

Mothers of Kuwaiti kids protest against allowance halt



Palestinian teen's case casts spotlight on Israel detentions



'La La Land' dances away with record 14 Oscar nods



Venus, Federer back in the thick of a Grand Slam



NATO OPENS NEW CENTER IN KUWAIT TO BOOST GULF TIES

FM TO DELIVER LETTER TO TEHRAN • TRUMP 'FULLY' COMMITTED TO NATO



150 FILS

NO: 17121

40 PAGES



Min 07°
Max 18°
High Tide 11:33 & 21:42
Low Tide 05:05 & 15:59



KUWAIT: NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg yesterday called for boosting security cooperation with the Gulf states as the Western military alliance opened its first office in the region. "It will be a vital hub for cooperation between the alliance and our Gulf partners," Stoltenberg said at the inauguration of the center in Kuwait in the presence of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. The center is based on the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), which was launched by the NATO leaders in 2004 and aims to boost security links with the Middle East, in particular Gulf Arab states.

Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates are members of ICI, while the remaining two Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states - Saudi Arabia and Oman - plan to join. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah said the region is facing serious challenges that require cooperation with international organizations.

"We face common security threats like terrorism, weapons proliferation, and cyber attacks. And we share the same aspirations for peace and for stability," Stoltenberg said. "So it is essential that we work more closely together than ever before. We have now developed individual cooperation programs with all our Gulf partners," he said. Stoltenberg said that over the past year, NATO has trained hundreds of Iraqi officers in Jordan to better fight the Islamic State group. "We are now extending our training and capacity-building efforts into Iraq itself," he said.

NATO continues to fight terrorism in other ways, including with direct support to the anti-IS coalition, he said. The center will strengthen the military-to-military cooperation and the fight against terrorism and extremism, Stoltenberg said. The center will help the Gulf states by providing advanced training courses on cyber security, energy security, chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Kuwait's foreign minister added he will visit Iran to deliver a letter from HH the Amir on the troubled ties between the Islamic republic and its Arab neighbors in the Gulf. The letter from HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to be delivered today deals with "Gulf-Iranian relations and the basis of dialogue and cooperation" between the two sides, said Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled. "Gulf states have a true desire that relations with Iran are normal and based on international law," he told reporters after attending the inauguration of the NATO center. "We are partners in this region and have common interests and huge potential," Sheikh Sabah said, calling for a "normalization of ties and opening dialogue".

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KUWAIT: (Top) A general view shows the meeting between members of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and the Islamic Cooperation Initiative (ICI) attended by NATO members at the newly-opened NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Centre in Mishref. (Above left) HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. (Above right) HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Stoltenberg open the new NATO-ICI Regional Center in Mishref. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat, AFP and KUNA

News

in brief

Extreme cold weather till Jan end: Saadoun

KUWAIT: Extreme cold weather will be prevalent in Kuwait starting today until the end of the month, said Adel Al-Saadoun, a Kuwaiti astronomer and historian. Speaking to KUNA, Saadoun said that the current cold weather was due to northwesterly winds, which usually bring temperatures down, especially in the early hours of the morning. Saadoun added that Kuwait's desert and open areas will also see a sharp drop in temperature.

Dubai center penalized for hosting Kardashian

DUBAI: UAE authorities have penalized a center for disabled people in Dubai for hosting US reality television star Kim Kardashian, describing its invitation as "pointless", media reported yesterday. The social development ministry said that the Rashid Centre for the Disabled violated regulations after receiving Kardashian without a permit, the Emirati newspaper said. The ministry said it would not have granted a permit because it is "pointless to receive her". During Kardashian's visit, the students wore T-shirts featuring her picture that the management said were distributed by the American star. The center's administration said it did not seek permission because time was limited. The ministry said it was still investigating the case, warning that the penalty could extend to closing the center.

Real drop cross for Mideast clothing deal

DUBAI: The club crest of Spanish soccer team Real Madrid will be altered to remove the traditional Christian cross from clothing apparel sold in some Middle East countries under a regional deal. Marka, a retailing group in the United Arab Emirates, has been granted exclusive rights to "manufacture, distribute and sell Real Madrid products" in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman, the company said in a statement yesterday. (See Page 19)

THREE-WAY BID TO BOOST SYRIA TRUCE



ASTANA: Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov (center) reads a final statement on Syria peace talks as UN envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura (right) looks through his papers yesterday. — AFP

ASTANA: Russia, Iran and Turkey agreed to bolster a fragile truce in Syria yesterday but a lasting political solution to the conflict appeared distant after two days of talks between Damascus and rebels. The three main sponsors of the negotiations in Astana announced the creation of "a trilateral mechanism to observe and ensure full compliance with the ceasefire" in place since late December. The three powers also agreed armed rebel groups should take part in a new round of peace talks set to be hosted by the United Nations in Geneva next month.

"There is no military solution to the Syrian conflict and... it can only be solved through a political process," said the final statement by Russia, Iran and Turkey, read out by Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov. The two days of meetings in Astana - which have left the West sidelined - were mainly a Kremlin

initiative and come as Russia has made itself the main powerbroker in Syria with its game-changing military support for leader Bashar Al-Assad.

The meeting was expected to see the first face-to-face negotiations between the regime and the armed opposition since Syria's conflict erupted in 2011, but the rebels backed out and mediators were forced to shuttle between the two sides. Rebel negotiator Mohammad Alloush told AFP the "intransigence of Iran and the regime" was responsible for "no notable progress" in the negotiations.

Regime negotiator Bashar Al-Jafaari said after the end of the talks that the meeting "succeeded in achieving the goal of consolidating the cessation of hostilities for a fixed period paving the way for dialogue between Syrians".

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GOVT GIVEN ULTIMATUM OVER FUEL, FEES HIKES

MP THREATENS TO GRILL PM

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee yesterday gave the government two weeks to provide its views over two draft laws that would effectively prevent the government from raising charges or fuel prices. Rapporteur of the committee MP Safa Al-Hashem said the two bills relate to prevent the government from raising charges on public services or hiking fuel prices without a law by the Assembly, while the second calls to scrap the recent hike in petrol prices.

Hashem said Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh, who attended the meeting, pointed out that the second draft law is

not in line with the constitution. The lawmaker criticized the government for ignoring the first three points in the economic reforms package and going directly to implement the fourth point, which is hiking charges and prices.

She said that the committee has decided to invite the governor of the Central Bank for a discussion over the government's plan to raise debt through issuing bonds in the international market and the cost of the process, adding that the committee wants to inquire why the government always accepts recommendations by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

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DUBAI AIRPORT STILL TOP FOR INT'L TRAFFIC

CEO OFFERS TO HELP US HUBS

DUBAI: Dubai International cemented its title as the world's busiest airport for international passengers in 2016, with a 7.2 percent increase in traveller numbers to 83.6 million, its operator said yesterday. Dubai Airports said "near record numbers" in December had pushed annual traffic at the Gulf hub to 83,654,250 passengers, compared with 78,014,838 in 2015. The airport, which serves as the home of Emirates airline, became the world's



Paul Griffiths

busiest in terms of international passenger traffic in 2014. "With our new forecast for 89 million passengers in 2017, DXB is closing the gap on Atlanta and Beijing for the top spot in overall traffic," Dubai Airports chief executive Paul Griffiths in a statement.

The airport announced in February it was expanding its annual capacity to 90 million passengers with the opening of a new concourse.

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with board members of the Arabian Horse Center.—KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Dr Yousef Al-Ibrahim and Founder of 'The Proteges' program Shamlan Al-Bahar, along with students and other officials from the program.

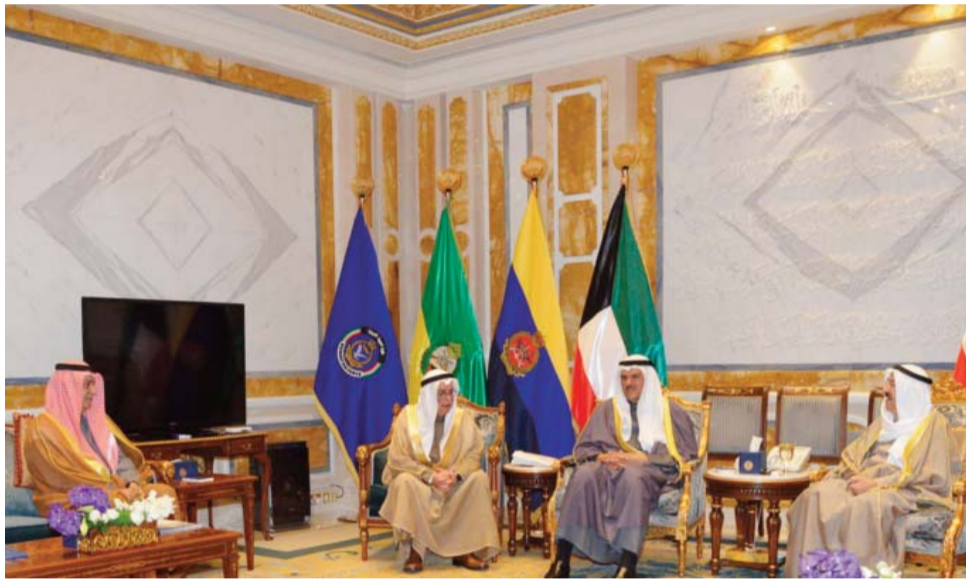
AMIR APPLAUDS EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE EQUESTRIAN GALA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah commended the Arabian Horse Center for its efforts to hold a ceremony slated for next month, to be held under the auspices of His Highness the Amir. In a meeting with the honorary Chairman of the Arabian Horse Center Mohammad Al-Marzouq and the head of the center's Board of Trustees Alaa Al-Roumi yesterday, His Highness the Amir wished the center continued success.

Moreover, Marzouq thanked His Highness the Amir for his persistent support, noting that next month's gala is set to be a monumental one in terms of the expected turnout and wide participation. On the success of the center, he attributed it to the support of His Highness the Amir, as he hoped that the ceremony will leave the audience with something to remember. He also pointed out that the center holds numerous cultural events, activities and championships year-round. Similarly, Roumi spoke of the center's growth over the years, noting that it is home to around 8,000 pure Arabian horses.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) Ali Al-Youha, as well as NCCAL Advisor Dr Mohammad Al-Roumaihi.

The officials informed His Highness the Amir on the cultural activities organized by the NCCAL recently. They also briefed His Highness on the council's future plans. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah lauded the NCCAL for their relentless efforts in spreading culture and arts. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and NCCAL officials.

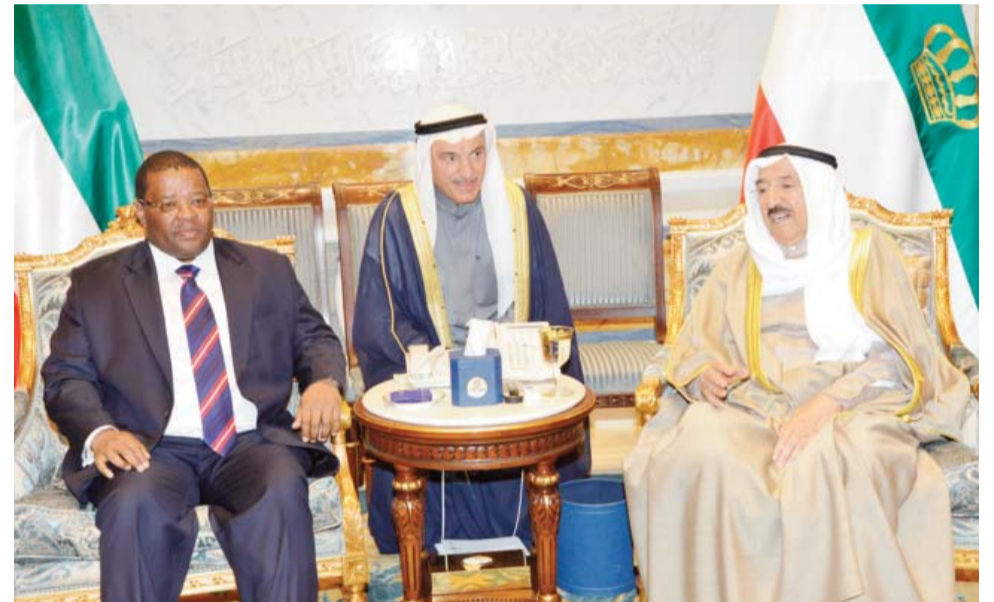
of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir also received the outgoing Swazi Ambassador to Kuwait Mlonzi Dlamini. The envoy later met with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as well. The meeting was attended by head of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Itimad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir and

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah have separately met with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince received Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Capital Market Authority Nayef Falah Al-Hajraf, as well as Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown prince received Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Dr



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the outgoing Swazi Ambassador to Kuwait Mlonzi Dlamini.

Yousef Al-Ibrahim and Founder of 'The Proteges' program Shamlan Al-Bahar. Bahar, along with the community's officials, offered His Highness the Crown Prince an explanation over activities designed to allow youth the opportunity to hone their skills, which drew applause from His Highness the Crown Prince.

His Highness the Crown Prince commended Kuwaiti youth for doing the nation proud, describing them as the cornerstone of national development. 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. His Highness the Crown Prince also met with Dr Salah Kassab Al-Thufairi who presented him with a copy of his doctorate on educational management development, and Dr Jawad Fadel Abu Al-Hassan who presented him with a copy of his doctorate on human knee improvement. His Highness the Crown Prince appreciated their efforts.—KUNA



QARUH ISLAND MARKS LIBERATION ANNIVERSARY

KUWAIT: Despite being Kuwait's smallest island, Qaruh holds a significant place in the hearts of Kuwaitis for being the first land to be liberated from the Iraqi Invasion in 1991. The island celebrated

yesterday its 26th anniversary of liberation. Located around 37 kilometers from the Kuwaiti mainland, the island's name 'Qaruh' was derived from the presence of tar (Qar) residues on the island.—KUNA



BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun receives Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.—KUNA

AMIR CONVEYS GREETINGS TO LEBANESE PRESIDENT

BEIRUT: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah conveyed greetings yesterday on behalf of the Amir to Lebanese President Michel Aoun congratulating him on assuming the new post. Sheikh Mohammad conveyed a verbal message to the Lebanese leader, inviting him to visit Kuwait in the near future to boost the exceptional bilateral rela-

tions in all fields. After the meeting, Sheikh Mohammad said he was honored to meet the Lebanese leader, describing bilateral relations as strong and unique on many levels. Sheikh Mohammad also expressed gratitude and appreciation for the warm welcome and reception he received during his meeting, wishing the best for the Lebanese leadership and people. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah also met with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.—KUNA



Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah visits Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (eighth from left), NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (seventh from left), and other officials pose for a group photo during the opening of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Center yesterday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and KUNA

FOREIGN MINISTER URGES INCREASED EFFORTS TO FIGHT 'TERROR SCOURGE'

ICI CENTER VITAL HUB FOR NATO-GULF COOPERATION: STOLTENBERG

KUWAIT: It is imperative to bolster cooperation with regional and international organizations to cope with grave threats, chiefly, the 'scourge of terrorism,' Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said yesterday.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled made the remarks in a speech during the opening ceremony of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Center, held under the auspices of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who was also in attendance. Moreover, he spoke of Kuwait's firm belief in how instrumental the new center, located in Mishref's Diplomatic Zone, will be in strengthening cooperation, which in turn, will uphold global peace and security. In his speech, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister thanked state officials for their contributions to such a monumental event, commending all those involved for their "diligent efforts" to hold the ceremony.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled noted that Kuwait joined the ICI back in 2004 and ties with NATO have since blossomed to include fields such as strategic analysis and disaster management. He added that the idea to initiate the ICI center came about in 2012 and was subsequently approved during a NATO summit in May of that year, as he touted this center as the "first of its kind" in the region.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled highlighted a plethora of joint activities held by NATO and Kuwait, including conferences, meetings and lectures, in addition to the impending formation of a special Kuwaiti delegation to NATO.

On "pervasive challenges and threats", he said it behooves Kuwait to step up efforts to enhance its ties with the international community to stifle the rise of terrorism, adding that the new center will be a launchpad for increased cooperation.

Vital hub

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had earlier inaugurated the NATO-Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) regional center,



A handout picture released by the NATO Media Library yesterday shows Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah signing an agreement with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

saying it was designed to contribute to long-term regional stability. "Today I am honored to celebrate the opening of the ICI-NATO Regional Centre. In doing so, we mark two important milestones: A milestone in the friendship between NATO and Kuwait; And a milestone in the blossoming partnership between NATO and the entire Gulf region," he said in his inaugural speech while opening the ICI center in Kuwait.

He said this Centre is a historic first: NATO's first such presence in the Gulf region. It will be a vital hub for cooperation between the Alliance and our Gulf partners, as well as with Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the Gulf Cooperation Council, including in our important fight against terrorism.

He said that they will work together in a range of different areas, including: strategic analysis; civil emergency planning; military-to-military cooperation. "We owe a debt of gratitude to Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah. So I thank him for his leadership and steadfast support. I also want to thank the State of Kuwait in hosting and the people of Kuwait for your generosity and in hosting this Centre, for being such a strong and valued NATO

partner and for your long-standing leadership in promoting regional security," said the NATO chief. Stoltenberg stressed that the partnerships will strengthen through this Centre are vitally important to NATO. "Because the security of Gulf countries is directly linked to the security of all Allies, we face common security threats like terrorism, weapons proliferation, and cyber-attacks. And we share the same aspirations for peace and for stability. So it is essential that we work more closely together than ever before," he said. "We have now developed individual cooperation programs with all our Gulf partners. Because modern security institutions and well-trained local forces represent our best weapons in the fight against violent extremism," he said. The NATO chief said he is extremely pleased that the three other ICI partners are represented here today: Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. "I am also glad to welcome the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation, and the representatives from Saudi Arabia and Oman," he added.

Regional stability

In the meantime, Chairman of the National



A handout picture released by the NATO Media Library yesterday shows Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

Security Bureau (NSB) Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said that Kuwait is steadfast in its efforts to promote regional peace and security. Speaking during the ceremony, Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali noted that the center, which was Kuwait's brainchild, aims to align the views of ICI member nations on various issues, through courses, lectures and workshops to be held in the new ICI center.

On topics to be covered in courses offered by the center, he said it includes electronic security and crisis management, adding that the world is rife with political and economic conflicts with ripple effects all across the globe. Moreover, Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali said that conflict abounds in the Gulf region despite an abundance of wealth, as he underscored the significance of closer ties between Kuwait and NATO.

Senior officials

Other officials who attended the ceremony included Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa, Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior

Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Secretary General of the GCC Dr Abdullah bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah, in addition to a number of GCC and Foreign diplomats.

After Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and NATO's Secretary General Stoltenberg delivered speeches, an accord for the establishment and operation of the ICI center was signed between Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and Stoltenberg. A documentary, showcasing Kuwait's efforts in hosting the center, was displayed during the event.

Stoltenberg met with Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled after his arrival to Kuwait on Monday evening. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled reaffirmed keenness to expand cooperation with the NATO, adding that Kuwait's cooperation with the organization witnessed a turning point when the Arab Gulf country joined the Islamic Cooperation Initiative (ICI) in 2014. Stoltenberg thanked Kuwait for hosting the Regional Center, commending the Arab Gulf country's "important and constructive" role to security and stability at the regional and international levels. —KUNA



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (right) and Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah attend the meeting.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meet with Chairman of the National Security Bureau (NSB) Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.



First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah poses for a picture with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following their meeting.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah speak as they arrive to attend the meeting.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (right) talks with Chairman of the National Security Bureau (NSB) Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, during the meeting.

NATO OPENS NEW CENTER...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Stoltenberg said the new US administration was "fully committed" to the Western military alliance despite strong criticism from President Donald Trump. "I am absolutely certain that President Trump and the new US administration will be fully committed to NATO and to the transatlantic partnership," Stoltenberg said. The NATO chief also said he had received assurances from both Trump and his Defense Secretary James Mattis of continued US support for the alliance.

"I spoke with President Trump a few days after he was elected in November and he conveyed a very strong message to me that he personally was very commit-

ted to NATO and the transatlantic partnership," Stoltenberg said. He said he also spoke with Mattis on Monday, "who expressed strong support to NATO". "I am absolutely certain that the new US administration ... will support strengthening NATO," he said.

The NATO chief said he totally agreed with Trump and Mattis that European financial contributions to NATO must increase. "European allies have to spend more, have to invest more on defense... We have seen some progress but there is a long way to go," Stoltenberg said. The Pentagon said on Monday that Mattis reassured NATO allies that Washington had an "unshakable commitment" to the military alliance, despite Trump having previously deriding the organization as "obsolete". — Agencies



Members of NATO countries attend a meeting between members of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and the Islamic Cooperation Initiative (ICI) at the NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Center.



Representatives from NATO countries attend a meeting between members of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and the Islamic Cooperation Initiative (ICI) at the NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Center.

PANEL MEETS AGAIN TO DISCUSS SAWABER'S FATE

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A Municipal Council committee tasked with following up with the structural plan for the Sawaber area will discuss during its next meeting recommendations with regards to the municipality's vision for the area and how it is going to be used. Committee Chairman Ali Al-Mousa said members will discuss the possibility of issuing a decision by the Municipal Council to privatize the area located in the heart of Kuwait City. A decision would also be needed to find a quick solution for the problems of residents still living in the complex and who have not evacuated their apartments yet, according to Mousa. The committee also seeks to coordinate with the Finance Ministry and government bodies on the possibility of putting up the site for investment, he added.

There are plans to demolish all buildings that constitute the Sawaber residential compound and turn the wide area it inhabits either into a touristic destination or a financial center. The Cabinet had issued a decree last year for the removal of all residents of the complex by March 2016. Most tenants have evacuated since then, but there have been conflicting reports that

some of them still refuse to accept financial compensations or alternative homes located in Northwest Sulaibikhat to leave their properties.

Built in 1981 with designs by famed architect and urban planner Arthur Erickson, Al-Sawaber represents a distinct architectural, economic and cultural period in Kuwaiti history. It is one of the first high density complexes in the country. Located on approximately 245,000 square meters of prime real estate property in the heart of Kuwait's financial district, the complex includes 33 buildings and more than 520 residential apartments.

New locations

The Justice Ministry asked lawyers and all litigants to go to family courts in their new locations designated by the ministry from Feb 1. The courts will start receiving lawyers and the public at various departments in the new locations, as the family appeals court in Mubarak Al-Kabeer will move from the Ahmadi Courts Complex to block 2 in Sabah Al-Salem. The Ahmadi family appeals court will move from Sabahiya to Mahboula, while courts in Hawally will move to block 34 in Hawally near Qadisiya Sports Club.



KUWAIT: Women and their children demonstrate outside the National Assembly's building yesterday in protest against a decision to cut their social allowances. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

STATELESS WOMEN PROTEST AGAINST SUSPENDED ALLOWANCES DEATH SENTENCE FOR OUR FAMILIES

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: For the second day in a row, a number of stateless mothers of Kuwaiti children demonstrated outside the National Assembly's building in protest against a Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) decision to suspend their social allowance. Demonstrators threatened to organize a sit-in unless the ministry revokes the decision they described as a 'death sentence for our families'. Protestor Hum Hamad said she is a non-Kuwaiti and mother of three Kuwaiti children. "Undersecretary Hassan Kathem told us that we do not meet the conditions because our children do not work. How can my seven-year-old child work?" she asked, noting that Kathem promised to write a memo requesting to amend the law.

Another stateless mother, Um Abdullah, said she is a Kuwaiti citizen's ex-wife. She added she pays KD 350 in rent and KD 100 in installment for her car. "After this unfair decision, me and my kids will become homeless and I might go to prison," she said, noting that the decision was like a death sentence for over 3,000 families that had been receiving the social allowance.

"Is MSAL's social allowance given to us the reason behind Kuwait's budget deficit? How will we feed our children, how will we pay rent and how will we be able to educate our kids so that they can find jobs?" Um Hussein exclaimed,

adding that the decision also affected Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis.

'Chaotic' bonus payments

Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan issued a new administrative decision to stop the process by which annual bonuses were paid to ministry employees who are rated as 'excellent' in their job evaluation reports; a process that was described to be 'chaotic'. According to directive number 2/2017, hard-working employees and irresponsible ones used to be treated equally and they all got the bonuses according to the moods of their bosses. The new directive quoted a Civil Service Commission (CSC) stipulation which says that public employees have to actually work a minimum of 180 days a year to get the bonus. The directive also explained that employees working shifts will have to work at least 70 percent of those shifts to get the bonus. Moreover, the directive explained that actual working days would be calculated after deducting all leaves and vacations, except sick leaves. Commenting on the decision, observers said that it was a very bold one at a time when other ministers have failed in tackling this issue.

Mutawa stressed that the ministry is keen on finishing maintenance operations in Hadiya and Riqqa. Speaking during a tour of both areas accompanied by MPs Nayef Al-Merdas and Majed Al-Mutairi, Mutawa stressed that both areas' residents were suffering from bad public services. He added that maintenance would include changing the entire rainwater and sewage drainage grids and that the work would be done as soon as possible.

Subpar performance

Chairman of the parliament's budgets and final statement committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said that a meeting was held with Education Minister Mohammed Al-Fares to discuss the State Audit Bureau's report about Education Ministry's budget for the fiscal year 2015-2016. Abdulsamad said that the committee recommended setting up an auditing department within the ministry. The committee also stressed that despite spending over KD 15 billion on education in the last 10 years, the outcome of educational facilities was subpar, and more efforts were needed to improve educational quality. The committee recommended reconsidering the recruitment of expatriate teachers and instead hire bedoons (stateless) to tackle the lack of teachers in some subjects (rare specialties) such as physics and mathematics.

Bad services

Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-



KUWAIT: This file photo shows Al-Sawaber Complex (right) in Kuwait City.

KUWAIT HAS RICH, DEEP CIVILIZATION: RESEARCHERS

KUWAIT: Two Kuwaiti researchers lectured Monday about discoveries of relics in Kuwait, and affirmed that Kuwait has "rich and deep" civilization. Dr Sultan Al-Duweesh, director of antiquities and museums at the National Council for Culture, Art

discoveries in Kuwait, Al-Duweesh said following the lecture. Excavations in Kuwait discovered four major writings: Sumerian, Aramaic, Old Arabic and Greek, he said. "There is no doubt that the land of Kuwait is rich with different antiquities which began from the stone age and the bronze age as well as other historic ages," added Duweesh. The most ancient writings were the Sumerian of the Dilmun civilization, and discovered in Failaka Island, he said. "We have found 20 Sumerian documents in Failaka, all talking about importance of Dilmun and the big trade relations between Dilmun and old Iraq," he said. Some of these documents also described the area of Dilmun.

Meanwhile, Mutairi said discoveries of antiquities in Kuwait were evidence on existence of population, social and economic activities in ancient times. He talked about discoveries made at Saeeda Village in Failaka Island, like pottery ovens, weights of fishing nets, bones of animals and fish, and glassy bracelets. Mutairi said a mosque of Saeeda Village was discovered in 2001. This mosque, he said, consisted of two corridors and a yard. It is surrounded by a number of rooms. This is one of the oldest mosques discovered in Kuwait, he said. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Dr Sultan Al-Duweesh (right) and Dr Hamed Al-Mutairi attend a lecture about ancient writings in Kuwait. — KUNA

and Letters (NCCAL), gave a lecture about ancient writings in the land of Kuwait. Dr Hamed Al-Mutairi, director of surveillance and excavation at NCCAL, talked about results of excavation of the Gulf mission. The ancient writings are one of the major

TREES HELP PROTECT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES FROM SANDSTORMS



KUWAIT: The second phase of a project to plant trees at various archaeological sites in Bahra in Subbiya north of the country started yesterday, with participation of a number of government and voluntary bodies, such as the Green Line Group, the Teaching Staff Society and the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR). Teaching Staff Society member Dr Shamlan Al-Qenae said the first phase involved planting trees and plants to secure archaeological sites in Failaka against sandstorms that affect and gradually bury them. Qenae added that more trees and fungal plants were planted yesterday in Subbiya to do the same. Green Line Group's President Khaled Al-Hajri said the tree planting was done on a request from the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) in a bid to protect archaeological sites and hold the soil around them together. Hajri added that a second

perimeter of those trees and plants would be planted in another phase.

Waste management

In other news, the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) said it intends to allocate certain collection points for agricultural waste for recycling. PAAAFR's deputy director for botanical wealth Faisal Al-Siddiqi said the authority had been receiving many complaints about agricultural waste dumped in yards and alleys. "Such acts cause pollution and lead to flies, insects and stray animals that pose a threat to human health," he warned, adding that the waste also causes bad odors that sometimes get carried elsewhere by the wind. Siddiqi added that, accordingly, the Municipality was contacted to allocate special sites to collect waste in Kabd and Wafra to recycle and reuse it as fertilizer and fodder.

News

In Brief

BOGUS DOMESTIC HELP OFFICE BUSTED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Residency detectives arrested a gang that ran a bogus domestic help office by harboring absconding persons and making them work in violation of the law. The gang, mostly consisting of Ethiopian nationals, used to send absconding domestic helpers to other employers, then the maids later escaped and returned to the office again. Five Ethiopians reported as absconding were arrested and sent to concerned authorities. Meanwhile, the domestic help department at the Interior Ministry held several inspection tours in all governorates and placed stickers to close down several offices in violation of the law.

Fake passports

Criminal investigators recently arrested an Iranian national on charges of forging Portuguese passports for himself and his kids, based on which they got residency visas as Portuguese citizens, said security sources. Case papers indicate that investigations went underway based on information that detectives received, which indicated that the man had changed his and his children's nationality. After contacting the Arab and International Criminal Police Department and the INTERPOL, it was discovered that the new passports that the suspect obtained were fake. Based on that, the suspect was arrested and later confessed that he paid an amount of money to an unidentified person who helped him forge the passports, the Interior Ministry said in a statement. Police searched the suspect's home and found 12 fake Portuguese passports, three Iranian passports and seven cancelled Kuwaiti passports.

Liquor 'factory' stormed

Ahmadi security led by Director General Brig Abdullah Saffah Al-Mulla busted a local liquor 'factory' in Khairan residential area. The Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department said that after police confirmed information received earlier about the brewery, patrol officers stopped a vehicle driven by an Asian man who left the house. Police searched the vehicle and found 480 bottles, 12 cooking gas cylinders and other equipment inside. When police entered the house, 400 sacks each containing 12 bottles - 4,800 bottles in total - 60 drums, seven steel distilling drums, five steel burners, 29 cardboard boxes, 50 gas cylinders, 30 sacks of sugar and five boxes of yeast were found. The suspect and the material were sent to concerned authorities.



HAVANA: Kuwaiti students pose for a group photo with Cuba's President of the National Institute for Water Resources Ines Maria Chapman. — KUNA

CUBAN, ALBANIAN OFFICIALS HAIL KFAED'S SUPPORT TO DEVELOPMENT

HAVANA/TIRANA: Senior Cuban official praised yesterday Kuwait's efforts and role in supporting development in her country through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). President of the National Institute for Water Resources Ines Maria Chapman made her statements after meeting Kuwaiti visiting students touring the institute.

Chapman hailed as well the humanitarian role played by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in supporting communities and developing economies in most countries around the world. The Director added Kuwaiti-Cuban relations, dating back to 1974, remain exceptional, deep, and historic.

On a different front, Chapman said KFAED provided five loans to Cuba totaling at KD 31 million, noting that four of those loans were for water related projects. The fifth loan presented by KFAED to Cuba focused on the establishment of 34 semi-electric power stations in various areas in Cuba, she added. Meanwhile, the visiting Kuwaiti students toured the National Institute for Water Resources and were briefed by senior officials on the role of the institute. Earlier the students visited Morro Castle in Havana which shares its name with structures in Santiago de Cuba and the Castillo de San Felipe del Morro in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The students also visited popular Feira

Shop in central Havana, and were briefed on its heritage and history. The students' tour is part of the "be amongst the outstanding ones" a cooperation between the Ministry of Education and KFAED, which kicked off in 2010. It involves the annual selection of a number of high achieving 11th grade students who are sent on accompanied trips to see first-hand KFAED and Kuwaiti developmental contributions and efforts.

Vital projects

Separately, Albanian officials credited KFAED contributions for helping their countries develop several vital projects. They made their statements yesterday during a visit by Kuwaiti students, organized by KFAED in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. They added that last March saw the signing of a loan agreement with the Kuwait Fund to restore the Vlora River road at a total cost of KD 12 million (\$48.8 million).

The Albanian Fund officials hoped that the two sides will continue such cooperation in the future to help bolster bilateral relations. The visit by the students aims to highlight the fund's projects in Albania since 1993.

Seven loans were provided by the fund to Albania worth KD 33.438 million, (\$113.6 million) to finance projects within agriculture, transportation, and infrastructure. On an annual basis, KFAED organizes trips to showcase Kuwait's huge role in providing assistance to other countries. — KUNA

In Brief

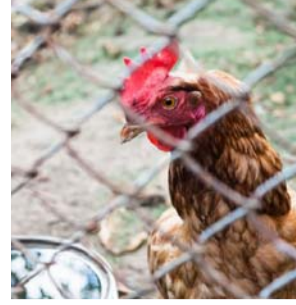
US DOLLAR STABLE AGAINST KD 0.304

KUWAIT: The rate of the US Dollar against the Kuwaiti Dinar was stable at KD 0.304, the same case with the euro which stood at KD 0.327, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. The CBK said that the Sterling Pound went up to KD 0.381 while the Swiss Franc was stable at KD 0.305. The Japanese Yen stood firm at KD 0.002. — KUNA



NO H5N8 HUMAN INFECTION

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health emphasized Monday that no human infection of the deadly H5N8 virus was detected in Kuwait. The ministry's Assistant Undersecretary Dr Majeda Al-Qattan stated that no reports about receiving H5N8-infected people were received from hospitals and medical centers and institutions across the country. Qattan assured that the highly contagious H5N8 is spreading among poultry, but the likelihood of human infection is low. — KUNA



KUNA CHIEF MEETS ENVOYS

KUWAIT: Director General and Chairman of KUNA Sheikh Mubarak Duajj Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah met yesterday with the Algerian Ambassador to Kuwait Abdulhamid Abdawi, as talks centered on increased cooperation in the media sector. Moreover, the KUNA Chairman also received Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait Yasser Atif, as the Egyptian diplomat commended KUNA's efforts to bolster relations with Egypt. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: 'Kushk Mubarak' in the historical Souk Al-Mubarkiyah. Established circa 1897, the kiosk was used by Kuwait's seventh ruler Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah (Mubarak the Great) as the seat of government during the early years of his reign before the construction of Seif Palace. The property was renovated by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters and reopened to the public in 2011 as a historical monument. — KUNA photo

KUWAIT ALLOCATES \$10 MILLION FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN IRAQ'S KURDISTAN



IRBIL: Member of KFAED's mission Sheikh Ahmad Ali Al-Sabah meets with Iraq's Kurdistan officials. — KUNA

IRBIL: Kuwait has allocated \$10 million for Syrian refugees in Iraq's Kurdistan province, an official from Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) said Monday. Sheikh Ahmad Ali Al-Sabah, member of KFAED's mission visiting Iraq's Kurdistan, said that the financial aid would be used to carry out projects for Syrian refugees in collaboration with UNHCR, the UN refugee agency.

He said the visit of the mission aimed at evaluating the refugee projects in the

province, and added that the \$10 million would be used to improve public services in three camps in Dahuk and Irbil.

Dr Hanan Hamdan, head of UNHCR office in Kuwait, said her agency was happy with the cooperation with KFAED to support the Syrian refugees in Iraq's Kurdistan. She said the visit aimed at studying the remaining details related to special agreements to support the Syrian refugees in camps in the province. Governor of Irbil Nawzad Hadi, in remarks

after a meeting with the mission, said the refugee camps needed further funding to overcome problems caused by the large number of refugees.

He said the hospital in the province in general and Irbil in particular were stretched with the large number of patients. Dr Omar Al-Kanderi, the State of Kuwait General Consul in Irbil, reaffirmed Kuwait's keenness to help the Syrian refugees either bilaterally or through the UN agencies. — KUNA

HEALTH MINISTRY STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DETECTION OF CERVICAL CANCER

KUWAIT: A senior official at Kuwait's Ministry of Health on Monday affirmed the significance of the early detection of cervical cancer so as to control the disease in its first phases. Speaking at a news conference, head of media office of Ministry of Health Dr Ghalia Al-Mutairi said a campaign entitled 'Do not turn your back to cervical cancer' will kick off next month and will run throughout the year. The campaign aims to raise women's awareness on risks and symptoms of the disease, she added.

The ministry is currently considering importing cervical cancer vaccine which is used at the private sector hospitals, she noted. She pointed out that the campaign coincides with other events that mark World Cancer Day on February 4 and the Gulf Cancer Awareness Week on February 1-7 every year. Meanwhile, Dr Abdelmohsen Al-Anjari, a consultant for obstetrics and gynecology, said the total cases diagnosed with cervical cancer in Kuwait has reached 350 over 10 years and 38 cases were detected in 2013.

Only married women are vulnerable to the disease which is caused only through the process of intercourse, he emphasized. He said the cervical cancer turns slowly into a cancer cell, indicating that the disease can be treated when it is detected early. He urged necessarily married women to make cervix screening annually.

Dr Waleed Al-Jassar, a consultant for obstetrics and gynecology at Kuwait University's Faculty of Medicine, said Kuwait would be amongst the region's countries that imports cervical cancer vaccine. Providing vaccine to young people will strengthen their immune systems and decrease disease rates, he said. He stated that Australia gives vaccines to both men and women as males are the transmitters of the disease. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ministry of Health officials attend a press conference held to announce an awareness campaign against cervical cancer. — KUNA

JAN 7 - FEB 7

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Crime

Report

BODY FOUND IN MALL PARKING LOT

KUWAIT: The body of an Egyptian was turned to the corner after he was found dead in a car behind a mall in Farwaniya. Police received a call about a person sleeping in his car, so patrols went to the area. When they knocked on the window, there was no response, so they obtained a warrant and smashed the glass. Paramedics at the scene declared him dead. Police are investigating the cause of death, because there may be foul play involved.

Woman raped

A Thai woman told police a man tricked and raped her. The victim said a man she knows, who had promised to marry her, invited her for dinner, but instead of going to the restaurant, he took her to an isolated area and raped her. She filed a complaint at Salmiya police station. Separately, a case was reported involving a driver who took a flight attendant to a mall, then invited her for a cup of coffee in his apartment, where he raped her. Detectives are working on the case to identify the suspect.

Policeman caught with drugs

A policeman and his friend were arrested with shabu, chemical narcotic pills and two liquor bottles. A police patrol spotted the car the two were in being driven unsteadily, so they stopped it and found them in an abnormal state. The car was searched and the drugs were found.

Flag dishonored

A citizen charged with desecrating the Kuwaiti flag was sent to state security for questioning.

Wife charged

A Jordanian man told police his wife insulted him, threw his mobile phone at him and damaged it. A case was filed and referred to the concerned authorities for investigations.

Neighbors' fight

A Syrian woman accused her Lebanese neighbor of beating her following previous differences. She gave police his details along with a medical report to back her claims. The suspect is being sought by detectives for questioning. — *Translated from the Arabic press*



Nawaf Najia

KIB SPONSORS THE LATE KHALIFA AL-JERI ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

KUWAIT: In an effort to help raise environmental awareness amongst the younger generations, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced its sponsorship of the 'Late Khalifa Al-Jeri Environmental Award', organized by Al-Jeri Group. The Award is initially set to take place across the Group's own schools throughout the current academic year, and will later expand to include all schools in Kuwait.

Launched as part of a memorandum of cooperation signed between Al-Jeri Group and the United Nation's associated Renewable Energy Developmental Organization (REDO), the Award will feature sixteen schools competing in ten different categories. A number of awareness workshops are also set to take place in parallel, seeking to encourage environmental conservation amongst students.

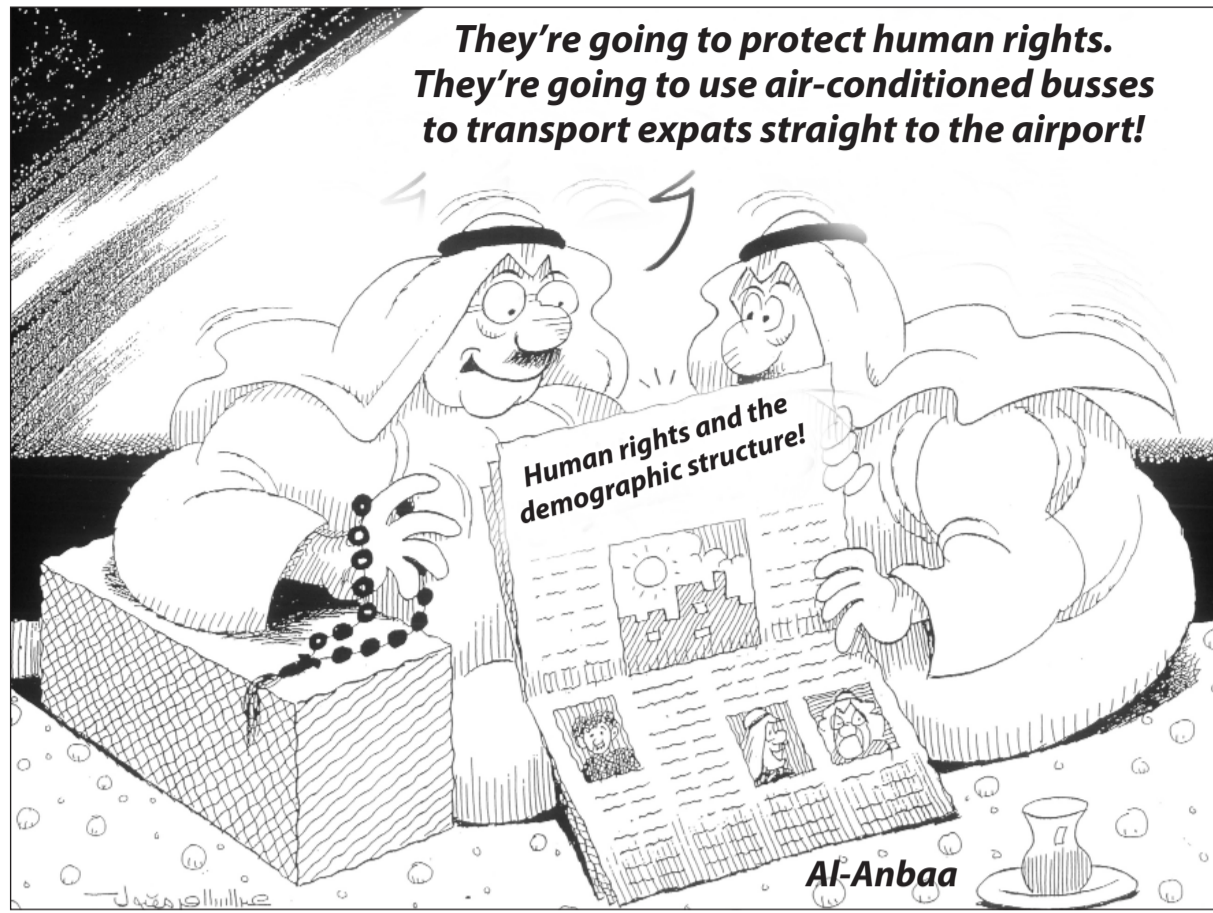
Nawaf Najia, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, said "KIB's sponsorship of this Award stems from our strong belief in the importance of its message of environmental consciousness - especially given that it focuses on promoting conservation awareness within schools and amongst students. At KIB we are acutely aware of the need to spread environmental education amongst the younger generation, in an effort to help them build a sustainable and healthy future for their country."

GREEN FLAME GAS CO PRESENTS LATEST GAS EQUIPMENT AT HORECA

KUWAIT: The Green Flame Gas Company participated in the Horeca Kuwait 2017; an important event and an annual attraction in the hotel and restaurant industry. Engineer Bashar Al-Qattan was present at the company's booth along with the Sales Department officers.

Bashar has stated the importance at the exhibition to present and introduce the GFGC is a leading company in the state of Kuwait and Gulf Countries, in the field of Design and Build the Gas Piping Network with specification that serve all important sectors such as Residential, Commercial and Industrial. Would also like to highlight that the Avenues Mall was one of the Companies Land Mark Project in addition to the 14 international companies that the company represented in Kuwait for the Gas field.

The Green Flame Gas Company has obtained (ISO) 9001 Certified in 2008, 2009 and (ICC) in 2007 and (NFPA) in 2008. The Green Flame Gas Co is a company that adheres to the international specification and high standard that gives the company the edge among one of the best company in Kuwait.



They're going to protect human rights. They're going to use air-conditioned busses to transport expats straight to the airport!

Al-Anbaa

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

WHAT'S ON THIS EVENING?

By Mudaffar Abdullah

Vibrant cultural activities are slowly advancing in Kuwait but they still need more care and management - they can be utilized within a touristic recreational policy that a certain body can invest in. For starters, the parliament is due to discuss Kuwait's

where the activities are held. Building new cultural establishments is a great feat that Kuwait deserves. However, it would be a wasted effort unless they are properly managed. We do lack enough training for human resources specializing in recreation. Jaber Al-

Building new cultural establishments is a great feat that Kuwait deserves.

demography on Feb 2; I hope the discussion will focus on visa traffickers instead of on expats. Yes, indeed I do. Now, we can take our family members out to theatres and various recreational venues around the country. A week hardly passes nowadays without a cultural activity is held, as various cultural bodies like the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), Yarmouk and the American Cultural Centers, Sabah Al-Ahmed Heritage Village, the Sheikh Jaber Cultural Center and the Writers Syndicate have been so active.

Ahmad and Abdullah Al-Salem centers are so huge and call for considering the issue of training.

Archaeological expeditions have become more active in recent years and in 2016 alone, over seven teams from Gulf Cooperation Council countries and other foreign states visited Kuwait to dig out a lot of regional history and encourage more people to visit Failaka, Subbiya and other areas on safe and well-organized excursions. For those describing this movement as 'shamelessness', we have to assert that it is art. All of these artistic activities take place in theatre, galleries, crafts, cinema, workshops for kids, inter-cultural communication and making cultural and music agreements, seminars and symposiums. It is unacceptable to summarize all these efforts in one abusing and unjust word like 'shamelessness'.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

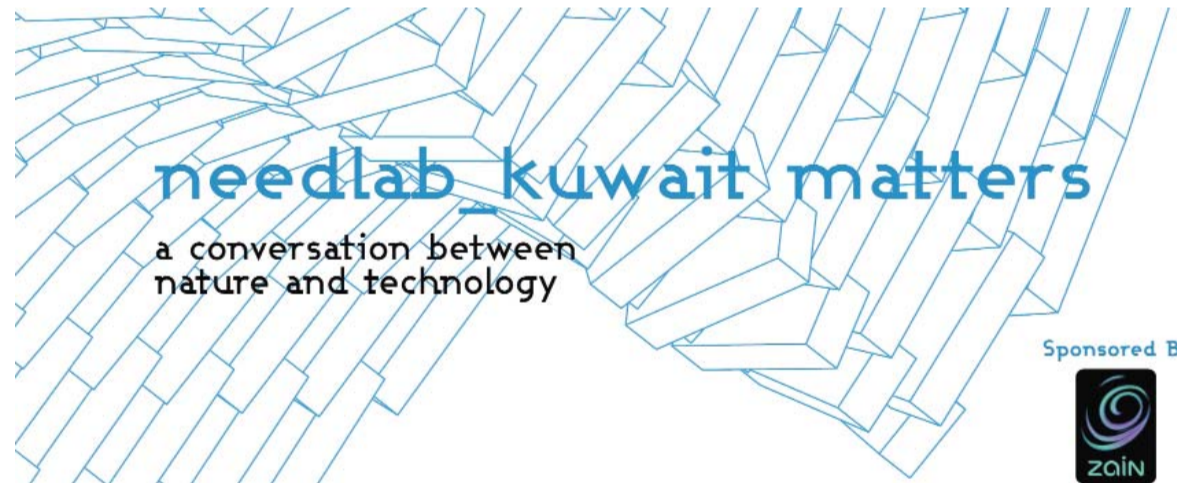
ZAIN MAIN SPONSOR OF NEEDLAB KUWAIT MATTERS

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of NeedLab Workshop Series, an educational initiative that takes place in several countries around the world starting from Kuwait. The event aims at introducing a unique architectural-social experience using advanced technology.

Zain's sponsorship of this initiative came under its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility umbrella, which closely focuses to contribute in the development of the education sector and technological innovation. The company partners with leading organizations locally and globally to invest in education, an essential element of the further progress of national economy.

NeedLab aims at increasing general awareness about architecture and local craftsmanship, as well as strengthen the skills and talents of architecture students and introduce them to the role of advanced technology solutions in the development of the modern design methods.

NeedLab kick-started with a workshop that was hosted last weekend in the College of Engineering and Petroleum of Kuwait University. The event will also feature a series of workshops and lectures featuring a number of experts, designers, and architects, both from local and international levels. Additionally, participants will build a pavilion plaque using locally produced materials, responding to the climate and visualizing the effect using augmented



Sponsored By



reality. The pavilion will be built in Shaheed Park at the end of the workshop.

Zain's support to NeedLab springs from the company's core Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy. The company believes that supporting initiatives such as this one provides young people with skills and tools necessary to help them highlight and develop their

skills, ultimately contributing to the further progress of national economy.

As a leading national company, Zain firmly believes in the importance of contributing to the progress of the education sector, and looks to empower and prepare the nation's youth for the important roles they will play in the further progress of the country.



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) sponsored a campaign organized recently by the Farwaniya Governorate to distribute winter clothes to municipality workers and people in need.

TRUTH ABOUT HATE

By Salah Al-Sayer

Saying that the West antagonizes Islam is baseless and is mainly built on illusions to spread hate among human beings. The West long ago surpassed the issue of religious beliefs and thus built states and communities governed by law. One can live in Europe for years without being asked about his religion. People there respect the individual's right to choose or change beliefs. You might even find a family with a Christian father, Jewish mother, Buddhist son and an atheist daughter, because these individuals believe and follow the Arab saying of "Everyone has

The West hates and detests radical political Islam that antagonizes the entire world

the freedom of belief and may Allah help him!"

"Be it atheists, Muslims or Jews, no one should be deprived of rights because of their religion," said Thomas Jefferson, the second president of the United States (1801-1809). In Canada, the first mosque was built in 1938. The British elected a Muslim man of Pakistani origin as London's Mayor. There are over 2,500 mosques in Germany. A Muslim of Somali origin was elected as the Senator of Minnesota in the United States. The French government allocated \$9 million to equip mosques with security surveillance systems to protect Muslim worshippers. The government funds Islamic centers in Norway, and there are many such examples.

As a matter of fact, the West hates and detests radical political Islam that antagonizes the entire world. One look at the actions of the Islamic State (IS) group or Taliban are enough for believers, and spares them a lot of explanation and slipslops. Neither the West nor the East antagonizes Islam as a religion. Religions are no longer a motive for hate among civilized peoples that had never experienced Islamophobia and suspicions about Muslims until after the rise of political Islam in the Middle East. It also started after the spread of political Islam's terrible practices, starting from the US embassy hostages crisis in Tehran after Khomeini's Islamic revolution, all the way through the September 11th attacks and the repeated assaults on innocent people in Europe in the name of Islam.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



UK parliament must approve start of talks on Brexit

HOPES FADE FOR JUSTICE FOR SRI LANKA'S LOST JOURNALISTS

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump during a reception with Congressional leaders on January 23, 2017 at the White House. — AFP

TRUMP UNDERCUTS BIPARTISAN EFFORT

NO EVIDENCE FOR PRESIDENT'S CLAIM OF RAMPANT VOTER FRAUD

WASHINGTON: Even as President Donald Trump starts reaching out to lawmakers and business leaders to sell his policies, he's still making false claims about election fraud. During a reception with lawmakers at the White House Monday evening, Trump claimed the reason he'd lost the popular vote to his Democratic rival was that 3 million to 5 million immigrants living in the US illegally had voted. That's according to a Democratic aide familiar with the exchange who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

There is no evidence to support Trump's claim. He made a similar statement on Twitter in late November that he had won the electoral college in a "landslide" and "won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally."

Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by nearly 2.9 million votes despite losing the electoral college. The assertion appeared to be part of a developing pattern for Trump and his new administration in which falsehoods overshadow outreach efforts.

After a contentious weekend, Trump began his first full week as president bounding from

one ornate room of the White House to another as he played host to business, labor and Congressional leaders. Again and again, he ordered aides to summon journalists from their West Wing workspace at a moment's notice for unscheduled statements and photo opportunities

Business friendly

Yesterday, Trump summoned the heads of the big three American automakers, General Motors, Ford Motor Co and Fiat Chrysler, for a breakfast meeting at the White House. He pledged to scrap regulations and reduce taxes on corporations that keep jobs in the US, though he did not specify his plans for either.

His administration, he said, will "go down as one of the most friendly countries" for business. The president was also expected to take executive actions yesterday related to manufacturing. Trump has moved swiftly to center his first full week in office on jobs and the economy. On Monday, he signed an order withdrawing the United States from the sweeping Trans-Pacific Partnership, using one of his first actions in office to reject a center-

piece of Barack Obama's attempts to counter China and deepen US ties in Asia.

For Trump, the move was a fulfillment of a central campaign promise. He has repeatedly cast the 12-nation trade pact - which was eagerly sought by U.S. allies in Asia - as detrimental to American businesses "Great thing for the American worker what we just did," Trump said in brief remarks as he signed a notice in the Oval Office. The Obama administration spent years negotiating the Pacific Rim pact, though the mood in Washington on trade soured over time. Obama never sent the accord to Congress for ratification, making Trump's actions Monday largely symbolic.

The start of Trump's first full week in office had begun as a reset after a tumultuous weekend dominated by his and his spokesman's false statements about inauguration crowds and their vigorous complaints about media coverage of the celebrations. While Trump's advisers have long accepted his tendency to become fixated on seemingly insignificant issues, some privately conceded that his focus on inauguration crowds was unhelpful on the opening weekend of his presidency.

In addition to his executive action on TPP, Trump signed memorandums freezing most federal government hiring - though he noted an exception for the military - and reinstating a ban on providing federal money to international groups that perform abortions or provide information on the option. The regulation, known as the "Mexico City Policy," has been a political volleyball, instituted by Republican administrations and rescinded by Democratic ones since 1984.

Day one proposals

The actions were among the long list of steps candidate Trump pledged to take on his opening day as president. But other "Day One" promises were going unfulfilled, including plans to propose a constitutional amendment imposing term limits on members of Congress and terminating Obama's executive actions deferring deportations for some people living in the US illegally.

Spokesman Sean Spicer said Monday that Trump intended to follow through on his proposals, though on a more extended timeframe to ensure maximum attention for each move.

Yet he appeared to suggest that Trump would not move quickly - or perhaps at all - to reinstate deportations for young immigrants protected from deportation under the Obama administration.

Spicer said Trump's focus would be on people in the US illegally who have criminal records or who pose a threat. "That's where the priority's going to be, and then we're going to continue to work through the entire number of folks that are here illegally," he said. Spicer - making his first appearance at the briefing room podium since his angry tirade against the press on Saturday - also appeared to back away from Trump's assertion that he could move the US Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

While presidential candidates have long made similar pledges, all have abandoned the idea over concerns that following through would further inflame tensions in the volatile region. "We are at the early stages in this decision-making process," Spicer said of the possible embassy relocation. "If it was already a decision, then we wouldn't be going through a process." — AP

IRAQ CLERIC WARNS US ON ISRAEL EMBASSY MOVE

NAJAF: Moving the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem would be a declaration of war on Islam, influential Iraqi cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr said yesterday. "Transferring the US embassy to Jerusalem would be a public and more-explicit-than-ever declaration of war against Islam," he said in a statement. In a break with previous administrations, new US President Donald Trump has pledged to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and relocate the US embassy there from Tel Aviv.

Sadr, a firebrand Shiite cleric whose militia once fought US occupation forces in Iraq, called for the "formation of a special division to liberate Jerusalem were the decision to be implemented." Sadr said the Cairo-based Arab League as well as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the world's main pan-Islamic body, should take a decisive stand on the issue or dissolve themselves. The Najaf-based cleric also called "for the immediate closure of the US embassy in Iraq" should Washington go ahead with its promised embassy transfer in Israel. Sadr supporters protesting against the lack of services and widespread corruption in the Iraqi state stormed the so-called "Green Zone" in Baghdad twice last year. The protesters entered the parliament buildings and the prime minister's office but did not attempt anything against the US embassy there, which is Washington's largest foreign mission.

The United States works with Iraq on a range of issues, notably with military backing for the Iraqi offensive to retake large parts of the country seized by the Islamic State group. The final status of Jerusalem is one of the thorniest issues in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel considers Jerusalem-including the eastern Palestinian sector it annexed in 1980 — as its indivisible capital. The Palestinians want to make east Jerusalem the capital of their future state. The White House on Sunday appeared to play down suggestions that a move was imminent, with press secretary Sean Spicer saying: "We are at the very beginning stages of even discussing this subject." — AFP

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TRUMP'S HEALTH SECRETARY FACES NEW SENATE HEARING

WASHINGTON: A second Senate committee is ready to interrogate President Donald Trump's pick for health secretary, a nominee who's backed by Republicans but under fire from Democrats for his support for tearing down President Barack Obama's health care overhaul and his past stock trades.

Trump's selection, Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga, 62, is a veteran conservative congressman and orthopedic surgeon from Atlanta's suburbs who has long favored voiding Obama's 2010 law and wrote his own proposed substitute for it. Chairman of the House Budget Committee until recently, he's also favored revamping Medicare and Medicaid, which Democrats vehemently resist and Trump as a presidential candidate said he opposed.

Democrats at yesterday's Senate Finance Committee hearing were expected to pursue questions raised at an earlier hearing this month about Price's stock acquisitions. That followed a Wall Street Journal report that over the past four years, Price traded more than \$300,000 worth of shares in around 40 health-related companies, even as he pushed legislation that could affect the firms' values.

In a new detail Democrats seemed likely to raise, congressional records show that Price bought shares last March in three drug firms - Amgen, Bristol Meyers Squibb and Eli Lilly - that each benefited from a tax deduction for having facilities in Puerto Rico. That provision expired on Jan. 1. Last June, Price introduced a bill to

permanently extend that deduction. The measure went nowhere but would have benefited the three companies.

Scuttling Obama's law

Yesterday's Senate Finance Committee hearing comes as GOP lawmakers intent on repealing Obama's law continue trying to figure out how they would replace it. That remains a top priority for Trump and congressional Republicans, and GOP lawmakers plan a retreat in Philadelphia later this week to discuss what to do. Trump has been pressuring Republicans to move quickly on legislation scuttling Obama's law and replacing it.

The hearing also follows an executive order Trump issued Friday, his first day in office, that vaguely empowers federal officials to curb fiscal burdens Obama's overhaul imposes and give states more flexibility to interpret it. That could let agencies take steps like stopping fines of people who don't buy coverage or easing the law's requirement that insurers cover birth control, but there could be procedural and political pitfalls to exercising those powers. In prepared remarks, committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, praised Price for having "the experience and qualifications" needed for the post. He accused Democrats of a "level of partisan rancor" he said he'd not seen before in trying to derail Price and other Trump nominees.

The top Democrat on the panel, Ron Wyden of Oregon, called Price "the architect of repeal and ruin" in prepared



WASHINGTON: Health and Human Secretary-designate Rep Tom Price, R-Ga, arrives on the West Front of the US Capitol on Friday, Jan. 20, 2017, in Washington, for Donald Trump's inauguration ceremony as the 45th president of the United States. — AP

remarks. He said Price's plan would "tell vulnerable Americans that their health care will go only as far as their bank accounts will take them."

Enormous power

As head of the huge Health and Human Services Department, Price would have enormous power to decide how Obama's law is interpreted and enforced.

For example, he could weaken the statute's requirements that people buy insurance and larger employers provide it to workers by granting broader exemptions, or reduce the extent of coverage insurers must provide for 10 types of mandated health services.

Obama's law has provided coverage to 20 million people by creating online marketplaces for those without employer-

provided coverage and subsidizing many of them, and expanding Medicaid to more lower-income people. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated last week that repeal without a replacement would cost 18 million people their insurance in the first year and spike premiums for individual coverage - not provided by companies - by up to 25 percent.

Price has signed a government ethics agreement to sell his stock, but Democrats have suggested he's gotten special deals and inside information for some purchases. Price has said he's done nothing wrong. A bipartisan Finance panel staff memo obtained by The Associated Press said that in disclosure forms he's filed, Price undervalued around 400,000 shares of stock he purchased last August in an Australian drug company.

The memo said Price reported the shares were worth \$50,000 to \$100,000, based on the purchase price then. Those shares were worth up to \$250,000 when he filed his forms to the Finance committee, the report said. Price said his figures were a "good faith valuation" but agreed to recalculate the value, the memo said. The shares are in Innate Immunotherapeutics Ltd, which Democrats have accused Price of purchasing based on insider information. Price has denied that. The Senate Health committee held an initial hearing on Price last Tuesday, but only the Finance Committee has the jurisdiction to vote on his nomination. The full Senate would then vote on confirmation. — AP

ELDER BUSH OUT OF INTENSIVE CARE, WIFE BARBARA RELEASED

CHICAGO: Former US president George HW Bush was being transferred out of intensive care on Monday as he recovered from pneumonia, while his wife Barbara was discharged from the hospital after a bout of bronchitis, doctors said. The 41st president and former first lady were admitted to Houston Methodist Hospital on Wednesday.

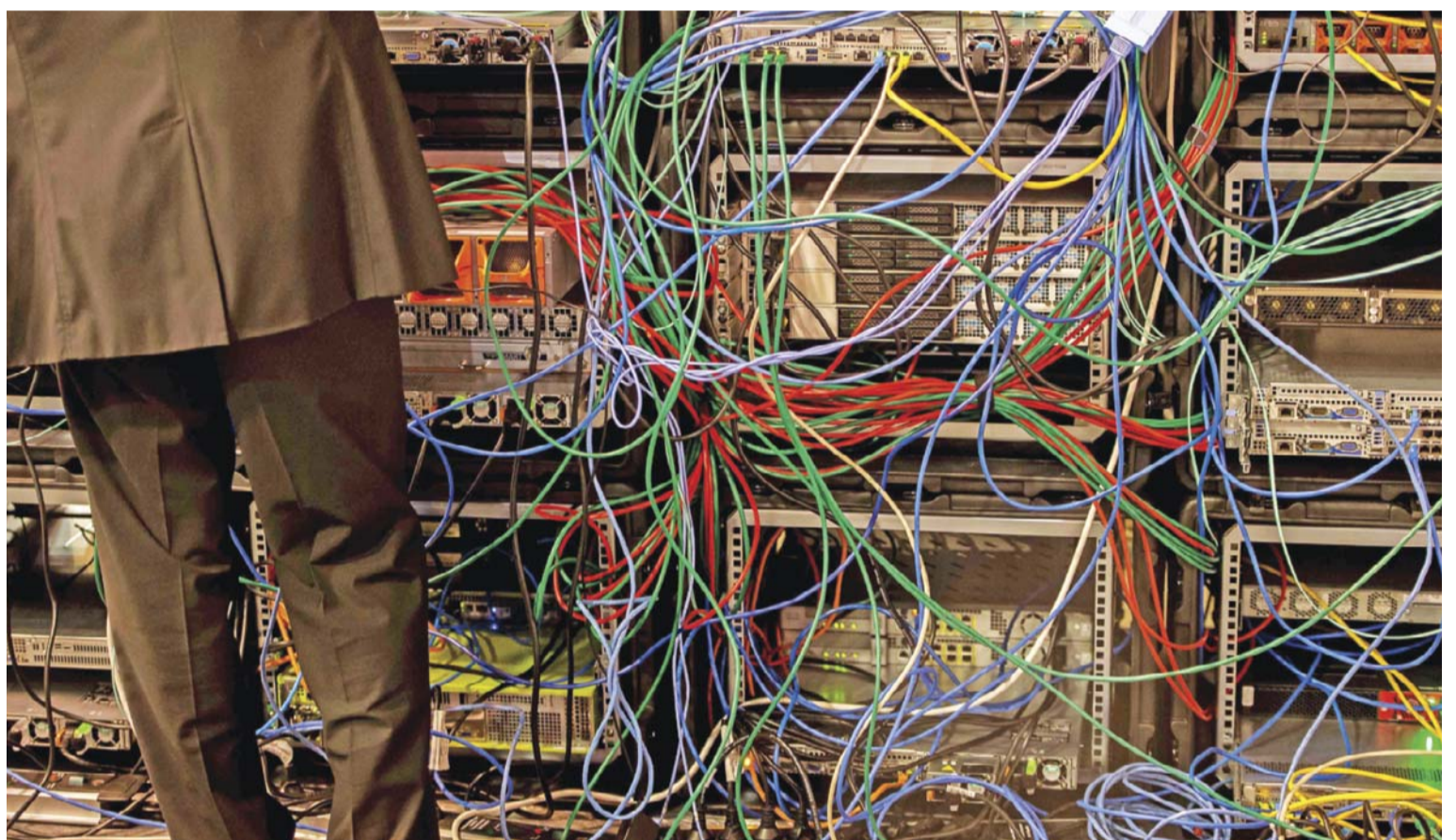
George HW Bush, 92, was suffering from bacterial pneumonia and was intubated during a 48-hour period to help him breathe. He is now breathing on his own and could be discharged as early as Friday or this weekend. Barbara Bush, 91, who had viral bronchitis, was hospitalized as a precaution. Physicians Amy Mynderse and Clint Doerr said at a news conference that the two were recovering well, but full recovery could take another week or two. "X-rays continue to improve, so no obvious re-accumulation of material in his airways that would then again put him behind the eight ball (at a disadvantage)," Doerr said about the former president, adding that he will need a "fairly aggressive combination of breathing medications" and a full course of antibiotics.

Bush has Parkinson's disease, which has left him in a wheelchair, but doctors said it was not a major factor in this latest illness. His is a less-common version of Parkinson's that only affects the lower body. Advanced age was of greater concern. "This age group doesn't have as much reserve as a decade ago, let alone 40, 50 years ago. It doesn't take much, from a respiratory standpoint, to get into trouble," Doerr said.

'Therapy for each other'

Barbara Bush was discharged but expected to return to remain by her husband's bedside, where she has been for much of their hospitalization. "They really, truly are therapy for each other," Mynderse said. "When she's not there, he's looking for her." The couple "thank their fellow Americans and friends from around the world for their prayers and good wishes," Bush family spokesman Jim McGrath said in a tweet. He posted a photo showing the former president sitting in a hospital bed, dressed in a gown and smiling. Barbara Bush is at his side, her hand on his arm, wearing a lavender sweater set and her trademark pearls. The former president and first lady have received many messages of support, the doctors said, including from a family who hand-delivered a get-well card. The card is in Bush's hospital room, they said. The couple has been surprised by the public concern. Mynderse said that before she headed to the Monday news conference, George HW Bush asked her: "People want to know about me?" "They're very grateful for the love that people showed them, and just are extremely humbled and I think a little bit awed by how beloved they are," Mynderse said.

The Bushes were the only former White House residents who did not attend Friday's inauguration of Donald Trump, due to their health. The couple watched the ceremony from the hospital. Their son George W Bush, the 43rd US president, had a prime seat on the inaugural platform in Washington. — AP



LILLE: A person works on a protective cybersecurity system yesterday in Lille, during the International Cybersecurity Forum. — AFP

EU SECURITY CHIEF ISSUES WAKE-UP CALL OVER GROWING CYBER THREATS

'CYBERCRIME COST THE ECONOMY NEARLY 60 BILLION EUROS'

BRUSSELS: EU security commissioner Julian King says Europe faces a growing threat of cyber attacks from criminals and those plotting to destabilize the 28-nation bloc politically. In an interview with AFP, King urged the European Union to shore up its defenses in the face of a mounting danger. He gave the example of the European Commission, the EU's powerful executive, which was hit by a 20-percent surge in cyber-attacks last year.

"Cybercrime cost the European economy nearly 60 billion euros (\$64 billion) in 2016" and the bill will continue to rise, King said ahead of a cyber security conference in the northern French city of Lille yesterday. "An increasing number of hackers use cyber space to spread doubt about our political systems," he said. "The people who are trying to do that, with criminal or other objectives, would like to work in the dark," the European commissioner and former British ambassador to Paris said. "So the first thing we can do is to shine a light to what is going on in order for people to realise what is going on," said King, who will likely be Britain's last top EU official as the country prepares for Brexit.

US spy chiefs have pointed to suspected Russian hacking in the American presidential election and say the Chinese government runs cyber espionage against the US government, allies and corporations. Experts in Europe have also warned of the risk of interference in upcoming French and German polls. Bolstering European "resilience" to cyber-threats requires a response from all players, King said. Private citizens, he said, must follow bank security guidelines, while the public and business sector must ensure the security of their networks and member states reinforce cooperation.

'Ransom on line'

The EU Commission "has just launched a new public-private partnership which we hope will generate 1.8 billion euros (\$1.9 billion) in investment in research" in cybersecurity, he said. King highlighted for example initiatives involving the private sector and Europol, the EU police agency, to fight "ransom on-line," where criminals demand money from individuals or firms to unblock computers they have hacked.

"There is a whole range of software. We can provide the tools to unblock them without the user being forced to pay. More than 2,500 computers were decrypted this way for free in Europe last year," he said. He said the Commission itself experienced a 20-percent increase in cyber attacks last year. "We are targeted and sometimes they are rather serious attacks," he said without elaborating on the nature of the incidents or any

damage they caused. "Our efforts are more effective if we avoid giving all the details," he said.

More biometric information

In his other work in fighting terrorism, King admitted that sharing information among member states "runs up against issues of internal organization or different traditions among member states," but he said the mindset is changing. He said there are plans to improve the exchange of information that allow EU states to identify

suspects. The EU this week wants to make progress in managing the information so that police officers, border guards and others can consult on one data base all the files they have access to. The EU will also work on setting up a "unified system" for managing biometric and other information. "In recent attacks, including the one in Berlin, we see that the suspects used aliases," King said. "With biometric information, we have the possibility of bolstering our defenses against these abuses," he said. — AP



HOUSTON: In this photo provided by Office of George HW Bush on Monday Jan 23, 2017, former President George HW Bush and his wife Barbara pose for a photo at Houston Methodist Hospital. — AP

STORMS KILL 20 IN SOUTH US

ADEL: Bonnie and Wayne Collier were jolted awake in their mobile home by a cell-phone weather alert early Sunday. They jumped up, turned on the TV, saw a tornado warning and decided to run. "We heard the Code Red," said Bonnie Collier, 65. "He told me, 'Get up. We've got to get out.'" Quickly, they headed to a friend's nearby building just down the road from their mobile home near Cecil, Georgia. There they met up with their son, daughter-in-law and three grandchildren - ages 5, 7 and 9.

They arrived just ahead of a tornado, part of an unusual midwinter barrage of tornadoes and thunderstorms that killed at least 20 across the Deep South over the weekend. "My husband yelled, 'Get under the tables!' and then it just came right over the top of us like a freight train." When they emerged, the home they had been sleeping in was blown clear across the street, flattened and shattered to pieces. Her car and his pickup truck were buried under debris.

Smiles and tears

"If we had been five minutes later, they probably would have found us out here

somewheres dead." Collier returned Monday to pick through the wreckage, pulling out clothes and family photos with a mix of smiles and tears. She laughed as 5-year-old granddaughter Rylee ran up, holding a photo and excitedly shouting "Mimi! This one's of you." But moments earlier, she choked back sobs talking about how she could have lost much more than her home.

"Material things can be put back and replaced and family can't. And I'm just glad we got out OK," she said, wiping away a tear. Mobile homes were especially vulnerable to the storms, with seven people alone killed early Sunday in one trailer park community a few miles away - Sunshine Acres - in the community of Adel.

Just the day after Devocheo Williams moved into Sunshine Acres, his mobile home - and many of those around him - were demolished as the winds descended before dawn with terrifying swiftness. "The whole trailer park was gone in 15 seconds," Williams said, describing a funnel cloud that appeared to loop back around and hit the place a second time. "It looked like a ball of fire was going 100 mph." Williams said

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Two persons watch the sun setting on the Old City of Jerusalem, with the Dome of the Rock mosque in the center. —AFP

GOVT GIVEN ULTIMATUM OVER FUEL, FEES HIKES

Continued from Page 1

Hashem said that the government does not have any studies on the impact of hiking charges or imposing taxes and called on the government to submit such studies.

She said the government has failed to stop squandering of public funds used to send patients for treatment abroad that cost public coffers KD 1 billion, adding that the government agreed to allow the withdrawal of \$7 billion from state reserves for armament deals.

Opposition MP Mohammad Al-Mutair warned yesterday that he will file to grill Prime Minister HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah if the government fails to resolve a number of important issues, especially reinstating the revoked citizenships and scrapping the hike in petrol prices and the planned increase in power and water prices. He said that the prime minister is responsible for the policy of the gov-

ernment, and accordingly, if these issues remain unresolved, he will file to grill him. Mutair said that he will wait until after national holidays late next month before filing to grill him.

Another opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri also strongly criticized the prime minister for holding "side meetings" with MPs in a bid to divide the Assembly. Muwaizri also criticized Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem over his statement regarding a request by several lawmakers to meet HH the Amir, saying this is unacceptable and that the door of the Amir is always open for all lawmakers. The lawmaker said that practices by Ghanem show that he is trying to return to his previous behavior, "which is totally unacceptable", adding that he had warned him against this in the opening session of the Assembly. Muwaizri said MPs will not allow Ghanem to return to his previous style, because lawmakers have their own opinions and these must be heard.

THREE-WAY BID TO BOOST SYRIA TRUCE

Continued from Page 1

There were, however, no concrete details given immediately on the three-way mechanism to strengthen the ceasefire and how it would resolve the thorniest hotspots. UN Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura said his organization was ready to assist in developing the mechanism and "ensure that it helps strengthen the quality of the ceasefire". The rebels have called for a halt to regime attacks on Wadi Barada, an area 15 km northwest of Damascus, but Jafaari insisted operations would continue there.

There was profound rancor and mudslinging between the delegations from Damascus and the rebels. It also remained to be seen how the sides could patch up differences on the role of the talks' three organizers, Russia, Turkey and Iran. A member of the rebel delegation told AFP on Monday that the group would agree to have Russia serve as a guarantor of the current ceasefire but not Iran, which controls troops on the ground fighting for Assad. The Syrian regime, meanwhile, said it would refuse to hold government-level talks with Turkey and sign any document bearing the signature of a Turkish official. — AFP

DUBAI AIRPORT STILL TOP FOR INT'L TRAFFIC

Continued from Page 1

Griffiths said at the time that Dubai Airports was expecting to receive 85 million passengers in 2016 - something he blamed on the economic, political and terror-related turmoil of the past year. "We know that the global economy has slowed a little bit and the propensity for travel has dropped, but I think that 2016 was quite an unparalleled year," Griffiths told AP. "Fortunately, our numbers are still holding up."

Griffiths also said Dubai International Airport - often lauded by US President Donald Trump during his campaign - would welcome a call from the Trump administration on ways to improve American airports. Situated on transcontinental air routes, Dubai is one of several

Gulf-based airports to experience prodigious growth in recent years. More than 100 airlines fly to around 260 destinations from the international hub. The rapid growth has angered US carriers, which allege Emirates, Abu Dhabi-based Etihad and Qatar Airways receive unfair government subsidies. The three Gulf airlines repeatedly have denied the allegations.

Asked about Trump's protectionist stance, Griffiths said it would hurt consumers the worst. "The result of that is reduced choice for the consumer and higher prices," he said. He added that the Dubai airport would welcome any discussions with US officials about how to improve their airports. "If America and President Trump would like some of the expertise from Dubai, I'm sure we'd be pleased to assist," Griffiths said— Agencies

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Focus

TAJIK WOMEN TRAIN TO SHOULDER WORK MEN LEFT BEHIND

Wearing blue overalls, trainee mechanic Marjona Abdulloeva carefully examines a car chassis at a government-run training center in Tajikistan, an ex-Soviet republic hit hard by the recession in Russia. The 20-year-old hopes to be the first woman to earn a car mechanic's diploma at the Dushanbe centre, as a growing number of women seek work to help make ends meet in the socially conservative and impoverished country.

Undeterred by the social stigma of shedding their traditional home-based role, the women are stepping into jobs left vacant by menfolk, many of whom moved to Russia to find work. "Repairing cars is considered man's work, but I do not care what my friends think about my choice," Abdulloeva told AFP. "The work you do should interest you. I want to make a life for myself."

Russian recession

Historically heavily reliant on Russia, the Muslim-majority nation of some eight million has been hit by the two-year recession suffered by its ex-Soviet masters. At least 860,000 Tajik citizens - the vast majority men - are working in Russia, according to Russian migration authorities, sending back good wages to provide for their families at home.

But many have been thrown out of work as Russia's economy was hit by plunging oil prices and Western sanctions over Moscow's actions in Ukraine. The collapse in the Russian ruble's value has also left a sharp dent in the money they send home. In 2015, the amount of money transferred back to Tajikistan fell to \$1.3 billion from \$3.8 billion a year earlier when remittances represented nearly half of the country's GDP, according to the Russian Central Bank.

'Don't look back'

To make ends meet, women have had to find new sources of income. Women make up about 60 percent of the new enrollees at the Dushanbe training center, said its director Shukhrullo Salomov. "Many of them choose typically male professions, successfully complete their courses and don't look back," he told AFP. Even with a qualification, the job market is tough: Although Tajikistan has significantly reduced poverty in the last decade, unemployment remains stubbornly high.

"Of the 130,000 young people that finish school every year, more than 60,000 enter the ranks of the unemployed," Saimuddin Dustov, a Moscow-based Tajik analyst, told AFP. In theory this could prompt women like Abdulloeva to head abroad too. But they could face a double stigma if they leave the country to find work: Both xenophobia, which Tajik men say they suffer abroad, but also suspicions about exactly what kind of work they are doing. "Young women migrants often find themselves targets of (Tajik) society's suspicion if they find work abroad, because some female migrants fall into prostitution," said researcher Alla Kuvatova, who studies gender issues in the country.

Social pressure

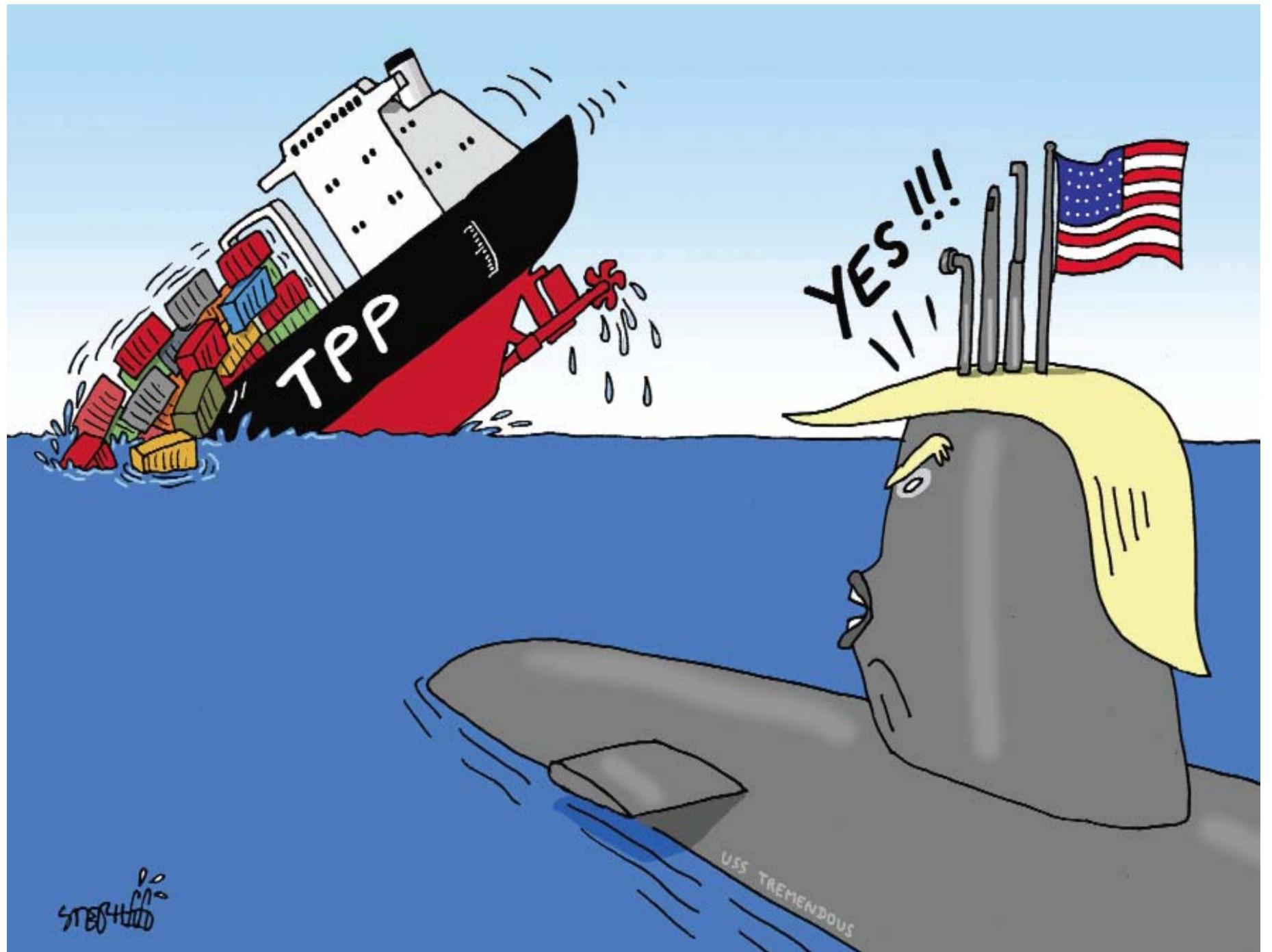
Even at home, Tajik society "doesn't welcome" women taking up work that is usually done by men, she added. A 2010 census, whose data was published in 2013, showed that about 1.1 million women in Tajikistan work, most of them in agriculture. In his December address to the nation, veteran President Emomali Rakhmon summed up the sentiment, deploring that women were "more often than not doing heavy, physically taxing work".

Rakhmon, who came to power during a ruinous five-year civil war in the country during the 1990s, called on the service industry to employ more women instead. Taxi driving has drawn some of Tajikistan's unemployed but few women have been able to get into the business. "Behind the Wheel", a 2013 award-winning short documentary film, tells the story of a Tajik woman, who quit taxi driving after repeated arguments with male clients, preferring to fix tyres instead. "Of thousands of taxi drivers in the major cities - Dushanbe, Khujand and Kulyob - probably fewer than 10 are women," said analyst Dustov.

No regrets

Despite grim employment prospects across the board, however, many women graduates from the Dushanbe training centre don't regret their choices to attend courses. Zarina Nabieva, who trained as a plumber, said her new skills had already helped her save money on handymen. "We are not looking to take anyone's place," the 47-year-old said. "Everything we do, we do for the well-being of ourselves and our families." — AFP

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BREXIT PLANS UNLIKELY TO BE SLOWED BY DEFEAT

Prim Minister Theresa May's plans to start the process of Britain leaving the European Union by the end of March are unlikely to be hindered or slowed by yesterday's Supreme Court ruling the government must seek parliamentary approval. In the ruling, judges on Britain's top judicial body upheld an earlier High Court decision that lawmakers had to give their assent before May can invoke Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty which formally starts two-years of divorce talks.

However, the legal defeat, while an inconvenience and embarrassment for the government, is not expected to delay its Brexit timetable or, as some investors and pro-EU supporters hope, make it possible to stop Britain leaving the bloc. Part of this is because the opposition is divided. "We will not block Article 50," Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the main opposition Labour Party which campaigned against Brexit, said last week. "All Labour MPs (members of parliament) will be asked to vote in that direction next week, or whenever the vote comes up."

Not all Corbyn's colleagues may go along, but May can get the votes she needs for overall passage. However, what the decision could do is give an opportunity for Labour and other lawmakers who oppose a "hard Brexit" - an agreement with the EU that puts immigration curbs above access to the single market - to have a greater influence on what the final deal should look like.

Senior ministers in May's Conservative government, which had been expecting to lose the case, have already drawn up a series of options, including a short, tight bill which will quickly be put before parliament's lower chamber, the House of Commons.

Although before June's referendum the vast majority of MPs in the Commons

backed staying in the EU, most now say they would back Brexit, especially those in England and Wales whose constituents had strongly backed leaving the bloc. MPs voted overwhelmingly to support the timetable of May's Conservative government for invoking Article 50 before April in a non-binding vote in December. Sources from both May's ruling

Conservatives and the opposition Labour Party have told Reuters there was scope for a bill to be accelerated through parliament, without restricting debate, to ensure it could pass before the end of March.

Labour, though, faces a particular problem as many of its traditional working class supporters voted to leave the bloc and have been wooed in recent years by the anti-EU UK Independence Party (UKIP). Whilst not blocking Brexit, Corbyn, who himself was an EU critic for many years, has said he would fight for Britain to have full access to the single market "with reasonable management of migration". Labour could try to amend any bill to ensure this, attracting support from some Conservative MPs, who oppose a "hard Brexit", and other smaller parties such as the Scottish Nationalists and Liberal Democrats.

The greatest potential threat to May comes from parliament's unelected upper chamber, the House of Lords, where many peers remained strongly opposed to Brexit and do not have voters to worry about. If the Lords were to vote against approving the triggering of Article 50, the Brexit timetable could be severely delayed. However, the government is confident the bill will pass through the Lords because there would be a constitutional crisis if unelected peers were to thwart the will of the people expressed both through the referendum and from their representatives in the Commons. — Reuters



A man carries a box, resembling Ready Brek porridge, but with the logo modified to read 'Ready Brexit' as he arrives to queue to enter the Supreme Court opposite the Houses of Parliament in central London yesterday. — AFP

ZIMBABWE IN-LAWS STEAL HOUSES FROM WIDOWS

As Maliyaziwa Malunga mourns her dead husband, she also battles against his relatives who plot to seize her house in a custom that affects thousands of women in Zimbabwe each year. A Human Rights Watch report released on Tuesday details how in-laws in the country routinely expect to take property and money from bereaved widows soon after their husbands die.

When Malunga's husband died in 2013, his relatives locked her in her home, forced her to open her cash box, and stole \$4,000 and the title documents to her property. "I lock my doors always fearing some of those in-laws will come and harass me," Malunga, who is still in a legal tussle to fight off the relatives, told AFP. "It is so painful to go to courts and it is stressful. I lose sleep, my blood pressure is high and I have lost weight because of stress," the 53-year-old said.

HRW said Zimbabwean widows who are thrown out of their homes by their in-laws often have little chance of justice because many marriages are under customary law and not registered. "My advice is for married women to go to court and have a wedding certificate and we will not have problems like this one," said Malunga. "Widows must fight for their rights, they should be strong and should not give up," she added, recalling that her husband's relatives engaged in fistfights over her house in Chitungwiza, outside Harare.

'Happy to see us suffer'

The HRW report called for the government to protect vulnerable, often elderly widows. "The impact of property grabbing on widows is devastating," said its author Bethany Brown. "Women whose property was taken from them spoke of homelessness, destitution and loss of livelihoods". The report is based on interviews with 59 widows across Zimbabwe's 10 provinces last year. (My brother-in-law) has taken all of my fields," Deborah, 58, from Mashonaland East, told researchers. "Now, he says that I cannot walk on 'his' fields... Maybe he is really happy to see us suffer."

The Legal Resources Foundation (LRF), an organization helping widows in Zimbabwe, said it alone had handled at least 1,700 cases in the last three years. "Women have to register their estates and they should do so immediately after the deaths of their husbands," Lucia Masuka-Zanhi, legal programs director at LRF, told AFP. "Women can assert their rights through the courts and each case will be decided on its facts."

The government said it supported better protection for

widows and would act to enforce the law more widely. "This practice contravenes the law which entitles the surviving spouse to inherit property," Ivan Dumba, an official from the ministry of women affairs, told a press conference in Harare where the report was launched. "We will increase

the volume to condemn such practices... It is critical we investigate this issue as we need to get to the bottom of it." HRW said that, according to Zimbabwe's 2012 census, there were about 590,000 widows in the country, and that most women over 60 were widowed. — AFP

HOUSING BIAS TURNING GHETTOIZE INDIA CITIES

On the inauguration of US President Donald Trump, an Indian real estate company ran an advertisement with the slogan 'Homes that don't discriminate', calling for an end to prejudice in India's housing market based on gender, religion or caste. While the ad was unusual, the sentiment was familiar to millions of Indians who have tried to rent or buy city homes only to be denied because they were single, ate meat, were of a certain caste or from a certain region.

Informal rules and discrimination by Indian landlords to keep out religious minorities and single people are eroding the multi-cultural nature of India's cities and dividing communities into ghettos, analysts say. "It's 2017 - and we're still encountering discrimination," said Rishi Dogra of NestAway Technologies that ran the ad. "People should be able to move freely and find a living space anywhere in the country," said Dogra, marketing head for the company founded by four young male graduates after they had trouble finding a home in Bengaluru.

Such discrimination has forced many people to the suburbs, making Indian city centers less diverse and cosmopolitan, with high rents already making them unaffordable to poorer workers. Mumbai, India's financial hub and a magnet for migrants from across the country, has traditionally had enclaves for Catholics, Parsis, Bohri Muslims and others. They set up housing societies, or co-operatives, to help other community members.

As the city grew and drew more migrants, powerful housing societies have often denied homes on the

basis of religion, caste, food preferences and even professions. The divide grew after bloody Hindu-Muslim riots in 1992-93 and still persists, said Zakia Soman, a co-founder at Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, a non-profit organization for Muslim women. A Facebook group called 'Indians Against Discrimination' was set up in 2015 after a young Muslim woman was asked to leave her flat a week after she moved in, because of her religion.

"When it comes to living spaces, we have become very insular," Soman said. "The city is getting increasingly ghettoized as a result, weakening our social fabric and polarizing us further. That doesn't bode well," she said. Local courts have ruled against discrimination by housing associations in several cases, but there have also been contradictory rulings.

Discrimination

In a 2005 case, India's top court ruled in favor of a Parsi housing society in Ahmedabad, saying it could limit its membership to Parsis and not admit others. "The constitution guarantees our right to equality, but housing societies can still frame their own guidelines which may be discriminatory," said Vinod Sampat, a real estate lawyer. A draft housing policy for Maharashtra state, where Mumbai is located, has dropped a clause that prevents discrimination in housing. This may leave those looking to rent or buy property with fewer protections, Sampat said. Government officials have said non-discrimination is already protected by the constitution, so there is no need for the clause. — Reuters

CORINI RESIGNS AS
PALERMO COACH

PALERMO: Eugenio Corini resigned as Palermo coach yesterday after guiding the Sicilian club to only one win in seven matches. The move came two days after Palermo was beaten 1-0 at home by Inter Milan. "This is a decision that I've taken with integrity and lucidness, which makes me feel great pain, but which seems the fairest and most logical option right now," Corini said, according to the ANSA news agency. Corini was hired in November as Palermo's third coach of the season. Davide Ballardini coached the club for the opening two rounds then was replaced by Roberto De Zerbi, who was fired to make room for Corini. With only two wins in 21 matches, Palermo is one point above last-place Pescara in Serie A. Palermo president Maurizio Zamparini has made about 60 coaching changes in 30 years as a club owner. Last season alone, Zamparini changed coach eight times. No immediate replacement was named, although there were reports that Zamparini was considering rehiring Ballardini. —AP

CRICKETER SUNNY DENIED
BAIL IN SNAPS CASE

DHAKA: A court refused to grant bail to Bangladeshi cricketer Arafat Sunny yesterday after he was charged with posting "intimate" photos of his girlfriend on social media. Metropolitan magistrate Zakir Hossain said another court which deals with internet-related crime would instead hear the bail application, meaning the 31-year-old spinner would remain behind bars on remand at a Dhaka prison. "The court directed us to move to the cyber court to seek bail. It also asked the jail authorities to look after the health of Sunny as he was sick," Sunny's lawyer M. Muradduzaman told AFP. Police arrested the left-arm bowler in a Dhaka suburb on Sunday after his longtime girlfriend Nasrin Sultana, 23, filed a complaint two weeks ago. In her complaint Sultana said Sunny opened up a fake Facebook account in her name and posted "intimate photos" which she found "offensive and defamatory". She also claimed that they had been married since 2014 and filed a separate lawsuit against Sunny on Monday, accusing the player of seeking dowry worth millions from her family. —AFP

RYAN MASON MAKING
'EXCELLENT PROGRESS'

LONDON: Hull City midfielder Ryan Mason is making "excellent progress" after fracturing his skull but will remain under close observation in hospital, the Premier League club said yesterday. The 25-year-old suffered serious injury when he accidentally clashed heads with Chelsea's Gary Cahill in the 14th minute of the 2-0 loss at the Premier League leaders on Sunday. Mason was rushed to the nearby St Mary's Hospital in west London and underwent surgery. "The club can confirm that Ryan Mason continues to make excellent progress after sustaining a skull fracture in Sunday's game against Chelsea," said a Hull statement. "He will continue to be closely monitored by staff at St Mary's Hospital over the next few days, whilst also remaining in contact with our medical team to assess his progress." Hull said they would only release more information when there are changes to Mason's condition, adding: "We also ask that people respect Ryan and his family's privacy whilst he remains in hospital." Hull announced Monday that Mason was conscious and able to speak following a visit by captain Michael Dawson and club officials. —AFP

FORMULA ONE'S NEW OWNERS
PLAN US STREET RACE

LONDON: Formula One's new owners plan to add a street race in the United States in an attempt to improve a sport which they feel stagnated under Bernie Ecclestone's control. Chase Carey, who ended Ecclestone's four-decade reign as F1's chief executive, told The Associated Press yesterday that the sport will no longer be run as a "one-man show."

Carey, though, will be as dogged as the 86-year-old Ecclestone in negotiations with circuits, insisting that less-lucrative races in heartlands like Britain will have to prove they can become more profitable rather than being allowed to renegotiate hosting fees. International sports and entertainment firm Liberty Media, which is controlled by 75-year-old tycoon John Malone, completed its takeover of F1 on Monday from investment fund CVC Capital Partners.

Driving growth in the United States is seen as a priority for Liberty, which also owns baseball's Atlanta Braves and has investments in cable TV companies. F1 currently only makes one stop during the season in the United States - to Austin, Texas - but adding a street race is high on Liberty's agenda. "We would like to add a destination race in the US in a location like New York, L.A., Miami, Las Vegas," Carey said in a telephone interview. "We think we can create something that will be a really special event. Obviously the US is all upsides for us. We haven't invested in the way we need to build the US market."

ONE-MAN SHOW

The sport has remained stuck in the past, making "events feel a little tired," while the modern media landscape was not grasped by Ecclestone, according to Carey. "Bernie really ran a one-man show," Carey said. "I don't plan to run a one-man show."

Although Ecclestone remains on board as an honorary chairman and will be an F1 adviser, power clearly now rests with Carey, who is a veteran Fox executive. "The last half dozen years I think the business has not reached its potential," Carey said. "With all the things you need to do to be competitive in an increasingly fragmented online world, you need an organization doing many things at the same time."

Carey, who played rugby at Colgate and holds a Masters degree from Harvard, is a friend of Rupert Murdoch. He has worked

closely with the media mogul since 1988 and was a former president of 21st Century Fox. Ecclestone was criticized for overlooking historic popular race venues to move into new, wealthier markets including Abu Dhabi, Bahrain and Azerbaijan, which held its first race last year. The German Grand Prix has been dropped from the 2017 calendar because of Hockenheim's financial difficulties, while the British race at Silverstone is at risk because of hosting costs. "Western Europe is important for us and to some degree we have to engage to make those races bigger and better than they are while respecting their heritage," Carey said, while ruling out cut-price deals to keep historic races.

"We are willing to invest in the sport but we are the new guys so everyone wants to come in and figure it's a chance to renegotiate. So I don't think that's the right mindset. We think these races (in places like Britain and Germany) should be bigger and more profitable and we are willing to work with promoters to figure out how to achieve that. That's our goal."

The takeover, which gives F1 an enterprise value of \$8 billion and an equity value of \$4.4 billion, comes as the series is poised for a shakeup. Changes such as wider tires, car design, louder engines, and more overtaking opportunities are set to make F1 more exciting in a bid to win back a large chunk of unhappy fans amid flagging attendances at some races.

"We can certainly do things to make the race day more engaging, more exciting - make the race itself more exciting," Carey said. "I have gone around and talked to a lot of people and hear many of the same things about predictability, rules too complicated, engineers overtaking drivers, the engines could be faster, louder, cheaper."

"And so there are a number of things we can do to improve the race, the race day." Such as tapping into the "excitement and buzz" found at the NFL's showpiece game and turning races into week-long festivals in host cities.

"What I would like to have is 21 Super Bowls," Carey said. "Priority 1 is to make the races bigger and better. We have some great races like Singapore, Mexico and Abu Dhabi but we have to make all the races have an energy and excitement that really makes them unique events." —AP



SINGAPORE: This is a Thursday, Sept. 18, 2014 file photo of Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone, center, as he walks with his wife, Fabiana Flosi, left, at the Marina Bay City Circuit for the Singapore Formula One Grand Prix. Bernie Ecclestone's reign of Formula One ended after Liberty Media officially completed its takeover of the series on Monday. — AP

F1 NEEDS FRESH START FROM
'ONE-MAN DICTATOR': CAREY

ECCLESTONE, THE RACING NAPOLEON, FORCED INTO EXILE

LONDON: Bernie Ecclestone's four-decade reign as a "one-man dictator" of Formula One had to end if the sport is to have the fresh start it needs, new chairman and chief executive Chase Carey says.

Ecclestone's time as the colourful ringmaster of the Grand Prix circuit was effectively finished on Monday when US-based Liberty Media completed its takeover of motorsport's most prestigious brand in a deal valued at about \$8 billion.

While the 86-year-old Ecclestone, a former car salesman, was widely credited with transforming Formula One into a multibillion global business, there have been growing complaints in recent years that the sport has failed to modernise under the Englishman's no-nonsense leadership.

There has also been the view inside and outside the sport-and a concern shared by Carey-that it is wrong for one man to wield as much power as Ecclestone did in Formula One. Despite sidelining Ecclestone to an advisory role as "chairman emeritus" Carey stressed to the BBC that he had "tremendous respect" for Ecclestone and will value his

input. But he said that F1 "needs to be run differently than for the last four or five years."

"He has run this sport for his entire adult life and I respect completely that this is a difficult change," Carey said.

"We have tried to deal with him with the respect he's due, which is why we offered him the chairman emeritus title. 'I have been sincere in saying I value his help and advice as we go forward.' He calls himself a dictator. He has run it as a one-man dictator for a long time. I think the sport needs a fresh perspective. 'But he has a lot to continue to offer and he will always be part of the F1 family.'"

INNOVATION

The American Carey, a vice-chairman of the 21st Century Fox media conglomerate, has a proven record in expansive sport-media growth and expertise in the value and exploitation of sports rights, notably in the US market, where Formula One has struggled to gain a foothold.

"Bernie is a one-man team. It was not right in today's world," added Carey.

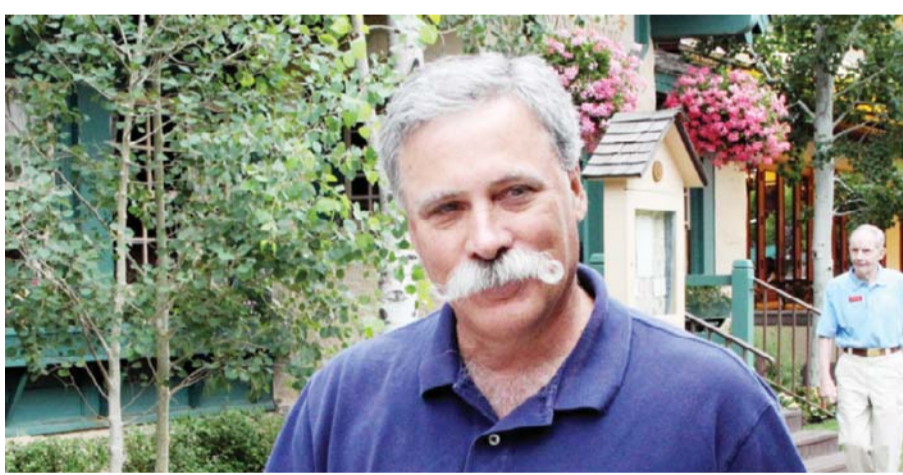
"The decision-making is not as effective as

it needs to be. Clearly it has to be improved. One of the benefits we bring is a fresh start."

Carey added that Formula One had not grown as much as it needed to and that Liberty could exploit new technologies to do just that. But he stressed the new owners would protect historic races, insisting there would still be a British Grand Prix amid speculation the Silverstone course-which has had several run-ins with Ecclestone over staging fees-would be stripped of the event in 2019.

"We needed a sport that while respecting what made it great has a sense of energy and innovation," Carey said.

"In many ways, in a simplistic sense, the sport said 'no' too much and we have to start saying 'yes'-not gimmick it up but find ways to do new and exciting things to have the sport continue to grow and interest and excite people." As part of the new management structure, Carey will have highly respected former Mercedes F1 team boss Ross Brawn and Sean Bratches, once a sales executive with North American sports television channel ESPN, running the sporting and commercial sides of F1 respectively under him. —AFP



IDALHO: In this Thursday, July 11, 2013 file photo, Chase Carey, President and Chief Operating Officer, 21st Century Fox, walks during a break at the Allen & Company Sun Valley Conference in Sun Valley, Idaho. Formula One's new owners plan to add a street race in the United States in an attempt to improve a sport which they feel stagnated under Bernie Ecclestone's control. —AP

PACQUIAO SAYS 'NOTHING
FINAL' ON NEXT FIGHT

MANILA: WBO welterweight world champion Manny Pacquiao said yesterday the details of his next fight have yet to be determined, despite widespread reports he will face Australian Jeff Horn. Asked in an interview with ABS-CBN television about a Horn fight, Pacquiao, said "not yet done, the negotiation is not yet done". "We are still negotiating about that. Nothing is really final, the date, who is the opponent. There are a lot of offers from other countries." Pacquiao's promoter, Bob Arum, has been widely quoted in international media as saying that the 38-year-old Filipino dubbed "Pac-Man" will get into the ring with Horn in April, possibly in Australia, but Pacquiao himself has not confirmed this.

The Philippine boxing hero, who parlayed his sporting fame into election to the influential Senate last year, also reiterated his willingness to fight mixed martial arts star Conor McGregor if his potential super-fight with Floyd Mayweather fails to materialise. "It could be possible if there is an intention to negotiate (for) the fight but

definitely in boxing, not in an MMA fight," he said. But the 1.69 metre (5ft 6in)-tall Pacquiao also said he was not giving up his position as a playing coach in the Philippines' highly-competitive professional basketball league, despite criticism of his hardcourt performance and Senate duties.

Pacquiao, who plays for the Mahindra Floodbuster team but who has missed practice because of his other roles, said he was not giving up his place on the squad. "I just make sure that whatever I do outside does not affect my work in Senate," he said. Pacquiao has previously used his fame to earn a fortune as a TV host and has even made forays into singing and acting. The Filipino southpaw briefly retired from the ring after beating American Tim Bradley in Las Vegas in April but soon made a comeback, saying he still felt like a youngster.

In his last fight in November, Pacquiao reclaimed the World Boxing Organization welterweight title for the third time with a unanimous-decision victory over former champion Jessie Vargas in Las Vegas. —AFP



YEONGAM: This is a Thursday, Oct. 21, 2010 file photo of Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone, centre, poses for a photo with from left, McLaren driver Lewis Hamilton, Ferrari driver Fernando Alonso, Red Bull driver Mark Webber, McLaren driver Jenson Button, 2nd right, and Red Bull Sebastian Vettel at the Korean International Circuit venue for the Korean Grand Prix in Yeongam, South Korea, Bernie Ecclestone's reign of Formula One ended after Liberty Media officially completed its takeover of the series on Monday. — AP

OWEN URGES RASHFORD TO BIDE TIME AT MAN UNITED

LONDON: Former Manchester United striker Michael Owen believes Marcus Rashford can be the club's first-choice centre-forward for "years to come", but told AFP he will have to be patient.

Rashford, 19, exploded onto the scene with United last season, scoring eight goals in his first 18 appearances and breaking into England's Euro 2016 squad. This season, Zlatan

Ibrahimovic's arrival has seen him used either on the flanks or on the bench and he has scored only three Premier League goals, but Owen believes he is in exactly the right place. "Wayne (Rooney) and Ibrahimovic at some point are going to retire and it's who's going to take the mantle on as the regular number nine?" Owen said at the launch of the

Star Sixes tournament in London on Tuesday. "As soon as those two players are no longer at the forefront for Manchester United, which isn't going to be very long, then it'll be really interesting to see who's the next person to carry the can. "One of those in line for it is Rashford. I'd say he'd be foolish to move now because he could be the number nine for Manchester

United for years to come, once his turn comes."

Owen, who spent three years at United, believes training alongside players like Ibrahimovic, Rooney and Anthony Martial will prove beneficial to Rashford in the long-run. "It depends how you look at it," said the former England striker. "Unfortunately, he's got a load of traffic in front of him.

Fortunately for him, he's at a place where he's going to be playing and honing his skills with the best, so you'd think that that would help him." Owen is due to play in an England team captained by Steven Gerrard at Star Sixes, a six-a-side indoor tournament for former international players taking place at London's O2 Arena in July. —AFP

BARCELONA CHIEF RELAXED DESPITE MESSI SPECULATION

BARCELONA: Barcelona sporting director Robert Fernandez insists he is sure Lionel Messi will sign a new deal with the Catalan giants despite continued speculation over the five-time World Player of the Year's future. Messi has just 18 months left on his current contract and would have no shortage of lucrative offers should he decide to leave the club where he has spent the entirety of his glittering career.

However, Fernandez believes negotiations over a new deal are progressing "very well." "There were many comments and people who want to intoxicate this situation, but we have been working on it for a long time and we are calm," he told Catalan radio station Raci1.

Simmering tensions between the Barca board and squad boiled over a fortnight ago when the club's CEO Oscar Grau claimed Barca had to negotiate any new contracts with "common sense" given their spiralling wage budget.

However, star striker Luis Suarez, who recently signed a new deal to 2021, responded angrily to those comments. "With Messi what you have to do is give him a new contract, not have common sense," said the Uruguayan.

Messi, who will turn 30 in June, has been in spectacular form this season, scoring 28 times in just 26 appearances.

"Leo has got to the stage where he seems he is better now than he was two, three, four or five years ago. That is the feeling he gives us, that he gets better all the time and plays as he wants," added Fernandez.

"There is no doubt that Leo is the best player in the world. That is the reality." As well as Suarez, Barca have handed new

deals to Neymar, Sergio Busquets and Javier Mascherano in the past year.

And Fernandez is hopeful of also pinning down captain Andres Iniesta, Ivan Rakitic and Marc-Andre ter Stegen in the coming months.

"I am very calm, but I was very calm in the case of Mascherano, Neymar, Busi (Busquets), and I am very calm with the subject of Andres, Ivan, Marc and Leo because I have a lot of confidence that they are going to remain with us," he added.

"I am totally convinced that the four players will continue at Barcelona." —AFP

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

SPAIN COPA DEL REY	
Eibar v Madrid	21:15
beIN SPORTS	
Vigo v Real Madrid	23:15
beIN SPORTS	

ITALIAN CUP	
Juventus v Milan	22:45
beIN SPORTS	

FRENCH CUP	
Monaco v Lorraine	23:00
beIN SPORTS	

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP	
Egypt v Ghana	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Uganda v Mali	22:00
beIN SPORTS	



IBARRA: Argentina's player Juan Marcos Foyle vies for the ball with Bolivia's player Carlos Abelardo Ribera during their South American Championship U-20 football match at the Olimpico stadium in Ibarra, Ecuador on Monday. —AFP

INJURY-HIT REAL WAIT ON RONALDO FOR CUP COMEBACK

MADRID: Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane hopes Cristiano Ronaldo will shrug off a foot problem in time to lead the European champions' bid to overcome a Copa del Rey deficit at Celta Vigo today. Zidane's squad, down 2-1 from the quarter-final first leg at home, has been hit by a series of injuries with Marcelo and Luka Modric joining Gareth Bale, James Rodriguez, Dani Carvajal and Pepe on the sidelines after limping off in Saturday's 2-1 win over Malaga.

Ronaldo also suffered a blow to his right foot at the weekend, but Zidane expects the World Player of the Year to feature as Real aim to keep their quest for a first ever treble on course in Galicia.

"It is something that has bothered him until now, but he is fine. It is just a knock," said Zidane yesterday. "He will be with us tomorrow." After a glorious 2016 for club and country, Ronaldo has endured a frustrating start to the new year. The Portuguese has scored just once from open play and was even jeered by sections of the Santiago Bernabeu crowd on Saturday. "We all want the same thing, which is to do our best to win things," added Zidane.

"Whistles have always been heard in this stadium and others, and that isn't going to change. The only thing I will say is that we need the fans on our side." Zidane admitted his annoyance at the crowd's reaction and the number of injuries that have blighted Madrid throughout the season, despite tasting defeat for the first time in the campaign just nine days ago at Sevilla. However, the Frenchman challenged the less heralded members of the Madrid squad to take their chance to shine at Celta Vigo. "It does annoy me that some players are out, but we can't do anything about it," he said.

"Throughout the season players will get injured and now we have to continue with those that are ready. "It is a difficult, but great game to play. Now and again we also like to come from behind in these types of games."

In contrast to Madrid's ailing squad, Celta should be well rested to spring another surprise after coach Eduardo Berizzo made eight changes from the side that won at the Bernabeu last week for Sunday's 1-0 defeat to Real Sociedad. "The game on Wednesday has a real importance," said Berizzo. "It is a game of life or death and to prepare for that game it is necessary to hand a rest to those that have accumulated many matches."

BARCA IN COMMAND

The other three quarter-final ties to be completed this week look far more predictable. Barcelona ended a 10-year wait for a victory away at Sociedad thanks to Neymar's penalty last week to carry a 1-0 lead into their second leg at the Camp Nou tomorrow.

The Catalans have also been afflicted by injury with Sergio Busquets set to miss the next few weeks due to ankle ligament damage. Andres Iniesta and Rafinha are also doubtful, but Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Neymar are expected to start again up front after all three scored in Sunday's 4-0 rout at Eibar.

Sociedad may also have their La Liga visit to the Bernabeu on Sunday in mind as they chase Champions League football.

Atletico Madrid have the healthiest lead of all as they carry a 3-0 advantage into their second leg at Eibar on Wednesday. And Alaves are on course to reach the last four for just the third time in their history as they welcome second-division Alcorcon with a 2-0 first-leg lead yesterday. —AFP

CHRISTIAN CROSS DROPPED FROM REAL LOGO IN ME

DUBAI: The club crest of Spanish soccer team Real Madrid will be altered to remove the traditional Christian cross from clothing apparel sold in some Middle East countries under a regional deal.

Marka, a retailing group in the United Arab Emirates, has been granted exclusive rights to "manufacture, distribute and sell Real Madrid products" in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman, the company said in a statement yesterday.

But Marka Vice Chairman Khaled al-Mheiri told Reuters by phone the crest would be altered due to cultural sensitivities. "We have to be sensitive to parts of the Gulf that are sensitive to products that hold the cross," said al-Mheiri, who owns a Real Madrid cafe in Dubai. The six Gulf Arab countries Marka will sell and distribute Real Madrid products in are all Muslim-majority. The redesigning of the crest would require only a minor change with the original featuring a very small Christian cross at the top of a crown on the crest.

The agreement allows Marka to sell clothing apparel such as t-shirts, polo shirts and swim wear featuring the Real Madrid name



and crest. Sales will start by March, al-Mheiri said. The deal does not cover replica jerseys, which are sold in Dubai featuring the cross. Real Madrid did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. But it is not the first time the symbol has been altered.

In 2014, Real Madrid removed the Christian cross from its crest when used by its sponsor the National Bank of Abu Dhabi. Dubai-based airline Emirates is Real Madrid's main shirt sponsor, whilst the club is also sponsored by Abu Dhabi investment fund IPIC. — Reuters



Granit Xhaka

ARSENAL'S XHAKA INTERVIEWED BY COPS

LONDON: Arsenal midfielder Granit Xhaka was interviewed by police after allegedly racially abusing a worker at Heathrow airport, British media reported yesterday.

The incident happened on Monday, little more than 24 hours after Xhaka was sent off in a Premier League match against Burnley, a dismissal that will probably incur a four-game ban.

Xhaka had travelled to the airport to see off a friend flying to Germany, but reacted badly when his companion was refused entry after arriving late for the flight at Terminal Five, the reports said.

The Independent reported that a witness said the 24-year-old Switzerland international had racially abused a member of

staff in German. "Police were called at 19:29hrs on Monday, 23 January following an allegation that a member of staff had been racially abused at Heathrow Airport, Terminal Five," a Metropolitan Police spokesman said.

"The allegation was made by a third party. Officers attended and spoke with a man in his 20s. He was not arrested. He voluntarily attended a west London police station where he was interviewed under caution."

Xhaka has now been sent off nine times in three seasons. If he is banned for four games he will miss Arsenal's FA Cup fourth-round clash with Southampton and league matches against Watford, Chelsea and Hull City. — Reuters

HOT SHOT WARNER HAPPY TO REST FOR TOUGH INDIA TEST

SYDNEY: Australia's player of the year David Warner has welcomed a rest before touring India next month saying it's tough preparing for sub-continental conditions.

Warner, who won back-to-back Allan Border medals on Monday night, has been excused from the three one-day games in New Zealand starting next week after a hectic southern summer.

"We're running ragged in the outfield ... we're giving everything we can, and I've run as hard as I can for every ball," the 30-year-old told reporters after the medal ceremony. "So that does take its toll," the opening batsman added. Warner said he would fly out on February 5, "So I've got a bit of time at home which is great."

"I'm grateful that you know Cricket Australia allowing me to get over some little niggles and having a little bit of rest at home to get me ready for India and there's no excuses there."

Australia has won Test and one-day

series against Pakistan after losses to South Africa and a tough tour of Sri Lanka and Warner admitted to feeling the strain.

"I felt probably the first two especially one-dayers this series with Pakistan, I've felt quite, not lazy, but my feet weren't moving," he said.

"Sometimes they don't move at all, but they were just quite fatigued."

Australia face Pakistan in Adelaide in their final one-dayer tomorrow having already wrapped up the series 3-1. With a need to get on the front foot batting in India, Warner said he could look forward to training after the break.

"We are going to be working our backsides off physically and mentally as well before we even think about playing the game of cricket (in India)," the vice-captain said. "That's what gets you mentally tough and ready for those conditions. It's not the wicket it's not the opposition, the conditions.—AFP



PORT-GENTIL: Democratic Republic of the Congo supporters arrive to attend the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations group C football match between Togo and DR Congo in Port-Gentil yesterday. — AFP

Ecclestone, the
racing Napoleon,
forced into exileTokyo venue under
fire for barring
female members

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2017

IMPATIENT CHINESE CHASE GLORY AT ALL COSTS

Page 18



MELBOURNE: Switzerland's Roger Federer hits a return against Germany's Mischa Zverev during their men's singles quarter-final match on day nine of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

FEDERER ROLLS INTO ALL-SWISS SEMI

MELBOURNE: Roger Federer was just one step away from his first Grand Slam final in 18 months yesterday after he demolished giant-killer Mischa Zverev to set up an Australian Open semi-final with Stan Wawrinka.

Federer, 35 and considered past his prime after an injury-ruined 2016, rolled back the years with a masterful 6-1, 7-5, 6-2 win in just 92 minutes on Rod Laver Arena. The four-time champion will next take on his Swiss Davis Cup team-mate and world number four Wawrinka in what promises to be an enthralling semi-final showdown.

Federer, to his surprise, has now won five matches in his comeback from a six-month injury break, with hopes rising of a record-extending 18th Grand Slam title in Melbourne. "I felt I was always going to be dangerous on any given day in a match situation. But obviously as

the tournament would progress, maybe I would fade away with energy," Federer said. "I think now that I'm in the semis, feeling as good as I am, playing as good as I am, that's a huge surprise to me."

"If someone would have told me I'd play in the semis against Stan, never would I have called that one for me. For Stan, yes, but not for me."

It will be the Swiss legend's record 13th Australian semi-final appearance and 41st Grand Slam semi-final. It was a dominant performance from Federer, hitting 65 winners to just 13 unforced errors and breaking left-hander Zverev's serve six times.

"I think it definitely went as good as it possibly could have gone," Federer said. "I think I played great. Mischa has had a wonderful tournament."

Zverev, ranked 50, had pulled off one of the major

upsets of the tournament with a fourth-round win over world number one Andy Murray, and he didn't play badly against Federer, making only 13 unforced errors.

Zverev didn't win a game in their most recent meeting at 2013 Halle, but he broke Federer's serve in the fourth game of the second set and won a total of eight games. Federer ripped through the opening set in just 19 withering minutes, breaking Zverev's serve twice and not having one break point on his own service.

The Swiss legend helped himself to 18 winners with just five errors as he laid down the markers for Zverev.

Zverev was backing up after his superb tactical success over world number one and five-time finalist Andy Murray. But this was a far different proposition as Federer's speed around the court, shot variation and attacking intent flummoxed the German.

Zverev bravely remained true to his serve-volley game, coming to the net, but often being passed by crisp Federer volleys.

Zverev picked up his game in the second set and broke Federer with three break points in the fourth before the Swiss quickly broke back.

Zverev's serve again came under attack and he fell three break points down with Federer hitting two sublime backhand winners to take the break.

He raced to three set points on his next service before taking a two sets lead in a total of 55 minutes.

Federer uncorked another gorgeous backhand pass to take the decisive break in the fifth game of the final set. Zverev was taken to 10 deuces in the seventh game before Federer broke on his sixth break point for a 5-2 lead and to serve out for the match. — AFP

VANDEWEGHE OVERCOMES NERVES AND MUGURUZA TO MEET VENUS

MELBOURNE: "Fake it 'til you make it," Coco Vandeweghe said after her fourth round upset of world number one Angelique Kerber this week and if the American is indeed hiding her nerves under a patina of confidence, she's doing a great job of it.

The big-hitting 25-year-old world number 35 blasted her way past seventh seed Garbine Muguruza 6-4 6-0 at the Australian Open yesterday to reach the semi-finals of a grand slam for the first time.

French Open champion Muguruza was left simply stunned. "I think she played unbelievable. Three times we played in the past, she didn't show this level," the Spaniard said.

"I have zero regrets about my performance. I think when you play with someone that has the power to disturb like this, to hit these kind of shots, and has a good day, I mean, it's difficult honestly."

Vandeweghe said the "calming voice" of her experienced coach Craig Kardon had helped ease her nerves before the contest but also posited that perhaps the butterflies in her stomach were necessary.

"Maybe I play better nervous and scared," she said. "I don't know. I think I don't shy away from a challenge neces-

sarily. I never have. Growing up, I've always just been wanting to prove people wrong in a lot of different regards.

"I think it's more I take it as a challenge. I take it as an enjoyable challenge. It's what I want to do. It's where I want to be."

"To face the best players is definitely an accomplishment, to say for myself that I've gotten to the point that I've beat and face these top players."

That competitive edge may have derived from growing up in a family where sporting excellence was the norm. Her grandfather was former New York Knicks basketball player Ernie Vandeweghe, she is the niece of former NBA player Kiki Vandeweghe and her mother Tauna was a swimmer who represented the United States at the 1976 Olympics.

"In my family, if you think you're too high, you'll get put down really fast. They're good about that," she said. "It's a very competitive family, whether it's just playing cards around the table, or if it does end up coming to sports. But, you know, I like to think I'm smart enough not to mess with anyone in their said sport that they like to play."

"They're quick to bring me back down off my pedestal if I get too high." Next up for Vandeweghe in the semi-finals is fel-



MELBOURNE: Coco Vandeweghe of the US serves against Spain's Garbine Muguruza during their women's singles quarter-final match on day nine of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

low American Venus Williams, 11 years her senior and seven-times a grand slam champion.

"It's a dream to play someone you

grew up watching," she said. "But to do it at this stage of a grand slam is kind of crazy. I mean, I can't really put it into words." — Reuters

MURRAY LEFT OUT OF BRITAIN'S DAVIS CUP TEAM

LONDON: Andy Murray was left out of Great Britain's initial four-man team for next week's Davis Cup World Group first-round meeting with Canada, which was announced yesterday.

Captain Leon Smith says Murray needs rest following his shock Australian Open fourth-round defeat at the hands of Germany's Mischa Zverev.

But he has not ruled out drafting the world number one into the team if he changes his mind about competing in the Ottawa match, which begins on February 3.

"We will continue to speak with Andy in the coming days regarding his potential involvement and if he decides he would like to be part of the team, then we can of course change the nominations as necessary," said Smith.

In Murray's expected absence, Dan Evans, Kyle Edmund, Jamie Murray and Dominic Inglot are due to line up for Britain at the TD Place Arena.

The winners of the tie will play either France or Japan in the quarter-finals in April, with the losers facing a relegation play-off after the US Open in September.

Murray's next tournament is scheduled to be the Dubai Duty Free Championships at the end of February.

He inspired Britain to glory in the 2015 Davis Cup—their first triumph in the tournament since 1936 — but they fell to eventual champions Argentina in last year's semi-finals. — AFP



CAESARS TRAVEL GROUP: SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS



RIYADH: A general view of the construction site under the contract of French company ALSTOM as part of the Riyadh metro main line in the Saudi capital. — AFP

AUSTRALIA INVITES CHINA AS TRUMP DUMPS TPP

EU-CANADA TRADE DEAL CLEARS CRUCIAL HURDLE

SYDNEY: Australia said yesterday it was working to recast the Trans-Pacific Partnership without the United States and opened the door for China to sign up after President Donald Trump ditched the huge trade pact.

The deal included a dozen Asia-Pacific nations which together account for 40 percent of the global economy, but Trump declared Monday he had "terminated" it in line with election pledges to scrap the "job killer" pact. Canberra is floating a "TPP 12 minus one", with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull saying his government was in "active discussions" with other signatories including Japan, New Zealand and Singapore on how to salvage the agreement.

"It is possible that US policy could change over time on this, as it has done on other trade deals," Turnbull told reporters in Canberra, adding that the nominee for US secretary of state Rex Tillerson and Republicans supported the TPP.

"There is also the opportunity for the TPP to proceed without the United States," he added.

"Certainly there is the potential for China to join the TPP." The agreement, the biggest trade deal in history, was seen as a counter to China's rising economic influence. It was signed last year but has not gone into effect. Trade Minister Steven Ciobo said Australia, Canada, Mexico and others had canvassed for a pact without the US at a World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Davos.

"There would be scope for China if we were able to reformulate it to be a TPP 12 minus one, for countries like

Indonesia or China or indeed other countries to consider joining," Ciobo told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"This is very much a live option and we are pursuing it and it will be the focus of conversations for some time to come." New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English noted that Beijing "hasn't been slow to spot the opportunity" to cast itself as a free trade supporter.

There was a willingness toward "making an effort to find out what we can do with TPP, rather than just dropping it and waiting and hoping to get a call (from Washington) about bilateral agreements sometime", he told reporters in Wellington. Trump said he would pursue bilateral deals with TPP signatories to secure terms more favorable to the US. But English said a US-New Zealand pact would be challenging given Trump's insistence that Washington would dictate terms.

Chinese interest

Beijing has long been noncommittal on the idea of joining the TPP, choosing to back an alternative trade pact, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a more modest deal that calls for lower and more limited regulatory standards. It includes the 10 members of the Southeast Asian grouping ASEAN plus China, India, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, but notably excludes the US. At a regular press briefing yesterday, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying remained coy about Beijing joining the TPP, simply noting that China supports "open,

transparent, and win-win" trade pacts. RCEP talks were pressing ahead, she said, stating they "should be concluded at an early date".

Alan Oxley, the first Australian to chair the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the World Trade Organization's predecessor, said Chinese involvement in the TPP was unlikely at this stage.

"China's certainly interested in the long run... but the prospect of them tying into the TPP now, given their own domestic economic problems, has got to be considered very low," Oxley, who heads the Australian APEC Study Centre at RMIT University, told AFP.

The most likely option for TPP nations was "let the dust settle" and wait for possible changes in US attitudes toward multilateral pacts, he said.

Analysts in Japan said the TPP would not make sense without the US. "Japan thinks it's worth patiently maintaining the (TPP) framework even until the United States possibly comes back to it under the next administration," Yoko Takeda, chief economist at Mitsubishi Research Institute, told AFP. Trump's decision to walk away from it "could be a negotiating bluff," he said.

EU-Canada trade deal

Meanwhile, a contested EU-Canada free trade deal cleared a key hurdle yesterday as EU lawmakers defied rising anti-globalization sentiment to back one of Europe's most ambi-

tious accords. Members of the European Parliament's powerful trade committee voted 25 in favour of the deal, known as CETA, with 15 against, during a heated session in Brussels that was interrupted by a protestor.

CETA now goes to a showdown vote in a full session of the European Parliament on February 15, where the EU leadership hopes for a symbolic show of support for a global trade system in the face of rising protectionism championed by new US President Donald Trump. Boosters of CETA describe it as a new kind of deal that not only breaks the usual barriers but enshrines high standards for international trade. "With CETA, we are rejecting unfettered globalization and laying the foundations for a new era of rules-based trade," social democrat MEP David Martin, a key backer of the deal, told AFP. But CETA's opponents slam it as a gift to multinationals who will use the deal to lower health and environmental standards and circumvent government regulation.

"It's a defeat," Greens MEP and French presidential candidate Yannick Jadot told AFP after the packed committee session. "The European Parliament has ignored all the lessons of Trump's victory and the Brexit vote in giving more power to corporations and reducing the power of citizens," Jadot said.

The EU and Canada formally signed the landmark free trade deal in October after seven years of tough talks, overcoming last-minute resistance from a small Belgian region that blocked its national government from approving the accord. — AFP

SAUDI CONTINUES REBOUND, KUWAIT RISES, EGYPT DROPS

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's stock market continued rebounding yesterday in a generally strong Gulf region, while a drop by shares in real estate firm Emaar Misr dragged down Egypt. The Saudi index climbed 1.1 percent, adding to Monday's 1.7 percent gain. With the fourth-quarter earnings reporting season more or less over, many Saudi firms have posted flat or weak profits because of government austerity steps and a sluggish economy. Over half a dozen major firms, including food maker Savola and several banks, missed analysts' estimates by wide margins.

But stocks in most companies which missed estimates have recovered strongly, suggesting investors are looking towards improvement in the non-oil economy this year as the government's introduction of austerity measures slows. Mowasat Medical Services jumped 3.5 percent after saying its board was recommending a cash dividend of 2.5 riyals per share for 2016, up from 2 riyals in the previous year. The company reported an estimate-beating 34.2 percent rise in fourth-quarter profit last week.

Savola surged 3.3 percent. It had dropped 2.0 percent on Sunday after reporting a shock fourth-quarter net loss, but

jumped 5.4 percent on Monday. Kuwait's index climbed 0.9 percent as trading volume remained extremely high, though it fell slightly from Monday's level. The index is up 17 percent since the end of last year, causing funds and individual speculators to pile into the market to catch the momentum.

Dubai's index rose 0.3 percent as GFH Financial, a speculative favorite and the most heavily traded stock, jumped 11.2 percent. It also soared during the day on Monday but gave up all its gains by the close on that day. In Qatar, the index rose 1.0 percent as Islamic bank Masraf Al Rayan, the most heavily traded stock, rose 4.6 percent to a 14-month high. Egypt sank 0.9 percent as Emaar Misr dropped 4.3 percent to 2.67 Egyptian pounds, confirming a break of technical support at 2.80 pounds, the bottom of its range since mid-November.

That triggered a bearish right triangle formed by the highs and lows since November and pointing down to the area of 2.30 pounds. Sidi Kerir Petrochemicals jumped 10 percent to 19.89 pounds, however. Last week Beltone Financial raised its fair value estimate for the stock to 32.3 pounds from 17.68 pounds, citing stronger global oil prices among other factors. — Reuters

TRUMP URGES US AUTOMAKERS TO MAKE BIG PUSH FOR NEW PLANTS

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump pushed the chief executives of General Motors Co, Ford Motor Co and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV yesterday to increase production in the United States and boost American employment.

Trump opened a meeting with GM CEO Mary Barra, Ford CEO Mark Fields and Fiat Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne at the White House, saying he

wants to see new auto plants built in the United States. "We have a very big push on to have auto plants and other plants," he told reporters.

The new Republican president, who took office last Friday, vowed to cut regulations and taxes to make it more attractive for businesses to operate in the United States. "I want new plants to be built here for cars sold here!" Trump said in a tweet

ahead of the meeting with automakers, saying he would discuss US jobs with the chief executives. US automakers have been reluctant to open new US auto plants in recent years, but they have expanded some operations at existing plants.

Trump has criticized automakers for building cars in Mexico and elsewhere and has threatened to impose 35 percent tariffs on imported vehicles. The meeting is the latest sign of Trump's uncommon degree of intervention for a US president into corporate affairs as he has repeatedly pressured automakers and other manufacturers to "buy American and hire American."

Yesterday's gathering was the first time the CEOs of the big three automakers have met jointly with a US president since a July 2011 session with former Democratic President Barack Obama to tout a deal to nearly double fuel efficiency standards to 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025. Fiat Chrysler is the Italian-American parent of the former Michigan-based Chrysler. White House spokesman Sean Spicer said on Monday that Trump was looking forward at the meeting "to hearing their ideas about how we can work together to bring more jobs back to this industry." US and foreign automakers have been touting plans to boost American jobs and investments in the face of Trump's comments. Trump, a New York real estate developer, often singled out Ford's Mexico investments for criticism during his election campaign. — Reuters



WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump speaks to automobile leaders during their meeting in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington yesterday. — AP

DOLLAR STEADIES, STERLING RIDES OUT BREXIT RULING

LONDON: The dollar steadied yesterday, recovering from a dip on fears that US President Donald Trump's focus on protectionism over fiscal stimulus suggested his administration might be content to gain a competitive advantage through a weaker currency.

its banks. They made additional ground as Britain's top court ruled that the UK government must get parliamentary approval to start the Brexit process, though sterling briefly dipped on news Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland's assemblies would not have to give their assent.

pause," said Saxo bank's head of FX strategy John Hardy. "The dollar rally needs to find some support pretty soon otherwise we are facing a potentially serious correction."

lowest since late November. Its 1.7 percent loss on Monday was the largest since July 29 though it had recovered to stand at 113.21 yen by 1015 GMT.

there is a growing sense of scepticism, not helped by the tone of Friday's inaugural address and subsequent spat with the media. "Doubts about exactly how much fiscal stimulus might be forthcoming had helped Treasuries rally. Yields on 10-year notes steadied at 2.42 percent in European trading, having enjoyed the steepest single-day drop since Jan."

Two-year yields were around 1.16 percent, narrowing the dollar's premium over the euro to 183 basis points from a recent top of 207 basis points. The recent drop in the dollar boosted industrial metals including copper and iron ore, while gold was near two-month high at \$1,212 an ounce. — Reuters

SEPTICISM GROWS

While Trump promised huge cuts in taxes and regulations on Monday, he also formally withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal and talked of border tariffs. "It's interesting that markets did not respond positively to a reaffirmation of lower taxes and looser regulation, reinforcing the impression that all the good news is discounted for now," wrote analysts at ANZ in a note.

"As week one in office gets underway,

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Tuesday 24 January 2017. Table with columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low, Volume, Value (KWD), Number of Trades. Includes sub-tables for Trades, Basic Materials, Consumer Goods, and Banks.



TOKYO: A man walks past an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm in Tokyo yesterday. Asian shares were mixed yesterday as uncertainty mounted over US President Donald Trump's trade and regulatory policies.— AP

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. At 02:00 PM Previous Day. Includes Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, and Global Bond Yields.

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MEASLES OUTBREAK STRIKES LA'S ORTHODOX JEWISH COMMUNITY

LOS ANGELES: A measles outbreak has infected at least 18 people in the Los Angeles area, health officials said Monday, noting that most of those affected could show no proof of vaccination. Officials indicated that at least 16 of the cases involved people of the same social group, with local media saying most belonged to the Orthodox Jewish community. "We can say that the outbreak has

largely been limited to unvaccinated people in a single social group and the disease is spreading among personal contacts in the group," Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, interim health officer at the LA County Department of Health, said.

"There have been no infections spreading in the general community." The outbreak of the highly contagious virus comes six months after California's

strict vaccine law went into effect. A measles outbreak that originated at Disneyland in 2014 sickened 145 people across the United States and dozens more in Canada and Mexico. That episode led to the new law in California that requires that all children be vaccinated unless a doctor submits an exemption for medical reasons.

Personal and religious belief exemp-

tions are not allowed under the new law. Gunzenhauser said the new outbreak of measles is affecting individuals older than 12 years old, who would not be directly concerned by the new law. He said the first person was diagnosed in early December and 16 more cases were reported in the last three weeks of 2016. The last case was diagnosed last week.

Measles is a highly contagious virus

that lives in the nose and throat of an infected person, and can linger in the air for hours, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms include a reddish rash, white bumps inside the cheeks, a fever, runny nose and cough. Severe complications can occur, leading to miscarriage in pregnant women as well as the risk of death by pneumonia or brain swelling.—AFP



PENNSYLVANIA: The Pro-Life Coalition of Pennsylvania holds a rally in July 2016.—AFP

TRUMP BANS FEDERAL FUNDING FOR FOREIGN NGOS SUPPORTING ABORTION

'THE PRESIDENT TAKES A STAND FOR THE UNBORN'

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Monday signed a decree barring US federal funding for foreign NGOs that support abortion, re-launching a battle that has long divided Americans. "The president, it's no secret, has made it very clear he's a pro-life president. He wants to stand up for all Americans, including the unborn," White House spokesman Sean Spicer said. "The reinstatement of this policy is not just something that echoes that value, but respects taxpayer funding as well."

The restrictions prohibit foreign non-governmental organizations that receive US family planning assistance from using non-US funding to provide abortion services, information, counseling or referrals. They are also barred from engaging in advocacy to promote abortion. The move comes just two days after women led a massive protest march in Washington-with satellite rallies across the country and around the world-to defend their rights, including to abortion. And it also comes a day after the 44th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the landmark US Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in 1973.

Women will suffer

Trump's move deepened concern among

already apprehensive US family planning and women's rights organizations.

"The world's most vulnerable women will suffer as a direct result of this policy, which undermines years of effort to improve women's health," said Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards. "This will cause clinic closures around the world-resulting in more unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion, not less." She vowed her group, the biggest US provider of family planning, will "never stop fighting" for access to reproductive health services.

Trump's executive order is a "clear assault on both access to health care and free speech," the American Civil Liberties Union said. Steny Hoyer, a Democratic leader in the House of Representatives, sharply criticized Trump for using his first week in office "to attack women's health." "It should be no surprise to the millions of women and men who gathered in protest this weekend across the country-and around the world-that Republicans are focused more on making it harder for women to access health care than on the serious economic and security challenges we face," he said.

Anti-abortion forces

Meanwhile, anti-abortion activists cheered the move. "Recognizing and affirming the universal ideal that all human beings have inherent worth & dignity, is vital to making America great again," tweeted Family Research Council leader Tony Perkins, reprising Trump's campaign slogan. The restrictions were first put in place in 1984 by Republican president Ronald Reagan. Later eliminated by Democratic president Bill Clinton, they were reinstated by his Republican successor George W. Bush, and annulled again after Barack Obama took office.

Galvanized by Trump's November 8 election, abortion opponents in states where Republicans hold power moved swiftly last month to adopt draconian anti-abortion measures that in some cases pose challenges to constitutional liberties. And the new president has surrounded himself with senior officials openly hostile to abortion rights. While signing the executive order, he was surrounded by a dozen men, including Vice President Mike Pence, who has long sought to dry up federal funding for Planned Parenthood. Trump, meanwhile, has pledged to nominate an anti-abortion justice to the Supreme Court, which could lead to overturning Roe v. Wade.—AFP

DWARF GALAXIES SHED LIGHT ON DARK MATTER

PARIS: The first sighting of clustered dwarf galaxies bolsters a leading theory about how big galaxies such as our Milky Way are formed, and how dark matter binds them, researchers said Monday. Theorized but never seen, the bundled galaxies were discovered using the largest optical survey of the night sky ever compiled, they reported in the journal Nature Astronomy. Seven clusters of three-to-five galaxies are each 10 to 1,000 times smaller than the Milky Way. Unlike our home galaxy, all have long-stopped giving birth to new stars.

"We suspect these groups are gravitationally bound and thus will eventually merge to form one larger, intermediate-mass galaxy," said lead author Sabrina Stierwalt, an astrophysicist at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in Charlottesville, Virginia. The findings shed light on several big questions about how structures such as galaxies formed in the early Universe, she said. A leading theory predicts that, after the Big Bang some 13.7 billion years ago, smaller things joined together to form bigger ones.

But there has been frustratingly little observational evidence of such mergers occurring on a scale as small as dwarf galaxies, Stierwalt explained. One reason is that dwarf galaxies are hard to see. Only two-known at the Magellanic Clouds-are visible to the naked eye. As of a decade ago, no more than a dozen had been identified by astronomers. And even as bigger telescopes made their discovery commonplace, those found were either isolated "field dwarfs," or "satellite dwarfs" being cannibalized by larger galaxies. "Independent groups of only low-mass galaxies-like the ones we found-reveal a possible formation mechanism for larger ones such as our Milky Way," Stierwalt said. The clusters are between 200 million and 650 million light years away from Earth. "That sounds like a lot, but it is relatively nearby given the vast size of the Universe," she said.

Hunting dark matter

The researchers spotted the galaxies by combing through a massive library of star maps compiled under a project known as the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, made public in 2008 and upgraded regularly since. The team then used telescopes-including one at the Apache Point Observatory in New Mexico, and the Walter Baade Telescope at the Los Campanas Observatory in Chile-to confirm their findings. Dwarf clusters are also natural laboratories for better understanding the mysterious substance known as dark matter, thought to account for a quarter of the Universe, the study found. Likely made up of unknown sub-atomic particles, dark matter can only be inferred through its gravitational pull on other objects in space.—AFP



INDONESIA: This file picture shows a helicopter operated by Indonesia's National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) dropping water over a fire in Kampar, Riau province.—AFP

INDONESIAN PROVINCE DECLARES ALERT AS HAZE FEARS GROW

JAKARTA: An Indonesian province that suffers annual outbreaks of haze-belching fires said yesterday it was declaring an early alert to prevent blazes burning out of control after forecasters predicted a dry 2017. Riau, on the western island of Sumatra, announced the move after a few "hotspots"-areas of extreme heat detected by satellites which often indicate fires-were sighted this month. It came a day after President Joko Widodo urged local authorities to take early steps to prevent a repeat of the haze crisis of 2015.

The fires occur every year on Sumatra and the Indonesian part of Borneo island, typically during the months-long dry season later in the year. The fires are deliberately started to clear land quickly and cheaply for palm oil and pulpwood plantations. The 2015 blazes were among the worst on record and sent clouds of toxic smog floating across Southeast Asia, leading large numbers to fall ill. A US academic study estimated that the crisis may have led to over 100,000 premature deaths.

The alert status in Riau-below the more significant "state of emergency", which typically indicates a large number of fires burning fiercely-was set to remain in place until April and allows the province to request more resources from central government. "We are preparing helicopters for water-bombing to help the regional government," disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said. Several provinces were criticized in 2015 for failing to declare emergencies quickly enough.

The blazes typically start earlier in Riau due its high concentration of carbon-rich peat land and a widespread practice of using fire to clear land. The Meteorology, Geophysics and Climatology Agency has predicted that this year will be drier than 2016, when an unusually long rainy season prevented major outbreaks of fires. Widodo urged efforts to stop the blazes including setting up fire prevention task forces. He told a meeting of ministers and senior officials: "It is only January but it is already looking dry, therefore we cannot be careless."—AFP

DOUBT OVER EVEREST'S TRUE HEIGHT SPURS FRESH EXPEDITION

NEW DELHI: Scientists will take the tape measure to Mount Everest to determine whether a massive earthquake in Nepal really did knock an inch off the world's tallest peak. India's top surveyor said yesterday a team of scientists would be sent to neighboring Nepal to measure Everest in the hope of putting to rest a debate about the true height of the towering mountain. A deadly 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal in 2015, killing thousands and altering the landscape across the Himalayan nation.

Satellite data at the time suggested the impact of the quake reduced Everest's peak-which officially stands at 8,848 meters above sea level-by anywhere between a few millimeters and an inch. But lingering doubt among the scientific community has prompted a fresh expedition to size up the

peak, said India's surveyor general Swarna Subba Rao. "We will re measure it," Rao was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency, adding the team would set off in two months. "Two years have passed since the major Nepal earthquake and there's doubt in the scientific community that it did in fact shrink."

The exercise will require a month for observation and roughly another fortnight for the data to be officially declared. Another official told AFP that a five-member team would depart for the expedition at winter's end, and would take measurements using instruments on the ground to gauge the peak's real height. The earthquake, Nepal's deadliest disaster in more than 80 years, is also believed to have shifted the earth beneath the capital Kathmandu several meters to the south.—AFP

BANGLADESH PLANTS MILLION TREES TO CUT LIGHTNING TOLL

DHAKA: Bangladesh has begun planting one million palm trees nationwide to help prevent hundreds of people being killed by lightning strikes every year, a top official said yesterday. Authorities last year declared lightning a natural disaster as official tallies recorded more than 200 deaths in 2016, with 82 people dying on a single day in May. Experts say the real number was actually much higher, with one independent monitor saying 349 people were killed by lightning strikes in 2016. Many people living in rural areas do not report deaths to the police.

Disaster officials have spent several months looking at ways to reduce the toll and the tree planting program is likely to be the first of several measures brought in by the government. "We've already started planting palm trees in rural areas in an effort to reduce the number of deaths due to lightning," Shah Kamal, the government's disaster management secretary, said. "We'll plant one million palm trees by June this year." Experts say the high death toll stems

in part from a lack of trees whose branches can absorb the impact of lightning.

While the trees are damaged, it means the electric charge does not course through the earth. Kamal said a similar program in Thailand had already yielded results, adding that a team of Bangladeshi officials had also travelled to Vietnam to study how authorities there protect farmers along the Mekong delta. A top meteorologist who has conducted some research on lightning said the tree planting should help ultimately help reduce the number of deaths, but the benefits would only be felt some way down the line.

"Palm trees take years to grow. But definitely, this is a good move by the government. It will reduce deaths," Shah Alam, a former head of Bangladesh Meteorological Department, said. Alam said the number of lightning strikes has increased in Bangladesh amid increased deforestation in rural areas where farmers often chop down trees so they can grow more rice and other crops.—AFP



JAPAN: Japan's H-IIA rocket carrying the Kirameki-2 satellite is launched from Tanegashima Space Centre in southern Tanegashima island, Kagoshima prefecture, yesterday.—AFP

JAPAN LAUNCHES SATELLITE TO MODERNIZE MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS

TOKYO: Japan yesterday launched a satellite to modernize its military communications and reportedly to better monitor North Korean missile launches. The Kirameki-2 will enable ground, sea and air units of the military-known as the Self-Defense Forces-to communicate directly with each other, a defense ministry official said. "We'll be able to exchange a large amount of data more quickly," the official said.

"We currently share information with voice and by fax" due to limitations in the speed and capacity of the three civilian satellites the ministry currently uses, he said. An H-IIA rocket carrying the satellite, which means "sparkle" in English, blasted off from the southern island of Tanegashima at 4.44 pm local time (0744 GMT). Public broadcaster NHK said the

ministry would be able to swiftly share information about ballistic missiles launched by North Korea or videos of Japanese troops deployed overseas.

Japan is on constant alert for moves by North Korea, which conducted two underground nuclear tests and more than 20 missile test-launches last year. Kirameki-2 is one of three defense communications satellites that will replace the current civilian ones.

The total cost for the three comes to 230 billion yen (\$2.48 billion), the ministry said. The ministry planned to launch Kirameki-1 last year but it is undergoing repairs after being damaged when being transported to a launch site in French Guiana. Its launch is now scheduled for March 2018 at the earliest.—AFP

KENYAN IRRIGATION APP AIMS TO CUT WATER WASTE, CROP LOSSES

KUNENE, Kenya: Dressed in brown overalls, gumboots and a hat, John Njeru kneels and scoops up a handful of soil at his small farm in central Kenya, where he grows tomatoes, spinach and carrots. "Not only has there not been enough rain in the past few months, it's also been unevenly distributed," he said, picking through the earth in his hand. "This destroys our crops." Dealing with more unpredictable and irregular rainfall associated with climate change is a challenge for many farmers, and one made worse by water-wasting, inefficient irrigation systems, experts say.

But scientists from Kenya's Meru University of Science and Technology have come up with one way to deal with the problem: a mobile app that monitors the need for water in fields and controls irrigation equipment to deliver just what is needed. "Farmers in the region traditionally water crops with cans or buckets," an inefficient way of getting water to plants, said Daniel Maitethia, an electronics lecturer at Meru University.

"The lack of measuring also means they water crops unevenly so some may get too much water, and others not enough," he said. The "sensor-based automatic irrigation system" app, launched last year, uses sensors placed throughout a field to determine if soil is moist enough.

If it's too dry, a control unit uses solar panels to open the valve of a water tank, then close it again when the soil is damp enough. Initially tested at the university's own farm, the irrigation system is now being rolled out to the public - including farmers like Njeru. "We can't yet quantify how many farmers are using the app, but

hope to expand it to thousands across Meru County - and potentially the rest of the country if the system proves successful," Maitethia said. The combined app and irrigation system cost 50,000 Kenyan shillings (\$480) per quarter of an acre, including solar panels and two drip irrigation lines. The system can be expanded to an additional quarter acre for 5,000 Kenyan shillings (\$48).

Cost and benefits

While Maitethia acknowledges the upfront cost of the system is high, he believes it will not only curb water waste but save labor costs as it does not require farmers to physically monitor it. "If there is a glitch in the system, the farmer receives a text message notifying him of the problem," he explained. "A technician employed by the university will then help the farmer remotely with instructions, or physically come to the farm if needed." Depending on the severity of the problem, a consultation with a technician can cost the farmer up to 500 Kenyan shillings (about \$5).

Njeru, who paid 75,000 Kenyan shillings (\$721) to install the app and irrigation system on his 1.5-acre farm, said that "although the app is expensive, it's a cost worth paying when I compare my current harvest to previous years." "I used to lose up to 70 percent of my produce as a result of dry weather and inefficient irrigation, compared to only 10 percent now," he said. Njeru used to occasionally hire other farmers to help water his farm on a day-to-day basis. Now he no longer needs to do so, he said. "That saves me 20,000 Kenyan shillings (\$192) per month," he said. —Reuters



MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS CASES ON THE RISE IN KUWAIT

Dr. Raed Alroughani, Consultant Neurologist and Director of MS Clinic at Al Amiri Hospital said, "Multiple Sclerosis is a rising concern in the Kuwait. The diagnostic process has improved despite the complexity and variability of symptoms which may vary from one person to the other. It can be a challenging condition to live with, but new treatments have considerably improved the quality of life of people with the condition." His remarks were highlighted at a medical conference that was organized by Bayer recently in the United Arab Emirates.

The event focused on the prevalence and management of multiple sclerosis in the region. The event included prominent medical experts from Kuwait, and the region as well as senior representatives from Bayer. According to recent studies, in Kuwait, the disease has a prevalence rate of 85.05 for every 100,000 persons. Multiple Sclerosis is a chronic condition which can affect the brain and/or spinal cord, causing a wide range of potential symptoms, including problems with vision, limb movement, sensation or balance. It is caused when an individual's own immune system attacks healthy cells and tissue.

When this occurs, myelin - the protective insulation surrounding nerve fibers of the central nervous system (CNS) - is destroyed. Ultimately, this damage interferes with nerve communication between neurons in the CNS. During the event, medical experts highlighted that recent studies suggest a moderate-to-high

prevalence of multiple sclerosis in the region nearby (31-55 MS per 100,000 individuals), with more prevalence increasing in recent years. Multiple sclerosis' signs and symptoms may differ considerably from person to person and over the course of the disease depending on the location of affected nerve fibers.

Amongst these symptoms are numbness in limbs, partial or complete loss of vision in one or both eyes, tingling or pain in body parts, fatigue, dizziness, double vision, slurred speech, and loss of bladder control. "There is no cure for multiple sclerosis, however, treatment focuses on relieving the condition's symptoms. They work to alter the course of the disease by halting the disease activity through controlling the relapse, disability progression and MRI changes. Successful management of the disease requires early intervention.

Auto injectors

That is why efforts need to be concentrated on driving stronger awareness initiatives in Kuwait in addition to patient education programs that ultimately aim at enhancing patients' adherence to treatment and enhancing their quality of life," added Dr. Raed Alroughani. Phil Smits, Bayer Middle East's Vice President also said, "Being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis is a critical life event, however with the new treatments in hand, patients can alleviate the conditions that arise from the disease. In the field of multiple sclerosis, Bayer has

grown to develop a strong commitment to patients by continuously investing to support their varied needs.

We pride ourselves with more than 29 years of history in delivering data and patient insights for effective treatment. Moreover, the company has developed a 360° support system for multiple sclerosis patients which focuses on driving patient education and training needs. We have also developed auto injectors to make the drug injection experience comfortable and more importantly, safe for patients." As part of its patient commitment, Bayer's BETACONNECT auto injector, designed to deliver tailored, actionable information based on patient data to provide a more personalized approach to patient support, is the first component of an innovative dose delivery system for multiple sclerosis treatment.

Patients may choose to use BETACONNECT independently or as part of a complete software based system designed to track injection history and share important treatment information with healthcare providers. "At Bayer, we are pleased to continue facilitating leading discussions that focus on best practices in multiple sclerosis care and management. We believe that the only way this disease can be brought under control is through the joint efforts and close collaboration of all entities across the healthcare spectrum. We are guided by a clear determination to provide sustainable solutions that place patients at the core," added Phil Smits.

NEW BIRD FLU VIRUS TYPE CONFIRMED ON TURKEY FARM

HAMBURG: A bird flu outbreak in north Germany this week was of a new subtype called H5N5, the first time the strain has been confirmed on a German farm, the country's national animal disease centre said yesterday. The H5N5 strain was found on a turkey farm in Germany in Steinburg in the northern state of Schleswig-Holstein, the Friedrich Loeffler Institute said. The H5N5 strain has been found previously in wild birds in the Netherlands, Italy, Montenegro and Italy and Croatia, the institute said. It has also been found in wild birds in Germany this week.

The institute is not changing its bird flu risk assessment, it said. There have been no recorded cases of H5N5 spreading to humans, it added. The contagious H5N8 bird flu strain has been found in hundreds of wild

birds in Germany in recent weeks and isolated outbreaks on farms have been occurring despite tougher hygiene rules and orders to keep poultry indoors in high-risk areas.

But German outbreaks are at a much lower level than in France, where a mass culling of around 800,000 ducks was undertaken after bird flu hit southwest France, the country's main foie gras producing region. A series of European countries as well as Israel have found cases of H5N8 bird flu in the past few weeks and some ordered poultry flocks be kept indoors to prevent the disease spreading. Different bird flu strains have also spread in Asia in recent weeks leading to the slaughter of millions of birds in South Korea and Japan, and some human infections in China. —Reuters

AUSTRALIA ZOO URGES PEOPLE TO CATCH DEADLY SPIDERS AS ANTIDOTE RUNS LOW

SYDNEY: An Australian zookeeper yesterday urged people to catch and donate deadly funnel-web spiders, to help replenish stocks of antidote running low after a spate of spider bites. The Australian Reptile Park, the country's sole supplier of funnel-web venom to antidote producers since 1981, relies on the public to hand in spiders that are milked for the venom used to produce an antidote.

The anti-venom program was now at risk after too few spiders were donated last year and a recent heat wave encouraged more spider activity and bites, the park's general manager, Tim Faulkner, said yesterday. "We rely on community support to keep this program alive," Faulkner said in a telephone interview. "We have tried to catch enough spiders ourselves and we just can't."

Funnel-web spiders live throughout southeastern Australia, but the only known

killer is the Sydney funnel-web spider, found in the Sydney region and as far north as Newcastle and south to Illawarra, the park says on its website. "The large fangs and acidic venom make the bite very painful," it said, noting that a major bite can cause death within an hour if left untreated.

After milking the spiders, the park delivers the venom to a division of the blood plasma and vaccine maker CSL Ltd, which converts it into the life-saving antidote. Australia has had two funnel-web spider attacks in two weeks, media have said, one of them involving a woman bitten by a spider while she was asleep. Despite the terrifying reputation of Australian wildlife, nobody has died from the bite of a funnel-web spider since the anti-venom program began in 1981. Catching venomous spiders is safe, as long precautions are followed, Faulkner said. — Reuters

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OOREDOO AWARDS ITS EMPLOYEES



Kuwait's fastest network, held an awarding ceremony for its distinguished employees in the second and third quarters of 2016. The awarding ceremony took place in Ooredoo's head office Monday afternoon.

Commenting on this, Acting Chief of Human Resources and Administration Services Omar Al-Bassam said, "Our strong performance and leading position in the market is the direct result of our employees' outstanding performance, hard work and dedication. Rewarding our employees for their excellent performance is one way to express our pride in their achievements and to recognize their hard work."

He added, "Any company's achievements begin with a solid investment in its human resources, and

we at Ooredoo have a comprehensive human resources policy to train employees and improve their capabilities, talent and expertise," he added. Ooredoo Star Awards are presented to outstanding employees every quarter. A special committee assesses all employees and selects winners based on certain competence and performance criteria. The awards are given to employees in the categories of most outstanding persons in technology, finance, marketing, human resources, customer care and other departments within the company. Other categories include VOCE (Voice of the Customer Experience) and Ooredoo Way Accomplisher for outstanding performance.



A female winner receiving her prize from Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al Thani and the administration



A winner receiving his prize from Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al Thani and the administration



A winner with Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdullah Aal Thani and the administration



A female winner receiving her prize from Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdullah Aal Thani and the administration



Omar Al-Bassam speaking during the ceremony



Frederic Debord delivering his speech

IRELAND VISA APPLICATION CENTRE LAUNCHED IN KUWAIT

Residents of Kuwait can now apply in Kuwait City for visas to Ireland at a modern and centrally-located Visa Application Centre launched in cooperation with the Embassy of Ireland. Applicants can visit the VFS Global centre, located at Level 30, Arraya Center, Alshuhada Street, Kuwait City, Kuwait, to submit visa applications. The centre was formally inaugurated by HE Patrick Hennessy, Ambassador of Ireland to Kuwait, on 19 Jan 2017. Kuwait is the first country in the Gulf region where applicants can apply for a visa to Ireland from the professionally appointed VFS Global Visa Application Centre. The new Ireland Visa Application Centre caters to the growing needs of outbound travellers from the country. With Ireland being a popular destination for tourism, business and higher education, travellers from Kuwait will experience enhanced convenience and ease when applying for their visas through customer-centric and professionally managed services offered at the centre. VFS Global has been serving the Government of Ireland since 2004, and currently serves the client in 10 countries from 41 visa application centres globally. The company has been operating visa processing services in Kuwait since 2005, and today serves 13 client governments in the country.

Speaking at the launch, HE Patrick Hennessy, Ambassador of Ireland to Kuwait, said, "I warmly welcome the new visa service launched in cooperation with VFS Global. It means those living in Kuwait will be able to apply in person for an Irish visa, and will benefit from this smooth and efficient service. I'm

sure it will result in many more of our Kuwaiti friends choosing to visit Ireland, whether for business, education or tourism." Vinay Malhotra added, COO - Middle East & South Asia, VFS Global, "We are delighted to launch this centre for the Government of Ireland in Kuwait that will provide streamlined visa services and uncompromised service quality to travellers to Ireland. The launch of this centre serves the needs of the ever-expanding travel trade in this region and we are confident it will deliver services that exceed the expectations of our client."

The key features of the centre include:
Convenient and centrally-accessed location

Professional staff with local language capability to handle queries and applications
Well-appointed centre for enhanced comfort of applicants
Automated queue governance for smooth flow of applicants
Dedicated website for easy access to information including visa categories, requirements, check-list and applicable fees
100% secure handling of passports, documents and personal information
Door-step delivery of passports
Premium Lounge for personalised and comfortable service



ASIAN THEMED NIGHTS AT JUMEIRAH MESSILAH BEACH HOTEL & SPA

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa invites you to try signature Asian themed nights with a buffet of exotic offerings in Garden Cafe all day dining Restaurant. With selections

such as Asian salads, sashimi counter, stir fry station, Asian BBQ, assorted dumplings, and a hot buffet including desserts. Every Thursday from 7 pm to 11:30 pm.

GOVT OF INDIA BANS THURAYA PHONES

The Government of India has banned the use of Thuraya phones in the country. All State Police Agencies have been asked to seize Thuraya/Iridium sets in India and take

action as per provisions of the law. This Press Advisory is issued for the benefit of foreigners going to India and asking them not to carry Thuraya/Iridium satellite phones into India.



AUB distributes Iftar meals in Ramadan



AUB sponsors 'Color Your Life' activity

AUB'S 2016 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAM HAILED AS A GREAT SUCCESS

Ahli United Bank's (AUB) 2016 corporate social responsibility program has been hailed as a great success. The Bank participated in an extensive and diversified range of activities throughout the year that added value to the wider social community in Kuwait. Throughout the year, the Bank took part in a number of events which included its underlying support to children with autism, an event that took place at the Arabian Gulf beach, and was patronized under the President of Civil Development Society, Sheikha Dr. Maimouna Al-Sabah under the theme of "You're welcome, Run with Us, Supporting our children."

A large number of the Bank's executive management and staff participated, who found that this event was a strong platform to create a good level of awareness around autism in Kuwait. As part of its continued efforts to reinforce its services to special needs clients, AUB organized a wide number of specialized training courses throughout the year that aimed at providing an educational base for employees to learn more about sign language, with a primary objective of facilitating communications with special needs customers, and helping them receive the best possible banking services that are in line with their varied needs.

In a clear message that supports the importance of encouraging special needs athletes, and showcasing their true potential, AUB supported the Kuwait Paralympics team that participated in the Paralympics which took place in Brazil from Sept 7 to 19, 2016. This popular initiative was widely endorsed by representatives from the Kuwait Disabled Sports Club, who have commended the Bank's support towards its athletes. At the same time, it also shed light on the overall developmental role the Bank plays to facilitate the necessary needs for special needs citizens, a core social segment of the wider community that is able to represent Kuwait in a number of activities, whether sports, cultural and scientific amongst others.

The Bank continued the social responsibility program during 2016 with an entertaining event that was held under the theme of "Color your life", which was held at the Al-Kharafi Children Special Needs Center. The event was held to celebrate World Special Needs Day which is marked on Dec 3 each year, and included a variety of fun filled activities, where children of all age groups participated with the objective of creating an encouraging and competitive spirit amongst participants. The event also included distribution of gifts to all those who took part.

The Bank has placed healthcare amongst its list of priorities. To that extent, AUB launched its annual initiative, in line with World Humanitarian Day, which was held on the 19 Aug 2016, where a number of the Bank's female employees volunteered in a visit to the Hayat Breast Cancer Association, which is also known as "Ruqayah Abdulwahab Al Qatami Association." In a special event that was held by Hayat Breast Cancer Association in Al Shuwaikh District, AUB's volunteering team met patients as well as cancer survivors, with an objective of communicating with them, supporting their treatment and recovery process as well as distributing gifts to raise their morale.

In an humanitarian initiative that aims at supporting social wellbeing and giving amongst members of the society, AUB organized a number of blood donation drives which were in support of the Blood Bank. The blood donation campaigns, which were held at the Bank's headquarters, were widely received and well attended by the Bank's employees, who donated their blood. The initiative reflects the overall increased awareness levels around the importance of driving reserves at the Blood Bank, and supporting its role of saving patient lives who require transfusions.

AUB has also sponsored the national

blood donation campaign which was launched earlier by the Central Blood Bank under the theme "Be the first to donate blood". The event was held in line with the World Donors Day, which is celebrated on June 14 each year. The Bank sponsored the second gastroenterology disease conference, which was organized

Ramadan. The program was developed in cooperation with LOYAC, which aims at strengthening ties amongst members of the society, and encouraging a sense of happiness during the holy month. Special needs comes at the core of the Bank's activities during the year, where AUB celebrated Girgean with the Kuwait Down

tribution in a fun filled atmosphere.

AUB's initiative to sponsor the celebration that marked Kuwait as the capital of Islamic culture, which was organized by the Ministry of Education in November 2016, was part of its support toward spreading the Islamic culture and reinforcing its values, and human nature, which is

bers of society that require care and appreciation for their many years of professional service and expertise. The Bank has reaffirmed its leading social position in similar events which aims at improving retired professionals' lives and is in line with its overall objective of providing banking services that meet their needs.

In line with the Bank's strategic imperatives of empowering youth, being the backbone of the country's future, AUB has welcomed the sponsorship of the charity dinner organized by Mentor Arabia held under the patronage His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The dinner was attended by the Representative of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al Sabah - Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan, HM Queen Silvia of Sweden - President of Mentor International, HRH Prince Turki Bin Talal Bin Abdelaziz Al Saud - Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Mentor Arabia, and Faisal Al Mutawa, the Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Mentor Arabia, with the objective being to participate in the organization's efforts in safeguarding youth from drug abuse, and raising more awareness around its dangers across society.

The event was attended by a number of senior executives from AUB who have shared their gratitude and respect towards the role that the Mentor Arabia plays in empowering the youth and protecting them from negative practices, namely drug abuse while creating a sense of awareness amongst the youth around the dangers of drugs. This is in line with the Bank's social role and its commitment toward the younger members of the society. Richard Groves, Chief Executive Officer of Ahli United Bank, said, "Since the Bank's operations were launched 75 years ago, and as the first bank to operate in Kuwait accommodating the most important milestones across the Kuwaiti economy throughout its history.

AUB was able to develop a strong footprint across the local banking sector and support its economic development. At the same time, the Bank has ensured that its social development role in Kuwait grows. Social responsibility has long been a core part of the Bank's strategy, especially when the Bank operates under the Shari'a law, which adds more depth and value to the Bank's overall role in society."

Groves added, "Our understanding on the social role reflects our commitment to establishing a robust social role. To that extent, our commitment continues to drive more comprehensive social responsibility activities, through a diverse range of initiatives that help achieve a more sustainable society, and which helps create an understanding and culture of social obligation."

The conference was held on the 30 May 2016 under the patronage of Mr Marzouq Ali Al Ghanem, Parliament Speaker, and was attended by a number of the country's officials. AUB's support is reflected in supporting retired professionals due to their leading roles over a number of years who are also considered important mem-



In collaboration with LOYAC, AUB sponsors 'Service is My Joy'

by the Kuwaiti Gastroenterology Board during May 2016. The event aimed at qualifying the skills and potentials of all Kuwaiti doctors and increasing their overall knowledge base. In line with World Diabetes Day which is held on 14 Nov each year, AUB organized a health drive for its employees, in cooperation with Dar Al Shifa Hospital.

The hospital's team visited the Bank's main branch, and were given a large conference room to conduct the necessary tests that aim at preventing diabetes. These included measuring blood glucose levels, blood pressure as well as BMI levels. Moreover, a live discussion with the hospital's nutritionist was facilitated, where a range tips were provided to the staff after performing the tests on them and raising their awareness levels around diet and nutrition that suit their health needs and helps prevent diabetes or manage their conditions. Dar Al Shifa Hospital's team provided booklets that included the necessary information around the disease, its complications and prevention mechanisms.

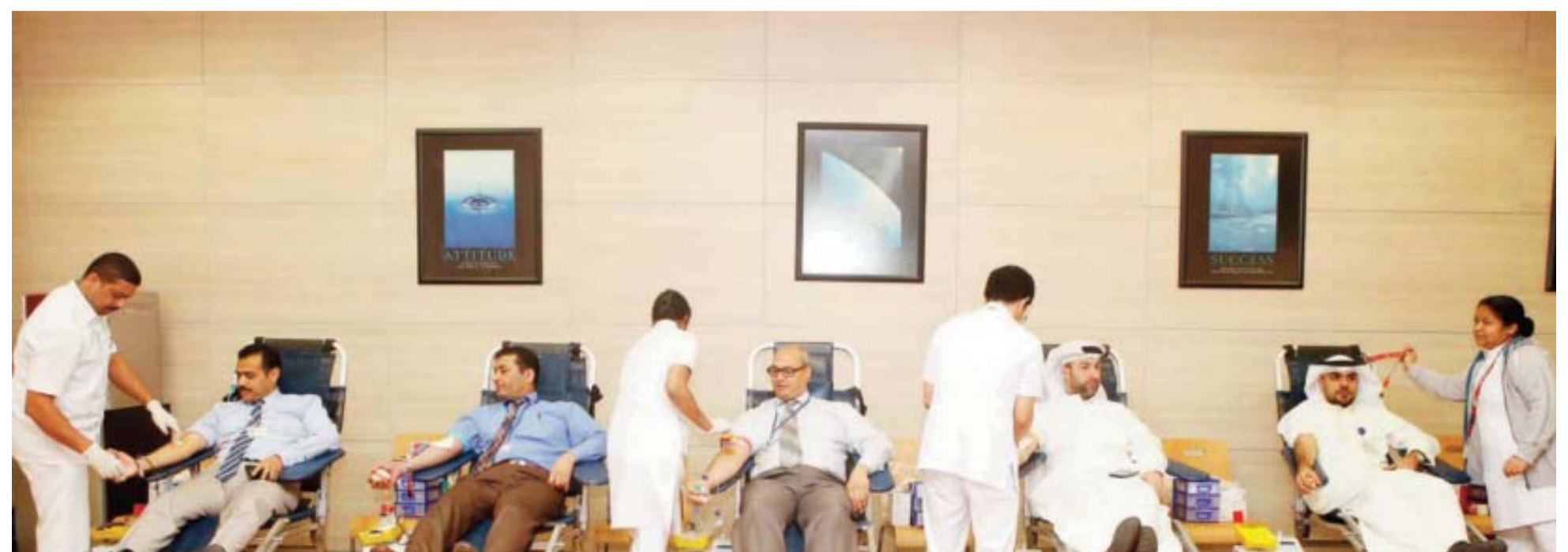
An integrated social program

As part of its annual drive, AUB launched its integrated social responsibility program during the Holy Month of

Syndrome Society and Souad Al Sabah Special Needs Care Center, where the Bank distributed gifts as well as shared the joy of Ramadan with the participants.

Throughout the month, the Bank also organized a Quran recitation competition at its headquarters. The competition included 4 groups - male and female employees, employees' children, and children from the general public. As part of its continued efforts to support the society and contribute in charitable initiatives during the holy month of Ramadan, AUB launched a program that aimed at breaking the fast for fasting underprivileged individuals near its branches across Kuwait.

AUB, being a core member of Kuwaiti society, participated in the national celebrations, with an aim of spreading happiness and joy across social groups. The Bank organized a special celebration to mark Kuwait's National Day, which was held at the Bank's complex. The celebration included a segment of national songs in front of a large crowd. The Kuwaiti flag was also distributed amongst the audience, along with sweets. The Bank also organized an open day for its employees and their families at Al Shaheed Park, which included a wide range of surprises and entertaining segments and gifts dis-



AUB's blood donation campaign

'La La Land' ties record with 14 Oscar nominations

Romantic showbiz musical "La La Land" topped the Oscars nominations list yesterday with a whopping 14 nods, tying the all-time record set by "Titanic" and "All About Eve." The movie—a whimsical tribute to Hollywood's Golden Age of musicals, set in modern-day Los Angeles—earned nods for best picture, director for 32-year-old Damien Chazelle, and for its two stars, Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone. In second place were sci-fi movie "Arrival" and coming-of-age drama "Moonlight," tied at eight nominations each. This year's crop of nominees clearly reflected a push by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to show more diversity after the #OscarsSoWhite controversy of the past two years, with multiple black actors and filmmakers earning nods.

For best actor, Gosling will be vying for a golden statuette at the February 26 Oscars bash along with Golden Globe winner Casey Affleck ("Manchester by the Sea"), Andrew Garfield ("Hacksaw Ridge"), Viggo Mortensen ("Captain Fantastic") and Denzel Washington ("Fences"). In the best actress category, France's Golden Globe winner Isabelle Huppert was nominated for her performance in the rape-revenge thriller "Elle," along with Stone, Ruth Negga ("Loving"), Natalie Portman ("Jackie") and Meryl Streep, who earned her 20th nomination for "Florence Foster Jenkins."

Industry watchers had predicted that Chazelle's "La La Land"—buoyed by a record seven Golden Globe awards earlier this month—will triumph at the nominations. But few thought it would tie for the all-time record set by "Titanic" and "All About Eve." "La La Land" will vie for best picture honors with eight other films (current rules allow for up to 10 nominees in this category) including "Arrival," grim family drama "Manchester by the Sea" and "Moonlight." Others in the coveted top category are the film adaptation of August Wilson's play "Fences," Mel Gibson's bloody WWII drama "Hacksaw Ridge," the western "Hell or High Water," the real-life tale of NASA's black female mathematicians

"Hidden Figures" and Garth Davis's family drama "Lion."

Tough competition for supporting actress

In the running for best supporting actress are three black actresses: past nominee Viola Davis for "Fences," Oscar winner Octavia Spencer for "Hidden Figures" and Naomie Harris for "Moonlight." They will compete against past Oscar winner Nicole Kidman ("Lion") and Michelle Williams ("Manchester by the Sea"), who was nominated three times before. In the best supporting actor category, Jeff Bridges ("Hell or High Water") will take on Mahershala Ali of "Moonlight," Dev Patel ("Lion"), Lucas Hedges ("Manchester by the Sea") and Michael Shannon ("Nocturnal Animals").

The foreign films nominated are "Land of Mine" (Denmark), "A Man Called Ove" (Sweden), "The Salesman" (Iran), "Tanna" (Australia) and "Toni Erdmann" (Germany). The nominations were revealed in the pre-dawn hours in Los Angeles in an online broadcast, not at the traditional press conference. Unlike previous years, this year's nominees include a number of black actors and filmmakers, a move that should ease the diversity row that has cast a shadow over the Oscars for the past two years.

Almost half the 683 people invited last year to join the 6,000 plus Academy members that bestow the Oscars were women and nearly as many people of color. All 20 nominees in the main acting categories at last year's Oscars were white for the second year running, prompting calls to boycott the glitzy event and an angry social media backlash under the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite. The Academy's board of governors has vowed to double the number of female and ethnic minority members by 2020. Late night funnyman Jimmy Kimmel will host the Oscars on February 26. — AFP



This file photo shows the cast and crew of 'La La Land,' winner of Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy posing in the press room during the 74th Annual Golden Globe Awards at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

NOMINEES IN MAIN OSCARS CATEGORIES

Best picture

"Arrival"
"Fences"
"Hacksaw Ridge"
"Hell or High Water"
"Hidden Figures"
"La La Land"
"Lion"

"Manchester by the Sea"
"Moonlight"

Best director

Denis Villeneuve, "Arrival"
Mel Gibson, "Hacksaw Ridge"
Damien Chazelle, "La La Land"
Kenneth Lonergan, "Manchester by the Sea"
Barry Jenkins, "Moonlight"

Best actor

Casey Affleck, "Manchester by the Sea"
Andrew Garfield, "Hacksaw Ridge"
Ryan Gosling, "La La Land"
Viggo Mortensen, "Captain Fantastic"
Denzel Washington, "Fences"

Best actress

Isabelle Huppert, "Elle"
Ruth Negga, "Loving"
Natalie Portman, "Jackie"
Emma Stone, "La La Land"
Meryl Streep, "Florence Foster Jenkins"

Best supporting actor

Mahershala Ali, "Moonlight"
Jeff Bridges, "Hell or High Water"
Lucas Hedges, "Manchester by the Sea"
Dev Patel, "Lion"
Michael Shannon, "Nocturnal Animals"

Best supporting actress

Viola Davis, "Fences"
Naomie Harris, "Moonlight"
Nicole Kidman, "Lion"
Octavia Spencer, "Hidden Figures"
Michelle Williams, "Manchester by the Sea"

Best foreign language film

"Land of Mine" (Denmark)
"A Man Called Ove" (Sweden)
"The Salesman" (Iran)
"Tanna" (Australia)
"Toni Erdmann" (Germany)

Best animated feature

"Kubo and the Two Strings"
"Moana"
"My Life as a Zucchini"
"The Red Turtle"
"Zootopia"

Best documentary feature

"Fire at Sea"
"I Am Not Your Negro"
"Life, Animated"
"OJ: Made in America"
"13th"

Best original screenplay

"Hell or High Water" - Taylor Sheridan
"La La Land" - Damien Chazelle
"The Lobster" - Yorgos Lanthimos and Efthimis Filippou
"Manchester by the Sea" - Kenneth Lonergan
"20th Century Women" - Mike Mills

Best adapted screenplay

"Arrival" - Eric Heisserer
"Fences" - August Wilson
"Hidden Figures" - Allison Schroeder and Theodore Melfi
"Lion" - Luke Davies
"Moonlight" - Barry Jenkins and Tarell Alvin McCraney
Best cinematography: "Arrival" - Bradford Young
"La La Land" - Linus Sandgren
"Lion" - Greig Fraser
"Moonlight" - James Laxton
"Silence" - Rodrigo Prieto

Best original score

"Jackie" - Mica Levi
"La La Land" - Justin Hurwitz
"Lion" - Dustin O'Halloran and Hauschka
"Moonlight" - Nicholas Britell
"Passengers" - Thomas Newman

Best original song

"Audition (The Fools Who Dream)" from "La La Land"
"Can't Stop The Feeling" from "Trolls"
"City of Stars" from "La La Land"
"The Empty Chair" from "Jim: The James Foley Story"
"How Far I'll Go" from "Moana"
Best visual effects: "Deepwater Horizon"
"Doctor Strange"
"The Jungle Book"
"Kubo and the Two Strings"
"Rogue One: A Star Wars Story"

Number of nominations for films with three or more nods

"La La Land" - 14
"Arrival" - 8
"Moonlight" - 8
"Hacksaw Ridge" - 6
"Lion" - 6
"Manchester by the Sea" - 6
"Fences" - 4
"Hell or High Water" - 4
"Hidden Figures" - 3
"Jackie" - 3 --AFP

After life performing Tchaikovsky, conductor keeps discovering



This file photos show French ballerina Leonore Baulac of the Paris Opera Ballet performing during Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake (Lac des cygnes) at the Bastille Opera house, in Paris. — AFP photos



As a boy in Saint Petersburg, Semyon Bychkov would scrounge to buy second-hand Tchaikovsky scores with pocket change from lunch money given by his mother. Living in a communal apartment with other families in the city then called Leningrad, he recalls that by age 12, he would spend nights in the kitchen—the only room with both lights and privacy—waving an imaginary baton as if guiding orchestras to Russia's most treasured composer.

Bychkov went on to become a renowned conductor, fleeing the Soviet Union for the West after reaching adulthood to escape anti-Semitism and official suspicion of his political views. Now 64, the maestro has put together a Tchaikovsky festival at the New York Philharmonic, an in-depth exploration through performances from yesterday until February 11. Scholars have persistently debated whether Tchaikovsky was uniquely Russian or an extension of the Western classical tradition.

Although he sees both sides, Bychkov stresses Tchaikovsky's connection to national identity, saying that even Russians with little education revere the composer. "Say Tchaikovsky and their eyes begin to swell," Bychkov, who speaks with clear delight about the 19th-century composer, told AFP. The former music director of the Orchestre de Paris who holds conducting posts in London at both the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Academy of Music, Bychkov says his passion for Tchaikovsky never

faded despite his difficult past with his homeland.

Not so with Shostakovich, arguably Russia's greatest 20th-century composer, who struggled under the stifling control of the Soviet authorities. "There was a period of about five years that I could not hear the sounds of his music, let alone perform it, because it brought me back to what I left," Bychkov says. Tchaikovsky, however, "is in a way something that has always been in my life and always will."

New look at final work

Although Bychkov's relationship with Tchaikovsky never ebbed, it has evolved. "The music remains the same," he says. "We change the way we perceive it, or the way we interpret it." He points to Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6, or "Pathétique," which the composer premiered in 1893 days before his death. Tchaikovsky officially died from cholera, but many have long speculated that he killed himself after the discovery of his homosexuality. Bychkov—who will close the Tchaikovsky festival with "Pathétique," which he recently recorded for Decca Classics with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra also believed the suicide hypothesis.

But he began questioning the theory in recent years after studying the original score, deciding that Tchaikovsky wanted the last movement to be more dynamic and have a faster tempo than how orchestras have historically performed it. "Its coda, which offered a proof of resignation, in fact for me is not a resigna-

tion at all but a protest against dying," Bychkov says. However, "whether he committed suicide or not, I don't think we will ever know."

Balance between famous and obscure

Bychkov has included some of Tchaikovsky's comparatively obscure works in the festival, including Piano Concerto No. 2, to be played by Yefim Bronfman, and the "Manfred" Symphony based on Lord Byron's poem. Orchestras have often shied away from the complex "Manfred" Symphony, which evokes the Alps over nearly one hour. The legendary conductor Arturo Toscanini condensed it. Bychkov says directors should be confident in each piece they choose because it "simply cripples the creation" if they try to alter it.

"It is our challenge to bring it to life in a way that will reveal that it is a genuine masterpiece." Bychkov will also conduct Symphony No. 5, one of Tchaikovsky's most recognizable works besides his ballet suites for "The Nutcracker" and "Swan Lake." For Bychkov, even the most famous works can deliver new meaning. "If performances have real commitment, real conviction and a real quality, music that is very familiar will be revealed in a new light—first to ourselves, and then to an audience." — AFP

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The month-long Academy Award action continues with 'Oscars on demand' content throughout February. Winning and nominated titles will be available on OSN Store; whilst OSN On Demand and OSN Play will have dedicated folders of the biggest blockbusters.

Missed the Oscars live, or want to relive the excitement? Catch a repeat of the main event at 7pm and 11pm (KSA) on February 27 on OSN Movies Festival HD and OSN Play. For detailed schedules and to join the conversation, visit www.osn.com Get social with OSN on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram @OSN_livetheOscars



Dior designer debuts Paris couture as Dunst talks girl power



A labyrinth and a scented secret garden led to Christian Dior's enchanted collection Monday - the hugely anticipated couture debut from new designer Maria Grazia Chiuri. The collection in Paris' Musee Rodin kicked off Paris' week of spring-summer couture shows - the fashion industry's ideas factory spanning four days and 24 collections. Star guests including actresses Kirsten Dunst, Diane Kruger and rapper ASAP Rocky marveled at a gargantuan magical tree constructed inside the venue, decorated colorfully with beading, lights and philosophical quotes. Perhaps inspired by the decor, Dunst moved beyond fashion to talk to The AP about female empowerment. Here are some highlights Monday:

Dior's forest fantasy

Fairytale music conjured up a sensuous, magical atmosphere at Chiuri's spring-summer show that didn't fully translate to the couture. Taking over the creative reins of such a historic house as Dior is a daunting task, and so who can blame the talented Italian-born designer for playing it a little safe? The finely executed styles - floppy hoods, smooth signature peplums, feather tiaras, delicate sheer black animal masks and butterfly chokers - were pared down on sometimes minimalist silhouettes.

The tulle and silk velvet gowns strongly evoked a fairytale or black-magic theme echoed by the forest decor and "Thought Tree" glistening with Tarot cards and gold coins. The binary palette - of mainly white and black, with flashes of satin red and forest green - highlighted a fairytale morality of good and bad, producing some of the show's most beautiful looks. Full, floor-length skirts hid the elfin-like models' legs, so that they appeared to float across the mossy runway floor.

Dunst speaks on women's movement

Dunst, whose latest film "Hidden Figures" features the untold story of three African-American women working at a racially discriminatory NASA in the 1960s, said there was no better time for the movie to come out. The 34-year-old actress said that the "inspiring message is hugely important in the world today" as it crossed lines of both gender and race at a moment of political transition in the US. "With the (President Donald Trump's) inauguration, it couldn't be a better time for this movie to come out. I'm so proud of its success," Dunst told The AP. "This film inspires women to come out and support other women in the arts and all women everywhere. It shows a movie's real power to shape attitudes," she said.

FASHION



Models present creations for Schiaparelli during the 2017 spring/summer Haute Couture collection on January 23, 2017 in Paris.

Schiaparelli goes Chinese

Popstar Kylie Minogue and actress Thandie Newton were front row for Schiaparelli's couture feast - held in the old Place Vendome atelier-apartment of fashion icon Elsa, who died in 1973. Once the place where writer Jean Cocteau and artist Salvador Dali mingled, on Monday fashion insiders were presented a spring-summer show that revisited the design house's shocking pink as well as art deco and 1930s designs. The show channeled the Asian styles that the eccentric couturier would wear around the famed apartment - including silk Japanese kimonos and Chinese hanfusu.

The signature "lobster dress" - influenced by Surrealist Dali - was revisited with inserts alongside menswear jacket silhouettes that riffed on geometry. The house, which was

revamped a few years ago, still has some way to go before the designs gain confidence and liberate themselves from the overly referential.

Iris Van Herpen

Blurring the lines between fashion and art, Dutch Wunderkind Iris Van Herpen's cerebral couture collection explored imperfections and "gaps" in fashion and in science. The catwalk of short-circuiting lines of electricity was lit patchily so that the eyes of the spectator had to keep readjusting to focus in on the 16 organic, diaphanous creations.

It had fashion insiders initially looking bemused as they tried in vain to take photos of the show. But they soon realized this was art. The haphazard lighting was, in fact, the work of

German artist Ester Stocker to create visual distortion - to create "a conflict of light and shadow," so said the house. The theme of imperfection was handled perfectly in the couture, which played on textures in black and white.

High-tech material formed bumps and glistened as if wet on flat-fronted mini dresses that evoked gossamer and weightlessness. Elsewhere, fragmented patterns resemble the grooves of a fossilized shell. Copper-plated diagonal high heels also disrupted the balance of the shoe, leaving a rectangular gap for the very thought-provoking show.

Ralph & Russo

Rapper Nelly and Dunst hit the eclectic Ralph & Russo couture show that revamped the bygone glamour days of the

1950s. Silken full skirts in white and pastel shades successfully sparked down the runway worn on models with sharp, Asian-style bobs. But the 55 styles felt incongruous as a whole.

Uber-minis of the 1960s sexual revolution met with designs that showcased the clubbing visor and exposed midriff of the 1990s. Elsewhere, one structured pink satin gown embodied 1980s decadence and almost evoked the TV show "Dynasty." Still, there were plenty of red-carpet gowns to satisfy the nascent house's burgeoning clientele that includes Beyonce and Gwyneth Paltrow. — AP



Models present creations for Iris Van Herpen during the 2017 spring/summer Haute Couture collection on January 23, 2017 in Paris.



Models present creations by Ralph and Russo during the 2017 spring/summer Haute Couture collection.

Lifestyle

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'La La Land' ties record with 14 Oscar nominations

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This photo taken shows Chinese people visiting a lantern display for the upcoming Lunar New Year at a park in Beijing. The Lunar New Year, known locally as the Spring Festival, falls on January 28 this year and marks the Year of the Rooster in the Chinese calendar. — AFP

Cock of the walk: Trump to thrive in Year of the Rooster



Feng shui master Alion Yeo posing as he speaks with AFP in Hong Kong about the predictions for the Year of the Rooster as the 2017 Lunar New Year approaches. — AFP photos



Feng shui master Thierry Chow holds up a metal rooster in her Hong Kong office.

US president Donald Trump will strut through the Year of the Rooster, thriving as Hong Kong geomancers predict 2017 will be marked by the arguments and aggression-characteristics attributed to the animal. With Trump at the top of the pecking order, the volatile traits of the rooster-combined with the year's signature element of fire-mean rocky times ahead, particularly in the western world, feng shui masters say. "The rooster likes to pick fights, loves to have verbal arguments and is combative," Hong Kong soothsayer Thierry Chow told AFP. Trump's inauguration was met with mass protests in the US and he has already riled China, prompting fears of a trade war between the world's top two economies.

Chow predicted he would ruffle more feathers in his first year as president. "There will be a lot of strikes and even riots," says Chow. Although born in the Year of the Dog, Trump can afford to be cocky due to his flock of faithful followers and his personal "bazi" element of earth, which is compatible with the fire element defining 2017. According to the philosophy of feng shui, all events are dictated by the varying balances in the five elements that make up the universe: metal, wood, water, fire and earth. "Bazi" are fate-setting traits linked to the exact time and date of a person's birth. "The year will have all these elements, these people, these things and environment which will help him personally as a president," says Chow.

Celebrity feng shui master Alion Yeo said the US economy would benefit due to the rooster's signature element of metal, which also represents money and stocks. "Trump's 'bazi' shows he will be prosperous, so the US stock market will perform well in 2017," Yeo said. But he says Trump's good luck will only be temporary as the elements turn against him in future years. "He will have a good run in 2017, but this won't be the case for 2018 (the Year of the Dog)," says Yeo.

'Communicate with the heavens'

Feng shui-literally meaning "wind-water"-is influential in many parts of Asia, where people adjust their lives and carefully position items such as a cup of wine or pieces of ivory in offices and homes to maximize their luck and wealth. Those who practice the ancient philosophy were highly sought-after by Chinese dynastic rulers as far back as 1,000 years ago. "We were government workers in the past and would help the emperors ask the heavens whether the year was going to be a good one or not," Yeo said. One traditional method was to shake three coins in a turtle shell and see which way they fell in order to judge important topics, including picking dates for

marriage or how to fight a major battle.

Yeo still rolls coins to make predictions but uses a cup not a turtle shell. Others use a metal shell replica. To divine the future, Yeo says the geomancer's heart must be "very quiet." "Whether or not you can communicate with the heavens is a gift," he adds. Yeo says the world will be like a "sick ox" in 2017, with an even less favorable outlook than tumultuous 2016. "It can barely even get up to eat the grass around it," he says, adding that Europe will fare particularly badly.



A man walking past potted kumquat plants, a symbol of good luck and prosperity, on sale in Hong Kong.

The rooster's metal element signifies western countries, especially Europe, and will come under pressure from the year's fire element, explains Yeo. Brexit and the refugee crisis will drive more chaos for the continent in 2017, says Chow, who uses the "flying star" system to make her predictions based on constellation positions. "I wouldn't say things are calming down," she said. "It will be a year of very heated arguments." — AFP



People looking at a stall in Hong Kong selling decorations for the Year of the Rooster as the 2017 Lunar New Year approaches.



Soft toys for sale at a stall in Hong Kong ahead of the Year of the Rooster as the 2017 Lunar New Year approaches.



A woman (right) taking a selfie with a man (center) in traditional Chinese dress as he hands out "laicee" packets in Hong Kong for the Year of the Rooster as the 2017 Lunar New Year approaches.