

Solution to Bedoon issue deliberately delayed: MP



Iraqi troops seize historic Mosul mosque from militants



Trump calms tensions after Lewis squabble



I Coast stumbles, Congo beat Morocco in Africa Cup of Nations



ASSEMBLY PANEL APPROVES MEDICAL CHARGES ON EXPATS

LEGAL COMMITTEE NODS TO CHANGE VOTING SYSTEM TO TWO VOTES



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KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti military helicopter takes part in a live ammunition exercise at Udaira military range, 140 km north of Kuwait City, yesterday. (Inset) Defense Minister Sheikh Mohamad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah looks through binoculars as he watches Kuwaiti soldiers participate in the exercise. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat (More Photos Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's legal and legislative committee yesterday approved proposals to raise medical charges on expatriates and to amend the conditions of the existing health insurance on foreigners.

The decision will now go to the assembly's health and labor committee to work out the details of the proposals in cooperation with the Health Ministry which has already announced plans to increase medical charges on expatriates from the middle of next month. The legal committee's decision found the proposals in line with the constitution and the law.

One of the proposals call to impose mandatory health insurance on expatriates coming to Kuwait on visit visas after it was noticed that many expatriates, especially the elderly, visit Kuwait only to enjoy the almost free medical services.

Health Ministry officials said last week that the ministry plans to raise the prices of most radiology and technical medical services on expatriates from mid-February. No details were provided for the services that will be impacted.

The ministry did not explain reports about plans to raise the current KD 50 annual health insurance fee paid by expatriates on renewing their residence permit to as much as KD 130. The ministry also said it was planning to establish three hospitals for the treatment of the 3.1 million foreigners.

In a related matter, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour Hind Al-Sabeeh said yesterday that the balancing of the demographic structure, which is tilted in favor of expatriates, will not be completed immediately but will require years.

She said that a special committee is studying this issue and will take into consideration the requirements of the labor market. A number of MPs have called for reducing the number of expatriates who now constitute 70 percent of Kuwait's 4.4 million population. Kuwaitis are only 1.33 million against 3.1 million expats.

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MAY SIGNALS CLEAN BREAK WITH EU

BRITAIN IS LEAVING EUROPE'S SINGLE MARKET

LONDON: Prime Minister Theresa May unveiled her Brexit blueprint yesterday, announcing for the first time that Britain will leave Europe's single market in order to control EU immigration.

In a highly-anticipated speech, May also warned the EU against imposing harsh terms on Britain's historic divorce from the bloc after more than four decades of membership. She also revealed that Britain would look to strike a new customs agreement with the EU to

be able to carve out its own trade deals with the rest of the world.

In a concession to parliamentary critics, the Conservative party leader said lawmakers would also get a vote on any final Brexit agreement negotiated with Brussels. EU leaders have insisted that single market membership means accepting free movement—a key issue in Britain's shock June referendum vote to leave the 28-member grouping.

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SAUDI GOVT COULD SHELVE \$13.3BN PROJECTS IN 2017

DUBAI: At least \$13.3 billion of government projects are at risk of being cancelled in Saudi Arabia this year because of fiscal pressures and changing government priorities, Zawya Projects reported, citing a study by consultants Faithful+Gould.

The total value of project awards for 2017 is forecast at \$27 billion, and could rise to \$32 billion if the Makkah Metro project, which was originally expected to be awarded in 2016, goes through this year. "If Makkah Metro is awarded, which I believe will be the case in 2017, admittedly slightly downscald, then it's 60 percent growth year-on-year," David Clifton, regional development director at Faithful+Gould, told Zawya Projects, a Thomson Reuters service.

The figures suggest \$20 billion in contracts were awarded last year, compared with \$35.5 billion in 2015. Faithful+Gould's 2017 forecast assumes a major infrastructure project will be awarded by "exception or royal decree", according to the firm's Construction Intelligence Report on Saudi Arabia, which was released yesterday. It referred to expenditure under the 2017 state budget that appears to make room for a big new infrastructure scheme.

"I would expect that another major or semi-major government scheme will be singled out for award," Clifton said, predicting a reprioritizing across five major ministries in the first half of 2017.

Continued on Page 13



LIVERPOOL: Televisions are pictured on display for sale in a store in Liverpool, north-west England, yesterday as they show a live speech by British Prime Minister Theresa May on the government's plans for Brexit. — AFP

SAUDI REJECTS CRITICISM OF ROLE IN FRENCH RACE

PARIS: Saudi Arabia's foreign minister has hit back at suggestions by some French presidential candidates that Riyadh funds Islamist extremism in France and that bilateral ties between the two allies should be reviewed. With less than four months before France's elections, the favorites - conservative Francois Fillon and far-right National Front Marine Le Pen - have both stepped up anti-Gulf rhetoric in recent weeks. Both say Paris should review ties with Saudi Arabia and Qatar and suggest it has an unhealthy relationship with countries they say propagate a radical Islamist ideology in France.

"I can't comment on what's said during an election campaign, but I know there is a misperception of Saudi Arabia," Adel Al-Jubeir told reporters late on Monday. "People say Saudi Arabia is extremism. Saudi Arabia is intolerance. Saudi Arabia is funding radical institutions and I always say it's not true."

Former conservative President Nicolas Sarkozy and current Socialist President Francois Hollande both aligned themselves with Gulf Arab states and adopted a hawkish attitude to Iran. That stance has brought criticism at home, with certain lawmakers saying Paris is thinking short-term, ignoring Gulf influence domestically.

"When people say the Saudis are funding this, I say show me. Nobody has anything to show, but the image has stuck and becomes a reality," Jubeir said. A French parliamentary report on mosque financing concluded in July that overseas financing was "marginal".

According to the Saudi Embassy, the kingdom has financed eight mosques around the country, at a cost of about 3.7 million euros, and paid salaries for 14 imams. "They (extremists) want Makkah and Madina. For people to think that we would be funding a mindset whose objective is to kill us, you'd have to assume we were either naive or not very smart," he said. — Reuters



ISTANBUL: A piece of paper with a message written on it was found in the apartment from where the main suspect Abdulgadir Masharipov (inset) in the Reina nightclub rampage was arrested in Istanbul yesterday. — AP/AFP

TURKEY CAPTURES NIGHTCLUB GUNMAN WHO ACTED FOR IS

ISTANBUL: Turkish authorities have captured the gunman who killed 39 people in an Istanbul nightclub on New Year's Day, an Uzbek national they said was trained in Afghanistan and had clearly acted on behalf of Islamic State. The suspect, named by Istanbul Governor Vasip Sahin as Abdulgadir Masharipov, was caught in a police raid late on Monday in a hideout in an outlying Istanbul suburb after a two-week manhunt.

Masharipov, who was captured with four others, had admitted his guilt and his fingerprints matched those at the scene, Sahin said in a news conference.

"He knew four languages and was well-educated," Sahin said, adding he was born in 1983 in Uzbekistan and received training in Afghanistan. There were strong indications he entered Turkey illegally through its eastern borders in January 2016 and it was clear the attack was carried out on behalf of Islamic State, Sahin said. The jihadist group claimed responsibility a day after the mass shooting, saying it was revenge for Turkish military involvement in Syria.

Masharipov was captured with an Iraqi man and three women from Africa, one of them from Egypt, in the Esenyurt district on Istanbul's western outskirts,

about 30 km (19 miles) from the Reina nightclub. Two pistols, mobile phone SIM cards, two drones and \$197,000 in cash were also seized, Sahin said.

Dogan news agency published a photo of the alleged attacker with a black eye, a cut above his eyebrow and bloodstains on his face and t-shirt. It broadcast footage showing plain-clothes police leading a man in a white sweater to a waiting car. He was being questioned at Istanbul police headquarters, while other people were detained in raids across the city targeting Uzbek Islamic State cells, the state-run Anadolu news agency said.

The gunman appeared to have repeatedly changed addresses before and after the attack. Remaining in Istanbul, he evaded a 16-day nationwide manhunt that included operations in cities from Izmir on the Aegean coast, to Konya in central Anatolia, and Hatay near the southern border with Syria.

"Five addresses were tracked and operations were carried out against them. He was found at one of the five," Sahin said. Masharipov and those seized with him late on Monday had moved to the Esenyurt address around three days ago, he said.

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KUWAIT: (From left) Dr Ziyad Al-Kandari, Minister of Health Dr Jamal Al-Harbi, Dr Fawzia Al-Kandari, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Dr Jawad Abu Al-Hasan and Dr Abdulrazzaq Al-Obaid. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with students from the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET).

AMIR PRAISES KUWAITI DOCTORS' ACHIEVEMENTS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Minister of Health Dr Jamal Al-Harbi. During the meeting, Minister Harbi introduced His Highness Sheikh Sabah to Dr Abdulrazzaq Al-Obaid who won patent for a device used in the spinal treatment.

His Highness was also introduced to Electro-Physiologist Dr Fawzia Al-Kandari who recently trained a number of Japanese physicians on the use of pacemakers. His Highness the Amir also received Dr Jawad Abu Al-Hasan and Dr Ziyad Al-Kandari who are also

amongst the excelling Kuwaiti physicians. His Highness the Amir praised the medical achievements of the Kuwaiti Doctors, wishing more progress and success. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received students from the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET). During the reception - held on the occasion of the formation of the students' new union -

His Highness the Crown Prince urged them to put more efforts in education to serve their country.

The meeting was attended by head of protocols at His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Undersecretary at His Highness the Crown Prince Diwan Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince separately received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences to Egyptian President AbdelFatah Al-Sisi after a terrorist attack against security forces in Egypt's New Valley Governorate. His Highness the Amir prayed for the security personnel killed in the attack and wished for the speedy recovery of the injured. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem sent condolences to Egyptian parliament speaker Ali Abdel Al. — KUNA

KUWAIT SIGNS DECLARATION OF INTENT TO HOST ACD'S SECRETARIAT HEADQUARTERS

KUWAIT TAKES PART IN 15TH ACD MEETINGS

ABU DHABI: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah signed yesterday with Secretary General of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Bundit Limschoon a Declaration of Intent which will enable Kuwait to host the permanent headquarters of the ACD's Secretariat.

According to a statement by the Foreign Ministry, the hosting of the headquarters proved the leading role taken by Kuwait toward the promotion of the common Asian action. This signing also stemmed from the belief of the Member States of the Forum in the importance of Kuwait's active efforts that supported the Asian Cooperation Forum, especially through the Gulf country's interim hosting of the Secretariat since the first Summit of the Forum between on Oct 15-17, 2012.

The signing of the Declaration of Intent also came to implement two resolutions issued by the Second Summit of the Forum, which convened in Bangkok, Thailand, on Oct 9-10, 2016. It also came to fulfill resolutions which came out of the 11th ministerial meeting of the ACD which was held in the capital of the Republic of Tajikistan Dushanbe on Mar 29, 2013.

Condolences

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah participated in the 15th Ministerial Meeting of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) hosted by the UAE's capital Abu Dhabi. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed in his speech sincere condolences for United Arab Emirates' leadership, government, and people on the deaths of a group of diplomats while carrying out a humanitarian mission in Afghanistan. The diplomat were slain during a terrorist bombing that took place at the headquarters of the governor of Kandahar.

In this regard, he reiterated strong condemnation of the State of Kuwait of this terrorist and heinous attack that targeted innocent lives, saying that such attack was contrary to the laws and human values. He stressed Kuwait's firm position that rejected all forms and manifestations of terrorism, asking Almighty Allah to bestow his mercy on the deceased and quick recovery for the wounded.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed deep gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the UAE for the warm hospitality and welcome and thanked the Kingdom of Thailand for its efforts during its presidency of the fourteenth ministerial meeting. He also thanked the Secretary-General of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue and the members of the General Secretariat for the excellent organization and arrangement of this meeting.

"It gives us great pride to see the continuity of meetings of the ACD forum at frequent intervals, a matter that demonstrates determination of its member states to positively interact at the regional and international levels in order to achieve the goals on which the ACD was founded.

"We meet today in our fifteenth session of the Ministerial meeting which is not far from the second summit, which was hosted by the Kingdom of Thailand three months ago and we look forward to the meeting to be hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain next month for regional organizations with the General Secretariat of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue, as well as the kind invitation submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the third summit of the forum," he added.

"The State of Kuwait and out of its full awareness of the importance that this forum receives the needed attention to achieve the hopes of our peoples and their aspirations, has been keen since its accession to the Forum in 2003 to take several steps to strengthen the elements of strategic cooperation between our countries, therefore, it had hosted the first summit for dialogue on October 2012 and hosted the interim headquarters of the Secretariat since then," the Kuwaiti Minister noted.

He said he had the pleasure and by approval of the member states to sign a letter of intent with the Secretary General of the Asian Cooperation

Dialogue to have the State of Kuwait be honored to host the permanent headquarters of the General Secretariat of the ACD, stressing that the success of the Secretariat body "is linked to our support and concerted efforts to allow it to complete its important role and make success the purposes and principles that we all strive towards strengthening our common action".

Cooperation

With regard to the six areas of cooperation that were agreed upon during the second Summit, the State of Kuwait will organize two workshops in the areas of communications and sustainable development in the coming period.

"We look forward for the next consultations concerning initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to generate financial resources worth USD two billion to finance development projects in the Asian non-Arab countries, in which Kuwait will contribute USD 300 million," he pointed out.

The Kuwaiti Minister added that food security,

energy, and water were the most important issues to be focused on. "We have to find all ways to preserve them," said Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, adding this would not be possible without cooperation and coordination and participation among Member States. He hailed what was stated in the concept paper presented at the meeting by the United Arab Emirates which "answers all our questions about the importance of energy, water, and food security".

He said that the plan submitted by the ACD was the real roadmap to preserve those important natural resources. And believing in the importance of diversification of energy sources in general, and renewable and clean energies in particular, and the inevitability of working to reduce the consumption of non-renewable energy sources more responsibly, the State of Kuwait's efforts began in the field of renewable energy research and localization technologies since 1980 which culminated in 1984 with the construction of the first plant for the production of electrical power for the use of solar thermal energy. — KUNA



ABU DHABI: Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah signs the Declaration of Intent letter with ACD's Secretary General Bundit Limschoon. — KUNA

MAJOR DONORS URGE MORE EFFORTS TO BOOST HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN SYRIA

KUWAIT: The 9th meeting of major donors to Syria called for maintaining international efforts to promote humanitarian situation in Syria and alleviate suffering of the Syrian people. In a final communique issued Monday, the conferees stressed the necessity of honoring pledges made during donors conferences, promoting humanitarian response plans and providing support for host countries of Syrian refugees that are facing many burdens. They referred to the importance of holding the 5th international donors conference so as to meet increasing needs of Syrian internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, the communique said.

They also reiterated the necessity of cooperation of the international community to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 2254, Geneva I statement and relevant international resolutions, with the aim of stopping the bloodshed of Syrians, ending their suffering, returning IDPs and refugees to their homes, and beginning the reconstruction process.

The participants urged the international community and the UNSC to work seriously to put pressures on the conflicting parties in Syria so as to lift siege imposed on the cities and towns, and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid, it added.

They affirmed the need to protect civilians in light of the shortage of food, medical supplies, medicine and warming in frigid winter in the besieged areas, it pointed out. They recommend inviting Syria's neighboring countries to

attend the forthcoming meetings due in Qatar, denouncing the deadly incidents in eastern Aleppo that lead to demographical changes.

The participants condemned the forcible displacement of tens of thousands of people to the countryside of Idlib and western Aleppo after imposing siege for three months that was associated with random shelling which killed hundreds of civilians, including children, women, medical staff, relief workers and civil defense teams.

They extolled role of Kuwait, His Highness the Amir, government and people for hosting the meeting, out of the State's leading humanitarian position and its keenness on coordinating efforts to promote humanitarian situation in Syria and following up honoring pledges made during the international donors conferences.

The meeting gathered representatives from Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt - host countries of large numbers of Syrian refugees - and some delegations from the World Bank and international humanitarian organizations. The event discussed humanitarian developments in Syria and examined how far pledges of aid made at the Syria donors conference last February in London have come.

The State of Kuwait has been providing humanitarian needs to the Syrians affected by the conflict. It hosted three international humanitarian pledging conferences for Syria for three years in a row during which donations exceeded \$7 billion. Kuwait donated \$1.6 billion during the three conferences it hosted and the fourth one held in London last years. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Assistant Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Art and Letters Mohammad Al-Asousi (left) speaks during the function. — KUNA

HUMANITARIANS COMMEND KUWAIT'S ROLE IN HELPING PEOPLE IN NEED

KUWAIT: Humanitarian activists and officials commended Monday role of Kuwait and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in help of people in need in different parts of the world. Kuwait has always been contributing to development in Arab world and well-being of its people, and the country is keen on distancing relief aid from politics, Mohammad Al-Asousi, Assistant Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Art and Letters (NCCAL), said.

Addressing function about humanitarian role of Kuwait and His Highness the Amir, part of Al-Qurain Cultural Festival, Asousi said humanitarian action was a major "arm of Kuwait's foreign policy, the culmination of which was establishment of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development in December 1961, to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries."

Zakat (alms) House contributed over 40 Kuwaiti Dinars (KD) to charity projects, he said. Kuwait-based International Islamic Charitable Organization (ICCO) allocated KD 36 million for projects in 2012. Al-Asousi said Kuwait's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the red crescent have numerous humanitarian contributions in many parts of the world, including the funding of development projects in disaster-hit areas.

His Highness the Amir hosted the Arab-African summit in November 2013, and the Kuwaiti leader ordered a \$1 billion in easy loans for African countries for five years, and launched a \$1 million prize after late Dr Abdulrahman Al-Sumait for development research in Africa, he said. Asousi noted that Kuwait hosted three international donor conferences for the Syrian people, extended a helping hand for the Iraqis and Yemenis. Asaad Mustafa, advisor at the Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, said Kuwaiti volunteers spent days and nights delivering aid for the people in need in Syria, shortly after outbreak of the conflict in March 2011. Kuwait's humanitarian aid are unconditional, he noted.

Dr Mohammad Al-Rumaihi, sociology professor at Kuwait University, called for collaboration between relief organizations and businesspeople to find permanent humanitarian channels for Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

Sheikha Hessa Al-Thani, Arab League Secretary General's humanitarian envoy, supported Rumaihi's proposal. "I would raise the issue of coordination of efforts," she said. Sheikha Hessa added that refugees in the camps would return to their homes one day. Dr Adel Al-Zayani, Director of Human and Environmental Affairs at GCC secretariat, said humanitarian issues and volunteering should be distinguished. — KUNA



KRCS CONTINUES TO AID SYRIANS IN LEBANON

BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) continued yesterday its campaign to aid the Syrian refugees in eastern Lebanon, providing them with necessities to help fend off the harsh cold weather. Head of the KRCS field team, Jafar Al-Jamali said that the recent batch of relief aid included materials such as clothing, fuel for

heating and other necessities. The KRCS official affirmed that Kuwait will continue to aid the Syrian refugees who are escaping the chaos in their country since 2011. Many of the estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon live in squalid conditions and poorly-built shanty towns. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Kuwait Air Force held a live ammunition military exercise at Udaira military range, 140 kilometers north of Kuwait City yesterday. Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khadher, as well as other top state and army officials attended the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT MARKS MEMORY OF 'OPERATION DESERT STORM'

KUWAIT: Kuwait marked yesterday the 26th anniversary of an event deeply entrenched in the minds of its people; a military operation dubbed 'Desert Storm', which liberated Kuwait from the atrocious Iraqi occupation. On the morning of January 15, 1991, then US President George H W Bush opted for military intervention in the event diplomacy fails to end the conflict known as the 'Gulf War', which was triggered by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Moreover, 'Operation Desert Storm' commenced with a devastating air strike launched by US-led Coalition warplanes, as the entire world watched the developments unfold on their television screens.

Meanwhile, then Crown Prince and Prime Minister the late His Highness Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah delivered a memorable address to the nation, where he commended the Kuwaiti people for their unbridled resistance in the face of Iraqi aggression. Among the fleet of warplanes heavily relied upon by Coalition forces was the "F-117", which inflicted damage on strategic targets in

the Iraqi capital and overwhelmed the Iraqi army.

The first day of the military operation lasted 240 minutes where some 400 warplanes ejected 1,200 strikes that destroyed half of the Iraqi arsenal, which Saudi Arabia and Kuwait claimed 302 of them. The brunt of the aerial barrage targeted biological, atomic and chemical weapons stored in the northern Iraqi cities of Mosul, Irbil and Al-Koufa, in addition to the southern cities of Baghdad and Basra.

Similarly, more than 100 US naval ships joined the war, along with 1,800 warplanes and 1,700 helicopters that assisted the Kuwait air force as it hammered locations inside Kuwait in efforts to protect valuable possessions.

By the end of the war on February 27, 1991, Coalition forces, which comprised a total of 32 nations, had destroyed 88,500 tons of supplies, while Coalition contributions to liberate Kuwait amounted to \$53 billion. On February 26, 1991, Coalition forces declared victory, heralding the complete liberation of Kuwait. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Faleh Al-Azab submitted a financial disclosure statement to the Anti-Corruption Authority yesterday. The authority is an independent agency that was established according to Law 2/2016 in compliance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah (center) inaugurates the 9th International Invention Fair of Middle East. —KUNA



Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah visits Kuwait Science Club's booth.

9TH INTERNATIONAL INVENTION FAIR OF MIDDLE EAST KICKS OFF

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the 9th International Invention Fair of Middle East (IIFME) kicked off Monday evening, with the participation of nearly 200 inventors from across the globe. "The IIFME has become a globally-admired Kuwaiti event," Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah said in the inaugural speech.

He pointed out that IIFME has brought together inventors and inventors from the four corners of the globe to exchange ideas and expertise. He lauded the IIFME as the second largest international exhibition for inventions after the International Invention Exhibition of Geneva. "Every year, the IIFME showcases a plethora of impressive Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab inventions," he said.

Meanwhile, Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General Abdullah Al-Zayani lauded Kuwait's hosting of the event that aims to foster invention and creativity. He added that Kuwait's embracing of inventors and their inventions embodies its great interest in promoting creative thinking. Zayani applauded the displayed inventions which meets the needs of the society and shows potential and skills of young inventors and their endeavors to better serve their societies. In the meantime, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce Sheikh Namer Al-Sabah voiced appreciation of His Highness the Amir's sponsorship of the event. His Highness the Amir's patronage of the IIFME reflects his support to youth in general and young inventors in particular, he said. He clarified that the ministry of commerce is providing all necessary help for

inventors register their inventions and record their patent and intellectual rights. Furthermore, Head of the IIFME organizing committee Talal Al-Kharafi unveiled over 200 inventors from 36 countries are showcasing their inventions in IIFME during the period 16 to 19 January. He noted that Kuwait is represented in the event with 32 inventors. The event, themed "investor-inventor meeting aims to bring international, Arab, Gulf, and Kuwaiti inventors and investors together, he said. He added that it is also meant to build a

community for regional and international inventors from all over the world under a unique umbrella in the exhibition's hall at the Kuwaiti Scientific Club. The fair will offer cash awards totaling in value \$100,000; these include a grand prize of \$15,000, the KSC prize - \$10,000, the GCC Patent Office prize - 50,000 Saudi riyals for the three top winners from the GCC countries, the award of the International Exhibition of Geneva - \$15,000, and an award from World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). — KUNA

MP: BEDOONS' ISSUE DELIBERATELY DELAYED

EIGHT SUSPICIOUS DISABILITY FILES REFERRED TO PROSECUTION

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The issue of bedoons or stateless residents needs to be solved as soon as possible because of its humanitarian nature, a lawmaker said yesterday, accusing authorities concerned with the topic of deliberately delaying any solution for the decades-old problem.

MP Abdullah Fahhad Al-Enezi further said in a press statement that the Central Apparatus for Illegal Residents, which was established a number of years ago to find a final solution to the bedoons' problem, should be dissolved and merged into the Interior Ministry after it failed to achieve its targeted goals.

"This issue bedoons' has been turned into an experiment field for officials at the central apparatus," he underlined, noting that many stateless residents remain deprived of basic human rights including access to permanent security IDs or any form of identification. Instead of traditional civil IDs, the Kuwaiti government started in recent years to hand over security IDs that can be used to have access to a number government services, but not to all privileges that a civil ID holder normally receives. Furthermore, people that the government says are not qualified for consideration to receive the Kuwaiti citizen-

ship are often given temporary IDs valid for up to six months, while in some cases bedoons were not given any IDs.

Disability files

The Public Authority for Disabled People's Affairs is already half way through examining an estimated total of 57,000 files it has for disabled citizens who take advantage of privileges the government provides for people



MP Abdullah Fahhad Al-Enezi

with special needs. So far, only eight cases were referred to the public prosecution on suspicions of forgery, Director Dr Shafiq Al-Awadhi said during a press conference yesterday. The examination process had went underway recently in order to reveal cases involving people suspected of forging official documents presented to the authority in order to obtain

special privileges illegally. Dr Awadi also announced yesterday that a project of 'automating' the authority's services is set to conclude by April, after which finalizing transactions would become available online. She also noted that a new reception lounge is being built at the authority's building to receive transactions from disabled citizens only, thus helping them avoid crowding.

Dr Nadia Abul, the Deputy Director for Medical Services at the authority, said during the same press conference that examining the files revealed numerous violations, such as forgery to change the severity of the disability without providing due reports. She added that a medical committee comprising 68 doctors was transferred to the authority's headquarters to facilitate and accelerate finalizing the transactions.

Meanwhile, Deputy Director for Education Services Majed Al-Saleh highlighted the significance of providing quality education at schools for students with special needs, adding that such schools in Kuwait are subjected to periodic quality control inspections. Saleh further indicated that early intervention centers for children up to the age of six are set to open in various areas around Kuwait to provide residents with handy services within their reach.



KUWAIT: Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah visits Zain's booth at the 9th International Invention Fair of Middle East.

ZAIN STRATEGIC PARTNER OF 9TH INT'L INVENTION FAIR MIDDLE EAST

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its strategic partnership of the 9th International Invention Fair Middle East. The event is held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and runs from 16-19 January 2017.

Zain participated in the opening ceremony through its booth, which welcomed His Highness the Amir's representative His Excellency Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Abdullah Al-Zayani, and Vice Chairman of the Kuwait Science Club Talal Al-Kharafi.

Zain's support of this major event since its inception is part of the company's Corporate Sustainability and social Responsibility strategy, which aims at supporting the scientific arena and contribute to the further development of the scientific field in Kuwait and the region. The Invention Fair Middle East brings together a large number of local, regional, and international inventors who jointly exchange knowledge and experiences.

The International Invention Fair is one of the most significant and largest specialized exhibitions of inventions in the Middle East, and is considered as the second largest exhibition of its kind in the world. The event is part of the International Exhibition of

Geneva, and offers an opportunity for inventions from different cultures to be exhibited and the strengthening of relationships among inventors and inventors.

Zain is keen on encouraging Kuwaiti and Arab talents, especially Kuwaiti inventors, in the fields of science and innovation side by side with international experts. Zain supports such areas as it believes it offers a valuable opportunity for young inventors to benefit from the expertise and knowledge of international inventors. The company will continue to foster young talents, believing that the current generation of youngsters holds to the keys to the future development of Kuwait.

HORECA LEADS KUWAIT'S ECONOMIC, TOURISTIC DRIVE: ECONOMISTS

OVER 80 COMPANIES TAKE PART IN HORECA 2017

KUWAIT: Horeca Kuwait effectively contributes in boosting commercial exchanges among participating companies and supports their expansion plans, a number of economist and businessmen stressed yesterday. The exhibition also plays a significant role in supporting young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs who want to start their own small projects and helps them develop according to integrated and systematic basis, they added.

The three-day exhibition, which was inaugurated by Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah on Monday, showcases solutions to develop the hospitality, catering and hotel equipment sectors, the economists indicated, adding that Horeca has become a major event in terms of helping achieve development in several economic fields including tourism, transportation and energy.

Over 15 diplomats attended the opening ceremony, including the ambassadors of Germany, Italy, Brazil, Holland, Malta, Romania, Mexico, India, Algeria, in addition to former Lebanese ambassador Khodor Helweh. A large number of businessmen and representatives of local, Arab and foreign media outlets also attended the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Mabrook Company's General Manager Ali Farhat stressed that Horeca has economic benefits especially considering the development upsurge Kuwait is currently witnessing in the form of mega development, housing and tourism projects, in addition to the increase in the number of hotels and restaurants.

Meanwhile, Boecker's Administrative Associate Abraham Hilal said that Horeca is an ideal platform to enhance the performance of vital sectors, adding that it plays an effective role in boosting Kuwait's developmental ambitions in the fields of hospitality and food industries. He also noted that Horeca supports the Kuwaiti government's plans to diversify sources of

income, develop local tourism and create job opportunities for young Kuwaitis.

Farm Land's General Manager Antoine Obeid expressed excitement with the recurrent success that Horeca has achieved in recent years, saying that it has become a major forum for experts in tourism, hospitality, travel and food industries from Kuwait and the Middle East. Ghazi Al-Nafisi, Head of Kuwait the Hotel Owners Society also commended Horeca's role and stressed that it helps diversify sources of national income and encourage young entrepreneurs. Furthermore, Osman and Bisher's Managing Director Sahani Jagdeep said that the exhibition has earned a great reputation among hospitality experts, and highly praised the activities held during it.

Moreover, Protein Company's General Manager Fadi Jebran and Morooj Company's Deputy Director Mohammed Ahmed Al-Farhan agreed that Horeca Kuwait is an optimal venue to display and promote exclusive products and support expansion strategies. Also commenting on the exhibition, Bano Professional Mix Company's General Manager Tawfiq Essam Al-Hashwi said that Horeca plays a major role in supporting small and medium enterprises and encourage young people to join the private sector. Finally, chef Samaan Hilal, head of the international cooking competition's judging panel, said that the Horeca cooking competition, which takes place as part of the event, includes contests for food items representing several international cuisines. Adding that the judging panel includes a number of highly experienced chefs from around the world.



KUWAIT: This photo released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows barrels filled with liquor busted inside a home in Zahra.



An image grabbed from social media shows the alleged scene of a fatal crash reported at Mutla'a Road yesterday.

SUSPECTS ARRESTED IN HOME-TURNED-BREWERY

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Multiple arrests were made yesterday in a police raid in a Zahra house where liquor was brewed for sale in violation of the law. The operation was carried out based on investigations which confirmed information detectives had received earlier that the house was turned into an illegal brewery. A group of persons, all of Asian nationalities, were arrested during the raid, the Interior Ministry said in a statement without specifying the number of people arrested. The suspects reportedly rented the house from its original owner and used it to facilitate their illegal activity, accord-

ing to the statement. They were taken to the proper authorities for further action.

Fatal accident

Two women were killed and seven other people were injured in a traffic accident reported at the Mutla'a Road yesterday. Further details about the accident could not immediately be known.

Motorists hurt

At least one motorist was reported injured in a two-vehicle collision reported in the desert southwest of Sabah Al-Ahmad area. Firefighters, paramedics and police rushed to the

scene in response to an emergency call, then freed the two drivers who were trapped inside their wrecked vehicles. One driver was transported via medevac to the nearest medical facility. An investigation was opened to determine the circumstances behind the accident.

Roaming vendors

Kuwait Municipality inspectors confiscated three truckloads of electric appliances and used furniture during a crackdown against illegal roaming vendors in Khaitan. Three truckloads of vegetables and fruits were also confiscated during the same campaign.





KUWAIT: KPC Deputy managing director of international marketing Waleed Al-Bader (right) shakes hands with SUMED's Chairman Mohammad Abdulhazef after signing the contract. — KUNA

KPC RENEWS CRUDE OIL STORAGE CONTRACT WITH EGYPT'S SUMED

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) renewed its crude oil storage and transportation contract with Egypt's Arab Petroleum Pipelines Company (SUMED). KPC said in a press statement, yesterday, that the contract, which enters its third year, aims at

strengthening Kuwait's position in oil markets by realizing a 2030 global marketing strategy.

KPC Deputy managing director of marketing operations Jamal Al-Lughani said that renewing the contract focuses on enhancing KPC's existing and potential mar-

keting relations. Expanding KPC presence in Europe would increase Kuwait's market share in that region, he said. He added that KPC was successful in entering crude oil markets in the Mediterranean, including Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Turkey. — KUNA

KFAED EXTENDS \$27 MILLION LOAN TO GEORGIA

KUWAIT: A loan agreement was signed yesterday by Georgia and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), whereby the Fund will extend a loan of KD 8 million (about \$27 million) for the financing of Batumi - Akhaltsikhe.

The project aims at supporting economic and social development in Georgia, and specifically in the mountainous areas surrounding the road, by improving access to places of work and social services, facilitating the transport of products and goods to markets, improving access to touristic sites, the KFAED said in a press release.

It is also meant to increase cross-border transport, reduce pressure on alternate roads, in addition to

other benefits resulting from improved transport efficiency and reduced economic transport cost and time for passengers and goods, including enhanced traffic safety under most weather conditions, it added.

The project consists of civil works for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the road section, and involves covering it with asphaltic concrete in accordance with sound engineering specifications, for a length of about 29 km, and width of 7.5 meters with shoulders of 1-2 meters, including traffic safety signage, furniture and markings, according to the release.

The works include the construction of concrete culverts and road-

side channels for water drainage, reconstruction of four bridges, in addition to the construction of retaining walls in different locations to fortify the roadbed for an accumulative length of 14 km, it added.

The total cost of the project is estimated at about Georgian Lari (GEL) 93.3 million (about KD 12.5 million), about 47 percent of which in foreign currencies. The Kuwait Fund Loan will cover about 64 percent of the total estimated cost of the Project. The loan will be for a term of 25 years including a grace period of five years, and will be amortized in 40 semi-annual installments after the said grace period, it noted. — KUNA

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London	142	522
New York	205	928
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Crime

Report

WOMAN DIED AFTER ATTEMPTING ABORTION

KUWAIT: A pregnant woman died as she attempted to deliver her baby at her apartment, while the newborn also died in the process, according to police. Farwaniya policemen rushed to a building in the area after receiving an emergency call from the janitor, who reported that a tenant was heard screaming inside her apartment while the front door could not be unlocked. They broke into the apartment and found the Filipina woman lying unconscious with a stillborn baby next to her. Paramedics who accompanied police to the apartment pronounced the woman and the baby dead on the scene. Preliminary investigations indicate that the woman likely attempted an abortion while she was alone inside the apartment, but it went horribly wrong. The bodies were taken to the coroner for an autopsy, and investigations are ongoing to determine the circumstances behind the case.

Search for bootlegger

Police are looking to identify and arrest a man who ran away and left behind his vehicle containing 700 liquor bottles. The man complied when Farwaniya patrol officers ordered him to pull over, but immediately ran away on foot. He managed to escape, leaving behind his car where police found 700 bottles filled with homebrewed liquor. The man, who police suspect is an Asian national, faces charges of liquor brewing, possession and trafficking. Investigations are underway.

Batteries stolen

Search is on for a number of suspects accused of stealing expensive batteries and other vehicle parts from a garage that belongs to a sports car's club. An official at the club which is located in Zahra reported to police that several expensive items were missing, saying that he suspects they were stolen but does not know who the suspects could be. A case was filed for investigations.

Accident

A driver rushed a pedestrian to Mubarak Hospital after he accidentally ran her over in Salmiya, according to the police report. The victim, Sri Lankan, is recovering at the hospital, while the driver, a Thai national, was taken to Jabriya police station for questioning.



Assault

A Kuwaiti citizen lodged a complaint against two men driving a red luxurious car, saying that they beat him up behind a restaurant. He submitted a medical report at Maidan Hawally police station showing bruises he said he sustained during the attack, and gave police details of their car. A case was filed for investigations. — Translated from the Arabic press



Al-Jarida

الجريدة Al-Jarida

IT'S ARAB EGYPT, OH BROTHERS!

By Mubarak Al-Wesais

We do not flatter anybody when we say that we are in our second home country whenever we are in Egypt. We are in a country that has been providing Kuwait and the entire Arab nation with all aspects of life. The entire Arab nation is nothing and would become marginal and worthless without Egypt. Kuwait's Justice Minister Faleh Al-Azab said nothing strange in this regard. He only expressed an opinion and those with the least amount of gratitude and appreciation would never object to, reject his statement or reshuffle priorities as a result of some political attitudes.

It seems that Azab angered the Muslim Brotherhood lawmakers to the extent that some of them demanded an apology for the sake of protecting Kuwait's dignity, as if it was he who had described Kuwait as a 'soft and flabby' flank. Yes, indeed. We will

Azab angered the Muslim

Brotherhood lawmakers to the extent that some of them demanded an apology

القباس

Al-Qabas

BIRTH OF A NEW MIDDLE EAST

By Dr Hassan Abdullah Jouhar

The features of the new Middle East do not strategically match those planned by Henry Kissinger, those written about by Simon Peres nor those Condoleezza Rice had hoped for. It seems that Vladimir Putin is the one setting all outlines after he brilliantly managed to take control of all striking forces and diplomacy according to a will that seems to no longer exists in the West. Why has Putin succeed while Obama, Cameron and Merkel failed?

Russia succeeded on Syrian soil despite its involvement in the battle relatively late, namely five years after Western interference and insurgents' control of over 60 percent of Syria. Putin militarily succeeded under an umbrella of the UN veto that paralyzed any countermeasures on the ground. The Russians had a clearer and more straightforward goal of protecting the Syrian regime and military, while the West was divided between supporting dozens of groups that are already fighting without any common political project but to topple the regime without having a real achievable alternative, which might lead to another Libyan experience and the security and political vacuum in the aftermath of toppling Gaddafi, which eventually devastated the entire country.

The Russians also had a strategic vision on fighting insurgents including those from Russia's vicinity, while the West only had contradicting double-measured visions, as the growth of religious groups and militia might enable them to invade their Western allies just the way like what happened with the mujahedeen movement in Afghanistan that managed to strike in the

heart of New York, London, Paris and Berlin. Accordingly, the Russians were more loyal to their allies, while US and Western allies sold out their friends, deserted them and ambushed them in Aleppo, which witnessed the beginning of ending the war in Syria. Putin was smarter and more capable of foreseeing the future than the mightiest Western strategy experts. The Russian president interpreted US and European public opinion indicators more wisely than the leaders of those countries. He betted on the rightists' surge that would create a knockdown domino effect, with the success of Republican candidate Donald Trump. Thus, he decided to hold offensives quickly to have more time for political arrangements later this year.

Even in political arrangements, Putin succeeded in making a quick breach by declaring a ceasefire and documenting it with a Security Council resolution after direct negotiations with Iran and Turkey. He managed to hunt down most insurgents through Turkey and leave Nusra and IS with their rears completely exposed and unprotected.

History is really amazing. Ever since the Soviet era, the Russians have been supporting and aiding anti-Arab regimes' political movements, while the Americans and the British have been letting these regimes down, and they started falling one by one. Today, the Russians are supporting their allied regimes, while the West gave up supporting Arab anti-regime blocs and groups, and thus they came out empty-handed from the birth of the new Middle East.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

never hesitate in providing all demands of Egypt that has always been there to protect the Kuwaiti people from Abdul Kareem Qassim who demanded annexing it in the 1960s and mobilized his troops at our northern borders.

Yes, we will never hesitate to provide the needs of Egypt that strongly rejected Saddam's aggressions in Kuwait by its courageous leader, Hosni Mubarak, who sent the finest Egyptian army divisions to liberate Kuwait. Yes, we will never hesitate in providing the needs of Egypt that sent us Abdul Raziq Al-Sanhouri and Othman Khalil who set the Kuwaiti constitution that makes us so proud worldwide nowadays as we have an unrivalled democracy in the Arab world.

Yes, we will never hesitate in providing the needs of Egypt of science, culture, art and economy that sent helping hands and minds to various Arab countries. Kuwait and its people will never forget Zaki Tolaimatt, Hassan Shehata, Taha Basri, Mohammed Abdo Al-Wahsh, Hazem Al-Beblawy, Ahmed Zaki Atef and many others who made significant changes in Kuwait's history.

The bottom line is that Iran has every right of fantasizing about a greater Persian state, the Turks have every right of fantasizing about reviving the Ottoman caliphate, but the question is: What about Arabs who support both sides - what do they fantasize about?!

— Translated by Kuwait Times



ABK SPONSORS LOYAC'S 5TH BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced its sponsorship of the Lothan Youth Achievement Center's (LOYAC) 5th Blood Donation Drive for the second consecutive year. The event is scheduled to take place on Saturday, Jan 21, 2017, and will commence with a bike motorcade that will start from the LOYAC offices in Al Qibliya School and end at the Dasman Diabetes Institution. The bikers participating in the motorcade will be donating blood upon arrival at the Dasman Diabetes Center, which will also be open to the public for interested donors.

Commenting on this sponsorship, Fawzy Al Thunayan GM, Board Affairs said: "At ABK we firmly believe in the importance of supporting initiatives that encourage individuals to contribute and make a life changing difference. By sponsoring the Blood Donation Drive, we are raising awareness

among the public, and hope to elevate the spirit of giving and coming together to donate blood in support of those who need it the most. We would like to encourage everyone that is able to donate to Donate and Save a Life."

LOYAC is a nonprofit organization that works toward the overall development of the youth. It designs and develops many programs to facilitate the professional development and personal growth of the youth, ages 6 to 30.

ABK continuously seeks to make a solid presence in the communities in which it operates by joining hands with active organizations that aim to create a more prosperous future for Kuwait. For more information about Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit eahli.com or contact a customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899.



OOREDOO CONDUCTS FIRE DRILL AT ITS HEADQUARTER

KUWAIT: Ooredoo, Kuwait's fastest network, recently conducted a fire drill in collaboration with General Administration of Civil Defense and Ministry of Interior at its headquarter, to increase its employees' awareness on how to protect themselves in case of fire. All staff at the head office rehearsed evacuation procedures during the drill to ensure that they knew where to go and what to do at the event of a real emergency.

The emergency evacuation exercise is a top priority for Ooredoo Kuwait and is part of the safety plan it follows. The success of the fire drill has helped ensuring that all staff are fully aware of the procedures they must follow to ensure their own safety and safety of the others including customers and visitors in the event of a fire or similar emergency.

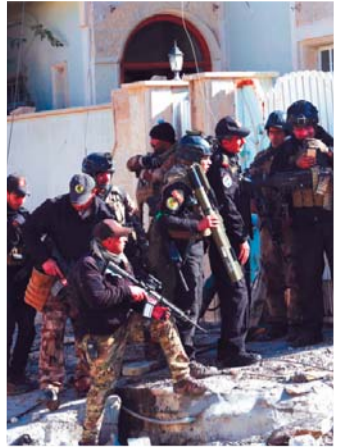
The fire drill was successfully completed

in less than 10 minutes, where the appointed volunteers for safety on each floor supervised the evacuation process and guided individuals directly to the assembly points outside the building. Ooredoo Kuwait organizes regular safety drills and briefings for employees as part of its strong commitment to upholding world class standards and operational practice.



KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) presented a course for oil sector employees recently to make them acquainted with the variety of services it provides.





WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2017

SYRIA TALKS IN ASTANA WILL 'CONSOLIDATE' TRUCE: RUSSIA FIGHTING RAGES NEAR DAMASCUS AMID FRAGILE CEASEFIRE

MOSCOW: Syria peace talks in the Kazakh capital next week are aimed at consolidating the frail truce in the war-torn country, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday. "One of the objectives of the meeting in Astana is first of all to consolidate the ceasefire," Lavrov said of the talks due to begin on January 23.

Lavrov said the talks would also serve as an opportunity to involve rebel field commanders in "the political process" aimed at ending the bloodshed. "Those who wish to join must have the possibility to do so." Organized by rebel backer Turkey and regime allies Russia and Iran, the Astana meeting is the latest bid to put an end to the brutal conflict raging since March 2011. US President-elect Donald Trump's transition team has been invited but has not yet officially responded.

Lavrov said yesterday it was "right to invite representatives of the UN and the new US administration" but did not say whether the incoming Trump administration had confirmed its attendance. A source in the Russian foreign ministry told AFP the talks would not involve the foreign ministers of participating countries and could last a few days, but did not give further details. Syria's UN ambassador will head the government delegation to upcoming peace talks, a Syrian daily reported yesterday, while the opposition said it would be represented by rebel negotiator Mohammad Allouh.

Talks on the nearly six-year-old conflict, organized by Turkey, Russia and Iran, are set to begin on January 23 in the Kazakh capital Astana. The Al-Watan daily, which is close to the government, reported yesterday that the regime's delegation "will be led by Syrian



TEHRAN: In this photo released by official website of the office of the Iranian Senior Vice-President, Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis (right) reviews honor guard as he is accompanied by Iranian Senior Vice-President Eshagh Jahangiri, during his official welcoming ceremony in Saadabad palace in Tehran, Iran yesterday. — AP

diplomat and permanent representative to the United Nations Bashar Al-Jaafari."

The government's team will also include "figures representing the military and the Syrian judiciary, so that the delegation will represent the whole Syrian state," the newspaper wrote. Chief rebel negotiator Mohammad

Allouh, a leading figure in the Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam) faction, will represent the opposition, according to National Coalition member Ahmad Ramadan. The opposition delegation will include around 20 people, Ramadan told AFP. Rebel groups announced on Monday that they would send a "military

delegation to Astana, as well as legal and political advisors from the High Negotiations Committee umbrella group.

Allouh and Jaafari headed opposing teams at UN-hosted peace talks in Geneva last year, trading accusations throughout the ill-fated negotiations. Jaafari described his rival as a

"terrorist," while Allouh accused the regime of committing "massacres" in Syria.

Fighting despite truce

The talks come a month after the Syrian regime took full control of the country's second city of Aleppo from rebels in its biggest victory in more than four years of fighting. Russia launched a bombing campaign to shore up the forces of long-time ally Bashar al-Assad in September 2015, a move Lavrov hailed yesterday. "We are convinced we acted rightly when we responded positively to the request (to intervene) of Syria's legitimate government... whose capital was two to three weeks away from being seized by terrorists," said Lavrov. Russia and Turkey last month brokered a ceasefire in Syria but without the involvement of the United States, a negotiator in previous truces. The truce went into effect on December 30 and has brought calm to much of Syria although fighting continues in some regions. Nine civilians were killed at the weekend in heavy fighting that erupted near Damascus, jeopardizing the nationwide truce. Government troops also lost ground to the Islamic State jihadist group near the Deir Ezzor military airport in the country's east.

The ceasefire excludes the IS group and its rival the Fateh Al-Sham Front, which changed its name from Al-Nusra Front after breaking ties with Al-Qaeda last year.

If the Astana meetings are successful, they could bode well for a new round of UN-hosted political negotiations on the conflict set for next month in Geneva. More than 300,000 people have been killed and over half of the population displaced in nearly six years of deadly fighting in Syria. Millions have also fled the country. — AFP

MODI URGES CHINESE RESTRAINT AS TRUMP HANDOVER NEARS

NEW DELHI: Growing military ambitions in the Asia-Pacific are creating security risks, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday in a coded message to China to exercise strategic restraint.

Although couched in diplomatic language and not mentioning China by name, Modi's remarks in a keynote foreign policy speech aligned New Delhi with US President-elect Donald Trump's intent to curb Beijing's regional clout. "Rising ambition and rivalries are generally visible stress points," Modi told an audience of politicians and top military brass from 65 nations at a security conference in New Delhi. "The steady increase in military power, resources and wealth in the Asia-Pacific has raised the stakes of security."

The US Republican has, since his shock election victory in November over Democrat Hillary Clinton, called into question the "One China" policy that Washington has adhered to for decades. His pick for secretary of state, former Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson, also told a confirmation hearing that Beijing's militarisation of reclaimed islands in the disputed waters of the South China Sea must be stopped. That is music to the ears of the foreign policy establishment in New Delhi, as are

Trump's tentative - albeit in Washington controversial - overtures towards Russia's President Vladimir Putin, whom Modi yesterday called "an abiding friend".

EMERGING INDIA

Modi was addressing the second annual Raisina Dialogue, a geopolitical gathering in New Delhi sponsored by India's foreign ministry and the Observer Research Foundation, a think tank, that is competing for attention with the higher-profile World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Speaking in Davos, Chinese President Xi Jinping avoided mention of Trump and instead mounted a vigorous defence of free trade that the American president-elect has vowed to roll back to protect US jobs. Although many of the guests in New Delhi were former, rather than current prime ministers, they did include the top US naval commander in the Pacific, Admiral Harry Harris. Modi, elected on a nationalist platform in 2014, called for a rules-based security architecture in the Asia-Pacific that is "open, transparent, balanced and inclusive, and promote(s) dialogue and predictable behaviour rooted in international norms and respect for sovereignty." — Reuters



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) interacts with former prime minister of Australia Kevin Rudd, third right, former prime minister of Canada Stephen Harper (second right) and former president of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai at the inauguration of the second edition of the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi yesterday. — AP

BRAZIL INMATES TAKE OVER JAIL

NATAL, Brazil: Brazilian police fired rubber bullets yesterday at inmates who have taken over a jail where dozens were massacred over the weekend in a string of prison riots.

Police positioned on top of the outer walls of the Alcauz jail near the northeastern city of Natal fired at a crowd of inmates who had taken control of part of the complex. A total of 26 prisoners were killed in Alcauz-many of them beheaded-during a violent riot that broke out late Saturday, according to officials. Police said they had stormed the prison and ended the violence on Sunday morning, but AFP reporters outside the prison said numerous prisoners were still loose within the complex. Dozens of them could be seen massed in the open air between the prison blocks and the outer walls of the complex, where they erected barriers of furniture.

Others stood with flags on the partially-

destroyed roof. The rubber bullets sent prisoners briefly fleeing to hide. It drew screams from a group of female relatives of prisoners who had gathered outside the prison walls.

Third jail bloodbath

The weekend bloodbath was the third mass-killing in Brazil's overcrowded jails this month. Officials blame the wave of violence on a war between drug gangs whose members are settling scores in the country's overcrowded jails. Gruesome violence at a prison in the northwestern city of Manaus killed about 60 inmates on January 1. Many were beheaded and mutilated. A further 33 died in a riot in Roraima state on January 6. In total, 134 people have been killed in prison violence this year, Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper said, citing justice ministry figures. Rights watchdog Amnesty International called for an independent inquiry into the killings. — AFP



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TRUMP'S TALK ON NUKE DEAL 'MAINLY SLOGANS': ROUHANI

TEHRAN: Iran's president yesterday compared talk of renegotiating its nuclear accord to "converting a shirt back to cotton," and said US President-elect Donald Trump's talk of doing so is "mainly slogans."

Trump has strongly criticized the deal struck with world powers, in which Iran agreed to curb its uranium enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief, but has not said what he plans to do about the agreement. Iran's President Hassan Rouhani told reporters that "renegotiation has no meaning at all."

"Mr. Trump has so far made many remarks on the deal," he added. "These are mainly slogans. I do not see it as likely that something happens in practice." He said the deal is beneficial to the United States, but that Trump "doesn't understand this." The agreement also included Russia, China, Britain, France

and Germany. None have expressed interest in scrapping the deal or restoring sanctions.

"There will be no negotiations on the nuclear deal," Rouhani said. "The deal has been finalized and it was approved in the UN Security Council."

Rouhani, a moderate who has advocated greater openness toward the West, is up for re-election in May, in what will likely be seen as a referendum on the nuclear deal. He said the new administration in Washington would have no impact on the vote.

Obama warning

US President Barack Obama on Monday marked the first anniversary of the nuclear deal with Iran by emphasizing its "significant and concrete results" and warning against undoing a pact

supported by the world's major powers. In language that seemed clearly directed at incoming president Donald Trump, who is set to take office on Friday, Obama said "the United States must remember that this agreement was the result of years of work, and represents an agreement between the world's major powers—not simply the United States and Iran."

He said the deal had "achieved significant, concrete results in making the United States and the world a safer place" and "verifiably prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon." Such a diplomatic solution, he added, was "far preferable to an unconstrained Iranian nuclear program or another war in the Middle East."

Trump has often denounced the nuclear deal, and in a Sunday interview

with the Times of London and Bild newspaper of Germany he continued his criticism, saying, "I'm not happy with the Iran deal, I think it's one of the worst deals ever made." But he declined to say whether he intended to "renegotiate" the deal, as he asserted regularly during the presidential campaign.

Obama insisted Monday that despite US reservations about other actions by Iran—including its support for "violent proxies" and "terrorist groups"—Tehran was "upholding its commitments, demonstrating the success of diplomacy." Iran, he said, had "reduced its uranium stockpile by 98 percent and removed two-thirds of its centrifuges." "There is no question, however, that the challenges we face with Iran would be much worse if Iran were also on the threshold of building a nuclear weapon," Obama said.

Secretary of State John Kerry, who helped negotiate the deal, said the Iran agreement had "resolved a major nuclear threat without firing a shot or sending a single soldier into combat." "It was endorsed unanimously by the United Nations Security Council and earned the support of more than 100 countries across the globe," he added. For all of Trump's sharp criticism of Iran and the nuclear deal, the policy he will embrace once in office remains unclear.

One of his top cabinet nominees, retired Marine general James Mattis, said last week that if he is confirmed as defense secretary, he will support the nuclear deal. "When America gives her word," he told senators during his confirmation hearing, "we have to live up to it and work with our allies." —Agencies

IRAQI TROOPS SEIZE HISTORIC MOSUL MOSQUE FROM IS

150,000 DISPLACED SINCE LAUNCH OF MOSUL OPERATION: UN



MOSUL: Iraq's special forces troops advance during a battle against Islamic State militants in Andalus neighborhood in the eastern side of Mosul on Monday. —AP

MOSUL: Iraqi forces have captured the site of the Mosque of the Prophet Younis (PBUH) after driving Islamic State group militants from a new neighborhood in eastern Mosul, a spokesman said yesterday. The progress comes as the UN warned that nearly 150,000 people have been displaced since the Mosul operation started in mid-October. The mosque was among dozens of historical and heritage sites destroyed by IS militants after their June 2014 onslaught.

The site is believed to be the burial place of the Prophet Jonah (PBUH), who was swallowed by a whale in stories from both the Bible and the holy Quran. It was built on an archaeological site dating back to the 8th century BC and attracted religious pilgrims from multiple faiths around the world.

Special forces spokesman Sabah Al-Numan told The Associated Press that security forces found only the fences alongside the ruins. The advance comes as Iraqi forces are pushing IS out of the last neighborhoods in Mosul's east and closing in on the Tigris river that roughly divides the city. While Iraqi forces continue to make territorial gains against IS, Mosul's civilians continue to be killed, wounded and displaced by the fighting.

Walid Mohammed buried his son in a graveyard in eastern Mosul yesterday. The young boy had been killed in a mortar attack earlier this month, but at the time it was too dangerous to travel to the graveyard so Mohammed buried him in a school yard not far from his home. "This is the will of God and his decision, he gave them and he took them back," he said. The UN said in a statement issued late Monday that the Mosul operation continues to inflict high civilian casualties. The UN said more than 1,500 wounded civilians were taken to hospitals in the nearby city of Irbil for trauma care since the operation began in October.

The number does not reflect the estimated hundreds more civilians who receive care at field hospitals in and around Mosul. Iraqi and UN officials believe that one reason so many have been killed and wounded is that IS fighters have targeted civilians trying to flee. The operation has also left more than 148,000 people homeless, according to the statement. Nearly 12,500 people were forced to flee their homes just over the past week, the UN said. More than a million people were estimated to still be living in Mosul in October, when Iraqi forces launched the operation to retake the country's second largest city from IS.

Meanwhile, Iraqi special forces pushed deeper into Islamic State-held districts in eastern Mosul yesterday, and army units battled the militants inside a military base in the north of the city, military officials said. Islamic State has been driven out of most eastern districts of its Iraqi stronghold in the three months since the US-backed campaign began. Iraqi troops have seized large areas along the river, which bisects Mosul from north to south. Capture of the entire east bank, which military officials say is imminent, will allow the army, special forces and elite police units to begin attacks on the city's west, still fully held by the militants.

"Roughly all the eastern axes for which CTS is responsible will be completed and we will announce the liberation of the entire eastern side," he said, but did not specify when. A separate military statement said the CTS had also seized Al-Muhandiseen district, nearly three miles further northwest, a short distance from the river. In a parallel advance, Iraqi army troops in the north of the city moved into the Kindi military base, and were fighting insurgents inside, an army officer said. More than 60 neighbourhoods in eastern Mosul - out of a total of around 80 - had been recaptured since the start of the offensive in October, Numan told state television. —Agencies

ERDOGAN FAULTS DELAYS IN FIGHT AGAINST IS

ANKARA: Turkey's president yesterday criticized delays in the US-led coalition's offensive against the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq, as the extremists pressed ahead with an offensive against Syrian government forces.

Speaking in Ankara yesterday, Recep Tayyip Erdogan said "the operations that are constantly delayed are of no benefit for the well-being of these two countries' people." Erdogan spoke after the capture of an Uzbekistan national who authorities say trained in Afghanistan and carried out a deadly New Year's nightclub attack in Istanbul.

Turkey is a partner in the US-led coalition against IS, which claimed the attack. The extremist group said it was a reprisal for Turkey's campaign to dislodge the militants from the northern Syrian town of al-Bab. Turkey, which for years supported the Syrian opposition drive to oust President Bashar Assad, has recalibrated its priorities toward fighting Islamic State militants and thwarting Kurdish aspirations for autonomous rule along Syria's border with Turkey. Turkish troops

rolled over the border in August to help Syrian opposition forces battle IS and halt the advance of US-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters, who are also fighting the extremists.

But nearly two months into the assault on al-Bab, one of IS' last major strongholds in northern Syria, Turkey has become bogged down in the fighting, which has driven a wedge between Ankara and Washington. Turkish officials say Washington hasn't done enough to support Turkey's operations in al-Bab and has forced Ankara to reach out to Russia for aerial support.

Meanwhile, in Syria's eastern city of Deir el-Zour, fighting between Syrian government forces and Islamic State militants continued for the fourth day yesterday.

IS fighters launched a new offensive to try and capture government-controlled parts of the contested city, also attacking a nearby military air base from several fronts. On Monday, the group made substantial gains near the air base, cutting the government-controlled pocket in half and further tightening the two-year-old siege on parts of the city. The extremist group, which controls



DAMASCUS: In Jan 16, 2017 photo, people carry plastic containers with water in Damascus, Syria. Water cut-offs have been almost continuous since Dec 22, in the worst water crisis known to Damascus residents. — AP

MOUNTING ANGER IN DAMASCUS AMID WIDESPREAD WATER CUTS

DAMASCUS: Omar Tarshan had never visited any of Syria's famous public baths until three weeks ago, when a water shortage in his Damascus neighborhood forced him to look for an alternative place to shower. On Monday night, the 25-year-old accountant came with a colleague, Safwat Hariri, to the 1,000-year-old bath house in the old quarter of Damascus - the Hammam Al-Malik Al-Zahir - where each was given two towels, a loofah and a piece of traditional olive oil soap. Minutes later, they stepped into the bath, enveloped by thick vapor.

The two men share the frustration of many other residents of the Syrian capital, forced to wait in long lines to fill their jerry cans after fighting with rebels in a valley northwest of Damascus cut off the main water line for the city last month. The more affluent, pay tanker trucks to come and fill up their tanks at home.

"We have no water at home and so I discovered the public bath," said Tarshan, a terry cloth wrapped around his waist. The bath house, like others in Syria, has its own well and doesn't rely on the public water network. Since Dec 22, the fighting in Barada Valley has severely restricted the flow of water to Damascus, piling up more hardship on the city's 5 million people already suffering massive power cuts, rising food prices and general erosion in all services as Syria's brutal conflict is about to enter its seventh year.

President Bashar Assad's government forces fighting for control of the opposition-held Barada Valley say the rebels contaminated the area's Ein Al-Fijeh spring with diesel. The rebels say government airstrikes damaged the water source. As insulated as Damascus has been from the effects of the civil war that has torn much of the country apart, the recent water crisis has dominated the talk in much of the city.

Hospitals without water

Residents line up in front of public taps with containers in hand; others crowd around huge water tankers parked in residential neighborhoods. Government-owned tanker trucks ferry water around the clock to hospitals. Prices of bottled waters

have doubled, as the fighting-stricken valley - Wadi Barada in Arabic - is home to some of the country's most famous drinking water companies.

A driver of one of the state-owned tanker trucks filled it up on Monday morning at a public tap in western Damascus, before heading across town to one of the city's main hospitals. "We cannot leave hospitals without water," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he did not have permission to talk to the media.

There are concerns of illnesses spreading because people and restaurants don't have enough water to wash produce and clean utensils properly. Private tanker truck owners are seeing their businesses boom. They sell 1,000 liters (264 gallons) of water for about \$10 - a huge amount of money in a country where many people make no more than \$100 a month.

The manager of the Damascus bath house, Bassam Kubab, said work has more than doubled since the water crisis began. But this has come at a cost to the quality of service, since he cannot afford to hire more staff, it would take too long for them to learn the business and who knows, by then the crisis might be over.

"This increase of work is not in our interest if we are speaking long term," Kubab said as dozens of customers crowded the bath house all at once - each paying \$3.5 to use the showers.

Jihad Al-Masri, a 52-year-old owner of a store that sells clothes, drove after work to a public tap in the western neighborhood of Mazzeh where he filled more than 10 containers to take home for washing dishes and showers. "It has been more than 15 days and we don't have a drop of water," said the father of three girls. Instead of showering every other day, each family member now showers once a week, he said. Sufian Mohammed Sharif came with his son in their pickup truck, packed with all kinds of small and large containers to take to their home in the suburb of Domar. "In the past, we did not think about water ... now it has become a burden, an extra expense and humiliation," said the 55-year-old truck owner. — AP

IRAQIS WHO ESCAPED IS GRAPPLE WITH TRAUMA

DEBAGA, Iraq: While fleeing Islamic State rule in northern Iraq three months ago, Laila saw two of her daughters die in front of her. Crippled by grief and the trauma of that night, she now struggles to walk and hardly eats. Running under the cover of darkness after more than two years under the jihadists' harsh rule in Shirqat town, south of Mosul, Laila's children stepped on a mine. The youngest one died on the spot, covered in blood and partially buried in the dirt.

Her 16-year-old daughter had a leg blown off and lost consciousness. Laila tied the girl's leg with her own headscarf, then carried her on her back for several kilometers to the Iraqi army's frontline.

"I could hear her soul leaving her body, her head on my shoulder," she recounted earlier this month at a nearby camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) where she now struggles with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The battle to retake Mosul, Islamic State's last major stronghold in Iraq, is playing out among the city's nearly 1.5 million residents who have spent 2-1/2 years under the ultra-hardline group's repression.

The militants have employed extreme violence to impose their strict interpretation of Islamic law in territories they seized in 2014, whipping people for smoking, cutting off hands for stealing, stoning women for adultery, and throwing men off of buildings for homosexuality.

Several thousand civilians have been killed or wounded in the street-to-street fighting since the US-backed offensive began in October. Nearby camps are full of civilians displaced from in and around Mosul and many suffer from depression and anxiety disorders, aid groups say. "I feel lost, my life has no meaning anymore," said Laila. "If your car is stolen, you can buy another one. If your house is destroyed you can build another one.

But a life cannot be replaced." She is taking psychotropic medication and attends weekly counselling sessions run by aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), but she says nothing helps. "Treatment cannot heal a heart in pain," she said.

MASS TRAUMA

In a nearby tent at Debaga sits a young mother of three, from another village south of Mosul. She looks about twice her 20 years and speaks in a monotone, rarely making eye contact. It was during their escape last autumn that she went into labor, giving birth to twins. The couple declined to go into details about the circumstances of the birth, but the woman has since been diagnosed with depression and PTSD.

A counsellor says she has struck her husband and tried to kill one of her babies. She also has suicidal feelings but refuses medication. "She is talking to you normally right now, but sometimes she chokes the baby and tells me, 'I don't want him, you take him,'" her husband said. Their names are withheld by Reuters to protect their safety. Their flight is just one of a raft of deeply traumatic events suffered by their family in recent years, and by many others like them. They had not yet fled their village when Islamic State fighters stormed their home, accusing the husband of sedition. A former policeman, he had worked with US forces following the 2003 invasion.

The militants shot in the air around him, then put a machine gun to his head and dragged him off to a mosque where they beat him. Another time, an air strike destroyed a neighbor's house. Their dog picked through the rubble and dragged back human remains. "There were parts left there, a hand or a leg," the woman said. "The dog brought them to our front yard and chewed on them in front of our kids." — Reuters



MOSUL: Um Yousef and her two young daughters recover in an Irbil hospital after they were badly injured in a mortar attack outside their home in Mosul. As Iraqi forces secure a series of swift gains, civilian casualties in the Mosul operation are increasing and doctors at nearby hospitals say they are operating above capacity. —AP



WASHINGTON: A Oct 26, 2016 file photo showing US President-elect Donald Trump greeting his daughter Ivanka Trump during the grand opening of Trump International Hotel in Washington. —AP

'MOMENTOUS CHANGES' PUSH BACK RELEASE FOR IVANKA TRUMP BOOK

NEW YORK: Citing "momentous changes" in her life, like her father being elected president, Ivanka Trump and her publisher are pushing back the release of her book "Women Who Work" from early March to early May. Portfolio, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, has now scheduled a May 2 sale date. Trump began the project when Donald Trump was a still a long-shot candidate for the White House and she completed it before his stunning victory in November. The May publication will include a preface she wrote after the election. Trump's husband, Jared Kushner, is expected to be a top adviser in the new

administration and the family is in the process of moving from New York to Washington. In a statement issued to The Associated Press yesterday, Portfolio said the later release would help "accommodate these momentous changes in Ivanka's life and give her time to settle her children into their new home, schools and city." According to the publisher, the book reflects Ivanka Trump's "continuing commitment to inspire and empower women to define success on their own terms and to create the lives they want to live." She is donating any net proceeds, including her advance, to charity. — AP

TRUMP CALMS TENSIONS AFTER LEWIS SQUABBLE

PRESIDENT-ELECT MEETS KING'S SON

NEW YORK: Donald Trump spoke of national unity to a son of Martin Luther King Jr, seeking to ease friction over the president-elect's squabble with Rep John Lewis, a protege of the slain civil rights leader. "He said that he is going to represent all Americans. He said that over and over again," Martin Luther King III told reporters in the lobby of Trump Tower Monday after a nearly hour-long meeting. "I believe that's his intent."

Trump met with King's son on the holiday marking the life of the assassinated civil rights icon, just days after the president-elect had gone on Twitter to strike back fiercely at Lewis for questioning the legitimacy of the billionaire businessman's election as president. Lewis and the elder King were among the Big Six civil rights leaders of the 1960s. In a post on his Twitter account, Trump had accused Lewis of being "all talk" after the Georgia Democrat said he didn't think Trump had come to the presidency legitimately. Trump also tweeted that the Southern congressman should pay more attention to his "crime ridden" Atlanta-area district.

Trump's comments drew widespread criticism, and have done little to reassure those uneasy about the transition from the Barack Obama, the nation's first black president, to a

president-in-waiting who struggled to connect with many nonwhite voters during the campaign. The younger King downplayed the incident Monday, saying that "in the heat of emotion a lot of things get said on both sides." King, who said he pressed Trump on the need for voting reform to increase participation, called their meeting "constructive." King said that while he disagreed with the president-elect's comments where Lewis is concerned, he believes "at some point in this nation, we've got to move forward."

"I think we also have to consistently engage with pressure, public pressure," King said. "It doesn't happen automatically." Trump, who struggled for support from minority voters on Election Day, briefly joined King in the lobby of Trump Tower but ignored reporters' shouted questions about his comments on Lewis, a civil rights legend in his own right. The congressman said late last week he didn't consider Trump a "legitimate president," blaming Russian interference in the election. Lewis said he would boycott Friday's inauguration. More than two dozen Democratic members of Congress have said they will sit out the Trump swearing-in ceremony. Among them is Tennessee Rep. Steve Cohen, who said Monday "this president 'semi-elect' does not deserve to be presi-



NEW YORK CITY: US President-elect Donald Trump shakes hands with Martin Luther King III after meeting at Trump Tower in New York City on Monday. —AFP

dent of the United States. He has not exhibited the characteristics or the values that we hold dear."

Confirmation hearing

The Martin Luther King holiday is meant to honor community service and volunteerism, and many Americans, including President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama spend part of the day undertaking a service project in their community.

Trump, who canceled a planned trip to Washington, spent the day

inside the Manhattan skyscraper that bears his name. Also this week, Trump's picks for Cabinet posts continue their trek to Capitol Hill to win support from lawmakers considering their confirmation for Cabinet positions.

Yesterday, Republican Rep Ryan Zinke of Montana was scheduled to make his case to be interior secretary. And Betsy Devos, Trump's pick for education secretary, had a confirmation hearing in the evening. Trump's tweets have stirred things up internationally, as well. — AP

POLL: 40% OKAY TRUMP'S HANDLING OF TRANSITION

WASHINGTON: President-elect Donald Trump will take office this week with an approval rating of 40 percent, sharply lower than any incoming US president in recent history, a new poll showed yesterday. The CNN/ORC poll showed Trump lagging more than 20 points behind the ratings of his three most recent predecessors and 44 points below that of President Barack Obama as he prepared to enter the Oval Office in 2009, CNN said.

Trump immediately slammed the poll findings. "The same people who did the phony election polls, and were so wrong, are now doing approval rating polls. They are rigged just like before," he said on Twitter. Forty percent of poll respondents said they approved of the way Trump has been handling the transition period heading into Friday's inauguration, the poll said.

In comparison, Obama had an 84 percent approval rating ahead of his inauguration, Bill Clinton scored 67 percent approval in late December 1992 and 61 percent approved of George W. Bush's transition in poll figures from January 2001, CNN said. Trump, a New York real estate developer working in government for the first time, has presided over a chaotic transition period since his election on November 8. The recent weeks have featured a drawn-out search for top cabinet members, public feuds with the media, unsubstantiated allegations that Russia holds compromising material against Trump, and the president-elect's Twitter blasts against critics ranging from the CIA chief to late-night comedy show "Saturday Night Live."

Young Americans

As Donald Trump approaches his inauguration, young Americans have a deeply pessimistic view about his incoming administration, with young blacks, Latinos and Asian Americans particularly concerned about what's to come in the next four years. That's according to a new GenForward poll of Americans aged 18 to 30, which found that the country's young adults are more likely to expect they'll be worse off at the end of Trump's first term than better off. Such young Americans are also far more likely to think Trump will divide the country than unite it, by a 60 percent to 19 percent margin.

Fifty-two percent of young whites, 72 percent of Latinos, 66 percent of Asian-Americans and 70 percent of blacks think Trump's presidency will lead to a more divided nation. "Minority people are very afraid of all the rhetoric that he ran upon (in) his campaign," said Jada Selma, a 28-year-old African-American graduate school student living in Atlanta. "Anytime he mentioned black people, he would talk about poor people or inner city. He would think that all of us live in the inner city and that we're all poor."

"If you're not a straight white male, than I don't think he's looking out for you as an American," she said.

GenForward is a survey of adults age 18 to 30 by the Black Youth Project at the University of Chicago with the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The first-of-its-kind poll pays special attention to the voices of young adults of color, highlighting how race and ethnicity shape the opinions of a new generation. The poll found that 54 percent of young people overall say life for people of color will be worse with Trump as president. About two-thirds of young blacks, Asian-Americans and Latinos think things will get worse for people of color, and whites are also more likely to expect things to get worse than better for minorities, 46 percent to 21 percent.

Overall, 40 percent of young adults think they personally will be worse off four years from now, while just 23 percent expect to be better off. Young people of color are significantly more likely to think they will be worse off than better off, while young whites are more split in their personal expectations.

Kuinta Hayle, a 21-year-old African-American from Charlotte, said she is worried that Trump's selection for attorney general, Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, could roll back civil rights. She said Trump's foray into "birtherism," during which he propagated the lie that President Barack Obama was not born in the United States, still bothered her.

"That was very meaningful. It still hurts," Hayle said. "He doesn't know anything about my life or the lives of people who aren't like him. I feel Donald Trump is only for rich people. Obama was for people who didn't have much." Although he had a decisive win in the Electoral College, Trump lost the overall popular vote to opponent Hillary Clinton and has done little to reach out to those who didn't support him in November's election. He focused his post-election "Thank You" tour on states he won, settling scores on stage as he boasted about his surprising electoral victory. Over the weekend, Trump tore into Georgia Rep. John Lewis, among the most revered leaders of the civil rights movement, for questioning the legitimacy of his victory and saying he would not attend Friday's inauguration. —Agencies

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NORWEGIANS SHUN BREIVIK HEARING, KILLER'S ONLY VISITOR IS PAID 'FRIEND'

OSLO: Anders Behring Breivik's massacre of 77 people still haunts Norwegians, yet ever fewer care about the neo-Nazi locked in a cell where his only "friend" is paid to visit. Most of the 10 seats in an Oslo court for the public to watch a case about his prison conditions have been empty as Breivik sits glumly in a black suit, the first flecks of grey in his beard, appearing by video-link from a high-security jail.

The Norwegian state is appealing against a lower court ruling in 2015 that it breached a ban on "inhuman and degrading treatment" under the European Convention on Human Rights by keeping Breivik, 37, in near-isolation since the 2011 killings. "He's being for-

gotten, step by step ... People are kind of done with him," said Aasne Seierstad, author "One of Us", a book about the 2011 mass murder, the worst in the Nordic nation in modern times.

It is in stark contrast to his criminal trial in 2012, covered by hundreds of reporters. At that time, Norwegians seemed riveted by his every word, horrified that a man who grew up in a peaceful Nordic society could be so radicalized. "It's not about him any longer," Seierstad said, adding that the focus was ever more on helping survivors and relatives of the dead. But even she was surprised at the lack of interest in him during the Jan 10-18 hearing. In many ways, Norwegians are punishing Breivik by

remembering the crime but ignoring the man, giving up trying to understand his unrepentant self-justification.

Norwegians often talk merely of "July 22", the date of the massacres, or "Utoeya", the island where he shot dead 69 people, many of them teenagers at a camp of the then ruling Labour Party, after detonating a bomb in Oslo that killed eight.

The main group for survivors and relatives of the dead has decided not to comment on this week's case. He won most coverage in Norway on the first day by making a Nazi salute. In the case, Norway argues that it is too risky to allow Breivik contact with other inmates - he might attack them or they might

attack him - and compensates him with a three-room cell with a mini-gym, television, newspapers and PlayStation.

'Stranger and stranger'

Only one visitor calls himself a "friend", a 48-year-old priest who has met Breivik about 90 times and is paid to have free-wheeling talks on subjects chosen by Breivik, such as immigration, racism, fascism or Islam. "It's not exactly a position I applied for," the man told the court, asking that he not be named. The two meet separated by a glass wall.

Breivik, who has spent much of the hearing shaking his head, says he wants contact with inmates to stop a drift to becoming what he called "stranger and

stranger" in his cell 23 hours a day only meeting guards, health personnel and lawyers. He spends much of his time battling dragons in video games, limited to those with a maximum age limit of 16. "A wand isn't realistic violence. The fantasy is unrealistic - there are dragons," Breivik told the court.

Breivik is also studying politics at Oslo University by correspondence. He has mostly got Cs and Bs. He clings to a belief that he is a "commander" on the vanguard of a white supremacist revolution. By contrast, his lawyer, Oeystein Storrvik, encourages modest goals to start meeting other inmates, saying Breivik will never be freed. "Let him play badminton," he suggested. — Reuters

GERMANY'S TOP COURT REJECTS BAN FOR FAR-RIGHT NPD PARTY

'BANNING A PARTY DOES NOT EQUATE TO BANNING AN ETHOS'

KARLSRUHE: Germany's highest court yesterday threw out a bid to ban the far-right NPD party, arguing that the xenophobic fringe outfit is too insignificant to spell a real threat to the democratic order. Federal Constitutional Court top judge Andreas Voßkuhle said "the NPD pursues anti-constitutional goals, but there is currently no concrete evidence... to suggest that it will succeed."

lunge in 2013, seeking to stub out any neo-Nazi influence as Germany was still reeling in shock over the discovery in 2011 of a group calling itself the National Socialist Underground (NSU) that carried out a series of racist killings. But since then, the NPD has lost its remaining seats in state parliaments, retaining just one representative, Udo Voigt, in the European Parliament. It has also lost ground to the anti-euro fringe party

in many municipalities may remain in the democratic spectrum?" he asked.

"This reality-blind and untimely decision sends a disastrous signal to Europe, where far-right and right-wing populists have found new partnerships and are now trying to transform the fear and insecurity of the population into hatred and aggression," he cautioned in a statement. World Jewish Congress President Ronald Lauder agreed, saying that "the situation today may be different, but there is absolutely no reason to be complacent."

But the court said that "banning a party does not equate to banning an ethos or a world view." "The party's battle against the democratic order would need to surpass a threshold" to warrant prohibition, said Voßkuhle, the Constitutional Court's top judge. "There must be a systematic approach aimed at destroying or eliminating the liberal democratic constitution or threatening the existence of Germany," he said, noting that the threat had to be credible.

With an eye cast back at the elimination of dissent in Hitler's Germany, the drafters of the post-war constitution set high hurdles for banning a party. Only two political parties have been outlawed since 1945: the SRP, a Nazi successor party, in 1952, and the West German Communist Party (KPD) in 1956.

'Germany for Germans'

Founded in 1964 as a successor to the neo-fascist German Reich Party, the NPD calls for "the survival and continued existence of the German people in its ancestral central European living space"-or simply, "Germany for the Germans". For the Bundesrat, the group creates a "climate of fear", "shares essential characteristics" with the Nazis and "wants to destabilize and overthrow the liberal-democratic order."

Germany's political landscape has however shifted since 2013. The AfD has relegated the NPD to the fringes, and the populist movement could win seats in parliament at polls later this year-something no similar party has managed since 1945. Many observers say parties such as the NPD must be beaten in the battle of ideas. "It's up to politics and civil society, not the courts," the centre-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily commented. "Hating foreigners cannot be banned, no law can help against radicalization reaching the centre of society." — AFP

'Disastrous signal'

But the International Auschwitz Committee's vice president Christoph Heubner voiced dismay at the ruling, warning that it could spur extremists across Europe to champion more hate. "How can it be that those who cheerfully celebrate the Holocaust and provoke new episodes of hatred



ESSEN: A graffiti showing a crossed out swastika and the lettering "Nazis piss off" is seen on a door of the regional branch of Germany's right-extremist NPD party. — AFP

The request to ban the party "has been rejected," he added of the neo-Nazi group which has around 6,000 members. The case marks the second failed attempt to outlaw the National Democratic Party of Germany, with the latest launched by the Bundesrat upper house of parliament which represents Germany's 16 states. Chancellor Angela Merkel's government supported the case, although the executive did not formally join the legal campaign.

NPD lawyer Peter Richter said that now that the case is over, "we can now really concentrate on our task of contributing to shaping the political will of the people". The Bundesrat had launched the chal-

AfD, which has morphed into an anti-immigration force railing against the mass arrivals of refugees in 2015. Polls now credit the NPD with around 1.0 percent support, compared with 12 to 15 percent for the right-wing populist AfD (Alternative for Germany).



BREST: A picture taken on December 21, 2016 shows a commuter train carrying Chechen asylum seekers leaving the Belarusian border city of Brest for the Polish town of Terespol. — AFP

FLEEING CHECHENS STRANDED AT DOOR

BREST: On a snowy day a commuter train leaves the Belarusian border city of Brest as usual for the town of Terespol in EU member Poland just a few kilometers away. Half the train is made up of regular cross-border travelers, but two carriages are filled with Chechens fleeing to Europe from their homes in the faraway Russian Caucasus region, where authorities have made their lives unbearable as the Kremlin looks away.

Those leaving are often accused of Islamist or anti-regime activities, or have become embroiled in blood feuds. Many victims say they have no idea who is targeting them, or why. Twenty-year-old Maga shows AFP pictures of his back streaked with gashes. His forearms are also covered in scars-injuries sustained from masked men who came without warning, he says. "We don't know who they are. They put a bag over your head, they take you away, beat you and torture you, and we never know for what," Maga said.

He, like other Chechens interviewed by AFP in Brest in late December, asked to be identified with a fictional name out of fear of reprisals from authorities in his native region. Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who has led the majority-Muslim region with an iron fist since 2007, is accused by rights groups of running Chechnya like his personal fiefdom. People's disappearances are widespread as well as allegations of involvement in torture and kidnapping by his unofficial security force, known as the Kadyrovtsy.

Many Chechens trying to escape the tyranny say they are not safe in other Russian regions because Moscow overlooks Kadyrov's abuses, instead hailing him for bringing order to a region ravaged by two separatist wars in the 1990s and early 2000s. Human Rights Watch said, in an August report on Chechnya, that the "increasingly abusive crackdown seems designed to remind the Chechen public of Kadyrov's total control". People are terrified of talking to journalists because of "a climate of fear", it added.

Turned away 44 times

With documents and photos alleging abuse, Chechens were once able to seek refuge in Europe via Belarus, a Moscow ally which does not have a formal border with Russia. But several months ago, Polish border guards began turning most people away, so the Chechens return to Brest by train three hours later.

On the 20-minute ride, Chechen men smoke with trembling hands after Poland allowed only two families and a young man through. "I asked for political asylum, but they wouldn't even look at my documents," said 20-year-old Alan, after his 44th failed attempt. Some have made so many trips they are running out of pages in their passports. Among asylum seekers, some said they were punished in Chechnya for refusing to join Kadyrov's men, including to fight in Syria and eastern Ukraine.

Others are wives and widows caught up in Chechnya's conflict against Islamists. There are also Chechens whose police duties saw their families targeted in blood feuds, and those who crossed or criticised Kadyrov. The Chechen leader has said those trying to leave for Europe are "not refugees" but rather pawns of European security services.

"Some say I wasn't tortured, only beaten with a hose and doused with icy water," said Vyacheslav Panasyuk, a rights activist with Belarusian NGO Human Constanta who has worked in Brest for five months. "They think only electrocution or needles stuck under their nails is torture." Panasyuk estimated there are about 1,000 Chechens stuck in limbo on the border between Belarus and Poland. "They are running for their lives," he said, voicing concern about those who gave up and returned to Chechnya promising him to send word they were okay but never did. "I don't know what happened to them there," he said.

Polish media has reported that 61,000 Russian citizens were refused entry into Poland from Belarus between January and September 2016, compared with 10,000 for the same period in 2015. — AFP



BERLIN: This file photo taken on November 17, 2016 shows German Chancellor Angela Merkel and US President Barack Obama shaking hands following a press conference after their meeting at the Chancellery. — AFP

TRUMP WANTS 'RELATIONSHIP' WITH MERKEL, SAYS ADVISOR

DAVOS: Donald Trump wants a "great relationship" with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, a member of his transition team said yesterday, after the US president-elect sparked anger with criticism of her and NATO. Anthony Scaramucci, a hedge-fund investor who is representing the Trump team at the World Economic Forum in Davos, said the next US president was a "man of peace" who "recognises the importance of the long-term alliances that we've got with Europe".

But he acknowledged that Trump is also seeking to build bridges with Russian President Vladimir Putin, moving on from hostilities over the war in Syria, Ukraine and allegations of state-sponsored cyberattacks.

"He wants to have a great relationship with Angela Merkel as he does with President Putin," Scaramucci told reporters in the Swiss resort of Davos, where 3,000 members of the political and business elite are gathered for annual talks.

"I don't see him as somebody who wants to have a bad relationship with people and he certainly doesn't view Europe as weak. "In the next six months, in the next year, the relationship between the United States and Europe will be stronger than ever," Scaramucci said. But he added: "I think he said something that you guys should listen to-that we have to make sure that our structures, our alliances or charters are in preparation for the 21st and

22nd century, not the 20th century." Trump unleashed a volley of attacks on Europe in a hard-hitting interview with two European newspapers on Sunday, branding NATO "obsolete" and saying more countries would leave the European Union after Britain.

The Republican billionaire, who takes office Friday, also criticised Merkel's "catastrophic" decision to open Germany's borders to hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants. Despite a backlash in Europe over the comments, Scaramucci said the interview reflected Trump's "authenticity", adding: "You should find this refreshing and not alarming. He is open with his views." — AFP

TAJANI POISED TO LEAD EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

STRASBOURG: Italy's Antonio Tajani, an ally of former premier Silvio Berlusconi, moved closer to being elected the new European Parliament president yesterday after two key groups formed a "pro-European" alliance against rising populism. The vote for the new chief of the EU's only elected assembly will be closely watched in European capitals, including London, as it the parliament that will have a final say on any eventual Brexit deal.

The 63-year-old centre-right politician comfortably won the first round of voting with 274 ballots but failed to secure a majority in the 751-seat parliament based in Strasbourg, France. The silver-haired Tajani is a former European commissioner who has faced criticism over the Volkswagen "Dieselgate" emissions scandal and previously served as spokesman for scandal-plagued Berlusconi.

If confirmed, he will replace Germany's Martin Schulz, a socialist who during five years in office made the office of European Parliament president far more prominent than it had ever been before. Early yesterday the head of the parliament's Liberal group, former Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, pulled out of the race and threw his support behind Tajani, the candidate of the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) grouping. "It is absolutely necessary. With Trump, with Putin, with many

other challenges Europe faces, it is key we cooperate to reform our union," said Verhofstadt. The deal secures Verhofstadt's important role as parliament's chief negotiator in talks over Britain's departure from the European Union. EPP party chief Manfred Weber said: "Our partnership is based on content and on reforms for Europe."

'Grand coalition' breaks down

The coalition agreement struck between the two groups calls for a European defense force at a time when US President Donald Trump has cast doubt on the future of the EU-led NATO alliance. It also calls for the European Parliament to have "full involvement" in the negotiations over Britain's exit from the EU after its shock referendum vote in June last year.

The new alliance comes after a decades-old "grand coalition" between the centre-right and the socialists-under which they rotated the post of parliament chief between them-broke down. Socialist candidate Gianni Pittella, another Italian, got 183 votes. Pittella said he will not accept an EPP "monopoly" of the EU's top jobs — held by EPP members Jean-Claude Juncker, the European Commission president, and Donald Tusk, the head of the European Council. — AFP

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HOMELESS IN WINTRY INDIA SHIVER IN BUSES

MUMBAI: Buses and portable cabins are doubling up as shelters for the homeless in northern India amidst a cold snap that has killed at least a dozen people, highlighting a critical lack of affordable housing, campaigners said yesterday.

There are nearly 1 million urban homeless in India, according to official data, although charities estimate the actual number to be three times higher. The urban homeless population rose by a fifth in the decade to 2011, as thousands migrated from villages in search of better prospects. Every year, hundreds die from exposure to the cold or heat on city pavements or station platforms. "Shelters are important, and we must ensure there are enough of them, but they are only a temporary solution," said Shivani Chaudhry, head of advocacy group Housing and Land Rights Network in Delhi.

"We need to address the structural issues for a

long-term solution: affordable housing for everyone," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The Supreme Court in 2010 ordered one homeless shelter for every 100,000 people in 62 major cities, with facilities including drinking water, subsidised meals, bedding and lockers. But few states have complied.

In Delhi, there are 263 shelters for more than 200,000 homeless people. Temperatures fell to as low as 2.6 degrees Celsius (37°F) last week, and residents complained about a lack of hot water, inadequate toilets and rats in shelters. A Delhi civic official said facilities were being improved, and that free healthcare and skills training was being provided.

The city has also launched a mobile app that enables people to alert officials to people on the street at night. "We have enough shelters as per

the guidelines, but we are aware there are still people sleeping on the streets," said Bipin Rai at the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board. "We also recognise that shelters are only a temporary arrangement and what is really needed are hostels and cheap rental housing," he said.

Blankets, mattresses

India has unveiled a plan to provide housing for all by 2022, creating 20 million new units and rehabilitating existing slums. But the slow pace of implementation is leaving thousands homeless as pavement dwellers are evicted. In the high-tech hub of Gurgaon, about an hour's drive from Delhi, civic officials are using portable shelters and have fitted out six buses with mattresses and blankets to take in about 400 homeless people at night.

In Mumbai, which has some of the most expen-

sive real estate in the world, the homeless are particularly vulnerable during the monsoon rains, which can last up to four months.

For its more than 57,000 homeless people, the city has nine shelters, less than a tenth of the mandated number. "We have funds to run shelters, but where is the space in the city?" said Pallavi Darade, a civic official. "We are looking to have 20-25 shelters, and our focus is ensuring street children have a safe place to sleep in."

Charities and start-ups are stepping in with innovations including weatherproof tents that can be set up on pavements. But what's also needed is the political will to find solutions, including social rental housing, said Chaudhry. "We pay greater attention to homelessness in the winter, but more people die in the summer. They deserve our attention every day," she said. — Reuters

FOREVER A MYSTERY? MH370 SEARCH ENDS AFTER 3 YEARS

'SEARCH HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO LOCATE THE AIRCRAFT'

SYDNEY: The nearly three-year search for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 ended yesterday, possibly forever - not because investigators have run out of leads, but because the countries involved in the expensive and vast deep-sea hunt have shown no appetite for opening another phase.

Late last year, as ships with high-tech search equipment covered the last strips of the 120,000-square kilometer search zone, experts concluded they should have been searching a smaller area immediately to the north. But by then, \$160 million had already been spent by Malaysia, Australia and China, who had agreed over the summer not to search elsewhere without pinpoint evidence. The transport ministers of those countries reiterated that decision yesterday in the joint communique issued

search for MH370 has been suspended. The decision to suspend the underwater search has not been taken lightly nor without sadness.

Relatives of those lost on the plane, which vanished during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014, responded largely with outrage. A support group, Voice 370, issued a statement saying that extending the search is "an inescapable duty owed to the flying public." Without understanding what happened to the plane, there's a "good chance that this could happen in the future," said KS Narendran, a member of the group.

But last year, Australia, Malaysia and China - which have each helped fund the search - agreed that the hunt would be suspended once the search zone was

Review of the data

For the families of the aircraft's 227 passengers and 12 crew members, that's a particularly bitter prospect given the recent acknowledgment by officials that they had been looking for the plane in the wrong place all along. In December, the transport bureau announced that a review of the data used to estimate where the plane crashed, coupled with new information on ocean currents, strongly suggested that the plane hit the water in an area directly north of the search zone.

Officials investigating the plane's disappearance recommended that search crews head north to a new 25,000-square-kilometer area identified in a recent analysis as where the plane most likely crashed. But Australia's government rejected that

frustrating," said Grace Nathan, a Malaysian whose mother was on board Flight 370. "It continues to be frustrating and we just hope they will continue to search. ... They've already searched 120,000 square kilometers. What is another 25,000?"

Investigators have been stymied again and again in their efforts to find the aircraft. Hopes were repeatedly raised and smashed by false leads: Underwater signals wrongly thought to be emanating from the plane's black boxes. Possible debris fields that turned out to be sea trash. Oil slicks that contained no jet fuel. A large object detected on the seafloor that was just an old shipwreck.

In the absence of solid leads, investigators relied largely on an analysis of transmissions between the plane and a satellite to narrow down where in the world the jet ended up - a technique never previously used to find an aircraft.

Based on the transmissions, they narrowed down the possible crash zone to a vast arc of ocean slicing across the Southern Hemisphere. Even then, the search zone was enormous and located in one of the most remote patches of water on earth - 1,800 kilometers (1,100 miles) off Australia's west coast. Much of the seabed had never even been mapped.

For years, search crews painstakingly combed the search area in several ships, largely pinning their hopes on towfish, small vessels equipped with sonar that sent information back to the boats in real-time. The ships slowly dragged the towfish through the ocean just above the seabed, hoping the equipment would detect some trace of the plane. Unmanned submarines were used to examine areas of rougher terrain and objects of interest picked up by sonar that required a closer look. The search zone shifted multiple times as investigators refined their analysis, all to no avail.

Ending the search

Some began to question whether the plane had gone down in the Southern Hemisphere at all. Then, in July 2015, came the first proof that the plane was indeed in the Indian Ocean: A wing flap from the aircraft was found on Reunion Island, east of Madagascar. Since then, more than 20 objects either confirmed or believed to be from the plane have washed ashore on beaches throughout the Indian Ocean. But while the debris proved the plane went down in the Indian Ocean, the location of the main underwater wreckage - and its crucial black box data recorders - remains stubbornly elusive.

If the plane is never found, the reasons for its disappearance and crash will probably never be known, though Malaysia has said the plane's erratic movements after takeoff were consistent with deliberate actions. The sister of the pilot, Captain Zaharie Ahmad Shah, slammed authorities for ending the search without settling the mystery, saying her brother will not be absolved of suspicions he deliberately crashed the plane. "How can they end the search like that? There will be finger-pointing again," Sakinah Shah said. — AFP



MANILA: This file photo taken on June 2, 2016 shows National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) negotiating panel Fidel Agcaoili gesturing during a press conference. — AFP

PHILIPPINE COMMUNIST REBELS WARN PEACE UNLIKELY SOON

MANILA: Philippine communist rebels waging one of Asia's longest insurgencies said yesterday a peace pact was likely not achievable before 2019, in a blow to the government's hopes of securing a deal this year. Ahead of fresh peace talks starting in Italy on Thursday, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines also warned that forces on the ground were urging an end to a ceasefire as they became frustrated with the government's "broken promises".

"The NDFP goes into the third round of formal talks in Rome determined as always to persevere with the peace talks but increasingly troubled by the other party's sincerity," the communists' chief negotiator, Fidel Agcaoili, said in a statement. The communists have been waging their "national democratic revolution" since 1968 to overthrow a capitalist system that has created one of Asia's biggest rich-poor divides.

At least 30,000 people have died in the conflict, according to the military. President Rodrigo Duterte, who describes himself as a socialist, has made ending the rebellion one of his top priorities. He launched the peace process soon after he took office in June last year and installed three communists in his cabinet. Both sides agreed to a temporary ceasefire during the first round of talks in Norway last August.

The government said then it was aiming for a final peace deal within 12 months. But Agcaoili said the communists would need at least two more years after negotiators agreed on a series of economic and political reforms before even beginning "serious discussions" on a final peace pact. Those economic and political reforms have yet to be agreed, and are meant to be discussed in Rome. Meanwhile, familiar grievances that derailed peace efforts under previous Philippine presidents appear to have returned to haunt the current negotiations.

'A poker game'

The communists have long demanded that hundreds of jailed communists be released before they will consider making major concessions in peace talks. Duterte released 18 top leaders to kickstart the peace process but the communists are demanding another 434 rebels be freed immediately. Duterte said last month he did not want to release the rebels straight away, describing the negotiations as a "poker game". "My aces are in prison," he said, referring to the jailed communists. "If I released them all my cards would be lost. There would be nothing else to talk about." The government's chief negotiator, Silvestre Bello, gave a more upbeat assessment of the peace process when contacted by AFP on Tuesday for reaction to Agcaoili's statement. He said the government was still sticking to its timeframe to secure a peace deal of between nine and 12 months from the start of the talks in August last year. — AFP

PAKISTANI MOTHER SENTENCED FOR HONOR KILLING

LAHORE: A mother who murdered her own daughter and set her alight for marrying the man of her choice has been sentenced to death, officials said yesterday, in a case that had revolted many in Pakistan. Zeenat Bibi, aged 16, was doused with kerosene and set alight in June last year in Pakistan's teeming cultural capital Lahore, a little over a week after she wed 20-year-old motorcycle mechanic Hasan Khan against her family's wishes.

A judge in an anti-terror court in Lahore sentenced her mother Perveen Bibi to death on murder and terrorism charges, prosecutor Mian Mohammad Tufail told AFP. She was charged under Pakistan's terrorism laws rather than newly-reformed criminal legislation against honor killings because of the use of kerosene in the murder, Tufail said.

Bibi also received a 14-year jail term and was fined one million rupees (\$9,300) under separate counts related to the killing. Her son Mohammad Anees was jailed for life and fined 1.5 million rupees for his role in the killing, Tufail said. Bibi's son-in-law, the husband of another daughter, was acquitted, he said. Zeenat's vicious murder sent shockwaves across Pakistan and triggered fresh calls for action against so-called "honor killings".

Hundreds of women are killed by their relatives each year after allegedly bringing shame on their families in the deeply conservative Muslim country. Under previous legislation the culprits-usually men-could get away with the killings after being pardoned by members of their own family. But in July last year the high-profile murder of social media star Qandeel Baloch, whose brother confessed to the killing, reignited calls for reform. In October parliament passed a law aimed at removing the ability to forgive "honor" killers. But critics contend some loopholes still exist. Khurram Khan, chief prosecutor, confirmed the sentences. — AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: This file picture taken on March 6, 2015 shows a board bearing solidarity messages during a gathering to mark the one-year anniversary of the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370. — AFP

by the Joint Agency Coordination Center in Australia that announced the search for Flight 370 - and the 239 people aboard the aircraft - had been suspended.

'Inescapable duty'

"Despite every effort using the best science available, cutting-edge technology, as well as modeling and advice from highly skilled professionals who are the best in their field, unfortunately, the search has not been able to locate the aircraft," said the agency, which helped lead the hunt for the Boeing 777 in remote waters west of Australia. "Accordingly, the underwater

exhausted unless new evidence emerges that pinpoints the plane's specific location. More than after of those aboard the plane were Chinese.

Since no technology currently exists that can tell investigators exactly where the plane is, that means the most expensive, complex search in aviation history is over, barring a change of heart from the three countries. There is the possibility that a private donor could offer to bankroll a new search, or that Malaysia will kick in fresh funds. But no one has stepped up yet, raising the bleak possibility that the world's greatest aviation mystery may never be solved.

recommendation, saying the results of the experts' analysis weren't precise enough to justify continuing the hunt.

"Whilst combined scientific studies have continued to refine areas of probability, to date no new information has been discovered to determine the specific location of the aircraft," the transport ministers of the three countries involved said in their statement yesterday. The lack of resolution has caused agony for family members of the flight's passengers, who have begged officials to continue the hunt for their loved ones. "The whole series of events since the plane disappeared has been nothing but

TAIWAN SIMULATES CHINA ATTACKS AS TENSION RISES

TAIPEI: Taiwan began two days of military drills yesterday simulating an attack by China as the government sought to reassure the public in the face of deteriorating relations with Beijing. The island's armed forces gathered in central Taiwan for annual drills that saw troops practice combat skills with tanks, attack helicopters and artillery.

"The military has active measures to deal with the situation in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea so the public can rest assured. We will enhance training 365 days a year," defence spokesman Chen Chung-chi said. Beijing considers Taiwan to be a breakaway province and part of "one China" to be brought back within its fold, by force if necessary.

China has stepped up drills in recent weeks after being angered by an unprecedented call between Taiwan's Beijing-skeptic President Tsai Ing-wen and United States president-elect Donald Trump. The US switched its diplomatic recognition of China from Taipei to Beijing in 1979. Trump has also riled Beijing by suggesting the "one China" policy could become a bargaining chip in negotiations over trade practices.

'National security'

The US is Taiwan's most powerful ally and arms supplier. Yesterday's drill mimicked an attack by China in a scenario where its war vessels have crossed over the middle line of the Taiwan Strait. Soldiers held positions next to a US-made Avenger air defense missile system during the drill in central Taichung city as Special Forces moved in formation through woods and a tank set off smoke bombs and crushed a car.

It comes after Beijing's only aircraft carrier sailed through the strait last week in what was seen as a show of strength. The Liaoning did not enter Taiwanese waters but went into an area covered by its air defense zone. Chinese military aircraft also passed near Taiwan on December 10 for the second time in less than a month. In addition to the drills, the air force confirmed yesterday an upgrade of Taiwan's 143 F-16s was under way, with materials supplied by US aerospace company Lockheed Martin which manufactured the jets.

"Taiwan is the first country in the world to upgrade the F-16 A/B fighters to F-16 V. We are enhancing our aerial capabilities to



TAIWAN: A Taiwan soldier operates home-made Tien Chien surface-to-air missiles during an annual drill. — AFP

ensure national security," an air force official told AFP.

The government-funded project, codenamed "Phoenix Rising" has a budget of Tw\$110 billion (\$3.47 billion) and aims to be complete within the next six years. Defense minister Feng Shih-kuan has said the F-16 V could match China's Chengdu J-20 stealth fighter, although Chinese

media have dismissed this as an "illusion." The jets will be equipped with radar to detect stealth aircraft, as well as more advanced avionics and missiles, according to local media.

Minister Feng recently warned of growing threats from China and called for increased vigilance, urging the island's youth to join the military. — AFP



ISTANBUL: A handout picture taken and released yesterday by Turkish Police shows an unidentified man who was arrested during a police raid in the Esenyurt district of Istanbul, in which a 34-year-old Uzbek man, the suspect in the nightclub attack, was also arrested. — AFP

TURKEY CAPTURES NIGHTCLUB GUNMAN...

Continued from Page 1

Neighbors in the modern, five-storey apartment building where he was found said they had never met him, although they had seen the African women who lived with him. A woman living directly below told Reuters the apartment had previously been lived in by seven or eight Syrians, who left late last summer.

Masharipov first rented an apartment in Basaksehir, another outlying Istanbul district, before switching addresses a day or two before the attack, the Istanbul governor said. The Hurriyet newspaper said he was married with two children, was a dual Uzbek-Tajik national and spoke Russian, Arabic, Chinese and Turkish, as well as Uzbek. He received two years training in Afghanistan and Pakistan and was believed to have entered Turkey via Iran, it said.

His wife was detained last week in a raid in Maltepe, a coastal district on the Asian side of Istanbul, and their one-and-a-half year-old daughter was taken into care, Hurriyet said. "We said our goodbyes and he left the house (on the night of the attack)," it quoted her as saying in a statement to police. About 50 people have been detained in raids on 152 addresses since the shooting. Investigators analysed 7,200 hours of camera footage in the search and police received more than 2,000 tip-offs, Sahin said.

"I congratulate our police who caught the perpetrator of the Ortakoy massacre," Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus, who is also the government spokesman, said on social network Twitter.

"Our war with terror and the powers behind it will continue to the end," he said. On Jan 1, the attacker shot his way into the nightclub and opened fire with an automatic rifle. He reloaded his weapon several times and shot the wounded as they lay on the ground.

Turks as well as visitors from several Arab nations, India and Canada were among those killed in the attack. NATO member Turkey is part of the US-led coalition against Islamic State and launched an incursion into neighboring Syria in August to drive the radical Sunni militants, and Kurdish militia fighters, away from its borders. The jihadist group has been blamed for at least half a dozen attacks on civilian targets in Turkey over the past 18 months. But, other than assassinations, the new year attack was the first it has directly claimed.

The shooting in Istanbul's Ortakoy neighborhood, an upscale district on the Bosphorus shore, followed a year in which Turkey was shaken by a series of attacks by radical Islamist and Kurdish militants and by a failed coup. President Tayyip Erdogan has said the attack, which targeted a club popular with local celebrities and moneyed foreigners, was designed to divide the largely Sunni Muslim nation. — Reuters

SAUDI GOVT COULD SHELVE \$13.3BN PROJECTS...

Continued from Page 1

The report said about 20 percent of Saudi Arabia's long-term projects pipeline of \$820 billion, or \$168 billion worth of projects, could be at risk of being cancelled because of the reprioritization program.

"2017 will see at least a 50 billion riyal cut-back due to the reprioritization program because of fiscal pressures and realigning the project pipeline to national priorities," Clifton said in an emailed response to questions. "I don't expect 2017 to be very easy" for construction firms, he said. "Backlogs are shrinking and staff have been laid off. I think 2017 is still a 'batten down the hatches' kind of year, and 2018 is very much the year to commence recovery."

The Makkah Metro award is "highly likely" because it is a priority project with a strong business case, Clifton said, adding that he believes the main question is how the project will be financed.

"The question really remains around the potential to switch the scheme from central government funding to a type of PPP (public-private partnership) model or bringing other forms of finance to the table, for example main contractor funding."

The value of Saudi contract awards has varied widely year-on-year over the past eight years as state spending ebbed and flowed, with a peak in 2011 of \$75.9 billion,

according to the firm's data.

Following the sharp drop in oil prices, the government and private companies have taken a much more conservative stance. "I expect social infrastructure to be prioritized along with significant alternative finance investment opportunity within the power and water sectors, which are intrinsically linked in the Middle East due to the power-hungry requirement to desalinate water," Clifton said.

The report said the risk facing the government's long-term projects could be mitigated by the planned creation of a projects oversight body. Under this plan, the National Project Management Office (NPMO) and governmental Project Management Offices (PMOs) will be tasked with controlling government project funds and reducing inefficiencies.

"If this implementation generates time and cost savings of 10 percent, the government could negate the \$168 billion of projects at risk through efficiencies," the report said. Clifton said he expected an NPMO management contract to be awarded in the first quarter of 2017 and the design program and rollout to take another 12 months. Under the government's economic development plans, vanity projects are being separated from essential schemes, Clifton said. He cited the cancellation of 10 football stadiums that Saudi Aramco had been tasked with developing in major cities around the country. — Reuters

MAY SIGNALS CLEAN BREAK WITH EU

Continued from Page 1

"Brexit must mean control of the number of people who come to Britain from Europe. And that is what we will deliver," May told foreign ambassadors in London. "What I am proposing cannot mean membership of the single market."

European Union president Donald Tusk said her speech gave a "more realistic" picture of what London wanted. "Sad process, surrealistic times but at least more realistic announcement on #Brexit. EU27 united and ready to negotiate after Art 50," Tusk tweeted.

Britain has two years to negotiate a break-up deal once May triggers Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, officially declaring the country's intention to quit, or face leaving with no agreement. May said London could accept departing on such terms if Brussels played hardball, but it would hurt the EU more than it would damage Britain.

"No deal for Britain is better than a bad deal for Britain," she said. May has promised to trigger Article 50 by the end of March, and said she was confident that final settlements could be negotiated within the two-year timeframe.

Seeking to calm fears of a sudden jolt to the economy on abruptly leaving the EU in 2019, May said she would seek a "phased process of implementation".

EU countries accounted for 44 percent of Britain's total exports in goods and services in 2015, with the country recording a £68.6 billion (\$82.7 billion, 77.9 billion euros) trade deficit with the bloc.

The British currency has endured a rocky ride since the June vote, but sterling responded strongly to May's speech, wiping out losses earlier in the week to stand at \$1.2340.

"The prime minister has adopted a more pragmatic approach to Brexit than expected, providing some much needed relief for the pound," NFS Macro analyst Nick Stamenkovic said. Naem Aslam, chief market analyst at ThinkMarkets, added: "The markets are going to be very

much volatile in the weeks ahead.

"Just fasten your seatbelts." HSBC analysts Simon Wells and Liz Martins wrote: "Prepare for a 'hard' Brexit".

May hinted that Britain might undercut the EU economically it faces the imposition of trade tariffs. Excluded from the single market, May said London would be free to "set competitive tax rates" and "change the basis of Britain's economic model," she said.

"There are some voices calling for a punitive deal that punishes Britain and discourages other countries from taking the same path. "That would be an act of calamitous self-harm for the countries of Europe."

Anand Menon, a European politics professor at King's College London university, said May had "resorted to threats." "It might be precisely to keep the EU together that EU leaders agree to pursue a harsh approach," he told AFP.

Scotland's nationalist First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said May's speech had made Scottish independence more likely. "The UK is heading for a hard Brexit, which threatens to be economically catastrophic," she said.

The British government "cannot be allowed to take us out of the EU and the single market... without Scotland having the ability to choose between that and a different future."

May said Britain voted to leave because Europe had not been flexible enough for voters on key issues, but Britain nonetheless wanted the EU to succeed, not unravel. She said Britain would remain a key intelligence and security partner in Europe, as she couched her speech as repositioning Britain as an outward-looking global trading player. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said May had "finally brought a bit more clarity." "We also want as good, close and trusting a relationship as possible and hope for constructive negotiations with this goal," he said. Britain's Supreme Court is due to rule later this month on whether May must seek parliamentary approval before triggering Article 50, which could delay the start of negotiations. — AFP

ASSEMBLY PANEL APPROVES MEDICAL CHARGES...

Continued from Page 1

A number of MPs have already signed a demand to hold a special debate on the demographic structure and the debate is likely to be held next month.

In another decision, the legal committee approved a draft law that calls to change the controversial voting system while keeping the number of electoral districts. Head of the committee MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said the draft law was submitted by five lawmakers and the committee only cleared the bill from any constitutional hurdles. It will now go to the interior and defense committee for final approval before going to the National

Assembly for a vote.

The main amendment to the existing law is raising the number of candidates a Kuwaiti voter can pick up in parliamentary election from one currently to two candidates.

The voting system has remained a highly controversial issue since late 2012 when the government unilaterally changed the system reducing the number of votes a voter can cast from four to one. The decision was rejected by the opposition which boycotted two parliamentary polls before returning in November last year. Opposition MPs have said they will do whatever it takes to raise the number of votes.

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Focus

DUTCH VOTE TO SET
OFF 'SUPER ELECTION
YEAR' IN EUROPE

By Jan Hennop

Dutch voters head to crunch parliamentary polls in two months' time, heralding the start of a "super election year" in three of Europe's leading economies: The Netherlands, France and Germany.

After the surprise Brexit result in Britain and as Donald Trump's inauguration looms on Friday in the United States, the spotlight is shifting to the continent's future political landscape. "It's going to be something of a 'super election' year in Europe," said University of Amsterdam political analyst Claes de Vreese.

"There will be a lot of focus on these elections," he said. On March 15, some 12.6 million Dutch voters will be eligible to cast ballots to usher in a new parliament, prime minister and government. It will be the first in a string of elections held against a backdrop of growing anti-EU sentiment and fears over Europe's largest wave of immigration since World War II which have emboldened far-right parties.

The anti-Islam Freedom Party (PVV) of Dutch MP Geert Wilders is riding high in the polls, with latest figures showing it may grab the lion's share in the 150-seat lower house harnessing between 31-37 members of parliament. "It could very well be that Wilders' party becomes the largest after the elections," political analyst Andre Krouwel said. "But I don't think Wilders will end up in government, because it's clear that nobody in The Hague wants to govern with him," he said.

No Rutte-Wilders match

As the countdown began here and the gloves came off, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said Sunday there was "zero chance" that his Liberal Party (VVD) — running second in the polls-would agree to govern in a coalition with Wilders. A firebrand politician with a trademark peroxide hairdo, Wilders was convicted of discrimination in December over statements he made about Moroccans living in the country.

In his election manifesto, Wilders vowed to shut mosques, ban the Holy Quran, close the country's borders and take The Netherlands out of the European Union, the very institution which it helped found. Rutte told the NOS public broadcaster that the PVV leader's comments vowing fewer Moroccan immigrants were "at odds" with Dutch values and he would not govern with him. "It's not going to happen," he said.

He may still be wary of Wilders. Rutte's first minority cabinet collapsed in 2012 when Wilders withdrew his party's support in parliament. Analysts believe the fractured nature of Dutch politics means the next government will also likely be a coalition-with perhaps as many as five parties.

Most probably it would include Rutte's VVD, the centre-right Christian Democratic Appeal and the progressive D66 party "with two or more of the smaller Christian parties," predicted Krouwel from the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam.

People's revolt?

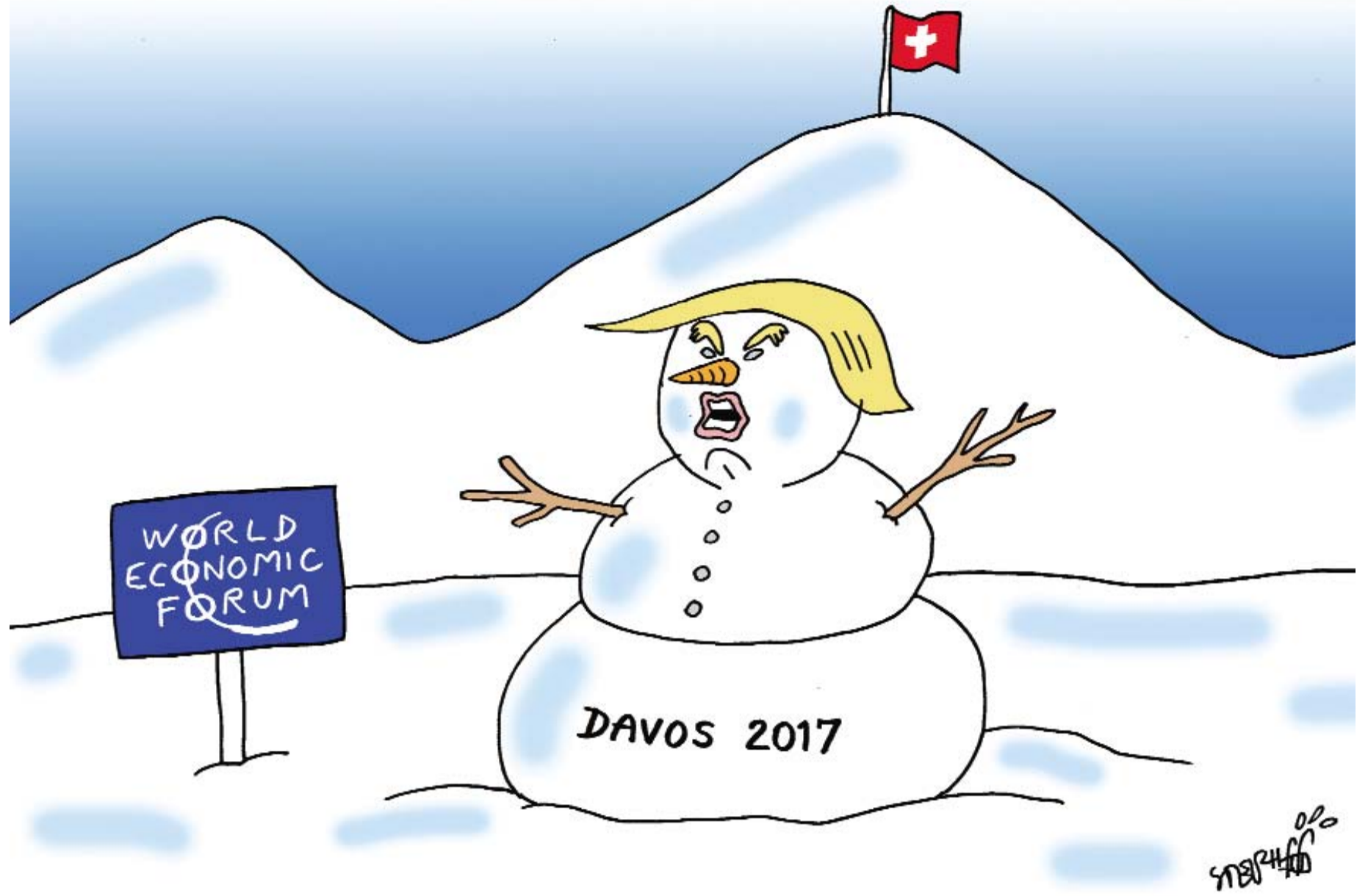
The Dutch vote will be followed just a month later by the first round of the French presidential elections on April 23. French polls show the first round shaping up as a three-way contest between conservative ex-premier Francois Fillon, far-right leader Marine Le Pen and centrist ex-economy minister Emmanuel Macron.

A Fillon-Le Pen runoff in May is seen as the most likely scenario. And after the summer, Germany will vote for a new parliament, with anti-immigrant party Alternative for Germany (AfD) polling at around 15 per cent. Europe's far-right parties have been boosted by the Brexit vote and Trump's unexpected election win, De Vreese said.

But he said there were "different reasons" for each party's success. "We should guard against a meta-narrative where each vote for a non-mainstream party is seen as one-and-the-same-they-are-not," he cautioned. "Of course it fits really well into their (Wilders and Le Pen's) narrative, but it's dangerous to call it a 'people's revolt' against the establishment."

Should far-right leaders consolidate gains "you'll have a transatlantic alignment of populist leaders in real power," Krouwel said. "Trump will then no longer be in isolation. They will work with him and that will have an impact on all kinds of treaties, including the Paris climate accords," he told AFP. "There will be real political consequences." Ko Colijn, senior researcher at The Hague's respected Clingendael Institute think-tank said far-right victories in The Netherlands, but particularly in France, would likely usher in closer co-operation with both Trump and Russia. — AFP

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CHINA'S XI TAKES SPOTLIGHT AT DAVOS

By Gillian Wong and Pan Pylas

Communist China is taking the world's most elite annual gathering by storm. President Xi Jinping leads a Chinese delegation of over 100 officials and scores of business executives attending the World Economic Forum, embodying a tectonic shift at an event that started nearly a half-century ago among Europeans and Americans.

Xi's opening plenary address to political and business leaders was shaping up as perhaps the highlight both of this year's WEF and Xi's one-country European visit to ultra-stable and chronically neutral Switzerland. It came as mainstream Western democratic leaders have been grappling with populist movements at home, including the one that helped undergird Donald Trump's US presidential election victory.

Trump's clique plans to have only one top adviser, Anthony Scaramucci, attending the forum ahead of Friday's presiden-

tial inauguration.

Such transitions have given an opening for Xi, who arrived by train in the Alpine snows of Davos to a red-carpet welcome Monday, to project political stability while drumming up business for China.

The bumpy run-up to the Trump administration - Trump's poll numbers are low for an incoming president - has given the Chinese leader a convenient opportunity to advance his goal of giving his country a more assertive leadership role on the world stage.

China previously sought to capture the mantle as a supporter of world trade after Trump said he would pull the United States out of the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal championed by President Barack Obama. Chinese media have trumpeted Xi's moves in the global arena as a force for stability. But analysts say he isn't likely to address Trump straight on.

"People will be asking, 'Will he say any-

thing about Trump?'" Steve Tsang, director of SOAS China Institute in London, said. "He would want to play his cards close to his chest at this stage. It would not make sense for him to say anything about Trump at the moment."

Francois Godement, head of the Asia and China program at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said the Chinese are "extremely careful about what they say about the incoming Trump presidency."

"I think right now they must be very busy watching and wondering what will come next," Godement said. "But I have no doubt that he (Xi) will try to portray China as open, corporatist, stable, predictable, reliable on a number of global issues. Even if he doesn't cite the Trump administration, he'll try to project a contrast." Xi is the first Chinese head of state to visit Davos, and he will be trailed by four government ministers.

Russia also will be represented, with two deputy prime ministers and dozens

of business leaders attending the gathering. When the first Davos conference took place in 1971, it was all about European leaders trying to tap into US business acumen.

Speaking on Monday before the conference's official opening, WEF Founder Klaus Schwab said this year's event is "not just a Western meeting." One-third of the participants are from the emerging world - including the largest-ever delegations from China and India, Schwab said.

In today's era of populism, a presence at uber-elite Davos can be a bit unseemly for Western leaders.

"Bear in mind that elites, bankers and top businessmen are not usually popular with voters in democracies, so I can see that democratically elected leaders don't rush to show themselves in Davos," Godement said. "Whereas, more authoritarian regimes, they believe in business....So they think of Davos as an arena for influence for the people who matter," he said. — AP

OBAMA LEAVES SYMBOLIC LEGACY IN AFRICA

By Stephanie Findlay

It was always going to be hard for outgoing US President Barack Obama to live up to expectations in Africa. Born to a Kenyan father who once herded goats, the first black US president was seen as Africa's prodigal son who would understand the continent in a way white presidents never could.

Nelson Mandela said Obama's historic victory was proof everyone should "dare to dream" and Africans gave the new president a hero's welcome. Six months after taking office in 2009, Obama travelled to Ghana to lay the foundations for future policies that emphasized responsibility and trade.

"Africa's future is up to Africans," he said in a speech in the country's capital of Accra. "Africa doesn't need strongmen, it needs strong institutions," he added, referring to the countless leaders who cling to power and enrich themselves in countries where poverty is rampant.

The speech electrified the crowd but the thrill wore off. The trip was his last visit to Africa in his first term. He took a different approach in his second term, launching his signature Africa initiative in 2013 after a visit to Robben Island, the apartheid-era prison outside Cape Town that held Mandela for more than 20 years.

His Power Africa program to double access to power in sub-Saharan Africa was designed to bring governments and the private sector together. "That's a big part of his legacy, to change that perception that Africa is not the dark continent, it is rising and there is opportunity there," US-Africa specialist Scott Firsing told AFP.

"Obama changed aid to trade," added Firsing, from the University of North Carolina.

Growing terror threat

Obama, who has said that one of his greatest achievements in office was "taking out" Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, also took the fight against rising Islamist extremism to Africa. He ordered an expanded military presence against Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali, Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Shabaab in Somalia. Drone bases were set up in Niger, which borders both Mali and Nigeria, and northern Cameroon, while there were targeted strikes in Somalia. "Frankly the US military didn't have much cause to focus on Africa, but now, unfortunately, there is cause to be there," said the former head of US Africa Command, retired general Carter Ham.

The breakdown in Libya following the death of strongman Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 saw weapons and radicalized fighters spread across Africa. "There clearly was a follow-on effect that was detrimental," said Ham, who led the initial military intervention against Gaddafi.

Tackling the threat was a priority for Obama, he said, adding: "I think he was genuinely concerned for stability and security in Africa. If left unaddressed it was only a matter of time before those organizations would fulfil their stated intention of attacking the West."

Shabaab gunmen confirmed those fears in 2013 when they killed at least 67 people at Nairobi's Westgate mall, a favorite shopping destination for Westerners.

'Transcendental awareness'

Obama's tenure has by no means been perfect. His administration faced heavy criticism for supporting countries such as Ethiopia with poor human rights records. Sometimes he misjudged the mood. Senegal cheered in 2013 when its president Macky Sall rebuffed Obama for hitting out at discrimination against gays.

And detractors say Power Africa is also falling short of its goals. Obama is generally seen as having advanced US interests in Africa and deepened relationships, not least by continuing his predecessors' flagship projects. George W Bush's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is credited with having given life-saving treatment to millions of people.

Bill Clinton's African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has boosted trade with sub-Saharan Africa.

Bur arguably Obama's most enduring legacy is his example. "Having a leader like him has an important psychological effect on Africans," said Mzukisi Qobo,

associate professor of politics at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. "Despite his weaknesses and shortcomings, there is a sense of pride in seeing someone like Obama. He seemed to have a more transcendental awareness of the challenges of the world rather than looking at it through a white Western lens."

In Accra in 2009, Obama declared he had "the blood of Africa" within him. Last month, Ghanaians remembered his words when president John Dramani Mahama lost an election to opposition leader Nana Akufo-Addo. The vote was hotly contested but generally peaceful. Mahama conceded and the transition was smooth, just as in Nigeria, when Muhammadu Buhari beat incumbent Goodluck Jonathan in 2015.

"I remember Obama's famous speech 'we don't need strongmen,'" said 28-year-old Daniel Apau Ofori as he celebrated outside Akufo-Addo's house. "It had an impact. This has been the most free and fair election." — AFP



WASHINGTON: US President Barack Obama plays with children on a swing donated by the first family at the Jobs Have Priority Shelter in Washington, DC yesterday. —AFP

RANIERI HOPING CHELSEA WIN TITLE

LONDON: Leicester City manager Claudio Ranieri is hoping fellow Italian Antonio Conte wins the English Premier League title with current leaders Chelsea. Ranieri led Leicester to a shock triumph in the competition last year but they are languishing 15th in the 20-team standings, 31 points adrift of his former club. "As former Chelsea coach and as an Italian supporter, I hope that Conte can achieve the goal," Ranieri told reporters in Florence yesterday ahead of the Italian Hall of Fame. "(Conte) came without uproar but demonstrated that the Italian school of coaches is valid more than ever," he added. Ranieri, who led Leicester to the English title for the first time in their history, is contracted to the midlands club until 2020 but he is not sure about his future. "I hope to remain in England, I'm good here, even though in football one day you are in the stars and the next day in the dust, so never say never," the 65-year-old said. — Reuters



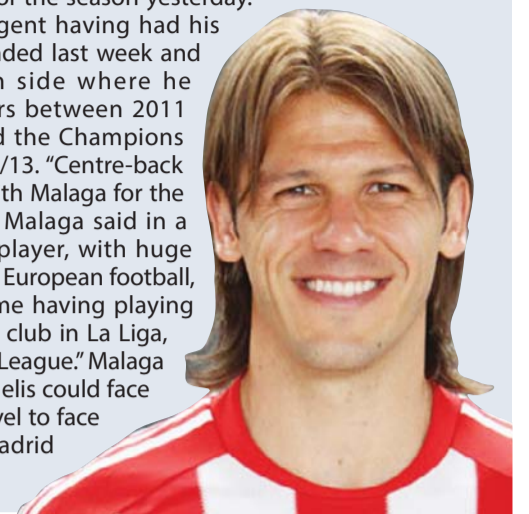
FA MULLS RETROSPECTIVE BANS FOR DIVING: REPORT

LONDON: The Football Association (FA) is considering introducing retrospective bans for players who dive, according to a media report. Diving came under the spotlight yet again after Hull City's Robert Snodgrass won a spot-kick during a 3-3 draw against Crystal Palace last month and later conceded that the penalty should never have been awarded.

The FA will send officials to Scotland to see how the punishment works there, according to the Times. "On the face of it, it's a good idea. The devil is in the detail, but as a tool to penalise blatant simulation versus 'did he dive or slip?' it is now being investigated," the newspaper quoted an unnamed FA official as saying. "It is being discussed with the SFA (Scottish Football Association) and some FA people are going up to Scotland for a meeting on how it is working." Premier League managers, including Burnley's Sean Dyche and West Bromwich Albion's Tony Pulis, have called for retrospective bans to eradicate diving. — Reuters

VETERAN DEMICHELIS REJOINS MALAGA

MADRID: Argentine international Martin Demichelis rejoined Spanish La Liga side Malaga till the end of the season yesterday. Demichelis, 36, was a free agent having had his contract with Espanyol rescinded last week and returns to the Andalusian side where he enjoyed two successful years between 2011 and 2013 as Malaga reached the Champions League quarter-finals in 2012/13. "Centre-back Martin Demichelis will play with Malaga for the rest of the 2016/17 season," Malaga said in a statement. "The Argentine player, with huge experience at the elite level of European football, joins Malaga for a second time having playing more than 100 games for the club in La Liga, Copa del Rey and Champions League." Malaga sit 14th in La Liga and Demichelis could face a daunting debut as they travel to face European champions Real Madrid on Saturday. — AFP



LA EYES TWO-STADIUM OPENING CEREMONY

LOS ANGELES: 2024 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles would feature a groundbreaking opening ceremony using not only the Memorial Coliseum but also a new state-of-the-art NFL stadium. The group backing Los Angeles' bid announced Monday they believe the plan, which would be a first for the Games, would attract "the largest in-stadium, citywide and TV audiences in Olympic ceremonies history." The proposed plan would feature a program at the Coliseum which hosted the opening and closing ceremonies for the 1932 and 1984 Olympics and is located within the city limits of Los Angeles to begin the Games with a torch relay, live entertainment and musical performances. The torch relay would then make its way to Inglewood, in suburban Los Angeles near its international airport, which is being referred to as Los Angeles Stadium even though it isn't within the city limits. The formal opening ceremony would be held at the newer stadium, a \$2.6-billion venue that will be the home of the NFL's Rams and Chargers starting in 2019.

The Coliseum would host the official closing ceremony, while Los Angeles Stadium will simultaneously host spectators for live viewing and entertainment. "Hosting Olympic ceremonies across two iconic stadiums has never been done.

But LA's wealth of stadiums and technology mean we can think about 'What's next?' instead of just asking what has been done before," LA 2024 chief executive Gene Sykes said. It comes after some members of the Los Angeles City Council expressed concern about too many events, in particular opening and closing ceremonies, being moved out of the city limits.

At a City Council ad hoc committee meeting last month, Councilman Paul Krekorian said moving too many Olympic venues outside the city limits would change the "value equation" of the Games for the council, and in particular said he hoped no one "was even thinking" about moving the opening and closing ceremonies to Inglewood.

The plan announced on Monday appears to be a compromise. The Coliseum is still slated to host track and field events for the Games, as it did in 1932 and 1984.

Both Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and Council President Herb Wesson expressed support for the split ceremony plan. Los Angeles is vying with Paris and Budapest to host the 2024 Games, with LA and Paris widely seen as the front-runners. The International Olympic Committee will make its decision in September at a meeting in Lima. — AFP

HARTLEY FACES SIX NATIONS FITNESS TEST

LONDON: England captain Dylan Hartley will undergo a 'trial match' today in a bid to find out whether he can lead the reigning Grand Slam champions into next month's Six Nations. The Northampton hooker is currently serving a six-week ban for striking. England coach Eddie Jones has made it clear he does not want the New Zealand-born front row player in the Anglo-Welsh Cup when Hartley's suspension expires and that means his skipper won't have played since December 9 when France arrive at Twickenham on February 4 for a Six Nations opener. Northampton will put Hartley through his paces today in a bid to replicate the demands of an international match. "Dylan has a game simulation, so we'll have a pretty good idea how he's shaping up then," Jones said.

"He'll do a session that's the equivalent of a game. A game of Test rugby is approximately 36 minutes of ball in play. You have to run around 120 metres per minute, that's the average speed. It's old school-run hard, get up, get off the ground, run again. It will give us a very good indication of where Dylan is and his ability to play rugby," the Australian coach added. "He's got to be able to do a session of that quality and if he can do a session of that quality he can do a game.

"We'll make a decision on him on today, one minute after he's done the session because we're going to name our squad on Friday. Hartley, whose poor disciplinary record has seen him miss more than a year of

rugby because of several suspensions, was red-carded for swinging an arm at Sean O'Brien just six minutes after coming on in Northampton's European Champions Cup loss to Leinster on December 9. Jones, however, said the break had done Hartley good in terms of his overall conditioning.

"I've never seen Dylan look fitter. You'd want him to have been playing rugby, but he's certainly benefited from six weeks of strength and conditioning," he said.

"That's probably put him in better condition than he was for last year's Six Nations. It's a combination between Northampton's and our staff," England, who have won all 13 of their Tests since Jones took charge after the 2015 World Cup, have injury doubts over several players. But Hartley's fellow forwards Joe Marler and George Kruis could both be available for the visit of France.

Harlequins prop Marler is recovering from a fractured leg while lock Kruis, who plays for English and European champions Saracens, is on course to face the French following a fractured cheekbone.

"Marler might be all right for the France game, you never know. He's down at Brighton, they have good sea air down there so the recuperation can be quicker," Jones said. "Kruis is going to be borderline for the France game. It's just the way the cheekbone is. You can have a broken cheekbone and play the next day or you can have an operation and it will be three or four weeks. It's just how they mend." — AFP



Ted Ligety

LIGETY, SVINDAL MISS SKI WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS WITH INJURY

GENEVA: Two of skiing's biggest stars will miss next month's world championships because of season-ending surgery. Ted Ligety of the United States and Aksel Lund Svindal of Norway - each with five career world titles - both announced in Instagram posts on Tuesday they will now focus on returning for next season.

Ligety's persistent back problem has denied him a chance to win a fourth straight giant slalom title. He is expected to have surgery imminently.

"Unfortunately surgery (microdiscectomy) means my season is over and a chance to defend my GS title again at World Champs," Ligety wrote on his Instagram account early yesterday.

The 32-year-old American's five world titles include three in giant slalom from 2011, '13 and '15. The next world championships will be Feb. 6-19 in St. Moritz, where Ligety won in February 2014 in the last World Cup race before the Sochi Olympics.

Svindal posted a photo from a hospital bed, four days after he left Switzerland ahead of the classic downhill in Wengen to seek treatment on the right knee he seriously injured a year ago.

"Together with the medical team I took the decision to do another surgery," Svindal wrote. "What they found was a meniscus that was no longer attached to the bone." A new setback for the 34-year-old Norwegian follows a fast return to form in his comeback.

PAINFUL

He took top-three finishes in downhill and super-G races in Val d'Isere, France, and Val Gardena, Italy. The bumpy Italian race is known for being physically demanding. "Ever since the Val Gardena downhill I've had a strange feeling in my knee," Svindal wrote. "Meniscus not attached means no function, and no function means every landing on a jump and every hit to the knee is painful."

Confirming he would not ski again this winter, Svindal added: "Sounds familiar. But if it can be better next year, it's more than worth it." Svindal won the last of his world titles in 2013, in downhill in Schladming, Austria. He also took a bronze in super-G behind Ligety.

Ligety expects to compete next season and defend his Olympic giant slalom title at the Pyeongchang Games.

"I will be back strong and fast again," wrote Ligety, who also won Olympic gold in the combined at the 2006 Turin Games. Ligety started only five World Cup races this season in his return from tearing right knee ligaments in January 2016. His best finish was fifth in the season-opening giant slalom in Soelden, Austria, before being slowed by the back problems.

"Since Soelden, I have been dealing with severe nerve pain down my left leg that has not allowed me to ski at the level that I expect of myself," he said.

Ligety's last race on Dec. 18 ended quickly when he skied out from a GS in Alta Badia, Italy, where he earned two of his 25 career World Cup wins. "I've been getting injections and trying to get it sorted out but it hasn't really turned the corner yet," Ligety said in Alta Badia. "Backs and nerve issues are not like a knee that's cut and dry and you know what you need."

If Ligety, a five-time crystal globe winner as World Cup giant slalom champion, returns to action in Soelden in October, it will be exactly two years since his last victory. — AP

JONES REPLACES WARBURTON AS WALES CAPTAIN FOR SIX NATIONS

LONDON: Alun Wyn Jones has replaced Sam Warburton as Wales captain for the upcoming Six Nations Championship, the Welsh Rugby Union announced yesterday.

"It's an honour to select Alun Wyn as captain," said Wales interim head coach Rob Howley as he announced a 36-man squad for the Six Nations.

"His vast experience, as a player and a leader will help drive this squad forward and I believe he will flourish in the role.

"Sam has led Wales more times than any other captain and had great success in the role, however we want him to concentrate on his game and to be the best player he can be," former Wales scrum-half Howley added.

Warburton, who led Wales in a record 49 Tests since taking charge in 2011, has struggled with a shoulder injury in recent months and doubts have arisen as to whether the Cardiff flanker should be guaranteed a spot in Wales's first-choice back-row.

No such debate exists around the right of 31-year-old Ospreys lock Jones, a veteran of 105 Tests, to a second row position. Nevertheless Warburton was included in the Six Nations squad announced by Howley.

Justin Tipuric impressed at openside flanker during Wales's 2016 end-of-year Test campaign, with Ross Moriarty also staking a claim to an international place.

WORLD CUP AGONY

Warburton first led Wales as a 22-year-old in June 2011 and skippered his country to the semi-finals of that year's World Cup in New Zealand only to be sent off in their narrow last-four defeat by France in Auckland.

He was also Wales' captain when they won the Six Nations with a Grand Slam in 2012 and again when they retained the title a year later.

Warburton led Wales at the 2015 World Cup, where they beat hosts England in the pool phase before losing to South Africa in the quarter-finals. Jones has previously captained Wales five times and also led the 2013 British and Irish Lions in their series-clinching third Test win against Australia in place of injured tour skipper Warburton.

Several uncapped players were selected in Wales's Six Nations squad by Howley at the helm while Warren Gatland concentrates on his role as Lions coach for this year's tour of New Zealand including Wasps flanker Thomas Young and Leicester back Owen Williams.

Young, the son of Wasps director of rugby and former Wales prop Dai Young, has been in fine form for the English club during their quest for domestic and European silverware so far this season. Williams, set to move to Leicester's English Premiership rivals Gloucester, gives Wales an additional goalkicking option as well as cover at both fly-half and centre. Wales, second last season behind Grand Slam champions England, begin their 2017 Six Nations campaign away to Italy in Rome on February 5.

"I believe we have named an exciting and experienced squad for what is going to be a thrilling RBS 6 Nations Championship," said Howley. "There is a flavour of freshness too in the squad, with seven uncapped players deserving their opportunity, and it will be exciting to see how they perform in the international set-up." "It is shaping up to be another great Six Nations.

"We have the all-important carrot of Rugby World Cup seedings on the horizon post-tournament and that is an important target for us, especially as we welcome the world's number two (England) and number four (Ireland) ranked sides to the Principality Stadium over the coming months." — AFP



SYDNEY: In this Saturday, July 6, 2013 file photo, British and Irish Lions' Sam Warburton, left, and Alun Wyn Jones, right, lift the Tom Richards Cup after their win over Australia in final match of their 3-game rugby union test match series in Sydney, Australia. Sam Warburton has conceded the captaincy of Wales to lock Alun Wyn Jones for the Six Nations, it was announced yesterday. Warburton stepped down to get his form in order after a run of injuries. — AP



Dylan Hartley

INDIA STARTS BUILDING WORLD'S BIGGEST STADIUM

AHMEDABAD: India has started building the world's biggest cricket stadium that will accommodate 110,000 spectators and cost around \$100 million.

Since the capacity of Kolkata's Eden Gardens was reduced as part of a major rebuilding project, Melbourne Cricket Ground has held the title of the sport's largest stadium with seating for around 100,000.

But speaking at a ground-breaking ceremony on Monday in western Gujarat state, officials said a new stadium in the city of Ahmedabad would be able to welcome 110,000 people.

Gujarat Cricket Association vice president Parimal Nathwani put the overall cost of the project at seven billion rupees, saying the venue would house other facilities. "The stadium will have 76 corporate

boxes, four dressing rooms, a clubhouse and an Olympic-size swimming pool," Nathwani was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India news agency.

The complex, to be built over the next two years, will also have three practice grounds and an indoor cricket academy.

It is on the site of the recently demolished Sardar Patel Gujarat Stadium, which could hold around 50,000 spectators.

India, the world's top-ranked Test team, has more than a dozen stadiums capable of holding international cricket matches.

The completed stadium is expected to be the home of the Gujarat Lions, one of the eight teams in the Indian Premier League Twenty20 tournament.

Gujarat are also the current holders of the Ranji Trophy, India's state championship. —AFP

DE VILLIERS OPTS OUT OF TESTS IN NEW ZEALAND

JOHANNESBURG: South African batting star AB de Villiers said yesterday he had decided not to make himself available for a Test series in New Zealand in March but stressed that he had not retired from Test cricket. De Villiers, who turns 33 next month, said his main goal for the rest of his career was to lead South Africa at the 2019 Cricket World Cup in England.

"We haven't won a World Cup yet," said De Villiers, who is captain of the South African one-day team. "For me, for now the most important thing is the 2019 World Cup. I want to make sure we get there. I want to make sure we lift that trophy. I feel that if I play all formats all the time, then mentally and physically I won't be at my best." Speaking at a launch for a one-day series against Sri Lanka, De Villiers said he was available for five one-day games in New Zealand next month but would return home before the first of three Tests starts on March 8.

De Villiers is recovering from a long-term elbow injury which has kept him out of action since July. He is due to make a low-key comeback in a one-day match for the Northerns provincial team on Sunday.

But he said he had recovered fully and would play in the third of three Twenty20

internationals against Sri Lanka in Cape Town on January 25 before captaining South Africa in a five-match one-day series against the Sri Lankans.

"I am really excited to get going," he said. Haroon Lorgat, chief executive of Cricket South Africa, said he hoped De Villiers would be available for four Test matches in England starting in July. "I've been engaged with him for some time and we've given him the latitude of taking time off and setting himself for the 2019 World Cup," said Lorgat.

"We're taking it one series at a time. I'm confident that by the time we get towards looking at England and the Champions Trophy (in June), he'll be fully fit and raring to go. His appetite would have returned because then it would be a fair amount of time he has had. I'm confident England is a kind of series that he would want to be available for."

De Villiers, who has made 8074 runs in 106 Tests at an average of 50.46, was named as Test captain after the resignation of Hashim Amla last January. But after his injury kept him out of series against New Zealand, Australia and Sri Lanka, he gave up the Test captaincy in favour of former schoolmate Faf du Plessis. — AFP



Joe Root

ROOT READY TO CAPTAIN ENGLAND SHOULD COOK QUIT

NEW DELHI: England's Joe Root has said he is ready to take on the mantle of Test skipper should Alastair Cook decide to relinquish the captaincy.

Root, part of the England limited-overs squad currently in India, has been widely tipped to take over the Test reins if Cook decides to stand down after five years at the helm.

Calls for a change of leadership gained ground after England suffered a 4-0 drubbing in the Test series against India at the end of last year, with Cook going on to say that Root was "ready" for the job. "I'd like to think so," Root told the English media in Pune when asked whether he was ready to captain England in Tests. "I've got a lot of experience behind me now in Test

cricket, and I feel that I would have something to offer. But hopefully it won't come to that. Cooky's a great leader. We'll see what happens," said Root. The 26-year-old batsman has represented England in 53 Test matches, scoring 4,594 runs at an average of 52.80.

Cook, 32, is to meet England's director of cricket Andrew Strauss on Friday but he is unlikely to make an immediate call on his future as the team's next Test assignment is not until July when they play South Africa. Root, who was England's highest run-getter in the five Tests against India, said he had spoken to Cook after the tour but only regarding parenting after he also became a new father.

"I've spoken to Cooky a couple of times but

it's been about how the baby is doing and whether we needed any help so he's been good in that respect," said Root.

"I'm clueless as to what's going on and I just hope he makes a decision he's happy with. He needs space. "As a player I really would like to see him continue as captain because he's a great leader and he can take this team forward," he added. Root top-scored for England with 78 in the first ODI on Sunday before sparkling centuries from Kohli and Kedar Jadhav enabled India to chase down their target of 351 with 11 balls to spare. England, led by limited-overs captain Eoin Morgan, are scheduled to play two further ODIs and three Twenty20s internationals in India. — AFP



MUMBAI: In this Friday, March 18, 2016 file photo, South Africa's AB de Villiers bats against England during their ICC World Twenty20 2016 cricket match at the Wankhede stadium in Mumbai, India. AB de Villiers will sit out South Africa's Test cricket series in New Zealand but the batsman insists he has no intention of retiring from the longest format of the game. —AP

AUSSIERS HIRE SPIN GURUS AHEAD OF INDIA TOUR

SYDNEY: Former Indian bowler Sriram Sridharan will work with Australia as a "spin consultant" on the upcoming tour of India, Cricket Australia announced yesterday.

Sridharan played eight one-day internationals for India and toured with Australian squads in Sri Lanka and India last year. "He knows our players very well and has a wealth of knowledge on the conditions that our players will face in India," said team performance manager Pat Howard.

Australia have named four spinners in the squad to take on top-ranked India in the series that begins in Pune on February 23. Uncapped Mitchell Swepson, 23, joins Nathan Lyon, Ashton Agar and Steve O'Keefe.

Monty Panesar, the former England spinner, who played three Test tours of India for 28 wickets, has also been recruited by Australia to impart his knowledge of sub-continent pitches.

Panesar, who was one of England's 2012 winning tourists in India, will spend a week in Brisbane with the Australians as they seek to bolster their chances of winning their first match in India since 2004. —AFP

LE CLEAC'H HOLDS OFF THOMSON AS VENDEE FINISH NEARS

PARIS: Despite the valiant attempts of Alex Thomson to reel him in, Frenchman Armel Le Cleac'h appeared headed for victory yesterday in the Vendee Globe solo round the world race with 600 nautical miles to go.

Thomson, in his Hugo Boss, has been shaving down his rival's lead in recent days and Sunday set a 24-hour speed record for distance covered in a single hulled yacht in 24 hours, skimming across 536.81 nautical miles of ocean at an average speed of 22.36 knots.

But Le Cleac'h has steadied his Banque Populaire VIII and held a lead of 74.9 nautical miles as both raced towards the French coast. Organisers expect the race winner to cross the line between 0700 and 1500 GMT tomorrow.

With the wind having dropped, the Frenchman was still under pressure to keep the dogged Thomson at bay as they steered towards the English Channel, where northeasterly winds awaited, at an average 17 knots.

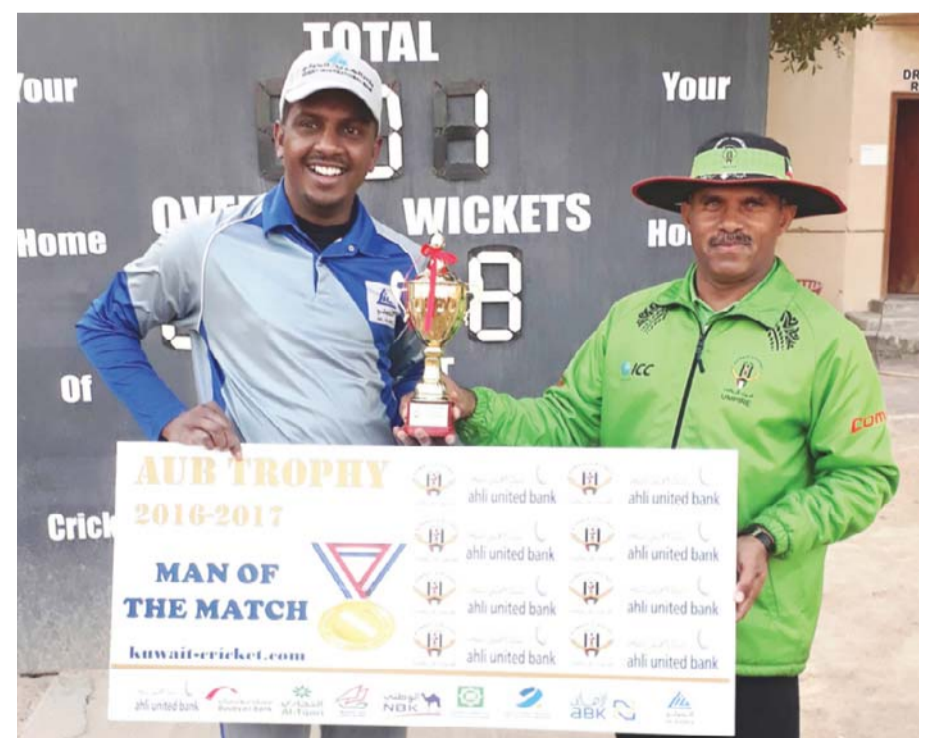
Thomson has been fighting to close the gap for 45 days since Le Cleac'h end-

ed his brief spell at the head of the race.

But the chances of his actually becoming the first Briton to win look slim given that the distance he has to make up exceeds 10% of the total remaining distance. Le Cleac'h is straining to go one better than two runner-up showings and those who know him think he will not let the chance of glory slip.

"They don't call Armel The Jackal for nothing. He is a few miles ahead and I think he won't let our British friend pass," said Conrad Colman, standing 10th with Foresight Natural Energy.

"Alex is plugging away and coming back very strongly but I think that Armel has what it takes to defend his lead," added Fabrice Amedeo, 11th in Newrest-Matmut. "It'll be tight-but he will hold on." With the winner expected to finish between 0700 and 1500 GMT on Thursday, a new record for the race will be set. If the winner finishes before 1202 GMT then he will come in just under 74 days at sea. In any case, both leaders are set to smash Francois Gabart's 2012-2013 record mark of 78 days 2hr 16min. —AFP



KIB CRICKET TEAM SCORES VICTORY AGAINST GULF BANK IN AUB TROPHY

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank's cricket team recently won their match against Gulf Bank in the AUB Trophy tournament, scoring the victory by 26 runs.

After winning the toss, KIB opted to bat first, scoring 124 runs in their allotted 20 overs. KIB's Mohammed Rilwan was a highlight of the game, scoring 33 runs,

and earning the title "Man of the Match" for his all-rounder performance.

While defending the target of 125 runs, KIB bowlers exerted pressure on Gulf Bank from the beginning and played with confidence and a fierce competitive spirit.

KIB's Manoj Mishra proved to be the star bowler, grabbing 4 wickets. The rest

of the team bowlers played an equally impressive game, with Mohammed Ziyauddin taking 2 wickets, and Sheraz Siddiqi and Mohammed Rilwan taking one wicket each. The bowlers were well supported by the team's fielders, who succeeded in making two remarkable speedy catches.

Congratulating the team on their win, the KIB's Management wished the cricket team plenty of more victories to follow in their upcoming games of the season.

KIB is a keen advocate of promoting a culture of sports internally amongst its staff, and the bank has established a number of sports teams, featuring a number of

talented and highly skilled athletes. The bank's leading social responsibility program focuses on raising awareness within the local community of the importance of sports and physical activity in all its forms, actively encouraging people across Kuwait to adopt healthier and more active lifestyles.

KIPCHOGE IN AUDACIOUS BID TO BREAK 2HR MARATHON MARK

ELDORET: Kenya's Olympic and two-time London marathon champion Eliud Kipchoge will skip the world championships this year in a bid to break the mythical two-hour barrier for the long-distance event.

The 32-year-old Kenyan is one of three top runners selected by American sportswear giant Nike to make the marathon record attempt later this year. Kipchoge believes this may happen as early as May, offering no further details on where or how the race would be held. "I am proud to be part and parcel of this Nike Breaking2 project ... I am going to break the two-hour mark in

May," Kipchoge told AFP in Eldoret, the high-altitude city in western Kenya used as a training centre for many long-distance runners.

"Many people have expressed doubts whether it would be logical to achieve this sooner than later, but I believe that it is all possible if we train hard and put all our focus on it." In 1908, Irishman Johnny Hayes won the first marathon set at the modern distance of 42.195 kilometres (26.219 miles) in a time of 2:55:18. In the 109 years since, the record has crumbled to 2:02:57, run by Kenyan Denis Kimetto in 2014.

Kipchoge, a former world 5,000m

champion, ran the world's third fastest marathon time of 2:03.05 when he successfully defended his London marathon title last April.

But the two-hour barrier has never been broken and has become the next big challenge for the event's elite racers.

'AUDACIOUS' BID

Respected track and field magazine Runners World has predicted that, based on data analysis, the barrier would only be broken in 2075, and called Nike's bid "audacious".

Nike is taking everything that is known about nutrition, training and bio-

mechanics, and some of the world's best runners—all from East Africa—in order to break the record.

However the brand has only been able to choose runners it sponsors, thus excluding current world record holder Kimetto who is sponsored by Adidas.

Kipchoge says he plans to forgo an attempt for a third successive London marathon title in April, as well as the IAAF world championships in the British capital in August, in order to concentrate on the sub-two hour attack.

The two other Nike-sponsored runners earmarked in the attempt are Ethiopia's former Boston marathon win-

ner Lelisa Desisa and veteran Eritrean distance runner Zersenay Tadese.

Their goal is to run 1:59.59 or faster, meaning a startling pace of 4min 34sec per mile. "Based on what is presently known, whoever breaks the 2hr barrier will have a favourable genetic profile (yet to be determined), an outstanding running economy and small body size along with chronic exposure to high altitude and significant physical activity early in life," Nike wrote on its website dedicated to the challenge.

"Current trends also suggest that an East African will be the first to break the 2hr barrier." — AFP

EWAN BEATS 'STINKING' HEAT TO GRAB TOUR LEAD

ADELAIDE: Rising Australian sprinter Caleb Ewan defied a heatwave to claim the opening stage of the UCI season-opening Tour Down Under in the South Australian wine-growing town of Lyndoch yesterday.

Ewan, 22, surged in the last 200 metres to hold off Dutchman Danny van Poppel and Ireland's Sam Bennett and win the 118-kilometre stage in three hours, 24 minutes and 18 seconds.

The Orica-Scott rider will wear the ochre leader's jersey into Wednesday's second stage over 148.5km from Stirling in the Adelaide Hills to the town of Paracombe.

Officials had earlier decided to shorten the stage from 145 kilometres as temperatures climbed above 40 Celsius during the race. "It was really stinking hot out there today," Ewan said. "I think everyone felt the heat. It was a good idea for the race to be shortened because we were just rolling around out there in the sun and it can't be too good for you."

"I'm just happy to get that win. It was a really close one in the end." The race started in the inner-city Adelaide suburb of Unley with the temperature already reaching 39 Celsius. Belgian rider Laurens De Vrees launched an early attack but in the scorching conditions as the peloton let him go with no one will-

ing to join him at the front.

De Vrees opened the gap to four-and-a-half minutes at one point but the lead was soon brought back to under two minutes, which remained constant for most of the race. The Astana rider had been finally swallowed up by the peloton with 19km to go. Another Belgian, Jan Bakelants from AG2R La Mondiale, attacked and quickly got clear. Australian Adam Hansen tried to join him but couldn't cross the gap and the dangerous Bakelants, who won a stage of the 2013 Tour de France using the same tactic, looked like causing an upset. But the sprinters' teams came to the front of the peloton and Bakelants was caught with only two kilometres to go. World champion Peter Sagan led an attack to bring Bennett to the front but Ewan stayed close and with the finish line in sight, he sprinted up the inside to edge van Poppel and Bennett and repeat his opening stage win from 2016. The young Australian may only wear the leader's jersey for one day however with today's stage to take place in the hills around Adelaide and four-time champion and Orica-Scott teammate Simon Gerrans only eight seconds behind in the overall standings.

Temperatures are forecast to drop dramatically for today as a cold front moves through the region overnight. — AFP



LOS ANGELES: Luke Witkowski #28 of the Tampa Bay Lightning checks Kyle Clifford #13 of the Los Angeles Kings during the first period at Staples Center on Monday in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

TAMPA BAY BEAT KINGS, PENGUINS DEFEAT CAPITALS IN WILD GAME

LOS ANGELES: Brian Boyle scored the go-ahead goal late in the second period as the Tampa Bay Lightning opened a six-game road trip with a 2-1 victory over the Los Angeles Kings on Monday. Ben Bishop made an early mistake that led to Kyle Clifford's goal for the Kings, but bounced back to make 31 saves in his second start back from a three-week absence with a lower-body injury. Tyler Johnson scored in the first period for the Lightning, who won for just the second time in seven games. Peter Budaj stopped 27 shots for the Kings.

PENGUINS 8, CAPITALS 7

Conor Sheary scored 34 seconds into overtime as Pittsburgh Penguins ended Washington's nine-game winning streak with a wild victory that included nine second-period goals. Sheary had two goals and an assist for the Penguins, who snapped a three-game losing streak. Evgeni Malkin picked up his 11th career hat trick during a frenetic second period, and Sidney Crosby collected his NHL-leading 27th goal to go with three assists. Bryan Rust and Nick Bonino also scored for Pittsburgh, and Matt Murray got the win despite allowing seven goals on 28 shots. The Penguins trailed 3-0 before scoring six goals in less than 11 minutes in the second period, more goals than the Capitals had allowed in a game all season. Pittsburgh led 6-5 after 40 minutes. Lars Eller scored twice for Washington, and T.J. Oshie, Brett Connolly, Nicklas Backstrom, Justin Williams and Andre Burakovsky also found the net. Philipp Grubauer made eight saves after coming on in relief of Braden Holtby, who was pulled during Pittsburgh's second-period deluge.

OILERS 3, COYOTES 1

Juhar Khaira gave Edmonton the lead with his first career goal as the Oilers beat Arizona for their third straight victory. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Leon Draisaitl also scored for the Oilers, who have won five of their last seven games. Cam Talbot had 20 saves. Radim Vrbata scored for the Coyotes, who have lost 11 of their last 13 games. Mike Smith stopped 24 shots.

SHARKS 5, JETS 2

Joel Ward scored a short-handed goal and took a hard hit to assist on Timo Meier's goal, helping San Jose to just its third win in eight games. Brent Burns and Chris Tierney also scored and Joe Thornton had an empty-netter as the Sharks bounced back nicely from a 4-0 home loss to St. Louis on Saturday. Martin Jones made 26 saves, allowing two late goals after the game had been decided. Josh Morrissey broke up the shutout with 2:36 to play and Mark Scheifele added a goal in the final minute after Jones tried to shoot the puck toward the empty net but hit Scheifele instead. Michael Hutchinson made 27 saves for the Jets, who have dropped four in a row.

ISLANDERS 4, BRUINS 0

Nikolay Kulemin scored two of New York's three second-period goals, powering the Islanders to the win. Josh Bailey and Jason Chimera also scored for the Islanders, who have lost 13 of 19 road games this season (6-9-4), but defeated the Bruins twice in TD Garden. Thomas Greiss made 32 saves. Boston goaltender Tuukka Rask was pulled after two periods. He gave up three goals on 15 shots. Backup Zane McIntyre gave up the other goal.

RED WINGS 1, CANADIENS 0

Thomas Vanek scored in the second period and Jared Coreau earned his second shutout, leading

the Red Wings to the victory. Detroit won consecutive games at home for the first time since starting the season 4-0 at Joe Louis Arena as part of its 6-2 start. The 6-foot-6 (1.98-meters) Coreau, the tallest goaltender to play for the Red Wings, stopped 18 shots to improve to 5-1-1 in his first season with Detroit. The Atlantic Division-leading Canadiens had won five of their last seven games. Montreal star Carey Price made a spectacular save late in the first period, using his glove to deny Andreas Athanasiou on a breakaway, and finished with 19 stops. Vanek extended his point streak to a season-high six games, redirecting Danny DeKeyser's shot

past Price with 1:36 left in the second.

SABRES 4, STARS 1

Jack Eichel scored two goals, helping Buffalo to the win. Buffalo's Tyler Ennis scored 19 seconds into the first period. Ennis returned after missing 30 games with a groin injury that required surgery. Jake McCabe also had a goal and Robin Lehner made 31 saves after missing the past three games with an illness. Radek Faska scored for the Stars in the opener of a three-game road trip. Kari Lehtonen stopped 25 shots. Dallas has lost two in a row and six of eight. — AP

NHL results/standings

Edmonton 3, Arizona 1; Pittsburgh 8, Washington 7 (OT); Tampa Bay 2, Los Angeles 1; San Jose 5, Winnipeg 2; Detroit 1, Montreal 0; NY Islanders 4, Boston 0; Buffalo 4, Dallas 1.

Western Conference						Eastern Conference						
Central Division						Atlantic Division						
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	
Minnesota	28	9	5	138	92	61	Boston	23	19	5	117	117
Chicago	27	14	5	126	116	59	Toronto	20	13	8	128	120
St. Louis	23	16	5	124	129	51	Ottawa	22	15	4	105	107
Nashville	20	16	7	119	114	47	Florida	20	17	8	106	122
Dallas	18	19	8	119	138	44	Tampa Bay	21	20	4	125	133
Winnipeg	20	23	4	129	145	44	Detroit	19	19	6	112	127
Colorado	13	27	1	82	137	27	Buffalo	17	17	9	101	120
Pacific Division						Metropolitan Division						
Anaheim	24	13	9	123	116	57	Washington	29	9	6	138	94
Edmonton	24	15	7	131	122	55	Columbus	29	9	4	141	95
San Jose	26	16	2	117	102	54	Pittsburgh	27	11	5	153	131
Calgary	23	20	3	119	125	49	NY Rangers	28	15	1	152	116
Los Angeles	22	18	4	111	110	48	Philadelphia	22	18	6	132	148
Vancouver	20	19	6	111	130	46	Carolina	21	15	7	121	117
Arizona	13	24	6	91	137	32	New Jersey	18	18	9	101	129
Eastern Conference						Atlantic Division						
Montreal	27	12	6	138	113	60	NY Islanders	17	17	8	120	128

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).



ADELAIDE: FDJ riders prepare for the first stage of the Tour Down Under cycling race from Adelaide to Tanunda, in Adelaide yesterday. — AFP

BIG GUNS DENMARK, FRANCE INTO LAST 16 AT WORLDS

PARIS: Olympic gold medallists Denmark and reigning world champions France booked their tickets to the last 16 of the World Handball Championships on Monday.

Denmark saw off Scandinavian rivals Sweden in a hard-fought 27-25 battle in Paris while hosts France and Brazil advanced without playing thanks to Russia's 24-20 win over Poland in the western city of Nantes. Other teams assured their qualification on the pitch with Spain crushing African minnows Angola 42-22, Slovenia easing past Macedonia 29-22 and Croatia dominating Belarus 31-25.

The Danes lead Group D after three consecutive wins and will be assured of top spot if they beat lowly Bahrain today, to avoid meeting France should they beat Russia yesterday.

France have six points and cannot be caught by Group A rivals Poland and Japan, who have lost all three of their group matches. For Sweden it is the first loss at France 2017, but they are still in a good position to qualify on four points.

The four top teams out of six in each

group advance to the next round. The Danes owed their victory largely to captain and goalkeeper Niklas Landin-making 23 saves and voted player of the match-with Henrik Toft Hansen the top scorer with eight goals.

The Olympic champions took a good quarter of an hour to settle after a half a dozen shots on Swedish goalkeeper Mikael Appelgren. Sweden's anti-Hansen plan worked well in the first period, but the Danes have depth and could also count on Henrik Mollgaard and Kasper Sondergaard to find the net.

Danish indiscipline in the second half-four exclusions in 20 minutes-caused some concern among their many fans.

But with the scores 20-21 ten minutes from the end, the Danes dug deep in a fast and furious game down until the final seconds. In Group B top spot will be played between Spain and Slovenia on Thursday. Croatia beat Belarus in Group C and will be up against Germany for top spot on Friday.

Egypt rebooted their campaign by beating Bahrain 31-29 and Hungary dominated Chile 34-29. — AFP



PARIS: Denmark's left back Mikkel Hansen scores a penalty to Sweden's goalkeeper Andreas Palicka (up) during the 25th IHF Men's World Championship 2017 Group D handball match Denmark vs Sweden yesterday at the Accor Hotels Arena in Paris. —AFP

YOUNG AMERICANS COMING OF AGE AT AUSTRALIAN OPEN

MELBOURNE: More than 13 years after Andy Roddick won the 2003 US Open, the last time an American man triumphed at a Grand Slam, the future of US men's tennis appears bright.

The next generation of young players, all aged between 18 and 20, is starting to emerge and showing enough promise at this year's Australian Open to suggest they may be on the cusp of a breakthrough.

Seven made the main draw at Melbourne Park and three were still in contention after the first round. Frances Tiafoe, who turns 19 on Friday, defeated Mikhail Kukushkin 6-1, 6-7 (3), 6-3, 6-2 yesterday, while 20-year-old Ernesto Escobedo beat Daniil Medvedev 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-1. They joined 20-year-old

Noah Rubin, who won his opener a day earlier to set up a second-round match against Roger Federer.

The others failed to advance, but not before serving notice to the tour's old guard. Reilly Opelka, 19, lost a tight five-setter to 11th-seeded David Goffin, while Jared Donaldson, 20, lost to Brazil's Rogerio Dutra Silva after leading two sets to none. Taylor Fritz and Michael Mmoh, both 19, each put up good fights in defeats to veterans Gilles Muller and Gilles Simon, respectively.

"We're all really supportive of each other and happy to see all of us doing so well," Tiafoe said. "Hopefully we can keep going and not stop now."

Much has been expected of Tiafoe, the son of immigrants from Sierra Leone,

since he won the Orange Bowl at age 15, the youngest champion in the prestigious 18-and-under tournament's history. Tiafoe just missed out on a career-defining win at last year's US Open, where as a wild card, he led the long-time top-ranked US player, John Isner, by two sets to none before the match slipped away. It was a heartbreaking loss, but one Tiafoe learned from.

"I was like, the next opportunity I'm definitely going to take it," he said after his first-round win yesterday, flashing a wide grin. "Now, getting through relatively comfortable today means a lot. ... I really feel like I belong now."

He next plays another 19-year-old, his close friend, Alexander Zverev of Germany. Both Opelka and Donaldson,

meanwhile, got their own tastes of Grand Slam agony in Melbourne.

Opelka, a 6-foot-11 (2.11 meter) former Wimbledon junior champion with a booming serve and whip-like forehand, had two break points to go up 4-2 in the fifth set against Goffin, but couldn't convert either and ultimately lost 6-4, 4-6, 6-2, 4-6, 6-4.

Opelka had never before played a five-set match and was making his debut in the singles main draw of a Grand Slam. Yet he showed grit - and no hint of nerves - deep into the fifth set against a seasoned pro like Goffin, even as he started to cramp and struggled to move.

"I've played some guys in the top 10 before so I wasn't uncomfortable," he

said. "With the way I play, hopefully it really shouldn't matter who's on the other side of the net."

Donaldson's loss was less expected. The Rhode Island native made a stunning run to the third round of last year's U.S. Open, upsetting the 12th-seeded Goffin and Viktor Troicki, a former top-20 player.

And he was well on his way to a commanding win over Dutra Silva before the Brazilian stormed back for a 3-6, 0-6, 6-1, 6-4, 6-4 victory.

"Losses like this really define your character," he said. "So I can be upset and sulk about it or I can get back on the practice court and keep working hard and get better so matches like that don't happen again." — AP

HEALTHY NADAL LOOKS TO SCALE RANKINGS AFTER INJURY HELL

MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal says he is driven to restore his slumping ranking after powering past Germany's Florian Mayer into the second round of the Australian Open yesterday. The long-time world number one looked back to his healthy best after an injury-riddled 2016 as he tossed the 49th-ranked Mayer 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 in just over two hours on Rod Laver Arena.

Nadal will face Cypriot Marcos Baghdatis in the second round. The 14-time Grand Slam champion is irked to be ranked at nine after occupying a total of 141 weeks at world number one during his storied playing career.

Now the 30-year-old is back to full fitness after recovering from a left wrist injury which dogged him during last year's French Open and forced him to miss Wimbledon and the ATP Finals in a frustrating second half of last season. Nadal said his current ranking affected his confidence and he was focused on returning to the top rungs. "Oh, yes, it makes a difference. Is much better be number one than number nine. Is no question about that," he said. "But I am number nine today. That is just the real thing. Today I'm the ninth player of the world. "I am going to fight to not be worse, and I going to fight to be again better. I feel that if I am playing well and I am healthy, I think I can be much better."

"I am happy with the way I have had the chance to play for a long, long time in this sport. I expect to keep playing for few more years."

AUTO PILOT

Nadal said at his peak things became automatic when winning matches and he was looking to retrieve those instincts this year. "When you are playing and playing and winning matches, then you have things that come very automatic," he said. "You don't need to think much about the things that are happening or the way that you play points."

"But when you are out for a while, you need to recover all these automatic things that makes you play easier. That's the important thing." Nadal looks well on the way to regaining winning confidence, returning to the Australian Open where he was dumped out in the first round last year by compatriot Fernando Verdasco in a five-set boiler. There was no likelihood of a repeat ambush by Mayer this time. "Today was not an easy match. I had the break in the third and in the second set in the key game, at 4-all," he said.

"But before he was serving well, so I didn't have the possibility to have the break. "Today was a good first round for me. Florian is a tough first player to play against." Nadal is bidding to win his second Australian Open after beating Roger Federer for the 2009 crown.

His trademark never-say-die retrieving behind the baseline was a feature as he fought for every point against Mayer. Nadal broke Mayer's service in the ninth game of the final set with a forehand winner and served out for a straight sets victory. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Croatia's Ivo Karlovic hits a return against Argentina's Horacio Zeballos during their men's singles match on day two of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

DJOKOVIC, SERENA SHARE STAGE WITH RECORD MAN KARLOVIC

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams launched their Australian Open campaigns in style yesterday as Ivo Karlovic smashed a record 75 aces in an unprecedented, 84-game marathon.

Djokovic and Williams have both dropped to world number two and faced awkward opposition, but they won in straight sets against Fernando Verdasco and Belinda Bencic respectively. Rafael Nadal also rolled into round two before Karlovic outlasted Horacio Zeballos in an epic that stretched for five hours, 15 minutes and ended 6-7 (6/8), 3-6, 7-5, 6-2, 22-20.

Karlovic beat Thomas Johansson's Australian Open record of 51 aces in a match, set in 2005, and 84 games was a new mark for the tournament in the tiebreak era, edging the 83 in Andy Roddick's 2003 defeat of Younes El Aynaoui.

It was one of the longest matches in the tournament's history in terms of time, although still short of the five hours, 53 minutes played by Djokovic and Nadal in the 2012 men's final.

The denouement, when it finally came, was almost comical as an exhausted Karlovic chipped a hopeful lob over Zeballos, only for the Argentine to send a wayward forehand rocketing out of the court.

"This is what I will, after my career, remember. If it was easy match or I lost easy, I wouldn't remember. But this one definitely I will remember forever," said the Croatian.

As the drama played out on Court 19, Djokovic gave further evidence of his return to form as he convincingly saw off Verdasco 6-1, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena.

Djokovic fell off the top of the rankings during a sudden slump last year but he showed signs of a revival by beating new world number one Andy Murray in this month's Doha final.

He fended off five match points against Verdasco in the Doha semis, and had to fight through a 71-minute second set against the Spanish left-hander for his win yesterday.

'NOTHING TO LOSE'

It was Djokovic's 15th straight win at the Australian Open as he seeks his third straight title and his seventh overall, which would break Roy Emerson's record set in the 1960s.

"I'm very pleased with the first round, considering I had one of the toughest first-round draws, definitely considering his form, how well he played against me in Doha," Djokovic said.

In afternoon play, Williams and Nadal made light of hot temperatures and doubts over their own form as they got off to sizzling starts.

Williams, back after an injury lay-off, demolished the dangerous Bencic 6-4, 6-3, while Nadal was also impressive in his 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 win over Florian Mayer. Williams has barely played since her shock defeat in the US Open semi-finals in September and she made, by one count, 88

unforced errors in her second-round loss to Madison Brengle at this month's Auckland Classic. But she came through a tight first set against Bencic before dominating the second in what turned out to be an emphatic victory on the centre court. The 35-year-old American, with a record 23rd major title in her sights, was watched from court-side by her new fiancée, Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian.

"Right now I've got nothing to lose. Every match, every tournament I'm playing for fun," she said. Williams, who can break Steffi Graf's Open-era record of 22 Grand Slam titles if she wins in Melbourne for the seventh time, next faces Lucie Safarova, who saved nine match points before beating Yanina Wickmayer.

Men's world number three Milos Raonic, a semi-finalist last year, enjoyed an uncomplicated start to his campaign when he beat Germany's Dustin Brown 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

And German hotshot Alexander Zverev credited a racket-smashing tantrum with sparking his revival as he came back to beat Robin Haase 6-2, 3-6, 5-7, 6-3, 6-2.

Injury-hit Nadal had a torrid 2016, failing to reach any of the Grand Slam quarter-finals, but he appeared rejuvenated under new coach and former world number one Carlos Moya. In the final match on centre court, Polish third seed Agnieszka Radwanska beat Bulgaria's Tsvetana Pironkova, 6-1, 4-6, 6-1. — AFP

SCOTTISH TEENAGER BURKE AT HOME WITH LEIPZIG

LEIPZIG: Scotland's Oliver Burke plans to fly his mum over to Germany to supply a taste of home cooking as he seeks to cement his future at RB Leipzig.

A Scotland international at just 19, the pacy teenage winger was told to forget everything he had learned tactically at Nottingham Forest after RB signed him for a reported 15 million euros (£13 million, \$16 million) last August.

Leipzig, backed by energy drinks giants Red Bull, are enjoying a stellar first season in Germany's top flight after starting with a record 13-match unbeaten run.

But a 3-0 pre-Christmas drubbing against league leaders Bayern Munich set them back and they resume on Saturday after the winter break with the first in a series of tough fixtures, against Eintracht Frankfurt. Since signing a five-year contract with Leipzig, second in the Bundesliga table just three points behind Bayern, Burke says he has been on a steep learning curve. And he said he plans to bring his mum over to help him make the transition. "The thing I miss most is my mum's cooking - I am not the best chef," he told AFP.

"I feel at my strongest when my family are here and I miss them when they're not. It's brilliant that I can get them over to live with me." Burke says he immediately knew that he had made the right decision to leave English football.

"As soon as I stepped through the door here, I knew it was the perfect club for me," he said. "The facilities are great and everyone has made me feel welcome."

But Leipzig coach Ralph Hasenhuetl said the teenager had to start from scratch tactically. Burke says he has been using his

mobile phone to swot up on video analysis alongside German lessons three times a week. "I'm learning every day on the pitch and watching all the video analysis I can, even on my phone," he said. "I'm constantly looking where I can improve."

Hasenhuetl says the hard work is paying off and Burke's progress was on display as he scored on Sunday in RB's 4-0 thrashing of Glasgow Rangers in a friendly.

"We've worked hard with 'Ol' in the past few weeks, you could see that from the way he played (against Rangers)," said Hasenhuetl. "He is eager to learn and things are becoming second nature to him."

"He still has a few mistakes in his game to iron out, which could be dangerous for the opposition, but he is an option for us." Burke said RB's stunning start to their first top-flight season did not catch him by surprise, even if he has had to settle for a bit-part role so far, starting just one of his 13 league games to date. "To be honest, from speaking with the coaches, you could see where they want to be, so I wasn't surprised (at their strong start)," he said. "It all happened very quickly under my own eyes and we have adapted really well. "Now we have to keep going and push on in the second half of the season."

'GREAT FEELING'

Burke says inexperienced Leipzig, whose average age is just 24, must forget the defeat at Bayern as they bid to bridge the three-point gap.

"Bayern are obviously a very strong team and have a lot more experience than we do, but that game has gone and there's no point dwelling on it," said Burke. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark hits a return against Arina Rodionova of Australia during their women's singles match on day two of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska survived a dogfight to move into the Australian Open second round yesterday as she bids to end her long wait for a maiden Grand Slam title.

The third seed battled past fellow veteran, Bulgarian Tsvetana Pironkova, 6-1, 4-6, 6-1 and will next play Croat Mirjana Lucic-Baroni, who beat Chinese qualifier Wang Qiang in three sets.

Radwanska, who lost in the final of the lead-up Sydney International, has consistently done well at Melbourne Park, making at least the quarter-finals in five of the previous six tournaments. But she is yet to break through to win a title at any of the majors in 42 attempts spanning more than a decade. "I have played her (Pironkova) many times and knew she was good," said the 27-year-old.

"I'm very happy that I was able to come back strongly in the third set and pleased to be into the next round."

An Australian semi-finalist last year, she is desperate to end her long wait and started methodically against Pironkova, who made the quarter-finals of the French Open last year, beating Radwanska along the way.

Nicknamed 'The Magician' for her shot-making, the Pole dug into her full box of tricks including a brilliant, between-the-legs winner.

Radwanska worked an early break in the third game and won the first set in just 28 minutes with a trademark cross-court backhand earning her the final point.

But Pironkova, ranked 64, has plenty of expe-

rience and was playing her 45th consecutive Grand Slam-the second longest active streak.

She has never done well at Melbourne Park, failing to go beyond the second round in 11 previous appearances, but suddenly woke up as the second set got underway. Pironkova won nine consecutive points on her way to going 2-0 in front, before Radwanska held serve in a long and

crucial third game and then broke back to level the contest at 2-2. Neither player could hold serve and they traded breaks before the Bulgarian finally claimed an error-strewn second set. But Radwanska raised her aggression in the third set and when the Bulgarian double-faulted to hand her a break and 2-0 lead, she didn't look back, eventually winning the match with an ace. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska hits a return against Bulgaria's Tsvetana Pironkova during their women's singles match on day two of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

OUTSIDE PRESSURE CHILD'S PLAY FOR ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC

LONDON: Swedish star Zlatan Ibrahimovic says the pressure on him that comes from outside is like a kindergarten compared to the pressure he places on himself every time he trains or plays for Manchester United.

The 35-year-old striker—who has defied the sceptics who thought he was too old to flourish at United but has scored 14 goals in 20 Premier League appearances—said the pressure he placed on himself was so immense because nothing less than winning counted.

Ibrahimovic, who joined United in the close season last year after a hugely successful period at French champions Paris Saint Germain, scored United's

equaliser in Sunday's 1-1 draw with Liverpool which ended his side's six-match winning streak and leaves them 12 points behind leaders Chelsea. "I think the pressure I have all around me is nothing compared to the pressure I put on myself," said Ibrahimovic.

"I really want to do not perfect, more than perfect, every game, even in training. I'm not happy if I don't win in training so imagine what it's like in the games. That is the pressure I put on myself and so your pressure becomes like a kindergarten for me. My pressure is really high. I'm not satisfied until I get what I want. What I want is to win."

Ibrahimovic, who retired from inter-

national football following a disappointing Euro 2016 finals, defended teammate and the world's most expensive player France midfielder Paul Pogba who was slammed for his below-par performance against Liverpool.

Ibrahimovic said although he didn't know Pogba that well he felt he could handle pressure too.

"Pressure is something I enjoy," said Ibrahimovic. "I don't know Paul personally to be able to answer that for him. But I think he likes it also because, without pressure, we would not be on our toes at the top level."

"If you want to play at the top, pressure is 24 hours, and if you play well or

better the pressure becomes even greater. "So it's something that we learn from and something we have to handle because we belong to the top, Paul belongs to the top absolutely and the pressure will be there."

Pogba's poor performance came on the day the Old Trafford hoardings promoted his #Pogba twitter hashtag. Ibrahimovic admitted it was easier when he started playing as social media was not part and parcel of life. "I think football is like that today. With the social media, the media building up the game," said Ibrahimovic.

"When I started to play football there was no social media, none of these

things. "But it's part of the game now. What is too much, what is too less? We don't know. We just follow the game. We are professional, we train like always, try to do our best every game."

Ibrahimovic suggested the reason the game passed Pogba by is that the game was not really played in midfield.

"For Paul (on Sunday) the game was different. It was a dirty game, in the way we had to play more direct, by jumping over the midfield because the pressure Liverpool put on us was hard."

"It was difficult. The first game against them was the same. The guys told me every game we play against Liverpool looks like this." — AFP

MARADONA SET FOR NAPOLI ROLE, IF TAX SETTLED

MILAN: Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis says a global ambassador's role will be offered to Diego Maradona—if the former club legend settles his score with the Italian tax man.

Maradona was served with a tax bill of around 39 million euros (£33m) four years ago when he returned to Italy, where he led Napoli to their two Serie A titles in 1987 and 1990. He is reportedly still in the red, having claimed in an interview with *Corriere della Sera* last October: "I don't owe them anything. The penalty, even though it was unfair, was paid by Napoli in 2003." De Laurentiis says once the dispute is settled, the 56-year-old Maradona, in Napoli to help celebrate the 30th anniversary of their maiden Serie A title, could be handed an official role at the club.

"For me, Maradona is a legend... as soon as he resolves his issues over outstanding taxes, he will become our global ambassador," said De Laurentiis, a film producer, on Monday evening.

Despite the controversy that has followed Maradona on and off the pitch throughout his career, the player who became notorious for his 'Hand of God'

goal against England at the 1986 World Cup remains a legend in Naples.

Thirty-metre high murals of Maradona are painted on many of the city's buildings while effigies, paintings and graffiti paying tribute to 'Il Pibe d'Oro' (the Golden Child), who joined the club from Barcelona in 1984, are omnipresent.

Maradona on Monday evening told hundreds of fans from a balcony: "I am really happy to be here with you."

Holding up his Napoli shirt to fans, Maradona claimed he rejected an offer by then Barcelona vice-president Joan Gaspart to double his salary to remain with the Catalan giants.

"This shirt allowed me to dream," added Maradona. "When I signed for Napoli, Gaspart wanted me to stay, he offered to double my salary."

"I told him no, that I wanted to follow my heart. Napoli is beautiful and unique, but they need to win another two league titles to become an even bigger club. We have faith in president De Laurentiis." Napoli sit third in Serie A at four points behind leaders and champions Juventus and one point behind Roma. — AFP



OYEM: Congo's Lomalisa Mutambala, right, vies with Morocco's Faycal Fajr, left, during their African Cup of Nations Group C soccer match between Congo and Morocco at the Stade de Oyem in Oyem, Gabon, Monday. — AP

ZIDANE LEANS ON SQUAD TO BOUNCE BACK FROM DEFEAT

MADRID: Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane insists he has no reason to panic and will once again use the depths of his squad against Celta Vigo in the Copa del Rey today looking to bounce back from a first defeat in 40 games.

Madrid conceded twice in the final five minutes in losing 2-1 to Sevilla on Sunday to see their lead at the top of La Liga over the Europa League holders cut to one point. Real did get the better of Sevilla in the Cup last 16 despite Zidane heavily rotating his side with Cristiano Ronaldo not even making the squad for both legs of a 6-3 aggregate win.

And, whilst Zidane refused to confirm whether the four-time World Player of the Year will make his first appearance in this year's competition in the first leg of their quarter-final at the Santiago Bernabeu against Celta, the Frenchman insisted a first defeat since April last year won't discourage him from rotating once more.

"We are a group of 24 and I am going to use everyone," Zidane said yesterday.

"I am going to count on all 24 until the end (of the season). If we win something it will be because of the 24 players, I am sure of that." Ronaldo netted from the penalty spot at the Sanchez Pizjuan on Sunday but was otherwise largely ineffective.

However, Zidane rejected suggestions the Portuguese was rusty due to his lack of playing time in 2017.

"Everyone will have their opinion. Some say it is best to rest, others that it is better to have rhythm," added Zidane. "You will see tomorrow whether he plays." Isco returns to Zidane's 19-man squad after missing the defeat at Sevilla through injury, but James Rodriguez, Pepe and Gareth Bale remain out.

SOCIEDAD HOODOO

Celta will definitely be missing one of their star men as coach Eduardo Berizzo said on Tuesday that Chilean international Fabian Orellana will not play again for him due to an "unacceptable lack of respect."

"I have decided to remove him from the squad. The decision is based in an unacceptable lack of respect," said Berizzo. "With me he will no longer belong to the team."

Barcelona aren't in action until Thursday when they travel to Real Sociedad hoping to end an eight-game winless run in San Sebastian, stretching back to 2007.

The Catalans were so outplayed on their most recent visit to Anoeta in November that coach Luis Enrique described their 1-1 draw as "almost a miracle".

However, after a difficult start to the year, Barca have begun to find their form in the past week in defeating Athletic Bilbao to reach the last eight before hammering Las Palmas 5-0 on Saturday.

Gerard Pique, Andres Iniesta and Neymar are set to return after being rested at the weekend, but Brazilian international midfielder Rafinha was ruled out on Tuesday with a hamstring injury.

Eibar have reached the quarter-finals for the first time in their history, but face a daunting task to reach the last four as they travel to Atletico Madrid for the first leg of their tie on Thursday.

Alcorcon are also making their bow in the last eight as the only second division side left in the competition and welcome Alaves yesterday. — AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

SPAIN COPA DEL REY

Alcorcon v Alaves 21:15
beIN SPORTS
Real Madrid v Vigo 23:15
beIN SPORTS

ITALIAN CUP

Sassuolo v Cesena 19:30
beIN SPORTS
Lazio v Genoa 23:00
beIN SPORTS

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP

Gabon v Burkina Faso 19:00
beIN SPORTS
Cameroon v Bissau 22:00
beIN SPORTS



PORT-GENTI: Uganda's midfielder Mike Azira (R) challenges Ghana's forward Jordan Ayew during the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations group D football match between Ghana and Uganda in Port-Gentil yesterday. — AFP

IVORY COAST STUMBLES, CONGO BEAT MOROCCO

OYEM: Ivory Coast's Europe-based stars stumbled in the heat of northern Gabon in their African Cup of Nations opener, with the defending champion held by Togo to 0-0 on Monday in another twist to start the tournament.

Ivory Coast's title-winning coach fared worse as Congo beat Herve Renard's Morocco 1-0 in the day's second game.

Congo, a team that was on strike and refusing to train two days ago, finished with 10 men on the field and on top of Group D.

Ivory Coast created few clear chances against Togo, with Wilfried Zaha's blocked shot in the second half after a clever run probably its best. Zaha was substituted two minutes later and, although Ivory Coast pressed hard in stages, it never broke open Togo's well-drilled defense in the first game in Group C in the northern jungle town of Oyem.

Togo was competitive in the first half and had two good openings with around 10 minutes to go, when Kodjo Laba missed with a header from in front of goal and Mathieu Dossevi's deflected shot dropped onto the roof of the net.

Four of the first six games at the African Cup have been draws, with Ivory Coast's fellow title challenger, Algeria, held to 2-2 by Zimbabwe, a team that hasn't qualified for the African Cup in over a decade. Also, host Gabon couldn't beat outsider and tournament debutant Guinea-Bissau in the opening game.

"After Algeria-Zimbabwe and Gabon-Guinea-Bissau, we were very careful," Ivory Coast coach Michel Dussuyer said. "But we still have two (group) matches so we are still confident."

MOOD-CHANGER

Togo even started better, and Dossevi was clear on goal in the 29th minute only for Ivorian goalkeeper Sylvain Gbohouo to smother the chance. Zaha was at the heart of Ivory Coast's two best attacks, first in the first half when he sped down the right wing and sent across a dangerous low cross that was scrambled away. Then, in the 68th minute, he tricked his marker with a clever turn, cut inside, and hit a low shot that was headed to goal before two Togo defenders managed to get in the way.

Senegal and Congo are the only teams to win at the tournament.

Junior Kabananga got the winner for Congo in the 55th minute after a mistake from Morocco 'keeper Monir el-Kajoui. Congo's Lomalisa Mutambala was sent off for a wild tackle in the 81st and the Congolese played for about seven minutes with nine men when captain Gabriel Zakuani went off injured in the 83rd with all their substitutes used up. Zakuani returned in injury time but was limping heavily and not much use.

This victory was a major mood-changer for Congo, whose players refused to train on Friday and Saturday, claiming they hadn't been paid tournament bonuses. They also posted a video on social media during their strike, where they complained about their treatment.

On Monday, Morocco was the one frustrated: Midfielder M'Bark Boussoufa hit the crossbar in the second minute. Goalkeeper El-Kajoui tried to block a cross with his feet and managed only to divert the ball to Kabananga to score the winning goal. Then, substitutes Youssef En Nesryi and Youssef el-Arabi missed late chances.

Although Ivory Coast and later Renard failed their first tests at the tournament, the Stade

d'Oyem held up despite a desperate race to be ready in time, which saw workers scrambling around the venue finishing all sorts of jobs on the day of the game. Television viewers won't have seen the construction debris that surrounds the outside of the stadium, which juts out of dense jungle canopy around 15 kilometers outside of Oyem. Even organizers couldn't

do anything about the heat during the opening match, though, with Togo coach Claude le Roy's shirt covered in dark sweat patches after urging his team on to a promising draw against the defending champion Ivorians.

"It was very hot. We were sweating so much," Le Roy said. "We did what it takes. We are satisfied with the draw." — AP

AUBAMEYANG PROMISES BETTER BY HOSTS GABON

LIBREVILLE: Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and hosts Gabon vowed to put a poor start to their Africa Cup of Nations behind them and beat Burkina Faso today in the second series of Group A matches. A "Panthers" team captained by the Borussia Dortmund star striker conceded a last-minute goal to only draw 1-1 with minnows Guinea-Bissau in the tournament opener.

Former African Footballer of the Year Aubameyang put the home team ahead with a tap-in only for Juary Soares to nod the leveller off a free-kick. With four-time champions Cameroon held 1-1 by Burkina Faso later last Saturday, every team has one point and identical goal records going into the second round of group games. Gabon and Burkina Faso clash at 5:00 pm local time (1600 GMT) in the 40,000-seat Stade de l'Amitie in Libreville followed by Cameroon against Guinea-Bissau three hours later. Aubameyang knows he and his team-mates let supporters of the central African team down and has promised a better performance against opponents they beat 2-0 at the same stage two years ago. "We have learnt from our mistakes," said the 27-year-old born in France to a Gabonese father and a Spanish mother, making him eligible to represent three nations.

He opted for Gabon, a country once captained by his father who has never gone further than the quarter-finals at the Cup of Nations. "I remain positive that we can reach our first goal, which is qualifying for the knockout phase," said the leading Bundesliga scorer this season with 16 goals from 15 matches.

"We have lofty ambitions in this tournament and playing at home in front of our wonderful supporters is a great advantage. Mistakes were

made against Guinea-Bissau, like conceding a goal in the final minute. We must now rectify those errors and defeat Burkina Faso." The Burkina, whose best showing was finishing runners-up to 2013 champions Nigeria, fell behind to Cameroon and survived an onslaught before levelling. Centre-back Bakary Kone, midfielder and captain Charles Kabore and winger Jonathan Pitroipa form an experienced backbone to an unpredictable side.

'LITTERED WITH UPSETS'

Belgium-born Cameroon coach Hugo Broos is nervous about facing shock qualifiers Guinea-Bissau in the second half of a double-header.

"Playing against less-well-known teams can be tricky," he warned, "and we do not want to go into our final group game against Gabon needing a win to survive."

"I have studied the history of the Cup of Nations and it is littered with upsets. Remember, Zambia won the 2012 title here (Libreville) against massive odds. The days when higher-ranked countries could go into a group game confident of winning convincingly are long gone. "We want to reach the quarter-finals and then see where we go from there," said the successor to underachieving German Volker Finke as coach of the "Indomitable Lions".

Guinea-Bissau sensationally won a qualifying group including former champions Congo Brazzaville and Zambia and continued the fairytale run by holding Gabon.

"We now have the motivation to go far," said Baciro Cande, who took charge of the "Wild Dogs" when Portuguese Paulo Torres was barred for four matches during the qualifiers. — AFP



LIBREVILLE: Gabon's forward Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang takes part in a training session in Libreville yesterday, as part of the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations football tournament. — AFP

Sports

De Villiers opts out of Tests in New Zealand



Djokovic, Serena share stage with record man Karlovic



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2017

MARADONA SET FOR NAPOLI ROLE, IF TAX SETTLED

Page 19



NEW YORK: New York Knicks' Carmelo Anthony, right, tries to sink the go-ahead basket over Atlanta Hawks' Kent Bazemore during the final seconds of the NBA basketball game, Monday in New York. Anthony missed the shot and the Hawks defeated the Knicks 108-107. — AP

ATLANTA EDGE KNICKS, WIZARDS BEAT BLAZERS

NEW YORK: Dennis Schroder scored 28 points, including a go-ahead 3-pointer with 22 seconds left, as the Atlanta Hawks beat the New York Knicks 108-107 on Monday. Tim Hardaway Jr. added 20 points and Paul Millsap had 17 for the Hawks, who won for the ninth time in 10 games to reach the midpoint of their schedule at 24-17. Carmelo Anthony scored 30 points for the Knicks, who changed their lineup but it wasn't quite good enough. They lost for the 11th time in 13 games. Neither team led by more than eight in the game that was close all the way. The Hawks rested Dwight Howard, while the Knicks were without Kristaps Porzingis again because of a sore left Achilles tendon.

attempts. Damian Lillard led Portland with 22 points and C.J. McCollum had 12, but they combined to shoot 11 of 29 from the floor. The Wizards have won four of their last five games.

76ERS 113, BUCKS 104

Joel Embiid scored 12 of his 22 points in the fourth quarter as Philadelphia won for the fourth time in five games. The Sixers improved to 13-26. Their only recent loss was Saturday at Washington, when Embiid didn't play. Embiid is limited to 28 minutes per game while trying to overcome injuries that have slowed his career. Embiid also had 12 rebounds. Dario Saric scored 17 points for Philadelphia, and Ersan Ilyasova had 12 on 4-for-14 shooting. Jabari Parker and Giannis Antetokounmpo each scored 23 points for Milwaukee, which led 54-46 at halftime.

PACERS 98, PELICANS 95

Jeff Teague had 16 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds, helping Indiana win for the fifth time in six games. The Pacers shot 50.6

percent from the floor and had five players score in double figures. Paul George had 19 points, and Myles Turner added 18 points and 12 boards. All-Star center Anthony Davis led the Pelicans with 16 points despite missing the final 19 minutes after hurting his right hip and left thumb. Team officials said X-rays were negative.

NUGGETS 125, MAGIC 112

Nikola Jokic scored a career-high 30 points and Emmanuel Mudiay dished out a career-best 13 assists as Denver followed its "home" win in London with another victory at the Pepsi Center. Jokic also grabbed 11 rebounds and Kenneth Faried scored 20 points for the Nuggets, who certainly packed their surging offense with them when they returned home from London. They routed Indiana 140-112 last Thursday in England and remained on that sort of shooting streak, hitting a season-high 58.4 percent from the floor. They also had 33 assists. Elfrid Payton had 20 points and 12 assists as the Magic fell to 1-4 on their current six-game trip. — AP

NBA results/standings

La Clippers 120, Oklahoma City 98; Utah 106, Phoenix 101; Golden State 126, Cleveland 91; Boston 108, Charlotte 98; Denver 125, Orlando 112; Indiana 98, New Orleans 95; Philadelphia 113, Milwaukee 104; Washington 120, Portland 101; Atlanta 108, NY Knicks 107.

Eastern Conference Atlantic Division				GB	Western Conference Northwest Division				
W	L	PCT	Utah		Portland	Denver	Minnesota		
Toronto	27	13	.675	-	27	16	.628	-	
Boston	26	15	.634	1.5	Oklahoma City	25	18	.581	2
NY Knicks	18	24	.429	10	Portland	18	25	.419	9
Philadelphia	13	26	.333	13.5	Denver	16	23	.410	9
Brooklyn	8	32	.200	19	Minnesota	14	27	.341	12
Central Division				GB	Pacific Division				
W	L	PCT	Golden State <th>LA Clippers <th>Sacramento <th>LA Lakers <th>Phoenix </th></th></th></th>		LA Clippers <th>Sacramento <th>LA Lakers <th>Phoenix </th></th></th>	Sacramento <th>LA Lakers <th>Phoenix </th></th>	LA Lakers <th>Phoenix </th>	Phoenix	
Cleveland	29	11	.725	-	35	6	.854	-	
Indiana	21	19	.525	8	LA Clippers	29	14	.674	7
Chicago	21	21	.500	9	Sacramento	16	24	.400	18.5
Milwaukee	20	20	.500	9	LA Lakers	15	30	.333	22
Detroit	19	24	.442	11.5	Phoenix	13	28	.317	22
Southeast Division				GB	Southwest Division				
W	L	PCT	San Antonio <th>Houston <th>Memphis <th>New Orleans <th>Dallas </th></th></th></th>		Houston <th>Memphis <th>New Orleans <th>Dallas </th></th></th>	Memphis <th>New Orleans <th>Dallas </th></th>	New Orleans <th>Dallas </th>	Dallas	
Atlanta	24	17	.585	-	31	9	.775	-	
Washington	21	19	.525	2.5	Houston	32	11	.744	0.5
Charlotte	20	21	.488	4	Memphis	25	18	.581	7.5
Orlando	17	26	.395	8	New Orleans	16	26	.381	16
Miami	11	30	.268	13	Dallas	13	27	.325	18

'IRON TULIP' VAN GAAL TO RETIRE

THE HAGUE: Firebrand manager Louis van Gaal has announced his retirement from professional football after more than three decades, citing "family reasons," a Dutch newspaper reported yesterday.

"I don't believe I'll return back to work," Van Gaal told popular daily tabloid De Telegraaf, which added he is "definitely drawing a line under his training career."

The man nicknamed the "Iron Tulip" has received dozens of lucrative offers since his unceremonious axing from Manchester United last year, including a three-year contract in the East, most likely China, which would pay an estimated 50 million euros (\$53.4 million) over three years, the paper said.

"I could have taken the contract," Van Gaal told the paper. "But I'm still here. So much has happened within my family and it has become time to face facts."

Flamboyant and outspoken, Van Gaal, 65, found himself in the midst of a family drama after the husband of one of his daughters unexpectedly passed away, De Telegraaf said. Despite winning the FA Cup last year-United's first major silverware since the retirement of legendary boss Sir Alex Ferguson-Van Gaal was given the boot in May.

He said then he was contemplating taking another manager's job. "I said I would stop, but then cleverly called it a 'sabbatical'." But now I don't believe I'll return to work," Van Gaal told De Telegraaf on receiving a lifetime achievement award in The Hague on Monday.

"Actually I wanted to stop after the (FIFA) World Cup," in Brazil in 2014, where Van Gaal's Dutch side ended third behind Argentina and Germany.



Louis van Gaal

"Then suddenly England called. It was a beautiful country I did not yet have on my cv," he said. Winning the FA Cup with the Red Devils "was the greatest achievement of my career," he added.

Asked whether he has realized all his dreams, the man often known for his blunt answers during press conferences said: "I have achieved everything during my lifetime." "I don't want to brag about all the countries where I've worked, and the level of clubs I've coached, but for me there's really nothing else left (to do)," Van Gaal said. — AFP

WILD SEASON FOR SEATTLE ENDS WITH QUESTIONS ON TITLE WINDOW

RENTON: In the midst of all that happened this season between debilitating key injuries, inconsistent play on both offense and defense, and enough distractions to raise the ire of any coach, there was one particular aspect of the Seattle Seahawks season that stood out to Pete Carroll. That after all the chaos, Seattle had a chance at the No. 2 seed in the NFC and gave away that chance at a playoff bye and a divisional round game at home.

"We missed that opportunity," Carroll said on Monday. "Of all of the things during the season, not being able to do that might have been the most significant thing that happened. We couldn't get the second home game here." A season defined by inconsistency came to an end for the Seahawks on Saturday with a 36-20 loss at Atlanta in the divisional round of the NFC playoffs.

It was likely the appropriate ending point for a team that never looked worthy of being a Super Bowl contender for an extended period, and was more frustrating than scintillating. Whether it was injuries to Russell Wilson, Earl Thomas, Thomas Rawls and now cornerback DeShawn Sheard, or a decision to put together an inexpensive offensive line that never was

consistently good, Seattle (11-6-1) failed to reach its full potential. And with a core group that's still talented but aging, the Seahawks are accepting their window of winning a title is shrinking even as Carroll believes they're in the middle of their run. "To get to where we got to this year, it was difficult," Seattle wide receiver Doug Baldwin said.

"It was extremely hard. It was exhausting." The Seahawks have won at least one playoff game in five straight seasons and have three division titles to show for it during that time. It's an unprecedented run of success in franchise history. But they were also fortunate this season to play in a weak NFC West that helped mask some of Seattle's flaws.

It was also a season where Seattle's depth was tested and some of its stars - Richard Sherman and Michael Bennett notably - let their emotions get away from them on the sideline and in the locker room. That was almost as disappointing for Carroll as letting the No. 2 seed slip away. "These guys have been very emotional players, and it's part of the thing that we like about them," Carroll said. "But there's a point where you can go too far." — AP

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DAVOS: China's President Xi Jinping (L) delivers a speech during the first day of the World Economic Forum. — AFP

BEIJING SEEKS BOLDER GLOBAL ROLE

CHINA'S XI DEFENDS TRADE AS WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM BEGINS

DAVOS: Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday trumpeted the need for free trade and urged the world to "say no to protectionism," delivering a strong rebuke to isolationist tendencies that helped fuel Donald Trump's presidential election victory.

Focusing on the "double-edged" impact of economic globalization in a speech that alluded variously to Charles Dickens, Greek mythology and Chinese proverbs, the leader of the world's No. 2 economy stressed the need for stability, new vision and perspective that has left many citizens disenfranchised and worried about the future.

His visit to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, is the first by a Chinese president and appears timed to position the country as a leader on the global stage as Western countries increasingly look inward. "We must remain committed to promoting free trade and investment through opening up and say no to protectionism," Xi told an opening meeting of the WEF. "Pursuing protectionism is like locking oneself in a dark room. While wind and rain may be kept out-

side, so are light and air." "No one will emerge as a winner in a trade war," he said.

No reference to Trump

During his campaign, Trump promised to raise tariffs on Chinese goods and declare Beijing guilty of keeping its currency artificially low. That would be a first step toward imposing sanctions. But in fact, for the past couple of years China has been intervening in markets to prop up its currency, not push it lower. "China has no intention to boost its trade competitiveness by devaluing the renminbi, still less will it launch a currency war," Xi said yesterday. Xi made no direct reference to Trump, but his vocal support for free trade and bashing of protectionism could appear rich to other Western countries who have grumbled about commercial restrictions in China that clash with the public assertions from officials.

Foreign companies complain Beijing is reducing access to its markets for electric cars, computer security technology and other promising fields or pressing them to give know-how to potential Chinese competitors.

Some say they are blocked from acquiring assets in China, just as Chinese companies have been on a foreign buying spree.

"The political leadership of China never ceases to assure us that further opening toward foreign investment ... is a priority," Germany's ambassador to China, Michael Claus, said this week. "However, many companies keep telling us that their difficulties in these areas have increased." "It often appears that somewhere down the line, political assurances of equal treatment give way to protectionist tendencies," he said in a statement.

US and European complaints

Beijing also faces US and European complaints for its exporting steel, aluminum, solar panels and other goods at improperly low prices, threatening thousands of jobs abroad. Aside from the economy, Xi stepped into other areas of international consensus, calling the Paris accord to fight climate change a "hard-won achievement," and urging signatories to "stick to it instead of walking away from it as this is a responsibility we must assume for

future generations." Trump, who has called climate change a Chinese hoax, has raised speculation that he might pull the US out. The visit by Xi caps the largest-ever Chinese delegation to Davos, including over 100 officials and scores of business executives and embodying a tectonic shift at an event that started nearly a half-century ago among Europeans and Americans. He is the first Chinese head of state to visit Davos since the annual conferences began in 1971. Speaking Monday, WEF Founder Klaus Schwab said this year's event is "not just a Western meeting." One-third of the participants are from the emerging world - including the largest-ever delegations from China and India, Schwab said.

The bumpy run-up to the Trump administration - Trump's poll numbers are low for an incoming president - has given the Chinese leader a convenient opportunity to advance his goal of giving his country a more assertive leadership role on the world stage. China previously sought to capture the mantle as a supporter of world trade after Trump said he would pull the United States out of the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal

championed by President Barack Obama.

Xi cast the world economy as adrift, saying it lacked a "driving force" with inadequate global governance and unequal benefits that have widened the gulf between rich and poor. "This is the biggest challenge in the world today," he said. He called for a "new growth model" that takes into account climate change, aging populations and increased automation, and said countries that face difficulties should not "lose confidence or run away from our responsibility, instead we should join hands."

Xi hit hard on the metaphor of the world economy as an "ocean," saying countries "must have courage to swim in the global market." "We should not develop a habit of retreating to the harbor whenever encountering the storm, for this will never get us to the other shore of the ocean," he said. Mainstream Western leaders have been grappling with populist movements at home, including the one that helped undergird Trump's election victory. His transition team has one top adviser, Anthony Scaramucci, at the forum ahead of Friday's presidential inauguration. — AP

BANKS BAULK AT PRICING OF DUBAI'S METRO LOAN

DUBAI: Some banks are balking at participating in funding an extension of Dubai's metro because the proposed pricing, they say, does not reflect banks' higher costs and the impact of lower oil prices on liquidity, bankers familiar with the matter said. The government wants to borrow \$2.8 billion for the 15-km extension to the site of the World Expo, being hosted by Dubai in 2020. Of that, \$1.2 billion will be commercial loans and the rest, loans guaranteed by export credit agencies.

Several other multi-billion dollar infrastructure projects are expected over the next few years in Dubai, and the prospects of financing them might be influenced by the result of the metro loan talks.

When the government approached banks last year, it specified that the commercial loan, with a 10-year maturity, had to carry an interest-rate margin of no more than 200 basis points (bps) over London interbank offered rates, with banks' up-front fees capped at 50 bps, commitment fees at 40 bps and underwriting fees at 25 bps.

"It's a significant project - putting caps on pricing proposals is not good for projects of this size," said one banker, speaking on condition of anonymity as the information is private. "For a local bank to enter a deal like this, the margin should be at least 250 bps, especially considering it's such a long tenor."

The Dubai Department of Finance declined to comment. Dubai has traditionally

been commercially savvy in its funding approach. Local and international banks have often lent to the government at pricing considered below market levels in order to establish and maintain relationships with the borrower. But the collapse of oil prices since 2014 has altered banks' calculations.

"The government keeps asking very low pricing that banks cannot afford any more. There's also an issue of banks' capacity - banks now have to pick and choose, they can't lend to anything," a Dubai-based banker at an international lender said. The relationship aspect of a tightly priced deal such as the metro project is therefore being debated, particularly among local banks.

"Some banks would come in at such a low margin if it was a relationship deal. But this isn't really a relationship deal. With such a long tenor it's more like a project finance transaction," one banker said. In a relationship-driven deal, banks tend to hold the credit until maturity, but the longer the tenor, the more difficult it becomes for a bank - especially if it is small - to retain loan paper with a low return. Bankers agree that Dubai will eventually obtain the funding for the metro extension.

International banks working on the export credit agency-backed tranche of the financing are likely to chip in on the commercial loan, and some Dubai banks are expected to participate on a large scale. — Reuters

MEXICO WORKERS FEAR TRUMP TRADE EFFECT

VILLA DE REYES: In a rocky desert of northern Mexico, impoverished villagers fear they may be the first people in the world to suffer the impact of US President-elect Donald Trump's trade crack-down. In the town of Villa de Reyes stand the square white skeletons of two huge buildings: an unfinished Ford car factory. The \$1.6-billion plant was expected to bring thousands of jobs to the area, but Ford abruptly called off the project this month in the state of San Luis Potosi.

The closure sparked concern that more companies could flee Mexico, where the auto sector has become a driver of growth, accounting for three percent of the economy and changing the face of some regions like San Luis Potosi. While Ford insisted it was a business decision, Mexican officials said it was also partly due to Trump's criticism of the company and his vow to penalize US companies that shift jobs abroad. "That guy in the United States is tightening the screws," says Concepcion Segura, 54. He, his wife and four of their six sons lost their jobs on the Ford building site when the project was pulled. "He has taken Ford away from us to keep it for himself," Segura said.

Autos and poverty

Half of the population of San Luis Potosi was categorized as living in poverty in 2014, according to the latest data from Mexico's National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL). The level is extremely high, but it has gradually eased over recent years as the state has become a hub of auto production.

Now it is one of the first places to suffer from the Trump effect. "The same old thing could happen," says Segura. "Lots of shortages and little work." General Motors started operating in San



MADRID: A picture taken yesterday shows the wax statue of US President-elect Donald Trump during its presentation at the Wax Museum of Madrid. — AFP

Luis Potosi in 2008. It and hundreds of other international companies have transformed the state's fortunes. Smart hotels for visiting executives sprang up along the highway where the abandoned plant now stands.

Houses were built near factories for the workers and their families. The Ford plant was supposed to begin operations in 2018. "We were growing very well, but with Ford that growth was going to accelerate," says Gustavo Puentes, the state's development secretary. Ford's decision to abandon the plant here meant the loss of 2,800 direct jobs in San Luis Potosi. Instead, Ford says it will expand a factory in the state of Michigan, the US auto-making heartland, to build electric and self-driving vehicles. Poverty in Michigan has

risen in recent years-the rate is about one in six, according to the US Census.

Optimism versus uncertainty

While Mexican officials voice optimism that other companies will not follow Ford's lead, President Enrique Pena Nieto warned Trump last week against influencing foreign investors "on the basis of fear or threats." Trump has threatened to impose a 35 percent import tariff on companies that ship jobs to Mexico.

The Republican billionaire also wants to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico. Mexico's car production has tripled since NAFTA came into force from 1.1 million in 1994 to nearly 3.8 million last year. But not all firms in the sector are fearing the wheels will come off San Luis Potosi's auto powerhouse. "It is too early to say," says Gunter Daut, vice-president for Mexico at German parts maker Bosch.

Another supplier operating in the area, Michigan-based TI Automotive, is also optimistic. "We shouldn't be too alarmed," says its plant head, Luis Caballero. "We have to trust in the business we have and companies' plans for expansion." He says T1 Automotive's main client, German manufacturer BMW, is planning to start operating in San Luis Potosi in 2019.

Further down the pecking order, the poorest of the local workforce are racked with uncertainty, however. In the nearby hamlet of Providencia, Teresa Contreras, 34, lost her job as a cleaner at the in-progress Ford plant when it was scrapped. "They told me it was going to last four years and it was only four months," she says. She doesn't know where she will find work now. — AFP

SAUDI ECONOMIC ACTIVITY SLOWS AS FISCAL CONSOLIDATION PROCEEDS APACE

KUWAIT: More than two years into the oil price downturn and Saudi economic growth has slowed significantly. Public investment has been pared back, credit growth has slowed and liquidity has tightened amid reduced deposit flows and rising debt issuance. Facing the prospect of widening fiscal deficits, the authorities have cut back on spending and embarked on a bold and ambitious program of fiscal consolidation.

They froze public sector salaries and benefits, cut fuel and utility subsidies, scaled down public investment projects and raised non-oil revenues via tax hikes and privatization programs. These and other measures form part of the government's new strategic blueprint for economic restructuring, diversification and fiscal sustainability: the Saudi Vision 2030. Looking ahead, we see the authorities delivering on some of their goals, economic growth resuming, albeit, modestly, in 2018, helped by higher oil prices and by a recovery in consumer and investor confidence.

Real growth to slow in 2016 as fiscal consolidation and subdued private sector activity take their toll on the non-oil economy. Real GDP is expected to slow significantly in 2016 to 1.2% from 3.5% in 2015 amid cutbacks in capital spending and weaker consumer spending.

Non-oil growth is also projected to slow considerably in 2016, from 3.1% y/y in 2015 to 0.2% y/y, as the government pushed through with aggressive fiscal consolidation and as the private sector feels the impact of lower retail spending and the overall fall in consumer confidence. Indeed, the non-oil economy could be on the verge of a technical recession, should soon-to-be-published 3Q16 real GDP data show another quarter of negative growth.

Key metrics of consumer and business activity, such as point of sale (POS) and ATM transactions, private sector credit growth and the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), all trended lower in 2016, although the latter was more volatile m/m and did not dip below 50, which would have suggested a contraction in business activity. Looking ahead to 2017 and 2018, activity is expected to pick up as the government resumes paying contractors and as deposits increase on higher oil prices and thanks to the international bond issuance. With deposit flows rising, lending should also pick up. We expect non-oil growth to reach 0.8% and 1.9% in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

Meanwhile, the oil sector continued to expand in 2016, with the kingdom ramping up both crude oil production to a record 10.5 million barrels a day (mb/d) in 2016 and gas production following the commissioning of the Wasit gas plant. Since oil prices headed south in 2014, Saudi Arabia has pursued its strategy of maximizing market share and accelerated its plan to move up the hydrocarbon value-chain by expanding its refining capacity. The launches of the Satorp and Yasref refineries brought an additional 0.8 mb/d of refined products output capacity. Real oil GDP growth should clock in at 2.5% in 2016 before moderating to 0.5% in 2017 and to 0.4% in 2018 as output gains recede and as Saudi Arabia complies with its reduced production quota under the terms of the recent OPEC/non-OPEC production cut agreement. While Saudi crude output is expected to contract in accordance with the agreement, on a full year

basis, we don't expect production to decline by as much as the 4.5% stipulated in the deal.

Inflation slowing as economic activity cools

Inflation was on a downward trend in 2016, slowing for the seventh consecutive month in October, to 2.6% y/y. Food and beverages were the chief negative influence on the cost of living index. The moderation in inflation comes despite a significant uptick at the start of 2016 in response to the government's fuel and utility price hikes. With their effects on headline inflation receding throughout the year, increases in the CPI tended to reflect other factors such as falling import prices, especially food and clothing (related to the stronger USD and SR in 2016) and moderating house price inflation as well as, more broadly, the contraction in money supply that was a feature for most of the year. The trend should continue into 2017, bringing inflation down to 2.5% before rebounding in 2018 to 4.3% as the economy picks up. Higher energy and utility costs and higher taxes (including VAT) will also pressure CPI in 2018.

Saudi Arabia's fiscal deficit, having widened significantly in 2015 to -15% of GDP (\$96.6 billion), is expected to narrow in 2016 to -12.1% of GDP and further over the forecast period as the government reins in its spending, including its expensive subsidy bill. Of course, expectations

Key economic indicators

		2015	2016e	2017f	2018f
Real GDP growth	% y/y	3.5	1.2	0.7	1.3
Oil	% y/y	4.0	2.5	0.5	0.4
Non-oil	% y/y	3.1	0.2	0.8	1.9
Inflation	% y/y	2.2	3.6	2.5	4.3
Fiscal balance	% of GDP	-15.0	-12.1	-7.5	-6.7
Public debt	% of GDP	5.9	13.0	18.3	23.6

Sources: Official sources and NBK estimates

that oil prices will be 33% higher in 2018 (averaging \$60 per barrel) than their average in 2016, is central to the improvement in the fiscal outlook.

Indeed, given the surprising degree of progress achieved so far, in what is undoubtedly a very bold and ambitious fiscal adjustment program, there is a very realistic chance that the authorities will deliver on their National Transformation Program (NTP) target of a balanced budget by 2020. Subsidies on fuel and utilities have already begun to be reduced (working towards the NTP target of a cut of SR200 billion, or 8.3% of GDP, over 5 years), wages and benefits for public sector workers have been frozen for a year (the NTP sets a target of reducing the wage bill by 5% to SR456 billion by 2020), and outlays on non-essential capital projects have been scaled back, by an estimated 12% in 2015 and 2016.

On the revenue side, though the NTP plan of more than doubling non-oil revenues to SR530 billion (\$141 billion, or 17.3% of GDP) by 2020 still appears ambitious, the authorities have made some headway in tapping new non-oil revenues. These include: higher fees on public services, immigration and traffic violations; new

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taxes on cigarettes and soft drinks as well as on undeveloped urban land (so-called "white lands"); and the introduction of a value-added tax (VAT), which will come into effect in 2018 at a rate of 5%. A rough estimate of the gain to the Saudi treasury resulting from the VAT could be in the order of \$10 billion, which would approximate to about 16% of projected non-oil revenues in 2018 and 1.4% of forecasted GDP in that year. The privatization of state entities, including up to 5% of state oil giant Saudi Aramco, and the transformation of the Public Investment Fund (PIF) into the kingdom's official SWF with a global footprint and assets under management of at least \$1.8 trillion by 2030, are key strategic objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030.

Public debt rises

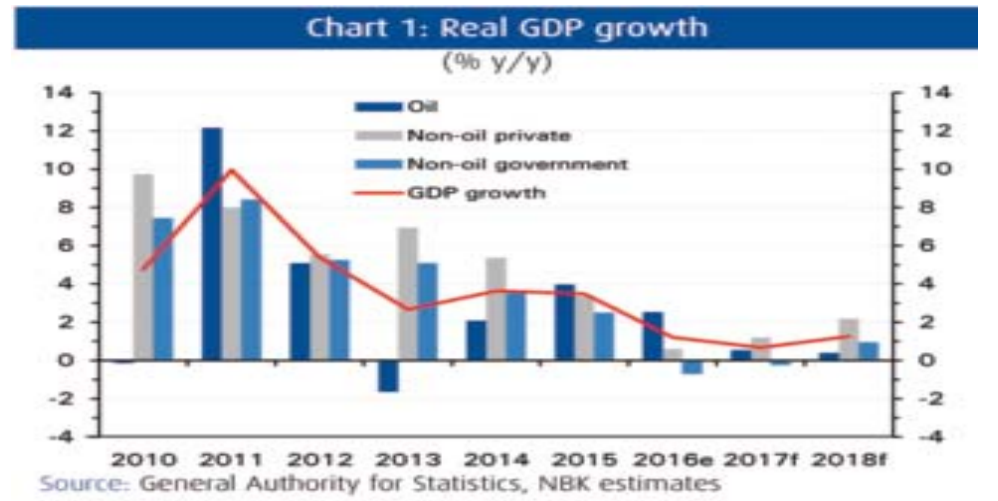
With Saudi Arabia expected to continue to post fiscal deficits over the next few years, public debt is projected to rise markedly from its historic low of 1.6% of GDP in 2014 to at least 23% of GDP in 2018. This is, however, still an extremely low level of debt by international standards. Up until mid-to-late 2016, when domestic and international bond issuance accelerated, the burden of deficit financing fell squarely on the kingdom's foreign reserves and the government's

accounts at SAMA. Since June 2016, the rate of reserve drawdown has slowed significantly to \$7.8 billion per month from an average of \$10.9 billion per month in 1H16. Total net foreign assets stood at \$572 billion in October, which is still an ample 30 months-plus in terms of goods and services import cover.

2015 witnessed approximately SR98 billion (\$26 billion) worth of government bonds sold to local financial institutions, which helped to cover a quarter of the deficit. In 2016, the authorities augmented their domestic bond issuance program with an additional, record-breaking \$17.5 billion international sovereign bond sale and a \$10 billion syndicated loan from foreign banks. We expect bond issuance to proceed apace during the next two years, with probably at least another \$80 billion added to central government debt.

Liquidity conditions improving

Deposit, credit and liquidity indicators continue to point to a banking system that has been pressured by the fall in oil prices, albeit, one that is showing some signs of a recovery following Saudi Arabia's record international bond sale in



Source: General Authority for Statistics, NBK estimates

October 2016. Bank deposit growth turned positive in October for the first time in 2016, rising by 0.5% y/y on a slight improvement in private sector deposits (3.4% y/y) after the government resumed payments to private contractors.

This should continue over the next few months as the government honors \$26.7 billion in back payments. However, deposits from government entities still remain well down, by -8.5% y/y, and are unlikely to expand significantly without higher oil prices. The pick-up in deposits was also reflected in the money supply, with growth in the broadest measure, M3, turning positive in October for the first time since January 2016.

On the credit side, lending to the private sector has been lackluster; October showed a rise of only 6.2% y/y, which is one of the slowest rates since 2011. In contrast, public sector credit growth accelerated significantly in 2016, rising to 31.4% y/y in October. This is the fastest pace of growth in more than three years, a trend that is likely to continue as the government borrows more from banks.

Despite overall deposit growth lagging credit growth, indicators of liquidity in the Saudi banking system have started to improve: banks' loan-to-deposit ratio (LDR) eased a little last October to 89.1%; the 3-month interbank rate has fallen by around 33 bps from its high of 2.38% in October to around 2.05% as of mid-December; and excess bank deposits at SAMA have increased 24% y/y to almost \$53 billion, according to the most recent data.

A number of measures, including their assumption of long-delayed government payments to private contractors, have contributed to this easing in liquidity. SAMA, for example, has alleviated some of the liquidity constraints through its broadening of the window for repo arrangements, reducing the size of its T-bill issuances and by injecting SR20 billion (\$5.3 billion) into the deposits of public sector companies. Also, the kingdom's record-breaking \$17.5 billion international sovereign bond issuance in October, of course, has the potential to significantly improve liquidity as well as the government's fiscal situation. The bond sale should indirectly help the private sector as well by lessening the pressure on domestic banks to finance the government, thereby freeing up credit lines for private enterprises. These are vital for a healthy and dynamic non-oil economy. Indeed, government bonds, as a share of total bank claims, went

from a low of 3.3% in 2013 to a post-financial crisis high of 10.6% in October as bank holdings of government bonds skyrocketed in 2016 to \$46.9 billion.

Market perceptions of Saudi sovereign risk moderating

The material improvement in banking sector metrics is reflected in the improvement in market perceptions of risk. In the currency markets, the difference between the spot and forward Saudi-US Dollar exchange rate (SR/USD) narrowed to around 300 forward points by mid-December, having hit its widest margin of 975 points in two decades earlier in the year on speculation that the authorities would be forced to devalue the riyal, in effect abandoning the 30-year peg to the US dollar.

The kingdom is, however, unlikely to shift away from an exchange rate regime that has served it well in the past, anchoring both the economy and inflation. The dollar peg provides stability to trade and income flows, especially given the fact that oil, which is priced in dollars, continues to dominate the Saudi economy. Over the last decade, with the exception of 2015, oil has accounted for close to 90% of the kingdom's export and fiscal revenues. 5-year credit default swap spreads (CDS), though still elevated, have also fallen in the last few months as the outlook has improved. Expectations of higher oil prices in 2017 and beyond in the wake of the recent OPEC deal is also a key factor in the improvement in sentiment.

Borrowing costs rise after the US Fed raises interest rates

SAMA, following the US Fed's lead, raised its key interest rate, the reverse repo, by 25 bps to 0.75% in December. The repo rate remains unchanged at 2.0%. This, the second rate rise in this cycle, points to further rising borrowing costs, as the US Fed moves ahead with monetary policy tightening in 2017. The main Saudi stock index, the Tadawul All-Share Index (TASI), reversed course in October after being down 21% ytd at one point in the year. As of mid-December, the index was in positive territory, up 3.3% ytd at 7,137, as it continued to ride on the marked improvement in optimism that came about in 4Q16 thanks to the international bond sale and the OPEC production cut agreement, which was positive for oil prices.

WALMART TO CREATE 10K JOBS

WASHINGTON: Walmart announced yesterday it will invest \$6.8 billion in the United States and create 10,000 jobs in stores and e-commerce, a move for which President-elect Donald Trump quickly took credit. The investment in 59 new, expanded or relocated Walmart and Sam's Club stores also will create an estimated 24,000 construction jobs, the company said in a statement.

"With a presence in thousands of communities and a vast supplier network, we know we play an important role in supporting and creating American jobs," said Dan Bartlett, Walmart executive vice president for corporate affairs. "Our 2017 plans to grow our business-and our support for innovation in the textile industry-will have a meaningful impact across the country."

The company, which is known for inexpensive and frequently imported products, said it plans to purchase an additional \$250 billion in American-made, grown, assembled and sourced products through 2023, estimated to help create one million jobs. Walmart and GM each announced investment and job creation plans yesterday, the latest in a series of companies to announce plans to do so-including Ford and Amazon-amid continued pressure, mostly via Twitter, from US President-elect Donald

Trump who has threatened stiff penalties on companies that import products manufactured overseas.

Shortly after the GM and Walmart announcements, Trump used two tweets to claim the jobs were a direct result of his own efforts. "With all of the jobs I am bringing back into the US (even before taking office), with all of the new auto plants coming back into our.... country and with the massive cost reductions I have negotiated on military purchases and more, I believe the people are seeing 'big stuff,'" he said.

Walmart's Bartlett, who is attending the US Conference of Mayors in Washington, also will announce that Walmart Foundation will provide \$3 million in grants through the US Manufacturing Innovation Fund to six universities "working to advance sustainability and innovations in textile manufacturing, which has proven to be one of the most challenging industries to reshore to the US." The projects include commercial textile dyeing method that does not use salt or alkali, does not produce effluent, and produces more than 95 percent savings of both energy and water, and research to develop sustainable polyester fibers. The company also said it will open 160 new training academies by July, bringing to 200 the total number of facilities to train associates. — AFP

IRAQ'S SOUTHERN OIL EXPORTS FALL

LONDON: Oil exports from Iraq's southern terminals have fallen so far in January, according to loading data and an industry source, a sign that OPEC's second-largest producer is following through on the group's decision to cut output. Baghdad's initial request to be exempt from the deal, plus loading programs pointing to continued high Iraqi exports, have added to skepticism that the country would comply with the output cuts. Iraq is supposed to curb production by 210,000 barrels per day.

Exports from southern Iraq in the first 16 days of January have averaged 3.25 million barrels per day (bpd), according to shipping data tracked by Reuters and by an industry source. That is down from Iraq's own figure of 3.51 million bpd in all of December, a record high. "Exports are definitely down, despite what the loading schedule suggests," said the industry source, who monitors Iraq's shipments. The preliminary January loading plan pointed to another month of near-record southern exports.

The OPEC cut started on Jan 1. Although it is only a mid-way through January, the drop in exports lends support to comments from Iraqi officials that Baghdad will stick to the accord. Compliance by producers with the deal will be a key influence in 2017 on oil prices,

which at \$56 a barrel are about half their level of mid-2014. A committee of OPEC and non-OPEC ministers to monitor the issue is meeting on Sunday.

It is not possible to draw firm conclusions about production from a few weeks of export data, not least because the deal by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other independent producers applies to production, not exports. In addition, export schedules can be volatile day-to-day. The first nine days of southern exports in January, as monitored by Reuters and the industry source, suggested steady supplies.

Iraq says it is abiding by the agreement. Oil Minister Jabar Ali Al-Luaibi said on Jan 10 he hoped that by the end of the month production would be cut by the 210,000 bpd Iraq pledged. Iraq's OPEC governor, Falah al-Amri, said southern exports over all of January would be as low as 3.1 million bpd. The bulk of Iraq's oil is exported via the southern terminals. Smaller amounts are shipped from northern Iraq via Ceyhan in Turkey. Northern exports have averaged about 540,000 bpd so far in January according to export data, suggesting little change from December. The Kurdistan Regional Government said November exports were 540,000 bpd and has yet to give a December figure. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2,615
Indian Rupees	4,510
Pakistani Rupees	2,934
Srilankan Rupees	2,053
Nepali Rupees	2,823
Singapore Dollar	212.790
Hongkong Dollar	39.563
Bangladesh Taka	3,893
Philippine Peso	6,173
Thai Baht	8,601
Malaysian Ringgit	223.230

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.881
Qatari Riyal	84.334
Omani Riyal	797.427
Bahraini Dinar	815.330
UAE Dirham	83.599

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.250
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.073
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1,232
Tunisian Dinar	133.590
Jordanian Dinar	432.400
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2,046
Syrian Lira	2,188
Morocco Dirham	30.839

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	306.850
Euro	323.270
Sterling Pound	379.270
Canadian dollar	229.680
Turkish lira	87.300

Swiss Franc	302.020
Australian Dollar	222.200
US Dollar Buying	305.650

GOLD

20 Gram	238.24
10 Gram	122.04
5 Gram	57.97

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	306.000
Canadian Dolla	233.485
Sterling Pound	369.790
Euro	326.395
Swiss Franc	303.085
Bahrain Dinar	811.180
UAE Dirhams	83.705
Qatari Riyals	84.925
Saudi Riyals	82.525
Jordanian Dinar	432.760
Egyptian Pound	16.619
Sri Lankan Rupees	2,043
Indian Rupees	4,491
Pakistani Rupees	2,919
Bangladesh Taka	3,880
Philippines Peso	6,139
Cyprus pound	168.040
Japanese Yen	3,680
Syrian Pound	2,430
Nepalese Rupees	3,800
Malaysian Ringgit	69.520
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.855
Thai Bhat	9,615
Turkish Lira	81.995

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY

	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.363456	0.373458
Czech Korune	0.004040	0.016040
Danish Krone	0.039746	0.044746
Euro	0.320411	0.329411
Norwegian Krone	0.031915	0.037116
Romanian Leu	0.072257	0.072257
Slovakia	0.009185	0.019185
Swedish Krona	0.030225	0.035225
Swiss Franc	0.297215	0.308215
Turkish Lira	0.077912	0.088212
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.221488	0.233468
New Zealand Dollar	0.212132	0.221632

America

Canadian Dollar	0.227747	0.236747
Georgina Lari	0.138321	0.138321
US Dollars	0.302150	0.306550
US Dollars Mint	0.302650	0.306550

Asia

Bangladesh Taka	0.003871	0.004255
Chinese Yuan	0.042976	0.046476
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037397	0.040147
Indian Rupee	0.002836	0.005511
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024

Japanese Yen	0.002609	0.002789
Kenyan Shilling	0.002941	0.002941
Korean Won	0.000250	0.000265
Malaysian Ringgit	0.065051	0.071051
Nepalese Rupee	0.003148	0.003318
Pakistan Rupee	0.002764	0.003054
Philippine Peso	0.006049	0.006349
Sierra Leone	0.000038	0.000044
Singapore Dollar	0.209526	0.219526
South African Rand	0.016525	0.025025
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001683	0.002263
Taiwan	0.009577	0.009757
Thai Baht	0.008323	0.008873

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.805763	0.814263
Egyptian Pound	0.013214	0.022467
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.426895	0.435895
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000153	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020163	0.044163
Nigerian Naira	0.000370	0.001006
Omani Riyal	0.789033	0.794713
Qatari Riyal	0.083308	0.084758
Saudi Riyal	0.080580	0.081880
Syrian Pound	0.001299	0.001519
Tunisian Dinar	0.129308	0.137308
Turkish Lira	0.077912	0.088212
UAE Dirhams	0.081956	0.083656
Yemeni Riyal	0.000996	0.001076

THE ALL NEW F-150 RAPTOR 2017

In its Exclusive Middle East Debut by Alghanim Auto and Ford All-New 2017 Ford F-150 Raptor Proves a Big Hit at Auto Moto

The show runs till January 21



FORD Middle East and Alghanim Auto Management

KUWAIT CITY, Kuwait, January 17, 2017 – Alghanim Auto and Ford are proudly participating at the most anticipated car show event in Kuwait: Auto Moto 17. For this special occasion and for the first time ever in the Middle East, Alghanim Auto is exclusively featuring the highly awaited all-new 2017 F-150 Raptor; as part of a larger display that features other popular Ford models.

Raptor enthusiasts and Auto Moto visitors alike now have an opportunity to get a closer look at the latest generation of this highly anticipated off-road monster, featured in a rugged display inspired from none other than its proving grounds, the desert. Customers who are interested in the all-new 2017 Raptor are able to register their interest and pre-book a vehicle with any of the Alghanim Auto sales consultants present on-site during the show.

most balanced, nimble and exhilarating production Mustang yet; thanks to Ford's most powerful naturally-aspirated V8 engine yet, pumping 526hp and 586N.m out of a 5.2 litres of displacement. Ford engineers took an innovative approach with GT350. Rather than develop individual systems to perform well independently, every component and shape is optimized to work in concert; balance is the key. While paying rigorous attention to detail, the team pushed the envelope with cutting-edge materials and technologies.



Taking place at 360 Mall till January 21st, Auto Moto has been recognized as the Annual Kuwait Motor Show, attracting a large base of car enthusiasts in Kuwait. Alghanim Auto's participation stems from its brand philosophy to bring the latest exciting Ford products to Ford enthusiasts in Kuwait while engaging with the local community. For the duration of the show, Alghanim Auto is also extending special offers to customers interested to get into a brand new Ford.

"Alghanim Auto is committed to deliver the latest Ford products and service excellence to our customers in Kuwait, and working with Ford Middle East to bring the region's first 2017 F-150 Raptor to our truck enthusiasts in Kuwait demonstrates just that," said Tim Zimmerman, Vice-President, Alghanim Auto. "We are excited to be part of this year's Auto Moto show with the latest 2017 lineup and are looking forward to welcoming our customers in Kuwait to the Alghanim Auto stand."



Representing full size sedans, the Taurus S.H.O makes quite a powerful appearance boasting a 3.5L EcoBoost engine and all-wheel drive system with a host of advanced technological and safety features. The sport utility vehicles (SUV) on display include the new Explorer, offering safety and comfort for 7 passengers, along with the all-new Edge. The new model features an impressive line-up of powertrains, class-leading technologies, higher levels of craftsmanship and greatly improved vehicle dynamics, guaranteed to impress drivers at first sight and test drive. The display also features a trio of tastefully accessorized vehicles with exterior and interior modifications including the midsize sedan Fusion, Expedition, and the F-150 – America's best-selling truck over the past 40 years – featured in Regular Cab configuration with a sporty makeover.



Ford's latest 2017 model range is available at Alghanim Auto, the only importer contractually authorised by Ford to sell new Ford vehicles, genuine Ford and MotorCraft® parts, and provide aftersales support to Ford customers in Kuwait.



"We are happy to showcase the new 2017 Ford products including the much anticipated all-new F-150 Raptor to our customers in Kuwait, together with Alghanim Auto" said Mohammed Houssami, Regional Sales Director at Ford Middle East, during his visit to the show. "We commend the entire team and leadership of Alghanim Auto on their commitment to deliver customer excellence and their continued drive to offer the latest Ford products to customers in Kuwait, as evidenced by their presence at the 2017 Auto-Moto."

Located by the fountain at 360 Mall, the Alghanim Auto display treats Auto Moto and mall visitors to a spectacular array of different Ford vehicles; showcasing key nameplates such as the sporty Focus ST dressed in Tangerine Scream and equipped with a sporty 2.0L EcoBoost engine mated to a 6-speed manual transmission. The legendary Mustang Shelby GT350 grabs more than just attention in its special Grabber Blue finish. Driving enthusiasts behind the wheel of a Shelby GT350 can expect to be treated to the

All customers interested in Ford vehicles are invited to visit the Alghanim Auto display at 360 Mall until January 21st, or the Ford Alghanim New Vehicle Showroom, Service and Spare Parts Center in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area, opposite from the Classical Car Museum and Sirbb Circuit. The showroom is open Saturday through Thursday from 9am to 10pm and 2pm to 8pm on Fridays; meanwhile, the Service Center is open from 7am to 7pm every day except Fridays. For added convenience, the Express Service welcomes customers till 10pm and 2pm to 7pm on Fridays.

To get in touch with Ford Alghanim, please call the customer care center at 1898900; visit www.fordalghanim.com or contact us via social media on @fordalghanim (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook).

MARKETS TREAD LOWER BEFORE KEY BREXIT SPEECH

LONDON: Europe's main stock markets slid yesterday but the pound rebounded somewhat, as British Prime Minister Theresa May was set to make a hotly-anticipated speech on Brexit strategy. London stocks declined as investors reacted also to news that annual inflation jumped to a two-and-a-half year peak at 1.6 percent in December.

Britain's premier is expected to say she favors a clean break from the European Union, dismissing a "half-in, half-out" Brexit deal with Brussels. May, speaking at around 1145 GMT, is likely to give further signals that Britain is heading to what analysts call a "hard Brexit". "Not partial membership of the European Union,

associate membership of the European Union, or anything that leaves us half-in, half-out," the prime minister will say, according to an extract of her speech circulated in advance to the media by Downing Street.

"We do not seek to adopt a model already enjoyed by other countries. We do not seek to hold on to bits of membership as we leave," she will add in a speech due in central London. A hard Brexit would see Britain's departure from the single market or tariff-free zone, while also ending the free movement of people. "European shares are trading moderately lower... ahead of May's speech where she is expected to announce her Brexit strategy," said Markus

Huber at trading firm City of London Markets.

"Whilst traders are eagerly awaiting her speech due to multiple leaks over the past few days, it might very well be that most of what the speech will contain is already well known in advance and therefore its impact on stocks and the pound should be limited." Sterling had slumped Monday on reports that May was ready to take the country out of the European Union in a hard Brexit.

The pound had collapsed to \$1.1986, its lowest level since October's "flash crash" that had sent it to a 31-year low of \$1.1841. However, the British currency rebounded slightly yesterday to hold above \$1.21. "After

such a sharp fall yesterday it seems to be in rebound mode at the moment," noted Spreadex analyst Connor Campbell. "The fact that the currency knows much of what May is going to say likely helps, as does the increase in clarity this speech will hopefully bring about."

Asian investors meanwhile moved warily yesterday before May's speech on and ahead of Donald Trump's inauguration on

Friday. While world markets soared in the months after Trump's November election win, he has yet to flesh out precise details of his spending and tax plans for the world's number one economy. There is also unease about his campaign rhetoric in which he promised to tear up trade deals and slap tariffs on China, which has already hit back at his comments, fuelling worries of a possible trade war. — AFP



TOKYO: People are reflected on an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm. — AP

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report											
Tuesday 17 January 2017											
Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low						
Price Index	▲ 77.12	6,301.12	6,224.00	6,301.94	6,212.70						
Weighted Index	▲ 9.43	409.03	399.60	409.52	399.60						
KSX 15	▲ 28.16	957.96	929.80	960.66	929.80						
						Volume	700,438,728				
						Value (KWD)	75,922,729				
						Number of Trades	11,832				

Global										
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change			
MARIN	60	56	2363000	133,880	31	60	▲ 5.0			
IKARUS	46.5	44.5	513,850	23,278	10	46.5	▲ 0.5			
IPG	400	395	51,750	20,450	2	395	— 0.0			
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	850	— 0.0			
ENERGYH	50	49.0	995,000	49,347	58	49.5	▲ 1.0			
GPI	56	52	11,668,963	637,655	190	55	▲ 1.0			
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	99	— 0.0			
Oil & Gas			15,592,563	864,610	291	849.73	▲ 8.76			
KFOUC	234	226	338,463	78,324	39	234	▲ 10.0			
BPC	550	550	484,696	266,583	19	550	— 0.0			
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	670	— 0.0			
ALQURAN	275	255	1,719,335	457,305	48	265	▲ 5.0			
Basic Materials			2,542,494	802,211	106	1128.62	▲ 15.54			
KCEM	455	445	110,000	49,378	6	450	▲ 5.0			
REFRI	310	305	15,959	4,937	2	305	▼ -10.0			
CABLE	450	435	270,500	121,460	22	450	▲ 15.0			
SHIP	192	188	455,428	86,545	27	192	— 0.0			
PCEM	980	980	108,000	105,840	13	980	— 0.0			
PAPER	275	275	5,000	1,375	1	275	▼ -20.0			
MRC	65	59	50,020	3,001	5	65	▲ 1.0			
ACICO	290	285	1,476,654	421,884	54	290	— 0.0			
GMCE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	300	— 0.0			
HCC	120	120	10,000	1,200	1	120	— 0.0			
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	180	— 0.0			
NICBM	212	210	53,500	11,282	5	212	— 0.0			
EQUIPMENT	64	62	5,389,013	339,039	112	62	— 0.0			
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	42.5	— 0.0			
GYPSON	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	95	— 0.0			
SALBOOKH	70	69	592,000	41,326	30	69	▼ -1.0			
AGLTY	700	690	2,881,402	2,012,420	86	690	— 0.0			
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	208	— 0.0			
CLEANING	59	53	7,286,611	418,536	109	59	▲ 4.0			
KGL	68	63	11,487,890	768,105	209	68	▲ 4.0			
KPC	174	174	10,000	1,740	3	174	— 0.0			
HUMANSOFT	2,960	2,880	119,600	350,624	27	2,920	▼ -60.0			
NAFAIS	176	176	201,000	35,376	1	176	▼ -30.0			
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	385	— 0.0			
GFC	37.0	36.0	24,000	870	8	37.0	▲ 2.0			
MAYADEEN	32.0	30.5	13,809,357	424,271	131	31.5	▲ 1.0			
CGC	550	540	23,959	13,137	4	550	▲ 10.0			
MTCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	56	— 0.0			
UPAC	730	730	7,892	5,761	1	730	— 0.0			
ALAFAC	248	240	360,316	88,367	19	246	▲ 4.0			
MUBARRAD	73	70	2,098,082	150,406	64	73	▲ 2.0			
LOGISTICS	74	72	3,825,120	280,806	78	74	▲ 1.0			
SCEM	88	87	397,000	34,659	10	87	▲ 1.0			
GCEM	85	79	2,398,138	198,596	59	85	▲ 5.0			
QIC	84	78	10,117	849	2	84	▲ 4.0			
KCEM	86	81	5,276,476	442,466	80	86	▲ 5.0			
RKWC	97	92	28,929	2,697	5	97	▲ 3.0			
SPEC	85	85	439,100	37,324	18	85	▲ 3.0			
Industrials			59,021,063	6,454,277	1,192	1398.19	▼ -9.88			
KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	142	— 0.0			
NSH	54	54	800	43	1	54	▼ -10.0			
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	95	— 0.0			
CATT	218	214	7,000	1,514	2	214	▼ -4.0			
DANAH	91	88	10,263,646	920,249	134	90	▲ 2.0			
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196	— 0.0			
FOOD	2,620	2,620	170,000	445,400	4	2,620	— 0.0			
Consumer Goods			10,441,446	1,367,206	141	1133.08	▼ -6.38			
MHC	250	250	10,500	2,625	1	250	— 0.0			
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	— 0.0			
YIACO	260	248	472,200	118,311	30	255	— 0.0			
Health Care			482,700	120,936	31	1168.97	— 0.00			
KCIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,160	— 0.0			
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	265	— 0.0			
SULTAN	67	64	1,221,124	80,240	50	66	▲ 2			
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	50	— 0.0			
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	385	— 0.0			
IFAHR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	192	— 0.0			
OUALFAZ	130	124	109,662	13,970	22	130	▲ 6			
MUNTAZAHAT	85	82	3,311,083	275,511	68	85	▲ 3			
JAZEERA	690	670	149,096	101,387	21	690	▲ 20			
SOOR	124	120	92,080	11,285	11	124	▲ 4			
FUTUREKID	106	104	61,131	6,470	4	106	▼ -4			
ALRAI	136	134	1,100,489	147,591	52	136	▼ -2			
ZIMAH	55	52	6,285,995	336,334	132	54	▲ 2			
Mezzan	980	950	620,852	598,796	46	980	▲ 20			
Consumer Services			12,951,512	1,571,584	406	934.68	▲ 10.67			
ZAIN	470	450	15,494,119	7,164,061	289	465	▲ 15			
QOREDOO	1,180	1,160	755	891	3	1,180	— 0.0			
HITSTELEC	61	56	22,041,501	1,299,133	202	61	▲ 5			
VIVA	800	890	31,076	27,770	39	890	— 0.0			
Telecommunications			37,567,451	8,491,854	533	683.31	▲ 16.22			
NBK	710	670	12,516,690	8,687,436	204	700	▲ 30			
GBK	265	248	5,969,337	1,549,869	109	265	▲ 17			
CBK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	425	— 0.0			
ABK	320	305	775,813	240,611	27	320	▲ 15			
ALMUTAHED	425	410	164,485	69,286	17	425	▲ 15			
KIB	222	214	5,176,236	1,131,515	105	220	▲ 6			
BURG	325	305	6,596,893	2,093,729	132	325	▲ 20			
KFIN	610	590	8,982,045	5,367,518	235	610	▲ 20			
BOUBYAN	415	405	4,820,490	1,981,394	115	410	▲ 5			
AUB	204	202	1,507,190	306,907	28	204	— 0.0			
ITHMR	47.0	44.5	19,164,300	888,702	233	47.0	▲ 3			
WARBANK	234	226	11,781,867	2,728,114	375	234	▲ 6			
Banks			77,455,346	25,043,082	1,580	906.32	▲ 29.22			
KINS	290	290	8,539	2,476	3	290	— 0.0			
GINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	720	— 0.0			
AINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	455	— 0.0			
WINS	100	100	171	17	1	100	— 0.0			
KUWAITRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	180	— 0.0			
FTI	50	50	4,500	225	3	50	— 0.0			
WETHAQ	41.0	39.5	213,600	8,566	12	40.0	▲ 0.5			
BKIKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	355	— 0.0			
Insurance			226,810	11,284	19	1049.02	▲ 1.92			

Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
SOKOUK	47.0	44.0	19189617	887,390	239	47.0	▲ 2.5
KRE	74	71	2,123,541	154,163	57	74	▲ 2.0
URC	108	99	1,158,340	120,129	45	106	▲ 4.0
NRE	128	118	14,176,864	1,762,749	158	128	▲ 10.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	360	— 0.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	445</	

INFLATION UP, ECONOMY BETTER, BUT ECB TO CONTINUE STIMULUS

FRANKFURT: Inflation has suddenly jumped in Europe. Growth is picking up. But don't expect the European Central Bank to start withdrawing its extensive stimulus programs just yet. This week, ECB President Mario Draghi is expected to lay out the reasons why the chief monetary authority for the 19-country eurozone intends to stick with its stimulus plan decided at the Dec 8 meeting - to keep pumping newly printed money into the economy through bond purchases at least until the end of the year.

The bank isn't expected to change its interest rates or other monetary stimulus measures when its governing council meets Thursday. But Draghi will find he has some explaining to do to convince stimulus skeptics - particularly in Germany - who think it's time to start looking to wrap up the measures. While they support the economy, the stimulus measures can lower returns on savings in investment and pension funds, an issue for many among Europe's aging populations.

The first reason for Draghi not withdrawing stimulus is simple: The recent turn upward in inflation

from near zero is mostly due to higher oil prices, not to rising wages or other fundamental pressures in Europe's economy. That means that the ECB doesn't feel much closer to its goal of inflation of just under 2 percent. December's inflation reading came in at 1.1 percent. The increase in oil prices may offer only a one-time boost. More importantly, so-called core inflation - which excludes fuel and food, where prices can rise and fall for short-term reasons - hasn't budged over the past few months. It's been stuck at 0.8 or 0.9 percent. And that's the figure the ECB keeps its eye on.

"There remain plenty of reasons for the ECB to remain cautious," Marco Valli, chief eurozone economist, wrote in an emailed research note. "Overall, it would probably take very significant changes to the growth and inflation outlook for the ECB to rethink its policy set-up announced last December."

That's not much comfort to savers in places like Germany, where the inflation rate has reached 1.7 percent but returns on bank deposits remain near zero. That means the value of people's savings shrinks over time - a constant risk with conservative

investments, to be sure. A headline in Germany's Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung called the recent inflation spike "an attack on our money."

'I share the concerns'

German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble was quoted as saying in the Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily that "I share the concerns" of savers, adding that financial advisers would recommend finding higher-yielding investments such as stocks for at least part of one's savings: "We must accept that there are no real interest returns on risk-free investments." Schäuble said the ECB was fulfilling its mandate of seeking price stability "and doing it well."

But he added that it would be "correct, if the ECB began this year to look for the entrance to the exit" from its ultra-cheap money policy. It's that kind of exit talk that Draghi has resisted, denying that December's decision to reduce the monthly size of its money injections into the financial system was in any way "tapering" the stimulus. There's another reason for the ECB to press on: protecting the economy from political shocks.

Elections in France, the Netherlands, Germany and, possibly, Italy could give right-wing, anti-EU forces a chance to demonstrate increased strength at the ballot box. That would continue a trend seen first in the British vote to leave the European Union last June. The British government and the EU haven't started talks yet on what would replace their current barrier-free trading relationship, leaving major uncertainties for businesses.

In France, polls suggest Marine Le Pen of the Front National will at least make the second round of presidential voting. She isn't expected to win. But Donald Trump wasn't expected to win either. Plentiful money and cheap credit could in theory help offset any caution among investors, consumers or businesses to risk lending or borrowing. The written account of the Dec 8 meeting indicated that the 25-member of the governing council saw monetary policy as offering a "steady hand" during political turbulence. The council extended the earliest end date to the purchases from March to year-end, though reducing the amount from 80 billion euros a month to 60 billion euros. — AP



SHAH ALAM: This file picture taken on March 8, 2016 shows a man walking in front of a mural of missing Malaysia Airlines MH370 plane in a back-alley. — AFP

MALAYSIA AIR ON REBOUND AS MH370 SEARCH IS CALLED OFF

HONG KONG: Nearly three years after twin disasters took it to the brink of financial collapse, Malaysia Airlines' new CEO says the airline's recovery is going better than expected. The search for the airline's Flight 370 that went missing in March 2014 with 239 people on board was suspended yesterday. Speaking before the search was called off, CEO Peter Bellew called the disaster an "awful tragedy."

"There's people I work with every day who lost some of their friends, so they're living with that," he said when asked about it yesterday. "We owe it to the people that lost their lives and the families and everything to make sure that the place is a success and that it survives, because that's the right thing to do," Bellew said when asked about the disaster at an industry gathering in Hong Kong.

Bellew did not mention the Flight 370 disaster or the loss of another Boeing 777 carrying 298 people that was shot down over Ukraine months later in his speech to the group. He said the airline is on track to meet key performance goals, including turning an annual profit by 2018 and relisting on the stock exchange the following year. The company's jets are carrying more passengers, including on its London route, he said.

Daunting troubles

London is the carrier's last remaining long-haul route and the only one where it uses superjumbo Airbus A380 jets that must carry many passengers to be profitable. The tragedies in 2014 deepened the carrier's already daunting troubles. An unsustainable network of routes, high operating costs and archaic online systems were symptoms of chronic mismanage-

ment that had saddled the airline with at least \$1.7 billion in losses since 2011.

Bellew's predecessor Christoph Mueller, who left the job unexpectedly early in June, described the airline as a "ship that has many leaks." Updates on the finances of the airline are scant: it was delisted from the stock exchange in 2014 and radically restructured with 6 billion ringgit (\$1.5 billion) in government support. But lower jet fuel prices have since helped cut costs, and revenue has improved thanks to strong traffic growth in the region.

Bellew said an old fashioned sales and marketing blitz helped bring back customers. So did revamping inflight menus and bringing in lie-flat business class seats for the A380s. "Tremendous result, tremendous improvement for us," he said. "Our planes are so full at the moment that our own staff are not able to use their standby tickets." The airline's load factor, an indicator of how many seats are sold, averaged 82 percent in the most recent quarter and rose to 90 percent in December, Bellew said. Airlines with a load factor higher than 80 percent are generally profitable, analysts say.

Just over a year ago the airline was operating 737s with five and 10 passengers on board. In late 2015, its A380s, which can carry nearly 400 passengers, were flying to London with just 50 to 60, he said. Bellew said the airline's lucrative business class bookings for the next six months were double those of a year earlier. He attributed the improvement to having apologized for the typical airline practice of putting cheaper fares on its company website instead of giving them to agents. "I personally apologized. I'm sure they thought I was nuts," he said. — AP

ZAMBIA'S NEW WAY TO BEAT DROUGHT: SOLAR GRAIN MILLS

LUSAKA: For Inonge Imutowana, buying food for her family of six is becoming increasingly costly. On the outskirts of the capital, a 25-kilo bag of staple mealie meal that cost 65 kwacha a year ago now is selling for 140 kwacha (\$14). Across Zambia, drought that swept across the region last year, leading to widespread crop failure, has sent cereal prices soaring.

The high cost of buying food has persuaded a share of small-scale farmers to hang onto their maize, rice and cassava harvests and mill them for their own household use and for their livestock, rather than selling the grain into the market. But a combination of higher fuel prices and unstable electrical supplies - both the result of lack of rainfall hitting hydropower - mean many small grain mills are charging higher prices for milling, or don't have sufficient capacity. But Zambia's government hopes it has an answer: Since 2015 it has been installing hundreds of small solar-powered mills in rural areas as a way to help hold down the price of producing food.

Cheaper, closer

One of those, built last November, is

now operating just seven kilometers from Imutowana's farm, which lies about 50 kilometers east of Lusaka. "Before this, we used to take (our grain) to a diesel-operated hammer mill (about 20 kilometers away) or buy commercially produced mealie meal in smaller quantities, just as we could afford it," said the 54-year-old farmer.

Now "it is cheaper milling here," she said. According to the Zambia Cooperation Federation (ZCF), a government agency that is installing the mills, over 250 have been set up so far out of 2,000 planned. Patrick Mumbi, an operator of one of the plants, said the 60 solar panels that power the mill can generate 15 megawatts of electricity.

"To mill maize or rice, we need less than nine megawatts of electricity" each day to process about two tonnes of grain, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. That means "we have surplus electricity output". Unfortunately, the plant does not have any means of capturing that power in batteries, to charge cellphones or provide lighting at night, he said. The Chinese-manufactured solar mills cost about \$70,000 each including installation, according to ZCF. — Reuters

MONEY AND POWER: SAMSUNG EMBROILED IN KOREA SCANDAL

FAMILY-RUN CONGLOMERATE STILL REELING

SEOUL: Major industrial firms are so intertwined with power in South Korea that citizens joke they live in the "Republic of Samsung." Now the heart of that republic is in the eye of a political storm. The family-run conglomerate is still reeling from last year's Galaxy Note 7 recall, its patriarch is on his death bed, and prosecutors on Monday sought the arrest of his son and heir on charges of bribery, embezzlement and perjury.

When Lee Jae-Yong emerged from a marathon 22-hour questioning session last week, his taut, fixed hint of a smile gave nothing away, seemingly characteristic of the electronics giant's opaque leadership. "There is this widespread perception that the Lee family is above the rule of law," said Shim Jung-Taik, an author of several books on Samsung and its corporate culture. "Many South Koreans hope that prosecutors investigating the case will prove that wrong," he said.

Samsung, whose turnover is equivalent to a fifth of South Korea's GDP, is one of several sprawling conglomerates, known as "chaebols", that dominate the country's economic landscape. The chaebols are credited with powering Seoul's state-directed growth in the 1970s and 80s, pulling the war-ravaged nation out of poverty. But critics say their founding families run them less as global firms and more as private fiefdoms that enjoy deep-rooted ties to the government.

When millions of people took to the streets to demand the ouster of now impeached President Park Geun-Hye in the latest bribery scandal, they also demanded the paymasters be punished. "Street rallies of unprecedented magnitude apparently convinced lawmakers and prosecutors that they could no longer ignore the public anger over corporate corruption," Shim told AFP.

Lee, vice chairman of flagship subsidiary Samsung Electronics, was hauled in over accusations he bribed Park's secret confidante Choi Soon-Sil with nearly \$40 million to seek policy favors. If convicted he could be sentenced to several years in prison, but powerful businessmen have previously met lenient fates in South Korean courts.

Lee's own father, Samsung's longtime patriarch Lee Kun-Hee, who is credited with turning the once-obscure manufacturer into a global powerhouse, was found guilty in 1996 of bribing former President Roh Tae-Woo. He was given a suspended jail term, but received a presidential pardon a year later. Lee senior was convicted of tax evasion and breach of duty in 2008 for creat-



SEOUL: This file photo taken on October 27, 2016 shows a man walking past the logo of Samsung Electronics at a flagship store. — AFP

ing secret slush funds worth billions of dollars - again receiving a suspended jail term and another presidential pardon.

'Hard lesson'

The Lee family directly own only five percent of Samsung shares but control the group via a complex web of cross-shareholdings between group subsidiaries. Samsung allegedly bribed Choi to secure a state approval for the controversial merger of two Samsung units in 2015, seen as a key step to ensure a smooth succession for Lee. Many external investors opposed the deal, saying it wilfully undervalued one of the firms involved. But it went through after Seoul's state pension fund voted in favor.

"Such lack of transparency is Samsung's biggest weakness that makes it vulnerable to outside criticism... or to political pressure" to offer bribes, said Kim Sang-Jo, economics professor at Hansung University. The timing of the crisis could have not been worse for the 48-year-old Lee, who has struggled to prove he deserves to take over the firm from his bedridden father.

Last year's recall of the Galaxy Note 7, when

the world's top smartphone maker was forced to discontinue its flagship handset over exploding batteries, damaged the son's nascent leadership. Lee's two sisters - especially Lee Boo-Jin, 46, who leads the group's fast-growing hotel business - have proven to be capable managers, while some critics suggest Lee has "a Minus touch" after several of his pet projects fizzled out.

Lee's absence might have a limited impact on the day-to-day operations of Samsung, where each unit has its own CEO and overall business strategies are set by an elite team of executives at its Future Strategy Office. But in the long term, Samsung's future hinges on reform of its byzantine governance structure, Kim said, adding Lee appeared to be more willing to listen to critics than his father.

The group said last year that it was considering splitting Samsung Electronics into two units, as suggested by many critics including the US activist hedge fund Elliot Management. "Samsung should learn a hard lesson from this whole crisis that it should reinvent itself as a truly global, transparent entity," said Kim, "whether Lee Jae-Yong goes to jail or not." — AFP

FUKUSHIMA EVACUEES FACE HARDSHIP AS HOUSING SUBSIDIES TO BE SLASHED

TOKYO: Nearly six years after Noriko Matsumoto and her children fled Japan's Fukushima region, fearing for their health after the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl, they confront a new potential hardship - the slashing of vital housing subsidies. Matsumoto is among nearly 27,000 people who left areas not designated as mandatory evacuation zones, spooked by high levels of radiation after nuclear meltdowns unleashed by a powerful earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011.

Now, as the Fukushima local government

prepares to slash unconditional housing assistance on March 31, many face the painful choice of returning to areas they still fear are unsafe, or reconciling to financial hardship, especially families scattered across different sites, such as Matsumoto's. "Because both the national and the local governments say we evacuated 'selfishly,' we're being abandoned - they say it's our own responsibility," Matsumoto, 55, told a news conference, her voice trembling. "I feel deep anger at their throwing us away."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a local

official said that although unconditional subsidies end on March 31, smaller amounts of aid will still be provided, if needed. At the time of the magnitude 9 quake, Matsumoto lived with her husband and two daughters in Koriyama city, about 55 km (35 miles) west of the crippled Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant. Authorities declared a no-go zone around the plant, but Koriyama was outside its 30-km (19-mile) radius.

When her younger daughter, then 12, began suffering nosebleeds and diarrhea, Matsumoto took the children and moved to Kanagawa prefecture, bordering Tokyo. Her husband, who runs a restaurant, stayed behind to ensure they could pay bills and the mortgage on their home. But high travel costs mean they can only meet every one or two months, and they face social pressure.

"People like us, who have evacuated voluntarily to escape radiation, have been judged by our peers as if we selfishly evacuated for personal reasons," said Matsumoto. What she called her "only lifeline" is a housing subsidy the Fukushima prefectural government pays to voluntary evacuees, who numbered 26,601 by October 2016. The payment is typically 90,000 yen (\$795) for a household of two or more in Matsumoto's area, a Fukushima government official said, adding that full rents are covered until March 31. "Things here now are safe, but there are people who are still worried about safety and we understand that," he said.

Subsidies, if needed, will be adjusted to suit individual households, rather than handed out unconditionally, he added. A city official said radiation levels in Koriyama are now safe, dissipated by time and clean-up efforts. But "hot spots" remain, say activists, and Matsumoto still worries. "I'm a parent, and so I'll protect my daughter," she said. "Even if I have to go into debt, I'll keep her safe from radiation." — Reuters



TOKYO: Nuclear researcher Hidetake Ishimaru (L) shows documents as Noriko Matsumoto, who left her house in Fukushima prefecture after the 2011 nuclear disaster, looks on during a press conference. — AFP

GULF BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF MOBILE AND ONLINE BANKING DRAW

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank launched a special draw competition based on usage of innovative, easy-to-use biometric Mobile Banking App "Blinking to Bank" and Online Banking platform during the month of December 2016. Customers were encouraged to register, use and experience the world class service and earn a chance to enter into a draw to win an iPhone 7. The draw was conducted on Thursday, 12 January 2017, at Gulf Bank headquarters in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce.

The winners were:

- Mubarak Rashed Abdullah AlAjmi
- Galen Daniel Roue
- Amal Salah Matar Marzouk

Gulf Bank was the first institution in the Middle East region to launch a biometric facial recognition Mobile Banking App and at the same time the Bank also launched a revamped Online Banking platform. This bilingual Arabic and English App is available for download onto smartphone devices through the Apple App store and the Android Play store.

Gulf Bank's Mobile Banking App, which has already received international recognition and several awards, is simple and easy to use, with each transaction only a few clicks away. The Bank's customers can access their personal accounts and any number of services by logging into the App

through one of two methods: by blinking their eyes at their smartphone camera ("Blinking to Bank") following their fingerprint recognition (Touch ID), or through the use of a traditional password registration.

The services included in the Mobile Banking App and Online Banking are: checking account details; making ad-hoc transfers; biometric verification for transfers; automatic IBAN data population; creating a standing order; setting future-dated transactions; and adding and managing beneficiaries. Transferring funds is also simplified since the application will populate the remaining IBAN Beneficiary Bank details automatically. Customers can also use the App to securely share information including IBAN number and account holder name sharing, IBAN certificate sharing and printing, transaction confirmation sharing, and statement sharing; and much more.

Additionally, Gulf Bank's credit card customers can check their Gulf Rewards point balances, as well as instantly redeem their Gulf Points for free travel and hotel stays. They can also pay their credit card bills; receive cash advances from credit cards; apply for new ATM and debit cards; activate new credit cards; as well as report and block stolen or lost cards (debit and credit). Furthermore, the new App allows customers to review their Al Danah chances, view and share their Al Danah certificate, or even open an Al Danah account.



MERCEDES-BENZ NEW SUV RANGE: AVAILABLE IN FULL FORCE IN KUWAIT



KUWAIT: Living up to its reputation of delivering off-road dominance and extraordinary on-road excellence, AR Albisher and Z. Alkazemi Company, the authorized general distributor of Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait has started the New Year strong, announcing the availability of Mercedes-Benz's complete SUV range in their Shuwaikh showroom. With seven models and nearly 20 model variants, the SUV family's G-Class, GLA, GLE, GLC and GLS, each offer something different, suiting every need and preference whether for the adventure seeker, off road explorer or growing family.

"The arrival of the GLC Coupe in December marks the seventh and final SUV to arrive in Kuwait, and we are thrilled to be able to offer our customers such a stellar family in its entirety," said Michael Ruehle, Chief Executive Officer, AR Albisher and Z Alkazemi Co. "From the iconic G-Class to the sophisticated GLS, this is a series of high class performance vehicles for people who want added space, luxury and capability without having to sacrifice on style or performance. Buying a Mercedes-Benz SUV is a lifestyle choice for those who will not settle for mediocre," he added.

Exhilaration and efficiency

Artfully combining excellent all-wheel-drive technology with superb craftsmanship and design, the premium Mercedes-Benz SUV range was created to endure the challenges of all circumstances, offering a combination of pulling capacity, passenger seating, increased safety and off-road capabilities.

As is typical of the G-Class, the new models retain the familiar sturdy basis of body and ladder-type frame, which still offers generous reserves to cope with the increased power. Also retained is the unrivalled off-road performance with permanent all-wheel drive, low-range gearbox and three differential locks that can be

engaged/disengaged while on the move. With 571hp (420kW) from its AMG biturbo V8 and 760Nm of torque, the Mercedes-AMG G63 is a remarkable combination of exhilaration and efficiency, as is its G 65 AMG and G 500 counterparts which effortlessly master spontaneous changes of scenery. Also available in showrooms, concept car turned series production G 500 4x4s knows no boundaries.

With the world's most powerful series-production 4-cylinder car engine, a high-performance braking system, a sports transmission, performance-oriented 4MATIC all-wheel drive, speed-sensitive sports steering and a sports suspension, the Mercedes-Benz GLA reinterprets the compact SUV segment in convincing style. The agile crossover is available as GLA 250 4MATIC and GLA 45 AMG, the latter high performance SUV also shining with low emission and fuel consumption figures.

Innovative technologies

The Mercedes-Benz GLC sets new standards with its state-of-the-art systems, dynamic design and modern aesthetic, excelling under all operating conditions. The GLC 250 4MATIC and the GLC 300 4MATIC offer a 4-cylinder petrol engine with direct injection and turbocharging, while the V6 AMG 43 goes from 0-100km in 4.9 seconds. The GLC 300 4MATIC comes with the sporty AMG Line exterior - with distinctive AMG body styling, 19-inch AMG wheels, chrome package, and enhanced performance and driving dynamics. Making a bold statement with its sporty silhouette, the GLC 250 4MATIC CoupÉ fuses SUV capability, coupe agility and Mercedes-Benz style.

Innovative technologies include its all-wheel drive system 4MATIC, automatic transmission 9G-TRONIC and air suspension AIR BODY CONTROL. The DYNAMIC BODY CONTROL adjustable steel suspension is the highlight when it comes

to driving dynamics - all features which enable an extremely individual set-up for thrilling sportiness or pleasant comfort.

Updated name, extended model range and even more power: the new Mercedes-GLS is an SUV prepared for any occasion. Thanks to the 4MATIC permanent all-wheel drive system available as standard, the GLS delivers outstanding dynamics and precise handling, even in tough driving conditions. The advantages of the new GLS include best on-road and off-road handling, outstanding spaciousness and high levels of active and passive safety. The new GLS is available in four models including the GLS 400 4MATIC and the GLS 500 4MATIC. Providing added sportiness and dominance, the GLS 63 is also available with AMG power, with a 5.5-litre twin-turbo V8 engine guaranteeing its driver an exclusive experience. Reaching from 0-100 km/h in 4.3 seconds, it offers sports car agility and spontaneous throttle response. In addition to the basic variant developing 410 kW (557 hp), there is also the highly sporty AMG GLS 63 S-Model to choose from, which is rated at 430 kW (585 hp).

Also offering a sleek Coupé variant, the AMG GLS 63 CoupÉ and AMG GLS 63 S CoupÉ both offer a powerful, hand-built AMG 5.5-litre V8 biturbo engine and a wealth of AMG-tuned enhancements that add unrivalled performance to its sleek coupÉ styling. Successor to the GL, the new GLS also sets standards in the world of SUVs as it confirms its position as the "S-Class among SUVs". The only full-fledged seven-seater in the premium SUV segment boasts ample spaciousness and combines luxury with impressive levels of comfort, agile dynamics and best-in-class safety. With a peak output of 430 kW (585 hp), discrete suspension and the revised AMG SPEEDSHIFT PLUS 7G-TRONIC transmission, the Mercedes-AMG GLS 63 4MATIC represents the pinnacle of the GLS model series.



FORD GT SUPERCAR'S DIGITAL INSTRUMENT DISPLAY IS THE DASHBOARD OF THE FUTURE

DUBAI: Like the glass cockpit in airplanes and race cars, the all-new Ford GT features an all-digital instrument display in the car's dashboard that quickly and easily presents information to the driver, based on five special driving modes.

The innovative 10-inch wide digital instrument display is far advanced from the original Ford GT, when the cockpit was hardwired with a fixed set of analog gauges, buttons and knobs across the dashboard that had to address almost every situation. "Driver focus and attention are key with such high performance," said Jamal Hameedi, chief engineer, Ford Performance. "We've designed the GT with a sleek digital instrument display that changes depending on driving mode in ways that are important and usable to the driver."

Ford engineers and designers created the state-of-the-art 10-inch wide digital gauge cluster to be customisable, elegant, and able to tailor information to each drive mode, to help ensure customers taking the Ford GT to its limits are provided the data they need to make critical decisions behind the wheel in the most efficient possible way.

Defining the visual future of in-car data

The Ford GT programme presented a unique opportunity to re-imagine the instrument cluster, further expanding what a connected car can be and previewing the future of Ford vehicles. Its layout is designed around which data is most important, when to present it, and how to show information in a way that's most expedient for a driver to process.

The design is executed on a high-resolution display that matches the sleek, purpose-driven cabin. Data is conveyed in crisp, high-contrast graphics.

To test the initial design, Le Mans winner Scott Maxwell of Multimatic(r) was invited to the Ford GT simulation lab to offer feedback. Maxwell suggested changing the tachometer to provide an expanded view of the EcoBoost(r) V6 redline approach for greater peripheral visibility. The race car driver also recommended tweaks to the prioritization of performance information.

Getting every pixel perfect

As advanced design work transitioned to putting prototypes on the road, Ford Performance reached out to suppliers at the cutting edge of data display. Ford designers and engineers worked closely with Pektron (for electronic design, development, implementation and manufacture) and Conjure (for graphical design) to create forward-looking renderings that are painstakingly animated, include

highlighted font, color and responsiveness, and avoid driver distraction and eye strain.

The five drive modes are easily accessed through steering wheel-mounted controls, to help keep eyes and attention on the road and hands on the wheel. Each mode presents information differently - prioritizing what is crucial for each environment and tailoring the display to the given context. How information is graphically displayed with each drive mode:

- Normal mode displays information in a purposeful, businesslike manner. The theme is simple; the speedometer is centred and bold, gear selection is to the right, fuel and temperature are top left. The hockey-stick-shaped tachometer displays in a compressed scale for lower rpm, as the engine revs so quickly the lower counts mean almost nothing to the driver. The 3,000-to-7,000-rpm range dominates the top of the display

- Wet mode carries many of the same information concepts over from normal mode, using a blue theme and a "wet floor" concept. Graphics under the speedometer emulate the shine of wet asphalt to remind the driver of the mode selection

- Sport mode adjusts information priorities. Front and centre is gear selection, with the speedometer off to the right and less prominent. It's displayed in an aggressive orange theme and is the preferred mode for most test drivers

- Track mode presents a stark combination of black background and highly legible text and graphics, in a crisp, red theme that's easy for the eye to pick up in a fast-paced environment. Gear selection and engine speed are displayed prominently, while coolant temperature, oil pressure, oil temperature and fuel level - rendered as a percentage rather than kilometers to empty - are bottom right

- V-Max offers an entirely different display - purposeful and pared down. Specifically tailored to pursuing maximum top speed, it displays a large, centered speedometer, with tachometer reduced to just a line with indicator dot for minimal distraction. Coolant temperature, oil pressure, oil temperature and turbocharger boost are displayed to the right, with fuel level displayed top left

"We spent an enormous amount of time getting this just right," says Nick Terzes, Ford GT engineering supervisor. "The result is simple, but achieving it perfectly can be a challenge." Joey Hand, winner of the 24 Hours of Le Mans at the wheel of Ford GT, raved about the different drive modes recently on a visit to Las Vegas Motor Speedway. "This is exactly what I want to see when I want to see it," he said. "You guys did a great job."



BAHRAIN GEARING UP TO HOST SIXTH GCC FINANCIAL FORUM

KUWAIT: Euromoney Conferences, the world's leading organiser of conferences for cross-border investment and capital markets and co-host, The Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB), yesterday announced the return of the GCC Financial Forum. The sixth annual event, which has grown to become the leading conference for financial services in the GCC since its inception in 2012, will take place in Manama on 27 and 28 February 2017. 600 financiers, economists, investors, bankers and policy makers are expected to attend the Forum to debate and discuss how the Gulf countries can fund their future.

Khalid Al Rumaihi, Chief Executive of the Bahrain Economic Development Board, said: "Diversification agendas across the GCC are generating exciting new opportunities for the private sector to offer sustainable solutions. In Bahrain, where financial services are the second largest contributor to the economy, we are particularly committed to working with the industry to facilitate sustainable long-term growth. Bringing together representatives from across industry and government, the GCC Financial Forum provides decision-makers with a unique platform to share the ideas that will shape the region's response to the challenges and opportunities ahead, and we are delighted to be working with the Forum for a sixth consecutive year."

Commenting on the Forum, Victoria Behn, head of Middle East and Africa at Euromoney Conferences said: "We are proud to host the GCC Financial Forum for the sixth consecutive year in partnership with the Bahrain Economic Development Board and we are excited to present a significantly upgraded event for 2017. Our flagship Forum has uniquely established itself as a truly international gathering which provides an ideal platform for financial experts, business leaders and policy-makers to exchange ideas, develop new contacts and participate in informed, impartial and leading-edge discussions."

"This year, our objective is to look at how the financial markets in the Gulf are evolving, to examine the region's financing challenges and to explore how the creation of vibrant and innovative approaches to financial intermediation can provide effective solutions to these challenges." Topics to be discussed at the event will include: the impact of global political events on the economic outlook; oil market dynamics with regards to demand, pricing and supply scenarios; fiscal strategy on tax, fees, non-hydrocarbon

revenues; liquidity constraints, the financial sector outlook; capital markets development; Fintech and innovation in payments; the role of private capital and the search for new sources of funding.

Euromoney Conferences invites interested participants to join the debate and to voice their opinions on the conference themes on Twitter, using the hashtag #emGCC. For further information and to view the 2017 agenda, please visit the Euromoney Conferences website: <http://www.euromoneyconferences.com/bahrain.html>

Euromoney Conferences, since the late 1970s has been the world's leading organiser of high-level financial and investment conferences. The conference business grew out of Euromoney, the strategic magazine of international finance, money and capital markets that has long been regarded by the banking and investment community as the leading publication in its field. Euromoney has held conferences in over 65 countries worldwide.



Khalid Al Rumaihi, Chief Executive of the Bahrain Economic Development Board

CANON TOPS JAPANESE COMPANY IN US PATENTS

KUWAIT: Canon, leader in imaging solutions, yesterday announced that it was again ranked first among Japanese companies and third overall for the number of US patents awarded in 2016, according to the latest ranking of preliminary patent results issued by IFI CLAIMS Patent Services in January 2017.

As part of its research and development efforts, Canon actively pursues patents in a number of countries and regions, while taking into consideration the business strategies and technology and product trends.

Among these, the United States, with its many high-tech companies and large market scale, represents a particularly important region in terms of business expansion and technology alliances.

Technological innovation continues to be a high priority for Canon and a key attribute to



its corporate DNA, with continued investment in developing a wide variety of powerful products, solutions and services within its core markets and new business areas. Through close cooperation between Canon's technology and intellectual property divisions, the Company aims to improve its technological capabilities while further enhancing its intellectual property rights. Canon has ranked in the top five patent holders for 31 consecutive years.

KASPERSKY LAB SURVEY SHOWS USERS' BAD PASSWORD HABITS

DUBAI: Internet users across the globe are yet to master how to use passwords effectively to protect themselves online. Research from Kaspersky Lab has shown that people are putting their online safety at risk by making bad password decisions and simple password mistakes that may have far-reaching consequences.

The research unearthed three common password mistakes that are putting a large number of Internet users at risk: (1) people use the same password for multiple accounts, meaning that if one password is leaked, several accounts can be hacked. (2) People use weak passwords that are easy to crack and (3) people store their passwords insecurely, defeating the point of having passwords at all.

"Considering the amount of private and sensitive information that we store online today, people

should be taking better care to protect themselves with effective password protection. This seems obvious, but many might not realize that they are falling into the trap of making simple password management mistakes. These mistakes, in turn, are effectively like leaving the front door open to emails, bank accounts, personal files and more", says Andrei Mochola, Head of Consumer Business at Kaspersky Lab.

The research shows large numbers of people (almost one in five - 18%) have faced an account hacking attempt but few have effective and cyber-savvy password security in place. For example, only a third (30%) of Internet users create new passwords for different online accounts and a worrying one-in-10 people use the same password for all their online accounts. Should one password be leaked, these people are therefore at risk of having

every account hacked and exploited.

People are also not creating passwords that are strong enough to protect them from hacking and extortion. Only half (47%) use a combination of upper and lowercase letters in their passwords and two-in-three (64%) use a mixture of letters and numbers. That's despite the fact that users think their online banking (51%), email (39%) and online shopping accounts (37%) need strong passwords.

The study also shows that people are mistreating their passwords - by sharing them with others and using insecure methods to remember them. Almost a third (28%) has shared a password with a close family member, and one-in-ten (11%) has shared a password with friends, making it possible for passwords to be unintentionally leaked. Over one-in-five (22%) also admitted to writing their passwords down in a notepad to help

remember them. Even if a password is strong, this leaves the user vulnerable because other people may see and use it.

Mochola continued, "People are still making simple mistakes when it comes to online passwords. The best passwords cannot be found in the dictionary. They are long, with upper and lowercase letters, numbers and punctuation marks. However, with people having so many online accounts today, it's not easy to remember a secure password for everything. Using a password management solution can help people remember and generate strong passwords to minimize the risk of account hacking online."

Kaspersky Password Manager securely stores all passwords, addresses and credit card details, and synchronizes them across all devices so that users only need to remember one master password.

VIETNAM COURTS JAPANESE HIGH-TECH INVESTMENT

HANOI: Vietnam is courting high-tech Japanese investment and wants Tokyo to become its top investor, its premier said yesterday during a visit by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Japan is the second largest foreign investor in communist Vietnam, a manufacturing hub in southeast Asia seeking to expand exports from apparel and agriculture to high-value goods like electronics and automobiles.

"Vietnam wants Japan to become the top investor in Vietnam," Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc said yesterday at a business forum co-hosted by Abe and attended by company tycoons from both sides.

Vietnam has become a fierce competitor to regional neighbours like Thailand, Malaysia, China and Taiwan in tech manufacturing.

Electronic giants like Panasonic, Samsung, Foxconn and Intel have all made significant investments, taking advantage of Vietnam's comparatively cheap but increasingly well-educated and youthful workforce.

Ties between Tokyo and Hanoi have warmed in recent years, and the world's number three economy has invested heavily in Vietnam as growth back home has been dragged down by a greying and shrinking population.

The Asian allies have also cosied up in the face of separate disputes with regional powerhouse China over disputed territory in regional contested waters.

Japanese firms are currently involved in more than 3,000 projects worth roughly \$42 billion in Vietnam, mostly in the manufacturing sector. It is the leading investor in Vietnam after South Korea.

Tokyo is also looking for new markets to sell major construction projects to.

Abe called on Vietnam to "continue supporting Japanese enterprises (and) listening to experiences from Japanese companies in high-tech areas".

He said earlier that investments would focus on "projects to upgrade high quality infrastructure".

The leaders did not outline specific areas of investment, but officials said earlier that Japan was interested in high-speed railway projects and airport infrastructure.

Earlier during Abe's two-day trip, officials said Japan's Mitsubishi is investing in a thermal power plant in Vietnam's central Ha Tinh province.

Members of Vietnam's business community welcomed the push toward high-tech at the meeting, which was attended by several Japanese companies, including Mitsubishi, Canon and Fukuyama Transporting.

"(It) will surely contribute to improving the quality of life in Vietnam," Nguyen Hoang, CEO of Vietnam's N&G Investment, told AFP.

Vietnam, an authoritarian one-party state, has become a hot spot for private investment in recent years, especially in manufacturing and consumer sectors.

Foreign investment shot up nine percent last year compared to the year before, hitting a record \$15.8 billion. Though growth has remained relatively strong in recent years, its GDP rose 6.2 percent last year, down from 2015 and falling shy of its growth target of between 6.7 and 7.00 percent.

Abe's visited Philippines, Australia and Indonesia on his six-day tour of Asia-Pacific before his final stop in Vietnam.

He said on Monday that Japan would provide six new patrol vessels to Vietnam as he called for maritime security in Asia. — AFP



PARIS: Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg (C) gives a press conference next to French businessman and founder of start-up incubator "Station F" Xavier Niel (sitting R) head of Station F Roxanne Varza (2ndR) and Paris' mayor Anne Hidalgo at "Station F" headquarters in Paris yesterday. — AFP

FACEBOOK MOVES TO HEAD OFF TOUGHER REGULATION IN GERMANY

BERLIN/MUNICH: Facebook is stepping up efforts to head off tougher regulation by Germany, a fierce critic of the social media network operator, with top managers visiting Germany and saying they would do more to combat fake news and hate speech.

Top German lawmakers are planning legislation this year to force Facebook to remove incitements to hate crimes from its web pages within 24 hours or face fines, a push that could force the social media giant to bear more responsibility for content posted by users.

Chancellor Angel Merkel, who is running for a fourth term this year, has warned that the Internet is not "a space that is free from the law".

Facebook's COO Sheryl Sandberg visited Berlin on Sunday to meet with German government officials considering new regulations on Facebook, according to a Berlin-based source at a rival Internet company.

In an interview with Germany's top-selling daily paper Bild published yesterday, she said Facebook could not single-handedly deal with hate speech and fake news posted on the network but had to work with third parties.

Facebook on Sunday announced a partnership with German third-party fact-checking organisation Correctiv, promising to update its social media platforms in Germany "within weeks" to reduce the dissemination of fake news.

"We don't want to decide what the truth is, and I don't believe anyone wants us to do that," said Sandberg, Facebook's second-most powerful executive after founder and Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg. "When we say that we can't take it on ourselves, that doesn't mean that we

don't want to take any responsibility. We do take responsibility."

The issue has taken on more urgency amid concern by Germany's political establishment that a proliferation of fake news and racist content, particularly about the 900,000 refugees that arrived here last year, could sway public opinion in the election campaign.

Dan Rose, who is in charge of partnerships for Facebook, on Monday acknowledged that it was no longer a simple communications platform.

"There is no question we play an important role in the media landscape," Rose told the DLD technology conference in Munich. "There are people who are discovering their news and consuming their video and other media types on Facebook ... We take that role seriously." Rose said it aimed to expand that model to other countries.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Tougher legislation poses challenges for the company's lucrative business model. Like most media companies it is based on generating advertising revenue but without all the costs of producing and managing content.

Analysts expect Facebook to have generated \$27.3 billion in revenue last year, more than 43 percent of which is set to fall to the bottom line as net profit.

But measures that would legally oblige such social media platforms to set up "complaints offices" and plough more resources into deleting hate posts or fake news would chip away at that profit.

A year ago Germany got Facebook, Twitter

and Google's YouTube to sign up to a code of conduct, which included a pledge to delete hate speech from their websites within 24 hours. A similar voluntary code was adopted by the European Union in May.

A September report by a group that monitors hate speech said it found Facebook deleted about 46 percent of illegal content reported by users in Germany within 24 hours, more than the 10 percent and 1 percent removed by YouTube and Twitter respectively.

German Justice Minister Maas wants that rate to be increased to 70 percent. "A company that earns billions from the Internet also has a social responsibility," he told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper last month.

Social networks such as Facebook are concerned that if they actively search for illegal content such as child pornography or incitement to terrorism, they could be deemed legally liable for such content.

To combat that disincentive, the European Union is considering adopting a so-called 'good Samaritan' principle from the United States that would exempt platforms from liability in such cases, according to an EU Commission official.

Senior conservative lawmaker Volker Kauder has said platforms should also provide information when requested about the identities of those posting fake news and hate speech.

"They say there is too much (hate speech)," he said. "But a big auto manufacturer that produces millions of cars can't say: 'I produce so many cars that I can't guarantee they are all secure.' No, that is not on. I expect and demand from Facebook that laws are upheld." — Reuters



BUTHIDAUNG: This photograph taken on January 14, 2017 shows a Myanmar immigration officer (L) using an eye scanner on a resident during the personal data verification process, as part of requirements for the registration of smart identity cards, in Buthidaung town located in Rakhine State. Rohingya Muslims living in Rakhine State are excluded from the smart card programme as they are not classified as citizens by the government and only citizens will be issued the identity cards. — AFP

APP STORES IN CHINA MUST REGISTER WITH THE STATE

SHANGHAI: App stores in China must register with the state from Monday, a government statement said, as China tightens its control over the internet. App stores are "not strict" when they examine and approve apps, the China Cyberspace Administration, the country's internet watchdog, said in a statement.

Lax standards have led to the "frequent appearance of apps that spread illegal information, encroach on users' rights and contain security hazards," it added in the statement issued last week. China's ruling Communist party oversees a vast censorship apparatus designed to censor online content deemed politically sensitive, while blocking some Western websites and the services of internet giants including Facebook, Twitter and Google.

It passed a controversial cybersecurity bill in November, tightening restrictions on online freedom of speech and imposing new rules on online service providers. The clampdown on app stores came just after Apple removed the New York Times from its China app store, stating that it was in violation of local regulations.

In the absence of Google Play, which is blocked, China is home to a variety of different Android app stores, though the landscape is mostly dominated by internet giants Baidu, Tencent, and Alibaba.

The first two companies control nearly half the Android app stores run in the country as of the third quarter of last year, according to a report from consulting firm Analysys.

Internet legal expert You Yunting of DeBund Law Offices told AFP the move "definitely has a

political agenda", but as Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent were already managed by the internet watchdog, the impact "won't be too big".

Meanwhile, Baidu Inc., which operates China's most popular Internet search engine, said yesterday it has hired a former Microsoft executive and artificial intelligence specialist to

improve its competitiveness in the field.

The Beijing-based company said Qi Lu was named group president and chief operating officer in charge of products, technology and sales. Qi, who has a Ph.D. from Carnegie Mellon University, previously was Microsoft Corp's global executive vice president. — Agencies



AHMEDABAD: Indian student Harshwardhan Zala (C) meets with Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officers to show them a drone he has designed at the Rapid Action Force (RAF) Camp on the outskirts of Ahmedabad on Sunday. Zala began working on a prototype of the landmine-detecting drone after reading about high army casualties caused by landmines, and has signed an agreement to look into the possibility of wider production. — AFP

CHILE TO INVITE BIDS ON VALUE-ADDED LITHIUM TECH

SANTIAGO: Chile will hold a tender in April to encourage companies to use its vast lithium resources to move it up the value chain with cathode or battery production, the head of the country's development agency told Reuters yesterday.

It is pressing ahead on deals with international firms as relations remain bitter with local lithium producer SQM SQM_pb.SN, where royalties arbitration is expected to take at least another year, said Eduardo Bitran, executive vice president of Corfo, which manages Chile's lithium leases.

The price of lithium, a rare bright spot in commodities, has rocketed in recent years and is expected to continue to rise alongside demand. Lithium plays a small but essentially irreplaceable part in powering electric car batteries.

The tender to develop value-added lithium technology in Chile should conclude by November with two Chinese companies and a Korean associate having shown interest, Bitran said in an interview late Monday.

The government's transparency website shows representatives from battery maker Vision Group and rare earths firm Kanhoo met with Bitran last November to present a proposal "for a lithium hydroxide plant and a lithium battery

plant" in Chile. "To make value-added products in Chile will be huge," Bitran said. "It allows us to create a significant industry."

Chile currently exports high-grade lithium carbonate but the process of turning it into cathodes and batteries takes place elsewhere.

Companies bidding in the tender will have access to cheaper lithium. Corfo recently signed a deal with world lithium leader Albemarle to allow it to boost output at its Salar de Atacama facility.

As well as the state receiving royalties, some of that production will be sold at a preferential price within Chile, to encourage investment. That should be the model for future deals, Bitran said. "For the Salar de Atacama we have established the floor," he said. "These are the minimum terms for any future agreement."

The deal covers about a quarter of the Salar with the rest leased to SQM under a pre-existing contract that Corfo wants to terminate early, alleging SQM has underpaid. SQM maintains it has fully complied with its contractual obligations.

Bitran has been a critic of SQM, which was privatized under dictator Augusto Pinochet in the 1980s and still is controlled by his former son-in-law, Julio Polanco. — Reuters

ACUPUNCTURE MAY CURE BABY COLIC, SAYS CRITICIZED STUDY

PARIS: Swedish researchers said yesterday acupuncture "appears to reduce crying" in babies suffering from colic. But their work was criticized by colleagues in the medical field, with one calling the study methodology "appalling". A duo from the Lund University's medicine faculty tested the traditional Chinese needle-piercing remedy in a trial involving nearly 150 babies between two and eight weeks old. They reported their results in the journal *Acupuncture in Medicine*, published by the BMJ—formerly known as the *British Medical Journal*. Compared to babies who did not undergo the needle treatment, infants who received acupuncture over two weeks

exhibited "a significant relative reduction" in crying, the team found.

Such research can be controversial. Acupuncture is invasive, potentially painful, and its benefits are not universally accepted. Organizations such as the British Medical Acupuncture Society says it is used to treat muscle and postoperative pain, as well as nausea. But some think acupuncture's effects are that of a placebo, meaning people feel better because they believe it works. The National Institutes of Health, the main UN research agency, says there is "considerable controversy" around its value. Colic affects as many as one in five families, and is diagnosed when a baby cries

for more than three hours per day on more than three days per week.

Why it occurs is not well understood. Indigestion, trapped wind and intolerance to cows' milk have been identified as possible causes. For the study, colicky babies were divided into three groups of 49. One received "minimal" acupuncture treatment, while another was given up to five, 30-second needlings per session. The third group was not given any needle treatment. "Significantly fewer infants who received acupuncture continued to cry/fuss excessively", the researchers concluded. This suggested "acupuncture may be an effective treatment option" for babies crying more than three hours a day.

'Sounds bizarre'

Criticism of the study was harsh. David Colquhoun, a professor of pharmacology at University College London, described the researchers' analysis of data as "incompetent" and "appalling". The study "certainly doesn't show that it (acupuncture) works," he told the Science Media Centre. "What parent would think that sticking needles into their baby would stop it crying? The idea sounds bizarre. It is," Edzard Ernst from the University of Exeter said the study showed "almost the opposite of what the authors conclude".

"We know that colicky babies respond even to minimal attention, and

this trial confirms that a little additional TLC - Tender Loving Care—"will generate an effect". A total of 388 acupuncture treatments were performed on the babies, the authors reported.

On 200 occasions the infant did not cry at all after being pierced, 157 times they cried for up to a minute, and 31 times for more than that.

"The acupuncturists reported bleeding (a single drop of blood) on 15 occasions," the authors said. The treatment "may be considered ethically acceptable" if it managed to reduce excessive crying in the longer term, they added. The report did not indicate what acupuncture points were used. — AFP

SAUDI EMERGENCY AFTER MASS FOOD POISONING

RIYADH: Saudi authorities blamed a small-town restaurant for a food poisoning outbreak that struck at least 150 people and sparked a declaration of a health emergency, media said yesterday. The incident occurred in Turabah, about 100 kilometers (62 miles) east of Taif in the kingdom's southwest. The official Saudi Press Agency said 150 people suffered food poisoning "because of eating meals" at the restaurant. The online newspaper Sabq, which is close to authorities, said 175 people fell ill after eating shawarma sandwiches, a Middle Eastern staple.

Makkah region governor Prince Khaled Al-Faisal ordered an investigation, "with the maximum penalties for the perpetrators of the poisoning incident," SPA said. It added that 45 patients "are under surveillance" at Turabah hospital and 32 at other medical facilities.

Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in its medical system. About 15 percent of this year's budget is allocated to health and social development spending, including for the setup of hospitals and healthcare centers "in all the regions across the kingdom," the budget said. — AP

THE SPY WHO QUIT? LOVERS KEEP 007 PASSIVE SMOKING RISK UP

PARIS: James Bond may have quit smoking 14 years ago, but he remains at high risk from the puffing habits of his many sexual partners, researchers warned yesterday. Delving into the British spy's on-screen smoking history, a team of public health researchers sought to highlight the tobacco hazards faced by the fictional action hero and the real-life people he may have inspired. Although he gave up the habit, 007 continued putting himself at risk by cavorting with smokers, the duo wrote in the journal *Tobacco Control*.

This "would have meant high levels of secondhand smoke exposure for Bond, especially with post-coital smoking, even to the point where one partner used an ashtray positioned on his naked chest," they said. The risk was slightly offset, added the researchers, "by the typically brief nature of his relationships". Though seemingly frivolous, the study does have a serious message about the behavior-swaying power of film characters' lifestyle choices. "While there are some favorable downward smoking-related trends in this movie series, the persistent smoking content remains problematic from a public health perspective, especially given the popularity of this movie series," said the team.

"Health workers may need to continue

to advocate for reducing smoking in movies." The team observed that Bond smoked most in the 1960s—in five out of six movies that decade—and took his last puff in 2002 in the aptly titled "Die Another Day." Smoking-related gadgets, such as a rocket-in-a-cigarette device in one film, became fewer over time, and mentions of smoking risks more frequent. But his sex partners often smoked, most recently in the 2012 film *Skyfall*. Bond's smoking history, the team said, seemed at odds with the need for physical fitness to do his job.

"But it does fit with a possible perception of low life expectancy given a cumulative total of thousands of bullets being fired at him," they wrote. "He also has a very high intake of martinis and other alcohol and often drives very fast." Talking of drink-another lifestyle risk for premature death—a 2015 study found that current 007 star Daniel Craig was the booziest Bond in the franchise's long history. Craig had at that time drunk an average of 20 units of alcohol per film since his debut in 2006's "Casino Royale," according to the study by British food and drink trade magazine *The Grocer*. That compared with an average 12 units for Pierce Brosnan, 11 units for Sean Connery and just four or five units per film for Timothy Dalton. — AFP



KALIMANTAN, Indonesia: This file picture taken on June 7, 2012 shows a palm oil plantation that has been carved out from a forest in central Kalimantan province in Indonesia's Borneo island.

HSBC FUNDING INDONESIAN FOREST DESTRUCTION: GREENPEACE

JAKARTA: Greenpeace yesterday accused banking giant HSBC of helping to arrange billions of dollars in financing for companies whose palm oil operations have been blamed for destroying vast swathes of Indonesian rainforest. The environmental group said the British bank had broken its own guidelines which ban supporting palm oil companies involved in unsustainable practices as it was part of syndicates that had arranged \$16.3 billion of loans since 2012. The bank was also involved in arranging nearly \$2 billion of corporate bonds, the activists said in a new report.

"HSBC claims it's a respectable bank with responsible policies on deforestation. But somehow these fine words get forgotten when it's time to sign the contracts," said Annisa Rahmawati, senior forest campaigner for Greenpeace Southeast Asia. The bank said it did not knowingly provide services to directly support palm oil companies that do not comply with their policies on deforestation. Vast tracts of Indonesian jungle have been cleared in recent years to make way for plantations to feed insatiable global demand for the edible vegetable oil, which is a key ingredient in goods from shampoo to biscuits.

This has led to the destruction of the habitats of endangered animals such as orangutans. Burning land to make way for plantations also causes huge forest fires that burn out of control most years and shroud the region in toxic haze.

Greenpeace, which analyzed corporate financial data and company reports and statements, listed six firms it said received financial services from HSBC and whose palm oil operations had been accused of unsustainable practices. The report said the companies were accused of activities including land seizures from local people, forest fires, abuse of workers and operating

without legal permits. HSBC said customer confidentiality meant it could not comment on specific companies. But the bank added it had no interest in financing customers involved in illegal operations, land clearance by burning, the conversion of high-value conservation areas, child or forced labour or the violation of local communities' rights.

"We are not aware of any current instances where customers are alleged to be operating outside our policy and where we have not taken, or are not taking, appropriate action," the bank

said in a statement.

The companies mentioned in the report as having received financial services from the bank were: Bumitama Agri; Goodhope Asia Holdings; IOI Group; Noble Group; Posco Daewoo; and Salim Group. Noble referred requests for comment to its sustainability information document, which said its plantation arm was a member of the industry's Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and it followed RSPO procedures. The other companies did not respond to requests for comment. — AFP



PELALAWAN, RIAU, Indonesia: This file picture taken on September 16, 2015 shows a worker handling palm oil seeds at a plantation area in Pelalawan, Riau province in Indonesia's Sumatra island. — AFP photos

TESTING WEARABLE SENSORS AS 'CHECK ENGINE' LIGHT FOR HEALTH

WASHINGTON: A next step for smart watches and fitness trackers? Wearable gadgets gave a Stanford University professor an early warning that he was getting sick before he ever felt any symptoms of Lyme disease. Geneticist Michael Snyder never had Lyme's characteristic bulls-eye rash. But a smart watch and other sensors charted changes in Snyder's heart rate and oxygen levels during a family vacation. Eventually a fever struck that led to his diagnosis. Say "wearables," and step-counting fitness trackers spring to mind. It's not clear if they really make a difference in users' health. Now Snyder's team at Stanford is starting to find out, tracking the everyday lives of several dozen volunteers wearing devices that monitor more than mere activity.

He envisions one day having wearables that act as a sort of "check engine" light indicating it's time to see the doctor. "One way to look at this is, these are the equivalent of oral thermometers but you're measuring yourself all the time," said Snyder, senior author of a report released Thursday on the project. Among the earliest hints: Changes in people's day-to-day physiology may flag when certain ailments are brewing, from colds to Lyme to Type 2 diabetes, researchers reported in the journal *PLOS Biology*.

Interest in wearable sensors is growing along with efforts to personalize medicine, as scientists learn how to tailor treatments and preventive care to people's genes, environment and lifestyle. The sensors are expected to be a part of the National Institutes of Health's huge "precision medicine" study, planned to begin later this year. But a first step is learning what's normal for different people under different conditions. The Stanford team is collecting reams of data - as many as 250,000 daily measurements - from volunteers who wear up to eight activity monitors or other sensors of varying sizes that measure heart rate, blood oxygen, skin temperature, sleep, calories expended, exercise and even exposure to radiation. That's paired with occasional laboratory tests to measure blood chemistry and some genetic information.

An initial finding: Blood oxygen levels decrease with rising altitudes during plane flights, in turn triggering fatigue. But toward the end of long flights, oxygen begins rising again, possibly as bodies adapt, the researchers reported. It was that phenomenon that alerted Snyder, the longest-tested participant, "that something wasn't quite right" on one of his frequent long flights. Landing in Norway for a family vacation, Snyder noticed his oxygen levels didn't return to normal like they always had

before. Plus his heart rate was much higher than normal, which sometimes signals infection.

Appropriate antibiotic

Sure enough, soon a low-grade fever left him dragging. He feared Lyme because two weeks before going abroad, Snyder had helped his brother build a fence in a tick-infested rural area in Massachusetts. He persuaded a Norwegian doctor to prescribe the appropriate antibiotic, and post-vacation testing back home confirmed the diagnosis. Also during the study's first two years, Snyder and several other volunteers had minor cold-like illnesses that began with higher-than-normal readings for heart rate and skin temperature - and correlated with blood tests showing inflammation was on the rise before any sniffing. In addition, the Stanford team detected variations in heart rate patterns that could tell the difference between study participants with what's called insulin resistance - a risk factor for Type 2 diabetes - and healthy people. No, don't try to self-diagnose with your fitness tracker any time soon. The findings in Thursday's report are intriguing but the study is highly experimental, cautioned medical technology specialist Dr Atul Butte of the University of California, San Francisco, who wasn't involved with the research. — AP

UNITEDHEALTH TOPS STREET 4Q FORECASTS, AS EARNINGS JUMP

MINNETONKA: UnitedHealth Group's earnings soared 56 percent in the final quarter of 2016, helped by growth in its core health insurance business plus gains from its Optum business segment. The nation's largest health insurer beat Wall Street expectations for the quarter and also reaffirmed its earnings forecast for the new year. UnitedHealth said operating earnings from its UnitedHealthcare business, which provides health coverage, jumped 79 percent to \$1.7 billion compared to the final quarter of 2015, when the insurer had to set aside money to cover growing losses on the Affordable Care Act's public insurance exchanges.

UnitedHealth has said it expected to lose around \$850 million last year from its ACA-compliant individual business, which is a small slice of its total operation. Heading into 2017, it drastically scaled back its participation on the ACA's public exchanges, which face an uncertain future as Republicans in Congress and President-elect Donald Trump seek to repeal and replace the law. In the fourth quarter, UnitedHealth also recorded \$1.8 billion in operating earnings from its Optum segment, which provides pharmacy benefits management and technology services and also operates clinics and doctor's offices. Earlier this month, it said it would

spend about \$2.3 billion to add Surgical Care Affiliates to its Optum health services unit, which has 20,000 affiliated physicians and hundreds of facilities. Surgical Care operates 205 surgical facilities and partners with about 3,000 physicians. Health insurance is still

UnitedHealth's main revenue generator, but it has been focused for several quarters now on growing its Optum segment. Overall, Minnetonka, Minnesota-based UnitedHealth Group Inc. earned \$1.9 billion in the fourth quarter, with adjusted earnings totaling \$2.11. Total revenue grew 9 percent to \$47.52 billion.

Analysts expected, on average, earnings of \$2.07 per share on \$46.86 billion in revenue, according to Zacks Investment Research. For 2017, UnitedHealth still expects adjusted earnings ranging from \$9.30 to \$9.60 per share, a forecast it announced in late November. Analysts forecast earnings of \$9.51 per share on \$198.66 billion in revenue, according to FactSet. UnitedHealth is the first insurer to report earnings every quarter. Many see it as a bellwether for other insurers. Shares of UnitedHealth started climbing early yesterday and was up 60 cents to \$162.40 about two hours before markets opened. The stock jumped 36 percent last year, easily outpacing broader indexes. — AP



MINNETONKA, Minnesota: This file photo, shows a portion of the UnitedHealth Group Inc.'s campus in Minnetonka, Minn. — AP



MANDALAY, Myanmar: This handout from the Wildlife Conservation Society taken on January 26, 2013 and released on November 23, 2016 shows Irrawaddy dolphins swimming in the Irrawaddy river near Mandalay. — AFP photos



MANDALAY, Myanmar: This photo taken on November 23, 2016 shows people traveling in the Irrawaddy river near Mandalay.



MANDALAY, Myanmar: This handout from the Wildlife Conservation Society taken on March 3, 2015 and released on November 23, 2016 shows Irrawaddy dolphins swimming in the Irrawaddy river near Mandalay.

MYANMAR'S 'SMILING' IRRAWADDY DOLPHINS ON BRINK OF EXTINCTION

SIN KYUN, Myanmar: Tears fill Maung Lay's eyes as he describes losing the dolphin he knew since his childhood, the latest casualty of a battle against pollution and electrofishing that may see the species disappear in Myanmar. Loved for generations for corralling the catch into fishermen's nets, the 'smiling' Irrawaddy dolphins are being killed in record numbers by rogue gangs who use car batteries to stun aquatic life. The illegal technique now threatens to wipe out the dolphins and the tourist bonanza they promise. Maung Lay's dolphin, known as Thar Gyi Ma, was found washed up on the banks of the river in November. When locals cut her body open, they found she was pregnant.

"She is irreplaceable because she's like my own parents. I'm heartbroken," the 55-year-old told AFP inside his bamboo hut, in a small village a few hours by boat from Mandalay. "I laid wreaths and flowers for her by the river." Irrawaddy dolphins can be found in rivers, lakes and seas across southern Asia, from the north-west Bay of Bengal, in India, to the south of Indonesia. On this stretch of river in Myanmar the animals have developed a deep bond with local fishermen, who they work with in a generations-old partnership that has become the stuff of local folklore.

With careful choreography, locals call the animals using a throaty purr, splashing their oars and tapping on the side of the boat. The dolphins signal they are ready to begin with a flick of a fin, before driving the fish towards the fishermen's boats where they are scooped up by waiting nets. Maung Lay said he had spent more than 30 years fishing with one group of seven dolphins, led by Thar Gyi Ma. "I'm sorry for the great loss because she's the leader of her group," he said sorrowfully. "The others are not skilled like her."

Record deaths

In neighboring Laos, the Irrawaddy dolphin was declared "functionally extinct" by the World Wildlife Fund in October 2016 after just three individuals were counted during their latest survey. "There is now little hope for a reversal of the situation," the WWF said. In Myanmar, officials say there only 62 Irrawaddy dolphin are thought to be left, after a record three were killed last year. "We lost the highest number of dolphins (in 2016)," said Jaw Kar, the deputy head of Mandalay's fishery department during a recent visit by AFP. He blamed pollution from mining upriver in Kachin state, where chemical-heavy gold prospecting has boomed since the former military government stepped down in 2011.



MANDALAY, Myanmar: This photo taken on November 23, 2016 shows people going about their activities along the Irrawaddy river near Mandalay.

Run-off from agricultural fertilizers is also thought to be poisoning the water. But fishermen say the greatest danger comes from rogue gangs who are wiping out river life in their quest for easy money. Initially these electro-fisherman

used small batteries attached to wire wound around bamboo poles to shock fish within a close radius, a cheap and effective way to bolster their catch. Now locals say they have moved on to using car batteries, high-voltage transformers

and trawling nets. "Even a big buffalo couldn't stand such an electric shock," said fisherman Thein San Min, 26, who lives in another village on the river's edge.

Electrofishing around Mandalay is punishable by up to three years in jail and a fine of 200,000 kyat (\$150) — a small fortune for local villagers. But conservationists say there is little they can do to stop the fishing gangs, who attack anyone daring to venture into their territory. Villagers refused to take AFP to where the electrofishermen live citing safety concerns.

For Irrawaddy locals, losing the dolphins is not just about destroying traditions from their past-it threatens their future. With fish stocks plummeting there are hopes ecotourism will prove a lifeline to bolster meagre incomes.

Visitor numbers have soared in the five years since the end of military rule and authorities are hoping to lure as many as 7.5 million people a year to Myanmar by 2019.

Wildlife Conservation Society ecotourism manager Thant Zin has set up a dolphin-watching program to attract tourists, which he believes will incentivize locals to protect the animals and their habitat. He is training villagers from a string of Irrawaddy villages in cooking, hospitality and environmentally responsible guiding. — AFP

MORE THAN 80 FALSE KILLER WHALES DIE OFF FLORIDA COAST

MIAMI: More than 80 dolphins known as false killer whales have died off the southwest coast of Florida after getting stranded in shallow waters, US officials said. A pod of 95 of the dolphins, which are black in color and look like killer whales without white markings, became stranded in the Gulf Coast off Everglades National Park, the park said on Twitter. Photos on social media showed dozens of these dolphins, some grouped in clusters of four or five, just a few feet from a sandy beach lined with trees.

"Sadly, 81 have already been confirmed dead," Everglades National Park said Monday, adding that marine mammal rescue operations were being carried out. The dolphins had become "deeply embedded in some of the mangroves making response efforts extremely difficult," Blair Mase, a stranding coordinator with NOAA's fisheries service, said in the Miami Herald newspaper. The National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration said that of the remaining dolphins, one had been seen alive and 13 others were unaccounted for.

While 72 had died on their own, rescuers put down nine that were too sick to survive, Mase said. The stranded dolphins include adults, juveniles and calves, and were first spotted Saturday in an area called Hog Key, part of a string of islands, according to the Herald.

False killer whales can be found in large groups of more than one hundred in warm waters across the globe. They have long, slender bodies and narrow, tapered heads with rounded snouts. They are much smaller and less aggressive than their distant relative, the Orca, or killer whale. Like Orcas, scientists classify them as dolphins rather than whales. The phenomenon of strandings and the causes remain the subject of scientific debate. The National Park Service has closed the area surrounding the dolphins to flyovers and boats. — AFP



EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK, Florida, United States: This January 16, 2017 handout photo courtesy of NOAA Fisheries Southeast shows and aerial view of false killer whales stranded in the Everglades National Park in Florida. (Inset) PERU: This file photo shows a dead dolphin on a beach on the northern coast of Peru, close to Chiclayo, some 750 km north of Lima. — AFP

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NISSAN AL BABBAIN SERVES AS GOLD SPONSOR FOR SPARK MARATHON

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co., the authorized agent of Nissan vehicles in Kuwait was the gold sponsor of the Spark Marathon for the second consecutive year. The marathon, which took place 14 January, is one of the biggest sporting events of 2017, organized by Spark Athletic Centre and under the patronage of Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Information.

Nissan Al-Babtain exerts its utmost efforts to partner with influential local partners, striving to promote awareness on the importance of healthy living. Nissan Al-Babtain is thrilled to sponsor Spark Marathon once again in support of integrating sports and fitness into the very fabric of the Kuwaiti society.

The marathon took place in Marina Crescent, Salmiya starting at 7:30 am. A total of 2,289 people participated

and competed in the marathon, which was divided into four categories: 5km, 10km, 21km and 42 km. Winners were awarded with prizes totaling \$100,000 in cash.

Makram Khater, group general manager marketing department Al-Babtain Group received an honoring trophy from Abdul Mohsen Saleh Al-Babtain, chief executive officer of Spark gym as an appreciation for sponsoring the event. Nissan Altima, Nissan Maxima and Nissan Patrol

vehicles were displayed in the Marathon Village for two days.

The sponsorship of Spark Marathon contributes to Nissan Al-Babtain's corporate social responsibility initiative to support a healthy and active lifestyle. This is a non-profit event and all the money is going to charity. This sponsorship reinforces Al-Babtain's long-standing tradition of contributing to a wide variety of local sporting activities.



KONOZ BALLROOM ALL SET TO MAKE YOUR WEDDING DREAM A REALITY

Millennium Hotel and Convention Center Kuwait is all set on a wedding package for guests wishing to declare their everlasting love. Your wedding is a very personal and a wonderful occasion to remember, one day, yet a lifetime of memories.

"A right choice of venue, as the saying goes, means half a success of an ideal wedding. The KonoZ Ballroom boasts a lavish setting with an adjoining foyer which makes an ideal pre-event reception space to have the wedding experience

of every couples dream come true," said Dani Saleh, General Manager of Millennium & Copthorne Hotels Kuwait.

For the bride and groom, to celebrate their glamorous wedding, a complimentary one night stay in a Romantic Ambience Suite followed by breakfast delight, a voucher for a rich lunch or dinner buffet for two at Lamar International Restaurant, a sumptuous dinner buffet reception and five-layer cake. Our wedding team can render each ceremony a memorable experience that enables bridal dream to come true.

MAIS ALGHANIM TO GO UNVEILS ITS LATEST PROMOTION WITH A VARIETY OF WINTER DISHES

Mais Alghanim To Go has recently unveiled its latest promotion, to coincide with the winter season; by introducing a wide variety of winter dishes and a combo meal. This special promotion is being offered to Mais Alghanim To Go patrons, treating them to savoring a diverse variety of palatable dishes that have been created to satisfy all tastes. The offering includes the Saver Combo Meal, which features grilled meat Kabbabs, Shish Taouk and many more of our unique new recipes.

The promotion also features a wide variety of newly crafted Lebanese appetizers, which have been meticulously prepared in the Mais Alghanim To Go kitchen, and include some of the most scrumptious and healthy mezzas such as mama ghanouj, grilled halloumi cheese topped with pesto sauce and kibbeh hameh. This is in addition to a variety of fresh salads that includes the healthy quinoa tabouleh salad, potato salad and lentil salad. In the hot mezza, there is skillet chicken liver and stuffed falafel. Offerings also feature an assortment of main courses, such as samakah harra beirutieh for seafood lovers, kurmuzi taouk, kabbab soujuk and the most appetizing kabbab orfali.

In addition to this very special selection of exceptional appetizers and main courses, Mais Alghanim To Go also offers a variety of delicious desserts, such as the chocolate maamoul and the most loved Lebanese kunafa.

So the next time you find yourself in the company of acquaintances in the diwaniya, spending some

quality time with family members or start feeling the pangs of hunger at work; remember that you can always enjoy a delicious selection of healthy and valuable meals offered by Mais Alghanim To Go or order the Saver Combo Meal along with the choice of your favorite grills, appetizers and salads.

Mais Alghanim To Go kitchen being the recipient of numerous industry awards - continuously strives to provide its clientele with a new and innovative experience every time it enables friends and family to enjoy each other's company while savoring appetizing signature dishes at an exceptional price, wherever they may be. With Mais Alghanim To Go rest assured that the most stringent public health and safety measures are observed in all branches, since only cutting-edge, quality packaging equipment and materials are utilized; supplemented by a fleet of delivery vehicles whose outreach spans the whole of Kuwait. We are always true to our motto, "Closer & tastier... wherever you are."

For inquiries or to order any of our promotions, all you have to do is call our hotline or place your order via the Talabat website. Mais Alghanim To-Go will deliver right to your doorstep, or you may opt to pick-up the order yourself from the nearest branch to your location: Bneid Al-Qar, Shuwaikh, Fintas, Salmiya or from our newest outlet in Hawally - off Al-Qadisiya Club.

*This promotion is only valid for delivery and pick-up orders.



KFIC HOLDS ANNUAL CAMP FOR EMPLOYEES

Kuwait Finance and Investment Company (KFIC) held its annual camp for employees on the outskirts of Al Wafra area where it held several entertainment and cultural activities for all attendees.

Tareq Ahmed Al-Jassim, Senior Vice President for Public Relations and Marketing at KFIC stated that the camp was a substantial success and enjoyed high attendance from employees from different departments of the company. He clarified that "the main objective of holding the camp, in addition to the other entertainment activities that KFIC holds, is to boost the morale of all employees in order for them to go back to work with a fresh mind and high enthusiasm."

Within the same context, Al-Jassim said that the camp included a handful of activities that are intended to entertain attendees and improve their team work and healthy competitiveness along with strengthening the social bonds between them. He added: "the

camp included activities such as football and volleyball matches, buggy riding and trampoline exercises. It also included a variety of cultural competitions, which showed a positive spirit of cooperation between the participants." The winners of these competitions were recognized and rewarded. Additionally, employees with a 15 years' tenure were recognized, which shows KFIC's commitment toward recognizing hard work and encouraging that culture in the new ranks.

Employees were invited to bring along their families and children to the camp where they were a number of entertaining and fun characters for them to enjoy. This enabled the families to socialize, form and strengthen the relationships between them outside the scope of work.

Al-Jassim finally expressed his happiness for the success of the camp and stated that he is optimistic that it will continue to be successful in the coming years.



رجعت الشتوية

Winter's Here

Enjoy our new collection of winter dishes and the valuable saver meal

Saver Combo	Winter Dishes	



JUMEIRAH MESSILAH BEACH HOTEL & SPA HOSTED CHAINE DES ROTISSEURS DINNER

KUWAIT: Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, Kuwait's idyllic resort, hosted a number of dignitaries at the prestigious Chaine des Rotisseurs dinner including the Ambassadors of Australia, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Romania, and South Korea. Guests of honor included Arlette Mabardi from Lebanon and Mohamed Hammam from Turkey.

For the third consecutive year, the dinner was held at Badriah Ballroom which was fully decorated with a London inspired theme. As a member of the prestigious culinary society, General Manager Hakan Petek said: "It was a great honour to host the distinguished Chaine des Rotisseurs Association at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa.

Badriah Ballroom served as the ideal venue to transport our guests to London, the theme we selected for this distinctive event. We were delighted to hear that our guests were impressed by the menu which emphasizes our commitment to exemplary gastronomy."

Mohamed Najja, Bailli Deleugue of the Chaine des Rotisseurs Kuwait chapter, said: "We were very delighted to hold our Chaine ceremony at Jumeirah Messilah Branch Hotel & Spa and we look forward to further collaboration in the future."

Following the induction of the event, Najja presented Hakan Petek with an award in appreciation for his continuing support for the Baillage du Koweit.

As a fitting tribute to the distinguished members, the hotel's award-winning chefs tailored a special six-course menu consisting of gourmet dishes with the finest ingredients such as Quail and Leek Terrine with roasted plums, Beef Wellington, River Salmon smoked with oak wood and Deconstructed Strawberry Trifle with vanilla custard for dessert.

The Chaine des Rotisseurs is an international association of gastronomy, established in over 80 countries that brings together a growing number of amateurs and professionals from all over the world in appreciation of fine cuisine and the culinary arts.



Mohamed Najja, Bailli Deleugue of the Chaine des Rotisseurs Kuwait chapter, presented Hakan Petek an award in appreciation for his continuing support for the Baillage du Koweit.

INTER SCHOOL ELOCUTION - ICS SALMIYA AND DPS WIN

Friday Forum held its 11th Annual Elocution contest in early January with both juniors and seniors elocution contests. Twenty three students from 13 different Indian schools competed. The event began with a beautiful Quran recitation by a wonderful kid Hima Jameela.

For the 'juniors' content, the topic given was "Islam and Environmental Protection". The three judges were Afzal Ali, Shathaa Shamiya and Bashir Khan. Three winners were selected. First prize went to Shoaib Javed Shahna (Delhi Public School), Second prize was grabbed by Yusra Asad Khan (Indian Learners Own Academy) and Third prize went to Mishal Kandapath (Delhi Public School).

For the 'seniors' elocution contest, the topic

was "Maintaining communal harmony, a believer's responsibility." Judges were Yousif Naif, Imran Shaik and Abdullah Al Mehdi. Senior winners were: First prize Mohammed Mishal (Indian Community School Senior, Salmiya), Second prize was bagged by Sayed Mujitabab (Jabariya Indian School) and Third prize went to Fudail Javed Ansari (Indian Learners Own Academy).

Consolation prizes were also given to Deva Prabha Siva Prasad (Indian Community School, Khaitan) and Christy Mervin (Indian Community School, Khaitan).

Friday Forum President Munawar Mohammed, Joint Secretary Sayam Basher and Executive Member Dr. Abdul Kader handed out the prizes. Shinan Abdurahiman served as master of ceremonies.



Winners - Seniors



Winners - Juniors

NEW OFFICE BEARERS TO KALA KUWAIT

Kerala Art Lovers Association, KALA Kuwait 38th annual General body unanimously elected Sugathakumar as President, J Saji as General Secretary and Ramesh Kannapuram as Treasurer. The conference conducted at VV Dakshinamoorthy Nagar (Khaitan Indian Community School) was inaugurated by well-known author, humanist and socio-cultural activist John Mathew. The conference started with welcome song by the arts wing followed by welcome address by Kiran PR, Chairman of the organizing committee. Sugathakumar conveyed condolence message. The venue was decorated with a photo gallery of leaders of progressive movements in India as well as famous personalities whose tenures ended in the year 2016.

Rajeesh VT, Ratheesh C Pillai, Prajeesh and K Akhilesh who were returning to India were presented with mementos by John Mathew. Presidium consisting R Naganadhan, KALA President with Saji Thomas Mathew and Asalatha Balakrishnan regulated the sequence of the conference smoothly. KALA-Kuwait Gen Secretary C K Noushad presented report for the year 2016 followed by financial report by Treasurer Anil Kookkiri. 16 delegates participated in the discussions on the reports and were passed thereafter.

The conference approved resolutions requesting Kerala Government to raise the pension amount for Gulf returnees, to declare rehabilitation package for the workers returning to India from GCC countries with the impact on oil price crisis etc.

The conference unanimously chose Sugathakumar (President), Nissar KV (Vice President), J Saji (Gen Secretary), Praseeth



Sugathakumar
President

J. Saji
General Secretary

Ramesh Kannapuram
Treasurer

Karunakaran (Joint Secretary) Ramesh Kannapuram (Treasurer), Michael Johnson, Arun Kumar, Musfer, Gijo Dominic as area Secretaries of Abbassiya, Salmiya, Abuhaleefa, Fahaheel respectively, Jiji George (Community Service), Jithin Prakash (Media Secretary), Sunny Sajesh (Literary Secretary), Sajith Kadalundi (Arts Secretary), Nasser Kadalundi (Sports Secretary) along with C K

Noushad, Ajithkumar Nedomkunnam, Rangan, Asaf Ali, Jyothish Cheriyan, V Anil Kumar, Biju Jose, Raveendran Pilla, Jayan TV, Subha Shine and Tolly Prakash as members of the Central committee.

Santha R Nair, Vanithavedi President and J Albert of KALA greeted the newly elected office bearers. Newly elected Gen Secretary J Saji rendered vote of thanks.





- 00:50 River Monsters
- 01:45 Gorilla School
- 02:10 Going Ape
- 02:40 Lone Star Law
- 03:35 Tanked
- 04:25 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
- 05:15 Gator Boys
- 06:02 River Monsters
- 06:49 Lone Star Law
- 07:36 Night
- 08:00 Night
- 08:00 America's Cutest Pets
- 09:15 Lone Star Law
- 10:10 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
- 11:05 Tanked
- 12:00 America's Cutest Pets
- 12:55 Going Ape
- 13:20 Going Ape
- 13:50 Lone Star Law
- 14:45 Gator Boys
- 15:40 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
- 16:35 Tanked
- 17:30 River Monsters
- 18:25 Wild Animal Rescue
- 19:20 The Pool Master
- 20:15 Tanked
- 21:10 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker

- 16:50 Fast N' Loud
- 17:40 Wheeler Dealers: Trading Up
- 18:30 How Do They Do It?
- 18:55 How Do They Do It?
- 19:20 What On Earth?
- 20:10 The Liquidator
- 20:35 The Liquidator
- 21:00 Blowing Up History
- 21:50 Mega Shippers
- 22:40 Impossible Engineering
- 23:30 Fast N' Loud



- 00:00 The Universe
- 01:00 Patton 360
- 02:00 Mud Men
- 03:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 03:50 Ancient Aliens
- 04:40 Ancient Aliens
- 05:30 The Universe
- 06:20 Patton 360
- 07:10 The Universe
- 08:00 Mud Men
- 09:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 10:00 Ancient Aliens
- 11:00 Ancient Aliens
- 12:00 The Universe
- 13:00 Patton 360
- 14:00 Mud Men
- 15:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 16:00 Ancient Aliens
- 17:00 Ancient Aliens
- 18:00 The Universe
- 19:00 Patton 360
- 20:00 Mud Men
- 21:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 22:00 Ancient Aliens
- 23:00 Blood And Glory: The Civil War In Color



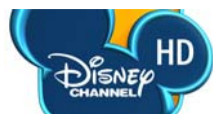
- 00:40 Jonbenet: An American Murder Mystery
- 01:30 Southern Fried Homicide
- 02:20 Judgment Day: Prison Or Parole
- 03:10 Nowhere To Hide
- 04:00 Jonbenet: An American Murder Mystery
- 04:48 I Almost Got Away With It
- 05:36 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 06:24 Evil Online
- 07:12 Blood Relatives
- 08:00 Monsters: When Moms Go Bad
- 08:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 09:40 Vanity Fair Confidential
- 10:30 Evil Online
- 11:20 Blood Relatives
- 12:10 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
- 13:00 Monsters: When Moms Go Bad
- 13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 14:40 On The Case With Paula Zahn



- 00:00 Man Fire Food
- 01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:00 Chopped
- 04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 05:00 Barefoot Contessa
- 06:00 The Kitchen
- 07:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 08:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 09:00 Valerie's Home Cooking
- 09:30 Valerie's Home Cooking



- 00:30 Nextworld
- 01:20 Australia Smashes Guinness World Records
- 01:45 Guinness World Records Smashed New Zealand
- 02:10 Guinness World Records Smashed UK
- 03:00 What Happened Next?
- 03:25 What Happened Next?
- 03:50 Ultimate Survival
- 04:40 How It's Made
- 05:05 How It's Made
- 05:30 Storm Chasers
- 06:20 Mythbusters
- 07:00 Do You Know?
- 07:15 Doki
- 07:35 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
- 08:00 K9 Cops
- 08:45 How It's Made
- 09:10 How It's Made
- 09:30 Nextworld
- 10:20 Mythbusters



- 00:10 Hank Zipzer
- 00:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 01:00 Violetta
- 01:45 The Hive
- 01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:40 Hank Zipzer
- 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 03:30 Violetta
- 04:15 The Hive
- 04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 05:10 Hank Zipzer
- 05:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 06:00 Violetta
- 06:45 The Hive
- 06:50 Mouk
- 07:00 Jessie
- 07:50 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 08:15 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 08:20 Elena Of Avalor
- 08:45 Bunk'd
- 09:10 Gravity Falls
- 09:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
- 10:25 A.N.T. Farm
- 11:15 Good Luck Charlie
- 12:05 Shake It Up
- 12:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 13:00 Welcome To The Ronks
- 13:15 Gravity Falls
- 13:40 Hank Zipzer
- 14:05 Frozen: Magic Of The Northern Lights
- 14:10 Austin & Ally
- 15:00 Jessie
- 15:50 Rolling To The Ronks
- 16:15 Sunny Bunnies
- 16:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 16:45 Elena Of Avalor
- 17:10 Bunk'd
- 17:35 Descendants Wicked World
- 17:40 Girl Meets World
- 18:05 Bizaardvark
- 18:30 Liv And Maddie
- 18:55 Best Friends Whenever
- 19:20 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 19:25 The Next Step
- 19:50 Austin & Ally
- 20:15 Star Darlings
- 20:20 Shake It Up
- 20:45 Backstage
- 21:10 Liv And Maddie
- 21:35 Cracked
- 21:40 The Next Step
- 22:05 Best Friends Whenever
- 22:30 Mako Mermaids
- 22:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts



- 00:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 00:35 The Hive
- 00:45 Loopidoo
- 01:00 Henry Hugglemonster
- 01:15 Calimero
- 01:30 Art Attack
- 01:50 Zou
- 02:05 Loopidoo
- 02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 02:35 Calimero
- 02:50 Zou
- 03:05 Art Attack
- 03:30 The Hive
- 03:40 Loopidoo
- 03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
- 04:10 Art Attack
- 04:35 Loopidoo
- 04:50 Calimero
- 05:05 Art Attack
- 05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 05:45 Zou



THE 5TH WAVE ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 21:00 Unbungalievable
- 21:05 Goldie & Bear
- 21:35 Miles From Tomorrow
- 22:00 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 22:25 Gummi Bears
- 06:00 Danger Mouse
- 06:25 Gravity Falls
- 06:50 The 7D
- 07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 07:15 Counterfeit Cat
- 07:40 Supa Strikas
- 08:10 K.C. Undercover
- 08:35 Star Wars Freemaker
- 09:00 Lab Rats
- 09:50 Danger Mouse
- 10:20 Supa Strikas
- 11:10 Counterfeit Cat
- 11:35 Pair Of Kings

- 07:40 Counting Cars
- 08:05 Counting Cars
- 08:30 Pawn Stars
- 08:55 Pawn Stars
- 09:20 Storage Wars
- 09:45 American Pickers
- 10:10 American Pickers
- 11:00 Hunting Hitler
- 11:50 Time Team
- 12:40 Swamp People
- 13:30 Ax Men
- 14:20 Mountain Men
- 15:10 Ice Road Truckers
- 16:00 Counting Cars
- 16:25 Counting Cars
- 16:50 Pawn Stars
- 17:15 Pawn Stars
- 17:40 Mountain Men
- 18:30 Swamp People
- 19:20 Ax Men
- 20:10 American Pickers
- 21:00 Counting Cars
- 21:25 Car Hunters
- 21:50 Forged In Fire
- 22:40 Forged In Fire
- 23:30 American Pickers



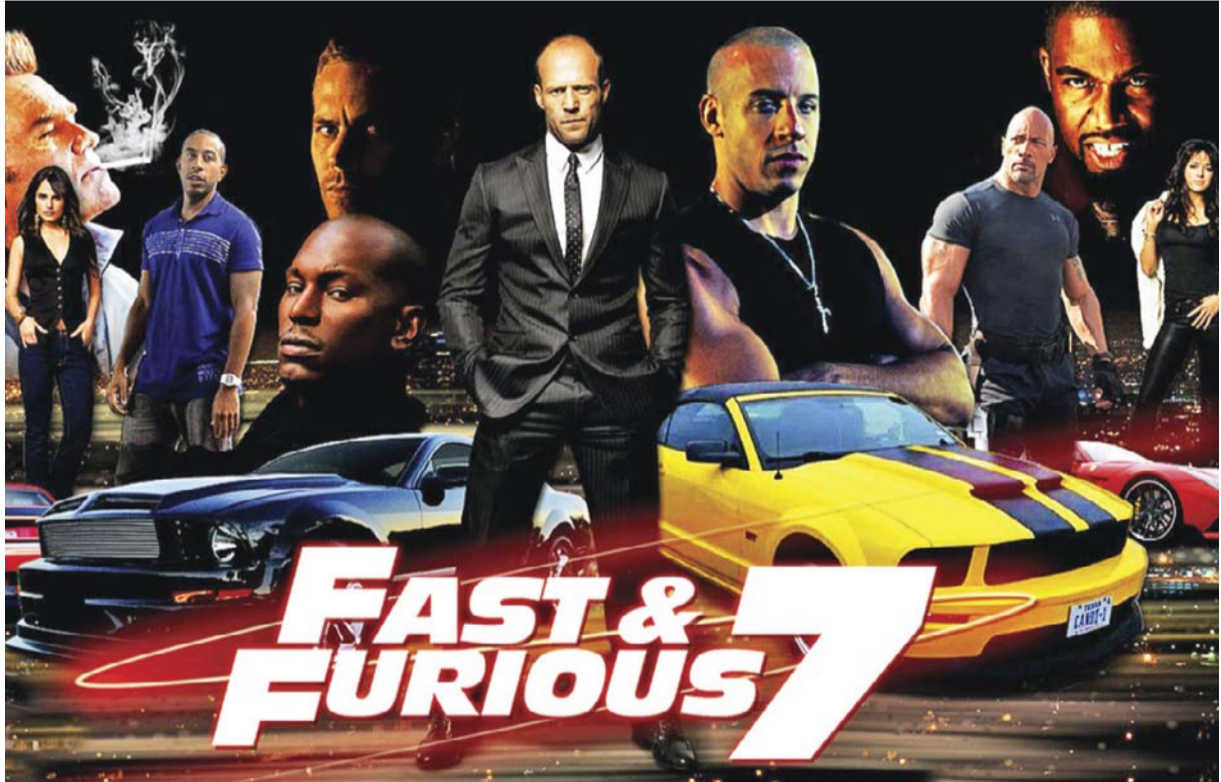
- 00:20 Crocodile King
- 01:10 Wild Russia
- 02:00 Crocopolypse
- 02:50 Animals Gone Wild
- 03:45 Animal Fight Club
- 04:40 Man And The Wild
- 05:35 Crocopolypse
- 06:30 Animals Gone Wild
- 07:25 Animal Fight Club
- 08:20 Man And The Wild
- 09:15 Secret Life Of Predators
- 10:10 Strangest Bird Alive
- 11:05 Predator Patrol
- 12:00 Lost Sharks Of Easter Island
- 12:55 Snake Paradise
- 13:50 Dangerous Encounters
- 15:40 Real Angry Birds
- 16:35 Battle Of The Swamp Dragons
- 17:30 Deadly Instincts
- 18:25 Man And The Wild
- 19:20 Dangerous Encounters
- 20:10 Real Angry Birds
- 21:00 Battle Of The Swamp Dragons
- 21:50 Deadly Instincts
- 22:40 Man And The Wild



- 00:10 The Chase
- 01:00 Emmerdale
- 01:30 Coronation Street
- 02:30 Come Dine With Me Couples
- 03:25 Murdoch Mysteries
- 05:15 Safe House
- 06:10 Don't Tell The Bride
- 07:10 Come Dine With Me Couples
- 08:00 Murdoch Mysteries
- 09:00 Murdoch Mysteries
- 10:00 Safe House
- 10:55 Don't Tell The Bride
- 12:45 Emmerdale
- 13:15 Coronation Street
- 13:45 Coronation Street
- 14:10 Don't Tell The Bride
- 15:10 Come Dine With Me Couples
- 16:00 Jericho
- 16:50 Shetland
- 17:50 Agatha Christie's Partners In Crime
- 18:45 Emmerdale
- 19:15 Coronation Street
- 19:45 Coronation Street
- 20:10 Come Dine With Me Couples
- 21:00 Jericho
- 21:50 Shetland
- 22:50 Emmerdale
- 23:15 Coronation Street
- 23:40 Coronation Street



- 00:10 Street Food Around The World
- 00:35 Wineroads
- 01:00 Glamour Puds
- 01:25 Places We Go
- 02:15 My Restaurant In India
- 03:05 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
- 03:55 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 04:20 Carnival Eats
- 04:45 Eat Street
- 05:10 A Is For Apple
- 05:35 Eat: The Story Of Food
- 06:25 Miguel's Feasts
- 06:50 Glamour Puds
- 07:15 Places We Go
- 08:05 My Restaurant In India
- 08:55 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
- 09:45 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 10:10 Carnival Eats
- 10:35 Eat Street
- 11:00 A Is For Apple
- 11:25 Eat: The Story Of Food
- 12:15 Miguel's Feasts
- 12:40 Glamour Puds
- 13:05 Places We Go
- 14:00 My Restaurant In India
- 15:00 Tom's Istanbul Delight
- 15:30 Grandma's Boy
- 16:00 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 16:25 Carnival Eats
- 16:50 Eat Street
- 17:15 A Is For Apple
- 17:40 Eat: The Story Of Food
- 18:35 Miguel's Feasts
- 19:05 Tom's Istanbul Delight
- 19:30 Grandma's Boy
- 20:00 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 20:25 Carnival Eats
- 20:50 Eat Street
- 21:40 A Is For Apple
- 21:45 Eat: The Story Of Food
- 22:30 Miguel's Feasts



FAST & FURIOUS 7 ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 11:10 Storm Chasers
- 12:00 K9 Cops
- 12:50 Ultimate Survival
- 13:40 How It's Made
- 14:30 Storm Chasers
- 15:15 Mythbusters
- 16:00 Doki
- 16:20 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
- 16:45 Do You Know?
- 17:00 Wildest Africa
- 17:50 Finding Bigfoot
- 18:40 Nextworld
- 19:30 How It's Made
- 20:20 Mythbusters
- 21:10 Wildest Africa
- 22:00 Finding Bigfoot
- 22:50 What Happened Next?
- 23:15 What Happened Next?
- 23:40 Ultimate Survival

- 10:00 The Kitchen
- 11:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 12:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:00 Chopped
- 15:00 The Kitchen
- 16:00 Valerie's Home Cooking
- 17:00 Chopped
- 18:00 Iron Chef America
- 19:00 Chopped
- 20:00 Food Network Star
- 21:00 Kitchen Casino



- 00:40 Mythbusters
- 01:30 How Do They Do It?
- 01:55 Food Factory
- 02:20 Joe Rogan Questions
- 03:10 Joe Rogan Questions
- 04:00 Origins
- 04:24 Origins
- 04:48 Mythbusters
- 05:36 Joe Rogan Questions
- 06:24 Joe Rogan Questions
- 07:12 How Do They Do It?
- 07:36 Food Factory
- 08:00 How Do They Do It?
- 08:26 Joe Rogan Questions
- 09:14 Mythbusters
- 10:02 Origins
- 10:26 Origins
- 10:50 How Do They Do It?
- 11:14 Food Factory
- 11:38 Joe Rogan Questions
- 12:26 Mythbusters
- 13:14 Joe Rogan Questions
- 14:02 How Do They Do It?
- 14:26 Food Factory

- 06:00 Art Attack
- 06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 06:45 Loopidoo
- 07:00 Zou
- 07:15 Calimero
- 07:30 Loopidoo
- 07:45 Henry Hugglemonster
- 08:00 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 08:05 PJ Masks
- 08:15 Goldie & Bear
- 08:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 08:45 Miles From Tomorrow
- 08:55 The Lion Guard
- 09:20 Doc McStuffins
- 09:35 Goldie & Bear
- 09:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 10:00 PJ Masks
- 10:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 10:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 10:35 Sofia The First
- 11:00 Sofia The First
- 11:30 Doc McStuffins
- 11:55 Doc McStuffins
- 12:20 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 12:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 13:15 Gummi Bears
- 13:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 14:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 14:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 15:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 15:30 Little Mermaid
- 15:55 Unbungalievable
- 16:00 Miles From Tomorrow
- 16:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 16:55 The Lion Guard
- 17:20 Goldie & Bear
- 17:50 PJ Masks
- 18:15 Sofia The First
- 18:40 Doc McStuffins
- 19:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 19:30 Little Mermaid
- 20:00 Doc McStuffins
- 20:30 Doc McStuffins

- 12:30 Future-Worm!
- 12:55 Lab Rats Elite Force
- 13:20 Lab Rats
- 13:45 Atomic Puppet
- 14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 14:15 Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution
- 14:40 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 15:05 Lab Rats Elite Force
- 15:30 Disney Cookabout
- 15:55 Danger Mouse
- 16:25 K.C. Undercover
- 16:50 Future-Worm!
- 17:15 Gravity Falls
- 17:40 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 18:10 Supa Strikas
- 19:00 Atomic Puppet
- 19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 19:55 K.C. Undercover
- 20:20 Counterfeit Cat
- 20:45 Mighty Med
- 21:10 Pickle And Peanut
- 21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 21:45 Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution
- 22:10 Ultimate Spider-Man
- 22:35 Boyster
- 23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am
- 00:20 Time Team
- 01:10 Mountain Men
- 02:00 Swamp People
- 02:50 Storage Wars
- 03:15 American Pickers
- 04:05 Pawn Stars
- 04:30 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Mountain Men
- 06:00 Big Rig Bounty Hunters
- 06:25 Big Rig Bounty Hunters
- 06:50 Shipping Wars
- 07:15 Shipping Wars



- 00:10 Hank Zipzer
- 00:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 01:00 Violetta
- 01:45 The Hive
- 01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:40 Hank Zipzer
- 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 03:30 Violetta
- 04:15 The Hive
- 04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 05:10 Hank Zipzer
- 05:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 06:00 Violetta
- 06:45 The Hive
- 06:50 Mouk
- 07:00 Jessie
- 07:50 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 08:15 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 08:20 Elena Of Avalor
- 08:45 Bunk'd
- 09:10 Gravity Falls
- 09:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
- 10:25 A.N.T. Farm
- 11:15 Good Luck Charlie
- 12:05 Shake It Up
- 12:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 13:00 Welcome To The Ronks
- 13:15 Gravity Falls
- 13:40 Hank Zipzer
- 14:05 Frozen: Magic Of The Northern Lights
- 14:10 Austin & Ally
- 15:00 Jessie
- 15:50 Rolling To The Ronks
- 16:15 Sunny Bunnies
- 16:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 16:45 Elena Of Avalor
- 17:10 Bunk'd
- 17:35 Descendants Wicked World
- 17:40 Girl Meets World
- 18:05 Bizaardvark
- 18:30 Liv And Maddie
- 18:55 Best Friends Whenever
- 19:20 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 19:25 The Next Step
- 19:50 Austin & Ally
- 20:15 Star Darlings
- 20:20 Shake It Up
- 20:45 Backstage
- 21:10 Liv And Maddie
- 21:35 Cracked
- 21:40 The Next Step
- 22:05 Best Friends Whenever
- 22:30 Mako Mermaids
- 22:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts



- 06:35 Dog Whisperer
- 07:30 Dino Death Trap
- 08:25 Seconds From Disaster
- 09:20 The Great Food Revolution
- 10:15 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 10:40 Desperate Hours
- 11:10 Years Of Living Dangerously
- 12:05 Killing Reagan
- 14:00 Dino Mania
- 15:00 Dog Whisperer
- 16:00 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 16:30 Desperate Hours
- 17:00 Sea Of Hope
- 18:00 Reagan: The Assassination Attempt
- 19:00 Facing...
- 20:00 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 20:25 Desperate Hours
- 20:50 Sea Of Hope

- 00:00 Ironclad: Battle For Blood
- 02:00 Inside
- 04:00 Double Team
- 06:00 Fast & Furious 7
- 08:30 Christmas Twister
- 10:15 Last Knights
- 12:15 Forbidden Empire
- 14:15 Fast & Furious 7
- 16:45 Bermuda Tentacles
- 18:45 Last Knights
- 20:45 Jurassic World
- 23:00 Legendary Tomb Of The Dragon



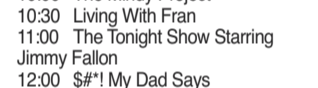
- 00:00 Bates Motel
- 01:00 How To Get Away With Murder
- 02:00 How To Get Away With Murder
- 03:00 Mistresses
- 04:00 Royal Pains
- 05:00 Good Morning America - Weekend
- 06:00 Prison Break
- 07:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 08:00 Unforgettable
- 09:00 Heartbeat
- 10:00 Prison Break
- 11:00 Unforgettable
- 12:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 13:00 The Fosters
- 14:00 Heartbeat
- 15:00 Live Good Morning America
- 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 18:00 This Is Us
- 19:00 The Fosters
- 20:00 Criminal Minds
- 21:00 Homeland
- 22:00 Tyrant
- 23:00 Tyrant

- 00:00 Three Night Stand
- 02:00 Forces Of Nature
- 04:00 The Beautiful And The Beast
- 06:00 Pixels
- 08:00 Shanghai Noon
- 10:00 The Beautiful And The Beast
- 12:00 Forces Of Nature
- 14:00 The Proposal
- 16:00 Shanghai Noon
- 18:00 Hot Rod
- 20:00 Ride Along
- 22:00 Running Scared



- 00:30 Happy Endings
- 01:00 Happy Endings
- 01:30 Family Guy
- 02:00 Together
- 02:30 The Big C
- 03:00 New Girl
- 03:30 Baby Daddy
- 04:00 The Bill Engvall Show
- 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 05:30 Trophy Wife
- 06:00 \$#! My Dad Says
- 06:30 Living With Fran
- 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 08:00 The Bill Engvall Show
- 08:30 Trophy Wife
- 09:00 New Girl
- 09:30 Breaking In
- 10:00 The Mindy Project
- 10:30 Living With Fran
- 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 12:00 \$#! My Dad Says
- 12:30 The Bill Engvall Show
- 13:00 Trophy Wife
- 13:30 The Bernie Mac Show
- 14:00 Baby Daddy
- 14:30 Breaking In
- 15:00 The Mindy Project
- 15:30 Happy Endings
- 16:00 Happy Endings
- 16:30 \$#! My Dad Says
- 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 18:00 New Girl
- 18:30 Cooper Barrett's Guide To Surviving
- 19:00 Son Of Zorn
- 19:30 The Mindy Project
- 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 21:00 Happy Endings
- 21:30 Happy Endings
- 22:00 Bordertown

- 00:30 Jamie Marks Is Dead
- 02:30 Jack Strong
- 05:00 Days Of Heaven
- 07:00 Late Bloomers
- 08:30 Mood Indigo
- 10:45 Jack Strong
- 13:00 Days Of Heaven
- 14:45 Testament Of Youth
- 17:00 Mood Indigo
- 19:15 Mystic River
- 21:30 The Boy
- 23:30 Men, Women & Children



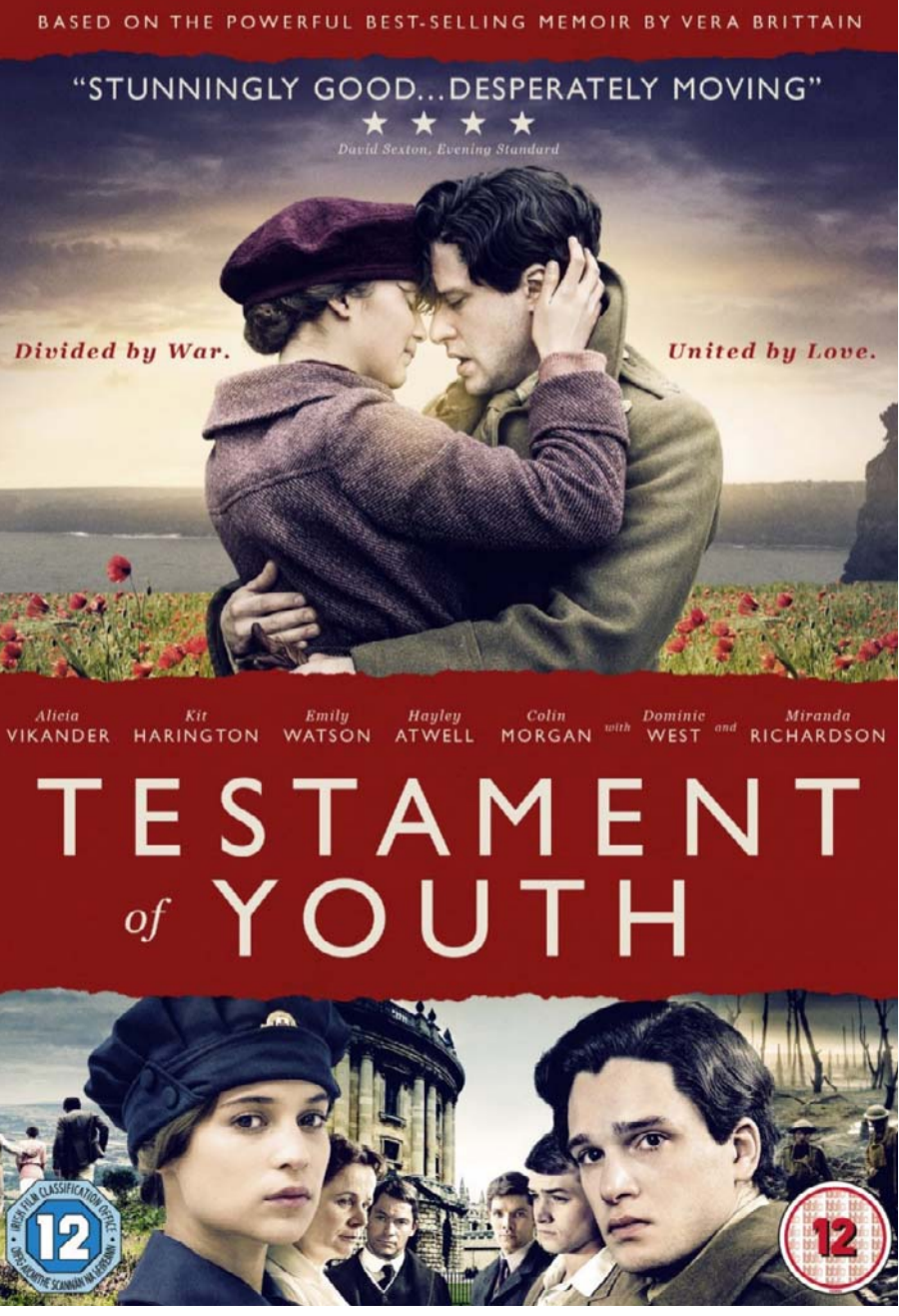
- 01:15 Marco Macaco
- 02:45 Memory Loss
- 04:30 Egon And Donci
- 06:00 Miffy The Movie
- 07:30 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
- 09:15 The Heart Of The Oak
- 10:45 Alpha Dogz: Pups United
- 12:30 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
- 14:15 Blue Elephant 2
- 16:00 The Unbeatables
- 18:00 The Heart Of The Oak
- 20:00 Miffy The Movie
- 21:45 Blue Elephant 2
- 23:30 The Unbeatables

- 01:00 Doctor Proctor's Far Powder
- 03:00 Little Women
- 05:00 Emma's Chance
- 07:00 My Girl
- 09:00 Santa's Little Helper
- 11:00 Emma's Chance
- 13:00 My Girl 2
- 15:00 The Land Before Time: Journey Of The Brave
- 17:00 The Lone Ranger
- 19:30 Charlotte's Web
- 21:15 Strange Magic
- 23:00 The Land Before Time: Journey Of The Brave



- 01:00 Before I Disappear
- 03:00 Wildlike
- 05:00 Don't Wake Mommy
- 07:00 The Reckoning
- 09:00 Selma
- 11:15 Before I Disappear
- 13:00 Wildlike
- 15:00 Cas & Dylan
- 16:45 Selma
- 19:00 Enter Nowhere
- 21:00 Dying Of The Light
- 23:00 The Bronx Bull

- 01:00 Before I Disappear
- 03:00 Wildlike
- 05:00 Don't Wake Mommy
- 07:00 The Reckoning
- 09:00 Selma
- 11:15 Before I Disappear
- 13:00 Wildlike
- 15:00 Cas & Dylan
- 16:45 Selma
- 19:00 Enter Nowhere
- 21:00 Dying Of The Light
- 23:00 The Bronx Bull



For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128



PHARMACIES
ON 24 HRS DUTY

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

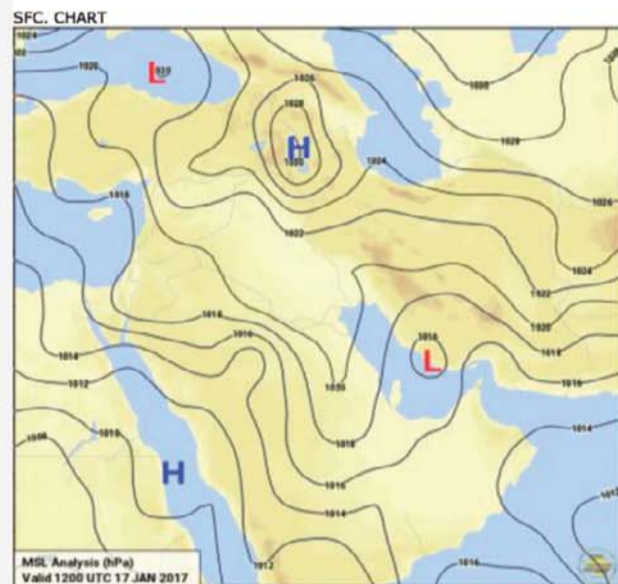


Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours
Issued 17/01/2017-19:00 LT UTC +3hr

MIN Temperature 8 °C
By Night :Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h
By Day : Partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind changing to light to moderate north easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain



Four-Day Forecast

	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Expected Weather	partly cloudy to cloudy + scattered light rain	Cloudy to partly cloudy + scattered rain	Mostly sunny	sunny + scattered clouds
Min Temp °C	08	11	10	09
Max Temp °C	18	20	21	19
Wind Direction	variable wind changing to light to moderate north easterly	north easterly to light variable	north westerly	north westerly becoming north easterly later on
Wind Speed km/h	06 - 26	08 - 26	08 - 28	06 - 28

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C EXP	Max °C REC
KUWAIT CITY	10	19
KUWAIT AIRPORT	08	19
ABDALLY	05	19
BUBYAN	07	19
JAHRA	07	19
FAILAKA ISLAND	08	19
SALMIYAH	10	18
AHMADI	10	18
JAL ALIYAH	05	19
QAROH ISLAND	13	17
UMM AL-MARADEM	13	17
NUWAISIB	07	19
WAFRA	07	20
MANAGISH	05	19
SALMY	04	17
MUTRIBA	05	20

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	19
Min Temp (°C)	12
Max Rel Hum (%)	90
Min Rel Hum (%)	34
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	39 N
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:43
Sunset	17:14

Tomorrow Prayer Times

Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:58
Asr	14:54
Sunset	17:14
Isha	18:35



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaizeem	23926920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

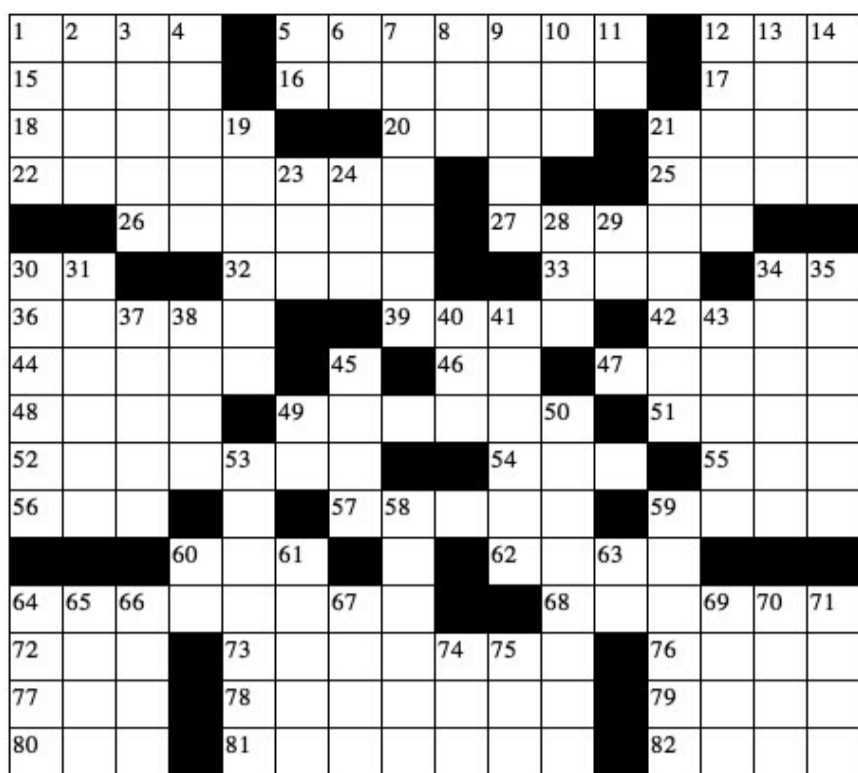
Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
DrAdrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gupare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrah	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammes Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	Te: 2575077 Fax: 25723123

Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antiga	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Azerbaijan	00994	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lesotho	00266		

CROSSWORD 1494



ACROSS

1. A city in the Asian part of Russia.
5. A form of insulin (trade name Humulin) made from recombinant DNA that is identical to human insulin.
12. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
15. Tree of low-lying coastal areas of south-eastern United States having glossy leaves and racemes of fragrant white flowers.
16. A contorted facial expression.
17. Any of various trees of the genus Ulmus.
18. The formation of frost or ice on a surface.
20. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
22. Italian poet considered the national poet of modern Italy (1835-1907).
25. Make anew.
26. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
27. (folklore) A corpse that rises at night to drink the blood of the living.
30. The sciences concerned with gathering and manipulating and storing and retrieving and classifying recorded information.
32. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
33. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
36. The sensation that results when taste buds in the tongue and throat convey information about the chemical composition of a soluble stimulus.
39. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
42. Something causes misery or death.
44. A city of central China.
46. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
47. Footwear (shoes or slippers) with no heel (or a flat heel).
48. A unit of area (4840 square yards) used in English-speaking countries.
51. A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
52. The cardinal number that is the product of 10 and 100.
54. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
55. Not divisible by two.
56. An associate degree in applied science.
57. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
62. King of Denmark and Norway who forced Edmund II to divide England with him.
64. One of the three prairie provinces in central Canada.
68. A genus of tropical American plants have sword-shaped leaves and a fleshy compound fruits composed of the fruits of several flowers (such as pineapples).
72. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
73. The Japanese art of folding paper into shapes representing objects (e.g., flowers or birds).
76. Not widely known.
77. Having leadership guidance.
78. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
79. American novelist (1909-1955).
80. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
81. (Greek mythology) The daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.
82. A city of central China.

DOWN

1. Of or relating to near the ear.
2. Any of various minerals consisting of

- hydrous silicates of aluminum or potassium etc. that crystallize in forms that allow perfect cleavage into very thin leaves.
3. Yearling heifer or bullock.
4. To some (great or small) extent.
5. A heavy silvery toxic univalent and bivalent metallic element.
6. An ancient city of Sumer located on a former channel of the Euphrates River.
7. (British) A minicar used as a taxicab.
8. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
9. A brief description given for purposes of identification.
10. A hospital unit staffed and equipped to provide intensive care.
11. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
12. Small genus of hairy herbs with yellow flowers.
13. Wearing or provided with clothing.
14. A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
19. The basic unit of money in Suriname.
21. Flowing in drops.
23. An accountant certified by the state.
24. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
28. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
29. Informal terms for a mother.
31. An archaic name for Easter or Passover.
34. An artificial language related to Ido.
35. Any plant of the genus Reseda.
37. Large spreading Old World tree having large leaves and globose clusters of greenish-yellow flowers and long seed pods that clatter in the wind.
38. A unit of weight used in east Asia approximately equal to 1.3 ounces.
40. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
41. An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
43. American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
45. English monk and scholar (672-735).
49. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
50. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
53. One of two or more atoms with the same atomic number but with different numbers of neutrons.
58. Very sad.
59. A drug (trade names Atarax and Vistaril) used as a tranquilizer to treat anxiety and motion sickness.
60. Destruction of heart tissue resulting from obstruction of the blood supply to the heart muscle.
61. Any of various edible mushrooms of the genus Morchella having a brownish sponge-like cap.
63. An organization of independent states to promote international peace and security.
65. In bed.
66. A quantity of no importance.
67. A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
69. Medium-sized tree having glossy lanceolate leaves.
70. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
71. Witnessed at first hand.
74. A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
75. The month following February and preceding April.



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Unfinished tasks may have you working late today. Taking care of business is a major theme where your emotional orientation is concerned. You crave organization and practicality and you want to get things accomplished. If you depend too much on the approval of people, you may be getting into a bed of thorns. Be enthusiastic with your regard for others. Be generous in your praise. It is worth the effort; people will adhere to your words when it is most important to you. They will remember you as the person who acknowledged them. Your craving to be appreciated will also be realized. Be open to receive messages of beauty, cheer and courage. This evening, you and a friend may decide to make winter wreaths for the front door.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your own thoughts are distracting today. Have a notepad available and write down one or two word thoughts each time you find your mind drifting so that you can know that you will remember and get back to that particular thought later. Work can soon continue at a brisk pace as usual. Insert your sense of humor when it is needed today. Silence can be very loud this afternoon and you may want to stir the soup-but stir softly, as other people may be concentrating on their work. Find ways to clear away things that stop your love relationship from growing. Enjoy a walk or a good visit with a friend this afternoon. Find ways in which to share your experiences of each day. You can be a very exciting companion.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today encourages hard work and study-you have a real appreciation for ideas and thoughts. This afternoon you catch up on phone calls and make appointments. A young person or mate complains because he or she needs more money. Dare yourself to guide this person in discovering the ability to make money instead of asking for it. With a mate, it may be in managing a garage sale, etc. There could be an emotional overtone to all of this that requires some flexibility. Your sense of humor will create positive feelings. You may have attracted a new friend recently. This could become an important relationship, perhaps a younger person or someone in your near environment. You think of ways to add color to a drab surrounding.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You will find yourself feeling in a stay-at-home mood but you, like the rest of us, join the work crowd and make your contributions. Career or vocational decisions are best made from the planning viewpoint and not the final decision phase just now. Be wise with your use of power. Work a little on your taxes this afternoon so that you will be ahead of any problems that could come up, as in finding receipts, etc. This is a time to renew the spirit and build on the connections you have with your loved ones. By taking charge of your life and showing reliability, you can easily gain the respect and admiration of others. Be watchful while walking your dog this evening; you may discover an interesting new animal in the neighborhood.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You are moving ahead and finances are improving. There is just one problem-the money just does not seem to stay around long enough to take root. However, by showing reasonable restraint you can set up a situation for better financial growth. Concentrate on the job at hand and zero in on ways to improve the required skill. Local, immediate and pressing matters get the green light. Visiting or inviting the neighbors in for a game of cards or refreshment may be just what is needed to strengthen the communications at this time. This would be a great time to run new ideas past a neighborhood improvement group. Perhaps a neighbor will support or add to your proposals. Family, home, relatives and real estate play big parts in your life.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Taking care of business is the most important order for the day. Tummy troubles today may have you believing in a more balanced nutrition. Your sharp mind and enthusiastic ways may keep you from being taken advantage of today. A fear of failing if you assert yourself can hold you back-as can coming on too strong. The trick is learning to make the most of your personal talents and abilities, working within your limitations instead of feeling hemmed in by them-balance. There is nothing like laughter to bring about a peaceful ending to a rather frustrating day. Watch a comedy video and enjoy being entertained a little differently from your usual. If you want to add color to a drab afternoon, consider arranging a bowl of fruit or flowers.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Problems concerning personal space, privacy or limitations in workspace can be handled with patience this morning. Changes happen and you are able to create an agreeable compromise. Exercise helps in arthritis and walking should be considered as a good form of exercise for you; walking is also a good way to enjoy good blood circulation. Maintaining good health care requires diversity. Concentrate on maintaining a centered awareness. In a centered awareness you will become aware of posture, attitude, energy, etc. You may receive help from a guide or teacher along these lines as well. Professional and personal relationships get a positive boost. Find ways in which you and your loved one can be close to nature this afternoon.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A computer or some other high-tech equipment has your interest this morning. You may appreciate your profession and promise to learn as much as you can in order to excel and move forward. You sometimes find it hard to believe you can have so much fun within the confines of how you make your living. The afternoon will bring about more changes that are positive where the matters of money are concerned. You attract people that give you encouragement and may attract a new friend this afternoon. Someone may be coming into your life that is new to your part of the country. You are able to help this person negotiate through the basics. There is time this evening for a home movie or a movie in the comfort of your home.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This is a smooth-running day. Business is a major theme and you are up for any of the roller-coaster events. You crave organization and you will gain some freedom of control in your area of expertise. You feel a need for a change, a desire to break with outmoded patterns from the past. Travel plans are possible now as well. You may have several contracts or proposals to review this afternoon. This is a full day with a most positive ending. This afternoon is filling up with a variety of social opportunities. Perhaps a stimulating lecture or music concert is the avenue of enjoyment. You may find yourself shopping for the little extras that make an evening perfect-a little wine, a little cheese. Romantic energies are high this evening.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Feeling out of balance today could only mean that there has been a hard push to complete difficult tasks, leaving most employees exhausted. You can create a balance for yourself and others by looking at a whole time period and separating that time into appropriate sections. In a time crunch, you and a couple of co-workers might encourage higher-ups to allow the employees to gain the help of family members for a day or two, especially with things like copying, sorting and stacking, inventory, etc. There could be a conference, a demonstration show or any other project requiring preliminary activity. Whatever the case, there is a lot of busy work that could be eased with a little originality. A little help would balance and simplify.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

The feeling for today is the need to stay focused. You feel good about the results of some long-term project coming to an end soon. New projects are on the horizon. Rewards for your hard work in your business should be enjoyed before long. You could also see some monetary results from a lucky guess. Your creativity is at an all-time high; keep your concentrated efforts going. Expectations can move to the back burner concerning romance; however, romantic possibilities are strong. You may be ready for a loving partnership that comes when you choose a good relationship. Keep the faith, there will be someone for you soon, if there is not someone special just now. Party time this evening creates some fun interaction with friends and acquaintances.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Speak out today when an important decision may create unexpected problems for employees. The demands of your career may interfere with the harmony at home just now. Being overworked can keep you away from the family. Review and define your career goals and you will be focused and ready for all sorts of miracles. You will create a healing with a friend today; whether the relationship is a lasting one or not, you will be pleased with the outcome. This is a time to insert a little flexible thinking into your day. You have enough commonsense to stay out of trouble. Taking things too far without the facts can have you agonizing over an imagined outcome as well as a stomachache. Busy hands will help you to keep your mind relaxed.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Fish 1

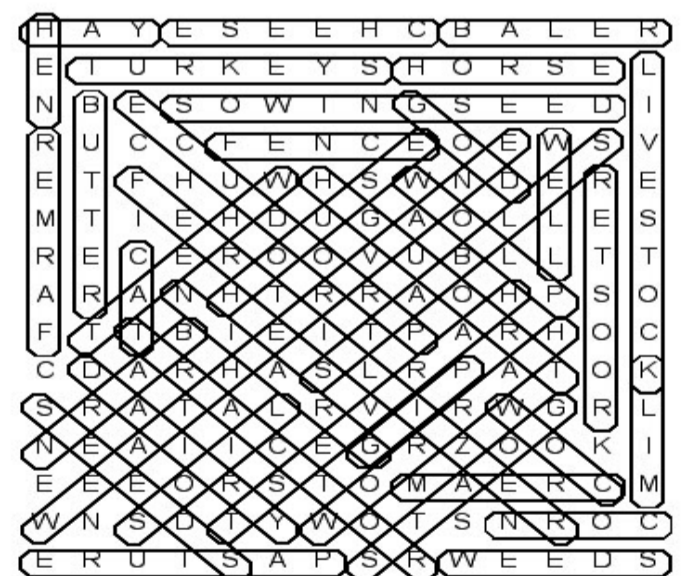
Find and circle all of the fish that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Benjamin Franklin quotation.

M U R D F S I L I A T E L P I R T
H S H A A N T L E M S B D D V C N
T A T I R E G U A S U S S O E R U
U I I B M I H T R L O A A L P A R
O P M L R U S S L G D S L L O P G
M A R U E U S H P U E A M Y M P H
R L E E N R E K C E V O O V P I S
A I P F D A E A E E E D N A A E I
W T I I D F R K R L A H D R N S F
W S M S E R I C R L D S D O H T
H A S H A R K S O A L U O E L A O
S L H B U H C D H E M C N N I L R
I R O O S T E R F I S H N G T I R
F H R E O H S I F E N O B R E B A
W C A T F I S H B A D D N A S U P
E A N U T H G R A Y L I N G E T D
J K O O N S W O R D F I S H A Y S

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| BARRACUDA | DORADO | PARROTFISH | SMELT |
| BLUEFISH | DRUM | PERMIT | SNOOK |
| BONEFISH | GAR | POMPAÑO | STURGEON |
| BULLHEAD | GRAYLING | RODFISH | SUNFISH |
| CATFISH | GRUNT | ROOSTERFISH | SWORDFISH |
| CHUB | HALIBUT | SALMON | TILAPIA |
| COD | JEWFISH | SAND DAB | TRIPLETAIL |
| CRAPPIE | MACKEREL | SAUGER | TUNA |
| CREVALLE | MUSKELLUNGE | SHARK | WAHOO |
| DOLLY VARDEN | PADDLEFISH | SHEEPSHEAD | WARMOUTH |

Yesterday's Solution

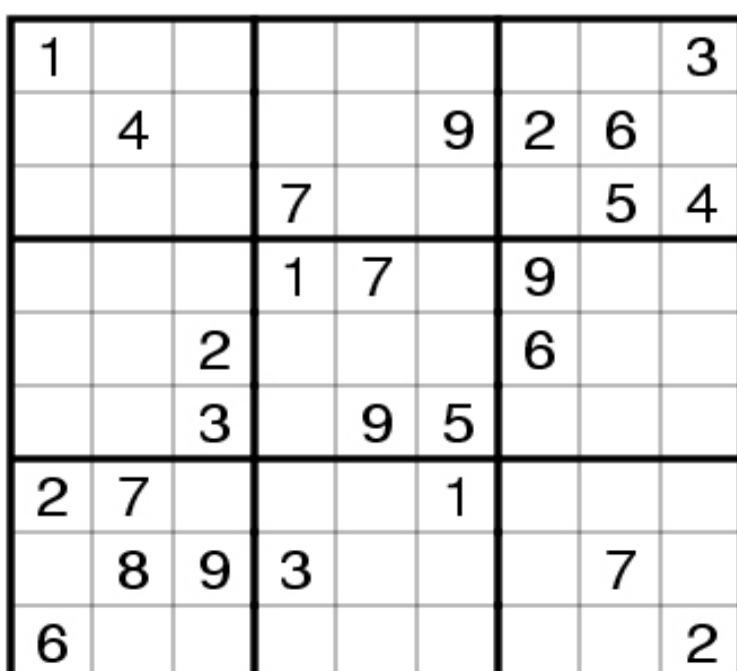
Farm



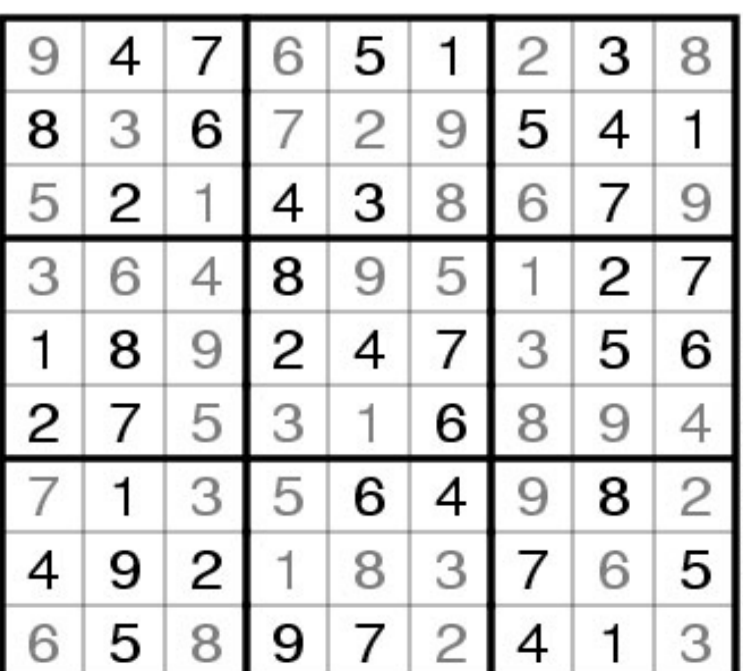
- | | | | |
|--------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| BALER | FARMER | HOUSE | SOWING SEED |
| BARN | FENCE | LIVESTOCK | STABLES |
| BUTTER | FERTILIZER | MILK | TRACTOR |
| CAT | GOATS | PASTURE | TROUGH |
| CHEESE | GRAIN | PIG | TURKEYS |
| CORN | HARROW | PLOW | WEATHERVANE |
| COW | HARVEST | PRODUCE | WEEDS |
| CREAM | HAY | ROOSTER | WELL |
| DAIRY | HEN | SEEDS | WHEAT |
| DOG | HORSE | SOIL | |

The hidden message is: CHICKENS

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution

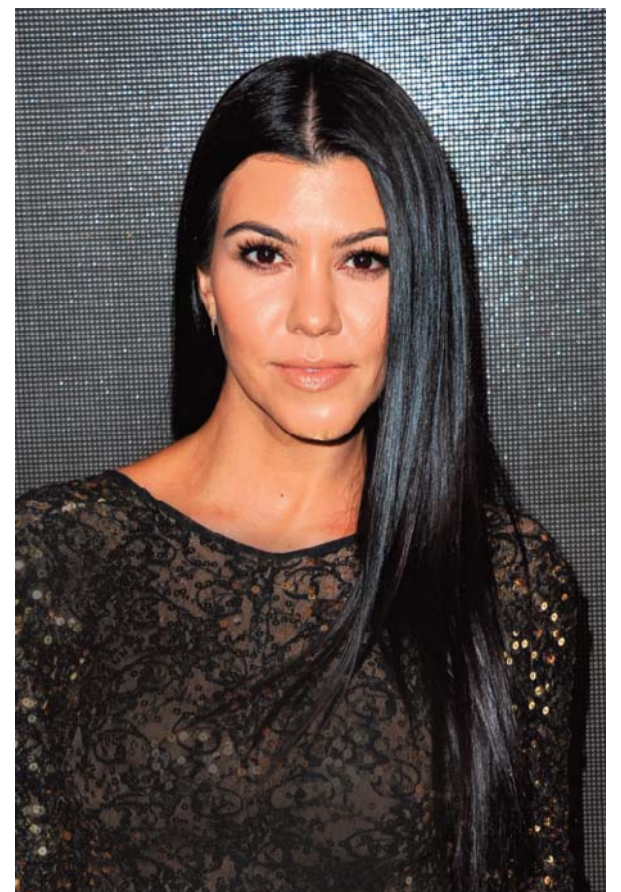


Kourtney Kardashian steps out with Justin Bieber

Kourtney Kardashian is "serious about making things work" with Scott Disick. The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star bumped into former flame Justin Bieber over the weekend but there is no chance of the pair rekindling their romance. A source told People magazine: "They hung out together with friends, but didn't spend the night together. "Kourtney is still serious about making things work with Scott. She went to the birthday party for Cash [Warren] first and was ready to party more after. They chatted, had fun but that was it. Kourtney is finished hooking up with Justin." Things have said to be going well for the

37-year-old television personality and the 33-year-old model, who share sons Mason, seven, and Reign, two, and daughter Penelope, four, together. An insider shared recently: "Kourtney is doing her part. She has a lot of strong feelings for Scott and she is enjoying having him around. She sees how much happier their children are when he's around, so she is being patient with Scott and trying to be forgiving of his rocky past. Scott and Kourtney are having a lot of fun too. They are stronger and healthier as a couple than ever before. "They have been laughing a lot and enjoying each other's company. Kourtney and Scott have taken the kids to Aspen for some skiing and are con-

tinuing to get along great. Scott is not drinking at all and working really hard to be present for Kourtney during this family vacation." And Scott has been "consistently on his best behavior" for months in a bid to win Kourtney over. A source said: "He has been consistently on his best behavior for the past two months. He's not been partying or drinking. This is the first time we've seen Scott be this good in a very long time. Yes, that is always something Kourtney wanted for Scott - to calm down and be at home."



James Arthur: My struggles shaped my work ethic

James Arthur says growing up with no money "shaped his work ethic". The 'Say You Won't Let Go' hitmaker had to graft when he was growing up to get the opportunities to share his music with the world. He said: "Being in bands and plugging away with not many opportunities and no money for many years really shaped me and taught me about work ethic. It really made me appreciate what I had now, because it was so hard before that. X Factor provided me with a platform that has launched me and given me some longevity. "I often think about starting a band again, doing my solo stuff and a band. I grew up in bands. Kurt Cobain is one of the reasons I started doing music because I just loved to watch them rock out. It's something I love to do." And the 28-year-old singer also opened up about feeling "super lost" when he first found fame.

He told HollywoodLife.com: "There was a point in my career when I was really, really lost - when I first found fame, I was super lost. I didn't have a clue what was going on. I was doing a lot of self-medicating and wasn't really in the right mind, and did some things that were quite irresponsible. Looking back, I'm embarrassed about it. But in hindsight, again, those things have shaped me and got me to a place where I have more self-respect and perspective. "It was a tough time for me, but maybe I wouldn't have had much to write about if I hadn't pressed the self-destruct button! It's relatable. Everybody's gone through some kind of struggle in their life, and I'd like to be the type of voice who talks about it."

GWYNETH PALTROW'S HEALTHY LIFESTYLE IS BASED ON 'CLEAN SLEEPING'

The 44-year-old American actress - who is also founded her healthy lifestyle website Goop - has admitted she not only eats well but she believes "good, quality sleep" and getting "ideally" 10 hours of rest every night is essential to leading a balanced life. Speaking in her new book 'Goop Clean Beauty', which was released last month, the golden-haired beauty said: "The lifestyle I lead is based not just on clean eating, but also on clean sleeping: at least seven or eight hours of good, quality sleep - and ideally even 10." And the 'Iron Man' star has revealed forty winks play a "powerful role" not only on people's energy levels, but on someone's appetite, which is why she believes a long slumber should be everyone's "first priority". She explained: "Sleep plays such a powerful role in determining your appetite and energy levels that I believe it should be your first priority - even before you think about your diet. "That's because the body repairs itself and detoxifies overnight, and it's this process - happening efficiently - that allows you to look your best the next day." However, Gwyneth - who has 12-year-old daughter Apple and 10-year-old son Moses with her former husband Chris Martin - has described menopause as "the undulating hormonal cocktail of midlife", which can throw a spanner in the works and lead to "troubled sleep". She explained: "But as menopause approaches, changes in hormones can lead to troubled sleep." "It might be night sweats, or thoughts rushing through your mind, but the undulating hormonal cocktail of midlife commonly leaves women sleep-deprived and stumbling through the day like a zombie."



Olivia Newton John is 'grateful' for having cancer

The 68-year-old singer was diagnosed with breast cancer over two decades ago and whilst it was a tough time for her, she admits it "taught her [about] compassion". She told Radio Times magazine: "I am grateful for the experience because without it I would not have done many of the things I have done in my life. It's taught me compassion for those going through difficult times." Meanwhile, the 'Grease' star previously admitted she never felt better after having a mastectomy. Speaking about her feelings towards the procedure, she shared: "I felt complete and utter dread. One night, shortly after it had been confirmed that I needed a mastectomy, I couldn't sleep. I went downstairs, sat in the dark and felt the fear washing over me. I was convinced that the cancer had spread at top speed and was in every part of my body. "For a few weeks my world was in turmoil, but then I calmed down and started to fight back mentally. Deep down, there was always a tiny nugget of hope inside me that said, 'You'll be OK. You'll make it,' and that little voice kept me going." And Olivia feels having a positive attitude has helped her get her health back on track. Speaking in 2009, she added: "After I had my treatment, I had counseling, which helped me to think about the importance of my feelings. Having cancer forced me to think deeply about myself for the first time, so it was a positive experience in that respect. I learned not to feel guilty about my successful music career ... "I also realized you had to eat well, exercise and be happy. It sounds obvious today, but I fully credit that attitude with my good health ... Today, I still eat well, using organic food where possible. I have been a vegetarian, but I'll now have grilled chicken or fish. I believe in treating yourself, so I drink the odd glass of wine and I like chocolate. I play tennis three times a week and I get out into the fresh air every day."



Burberry Beauty announces Iris Law as new face

Iris Law's school friends don't know she's the new face of Burberry Beauty. The 16-year-old model - who was announced as the face of Burberry's Liquid Lip Velvet campaign on Monday - is currently preparing for her GCSEs, and has admitted juggling her school work with her burgeoning career and having to shoot her campaign for the prestigious fashion house has all happened "very quickly", although it hasn't sunk in yet because her pals were at school when the news of her debut modeling job was unveiled and they have yet to congratulate her on her success. Speaking about her latest venture and her busy schedule, Iris - who is the daughter of 44-year-old actor Jude Law and his ex-wife Sadie Frost, 51 - said: "It happened very quickly. Burberry approached me, I found out in October that I got it and we shot the campaign in the same month. "I'm balancing this with my classes, working on it at the weekends and during my holidays. "The campaign will come out on a school day but none of my classmates even know I've done it yet. It'll probably hit me a lot more once everyone knows." Despite her young age, Iris has admitted she isn't feeling any pressure with her career and is trying to take a relaxed approach because she believes posing for photoshoots comes "naturally" to her. The brunette beauty told Grazia magazine: "It hasn't seemed too daunting yet. Everyone has been very friendly and I've felt very welcome. "It comes naturally and no one has put too much pressure on me. "I'm taking it all as it comes, that's my motto at the moment."

Taylor Hill ate '3,000 calories a day' prior to the Victoria's Secret fashion show

The 20-year-old model - who acquired her angel wings in 2015 - has admitted prior to gracing the runway for the lingerie giant's annual fashion extravaganza, which took place in Paris, France, in November 2016, she devoured 1,000 more calories than the daily requirement for women because she believes you can't look toned without eating or else you could "die". Speaking about her super svelte shape, the brunette beauty said: "I eat 3,000 calories a day before the VS show. Three thousand! There's no way you look like that and don't eat. You will die!" And the catwalk icon has credited all Victoria's Secret models as "Olympians", because they are "strong" athletic women. She explained to the Sunday Times Style Magazine: "Victoria's Secret girls are like athletes. We're like Olympians. We're



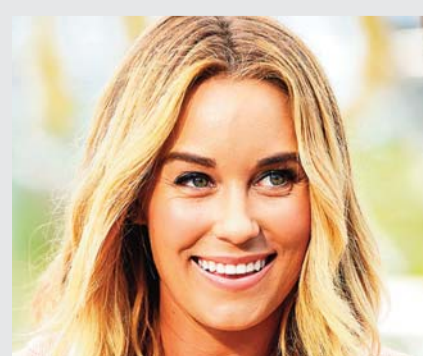
strong." Taylor has admitted stripping down to adorn a skimpy underwear suit on the runway "really challenges" her because she considers herself to be a "loser tomboy". Speaking previously, she

said: "[I'm] more of a loser tomboy type. I'm very nerdy, I love to read - I'm not necessarily a girl's girl. "[Being an Angel] really challenges who I am as a person. I'm standing there in underwear, but I'm just [macho] like, 'Hey guys!' " Meanwhile, Taylor is making the most of the opportunities she has in the industry during her current career to learn as much as she can to help her to move into the "actual business" of fashion in the future. Speaking previously, she said: "I'm really curious about the fashion business. "I mean, the actual business. As such as anything else, one of the amazing opportunities I have, doing this job, is that I get to see the industry from the inside. "I'm always paying attention, always making mental notes. "The more I see, the more I learn. I'll definitely use that education someday."

Lauren Conrad's hair stylist will be on call to style her after the birth

L Lauren Conrad's hair stylist will be on hand with a "blow dryer and round brush" when she gives birth. The 30-year-old television personality - who is pregnant with her and her husband William Tell's first child - hasn't admitted she wants to be fully pampered immediately after welcoming her tiny tot into the world, but beauty expert, Kristin Ess, has admitted she is more than happy to be on call if Lauren wants her tresses tamed after the delivery. Speaking about Lauren's post-pregnancy styling, Kristin said: "If she wants it, I will be there. "I will be there, blow dryer and round brush in hand, no doubt. That's the least I can do for her." And Kristin has revealed she avoids dousing 'The Hills' alumni's golden locks with a "tonne" of hairspray, even before she announced she was expecting a baby. She said: "We don't use a ton of sprays in general on her. We do one hairdo and then we do another hairdo, and if we do use aerosol sprays, it's a super soft amount - even before she was pregnant. "For the most part, we use pomade on her for texture, braids and waves." Kristin has revealed Lauren's favorite beauty products are from

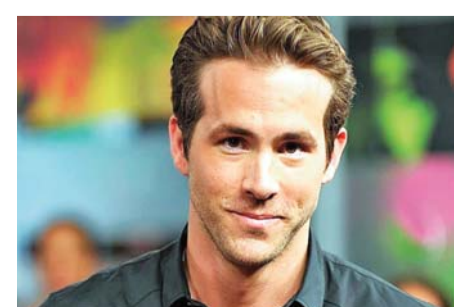
Kristin's debut hair care line with Target.com, and her preferred items are those in a "blush toned" bottle. Speaking about the reality TV star's beauty secrets, Kristin said: "Lauren's favourites are the shampoo and conditioner, probably because of the colour of the bottle - she loves anything blush toned." Lauren - who married her singer spouse in 2014 - announced the exciting news she is expecting a baby on Instagram with a picture of the happy couple's first sonogram. Alongside the photo, she wrote: "Happy New Year! I have a feeling 2017 is going to be the best year yet... (sic). — Bang Showbiz



RYAN REYNOLDS LEARNS HOW TO BUILD PIAGET WATCH ON RECENT VISIT

Ryan Reynolds has been taught how to build a watch when he visited Piaget. The 40-year-old actor - who was announced as the international male brand ambassador for the luxury watchmaker and jewellers in June last year - took a trip the fashion brand on Monday to mark the 60th anniversary of Piaget Altiplano, where he learnt how to construct the "world's greatest timepiece", although the star has hinted he doesn't have the creative skill and struggles to make a bowl of cereal. Alongside a collage edited with a black and white filter of him observing the accessories, which he shared on his Instagram account, he wrote: "Spent the afternoon with a master watch-builder at @piaget. He showed me how they build the world's greatest timepiece. While I can't even build a decent bowl of cereal.#SIHH #Altiplano60 (sic)." And the designer label has admitted they were honored to have the 'Deadpool' actor visit them and discover "the secrets" behind making a specific design. Alongside a string of pictures of the star - who has daughters James, two, and three-month-old Ines with his wife Blake Lively - which were shared on Piaget's photo-sharing site, they wrote: "It was an honour to welcome

#PiagetAmbassador @vancityreynolds who made a special appearance on the #Piaget booth at #SIHH2017 to celebrate the #PiagetAltiplano 60th anniversary. Thank you #RyanReynolds! #Altiplano60 "Great moment with #PiagetAmbassador @vancityreynolds discovering the secrets of making a #PiagetAltiplano. Thank you for being with us #RyanReynolds . #sihh2017#Altiplano60 (sic)." And the golden-haired hunk has admitted he was "proud" to be announced as the new face of the company last year. Speaking previously, the Canadian-born heartthrob said: "I could not be more proud and happy to have joined the @piaget family! I'll greatly miss my real family, but we all know this is for the best. #PiagetAmbassador (sic)."



GOSSIP



Stuntwoman Olivia Jackson reveals the pain of her on-set accident

The stuntwoman who lost her arm on the set of 'Resident Evil: The Final Chapter' wishes she could "crawl" out of her skin and "all the pains in it". Olivia Jackson, who also suffered serious head injuries and a punctured lung when she crashed into a metal camera arm while filming a high-speed motorcycle chase in 2015, has taken to Instagram to reveal the extent of her injuries and discuss the mental anguish she has subsequently faced. Alongside an image of her scarred back, Olivia wrote: "Scew much? This is the twisted upper body I'm left with from my accident. Scew spine, off-centered neck (the most painful part), twisted shoulder blade, permanently dislocated shoulder, 1 arm, muscle atrophy on the left hand side of my core & plenty more other treats. I don't mean to moan, but sometimes I just want to crawl out of my own skin & all the pains in it #thankgoodnessimnotmodellinganymore #2spinalops=bigscar (sic)" Previously, the stunt double, who has stood in for A-listers like Charlize Theron and Milla Jovovich, said she was determined to make the most of her life, despite losing her arm on the set of the movie. She explained: "Sometimes, when I catch sight of my stump in the mirror, I feel a wave of sadness. "There's no point in feeling down about life - it won't make my arm grow back. I used to miss



my old face but now I style my hair to fall forwards to hide the big scar. "Surgeons did an amazing job piecing fragments of my facial bones together and I think I look all right now." Olivia spent 17 days in a coma following the accident, in which she also suffered a broken shoulder blade, ribs and vertebrae, as well as bleeding on her brain.

EMMA WATSON: I ASPIRE TO BE LIKE BELLE FROM BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Emma Watson aspires to be like Belle from 'Beauty and the Beast'. The 26-year-old actress has revealed that after rejecting the chance to star in Disney's 'Cinderella', she accepted the role of Belle in the upcoming live-action adaptation because she can see certain similarities between herself and her on-screen character. She explained: "I didn't know they were going to make 'Beauty And The Beast' at the time I turned down 'Cinderella'. "But when they offered me Belle, I just felt the character resonated with me so much more than Cinderella did. She remains curious, compassionate and open-minded. And that's the kind of woman I would want to embody as a role model, given the choice." Emma was initially reluctant to accept the part, but agreed to do so after she was afforded the opportunity to shape Belle in her own way. She told Total Film magazine: "In a strange way, she challenges the status quo of the place she lives in, and I found that really inspiring." Emma previously admitted to changing her character's backstory to make her a more empowering figure. The actress - who is a vocal campaigner for equal rights for women - said: "I was like, 'Well, there was never very much information or detail at the beginning of the story as to why Belle didn't fit in, other than she liked books. "Also, what is she doing with her time?' So we created a backstory for her, which was that she had invented a kind of washing machine, so that, instead of doing laundry, she could sit and use that time to read instead. So, yeah, we made Belle an inventor." Emma stars alongside the likes of Dan Stevens, Emma Thompson, Luke Evans and Josh Gad in the Bill Condon-directed movie.

Maisie Williams worries about spilling Game of Throne secrets

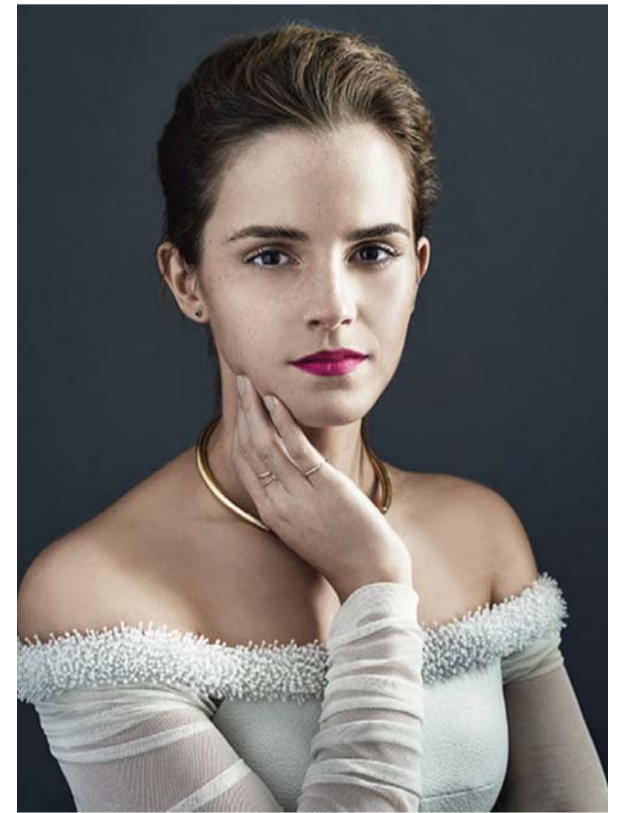
Maisie Williams says she and the 'Game of Thrones' cast are constantly worried about spilling the show's secrets. The 19-year-old actress plays Arya Stark in the HBO fantasy TV series - based on George R. R. Martin's series of novels - and she has revealed that she and her co-stars will often go out together socializing and will talk about upcoming plots and what they think is in stores for the characters, forgetting how popular it is and that fans could be listening in. In an interview on BBC Radio 1, she said: "We go out for a drink and discuss (what's going to happen) but we have to watch what we're saying because you don't know who is listening to your conversation and because we've been on this show since the beginning you forget that it's become so popular, so when you're sat chatting about possible storylines you're like, 'Oh we better keep this quiet because people might actually think we know

what's gonna happen even though we are speculating.' Although Maisie has been on the series since 2011 she doesn't get told everything that's in store for Arya or the other main players and has to make "educated guesses" just like the fans. She said: "I make educated guesses and we try and get answers and bits of information and knowledge from the writers but they keep it close to their chest." With the forthcoming Season 7 completed and due for release later this year, she teased: "People should be excited." HBO head of programming Casey Bloys previously confirmed that 'Game of Thrones' will be coming to an end after Season Eight. He said: "I think the showrunners [D.B. Weiss and David Benioff] have a very specific plan about the number of seasons they want to do. If I could get them to do more, I would take 10 seasons, but we want to take their lead with what they could do and what the best version of the show is."

COLEEN ROONEY: I HAVE A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH CAMERA PHONES



Coleen Rooney has a love-hate relationship with camera phones. The 30-year-old businesswoman - who shares sons Kai, seven, Klay, three, and 12-month-old Kit with her soccer star husband Wayne - has admitted the couple have mixed feelings towards the electronic devices. She said: "Aw, these camera phones - Wayne absolutely hates them. It's hard being in the public eye. "You can be sitting there having dinner with your family and someone's taking pictures of you." But she explained: "It's hard because I love taking pictures of the kids. I'm not really into selfies. It's so easy just to get your phone out and video the baby's first giggle." And despite Wayne's eye-watering earnings and their celebrity lifestyle, Coleen insisted the Rooney's are, at heart, still a normal family. She told the Daily Mirror newspaper: "I'm a hands-on mum, I like to be in control of what's going on at home. "Even if I'm away and my mum's taking the kids to school I like to have their uniforms laid out, with their school books set aside the night before when my mum's taking them. It's for my peace of mind as well, so I know everything sorted for them." "I'm lucky that my work projects aren't nine to five every day - a lot of the time I can work in the North with my children. I've got a strong family bond, where my mum will look after the kids. I've never struggled." Meanwhile, Coleen also revealed she is undecided about having more kids, admitting it's not something she's considering at the moment. Coleen - who married Wayne in 2008 - explained: "I don't know if I want more kids. Everyone always asks if I want a baby girl, but it's quite full-on right now. "I'm really busy being a mum and I'm not thinking about it any time soon, but I'd never rule it out."



Lindsay Lohan is opening 'a new chapter' in her life

Lindsay Lohan's decision to remove herself from social media was "symbolic" of her "letting go of the past". The Hollywood star feels she is entering a "new chapter" in her life after turning 30 in July 2016 and said deleting her social media accounts formed an important part of the transition. On her decision to take a break from social media, Lindsay said: "It was symbolic to me of letting the past go and moving on to the future, which was very therapeutic for me. It's been a long time coming." Lindsay said that having celebrated her landmark birthday last year, she has come to realize the importance of giving back and has, therefore, decided to focus her attention on her charitable work. Asked what triggered the turnaround in her lifestyle, she told OK! Online: "There was not an exact moment. However, there comes a time in one's life where you stop and reflect on all of the experiences you have had, for me

it happened when I turned 30 and realized there is more in giving back in life. "That is what will make you truly happy." The troubled star - who has battled drug and alcohol addictions - also voiced fears about the ever-increasing influence of social media on society. The 'Mean Girls' star said: "It has benefits such as connecting you to loved ones and old friends, and then it has negatives of possibly being too connected to everyone. "It is the world that we live in - just depends how the person decides to utilize it." Meanwhile, Lindsay still has plenty to keep her occupied in 2017, including new TV, film and business ventures. A member of her team shared: "We are extremely happy here at Team Lohan. Thrilled to see everyone's reactions over the next year as we have some big projects lined up."



Noah Cyrus wants to do 'Carpool Karaoke'

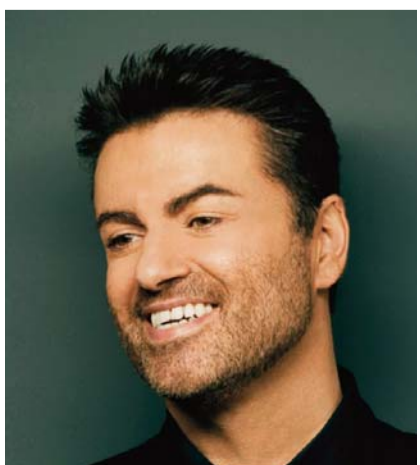
The 16-year-old singer - who is the younger sister of pop superstar Miley Cyrus - has only just kick started her music career with her debut single 'Make Me (Cry)' featuring Labrinth, but she is already dreaming of going on the popular segment on James' Corden's 'The Late Late Show' to sing along with the British comedian, 38, in his Range Rover. In an interview with V magazine, she said: "That [going on 'Carpool Karaoke'] is the dream! "I think he is amazing. I talk about it all the time. "James Corden is literally one of my favorite things to watch." The 'Doc' actress has spent two years working on her album, but was initially hesitant because of the success of her father, country singer Billy Ray Cyrus, Miley, and their rocker brother Trace. She previously said "It's so exciting because I feel like I can finally talk about it now. "In 2014, when the 'I Forget When We Were' album came out by Ben Howard, that was really inspiring to me. "I just started getting this drive to want to write and sing and start my own album." Though country music has been a big influence on Noah because of her father, she insists her own record has a very different sound. She said: "In my family, I grew up listening to my dad sing country music, but [the album] is definitely different from what I was raised listening to." And the teenage star is thankful to have a lot of support from her famous family, with Miley telling her she needs a "thick skin" in the public eye. She added: "Miley always says, 'Don't ever look yourself up or read your comments, 'cause you're gonna see stuff that you don't want to see. "That's the best advice ever. If it's making me happy, then it's working. "My dad has learned all of the songs that I've sent him. He put it on his computer, on his jukebox, on his phone. He still has a Blackberry, by the way. But everybody's been so supportive."



George Michael's cousin says singer 'died of accidental drug overdose'

George Michael's cousin suspects the singer died of an accidental drug overdose. Andros Georgiou has claimed the iconic musician returned to taking "hard drugs" towards the end of his life, but is adamant that George did not commit suicide. He said "Hard drugs had been back in his life. "I just think he took too much of something, mixed with antidepressants and other drugs he was on - with alcohol. I think his heart just stopped beating." Andros said George - who died at his Oxfordshire home on Christmas

Day - had been addicted to crack cocaine in the past, claiming it was one of his "favorite drugs". He told BBC's 'Victoria Derbyshire Show': "I believe he had suicidal thoughts, because his mental health was all over the place. But I don't believe this was suicide." The precise cause of George's death remains unclear at this stage, after the police recently confirmed that a post-mortem examination proved "inconclusive", while the results of further tests have not been made known to the public. Earlier this week, Andros hinted there is something suspicious about the singer's death. After George's boyfriend Fadi Fawaz recently tweeted he and George "were together 24 hours a day", Andros dismissed the claim, insisting they never even lived together. He also demanded to know why the photographer had slept in his car the night before finding the 'Too Funky' hitmaker's lifeless body. He wrote on Facebook alongside a screenshot of Fadi's tweet: "I have been trying to hold back on this tweet I saw nearly 10 days ago but the more I am reading and the more I am finding out about Fadi I just can't keep my mouth shut any longer No 1 he was never with Yog 24 hours a day they never lived together he lived in one of Yogs houses in Regents Park? "And even if they were, WHY were they not together on Christmas Eve? and WHY did he sleep in the car? Too many questions have come up.(sic)"



JUSTIN BIEBER THINKS SELENA GOMEZ'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WEEKND IS FAKE

Justin Bieber thinks Selena Gomez's romance with The Weeknd is a cynical plot designed to boost record sales. The 'Sorry' hitmaker dated Selena on and off from 2010, and is refusing to believe that his former love interest is really dating The Weeknd, who has been working on new music with the 24-year-old beauty. Justin, 22, thinks the supposed relationship is a strategic move on the part of Selena, who has previously dated Nick Jonas, Zedd and himself in the weeks before releasing new material, according to TMZ. Meanwhile, Selena is reportedly unconcerned about upsetting

Bella Hadid with her relationship with The Weeknd. The 'Heart Wants What It Wants' hitmaker was seen kissing the 'Can't Feel My Face' singer earlier this month, prompting his ex-girlfriend Bella to unfollow her on Instagram. One source said: "Selena was always the girl who stayed away from a lot of the Taylor Swift crew, except for Taylor. She preferred to be one-on-one with Taylor and didn't like being a part of the whole squad thing." Another insider stressed that because Selena is not especially close to Bella or Gigi Hadid, her new relationship is not a big issue. The source said: "Selena is not good friends with either Gigi or Bella. She knows them through other people, but they are just acquaintances. "She is friendly with them, but not friends with them ... Selena and Gigi were never fond of each other, so Selena definitely doesn't have any stipulations about hooking up with or dating Bella's ex." Bella and The Weeknd split two months ago, but 20-year-old model reportedly still has feelings for her ex. A source recently explained: "She is actually not over The Weeknd. She still loves him. They are on fine terms, but she is bitter about the romance with Selena. "She was not happy when all of that gossip went everywhere between The Weeknd and Selena. It really hurt her seeing Selena be all up on her man. She still feels like they have a connection."



FASHION



IMPISH, BOYISH LOOKS PERMEATE MILAN'S MENSWEAR RUNWAYS

Impish, boyish looks are permeating the Milan menswear runway this season, and the mood seems to be a search for a simpler past. Hooded parkas with contrasting color panels, straight trousers, boxy jackets and slightly oversized knitwear bely a nostalgia for the 1970s - a time when, more than one designer has recalled, there was more social protest and less social pressure. Here are some highlights from Monday's menswear previews for next fall and winter on the third day of Milan Fashion Week.

Trust Fendi

The Fendi runway was awash in optimism, and what could be more optimistic than a yellow and blue striped fur shopper? "I want to be optimistic. I have children," Silvia Venturini Fendi said backstage. The collection was relentlessly upbeat. Mixed and matched fur accents on over coats, like leopard sleeves and striped collars, offered a sense of graphic hi-jinx, as did a red banner reading "Fantastic" up the side of a fur coat.

Fendi dotted the garments with uplifting and sometimes ironic messages, from "Love" on the front of head bands to "Bliss" on zipper pulls to "Hope" on the side of a bag and "Trust Fendi" on the front of a sweater. Furry blue slippers read FEN on the right foot and DI on the left. "For me it is not just a logo, it is a history," the designer said. The silhouette was very simple and sporty, filled with everyday attire mixed more formal pieces. Part of the indulgence was also in the colors, with pink for men, alongside coral, sky blue and yellow. Footwear had a substantial, futuristic feel, with Italian leather shoes with integrated socks, like high-tech soccer cleats. Backstage, Korean popstar Taeyang greeted Fendi, who told him she couldn't wait to see him on stage wearing pieces from the collection. Soon, he said.

The billionaire's club

What the gilded helicopter in the middle runway didn't convey, the theme song to "Dallas" did. The Billionaire brand founded by Italian businessman and former Formula One manager Flavio Briatore is relaunching under the creative direction of German designer Philipp Plein, who aims to make it the most exclusive men's brand in the world. Plein's team scoured modeling agencies for gray bearded men to play oilmen in his billionaire fantasy.

They all wore cowboy hats, boots and tight pants, and walked with a knowing swagger. After that, they had their



Designer Philipp Plein (center) greets the audience at the end of the show for fashion house Billionaire during the Men's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 fashion week in Milan.

choice of leather jackets - from short and sporty to long and showy in purple with a fur collar - suede coats and tuxedo jackets. "He is a genius," Briatore said of the designer after Monday's preview. "Luxury is a very important niche. It creates jobs." Briatore's next date: The inauguration Friday of his friend, Donald Trump, as president of the United States. The Italian businessman said he leaves for Washington yesterday.



Models present creations for fashion house Fendi during the Men's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 fashion week in Milan. — AP/AF photos

FASHION

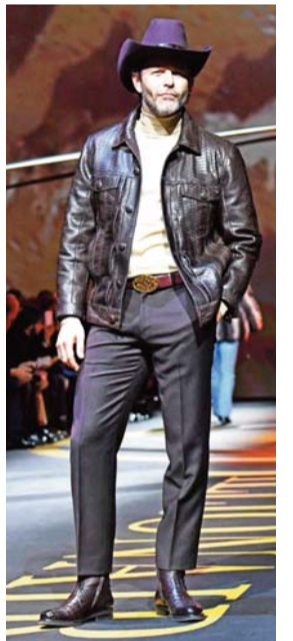


Protest revival for No. 21
 While some designers embrace social media, Alessandro Dell'Acqua is using the latest collection for the No. 21 brand to issue a reminder that there is more to life. The Italian designer sought inspiration in the 1970s for a simpler approach to life, but also as an era when protest movements found their voice. Dell'Acqua is not alone in the fashion community for thinking such a moment is again upon us, as he considers the world's political landscape. "I was inspired by images of marches and demonstrations of the 1970s. I was interested in the freedom of that era. That protest movement, which was very important then, has been lost today," Dell'Acqua said backstage.

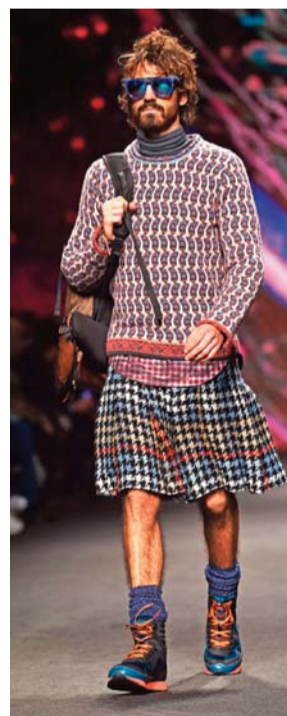
Dressing, he said, was also more free-spirited. He made that point with Nordic-style sweaters with the decorative trim left half finished, to underline that sometimes there are better things to do. He approached the collection through a free association. Pea coats closed with ribbons. Jackets mixed military camouflage patterns with more civilian stripes and checks, recalling the days when returning soldiers protested the Vietnam War. Thick sweaters included panels from tailored shirts. Hoods underlined the youthful appeal. "It is not that with this collection, I can change the world. But I think it is important that young people get the message and start to protest, and not just watch social networks," the designer said.

The sky is the limit for Etro
 The Etro man is descending from a mountain after a long a mystical climb. The fantastical collection shown Monday in Milan represented a transition into the spiritual world with rich velvety fabrics, deep meditative shades of purple, red and turquoise and easy silhouettes from kimono coats to parachute pants to Highlander kilts. The opening look was a rich printed velvet suit with an elongated jacket and loose trousers with elasticized ankles. It was finished off with eyewear that included a third lens for the inner eye.

The collection "is tied to the sacredness of nature and the dimensions of the mountains," designer Keane Etro said backstage. The Etro motif of the season included a series of bears, wolves and bucks with psychedelic floral antlers that appeared on backs, pockets and interior linings. Technical hiking boots with colorful accents and hiking backpacks with small chanting bells completed the looks. The collection finished with models carrying a series of paisley printed skis and snowboards. — AP



Models present creations for fashion house Billionaire.



Models present creations for fashion house Etro during the Men's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 fashion week.



Models present creations for fashion house No. 21 during the Men's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 fashion week.



Models present creations for fashion house Moncler Gamme Bleu during the Men's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 fashion week in Milan.

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2017

Impish, boyish looks permeate Milan's menswear runways

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Two women walk past a wall painting in Medellín, Colombia. — AFP



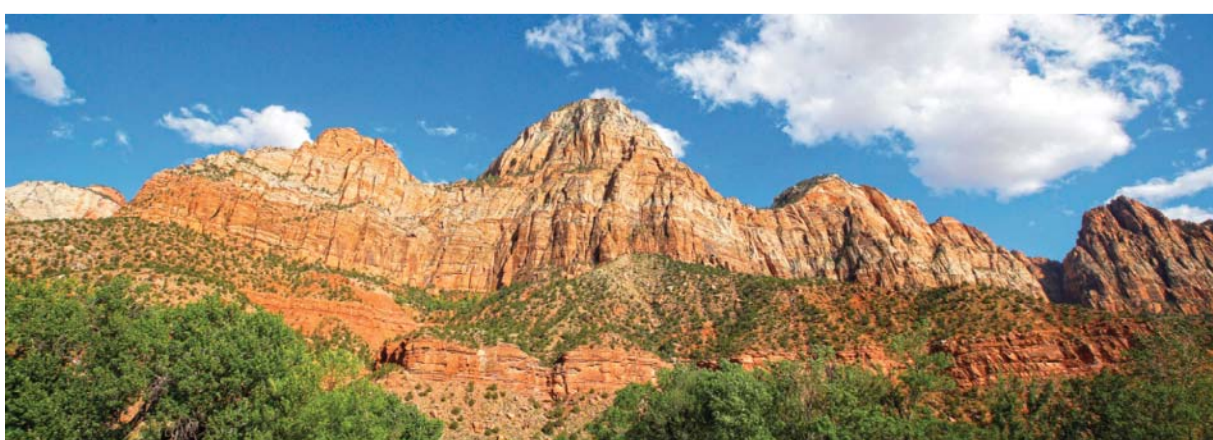
Hikers descend a ridge inside Rocky Mountain National Park, near Estes Park, Colo.



In this file photo, on the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service, visitors stroll with their baby as the sun at dawn illuminates mountain peaks as seen from Signal Mountain in Grand Teton National Park, Wyo.



File photo shows hikers on the Canyon Overlook Trail in Zion National Park.



This file photo shows Zion National Park, near Springdale, Utah. — AP photos

National park visits hit record high for 3rd straight year

Visits to US national parks set a record in 2016 for the third consecutive year as landmarks such as Zion, Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain experienced historic levels of popularity that brought collateral headaches stemming from overcrowded roads and trails and increasing visitor misbehavior. At many parks, visitors waited an hour or more in cars to get through entrance gates and then spent the day trying to outmaneuver fellow visitors for parking spots and room on popular trails. They left behind enormous amounts of trash and sometimes, human waste.

Encountering a crowded, Disneyland-like situation when people were expecting peaceful serenity can lead to aggression and bad decisions, park officials said. "The level of frustration, we've certainly seen an increase in that," said Kyle Patterson, Rocky Mountain National park spokeswoman. "Sometimes they take it out on each other and sometimes they take it out on park."

It created a good news-bad news story for park managers. They praise the increased interest but are struggling to preserve iconic mountains, slot canyons and wildlife habitat for future generations. The National Park Service budget has remained basically the flat, leaving parks to grapple with the problems without higher staffing levels. "We love having people come to the park," said John Marciano, Zion National Park spokesman. "But our No. 1 goal, our mandate, is to preserve the park into perpetuity and to ensure our visitors have a best of kind and safe experience."

Overall visitation to national parks is on track to surpass 325 million in 2016, breaking last year's all-time high of 307 million, federal figures show. The record-breaking three-year stretch came after parks visitation ebbed and flowed between 255-287 million for nearly three decades. The National Park Service launched a major marketing campaign to celebrate its 100th birthday in 2016, including free passes for every fourth-grader and their families. That renewed attention coupled with reasonable gas prices and an improved economy likely fueled the increase, said National Parks Service spokesman Jeffrey Olson.

The agency's "Find Your park" campaign will continue this year and officials expect to surpass 300 million visitors again even if there's no record, Olson said. Absent December totals, the Grand Canyon in northern Arizona hit 5.9 million visits. Yellowstone, which stretches into Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, had 4.3 million visits. The final year tally for Rocky Mountain in Colorado was 4.5 million. Zion in southern Utah had 4.3 million visitors - nearly double the 2010 total.

daily visitor limit. Even though it is prohibited, more people are taking dogs on trails in the Rocky Mountain park. Visitors are also parking cars on native vegetation or fragile alpine tundra and leaving human waste right near backcountry trails, Patterson said.

This summer, the park on certain days for the first time limited the number of cars allowed on two popular roads, she said.

After Yellowstone hit 4 million visitors for the



In this file photo, visitors take in a scenic overlook off Trail Ridge Road, above tree-line at Rocky Mountain National Park, near Estes Park, Colo.

Portable toilets

Cramming all those people into the narrow confines of Zion where most visitors want to see the same iconic slot canyons and trails has led many days to hour-long waits to get in the park, lots that fill up by 9 am and crowded shuttles, Marciano said. "Then, you hike like ducks in a row up the trail because there are so many going up the same trail," Marciano said. "That's not what we want."

One employee spent her entire summer hiking every day to the popular Angels Landing trail to clean and put more toilet paper in two portable toilets designed for 40 visits daily that had 200, he said. Both Zion and Yellowstone are reassessing how to create better crowd plans and Zion is considering a reservation system for park entries and a

time in 2015, park spokeswoman Morgan Warthin said the park last year the "Yellowstone Pledge" urging visitors to follow guidelines that include not stopping on the side of the road to look at bears and staying on boardwalks. A man who stepped off a boardwalk died last year after falling into a boiling, acidic spring. Yellowstone has also implored visitors to take "safe selfies" by staying far away from wild animals. "That want that perfect picture so they're driven to get closer and closer to the point they're risking their own safety," Warthin said. — AP



File photo shows a man takes a picture as the morning light illuminates the Grand Tetons, in Grand Teton National Park, Wyo.