttar Pradesh, Keshav Prasad Maurya, dismisses the alliance as a fiasco and called the war room a poor imitation. "Yadav and Gandhi both lack imagination," he told Reuters. "Being Modi is different from being like Modi." — Reuters



**NONGSTOIN:** Injured Indian patients receive treatment at a hospital in Nongstoin some 80kms west of Shillong yesterday, after a traffic accident in the north-eastern state of Meghalaya. — AFP

## 16 CHURCHGOERS DIE IN ACCIDENT IN MEGHALAYA

**NEW DELHI:** Sixteen people were killed and more than 50 injured when a truck carrying churchgoers overturned in a hilly region of northeast India early yesterday, police said. The truck was carrying people from three villages to a local church when it came to grief in the West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya state. "The survivors have told us that the truck driver was rash and lost control of the vehicle. After it overturned, many people fell into the deep gorge in this hilly region," district police Superintendent Sylvester Nongtnger told AFP by phone. "We rescued

everyone from the accident spot and rushed them to hospital but many of the survivors have serious injuries." India has some of the world's deadliest roads with more than 150,000 fatalities annually due to poor roads, badly maintained vehicles and reckless driving. Last month a school bus carrying dozens of pupils collided with a truck in northern India's Uttar Pradesh state, killing 13 people. Twelve of the dead were children aged between seven and 14, who were seated near the front of the bus when an oncoming truck collided with it. — AFP

## INDIA'S TOP DIPLOMAT TO VISIT WASHINGTON

**NEW DELHI:** India's top diplomat will visit Washington this week for talks with the new US administration, an Indian foreign ministry official said yesterday. Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar is expected to discuss with American officials India's concerns over proposed US legislation that could make it harder for companies to replace American workers with those from India and other countries. Also expected to be on the agenda during Jaishankar's four-day visit, which begins tomorrow, is safety for foreigners following a Kansas bar shooting that killed an Indian engineer and wounded another.

External Affairs Ministry spokesman Vikas Swarup said only that Jaishankar would be going to the US for talks, without offering details. News reports said Jaishankar would meet with Acting Deputy Secretary of State Tom Shannon and other US officials. President

Donald Trump has invited Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the United States later this year.

US-India relations generally prospered under the Obama administration, but New Delhi will be hoping that Trump takes a tougher line on Pakistan, which receives substantial US aid. India and Pakistan are neighbors and have fought three wars. However, Trump's strong stand against exporting US jobs has raised concerns in India, which has a thriving industry for American companies that offshore customer service call centers. Shares of top Indian IT companies sank 2 percent to 4 percent on the Bombay Stock Exchange early this month in response to news of proposed US legislation that could make it harder for companies to replace American workers with those from countries like India. — AP

## S LANKA SLAMS LAWYERS OVER 'SNOWDEN REFUGEE' CLAIMS

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan police yesterday formally denied hunting nationals who sheltered fugitive whistleblower Edward Snowden in Hong Kong and said their claims to the contrary could have been made to bolster asylum applications. Police said they had no interest in the two Sri Lankan men, both asylum-seekers, who in 2013 had helped the former US National Security Agency contractor evade authorities in Hong Kong.

Snowden's Sri Lankan former hosts, Supun Thilina Kellapatha and ex-soldier Ajith Pushpakumara, told reporters in Hong Kong on Thursday that they were "scared and nervous" about Sri Lankan police agents' activities allegedly targeting them in Hong Kong. "We confirm these allegations are frivolous, unfounded and baseless," Sri Lankan police said in a statement.

It said only one Sri Lankan police officer had travelled to Hong Kong last year, between November and December for five days to attend Interpol training on cyber crime. The statement did not name the attorneys

for the two Sri Lankan asylum-seekers, but said it had come across instances of lawyers making false allegations against law enforcement to strengthen their clients' asylum claims.

"We have come across lawyers representing asylum seekers who are in the habit of making utter false allegations against officers... with the ulterior motive of supporting (asylum) claims of their clients," the statement said. Accompanying the asylum-seekers on Thursday, their lawyer Robert Tibbo and pro-democracy lawmakers James To and Charles Mok said they believed Sri Lankan police agents had targeted the pair.

The city's 11,000 marginalized would-be refugees spend years in limbo, hoping the government will support their asylum claims. But with fewer than one percent of cases successfully substantiated by city authorities, most refugees live in fear of deportation. The Sri Lankan families want to go to Canada, which has a track record of taking in refugees. — AFP

## AUSTRALIA, INDONESIA RESTORE FULL MILITARY TIES, PROGRESS ON TRADE

**SYDNEY:** Australia and Indonesia said yesterday that full military ties between the two countries had been restored, after Indonesia's military suspended cooperation in January because of "insulting" teaching material found at an Australian base. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull made the announcement alongside Indonesian President Joko Widodo, who arrived in Australia on Saturday for his first visit as president. "President Widodo and I have agreed to full restoration of defence cooperation, training exchanges and activities," Turnbull said at a news conference in Sydney.

Widodo's visit to Australia comes less than two months after military ties were

suspended, an event that sparked a minor diplomatic spat and led to an apology from Australia's army chief in February. Military cooperation between the two countries has ranged from joint training and counterterrorism cooperation to border protection. The "insulting" material suggested that Indonesia's Papua province should be independent and mocked the nation's state ideology.

Indonesia and Australia have a history of patchy ties, but both leaders were keen on Sunday to emphasize their commitment to a strong relationship. "That robust relationship can be established when both countries have respect for each other's territorial integrity, non-interference into the

domestic affairs of each other and the ability to develop a mutually beneficial partnership," Widodo said.

### Key issues

While the primary focus of the visit was on security and economic issues, including the finalization of a bilateral free trade deal by the end of the year, talks touched on tourism, cyber security and social links. Widodo met Australian business leaders on Saturday, telling them that investor confidence in Indonesia was strong and reassuring them that Indonesia was a stable country in which to do business.

Following one-on-one talks, Turnbull said tariffs would be cut for Australian

sugar and Indonesian pesticides and herbicides. He also praised changes to the export rules for live Australian cattle. Two-way trade between Australia and Indonesia was worth \$15.3 billion in 2015-16, according to Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Widodo said he was confident that a free trade deal would be finalised this year.

"I have conveyed to Prime Minister Turnbull some of the key issues," he said. "First, is the removal of barriers to trade, tariffs and non-tariffs for Indonesian products such as Indonesia's paper and palm oil." Widodo told The Australian newspaper this week he would like to see joint patrols with Australia in the South China Sea if they did not further

inflare tensions with China. China - which claims almost the entire sea region - irked Indonesia last year by saying the two countries had "overlapping claims" to waters close to them, an area Indonesia calls the Natuna Sea.

The leaders stopped short of announcing joint patrols on Sunday, but stressed the importance of resolving disputes peacefully and in accordance to international law. "As maritime nations and trading nations, Australia and Indonesia are natural partners with common interests," Turnbull said. Collaboration on counterterrorism, especially the return of foreign fighters from the Syrian and Iraq conflict zone, would continue, Turnbull said. — Reuters

## EMPLOYEE DEATH HIGHLIGHTS WORLD'S LOWEST BIRTH RATE

**SEOUL:** Trying to raise the world's lowest birth rate is among the missions of South Korea's welfare ministry—a challenge starkly illustrated when one of its own working mothers died at her office. The 34-year-old woman was an elite employee who had passed the highest category of the highly competitive civil service entrance exams. A mother of three, she had only returned from maternity leave a week before her death last month, and immediately went back to working 12-hour days.

She returned to the office on the Saturday. On the Sunday, she was there again at five in the morning to finish early and take care of her children later in the day, according to her colleagues. Instead she suffered a heart attack and they never saw her alive again. Her death has prompted widespread soul-searching over the difficulties faced by overburdened and exhausted working mothers in a deeply workaholic and male-dominated society—which desperately needs to encourage more births. South Korea's fertility rate—the number of babies a woman is expected to have during her lifetime—has been declining for years and now stands at 1.2, the lowest in the world in the latest World Bank tally. The global average is 2.4. Experts call it a "birth strike".

### 'Unimaginable dream'

The civil servant who died has not been named, but Kim Yu-Mi, a 37-year-old IT engineer with two young daughters, said she could "totally relate to her". "It is exactly the reality for all working mums all across South Korea," she said. She was one of the minority of South Koreans who took advantage of the legally available one year of parental leave, which is paid for by the government.

Since 2006 authorities have pumped more than 100 trillion won (\$88 billion) into hundreds of programmes aimed at encouraging people to marry young and have larger families. But they have failed to arrest the trend. Kim describes herself as "extremely lucky" for being allowed to go back to work. "At least my employer did not kick me out when I asked for a maternity leave," she said. "In the past, female employees like me were simply told 'Go home and never come back.'" But when she returned

to the office after her first maternity leave, she added, she often worked past 9 pm, making reading a bedtime story impossible. "Sitting with my child to play and eat dinner together was an unimaginable dream."

### Workaholic country

According to official statistics, the average South Korean works 2,113 hours a year, the second-longest among OECD member nations, where the mean is 1,766. Mexico ranks number one. But local surveys indicate the reality is even longer, and, as in Japan, there are regular reports of "death by overwork".

At the same time, in double-income families, men spend only 40 minutes a day on house chores or childcare compared to three hours for women. The cutthroat corporate culture, and a deep-rooted patriarchy that sees women as the sole family caregiver, are pushing ever more women to shun marriage, said Lee Na-Young, sociology professor at Chung-Ang University in Seoul. The vast majority of children are born in wedlock in South Korea, but the marriage rate has steadily declined to hit a record low of 5.9 per 1000 people last year.

"South Korean women are expected to be modern career women at daytime and traditional housewives as soon as they go home in the evening... so why bother to get married?" Lee said, noting the burden on working women is far heavier in the South than elsewhere. "In this environment, I wouldn't be surprised even if more South Korean working mothers are exhausted to death," she added. "This trend among young women, called 'birth strike' or 'marriage strike', is a very reasonable, rational choice for them to survive socially and economically."

In the wake of the civil servant's death, the welfare ministry has banned working on Saturdays and moved to discourage weekday overtime. Asia's fourth-largest economy has seen ever more women joining the workforce and increasingly taking the top spots in competitive exams to become lawyers, diplomats, school teachers, accountants and other professionals. But a shortage of affordable, reliable day-care centers also means women are faced with having to give up their careers to stay at home if they become mothers. — AFP



SELANGOR: A hazmat crew scan the decontamination zone at Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2. — AP

## MALAYSIA SAYS POISONING OF KIM CAUSED PARALYSIS, QUICK DEATH

OFFICERS IN PROTECTIVE GEAR SWEEPED BUDGET TERMINAL WHERE KIM WAS ATTACKED

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's health minister said yesterday that the dose of nerve agent given to North Korean ruler Kim Jong Un's exiled half brother was so high that it killed him within 20 minutes and caused "very serious paralysis." Kim Jong Nam died Feb 13 at Kuala Lumpur's airport in what Malaysian police say was a well-planned hit by two women who wiped a liquid on Kim's face. Police revealed Friday that the banned chemical weapon VX nerve agent was used to kill Kim, raising the stakes in the case.

Health Minister Subramaniam Sathasivam said the dose of VX given to Kim was so high that he showed symptoms within minutes. Kim fainted at the airport clinic and died in the ambulance while en route to a hospital, he said. "VX only requires 10 milligrams to be absorbed into the system to be lethal, so I presume that the amount of dose that went in is more than that," he said at a news conference. "The doses were so high and it did it so fast and all over the body, so it would have affected his heart, it would have affected his lungs, it would have affected everything."

Asked how long it took for Kim to die after he was attacked, Subramaniam said, "I would think it was about, from the time of onset, from the time of application, 15-20 minutes." Malaysia hasn't directly accused the North Korean government of being behind the attack, but officials have said four North Korean men provided two women with poison to carry it out. The four men

fled Malaysia on the same day as the killing, while the women - one from Indonesia and the other Vietnamese - were arrested.

### Sophisticated state weapons

Experts say the nerve agent used to kill Kim was almost certainly produced in a sophisticated state weapons laboratory and is banned under an international treaty. But North Korea never signed the treaty, and has spent decades developing a complex chemical weapons program. Kim was not an obvious political threat to his estranged half brother, Kim Jong Un. But he may have been seen as a potential rival in North Korea's dynastic dictatorship, even though he had lived in exile for years. North Korea has denied any role in the attack.

Earlier yesterday, Subramaniam said the state chemistry department's finding of the VX toxin confirmed the hospital's autopsy result that suggested a "chemical agent caused very serious paralysis" that led to death "in a very short period of time." The VX agent can lead to death very quickly in high doses, he said. He said the final autopsy report would be submitted to police soon.

Subramaniam also said that there have been no reports of anyone else being sickened by the toxin, but that medical workers who attended to Kim would remain under observation for possible delayed effects. Tens of thousands of passengers have passed through the airport since the

apparent assassination was carried out. No areas were cordoned off and protective measures were not taken.

Early yesterday, more than a dozen officers in protective gear swept the budget terminal where Kim was attacked and said they found no traces of VX. Abdul Samah Mat, the police official leading the investigation, said the terminal was "free from any form of contamination of hazardous material" and declared it a "safe zone" after a two-hour sweep. He also said a condominium on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur that was raided by police last week had been rented by the four North Korean suspects who left the country. He said police were still testing a seized substance for traces of any chemicals.

Abdul Samah said the Indonesian woman who was arrested, Siti Aisyah, vomited in a taxi on the way from the airport after the attack but is fine now. He said that more tests were needed to determine if the two arrested suspects were given antidotes so the nerve agent wouldn't kill them. An antidote, atropine, can be injected after exposure and is carried by medics in war zones where weapons of mass destruction are suspected. On Saturday, representatives from the Indonesian and Vietnamese embassies met with the two arrested women, who both said they thought they were part of a prank show. Aisyah said she was paid the equivalent of \$90, according to Andriano Erwin, Indonesia's deputy ambassador to Malaysia. — AP



SEONGNAM: This picture taken on February 13, 2017 shows Kim Yu-Mi, a 38-year-old IT engineer, and her young daughters during an interview with AFP at her home. — AFP

## DUTERTE'S OPPONENTS TURN HISTORIC EVENT INTO PROTEST

**MANILA:** Supporters and opponents of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte turned a traditional celebration of the 1986 "People Power" uprising into demonstrations for and against his bloody war on drugs. Former president Benigno Aquino, the only son of Corazon Aquino, the icon of democracy, led about 3,000 protesters gathered at Manila's historic highway, site of the popular uprising that toppled dictator Ferdinand Marcos three decades ago.

The protesters condemned the deadly narcotics crackdown, which has killed about 7,700 people since the firebrand leader came to power on June 30, claiming they were the victims of extrajudicial killings. The police have denied the allegations. Later the president's supporters held a bigger counter-rally at the capital's main public park, lighting candles and backing the campaign against drugs, crime, corruption and poverty. Police estimated about 200,000 people were at the park.

"Our country is getting better and the criminals are slowly getting rounded up," said Risa Pedrosa, aged 43, who attended the rally. "We should back President Duterte all the way and I hope that God will give him good health to continue all these changes to the Philippines. Long live the president," she told Reuters. Politicians took turns in delivering fiery speeches at both rallies with local celebri-

ties and rock bands entertaining the crowd. There was a minor scuffle between pro- and anti-Duterte supporters.

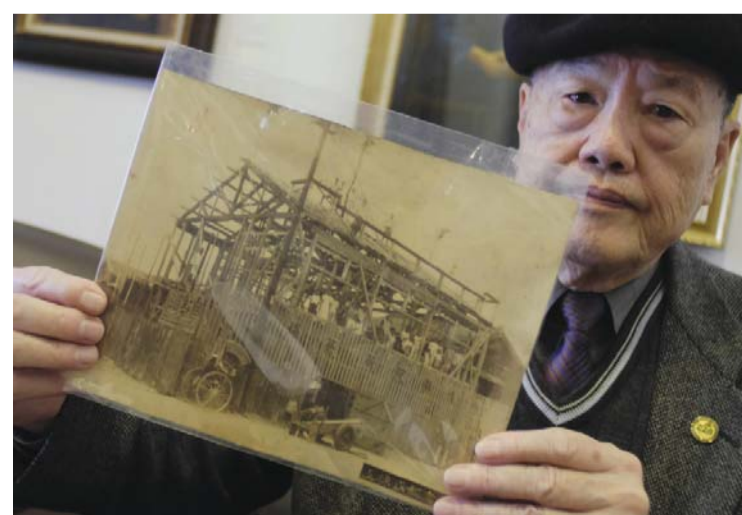
The small political opposition said there was a risk of a return to authoritarian rule under Duterte. "There is a president who is threatening to re-impose martial law and openly support the killings of thousands of people," staunch Duterte critic Senator Leila de Lima said in a message from her detention cell, a day after she was arrested for drug offences that she described as a vendetta. "The grim truth: in the last seven months under Duterte, there were more deaths compared to the 14 years of martial law under the Marcos regime."

Earlier, hundreds of left-wing activists marched on the main highway in Manila to demand the "genuine change" promised by Duterte, calling for the resumption of peace talks with Maoist-led rebels and the release of more than 400 political prisoners. Former President Fidel Ramos and former senator Juan Ponce Enrile, hailed as the heroes of the 1986 revolt against Marcos, attended a mass at the main army base in Manila to mark the anniversary, which Duterte skipped. Interior Minister Ismael Sueno had asked local officials to encourage supporters to join candlelight events organized by a pro-administration political movement. — Reuters

## VICTIMS DEMAND JUSTICE 70 YEARS AFTER BLOODY TAIWAN MASSACRE

**TAIPEI:** For Pan Hsin-hsing the sight and smell of lilies held a particular horror for many years—the pungent flowers decorated the room where his executed father lay before the funeral. He was just six years old when Pan Mu-chih, a doctor and local politician, was arrested, tortured and killed in a 1947 massacre that was the precursor to years of political purges in Taiwan, known as the "White Terror". A last note from his father was scribbled on a cigarette pack given to him by a sympathetic jailer and smuggled out to the family. "Don't be sad, I die for the residents of our city. I die with no regret," it read.

On Tuesday, Pan will speak at a national commemoration for the victims of the crackdown by troops under nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek, whose Kuomintang party governed Taiwan at the time. On behalf of many who lost loved ones, he will call for long-delayed justice. Pan's father was a critic of the KMT and was killed by a firing squad alongside other local politicians in southern Chiayi city, where there were anti-government riots. Those riots were part of island-wide civilian unrest which started on February 28, 1947, after an inspector beat a woman selling untaxed



TAIPEI: This picture taken on February 8, 2017 shows Pan Hsin-hsing, the son of a '228 Victim' which is used to refer to those executed in the February 28, 1947 incident, displays a picture of an unfinished hospital in Chiayi, southern Taiwan that was built by his family, during an interview. — AFP

cigarettes in Taipei. The immediate crackdown on protesters is estimated to have killed up to 28,000 people. Pan also lost his 15-year-old brother, who was shot after going out to look for his missing father. The family pretended the young boy had committed suicide for fear of repercussions if they told the truth. Another of his eight siblings

held their dying father in his arms after finding the train station where the execution took place, says Pan, his voice cracking.

The body was brought to their family's clinic, where he had worked as a doctor, and laid out in the waiting room so people could pay their respects. Pan says another of his brothers and a sister were

jailed for months as "communist spies", several of his siblings have struggled with depression. For years, he associated lilies with that terrifying time. "I remember looking at the lilies and smelling their scent as men who came to pay their condolences got angry that my father was killed, while women wept," he told AFP. "It was difficult to bear."

### Demand for truth

The massacres of 1947 were a prelude to wider purges of government opponents between 1949 and 1987 under martial law imposed by Chiang and his son, whose KMT fled to Taiwan after it was defeated by Mao Zedong's Communist Party in a civil war in mainland China. Official records state around 140,000 people were tried by military courts during the White Terror, with between 3,000 and 8,000 executed. Many believe the actual numbers are higher.

Taiwan's current government under President Tsai Ing-wen's Democratic Progressive Party has promised to investigate the purges. But with the first report not due for three years, some activists are critical of what they consider lack of progress. — AFP



In this photo taken on Saturday, people react as a sculpture burns at the Maslenitsa festival at the Nikola-Lenivets art park in Nikola-Lenivets village, about 200 km southwest of Moscow. As part of the celebrations of "Butter Week", or Maslenitsa in Russian, a folk holiday which heralds the beginning of spring, contemporary artist and park founder Nikolay Polissky built a giant sculpture made of wood and hay that was burnt to ashes in a traditional bonfire. — AP

### KING SALMAN BEGINS ASIA TOUR

Continued from Page 1

King Salman also plans to visit Indonesia, Brunei, Japan, China, the Maldives and Jordan "to meet with the leaders of those countries to discuss bilateral relations and regional and international issues of common concern," a royal court statement carried on Saudi Arabia's state media SPA reported.

Government sources with knowledge of the visit said a 600-strong delegation will accompany the king on his four-day visit to Malaysia, where cooperation on energy developments will be on the agenda. State oil firm Petrolina Nasional Bhd (Petronas) and Saudi Aramco will sign an agreement tomorrow to collaborate in Malaysia's Refinery and Petrochemical Integrated Development (RAPID) project, a boost for the Southeast Asian economy which has been reeling under weak global oil prices.

The last time a Saudi king visited Malaysia was in 2006, when King Abdullah, King Salman's half-brother and predecessor, flew in with a 300-member delegation. "Saudi Arabian investment in Malaysia is expected to create thousands of jobs and we are proud that Malaysian firms have been chosen to undertake projects at some of the most prestigious locations in Saudi Arabia," Najib said in a statement on Friday.

Besides travelling with his own private escalator, King Salman has also flown in two personal cars. His entourage has also completely booked out three luxury hotels in Kuala Lumpur for the duration of the visit. After Malaysia, the King is expected to travel to Jakarta and Bali in Indonesia from March 1-9 with an even larger entourage of 1,500 people, followed by a trip to Japan from March 12 to 14, officials in those countries said. King Salman is expected to spend the last two weeks of March on holiday in the Maldives, according to a Maldives diplomat. Local newspaper Mihaaru reported that three resorts have been reserved for his stay.

Meanwhile on Saturday, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir held talks in Baghdad with Iraq's leadership, the first such visit by a chief diplomat from the kingdom since 2003. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi received Jubeir and his accompanying delegation, a statement from his office said, a key step in efforts to normalise frosty ties. Both sides "discussed cooperation in various fields, including the fight against the Daesh gangs," it said, referring to the Islamic State group Iraqi forces are currently battling in the northern city of Mosul.

The Saudi minister also met his counterpart Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, who said in a statement the visit was "the first by a Saudi foreign minister since 2003". "This visit is to reestablish relations in a more stable way than previously," a senior government official said told AFP on condition of anonymity. "It's the first visit of its kind." Abadi, who has been at the helm since 2014, has supported efforts to improve strained ties but the road to normalization has been rocky.

Thamer Al-Sabhan, whose credentials were received in Jan 2016, became the first Saudi ambassador to Iraq in a quarter century, after relations were cut following ex-president Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. He left the same year after Baghdad demanded he be removed following remarks he made to the press about an alleged plot to assassinate him and criticism he voiced of the Hashed al-Shaabi. Hashed al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization) forces, which have played a key role in the fight against the Islamic State (IS) group, are a paramilitary umbrella dominated by Shiite militia and seen by Riyadh as a proxy for arch-rival Iran.

Jaafari was one of the most vocal critics of Saudi Arabia at the time and issued several strongly-worded statements against the kingdom and Jubeir himself. He told him directly on the sidelines of a global conference on the anti-IS war last year and in a statement expressing Iraq's "annoyance" over what he called "unacceptable interference".

"Jubeir congratulated Iraq on the victories achieved against Daesh and pledged Saudi Arabia's support to Iraq in fighting terrorism," the statement from Abadi's office said. It said the minister had also "expressed Saudi Arabia's willingness to back the stability of liberated areas". While Iraq has often suffered from being turned into a battlefield where the rivalry of its neighbors Iran and Saudi Arabia - the region's Shiite and Sunni Muslim powerhouses - played out, the Iraqi government official said there was an opportunity for Baghdad.

"The whole region is heading towards compromise and Saudi Arabia sees Iraq as an important player to have on its side," he said. "Iraq's neutrality could make it a ground for Iranian-Saudi rapprochement." He stressed that despite intense pressure from the street to take a strong stand against Saudi Arabia, Abadi - who belongs to Iraq's largest Shiite political bloc - had "never indulged in aggressive rhetoric against Saudi Arabia". — Agencies

### ZTE LAUNCHES WORLD'S FIRST 5G SMARTPHONE

Continued from Page 1

South Korean carrier KT Corp aims to offer trial 5G services during the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. The first large-scale commercial deployment of the technology is expected in 2020.

Forrester analyst Thomas Husson said ZTE was using the phone to "showcase innovation" and "offer a glimpse into the future when people will be able to download full movies in seconds" but it was not likely to be a big

seller. "The sad reality is that this smartphone will not end up in consumers' pockets because both 5G and Virtual Reality are still years away to be a mass-market consumer reality," he added. Founded in 1985, ZTE offers telecom equipment and services and has customers in more than 160 countries, according to the company. It is the only Chinese smartphone vendor with a meaningful presence in the United States, where its 10 percent market share makes it the fourth-largest vendor. — AFP

### TRUMP TO SKIP PRESS DINNER

Continued from Page 1

It is not uncommon for Republican and Democratic administrations to brief a limited number of reporters on specific themes. However the Friday event was billed as a regular briefing open to credentialed media before it became a closed event in Spicer's office for a chosen group. Several outlets that regularly cover the White House, including newswires Reuters and Bloomberg, attended. They are part of the "pool," a small group of reporters who have access to certain events and share the contents with other media.

The Associated Press boycotted the event in protest at the exclusions, which included The Los Angeles Times and Politico. AFP was not included despite being part of the

press pool. Its journalist protested, and attended the briefing uninvited. Spicer gave no explanation for the media selection. As protests erupted a December interview re-emerged in which Spicer told Politico that the Trump White House would never ban a news outlet. "Conservative, liberal or otherwise, I think that's what makes a democracy a democracy versus a dictatorship," he said.

Ari Fleischer, a former George W Bush spokesman, said the White House's stance was "unwise and counterproductive," but added that it should be kept in perspective. "Press secretaries need to meet with the whole press," Fleischer told CNN. "But beyond that, there is nothing unusual about presidents meeting with selected reporters, and White House staffs do it all the time too." — AFP

### FIRST GAZA ENGLISH LIBRARY TO OPEN WINDOW...

Continued from Page 1

Egyptian openings never really know when they will be able to return. In a territory where even the delivery of basic necessities is anything but simple, literature is also a victim of politics. "There are few books in English," Abu Toha said, and they "arrive well after their publication because of the blockade".

Even the idea of falling back on electronic versions is problematic. "The electricity cuts all the time," said Shadi Salem, who is helping Abu Toha set up the project. Gaza receives only a few hours of power per day due to chronic energy shortages.

Since the July launch of their "Library & Bookshop for Gaza" page, which has nearly 2,500 followers, the two friends say they have collected more than 200 books,

including from American and European donors, as well as \$2,000. But delivery has again been an issue. For months in 2016, Israel blocked the arrival of parcels into the Gaza Strip because they alleged its Islamist rulers Hamas were using it to send equipment for weapons. The transfer was restored in December, with Abu Toha announcing joyfully on Facebook: "You can now send your books".

For the time being, the 200 books received and his personal library - about 400 - stand on shelves in the family home in Beit Lahia in northern Gaza. The goal is a thousand more books. Of all his books he highlighted three from American philosopher Noam Chomsky, who sent them to him personally. In 2014, the Israeli military launched its third assault on Gaza since Hamas came to power in 2007. — AFP

Kuwait Times

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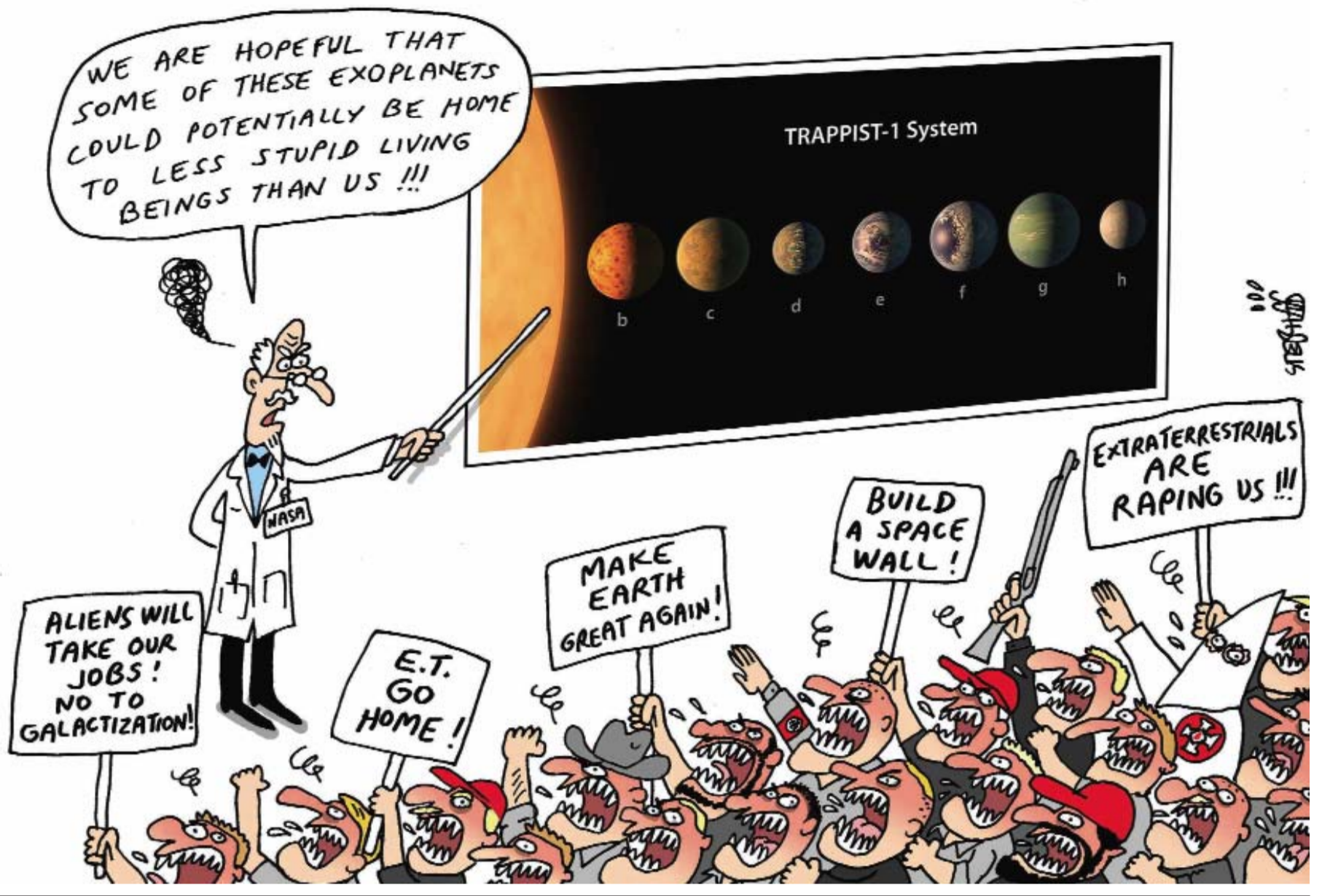
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## WILL CHINA BE N KOREA'S TRUMP CARD

China's announcement that it has suspended North Korean coal imports may have been its first test of whether the Trump administration is ready to do something about a major, and mutual, security problem: North Korea's nukes. While China is Pyongyang's biggest enabler, it is also the biggest outside agent of regime-changing change - just not in the way Washington has wanted. Judging from Trump's limited comments so far, and the gaping chasm between Washington's long-held focus on sanctions and punishment and Beijing's equally deep commitment to diplomatic talks that don't require the North to first give up its arsenal, a deal between the two won't come easily.

But if Beijing is indeed sending a signal to Trump about Pyongyang, its opening bid was a big one. North Korea's coal exports to China totaled \$1.2 billion last year, according to Chinese customs. US officials say that represents about one third of the North's total export income. For Kim Jong Un, that's going to hurt. In a bitter critique, the North's official media on Thursday likened the decision by Beijing to an enemy state's move "to bring down" their social system and, in a tone it normally reserves for Washington, Tokyo or Seoul, accused Beijing of "dancing to the tune of the US". It was one of the most biting attacks the North's media has ever made against China.

Trump, meanwhile, has often appeared to be more interested in bashing China than dealing with it. He has accused Beijing of not helping at all with the problem, and at the height of his bombast last year on the campaign trail, claimed China has "total control over North Korea". "China should solve that problem," he said. "And if they don't solve the problem, we should make trade very difficult for China."

Trump has vowed to "deal with" North Korea, and his administration is conducting a broad-ranging policy review, including how to make sanctions bite. Negotiations haven't been ruled out, said a US official who wasn't authorized to discuss internal deliberations and demanded anonymity. Unofficial talks between North Korean government officials and former US officials tentatively scheduled for early March in New York were called off after the US

government decided Friday against issuing visas, according to a person familiar with the decision who was not authorized to speak for the US government and discussed the matter on condition of anonymity. The State Department declined to comment Saturday, saying it does not discuss individual visa cases.

Although the US government was not due to participate in the dialogue, and such unofficial talks have little bearing on official US policy, allowing them to proceed could have signaled the Trump administration's openness to US engagement with North Korea, whose delegation was due to be led by Choe Son Hui, director of the US affairs department in North Korea's Foreign Ministry. It was not immediately clear why the US government nixed the dialogue - a decision first reported by the Wall Street Journal.

But the decision came after Malaysian authorities announced earlier Friday that the exiled half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Nam had been assassinated using VX nerve agent - a killing which is widely suspected to be the work of North Korea. Trump's basic position on North Korea reflects a dusty old chestnut in Washington: that China can, and should, force Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons but has instead, recklessly and short-sightedly, become North Korea's great enabler because it fears South Korea, an American ally that hosts US troops, controlling everything right up to its border.

**Status quo**

That is, after all, why China fought the US in the Korean War. But the pervasive Chinese economic engagement with the North that so aggravates sanctions' advocates in Washington has dramatically advanced the growth of a gray-zone market system, the swelling of an increasingly influential merchant class that is not utterly beholden to Kim Jong Un or his ruling party and shifts in popular attitudes and social relationships that could be extremely destabilizing for the entrenched North Korean status quo.

Beijing is no buddy of the Kims. And both sides know it. Though they fought on the same side in the 1950-53 Korean War, which cost China hundreds of thousands of

lives, neither side trusts the other or harbors any illusions their relationship is, or ever was, anything like a friendship. On the flip side, protecting stable trade relations with a prosperous Seoul is far more important and profitable for Beijing than its dealings with the Kims' northern dynasty. That trade serves to keep Pyongyang in check and also undermines the assumption that a reunited Korea would have the same motivations to remain the stalwart ally of Washington that Seoul now is.

It's also not a given the Korean public would continue to support the idea of hosting US troops at all since their only purpose post-unification would, indeed, be to threaten China. There is considerable popular opposition in the South to the US bases there even with the North intact and growing stronger. Exasperated US policymakers like to say there are no good options with North Korea. China could make the same complaint. Beijing is as painfully aware that its influence over Pyongyang has limits as Washington is aware that its military superiority alone cannot solve the problem.

China also knows the impact of a North Korean implosion - regional economic chaos, huge flows of refugees into its relatively poor northeast, which already has a sizable ethnic Korean minority - are far bigger problems for it than for the US and far more likely than a last-breath, suicidal nuclear attack by Pyongyang on Washington. Seen in that framework, it isn't surprising that China has half-heartedly gone along with UN resolutions on the North's nuclear program while advocating for enough security on the peninsula for US-North Korea diplomacy to be a viable option. Its suspension of coal imports was done to comply with an import cap that was part of sanctions it agreed to last year - when Trump was still a private citizen.

But Beijing is also clearly tired of being scapegoated by Washington. Repeated, self-righteous demands from the White House for China to take sole ownership over what Beijing considers to be a mess Washington created by rushing across the 38th parallel and on to the Yalu River when the North Korean army was in full retreat nearly 70 years ago almost guarantee it won't. At least not in the way that Washington wants. — AP

## MANILA METH DEALERS BACK ON STREETS

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs had until three weeks ago driven the trade in crystal methamphetamine underground, according to residents and drug users in some of the slum areas of the nation's capital city. As thousands of users and dealers were shot dead by police and vigilantes in the first seven months after Duterte came to power last June, open dealing in the drug, known here by its street name shabu, largely stopped. Instead, deals were done on the quiet between people who knew each other, maybe with a text message first.

But since Duterte ordered the Philippine National Police (PNP) to stand down from the drugs war last month, after declaring the force "rotten to the core", the drugs trade has come back out of the shadows, more than half a dozen drug users and dealers in some of Manila's toughest areas said in interviews. Many spoke on condition that only their first names be used in this story.

Beside one of the less-used railroad tracks in Manila - a grassy area scattered with human excrement only a few miles from the gleaming high-rises of the Makati business district - shabu was easily available last week, costing just a few pesos (cents) per hit. Residents said that when they travelled on the illegal trolleys that ferry people for a few pesos along the track when there are no trains in sight, a fellow passenger will often offer them a sachet of the drug.

Eusebio, 52, who pushes a wood and bamboo trolley on the track for a living, said dealers sometimes walk alongside calling out: "How much are you going to buy?" "Now that the operations have been suspended, drugs have become rampant again," he said. "Those who were hiding have resurfaced." Another trolley-pusher, Boyser, 59, told two Reuters journalists: "If you weren't reporters, they would offer you drugs."

In a dark cinderblock room that serves as a drug den in another part of Manila, there were similar stories from users. "We have more freedom now," Jason, a 39-year-old bartender told a visiting reporter as he inhaled shabu smoke. "All the users are still users, except those who have been killed," he said, adding that he has used shabu for almost two decades.

More than 8,000 people have been killed since Duterte was sworn in almost eight months ago, about 2,500 of whom were killed in official police anti-narcotics operations. Human rights groups believe many of the others were extra-judicial executions committed as part of the war on drugs, and in cooperation with the police - a claim the Duterte administration has vehemently denied.

The president's office did not respond to a list of emailed questions about the drugs war and whether dealers were now openly back on the streets. Duterte has repeatedly said he will hunt down drug lords and other "high value" targets and to date, there have been a handful of large-scale seizures and raids on shabu laboratories. But most of those killed in the war on drugs have been small-time dealers and users in some of the country's poorest neighborhoods. The PNP stopped publishing an official tally of drug war killings from police operations on Jan. 31 when Duterte ordered the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) to take over the campaign.

**Fewer killings**

According to reporters and photographers from Reuters and Philippine news organizations working the crime beat on the night shift, "vigilante-style" killings of drug suspects have continued, but at a much slower pace. Police data shows 398 people were killed nationwide in the first 20 days of February. Details of the killings

were not provided and it was unclear how many were drug-related.

Some anti-narcotics experts say they will not be surprised if it turns out that the drugs war has been ineffective. They say that ruthless operations against drugs, like Duterte's, have failed elsewhere in the world. Colombia's former president, Cesar Gaviria, said in a New York Times column earlier this month that his country's long war on drugs not only failed to eradicate drug production, trafficking and consumption but also pushed drugs and crime into neighboring countries, while "tens of thousands of people were slaughtered."

Thailand launched a "war on drugs" in 2003 that killed about 2,800 people in three months. But figures show it had no lasting impact on meth supply or demand in Thailand. "The world has lost the war on drugs, not only Thailand," the country's then Justice Minister Paiboon Koomchaya told Reuters last July.

When an aggressive anti-drugs campaign begins, supplies may be tight for a while, street prices may spike, but ultimately drug usage does not drop, say those who have studied the results. "We don't know of any examples from around the world where very hardline approaches have worked effectively," said Jeremy Douglas, the regional representative for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. "They can temporarily disrupt street business, but they don't disrupt demand."

**Lost momentum**

Some police officers told Reuters that they had received reports of increased street-level drug activity since they were ordered to stand down. Manila Police Commander Olivia Sagaysay, who oversees four precincts in the city, said the war on drugs had lost momentum and morale among her officers had suffered since they were ordered to stand down. "It's depress-

### Focus

## WIFE-BEATING A SOURCE OF PRIDE IN MAURITANIA

Salimata was always told she should be proud to come from a family of wife beaters. "You're the daughter of a woman whose husband broke her hands. Your grandmother's legs were fractured by her husband. You must be loved," Salimata said, citing her mother's words. The 19-year-old woman from Mauritania's Soninke ethnic group, married to a man who also beats her, said she taught herself to believe what her mother told her. "I felt like an animal that had to be disciplined," she said. "As time passed, I came to believe that my husband beats me only when he is at the peak of his love for me."

Mauritania, a poor, mainly Muslim nation, has deep social and racial divides, each group with its unique marriage norms. While divorce is widely accepted among the majority Moors, it is almost impossible among the Mauritians of African descent such as the Soninke and Fulani. And while domestic violence is frowned upon among the Moors, of Arab and Berber descent, it's seen as an act of love and a accepted practice for Soninkes, said social researcher Sidi Boyada, an advisor at the ministry of social affairs.

**Tradition**

Aichetou Samba is a 60-year-old Fulani grandmother who lives in a modest house in a Nouakchott neighborhood. "In the past, our girls used to get married at eight years of age, and they usually married their cousins," she said, coddling one of her grandchildren. Mauritanian law stipulates "sanity" and "marriageable age" as preconditions for getting married, leaving the door open for early marriage by giving parents the right to decide.

Wearing a colorful scarf that shows her Fulani heritage, Samba smiled and said: "A Fulani woman always takes pride in being beaten by her husband," and often shares her experiences with other women to show off his love for her. "This is one of our traditions," she said. "We see wife-beating as a common and normal practice, which sometimes includes pouring cold water on the wife's body."

**'My legs were broken'**

Sociology professor Ousmane Wague at the University of Nouakchott, also a Fulani, said Mauritanian women of African descent accept being beaten to avoid divorce, convincing themselves their husbands' violence is a sign of love. "As the popular song goes: My legs were broken and I stayed home," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Mariam Jallo, a 25-year-old Fulani woman, is an exception. She has been divorced for five years. "My husband used to constantly beat me. He passionately loved me but this didn't stop him from hitting me for very trivial reasons," she said. Jallo, who is fond of soap operas, said her husband came home one day while she was watching television and hit her. Minutes later, he tried to make it up to her, saying he couldn't bear to see her preoccupied with something other than him. Her husband tried to block the divorce and her family blamed her for the failed marriage, she said.

Alyoun Idi, a 27-year-old Fulani man, said he had beaten his wife many times because she disobeys him, adding that this never affected their relationship. "I love my wife so much and I can't live without her but we inherited this from our ancestors, which is part of our traditions," Alyoun said. "is also a great resolution for many family disputes."

**Criminalized**

Domestic violence against women was criminalized in 2001, and under Mauritanian law, wife-beating is a crime punishable with up to five years in prison. Ahmed Bezeid oud Almamy, a lawyer who works with women's rights groups, said he receives an average of five complaints every month of women reporting abuse by their husbands. But prosecutions are rare as women often drop charges for fear of sending their husbands to jail or getting divorced, he said.

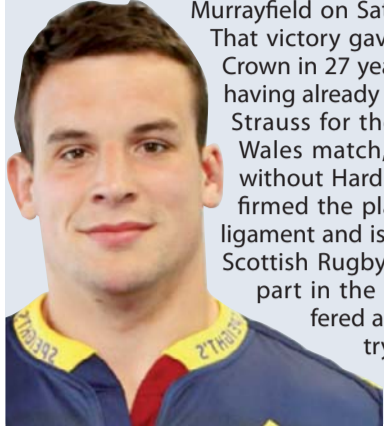
However, lengthening queues outside the offices of women's rights organizations suggest a waning tolerance for violence against women, campaigners say. The Household Women's Association recorded more than 2,000 complaints in the first half of 2016, compared to 1,700 complaints in 2014, according to Aminetou bint Al-Mokhtar, head of the association.

Ministry of Justice official Haimouda Ramdhane said the Mauritanian legal system provides women victims with free services, including lawyers, medical and psychological support. — Reuters

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### JOHN HARDIE ADDS TO SCOTLAND'S INJURY WOES

**EDINBURGH:** Scotland suffered a fresh injury setback yesterday when flanker John Hardie was ruled out of the final two games of the Six Nations Championship. The Edinburgh loose forward went off with a knee injury before the half-hour mark during Scotland's 29-13 win over Wales at Murrayfield on Saturday and was replaced by Hamish Watson. That victory gave Scotland the chance to claim a first Triple Crown in 27 years when they face England on March 11. But having already lost captain Greig Laidlaw and back-row Josh Strauss for the remainder of the tournament before the Wales match, they will now head south to Twickenham without Hardie as well. "An MRI scan after the game confirmed the player (Hardie) damaged his medial collateral ligament and is expected to be out for several weeks," said a Scottish Rugby Union spokesman. "He will take no further part in the Championship." Wing Tommy Seymour suffered a blow to the ribs while scoring Scotland's first try but played on and is not regarded as a serious injury concern. —AFP

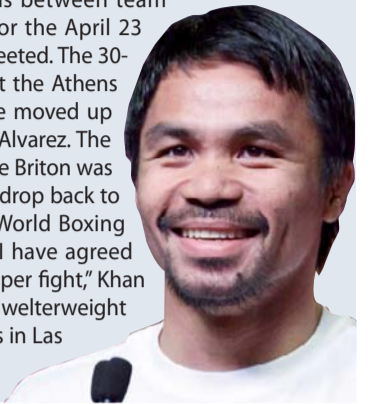


### RUSSIA TAKES TEAM SPRINT GOLD AS NORWAY COLLIDE

**LAHTI:** Russia swept to victory in the team sprint at the Nordic World Ski Championships after the Norwegian and Finnish skiers who were battling for gold collided late on, causing both to fall. Finland's Iivo Niskanen had reeled in leader Emil Iversen of Norway and made his move to pass coming into the final bend, but the pair collided with each other and fell. Russia's Sergey Ustiugov swept past the pair followed closely by Italy's Federico Pellegrino, who came second. Niskanen recovered to take the bronze for host nation Finland. In the women's race, Norway won the gold medal ahead of Russia, with the US pipping Sweden to the bronze by just 0.19 seconds. Norway's Marit Bjørgren stormed to victory in the women's skiathlon at the Nordic World Ski Championships on Saturday to claim her 15th world championship gold medal and break the record of 14 golds held by Russia's Jelena Valbe since 1997. After a tight, incident-filled race, the 36-year-old finally broke away on the last slope to edge out local favourite Krista Parmakoski and take first place by a margin of 4.8 seconds. —Agencies

### PACQUIAO TO FIGHT BRITAIN'S KHAN

**LONDON:** Multiple world champion Manny Pacquiao has agreed to fight Britain's Olympic silver medallist Amir Khan on April 23, both boxers said yesterday. The 38-year-old Pacquiao had said four days ago that he and Khan's management were in discussions for the fight, despite an earlier announcement the Filipino's next bout would be against Australia's Jeff Horn in Brisbane. Pacquiao, however, had said that Horn was one of many possible opponents. "Negotiations between team Pacquiao and team Khan have come to terms for the April 23 bout as this is what the fans wanted," Pacquiao tweeted. The 30-year-old Khan, who won silver as a lightweight at the Athens Olympics, has not fought since last May when he moved up two weight classes to fight middleweight Canelo Alvarez. The much bigger Mexican proved too powerful and the Briton was knocked out in the sixth round and he is likely to drop back to welterweight to fight Pacquiao, who holds the World Boxing Organisation title at the weight. "My team and I have agreed terms with Manny Pacquiao and his team for a super fight," Khan said on his Twitter page. Pacquiao won the WBO welterweight title last November against American Jessie Vargas in Las Vegas with an unanimous decision. —Reuters



## KIB'S SHOW JUMPING TEAM CONTINUES TO ACHIEVE LOCAL, INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that the show jumping team it sponsors, and which competes under the Bank's name, recently garnered a slew of accolades at several local and international competitions. The KIB team features jockeys Ghazi Al-Jurraei, Ahmad Al-Mudaheka, Abdullah Hamadah and Ahmad Al-Ansari. The first of the team's jockeys, Ghazi Al-Jurraei, recently scored a victory in the Late Raed Faisal Al Dabbous Championship with a first place finish, whilst also winning second place in the Public Authority for Youth

and Sport (PAYS) Championship. On an international level, the young show jumper delivered a strong performance to earn an advanced placement at the Qatar International Show Jumping Championship. On the other hand, Al-Jurraei's teammate, Ahmad Al-Mudaheka, placed second in the PAYS Championship, in addition to earning third place in the Atyab Al Marshood Championship and fourth place in the Late Raed Faisal Al Dabbous Championship. On his part, Abdullah Hamadah won fourth place in the Atyab Al Marshood

Championship, fifth place in the Late Raed Faisal Al Dabbous Championship and fourth place in the PAYS Championship, in addition to earning an impressive ranking in the Qatar International Show Jumping Championship. The final member of the team, Ahmad Al-Ansari, came in fourth place at the PAYS Championship, and placed fifth in both the Atyab Al Marshood Championship and the Hunting and Equestrian Club Championship. Speaking about the team's latest accomplishments, Nawaf Najia, Manager of the

Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, commented: "We are extremely proud of this team of young, talented champions and of the incredible performances they have all delivered recently. Our sponsorship of these athletes comes as part of our ongoing efforts to support youth in Kuwait across all fields and areas. It also comes in line with our numerous initiatives geared towards supporting the local sports culture, where we are especially focused on sponsoring talented Kuwaiti athletes to enable them to participate in

various local and international competitions." Najia concluded by praising the young equestrians for their unwavering dedication and their tireless commitment to their training, which has enabled them to deliver a solid performance time and time again. He further added: "We wish the team the best of luck and even greater success in the upcoming season. We are certain that they will continue to raise Kuwait's name high in the realm of equestrian sports, both regionally and internationally."



Tariq Al-Qallaf

### BURGAN BANK SPONSORS WORLD CHAMPION WHEELCHAIR FENCING TITLE HOLDER TARIQ AL-QALLAF

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank announced today its renewed sponsorship for Kuwait's world champion wheelchair fencer, Tariq Al-Qallaf, recipient of a number of gold medals and the 'sword of honor' award as the world's best player. A continuous success story reaching for new levels of excellence, Tariq Al-Qallaf will receive the bank's support during three upcoming championships in which he will participate in the USA in 2017. This is the fifth time in a row Burgan Bank has sponsored the Kuwaiti champion. As part of the current sponsorship, Burgan Bank will support Al-Qallaf as he gears up for the first championship, which will take place in Philadelphia in March 2017, and the second one, the Open Championship of America that will take place in October. The third championship will take place in Atlanta in December 2017. As part of his preparation process, Al-Qallaf will partake in external boot camps, each a month

before each actual tournament. This will be made possible thanks to Burgan Bank's sponsorship and the endless confidence in his extraordinary capabilities. As part of the bank's involvement in the community, Burgan Bank is constantly looking to identify and support local sports talents, help them receive the recognition they deserve and raise the Kuwaiti flag at prestigious international competitions. Burgan Bank's latest sponsorship falls under its recently launched full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.

## SECOND SHOOTING TOURNAMENT CONCLUDES WITH PARTICIPATION OF RECORD SHOOTERS

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The Second Shooting Tournament concluded at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex, in the presence of President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations, member of the International Sporting Shooting Association, Engineer Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi, and Kuwait Shooting Sports Club Board member Eng Hussam Al-Roumi, as the tournament witnessed the participation of a large number of shooters and fans of this exciting sport.

In his speech, Eng Duajj Al-Otaibi congratulated HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwaitis on the occasion of the national days. Eng Al-Otaibi thanked all those who participated in the tournament, adding that the sporting tournaments will continue in the future and will receive more attention from the board of directors to attract Kuwaiti youth to this sport.

Meanwhile, Eng Hussam Al-Roumi lauded the efforts exerted by KSSF board members to develop Kuwait shooting sport, and reach the highest levels possible.

He said the sporting tournament was in celebration of the national days. He said this sport follows the rules of FITASC, and the club is seeking to form a team that will participate in the international tournaments representing Kuwait. Meanwhile, KSSF and ASF President Eng Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi lauded shooter Atif Al-Dousary for winning the world cup and gold medal of the 10m air rifle for the disabled during the tournament that is being held in UAE from February 19-28. Al-Otaibi congratulated HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for this world achievement.

He also congratulated President of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club Shafi Al-Hajiri and its board members on this achievement, which coincides with Kuwait's celebration of the National and Liberation days.



Eng Duajj Al-Otaibi seen with the winners.







# NISSAN SETS OFF THE ICC CHAMPIONS TROPHY TOUR

## AROUND THE WORLD IN 100 DAYS

**DUBAI:** There are 100 days to go until the start of the ICC Champions Trophy 2017, which will be played in England and Wales from the 1st to the 18th June and features the top eight one-day teams in the world. This milestone also marked the start of the ICC Champions Trophy 2017 Nissan Trophy Tour, a global journey bringing the excitement of the ICC Champions Trophy closer to cricket fans around the world before it arrives in England at the start of the summer.

As global partner and official car of the ICC, Nissan will be transporting the ICC Champions Trophy in official vehicles on the ground in major cities as well as taking the trophy on some more unusual journeys to surprise and delight cricket fans. Nissan has also collaborated with the ICC to create a series of events that will bring fans together with the trophy and enable them to share their excitement and anticipation for the tournament.

The launch of the ICC Champions Trophy 2017 Nissan Trophy Tour was held at the ICC Academy in Dubai's Sport City. The event brought together local school teams, cricket fans, Academy coaches, ICC staff, Nissan employees and former Pakistan Captain Shahid Afridi. ICC Chief Executive David Richardson said: "The global trophy tour is the

start of what will be a fantastic summer of cricket celebration in the UK with two major back-to-back events - the ICC Champions Trophy followed by the ICC Women's World Cup.

### COMPETITIVE

"Our thanks to Nissan for bringing us this global trophy tour, providing the fans from the competing nations with a special experience in the build up to the events. We are confident that the ICC Champions Trophy will be as competitive and thrilling as preceding editions, bringing together some of the finest 50-over cricketers in a short and sharp event in which every match counts."

Roel de Vries, Nissan Corporate Vice President and Global Head of Marketing commented: "We partnered with the ICC to bring cricket fans closer to the excitement of the game. We want the Nissan Trophy Tour to build excitement and anticipation on the journey towards the ICC Champions Trophy tournament in the UK in June."

Former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi attended the launch event and added "I want to thank the ICC and its sponsors for their support of cricket. By taking the Champions Trophy on a global tour, they're enabling fans to connect with the event regardless of where



they live and hopefully help us build a new generation of fans."

The trophy will visit all the competing nations in the next 100 days, heading to India,

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan in March before flying to South Africa, New Zealand and Australia in April. The ICC Champions Trophy 2017 Nissan Trophy Tour will culminate in a



series of events across host cities in England and Wales in May, before the opening game between England and Bangladesh at The Oval on 1st June.



**PUNE:** Australia's Steve O'Keefe celebrates after Virat Kohli's wicket during third day of the first cricket test match against India in Pune, India, Saturday. — AP

## INDIA HOPE PUNE ROUT ACTS AS WAKE-UP CALL

**PUNE:** India will be hoping that by the end of March their Pune capitulation can be viewed from the lofty heights of a seventh consecutive test series triumph as an aberration that acted as a brutal wake up call to the world's number one side.

The shell-shocked hosts have a week to regroup before they again engage an Australian touring party which made Virat Kohli and his team of world-beaters look quite ordinary in a 333-run first test rout inside three days.

As they head south to Bengaluru, Kohli's team will be forced to ponder the end of their hard-earned 19-Test unbeaten run and what their captain described as their worst batting performance in two years.

"I would say that we needed something like this for us to get a reality check and understand what are the things we need to work on and keep persisting with it, not take anything for granted at any stage, especially at the test match level," Kohli told reporters after the defeat. Australia might be just below their hosts in the Test rankings but arrived in the country earlier this month having lost their last nine tests in spin-friendly conditions in Asia.

### 'FINAL FRONTIER'

They were swept 4-0 sweep the last time they played a series in India and had not won a Test since 2004 in what former captain Steve Waugh once called Australian cricket's "Final Frontier".

There were many predictions of a result inside three days on the turning track dished out at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium, which was making its debut as a test ground, but none had India

ending up on the losing side. That was unsurprising, considering India possess the world's top two ranked bowlers in spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja and a batsman in Kohli who recently became the first to score four double hundreds in as many series.

But Ashwin and Jadeja managed only a dozen wickets between themselves in the match, the same number that Australia left-arm Steve O'Keefe alone bagged in the two innings.

Kohli blamed the Indian batting for the humbling after they scored 105 and 107 in their two innings and the image of the captain frozen in a crouch with his bat in the air as an O'Keefe delivery shattered the wickets behind him will not fade fast.

"Even a part-timer can get four wickets if you don't apply yourself. And I certainly would like to think that that was the case with our batting line-up in this game," he said. "It rarely happens that four or five batsmen make errors in judgement in both the innings, especially with the way we batted in the last few months. "I would say this was our worst batting performance and we need to accept that." India's shoddy performance with both bat and ball translated to their fielding too as they dropped numerous catches to compound their problems. Australia captain Steve Smith was dropped four times and he made India pay dearly with his 18th test hundred in the second innings.

India were also found wanting in their choice of referrals in the match, losing all four reviews while fielding and managing to overturn one decision from the umpire out of three while batting.—Reuters

### CRICKET

# DE VILLIERS PASSES MILESTONE IN SA WIN

**WELLINGTON:** South Africa captain AB de Villiers became the fastest man to score 9,000 one-day international runs as he led his side to a 159-run victory over New Zealand in the third one-day international on Saturday.

De Villiers scored 85, having needed just five runs to surpass former India captain Sourav Ganguly, who took 228 innings to achieve the milestone. De Villiers did it in his 205th innings.

South Africa scored a credible 271-8 in their 50 overs and then their pace bowlers ripped the top off the hosts batting to reduce them to 58 for six in the 20th over before bowling them out for 112 in 32.2 overs. The victory gave de Villiers' team a 2-1 lead in the five-match series with the fourth game in Hamilton on Wednesday.

Colin de Grandhomme was the only New Zealand batsman to really come to grips with the drop-in pitch at Wellington Regional Stadium with 34 not out and highlighted that he was batting too low at number eight in the order. Andile Phehlukwayo (2-12 from five overs) and Dwaine Pretorius (3-5 from 5.2 overs) were the most economical of the South African bowlers. De Villiers had again held his side's innings together with a composed knock and was only dismissed in the final over when he failed to get underneath a Trent Boult full toss and was caught on the boundary.

Quinton de Kock also gave his side a solid foundation with 68, the opener passing 50 in his

last five one-day matches.

The visitors were adept at rotating the strike and ticking the scoreboard over, with 116 runs coming from singles. A surprising double strike by de Grandhomme in the 23rd over slowed the visitors momentum, with the all-rounder having Faf du Plessis (36) caught by Tim Southee before de Kock was caught by Jimmy Neesham three balls later at deep midwicket. South Africa had

been cruising at 114-1 before de Grandhomme's double strike. Their vaunted middle order failed to fire with wickets falling at regular intervals and they were in trouble at 180-6 by the 39th over. De Villiers, however, then combined with Wayne Parnell (35) to add 84 runs for the seventh wicket that gave them a target that was achievable but never in danger of being threatened by the hosts.—Reuters

## BANGLADESH'S RAHIM RELISHES CHANCES AGAINST SRI LANKA

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiq Rahim believes his team has "a good chance" of an upset victory against Sri Lanka given the island nation's current dearth of heavyweight players. A 16-member squad will leave today to play two Tests against the Sri Lankans—one in Galle on March 7-11 and another in Colombo, which starts on March 15 and will be Bangladesh's 100th Test.

The teams are also scheduled to play three 50-over One-Day Internationals (ODIs) before facing off for two Twenty20 Internationals at the tail-end of the tour, which wraps up on April 6.

Sri Lanka have a good record at home, beating Australia 3-0 in the last series they

hosted in August 2016.

But the team will be without some of its star players during the Bangladesh tour following the retirements of Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Tillakaratne Dilshan and Muttiah Muralitharan.

Sangakkara, Jayawardene and Dilshan are the only players to have scored more than 1,000 Test runs against Bangladesh while off-spinner Muralitharan claimed 89 wickets in 11 Tests.

"They (Sri Lanka) are going to miss some players who have been part of their team for many days. Regular captain Angelo Mathews is also absent," Rahim said in Dhaka ahead of the team's departure.—AFP

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play in the third One Day International between New Zealand and South Africa on Saturday in Wellington, New Zealand.

#### South Africa Innings

Q. de Kock c Neesham b de Grandhomme	68
H. Amla c Williamson b Southee	7
F. du Plessis c Southee b de Grandhomme	36
A. de Villiers c Neesham b Boult	85
J. Duminy run out (Southee)	16
D. Miller c Broom b Santner	3
D. Pretorius b Ferguson	11
W. Parnell run out (Santner, Latham) 35	
A. Phehlukwayo not out	1
Extras (lb-2 w-7)	9
Total (for 8 wickets, 50 overs)	271
Fall of wickets: 1-41 H. Amla, 2-114 F. du Plessis, 3-115 Q. de Kock, 4-157 J. Duminy, 5-164 D. Miller, 6-180 D. Pretorius, 7-264 A. de Villiers, 8-271 W. Parnell.	
Did not bat: I. Tahir, K. Rabada	
Bowling: T. Southee 10-0-66-1 (w-2); T. Boult 10-0-47-1; L. Ferguson 10-0-71-1 (w-3); C. de Grandhomme 10-0-40-2 (w-2); M. Santner 10-0-45-1.	

#### New Zealand Innings

D. Brownlie c de Kock b Rabada	2
T. Latham c Duminy b Parnell	0
K. Williamson b Phehlukwayo	23
R. Taylor lbw b Pretorius	18
N. Broom c Amla b Phehlukwayo	0
J. Neesham c & amp; Parnell	13
M. Santner b Pretorius	1
C. de Grandhomme not out	34
T. Southee c de Kock b Rabada	4
L. Ferguson b Tahir	5
T. Boult c de Villiers b Pretorius	4
Extras (w-8)	8
Total (all out, 32.2 overs)	112
Fall of wickets: 1-2 T. Latham, 2-11 D. Brownlie, 3-48 K. Williamson, 4-48 R. Taylor, 5-51 N. Broom, 6-58 M. Santner, 7-77 J. Neesham, 8-82 T. Southee, 9-95 L. Ferguson, 10-112 T. Boult	
Bowling: K. Rabada 10-0-39-2 (w-2); W. Parnell 8-0-33-2; A. Phehlukwayo 5-0-12-2 (w-1); D. Pretorius 5.2-1-5-3; I. Tahir 4-1-23-1 (w-1).	
Result: South Africa won by 159 runs	



AB de Villiers



BAYERN DESTROY HAMBURG 8-0 WITH LEWANDOWSKI HAT-TRICK

BERLIN: Bayern Munich forward Robert Lewandowski scored a hat-trick as the Bundesliga leaders mercifully obliterated Hamburg SV 8-0 on Saturday as coach Carlo Ancelotti celebrated his 1,000th game as manager.

The win kept Bayern five points clear at the top as they again inflicted on their opponents their heaviest league defeat. The Pole, who has netted 19 times in the Bundesliga this season, struck twice in the first half and slotted in his third goal in

the 54th minute after Arturo Vidal had put the hosts ahead in the 17th. Strugglers Hamburg had been confident they would not be the punch bags of past matches between the sides, having also lost 8-0 in Munich two years ago, and they had been unbeaten in their last three games. But they looked shell-shocked as they conceded another goal by David Alaba in the 56th and substitute Kingsley Coman scored twice more within five minutes a little later. Arjen Robben struck on

the break as Hamburg again capitulated to the Bundesliga champions and current leaders. "A perfect day, a perfect game," said Ancelotti. "The team played an outstanding game and I could not be happier." "I told my players before the game that I wanted a good match for my anniversary. I never thought it would be that good. I hope we show the same attitude in our next game." Bayern never gave Hamburg a chance, making amends for their last-gasp 1-1

draw at Hertha Berlin last week. They had 75 percent possession in the first half alone and could have added to their tally with Lewandowski also hitting the woodwork. "I think we did not win a single one-on-one throughout the entire first half," Hamburg keeper Rene Adler said. "It's just intolerable." Second-placed RB Leipzig stayed five points off the pace after beating Cologne 3-1 to climb up to 48 points. Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang ended his

goal drought after 471 minutes to score twice as Borussia Dortmund tightened their hold on third place with a 3-0 victory at Freiburg. Dortmund are on 40 points, three ahead of Hoffenheim who play Schalke 04 today. Hertha Berlin beat 10-man Eintracht Frankfurt 2-0 with goals from Vedad Ibisevic and Vladimir Darida in the second half to leapfrog their opponents into fifth place. Eintracht, two points behind in sixth, had Haris Seferovic sent off for elbowing an opponent. —Reuters

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE TABLE

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Tottenham Hotspur 4, Stoke City 0; Chelsea 3, Swansea City 1; Crystal Palace 1, Middlesbrough 0; Everton 2, Sunderland 0; Hull City 1, Burnley 1; Watford 1, West Ham United 1; West Bromwich Albion 2, Bournemouth 1.

Standings table for Premier League with columns for P, W, D, L, F, A, Pts

Table with Premier League standings including teams like Chelsea, Tottenham, Manchester City, Arsenal, Liverpool, etc.

SPANISH LA LIGA TABLE

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

Table with Spanish La Liga standings including teams like Real Madrid, Sevilla, Barcelona, Atletico Madrid, Real Sociedad, Villarreal, etc.

ITALIAN LEAGUE RESULTS/STANDINGS

Table with Italian league results and standings including teams like Chievo Verona, Pescara, Lazio, AC Milan, Juventus, etc.

Table with Italian league results including teams like Crotona, Pescara, Bayer Leverkusen, Mainz, etc.

GERMANY LEAGUE RESULTS/STANDINGS

Bayer Leverkusen 0, Mainz 2; Bayern Munich 8, Hamburg SV 0; Hertha Berlin 2, Eintracht Frankfurt 0; RB Leipzig 3, Cologne 1; Freiburg 0, Borussia Dortmund 3; SV Darmstadt 98 1, FC Augsburg 2; VfL Wolfsburg 1, Werder Bremen 2.

Table with German league standings including teams like Bayern Munich, RB Leipzig, Dortmund, etc.

FRANCE LEAGUE RESULTS/STANDINGS

En Avant de Guingamp 1, Monaco 2; Nantes 3, Dijon FCO 1; Nice 2, Montpellier HSC 1.

Table with French league results and standings including teams like Monaco, Nice, Paris St Germain, Lyon, etc.

FRANCE LEAGUE RESULTS/STANDINGS

En Avant de Guingamp 1, Monaco 2; Nantes 3, Dijon FCO 1; Nice 2, Montpellier HSC 1.

Table with French league results and standings including teams like Monaco, Nice, Paris St Germain, Lyon, etc.

Live Matches on TV (Local Timings) section for English Premier League and Italian Calcio League.

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Leicester City v Liverpool 23:00

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

ACF Fiorentina v Torino FC 22:45



REGGIO EMILIA: AC Milan's defender Gabriel Paletta (front) controls the ball over Sassuolo's midfielder Matteo Politano during the Italian Serie A football match Sassuolo vs AC Milan yesterday at the Mapei stadium in Reggio Emilia. — AFP

SOCCER

IMMOBILE, BACCA SPOT-ON FOR LAZIO AND MILAN

MILAN: Ciro Immobile and Carlos Bacca hit spot-kicks for Lazio and AC Milan respectively yesterday in key wins that boosted the Serie A sides' hopes of European football next season. Table-toppers Juventus took their lead over Roma to 10 points with a comfortable win over Empoli on Saturday, and the gap will remain if Roma suffer defeat at Inter Milan later.

With third-placed Napoli now 12 points in arrears after a shock 2-0 defeat to Atalanta, the race for a top-three finish is back on. Atalanta (three points off third), Lazio (four), Inter (six) and AC Milan (seven) are all within reach, but it took a pair of spot-kicks for Lazio and AC Milan to keep their hopes alive.

Lazio welcomed Udinese protecting a three-game unbeaten run but it took Immobile's second-half penalty to secure the points at the Stadio Olimpico after Iraqi defender Kadhim Ali Adnan was deemed to have handled. The 1-0 win kept Lazio fifth, 16 points behind runaway leaders Juventus, and just four behind third-placed Napoli. "After Atalanta's win at Napoli, it's given the table a different look," Immobile told Premium Sport. "We're up there as well now, and we'll try to capitalise from here on in. We have a few key games coming up, so we have to stay focused if we want Europe." AC Milan's Champions League hopes are probably over following a series of recent setbacks, and they showed little improvement in a cagey performance away to Sassuolo.

Bacca's 22nd minute penalty ended a three-game victory famine at the Mapei Stadium for Vincenzo Montella's men.

After earning an early caution from referee Gianpaolo Calvarese for simulation, Domenico Berardi missed the spot-kick for Sassuolo after Juraj Kucka hauled down Alfred Duncan minutes later. Ten minutes later the hosts suffered another blow when Calvarese awarded Milan a penalty after Andrea Bertolacci came down under a soft challenge. Bacca slid on his way to mis-hitting his effort, which flew over the body of Andrea Consigli and into the net, prompting vociferous protests from Sassuolo that the Colombian had made contact twice with the ball. Sassuolo saw valid claims for a penalty waved away on the hour after Gabriel Paletta came in late with a challenge that sent Matteo Politano sprawling to the turf.

"They shouldn't have had a penalty, and we should have had three," Sassuolo forward Alberto Aquilani told Mediaset Premium. But the hosts were lucky not to escape further punishment, Consigli fingertipping a Suso effort to safety before, from the corner, pulling Cristian Zapata's header out from under the crossbar.

"Today we saw a lot of borderline incidents, fortunately they went in our favour," said Montella. "It was a very nervous game, every time something happened there were protests."

NTCHAM RESCUES GENOA

Zdenek Zeman steered Pescara to a stunning 5-0 rout of Genoa last week in his first game back in charge of the league minnows, which led Genoa to sack Ivan Juric. But the wily Czech coach failed to reproduce the magic in a 2-0 defeat at Chievo, who saw ex-AC Milan midfielder Valter Birsa open the scoring on 12 minutes.

The hosts wrapped up the points on the hour when Lucas Castro was left with an easy tap-in from six yards after he pounced on a loose ball. Elsewhere, Genoa had late substitute Olivier Ntcham to thank for a 94th minute rocket that secured a share of the points in a 1-1 draw at home to Bologna. Andrea Mandorlini looked to be on his

way to an opening defeat after succeeding Juric in midweek, after Federico Viviani struck for Bologna just before the hour. But 21-year-old French midfielder Ntcham, on

loan from Manchester City, made his entry on 92 minutes and coolly sidestepped his marker to beat Antonio Mirante in the Bologna net with an unstoppable drive two minutes later. —AFP

KANE SCORES HAT TRICK AS SPURS THRASH STOKE 4-0

Scoreboard showing Tottenham 4 and Stoke 0.

LONDON: Harry Kane scored a first-half hat trick as Tottenham thrashed Stoke 4-0 yesterday to deliver a record-equaling eighth straight Premier League victory at home. Kane reached 100 career goals at club level with his opener as he delivered a spectacular treble within 37 minutes, before setting up Dele Alli to give Spurs a 4-0 halftime lead.

Tottenham's eighth successive win at White Hart Lane equals the club record set in 2009. It was the perfect way for Mauricio Pochettino's side to get its Premier League campaign back on track after a turbulent February, which saw defeat to domestic rivals Liverpool followed by a surprise Europa League exit at the hands of Belgian side Genk.

"I'm very pleased for him (Kane), he deserves it, he's very professional and he's a top man. It doesn't surprise me, because I've told you many times that for me he's one of the best strikers in the world," Pochettino said.

"This season we are not only winning games (at White Hart Lane), we are playing very well here. Maybe because we all know it's the last season here and it's a very special atmosphere on the pitch and in the stadium."

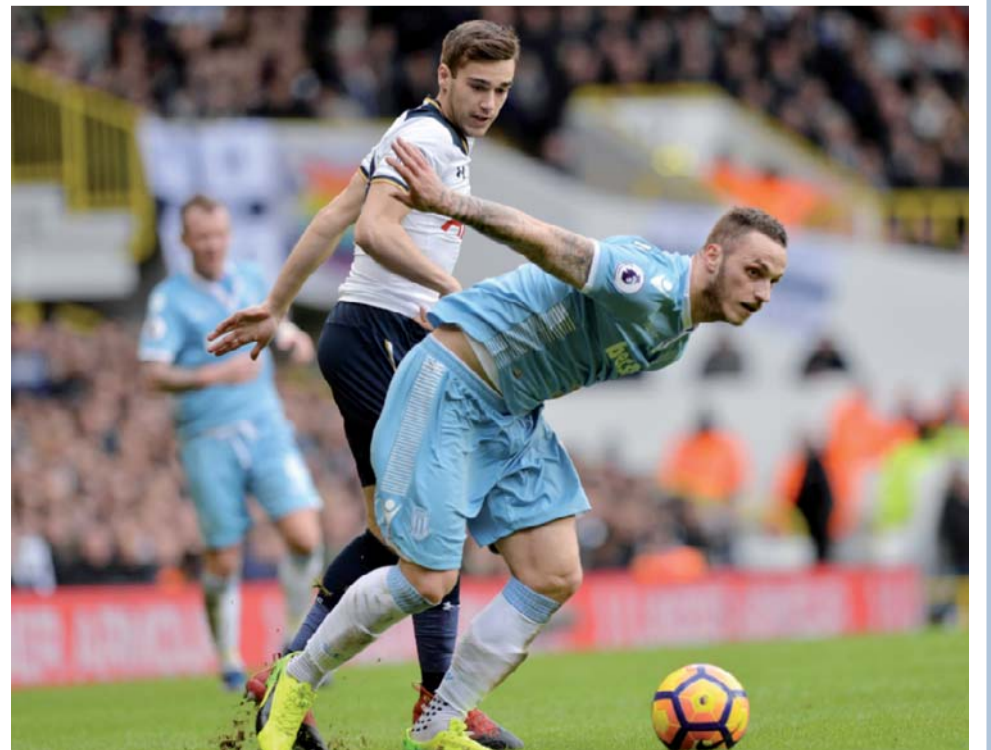
Stoke has now lost its last three Premier League games against Tottenham 4-0. "Maybe we had a few scars from the previous two performances," Stoke manager Mark Hughes said.

"We were a little bit too passive and not aggressive enough in our defensive work. At times we were a little bit awestruck and maybe gave a little bit too much respect to good players."

LANDMARK STRIKE

Kane's landmark strike came in the 14th as he took advantage of Ryan Shawcross' failure to clear, sending the ball across goal with power and precision from the right side of the box. Despite the final score, Hugo Lloris produced one of the game's most crucial moments in the 23rd to preserve his side's lead. The French goalkeeper repelled Peter Crouch's effort at point-blank range after the former Spurs striker met Erik Pieters' cross.

Warning heeded, Tottenham did not look back. Jan Vertonghen struck the crossbar with a rising right-footed effort before Kane came within inches of adding his second with a powerful strike from outside the box. —AP



LONDON: Stoke City's Austrian striker Marko Arnautovic (R) vies with Tottenham Hotspur's English midfielder Harry Winks (L) during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Stoke City at White Hart Lane in London, yesterday. — AFP

MARSEILLE'S AMERICAN OWNER VOWS BUYING SPREE

MARSEILLE: Marseille's American billionaire owner Frank McCourt says he intends to invest heavily in new talent to restore the glory days of the once-dominant French giants.

Marseille stumped up a club-record 30 million euros (\$32m, £25m) to lure French international Dimitri Payet back from Premier League West Ham during the winter transfer window, when they also signed veteran Patrice Evra on a free from Juventus.

But McCourt indicated that more heavy spending was on the way at Marseille after he snapped the club up for a reported 45 million euros in October. "First of all, the best thing anyone can do to improve the fan experience is to win," he told reporters. "This improves everybody's mentality, everyone's approach, everybody's attitude."

"So the fact that the club is playing better, that there's more talent, that there is more passion, better results and so forth, this improves the fan experience," Marseille slumped to their worst finish in Ligue 1 in 15 years last season but appear to have turned the corner following McCourt's arrival and the appointment of former Lille and Roma manager Rudi Garcia on a three-year contract at the imposing Stade Velodrome.

McCourt also named former Spain and Barcelona goalkeeper Andoni Zubizarreta as sporting director and businessman Jacques-Henri Eyraud as club president. Eyraud said that the club had laid the foundations for future

success with the purchase of Payet, among others, during the winter transfer window but the real action would come later. "Our main objective is the summer transfer market," Eyraud said. "It will give us the opportunity to complete our strengthening of the team ahead of our first full season in control of the club." Boston-born tycoon McCourt, 63, who made his fortune building up a commercial real estate conglomerate, purchased Marseille after eight turbulent years in charge of the LA Dodgers.

He financed the \$430 million purchase of the baseball franchise with a leveraged buyout, loading debt onto the club while using commercial properties in Boston as collateral.

To help service the debts from the purchase, revenue streams were aggressively ramped up with hikes on annual tickets and subscriptions, angering long-time fans.

During his eight-year reign, the Dodgers reached the playoffs four times but never progressed past the second round. The period ended in controversy with the sale of the franchise after it filed for bankruptcy protection. McCourt reassured Marseille fans that he had no plans to hike revenue streams and increase ticket prices at the Stade Velodrome. "The strategy is rather to inject enough capital to buy talent, while also providing capital to build up our coaching facilities," he said.

"Excellence on the field brings with it more fans, more sponsors and bigger TV revenues." — AFP

## Sports

'I'm a clean athlete' insists Mo Farah



England keep Grand slam dream alive after Italy scare



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KANE SCORES HAT TRICK AS SPURS THRASH STOKE 4-0 Page 19



LONDON: Manchester United's players celebrate with the trophy on the pitch after their victory in the English League Cup final football match between Manchester United and Southampton at Wembley stadium in north London yesterday. — AFP

## IBRA DOUBLE DOWNS SAINTS IN THRILLER

LONDON: Zlatan Ibrahimovic sealed the first major silverware of Jose Mourinho's Manchester United reign and broke Southampton's hearts as the Swedish star's late goal clinched a dramatic 3-2 victory in yesterday's League Cup final. Ibrahimovic was one of Mourinho's marquee signings in the close-season and he repaid his manager's faith with a typically dominant display on the big occasion at Wembley. The 35-year-old opened the scoring with a blistering free-kick before Jesse Lingard doubled United's lead.

Manolo Gabbiadini sparked a thrilling Southampton fightback, scoring just before half-time and again early in the second half. But Ibrahimovic had the last word as his 87th minute header—his 26th goal of the campaign—ensured Mourinho joined United legend Alex Ferguson and Nottingham Forest great Brian Clough as the only managers to win the League Cup four times.

Mourinho is the first United manager to win a top prize in his maiden season at Old Trafford, a feat not even Ferguson or Matt Busby achieved. It was also the 54-year-old's 19th major trophy of his glittering career. With

United trailing well behind Premier League leaders Chelsea, Mourinho needed this success to guarantee players, fans and the club's hierarchy remain in his corner.

But the serial winner will hope the victory acts as a catalyst to claim bigger prizes in the near future, just as it did when the League Cup was the first silverware of his maiden spell with Chelsea.

It is 41 years since Southampton shocked United in the FA Cup final to lift the only major trophy in the club's history and Claude Puel's team deserve credit for an enterprising display that took them agonisingly close to another huge upset.

In the absence of injured playmaker Henrikh Mkhitaryan and with Wayne Rooney again on the bench, the stage was set for Ibrahimovic to cement his status as United's talisman and he wasted little time stamping his authority on his first showpiece occasion in England. Demanding the ball right from the start, Ibrahimovic's astute pass set up France midfielder Paul Pogba for a fierce long-range effort that stung the palms of Saints goalkeeper Fraser Forster.

## KNOCKOUT BLOW

Southampton responded with a dangerous raid that should have brought the opening goal in the 11th minute when Cedric Soares crossed low into the six yard box and Gabbiadini side-footed past David de Gea, only to see his celebrations curtailed by a dubious offside decision. Emboldened by that lucky escape, United swept forward and in the 19th minute Oriol Romeu made a costly error when he tried to halt another attack with a crude lunge on Ander Herrera.

Romeu was booked but there was worse punishment to come from the free-kick as Ibrahimovic stepped up to smash his dipping shot over the Southampton wall. Despite their lead, United still looked alarmingly casual and De Gea was forced to save from James Ward-Prowse and Dusan Tadic. But Southampton were even more negligent at the back and Mourinho's men made them pay again in the 38th minute.

Marcos Rojo was given room to pick out Lingard inside the penalty area and the United forward couldn't believe this luck as the statuesque Saints' defence

allowed him to guide a low finish past Forster.

Yet on the stroke of half-time Southampton were back in it as United were caught napping by Ward-Prowse's cross and Gabbiadini applied the finishing touch with a cool close-range effort.

With the strangely diffident Pogba offering little protection to United's defence, Southampton exposed United's defensive flaws again to draw level in the 48th minute when a corner was directed back into the United area, Pogba missed a header and Gabbiadini reacted quicker than Chris Smalling to whip his shot past De Gea for his fifth goal in just three appearances since a January move from Napoli. Romeu almost won it when he headed against a post from Ward-Prowse's corner. But, despite a far from convincing display from United, it was Ibrahimovic who delivered the knockout blow with extra-time looming.

He started and finished a United counter, ghosting into the six-yard box to meet Herrera's cross with a bullet header that added more lustre to both United and Mourinho's trophy cabinets. — AFP

## MESSI HAUNTS ATLETICO ONCE MORE TO SEND BARCA TOP

MADRID: Lionel Messi struck the winner four minutes from time as Barcelona moved top of La Liga yesterday with a crucial 2-1 win at Atletico Madrid.

All the goals came in the final half hour as Rafinha put Barcelona in front before Diego Godin's header quickly restored parity. However, so often the thorn in Atletico's side, Messi registered his 27th career goal against Los Rojiblancos to ease the pressure on under fire Barca coach Luis Enrique.

Barcelona now lead Real Madrid and Sevilla by two points. Real, though, have two games in hand on their title rivals, the first of which comes later at Villarreal.

Defeat leaves fourth-placed Atletico just one point clear of Real Sociedad in the battle for the final Champions League slot.

Following their Champions League thrashing at the hands of Paris Saint-Germain and struggles at home to Leganes last weekend, Luis Enrique switched from the Catalans habitual 4-3-3 to a 3-4-3 with Messi forced into an advanced midfield role.

However, the change in tactics did little to stem Barca's slump in form early on as Atletico dominated the opening half hour.

Yannick Carrasco and Godin blasted wildly off target when well placed inside the area early on. Antoine Griezmann then saw a goalbound effort blocked by French international teammate Samuel Umtiti.

Atletico's best effort of the opening half came from long range, though, as Griezmann's driven effort on his weaker right foot forced a brilliant flying save from

Marc-Andre ter Stegen. Barcelona thought they had gone in front against the run of play on the half hour mark when Luis Suarez headed in from close range after a goalmouth scramble.

However, the Uruguayan was penalised for a handball after Jan Oblak had parried Messi's initial effort.

Oblak was making his first appearance since December 12, but the Slovenian showed no signs of rustiness to once again prove his credentials as one of the finest 'keepers in the world.

Firstly, Oblak produced a sensational stop to tip Messi's dipping free-kick over and then clutched Gerard Pique's header from point-blank range.

Both sides passed up huge chances at the start of the second-half. Firstly, Suarez screwed his shot horribly wide after being played in by Messi. Then at the other end, Ter Stegen made another excellent stop to deny Griezmann from a narrow angle. The deadlock was eventually broken in scrappy fashion on 63 minutes as Rafinha profited from a loose ball inside the area to fire low into the far corner. However, the lead lasted only seven minutes as Godin rose higher than a host of Barca defenders to flick home Koke's free-kick for the equaliser.

Yet, when Barca needed a potential season defining goal, Messi again came up trumps with his 35th in as many games this season.

The five-time World Player of the Year's first effort from Suarez's cut-back was blocked, but he followed up to prod past the helpless Oblak and move Barca top of the table. — AFP



MADRID: Atletico de Madrid's Diego Godin, right, and Sime Vrsaljko, left, duels for the ball with Barcelona's Neymar da Silva during a Spain's La Liga soccer match between Atletico de Madrid and FC Barcelona at the Vicente Calderon stadium in Madrid, Spain, yesterday. — AP

# Kuwait Times **BUSINESS**

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Al-Sayer aims for customer convenience first

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## NEGATIVE SENTIMENTS DOMINATE KUWAIT MARKET

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CAIRO: In this Feb 14, 2017 photo, a fruit vendor checks an apple as he waits for customers in the Sayeda Zeinab neighborhood of Cairo, Egypt. Egyptians are cutting, spending and trying to make it through the country's worst inflation in a decade. —AP

# INVESTORS SEEN WARY OF RETURNING TO EGYPT

## EGYPTIANS ENDURE WORST INFLATION IN A DECADE

CAIRO: Egypt is pursuing a raft of reforms to try to revive an economy weakened by years of turmoil, but analysts say that wooing foreign investors will take time. Since the 2011 uprising, the Arab world's most populous nation has suffered a slump in key tourism revenues, slowing economic growth and investment, double-digit inflation and falling foreign currency reserves.

Egyptians are bearing down under their worst inflation in a decade, cutting spending as much as possible as prices surge on basic food items, transport, housing, and even some essential medicines. Inflation reached almost 30 percent in January, up five percent over the previous month, driven by the floatation of the Egyptian pound and slashing of fuel subsidies enacted by the government in November.

The move was part of a reform package to secure an IMF bailout loan of \$12 billion desperately needed to shore up investor confidence and overhaul the economy. Immediately after the floatation, the pound lost over half its value, making a wide range of Egypt's many imported goods double in price. In the months since, Egyptians have been left with a grim search for ways to tighten their belts and make ends meet, hoping

eventually the promised benefits of reform like growth and job creation come.

"People are buying half of what they did before, because it's gotten very expensive," said Hassan, a butcher who only gave his first name. Food and drinks have seen some of the largest increases, costing nearly 40 percent more since the floatation, figures from the statistics agency show. Some meat prices have leaped nearly 50 percent.

"They're buying less than before. Instead of buying five or six items they'll buy two, for example," said a grocery clerk, Ismael. "No one knows what the prices will be next. But hopefully tomorrow things will get better." Egypt had little alternative to the reforms.

The economy has yet to recover from the 2011 Arab Spring uprising that overthrew longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak. Investment and tourism, a pillar of the economy, were both gutted by political turmoil and terror attacks.

In November the International Monetary Fund approved a \$12 billion loan for Egypt after the government committed to reforms including floating the Egyptian pound, which subsequently plunged against the US dollar. The authorities also pledged a new investment law with tax incentives, a "one-stop-

shop" to simplify investment procedures and a new bankruptcy law.

### Recovery blues

"Egypt's economic recovery will come with a lag, until the government follows through on reform policies with a successful implementation," said Hany Farahat, a senior economist at the Egyptian investment bank CI Capital.

The authorities have also introduced a value-added tax and cut fuel subsidies, moves the IMF said were required to fix government finances and boost investor confidence. "Everyone is expecting 2017 to be a difficult year," said Walid Allam, the chief financial officer in Egypt for Swiss elevator manufacturer Schindler.

"But we expect that starting in 2018 there will be a bit of a revival," he told AFP. "We are talking about a state, not a company that would take a decision and profit from it after a week or two." Foreign direct investment in Egypt has fallen from a peak of \$13.2 billion in the fiscal year ending in June 2008, to \$6.8 billion in the year ending in June 2016.

The tourism sector in particular is reeling from years of upheaval and a series of jihadist attacks including the 2015 bombing of a

Russian airliner carrying holidaymakers home from the popular Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. Even before the tumultuous 2011 uprising that ousted longtime president Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's economy was suffering from decades of structural problems and delayed reforms, said Ahmed Abdelnaby, a strategist at Mubasher Financial Services.

Investors will need time to see the government's commitment to reforms if the business climate is overhauled, he said.

### Obstacles remain

One of the challenges for Egypt is to diversify its sources of foreign currency, said political economist Amr Adly, nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Middle East Center. This is particularly important as the main sources now-workers' remittances, crude oil exports, the Suez Canal and tourism-"proved to be very volatile and cannot be depended on," said Adly.

A key part of the government's efforts should be directed to improve the business climate and reduce bureaucracy for small and medium enterprises and not just foreign investors, he said.

This would help boost local industries including agriculture and manufacturing, he

said. Potential investors are keen to see additional structural reforms before committing to long-term investments, said Esraa Ahmed, an economist with Mubasher. She thinks that more than half of the problems facing investors still need to be resolved.

"Investors have always suffered obstacles in procedures, corruption, and bureaucracy. Reforming these issues will take some time," she added. The former chairman of the General Authority for Investment, Ziad Baha-Eldin, said that fixing "genuine barriers" to investment would have a bigger impact than a new investment law.

These include "the state's unclear economic and social vision, its competition with the private sector in all fields, the spread of corruption, and clogged, slow courts, as well as security and political conditions," he wrote in an article for the Ahram Online news website.

Despite the remaining challenges, there are signs that investors are responding positively to the reforms. In January, Egypt sold \$4 billion of dollar-denominated bonds on international markets, almost double its initial target. "Every time I attend a discussion one can sense that officials are aware of everything they should be doing," said an official at a multinational company. —Agencies

# EUROZONE'S REAL RECOVERY OR ANOTHER SIRENS' SONG?

LONDON: Over the years, eurozone economic growth has been a bit like the Sirens in Homer's Odyssey: singing a song of promise, only to end up pulling you onto the rocks. Will it be different this time? The strong growth registered in numerous data releases and surveys at the beginning of this year has surprised many. One eye-opening example was the release of flash purchasing managers indices for France, Germany and the eurozone on Feb 21. Of nine indexes, eight registered growth and six did so at a higher level than any economist polled by Reuters had imagined. Not surprisingly, economists and policy-makers are now looking for firm proof that the eurozone's apparent rebound this year is sustainable, as well as noting a variety of potentially destructive economic and political hazards ahead.

There has not been, they say, a specific inflexion point at which it can be said that the euro zone has recovered and is off on a growth tear. Rather it has been a slow simmer.

"The euro zone has been recovering steadily for three years now, helped by monetary policy stimulus, an end to fiscal austerity and a healthier financial sector," said James McCann, OECD economist at Standard Life Investments. "(It's) a steady recovery which has been trundling on."

The numbers confirm this. The European Commission notes that real GDP in the euro zone has grown for 15 consecutive quarters - a sign of steady improvement. But putting aside some of the latest data, it has been steady rather

than spectacular. Economic growth is still running at only around 1.6 percent annually, and most forecasters - from economists polled by Reuters to the Commission itself, reckon it will be about the same this year. So the question is whether the recent data has turned this on its head. Even before considering whether Greece's debt problems will come back to bite the eurozone, there are two main strands: inflation and elections.

### OF POLITICS AND INFLATION

While the repetition of positive January and February data in the month ahead - for example, German industrial orders soaring again - would fuel the eurozone takeoff story, inflation may hold the key. "The risk of disappointment is that higher headline inflation decelerates real income growth and consumption," said Paul Mortimer-Lee, global head of market economics at BNP Paribas. The preliminary reading of February euro zone inflation, to be reported on Wednesday, is expected to come in at 2.0 percent year-on-year, rising to the European Central Bank's target on the back of monetary stimulus and economic growth.

While far from hyper, such a level has not been seen for four years, and there has been a strong inverse path taken between inflation and retail sales over the last five years. In other words, rising prices can hurt consumer spending, which in turn drives economies. Unemployment during the

financial crisis accounts for some of the dive in retail sales seen on and off since 2008. But joblessness, though improved, is still twice that of, say, the United States.

So if euro zone inflation were to overshoot in the coming year, it may well stifle the very growth that engendered it. Economists, however, also see a growth killer in the bloc's politics. Many have long argued that the eurozone cannot compete as a leading economy without substantial structural reform - particularly in the number two and three economies after Germany.

"It comes down to France and Italy stepping up a gear," said Florian Hense, European economist at Berenberg private bank. But it is exactly in those two countries where politics is threatening to delay or derail the type of pro-growth structural reforms advocated by the European Central Bank and many private sector economists.

In Italy, the chances of an election this year have diminished, but the political turmoil surrounding the resignation of prime minister Matteo Renzi is likely to set back major reforms until an election takes place. It is France, however, that is seen providing the biggest risk. Two of the top three candidates are viewed as economic reformists, but they are up against Marine Le Pen, the far-right National Front candidate whose pledge to put France's EU membership to a referendum could de-stabilise the region's economy for years.



PARIS: A farmer looks at his phone as he lies next to his cattle at the Agriculture Fair in Paris yesterday. —AFP



ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras speaks during a Parliament session about bailout negotiations in Athens on Friday. —AP

# GREECE'S TSIPRAS: THE ERA OF AUSTERITY IS OVER

PM PAINTS A POSITIVE PICTURE OF REFORMS

ATHENS, Greece: Greece's era of austerity is over, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras claimed Friday, as he painted a positive picture of the reforms his government has agreed to take after the bailout program ends in 2018. Speaking in parliament, Tsipras described the deal reached Monday as an "exceptional success" and said it showed the country's creditors accepted Greece's insistence that it could no longer bear further budget austerity.

"I am fully convinced we achieved an honorable compromise," Tsipras said, adding that all sides at the eurozone finance ministers' meeting in Brussels had agreed for the "first time after seven years ... to leave the path of continued austerity behind us."

On Monday, Greece agreed to legislate new reforms to come into effect in 2019, but said these will be fiscally neutral: for every euro's worth of new burdens on the Greek taxpayer, an equal amount of relief will be granted.

In return, Greece's creditors agreed to send their bailout inspectors back to Athens next week for further talks to complete a long overdue review of Greece's progress in its bailout program. Greece's central bank chief warned Friday that the bailout talks must be concluded

as soon as possible. "If the negotiations drag on with no agreement in sight, then Greece will enter a new cycle of uncertainty, deteriorating relations with our partners and creditors, and a backsliding of the economy into stagnation," Yannis Stournaras said in a speech.

He warned that risks "also arise from delays and procrastination in implementing reforms already agreed on, or from distortions to competition that could hurt crucial sectors of the economy." Fitch ratings agency left Greece's credit rating unchanged at CCC, near the bottom of the rating scale and deep in junk bond territory. It said late Friday that despite risks from the delays in negotiations it expects an agreement will be reached. "The current stand-off appears to be driven more by the ... disagreement" between Greece's European creditors and the International Monetary Fund on Greece's debt sustainability, the agency said.

"Relations between the Greek government and official creditors have stayed on a fairly firm footing" since Greece's third bailout was signed in 2015, it added.

Tsipras said both the new measures requested by creditors and the government-proposed relief measures will be legislated at the same

time. The prime minister's left-led coalition government, trailing badly in polls, has presented Monday's deal as a decisive, positive step forward for austerity-weary Greeks hammered by seven years of a financial crisis that plunged the country into an economic depression.

No details have been provided of what the new reforms will entail, although there is widespread speculation they will include a broadening of the tax base and further pension and labor reforms.

Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos has provided no details on the upcoming reforms. Government spokesman Dimitris Tzanakopoulos on Tuesday said no specifics could be given as the reforms are subject to negotiation and agreement with the country's creditors.

Greece has depended on three international bailout funds since 2010, when it became locked out of bond markets by sky-high borrowing rates. In return for the rescue loans, it has had to overhaul its economy, imposing rounds of spending cuts and tax hikes. The austerity saw the economy contract by more than a quarter and sent unemployment soaring. The jobless figure now hovers at around 23 percent, down from a high of 27 percent.—AP

# CITY GROUP LAUNCHES DOUBLE DECKER BUSES

KUWAIT: To coincide with the commemoration of the National day and Liberation day of Kuwait, City Group launched yesterday "double decker buses" as a part of its ongoing commitment to upgrade and improve the quality of public transportation in Kuwait, and to strengthen the network of City Bus which covers most of the areas in Kuwait.

Nabil Al-Jeraisy, Vice Chairman and CEO, stated that City Bus is committed to providing world class public transportation services to its customers in Kuwait in cooperation with the Traffic Department Authority to contribute in the reduction of traffic congestion and support the environmental protection agenda.

Jeraisy added, "The double decker buses" are considered environmentally friendly and is equipped with GPS tracking, Wi-Fi on board and enhanced passenger comfort and safety features as well. These types of buses will also help to reduce the actual number of vehicle operating on Kuwaiti roads and yet address the increasing requirement of public transport.

He also affirmed to providing a better service to citizens and residents alike, and to encourage drivers to abandon their cars and use these public transport services. Here Al-Jeraisy invited both citizens and residents to try the new "double decker buses", which will begin its maiden trip today on Route 999 starting from Sheraton hotel bus stop in Kuwait City going along the coastal road of the Arabian Gulf passing through "Al-Ta'awun" street to Fahaheel



Nabil Al-Jeraisy

costal road ending in Fahaheel area and then return.

Finally, Nabil Al-Jeraisy congratulated and wished that God bless HH the Amir of Kuwait, its government and citizens and hoped that peace and security prevails among the residents of Kuwait. Happy National Day and Liberation Day.



# ABK ANNOUNCES THIRD WINNER OF 'UPDATE YOUR CIVIL ID' DRAWS

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held the third weekly 'Update your Civil ID' February promotion draw on Monday, 20th February, 2017 at the Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce

The lucky customer for the third 'Update Your Civil ID' draw was Mr. Tawfeeq Wajeel Teweel, from Andalous Branch, winning an Apple iPhone7.

To enter the final draw, customers just need to insert their Civil IDs into an ATM at any ABK branch up until the 28th of February 2017 and update their information. In addition to allowing customers to update their Civil ID details, ABK's ATMs also offer a range of other services including withdrawing and depositing money, requesting account balances and mini-statements, changing a PIN number and transferring funds to other ABK accounts.

For more information about Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit [eahli.com](http://eahli.com) or contact a customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899.



# BUFFETT TACKLES TRUMP IN DEFENDING VALUE OF IMMIGRANTS

WASHINGTON: Billionaire investor Warren Buffett used his annual letter Saturday to laud immigrants and their contribution to the growth of the US economy amid President Donald Trump's anti-immigrant stance. "Americans have combined human ingenuity, a market system, a tide of talented and ambitious immigrants, and the rule of law to deliver abundance beyond any dreams of our forefathers," he wrote in the letter to shareholders of his massive Berkshire Hathaway conglomerate.

The annual missive from the 86-year-old investor-the world's third-wealthiest person, according to Forbes magazine-is pored over for clues to the thinking of the "Oracle of Omaha," who lives and works in the Nebraska city. Buffett steered clear of any mention of Republican President Donald Trump, who took office on January 20. He had sup-

ported Democrat Hillary Clinton in her bid to win the White House. The letter came as the country grapples with a sharp controversy over Trump's anti-immigrant policies and his crackdown on the estimated 11 million undocumented people living in the country.

The letter accompanied Berkshire Hathaway's release of 2016 fourth-quarter and full-year earnings.

The company reported net profit of \$6.3 billion in the October-December period, a gain of nearly 15 percent from a year ago. For all of 2016, net profit came in at \$24.1 billion, slightly lower than the prior year. Berkshire, which has stakes in Kraft Heinz, Coca-Cola and a number of other companies, and recently invested in Apple, has benefited from the Wall Street rally after Trump's election. Berkshire gained \$27.5 billion in net worth during 2016, Buffett said. — AFP

## EXCHANGE RATES

### AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.689
Indian Rupees	4.571
Pakistani Rupees	2.919
Srilankan Rupees	2.034
Nepali Rupees	2.866
Singapore Dollar	216.060
Hongkong Dollar	3.946
Bangladesh Taka	3.831
Philippine Peso	6.132
Thai Baht	8.756

GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.694
Qatari Riyal	84.142
Omani Riyal	795.608
Bahraini Dinar	813.470
UAE Dirham	83.408

ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.450
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.537
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.230
Tunisian Dinar	134.810
Jordanian Dinar	431.290
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.041
Syrian Lira	2.183
Morocco Dirham	30.924

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	306.150
Euro	327.180
Sterling Pound	384.680
Canadian dollar	234.780
Turkish lira	83.310

Swiss Franc	307.460
Australian Dollar	237.110
US Dollar Buying	304.950

GOLD	
20 Gram	252.060
10 Gram	128.950
5 Gram	65.320

### DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

US Dollar	305.900
Canadian Dolla	233.425
Sterling Pound	382.105
Euro	324.700
Swiss Frank	310.650
Bahrain Dinar	810.915
UAE Dirhams	83.680
Qatari Riyals	84.900
Saudi Riyals	82.500
Jordanian Dinar	432.620
Egyptian Pound	19.484
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.012
Indian Rupees	4.574
Pakistani Rupees	2.917
Bangladesh Taka	3.854
Philippines Pesto	6.088
Cyprus pound	167.990
Japanese Yen	3.700
Syrian Pound	2.425
Nepalese Rupees	3.855
Malaysian Ringgit	69.655

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.905
Thai Bhat	9.735
Turkish Lira	85.835

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
<b>Europe</b>		
British Pound	0.376029	0.386029
Czech Korune	0.003923	0.015923
Danish Krone	0.039340	0.044340
Euro	0.317172	0.326172
Norwegian Krone	0.032605	0.037805
Romanian Leu	0.071312	0.071312
Slovakia	0.009185	0.019185
Swedish Krona	0.030062	0.035062
Swiss Franc	0.296735	0.307735
Turkish Lira	0.079075	0.089375
<b>Australasia</b>		
Australian Dollar	0.226999	0.238999
New Zealand Dollar	0.212865	0.222385
<b>America</b>		
Canadian Dollar	0.227782	0.236782
Georgina Lari	0.138321	0.138321
US Dollars	0.302150	0.306550
US Dollars Mint	0.302650	0.306550
<b>Asia</b>		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003584	0.004148
Chinese Yuan	0.043138	0.046638
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037368	0.040118
Indian Rupee	0.002683	0.004906

Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002613	0.002793
Kenyan Shilling	0.002951	0.002951
Korean Won	0.000258	0.000273
Malaysian Ringgit	0.064973	0.070973
Nepalese Rupee	0.002996	0.003166
Pakistan Rupee	0.002673	0.002963
Philippine Peso	0.006026	0.006326
Sierra Leone	0.000038	0.000044
Singapore Dollar	0.210343	0.220343
South African Rand	0.017298	0.025798
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001683	0.002263
Taiwan	0.009820	0.010000
Thai Baht	0.008407	0.008957
<b>Arab</b>		
Bahraini Dinar	0.805763	0.814263
Egyptian Pound	0.014131	0.023384
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000187	0.000247
Jordanian Dinar	0.426284	0.435284
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000152	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020163	0.044163
Nigerian Naira	0.000403	0.001038
Omani Riyal	0.789033	0.794713
Qatar Riyal	0.083308	0.084758
Saudi Riyal	0.080580	0.081880
Syrian Pound	0.001299	0.001519
Tunisian Dinar	0.130050	0.138050
Turkish Lira	0.079075	0.088375
UAE Dirhams	0.081956	0.083656
Yemeni Riyal	0.000996	0.001076

## KFH PARTICIPATES IN KUWAIT INVESTMENT FORUM

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the 4th Kuwait Investment Forum as part of its endeavors to be present at important economic forums and conferences that discuss means of improving the economy and enhancing the investment climate in Kuwait.

The forum themed "Investing in Kuwait, Available and Lost Opportunities" was held at JW Marriot hotel. Participants tackled different issues mainly the SMEs and the role of Kuwait in supporting them, the country's vision of the future outlook of the economy in light of the variables and repercussions, while demonstrated successful investment experiences.

The forum featured a number of workshops and seminars allowing investors and officials to have fruitful and constructive dialogue on several issues that serve investment promotion in Kuwait. The forum hosts dignitaries from public and private sectors in addition to MPs.

It is worth noting that the 4th Kuwait Investment Forum kicked off for 2 days under the sponsorship of Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh. KFH's participation affirms its commitment towards streamlining a favor-

able business environment and supporting the SMEs owners, yet reflects its efforts in building bridges of cooperation between the public and private sectors. This is in line with its strategy that aims at achieving economic and social development in the country.

KFH was established in Kuwait in 1977 and is enlisted in the Kuwait Stock Exchange. KFH Group is a global pioneer in the field of Islamic banking services, where it offers a wide array of Islamic products and services, not to mention a high standard of innovation and client service.

KFH manages its operations in the GCC, Asia, and Europe through over 446 branches, including KFH-Turkey, in order to offer services for the bank's clients in Turkey, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Germany, Jordan, and Dubai.

KFH's mission is to achieve highest levels of excellence and innovation in the field of client service, while developing common interest for all those concerned with the financial institution. KFH's vision is to spearhead the global development in Islamic financial services, and to upgrade the bank into the level of becoming the most sustainable profitable Islamic bank in the world.



KFH team at the booth

## TOP CEOs TO TRUMP: JOBS EXIST; SKILLS DON'T

PRESIDENT ASSURED OF COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT ON JOBS

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump brought two dozen manufacturing CEOs to the White House on Thursday and declared their collective commitment to restoring factory jobs lost to foreign competition. Yet some of the CEOs suggested that there were still plenty of openings for US factory jobs but too few qualified people to fill them. They urged the White House to support vocational training for the high-tech skills that today's manufacturers increasingly require - a topic Trump has seldom addressed.

"The jobs are there, but the skills are not," one executive said during meetings with White House officials that preceded a session with the president. (Reporters were permitted to attend the meetings on the condition of not quoting individual executives by name.)

The discussion of job training and worker skills is a relatively new one for Trump, who campaigned for the White House on promises to restore manufacturing jobs that he said had been lost to flawed trade deals and unfair competition from countries like Mexico and China.

Again and again, Trump brought up that theme in his meeting with the CEOs. "Everything is going to be based on bringing our jobs back," Trump said. "The good jobs, the real jobs. They've left."

White House officials said Trump heard the CEOs' concerns about a shortage of qualified workers and said he supports efforts to increase training for factory jobs. But they didn't provide details. "We were challenged by the president to ... come up with a program to make sure the American worker is trained for the manufacturing jobs of tomorrow," Reed Cordish, a White House official, said after Thursday's meetings. Trump officials said the meetings were intended to provide the White House with ideas in four areas: taxes and trade; regulatory reform; infrastructure; and the "workforce of the future," including advanced training. Proposed solutions may be included in future presidential executive orders or legislative proposals, a White House official said.

The gathering occurred amid the same kind of jovially informal atmosphere that has prevailed in several meetings Trump has held with CEOs in the four weeks since his inauguration. Most of the executives thanked the president for reaching out to them, and several expressed gratitude for his interest in meeting them face to face.

"All the CEOs are very encouraged by the pro-business policies of President Trump," Andrew Liveris, CEO of Dow Chemical, said afterward outside the White House. "Some of us have said this is probably the most pro-business administration since the Founding Fathers."

Other executives at the meeting included Jeff Immelt, CEO of General Electric; Doug Oberhelman, chairman and former CEO of Caterpillar; Inge Thulin, CEO of 3M; and Denise Morrison, CEO of Campbell Soup. One executive said in discussions with White House officials that his company has 50 participants in a factory apprenticeship program, but could take 500 if enough were qualified. But he said that in his experience, most students coming out of high school lack the math and English skills to absorb

Republican leaders, including Speaker Paul Ryan. In an interview with Reuters, Trump expressed general support for a "form of tax on the border," saying it "could lead to a lot more jobs in the United States." But he stopped short of endorsing the House proposal specifically.

Earlier Thursday, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin gave a more lukewarm assessment of the proposal in an interview with the business network CNBC.

"We think there are some very interesting



WASHINGTON: Caterpillar CEO Doug Oberhelman, left, GE CEO Jeffrey Immelt, and other manufacturing executives leave the White House in Washington following their meeting with President Donald Trump. —AP

technical manuals. Some economists argue that businesses should offer higher pay and adopt more training if they can't find the workers they need. Higher pay would draw more young people into the field.

In the meantime, some data supports the CEOs' concerns about the shortage of qualified applicants. Government figures show there are 324,000 open factory jobs nationwide - triple the number in 2009, during the depths of the recession. Separately, the administration sent mixed signals Thursday about a contentious proposed tax on imports, known as a "border adjustment." The proposal has the support of House

aspects of it," Mnuchin said but added: "We think there are some concerns about it."

Several of the manufacturing CEOs pushed for the tax during their meeting with Trump, a White House official said. But others, particularly those who rely on imported goods, were opposed, the official said.

The border-adjusted tax is opposed by large retailers such as Wal-Mart and Target, who argue that they could end up paying more in taxes than they earn in profits under the proposal. The official wasn't authorized to discuss a closed-door meeting and spoke on condition of anonymity. — AP

## US NEW-HOME SALES RISE IN SIGN OF MARKET HEALTH

**WASHINGTON:** Americans bought more new homes in January after a steep fall-off the previous month, a sign the housing market is healthy despite higher mortgage rates. New home sales rose 3.7 percent to a seasonally-adjusted 555,000, the Commerce Department said Friday. That is 5.5 percent higher than a year ago.

Solid job gains and some signs of rising wages have driven up consumer confidence, which has also risen since the presidential election. More confident consumers are more likely to buy homes. Sales of existing homes jumped to their highest level in a decade, according to data released earlier this week.

The solid sales have occurred despite, or perhaps because of, a jump in mortgage rates since the fall. Many buyers could be accelerating purchases to get ahead of any further rate increases.

Financial markets expect faster growth and higher inflation will flow from President Donald Trump's tax cuts and deregulation initiatives. That has pushed up interest rates on both the 10-year Treasury note and mortgages. The average 30-year fixed mortgage rate was 4.16 percent this week, little changed from the previous week.



A house for sale sign in Miami Lakes, Florida. — AP

Still, that is up sharply from an average of 3.65 percent all last year.

Low mortgage rates and a steady job market have helped the housing market recover from its bubble and bust cycle a decade ago. By some measures, home prices on average nationwide have returned to their pre-recession peaks. Yet homeowners

are carrying less debt and have more equity ownership of their homes now than during the bubble, reducing fears of a repeat.

A limited supply of homes available has helped push up prices, but there are signs that in the new home market builders may be addressing the problem. There were

265,000 new homes for sale at the end of January, up nearly 11 percent from a year earlier and the most in nearly eight years.

Still, more home building is needed to address supply shortages. The number of existing homes on the market is near its lowest level since 1999. — AP



PARIS: A chick stands among eggs being hatched inside an incubator at the Agriculture Fair in Paris yesterday. —AFP

## FRANCE'S FARM EXPO: A HIGH-STAKES PHOTO OP

**PARIS:** With France's election just two months away, glad-handing at the annual farm show is not just a photo op for presidential hopefuls, it's a must. And this year the candidates had better come bearing concrete plans, not just smiles, union leaders and exhibitors say.

"We're waiting for them," said Jeremy Decerle, the head of the Jeunes Agriculteurs (Young Farmers) union, complaining that the would-be heads of state have given the distressed farming sector short shrift so far.

"They should be more worried about farmers-and not just next week but 365 days a year," he told AFP. Behind Decerle, a huge poster spelled out his union's demands in oversized type, stressing the need for people-oriented policies over those favouring agri-business.

The flagship expo, which opened Saturday and runs until March 5, brings the countryside to the city, showcasing the wealth of France's agricultural output from all its regions as well as its far-flung islands and former colonies.

This year there are nearly 1,000 exhibitors displaying some 22,000 products, including 2,600 heads of livestock requiring hundreds of tons of straw and hay, organizers say. With spring just around the corner, it is a happy family day out for more than half a million people every year.

But politicians stopping by for the annual ritual that has come to be known as "stroking the cow's behind" need to watch their step. Conservative president Nicolas Sarkozy lived to rue the day at the 2008 expo when he lost his cool with a punter who refused to shake his hand, saying:

"Get lost, dumbass!" Video of the exchange went viral on the internet. Four years later, when Sarkozy ran for re-election, many of his detractors delighted in turning the phrase against him, and he was turfed out of office.

Last year his Socialist successor Francois Hollande suffered ignominy at the fair in his turn, when farmers furious over collapsing milk prices heckled him and union activists tore down the agriculture ministry's pavilion.

Today, that anger has been replaced by despair in a sector that depends heavily on EU subsidies-on average the aid makes up some 80 percent of farmers' income-and

there has been an alarming spike in suicides. What is more, a community that has traditionally leaned to the right is clearly dismayed by an expenses scandal dragging down the candidacy of conservative Francois Fillon.

"A few weeks ago I had a candidate, but now I'm not so sure," said Marianne Roussille, 57, who runs a family Cognac distillery in southwest France. "If they wanted to disgust us, the French, they've outdone themselves," she said. Claire Coutard, a 44-year-old exhibiting specialties from the northeastern Vosges region such as plum liqueur, agreed. "I don't know who I'm going to vote for," she said. "There's been so much disappointment and now we're wondering if they are going to lie again."

### 'Shocked' by Penelopegate

The sentiment was the same at a stand promoting Camembert and other prized products from northern Normandy. "All our politicians have a hand in it, they're hooligans, mafiosi," said the 45-year-old exhibitor, who gave his name only as Ghislain.

"I knew who I was going to vote for, but I was shocked" by the revelations last month that Fillon's wife Penelope was on the public payroll and appears to have done little to earn her generous salary," he added, referring to the scandal dubbed Penelopegate.

Fillon's campaign has yet to set a date for his appointment with the salon's mascot-always a prize cow, which is from Brittany this year and named Fine.

Far-right leader and Brittany native Marine Le Pen, who is herself embroiled in a corruption scandal, is set to show up on Tuesday. Emmanuel Macron, the 38-year-old upstart former Socialist minister running as a centrist, has a planned visit on Wednesday.

At least this year the fair has been kinder to Hollande, whose popularity has improved since he announced in December that he would not seek re-election in the April-May vote.

Emulating the crowd-pleasing former president Jacques Chirac, Hollande sipped beer for the cameras as he inaugurated the expo on Saturday, bringing farmers "a message of encouragement, support and solidarity". — AFP

## CHINA REGULATOR RAPS STOCK MARKET 'CROCODILES'

**BEIJING:** China's stock market regulator yesterday denounced the "crocodiles" that prey on small investors, at a time when Beijing is trying to reassure retail investors following the crash of summer 2015. "In the capital market, being a financial tycoon is only a half step away from being a financial crocodile," said Liu Shiyu, chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC).

China in recent days has announced investigations into insurance companies, including Evergrande Life and Foresea Life, for alleged market manipulation.

The president of PICC, the country's first non-life insurance company, is being probed for corruption, the disciplinary organ of the ruling Communist Party said Thursday. Liu late last year

denounced insurers engaged in debt-fuelled stock market acquisitions as "barbarians" and "thieves"

The former banker was appointed in early 2016 with the mission of restoring confidence in financial markets after the debacle the previous summer, when the Shanghai market slumped nearly 40 percent. The erratic behavior of the market regulator at the time fuelled the panic. In a report on its operations in 2016, the CSRC said it had opened investigations into more than 300 new cases. "Zero tolerance was given to insider trading, market manipulation, and dissemination of false information," it said. "The CSRC is committed to fighting against misbehaving financial magnates who will stop at nothing for money and power". — AFP

SECTORS' WEEKLY TRADING ACTIVITY					SECTORS INDICES PERFORMANCE				
Sector	Volume	To Market %	Value	To Market %	Sector	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
OIL & GAS	69,526,531	3.81%	4,604,679	2.50%	OIL & GAS	886.90	865.96	2.42%	13.61%
BASIC MATERIALS	10,158,535	0.56%	3,803,891	2.07%	BASIC MATERIALS	1,321.85	1,306.32	1.19%	31.55%
INDUSTRIALS	136,001,442	7.46%	25,605,664	13.93%	INDUSTRIALS	1,521.13	1,514.87	0.41%	13.18%
CONSUMER GOODS	10,583,070	0.58%	1,326,076	0.72%	CONSUMER GOODS	1,162.50	1,129.33	2.94%	3.33%
HEALTH CARE	75,047	0.00%	20,453	0.01%	HEALTH CARE	1,323.63	1,225.37	8.02%	6.36%
CONSUMER SERVICES	16,578,278	0.91%	1,823,482	0.99%	CONSUMER SERVICES	964.90	988.65	-2.40%	4.36%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	62,806,238	3.44%	19,827,786	10.78%	TELECOMMUNICATIONS	662.02	690.53	-4.13%	4.07%
BANKS	253,865,738	13.92%	50,217,024	27.31%	BANKS	994.44	988.83	0.57%	18.78%
INSURANCE	7,348,669	0.40%	519,345	0.28%	INSURANCE	1,167.49	1,173.77	-0.54%	17.42%
REAL ESTATE	729,419,254	40.00%	41,725,576	22.69%	REAL ESTATE	1,074.80	1,081.68	-0.64%	23.51%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	525,179,002	28.80%	34,115,825	18.56%	FINANCIAL SERVICES	776.65	791.64	-1.89%	30.08%
TECHNOLOGY	2,220,825	0.12%	270,805	0.15%	TECHNOLOGY	880.77	828.09	6.36%	45.07%

# BOURSA KUWAIT DROPS UNDER SELLING PRESSURE

## BAYAN WEEKLY MARKET REPORT

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) ended last week in the red zone. The Price Index closed at 6,809.78 points, down by 0.22 percent from the week before closing, the Weighted Index decreased by 0.38 percent after closing at 427.14 points, whereas the KSE-15 Index closed at 971.66 points down by 0.33 percent. Furthermore, last week's average daily turnover decreased by 35 percent, compared to the preceding week, reaching KD 36.77 million, whereas trading volume average was 364.75 million shares, recording a decrease of 35.95 percent.

The three market indices closed with limited losses affected by the profit collection trend that was present during most of the week's sessions, amid declined levels of trading compared to the previous week, where the total value for the last week dropped by 35 percent to reach KD 183.86 million, and the volume decreased to reach 1.82 billion stock, down by 35.95 percent, while the total executed deals during the week reached around 38.32 deal, down by 28.31 percent.

The Boursa witnessed in the first session of the week a grouped decline for the three indices affected by the profit collection operations executed after the good gains witnessed during some previous sessions, where it included many listed stocks in the market, however concentrated mostly on the leading and heavy stocks, which caused all the Boursa indicators to drop, in parallel with a decline in the trading indicators especially the value that decreased by 22 percent by the end of the session. On the next session, the three Boursa indices continued its decline affected by the continued selling and profit collection operations, which came amid a decline in the trading levels for the second consecutive session, where the volume dropped by 27 percent, and the value decreased by 15 percent.

The market continued its negative performance in the mid-week session, however at slower pace, as the selling operations continued in controlling the trading activity for the third consecutive session, amid a slight growth in the cash liquidity during the session, where it recorded an increase of around 13 percent.

Moreover, the market was able in the next two sessions to reverse its direction and go upward as the three indices were able to return once again to the green zone, compensating a part of its previous losses, especially in the last session of the week where it witnessed a grouped increase for all the market indicators, supported by the return of the speculative operations executed on the small-cap stocks in particular, in addition to the random purchasing operations that targeted some leading stocks after the declines witnessed in the previous sessions.

The Boursa lost more than KD 36 million of its market cap during the last five sessions, or 0.13 percent compared to a week earlier closings, where its total losses since the beginning of the month reached about KD 120 million, or 0.42 percent compared to January's closings. However, the gains of the market cap since the beginning of the year contracted to reach 11.68 percent compared to its level at end of 2016 where it was KD 25.41 billion.

For the annual performance, the price index ended last week recording 18.47 percent annual gain compared to its closing in 2016, while the weighted index increased by 12.38 percent, and the KSE-15 recorded 9.79 percent growth.

### Sectors' Indices

Seven of Boursa Kuwait's sectors ended last week in the green zone, while the other five recorded declines. Last week's highest gainer was the Health Care sector, achieving 8.02 percent growth rate as its index closed at 1,323.63 points. Whereas, in the second place, the Technology sector's index closed at 880.77 points recording 6.36 percent increase. The Consumer Goods sector came in third as its index achieved 2.94 percent growth, ending the week at 1,162.50 points. The Industrial sector was the least growing as its index closed at 1,521.13 points with a 0.41 percent increase.

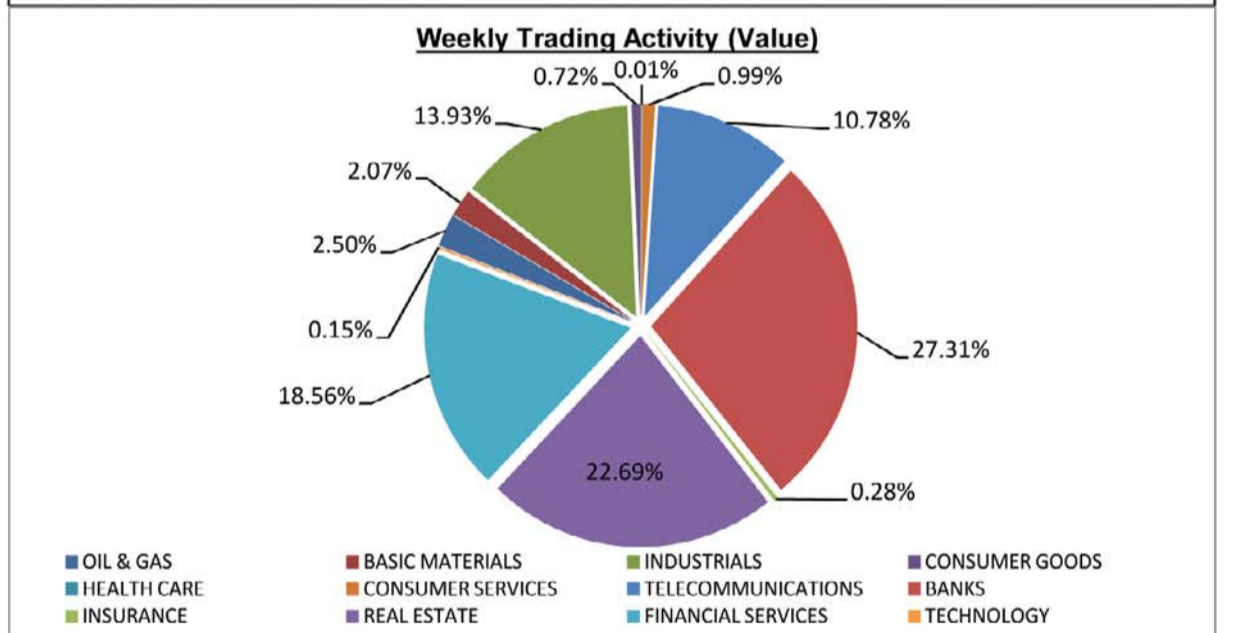
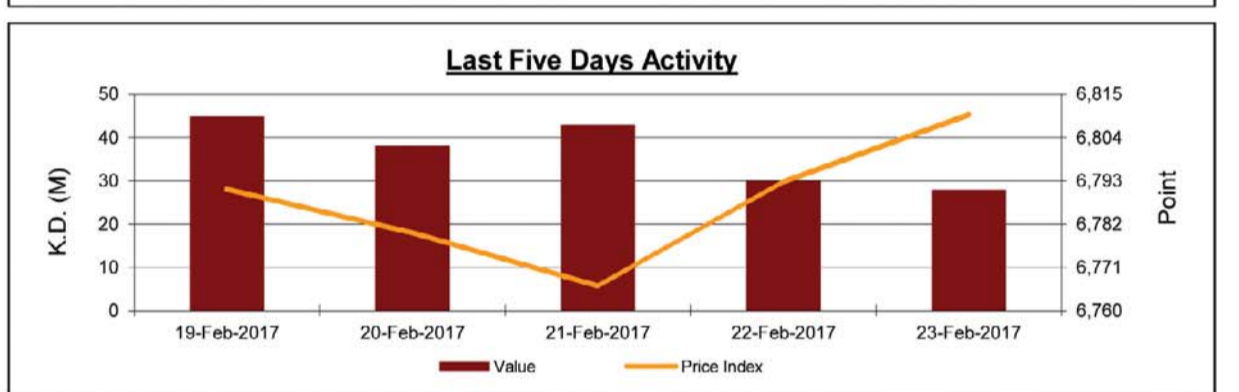
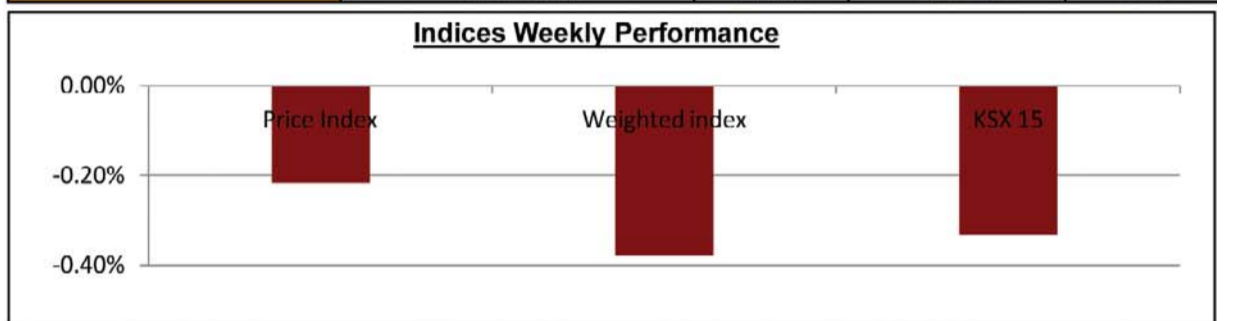
On the other hand, the Telecommunications sector headed the losers list as its index declined by 4.13 percent to end the week's activity at 662.02 points. The Consumer Services sector was second on the losers' list, which index declined by 2.40 percent, closing at 964.90 points, followed by the Financial Services sector, as its index closed at 776.65 points at a weekly loss of 1.89 percent.

### Sectors' Activity

The Real Estate sector dominated a total trade volume of around 729.42 million shares changing hands during last week, representing 40 percent of the total market trading volume. The Financial Services sector was second in terms of trading volume as the sector's traded shares were 28.80 percent of last week's total trading volume, with a total of around 525.18 million shares.

On the other hand, the Banks sector's stocks were the highest traded in terms of value; with a turnover of around KD 50.22 million or 27.31 percent of last week's total market trading value. The Real Estate sector took the second place as the sector's last week turnover was approx. KD 41.73 million representing 22.69 percent of the total market trading value. — Prepared by the Studies & Research Department, Bayan Investment Co.

BOURSA KUWAIT INDICES				
		Price Index	Weighted index	KSX 15
Weekly	Last week	6,809.78	427.14	971.66
	Previous week	6,824.49	428.76	974.89
	Change (Point)	-14.71	-1.62	-3.23
	Change (%)	-0.22%	-0.38%	-0.33%
Annual	Last year	5,748.09	380.09	885.02
	Change (Point)	1,061.69	47.05	86.64
	Change (%)	18.47%	12.38%	9.79%



MARKET ACTIVITY			
	Last Week	Previous Week	Ch. %
Volume	1,823,762,629	2,847,515,681	-35.95%
Value (K.D)	183,860,607	282,848,393	-35.00%
Deals	38,320	53,454	-28.31%

MARKET CAPITALISATION (K.D.)			
Last Week	Previous Week	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
28,375,087,048	28,411,283,027	-0.13%	11.68%

TOP GAINERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
REAM	375.00	250.00	125.0	50.00%
JEERANH	73.00	51.00	22.0	43.14%
GFC	61.00	43.00	18.0	41.86%
ASC	320.00	244.00	76.0	31.15%
MHC	300.00	250.00	50.0	20.00%

TOP LOSERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
CABLETV	30.00	47.50	-17.5	-36.84%
ALMUDON	51.00	62.00	-11.0	-17.74%
THEMAR	94.00	108.00	-14.0	-12.96%
COAST	50.00	57.00	-7.0	-12.28%
FTI	66.00	74.00	-8.0	-10.81%

# RECORD-SETTING STOCK RALLY FACES TEST IN TRUMP SPEECH

## WALL STREET WEEK AHEAD

**NEW YORK:** US President Donald Trump's planned economic agenda has fanned the flames for Wall Street's record-setting run, but some investors worry that his first major address to Congress next week risks dousing it if his plans look slow to execute or are overly vague.

The benchmark S&P 500 has surged 10 percent since Trump's Nov. 8 election, with optimism running high over the Republican administration's domestic proposals, including plans to reform taxes paid by businesses. But there have been few specifics so far, and some investors believe Trump may need to provide more than just generalities when he gives his first major presidential address tomorrow.

"If he comes out next week and there are little or no details other than that it is going to be great, that is going to be a time where we could have the first sort of crack in the armor," said JJ Kinahan, chief market strategist at TD Ameritrade in Chicago.

Trump has said enough so far to help propel major stock indexes to all-time highs. The

Dow Jones Industrial Average this week marked its longest run of consecutive record-high closing prices in 30 years. With stock valuations expensive, many market participants are bracing for a pullback. The S&P 500 is trading at nearly 18 times forward earnings estimates versus the long-term average of 15 times, according to Thomson Reuters data.

In Tuesday's speech, "the market wants to hear about concrete tax reform plans that have traction either across the Republican base or have the potential to reach across to moderate Democrats," said Alan Gayle, director of asset allocation with RidgeWorth Investments in Atlanta. "If the market begins to doubt Trump's ability to follow through on his promises, then I would think that we would see a 5 percent market correction fairly easily," Gayle said. Investors are also watching for hints about timing of Trump's economic plans. US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Thursday laid out an ambitious schedule to enact tax relief by August.

"The one thing that could stall this rally would be any sort of indication that we won't

see the bulk of the effects this year," said Bruce McCain, chief investment strategist at Key Private Bank in Cleveland. "I think that would take some of the air out of the enthusiasm."

Investors will also be listening for comments about the border adjustment tax being pushed by Congressional Republicans, about which Trump spoke positively in a Reuters interview on Thursday after having previously sent mixed signals. Ahead of Trump's address, the stock options market was not yet foreseeing a huge reaction to the speech, bracing for a move of 0.9 percent in either direction by Wednesday's close, according to pricing on at-the-money straddles on S&P 500 index options. Investors appeared to show comfort wading into the stock market, according to Lipper data released on Thursday, with US-based stock funds attracting \$2.7 billion in the latest weekly period, their fourth consecutive week of inflows. However, one high-profile investor, Jeffrey Ubben of activist investor ValueAct Capital, told Reuters on Wednesday that his firm had been taking money out of the capital markets as valuations have become overextended. —Reuters



**NEW YORK:** File photo shows the Wall Street entrance of the New York Stock Exchange. Global stocks fell Friday amid worries about the potential impact of US trade policies and as investors became more cautious about the market's recent rally. —AP



Most Active Stocks	Current Week ('000 Share)	Prev. Week ('000 Share)	Chng	% Total Mkt	YTD-Turnover	Price Stats - Weekly		
						Current	Prev.	Chng.
Ithmar Bank @	124,242	202,275	-38.6%	6.82%	39.3%	0.064	0.068	-5.9%
Abyaar Real Estate Dev. Co. @	112,635	223,968	-49.7%	6.19%	157.5%	0.034	0.038	-9.3%
Kuwait Remal Real Estate Co. @	107,302	80,598	33.1%	5.89%	118.5%	0.071	0.069	2.9%
Al Mudon International Real Estate Co. @	97,124	43,452	123.5%	5.33%	375.5%	0.051	0.062	-17.7%
Investors Holding Group @	77,046	145,533	-47.1%	4.23%	203.9%	0.030	0.033	-7.7%

Top 3 Losers	C. Mkt Cap	Pr. Mkt Cap	Change %	% Total Mkt	Price Stats - Weekly	
					Current	Previous
Kuwait Cable Vision	0.90	1.43	-36.84%	0.003%	0.030	0.048
Al Mudon International Real Estate Co. @	5.10	6.20	-17.74%	0.017%	0.051	0.062
Al-Themar International Holding Co.	99.93	114.82	-12.96%	0.341%	0.094	0.108

Top 3 Gainers	C. Mkt Cap	Pr. Mkt Cap	Change %	% Total Mkt	Price Stats - Weekly	
					Current	Previous
Real Estate Asset Management Co. @	39.19	26.13	50.00%	0.134%	0.375	0.250
Jeeran Holding Co. @	10.96	7.66	43.14%	0.037%	0.073	0.051
Gulf Franchising Holding Co. @	1.98	1.40	41.86%	0.007%	0.061	0.043

Stocks	Current Week	Previous Week	Chg.	% of MUDX	Weekly Volume	YTD-Gain
Boubyan Bank @	931.56	899.06	3.6%	11.3%	9,041,960	8.9%
Ahli United Bank @	762.24	753.58	1.1%	9.3%	547,630	7.3%
GFH Financial Group B.S.C @	532.55	528.04	0.9%	6.5%	3,045,515	40.5%
Kuwait Telecommunications Co. @	424.49	429.48	-1.2%	5.2%	551,504	-8.6%

# NEGATIVE SENTIMENTS DOMINATE KUWAIT MARKET

## KFH CAPITAL WEEKLY MARKETS REPORT

The KSE Indices witnessed a negative week as indices decreased this week. The KSE price index closed at 6,809.78 a decrease of 0.22 percent down 14.71 points compared to the previous week. As the MUDX witnessed an increase this week of 0.44 percent to close at 669.6 for the week. Furthermore, the market blue-chip index the KSX15 closed on a decrease of 3.23 points down 0.33 percent during the week to close at 971.66.

The reported weekly volumes were 1,820.73 million shares compared to 2,833.30 million shares in previous. Among the major contributors, the Financial Services Sector (contributing 28.68 percent) witnessed 522.15 million shares of trading compared to 898.91 million shares in the previous week, while Real Estate Sector (contributing 40.06 percent) witnessed 729.42 million shares of trading compared to 1,059.82 million shares in the previous week.

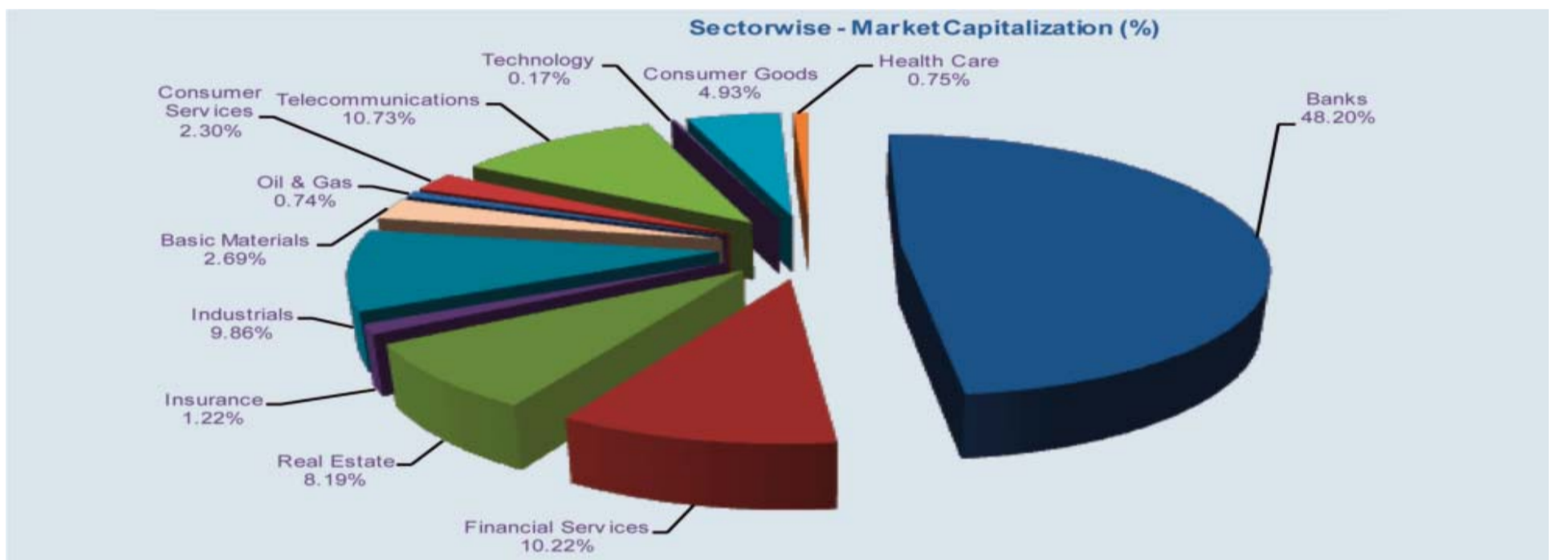
The overall market cap witnessed an increase this week as it stood at KD 29.30 billion down 0.6 percent on weekly basis. As for the blue chips, National Bank of Kuwait - NBK (Mcap - KD 4.17 billion) saw its market cap unchanged this week. However, Mobile Telecommunication Co - Zain (Mcap - KD 2.07 billion) saw its market cap decreased by 2.04 percent. Ahli United Bank - AUB (Mcap - KD 1.690 billion) saw it market cap increase by 7.83 percent.

On the total market breadth, Of the 56 Islamic Companies, 12 advanced while 34 declined during the week.

The Islamic universe market cap witnessed its market cap an decrease of 0.47 percent to close at KD 8,236 billion. The universe heavy-weights Kuwait Finance House - KFH (Mcap - KWD 3.249 billion) saw its market cap decrease by 1.59 percent during the week. However, Boubyan Bank (Mcap - KW 931.56 million) saw its market cap increase by 1.22 percent during the week. However, Kuwait Telecommunication Co. - VIVA (Mcap - KD 424.49 million) saw its market decrease by 1.16 percent during the week.

Weekly KSE Statistics				
Key Parameters	Current	Previous	Chg.	%
Volume (Million Share)	1,820.73	2,833.30	(1,012.57)	-35.7%
Value (KD Million)	183.75	282.37	(98.62)	-34.9%
Deals ('000)	38.19	52.89	(14.70)	-27.8%
Market Cap (KD Bln)	29.33	29.44	(0.12)	-0.4%

Market Movers			
Advance	Decline	Unchanged	Not Traded
50	90	23	16



## 2% INFLATION, A CALL TO ACTION?

**BRUSSELS:** US President Donald Trump's address to Congress may make the most headlines, but inflation readings of 2 percent could prove more significant economic events next week - a call to action perhaps in America and an important milestone in Europe.

The US consumer price index (CPI), published mid-Feb, has already shown prices rising at their fastest monthly pace in nearly four years in January and a year-on-year rate of 2.5 percent. However, the Fed has often emphasized the inflation measure for personal consumption expenditures (PCE) because of its wider range of goods and services. And that too is now seen climbing to 2 percent on its release on Wednesday.

Rob Carnell, chief international economist at ING, sees the release as pivotal, nudging more Federal Reserve Open Market Committee members, who next meet on March 14-15, to favour action as the excuse of low inflation disappears. "Their target inflation measure is hitting their longer-run objective and at that point, everybody should be waking up and saying: You know what, March is a live month," he said.

In a Reuters poll of primary dealers earlier this month, none expected the next rate hike to occur before the second quarter. According to minutes released on Wednesday, many Federal Reserve policymakers said it may be appropriate to raise interest rates again "fairly soon", taken by markets as implying a reduced chance of a March hike.

"The only thing they can point to is all the uncertainty around Trump. Well, the only uncertainty is how much stimulus he's going to deliver," said Carnell.

Trump will address Congress in a speech on Tuesday expected to include some details of his infrastructure spending and tax plans, which could include a new border tax on imports.

By contrast, the European Central Bank, whose Governing Council next meets on March 9, will more easily brush aside an inflation rate of 2.0 percent, the market consensus for February, with a core rate, excluding more volatile energy and unprocessed food components, seen stubbornly below 1 percent. Headline inflation in any case is unlikely to spiral higher.

Fabio Fois, European economist at Barclays, sees a "twin-peak" profile, with highs in April and September, boosted by rising airline, holiday, energy and food prices, before receding towards the core

level of around 1.2-1.3 percent by the end of 2018.

### Price impact on consumers heaviest in UK

If inflation fails to spur central banks, what of its effect on consumers, the main drivers of growth in Europe and the United States? US consumer sentiment is seen easing further from December's 15-year high, with stock markets more subdued after initial euphoria following Trump's election victory. The February figure due on Tuesday will give a first consumer assessment of Trump's turbulent first month in office and his possible impact on the economy. For the time being, rising inflation is not biting.

"Last year we got a bit of a boost from low oil prices. This year, it's more the nominal wage side, partly offset by higher oil prices," said Harm Bandholz, chief US economist at UniCredit.

In the euro zone's periphery, private consumption picked up with lower energy prices last year, with a reverse effect possible 2017. Among core countries, spending should stay healthy due to a strong labor market, wage increases and low interest rates, all factors that should be in place for the next year or two. So far, consumers have shrugged off political risk factors, such as the Dutch who vote on March 15 and the British after the Brexit vote. However, British inflation could start to be felt with the rate set to approach 3 percent by the end of the year due to the fall in sterling.

Christian Schulz of Citi, behind a paper entitled "UK consumption - the only way is down", sees food and energy inflation weakening consumer sentiment and driving up currently low savings rate.

Consumer sentiment data for February are due out on Tuesday. Retail sales were strong from June to November, but the boom came to an abrupt end in December and January, with UK retailers now raising prices at their fastest pace in almost six years.

Fuel price rises are felt immediately, but the full impact of the lower pound may take some time to feed through to inflation because of hedging, such as by airlines, and companies having stock from before. "We see it adding up to 2 percentage points per year," Schulz said, adding Citi views UK inflation as the biggest risk to consumption growth this year and next. —Reuters

## BREXIT CHURNS UNEASE FOR BRITAIN'S SPECIALITY CHEESE

**DYMOCK, United Kingdom:** In the rolling countryside of southwest England, farmer Charles Martell is tending to his rare breed of cattle while two of his dairy workers get to work making Single Gloucester cheese—a British delicacy. It has been two decades since Martell gained European Union protected status for his premium cheese, meaning it can only be made according to a pre-defined recipe and in a specific location.

Britain's impending EU exit puts that status at risk. "The reason I did it was because people were starting to make the cheese outside the county, and I thought: 'Clear off! It's not your cheese, go away,'" Martell told AFP, surrounded by his black brown Gloucester cows in the rural county of Gloucestershire on an icy February day.

Dozens of Britain's signature foods and drinks are expected to lose their special EU status with Brexit, leaving producers like Martell facing uncertainty over how to protect their businesses. From Cornish clotted cream to Scottish wild salmon, Scotch whisky and Stilton cheese, Britain boasts 77 products which are part of the same EU scheme as French Champagne and Italy's Prosciutto di Parma ham.

The EU stamp means consumers know they are getting the genuine article. According to the European Commission, such items sell for an average 2.3 times more than a similar but non-authenticated item, while producers can additionally apply for EU funding to promote their products.

### EU labor

Martell, who supports Britain leaving the EU, said his main motivation for getting the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) label was to protect Single Gloucester, which he revived in 1976 with the help of a local recipe from 1931. The full-fat hard cheese, which originated in the county more than 200 years ago, can only be made on Gloucestershire farms that have a herd of Old Gloucester cows.

The early days saw Martell hand-milking three cows and selling cheese at a local market.

He now exports to 30 countries. His business relies on the expertise of a Romanian cowherd and the skills of his Polish and Bulgarian cheesemakers, whose right to live and work in Britain will also be affected by Brexit—a major concern for many farmers.

Martell said his Romanian employee has cow-milking experience from his home country that is not often found among young British jobseekers.

British farmers have voiced concerns about being able to attract local staff if Brexit restricts their ability to hire seasonal and permanent EU workers. "I'm sure we'll find a way to reach Europe anyway" even without the PDO label, Bulgarian Daniela Welch told AFP. She has been



**DYMOCK:** An Old Gloucester cow, whose milk is used in the production of Single Gloucester, is seen on Charles Martell and Sons Ltd's farm in Dymock, Gloucestershire, south west England. —AFP

producing Single Gloucester for Martell for more than 13 years.

Even before the sun is yet up, Welch and her colleague don white overalls with matching rubber boots to begin transforming the cow's milk into hard cheese wheels. They are then stored while they develop a mouldy rind ready to be sold.

### 'Hugely important'

Meanwhile, producers of Newmarket Sausages in eastern England said they had sought a slightly different EU label of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) to distinguish their brand after copies claiming to be the traditional pork and herb recipe started popping up on the market.

Grant Powter, whose family has been making the sausages since the 1880s, told AFP that the designation was "hugely important" for food safety and authenticity as well as helping exports.

In the town of Newmarket, after which the sausages were named, another family butcher's, Musk's, established in the same decade, also got the regional speciality status to shield itself from imitation, said the company's Edward Sheen. "Until Article 50 has been triggered it's all slightly up in the air," Sheen said in a telephone interview, referring to the formal process to begin Brexit negotiations.

### 'Great food nation'

Britain's agriculture ministry has not yet outlined a program to replace the EU scheme after Britain leaves the bloc. However, a ministry spokeswoman told AFP that "these products are extremely important to our reputation as a great food nation and we will work to ensure they continue to benefit from protection in the future."

Martell said he believed the British government would act to help protect regional foods from imitations. "I can't believe the government won't do something, a British version of it... They'd be crazy not to." The Gloucester area voted to leave the EU in the June referendum, which saw 52 percent of voters nationwide supporting Brexit.

"I did vote and I value our sovereignty," Martell said of the referendum, adding he hoped Brexit would lead to greater environmental protection and end the subsidy system for large farms.

"I think there's much too much subsidy given keeping the big farms big," he said. Martell said he was concerned that farming may not be one of parliament's top priorities in negotiations with Brussels on the terms of Britain's future EU relations, expected to start this year. "They've got a hell of a lot to do; they've got 40 years of EU to undo. I don't think we'll be that high on the list." —AFP



—Photos by Joseph Shagra



# AL-SAYER AIMS FOR CUSTOMER CONVENIENCE FIRST

MOHAMED NASER AL-SAYER OPENS NEW LICENSING DEPT WITH MOI TO OBTAIN CAR NUMBER PLATES

**KUWAIT:** Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer (MNSS), one of the Al-Sayer Group Holding Companies held an opening ceremony to announce the opening of the new licensing department for customers to obtain car number plates at Al-Rai showroom. The event was held under the patronage of The Interior Assistant Undersecretary of the Citizenship and Passports Affairs General Sheikh Mazen Jarrah Al-Subah, in the presence of VIP delegates from Ministry of Interior General Fahd Al-Shuwai, General Adib Al-Swaidan, General Ali Al-Moauali and General Yakoub Al-Yasin.

The event hosted by Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer was also attended by Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer CEO Al-Sayer Group Holding, Bengt Kurt Schultz Chief Operating Officer, Abdullah Saleh Alshuwaie Senior Manager Customer Relations and Legal Representative along with representatives from Toyota Group Sales and Marketing team.

Speaking on the occasion Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer CEO Al-Sayer Group Holding said "I take this opportunity to thank the traffic department for their support to introduce this special service to our customers. This occasion reflects the cooperation between Ministry of Interior and the private sector. Such service will definitely add convenience for customers and help drive customer satisfaction."



The authorized licensing department at Toyota Al-Rai showroom will provide registered number plates for the purchase of new cars from Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and car dealerships in Kuwait. The operations and the customer relations team at Al-Sayer will continue to focus on offering great customer experience

and excellent customer satisfaction. "Al-Sayer in this regard has been a leader in initiating new customer centric services and solutions, commencing operations of the first ever traffic department at Al-Rai showroom during April 2002 is a testimony of this approach. I also take this opportunity to

thank everyone involved who have worked towards making this opening event of the licensing department a great success" Mubarak Al-Sayer added.

Brigade Adib Al-Swaidan, Director General of General Directorate of Service Centers, on behalf of Ministry of Interior and Brigade Shaikh Mazen Jarrah Al-Subah, Interior Assistant Undersecretary for Citizenship and Passports Affairs, highlighted "the importance of joint cooperation, with Private Sector, for Ministry of Interior as it proved its excellence and its ability to facilitate transactions for citizens and expatriates in State of Kuwait which gave it a distinctive remarkable position among GCC and Middle East for providing exceptional services. He extended his appreciation to the unknown soldiers headed by Hashem Dashti, Supervisor of Automotive Agencies Offices, who facilitate the communication between Ministry of Interior and Private Sector".

Brigade Fahd Al-Shuwai, Assistant Undersecretary of Traffic Affairs and Director General of the General Directorate of Traffic, thanked the private sector specially for facilitating the area and spaces required for the opening of Ministry of Interior Service Center to issue plate numbers for vehicles.

Brigade Eng. Ali Al-Moauali, Director General of General Directorate of Information

Systems commented: "Providing service centers for plates outside the official offices of Ministry of Interior is exceptional, therefore there should be a double effort to facilitate and provide such special services in cooperation with private sector.

Brigade Yakoub Al-Yasin, Director General of Automotive Agents Union concluded the speeches saying: "On behalf of Automotive Agents Union, I extend my sincere thanks for the continues cooperation between the Ministry of Interior and Public Sector which is confirmed today through the cooperation between the Ministry and MNSS, exclusive dealer of Toyota and Lexus brands in Kuwait, by opening the new service center for instant delivery of plates numbers at the location of Toyota Al Sayer Company in Al-Rai area."

Al-Sayer Group presented with representatives from Ministry of Interior and MNSS, presented to the leaders of all departments in Ministry of Interior and to everyone participated in this successful achievement. Opening press conference was concluded by ribbon cutting ceremony of the new center in the presence of Ministry of Interior and MNSS representatives. The event was attended by a number of Ministry of Interior and Automotive Agents Union representatives in addition to press and media representatives.

# OOREDOO KUWAIT ATTENDS WMC IN BARCELONA

OOREDOO GROUP PAVILION WILL HOST ALL-NEW 5G, SMART STADIUM AND SMART CITY DEMOS

**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo, Kuwait's fastest network, will participate in the World Mobile Congress in Barcelona, which starts today. Ooredoo Kuwait will be present there with Ooredoo Group, which announced earlier that it will showcase next-generation solutions and services on its pavilion, demonstrating the



Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Thani

incredible progress the group's companies have made in recent years.

Ooredoo Kuwait's delegation will be headed by General Manager and CEO Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Thani, and includes a number of the company's top management representatives. Commenting on participating in the event, Al-Thani said: "We're eager to participate in such a prestigious event, which witnesses the most important presentations in the telecom industry. Our participation stems from our deep-rooted beliefs of caring, connecting and challenging. We are also happy to meet some of our most important clients during this event, to reiterate our joint efforts and partnership for a better telecom world."

The company is pushing to become a data experience leader across its footprint in the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia, and each of its operations has made major progress in modernising their networks and enhancing the range of content and apps available for customers. Ooredoo now provides 4G services to eight out of ten of its markets and advanced fixed line services in six operations.

Ooredoo's enhanced network infrastructure has enabled the company to introduce a range of innovative services and conduct cutting-edge network research, and visitors to its pavilion at the Mobile World Congress will be among the first to see the results of this work.

Sheikh Saud bin Nasser Al-Thani, Group CEO, Ooredoo Group, said: "The Mobile World Congress is one of the biggest events in the industry calendar and a chance for us to showcase our solutions as well as collaborate with a host of companies from around the world. Ooredoo is a data experience leader, and this event enables us to show the incredible progress we have made and the benefits we are delivering for our customers."

One of the prime areas of focus will be Ooredoo's research into 5G technology, which will provide the enhanced speeds and improved latency necessary to deliver next generation mobile technologies.

As part of its participation in Mobile World Congress, Ooredoo will take visitors on a journey from the days of voice and text through to the super-connected era of 4.5G and 5G now made possible by Ooredoo's advanced Supernet technologies. Using a special video demonstration of 5G-enabled robotics,



Ooredoo will show the faster and smoother performance of Ooredoo 5G and the potential for Internet of Things applications, with the reduced latency and high-speed network enabling real-time communication between machines.

Joining next-generation and lifesav-

ing technology together, Ooredoo will also premier its 'Ooredoo Rescue' concept. Using pioneering drone technology Ooredoo aims to enable Coast Guards to respond faster and more accurately to emergencies by providing a live video feed of the situation remotely and deploying an emergency raft via the

drone. The Ooredoo Rescue solution includes a host of stations on a series of made-to-order buoys that are anchored around the coast. Each buoy is equipped with cameras, powered by solar technologies that can monitor the seas in real-time.

These then feed through to the control centre of the Coast Guard, who are trained in emergency response best practices. Piloted by trained professionals in the Coast Guard control centre, the drones communicate remotely via video feed over Ooredoo's world-class 4G Supernet. The new Ooredoo Rescue solution focuses on getting a drone carrying a life raft to the person in need in the fastest time possible, to allow them to hold on to the floatation device until human aid can reach them.

Ooredoo will also present a broad range of mobile health solutions, including 'You Click, We Care', which brings advance medical monitoring and interaction straight to the home. Patients with chronic diseases can receive full medical attention from professionals with just one click on a mobile device, while advanced monitoring and alerting algorithms enable doctors to intervene as required before an emergency situation.

With Qatar set to host some of the world's largest sporting events in the coming years, Ooredoo will include a section on its pavilion covering Smart Sports Venue Management. One of the highlights in this area will be Ooredoo Smart Stadium, a centralised solution for stadium management that controls security, connectivity, identity management, and access control, enabling teams to effectively manage large-scale events using enhanced predictive models, business intelligence and real-time monitoring.

In addition, Ooredoo will demonstrate the latest in Content Innovation services, where 2D and 3D coverage of matches can be broadcast to fan zones and directly to people's homes within a fully-interactive virtual reality ecosystem.

Highlighting its growing cyber security portfolio across its footprint, Ooredoo will also showcase a live demonstration of security solutions available for businesses, to exhibit the real-time capabilities of Ooredoo's cyber-security technology.

Ooredoo's next generation Security Operations Centre uses machine learning, behaviour analytics and in-built threat intelligence to provide customers with a proactive defensive barrier to tackle a full range of cyber-threats.

Smart City and Internet of Things (IoT) technology will also be on display, with Indosat Ooredoo showing the benefits of all things 'digital' with their comprehensive solutions portfolio from Indonesia, showcasing everything from smart lighting and waste management, to education and future library options.

Ooredoo's Smart City vision aims to create urban areas that enrich people's everyday lives and enable them to fulfil their aspirations through efficient and sustainable services. From intelligent traffic to connected homes, from smart metering to natural disaster response, Ooredoo's Smart City platform is the centre of operations for all smart solutions and City Management Systems. The Ooredoo stand at Mobile World Congress will take visitors through an example of how innovative IoT services enable faster responses in critical situations.

The Mobile World Congress 2017 will be held from 27 February to 2 March at Fira Gran Via in Barcelona, Spain.



BARCELONA: TCL Communication's CEO Nicolas Zibell presents the new BlackBerry Key one at the Mobile World Congress centre in Barcelona.

## PRIVATE DATA LEAKED ONLINE BY CLOUDFLARE BUG

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Internet users Friday were being urged to change all their passwords in the wake of a Cloudflare bug that could have leaked passwords, messages and more from website visits. A Cloudflare service used by millions of websites to enhance security and performance said that it had fixed the flaw quickly after being alerted a week ago by Google researcher Tavis Ormandy.

"It turned out that in some unusual circumstances, our edge servers were running past the end of a buffer and returning memory that contained private information such as HTTP cookies, authentication tokens, HTTP POST bodies, and other sensi-

tive data," Cloudflare chief technology officer John Graham-Cumming said in a blog post. "And some of that data had been cached by search engines."

Essentially, sensitive data intended to be temporarily stored overflowed "buffering" memory space and was then tucked into more exposed spots such as web pages that could then be captured by online search engines, according to descriptions of the bug. "We fetched a few live samples and we observed encryption keys, cookies, passwords, chunks of POST data and even HTTPS requests for other major Cloudflare-hosted sites from other users," Ormandy said in an online post about the flaw. —AFP

## CISCO INTRODUCES NEXT-GENERATION FIREWALL

**Dubai:** Cisco (NASDAQ: CSCO) takes on security bottlenecks, with the introduction of the Cisco Firepower 2100 Series Next-Generation Firewall (NGFW). The 2100 series is designed for businesses that perform high volumes of sensitive transactions, such as banking and retail, and supports their need to maintain uptime and protect critical business functions and data. The series aims to end the industry tug of war between performance and protection - with incorporation of a new scalable architecture and improvements of up to 200 percent greater throughput to eliminate bottlenecks - from the Internet edge to the data center.

Cisco also is simplifying management of business' security portfolios from device to the cloud with productivity and threat defense enhancements to tools that match their needs. These include Cisco Firepower Device Manager for on-box requirements, Cisco Firepower Management Center for centralized security management needs, and Cisco Defense Orchestrator for cloud-based management. "The Cisco Next-Generation Firewalls have been proven to be the most effective on the market, but we also know that businesses everywhere are struggling with a number of factors, including lack of talent and expanding attack surfaces, which can impact the effectiveness of even the best solutions."

The New Cisco Firepower 2100 Series addresses these challenges, making it easier for enterprises to manage their architecture and ensure that they have the best performance at all times," said Scott Manson, Cyber Security Leader for Middle East and Turkey, Cisco. As businesses increasingly move to digital business models, cybersecurity solutions must scale to add new functions and address the latest vulnerabilities and threats without impacting application or network performance. Traditionally, this has not been the case. In fact, it is common that enabling intrusion inspection on a NGFW can slow throughput performance by up to 50 percent or more.

This can have a significant impact on customer-facing web applications, such as e-commerce and online banking, which require top performance but also are often targeted by attackers. To ensure the best possible customer experience, some businesses turn off critical security capabilities putting themselves and customers at risk.

Proven Protection and Performance  
The new Cisco Firepower 2100 Series provides businesses with the confidence to pursue new digitization opportunities, knowing they have a security architecture designed to protect against the greatest threats, without affecting the performance of critical business functions. As the industry's first architecture with dual multi-core CPU complexes that accelerate key cryptographic, firewall, and threat defense functions, the 2100s are pur-

Scott Manson, Cisco Cyber Security Leader for Middle East and Turkey

pose-built to meet customers' ongoing protection and performance needs without compromise.

The Cisco Firepower 2100 Series delivers up to 200 percent greater throughput than similarly priced offerings, even when threat inspection is turned on. The new Cisco Firepower 2100 Series NGFW is a family of four threat-focused NGFW security platforms (2110, 2120, 2130, and 2140) that deliver throughput ranges from 1.9-8.5 Gbps, for enterprise use cases from the Internet edge to the data center. Each delivers Cisco's renowned reliability for network uptime and twice the port density with 10 GBE connectivity in a compact 1RU design.

### Simple, Effective Management

High-profile breaches have illustrated that management can be the Achilles heel of protection. Misconfiguration and missed alerts pose challenges for security teams as noted in the Cisco 2017 Annual Cybersecurity Report. To combat this, Cisco has enhanced local, centralized, and cloud-based management tools that allow customers to streamline operations and more cost-efficiently address unique enterprise user requirements. Firepower Device Manager: Features an on-box web-based interface to deploy Cisco Firepower NGFW devices in minutes, with the use of a guided set-up wizard.

Firepower Management Center (FMC): Enables simple and comprehensive security administration of multiple appliances. New FMC appliances offer a 50 percent increase in management scalability over previous models. Further simplifying and improving protection, the FMC enables users to automate security tasks, including assessment, tuning, correlation, containment and remediation. With the Cisco Threat Intelligence Director (TID), using industry standards FMC can now also automatically take in and correlate third-party and customer-specific threat intelligence providing additional defense via security sensors on your network.

Cloud Defense Orchestrator: Delivers simple, cloud-based policy management. This tool allows teams to streamline and scale security policy management, designing and deploying policy uniformly across an organization. CDO now offers support for Web Security Appliance v.11 and is now available via a European cloud.

# CHINA'S TCL BRINGS BACK PHYSICAL KEYBOARD IN NEW BLACKBERRY

## TCL TRIES TO REKINDLE BLACKBERRY'S STRONG REPUTATION

**BARCELONA:** Chinese electronics company TCL unveiled Saturday its first BlackBerry-licensed smartphone which brings back the device's signature physical keyboard as it seeks to revive the once mighty brand. The KEYone phone has a larger screen than previous BlackBerry devices and a fast charging battery as TCL sets its sights on businesses and tries to rekindle BlackBerry's strong reputation for productivity and security.

TCL reached the brand-licensing deal in December after the Canadian company announced that it would halt in-house production of smartphones, marking the end of an era for the once-dominant tech firm. Under the agreement, BlackBerry will remain in control of software and security on smartphones, while TCL will handle creating handsets powered by Google Android software. Officials from both firms unveiled the KEYone in Barcelona in northeastern Spain ahead of the start today of the four-day Mobile World Congress, the world's largest annual phone expo.

BlackBerry worked closely with TCL to build security into the new device, said Alex Thurber, the general manager of BlackBerry's mobility solutions unit. "At BlackBerry we live and breathe security. Security has been engineered into the entire manufacturing process, throughout the hardware and of course the software," he said. BlackBerry's physical keyboard was one of the drivers of the popularity of its earlier phones but it was dropped once

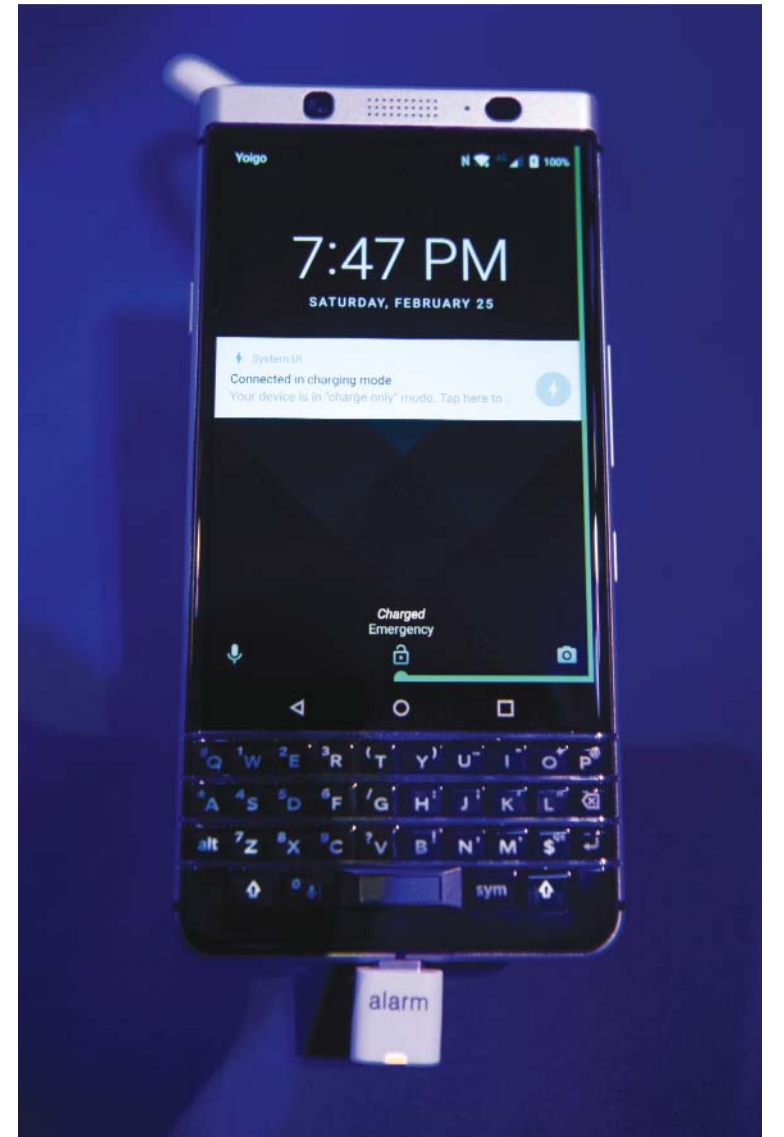
touch screens became popular.

### Beginning of a new story

The company in 2014 launched a "Classic" smartphone that brought back the keyboard but the device was discontinued in July. In the new BlackBerry phone the keyboard can be used for more than just typing. The spacebar on the keyboard also doubles as a fingerprint sensor while individual letter keys can be programmed as shortcuts to open specific apps. The KEYone will go on sale around the globe in April at a cost of 599 euros (\$549).

"The new BlackBerry portfolio has a chance of success, because few companies now offer BlackBerry-style design and features, and the productivity-focused smartphone segment is underserved," said Ian Fogg, head of mobile at research firm IHS. "Even if BlackBerry's smartphone share remains so low it is hard to quantify, the vast scale of the smartphone market-over 1.5 billion units will ship in 2017 — means even a tiny share would represent significant unit volumes and revenues," he added.

TCL said it would be coming out with new BlackBerry products later this year. "What we are unveiling today is just the beginning of a new story," said TCL chief executive Nicolas Zibell. BlackBerry once dominated the smartphone market but its luster faded after the introduction in 2007 of the Apple iPhone and the large number of low-cost Android devices that followed.—AFP



BARCELONA: The new BlackBerry Key one is displayed at the Mobile World Congress centre in Barcelona. —AFP photo

# SHARP VISION: NEW GLASSES HELP THE LEGALLY BLIND SEE

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Jeff Regan was born with underdeveloped optic nerves and had spent most of his life in a blur. Then four years ago, he donned an unwieldy headset made by a Toronto company called eSight. Suddenly, Regan could read a newspaper while eating breakfast and make out the faces of his co-workers from across the room. He's been able to attend plays and watch what's happening on stage, without having to guess why people around him were laughing. "These glasses have made my life so much better," said Regan, 48, a Canadian engineer who lives in London, Ontario.

The headsets from eSight transmit images from a forward-facing camera to small internal screens - one for each eye - in a way that beams the video into the wearer's peripheral vision. That turns out to be all that some people with limited vision, even legal blindness, need to see things they never could before. That's because many visual impairments degrade central vision while leaving peripheral vision largely intact. Although eSight's glasses won't help people with total blindness, they could still be a huge deal for the millions of people whose vision is so impaired that it can't be corrected with ordinary lenses.

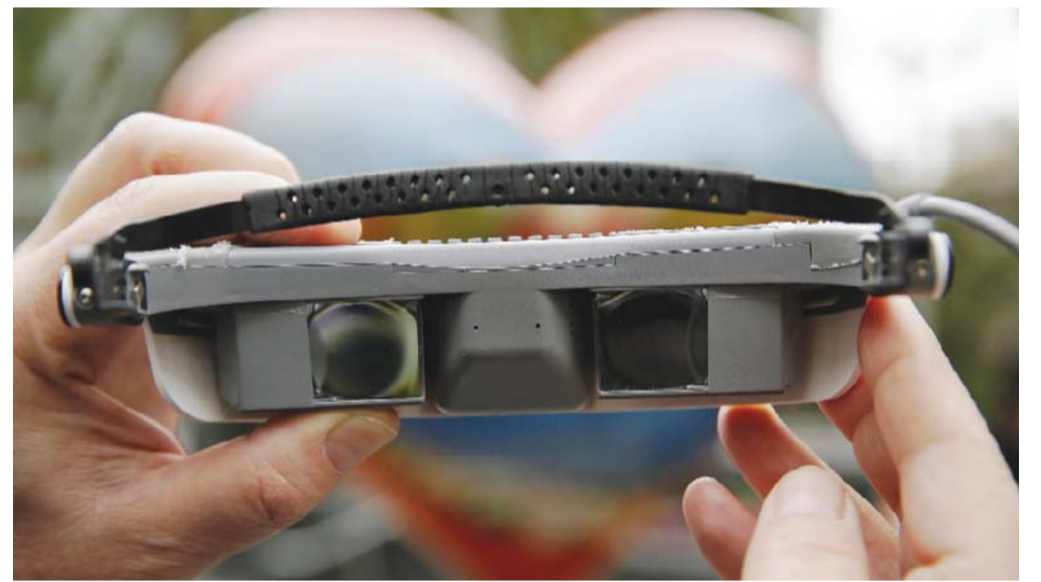
### Eye test

But eSight still needs to clear a few minor hurdles. Among them: proving the glasses are safe and effective for the legally blind. While eSight's headsets don't require the approval of health regulators - they fall into the same low-risk category as dental floss - there's not yet firm evidence of their benefits. The company is funding clinical trials to provide that proof. The headsets also carry an eye-popping price tag. The latest version of the glasses, released just last week, sells for about \$10,000. While that's \$5,000 less than its predecessor, it's still a lot for people who often have trouble getting high-paying jobs because they can't see.

Insurers won't cover the cost; they consider the glasses an "assistive" technology similar to hearing aids. eSight CEO Brian Mech said the latest improvements might help insurers overcome their short-sighted view of his product. Mech argues that it would be more cost-effective for insurers to pay for the headsets, even in part, than to cover more expensive surgical procedures that may restore some sight to the visually impaired.

### New glasses

The latest version of eSight's technology, built with investments of \$32 million over the past decade, is a gadget that vaguely resembles the visor worn by the blind "Star Trek" character Geordi La Forge, played by LeVar Burton. The third-generation model allows wearers magnify the video feed up to 24 times, compared to just 14 times in earlier models. There's a hand control for adjusting brightness and contrast. The new glasses also come with a more powerful high-definition cam-



SAN FRANCISCO: In this photo, eSight CEO and President Brian Mech holds up a pair of electronic glasses at Union Square San Francisco.

era. eSight believes that about 200 million people worldwide with visual acuity of 20/70 to 20/1200 could be potential candidates for its glasses. That number includes people with a variety of disabling eye conditions such as macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, ocular albinism, Stargard's disease, or, like Regan, optic nerve hypoplasia. So far, though, the company has sold only about 1,000 headsets, despite the testimonials of wearers who've become true believers.

Take, for instance, Yvonne Felix, an artist who now works as an advocate for eSight after seeing the previously indistinguishable faces of her husband and two sons for the first time via its glasses. Others, ranging from kids to senior citizens, have worn the gadgets to golf, watch football or just perform daily tasks such as reading nutrition labels.

### Eying the competition

eSight isn't the only company focused on helping the legally blind. Other companies working on high-tech glasses and related tools include Aira, OrCam, ThirdEye, NuEyes and Microsoft. But most of them are doing something very different. While their approaches also involve cameras attached to glasses, they don't magnify live video. Instead, they take still images, analyze them with image recognition software and then generate an automated voice that describes what the wearer is looking at - anything from a child to words written on a page.

Samuel Markowitz, a University of Toronto professor of ophthalmology, says that eSight's glasses are the most versatile option for the legally blind currently available, as they can improve vision at near and far distances, plus everything in



SAN FRANCISCO: In this photo, Yvonne Felix wears eSight electronic glasses and looks around Union Square during a visit to San Francisco. —AFP photos

between. Markowitz is one of the researchers from five universities and the Center for Retina and Macular Disease that recently completed a clinical trial of eSight's second-generation glasses. Although the results won't be released until later this year, Markowitz said the trials found little risk to the glasses.

The biggest hazard, he said, is the possibility of tripping and falling while walking with the glasses covering the eyes. The device "is meant to be used while in a stationary situation, either sitting or standing, for looking around at the environment," Markowitz said.—AP

# GOOGLE ROLLS OUT AI TOOL TO COMBAT ONLINE TROLLS

**PARIS:** Google said it will begin offering media groups an artificial intelligence tool designed to stamp out incendiary comments on their websites. The programming tool, called Perspective, aims to assist editors trying to moderate discussions by filtering out abusive "troll" comments, which Google says can stymie smart online discussions. "Seventy-two percent of American internet users have witnessed harassment online and nearly half have personally experienced it," said Jared Cohen, president of Google's Jigsaw technology incubator.

"Almost a third self-censor what they post online for fear of retribution," he added in a blog post on Thursday titled "When computers learn to swear." Perspective is an application programming interface (API), or set of methods for facilitating communication between systems and devices, that uses machine learning to rate how comments might be regarded by other users. The system, which will be provided free to media groups including social media sites, is being tested by The Economist, The Guardian, The New York Times and

Wikipedia. Many news organizations have closed down their comments sections for lack of sufficient human resources to monitor the postings for abusive content. "We hope we can help improve conversations online," Cohen said.

Google has been testing the tool since September with The New York Times, which wanted to find a way to maintain a "civil and thoughtful" atmosphere in reader comment sections. Perspective's initial task is to spot toxic language in English, but Cohen said the goal was to build tools for

other languages, and which could identify when comments are "unsubstantial or off-topic".

Twitter said earlier this month that it too would start rooting out hateful messages, which are often anonymous, by identifying the authors and prohibiting them from opening new accounts, or hiding them from internet searches. Last year, Google, Twitter, Facebook and Microsoft signed a "code of good conduct" with the European Commission, pledging to examine most abusive content signaled by users within 24 hours.—AFP



## GLOBAL WARMING IS SHRINKING RIVER VITAL TO 40M PEOPLE

**DENVER:** Global warming is already shrinking the Colorado River, the most important waterway in the American Southwest, and it could reduce the flow by more than a third by the end of the

century, two scientists say. The river's volume has dropped more than 19 percent during a drought gripping the region since 2000, and a shortage of rain and snow can account for only about

two-thirds of that decline, according to hydrology researchers Brad Udall of Colorado State University and Jonathan Overpeck of the University of Arizona.

In a study published last week in the journal *Water Resources Research*, they concluded that the rest of the decline is due to a warming atmosphere induced by climate change, which is drawing more moisture out of the Colorado River Basin's waterways, snowbanks, plants and soil by evaporation and other means. Their projections could signal big problems for cities and farmers across the 246,000-square mile basin, which spans parts of seven states and Mexico.

The river supplies water to about 40 million people and 6,300 square miles of farmland. "Fifteen years into the 21st century, the emerging reality is that climate change is already depleting the Colorado River water supplies at the upper end of the range suggested by previously published projections," the researchers wrote. "Record-setting temperatures are an important and underappreciated component of the flow reductions now being observed."

The Colorado River and its two major reservoirs, Lake Mead and Lake Powell, are already overtaxed. Water storage at Mead was at 42 percent of capacity Wednesday, and Powell was at 46 per-

cent. Water managers have said that Mead could drop low enough to trigger cuts next year in water deliveries to Arizona and Nevada, which would be the first states affected by shortages under the multistate agreements and rules governing the system. But heavy snow in the West this winter may keep the cuts at bay.

### Riverflow

Snowpack in the Wyoming and Colorado mountains that provide much of the Colorado River's water ranged from 120 to 216 percent of normal Thursday. For their study, Udall and Overpeck analyzed temperature, precipitation and water volume in the basin from 2000 to 2014 and compared it with historical data, including a 1953-1967 drought. Temperature and precipitation records date to 1896 and river flow records to 1906.

Temperatures in 2000-2014 were a record 1.6 degrees Fahrenheit above the historical average, while precipitation was about 4.6 percent below, they said. Using existing climate models, the researchers said that much decline in precipitation should have produced a reduction of about 11.4 percent in the river flow, not the 19.3 percent that occurred. They concluded that the rest

was due to higher temperatures, which increased evaporation from water and soil, sucked more moisture from snow and sent more water from plant leaves into the atmosphere.

Martin Hoerling, a meteorologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who was not involved in the study, questioned whether the temperature rise from 2000 to 2014 was entirely due to global warming. Some was likely caused by drought, he said. Udall said warming caused by climate change in this century will dwarf any warming caused by drought. He noted that during the 1953-1967 drought, the temperature was less than a half degree warmer than the historical average, compared with 1.6 degrees during the 2000-2014 period.

Udall said climate scientists can predict temperatures with more certainty than they can precipitation, so studying their individual effects on river flow can help water managers. Rain and snowfall in the Colorado River Basin would have to increase 14 percent over the historical average through the rest of the century to offset the effect of rising temperatures, he said. "We can't say with any certainty that precipitation is going to increase and come to our rescue," Udall said.—AP



**NEVADA:** In this file photo, a bathtub ring marks the high water mark as a recreational boat approaches Hoover Dam along Black Canyon on Lake Mead, the largest Colorado River reservoir, near Boulder City, Nevada. —AP

## CANADA CONSERVATIONIST WARNS OF CYBER POACHING

### TRACKING TAGS HACKED TO HUNT ENDANGERED ANIMALS

**OTTAWA:** Photographers, poachers and eco-tour operators are in the crosshairs of a Canadian conservationist who warns that tracking tags are being hacked and misused to harass and hunt endangered animals. Steven Cooke, a biology professor at Carleton University in Ottawa, says that the very tools used by scientists to study and protect animals and fish are being

publicly available because the research was publicly funded. Australian authorities have used tags to locate and cull sharks in India, attempts were made to hack the global positioning system (GPS) collars on endangered Bengal tigers in a case of "cyber poaching."

Cooke said that it is a new phenomenon and there is no data available to quantify this "troubling and

noted that natural history, ecology, conservation and resource management have all benefited from the use of electronic tagging technology. But if left unchecked, abuses could not only cause harm to animals, it could significantly hamper research. "Just think about all the weird ways that people might try to exploit this technology," Cooke said.

The idea for this research came

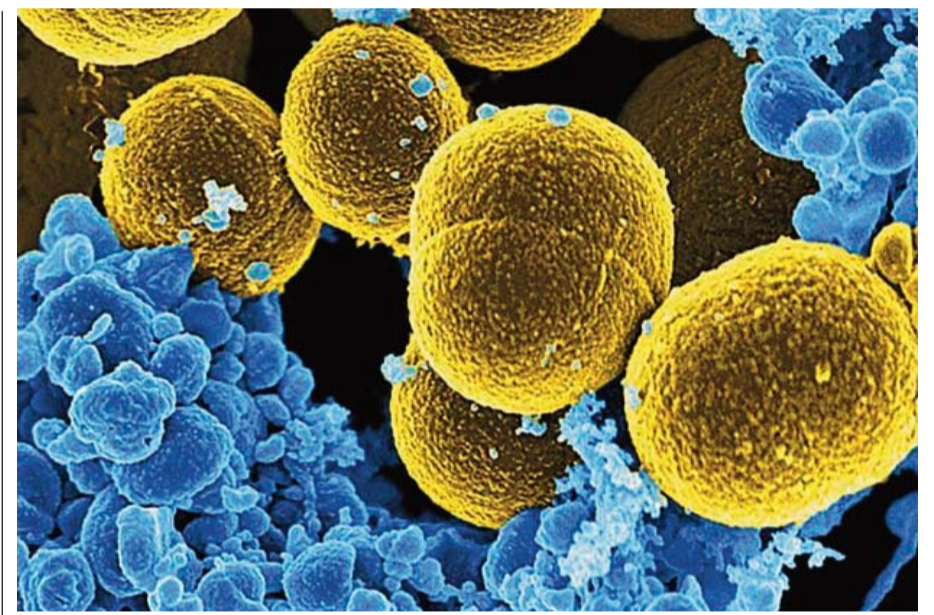
behavior and thus influence research findings, or lead to human-wildlife conflicts.

### Follow the ping

The tags, Cooke explained, send out pings that can be tracked with a cheap handheld radio receiver. "So you can stalk these animals in their natural environment, instead of waiting for them to wander over to you," he said. Following one tagged animal could also lead poachers to others in its group. Convincing scientists to restrict access to their data may prove problematic, Cooke acknowledged. "It runs counter to the open data movement," he said, describing the widespread use of social media and other outreach to share findings.

In some cases, researchers who receive government grants may be obligated to disseminate the information. Citing cases of US ranchers accused of trying to interfere with the reintroduction of wolves in Yellowstone National Park, and divers in the Bahamas who removed satellite tags from sharks, Cooke also warned about so-called "telemetry terrorism." There is potential for this if people oppose tagging. For example, some Canadian Inuit fear acoustic transmitters will scare away culturally important marine wildlife, and some park visitors have complained that tags distract from the "wilderness experience."

Where commercial interests conflict with conservation goals or where they overlap, there is also a risk. After the publication of his article Monday, Cooke said he received a call about a safari company that has been tagging animals in order to find them to show guests, rather than waiting patiently near watering holes hoping for wildlife to show up. Many eco-tour operators offer discounts if no wildlife is seen during a trip. "There's a pretty strong financial motivation for them to consistently find animals," Cooke commented.—AFP



**WASHINGTON:** This digitally colored microscope image provided by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) shows *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria in yellow. —AP

## ADDING FRIENDLY BACTERIA TO SKIN LOTION WARDS OFF BAD GERMS

**WASHINGTON:** Bacteria live on everyone's skin, and new research shows some friendly germs produce natural antibiotics that ward off their disease-causing cousins. Now scientists are mixing the good bugs into lotions in hopes of spreading protection. In one early test, those customized creams guarded five patients with a kind of itchy eczema against risky bacteria that were gathering on their cracked skin, researchers reported Wednesday. "It's boosting the body's overall immune defenses," said Dr. Richard Gallo, dermatology chairman at the University of California, San Diego, who is leading the work.

We share our bodies with trillions of microbes that live on our skin, in our noses, in the gut. This community - what scientists call the microbiome - plays critical roles in whether we stay healthy or become more vulnerable to various diseases. Learning what makes a healthy microbiome is a huge field of research, and already scientists are altering gut bacteria to fight diarrhea-causing infections. Wednesday's research sheds new light on the skin's microbiome - suggesting that one day it may be possible to restore the right balance of good bugs to treat skin disorders, too.

"It's a really important paper," said Dr. Emma Guttman-Yassky of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, who wasn't involved with the new research. "It does open a window for a potential new treatment." Healthy skin harbors a different mix of bacteria than skin damaged by disorders such as atopic dermatitis, the most common form of eczema. Those patches of dry, red, itchy skin are at increased risk of infections, particularly from a worrisome germ known as *Staphylococcus aureus*. Gallo's team took a closer look at how microbes in healthy skin might be keeping that bad staph in check.

### Wrong bacteria

They discovered certain strains of some protective bacteria secrete two "antimicrobial peptides," a type of natural antibiotic. In lab tests and on the surface of animal skin, those substances could selectively kill *Staph aureus*, and even a drug-resistant strain known as MRSA, without killing neighboring bacteria like regular antibiotics do, the team reported in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*. But those good bugs are rare in the skin of people with atopic dermatitis, Gallo said. "People with this type of eczema, for some reason that's not quite known yet, have a lot of bacteria on the skin but it's the wrong type of bacteria. They're not producing the antimicrobials they need," he explained.

Would replenishing the good bugs help? "They're normal skin bacteria, so we knew they would be safe," Gallo noted. His team tested five volunteers with atopic dermatitis who had *Staph aureus* growing on their skin's surface - what's called colonization - but didn't have an infection. Researchers culled some of the rare protective bacteria from the volunteers' skin, grew a larger supply and mixed a dose into an over-the-counter moisturizer. Volunteers had the doctored lotion slathered onto one arm and regular moisturizer on the other.

A day later, much of the staph on the treated arms was killed - and in two cases, it was wiped out - compared to the untreated arms, Gallo said. "We're encouraged that we see the *Staph aureus*, which we know makes the disease worse, go away," he said. The study couldn't address the bigger question of whether exposure to the right mix of protective bacteria might improve atopic dermatitis itself, cautioned Mount Sinai's Guttman-Yassky. Next-step clinical trials are underway to start testing effects of longer-term use.—AP



**AMBOSALI:** This file photo shows a herd of elephants walking in Amboseli National Park in Kenya. —AFP

hijacked to do just the opposite. Cooke, the Canada research chair of environmental science and biology, is the lead author of a paper published this week in the journal *Conservation Biology*.

The research paper cites the example of anglers in the US state of Minnesota who petitioned for access to data on northern pike movements, arguing that it should

unanticipated" problem. But he provides a broad range of anecdotal evidence in his scholarly article. Scientists are scheduled to meet in June in Australia to discuss the problem as well as potential fixes. In the meantime, Cooke is calling for encryption and strict rules to secure data and limit the use of telemetry tools for non-research activities.

In an interview with AFP, Cooke

during a family vacation last summer to Banff National Park in Canada. It was then that he learned that the park authority had imposed a public ban on VHF radio receivers after photographers used telemetry to track tagged animals. Canadian officials were concerned that the animals may be spooked, stressed or habituated to human interaction, which can alter their

## US BRACES FOR LONG BATTLE OVER GENETIC PATENT RIGHTS

**WASHINGTON:** The first skirmish was fought last week in what could be a long war over a revolutionary patent on gene-editing technology, with colossal amounts of money at stake. Facing off are the top international experts in the fast-growing field of gene-editing-pitting an American of Chinese origin, Feng Zhang, against the French-American duo of Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna.

The US Patent and Trademark Office ruled last Wednesday in favor of Zhang, who is a researcher at the Broad Institute, collaboration between Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After that decision, which stunned many scientific observers, Editas Medicine, a start-up linked to Broad, saw its stock soar.

Meanwhile, shares plummeted for companies that believed the patent rights would go to Charpentier and Doudna. The dispute mingles science and economics, with billions of dollars in contracts hanging in the balance.

Charpentier and Doudna "would be crazy not to appeal. The cost-benefit ratio demands it," said Jorge Contreras, an expert in genetics and intellectual property at the University of Utah. Charpentier, who is affiliated with the Max Planck Institute of Berlin, and Doudna of the University of California, Berkeley, have already won a \$3 million US Breakthrough Prize for their work and are widely believed to be in line for a Nobel Prize someday. They developed a tool called CRISPR-Cas9, which

experts say is revolutionizing the field of genetics the way word processors did for typewriters.

### Surgical scalpel

Their discovery, published in the prestigious journal *Science* in June 2012, sent shockwaves through scientific community. Much like a surgical scalpel, the technique allows the genome to be edited by clipping out a specific area of DNA and in some cases replacing it with new instructions. The breakthrough has opened up countless possibilities in the fields of health and agriculture. The French-American team filed for a patent in May 2012, describing how they used CRISPR with a simple type of bacteria.

Zhang applied CRISPR to cells with a nucleus, known as eukaryotes, an innovation that had the potential to broaden genetic editing to human cells. He published his research months after Charpentier and Doudna. Zhang also applied for a patent-following a fast-track procedure that was more costly than the route taken by Doudna and Charpentier-and won. Enter the legal battle, as UC Berkeley and the Broad Institute face off over the patent rights to a technology that has aroused both vast hopes and deep ethical concerns about its potential to forever alter species and ecosystems.

After a hearing in December, the US Patent Trial and Appeal Board of the USPTO announced last Wednesday that the patent application by the Broad Institute caused no "interference" with the larger

patent request by Berkeley, and Charpentier and Doudna. But the two women have not conceded defeat. Their Broad patent is "sufficiently distinct as to be separately patentable from the claims of the Doudna/Charpentier group's patent application, which cover the use of CRISPR-Cas9 in any setting, including eukaryotic cells and other cell types," said a statement from UC Berkeley.

### Tennis balls

Doudna used a sports metaphor to put Zhang's victory in context with what her group intends to seek. "They have a patent on green tennis balls; we will have a patent on all tennis balls," she told a press conference. Experts say that this outcome is a plausible one. "It is entirely possible that Berkeley will get broad claims covering all uses of CRISPR, while Broad's are limited to eukaryotes," said Contreras. "Thus, anyone wishing to use CRISPR (e.g., including agro uses), will need a license from Berkeley, while only uses involving eukaryotes will require both Berkeley and Broad." But Jacob Sherkow, an associate professor of law at the New York Law School, said in his view, Broad has obtained rights to the technology that are potentially very profitable and would exclude other competitors from the field when it comes to using CRISPR. Even if Berkeley did manage to receive broader rights to CRISPR, "the patent would be weak and wouldn't likely stand up to later challenges in court," he said.—AFP

## TALEBAN LEADER ENCOURAGES PEOPLE TO PLANT TREES

**KABUL:** Springtime in Afghanistan usually brings a spike in violence as the Taliban takes advantage of the thaw to launch a wave of fresh attacks. But the Taliban's leader has just issued a statement calling on Afghans to plant more trees. In a public letter issued yesterday in four languages, including English, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada said that, "the Mujahideen and beloved countrymen must join hands in tree planting."

The statement does point out that the Taliban remain, "actively engaged in a struggle against foreign invaders and their hirelings" - a reference to the Kabul government that the militant group seeks to overthrow. Shah Hussain Murtazawi, deputy spokesman for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, dismissed the statement as an attempt to "deceive public opinion" and distract from the Taliban's "crimes and destruc-

tion." "Since the establishment of the Taliban movement the only things that these people have in their minds are fighting, crimes and destruction," he said.

"How is it possible for the Taliban to think about planting trees or protecting the environment in the country?" Most of Afghanistan's big cities, including the capital Kabul, are over populated and there are few public green spaces or parks. According to officials from the Afghan Public Health Ministry, up to 4000 citizens die each year in Kabul due to illnesses brought on or exacerbated by air pollution. Wahid Muzhda, a political analyst in Kabul, said that announcements like this - and other statements where they claim to be building roads and bridges - could be part of a Taliban campaign to show that they would provide enlightened leadership in areas of the country that they control.—AP

## NASA MULLS PUTTING ASTRONAUTS ON DEEP SPACE TEST FLIGHT

**MIAMI:** The US space agency said Friday it is considering putting astronauts on an upcoming test flight of the deep space capsule Orion as it aims to orbit the Moon. Orion is being built with an eye to one day ferrying astronauts to Earth's neighboring planet, Mars, perhaps by the 2030s. Until now, the Orion test flight known as Exploration Mission 1 (EM-1) was scheduled for 2018 and was expected to be unmanned.

But NASA's acting administrator Robert Lightfoot asked on Feb 15 for the space agency to study the feasibility of putting people on board, and the findings of that study are expected in the coming months. "Our priority is to ensure the safe and effective execution of all our planned exploration missions with the Orion spacecraft and Space Launch System rocket," said Bill

Gerstenmaier, associate administrator for NASA's human exploration and operations mission directorate. The capsule will be propelled to space atop a rocket called the Space Launch System (SLS), which is currently being developed.

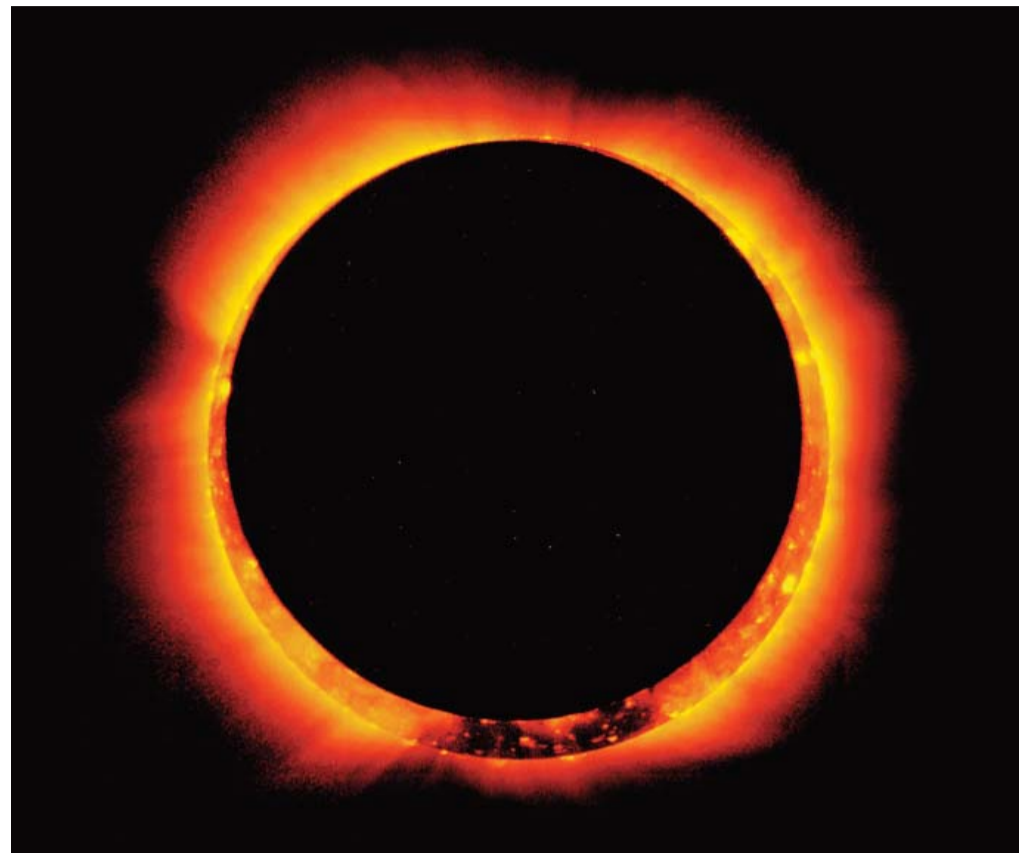
NASA has described it as the "most powerful rocket in the world." Orion will "fly farther than any spacecraft built for humans has ever flown," NASA added. The space capsule also aims to "stay in space longer than any ship for astronauts has done without docking to a space station and return home faster and hotter than ever before." The study is evaluating the pros and cons of adding two crew members, and could possibly delay the EM-1 mission until mid-2019. The current plan is to send astronauts on Orion's second flight, EM-2, an eight-day mission in 2021.—AFP

## STARGAZERS GATHER IN ARGENTINA FOR SOLAR ECLIPSE

**SARMIENTO:** Stargazers in Argentina and parts of Africa prepared to be plunged into darkness yesterday at the start of a spectacular solar eclipse. The "ring of fire" or annular eclipse will see the Sun all but disappear for one minute as the Moon crosses its path. It will be most visible in a 100-kilometer band cutting through Chile, Argentina, Angola, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Scores of astronomers and enthusiasts gathered yesterday morning in Sarmiento, southern Argentina, the point in the country where the eclipse was expected to be most visible.

"I have already seen six annular eclipses and each one was different," said Josep Masalles Roman, an enthusiast who came all the way from Barcelona in Spain. "This one is going to be very fine and it is possible that we will be able to clearly see Baily's Beads," a string of points of light produced as the sun's beams break through peaks on the moon's surface. An annular solar eclipse occurs when the Earth, Moon and Sun line up.

But even when perfectly aligned, the Moon is too far from Earth to completely block out the Sun, creating instead the impression of a fiery ring. The spectacle will reach Angola south of the town of Benguela around 1515 GMT, then move to Zambia and DR Congo just before the Sun sets and the light show ends. According to the Astronomical Society of Southern Africa (ASSA), the eclipse can be safely observed using a basic pinhole projector. Punch a tiny hole in a piece of paper with a sharp pencil, hold it into the Sun, and project the image onto a second sheet.—AFP



**IN SPACE:** In this handout provided by NASA, sun spots are seen as the moon moves into a full eclipse position after reaching annularity during the first annular eclipse seen in the US.—AFP

## BANGLADESH OPENS FIRST SOLAR-POWERED FOOD WAREHOUSE

**DHAKA:** Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated yesterday the country's first solar-powered food warehouse with a capacity of 25,000 tons of grain in the northern part of the country. The modernized, multi-storey warehouse was built with financial and technical support from Japan. Food silos are crucial for natural disaster-prone Bangladesh to keep stocks safe from water and other threats.

The world's fourth-biggest producer of rice, Bangladesh uses almost all of its production to feed its population of 160 million, and often needs imports to cope with shortages caused by natural calamities such as floods or droughts. Bangladesh imports around 4.5 million tons of wheat a year to meet growing demand, while the country's output has stagnated at about 1 million tons.—Reuters

## BEEES CAN LEARN TO ROLL A BALL FOR FOOD

**MIAMI:** Entice them with a sweet reward and bumblebees can be trained to roll a ball into a goal, revealing unexpectedly complex learning abilities for insect, researchers said Thursday. The findings in the US journal Science offer the first evidence that bees can learn a skill that is not directly related to their typical duties of foraging for food. Even more, bumblebees appeared to learn best by watching the behavior of other bees, and sometimes even improved on their predecessors' techniques.

Until now, the ability to learn how to solve a complex problem by reaching a goal was known to be possible in humans, primates, marine mammals and birds. But insects were not necessarily considered part of this elite group. "Our study puts the final nail in the coffin of the idea that small brains constrain insects to have limited behavioral flexibility and only simple learning abilities," said co-author Lars Chittka, a professor at Queen Mary University of London's School of Biological and Chemical Sciences.

### Exploring limits

Previous studies have shown bees could learn to pull on a string to get a food reward and perform other simple tricks, but these studies were limited in scope because the "learning processes involved might be used in tasks encountered by bees naturally," said the study. Researchers wanted to explore whether or not bees could learn to manipulate an object — in this case a small, yellow ball-unlike anything they knew in their daily lives.

"We wanted to explore the cognitive limits of bumblebees by testing whether they

could use a non-natural object in a task likely never encountered before by any individual in the evolutionary history of bees," said joint lead author Clint Perry, also of the QMUL School of Biological and Chemical Sciences. The bees were trained, one at a time, to roll the ball, which was about the same size as the bees themselves.

The ball had to be pushed to a specific target before a sugar solution would be awarded to the bee. Some bees were trained by observing a bee that had already learned the technique. Others were shown how by a hidden magnet beneath the platform which moved the ball. A third group received no instructions at all. The bees learned most efficiently from watching other bees, it turned out.

Sometimes, they even found better ways to get a treat, for instance by choosing one of a selection of balls that was already closer to the goal than the others, instead of picking the ball that was furthest away as the trainer bees consistently did. "The bees solved the task in a different way than what was demonstrated, suggesting that observer bees did not simply copy what they saw, but improved on it," said joint lead author Olli Loukola.

"This shows an impressive amount of cognitive flexibility, especially for an insect." But don't expect that bumblebee buzzing in your garden to be ready to join your football team just yet. "It may be that bumblebees, along with many other animals, have the cognitive capabilities to solve such complex tasks, but will only do so if environmental pressures are applied to necessitate such behaviors," Loukola said.—AFP

## THORNY SKATE WILL NOT BE ADDED TO ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

**PORTLAND:** The thorny skate's population may have declined, but not by enough to justify listing it under the Endangered Species Act, the federal government has ruled. Environmental groups had argued that the bottom-dwelling fish's population loss in the north-west Atlantic Ocean was consider-

able enough to afford it protections set aside for endangered animals. But the National Marine Fisheries Service disagrees.

Documents published in the Federal Register on Friday state that the fisheries service has concluded the thorny skate is "not currently in danger of extinction"

in all or a significant piece of its range. The service said the fish is also not likely to become in danger of extinction soon. The agency agreed with the petitioners that surveys of the skate have declined over time. Recent catch surveys show less than 5 percent of the peak they reached in the

1970s, the report stated. However, the skates "remain numerous throughout the greater portion of their range, numbering in the hundreds of millions," the report stated.

The thorny skate ranges from Greenland to South Carolina. Animal Welfare Institute and Defenders of Wildlife called on the federal government to offer the fish Endangered Species Act listing, which could've led to habitat protection or new fishing restrictions. The skates live in the Gulf of Maine, a key commercial fishing area, and the call to protect them generated some resistance from fishing groups. Tara Zuardo, an attorney for Animal Welfare Institute, said Saturday that the group is disappointed by the government's ruling, and disagrees that the skate is not being subjected to overfishing.

"Climate change and other factors continue to impact this species," Zuardo said. Fishermen have been prohibited from harvesting the thorny skate commercially since 2003. The fish are sometimes taken as bycatch in other fisheries, including by vessels that seek cod and some that seek other skates. Skates have commercial value as bait as well as food, with the meat frequently appearing as "skate wing" on menus. It tends to be a little less expensive to consumers than other kinds of fish.—AP



**PORTLAND:** This undated photo shows a thorny skate, a bottom-dwelling fish whose habitat in the north Atlantic Ocean ranges from Greenland to South Carolina.—AP

# CLINIC PAGE



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Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem  
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

استشاري أطفال  
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM



Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368



## AHMADI GOVERNORATE CELEBRATES NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS

Under auspices and with the attendance of Ahmadi Governor, Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Ahmadi governorate celebrated the National and Liberation days 2017 starting with Nuwaiseeb land border exit where GCC nationals arriving to celebrate the occasion in Kuwait were warmly welcomed with Kuwaiti flags and special gifts. Speaking on the occasion, Al-Sabah expressed his pleasure to receive brothers and sisters coming from neighboring GCC states to commemorate the occasion. Al-Sabah also hailed the efforts exerted by the organizing committee.



## KKIC OPENS 4TH ISLAMIC SEMINAR AND EXHIBITION

The 4th Islamic Seminar organized by Kuwait Kerala Islahi Center (KKIC) was inaugurated under the patronage of the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Mohammed Haif Al Mutairi, in Farwaniya on Thursday. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the minister stressed on the importance of the event for the propagation of the oneness of God, which is the central tenet of Islam, and in spreading awareness on the humanitarian aspect of the faith. Signs Visual Arcade, the 4-day exhibition, which was a part of the seminar, was inaugurated by the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, Sunil Jain.

The seminar and exhibition were underway from Feb 23 to 26 at a special venue, near the Farwaniya

Garden. The exhibition presents a variety of topics spanning man's life, death, hereafter, history, science and others through 3D models, posters and other mediums. Visually impactful presentations about the fast-spreading immoralities that are corrupting the society, in addition to documentaries on the scientific facts in the Quran and guidance and counseling counters are some of the main draws at the exhibition.

The exhibition boasted different pavilions, each under a specific theme such as "Islam, the Religion of Serenity" and "Afterlife, Fact or Fiction" among others. Speaking at the inauguration of the exhibition, the Indian Ambassador, Sunil Jain, stated that events of this nature will be useful in dispelling the

myths about Islam and presenting the peaceful and humanitarian nature of the faith to the world at large. The ambassador recalled his participation in the 3rd Islamic Seminar held two years ago, and said that he is glad to be part of the fourth one as well.

PN Abdul Lateef Madani, President of KKIC, lead the programs. KKIC General Convener, TP Abdul Aziz, delivered the welcome address at the seminar, and the conveners, Zakir Koilandi, Sunash Shukoor, Haroon Abdul Aziz, Dr. Ameer Ahmmad, Khaleel Adoor, Ibrahim Kunnil, O Abdul Khadar, AM Abdu Samad, CP Saleem, Abdu Rasheed Kuttamboor, Mujahid Balussery, Amin Swalahi, Zubair Firoshe and Jishad adorned the presidium.





Ahmed Al-Essa presenting the ceremony



Nasser Al-Arfaj during his speech



Adnan Al-Rashid delivering KJA speech



Honoring Dr. Najla Al-Faraj



Honoring Heba Al-Taweel



Honoring Anwar Al-Dhuwaih



Honoring PAAET's Fatima Al-Azmi



Honoring Nasser Al-Arfaj



A trophy for KJA



KJA chairperson with some trainees



KJA chairperson Fatima Hussein with lecturers and trainers. —Photos by Joseph Shagra

## KJA CONCLUDES ITS JOURNALISM TRAINING INITIATIVE 'SAHAFI'

In collaboration with ministry of state for youth affairs, Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) recently concluded its journalism training initiative held under the title of 'Sahafi'

(Journalist). Speaking on the conclusion ceremony, KJA chairperson, Fatima Hussein, stressed that KJA believes that training is more important than education, namely in journal-

ism where a journalists' skills develop through what he/she writes not only his/her knowledge. KJA's secretary, Adnan Al-Rashid thanked the former minister of information and minister of

state for youth affairs, Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud, ministry of state for youth affairs undersecretary, Shiekha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, PAAET and lecturers for their cooperation with KJA to

make the course a success. Ministry of state for youth affairs' PR manager and official spokesperson, Nasser Al-Arfaj said that the ministry is always keen on supporting such initiatives.



## IDEAL EDUCATION SCHOOL CELEBRATES NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS

The Ideal Education School for special needs recently celebrated Kuwait's National and Liberation Days. The ceremony was sponsored by the Gulf Bank and Cake and Bake and was attended by parents, dignitaries and MOE officials. The ceremony was also attended by Kuwait Investment Company's CEO, Bader Al-Asuba'ei, school principal, Nouri Al-Dawoud, Esra' Al-Habib from GB and Mesh'al Al-Enezi from Cake and Bake.



00:50 Gator Boys  
01:45 Call Of The Wildman  
06:49 River Monsters  
07:36 Going Ape  
08:00 Going Ape  
08:25 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101  
09:15 Biggest And Baddest  
10:10 Call Of The Wildman  
10:30 Call Of The Wildman  
11:05 Tanked  
12:00 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101  
12:55 Bondi Vet  
13:50 Wildest Arctic  
14:45 Wildest Arctic  
15:40 Growing Up... Polar Bear  
Ogban  
16:35 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert  
17:30 Wildest Europe  
18:25 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet  
19:20 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet  
20:15 Tanked  
21:10 Call Of The Wildman  
21:35 Call Of The Wildman  
22:05 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet  
23:00 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet  
23:55 Gator Boys

18:30 How Do They Do It?  
19:20 Running Wild With Bear Grylls  
20:10 Storage Wars Canada  
21:00 Gold Rush  
21:50 Everest Rescue  
22:40 Killing Fields



00:00 Famously Single  
01:00 Botched  
01:30 Live From The Red Carpet  
03:30 Red Carpet Rundown: Oscars 2017  
04:30 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian  
05:30 Fashion Bloggers  
06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
06:55 E! News  
07:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
10:10 E! News  
10:40 Celebrity Style Story  
11:10 Live From The Red Carpet  
13:10 Red Carpet Rundown: Oscars 2017  
14:05 Mariah's World  
15:00 E! News  
15:30 Celebrity Style Story  
16:00 Live From The Red Carpet  
18:00 Red Carpet Rundown: Oscars 2017  
19:00 Live From The Red Carpet  
21:00 So Cosmo



00:20 Time Team  
01:10 Pawn Stars  
01:35 Storage Wars  
03:15 American Pickers  
04:05 Pawn Stars  
04:30 Pawn Stars  
05:00 Mountain Men  
06:00 Alaska Off-Road Warriors  
06:50 Shipping Wars  
07:15 Shipping Wars  
07:40 Counting Cars  
08:05 Counting Cars  
08:30 Pawn Stars  
08:55 Pawn Stars  
09:20 Storage Wars: Best Of  
09:45 Storage Wars: Best Of  
10:10 American Pickers  
11:00 Billion Dollar Wreck  
11:50 Time Team  
12:40 Swamp People  
13:30 Ax Men  
14:20 Mountain Men  
15:10 Shipping Wars  
15:35 Shipping Wars  
16:00 Counting Cars  
16:25 Counting Cars  
16:50 Pawn Stars  
17:15 Pawn Stars  
17:40 Storage Wars  
18:05 Storage Wars  
18:30 Pawn Stars  
18:55 Storage Wars  
19:20 Mountain Men  
20:10 American Pickers  
21:00 The Curse Of Oak Island  
21:50 Hunting Hitler  
22:40 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle  
23:30 American Pickers



00:00 Private Chef  
01:00 Patricia Heaton Parties



00:10 Hank Zipzer  
00:35 Binny And The Ghost  
01:00 Violetta  
01:45 The Hive  
01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
02:40 Hank Zipzer  
02:55 Binny And The Ghost  
03:30 Violetta  
04:15 The Hive  
04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
04:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
05:10 Hank Zipzer  
05:35 Binny And The Ghost  
06:00 Violetta  
06:45 The Hive  
06:50 The 7D  
07:00 Jessie  
07:25 Jessie  
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts  
07:55 Rolling To The Ranks  
08:20 Elena Of Avalor  
08:45 Bunk'd  
09:10 Stuck In The Middle  
09:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place  
10:25 A.N.T. Farm  
10:25 Good Luck Charlie  
11:40 Good Luck Charlie  
12:05 Shake It Up  
12:30 Shake It Up  
12:55 Disney Mickey Mouse  
13:00 Welcome To The Ronks  
13:15 Gravity Falls  
13:40 Hank Zipzer  
14:05 Star Darlings  
14:10 Austin & Ally  
14:35 Jessie  
15:00 Bunk'd  
15:25 Kirby Buckets  
15:50 Rolling To The Ronks  
16:15 Sunny Bunnies  
16:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir  
16:45 Elena Of Avalor  
17:10 Stuck In The Middle  
17:35 Descendants Wicked World  
17:40 Girl Meets World  
18:05 Bizaardvark  
18:30 Bunk'd  
18:55 Best Friends Whenever  
19:20 Disney Mickey Mouse  
19:25 The Next Step  
19:50 Austin & Ally  
20:15 Star Darlings  
20:20 Shake It Up  
20:45 Backstage  
21:10 Liv And Maddie  
21:35 Cracked  
21:40 Dog With A Blog  
22:05 Best Friends Whenever  
22:30 Jessie  
22:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts



00:20 Henry Hugglemonster  
00:35 The Hive  
00:45 Loopdidoo  
01:00 Henry Hugglemonster  
01:15 Calimero  
01:30 Art Attack  
01:55 Zou  
02:05 Loopdidoo  
02:20 Henry Hugglemonster  
02:35 Calimero  
02:50 Zou  
03:05 Art Attack  
03:30 The Hive  
03:40 Loopdidoo  
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster  
04:10 Art Attack  
04:35 Loopdidoo



FORBIDDEN EMPIRE ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

20:00 PJ Masks  
20:30 PJ Masks  
21:00 Unbungalivable  
21:05 Goldie & Bear  
21:35 Miles From Tomorrow  
06:00 Danger Mouse S1  
06:25 Gravity Falls  
06:50 Atomic Puppet  
07:15 Star vs The Forces Of Evil  
07:25 Counterfeit Cat  
07:40 Supa Strikas  
08:10 K.C. Undercover  
08:35 Star Wars Freemaker  
09:00 Lab Rats  
09:25 Lab Rats  
09:50 Danger Mouse S1  
10:20 Supa Strikas  
10:45 Supa Strikas

08:25 Who On Earth Did I Marry?  
08:50 I Almost Got Away With It  
09:40 On The Case With Paula Zahn  
10:30 Blood Relatives  
11:20 Nightmare Next Door  
12:10 A Crime To Remember  
13:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?  
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It  
14:40 On The Case With Paula Zahn  
15:30 Blood Relatives  
16:20 Nightmare Next Door  
17:10 Evil Onie  
18:00 I Was Murdered  
18:50 I Almost Got Away With It  
19:40 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones  
20:30 Blood Relatives  
21:20 Nightmare Next Door  
22:10 Headline: Crime With Tamron Hall  
23:00 Obsession: Dark Desires  
23:50 How (Not) To Kill Your Husband



00:20 World's Deadliest  
01:10 Dead Or Alive  
02:00 Big Cat Games  
02:50 Maneater Manhunt  
03:45 Dr. Oakley: Yukon Vet  
04:40 Mission Critical  
05:35 Big Cat Games  
06:30 Maneater Manhunt  
07:25 Dr. Oakley: Yukon Vet  
08:20 Mission Critical  
09:15 World's Weirdest  
10:10 Bearhood  
11:05 World's Deadliest  
12:00 Queens From Below  
12:55 Queen Of The Chase  
13:50 Feast Of The Grizzly  
14:45 Polar Bear Invasion  
15:40 Wild Winter  
16:35 World's Weirdest: Animal Taboo  
17:30 Animal Intervention  
18:25 Feast Of The Grizzly  
19:20 Polar Bear Invasion  
20:10 Wild Winter  
21:00 World's Weirdest: Animal Taboo  
21:50 Animal Intervention  
22:40 Operation Sumatran Rhino  
23:30 Malaysia From Below



00:10 Wicked Tuna  
01:00 Cradle To Grave  
02:55 Mine Kings  
03:50 Wicked Tuna  
04:45 Big, Bigger, Biggest  
05:40 80s: The Decade That Made Us  
06:35 Apocalypse: The Battle Of Verdun  
00:15 The Haunted Mansion  
02:00 Pooh's Heffalump Movie  
03:30 Little Women  
05:30 Frankenweenie  
07:30 Pooh's Heffalump Movie  
09:00 Tarzan  
11:00 Frankenweenie  
13:00 Mickey, Donald, Goofy: The 3 Musketeers  
14:30 A Bug's Life  
16:30 Mars Needs Moms  
18:30 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of The Lost Gold  
20:30 Marvel's Iron Man & Captain America: Heroes United



00:10 Glamour Puds  
00:35 The Shelbourne  
01:00 Testing The Menu With Nic Watt  
01:25 Carnival Eats  
02:15 Glamour Puds  
02:40 One Man & His Campervan  
03:05 Home Strange Home  
03:55 The Wine Show  
04:45 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia  
05:10 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia  
05:35 Poh & Co  
06:00 Glamour Puds  
06:25 David Rocco's Dolce Vita  
06:50 Testing The Menu With Nic Watt  
07:15 Carnival Eats  
08:05 Glamour Puds  
08:30 One Man & His Campervan  
08:55 Home Strange Home  
09:45 The Wine Show  
10:35 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia  
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14:00 Miguel's Feasts  
14:30 One Man & His Campervan  
14:55 Home Strange Home  
15:50 The Wine Show  
16:45 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia  
17:15 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia  
17:45 Poh & Co  
18:10 David Rocco's Dolce Vita  
19:05 Home Strange Home  
20:00 The Wine Show  
20:50 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia  
21:15 Valentine Warner Eats



00:05 Destroyed In Seconds  
00:30 Science Of The Movies  
01:20 Science Of The Movies  
02:10 Dirty Jobs  
03:00 Dirty Jobs  
03:50 Ultimate Survival  
04:40 Ultimate Survival  
05:30 Ultimate Survival  
06:20 How It's Made  
06:40 How It's Made  
07:00 Kids vs Film  
07:25 Bear Grylls Survival School  
07:50 Bondi Vet  
08:40 How It's Made  
09:05 How It's Made  
09:30 Science Of The Movies  
10:20 Mythbusters  
11:10 Bondi Vet  
12:00 Ultimate Survival  
12:50 How It's Made  
13:15 How It's Made  
13:40 Dirty Jobs  
14:30 Mythbusters  
15:20 Unchained Reaction



STEP UP REVOLUTION ON OSN MOVIES HD

16:10 Kids vs Film  
16:35 Bear Grylls Survival School  
17:00 Baby Animals  
17:25 Baby Animals  
17:50 Pick A Puppy  
18:15 Pick A Puppy  
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds  
19:05 Destroyed In Seconds  
19:30 How It's Made  
19:55 How It's Made  
20:20 Mythbusters  
21:10 Baby Animals  
21:35 Baby Animals  
22:00 Pick A Puppy  
22:25 Pick A Puppy  
22:50 Destroyed In Seconds  
23:15 Destroyed In Seconds

01:30 Patricia Heaton Parties  
02:00 Chopped  
03:00 Food Network Star  
04:00 Guy's Grocery Games  
05:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin  
06:00 The Kitchen  
07:00 The Pioneer Woman  
08:00 Siba's Table  
09:00 Anna Olson: Bake  
10:00 The Kitchen  
11:00 The Pioneer Woman  
12:00 Siba's Table  
13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
14:00 Chopped  
15:00 The Kitchen  
16:00 Anna Olson: Bake  
17:00 Chopped  
18:00 Guy's Grocery Games  
19:00 Restaurant Stakeout  
20:00 Mystery Diners  
21:00 Restaurant Takeover  
22:00 Iron Chef America



00:15 Close Encounters  
03:10 Mythbusters  
08:00 How Do They Do It?  
08:26 Kings Of Construction  
09:14 Mythbusters  
10:02 Close Encounters  
10:27 Close Encounters  
10:50 How Do They Do It?  
11:14 Food Factory  
11:38 Mythbusters  
12:26 Kings Of Construction  
13:14 Mythbusters  
14:02 How Do They Do It?  
14:26 Food Factory  
14:50 Close Encounters  
15:38 Mythbusters  
16:26 Kings Of Construction  
17:14 Mythbusters  
18:02 Close Encounters  
18:27 Close Encounters  
18:50 Kings Of Construction  
19:40 Mythbusters

04:50 Calimero  
05:05 Art Attack  
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster  
05:45 Zou  
06:00 Art Attack  
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:45 Loopdidoo  
07:00 Zou  
07:15 Calimero  
07:30 Loopdidoo  
07:45 Henry Hugglemonster  
08:00 Minnie's Bow-Toons  
08:05 Sheriff Callie's Wild West  
08:15 Jake And The Neverland Pirates  
08:30 Miles From Tomorrow  
08:45 Goldie & Bear  
08:55 The Lion Guard  
09:20 PJ Masks  
09:35 Jake And The Neverland Pirates  
09:50 Doc McStuffins  
10:00 Goldie & Bear  
10:15 PJ Masks  
10:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons  
10:35 The Lion Guard  
11:00 Sofia The First  
11:30 Doc McStuffins  
11:55 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse  
12:20 My Friends Tigger & Pooh  
12:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West  
13:15 Gummy Bears  
13:40 Sofia The First  
14:10 Little Mermaid  
14:35 PJ Masks  
15:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh  
15:30 The Lion Guard  
15:55 Unbungalivable  
16:00 Miles From Tomorrow  
16:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates  
16:55 The Lion Guard  
17:20 Goldie & Bear  
17:50 PJ Masks  
18:15 Sofia The First  
18:40 Doc McStuffins  
19:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates  
19:30 Little Mermaid



00:40 Blood Relatives  
01:30 A Haunting  
02:20 A Haunting  
03:10 True Nightmares  
04:48 Is O.J. Innocent? The Missing Evidence  
05:36 Blood Relatives  
06:24 Blood Relatives  
07:12 Blood Relatives  
08:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?



00:00 Predators  
02:00 Mine Games  
03:45 Forbidden Empire  
05:45 San Andreas  
07:40 Blunt Force Trauma  
09:35 Reign Of Fire  
11:15 Double Team  
13:15 San Andreas  
15:15 Sword Of Vengeance  
17:00 Jupiter Ascending  
19:15 Real Steel  
21:30 Troy



00:00 Ted 2  
02:00 All About Christmas Eve  
04:00 Hanging Up  
06:00 Accidental Love  
08:00 All About Christmas Eve  
10:00 Hanging Up  
12:00 Accidental Love  
14:00 Passed Away  
16:00 How Do You Know  
18:00 Hot Rod  
20:00 The Brass Teapot  
21:30 Please Give



01:00 Live On The Red Carpet: The Arrivals  
03:00 Live Oscars Opening Ceremony: From The Red Carpet  
04:30 Live The 89th Academy Awards  
08:30 Oscars Opening Ceremony: From The Red Carpet  
10:00 The 89th Academy Awards  
14:00 Bridge Of Spies  
16:30 Spotlight  
19:00 The 89th Academy Awards  
22:10 The 89th Academy Awards



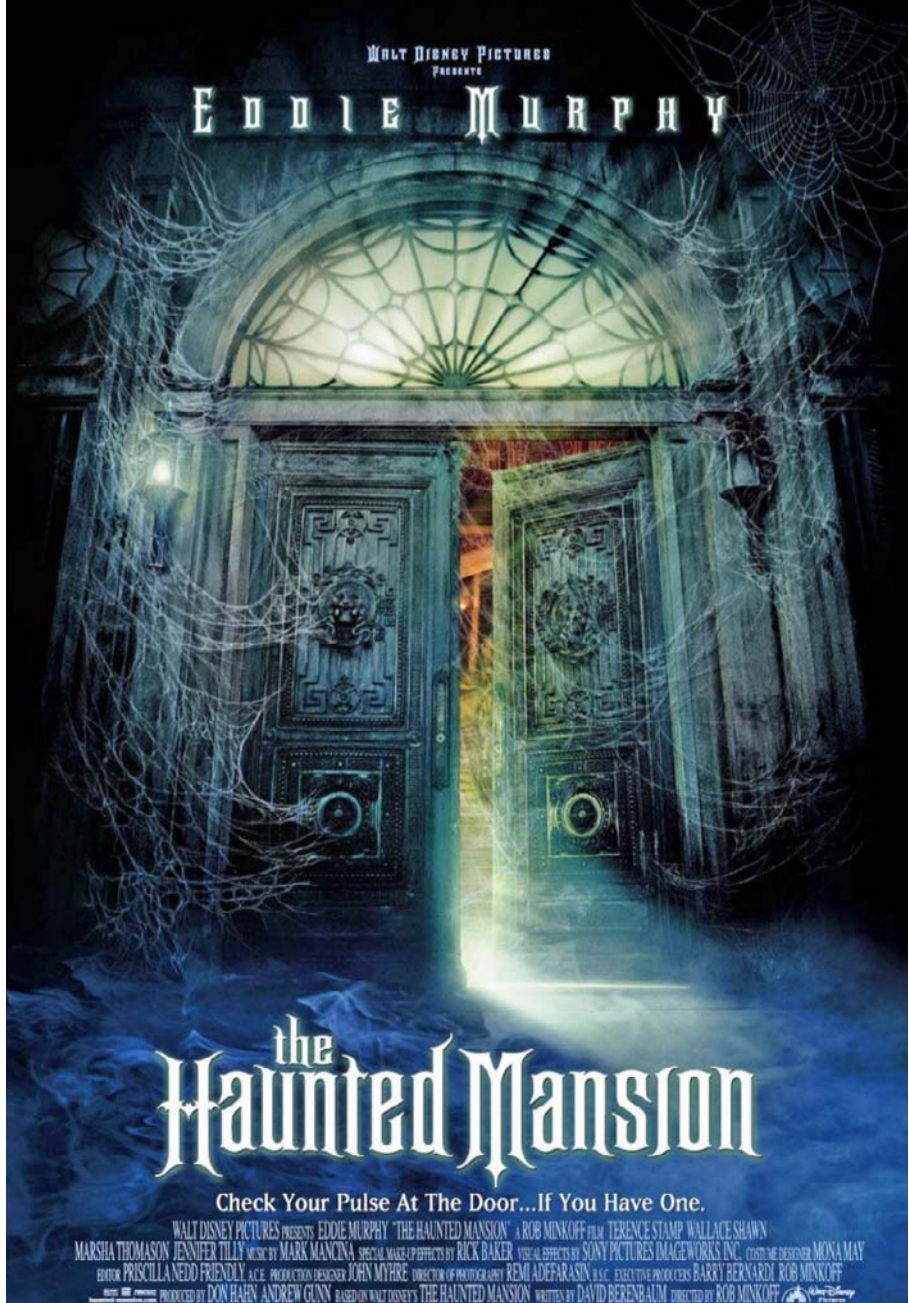
00:05 Moomins And The Comet Chase  
02:30 Daddy I'm A Zombie  
04:15 Hey Arnold! The Movie  
06:00 Jetsons: The Movie  
07:45 Bolts And Blip  
09:15 Harriet The Spy  
11:00 Moomins And The Comet Chase  
12:30 Daddy I'm A Zombie  
14:00 Blackie And Kanuto  
16:00 Harriet The Spy  
18:00 Bamse And The City Of Thieves  
19:30 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion  
21:15 Blackie And Kanuto  
23:00 Bolts And Blip



00:20 Designer Darlings  
01:10 Alaskan Women Looking For Love  
02:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life  
02:25 Say Yes To The Dress  
02:50 Love, Lust Or Run  
03:15 Cake Boss  
03:35 Outrageous Kid Parties  
04:20 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm  
05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras  
06:00 Ultimate Shopper  
06:50 Too Ugly For Love?  
07:40 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm  
09:20 Kate Plus 8  
10:10 Love, Lust Or Run  
10:35 Cake Boss  
11:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life  
11:25 Say Yes To The Dress  
11:50 Ultimate Shopper  
12:40 Outrageous Kid Parties



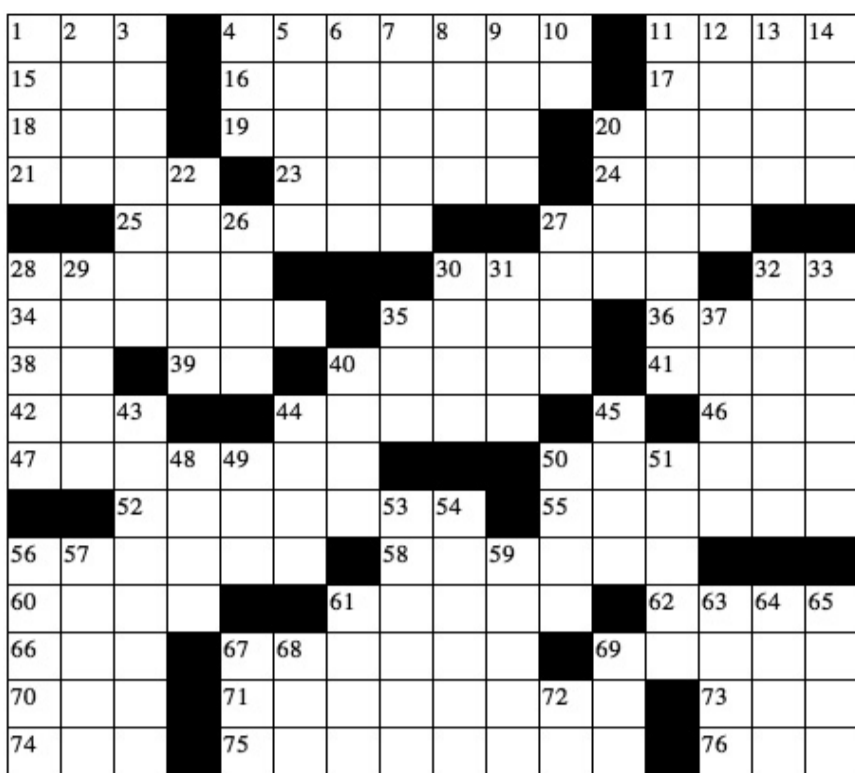
00:15 The Haunted Mansion  
02:00 Pooh's Heffalump Movie  
03:30 Little Women  
05:30 Frankenweenie  
07:30 Pooh's Heffalump Movie  
09:00 Tarzan  
11:00 Frankenweenie  
13:00 Mickey, Donald, Goofy: The 3 Musketeers  
14:30 A Bug's Life  
16:30 Mars Needs Moms  
18:30 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of The Lost Gold  
20:30 Marvel's Iron Man & Captain America: Heroes United



THE HAUNTED MANSION ON OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY



CROSSWORD 1532



ACROSS

- The dressed hairy coat of a mammal.
- A bed supporting a road.
- Of a period of maximal use or demand or activity.
- The use of nuclear magnetic resonance of protons to produce proton density images.
- A capacitance unit equal to one billion farads.
- A feeling of intense anger.
- Support resembling the rib of an animal.
- A German city near Leipzig.
- A ballistic missile that is capable of traveling from one continent to another.
- (Welsh) Lord of Annwn (the other world).
- Many times at short intervals.
- Personification of the sky or upper air breathed by the Olympians.
- To some (great or small) extent.
- The cardinal number that is the sum of seven and one.
- An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
- Being one more than fifty.
- Being ten more than one hundred forty.
- Dearly loved.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
- An incorrect deal.
- The lowest molding of an architectural base or of a baseboard.
- (Arthurian legend) The battlefield where King Arthur was mortally wounded.
- Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
- A volcanic island (part of Campania) in the Tyrrhenian Sea at the north end of the Bay of Naples.
- A British peer ranking below a Marquess and above a Viscount.
- The lean flesh of a fish similar to cod.
- A chronic drinker.
- A strong emotion.
- A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
- (usually followed by 'of') Released from something onerous (especially an obligation or duty).
- Low stingless nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
- Having undesirable or negative qualities.

DOWN

- A form of magnetic resonance imaging of the brain that registers blood flow to functioning areas of the brain.
- In or relating to or obtained from urine.
- A ribbon used as a decoration.
- (used especially of commodities) In the natural unprocessed condition.
- A religious belief of African origin

- Involving witchcraft and sorcery.
- Lighted up by or as by fire or flame.
- Any of various hard resins from trees of the family Dipterocarpaceae and of the genus Agathis.
- Brightly colored and showy.
- Earn on some commercial or business transaction.
- A doctor's degree in religion.
- Treated irreverently or sacrilegiously.
- The 3rd planet from the sun.
- American novelist (1909-1955).
- United States composer of musical comedies (1885-1945).
- A wine bottle made of leather.
- Red Bordeaux wine from the Medoc district of southwestern France.
- An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
- The part of the eye that contains the iris and ciliary body and choroid.
- Any of a group of heavenly spirits under the god Anu.
- An island in Indonesia south of Borneo.
- A blue dye obtained from plants or made synthetically.
- Drought-resistant Asiatic treelike shrub bearing pleasantly acid small red edible fruits commonly used in sherbets.
- Pitching dangerously to one side.
- A decree that prohibits something.
- Relating to or resembling or made of or adorned with pearls or mother-of-pearl.
- Offering fun and gaiety.
- Consisting of a haphazard assortment of different kinds (even to the point of incongruity).
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
- A prearranged fight with deadly weapons by two people (accompanied by seconds) in order to settle a quarrel over a point of honor.
- A gradual decline (in size or strength or power or number).
- A dull persistent (usually moderately intense) pain.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- A range of mountains (usually with jagged peaks and irregular outline).
- The condition of being honored (esteemed or respected or well regarded).
- The Oceanic language spoken by the Maori people in New Zealand.
- An African river that flows northwest into Lake Chad.
- The provision of money temporarily (usually at interest).
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- Tree bearing large brown nuts containing e.g. caffeine.
- A town in north central Oklahoma.
- Of southern Europe.
- An accountant certified by the state.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Being nine more than ninety.

Yesterday's Solution

P	A	P		S	N	O	B	B	E	R	Y		R	O	B	
A	W	E		H	U	A	R	A	C	H	E		A	P	R	
D	A	B		A	T	R	I	U	M			A	P	N	E	A
D	R	A	C	H	M		D	D		E	R	L	A	N	G	
A	D		E		E	E	G		P	A	L	E				
		B	I		G	L	E	B	A		Y	A	C	C	A	
A	K	A	B	A		S	T	A	R	R		D	A	R	D	
M	A		A	B	B	E		B	A	A	L		B	I	D	
N	M	R		Y			H	A	D	J		M	A	M	A	
I	B	I	D	E	M		A	R	E	A		I	L	E	X	
C	A	D	E		E	L	L		B	A	D					
		D	A		D	E	L	V	E		B	A	B	K	A	
M	E	A	D	E		S	I	O	N		A	I	R	E	D	
O	W	N		D	E	S	A	L	T		D	R	A	B	A	
N	E	C		A	G	E	R	A	S	I	A		M	A	N	
A	R	E		M	O	N	D	R	I	A	N		A	B	A	

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your creative side is showing this Sunday and you just may create a fun invention or easy solution to achieving some task that usually takes way too long to complete. Let yourself dream a little. There is a secret that will be revealed to you today and you may discover the whole story if you persist with questions. Be aware of tendencies to become gullible at this time. It is possible to just see questionable stories as a test for future development. Recognize the trend from certain individuals and keep moving forward. Forgiveness, compassion and understanding come naturally, particularly when you look at life from an eternal perspective and if anyone ever does know such things, you will probably come to understand them as this cycle unfolds.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Take a little trip, or get outside today. You may want to break up your schedule and try something different. A new view or viewpoint may point to new insights that will be of great value later. You may be able to bring a group together with words or ideas that transport others. Poetry and art may be possible now. Movies, books and all forms of escape could prove very enjoyable. This can be a phase of sublime spiritual development, to be sure. You should be aware of tendencies to believe too quickly, too deeply, or to become dependent on things or people that seem to offer quick and easy answers to life's deepest yearnings. Lovers, children and other people or things dear to your heart are emphasized at this time in your life.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may be surprised this morning when you are put in a position to explain some important circumstances to one or two loved ones. This could be anything from the birds-and-the-bees to new shoes for growing feet or an answer for an ailment. The direction of this day may become quite interesting. This would certainly be a time to not only go-with-the-flow but to research what you learn. If possible, ask for resources where information could be acquired. In most cases, you are able to cut through to the truth in order to gain an understanding. Clear decisions affecting others can be made now. You are most persuasive with others and the situation is a natural for self-expression. Tonight is a good time to practice your story writing.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Social get-togethers at church or perhaps a special called committee meeting will have you working for community affairs. You can make a big difference in your community and your hard work will pay off soon. Make sure that you listen to what everyone is really saying so that you do not work against the group energy. You could find that you are appreciated or valued for your feelings or your ability to act and get things done. You enjoy your own company today and you appreciate the many hobbies in which you excel. A creative endeavor turns out positive and may bring you monetary rewards. There is a lot of contract type of stores in which you could contract to show off your creative wares. You might want to check out the consignment store.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

The ways you get around and stay in touch at the everyday level are changed by technology or social circumstances. This might also mean you have received a fascinating new piece of equipment lately and are enjoying the learning experience with this new apparatus. There are many good interactions with friends. One of your friends, who is an agreeable sort, may agree to share a ride to work. Conversations move around to the possibility of a hybrid car and who has one and how to take care of one and all sorts of questions. There could even be a trip to a car dealer just to see what it would be like to own a hybrid car. Humility with a particular family member brings forgiveness and compassion. Slow down... Savor the feelings.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

There is a meeting of the minds today. A family gathering can clear up some strange thinking and bring closure to some misunderstanding. Family, home, relatives and real estate play big parts in your life. There is a merger or a coming together that culminates in a tremendous amount of love, healing, education, accountability and cooperation. This could mean a marriage, a move or a birth of a child. You might want to just go with the flow as much as possible; if you are always trying to figure out the details, you could become lost in the shuffle. You enjoy belonging on a private, intimate, personal level. United, you will notice that you and your family make a positive difference throughout the community-keep up the good work!



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Thinking over this past week with the challenges it presented, along with some decisions for next week, may be uppermost on your mind. With the involvement of a charity or teaching project you balance out your energies and help yourself to find peace of mind. Friendships are in a state of transformation-old ones are either revitalized or else they come to an end; new ones are formed. An organization you belong to, or a group you associate with, may want a phone conference. Timing and responsibilities are all assigned and noted. Plans are fun to make and you may enjoy this process of being included in the fun results. Let yourself dream this evening. Perhaps a book will be enjoyable along with some new and delightful background music.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may be shopping today and find some special item for your house. Your house is usually full of delightful things that friends find hard to forget. You always seem to find the right piece of furniture for the right corner. Today there could be an antique store to visit. A gift or a find of some cash can be enjoyed. This is generally, a great day! Enjoy your friend whose thinking is most positive and upbeat. Learn from his or her ability to stay strong in difficult situations. You can gain a feeling of security if you learn how to ground yourself in positive and open-minded thinking. You have a clear vision into your own inner sense of values at this time. An animal may come to your attention this afternoon and you may need to become a rescuer.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

The exchange of ideas becomes a focal point in your life. Learning and knowing a little about a lot of things satisfies a need for mental stimulation. If you like to stay on top of the latest developments, a visit to the library, exhibit or museum could be a part of this. Neighbors and brothers or sisters may also play a role in your life and young people begin to figure more prominently in your schedule. An old friend contacts you this afternoon and you may find yourself sharing stories and bragging about accomplishments. You may have some ideas on making extra money for the next few weeks. You like to feel that you have security for a rainy day and you are determined to build up your bank account. Music is very soothing tonight.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Your imagination can run wild today. Creative thoughts come from many different directions. Write them down in order to act on them and fine-tune your ideas when time permits. You could be most persuasive with others, especially your loved ones. This is a good time for conversations concerning dreams and the future. Independence is valued, as well as anything unusual or different. You may enjoy getting away from routine and doing something completely different for a change. If you do not get away from your usual activities today, at least consider getting away for part of the day-weather permitting. A walk in the park, trip to the pet store, zoo, museum or art show may do the trick, meaning rest, relaxation and a renewal of ideas and energy.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Fondness and appreciation for the past and for your roots in life take on a greater importance for you now. Making your home situation more pleasant and attractive plays a part in this. You may be moved to appreciate and discover the beauty in your life and in those around you. At the same time, everything could take on added value and importance. Be wise that you do not overspend or indulge too much just now. Be aware of tendencies to believe too quickly, too deeply, or to become dependent on things or people that seem to offer quick and easy answers to life's deepest yearnings. Conversations with your family, friends and neighbors will lend itself to a feeling of being in the know and in control of your life at this time.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may find some fascination with a particular religious teaching. There are questions and you want answers. You may find some research is helpful. A library near you has some fascinating literature that you can examine. Faith in yourself and the future is emphasized as you begin a new cycle. This is a very positive and optimistic time. Your musical talent is strong and you might consider this is the year to invest in more of you. A class in writing music or taking private lessons to learn voice, guitar, piano, etc., would afford you that feeling of being free to experience and discover hidden talents. You will advance rapidly with regard to your talents. Many friends show up tonight and create a party to remember.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Musical Instruments 1

Find and circle all of the musical instruments that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.

C	A	T	H	O	U	K	U	L	E	L	E	M	U	R	D	G	R
C	O	K	S	Y	D	R	U	G	Y	D	R	U	H	I	U	E	A
P	I	R	R	B	A	L	A	L	A	I	K	A	D	I	T	O	T
E	E	T	N	A	R	H	D	O	B	H	W	G	T	H	R	B	I
V	O	N	T	E	T	O	H	N	A	E	E	A	A	R	O	O	S
I	P	S	N	E	T	N	U	R	R	R	R	C	O	T	M	C	C
B	I	A	T	Y	R	E	P	D	I	O	A	H	C	E	B	O	H
R	C	C	R	L	W	N	P	D	M	B	H	L	M	U	O	N	I
A	C	A	L	M	H	O	I	A	E	A	H	A	S	O	N	G	M
P	O	R	M	E	U	O	I	S	P	R	L	H	C	O	E	A	E
H	L	A	Z	B	I	F	A	S	I	G	O	O	I	N	T	I	S
O	O	M	I	W	N	S	L	N	T	D	A	D	D	U	E	C	T
N	H	I	M	O	O	S	E	U	N	L	R	B	O	I	N	R	N
E	S	A	Z	C	H	T	S	A	T	O	E	A	K	U	C	T	F
V	E	E	N	A	P	H	M	A	C	E	L	X	D	A	A	N	
B	A	N	J	O	U	C	E	C	B	R	V	I	O	L	I	N	S
O	L	L	E	C	E	M	A	E	L	G	N	A	I	R	T	A	D

- |           |             |              |            |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| ACCORDION | CONGA       | HURDY-GURDY  | SAZ        |
| BAGPIPE   | CORNET      | LAUTA        | SITAR      |
| BALALAIKA | COW BELL    | MANDOLA      | TARIKA     |
| BANJO     | DIDGERIDOO  | MARACAS      | TRIANGLE   |
| BASS      | DRUM        | MELODICA     | TROMBONE   |
| BODHRAN   | EUPHONIUM   | MIZMAR       | UKULELE    |
| CABASAS   | FLUTE       | OBOE         | VEENA      |
| CELLO     | FRENCH HORN | OUD          | VIBRAPHONE |
| CHIMES    | GUITAR      | PENNYWHISTLE | VIOLIN     |
| CITRIN    | HARP        | PICCOLO      | XUN        |

Yesterday's Solution

Movies: Science Fiction 2

C	E	E	N	T	H	S	N	U	S	C	W	A	T	C	H	M	E	N	
K	R	C	L	R	N	I	E	N	A	L	P	D	E	R	O	S	E	D	
C	A	E	A	E	R	N	E	R	O	T	A	D	E	R	I	P	C	A	
A	T	A	L	E	E	M	O	O	K	V	S	L	I	T	H	E	R		
J	A	S	L	H	N	A	I	M	E	N	T	N	B	L	A	C	K		
E	V	U	P	L	E	E	I	N	G	M	R	Z	O	D	R	A	Z	N	
E	E	A	S	T	L	E	G	A	I	N	F	D	N	A	L	T	U	O	
R	I	L	R	U	R	K	N	E	S	P	I	T	E	L	E	D	F	N	A
F	L	X	M	O	A	C	S	A	D	E	W	I	J	O	R	I	A	R	
K	A	S	N	A	E	N	N	E	L	L	Z	O	N	A	K	E	M	S	
A	B	G	C	M	G	D	S	M	E	D	M	N	E	Q	U	E	R	O	
R	E	T	O	R	N	E	D	G	O	E	I	T	O	E	E	P	E		
B	L	F	U	C	E	N	T	D	D	R	E	L	P	N	P	N	U	R	E
T	L	M	H	E	E	E	A	O	A	M	M	T	E	E	H	C	S	E	
O	C	I	M	E	M	P	R	I	N	O	E	H	A	E	Y	H	N		
O	R	O	H	U	L	K	I	S	S	J	I	R	R	D	L	K	I		
N	A	M	N	O	R	T	H	E	A	B	Y	S	S	F	D	T			
S	P	E	C	T	E	S	N	O	T	I	A	N	N	E	T	L	A	Y	

- |              |              |            |              |
|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| AEON FLUX    | FREQUENCY    | OUTBREAK   | SPECIES      |
| ALIEN NATION | GAMER        | OUTLAND    | SPHERE       |
| ALIENS       | GODZILLA     | PANDORUM   | STAR TREK    |
| ARMAGEDDON   | HULK         | PREDATOR   | SUNSHINE     |
| AVATAR       | INCEPTION    | PUSH       | SUPERMAN     |
| CLOVERFIELD  | IRON MAN     | RED PLANET | THE ABYSS    |
| DARK STAR    | JUMPER       | ROLLERBALL | TIMECOP      |
| DEATH RACE   | KING KONG    | SCANNERS   | TIMECRIMES   |
| DEJA VU      | KNOWING      | SERENITY   | TRANSFORMERS |
| DONNIE DARKO | MEN IN BLACK | SIGNS      | WATCHMEN     |
| FLATLINERS   | MIMIC        | SLEEPER    | ZARDOZ       |
| FREEJACK     | MOON         | SLITHER    |              |

Hidden movie: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

Daily SuDoku

5		1						7	
							5	9	8
	7		4					6	
3				4	9	6			
		9				7			
		6	8	1			5		
9					2			4	
8	5	3							
	6					9		7	

Yesterday's Solution

9	8	5	1	7	3	2	4	6
2	6	3	4	8	9	5	1	7
1	7	4	2	6	5	9	3	8
5	9	7	8	2	1	4	6	3
8	3	2	6	9	4	1	7	5
6	4	1	3	5	7	8	2	9
3	5	8	7	1	2	6	9	4
4	1	9	5	3	6	7	8	2
7	2	6	9	4	8	3	5	1

Colours of Australia  
STUDENT ART COMPETITION

**'Colours of Australia' art competition decorates Crowne Plaza with students' art**



Warren Hauck, Australian Ambassador to Kuwait.

(From left) Adnan Saad, Deputy General Manager, Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief, Eleanor Hale, one of the jury members, Svetlana Arndt, one of the jury members, Dr Osama Al-Jamal, ACK, Warren Hauck, Australian Ambassador to Kuwait, Hasa Alsabe, VIVA and Abd Al-Kareem Al-Enizi, one of the jury members are seen during the event. — Photos by Joseph Shagraa and Yasser Al-Zayyat

Adnan Saad, Deputy General Manager is seen during the event.

By Faten Omar

The Australian Embassy, in cooperation with Kuwait Times, held an award ceremony for the "Colours of Australia" art competition on Tuesday at Crowne Plaza Hotel. "More than 6,500 students of both genders participated by drawing expressive pieces about Australia, its civilization, heritage and colors that were magnificent and beautiful, making it tough for the officiating committee to make a fair and just decision to decide the winner," said Adnan Saad, Kuwait Times

Deputy General Manager.

Saad noted that the goal behind the contest is to have students reflect their feelings and knowledge about the landmarks and colors Australia enjoys in the form of its beautiful nature and civilized heritage mixed with its culture. Animals, birds, forests and the beauty of its coasts, cuisine and fruits were expressed in the drawings of Kuwait's students in water, oil and acrylic colors.

Warren Hauck, Australian Ambassador to Kuwait, said the "Colours of Australia" idea was about finding a theme that

captures the land, animals and people of Australia. "We wanted the theme to give people some idea of the diversity within Australia. It is something that we are extremely proud of. Australia's diversity and its openness to cultures and people is its real strength. I'm pleased that students had the chance to explore some of these themes in their drawings."

The representatives of VIVA, Hessa Alsabe, Dr Osama Al-Jamal from ACK, and Antion Fluty General Manager of Crowne Plaza "Al-Thuraya City" opened the student art competition image gallery.

"Colours of Australia through student's eyes," a film prepared by Sherif Ismail, Kuwait Times Art Director, was screened, and Hai Wei Li, a Chinese boy and a multi-instrumentalist, sang a Kuwaiti song that stunned the audience.

Abd Al-Kareem Al-Enizi, Svetlana Arndt and Eleanor Hale were the jury members, who are professional artists selected from the Kuwait Arts Association, who chose the top 10 winners in each age group.

Ambassador Hauck and Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan concluded the event by

distributing certificates of appreciation to the principals and art teachers of various schools that participated in the competition. Awards and prizes were distributed to the winners by the VIP guests and sponsors as part of the closing ceremony. The competition was sponsored by VIVA and Australian Collage of Kuwait (ACK) and was hosted by Crowne Plaza Hotel "Al-Thuraya City". **Kuwait Times will publish for two consecutive days the rest of the categories.**



Guests are seen at the art gallery during the event.



(From left) Svetlana Arndt, Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief, Dr Osama Al-Jamal, ACK, Warren Hauck, Australian Ambassador to Kuwait, Eleanor Hale, Adnan Saad, Deputy General Manager, Antione Fluty and Kamal Kokash are seen during the event.



Guests are seen at the art gallery during the event.



Guests are seen at the art gallery during the event.



(Third right) Warren Hauck, Australian Ambassador to Kuwait, (second right) Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief, (right) Dr Osama Al-Jamal, ACK and (fourth right) Abd Al-Kareem Al-Enizi with other VIP guests and sponsors are seen during the event.



(From left) Adnan Saad, Warren Hauck, the Armenian Ambassador and his spouse and the Ukrainian Ambassador are seen during the event.



(From right) The Armenian Ambassador is seen with children from the Armenian School during the event.



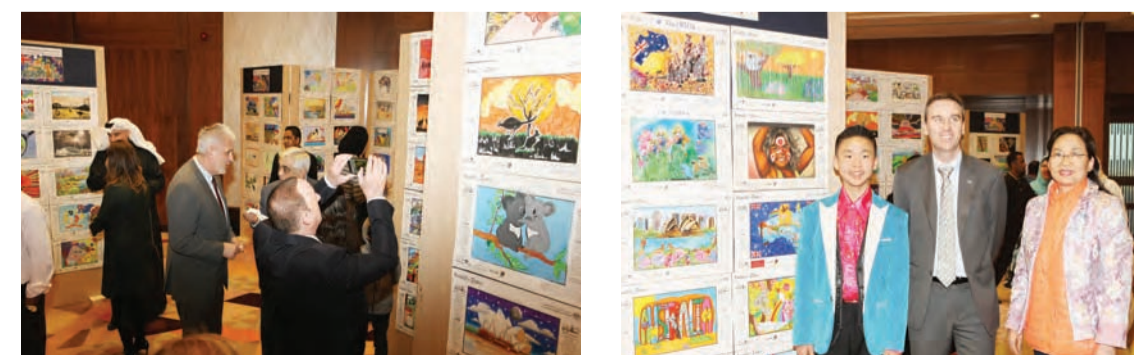
Hai Wei Li (center) celebrates National Day during the event.



(From left) Abd Al-Kareem Al-Enizi, Antion Fluty, Warren Hauck and Kamal Kokash are seen during the event.



Guests are seen at the art gallery during the event.



(From left) Hai Wei Li pose with Warren Hauck (center) and his mother during the event.



Ayman Al-Sharaa pointing at his daughter's painting during the event.

# Colours of Australia STUDENT ART COMPETITION



# Colours of Australia

## STUDENT ART COMPETITION



Special need student winners

### Al-Nebras school wins three major awards at student art competition

By Ben Garcia

Faisal Ali Al-Muhana won the grand prize in the Australian student art competition held at Crowne Plaza Hotel on Tuesday, organized by the Australian Embassy in Kuwait in collaboration with Kuwait Times.

Along with Muhana, two other special need students - Mousa Abdalaziz Ahmed and Haya Abdalaziz Al-Shaya - won the second and third prizes respectively. Although there were many on the list, Al-Nebras took home three major award.

Mousa's father Ahmed told Kuwait Times he is big fan of his son and that his son keeps making their family proud. "He works hard for it. I encourage him every day to be active and enthusiastic," he said. "I always remain positive around him. When he was little, he used to draw in the sand - now he does so on a canvas," said Ahmed.

He explained that despite his autistic condition, his son understands Arabic. "He uses his special abilities to communicate," he added. He said that his son likes strings and bright colors. "He

likes the color of acrylic paints because they have a really strong glossy color. He's a very imaginative boy. He took a course in painting, and then shifted to creating video games," he said.

The parents of Haya, who is a special child, were also very proud. "She is only seven years old, but her imagination is really brilliant," said her mother. "She is very creative and active."

She enjoys holding brushes and crayons. She's very artistic and I'll be supporting her unconditionally," she added.



Faisal Ali Almhana - Al-Nebras School



Mousa Abdal-Aziz Ahmed - Al-Nebras School



Haya Abd Al-Aziz Al-Shaya - Al-Nebras School



Rawa Fawzi Al-Shayea - Manarat School



Johann D'souza - Kuwait English School



Mesbah Humoud Al-Mesbah - Khalifa School



Bader Younis Al-Dwailah - Hope School



Haya Soliaman Al-Shaya - Manarat School



Badrreya Mousa Sabti - Khalifa School



Mohamed Abd Al-Rahman - Kuwait Academy

# 'Moonlight' sweeps Spirit Awards; Affleck wins best actor



Adele Romanski, at podium, and the cast and crew of "Moonlight" accept the award for best feature at the Film Independent Spirit Awards on Saturday in Santa Monica, Calif. — AP/AFP photos



The cast of Moonlight poses in the press room at the 2017 Film Independent Spirit Awards.



(From left) Jay Van Hoy, Robert Eggers, Daniel Bekerman, Rodrigo Teixeira, Lars Knudsen, and Jodi Redmond pose in the press room with their awards for best first feature for "The Witch".

Sunday might be dominated by "La La Land," but Saturday belonged to "Moonlight." Barry Jenkins' luminous coming-of-age tale swept Saturday's Film Independent Spirit Awards, taking home six awards including best feature. "Moonlight" won every award it was nominated for at the 32nd annual indie awards, the dressed-down, beachside ceremony held the day before the Academy Awards. "Moonlight" won for its directing, screenplay, cinematography and editing. It was also honored for its ensemble cast in the Spirit Awards' Robert Altman Award.

Backstage, Jenkins said its tale of a poor, young, black kid in Miami stole in stark contrast to President Donald Trump's administration. "I think 'Moonlight' exists as a beacon of inclusivity," said Jenkins, flanked by his African-American cast and producers. The afternoon ceremony frequently had a strong political tenor. Casey Affleck, who won best actor for "Manchester by the Sea," wore a shirt with the word "love" in Arabic. "The policies of this administration are abhorrent and will not last," said Affleck, accepting his award. Backstage, he spoke about "the torrent of terrifying news that comes out of Washington every day."

Some Oscar contenders were missing their presumed rivals at the Spirit Awards, which only nominated films made for \$20 million or less (and thus disqualifying the Academy Awards favorite "La La Land"). But if "Moonlight," nominated for eight Oscars including best picture, is to pull off the upset Sunday, it has some history on its side. The last three Spirit Awards best-feature winners — "Spotlight," "Birdman," "12 Years a Slave" — all went on to win best pic-



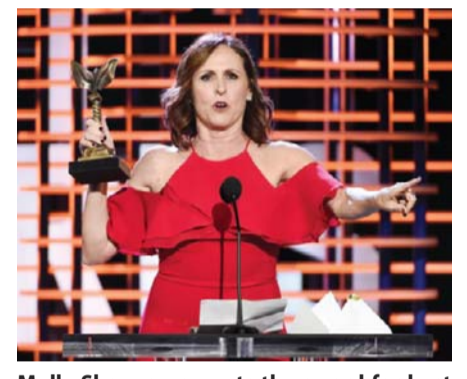
Casey Affleck accepts the award for best male lead for "Manchester by the Sea".

ture at the Oscars. Host Nick Kroll and John Mulaney maintained a rigorously irreverent tone through a ceremony often punctuated by belly laughs. In their opening monologue, Kroll mockingly defended the common charge of "liberal elitism" often thrown at Hollywood events like the Spirits.

"We're not in a bubble. We're in a tent," said Kroll, referring to the Spirits' Santa Monica, Calif., home. "We're fringe artists on a California beach. If we leaned any further to the left, we'd topple into the ocean." Instead of a lengthy in memoriam reel, they opted instead for a highlight of those who didn't die, singling out Milos Forman and Tim Allen while Andy Samberg, doing his best Eddie Vedder, sang Pearl Jam's "Alive." Best actress went to Isabelle Huppert, the French actress of "Elle," who bested Natalie Portman and Annette Bening. Just as Affleck wasn't up against Oscar favorite Denzel Washington in best actor, the best actress category was missing Emma Stone of "La La Land." Molly Shannon, the former "Saturday Night Live" cast member, sup-



Isabelle Huppert accepts the award for best female lead for "Elle".



Molly Shannon accepts the award for best supporting female for "Other People".



Barry Jenkins accepts the award for best director for "Moonlight".

plied one of the afternoon's highpoints. She was visibly overjoyed by winning best supporting actress for her performance in "Other People." She concluded her speech by exclaiming, "I really truly feel like a ... SUPERSTAR!" — aping her old "SNL" character.



Ben Foster accepts the award for best supporting male for "Hell or High Water".

**'Writing down so much stuff'**  
Other awards also went to films far out-

side the Oscar candidates. Robert Eggers' well-researched "The Witch," set in 17th century Massachusetts, won for both best first feature and best first screenplay. He thanked the Puritans for "writing down so much stuff." Ezra Edelman's "O.J.: Made in America" took best documentary. Best foreign language film went to Maren Ade's "Toni Erdmann." — AP

## Film Independent Spirit Awards Winners 2017

- Best Feature: 'Moonlight'
- Best Male Lead: Casey Affleck, 'Manchester by the Sea'
- Best Female Lead: Isabelle Huppert, 'Elle'
- Best Supporting Female: Molly Shannon, 'Other People'
- Best Supporting Male: Ben Foster, 'Hell or High Water'
- Best Director: Barry Jenkins, 'Moonlight'
- Best International Film: 'Toni Erdmann'
- Best Screenplay: 'Moonlight'
- Best First Screenplay: 'The Witch'
- Best Cinematography: 'Moonlight'
- Best First Feature: 'The Witch'
- Best Documentary: 'O.J.: Made in America'
- Piaget Producers Award: Jordana Mollick
- Robert Altman Award (Best Ensemble): 'Moonlight'
- John Cassavetes Award (Best Feature Under \$500,000): 'Spa Night'



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Ben Affleck, left, and Henry Cavill in a scene from, 'Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice.' — AP

# 'Batman vs Superman' and Hillary doc tie at Razzies

DC Comics' "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice" and a documentary attacking Hillary Clinton tied Saturday at the annual Razzie worst-of film awards, Hollywood's hall of shame. The rivals won four "Razzies" each for their poor acting, writing and directing, although the anti-Clinton documentary walked away with the spray-painted trophy for "worst picture." "It all came down to two decidedly different examples of cinematic sludge: The \$250 million comic book oop-us 'Batman v Superman' and the faux right wing 'documentary' 'Hillary's America: The Secret History of the Democratic Party,'" a statement from the Razzies read.

Dinesh D'Souza picked up the prestigious double of worst actor for his narration and worst director on "Hillary's America," which has an average rating of 1.7 out of 10 on online reviews aggregator Rotten Tomatoes. The site's critical consensus reads that the movie has the conservative commentator

"once again preaching to the right-wing choir-albeit less effectively than ever." Rebekah Turner, unnamed by the awards, won worst actress for her turn as the losing Democratic presidential candidate, while worst supporting actress went to Kristen Wiig for her efforts in the panned "Zoolander No.2."

"Batman" took the Razzie for worst supporting actor Jesse Eisenberg, who caused many a critic's jaw to drop as he chewed the scenery as Lex Luthor. The critical flop also won worst screen combo for dueling superheroes Ben Affleck and Henry Cavill, as well as worst screenplay and worst remake, rip-off or sequel. The Razzies were created in 1980 as an antidote to Hollywood's star-studded, back-slapping annual awards season, which climaxes Sunday with the 89th Academy Awards. Nominees rarely attend the Razzies, usually held in small venues somewhere in and around Los Angeles, and there was no ceremony at all this year.

Sandra Bullock turned up in 2010 to accept worst actress for "All About Steve," a day before winning best actress Oscar for "The Blind Side." Eight of the nine Razzie categories are chosen by the 800 or so members of the Golden Raspberry Award Foundation, who earn voting rights by paying a \$40 membership fee, with a \$25 annual renewal. Worst screen combo is determined by ratings from more than 80,000 users of the Rotten Tomatoes movie review website.

While they were neck-and-neck for the award, there was some distance between this year's two big Razzies winners at the box office. "Hillary's America" took just \$13.1 million at the box office, while "Batman v Superman" grossed \$873.2 million. The annual Razzie Redeemer Award went to actor-director Mel Gibson, who has had glowing reviews for his war movie "Hacksaw Ridge," 10 years after he was ostracized following a drunken antisemitic rant. — AP

## The 89th Academy Awards: Fun facts and figures

Hollywood's elite gathered at the Dolby Theatre for the 89th annual Academy Awards yesterday to reward the best in acting, writing and filmmaking talent. Almost every ceremony has thrown up surprise winners, sensational snubs and other memorable moments since the first of around 3,000 statuettes was given out in 1929. Here are some fun facts and figures to help you navigate yesterday's show:

### Youngest to oldest

- 1- The youngest person to receive an Oscar was five-year-old Shirley Temple in 1934, although it was an honorary award for children. The youngest to win a competitive Oscar was Tatum O'Neal, who was 10 when she bagged best supporting actress for "Paper Moon" in 1974.
- 2- The oldest winner was Christopher Plummer, who was 82 when he took home best supporting actor in 2012 for "Beginners." The oldest best actor winner was Henry Fonda, for "On Golden Pond" in 1982. He was 76.
- 3- The oldest nominee remains Gloria Stuart, who was 87 when she was recognized for her role as an elderly Rose in 1997's "Titanic".
- 4- The only Oscar winner with Oscar-winning parents is Liza Minnelli, who won best actress for "Cabaret" in 1973. Her mother Judy Garland received an honorary award in 1939 and her father Vincente Minnelli won best director in 1958.

### Big winners (and one huge loser)

- 1- Three movies have won 11 Oscars: "Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" (2003), "Titanic" (1997) and "Ben-Hur" (1959). "Titanic," "All About Eve" (1950) and "La La Land" (2016) share the record for most nominations, with 14 each.
- 2- The only movie to achieve a clean sweep of every award for which it was nominated is "The Return of the King" while three contenders—"It Happened One Night" (1934), "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" (1975) and "The Silence of the Lambs" (1991) — have swept the "big five" awards (best picture, actor, actress, director and screenplay).
- 3- The star with the most acting stat-

uettes is Katharine Hepburn, who won best actress in 1934, 1968, 1969 and 1982. Daniel Day-Lewis has three best actor Oscars.

- 4- Meryl Streep holds the record for the most nominations for acting, with 20. She and Jack Nicholson, who was nominated 12 times, each have two statuettes for lead acting and one for supporting roles.
- 5- The movie industry figure with the most Oscars is Walt Disney, who won 22, plus four honorary statuettes.
- 6- Sound engineer Kevin O'Connell goes into the 89th Academy Awards with his 21st nomination. He has lost on each occasion, starting with "Terms of Endearment" in 1983, earning him the title "the unluckiest nominee in history."

### Trivia quiz

- 1- The longest acceptance speech was given by Greer Garson, best actress for 1942's "Mrs. Miniver." She is believed to have held forth for between five and seven minutes.
- 2- Antony and the Johnsons singer Anohni, the first transgender performer nominated for an Oscar, boycotted the awards gala last year after she was not asked to perform. She was in contention for best original song for "Manta Ray" from documentary "Racing Extinction."
- 3- At a height of 13.5 inches (34 centimeters) and weight of 8.5 pounds (nearly four kilos), the Oscar is officially named the Academy Award of Merit. Bette Davis claimed to have nicknamed the trophy after her first husband Harmon Nelson's middle name, although she later withdrew the claim.
- 4- Around 3,000 Oscars have been handed out since 1929, and it takes around three months to produce a batch of 50 statuettes.
- 5- The first person to refuse an Oscar was Dudley Nichols who won best screenplay in 1935 for "The Informer," although he eventually accepted in 1938. In 1973, best actor winner Marlon Brando sent a Native American woman named Sacheen Littlefeather to read a prepared statement in his place when he declined his award for "The Godfather." — AFP



Revelers of the Mancha Verde samba school perform during the first night of carnival parade at the Sambadrome in Sao Paulo, Brazil early on February 25, 2017. — AFP

## Brazil's Carnival kicks off with parades and street parties

Revelers all over Brazil were getting Carnival celebrations started Friday, taking to the streets to dance, drink, and blow off steam at a time of economic angst and fury with politicians over a sprawling corruption scandal. The world's most famous Carnival bash in Rio began in a strange way. After a day in silence, evangelical Mayor Marcelo Crivella delayed the traditionally opulent starting ceremony until 8:30 p.m. only to skip it with the excuse that his wife was sick. Eventually, Rio city hall put out an email saying that Carnival was "officially open."

But several so-called block parties in Rio were underway by the afternoon. Thousands of revelers danced amid 90-degree (32 Celsius) heat with high humidity, standard during the Southern Hemisphere summer. At the "Carmelitas" block party in Rio's bohemian Santa Teresa neighborhood, revelers dressed up as nuns, with many carrying signs insulting politicians who oppose marijuana legalization. "The lord says: you will try all the herbs that came from the seeds," read one banner. "Carnival is a very nice and democratic party," said partygoer Nilse Azevedo. "Whoever wants to pray, prays. Whoever wants to have fun in the street has fun." But it was the odd opening to the iconic festival, which brings in more than \$ 1 billion to Rio each year, that was the talk of the day.

### Rio's tourism agency

At the sambadrome, where top league samba schools begin competing on Sunday, revelers waited Friday for the traditional handing over of the city's key to "Rei Momo," or the king of carnal delights. This was always done with great fanfare by former Mayor Eduardo Paes.

But the current mayor, Crivella, decided to send the head of Rio's tourism agency to represent him. Even more strange was the quick removal of Rei Momo, who did not give interviews as usual and was escorted out of the sambadrome by security guards after the opening ceremony. It isn't clear whether Crivella, a retired Pentecostal bish-

op who took office on Jan. 1, will attend any of the five days of parades at the sambadrome. Rio's city council has already authorized him to travel abroad on the next few days.

Holding the symbolic key to the city was Maria Cristina, who appeared like somebody who had been stood up. "I would also like to know what is going on," she said when asked by an Associated Press reporter about what she would do with the key. Cristina said the mayor's office had told her and the symbolic key-holding group to come, but hadn't said more about the plans. The mayor "should separate religion from politics at our Carnival," said Marisol Portela, a homemaker who had come to the sambadrome. "He will not be missed. We will throw our party anyway."

### Illegal mismanagement

The annual Carnival celebrations come at a difficult time for many Brazilians. The economy is mired in recession, leading to daily announcements of job cuts and much angst about the future. Many states, including Rio de Janeiro, are so broke that thousands of public workers are being paid months late, if at all. Latin America's largest nation is also recovering from a brutal impeachment fight last year that led to the removal of President Dilma Rousseff for illegal mismanagement of the budget. The man who replaced her, Michel Temer, is deeply unpopular.

Temer and several others in both chambers of Congress have been caught up, either through formal charges or in plea bargains, in a massive corruption probe that has jailed dozens of politicians and businessmen in the last few years.

Temer denies wrongdoing. One of Rio's big block parties is dedicated to the president. It's theme: "Out with Temer!" In Sao Paulo, where samba school competitions get started Friday night, there was heavy rain and thunder. Some streets in the eastern part of the megacity were flooding. Images on Globo Television show cars fully submerged and floating. — AP

## Rare Japanese woodblock prints on display in Poland

Polish-French art enthusiast Jerzy Leskowicz is obsessed with first-edition Japanese woodblock prints, and Katsushika Hokusai's iconic 19th-century "The Great Wave Off Kanagawa" is only one of many in his collection. Part of that collection goes on display this weekend in Poland at the National Museum in Warsaw, where visitors can also admire Utagawa Hiroshige's "A Sudden Shower over the Ohashi Bridge and Atake," a favourite of celebrated 19th Dutch artist Vincent Van Gogh. "Virtually all of Van Gogh's landscapes were inspired by Hiroshige," said the 71-year-old Leskowicz, who sports a white moustache and made his fortune in real-estate.



Jerzy Leskowicz points on a woodblock print that shows the actor Sawamura Sojuro III by Kabukido Enkyo (1797) presented at a large-scale exhibition of Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock prints from Jerzy Leskowicz's collection at the National Museum in Warsaw. —AFP photo

"Van Gogh copied Japanese prints and he even tried to reproduce the signatures on them," added exhibition curator Anna Katarzyna Maleszko, as Japanese flute music played in the background. Leskowicz is particularly proud of owning first edition prints of the entire series "The Sixty-Nine Stations of Kisokaido" by Hiroshige and Keisai Eisen. The series includes stunning landscapes and scenes of everyday life featuring merchants, peasants and noblemen from 19th-century Japan.

"This is an extraordinary series where you have the first signatures and all the first editions of these prints," Leskowicz told AFP. "It was presented in Japan in the early

2000s and then in the United States, and it is the first time it has been presented in Europe," he said, adding that German publisher Taschen will soon publish an art book on the series.

### Between Edo and Kyoto

Leskowicz's collection numbers some 2,000 items, of which more than half are first-edition prints. The polychrome "pictures of the floating world," or "ukiyo-e" in Japanese, were the pop art of their day, produced for the general public and depicting beautiful women and kabuki theatre actors but also nature and scenes from Japanese history. Once they made their way to Europe near the end of the 19th century, the traditional prints featuring solid colours and novel use of perspective and composition took the continent by storm and had a huge influence on Western art.

Around 300 prints from Leskowicz's collection, shown to the public for the first time, will be on display in Warsaw until May 7. "The exhibition 'Journey to Edo' is put together in such a way that visitors can travel between Edo, today's Tokyo, and Kyoto while admiring the landscapes and observing the people," explained Maleszko. "All that is to capture the spirit of ancient Japan." Leskowicz fell into collecting as a child. His father Aleksander was a well-known antiquarian book collector in Poland before World War II.

The collection was lost during the turmoil of the war and it is only recently that the younger Leskowicz began to rebuild it bit by bit to restore his father's legacy. "When I was five, six years old, my father would sit me on his knee and show me his manuscripts and rare books and tell me stories," said Leskowicz. "I was forced to listen, even though I would have preferred to play soccer or war."

But certain things seeped into my head anyway," he added with a smile. Later he began collecting foreign stamps. "That enabled me to travel."

I was living in Poland, a country where you didn't have the possibility to travel! He emigrated to France in the early 1970s and studied architecture before enjoying great success in the real-estate business. Then came the Japanese prints. — AFP

# Morocco looks to new markets to boost stagnant tourism



Asian tourists pose for a photo as they visit the Hassan Tower in Rabat. — AFP photos

Morocco's key tourism sector barely grew last year amid security challenges, but operators are hoping Chinese and Russian visitors will boost their fortunes in the coming years. While political turmoil and jihadist attacks have battered the sector in Egypt and Tunisia, Morocco registered 10 million visitors last year, according to the Moroccan Tourism Observatory. That was a barely perceptible rise of 1.5 percent from 2015, it said. But hoteliers in the narrow streets of the capital Rabat's old city were cautiously positive.

"Last year was better than 2015. And the first two months of 2017 augured an even better year," said Hanane, manager of a local guesthouse. Tourists are easy to spot wandering through Rabat's old city with its craft stalls, Andalusia-style houses and a 12th-century kasbah overlooking the Atlantic. But while tourism revenues rose 3.4 percent to \$6.3 billion (5.9 billion euros) in 2016, visitor arrivals to Morocco have fallen far short of an ambitious official target of 20 million per year by 2020. A growing number of visits by Moroccans who live abroad counted as tourists when they come home-accounted for much of the sector's buoyancy.

Foreign visitor arrivals last year were down by 0.9 percent. Karim, owner of a travel agency in commercial capital Casablanca, said more work was needed to drum up new business. "The situation is pushing us to look for new markets outside Europe," he said. "But overall, it can be said that there was a slight recovery in 2016." Authorities are hoping for an influx of Russian and Chinese tourists, who currently account for just one percent of total visitors. That is far behind the French, who make up almost a third of arrivals—a figure that includes many of Moroccan origin. "Europeans still top the list, but the number of Chinese visitors is growing," Hanane said. "Since visas for the Chinese were abolished in June, a door has been opened."

### 'Lacklustre' performance

Tourism remains a vital pillar of the Moroccan economy and the country's second biggest employer, after agriculture. The sector accounts for 10 percent of national income and, along with exports and remittances from Moroccans overseas, it is one of the country's main sources of foreign currency. Former imperial city Marrakesh, with its UNESCO-listed old town, and the coastal town of Agadir have long been key attractions. They remain popular in contrast to Tunisia, Turkey and Egypt, where visitor numbers have plummeted following the Arab Spring uprisings and repeated jihadist attacks. Morocco has not experienced an attack since

a 2011 bombing in Marrakesh's famed Jamaa El Fna Square, which killed 17 people, mainly European tourists. Today, security forces stand guard at Morocco's main tourist sites. The government, a key security partner of European countries, regularly announces it has dismantled jihadist cells. But while the kingdom remains safer than other countries in the region, visitor numbers have stubbornly refused to rise. The local press calls the sector's performance "lacklustre and disappointing" compared with a 2010 plan to double arrivals.

Back then, "Vision 2020" envisioned creating

200,000 new hotel beds and attracting 20 million visitors a year by the end of the decade. Since then, "many international factors" had disrupted the government's efforts, Observatory chief Said Mouhid said. "We will not reach 20 million in 2020, for sure, but it remains a symbolic figure to mobilize operators," he said. He defended last year's performance as "respectable and positive". "We are in a difficult international context, marked by many obstacles to travel," he said. "These figures prove the resilience of Moroccan tourism, even if they remain below our ambitions." — AFP



An Asian tourist takes a selfie in front of the Hassan Tower in Rabat.



Tourists visit the Hassan Tower in Rabat.

## 'It's like tripping,' says French artist entombed in rock

An artist entombed inside a 12-tonne rock for nearly three days has described the experience as like "tripping," insisting he would stick it out for a week. Speaking to AFP through a crack in the limestone boulder late Friday, Abraham Poincheval said he had been buoyed by how his performance has "got into people's heads." "I am travelling in this rock without moving, like an astronaut," he said. The artist made headlines worldwide when the two halves of the rock closed around him on Wednesday at Paris's Palais de Tokyo art museum. Poincheval, 44, had carved out a hole inside the rock in his own image, just big enough for him to sit up in, with a niche to hold supplies of water, soup and dried meat.

"People seem to be very touched. They come and talk into the crack, read poetry to me, or tell me about their nightmares or their dreams," he said. "They are not so much talking to me, I think, as to the stone. I am very happy that the stone has got into their heads." If he survives the ordeal, the performance artist who has previously spent a fortnight sewn-up inside a stuffed bear, will attempt to become a human hen and hatch a dozen eggs by sitting on them for weeks on end. Lack of sleep rather than claustrophobia is his biggest worry inside the darkness of the rock, he confessed. Without a watch-and with only an emergency phone line—he has no way to tell the time.

"I have some idea of time relative to the museum hours. I hear different sounds. But otherwise I have no sense of day or night," Poincheval said. "I can sleep but it is very hard. It is very strange, I don't know whether I am sleeping well or not." Even though he can only move his feet and hands a few inches, "I do not feel oppressed (by the rock), I feel completely at ease, in real connection with it."



File photo shows French artist Abraham Poincheval performs "Pierre" (Stone), at the Palais de Tokyo on February 22, 2017 in Paris. — AFP

### France's most extreme artist

"Right now, it's sweet. Like when you are starting to climb a mountain. But I know it will get difficult," said Poincheval, who is having store his own excrement around him. "For now, it is OK," he said, adding there had been "no accidents" peeing into his empty water bottles. "We are already locked into our own bodies," the artist told AFP minutes before climbing inside the rock to become what he called the boulder's "beating heart". However, he admitted that emotionally, his time inside has been something of a rollercoaster. "It's very complex. You pass from

one feeling to another. Like you are being carried away on a raft," he said.

"It's like tripping. I am trying to explain (the feelings) in language but it is very difficult to put down in black and white." To keep a hold on himself, the man dubbed France's most extreme artist has been keeping a diary, which he will later publish. Poincheval is certainly no stranger to bizarre and hair-raising performances. He ate worms and beetles while living inside the bear, was buried under a rock for eight days and navigated France's Rhone river inside a giant plastic corked bottle. — AFP

# Lifestyle

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Kuwaiti youths wave national flags during celebrations marking the country's 56th Independence Day and the 26th anniversary of the end of the Gulf war with the Liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, in Kuwait City on February 25, 2017. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Bethlehem fetes Palestinian Arab Idol singing hero



The jury of the Arab Idol TV show take part in a tribute for Kuwait national Day during the last show before the final in the pan-Arab song contest on February 24, 2017 at MBC studios in Zouk Mosbeh north of Beirut. — AFP photos

Hundreds of Palestinians celebrated in Bethlehem after a young singer from the occupied West Bank city became the second Palestinian to win the Arab Idol television song contest. Yacoub Shaheen, the 23-year-old son of a Syriac Christian carpenter, on Saturday night won the pan-Arab singing competition, defeating a fellow Palestinian and a Yemeni in the finals filmed in Lebanon. He became the second Palestinian to win the contest after Mohammed Assaf, who was raised in a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, won Arab Idol against all odds aged 23 in 2013.

Hundreds of people including the town mayor gathered in front of a large screen in Bethlehem's Manger Square to watch Shaheen sing in the final of the popular television show. Supporters celebrated all night after Shaheen won, waving Palestinian flags and emblems of the Christian Syriac church. His mother, Norma Shaheen, thanked the crowd after public vote results came in. "Yacoub won with his

voice, his education, his good manners, as well as his love for his people, Bethlehem and Palestine," she said.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas this week in Beirut met Shaheen and fellow finalist Amir Dandan, 25, an Arab Israeli descended from the Palestinians who remained on their land when Israel was established in 1948. Dandan's supporters also feted him in his hometown of Majd Al-



Palestinian Arab Idol TV show winner Yacoub Shahin holds a Palestinian flag while he performs on stage.



Egyptian singer Sherine Abdel Wahhab performs on stage.



Palestinians gather in the biblical town of Bethlehem as they watch in anticipation the announcement of the winner of the Arab Idol, cheering for their countryman and contestant Yacoub Shahin.



Palestinians celebrate with a national flag in the biblical town of Bethlehem.



Palestinian Arab Idol TV show finalist Yacoub Shahin performs on stage.



Palestinian Arab Idol TV show winners Yacoub Shahin (left) Ammar Mohammed (center) and Amir Dandan (right) perform on stage.



Palestinian Arab Idol TV show winners Yacoub Shahin (center), Ammar Mohammed (left) and Amir Dandan (right) perform on stage.