

Pope Francis lauds HH the Amir's peace efforts



Nazi Brunner 'died in Syria basement in 2001'



French chefs hooked on fish killed the Japanese way



Egypt look to rekindle footballing glory days



MPs CALL FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES TO CONSTITUTION

SPORTS ROW INTENSIFIES • LAW SEEKS TO SCRAP PETROL HIKE



Min °
Max 20°
High Tide
12:40 & 23:10
Low Tide
06:08 & 17:50

TRUMP REJECTS 'PHONY' RUSSIA DOSSIER

NEW YORK: US President-Elect Donald Trump yesterday berated the media and US intelligence agencies as he denied explosive allegations about his ties with Russia - while admitting for the first time that Moscow had likely meddled in the US election. Just over a week before he takes office, Trump confirmed he had ceded "complete" managing control of his global property empire to his two sons, seeking to dispel fears about possible conflict of interests.

Trump also said he rejected a \$2 billion deal in Dubai last weekend, demonstrating he was putting his business behind as he prepares to move into the White House. "Over the weekend, I was offered \$2 billion to do a deal in Dubai with a very, very, very amazing man, a great, great developer from the Middle East," he told the press conference. "I didn't have to turn it down," he said. "But I have a no-conflict-of-interest provision as president."

But the focus of the hour-long press conference - his first in six months was firmly on the unsubstantiated claims that his aides colluded with the Kremlin to win the US election, and that Russia has compromising sexual material on Trump. The 70-year-old billionaire angrily accused CNN of being "fake news" and called BuzzFeed - which published a dossier with the allegedly incriminating material drawn up by a former British intelligence agent hired to do "opposition research" on Trump - a "failing pile of garbage."

"It's all fake news. It's phony stuff. It didn't happen," he said, referring to allegations of lurid behavior in a

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NEW YORK: US President-Elect Donald Trump holds a press conference yesterday, his first in nearly six months, amid explosive allegations over his ties to Russia, a little more than a week before his inauguration. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Several MPs called yesterday for fundamental changes to the country's 1962 constitution as an essential requirement to resolve the ongoing crises in the country. The call came during the debate on the Amiri address delivered at the opening session of the new National Assembly on Dec 11. Opposition MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said the real requirement for reforms is amending the constitution, which was issued 54 years ago and has never been amended.

"We have been encountering constitutional problems and dilemmas and failed to find solutions simply because we still believe that the constitution cannot be changed. This democratic system has become ineffective," Kandari, a professor of law, told the house. He called for immediately setting up a committee to revise and suggest amendments to the constitution, adding that the main issues that need change is to increase the number of MPs, amend the article that deals with dissolving the Assembly and several other articles, to activate the constitution.

He said that there is no democratic system in the world that is so greatly under the influence of the government like the Kuwaiti system, and the only way out of this is to increase the number of lawmakers. Kandari said that dissolving the Assembly should not remain so easy to do and without conditions. This makes lawmakers live under the fear of the dissolution of the Assembly, and therefore are not able to perform. "After 54 years, we need to change the system, which is not working. The system is old and needs to be amended," Kandari said. He also called for legalizing political parties.

MPs Mohammad Al-Dallal and Osama Al-Shaheen also called for the need to amend the constitution to

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WASHINGTON: (From left) Secretary of State John Kerry, former Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright, Hillary Clinton and Colin Powell attend a reception celebrating the completion of the US Diplomacy Center Pavilion at the State Department on Tuesday. — AP

TOP US DIPLOMATS OPEN NEW DIPLOMACY MUSEUM

KUWAIT AMONG SUPPORTERS

WASHINGTON: Four current and former US secretaries of state, including Hillary Clinton, gathered at the State Department on Tuesday to mark the ceremonial opening of a museum on American diplomacy. The privately funded US Diplomacy Center will formally open in 2018. It includes an exhibition hall named after Clinton, who lost the November presidential election to Republican Donald Trump. Other halls in the nonpartisan center are named for US Secretary of State John Kerry and predecessors Henry Kissinger and James Baker.

In the light-filled hall named in Clinton's honor, marked by glass walls and a glass roof, she joked that it "is the most transparent part" of the center, an apparent reference to the controversy over her use of a private email server which dogged her presidential ambitions. In her brief remarks, Clinton did not mention Trump or the campaign. She said that democracy, freedom and the rule of law were under attack around the world and that the world faced "a rising tide of authoritarianism and illiberalism."

"The longstanding bipartisan goal of a Europe that is whole, free and at peace is under enormous pressure," she said. "We should remember that the world looks to America as the indispensable nation not just because of the size of our military or the strength of our economy," she said. "It looks to us because America stands for universal values and aspirations. And if we stay

true to those values like the best of the men and women whose leadership and service will be commemorated here, then our country will weather every storm on the horizon."

Former top US diplomats Madeleine Albright, who will donate her personal collection of more than 200 pins to the center, and Colin Powell also spoke at the ceremony. Supporters of the center include private American companies Boeing Co, Intel Corp and FedEx Corp; the Kuwaiti, Qatari, United Arab Emirates and Brunei governments; and the Clinton Family Foundation, according to a panel in the exhibition hall. Nearly \$48 million in private sector funds have been raised for the center, and \$18 million more is needed, according to the website of the Diplomacy Center Foundation created to support the museum.

Clinton has kept a low profile since the election, popping up at a Broadway shows and in selfies snapped by supporters who run into her at bookstores and hiking near her Chappaqua, New York home. In her last public appearance, an event last month thanking campaign donors, Clinton blamed Russian interference for her defeat in the presidential race, casting her loss as part of a long-running strategy by Putin to discredit the fundamental tenets of American government. Trump's choice to head the State Department, Exxon Mobil chief Rex Tillerson, was facing the Senate in his confirmation hearing yesterday. — Agencies

YES WE DID: OBAMA BIDS FAREWELL

UAE MOURNS FIVE DIPLOMATS KILLED IN AFGHAN BLAST

AMIR SENDS CONDOLENCES

KANDAHAR: The killing of five diplomats from the United Arab Emirates in a bombing in southern Afghanistan marks the deadliest attack ever for the young nation's diplomatic corps, though it's too soon to tell who was behind it or if the Gulf envoys were even the targets. The federation of seven sheikhdoms, founded in 1971 on the Arabian Peninsula, said it would fly the nation's flag at half-staff for three days in honor of the dead from the attack Tuesday in Kandahar.

The Taliban denied planting the bomb, even as the insurgents claimed other blasts Tuesday that killed at least 45 people. No other group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack in Kandahar, a province in Afghanistan's Taliban heartland. The bomb targeted a guesthouse of Kandahar Gov Homayun Azizi, who was wounded in the assault along with UAE Ambassador Juma Mohammed Abdullah Al-Kaabi. The attack killed 11 people and wounded 18, said Gen Abdul Razeq, Kandahar's police chief, who was praying nearby at the time of the blast.

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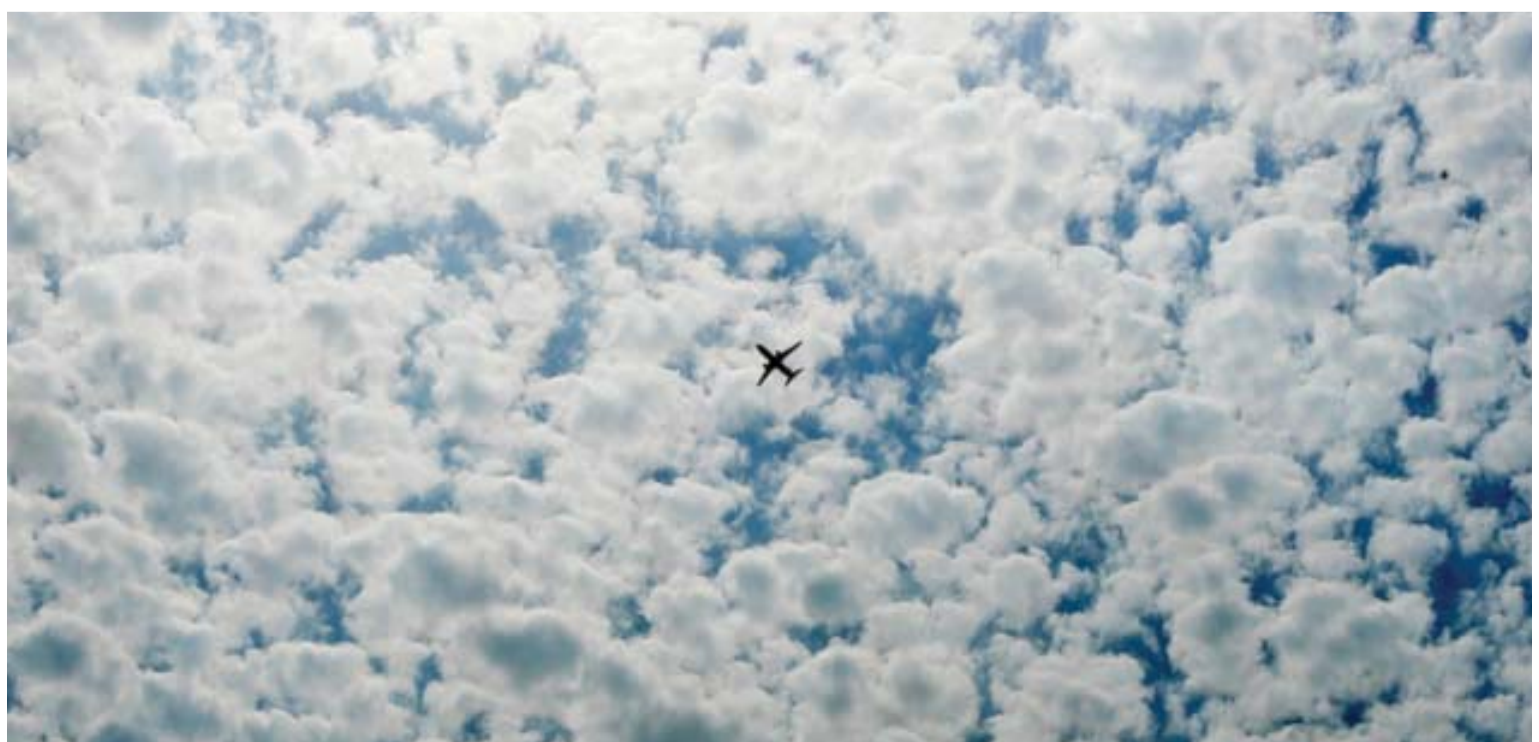
CHICAGO: US President Barack Obama cries as he speaks during his farewell address on Tuesday. — AFP

CHICAGO: Barack Obama addressed America and the world for the last time as US president yesterday, in a speech that was both a tearful goodbye and a call to arms. Capping eight years in the White House, Obama returned to his adopted hometown of Chicago to recast his "yes we can" campaign credo as "yes we did". Surveying the staging posts of his presidency - from the Iran nuclear deal to reforming healthcare - the speech sought to lift supporters shaken

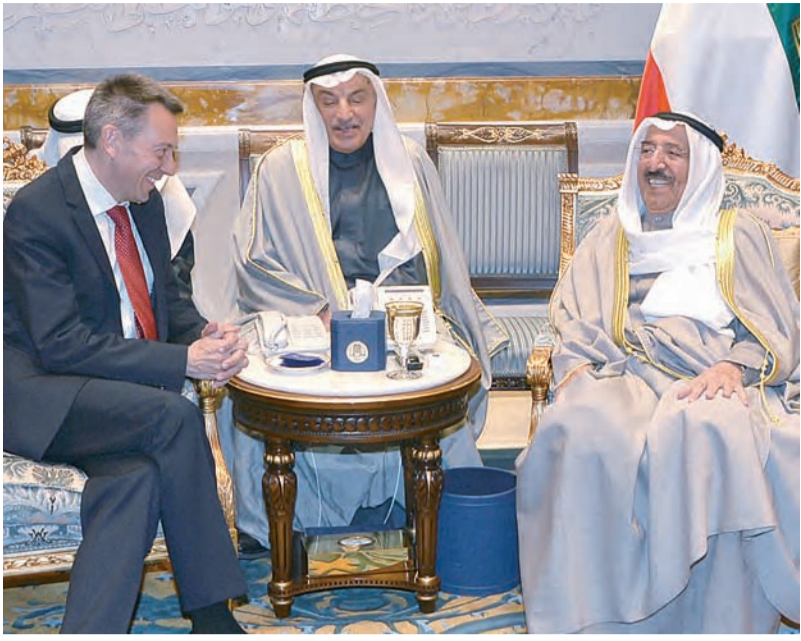
by Donald Trump's shock election.

Obama urged them to pick up the torch, fight for democracy and forge a new, fairer, "social compact". "For all our outward differences, we are all in this together," he said, warning that naked partisanship, racism, and inequality all threaten democracy. "We rise or fall as one. All of us, regardless of party, should throw ourselves into the task of rebuilding our democratic institutions."

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KUWAIT: A commercial airliner is seen after taking off from Kuwait International Airport yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Peter Maurer. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Peter Maurer presents a memorial shield to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with President of ICRC Peter Maurer.

KUWAIT LEADS HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS IN MIDEAST: ICRC CHIEF

KUWAIT: President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Peter Maurer underscored the importance of Kuwait's leading humanitarian role in the Middle East. Maurer, who is paying a one-day official visit to Kuwait, stressed in a press statement the urgent need for the international community to unify and scale up its efforts in order to respond to current humanitarian challenges.

On the visit to Kuwait, he said: "This visit highlights ICRC's strategic ties and partnership

with the State of Kuwait to respond to the humanitarian needs of the victims of armed conflicts and other situations of violence worldwide." During his stay in Kuwait, Maurer has met with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and thanked him for Kuwait's generous financial contributions and diplomatic support to ICRC's humanitarian efforts in the Middle East.

Maurer and His Highness the Amir exchanged views on the dire humanitarian situation in conflict-affected countries in the

region. Maurer reaffirmed ICRC's commitment to neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action. The ICRC chief also offered His Highness the Amir a memorial shield in recognition of his leading humanitarian role.

Furthermore, Maurer met with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and expressed his appreciation for the continuous diplomatic and financial support of the Kuwaiti government. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled praised ICRC's human-

itarian efforts, especially those which focus on finding Kuwaiti missing persons and POWs in Iraq since 1991.

In addition, Maurer met with President of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer and underlined KRCS's distinguished role in various humanitarian response operations worldwide and expressed his appreciation of KRCS's support to ICRC's operations and the successful collaboration between both institutions.

He also met with Chairman of the

International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) and Advisor to the Amiri Diwan Dr Abdullah Al-Maatoouq and acknowledged IICO's valuable work and expressed his gratitude for the organization's support to ICRC's operations in the region.

Maurer's last visit to Kuwait was in 2015. ICRC has been in Kuwait since the 1990-91 Gulf War. It focuses on humanitarian needs remaining from that war or arising from current armed conflicts and other situations of violence in the wider region. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, as well as Yousef Al-Abdulrazzaq. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



Yousef Al-Abdulrazzaq, the winner of the 2016 Aquabike World Championship presents a gift to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Yousef Al-Abdulrazzaq.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Yousef Al-Abdulrazzaq.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares.

AMIR MEETS WITH KUWAITI ATHLETE

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

During the meeting, Minister Al-Humoud presented to His Highness the Amir, Yousef Al-Abdulrazzaq, the winner of the 2016 Aquabike World Championship. His Highness the Amir

praised this international achievement and wished Abdulrazzaq more success in the future.

Sheikh Salman later presented Abdulrazzaq to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who extolled Abdulrazzaq's victory, noting that Kuwaiti athletes are capable of ascending to the upper echelons of the sports world. Furthermore, Sheikh Salman presented the champion to

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who stated that the Kuwaiti youth are accustomed to such great accomplishments, noting that they always strive for excellence.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh

Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, as well as Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ethiopian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammed Gudeta Chebsa. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos

AMIR, FM MEET OUTGOING AMBASSADOR

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received outgoing Ethiopian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammed Gudeta Chebsa at Bayan Palace yesterday. The Ambassador also met with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who hailed the efforts of Chebsa in boosting bilateral ties between Kuwait and Ethiopia.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Ambassador Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. —KUNA



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Ethiopian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammed Gudeta Chebsa.



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church meets with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Switzerland and non-resident ambassador to the Vatican Bader Al-Taneeb. —KUNA

POPE FRANCIS LAUDS AMIR'S PEACE EFFORTS

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church and sovereign of Vatican City lauded His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's and the state of Kuwait's efforts in solving disputes and encouraging peace, open dialogue and humanitarian co-habitation.

The Pope made this remark at his annual New Year celebration with ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions to the Vatican, including Kuwaiti Ambassador to Switzerland and non-resident ambassador to the Vatican Bader Al-Taneeb.

Taneeb said yesterday that Pope Francis relayed his New Year greetings to His Highness the Amir, wishing world peace

and prosperity on all. The Pope also praised efforts exerted by His Highness the Amir in solving disputes, promoting peace and co-habitation despite differences.

Taneeb said that Pope Francis' New Year message at the event focused on bringing people from different cultures and backgrounds together. "That is how one builds peace, saying 'no' to hatred and violence-with action-and 'yes' to fraternity and reconciliation," the Pope said in his message. His message also affirmed the good ties between the Vatican and the Arab nations, reiterating his solid position of recognizing the State of Palestine's sovereignty under international law. —KUNA



MANAGUA: Kuwait Ambassador to Mexico Mutaab Al-Motawtah attends the Nicaraguan President's oath taking ceremony. —KUNA

KUWAITI ENVOY ATTENDS NICARAGUAN PRESIDENT'S OATH TAKING CEREMONY

MANAGUA: Kuwait Ambassador to Mexico Mutaab Al-Motawtah took part in the oath swearing ceremony for the Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega who is serving for a new term. Motawtah expressed the greetings from His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

to President Ortega, adding that His Highness was looking forward to boost ties with Nicaragua. Meanwhile, Ortega thanked His Highness Sheikh Sabah for his invitation to visit Kuwait in the near future, noting that his country was eager for further cooperation on all levels with Kuwait. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Damage left by fire in a Hawally building yesterday.

MAN FOUND DEAD IN FARWANIYA APARTMENT

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A man was found dead inside the bathroom of his apartment in Farwaniya yesterday. Firefighters were called to the scene in response to an emergency call about a man being locked up inside his apartment. They broke open the apartment's door and found the expatriate man's dead body inside. The body was taken to the coroner for an autopsy. An investigation was opened to determine the circumstances behind the man's death.

Department said that an inspection campaign was launched in various restaurants and foodstuff stores in Hawally, which resulted in filing 14 citations. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced that inspectors busted a warehouse in Industrial Shuwaikh where they found 47 tons of rice placed in packs that had the expiration date altered.

No injuries

A fire broke out in a Hawally building, said security sources, noting that the fire started in the stairway on the ground floor. Firemen evacuated all tenants and controlled the blaze. No injuries were reported in the incident.

Municipality campaign

Kuwait Municipality's Public Relations

MIDEAST SECURITY CONDITIONS LIMIT GLOBAL CLOUT: FORMER FM

BERLIN: There are a myriad of threats and challenges facing the Middle East that have stifled the influence of some world powers, a former Kuwaiti Foreign Minister said yesterday. Former Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Salem Al-Sabah made the remarks in a speech during a ceremony held by the German-Arab Friendship Association (DAFG), to mark the start of the new year.

Sheikh Dr Mohammad Al-Sabah said that worsening security conditions in the Middle East have curbed the clout of some powerful nations including the United States, Britain and France. Moreover, he spoke of parliamentary elections due in four European Union (EU) nations, noting that the results of these elections will be crucial to peace and security in the Western

world. On terrorism, the former Kuwaiti Foreign Minister said that a spate of attacks in cities including Berlin and Istanbul has claimed the lives of scores of innocent people.

Speaking on the root-cause of turmoil plaguing the Middle East, he said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has plunged the region into upheaval, adding that a solution to the conflict is "near and possible." On the war in Syria, Sheikh Dr Mohammad Al-Sabah said that the international community should fulfill its obligations to put an end to this conflict, as he underscored that a military solution is never feasible. The Former Kuwaiti Foreign Minister also heaped praise on the ideology of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which is one of "openness and forgiveness," urging the GCC to overcome all obstacles thrust upon its member nations. —KUNA



BERLIN: Former Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Salem Al-Sabah delivers his speech during a ceremony held by the German-Arab Friendship Association. —KUNA

MEW LABOR UNION UPSET OVER CANTEN'S CLOSURE

EFFORTS TO PROTECT KUWAIT BAY FROM POLLUTION

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: The workers union at the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) criticized the closure of a canteen located at the Sulaibikhat water pumping station. The union's secretary Nawaf Buyabes described the withdrawal of the canteen's license as 'illegal' and a decision that was made 'under political pressure.' Buyabes also held the ministers of commerce and municipality affairs responsible for the possible consequences of what he described as their erroneous and illegal decisions. "Our labor interests are no political tools that the minister uses to please some MPs," he stressed, pointing out that dealing with investments owned by the syndicate in such a manner will not be accepted.

Pollution

In continuation of its efforts to protect Kuwait Bay from pollution and implement the environment protection law number 42/2014, EPA Chairman Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Humoud Al-Sabah met officials from PAI and MPW. The meeting was dedicated to discussing the environmental situation within the bay and the negative impact of illegal rain drainage and sewage discharging into the bay in the Free Trade Zone. Notably, the Environment Public Authority (EPA) had closed two outlets draining rainwater into Kuwait Bay at the free trade zone in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Works (MPW),

after tests proved that the water was contaminated with sewage.

Rent buildings

The Kuwait Lawyers Society strongly condemned the justice ministry's decision to rent special buildings in various governorates for family courts instead of waiting till the new courthouses are built. In this regard, society member and treasurer Humoud Al-Radaan stressed that such a decision did not conform to the state's strategy of providing the highest levels of services. He added that law 12/2015 stated that in view of the sensitive nature of family litigations, a special court would be built in each governorate to provide privacy

Financial disclosure

The Public Anti-Corruption Authority yesterday contacted officials still in service to file their financial disclosure statements, notifying them of the need to do so within six months, ie by May 14, 2017. The authority also urged MPs to file their reports by Jan 26 and ministers to do the same by Feb 8, 2017. The authority called on officials to download the needed forms from its website www.kwncor.gov.kw, fill them up and submit them during official working hours.

Blogger acquitted

The court of appeals yesterday cancelled a first instance verdict sentencing a 54-year-old blogger to three years in prison over charges of

threatening His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah via his Twitter account, and acquitted him of all charges.

Disabled parking

The Public Authority for Disabled Authority's Deputy Director Nadiya Abul said the authority has been coordinating with the Ministry of Interior concerning imposing the law on illegally parking in spaces reserved for the disabled. Abul made her statements to reporters after a meeting with officials from the citizenship and passport department and legal affairs representatives to discuss activating law number 8/2010 pertaining the rights of the disabled.

Fees for services

Kuwait Municipality's Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi denied increasing the fees for any of various services it provides. He added that the finance ministry had asked several state departments to conduct comprehensive studies regarding the services they provide to the public. "However, studies are still in progress and are being reviewed," he added, noting that some services would be exempted from any fees when e-services are launched by February.

Housing tender

The Public Authority for Housing Welfare will offer a tender for public bidding in February to landscape and design areas in South Sabah Al-Ahmad that include 25,000 housing units.



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with British Ambassador to Kuwait Mathew Lodge. —KUNA

INTERIOR MINISTER, BRITISH ENVOY DISCUSS COMMON ISSUES

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah discussed with the British Ambassador to Kuwait Mathew Lodge yesterday, security issues of mutual concern. Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah under-

scored that both nations enjoy close and solid ties. Meanwhile, the British envoy acknowledged Kuwait's efforts to promote peace and security in the region, saying that such discussions are crucial to boost bilateral ties. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Ministry of Interior's Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd and his assistant for criminal security affairs Maj Gen Abdul Hameed Al-Awadhi yesterday met the Supreme Planning and Development Council's Secretary General Dr Khaled Mahdi and the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Zineb Benjelloun, where they signed on the national project on drug prevention's policy and management.

In Brief

AMIRI REPRESENTATIVE OFFERS CONDOLENCES

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's representative, Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah conveyed yesterday the Kuwaiti leadership's condolences over the death of former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani during an event in Tehran. — KUNA



KUWAIT CONDEMNS BLAST

KUWAIT: Kuwait condemned an explosion against a guesthouse of Kandahar's provincial government, Afghanistan, which killed five UAE diplomats and injured the UAE ambassador on Tuesday. "This terrorist crime, which targeted the noble humanitarian action and those supervising it, showed again how the menace of terrorism has been targeting mankind and those seeking wellbeing of others," a foreign ministry source said. — KUNA



SPEAKER OFFERS CONDOLENCES

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday sent a cable of condolences to Speaker of the UAE's Federal National Council (FNC) Amal Al-Qubaisi, over the death of five Emirati diplomats in the terrorist attack on Afghanistan's Kandahar city. Ghanem also expressed Kuwait's full support for any measures taken by the UAE to fight terrorism. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: A jockey and his horse pose in front of an aircraft. — KUNA photo

NCCAL HONORS POPULAR POET



KUWAIT: An artist performs during an event held to honor poet Mubarak Al-Hudeibi. — KUNA



NCCAL Assistant Secretary-General for the Arts Sector Dr Bader Al-Duweesh speaks during the event.



Mubarak Al-Hudeibi

KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Art and Letters (NCCAL) organized a singing seminar at Abdulhussein Abdulredha Theater on Tuesday evening in honor of Mubarak Al-Hudeibi, a celebrated Kuwaiti poet.

At the beginning of the function, NCCAL Assistant Secretary-General for the Arts Sector Dr Bader Al-Duweesh spoke highly of Hudeibi's eloquent lyrics which helped enrich the national library with love and patriotic songs.

Hudeibi's lyrics are sung by most of singing stars in Kuwait and other Gulf countries such as Shadi Al-Khaleej, Gherrid Al-Shat'e, Hussein Jassem, Abdulmohsen Al-Mehanna, Talal Maddah, Mohammad Abdo, Abdullah Al-Ruwaisheed, Abadi Al-

Jowhar, Nabil Shu'a'il and Abdulmajid Abdullah, Dr Al-Duweesh said. He also commended as outstanding Hudeibi's contributions to the Kuwaiti radio and Kuwait Artist Association, noting that Hudeibi is one of the pioneers of the Kuwaiti media.

NCCAL's Secretary-General Ali Al-Youha and Assistant Secretary-General for Culture Sector Mohammad Al-Asousi honored the great poet in the presence of a dozens of artists and media celebs. Later on a documentary featuring the biography of, and interviews with, Hudeibi was screened. Born in Al-Mergab area in 1946, Hudeibi is married and has one son. — KUNA

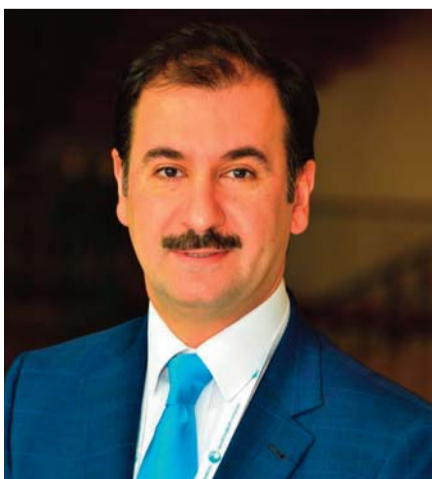
UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR TOUTS NEW OBESITY MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

By Abdellatif Al-Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait University Professor, liver disease and endoscopy consultant at Mubarak Hospital Dr Jaber Al-Ali spoke recently about a highly advanced technique used for the first time in Kuwait and Arabian Gulf region to treat obesity called 'Endomina System'. It is a new and highly advanced technique that is already available in Europe, and considered one of the most modern ways in obesity management, he indicated.

The system complements in with the stomach endoscope to reduce the size of the stomach in a sleeve gastrectomy form, Dr Ali said. He reassured that the technique is completely safe to use, adding that it is designed in a way to prevent any kind of liquid leakage or bleeding. Patients might initially experience some pain, nausea and vomiting that lasts for up to two days however, he noted.

In addition to being safe, the procedure does not involve surgery and does not take time as the patient can leave within 24



Dr Jaber Al-Ali

hours from the time he is admitted to the hospital. It helps the patient lose nearly 40 percent of excessive weight, he added. This technique is considered a complementary for sleeve gastrectomy and bypass operations, and not a replacement, he noted.

SOCIETY COVERS EDUCATION FEES FOR 1,840 SYRIAN REFUGEE STUDENTS

ANKARA: Kuwait's Al-Najat Charitable Society covered the education fees of some 1,840 Syrian refugee students at Al-Najat schools in the cities of Sanliurfa and Hatay southern Turkey yesterday. The society opened a school in Hatay and two schools in Sanliurfa, Kuwaiti volunteer Mohammad Al-Khaleedi said. Najat Society, alongside other bodies and organizations, also offered 460 food baskets, blankets, in addition to winter clothes for Syrian refugees and Orphans in a different campaign, he said. — KUNA

ANKARA: Members of Kuwait's Al-Najat Charitable Society during their visit to Syrian refugee students in Turkey. — KUNA





ANTIQUITIES EXHIBITED AT KUWAIT NATIONAL LIBRARY

KUWAIT: The Kuwait National Library yesterday opened an exhibition to display antiquities recently recovered from archeological sites discovered in Subbiya and Tal Buhaita north of Kuwait. They include potteries, some of which date back to the early Islamic era, and belong to civilizations that inhabited the coastal area of Kuwait during that time. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KFAED OFFERS GRENADA KD 4 MILLION LOAN

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed an agreement with the government of Grenada on Tuesday under which the fund will offer Grenada a loan amounting to KD four million (nearly \$13.6 million).

The document was signed by Grenadian Prime Minister Keith Mitchell and KFAED Deputy Director-General Ghanim Al-Ghaniman. The funding will be used in financing the third stage of a road-building project in the rural communities in the Caribbean island country, according to a statement by the Fund.

The project is to promote the socio-economic development in Grenada through the improvement of the road network in the rural areas and facilitating the exportation of farm products. It aims to rehabilitate 12 roads and bridges in six provinces, and improve the sewage system in the rural areas by the end of 2019, the statement added. — KUNA

PRIVATE SECTOR INVITED FOR 'INNOVATION CHALLENGE' PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences on Tuesday invited private sector companies to register for the applied executive education program 'innovation challenge' 2017. In a press statement, Head of the Companies Management and Innovation Department at KFSA Bassam Al-Faili stated that KFAS invites companies in Kuwait's private sector to take advantage of this exciting opportunity to develop their company's science-based innovation capabilities. He added that registration for the free-of-charge training program would be closed on January 15.

"This unique program uses the modern learning techniques such as interactive mentoring, simulation and distance learning in addition to case studies and experiential projects to help participants drive innovative change into their companies," Faili said.

The KFAS Innovation Challenge program specifically intended to drive companies in Kuwait to become more innovative. This program is customized for Kuwait through a partnership between KFAS and the Executive Education for Business at the Royal College of Art (RCA), the world's top postgraduate design University based in London.

The programs modules will be balanced between classroom style learning and experiential exercises, site visits and co-creation sessions alongside practical lessons based in 'real world' contexts. He indicated that the program is part of KFAS efforts to support the private sector to be a catalyst in transforming Kuwait's economy into knowledge based economy. — KUNA

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القلم

Al-Qabas

EDUCATION WOES

By Khalid Al-Tarrah

Kuwait's failure to achieve educational goals set in 2000, and improve education in the secondary and elementary stages is old news. A UNESCO report about 'failure and setback' in general education stages in Kuwait explained that the percentage of graduates who have Bachelor's or Master's degrees in Science in Kuwait are among the least in the world, and are comparable to those of countries like Madagascar, Rwanda, Brunei, Comoros, and Sudan. Meanwhile, Kuwait was surpassed in this field by each of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunis and Lebanon.

Kuwait is among the countries that has a relatively higher rate of spending on education, but the problem lies within the planning method. The Kuwait National Competitiveness Committee's reports showed that the largest part of budgets allocated for education is directed towards the salaries for teachers at the Education Ministry, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) and Kuwait University. Meanwhile, developing curricula, means of teaching, educational facilities or environmental and educational activities receive limited funding compared to the total annual expenditure on education.

The committee's report for 2012-2013 showed that KD 500 million were spent on education for the fiscal year 2000-2001, which is three times more than what was spent in the last 10 years. The report warned against low education efficiency levels and pointed out that parents preferred to register their children in private schools. Furthermore, it points out the increasing number of teachers in 2001-2002 at a rate of 6.4 percent on average, compared to the drop in the number of students in the same period.

Reports of Kuwait's committee were completely based on official data and not estimations. These results underwent careful analysis and highlighted the deviation in educational policies and expenditure, so that decision makers can use these information for the better good. But the education ministry did not benefit neither from these reports, nor from the World Bank's studies in regards to the educational curricula.

The dilemma is found in policies that has no accountability, and because of which Kuwait is witnessing regression and failure in the educational field while education is considered the most important form of human investment for all individuals in the society. Kuwait is currently suffering from a budget deficit that happened as a result of random policies and hesitation in reform. The victim as a result is not only the state's wealth, but also the efficiency of education which is supposed to be what helps us overcome all challenges. Hopefully minister Dr Mohammad Al-Fares rescues us from this crisis, regardless of the hurdles the ministry suffered in the past.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



الوعي

Al-Rai

AWARENESS KEY TO SUCCESS

By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

It is said that advanced countries are highly aware nations, and a country's advancement can be distinguished by assessing the public awareness level of its people. A person's history or culture does not prove anything, but the proper way to gauge is to know how much awareness is spreading among the people. When you visit a country with citizens who have high awareness levels, you can see that the employees are appreciated for their work, the people follow traffic laws despite the jams, and you would find that the country is beautiful and clean in general.

But on the other hand, when you visit a country with citizens who have low level of awareness, you can see chaotic and filthy streets that are jammed with vehicles. The difference between both countries is found in the people living in them. An aware citizen is a respected one who helps himself and his country, and believes that he alone can bring a change. However, an ignorant citizen is the one who does not appreciate his own country or other human beings. This proves that awareness among people is very important.

When a child is born, her mother is educated about the baby by an expert who explains to her what she has to do to protect her baby's health and well-being. The child discovers

its importance as a human being when he starts receiving education and distinguishes between what is right and wrong about his surroundings and how to respects others. He is corrected when making a mistake, and punishment becomes a lesson.

The question is, are we a country that has a high level of awareness? I believe that the answer is yes. Who makes us aware? In Kuwait, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play this role, and have succeeded in increasing awareness among citizens. We can complete the picture by convincing the government to allocate a suitable budget to be spent on spreading the importance of awareness. The interior ministry for example can increase traffic awareness. Traffic is a problem that we experience every day. Meanwhile, there are other responsibilities that ministries cannot be held responsible for alone, but we also should be responsible for them.

I would like to thank the education ministry for adding the word 'health' to the official title of physical education, increasing awareness about health education among children, which will help drop the rate of obesity, diabetes and will increase awareness about early cancer detection. Awareness is the key to success, which is a scientific fact.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

Crime

Report

Probe continues in containers case

KUWAIT: The public prosecution is continuing its investigations in the case of containers containing liquor that were smuggled out from Shuwaikh Port, and that in order to uncover the causes of other major security breaches at the port in the past few months. The discovery of the two containers can solve the puzzle of other containers that left Shuwaikh customs without being checked. The arrest of the main accused, a Kuwaiti, and his Indian partner, helped the prosecution solve this mystery.

The accused citizen (J. B.) worked at Shuwaikh Port as an official for a company, and had the authority to sign permits for containers to leave, said an informed source. Investigations revealed that the containers left behind many pieces of evidence including forged papers and policies that belong to others. The accused got the containers out at a time when containers arrived in the name of the Amiri Diwan with furniture for Jaber Cultural Center in the name of a ruling family member, said the source. "The suspect used a copy of the civil ID attached to the clearance papers of the Amiri Diwan containers and got his containers out," he said. The suspect also said some containers left Kuwait after they were unloaded, as port papers show. Investigations are continuing to get all the details and bust those who are involved.

Sentenced to death

The criminal court sentenced a Sri Lankan man to death for murdering his wife. The suspect confessed he was behind an explosion in a three-storey building in Salmiya that injured him and killed his wife and another woman. The suspect confessed that he planned to make the crime look like an accident, so he made a hole in the gas pipe, which caused a huge explosion. He said the move was the result of complicated disputes he failed to resolve.

Exonerated

The appeals misdemeanor court canceled a ruling of the court of first instance that convicted a school vice principal and jailed her for six months for defrauding a computer company, and exonerated her from the charges. The case began when the company told police it was swindled by a person who made it believe that he can mediate with a school to supply it with several computers. The vice principal's lawyer said there are no merits of being party to the swindling charges against his client based on the judicial principle that a person may be questioned if he contributed to the action that required the punishment, which does not exist in this case.

Fake notes

Airport customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle fake \$500 notes. The officers suspected a parcel from China in the name of two Asian expats. The parcel included an ad magazine with \$500 notes between its pages. The person who went to receive it denied anything to do with the contents, so they suspected that the notes might be forged. The parcel was sent to concerned authorities.

— Translated from the Arabic press



KFH PARTICIPATES IN 'MANAGING FOR SUCCESS' SEMINAR

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in 'Managing for Success' seminar organized by the Institute of Business Studies IBS. The seminar that was led by Francesca Gino, Professor of Business Administration, tackled several subjects that are of great importance to employees of different sectors, such as a brief overview of the objectives for the day, as well as a quick tour through core concepts such as

effective leadership, and the concept of leaders as decision architects. It also focused on managing talent and solving organizational issues: leaders as decision architects, effective leadership and how it requires creative deal-making, team preparation and negotiation, the art and science of negotiation, debrief, in addition to question and answer and general discussions.

The seminar witnessed huge turnout and

participation of managers and dignitaries from different sectors. KFH participated with 22 seats. The IBS hosts the seminar in collaboration with Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP). It is worth noting that Professor Gino has won numerous awards for her teaching, including the HBS Faculty Award by Harvard Business School's MBA Class of 2015.

SPARK MARATHON 2017 KICKS OFF ON JAN 14



Ayman Al-Mutairi

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, invited all sport activities' fans to participate in Spark Marathon 2017. The marathon is set to be held on Saturday, January 14, 2017 at Marina Crescent in Salmiya. It is organized by Spark Athletic Center, under the patronage of Sheikh Salman Al-Homoud Al-Sabah, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and presence of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Sabah, Director General of the Public Authority for Youth and Sports. The marathon starts at 6:30 am, composed of four categories: 5 km, 10km, 21km and 42 km, and \$100,000 in cash prizes, will be distributed at the marathon's conclusion at 1:00 pm.

The marathon sponsored by VIVA, aims at spreading sport and health awareness in the Kuwaiti society, highlight new healthy life styles and emphasize on health programs. Many participants, from inside and outside Kuwait, are expected to race in the marathon.

Ayman Salem Al-Mutairi, Senior Manager Corporate Communications said: "We decided at VIVA to sponsor such event that combines between health and sport and meets

with our CSR strategy, as we are keen to support activities that serves the society and spread awareness."

It is noteworthy that VIVA is always proactive to brace the local and international sport activities, for example and not limited to: main sponsor for Kuwait Soccer League, sponsor for Real Madrid and Manchester United soccer teams, to grant opportunities for Kuwaiti youth to explore new experiences through VIVA Real Madrid and VIVA Manchester United soccer academies.

VIVA is keen to continue its ongoing socially responsible role in the community by spreading the spirit of goodness amongst Kuwaiti society. We believe at VIVA in taking a holistic approach to our CSR activities, one that engages our employees, and creates goodwill in our communities with a focus on helping to grow and develop the State of Kuwait.

VIVA's Corporate Social Responsibility 'CSR' activities can be reviewed on the company's website at <https://www.viva.com.kw/csr>. This offers a description of each CSR initiative that VIVA has supported, or taken on since its inception.

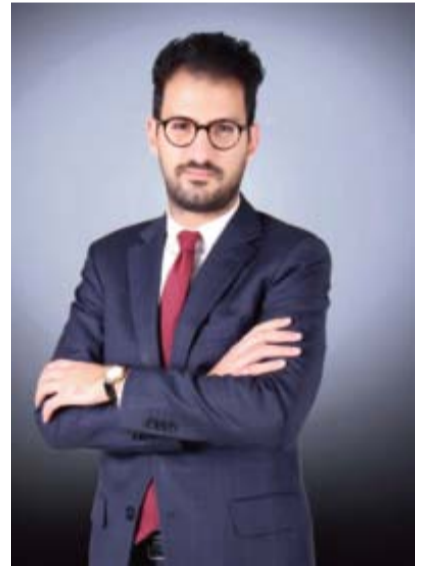
BOECKER, MUMS JOIN HORECA 2017

KUWAIT: Preparations for the Horeca Kuwait 2017 exhibition are steadily progressing, and the event is attracting more companies to take part, since it is an event which provides a golden opportunity to exchange expertise to meet the local market's needs and future expansion plans.

In this regard, Boecker announced its intention to join other companies specialized in hospitality, hotel equipment, catering, transportation, cooking gas and design, which have already signed up to take part in Horeca Kuwait 2017 exhibition.

In this regard, Boecker's administrative associate Abraham Hilal stressed that Horeca Kuwait is a leading specialized exhibition that provides golden opportunities for companies to display various key products and services that help improve progress in the fields of hospitality and food industries in Kuwait, while also support the state's plans to diversify sources of income and create more job opportunities. Abraham added that Boecker provides top health services in various Middle Eastern countries including Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. He also stressed that Boecker plans to highlight and display its creative solutions in pest control, food safety and disinfection services related to hospitality and restaurants. He added that all Boecker services have earned it the prestigious ISO 9001 certificate for quality. Furthermore, he indicated that Boecker is a member in the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH).

Meanwhile, the International MUMS Food Waste Disposal Company, Korea; a leading company in the disposition of



Abraham Hilal

food waste using the latest technologies in this field, also announced plans to take part in Horeca Kuwait.

MUMS will display many of its products during the exhibition, including a newly-invented device to help dispose food waste in homes, restaurants or hotels. The device has been a success in Korea, Japan, Malaysia and China, and has successfully been tried in a restaurant in Kuwait.

Horeca Kuwait 2017 has so far attracted over 80 companies due to display their products in the presence of a group of international experts and chefs and a large group of company and hotel owners. The exhibition is organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref on January 16-18, 2017.



Leaders Group's General Manager Nabila Al-Anjari (third from left) poses with officials from MUMS Food Waste Disposal Company.



THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2017

FIRESTORM OVER TRUMP-RUSSIA REPORT PUBLICATION

'THIS IS NOT FAKE NEWS, IT IS REAL DOCUMENTS'

WASHINGTON: A media firestorm erupted yesterday after BuzzFeed published an unverified report with salacious details on purported intelligence gathered by Russia on President-elect Donald Trump. Many media outlets and analysts joined Trump in denouncing the decision by BuzzFeed to release the report, which had been circulating in Washington for weeks. "I think it was incredibly irresponsible," said Dan Kennedy, a journalism professor at Northeastern University. "These allegations are completely unverified, and as BuzzFeed acknowledged some are unverifiable."

Kennedy said the decision could further erode public trust in media after a bruising campaign in which news organizations were pilloried by Trump and his supporters and during which "fake news" became an issue. "It is unfortunate because this is not 'fake news,' it is real documents," Kennedy said. "And it's not 'the media,' it's BuzzFeed."

BuzzFeed published the 35-page document, compiled by a former British intelligence operative hired by other US presidential contenders to do political "opposition research" on Trump last year. Kelly McBride, a media ethicist at the Poynter Institute, a media education center, said in a blog post that "publishing an entirely unvetted document is a significant departure from the way editors of most significant publications would define the role of reporting."

'Transparency'

BuzzFeed editor-in-chief Ben Smith defended the decision to publish the document, saying his goal is "to be transparent in our journalism and to share what we have with our readers," while noting that "the document was in wide circulation at the highest levels of American government and media." Trump, who was set to hold his first news conference since the election yesterday, blasted what he called "fake news," and his spokesman Reince Priebus called it "complete garbage."

Media writers at other news organiza-



NEW JERSEY: In this photo, Defense Secretary-designate James Mattis stands with President-elect Donald Trump in Bedminster, New Jersey. — AP

tions joined in criticism of BuzzFeed's decision. Washington Post media writer Erik Wemple lamented BuzzFeed's "ridiculous rationale" for publication. "It is unverified-

meaning that it requires further investigation," Wemple wrote. "BuzzFeed has started that process and pledges to continue pursuing it. So why post the documents now?"

David Graham of The Atlantic said BuzzFeed "sidestepped a basic principle of journalism." The release "unfairly forces a public figure-Trump, in this case-to respond to a set

of allegations that might or might not be entirely scurrilous," Graham wrote.

"The reporter's job is not to simply dump as much information as possible into the public domain ... It is to gather information, sift through it, and determine what is true and what is not." He added that "transparent transmission of misinformation is no more helpful or clarifying than no information at all." Michael Tracey of Vice News offered a dig at the online news rival, tweeting: "BuzzFeed breathlessly promotes a 'dossier' that it admits is unverified / riddled with errors, and reaps the rewards in traffic. A win-win."

'Kudos' to BuzzFeed

Richard Tofel, president of the investigative news organization ProPublica, welcomed BuzzFeed's decision to publish, noting that CNN had earlier reported on the existence of the document without revealing its contents.

"Kudos to @BuzzFeedBen and his team for publishing the dossier. Once CNN story out, citizens should have evidence to consider for themselves," Tofel tweeted. "Thus the dossier became focus of public debate. What remained was whether the debaters should be allowed to know what they were debating."

Analysts at the blog Lawfare, which follows national security issues, noted that it had the document "for a couple of weeks" and had chosen "not to publish it while the allegations within it remain unproven." But the analysts-Benjamin Wittes, Susan Hennessey and Quinta

Jurecic of the Brookings Institution-said this is nonetheless an important issue to be investigated. "The President and president-elect do not get briefed on material that the intelligence community does not believe to be at least of some credibility," they wrote. "While nobody has confirmed any of the allegations, both inside government and in the press, it is clear to us that they are the subject of serious attention." — AFP

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TOP PRESS RIGHTS DEFENDER CHARGED IN TURKEY COURT

ISTANBUL: The Turkey representative for Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and two other campaigners appeared in court yesterday, risking years in jail in a high-profile trial charged with aiding Kurdish militants. The trial has sparked international howls of protest from press rights' defenders who claim the climate for press freedom in Turkey has deteriorated sharply under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. RSF representative Erol Onderoglu, rights activist Sebnem Korur Fincanci and journalist Ahmet Nesin have been charged with making "terror propaganda" on behalf of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) after

guest-editing pro-Kurdish Turkish newspaper Ozgur Gundem.

Onderoglu told reporters outside the court they risked 14 years and six months in jail if convicted. Turkey ranked 151st of 180 countries in the 2016 World Press Freedom index published by RSF. "Since then, the situation has been getting worse every day," Christophe Deloire, RSF secretary general, told reporters outside the court. "Pluralism is almost totally dead in this country, there is no independent TV, there are only two or three newspapers that try to resist as they can," he said. Ozgur Gundem had invited guest editors to take control

of the paper in a campaign of solidarity as it faced pressure from authorities.

Onderoglu and the others were initially arrested in June but then freed pending trial. The daily was then raided and permanently shut down in August on charges of links with the PKK, which has waged an insurgency against Ankara for more than three decades. "This trial is a matter of honour for me and my friends, because we stood up and we fought for a noble cause," Fincanci said. Onderoglu's detention on June 20 triggered international alarm over press freedom in Turkey but concerns have grown further as the authorities

imposed a state of emergency in the wake of the July 15 failed coup.

Critics say that the state of emergency is being used against any opponent of Erdogan and not just the suspected coup plotters. The Istanbul court was also the scene Wednesday of a fresh hearing in the separate trial against the exiled former editor-in-chief of Turkish opposition newspaper Cumhuriyet, Can Dundar, and his Ankara bureau chief, Erdem Gul. Dundar and Gul, who are fighting previous convictions for revealing state secrets, are accused of ties to the US-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, a former Erdogan ally turned foe. —AFP



SYRIA: People are seen crossing at an army checkpoint, as rebel fighters and their families prepare to leave the town of Deir Kanun in the Wadi Barada region, yesterday, as part of a ceasefire deal with the Syrian government. —AFP

ARMY TO ENTER AREA NEAR DAMASCUS, WATER TO RESUME

'AGREEMENT REQUIRES MILITANTS TO GIVE UP HEAVY WEAPONS'

DAMASCUS: The Syrian government has reached a deal for the army to enter a rebel-held region near Damascus and restore the capital's water supply, the provincial governor said yesterday. Opposition sources denied there was any such deal, but a source inside the Wadi Barada region reported several hundred civilians were leaving under an agreement. Wadi Barada, some 15 kilometers northwest of Damascus, provides most of the water to the capital, but mains supplies have been cut since Dec 22, causing shortages for millions.

President Bashar al-Assad said this week he was determined to retake the area and secure the water supply, and fighting has continued despite a nationwide truce in place since Dec 30. Provincial governor Alaa Ibrahim told state news agency SANA there was now a deal to allow the government to retake control of the

region. "The agreement that was reached in principle requires the militants to give up their heavy weapons and for non-local militants to leave the area of Wadi Barada," he said. "(Then) the Syrian Arab Army will enter the area to clear it of mines and bombs to prepare for the entry of maintenance teams... to fix the damage caused to the water pumps and pipes by the terrorists' attacks."

But Ahmed Ramadan, an official with the opposition National Coalition, denied any such deal had been reached. "This information is untrue and is a part of the (regime and its allies') psychological warfare," he said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor of the war, also said the government had not reached a comprehensive deal with rebels. But it reported that residents wishing to leave were being offered safe passage on an individual basis. And a source on the

ground in Wadi Barada said Wednesday that some 600 civilians had left, passing through a makeshift tent where government officials were checking documents.

Syria's government accuses rebels, including former Al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front, of deliberately cutting the supply to the capital. But the rebels say regime strikes damaged pumping facilities and deny that Fateh al-Sham, previously known as Al-Nusra Front, has forces in the area. The government has concluded dozens of so-called "reconciliation deals" with rebel-held areas in Syria in recent months, particularly around the capital. The deals usually offer civilians and rebels safe passage to opposition-held territory elsewhere in exchange for surrendering the area to the army. The opposition says it is forced into such deals by government sieges and assault, and terms them a "starve or surrender" tactic. —AFP

FRESH SYRIA RAIDS AS MOSCOW SETS JANUARY 23 PEACE TALKS

BEIRUT: Syrian warplanes launched strikes in several parts of the country yesterday despite a fragile truce, a monitor said, as Russia confirmed a Jan 23 date for new peace talks. The negotiations, to be held in the Kazakh capital Astana, are intended to build on a ceasefire in effect since late December, brokered by regime ally Russia and rebel backer Turkey. The truce has brought quiet to large parts of the country, but has been threatened by continuing violence, particularly near the capital Damascus.

Overnight and into Wednesday, government warplanes hit opposition areas in the provinces of Aleppo and Idlib, as well as the Eastern Ghouta region near the capital, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The overnight strikes in Idlib, in the northwest of the country, targeted positions belonging to former Al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front, which is not party to the ceasefire, the Observatory said. The strikes on the town of Taftanaz killed three rebels from an Islamist group allied to the jihadists, the Britain-based monitor said.

An AFP correspondent in the town saw a building that had totally collapsed in the attack. The White Helmets, a rescue service operating in rebel areas, spent hours clearing debris with picks and hammers. Yesterday morning, government air strikes also hit Eastern Ghouta, the Observatory said. The rebel-held region has been hit by artillery fire during the truce, but the air strikes, which killed a woman and wounded nine other people, were the first since the start of the ceasefire, the monitor said. The Observatory also reported clashes and air strikes in the Wadi Barada region, which has seen some of the most serious violence since the truce went into effect on Dec 30.

Jan 23 peace talks

The rebel-held region some 15 kilome-

ters northwest of Damascus is the main water source for the capital, but supply has been cut since Dec 22.

Some 5.5 million people in Damascus and its suburbs are suffering water shortages as a result, the UN says. The government accuses rebels, among them Fateh al-Sham, of deliberately cutting the supply. The rebels say regime strikes damaged pumping facilities and deny that Fateh al-Sham, previously known as Al-Nusra Front, has forces in the area.

Fateh al-Sham and its jihadist rival the Islamic State group are excluded from the truce, and President Bashar al-Assad's government has said it plans to "liberate" Wadi Barada despite the deal. "The role of the Syrian army is to liberate that area in order to prevent those terrorists from using that water in order to suffocate the capital," Assad told French media on Monday. On Tuesday, the regime sent reinforcements to Wadi Barada, the Observatory said, without providing further details. Yesterday, however, state television said a deal had been reached with rebels to allow repair crews to enter the region "in the coming hours."

The delicate ceasefire has held in other parts of the country, though rebels and Turkey have warned the fighting in Wadi Barada could threaten the planned Astana talks. A Russian foreign ministry source said yesterday that the talks were scheduled for Jan 23, a date previously floated by Turkish officials. "At this time there is no indication that the meeting will be postponed. The date of January 23 is set," the source said, adding that work was underway to compile a list of participants. Regime ally Iran is also helping to organize the talks, which are the latest bid to find a political solution to the nearly six-year-old civil war that has killed more than 310,000 people. —AFP

YEMEN WAR CLAIMS LIVES OF 1,400 CHILDREN

SANAA: Nearly 1,400 children have been killed, hundreds more injured and many schools closed by the war in Yemen, the UN children's fund said yesterday. "Attacks on civilian areas continue to kill and injure scores of children in Yemen," said UNICEF's representative in Yemen, Meritxell Relano. "Instead of learning, children are witnessing death, war and destruction," she added, warning that the actual casualty toll was likely to be much higher than the verified figures.

More than 7,300 people have been killed in Yemen since a Saudi-led coalition intervened against Iran-backed Huthi rebels in March 2015 in support of the government. Relano called on all

parties in the conflict to protect children and stop attacks on schools. The plea follows a coalition air strike near a school in rebel-held northern Yemen on Tuesday that medics and a local official said killed five people, including two children.

UNICEF said that it had confirmed the death of one child in the strike. "Schools have to be zones of peace at all times, a sanctuary where children can learn, grow, play and be safe," Relano said. "Children should never risk their lives only to attend school." She said that nearly 2,000 schools in Yemen can no longer be used because they have been damaged, destroyed or are used as shelters or for military purposes. —AFP

FRANCE'S MACRON HIT FOR SPEAKING ENGLISH

PARIS: French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron has come under fire from the far right for showing disrespect for the French language by daring to address a conference in English. Macron, a 39-year-old centrist whose prospects are being taken increasingly seriously, took what amounts to an unusual move in French politics by defending the European Union during a visit to Berlin on Tuesday. And he raised eyebrows further by doing it in the language of "les anglosaxons" — too much for far-right leader Marine Le Pen, whose nationalist instincts are matched by a contempt for the European Union.

"Presidential candidate Macron goes to Berlin to do a conference in English... poor France!" she wrote on Tuesday in a tweet personally signed by her. Responding to a tweeted suggestion that Macron's language skills had upstaged his monolingual opponents, Le Pen's loyal lieutenant Florian Philippot went further. "He just shows that he has no respect for our language and that he doesn't believe in France," wrote the vice-president of the National Front party. The French government fiercely protects the language of Moliere, spoken by more than 220 million people worldwide thanks to France's colonial past.

While its leaders have a poor record in English-President Francois Hollande has little command of the language of Shakespeare—more and more young French people see it as vital. Hollande was mocked in 2012 when he wrote to US President Barack Obama to congratulate him on his re-election and signed off with the words, "Friendly, Francois



BERLIN: French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron at Humboldt university in Berlin. —AFP

Hollande." It was an embarrassing mis-translation of the French word "amicale-ment", used at the end of letters to mean "best wishes." In 2006, then French president Jacques Chirac famously stormed out of an EU summit in protest at a French businessman who had addressed the room in English.

Macron, a former banker and economy minister who is running as an independent, claims that his movement "En Marche" is the only pro-European force in France's presidential election this April and May. A recent poll showed him ahead of Le Pen in the first round of the April-May election for the first time under certain scenarios. Analysts see France's election as highly unpredictable, with the final list of candidates still unknown. —AFP

VENEZUELA OPPOSITION RENEWS ASSAULT AGAINST PRESIDENT

CARACAS: Venezuelan opposition lawmakers sought to trigger early elections by passing a key censure motion Monday against President Nicolas Maduro, who is ruling over a national economic crisis and consequent food shortages. The opposition majority in the National Assembly legislature declared that Maduro effectively "abandoned his post" by failing to stem the "economic devastation" in the oil-rich country, according to the speaker of the legislature, Julio Borges.

However, the Supreme Court, which has consistently sided with Maduro, was expected to overrule the motion. It has stated that "the National Assembly is not qualified to remove the president." The opposition blames Maduro for an "unprecedented economic crisis" that has prompted deadly riots and looting amid shortages of food and medicine. And it plans to hold a session Tuesday on the grounds of Vargas Hospital, one of the 320 public health facilities wracked by shortages. "People need to know that we are there with them," Borges said.

Maduro has blamed the crisis on a US-backed conspiracy against his socialist policies inherited from his late predecessor, Hugo Chavez. The opposition wants to hold early elections, saying the situation is too serious to wait until Maduro ends his term in 2019. "An electoral end to Venezuela's crisis is needed. So that the people can express themselves through a vote," Borges said. The lawmakers' declaration accuses Maduro of trampling citizens' rights and "breaking with the constitutional order."

More protests?

Under Venezuela's constitution, the National Assembly can force the president's replacement by declaring he has "abandoned his post." Elections are then meant to be held within 30 days. But Maduro has easily swatted down the opposition's other maneuvers against him so far.

His grip on the courts, electoral council and military has allowed him to stymie a series of opposition strategies: a recall referendum, legislative onslaught and street protests. The Supreme Court five months ago declared null all acts passed by the opposition-dominated parliament. It maintains that Maduro is exercising his constitutional prerogatives.

Political analyst Diego Moya-Ocampos of the London-based research group IHS said the opposition's motion will not succeed as long as the Supreme Court remains loyal to Maduro. "And we will have to wait and see whether it will be accompanied by a strategy of pressure from the street to escalate the protest," he said. Other analysts said the opposition-itself divided-would

do better to focus on local and state elections due this year. Venezuelans, meanwhile, must queue hours to buy rationed food and supplies at shops. Soaring inflation has driven up the prices of what goods are available.

Maduro has launched a series of measures to tackle the crisis, with limited success. Last month, he announced that new, higher-denomination banknotes would be printed to spare Venezuelans handling unwieldy wads of bills. That triggered chaos as Maduro tried to withdraw the prevalent 100-bolivar bill from circulation before replacements had arrived. He said in televised comments on Monday that he now aimed to launch the new series of banknotes on Jan 16. —AFP

IRAQ FORCES RETAKE 80% OF EAST MOSUL

MOSUL, Iraq: Iraqi forces have retaken at least 80 percent of east Mosul from the Islamic State jihadist group, the spokesman of the special forces spearheading the campaign said yesterday. "I think you can say that we have retaken 80 to 85 percent" of the eastern side of Mosul, Sabah al-Noman, spokesman for the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS), said in the city. Tens of thousands of troops launched a huge offensive to retake Mosul, IS's last major bastion in Iraq, and areas around it on Oct 17.

The initial phase of the offensive saw a variety of forces retake significant swathes of land in little time but the going has been tough inside the city itself. After a lull in operations, the CTS and other forces

stepped up their coordination and, with increased air and advisory support from a US-led coalition, launched a fresh push just before the New Year. Over the past two weeks, Iraqi forces have overrun several districts and reached the Tigris River that runs through the heart of the city for the first time.

Combined with the destruction of all bridges over the river, that has made it difficult for IS fighters in east Mosul to resupply or escape to the west bank, which they still fully control. The western side of Mosul, which is home to the old city and some of the jihadists' traditional strongholds, was always tipped as likely to offer the most resistance. —AFP

THOUSANDS OF 'GHOST SOLDIERS' LIKELY STILL ON AFGHAN PAYROLL

WASHINGTON: The Afghan army likely still has tens of thousands of "ghost soldiers" on its payrolls and Taliban commanders are apparently buying US-supplied weapons from local troops, a US government inspector said yesterday. US and NATO commanders in Afghanistan have long criticized endemic corruption in the Afghan security forces, but 15 years after the US-led invasion the problem remains persistent, said John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

"Afghan commanders often pocket the paychecks of 'ghost soldiers' for whom the US is paying salaries," Sopko said in prepared remarks to a Washington think tank. "The number of ghost soldiers is significant, likely reaching into the tens of thousands." He added there is evidence the Taliban have instructed field commanders to buy US-supplied weapons, fuel, and ammunition from Afghan soldiers. "Because to do so is both easier and less expensive for the insurgents," he said in a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Afghan police and army units took over providing security for

Afghanistan from NATO in 2015. Their first year was something of a disaster, when they sustained more than 5,000 fatalities and saw the regional capital Kunduz briefly captured by the Taliban. Numbers of casualties were significantly higher in 2016. Sopko, who frequently delivers scathing reports detailing Afghan corruption and hapless US reconstruction efforts, delivered his latest assessment just weeks before President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

Just as President Barack Obama did eight years ago, Trump is inheriting an Afghan conflict that seems impossible to resolve any time soon. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joe Dunford, has called the situation a "stalemate." Obama has cut the US troop presence to about 8,400 but Sopko warned of the consequences of draw downs. "Withdraw, and the democratic government may well fall. Stay, and continue what we have been doing and we may be faced with what General Dunford has described as a stalemate," Sopko warned. Including war fighting, US costs for Afghanistan now total near \$1 trillion.—AFP

US JURY CONDEMNS CHARLESTON CHURCH SHOOTER TO DEATH

CHARLESTON, United States: A US jury on Tuesday condemned self-described white supremacist Dylan Roof to death over the massacre of nine black worshippers in a South Carolina church in June 2015 — a crime that shocked the nation. Roof, 22, was convicted last month of 33 federal charges-including hate crimes resulting in death-in connection with the shooting spree at the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston. A Bible study group at "Mother Emanuel," which had welcomed Roof, was just beginning its closing prayer when the self-avowed Nazi and Ku Klux Klan sympathizer opened fire, killing nine people ranging in age from 26 to 87.

The slayings once again exposed the deep divides in America over race and access to guns. Roof showed little reaction to the decision, delivered just hours after the 12-member jury retired to deliberate, though he occasionally seemed to be slightly smiling. Federal judge Richard Gergel will formally deliver Roof's sentence yesterday morning at the Charleston courthouse. The verdict unanimously reached by the jury is binding. "I still feel like I had to do it," Roof told jurors earlier in a semi-coherent closing argument.

Roof represented himself in the sentencing phase of the trial, against the advice of his lawyers and the judge. He called no witnesses and offered no evidence for the jury to consider. After the jury offered its sentencing verdict, Roof asked for new attorneys so he could move for a retrial, but Gergel told him to provide specific reasons for his request yesterday. Relatives of the victims will be invited to speak at yesterday's hearing.

'Not one tear'

Earlier, prosecutor Jay Richardson urged jurors to sentence Roof to death for "this cold, calculated, malicious killing." "Not one tear did he shed for those that he killed," he said. "Unrepentant. No remorse." Richardson noted Roof only expressed sorrow that he put his parents through an emotional trial during which his mother suffered a heart attack after a survivor's

gripping testimony. "He had sorrow for them. He had pity for himself. That he had lost his freedom. His ability to watch movies and drive a car," he said. "But his sadness was reserved for the little white children that have to live with African Americans."

During the first phase of the trial, Roof exhibited no signs of remorse as survivors recounted the rampage in heart-rending detail. A video of Roof's chilling confession was shown to the jury. "Somebody had to do something because black people are killing white people every day," Roof said without emotion to the FBI special agent questioning him. "They rape 100 white people a day." In notes confiscated from Roof in prison in August 2015, he wrote that he was "not sorry." "I have not shed a tear for the innocent people I killed," the notes said.

Roof's lawyers had suggested their client was not mentally fit, but Gergel found Roof competent to stand trial. His family said in a statement posted in US media Tuesday that they would "continue to pray for the Emanuel AME families and the Charleston community." "We will struggle as long as we live to understand why he committed this horrible attack, which caused so much pain to so many good people," the statement said. US Attorney General Loretta Lynch, who is herself black, said in a statement that "we hope that the completion of the prosecution provides the people of Charleston-and the people of our nation-with a measure of closure."

Tim Scott, one of South Carolina's two senators, added that "nineteen months ago, a heartless murderer attempted to start a race war." "Today that man was rightly sentenced to death," said Scott, who is black. Capital punishment is only rarely meted out in federal cases, in part because violent crimes more typically are tried under state laws. Federal authorities have executed only three inmates since 1976. Roof is also facing state murder charges in South Carolina, and prosecutors were planning to seek the death penalty, but those proceedings were indefinitely put on hold last week.—AFP



CHARLESTON: Jennifer Pinckney, widow of the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, one of the Emanuel Church shooting victims, leaves the US District Court with family friend Kylon Middleton in Charleston, South Carolina.—AP

BREXIT DEAL WORSE THAN EU MEMBERSHIP

VALLETTA: Britain's deal for leaving the European Union must be worse than the terms of its membership, said Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, whose country has just taken on the six-month EU presidency. "We want a fair deal for the United Kingdom but that fair deal has to be inferior to membership," Muscat told a press conference in Valletta with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. "We can see no situation where whatever is negotiated ends up being better than the current situation that the United Kingdom has."

Britain voted to leave the EU in a referendum in June last year but has yet to start formal negotiations with the other 27 countries on the terms of its departure and its future relationship. British Prime Minister Theresa May has said she will trigger the official two-year divorce process by the end of March. EU nations have warned Britain it cannot expect to keep all the ben-

efits of membership of the single market while being able to limit the bloc's signature freedom of movement for people.

Muscat rejected suggestions that Britain may be able to play on divisions within the other 27 countries to extract concessions, saying that the rest of the EU was unusually unified. "I have rarely been at a discussion on any other subject where the 27 member states have basically the same position," said the premier, whose country is a former British colony that also holds the rotating presidency of the Commonwealth. "So I can't peek into the future and see whether one country or another will break that sort of unity, but I simply don't see it happening now."

The EU 27 are due to hold a special summit in Valletta in February to discuss the post-Brexit future followed by a major summit in Rome in March to mark the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome which founded the EU's forerunner.—AFP



BRAZIL: Relatives wait for information following a riot that ended with at least four prisoners killed inside Desembargador Raimundo Vidal Pessoa Public Jail, in Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil.—AP

COCAINE GANG WAR DRIVES BRAZIL PRISON BLOODBATHS

'AN ORCHESTRATED MASS KILLING TARGETING BIGGEST GANG MEMBERS'

SAO PAULO: When beheaded, disemboweled corpses stacked up in Brazilian jails, it looked like bloody chaos caused by overcrowding. But experts see method in last week's madness. They say it was part of a war between organized drug gangs in one of the world's most important cocaine markets and trafficking routes. Last week's series of massacres left 100 prisoners dead-many of them active members of gangs, authorities said.

The government has deployed 200 emergency personnel to secure the two prisons where the most blood was shed. The largest bloodbath appeared to be an orchestrated mass killing targeting members of Brazil's biggest gang, the First Capital Command (PCC). It was thought to be a backlash by the PCC's rivals for its violent expansion.

Seizing drug routes

Authorities say the Sao Paulo-based PCC seized control of the country's southern supply routes last year by gunning down powerful drug trafficker Jorge Rafaat. Its expansion has made it an outright enemy of the second-biggest Brazilian gang, the Red Command (CV), based in Rio de Janeiro. After the Rafaat killing gave it control of a key Paraguayan border route, the PCC then turned its attention to securing control of the north. "What it wants is to dominate the whole of Brazil," said Marcio Sergio Christino, a public prosecutor of organized crime. "The Red Command used to use southern trafficking routes that are now controlled by the PCC," said Christino.

After the killing, the Red Command "had to look for alternative routes in the north," he said. There it joined forces with the third most-powerful faction in Brazil, Family of the North (FDN), "to forge an alternative route to the one used by the PCC." Authorities said FDN members were the ones who beheaded and mutilated PCC members in the biggest of last week's massacres, in a jail in the northern state of Amazonas that left 60 people dead.

Highly organized gang

With an estimated 20,000 members, the PCC thrives even with its leader Marcos Willians Herbas Camacho, known as "Marcola," behind bars since 1999. Investigators say that apart from its drug-trafficking activities it also owns bus companies, minor football clubs and an illicit petrol refinery. "The PCC is a very solid and hierarchical organization," said Sergio Adorno, an expert on violent crime at Sao Paulo University. "It has very clearly defined rules and a clear division of tasks and functions." Its rival Red Command is considered Brazil's oldest gang, dating to the 1970s.

It thrived on a cocaine boom from the 1980s, expanding from bank robberies and kidnapping to control the drug trade in Rio. But its power has declined, said Alexander Araujo, a federal prosecutor in the city. He says CV is less organized and ambitious than its main rival. Araujo said he believes the root cause of the conflict is the PCC's encroachment on CV's turf in the Rio slums with the help of smaller local gangs.

Brazil shares thousands of miles of porous borders with three of the biggest cocaine-producing countries in the world: Colombia, Bolivia and Peru. That makes Brazil a major stepping stone for networks trafficking the drug via Africa to Europe. Experts say Brazilian traffickers are aiming to forge ties with Colombian gangs to offer them access to one of the most important international drug routes in the world. But first they have to win the turf war at home.—AFP



GENEVA: Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Cyprus Norway's Espen Barth Eide, talks during a press conference on the third day of the UN-sponsored Cyprus peace talks yesterday in Geneva.—AFP

CYPRIOT LEADERS TO SWAP MAPS ON UNIFIED ISLAND

GENEVA: Rival Cypriot delegations were to yesterday present maps detailing their visions for how internal boundaries should be drawn as they pursue talks aimed at ending the island's 42-year division. UN envoy Espen Barth Eide told reporters in Geneva that the exchange will take place behind closed doors with cartographers from both sides present. "It is a very important moment... Historic," Eide said. It will mark the first time since the eastern Mediterranean island was divided that Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders had presented maps describing the borders a reunified country, he added.

The step comes a day before foreign ministers from Cyprus's so-called guarantor powers-Britain, Greece and Turkey-arrive at the UN in Geneva for talks on security, another bedrock issue in the peace process. Turkish Cypriot leaders have agreed in principle to return some of the land controlled by Greek Cypriots before the 1974 invasion by Turkish troops, which came in response to an Athens-inspired coup seeking union with Greece. Eide said the sides are very close to agreeing on what overall percentage of the island each will control.

The thorny issue lies in how the boundaries are redrawn, including around the iconic town of Morphou on the northern coast. Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades has warned that there can be no deal without a full return of Morphou, while some in the Turkish Cypriot camp have declared its return a non-starter. After the maps are reviewed by Anastasiades, Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, Eide and cartographers, they will be locked in a UN vault pending further discussions on territory swaps, the envoy said.—AFP

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KENYANS MOCK PRESIDENT'S PASSION FOR PROJECT LAUNCH

NAIROBI: Kenya's notoriously caustic tweeters have taken aim at President Uhuru Kenyatta's love for a good ribbon-cutting, mocking his endless unveilings of often bizarrely named projects. Kenyatta, who is seeking re-election in August, has an active Twitter account which has recently been abuzz with him launching a series of infrastructure projects alongside tweets reminding the country of how much development he has brought. However his commissioning last week of a foot-bridge in the coastal region of Mombasa, dubbed the "Buxton Footbridge Non-Motorized Transport

Project" was a step too far for Kenyans on the social networking site.

They criticized him and his advisors for publicizing such small projects highlighting that many had been previously launched or commissioned. "This fetish with ribbons must be investigated," tweeted James W. The publicity stunt saw the country's twittering class, widely known as Kenyans of Twitter (KOT) launch the hashtag #UhuruChallenge in which they came up with their own projects to be launched or commissioned. Alongside a picture of a toothpick contain-

er tied with a ribbon, one Kenyan wrote: "I have commissioned the multi-million manually propelled dental debris excavator project."

Another posted a picture of a condom tied with a ribbon, declaring he was launching a "virginity eradication program." An even more inventive tweeter came up with a "launching kit" of a pair of scissors and a roll of ribbon, while another pictured a pair of flip-flops to commission his "advanced mobility apparatus project." Others took a more serious tone, pointing to some of the problems plaguing the east African nation. "When you realize

the only thing you are not launched yet is a spirited fight against corruption," one person wrote.

Others referred to the biting drought in the country, and a strike by public health doctors that has lasted over a month. Meanwhile data science company Odipo Dev published graphs showing that a quarter of all projects launched by Kenyatta were carried out in the past six months. The election race is heating up in the country, with some 4,000 opposition members meeting in the capital Wednesday in a bid to come up with a common platform to unseat Kenyatta. —AFP

NAZI WAR CRIMINAL ALOIS BRUNNER DIED IN SYRIA BASEMENT IN 2001

'HE SUFFERED AND CRIED A LOT IN HIS FINAL YEARS'

PARIS: Nazi war criminal Alois Brunner, who was responsible for the deaths of an estimated 130,000 Jews, died in 2001 at the age of 89, locked up in a squalid Damascus basement, a French magazine reported yesterday. Its investigation described as "highly credible" by veteran Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld aims at resolving the fate of one of the most notorious figures of the Holocaust. Three ex-members of the Syrian secret service interviewed by the magazine XXI said Adolf Eichmann's former assistant spent his last years in miserable conditions underneath an apartment block in the Syrian capital.

The Austrian-born SS commander was in charge of the Drancy camp north of Paris from which Jews in occupied France were sent to the gas chambers. He remained to the end an unrepentant Nazi and anti-Semite, the sources told XXI. One of his guards said Brunner, who went by the name of Abu Hussein, "suffered and cried a lot in his final years, everyone heard him." The man, identified only as Omar, said he "couldn't even wash." All he had to eat were "army rations, awful stuff and an egg or a potato. He had to chose one or the other."

The circumstances of Brunner's final years have remained an enigma for decades. The Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Vienna, which tracks down former Nazis, had declared that he had died in Damascus in 2010. Klarsfeld, a prominent lawyer and historian, flew to Syria with his wife and fellow investigator Beate in 1982 to urge the Assad regime to expel him. Klarsfeld's father was arrested in Nice in September 1943 in an SS roundup led by Brunner. He later died in Auschwitz.

Eichmann's 'right-hand man'

Eichmann, one of the architects of the so-called Final Solution who was hanged in Israel in 1962, called Brunner his "right-hand man." "We are satisfied to learn that he lived badly rather



PARIS: This undated file photo shows Austrian-born Nazi war criminal Alois Brunner. — AFP

than well," Klarsfeld said. "XXI's investigation is highly credible. They have questioned someone who knew him at close quarters," he added. Brunner slipped through the Allies' hands at the end of the war. He left Germany for Egypt in 1953 with a passport in the name of Georg Fischer. He worked for a time running guns to the Algerian independence movement, the FLN, before moving to Syria the following year.

Sheltered in Damascus, he became an advisor to the Syria secret police, allegedly passing on torture and interrogation methods developed by the Nazis.

Survived parcel bombs

But the Israeli intelligence services were quickly on his trail. He was said to have been killed by a parcel bomb on Sept 13, 1961. In fact, he lost an eye in that attack and four fingers in another parcel bomb in 1981, although the Syrian authorities continued to deny his existence. He was convicted of war crimes by French courts in his absence in 1954, when he was sentenced to death. In 2001, another French trial, which for the first time included the specific charge of arresting and deporting hundreds of orphans, sentenced him to life imprisonment. The death sentence had been abolished in France in 1981.

According to XXI, Brunner was practically under house arrest in his apartment in the diplomatic quarter of Damascus from 1989. It said at the end of the 1990s he was moved for "security reasons" to the basement, and he was confined there until his death. "Once he was in the room, the door was closed and never opened again," Omar told the magazine. He claimed Brunner was buried secretly in accordance with Muslim rites in the city's Al-Affif cemetery in December 2001.

"In a dictatorship like Syria, he was untouchable as long as the dictator didn't want rid of him," said Klarsfeld. "Until the end he kept his hatred of Jews intact, as well as his faith in National Socialism," he added. "He was someone who hated France as much as he hated Jews." In a short telephone interview in 1987 Brunner is alleged to have told the Chicago Sun-Times that he didn't regret his part in the Holocaust. "All of them deserved to die because they were the devil's agents and human garbage. I have no regrets and I would do it again." — AFP



BRAZIL: In this photo released by Agencia Brasil, a ceremony is held for Greece's late Ambassador to Brazil Kyriakos Amiris before his remains are flown home from the airport in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

GAMBIA ELECTION RULING DELAYED FOR SEVERAL MONTHS

BANJUL, Gambia: The Gambia's chief Supreme Court justice dealt a blow to President Yahya Jammeh's legal challenge against the result of December's election on Tuesday, saying it would not be heard for several months. Jammeh's political party lodged a legal case on his behalf last month aimed at annulling his Dec 1 election defeat to opponent Adama Barrow, and triggering new elections. "We can only hear this matter when we have a full bench of the Supreme Court," Chief Justice Emmanuel Fagbenle said, adding that the extra judges needed to hear the case were not available and could arrive only in May or November.

The Gambia relies on foreign judges, notably from Nigeria, to staff its courts due to a lack of trained professionals in the tiny west African state. Fagbenle is the panel's only sitting judge, as the Supreme Court has lain dormant since May 2015. The chief justice added that he would prefer the country to resolve its political deadlock through the mediation underway by a group of west African leaders, who are attempting to persuade Jammeh to respect the constitution and step aside. "This is why alternative dispute resolution is important," he said. "We are now only left with the ECOWAS mediation initiative and the inter-party committee set up by government to resolve the dispute." The inter-party committee is a UN-backed body aimed at resolving arguments between different Gambian political parties. But Jammeh has made clear he will not go

until his complaint is heard. On Dec 20 he was broadcast on state television saying "unless the Court decides the case, there will be no inauguration on the 19 Jan. And let me see what ECOWAS and those big powers behind them can do."

West African leaders apply pressure

The leaders from the ECOWAS regional grouping led by Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari will return to The Gambia for the second time this week since the election to attempt to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis. They were due to arrive Wednesday but the trip was delayed until Friday, Buhari's spokesman said, because Jammeh had asked for more time. "Delay notwithstanding, the mandate of the ECOWAS will be accomplished," Garba Shehu said.

Nigeria's foreign minister said Monday the use of force remained an option if there was no movement in the situation. "Violence should be avoided but nothing is ruled out," Geoffrey Onyeama said. Meanwhile an ex-minister and high-profile defector from Jammeh's government declared his support for Barrow, and said the Supreme Court case was an attempt to "subvert the express will of the Gambian electorate." Former information and communication minister Sheriff Bojang fled to neighboring Senegal on Monday after resigning. Bojang said his conscience had overwhelmed him after Jammeh declared he would not step down at the end of his mandate. —AFP



KOSOVO: Kosovo Albanians hold placards in support of Kosovo's former prime minister Ramush Haradinaj arrested on suspicion of war crimes, during a demonstration yesterday in Mitrovica. — AFP

ARREST OF KOSOVO'S EX-PM THREATENS TIES WITH SERBIA

PRISTINA: The arrest in France of Kosovo's former prime minister Ramush Haradinaj on suspicion of war crimes threatens to derail fragile negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo and ramp up tensions between the former foes. Serbia wants to try the former leader of the insurgent Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) for alleged atrocities committed against civilians during the 1998-1999 conflict against Belgrade forces. After the conflict, which killed 13,000 people, the predominantly ethnic Albanian province of Kosovo became a United Nations protectorate and declared independence a decade later—a move that has never been recognized by Belgrade.

The Serbian justice ministry on Tuesday requested the extradition of the former guerrilla fighter Haradinaj following his arrest by French police on Jan 4 at the eastern Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg airport, under an international arrest warrant. Today, a French court will consider a request for the 48-year-old's release on bail. For his compatriots, Haradinaj is a hero for his efforts to win independence from late Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, and he is known as "Rambo" at home for his stocky build and military prowess. "Haradinaj is Kosovo" read the placards of hundreds of war veterans who rallied against his arrest in front of the French embassy in Pristina last week. Protesters gathered again yesterday, despite subzero temperatures, in several

towns across Kosovo and in neighboring countries with significant ethnic Albanian populations.

Slow progress

Haradinaj has twice before been acquitted of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. He was elected premier in 2004 but resigned after 100 days in power to surrender to the United Nations judges. Since his acquittal he has become a political opponent to powerful President Hashim Thaci and a resolute opponent of a historic 2013 agreement, brokered by the European Union, to normalize relations between Pristina and Belgrade. The fragile talks have made progress in terms of the movement of people and goods, but it has never had great popular support, having been imposed by political leaders under pressure from the EU, which both sides aspire to join.

The dialogue advances laboriously, as illustrated by Kosovo's reluctance to set up an association of municipalities for its ethnic Serb minority around 100,000 people out of a population of 1.8 million. In October, with the support of Belgrade, ethnic Serb MPs boycotted both the government and parliament to protest against the nationalization of the Trepcia mine, whose ownership is disputed, intense northern Kosovo. In a parliamentary session over the Haradinaj affair on Tuesday, Kosovo's opposition called for

the suspension of all negotiations with Serbia "until all arrest warrants are waived against leaders or members" of the KLA.

'Block imports'

"Serbia is working openly and on a daily basis to destroy the state of Kosovo. The government should immediately block imports from Serbia," said Ismajl Kurteshi, an MP with the opposition Vetevendosje (Self-Determination) party. The group's methods to protest against the Serb association of municipalities—which they fear will increase the influence of Belgrade—have included repeatedly releasing tear gas in parliament. Kosovo's Prime Minister Isa Mustafa said arrest warrants such as Haradinaj's were "completely illegal and unjust" with the consequence of "provoking tensions and conflicts, and damaging the European (integration) process in the region." For its part, Serbia considers Kosovo the cradle of its identity in religion and affirms its guardianship its constitution. To think otherwise is politically taboo in Belgrade.

"Serbia will not give up on prosecuting Haradinaj or anybody else who has committed crimes against Serbs. The Serb people like all others deserve justice," Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic warned. He said he had information about plotting among the Albanian diaspora to occupy Serbian diplomatic premises by force in Europe and the United States. —AFP

GERMANY AGREES TO SEND MORE TROOPS TO MALI

BERLIN: The German government decided yesterday to raise the number of troops deployed to Mali as part of a UN mission that is known as the world's most dangerous. The UN's Mali mission, also known as MINUSMA, regularly comes under attack from jihadists. Last year alone, more than 30 troops were killed, more than in any other UN peacekeeping mission. MINUSMA is tasked with monitoring a peace deal between the government and northern rebels in the west African country. The German cabinet agreed Wednesday to raise the limit for troop deployment to the country from 650 to 1,000.

The additional soldiers are meant to take over an emergency rescue mission in northern Mali that is currently under the command of the Netherlands. Four helicopters for transporting injured as well as four combat helicopters will also be deployed. Northern Mali fell under the control of Al-Qaeda-linked groups in 2012.

The Islamists were largely ousted by a French-led military operation launched in January 2013, but large swathes of Mali remain lawless and prone to attacks. If Berlin does end up sending 1,000 troops to Mali, then the deployment would be Germany's biggest abroad.

To date, its biggest deployment has been to Afghanistan, where around 890 German soldiers are currently stationed. The cabinet also extended to January 2018 a mission in northern Iraq, where 150 German soldiers are training Kurdish fighters for combat against Islamic State jihadists. The German army has already trained around 12,000 Kurdish fighters, as well as others from groups such as the Yazidi minority. The new deployment plans would still require parliamentary approval, but are unlikely to meet with any resistance as Chancellor Angela Merkel's ruling right-left coalition has a crushing majority. —AFP

SPAIN GOVT ACCEPTS RESPONSIBILITY FOR 2003 MILITARY PLANE CRASH

MADRID: Spain's defense ministry took political responsibility for the first time yesterday for a 2003 air accident which killed 62 Spanish soldiers as they were returning from Afghanistan. "There are reparations that are not economic, which have to do with recognition," Defense Minister Maria Dolores de Cospedal told radio Cadena Cope a day after she met family members of the victims. Sixty-two Spanish soldiers and 13 Ukrainian and Belarusian crew were killed on May 26, 2003 when a Russian-built Yak-42 bringing them back from Afghanistan crashed in a mountainous area of northeast Turkey.

The defense ministry had chartered the plane from a Ukrainian firm despite warnings from military authorities that it was in poor shape. The accident was followed by a scandal over the misidentification of the bodies of 30 of the soldiers, which had been delivered to the wrong families. Three Spanish military officers received jail

terms in 2009 for having misidentified the bodies. The crash and subsequent misidentification scandal hurt the popularity of the then conservative government of Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar. The top advisory body to the government ruled in an October report that the ministry had an "administrative" responsibility in the affair.

Cospedal said the defense ministry accepted the report's conclusion that "there is a relationship between the work of the defense ministry and the tragedy." But she stressed this acknowledgement was symbolic and did not have financial or criminal consequences as the victims have already been compensated by insurance firms. Cospedal said the defense ministry also agreed to search for all documents related to the hiring of the Yak-42 plane that crashed. "We will do everything possible to find all the documents...related to the contracts," she said. —AFP

Sales Account Manager
 Multi Productions for Printing
 Kuwait

You will be responsible for promoting/ selling/ securing orders from existing and prospective customers through a relationship-based approach, demonstrating products and services to existing/ potential customers and assisting them in selecting those best suited to their needs.

Apply Now **JB3608802**

Elevator Mechanical Engineer
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You will be responsible for making minor repairs or isolating problems until a service can be carried out, responding to emergency breakdown call-outs, installing and fitting out lifts, lifting gear and lift wells, demonstrating new equipment to clients and refurbishing or replacing lift interiors, flooring and panel displays.

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You will be responsible for supervising daily staff assignments, performing regular operational inspections on a biweekly basis, conducting preventive maintenance and troubleshooting, overseeing all mechanical and electrical elevator work and submitting repair budget allocation requests to management.

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You will be responsible for overseeing security guards presence, duties, appearance and day to day responsibilities onsite in addition to effective client's communication and emergency responses, and reporting any occurrence and or incidents to Manager.

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You will be responsible for reporting to the Country Manager and Regional CFO, controlling all financial aspects of company strategy, analyzing figures and implementing recommendations based on these findings, with the most profitable outcomes, as well as, managing and leading a team of two people through month end, year-end and annual budgeting.

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You will be responsible for the overall management of the learning and development unit, day-to-day management of the Learning and Development unit, assigning workflow for the design of quality professional training materials including workbooks, training aids, audio and visual support materials, instructor guides, etc.

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You will be responsible for the identification and reporting on all significant control weaknesses, through the application of a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, processes, controls and decision making.

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You will be responsible for meeting all ministries, government bodies and consultants to get HVAC products specified in their vendor list, as well as, responsible for marketing promotions, conducting seminars etc.

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 Morpheus Consulting - KSA

You will be responsible for organizing, updating and controlling technical documentation, records, and data, responding to information requests submitted by technical and non-technical personnel at all levels in the organization and providing assistance to PMC and EPC.

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 Al Kifah Holding
 KSA

You will be responsible for building applicant sources by researching and contacting community services, colleges, employment agencies, recruiters, media, and internet sites; facilitating finding efficiency applicant, following up the company policies and procedures to close the recruitment cycle on time and ensure the quality of work.

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 Clinique - KSA

You will be responsible for insuring high quality, well-coordinated patient flow in the clinic according to Al Mada guidelines and mission, creating the schedules for the clinic (Drs, nurses, staff), collaborating with Administrative team in clinical program goal setting, progress evaluations, and ongoing problem solving.

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 DAG
 KSA

You will be responsible for managing and monitoring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the work, implementing strategies to achieve targets set, managing all HR related transactions and ensuring they attended to in a timely manner, providing timely and accurate information to the external and internal auditors and the compliance function as and when required.

Apply Now **JB3605338**

Buying Manager - John Lewis Home
 Al Futtaim Group - UAE

You will be responsible for ensuring that the Buying function operates effectively with the objective of generating budgeted levels of sales and profit, accountable for product availability, stock holding, supplier relationships, category management and new range development.

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You will be responsible for supporting background to work for our client - a multinational machinery company in their Dubai office, owning and driving the update of the company's on-site activities tools, such as CRM and Pulse, supporting the Project Manager Execution in the preparation and execution of the on-site activities for the assigned New Equipment Projects.

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You will be responsible for overseeing collaboration/automation enhancement: identifying scope for business processes to be automated via SharePoint or other, proposing new practices and ways for users to collaborate, keeping up to date with latest solutions.

Apply Now **JB3608135**

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 Mindfield Resources
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You will be responsible for developing, launching and managing digital PPC marketing campaigns, tracking conversion rates and making improvements to the website, staying up to date with online marketing trends and strategies, as well as, overseeing the social media strategy for the company.

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Finance Manager
 International Works
 Development Group - Qatar

You will be responsible for coordinating and supervising all financial and accounting operations e.g. credits, expenditures, account collection, sales, purchasing, providing financial advice on the overall corporate financial position, partnering with the GM and business to explain & comments results and support effective strategic decision making for the company as a whole.

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Senior Credit Controller
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 Qatar

You will be responsible for end to end Credit & Collection procedures of the company, keeping the company's outstanding balance at minimum level to minimize risk and exposure, by defining and executing adequate collection strategy.

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Accountant and Auditor
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 Contracting - Qatar

You will be responsible for gathering the company money from the market and to follow up our invoices with the main contractors, performing and controlling the full audit cycle including risk management and control management over operations' effectiveness, financial reliability and compliance with all applicable directives and regulations.

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You will be responsible for performing General ledger and fixed assets accounting functions. Update chart of accounts and perform monthly review of balance sheet schedules, assisting in periodic audits undertaken by external auditors or internal auditors across the network.

Apply Now **JB3607279**

INDIA'S TOP COURT THROWS OUT CASE ALLEGING MODI TOOK CASH PAYMENTS

NEW DELHI: India's Supreme Court yesterday threw out a case brought by an anti-corruption lawyer that accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of accepting suspicious cash payments, dealing a blow to an opposition leader who had latched on to the case. A panel of judges found that there was too little evidence to go on, deflating Rahul Gandhi's warnings late last year that he would cause an "earthquake" by unveiling proof that Modi was corrupt. In the event, it transpired that the heir apparent to the leadership of the opposition Congress party was referring to a case already before India's highest court that relied on evidence recovered in

income-tax raids on two corporate houses. Citing written records, the plaintiff alleged that an individual called "Gujarat CM" had received cash payments from companies totaling at least 400 million rupees (\$5.9 million) in late 2013 and early 2014. Modi was the chief minister of India's western state of Gujarat at the time and went on to win election by a landslide in May 2014. "There is not enough evidence to order an inquiry into the case. We are dismissing it," a Supreme Court bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra ruled. Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi, the government's top lawyer, told the court that there was no credible evidence to prove that

Modi had been paid off. "Nobody in the country would be safe if such documents are accepted as legal evidence. Anyone can put the name of anybody on such papers," Rohatgi told the court. Prashant Bhushan, the anti-corruption lawyer who brought the case on behalf of a non-governmental organization called Common Cause, had urged the court to order a probe into the alleged payments made to public officials. "It is sad and unfortunate that the Supreme Court dismissed my plea," Bhushan said. Indian politicians are often dogged by sleaze allegations and many of the country's elected officials face criminal proceedings.

Modi has, however, cultivated a clean image as the son of a humble tea seller. He shook India in November by scrapping high-value banknotes in a bid to purge the economy of "black money" - the proceeds of illicit business, corruption and tax evasion. The move has caused massive disruption to daily life and business throughout the country of 1.3 billion people. Modi's so-called demonetization drive will face the verdict of voters when five of India's federal states hold elections in February and March - most importantly the battleground state of Uttar Pradesh - that will influence his chances of a second term at the 2019 general election. —Reuters



HONG KONG: This picture shows Hong Kong Legislative Council member Carrie Lam speaking at a press conference to start the public consultation process for the Hong Kong Palace Museum in Hong Kong. —AFP

HONG KONG ANGER OVER CHINA MUSEUM PROJECT

'PEOPLE APPRECIATE MUSEUMS IF DONE IN A PROPER WAY'

HONG KONG: Plans to boost Hong Kong's cultural credentials by building a new branch of China's most famous museum in the city have sparked protests against what critics say is cultural brainwashing and kowtowing to Beijing. The backlash comes at a time of heightened sensitivity in the semi-autonomous city where there is increasing concern that Chinese authorities are tightening their hold. With its collection of ceramics, calligraphy, paintings, jades, timepieces and other items from multiple Chinese dynasties, Beijing's Palace Museum is the most visited in the world, with more than 14 million people coming through its doors each year. Project organizers say a locally managed Hong Kong branch, displaying artifacts on long-term loan from Beijing, would be a stellar attraction for the city. But opponents argue the public should have been consulted before the green light was given to a project they feel has been developed to please Beijing. Recent demonstrations against the plans have included protesters throwing paper tanks at officials, in a reference to China's Tiananmen Square crackdown. The Palace Museum is housed within Beijing's Forbidden City, just north of the square where tanks rolled in to quash pro-democracy protests in 1989. "It's not simply brainwashing-it is cultural whitewashing by introducing more Chinese history

and culture that is perceived to be positive," said Avery Ng, chairman of the League of Social Democrats. Ng said the museum disregarded Hong Kong's identity "including its own history and the dark side of Chinese history." Others say the public may have appreciated the museum if it had been discussed transparently. "People appreciate museums and art if you do it in a proper way," said former legislator Lee Cheuk-yan, who organizes the city's annual Tiananmen vigil. He called the lack of public consultation over whether the museum should go ahead a "dictatorial approach".

'Diluting culture'

The Hong Kong Palace Museum will be built in the West Kowloon Cultural District, a sprawling arts project already mired in delay and accusations of political interference. It replaces a performance venue originally slated for the area. Set to open in 2022, it will be funded by a HK\$5 billion (\$450 million) grant from the city's Jockey Club, which runs Hong Kong's horse racing meets, lottery and betting shops. Hong Kong's deputy leader Carrie Lam is chairman of the cultural district authority's board and critics accuse her of pushing through the museum project to impress Beijing. Lam is widely expected to run for city leader in March, with little hope of succeeding in her

election bid without the nod from China. But she has defended herself and the project. "I know that today's society is full of mistrust, but for this issue, we really do not have any selfish motives and private interests," she told reporters Tuesday. "We should not let this cultural issue be politicized." A six-week public consultation into the design, operation and programming for the museum kicked off yesterday, after criticism mounted, but it does not ask whether the project should go ahead. The board already approved plans for the museum in November.

City residents said they did not support the project. "By building something like this they just want to merge us together," real estate agent Kong Lung, 27, said, adding he felt it was an example of the "mainlandization" of Hong Kong that had taken place since the city was handed back to China by Britain in 1997. "Every day since the handover you can see that mainland Chinese have been coming to Hong Kong and that's already diluted the Hong Kong culture," he said. Others said they felt the museum plan was a political move. "I don't see why they have to build the Palace Museum here, I don't see it to have any relationship with Hong Kong," said education publisher Danny Chung, 28. "I think those responsible for it are trying to ingratiate themselves with those in Beijing," he added. —AFP

JAPAN PLANS TO HAVE NEW EMPEROR IN 2019

TOKYO: Japan is planning for Emperor Akihito to retire and be replaced by his eldest son on Jan 1, 2019, reports said yesterday, as the country works on a legal framework for its first abdication in 200 years. Akihito, 83, expressed a desire in August to abdicate after nearly three decades on the Chrysanthemum Throne, citing his advancing age and weakening health. Major national newspapers-the Yomiuri, Asahi, Mainichi and Nikkei-cited unnamed sources as saying Crown Prince Naruhito, 56, would succeed his father on New Year's Day 2019.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga declined to comment on the reports at his regular news conference yesterday. After Akihito's announcement last year, the government established a panel of experts to help decide how best to proceed on an issue fraught with historical and legal challenges. Though abdications have occurred in Japan's long imperial history there has not been one for 200 years. Under current laws there is no legal mechanism for one.

The six-member panel has discussed various legal options, with speculation rampant it will propose parliament pass a special one-time law to allow Akihito to step down. The leading opposition Democratic Party, however, opposes a one-time change, arguing that this would not ensure stable future successions. It has advocated a revision to the permanent law that governs the imperial family. Abdication is a highly sensitive issue in light of Japan's modern history of war waged in the name of Akihito's father Emperor Hirohito, who died in 1989.

'The emperor's feelings'

Some scholars and politicians worry that the abdication issue could open a can of worms and risk Japan's monarchs becoming subject to political manipula-

tion. Under the constitution they play only a symbolic role. The panel plans to compile a summary of its views on the issue this month, a government official said. Its firm proposals, however, will come no later than the end of March before the government submits legislation to parliament, reports said. As for the timing of the abdication, the Yomiuri said the panel considers that Jan 1, 2019 would be appropriate given he will have reigned for 30 years-something the emperor himself mentioned as a milestone year in his August speech.

The Asahi said Akihito would step down sometime on December 31, though the Nikkei reported it could also happen on New Year's Day when Naruhito is enthroned. The reports also said that the government plans to announce the official name of Naruhito's reign era at least six months beforehand to avoid confusion in daily life. Years in Japan are numbered both in terms of the length of an emperor's reign, as well as in accordance with western calendar years. When Hirohito died on Jan 7, 1989, the 64th year of his Showa era ended after just seven days.

The government announced the first year of Akihito's Heisei era would start the following day. "The government's plan to start a fresh imperial era on New Year's Day is in line with the emperor's feelings" to ease burdens on the Japanese people, the Yomiuri said. Previous emperors, including Hirohito, were deemed semi-divine. But in the aftermath of Japan's World War II defeat and occupation they became constitutionally limited to a role as "symbol of the state and of the unity of the people." Akihito has keenly embraced the symbolic role. He is credited with making efforts to seek reconciliation both at home and abroad over the legacy of the war fought in his father's name. —AFP



TOKYO: This file photo shows Japan's Emperor Akihito waving to well-wishers during his new year speech on the balcony of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. —AFP

N KOREA HAS PLUTONIUM FOR 10 NUCLEAR BOMBS

SEOUL: North Korea now has enough plutonium to make 10 nuclear bombs, South Korea said yesterday, a week after leader Kim Jong-Un said it was close to test-launching an intercontinental ballistic missile. The isolated communist state, which has carried out five nuclear tests and numerous missile launches, is thought to be planning a nuclear push in 2017 as it seeks to develop a weapons system capable of hitting the US mainland. Analysts are divided over how close Pyongyang is to realizing its full nuclear ambitions, but all agree it has made enormous strides since Kim took over as leader from his father Kim Jong-Il who died in December 2011.

Seoul's defense ministry said the North is believed to have some 50 kilograms (110 pounds) of weapons-grade plutonium as of the end of 2016, enough to make about 10 weapons up from 40 kilograms eight years earlier. The North also has a "considerable" ability to produce weapons based on highly-enriched uranium, it said in a two-yearly white paper, but did not estimate weapons-grade uranium stocks, citing impenetrable secrecy in the state's uranium program. US think tank the Institute for Science and International Security estimated in June that the North's total nuclear arsenal was more than 21 bombs, up from 10-16 weapons in 2014, based on estimates of plutonium and uranium.

The North has boosted plutonium supplies by reactivating its once-mothballed nuclear reactor in Yongbyon, the defense ministry said. North Korea deactivated the Yongbyon reactor in 2007 under an aid-for-disarmament accord, but began renovating it after Pyongyang's third nuclear test in 2013. The type of plutonium suitable for a nuclear bomb typically needs to be extracted from spent nuclear reactor fuel. Kim Jong-Un said in a New Year's speech that Pyongyang was in the "final stages" of developing an intercontinental ballistic missile of the kind that could threaten US territory. The address drew a swift response from US president-elect Donald Trump, who took to Twitter vowing to halt Pyongyang in its tracks. —AFP

CHINA SHIP ENTERS STRAIT, TAIWAN AGAINST PANIC

TAIPEI: China's only aircraft carrier has entered the Taiwan Strait in a highly symbolic show of strength, but Taiwan insisted yesterday there was no need for panic even as tensions boil over the island's diplomatic status. Beijing has upped its military drills near the island in recent weeks after being incensed by a congratulatory phone call from Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-wen to US president-elect Donald Trump, and by a subsequent transit stop by Tsai in the US. China considers Taiwan a breakaway province to be brought back into its fold. The US is the island's most powerful ally and main arms supplier, despite having no official diplomatic relations since recognizing Beijing in 1979.

The Liaoning aircraft carrier has not entered Taiwanese waters but has gone into an area covered by the island's air defense zone, Taiwan's defense ministry said. Beijing responded that it was "very normal" for the Liaoning to

pass through an international waterway as part of drills. "Every year, in this season, China's navy has a few exercises in the near seas and other maritime regions. These exercises are all for training," said Liu Zhenmin, vice minister of foreign affairs. Taiwanese media said that F-16 fighter jets and other aircraft were dispatched Tuesday night to monitor the Chinese carrier group. The defense ministry would not confirm those reports.

Tsai, who is currently on a visit to Central America, has been regularly instructing the national security team and the defense ministry by phone, presidential office spokesman Alex Huang said. "The military is monitoring the whole situation and will act as necessary. We urge Taiwan's people to be at ease," the defense ministry said in a statement. "There is no need for us to overly panic," said the chairwoman of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), which handles the island's relationship with

Beijing. "The national security council has a good grasp of the situation. We are doing what is necessary," Chang Hsiao-yueh told reporters at an end-of-year briefing. "The government has sufficient capabilities to defend our country's safety," she added.

'Reactive measures'

Experts have said the maneuvers of the second-hand, Soviet-built Liaoning are "symbolic" rather than any real military threat. The Liaoning has been carrying out its first exercise in the Pacific and already passed south of Taiwan last month. It entered the southwest of Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) yesterday, the defense ministry said, along with escort vessels. By midday it was moving north along the mainland's coast, the ministry said. Local media said the carrier was expected to move out of the strait later yesterday. "There is currently no navy or air force activity out of the ordinary," it added.

Tsai visited the US at the weekend on a transit to Central America, despite protests from Beijing. She stopped in Houston on Saturday and met with Republican Senator Ted Cruz during her stay, which was slammed by Beijing as an attempt to "undermine China-US relations." Tsai is this week visiting Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador among the dwindling number of states that have formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan instead of with Beijing. While the focus of her visit is to bolster ties with allies, her US stopovers are being closely watched with speculation she may make contact with Trump and his team.

Tsai has faced a mounting backlash from Beijing since she took office in May because she has refused to recognize that Taiwan is part of "one China." All official communications with Taipei have been severed by Beijing and tourist numbers have plummeted as Chinese visitors are discouraged from travelling to the island. MAC's Chang said yesterday that Taiwan was taking "relevant reactive measures" against military, diplomatic and economic actions by China since Tsai came to power. "We urge China (to understand) the hopes of people on both sides to maintain peaceful and stable development in relations," she added. —AFP



TAIWAN: This file photo shows the Liaoning, China's only aircraft carrier, sailing during military drills in the Pacific. —AFP

YES WE DID: OBAMA BIDS FAREWELL

Continued from Page 1

The incoming Republican president has smashed convention, vowed to efface Obama's legacy and hurled personal insults left and right...

Obama painted the task ahead as a generational challenge. "A faith in reason and enterprise and the primacy of right over might," he said...

"First by violent fanatics who claim to speak for Islam; more recently by autocrats in foreign capitals who see free markets, open democracies, and civil society itself as a threat to their power..."

Diehard fans - many African Americans - braved Chicago's frigid winter to collect free tickets, which were selling for upwards of \$1,000 a piece on Craigslist...

Wiping a tear from his eye, Obama paid a poignant tribute to his own family, his daughter Malia who was present and Sasha who stayed in Washington because of an exam...

best friend. "You took on a role you didn't ask for and made it your own with grace and grit and style and good humor," he said.

Obama also acknowledged that his historic presidency was not a panacea for the country's racist past. "After my election, there was talk of a post-racial America," he said.

Trump's unorthodox politics have thrown the 55-year-old Obama's transition and post-presidency plans into flux. Having vowed a smooth handover of power, Obama has found himself being increasingly critical of Trump...

Having vowed to take a backseat in politics, Obama's second act could yet be as politically engaged as Jimmy Carter - whose post-presidency remade his image as an elder statesman...

UAE MOURNS FIVE DIPLOMATS KILLED ...

Continued from Page 1

Razeq said investigators believe someone hid the bomb inside a sofa at the guesthouse. He said an ongoing construction project there may have allowed militants to plant the bomb.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable to UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, expressing condolences and sympathy over the deaths of the Emirati diplomats.

community to combat it and dry off its sources of financing.

HH the Amir sent a similar cable of condolences to UAE's Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum offered condolences for the families of the dead and condemned the attack. "There is no human, moral or religious justification for the bombing and killing of people trying to help" others, he wrote on Twitter.

The attack inside the heavily guarded compound represents a major breach of security, even in Afghanistan, a country long torn by war.

MPs CALL FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES...

Continued from Page 1

develop the country's political life. He called for meeting with HH the Amir over this issue and holding a national conference. During their speeches, MPs warned the government against imposing any forms of charges on citizens as a means to finance the budget deficit...

In a related development, MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said that he and four other MPs submitted a draft law calling to scrap the recent rise in petrol prices, which should return to their July rates.

Meanwhile, opposition lawmaker Waleed Al-Tabtabaei said he has coordinated with MPs Subaei and Abdulwahab Al-Babtain to file the grilling against Information and Youth Minister Sheikh Salman Al-

Humoud Al-Sabah "either late today or Sunday". Kuwait had been given until yesterday to meet conditions set by the International Olympic Committee and world football controlling body FIFA to get the suspension lifted.

IOC demanded that Kuwait amend its sport legislation to be compatible with the Olympic charter and withdraw cases filed against it in Swiss courts demanding compensation for the suspension.

Sheikh Salman said yesterday that he has sent flexible responses to the IOC's demands and accepted in principle to withdraw court cases against it, provided the suspension is lifted. He also said a new sports law has been sent to the Assembly, and he also accepted to allow the general assemblies of the dissolved bodies to appoint caretaker committees to run the federations.

TRUMP REJECTS 'PHONY' RUSSIA DOSSIER

Continued from Page 1

Moscow hotel room. "It was a group of opponents that got together, sick people, and they put that crap together," Trump said. "I think it's a disgrace that information would be let out," Trump said.

Trump dodged specific questions about whether his campaign had contacts with Russian intelligence, instead tearing into reporters whose outlets reported the suggestions of compromising material.

Trump began the press conference muted and disciplined, but became increasingly agitated as questions piled up. "I have no dealings with Russia. I have no deals in Russia. I have no deals that could happen in Russia, because we've stayed away."

"As far as hacking, I think it was Russia, but I also think we've been hacked by other countries, other people," he said. Trump aides bristle at the suggestion that Russia weighed in behind Trump, seeing it as an effort to delegitimize his election victory.

consider that an asset, not a liability, because we have a horrible relationship with Russia," Trump said. "I don't know that I'm going to get along with Vladimir Putin. I hope I do. But there's a good chance I won't."

Without corroborating its contents, BuzzFeed published a 35-page dossier of memos on which the synopsis reportedly presented to Trump is based. The memos, which had been circulating in Washington for months, describe sex videos involving prostitutes filmed during a 2013 visit by Trump to a luxury Moscow hotel, supposedly as a potential means for blackmail.

They also suggest Russian officials proposed lucrative deals in order to win influence over the real estate magnate. "The Kremlin does not have compromising information on Trump," Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov telling journalists.

Trump refused to comment on his classified briefing but said he had seen the information "outside of that meeting". Without delineating the specific allegations in the memos, Trump denied engaging in any questionable behavior during visits to Russia.

Trump also vowed to forge ahead with plans for a wall on the southern US border after taking office, and said Mexico would reimburse the United States for the cost. "I could wait about a year and a half until we finish our negotiations with Mexico, which we'll start immediately after we get to office, but I don't want to wait," Trump told the news conference.

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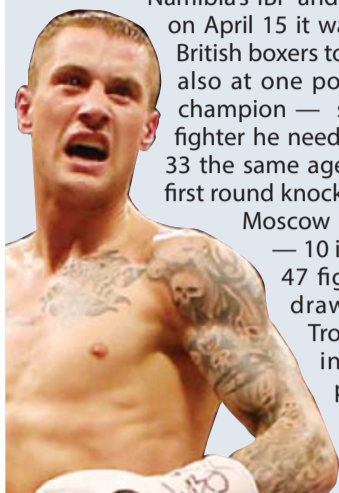
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BURNS TO FACE UNBEATEN NAMIBIAN IN WORLD TITLE

LONDON: Britain's super-lightweight WBA title holder Ricky Burns is to fight Namibia's IBF and IBO world champion Julius Indongo in Glasgow on April 15 it was announced yesterday. Burns—one of only three British boxers to win world titles at three different weights having also at one point been super-featherweight and lightweight champion — said the unbeaten Indongo was just the type of fighter he needed to face at this stage of his career. Indongo, at 33 the same age as Burns, won the IBF and the IBO belts with a first round knockout of then holder Russia's Eduard Troyanovsky in Moscow last December. Indongo has 21 wins in 21 bouts — 10 inside the distance—whilst Burns has 41 victories in 47 fights — 14 knockouts—with five losses and one draw. "When Julius Indongo knocked out Eduard Troyanovsky he was immediately an opponent I was interested in," said Burns. "Indongo can clearly punch and that's an impressive way to win a World title, especially in Russia. It was some shot he hit Troyanovsky with. —AFP

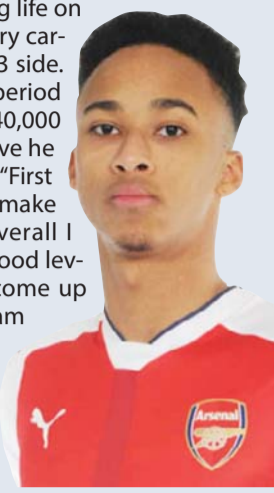


EURO 2016 GENERATED 1.22BN EURO BOOST FOR FRANCE: STUDY

PARIS: Last year's European Championship soccer tournament generated a 1.22 billion euro (\$1.3 billion) boost for host France, a study commissioned by the French government showed yesterday. It said that 2.5 million fans attended the games even as France extended a state of emergency and intelligence agencies warned of the threat of militant attacks during the month-long tournament. The report, unveiled by the Centre of Law and Economics of Sport and the Keneo agency, said fans spent an average of 154 euros per day during their average 7.9 day stays - with just over a third of that amount being spent on accommodation. According to the document, 75 millions euros, including 70 million in VAT, went to the French state. Organisers UEFA were exempted from taxation in 2014 but French sports minister Patrick Kanner said that it remained a "good operation economically". "They did not pay taxes but they paid 20 million euros to rent stadiums, 20 million euros to finance the cities and five million euros for the fan zones," he said. — Reuters

BRAMALL HAS ALL THE INGREDIENTS: WENGER

LONDON: Former non league player Cohen Bramall has the all round qualities to make it at Arsenal said Gunners manager Arsene Wenger yesterday. The 20-year-old defender—who a week ago was facing life on the dole queue after being made redundant by luxury car-makers Bentley—will first be tried out in the Under-23 side. However, Wenger—who was impressed by his trial period and persuaded Arsenal to pay Hednesford Town £40,000 (46,000 euros, \$48,500) — said he would have to prove he could challenge for a first team place pretty quickly. "First he has to show at youth level that he can quickly make the first team," Wenger told the club website. "Overall I believe he has fantastic physical qualities, he has a good level of motivation because he has gone down and come up again. "He has to prepare, to challenge the first-team players as quickly as he can. That could be in a very short period of time. "He has the ingredients: the timing of his runs is very good, he has decent technique and exceptional pace. These are very important ingredients today. —AFP



MCILROY CHANGES CLUBS FOR SOUTH AFRICAN OPEN

JOHANNESBURG: World number two Rory McIlroy tees off today in the South African Open hoping a change of clubs will not trigger a loss of form.

The last time the 27-year-old from Northern Ireland made his seasonal debut with new equipment was four years ago, and he initially struggled to adapt. It was the only time in the past eight years that the four-time major winner finished outside the top five in his first appearance of the year. The withdrawal of Nike from club manufacturing forced McIlroy to change and he has spent several weeks in Dubai experimenting with various brands. For his first South African Open appearance since 2008, he will use woods and irons from one manufacturer, wedges and balls from another and a putter from a third.

McIlroy has been paired with defending champion Brandon Stone and another South African, three-time European Tour winner George Coetzee, in the first two rounds.

The trio tee off at 0710 local time (0510 GMT) Thursday and at 1210 Friday. A 7-4 favourite to win the second oldest national golf championship after the British Open, the Irishman quickly adapted to his new clubs at Glendower Golf Club near Johannesburg.

"The first few holes of my practice round were not great but once I got into the rhythm, everything was fine. "I am in South Africa to play well and get my confidence up," said the star who has won every major bar the US Masters.

CHOICE OF EQUIPMENT

McIlroy said it could take time before settling on a new equipment combination as he seeks to overtake world num-

ber one Jason Day of Australia. "My choice of equipment may change from week to week. We will see how I fare in South Africa.

"You never know until you study a card after a round. Besides, the golfer swinging the club is more important than the club itself." Having spent much of festive season practising, the Irishman took time off from golf last weekend to visit a private South African game reserve. McIlroy tweeted footage of a male lion, who wandered slowly past the vehicle the wide-eyed golf star was in with two rangers. There are four other former major title-holders in the Glendower field—South Africans Ernie Els and Retief Goosen, Nick Faldo of England and Irishman Darren Clarke.

But the greatest threat to McIlroy could come from rising star Stone, impressive winner of the pre-Christmas Alfred Dunhill Championship in South Africa. Only two shots ahead of title favourite and compatriot Charl Schwartzel with nine holes left, 23-year-old Stone pulled away to triumph by seven strokes. The defending South African Open champion fired a warning to rivals by carding an 11-under-par 61 in a practice round at the 7,564-yard (6,916-metre) parkland course.

"You never really know after a festive break how it is going to pan out, A 61 certainly does not hurt the confidence," said Stone. "I will be excited today when I step on to the first tee and the announcer says 'please welcome the defending champion, Brandon Stone."

Created in 1937, Glendower Golf Club will be hosting a third consecutive South African Open, boasts 64 bunkers, and water hazards on 11 holes. —AFP

RENAULT PART WITH F1 TEAM PRINCIPAL VASSEUR

LONDON: Formula One's winter of change continued yesterday with Renault and team principal Frederic Vasseur parting company a day after champions Mercedes announced the departure of technical head Paddy Lowe.

Although likely to be unconnected, with Lowe expected to show up at Williams after a period of 'gardening leave', the two exits provided further evidence of a major pre-season shake-up of the paddock landscape.

For the first time in 23 years, Formula One will start a season without a reigning world champion on the starting grid as a consequence of Nico Rosberg retiring five days after winning the title with Mercedes.

The German's replacement has yet to be announced.

McLaren had already parted company with their boss Ron Dennis, while engineering head Pat Symonds left Williams at the end of last year. The Manor team are meanwhile facing an uncertain future after going into administration this month. Renault, who took over the failing Lotus team at the end of 2015 and finished ninth of 11 teams last year, said the split with Vasseur was by mutual consent. "Both parties remain committed to maintaining the good working relationship they have enjoyed and expect this to take a new form sometime in the

future," the French manufacturer said in a statement.

It promised more information when the 2017 car was unveiled on Feb. 21.

The team, who have Germany's Nico Hulkenberg and Britain's Jolyon Palmer as drivers, will be run in the meantime by president Jerome Stoll and managing director Cyril Abiteboul.

The season starts in Australia on March 26 with major changes designed to make cars faster, more aggressive-looking and harder to handle.

Vasseur, who became principal midway through last season, brought a strong reputation with him after steering his ART team to success in the GP2 support series.

Hulkenberg won the GP2 title with ART in 2009 and had been looking forward to linking up with Vasseur again after switching from Force India at the end of last season. There had, however, been reports of differences of opinion among the management despite Renault, who have restructured the team and recruited more staff, setting what looked like realistic targets for their return as a manufacturer. "We knew... when we took over the company that 2016 would be very difficult in terms of results. That's life. We have to build up a strong team for the future," Vasseur told Reuters a year ago. —Reuters



TAMPA: Clemson's Jalen Williams, right, and K'Von Wallace hold a sign after returning Tuesday, in Clemson, S.C., the day after the Tigers defeated Alabama 35-31 in the College Football Playoff championship NCAA college football game in Tampa. — AP

CLEMSON FANS TURN OUT TO WELCOME NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

CLEMSON: About 6,000 Clemson fans turned out Tuesday to welcome their national champions, capping a giddy day of celebration after their team toppled Alabama.

People screamed as the buses pulled up, calling out "DE-SHAUN" over and over as Tigers' star quarterback Deshaun Watson walked with his luggage and national championship hat into Clemson's football building.

"This means a lot," said receiver Mike Williams, who like Watson will forego his final year in college and enter the NFL draft. And what a way to leave. Watson accounted for 463 yards and four touchdowns in the 35-31 win over the top-ranked and seemingly unbeatable Crimson Tide. Watson's final college pass was a two-yard throw to Hunter Renfrow for the game-winning score with a second left.

Watson walked to the crowd, which was kept behind metal barriers, to sign a few autographs and share a few hugs before waving and heading off. Clemson fans will get one more chance to see Watson and the rest of the Tigers on Saturday during a parade through town that will end inside Clemson's Death Valley.

After that, Watson, Williams and many of the Tigers who helped Clemson overcome a 14-point deficit win its national title rematch with Alabama will scatter to train for their next showcase: Clemson's pro timing day in front of NFL executives and scouts in early March. But on Tuesday it was time for them to take another bow in front of a happy crowd.

Fans waved all kinds of signs, some simply saying "Thank You, Tigers," to more pointed ones that read "We Want Bama" with the "Want" crossed out and replaced by "Beat." There was even a sign asking if head coach Dabo Swinney's son, high-school senior Will, would take the sightholder to prom.

LEADING TACKLER

"We couldn't do this without these people," said Ben Boulware, Clemson's leading tackler who gave a stirring speech thanking the team's past players as the confetti fell in Tampa, Florida, at Raymond James Stadium. "They've been here for all of it."

There was a sizeable crowd of Clemson fans in Tampa with a smaller, but just as thrilled, group that watched the game on large screens



TAMPA: Clemson fans cheer as the Clemson Tigers return Tuesday, in Clemson, S.C., the day after Clemson defeated Alabama 35-31 in the NCAA College Football Playoff championship game in Tampa, Fla. — AP

in the middle of the blocked-off College Avenue on Monday night. After the dramatic win, the celebration lasted well into the morning. Clemson police said there were no serious incidents or vandalism, although six people were arrested on alcohol-related charges.

Fans spent much of Tuesday swarming souvenir shops in town, snapping up whatever "national champions" apparel they could find. They filtered over to the stadium around midday, awaiting the buses to pull in front. Artavis Scott, who became the Tigers' all-time leader in pass catches this year, was first off and pumped his fist as fans shouted back.

"We have the best fans in college football," Boulware said. "I know when Alabama won it last year, they didn't have fans show up like this. The culture at Clemson is uncommon, so I'm super happy for our community."

Boulware is among four senior defensive starters who will be leaving. Clemson is also losing the team's sacks leader in defensive tackle

Carlos Watkins and two members of the secondary - cornerback Cordrea Tankersley and safety Jadar Johnson. The losses on offense are even more daunting with Watson, Williams, Scott, tight end Jordan Leggett, single-season rushing leader Wayne Gallman and Jay Guillermo all entering the NFL draft.

Defensive end Christian Wilkins, however, believes Clemson's run at the top is not over. "We've always recruited well. People had questions about the defense the past couple of years and you can see what we've done," said Wilkins, a sophomore. "I think the same thing can happen on offense."

Wilkins, who's celebratory postgame split in Tampa went viral, was glad to celebrate back home with fans who've supported him throughout his career.

"We just dream of this moment forever and that's why you come to Clemson," he said. "We showed the world what we're made of last night!" —AP



UYUNI: (L-R) Toyota's Spanish driver Nani Roma, Peugeot's French co-driver Jean Paul Cottret, driver Sebastien Loeb and driver Stephane Peterhansel joke during Stage 8 of the 2017 Dakar Rally between Uyuni in Bolivia and Salta in Argentina, on Tuesday. Yesterday's ninth stage of the rain-swamped Dakar Rally from Salta to Chilecito in Argentina has been cancelled following a huge mudslide, race organisers announced. — AFP

LOEB RETAKES DAKAR RALLY LEAD ON EIGHTH STAGE

SALTA: Sebastien Loeb retook the lead in the Dakar Rally when he dominated the eighth stage crossing from Bolivia into Argentina on Tuesday.

Loeb began the day less than a minute behind race leader Stephane Peterhansel but where the route was changed and the stage split at the border, because rain made swollen rivers impassable, Loeb zoomed ahead and made his fellow Frenchman look like he was driving on three wheels.

In the second part, on the run to Salta, Loeb was more than five minutes ahead of Peterhansel, but a puncture

forced him to stop and he won his third stage of the race by nearly four minutes from Peterhansel, to lead the latter overall by 1 minute, 38 seconds. Cyril Despres, the five-time motorbike champion, was more than five minutes back in third, giving Peugeot a 1-2-3 finish for the second time in the overall. Only Nani Roma, the 2014 champion, and Mikko Hirvonen, fourth on debut last year, were within an hour of Loeb, the rally great trying to win his first Dakar at his second attempt.

"I wanted to try to make a gap today, but I had a puncture on the last part of the stage, so I lost a few minutes to change the wheel," Loeb said. "But it's OK, it's still the best time." In the motorbike category, Joan Barreda of Spain won his second stage of the race comfortably.

Barreda was no threat to overall leader Sam Sunderland at more than an hour behind, and was free to attack. Sunderland tracked him though to finish third, about four minutes back, and the Briton still increased his overall lead to 21 minutes over Pablo Quintanilla of Chile, who was seventh on the stage. —AP

NADAL PRAISES NEW GENERATION, OLD FOE FEDERER

MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal says the emergence of a new generation is just what tennis needs, while welcoming back old foe Roger Federer to help him keep them at bay.

The Spanish great, a 14-time Grand Slam champion, is on the comeback trail after his 2016 season was ruined by a wrist problem which has seen him slip to nine in the world.

Fellow warrior and Swiss great Federer is also easing his way back after six months out with a knee injury, with

both of them keen to return to winning ways at the big tournaments.

They will have their work cut out at the opening Grand Slam of the year at Melbourne Park next week with not just Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic to contend with but an emerging new breed. Leading the pack are the likes of Austria's Dominic Thiem, Germany's Alex Zverev and Australia's Nick Kyrgios. Nadal, 30, said it was good for the game to see younger players starting to make their mark. "These guys are doing well,"

he said in The Australian newspaper yesterday. "It's great to have a new generation of fantastic players there and that's good for tennis. Tennis needs it. 'People sometimes get bored to see the same players all the time.'"

While excited by the young guns, Nadal is not yet ready to hand over the baton, believing he can still compete at the top level despite the last of his major titles coming at the French Open in 2014. And he is pleased to see Federer, 35, also back in the fold and playing

well. "The good thing is that Roger is back on tour after probably his first important injury," Nadal said.

"That's tough but he looks great. He's played some good matches there in Perth (at the Hopman Cup) so I'm very happy for him."

After opening his season in Doha for seven of the past eight years, Nadal instead opted this year to begin at the Brisbane International in a bid to better adapt to Australian conditions.

But he lost in the quarter-finals last

week to big-serving Milos Raonic. Nadal admitted he may not hit his best form until later in the year.

"I think that I had a great off-season so I am excited about these next few months," he said. "You cannot say something about how Roger is, how I am, in just two weeks. 'In Melbourne anything could happen, but I give myself a little bit more time, three months, and after Miami, let's see how I am,' he added, referring to the Miami Open in late March. — AFP

KERBER HAS SERENA IN AUSSIE OPEN SIGHTS

MELBOURNE: World number one Angelique Kerber spearheads a host of dangerous players looking to halt Serena Williams' bid for an Open-era record 23rd Grand Slam title at the Australian Open next week.

The German left-hander stunned the American powerhouse at Melbourne Park last year, upsetting her in the final and ultimately dethroning her as the top ranked player in the world.

That win sparked a memorable season for Kerber, who followed it up by claiming the US Open, where Williams crashed in the semi-finals and has barely played since.

But Kerber has not had a good start to 2017, falling to Ukraine's Elina Svitolina in the Brisbane International quarter-finals last week, then slumping out in round two of the Sydney International to Russian teenager Darya Kasatkina.

Despite this, she remains upbeat as she prepares to mount her first Grand Slam title defence. "I think Grand Slams are always completely different," Kerber said. "It doesn't matter how you play before."

She goes into the tournament as top seed with Williams second, meaning they are scheduled to meet in the final on January 28.

Williams, newly engaged to Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian, heads to Melbourne Park with little match practice after a four-month layoff.

Having won Wimbledon last year to match Steffi Graf's Open era-record 22 Grand Slam singles titles, two shy of Margaret Court's all-time mark, she didn't play again after Flushing Meadows in September. She opted for the Auckland Classic as her comeback tournament last week but she was bundled out in just the second round, complaining loudly about the windy conditions.

Ahead of the defeat, the 35-year-old made clear that Grand Slams were what mattered at this stage of her career.

"Unfortunately I have the highest of

goals and obviously that involves winning Grand Slams and that's all," said Williams.

'ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE'

Despite her recent lack of time on court, nobody will be writing off a veteran who is renowned for her fighting qualities.

Williams entered the Australian Open last year under an injury cloud having played few matches, yet went on to make the final.

Melbourne Park has been a happy hunting ground for her. She claimed her first Australian Open title way back in 2003, beating elder sister Venus in the final, and has since won five more.

Aside from Kerber, Polish world number three Agnieszka Radwanska, who lost to Williams in last year's semi-finals, Romania's pocket-rocket Simona Halep and Spain's Garbine Muguruza can all pose a threat.

Also keen to make her mark is Czech star Karolina Pliskova, who stamped herself as a major contender by winning the Brisbane International.

Pliskova had a breakthrough 2016, finishing runner-up to Kerber at the US Open and will start at Melbourne Park as world number five after leapfrogging Dominika Cibulkova in the rankings this week.

"The important thing is the draw. I need to have some players which I like, which is also important in a Grand Slam, to just have a little bit of luck with the draw," Pliskova said. "But, I mean, anything is possible. So let's see." Several notable players will be missing from Melbourne, including two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova who was injured by a knife-wielding intruder at her home in the Czech Republic last month. Also out is pregnant two-time Australian Open winner Victoria Azarenka, along with five-time major champion Maria Sharapova, who is suspended until April after failing a drugs test at last year's tournament. World number eight Madison Keys is another absentee after minor wrist surgery.— AFP



SYDNEY: Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark plays a shot to Barbora Strycova of Czech Republic during their women's singles match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney, Australia, yesterday. — AP

WOZNIACKI'S SYDNEY ENDS AGAIN AT QUARTERFINALS

SYDNEY: Former No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki's streak of not advancing past the quarterfinals in her past seven Sydney Internationals was extended in stinging heat yesterday.

In temperatures reaching 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) for much of the match, Wozniacki lost 7-5, 6-7 (6), 6-4 to Barbora Strycova in a duel that stretched to 3 hours, 19 minutes. Both players were treated for foot injuries during a grueling second set at Ken Rosewall Arena. Wozniacki came back from 5-2 down in that set, and then 5-0 in the tiebreaker, to win it and force a third set. "It was brutal out there ... but you just try and think like you're on a beach drinking pina colodas," Wozniacki said. "That's basically your train of thought. You know that it's the same for both players, so I was just trying to mentally just try and keep cool."

In the semifinals, Strycova will play Agnieszka Radwanska. The second-seeded Pole beat Chinese qualifier Duan Yingying 6-3, 6-2. Former Wimbledon finalist Eugenie Bouchard continued her strong start to the year with a 6-2, 6-3 quarterfinal win over Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

Bouchard had a breakout season in 2014, reaching the semifinals at the Australian Open and French Open before making the final at Wimbledon. But she has only gone past the fourth round at a major once since then and slipped to No. 46 at the end of last year.

"I feel more and more confident every day," Bouchard said. "I feel like I'm getting back into the rhythm of things a little bit, but it's a long road." The Canadian's semifinal opponent will be Sydney-born Johanna Konta of Britain, who beat Daria Kasatkina 6-3, 7-5. Konta broke Kasatkina's service in the 11th game of the second set, helped by a double-fault to set up break point in that game.

Last year at the Australian Open, Konta became the first British women to make a Grand Slam semifinal since 1983 before losing to eventual champion Angelique Kerber.

In men's play in Sydney, two-time defending champion Viktor Troicki beat Paolo Lorenzi 6-3, 6-4, and second-seeded Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay defeated Nicolas Mahut of France 6-4, 2-6, 6-2. In Auckland, New Zealand, John Isner narrowly avoided the fate of two former champions when he beat Malek Jaziri 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (6) to make the quarterfinals of the ASB Classic.

Isner won his last three points with volleys at the net. "The way I need to finish points is that if I can I have to try and finish them at the net," Isner said. "I did that three times in a row and I'm very proud of that." Four former champions were scheduled to play second-round matches Wednesday but by the time the second-seeded Isner took the court, two had bowed out.

Defending champion and No. 1-seeded Roberto Bautista Agut was forced to withdraw before play began because of a stomach virus, handing Ruben Statham a place in the second round as a lucky loser from the qualifying rounds. Jiri Vesely, the 2015 champion, was due to play Bautista Agut and thought he had caught a break when the Spaniard withdrew and the 434th-ranked Statham took his place. But Vesely had a tussle on his hands before winning 6-7 (6), 7-5, 6-3.

Four-time champion David Ferrer was first up on center court and lost 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (4) to Robin Haase of the Netherlands. In a night match, fourth-seeded Jack Sock beat fellow American Ryan Harrison 7-6 (5), 4-6, 6-1.

At the WTA's Hobart International, former French Open finalist Lucie Safarova was beaten 2-6, 6-3, 7-5 by Japanese qualifier Risa Ozaki. Ozaki will next meet Monica Niculescu. Top-seeded Kiki Bertens advanced with a 6-1, 6-4 win over Galina Voskoboeva of Kazakhstan and Shelby Rogers defeated Lara Arruabarrena of Spain 6-2, 6-2. — AP



SYDNEY: Eugenie Bouchard of Canada celebrates beating Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia in their women's quarter-final match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney yesterday. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Tennis player Serena Williams of the US hits a backhand return during a training session in Melbourne yesterday. Top players from around the world are arriving in Melbourne in the lead up to the Australian Open from January 16 to 29. — AFP

VONN TO RETURN TO WORLD CUP RACING IN AUSTRIA

FLACHAU: With Lindsey Vonn's return to the World Cup looming, Mikaela Shiffrin is looking forward to leaving the limelight to her American teammate. Nursing a knee injury and a broken arm for the past 11 months, Vonn was expected to take part in official downhill training in Altenmarkt-Zauchensee, Austria, on Thursday and Friday, and probably in two races over the weekend. Vonn earned two of her record 76 victories at the Austrian resort a year ago. Shiffrin can't wait for the four-time overall champion to return to the start gates. "For sure, when she is around, I feel like I am less the one that people want to talk to, and that is definitely nice. I am generally a quiet person," Shiffrin told The Associated Press after finishing third in a night slalom on Tuesday.

"She is really good at the spotlight, I have to say that," Shiffrin said. "She knows how to put on a show. I don't even think she is trying to, she is just like skiing fast and doing her thing and everybody wants to see that." Vonn hasn't raced since fractur-

ing her left knee in a super-G crash in Andorra last February. Two weeks before her planned comeback at speed races in Lake Louise, Alberta, in November, she broke her right upper arm during a fall in training. The 2010 Olympic downhill champion returned to skiing last week in Vail, Colorado, and traveled to Europe after the weekend to join the US speed team.

Another American standout, Julia Mancuso, was also closing in on her comeback to World Cup racing. A winner of nine medals at major championships, Mancuso sat out the entire last season to have surgery on a persistent hip problem.

Like Vonn, Mancuso planned to start in this week's training runs in Austria before deciding about racing over the weekend.

"They both have been amazing athletes in the sports. For ski racing in the U.S. they have been huge," Shiffrin said. "I am crossing my fingers that they can get back in the starting gate and ski fast because everybody loves watching them."

The races in Altenmarkt-Zauchensee consist of a downhill on Saturday followed a day later by a combined event, with a super-G and a slalom run.

A winner of 24 slaloms and three GS races, Shiffrin has been tiptoeing into speed races as well. The Olympic slalom champion was planning to start in Sunday's combined event but was reluctant to put too many super-G and downhill races on her schedule. Her head coach, Mike Day, said Shiffrin "is a racer who puts in a lot of volume into the training and is looking for a specific feeling to be confident going into the races."—AP



Lindsey Vonn

TOP SEED THIEM BATTLES PAST ELIAS INTO QUARTERS

SYDNEY: Austrian top seed Dominic Thiem had a three-set struggle with Portuguese qualifier Gastao Elias before clinching a quarterfinal spot at the Sydney International yesterday. Thiem, the world number eight, had several chances to put away the plucky 81st-ranked Elias, only to be broken back before he eventually won 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 7-5 in a match that finished at midnight.

Thiem will now face Britain's number three Daniel Evans in today's quarters. "That's three times I've played Gastao and each time it has been very close matches," Thiem said. "He was running unbelievable with long rallies and I'm very happy to be in the quarter-finals."

Evans fought back from dropping the opening set to down Spanish eighth seed Marcel Granollers 1-6, 6-3, 6-3. Gilles Muller earlier beat the heat to be one match away from a third straight semi-final appearance at the Sydney International, following a big-serving victory over Australian Matt Barton.

The sixth seed from Luxembourg prevailed over Barton 6-1, 3-6, 6-4 as temperatures nudged 42 Celsius (108 Fahrenheit) to reach the quarter-finals.

Muller, who lost to Grigor Dimitrov in last

year's semi-final, will next face Uruguayan second seed Pablo Cuevas, who overcame Frenchman Nicolas Mahut 6-4, 2-6, 6-2.

"It was tough today. I think it was good that we both have big serves, there were not many rallies so that helped to get through it. I was happy when it was over," Muller said.

The 33-year-old added that he was still struggling with the lingering effects of illness from last week's Brisbane International, where he lost in the first round to American Jared Donaldson. "The result is actually not so bad, the quarter-finals, so I should be happy," he said. "I like it here. The courts are quite fast, I enjoy the city. I feel good here. I don't know what it is, but it's true my results have been great here over the last three years."

German fifth seed Philipp Kohlschreiber knocked out Australian Jordan Thompson 7-5, 6-4 and will face the two-time defending champion Viktor Troicki.

Third seed Troicki from Serbia won his 13th consecutive match at the Sydney international with a 6-3, 6-4 win over Italy's Paolo Lorenzi.

Kohlschreiber needed just 84 minutes to cruise past Thompson, who failed to save a single break point.—AFP

RONALDO, MODRIC RESTED FOR KING'S CUP GAME AT SEVILLA

BARCELONA: Real Madrid have rested Cristiano Ronaldo and Luka Modric for today's King's Cup last 16, second leg at Sevilla but captain Sergio Ramos is back after injury, the club said yesterday.

With Real winning last week's first leg 3-0, coach Zinedine Zidane's priority looks to have turned to Sunday's La Liga game back at Sevilla, which could have a huge impact on their bid to

claim their first title in five years.

The Andalusian club are second in the standings, trailing Real by four points although they have played a game more.

Real midfielders Lucas Vazquez and Mateo Kovacic have also returned to the squad alongside Ramos although James Rodriguez, scorer of two of the three goals in the first leg, has been left out after sustaining a slight calf injury.

Zidane unveiled his squad list after giving his pre-game news conference, where he said Real would not relax in the second leg despite their heavy advantage.

"We know it's another game and it's going to be hard because Sevilla are going to do everything they can to win the game and we're expecting it to be difficult. We're prepared for that and it (the first leg result) won't change any-

thing," he said. "What Sevilla are doing at the moment is phenomenal. They are a really strong team with quality players. Both games are vital to us, it's a big week for us." Sevilla coach Jorge Sampaoli said his side would attempt to turn the tie around on Wednesday but added that his priority was Sunday's league match.

"We're going to try and put in a performance that would allow us to dream

of the possibility of a comeback but the reality is that's going to be very complicated," said the Argentine coach.

"For us Sunday's game is like a final. We want to cut the gap with them and that game is where we will be able to say: 'Here we are and we're going to fight for this league title'. 'Winning would take us to within a point of a leader everyone thought was unreachable.' —Reuters

GRIEZMANN SEES ATLETICO INTO CUP QUARTERS DESPITE DEFEAT

MADRID: Antoine Griezmann struck for the third time in as many games in 2017 as Atletico Madrid secured their place in the quarter-finals of the Copa del Rey 4-3 on aggregate despite losing 3-2 at home to Las Palmas on Tuesday.

Griezmann shrugged off the disappointment of finishing third behind Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi for world's best player at the inaugural Best FIFA Football Awards on Monday to force home the opener four minutes into the second half.

A fine individual effort from Marko Livaja gave Las Palmas a brief lifeline, but Angel Correa looked to have killed the tie off just after the hour mark.

However, the hosts were made to sweat in the final seconds of stoppage time as two goals in three minutes from Livaja and Mateo Garcia gave Las Palmas victory on the night. "These type of things always happen in the Copa del Rey," Atletico boss Diego Simeone told BeIN Sports Spain.

"They finished the few chances they had well which meant, despite us having the game under control, they take away the victory." Despite holding a commanding 2-0 first leg lead, Atletico boss Diego Simeone took no chances by naming a strong side. Griezmann was included despite making the trip to Zurich to attend

FIFA's gala just 24 hours earlier and had the first big chance when he fired straight at Raul Lizoain on 23 minutes. Las Palmas had chances to get back into the tie as Miguel Angel Moya produced a great save to deny Livaja's header at the near post before Tana blasted over when well-placed inside the area. Griezmann scored for the first time in La Liga for three months in a 2-0 win at Eibar on Saturday, but the Frenchman is now on his best scoring run of the season as he tapped home Nicolas Gaitan's cross at the start of the second half to give Atletico extra breathing space. Livaja took advantage of some uncharacteristically lax defending from Diego Godin and Jose Maria Gimenez to drive through the heart of the Atletico defence and smash the ball into the far corner.

However, just four minutes later Correa controlled a long ball from Koke and shrugged off his marker before finishing from a narrow angle to put Atletico back in front. The game appeared to be petering out when a great touch and cross from Garcia teed up Livaja for a second equaliser a minute from time.

And Garcia then volleyed home himself from Jonathan Viera's free-kick deep into stoppage time, but Atletico held out to progress. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's French striker Anthony Martial (2R) shoots but fails to score during the EFL (English Football League) Cup semi-final football match between Manchester United and Hull City at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England on Tuesday. — AFP

MATA AND FELLAINI GIVE MAN UTD LEAGUE CUP EDGE

MANCHESTER: Juan Mata and Marouane Fellaini struck to give Manchester United a 2-0 victory over injury-ravaged Hull City in Tuesday's League Cup semi-final first leg at Old Trafford.

All eyes were on United captain Wayne Rooney, who is chasing a record 250th goal for the club, but it was Mata who broke the deadlock in the 56th minute before substitute Fellaini added a late second. It puts Jose Mourinho's men in the driving seat ahead of the return leg on January 26, although it was not until Fellaini headed home in the 87th minute that they finally put the game beyond Hull.

Nevertheless, they have now won nine games in succession and look in fine fettle ahead of arch rivals Liverpool's visit in the Premier League on Sunday. Hull's new manager Marco Silva, taking charge of his second game, was able to name only six substitutes and lost both Markus Henriksen and Josh Tymon to injury.

Liverpool, last season's beaten finalists, visit Southampton in the first leg of the second semi-final on Wednesday.

Despite Mourinho making seven changes to the team that had outclassed Reading 4-0 in the FA Cup on Saturday, United picked up where they had left off, peppering the Hull goal with shots. Hull goalkeeper Eldin Jakupovic had to produce a one-handed save to thwart Mata inside two minutes and moments later Andy Robertson stopped Rooney applying the finishing touch to Marcus Rashford's shot. The presence of David Meyler and Tom Huddlestone in defence and the fact there were only six players on the Hull bench told the story of the visitors' injury problems and there was more to come.

ROONEY GOES CLOSE

Henriksen was left clutching his right shoulder in agony after being knocked over by Paul Pogba and had to go off in the 16th minute, with Abel Hernandez taking his place.

United, missing the ill Zlatan Ibrahimovic, continued to swarm forward. Mkhitaran twice shooting wide, Rashford lashing over and Jakupovic shovelling a long-range Pogba effort over the crossbar.

But Hull, the Premier League's bottom club, began to offer an attacking threat of their own as half-time approached in the club's first ever League Cup semi-final match.

Adama Diomande gave United a scare when he headed against the post, only for an offside flag to then go up, and both Snodgrass and Hernandez tested David de Gea before the interval. Rooney's moment of history looked to have arrived in the 51st minute when Pogba's fine, flighted pass set him racing in on goal from the right, but he drilled his shot inches wide of the far post. Instead it was Mata who provided the breakthrough, stabbing in on the volley at the back post after Antonio Valencia's cross from the right was headed back across goal by Mkhitaran.

After Diomande had volleyed over acrobatically for Hull, Pogba came within a whisker of doubling United's lead, his curling free-kick clanging against the left-hand post and bouncing away. It seemed Hull would escape with only a one-goal deficit, but with three minutes remaining Fellaini met Matteo Darmian's cross with a looping header that Huddlestone could only help over the line.

Silva's injury woes mounted yet further in stoppage time when 17-year-old left-back Tymon had to limp off. — AFP

EGYPT LOOK TO REKINDLE GLORY DAYS

CAIRO: Egypt return to the African Cup of Nations after a seven-year absence with a new generation looking to rekindle the glory days of three consecutive titles before the 2011 uprising exhausted Egyptian football.

Watching football has for decades been a favourite past-time for millions of Egyptians, especially with the national team who won the title in 2006, 2008, and 2010, making them one of the strongest teams in Africa and the Middle East.

But after 2011 this passion was rolled back among many fans due to memories of violence and was dimmed in a faltering economy. "Egypt returns to the tournament under totally different circumstances," Karim Ramzy, the managing editor of the independent Yallakora website, told AFP. "Egypt's national team has drastically changed in comparison to the team which last participated in the tournament," said Ramzy. The tournament kicks off on January 14 in Gabon with Egypt drawn in Group D alongside Ghana, Uganda and Mali.

Out of the 23 players called up by Argentinian coach Hector Cuper, 19 are playing for the first time in the tournament, including Roma star Mohamed Salah. Conditions drastically changed in Egypt amid the political and security turmoil that has engulfed the country since the January 2011 uprising that toppled longtime ruler Hosni Mubarak.

These disturbances impacted football, reflected in the team's absence from the tournament in 2012, 2013, and 2015, despite winning seven tournaments before, a continental record. The national team does not receive the same level of support as it did under Mubarak, whose sons Gamal and Alaa used to visit training sessions and attend matches.

"Political and economic challenges" led to a reduced interest in football, said Ramzy.

"Under Mubarak, there was nothing in the country more important than football. It was more important than presidential and parliamentary elections," he said.

Very little airtime is dedicated to the team's participation in the tournament on satellite

channels which are more occupied with the country's political and economic crises.

With the retirement of golden era stars Mohamed Abou Treika, Ahmed Hassan, Wael Gomaa, and Mohamed Zidan, more room was made for younger players. In addition to Salah, the lineup includes other prominent players such as Mohamed Elneny, Ramadan Sobhi, and Ahmed Elmohamady who play for the English clubs of Arsenal, Stoke City, and Hull City, and Kahraba who plays for the Saudi club Al-Ittihad. The Egyptian team's lineup includes 10 professional players based abroad, the biggest number in tournament history.

A CHANCE TO REUNITE

Still, the fans fear the lack of experience of the newer players, although the participation of legendary goalkeeper Essam Al Hadari and defender Ahmed Fathy, who won three tournaments, could boost the newcomers. "Egypt's return carries big gains for this generation of players," Ahmed Hassan, the captain of the team that won three consecutive titles, told AFP. "There is a lack in experience and no interaction with African teams for many of the players, and it is possible that Egypt's performance does not rise up to the audience's aspirations," said Hassan.

"Still, 'Egypt always does well in tournaments,'" says Hassan. In Egypt winning this tournament was an outlet for the fans frustrated at not qualifying for the World Cup since 1990. Watching the games has been a chance for family and friends to unite behind the national team despite turmoil.

Football matches in Egypt have held behind closed doors in empty stadiums void of fans since 19 Zamalek fans were killed in February 2015 and 72 Al-Ahli fans perished three years earlier. "I hope it becomes a big opportunity for Egyptians to come together behind one team that is playing under Egypt's name, especially after the country went through a terrible phase of polarisation," added Hany Hathout, a presenter with private eXtra News channel. — AFP



CAIRO: Egypt's replacement players stand during the international friendly football match between Egypt and Tunisia at the Cairo International Stadium in the capital Cairo. Egypt return to the African Cup of Nations after a seven-year absence with a new generation looking to rekindle the glory days of three consecutive titles before the 2011 uprising exhausted Egyptian football. — AFP



MADRID: Atletico Madrid's Argentinian midfielder Angel Correa (L) vies with Las Palmas' Uruguayan defender Lemos during the Spanish Copa del Rey (King's Cup) round of 16 second leg football match Club Atletico de Madrid vs UD Las Palmas at the Vicente Calderon stadium in Madrid on Tuesday. — AFP

GIACCHERINI HELPS FIRE NAPOLI INTO CUP QUARTERS

MILAN: A superb second-half volley from Emanuele Giaccherini set Napoli up for an impressive 3-1 win over La Spezia that secured a place in the Italian Cup quarter-finals on Tuesday. Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri and makeshift striker Dries Mertens were notable absences at the San Paolo due to both serving one-match suspensions and watched from the comfort of the executive boxes. By the end of a dominant first half for the Serie A title challengers, Sarri had his head in his hands in frustration after Antonio Piccolo's deflected 35th-minute strike levelled Piotr Zielinski's well-taken third-minute opener for the hosts.

Spezia had eliminated Serie A strugglers Palermo in the previous round, but any hopes of causing an upset were quickly extinguished. Zielinski exposed the visitors barely three minutes in after collecting possession on the left, cutting in unchallenged and beating Leandro Chichizola in the Spezia net with a superb curling strike at the keeper's far post. Napoli should have doubled their lead, but were wasteful every time. Manolo Gabbiadini had stepped in to replace Mertens and tested Chichizola with a fierce long-range strike on 24 minutes.

Lorenzo Insigne then hit the post with the softest of touches from Giaccherini's cut-back, and from the corner Zielinski forced Chichizola into a desperate one-handed tip over the crossbar.

Gabbiadini turned on the style, controlling well to drop a backheel into the path of Insigne only for his curling strike to inch agonisingly wide. A Giulio Maggiore snapshot on a rare Spezia foray fired a warning to Napoli keeper Rafael, who after punching a dangerous cross into the path of Piccolo on the edge of the area was left rooted when his shot deflected off Raul

Albiol and bounced into the net.

Piccolo, a native Neapolitan, refused to celebrate-perhaps also due to the way he scored. Rafael then parried Alessandro Piu's drive at the near post and was happy to see Piccolo's curling shot charged down.

Spezia looked determined after the restart, until Giaccherini timed a run to perfection and met Insigne's weighted delivery with a sweet right-footed volley that sailed past Chichizola and into the far top corner of the net. Spezia heads went down and two minutes later Marko Rog coolly dribbled his way into the area to deliver a cross that Gabbiadini chested into the net from close range.

Leonardo Pavoletti, recently signed from Genoa, made his Napoli debut when he replaced Gabbiadini 10 minutes from the end and spurned a great chance in the dying minutes when he bundled over the bar from a yard out. — AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

SPAIN COPA DEL REY

Celta v Valencia	21:00
beIN SPORTS	
SD Eibar v Osasuna	21:00
beIN SPORTS	
Sevilla v Real Madrid	23:15
beIN SPORTS	

ITALIAN CUP

AC Milan v Torino FC	23:00
AD SPORTS 3 HD	

Sports

Clemson fans turn out to welcome national champions



'Miracle Man' Jacobs to challenge unbeaten Golovkin



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WOZNIACKI'S SYDNEY ENDS AGAIN AT QUARTERFINALS Page 17



TORONTO: Toronto Raptors guard Kyle Lowry (7) drives past Boston Celtics center Al Horford (42) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday in Toronto. — AP

DEROZAN SCORES 41 AS RAPTORS TOP CELTICS

TORONTO: DeMar DeRozan scored a season-high 41 points, Kyle Lowry had 24 and the Toronto Raptors rallied to end the Boston Celtics' four-game winning streak with a 114-106 victory Tuesday night. DeRozan added 13 rebounds for his second double-double of the season, and Jonas Valanciunas had 18 points and a career-high 23 rebounds. The Raptors bounced back after losing to Chicago and Houston last weekend. Toronto also kept itself above Boston in the Eastern Conference standings. A win would have pulled the Celtics even with the Raptors for second place behind Cleveland. Isaiah Thomas had 27 points and Marcus Smart scored 16 for the Celtics. Boston pulled in front with 3:54 left in the second quarter and led until Lowry's 3-pointer with 2:41 remaining in the game. With 5:05 to play, Boston was ahead 102-95, but the Raptors closed on a 19-4 run to clinch the victory, their second of the season over Boston.

ROCKETS 121, HORNETS 114

James Harden had 40 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists for his second consecutive triple-double, and Houston outlasted Charlotte for its ninth straight win. The Rockets missed 10 shots in a row and let an 18-point lead evaporate before coach Mike D'Antoni called a timeout with 2:26 left. Ryan Anderson made Houston's first shot in more than four minutes with a 3-pointer out of the timeout, and after a block on the other end, Harden's layup put Houston up 115-111 with just over a minute to play. Kemba Walker cut the deficit to one with a 3-pointer, but another layup by Harden made it 117-114 with 28.6 seconds left. Charlotte missed three 3-point tries in the final seconds. Harden got his 11th triple-double this season and the 20th of his career. He had 40 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds Sunday against Toronto, making him the fourth player in NBA history with at least 40 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists in consecutive games. Walker had 25 points for the Hornets, who dropped their third straight.

JAZZ 100, CAVS 92

Gordon Hayward went toe-to-toe with LeBron James in the second half to help Utah beat Cleveland. Hayward had 28 points and went back and forth with James during a decisive third quarter. James brought the Cavaliers back from a 15-point halftime deficit before Hayward drove the lead back to 14. Trey Lyles scored eight straight points, including a pair of 3-pointers, in the fourth quarter to help the

Jazz hold on. Rudy Gobert had 11 points and 14 rebounds for Utah. James finished with 29 points and Kyrie Irving added 20 for the defending champs. Kyle Korver had two points and three rebounds in 17 minutes during his Cleveland debut.

WIZARDS 101, BULLS 99

John Wall scored 26 points, including a game-winning baseline jumper with 5.9 seconds left, and added 14 assists as Washington moved above .500 by defeating Chicago. Marcin Gortat had 10 points and 12 rebounds for Washington (19-18). He also set the screen that freed up Wall for his tiebreaking jumper to seal a 10th straight home win. Markieff Morris and Bradley Beal each scored 19 points for the Wizards, who completed their biggest comeback victory of the season after trailing by 18 in the second quarter. Washington is above .500 for the first time since it was 6-5 last season on Nov. 24, 2015. Denzel Valentine set career highs by scoring 19 points and making five 3-pointers for the short-handed Bulls, who led by seven in the fourth quarter. Rajon Rondo added 12 points in his first game since Dec. 30. Chicago was without leading scorers Jimmy Butler (ill) and Dwyane Wade (resting). Bulls forward Nikola Mirotic also sat out with an illness. Wall hit a pull-up that tied it at 99 with 47.4 seconds to play.

BUCKS 109, SPURS 107

Michael Beasley scored a season-high 28 points in place of an ill Giannis Antetokounmpo, and Milwaukee rallied to beat San Antonio. Kawhi Leonard had 30 points for the Spurs, who had their nine-game home winning streak snapped. Jabari Parker's layup with 2:56 remaining gave Milwaukee a 103-101 lead, its first since the 3:24 mark of the first quarter. Moments later, rookie Malcolm Brogdon hit a 3-pointer to give the Bucks a 108-107 edge. Brogdon sank one of two free throws with 6.7 seconds to go, and Manu Ginobili's 3-pointer hit the side of the backboard at the buzzer. Antetokounmpo, who missed Milwaukee's previous game, started despite having a fever at morning shootaround. He was scoreless for the first time this season, missing his only three attempts in nine minutes. Beasley responded with 22 points in the second half. Spurs forward LaMarcus Aldridge was sidelined with a stomach virus.

HAWKS 117, NETS 97

Dennis Schroder had 19 points and 10 assists, Dwight Howard added 14 points and 16 rebounds, and Atlanta beat skidding Brooklyn to win its season-high seventh straight. Paul Millsap added 14 points for the Hawks, who led the entire way and have won eight of their last nine road games. Brook Lopez scored 20 points for the Nets, who have lost seven in a row and 12 of 13. Nets coach

Kenny Atkinson was a Hawks assistant for four years, the last three (2013-16) under current Atlanta coach Mike Budenholzer.

WARRIORS 107, HEAT 95

Stephen Curry had 24 points, nine assists and eight rebounds, Kevin Durant added 28 points and Golden State picked it up late to beat Miami. Durant also had eight rebounds and Draymond Green had 13 points, nine rebounds and five assists in the Warriors' fifth straight win against the Heat and eighth in 10, including three in a row at home. Klay Thompson had the night off for rest after he played through illness the past two games. Hassan Whiteside had 28 points and 20 rebounds for the Heat, outscored 26-14 in the third quarter after leading 54-53 at halftime. Miami lost its third straight game and dropped to 1-4 on a six-game road trip.

TRAIL BLAZERS 108, LAKERS 87

C.J. McCollum scored 25 points and Portland used a dominant third quarter to defeat Los Angeles for the 10th consecutive time. The Trail Blazers were down by two to start the second half, but held the Lakers to 21.7 percent shooting (5 of 23) and blocked four shots in the third

quarter, outscoring Los Angeles 23-12. Damian Lillard overcame a 0-for-8 start to finish with 20 points, eight rebounds and six assists for Portland. Al-Farouq Aminu had 15 rebounds, and Maurice Harkless scored 14 points. The Lakers shot 38.6 percent for the game. Luol Deng led them with 14 points but did not make a field goal after the first half.

KINGS 100, PISTONS 94

DeMarcus Cousins had 24 points, 13 rebounds and six assists to help Sacramento stage a fourth-quarter comeback in defeating Detroit. The Pistons led by nine entering the fourth, when they were outscored 32-17. The victory snapped a three-game losing streak for the Kings, who had lost five of six since winning a season-high four straight. Anthony Tolliver added 17 points for Sacramento, and Kosta Koufos scored eight of his 12 in the final period. The Kings closed the game with an 11-2 run, and Detroit went scoreless over the final 1:15. Sacramento made four 3-pointers in the fourth and was 13 of 24 overall from beyond the arc, including 4 of 5 for Cousins. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope made six 3s and had 21 points for the Pistons, who had won three of four. — AP

NBA results/standings

Portland 108, LA Lakers 87; Golden State 107, Miami 95; Sacramento 100, Detroit 94; Utah 100, Cleveland 92; Milwaukee 109, San Antonio 107; Houston 121, Charlotte 114; Toronto 114, Boston 106; Atlanta 117, Brooklyn 97; Washington 101, Chicago 99.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference				
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB				
Toronto	25	13	.658	-	Utah	24	16	.600
Boston	23	15	.605	2	Oklahoma City	23	16	.590
NY Knicks	17	21	.447	8	Portland	17	23	.425
Philadelphia	10	25	.286	13.5	Denver	14	23	.378
Brooklyn	8	29	.216	16.5	Minnesota	12	26	.316
Central Division				Pacific Division				
Cleveland	28	9	.757	-	Golden State	33	6	.846
Indiana	20	18	.526	8.5	LA Clippers	26	14	.650
Milwaukee	19	18	.514	9	Sacramento	16	22	.421
Chicago	19	20	.487	10	LA Lakers	15	27	.357
Detroit	18	22	.450	11.5	Phoenix	12	26	.316
Southeast Division				Southwest Division				
Atlanta	22	16	.579	-	San Antonio	30	8	.789
Washington	19	18	.514	2.5	Houston	31	9	.775
Charlotte	20	19	.513	2.5	Memphis	24	16	.600
Orlando	16	23	.410	6.5	New Orleans	15	24	.385
Miami	11	29	.275	12	Dallas	11	27	.289

MAN CITY CHARGED OVER ANTI-DOPING PROCEDURES

LONDON: Manchester City have been charged by the Football Association with breaching its anti-doping procedures, the governing body said yesterday. The FA said the issue referred to rules concerning "club whereabouts", but no other information was given.

Under FA rules, English clubs are required to provide the correct details of training sessions, as well as player addresses, so that they are available for drug testing at all times.

The BBC reported that information was not updated following a change to training routines. "Manchester City

have been charged in relation to the FA's rules on anti-doping," an FA statement read.

"It is alleged the club failed to ensure that their 'Club Whereabouts' information was accurate.

"City have until 19 January 2017 to respond to the charge." City are currently fourth in the Premier League, seven points behind leaders Chelsea, and take on Everton at Goodison Park on Sunday.

Pep Guardiola's side won 5-0 at West Ham in the FA Cup third round on Friday.— AFP

Kuwait Times ^{ANNIVERSARY} 55 ^{YEARS} BUSINESS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2016

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM: CAPITALISM NEEDS CHANGE

London stocks scale to new record peak

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Camaro ZL1 makes first appearance in Kuwait

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Uncertainty over Trump policy clouds global outlook

Page 23

Page 22



TURKEY: A man sits at the entrance of his shop in Diyarbakir's historic Sur district yesterday. — AFP

TURKISH LIRA: HOW BAD CAN IT GET?

THE WORST PERFORMING OF EMERGING-MARKET ECONOMIES

ISTANBUL: Political instability and security fears in Turkey following a bloody 2016 have driven the lira to record lows. Parliament's debate over a controversial new constitution to give President Recep Tayyip Erdogan greater powers has fuelled economic worries to make lira the worst performing of the emerging-market economies. The central bank has tried to step in but analysts warn its firepower may be limited and the lira may further plummet.

What is causing the slump?

Deadly attacks, an economic slowdown and political uncertainty have spooked the markets. On top of that, higher inflation has sparked selling and the currency has been dragged down by the prospect of more protectionist economic policy by US President

elect Donald Trump. Standard and Poor's and Moody's both downgraded the country's credit rating to junk status in 2016. And this week Moody's warned the security situation was likely to weigh on the economy and cause a "general worsening of the investment climate", putting Turkey's banks under pressure. Analysts say investors are also increasingly worried about interference in monetary policy under Erdogan who has repeatedly pressured the central bank to lower interest rates.

What has been done to recover losses?

The central bank tried to break the lira's fall in November by raising interest rates for the first time since 2014. On Tuesday it relaxed foreign exchange rules to inject \$1.5 billion into the market, but the move fell flat. Experts said the bank will be aware such measures

can only have limited effect: it tweaked required reserve ratios four times last year, but on three occasions the lira continued to weaken.

How long could the decline continue?

"Nobody really knows," admits senior market analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya at LCG, warning the lira could go "way lower" without "immediate action from policy makers". As it stands, the lira is "racing to the bottom". NFS Macro analyst Nick Stamenkovic says there is "increasing pressure from Mr Erdogan and his cohorts to cut rates, compounding the problems for the lira amid mounting external constraints".

Analysts say the massive crackdown in Turkey following last July's failed coup is affecting the business sector, which could

prompt capital flight. The political uncertainty is likely to drag on for months. If parliament passes the new draft constitution, it will be put to a referendum in late March or early April. Ratings agency Fitch is expected to review its assessment of Turkey soon and may also downgrade its credit rating to junk.

Can the slide be stopped?

Erdogan has described himself as an "enemy" of interest rates, but analysts say the central bank will have to hike them again, and soon. William Jackson of Capital Economics says it is "increasingly likely" the bank will have to raise official interest rates when it next meets on January 24.

According to City Index research director Kathleen Brooks, "a bold move from the Turkish central bank, like a large, one-off rate

hike would probably be the only thing that would boost the currency. "But even then, it may only have a limited effect." Analysts at Renaissance Capital believe everything depends on whether

Turkey's situation stabilizes after the referendum on the constitution. In a best case scenario, growth could rise to 4-5 percent in 2018, but if there is no stability, the exchange rate could hit "4-5 Turkish lira to the dollar". Nomura International said it expects to see a hike of 25-50 basis points from the central bank in January—far lower than what it says is a needed increase of 350-400 basis points. Should the bank choose not to raise interest rates at all, the lira risks dropping in real terms to lows "last seen in the aftermath of the 2001 crisis" when Turkey flirted with financial meltdown, it said. — AFP

SAUDI DECLINES ON OIL, DUBAI STALLS NEAR HIGH

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's stock market declined for a fourth straight day yesterday after oil prices fell further, but other Gulf bourses largely moved sideways and Dubai held near a 15-month high. The Saudi index pulled back 1.6 percent to 6,895 points, falling below technical support at the mid-December low of 7,002 points. Another straight close below support would confirm a break, triggering a double top formed by the December and January peaks and pointing down to around 6,770 points. The market had rebounded more than 30 percent from its October lows so analysts said profit-taking pressure was inevitable.

"Beyond fourth-quarter earnings, which may show moderate improvement in earnings for some sectors like banks, investors will be focusing on economic reforms in 2017," said Santhosh Balakrishnan, senior analyst at Riyadh Capital. In that environment, he added, stocks are only likely to rise if earnings come in much higher than analysts' expectations.

Yanbu National Petrochemical Co jumped as much as 4 percent in the first hour of trade yesterday but closed flat after it reported a 53.4 percent rise in fourth-quarter net profit to 602.85 million riyals (\$161 million), in line with analysts' forecasts.

Twelve of the 13 other listed petrochemical producers declined with heavyweight Saudi Basic Industries dropping 0.5 percent. All 12

listed banks were weak, with Al Rajhi falling 1.2 percent.

Meanwhile, Dubai's main index pulled back 0.1 percent to 3,722 points. Union Properties dropped 1.7 percent and Dubai Financial Market, the only listed exchange in the Gulf, closed 1.4 percent lower. But some shares in the insurance sector outperformed with Islamic Arab Insurance surged 6.5 percent in heavy trade to its highest close since August 2015. There is speculation that the finance and insurance industries may witness further tie-ups after the impending merger of National Bank of Abu Dhabi and First Gulf Bank. Insurers were also volatile in neighboring Abu Dhabi. Methaq Takaful Insurance jumped 5 percent but Al Khazna Insurance slumped 8.5 percent. Cairo's blue chip index added 0.6 percent to 13,089 points, another record peak, but trading volume declined, shrinking by roughly half from last week's high. Foreign funds, which were marginal sellers of shares on Tuesday, were net buyers by a narrow margin, bourse data showed. Arabian Cement jumped a further 9.9 percent to 8.33 Egyptian pounds, taking its gains over the last two days to 16.9 percent after Beltone Financial placed a "buy" recommendation on the stock with a fair value of 12.60 pounds, citing higher cement prices and a healthy pricing environment. — Reuters

IN DETROIT, FOREIGN AUTO MAKERS WAVE US FLAG

DETROIT: Pledges of loyalty to the United States, touting local investments and cars draped in red, white and blue. At the annual Detroit auto show, foreign manufacturers have put their American patriotism on ostentatious display. The trend by itself is nothing new, and the brand message of global manufacturers often is tailored for local markets.

But this year, with the imminent inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump, this professed devotion takes on greater significance, especially at the key showcase for the auto industry, which has come under frequent attack. The president-elect has singled out US and foreign auto manufacturers, threatening them with steep import tariffs if they sell cars on the US market that were made in Mexico.

The auto industry has invested heavily in Mexico to take advantage of cheaper labor and access to duty-free trade within the North American Free-Trade Agreement, a pact Trump also has attacked. Some auto makers have made goodwill overtures toward Trump, including Toyota, which on Tuesday fortuitously announced \$10 billion in US investment over the next five years, and calling attention to the fact that it employs 40,000 people in the United States.

Foreign NASCAR enthusiasts

The newest Toyota Camry draped in the stars and stripes and emblazoned with the words "Made in America" was a prominent feature in the Japanese auto maker's area of the convention center in Detroit. Behind it were two Toyota Tacoma and Tundra pickups, the latter bearing a map of Texas, where it is assembled.

The red, white and blue Tacoma also let visitors know that Toyota participates in the US Chamber of Commerce's "hiring our heroes" pro-



DETROIT: The Mercedes-Benz EQ Concept is shown at the 2017 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS). — AFP

gram to provide jobs for American military veterans. The company "wants to be genuinely involved in American culture," Detroit-based auto industry analyst Bertrand Rakoto said. "Toyota is the only foreign manufacturer to get involved in NASCAR," the popular US stock car racing series, he said. Nearby, a Hyundai SUV was decorated with the logo of US National Football League, which it sponsors, though American football has only limited appeal in South Korea. Images of the US flag also are displayed across the screens above the display by Volkswagen—which is still righting its ship after its emissions cheating scandal—where it is showcasing its large new SUV, the

Atlas. VW's US boss Hinrich Woeckel described the Atlas as "designed for the American lifestyle and built here in the US in our state-of-the-art factory in Chattanooga," Tennessee.

He pointedly did not say that the other new SUV unveiled this week, the Tiguan, rolls off a Mexican assembly line. Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn took advantage of the Detroit auto show to brag that his company has "a 33-year history of investing in the United States" and currently employs 22,000 people there. The company's plant in Smyrna, Tennessee is "the largest industry plant in North America," working at full capacity to produce 642,000 cars last year. — AFP

LONDON STOCKS SCALE TO NEW RECORD PEAK

LONDON: European stocks rose yesterday, with London striking another record pinnacle on the sliding pound and rebounding commodity prices. Sterling fell as weak official trade data offset bright industrial output figures and the currency's slide gave a fresh impetus to London share prices. London's FTSE 100 was catapulted to 7,293.26 points, extending a record-breaking run for the benchmark index that began just ahead of the New Year.

The pound took another pummeling on news that Britain's trade in goods deficit with the rest of the world worsened in November. Industrial production however rose more by more than market expectations. "Continued sterling weak-

ness is providing yet more support for equities and we are seeing the FTSE 100 punch fresh record highs and it is now just a whisker away from 7,300 points," noted ETX Capital analyst Neil Wilson.

"The question now is when this will end-can we call the top of the market?" The weak pound-which has struck multi-year lows and languished since Britain's EU exit vote on June 23 — boosts share prices of FTSE-listed multinationals as they profit from favorable exchange rates. London profited from gains to shares of heavyweight miners. Chinese data "points towards strength in commodity prices, which has been followed up in style, with the likes of copper, gold and iron ore proving

enough to drive substantial gains for (mining) names such as Anglo American and Antofagasta," said Joshua Mahony, analyst at traders IG. Elsewhere yesterday, eurozone stocks pushed higher amid hopes of more stimulative US monetary policy.

Bullish sentiment

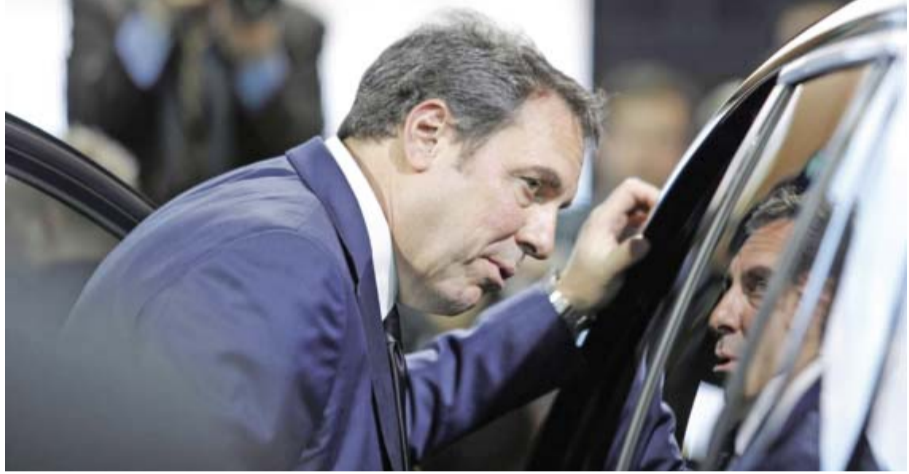
"The incredible bullish sentiment seems to be borne out of a concoction of a weak pound, loose monetary policy, rising commodity prices and expectations of increased US fiscal stimulus," added Mahony. Asian markets rose yesterday, with commodities-linked firms boosted by China's strong inflation reading.

China on Tuesday said factory-gate prices surged last month at their fastest pace in more than five years, leading to hopes the country could export much-needed inflation around the world and help kickstart global growth. The news helped ramp up prices in key commodities such as iron ore, copper and aluminum, which in turn provided support to producers.

In London, Anglo American won 1.7 percent and Antofagasta gained 0.9 percent in value. The British capital's top gainer was supermarket chain Sainsbury's. Shares jumped 4.0 percent after it posted rising sales over the key Christmas period. Oil prices were only marginally higher after two days of sharp

losses, hit by doubts about the effectiveness of OPEC's planned output cuts. Investors were meanwhile awaiting Donald Trump's first press conference since he won the US presidential election, with initial excitement about his plans turning to skepticism about whether he can deliver.

"Markets are on tenterhooks ahead of a 4pm (1600 GMT) Trump press conference, especially after overnight claims about his links to Russia," noted Acendo Markets analyst Mike van Dulken. The president-elect faced explosive claims that Russian intelligence gathered compromising information on him. Trump has denounced the report as a "political witch hunt". — AFP



DETROIT: Mark Reuss, GM Executive Vice President Global Product Development talks through the window of a GM vehicle with Vice President Joe Biden as Biden toured the General Motors exhibit at the 2017 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS). — AFP

GM SIGNALS NO CHANGE OF PLANS DESPITE CRITICISM FROM TRUMP

DETROIT: Leaders of the big three US auto makers have all spoken at the Detroit auto show about how President-elect Trump might impact the industry, but the third, from GM, offered the most business-as-usual message. Trump has slammed American car makers Ford, Fiat Chrysler and GM's Chevrolet brand for manufacturing cars in Mexico to export to the US market, threatening them with import tariffs. He also has blasted free trade agreements.

Ford boss Bill Ford and Fiat Chrysler chief Sergio Marchionne offered their views Monday, at the start of the important auto industry showcase. Ford said Trump has been receptive to industry concerns, while Marchionne was taking a wait-and-see approach but planning no additional Mexico investments for the time being. GM chief Mary Barra was the last to be heard on Tuesday and she held firm to her plans for the biggest of the US auto makers. She refused to speculate on whether a new White House may require the company to alter course-particularly with regard to investments in Mexico.

"We think there's many things that we can do in working with the administration that are going to make American great again, that are going to strengthen business, which will strengthen growth, which will strengthen jobs," she said, evoking Trump's campaign slogan. GM's Chevrolet Cruze was the target of Trump's Twitter attack a week ago, but Barra said only that she looked forward to conversing with the Republican president once he takes office on January 20. "We're going to have an active voice as trade policy changes or evolves, but the foundation of our strategy is to build where we sell," she told reporters.

GM, which includes four American brands—Chevrolet, Buick, Cadillac and GMC—has production plants in Mexico and even announced Tuesday that the new version of the GMC Terrain, an SUV currently produced in Canada, will be made in Mexico. "These decisions were made two and three years ago" and involve "big investments," Barra said. Trump's

applauded the other two American auto makers when they touted plans for US investments in recent days.

Ford scrapped plans to open a new \$1.6 billion factory in Mexico, to instead invest in a US plant, and Fiat Chrysler said it was creating 2,000 US jobs by investing in factories in Ohio and Michigan.

"Thank you Ford & Fiat CI," Trump tweeted Monday as the auto show officially opened to industry insiders and the press. "We owe a lot to this country," Marchionne said to a room full of reporters, and it would be "foolish" for his company to make any additional investments in Mexico, pending more information from the incoming administration about its trade plans. "I need clarity. I think we all need clarity," he said. Ford said he had "frequent" conversations with Trump about topics ranging from trade policy to corporate taxes. "He's very accessible, very easy to talk to," Ford said. "I found him to be very informed and very respectful of our position."

GM voice 'will be heard'

Barra said she, too, expected to have the administration's ear as it takes power and begins work on its to-do list. "When I think you look at our industry, and General Motors specifically, of how much we already contribute to jobs, we think that voice will be heard as any policy is set," Barra said. GM had good news Tuesday, as it raised its 2017 earnings outlook, thanks to expected solid final sales figures for 2016. Its expected earnings per share was bumped up to \$6.00 to \$6.50 for 2017, from \$5.50 to \$6.00 in 2016.

"We had a great year in 2016 in every respect," Barra said. GM also said it would ramp up its global volume of crossovers, trucks and sports utility vehicles, models which accounted for approximately 60 percent of all US auto sales last year. The category will account for 52 percent of the car giant's global volume of vehicles by 2020, GM announced. — AFP

UNCERTAINTY OVER TRUMP POLICY CLOUDS OUTLOOK: WORLD BANK

'A HEALTHY US ECONOMY IS GOOD FOR THE WORLD'

WASHINGTON: The World Bank on Tuesday pared back its global growth estimate for 2017, but uncertainty about the economic policies of US President-elect Donald Trump is clouding the outlook. "We need to pay attention. All eyes are on US policymakers and how they will formulate their policies," Ayhan Kose, main author of the World Bank's global forecast, told AFP in an interview. "What happens in the United States does not stay in the United States."

In the semi-annual Global Economic Prospects report, the World Bank lowered the estimate for global growth this year a tenth from the June forecast, to 2.7 percent compared to the 2.3 percent growth seen last year. The World Bank maintained its US forecast at 2.2 percent following a sluggish 1.6 percent in 2016. But those estimates could go much higher.

Even the table in the report displaying the forecasts for the major regions and economies comes with a footnote warning about the uncertainty. "The US forecasts do not incorporate the effect of policy proposals by the new US administration, as their overall scope and ultimate form are still uncertain." Kose said it is simply too soon to draw any conclusions, however a simulation showed the individual and corporate tax cuts that Trump discussed during the campaign could on their own add three-tenths to the US growth rate this year, and more than double that in 2018.

And infrastructure spending could have an even larger impact. "These are significant increases," he said. "A healthy US economy is good for the rest of the world," since an increase in US growth of one full percentage point could boost advanced economies by eight-tenths after a year, and emerging markets by six-tenths. So global growth potentially could rise another tenth this year to 2.8 percent, and get a three-tenths boost in 2018, he said.

Waiting for specifics

However, he was quick to stress the caveats to this estimated impact: It will depend on the timing of the tax cuts, how they impact inflation, and how the Federal Reserve reacts. The same is true for other proposals like big spending on infrastructure, which would have a more direct impact on growth, but could exacerbate an already tight labor market, which also could fuel inflation. The US central bank has cautioned that spending that fuels inflation could require more and faster increases in the benchmark lending rate. Higher interest rates in turn would tend to slow economic growth. Kose said the rising threat of protectionism in advanced economies

Modest recovery

After a pretty bad year in 2016, Kose said the world economy is poised for a recovery, especially with major commodity exporters returning to growth after recessions, including Russia, Brazil and Argentina. The euro area is expected to grow 1.5 percent this year—the same as in the June forecast—and 1.4 percent in 2018, after 1.6 percent GDP last year. Japan's growth is forecast at 0.9 percent and

0.8 percent for 2017 and 2018, which is a half-point better than the June estimate. The China forecasts are unchanged, with growth expected to slow to 6.5 percent this year and 6.3 percent next, which Kose called "a healthy slowdown." "They have done a real competent job so far slowing down the economy" from double-digit rates.

Investment crisis

Kose said the most worrisome thing about the global outlook is the continued drop off in investment. "The single most important issue we are focusing on in this report is the persistent investment weakness in emerging and developing economies," he said. "The issue is critical." Investment expanded 10 percent in 2010, but has slowed steadily growing just 3.5 percent in 2016.

There is no smoking gun for the cause of the decline, but some factors include the collapse of commodity prices, which reduced investment in those industries, debt problems in some countries, and political uncertainty in others. — AFP



WASHINGTON: In this Oct 26, 2016, file photo, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, accompanied by, from left, Donald Trump Jr, Eric Trump, Melania Trump, Tiffany Trump and Ivanka Trump, speaks during the grand opening of the Trump International Hotel-Old Post Office. — AP

also remains a concern, and that uncertainty "is a challenge to businesses in the US and abroad." But again he said, it is too early to tell what the impact on global growth will be until the specifics are known—for example, whether US tariff increases Trump has threatened are limited to one product, like automobiles, or extend to an entire country. "One thing we know well, open trade policies help promote economic growth," Kose said, in the closest he came in the interview to a word of caution to the new administration.

VW EMISSIONS-CHEATING DEAL COULD PUT STAFF IN HOT SEAT

DETROIT: The imminent criminal plea deal between Volkswagen and US prosecutors in an emissions-cheating scandal could be bad news for one group of people: VW employees who had a role in the deceit or subsequent cover-up. VW on Tuesday disclosed that it is in advanced talks to settle the criminal case by pleading guilty to unspecified charges and paying \$4.3 billion in criminal and civil fines, a sum far larger than any recent case involving the auto industry.

It's likely that VW will agree to cooperate in the probe, turning over documents and other information, said David M. Uhlmann, a former chief of the Justice Department's Environmental Crimes Section who is now a University of Michigan law professor. "Companies often face the dilemma of whether to protect their employees or cooperate with government investigations, but almost always end up deciding in the company's best interest to share what information they have," Uhlmann said. Although VW's communications with lawyers may be exempt, emails between employees and company executives should help prosecutors reach as far up VW's organizational chart as the scandal went, he said.

Prosecutors now have three witnesses giving them information and have arrested Oliver Schmidt, VW's former head of US environmental compliance who dealt with the EPA and California Air Resources Board after the scandal was uncovered. The cooperation of witnesses and the company should help investigators determine if the scandal went beyond VW's engineers, Uhlmann said. But extraditing any executives from Germany would be a problem.

'Defeat device'

Volkswagen has admitted equipping diesel cars with sophisticated software that turned on emissions controls when engines were being tested by the Environmental Protection Agency, then turned them off during normal driving. The software, called a "defeat device" because it defeated the emissions controls, improved engine performance but spewed out harmful nitrogen oxide at up to 40 times above the legal limit. Volkswagen has reached a \$15 billion civil



GENEVA: This file photo taken on March 2, 2015 shows then chairman of the board of German carmaker Volkswagen Group, Martin Winterkorn, posing with the Car of the Year 2015, a Volkswagen Passat, during a preview of Volkswagen Group ahead of the Geneva Car Show. — AFP

settlement with environmental authorities and car owners in the US under which it agreed to buy back up to 500,000 vehicles. The company also faces an investor lawsuit and criminal probe in Germany. In all, some 11 million vehicles worldwide were equipped with the software. The criminal investigation likely will continue into the administration of President-elect Donald Trump and attorney general nominee Sen. Jeff Sessions. Uhlmann, who served under Republican and Democratic attorneys general, doesn't think the new administration will back off from the VW prosecution.

"All administrations want to be tough on crime, including corporate crime," he said. "I doubt the Trump administration will be any dif-

ferent." A draft of the VW settlement with the government calls for the appointment of an independent monitor to oversee compliance and control measures for three years. The draft still must be approved by Volkswagen's boards and US courts.

The scandal was revealed in September 2015, when West Virginia University tested on-road diesel emissions. The EPA issued a notice of violation, and VW apologized and brought in US law firm Jones Day to investigate. If finalized, a \$4.3 billion settlement would eclipse Toyota's \$1.2 billion penalty over unintended acceleration problems as well as General Motors' \$900 million payment to resolve a deadly ignition-switch scandal. — AP

BROWN, LEGISLATURE DIFFER SHARPLY ON CALIFORNIA BUDGET DEFICIT, CUTS

SACRAMENTO: Gov Jerry Brown sees a budget deficit and an urgent need for spending cuts. Legislative leaders see a surplus with room to comfortably increase expenditures. Always at odds when it comes to the budget, the Democratic governor and the Democratic Legislature are particularly far apart this year as they embark on six months of spending negotiations amid uncertainty about federal funding under the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump.

Brown staked out a conservative opening position Tuesday, warning of a potential \$1.6 billion budget deficit and proposing a spending plan that keeps general fund expenditures flat at \$122.5 billion. Since costs rise every year, his plan would require cuts to keep pace, and he suggested eliminating billions of dollars allocated to education, state building construction, subsidized housing, college scholarships and child care providers. He seeks to boost the state's reserve fund to \$7.9 billion - up from \$6.7 billion in the current budget year - to help soften what he warned is an inevitable recession after 10 years of economic recovery. "You've got to save your money or you're going to lose the farm," Brown said, acknowledging that he expected "some shoving back and forth" with lawmakers as a final budget compromise is negotiated by June.

Rapid reception

Democratic legislative leaders gave Brown's budget a tepid reception. Acknowledging the need for caution in the face of federal uncertainty, they nonetheless rejected Brown's proposed cuts to college scholarships and child care while insisting they will still push to increase spending on social welfare programs. "This is not a

time to eliminate important programs that lift up the middle class," Assemblyman Kevin McCarthy, D-Sacramento, said in a statement.

Brown said months of lower-than-expected revenue, combined with the likelihood of a recession and the potential for drastic cuts in federal spending, demand restraint. His projection for a deficit was a stark contrast with the forecast released in November by the Legislature's nonpartisan budget expert, Legislative Analyst Mac Taylor, who projected a surplus as high as \$2.8 billion.

Drawing on that forecast, Assembly Democrats in December called for \$1 billion in new spending for things such as expanding the state earned-income tax credit, mandatory full-day kindergarten and reducing college costs. To maintain current spending, Brown proposes cutting \$3.2 billion from future commitments, about half by giving schools and community colleges less than expected. He wants to stop enrolling new college students in the Middle Class Scholarships program, saving more than \$30 million, cancel \$300 million in upgrades to state buildings and drop a \$400 million proposal for affordable housing that the Legislature rejected last year.

Brown also proposed canceling higher payments for state-funded child care providers. The governor's budget includes \$800 million more to cover people who joined Medi-Cal under Obamacare.

He also revisited his previous proposal, which has stalled in the Legislature, to increase gas and vehicle taxes to raise \$4.2 billion per year for road construction and maintenance. In all, California's spending plan would reach \$179.5 billion when restricted "special funds" and bonds are included. — AP

CAMARO ZL1 MAKES 1ST APPEARANCE IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: Chevrolet Middle East and Chevrolet Alghanim Automotive held the Kuwait debut of the 2017 Camaro ZL1 at Auto Moto Kuwait. The Camaro ZL1 is the most powerful Camaro in the model's fifty year history and will go on sale in the first half of 2017.

"We're excited that people in Kuwait are some of the first in the region to see this amazing piece of machinery up close. The ZL1 is the track capable version of the award-winning sixth generation of the Camaro and can challenge the most advanced sports coupes in the world, on any measure," said Abdallah Madhoun, Regional Sales and Marketing Manager for Chevrolet, GM Middle East. "The Camaro's technology, refinement, track capability and straight-line acceleration are on a whole new level," he said.

Visitors to the Chevrolet stand will also have the opportunity to experience the Chevrolet vehicle line-up, including the all-new 2017 Chevrolet Malibu, new 2017 Chevrolet Trax, new 2017 Chevrolet Trailblazer Z71, and 2017 Chevrolet Tahoe and Silverado Midnight editions. In addition, visitors will have the opportunity to stop by the Chevrolet stand to experience a Trailblazer virtual reality experience and to be able to go face-to-face with Q8Stig for a free gift.

The 2017 Chevrolet Camaro in detail

Acceleration is delivered via a new supercharged 6.2L V-8 engine, with estimated 650hp. Its 0-100kph time is a mere 3.6 seconds, and it can complete the quarter mile in 11.4 seconds at a speed of 204 kph. It builds on the sixth generation Camaro's segment leadership as the fittest in the segment. The Camaro ZL1 is the first production car to use a new, advanced 10-speed automatic gearbox, which offers strong economy and performance benefits. It is also available as a six-speed manual.



Handling capability starts with the lightweight, stiff structure of the all-new sixth-Generation Camaro, married with Magnetic Ride suspension and an electronic limited-slip differential. Standard technologies include Driver Mode Selector, dual-mode exhaust and advanced connectivity features.

Designed for performance

Functionality defines the Camaro ZL1's form, with the exterior shaped during more than 100 hours of wind-tunnel testing and on-track validation to improve aerodynamics and cooling for track use. Accordingly, its exterior elements all play a part in managing airflow over, under and through the ZL1.

"The design supports the Camaro ZL1's exceptional performance and does

so with compelling style," said John Mack, Camaro exterior design manager. "From every angle, the elements coalesce to give the car a purposeful, super aggressive attitude."

The lower grille opening, for example, offers greater airflow compared to the Camaro SS, and the upper grille incorporates a new version of the "flow-tie" open bowtie insignia. There's also a new hood, with a carbon fiber insert and heat extractor that pulls hot air from the engine compartment. Additional changes include a larger front splitter, unique rockers, a wing-style rear spoiler and wider front fenders - all tuned to improve aerodynamics for greater high-speed stability. Inside, there are standard Recaro front seats, along with a suede flat-bottom steering wheel and

shift knob. Chevrolet's Performance Data Recorder is available.

Fast with finesse

A cohesive suite of performance technologies tailors ZL1's performance for street and track. Features include an updated Magnetic Ride suspension, Performance Traction Management, electronic limited-slip differential, Custom Launch Control and Driver Mode Selector. It also has a stronger power-to-weight ratio than its predecessor, weighing 200 pounds less, while offering approximately 60 more horsepower and 80 more pound-feet of torque. The result is a one-of-a-kind driving experience.

"Driving the Camaro ZL1 is best described as 'fast with finesse,'" said Reuss. "It is beautifully balanced, with perfect

damping and isolation for optimal performance and driver confidence in virtually any situation - from the Pacific Coast Highway to Willow Springs to Pomona."

Additional chassis features include:

- Unique 20-inch forged aluminum wheels with 285/30ZR20 front and 305/30ZR20 rear tires
- Goodyear Eagle F1 Supercar tires with a compound and construction developed exclusively for the Camaro to offer exceptional grip on the track
- Brembo brakes with six-piston monobloc front calipers - featuring the ZL1 logo - and massive, 15.35-inch (390 mm) two-piece front rotors.

Supercharged performance and new 10-speed automatic

Underhood, the ZL1 features a supercharged LT4 6.2L V-8 Small Block engine, with intake and exhaust systems tailored for Camaro. It is rated at an estimated 650 horsepower and 650 lb-ft of torque (881 Nm). The LT4 is backed by a standard six-speed manual transmission or all-new, available paddle-shift 10-speed automatic. The 10-speed automatic has 7.39 overall ratio for smaller steps between gears. It enables the LT4 engine to remain at optimal rpm levels during acceleration, particularly when exiting corners, for quicker laps and lightning-quick responses on both up- and down-shifts.

This is the first Chevrolet application of the new quick-shift 10-speed, with unique calibrations and hardware developed exclusively for the ZL1. By the end of 2018, GM will introduce the new 10-speed automatic in eight vehicle models. Finally - and unlike some competitors - there's no need to purchase an optional package to make the ZL1 track ready. Track capability comes standard, with features including an impressive 11 heat exchangers for optimal powertrain cooling.

SAMSUNG HEIR NAMED SUSPECT IN S KOREAN POLITICAL SCANDAL

FAVORS INCLUDE GOVT BACKING ON CONTROVERSIAL MERGER

SEOUL: South Korean authorities said yesterday that a Samsung scion will be questioned as a suspect in a bribery case in the massive influence-peddling scandal that led to the impeachment of the country's president.

Lee Jae-yong, Samsung Electronics' vice chairman, will be summoned to face questions by investigators probing whether South Korea's largest business group bribed a jailed confidante of President Park Geun-hye to win favors, said Hong Jong-seok, a spokesman for the special prosecutor team investigating the scandal. Those possible favors include getting the government's backing on a controversial Samsung merger in 2015 that was opposed by minority shareholders, Hong said by phone.

Lee and members of his family were the biggest beneficiaries of the merger of Samsung C&T and Cheil Industries, which helped Lee increase his control over Samsung Electronics without having to spend his money to buy its shares. The former health minister overseeing the government-controlled national pension fund was arrested last year. The pension fund, the biggest shareholder in Samsung C&T, voted for the merger even though its advisers recommended voting against it, giving the crucial vote Samsung needed to secure shareholder approval. Prosecutors are expected to grill Lee starting today regarding why Samsung Group sent corporate funds to Choi Soon-sil, the jailed confidante, including buying costly horses for her daughter, who was on the national dressage team.

Winning favors

Samsung Group did not immediately respond to an email yesterday seeking comment. Two Samsung executives, including a man known as Lee's mentor, were questioned in the case earlier this week. When Lee appeared at a public hearing last month, he told lawmakers that he was not aware of the decision to fund Choi's daughter. He also denied that Samsung tried to win favors through the funds. Lee, the only son of Samsung's ailing chairman and a grandson of the company's founder, acknowledged that it was "inappropriate" but "inevitable" to send money to Choi (pronounced Chwey). He



SEOUL: In this Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2016, file photo, Lee Jae-yong, a vice chairman of Samsung Electronics Co., arrives for a hearing at the National Assembly. — AFP

did not elaborate further.

Prosecutors asked lawmakers to file a complaint against Lee for alleged perjury at the hearing. Cho Myung-sik, a parliamentary official, said yesterday that lawmakers had received the request and would review it. Authorities declined yesterday to confirm how much money Samsung spent on Choi's companies or foundations. Samsung Group declined to comment when asked about the matter last week.

According to local media and legislators, Samsung signed a contract worth over \$18 million with Choi's company to bankroll her daughter's equestrian training in Germany and donated another \$17 million to two nonprofit foundations

whose funds were allegedly for Choi's personal use.

Hong, the spokesman, said that prosecutors have examined a tablet PC that Choi had owned and found details about what type of benefits Samsung provided to her, including the Samsung funds used in Germany. Once prosecutors finish questioning Lee, they will determine whether to add more Samsung officials on a list of suspects, Hong said. President Park's powers have been suspended since Dec. 9, when South Korea's opposition-controlled parliament voted to impeach her over the scandal. Her trial is currently being held at the Constitutional Court to decide whether she will be permanently removed from power. — AP



MORAGAHAKANDA: Sri Lanka President Maithripala Sirisena (5L) attends the inauguration of the filling of the Moragahakanda reservoir in Moragahakanda yesterday. The 220 million dollar irrigation project is expected to help tens of thousands of farmers in the north-western, northern and eastern parts of the island. — AFP

S LANKA TO RAISE \$1.5 BN THROUGH BONDS IN 2017

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka announced yesterday it would raise \$1.5 billion through a domestic bond sale this year as it moves to rebuild its foreign exchange reserves. The cabinet approved the borrowing through dollar-denominated bonds to be offered to banks and investors in the country, said government spokesman Gayantha Karunatileka.

The move to borrow locally came weeks after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned that the country's foreign reserves were "below comfortable levels".

Last June the government, which came to power in January 2015, received a \$1.5 billion bailout from the IMF after facing a

balance of payments crisis. The IMF, in a November review before releasing the second tranche of the funds, said Sri Lanka's performance was "broadly satisfactory" but that it needed to build its dwindling foreign reserves.

Foreign reserves at the end of December were \$6.06 billion, up from \$5.64 billion a month earlier, according to government data. Sri Lanka also secured in December a three year \$1.34 billion loan from the World Bank to fund a range of projects. It is also selling part of a loss-making \$1.4 billion harbour to a Chinese company to help repay crippling debts. — AFP

MA'S MILLION JOBS PLEDGE MORE PR THAN PROMISE

BEIJING: Alibaba founder Jack Ma and Donald Trump made headlines with the Chinese entrepreneur's attention-grabbing pledge to create one million US jobs, but analysts say the move is more about good PR than substance. The splashy promise at Trump Tower was a strategic decision by Ma to win goodwill from the next US president and hedge against political risks to Alibaba's vast online shopping business over counterfeiters, independent e-commerce analyst Li Chengdong told AFP.

"We don't have to take the one million job promise too seriously," Li said. In the short term, economists are sceptical. Such a figure would represent almost one percent of all jobs in the United States, making the firm one of the country's largest private employers, said Christopher Balding, professor at Peking University's HSBC Business School.

China's largest online shopping portal has been on the defensive since the office of the US Trade Representative last month put its massive electronic sales platform Taobao on its annual blacklist, saying it was not doing enough to curb sales of fake and pirated goods. Although inclusion on the blacklist carries no penalties in itself, it dealt a blow to Alibaba's efforts to improve its image and boost international sales. "This (pledge) is more made to relieve its PR pressure, so Alibaba won't become a target of attack after Trump takes office," Li added. "As Alibaba's counterfeiters problem is indeed quite serious, it is an easy target."

'Good relationships'

This month Alibaba filed a lawsuit in China against two vendors for allegedly

selling fake Swarovski watches on Taobao, portraying the move as the first time an e-commerce site had taken a counterfeiter to court in the world's second-largest economy. "Jack Ma is a smart guy and if there is anything being a major businessman in China teaches you it is the importance of having good relationships with the leaders," Balding added.

Alibaba and Taobao have long been accused of providing a platform for the sale of knockoff brand-name goods. Items for sale include a variety of Trump-related products, including "Make America Great Again" hats that sell for \$25 on Trump's website-available for 3.5 yuan (50 cents) yesterday. Analysts say Alibaba wants to enhance its imports of US merchandise for Chinese consumers.

"It is not necessarily to create more jobs in the US, it is simply providing one more sales channel for them," Nell Lu, analyst with Shanghai's Business Connect China consulting firm, told AFP. Scandals over food safety and milk powder have eroded Chinese shoppers' confidence in domestic goods, fuelling lively informal grey markets in food, vitamins, and medicines from all over the world.

While dominant in its home market, and making forays into Russia and Southeast Asia, Alibaba's efforts in the US have so far failed to find the same success.

Its business model as a platform offers US consumers no extra benefits, Li said, and it faces dominant local competitors such as Amazon and eBay. Even so, Ma wants half of Alibaba's revenue to be international within 10 years. — AFP

INDIA'S GASOLINE THIRST SHOWS NO SIGN OF BEING SLAKED: KEMP

LONDON: India's gasoline consumption continues to grow rapidly as an increasing number of individuals purchase their first motorized vehicle, helping drive the fastest growth in fuel demand in the world. India's gasoline consumption rose more than 12 percent in 2016 compared with 2015, according to preliminary fuel sales figures compiled by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Motor spirit consumption averaged 574,000 barrels per day in 2016, up from 513,000 bpd in 2015 and 447,000 bpd in 2014. Consumption is being driven by an enormous increase in the number of drivers on the country's roads for the first time. The number of registered motor vehicles hit 210 million by March 2015 up from just 105 million in March 2008 ("Road Transport Yearbook", Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, 2016).

The number of registered motor vehicles is doubling every seven years and shows no sign of being saturated. Vehicle ownership stood at an average of 167 per 1,000 people in 2015, up from 86 in 2007, according to government data. But penetration rates were still low compared with other developing countries such as Mexico

(285), Brazil (290) and Malaysia (396). And ownership was very low compared with developed economies such as the United Kingdom (517), Japan (598) and the United States (783). Three-quarters of registered vehicles were two-wheeled motor cycles (154 million) rather than cars (29 million), goods vehicles (9 million) or buses (2 million).

Vehicle ownership

Motorcycles use much less fuel than a car, but run entirely on gasoline, not diesel, and the correct comparison is with the non-motorised transport and buses they are replacing. Vehicle ownership including motorcycles has become an important status symbol for India's rapidly growing urban middle class. Nearly one-third of all motor vehicles are registered to individuals in the country's million-plus cities according to government data.

The most heavily urbanised states and territories in the union also have the highest rates of vehicle registration per 1,000 population. Registration rates in heavily urbanised Goa (551), Puducherry (488), Delhi (424) and Tamil Nadu (326) are much higher than in rural states such

as Odisha (124), Assam (78), Bihar (46) and Himachal Pradesh (153).

There is enormous potential for India's fuel consumption to increase as vehicle penetration rates converge with other developing countries and spread from urban centers to more rural areas. Fuel use will also increase as families upgrade from their initial two-wheeled vehicles to larger and more comfortable cars.

India is therefore one of the most important and natural markets for Saudi Arabia, Iran and other crude producers in the Middle East given the short sea routes. The country is also critical for the major international oil companies as an outlet for their downstream fuel divisions. BP has obtained permission to set up 3,500 fuel stations in India because it sees a strong future for transportation demand in India.

Other major private and state-owned oil companies are also reported to be interested in establishing retail distribution networks given the strong outlook for fuel consumption. In absolute terms, India's gasoline consumption is still dwarfed by China. But India is set to be one of the fastest growing markets for road fuel in the next decade. — Reuters

BURGAN BANK ANNOUNCES SPONSORSHIP OF 'SPARK MARATHON 2017'

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday its sponsorship of 'SPARK Marathon 2017', the largest and most anticipated charity race events in Kuwait, for the second consecutive year. Organized by Spark Athletic Centre and scheduled for Saturday January 14th, 2017 at the Marina Crescent, the marathon aims at integrating sports and fitness into the very fabric of the Kuwaiti society as well as at supporting local charities and non-profit organizations by highlighting the positive role they play in our community.

The race is open to individuals and families from all age groups and will feature four categories; 5 km run, 10 km run, 21 km run, and 42 km run, while the event

will continue running over two days, from January 13th till the 14th. The race will be followed by a full-fledged program of entertaining activities for all ages.

Burgan Bank is a firm believer of the great importance of such sporting events and its positive outcome on the society and on Kuwait in general. Such events position Kuwait as a hub for world-class sports initiatives in all fronts, while it encourages individuals in the community to integrate sports and fitness into their very own lives, which is all under the bank's philosophy in order to support such local initiatives that raise the level of awareness on the community as a whole. The sponsorship of SPARK



Marathon falls under the umbrella of nationalism and corporate citizenship spirit which Burgan Bank believes in. The bank trusts that the outcome of this local event with international standards will showcase Kuwait as a host for world class sporting events.

Burgan Bank's sponsorship of this unique event stems from its overall social responsibility and firm belief in supporting initiatives that raise awareness about the benefits of maintaining a healthier lifestyle. As part of this commitment, Burgan Bank will continue to support similar initiatives in the future as to create a positive impact on the society as a whole.



GULF BANK WELCOMES RED ACCOUNT'S DRAW WINNER

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank's Al Danah Millionaire Draw, recognized as the 'Largest prize linked to a bank account' by Guinness World Records TM, resulted in the announcement of many winners. The red account winner visited Gulf Bank's headquarters yesterday to officially receive her prize. Gulf Bank welcomed Ms. Huda Hussein Mohammad Mohammad, the last winner of the monthly cash draw for the Red Account 2016, at the head office at Gulf bank. Manal Barakat, Manager, Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank congratulated her on winning a prize of KD 1,000 during Al Danah Millionaire Draw event that took place on January 5 at the Avenues.

Throughout her visit to Gulf Bank's headquarters to officially receive her prize, commenting on her win, Ms. Mohammad stated that "at first I thought it was a prank from one

of my friends was so surprised to win the draw. I had to reconfirm twice before believing that I have won" Cash prizes up to KD 1,000 each with Gulf Bank's Salary and red accounts were won on the spot during Al Danah Millionaire Draw event. New red Account or Salary Account customers who have opened an account and transferred their student allowance or salary always have a chance to enter cash draws and win prizes with Gulf Bank.

For further information about the Al Danah, Salary, red accounts, or any of the products or services, visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, or call Gulf Bank's Customer Contact Center on 1805805. General information about Gulf Bank's products and services can also be found at the Bank's website at www.e-gulfbank.com.

THE KUWAIT MOTOR SHOW AUTOMOTO 17 BEGINS

OVER 30 BRANDS, OVER 100 CARS ON DISPLAY FOR 10 DAYS IN 360 MALL

KUWAIT: EPR Company announced that the Kuwait Motor Show Automoto17 opens its doors for the public under the patronage of His Excellency Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Homoud Al-Sabah yesterday at 10 am at 360 MALL and will continue through the 21st of January. The Kuwait Motor Show Automoto 17 is Kuwait's only motor show displaying more than 30 brands by authorized dealerships in Kuwait. The show is bringing the newest releases of 2017 to the public under one roof.

Car launches and new models of 2017

The Kuwait Motor Show Automoto 17 will showcase the latest in the automotive market offering vehicles of the year 2017, an array of new product launches, never seen before vehicles and much more. The world most renowned brands plan to do their major launches in the country throughout the show. Visitors will enjoy a one of a kind experience with vehicles ranging from economy passenger cars, luxury sedans, super cars, and a mix of motorcycles and ATV's. The show offers visitors over 100 vehicles on display ranging from passenger cars, SUV's, and Motorcycles and more.

Sponsors

The Kuwait Motor Show is in partnership with The Kuwait Finance House as a Strategic Partner for the Third year in a row. KFH offers exclusive promotions and a comprehensive range of financial services for those visitors who are planning to purchase new cars. KFH's active role and contributions in the automotive market reiterate its flagship status and leading position in financing automobiles. The show is also backed by various sponsors that will add value to the show experience ranging from car cleaning services offered by Pronto Wash, Fuel products and services offered by Oula, and innovative cleaning services by Smart Polish Pro.

Automoto17 commences its activities today January the 12th and will continue through



Rawiah Alateeqi

January the 21st at the mall regular hours 10 am to 10 pm. 360 MALL showed its keenness to support new ideas which fall in line with its policy and serves the community. The Chief Executive Officer of EPR, Osama Bastaki expressed his confidence in the company's successful experience in organizing the most prestigious and largest



Osama Bastaki

Bastaki added: "The Kuwait Motor Show brings together automotive brands from around the world displaying them to their customers in Kuwait in a drive to support the local dealers in showcasing their newest models. The show is designed to generate traffic translating into sales which in turn reflects on the economy of the country."



car show in Kuwait. He said: "We aim to further expand on our success and progress in all our events, with emphasis on the Kuwait Motor Show being the largest motor show in Kuwait. Last year, over 260,000 visitors entered the mall during the 7 days show and over 100 cars were sold as a result of the show."

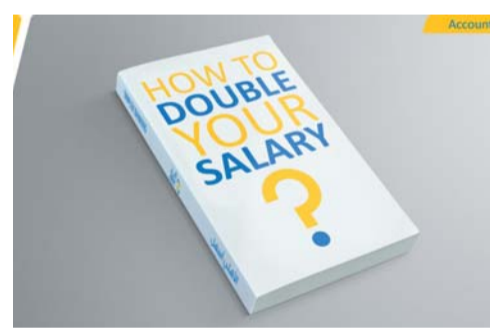
General Manager of EPR, Rawiah Alateeqi stated: "We have organized the Kuwait Motor Show for five consecutive years at 360 MALL and we have been investing in it since inception. We have become the only and largest motor show in the country. Our statistics proved that last year's event was a success, and we aim to accomplishing more this year."

ABK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 'DOUBLE YOUR SALARY' WEEKLY DRAWS

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its 37th 'Double Your Salary' weekly draw on 9th January, 2017 at the Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, announcing the names of the winners for this week. The promotion includes weekly draws, with two winners per draw. The campaign will run until 27th June, 2017.

The winners this week were:

1) Abdulrazzaq Abdullah Al Marzouq, Shuwaikh Branch



2) Abdullah Zayed Abdullah Al Sader, Hawally Branch
New customers who transfer their salary to ABK receive KD 100 and will automatically be entered into the weekly draws to double their salaries. Existing customers who are already transferring their salary to ABK are entered into a separate draw. The next 'Double Your Salary' draw will be held on 16th January, 2017 where two new lucky winners will be announced. All winners will be contacted personally and a weekly announcement will be made through the media with the winners' names.

DHOFAR GLOBAL PURSUES EXPANSION TO ESTABLISH PRESENCE IN THE GCC

DUBAI: In line with its strategic expansion plans, Dhofar Global, a leading supplier of hygiene products in the Middle East, is looking to enter at least one GCC country in 2017 and two more by 2020. The move complements the robustness of the region's cleaning and hygiene sector and its strong organic growth in the UAE, where it recorded a surge of 40 per cent in 2016. The new expansionary policy will be supported by the launch of advanced cleaning solutions and innovative fragrance diffusers in the UAE.

The outlook for the UAE's cleaning and hygiene sector is optimistic following significant growth registered in the last nine years along with the launch of specialized products and services. The domestic market has received a major boost with the introduction of advanced technology and application software, enabling it to adopt a more scientific and sustainable approach towards a safe, clean and

green environment. The UAE Government's initiatives such as the promotion of the best hygiene practices and a clean community have contributed to the growth as well.

Chandan Singh, CEO, Dhofar Global, said: "Dhofar Global has witnessed a remarkable growth of 40 per cent over 2015. As the region prepares to host two major events - Expo 2020 and the 2022 FIFA World Cup - we are bullish about growing by more than 50 per cent in 2017 as they will positively impact the volume of our business. The massive projects being launched and executed in the UAE will create more opportunities in the cleaning and hygiene sector and therefore support our expansion plans."

"The growth will be accompanied with challenges such as educating clients about new products and services; however, as the market leader in the away-from-home (afh) segment, we take it as our responsibility to raise awareness among cus-



tomers about the importance of hygiene and inform them about new cleaning solutions," concluded Singh.

Convenient Banking at Your Fingertips
Download the NBK Mobile Banking App With "Touch ID"

Now, the new NBK Mobile Banking App is more user-friendly than ever. Simply login with your fingerprint to make transactions on the go securely and enjoy an exceptional mobile banking experience.

NBK INTRODUCES NEW FINGERPRINT FEATURE TO MOBILE BANKING APP

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait is committed to providing its customers with the best and most up-to-date banking e-services that enable them to conveniently and securely access their accounts on their smartphones and meet their banking demands at anytime and anywhere in the world.

Driven by this commitment, NBK added the new Touch ID login feature to its enhanced Mobile Banking App for iOS and Android devices, which enables customers to login to the App safely and quickly with one touch by selecting the fingerprint option from the settings menu instead of using the username or password; given that the smartphone supports the fingerprint feature.

This pioneering step plays an integral role in saving customers' time and effort, as well as enabling them to bank more quickly and easily. It also translates NBK's leadership in providing efficient e-services in the market that satisfy the growing financial needs of its customers conveniently and securely. NBK customers can login into the

NBK Mobile Banking with one step and benefit from the various new innovative services and features, such as: choosing the favored language, viewing NBK Rewards Program participating outlets, using augmented reality to locate the new CDMs, in addition to ATM and branches locator and official working hours. Customers can also complete their banking transactions conveniently and securely, including: Checking account and credit card balance, transferring funds locally and internationally, requesting checkbooks and printed account statement, credit card and phone bill payments in addition to the "Travel Tips" for customer to view and benefit for their safety while travelling.

The NBK Mobile Banking APP is available for Android, and Apple devices. NBK customers can download the NBK Mobile Banking free from nbk.com or by logging into NBK Online Banking. For more information, customers can visit any of NBK's branches or call NBK Call Center at 1801801 or 0096522248361 from outside Kuwait.



RENAULT AL BABBAIN RE-AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO ROAD SAFETY

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babbain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in the State of Kuwait has once again reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to improving road safety by launching an Aftersales campaign for all Renault owners.

The Aftersales campaign, a token of gesture of customer loyalty, offers special discounts including a 30% discount on parts and 15% discount on labor and is aimed to raise awareness on the importance of replacing timing belts every 80,000 KMS. Renault Al Babbain is strongly committed to giving preventive maintenance services to

its customers, thus enhancing their ownership experience and provide them with maximum benefits and services."

Renault Al Babbain urges all Renault owners to take advantage of this offer, and to accentuate their unique Renault experience. The service center available in is fully equipped with state-of-the-art technology that ensures continued value, safety and driving pleasure. The service center offers services that include but are not limited to oil change, brake change, seatbelt warming, tire pressure monitoring, checking fluid levels and transmission replacements.

TIME FOR YOUR NEW YEAR CYBER DETOX?

By Alastair Paterson



The festive period is over, the mince pies, turkey and other excesses are finished for another year and we start the New Year with hope and optimism and often New Year resolutions. Equally in the corporate world we need to start the New Year with fresh plans and schemes, but at the same time ensure we focus on the key challenges that can help our businesses move forward to ensure 2017 is our most successful ever, while addressing the challenges which could derail that success.

But while the year might be new, many of the Cybersecurity challenges we face are far from

new, but it is equally important that we address them for the data security and integrity of our businesses.

If I had been writing this blog even three years ago, it is probable I would have talked about needing to recognize the cyber risk and not bury our heads in the sand to the industrialized threat caused by professional cybercrime. Today in 2017, I don't think anyone could be in any doubt about the challenge and threat cybercrime is to all businesses, of whatever size and industry.

So the start of a new calendar year is a great time to take stock of our cybersecurity posture and risk profile and ensure we are ready to

meet the challenges the future holds. We know that ransomware and extortion will continue to be a huge problem in 2017 particularly making advantage of insecure Internet of Things devices with the Mirai Distributed Denial of Service technique. Also Data Breaches remain a huge challenge for businesses and governments whether deliberate or accidental.

But while these are likely to be the most common threats faced in 2017, we also know that it is probable new, unforeseen challenges will arise in 2017 and to be ready for them, we need to ensure our security teams have the cyber intelligence and awareness at hand to quantify and manage those new threats as

they materialize. After all you can't defend what you don't understand or know about. We also know we cannot do everything, so cybersecurity in 2017 and beyond is about prioritizing the threats and managing those that will have the most damaging impact on your business.

So is it time for you to have a New Year Business Detox, and ensure you have the cyber intelligence to measure this risk and prioritize the potential impact to your business? I think it probably is. Happy New Year.

— Alastair Paterson is the CEO and Co-Founder of Digital Shadows

BACKPAGE.COM EXECS REFUSE TO TESTIFY AT COURT HEARING

WASHINGTON: Executives at the advertising website Backpage.com refused to testify before Congress Tuesday following a Senate report that accuses the site of systematically editing its "adult" ads to remove words that indicate sex trafficking. Four top executives and the company's lawyer told a Senate subcommittee they were invoking their Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination.

The Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations released a report Monday charging that Backpage has created a lucrative marketplace that makes child sex trafficking easier. The report cites internal documents showing that up to 80 percent of the site's ads are edited to conceal the true nature of the underlying transaction. Backpage has denied the allegations, and the site shuttered its "adult" section in the US Monday night to protest what it calls government censorship. Sen Rob Portman, R-Ohio, the subcommittee's chairman, said Backpage's actions validated the panel's report, adding that Backpage has "put profits ahead of vulnerable women and children."

Backpage has shown it is "intent on profiting from human trafficking - and human misery - and profit they have, at the expense of countless innocent victims," Portman said as the Backpage executives sat stone-faced in front of him. Missouri Sen Claire McCaskill, the panel's top Democrat, called Backpage "a \$600 million company built on selling sex - and importantly, built on selling sex with children."

'Simply evil'

Rather than turn away ads that sell girls as young as 12 for sex, Backpage executives "just tried to make it less obvious," McCaskill said. The committee's report said the company used a computer program to find and delete words such as "Lolita," "cheerleader," "teenager" and "young." The editing practices amounted to "coaching"

traffickers and pimps in how to make their ads appear legitimate while continuing to sell girls and boys into prostitution and modern-day slavery, McCaskill said. "That, ladies and gentlemen, is the definition of evil - simply evil," she said.

The Senate hearing comes a day after the Supreme Court said it won't hear an appeal from three sex trafficking victims who accuse Backpage of helping to promote the exploitation of children. The justices left in place a lower court ruling that said federal law shields Backpage from liability because the site is just hosting content created by people who use it.

The women say they were sold as prostitutes in Massachusetts and Rhode Island through advertisements for escort services on the site when they were as young as 15. A federal judge threw out the lawsuit, and the federal appeals court in Boston upheld that ruling. In a separate case last month, a California judge rejected pimping charges against Backpage CEO Carl Ferrer and former owners Michael Lacey and James Larkin, citing federal free speech laws. California officials have said they intend to pursue new charges against the company based on new evidence. Prosecutors have alleged that more than 90 percent of Backpage's revenue - millions of dollars each month - comes from adult escort ads that use coded language and nearly nude photos to offer sex for money.

The Senate report says that despite public claims to the contrary, Ferrer, Larkin and Lacey are the "true beneficial owners of the company." The report says Larkin and Lacey loaned Ferrer \$600 million to buy the company from them, and the men concealed their ownership interest through "a complex chain of domestic and international shell companies." Ferrer, Lacey, Larkin and chief operating officer Andrew Padilla all refused to testify Tuesday, as did Elizabeth McDougall, the company's general counsel. — AP



Honor President George Zhao during Honor 6X launch.

HONOR 6X LAUNCHES IN MIDEAST

By Islam Al-Sharaa

LAS VEGAS: Built for the cost-conscious yet uncompromising Internet-minded millennial, the Honor 6X is the perfect technological budget beast. It features an innovative dual-lens rear camera offering a wide aperture range (F/0.95-F/16) that gives all the latitude to unleash your creative potential. Embodying the "Double the Experience" motto that millennials live and breathe, the Honor 6X breaks new ground at CES 2017 with its premium dual-lens rear camera, extended battery life and rock-solid performance.

The main 12 MP camera of the Honor 6X dual lens rear camera is responsible for the composition of the image while the 2 MP camera helps to get depth of field information, resulting in beautiful shots that are sharp and crisp. Combined with the camera's wide aperture (F/0.95), the Honor 6X produces professional-looking background blur to make your subjects stand out. This, coupled with a 1.25um pixel size, enables the Honor 6X to capture quality shots even in low-light settings. The Honor 6X's camera uses Phase Detection Auto Focus technology, which allows for an ultra-fast camera focus speed of 0.3 seconds.

Fueled by Kirin 655 boasting an octa-core architecture, the Honor 6X is built to provide a glitch-free user experience. Kirin 655 packs four cores clocked at 2.1GHz and another four at 1.7 GHz. Supported by 3GB RAM and a powerful i5 co-processor, the Honor 6X allows you to seamlessly game, browse and listen to music or run multiple apps at the same time, it also boasts an internal storage memory of 32GB.

Running on a powerful 3340 mAh battery, Honor 6X offers an exceptional battery life. With its 16nm CPU and power saving technology further reducing power consumption, the Honor 6X provides 2.15 days of usage and 1.54 days of heavy usage on a single full charge. On a single full charge, the Honor 6X allows you to enjoy up to 11.5 hours of video, 70 hours of music, or up to 8 hours of gaming.

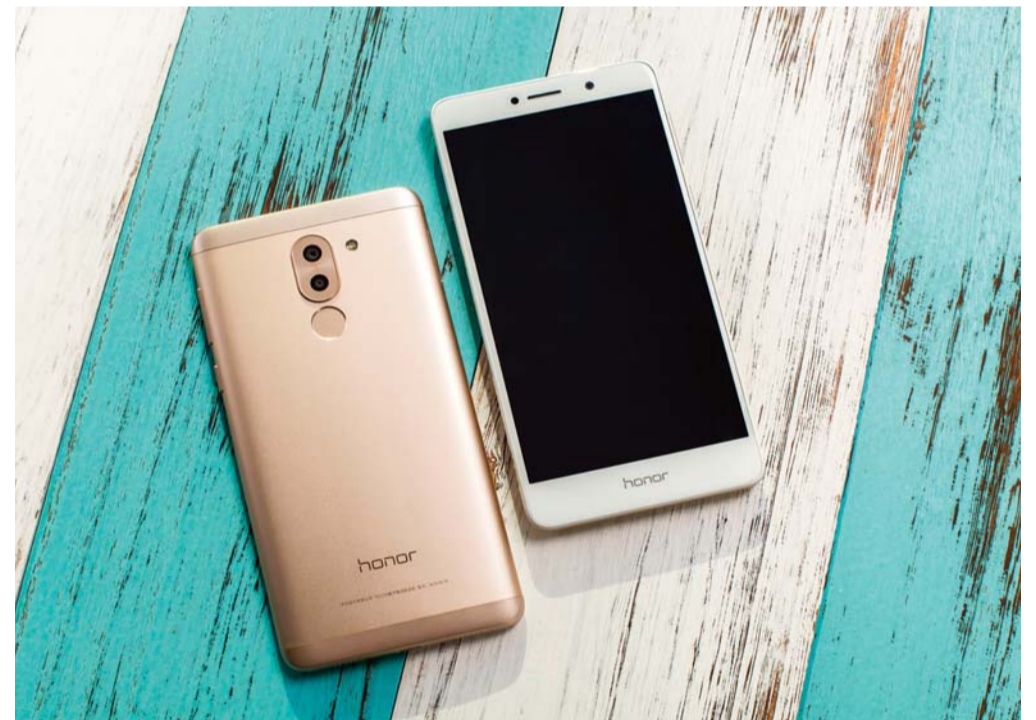
Featuring a generous 5.5-inch full HD (1920 x 1080p) display, the ergonomically designed Honor 6X boasts a full metal slim body (8.2 mm thick) with 2.5-D glass on the front and curved panel on the back. The Honor 6X comes in three colors - gold, silver and grey. It has been available for purchase since January 5 in the Middle East including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc at a selling price of KD 75.

"Millennial smartphone users in the Middle East region have integrated the technology seamlessly in to every aspect of their life and are looking for a device that can match both their lifestyle and their pocket. With the honor 6x, we are bringing our consumers a device that is perfectly tailored to the desired experience for a digital native," said Chris Sun Baigong, Vice President Huawei honor Middle East CBG.

"Geared towards those unwilling to cut back on performance, Honor 6X is a device engineered with uncompromising excellence," said George Zhao, president of Honor. "Understanding the 'double or nothing' lifestyle of millennials, we designed Honor 6X with enough muscle power to allow them to share, explore, and enjoy life to the fullest."

Zhao spoke to Kuwait Times as part of a group interview at CES. Some excerpts: **Kuwait Times: How is Honor doing in the smartphone market?**

George Zhao: We are the leading smartphone e-brand in the region and we pride ourselves in following an online and offline business model that caters to digital natives. Honor products are available through multiple sales channels enabling us to connect directly to our consumers



and closely focus on users' needs and in developing superior products and services. Honor incorporates the ultimate tech innovations, with strong research and development capabilities that allow creation of the best products. Huawei Honor has access to 16 global R&D centers, 79,000 R&D staff and 50,377 total granted patents. The brand offers innovative high-quality, high-performance products and services at a more accessible price point than other brands.

KT: What is Honor's strategy to sell more products in the Middle East and Kuwait?

Zhao: Over the past two years since Honor was first launched, globally the brand has been growing at 100 percent year on year; a figure we are replicating in the Middle East market. We

sales records to become the fastest selling device sold on Souq.com ever.

The Honor 7, which was launched in October last year, is the number one smartphone in its price category online in the Middle East. Our latest flagship beauty also exceeded target sales at Gitex Shopper 2016, with Honor 8 being among the most sold out phones within its price category. This confirms our belief in working with our users to create technology that caters to their specific needs and have the perfect bundles to ensure happier and more satisfied users.

Also, at CES 2017 in Vegas there was an exciting announcement from the Huawei Honor family where yet another technological budget beast was launched, but this time it was about setting the standards even higher for the competition where the first mid-range dual camera smartphone was launched, the Honor 6X.

Millennial smartphone users in the Middle East region have integrated the technology seamlessly in to every aspect of their life and are looking for a device that can match both their lifestyle and their pocket. With the Honor 6X, we are bringing our consumers a device that is perfectly tailored to the desired experience for a digital native. Geared towards those unwilling to cut back on performance, Honor 6X is a device engineered with uncompromising excellence. Understanding the 'double or nothing' lifestyle of millennials, we designed Honor 6X with enough muscle power to allow them to share, explore, and enjoy life to the fullest

KT: People need to see and touch products. What is Honor's retail presence?

Zhao: Honor is available online on www.hihonor.com and also through all major retailers in the region

KT: Is there any plan to launch a new device in future?

Zhao: 2017 is going to be an exciting year for Honor. We are looking at breaking norms and showing our users that premium quality is now within their reach. In the Middle East we see great potential for our brand; this is particularly so due to the predominance of digital natives and high incidence of early adopters that impact the way in which we approach this highly sophisticated market. Honor 6X is the only mid-range phone with a dual camera in the ME region that is built for the cost-conscious yet uncompromising Internet-minded millennial.



WASHINGTON: From left, Backpage.com CEO Carl Ferrer, former owner James Larkin, COO Andrew Padilla, and former owner Michael Lacey, are sworn-in on Capitol Hill. — AP

YAHOO TO CHANGE NAME, TRIM BOARD IF NEW DEAL GETS DONE

SAN FRANCISCO: Yahoo will adopt a new corporate identity and slash the size of its board if the proposed \$4.8 billion sale of its digital services to Verizon Communications goes through. The company plans to change its name to Albata Inc. after it turns over its email, websites, mobile apps and advertising tools to Verizon. The new name is meant to reflect Yahoo's transformation into a holding company for investments in China's e-commerce leader, Alibaba Group, and Yahoo Japan that are worth about more than \$40 billion combined.

Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer, co-founder David Filo and four other directors currently on the company's 11-member board will resign after the planned sale to Verizon closes. Verizon is expected to retain Yahoo's brand under its ownership. But the Verizon deal has been jeopardized by Yahoo's recent discovery of two computer hacking attacks that stole

personal information from more than 1 billion user accounts during two different intrusions that occurred in 2013 and 2014.

Verizon is reassessing whether it should renegotiate the sales price or perhaps cancel the deal light of hacking revelations that could trigger a backlash among Yahoo users upset about sensitive personal details being stolen. Yahoo is fighting to keep the deal intact. In the only change that took effect Monday, Yahoo director Eric Brandt became the company's chairman. He replaces Maynard Webb, who becomes chairman emeritus until the Verizon deal closes.

Brandt, the former chief financial officer of chipmaker Broadcom, joined Yahoo's board 10 months ago. Webb had been Yahoo's chairman for nearly four years. If the Verizon deal closes, Webb will leave the board along with Mayer, Filo and Eddy Hartenstein, Richard Hill and Jane Shaw. — AP



NORTH ANDOVER: This Monday, July 25, 2016, file photo shows the Yahoo and Verizon logos on a laptop. — AP

TRUMP APPEARS TO DIAL BACK FROM VACCINE SKEPTIC NOD

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump's transition team on Tuesday appeared to dial back from naming noted vaccine skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr to lead a committee on vaccine safety, officials said. Earlier in the day, Trump met with Kennedy, a prominent environmentalist who has authored a book about his concerns that ingredients in childhood vaccines may cause autism—a notion long debunked by the

scientific community. After that meeting, Kennedy told reporters Trump had asked him to head a commission on vaccine safety and scientific integrity, and the 62-year-old son of slain senator Bobby Kennedy and nephew of late president John F. Kennedy said he had agreed.

"He asked me to chair a commission on vaccine safety and scientific integrity," Kennedy said after the meeting, which he said Trump had called and requested.

"I said I would," Kennedy said the job would be to "make sure we have scientific integrity in the vaccine process for efficacy and safety." But Tuesday evening, Trump's transition team issued a statement saying that no such decision had been made. The statement also referred to the committee in question as one on autism, not vaccine safety.

"The President-elect enjoyed his discussion with Robert Kennedy Jr on a range of issues and appreciates his thoughts and ideas," the statement said. "The President-elect is exploring the possibility of forming a commission on autism, which affects so many families; however no decisions have been made at this time."

Doubts expressed

Both Kennedy and Trump have expressed concerns that childhood vaccinations could lead to autism. "Trump has some doubts about the current vaccine policies and he has questions about it," Kennedy told reporters. "His opinion doesn't matter but the science does matter and we ought to be reading the science and we ought to be debating the science," he added. "Everybody ought to be able to be assured that the vaccines that we have—he's very pro-vaccine, as am I—but they're as safe as they possibly can be."

Kennedy authored a 2014 book

describing the dangers of the mercury-containing preservative thimerosal in vaccines. At a film screening in California in 2015 he expressed mistrust of public health officials who say vaccines are safe for children. "They get the shot, that night they have a fever of a hundred and three, they go to sleep, and three months later their brain is gone," Kennedy said, according to a report at the time in the Sacramento Bee. "This is a holocaust, what this is doing to our country."

Long ago debunked

Such fears have spread online in recent years, fueled in part by celebrity attention, and by the fact that doctors don't fully understand what causes autism, leading some parents to connect the sudden onset of the brain disorder with the series of visits to the doctor for vaccinations in childhood. Trump has repeatedly suggested a link between vaccines and autism spectrum disorder, or ASD. He tweeted in 2014: "Healthy young child goes to doctor, gets pumped with massive shot of many vaccines, doesn't feel good and changes - AUTISM. Many such cases!"

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that multiple studies in recent years have shown no link between receiving vaccines and developing autism. A 2011 Institute of

Medicine report on eight vaccines given to children and adults "found that with rare exceptions, these vaccines are very safe." Furthermore, nine CDC studies since 2003 have found "no link between thimerosal-containing vaccines and ASD, as well as no link between the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism spectrum disorder in children," the federal agency said.

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, thimerosal has been removed or reduced to trace amounts in all childhood vaccines except for some flu vaccines, the CDC has said, describing the move as a "precaution." Georgetown University professor of family medicine Ranit Mishori told AFP the news of Kennedy's role was seen as a "nightmare" for doctors who have fought a surge of vaccine skepticism among parents in recent years, amid resurgent outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases like pertussis and measles with sometimes fatal consequences.

"This helps stoke a lot of unnecessary fear and it is anti-science. We have been there, we have looked at it. The science is extremely solid on this," she said. Kennedy "is known to be a person who believes that vaccines cause harm and it sounds like he won't be satisfied until this is proven in one way or another," she added. "Unfortunately, that is not how science works." —AFP



NEW YORK: (FILES) This file photo shows President-elect Donald Trump speaks to the media at Trump Tower in New York.—AFP

BANGLADESH FALLS SHORT IN TACKLING CHILDHOOD STUNTING

'WE KNOW EGGS AND MILK ARE GOOD FOR BABIES BUT HOW CAN WE BUY THEM?'

DHAKA: Scampering up the wall of his tin shack in Bangladesh's capital, three-year-old Rozzob Ali has the same combination of mischief, charm and boisterous energy as many other boys. But the fourth of five children, all born in a Dhaka slum, Ali shows one danger sign - at 80 centimeters tall, he is a good 10 cms shorter than the ideal height for a boy his age. Poverty and a diet of mostly boiled rice or mashed potato are partly to blame for his stunting, which is caused by a lack of nutrients, protein, vitamins and minerals found in meat, fruit and vegetables. Research shows that insufficient nutrition in the first 1,000 days of a child's life can lead to irreversible damage to health, growth and development.

Nutritious food has become even harder to afford since Ali's father was forced to work in a brick factory to pay off a debt. It will take him at least six months to pay back what he owes, depriving the family of the little income he would earn pulling rickshaws around Dhaka's teeming streets. "How can I feed the children? How can I pay the rent?" said Ali's mother, Taslima Begum, who spends her days picking up discarded plastic bottles in an upmarket neighborhood to sell for recycling in the hope of making a dollar or two.

The rate of stunting in under-fives in Bangladesh has fallen to 36 percent from 45 percent in 2000, official figures show, partly due to a growing economy which has helped lift some 20 million people out of poverty over the last two decades. But more than 5.5 million Bangladeshi children under the age of five are still affected by the condition.

Health experts say a major challenge for the government is to reduce stunting especially in ever-expanding slums, where it is worse than in other areas. "There has been a reduction in the level of stunting in Bangladesh but it remains unacceptably high," Anuradha Narayan, nutrition chief at the

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Bangladesh, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "At present, Bangladesh is still one of 20 countries in the world with the largest burden of stunting among children."

Disease, infections

A 2016 survey by UNICEF and the Bangladeshi government shows the poorest children are disproportionately affected with 40 percent of children in slums who are stunted, compared with the overall urban average of 26 percent. "Children in urban slums tend to be from families that are among the most vulnerable," Narayan said. "Families in urban slums might be more food insecure, but also live in environments which increase the risk of disease and infections." Of Bangladesh's 160 million people, around 2.2 million live in 14,000 slums, according to a 2014 slum census.

In Balurmath slum where Ali grew up, the putrid smell of sewerage seeps through the air as children play barefoot in the narrow alleys lined by corrugated iron houses.

Residents bathe in the open, close to women filleting fish and girls cooking on mud stoves. Poor sanitation and diseases linked to dirty water such as diarrhoea, which causes vital nutrients to be lost from the body, are a common scourge. UNICEF's Narayan said progress was hampered by the government's focus on development through infrastructure. "Investments in nutrition don't get attention that a bridge or road or infrastructure project might get," she said.

Ministry of health officials agree more needs to be done to improve nutrition among slum residents. "We're trying to address this in a different way," Roxana Quader, a senior ministry official, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, without giving details.

Development priority

Last October, the World Bank announced it would increase funding to tackle stunting in Bangladesh to \$1 billion over the next three years from about \$330 million it has invested in two programs. Part of the money would be spent giving 600,000 families cash to buy nutritious food for their children in return for regular monitoring of their development, including height and weight. "Investing in reducing child stunting should be a priority in Bangladesh," Qimiao Fan, the World Bank's Bangladesh country director, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

If Bangladesh is to achieve its target of becoming a middle-income country by 2021, "investing in child nutrition and their cognitive development is among the most cost-effective development actions," Fan said. Health experts say this is critical because under-nourished girls tend to grow up and give birth to under-nourished babies - unless action is taken.

They say more awareness needs to be raised about the link between early marriage and stunting, and the importance of allowing more time between pregnancies to give mothers a chance to regain their health. By the age of 27, Ali's mother had already given birth to five children. The oldest, a girl, is 12. For many struggling to survive in the slums, nutritious food remains a luxury they cannot afford.

Manik Mia, a father of six, worries about his daughter Jannatul who turned five this month. Measuring 82 centimeters, she is severely stunted. He spends the \$38 monthly income that one of his daughters earns as a maid on paying the rent. Anything else goes on food. "We know eggs and milk are good for babies but how can we buy them?" he said with a shrug.—Reuters



QUIBERON, France: This file photo shows French fisherman Daniel Kerdavid getting ready to kill a ray according to the Japanese technique ikejime onboard his boat Miyabi in Quiberon, western France.—AFP photos



FRENCH CHEFS HOOKED ON FISH KILLED THE JAPANESE WAY

QUIBERON, France: At first glance, apart from a telltale little hole between its eyes, the inert fish looks like any other dead whiting. But its flesh is much tastier thanks to the ancient Japanese method by which it was slaughtered: ikejime, also known as spiking. Practiced for centuries in Japan, the technique has been adopted only recently in France, and 30-year-old Brittany fisherman Daniel Kerdavid is one of only a handful of French purveyors of ikejime-slaughtered fish. Receiving a delivery of Kerdavid's catch of the day, Michelin-starred chef Herve Bourdon exclaims: "Wow, aren't they beautiful!"

The use of ikejime "completely changes the taste and texture of the fish," says Bourdon, who serves up pearly white pollock with caramelized carrots at the Petit Hotel du Grand Large restaurant in the seaside Brittany town of Saint-Pierre-Quiberon. "You can feel the muscle," he told AFP. "I don't know if you can imagine the result, something both firm and tender, and it also preserves the original colors of the fish. It's pretty extraordinary." Adopting the technique has enabled Kerdavid to double his prices—he now charges an average of eight euros (dollars) a kilo for his whiting.

But Bourdon says he is not bothered by the expense: "What I'm interested in is quality." And Kerdavid is not looking back: "All my fish have already been sold," he says. Another Michelin-starred chef Kerdavid has reeled in is Christopher Hache of the restaurant Les Ambassadeurs at the storied Hotel de Crillon in Paris. As the majestic hotel undergoes extensive renovations, Hache is on a global mission scouting for techniques and ingredients used by other top chefs—which turned him into a fan of the ikejime method, Kerdavid says.

Donning rubber boots and waterproof overalls, Kerdavid sets sail before dawn from the port of Quiberon on a quest for whiting, pollock and other fish around the island of Belle-Ile. Each fish he hauls aboard his nine-metre (30-foot) boat—

named Miyabi after the hook that is the main tool of his trade—meets a sharp, swift fate. With disconcerting self-assurance, Kerdavid sinks a miyabi between the fish's eyes, then pushes a steel spike through the hole into the brain, slicing through arteries as it goes.

The blood drains from the fish's body into a bin filled with ice water. The technique destroys the fish's nervous system including the spinal cord in a few seconds while the heart continues to beat. "The fish is still alive. Its internal organs continue to function, especially the heart, which will empty out all the blood," says Kerdavid, who has never set foot in Japan but learned the technique by watching video clips online. "The blood is the main cause of the fish's deterioration," he says. Not only is the flesh tastier with all the blood drained from it, but the fish has a longer storage life.

Not left to thrash about

The technique may seem cruel, but its proponents say it is more humane than allowing a fish to thrash about until it dies. "I kill the fish, I don't leave them to die," Kerdavid says. "From the moment I pull my hook from the fish it feels no more pain." Death by ikejime causes far less stress to the fish, assuring better quality flesh. Kerdavid's haul for the day weighs 91 kilograms (200 pounds). The more fragile fish, such as whiting and pollock, are killed onboard.

Others such as conger eels, sea bream, rays or smooth-hound sharks are brought ashore to be killed after being kept alive in tanks. As interest in ikejime-slaughtered fish grows among French chefs, Kerdavid wants to branch out, and is now looking into using the technique to kill lobsters as an alternative to boiling the animals alive. Kerdavid has only two competitors in France, fish wholesaler France Ikejime and Damien Muller, a Corsican fisherman who uses ikejime to slaughter his bluefin tuna and swordfish.—AFP



MARSEILLE: Medical personnel work in the emergency room of Hopital de la Timone hospital in Marseille yesterday.—AFP photos

MIGRAINE SUFFERERS AT HIGHER SURGERY STROKE RISK

PARIS: People who suffer migraines are at a higher risk of stroke after surgery, researchers said yesterday. This means that a history of migraines, which affect about one in five people, should be taken into account when weighing the pros and cons of undergoing an operation, said a study in The BMJ medical journal. "Given the high prevalence of migraine in the general population, the... association (with stroke) carries public health importance," the authors wrote.

A research team from the United

States, Denmark and Germany analyzed the records of nearly 125,000 surgical patients at Massachusetts General Hospital and two satellite campuses between January 2007 and August 2014.

Of the group, 771 (0.6 percent) suffered a stroke within 30 days of surgery. Just over eight percent (10,179) of the surgery group had a history of migraine, compared to 11.5 percent (89) of the 771 who suffered a stroke. The team calculated the risk of stroke at 2.4 attacks for every 1,000 surgeries—a number which rose to 4.3 in 1,000

for migraine patients. The risk was highest for those whose migraines had an "aura"—described as flashing lights or other warning signals experienced before an attack.

According to the World Health Organization, about 6.7 million people died of stroke in 2012. Survivors often suffer long-term disability. Stroke occurs when blood flow to an area of the brain is cut off due to a clot blocking the path or due to a leak in a blood vessel. Brain cells are starved of oxygen, and die. Migraine, more common in women, is character-

ized by a severe headache often associated with disturbed vision, sensitivity to sounds, smells and light, and nausea.

Migraine has long been considered to increase the risk for stroke, the study authors said, but is still widely perceived as a benign condition. This study was the first to assess whether migraines boost stroke risk after surgery. "Physicians should be aware of this increased... risk," said the team. And further research was needed to preventing post-operative stroke in migraine sufferers.—AFP

CHINA TO BOOST BEDS, STAFF TO HANDLE HEALTHCARE STRAINS

SHANGHAI: China will add 89,000 new hospital beds and train 140,000 new obstetricians and nurses in order to deal with the strains on its healthcare system brought about in part by the relaxation of its "one-child policy", state media said yesterday. Worried about its ageing population, China issued guidelines in late 2015 allowing all parents to have

two children and now needs to meet fresh demand for public services such as child healthcare and primary education, the official Xinhua news agency said. As part of its 2016-2020 health "five-year plan", China aims to raise its total number of nurses to 4.45 million by the end of the decade, Xinhua said.

The new plan, published late on Tuesday, said demographic problems were likely to become more pronounced in the coming five years as a result of China's ageing population, rising urbanization rates and healthcare coverage gaps in some regions. It said China's average life expectancy was expected to rise one year to 77.3 years by the end

of 2020, while its population was forecast to rise to around 1.42 billion, up from 1.37 billion at the end of 2015. China also aims to cut infant mortality rates to less than 18 per 100,000 births, down from 20.1 in 2015, and death rates from diseases such as cancer and diabetes were also expected to fall 10 percent over the 2016-2020 period. —Reuters

BREASTFED BABIES STILL NEED EXTRA VITAMIN D

NEW YORK: Many breastfed infants may not get enough vitamin D because their mothers prefer not to give babies supplement drops, a study suggests. Pediatricians recommend that mothers exclusively breastfeed infants until at least six months of age because it can reduce babies' risk of ear and respiratory infections, sudden infant death syndrome, allergies, childhood obesity and diabetes.

Because breast milk typically doesn't contain enough vitamin D to help infants develop healthy bones, the American Academy of Pediatrics advises nursing mothers to give their babies daily supplements of 400 IU (international units) of vitamin D. As an alternative, women can take vitamin D supplements themselves - typically 4,000 to 6,000 IU daily - to give babies enough in breast milk so that drops aren't needed.

The research team surveyed 184 breastfeeding mothers, including 44 mothers who also gave their babies formula in addition to breast milk. Altogether, just 55 percent of the women said they gave their babies vitamin D drops and only 42 percent supplemented with the recommended 400 IU. "Many mothers were not aware of the need for vitamin D supplementation or their physician had not recommended supplementation," said senior study author Dr. Tom Thacher, a researcher at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

"Others believed that breast milk had all the needed nutrition, and some mentioned the inconvenience of giving a supplement or their poor experience of giving a supplement to previous children," Thacher added by email. Severe vitamin D deficiency can lead to rickets, or soft bones, seizures due to low calcium or heart failure in infants. While adults may get some vitamin D from sunlight, direct sun exposure isn't recommended for babies.

About 76 percent of mothers said they took vitamin D themselves, and most of them preferred daily supplements to longer-acting versions taken less often. Overall, nearly nine in 10 women said they would prefer to take supplements themselves rather than give drops to their babies. Women who didn't give babies vitamin D most often cited safety concerns, the survey found. One limitation of the study is that it included mostly white mothers, and the findings might not apply to women of other racial or ethnic groups or with a high risk of vitamin D deficiency, the authors note in the *Annals of Family Medicine*.

Breast milk

Still, the findings highlight the need to educate new parents about vitamin D and make sure breastfeeding mothers take supplements themselves or give babies drops, said Dr Lydia Furman, a researcher at Case Western Reserve University and Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. "Infants can only receive adequate vitamin D if their mothers receive adequate vitamin D and thus there is adequate vitamin D in their breast milk, or if they are supplemented," Furman, who wasn't involved in the study, said by email.

Some infant formulas may contain enough vitamin D to make drops unnecessary. But babies who consume both breast milk and formula may not get enough vitamin D and still need drops or mothers who take supplements. Many women who breastfeed incorrectly believe that this gives babies all the nutrients they need, said Dr Carol Wagner of the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston.

"There is an inherent belief that breast milk is the perfect food for their baby," Wagner, who wasn't involved in the study, said by email. It's no surprise women prefer taking supplements themselves, because infant drops can be hard to remember and hard to get babies to swallow, Wagner added. "We have found that mothers are more apt to take medications and vitamin supplements themselves than to give anything to their infants," Wagner said. "It is much easier to give a vitamin to an adult than to an infant." —Reuters



SUNGGAI LIAT, Indonesia: This photo shows dredging crews on repurposed fish-boats trawling for tin off Sungai Liat in northeast Bangka. —AFP photos



SUNGGAI LIAT, Indonesia: This photo shows illegal miner Paci (center) diving into the waters to dredge for tin off Sungai Liat in northeast Bangka.



SUNGGAI LIAT, Indonesia: This photo shows a pump dredging sediment from a pit mine located inland from Sungai Liat.



This photo shows a member of an illegal mining crew preparing to pan sediment for tin raked from the seabed off Sungai Liat in northeast Bangka.

INDONESIAN ISLANDS PAY PRICE FOR GLOBAL SMARTPHONE RUSH

'IT IS VERY DANGEROUS WORK, AND THE RISKS ARE HUGE'

SUNGGAI LIAT, Indonesia: Deep beneath the murky ocean, Paci breathes through a thin plastic tube as he dredges the seabed for tin, a vital component inside smartphones and tablets that's brought riches and ruin to his island home. One-third of the world's tin comes from the Indonesian islands of Bangka and Belitung, where thousands risk serious injury and death in the mines. Demand for the metal ore has soared in recent years, driven by a voracious consumer appetite for the latest electronics gadgets. In Bangka, the result has been a free-for-all-both inland and now offshore. Many miners are unlicensed, sailing out in repurposed fishing boats in the hope of finding new deposits with little experience, and no protection.

Paci, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, earns USD\$15 for a day's work beneath the seas. Clad in goggles and a swimming cap he rakes a powerful hose across the sea floor, sending violent torrents of mineral-rich sand shooting to the surface. "It is very dangerous work, and the risks are huge," he told AFP after surfacing, as the mining crew panned the dark sediment to separate fragments of tin. "But what are you going to do? It's my life, and this is my job," he added. He's not alone. Dozens of dredging crews trawl off north-east Bangka, the same stretch of coastline where a 23-year-old miner drowned in October. At least one miner dies every week in Bangka and Belitung according to estimates from the Indonesian Tin Working Group, an organisation comprised of electronics companies, tin firms, industry bodies, and activists.

Death metal

A four-man operation can fetch 30 kilograms of tin ore on a good day, another sea miner told AFP. It passes through many hands before arriving at smelters, which export the refined product used in the solder binding the components of tech gadgets. Half of all mined tin is transformed into solder for the electronics industry, data from industry group ITRI shows, making the brands behind best-selling laptops and flat-screen televisions a powerful force in the global market. While there is obvious damage to the environment, and miners have lost their lives, tin from Indonesia is considered "conflict free" and so there are no trade restrictions on its use.

But as the negative impacts on the land, and to local communities are revealed, electronics firms have come under pressure to properly account for the provenance of the minerals they use. Evert Hassink from Friends of the Earth Netherlands says companies have done little to ensure the tin they used in their gadgets was not harming Bangka. "Companies don't even know what they are sourcing," he said. "They refuse to really stick out their necks and dive into the supply chain."

Ten major tech manufacturers-including Apple, Samsung, Microsoft and Sony-are members of the tin working group, which has pledged to support less harmful mining practices on Bangka. Apple said in a statement it had spent "thousands of hours" in Indonesia in a bid to improve the situation for workers and the environment. It added: "Suppliers who are unwilling or unable to comply

with our standards will be removed from our supply chain." A spokesman for Samsung said the firm was "committed to continuously evolving our efforts on responsible mineral sourcing".

'It's all about tin'

A representative for the tin working group said it had two pilot projects aimed at improving worker safety and restoring land degraded by mining in development. Jabin Sufianto, president of the Association of Indonesian Tin Exporters, acknowledged some tin firms were apprehensive about committing further but believes things will change over time. "What's important now is doing the pilots, so we can show there is progress and it's not just all talk," he told AFP. But Retno Budi from Walhi, a conservation group that has mobilized huge rallies against tin mining, is skeptical.

Inland from Sungai Liat, a giant pit mine stretches as far as the eye can see, one of the treeless, pockmarked scars visible from a flight over the island. "They say they're restoring the land-I'm yet to see it," he told AFP, surveying the ruined landscape. "To this day there's been almost no effort to fix anything whatsoever." Just weeks earlier two miners died in a landslide at the mine, he said. Nazaruddin earns less panning for tin, a backbreaking job under the blistering sun, but avoids the dangers of pit mining. "Over there, they don't think about safety," he told AFP, gesturing to a crew blasting sand and rock below a steep cliff. "It's all about the tin, tin, tin." —AFP

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SACGC FETES SIX KUWAITIS FOR PATENTED INVENTIONS

The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC), an affiliate of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), has hon-

ored six Kuwaitis for obtaining exclusive rights to global inventions, the result of a spike in scientific projects.

In a statement issued by SACGC yester-

day, the inventors were named as Naji Al-Failakawi, who built a steel concrete house, Adel Al-Wusais, who designed a hammer to penetrate bulletproof glass and Khaled

Sabti, who created a device to adjust contact lenses.

Moreover, the center also honored Mohammad Al-Refai for his work on a home

automation system, Faisal Al-Asfour, who created a water collection system and Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah, who put together an unmanned aircraft. —KUNA



Kindergarten students at India International School Mangaf (IISM) celebrated Christmas and New Year during a ceremony held recently in the presence of school officials and teaching staff.



SHERATON KUWAIT AND FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON HOLD BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

At the start of the New Year 2017, Sheraton Kuwait, a Luxury Collection Hotel and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait recently conducted a blood donation drive in coordination with the Central Blood Bank of Kuwait (CBBK). The hotels took the initiative to donate blood out of the fact that transfusion of blood helps saving millions of

lives every year, in addition to supporting complex medical and surgical procedures and helps patients suffering from life threatening conditions to live longer with a higher quality of life. This also contributes to CBBK's national blood supply to be ready for all who might need it in the beloved state of Kuwait whether citizens or residents.

Emerald Ballroom at Sheraton Kuwait was designated to hold this drive, where donation stations and all required equipment were set up for the event. Many employees waited for their turn to roll up their sleeves to donate blood where the General Manager and the directors of different departments joined given the hotels' important role in encouraging volunteerism.

On this occasion, Fahed Abushaar, General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait expressed his sincere gratitude and pride to all of the employees who donated; he also extended his regards and paid tribute to The Central Blood Bank of Kuwait who works continuously to secure blood supply to the beloved State of Kuwait and its people. Mounir Amer, General Manager

of Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait added that these charitable initiatives are part of the hotels' moral and ethical values noting that Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait have been always supportive and playing remarkable roles in charitable and humanitarian activities that aim to solve different problems, whether health, environmental or social.



AL-MULLA EXCHANGE OPENS 71ST BRANCH IN KUWAIT, 3RD IN ABU HALIFA

Al-Mulla Exchange, the leading Money Exchange Company in Kuwait, continues its expansion drive by opening the 71st branch in the country. The latest branch was inaugurated on Jan 8, 2017, in Abu Halifa, Block 1, Street 9, Al Razi Street, which makes it the third branch in the area. Speaking to the media, Rakesh Joshi, General Manager of Al-Mulla Exchange, said the third

branch in Abu Halifa aims to cater to the growing demand for Al-Mulla Exchange's services in the location. "We are grateful to our valuable customers for their trust and continued support, and we look forward to serving them with the highest quality services, using technology that enables speedy and safe transactions.

This is part of Al-Mulla Exchange's commitment to

enable easy access for their customers. The branch will be equipped to provide all the services and products of Al-Mulla Exchange and is manned by well trained staff capable of providing the right solutions to customers. Joshi further added that Al-Mulla Exchange lays great emphasis on continuous improvement in terms of manpower and technology. "This is the reason we have been able to hold our

leading position in the market despite stiff competition." The customers at the new branch expressed their satisfaction at the having a branch closer to them. "We will now be able to conduct our transactions much easier." The branch, however, targets not just the residents of the area, but also the large floating population in the commercial areas of Abu Halifa as well.



ASSE HOSTS 'IOSH MANAGING SAFELY' TRAINING PROGRAM

Adding on to its illustrious pathways of educating and empowering its members, American Society of Safety Engineers, (ASSE) Kuwait Chapter organized IOSH Managing Safely Training Program from 27th to 29th December 2016, at Best Western Hotel, Mahboula. The trainer for the program was Muhammad Alamgir, CSP, CRSP, CMIOASH. 16 ASSE KC members from different sectors, participated in this training and got benefited.

ASSE - Kuwait Chapter lead by Chairman Fadhel-Al Ali, is a non-profit organization which always strives to excel in providing quality trainings and consultation in the field of Health Safety and Environment all across different public and private sectors in Kuwait.

Rama Krushna Chary, President of ASSE Kuwait chapter welcomed the participants. He briefed about the significance of the training seminar and the importance of conducting the training pro-

gram to help the people get certification in the field of Health, Safety and Environment. Sanjay Jaiswal thanked the trainer and the participants for their interest shown towards HSE. Sony Thomas CSP, Head of Training Committee, in his brief address, appreciated the participants for their interest to learn and enhance their professional development. Subsequently, he introduced the trainer Muhammad Alamgir.

Muhammad Alamgir is a Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP) by BCRSP Canada, Certified Safety Professional (CSP) by BCSP USA, Chartered Safety and Health Practitioner (CMIOASH) by IOSH UK, Professional Member of American Society of Safety Engineers-USA, Full Member of IIRSM UK, Lead Auditor of OHSAS 18001, ISO 14001 and obtained many other International HSE certifications. Alamgir is Chemical Engineer and has served more than a decade in the field of HSE including Oil and Gas,

Petrochemical, Chemical and Construction industries. He is currently Vice-President of American Society of Safety Engineers Kuwait Chapter (Term 2016/17).

The training seminar was meticulously carried on by the trainer and effectively communicated citing relevant industrial scenarios and case studies. The course helped the attendees to comprehend and adopt high standard occupational health and safety principles and practices in their particular work culture. The course enabled personnel to understand the company's safety policy health and safety legislation. This training also provides the perfect base to take up the advanced NEBOSH courses.

CH. Rama Krushna Chary thanked the trainer for this initiative. The participants who will successfully complete the assessment and project will receive certificate from Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH).

GLOBAL EXHIBITION OF SERVICES (GES) FROM 17-20 APRIL 2017

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, Services Export Promotion Council and the Confederation of Indian Industry are organizing the 3rd edition of the Global Exhibition of Services (GES) from 17 - 20 April 2017, at India Expo Centre and Mart, Greater Noida, India. The focus sectors for GES-2017 will be information technology and telecom, tourism and hospitality, media and entertainment, healthcare, logistics, environmental services, facility management, exhibition and event services, professional services, retail, education, banking and financial services, R&D skills, railways services, next generation cities, wellness and startups/SMEs, sports, infrastructure and services in manufacturing. More details about GES-2017, are available on Website: <http://www.gesdelhi.in>. All Kuwaiti companies with businesses in the above mentioned sectors are encouraged to participate in GES-2017 which will give them a chance to promote their business to Indian and global companies.

Bowie tributes around world year after death

Bearing flowers, lipstick and glitter fans around the world Tuesday paid tribute to rock icon David Bowie a year after his shocking death. Bouquets of flowers appeared once again outside the New York apartment where Bowie spent his final years, recreating the festive and communal scene that emerged after he passed away on January 10, 2016.

Sabrina Rosneck, a student from Detroit who came to New York for a Bowie anniversary concert, slipped a letter into the makeshift memorial outside The Starman's Soho home. "I leave him a card whenever I come to New York. I feel like he sort of understands people and he kind of understood me even though he didn't know me, so I just want to update him on my life and how it's going," she said. Like many fans, Rosneck credited Bowie—who constantly reinvented himself in a half-century career that spanned from glam rock to electronica to disco—with helping people accept themselves.

Aurelio Ayala III, who flew to New York from Seattle, said that discovering Bowie transformed his youth in Texas, where he dyed his hair orange in the rocker's honor and didn't look back. "He allowed me to express myself the way I wanted," the 56-year-old said on the sidewalk outside Bowie's apartment, between the building's dumpster and slushy snow. "Living in Texas you are looked upon if you're a little different. I never really cared-and to this day, I don't care."

Tribute concerts around world

Bowie died from an undisclosed battle with cancer two days after releasing his last album, "Blackstar," a work of hard-driving jazz that won glowing reviews. Columbia Records on Sunday released three additional tracks from the "Blackstar" sessions in a digital EP to celebrate what would have been Bowie's 70th birthday. Bowie's veteran producer Tony Visconti, one of



Tributes to British pop icon David Bowie are seen at the mural of the pop icon in Brixton, south London. — AFP photos



David Bowie fans pose for a "selfie" photograph in front of the mural of late British pop icon David Bowie, created by Australian street artist James Cochran, also known as Jimmy C, as fans payed their respects in Brixton, south London the first anniversary of Bowie's death.

the few people to whom the rocker had confided his illness, said he has "been through every stage of grief in the past 365 days."

Visconti, writing on Facebook, recalled that Bowie had been "so much stronger, more positive and bursting with creativity" when making "Blackstar." "Our team, the band, the technicians and everyone who visited us in the studio kept shooting glances at each other—is this really happening?" he recalled of the final recording sessions. "He was a legend in his lifetime and he will be a legend until the end of time. But he was my friend, too. I miss him dearly."

Bowie fans organized concerts around the world

to mark the anniversary, with proceeds to go to charities. The New York show on Tuesday evening will feature Kate Pierson of The B-52s and rockers Living Colour with veterans of Bowie's band.

'Eternal' Bowie

A similar show on Sunday at London's Brixton Academy brought out actor Gary Oldman, who was a close friend of Bowie, and artists as diverse as Def Leppard frontman Joe Elliott and Duran Duran's Simon Le Bon. Bowie was born in the south London district, where thousands had gathered after his death to sing, dance and cry for their hero. On the anniversary, a

blonde girl wept as her friend drew a heart with lipstick on a Bowie mural in Brixton.

"Gone but never forgotten," "All the days of my life I owe you" and "RIP David my hero my idol," read some of the inscriptions scrawled on the wall. "He changed the face of music," said Roger Rowley, an actor and musician who traveled down from Leeds in northern England to attend a vigil by the mural along with dozens of other fans. "I've learnt more from Bowie as an artist as from anyone else. He's eternal," he said. — AFP

Chef brings attention to cuisine of Melania Trump's homeland



Photo provided by Hisa Franko shows a dish by chef Ana Ros at her restaurant, Hisa Franko, in the remote village of Kobarid, in the western part of Slovenia.

The tiny European nation of Slovenia is getting an outside share of attention lately. Not only has Melania Trump given her native country a boost of recognition, but Slovenia's also undergoing a tourism boom. Nearly 3 million foreign tourists visit a year now - in a country of 2 million.

On a recent evening in New York, tourism officials touted the attractions of this ex-communist land that broke off from Yugoslavia in 1991. Among the draws was the food of chef Ana Ros (pronounced ROSH), who starred in an episode of the Netflix series "Chef's Table." Her restaurant in a remote village inn is considered by some to be Slovenia's best, wowing foodies with dishes like fried white asparagus on celery cream, and pork with lobster, ginger and pickled garlic. — AP



Photo provided by Hisa Franko shows a dish by chef Ana Ros at her restaurant, Hisa Franko, in the remote village of Kobarid, in the western part of Slovenia.



Photo provided by Hisa Franko shows a dish by chef Ana Ros at her restaurant, Hisa Franko, in the remote village of Kobarid, in the western part of Slovenia.



Photo provided by the Slovenia Tourist Board shows chef Ana Ros, standing center, greeting guests at Hisa Franko, in the remote village of Kobarid, in the western part of Slovenia.



In this file photo, tourists and residents walk across Tromostovje bridge in downtown Ljubljana, Slovenia. — AP photos



(From right) Elbphilharmonie architects Ascan Mergenth, Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, musical director Christoph Lieben-Seutter, Hamburg Mayor Olaf Scholz, Joachim Knuth, Radio Director at the Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) public broadcasting company, managing director of Ensemble Resonanz Tobias Rempe, attend a press conference in the concert hall on the day of the opening of the Elbphilharmonie concert hall in Hamburg, northern Germany, yesterday. — AFP photos

Dazzling German concert hall takes its bow

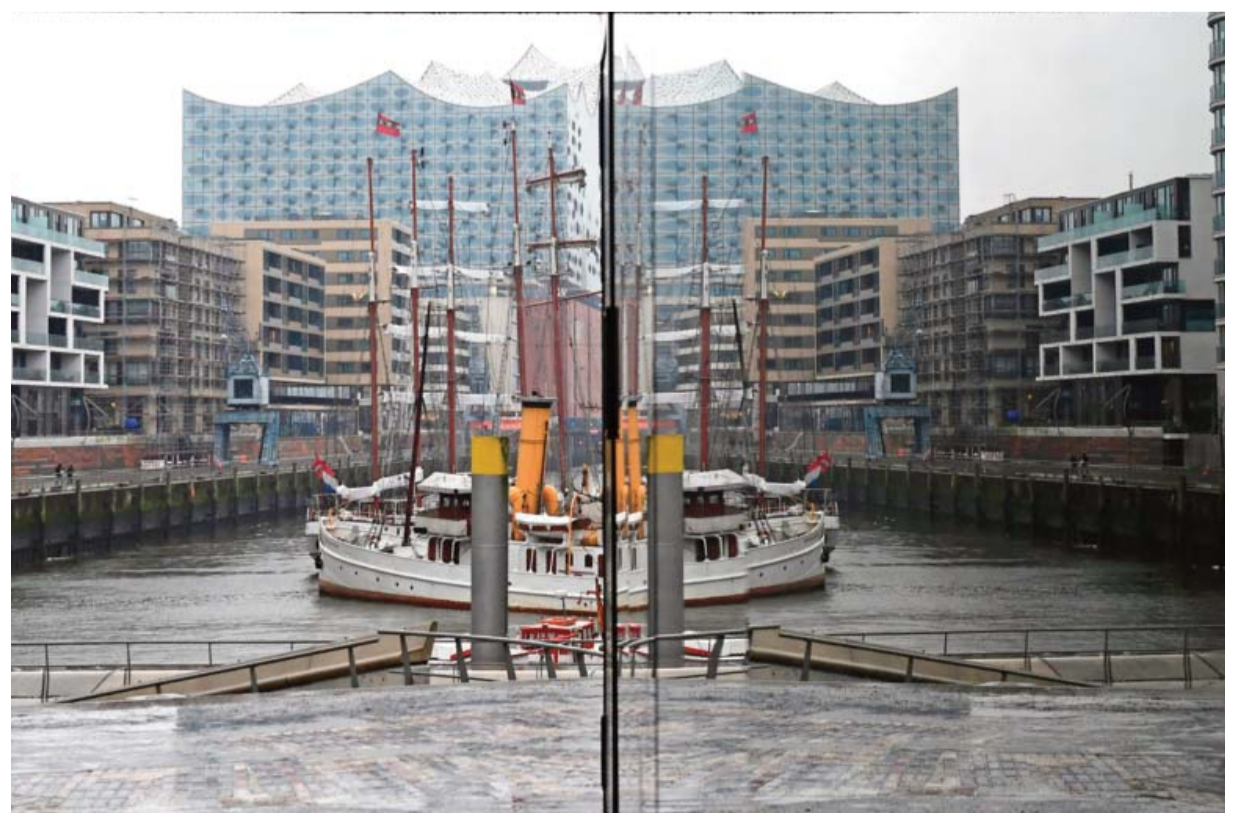
Germany premiered a spectacular new concert house yesterday in the northern city of Hamburg, billed as a future national landmark and global attraction, albeit after a cost explosion. Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Joachim Gauck were among 2,100 guests invited to the inaugural evening concert under tight security at the grand hall of the Elbphilharmonie, which has electrified critics with its audacious design and world-class acoustics. Billed as a cultural monument ready to rival the Sydney Opera House, the building came in more than six years overdue and at 10 times the initial budget, with a cost to the city-state of 789 million euros (\$829 million).

At a pre-opening news conference, Hamburg Mayor Olaf Scholz defended the project, saying that its sold-out concert schedule through July and the more than 500,000 visitors who have already flocked to the building proved the Elbphilharmonie was winning hearts. "It was a difficult birth but they have adopted the child," he said of the 1.7 million residents of Germany's second city who have footed the bill. Jutting out from the city at the end of a pier on the Elbe River, the Elbphilharmonie has a boxy brick former cocoa warehouse as its base, with a breathtaking glass structure recalling frozen waves perched on top.

Sandwiched between the two levels, a public plaza protected by giant curved glass windows offers stunning

views of the harbor, the spires of the charming old trade centre and Hamburg's temperamental skies. Scholz insisted that the Elphie, as the two-hall concert house has been nicknamed, would be a building for the people, with diverse events appealing to visitors beyond the well-heeled classical music set. "It is my aim that every pupil in a Hamburg school will see a concert here," he said.

The completion marks a rare urban development success story in Germany, which has been plagued by planning disasters such as Berlin's international airport, now five years behind schedule and counting. To claw back some of the investment, Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, who also designed Beijing's "bird's nest" Olympic stadium and the Tate Modern gallery in London, added posh apartments, restaurants and a luxury hotel complete with an on-site meditation consultant. The program for the opening has been kept secret but is meant to span 400 years of music history, including Beethoven, Wagner and contemporary composer Wolfgang Rihm. For those not lucky enough to snag tickets, a music-and-light show will be staged in the evening, projected on to the Elbphilharmonie facade. — AFP



The building of the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, northern Germany, reflects in a window just hours before the gala opening of the new concert hall.

MUSIC & MOVIES

Contest will pick opening acts for **Bon Jovi tour**

Who says you can't open for Bon Jovi? The New Jersey-based platinum-selling rockers are holding a contest to choose bands or singers to open for their upcoming tour. Artists will upload videos of themselves performing original music, and concert promoters Live Nation will select 10 finalists. Bon Jovi management will then pick winners from the finalists to perform 20-minute sets. "Every great band starts small and builds their rep one show at a time," Jon Bon Jovi said Tuesday in a statement on the band's website announcing the contest. "That's the opportunity we were given, and now we want

to pay it forward. If you're ready for the arena stage, submit your audition tapes and join us in playing for the best audiences in rock music."

Formed in Sayreville, New Jersey, the fledgling Bon Jovi landed opening act gigs with some of the biggest names in music at the time, including ZZ Top in 1983, and the Scorpions, Kiss and Ted Nugent in 1984, exposing them to millions of new fans. The band will begin its "This House Is Not For Sale" tour Feb. 8 in Greenville, South Carolina. The last listed tour date is April 11 in Toronto, but additional dates are expected to be announced. Entries will be judged

on entertainment value, creativity and originality. No-nos include profanity, nudity, violence, drug or alcohol use, commercial endorsements of products, and disparagement of any group of people. In addition to performing live, the winners will be featured on the Bon Jovi and Live Nation Facebook pages. — AP

This file photo shows Jon Bon Jovi performing with his band during Art Basel in Miami Beach, Fla. — AP



This image released by Warner Bros. Entertainment shows Ben Affleck, left, and Sienna Miller in a scene from 'Live by Night'. — AP

Review

Affleck's stylish 'Live by Night' is by the numbers

Ben Affleck is no doubt an ambitious and tasteful filmmaker, but he's gotten himself in a bit of hot water with the bloated period gangster epic "Live by Night." It looks and sounds right and all the elements are there: A conflicted anti-hero with a granite jaw, a fast-talking, two-timin' moll, crooked cops, and a sweaty loyal partner. There's the one-last-job-gone-awry, some rum-running, a few epic shootouts and the big questions about whether or not our man has become everything he swore he wouldn't. It seems like enough to hold audience interest for a few hours, but somehow even with all that going for it (not to mention a parade of recognizable faces), "Live by Night" is dull as sin.

The story is adapted by Affleck from a Dennis Lehane novel of the same name. Lehane is the author of the source material for some good to great films like "Mystic River," "Shutter Island" and Affleck's first stab at directing, "Gone Baby Gone." It was a decent gamble that "Live by Night" would be pretty good, too. Affleck has put himself front and center here as the lead, Joe Coughlin, a once good man who became jaded after serving in World War I. He came back to his hometown of Boston, where his father (Brendan Gleeson) is the Police Chief, with the intention of never answering to anyone. We don't ever see Joe as a standup citizen, only robbing banks and sleeping with Emma Gould (Sienna Miller), the mistress of the town's most notorious mob boss Albert White (Robert Gleister).

Naturally as soon as Emma and Joe decide to skip town and find a new life somewhere warm (where they come so close to saying that they'll "live by night" it's almost annoying that they don't), things take a turn and Joe is left beaten to a pulp, imprisoned and alone. When he gets out, revenge against Albert White is the only thing on his mind, so he heads to Florida to work for a rival. While the Boston scenes are paint-by-numbers gangster pic, with a few gorgeous shots thanks to

cinematographer Robert Richardson, in Florida at least the plot gets somewhat interesting as Joe pairs up with a nearly unrecognizable Chris Messina as Dion Bartolo to get in the Prohibition-era rum business while butting heads with the local KKK thugs, a complicated cop (Chris Cooper) and his troublesome evangelist daughter Loretta (Elle Fanning). Oh, and Joe also falls in love with a Cuban expat Graciela (Zoe Saldana).

Good and moral

By the time Loretta becomes the main focus, and foe, of Joe and Dion the film has already lost most of its steam. "Live by Night" wants to be about everything - capitalism, racism, the American dream, the hypocrisy of the good and moral - while also providing shoot 'em up thrills. It's hard to do that when you don't even care for or about any of the characters, though. In fact, there are so many characters and so much story (not to mention at least four false endings) that it wouldn't be surprising if there exists a better three-hour version of this.

Affleck may have done his film a disservice by making himself the star. On screen the generally effortlessly charismatic Affleck seems to be sleepwalking through the movie - with the exception of his moments with Miller's Emma Gould. He looks out of place and uncomfortable most of the time, and the distractingly ill-fitting jackets don't help.

It was always going to be a tricky thing to follow up a smash like "Argo," so taut and smart and thrilling. Affleck went maximalist with "Live by Night," and it was, indeed, too much. "Live by Night" a Warner Bros. release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "strong violence, language throughout, and some sexuality/nudity." Running time: 128 minutes. Two stars out of four. — AP

Damien Chazelle: Shy musician turned Hollywood darling

For a man whose movies burst with bravado and swagger, Damien Chazelle is disarmingly shy, but the filmmaker is finding himself increasingly in the spotlight as the awards pile up. The 31-year-old director's latest movie "La La Land," a sumptuous musical throwback to the halcyon days of Old Hollywood, came away with seven statuettes at Sunday's Golden Globes, more than any other film in the show's history. Veteran film critic Anne Thompson, awards editor for movie blog IndieWire, describes the youngest ever recipient of the best director award as the kind of filmmaker who is respected not just by reviewers but also by his peers in the industry.

"Damien Chazelle is a young version of Quentin Tarantino or Martin Scorsese a gifted film nerd, super smart, who knows the classics well enough to deconstruct them and put them back together again in fresh new ways," Thompson told AFP. "He's not pretentious. He's had to struggle to get where he is." It is likely to be a memorable year for Chazelle, as every Golden Globes best director over the last decade-with the lone exception of Ben Affleck in 2013 -- has gone on to win the Oscar. "It took six years to get the movie going. All of this is just so surreal. The dream come true was literally the first day of shooting. All of this is even more surreal," he told journalists backstage at the Globes.

Stage fright

A native of Rhode Island, Chazelle was born to Celia Martin, a writer, and French-American Bernard Chazelle, a pioneering computer scientist and a huge jazz and blues fan. Inspired at a very young age by Edward Zwick's epic civil war film "Glory" (1989), Chazelle had always planned to become a filmmaker but took up jazz drumming in high school, becoming

obsessed and practicing up to eight hours a day. It wasn't until he started reading visual studies at Harvard that he realized his true calling was filmmaking.

Chazelle wrote, produced, co-shot and directed the lion's share of his first feature, jazz musical "Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench," while he was still an undergraduate. He continued playing the drums at Harvard, where he was in a band with Justin Hurwitz, who would eventually join the crew of "La La Land," winning the best original song Golden Globe for penning the infectious "City of Stars." But Chazelle had always suffered from crippling stage fright before performances and came to accept that his nerves would continue to be an obstacle to a career in music.

"I couldn't handle the particular kind of terror that came from performing on a stage, or performing in front of people, or performing period," he said at a recent roundtable discussion for directors the Hollywood Reporter. Chazelle said he still gets nervous directing, or even watching screenings, and is "in awe of actors" who are "better at handling it than I am."

Nostalgia

Nevertheless, his experiences as an aspiring drummer were the inspiration for his darkly comic second feature "Whiplash" (2014) -- the intense story of the stormy relationship between a bullying teacher and his jazz drumming student. The movie swept up trophies on the film festival circuit and won three Oscars, including for best supporting actor for J.K. Simmons, and nominations for best picture and for Chazelle's screenplay. All the while Chazelle, who has writing credits for "The Last Exorcism Part II," "Grand Piano" (both 2013) and last year's hit sci-fi thriller "10 Cloverfield Lane," harbored the ambition to make a musical.

He told AFP in an interview in 2014 of his nostalgia for the golden age of cinema and musical comedies, performed by the likes of Jacques Demy, Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire, and Gene Kelly. "It was the last generation who danced to jazz, just before rock. The 1930s to the 1960s is an era which means a lot to me, not only cinematically but musically," he said. Next up for Chazelle is "First Man," a biopic on Neil Armstrong, with shooting expected to begin early this year and "La La Land" star Ryan Gosling due to play the iconic astronaut. — AFP



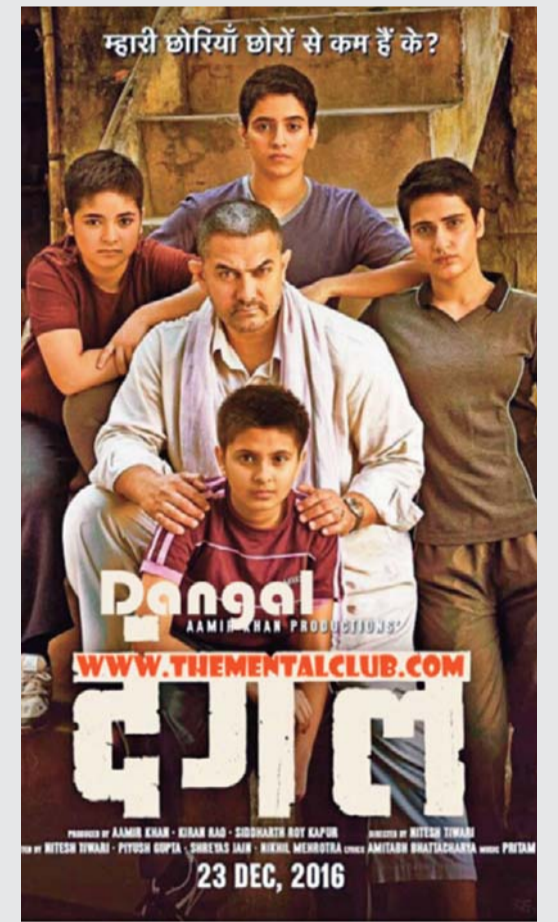
This image released by NBC shows Damien Chazelle with the award for best screenplay for 'La La Land,' at the 74th Annual Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif, on Sunday. — AP

Khan's 'Dangal' becomes highest-grossing Bollywood movie

Indian movie star Aamir Khan's latest blockbuster "Dangal" has become the highest-grossing Bollywood film of all time, smashing his own record, trade analysts and producers said on Monday. The wrestling drama, which is based on the true story of an Indian coach who trained his two daughters to become champion grapplers, has made 3.45 billion rupees (\$50.59 million) in just three weeks, according to bollywoodhungama.com. That is more than the previous top grosser-Khan's science fiction film

"PK", which amassed 3.40 billion rupees during its entire run in 2014. "This is our ninth film with Aamir Khan and with 'Dangal' we've broken our own record of 'PK'," Amrita Pandey, vice-president of studios at Disney India, told AFP via email. "Dangal", directed by Nitesh Tiwari, is based on the true story of wrestling coach Mahavir Singh Phogat who raised his daughters Geeta and Babita Phogat to become champion wrestlers.

Geeta won a gold medal for India at the 2010 Commonwealth Games while her sister topped the podium at the 2014 Commonwealth Games. "Dangal" is a Hindi word used to describe a wrestling competition. Khan, 51, gained a lot of weight to play the role of Mahavir before quickly losing 25 kilograms to appear as a younger version of the coach elsewhere in the film. The movie was released on December 23 and was India's second hit wrestling film of 2016. "Sultan", starring Salman Khan, came out in July, made 3.15 billion rupees and sits third on the all-time grossing list. — AFP



U2, Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Weeknd to headline Bonnaroo

U2, Red Hot Chili Peppers and The Weeknd are set to headline the annual Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in June. Festival organizers announced the 2017 festival lineup yesterday. U2's set will

include its 1987 album, 'The Joshua Tree.' Other artists set to perform during the four-day event include Chance the Rapper, Major Lazer, The xx, Tove Lo, Lorde and Cage the Elephant. The 16th annual Bonnaroo festival will be held June 8-11

at Great Stage Park in Manchester, Tennessee, about 60 miles south of Nashville. — AP



Madonna blasts criticism over younger lovers

Pop icon Madonna has described herself as "oppressed," saying she was tired of a gender double-standard over her relationships with younger men. The 58-year-old singer said in an interview published Tuesday that she has endured criticism throughout her entire career despite her professional success. "I've always felt oppressed," she told Harper's Bazaar magazine. "A large part of that is because I'm female and also because I refuse to live a conventional life. I've created a very unconventional family."

"I have lovers who are three decades younger than me. This makes people very uncomfortable. I feel like everything I do makes people feel really uncomfortable," she said. Madonna has been linked romantically to a number of men in their 20s at the time, most recently Ivorian model Aouabakar Soumahoro and earlier French choreographer Brahim Zaibat and Dutch dancer Timor Steffens. The Material Girl who has four children and has been married twice-also said she faced sexism in that she is often asked why she remains active as an artist.

"Did somebody go to Pablo Picasso and say, 'Okay, you're 80 years old. Haven't you painted enough paintings?' No. I'm so tired of that question." Madonna, who last year completed a global tour for her latest album "Rebel Heart," will soon be directing a movie, "Loved." Madonna wrote the screenplay for the film, an adaptation of Andrew Sean Greer's novel "The

Impossible Lives of Greta Wells" about a woman who is transported to different eras as part of psychiatric treatment for depression. — AFP



In this file photo, Madonna attends the 11th annual Billboard Women in Music honors in New York. — AP

FEATURES

Fans mourn death of California's famous 'drive-thru' sequoia

Joyce Brown was 12 when her parents first took her to visit the "drive-thru tree," a giant sequoia in California famous for a car-sized hole carved into the base of its trunk. Brown thought she had entered a land of giants as she walked underneath and around the ancient 100-foot-tall tree, which was toppled by a massive storm on Sunday. "It's kind of like someone in the family has died," said Brown, a 65-year-old retired middle school teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area who spends about a third of the year at her family's cabin in Arnold, about 4 miles from where the now-fallen tree lies dead in Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

Four generations of Brown's family have spent countless hours at the tree and often took out-of-town visitors there, some from as far away as Turkey. In May 2015, she and her husband showed off the tree to John and Lesley Ripper, a Michigan couple the Browns befriended on an African safari. "I was blown away," said John Ripper, a 55-year-old printer in Northville, Michigan. "I've traveled to 70 countries. But that particular tree and being able to walk underneath it and touch it was quite a memorable moment and something I won't soon forget."

Ripper said he can't believe that a storm felled such a massive, sturdy-looking tree. "In the blink of an eye, it's gone," he said. "There's this giant tree everyone remembers, and it's going to be laying there in plain sight. The dead giant." Sumner Crawford of Charleston, South Carolina, remembers every detail of his first visit to the tree as a kid in the early 1990s. "I remember I was walking through the tree and thinking, 'I'm inside of the tree right now!'" he said. "It was madness."

Crawford, 36, was stunned by the sequoia's size: When his family of four tried to join hands around the tree they discovered they couldn't even come close. "It was so different and so odd," Crawford said, adding that he recently visited the tree again

and relived those memories. "I feel like it's part of my personal history. So it's a bummer to see it go," he said. The tunnel that made the tree famous and ultimately weakened it was carved into its trunk in the 1880s to allow tourists to pass through, first with horses and buggies and later with cars. The tunnel was limited to pedestrians in recent decades.

The largest tree species in the world, sequoias can reach diameters up to 27 feet and have shallow

root systems that make them vulnerable to toppling. The drive-thru tree had a diameter of 22 feet and was about 2,000 years old, said Tony Tealdi, a supervising ranger at California State Parks. When the already mostly dead tree hit the ground on Sunday, it shattered and is now completely unrecognizable, said Jim Allday, a volunteer at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. "It was majestic," he said. "Now it's basically a pile of rubble." — AP



In this photo provided by Michael Brown, John and Lesley Ripper pose in the Pioneer Cabin tunnel tree, a giant, centuries-old sequoia that had a tunnel carved into it in the 1880s, during a visit to Calaveras Big Trees State Park near Arnold, Calif, in the Sierra Nevada. — AP

PHILIPPINE MINISTER SAYS DORA CAN'T EXPLORE PRISTINE PALAWAN

American children's television network Nickelodeon will not be allowed to build an underwater theme park on one of the nation's most pristine islands, the Philippine environment minister said yesterday. Nickelodeon's parent firm announced Monday it would build a "themed attraction" inspired by its cartoon characters such as Dora the Explorer and SpongeBob SquarePants as part of a 400-hectare (1,000-acre) development on Palawan, generating alarm from environmentalists.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez said yesterday she would reject the project. "Lopez says she won't allow the underwater theme park in Palawan. #environment2017," the environment department posted on its Twitter account. In an interview with ABS-CBN television, Lopez said she would not allow any project that would damage the environment and the welfare of local communities. "That's our wealth. It's not allowed. You can't kill the corals. For a theme park? No. No way, man," said Lopez, who has been a vocal opponent of mining projects in Palawan.

"The commitment of the government is first and foremost and always, always to the benefit of our people." Conservation groups call Palawan the nation's "last ecological frontier" because of its relatively untouched coastlines and forests, which are among the oldest and most diverse in Southeast Asia. Palawan

is home to two UNESCO World Heritage-listed sites, a subterranean river and the Tubbataha coral reefs. Monday's statement by Nickelodeon's parent firm, Viacom International Media Networks, said its resort would open in 2020 and feature restaurants and lounges six meters (20 feet) below sea level.

It also said the Palawan project would "take its place alongside" other Nickelodeon-branded attractions such as Wet'n'Wild in Australia, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Land in Russia and IMG Worlds of Legends theme park in Dubai. An online petition organized by local environmentalists calling for the project to be stopped attracted more than 125,000 signatures in less than 24 hours.

Viacom's Philippine partner, Coral World Park, issued a statement yesterday insisting the development was not a "theme park" and emphasized that it would not all be underwater. The statement also highlighted the project's "ocean conservation focus" and said it would help fund environmental protection in the area. It referred to plans for a marine sanctuary and said the Coral World Park would "be the largest coral reef conservation program in Asia." "There has never been any form of communication from our side mentioning a theme park," said Coral World Park marketing and communications director Susan Lee. — AFP



These concept designs provided by the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art show a rendering of their proposed museum in Exposition Park in Los Angeles. — AP photos

George Lucas chooses Los Angeles for \$1 billion museum



Sculptures from the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition face a proposed site of the George Lucas Museum on Treasure Island in San Francisco.

George Lucas has chosen Los Angeles as the future home of his Museum of Narrative Art, a decision that Mayor Eric Garcetti touted as a turning point for the city and the area around Exposition Park, where the new \$1 billion project will make its home. The museum for Lucas' extensive collection of art and film memorabilia will make its home in the park adjacent to USC. The "Star Wars" filmmaker chose the site over a competing location on Treasure Island, in the middle of San Francisco Bay.

Garcetti's office trumpeted the arrival of "a new jewel," saying that the museum will "soon bring unrivaled opportunities to be immersed in stories told on canvas and celluloid." The museum will be adjacent to the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, the Natural History Museum, and a museum of African-American history and art. "I believed in the vision for the Lucas Museum, and we went after it with everything we have—because I know that LA is the ideal place for making sure that it touches the widest possible audience," Garcetti said in a statement. "I am deeply grateful to Melody and George, and to our educational, governmental, and cultural leaders for their extraordinary support in helping us bring the museum home. Now it's time to build the vision."

The cost of the project has been pegged at about \$1 billion, with the costs borne almost entirely by Lucas. The gift to the city comes along with Lucas's extensive art collection and an endowment of at least \$400 million. At a press conference Tuesday afternoon, Garcetti said the museum amount to the largest gift in American history from one family to a city. The mayor said he got the news

the museum would come to L.A. from Lucas's wife, Melody Hobson. Construction is set to begin this year near the corner of Vermont and Exposition avenues and to be completed in 2020. The collection includes about 10,000 paintings, illustrations and other items, with works from Norman Rockwell, NC Wyeth, Thomas Hart Benton and many others, along with mementos from many films, including "Star Wars."

Lucas has been looking for a home for his collection for more than a decade. He faced community opposition in first San Francisco and then Chicago, his wife's hometown. Garcetti said that LA's quick acceptance of the proposal, and cooperation between the city, county and state governments, helped secure the project for the city. He said it would create thousands of jobs during construction and more than 1,000 permanent positions. Chinese architect Ma Yansong designed museums for both the Treasure Island and Exposition Park locations. The LA project will cover seven acres and be within walking distance of seven high schools. The site's immediate connection to a vast audience appealed to Lucas and Hobson, in contrast to the more isolated San Francisco location, which sat in the middle of the San Francisco Bay Bridge. The LA site is also across Exposition Boulevard from Lucas's alma mater, USC. Garcetti said he wanted to conclude the announcement by quoting "Star Wars" seer Yoda. "Do or do not. There is no try," the mayor said, adding: "Today, we did it." — Reuters



In this Jan 16, 2014, photo George Lucas speaks in Singapore.



'Shop Qatar' festival kicks off

By Nawara Fattahova

DOHA: It is really impressive to witness the great change and development boom in Qatar, compared to a few years back. The country is systematically changing as it gets ready to host the FIFA World Cup 2022, and many new projects are coming up. With the rapidly increasing number of shopping malls in Doha, the Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) added a new event to already existing ones - the Shop Qatar festival.

The first edition of Shop Qatar kicked off on Jan 7 under the slogan 'A Brand New Tradition' at the recently launched Mall of Qatar, with discounts on popular brands, cash prizes worth up to QAR 4 million, special offers on flights and hotel bookings and a colorful schedule of entertainment featuring "Cats", the Broadway musical, live music concerts and 15 stand-up comedy acts.

The ceremony started with a show presented by professional acrobats with music and lights. Then popular young Qatari singer Fahd Al-Kbeisi performed on a special stage built in the middle of Mall of Qatar, and hundreds of spectators enjoyed his songs.

The festival will continue till Feb 7, 2017, and is organized by QTA in cooperation with festival partners including Mall of Qatar, Qatar Airways and Ezdan World. Retail outlets will be providing discounts of up to 50 percent on a range of consumer goods including clothes, electronics, cosmetics and accessories for men, women and children. In addition to the Mall of Qatar, which opened last month to become the largest shopping and entertainment hub in the nation, participating malls include Ezdan Mall, Hyatt Plaza, AlKhor Mall, Lagoona Mall, Gulf Mall, Landmark, Dar Al Salam Mall, The Gate and The Pearl-Qatar.

In a move by QTA to support local entrepreneurs, Shop Qatar will also feature local products designed by students of Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar and other local designers, which will be displayed in a variety of pop-up stores throughout the participating malls. In addition, visitors can benefit from experts on the latest fashion and make-up trends through make-up tutorials which will be offered throughout the period of the festival and a fashion show during the final week.

To offer tourists the chance to conveniently travel, stay and shop in Qatar, QTA has partnered with Qatar Airways and popular hotel booking platforms to offer discounted air travel and tourist accommodation packages. Any flights to Qatar from within the GCC region booked on Qatar Airways for the period between 7 January and 7 February will be available with a 25 percent discount. In addition, members of Qatar Airways' Privilege Club will receive double Q-miles on their booking during Shop Qatar. Visitors to Shop Qatar can also take advantage of a range of accommoda-



Megastores outlets, starting at QAR 150 per ticket. Two concerts which will feature Arab and Khaliji singers will take place on Jan 20, and 27, 2017 at Doha Exhibition and Convention Center. Tickets will go on sale at all Virgin Megastores outlets and will range in price from QAR 120 to QAR 1,250.

The Doha Comedy Festival will be returning with an extensive line up of Khaliji, Arab, and international comedians, who will entertain audiences over a three-day fiesta of stand-up and humorous storytelling from 2nd to 4th February 2017 at Qatar National Convention Centre. Tickets will be on sale at all Virgin Megastores outlets with ticket prices ranging from QAR 120- QAR 1000.

Participating retail partners will also host exclusive in-mall entertainment and roaming mall shows, with fun for the whole family. And, to capitalize on Qatar's splendid winter weather, Shop Qatar has partnered with Ezdan World to offer a fun fair to visitors at the Magical Festival Village, which will be held beside Katara Cultural Village this winter. The Village houses over 400 shopping outlets, dozens of cafes and restaurants, bordered by public seating areas where visitors can relax and enjoy the ambience and lovely climate.

During this trip the media delegation stayed at Al Mirqab - part of Souq Waqif Boutique Hotels, which made our stay pleasant. These hotels remind us of our Arab Khaliji heritage, as they preserve the style and are located in the same old place. Al Mirqab is perfectly positioned at the gateway into Souq

years gone by.

A gleaming set of pearls encircling the historical heart of Doha, Souq Waqif Boutique Hotels is a collection of six luxurious hotels and full-service residences steeped in timeless Qatari hospitality. Each of the unique five-star properties, linked by the lively Souq Waqif, invites one to experience the collection's full

world's most exclusive brands and contemporary luxuries in a fashionably refined setting. A center of gravity for those in the know, Alhazm provides the ideal blend of high-end fashion boutiques, trendy restaurants and cafes and memorable events.

The media delegation met Mohamed A K Al-Emadi, CEO of Al-Emadi Holding that owns



range of culinary and leisure offerings. During your stay, you will have access to the collection's full range of facilities, and enjoy the personalized service and attention to detail that will make each moment of your stay with us unforgettable.

Dhow Cruise

The media team had a chance to enjoy a 45-minute cruise onboard a traditional dhow with Doha's spectacular skyline as the backdrop, while drinking the popular Qatari karak tea. Besides the new modern buildings, we were also able to see the Pearl-Qatar, a man-made island, from a distance.

Msheireb Museums

During the trip, we also visited two of the four historic heritage buildings of the Msheireb Museums that are located in the heart of Msheireb Downtown Doha. Located within the oldest part of the capital, they form an important part of Qatar's national history. Msheireb Museums are an integral aspect of the inner city's regeneration of the old commercial center with its traditional community-based lifestyle. The restoration of four heritage houses, Bin Jelmoos House, Company House, Mohammed Bin Jassim House and Radwani House, into world-class museums, forms a vital part of the Msheireb Downtown Doha development.

Alhazm

Much more than just a shopping destination. Alhazm embodies a new luxurious lifestyle. It's an environment of classical European style in the heart of modern Arabia. Designed for connoisseurs, those who appreciate the finer things in life, Alhazm offers the

enjoy exclusive brands, exceptional restaurants and immersive events all under one roof and we look forward to sharing it with you," he added.

A magnificent venue of grand proportions and noble design, Alhazm is an architectural gem in the heart of modern Qatar. With classic continental style in the spirit of grand Italian shopping arcades of years gone by, Alhazm is a testament to timeless traditional style, designed to renew the wonder and spirit of amazement in everybody that walks among its splendid pillars, dome and arches. Crafted from the finest materials, including original Tuscan marble, Alhazm will leave visitors in awe of the stunning scale and striking beauty of its open spaces and inspiring panoramic terrace for shows and special events.

It's also a space for relaxation and renewal. A marvel of modern landscaping, the gardens feature a state-of-the-art outdoor ventilation system and heat absorbing white marble flooring, making it a great venue for a lively chat, a moment of peace, or an al fresco bite to eat anytime of the year.

For those who truly love shopping as a journey, Alhazm is a distinctive destination with a hand-picked mix of the world's most exclusive fashion, beauty and luxury brands, displayed in stylish boutiques that exude authentic elegance. Inspired by the latest global trends, Alhazm brings high fashion at its finest from the streets of Milan, Paris, New York.

Alhazm is a passion for culinary excellence. A global gastronomic journey awaits at Alhazm, with a wide range of delicious and decadent dining options to satisfy any taste and every occasion. Home to well-known international restaurants and coffee shops, as well as a number of unique, home-grown dining outlets, Alhazm serves up everything from signature fine dining and gourmet lounges to casual dining and a fantastic fresh food market, all with a focus on quality and service excellence.

Furthermore Alhazm Cultural Center is a haven of silent serenity where visitors can browse the countless books and magazines and escape all the stresses of life. Packed with many rare and valuable volumes and all the classics in English and Arabic, the center is an ideal spot to spend a lazy morning or long afternoon in a comfortable corner, taking joy in a good read and some well-earned peace and quietude.

Chances to win cash prizes worth up to QAR 4,000,000

Shoppers who spend QAR 200 at any of the participating retailers can enter a weekly raffle draw at Mall of Qatar for a chance to win cash prizes worth up to QAR 4 million. Draws will be held on the first three Fridays of the Festival (13th, 20th, 27th of January), with 15 cash prizes ranging from QAR 10,000 to QAR 300,000 to be won each week. The draws will culminate in a mega-draw on the final day of Shop Qatar (7th February 2017) where a jackpot prize of QAR 1,000,000 will be up for grabs, in addition to 14 other cash prizes ranging from QAR 20,000 to QAR 120,000.

Details of more events and activations will be announced during the course of the coming few weeks. To find out more, visit www.shopqatar.qa and follow the dedicated Shop Qatar social media accounts on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

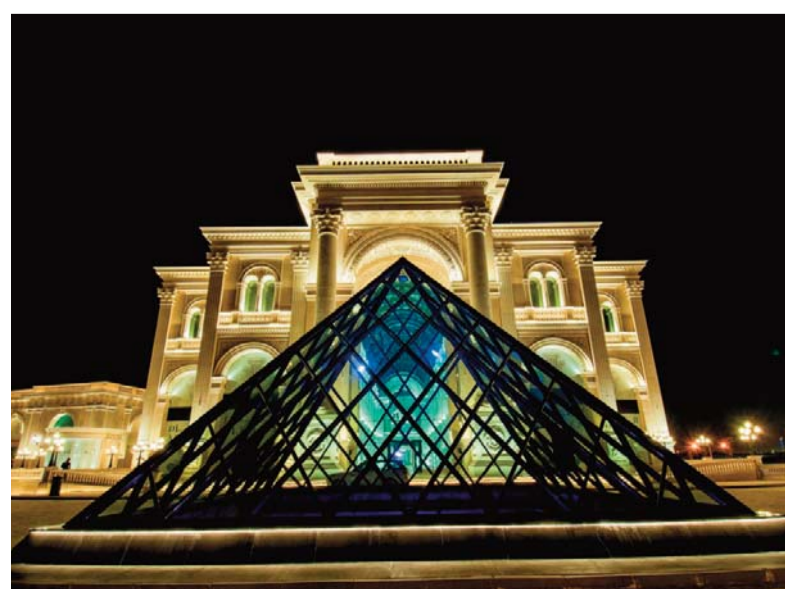


tion offers at Qatar's globally-recognized hospitality sector, when booking through Expedia.com and Booking.com.

Organizers also confirmed that Shop Qatar will offer a rich array of live cultural shows, performances by singing sensations and unlimited family-friendly entertainment in a festive, safe environment that reflects local culture and heritage. Cats, the longest-running show on Broadway, will show from the Feb 1-4, 2017 at Qatar National Convention Centre. Tickets for the musical composed by Andrew Lloyd Webber will be available for purchase at Virgin

Waqif, and captivates leisure and business travelers alike with its warm traditional colors and eye-catching Arabic design.

Doha's vibrant cultural and commercial center since the times of Qatar's Bedouin tribes, Souq Waqif continues to bring together locals and visitors from around the world. Only steps from Doha's spectacular Corniche, the Souq draws you into its winding, narrow alleyways to reveal merchants trading fine silks, carpets, spices, textiles, antiques, musical instruments and Arabian oud perfumes, entrancing your senses with the sights, scents and sounds of



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2017

'Shop Qatar' festival first edition kicked off on January 7

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A David Bowie fan poses in front of the mural of late British pop icon David Bowie created by Australian street artist James Cochran, also known as Jimmy C, as fans payed their respects in Brixton, south London on January 10, 2017, on the first anniversary of Bowie's death. Fans arrived to pay tribute and mark the one-year anniversary of David Bowie's death at the mural in Brixton, where the British pop icon was born, which became a focal point for emotional outpouring since Bowie's death one year ago today. — AP

'A designer's designer': NY exhibit showcases Chareau



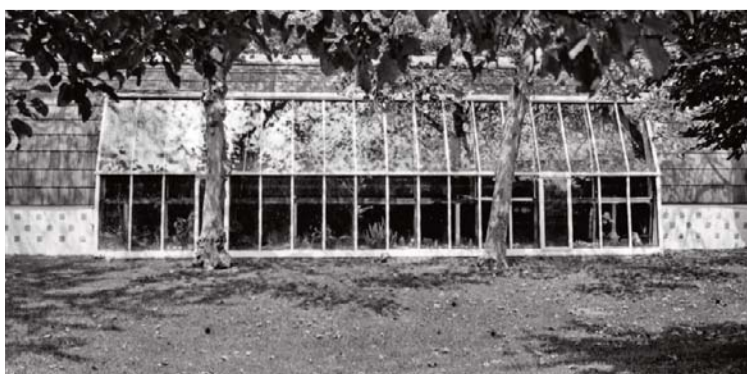
This undated photo provided by the Jewish Museum shows an installation view of the exhibition "Pierre Chareau: Modern Architecture and Design," in New York. — AP photos



This undated photo shows two Pierre Chareau designed high-backed chauffeuses (fireside armchairs), wood and velours, with tapestry upholstery by Jean Lurcat, and reupholstered in 1968, in an installation view of the exhibition "Pierre Chareau: Modern Architecture and Design," in New York.



An installation view of the exhibition "Pierre Chareau: Modern Architecture and Design," in New York.



The Pierre Chareau designed house for Robert Motherwell in 1947.

More than a decade before Philip Johnson designed his iconic Glass House, French designer and architect Pierre Chareau designed the Maison de Verre in 1932 in Paris. It featured one of the world's first glass-brick exterior walls - three stories high.

Chareau's work straddles industrial aesthetics and traditional fine craftsmanship, clean spare lines and playful 1920s whimsy. He made futuristic gadgets like folding staircases, a pivoting bidet and sliding walls. His furniture, with elegant woods and hand-wrought iron, was made for the few and the wealthy. Many pieces fold or have multiple uses, designed for small but chic Paris apartments.

It was a gem-like world soon to be violently dismantled with the start of World War II, and Chareau, despite moving to New York to flee the war, has remained little known in the United States.

An exhibit, "Pierre Chareau: Modern Architecture and Design," billed as the first in the US to focus on him, is on view at The Jewish Museum in Manhattan through March 26. It was organized by guest curator Esther da Costa Meyer, professor of the history of modern architecture at Princeton University, in collaboration with the Centre Pompidou in Paris. It will not travel beyond New York.

The show is accompanied by a hefty and richly illustrated book with essays by a half-dozen leading scholars. "Pierre Chareau: Modern Architecture and Design," was published in 2016 by The Jewish Museum and Yale University Press.

"Chareau is the most invisible of the great designers, because outside of France, there are less than a dozen pieces by him on view in museums anywhere in the world. It's all in private collections," said da Costa Meyer. "And the most famous masterpiece he did, the Maison de Verre, has always been in private hands and is not visible from the street. He is really known by designers."

Chareau worked in "the golden age of French design before the Depression, and he was trained in that grand tradition," she said. "He was one of the leaders of the early trend to modernize. He was also known in his day as a patron of the arts, so we reunited here some of his (collection)."

Through over 180 rarely seen works from public and private collections in the U.S. and Europe, the exhibit brings Chareau's world of Paris luxe to life. Furniture dis-



Pierre Chareau's folding chair, metal and paint.

plays are enhanced by an enormous white screen behind them on which shadow-like silhouettes of imagined residents come and go, complete with shadow cigarette smoke and the enthusiastic tail wags of a passing shadow dog.

In another gallery, rustling leaves and glinting sunlight, visible through virtual reality goggles, bring visitors into Chareau's Paris study, an apartment he designed, and a salon and courtyard of the elegant Maison de Verre, designed with Dutch architect Bernard Bijvoet. Those elements add context and movement to the furniture.

The exhibit employs a large-scale digital installation that lets you experience different sections of the Maison de Verre as if moving through it. Film footage of actors strolling through the house using Chareau-designed gadgets adds to the experience. Floor plans are projected onto walls, making the space appear continually spliced, deconstructed, revealed and then reconstructed.

"Chareau has almost no surviving interiors, since most of them were destroyed. And the furniture feels a bit orphaned in and of itself," explains Liz Diller, founding partner of Diller Scofidio and Renfro, the firm that designed the exhibit. "So we brought back the domestic life and the feel of the furniture in situ."

When the Maison de Verre was built, she says, "it was very radical. ... The exposed steel columns could be a beautiful contemporary loft." Chareau rose to prominence in early 1920s Paris with interior designs that were both elegant and functional. The pieces featured rare woods, alabaster (for lamps), and exotic elements like touches of ivory or sharkskin. Many of his designs featured leopard-skin rugs, with expanses of silk or velvet curtains as wall coverings.

Chareau's works were custom-made, not mass-produced, and made use of France's artisanal traditions of metal, woodwork and tapestry-making. He designed for a cultured urban elite, and many of his clients, including painters, sculptors and composers, were Jewish. Although Chareau was raised Catholic, his mother came from a Sephardic Jewish family and his wife Dollie, also a designer, was Jewish. With the German occupation of Paris in 1940, the couple, like many of their clients, fled to the United States.

The show explores the enduring consequences of that flight from persecution, including the dispersal of many of his works during the war; his own collection of art, including works by Mondrian and Modigliani; and his attempts to rebuild his career in New York in the 1940s.

By then, the world of European luxe to which he catered had vanished. In New York, he lacked the pool of skilled French artisans with whom he was used to working. And aside from an East Hampton, Long Island, house that he designed for artist Robert Motherwell in 1947 - and which was later destroyed - he obtained few commissions here. "He basically did odd jobs, and he and his wife had no children, so once they had died, everything was gone. We have tried to put some of it together again here," da Costa Meyer said. "He was truly a designer's designer." — AP



Pierre Chareau's (French, 1883-1950) and Bernard Bijvoet's (Dutch, 1889-1979), glass house Maison de Verre.



Pierre Chareau's (French, 1883-1950) and Bernard Bijvoet's (Dutch, 1889-1979), glass house Maison de Verre.