

SUBSCRIPTION

Kuwait Times



THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF



THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2017

JAMADA ALTHANI 4, 1438 AH

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Cabinet tasks finance ministry to set budget ceiling



Bloody Islamic State video puts China in crosshairs



Saudi Arabia, Indonesia ink deals as king starts visit



Big Ben towers in basketball-mad Philippines



150 FILS

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40 PAGES

GHANEM HOPEFUL OF POLITICAL STABILITY, DIFFUSION IN TENSION

GOVT TO REJECT ASSEMBLY BID TO SCRAP PRICE HIKES



Min 14°
Max 28°
High Tide 01:59 & 14:31
Low Tide 08:38 & 21:53

TRUMP VOWS 'RENEWAL OF AMERICAN SPIRIT'

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump pledged a "renewal of the American spirit" Tuesday, as he fleshed out his America-first agenda in a more measured presidential tone during a landmark speech to Congress. Transposing hardline campaign promises into a presidential key, Trump offered the most restrained and detailed explanation yet of his America-first world view. He criticized threats against Jewish community centers and condemned the seemingly racially-motivated killing of an Indian immigrant, answering calls for him to speak out.

And although the 70-year-old again promised a hard line on illegal immigration, he outlined his policies in less-inflammatory economic terms, winning sustained applause from the Republican-dominated Congress. "By finally enforcing our immigration laws, we will raise wages, help the unemployed, save billions and billions of dollars, and make our communities safer for everyone," he said.

Putting some policy meat on the bones, he proposed introducing an Australian-style merit-based system to reduce the flow of unskilled workers - and held out the prospect of a bipartisan compromise with Democrats on root-and-branch immigration reform. But he also stood by his plan to subject travelers from certain countries to extreme vetting, insisting: "We cannot allow a beachhead of terrorism to form inside America."

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WASHINGTON: US Vice President Mike Pence (left) and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (right) applaud as US President Donald Trump delivers his first address to a joint session of Congress from the floor of the House of Representatives on Tuesday. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday he was optimistic that certain positive moves and efforts would succeed in defusing tension and achieving political stability. Ghanem told reporters that he believes these efforts would bear fruit in the coming week when the National Assembly is scheduled to hold regular sessions to debate a number of crucial issues. He said that he was also optimistic that there will be some diffusion in tension for the interests of the country and citizens.

The speaker however declined to comment on a threat by MP Youssef Al-Fadhlah to file a grilling against the prime minister on March 5, saying that the issue is being followed by the lawmaker himself. Asked if amendments to the nationality law will be discussed by the Assembly next week, Ghanem said he will meet with the Assembly's committee on priority issues and after that he will prepare the agenda for the session.

The Assembly session is also expected to debate a draft law calling to scrap the hikes in petrol prices and electricity and water, which was approved by the financial and economic affairs committee two weeks ago. MPs have vowed to pass the law, which requires the government to cancel all the increases in public services and the planned hike in electricity and water prices in May.

According to reports, the government has decided to start increasing electricity charges for government offices first instead of commercial shops as was initially planned.

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KUWAITI BREAKFAST 5.950 KD
(For 2 Persons)

OMELETTE, FOUL, LEBNEH, CHICKEN LIVER, FRESH VEGETABLE, QIMAR, DARABEEL, BAQSAM, JAM & HONEY, SERVED WITH TANDOR BREAD

LEBANESE BREAKFAST 5.950 KD
(For 2 Persons)

FIRE EGG, GRILLED HALLOUM, SAUSAGE, LEBNEH "TRADITIONAL LEANNESS", MAKDOOS, COLD CUT, QIMAR & HONEY. SERVED WITH LEBANESE BREAD

JORDANIAN BREAKFAST 4.900 KD
(For 2 Persons)

WHOLE EGG, FOUL, FALAFEL, MUSABAHA, WHITE CHEESE, OILVE OIL, ZATAR, SERVED WITH TANDOR BREAD

INDIAN BREAKFAST 4.750 KD
(For 2 Persons)

LENTIL MIX, QEEMA, TAWA CHICKEN, EGG TOMATO, YOGHURT MINT, SERVED WITH CHAPATTI

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah bids farewell to Bahraini Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Bahraini Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander, and First Deputy Prime Minister, Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

BAHRAINI CROWN PRINCE CONCLUDES KUWAIT'S VISIT

KUWAIT: Bahraini Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa and his accompanying delegation departed Kuwait yesterday, concluding a two-day official visit during which he held official talks with the political leadership.

He was seen off at the airport by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah,

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Khaled Al-Saleh as well as the chief of the accompanying mission of honor Advisor at His Highness Crown Prince's Diwan Nasser Abdullah Al-Roudhan, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, head of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Al-Faisal Al-

Saud Al-Sabah, head of protocols at His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, along with senior officials at the police, army, Kuwait National Guard (KNG), as well as state officials, Ambassador of Bahrain to Kuwait Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and Ambassador of Kuwait to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah.

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf met Prince Salman earlier at the latter's residence in Bayan Palace, and they discussed the deeply-rooted bilateral ties between the two brotherly nations, and means to boost them on all possible levels. —KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Hamad Al-Sabah bids farewell to Bahraini Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.



His Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Khaled Al-Saleh. —KUNA

CROWN PRINCE MEETS STATE OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met with Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Crown Prince

also received Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. Earlier yesterday, His Highness the

Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister

and Minister of Finance Anas Khaled Al-Saleh as well as Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. — KUNA



Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Bahraini Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa.

SPEAKER GHANEM MEETS MALAYSIAN COUNTERPART

KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem received at his office on Tuesday evening visiting Malaysian Parliament Speaker Pandikar Amin bin Haji and his delegation. The two sides discussed the friendly ties between their two countries, and the explored ways to promote parliamentary cooperation coordinate their stances at regional and international parliamentary organizations.

They also discussed a range of regional and international issues of common concern. The meeting gathered the Assembly's Secretary MP Awdah Al-Rowai'e, Chief Whip Nayef Al-Merdas Al-Ajmi, Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee MP Ali Salem Al-Deqbasi and Secretary-General Allam Al-Kandari, as well as Kuwait Ambassador to Malaysia Saad Al-As'ousi and Malaysia Ambassador to Kuwait Ahmad Rozian Abd Ghani. Later on Ghanem hosted a dinner banquet in honor of the Malaysian

guests at Sabah Al-Ahmad building in the presence of several MPs.

Separately, Ghanem received at his

office yesterday the visiting Bahraini Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Malaysian Parliament Speaker Pandikar Amin bin Haji. - National Assembly's website

EUROPEAN COMMISSION, EU COMMEND KUWAIT'S ROLE IN COMBATING EXTREMISM

BRUSSELS: The European Commission and the European Union (EU) lauded late Tuesday efforts by Kuwait in combating radicalism during a seminar on international efforts to counter cyber extremism. This came during the conclusion of the seminar, which was attended by representatives from several European and Arab countries including Kuwait.

In its final communique, the seminar said it was important for academics, intellectuals, and representatives of civil societies to debunk the extreme image of Islam portrayed by violent persons claiming to be

Muslims. The European Commission and the EU expressed desires to cooperate with Arab and Islamic nations as well as organizations to fight against extremism on all levels especially within the cyber domain, the communique said.

Meanwhile, Khulaf Al-Ohtaina, Assistant Undersecretary for Coordination and International Relations and Hajj at Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, said that his country was keen on spreading the moderate values of Islam. In a paper submitted to the event, the Kuwaiti official said that the Ministry

of Awqaf and Islamic affairs had made its mission to prevent the cyberspace radicalization of youth in Kuwait.

The ministry holds events, seminars, and courses that denounced the extremists views of Islam and Muslims, said the official who reiterated Kuwait's commitment to fighting radicalism in all shapes and forms.

The seminar, organized by the European Commission, European Parliament, and the European Islamic Conference, was attended by officials from France, Germany, Britain, Belgium, Sweden, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, the UAE, and Egypt. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah receives sharia forum participants. — KUNA

DEPUTY AMIRI DIWAN MINISTER MEETS SHARIA FORUM PARTICIPANTS

KUWAIT: Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday the head of a state committee tasked with handling the implementation of Islamic sharia Dr Mohammad Al-Tabtabie. The

Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs also received President of Saudi Arabia's Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University Dr Sulaiman Abalkhalil, former head of Qatar's Sharia Courts Abdulrahman Al-Mahmoud and

Professor of Jurisprudence at King Saud University Dr Abdulaziz Al-Thuwaihi, along with the participants of the first forum organized by the Supreme Consultative Committee on the Implementation of Sharia. —KUNA

OPPOSITION LAWMAKERS MEET TO DISCUSS DEMANDS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Twelve opposition Lawmakers yesterday met outside the parliament to discuss moves against the government if it fails to meet demands they intend to make public on Tuesday. Those demands include returning withdrawn citizenships, cancelling the law banning blasphemers from taking part in elections and cancelling the fuel and electricity price increases. Informed sources said the MPs included Mohammed Al-Mutair, Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, Jamaan Al-Harbash and Shuaib Al-Muwaizri, while others who had promised to attend the meeting sent regrets.

The sources added that the MPs agreed on the citizenship issue but failed to reach an agreement on the necessity of cancelling the blasphemy law, because it is already seconded by a majority of MPs. Thus, the lawmakers agreed to amend it and ban its retroactive implementation. The lawmakers also failed to agree on supporting MP Yousef Al-Fadhlah's bid to grill His Highness the Prime Minister over alleged corruption at the Ministry of Health because it would be constitutionally rejected on grounds that such a motion ought to be made against the health minister. The added that accordingly, it was agreed to hold talks with the government to change some health ministry officials first, then form a committee to investigate the financial violations.

State revenues

Chairman of the parliamentary budgets and final statements committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said total state revenues in the 2017-2018 budget will be around KD 13,324,000,000, with a 30 percent increase compared to the previous budget, because of the slight improvement in oil prices. He also noted that total expenditure would be around KD 20 billion with a five percent increase compared to the previous fiscal year's budget, with a KD 7 billion deficit. Abdulsamad added that 10 percent of the revenues (KD 1.3 billion) would be deposited in the future generations reserve fund. Abdulsamad stressed that there was a lot

of squandering, especially in some projects where the cost is getting dearer with sluggish pace of achievement.

Couple arrested

A bedoon (stateless) man with a long criminal record and a Gulf woman were arrested in Salwa after they raced through a checkpoint and tried to run over a policeman. Security sources said a police officer and a policeman were also injured when the suspect rammed their patrol car off the road and it turned over. The sources added that another patrol car chased the suspects and stopped them. Drugs were found in their possession and the vehicle they used was found to have been reported 'wanted'.

Hajj coordination

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs started coordinating with Interior Ministry on the issuance of hajj and umrah visas soon after applying the conditions set by Saudi authorities, including changing the bedoons' passport code as 'non-Kuwaitis' instead of 'Kuwaitis'. The conditions also include mandating all hajj convoys not to leave Saudi Arabia until all their pilgrims leave, in addition to increasing the number of bedoon pilgrims by 8-10 in each convoy. Meanwhile, as head of this year's hajj convoy, the manager of the hajj affairs department Mohammed Nasser Al-Mutairi said that an integrated plan had been set for the coming season and that CTC had been contacted concerning the hajj convoys' services contracts.

2 million tons

The Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation (EGPC) offered a tender to purchase two million tons of fuel oil (furnace oil) to be delivered between April and June, including 1.21 tons to be delivered at Suez and Ain Sokhna ports and 792,000 tons to be delivered at Alexandria or Dekhailah ports. The Egyptian Refining Company (ERC) told agencies that it has been negotiating with various oil companies including KNPC, Aramco and Shell to import around 1.2 million tons of crude oil.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's meeting yesterday. — KUNA

CABINET TASKS MINISTRY TO SET BUDGET CEILING

MINISTERS REVIEW TRUMP'S LETTER TO AMIR

KUWAIT: The Cabinet yesterday assigned the Ministry of Finance to oversee measures taken by its economic committee dealing with setting an expenditure ceiling for the nation's state budget. Furthermore, the Cabinet has approved appointing Haya Ahmad Al-Wadani as secretary general of the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT). The ministers approved a draft decree appointing Wadani in the post, said Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah

In the onset of its routine meeting at Bayan Palace, presided over by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Cabinet thanked Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations for the outpouring of con-

gratulatory messages to mark Kuwait's national celebrations. Moreover, the Cabinet looked over a letter sent to His Highness the Amir by Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi, thanking His Highness the Amir for his efforts to align the views of Arab nations, which in turn, would serve the best interests of the Arab world.

The Cabinet also reviewed a letter sent to His Highness the Amir by US President Donald Trump, which heaped praise on Kuwait as a valued partner of the US in the fight against terrorism. In his letter, the US President underscored the need for increased dialogue between both nations to enhance bilateral ties.

Similarly, a letter penned by United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres extending an invitation to His Highness the Amir to

attend a forthcoming UN Sustainable Development Summit, slated for June 5-9th in New York city. Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister briefed the Cabinet on Bahraini Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa's recent visit to the country, which aimed to ameliorate long-standing ties between the Gulf nations. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Al-Sabah apprised the Cabinet of his participation in a meeting of the US-led Coalition against the so-called Islamic State (IS), held in Belgium. On recent regional and international happenings, the Cabinet deplored a pair of recent bomb blasts in Bahrain and Algeria, where scores of people were wounded, as it renewed its vehement condemnation of all forms of terrorism. —KUNA



'STRANGE ACCIDENT' IN SHARQ

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The fire department received a call about a car accident in which one vehicle ended up on top of the other. The accident took place in Sharq across Al-Hamra

Tower. No injuries were reported. Separately, firemen were called to help a child whose foot got stuck in his bicycle. Mishref fire center responded, cut the metal and freed the boy's foot, before paramedics checked it for any injuries.

POWER PLANT WORKERS PROTEST UNPAID SALARIES

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A number of contracted employees working at West Doha power plant staged a protest outside the Indian embassy yesterday to demand their unpaid salaries. Commenting on the issue, Abdullah Al-Motoutah, Acting Director of the Public Authority for Manpower, confirmed that the protest was because the employees' salaries had been delayed. Motoutah added that the authority's investigators rushed to the scene and advised the employees to check with relevant labor departments to get help in resolving their problems. Further, Motoutah stressed that all possible measures would be taken to protect the employees' rights and pay them the overdue salaries, even if it means liquidating the financial guarantee deposited by the company.

is currently preparing studies on places where smoking could be allowed by inviting engineering bureaus and specialized consultancies to take part in the study within two weeks after publicizing the call. EPA also urged interested engineering offices to pay the annual fees of KD 5,000 to be accredited to design and build smoking cabins.

Road project

The Ministry of Public Works' (MPW) assistant undersecretary for roads engineering affairs Ahmed Al-Hassan said that an exit at Jamal Abdul Nasser development project will open at dawn tomorrow. He added that the exit is 150 meters' long and would serve traffic coming through the recently opened bridge towards Ghermata. Hassan added that launching this part of the project is part of several others to be completed soon as previously announced.

Smoking areas

The Environment Public Authority (EPA)

NBK-CAPITAL TO MANAGE AZ-ZOUR NORTH ONE SHARE SALE: KAPP

KUWAIT: A consortium led by NBK Capital has been awarded the tender of managing the public share sale of 50 percent of the Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula. Half the shares of Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula will be offered to Kuwaitis in an Initial Public Offering (IPO), with a nominal value of 100 fils a share, the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) added in a statement yesterday. Work is underway to obtain approvals of monitoring authorities for the IPO contract, the KAPP added.

In January, the KAPP received offers from bidders, banks and local financial firms, to provide the consultative and financial services for managing the IPO. Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula is the first gas-fired combined cycle power and water desalination plant in Kuwait, with a capacity of min-

imum 1,500 megawatts of electricity and 102-107 million imperial gallons of water per day.

The gas-fired combined cycle power and water plant is the first phase of Az-Zour North Independent Water and Power Project (IWPP). A consortium GDF SUEZ and Sumitomo has been undertaking the operation, and maintenance of Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula on 50/50 basis.

Meanwhile, the KAPP said that another consortium led by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PWC) has been chosen as a consultancy house for the entertainment and services center in the Fintas Commercial and Administrative Center, Egaila, Al-Ahmad governorate. Approval is being sought from the monitoring bodies to conclude the contract of the project. — KUNA

KUWAIT, LATVIA TO BOOST ECONOMIC TIES

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh has stressed the significance of fostering economic ties with Latvia. Following Al-Saleh's talks with Latvia's visiting Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economy Arvils Aseradens yesterday, he emphasized the role of the chambers of commerce and industry in both countries to bolster bilateral relations and enhance the role of the private sector, the Ministry of Finance said in a statement.

The ministry quoted Aseradens as saying that his country hopes for better economic and trade ties with Kuwait. He also pointed to the investment attractions at home. According to the statement, the two sides approved a proposal for developing mechanisms for boosting bilateral cooperation. These will include an agreement for economic and technical cooperation and the formation of a joint higher committee to be chaired by the two ministries.

Slovakia

Meanwhile, Kuwait and Slovakia signed an agreement to bolster economic, technical, and commercial cooperation, said a statement by the Kuwaiti embassy. According to the Kuwaiti Embassy in Bratislava, Ambassador Essa Al-Shamali thanked Slovakia's first State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy Vojtech Ferencz and the Kuwaiti side for their efforts in actualizing the agreements, saying that his nation was looking forward for more cooperation with Slovakia in the near future. The signing of the agreements will take Kuwaiti-Slovakian relations to the next level and hopefully the deals will meet the expectation of people in both countries, said the Ambassador. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh meets with Latvia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economy Arvils Aseradens. — KUNA



The Kuwaiti Ambassador Essa Al-Shamali is pictured with Slovakia's first State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy Vojtech Ferencz.

QATARI-KUWAITI MILITARY DRILL IN DOHA SUCCESSFUL: BRIGADIER ZAYED

KUWAIT: The Qatari-Kuwaiti Amiri Guards drill, codenamed 'Saqr Al-Khalij 2', was successful, said chief of Kuwait's Amiri Guard, Brigadier Fahad Al-Zayed yesterday. The drill was launched to develop security coopera-

tion between Kuwait and Qatar, the military official said, adding that the exercise displayed the readiness and professionalism of both forces. He affirmed that the GCC nations were looking forward to the holding of a new

exercise in the near future, adding that the drill was in line with both leaderships' desire for more security and peace in the region. The 'Saqr Al-Khalij 2' exercise began on February 16. —KUNA





SFAX: Scenes from activities held during the Kuwait Cultural Week in Tunisia. — KUNA

KUWAIT CULTURAL WEEK IN TUNISIA CONCLUDES



SFAX: The Kuwait Cultural Week in Tunisia concluded Tuesday evening with performing of the 'Sad Family' play at Mohamed Jamoussi Cultural Center in Sfax. The performance attracted a large audience including officials, artists and ordinary people who were eager to get a glimpse of the Kuwaiti theateric movement.

"With a range of musical concerts, formative

art and photo galleries, a lecture on heritage and antiquities delivered by Sheikh Farah Al-Sabah and a play performance, Kuwait Cultural Week has succeeded in showing part of the Kuwaiti culture," Kuwaiti Ambassador in Tunis Ali Al-Thufeyri said in a statement. He noted that culture weeks are playing a significant role in promoting cultures of states and cementing

people-to-people relations as well as the cultural cooperation between countries. "They also contribute to the development of human civilization," Thufeyri added. The Kuwait's Cultural Week in Tunisia has coincided with Tunisia's celebrations marking 'Sfax Capital of Arab Culture for 2016'. The event, kicked off on February 25th, featured art galleries, plays, lec-

tures and seminars all performing under the umbrella of Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL).

Meanwhile, general coordinator of the Sfax Capital of Arab Culture for 2016 event Hoda Al-Kasho stressed that the main goal of the cultural weeks is to promote the Arab culture with its diversity and richness. She expressed

admiration of the Kuwaiti Cultural Week and its impressive activities. The Kuwaiti Week has shown Tunisians the mesmerizing Kuwaiti popular culture, folklore and arts, she said. Kasho said that Tunisia is looking forwards to launching cultural partnerships with Kuwait that pave the way for joint cultural and artistic production. — KUNA

EMBASSIES ABROAD CONTINUE TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL DAYS



BEIJING: The Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Sameeh Johar Hayat and other diplomats cut the cake during a ceremony celebrating Kuwait's national days. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti diplomatic missions in Sweden, Mexico, and China held ceremonies celebrating the anniversaries of Kuwait's 56th National Day and 26th Liberation Day, and the 11th year of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah assumption of power.

In Sweden, the Kuwaiti Ambassador Nabeel Rashed Al-Dekheel and members of the embassy celebrated Kuwait's national occasions. The ceremony was attended by a number of local politicians, economic figures,

and Arab and foreign diplomats who offered their congratulations to the Kuwaiti leadership and people.

The Ambassador congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Kuwaiti people on the advent of the national occasions.

Mexico

In a similar celebration in Mexico, the

Kuwaiti Ambassador Met'ab Saleh Al-Mutawtah gave a speech praising the strong bilateral relations between Mexico and Kuwait, which is witnessing a remarkable and distinguished level of cooperation in various domains as propagated by the political leaderships of both countries.

He added that such national occasions are a great chance to express his love and loyalty to Kuwait and its political leadership. Kuwait will always recall the honorable position of Mexico in supporting Kuwait liberation from

the Iraqi invasion in 1991, he said.

China

In China, the Kuwaiti Ambassador Sameeh Johar Hayat and the diplomatic mission held a ceremony on the national days. In a speech to the reception, Hayat offered his congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah

on the advent of Kuwait's celebrations. He praised the distinguished Kuwaiti-Chinese bilateral relations which witnesses remarkable cooperating and coordination at all levels.

Kuwait is the first member of the Gulf Cooperation countries to establish diplomatic relations with China back in 1971, he said. The diplomat recalled China's support to the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in favor of the Kuwaiti rights, which resulted in the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion in 1991. — KUNA



Ambassador Sameeh Johar welcomes officials during the ceremony.



MEXICO CITY: The Kuwaiti Ambassador to Mexico Met'ab Saleh Al-Mutawtah and other diplomats cut the cake during a ceremony celebrating Kuwait's national days.



STOCKHOLM: The Kuwaiti Ambassador to Sweden Nabeel Rashed Al-Dekheel (right) and members of the embassy celebrate Kuwait's national days.



Kuwaiti Ambassador to Sweden Nabeel Rashed Al-Dekheel welcomes an official during the ceremony.

In Brief

E-PASSPORTS APPLICATION SUNDAY

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday that it will begin to process requests for electronic diplomatic passports starting from Sunday. The ministry noted that non-electronic passports for diplomats have become obsolete and that a special center has been allocated for the process of e-passport issuance, which welcomes applicants on week days from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm. — KUNA



JARALLAH MEETS UK MINISTER

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met yesterday with visiting UK Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs George Eustice. During the meeting, they discussed Kuwaiti-UK relations and the latest regional and international developments. Several senior officials of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UK Ambassador to Kuwait Matthew Lodge attended. — KUNA



CBK LAUNCHES CULTURAL CAMPAIGN

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced yesterday launching its 'Ya Zain Turathna' (our beautiful heritage) cultural campaign for the sixth consecutive year. This year's campaign includes several school visits, competitions and other cultural activities to be announced soon, said Amani Al-Waraa, Deputy General Manager - Public Relations and Media Department.



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Al-Hamra Tower (right) and other Kuwait City skyscrapers pictured from Shaheed Park. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KFH PARTICIPATES IN HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

'LEADING STRATEGY EXECUTION IN FINANCIAL SERVICES'



KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in Harvard Business School Executive Development Program themed 'Leading Strategy Execution in Financial Services.' The education program that was held in Oman for six consecutive days focused on two primary themes; strategy and Leadership.

This program is designed to courageously lead executives to drive their organizations forward by superior strategy execution and to support the development of senior

leaders in the banking and finance sector in the GCC countries. It equips participants with concepts and tools for thinking strategically.

The program is viewed as strategic project to be organized by the Institute of Banking Studies (IBS). 47 participants took part in this program from different banks and financial institutions in the GCC region.

Participants from KFH were: Lmya Al-Tabtebae, Group Deputy General Manager IT Planning and Architecture,

Imad Mirza, Executive Manager Talent Management, Mahmoud Wafa, Executive Manager Debt Restructuring, Mohammad Al-Duwailah, Executive Manager Capital Market, Mohamed Fayad, Executive Manager Credit Administration, Khaled Al-Awadhi, Executive Manager Al-Ruwad Banking, and Ahmad Al-Othman, Manager Retail Transition. The program offered international lecturers and professors such as James Dowd, Linda A Hill, Stuart Gilson and Francesca Gino.



FIRST INT'L SCULPTURE FORUM OPENS SUNDAY

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Council for Culture, Art and Letters (NCCAL) will organize the first international sculpture forum between March 5 and 20. The event, to be held on a biennial basis, was approved by the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD), said Dr Bader Al-Duweesh, NCCAL's assistant secretary-general and head of the organizing committee.

"It will gather imminent sculptors from Kuwait, the Gulf region and beyond as well as academics from the Basic Education College, with a view to polishing up the talents of Kuwaiti artists through sharing experience with world-renowned sculptors," he added.

Meanwhile, Ali Numan, a Kuwaiti sculptor and member of the organizing committee, thanked the SCPD and the NCCAL for approving the long-awaited event. On the technical aspects of the forum, he said the organizing committee approved wood as a main material for sculpture, noting that there are suggestions for using the products of the forum as interior decor at government buildings.

Mashaal Al-Khalaf, supervisor of the formative arts at NCCAL, said the event will provide a chance for Kuwaiti artists to highlight the advances made by cultural movement in the country. He appreciated the efforts made by NCCAL Secretary-General Ali Al-Yuha for lobbying among the country's cultural institutions for the event and the sideline activities. — KUNA

STUDY IN CANADA

• Schooling • Undergraduate • Graduate • Post Graduate Studies •

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS:

- Columbia College
- College of New Caledonia
- Douglas College
- Durham College
- Golden Hills School Division
- North Island College
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Crime

Report

RELATIVES FIGHT IN ARDIYA CAFE

KUWAIT: Five female citizens who are related engaged in a fight with each other in an Ardiya cafe. They were taken to the police station and charged with fighting. The five women hurled insults at each other before exchanging blows, so police were called.

Escapes caught

Ahmadi detectives arrested two dangerous suspects who had escaped from their holding cell. The two, who were found in Hawally, said they opened the cell's door with a copy of the key and that they had planned the escape for days. A man was waiting for them outside the police station. He was also arrested.

Physical assault

A Syrian man suffered a broken jaw and his friend, a citizen, suffered various bruises and grazes, when six persons beat them for no apparent reason in Zour desert. The two called police, who responded along with paramedics and took them to Adan Hospital. Ahmadi detectives are working on the case.

Reckless driving

Police brought 150 persons under control who had gathered in a street near Taima to see reckless drivers showing off with their cars. The drivers poured diesel on the street during their act, endangering other motorists who drive on the road. Several drivers were arrested and their cars impounded, and legal action is being taken.

Pedestrian mugged

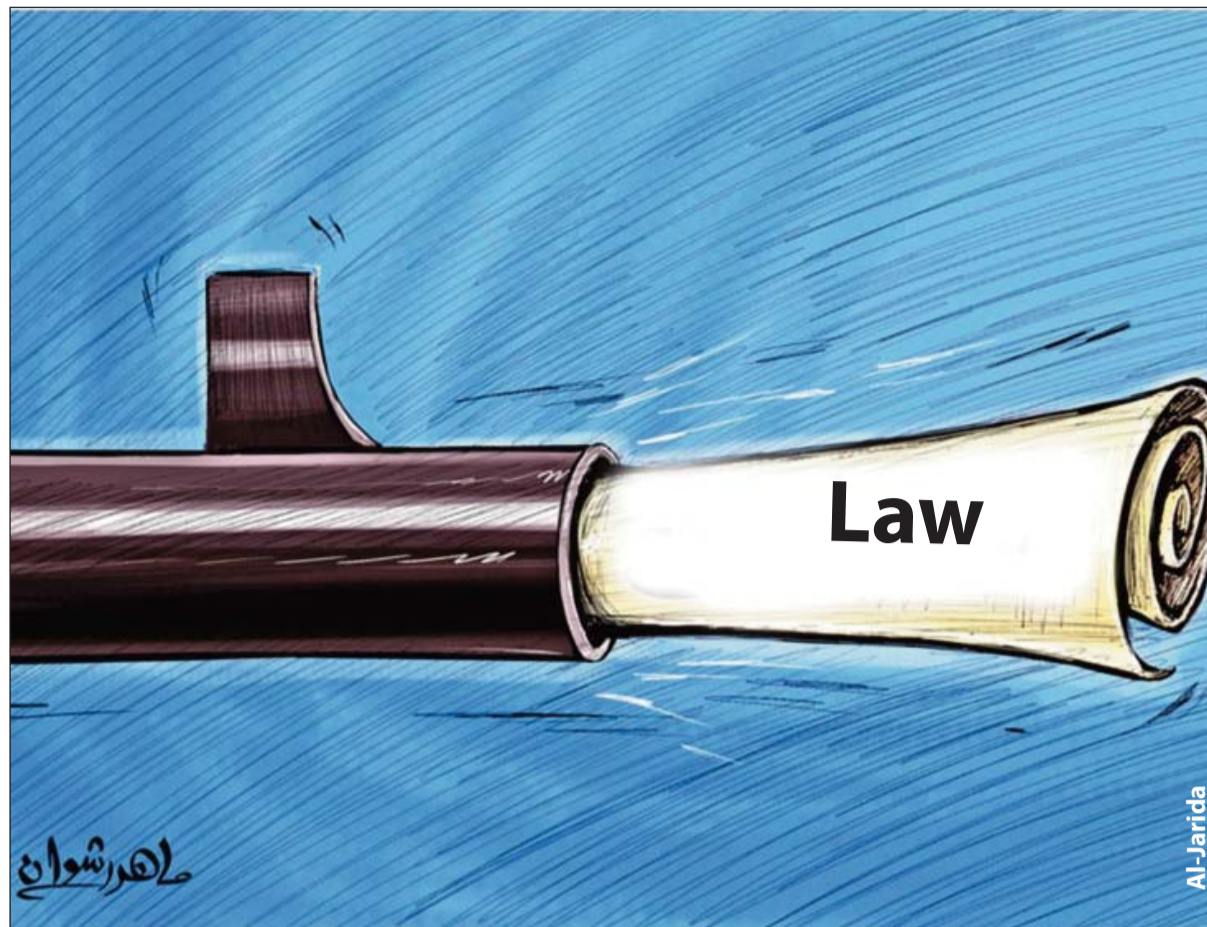
A person in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh abducted an Asian man and robbed him, claiming to be a detective. The victim was walking at night when a man stopped him telling him he was a detective. He asked him to get in his car and handcuffed him. He then took him to an area in Hasawi and stole KD 300 in cash and his new phone, got him out of the car then drove off. The victim went to Jleeb police station and complained.

Domestic violence

A citizen dropped domestic violence charges against her husband, saying that issue between them was resolved. However, she made an emergency call later and insisted to lodge a complaint against her husband. The woman told police she was beaten by her husband, and when a patrol went to the house, the woman told them the dispute was resolved. Minutes later, she called again and insisted that a complaint be lodged. Both were sent to Saad Al-Abdullah police station, and investigations are underway.

Suicide attempt

Police and paramedics rescued a young citizen who slashed his wrist in an attempt to commit suicide. Police found there was a fight between two brothers, which prompted one of them to attempt suicide. The injured youth became enraged in the ambulance and caused extensive damage, while paramedics attempted to help him. —Translated from the Arabic press



Al-Jarida

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

AMENDING ARTICLE 79 AND THE CIVIL STATE

By Dr Bader Al-Daihani

According to its constitution, namely article 6, Kuwait is a democratic civil state and any proposal to amend constitutional articles should be done for the sake of achieving more liberties, equality and establishing the foundations of a civil democratic state that has room for everyone. Nevertheless, political Islam blocs do not recognize democratic regimes and values such as freedom, devolution of power, pluralism and separation between powers.

The ultimate goal of political Islam blocs is to build a religious state that is no different from the Islamic State (IS) group except for some slight differences in grades. Political Islam blocs (the Muslim Brotherhood and its subdivisions) work according to gradual phases, during which they utilize liberties and democratic tools, such as elections and ballots, only to get to power and then monopolize it forever, while IS follows a policy of burning everything.

Therefore, it is no wonder that once in power, their first priority is to try to indirectly cancel the constitution and push towards establishing a religious state. This is why they recently asked to amend article 79 of the Kuwaiti constitution after they failed several times (nine to be precise) in amending article 2. If they manage to achieve this, the other articles of the constitution will be worthless. Notably, this is their second attempt to amend article 79 after His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Sabah had previously rejected the first attempt in accordance with article 66 of the constitution.

In case article 79 gets amended as proposed by Kuwait's branch of the Muslim Brotherhood - the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) and its allies in other Sunni blocs - this would signal a shift from a civil state into a religious one similar to IS, and we would then have a religious power superior to the legislative power, which is according to article 51 of the constitution, headed by His Highness the Amir and the National Assembly. This new power will decide on violations of Islamic sharia laws.

I wonder who will be its members. Which of the so many sharia interpretations will they adopt, especially when each of them claims to know the whole truth? The Muslim Brotherhood's interpretation of some issues is different from those of Salafists. In addition, we have differences between Sunnis and Shiites. We still remember the disagreement between the Brotherhood and the Salafist Ummah Principles Party when the Youth Rising Forum was held in Kuwait several years ago, and MP Jamaan Al-Harbash tweeted addressing his fellow MP, urging him not to encapsulate sharia in his own interpretations of it. This confirms the existence of more than an interpretation of sharia. So, which one will the proposed religious power follow after amending article 79?

The slogan of applying Islamic sharia used by political Islam blocs to justify turning against the constitution is nothing more than an evasive emotional political tactic used to manipulate simple people and win their support. According to our constitution, sharia is the basic source of legislation. These blocs are not even settled on the religious state they intend to establish, and the best example of this are the bloody conflicts among them in Syria.

Last but not least, political Islam blocs that are hindering the development of the democratic civil regime and look forward to establishing a religious state get their might and strength from allying with the political regime since the 1970s, as the latter has been facilitating their access to power and allowing them to publicly expand, although they have been frankly announcing rejection of liberties and the values of a democratic civil regime. For them, democracy is nothing more than a tool they use to come to power, then start changing the rules and monopolize it forever! —Translated by Kuwait Times

النهار

Al-Anbaa

180° EXPANSION

By Saad Al-Motesh

I totally believe that Almighty Allah is capable of changing anything promptly - praise be to Him who cannot be impeded by anything on earth or in the skies. I recall a story, although I am not sure if it is authentic or not. However, it has been going around among people, who say that in a TV interview with a rich Arab, he was asked about the size of his fortune, and the billionaire said: 'Do you mean its size before or after you asked the question?' Such an answer means that man's wealth changes within seconds and never stays the same!

I remembered this story while listening to some statements about the number of casualties among our Syrian brothers, which sounded more like that Arab billionaire's answer.

If you ask anybody about the real figures of those killed and held captive, the number will surely and drastically change. So, are those fig-

ures about the fallen true before or after the question was asked?!

Away from the Syrians' sufferings and the Arab billionaire's wealth, we have seen personal accounts of ordinary and economically and commercially insignificant people expand to astronomical figures.

So, did this happen after or before they started their political careers? The answer highly depends on whether those accounts multiplied before or after they assumed their positions!

Notably, the question does not only include those who had their bank accounts enlarged, but also includes all politicians who turned into real estate merchants inside and outside Kuwait. Those who always claimed owning nothing more than their salaries and things changed by 180 degrees after they started their political careers!

—Translated by Kuwait Times

If you ask anybody about the real figures of those killed and held captive, the number will surely and drastically change



A picture from the celebrations in Al-Hamra Tower.



A picture from the celebrations in Shuyoukh office.



Kuwaiti flag in an atrium area.



ALGHANIM INDUSTRIES CELEBRATES NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS

KUWAIT: On Tuesday, February 21, 2017, Alghanim Industries, one of the largest private companies in the region, celebrated Kuwait's National and Liberation Days, with employees at the company headquarters in Al-Hamra Tower and its Shuwaikh offices.

The employee engagement featured the local band The Concert which played Kuwaiti national music to the diverse crowd. Kuwaiti food and desserts were served, alongside a temporary photo studio, consisting of traditional sadu woven furniture, giving employees a fun place to socialize and take pictures.

Commenting on the event, George Lambros, Chief Human Resources Officer, said: "At Alghanim Industries, we strive to engage with our employees, bringing them together around important events throughout the year. This year, we created a lot of fun activities around Kuwait's national holidays in order to celebrate with our

employees and our customers who are at the center of our values. We also take opportunities such as these to emphasize our Kuwaiti talent within Alghanim Industries - we have worked hard to create a collaborative, encouraging and challenging environment which we hope brings out the potential in all of our employees."

In addition to the employee engagement event, the company held a photography competition for the employees to share patriotic pictures featuring Alghanim Industries related items. The winning photo was of a costa cup and Kuwait City's skyline drawn by hand with coffee.

The offices were also decorated throughout the month of February, featuring a large 3-story Kuwaiti flag, which was hung in the headquarter atrium. Decorated cookies were handed out to employees earlier in the same week, and Kuwait flag pins were distributed for employees to express nationalistic spirit.

Alghanim Industries holds engaging employee activities on a regular basis, including blood drives which the company organizes in collaboration with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank (KCBB), Breast Cancer Awareness campaigns, and charity runs and marathons in which the company pays the registration fees for its employees who are interested in joining, in addition to celebrating the national holidays in the company.

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Australia calls 113 ambassadors home to reshape foreign policy

BLACKFACE BAN, NO SUNDAY SHOPS: OFFBEAT IDEAS IN DUTCH

Page 10

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CALIFORNIA: Smoke rises from a fire after a plane crashed in Riverside, Calif on Monday, Feb 27, 2017. — AP

PLANE CRASH IGNITES HORRIFYING INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

RIVERSIDE: Juan Cortes and his son were installing fencing when they saw a low-flying plane make an awkward tilt and go straight down into a quiet Southern California neighborhood of single-family homes. Moments later they and others were confronted with a horrifying inferno. "I saw the smoke, the black smoke," said Cortes, 42, who raced to the scene in a truck with 19-year-old son Jonathan and tried to help. People were screaming in the street, and he saw a woman pulled away from the flames. "She was alive because she was screaming, 'My daughter! My daughter!'" he recalled Tuesday. Traci Zamora, 38, rushed out of her home and around a corner to find a house engulfed in flames and then saw a victim emerge. "She just came crawling right out of it onto the front lawn," she said. "Her lower body was on fire."

The crash of the twin-engine Cessna 310 late Monday afternoon killed a man, a woman and a teenager, and two other women were ejected when it hit the corner of a house, authorities said. The women were hospitalized with critical injuries. Despite the inferno, no one on the ground was hurt, but two houses were destroyed. Two others had minor damage. No identities were released, but Riverside Fire Chief Michael Moore said the plane had just taken off from Riverside Municipal Airport, less than a mile away, bound for San Jose after a weekend cheerleading competition staged at the Disney California Adventure Park.

Weather in the area 60 miles east of Los Angeles had included rain, but there were no immediate indications of what caused the crash. Investigators with the National Transportation Safety Board were expected to hold a briefing at the scene Tuesday afternoon. One of the women sur-

vivors suffered burns on 90 percent of her body and was found under debris in a smoke-filled bedroom of a burning home and was lifted out a window, fire Capt. Tyler Reynolds said. "She was moaning and that is how the firefighters found her," he said.

The other survivor also was hospitalized in critical condition. The tail number of the aircraft was N1246G, according to a government official with knowledge of the investigation who spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to release the information until next-of-kin have been notified. Federal records show that number is assigned to a twin-engine Cessna 310 registered to Nouri Hijazi of San Jose. Telephone listings for him were either disconnected or went to voicemail. Moore did not provide the name of the cheerleading competition, but the Jr USA Nationals for girls 15 and under was held at Disney California Adventure Park over the weekend. Officials with the competition did not immediately return calls Tuesday.

For many in the neighborhood the crash announced itself with a tremendous boom that rattled their houses like an earthquake. HL Reyes, who lives about a quarter-mile from the crash site, said she felt the ground shake and saw plumes of black smoke.

"I thought it was a possible earthquake, and we heard all the birds just suddenly react outside, too," Reyes said. "This was just like a nightmare coming true." Hector Jimenez, 19, was playing video games at home when he heard a loud boom and saw black smoke.

"It's just sad that it happened here," he said. "It makes me nervous living around an airport. That's one of my worst fears, having this happen." — AP

TORNADOES HIT CENTRAL US; 2 DIE

LITTLE ROCK: Tornadoes touched down in the upper Midwest and northern Arkansas on Tuesday, killing at least two people, as a spring-like storm system posed a risk to 45 million people. Compact but strong storms known as supercells raked parts of the central US, causing damage from Arkansas to Iowa and Illinois. Wind-whipped wildfires destroyed homes in Texas. At Ottawa, Illinois, state Emergency Management Agency spokeswoman Patti Thompson said a tornado victim was killed by an uprooted tree.

Minor injuries were also reported at an Ottawa nursing home, but Thompson said the number of those hurt in the twisters was not known. Meanwhile, one person was killed when an apparent tornado ripped through Perry County, Missouri,

about 80 miles south of St. Louis. Eight to 10 homes near the small town of Perryville were badly damaged and winds were so strong that several vehicles were blown off of Interstate 55. Perry County Clerk Jared Kutz said search and rescue crews were going door-to-door and checking the highway to see if there were other victims.

Missouri Gov Eric Greitens said in a statement that a tornado was confirmed in Perry County. Authorities have not released any information about the person killed. Forecasters were particularly concerned that the worst of the weather developed after nightfall - and worried it would continue overnight and hit communities while people slept. While weather conditions typically improve after nightfall, as the atmosphere cools, the Storm


Prediction Center posted tornado watches late Tuesday for the area from eastern Kansas and Oklahoma to near Cincinnati. It warned that significant tornadoes with winds above 111 mph were possible until 4 am Central time. "Some increase in storm coverage is likely through the overnight hours," one of its advisories said.

The Oklahoma-based forecast center said 45 million people from Texas to Ohio faced some risk of bad weather. The highest threat level in effect, warning of a "moderate risk" for severe weather, covered the area from southwestern Missouri into Indiana. Hundreds of people, including many school children, took shelter at Bald Knob High School in Arkansas after a tornado warning was posted for the area. The school is hosting a state basketball tournament for smaller schools this week. Moments earlier, the storm caused damage in Higginson, a town of 621, the White County Sheriff's Office said.

Photos posted on social media showed basketball fans on the floor in the school's designated safe area. The Bald Knob storm was part of the same system that produced a wall cloud near Mayflower, Arkansas, which was hit in 2014 by a tornado with winds approaching 200 mph. The storm crossed Interstate 40 between Little Rock and Conway, but there were no reports that a funnel cloud touched down. The Storm Prediction Center had warned that some of Tuesday's storms would track over long distances. The Arkansas storm held together for more than 100 miles, though it did not produce tornadoes. The Missouri Department of Transportation closed Interstate 55 in both directions because of storm damage in Perryville. — AP



PENNSYLVANIA: Robert Galonis pauses before he begins to chainsaw away debris from a relative's house after a tornado touched down in the area in Pittston Township, Pa. — AP



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TRUMP ADMINISTRATION 'DEEPLY TROUBLED' BY IMBALANCE

US SEEKS END TO UN RIGHTS COUNCIL'S 'OBSESSION WITH ISRAEL'

News

in brief

Leader of UAE travels abroad on 'private' trip

DUBAI: The leader of the United Arab Emirates, who has rarely been seen in public since suffering a stroke three years ago, has left the country on a "private visit" abroad. The state-run WAM news agency says Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan left yesterday. It did not elaborate. Sheikh Khalifa was born in 1948 and became president after his father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, died in 2004. He is also the ruler of Abu Dhabi, the oil-rich capital of the seven UAE sheikhdoms. Sheikh Khalifa suffered a stroke on Jan. 24, 2014, and underwent emergency surgery. He went abroad for several months last year and made a weeklong trip abroad in January. The UAE is a strong Western ally and hosts American troops fighting the Islamic State group.

Turkish media mogul Dogan accused of 'fuel smuggling'

ANKARA: The honorary chairman of Turkish conglomerate Dogan Holding was summoned yesterday to appear in court over accusations of fuel smuggling, a day after Turkey's president criticized a story published in the group's Hurriyet newspaper. Aydin Dogan, 80, who founded and ran media-to-energy conglomerate until 2010, is a prominent figure in Turkey's secular establishment and has had strained ties with President Tayyip Erdogan and the ruling Islamist-rooted AK Party in the past. His group has faced charges that it ran a fuel-smuggling ring a decade ago and Dogan and Isbank's Ersin Ozince, 64, face up to 24-1/2 years in prison on charges of setting up a criminal gang, smuggling and fraud. This is the first time, however, that Dogan has been summoned to court in the case, rather than being represented by his lawyer. Dogan and Ozince have denied any wrongdoing. The Istanbul court ordered that Dogan be compelled to attend the next hearing in the case where 47 defendants are being tried, state-run Anadolu Agency said.



KABUL: Smoke rises from a district police headquarters after a suicide bombing in Kabul, Afghanistan yesterday. — AP

Taliban hits military targets, killing three

KABUL: Afghan Taliban militants said they attacked police, military and intelligence targets in Kabul yesterday and security officials confirmed attacks in at least two areas of the city that killed at least three people and wounded dozens. A resounding explosion was heard across the city as a car bomb was detonated near a police headquarters in the west of the city, the interior ministry said. The blast was followed immediately by gunfire between security forces and an unknown number of attackers. Fighting at the police headquarters, not far from a military training school, lasted for several hours with gunmen barricaded inside the building. Najib Danesh, a spokesman for the interior ministry, said the attack was suppressed by late afternoon and security forces were conducting checks of the area. A separate attack appeared to have targeted an office of Afghanistan's main intelligence agency, the National Directorate for Security (NDS), on the eastern outskirts of Kabul. However a senior army official said that attack was quickly suppressed.

White House condemns shooting attack, racism

WASHINGTON: The White House has condemned a shooting attack in a Kansas bar that left one Indian man dead and another wounded as an apparent act of "racially motivated hatred." After criticism that Donald Trump had not spoken about the attack—which happened a week ago—the White House said president did indeed condemn the attack. "As more facts come to light and it begins to look like this was an act of racially motivated hatred, I want to reiterate the president condemns these or any other racially or religiously motivated attacks in the strongest terms" said White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders. "They have no place in our country," Sanders said the president may raise the issue during his maiden address to Congress later Tuesday.

Sri Lanka Tamils blast govt over war crimes

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's main Tamil party accused the government yesterday of not lifting a finger to address wartime crimes, as the foreign minister asked the UN for more time to investigate abuses. President Maithripala Sirisena had agreed to a United Nations resolution which, among other things, called for special war crime tribunals and reparations for victims of the 37-year Tamil separatist conflict that claimed at least 100,000 lives. Sri Lanka was given 18 months to establish credible investigations into atrocities, but the deadline lapsed without these promises being kept. The Tamil National Alliance, a moderate party representing the minority Tamil population, has been scathing about the lack of progress and wants Colombo held to account.

Tunisia to prosecute six police over beach attack

TUNIS: Tunisia is to prosecute six policemen over their response to a 2015 gun and grenade attack on a beach resort that killed 38 foreign holidaymakers, a judiciary spokesman said yesterday. The announcement comes a day after an inquest into the deaths of the 30 Britons among them found that the response of Tunisian police was "at best shambolic, at worst cowardly". The six policemen, who will remain at liberty pending trial, have been charged with "failing to come to the assistance of a person in danger," said Sofiene Sliiti, spokesman for the judiciary's counter-terrorism section. No trial date has yet been set.

GENEVA: US President Donald Trump's administration is reviewing its participation in the UN Human Rights Council, seeking reform of its agenda and an end to its "obsession with Israel", a senior US official said yesterday. Washington has long argued that the Geneva forum unfairly focuses on Israel's alleged violations of human rights, including war crimes against Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. The United States "remains deeply troubled by the Council's consistent unfair and unbalanced focus on one democratic country, Israel", Erin Barclay, US deputy assistant secretary of state, told the UN Human Rights Council. Barclay said that no other nation had a whole agenda item devoted to it and that "this obsession with Israel" threatened the council's credibility.

Barclay questioned whether focusing on Israel was a sensible priority, adding that Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's government was bombing hospitals while North Korea and Iran deny millions of their people of freedoms of religion, peaceful assembly



GAZA: In this July 29, 2014 file photo, smoke and fire from an Israeli strike rise over Gaza City. Israel's official government watchdog says the country was ill-prepared to handle the threat of underground tunnels from Gaza during the 2014 war, and the Cabinet was not provided enough information to make proper decisions about it. — AP

and expression. "In order for this Council to have any credibility, let alone success, it must move away from its unbalanced and unproductive positions," Barclay said. "As we consider our future engagements, my government will be considering the Council's actions with an eye toward reform to more fully achieve the Council's mission to protect and promote human rights."

The United States is currently an elected member of the 47-state Geneva forum where its three-year term ends in 2019. There was no immediate reaction from the UN human rights office, but on Tuesday Council spokesman Rolando Gomez told a briefing: "The US been a very active and constructive partner in the Council for many years, spearheading a number of important initiatives, such as DPRK (North Korea), Iran, Syria, LGBT rights ... and many issues that are certainly on the agenda today." He said that any country that wished to revoke its membership of the council would have to go through the General Assembly in New York. — Reuters

ARMY CONTROLS MAIN ROADS OUT OF MOSUL, TRAPPING IS

CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO FLEE FIGHTING UNDER ISLAMIC STATE FIRE

MOSUL: US-backed Iraqi army units yesterday took control of the last major road out of western Mosul that had been in Islamic State's hands, trapping the militants in a shrinking area within the city, a general and residents said. The army's 9th Armored Division was within a kilometer of Mosul's Syria Gate, the city's northwestern entrance, a general from the unit told Reuters by telephone. "We effectively control the road, it is in our sight," he said. Mosul residents said they had not been able to travel on the highway that starts at the Syria Gate since Tuesday. The road links Mosul to Tal Afar, another Islamic State stronghold 60 km to the west, and then to Syria.

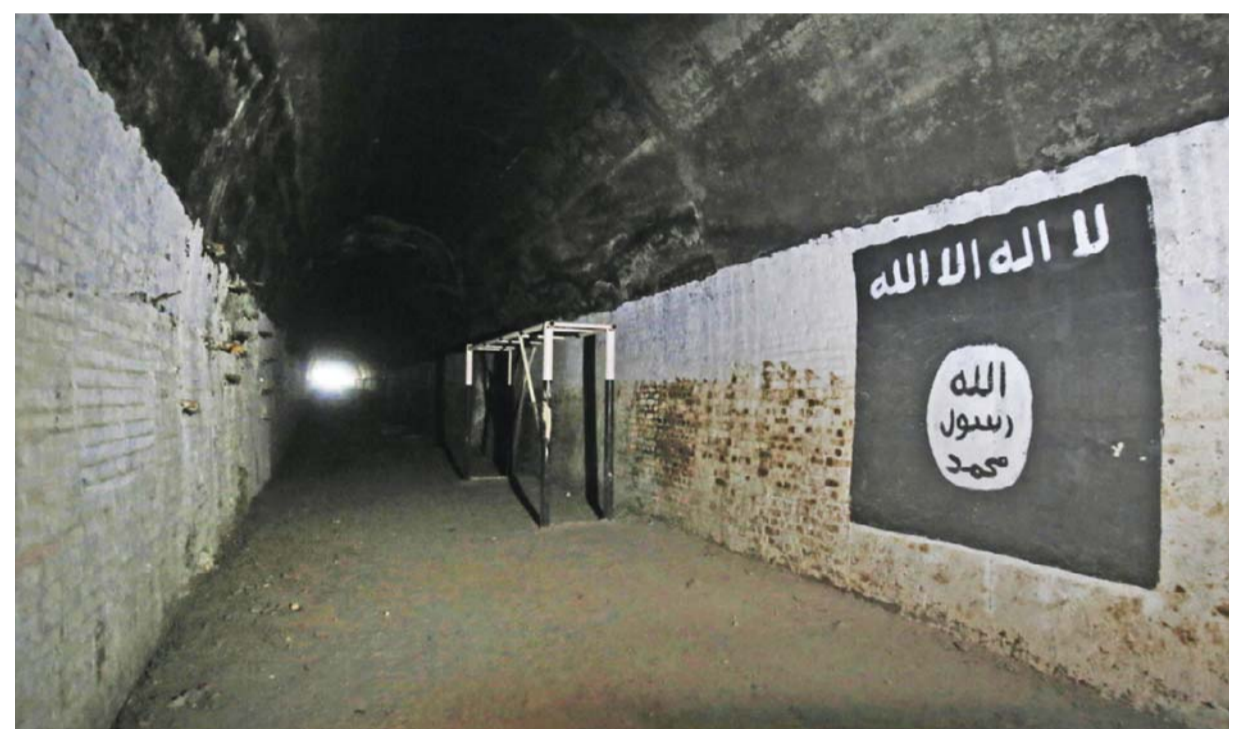
Iraqi forces captured the eastern side of Mosul in January after 100 days of fighting and launched their attack on the districts that lie west of the Tigris river on Feb 19. If they defeat Islamic State in Mosul, that would crush the Iraq wing of the caliphate declared by the group's leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in 2014 from the city's grand old Nuri Mosque. The US-led coalition effort against Islamic State is killing the group's fighters more quickly than it can replace them, British Major General Rupert Jones, deputy commander for the Combined Joint Task Force said.

With more than 45,000 killed by coalition air strikes up to August last year, "their destruction just becomes really a matter of time," he said on Tuesday in London. The US commander in Iraq, Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend, has said he believes US-backed forces will recapture both Mosul and Raqqa, Islamic State's Syria stronghold in neighboring Syria, within six months. The closing of the westward highway meant that Islamic State are besieged in the city center, said Lt General Abdul Wahab Al-Saidi, the deputy commander of the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), deployed in the southwestern side.

Units from the elite US-trained division battled incoming sniper and anti-tank fire as they moved eastwards, through Wadi Al-Hajar district, and northward, through Al-Mansour and Al-Shuhada districts where gunfire and explosions could be heard. These moves would allow the CTS to link up with Rapid Response and Federal Police units deployed by the riverside, and to link up with the 9th Armored Division coming from the west, tightening the noose around the militants. "Many of them were killed, and for those who are still positioned in the residential neighborhoods, they either pull back or get killed as our forces move forward," Saidi said. Two militants lay dead near the field command of the CTS, in the Al-Mamoun district which looked like a ghost town. A few hundred meters away, a car bomb was hit by an airstrike.

Strafing from above

The few families who remained in Al-Mamoun said they were too scared to leave as the militants had booby-trapped cars. Women cooked bread over outdoor ovens



MOSUL: The logo of the Islamic State (IS) group is seen in a tunnel that was reportedly used as a training centre by the jihadists in the village of Abu Sayf, on the southern outskirts of Mosul. — AFP

while men gathered on street corners as helicopters flew overhead strafing suspected militant positions further north. One of two buses parked nearby had its roof shorn off. Residents buried a 60-year-old woman who was killed on Tuesday when she stepped on an explosive device while trying to flee. Several thousand militants, including many who traveled from Western countries to join up, are believed to be in Mosul among a remaining civilian population estimated at the start of the offensive at 750,000.

They are using mortars, sniper fire, booby traps and suicide car bombs to fight the offensive carried out by a 100,000-strong force made up of Iraqi armed forces, regional Kurdish peshmerga fighters and Iranian-trained Shiite Muslim paramilitary groups. About 14,000 people have been displaced from western Mosul, often under militant fire, according to government figures. The United Nations puts at more than 176,000 the total number of people displaced from Mosul since the offensive started in October.

Thousands more streamed out, walking through the desert toward government lines during the day, crossing over a deep trench which appears to have served as an Islamic State defense, some waving white flags. Among them a boy shot in the leg was limping alongside a cart

carrying an older woman, while another was pushed in a wheelchair. Old people asked why there was no cars or buses to pick them up and take them to the displaced people centers. A man said he spent 11 days hiding in his house with no food, no water and no idea of what was happening outside. "The archangel of death would have come for us if we stayed any longer," he said. Aid agencies put the number of killed and wounded at several thousands, both military and civilians.

Army, police, CTS and Rapid Response units forces attacking Islamic State in western Mosul are backed by air and ground support from a US-led coalition, including artillery. US personnel are operating close to the frontlines to direct air strikes. Federal police and Rapid Response units are several hundred meters only from the city's government buildings. Taking those buildings would be of symbolic significance in terms of restoring state authority over the city and help Iraqi forces attack militants in the nearby old city center where the al-Nuri Mosque is located. Military engineers started preparing a pontoon that they plan to put in place by the side of the city's southernmost bridge, captured on Monday. Air strikes have damaged all of its five bridges. — Reuters

AS IRAQI CIVILIANS FLEE MOSUL; DELICATE SEARCH FOR JIHADISTS

AL-SALAM: The Iraqi officer addresses a group of men who fled fighting in Mosul, urging them to admit any affiliation with the Islamic State group, and turn in collaborators. Second Lieutenant Abdullah Qassem is by turns encouraging and reproachful as he talks to the crowd, who fled as Iraqi forces battle to wrest west Mosul from the jihadist group. The scene is part of the delicate and sometimes tense process by which Iraqi forces are trying to weed out IS members attempting to escape among civilians.

"They made you grow your beards, they banned cigarettes, they controlled you," says Qassem, dressed in the black uniform of the elite Counter-Terrorism Service and waving a stick to emphasize his point. "Islam... is about forgiveness, not about killing and fighting. So all of you know what the difference is between Daesh and Islam," he says, using an Arabic acronym for IS.

"Anyone who helped them or let them in their houses, or gave them women to marry is not honorable," Qassem says, his voice just loud enough to carry to the back of the group of around 70 men, sitting in rows in the dust in a village south of Mosul. The men listen quietly, but the chastisement prompts one to interject: "But we couldn't fight them, we had no power." Calmly but firmly, Qassem turns to him, his eyes hidden behind sunglasses. "But how did they enter Mosul in the first place? That's the question," he replies, in a tone that does not invite an answer.

Thousands of civilians, including many women and children, have fled west Mosul

since Iraqi forces began the push to retake it on February 19, trekking through the desert during the day and night to escape. As one group arrives in the tiny village of Al-Salam, they are separated, with women and children brought to a shaded area to receive food and water. The men are investigated nearby. First, they are asked informally for their names and quizzed for information. Afterwards, their identities are run against a database.

Those who are suspected of or admit to IS

ties are taken for additional questioning. The men sit in rows of around ten, most sporting the uniform-length beard mandated by IS. They are covered in dust, and many look exhausted and nervous. After Qassem's lecture, the men are ordered to stand and place their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. Then a local notable, an older man in an immaculate white headscarf leaning on a carved, varnished walking stick, scans each row as he confers with an intelli-

gence officer. The officer, who declined to give his name, orders each row to sit once it has been reviewed.

'I pledged allegiance'

Then he addresses the group: "If you know someone who pledged allegiance or who worked with Daesh, don't be afraid. Daesh is finished," he says. He beckons a young man in a tracksuit to stand up and come over. "Look at this man, he came and he admitted to me that he pledged allegiance, and he was with them for 10 days, and nothing will happen to him," he says, his arms around the shoulders of the young man, whose expression is a mixture of embarrassment and fear. The officer keeps up his pitch, warning that an admission or discovery of guilt later will not be so kindly received.

And then a man stands up, clutching a sack of belongings, and walks out of the crowd. "I pledged allegiance, I worked with them in Qayyarah," he says, referring to an area south of Mosul. "But I swear it was only for 23 days, then I had a break and I left and never went back to them."

Then another joins him, dressed in a hat and a leather jacket. And a third follows, wearing a tracksuit and avoiding eye contact as he makes his way up to the officer at the front, who smiles. "You see, nothing will happen, you pledged allegiance, you worked with them for a week, a month, three months, it's nothing. What we need is information," he says. "We need to finish with Daesh, they are like a cancer. If it persists, it will consume the body." — AFP



MOSUL: Iraqi Army soldiers help displaced civilians as they flee their homes due to fighting between Iraqi security forces and Islamic State militants, on the western side of Mosul, Iraq. — AP

STILL TALKING TOUGH, TRUMP TOUTS IMMIGRATION COMPROMISE

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump suggested a new merit-based system to regulate entry to the United States on Tuesday, as he tried to square his headline campaign rhetoric with the goal of broad immigration reform. Addressing Congress, Trump stood by his plan to subject travelers from certain countries deemed a risk to extreme vetting, insisting: "We cannot allow a beachhead of terrorism to form inside America." But alongside this promise of "strong measures to protect our nation from radical Islamic terrorism" he held out the prospect of a merit-based immigration system that might win cross-party support.

Arguing that mass immigration by unskilled workers costs the US taxpayer billions of dollars and depresses the wages and job opportunities of the working poor, Trump urged lawmakers to get behind reform. "If we are guided by the well-being of American citizens then I believe Republicans and Democrats can work together to achieve an outcome that has eluded our country for decades," he argued. A merit-based system—such as those in use in Canada and Australia—would, he argued "save countless dollars, raise workers' wages, and help struggling families—including immigrant families—enter the middle class."

Path to papers

"It is a basic principle that those seeking to enter a country ought to be able to support themselves financially," Trump told lawmakers. "Yet, in America, we do not enforce this rule, straining the very public resources that our poorest citizens rely upon," he added. US lawmakers, encouraged by the previous administration under President Barack Obama, have long sought to agree a broad-based package to provide roughly 11 million undocumented migrants with a path to legal residency.

But Republican members, in particular, faced opposi-



WASHINGTON: Members of congress attend US President Donald Trump's address to a joint session of the US Congress in the House chamber of the US Capitol. Trump's first address to Congress focused on national security, tax and regulatory reform, the economy, and healthcare. — AFP

tion from their electoral base to any measure that smacked of an "amnesty" for illegal immigrants—a sentiment that Trump played up to during his campaign. Vowing to build a wall on the Mexican border to keep out migrants he branded drug-dealers, murderers and

rapists, Trump gave every appearance of planning a still tougher line on immigration. But his attempts to introduce a visa ban on visitors from seven mainly-Muslim countries deemed seedbeds of terror have been halted by the courts, and he faces opposition from influential

quarters to tougher general controls.

Silicon Valley software giants, with their huge lobbying reach, rely on recruiting foreign engineers—particularly from the Indian sub-continent—and Republican backers in construction and agriculture employ millions of migrants. Federal officers from Immigration and Customs Enforcement and from Customs and Border Protection have set about enforcing existing immigration law with renewed vigor—but their dragnet has triggered popular protests. Earlier Tuesday, Trump suggested in a meeting with television news anchors that he was open to a deal that would legalize millions of undocumented immigrants as part of a bipartisan compromise.

'Build the wall'

That would mark a dramatic shift in policy. "The time is right for an immigration bill as long as there is compromise on both sides," Trump reportedly told the anchors. But there is clearly a line that Trump cannot cross if he is to placate his electoral base. Blue-collar crowds in the key states that gave him victory cheered his "Build the Wall" mantra to the rafters.

And Trump has firmly tied his pledge to fight illegal immigration to the prospect of jobs and security at home. "By finally enforcing our immigration laws, we will raise wages, help the unemployed, save billions and billions of dollars and make our communities safer for everyone," he said. He said he had given orders to create a special office to assist victims of crime by immigrants: "VOICE"—Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement. "We are providing a voice to those who have been ignored by our media, and silenced by special interests," Trump said. He then paid tribute to four guests in the audience, who, he said, had lost loved ones in violent crimes committed by immigrants living in the country illegally. — AFP

HOW COULD THE PENTAGON SPEND EXTRA BILLIONS? EASILY

US PRESIDENT TO HIKE MILITARY SPENDING BY NEARLY 10%

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump has outlined a goal to hike American military spending by nearly 10 percent, shoveling yet more cash toward a defense budget already greater than that of the next seven nations combined. The proposal faces stiff opposition but if approved, the basic military budget would swell to \$603 billion—with billions more available for overseas wars.

While critics question Trump's math, or say a military-industrial spending bonanza is unjustified, the Pentagon insists it is struggling on multiple fronts. Hawkish Republicans say the additional money wouldn't go nearly far enough. So what, exactly, does the military need billions of dollars extra for? The Pentagon's short answer: Plenty. Military leaders have in recent weeks warned that aging equipment and underfunding have left the Pentagon staving off a crisis in "readiness"—the speed at which it can respond.

They say the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere have hammered military equipment, much of which needs urgent upgrading or replacement. And the brass point to a depleted workforce dealing with constant deployments and low retention rates. "We were out of Iraq, but we are back in Iraq. We were out of Afghanistan, but we are not out of Afghanistan," said General Herbert "Hawk" Carlisle, who heads the Air Combat Command. "We have Libya, we have Yemen, we have North Korea still, we have South China Sea, the Ukraine," he added.

Carlisle noted that the Air Force has shrunk its fighter squadrons from almost 100 in the early days of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq down to just 55 today—even though warplanes form the backbone of the fight against the Islamic State group. He urgently wants to get the number of squadrons up to 60. Then there's the development of the Long-Range Standoff nuclear cruise missile, the replacement of America's intercontinental missile fleet, the F-35 stealth plane, a fighter pilot shortage and the goal of swelling the ranks from 317,000 today to about 350,000 — to name but a few areas clamoring for cash. And that's just the Air Force.

Ships and soldiers

Trump in January signed an executive order to begin increasing the size of the US military, promising new aircraft, naval ships and more resources for the Pentagon. He offered few specifics but has said he envisioned a naval fleet of 350 vessels, up from the Navy's current 274 and more than its 310-vessel target. The Navy has a long wishlist of what it could buy this year



WASHINGTON: Carryn Owens, the wife of slain Navy SEAL William 'Ryan' Owens, looks up while being acknowledged by US President Donald Trump during his address to a joint session of Congress at the US Capitol in Washington, DC. — AFP

if it had more money. This includes 24 F/A Super Hornets (\$2.3 billion), six more Poseidon maritime patrol planes (\$1.2 billion), another amphibious assault ship (\$1.83 billion) and so on. Neither the Navy nor Trump have described what the additional ships might be, but the costs would quickly tot up. A single Virginia class nuclear submarine goes for about \$2.7 billion. The latest aircraft carrier is nearly \$12 billion.

As for the Army, Thomas Spoeher, a retired lieutenant general and military expert at the Heritage Foundation conservative think tank, said it needs more than the 476,000 soldiers currently planned for 2017.

"That's still way below where there need to be. Everybody is in agreement that there need to be at least 500,000 active duty soldiers. That's a fairly costly endeavor (of up to \$5 billion) to do that," Spoeher said.

The Army started to shrink after the withdrawal of most troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, dropping from a high of 570,000 soldiers. Spoeher added that the Army's modernization programs for Apaches and Black Hawk helicopters need to be accelerated. Despite

Trump's promise of a "great rebuilding," his lofty pledges are constrained by fiscal reality. One roof on defense spending is a legal budget cap, known as sequestration, that was implemented under Barack Obama. And the Republican-held Congress will still need Democratic buy-in to approve the military spending proposal—a tough sell considering Trump wants to pay for it by slashing funding to other federal agencies and likely will cut taxes.

Still, for hawkish Republican Senator John McCain, Trump's proposals are lacking. The president's request is only \$18.5 billion above what Obama had proposed for fiscal year 2018 anyway, he said, urging a spending level of \$640 billion. "In other words, President Trump intends to submit a defense budget that is a mere three percent above President Obama's defense budget, which has left our military underfunded, undersized and unready to confront threats to our national security," McCain said. "With a world on fire, America cannot secure peace through strength with just three percent more than President Obama's budget. We can and must do better." — AFP

TRUMP'S FANS STOOD BY THEIR MAN DESPITE UNTRUTHS: STUDY

PARIS: Donald Trump supporters remained steadfast at the voting booth even after acknowledging that some of his statements were untrue, experiments conducted during the US presidential campaign revealed yesterday. Republicans were more likely to believe a statement-factual or false — if it was attributed to Trump, while Democrats showed the opposite bias, according to a study in the journal Royal Society Open Science.

That was hardly surprising, the researchers said. But even when participants of both political persuasions changed an erroneous view after being confronted with the correct answer, they often quickly gravitated back to their original view. The experiments, conducted in November 2015 and July 2016, provide scientific evidence for something that became obvious after Trump gained the White House, the study concluded: "spreading falsehoods does not discredit character".

Trafficking in "misinformation did not hinder [Trump's] candidacy, and even if misinformation was exposed, this did not reduce voting preference or positive feelings", the study found. A wealth of research shows that people disagree on what is true or not depending on their political loyalties. Many people think unemployment,

inflation and crime rates are lower, for example, when their preferred party is in power. But the recent US election suggested the gap may be even bigger than once suspected.

A case in point: Trump's oft-repeated assertion that the US murder rate is at its highest level in 47 years, which continues to be cited by his supporters as fact even though it has been thoroughly debunked. But how people's brains manage to deal with such disparities between reality and personally-held views is still poorly understood. Researchers led by Briony Swire at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) designed twin experiments to explore how much people rely on the credibility of a source in deciding whether something is true or not. In the first test, they presented 2,000 volunteers with eight statements—four true, four false—made by Trump during the campaign.

'An expiration date'

The same items were sometimes attributed to Trump, and sometimes presented as an unendorsed fact: "Donald Trump said that vaccines cause autism" or "Vaccines cause autism," for example. The participants graded each statement as true or false on a scale of one to ten, before being told the right answer and given a

chance to revise their opinion. Both Republican and Democrat supporters were willing in many cases to change their minds when corrected, the team found. But it didn't last long. "After a one-week delay, participants partially 're-believed' in the misinformation, and partially forgot the factual information that was true," the researchers said. "Explanations regarding both fact and fiction seemingly have an expiration date," they noted wryly.

In the second experiment, seven months later, nearly 1,000 different volunteers were presented with true and false statements Trump had made on the campaign trail, and asked to rate their veracity on the same scale. This time, however, all the statements were attributed to the candidate, and the same explanations as to why they were valid or not were alternately attributed to one of three sources: Republicans, Democrats or a "non-partisan fact-checking website". Volunteers were again asked whom they would vote for. "Trump supporters did not change their voting intentions even if they altered their beliefs about the truth of his statements," the study found. "This study contributes one further piece of the puzzle as to why Trump's success has been sustained," the researchers concluded. — AFP



SEATTLE: Asti Gallina (center) a volunteer law student from the University of Washington, works at a station near where passengers arrive on international flights at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in Seattle. Gallina was volunteering with the group Airport Lawyer, which also offers a secure website and mobile phone app that alerts volunteer lawyers to ensure travelers make it through customs without trouble. — AP

AIRPORTS AND LEGAL VOLUNTEERS SET FOR NEW TRUMP TRAVEL BAN

SEATTLE: Airport officials and civil rights lawyers around the country are getting ready for President Donald Trump's new travel ban — mindful of the chaos that accompanied his initial executive order but hopeful the forthcoming version will be rolled out in a more orderly way.

The new order was expected as soon as today. A draft suggested it would target people from six of the original seven predominantly Muslim countries but would exempt travelers who already have visas to come to the US. The latest draft in circulation no longer includes Iraq.

Since last month's ban, which courts have put on hold, a section of the international arrivals area at Dulles International Airport outside the nation's capital has been transformed into a virtual law firm, with legal volunteers ready to greet travelers from affected countries and ask if they saw anyone being detained. Similar efforts are underway at other airports, including Seattle-Tacoma International, where officials have drawn up plans for crowd control after thousands crammed the baggage claim area to protest the original ban.

"The plan is to be as ready as possible," said Lindsay Nash, an immigration law professor at Cardozo School of Law in New York who has been helping prepare emergency petitions on behalf of those who might be detained. Trump's initial action, issued Jan 27, temporarily barred citizens of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and Libya from coming to the US and halted acceptance of all refugees. The president said his administration would review vetting procedures amid concerns about terrorism in those seven nations.

Protesters flooded US airports that weekend, seeking to free travelers detained by customs officials amid confusion about who could enter the country, including US permanent residents known as green-card holders. Attorneys also challenged the order in court, including officials from Washington state. That lawsuit, which Minnesota joined, resulted in a federal judge temporarily blocking the government from enforcing the travel ban, a decision unanimously upheld by a panel of the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals.

A new order

Many civil rights lawyers and activists have said they don't believe a new order would cure all the constitutional problems of the original, including the claim that it was motivated by anti-Muslim discrimination. Trump has said he singled out the seven countries because they had already been deemed a security concern by the Obama administration. In his first address to Congress on Tuesday night, Trump said his

administration "is taking strong measures to protect our nation from radical Islamic terrorism" and is working on improved vetting procedures. "And we will shortly take new steps to keep our nation safe — and to keep out those who would do us harm," Trump said. Last week, analysts at the Homeland Security Department's intelligence arm found insufficient evidence that citizens of the seven Muslim-majority countries pose a terror threat to the United States. "It's not enough to just tweak an order and not change the nature of why it was issued in the first place," said Rula Aoun, director of the Arab American Civil Rights League in Dearborn, Michigan, which sued over the initial ban and is prepared to do the same with the rewrite if necessary.

Prepared and willing

In New York, American Civil Liberties Union attorney Lee Gelernt said the organization was ready to go to court if the administration tries to immediately enforce its new order. "The primary focus is being able to respond immediately to any request by the government to lift any of the injunctions, before the courts have had a chance to examine the new order," he said. Activists and airport officials alike said they hoped it would be phased in to give travelers fair warning, which might preclude any detentions from arriving flights. "We are prepared and willing," said Rebecca Sharpless, who runs the immigration clinic at the University of Miami School of Law. "But it's unlikely to cause the same kind of chaos of last time."

At Dulles, Sea-Tac, Minneapolis-St Paul and other airports, legal volunteers have greeted arriving travelers in shifts every day since the initial ban, wearing name tags or posting signs in different languages to identify themselves. The legal-services nonprofit OneJustice was ready to send email alerts to 3,000 volunteers in California if needed, deploying them to San Francisco and Los Angeles airports for people affected by any new order, chief executive Julia Wilson said. In Chicago, travelers have been signing up for an assistance program started by the local Council on American-Islamic Relations office to ensure swift legal help if they're detained.

Groups urged those arriving at 17 other airports, including Miami, Atlanta and San Diego, to register with Airport Lawyer, a secure website and free mobile app that alerts volunteer lawyers to ensure travelers make it through customs without trouble. Asti Gallina, a third-year student at the University of Washington Law School, volunteered at Sea-Tac for the first time Tuesday. It was quiet, she said. "An essential part of the American narrative is the ability to come to America," Gallina said. "Any infringement of that is something that needs to be resisted." — AP

BLACKFACE BAN, NO SUNDAY SHOPS: OFFBEAT IDEAS IN DUTCH POLLS

THE HAGUE: Legalizing all drugs, banning a blackface children's character, scrapping Sunday shopping and introducing mobile apps to tell MPs how to vote are some of the unorthodox ideas being peddled by Dutch political parties. Twenty-eight parties—a post-World War II record—are vying for the 150 seats in the centuries-old parliament when The Netherlands goes to the polls on March 15. The country's newest party, Artikel 1, founded late last year by former TV host Sylvana Simons to fight racism, has floated perhaps one of the most controversial ideas. It entails banning a traditional Christmas-time character called Zwarte Piet (Black Pete) from public spaces. The beloved jolly character accompanies Dutch Saint Nicolas in early December to hand out sweets to kids.

But foreigners are often shocked to see dozens of blackface men and women in gaudy costumes with red lips and afro wigs parading city streets. Artikel 1 would ban Black Pete figures from public spaces, and proclaim July 1 as a national holiday to mark the abolition of slavery. Meanwhile, should they get their say, the techno-savvy StemNL Party (VoteNL) proposes that all citizens should weigh in on draft legislation before the Dutch lower house via a mobile phone app. After receiving an alert that MPs are about to cast ballots, the issue would be put up for a "citizens' vote" via the app.

Party for non-voters

StemNL's lawmakers will then rely on the outcome of the citizens' poll to decide which way to vote. In the 21st century "we don't need a new government, we need a new system to give The Netherlands the



THE HAGUE: Dutch far-right Freedom Party leader (Partij Voor De Vrijheid - PVV) Geert Wilders (2nd right) walks as he arrives at the Senate in The Hague. The Dutch anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders and his populist Freedom party have suspended all public campaigning for next month's parliamentary elections following an alleged security leak. — AFP

kind of democracy it deserves," the party said on its website. At the other end of the spectrum, the Non-Voter Party (NietStemmers) has no political program and plans "not to vote for anything" in the lower house. "Political parties pretend that non-voters don't exist," the party says.

"We are going to end that. We are going to make

the voice of non-voters heard. From now on, non-voters will also get seats in parliament," the party said, hoping to cash in on disillusionment among some 12.9 eligible Dutch voters.

The Netherlands has a plethora of Christian-based parties from the centre-right Christian Democratic Appeal to the deeply conservative Reformed Political

Party (SGP). There is also the evangelical JezusLeef (Jesus Lives), which on its home page says it is a "party which does not add water to its wine". Currently with three seats in the lower house, the SGP wants to ban all Sunday shopping so citizens can "go to church."

The party, which has never had a woman in parliament since its founding in 1918, also advocates a "no work" Sunday, unless the work is an act of charity or an essential service.

It also vows to close all 600 so-called "coffee shops" in The Netherlands which sell cannabis, and to ban all advertisements featuring alcoholic drinks. The Libertarian Party on the other hand, which strives for maximum freedom and little or no government interference, wants to legalize the production, trade and possession of all drugs. Founded in 1993, it also wants The Netherlands out of the European Union, NATO and the United Nations, which exist "solely to help politicians further their careers."

Toilets on all trains

The 50Plus party, set up to defend the rights of the over 50s, already has one seat in parliament. Apart from serious proposals on pensions and retirement age, it also has a more pressing matter - that toilets should be added to all trains. Initially 81 parties enrolled with the Dutch Election Council in mid-December to field candidates on March 15, but only 28 finally met the criteria to participate. Parties which did not make it included the Kleptocrat Party-which wants to scrap anti-tobacco and anti-smoking laws-and the "HHH Party" which in Dutch translates to the "Ha Ha Ha Party", as well as the Politically Correct Party. — AFP



PARIS: French presidential election candidate for the right-wing Les Republicains (LR) party Francois Fillon touches a cow as he visits a stall at Paris' International Agriculture Fair yesterday in Paris. — AFP

FRENCH CANDIDATE FILLON FACES CHARGES BUT STAYS IN CAMPAIGN

PARIS: French presidential candidate Francois Fillon announced yesterday that judges had summoned him to press charges over an expenses scandal but vowed to continue his campaign. The 62-year-old conservative former premier was favorite at the start of the year to win the French presidency after clinching the nomination for the Republicans party in November. But he has since been hit by a series of allegations that he paid his wife Penelope and his children hundreds of thousands of euros over decades for allegedly fake parliamentary jobs.

Fillon said the charges were "entirely calculated to stop me being a candidate for the presidential election." "I won't give in, I won't surrender and I won't withdraw," he told a press conference yesterday. French prosecutors launched a full judicial inquiry into the claims last week, increasing pressure on Fillon's campaign which has been in crisis since allegations first surfaced in January.

Fillon has been defiant throughout, insisting publicly that the facts would exonerate him and reminding his party that they have few attractive alternatives to him. He has accused the media of trying to "lynch" him and believes Socialist President Francois Hollande has encouraged the investigations to discredit him, which would be illegal.

Recent surveys suggest that far-right leader Marine Le Pen and centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron are the two most likely to progress from the first round of the election on April 23. Macron is currently shown as the winner of a run-off vote scheduled for May 7.

Political assassination

Fillon campaigned as a sleaze-free reformer ready to administer a "radical" economic overhaul and cut public spending. He postponed a visit to a key farm show yesterday morning and announced the press conference, sending the rumor mill into overdrive amid speculation he would withdraw. Though employing a family member is not illegal in France, Fillon has not provided evidence publicly of Penelope's work beyond her contracts which show various periods of employment.

"From the start, I have not been treated like anyone else facing the justice system," Fillon said in his statement to reporters, claiming he was the victim of a "political assassination." "It's not just me they are killing, but the French presidential election," he said. British-born Penelope, or Penny as she is known, and two of their five children were paid around 900,000 euros (\$950,000) from public funds from Fillon's office budget, the Canard Enchaîné newspaper has reported. — AFP

NORWAY MASS KILLER BREIVIK 'NOT TREATED INHUMANELY' IN PRISON

OSLO APPEALS COURT OVERTURNS LOWER COURT JUDGMENT

OSLO: Norwegian mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik has not been treated "inhumanely" by being held in isolation in prison, an Oslo Appeals Court ruled yesterday, overturning a lower court judgment. "Breivik is not, and has not, been subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment," it said. The 38-year-old rightwing extremist, who killed 77 people in 2011, will file an appeal against the verdict to Norway's highest court, the Supreme Court, his lawyer Oystein Storrvik announced immediately after the ruling was published.

In April 2016, an Oslo district court stunned survivors and families of the victims when it found the Norwegian state guilty of treating him "inhumanely" and in "degrading" fashion, in breach of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The lower court judge had noted in particular Breivik's lengthy isolation regime. He has been held apart from other inmates since his arrest on the day of the attacks, and his lawyers have argued that has been detrimental to his mental health.

The Norwegian state appealed against that ruling and yesterday it won its case. "There are no clear indications that Breivik has been subjected to isolation damage during his prison sentence," the appeals court found. "The court is of the opinion that there is a high risk that Breivik will resort to violence in the future," it added. The appeals court also upheld the lower court's ruling that Breivik's right to privacy, as guaranteed by Article 8 of the Convention, had not been violated. He had argued the strict controls on his correspondence with the outside world breached his rights.

The appeals court noted that Breivik remained a dangerous man who was still trying to spread his extreme rightwing ideology and build up a network of followers. In July 2011 Breivik, disguised as a police officer, tracked and gunned down 69 people, most of them teenagers, at a Labor Party youth camp on the island of Utoya, shortly after killing eight people in a bombing outside a government building in Oslo. In January, during the appeals hearing held inside Skien prison where the self-proclaimed neo-Nazi is incarcerated, the state's lawyers argued the strict regime was justified because he was dangerous.

The court accepted the state's claim that it



Norwegian mass killer Anders Behring Breivik making a Nazi salute. — AFP

was compensating for the strict regime by providing him with three well-equipped cells, as well as extra interaction with guards and a prison visitor, among others. "The compensating measures are well adjusted to Breivik's needs. The court notes, however, that restricted socialisation with other inmates is under consideration and will possibly be tested soon," it said.

No sign of remorse

Breivik said he killed his victims because they valued multiculturalism. Convicted of the bloodiest crimes in Norway since World War II, he was sentenced in August 2012 to 21 years in prison, which can be extended indefinitely. The extremist has never expressed remorse for his actions, and at the opening of his appeals hearing in January he provoked the court's ire by making a Hitler-like salute. However nowadays, his actions and statements elicit little reaction in Norway, a tranquil and prosperous country that is trying to close this painful chapter of its history. Survivors and families of the victims most often try to ignore the man they simply refer to as "the terrorist".

'VIP inmate'

During the appeals hearing the lawyer representing the state, Attorney General Fredrik Sejersted, described Breivik as a "VIP inmate", in good physical and psychological health, and who was holding up well under his prison conditions. In prison, he has three cells measuring more than 10 square metres (107 square feet) each, some of which have views of nature outdoors, and where he can play video games, watch television and exercise.

"His prison conditions are better than those of other prisoners," argued Sejersted, calling them downright "cosy". "No other prisoner can discuss and play games with prison staff for two hours a day," he stressed, rejecting the notion of isolation. But Breivik claimed his isolation had radicalized him, and his lawyer argued it was affecting his client's psychological state. "Is this man healthy in a general sense?" Storrvik asked in his final remarks to the court. "His mental health doesn't seem good, in my opinion." He cited as proof the inappropriate content of his letters and his persistent insensitivity to his crimes. — AFP

BREXIT LOOMS LARGE; NORTHERN IRELAND HOLDS SNAP ELECTIONS

BELFAST: Northern Ireland holds snap elections today in a bid to resolve a political crisis precipitated by Brexit as bad blood and allegations of corruption threaten to rock a delicate peace in the province. Long-simmering tensions boiled over in January when deputy first minister Martin McGuinness of the Sinn Fein party quit, saying he could no longer work with First Minister Arlene Foster from the rival Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). That triggered fresh elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, a semi-autonomous body that has powers devolved from London over matters such as health, education and the local economy. If fences cannot be mended between Sinn Fein and the DUP after the elections, the assembly's executive could be suspended and the province fully governed from London.

In the May 2016 assembly elections, the Protestant, conservative and pro-British DUP won 38 seats in the 108-seat assembly. Sinn Fein-Catholic, socialist and Irish Republican-won 28 seats. Polls and experts predict this week's election will produce a result mirroring the 2016 outcome, meaning deadlock. McGuinness resigned in protest over a botched green heating scheme, the breaking point after months of tensions with the DUP. Foster had instigated the scheme when she was the province's economy minister.

Brexit in volatile mix

While deeply-engrained historical enmity persists between the parties, they have also been divided by Brexit. The DUP backed the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, while Sinn Fein wanted the UK to stay within the bloc. During a televised debate on Tuesday, Michelle O'Neill, who replaced McGuinness as the head of Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland said the DUP's pro-Brexit view

was "absolutely disgusting." "I think it is disappointing and disgraceful that the DUP have taken a stance against the majority of the people here," she said. In Northern Ireland, 55 percent voted Remain in the June EU referendum. Across the UK as a whole, 52 percent voted Leave. "Brexit sped into the political crisis because Brexit is a highly divisive issue between unionists and (Irish) nationalists," said Jonathan Tonge, a politics professor at Liverpool University and an author of several publications on Northern Irish politics.

"Brexit is a disaster for Northern Ireland on so many levels," said Tonge. "The most disastrous thing would be the return of a border... which will greatly offend nationalists." The open frontier between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is the UK's only land border with EU territory. Border checkpoints are a memory of Northern Ireland's violent past—a time known as "The Troubles" of three decades of strife in which more than 3,500 people were killed. With Britain seeking to pull out of the European single market some worry about customs posts being installed, damaging cross-border trade and weakening the relative stability of the last 20 years.

The elections and the border issue are being closely watched. Yesterday Britain's Northern Ireland minister James Brokenshire traveled to Brussels, where European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker last week stressed the importance of the 1998 peace deal. "The Irish and British have worked hard to have it and in no way should it become under risk," he said, after talks with Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny. George Mitchell, a former US senator who chaired the talks that led to the Good Friday agreement, said the EU had helped to bring Britain and Ireland to the negotiating table. "I think the UK being out of the European

Union may reduce the prospect for further co-operation," he told Sky News on Sunday.

The last opinion poll ahead of the vote, of 1,580 people surveyed online by LucidTalk between Friday and Sunday, put the DUP on 26 percent and Sinn Fein on 25 percent. In terms of seats, the DUP is expected to win 29 or 30, with Sinn Fein on 26 or 27 in a new 90-seat assembly configuration, according to Tonge. — AFP



WEST BELFAST: A woman walks past a Sinn Féin poster opposing Brexit on the Falls road in West Belfast, Northern Ireland. — AP

RUSSIA ORTHODOX CHURCH FUELS A POWERFUL PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT

MOSCOW: When Anna Kuzeva became pregnant with her second child, she was terrified. With no home, money or family in Moscow, she saw no way of keeping the baby. So she scheduled an abortion. But then she met an activist from an Orthodox NGO, who took her in to a shelter in central Moscow for expectant mothers, and changed her mind. Sitting in her small, cosy room, 33-year-old Kuzeva cradles her baby boy Ilya as four-year-old Antonina plays with her doll. "We are taking you in, but you won't be having the abortion," Kuzeva recalls being told.

The Mother's House shelter takes in 10 women and their children for up to a year. Opened in 2012, it was its director, Maria Studenikina, who persuaded Kuzeva not to abort. "The Orthodox Church and the public are very concerned about abortions today," said Studenikina. Across Russia, the pro-life movement, which espouses nationalism and Orthodox values, is growing in influence and is embraced both by religious groups and government agencies. "The security of our state depends on what sort of population we have,"

Studenikina said, sitting under an icon of the Virgin Mary. Russia's abortion policies have changed drastically several times in the past century. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviet Union became the world's first country to legalize abortion in 1920. Stalin then banned the practice for nearly two decades. Later, it became the primary method of family planning, until contraception and information became widely available in the 1990s. In 1993, the abortion rate was one of the highest in the world, at 235 per 100 live births, but had plunged to less than 44 by 2015, according to state statistics agency data.

Nevertheless, with the Church holding more sway in decision-making, and the government keen to increase the birth rate, abortions are still portrayed by the authorities as a growing problem. Lawmakers last year sought to remove abortions from the list of services covered by state health insurance. That bill was rejected but another one, requiring clinics to obtain additional certification to perform abortions, was passed. — AFP

BEIJING'S SHANTIES: TOWNS OF HOPE AND DESPAIR

BEIJING: A nerve centre for migrant workers who stream in from around the country in search of a better life, Black Bridge Village is a place of industry and desperation. Posters on the wall offer easy money for blood donations: 400 ml-almost one US pint-earns between 400 and 500 yuan, enough to pay the rent for a small room.

Ramshackle structures of brick, corrugated iron and wood have mushroomed everywhere with little thought or design, the jobs on offer are often menial and low paid. Red lights illuminate beauty parlors, where women, sometimes offering more than just haircuts, wait to entertain the many lonely men who have come from around the country to work in Beijing's thriving construction industry. China's capital relies on migrant labor to keep its economy humming, but high real estate prices and China's restrictive residence registration system, known as hukou, have driven many into shanty towns on Beijing's periphery.

Black Bridge Village-known as Heiqiaocun in Chinese - is one such place. Looped by a railroad the government uses to test trains, the whole village has found itself on the wrong side of the tracks. Access to health care and schooling is limited. Creature comforts are few: Families huddle in unheated, one-room apartments with no running water. Even on the occasions when Beijing's often smoggy skies are blue, the air here can be thick with smoke as many use old-fashioned coal braziers for heat. A woman surnamed Yang and her husband live in a typical one-room apartment off a dusty alley.

It has no toilet or shower. Families stir fry dishes from home in a simple shared kitchen in the hallway, the smell of ginger and garlic mixing with the coal smoke. Back in their hometown in eastern Jiangsu province, the couple lived in a roomy two-storey home. They chose such modest accommodation in this village close to the capital to save more



BEIJING: An elderly man sits on the back of a tricycle ridden by an elderly woman in the Heiqiaocun migrant village in Beijing. — AFP

money. Ms Yang works as a maid for foreign families, travelling to central Beijing to clean and cook in roomy apartments. Her husband works in construction, earning 10,000 yuan (\$1,500) a month for carpentry, a good wage in a country where the average salary in major urban areas was 6,000 yuan in 2015.

Many migrant workers in the village have tried to create a taste of home to help them navigate the tough living conditions they endure to earn a better, regular wage. Groceries sell exotic ingredients for making spicy dishes from southwest Sichuan province, which many of the town's residents call home. Steam billows from the windows of tiny carry out restaurants, where cooks make dumplings and hardy white bread called mantou for workers who hail from China's frozen north. For all the hardship, many earn wages they could not hope to match in their home region. And for those who would rather put their faith in lady luck, a small betting parlour sells lottery tickets. — AFP



MANILA: People look at a photograph exhibit of victims of extra-judicial killings in President Rodrigo Duterte's drug war on the grounds of a church in Manila yesterday. — AFP

MORE BODIES ON THE STREETS; PHILIPPINES DRUG WAR RAGES

MANILA: Jomar Palamar and his girlfriend Judy Escilona were killed in the early hours of yesterday, cut down in a hail of bullets fired by unknown gunmen in a rundown backstreet of the Philippines capital Manila. Described by a family member and community leaders as drug users, the couple appeared to be the latest victims of the deadly war on drugs launched by President Rodrigo Duterte in which over 8,000 people have died.

Most have been small-time dealers and users killed in police operations or shot dead by unknown gunmen. Duterte said on Tuesday he would recall some police to anti-drugs operations to provide fresh impetus to the campaign. He had suspended police from operations a month ago after which the killings slowed but did not end.

Police said they did not know who killed Palamar, 22, and Escilona, 20. "They were on a watch list, because they were users," said Nestor del Rosario, the deputy leader of the local barangay, or community, who was huddled along with dozens of neighbors behind a police cordon at the crime scene. Police and barangay officials said the two died in shots fired by gunmen on motorcycles as they stepped out of a ramshackle convenience store in the Pasong Tamo area of Manila. At least a dozen shots were fired, they said, going by spent bullet casings on the street.

Palamar died on the spot, shot in the head. His body was lying on the street when a Reuters team arrived at the scene, his face covered in blood. Escilona was taken to hospital but didn't make it there alive. No one in the crowd claimed to have witnessed the shooting. Del Rosario said four security cameras on the street could have captured the killing. But none were working. Duterte suspended the national police from his war on drugs in late January after rogue officers kidnapped and killed a South Korean businessman and handed charge to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA).

More than half a dozen drug users and dealers in some of Manila's toughest areas told Reuters that the drugs trade had come out in the open after the suspension, although it was

not possible to verify their comments. The "vigilante-style" killings of drug suspects slowed, down to about 400 in February, but it was unclear how many were drugs-related. On Tuesday, Duterte said he needed more men to fight drugs, and had no choice but to put some police back in the campaign. He said the PDEA would remain in charge of the crackdown, with the support of the police and the military. However, authorities have not spelled out when police are likely to return to the campaign.

Death lists

In one of a series of investigative reports last year into the war on drugs, Reuters found that low-level officials in poor neighborhoods helped police assemble "watch lists" of alleged drug users and pushers that were effectively hit-lists, with many of the people named ending up dead. Authorities strenuously deny that, and dismiss allegations that police are behind thousands of these shadowy killings, either pulling the trigger themselves, or paying hit men to do it.

National police chief Ronald dela Rosa warned on Monday that lawlessness and narcotics were returning to the streets and gains in the drug war would soon be lost unless police were allowed to tackle the problem. In another part of Manila after midnight on Tuesday, the body of a man was pulled out of a swamp behind a labyrinth of slums in the city's Malabon area. The victim, Jonathan Lapuz Valles, 28, was shot through the side of the head. Police at the scene declined to give details.

"Still under investigation," said the lead officer. Funeral home workers hauled his black body bag awkwardly through winding, narrow alleys, repeatedly dropping it and as they stumbled on planks of wood and rocks sunken into the mud. His girlfriend howled as the body was loaded into a van on a stretcher in front of crowds of onlookers and taken to the funeral parlour before it was laid out on a table. One of the workers at the parlour said the victim was a small-time seller of drugs. "He had no job. I don't know if he was into drugs," said Valles's younger brother, Julius, his next of kin, who showed no emotion as identified the body. "I didn't know him so well." — Reuters

FORCED SMILES MASK PAIN OF HK TRAFFICKED BAR GIRLS

GIRLS FORCED TO SELL SEX FOR MAMA-SAN IN HONG KONG

HONG KONG: As she smiles at customers and makes small talk with regulars in a Hong Kong bar, Kat's every move is being watched by an older woman, a pimp who answers to the name "Mama-san". The 23-year-old from the Philippines has been forced to sell sex for Mama-san and her organized crime network since December when she was moved to Hong Kong under a recruiter's promise of a well-paying job and easy working conditions.

A single mother, whose own mother is too sick to work, Kat jumped at the chance to earn a high salary but soon after arriving in Hong Kong, Mama-san confiscated her passport and sent her to work in the bar alongside other trafficked women. Clients pay up to 5,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$650) to have sex with Kat but payment goes directly to her pimp. Without any money, she said she cannot escape or fly home - and besides, her traffickers know where her family lives. "I'm depressed. The other bar girls are depressed. They have to force themselves to be happy and make jokes," said Kat, sobbing. "The Chinese bar owner gets angry with me because I look so sad."

Kat, who declined to give her real name, is one of hundreds of women who are trafficked to Hong Kong from mainland China, Southeast Asia, Europe and South America for forced prostitution in the city's brothels, bars, spas and pornography industry, rights activists say. Many victims do not speak out for fear of being punished by their traffickers, some of them linked to the powerful Triad organized crime group. Others are afraid of being deported home or criminalized for being in the possession of fake papers arranged by their pimps, campaigners say.

"I take a risk every time I go out with a male customer," said Kat, who also shudders at the parties she is made to attend where cocaine, marijuana and other drugs are used by clients and forced on

the girls. "They are great actresses because like one of them said, 'I need to show that I am happy and OK even when I am not. This to me kills a soul,'" said Marcela Santos, an advocate for trafficking victims who did not want to give her real name, saying it may put at risk her work helping survivors with jobs, training and sometimes a flight home.

Identifying victims

Last year, the US State Department downgraded Hong Kong in its annual Trafficking in Persons report to its Tier 2 Watch List, just one rank above countries like North Korea. The report criticized Hong Kong for not doing more to identify victims of sex and labor trafficking among vulnerable groups such as foreign migrants, domestic workers and women and children in prostitution.

In 2016, the police identified a total of 16 trafficking victims who were foreign women forced into prostitution. Hong Kong's Security Bureau, in charge of law and order as well as immigration, said the police officers had been provided with regular training on identifying victims of human trafficking. Recognizing the need for more training, the Immigration Department and Hong Kong Police Force introduced new and revised procedures for identifying potential trafficking victims including a checklist for danger signs.

The list of vulnerable trafficking victims has also been expanded to sex workers, illegal workers and illegal immigrants. "It's often challenging for law enforcement personnel and service providers to identify potential victims. In most situations, victims cannot escape from the traffickers," said Nurul Qoiriah, head of the Sub-Office of the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Hong Kong. Sandy Wong, chair of the Anti-Human Trafficking Committee of the Hong Kong Federation

of Women Lawyers, said the best way to tackle forced prostitution was to target buyers of sex. "Despite the police's commitment and constant efforts in combating vice establishments, many operate in broad daylight and through the cracks in the legal system and evade arrest by police," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Investigating forced prostitution takes a long time with many victims unwilling to come forward as witnesses, she said. "If we don't stop the source of demand, there will always be someone who will provide the supply by hook or by crook," Wong said, adding that Hong Kong should consider adopting a version of Sweden's 1999 law which criminalizes the purchase of sex.

Drugs

Some victims blame police corruption for inaction over human trafficking in Hong Kong. One of the Philippine women Santos helped to rescue, Jean, said she was brought to Hong Kong on a two-month tourist visa in 2014 by an organized crime group in the Philippines with Triad links. Her traffickers then used fraud to organize a two-year domestic helper visa for her as part of an arrangement with a bar in Hong Kong co-owned by a police officer - where she was immediately put to work.

"Of course it's like torture to pay back the debt. The agent doesn't care. They don't know how clients treat you badly," she said by telephone from Manila where she now lives. "Life was hell. The most traumatic thing is you have to do a lot of drugs. Clients ask you to buy drugs like cocaine, ice, marijuana ... (They) make you take it with them." She said the victims always knew when the police planned to come to the bar to check the women's papers because their passports would be returned to them temporarily. — Reuters



KABUL: An Afghan man carries a bag of dirt to repair the mud roof of his house and prevent rain from leaking inside, on the outskirts of Kabul, Afghanistan. — AP

KABUL'S THIRSTY RESIDENTS DIG DEEP TO COMBAT DROUGHT AND OVERUSE

KABUL: A growing population is straining water supplies in Afghanistan's capital, forcing those who can afford it to dig unregulated wells ever deeper to tap a falling water table. Finding water in arid Afghanistan is virtually always a challenge, but a drop in the groundwater level in Kabul caused by overuse and drought is making it even more difficult for residents, especially the poor. Modern Kabul was originally planned to support about 1 million people, but is now home to more than 4.6 million, according to US government estimates, with people fleeing violence and seeking jobs thronging into urban centers.

Several unseasonably dry winters, with little rain and a dusting of snow, have exacerbated the problem. Heavy rain and snow this year has raised hopes that groundwater can be replenished, at least for a while. "The increase in population and drought has resulted in a shortage of water in Kabul, so more people are demanding deeper wells to get it," said Aslam Khan, who runs a well-digging business.

Since 2001, Kabul's sprawl has expanded by

nearly 2,500 square kilometers, according to the World Bank, with some of the poorest arrivals perched in homes on rocky hills around the city, where wells are generally non-existent. At the base of the hills, children cluster around hand-operated pumps, filling buckets and cans before climbing back up to their homes. "We have lots of problem in getting water," said 15-year-old Mohammad Jaweed, bent under a load for his family.

'No serious attention'

People who can afford it usually dig a well rather than depending on the city's limited water system, but they are having to go ever deeper to reach the receding water. The depth of a well varies across the city, but Khan said many residents are being forced to dig 10 to 20 meters deeper than in the past. In some cases, wells have to go down 150 meters or more to reach clean water, at a cost of more than \$5,200, he said, a price out of reach of many people. Officials say well digging has spiraled out of control, with little or no regulation of how the ever

more scarce water is exploited. "Unfortunately there hasn't been any serious attention to this," said Hamidullah Yelani, director general of the government's Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Corporation.

In the past, residents have been banned from digging wells within 100 meters of each other, but wells are now routinely dug 5 to 10 meters apart, sucking ever more water from the aquifers, said Khan.

Yelani said the government was looking to implement a licensing system. The ministry of water and power did not respond to requests for comment. Poor residents are not optimistic authorities will get a grip on the problem, at least in a way that will help them get better access. "The government mustn't allow people to dig deep wells because it has caused many problems," said Mohammad Karim, 60, who said he was too old to carry water up to his home on a hill. "The poor can't dig deep wells, but that doesn't mean they should die of thirst." — Reuters

INDIA TOP POLITICIAN NABBED OVER ILLEGAL ADOPTION RING

KOLKATA: Indian police said yesterday they had arrested a senior regional official from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party over alleged links to a trafficking scandal that saw children sold to foreign couples. Investigators said children aged between six months and 14 years were sold in illegal adoptions to couples from Europe, America and Asia for between \$12,000 and \$23,000 and taken out of the country. Police said they arrested Juhi Choudhury, a general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the eastern state of West Bengal, late on Tuesday and charged her in connection with the case.

"She has been charged under several sections of the Indian penal code including cheating, trafficking and exploitation," said Rajesh Kumar, a director-general from the state's Criminal Investigation Department. The head of the adoption centre at the heart of the scandal, Chandana Chakraborty, told investigators that Choudhury had been involved in child trafficking for several years. Police arrested Chakraborty, a retired school principal, and her deputy Sonali Mondal last month after a tip-off from the federal adoption agency.

The pair ran the Bimala Sishu Griha

centre where children were sold abroad to couples for as much as 1.5 million rupees (\$23,000). "At least 17 children were sold, with the children reportedly sent to France, the United States, Spain and Singapore," Kumar said. Investigators said they had been monitoring the charity since June when child welfare authorities found discrepancies in their records and relocated all the children from one of the homes. One said the accused ran health camps to identify poor and unmarried pregnant women and persuaded them to give up their babies for adoption after paying them.

It is unclear how the alleged sales escaped official notice. India has an estimated 30 million orphans, but the rules governing international adoptions are strict and domestic adoptions remain relatively rare. Experts say desperate couples wanting to adopt in India are often frustrated by lengthy bureaucratic delays and complex rules, pushing them towards the thriving illegal adoption market. The latest scandal comes roughly four months after police arrested 18 people over a racket that saw gangs steal newborn babies from nursing homes with the intention of selling them. — AFP

'MEET TO KILL' ADMITS MURDERING CAMBODIAN CRITIC

GUNMAN CLAIMS THE HIT WAS IN REVENGE FOR AN UNPAID DEBT



PHNOM PENH: In this file photo, prominent political analyst Kem Ley smiles as he celebrates the 67th anniversary to commemorate the Kampuchea Krom territory's return to Vietnam by the French government. A Cambodian man has confessed in court yesterday to killing Kem Ley over an unpaid loan, but the victim's family says he's a scapegoat in a political assassination. —AP

PHNOM PENH: An unemployed former Cambodian soldier who calls himself "Meet to Kill" admitted to the brazen murder of a renowned government critic yesterday, saying the hit was in revenge for an unpaid debt. Doubt was immediately cast over his apparent motive by Kem Ley's supporters in a country with a long and dark history of political assassinations. Oeuth Ang, a former soldier who had little steady work, shot Kem Ley in the head while his victim was having a morning coffee at a Phnom Penh gas station in July.

He told the court that he gave \$3,000 to the outspoken activist for a property deal that went bad—more than double Cambodia's average annual wage. Pleading guilty at a four-hour trial in the capital, the 44-year-old said he acted alone after following Kem Ley for days to find the right moment to strike. "I shot twice," he told the court. "The first bullet struck his head but I was afraid he would not die, so I fired another shot at him." But the

accused now said he "felt regret" for the killing.

Throughout, Oeuth Ang insisted the court address him by his nickname Chuob Samlab, which in Khmer means "meet to kill"—a moniker given to him during his years as a soldier. He faces life in prison. Tens of thousands turned out for Kem Ley's funeral in scenes that rattled the government of ruling strongman Hun Sen. The prime minister's more than three decade rule has seen multiple critics murdered in rarely solved cases, especially in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Acted alone?

Kem Ley was an eloquent and charismatic critic of Cambodia's politicians in both the ruling government and its opposition. He set up a new grassroots political movement, although it has now abandoned plans to field candidates in upcoming local elections this year. In the days before his death, he gave interviews on a report alleging Hun Sen's

family to have amassed huge wealth. The killer's motive has been questioned by Kem Ley's wife, who has since fled to Thailand fearing for her safety, as well as friends of both the victim and his killer.

Am Sam Ath, from local rights group Licadho, questioned why the court had not made more effort to explore where the apparently poor killer got hold of so much money to lend the victim. "I believe that Chuob Samlab alone could not kill Kem Ley," he said. Oeuth Ang said the cash he gave to Kem Ley came from the sale of a plot of land he owned. He added he spent an additional \$1,400 on the gun used to kill Kem Ley. Cambodian media reports have suggested the accused lived precariously since leaving the army, see-sawing between gambling and moving into Buddhist temples when he ran out of cash. While the court accepted Oeuth Ang's guilty plea, none of the other nine witnesses—including police—were called to testify about his finances. —AFP

AUSTRALIA CALLS 113 AMBASSADORS HOME TO RESHAPE FOREIGN POLICY

US, CHINA RELATIONSHIPS TO BE EXAMINED AFTER STRAINS

SYDNEY: Australia will call home all of its overseas ambassadors for a meeting, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said yesterday, as it reshapes its foreign policy to balance ties with long-time ally the United States and China, its largest trading partner. It is the first time Australia has brought together all of its top diplomats from their 113 missions around the world. The aim is to draw up a "white paper" to guide Australian diplomacy for the next decade, the first document of its kind since 2003.

"At a time of significant global uncertainty, it is vital that Australia harness the experience and intellect of our most senior diplomats," Bishop said in a statement. She said the meeting later this month would focus on a broad reset of Australia's approach to international relations and trade. Australia's relations with

China have been strained recently by a push-back against foreign investment by an increasingly conservative parliament in Canberra. It also hit a low point in its relationship with the United States after a rancorous phone call between Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and new US President Donald Trump, during which the pair clashed over a planned refugee swap.

Kim Beazley, Australia's former ambassador to the United States and a former leader of the opposition Labor Party, said the US relationship was vital, not only because of their long-standing strategic alliance but also because of the amount of investment ploughed into Australia. "I am more worried in economic terms about Trump discouraging American investment globally than I am about the possibilities of a trade war between the US and China," Beazley told Reuters by telephone. The

ambassadors will meet in Canberra for two days with Turnbull, Bishop, and Trade Minister Steven Ciobo, with the white paper scheduled to be delivered around the middle of the year.

Alexandra Oliver, lead researcher on Australia's white paper at Sydney-based think tank the Lowy Institute, said a global political shift had challenged traditional foreign policy-making. "Concerns about immigration, about terrorism, about globalization, about global free trade - all of those assumptions that we have held to be for the common global good are in question now," Oliver said. "It would be foolish to say it is just the Trump presidency that's caused this, these are broader social movements that are evident in developments like Brexit and in the way that Europe appears to be fracturing at the edges, if not at the centre," she said. —Reuters



HETIAN: Chinese military police getting off a plane to attend an anti-terrorist oath-taking rally in Hetian, northwest China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. —AFP

HONG KONG REBEL MPs FIGHT PARLIAMENT BAN

HONG KONG: Four rebel Hong Kong lawmakers were in court yesterday to fight a government bid to disqualify them from parliament, a move criticized as an attack on democracy under pressure from Beijing. Hong Kong's unpopular leader Leung Chun-ying and the justice department have brought the case against the pro-democracy legislators who they accuse of failing to properly take their oaths of office during their swearing-in last October.

It comes as fears grow that Beijing is increasingly interfering in semi-autonomous Hong Kong, sparking calls by some activists for self-determination or even independence for the city which have angered China. "What's happening today would nev-

er happen in a democratic society," said one of the four targeted lawmakers, Leung Kwok-hung, known as "Long Hair", as he entered Hong Kong's High Court. Two pro-independence lawmakers have already been banned from office by the High Court after they inserted expletives and draped themselves with "Hong Kong is not China" flags during the swearing-in.

That decision followed a special "interpretation" of the city's constitution by Beijing that effectively prevented them from taking up their seats because of the way they took their oaths. The four legislators in court yesterday are not staunchly pro-independence but two of them have advocated self-determination

for Hong Kong. All four altered their oaths during the swearing-in, which requires lawmakers to repeatedly describe Hong Kong as a "special administrative region of China". Unlike the pro-independence activists, they were allowed to take up their seats. But the government is now seeking to remove them respectively.

'Political case'

Defense lawyer Martin Lee-himself a respected democracy campaigner—said there had been unorthodox readings of oaths in the past without disqualifications, and that lawmakers "could not have imagined" that they could lose their seats. "This who case is very political," he told the court.

"You have the government attacking some of the legislators," Lee argued that the only justification for forcing them out of their seats would be if they had outright refused to take the pledge. But prosecutor Johnny Mok questioned whether their oaths met requirements, including "solemnity and sincerity".

Mok said lawmaker Nathan Law, who led massive pro-democracy rallies in 2014 and is the city's youngest ever legislator, made an "invalid" oath. Law quoted Gandhi before making the pledge, saying: "You will never imprison my mind," and used intonation to make his oath sound like a question. Legislator and former protest leader Lau Siu-lai read her pledge at a snail's pace, which Mok said "cannot be said to be sincere". Veteran anti-China lawmaker Leung raised a yellow umbrella—a symbol of the democracy movement—during his pledge, which Mok said he turned into a "theatrical performance".

The fourth defendant, Edward Yiu, added lines to his oath, saying he would "fight for general universal suffrage", which Mok described as a conscious decision to alter the pledge. Hong Kong is governed under a semi-autonomous "one country, two systems" deal after being handed back to China by Britain in 1997. The framework is supposed to safeguard the city's freedoms and way of life. But there are growing concerns that its liberties are disappearing in a range of areas, from politics to media and education, as Beijing tightens its grip. —AFP



HONG KONG: Two women hold an umbrella as they protest in support of elected pro-democracy lawmakers Edward Yiu, 'Long Hair' Leung Kwok-hung, Nathan Law, and Lau Siu-lai outside the High Court before they face a judicial review into whether they should be disqualified from their Legislative Council seats, in Hong Kong yesterday. —AFP

TIGHT SECURITY AS MALAYSIAN COURT CHARGES WOMEN WITH KIM MURDER

SEPANG: A tightly-guarded Malaysian court yesterday charged two women with murdering the estranged half-brother of North Korea's leader, who was killed with a powerful nerve agent, and warned them they face the death penalty if convicted. The handcuffed suspects were brought to court surrounded by masked and heavily armed police and Special Forces for their first public appearance since they were arrested two weeks ago.

At least one wore a bulletproof vest on leaving the court. South Korea says the government of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un ordered the killing of Kim Jong-Nam, who had lived overseas for years but had voiced criticism of the regime, and engaged two outsiders to carry it out. Indonesian Siti Aisyah, 25, and Doan Thi Huong, 28, from Vietnam, were held just days

after the killing at Kuala Lumpur International Airport on February 13, which Malaysia said was carried out with a nerve agent so deadly that the UN terms it a weapon of mass destruction.

CCTV footage shows two women approaching him as he prepared to fly to Macau and seemingly push something into his face. Kim suffered an agonizing death within 20 minutes of being attacked. Siti, wearing a red T-shirt, was brought in first to hear the murder charge read out before being taken away. Huong, dressed in a yellow top, then heard the charge in Vietnamese. They were accused of murdering Kim with four others still "at large". Four North Korean suspects fled Malaysia on the day of the murder, police have said. Both female suspects say they thought they were taking part in a prank video but police have dismissed

the claims. Neither woman was asked to enter a plea yesterday and their trial is not expected to begin for several months.

However, Huong's lawyer S Selvam said she told the court: "I am not guilty." Selvam added his client was "nervous as she is facing a murder charge". Huong was seen wearing a bulletproof vest as she was escorted out of the building and looked tired as she was led away. Indonesia's acting ambassador to Malaysia Andreano Erwin said he had met Siti in court and she was "calm". "We told her to take care of her health as it will be a long trial process," he said. Jakarta's foreign ministry said later that defense lawyers had been granted a request for a "gag order" to prevent details of the investigations being disclosed "so there is no interference in the ongoing legal process". —AFP



SEPANG: Vietnamese national Doan Thi Huong (left), 28, is escorted with a heavy police presence after a court appearance with Indonesian national Siti Aisyah, 25, at the magistrates' court in Sepang yesterday for their alleged role in the assassination of Kim Jong-Nam, the half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un. —AFP

BLOODY ISLAMIC STATE VIDEO PUTS CHINA IN CROSSHAIRS

BEIJING: Islamic State militants from China's Uighur ethnic minority have vowed to return home and "shed blood like rivers", according to a jihadist-tracking firm, in what experts said marked the first IS threat against Chinese targets. The threat came in a half-hour video released Monday by a division of the Islamic State in western Iraq and featuring militants from China's Uighur ethnic group, said the US-based SITE Intelligence Group, which analyzed the footage.

China has for years blamed exiled Uighur "separatists" for a series of violent attacks in its western Xinjiang region—the Uighur homeland—and warned of the potential for militants to link up with global jihadist groups. In the video, a Uighur fighter issued the threat against China just before executing an alleged informant. "Oh, you Chinese who do not understand what people say! We are the soldiers of the Caliphate, and we will come to you to clarify to you with the tongues of our weapons, to shed blood like rivers and avenging the oppressed," according to SITE's translation.

A traditionally Muslim group, many Uighurs complain of cultural and religious repression and discrimination by China. It appears to be the Islamic State's "first direct threat" against China, Dr Michael Clarke, an expert on Xinjiang at the National Security College of Australian National University said. "It is the first time that Uighur-speaking militants have claimed allegiance to IS," he added.

The video showed China is now "very firmly a target of jihadist rhetoric," Clarke said, marking a shift from years past when it rarely figured in statements by global jihadist groups. But Clarke said it also could indicate a possible split among Uighur fighters, as it includes a warning to those fighting with the al Qaeda-aligned Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) in Syria. China's foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said yesterday that he had not seen the video but noted that "East Turkestan terrorist forces have been posing a severe threat to China's security," referring to Xinjiang militants. He called for international cooperation "to combat such terrorist forces".

Show of force

China maintains tight security in Xinjiang but a drumbeat of deadly unrest has continued. A knife attack last month left eight dead, including three attackers, police said. The video was released on the same day China staged the latest in a series of mass rallies by armed police in Xinjiang meant to indicate Chinese resolve in crushing security threats.

More than 10,000 officers gathered Monday in the regional capital Urumqi—the fourth such show of force this year in Xinjiang. Chinese authorities also have strengthened controls and anti-terrorist rhetoric. In one violence-wracked corner of Xinjiang, authorities are offering rewards of up to 5 million yuan (\$730,000) to those who expose terror plots or "kill, wound, or subdue" any attackers. The Islamic State video showed fighters, including heavily armed children, giving speeches, praying, and killing other "informants".

It also featured images of Chinese riot police guarding mosques, patrolling Uighur markets, and arresting men in what appears to be western China. The Chinese flag is pictured engulfed in flames. Clarke said the hints of a Uighur split could "intensify the threat to China" as it indicates Uighur militants may be able to tap into the capabilities of both the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda. Overseas experts have up to now expressed doubts about the strength of Uighur militants, with some saying China exaggerates the threat to justify tough security. A US think tank said in July that Chinese religious restrictions on Muslims may have driven more than 100 to join the Islamic State.

Authorities have banned or strictly controlled the observance of certain Muslim practices, such as growing beards, wearing headscarves, and fasting during Ramadan, calling them symbols of "Islamic extremism". "When we see the government involved in a very heavy crackdown, it hasn't really ever solved the problem, it hasn't made it go away," said Raffaello Pantucci, director of International Security Studies at the UK-based Royal United Services Institute. "In some cases it has made it worse." —AFP



A man performs on a flyboard at the Dubai International Marine Club during the Gulf emirate's international Boat Show on Tuesday — AFP

FRENCH ARTIST ROCKED BY HIS WEEK INSIDE BOULDER

PARIS: A French artist emerged "a little stunned" yesterday from a week entombed inside a 12-tonne rock and thanked it for having made him feel "so welcome". Abraham Poincheval, 44, had difficulty walking as he was helped from the stone onto a chair before being taken away for a medical examination. "It is normal that I should feel a little stunned after spending a week inside a rock," he told reporters half an hour later. "I would like to thank it," Poincheval added. "It made me so welcome."

He had carved out a hole inside the rock in his own image, just big enough for him to sit up in, with a niche to hold supplies of water, soup and dried meat. Poincheval's extreme performance in a Paris art museum has become something of a sensation in the French capital. Crowds thronged the Palais de Tokyo to watch him inside through an infra-red camera.

Hundreds tried to talk to him through a crack in the rock, with the artist telling AFP that some had read him poetry, played guitar or told him about their dreams and nightmares. But the artist, no stranger to bizarre and death-defying feats, admitted there were moments when the experience "shook" him - with "some huge moments when I lost myself. "I had the feeling that I was just a particle inside this mineral world," he said. Sometimes he even felt he and the rock were one and the same. "I felt I was a stone at the side of a path and at night I was a much wilder rock."

Poincheval, who previously spent a fortnight sewn-up

inside a stuffed bear, had earlier told AFP through a crack in the limestone boulder that his confinement had been "like tripping". "I am travelling in this rock without moving, like an astronaut," he said, buoyed up by the fact that he had "got into people's heads". Dubbed France's most extreme artist, he will attempt to become a human hen later this month and hatch a dozen eggs by sitting on them for weeks on end. Lack of sleep rather than claustrophobia was his biggest worry inside the darkness of the rock, he said.

Living with his excrement

Without a watch - and with only an emergency phone line - he had no way to tell the time. The artist could only move his feet and hands a few inches, and had to store his excrement around him. But he assured AFP at the weekend that there had been "no accidents" peeing into his empty water bottles. Emotionally, however, his time inside was something of a rollercoaster, he said. "It's very complex. You pass from one feeling to another. Like you are being carried away on a raft," he said. "It's like tripping. I am trying to explain (the feelings) in language but it is very difficult to put down in black and white."

Poincheval is no stranger to bizarre performances. He ate worms and beetles while living inside the stuffed bear, was buried under a rock for eight days and sailed France's Rhone river inside a giant plastic corked bottle. He has crossed the Alps in a barrel, and last year spent a week on top of a 20-m pole outside a Paris train station. — AFP



PARIS: People open the 12-tonne boulder where French artist Abraham Poincheval was entombed inside for a week at the Palais de Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

GHANEM HOPEFUL OF POLITICAL STABILITY...

Continued from Page 1

The several-fold rise in electricity charges is expected to trigger massive increases in the prices of commodities and services, eventually leading to a rise in inflation and the cost of living.

MPs have vowed that they will not let the government touch the income of citizens to finance the budget deficit resulting from the sharp fall in oil revenues. They demanded that the government should first stop squandering public funds before it resorts to raising prices. But the government has insisted that it will not accept any legislation passed by the Assembly because it will have far-reaching negative consequences on the national economy. Under Kuwait law, the government can reject

laws passed by the Assembly, but lawmakers can override the rejection with a fresh two-thirds majority.

Meanwhile, opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday that one of the lawmakers who were charged of accepting millions of dinars in bribes from the government has received fresh cash deposits in his bank account totaling KD 250,000. Two weeks ago, Adasani revealed the names of 13 present and former MPs who received around KD 51 million in bribes, which were deposited in their bank accounts. The lawmaker said he is prepared to provide the details about the new deposits. The head of the Assembly's budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said yesterday that the panel will invite the prime minister to discuss resolving extended overlapping between government institutions.

TRUMP VOWS 'RENEWAL OF AMERICAN SPIRIT'

Continued from Page 1

His remarks were made amid expectations that a new executive order on immigration could be rolled out within the coming days. Trump's initial attempt to bar the entry of visitors from seven Muslim-majority countries has been halted by the courts. Trump's maiden address to a chamber of lawmakers, Supreme Court Justices, ambassadors and generals, was delivered as the president grapples with multiple crises and faces historically-low approval ratings.

Hailing what he called the "new national pride" sweeping the country, he sought to use the pomp of the occasion and the presidential pulpit to reclaim authority and correct course after 40 difficult days. Discussing trade, Trump even enlisted the help of Abraham Lincoln, echoing what the first Republican president described as "protective policy". "Lincoln was right - and it is time we heeded his words," Trump said. "I am not going to let America and its great companies and workers be taken advantage of anymore."

Looking abroad, Trump softened his criticism of NATO partners and vowed to work with allies in the Muslim world. But he offered no apologies for emphasizing a world order centered on the nation state. "My job is not to represent the world. My job is to represent the United States of America," he said. "But we know that America is better off when there is less conflict - not more," he said, promising to "find new friends, and to forge new partnerships, where shared interests align".

In Trump's longest presidential speech to date, he remained largely on message, reading his planned address almost verbatim. Some women Democratic lawmakers had dressed in white for the occasion, a nod to the suffragette movement and an echo of the substantial opposition the president's policies face. But Trump struck a compassionate tone at times, embracing family-friendly policies like paid parental leave, and even won

cautious praise from Democrats for his call for unity.

"This was far less dark than the inaugural speech. And he has made an attempt to reach out," said Democrat John Larson of Connecticut. "But the devil is in the details." According to a CNN instant poll, 57 percent of Americans who tuned in had a very positive reaction to the speech. Pressing his domestic agenda - and pleasing mainstream Republicans who reluctantly embraced him - Trump promised to provide "massive" tax relief for the American middle class and to repeal his predecessor's landmark Obamacare health reform.

The billionaire's populist economic message was crucial in his November victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton - helping him sway voters in crucial Rust Belt states Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Now his challenge is translating that into tangible policy steps. He outlined plans for rebuilding America's creaking infrastructure and for high-stakes tax and healthcare reform. But on all three issues, Trump faces a difficult balancing act with fellow Republicans, who control both the Senate and House of Representatives.

To succeed, Trump - the consummate political outsider - may have to embrace Washington deal-making. Conservatives are desperate to uproot Obamacare, but party pragmatists are wary of dismantling a system that helped some 20 million Americans obtain health insurance. Tensions between the executive branch and the Republican-led Congress are also simmering over Trump's 2018 budget proposal.

Trump wants to hike defense spending by \$54 billion, offsetting that with cuts in foreign assistance and other non-military spending. On all these issues, Trump offered little detail about how to meet his promises without worsening the country's nearly \$20 trillion national debt. "This plan doesn't add up. A third-grade math student can see that you're going to blow a huge hole in the deficit if you do the things the president is talking about," Democratic Senator Chris Van Hollen said. — AFP

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Focus

EMIR OF KANO
TRIES TO SHAKE
UP FAMILY LAW

As a traditional ruler, the Emir of Kano is expected to dispense sage advice in matters temporal and spiritual to his legions of followers across Muslim-majority northern Nigeria. Like his counterparts dotted across the vast country of 180 million, he is the proud guardian of the past and the customs that define his people. But Muhammad Sanusi II has also set himself up as a progressive social reformer, shaking up long-held views and practices on marriage, including polygamy, to make unions fairer - and safer.

For more than a year, a team of clerics and experts assembled by the 55-year-old emir has been working to end abuse in family life, he revealed last Sunday. The 670-page document seeks to codify all aspects of family life including marriage, divorce, child custody, wills and inheritance, specifically to enforce and protect women's rights. The report recommends stiff penalties for domestic violence, early and forced marriages, child begging and "the humiliation of women" in homes, he added.

Means to marry

Before being appointed emir in June 2014, Sanusi was governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria and a university lecturer. In that regard, he is one of a new generation of younger, more worldly traditional rulers in Nigeria along with the Oba of Benin in the south, and the Ooni of Ife in the southwest. But Sanusi's attempts to break with the past have met resistance in royal circles. Last month he cancelled plans to put a cap on the cost of marriage, calling it oppressive against women as it did not provide any measures to make it harder for men to divorce wives.

Polygamy is widely practiced in northern Nigeria, as Islam allows a man to take up to four wives. Sanusi himself has three wives and a number of children. But under his plans, anyone without the financial wherewithal would not be able to add a wife, given that many men marry and divorce at will. Former wives and children from those unions are abandoned and with no social safety net, are forced to fend for themselves in Kano city, which has been in economic decline since the 1980s. "If you father a child, you are responsible for his upkeep and if you know you don't have the capacity to cater for him, then don't bring him to the world," said Sanusi.

'No turning back'

High rates of begging have been blamed on the widespread belief in predestination among Muslims in northern Nigeria, who expect God to provide for them and their families, no matter how big. Campaigners have warned that children especially are put at risk from traffickers, drugs, sexual abuse and indoctrination by extremists such as Boko Haram.

Sanusi has criticized those who defend the practice as "tradition" and vowed to end the impunity of those men who force their former wives and offspring onto the streets. Some men have criticized the proposed law, saying it will curb their rights to marriage and family. But the emir, who has the backing of the state governor Umar Ganduje, was unmoved. "Change is always difficult to effect and people may not necessarily be willing to accept and appreciate change," he said. "But people should be ready for the family code, there is no turning back on this."

Mass weddings

Efforts have been made to address the impact in Kano of the highest divorce rates in Nigeria, including mass weddings initiated by the sharia or Islamic law police, the Hisbah. Couples have to sign an undertaking to explore all avenues if they are considering breaking up, and a man risks jail for divorcing without the consent of the Hisbah. The "morality police" also ensure the men have the means to support a wife and any children, while the state pays the marriage expenses.

Attine Abdullahi, head of the Voice of Widows, Divorcees and Orphans Association of Nigeria (VOWAN), said they were "very happy" with Sanusi's proposals. "We have been fighting for an end to the exploitation and dehumanization of women and children in the name of marriage," she said. "The institution of marriage has been flagrantly abused by men in our society out of sheer ego and I believe this law will check such excesses when it comes into effect." She added: "If the emir succeeds in enacting the family law we will have solved half the social ills confronting our society today. The law will certainly tackle the endemic social problems in our society from their roots, which is the family." —AFP

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TRUMP TRIES TO TURN FROM DIVISIVE TO DEALMAKER

US President Donald Trump showed a different side in his first address to Congress. This Trump was part dealmaker, part salesman, asking for unity and trying to repack his populist message in more palatable terms. He was less combative, less thin-skinned and more inclusive. And where five weeks ago at his inauguration, he slammed Washington's politicians as out-of-touch elitists who prospered at the expense of the public, his message on Tuesday night was different: I need you, Republicans and Democrats alike.

Always a showman, the reality TV star-turned-politician laid out plenty of promises: A massive infrastructure and public works program; tax cuts for the middle class; immigration reform; a healthcare overhaul; an education bill. All of it would require congressional action, likely by different coalitions of conservatives, moderates and Democrats. "This is our vision. This is our mission," Trump said. "But we can only get there together."

Trump, a Republican who has taunted Democrats over his 2016 election victory and publicly fumed as they held up his Cabinet nominees, did not criticize them this time. Repeatedly, he asked for their help, arguing that the country's problems call for bipartisan solutions. After weeks of attacks on the media, political rivals and the judges who ruled against his executive order to temporarily ban travel from seven Muslim-majority countries, Trump finally eased off, although his proposals were short on specifics.

"It was a softer tone and he gave a speech and not a tweet and that's more suitable when you're president of the United States," said Democratic Representative Peter Welch. "The challenges are going to be the details on his policies." "He was presidential tonight in a way he has not been before this," said Republican consultant Matt Mackowiak. The address appeared to show some recognition by the White House that Trump's bombastic go-it-alone style has its limits. After a parade of executive orders, Trump must now turn his attention to the big-ticket items on his agenda requiring legislative action. "He's done all he can unilaterally," said Bradley Blakeman, a former aide to President George W. Bush. "Now he needs to pass bills."

Even though Republicans control Congress, Blakeman said Trump needs Democrats to build a majority that would allow conservative Republicans to oppose some of his more centrist proposals, such as hefty infrastructure spending and talks on immigration reform. "The president is as transactional a person as we've ever seen," Blakeman said. "He understands that you

might not like this deal, but I need you for three other deals."

Skeptical

Despite the softer tone, Trump's divisive policies and months of hostile rhetoric will not be forgotten by his adversaries. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, in a round of television interviews on Wednesday morning, dismissed Trump's speech as detached from reality, saying the softer tone did not match the administration's hardline agenda presented so far. "His speeches are populist. They're aimed at the working folks who supported him. But his governing and what he does is hard right, favoring special interests over the working class," Schumer told CBS.

Nancy Pelosi, the leading Democrat in the US House of Representatives, told MSNBC that Trump gave a good sales pitch but has offered little in the way of concrete proposals. "All they have is rhetoric. We don't have any reality in terms of any legislation." Congressional Democrats said they liked Trump's infrastructure program, his childcare tax credit, his call to reduce the prices of prescription drugs, and his vow to preserve some key elements of former President Barack Obama's signature 2010 health insurance law.

Democrats remain troubled, among other things, by Trump's desire to slash domestic programs to increase military spending, his plans to reduce taxes for the wealthy and corporations, as well as his aggressive policy to deport illegal immigrants. To be sure, the more foreboding elements of Trump's campaign rhetoric were still present, albeit slightly dialed-down. As he did during the campaign, he portrayed a country in ruinous economic shape and plagued by terrorism, drugs, gangs, and illegal immigrants.

In coming days, the White House is likely to release a revised version of its travel ban, reigniting a controversy that overshadowed the first weeks of Trump's presidency. Trump came into the address struggling with public opinion. In an interview with Fox News he acknowledged that he and his staff had not been effective communicators. The most recent Reuters/Ipsos tracking poll found about 48 percent of Americans disapproved of Trump's performance, with 46 percent backing him, poor numbers for a new president.

Mackowiak said Trump's address could reverse his fortunes in a "crucial moment" for his presidency. "His public support will improve from this speech," he said. But John Geer, a public-opinion expert at Vanderbilt University, was not convinced. "He's going to have to do more than give a speech." —Reuters

TRUMP PIVOT PLEASURES
GOP, BUT WILL IT LAST?

Donald Trump finally gave Republicans what they've spent months begging him to deliver: a pivot to presidential behavior. The question now is how long it lasts. Days, weeks, months - or simply until the next tweet? Just a little more than a month into his presidency, Trump clearly wanted to use his first speech to Congress to reset a chaotic start to his administration. Gone was the dark tone that marked his inaugural address, replaced by optimism and pleas for bipartisan support. Standing before lawmakers, Supreme Court justices and military leaders, the famously unrestrained politician was softer, sober and verged on diplomatic.

"I am here tonight to deliver a message of unity and strength, and it is a message deeply delivered from my heart," he said, in the opening of his hour-long speech. But while his prime-time address to Congress and the nation wrapped his nationalistic politics in prose that was more presidential, it is unlikely to overcome the deep divisions created by his first few weeks in office. For a candidate who sold himself as a master dealmaker, Trump has shown little inclination to get deeply involved with the kind of nitty-gritty negotiating that defines the legislative process.

That's left the Capitol reeling. Republicans have united control for the first time in decades but no agreement over the specifics of long-promised plans to repeal "Obamacare" and revamp the tax code. The federal civil service is in not-so-subtle revolt. And weeks of protests and raucous town halls are putting fresh political pressure on lawmakers from both parties to resist his agenda. The stakes are high not only in terms of policy but politics: If the GOP is unable to make good on years of election promises, they could enter the midterm elections in a far weaker position than expected.

Trump, meanwhile, faces record low approval ratings - just 44 percent of Americans approve of his job performance, according to a new NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey. He's nearing the end of big achievements he can enact by executive order, forcing him to rely on Congress to turn the bold promises of his campaign into actual achievements. Trump needed to use his prime-time address to show he could steady his flailing White House and focus on the difficult work required to pass his legislative agenda.

Still, he arrived at the Capitol in a blaze of accusations, enraging his opponents before he even entered the building. In the 24 hours before his address, he blamed former President Barack Obama for town hall protests and security leaks, called House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi "incompetent" and said his generals, not the commander in chief, were responsible for a military raid in Yemen that killed a Navy SEAL. In his speech, he called on Washington to "work past the differences of party".

The candidate who won the White House by taking a hardline stance on immigration, seemed to express openness to a bipartisan immigration bill. The president whose administration spent much of its first weeks in office battling with the media, intelligence community, federal judiciary and even Hollywood celebrities asked for an end to "trivial fights". And after questioning the authenticity of a wave of bomb threats against Jewish community centers, he condemned the flood of anti-Semitic attacks and other racially motivated crimes.

For House GOP leaders, Trump came tantalizingly close to backing their plan to overhaul the tax code by imposing a new tax on imports while exempting exports. He appeared to lend support to the House Republican leaders' plan for Obamacare, by embracing "tax credits" and health savings accounts. But on other issues, Trump offered barely a blueprint for his initiatives. He repeated his campaign pledge to make a \$1 trillion investment in infrastructure, adding no new details to a proposal that's sure to face fierce resistance from budget hawks. Big promises to make childcare more affordable, ensure paid family leave, invest in women's health and a major education bill were mentioned merely in passing.

There was no discussion of how his administration would fund any of the new - and expensive - programs, putting him in direct conflict with a Republican Party that's long focused on cutting the deficit. On foreign policy, he promised a massive expansion in military spending, even as he made no mention of Iraq or Afghanistan, where American troops are still stationed. And he avoided commenting on US-Russia relations, an area where he's sparked major controversy even within his own party, making only a nebulous reference to an America "willing to find new friends". —AP

TO COUNTER TURKEY, DAMASCUS SIDLES UP TO KURDS

Worried over Turkish advances in Syria's north, the Damascus regime has formed an alliance of convenience with the country's Kurds to prevent their common enemy from gaining ground. President Bashar al-Assad's government has repeatedly criticised Turkey's operation in Syria, which saw Ankara in late August send troops across the border where they are working with local rebels. Turkey's invasion has also been fiercely opposed by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, which is dominated by Kurdish fighters.

"For the government, just as for the Syrian Kurds, the enemy is (Turkish President Recep Tayyip) Erdogan. They want to counter his project of invading the border territory," said Waddah Abed Rabbo, editor-in-chief of Syria's Al-Watan daily. "It's completely normal that the forces present on the ground would ally with each other to block any Turkish advance in Syrian territory. Now, Turkish forces are totally encircled," said Abed Rabbo, whose paper is close to the government.

With help from Turkish air strikes, artillery, and soldiers, Syrian rebels last week overran the town of Al-Bab, the Islamic State group's last bastion in the northern province of Aleppo. Syrian troops had advanced to the

southern edges of the town, but had been ordered by their ally Russia not to enter Al-Bab after Moscow struck a deal with Ankara. Instead, regime fighters headed east, sweeping across previously IS-held villages to link up with the SDF south of its stronghold in Manbij.

'Surrounded on all sides'

In just 15 days, Assad's army seized nearly two dozen villages, including Taduf south of Al-Bab, gaining approximately 600 sq km of territory in Aleppo province. The advance brought Syrian troops to territory just southwest of Manbij and adjacent to SDF forces there, said US-based Middle East expert Fabrice Balanche. By sealing off that territory, Balanche added, the regime has stemmed Turkish ambitions of heading further east. "The road to Raqa via Al-Bab is now cut for the Turks. They also can't attack Manbij from the south," Balanche added.

Erdogan has insisted that Ankara wants to work with its allies to capture Raqa, the de facto Syrian capital of IS's so-called "caliphate", without the SDF. Turkey considers the SDF's biggest component - the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) - as "terrorists" because of their links to an outlawed Kurdish militia in

southeast Turkey. But the SDF has a head start. Since November, it has been battling to encircle Raqa with the help of US-led coalition air strikes and is much closer to the city than the Turkish-backed fighters.

The regime's recent advance has boxed Turkey in, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group. "They're surrounded on all sides. The Kurds are to the east, southeast, and west. The regime is south," said Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman. "They don't have a single road to Raqa except via territory controlled by the Kurds or the Syrian army," Abdel Rahman said. "If they really want to go, they only have two options: opening up a front with the army or the Kurds, or striking a deal with them."

'Regime has not changed'

Such a deal would require the mediation of either Russia - who has long backed the Syrian regime and has recently developed closer cooperation with Turkey on Syria - or the United States, an ally to Ankara and SDF backer. "The risk of confrontation is there. But if the Turkish army heads towards Raqa, it will only be after a deal with the United States," said Sinan Ulgan, who heads the

Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy (EDAM) in Istanbul.

While the SDF and Syria's regime have a shared interest in countering Ankara's influence, the alliance is not foolproof. Regime forces and Kurdish fighters have clashed several times across the northeastern province of Hasakeh, and government officials frequently criticize a Kurdish announcement last year of a "federal system" to run affairs in northern Syria. "The regime is against Kurdish independence, but it doesn't have the means to retake Kurdish territory," Balanche said.

A high-level security source in Damascus insisted that "Syria does not recognize the SDF because the constitution stipulates that the only military presence in Syria is the Syrian army." "But really, there are several legitimate and illegitimate organizations involved in the Syrian conflict," the source conceded. Leading SDF adviser Nasser Al-Hajj Mansour denied that his group had struck a deal with the regime, but acknowledged that the current situation is an incentive for cooperation over confrontation. "The regime has not changed. When it can, it will attack us. But today, local and international dynamics will not allow it to do so," he said. —AFP

SVITOLINA PULLS OUT IN MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR: Top seed and defending champion Elina Svitolina withdrew from the Malaysian Open with a lower leg injury yesterday, bringing her 13-match winning streak to a halt. The Ukrainian world number 10, who beat Caroline Wozniacki in Dubai last week to lift her second straight trophy, pulled out before her second-round match against Japan's Nao Hibino. Svitolina, 22, had needed treatment during her 6-2, 6-3 first-round win over Jang Su-Jeong of South Korea-her 250th victory on the WTA tour. "I was looking forward to coming back to Kuala Lumpur to defend my title and I was excited to play here but, unfortunately, I have to withdraw because of a lower leg injury," she said, according to the WTA website. "I was struggling in my final match in Dubai and I was hoping to recover but... I need to make sure I take care of my body for the rest of the season." Svitolina's unbeaten streak, which has pushed her into the top 10 for the first time, also included a run to the Taiwan Open title and two Fed Cup wins against Australian opposition. — AFP



CHINESE MILAN BUYOUT COULD HIT NEW DELAY

MILAN: The sale of AC Milan to a Chinese consortium, scheduled to be finalised on March 3, could be delayed until the end of the month, a source close to the deal told AFP yesterday. Milan's media tycoon owner Silvio Berlusconi agreed in August 2016 to sell the club to Sino-Europe Sports (SES) in a deal that values the Serie A giants at 740 million euros (\$825.4 million). But the takeover has been postponed on several occasions as the financial details are ironed out. "The Chinese consortium has asked to postpone the signing by a month," the source said. "That should be possible with the payment of a new instalment of 100 million euros." Italian media has reported that the Chinese consortium, which has already paid out 200 million euros, was encountering difficulties after the withdrawal of one of its investors. La Repubblica newspaper confirmed that one of the Chinese investors due to have paid out 80-100 million euros had withdrawn because it failed to obtain permission to move funds out of China. "It's like a joke, one of those that doesn't make you laugh," opined Gazzetta dello Sport. Milan's neighbours Inter Milan are already under Chinese ownership. — AFP

SHARAPOVA HANDED ROME WILDCARD

ROME: Five-time Grand Slam champion Maria Sharapova has been given a wildcard to play in the Italian Open in May, organisers said yesterday. The former world number one makes her return to the circuit in Stuttgart in April after completing a 15-month ban for doping. "We officially announce the wildcard for the 3-time Rome champion @MariaSharapova into the main draw ..." organisers announced on Twitter. Sharapova hasn't played on tour since testing positive for meldonium at the 2016 Australian Open. An initial two-year ban by the International Tennis Federation was reduced to 15 months by the Court of Arbitration for Sport. The Rome tournament runs from May 15 to May 21. She has also been handed a wildcard for the May 6-13 Madrid Open. —AFP



BARCELONA: Mercedes driver Valtteri Bottas of Finland exits a curve while performing a race simulation during a Formula One pre-season testing session at the Catalunya racetrack in Montmelo, outside Barcelona, Spain, Tuesday. — AP

ROSBERG HAS NO REGRETS ON RETURN TO F1 PADDOCK

BARCELONA: Formula One champion Nico Rosberg returned to the paddock yesterday for the first time since his retirement and said he had absolutely no regrets about his decision to quit at the top. With Finnish replacement Valtteri Bottas putting the Mercedes through its paces on the third day of pre-season testing, Rosberg said the new cars looked 'monstrous' and a real physical challenge. "There was not one single moment where I

thought 'Oh, damn I should be sitting in that car', declared the 31-year-old German, who said he was enjoying family life and exploring potential new challenges. "That was interesting for me to realise, and perfect of course." Rosberg announced his retirement in December, shocking the sport just five days after taking the title from team mate and triple champion Lewis Hamilton in Abu Dhabi. He spoke to Bottas but said he had not seen Hamilton on his brief visit

to the Circuit de Catalunya. "It's good to be back, first of all to see my racing family again. And it's such a massive hype at the moment so I want to see it first hand as well and see the new cars. They look absolutely monstrous," Rosberg told television reporters. "Very, very aggressive and everybody's excited and that's great to see. The drivers are loving it and I think this year they will be proper gladiators out there. "The cars will take them to their physical lim-

its and we might even see drivers losing race wins because of just being game over physically. And that's what we need."

Rosberg said he had been interested to hear from Bottas how it felt to drive the new car, wider and lower and with bigger tyres, and expected the Finn to settle in well at a team that has dominated for the past three years. He added that the Finn needed no advice from him, other than some tips to help with integrat-

ing into the team. "He's a good driver so we need to expect that he will be challenging Lewis," he said. "It's difficult to predict exactly how they are going to compare. "We all know Lewis is a massive benchmark so it's never going to be easy against him but sure there's going to be a battle." The season starts in Australia on March 26. Mercedes have so far done more laps in testing than any other team, with no reliability problems. — Reuters

MOTOR RACING

F1 MAY RE-INTRODUCE A NON-CHAMPIONSHIP RACE

BARCELONA: Formula One could re-introduce a non-championship race to experiment with new formats and ideas if such an event can be made commercially viable, motorsport head Ross Brawn has suggested.

"It might be rather optimistic," the former Honda, Brawn and Mercedes team principal told Reuters during pre-season testing at the Circuit de Catalunya yesterday.

"But you can imagine if we had a non-championship race there'd be a lot more capacity to look at different formats and approaches and see if the fans take to it with much less risk or exposure than we would if we were doing something in the championship."

The last non-championship race was held at Brands Hatch in 1983 and won by Keke Rosberg, the father of 2016 world champion Nico, in a Williams. Silverstone also held the International Trophy from 1949 to 1978. Such races saw drivers compete for prize money but not points towards the world title, with teams using them for extra testing. "We often had non-championship races in the old days but getting it all to work is another matter," said Brawn. "It needs to be commercially viable of course, and that's the challenge. Again, it couldn't just be 'pick ideas out of a hat'. It needs to be properly thought through, but maybe an opportunity."

Brawn was appointed in January, following the takeover of the sport by Liberty Media, and the Englishman reports to the new chairman Chase Carey who has taken over from Bernie Ecclestone.

Sean Bratches, who was in the paddock on Monday as testing started, is the managing director for the commercial side.

Speaking separately to Sky television on Tuesday, Brawn said he was nervous about changes to the race weekend format.

"You can't take the risk of swapping a format in a championship race and not getting it right," he said. He also said 2017 rule changes with faster and wider cars and fatter tyres could unwittingly benefit his former Mercedes team, the dominant world champions for the past three years.

"We expose ourselves whenever we make changes like this. Fingers crossed, it is going to work out but I think it is a good example of where we didn't go through the right principles to begin with," he said. "And if this was a principle to stop Mercedes winning, you could argue the exact contrary. A team that strong and with that resource will relish change. It was naive to think it would destabilise Mercedes. If anything it gave them an advantage." — Reuters

KUWAIT'S JUNIOR SOCCER TEAM WINS BRONZE IN QATAR 'JEEEM CUP3' INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Football is Kuwait's most popular sport, but the national team cannot participate in international competitions due to the suspension imposed by the International Olympic Committee. This is very disappointing, but the people of Kuwait finally celebrated a victory.

Recently, the junior Kuwait team won the bronze medal at the 'Jeeem Cup3', an international football tournament for young boys held in Qatar. This was the third edition of this tourney, with 20 teams from various countries participating. It began as a 10-team competition before expanding to 16 teams in its second iteration. Organizers plan to expand it even further.

"This is the first time a Kuwait team won in this mini-cup, and it has participated since the first tourney," coach Ali Falah told Kuwait Times. "The teams were divided in four groups, each containing five teams. In our group, we won against Brazil 3-1, then against Chile 6-0, Sudan 11-0 and finally Russia 3-1. We qualified for the quarterfinals and beat the UAE 2-1. Unfortunately, we lost against France on penalties and ranked third after beating Bahrain 4-2. France stood first and Morocco second," he said. Kuwait's team consisted of 15 players between the ages of 12 and 13 studying in the seventh grade. "The matches are shorter than regular adult games. Each half is only 20 minutes, instead of the regular 45, and halftime is only for five minutes. Also, only nine players play in the field and six are substitutes," Falah explained.

The players study at both public and private schools. "We chose the players from different schools. There was a league held including schools in all governorates," Falah said. "We then chose the best players from the many teams and formed our team. In this team, 11 players were from public schools and four from private schools."

The school world cup is supervised by the Ministry of Education. "This cup is not related to the Olympics or FIFA, so we could participate under the Kuwait flag. The organizers in Qatar corresponded with the undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, so we formed this team," he pointed out.

The players trained at one of the schools equipped with artificial turf. "They trained for 17 days before participating in the championship. The training took place after school hours four days a week," Falah said. "I'm the coach, and we have an administrative assistant and the head of our delegation Dr Ahmad Al-Fayez. We are proud of our achievement, and various institutions held honoring ceremonies for the team, especially now that our sporting activities are suspended. I hope that we achieve first place in the future," he concluded.



NFL

NFL PLAYERS PREPARING FOR THIS WEEK'S 'UNDERWEAR OLYMPICS'

INDIANAPOLIS: The 330 players arriving at the league's annual combine have been preparing for this week's "Underwear Olympics" like a prize fighter gets ready for his big night, pumping iron and cutting carbs.

They've been following strict programs designed to help them get stronger, run faster and jump higher in anticipation of getting poked and prodded, measured and treasured.

"The hardest thing for these kids to really understand when they get to the combine and the pro day is they get one shot at all these drills," said Loren Landow, who trained Stanford star Christian McCaffrey among more than two dozen NFL hopefuls at Landow Performance in suburban Denver over the last two months.

"Whereas your strength coach in college used to let you do it over and over until you got your best time, now that's not the case when you're being evaluated in a time crunch," Landow said. "They're going to give you one

opportunity and it's all about how well you perform at that moment with high levels of stress and some fatigue on you."

That's why they've been training with such single-minded focus since their bowl games. "It's a lot of just trying to improve all the funky drills that they have you doing at the combine that you know aren't necessarily things that we practice as a football player on a daily basis," said Wyoming offensive lineman Chase Roullier, who trained with Landow. That's been the formula ever since Mike Mamula absolutely killed it at the 1995 combine and rocketed into the first round, where the Philadelphia Eagles traded the 12th overall pick and two second-round selections to Tampa Bay so they could move up five spots and get the Boston College defensive end at No. 7.

TARGETS

Mamula was among the first players to train specifically for the tests he'd face

at the combine: The 40-yard dash, the three-cone drill that measures agility and the 225-pound bench press.

Now everybody targets this week in Indy like Mamula did all those years ago.

Today's prospects train six days a week for eight weeks or more all so they can impress NFL executives who will test their speed, strength, skills and brain power while also checking out their medical background and any off-field history for any red flags.

"I feel like it's definitely getting us ready for the combine as far as all the guys we're competing against each other," said Air Force receiver Jalen Robinette, who led the nation in yards per catch in 2016. "Because it's a real big interview/competition there at the combine. And being able to break down the drills and mentally be practicing everything, it's awesome. Literally every day I hear new stuff about the combine that they teach me here. "Preparation is everything."

They pretty much follow the same

basic program because they'll be doing the same tests at the combine. But the training is also personalized by position. "I'll talk to the agents and from the agents' perspective, I'll say, 'What are the scouts telling you that they want to see from your player? Do they want to see them heavier, lighter?'" Landow said.

"At the end of the day, I don't think you ever go wrong in providing a little bit more mobility, flexibility to an athlete and getting them stronger. More explosive is always the key in this short window so they can really show their best in all their 'measurables.'"

These players have all undergone mock combines, too, where they put all their training together for dry runs to give them a taste of what this week will bring. "I think it makes the biggest difference," Roullier said. "If I were to go in there and do this stuff cold, I mean, I'd have an idea of what I'd be doing because it's all stuff that I've done in the past. But my technique would be just awful, you know, it's just all these little

things that you need to change and I'm able to get coached up on all of them. It's just continuing to improve those little things and it makes a huge difference in the numbers."

This training isn't cheap. It can cost tens of thousands of dollars, although the pricing structure changes for draft wannabes and sure bets. "If an athlete is an NFL combine invite, the agent will pay for everything," Landow said. "If you have a kid who may be a bubble guy who didn't get the combine invite but you know can play, the agents will typically foot the bill. Some guys if they're a priority free agent maybe at best, sometimes it's coming out of their own pocket." For a combine invitee, the cost can run into the tens of thousands of dollars. "I know with housing and food and all that it ends up being like 10, 20 grand that my agent's dropping just in these few months up to the combine. So, it's a lot," said Roullier, who's out to ensure this week that the training pays big dividends. — AP

S AFRICA: COMMONWEALTH GAMES A NO-GO UNLESS COSTS CUT

DURBAN: The South African city of Durban's hosting of the 2022 Commonwealth Games was in serious doubt on Tuesday after the sports ministry said the country won't stage it unless costs are reduced.

Liverpool in England immediately put itself forward as a replacement host.

Preparations in Durban have been troubled ever since it was awarded the games as the only candidate in September 2015.

At the time, the east coast city of Durban failed to get a financial guarantee from the government and also didn't make other commitments required by the Commonwealth Games Federation.

The impending cost of the games, estimated by Durban bid committee chief executive Tubby Reddy at \$670 million, remains the problem. Reddy, who made his estimate in 2015, said Durban needed \$470 million of that from the government.

In its statement on Tuesday, the office of sports minister Fikile Mbalula said it was in discussions with event owners the Commonwealth Games Federation, but costs had to be cut.

"The Minister reiterated South Africa's readiness to host the games within its available means," Mbalula's office said. "It is against this background that the department and the CGF are having talks ahead of

the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

"The Minister further indicated that if both parties fail to find common ground on cost cutting measures, the South African government will not host the games."

The 2022 Commonwealth Games were set to be the first international multi-sport event hosted in Africa.

Following its widely-praised staging of the 2010 soccer World Cup, South Africa was also viewed as a possible future host of the Olympics, with the Commonwealth Games seen as a stepping stone.

A South African Olympic bid looks less and less likely any time soon. Should Durban back out of the Commonwealth Games, it would likely hurt the country's future Olympic prospects.

Soon after the statement from Mbalula's office, the English city of Liverpool said it was willing to step in, with Liverpool's mayor sending a letter to the British government indicating its willingness.

"Liverpool is interested in hosting the games in 2022," the city council said. "We had heard Durban might be unable to deliver the Commonwealth Games in 2022 and have already indicated to the Government that we are very willing to host them instead." The next Commonwealth Games are on the Gold Coast in Australia next year. — AP



Group picture of Women's Sports Committee members and Kuwaiti athletes.

FEMALE ATHLETES TO SET ACTION PLAN TO DEVELOP WOMEN'S SPORTS IN KUWAIT

By **Faten Omar**

KUWAIT: The Women's Sports Committee of the Kuwait Olympic Committee organized a discussion titled "Together we can make a change" on Tuesday at the multipurpose hall in Al-Shaheed Park. Female athletes gathered to set an action plan to reform and develop women's sports in Kuwait and discuss the obstacles hindering the development and growth of women athletes.

"This is our second meeting to discuss the difficulties that players face. Kuwait is still marginalizing female players, and 90 percent of the Kuwaiti society does not even know anything about these players. We have to bring women back into the picture because young girls deserve to have a Kuwaiti athletic role model," said Fatima Hayat, Chairperson of the Women's Sports Committee and Olympic Committee of

Kuwait. She noted that the Women's Sports Committee is trying now to put the right person in the right place by selecting professional women from each sport to lead. "We have heard a lot of promises, but we will never accept mere promises - we insist on turning them into action," she said. Hayat said there have been suggestions to dissolve the Women's Sports Committee because it contravenes local and international rules where the committee is considered sexist for mentioning 'women's sport.' "We also suggested letting women to be in the general assembly and have the right to vote," she said.

She assured that there will be three upcoming initiatives "We are forming a women's committee at the Kuwait Tennis and Squash Union. We have been communicating with specialized sports companies to design campaigns that will be announced shortly. We also negotiated with a

German coach and made an agreement with to establish training centers for girls in all governorates along with four women referees and 20 Kuwaiti female coaches," Hayat said.

Rabaa Al-Hajri, a member of the Women's Sport Committee, pointed out that the committee is communicating with private companies to participate in the development of women's sports. "Our goals are to rebuild and develop the organizational structure of women's sport to international standards and in line with the reality of women's sports in Kuwait. We are going to organize a national awareness campaign to promote women's sports and create sports awareness in the community to encourage girls," Hajri explained. She added that the committee is aiming to prepare for Olympic football in cooperation with the women's football committee to participate in the 2024 Olympics.

BASEBALL

TANAKA GOES TWO HITLESS INNINGS IN SPRING DEBUT

TAMPA: Masahiro Tanaka's first pitch of spring training was a wild one, sailing all the way to the backstop. Then, the New York Yankees ace quickly settled in.

Tanaka struck out two over two hitless innings during his initial exhibition start Tuesday in the Yankees' split-squad 9-5 win over the Detroit Tigers. The right-hander's opening pitch soared over the head of Tigers leadoff hitter Ian Kinsler. "I liked everything except the first pitch," Tanaka said through a translator. "I'm not really sure (what happened)."

Tanaka did say that the angles of the bullpen mound and the slope of the main hill were different. Kinsler reached on an infield error but was erased when Omar Infante hit into a double play. Tanaka ended the first by striking out Nicholas Castellanos.

Tanaka struck out Steven Moya during a perfect second. He reached 92 mph in a 25-pitch outing that included 16 strikes. "Overall I thought everything was good," Yankees pitching coach Larry Rothschild said. "It was good to see him stay within his delivery and execute the pitches he needed to execute, and come out of it and feel good."

Both strikeouts came on split-finger pitches. "The split was really good, and the slider (too)" Yankees catcher Gary Sanchez said through a translator. "The location of the fastball was a little off. But it's the first start, so I know he can locate better."

Four of the six batters Tanaka faced hit the ball on the ground. "It means that the batter is off balance, you're getting the batter to be off-balance," Tanaka said. "I think it's a good sign."

Tanaka is scheduled to start on opening day April 2 at Tampa Bay. Tanaka was a concern at the start of spring training last year after arthroscopic surgery in October 2015 to remove a bone spur from his throwing elbow. He went 14-

4 with a 3.07 ERA in 31 starts, throwing a career-high 199 2-3 innings.

"Right now I think I'm on the right path," Tanaka said. "As far as my body goes, it's in good shape. So it's been good."

Tanaka is 39-16 with a 3.12 ERA over 75 starts

in three seasons with the Yankees. He was limited to 44 starts over his first two seasons due to injuries. Tanaka's \$155 million, seven-year contract allows him to terminate the deal after this season, give up a \$23 million annual salary from 2018-20 and become a free agent. — AP



TAMPA: New York Yankees starting pitcher Masahiro Tanaka pitches during the second inning of a spring training baseball game against the Detroit Tigers Tuesday, in Tampa, Fla. — AP

BUDAPEST ASSEMBLY PASSES MOTION TO WITHDRAW 2024 OLYMPIC BID

BUDAPEST: Budapest's assembly approved a motion yesterday to withdraw the city's bid for the 2024 Olympics. The decision leaves Los Angeles and Paris as the only remaining candidates. The International Olympic Committee will choose the host city in September.

Budapest's decision to withdraw came after a new political group appeared to have successfully gathered enough signatures to force a city-wide referendum on the bid. Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government said the change of heart by opposition politicians who earlier supported the bid had shattered consensus on the issue.

The withdrawal of the bid was decided with 22 votes in favor and six against, with support coming mostly from councilors from Orban's governing Fidesz party. "Everything that is going on is no longer about sports," Mayor Istvan Tarlos said during a heated debate at the extraordinary session of the assembly. "The saddest thing ... is what kind of image the country is creating itself

abroad with this circus surrounding the Olympics." The opposition said the city government was letting down voters by preventing them from expressing their opinions about the bid.

"If over a quarter of a million Budapest citizens have determined that they want to decide in a referendum about the Olympics, it is only right if we give them this opportunity," said Antal Csardi of the Politics Can Be Different party.

The Momentum Movement, a new political association, gathered more than 266,000 signatures in 30 days in favor of holding a vote. Some of the other opposition parties helped collect the signatures, far more than the 138,000 minimum needed. Political analysts said holding the referendum and keeping the issue on the agenda for months did not favor Orban's plans to seek a fourth term in elections scheduled for April 2018. Hamburg, in 2015, and Rome last year also withdrew their bids. The IOC said last week it would review its bid process because it now produces "too many losers." — AP



BUDAPEST: In this Feb. 24, 2017 file photo cars line up in front of a poster with an advertising campaign for the 2024 Olympic bid with Hungarian Olympic fencer Aron Szilagyi in Budapest. Yesterday Budapest's assembly has approved a motion to withdraw the city's bid for the 2024 Olympics. — AP

PSL FINAL TICKETS PRECIOUS FOR CRICKET-STARVED FANS

ISLAMABAD: Cricket-starved fans in Pakistan aren't too worried about which foreign players are coming to Lahore for Sunday's Pakistan Super League final. They just want to know where they can buy tickets.

"I came to the bank as early as 6:30 a.m. and after seven hours I got hold of a (\$5) ticket," Ali Hussain, a 22-year-old businessman told The Associated Press yesterday.

PSL organizers claimed that 10,000 tickets at the 27,000-capacity Gaddafi Stadium will be sold for \$5 for the final. The remaining tickets were priced at \$38, \$76 and \$114. However, hundreds

of fans around the city of Lahore yesterday went from bank to bank looking for tickets. "We went to at least five branches but couldn't find even one ticket," said Faiza Tasleem, a university student. Tasleem was accompanied by her nine university friends, but none of them was successful in getting a ticket. The organizers have also made it mandatory for every buyer to produce his or her original National Identity Card at the time of buying a ticket.

As a security precaution, entry to the stadium will be made once the spectator shows his or her ID at various security checkpoints on Sunday. "We

are not going to get disheartened, there are still three days to go and we hope to get the ticket for the Sunday's final," said Tasleem, whose favorite team Quetta Gladiators qualified for the final.

But Quetta will be without all its key foreign cricketers after Kevin Pietersen, Luke Wright and Tymal Mills all flew back to England soon after winning their playoff against Peshawar Zalmi by one run on Tuesday night.

"It's with a heavy heart I will not be coming to Lahore. I have a young family and for me a game of cricket is just not worth the risk," Wright tweeted. "I'm sorry as I know how much it means to you

and hopefully in the future the safety will not be in doubt to come play there."

But for Pakistani fans it mattered little who is coming for the final or not. "Whosoever plays for Quetta we will support them," Tasleem said. "We want to show the world that we are sports-loving people and we want cricket back home on our own grounds."

Peshawar will have another chance at the Sunday's final when it meets the winner of Thursday's match between Karachi Kings and defending champion Islamabad United.

PSL organizers have shortlisted 60 foreign players who have agreed to

travel to Lahore. The two finalists could pick up four players each for Sunday's final. The provincial government has promised security for the Sunday's final despite a recent wave of terrorist attacks that killed dozens of people around the country. At least 13 people were killed in Lahore when a bomber targeted police escorting a rally by pharmacists.

Several former cricketers like Imran Khan, Javed Miandad and Aamir Sohail have criticized PCB's decision to organize the PSL final in Lahore with thousands of security officials being deployed around the stadium. — AP

BIG BEN TOWERS IN BASKETBALL-MAD PHILIPPINES

MANILA: "Big Ben" cuts an imposing figure, dominating college basketball in the hoops-crazy Philippines as the best of a wave of African imports on unlikely Asian journeys in search of their NBA dreams.

Cameroon's Benoit Mbala scooped up MVP honours as he led one of Manila's top colleges to last year's University Athletic Association of the Philippines championship.

To the 22-year-old, who played only football until a tremendous growth spurt forced him from pitch to hardwood as a teenager, the fervour of a nation that treats basketball almost as a religion has been overwhelming. "I never expected myself going to a basketball game, (with the crowds) super full and packed with people almost spilling onto the court. That's really something crazy. The Filipinos are really fanatics," Mbala told AFP in an interview.

In an Asian nation where few people grow taller than 1.81 metres (6ft), the 2.07m (6ft 7in), 109kg (240lb) Cameroonian is a scoring and rebounding machine for Manila's De La Salle University team, where he averaged double digits for both statistical categories in his first year.

"He's a big (forward) who can run, he's fast, he's agile, physically strong and mentally he's sharp, and he has a good attitude," his coach, Aldin Ayo, told AFP.

"He's the best player right now in terms of how he dominated the league last season... he intimidates other players." Mbala's exploits earned him a call-up this month to the Cameroon men's basketball team pool, alongside NBA stars Joel Embiid of the Philadelphia 76ers and Luc Mbah a Moute of the Los Angeles Clippers. The youngest in a middle-class family, the burly Mbala took a strange route to basketball's oldest Asian outpost and home to one of the world's oldest professional leagues.

AFRICAN INFUX

In 2011 he won African MVP honours at a South Africa camp organised by Basketball Without Borders, a global development programme for teenagers co-run by the NBA.

A few months short of 17 at the time, Mbala had hoped it would land him a US college basketball scholarship, but visa problems wrecked his dream. "It's bizarre, going to the States you need something

like a godfather, someone backing you up... unluckily I didn't have anyone so I just did everything on my own. Things didn't go my way," he said. So he headed to the Philippines instead, starting initially at a little-known school in the central city of Cebu. But at an invitational tournament, Mbala shot the lights out against La Salle, a wealthy, Catholic Church-run Manila school financially backed by several billionaire alumni, and he was quickly recruited. The Philippines' university basketball scene resembles the American system in terms of popularity and importance, with games broadcast on national television and attracting crowds of more than 10,000. Mbala was among the early African recruits to the Philippines. Now, nearly every university has filled their quota of one foreign student with an African. "They (African imports) raised the standards of the game because of that talent. And the local players are learning to adapt to bigger opponents as well," Ayo said.

LATE STARTER

Despite his achievements, Mbala remains a work in progress. He struggled to execute a spin dribble, a must-have skill for Filipino players, during the La Salle practice witnessed by AFP.

With better ball-handling skills, his coach believes Mbala could be at the level of a top-calibre level collegiate player in the United States, which is one step away from the NBA. "There are some aspects of his game that he has to improve. But physically, talent-wise, he can play," Ayo said.

"Had he started playing basketball at an early age all of his skills would have developed by now. But since he started with football that affected it somewhat."

Mbala, who idolises NBA legend Michael Jordan and LeBron James of the Cleveland Cavaliers, makes no secret of his own dream of playing in the world's top pro league. But Mbala is putting as much effort into his business management course as his basketball career. He said he was aware basketball was a "gamble" and an NBA career was no certainty, citing woeful stories of promising young men whose careers were prematurely ruined by injury. "Unluckily, they didn't get to finish college for backup... I want to have a degree just in case," he said. —AFP



WASHINGTON: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors dribbles around John Wall #2 of the Washington Wizards in the second half at Verizon Center on Tuesday, in Washington. — AFP

BASKETBALL

WARRIORS LOSE DURANT TO INJURY AND GAME TO WIZARDS

WASHINGTON: Kevin Durant injured his left knee and departed after only 93 seconds before Golden State's Stephen Curry missed a potential go-ahead 3-pointer late in the game as the Washington Wizards beat the Warriors 112-108 on Tuesday night. Durant hyperextended his knee and will have an MRI exam after teammate Zaza Pachulia was pushed into him by Washington center Marcin Gortat. The 2014 NBA MVP and Golden State's leading scorer and rebounder exited with zero points, ending his streak of 562 regular-season games with at least 10 points. John Wall got a career high-tying 19 assists for the Wizards while Bradley Beal scored 25 points and Markieff Morris added 22, including a pair of free throws after Curry's 3 was off-target in the final 10 seconds.

rebounds, while Tony Allen had 11 points as Memphis shot 56 percent, including 12 of 25 from outside the arc. The 130 points were a season high for Memphis, which won its second straight. Conley was 10 of 19 from the field. Gasol shot 10 of 16 and Randolph was 10 of 15 as Memphis shot a season-best percentage from the field. Eric Bledsoe had 20 points for the Suns, while TJ Warren finished with 17 and Alex Len had 12. Devin Booker, the Suns' second-leading scorer at 21.1 points a game, was limited to nine points on 3 of 11 from the floor.

HORNETS 109, LAKERS 104

Kemba Walker scored 30 points and hit the go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:55 to play as Charlotte rallied late for a victory over struggling Los Angeles. Frank Kaminsky had 24 points and 12 rebounds for the Hornets, who won for just the third time in 16 games. Julius Randle had 23 points, 18 rebounds and six assists for the Lakers (19-42), who have lost five straight and clinched four consecutive losing seasons for the first time since 1961, the franchise's first year on the West Coast. — AP

NBA results/standings

Charlotte 109, LA Lakers 104; Denver 125, Chicago 107; Memphis 130, Phoenix 112; Oklahoma City 109, Utah 106; Detroit 120, Portland 113 (OT); Washington 112, Golden State 108.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference				
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT		W	L	PCT	
Boston	38	22	.633	-	Utah	37	23	.617
Toronto	36	24	.600	2	Oklahoma City	35	25	.583
NY Knicks	24	36	.400	14	Denver	27	33	.450
Philadelphia	22	37	.373	15.5	Portland	24	35	.407
Brooklyn	9	49	.155	28	Minnesota	24	36	.400
Central Division				Pacific Division				
Cleveland	41	17	.707	-	Golden State	50	10	.833
Indiana	31	29	.517	11	LA Clippers	36	23	.610
Chicago	30	30	.500	12	Sacramento	25	35	.417
Detroit	29	31	.483	13	LA Lakers	19	42	.311
Milwaukee	26	32	.448	15	Phoenix	18	42	.300
Southeast Division				Southwest Division				
Washington	35	23	.603	-	San Antonio	45	13	.776
Atlanta	33	26	.559	2.5	Houston	42	19	.689
Miami	27	33	.450	9	Memphis	36	25	.590
Charlotte	26	34	.433	10	Dallas	24	35	.407
Orlando	22	38	.367	14	New Orleans	23	37	.383



MANILA: This picture taken on January 24, 2017 shows Cameroon's Benoit Mbala (C, in black) listening to coach Aldin Ayo (3rd R) during a basketball practice session at De La Salle University's gym in Manila. "Big Ben" cuts an imposing figure, dominating college basketball in the hoops-crazy Philippines as the best of a wave of African imports on unlikely Asian journeys in search of their NBA dreams. — AFP

TWO UNCAPPED PLAYERS IN S LANKA TEST SQUAD

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka yesterday named two uncapped players in a 15-member squad led by spinner Rangana Herath for the two-Test home series against Bangladesh starting next week.

All-rounder Malinda Pushpakumara, 29, was brought into the squad after he led Sri Lanka A to a three-wicket victory over England Lions in an unofficial Test on Monday, the Sri Lankan board said.

Fast bowler Vikum Sanjaya Bandara, 25, was called up for a second time. He was first named into the Test squad in December for the South African tour, but did not play.

Sri Lanka's regular skipper Angelo Mathews has been left out of the two Tests against Bangladesh, but the Sri Lankan

board has not ruled him out of the three one-day internationals and the two Twenty20 games. The first Test starts in Galle on March 7.

Mathews returned home in January, halfway through the South African tour, after twisting his ankle. Herath filled in for Mathews during Sri Lanka's tour of Zimbabwe in November, when he led his side to victory in both Tests.

Sri Lanka squad: Rangana Herath (capt), Dimuth Karunaratne, Niroshan Dickwell, Upul Tharanga, Dhananjaya de Silva, Kusal Mendis, Asela Gunaratne, Dinesh Chandimal, Suranga Lakmal, Lahiru Kumara, Nuwan Pradeep, Vikum Sanjaya Bandara, Dilruwan Perera, Lakshan Sandakan, Malinda Pushpakumara. —AFP

PISTONS 120, TRAIL BLAZERS 113, OT

Marcus Morris scored a career-high 37 points, including Detroit's first seven in overtime, as the Pistons rallied from a 13-point, third-quarter deficit to beat Portland. Ish Smith had 12 points, seven assists and seven steals for the Pistons. The backup point guard was scoreless heading into the fourth quarter but gave Detroit a huge lift down the stretch. Damian Lillard had 34 points and 11 rebounds for Portland while falling an assist shy of his first triple-double. He had only one assist after the start of the fourth, however, and the Trail Blazers were eventually done in by their inability to take care of the ball. C.J. McCollum scored 25 points for Portland.

GRIZZLIES 130, SUNS 112

Mike Conley scored 29 points and Marc Gasol added 28 while making all five of his 3-point shots to lead Memphis past Phoenix. Zach Randolph finished with 23 points and eight

DJOKOVIC RETURNS WITH A VICTORY

MEXICO CITY: Novak Djokovic beat Slovakia's Martin Klizan 6-3, 7-6 (4) in the opening round of the Mexican Open on Tuesday. The win was Djokovic's first since his shocking loss in the second round of the Australian Open.

"It's always tough to win the first match but I'm happy with my game, especially in the first set, hopefully I can keep playing like that," Djokovic said. "I have not played since Australia and I felt out of rhythm out there. Klizan is an aggressive player and he's not afraid and I needed to give my best to win it."

The 29-year-old Serbian, ranked No. 2, played his first tournament since Jan. 19, when he suffered an unexpected loss to Uzbekistan's Denis Istomin. Djokovic, making his debut in Acapulco, saved four break points to take the first set Tuesday, struggled in the second set and needed a tiebreaker to take down Klizan in about 1 1/2 hours.

Djokovic, the top seed in Mexico, will play against Argentinian Juan Martin Del Potro,

who needed 2:31:19 to defeat American Frances Tiafoe 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (1).

It will be the first match between them since the first round of the Olympic tournament in Rio 2016, when Del Potro, the 2009 US Open winner, ousted Djokovic 7-6 (4), 7-6 (2) in the first round. Djokovic, who skipped Dubai for the first time in seven years, is the first favorite in Mexico. The second is Spaniard Rafael Nadal, who had a comfortable 6-4, 6-3 win over Mischa Zverev.

Nadal, a two-time winner in Acapulco, will play Italian Paolo Lorenzi in the next round. The Spaniard has an 11-0 record in Mexico. Earlier, third-seeded Marin Cilic reached the second round with a 6-3, 4-6, 6-0 win over Alexandr Dolgopopolov, a wild-card entry. The 28-year-old Cilic is struggling this year with a 4-4 record. He was beaten in the second round in the Australian Open and Montpellier and reached the quarterfinals in Rotterdam. — AP

GUARDIOLA SAYS MAN CITY OWNER WANTS HIM TO STAY FOR 'LONG' TIME

LONDON: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has said the club's owner, Arab billionaire Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, wants him to stay in charge of the club beyond his current three-year contract.

Guardiola, who took over at City before the start of the season, won two Champions League, three La Liga and two King's Cup titles as Barcelona coach. Two domestic doubles followed at Bayern Munich.

The Spaniard met Sheikh Mansour for the first time during City's recent warm-weather training break in Abu Dhabi. "He would like that I stay here for a long, long, long, long time. But of course it depends on the results," Guardiola told British media. "If not, they would say: What happened? What can we do? What do we need to improve? That's the process. To finish the process, they are going to help us. "We didn't speak about targets.

They will be happy if we win. I know we have to win but I've handled that in the past and I will in the present."

City are third in the Premier League, 11 points behind leaders Chelsea, who have played one game more, and face second-tier Huddersfield Town in an FA Cup fifth-round replay on Wednesday. Guardiola's men also hold a 5-3 advantage from their Champions League last-16, first-leg tie against French side Monaco, who they face in

the return leg in France on March 15. The manager said he would wait until the season is over before taking a call on the future of several of his players, including goalkeeper Joe Hart.

Hart, who is England's first-choice keeper, has joined Italian side Torino on loan, with Guardiola signing Claudio Bravo from Barcelona as a replacement. Guardiola has rotated between Bravo and Willy Caballero this season. "I'm so happy with Willy and

Claudio," Guardiola added. "We are going to talk about (Hart's future) at the end of the season." "I trust a lot in both and we'll decide - not just the goalkeepers, the midfielders, wingers, strikers, full-backs - we are going to decide at the end of the season." Caballero is out of contract in June along with midfielders Jesus Navas and Yaya Toure. So are defenders Gael Clichy, Pablo Zabaleta and Bacary Sagna. —Reuters



BRIGHTON: Brighton and Hove Albion Goalkeeper David Stockdale (13) during the Sky Bet Championship Match between Brighton & Hove Albion and Newcastle United at Amex Stadium on Tuesday. —AFP

SOCCER

NEWCASTLE LATE SHOW BOOSTS PROMOTION BID

LONDON: Newcastle moved a step closer to the Premier League after staging a dramatic fightback to clinch a crucial 2-1 win over Championship promotion rivals Brighton on Tuesday.

Rafael Benitez's side climbed above Brighton into first place in the second tier table thanks to a two-goal burst in the final nine minutes at the Amex Stadium.

Trailing to Glenn Murray's first half penalty, the Magpies equalised through Mohamed Diamé's fortuitous effort before Ayoze Perez bagged the winner just a minute before full-time.

A 12th win in their last 17 away games puts Newcastle firmly on course for promotion. Benitez's men are two points ahead of second placed Brighton and eight in front of third placed Huddersfield as they look to secure an immediate return to the Premier League following last season's relegation.

"A lot of things are against us, but the reaction of the team was good," Benitez said. "Watching the replay of the penalty he was pushing our player, you can't give a penalty in this type of game."

"But I think we created a lot of good situations before we got a little bit lucky. And Ayoze was calm and composed for the winner." It was a bitter blow for Brighton, who are eyeing a place in the top-flight for the first time since 1982-83 after missing out in the play-off semi-finals last season.

But despite the frustrating setback, Brighton boss Chris Hughton, who led Newcastle to the Championship title in 2009-10, knows his team still control their own destiny in the battle for automatic promotion.

"Was it a sickener? Yes, and I don't think it was a result we deserved," Hughton said. "I generally felt we would go on and win the game. Murray had only one goal in his last nine Championship outings, but it didn't take long for the veteran striker to net his 17th of the season."

The breakthrough came in the 14th minute when Ciaran Clark and Murray tan-

gled in the area as they awaited a corner. Referee Bobby Madley ruled in Murray's favour and the striker coolly dispatched the penalty. Although Brighton had won all 18 of the previous matches in which they had scored first this season, Newcastle always looked capable of coming back.

After spurning a series of chances, the visitors luck changed as they drew level in the 81st minute. Christian Atsu's miscued shot spun off Diamé and looped into the air, eluding Brighton goalkeeper David Stockdale as it went into the top corner.

Atsu was the catalyst for a more conventional Newcastle when he got clear down the left in the 89th minute and crossed for Perez to side-foot home from 10 yards.

JEERED

Jonathan Kodjia went from zero to hero against his former club as Aston Villa eased their relegation fears with a 2-0 win over Bristol City at Villa Park.

Kodjia joined Villa from City last year and the striker was jeered by the away fans after crashing a first-half penalty against the crossbar. However, the Ivorian scored Villa's 54th minute opener and then set up Conor Hourihane's first goal for the club in the 59th minute as Villa put nine points between themselves and a struggling City side now without a win in their last five.

Struggling Blackburn marked new manager Tony Mowbray's first home game with a 1-0 win over Derby that improved their survival prospects and dented their visitors' play-off push.

Former Celtic and West Bromwich Albion boss Mowbray was named as Owen Coyle's successor last week and has now taken four points from two games.

Blackburn's winner came via a Craig Conway penalty in the 58th minute, moving them level on points with 21st-placed Bristol City. Derby, now without a goal in three games, have ended a winless February languishing 10 points behind the top six. — AFP

INFANTINO PROMISES AFRICA WORLD CUP DREAM

NOUAKCHOTT: FIFA president Gianni Infantino promised to come good on a promise to hike Africa's World Cup berths to nine or ten during a visit to the impoverished West African state of Mauritania this week.

"We want everyone to have the right to dream and how better to do that than taking part in a major event such as a World Cup," Infantino told a press conference.

During last year's hotly contested FIFA elections Infantino promised African federation chiefs that if elected he would increase the continent's meagre five World Cup berths in a new look competition featuring 48 nations rather than the current format of 32.

"Of the 48 teams scheduled for the 2026 World Cup nine or ten will be African. We'll be working on that," the Swiss head of world football promised. The expansion of

the World Cup, passed by the FIFA Council in January, comes into effect for the 2026 tournament. The Infantino proposal will feature 16 first-round groups from which winners and runners-up qualify for the knockout phase. — AFP

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

SPANISH LEAGUE

Deportivo v Atletico de Madrid 22:45
beIN SPORTS

Sevilla v Athletic de Bilbao 23:30
beIN SPORTS

NAPOLI FURIOUS AFTER CONTROVERSIAL DEFEAT

TURIN: Juventus came from behind to beat Napoli 3-1 with the help of three favorable penalty decisions in a controversial first leg of their Italian Cup semifinal on Tuesday.

Napoli had broken the deadlock with a well-worked team goal in the 36th minute. Lorenzo Insigne and Arkadiusz Milik played a rapid one-two and the former crossed into the box for Jose Callejon to volley in at the back post.

But the momentum changed after the break with two contentious penalties awarded to Juventus - and one denied to the visitors.

Napoli, which had been in a self-imposed media blackout for more than a week, decided to break its silence after the match.

"We haven't decided to interrupt our media silence, but it seemed right to us to congratulate the lads, who had a great game," Napoli's sporting director Cristiano Giuntoli said. "We lost tonight because of decisions that weren't just debatable, but were shameful and hurt Italian football. "The first penalty shouldn't have been given, and the second was even less of a penalty because (Napoli goalkeeper Pepe) Reina got the ball ... Ours was a penalty. This referee is shameful. Congratulations to the team."

Napoli's Kalidou Koulibaly was judged to have tripped Paulo Dybala shortly after halftime and the Argentina forward dusted himself off before firing the resulting spot-kick into the bottom left corner, sending Reina the wrong way.

Juve's second penalty came five minutes after former Napoli striker Gonzalo Higuain had made it 2-1. Napoli goalkeeper Pepe Reina appeared to get the ball but also brought down Juan Cuadrado following a swift counterattack. Dybala converted into the same corner.

Napoli's players were also angered by the referee ignoring their claims for a penalty moments earlier for what appeared to be a foul on Raul Albiol, which led to the counterattack.

"The result changed only because of the refereeing decisions," Reina said. "What should I have done on Cuadrado? Disappear? If I get the ball I get the ball, it's not a penalty."

"And no one's talking much about the penalty on Albiol," the Napoli keeper added. "That was more a penalty than the other... Tonight the result was decided by refereeing mistakes, the whole of Italy saw it."

Higuain's goal came shortly after the hour. A corner was played out to Cuadrado and his cross into the box was inadvertently headed to



TURIN: Juventus' Stephan Lichtsteiner, left, and Napoli's Lorenzo Insigne vie for the ball during the Italian Cup first leg semifinal soccer match between Juventus and Napoli, at the Juventus Stadium in Turin, Italy, Tuesday. — AP

Higuain by Koulibaly and the forward slotted it in from a tight angle.

Higuain, who had netted the winner when the two sides met in the league earlier this season, joined Juventus for an Italian-record 90 million euros (\$100 million) after scoring a league-record 36 goals for Napoli last campaign.

Juventus defender Giorgio Chiellini later brushed off the controversy surrounding the penalty decisions.

"It's bar talk," Chiellini said. "After Roma's win at Inter on Sunday, everyone talked about refereeing decisions and not about Roma's great performance. And it's the same thing tonight. We're used to it, we're thinking about the actual football and the mistakes we made, we will have to sweat hard in Naples."

The return leg will be played on April 4. The winner will meet either Lazio or Roma, which play the first leg of their cup derby later. — AP

REAL SOCIEDAD CONCEDES LATE EQUALIZER IN DRAW WITH EIBAR

MADRID: Real Sociedad conceded an equalizer in the final minute of stoppage time to draw 2-2 against Eibar on Tuesday, missing a chance to take fourth place from Atletico Madrid in the

Spanish league and establish itself as a top contender for a Champions League spot.

The hosts were only a few seconds from victory when Pedro Leon seized on a loose ball and

evaded a defender before firing a low shot beneath goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli.

Instead of earning a fourth win in five matches, the disappointing draw left fifth-place Real Sociedad level on 45 points with Athletic, which plays at Deportivo La Coruna on Thursday.

"We were in control and had the match in our hands," Real Sociedad coach Eusebio Sacristan said. "But we let it escape from us at the end." Juanmi put Real Sociedad in front with a header in the 14th minute and Gonzalo Escalante leveled with another header in the 26th. Carlos Vela restored the hosts' lead by converting a 67th-minute penalty, with both teams then down to 10 men at Anoeta Stadium in San Sebastian.

Eibar defender Florian Lejeune was shown a second yellow card in the 46th and Juanmi was sent off in the 59th, also with a second yellow. Eibar coach Jose Luis Mendilibar was also dismissed, apparently for complaining about the penalty decision. Eibar's equalizer came after Real Sociedad's defense failed to fully clear a long cross. Leon broke into the area and cleared a defender before striking his left-foot shot.

"You have to pay attention to these details that can decide a match," Real Sociedad defender Raul Navas said. Real Madrid leads the league with 55 points, one more than Barcelona. The Catalan club hosts Sporting Gijon on Wednesday. Madrid hosts Las Palmas later on the same day.

VALENCIA 1, LEGANES 0

France defender Eliaguim Mangala scored a 29th-minute winner from a corner to give Valencia its third win in four matches. The result left the hosts in 12th place with 29 points, comfortably away from the relegation zone. Promoted Leganes, which was coming off a surprising 4-0 rout of Deportivo La Coruna, remained 16th, only four points from the relegation zone. It was Leganes' fifth loss in its last six games.

MALAGA 1, REAL BETIS 2

Real Betis scored twice in the second half through Jonas Martin and Antonio Sanabria to defeat Malaga and rebound from a home loss to city rival Sevilla at the weekend. The result ended the team's six-game winless run and moved it to 14th place, 10 points above the relegation zone. Malaga, which has lost two matches in a row, dropped one point behind Betis. Pablo Fornals scored for the hosts in the first half. — AP



SAN SEBASTIAN: Real Sociedad's defender Alvaro Odriozola (L) vies with Eibar's defender Ivan Ramis (R) during the Spanish league football match Real Sociedad vs SD Eibar at the Anoeta stadium in San Sebastian on Tuesday. — AFP

Sports

Female athletes
to develop women's
sports in KuwaitNapoli furious
after controversial
defeat to Juventus

THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2017

GOLF UNVEILS MODERN SET OF RULES TO MAKE IT EASIER TO PLAY

Page 17



HAMILTON: Martin Guptill of New Zealand bats as South Africa's Quinton de Kock (L) watches during the one-day international (ODI) cricket match between New Zealand and South Africa at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

GUPTILL LEADS NZ TO 7-WICKET WIN OVER SA

HAMILTON: Opening batsman Martin Guptill returned from injury to score an unbeaten 180 and lead New Zealand to a seven-wicket win over South Africa in the fourth ODI yesterday, tying the five-match series at 2-2.

Guptill has been sidelined for the past month with hamstring injuries and was making his first ODI appearance since Jan. 30 when he scored 61 against Australia in Auckland. He shrugged off that enforced layoff, dashing to his 12th ODI century from 82 balls on a tricky pitch at Seddon Park.

Guptill's 180 from 138 balls contained 15 fours and 11 sixes and was the highest score by a New Zealand batsman against South Africa, and his unbroken partnership with Ross Taylor (66) was the highest for all wickets for New Zealand against the Proteas.

In partnership, the pair guided New Zealand to their winning total of 280-3, surpassing South Africa's 279-8 with five overs to spare. South Africa captain A.B. de Villiers called Guptill "unstoppable" and New Zealand captain Kane Williamson described his innings as "unbe-

lievable," saying it was "probably the best one-day innings I've ever seen on a wicket that wasn't that easy."

Guptill, more subdued, said he was simply glad to be in the middle again after a long battle with hamstring injuries. "It was one of those innings where it all went to plan and Ross and I were able to take it deep," Guptill said. "That partnership set it up really nicely."

"I had a couple of good nets the last couple of days but it's always nice to go out to the middle and hit a few out of the screws."

MILESTONE

Guptill raced to 50 from only 38 balls with six fours and three sixes. His century contained 12 fours and four sixes and his 150, from 123 balls, had 14 fours and nine sixes. His total of 180 was the highest percentage of a winning total for New Zealand in the second innings of a one-day match.

Taylor was very much the junior partner in the stand, struggling for much of his innings to find his timing and

willing for that reason to defer to Guptill, who was so clearly in the zone. But while he took 83 balls to reach his 50 - one more than Guptill needed for his century - he reached that milestone with a flourish, striking a towering six off Chris Morris. On his way he passed Brendon McCullum to place himself third behind Stephen Fleming and Nathan Astle on New Zealand's all-time list of run-scorers in one-day internationals.

Many of Guptill's scoring shots were memorable and included two sixes off Morris, one over mid-wicket and another over the bowler's head, which flew almost out of the ground.

Through his Taylor's efforts the series remains alive and will be decided in the final match in Auckland on Saturday, in which New Zealand has the chance to extend its winning streak in ODI series at home to nine.

"We probably would have liked to restrict them to less than that total but for Martin to come out and play a hand like that, it was a special knock," Williamson said. "Also the way Ross stuck at it. They put together a part-

nership that allowed Guppy to play with that freedom."

Guptill was Man of the Match as his innings surpassed all achievements in the match and series to date. No South African batsman has reached a century in the series so far and De Villiers' 85 in the last match in Wellington is still their best in four matches.

De Villiers made a superb unbeaten 72 from 59 balls yesterday to lead South Africa to 279-8 as it batted first after winning the toss. Faf du Plessis fulfilled Taylor's subordinate role, scoring 67 from 97 balls, and Hashim Amla made a return to form with 40 from 38 balls, leading the Proteas' recovery after the loss of Quinton de Kock in the first over. De Kock's first-ball dismissal, as New Zealand opened the bowling with spinners for the first time in an ODI at home, ended his run of five consecutive centuries in one-day internationals, a South African record he shares with Jonty Rhodes.

Amla contributed 40 of a 65-run second innings partnership with du Plessis, who then steered the South African innings through its middle stages. — AP

SOCCER

ALEX TEIXEIRA DOUBLE SPARKS JIANGSU IN ASIA

NANJING: Alex Teixeira's double strike put China's deep-pocketed Jiangsu Suning on top of their AFC Champions League group with a 2-1 win over Adelaide United yesterday. As Chinese rivals Guangzhou Evergrande scrambled a 2-2 draw with Suwon Samsung Bluewings, Teixeira scored an early tap-in and a brilliant solo effort late on in Nanjing.

The match-winning performance by the former Liverpool target, a 50-million-euro signing from Shakhtar Donetsk last year, put Jiangsu top of Group H with a maximum six points. Jiangsu, bankrolled by the Suning group which also controls Inter Milan, were runners-up to Evergrande in last year's Chinese Super League but the Asian title looms as a much bigger prize.

They were quickly on top against Adelaide when Teixeira snapped up a rebound from former Chelsea man Ramires on 14 minutes. Adelaide were threatening to equalise but on 72 minutes, Teixeira set off on a run from the left, drifting past a defender before nutmegging goalkeeper Daniel Margush.

Substitute forward Eli Babalj grabbed a goal for Adelaide in injury time but there was to be no miracle comeback for the 2008 Asian finalists and reigning Australian champions. Earlier, Brazilian forward Alan struck late to spare Evergrande's blushes 2-2 against Suwon, just a week after the Chinese giants hammered Hong Kong's Eastern 7-1. Luiz Felipe Scolari's team were

headed for a shock defeat in South Korea before Alan slammed home a loose ball on 81 minutes to keep the two-time Asian champions top of Group G.

In pouring rain at Suwon World Cup Stadium, Evergrande's Ricardo Goulart had cancelled out Santos' early opener with a stunning half-volley on 25 minutes. Suwon's Johnathan made it 2-1 shortly afterwards before Alan, the game's fourth Brazilian scorer, secured an important away point for Evergrande with his late equaliser.

In Group H, Yasuhito Endo's own goal triggered a collapse by Gamba Osaka as the first-week table-toppers slumped to a 4-1 home defeat to South Korea's Jeju United. Japan international Endo nodded the ball into his own net on 44 minutes before Lee Chang-Min doubled Jeju's advantage in first-half injury time. After the break, Marcelo Toscano's strike and a long-range rocket from Lee made it 4-0, before Ademilson grabbed a consolation goal with one minute remaining.

In Hong Kong, debutants Eastern flirted with their first AFC Champions League win before drawing 1-1 with 10-man Japanese side Kawasaki Frontale. Manuel Bleda's 14th-minute penalty after Tatsuki Nara's straight red card-gave Eastern hope of a morale-boosting win after last week's crushing, 7-1 defeat to Evergrande. But Eastern, led by their trailblazing female coach Chan Yuen-ting, had to settle for their first point in the competition after Ko Itakura's second-half equaliser. — AFP



NANJING: Roger Beyker Martinez (L) of China's Jiangsu FC fights for the ball with Michael Marrone of Australia's Adelaide United during their AFC Champions League group stage football match in Nanjing, east China's Jiangsu province yesterday. — AFP



Zain Group enters MoU
 with Myca Health Inc

BOURSA KUWAIT CONTINUES BEARISH TREND



BOGOR, Indonesia: Indonesia's President Joko Widodo (center right) and Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdul Aziz (center left) holding hands after their meeting at the presidential palace in Bogor, West Java province. — AFP

SAUDI ANNOUNCES HUGE INDONESIA INVESTMENTS
 COUNTRIES SIGN 11 DEALS AS KING SALMAN VISITS



BOGOR: Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdul Aziz (third left) attends a bilateral meeting at the presidential palace in Bogor yesterday. — AFP

BOGOR, Indonesia: Saudi Arabia pledged \$1 billion in development finance for Indonesia and expanded cooperation in other areas, deepening ties with Southeast Asia's biggest economy as the Saudi king and a huge entourage arrived yesterday for a 9-day visit.

Enthusiastic crowds lined the route of King Salman's heavily guarded motorcade as it arrived in Bogor, near the capital Jakarta, where official events were held at an imposing presidential palace.

He was earlier welcomed at Jakarta's Halim airport by President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo and the minority Christian governor of Jakarta, Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama, who is fighting a tough election battle after being charged with blasphemy.

At a joint news conference, the countries' foreign ministers affirmed Saudi Aramco and Indonesian oil company Pertamina's plans for a \$6 billion refinery joint venture in Cilacap in central Java. The two countries also signed 11 agreements that included a Saudi commitment to provide \$1 billion of financing for economic development and cooperation to combat transnational crime such as people smuggling, terrorism and drug trafficking.

Salman is on a tour of Asian countries to advance the kingdom's economic and business interests. On his first stop in Malaysia, Saudi Aramco signed a \$7 billion deal to take a 50 percent stake in a Malaysian oil refinery.

Salman will also visit Brunei, Japan, China and the Maldives, the official Saudi Press Agency has reported. The first visit of a Saudi monarch to Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, in nearly a half century generated blanket media coverage.

Live broadcasts showed the octogenarian Salman exiting his plane at Halim using a gold-colored escalator sent from Saudi Arabia for the visit, with a portable lift carrying him the final meter or so to the ground. Salman will spend six of his nine days in Indonesia vacationing on the resort island of Bali, a predominantly Hindu part of the Indonesian archipelago.

"As the world's biggest Muslim nation, Indonesia will always have a special bond with Saudi Arabia," said Jokowi. "Indonesia and Saudi Arabia are two big countries that have important influence in the region, and

our countries should continue to improve cooperation both in bilateral and international contexts."

Jokowi said he appreciated that Indonesia's Hajj quota, which was reduced in the aftermath of the 2015 Hajj disasters, had been restored and expanded for 2017 with 221,000 pilgrims allowed from Indonesia.

The Indonesian government said Salman's entourage and related delegations number about 1,500 people. They have booked out four hotels in a posh Jakarta neighborhood for the week and about 10,000 police and soldiers have been deployed for security, including for Salman's Bali trip.

Indonesia has said it hopes for \$25 billion of new investments from Saudi Arabia. The two leaders discussed possibilities including three oil refineries, a power plant and infrastructure such as roads, housing and sanitation. Aside from the two countries having a common faith, Saudi Arabia employs hundreds of thousands of Indonesians despite a government ban on sending domestic workers there following the execution of an Indonesian maid in 2011. — AP

UBER CEO APOLOGIZES
 AFTER VIDEO SHOWS
 HIM BERATING DRIVER

WASHINGTON: Uber chief Travis Kalanick has apologized, acknowledging that "I must fundamentally change as a leader and grow up," after a video showed him verbally abusing a driver for the service.

In a message to Uber employees late Tuesday, Kalanick cited the widely circulated video and said he "treated an Uber driver disrespectfully." The incident which circulated on social media was the latest hit for the image of the global ridesharing giant, which faces accusations of sexual harassment and a lawsuit contending it misappropriated Google's self-driving car technology.

In the dashcam video, Kalanick responded to a driver's complaint by saying, "Some people don't like to take responsibility for their own shit. They blame everything in their life on somebody else."

In the message to employees later, Kalanick wrote "To say that I am ashamed is an extreme understatement." He added: "My job as your leader is to lead... and that starts with behaving in a way that makes us all proud. That is not what I did, and it cannot be explained away."

Kalanick also offer his apology to the driver and said the incident shows he needs to work on his leadership. "It's clear this video is a reflection of me and the criticism we've received is a stark reminder that I must fundamentally change as a leader and grow up. This is the first time I've been willing to admit that I need leadership help and I intend to get it."

Uber is one of the largest investor-backed start-ups with a valuation estimated at \$68 billion, and has operations in dozens of countries and hundreds of cities, even as it battles regulators and an established taxi industry. Kalanick also faced criticism for agreeing to be part of a business advisory panel for President Donald Trump, but then quit the panel amid a campaign by Trump opponents to delete the application. — AFP

US CONSUMER SPENDING SLOWS; INFLATION TICKS UP

WASHINGTON: US consumer spending rose less than expected in January as the largest monthly increase in inflation in four years eroded households' purchasing power, pointing to moderate economic growth in the first quarter.

The surge in inflation raises the possibility of an interest rate increase from the Federal Reserve this month. While still below the US central bank's 2 percent target, inflation is now in the upper end of the range that Fed officials in December felt would be reached this year. The Commerce Department said yesterday that consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, increased 0.2 percent after rising 0.5 percent in December. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast consumer spending gaining 0.3 percent in January.

Consumer spending is likely to remain supported amid promises by the Trump administration of sweeping tax cuts and increased infrastructure spending. In a speech to Congress on Tuesday night, President Donald Trump said his economic team was working on a "historic tax reform that will reduce the tax rate on our companies" and promised a "massive" tax relief for the middle class. Trump offered no further details.

Consumer confidence has surged following Trump's election victory, hitting a 15-1/2-year high in February. In January the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index increased 0.4 percent - the largest gain since February 2013 - after rising 0.2 percent in December.

In the 12 months through January, the PCE price index jumped 1.9 percent. That was the biggest year-on-year gain since October 2012 and followed a 1.6 percent increase in December. Excluding food and energy, the so-called core PCE price index rose 0.3 percent in January. That was the biggest increase since January 2012 and followed a 0.1 percent gain in December. The core PCE price index increased 1.7 percent year-on-year after a similar gain in

December. The core PCE is the Fed's preferred inflation measure.

Prices for US Treasuries fell, with the yield on the interest-rate sensitive 2-year note rising to its highest level since August 2009. Fed funds futures were pricing in a 65 percent chance of an interest rate hike at the Fed's March 14-15 policy meeting. The US central bank has forecast three rate increases this year. The Fed hiked its

overnight interest rate last December by 25 basis points to a range of 0.50 percent to 0.75 percent. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies, while US stock index futures pared gains slightly.

Real spending

Rising price pressures, however, suggest that consumer spending will probably not provide a big boost to gross domestic product in the first quarter. When adjusted for inflation, consumer spending fell 0.3 percent in January, the first drop since August and the biggest in three years. Real consumer spending increased 0.3 percent in December. Builders cut back on construction spending in January by the largest amount in nine months, with weakness stemming from the biggest reduction in government activity in nearly 15 years.

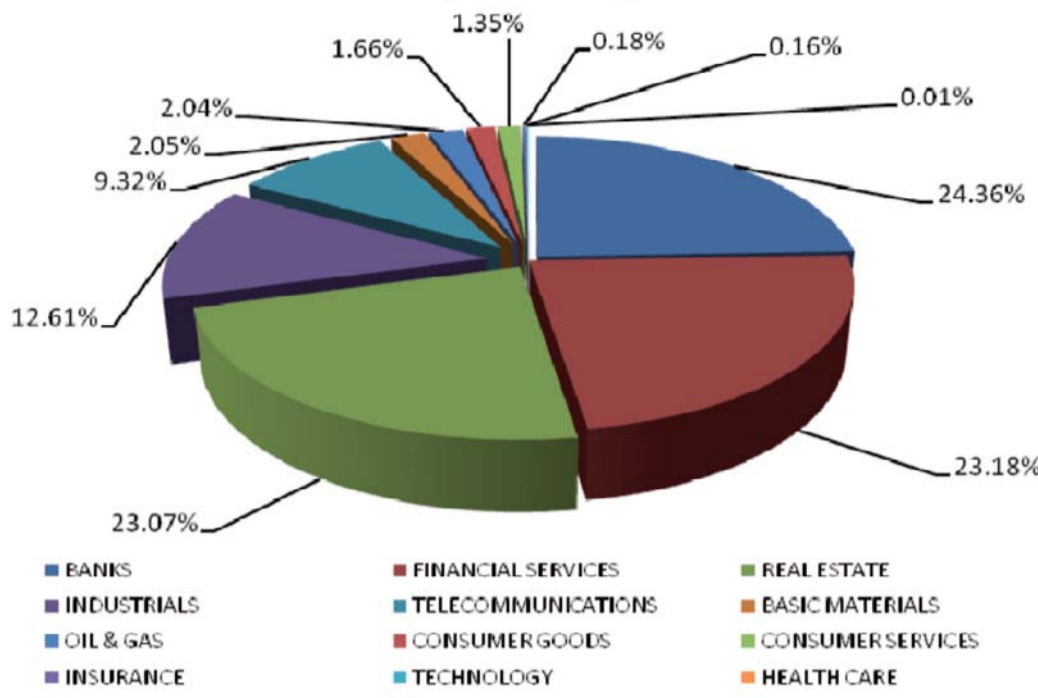
Construction

The Commerce Department says that construction spending fell 1 percent in January. It was the first decline since September and the biggest drop since a 2.9 percent dip in April. Residential construction showed a modest gain, while private nonresidential activity was flat. However, spending on government projects tumbled 5 percent, the largest one-month drop since March 2002. President Donald Trump wants to sharply increase spending on government infrastructure projects over the next decade. But his proposal is expected to face hurdles winning approval in Congress at a time of rising budget deficits. — Agencies

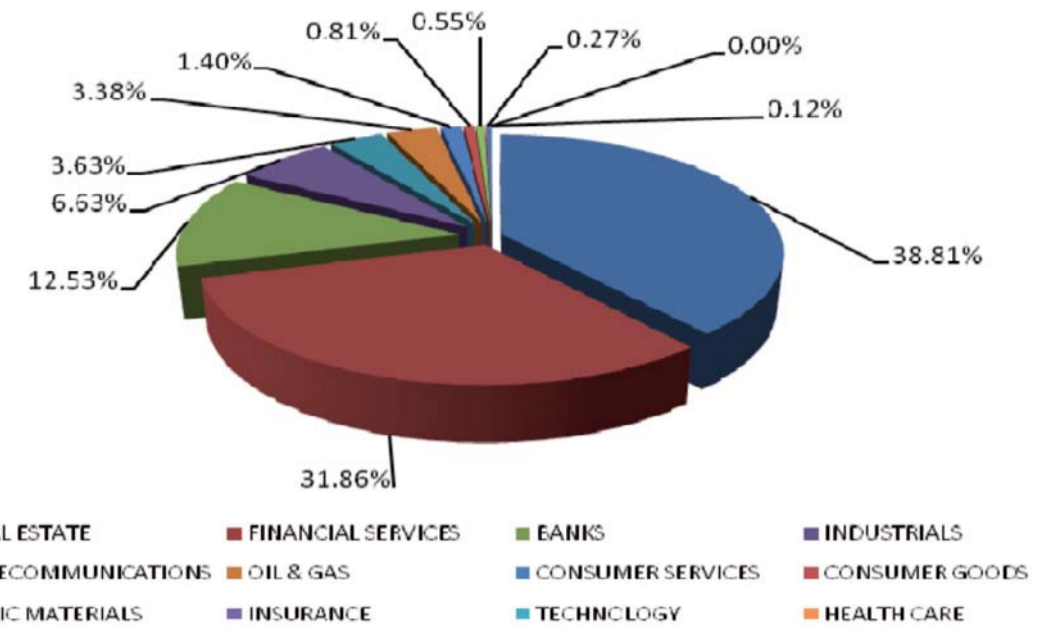


MIAMI: In this Feb 9, 2016 file photo, shoppers are shown in Miami. US consumer spending rose at only a sluggish pace in January 2017. —AP

Monthly Trading "Value"

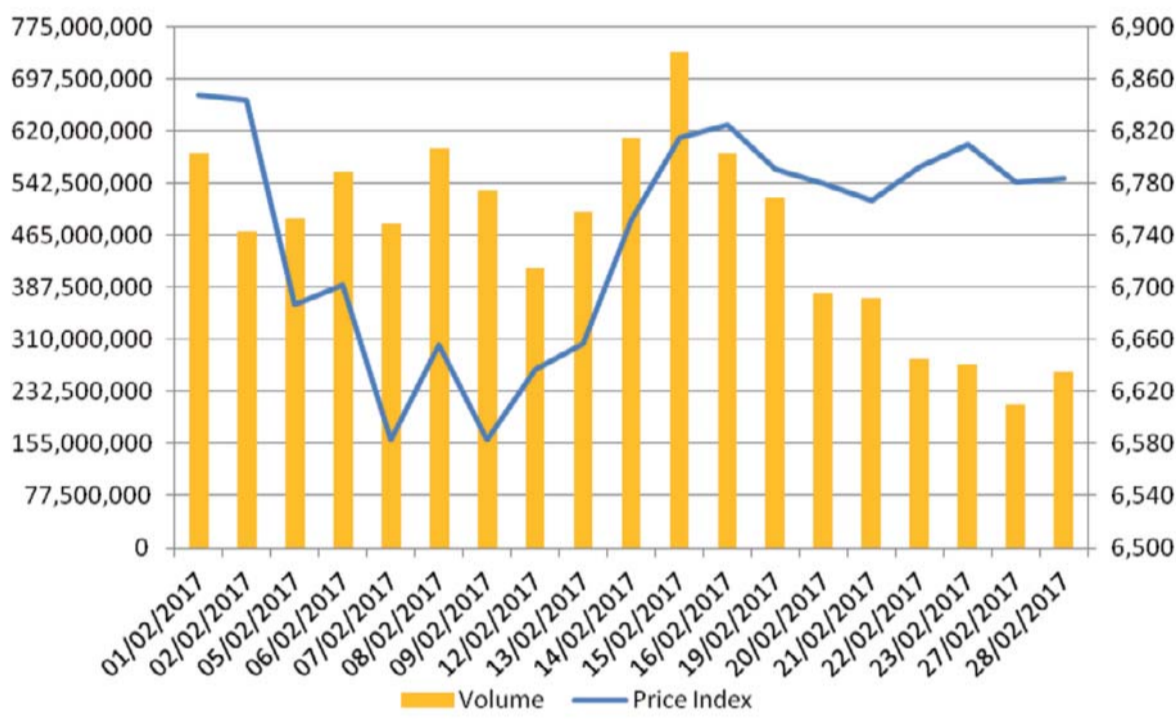


Monthly Trading "Volume"



BOURSA KUWAIT CONTINUES BEARISH TREND

Bayan Investment Monthly Market Report



KUWAIT: Bursa Kuwait ended January in the red zone. The Price Index closed at 6,783.08 points, down by 0.72 percent compared to the closings of the month before, the Weighted Index decreased by 0.79 percent after closing at 424.02 points, whereas the KSX-15 Index closed at 964.08 points decreasing by 2.16 percent. Furthermore, last month's average turnover decreased by 15.36 percent, compared to the preceding month, reaching KD 45.60 million, whereas trading volume average was 466.16 million shares, recording a decrease of 25.99 percent.

The three indices of Bursa Kuwait recorded limited losses by the end of the month, except for KSX-15 Index that recorded relatively large losses, as it was subject to the selling pressures which included many traded stocks, especially the leading and operational ones, the most declining during the month, which was reflected on the Weighted and KSX-15 indices' performance, the most losing indices compared to the Price Index. Also, the market witnessed at sometimes a fluctuated performance, due to the speculative operations that were not absent from affecting the market performance, and concentrated on the small-cap stocks of the market.

On the other hand, the Bursa Kuwait lost during February around KD 324.16 million of its market value, as it reached by the end of the month about KD 28.17 billion, down by 1.14 percent from its value at end of last January, where it reached then around KD 28.49 billion.

Price Index Performance

The Price Index witnessed a positive performance during most of the

daily sessions of the month, despite its decline on the monthly level, where it was able to realize gain in 11 days out of 19 trading day of the month, as it initiated the month with a slight increase in the first session, to be able to reach its highest level during the month at 6,847.96 point. The Index witnessed thereafter a fluctuated performance with a downward direction in general, to end the 9th February session at 6,582.75 point, its lowest level of the month, down by 3.65 percent compared with January's closing. The Index was able in the next few sessions to compensate a large part of its losses through a fluctuated performance, within the positive range however, but could not realize growth on the monthly level until the end of the month, where its its monthly losses reached 0.72 percent.

Weighted Index Performance

The Weighted Index's performance did not much differ than the Price Index, as it was able to increase in 11 sessions out of 19 sessions held during the month, where the Index witnessed during the first half of the month a fluctuated performance, with a downward trend in general, to end the session of 13th February at 419.05 point, its lowest level of the month, where its losses reached since the beginning of the month 1.95 percent. However, the Index was able thereafter to compensate all its month's losses through realizing consecutive gains during the next couple of sessions, recording its highest closing during the month on 15th February, with an increase of 0.37 percent compared to January closing.

The Weighted Index returned after to the red zone and recorded losses during most of the second half of the month's sessions, to lose by this all its gains and end the month's sessions with loss of 0.79 percent.

KSX-15 Performance

The KSX-15 Index ended the month of February's trading with loss of 2.16 percent, despite its ability to record gains in 12 sessions out of 19 trading session during the last month. The Index was able in the first session of the month to realize an

increase of 0.19 percent to close at 987.30 point, its highest level during the month, while it witnessed thereafter a fluctuated performance until it reached on 13th February its lowest closing level of the month and closed at 952.12 point, where its losses reached 3.38 percent compared to January's closing. The Index was able however in the second half of the month to compensate a part of its losses, through a fluctuated performance between up and down, to end the month's trading at 964.08 point.

For the annual performance, the

price index ended last week recording 18.01 percent annual gain compared to its closing in 2016, while the weighted index increased by 11.56 percent, and the KSX-15 recorded 8.93 percent growth.

Sectors' Indices

Six of KSE's sectors ended last month in the red zone, while the other six recorded increases. The Telecommunications sector headed the losers list as its index declined by 4.58 percent to end the month's activity at 663.30 points. The Real

Estate sector was second on the losers' list, which index declined by 4.38 percent, closing at 1,058.38 points, followed by the Consumer Services sector, as its index closed at 971.52 points at a loss of 2.91 percent. The Oil & Gas sector was the least declining as its index closed at 946.12 points with a 1.33 percent decrease.

On the other hand, last month's highest gainer was the Health Care sector, achieving 17.79 percent growth rate as its index closed at 1,398.05 points. Whereas, in the second place, the Basic Materials sector's index closed at 1,308.70 points recording 4.31 percent increase. The Banks sector was the least growing as its index closed at 977.67 points with a 0.68 percent increase.

Sectors' Activity

The Real Estate sector dominated a total trade volume during the last month of 3.44 billion shares changing hands, representing 38.81 percent of the total market trading volume. The Financial Services sector was second in terms of trading volume as the sector's traded shares were 31.86 percent of last month's total trading volume, with a total of 2.82 billion shares. On the other hand, the Banks sector's stocks were the highest traded in terms of value; with a turnover of KD 211.09 million or 24.36 percent of last month's total market trading value. The Financial Services sector took the second place as the sector's last month turnover of KD 200.86 million representing 23.18 percent of the total market trading value. Prepared by the Studies & Research Department, Bayan Investment Co.



In this photograph taken on February 27, 2017, a customer scans a bar code sign of cellphone-based payment system Paytm at a parking area in New Delhi. —AFP

IN INDIA, A NEW BANKING SYSTEM SEEKING TO REACH THE MASSES

GREATER NOIDA, India: At a furniture store outside India's capital, a salesman scans the manager's ID and takes her fingerprint on a biometric device attached to his cellphone. Within minutes, Meenakshi Sharma becomes eligible for an account with Paytm, joining the hundreds of thousands who have signed up to a payments banking system that is revolutionizing India's retail sector.

Before the government's shock decision in November to withdraw high-value bank notes from circulation, around 90 percent of everyday transactions in India were in cash. The sudden cash shortage forced millions to join the formal banking sector for the first time, helping Prime Minister Narendra Modi meet a long-term goal. A country of 1.25 billion people, India has only about 132,000 bank branches and 218,000 ATMs—just a fraction of which are in rural areas.

So in 2015, India's banking regulator offered licenses for what are known as payments banks to stop people putting their money under a mattress. This new model can accept deposits—currently limit-

ed to 100,000 rupees (around \$1,500) per account—but unlike traditional banks are prohibited from offering loans and issuing credit cards.

They also offer services like ATMs, debit cards and online banking. Another problem was not just that people did not have bank accounts, but that those who did were not using them.

According to a recent report by the McKinsey Global Institute, Indians lose more than \$2 billion a year in income simply because of the time it takes travelling to and from a bank.

"It is no wonder that because of the time and cost required to interact with a bank, many poor and rural individuals opt instead to use cash for transactions," the report said.

'Bottom of the pyramid'

Those most impacted by the cash ban were the same group of people that the payments banks are supposed to reach—the poor and those in rural areas. To fill that gap, regulators have offered licenses to firms that already had large distribution networks in

place, like telecom and e-commerce companies.

Airtel Payments Bank, owned by India's largest telecom service provider Airtel, was the first to launch. It has enrolled two million people so far through the mom and pop stores in its network where customers top up their phones. At these outlets customers can make deposits for free and withdraw cash for a nominal amount. Other services like transfers can be conducted on cell phones.

"The affluent, high net-worth person is over-banked and always has access to a credit card or an ATM... but the situation at the bottom of the pyramid is diametrically opposite," Shashi Arora, chief of Airtel Payments Bank, told AFP. "This is digital and paperless and at a bare minimum cost to that part of society that needs it the most."

Paytm is working on joining Airtel and looking at a summer rollout of its payments bank.

It has the largest mobile wallet in the country and its 200 million active users are potential customers for its new bank. In the days after the cash ban, it saw a 700 percent increase in overall traffic, a 1,000 per-

cent growth in the amount of money added to its system and a doubling of daily transactions on its app to five million. Having built a massive customer base, Paytm is now signing up merchants in small towns and rural India.

Targeting tea vendors

It has thousands of employees walking the streets signing them up — 3.7 million merchants across 1,000 cities and small towns so far—and small entrepreneurs like tea and vegetable vendors to accept payments through the Paytm wallet. "We want to bring half-a-billion people into the formal economy by 2020," Deepak Abbot, a senior vice president at Paytm, said.

Digital transactions should also boost government revenues, say experts. "The move to digitization means transactions are now formally recorded instead of being done in cash like in the past and that means the revenue collection will absolutely go up," said Mumbai-based tax consultant Uday Ved. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

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

GCC COUNTRIES

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

ARAB COUNTRIES

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

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	306.150
Euro	327.180
Sterling Pound	384.680

Canadian dollar	234.780
Turkish lira	83.310
Swiss Franc	307.460
Australian Dollar	237.110
US Dollar Buying	304.950

GOLD

20 Gram	252.060
10 Gram	128.950
5 Gram	65.320

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfr	Selling Rate
US Dollar	306.000
Canadian Dolla	230.415
Sterling Pound	380.090
Euro	324.470
Swiss Frank	310.255
Bahrain Dinar	811.180
UAE Dirhams	83.705
Qatari Riyals	84.925
Saudi Riyals	82.525
Jordanian Dinar	432.760
Egyptian Pound	19.522
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.025
Indian Rupees	4.580
Pakistani Rupees	2.918
Bangladesh Taka	3.853
Philippines Pessso	6.086
Cyprus pound	168.040
Japanese Yen	3.695
Syrian Pound	2.430

Nepalese Rupees	3.860
Malaysian Ringgit	69.675
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.920
Thai Bhat	9.730
Turkish Lira	84.230

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.373797	0.383797
Czech Korune	0.003981	0.015981
Danish Krone	0.039532	0.044532
Euro	0.318472	0.327472
Norwegian Krone	0.032551	0.037751
Romanian Leu	0.084847	0.084847
Slovakia	0.009181	0.019181
Slovenia	0.029732	0.034732
Swedish Krona	0.296906	0.307906
Swiss Franc	0.079521	0.089821
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.226891	0.238891
New Zealand Dollar	0.213710	0.223210
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.226823	0.235823
Georgina Lari	0.138275	0.138275
US Dollars	0.302050	0.306450
US Dollars Mint	0.302550	0.306450
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003532	0.004116
Chinese Yuan	0.043091	0.046591

Hong Kong Dollar	0.037387	0.040137
Indian Rupee	0.002651	0.004748
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002636	0.002816
Kenyan Shilling	0.003019	0.003019
Korean Won	0.000260	0.000275
Malaysian Ringgit	0.065185	0.071185
Nepalese Rupee	0.002995	0.003165
Pakistan Rupee	0.002672	0.002962
Philippine Peso	0.006016	0.006316
Sierra Leone	0.000068	0.000074
Singapore Dollar	0.212728	0.222728
South African Rand	0.017519	0.026019
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001682	0.002262
Taiwan	0.009862	0.010042
Thai Baht	0.008428	0.008978

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.805497	0.813997
Egyptian Pound	0.013819	0.023072
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000188	0.000248
Jordanian Dinar	0.426143	0.435143
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000158	0.000258
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020153	0.044153
Nigerian Naira	0.001269	0.001904
Omani Riyal	0.788774	0.794454
Qatar Riyal	0.083280	0.084730
Saudi Riyal	0.080553	0.081853
Syrian Pound	0.001298	0.001518
Tunisian Dinar	0.130305	0.138305
Turkish Lira	0.079521	0.089821
UAE Dirhams	0.081929	0.083629
Yemeni Riyal	0.000995	0.001075

ZAIN GROUP ENTERS MOU WITH MYCA HEALTH INC

PARTNERSHIP TO ROLL OUT WORLD-CLASS MOBILE HEALTH PLATFORM

BARCELONA: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces entering a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Myca Health Inc. (Myca), an innovative Canadian-based leader in the development of unique proprietary software for scalable IT web based platforms. Myca's expertise extends to mobile telephone networks, permitting cost effective and time efficient management of access and delivery of health and medical services to its users.

The MoU between the two organizations provides for the development and implementation of a world-class mobile electronic medical health record (EMR) platform across Zain's network, powered and customized by the telco for each specific market. The service is in alignment with Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) of the UN's Global Goals for Sustainable Development and is planned to be gradually rolled out across Zain markets in the second-half of 2017.

Once fully implemented, the project will allow Zain to offer to its users a controlled and secured mobile interface for access to physician services, scheduling of appointments, non-face to face mobile consultations, and access to electronic prescriptions, among other services. The Zain mobile health interface (patient portal) will also include secure storage of all health records on a user's mobile device, together with health and wellness applications that track nutrition and exercise, and allow

monitoring of remote patient care management as needed.

Commenting on the MoU, Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Group Vice-Chairman said, "This collaboration represents the very best of our efforts, combining technology and innovation, with the tangible improvement of people's health and well-being and ultimately, their lives. We believe the state-of-the-art digital solutions offered by Myca complemented by our local knowledge and strong customer base in the region will make for an extremely impactful interaction."

Leonard B C Schlemm, Myca Health's Chairman, stated, "We are very excited about the prospect of being able to work with the innovating and dynamic leadership of Zain's management and technical teams. We strongly believe that the unique product that Myca has to offer, developed and refined over many years of extensive research and development, will adapt very well to the Zain mobile platform and secure Zain's continued leadership in the region in the delivery of mobile telephone services and applications. We expect that this will also add greatly to improving health outcomes of the region's population."

Zain is a leading telecommunications operator across the Middle East and Africa providing mobile voice and data services to over 47 million active customers as of 31 December, 2016. With a commercial presence in 8 countries, Zain operates in: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and South Sudan. In Lebanon, the Group manages 'touch' on behalf of the government.



BARCELONA: Myca's representative in Kuwait, Kamran Lari (2nd Left) shakes hands with Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Group Vice-Chairman, flanked by Emre Gurkan, Zain Group Chief Strategy & Business Development Officer (L) and Jennifer Suleiman, Zain Group Head of Corporate Sustainability (R).



PARIS: French Economy and Industry minister Emmanuel Macron (center) speaks with a farmer as he visits Paris' international agriculture fair, Yesterday. —AFP

WEAKER EURO HELPS PROPEL EUROZONE FACTORY GROWTH

BRUSSELS: Eurozone manufacturing growth accelerated to a six-year high in February as a weaker euro helped drive strong demand for its exports, with inflationary pressure showing further signs of recovering, a business survey showed. While the upturn in eurozone factory activity was not shared by all major economies, particularly France, prices rose faster across most countries in the region.

The IHS Markit euro zone manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index rose to 55.4 in February—the highest reading since April 2011 — from 55.2 in January, although it inched down from a flash estimate of 55.5. That reading is well above the 50 mark denoting growth and suggests a solid pickup in activity. Optimism among euro zone manufacturers about future business is also surging.

An index measuring output, which feeds into a composite PMI due out on Friday, jumped to 57.3, which was also the highest in nearly six years. The flash composite PMI suggested economic growth of 0.6 percent in the first quarter. Separate data showed German unemployment fell more than expected in February, with the jobless rate holding at 5.9 percent, the lowest since German reunification in 1990.

"Certainly if you look at eurozone manufacturing, it is the highest for quite some

time, clearly suggesting the economy is gaining a little more traction compared to where we have been over the course of recent months," said Peter Dixon, economist at Commerzbank.

"The other thing I would say is the strength of the sentiment indicator in recent months has probably outstripped the actual strength of the economy. So there are lots of positives—but we have to be a little bit cautious."

Weaker euro helps

Renewed optimism about the region's economic outlook in recent weeks has been buoyed by a weak euro, which makes the currency bloc's exports relatively cheap on world markets. The latest PMI survey's new export orders sub-index rose to its highest since April 2011 at 55.5, up from 55.2 in January.

"Euro area manufacturers are reporting the strongest production and order book growth for almost six years, in what's looking like an increasingly robust upturn," said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit. "This year has seen firms more optimistic about the future than at any time since the region's debt crisis. Companies are reporting stronger demand in both home and export markets, with the weakened euro providing an accompanying tailwind to help drive sales."

GULF BANK OFFERS PRIME CONCIERGE SERVICES FOR ITS PRIORITY CUSTOMERS

A WORLD OF BESPOKE SERVICES WELCOMES PREMIUM CARDHOLDERS

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank offers a wide array of prime concierge services for its priority customers, through one of Kuwait's leading concierge providers, Peacock Concierge. Valued customers can enjoy a series of top-notch facilities when using their premium credit cards

Through Peacock Concierge, holders of Gulf Bank's VISA Infinite, VISA Signature and MasterCard World premium credit cards will benefit from a selection of concierge services, in Kuwait or even abroad.

Dedicated concierge services: A 24/7 Qualified and Bilingual (English & Arabic) personal assistant reachable on the dedicated line 22969955 is at the client's service, to handle their requests, finding last-minute event tickets to concerts, exhibitions, securing high-end dinner reservations or making full holiday and travel plans in the hotel and airline of their preference.

Messenger service: A speedy and friendly messenger service to handle clients' everyday tasks with utmost confidentiality, and efficiency. Those tasks could be car maintenance

check (service) or paying bills, renewing license, processing government and legal documents.

Concierge Limo: Luxuriously tailored Concierge Limo aims to support all of clients' personal and professional travel and transportation needs including pick-up and drop-

off by to Kuwait International Airport. Valet Parking: Free Valet Parking at select venues around Kuwait among which is Marina Mall.

Airport meet-and-assist services: A fast track service through immigration and assistance in issuing visas and luggage collection.

Other Hospitality Management: Planning your special events, securing a Personal Shopper, booking of a restaurant, sending flowers or gifts to your loved ones on your behalf, amongst other.

Road-side assistance: A 24/7 vehicle recovery service and mobile workshop service.

Peacock Concierge was established in 2011 within our Kuwait office. Peacock Concierge has since made rapid and fruitful expansions within our surrounding GCC neighbors, with global reach.

As of 2015, Peacock Concierge offices can now be found in Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, and Saudi Arabia.

As leaders in the region, Peacock Concierge is among the most professionally optimized, culturally oriented lifestyle management powerhouses. They have a keen understanding of the daily needs and demands of clients, along with the quality expertise.

To use Peacock Concierge Visa Infinite, Visa Signature or MasterCard World cardholders should first activate it by calling the dedicated number 22969955

MIXED SIGNALS FOR BRITISH ECONOMY

LONDON: Britain's factories have started 2017 strongly but consumers are turning more cautious about borrowing to spend, according to data which suggested the economy will slow after defying the Brexit shock in 2016. The pound's slump after June's vote to leave the European Union helped demand for British exports, but it is unlikely to outweigh the hit to households as the cost of imports rises.

The picture of Britain's economy given by a monthly survey of the manufacturing sector and separate Bank of England data on borrowing hinted at a slight shift in the drivers of the country's surprisingly strong growth since the referendum.

Despite a bigger-than-expected slip in February in its measure of manufacturing, Markit said the sector looked on track for one of its best performances of the past seven years with growth of 1.5 percent likely in the

first three months of 2017. Export order growth picked up after a dip in January - something likely to please finance minister Philip Hammond, who told lawmakers on Tuesday that he hoped stronger net trade and investment would compensate for weaker consumer demand in 2017.

That said, manufacturing only accounts for about 10 percent of the British economy - far less than the roughly two thirds of spending in the economy which is driven by consumers.

Markit said the real Brexit test had yet to come. "The big question remains as to whether robust growth can be sustained or whether it will continue to wane in the coming months," Rob Dobson, an economist at IHS Markit, said.

The BoE's credit data added to recent signs that consumer demand is softening.

For the first time since mid-2012, year-on-year growth in unsecured consumer borrowing

fell for two months in a row. The rise in borrowing in the three months to January, while still strong at nearly 10 percent, was its weakest in over a year.

BoE Governor Mark Carney said last month he was watching to see if consumers kept up their borrowing to bridge the gap between rising inflation and sluggish growth in their wages, or instead reined in their spending. The BoE has shown it is in no rush to raise record low interest rates as it waits to see how the economy copes with uncertainty about Brexit.

The housing market has shown fewer signs of a slowdown. The BoE said mortgage approvals - a gauge of future activity - rose to an 11-month high in January and mortgage lender Nationwide reported an unexpected pick-up in price growth, though it still expected growth to slow to 2 percent this year. —Reuters

ABK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 43RD 'DOUBLE YOUR SALARY' WEEKLY DRAWS

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its 43rd 'Double Your Salary' weekly draw on 20th February, 2017 at the Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, announcing the names of the winners for this week. The promotion includes weekly draws, with two winners per draw. The campaign will run until 27th June, 2017.

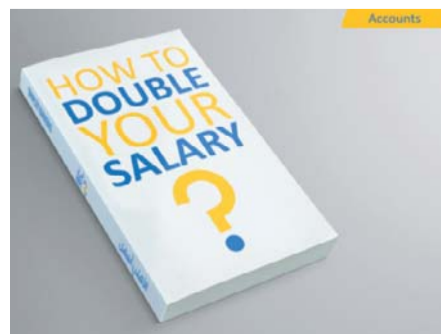
The winners this week are:

- Ohoud Jaafar Essa AlMusaway, Qurain Branch
- Siju Vayalamanni Chacko, Jleeb Al-Shyukh Branch

New customers who transfer their salary to ABK receive KD 100 and will automatically be entered into the

weekly draws to double their salaries. Existing customers who are already transferring their salary to ABK are entered into a separate draw.

For more information about Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit eahli.com or contact a customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899.



JAPAN WILL TELL US TO RESPECT WTO RULES, SAYS ABE AIDE

TOKYO: Japan will tell the United States in their economic talks that any border tax the US government imposes on imports should not break World Trade Organization rules, an adviser to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said yesterday.

Yasutoshi Nishimura also said Japan would not rule out a bilateral trade agreement with the United States, but talks may not start soon because Washington is putting a higher priority on renegotiating the North America Free Trade Agreement. "We don't want any border tax to violate WTO rules by becoming a tax system intended to promote exports," Nishimura told Reuters in an interview.

"Our position is WTO rules and multilateralism are important and we want to lobby for that," Abe and US President Donald Trump agreed last month to establish a new frame-

work for economic dialogue to discuss trade and infrastructure investment. The two countries have not set a schedule for their talks.

Trump has spoken positively about a 20 percent border adjustment tax being pushed by Republicans in Congress as a way to boost exports, but it is still uncertain if he will fully endorse the proposal. Trump, who has lashed out at US companies for moving operations and jobs to countries such as Mexico, had previously sent mixed signals on the border adjustment tax.

Some Japanese policymakers grew concerned about US protectionism and a return to 1980s trade friction after Trump criticized Japanese auto imports shortly after taking office in January. Trump has since softened his rhetoric on Japan following a summit meeting with Abe where the two leaders agreed to hold the economic dialogue.

Japan's hopes to avoid trade friction by reminding Trump that the trade relationship has changed a lot since the 1980s, Nishimura. Japanese automakers now produce a lot of cars in the United States, which dovetails with Trump's repeated pledges to create more jobs, Nishimura said. Japan is interested in using the new dialogue with the United States to talk about infrastructure investment, boosting other types of direct investment and US shale gas imports, Nishimura said.

Some economists and policymakers are worried that the United States could use the dialogue framework to criticize Japan's currency policy and its aggressive monetary easing. Nishimura expressed confidence that Japan could avoid such criticism, saying Japan needs easy monetary policy because it is still in deflation and that foreign exchange levels are determined by markets. —Reuters

DOLLAR FIRMS ON FED RATE TALK, TRUMP SPENDING PLEDGE

LONDON: The dollar rose yesterday after two top Federal Reserve officials suggested US interest rates could rise this month, while Donald Trump's speech to Congress boosted European stocks.

In Washington, President Trump's much-anticipated address to both houses of Congress was short on detail but provided enough to keep traders mainly upbeat. The tycoon pledged \$1.0 trillion in public-private infrastructure spending and "massive" tax cuts for the middle class, but he did not say how any of it would be paid for.

In European trade, London stocks rallied to stand 0.9-percent around the half-way stage, while Frankfurt and Paris each scored gains of approximately 1.5 percent in value compared with Tuesday's closing levels. "Equities are embracing a more Presidential Trump whose congressional address offered just enough to rekindle bullishness-infrastructure, defense spend, tax breaks-

even if detail was distinctly lacking," said Mike van Dulken, head of research at Accendo Markets.

"A stronger US dollar, after hawkish comment from the Fed's Dudley is also offering helpful weakness in the pound and euro to boost the FTSE and DAX." Investors shifted into the US after New York Fed president William Dudley said there was a strong case for borrowing costs to rise, while his San Francisco counterpart John Williams expects such a move to get "serious consideration" when the bank meets this month.

'Trump rally'

The greenback's rally also provided fresh impetus for Tokyo stocks, but Asia's regional markets were subdued despite forecast-beating readings on Chinese factory activity and Australian growth. Markets have surged since Trump's November election victory on expectations his plans for infra-

structure spending and tax cuts would fire up the world's top economy. However, his lack of clarity in recent weeks has led to some uncertainty,

while there are also concerns the presidency has been enveloped with controversy that has caused division in the country. Sydney stocks shed 0.1 percent as traders brushed off news Australian growth hit 1.1 percent in the October-December quarter, averting a technical recession of two-straight quarters of contraction, thanks to a pick-up in exports and household spending.

There was little reaction to Chinese figures showing manufacturing activity grew more than expected last month. The improvement in the purchasing managers index follows a series of upbeat readings from Beijing that suggest the world's number two economy may have turned a corner after years of slowing growth.

Asian markets were mostly higher yesterday as attention turned to President Donald Trump's speech to Congress for clues on what might be ahead for trade, regulations and taxes. Tokyo shares rose in early afternoon trading yesterday, in a muted reaction to US President Donald Trump's congressional speech which offered few fresh details on his economic growth plans.

Dealers were keen to see if Trump would offer a more specific blueprint on what he has described as a "phenomenal" tax-cut plan and big infrastructure spending, promises that stoked a global equities rally. But the wide-ranging remarks offered little new on Trump's proposals for the world's top economy.

He pledged \$1.0 trillion in public-

private infrastructure spending and "massive" tax cuts for the middle class. "There was no surprise and nothing concrete," Tomohiro Nishida, dealer at Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Bank, said in the remarks. "But there was also no disappointment as he touched upon his key economic policies." Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 0.5 percent in morning trading to 19,222.56.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slipped 0.6 percent at 5,676.90. But Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.4 percent to 23,824.17, while the Shanghai Composite rose 0.5 percent to 3,257.53. South Korea's markets were closed for a holiday. Australia's S&P ASX/200 fell 0.5 percent to 5,685.00. —Agencies



TOKYO: A postman looks at an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm in Tokyo yesterday. Global markets were mostly higher yesterday after US President Donald Trump delivered a relatively upbeat speech to the US Congress. —AP

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Wednesday 01 March 2017

Summary table with columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low. Includes Price index, Weighted Index, KXS 15.

Summary table with columns: Volume, Value (KWD), Number of Trades.

Table of trades for various security indices including MARIN, IPG, NAPESCO, ENERGY, etc.

Table of trades for various security indices including SOKOUK, KRE, URC, NRE, SRE, TAM, AREEC, etc.

Table of trades for various security indices including KCEM, CABLE, SHIP, PCEM, PAPER, MRC, ACICO, etc.

Table of trades for various security indices including ALTIJARIA, SANAM, AAYANRE, AQAR, ALAQARIA, etc.

Table of trades for various security indices including KSH, NSH, PAPCO, CATT, DANAH, FOOD, etc.

Table of trades for various security indices including KINV, FACIL, IFA, NINV, KPROJ, etc.

Table of trades for various security indices including MHC, ATC, YIACO, Health Care, etc.

Table of trades for various security indices including MADAR, ALDEERA, ALSALAM, etc.

Table of trades for various security indices including NBK, GBK, CBK, ABK, etc.

Table of trades for various security indices including SANAD, AFAQ, ALSHAMMEL, etc.

For more information, call Global Investment House on 1 80 42 42, www.globalinv.net

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report

Global Stock Indices table with columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance, Yearly Performance.

MENA Stock Indices table with columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance, Yearly Performance.

Global Currencies Exchange Rate table with columns: Currency, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, US Dollar, Euro, etc.

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate table with columns: Currency, US Dollar, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, etc.

Global Interest Rates table with columns: Currency, 1-Week, 1-Month, 3-Month, 6-Month, 1-Year.

Global Bond Yields table with columns: Country, 2-Year, 5-Year, 10-Year, 30-Year.

Commodities table with columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance, Yearly Performance.

CADILLAC ALGHANIM LAUNCHES 2017 XTS IN KUWAIT

XTS DELIVERS THE SPACE, ELEGANCE AND DRAMATIC PRESENCE

KUWAIT: The Cadillac XTS is one of the most technologically advanced production cars in the brand's history, delivering the space, elegance and dramatic presence that are brand signatures, all in a unique package tuned for a new generation of luxury customers.

Tailored to provide roominess in a more efficiently sized package. It offers more interior space than midsize luxury cars and is comparable to full-size sedans, particularly in the rear seat area, where it has 1,016 mm (40 inches) of rear legroom. That's about four more inches than competitors.

And when it comes to trunk space, the XTS is in a league of its own, with 509 L (18 cubic feet), exceeding both midsize and full-size competitors. For XTS customers, the cargo advantage means room for five or more suitcases.

XTS's hardware and spatial dimensions are the foundational layers that support exceptional surface detail. Multidimensional elements, including the grille, headlamps and accent lighting, coalesce to give the XTS a presence and attention to detail unlike any Cadillac that has come before it.

The XTS's surface details also convey a more nuanced design philosophy, bringing elegance with refined, graceful forms and surfaces working harmoniously with established Cadillac linear forms.

Nine exterior colors are offered: Red Passion Tintcoat, Dark Adriatic Blue Metallic, Crystal White Tricoat, Radiant Silver Metallic, Black Raven, Stellar Black Metallic, Phantom Grey Metallic, Deep Amethyst Metallic and Bronze Dune Metallic.

Like the exterior, the XTS's cabin extolls a multidimensional philosophy in a bold, elegant design that is also very efficient in the ways it encompasses passengers and cargo. It represents Cadillac's expression of luxury also in its use of authentic materials and unprecedented connectivity. Vsport Collection models feature a fully wrapped leather interior with microfiber sueded headliner, as well as premium wood trim on the steering wheel, console, center stack, instrument panel and door panels.

Seating trim is offered with Soleil Keisel leather seating surfaces or premium Opus full leather - both with perforated detailing. Heated and ventilated seats are also offered.

At the heart of CUE, the vibrant, eight-inch-diagonal LCD multi-touch sensitive screen - with proximity sensing and haptic feedback - is seamlessly integrated in the top of the central instrument panel. It displays CUE's home page, which resembles a smartphone screen, with large, easy-to-target icons that execute commands. Capacitive technology on the screen and faceplate enables consumers to use the same "swipe," "pinch" or "spread" gestures common to most popular smartphones and tablets.

CUE also provides phone integration technology with Apple CarPlay, which allows smartphone users to connect with applications such as navigation, hands-free text messaging, entertainment and news directly through the display screen. Inductive wireless charging is also new and allows users to charge their compatible smartphone without the need to plug it in.



The Cadillac Twin-Turbo 3.6L V-6 headlines the XTS's powertrain lineup and is standard on Vsport models, delivering SAE-certified 410 horsepower (306 kW) and 369 lb-ft of torque (498 Nm) - making it one of the most power-dense six-cylinder engines in the segment. The XTS's standard 3.6L V-6 is rated at 304 horsepower (226 kW) and 264 lb-ft of torque (355 Nm). Lightweight features help reduce overall weight for greater efficiency and a more favorable front-to-rear weight balance.



The engines are matched with six-speed automatic transmissions with tap-shift control.

Premium Care Program

Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim & Sons Automotive's showcases the company's commitment to enhance customers' unique Cadillac experience by offering customers peace of mind with a comprehensive insurance program. In addition, all Cadillac owners will enjoy service and maintenance for four years or 100,000 km, warranty for 4 years or 100,000 km, 24-hour roadside assistance any-

where in the Middle East for four years (unlimited miles) plus a courtesy transportation and a replacement vehicle upon availability.

Adding to the luxury experience, Cadillac offers its customers in Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim the highest quality of services. The service center is equipped with a large variety of the most advanced equipment operated by a team of skilled professionals and effective consultants who ensure timely service.

Visit Cadillac Alghanim showroom today at the Fourth Ring Road next to Safat Alghanim.



BARCELONA: Visitors check the new Nokia 3310 at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona yesterday. The Mobile World Congress that started on 27 Feb will end today. — AP

PHONEMAKERS CHASE NICHE MARKETS WITH KEY FEATURES

BARCELONA: Phones rugged enough to survive falling from the sky or resistant to foaming hand soap—just some of the special features mobile phonemakers are offering to appeal to niche markets.

"The smartphone market is so enormous that even having a phone that is targeting a niche can still sell hundreds of thousands, if not millions of units over its life," said Ian Fogg, head of mobile research firm IHS. "1.5 billion smartphones will ship in 2017. Even a company that is targeting a fraction of a percent can still have a product with very significant volumes."

Several "niche phones" were on display at the four-day Mobile World Congress in Barcelona which wraps up today seeking to attract markets ranging from adventure sport enthusiasts to busy mothers. Bullitt Group, a small British firm, showcased its extremely rugged phones that carry the branding of US construction giant Caterpillar which can withstand heat up to 120 degrees Celsius (248 degrees Fahrenheit) and temperatures as low as minus 20 degrees Celsius.

The devices are also waterproof and come with a thermal imaging camera. Bullitt sells over a million Caterpillar phones a year. They are popular with ski instructors, builders and others with rugged jobs or who like outdoor activities. The phones have an ardent fan base. Videos posted on YouTube by satisfied customers show the devices surviving falls into fresh cement, falling down a flight of stairs or being run over by a car.

"We have even had one of our phones fall out of someone's backpack when they were parachuting and land and work afterwards. It got banged up on the way down but it was still working," said Bullitt's chief executive Peter Stephens. Bullitt plans to launch a Land Rover-branded phone later this year that targets adventurers. The company is reluctant to reveal details but Stephens said it will "have elements that appeal to someone who is away from energy sources for a very long time".

Help for seniors

Bullitt released a Kodak smartphone in December that features a retro design and a high-powered camera and software with exceptional tools to edit images.

"We have got a huge list of niches that you could enter," said Stephens. Swedish telecoms firm Doro began focusing on creating easy-to-use phones for the elderly a decade ago and is now the market leader in Europe in this segment. The devices feature large icons, easy menus and loud, clear sound as well as an alarm button that can be used to alert relatives in case its user needs help.

The company also makes it possible to manage its smartphone's settings through a web service so more tech-savvy friends or family can help users add contacts or adjust the device's volume from miles away. "We realised that there was a segment in the market that nobody was really focusing on and that has a real need. Seniors feel lost, they feel abandoned," said Doro's marketing manager Caroline Kristensson Helin. Smartphones with extra strong security measures to prevent hacking were also on display that target financial sector employees.

Reaching customers

Japan's Kyocera launched a new smartphone last month that is resistant to foaming hand soap and includes an app that allows users to scroll through recipes using just hand gestures. The features are convenient "for people like busy mothers," said the company's general manager for strategic business planning, Takashi Nohara. However, reaching customers who may be interested in a niche phone can be a challenge, said David Eberle, the vice president of French firm Crosscall which makes phones geared for outdoor activities. "Most users do not know that something else exists in the market," he said. The company sells its phones in sporting goods stores. "The real challenge for these small brands, these small niche products, is finding what volumes do they need to be profitable," said Fogg. — AFP

NBK AWARDED 'BEST PRIVATE BANK FOR 2017 IN KUWAIT'

EUROMONEY RECOGNITION FOR NINTH YEAR IN A ROW

KUWAIT: For the ninth year in a row, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has been awarded the "Best Private Bank for 2017 in Kuwait" in Euromoney's Annual Survey surpassing global banks in wealth management and private banking services. NBK topped the list of nominees, outmatching renowned international banks in the field of Private Banking Services.

Euromoney's Annual Survey data is compiled from the industry's experts and analysts worldwide. NBK's Best Private Bank award include: "Best Private Bank in Kuwait", Mahmoud Ezzedine, NBK's Deputy General Manager, Private Banking Group, received the awards at a glittering dinner and awards ceremony recently held in London.

"Awarding NBK the prestigious title of "the Best Private Banking Services in Kuwait" for another year, surpassing renowned global banks and financial institutions, reflects the constant confidence the customers vest in NBK and their appreciation of the outstanding quality of its services and products," said Ezzedine. "This award is another testimony of NBK's leading position as the highest-rated bank in the Middle East and among the 50 safest banks in the world."

He added "the excellent, strong and durable relationships NBK has always maintained with its high net-worth customers, enabled the bank to assume a unique and leading position in the field of wealth management and private banking on both local and regional markets. NBK also succeeded in maintaining the highest service quality standards while consistently endeavoring to provide the most innovative spectrum of investment and wealth management products and solutions to satisfy the increasingly changing needs of customers."

"Thanks to its largest local and international network strategically located in the major world

financial centers, NBK has always maintained a dominant and advanced position to provide the best banking and investment solutions that covers a wide range of international markets, taking into consideration the specific profile of each and every customer," noted Ezzedine.

"I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to both the trust of NBK clients as well as the invaluable efforts of the Private Banking team at NBK that enabled the bank to win such a prestigious title," said Ezzedine.

Euromoney is a leading British Financial magazine that organizes annually this event. The Private Banking Awards event covers over 60 countries each year. The results are voted by experts and analysts worldwide. The results are also based on other major criteria such as the services provided, asset management, wealth management and client relationship manage-

ment. For more information on this award please visit www.euromoney.com;

NBK continues to enjoy collectively the highest credit ratings in the region from the three international rating agencies Moody's, Fitch Ratings and Standard and Poor's. The Bank's ratings are supported by its high capitalization, prudent lending policies, and its disciplined approach to risk management, in addition to its highly recognized and very stable management team. NBK was also named among Global Finance's list of the 50 safest banks in the world for the eleventh consecutive time.

NBK enjoys the widest banking presence with a local and international network reaching 4 continents. NBK's international presence spans many of the world's leading financial centers including New York, Europe, GCC, Middle East, Singapore as well as China (Shanghai).



CARS OF THE FUTURE TO BECOME 'MOBILE PHONES ON WHEELS'

BARCELONA: The car of the future will let you pay for petrol or parking directly from your vehicle and receive traffic alerts and restaurant recommendations from your onboard digital assistant.

Connected cars-or "mobile phones on wheels"-will be able to do those things and more, including communicate with each other on the road and with the infrastructure around them through their computer networks.

And they will, of course, be able to drive themselves. Prototypes, fitted with the next generation 5G wireless communications network, turned heads at the Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona. But as the excitement and novelty over connected cars grows, vehicle, tech, and telecom firms are struggling with how to handle the inevitable legal and ethical issues. Add to that the risk of cyberattack and reliability issues surrounding a fast and stable internet connection and connected cars face many obstacles before they can ever be set loose.

"Connected cars pose a significant risk from a

cybersecurity perspective," said Jeff Massimilla, head of cybersecurity at General Motors, during a discussion at the MWC. This is the industry's biggest worry: hacking. A hacker could easily take over a car's network and disable brakes, the transmission, or simply shut the car down.

And that worry is hardly unfounded: Connected cars were hacked in 2015 during testing. According to data presented Monday by Masayoshi Son, chief executive of telecoms giant SoftBank, cyberattacks against connected objects-objects with internet connectivity-have multiplied by four and five times between 2015 and 2016. To mitigate the risks, telecom and vehicle firms have teamed up to enhance collaboration. "We cannot do it alone," said tech executive Ogi Redzic, who heads the connected vehicles services at Renault-Nissan. Renault-Nissan partnered with Microsoft last September, and its cars plan to use Microsoft Cortana as a digital assistant.

Three years ago, Volkswagen acquired Blackberry's European research and development

centre, a group of 200 engineers, to update its connected software.

'Bandwidth issues'

The success of connected vehicles will also hinge on the ability of an internet network to enable lightning-quick downloads or support split-second activities, such as the automatic traffic movement of driverless cars. The current 4G standard enables fast broadband access via mobile smart phones, but government and manufacturers see the next generation enabling connection speeds of up to 1,000 times faster than current ones. "When there will be many (connected) cars on the roads, there will be flow and bandwidth issues to make the system work," said Guillaume Crunelle, an automotive analyst at Deloitte. The new, fifth generation of mobile networks is expected to enable communications between cars and infrastructure, automated manoeuvres such as overtaking and braking, and emergency warning and call systems, among others. — AFP

ZAIN, VIVA PARTNER TO LAUNCH FIRST VOLTE INTERCONNECTION IN MENA

KUWAIT: Zain and VIVA, Kuwait's leading telecom operators, jointly announced the successful establishment of the first Voice Over LTE (VoLTE) interconnection in the Middle East and North Africa region in partnership with Huawei, a leading global ICT solutions provider. The announcement was made during the GSMA Mobile World Congress 2017 held in Barcelona, Spain in the presence of executive management representatives from Zain, VIVA, Huawei, and the GSMA.

The GSMA led initiative, a first in the MENA region, will allow a seamless and direct VoLTE-to-VoLTE HD voice experience between Zain and VIVA customers. The connectivity was established in a record time of five months, surpassing previously established records. The contribution of Huawei's highly-flexible infrastructure and expertise was key to the success of the interconnection and the record time achieved.

Nabeel Mohammed, Chief Technical Officer of Zain Kuwait, commented: "Zain's strategic vision is centered around innovation and technological advancement, being the leading telecom company in Kuwait. Every investment we make is based on the prospect of improving customer experience, now and into the future. This latest agreement, in partnership with VIVA and Huawei is a prime example of innovation and collaboration in the Kuwaiti telecom sector on a regional level."

Eng. Zarrar Khan, Chief Technology Officer at

Kuwait Telecommunications Company VIVA, commented: "We believe it is vital to foster close partnership with "Zain" and "Huawei" in the Kuwaiti telecom market, to continue providing unique services and products that satisfy the aspirations of our customers. At VIVA, we have pledged to enrich the lives of our customers through our innovative strategy and vision not only as a technology leader, but also as a truly customer-centric company."

Lan Yun, vice president of Huawei ME region, commented: "It is a valuable step forward to enrich the lives of Kuwait's people. We hope that Huawei can have more contributions to the Kuwaiti telecom industry in the coming future and build a better connected Kuwait."

"This is a positive step for the region and will provide subscribers of all networks with enhanced calling and messaging experiences," said Alex Sinclair, Chief Technology Officer, GSMA. "In particular, all parties are to be congratulated for completing a complicated process in an incredibly short time frame. We hope this example will encourage other markets and regions around the world to follow suit."

Voice over Long-Term Evolution (VoLTE) is a standard for high-speed wireless communication for mobile phones and data terminals. Voice calls over LTE are recognized as the industry-agreed progression of voice services across mobile networks, deploying LTE radio access technology as it provides a more efficient use of spectrum than traditional



BARCELONA: Nabeel Mohammed, Chief Technical Officer of Zain Kuwait, and Eng Zarrar Khan, Chief Technology Officer at VIVA, with Huawei and GSMA officials at Barcelona.

voice and meets the rising demand for richer, more reliable and clear voice services.

VoLTE brings users a number of significant improvements. The service enhances the overall user experience without interrupting their LTE Internet experience. Connection times will be significantly shorter, which will come to complement and

improve customers' experience. Additionally, customers making connections on the LTE network while on a phone call will be able to do so in a smooth manner without any time lag on the existing phone call. The VoLTE advancement technology offers users the chance to perform a clear phone call while surfing the internet in full speed capacity.



Nissan launches its all-new crossover 'Kicks' across the Middle East

NISSAN LAUNCHES ITS ALL-NEW CROSSOVER 'KICKS' ACROSS ME

CROSSOVER TO REDEFINE SEGMENT WITH CLASS LEADING INNOVATION, STYLE AND PRACTICALITY

KUWAIT: Nissan has launched the all-new Nissan Kicks compact crossover in the Middle East, its latest addition to the crossover segment. The all-new Nissan Kicks was first rolled out in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during the 2016 Summer Olympics held there, and is poised to add a whole new dimension to the compact end of the crossover field in more than 80 countries.

Samir Cherfan, Managing Director of Nissan Middle East said: "The all-new Nissan Kicks was developed with the modern urban commuter in mind, with the aim of delivering the most innovative, stylish and functional crossover in its class. These commuters will appreciate the car's ability to deal with the rough and tumble of the urban jungle courtesy of its advanced chassis control technology. They will also love the ease of parking thanks to the Around View Monitor and the amazing functionality of the 7-inch color touchscreen. From the cosseting interior to the bold styling to the advanced technology, everywhere you look on the car there is evidence to back up our belief that Kicks will be a big hit with young people all over our region."

The newcomer is aimed squarely at urban driving environments and combines a robust exterior and elevated driving position with compact dimensions for agile performance and manoeuvrability. The body features an advanced aerodynamic design, which optimizes fuel consumption and minimizes noise. Kicks is also one of the

first models to realize the concept of Nissan Intelligent Mobility, initially presented at the Geneva Auto Show in 2016.

Intelligent mobility

Nissan Intelligent Mobility uses smart, relevant technology to make the driver's life easier while also making advances towards Nissan's long term goal of zero emission and zero fatality motoring. Nissan Kicks targets young people who are



early adopters of such technology and who appreciate and embrace the way it can both simplify urban driving and connect them more easily to what matters. The Intelligent Mobility technology present in Kicks aims to reduce stress for drivers through innovations such as the Around View Monitor (AVM) and the Moving Object Detection system (MOD).

Using four cameras, placed at the front and rear of the car and in both door mirrors, AVM creates a bird's eye 360-degree view of the car which can be displayed on the central monitor and used as a parking aid.

When the MOD system detects a moving object - a pedestrian, for example - a warning is sounded to alert the driver to the hazard and prevent a potential accident. Technology-loving Kicks owners

will relish the convenience and simplicity of the suite of systems that are accessible via the centrally mounted 7-inch colour touchscreen. These functions include navigation, audio, and Bluetooth phone connections. Complementing the touchscreen, and ideally located in front of the driver, a further screen in the main cluster of dials relays information from the on-board drive

computer, audio system and navigation systems, as well as displaying warnings. Vehicle settings can be easily adjusted using the four-way selector on the steering wheel.

Among a host of comfort and safety technologies included in Kicks, its chassis control, supported by advanced electronic systems known as Active Trace Control, Active Ride Control and Active Engine Brake, is a truly outstanding feature.

Active Trace Control is an innovation that intervenes during driving through corners to ensure the intended trajectory is maintained by discreetly applying brakes to wheels individually. This has the effect of preventing a sudden loss of grip or stability.

Similarly, Active Ride Control, applies the brakes for a split-second after the car has encountered large undulations in the road, to reduce the "bounce" effect on the suspension. This simple, effective solution is lighter and less complex than expensive and heavy adaptive damping systems.

To counter the "coasting" effect often associated with automatic and CVT gearboxes, Kicks is equipped with Active Engine Brake. When the accelerator is released, typically approaching a corner, engine braking is applied to stabilise the speed.

In terms of its visual appeal, Kicks features established Nissan design signatures such as the V-motion grille which dominates the car's front end. Also present are the boomerang head and taillights, and the "floating" coupÉ-style roof with a "wrap-around visor" look to the windscreen and side glass. The spacious interior too, is instantly recognizable as a Nissan design thanks to the "gliding wing" shape stretching the width of the dashboard.

Underlining the car's crossover stance and inherent strength is its generous ground clearance (200mm), which helps provide a commanding driving position and a high eye point for excellent all round visibility. Nissan Kicks has class-leading fuel efficiency thanks to its advanced 1.6-liter engine and lightweight platform. Power is rated at 88kW (118HP) and torque of 149Nm.

JAZEERA AIRWAYS BUILDING NEW GENERATION OF KUWAITIS FOR AVIATION INDUSTRY

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways, the first private airline in Kuwait and the Middle East, recently announced the launch of its Graduate Development Program (GDP), aimed at growing the Kuwaiti talent in the aviation industry. GDP consists of a six-month training program across various divisions in Jazeera Airways. At the end of the program, graduates will have a full understanding of the commercial aviation business and technical fields and expand their employment opportunities in the private sector.

This pioneering, ambitious program is open to fresh graduates from a wide range of disciplines seeking hands-on professional experience working with best-in-class companies committed to providing the young generation with opportunities to deepen their knowledge and skills in a competitive environment. It also serves as a mandatory passage of all entry level employees at Jazeera Airways.

Thirty successful candidates were selected to join the GDP program, who now are part of Jazeera's Human Capital. The program runs through three different phases - each providing a unique learning opportunity. During the first month, the participants are introduced to Jazeera's policies and procedures, code of conduct, employee manual and management principles. The second phase, which runs over 4.5 months, sees the participants rotate across the various departments - Engineering, Sales, Marketing, Finance, Safety, Human

Resources, Flight Operations Ground Handling, Flight Control, among others - to obtain a 360 degree view on the airline business and hands-on experience. In the final phase, the graduates receive technical training on the operating procedures in the aviation industry.

Upon successful completion, all high potential participants are offered the opportunity to be part of Jazeera Airways career progression scheme.

This program serves as a testimony to the Jazeera Airways' trust in the young generation and its drive to continuously inject new energy to its remarkable work-force.

Commenting on the GDP, Dr. Rami Al-Semaani, VP Human Capital at Jazeera Airways, said: "We are committed to helping shape the future of the Kuwaiti youth and this dynamic training program is an ideal vehicle to achieve this. Since its inception, the program has attracted thousands of candidates demonstrating the willingness of our country's graduates to acquire new skills and their trust that Jazeera Airways is their partner in growth."

The Graduate Development Program falls under the Jazeera Airways Corporate Social Responsibility strategy, which places great importance on promoting education, innovation and creativity. The airline remains committed to supporting value-adding projects in the future as it seeks to create positive change and remain an inspiration to its society.



BURGAN BANK WILL SOON ANNOUNCE AL-THURAYA ACCOUNT DRAW WINNER

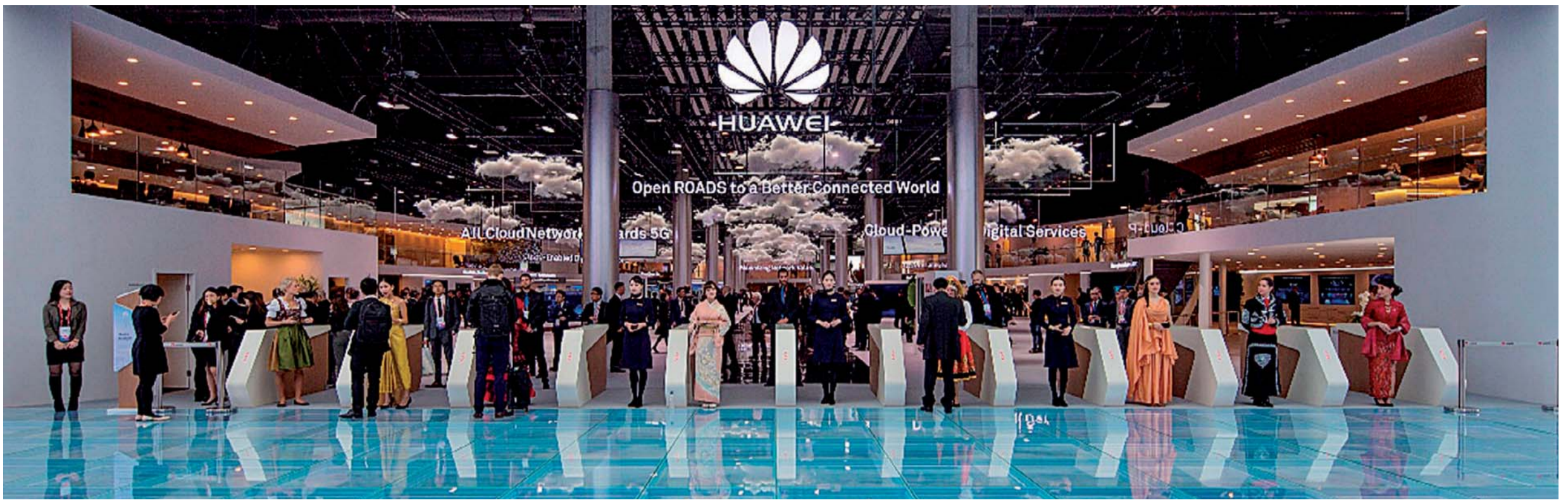
KUWAIT: Burgan Bank will soon be announcing the lucky winner of its Al-Thuraya Salary Account. The winner will be granted a Nissan Patrol SUV. The draw rewards new and existing customers who transfer their salary to Burgan bank a chance to win a Nissan Patrol SUV every month.

The draw is part of Burgan Bank's approach of rewarding loyal customers with higher chances of winning while encouraging new customers to benefit from the bank's unique offerings. With the monthly draw, every KD 10 available in the account provides the customer a chance to win. The Al-Thuraya Account's

features range from the option to hold money in Kuwaiti dinar and any other major currencies, access to account-related services such as standing orders, loans and credit cards and much more. The account has been further developed in response to offering more benefits and increasing chances to win.

Customers wishing to open an Al-Thuraya account can do so by simply visiting the nearest Burgan Bank branch and obtain all the necessary details, or simply call the bank's call center on 1804080. For further information, customers can also visit the bank's website on www.burgan.com.





Entrance to Huawei booth at the venue

HUAWEI HIGHLIGHTS GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

GDTF OUTLINES DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS' ROLE IN BUSINESS SUCCESS

KUWAIT: During its participation at the world's biggest ICT show, Huawei hosted its Global Digital Transformation Forum (GDTF), which saw keynote speeches and address from Huawei officials and a host of industry players from around the world.

During the one-day event, officials from Huawei highlighted the ICT sector's role in advancing economic and social development, during this year's edition of Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain. In his keynote address, William Xu, Executive Director of the Board and Chief Strategy Marketing Officer of Huawei, focused on growth opportunities in Emerging Market and highlighted Huawei's commitment to creating value for communities by collaborating with operators to help them maximize network assets, deploy home broadband and indoor digitalization, and drive connectivity to enhance the user experience, while promoting economic and social growth.

William Xu, Executive Director of the Board and Chief Strategy Marketing Officer of Huawei, outlined opportunities for growth in emerging markets. "As we enter a fully connected era, digital infrastructure is facilitating economic growth and emerging markets are on the cusp of a major transition towards digital economies."

Impact on businesses

"The Global Connectivity Index (GCI) published by Huawei in 2016 reported that for each GCI score point increase a country improved its innovation capacity by 2.2 percent, competitiveness by 2.1 percent, and productivity by 2.3 percent. Operators around the world are in a unique position to invest in these emerging markets to capitalize on huge ICT industry potential, untapped demographics, and national ICT strategies," Xu concluded.

Huawei officials, along with industry experts, also discussed connectivity's impact on business success, and defined the key themes and trends affecting technology growth. Themes discussed during the session covered 5G Innovation, Huawei's ROADS to New Growth, Network Value Maximization and Operations Transformation. The sessions provided a platform for operators to share industry-wide challenges, strategies, and best-practice digital solutions. "The ROADS (Real-time, On-demand, All-online, DIY, and Social) experience at the heart of transformation requires support for both an agile, automated operating system as well as development of the network infrastructure," said Vice-president of Huawei's Global Technical Services, Dr. Leroy Blimegger.

On the sidelines of GDTF, Huawei released the industry's first 5G network slicing router. Offering 50GE base station access and seamless compatibility with 100GE, the slicing router achieves physical isolation of port channels based on innovative Flexible Ethernet technology to provide differentiated SLA guarantee.

Growth plans

On the day before Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona, Huawei releases the world's first 5G core solution for commercial use case, known as Service-Oriented Core 2.0 (SOC 2.0). At the 2016 MWC, Huawei introduced the world's first 5G core prototype, known as SOC 1.0, and verified its multi-service slicing technology. SOC 2.0 will show the commercial 5G capabilities of the solution and enable all access to 5G networks and all services in 5G. It will not only provide connectivity for a multitude of terminals from various industries, but also on-demand services for all vertical industries.

During one of MWC, Huawei showcased at its main

exhibition its growth plans, business models and latest developments in themed areas: 'Maximizing Network Value', 'All Cloud to Support 5G', 'Agile Digital Operations' and 'Cloud-based Digital Services', including a complete range of All Cloud solutions (All Cloud core/wireless/bearer network solutions etc.).

Also ahead of MWC, Huawei and DLR (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt) have tested 5G for cooperative automated driving in Munich. The results show the practical applicability of 5G V2X to achieve a reliable and ultra-low-latency connection between vehicles for collision avoidance. Currently, Huawei and DLR investigate the application of 5G V2X (Vehicle to Everything) for more complex cooperative maneuvers, starting with 5G-enhanced platooning.

Huawei's NFV solution was awarded Best Technology Enabler during this year's edition of MWC. The award came in recognition of Huawei's leading capabilities and outstanding performance in NFV architecture, technology, commercial application, and the evolution toward Cloud Native. Organized by the GSMA, Mobile World Congress is the world's most influential event in the mobile communications sector, and the GSMA Global Mobile Awards are considered the highest honor within the industry.

Huawei is a leading global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider. Our aim is to enrich life and improve efficiency through a better connected world, acting as a responsible corporate citizen, innovative enabler for the information society, and collaborative contributor to the industry. Driven by customer-centric innovation and open partnerships, Huawei has established an end-to-end ICT solutions portfolio that gives customers competitive advantages in telecom and enterprise networks, devices and cloud computing. Huawei's 180,000 employees worldwide are committed to creating maximum value for telecom



Huawei's NFV solution was awarded Best Technology Enabler during this year's edition of MWC.

operators, enterprises, and consumers. Our innovative ICT solutions, products, and services are used in more than 170 countries and regions, serving over one-third of the world's population. Founded in 1987, Huawei is a private company fully owned by its employees.

SOPHOS LAUNCHES SOPHOS MOBILE 7 ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

DUBAI: Sophos (LSE:SOPH), a global leader in network and endpoint security, yesterday announced Sophos Mobile 7, the latest version of its Enterprise Mobility Management (EMM) solution. This new version extends containerization support for Android Enterprise (formerly "Android for Work,") enables IT administrators to manage IoT devices, strengthens security features and will be available through the Sophos Central cloud-based management platform.

Sophos Mobile 7 security enhancements include anti-phishing technology to protect users from malicious links in emails and documents and improvements to Sophos' Android security and anti-malware app. There are also usability enhancements to the Secure Workspace and Secure Email app where users now can open, view and even edit encrypted and secure Office format documents and attachments without leaving the secure and encrypted container.

Sophos Mobile 7 is the latest in an increasing number of products that are available through the integrated Sophos Central management platform, including the next-generation XG Firewall, Sophos Endpoint Security, Sophos Intercept X, Sophos Email Security, Sophos Server



Dan Schiappa

Protection, Sophos Encryption and Sophos Phish Threat. "Today, a mobile device is just another endpoint yet businesses still struggle to manage them within a comprehensive endpoint security strategy due to a lack of integration with traditional endpoint protection. The availability of Sophos Mobile 7 alongside other Sophos endpoint, network and encryption protection in Sophos Central will streamline manage-

ment of mobile devices while increasing security across the entire organization," commented Dan Schiappa, general manager and senior vice president of Sophos Endpoint and Network Security Groups. "The introduction of IoT device management will enable IT organizations to realize the value of IoT projects and help reduce the additional resources required to effectively manage and secure these devices. The development team at Sophos wanted to lead the industry by offering the first steps towards an integrated protection strategy for all devices - mobile and IoT!"

The new IoT functionality will provide basic management features to organizations that are designing and deploying solutions at scale using low-cost Android Things or Windows 10 IoT devices. This includes management tasks such as applying policies, checking the online device status, monitoring battery levels or confirming or updating firmware. Sophos will be one of the first security companies to provide organizations with a cost-efficient way to add management and security capabilities to their IoT projects, offering a communication and management framework that can be built into industrial and commercial IoT solutions such as POS/retail or connected classrooms.

CISCO BOOSTS DNT WITH NEW VIRTUALIZATION AND SECURITY TECHNOLOGIES

DUBAI: According to a newly released IDC study, organizations around the world are expected to triple the adoption of modern, automated networks over the next two years. To accelerate the journey to these digital-ready networks, Cisco is introducing new technologies that allow customers to virtualize and secure their networks.

Today, businesses demand a lot from their networks. However, the vast majority of today's networks were only designed to provide fast, reliable connectivity. These legacy networks are struggling to combat sophisticated cyber-threats, or keep up with the requirements of today's mobile workforce and their use of IoT devices and new cloud applications. A new approach is required. With its Digital Network Architecture (DNA), Cisco is ushering in a new era of networking that rips up the playbook for how companies build and manage network infrastructure.

Network virtualization and integrated security are foundational elements of Cisco DNA. Cisco is introducing a new hardware platform and virtual network services to extend virtualization to branch locations, as well as a new solution that allows customers to virtualize their network perimeter and extend it to colocation centers. Cisco is also the first in the industry to deliver software-defined segmentation across the entire network-from the network to the endpoint to the cloud - with complete application visibility.

Deploying Services in Minutes

Over the past decade, IT teams have changed how they design and deploy data centers to help their organizations take advantage of virtualization and cloud computing. Now enterprise networks are going through a similar change. With Cisco DNA, organizations can now extend network services, like routing or security, to a diverse set of platforms across branch, campus, colocation centers and the public cloud. By decoupling hardware from software, Cisco DNA allows for greater speed and flexibility.

Cisco is building on the industry's broadest set of network virtualization solutions with innovations in two key areas:

- Enterprise Network Functions Virtualization (NFV) Platform is an emerging technology that boosts flexibility and agility for remote locations by virtualizing branch networks. Cisco is introducing a new, purpose-built branch platform, Cisco Enterprise Network Compute System (ENCS 5400 Series), to help customers accelerate their Enterprise NFV deployments. ENCS allows customers to extend routing, security, WAN optimization and other network services to their branch environments.

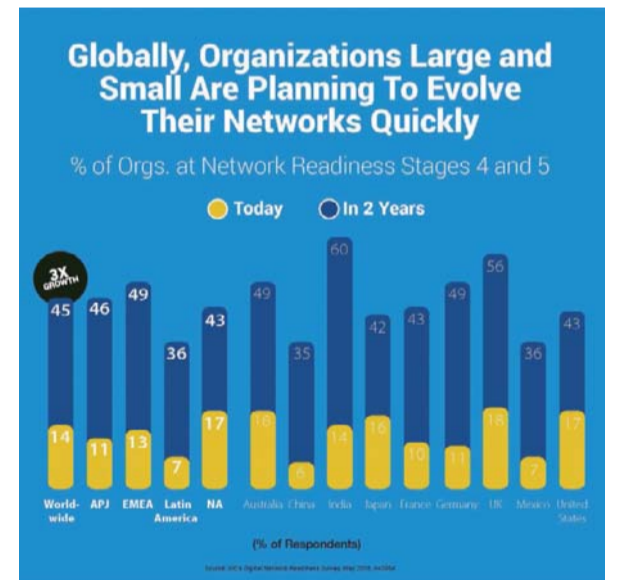
- Virtualizing the Network Perimeter: The network perimeter is an organizations' gateway to the Internet. But traditional, static network perimeters are struggling with the new realities of the digital era. The new Cisco Secure Agile Exchange solution virtualizes the network perimeter and extends it to colocation centers. This allows organizations to dynamically connect customers, employees and partners using on-demand, virtualized network services.

Boosting Threat Visibility and Enforcement

The network can provide deep visibility into network traffic patterns and rich threat intelligence. With Cisco DNA, the network can be used to quickly detect cybersecurity threats and then automatically take action to stop them.

New security features introduced include:

- Visibility and Control: Cisco Identity Services Engine (ISE) provides visibility and control of users and devices on the network. ISE 2.2 offers much deeper visibility into applications on endpoints, including detection of anomalous behavior. It also offers more granular control with the ability to define "DEFCON" policy sets that allow customers to escalate their response to prolific threats.



- Software-defined Segmentation: Cisco TrustSec provides software-defined segmentation to isolate attacks and restrict movement of threats in the network. This dynamic segmentation makes security policy changes 98 percent faster than traditional methods, with an 80 percent reduction in operational efforts. TrustSec 6.1 is now available across Cisco's entire enterprise networking portfolio and integrates with Cisco ACI. With these advancements, TrustSec enables dynamic segmentation anywhere on the network, from the edge to the data center and cloud.

IDC Study Highlights

Cisco also unveiled the results of a major global study into the adoption rates of digital-ready networks. Conducted by IDC and commissioned by Cisco, the research surveyed 2,054 global organizations across 10 countries to determine the digital readiness of their networks.

Key findings include:

- Organizations clearly recognize the need to evolve their networks: Over the next two years, 45 percent of organizations expect to achieve digital-ready network capabilities. That represents three times the current adoption rates.
- Modern networks are delivering real, tangible benefits: Companies that have invested in modern network capabilities are experiencing 2-3 times the rate of growth in revenue, customer retention and profit. They have also deployed twice as many digital transformation initiatives compared to companies with legacy networks.
- Adoption rates comparable across company size and industry vertical: It turns out that network maturity levels are comparable across market segments, with minimal variation between mid-market (500-999 employees) and large (1000+) organizations.
- Emerging countries to leapfrog developed nations: The real variance occurs when comparing countries. The most significant jump in maturity is expected to occur in emerging economies. To help customers navigate the complex journey to a digital-ready network, Cisco is introducing a series of new tools and services. Network assessment tools will help customers understand where they are on the journey, plot a roadmap and understand the business benefits of continuing on their path to digital network maturity. Cisco is also introducing new DNA Advisory Services that will offer in-depth consulting to help enterprises formulate a unique strategy that maps directly to their digital aspirations.

24/7 IT SUPPORT BY YOUR MSP IS NOT AN OPTION BUT A MUST

By Sachin Bhardwaj

If you are a business, looking to streamline your operations and to benefit from cost savings - while enhancing your functional efficiency at the same time - the option to engage a Managed Services Provider (MSP) must, surely, have come up for your consideration. It seems everywhere one looks, Managed Service Providers in the UAE are stepping in to augment the core strengths of enterprises, by taking on the critical but tedious IT tasks associated with the everyday working of a modern business. However, there are some critical things for business to consider in choosing the right Managed Services Company in Dubai, as in any other part of the world.

One of the most crucial aspects of a contract with a Managed Services Provider is whether or not their services are available 24/7, all 365 days of the year. After all, the benefits of substituting an in-house

department with the services of an external entity cannot simply be driven by reduced costs, they must also be gained without losing the advantages of a legacy system. While advantages gained through optimizing returns on investment and the outsourcing of specialized functions does indeed increase the viability of most businesses manifold, it cannot be an effective strategy without round-the-clock support that reduces the threat of downtime and operational disruptions.

A state-of-the-art and best-in-class Managed Services Provider in Dubai must commit to providing a round-the-clock service that includes the ability to monitor, diagnose and troubleshoot issues as they arise - without such concerns being deferred to a specific period of the week being identified as "working hours". Given the availability of Managed Services Providers in the UAE who conform to the highest standards of uninterrupted service, it is incumbent upon enterprises to partner with such service providers, rather than expose themselves to unnecessary risks in order to cut costs. While it may superficially appear that the viability of a business model is largely predicated by cost considera-

tions, the losses and damage that can result from delays in service far outweigh such benefits and expose the enterprise to avoidable and grave risks.

Several Managed Service Providers in Dubai and the UAE have realized that, the presence of innumerable multinational businesses in the location they are servicing, comes with the presupposition and expectation of the highest standards of service, available anywhere in the world. An inherent and inevitable benchmarking of Managed Service Providers in the UAE, against the best practices in the world, therefore, means that there is now no shortage of such services in the UAE market. It is advisable that any business, opting for a Managed Services company in Dubai and the UAE, consider such a standard of service par for course, rather than a premium service. A slightly higher ongoing cost - that still retains advantages over legacy systems - is a small price to pay for the peace of mind from being assured of a constant and uninterrupted service that manages the Cloud and IT infrastructure of a business. Note: By Sachin Bhardwaj is Director, Marketing & Business Development at HostingDataFort

SHANGHAI EXPANDS PUBLIC SMOKING BAN



SHANGHAI: In this photo a man smokes a cigarette on the streets in Shanghai. — AFP photos

SHANGHAI: Shanghai widened its ban on public smoking yesterday as China's biggest city steps up efforts to stub out the massive health threat despite conflicts of interest with the state-owned tobacco industry. Nearly a quarter of adults in the commercial hub of 24 million people are smokers, according to the state-run People's Daily newspaper, citing data from the Chinese Association of Tobacco Control. Shanghai has had a limited ban on public smoking since 2010, but the regulation covered only certain spaces such as schools and libraries. The new rule expands the restrictions to all public indoor areas and some outdoor ones.

In June 2015 Beijing municipality adopted the toughest anti-smoking legislation in the country, banning smoking in offices, restaurants, hotels and hospitals. The southern city of Shenzhen introduced similar rules in 2014. China has long said it plans to ban smoking nationwide. In November, government health spokesman Mao Qunan indicated measures would be rolled out across the country by the end of last year. But the measures, which have been available for public comment

since 2014, still have not been put into effect.

Anti-smoking measures pose a dilemma for China. On one hand, smoking has created an enormous burden on the public health system leading to as many as one million deaths in 2010, according to a 2015 study in medical journal *The Lancet*. On the other, the state-run tobacco industry provides the government with an enormous source of income: 1.1 trillion yuan (\$160 billion) in taxes and profits in 2015, according to the most recent figures, up 20 percent year-on-year. China's tobacco regulator shares offices and senior officials with the state-owned China National Tobacco Corp—a near-monopoly and by far the world's biggest cigarette producer.

The China representative of the World Health Organization, Bernhard Schwartlander, said Tuesday in a statement that "the tobacco economy has all but stopped progress on a national smoke-free law." "Largely because the tobacco industry in China, which has a vested interest in maintaining an economy based on the production and use of tobacco, dominates the official government body meant to curb tobacco use," he said. — AFP

THOSE WITH BLURRY CLOSE-UP VISION GET SOME NEW HELP

'EVERYTHING IS VERY CLEAR AND GETTING BETTER EVERY DAY'

WASHINGTON: Squinting while texting? Always losing your reading glasses? An eye implant that takes about 10 minutes to put in place is the newest in a list of surgical repairs for the blurry close-up vision that is a bane of middle age. But who's really a good candidate to toss their specs? "It's not bringing anybody back to being 20 again," cautioned Dr Shilpa Rose, a Washington ophthalmologist who tests whether patients' eyes are healthy enough to qualify. "But it decreases the need to rush to get that pair of reading glasses every time you want to send a text or read an email." Nearly everybody will experience presbyopia at some point, usually starting in the mid-40s. At first you may notice yourself holding restaurant menus at arm's length. Eventually, even in good light, reading becomes a blur.

How well you see has to do with how light is directed through the natural lens to the back of the eye. That lens stiffens with age, losing its ability to shift and bend light so that it becomes more difficult to focus close-up. The usual options are magnifying drugstore reading glasses or, for people with other vision problems, bifocals, multifocal contact lenses or what's called monovision, correcting for distance vision in one eye and near vision in the other. "I have glasses everywhere - the bedroom, the office, the kitchen," said Christianne Krupinsky, 51, of Marriottsville, Maryland, who'd never needed them until presbyopia struck. "Getting ready in the morning, even to put on jewelry I can't see the clasp. It's so frustrating."

And while surgery always carries some risk, corneal inlays that are implanted into the eye's clear front surface are getting attention because they're removable if necessary. "It's not magic. It's surgery. People have to remember this is not one and done," but requires post-surgical exams and care, said Dr Deepinder K Dhaliwal of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, a corneal specialist who is watching studies of the inlays. Krupinsky was a little nervous while lying on the operating table to receive the new Raindrop near vision inlay.



WASHINGTON: Dr Mark Whitten performs a short eye surgery procedure on patient Christianne Krupinsky in Washington, to insert a Raindrop inlay, a disc implanted in the cornea to reshape it for better close-up focus. — AP photos

See at a distance

"The most you're going to feel is pressure," promised Washington refractive surgeon Dr Mark Whitten, applying numbing drops to her left eye. A gel-like device that looks like a miniature contact lens, the Raindrop is smaller than the eye of a needle. It's the first implant to treat presbyopia by changing the cornea's shape, making it steeper to alter how light passes through. It's placed in only one eye; both eyes still see at a distance. Patients can test-wear a single contact lens to be sure they'll like the effect before choosing surgery. Rose, the ophthalmologist, checked for dry eye, underlying diseases like glaucoma, and whether the corneas were thick and healthy enough to implant before turning Krupinsky over to her surgical partner.

"Just look straight up," Whitten said as he used a laser to slice a flap in Krupinsky's cornea. He cen-

tered the Raindrop inlay over her pupil and lowered the flap to seal it in place. Minutes later, Krupinsky read lines on an eye chart she previously couldn't make out without glasses, albeit still a little blurry. She'll need eye drops for several months as her cornea heals so vision can sharpen. Maker ReVision Optics Inc. is gradually training eye surgeons to use the Raindrop properly, after the Food and Drug Administration approved it last summer based on a study of 373 people whose only vision problem was moderate presbyopia. Two years later, 92 percent had good near vision, 20/40 or better without glasses, in the implanted eye.

Pre-surgical vision

Potential side effects include infection, dry eye, glare, or corneal problems such as scarring. About 7 percent of study participants had the implant removed, mostly because they weren't satisfied with their vision or experienced a haze or clouding of the cornea. Most returned to their pre-surgical vision, although one had lingering haze.

Other surgical options:

- Another FDA-approved corneal inlay, the Kamra, is a doughnut-shaped device, also used in one eye and removable. It works like a pinhole camera, improving vision by focusing light through the center of the pupil.

- A more invasive operation replaces the natural lens in each eye with an artificial one, named Symfony, that can focus both near and far. Approved for cataract surgery, it also is being offered as a presbyopia fix for the middle-aged who don't yet have cataracts. Unlike inlays, artificial lenses can't simply be removed. Insurance doesn't cover elective presbyopia surgery. Rose said the inlays average about \$4,000 to \$5,000, while the artificial lens in both eyes can cost twice as much. Patients should consult a surgeon experienced with all the options who can determine which best suits their eyes, advised Pittsburgh's Dhaliwal. — AP



WASHINGTON: Dr Mark Whitten, left, shows Christianne Krupinsky that almost immediately she can begin reading without glasses following a short eye surgery procedure in Washington.

OBESSE COUPLES MAY TAKE LONGER TO CONCEIVE

NEW YORK: Couples who are obese may take longer to achieve pregnancy than partners who aren't as overweight, a recent US study suggests. Previous studies in women have linked obesity to difficulties getting pregnant. In the current study, neither male nor female obesity alone was linked to taking a longer time to conceive, but when both partners were obese, the couple took up to 59 percent longer to conceive than non-obese counterparts. "If our results are confirmed, fertility specialists may want to take couples' weight status into account when counseling them about achieving pregnancy," said lead study author Rajeshwari Sundaram of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in Bethesda, Maryland.

"The benefits of a healthy weight are well known: obesity increases the risk for diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer," Sundaram added by email. Sundaram and colleagues focused on the relationship between pregnancy and body mass index (BMI), a ratio of weight to height. A BMI between 18.5 and 24.9 is considered a healthy weight, while 25 to 29.9 is overweight, 30 or above is obese and 40 or higher is what's known as morbidly obese. An adult who is 5 feet 9 inches tall and weighs 160 pounds, for example, would have a BMI of 23.6, which is in the healthy range. An obese adult at

that height would weigh at least 203 pounds and have a BMI of 30 or more.

Normal weight

Researchers categorized individuals into two subgroups: obese class I, with a BMI from 30 to 34.9, and obese class II, with a BMI of 35 or greater. Overall, 27 percent of the women and 41 percent of the men were obese class I or heavier. Then, the researchers compared the average time to conceive for couples where neither partner was obese to couples where both fell into the obese class II group. Couples in the obese class II group took 55 percent longer to achieve pregnancy than their normal weight counterparts, the study team calculated. After accounting for other factors that influence fertility such as age, smoking status, exercise and cholesterol levels, obese class II couples took 59 percent longer to get pregnant.

About 40 percent of the men and 47 percent of the women also had enough excess fat around the midsection to potentially influence fertility. In addition, 60 percent of the women and 58 percent of the men said they exercised no more than once a week, the researchers report in *Human Reproduction*. Beyond its small size, another limitation of the study is that it wasn't a controlled experiment designed to determine whether obesity directly causes infertility, the

authors note. It also focused on couples in the general population, not people undergoing treatment for infertility, so the results might not reflect what would happen for all couples trying to conceive, the researchers point out.

From testosterone to estrogen

However, unlike many other studies of obesity and fertility, the current analysis used height and weight measured by clinicians instead of relying on participants to report this information themselves, which may make the findings more accurate. Obesity can influence fertility by altering hormone levels in both men and women, converting testosterone to estrogen, said Dr Jeffrey Goldberg, section head of reproductive endocrinology at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio.

"If you have more fat there is more conversion from testosterone to estrogen," Goldberg, who wasn't involved in the study, said. It makes sense that obese couples would take longer to conceive because excess weight doesn't just impact fertility in women. "For women extra weight impairs ovulatory function," Goldberg said. "For guys, having lower testosterone and higher estrogen impairs sperm production and having a lot of fat around the scrotum, fat thighs and fat around the abdomen raises the scrotal temperature and that can also have an adverse effect." — Reuters

US MILITARY MARCHES FORWARD ON GREEN ENERGY, DESPITE TRUMP

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump and his top advisors have often scoffed at government support of green energy. His chief strategist called it "madness." But the largest US government agency - the Department of Defense - plans to forge ahead under the new administration with a decade-long effort to convert its fuel-hungry operations to renewable power, senior military officials told Reuters. The reasons have nothing to do with the white-hot debate over climate change. In combat zones, green energy saves lives by, for instance, reducing the need for easily attacked convoys to deliver diesel fuel to generators at US bases. Mobile solar-power units allow soldiers to prowl silently through enemy territory.

At sea, gas-electric hybrid battleships save fuel and allow for fewer stops - making them less vulnerable to attacks like the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000, when al-Qaeda militants killed 17 US soldiers during a refueling stop in Yemen. The military's zeal for renewable power has already had broad impacts on energy contractors, generating hundreds of millions in contracts for solar companies and helping to reduce fuel consumption by the world's largest single petroleum buyer.

The armed forces nearly doubled renewable power generation between 2011 and 2015, to 10,534 billion British thermal units, or enough to power about 286,000 average US homes, according to a Department of Defense report. The number of military renewable energy projects nearly tripled to 1,390 between 2011 and 2015, department data showed, with a number of utilities and solar companies benefiting. Many of those projects are at U.S. bases, where renewable energy allows the military to maintain its own independent source of power in case of a natural disaster or an attack - or cyber attack - that disables the public grid.

The White House did not respond to Reuters requests for comment on the military's use of green energy. Although Trump has blasted solar subsidies, vowed to boost fossil fuel development and questioned the science behind climate change, military leaders remain confident that the president won't halt their march toward renewable power. "We expect that it's going to continue during the Trump administration," said Lt. Col. Wayne Kinsel, head of the infrastructure unit of the Air Force Asset Management Division for Logistics, Engineering and Force Protection. "It's really not political."

Other senior officials in the Navy, Air Force and Army also told Reuters that they expected their renewable energy programs to continue. Lt. Col. J.B. Brindle, a Defense Department spokesman, said the agency "spends very little appropriated funding" on renewable energy projects, but declined to give any figures or to answer additional questions about such efforts. Trump's Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis, has long supported efforts to reduce troop dependence on petroleum. He saw first-hand the vulnerability of diesel convoys to attacks by militants while serving as Commander of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s. As far back as 2003, he urged Navy researchers to find innovative ways to unleash the military from the "tether of fuel."

Launched by a republican

The military's push into alternative energy started under Republican President George W. Bush in 2007, when he signed a law requiring the Pentagon to get 25 percent of the electricity for its buildings from renewable energy by 2025. The effort accelerated under President Barack Obama, who required the Army, Air Force and Navy to each deploy 1 gigawatt of renewable power and directed the Army to open a lab developing energy technologies for combat vehicles.

In an apparent nod to Obama's efforts to curb global warming, the Pentagon also reported to Congress in 2015 that the droughts and floods caused by climate change pose a security threat - contributing to foreign political and economic instability that could require substantial troop deployments. Former Defense Secretary Ash Carter said in his parting memo in January that the Navy has already met its goal, producing 1 gigawatt

of electricity - while the other forces are on track to meet their targets. The programs have their opponents. The conservative Heritage Foundation, for example, has railed against the military's support of renewable power and biofuels. "The administration right now needs to focus specifically on combat power," said Rachel Zissimos, a Heritage researcher. "Investing money on optional initiatives right now I think is problematic."

High stakes for military suppliers

Solar companies such as SunPower Corp and utilities including Sempra Energy and Southern have won utility-scale renewable energy contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years, according to the companies and Department of Defense documents reviewed by Reuters. Southern, for example, has 11 solar projects totaling 310 megawatts on bases in states including Georgia and Alabama. In December, Sempra completed the 150-megawatt Mesquite Solar 3 in Arizona to provide about a third of the power needed at 14 Navy and Marine bases in California for 25 years.

SunPower has already landed a major deal under the Trump administration - a \$96 million contract finalized on Feb. 3 to provide power to Vandenberg Air Force base in California until 2043, according to a Pentagon database. Sempra and Southern said they were committed to serving their customers but declined to comment on whether they were discussing new contracts with the military. SunPower did not comment. Last year, the Navy began outfitting Arleigh Burke destroyers with gas-electric hybrid engines developed by L3, which won a \$119 million contract in 2013.

Tesla, which produces electric cars and batteries, is another company that analysts say could benefit from military contracts. A Tesla spokesman said the company is "supportive" of the military's interest in clean energy but declined comment on whether it was pursuing Defense Department contracts. The US military's use of oil, meanwhile, fell by more than 20 percent between 2007 and 2015. The bulk of the decline likely stems from declining combat operations rather than rising efficiency and use of renewable energy. But traditional military fuel suppliers - such as Exxon Mobil, BP, and Shell - nonetheless have a lot at stake if the military accelerates its move away from fossil fuels.

The military's average annual oil bill was about \$14.28 billion between 2007 and 2015. BP is constantly reviewing its marketing strategies to ensure growth, a spokesman said. "As fuel slates change, we will adapt, and continue to provide our customers with the products they demand," he said in response to questions about the potential impact of the military's increased use of renewable fuels.

Solar-powered soldiers

Hauling fuel to the battlefield has been a hazard for militaries since at least World War I and continues to take a grim toll. One in nearly 40 fuel convoys in Iraq in 2007 resulted in a death or serious injury, according to a study commissioned by the Defense Department. In Afghanistan the same year, one in 24 fuel convoys suffered casualties. Marines in Afghanistan began carrying solar panels in 2009 to forward bases in battles with Taliban fighters. They used them to power batteries for communications, GPS and night-vision goggles. The panels not only reduced the need for convoys, they allowed marines to shut off generators, hushing operations and making them harder for enemies to detect.

Arotech subsidiary UEC has sold \$25 million worth of the solar arrays and expects a bigger business in systems working with batteries and solar to slash dependence on generators, said business manager Nancy Straight. Col Brian Magnuson, the head of the Marines' expeditionary energy office, established in 2009, said his office aims to replace diesel-powered generators on the battlefield with solar power, and to reduce energy use with efficiency measures such as insulated tents and the deployment of advanced batteries. "These technologies are a way to become more effective in combat," Magnuson said. "This is about war-fighting capability." —Reuters

ZIMBABWEAN STRUGGLING HEALTH SYSTEM LEANS ON UNSUNG HEROINES

BULAWAYO: As Zimbabwe's health service buckles amid low levels of public funding and a government freeze on hiring medical staff, volunteers have stepped in to take the strain. Home-based carers can be found across Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city, where they work with local clinics to monitor tuberculosis (TB) and HIV patients, making sure they take their medication as prescribed.

Led by local religious organizations such as the Roman Catholic Church, Seventh Day Adventists and Brethren in Christ, the volunteers - almost all women - work in groups to attend patients who need support. "Some of the patients stay alone, and it is easy for them to just stop taking their medications," said Silibaziso Moyo, a 41-year-old volunteer. "Others cannot even bathe themselves. We make sure they are clean and the places they live in are also clean."

A Bulawayo municipality spokesperson said volunteers had worked with the city council since the early 1990s under the Community Participation for Health Initiative, but the need had grown over the years with the spread of HIV and opportunistic infections such as TB. In 2015, the World Health Organization said Zimbabwe had failed to meet its Millennium Development Goal target to reduce TB prevalence, noting that this was largely due to an increase in new infections since 2000.

Meanwhile, UNAIDS says Zimbabwe is among the countries in sub-Saharan Africa worst-affected by the HIV and AIDS epidemic, and has around 1.4 million people living with HIV, although prevalence rates have dropped steadily since the late 1990s. In their 2001 Abuja Declaration, African Union governments pledged to allocate at least 15 percent of their annual budgets to improve the health sector. But in 2015, cash-strapped Zimbabwe earmarked just 6 percent of its budget for that purpose. This January, the ministry of health announced it would not be hiring any more doctors, while the recruitment of nurses was suspended last year.

Prolonging life

Despite the huge challenges to providing adequate care in a country where the health ministry's budget has been cut by over half since 2000, community volunteers are providing some relief. In Bulawayo, the local government helps the teams of volunteers by providing them with surgical gloves and other protective clothing, and occasionally gives them food packs to thank them for their efforts. "Patients tend to ignore medication once they feel they are better, and some stop coming for their check-ups altogether, but we have these volunteers who follow up the patients, making sure they at least prolong their lives," said Tabeth Nkomo, a senior municipality nurse who has worked with volunteers for more than a decade. "They have helped a lot in managing HIV-related mortality."

The city has 19 clinics, each of which can register up to 200 TB and HIV patients at any given time, Nkomo said, highlighting the need for back-up care. Simon Bhebe, a pastor who coordinates 15 volunteers from his local church, said they were doing "God's work". "It is not easy - but for anyone to be found doing this kind of work, it means they have compassion for the sick, which is a basic Christian ethos," he said. According to the Home-based Care Alliance, located in the Netherlands, there are more than 44,000 healthcare volunteers spread across 11 countries in Africa, but this may not be enough as some communities are failing to cope with the number of TB and HIV patients.

The National AIDS Council of Zimbabwe, a government agency, estimates there are around 3,000 volunteers across the country, and Irish Aid, which runs Ireland's development assistance, has supported 15 home-based care programs in Zimbabwe since 2005. "It wasn't easy at first to have strangers coming to my house to assist me, but I thank these women for my recovery," said Jacob Conjwayo, a TB patient convalescing at his home in Bulawayo. — Reuters



KABUL, Afghanistan: In this photo, an Afghan first aid nurse with Bridge Hope Health Organization (BHHO) right, dresses the wounds of a drug addict in Kabul, Afghanistan. — AP photos

FORMER ADDICTS TRY TO HELP DRUG USERS IN AFGHANISTAN

'WHEN I GAVE UP ADDICTION, I DECIDED TO DEVOTE MY LIFE TO SERVING THESE PEOPLE'

KABUL, Afghanistan: Raheem Rejaey was a drug addict for 17 years. He lived under bridges in Kabul or in the ruins of buildings. His clothes reeked. In his misery, he tried suicide several times, he said, once intentionally overdosing and lying unconscious in a street for two days, undiscovered. So he can feel the pain of other addicts as he searches for them in the streets of the Afghan capital. Clean for six years, the 54-year-old Rejaey volunteers for the Bridge Hope Health Organization, a group made up of former addicts like himself who help get care and counseling to drug users. It is an overwhelming challenge: Afghanistan has one of the highest rates of drug use in the world, with an estimated 3 million addicts, around 10 percent of its population of 30 million. The government struggles to provide services, but can't keep up as the numbers of addicts grow in the country, which is the world's main source of opium and heroin.

Authorities have established treatment centers, and police with health officials often round up addicts from the streets and bring them to the centers. Billions of dollars have been spent on counter-narcotics campaigns in the past decade, including encouraging poppy farmers to switch to other cash crops. Still, officials say the number of drug users is growing. Most addicts come from the millions of Afghans who work in neighboring Iran and Pakistan, where narcotics are even more of a problem. The 10 volunteers at Bridge tour Kabul districts where addicts are most plentiful and provide basic help to 15-30 a day, such as counseling and referrals to drop-in centers where they can get screened for HIV. They often find old friends.

"My health was really bad when I was an addict, I was hoping to die," Rejaey told The Associated Press. "When I became healthy and gave up addiction, I decided to devote my life to serving these people, because ... I knew there is no one who will care for them." The ranks of Afghanistan's addicts include more than 1 million women and more than 100,000 children, said Abdul Manan Azadmanish, director of drug demand reduction for the Public Health Ministry. "It is a big disaster," he said, speaking at a Kabul

rehabilitation center as police brought in several hundred addicts for treatment. There are believed to be at least 40,000 intravenous drug users in Afghanistan, making them vulnerable to HIV and other infections. The UN estimates that around 7,000 people in the country live with HIV and believes the epidemic is mainly centered among those injecting drugs.

Decent salary

Non-governmental organizations are so overwhelmed as the government. The Bridge organization has a very small budget. Its volunteers take public buses in their neighborhood tours to cut costs, Rejaey said. Reza Gul Jan, another volunteer, became an addict while living in Iran. He stopped taking drugs six years ago and says his heart breaks when he now sees addicts. "But a sense of humanity drives me to come here to help them," he said. The Taleban,

which have been waging war against the Afghan government since 2001, are heavily involved in poppy growing. The militants' growing control over the poppy fields in the south meant government eradication efforts almost completely halted, while cultivation of the flower grew by 10 percent.

As a result, Afghanistan's potential opium production increased 43 percent to 4,800 tons in 2016, according to Salamat Azimi, Afghanistan's counter-narcotics minister. Atiqullah, a 28-year-old in Kabul, was once a well digger with a decent salary. But over the course of 11 years of addiction, his life and health fell apart. He now lives under a bridge in western Kabul, unable to walk. "If I find money to buy food, I won't be able to buy drugs. If I have money for my drugs, I won't be able to have food," he said, weeping. "I am tired of this life and even God is not ending my life so I can at least rest in peace." — AP



KABUL, Afghanistan: Afghan drug addicts wait for registration at a rehabilitation center during a campaign to help drug users in Kabul.

UK ZOO FACES CLOSURE FOR ANIMAL CRUELTY AFTER HUNDREDS DIE

LONDON: A British zoo is facing closure and its owner prosecution after nearly 500 of its animals died of poor nutrition, cramped conditions and hypothermia over four years, it emerged yesterday. A damning report into the South Lakes Safari Zoo in Cumbria, northwest England, found that 486 animals had died in the past four years, putting most of the blame on its owner David Gill. The zoo had over 1,600 animals in 2016. Describing the conditions as "appalling", inspectors reported finding poor levels of veterinary care, cleanliness and pest control, as well as inadequate food.

"The conditions that these animals are being held in, is quite frankly appalling, and has led directly to the death of a number of them," they wrote in the report. They recommended Gill be prosecuted under the Animal Welfare Act. In 2016, 123 animals died including a West African giraffe which was euthanized a day after collapsing. Post-mortem images raised concerns over nutrition. A red kangaroo also died following a head trauma and six lion cubs were euthanized because the facility was not big enough to house them. The report notes they were "healthy cubs and nothing wrong with them". An African spurred tortoise was electrocuted on an electric fence, while

a leopard tortoise died from cold.

'This zoo has failed'

Keepers told the inspecting team they had been informed to dispose of the animals' bodies and not tell anyone about them. Inspectors also flagged the owner's poor duty-of-care towards its staff. It was fined £255,000 (\$316,000, 299,500 euros) last June for health and safety reasons following the 2013 death of one of its zookeepers, Sarah McClay. She was mauled by a Sumatran tiger. Gill is currently applying for a fresh license for the zoo after the local council, Barrow and Furness, rejected his application for an extension of his previous license back in July 2016.

Applying for a new license allows the zoo to remain open until the application is processed. Inspectors are recommending the council reject his application and close the zoo stating that the standards maintained by Gill "fall far below the standards required in a modern zoo". The animal welfare charity Captive Animals' Protection Society applauded the recommendation. "We feel that the many instances of suffering and unnecessary deaths of animals go to show that this zoo has failed and will continue to fail the animals in their care," it said in a statement. —AFP

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X-CITE WINS SERVICE HERO ELECTRONICS STORE OF THE YEAR AWARD



X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, Kuwait's largest electronic retailer, won the first place in the Service Hero Awards 2016 for the Electronics category, for the third year in a row. The award ceremony was held in Dubai on Wednesday, February 22, 2017.

It is of no coincidence that X-cite won this prestigious award for three consecutive years, given the company's continuous efforts towards service excellence and positive consumer engagement. The award also demonstrates X-cite's ongoing commitment to deliver a world-class shopping experience throughout its strategically located showrooms and online store with great customer service throughout the year.

X-cite by Alghanim Electronics would like to thank its customers and fans as this award was only made possible by the customers' trust that was instilled in the company, a trust that the company prides itself on and strives to maintain. The company's main goal is to meet and exceed customer satisfaction by continuously improving its services and providing value to the customer.



Deputy Director of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Engineer Hajraf Al-Hajraf hosted a dinner at the Hajraf Diwan in Jahra, and that to celebrate the selection of Dr Mohammad Al-Faris and Engineer Abdurrahman Al-Mutawa as Minister of Education and Minister of Public Works respectively.



DELEGATION FROM COUNCIL OF SAUDI CHAMBERS VISITS AOU TRAINING CENTER

A delegation from the National Committee for Training at the Council of Saudi Chambers, paid a visit to the Training Center of the Arab Open University (AOU). Dr Sami Khalifa, Manager of the Training Center, welcomed the delegation headed by Dr Ahmad Sultan Nasser and expressed his pleasure for the visit, cherishing the efforts of the committee in the areas of training and human resource development.

The delegation was briefed on the AOU's mission and vision as well as its programs across its branches that operate in eight Arab countries. They were also introduced to the Center's training and counseling services, and the agreements and protocols that the AOU has signed with various Arab and international bodies.

Meanwhile, Dr Khalifa Hassan expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome and valued the AOU's role in training and research. He pointed out that the visit is one of the visits paid to a number of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in order to consider the best practices of training and development in the GCC countries, and to reach an agreement and a strategic partnership on training for serving labor markets and developmental tracks in the GCC countries.

During the meeting, both parties were ready to cooperate for the common good and the programs of sustainable developmental plans in Arab countries. In addition, numerous ideas



about the important issues of training and development were addressed, such as the possibility of cooperation, coordination and exchange of experiences to achieve the goals of both the Center and the committee and to promote the environment of business management and the programs of training and development at the

Gulf and Arab levels. The meeting was also attended by Naif Al-Fadli from the Department of Training, Development and Community Service, the AOU Headquarters, and Engineer Misherf Al-Royali and Hanan Al-Atas from the visiting delegation.



It was a wonderful moment as family, friends and well-wishers gather to celebrate with Fatiha Ayomide on her Quran Recitation Graduation ceremony. May Allah guide and protect you as you continue to be a blessing to our family. Greetings from mom, dad, friends and well-wishers

KADAPA ISLAMIC WELFARE SOCIETY MARKS NATIONAL DAYS WITH PICNIC



The Kadapa Islamic Welfare Society, in existence for more than 30 years under the patronage of the Islamic Presentation Society (IPC), held a picnic to celebrate National Day on Feb 25 at Lulu Masjid, organizing sports, games, an Islamic quiz, awards and prayers.

Eminent Arabic scholar and preacher working for IPC, Sifat Alam, who hosts a question and answer session on Islamic monotheism on Radio Kuwait, delivered a message on respecting and abiding by national laws, customs and conventions of Kuwait. He said this is a moral duty of all Indians in the diaspora, to sincerely work hard for the unity, integrity and solidarity of Kuwait.



Sanaullah Umri, another eminent Arabic scholar and preacher, spoke about the 400-year-old history of Kuwait since 1613. Historically, this land was known as Qurain and Al-Kut (fort). The Al-Sabah family struggled for freedom from Portuguese rule and overthrew the Ottomans with the help of Britain in 1899. The British (on whose empire the sun never set) left Kuwait in 1961. He said Kuwait and India enjoy very good commercial and economic relations throughout the ages.

Abdul Quader Umeri, another noted Arabic scholar and preacher at IPC, highlighted the importance of immortal life and cautioned to save ourselves and our families from the hellfire, whose fuel is men and stones, according to the Holy Quran.

IYS PRESENTS 'PHIR WOHI SHAAM'

Indian Youth Society (IYS) a leading youth organization in Kuwait, will present a musical tribute to the legends of Indian music titled 'Phir Wohi Shaam' on 3 March at Salmiya Indian Model School (SIMS) at 6:30pm. The concert features talented playback singers Paresh Pewekar and Minakshi, who will render popular ghazals from the repertoire of legendary Indian singers.



HILTON KUWAIT RESORT ORGANIZES FESTIVAL AT BAYT ABDULLAH CHILDREN'S HOSPICE

In commemoration of Kuwait National and Liberation days, Hilton Kuwait Resort organized a fun-filled festival at Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice involving a number of families. Designed to entertain both children and their parents alike, the day involved face painting, a magician and cartoon characters. The program also included a competition between the children and Hilton Kuwait team, creating an exciting and interactive ambiance, before Kuwait flags were distributed to the children to mark the occasion of National and Liberation days.

Hilton Kuwait Resort has always considered supporting the children an essential part of its social and philanthropic outreach," said Yasmine Adel, Hilton Kuwait Marketing and Public Relations Manager. "We take great pride in celebrating with our children at Bayt Abdullah Hospice."

As part of the day, Hilton Kuwait provided the families with delicious lunch meals prepared by Hilton's talented chefs and distributed valuable gifts to all children, helping to paint a smile on to each of their faces and ensure they had a fantastic day.

Hilton Kuwait Resort was pleased to make a wish for one of Bayt Abdullah children comes true, who wanted to stay by the beach for a night with his family. Consequently, Hilton Kuwait invited the child and his parents for a two night stay in one of its Presidential villas, much to the child's delight who claimed, "Hilton Kuwait is the perfect destination in Kuwait to unwind and relax."

Bayt Abdullah is the first children's hospice in the Middle East, offering a comprehensive pediatric palliative care service free of charge to children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions. Services include pediatric pain management and symptom control at home and hospice, respite for the family, end of life care and bereavement support.



KHAIRAN RESORT HOSTS NATIONAL DAY FESTIVAL

The Touristic Enterprises Company hosted a national festival titled 'Most Precious Home' at Al-Khairan Resort during the period between the 23rd and 26th of February. The festival was organized by Ahmad Al-Ali and Q8 team and included several activities such as a car parade, Smurfs show, and Yemeni Hadhramaut band performance, which took place during the first day. Films for children, a classic cars' display as well as heritage and folkloric shows were performed during the second day.

The dogs' training team 'Kuwait K9' participated as well, in addition to a performance by singer Yousuf Al-Omani which concluded the second day of events. Kuwait Medical emergency teams participated by offering lectures on first aid. The third and last day saw concerts by Anwar Al-Shami, performance of heritage Ardha dances and a fireworks show.



GULF BANK SPONSORS NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS CELEBRATIONS OF IDEAL EDUCATION SCHOOL

Gulf Bank was proud to be a sponsor of the National and Liberation days' celebrations of Ideal Education School, which provides education, and support services for students with special needs. The celebrations took place on Wednesday, February 22, 2017 at the school premises in Sharq.

The event included a play about Kuwait featuring the story of the 1990 invasion and liberation. Attendees were amazed by performance that special needs students carried out on stage. The students who were able to perform expressed their emotional attachment and pride towards their nation with significant depth that touched all the spectators. The event also featured national anthems and songs performed by the students who were delighted to raise Kuwaiti flags on the entire stage adding moments of happiness and joy. The day was concluded by a competition around Kuwait's history and local proverbs.

Commenting on this occasion, Esra Al-Habib, Manager of External Communications at Gulf Bank said: "We are happy to take part in such a joyous event. Gulf Bank conveys its best wishes to the Ideal Education School and thanks them for inviting us to be part of this event. It was inspiring to see how happy the students were and the level of attention they receive from the teachers and staff at the school."

The Ideal Education School provides education and support services for students with special

needs of mild and moderate levels of intellectual and multiple disabilities in the age range of 6 to 21 years. The school aims to develop and improve the maximum potential and independence of students through individual education programs that include vocational training, community awareness and advocacy. It believes that everyone has the right to be educated in a safe, caring and enjoyable environment that provides intercultural and international experiences. The core curriculum, extracurricular activities as well as the improvement programs provides an opportunity for each of students to reach their maximum potential and beyond.

The school has an excellent panel of professional educators, teacher assistants, paramedical as well as administrative staff. These staff, with their strong sense of responsibility, is there to ensure a persisting and appropriate progress of students' academic, emotional, physical and vocational skills, including activities for daily living (ADL). They great pride in providing a safe and secure learning environment while at the same time leading the students towards overall growth and development in an environment which is conducive of learning and enhance therapeutic progress.

Gulf Bank is strongly committed to giving back to Kuwait as it supports numerous events and initiatives focusing on youth, education, health and fitness, helping the underprivileged, women's empowerment, as well as promoting Kuwait's heritage and culture.



Ideal Education School Students perform on stage.



Gulf Bank representatives receive an award from Ideal Education School.

OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 01:00 Ironclad: Battle For Blood
- 03:00 I Am Number Four
- 05:00 Legendary: Tomb Of The Dragon
- 07:00 Tekken: Kazuya's Revenge
- 08:45 Last Action Hero
- 11:15 I Am Number Four
- 13:15 Con Air
- 15:15 Seventh Son
- 17:00 Harlock: Space Pirate
- 19:00 King Arthur
- 21:15 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I
- 23:30 Universal Soldier: The Return

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:00 Insane Pools: Off The Deep End
- 00:55 Gator Boys
- 01:50 River Monsters
- 02:45 Bondi Vet
- 03:40 Yankee Jungle
- 04:35 Tanked
- 05:25 In Too Deep
- 05:50 In Too Deep
- 06:15 Gator Boys
- 07:02 River Monsters
- 07:49 Insane Pools: Off The Deep End
- 08:36 Going Ape
- 09:00 Going Ape
- 09:25 Cats 101
- 10:15 Yankee Jungle
- 11:10 In Too Deep
- 11:35 In Too Deep
- 12:05 Tanked
- 13:00 Cats 101
- 13:55 Bondi Vet
- 14:50 Yankee Jungle
- 15:45 Gator Boys
- 16:40 In Too Deep
- 17:05 In Too Deep
- 17:35 Tanked
- 18:30 River Monsters
- 19:25 Gangland Killers
- 20:20 The Vet Life
- 21:15 Tanked
- 22:10 In Too Deep
- 22:35 In Too Deep
- 23:05 Gangland Killers

BBC FIRST

- 00:40 Doctors
- 01:10 Eastenders

- 02:40 Broad City
- 03:05 South Park
- 03:30 South Park
- 04:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
- 04:25 Catch A Contractor
- 05:15 Lip Sync Battle
- 05:40 Ridiculousness
- 06:05 Ridiculousness
- 06:30 Lip Sync Battle
- 07:20 Framework
- 08:10 Catch A Contractor
- 09:00 Disaster Date
- 09:25 Ridiculousness
- 09:50 Ridiculousness
- 10:15 Key And Peele
- 10:40 Disaster Date
- 11:05 Ridiculousness
- 11:30 The It Crowd
- 11:55 Sweat Inc.
- 12:45 Idiotstiter
- 13:10 Lip Sync Battle
- 13:35 The It Crowd
- 14:00 Catch A Contractor
- 14:50 Ridiculousness
- 15:15 Catch A Contractor
- 16:05 Idiotstiter
- 16:30 Ridiculousness
- 16:55 Ridiculousness
- 17:20 Disaster Date
- 17:45 Lip Sync Battle
- 18:10 Key And Peele
- 18:35 Coaching Bad
- 19:25 The It Crowd
- 19:50 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwafel
- 20:20 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwafel
- 20:50 Disaster Date
- 21:13 Ridiculousness
- 21:37 I Live With Models
- 22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
- 22:30 Broad City
- 22:54 The Half Hour
- 23:18 Tosh.0
- 23:42 Tosh.0

Discovery Family

- 00:15 Destroyed In Seconds
- 00:40 Ultimate Survival
- 01:30 Unchained Reaction
- 02:20 Wildest Africa
- 03:10 Lost & Found With Mike & Jesse
- 04:00 Destroyed In Seconds
- 04:25 Destroyed In Seconds
- 04:50 Ultimate Survival
- 05:40 How It's Made
- 06:05 How It's Made
- 06:30 Dirty Jobs
- 07:20 Mythbusters
- 08:00 Kids vs Film

- 14:15 Gravity Falls
- 15:20 Hank Zipzer
- 15:05 Star Darlings
- 15:10 Austin & Ally
- 15:35 Jessie
- 16:00 Bunk'd
- 16:25 Kirby Buckets
- 16:50 Rolling To The Ronks
- 17:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 17:45 Elena Of Avalor
- 18:10 Stuck In The Middle
- 18:35 Descendants Wicked World
- 18:40 Girl Meets World
- 19:05 Bizaardvark
- 19:30 Bunk'd
- 19:55 Best Friends Whenever
- 20:20 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 20:25 The Next Step
- 20:50 Austin & Ally
- 21:15 Star Darlings
- 21:20 Shake It Up
- 21:45 Backstage
- 22:10 Liv And Maddie
- 22:35 Cracked
- 22:40 Dog With A Blog
- 23:05 Best Friends Whenever
- 23:30 Jessie
- 23:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts

Disney Junior

- 00:00 Miles From Tomorrow
- 00:30 Miles From Tomorrow
- 00:55 PJ Masks
- 01:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 01:35 The Hive
- 01:45 Loopdidoo
- 02:00 Henry Hugglemonster
- 02:15 Calimero
- 02:30 Art Attack
- 02:55 Zou
- 03:05 Loopdidoo
- 03:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 03:35 Calimero
- 03:50 Zou
- 04:05 Art Attack
- 04:30 The Hive
- 04:40 Loopdidoo
- 04:55 Henry Hugglemonster
- 05:10 Art Attack
- 05:35 Loopdidoo
- 05:50 Calimero
- 06:05 Art Attack
- 06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 06:45 Zou
- 07:00 Art Attack
- 07:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 07:45 Loopdidoo
- 08:00 Zou
- 08:15 Calimero

- 14:55 Storage Wars Canada
- 15:20 Alaska: The Last Frontier
- 16:10 The Island With Bear Grylls
- 17:00 Deadliest Catch
- 17:50 Fast N' Loud
- 18:00 Mist Garage
- 19:30 How It's Made: Dream Cars
- 19:55 How It's Made: Dream Cars
- 20:20 The Island With Bear Grylls
- 21:10 Storage Wars Canada
- 21:35 Storage Wars Canada
- 22:00 So You Think You'd Survive?
- 22:50 Legend Of Croc Gold
- 23:40 Manhunt With Joel Lambert

Disney XD

- 00:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA
- 07:00 Danger Mouse
- 07:25 Gravity Falls
- 07:50 Atomic Puppet
- 08:15 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 08:25 Counterfeit Cat
- 08:40 Supa Strikas
- 09:10 K.C. Undercover
- 09:35 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
- 10:00 Lab Rats
- 10:25 Lab Rats
- 10:50 Danger Mouse
- 11:20 Supa Strikas
- 11:45 Supa Strikas
- 12:10 Counterfeit Cat
- 12:35 Pair Of Kings
- 13:00 Pair Of Kings
- 13:30 Future-Worm!
- 13:55 Lab Rats
- 14:20 Lab Rats
- 14:45 Atomic Puppet
- 15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 15:15 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 15:40 Supa Strikas
- 16:05 Lab Rats
- 16:30 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 16:55 Right Now Kapow
- 17:25 K.C. Undercover
- 17:50 Future-Worm!
- 18:15 Gravity Falls
- 18:40 Lab Rats Elite Force
- 19:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 19:10 Supa Strikas
- 19:35 Right Now Kapow
- 20:00 Atomic Puppet
- 20:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 20:55 K.C. Undercover
- 21:20 Kickin' It
- 21:45 Mighty Med
- 22:10 Danger Mouse
- 22:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 22:45 Marvel's Avengers Assemble
- 23:10 Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister 6
- 23:35 Boyster

itv CHOICE

- 00:15 Coronation Street
- 00:40 Coronation Street
- 01:10 The Chase
- 02:00 Emmerdale
- 02:30 Coronation Street
- 03:00 Coronation Street
- 03:30 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 04:25 Tina & Bobby
- 05:20 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
- 06:15 The Syndicate
- 07:15 The Chase
- 08:05 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 09:00 Tina & Bobby
- 10:00 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
- 11:00 The Syndicate
- 12:00 The Chase
- 12:50 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 13:45 Emmerdale
- 14:15 Coronation Street
- 14:45 Coronation Street
- 15:15 The Chase
- 16:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 17:00 Don't Tell The Bride
- 18:00 5 Star Family Reunion
- 18:50 The Syndicate
- 19:50 Emmerdale
- 20:15 Coronation Street
- 20:45 Coronation Street
- 21:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 22:00 Don't Tell The Bride
- 23:00 5 Star Family Reunion
- 23:50 Emmerdale

- 08:30 The Pioneer Woman
- 09:00 Siba's Table
- 09:30 Siba's Table
- 10:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 10:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 11:00 The Kitchen
- 12:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 12:30 The Pioneer Woman
- 13:00 Siba's Table
- 13:30 Siba's Table
- 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 15:00 Chopped
- 16:00 The Kitchen
- 17:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 17:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 18:00 Chopped
- 19:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 20:00 Private Chef
- 20:30 Private Chef
- 21:00 Patricia Heaton Parties
- 21:30 Patricia Heaton Parties
- 22:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
- 22:30 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
- 23:00 Iron Chef America

itv CHOICE

- 00:15 Coronation Street
- 00:40 Coronation Street
- 01:10 The Chase
- 02:00 Emmerdale
- 02:30 Coronation Street
- 03:00 Coronation Street
- 03:30 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 04:25 Tina & Bobby
- 05:20 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
- 06:15 The Syndicate
- 07:15 The Chase
- 08:05 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 09:00 Tina & Bobby
- 10:00 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
- 11:00 The Syndicate
- 12:00 The Chase
- 12:50 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 13:45 Emmerdale
- 14:15 Coronation Street
- 14:45 Coronation Street
- 15:15 The Chase
- 16:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 17:00 Don't Tell The Bride
- 18:00 5 Star Family Reunion
- 18:50 The Syndicate
- 19:50 Emmerdale
- 20:15 Coronation Street
- 20:45 Coronation Street
- 21:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 22:00 Don't Tell The Bride
- 23:00 5 Star Family Reunion
- 23:50 Emmerdale

HQ HD

- 00:00 Ancient Top 10
- 01:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 02:00 Blood And Glory: The Civil War In Color
- 03:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 04:00 Missing In Alaska
- 04:50 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
- 05:40 Ancient Top 10
- 06:30 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 07:20 Blood And Glory: The Civil War In Color
- 08:10 The Universe
- 09:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 10:00 Missing In Alaska
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- 18:00 Ancient Top 10
- 19:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 20:00 The Universe
- 21:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 22:00 Missing In Alaska
- 23:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence

HISTORY HD

- 00:30 American Pickers
- 01:20 Time Team
- 02:10 Counting Cars
- 02:35 Car Hunters
- 03:00 Forged In Fire
- 03:50 Forged In Fire
- 04:40 American Pickers
- 05:30 Pawn Stars
- 06:00 Mountain Men
- 07:00 Counting Cars
- 07:50 Shipping Wars
- 08:15 Shipping Wars
- 08:40 Counting Cars

food network

- 00:00 Chopped
- 01:00 Food Network Star
- 02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 03:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:30 Man Fire Food
- 04:00 Chopped
- 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 06:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 07:00 The Kitchen
- 08:00 The Pioneer Woman



SKYFALL ON OSN MOVIES HD



CYRUS ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

- 09:05 Car Hunters
- 09:30 Pawn Stars
- 09:55 Pawn Stars
- 10:20 Storage Wars: Best Of
- 10:45 Storage Wars: Best Of
- 11:10 American Pickers
- 12:00 Alone
- 12:50 Time Team
- 13:40 Swamp People
- 14:30 Ax Men
- 15:20 Mountain Men
- 16:10 Shipping Wars
- 16:35 Shipping Wars
- 17:00 Counting Cars
- 17:25 Counting Cars
- 17:50 Pawn Stars
- 18:15 Pawn Stars
- 18:40 Forged In Fire
- 19:30 Counting Cars
- 19:55 Car Hunters
- 20:20 Mountain Men
- 21:10 American Pickers
- 22:00 Outlaw Chronicles: Hells Angels
- 22:50 Search For The Lost Giants
- 23:40 Hunting Hitler

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 00:00 Charlotte's Web
- 02:00 Man Of The House
- 04:00 Emma's Chance
- 06:00 Inspector Gadget
- 08:00 Meet The Robinsons
- 10:00 Oliver & Company
- 11:30 Charlotte's Web
- 13:15 Inspector Gadget
- 14:45 Oliver & Company
- 16:15 Frozen
- 18:00 Peter Pan
- 20:00 Mary Poppins
- 22:30 The Odd Life Of Timothy Green

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 01:00 Cyrus
- 03:00 Baby's Day Out
- 05:00 Father Of The Bride
- 07:00 National Security
- 09:00 Baby's Day Out
- 11:00 Father Of The Bride
- 13:00 National Security
- 15:00 Coneheads
- 17:00 Father Of The Bride Part II
- 19:00 The Rewrite
- 21:00 Etlv
- 23:00 The Bronze

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

- 00:45 Tili
- 03:00 The Water Diviner
- 05:00 Gone With The Bullets
- 07:00 Quiz Show
- 09:15 The Truth About Emanuel
- 11:00 Experimenter
- 12:45 Trash
- 14:15 Ironweed
- 17:15 Escobar: Paradise Lost
- 19:15 Bulworth
- 21:15 Manglehorn
- 23:00 Boys Don't Cry

OSN MOVIES HD

- 00:20 World's Creepiest Killers
- 01:10 Dog Whisperer
- 02:00 Miracle Hospital
- 02:30 Miracle Hospital
- 03:00 Cradle To Grave
- 04:50 Dog Whisperer
- 05:45 Ancient X-Files
- 06:40 Yukon Gold
- 07:35 Ultimate Airport Dubai
- 08:30 Megastructures
- 09:25 Mega Factories: Supercars
- 10:20 Ancient X-Files
- 11:15 Ghosts Of Pearl Harbor
- 12:10 Bugging Hitler's Army
- 13:05 Locked Up Abroad
- 14:00 Mega Factories: Supercars
- 15:00 Megastructures
- 16:00 Ultimate Airport Dubai
- 17:00 Hitler The Junkie
- 17:30 Hitler And The Occult
- 18:00 Human Lampshade: A Holocaust Mystery
- 19:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 20:00 Taboo USA
- 21:00 Hitler The Junkie
- 21:25 Hitler And The Occult
- 21:50 Human Lampshade: A Holocaust Mystery
- 22:40 Locked Up Abroad
- 23:30 Taboo USA

DISCOVERY SCIENCE

- 00:00 How The Earth Works
- 00:50 Kings Of Construction
- 01:40 Mythbusters
- 02:30 How Do They Do It?
- 02:55 Food Factory
- 03:20 How The Earth Works
- 04:10 Close Encounters
- 04:35 Close Encounters
- 05:00 Kings Of Construction
- 05:48 Mythbusters
- 06:36 How Do They Do It?
- 07:00 Food Factory
- 07:24 How The Earth Works
- 08:12 Close Encounters
- 08:37 Close Encounters
- 09:00 How Do They Do It?
- 09:26 Kings Of Construction
- 10:14 Mythbusters
- 11:02 Close Encounters
- 11:27 Close Encounters
- 11:50 How Do They Do It?
- 12:14 Food Factory
- 12:38 How The Earth Works
- 13:26 Kings Of Construction
- 14:14 Mythbusters
- 15:02 How Do They Do It?

NAT GEO WILD HD

- 00:30 Manta Mystery (Aka Project Manta)
- 01:20 Brutal Killers
- 02:10 Dangerous Encounters
- 03:00 Puma: Lion Of The Andes
- 03:50 Bearhood
- 04:45 Ultimate Animals



SEVENTH SON ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 01:45 Poldark
- 02:40 Last Tango In Halifax
- 03:35 Ripper Street
- 04:25 Orphan Black
- 05:10 Doctors
- 05:40 Eastenders
- 06:10 New Tricks
- 07:00 Doctors
- 07:30 Eastenders
- 08:00 Holly City
- 08:55 Father Brown
- 09:45 The Coroner
- 10:35 New Tricks
- 11:30 Doctors
- 12:00 Eastenders
- 12:35 Father Brown
- 13:25 The Coroner
- 14:15 New Tricks
- 15:15 Doctors
- 15:45 Eastenders
- 16:20 Father Brown
- 17:10 The Coroner
- 18:05 New Tricks
- 19:00 Doctors
- 19:30 Eastenders
- 20:05 Father Brown
- 21:00 Holly City
- 22:00 Mum
- 22:30 Uncle
- 23:00 The Detectorists
- 23:30 The Detectorists

Disney Channel HD

- 00:00 Kirby Buckets
- 00:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 01:10 Hank Zipzer
- 01:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 02:00 Violetta
- 02:45 The Hive
- 02:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 03:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 03:40 Hank Zipzer
- 04:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 04:30 Violetta
- 05:15 The Hive
- 05:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 05:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 06:10 Hank Zipzer
- 06:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 07:00 Violetta
- 07:45 The Hive
- 07:50 The 7D
- 08:00 Jessie
- 08:25 Jessie
- 08:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 08:55 Rolling To The Ronks
- 09:20 Elena Of Avalor
- 09:45 Bunk'd
- 10:10 Stuck In The Middle
- 10:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
- 11:00 Wizards Of Waverly Place
- 11:25 A.N.T. Farm
- 11:50 A.N.T. Farm
- 12:15 Good Luck Charlie
- 12:40 Good Luck Charlie
- 13:05 Shake It Up
- 13:30 Shake It Up
- 13:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 14:00 Welcome To The Ronks

- 08:25 Awesome Adventures
- 08:50 Bondi Vet
- 09:40 How It's Made
- 10:05 How It's Made
- 10:30 Unchained Reaction
- 11:20 Mythbusters
- 12:10 Bondi Vet
- 13:00 Ultimate Survival
- 13:50 How It's Made
- 14:15 How It's Made
- 14:40 Dirty Jobs
- 15:30 Mythbusters
- 16:20 Unchained Reaction
- 17:10 Kids vs Film
- 17:35 Awesome Adventures
- 18:00 NASA's Greatest Missions
- 18:50 NASA's Unexplained Files
- 19:40 Destroyed In Seconds
- 20:05 Destroyed In Seconds
- 20:30 How It's Made
- 20:55 How It's Made
- 21:20 Mythbusters
- 22:10 NASA's Greatest Missions
- 23:00 NASA's Unexplained Files
- 23:50 Destroyed In Seconds

Discovery Channel HD

- 00:30 Fast N' Loud
- 01:20 Misfit Garage
- 02:10 Made By Destruction
- 02:35 Made By Destruction
- 03:00 How Do They Do It?
- 03:25 How Do They Do It?
- 03:50 Impossible Engineering
- 04:40 Fast N' Loud
- 05:30 Storage Wars Canada
- 06:00 How It's Made: Dream Cars
- 06:30 How It's Made: Dream Cars
- 07:00 Deadliest Catch
- 07:50 Misfit Garage
- 08:40 Fast N' Loud
- 09:30 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
- 10:20 Storage Wars Canada
- 10:45 How It's Made: Dream Cars
- 11:10 How It's Made: Dream Cars
- 11:35 Made By Destruction
- 12:00 Made By Destruction
- 12:25 How Do They Do It?
- 12:50 How Do They Do It?
- 13:15 Impossible Engineering
- 14:05 How It's Made: Dream Cars
- 14:30 Storage Wars Canada

crime & investigation network

- 00:00 My Crazy Ex
- 01:00 My Ghost Story: Caught On Camera
- 02:00 My Haunted House
- 03:00 I Was Possessed
- 04:00 My Crazy Ex
- 05:00 My Ghost Story: Caught On Camera
- 06:00 My Haunted House
- 07:00 I Was Possessed
- 08:00 Deadly Wives
- 09:00 Deadly Wives
- 10:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 11:00 Homicide Hunter
- 12:00 Crime Stories
- 13:00 Crime Stories
- 14:00 Crime Stories
- 15:00 Crime Stories
- 16:00 Deadly Wives
- 17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 18:00 Homicide Hunter
- 19:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 20:00 It Takes A Killer
- 20:30 It Takes A Killer
- 21:00 The First 48
- 22:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 23:00 Deadly Wives

COMEDY CENTRAL

- 00:05 Another Period
- 00:30 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
- 01:00 Inside Amy Schumer
- 01:25 South Park
- 01:50 South Park
- 02:15 Ugly Americans

CLASSIFIEDS



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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (02/03/2017 TO 08/03/2017)					
SHARQIA-1 LOGAN HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film LOGAN	11:30 AM 2:15 PM 3:45 PM 5:15 PM 6:45 PM 8:30 PM 10:00 PM 11:30 PM	HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film HIDDEN FIGURES HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film	8:30 PM 10:00 PM 12:45 AM	LOGAN LOGAN	8:15 PM 11:00 PM
SHARQIA-2 HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN	12:00 PM 1:30 PM 4:15 PM 7:00 PM 9:45 PM 12:30 AM	FANAR-2 KIKORIKI. Legend of the Golden Dragon KIKORIKI. Legend of the Golden Dragon KIKORIKI. Legend of the Golden Dragon ELOISE MERCURY PLAINS ELOISE	1:00 PM 2:45 PM 4:30 PM 6:15 PM 8:15 PM 10:15 PM 12:15 AM	AVENUES-1 THE DEVIL'S CANDY A DOG'S PURPOSE THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE A DOG'S PURPOSE THE DEVIL'S CANDY THE DEVIL'S CANDY THE DEVIL'S CANDY	11:30 AM 1:30 PM 3:45 PM 6:00 PM 8:15 PM 10:15 PM 12:15 AM
SHARQIA-3 ELOISE ELOISE LOGAN LOGAN ELOISE ELOISE	1:15 PM 3:15 PM 5:15 PM 8:00 PM 10:45 PM 12:45 AM	FANAR-3 MERCURY PLAINS COMMANDO 2-Hindi ELOISE COMMANDO 2-Hindi MERCURY PLAINS MERCURY PLAINS	12:00 PM 2:00 PM 5:00 PM 7:00 PM 10:00 PM 12:05 AM	AVENUES-2 LOGAN -2D-4DX LOGAN -2D-4DX LOGAN -2D-4DX LOGAN -2D-4DX LOGAN -2D-4DX	1:30 PM 4:15 PM 7:00 PM 9:45 PM 12:30 AM
MUHALAB-1 ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE MERCURY PLAINS ELOISE ELOISE	12:30 PM 2:30 PM 4:30 PM 6:30 PM 8:30 PM 10:30 PM 12:30 AM	FANAR-4 LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN	1:30 PM 4:15 PM 7:00 PM 9:45 PM 12:30 AM	AVENUES-3 ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE	1:00 PM 3:00 PM 5:00 PM 7:00 PM 9:00 PM 11:00 PM 1:00 AM
MUHALAB-2 LOGAN LOGAN HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film LOGAN HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film LOGAN	12:15 PM 3:00 PM 5:45 PM 7:15 PM 10:00 PM 11:30 PM	MARINA-1 ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE HIDDEN FIGURES ELOISE	12:00 PM 2:00 PM 4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:00 PM 10:45 PM 12:45 AM	360°-1 ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE ELOISE	12:00 PM 2:00 PM 4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:00 PM 10:00 PM 12:05 AM
MUHALAB-3 LOGAN HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN	1:15 PM 2:30 PM 4:00 PM 6:45 PM 9:30 PM 12:15 AM	MARINA-2 LOGAN THE DEVIL'S CANDY LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN LOGAN	1:00 PM 1:45 PM 3:45 PM 6:30 PM 9:15 PM 12:05 AM	360°-2 HIDDEN FIGURES HIDDEN FIGURES FRI HIDDEN FIGURES HIDDEN FIGURES HIDDEN FIGURES HIDDEN FIGURES	1:00 PM 1:30 PM 4:00 PM 6:45 PM 9:30 PM 12:15 AM
FANAR-1 HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film HIDDEN FIGURES HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film	12:00 PM 1:30 PM 3:00 PM 5:30 PM 7:00 PM	MARINA-3 LOGAN HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film HAMAHA - Kuwaiti Film	11:30 AM 2:15 PM 5:00 PM 6:45 PM	360°-3 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 ABY - Malayalam	1:45 PM 4:30 PM 7:00 PM

WANTED TEACHER
 Needed Math's Teacher for Foreign School Studied 9th Grade.
 Please contact for more details in:
 (965) 22445150 / 1 / 2 / 3

South Surah Deluxe Floor
 5BR + 4 bath + maid room with bath + living room with dining 14*9m + big kitchen + beautiful corner view balcony.
 Al-Salam B3-S106-H14
 Mob: 99377017

A HOUSE FOR RENT IN SURRA
 Two and half floors for services and domestic helpers, with an external room for driver

Ground floor:
 Reception hall, two rooms with two bathrooms guests toilet, large kitchen and there is an external room with a bathroom for the driver

First floor:
 4 rooms, one of them master room with living room + 3 bathrooms and preparation kitchen.

Second floor:
 Maids room with laundry room and a bathroom.

Rent is KD 3500
 Surra - block 2 - quiet area with parking for 4 cars
mob: 51000901

SITUATION WANTED

Art director, Jordanian, BA graphic design, 13 years experience with international agencies (Dubai, Riyadh, Kuwait & Amman) in graphic skills, web design, story boarding, creative solutions & mobile design, proficient in Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, Indesign. Seeks job in Kuwait, please call 00965 98773900 or email: mamoonaqutob@gmail.com (C 5277) 28-2-2017

EMERGENCY 112
 Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

REQUIRED for an Indian Resturant

- 3 Indian cooks, can cook Arabic food and Indian cuisine.
- Indian display worker with experience in Kuwait resturant.

Tel:66234930

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr:	04:54
Shorook:	06:13
Duhr:	12:00
Asr:	15:19
Maghrib:	17:48
Isha:	19:05

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 2/3/2017				Departure Flights on Thursday 2/3/2017			
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
KLM	411	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20	JZR	786	Riyadh	13:45
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	JZR	176	Istanbul	13:45
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	KAC	155	Istanbul	13:50
KAC	102	London	00:55	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	FDB	076	Dubai	14:05
MSC	411	Asyut	01:00	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:10
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15	KAC	561	Amman	14:20
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30	KAC	521	Al Najaf	14:45
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KNE	382	Taif	14:50
DLH	635	Doha	01:55	FEG	932	Alexandria	14:55
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:05	KAC	785	Jeddah	15:15
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	PAL	669	Dubai/Manila	15:20
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:40
KKK	6506	Istanbul	02:55	JZR	188	Dubai	15:40
FDB	069	Dubai	03:05	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	FDB	8054	Dubai	16:05
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	546	Cairo	03:55	KAC	357	Kochi	16:20
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:30
MSC	501	Alexandria	04:05	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	SAW	706	Damascus	16:55
FEG	933	Sohag	05:00	KNE	532	Jeddah	16:55
JZR	503	Luxor	05:10	KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
JZR	529	Asyut	05:15	JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KAC	354	BLR	05:20	JZR	240	Amman	17:15
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	FDB	052	Dubai	17:25
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:45	KAC	615	Bahrain	17:35
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
KAC	364	Colombo	06:05	KAC	343	Chennai	17:40
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:20	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	06:25	JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
BAW	157	London	06:40	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
QTR	8511	Doha	07:00	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
PAL	668	Manila/Dubai	07:00	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15	KAC	353	BLR	18:15
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	284	Dhaka	07:35	KAC	283	Dhaka	18:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	08:20	NIA	252	Alexandria	18:55
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	JZR	554	Alexandria	18:55
KAC	382	Delhi	08:45	FDB	064	Dubai	19:05
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	JZR	124	Bahrain	19:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	352	Kochi	09:10	QTR	1081	Doha	19:50
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	383	Delhi	20:30
AVV	653	Sohag	10:10	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
IRA	673	Ahwaz	10:10	KAC	361	Colombo	20:35
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	775	Riyadh	20:45
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:55
KAC	774	Riyadh	11:05	MSR	619	Alexandria	21:05
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15	OMA	648	Muscat	21:10
MSC	403	Asyut	11:15	KAC	619	Doha	21:20
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	QTR	1089	Doha	21:35
FDK	801	Damascus	11:45	DLH	634	Doha	21:35
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
KAC	744	Dammam	12:10	FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
KAC	286	Dhaka	12:25	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:00
FEG	953	Asyut	12:35	KAC	351	Kochi	22:00
JZR	561	Sohag	12:40	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
JZR	239	Amman	12:45	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
FDB	075	Dubai	12:50	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	KAC	301	Mumbai	22:45
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10	KAC	381	Delhi	22:45
				KAC	1543	Cairo	22:45
				UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
				KLM	417	Dammam/Amsterdam	23:05
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				NIA	152	Cairo	23:10
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:20

CROSSWORD 1535



ACROSS

1. A defensive missile designed to shoot down incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles.
4. (anatomy) Of or related to an ampulla.
12. A label made of cardboard or plastic or metal.
15. Of or relating to a member of the Buddhist people inhabiting the Mekong river in Laos and Thailand.
16. British statesman who as Prime Minister bought controlling interest in the Suez Canal and made Queen Victoria the Empress of India (1804-1881).
17. A run that is the result of the batter's performance.
18. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
19. A member of the Iroquoian people formerly living east of Lake Ontario.
20. A territory in southwestern Germany formerly ruled by the counts palatine.
21. Speaking a Slavic language.
23. A substance that produces a fragrant odor when burned.
25. Seed of a pea plant.
26. A mistake resulting from inattention.
28. An inactive volcano in Sicily.
30. North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
32. Deciduous or evergreen shrubs and shrub by trees of temperate and subtropical North America, South Africa, eastern Asia and northeastern Australia.
37. The capital of Croatia.
39. A song or hymn of mourning composed or performed as a memorial to a dead person.
40. A nobleman (in various countries) of varying rank.
43. A plant consisting of buildings with facilities for manufacturing.
44. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
45. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
47. Any of 12 kings of ancient Egypt between 1315 and 1090 BC.
50. A general anesthetic (not a barbiturate) that is administered intravenously or intramuscularly.
53. 10 hao equal 1 dong.
54. A Buddhist who has attained nirvana.
57. A hard brittle gray polyvalent metallic element that resembles iron but is not magnetic.
58. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
62. A town in southeastern New Mexico on the Pecos River near the Mexican border.
65. One of a family of granular intrusive rocks.
67. A brittle silver-white metalloid element that is related to selenium and sulfur.
68. Having a woven pattern.
71. A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
72. (Babylonian and Assyrian) Goddess of love and fertility and war.
75. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
76. The state of matter distinguished from the solid and liquid states by.
77. Female sheldrake.
79. A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
80. Antibacterial drug (trade name Nydradiz) used to treat tuberculosis.

DOWN

81. A public place in ancient Greece or Rome devoted to the training of wrestlers and other athletes.
82. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
1. By bad luck.
2. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
3. Relating to principles of right and wrong.
4. A rapid bustling commotion.
5. Submersible vessel for one or two persons.
6. A genus of Stromateidae.
7. In or relating to or obtained from urine.
8. Remove with or as if with a ladle.
9. (horseshoes) The throw of a horseshoe so as to lean against (but not encircle) the stake.
10. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
11. Of wines, fruit, cheeses.
12. A device in which something (usually an animal) can be caught and penned.
13. (usually followed by 'to') Having the necessary means or skill or know-how or authority to do something.
14. An ancient Egyptian city on the west bank of the Nile opposite Cairo.
22. Roman scholar (116-27 BC).
24. What you can repeat immediately after perceiving it.
27. Any of a class of weakly acidic organic compounds.
29. A hard copal derived from an African tree.
31. A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
33. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
34. Of or relating to or characteristic of Ireland or its people.
35. Bright with a steady but subdued shining.
36. English admiral who defeated the French fleets of Napoleon but was mortally wounded at Trafalgar (1758-1805).
38. A hard coarse-grained siliceous sandstone.
41. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
42. A village of huts for native Africans in southern Africa.
46. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
48. An honorary arts degree.
49. Informal terms for a mother.
51. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
52. Informal terms for clothing.
55. A rapid series of short loud sounds (as might be heard with a stethoscope in some types of respiratory disorders).
56. Fallow deer.
59. Any of various thermoplastic resins used to make things.
60. Cause to be embarrassed.
61. (of something seen or heard) Clearly defined.
63. A coffee cake flavored with orange rind and raisins and almonds.
64. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
66. A law passed by US Congress to prevent employees from being injured or contracting diseases in the course of their employment.
69. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
70. God of love and erotic desire.
73. Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
74. A groove or furrow (especially one in soft earth caused by wheels).
78. A hard brittle blue-white multivalent metallic element.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Avoid burnout by scheduling time for exercise. Make it a point to tell a joke! You face many responsibilities in your professional life and it would be good to keep your body running smoothly. You are compassionate and giving to all around you, people love to work with you and the people that are over you in this workplace are pleased. Now we just have to convince you that you are doing a good job. Step back and view your work after the completion date and you will see that all is in order. If something doesn't turn out the way you think it should, it is most certainly not because you do not put in all your effort. Your devotion and selflessness will reap unexpected rewards. Leave with a smile, your smile is contagious.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

A new person in the workplace may try your patience today and you may wonder if you were the same when you were new. A sense of humor and a little patience may be needed. There is a yearning for the stimulation of new ideas this afternoon. Since you have not quite reached your long-term goal, it might be fun to plan your path to completion-create some short-term goals as well. This way, you will stay motivated. Fun with friends this afternoon may mean a lot of laughter and talk of new ideas for entertainment as well as ideas of ways to be useful. Two of you may end up signing up to volunteer at a hospital or some other similar institution. You are happy and pleased with your decision to volunteer. Shopping may happen later this afternoon.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Any confusing problem can be cleared away now. Your activity level is high and your energies will promote positive results all day long. Your wishes materialize through sheer will. Reward yourself for progress rather than punishing yourself for any imperfections. Choose an activity that you consider fun and soothing this afternoon-like visiting an amusement park, bicycling, skating, etc. You may be sought after for your guidance regarding very personal and emotional issues surrounding a friend. You will be able to be understanding and handle this situation most successfully when you create opportunities for this friend to find his or her own answers. You encourage a positive attitude from yourself as well as those around you.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Today you work harder than usual and feel great about the amount of work you can accomplish. There is an urge to push for success when it comes to the world of high finance. Careful-you might get a bit reckless when it comes to the handling of some financial proposal. Do the regular review and research. A domestic challenge can be settled today and will free you for a more creative expression. Your tact is improving. Learning more about you is becoming an important ongoing investigation. In learning more about your real self, you learn more about humanity. Coming to grips with the past or getting in touch with the mystical and the spiritual gives you a sense of satisfaction and completeness. Many new ideas are waiting for you to assimilate.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is a time of introspection and evaluation of goals. You may feel lonely and self-critical at this time, but do not be too hard on yourself. Focus your energy on self-discovery instead. For the duration of the morning you may desire peace and quiet in the family setting. Parental instincts may come to the forefront now as you see plenty of opportunities to help others. You are appreciated for your thoughtful consideration of others and your ability to lead and teach. A small, social get-together is possible this evening, perhaps an early dinner in a restaurant. One topic of conversation is hobbies and how each person got started with a hobby. This evening you may begin thinking about an herb garden or a vegetable garden hobby for your own place.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Everything points to your taking the initiative now. Sacrifices may be the first thing to consider this morning. Your appointment calendar is overflowing and you will need to cancel one or two of your appointments in order to be with unexpected company. You may later discover that there is a possibility to travel out-of-town soon. A business trip may be the reason you get to travel to a distant place and visit with long-lost but not forgotten friends. Careful, if there is too much talk about the trip before you go, you may have to take out a loan when you discover how many people from the family want to go with you. A social event this evening may find you enjoying the company of a new friend-someone who seems to have similar goals.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

If there are not strong weather changes present, unnecessarily high emotions may be the stirring you feel. Consider the facts and nothing else this day. You will be very happy by the end of your workday as you look back to discover that the word unnecessary opens a whole new perspective. Travel sets you apart, giving you a new and in some sense revolutionary perspective. Contact with faraway people and places soon plays a bigger role for you this spring. If you are not engaged in traveling just now, you will be soon. Good things are happening in your life. You will soon become involved with a whole new group of friends. Allow yourself to grow and be open to change. Higher education or philosophy has a part in making good things happen.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may feel restricted today. Perhaps this is not the time to try to solve any serious problems or make important decisions. Taking care of the necessary work at hand becomes a greater preoccupation of your mind. You may find that any little distraction makes it hard for you to concentrate. Real estate or home and family projects take on a greater importance later today. There is a great deal of conversation at the dinner table tonight, surrounding the subject of future plans regarding the home. You are coming into a time of experimenting with styles and fashion and tradition. Planning a garden or some other project may also be enjoyed this evening. More than one person may wonder if they can see results from planting seeds.



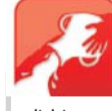
Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You could be at the attention of your superiors this day. You may find yourself more than a little acquisitive. Your current appreciation for just about everything may lead you to overspend or indulge too much. You will make career gains by your ability to sense quality and choose accordingly. Look for ways in which to rid yourself of the things that do not carry you forward. A fun and unexpected conversation may give you some ideas of new and exciting adventures. Do the things that really bring the family together. Volunteer work for humanitarian causes or community concerns done as a family can be just what is needed to bring the family close. In many cases, when a family works or plays together, everyone benefits.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Someone unexpected confronts you this morning and your reaction is surprising. You may not appreciate their very different perspective or attitude but you respect his or her fortitude and opinion. Sometimes it would be nice, you think, if you could have the same type of strength. You remember that you are working on your ability to become more skillfully communicative. Look for the good and the negative will dissipate-speak truthfully. Other people tend to be lucky for you today. You are able to value your own life circumstances. You may find yourself guiding a young person with homework, even though you would rather not repeat a particular school lesson. A visitor in your home this evening may compliment you on your tastes.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Get rid of the things in your life that slow you and keep you from accomplishing your goals. Consolidate your efforts and eliminate some of those scattered times in your life that leave you exhausted. You will be learning to streamline your energy by focusing on one thing at a time. You could receive unexpected backing and, in general, your efforts throughout this day are successful. There is a feeling that anything is possible if you set your sights high enough. Your creativity is strong and with your love of antiques, you could take a class or study the art of refinishing furniture. It may even be possible that a very good friend would enjoy taking the class with you. You discover a new book this evening and may spend much time in reading.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There are lots of things on your mind this morning but the most important thing is to become focused and set in what you want to accomplish. Before you know it the projects and general work chores are behind you and the workday is successfully completed. If you are lucky enough to be able to leave work early, it would be of benefit to list your personal chores so that you can get them done quickly. This afternoon you may be working on a secret project at home. The completion of your new invention or project is exciting and you will get to do the unveiling this evening. You have finally put together some fun new game or gizmo that you had been thinking about for some time. Socializing is the best happening this evening.

WORD SEARCH

Nursing Home 2

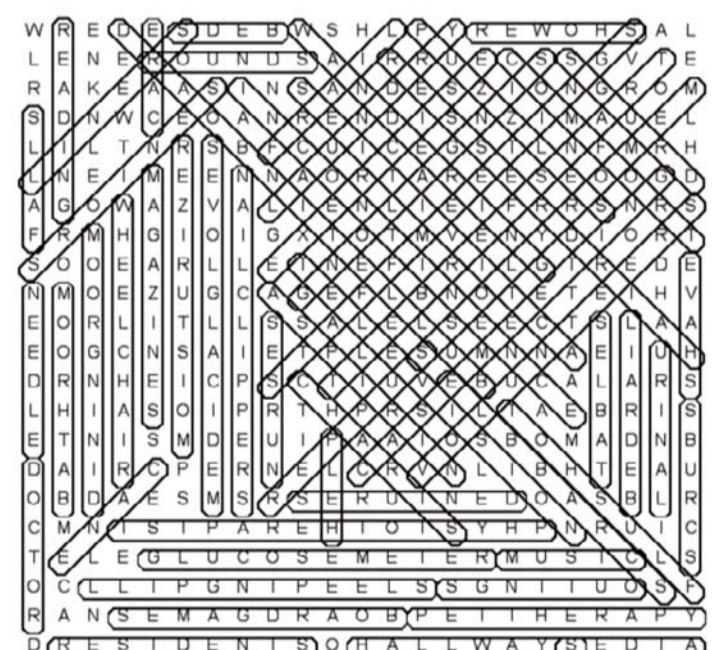
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 47 letters spell a Benjamin Franklin quotation.



- | | | | | |
|------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|
| ADMISSION | DISABILITY | LOTION | PHYSICAL THERAPY | SOAP |
| ASSIST | DOCTOR | LOUNGE | PILLS | SOCIALIZE |
| BATHROOM | ELEVATOR | MEALS | PODIATRIST | STAFF |
| BEDPAN | ENTERTAINMENT | MECHANICAL LIFT | RECLINER | SUPPOSITORY |
| BEDTIME | EYEGASSES | MEDICINE | RECREATION ROOM | SYRINGE |
| BOOKS | FOOD TRAY | MEMORY | RELATIVES | THERMOMETER |
| CALL BELL | GERIATRIC | MORNING CARE | ROOMMATE | TUBE FEED |
| CARD GAMES | HEALTH | NURSE | SEDAIVES | VIRUS |
| CHARTING | HOLIDAY EVENTS | OSTEOPOROSIS | SHAVES | VISITOR |
| CRAFTS | INSULIN SHOT | OXYGEN | SINGING | WANDER ALARM |
| DEMENTIA | LAXATIVES | PATIENTS | SLEEP | WASH HANDS |
| DIABETES | LOCKDOWN | PHARMACIST | SNACK CART | |

Yesterday's Solution

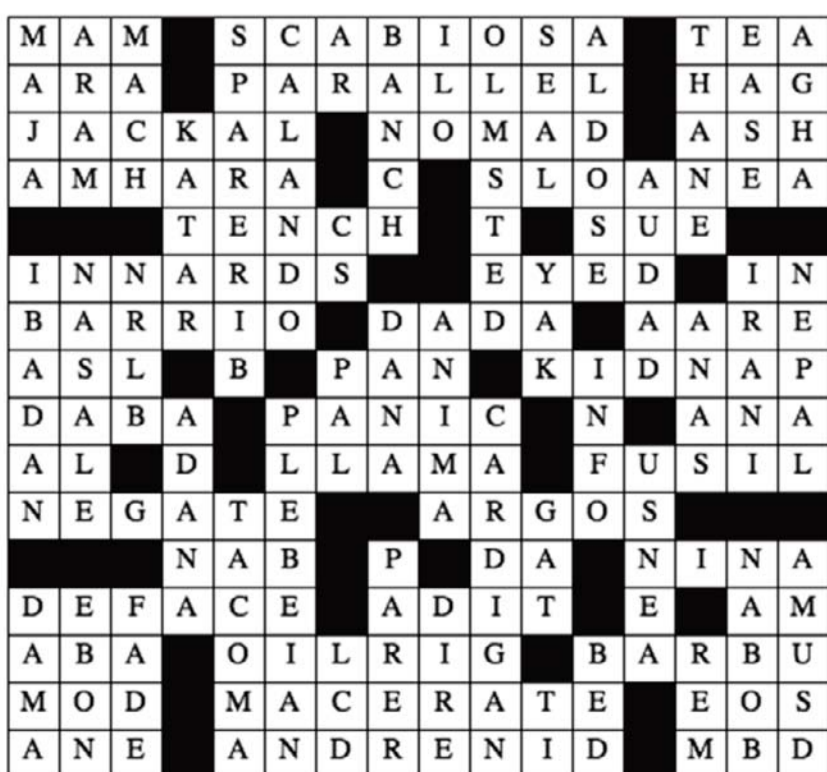
Nursing Home 1



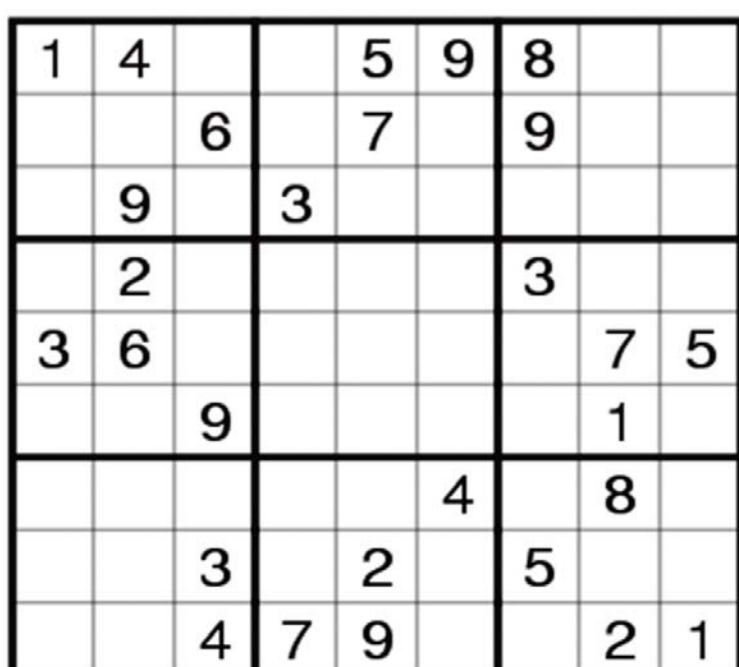
- | | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| ACTIVITIES | COMFORT | HELP | OUTINGS | SING ALONG |
| AIDES | DENTURES | INCONTINENCE | PET THERAPY | SLEEPING PILL |
| ASPIRIN | DINING ROOM | LAUNDRY | PHYSIOTHERAPIST | STAFF MEETINGS |
| BATHROOM | DOCTOR | LINERS | PUZZLES | SUPPER |
| BEDRAIL | DRUGS | MAGAZINES | READING | TABLES |
| BEDS | EXERCISE | MEDICAL GLOVES | RESIDENTS | TELEVISION |
| BOARD GAMES | FALLS | MEMORY LOSS | ROUNDERS | TRANSFER BELT |
| BULLETIN BOARD | FLU SHOT | MOISTURIZER | SCRIBBLE | URINAL |
| CANE | FRAIL | MUSIC | SCRUBS | VOLUNTEERS |
| CARE | GLUCOSE METER | HAIRDRESSER | NEEDLE | WANDERING |
| CASE MEETING | HALLWAYS | NURSES | SHAVE | WHEELCHAIR |
| CHARTS | | | SHOWER | |

The hidden message is: WE SHALL NEVER KNOW ALL THE GOOD THAT A SIMPLE SMILE CAN DO

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

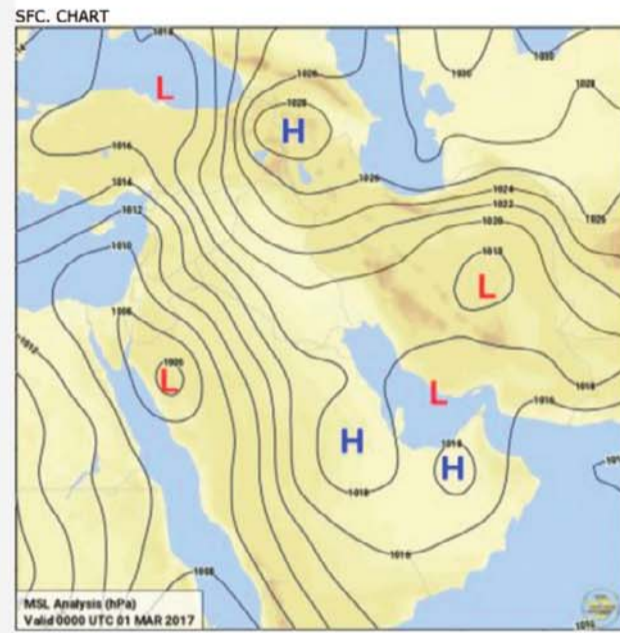


Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 01/03/2017-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 26 °C

By Day : Clouds will increase gradually with light variable wind changing to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain later on
By Night : Cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 35 km/h with a chance for scattered rain



Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Expected Weather: clouds rain will decrease+ rising dust	mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	partly cloudy + light rain
Min Temp °C: 12	11	10	13
Max Temp °C: 28	27	27	28
Wind Direction: south easterly	north westerly to light variable	north westerly to light variable	variable
Wind Speed km/h: 25 - 50	08 - 30	06 - 28	06 - 20

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C REC	Max °C EXP
KUWAIT CITY	14	27
KUWAIT AIRPORT	07	26
ABDALY	09	26
BUBYAN	12	24
JAHRA	11	27
FAILAKA ISLAND	12	26
SALMIYAH	14	23
AHMADI	15	23
JAL ALIYAH	11	26
QAROH ISLAND	15	22
UMM AL-MARADEM	14	22
NUWAISIB	11	26
WAFRA	08	27
MANAGISH	09	25
SALMY	10	27
MUTRIBA	09	28

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	26
Min Temp (°C)	06
Max Rel Hum (%)	51
Min Rel Hum (%)	14
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	28 SW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm
Sunrise	06:14
Sunset	17:47

Prayer Times

Fajr	04:56
Sunrise	06:14
Zuhr	12:01
Asr	15:19
Sunset	17:47
Isha	19:04

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macao	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antiga	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Azerbaijan	00994	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lesotho	00266		

PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabeea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhazeem	25726920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rfae	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
DrAdrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarroof	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. MUSAED FARAJ KHAMEES	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammes Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACCC	
Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	
Te: 2575077	
Fax: 25723123	

Psychologists /Psychotherapists	Soor Center Tel: 2290-1677 Fax: 2290 1688	info@soorcenter.com www.soorcenter.com	Kaizen center 25716707	Noor Clinic 23845955	William Schuilenberg, RPC 2290-1677 Zaina Al Zabin, M.Sc. 2290-1677
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FASHION

Top Paris label sacks agency over 'sadistic' abuse of models

Fashion brand Balenciaga said yesterday it had sacked its casting agency amid a furore over the "sadistic" mistreatment of models at Paris fashion week. The label, the hottest on the Paris catwalk, said it had sent a written apology to the 150 women who were forced to wait in a cramped stairwell for three hours at the casting for its show on Sunday. Some were shut inside in the dark while the casting directors went off for lunch, according to James Scully, a US casting director who took to Instagram to brand their treatment as "sadistic and cruel".

He claimed the directors involved were "serial abusers". "In their usual fashion they shut the door, went to lunch and turned off the lights to the stairs leaving every girl with only the lights of their phones to see," he added. "Not only was this sadistic and cruel it was dangerous and left more than a few of the girls I spoke with traumatized." Scully also accused a major Paris fashion house, which he did not name, of trying to "sneak in" 15-year-old models for its show. "It's inconceivable to me that people have no regard for human decency or the lives and feelings of these girls, especially when too, too many of these models are under the age of 18 and clearly not equipped to be here."

'No women of colour'

Balenciaga confirmed to AFP it was "making radical changes to the casting process" after the incident, "including

discontinuing the relationship with the current casting agency". "Balenciaga took notice of issues with the model castings carried out on that day (Sunday). The house reacted immediately," a statement added. "Balenciaga condemns this incident and will continue to be deeply committed to ensure the most respectful working conditions for the models." The fashion house-whose show is on Sunday-has become the hottest ticket on the Paris catwalk since the Georgian wunderkind Demna Gvasalia took the helm last year.

Scully, whose post garnered support from supermodels Joan Small, Helena Christensen and Carolyn Murphy, also accused the French label Lanvin of discrimination against black models. "I have heard from several agents, some of whom are black, that they have received (a) mandate from Lanvin that they do not want to be presented with women of colour," he wrote. The brand, whose designer Bouchra Jarrar's family comes from Morocco, used two black models among nearly 50 women who walked in its last Paris womenswear show. No one was available to comment at Lanvin but a spokeswoman told Women's Wear Daily that the "allegations are completely false and baseless". — AFP

This file photo shows models presenting creations for Balenciaga during the 2016 Spring/Summer ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP



Models present creations by Yves Saint-Laurent during the Women's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 fashion week in Paris. — AP/AFP photos

Saint Laurent designer gives bold, VIP-filled sophomore show



Kate Moss hid under a hat, Eva Herzigova shivered in the cold, Catherine Deneuve and ASAP Rocky sat poker-faced, while only Charlotte Gainsbourg managed a smile. Fashion crowds do not usually brave a cold, elemental construction-site at night in Paris unless there's a very good reason. And this was it: Anthony Vaccarello's highly-anticipated sophomore collection for the iconic house of Saint Laurent. Here are some highlights from Tuesday, the first day of fall-winter 2017 shows.

Saint Laurent under construction

The Saint Laurent show venue - a near-derelect site on the Left Bank that's undergoing construction and renovation - was a clear metaphor. Vaccarello is continuing his creative reconstruction of the Parisian house since Hedi Slimane's departure. As smoke - or was it dust? - wafted from the sides of the set scaffolding, the myriad looks began to file by. They mixed the shimmering disco-dresses from the Slimane years with the peaked, tuxedo shoulders associated with the late house founder Yves Saint Laurent.

But beyond this, the exhaustive collection seemed less to do with Saint Laurent than Vaccarello himself like last season - in all his brazen, provocative glory. Plunging necklines met slashed asymmetry. Patent fetish-like

black leather came alongside exposed breasts. While uber-mini dresses - the staple silhouette - teased the eye with knee-high-, and sometimes stripper-, boots. Still, there were some nice creative twists, like a leg of mutton sleeve made literally out of mutton. Elsewhere, there were some skillful abstract plays on leather ruffles - and the ruched boots will fly off the shelves.

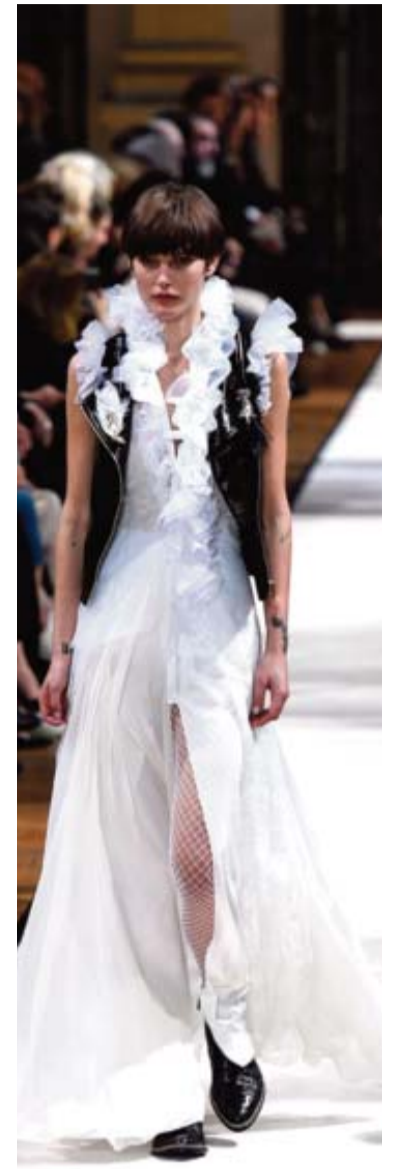
Vaccarello has loyal friends

Actress Gainsbourg, 45, who attended the Saint Laurent show in a black leather mini with tousled hair, spoke of her friendship with the French-Italian designer. "I love what he does - he's a friend and I like to support him. I knew him before he started at Saint Laurent, so I was already wearing Anthony Vaccarello - his brand. And so to switch to Saint Laurent is chic," she told The Associated Press. Model Herzigova, 43, who braved the elements in a revealing LBD that plunged to her midriff, also was effusive in praise for her friend for whom she has modeled in the past. "Saint Laurent, it's audacious... (for) a woman sure of herself and sexy. That's why (Anthony) was chosen as it's a good match," she said, before running off. "I'm cold," she added, laughing.

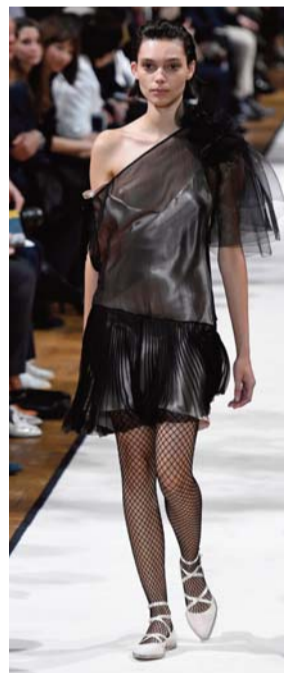
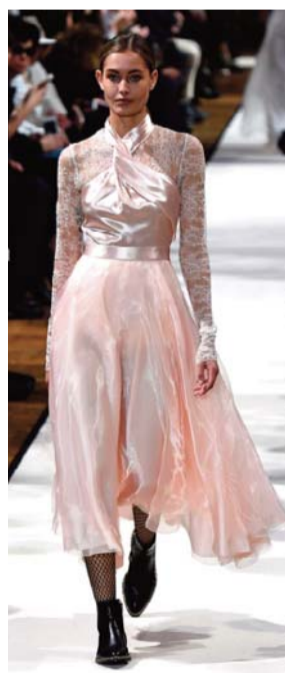
Models present creations by Maison Margiela during the women's Fall-Winter ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris.



FASHION



Models presenting creations for Lanvin during the 2017 Spring/Summer ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris.



Vera Wang gets decorated

One of the biggest names at New York Fashion Week switched allegiance this season - forgoing a runway show in February in her native land in favor of a trip to the City of Light. There was good reason. On Tuesday to kick off Paris Fashion Week, Vera Wang was presented France's top civilian award, the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, for her services to the fashion industry by France's Ambassador to the United States, Gerard Araud.

The 67-year-old New York-born designer was celebrated at the official ceremony at a lunch at the Hotel des Invalides. "This is an unimaginable honor, both as an American and a designer, to be presented with this most prestigious award from the French Republic," Wang said.

Speaking of the award, Araud said that "French culture has been a strong inspiration throughout her life, and has influenced her work as both a designer and an accomplished and independent business woman." The designer opted to present her fall-winter collection by means of a short online film - instead of a runway show - released Tuesday.

Anrealage's off-kilter couture

It could be called techno-couture. The fashion-forward house of Tokyo designer Kunihiro Morinaga has built up a huge fan base in Japan for its intellectual designs and original use of techno-fabrics. This was on full display Tuesday in a collection in which Morinaga explored eclectic, often-trapeze silhouettes in shimmering fabrics that encased the models' bodies in three-dimensions. Looks tiered and cascaded, a little like the figurative blue sea runway around which the models strutted.

Sharp frills, sharply cut horizontal segments and bands of satin - had a nicely off-kilter 1950s vibe. Some looks even resembled a modernized version of the Duster Coats popular in that era, with high ruff-necks evoking the nostalgia of 1900s' styles. A dusty palette of burnt sienna, blue, and umber - mixed with a splashing of black - produced a very pleasing display.

Ecology escapes Paris fashion

The art of the chic invite is still very much a staple of Paris fashion. Houses compete to produce the most eye-catching, inventive, and often plain wasteful, show invitations delivered often by gas-guzzling courier to each guest's personal residence. The little works of art often provide a hint as to what the collection has in store. Eccentric Rick Owens sent out thick panels of black leather embossed with the show information wrapped with a wacky surgical bandage. Chloe, meanwhile, had a shimmering "golden ticket"-style card - to mark designer Clare Waight Keller's final show as the house' designer.

But so far, it was Saint Laurent's invite that was the chicest - a beautifully-constructed beige leather wallet with a gold panel with the house name embossed. In other countries like in Brazil, fashion invites are often sent by plain-old email.

State of emergency

With the state of emergency extended across France following a spate of deadly extremist attacks, Paris Fashion Week has not escaped the tightening of security. Fashionistas have been advised to be extra vigilant. Designer bags are frisked and searched at the entry point of each show - with armed guards and sniffer dogs often policing the famed venues including the Louvre and the Grand Palais. Passports and official identification is also required in addition to the show invite, or else VIPs - however important - are refused access. — AP

NEW LOOK SPRING/SUMMER 2017



This season, for ladies more than ever, colour and print are key. Acid brights lead the way as the go to palette - bright prints as well as block colours and 80s rave graphics adorn some of the most statement seasonal pieces. Gingham reigns supreme as our go to print for spring and is seen across dresses, separates and outerwear. Sleeve details are statement - from over stated ballooned shaped to exaggerated cuffs on deconstructed tailoring. Layering aids the spring/summer transition - studded and embroidered tulle is worn over denim and printed tees keeping things casual and fresh.

Grunge is back but with a folk inspired twist. Multi frills, mismatched ditzy prints and cutwork details are seen on blouses and dresses and worn against ripped denim and lace. For men 1950s Sin City inspires one of the main trends this season; reverse shirts

teamed with retro tailoring in Cuban colours are key. Printed summer darks and black base florals are dressed down to give a relaxed feel to the vintage inspired collection.

Urban culture is evident throughout the range. The return of the Crombie jacket, tracksuit and polo neck lend themselves to the 90s East London hipster scene, whilst customised tops and denim give the collection a real edge. Layering plays an important role for New Look Men this season. Washed out, neutral colours provide a clean minimalist feel with fabrications and lose fitting silhouettes key for SS17. Tailoring has evolved with a nautical influence, pin-stripes give the collection a fresh modern feel. The Spring Summer Collection is available at all New Look stores throughout Kuwait at The Avenues, Al Bairaqa Mall, Al Salam Mall and Promenade Mall.



MUSIC & MOVIES

Lady Gaga steps in for pregnant Beyonce at Coachella



Lady Gaga performs with Metallica onstage during the 59th Annual Grammy music Awards on February in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Lady Gaga has stepped in to replace the pregnant Beyonce at Coachella, ensuring that the premier music festival has a woman headliner for the first time in a decade. Coachella, one of the most lucrative music events in the world, late Tuesday posted an updated lineup with Lady Gaga now the headliner on April 15 and April 22. "Let's party in the desert," Lady Gaga, who will offer a glimpse of her upcoming world tour, wrote on Instagram as she shared Coachella's new poster. Coachella takes place over two consecutive weekends with identical lineups in the desert of southern California, where up to 200,000 people flock each year for an extravaganza of music, fashion and partying.

Beyonce had been due to headline Coachella each Saturday alongside British experimental rockers Radiohead on Fridays and acclaimed rapper Kendrick Lamar on Sundays. But Coachella last week said Beyonce had been obliged to cancel on doctors' orders as she is expecting twins with her husband, rap mogul Jay Z. Coachella would have been the sole concert this year by Beyonce and ticket resale prices for the sold-out festival had slumped immediately after her cancellation. While Beyonce has been increasingly experimental in the past year, Lady Gaga-famous for her attention-grabbing outfits-turned to a more classic pop sound on her latest album "Joanne."

Lady Gaga put on a well-received, acrobatic-

intense performance in February during halftime of the Super Bowl-the most widely watched television event each year in the United States. A week later she took an entirely new approach as she transformed into a metalhead at the Grammy Awards for a performance with Metallica. Lady Gaga is set to start a world tour on August 1 in Vancouver, with dates scheduled across North America and Europe through the end of the year. Coachella has not had a woman as one of the nights' headliners since Icelandic pop diva Bjork in 2007. — AFP



This undated image shows protagonist Jesuit Sebastiao Rodrigues, left, played by Andrew Garfield, and Japanese villager Kichijiro played by Yosuke Kubozuka in a scene from Martin Scorsese's latest film Silence. — AP photos

Japan actor in Scorsese's 'Silence' drawn to recurring theme

Violence pulsates in Shinya Tsukamoto's early films, driving stories into nightmarish fantasies like in the award-winning 1989 "Tetsuo," which ridicules middle-class conformity with a man-becomes-machine metamorphosis. His more recent works still depict violence, though the Japanese director says the nature of the violence has changed - from whimsical "cyberpunk" horror to horrifying reality. That's why he identified so closely with Martin Scorsese's grueling epic, "Silence," which portrays the persecution of Christians in samurai-era Japan. Tsukamoto plays Mokichi, a poor villager and martyr. "In any era, regular people are kept down with violence. There is such sadness about why violence is perpetually involved," Tsukamoto said in an interview with The Associated Press at a Tokyo hotel. "This same theme came at the same time."



This undated image distributed by 2016 FM Films, LLC, shows Japanese Christian villager Mokichi, right, performed by Japanese director Shinya Tsukamoto and protagonist Jesuit Sebastiao Rodrigues, left, played by Andrew Garfield in a scene from Martin Scorsese's latest film Silence.

Tsukamoto, 57, is a prolific actor as well as director, with a cameo as a scientist in the latest Japanese Godzilla film. He went to an audition for "Silence," not counting on landing a role but hoping to get close to a director he has admired since he was a teenager. He has watched "Taxi Driver" dozens of times, and finds something new each time. He was surprised and flattered when Scorsese recognized him right away and told him he admired Tsukamoto's films. In the audition, a dialogue scene, Scorsese played the part of the missionary to his Mokichi. It was so natural, easy and perfect, Tsukamoto recalled happily.

The film, which had an Oscar nomination for the cinematography by Rodrigo Prieto, is based on a novel by Shusaku Endo, inspired by the true history of torture used by the shogunate on European missionaries and their Japanese followers, purposely to degrade and discredit them. Mokichi, a forlorn and ragged figure of angelic purity, dies a grisly but glorious martyr's death drowning on a cross as the waves engulf his rail-thin body, again and again. Some scenes of the crucifixion were shot on a beach, but close-ups of the drowning were shot in a pool with computer graphics for the landscape, and it required near-drowning exertion by Tsukamoto.

Grotesque tale

He was impressed with the uncompromising scale and artistic grandeur of Scorsese's movie-making, but also how positive Scorsese was toward his actors, being open to their ideas - while demanding take after take. "He would say, 'Excellent,' get the actors motivated, and shoot again and again," he said.

Fortunately, Tsukamoto was already in character for the role. He had just finished his own 2014 movie, "Fires on the Plain," a brutally solemn and grotesque tale about World War II, which he directed and starred in as a near-starving soldier.

He got the guidance of a professional Hollywood nutritionist to further lose weight to play Mokichi, ending up some 22 pounds (10 kilograms) under his usual weight. Throughout "Fires on the Plain," the soldiers are fighting nothing other than their own hunger. They fear each other as much as the enemy. The film carried stunning references to cannibalism, which some historians say really happened. That kind of no-holds-barred storytelling is signature Tsukamoto. Over the decades, his scenes have abounded with squirming maggots, metallic rock-inspired banging, blood-spattering beatings, dizzily jagged camerawork and masochistic but titillating erotica.

His Kafka-esque characters inhabit sterile concrete apartments, lost in winding alleys, escalators and stairways, all seemingly on the verge of collapsing, like a stage set, into another darker reality. And the language of his films juxtaposes the obsessive and deranged with the childlike and lyrical. Maggie Lee, film critic for Variety, calls Tsukamoto "an eccentrically versatile and sometimes visionary director, who expanded international fandom for Japanese horror before they'd even heard of Sion Sono," referring to the director of "Himizu" and "Cold Fish," who also has a reputation as subversive and fiercely independent.

Claustrophobic film

Tsukamoto shot to stardom with "Tetsuo," which launched a prize-amassing career in what he dubs "cult entertainment," meaning that he strives for fun, along with the experimental. Three years ago, he won the lifetime achievement award at the Festival du Nouveau Cinema at Montreal, which screened "Fires on the Plain." The work is based on an anti-war novel by Shohei Ooka, and was made into a film in 1959, by Kon Ichikawa. Tsukamoto had been planning to make the film for two decades but decided the time was now. He fears Japan, peaceful after its defeat in World War II, may be starting to forget the lessons of its past. He was determined to make the film, even if it meant he had to do it practically alone, he said, setting up a camera in the jungle and then acting in front of that camera.

His 2011 "Kotoko," which won the Horizons award for innovative works at the Venice International Film Festival, is a more claustrophobic film, both poetic and heart-breaking. Cocco, a Japanese pop singer, is excellent as a fragile self-destructive woman, tormented by her hallucinatory fears of people around her, as well as of the urge to murder her own baby. Tsukamoto plays a novelist, who becomes her lover and endures her beatings to win her trust and help her overcome her psychosis.

Tsukamoto said the March 11, 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters in northeastern Japan gave special meaning to "Kotoko," as he witnessed how many mothers worried for the safety of their children. "It is a world in which it has become so difficult to protect those we love," said Tsukamoto. He has many ideas for his next movie, maybe a samurai film, a genre he has never made, maybe animation, or a film about childhood. "Those who must go to war are the children. And we fear for our children," he said. — AP



Argentine folk singer Mercedes Sosa performing during a concert in Quito, Ecuador.—AFP photos



This file photo shows singer Magos Herrera attending the 3rd Annual Cinema Tropical Awards at The New York Times Headquarters in New York City.

PUSSY RIOT BRANCHES INTO THEATER AT NEW YORK FESTIVAL

Russian punk provocateurs Pussy Riot are branching into theater to tell their story as they headline a New York festival that explores women's empowerment. Spring Revolution, which opened yesterday at Brooklyn's year-and-a-half-old experimental music hub National Sawdust, will also feature a jazz interpretation of Argentina's celebrated protest singer Mercedes Sosa. Pussy Riot became an irritant to President Vladimir Putin and an international cause celebre when the female rockers performed a noisy "punk prayer" on the altar of a Moscow church near the Kremlin in 2012.

Maria Alyokhina, who was imprisoned along with fellow key member Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, has turned the Pussy Riot experience into an autobiographical theatrical work entitled "Revolution." The piece, which will take the stage at National Sawdust on March 17 after stops on the US West Coast, combines video footage and features Alyokhina herself among performers who include fellow Russian punk act Asian Women on the Telephone.

The composer Paola Prestini, who is National Sawdust's executive and creative director, said the venue had been open to any sort of performance by Pussy Riot and found the turn to theater "really exciting." "It seems like a natural evolution for an artist who deals with highly political themes," she said. A new work by Prestini for cello and electronics will premiere as part of the festival on March 5 alongside works of Philip Glass and John Zorn, two leading composers who serve as artistic advisors to National Sawdust.

The Spring Revolution festival, which runs throughout the month, focuses on the empowerment of women as well as cultural exchanges more broadly and coincides with International Women's Day on March 8. Taking place a month into the

presidency of Donald Trump, Prestini said the festival was inevitably "deeply reflective of the time we're living in." The festival opens Wednesday as avant-garde cellist Amanda Gookin performs seven commissioned works that take up issues that affect women or girls.

New take on protest singer

Magos Herrera, one of Mexico's leading jazz singers, will on Thursday lead a tribute to Sosa, the Argentinian folk artist revered by much of Latin America's left. Sosa, who died in 2009, went into exile after rattling the military junta that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. "Everything that she represents gives a nostalgia for what Latin America aimed for in those days," Herrera told AFP. "We are definitely in a different moment in history today but still the values of her singing were so strong and so meaningful that they still resonate with us, especially these days," said Herrera, who has been active in UN campaigns for women's equality.

While Sosa was foremost known as a protest singer, Herrera noted that one of her signature songs, "Gracias a la Vida" ("Thank You to Life"), celebrates more than just a political cause. The show will also feature Pedro Aznar, a prominent Argentinian rocker who had recorded with Sosa, as well as the Venezuelan jazz pianist Edward Simon. "There have been many tributes to Mercedes Sosa but I wanted to give a perspective from the jazz field with someone who could understand emotionally what Mercedes Sosa represents," Herrera said. The festival, in its second season, will also look at the meaning of spring with a celebration of Nowruz, the Persian New Year which coincides with the equinox. — AFP



Russian activist Maria Alyokhina of Russian feminist punk rock protest group Pussy Riot addressing the crowd at the Glastonbury Festival in Somerset, South West England.

Chance the Rapper added to Essence Festival

Chance the Rapper is bringing his Grammy-winning music to the Essence Festival. The rapper won three trophies at this year's Grammy Awards including best new artist. He is the latest performer to join the annual music event as a headliner. Others that were previously announced include Diana Ross, John Legend and Mary J Blige. Also yesterday, Essence said that there will be a No Limit reunion of sorts as Mystikal, Mia X and Silk will join Master P, who already was announced. The New Orleans unit was making hits in the 1990s and early 2000s. Other added performers include Elle Varner, BJ the Chicago Kid and Emily Estefan. The Essence Festival will be held June 30 to July 2 in New Orleans.—

BEATTY URGES ACADEMY PRESIDENT TO CLARIFY OSCAR FIASCO

Warren Beatty says Academy of Motion Pictures President Cheryl Boone Isaacs should "publicly clarify" what happened during Sunday night's best picture presentation "as soon as possible." Beatty released a statement Tuesday to The Associated Press in which he declined to comment further on the debacle that led to him and co-presenter Faye Dunaway mistakenly reading "La La Land" as best picture winner rather than "Moonlight." Instead, he urged the academy to answer questions. "I feel it would be more appropriate for the president of the Academy, Cheryl Boone Isaacs,

to publicly clarify what happened as soon as possible," said Beatty. Representatives for the academy didn't immediately comment Tuesday. Since Sunday's broadcast, the academy has largely left the explaining to PwC, the accounting firm that has taken the blame for the "La La Land" mistakenly being read as the best picture winner by Beatty and Faye Dunaway. PwC, which is in charge of tabulating the winners, has said partner Brian Cullinan mistakenly handed them the wrong envelope.

The film academy didn't release a statement of its own until late Monday. "We deeply regret

the mistakes that were made during the presentation of the best picture category during last night's Oscar ceremony," it read. "We apologize to the entire cast and crew of 'La La Land' and 'Moonlight' whose experience was profoundly altered by this error. We salute the tremendous grace they displayed under the circumstances. To all involved? - ?including our presenters Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway, the filmmakers, and our fans watching worldwide? we apologize."

On Monday, the academy said it has spent Sunday night and the following day "investigating the circumstances" and "will determine what actions are appropriate going forward." Neither PwC or the academy has commented on whether Cullinan's use of social media was a factor in the error. The PwC partner tweeted a behind-the-scenes photo of best-actress winner Emma Stone moments before the best picture announcement. The tweet was later deleted. As per protocol, Cullinan and PwC colleague Martha Ruiz toted briefcases to the awards via the red carpet, each holding an identical set of envelopes for the show's 24 categories. The accountants are also supposed to memorize the winners. During the telecast, the accountants were stationed in the Dolby Theatre wings, one stage left and one stage right, to give presenters their category's envelope before they went on stage. Most presenters entered stage right, where Cullinan was posted and where he handed Beatty and Dunaway the errant envelope. Yet the previous award, best actress, had been presented by Leonardo DiCaprio, who entered stage left and received the envelope from Ruiz. That left a duplicate, unopened envelope for best actress at stage right. — AP



'La La Land' producer Jordan Horowitz, left, presenter Warren Beatty, center, and host Jimmy Kimmel right, look at an envelope announcing 'Moonlight' as best picture at the Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. — AP



Fishermen pull their nets on a beach outside the small coastal town of Ouidah, some 40km from Cotonou. — AFP photos



A picture shows the Museum of History of the small coastal town of Ouidah, some 40km from Benin's capital Cotonou.

TINY BENIN LOOKS TO TOURISM TO BOOST ECONOMY

With its palm tree-lined beaches, unique heritage and wildlife parks, Benin can hold its own against the best African holiday destinations. But tourism revenue accounts for just 0.7 percent of gross domestic product and there were only 240,000 visitors in 2014, according to World Bank figures. That compares to an average of one million visitors a year in Senegal, which is one of the most popular destinations in West Africa. Now Benin's government wants to change the situation. "We've got 200,000 people without doing anything. Imagine what we could do with a bit of effort? We could double that," said the head of the national tourism agency, Jose Pliya.

The agency, which was set up several months ago, is the focus of President Patrice Talon's new drive to boost tourist numbers and as a result the wider economy. "Our aim between now and the end of (Talon's) five-year term is to reach 700,000 tourists," Pliya told AFP. Some 600 billion CFA francs (\$968 million, 913 million euros) will be pumped into the sector over five years, notably through a World Bank loan. In his small office in the former Portuguese fort of Ouidah, the head of the town's museum, Bertin-Calixte Biah says it is an "unprecedented effort" and is happy that the state is finally putting in the money. "We've got to take stock of our heritage, train guides, put in place a policy of cultural promotion... It costs a fortune," he said. Nevertheless, he said he was "waiting to see the pledges become a reality".

Business tourism

Ouidah is a small town on the Atlantic coast and a former



Palm trees on a beach outside the small coastal town of Ouidah.

West African slave port to the New World. Under the government's new plan, it will be the country's tourist hub. The town has the same Portuguese colonial architecture as Salvador de Bahia in Brazil, but it is more worn. Ouidah's beaches, however, stretch for miles and there are villages dotted around the lagoon, colonial-era forts as well as a strong culture of the voodoo tradition. It is also the home of sub-Saharan Africa's first museum dedicated exclusively to contemporary African art. Groups of Germans, Belgians, Italians and French come to Ouidah to take photos of themselves with pythons wrapped around their necks, unclear whether they should be terrified or enjoying it.

"Don't worry," says the guide. "They're sacred. They won't do you any harm!" The head of the town's tourist office, Modeste Zinsou, described the town as "a living museum". "Tourism has a direct economic impact on the population. It pays for hoteliers, but also villagers, canoe drivers and fishermen. The problem is that Benin is not very well known." One of the main problems facing Benin is getting there in the first place. The government has in response lifted visa restrictions for citizens of 30 African countries to encourage business travel from across the continent. "As a general rule Africans don't do leisure tourism, which is a lot more Western," said Pliya. "Now our aim is change the situation, so those who are business travellers will spend a day or two at leisure. We want to create new tourists." — AFP



Tourists arrive to visit the Pythons Temple in the small coastal town of Ouidah, some 40km from Benin's capital Cotonou.



A general view of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in the small coastal town of Ouidah.



Tourists arrive to visit the Pythons Temple in the small coastal town of Ouidah, some 40km from Benin's capital Cotonou.

The rise of Benin's devil-hunting female pastor

In the Very Holy Church of Jesus Christ of Baname, the 25-year-old founder calls herself God, her business partner is a self-styled Pope and devotees pledge to end the reign of the Devil. Its charismatic theology and clashes with other religions have caused it to be expelled from Benin's community of churches, and repeated scandals keep the sect in the public eye. The latest episode occurred in January, when five followers suffocated to death after they were told to lock themselves inside sealed rooms with burning incense and pray for deliverance.

founded the church in 2009. Since then, her influence has grown rapidly across the country.

"Just by walking up this hill, you are delivered and cured of many ailments," she proclaims on her website, which shows videos of her in a cassock and her signature cherry-red cloche hat addressing cheering crowds. Her story is a take on immaculate conception: Tchranvoukinni claims she fell from the sky in northern Benin and was found by a Fulani shepherd in the bush.

Religious 'warriors'

West Africa is no stranger to larger-than-life pastors and mega-churches, and Benin itself is a tumultuous hub of mystical religions and animism. But despite her cherubic appearance, Tchranvoukinni stands apart for her vitriolic condemnation of other beliefs—notably voodoo, which is an official religion here. Critics accuse her of fanning hatred between normally peaceful co-existing communities of different faiths. On January 8, violent clashes broke out between her followers and residents in the southern town of Djime, who said they "insulted and offended" traditional leaders during an "evangelization mission", one local official said.

Local media said two people were killed, several others were injured and a number of vehicles were torched. There was no official death toll but Benin's government said it regretted the "loss of life". According to daily newspaper La Nouvelle Tribune, the "warriors of the Church of Baname" came dressed in grey, armed with guns, machetes and clubs. It wasn't the first time church followers had turned violent. In 2014, clashes broke out at one of its rallies in Cotonou after youths from the Kpondehou area refused to leave their sports field. Several people were seriously injured. Violence broke out again the following year in the central town of Save between church devotees and Roman Catholics.

Expelled

Tchranvoukinni started the church after meeting a Catholic priest, Mathias Vigan, from the parish of Sainte-

Odile-de-Baname in 2009. "Perfect" was not yet 20 and had come to be exorcised. But it was the young woman who captivated the man of the cloth, whom she would later install as "Pope Christopher XVIII". The religious odd couple built up their own congregation and to the chagrin of the Catholic church, Vigan started wearing all-white outfits similar to papal regalia—ornate mitre and all. Tchranvoukinni meanwhile called herself God. By 2013, the Episcopal Conference of Benin—the country's assembly of bishops—expelled Tchranvoukinni and Vigan, and condemned the new church as a cult.

"Of all the dioceses of our country, and even beyond... our uninformed faithful with a thirst for the sensational and illusion of the new come in large numbers to Baname," the conference said. In January 2014, the Benin government launched an investigation into the church after receiving what it said were "numerous complaints" from religious communities, political and traditional leaders. Benin's former president, Thomas Boni Yayi—himself a member of a pentecostal church—summoned "Perfect" for talks but it had little effect and no legal action was taken against her.

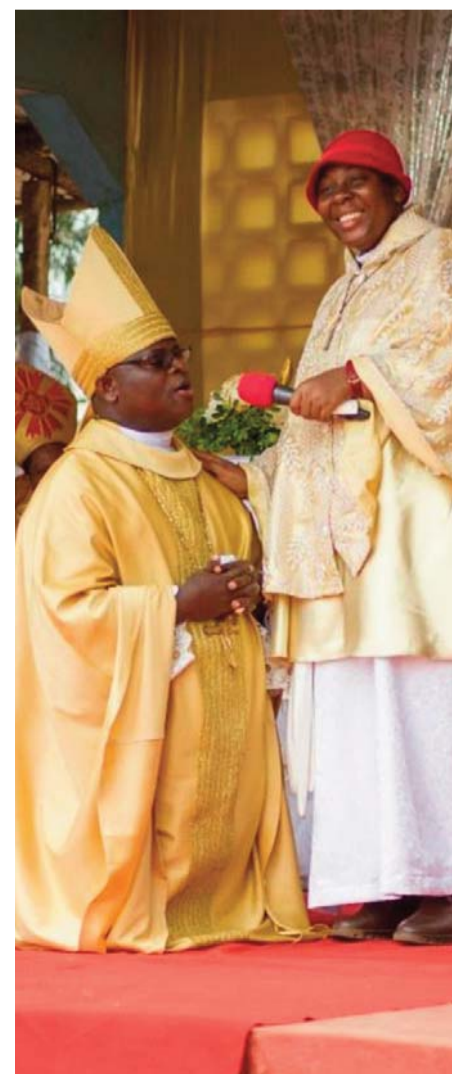
'End the reign of Beelzebub'

The Church of Baname's spokesman, "cardinal" Cesaire Agossa, insists that Tchranvoukinni is a divine messenger. People do not understand that the Holy Spirit Creator of Heaven and Earth uses the body of Perfect as its temple," he told AFP. Her mission? "To end the reign of Beelzebub, to succeed in exterminating sorcery and all evil spirits that prevent mankind from developing," he said. Agossa, a former government advisor and the head of a media group, maintained the church had "never orchestrated violence" and its success had "aroused jealousy and hatred". In the meantime, Tchranvoukinni's sphere of influence keeps growing. She publicly endorsed President Patrice Talon, who was elected in March 2016. He has yet to say a word about the Church of Baname. — AFP



Priests of the Very Holy Church of Jesus Christ of Baname arrive at the Nazareth church in Djidja.

But it seems no amount of bad press can dent the Very Holy Church's soaring popularity, or eclipse the fire-and-brimstone appeal of its leader. On special Sundays, thousands of followers climb up a hill in the Zou district in Baname, 130 kilometers (about 80 miles) north of the commercial capital Cotonou, to witness one of the country's most seductive pastors. Vicentia Tadagbe Tchranvoukinni, who calls herself "Perfect" and "God's Holy Spirit", promises to "drive out demons". The round-faced young woman



Vicentia Tadagbe Tchranvoukinni (right) stands next to Mathias Vigan, alia Pope Christopher XVIII of the Very Holy Church of Jesus Christ of Baname, at the Nazareth church in Djidja, Benin. — AFP photos

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2017

Lady Gaga steps in for pregnant Beyonce at Coachella

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A reveler in disguise, with a mask of the Matlacihua Arte gallery, is pictured during carnival in San Martin Tilcajete, Oaxaca state, Mexico. — AFP

You can explore Dubai while changing planes

'Dubai has only two seasons - hot and hotter'

Dubai International Airport recently surpassed London's Heathrow as the world's busiest international air travel hub. If you can arrange it, Dubai is a great place for long layovers between long-haul flights. Dubai sits in desert country but that's part of its appeal. It makes a handy stopover point for lazing on a beach, doing wheelies in the sand with a dune buggy, bargaining with merchants at a traditional souk or taking high tea in the world's tallest building. But beware: "Dubai has only two seasons - hot and hotter," my for-hire driver said with a shrug and a smile while taking me on a private tour of the city (about \$125 US).

Temperatures had already reached 91 degrees Fahrenheit at 5 am on a mid-September day as my plane arrived in Dubai from Johannesburg. I had scheduled two days between destinations en route home from South Africa to Seattle via the polar route. Here are a few suggestions for things to see and places to go while pausing in Dubai:

Visit Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building

The Burj Khalifa is the icon of Dubai's fast-growing vertical cityscape. It's the world's tallest structure at 2,717 feet (828 meters), making it nearly twice as tall as New York's Empire State Building. The building was completed in 2010 and houses a luxury hotel, residential apartments, corporate offices and suites. It takes a little over a minute by high-speed elevator to reach the observation decks (124th, 125th and 148th floors). Splurge by reserving a window table at the building's 122nd story At. Mosphere restaurant. Prices aren't cheap but then it's all about rooms with grand views. Fronting the building is the Dubai Fountain. It has quickly become popular for its choreographed, multi-colored displays - especially at night.

Ride an abra across Dubai Creek to bargain at the gold and spice souks

Getting to the most popular of the city's traditional souks is more than half the fun when you ride across Dubai Creek on a motorized abra. These small wooden water taxis can squeeze in 16 to 20

people seated shoulder to shoulder. Scores of the boats work the Creek daily, taking about five minutes to cross from Bur Dubai to the Deira district with its souks or small markets selling everything from gold and spices to perfumes and belly dancer outfits. Hone your haggling skills. Few things are sold at listed prices. Take a wharf walk to soak up the many fascinating street scenes. Buy a bottled beverage along the way to hydrate.

Book a desert safari

Consider taking a trip into the surrounding desert if you have a lengthy layover in Dubai. Tour options range from wildlife watching and sand-skiing to dune bashing - racing four-wheelers up and down the many steep sandy slopes. Another desert-trek alternative is sunset safaris. These are

half-day, late evening outings to pseudo Bedouin encampments featuring buffets set around campfires. Entertainment varies from camel rides and belly dancing to falconry. One operator offers an exceptional after-dinner treat simply by turning out the lights. Stargazing in the unpolluted dark of a desert night is an unforgettable experience.

If You Go...

Burj Khalifa: Head for the lower level of The Dubai Mall near the food court and walk to the Burj Khalifa ticket counters. Book online in advance to avoid the long lines of daily visitors. That also may earn you a discount; <http://www.burjkhalifa.ae/en/the-tower/ObservationDecks.aspx>. Access the At. Mosphere Web site to make a dinner reservation, <http://www.atmosphereburjkhalifa.com>.

Abra rides: Make your way to any of these departure points: Deira Old Souk Abra Station, Bur Dubai Abra Station, Sabkha Abra Station. Ticket prices are minimal: 1 dirham or about 27 US cents per person per trip. No reservations are required. Simply pay the abra operator and board. The boats leave when both benches are full.

Desert tours: Find a tour package in any of the local guidebooks at airport magazine stands or from sales reps stationed in nearby hotels. If you're flying Emirates airline, you can arrange a variety of stopover tours via its website: http://www.emirates.com/english/destinations_offers/dubai_stopovers/dubai-stopovers.aspx.



Photo shows the needle-like exterior of the Burj Khalifa, in downtown Dubai, United Arab Emirates.



This photo taken in Dubai at Dubai Creek, which is fed by waters from the Arabian Gulf, shows people packed shoulder-to-shoulder as they take in the sights of the historic Bur Dubai and Deira districts.



This photo taken in Dubai, shows goods overflowing from a souk or small market that specializes in antiques of many kinds. — AP photos



People listen to curators at the Metropolitan Museum of Art February 24, 2017 as ten-minute gallery talks are given in the permanent collection created in the lands that are now Iraq, Syria, Iran and Yemen, four of the seven countries affected by the recent travel ban. Museums across New York are waging a cultural war on prejudice in Donald Trump's America, flexing the soft power of art and photography to compound the city-wide climate of protest. — AFP

NY museums wage cultural war against Trump prejudice

Museums across New York are waging a cultural war on prejudice in Donald Trump's America, flexing the soft power of art and photography to compound the city-wide climate of protest. From talks about Islamic art to a Muslim exhibition, swapping Picasso and Matisse for Iranian, Sudanese and Iraqi artists and extending a children's exhibition, museums have dreamt up multiple ways to promote art and education in the wake of Trump's short-lived travel ban. Building on the city's culinary diversity, foodies are offering tours of Syrian, Yemeni and Iranian cuisines, and have introduced curious New Yorkers to the perhaps lesser known culinary delights of Somalia.

"We wanted to be out here," explains Sheila Canby, head of Islamic art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, "showing our public what a deep resonant important contribution these cultures make to who we are." The Met, one of the largest museums in the world, is running its first monthlong program of two 10-minute talks each Friday to explore Islamic and Near Eastern art specifically. "It's a brilliant idea," said retiree Barbara Sullivan, among those who attended Canby's recent talk on paintings from Syria and Iran. "I would hope that more parents will bring their children, so if they don't learn it in school, it will still pique their interest." The thrust of Canby's remarks? To underscore the debt Western civilization owes the Islamic world, and how an Arabic manuscript, translated from Greek and then into Latin, passed on knowledge.

'Without Baghdad'

"Without Baghdad in the ninth and 10th century, we wouldn't know any of these things and so it's all a chain, and we shouldn't forget that." A 10-minute bus ride up the road, the Museum of the City of New York mounted in under three weeks an exhibition of photographs chronicling Muslim life in the city, which dates back at least to the 1620s, the diversity of the communities and their contribution to daily life. "Educating and informing, that is one major role that our institutions play," chief curator Sarah Henry told AFP. "Knowledge and understanding is always a good antidote to prejudice and irrational fears." While Henry is not attributing it to a single installation, museum attendance for the exhibition's inaugural weekend was up 80 percent compared to the same time last year.

In Midtown, the Museum of Modern Art replaced seven Western works on display, including art by Picasso and Matisse, with pieces by Iranian, Iraqi and Sudanese artists a week after the travel ban went into effect. On the Upper West Side, the Children's Museum of Manhattan extended by another year the run of its "America to Zanzibar" Muslim culture exhibition already seen by more than 350,000 visitors. Next year, it will tour to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where the FBI said a 2015 shooting was inspired by radical Islamist propaganda, and then to Philadelphia. "Any exhibit you're hoping you've hit the mark and for us, seeing this and seeing the families in it, and the children playing, it has been incredibly rewarding," said the exhibit's curator, Lizzy Martin.

'Revolutionary'

Amy Bandolik is one of those introducing people to Middle Eastern cuisine. Her first Iranian-themed night sold out in days, and tickets for the second one in early March are flying off the shelves. Food, she explained, was a "wonderful hook" to capture people's attention, appetite and their emotion. A portion of the ticket price goes to an organization that helps refugees. "This is quite revolutionary at least for anything I've seen," said the director of operations for Foods of New York Tours. "The speed at which people are organizing and demonstrating and coming together, and genuinely not just protesting but actually taking action."

A parallel initiative-Breaking Bread NYC- has already garnered more than 1,000 likes on Facebook, done three sold-out food tours in three weeks and organized restaurant nights. "For anyone who doesn't agree with the way politics are moving in America, all we can think about is how can we be effective, what can we do?" said Scott Wiener, one of the organizers. But if the initiatives are preaching to the converted in one of America's most liberal cities, painter Sayan Ben Bady, 34, said any gesture, however small, is worthwhile. A Canadian visiting from Paris, he attended two Met talks, drawn in as a "half Muslim" who knows "almost nothing" about Islamic art. "I wonder how this affects anything," he said. "I think even if there was only one person it does... things don't really need to have a large number to make a difference." — AFP