

Kuwaiti farmer distributes free saplings to boost planting



Turkey, Russia, US military chiefs hold surprise meeting



Chance the Rapper gives \$1m amid Chicago school row



Bayern Munich crush Arsenal; Real Madrid oust Napoli



DEBATE OVER NATIONALITY LAW DELAYED; AMIR URGES CAUTION

MPS FORM PANEL TO PROBE HEALTH VIOLATIONS

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The government and its supporters yesterday defeated a request by opposition MPs to urgently debate proposed amendments to the 1959 nationality law to prevent revocation of citizenships without a final court verdict. The debate is now scheduled to take place after two weeks after the concerned Assembly panel, the interior and defense committee, will prepare the draft law.

Opposition MPs demanded that the amendments be debated during the session, but the government demanded a two-month postponement, which the Assembly rejected. Later, the Assembly agreed to delay the issue for two weeks. Opposition lawmakers want to add a clause to the law that prevents the government from revoking a citizenship without a final court ruling. The amendment also wants to allow Kuwaiti courts to hear nationality cases.

The government has been opposing such moves because it considers citizenship cases as sovereign issues that courts should not be allowed to handle. The delay comes a day after HH the Amir agreed to reinstate the citizenship of four opposition figures and their family members more than two years after revoking them. Several opposition MPs welcomed the Amiri gesture and said the deal calls on them to suspend any plan to grill the prime minister. However, several MPs said yesterday that the agreement to suspend grilling the premier is not binding on them, adding that the suspension is against the constitution.

Continued on Page 13

AMIR MEETS PAKISTANI PM



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets visiting Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Nawaz Sharif at Bayan Palace yesterday. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed their good bilateral ties and ways to bolster them in all fields, and attain their joint aspirations. They also discussed a number of issues of mutual interest. — KUNA (See Page 2)



KUWAIT: Opposition MPs (from left) Riyadh Al-Adasani, Abdulkareem Al-Kandari, Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei and Waleed Al-Tabtabaei pray during a session at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

N KOREA, MALAYSIA SLAP EXIT BANS

MALAYSIA FOILED ATTACK AGAINST 'ARAB ROYALTY'

KUALA LUMPUR/DUBAI: Malaysia said yesterday that suspected militants from Yemen arrested late last month ahead of a visit by Saudi King Salman had been planning an attack on Arab royalty. A senior Malaysian police source said the four suspects belonged to Yemen's Iran-allied Houthi movement that has been fighting other Yemeni forces backed by a Saudi-led military coalition for two years. Malaysian police had previously said the men were suspected of links to militant groups including Islamic State, known by the Arabic acronym Daesh.

A Saudi source said that it was still not certain whether the suspects supported the Houthis or Islamic State, but that the arrests showed why security "represents the bulk of the entourage in foreign official trips". "It is no doubt a terrorist act. Should it be Daesh or Houthis supported by Iran, this is what the local Malaysian investigation will reveal," the Saudi source said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media.

The king arrived in Kuala Lumpur on Feb 26 with a 600-strong delegation for a four-day visit at the start of a month-long Asia tour. Yesterday, he was in Indonesia. Between Feb 21 and Feb 26, Malaysia arrested one Malaysian and six foreigners - the four Yemenis, one Indonesian and one East Asian - for suspected links to militant groups including Islamic State, police had said in a statement on Sunday.

Speaking yesterday, Malaysia's police chief said the four Yemenis were plotting an attack on Arab royalty. "Four Yemenis, apart from their role involving in producing false travel documents they are also involved in distributing drugs..."

Continued on Page 13

KUALA LUMPUR: North Korea barred Malaysians from leaving the country yesterday, sparking tit-for-tat action by Malaysia, with Kuala Lumpur saying its nationals were effectively being held "hostage" in a row over the assassination of Kim Jong-Nam. The extraordinary tit-for-tat moves came as the reclusive North faced growing international condemnation for a volley of missiles it fired into the Sea of Japan, defying stringent global sanctions aimed at halting its weapons program.

Yesterday's developments marked a dramatic heightening of tensions with Malaysia three weeks after the half-

brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un was murdered at Malaysia's main airport with the banned VX nerve agent. The North decided to "temporarily ban the exit of Malaysian citizens in the DPRK", the official news agency KCNA said, citing the foreign ministry and using the country's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The prohibition would remain in place "until the safety of the diplomats and citizens of the DPRK in Malaysia is fully guaranteed through the fair settlement of the case that occurred in Malaysia".

Continued on Page 13



Iranian Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan (third right) unveils the Saba-248 multi-purpose helicopter yesterday. — AP

IRAN UNVEILS NEW CHOPPER

TEHRAN: Iran yesterday unveiled a new helicopter designed for offshore operations, medical evacuations and surveillance. The official IRNA news agency said yesterday that the four-bladed Saba-248 has two engines but its capable of operat-

ing with just one, and that it can fly in temperatures ranging from minus 25 to 55 degrees Celsius. Iran has been producing its own weapons and military equipment, including missiles, fighter jets and submarines, for more than two decades. — AP

TRUMP CRITIC'S TRAVEL RIGHTS UNDER REVIEW

WASHINGTON: The father of an American soldier killed in Iraq who came under criticism last year from then-candidate Donald Trump said he has canceled a speaking engagement in Toronto after being notified that his US travel privileges were under review. Khizr Khan, an American citizen born in Pakistan, said he had not been given a reason as to why his travel privileges were being reviewed. He did not say what kind of review he was subject to, which US agency ordered it or who told him of the change.

"This turn of events is not just of deep concern to me but to all my fellow Americans who cherish our freedom of travel abroad," Khan said in a statement issued by the engagement organizer on Monday. "I am grateful for your support and look forward to visiting Toronto in the near future." Khan had planned to speak at a luncheon in Toronto yesterday in a discussion about President Trump's administration, according to Ramsay Talks, a Toronto-based speaker series hosted by Bob Ramsay. Khan

declined to comment further in an email exchange with Reuters.

The organization said in the same statement that Khan, a US citizen for over 30 years, was notified Sunday evening that his travel privileges were being reviewed. "Mr Khan will not be traveling to Toronto on March 7th to speak about tolerance, understanding, unity and the rule of law," said Ramsay Talks, which announced guests would be refunded the ticket price of C\$89.

US Customs & Border Protection said it does not contact travelers in advance of their travel out of the United States, according to an official who said any US citizen with a passport may travel out of the country. CBP would not comment specifically on the Khan case, citing privacy protections. Trump signed a revised executive order on Monday banning citizens from six Muslim-majority nations from traveling to the United States, but Pakistan is not one of those countries and the ban does not apply to US citizens or legal permanent US residents. — Reuters



KUALA LUMPUR: Members of the media surround a car entering the North Korean embassy yesterday. — AFP

NEW TRUMP TRAVEL BAN COMES WITHOUT CHAOS

WASHINGTON: When US President Donald Trump signed his first travel ban with scant warning and little planning seven days into his presidency, he meant to signal he was a man of action. After the lawsuits, chaos at airports and international criticism, Trump's rewritten travel ban sent a different message: The White House has learned some lessons.

The Trump administration's unveiling of its revised restrictions on travel and refugees was deliberate and cautious, an implicit acknowledgement of some of the unforced errors from the first rollout. The executive order was announced by Trump's Cabinet officials, some of whom felt cut out of consultations on the earlier version. It does not go into effect immediately, giving the world time to assess its impact.

The White House took weeks of consultation with agency heads about how best to withstand expected legal challenges. The scaled-back order will still face fire from critics.

It bars new visas for people from six Muslim-majority countries and temporarily shuts down America's refugee program, affecting would-be visitors and immigrants from Iran, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and Libya. Department of Homeland Security intelligence analysts have questioned the rationale behind it, concluding that citizenship is an "unlikely indicator" of terrorism threats to the United States.

But the new ban does eliminate many of the original order's most contentious elements. It removes Iraq from the list of banned countries - at the urging of US military and diplomatic leaders - and it makes clear that current visa holders will not be impacted. It also removes language that would give priority to religious minorities - a provision some interpreted as a way to help Christians get into the US while excluding Muslims. Trump signed the order without fanfare in a closed-circuit ceremony in the Oval Office.

Legal experts say the new order addresses some of the constitutional concerns raised by a federal appeals court about the initial ban but leaves room for more legal challenges. "It's much clearer about how it doesn't apply to groups of immigrants with more clearly established constitutional rights," said University of Texas law professor Stephen Vladeck. "That's a really important step."

Trump officials say the goal hasn't changed: Keeping would-be terrorists out of the United States while the government reviews vetting systems for refugees and visa applicants from certain parts of the world. "It is the president's solemn duty to protect the American people, and with this order President Trump is exercising his rightful authority to keep our people safe," said Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at a brief press announcement, where he, Homeland Security

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Abdulaziz Al-Fayez. — KUNA photos

AMIR RECEIVES LETTER FROM SAUDI MONARCH

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday a written letter on bilateral relations from Saudi Monarch King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. The letter, handed in to His Highness the Amir by Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Abdulaziz Al-Fayez, focused on bolstering relations and it also touched issues of mutual interest. The meeting between His Highness Sheikh Sabah and the Ambassador was attended by Deputy Minister for Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also met with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir met with a number of Kuwaiti academics, including Ahmad Khalifa Al-Shouhami and Dr Mohammad Khalifa Al-Shouhami who handed His Highness a copy of his thesis on the legal system for acquisition of shareholding companies. His Highness Sheikh Sabah also met with Dr Ibrahim Al-Sayed Al-Rafaei and Dr Jaber Mohammad Al-Awadhi who presented to him a copy of their book titled 'earth and the universe'. Later, His Highness met with Dr Al-Anoud Al-Sharekh who was recently honored with the French National Order of Merit, in addition to other academics. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Al-Anoud Al-Sharekh.

PAKISTANI PREMIER MEETS AMIR, HOLDS OFFICIAL TALKS WITH KUWAITI COUNTERPART



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khadher greets Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif during a luncheon hosted by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif receives flowers upon his arrival.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Nawaz Sharif attend the official reception ceremony.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the visiting Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir met Sharif in presence of 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.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed their good bilateral ties and ways to bolster them in all fields, and attain their joint aspirations. They also discussed a number of issues of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, and Head of the Honorary Mission, Advisor at the Prime Minister Diwan Dr Salem Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Later, His Highness the Amir hosted a luncheon banquet in honor of the visiting delegation.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister and his Pakistani counterpart co-chaired at Bayan Palace official talks between the two countries. The talks focused on bolstering relations on all possible levels and it also touched on issues of regional and international importance in addition to issues of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled, Dr Salem Al-Jaber, Minister of Oil and Minister of Water and Electricity Essam Al-Marzouq, Undersecretary



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Nawaz Sharif co-chair official talks between the two countries.

at the Prime Minister Diwan Sheikh Fahad Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Pakistan Nasser Al-Mutairi, senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Authority for Investment (PAI), and His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan.

Sharif and his delegation also met with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, and they discussed the bilateral ties

between the two countries and ways to boost them in all fields and on all levels to attain the aspirations and interests of their countries and people. They also discussed recent developments of the situations on regional and international arenas, and exchanged views on a number of issues of joint interest.

The meeting was attended by Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee MP Ali Salem Al-Deqbasi, Rapporteur of the Foreign Affairs

Committee MP Yusuf Al-Fadhlah, and Ambassador Mutairi. The Pakistani Premier also received at his residence in Bayan Palace the Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Thnayyan Al-Ghanem, in addition to other KCCI officials. Sharif and his delegation later left Kuwait, concluding an official visit that came upon an invitation by His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak. — KUNA



Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ali Thnayyan Al-Ghanem presents a memento to Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.



Oil minister Essam Al-Marzouq greets the Pakistani premier as defense minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah looks on.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.



Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif waves as he prepares to leave Kuwait on the conclusion of his visit.



KUWAIT: In this file photo, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (center) poses with Dr Maasouma Al-Mubarak (second from left), Dr Salwa Al-Jassar (far left), Dr Aseel Al-Awadhi (second from right), and Dr Rola Dashti (far right); the first ever female Parliamentarians in Kuwait's history. — KUNA



This file photo shows women demonstrating outside the National Assembly building to demand suffrage.



A Kuwaiti woman casts her vote in the 2009 parliamentary elections.

KUWAIT CELEBRATES WOMEN'S POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait marks the International Women's Day today by highlighting local women's long road to attain their legislative and political rights. Kuwaiti women's road to recognition was not as easy; they had to earn their rights. In 2005, women won full recognition to participate in the country's legislative and political decision. Nouria Al-Sadani was the first woman to submit a complaint to the National Assembly in 1971, demanding that women have the right to vote and participate in the parliamentary election. This demand was well-received by a number of MPs who joined the rally to promote women's right for participating in Kuwait's legislative and political affairs between 1971-1981, but these efforts were not successful.

When the nightmare of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was lifted in 1991, these demand continued with MPs continuing to push for women's involvement. In 1999, then Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed an Amiri desire to involve women in the political and legislative system; however, this particular effort was not successful as the National Assembly failed to pass a bill concerning the issue in the same year.

The struggle ended in 2005 when parliament passed the bill, finally ushering the age when women fully became partners in decision-making. Women had to wait until 2009 to announce their arrival to the political scene. Dr Maasouma Al-Mubarak, Dr Salwa Al-Jassar, Dr Aseel Al-Awadhi, and Dr Rola Dashti became the first women to win seats at the National Assembly, marking a new age of legislative history in the country.

Women in Kuwait have always been an integral part of the country's development, former Minister of Commerce and Industry and Professor at Kuwait University Dr Amani Bourselli said on the occasion. She added that women held various positions in the country; however, that did not mean that there were no obstacles in the way.

Dr Bourselli said that compared to men, women still were not given equal opportunities whether in the job market or senior positions of state. A quota system where in women were guaranteed certain positions in the National Assembly or cabinet might solve this problem, said the academic who hoped that women in Kuwait will continue their efforts to develop the country for years to come. — KUNA



Dr Nouria Al-Subaih, the second female cabinet member in Kuwait's history after Dr Maasouma Al-Mubarak, served as education minister from 2007 to 2008.



A female citizen casts her vote in the 2009 Municipal Council elections.



Major General Fahad Al-Shuwaie

Colonel Khalil Al-Amir
— Photos by Joseph Shagra

GCC TRAFFIC WEEK KICKS OFF NEXT WEEK

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs Major General Fahad Al-Shuwaie said the GCC Traffic Week to be launched next week under the slogan shows solidarity and integration between Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries and proves that traffic cooperation between them had gone a long way. The week, held under the slogan 'life is precious', starts next Sunday with a ceremony to raise GCC states' flags at the Police Officers Club. Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-

Sabah gave instructions to ensure the success of this week, Shuwaie said.

Separately, director of Public Relations and Information at Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) Colonel Khalil Al-Amir said the 'Fifteenth Fireman's Day' will be held under the patronage of State Minister for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdallah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and that during the period between the 9th and 11th of March.

The event is considered special for firemen in the country, he said, adding that the festival comes in continuation of Kuwait's national holidays.

THOUSANDS OF SOCIAL AID FILES SUSPENDED FOR LACK OF UPDATES

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh stressed that reforming the social aid process would not stop, and that thousands of recipients' files have been suspended for not updating their information, while 1,200 other citizens have been notified to update their files but had not responded so far. Speaking at an open discussion hosted at former MP Yousef Al-Zalzalah's diwaniya, Sabeeh said social aid would only be given to those who deserve it. She added that on updating the information of any of the suspended files, the aid would be paid retroactively. Speaking about people with disabilities, Sabeeh said 41,000 disabled people and over 50 women are currently receiving legal monthly aid.

In another concern, Sabeeh said that as part of the 20-year development plan, the privatization committee is currently working on studying the possibility of privatizing 37 public sector projects, adding that the study would be over in three months. However, Sabeeh stressed that no decision had been made yet about privatizing Kuwait Airways, because the law currently in effect needs amendments to match the new economic policies and the government's long-term development plan.



Minister Hind Al-Sabeeh

Meanwhile, Sabeeh expressed excitement over the appointment of 34 young Kuwaiti men and women at Huawei as part of plans to investment in human resources. "The Public Authority for Housing Welfare will soon start building 'smart cities' and we will then be ready with the youth being currently trained," she said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh sent National Assembly

Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem a letter pertaining with the Ministry of Health's request for increasing its 2016-2017 budget. Saleh said that in response to the parliamentary budgets and final statements committee request for some data about this matter, figures on the total number of patients sent for overseas treatment in 2016-2017 compared to those sent the previous year were only available at the ministry.

He added that he had asked for the same data to be provided to the finance ministry several times. Saleh said the ministry had exceeded the budget allotted for overseas treatment at the expense of other subcategories of its total budget without coordinating with the finance ministry.

Vietnam refinery

Final preparations to start operating secondary units at the Vietnam refinery are going according to schedule and it is expected to be launched next week, said informed sources, noting that the main units would be then launched. The sources added that the joint company running the project in Vietnam has already succeeded in operating 13 of the backup units. The sources added that the president of Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) Bakheet Al-Rashidi was closely following the project developments.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti farmer Yousef Al-Kreibani poses with some saplings grown at his private farm. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



KUWAITI FARMER DISTRIBUTES FREE SAPLINGS TO ENCOURAGE PLANTING

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti farmer Yousef Al-Kreibani distributed saplings for free at The Boulevard Park in Salmiya yesterday in his last activity for this season. "This is part of the campaign I held during the entire year, where I distributed rare and special saplings to citizens and expats free of charge," he told Kuwait Times.

Kreibani held this campaign for the second year. "I aim to encourage people to plant, especially household farming. This campaign also

aims to spread environmental awareness in Kuwait. I hold such activities about seven times a year in different areas of the six governorates. This campaign starts in October and concludes in March," he added.

Yesterday, he distributed around 2,400 saplings, which were given to around 400 people. "The types of plants I distribute depend on the season."

Today I distributed black tomatoes, red lettuce, purple kale, Swiss chard, chamomile, purple carrot and yellow carrot. Every month, we

change the kind of saplings according to the season," he explained.

"We give the people the sapling ready in the box with proper natural soil. They only have to transfer the sapling to a bigger pot or to the garden, and after around a month, this sapling will grow and bear fruit. But it differs from one kind to another - and the period of maturity is between six weeks to two months," Kreibani said. "I am glad that more people are interested in this campaign. I hope that this useful activity will teach people new things," he concluded.



In Brief

AMIR TO PATRONIZE OFFICERS' GRADUATION

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, is set to patronize and attend the graduation ceremony of the 44th batch of officers at Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy. The ceremony takes place today at 10:30 am. —KUNA



GCC CHIEF JUDGES MEET

RIYADH: Heads of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) high courts and courts of cassation are set to hold their third meeting in Riyadh today, the GCC General Secretariat said. During the meeting, they will discuss several judicial issues, primarily a report on the implementation of a strategic plan for GCC high and cassation courts, it added in a statement. The agenda also includes a planned website of GCC high courts and courts of cassation, it pointed out. —KUNA



ENVOY VISITS ISLAMIC CENTERS

PARIS: Kuwait's Ambassador in Paris Sami Al-Sulaiman visited two Islamic projects in the Alsace region, northeastern France, the embassy said in a statement Monday. Kuwaiti charity organizations are contributing to the construction of the projects. Al-Sulaiman visited Al-Noor Islamic Center and Al-Andalus Islamic Center in the region, it said. Al-Noor is the largest project in eastern France and is expected to open next year, said the embassy. Al-Andalus Islamic center will house, when completed, 1,000 students, it added. —KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: A fisherman throws his net into the Arabian Gulf waters. —KUNA photo

'AL-HABAL': AN OLD METHOD OF HUNTING BIRDS IN KUWAIT



A man sets up Al-Habal.



A mouse set as bait for migrating birds.



A bird surveys its surroundings.



The bird approaches the trap.



The bird is caught in the trap.



The bird tries to make its way out of the trap.

KUWAIT: Kuwaitis in the old days practiced 'Al-Habal' hunting, a method used to trap various kinds of migrating birds crossing Kuwait during the spring season. The circular-shaped trap includes a net and flat surface in which the bait is placed to lure birds. The most common bird caught via this method is the small grey-colored 'Al-Hammami'. —KUNA

KUWAIT AIRWAYS REVEALS 41.7% SCHEDULING BOOST ON MIDDLE EAST DESTINATIONS FOR SUMMER SEASON

36 INT'L DESTINATIONS SEES 15.9 PERCENT FREQUENCY INCREASE

KUWAIT: Following the recent announcement of a 15.9 percent increase in frequencies across its entire network for the upcoming International Air Transport Association (IATA) "Summer Season", starting 26th March 2017, Kuwait Airways has today further detailed its plans for how that will affect its Middle East destinations - a 41.7 percent increase in the number of flights.

Key routes to be directly affected by the official national carrier of Kuwait's changes to its "Summer Schedule" include increased flight frequencies to: Dubai (18 - 25 flights, per week); Beirut (7-12); Bahrain (8-14); Istanbul (9-12); Amman (13-14); Najaf (2-3); Mashhad (2-3); Doha (9-14); and Tehran (4-5).

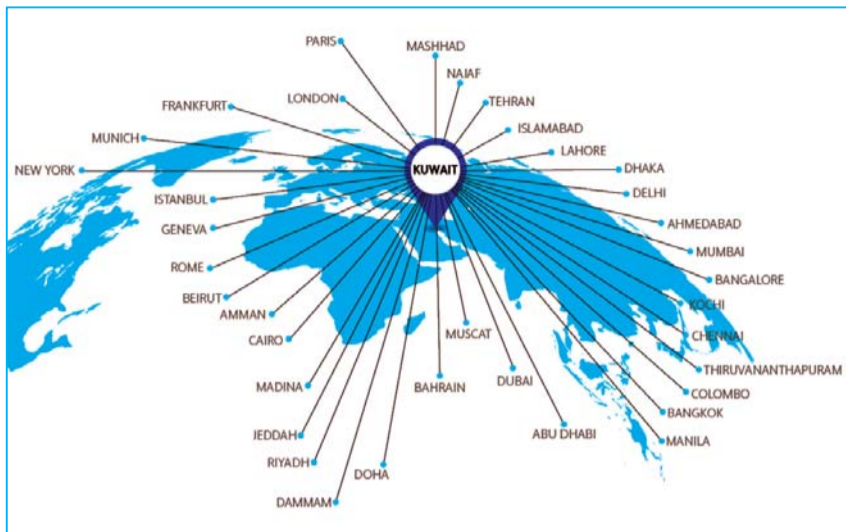
Effective 1st June 2017, Kuwait Airways' Dubai route will see a 38.9 percent increase in frequency, over the current Winter Schedule's services. This will take the airline's highest frequency destination increase further, from 18 to 25 flights per week.

A key introduction of the additional services to Dubai will be the new night-time service. This will further enable Kuwait Airways to offer greater connectivity on its European and New York services - to Dubai via Kuwait - in both directions.

The new Dubai flights will primarily deploy Kuwait Airways' fleet of Airbus A320neo aircraft, all of which come equipped with Wi-Fi and the latest in-flight entertainment, across all seating classes. An early morning Dubai-Kuwait service will now arrive in Kuwait at 7am local time, which should prove popular with business travellers, commuting between these two key commercial centers, in the GCC region.

Commenting on the regional frequency increases, Kuwait Airways' Director of Network Planning and Strategy, Shorouk Al-Awadi, said: "Over the last decade, demand between Dubai and the major European and North American destinations has grown exponentially, with all regional carriers benefitting from the demand in traffic. This has been seen on both non-stop and one-stop services."

"With Kuwait Airways' new Airbus A330-200 and Boeing 777-300ER aircraft now adding to the fleet already serving the airline's highest frequency route, enhancements have been made to the connections on key international destina-



tions. This means, that the official national carrier of Kuwait now offers a world-class, five-star product - in all cabin classes," Awadi added.

As one of the most popular tourism destinations in the Middle East, for both Kuwaitis and other Arab nationals, Beirut's Mediterranean charms continue to delight and drive up load factors on this route. To take advantage of this growing demand,

from 26th March 2017, Kuwait Airways will expand its services to the Lebanese capital from a daily service to 10 times per week.

Deploying A320neo aircraft on this route, equipped with Wi-Fi and the latest in-flight entertainment, across all classes, the new evening flight will also offer greater convenience for passengers looking to visit Beirut for short/weekend breaks. Bahrain has always been one of the popular business and weekend destina-

tions for Kuwaitis, being one of the first Gulf States to have opened up to international commerce and regional tourism.

With a notable increase in demand for Bahrain-bound services, during the current Winter Season, the viability of increasing the frequencies to the island-Kingdom was duly recognized by Kuwait Airways' commercial department. This means that, from 26th March, the airline will increase its eight-times per week service to a twice daily service - a capacity increase of 75 percent.

Straddling two continents, Istanbul's attraction as a gateway to two of the world's prominent regional cultures continues to attract an ever-increasing number of passengers - either originating in or transferring through Kuwait. This has largely been boosted by Turkey becoming a more affordable and accessible destination, in recent years.

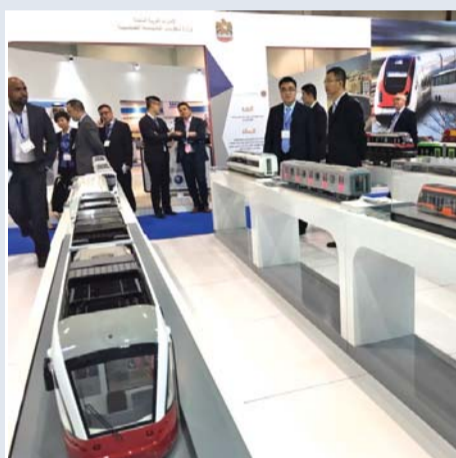
In the Winter Schedule 2016-2017, Kuwait Airways increased its non-stop Istanbul-Ataturk service to nine times per week; however, from the start of the IATA Summer Season, further increases will see this service rise to 12 times per week. Kuwait Airways' fleet of Airbus A320neo aircraft - again with Wi-Fi and new in-flight entertainment systems - will primarily be deployed on this route. The Istanbul Summer Season services will now offer a daily morning flight with evening flights operating on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday.

"Kuwait Airways' revitalized efforts since the announcement of its Transformation Strategy, in September 2016, has been remarkable - with tangible results being felt and observed by all members of the travelling public," Awadi continues.

"Our aim to become the preferred carrier of choice for Kuwaitis flying to the most popular destinations in the Middle East region has started to take shape, in just a short period of time. Our route performance analysis for the past few months has indicated which market segments are growing and we are now in a position to take the initiative - for the betterment of the airline and the country as a whole," Awadi concluded. According to Kuwait Airways, further details relating to how the Summer Schedule changes will affect its Asian and European networks will follow shortly.



DUBAI: GCC Secretary General Abdullah Al-Zayani attends the "Middle East Rail 2017" conference and exhibition. — KUNA



RAILWAY PROJECT MANDATORY FOR REGIONAL GROWTH: GCC CHIEF

DUBAI: A proposed project to build a railway system to connect Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member nations is necessary to ensure sustained development, GCC Secretary General Abdullah Al-Zayani said yesterday. In a speech to open the 'Middle East Rail 2017' conference and exhibition, Zayani said that closer ties and seamless transportation remain the GCC's primary goals. Moreover, on the railway system project, he noted that recent GCC summits have yielded consensus over the need to complete the project in a timely and efficient

manner, adding that any impediments to the iconic project should be eliminated. He also underscored that the private sector is actively contributing to the project, saying that the sector possesses the aptness needed to undertake endeavors of such magnitude.

Meanwhile, Emirati Minister of Public Works Dr Abdullah Al-Nuami said that the conference is an opportunity to showcase bountiful investment opportunities the region's transport sector has to offer. On the railway system project, he said that it tops the priority list for the

government as it readies for the post-oil era, where a multi-dimensional economy is needed for growth. Nuami also spoke of an imminent project to build a local railway system to connect the country's seven emirates through trains operating at blazing speed, adding that the private sector is the catalyst for these major projects. Touted as the most influential rail event in the region, the two-day conference features 400 exhibitors expected to attract around 8,000 visitors to examine the prospect of a Middle East rail network. — KUNA



ملتقى الكويت الأول للطيران Kuwait First Flying Gathering OOREDOO SPONSORS FIRST KUWAIT AIR SHOW

KUWAIT: Ooredoo, the fastest network in Kuwait in 2016, proudly announces its sponsorship of the First Kuwait Air Show, an event that aims to bring together all aviation enthusiasts for a fun-filled schedule spanning across two days. The event will be held at Sheikh Saad Terminal on Friday March 10th from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm and on Saturday March 11th from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm and is open to the public.

The event will include a number of activities targeting different age groups, such as an entertainment performance during the opening and seminars held on the sideline to discuss the latest in the world of aviation. The event will include a spectacular airshow featuring an array of aircrafts from different countries aside from Kuwait, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. 25 aircrafts will be participating at the airshow, with 6 from Saudi Arabia, 4 from the United Arab Emirates, 4 from Kuwait, 10 from Qatar, and one from Bahrain. There will also be visible participation from several important entities, such as ministries, schools, and universities.

Ooredoo stated that this sponsorship comes in tandem with its social responsibility strategy of supporting the passions of its customers, which in turn is based on its core values of Ooredoo, of caring, connecting and challenging. Ooredoo is looking forward to engaging and meeting all the aviation enthusiasts who will be participating in this event. Ooredoo is a strategic partner of this airshow. Updates about the airshow can be found on our Instagram account @OoredooKuwait.





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Crime

Report

MAN HURT IN MELEE AFTER CATCHING 'CHEATING' WIFE

KUWAIT: A security source said a citizen saw his wife's car while he was near a private hospital, so he called her several times, but her phone was switched off, so he waited next to the car to find out what was going on. Two hours later, he was surprised after a car parked next to his wife's car. His wife was with another man in it, so he rushed towards her, but the stranger hit his car several times. The man suffered a broken leg and a deep wound in the head, while his car was totally destroyed. The stranger escaped with the citizen's wife, hitting several cars in the process. Police are investigating.



Home robbery

Ahmedi detectives are looking for a thief who entered the flat of an Egyptian woman, beat her and her children, removed the accessories she was wearing, then fled with a box of jewelry. The man knocked at the door, and when the woman answered it, he barged in. When the thief left, the woman screamed for help, and a neighbor attempted to stop him, but he was able to escape. The victim said she does not know the thief but she saw him once in the building. Ahmedi detectives are working on identifying him. Separately, police arrested three men who targeted taxi drivers and committed at least 20 robberies. A security source said one of the drivers played a role in arresting the gang members when he resisted and prevented one of the suspects from escaping, until the arrival of police, who arrested him, and he led them to the rest. The thieves used knives and an axe.

50 prostitutes arrested

The general security sector carried out a major campaign, resulting in the arrest of 50 prostitutes and 40 absconders of various nationalities. The security source said that police identified nine suspicious places, which were all raided simultaneously and the arrests were made.

Child kidnapped

A Jordanian man accused his Egyptian wife of kidnapping his son. He said his wife took his 5-year-old son to Egypt to let her family see him. The wife left on Feb 11, and did not answer any of her husband's calls. He then discovered that she returned back on Feb 24. He looked for her, and when he finally found her, he was heartbroken to learn she had left the boy back in Egypt. The prosecutor general decided to consider the case a felony and ordered the arrest of the woman on kidnapping charges.

Drug addict caught

A citizen went to the police station to complain that his nephews damaged his car, but was arrested for using drugs. Policemen found it strange when the man was complaining against children who are under 10 years old. Policemen noticed the man was not behaving normally and discovered he was under the influence of drugs, so he was held until he sobered up. He confessed to using drugs before arriving at the police station, so he was charged and detained accordingly. — *Translated from the Arabic press*



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

LET US NOT FREAK OUT ABOUT PUBLIC DEBT

By Abdul Majeed Al-Shatti

KUWAIT: Kuwait is currently preparing to borrow money from international markets to fund part of its public budget deficit through issuing sovereign stocks and bonds. This will be the first time since 1992 when Kuwait had borrowed a \$ 5 billion Syndicated Loan from international markets, and it was paid off before due time, which is in favor of boosting Kuwait's image and enhancing its financial status. The estimated deficit in the last budget is around KD 5.5 billion and options to fund it are limited to either withdrawing from public reserves, borrowing or both.

Naturally enough, the decision will be subject to the cost of borrowing compared to returns on investments. Some economists believe that liquidating public reserves would have a negative impact on the country's credit rating, and would therefore increase the debt's cost if the country had to take a loan later on. In addition, issuing such government bonds will contribute to developing the local capital market and borrowing a foreign currency will provide part of the economy needs of that currency compared to domestic loans.

On the other hand, others believe that Kuwait owns a huge reserve and is capable of paying off the deficit without the need of adding the cost of borrowing from international markets. Meanwhile, the government has already decided to handle the deficit through borrowing from both local and international markets and paying off the balance from public reserves. A special unit was formed to administer the public debt, set strategies, assess risks and supervise the loan process in collaboration with the Central Bank and Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA).

Accordingly, the Central Bank already issued KD 1.4 billion-worth public debt bonds to fund the deficit up to October 2016 and the total value is expected to reach KD 2 billion. The government is currently promoting the idea of issuing \$10 billion-worth bonds and appointed special financial advisors to administer the issuance of such sovereign bonds. In a bid to avoid having to issue a new law entitling it to borrow, the government is working on issuing the international bonds at a very short notice to benefit from the public debt law.

This allows it to borrow the maximum of KD 10 billion for a maximum duration of ten years until the end of 2017, not to mention that the government is working on

passing integrated legislations to provide full flexibility of the public debt bonds and instruments. It is expected that demand for the Kuwaiti issue will exceed the primary issue volume, which already happened with all five GCC states that have already borrowed from international markets over the past two years to pay off their budgets' deficits. It is also well-known that Kuwait enjoys an outstanding financial solvency, a stable regime and a remarkable judiciary. In addition to its huge oil resources, the size of Kuwait's sovereign fund was \$ 530-550 billion by the end of 2016, which acts as public and future generations reserves.

Saudi Arabia was the most recent GCC state to get a loan last October when it issued \$ 17 billion-worth bonds and the demand was four times as much as the primary issue of \$ 15 billion. UAE and Qatar issues witnessed the same demand levels. Saudi's issue is divided into three time segments; five, 10 and 30 years with respective interest rates of 135, 165 and 210 points on the benefits of US treasuries, which is higher than those paid by Qatar an Abu Dhabi.

That could be attributed to each country's credit rating. Qatar pays 150 points for a \$ 3.5 billion loan due within ten years while UAE pays 125 points for a \$ 2.5 billion loan due within the same period. It is expected that Kuwait's issue will get interest rates close to those given to Qatar and UAE, if not better, especially since we enjoy the same credit rating of AA (according to Standards and Poor's compared to only A- rating of Saudi Arabia), without any other considerations. We must not panic about sovereign borrowing because debt instruments are a necessity and part of public finance policies used worldwide.

Kuwait's solid financial solvency, international economic circumstances and low interest rates represent a suitable opportunity to issue inevitable international bonds. In addition, this will provide enough time to execute needed economic measures gradually and without draining public reserves. It is mandatory to spend the loan on significant development project and not to pay off the loans through further borrowing. To do so, we have to carry on with economic reforms and rephrasing the economy's philosophy. The real panic actually lies in further squandering, corruption and populist promises. — *Translated by Kuwait Times*

القلم

Al-Qabas

THE SAD REALITY

By Ahmad Al-Sarraf

The appeals court in Mauritania sentenced writer Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir to death after he was found guilty of charged with riddah (apostasy in Islam) after his arrest for publishing a column in which he spoke about events that took place during the time of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). The supreme court later annulled the death sentence, but this was not accepted by the Mauritanian people, as the capital Nouakchott saw protests that spread to many other cities.

As usual, the protestors walked in huge demonstrations and carried slogans demanding that the death sentence be upheld and carried out quickly. Along with the protests there were property damages and obstruction of people's business, all this to punish the 'atheists' and the writer for rejecting the repentance announced for him.

We did not see a single Muslim organizing a demonstration to protest against Daesh's criminal actions

What happened in Nouakchott and other Mauritanian cities, also happened in tens of Islamic and Arab cities and capitals a hundred of times. Here we must clarify that it is the right of all people to protest, peacefully, whenever their sacred beliefs and symbols are compromised, as this is a normal matter. But to go out in demonstrations and damage public property, instead of resorting to the executive and judicial authorities to get their rights from suspects, is not acceptable.

During the past three years, Daesh has committed savage actions, characterized within the most gruesome bloody crimes of modern era, which harmed the image and reputation of all Muslims, individuals and countries, especially those who have been living for decades in the Western countries. And while all this was happening, we did not see a single Muslim organizing a demonstration to protest against Daesh's criminal actions.

Also, all Muslim countries, without exception, are in the bottom ranks of development. But despite that, we did not see one single demonstration to protest their miserable situation. Most of these countries democracy, basic liberties, honest governments, accredited universities, medicine, hospitals and paved roads, but no one demonstrated in protest of the absence of all those vital matters.

Most Arab and Muslim countries are suffering from clear poverty, crimes, drugs, political and administrative corruption. But despite that, not one single protest was carried out. But, as soon as we see a male and female student sitting next to each other in the university lecture halls or cafes, our blood boils. The same goes for those who criticize participating in national celebrations, claiming that it is not 'Islamic'.

Yes, they become furious by many scenes that they think are immoral, but they do not feel the same when they encounter a beggar. Also the scene of the army of starving Muslim children in many of our countries does not concern them. Rather, they are concerned with defending ethics, and separating men from women. — *Translated by Kuwait Times*



Hind Al-Sabeeh speaks during the event.



Hind Al-Sabeeh with Soroptimist Kuwait members.

SOROPTIMIST KUWAIT HOLDS SYMPOSIUM ON 'PERSPECTIVES GENDER EQUALITY'

UNDER MINISTER'S PATRONAGE; GULF BANK AMONG SPONSORS

KUWAIT: Soroptimist Kuwait was pleased to hold a symposium entitled 'Perspectives on Gender Equality' under the Patronage of Hind Al-Sabeeh, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Minister of State for Economic Affairs. The event took place on March 4, 2017 at the National Library of Kuwait.

The name Soroptimist means 'best for women' and the Kuwait chapter was chartered in October 2015 by Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) and was further recognized as a non-governmental organization by the Kuwaiti government in August 2016 under the name Kuwait Soroptimist Society for Societal Development. Soroptimist Kuwait joins over 3,000 Soroptimist clubs located in over 135 countries and territories working together to educate, empower, and enable opportunities for women and girls.

Soroptimist is a worldwide service organization for women with general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as well as official relations

with several UN agencies and technical bodies. Soroptimists also have a network of permanent representatives at all of the major UN centers.

Sabeeh addressed the gathering saying, "Kuwaiti women have gained a lot of their rights, and based on my own experience, I can say that they got a lot. Women in Kuwait are now handling leading positions in the public and the private sectors; they have also succeeded in achieving the highest levels of education. The Ministry of Social Affairs will be organizing, in collaboration with NGOs, a series of educational sessions in the near future. We have stopped applying the laws that hinder the empowerment of women until we explore the loopholes and we shall study the necessary reforms."

The 'Perspectives on Gender Equality' Symposium discussed local and international implications of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals with regard to women and girls. The three goals underpinning the event were: ensuring healthy lives and pro-

moting well-being at all ages; working to achieve gender equality and empowering women and girls of all ages; and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

Women's empowerment

The event was introduced by Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager for Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, who noted: "Gulf Bank is pleased to support Soroptimist Kuwait as part of its corporate social responsibility program commitment to women's empowerment. The work they do on behalf of women and girls will have a positive impact both today and for future generations."

Then, Dr Stacey Al-Ghawas, Soroptimist Kuwait President discussed the importance of working together saying: "The 'butterfly effect' is a theory wherein one small change can result in much larger systemic changes. The Soroptimist network of clubs around the world is evidence of that theory at work,

because the work of all the different clubs put together gives women and girls a truly global voice." This was followed by an interesting keynote presentation by Anne Simon, Former Executive Director of Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE). Simon gave an overview of various challenges countries around the world have in trying to close gender inequalities and eliminate discrimination. She also shed light on initiatives that have been successful in different parts of the world.

Then, local experts including Dr Ghanem Al-Najjar, Professor of Political Science and Dr Lubna Al-Kazi, Associate Professor and Director of the Women's Research and Studies Center, joined Simon to discuss the 'Role of Civil Society and How Women Can Effectively Contribute and Support their Governments'.

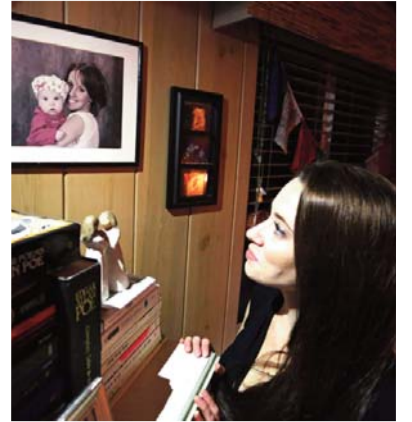
This was followed by a panel discussion entitled, 'Facing our Challenges, Identifying Our Needs'. Dr Nowall Al-Sayegh moderated the discussed with panelists: Dr Mona Al-Khawari, Dr Jehad Harmi, Dr Joanne Hands,

and Simon. The group also identified and discussed local initiatives to address global issues, answering numerous questions from the audience.

A workshop was also held to emerge with concrete strategies and responses to issues facing women in the workplace. During the workshop Balsam Al-Ayoub gave a presentation on the importance of removing barriers and stereotype for women in sports.

The sponsors of the event included: Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development; Gulf Bank; ATC-Advanced Technology Company; IKEA; Images General Trading; Lazurd; Ibtikar Consulting; and Balsam International.

To learn more about the Soroptimist International Club of Kuwait, please visit their social media accounts Soroptimist Kuwait. To learn more about Soroptimist International, see their website at: www.soroptimistinternational.org and www.soroptimisteurope.org.



Casey Anthony speaks about case for first time

ISRAEL LAW BANNING ENTRY TO BDS SUPPORTERS DRAWS FIRE

TURKEY, US, RUSSIA MILITARY CHIEFS MEET
 GENERALS DISCUSS SYRIA TENSIONS, SEEK BETTER COORDINATION AGAINST IS

ISTANBUL: The top generals of the Turkish, Russian and US military met yesterday in a bid to step up coordination in Syria and avoid clashes between rival forces in the fight against IS. The meeting between Turkish Chief of Staff Hulusi Akar, US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford and Russian Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov appears to be the first of its kind. Their discussions in the southern Turkish city of Antalya come as a US-led coalition is making progress to push the Islamic State group (IS) out of Syria, where Ankara has been increasing its efforts against the jihadists.

Turkey, Russia and the United States are all fighting against IS, though they support different camps and military tension remains because of Turkish opposition to the involvement of Syrian Kurdish militia. Turkey has said that the next target of its cross-border Syria campaign would be Manbij, which is now controlled by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a group dominated by Kurdish fighters. The SDF has controlled Manbij since last year when it pushed out IS, but recently it has clashed with Turkish-backed forces.

"Common issues relating to regional security, in particular Syria and Iraq, are being discussed at the meeting," the Turkish army said in a statement, without giving further details. Antalya has previously hosted several NATO meetings, as well as the G20 summit in 2015. Moscow confirmed the meeting, with the defence ministry saying in a statement to Russian news agencies: "A joint discussion on security issues in Syria and Iraq is planned." The Antalya talks are aimed at ensuring better coordination to avoid "the risk of unwanted clashes" as many countries are involved in Syria, the Turkish premier said.

'Common threat: Terror'

Speaking in Ankara, Yildirim said Syria needed to be rid of "all terrorist groups" including Al-Nusra, Syrian Kurdish militia as well as IS jihadists. "The objective of the meetings today and tomorrow (Wednesday) is how to provide coordination in the best way possible and



ANTALYA: This handout photo shows Chief of the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces Hulusi Akar (center), US Chairman of the Joint Staff General Joseph Dunford (left) and Russian Chief of General Staff General Valery Gerasimov during a meeting. — AFP

prevent parties from interfering with each other's operations and cause unpleasant developments while fighting against terror," Yildirim said. "Naturally terror elements are a common threat and spoil peace and (the possibility of) political solution in Syria."

The trilateral meeting in Antalya comes a day after Turkey stepped back from threats to unilaterally strike Kurdish militia deployed in Manbij. "It makes no sense to launch an operation in Manbij without the cooperation of Russia and the United States," Yildirim said in a televised interview late on Monday. His announcement stood in stark contrast to previous threats from Ankara that it would hit Syrian Kurdish militia - considered "terrorists" by Turkey - unless they withdrew from Manbij.

However yesterday, Yildirim criticised some allies' "unfortunate" choice of Kurdish militia linked to separatist rebels in Turkey as partners against terror groups. The Pentagon said it has sent extra troops into northern Syria to make sure competing forces in and around Manbij remain focused on fighting IS rather than each other.

Erdogan to meet Putin

Ankara has conducted a military campaign inside Syria since late August, backing Syrian opposition fighters and recapturing from IS several towns near its border including Jarabulus, Al-Rai, Dabiq and Al-Bab. But the Turkish campaign is also aimed at stopping the

advance of the Kurdish militia, which Ankara accuses of being the Syrian branch of an outlawed militant group. Turkey has also said it wants to work with its allies to capture the IS stronghold of Raqqa, but has ruled out any operation alongside the Kurdish militia.

Turkey is also cooperating with Russia in Syria, despite them being at odds politically over the future of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, whom Moscow backs militarily. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan plans to visit Russia on March 10, to co-chair with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin a meeting of ministers from both countries, a statement from Erdogan's office said. Bilateral ties as well as regional and international issues particularly Syria will be discussed, it added. — AFP



MOSUL: An Iraqi forces member looks at a crater made by an air strike in west Mosul as Iraqi troops continue battling against Islamic State (IS) group fighters to further advance inside the city yesterday. — AFP

IRAQI FORCES RETAKE GOVT HQ, MUSEUM IN MOSUL

MOSUL: Iraqi forces said yesterday they had seized the main government offices in Mosul and its famed museum as they made steady progress in their battle to retake the city's west from the militants. News of the advances came on the third day of a renewed offensive against the Islamic State group in west Mosul - the largest remaining urban stronghold in the "caliphate" declared by the jihadists in 2014. Supported by the US-led coalition bombing IS in Iraq and Syria, Iraqi forces began their push against west Mosul on February 19. The advance slowed during several days of bad weather but was renewed on Sunday.

Recent advances have brought government troops and police closer to Mosul's densely populated Old City, where hundreds of thousands of civilians are believed to still be trapped under IS rule. Iraq's Joint Operations Command said in a statement that federal police and the elite Rapid Response unit had been able to "liberate" the headquarters for the Nineveh provincial government.

They also seized control of the Al-Hurriyah bridgehead, it said, in a step towards potentially relinking west Mosul with the city's east, which government forces seized from the jihadists earlier in the offensive. All the bridges crossing the Tigris in Mosul have been damaged or destroyed, and Iraqi forces would either have to repair them or install floating bridges to reconnect the two banks of the river, which divides the city. Officers said yesterday that security forces had also managed to recapture the Mosul museum, where the militants destroyed priceless artefacts, releasing a video of their rampage in Feb 2015.

Site of artefact destruction

The video showed militants at the museum knocking statues off their plinths and smashing them to pieces. In another scene a jackhammer was used to deface a large Assyrian winged bull at an archaeological site in the city. The jihadists' attacks on ancient heritage in Iraq and Syria have sparked widespread international outrage and fears for some of the world's most important archaeological sites. The museum was on a police list released yesterday of sites recently recaptured from IS, which also included Mosul's central bank building, which the jihadists looted along with other banks in 2014, seizing tens of millions of dollars.

Other sites recaptured during the last few days include the provincial police headquarters, the courts complex and the water and electricity directorates. The recent fighting in west Mosul has forced more than 50,000 people to flee their homes, according to the International Organization for Migration. But the number who have fled is still just a fraction of the 750,000 people who are believed to have stayed on in west Mosul under IS rule.

Emerging from the chaos of the civil war in neighboring Syria, IS seized control of large parts of Syria and Iraq in mid-2014, declaring its Islamic "caliphate" and committing widespread atrocities. The US-led coalition launched air strikes against the jihadists in both countries several months later and has backed both Iraqi forces and fighters in Syria battling IS. The militants have been pushed from most of the territory they once seized but remain in control of key bastions including west Mosul and the caliphate's de facto Syrian capital Raqqa.

Anti-IS advances in Syria

In Syria they have faced offensives by three rival forces. Turkish troops and their Syrian rebel allies have pushed south from the Turkish border and drove IS out of the northern town of Al-Bab. Syrian government troops have pushed east from second city Aleppo with Russian support and seized a swathe of countryside from the militants. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor of the conflict, said Tuesday that regime forces had neared a key water pumping station for Aleppo and a military airport under IS control. "Regime forces are now on the outskirts of the Jarrah military airport and the town of Al-Khafisah and the water pumping station," it said.

A US-backed alliance of Kurdish and Arab fighters has been advancing on Raqqa and on Monday reached the Euphrates River cutting the main road to the partly IS-held city of Deir Ezzor downstream. World powers have vowed increased cooperation in tackling the global threat from IS, which from its base in Syria and Iraq had organized or inspired a series of deadly attacks in foreign cities. Talks were taking place on Tuesday between the Turkish, Russian and US military chiefs in the southern Turkish city of Antalya on issues including cooperation in Iraq and Syria. — AFP

'MASSIVE RESPONSE' URGED TO AVERT SOMALIA FAMINE

UN CHIEF IN MOGADISHU ON EMERGENCY VISIT

MOGADISHU: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres yesterday urged the international community to take action to avert famine in Somalia where a biting drought has left three million people going hungry. Somalia is facing its third famine in the 25 years that it has been embroiled in civil war and anarchy. A 2011 famine left 260,000 people dead in the Horn of Africa nation. "There is a chance to avoid the worst... but we need massive support from the international community to avoid a repetition of the tragic events of 2011," said Guterres. "It justifies a massive response," he added.

Guterres arrived in Mogadishu yesterday morning for a whirlwind visit which will also take him to a camp of internally displaced persons in

popular leader whose recent election has sparked hope among Somalis of a more stable future for a country notorious for being the world's foremost failed state.

"The reason (Guterres) came here today is to show support and solidarity to the Somali people at this time of humanitarian crisis," said the president, better known by his nickname Farmajo. "We have a drought which could result in a famine if we don't receive any rain in the coming two months."

While Somalia is inching closer to stability, Farmajo warned after his election that there would be no quick fixes for the country. "Your problems were created during twenty years of conflict and droughts. A solution will need more

Africa nation is one of three countries - along with Yemen and Nigeria - on the verge of famine which has already been declared in South Sudan.

Conflict and drought

Conflict and severe drought are the common denominators that have led to an unprecedented number of famine alerts at one time around the world. The United Nations said last month that \$4.4 billion in emergency funding is needed to address the crisis in the four countries, where more than 20 million people face starvation. In South Sudan, 100,000 people are already suffering from a "man-made" famine due to three years of civil war. An official declaration of famine is made when 20 percent of the population in the affected area has extremely limited access to food, acute malnutrition is higher than 30 percent, and more than two per 10,000 people are dying every day. In Somalia, the drought has led to a spread of acute watery diarrhoea, cholera and measles, and nearly 5.5 million people are at risk of contracting waterborne diseases.

On Saturday Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire said at least 110 people had died in 48 hours from "droughts and acute watery diarrhoea" caused by lack of food, medicine and access to safe drinking water. "The combination of conflict, drought, climate change, diseases and cholera is a nightmare," Guterres told journalists during the flight to Mogadishu. Several failed rainy seasons have also severely impacted other east African nations such as Ethiopia and Kenya, and much of southern Africa.

East Africans are holding their breath just weeks ahead of the main annual rains. If they fail, the situation will turn from crisis into catastrophe. Guterres' visit to Somalia is only the third by a UN secretary general since 1993 - two years after then president Siad Barre was overthrown, plunging the country into civil war. Guterres' predecessor Ban Ki-moon visited in 2011 just months after the country's last famine which was Africa's worst in 20 years. He returned in 2014. — AFP



MOGADISHU: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stands with Somali president Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (left) during his visit to Mogadishu yesterday. — AP

one of the hardest-hit parts of the country. He met President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, a

than another twenty years," he said in an address to the Somali people last month. The Horn of

ISRAEL LAW BANNING ENTRY TO BDS SUPPORTERS DRAWS FIRE

JERUSALEM: A new Israeli law banning entry to foreigners who support boycotting the country came under fire yesterday from human rights groups and the opposition, who called it "thought control" harmful to Israel's international standing. The approval of the law late Monday was defended by government ministers and supporters as a necessary response to the movement that calls for Israel to be boycotted over its 50-year occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Israel sees the boycott movement as a strategic threat and accuses it of anti-Semitism - a claim activists deny, saying they only want to see the occupation end. The law follows other recent measures seen as targeting left-wing NGOs, and human rights groups said it could affect their work. Israel has been faced with boycott calls for decades, but the movement known as BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) has raised its profile in recent years with help from famous backers such as Roger Waters.

In response, Israeli politicians have become more combative under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's current coalition government, seen as the most right-wing in the country's history. Last year, Israel budgeted 118 million shekels (\$32 million) to fight the movement. The bill, which passed by a vote of 46 to 28, means visas and residence permits will not be given to those who have "knowingly issued a public call to boycott the state of Israel or pledged to take part in such a boycott," a parliament statement said.

It applies to those who are not Israeli citizens or permanent residents, and includes those who are members of organizations calling for a boycott, it said. "We think that border control should not be used as thought control," Hagai El-Ad, executive director of prominent Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, told journalists. He noted that Israel also controls who enters the Palestinian territories, apart from through one border crossing into Gaza from Egypt, and said the law could "absolutely" affect his group's work.

Invoking Trump

The law defines boycott as "deliberately avoiding economic, cultural or academic ties with another person or body solely because of their affinity with the state of Israel, one of its institutions or an area under its control, in such a way that may cause economic, cultural or academic damage." The reference to "an area under its control" means the law also applies to activists' calls to shun dealings with Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan defended the law yesterday, saying "every country has the right to determine who enters its borders". He called it "another step in our struggle against those who seek to delegitimize Israel while hiding behind the language of human rights, and they do it from time to time."

But Jewish Voice for Peace, a US human rights

group supporting BDS, went as far as to compare the law to US President Donald Trump's revised ban on refugees and travellers from six Muslim-majority nations. "Israel just passed its own discriminatory travel ban barring supporters of nonviolent tactics to end Israel's violations of Palestinian rights," its executive director Rebecca Vilkomerson said in a statement. "My grandparents are buried in Israel, my husband and kids are citizens, and I lived there for three years, but this bill would bar me from visiting because of my work in support of Palestinian rights." Anti-settlement NGO Peace Now called the law "neither Jewish nor democratic". It said it "will not prevent the boycott but just erode Israel's standing in the world and lead us toward international isolation".

Those who supported the bill however said it was simply a matter of self-defense, saying Israel should not open its doors to those they allege want to harm the country. "If someone demeans me, I do not let them into my home," said David Amsalem, a lawmaker from Netanyahu's Likud party, according to the Jerusalem Post. MP Manuel Trajtenberg, of the main opposition Zionist Union alliance, said he believed constructive engagement with the boycott lobby was a better option.

"For 10 years I've repeatedly confronted BDS and I have brought some of them here to show them that they are mistaken," he said during Monday night's debate. — AFP



JOHANNESBURG: A pro-Palestinian activist paints a banner in front of a line of private security officers deployed to separate pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian activists at an Israeli Apartheid Week 2017 event at Witwatersrand University yesterday. — AFP



BEN GUERDANE, Tunisia: Tunisian Prime Minister Youssef Chahed stands after laying a wreath yesterday during a commemoration marking the first anniversary of attacks that killed 13 members of the security forces and seven civilians in this town near the Libyan border. — AFP

PM HAILS BEN GUERDANE BATTLE AS 'TURNING POINT'

BEN GUERDANE, Tunisia: The battle against militants in Ben Guerdane a year ago was a "turning point" for Tunisia, Prime Minister Youssef Chahed said yesterday during a visit to commemorate the anniversary. Jihadist groups mounted a coordinated assault on security installations in the town on the border with Libya last March 7, aiming to win over residents and establish an "emirate" of the Islamic State jihadist group, according to Tunisia's authorities. At least 55 assailants were killed, along with 13 members of the security forces and seven civilians.

Tunisia, which was the target of several IS attacks in 2015 in which 72 people were killed - 59 of them foreign tourists - has since been spared any major militant violence. "March 7 is no longer an ordinary day in Tunisia. It has a symbolic value," the prime minister said at a ceremony held under tight security. "To the inhabitants of Ben Guerdane, the town of resistance, your victory in the March 7 battle, the victory of security agents, of our soldiers, marked a turning point in the struggle against terrorism," Chahed said.

An analyst with the International Crisis Group, Michael Ayari, said residents and

security forces in Ben Guerdane had shown "resilience, but that doesn't mean Tunisia is immune" to the jihadist threat. The attacks in 2015 and on Ben Guerdane in 2016 were followed by stronger security cooperation with Tunisia's Western allies, especially in military equipment and on supervision of the 500-km border with Libya.

Defense Minister Farhat Horchani backed up Chahed's point. "We showed that terrorism has no future in Tunisia... So long as the state is united, that the population is united, we will defeat this scourge," he told AFP. During his visit, the premier announced several projects for Ben Guerdane, which is in southern Tunisia that has suffered neglect by central authorities. The town of 60,000 inhabitants lives off trading, mostly smuggling goods across the border with chaos-strewn Libya.

"I have a message for our politicians: they haven't delivered on even one percent of their promises," said a brother of Abdelattif Abdelkarim, a victim of last year's attacks, echoing local distrust of the authorities. "What we did (on March 7, 2016), that was to protect our country, our children, not for you," he said on Shams FM radio. — AFP

'DEEP REGRET' OVER NEW US TRAVEL BAN: SUDAN

KHARTOUM: Sudan expressed "deep regret and discontent" yesterday over US President Donald Trump's revised travel ban barring its citizens from travelling to the United States. "The ministry of foreign affairs expresses its deep regret and discontent over the executive order issued by the American president," a statement said. On Monday, Trump signed a revised ban on refugee admissions and new visas for travellers from six Muslim-majority nations, among them Sudan. It came after a first ban was frozen by US federal courts.

The new executive order suspends refugee admissions for 120 days and halts new visas for travellers from Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Yemen and Sudan. Iraqis who had been targeted by the original ban were not included. Sudan said it renews its "condemnation" of the order as it comes despite Khartoum engaging in talks with Washington on fighting regional and international terrorism. "These negotiations confirmed that Sudan plays a big role as a partner in fighting terrorism that endangers people of both countries and of the world," the foreign ministry said.

Urging Washington to drop Khartoum from its blacklist of state sponsors of terrorism, the ministry said the US administration should review the "harsh decision" taken against Sudanese citizens. "Sudanese citizens have never been involved in any crimes or terrorism in the United States,"

the statement said. Before leaving office, president Barack Obama eased decades-old sanctions against Sudan, but kept Khartoum on the blacklist.

Sudan was designated a state sponsor of terrorism in 1993 and has been subject to a US trade embargo since 1997 over its alleged support for Islamist groups. Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was based in Khartoum from 1992 to 1996. Washington believes Khartoum's terror ties have ebbed, but has kept sanctions in place because of the scorched-earth tactics it has used against ethnic minority rebels in Darfur.

An end to fighting in Sudan's hotspots - Blue Nile and South Kordofan states as well as the Darfur region - had been set as a precondition for sanctions being lifted. According to the United Nations, 300,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million displaced since the Darfur conflict erupted in 2003. Veteran President Omar Al-Bashir is wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide related to the conflict in Darfur. He strongly denies the charges.

Khartoum said it was keen to improve relations with Washington. "Sudan renews its commitment to continue a bilateral dialogue in order to reach full and normal relations between the two countries in the interests of their peoples," the foreign ministry said yesterday. — AFP

EX-GENERAL FORMS REBEL GROUP TO TOPPLE SOUTH SUDAN LEADER

JUBA: A former South Sudanese general has announced the formation of a new rebel group aimed at overthrowing the government after more than three years of civil war. Lieutenant General Thomas Cirillo Swaka quit last month issuing a stinging indictment of President Salva Kiir's regime, accusing it of carrying out a "tribally engineered war". On Monday Swaka declared the creation of his National Salvation Front, abbreviated as NAS, and called on the people of South Sudan "to rise up and topple the Kiir regime". "The National Salvation Front is convinced that to restore sanity and normalcy in our country, Kiir must go; he must vacate office without further bloodshed," his statement said.

Swaka, former deputy chief of the general staff for logistics, said Kiir should be "removed from power by all means necessary." A South Sudan army spokesman, Brigadier General Lul Ruai Koang, dismissed the new rebellion as "another armed group that will never see the light of day." The resignation of the influential and respected general was a blow to Kiir's government and army, which are increasingly dominated by the president's Dinka tribe.

Swaka is from Equatoria, a previously peaceful part of the country that has come under government attack in recent months. He has accused Kiir of pursuing

"ethnic cleansing" and looting the country. The extent of the former general's political and military support - both in South Sudan and in the wider region - is unclear. The 17-page letter declaring his rebellion was signed by him alone, raising questions about his ability to launch a broad movement to challenge Kiir.

Alan Boswell, a conflict analyst studying South Sudan, described the letter as "a personal manifesto", adding that Swaka, who has been in contact with Ethiopian and Sudanese officials among others, "looked more disruptive before he declared his one-man rebellion". South Sudan's civil war began in December 2013 when Kiir accused his deputy, Riek Machar, of plotting a coup.

The fighting that followed initially split the country between Kiir's Dinka and Machar's Nuer groups, but as the war spread so did cracks between other ethnic groups.

An August 2015 peace deal failed to end the conflict, and after an outbreak of fighting in Juba, the capital, in July last year, Machar fled into exile in South Africa, leaving the rebels without an active figurehead. The war has killed tens of thousands of people, uprooted millions and left nearly half the country in need of emergency food aid. In February the UN declared a "man-made" famine in some parts of the country. — AFP

NEW US BAN MORE PALATABLE, STILL PROBLEMATIC

WASHINGTON: After a federal appeals court unanimously refused to immediately reinstate his travel ban last month, President Donald Trump tweeted a warning: "SEE YOU IN COURT. THE SECURITY OF OUR NATION IS AT STAKE!" The courts never did get to decide the full merits of that case before Trump replaced the travel ban Monday with a much narrower version - one supporters say is well within his authority, but which critics say is more palatable but still problematic.

"Bottom line is the president has capitulated on numerous key provisions that we contested in court about a month ago," Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson, who led the legal challenge to the initial ban, told a news conference Monday. But the original ban was motivated in part "to target predominantly Muslim countries," Ferguson said, adding, "We still have concerns about that intent."

The new ban temporarily bars new visas for citizens of six predominantly Muslim countries - one fewer than the original, with Iraq removed from the list. It also suspends the entire US refugee program. The measure applies only to

refugees who are not already on their way to the United States and people seeking new visas. It removes language that gave priority to religious minorities.

Critics said the language was designed to help Christians get into the US and to exclude Muslims.

Ferguson and Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring, both Democrats, said they were evaluating whether to bring further legal challenges before the new order takes effect March 16. Although the order is scaled back, "it still sends a horrible message to the world, to Muslim-Americans, and to minority communities across the country, without any demonstrable benefit to national security," Herring said.

The American Civil Liberties Union promised "to move very quickly" to try to stop the order. Nevertheless, the changes will make it "much, much tougher" for a federal judge to block the ban, said New York immigration attorney Ted Ruzhizer. Courts could find it compelling that the order does not cover all Muslims from all countries, he said. And judges have a history of upholding portions of immigration law that discriminate on the basis of race

and nationality when national security is an issue. "There's still the argument that, when you take down all the window dressing, it's still a religion ban, but these are the kinds of nuances that the courts will look at," Ruzhizer said.

Litigations

Stephen Yale-Loehr, an immigration law professor at Cornell University Law School, said that even if the new order is on more solid legal footing, it "will not quell litigation or concerns." "US relatives will still sue over the inability of their loved ones to join them in the United States," he said. "US companies may sue because they cannot hire needed workers from the six countries. And US universities will worry about the impact of the order on international students' willingness to attend college in the United States."

Top Republicans welcomed Trump's changes. Sen Orrin Hatch of Utah said the revised order makes significant progress toward what Hatch called for after the first version: To avoid hindering innocent travelers or refugees fleeing violence and persecution. House Speaker Paul Ryan said

the order "advances our shared goal of protecting the homeland."

Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey, who supported the court challenge, described the updated ban as "a clear attempt to resurrect a discredited order and fulfill a discriminatory and unconstitutional campaign promise." Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who backed the first ban, said in a statement that the president had the authority to secure the nation's borders "in light of the looming threat of terrorism."

A spokesman for the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals, which upheld a Seattle judge's restraining order in the Washington case, said the court was evaluating the new executive order's effect on the existing case. The Justice Department filed papers Monday in federal court in Seattle arguing that the restraining order should not block the new ban from taking effect. Critics said the new order failed to address their concerns that the measure attempts to enact the Muslim ban Trump advocated during his campaign. Washington state, joined by Minnesota, argued that the original order violated the

First Amendment's separation of church and state.

The 9th Circuit's ruling did not deal with that argument, but the court said it would evaluate it after further briefing. The states' claims "raise serious allegations and present significant constitutional questions," the judges wrote. Larry E Klayman, a founder of and lawyer for the conservative group Freedom Watch, supported the original ban when it was before the appellate court and called the new version "quite modest." "Right now, we're in a state of war with certain countries, and this is a reasonable approach to it," Klayman said.

Additionally, a question remained over whether the new ban conflicted with federal immigration law, said Jorge Baron, executive director of the Seattle-based Northwest Immigrant Rights Project. His organization filed a class-action complaint over the initial ban and said it would amend its arguments in light of the new one. "Our immigration laws specifically say you cannot discriminate on basis of nationality in this process," Baron said. "The president can't rewrite the law by executive order." — AP



RENTON, Washington: Men and women attend Sunday services at the Gurudwara Singh Sabha of Washington, a Sikh temple on March 5, 2017, south of Seattle. — AP

SIKH MAN IS 'GETTING BACK TO NORMAL,' BUOYED BY SUPPORT

SEATTLE: A Sikh man who says a man shot him in the arm and told him to go back to his country is recovering from his wound at home in suburban Seattle and is encouraged by an outpouring of support, community leaders said. Hira Singh said Monday he has talked to the 39-year-old Indian man and his family by telephone and they are "getting back to normal."

The victim is shaken up and concerned about the safety of his family, but "he felt really, really blessed that he has survived with very little suffering and that he's received an enormous amount of support," said Jasmit Singh, another community leader. Police in the city of Kent are investigating the Friday night shooting as a hate crime and the FBI has joined the investigation. No arrests have been made so far, police Cmdr Jarod Kasner said.

Seattle FBI spokeswoman Ayn S Dietrich said the agency, in conjunction with the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, has also opened an investigation into the case to determine if there was a federal civil rights violation. The FBI's Seattle office said it is "committed to investigating crimes that are potentially hate-motivated." The shooting has rattled members of the Sikh community, which numbers about 50,000 in Washington state.

At the Sikh temple in nearby Renton, where the victim was worshipped for about a decade, leaders told their faithful to "keep calm and pray," said Harminder Singh, president of Gurudwara Singh Sabha of Washington. He said the victim, who is married and has three children, works in the construction industry and is "a nice guy." While the shooting shocked everyone, the positive responses from the FBI, police and others have been reassuring, he said. "That sent a positive message to the whole congregation," Harminder Singh said.

Kent police have not identified the victim or released other information about him. But India's foreign minister, Sushma Swaraj,

named him on Twitter, saying, "I am sorry to know about the attack on Deep Rai, a US national of Indian origin." Rai told police a man he didn't know came up to him Friday night as he worked on his car in his driveway. They argued, with the suspect telling Rai to go back to his homeland, then shooting him in the arm, authorities said.

He described the shooter as 6 feet tall and white with a stocky build, police said. He said the man was wearing a mask covering the lower half of his face. "All of the information that I have available at this time suggests that the information provided by the victim is credible," Kent Police Chief Ken Thomas wrote in an email Sunday. The shooting comes after an Indian man was killed and another wounded in a recent shooting at a Kansas bar that federal agencies are investigating as a hate crime after witnesses say the suspect yelled "get out of my country."

"This hateful incident echoes the disturbing pattern of anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, and anti-Muslim attacks in our state, and across the country," Washington Gov Jay Inslee said a statement Sunday night. "These acts of violence are hateful, detestable, and un-American." Many in the Seattle-area Sikh community fear that one of their own was targeted and said they're scared to go to the store or other public places. Some said they have noticed an uptick in name-calling and other racist incidents in recent months. Still others expressed hurt and disbelief at the lack of understanding and ignorance.

Jasmit Singh urged other Sikhs to be aware of their surroundings and "be open about having those conversations with the broader community." He also called on those who aren't Sikh to address such violence. "This is not a Sikh-American issue, a Muslim-American issue or a Jewish-American issue. It's really an American issue," he said. "What do we want America to look like and what are the values that it should reflect?" — AP

PANAMA DICTATOR NORIEGA UNDERGOES BRAIN SURGERY

PANAMA CITY: Panama's former military dictator Manuel Noriega was undergoing surgery on Tuesday to remove a benign brain tumor, with his family hoping the 83-year-old's recovery will prevent his return to prison. His daughter Thays Noriega told AFP that the surgeon had sent her a message saying he was already in the operating room of Santo Tomas Hospital, in Panama City, carrying out the delicate procedure. "We have confidence in the doctors treating him and are following their recommendations," Thays Noriega said. "We understand the operation had to be done given that his quality of life was steadily diminishing."

Manuel Noriega was a military intelligence officer who long worked for the CIA and who ruled his Central American country from 1983 until US forces invaded in 1989 to topple and capture him. Relations between Noriega and the United States deteriorated as he defied pressure from US president Ronald Reagan to stand down, and as he appeared to shift allegiance to the then-Soviet Union, at the height of the Cold War. After his ouster Noriega was taken prisoner to the United States, where he was tried and imprisoned on drug trafficking and money laundering charges. In 2010 Noriega was extradited to France, where he was convicted on money laundering charges, then extradited to Panama in 2011, where he was sentenced for the disappearance of political opponents dur-



Manuel Noriega

ing his reign. The former dictator is currently serving three 20-year prison sentences in Panama for those rights abuses.

Noriega was being held in El Renacer prison, on the banks of the Panama Canal. But in January he was granted temporary release into home detention to prepare for surgery, which had originally been scheduled for February. Noriega is suffering from a benign meningioma, a tumor on membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord just inside the skull. The tumor "has shown unexpected growth, which has accelerated the need for surgery to avoid damage to the brain," his personal doctor, Eduardo Reyes said, adding that Noriega is a "high-risk patient" because of his age and other ailments he suffers. — AFP

CASEY ANTHONY SPEAKS OUT ABOUT CASE FOR FIRST TIME

TRAIL HAD CAPTIVATED THE NATION

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida: Casey Anthony knows that much of the world believes she killed her 2-year-old daughter, despite her acquittal. But nearly nine years later, she insists she doesn't know how the last hours of Caylee's life unfolded. "Caylee would be 12 right now. And would be a total badass," she told AP in one of a series of exclusive interviews. "I'd like to think she'd be listening to classic rock, playing sports" and putting up with no nonsense.

But discussing Caylee's last moments, the 30-year-old Anthony spoke in halting, sober tones: "I'm still not even certain as I stand here today about what happened," she said. "Based off what was in the media" - the story of a woman who could not account for a month in which her child was missing, whose defense involved an accidental drowning for which there was no eyewitness testimony - "I understand the reasons people feel about me. I understand why people have the opinions that they do."

This was the first time Anthony spoke to a news media outlet about her daughter's death or her years since the trial. Her responses were at turns revealing, bizarre and often contradictory, and they ultimately raised more questions than answers about the case that has captivated the nation. It's been almost nine years since Caylee went missing, and six since the circus-like Orlando trial that ended in her mother's acquittal. The trial was carried live on cable networks and was the focus of daily commentaries by HLN's Nancy Grace, who called her "the most hated mom in America," and, derisively, "tot mom".

Anthony views herself as something of an Alice in Wonderland, with the public as the Red Queen. "The queen is proclaiming: 'No, no, sentence first, verdict afterward,'" she says. "I sense and feel to this day that is a direct parallel to what I lived. My sentence was doled out long before there was a verdict. Sentence first, verdict afterward. People found me guilty long before I had my day in court."

The child was supposedly last seen on June 16, 2008; she was first reported missing, by Casey Anthony's mother, on July 15. A day later, Casey Anthony was arrested on charges of child neglect. She told police that Caylee had disappeared with a baby sitter. A utility worker working in a wooded area near the Anthony home on Dec 11 found skeletal remains that were later determined to be Caylee's. Experts would testify that air samples indicated that decaying human remains had been present in Casey Anthony's trunk.

Liar

In the end, prosecutors proved Casey Anthony was a liar, but convinced the jury of little else. The government failed to establish how Caylee died, and they couldn't find her mother's DNA on the duct tape they said was used to suffocate her. After a trial of a month and a half, the jury took less than 11 hours to find Anthony not guilty of first-degree murder, aggravated manslaughter and aggravated child abuse.

Still, the Florida Department of Children and Families concluded that Anthony was responsible for her daughter's death because her "actions or the lack of actions ... ultimately resulted or contributed in the death of the child." And just this month, former Circuit Judge Belvin Perry Jr., who presided at the trial, theorized that Anthony may have killed Caylee accidentally when she was using chloroform to calm her.

She was convicted of four counts of lying to police (though two counts were later dropped), and served about three years in prison while awaiting trial. A thousand people were there to see her released. She admits that she lied to police: about being employed at Universal Studios; about leaving Caylee with a baby-sitter; about telling two people, both of them imaginary, that Caylee was missing; about receiving a phone call from Caylee the day before she was reported missing.

"Even if I would've told them everything that I told to the psychologist, I hate to say this but I firmly believe I would have been in the same place. Because cops believe other cops. Cops tend to victimize the victims. I understand now ... I see why I was treated the way I was even had I been completely truthful." She added: "Cops lie to people every day. I'm just one of the unfortunate idiots who admitted they lied." She paused. "My dad was a cop, you can read into that what you want to."

At the trial, lead defense attorney Jose Baez suggested that the little girl drowned and that Casey Anthony's father, George, helped cover that up - and sexually abused his daughter. Her father has vehemently denied the accusations. Anthony doesn't talk about her parents much, other than to say she was disappointed when they took money from television's Dr Phil and appeared on his show.



WEST PALM BEACH, Florida: In this Feb 13, 2017 photo, Casey Anthony poses for a portrait next to a photo of her daughter Caylee in her bedroom. — AP

The host donated \$600,000 to Caylee's Fund, a nonprofit started by Anthony's parents. At the time, he said George and Cindy Anthony would derive no income from the money. The nonprofit was later dissolved.

Defense

Asked about the drowning defense, Casey Anthony hesitated: "Everyone has their theories, I don't know. As I stand here today I can't tell you one way or another. The last time I saw my daughter I believed she was alive and was going to be OK, and that's what was told to me." Anthony lives in the South Florida home of Patrick McKenna, a private detective who was the lead investigator on her defense team. She also works for him, doing online social media searches and other investigative work. McKenna was also the lead investigator for OJ Simpson, when he was accused of killing his wife and acquitted; Anthony said she's become fascinated with the case, and there are "a lot of parallels" to her own circumstances. "I can empathize with his situation," she said.

An AP reporter met Anthony as she protested against President Donald Trump at a Palm Beach rally. It's unclear why Anthony agreed to speak to the AP. She later texted the reporter, asking that the AP not run the story. Among other things, she cited the bankruptcy case in which she has been embroiled since 2013: "During the course of my bankruptcy, the rights to my story were purchased by a third party company for \$25k to protect my interests. Without written authorization from the controlling members of this company, I am prohibited from speaking publicly about my case at any time."

In addition, she said she had violated a confidentiality agreement with her employer, and

remains under subpoena and subject to deposition in her bankruptcy case. Yet she had participated in five on-the-record interviews over a one-week period, many of them audiotaped. She still dreads the supermarket checkout line for fear she'll see photos of her daughter on the cover of tabloid papers. Her bedroom walls are decorated with photos of Caylee and she weeps when she shows off her daughter's colorful, finger-painted artwork.

Still, she asserts she is happy. For her 31st birthday she plans to go skydiving. She enjoys taking photos, mostly of squirrels and other wildlife. And she loves her investigative work. "I love the fact that I have a unique perspective and I get a chance to do for other people what so many others have done for me," she said. Someday, she said, she'd like to get a private investigator's license and work for a defense team. She talks of working on a DUI manslaughter case where the accused took a plea deal. "I look at him and I think this kid almost lost his life for something they can't definitively prove that he did," she said. "I've lived it firsthand. I didn't do what I was accused of but I fought for three years. Not just for me, but for my daughter."

Occasionally she goes out with friends to area bars and has struck up a few short-lived romantic relationships. When she's out in public, men are attracted to her long, dark locks and petite frame, and often pay for her signature drinks: Either a Fat Tire beer or a Jack Daniels and diet coke, with a lime wedge. But news that she is there spreads quickly; people whisper and snap photos, and she retreats to her newly purchased SUV so she can return home, alone. Anthony speaks defiantly of her parish status. "I don't give a s--- about what anyone thinks about me, I never will," she said. "I'm OK with myself, I sleep pretty good at night." — AP

NATIVE AMERICANS PROTEST TRUMP, PIPELINE IN CAPITAL

WASHINGTON: American Indians from across the country are bringing their frustrations with the Trump administration and its approval of the Dakota Access oil pipeline to the nation's capital, kicking off four days of activities that will culminate in a march on the White House. Tribal members and supporters plan to camp each day on the National Mall, with teepees, a ceremonial fire, cultural workshops and speakers. Native American leaders also plan to lobby lawmakers to protect tribal rights.

"We are calling on all our Native relatives and allies to rise with us," said Dave Archambault, the chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. "We must march against injustice. Native nations cannot continue to be pushed aside to benefit corporate interests and government whim." On Friday, the 2-mile "Native Nations March on DC" will lead participants from the Army Corps of Engineers office to a rally near the White House. Organizers have not released an estimate on how many people or tribes planned to take part.

The White House hasn't responded to a request for comment. The protest comes as a federal judge in Washington weighs a request by the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes to halt construction of the last section of the Dakota Access pipeline pending the out-

comes of their lawsuit to stop the project. The tribes say that section of the pipeline, which will pass under Lake Oahe, a large Missouri River reservoir, will threaten their water supply, sacred sites and religious rights. The judge is expected to rule this week.

The march Friday will begin at the Army Corps of Engineers office because the agency manages the Missouri River and last month gave the pipeline developer, Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, permission to finish the project. The company expects to wrap up the work and have oil flowing this month. The two tribes say they weren't properly consulted about the pipeline route, which the government disputes. They also maintain their treaty rights were violated when the government changed its mind about conducting further environmental studies of the Lake Oahe crossing after President Donald Trump took office in January.

"This fight against the Dakota Access pipeline has been the tip of the spear of a powerful global movement calling for the United States government and Donald Trump to respect indigenous nations and people in our right to water, land, sovereignty, and culture," said Dallas Goldtooth, an organizer with the Indigenous Environmental Network. — AP

FILLON'S FRIENDS AND DETRACTORS SEEK TO BRIDGE DEEP DIVISIONS

CONSERVATIVES RALLY BEHIND SCANDAL-HIT CANDIDATE

PARIS: Friends and detractors of Francois Fillon sought to bridge their deep divisions and put the French conservative candidate's presidential campaign back on the rails yesterday after deciding to stick with him despite a damaging financial scandal. A member of Fillon's team said reconciliation talks would begin with discontented centrists of the UDI party, who announced last week that they were withdrawing support for Fillon and his party, The Republicans.

Others members of his campaign team went on radio to deliver a call for unity, saying victory was still feasible. "The page has turned," Bruno Retailleau, Fillon's campaign coordinator, told Radio Classique. Fillon, at one point the favorite, has sunk to third place in opinion polls as he faces an investigation into allegations he paid his wife Penelope hundreds of thousands of euros of public funds for doing very little work as his parliamentary assistant.

He denies wrongdoing. The former prime minister now faces the prospect of being knocked out in the first round on April 23, leaving independent centrist Emmanuel Macron and far-right candidate Marine Le Pen to contest a run-off two weeks later. Investors have been unsettled by the possibility of a win for Le Pen, who wants to take France out of the euro zone.



PARIS: Supporters of conservative presidential candidate Francois Fillon listen during a rally in Paris. —AP

Unity call

Media reports said that the handful of key party members who thrashed out the deal to rally behind Fillon on Monday secured a pledge that he would temper his ultra-conservative strategy and accommodate centrists by working closely with a more moderate member of his party, Francois Baroin, a former finance minister. Retailleau declined to say whether the stick-with-Fillon deal had conditions. In legal terms The Republicans have no way to stop Fillon from standing despite the damage his campaign has suffered from the scandal, which has prompted some key aides to resign. France's constitutional court on Monday issued a reminder that once a candidate has registered the neces-

sary sponsors, only he or she has the power to withdraw. With those sponsors already in place, the 63-year-old Fillon can run come what may, even though his party could select a new candidate to run against him. Senate leader Gerard Larcher, one of the group of right-wing politicians behind Monday's pro-Fillon announcement, called for unity, saying failure would open the doors of power to Le Pen. "I cannot resign myself to the idea of a second round where it's Le Pen versus Macron," he said.

Bidding to match the anti-establishment shocks of Donald Trump's US presidential victory and Britain's vote to leave the European Union last year Le Pen is currently tipped in almost all polls to win the first round of the election, where she faces

a fragmented field with four main rivals. But they universally show her losing the head-to-head run-off to Macron, a former economy minister, or to Fillon if he made it that far. A new Opinionway survey yesterday suggested Le Pen would win 26 percent of the vote in the first round, versus 25 percent for Macron and 20 percent for Fillon. But it said Macron would beat her by a margin of 60-40 in the second round, or Fillon by 58-42 if he could edge ahead of the centrist.

UDI talks

Republican lawmaker Luc Chatel said consolidating Fillon's position would involve winning back the UDI centrist group which deserted him last week. The

group comprises several dozen lawmakers who traditionally work in tandem with The Republicans. "Talks will restart today," he said. It was not immediately clear to what extent Monday's deal could ensure broader reconciliation, especially after a scathing critique of Fillon on Monday by Alain Juppe, one of the grandees of The Republicans who had been touted as a possible replacement but has now ruled himself out. Fillon has upset some members of his own party by complaining the investigation against him amounts to a "political assassination" by the justice system and the media. That prompted harsh criticism on Monday from Juppe, who said such talk had brought his campaign to a dead end. —Reuters



TIGNES: Photo shows an avalanche site in an off-piste area after an avalanche engulfed nine people. —AFP

AVALANCHE HITS FRENCH ALPS SKI RESORT

TIGNES: An avalanche hit a ski slope in the popular French Alps resort of Tignes yesterday but no one was hurt, the resort said. Police had said yesterday that the avalanche, which hit at about 10:00 am (0900 GMT), had engulfed "many" skiers. Searches later found that no one had been hurt. "Several skiers were affected who were cared for by resort staff," the resort said in a statement. "Rescue workers were immediately deployed. After search operations, no victims were found," it said.

The slope is close to where an avalanche last month killed four people who were exploring in an off-piste area. Rescue workers and sniffer dogs were sent to the scene but helicopters could not be scrambled because of poor visibility. TV pictures showed firefighters' vehicles and ambulances at the scene. Yesterday's avalanche risk—which is normally assessed only for off-piste and closed slopes—was at four on a scale of five. At level five, all slopes are closed.

Holiday tragedy

The avalanche on February 13, which hit during school holidays, was a "slab" avalanche, caused when dense wind-packed snow breaks off from a slope. Rescuers quickly retrieved the bodies because the victims were carrying transmitters designed to assist in locating them. They had been only a few dozen meters from a ski lift when the 400-metre-wide avalanche ripped down the mountain. That incident brought to 14 the number of accidents recorded in the French Alps and Pyrenees so far this winter, claiming a total of seven lives.

Last winter there were 45 accidents and 21 fatalities. One of the worst avalanches in the Alps in the past decade took place in the summer of 2012 in the Mont-Blanc range. Nine climbers from Britain, Germany, Spain and Switzerland were killed as they tried to scale the north face of Mont Maudit, which translates as Cursed Mountain.

Avalanches can travel at speeds of up to 400 kilometers per hour. In January, 29 people died in Italy after an avalanche buried a hotel in the central town of Rigopiano. The force of that impact was calculated by police as being equivalent to the three-storey stone and wood structure being hit by 4,000 fully loaded trucks. Most avalanches are the result of a combination of weather and geological factors. In general, an avalanche results from fresh heavy snowfall that fails to stick to snow already on the ground. —AFP

HUNGARY PM CALLS MIGRATION 'TROJAN HORSE' OF TERRORISM

BUDAPEST: Migration is the "Trojan wooden horse" of terrorism and the current lull in the migrant flow is only temporary, Hungary's prime minister said yesterday. Prime Minister Viktor Orban, an early supporter of US President Donald Trump, has ordered the reinforcement of fences on Hungary's southern borders to keep out migrants. Orban says the migrants, many of whom are Muslims, are a threat to Europe's Christian identity and culture.

Orban said the migration issue would remain as long as its causes in the countries of origin were not dealt with and its potential risks were not recognized. "Migration is the Trojan wooden horse of terrorism," Orban said at a swearing-in ceremony for a new group of border guards, called "border hunters" by the government. "The people that come to us don't want to live according to our culture and customs but according to their own - at European standards of living," Orban said the migration pressure on Hungary's borders would continue as millions of people were planning to come to Europe in hope of better lives.

"We are still, at this moment, under siege," Orban said. "The migration flow has only slowed but it is not over. We have gained time to strengthen our lines of defense." As Orban was speaking to the 462 new border guards, lawmakers from his governing Fidesz party and the far-

right Jobbik party approved new rules which further limit the rights of asylum seekers and give police more power to send migrants back to Serbia. During a state of emergency due to migration, recently extended until Sept 7, all asylum seekers will be kept at camps built from shipping containers on the border with Serbia until a final decision is made on their asylum requests.

The decision is in line with Hungary's intention to close all other refugee reception centers around the country, some of which were shut last year. Police will also be allowed to return to the Serbian border any migrants caught anywhere in the country who cannot prove their legal right to be in Hungary. Since July 5, only migrants found within 8 kilometers of the border could be sent back to Serbia. The new legislation was strongly criticized by human rights advocates, who said asylum seekers' rights to legal assistance would be severely limited.

"There are hardly 400 asylum seekers in the country," said a statement issued by seven rights groups, including Amnesty International Hungary, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and MigSzol, the Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary. "The extension of the state of emergency only serves to maintain the xenophobic, fear-mongering propaganda." The United Nations refugee agency said it was "deeply con-

cerned" about the detention of asylum seekers. "This new law violates Hungary's obligations under international and EU laws, and will have a terrible physical and psychological impact on women, children and men who have already greatly suffered," the UNHCR said in a statement.

"The detention of refugees and asylum seekers can only be justified on a limited number of grounds, and only where it is necessary, reasonable and proportionate." Hungary built fences on the Serbian and Croatian border in 2015. Some 400,000 migrants passed through Hungary that year before the fences were in place, most on their way to Germany and other destinations in Western Europe. A second, 150-kilometers (93 miles)-long fence on the Serbian border equipped with motion and heat sensors and other surveillance tools is planned to be completed by May 1.

While Orban has said often that Hungary will apply its Christian values to take in asylum seekers, very few achieve protection here and only around 16 a day are now allowed to apply for asylum at the border transit zones. Experts fear even fewer will be allowed to apply as the new rules are applied. In 2016, Hungary accepted 425 asylum seekers, while registering 29,432 asylum claims. In 2015, 502 asylum seekers were granted protection. Germany took in 890,000 asylum seekers in 2015 and 280,000 in 2016. —AP



A Hungarian soldier patrols at the transit zone at Hungary's southern border with Serbia near Tompa, 169 km southeast of Budapest, Hungary. Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban, an early supporter of US President Donald Trump, has ordered the reinforcement of fences on Hungary's southern borders to keep out migrants, many of whom are Muslims. —AP

News

in brief

Putin pardons woman jailed over a 'treasonous' message

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday issued a rare pardon to a woman sentenced to seven years in jail for treason over a text message about movements of military equipment. Shopkeeper Oxana Sevastidi, 46, was convicted in March 2016 over an SMS sent eight years earlier about a train carrying hardware towards neighboring Georgia, months before Russia fought a brief war with the country. The lengthy sentence sparked an outcry from rights activists, and Putin at his annual news conference in December last year called her sentence "quite a harsh approach." The official pardon published by the Kremlin said it is motivated by "principles of humanity" and enters into force in five days' time. Sevastidi, from the Black Sea city of Sochi, told Meduza news site in December that she photographed military equipment transported on a train in April 2008, months before the August conflict. Sevastidi said she exchanged messages with a Georgian acquaintance about this.

Japan approves changes to century-old sex crime law

TOKYO: The Japanese government yesterday took a major step to overhaul century-old sex crime laws as it seeks to impose tougher penalties and make prosecutions easier. The Cabinet approved a bill to revise the 110-year-old law and wants parliament to pass it as quickly as possible, officials said. Victims and their supporters have long claimed that the current law, which took effect in 1907, is out of date and that penalties are too lenient. "As people's interest in the revision of penalties on sex crimes is high, we want to do our best to pass it swiftly," Justice Minister Katsutoshi Kaneda told reporters. Under the revised law, the minimum prison term for those convicted of rape will be raised to five years from the present three. A victim will no longer have to file a complaint before prosecution for sexual crimes can occur. The current requirement is seen as a major reason for the underreporting of rape cases. Rape victims for the first time will include men.

30 killed; thousands flee Myanmar border town

YANGON: Thousands were fleeing a Myanmar town bordering China yesterday after at least 30 people were killed in fighting between the army and ethnic rebels as Beijing called for an immediate ceasefire between the two sides. The violence is some of the most intense to rattle the Chinese-speaking Kokang region since clashes in 2015 left scores dead and forced tens of thousands to flee into China. The area is in northeastern Shan state, which has seen repeated bouts of heavy fighting between the army and a band of well-armed ethnic minority militias since November, undercutting a government peace bid. The fighting has also raised fears of a repeat of 2015, when the displaced flooded across the border into China, raising tensions with Beijing. In a statement released yesterday, the army said it used heavy artillery to repel rebels who swept into Laukkai, the capital of the Kokang region, before dawn on Monday.

Daring ambush fails to free top militant

DHAKA: Suspected Islamist militants hurled bombs at a prison van in a daring attempt to free Bangladesh's most-wanted militant leader from death row, police said yesterday. Police arrested a 24-year-old man at the scene and launched a hunt for his accomplices after the gang threw bombs at the van carrying Mufti Abdul Hannan in the town of Tongi just outside Dhaka on Monday. "Their aim was to snatch Mufti Hannan," local police chief Firoz Talukder said, referring to the high-profile ringleader of the Harkatul Jihad Al Islami group. Several of the bombs went off but the van was able to return to prison with Hannan and 18 other prisoners, he added. Police recovered a range of weapons from the scene, including a grenade and molotov cocktails, along with a pistol and butcher's knife. The man captured following the brazen attack was a former student at an Islamic boarding school, police said.



Vehicles carrying Afghan nationals, travel through Pakistan's famous Khyber Pass en route to neighboring Afghanistan in Pakistan yesterday. —AP

Pakistan temporarily reopens its border with Afghanistan

TORKHAM: Thousands of Afghans gathered at the Pakistani border to return home yesterday as Pakistan temporarily reopened two main crossings that had been closed last month after a wave of militant attacks. The Torkham and Chaman crossings were to remain open through Wednesday for nationals from both countries with valid visas who want to return home, a measure intended to calm tensions and ease a backlog. "I have a valid visa and I promise that I will never come back here. Please allow me go back to my country," Matiullah Khan, 52, told The Associated Press as he and his family waited at a checkpoint. Fayyaz Khan, a Pakistani official at Torkham, said large numbers of Afghans were returning home, along with smaller groups of Pakistanis, but that overland trade between the two countries has yet to resume. Pakistan shut the crossings three weeks ago after a wave of suicide bombings that authorities said was linked to Islamic militants based in Afghanistan.

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US MILITARY REMAINS DOMINANT IN ASIA, BUT CHINA IS RISING

BEIJING: China's announcement of a 7 percent rise in military spending for the year came shortly after President Donald Trump called for a 10 percent increase in America's defense budget, prompting renewed scrutiny of how the two countries' capabilities compare. While the US military remains the dominant force in Asia and the world, China has been moving from quantity to quality and is catching up quickly in equipment, organization and capability, and is increasingly able to project power far from its shores.

Rapid economic growth, lavish spending and a desire to regain China's historical role as East Asia's leading power are helping drive the moves. Below is a comparison of the present state of the two militaries, based on figures found in recent US government research on China's capabilities and information from defense think tanks and government websites. Some figures are estimates or approximations.

The big picture

China's People's Liberation Army has a total of 2.3 million personnel under arms, constituting the world's largest standing military. It provides only partial information about its order of battle, the PLA's mission and future plans, although outside analysts have produced detailed estimates. US troop strength varies depending on need, but as of Jan 31, there were 1.4 million active service members spread throughout the services.

Budgets

China announced this week that defense spending would rise by 7 percent this year to 1.044 trillion yuan (\$151 billion). While China has the world's second-largest defense budget, it's just a fraction of what the US spends, even if analysts' estimates of hidden additional spending are taken into account. Trump's request for an additional \$54 billion in spending would bring the US defense budget to a record \$603 billion, and that's before including tens of billions of dollars for overseas military operations. If approved, the increase would mean the US was spending 3.4 percent of its gross domestic product

on defense, up from 3.2 percent of GDP last year. China says its budget this year would equal 1.3 percent of GDP.

Ground forces

Owing to the PLA's origins as a guerrilla army and former tensions along its land border with Russia, the ground forces continue to dominate, with 1.6 million personnel and a weighty emphasis on armored vehicles (9,150) and heavy artillery (6,246). The US army boasts 460,000 personnel with another 182,000 in the Marines. It has a smaller emphasis on artillery (1,299) and armored vehicles (8,848), but places a greater emphasis on air support and Special Forces operations.

Air power

The US can boast more than 13,000 aircraft of all types to China's nearly 3,000. The gap is especially great in helicopters, where the US has more than 6,000 to China's 802. Despite having fewer aircraft, some of which are under the Chinese navy, China's air force has 398,000 personnel to 308,000 for the USAF. Both air forces are seeking to upgrade their aircraft, although the introduction of the fifth generation F-22 and F-35 jets puts the US several years ahead. China's stealth fighters remain in the prototype stage, although it has managed to replace more than half of its fighter fleet with fourth-generation aircraft.

Navy

China's navy has many more vessels (714 to 415), but the US has more where it counts in terms of power projection. The US has 10 aircraft carriers to China's one (although more are being built), 62 destroyers to China's 32, and 75 submarines to China's 68. The US Navy has 323,000 personnel to China's 235,000, reflecting the breadth and depth of a service that operates worldwide. China's navy has made strides in that direction since it established a permanent overseas presence by joining in multinational anti-piracy patrols off Somalia in 2008, and has begun exercising in the Western Pacific beyond the "first island chain" that blocks its access to open seas.



A US Navy F18 fighter jet lands on the US Navy aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) following a patrol off the disputed South China Sea. The USS Carl Vinson, which is steaming through the South China Sea, is just one of several high-profile displays of US naval power as President Donald Trump's administration weighs options of how to reassure allies and respond to an assertive China. — AP

Missile command

The PLA has a completely separate branch, the Rocket Force, to operate its formidable arsenal of short-, medium- and long-range missiles, including those capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Estimates say China has a stockpile of approximately 260 nuclear warheads for delivery by nearly 150 land-based ballistic missiles, 48 sea-based ballistic missiles as well as bombers. The US has an estimated 1,740 nuclear warheads deployed for delivery by the same means. China's development of the DF-21D ballistic missile that is thought capable of threatening aircraft carriers has garnered much attention, although it remains untested in a conflict.

Overseas presence

China hasn't fought a conflict outside its borders since it invaded Vietnam in 1979 and officially eschews overseas alliances. Nonetheless, the PLA has been expanding abroad, from garrisons atop man-made islands in the South China Sea, to U.N. peacekeeping operations, joint naval exercises with Russia in the Mediterranean and the construction of its first overseas base in the Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti. The US military, in comparison, currently operates in more than 100 countries, maintains a worldwide network of alliances and is engaged in major conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq and, increasingly, Syria. — AP

900 MILLION IN ASIA PAID BRIBES IN 2016

BRIBERY RATES HIGHEST IN INDIA AND VIETNAM

BANGKOK: More than a quarter of people living in Asia had to pay a bribe while trying to access a public service in the past year, a watchdog said yesterday, calling on governments to root out endemic graft in the region. The report by Berlin-based Transparency International surveyed more than 20,000 people in 16 countries spanning the Asia Pacific region from Pakistan to Australia. From the results they estimated 900 million people were forced to fork over "tea

money" at least once in the previous 12 months.

Bribery rates were highest in India and Vietnam, where nearly two thirds of respondents said they had to sweeten the deal to access basic services like public education and healthcare. Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Australia reported the lowest incidences of bribery. Police were the most common demanders of kickbacks, according to the survey, with just under a third of people who had come into contact with an offi-

cer in the past year saying they had paid a bribe. The poor are hit hardest by corruption with 38 percent of respondents saying they had to pay a bribe, the highest in any income category.

Yet while poorer people were more likely to be targeted in countries like Thailand, India and Pakistan, the reverse trend was found in places like Vietnam, Myanmar and Cambodia. "Governments must do more to deliver on their anti-corruption commitments," Jose Ugaz, the chair of Transparency International, said in a press release. "Bribery is not a small crime, it takes food off the table, it prevents education, it impedes proper healthcare and ultimately it can kill."

When it came to perceptions of corruption Malaysia and Vietnam got the worst ratings from their citizens, who felt graft was widespread and accused their governments of doing little to fight it. Corruption scandals have rocked a number of governments in Asia over the past year, dominating news headlines and whipping up protests. South Korea's President Park Geun-hye was impeached by parliament in December over a major influence-peddling scandal that prompted millions to take to the street for months to call for her resignation. Malaysia has also been seized by a graft scandal since 2015, with global investigators accusing Premier Najib Razak and his associates of misappropriating billions of dollars through the state-backed 1MDB fund.

A report last year by a corruption watchdog also detailed the enormous wealth accumulated by the family and friends of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen. China, meanwhile, has been on anti-corruption drive that has netted more than one million officials, while fellow communist country Vietnam has also jailed a number of former businessmen for graft in its bloated state-run sector. Thailand's junta government has vowed a similar anti-corruption campaign but there have been few convictions so far. —AFP



BANGALORE: Discontinued Indian currency notes of 1,000 denomination are seen after they were exchanged at a bank in Bangalore, India, in a government effort to crack down on corruption by banning high-denomination currency notes. A survey by the anti-graft group Transparency International shows that bribery and other forms of corruption are hindering poverty alleviation and hurting public health by channeling resources away from those who need them. — AP

TWO CHALLENGING MYSTERIES HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON: MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR: Two of the world's most intriguing mysteries are in the hands of Malaysian investigators. Will they ever find all the answers to either? One of them - the fatal poisoning of the half brother of North Korea's ruler with a banned nerve agent - happened long after the other - Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which vanished three years ago.

Investigators have far more evidence in the death of Kim Jong Nam, including his body and two suspects in custody, than they do in the disappearance of the plane, whose 239 passengers and crew could be forever lost in the Indian Ocean. Yet there are reasons to wonder whether Kim's death may prove just as difficult to solve completely. While seven North Koreans are suspected of involvement in the apparent assassination, Malaysian authorities may be unable to arrest any of them. Here's a look at the challenges investigators face in each case:

Malaysia Airlines Flight 370

Hopes that the world's greatest aviation mystery would soon be solved crumbled in January, when officials called off the years-long, deep-sea search for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370. The \$160 million search

of a remote stretch of the Indian Ocean off Australia's west coast failed to find any trace of the Boeing 777, which vanished on March 8, 2014, on a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. For the families of the 239 people on board, the decision to suspend the search was devastating. For the wider aviation industry and the flying public, it was unsettling. Would there ever be

a resolution to the tornado of questions about how the plane vanished and why? Still, while the deep-sea search has ended, the wider investigation into the plane's disappearance continues. In Australia, an international team of experts is studying whether an area north of the previous search zone could be the plane's final resting place. On Saturday, Malaysian Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said there was an "85 percent" chance that the aircraft is in the new 25,000-square kilometer area.

An important caveat: Investigators previously expressed confidence that the plane was in the original search area - and it wasn't. A search of the area to the north would also require fresh funding. Australia, Malaysia and China - the countries that paid for the original search - have said they have

no plans to fund a new one unless they receive evidence of the plane's exact location. So the families of those on board have launched an effort to come up with the money themselves, with a goal of raising at least \$15 million through online fundraising and corporate donations.

Investigators in Australia are also analyzing the way a recovered wing part known as a flaperon could have drifted through the ocean. The flaperon that washed ashore on Reunion Island off the African coast in July 2015 was the first piece of wreckage to be found. Investigators are conducting drift analysis on a different flaperon, hoping that will help pinpoint where the wing part from the Malaysian plane originated.

Malaysia, which is leading the investigation into the plane's disappearance, said authorities would also boost efforts to look for parts of the plane along the African coast. More than two dozen pieces of debris believed to have come from Flight 370 have been found so far, including two new pieces found off Africa about two weeks ago. Investigators are clinging to hopes the debris will yield clues to the main wreckage's whereabouts.

Finding the main wreckage - and

the all-important "black box" data recorders - is the key to unraveling the mystery of Flight 370. Yet given the limited information available to investigators and the vastness of the Indian Ocean, the prospects of finding the devices without a major breakthrough in data analysis or advancement in underwater search technology are slim. Malaysia expects to release a final technical report on what happened to the plane based on the available data and evidence sometime this year.

Killing of Kim Jong Nam

Kim, the estranged half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, died less than 20 minutes after he was accosted Feb. 13 by two women in the budget terminal of the Kuala Lumpur airport, officials say. Malaysian authorities have learned much since then, but they've hit a North Korean brick wall that could prevent them from fully solving an apparent assassination by chemical weapon. Two women charged with murder - one Vietnamese, one Indonesian - are accused of smearing Kim Jong Nam's face with the nerve agent VX. No one else is in custody, but police are seeking seven North Koreans. — AP



MAHARASHTRA: Indian grandmother Draupada Kedar (center) 62, and other classmates attends a class at Aajibaichi Shala, or 'school for grannies' in the local Marathi language, in Phangane village in Maharashtra state's Thane district. — AFP

LEARNING TO READ AND WRITE AT INDIA'S 'SCHOOL FOR GRANNIES'

PHANGANE: They wear uniforms, carry satchels and eagerly recite the alphabet in class, but the students here are different - this is a "school for grannies". Deprived of an education as children, the women - most of whom are widows and aged between 60 and 90 - are finally fulfilling a life-long dream to become literate through this unique initiative near Mumbai. "I never went to school as a child. It feels great to come now and study with my friends. We have so much fun," 62-year-old Gulab Kedar said, beaming with pleasure. She along with the rest of the class wear matching pink saris.

The school, which marks its first anniversary on International Women's Day on Wednesday, is challenging traditional attitudes common to many Indian villages and helping its women shed the stigma of illiteracy. Every day, 29 pupils take the short walk from their homes in Phangane village, in the Thane district of Maharashtra, to Aajibaichi Shala, meaning "school for grannies" in the local Marathi language.

Grandchildren wave them off, or sometimes accompany them, not that this group need to be cajoled into going. They proudly carry matching satchels each containing a slate, a piece of chalk and a textbook. From 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm they sit cross-legged on the floor of the small outdoor classroom, which is made from bamboo, its roof thatched with hay. Under the guidance of 30-year-old teacher Sheetal More they read simple text and carefully practice writing their names on their slates - two things none of them could do 12 months ago. They also learn basic arithmetic.

'Proud'

The women, many wearing bangles and elaborate nose rings, all have a similar story to tell. As youngsters they stayed at home or worked while their brothers got an education. They married young and were then expected to raise children and look after the home. "My siblings went to school but I wasn't given that opportunity," explains 75-year-old Janabai Dajikedar. "At the bank I used to have to give my thumb print every time. There was a stigma attached and I felt shame. Now I am proud to sign my name," she adds. The facility is funded by a local charitable trust and is the brainchild of

Yogendra Bangar, a teacher at Phangane's primary school for the last three years.

He struck upon the idea early last year when some of the women complained that they couldn't take part in public readings during religious celebrations. "We wanted to end their disdain and help them. We thought that if we could give these grandmothers a fair chance at education and literacy then it would make them very happy," explains Bangar, 41. "At their age they aren't going to go looking for a job at a corporation but their joy at being able to provide a signature and read have increased their happiness manifold," he adds. Bangar says the school - including its colorful uniform, which was purposefully chosen - is playing an important role in fostering respect for women. He also hopes it can be an example to other villages.

'Our diamonds'

"Most of the grandmothers are widows and are meant to wear white to show mourning. We wanted to break this taboo and other older traditions to make every person feel they are equal and part of the community without any discrimination so we chose a pink uniform," he explains. All 70 families in the village support the project and proudly dropped the grandmothers off on their first day of school. "There was music and drums, lots of fanfare. It made us feel so special," recalls Kantabai More, 70, who loves it when her grandchildren help her with her homework. "We huddle together and study, read, write, laugh and share stories. I'm content now," she explains.

The school has also become a focal point for social interaction and has boosted camaraderie amongst the women. It even held a sports day recently where the grannies played hide-and-seek, engaged in some traditional dancing and played a light-hearted and not too strenuous game of tag. For the school's first birthday on Wednesday a big party is planned. More than 500 people from nearby villages, including around 100 grandmothers, are expected to attend the festivities, Bangar said. "We will celebrate them for their invaluable contribution to our villages and our lives. They are our diamonds and we should treasure them." — AFP

N KOREA, MALAYSIA SLAP EXIT BANS

Continued from Page 1

The Malaysian foreign ministry said 11 of its citizens were currently in North Korea - three embassy staff, six family members and two who work for the UN's World Food Program. The WFP said the pair, as UN staffers, "are international civil servants who do not represent any country." It said it took the safety of its staff seriously and was closely monitoring the situation.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak condemned the ban and said he was ordering a similar ban on the movement of "all North Korean citizens in Malaysia". Analysts said they could number around 1,000. "This abhorrent act, effectively holding our citizens hostage, is in total disregard of all international law and diplomatic norms," Najib said. He later chaired an emergency national security council meeting. "We give assurances we will do everything within our means to bring them home safely," Najib said in a statement afterwards on the 11 Malaysians.

A top foreign ministry official met the number two at Pyongyang's embassy yesterday, a senior government official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "We have to negotiate with them. We have 11 people in North Korea. The situation is tense," he said. Senior cabinet minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar told AFP Malaysia had "very special" ties with China while Beijing had good relations with Pyongyang. "And this is one of the avenues we can explore to resolve the issue amicably."

Pyongyang and Kuala Lumpur had unusually strong links

for years, but ties have rapidly degenerated in the weeks since two women wiped a deadly chemical on Kim Jong-Nam's face. An autopsy revealed that to be VX nerve agent, a substance so dangerous it is classed as a weapon of mass destruction by the UN. Seoul has blamed Pyongyang for the assassination, and Kuala Lumpur wants to question several North Koreans, although the only one it arrested was released last week for lack of evidence.

The North has never confirmed the dead man's identity, but has denounced the Malaysian investigation as an attempt to smear it. North Korean ambassador Kang Chol slammed what he called a "pre-targeted investigation by the Malaysian police" on Monday, just before leaving the country after being expelled. Pyongyang retaliated by formally ordering out his counterpart - who had already been recalled for consultations. According to KCNA, the foreign ministry expressed hopes that the Malaysian government would solve the issue "as early as possible" from a position of "goodwill".

Chang Yong-Seok, senior researcher at Seoul National University's Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, said Pyongyang was using the exit ban as leverage to try to prevent the arrest of key suspects holed up in its embassy. "I think North Korea is worried that once the two suspects are handed over to Malaysian police, they will serve as clear evidence of the North Korean government's involvement." Speaking at a news conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Malaysia's police chief Khalid Abu Bakar said police would not raid the embassy building to get the three North Koreans sought in connection with the murder. — Agencies



SAN DIEGO: Protesters chant during a rally against the travel ban at San Diego International Airport on Monday. — AFP

DEBATE OVER NATIONALITY LAW DELAYED...

Continued from Page 1

Justice Minister Falah Al-Azeb said HH the Amir has instructed the government to keep the nation's best interests at heart as it sorts out the issue of Kuwaiti citizenship. In a statement to the press after the parliamentary session, Azeb, who is also Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, said that the Amir firmly believes in adhering to the constitution and state laws. Moreover, he noted that the Assembly has formed an ad hoc committee to deal with the citizenship issue. "The government has some pointers regarding some suggestions MPs have made related to the citizenship issue," Azeb said.

The Assembly also agreed to form a special committee to probe all violations in the health ministry including alleged violations at medical offices abroad and allegations of massive financial violations in the issue of sending Kuwaiti patients abroad for treatment. The Assembly also agreed to delay debating two key amendments to the election law - the

first barring people convicted of insulting HH the Amir from running for public office, and the second amending the single-vote system to two votes.

Azab told reporters after the session that the government is totally opposed to the election law and will not accept increasing the number of votes or allowing convicts to contest the elections. The Assembly also voted to ask the interior and defense committee to study traffic congestions in the country and propose short-, medium- and long-term solutions by May.

MPs also began debating a draft law to amend the juvenile law by reverting the juvenile age from 16 to 18 as it was several months ago following strong protests. The previous Assembly passed a law last year to lower the juvenile age to 16 in the wake of a rise in the crime rate among the 16-18 age group. State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said the amendment of the law was to curb crimes committed by teenagers, but the government has no objection to raise the juvenile age again to 18 years.

MALAYSIA FOILED ATTACK AGAINST 'ARAB ROYALTY'

Continued from Page 1

and they are also planning to attack the Arab royalties during the visit in Kuala Lumpur, so we got them in the nick of time," Inspector General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar told reporters.

The Yemenis were arrested in Serdang and Cyberjaya - near the capital Kuala Lumpur - Malaysian police had

said on Sunday. Police seized multiple international passports from the four, along with 270,000 ringgit (\$60,000) in different currencies which police said they suspected were intended to be channelled to insurgents. Police have said the Malaysian and the Indonesian who were arrested in late February were planning to launch a large-scale attack using a "vehicle-borne improvised explosive device". — Reuters

NEW TRUMP TRAVEL BAN COMES WITHOUT CHAOS

Continued from Page 1

Secretary John Kelly and Attorney General Jeff Sessions served as the public faces of the rollout.

The original travel ban led to instant chaos at airports as Homeland Security officials scrambled to interpret how it was to be implemented and some travelers were detained before being sent back overseas or blocked from getting on airplanes abroad. The order quickly became the subject of several legal challenges and was put on hold last month by a federal judge in Washington state.

This time, there was none of that chaos. The new order won't take effect until March 16, despite repeated warnings from Trump and his aides that any delay would put national security at risk by allowing the entry of "bad dudes" who want to cause harm to the country. Press secretary Sean Spicer told reporters at the White House that Trump approved the final details of the revised executive order on Saturday night after meeting with Kelly, Sessions and members of his legal staff and policy team.

Trump's new order reinstates his four-month ban on

all refugees from around the world and keeps in place his plan to reduce the number of refugees to be allowed into the United States this budget year to 50,000. Syrians are also no longer subjected to an indefinite ban, despite Trump's insistence as a candidate that they pose a serious security threat.

Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Immigrants' Rights Project, said the group will try to block the new order from taking effect, either by amending the existing lawsuits that blocked Trump's original ban or seeking a new injunction. "The only way to actually fix the Muslim ban is not to have a Muslim ban," said Omar Jadwat, director of the project.

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson, whose state won a court order blocking the travel ban, said the new travel ban is more legally palatable than the old one but that it still poses concerns and could prompt further court challenges from the state. "Bottom line is the president has capitulated on numerous key provisions that we contested in court about a month ago," Ferguson said at a news conference in his Seattle office. "This is a very significant victory for the people of the state of Washington." —AP

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ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

LATAM GIRLS HACK MAN'S WORLD OF TECH, SCIENCE

UZBEKISTAN'S RULERS AT ODDS ON REFORMS

The EBRD's return to Uzbekistan would be a victory for reformist President Shavkat Mirziyoyev but some of his other plans, such as a currency float, have been held up by disagreements with the powerful security chief, diplomatic and business sources say. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is expected to signal this week that it is ready to resume operations in the Central Asian nation after last year's death of President Islam Karimov whose authoritarian leadership and poor human rights record effectively pushed the lender out.

But two diplomatic sources say the EBRD's return, which could help Mirziyoyev modernize the economy with new loans, comes despite opposition from security chief Rustam Inoyatov, with whom he shares powers. An EBRD source also confirmed the re-engagement had faced opposition from Inoyatov. The sources say a push by Mirziyoyev to introduce a free floating exchange rate, abolish visas for tourists from 15 countries and resume passenger flights to neighboring Tajikistan have all been held up due to infighting.

The delays come as the major exporter of cotton and natural gas tries to modernize after the three-decade rule of Karimov, who was reluctant to impose potentially painful market reforms, and as the country tries to define its relationship with Russia, China and the West. "Mirziyoyev is trying to show the West that he is a reformer, especially when it comes to the economy and the financial sector," one diplomatic source said. "But the security chief, Inoyatov, has a different position - he is against swift reforms."

Former prime minister Mirziyoyev won a presidential election in December after Karimov's death but in a move aimed at avoiding a conflict over succession, he did not assume his predecessor's absolute powers. He shares them with Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov and Inoyatov. The predominantly Muslim nation's stability is seen abroad as important because it fought an Islamist insurgency in the 1990s, thousands of Uzbeks are believed to have joined Islamic State militants fighting in Syria and Iraq and because of its natural resources.

Mirziyoyev and Azimov are seen as reformers who pushed for a free float of the managed Uzbek currency, the sum, which trades at about half its official value on the black market. The government published the draft order outlining the liberalization of the foreign exchange regime in November and it was due to be enacted on Jan 15. But nothing has happened and the sources said Inoyatov is pushing against such a change, which could weaken the state and some of its powerful civil servants who control foreign currency flows through existing regulations. Officials in Mirziyoyev's office did not respond to requests from Reuters for comment. Azimov and Inoyatov deal with foreign press through the foreign ministry where officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Fractious decision-making

The diplomatic and business sources told Reuters the trio often disagree and that decision-making has become fractious and unpredictable as a result. "There are tensions in the decision-making process on all matters between the three key figures, Mirziyoyev, Inoyatov and Azimov," said the diplomatic source. Tashkent pursued an isolationist foreign policy under the late Karimov and had strained ties with both its former Soviet overlord Russia and the West, as well as most of its neighbours.

Mirziyoyev has spoken of the need for economic reform as well as steps to improve foreign ties, raising hopes of a thaw. Reform and greater openness could bring greater wealth for Uzbekistan's 32 million people. It sits on transit routes for natural gas shipped to China and Russia yet its gross domestic product is roughly half of that of neighboring Kazakhstan whose economy is more open and has attracted significant foreign investment. Disagreements within the ruling triumvirate threaten to stymie Mirziyoyev's ambitions however. "No one knows how any particular issue will be resolved as a result of these discussions," the source said.

The second diplomatic source said the three men could not agree on the direction and pace of reforms. "There is a common agreement to implement reforms but they still don't know which ones and they cannot agree on which ones," that source said. —Reuters

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Staying up late into the night, Lilia Lobato Martinez watched endless YouTube videos to teach herself the computer code she used to help build her prize-winning Ool app for volunteers in Guadalajara, Mexico. In her country, she is usually the only woman in tech competitions, which often hand out men's T-shirts to the winners. Now the 18-year-old electrical engineering student is using the \$10,000 she won for her app in last year's international girls-only Technovation competition to further develop Ool, which has so far linked over 1,000 volunteers with 20 non-profit groups in Mexico's second-biggest city.

"A lot of people were constantly complaining everything's wrong, but I found that no one was going out to the street to volunteer," said Lobato. "So I decided to develop an app that's a compendium of all the non-profit organisations, so we can learn what Mexico is building." With plans to eventually set up a centre to teach children to code, she said many of her female friends shied away from IT development because it was male-dominated. Only four out of 40 students on her degree course are women, she pointed out.

Across Latin America, the participation of girls and women in technology and science has lagged far behind men, experts say. And while awareness of the need to

correct the imbalance is growing, social and economic pressures mean many are still pushed into other areas or expected to start work straight after school rather than going into higher education.

"Boys think it's easy for them and they expect to be smart in technology... it's not expected for girls, and that's reinforced by the education system quite often," said Gloria Bonder, Buenos Aires-based UNESCO chair on women, science and technology in Latin America.

The portrayal of women in the media, and a lack of role models also contribute to making it a system-wide problem, added Bonder, who is working on a Central American pilot project to incorporate gender equality into science and technology education.

While 44 percent of all science research positions - including social sciences - in the region are held by women, they are under-represented in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), according to UNESCO.

For example, in Peru and Colombia, around a third of natural science researchers are women, but they account for just a quarter of engineering and technology researchers. Now a number of projects are striving to improve access for girls and give them the skills and confidence to compete in those jobs.

Developers' bootcamp

One of these is the Laboratoria coding academy in Lima, which spots talent "where no one else is looking," said its chief executive, Mariana Costa Checa. More than 1,000 women applied for 70 places at its intensive bootcamp where candidates from low-income backgrounds train as front-end web developers. The application process involves a series of rigorous tests, alongside interviews with candidates' families to reduce the drop-out rate for the course, which also runs in Santiago, Mexico City and the Peruvian city of Arequipa, and helps participants land jobs with companies such as IBM.

Along with computer programs like JavaScript, it teaches workplace skills that are crucial for women who have little experience of formal-sector employment, said Costa. She expects some Laboratoria graduates will go on to develop technical solutions for problems in their communities. "The first thing we look for is a job, because it gives them economic stability, and for our average student, it triples their income," said Costa. It also gives them "a new perspective in life", she added. "It starts changing the way they look at the world - and I think there's enormous value in then bringing that change to their own communities."

With many girls from poor families under pressure to start earning as soon as

they finish school, Rebeca Vargas, president of the US-Mexico Foundation, said most of those who signed up for the international STEM mentoring program she helped set up in Mexico's Puebla state did so without telling their parents. Nearly all are now studying STEM subjects at college or university. "Some of the girls we worked with last year had to sell bread and food on the street to be able to earn money to eat," said Vargas, whose foundation developed the program with Mexico's public education secretariat and the New York Academy of Sciences.

Families often expect girls to pay their way at home but not to seek senior positions at corporations or well-paid jobs. "They're supposed to work but they're not supposed to be educated," Vargas said. Wendy Arellano Martinez, who won a scholarship to study biotechnology engineering at the prestigious Monterrey Technology Institute after the mentoring programme, is now part of a team developing a project to make spectacle frames from recycled plastic bottles for older people on low incomes. "We're going to be looking for funds from organizations or foundations to help us distribute our products to people who need them but don't have the resources," said the 18-year-old student from Puebla. "I want to give the same support that I received." — Reuters

TRUMP SLURS, PRAISE OF OBAMA GO BACK YEARS

US President Donald Trump's love-hate attitude towards predecessor Barack Obama goes back a decade, a volatile mixture of admiration and scurrilous disrespect that helped launch the provocative billionaire's own political career. Trump was a main purveyor of the "birther" conspiracy theory that the nation's first African-American president was not born in the United States - and yet went out of his way to praise him after November's bitterly contested election, even declaring last month that Obama "likes me" and "I like him".

But the new president's explosive and unsubstantiated charge this weekend that Obama tapped his phones, in a scandal he likened to "Nixon/Watergate" in a Twitter broadcast, marked a brutal return to the belligerence of recent years. Trump's up-and-down treatment of Obama goes back to 2006, when the real estate tycoon was rising as a reality television star. That December he told The New York Times that it was "not a good sign" that Obama, then a US senator, was involved in a shady deal with a controversial Chicago businessman. "But he's got some wonderful qualities," Trump said of Obama.

For the next several months, as Obama mapped out his remarkable presidential run, Trump offered glowing praise, in March 2007 branding him "a star". The positive reviews continued after Obama won the 2008 election. But by April 2009 Trump was voicing concern about healthcare spending, inflation and taxes. One year later he was wavering on Obamacare, telling CNN "I'm really torn."

Trump's admiration turned to scorn, and he became a chief proponent of the racially charged conspiracy theory that Obama was not born in the United States. "Why doesn't he show his birth certificate?" Trump asked on ABC's "The View" show on March 23, 2011. The Obama White House indeed produced the birth certificate a few weeks later - and the president went on to skewer Trump at the White House Correspondents Dinner that April. "No one is prouder to put this birth certificate matter to rest than the Donald," Obama said, as Trump sat in the audience with a stiff smile on his face. "And that's because he can finally get back to focusing on the issues that matter - like, did we fake the moon landing?"

Trump 'strikes back'

Several observers say they believe the thin-skinned Trump decided then and there to seek his revenge. Trump felt "attacked and embarrassed" by Obama's jibes, Ohio State University political science professor Paul Beck told AFP. "He has personal reactions to almost everyone and everything," Beck added. "If he feels he has been treated unfairly, he really strikes back." Trump dismissed speculation that the abuse by Obama that night spurred his presidential bid. But Trump continued to gin up the birther con-

spiracy, even after it had been thoroughly debunked. "An 'extremely credible source' has called my office and told me that @BarackObama's birth certificate is a fraud," Trump tweeted in August 2012, at the height of the presidential race between Obama and Republican Mitt Romney. Obama pushed back that October, joking on NBC's "Tonight Show" that the rivalry with Trump "dates back to when we were growing up together in Kenya".

By 2016, with Trump having won the Republican nomination, the animosity was on full view - as Obama revved up his own attacks on the maverick candidate. Trump "doesn't appear to have basic knowledge around critical issues in Europe, in the Middle East, in Asia, (which) means that he's woefully unprepared to do this job," Obama said on Aug 2. Trump fired back on Twitter, saying Obama "will go down as perhaps the worst president in the history of the United States!"

In September Trump finally acknowledged Obama was born in the US state of Hawaii. And two days after his wide-

ly unexpected victory, Trump met with Obama and described the outgoing president as "a very good man," saying it was a "great honor" to meet with him at the White House. Trump's flip-flop fit his personality, Beck said. When Obama treated him with respect and formality, "Trump was kind of smitten by that," Beck said, noting that Trump was quick to curry favor with someone "if he thought it was in his interest".

But since taking office - with an inaugural address that painted the Obama years as a dark era in which "there was little to celebrate" - Trump's tone towards his predecessor has hardened. Obama meanwhile broke his silence, 10 days after leaving the Oval Office, to voice his support for the wave of protests against Trump's travel ban targeting refugees and citizens of Muslim-majority nations. And any remaining doubts about the hostility between the 44th and 45th presidents were laid to rest by Trump's wiretap allegations Saturday - which Obama rejected via a spokesman as "simply false". — AFP

TRUMP CRACKDOWN A BOON FOR SCAM ARTISTS

US President Donald Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration has sent shockwaves through the Latino population across the United States and brought out scam artists who are preying on the vulnerable community. From unscrupulous attorneys charging thousands of dollars for residency or work visas that never materialize to cheats bilking victims for documents freely available online and people passing themselves off as federal immigration agents, advocacy groups and officials say fraudsters are feasting on immigrant fears.

"When you have people worried and scared, you sadly have those that take advantage," says Enrique Morones, founder and director of the San Diego-based immigrant rights group Border Angels. Morones says he has seen a huge surge in the number of people falling victim to scams since Trump signed an executive order in January targeting the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the country. "The last time we saw a big increase like that was around 2006 (when a controversial immigration bill was proposed) and then it dropped down dramatically," he said. "Now, it's gone up again and the increase is higher than back then because of Trump's rhetoric and the fear he is creating in the community."

Prey on vulnerable

The executive order gives federal agents wider latitude to enforce immigration laws, enabling them to deport broad categories of undocumented immigrants who have not been convicted of any serious crime. Human rights advocates say that while they support criminals being deported, the order has put almost all undocumented immigrants - the majority of them Mexican - at risk. They point to a number of arrests in recent weeks as examples, including that of a father of four who was detained in Los Angeles after dropping one of his US-born children at school and an Arizona woman who had lived in the United States for more than two decades before she was deported last month.

Such cases have sent immigrants - many of whom have little formal education and don't speak English - scrambling for counsel from people posing as attorneys or anyone with an official title promising an easy path to legalization. Many scam artists show up at gatherings of immigrant communities during which they distribute flyers, offer their services or gather names and phone numbers, Morones says. Some people also pose as federal immigration agents to rip people off, the authorities have warned. — AFP

AILING MALAGA APPOINT MICHEL AS THIRD COACH

BARCELONA: Malaga have appointed former Real Madrid winger Michel as coach, the struggling Andalusian club said yesterday just hours after sacking Marcelo Romero following a run of one win in 10 games. Michel, one of the flagbearers of Real's famous 'Quinta del Buitre' generation of youngsters who broke into the first team in 1982 and kick-started a trophy-laden era for the Madrid club, is Malaga's third manager this season. Ex-Tottenham Hotspur and Sevilla coach Juande Ramos quit in December after taking over last summer while Marcelo was sacked with the team 15th in La Liga, seven points above the relegation zone, after a run of seven defeats, two draws and a win. Michel has been a manager since 2005, working in Spain with Rayo Vallecano, Getafe, Sevilla and in Greece with Olympiakos, who he led to three league titles in a row and a domestic cup before being dismissed in 2015. His last job was with French giants Olympique Marseille from the summer of 2015 until he was dismissed in April 2016. — Reuters

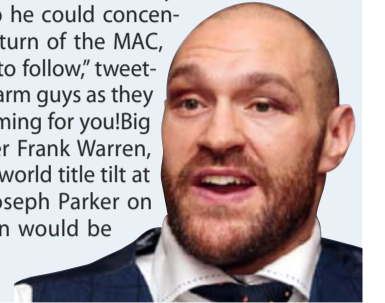


CAMARA ELECTED TO FIFA COUNCIL, OPPONENTS WITHDRAW

CAIRO: Almamy Kabele Camara of Guinea has been elected unopposed to the council of FIFA, a week before African elections for the post were to be held, after both his rivals pulled out hours before FIFA announced the results of background investigations on prospective candidates. Camara was one of three candidates for two places in the open category of the African elections, which also have other categories for the continent's various language groups. But both Danny Jordaan, president of the South African Football Association, and Chabur Goc Alei of South Sudan withdrew without explanation. That leaves a vacancy that will be filled by a supplementary election, officials said yesterday. If either Jordaan or Alei had stayed in the race, he would also have been elected unopposed to the council of world football's governing body. Attempts to contact both yesterday were unsuccessful. The Confederation of African Football and FIFA were notified of their withdrawals on Monday, just hours before FIFA announced that the 10 candidates in the race had all passed integrity checks. Camara will now fill one of the seven seats reserved for Africa on the FIFA council. — Reuters

FORMER CHAMPION FURY HINTS AT RETURN TO RING

LONDON: Troubled former world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury on Monday took to social media to suggest he could be back in the ring on May 13. However, the 28-year-old Englishman whose last bout was his remarkable defeat of the then WBO and WBA world champion Wladimir Klitschko in November 2015 — has to still convince the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBofC) to return his licence. Fury, who has admitted taking cocaine for depression, had his licence taken away last October after he surrendered his world titles so he could concentrate on medical treatment. "Breaking news. Return of the MAC, may 13th, working on an opponent more news to follow," tweeted Fury. "I'm taking on all bums, Keep my belts warm guys as they belong to the king who ever got my belts I'm coming for you! Big or small," he added in a further tweet. Promoter Frank Warren, who has set up Fury's cousin Hughie Fury with a world title tilt at New Zealand's WBO heavyweight champion Joseph Parker on April 1, also tweeted that the former champion would be back sometime soon. — AFP



Therese Johaug

JOHAUG DOPING BAN TOO SHORT, SAYS FIS

OSLO: The International Ski Federation (FIS) said yesterday it had appealed a 13-month doping ban against Norwegian world champion cross-country skier Therese Johaug, which it judged too short, threatening her 2018 Winter Olympic bid. In February, the Norwegian sports federation's arbitration body banned the 28-year-old seven-time world champion for 13 months after she tested positive for traces of the anabolic steroid clostebol, banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), during an out-of-competition drug test on September 16, 2016.

The steroid was contained in a lip cream called Trofodermin, which she had used to treat burns during a training session at high altitude in Italy in late August.

National ski team doctor Fredrik Bendiksen insisted he did not realise the cream contained clostebol, and took full responsibility. He resigned from his post in October. The 13-month suspension, retroactive to October 2016, would enable Johaug to return to competition in November 2017, and take part in the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang in February 2018. Johaug

chose not to appeal the ban. "The FIS doping panel has found that the sanction imposed is on the low end of the range of reasonable sanctions," the FIS wrote in a statement announcing its appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Johaug's lawyer Christian Hjort said he was "disappointed" and called the decision "incomprehensible". "It creates an uncertainty we would rather do without," he told Norwegian television TV2. In announcing its decision to ban Johaug for 13 months, the Norwegian confederation appeared to accept her argument that she had accidentally ingested the steroid, rather than deliberately attempted to cheat.

It acknowledged that she ought to have been more careful about the substances she was taking, but added there was no reason to believe that her use of Trofodermin could have had a performance-enhancing effect.

The FIS stressed however that Johaug failed to read the doping warning label on the product, "despite the fact that the medication was unknown to her and was purchased in a foreign country." — AFP

DISGRACED ATHLETICS CHIEF'S SON SLAMS 'WITCH HUNT'

DAKAR: Papa Massata Diack, son of disgraced former IAAF chief Lamine Diack, slammed corruption allegations against him over the awarding of the 2016 Olympic Games to Rio as a "witch hunt", in an exclusive interview with AFP on Monday.

"Rio won fairly," Papa Massata Diack, who rarely speaks to the international media, insisted to AFP, as he refuted "in the most virulent manner" accusations made against him in the French daily Le Monde. According to Le Monde, three days before the IOC awarded the Games to Rio, Brazilian businessman Cesar Menezes Soares Filho paid \$1.5 million (1.4m euros) to Pamodzi Sports Consulting, the business of Papa Massata Diack, to favour the awarding of the Games to Rio. At the time, Lamine Diack was president of the IAAF and a voting member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Papa Massata Diack acted as a marketing consultant for the IAAF.

"This company (Brazilian) was a client," said Papa Massata Diack of Soares Filho's Matlock Capital Group, slamming "unfounded accusations". According to the newspaper, "magistrates suspect manoeuvres intended to buy the votes of IOC members at the time of the designation". "There is an unworthy witch hunt created around this case, while the investigation is not credible, has not been done in a professional way and (is) contradictory," said Papa Massata Diack. Diack and his father are both under criminal investigation in France, with Lamine Diack charged with corruption and aggravated money laundering. The French judicial investigation, which initially focused on corruption within the IAAF, was extended in December 2015 to the awarding of the 2016 Olympics to Rio and the 2020 Games to Tokyo.

Since December 2015, Papa Massata Diack has been placed on Interpol's list of most wanted persons after an arrest warrant was issued by France in connection with the prosecution of his father. Papa Massata Diack was last year banned for life by the independent IAAF ethics committee over corruption and cover-up allegations linked to Russian doping.

"They should come to Senegal to investigate and I can respond formally instead of organising leaks in the press," said Papa Massata Diack, who lives in Dakar as the Senegalese government has indicated he will not be extradited to France.



DAKAR: Papa Massata Diack, son of former president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) Lamine Diack, speaks during an interview with AFP on Monday in Dakar. Papa Massata Diack, son of former president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) Lamine Diack, defended himself March 6 to have received money in the attribution of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games and denounced a "persecution" in an interview with AFP.

In the interview with AFP, Papa Massata Diack also deplored the treatment of his 83-year-old father, "taken hostage" by France. "They don't even want to grant him temporary release. They want to make him crack psychologically," he said.

FREDERICKS STEPS DOWN

Another cited in Le Monde, Namibian sprinter Frankie Fredericks on Monday stepped down from an IAAF taskforce investigating Russian doping amid a corruption probe.

"I have decided to step aside from the taskforce so that the integrity of its work is not ques-

tioned due to the allegations made against me in Le Monde," the 49-year-old was quoted as saying in an IAAF statement. "It is important that the taskforce's mission is seen as free and fair with no outside influence." Le Monde newspaper on Friday said that Fredericks, a four-time Olympic silver medalist, received nearly \$300,000 from Papa Massata Diack's Pamodzi company on the day Rio won the right to host the 2016 Games.

IAAF president Sebastian Coe has appointed Slovenian former high-jumper Rozle Prezelj to replace Fredericks, who denies any wrongdoing, on the taskforce. — AFP

FREDERICKS QUILTS 2024 OLYMPICS ROLE AMID CORRUPTION PROBE

LAUSANNE: Former sprinter Frankie Fredericks quit yesterday as head of the IOC commission monitoring candidates for the 2024 Olympics amid a probe into money he accepted from a sports marketing chief accused of corruption.

Fredericks, 49, strongly denied any wrongdoing in accepting nearly \$300,000 (283,000 euros) around the day that Rio de Janeiro was awarded the 2016 Olympics.

But said he had "personally decided that it is in the best interests of a good functioning of the International Olympic Committee candidature process that I step aside as chairperson of the 2024 Evaluation Commission, because it is essential that the important work my colleagues are doing is seen as being carried out in a truthful and fair manner."

The Namibian athletics great went on: "I do not wish to become a distraction from this great contest."

The IOC is to decide in September whether Los Angeles or Paris gets the 2024 Olympics. But the decision faces greater scrutiny because of corruption allegations over recent Olympics.

And Fredericks' announcement came one day after he also stepped down as a member of an International Association of Athletics Federations task force on getting doping-tainted Russia back into global sport.

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'NEGATIVE INSINUATIONS'

Fredericks received the sum from Pamodzi Sports Consulting, which is owned by Papa Massata Diack. Diack, alongside his father and former IAAF chief Lamine Diack, faces charges in France over millions of dollars paid to cover up doping failures by Russian athletes. French investigators are also look-

ing into the possibility that bribes were paid over the awarding of the 2016 Olympic Games to Rio and the 2020 Tokyo Games.

Three days before the IOC awarded the Games to Rio on October 2, 2009, Brazilian businessman Arthur Cesar Menezes Soares Filho paid \$1.5 million to Papa Massata Diack.

Another payment of \$500,000 was made around the same time to another account belonging to Diack in Russia. At the time Diack was a marketing consultant to the IAAF. Fredericks has said he had a consultancy deal with Diack's firm. "I categorically deny any direct or indirect involvement in any untoward conduct and confirm that I have never breached any law, regulation or rule of ethics in respect of any IOC election process," Fredericks said in his statement. "The articles do not only target me, they target the integrity of the International Olympic Committee bidding and elections process for host cities altogether."

"Of course all election processes should be seen to be free and fair. This is why I have been and am still actively cooperating with the IOC Ethics Commission in order for them to conduct a proper and independent investigation." Fredericks said he had made a statement to the IOC ethics commission on the case and "will continue to give my full cooperation to a proper investigation of these reports and then await the outcome of this independent process."

"It is of course in my highest interests to clear myself of the negative insinuations against me and my role within the IOC as soon as possible in order to prevent any further damage to my reputation and that of the IOC." The Namibian was one of the star sprinters of the 1990s. Running in the 100 metres and 200 metres, he won two silver medals at the 1992 Olympics and two more at the 1996 Games. He is Namibia's only Olympic medal winner. — AFP



MCDONALD'S SPONSORS 'SPORTY INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP'

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to support and encourage local sports initiatives, McDonald's Kuwait recently sponsored (Diamond Sponsor) the Sporty International Championship, which was held at Boulevard Football Grounds during the period from February 24th to February 26th. This youth football tournament was organized by Creative Sports Center, and was held under the patronage of the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Khaled Nasser Al-Roudan, and the Public Authority for Sports.

The Championship was the first of its kind to take place in the region, bringing together 16 teams from across Europe and Middle East - including teams from the Kuwait, UK, Bahrain,

Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Egypt. At the end of the thrilling three-day competition, the final match took place on February 26th between Al-Arabi from Kuwait and Al-Ahli from Saudi Arabia, and was attended by Dr Hmoud Flaiteh, General Director at the Public Authority for Sports, and Ahmed Medeth, Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the Sporty International Championship. After an intense match, Al Ahli nabbed the final championship title winning the game with a score of 1-0.

Speaking about the sponsorship, Sherif Coutry, Marketing Director at McDonald's Kuwait, said: "Sports continues to be an integral part of the McDonald's culture, and we have

always been committed to raising awareness of the importance of sports in people's daily lives. In fact, promoting an active and balanced lifestyle is truly a core component of our philosophy at McDonald's."

Coutry further added: "We at McDonald's Kuwait are proud to be a Kuwaiti owned and operated company, and we are extremely proud to be a part of the local community."

Therefore, as part of our efforts to give back to this community, we devote special attention to supporting and encouraging the local sports culture. Throughout the year we spearhead several of our own sports initiatives and we also seek to support and sponsor a diverse range of local sporting programs and events."

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KARACHI: World cricket's governing body plans to send a team of international players to Pakistan in September as part of efforts to revive home fixtures disrupted by a deadly militant attack in 2009, officials said yesterday. The announcement comes days after the final of the Pakistan Super League was held in Lahore without incident.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shaharyar Khan said the PSL event, which featured foreign stars and was hailed by fans as a unifying national force, had paved the

way for the return of international matches.

"I have received a letter from Giles Clarke, the head of a (International Cricket Council) task force on Pakistan, who has praised the successful staging of PSL final and has promised to bring a World XI in September," Khan told AFP. The Guardian had earlier quoted Clarke, who is also the president of the England and Wales Cricket Board, as saying: "The terrorists cannot win and cricket must not give up on Pakistan."

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Pakistan since Islamist militants attacked a bus carrying Sri Lankan cricketers in 2009, killing eight people and wounding nine including six visiting cricketers.

Visits by minnows Afghanistan and Zimbabwe did little to calm the nerves of bigger opponents. Khan added: "Clarke had come to Pakistan in January this year and was impressed with the security arrangements which we showed him for future matches." Sunday's PSL final was held amid security that resembled a military operation,

involving more than 8,000 heavily-armed police and paramilitaries.

The World XI is expected to play four Twenty20 matches against a Pakistan XI on September 22, 23, 28 and 29.

The visiting team will likely feature two-time World Twenty20 winner Darren Sammy and fellow West Indian Marlon Samuels as well as England's Dawid Malan and Chris Jordan. Sammy had earlier told AFP he had felt safe playing in Pakistan.

"I had my doubts and fears before coming

to Lahore and when I spoke to my mother she said 'Go, boy, and play and I will be on my knees praying for you', and my wife said the same thing," he said. "I am glad that I came for a cause and it was as safe as playing in St Lucia or India or anywhere in the world. Pakistan fans deserve to see their players playing, which they have not done for a while."

The PCB is also hoping Bangladesh and Sri Lanka-whose security delegates visited Lahore for PSL final-will consider touring Pakistan later this year. — AFP



GALLE: Sri Lankan cricketer Asela Gunaratne (R) is watched by Bangladesh wicket-keeper Liton Das as he plays a shot during the first day of the opening Test match between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh at the Galle International Cricket Stadium in Galle yesterday. — AFP

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GALLE: Kusal Mendis made the most of a first-ball reprieve and went on to score an unbeaten century yesterday as Sri Lanka posted a commanding 321-4 in the first Test against Bangladesh.

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Bangladesh pace bowler Subashis Roy thought he had Mendis out for a golden duck when wicketkeeper Liton Das dived to his right to take a catch off an inside edge.

But a TV replay showed the bowler had overstepped, prompting the umpires to declare a no ball and enable the 22-year-old Mendis to go on to compile his second Test century. Mendis reached three figures with a straight four off Soumya Sarkar in a 242-ball innings that has so far featured 18 fours and two sixes. Mendis and Gunaratne's massive partnership put the hosts firmly in control of the match by close of play after they were 92-3 at one stage. Gunaratne, who replaced injured regular skipper Angelo Mathews in the starting lineup, hit seven fours in his second half-century in three Tests before he was bowled by Taskin Ahmed.

The pair came together after the injury-

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Bangladesh omitted left-arm spinner Tajjul Islam from their side after the selectors opted for a three-man pace attack.

Liton was keeping wicket for the tourists after captain Mushfiqur Rahim, wanting to concentrate on his batting, handed him the gloves. The hosts went in with three spinners, meaning all-rounder Dhananjaya de Silva missed out after playing the last Test during Sri Lanka's recent tour of South Africa. The second Test, which will be Bangladesh's 100th, will be in Colombo from March 15-19. — AFP

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Excessive appealing and showing dissent at an umpire's decision can result in a warning, followed by five penalty runs for a second offence. — AFP

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- MCC's new Code of Laws to be gender neutral

ASHWIN GRABS SIX AS INDIA STUN AUSTRALIA

BANGALORE: Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin grabbed six wickets as India stopped Australia in their tracks to win a fiery second Test and level the series 1-1 yesterday.

Australia, needing 188 for victory, were bowled out for just 112 half-an-hour into the final session on day four at Bangalore's M. Chinnaswamy Stadium. Tempers frayed between the world's top two ranked sides as the hosts bounced back from a humiliating opening Test defeat in Pune. Ashwin (6-41), who bagged his 25th five-wicket haul in his 47th Test, took the final wicket of Nathan Lyon, caught and bowled for two, sparking celebrations among the Indian players. "After losing the first Test the way we did, we wanted to bounce back and not show anyone but ourselves what we are made of," said India skipper Virat Kohli.

"They showed the intent and the belief that we can win from any position. It was about taking responsibility. The way they showed heart and character, along with the crowd, is unbelievable." Cheteshwar Pujara (92) and Ajinkya Rahane (52) put on a crucial 118-run partnership for India's fifth wicket before the Australian bowlers struck back in the morning session.

But the tourists faltered in their run chase to leave the series perfectly poised heading in to the third Test in Ranchi from March 16. "This afternoon didn't go to plan," said Australia captain Steve Smith. "Ashwin did what he's done so well over here for a very long time-hit good areas and challenged our batters, and we weren't up to it today. "But I'm proud of the way the boys have competed over the last four days."

DRESSING-ROOM DRAMA

Australia started their second innings briskly, scoring at over four runs an over, but were soon rattled as Ashwin got into his groove, trapping a dangerous-looking David Warner lbw for 17.

"One good thing I did was when wickets were not coming, I kept the runs down," said Ashwin.

"We just spoke inside the dressing room to bowl some short spells and keep changing over. That is why we were rotating so we could attack through such short balls," he added.

Shaun Marsh became Yadav's first lbw victim as he tried to pad away an in-swinging delivery but was given out. The batsmen decided not to waste their single remaining review but TV replays suggested the ball would have missed the off stump by quite a distance.

It was Smith's dismissal that brought the home crowd to its feet, however, as Yadav's delivery stayed low to hit the star batsman's lower pad for lbw. Drama followed after Smith apparently waited for a signal from the dressing room to seek a referral, something he is not allowed to do, before the on-field umpire quickly ushered him away. India skipper Virat Kohli was angry at Smith's antics and the umpires were required to cool tempers down. Earlier Australian pace bowler Josh Hazlewood claimed career-best figures of 6-67 to help bowl out India for 274 before lunch. — AFP



BANGALORE: Indian captain Virat Kohli (C) and teammates celebrate their match victory against Australia on the fourth day of the second Test match between India and Australia at The M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

BANGALORE, India: Final scoreboard of the second Test between India and Australia in Bangalore yesterday:

India 1st innings 189 (Rahul 90; Lyon 8-50)	21.1-3-36-2, M. Marsh 3-0-4-0
Australia 1st innings 276 (Renshaw 60, S. Marsh 66; Jadeja 6-63)	
India 2nd innings (overnight 213-4; Pujara 79 not out, Rahane 40 not out)	
L. Rahul c Smith b O'Keefe	51
A. Mukund b Hazlewood	16
C. Pujara c M. Marsh b Hazlewood	92
V. Kohli lbw b Hazlewood	15
R. Jadeja b Hazlewood	2
A. Rahane lbw b Starc	52
K. Nair b Starc	0
W. Saha not out	20
R. Ashwin b Hazlewood	4
U. Yadav c Warner b Hazlewood	1
I. Sharma c S. Marsh b O'Keefe	6
Extras (b11, w4)	15
Total (all out, 97.1 overs)	274
Fall of wickets: 1-39 (Mukund), 2-84 (Rahul), 3-112 (Kohli), 4-120 (Jadeja), 5-238 (Rahane), 6-238 (Nair), 7-242 (Pujara), 8-246 (Ashwin), 9-258 (Yadav), 10-274 (Sharma)	
Bowling: Starc 16-1-74-2 (2w), Hazlewood 24-5-67-6, Lyon 33-4-82-0, O'Keefe	
Australia 2nd innings (target 188)	
D. Warner lbw b Ashwin	17
M. Renshaw c Saha b Sharma	5
S. Smith lbw b Yadav	28
S. Marsh lbw b Yadav	9
P. Handscomb c Saha b Ashwin	24
M. Marsh c Nair b Ashwin	13
M. Wade? c Saha b Ashwin	0
M. Starc b Ashwin	1
S. O'Keefe b Jadeja	2
N. Lyon c&b Ashwin	2
J. Hazlewood not out	0
Extras (b8, lb2, w1)	11
Total (all out; 35.4 overs)	112
Fall of wickets: 1-22 (Renshaw), 2-42 (Warner), 3-67 (S. Marsh), 4-74 (Smith), 5-101 (M. Marsh), 6-101 (Wade), 7-103 (Starc), 8-110 (O'Keefe), 9-110 (Handscomb), 10-112 (Lyon)	
Bowling: Sharma 6-1-28-1 (1w), Ashwin 12.4-4-41-6, Yadav 9-2-30-2, Jadeja 8-5-3-1	
Result: India beat Australia by 75 runs.	

PIETERSEN REJOINS SURREY FOR T20 STINT

LONDON: Kevin Pietersen is to make a shock return to county cricket with Surrey after opting to play for the London-based side in English county cricket's Twenty20 Blast rather than the Caribbean Premier League.

Former England batsman Pietersen, 36, last played for Surrey-his third English county-in 2015. "I'm absolutely over the moon to be joining Surrey again," said Pietersen, who had been due to play in the CPL for St Lucia, in a club statement. "I've missed playing here at home and it's going to be a special feeling walking out at The Oval again. "We've got some seriously talented guys in our team and I'm very confident we can achieve something really special this season."

"I've had some great times at this club and ground over the years; it's a special place with top people, and I'm looking forward to once again being part of it," explained Pietersen, who recently pulled out of playing for St Lucia in this year's CPL. In a separate video, filmed at Wentworth Golf Club, Pietersen-who also withdrew from this year's lucrative Indian Premier League because he felt he needed a break after a busy, globe-trotting schedule-said: "One of the great things is I'll be at home all summer. I've had an incredibly bad winter for travel and one of the reasons for doing it was to stay at home all summer. "I'll spend a lot of time on the cricket fields of England, and on the golf courses of England too."

'INFECTIOUS WORK ETHIC'

For all the reported discontent he caused within the England set-up, Pietersen has always been well-regarded at The Oval and Surrey director of cricket Alec Stewart said: "Re-signing KP is a massive boost to the club and the NatWest T20 Blast competition."

"To have a player of his undoubted calibre available to us will add strength and experience to our squad and I'm sure all our fans will enjoy seeing him back playing in England again."

"His work ethic and appetite for success are infectious and our squad have always enjoyed having him around the dressing room and per-



NEW DELHI: This file photo taken on May 01, 2012 shows Delhi Daredevils batsman Kevin Pietersen playing a shot during the IPL Twenty20 cricket match. Kevin Pietersen is to make a shock return to county cricket with Surrey after opting to play for the London-based side in English county cricket's Twenty20 Blast. — AFP

forming out in the middle," Stewart, like Pietersen a former England captain, added.

Pietersen is now due to make his first appearance of the 2017 English season against Essex on July 19 and is due to be available for the rest of the revamped tournament.

One of the most talented batsmen of his generation, South Africa-born Pietersen scored over 8,000 runs in 104 Tests for England at an average of nearly 48 including 23 hundreds.

He also helped England win the 2010 World Twenty20 in the Caribbean-still their only major international limited overs trophy.

Yet his often strained and bitter relationship with the officialdom finally reached breaking point after England suffered a 5-0 Ashes thrashing in Australia in 2013/14 and he was never selected for international duty again, with the England and Wales Cricket Board citing a need to rebuild "team ethic and philosophy" as a rea-

son for his exile. In 2015, ECB chairman Colin Graves at a possible return to England duty if Pietersen scored sufficient runs in county cricket.

But almost as soon as he had made a triple century for Surrey against Leicestershire, ECB cricket director Andrew Strauss-who had both captained and played under Pietersen for England-made it clear an international recall was out of the question.

His hopes of an England comeback dashed, Pietersen opted out of the 2016 county season and has since become a T'gun for hire, appearing in various Twenty20 leagues in India, the West Indies, Australia and South Africa.

Pietersen was most recently involved in the Pakistan Super League, largely staged in the United Arab Emirates, but withdrew from the Quetta Gladiators side that lost last weekend's final because of security fears concerning the match being staged in Lahore. — AFP

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Australia, needing 188 for victory, were bowled out for just 112 half-an-hour into the final session on day four at Bangalore's M. Chinnaswamy Stadium. Tempers frayed between the world's top two ranked sides as the hosts bounced back from a humiliating opening Test defeat in Pune. Ashwin (6-41), who bagged his 25th five-wicket haul in his 47th Test, took the final wicket of Nathan Lyon, caught and bowled for two, sparking celebrations among the Indian players. "After losing the first Test the way we did, we wanted to bounce back and not show anyone but ourselves what we are made of," said India skipper Virat Kohli.

"They showed the intent and the belief that we can win from any position. It was about taking responsibility. The way they showed heart and character, along with the crowd, is unbelievable." Cheteshwar Pujara (92) and Ajinkya Rahane (52) put on a crucial 118-run partnership for India's fifth wicket before the Australian bowlers struck back in the morning session.

But the tourists faltered in their run chase to leave the series perfectly poised heading in to the third Test in Ranchi from March 16. "This afternoon didn't go to plan," said Australia captain Steve Smith. "Ashwin did what he's done so well over here for a very long time-hit good areas and challenged our batters, and we weren't up to it today. "But I'm proud of the way the boys have competed over the last four days."

DRESSING-ROOM DRAMA

Australia started their second innings briskly, scoring at over four runs an over, but were soon rattled as Ashwin got into his groove, trapping a dangerous-looking David Warner lbw for 17.

"One good thing I did was when wickets were not coming, I kept the runs down," said Ashwin.

"We just spoke inside the dressing room to bowl some short spells and keep changing over. That is why we were rotating so we could attack through such short balls," he added.

Shaun Marsh became Yadav's first lbw victim as he tried to pad away an in-swinging delivery but was given out. The batsmen decided not to waste their single remaining review but TV replays suggested the ball would have missed the off stump by quite a distance.

It was Smith's dismissal that brought the home crowd to its feet, however, as Yadav's delivery stayed low to hit the star batsman's lower pad for lbw. Drama followed after Smith apparently waited for a signal from the dressing room to seek a referral, something he is not allowed to do, before the on-field umpire quickly ushered him away. India skipper Virat Kohli was angry at Smith's antics and the umpires were required to cool tempers down. Earlier Australian pace bowler Josh Hazlewood claimed career-best figures of 6-67 to help bowl out India for 274 before lunch. — AFP



BANGALORE: Indian captain Virat Kohli (C) and teammates celebrate their match victory against Australia on the fourth day of the second Test match between India and Australia at The M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

BANGALORE, India: Final scoreboard of the second Test between India and Australia in Bangalore yesterday:

India 1st innings 189 (Rahul 90; Lyon 8-50)	21.1-3-36-2, M. Marsh 3-0-4-0
Australia 1st innings 276 (Renshaw 60, S. Marsh 66; Jadeja 6-63)	
India 2nd innings (overnight 213-4; Pujara 79 not out, Rahane 40 not out)	Australia 2nd innings (target 188)
L. Rahul c Smith b O'Keefe	D. Warner lbw b Ashwin
A. Mukund b Hazlewood	M. Renshaw c Saha b Sharma
C. Pujara c M. Marsh b Hazlewood	S. Smith lbw b Yadav
V. Kohli lbw b Hazlewood	S. Marsh lbw b Yadav
R. Jadeja b Hazlewood	P. Handscomb c Saha b Ashwin
A. Rahane lbw b Starc	M. Marsh c Nair b Ashwin
K. Nair b Starc	M. Wade? c Saha b Ashwin
W. Saha not out	M. Starc b Ashwin
R. Ashwin b Hazlewood	S. O'Keefe b Jadeja
U. Yadav c Warner b Hazlewood	N. Lyon c&b Ashwin
I. Sharma c S. Marsh b O'Keefe	J. Hazlewood not out
Extras (b11, w4)	Extras (b8, lb2, w1)
Total (all out, 97.1 overs)	Total (all out; 35.4 overs)
Fall of wickets: 1-39 (Mukund), 2-84 (Rahul), 3-112 (Kohli), 4-120 (Jadeja), 5-238 (Rahane), 6-238 (Nair), 7-242 (Pujara), 8-246 (Ashwin), 9-258 (Yadav), 10-274 (Sharma)	Fall of wickets: 1-22 (Renshaw), 2-42 (Warner), 3-67 (S. Marsh), 4-74 (Smith), 5-101 (M. Marsh), 6-101 (Wade), 7-103 (Starc), 8-110 (O'Keefe), 9-110 (Handscomb), 10-112 (Lyon)
Bowling: Starc 16-1-74-2 (2w), Hazlewood 24-5-67-6, Lyon 33-4-82-0, O'Keefe	Bowling: Sharma 6-1-28-1 (1w), Ashwin 12.4-4-41-6, Yadav 9-2-30-2, Jadeja 8-5-3-1
	Result: India beat Australia by 75 runs.

PIETERSEN REJOINS SURREY FOR T20 STINT

LONDON: Kevin Pietersen is to make a shock return to county cricket with Surrey after opting to play for the London-based side in English county cricket's Twenty20 Blast rather than the Caribbean Premier League.

Former England batsman Pietersen, 36, last played for Surrey-his third English county-in 2015. "I'm absolutely over the moon to be joining Surrey again," said Pietersen, who had been due to play in the CPL for St Lucia, in a club statement. "I've missed playing here at home and it's going to be a special feeling walking out at The Oval again. "We've got some seriously talented guys in our team and I'm very confident we can achieve something really special this season."

"I've had some great times at this club and ground over the years; it's a special place with top people, and I'm looking forward to once again being part of it," explained Pietersen, who recently pulled out of playing for St Lucia in this year's CPL. In a separate video, filmed at Wentworth Golf Club, Pietersen-who also withdrew from this year's lucrative Indian Premier League because he felt he needed a break after a busy, globe-trotting schedule-said: "One of the great things is I'll be at home all summer. I've had an incredibly bad winter for travel and one of the reasons for doing it was to stay at home all summer. "I'll spend a lot of time on the cricket fields of England, and on the golf courses of England too."

'INFECTIOUS WORK ETHIC'

For all the reported discontent he caused within the England set-up, Pietersen has always been well-regarded at The Oval and Surrey director of cricket Alec Stewart said: "Re-signing KP is a massive boost to the club and the NatWest T20 Blast competition."

"To have a player of his undoubted calibre available to us will add strength and experience to our squad and I'm sure all our fans will enjoy seeing him back playing in England again."

"His work ethic and appetite for success are infectious and our squad have always enjoyed having him around the dressing room and per-



NEW DELHI: This file photo taken on May 01, 2012 shows Delhi Daredevils batsman Kevin Pietersen playing a shot during the IPL Twenty20 cricket match. Kevin Pietersen is to make a shock return to county cricket with Surrey after opting to play for the London-based side in English county cricket's Twenty20 Blast. — AFP

forming out in the middle," Stewart, like Pietersen a former England captain, added.

Pietersen is now due to make his first appearance of the 2017 English season against Essex on July 19 and is due to be available for the rest of the revamped tournament.

One of the most talented batsmen of his generation, South Africa-born Pietersen scored over 8,000 runs in 104 Tests for England at an average of nearly 48 including 23 hundreds.

He also helped England win the 2010 World Twenty20 in the Caribbean-still their only major international limited overs trophy.

Yet his often strained and bitter relationship with the officialdom finally reached breaking point after England suffered a 5-0 Ashes thrashing in Australia in 2013/14 and he was never selected for international duty again, with the England and Wales Cricket Board citing a need to rebuild "team ethic and philosophy" as a rea-

son for his exile. In 2015, ECB chairman Colin Graves at a possible return to England duty if Pietersen scored sufficient runs in county cricket.

But almost as soon as he had made a triple century for Surrey against Leicestershire, ECB cricket director Andrew Strauss-who had both captained and played under Pietersen for England-made it clear an international recall was out of the question.

His hopes of an England comeback dashed, Pietersen opted out of the 2016 county season and has since become a T'gun for hire, appearing in various Twenty20 leagues in India, the West Indies, Australia and South Africa.

Pietersen was most recently involved in the Pakistan Super League, largely staged in the United Arab Emirates, but withdrew from the Quetta Gladiators side that lost last weekend's final because of security fears concerning the match being staged in Lahore. — AFP

PREVIEW

BELIEF CAN SPUR CITY ON TO REPEAT 2014 WIN: TOURE

MANCHESTER: Yaya Toure says making up the ground on Chelsea to win the Premier League title is not beyond his club Manchester City if they retain belief in themselves as they did in 2014.

The 33-year-old Ivory Coast midfielder who has battled his way back into favour with City manager Pep Guardiola after a public spat with his agent and the Spanish coach earlier this season—concedes the 11 point difference will be tough to overhaul.

However, a fifth successive win at home to Stoke—they have not lost in nine in all competitions—on Wednesday would at least keep some pressure on Antonio Conte's Chelsea side.

Yet their previous two league title wins

both involved late runs to overtake teams with seemingly unassailable leads—in 2012 overhauling city rivals Manchester United and 2014 when they did the same to Liverpool. City trailed Liverpool by nine points with five games left—albeit with two matches in hand on the Merseysiders—and recovered to win the league by two points.

"We just hope. The Premier League this year is going to be very demanding and very difficult," said Toure. "When you see Chelsea play, they play with confidence and they are strong. We expect them to slip up, maybe a couple of times."

'WE HAVE TO BELIEVE'

"But they have good momentum and

they also play fewer games than nearly all of the other teams in the top four because they are not in Europe. That is a big advantage for them. "But we just have to believe, because we did that in 2014. Yeah, we have to hope it's possible again."

The loss of striker Gabriel Jesus to a broken metatarsal in February might have stalled City's progress, but the good news for Guardiola is Sergio Aguero has taken the opportunity to reassert himself.

Aguero was dropped in January following the arrival of Jesus from Brazilian club Palmeiras, and there was much speculation that the Argentine international may soon be leaving the club.

Guardiola, for his part, has always said

he wanted Aguero to stay; he has been rewarded by the forward's recent form. His goal in Sunday's 2-0 victory at bottom club Sunderland was his fifth in three matches. Under the guidance of former City manager Mark Hughes, Stoke have become remarkably consistent, finishing ninth for each of the last three seasons, and on course to make that four.

They have, however, failed to beat any side currently in the top half of the table this season, and have developed a worrying recent habit of losing heavily to the top teams. They were particularly poor in a 4-0 defeat at Tottenham in their last away game on February 26, but responded well to beat struggling Middlesbrough 2-0 last Saturday.

In-form forward Marko Arnautovic is doubtful because of illness. Swiss winger Xherdan Shaqiri, though, is available after missing five matches with a calf problem.

Goalkeeper Jack Butland has been cleared to return to full training almost a year after breaking his ankle while playing for England, but will not face City, and may not be risked before the start of next season. "It's huge for Jack but there's still a big step to be taken for him," said Hughes.

"Before the end of the season, if we think it's right and Jack hasn't had any complications, then we'd look to get him some game time. "It's whether or not we take that opportunity. We might decide to make sure we get him right for pre-season." — AFP

BARCA CAN HIT PSG FOR SIX, INSISTS 'CONVINCED' ENRIQUE

BARCELONA: Outgoing Barcelona boss Luis Enrique claimed his side have the firepower to stick six goals past Paris Saint-Germain as they attempt to make Champions League history by overturning a 4-0 first leg deficit today.

"If they can score four goals against us, we can score six," said Enrique yesterday. "We have nothing to lose and a lot to win." The fierce criticism that came Enrique's way after their humiliation in Paris three weeks ago has eased after he announced last week that he will step down after three seasons as coach at the end of the campaign.

Rather than show any ill-effects from Enrique's decision, optimism in the Catalan capital of a stunning fightback has soared after thrashing Sporting Gijon and Celta Vigo 6-1 and 5-0 respectively in their last two outings.

"Despite the fact that the result from the first leg is very one-sided, we are only halfway through the tie," added an uncharacteristically buoyant Enrique.

"In 95 minutes, an infinite amount of things can happen. I am convinced that at some point we will be close to qualifying."

"That isn't to say we will do it, but that we will be close. And, when you are close, our confidence will soar and theirs could start to diminish." No team in the history of the Champions League has ever turned around a four-goal deficit.

NOTHING IMPOSSIBLE

However, the statistics back up Enrique's

confidence. The results from more than a third of his home games as Barca coach would be good enough to at least force the game to extra time.

That record includes all three of Barca's Champions League games this season as they dismantled Celtic (7-0), Manchester City (4-0) and Borussia Moenchengladbach (4-0) by a combined score of 15-0.

Luis Suarez was also bullish as he claimed if there is one team capable of mounting a historic comeback it is Barcelona. "We are aware that it is a difficult situation to turn the tie around, but in football nothing is impossible," said Suarez.

"We have to be convinced that we can do it. If there is a team that can score four goals, I think it is Barcelona but with our philosophy of how to play and controlling the game." However, the Uruguayan striker pleaded for patience from an expectant near 100,000 fans at the Camp Nou.

An away goal for PSG would mean Barca would have to score at least six to have any chance of reaching the quarter-finals for a 10th straight season. "We are aware that the game lasts 94 or 95 minutes and we have to be ambitious but also patient."

"We hope that the fans understand and we are the first ones that want to make history, but we have to play with a cool head."

Barca are at full-strength with captain Andres Iniesta replacing Rafinha or Ivan Rakitic likely to be the Enrique's only change from the side that thrashed Celta at the weekend. — AFP



LONDON: West Ham's Manuel Lanzini, left, and Chelsea's Pedro battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between West Ham and Chelsea at London Stadium, Monday. — AP

SOCCKER

HAZARD AND COSTA RESTORE CHELSEA'S 10-POINT LEAD

	WestHam	1
	Chelsea	2

LONDON: Eden Hazard's dazzling goal inspired Chelsea to a 2-1 victory at West Ham United on Monday as Antonio Conte's side restored their 10-point advantage in the Premier League.

Hazard finished off a lightning counter-attack in the 25th minute and Diego Costa's 49th league goal for Chelsea rubber-stamped victory before Manuel Lanzini belatedly replied in stoppage time. "I think we played a good game," Chelsea manager Conte told Sky Sports. "We controlled the game. It's a pity for the goal we conceded at the end. To give away a clean sheet at the end is not good."

"We must improve in this situation. But I'm pleased. We showed great concentration and commitment and will to win." With Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City having won at the weekend, this was a test of Chelsea's nerve, but their assured display suggested there will be few bumps on the road to the title.

Hazard, in particular, brimmed with self-belief, at one point using his back to play a showy pass to N'Golo Kante, while Costa took his

tally for the season to 18 goals in all competitions. West Ham had won 2-1 when the sides last met in the League Cup in October, but Lanzini's late strike gave the final score at London Stadium a slightly misleading gloss for the home side. "Chelsea are where they are for a reason," said West Ham manager Slaven Bilic, whose team remain 11th in the table.

"To beat them, you need them to make mistakes, not the other way round." Andy Carroll's return after a month out with a groin injury gave Bilic's men a welcome attacking focal point and they looked for the towering striker at every opportunity.

Robert Snodgrass and Lanzini curled a succession of testing crosses into the Chelsea box, but the visitors withstood the aerial onslaught before taking the lead in ruthless fashion. All it took was a misplaced Mark Noble pass to set Chelsea off, with Kante intercepting the loose ball before ferrying a pass down the left touchline to Hazard, who moved it infield to Pedro.

FAN INTRUSION

No sooner had he released the ball than Hazard was darting in behind the West Ham defence. Pedro's pass found the Belgian and he nudged the ball wide of advancing goalkeeper Darren Randolph before steering a shot into the vacant net for his 11th goal of the season.

In a troubling moment, an irate male West Ham fan in a black anorak and jeans vaulted the advertising hoardings and attempted to confront

Hazard as he celebrated, but was held back by stewards. It took until the 40th minute for West Ham to muster an attempt worthy of the name, Lanzini swapping passes with Noble and blazing over. They were fortunate to reach the interval only a goal behind after Chelsea spurned three clear-cut chances in rapid succession.

Hazard's cross was completely missed by Costa, Victor Moses saw an effort blocked by a stretching Aaron Cresswell and Pedro's follow-up was palmed away by Randolph.

Costa atoned for his miscue five minutes into the second half by doubling Chelsea's lead, guiding the ball into the net with his knee after Cesc Fabregas's corner had glanced off Pedro Obiang's head.

Marcos Alonso threatened to kill West Ham off for good moments later when he danced past Jose Fonte and dinked a shot wide.

But it proved the precursor to the hosts' strongest period of the match. Carroll curled in an effort that brushed the roof netting, Snodgrass worried Thibaut Courtois with a cross-shot and Fonte headed wide moments after Moses had blocked from Sofiane Feghouli.

Coste stiffened his midfield in response, sending on Nemanja Matic for Pedro and switching to a 5-3-2 configuration.

The switch succeeded in snuffing out the hosts' revival and although Lanzini halved the arrears with a low drive, after Randolph had saved from Costa at the other end, victory never looked in doubt. — AFP



SANT JOAN DESPI: Barcelona's midfielder Sergio Busquets (L) and Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (C) take part in a training session at the Sports Center FC Barcelona Joan Gamper in Sant Joan Despi, near Barcelona yesterday, on the eve of the UEFA Champions League football match between FC Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain. — AFP

DORTMUND OUT TO ADD TO BENFICA'S GERMANY MISERY

BERLIN: Defender Sokratis Papastathopoulos says Borussia Dortmund must give '300 percent' in today's Champions League showdown in their bid to reach the quarter-finals and add to Benfica's miserable record in Germany. Benfica arrive in Dortmund for the last 16, second-leg, clash holding a precarious 1-0 lead after Konstantinos Mitroglou's winning goal in the first-leg win in Lisbon.

Benfica's record on German soil is poor with 14 defeats in 22 European games and just two victories.

However, Rui Vitoria's Benfica has won their last seven games in all competitions, including the first leg when Borussia's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang had a night to forget—missing four chances including a penalty.

Dortmund were dealt a pre-match blow on Saturday when Germany winger Marco Reus tore his left hamstring in their 6-2 rout of Leverkusen as Aubameyang netted twice to stretch his league goals tally this season to 21. "I'll have to keep my fingers crossed from

the stands. I don't think we have to change much—just score a few goals," said Reus.

Despite the goal-fest against Leverkusen, defensive lynchpin Sokratis insists Dortmund "have to play 300 percent better" and use their home advantage to reach the quarter-finals. "It would be very bad if we didn't make it," admitted the Greece international as victory would earn Dortmund 10 million euros (\$10.5M), which includes a 6.5m euros premium from UEFA, for reaching the last eight.

Benfica's in-form forward Mitroglou, who grew up in Germany, can rival Aubameyang having scored 18 goals in his last 17 games.

Their Brazilian midfielder Filipe Augusto has shaken off an ankle injury, while Dortmund are missing midfielders Sven Bender, Sebastian Rode, Mario Goetze and Reus. With play-maker Reus sidelined, the pressure falls on teenage winger Ousmane Dembele and Aubameyang to provide the goals, but defender Marc Bartra says patience is required. "It's going to be difficult, we must remain patient and calm," said the ex-Barcelona centre-back. "We have to stand up well at the back, the goals will come."

Benfica boss Vitoria says his side team will be "playing for their lives" at Dortmund's Signal Iduna Park and it's famous South Stand, nicknamed the 'Gelbe Wand' (Yellow wall), which holds 25,000 home fans.

Dortmund fans will look to one of the club's famous nights, on December 4, 1963, when they swept Benfica aside 5-0 at home, winning the European Champions' Cup first-round tie 6-2 on aggregate, despite having lost the first-leg 2-1 in Portugal.

For added motivation, according to German daily Bild, Dortmund's club bosses have earmarked 100,000 euros per player as an extra bonus. — AFP

FIFA'S TOP WOMAN WANTS END TO MEN'S W CUP DOMINATION

ZURICH: Fatma Samoura, the highest ranking woman at FIFA, is attacking football stereotypes in a way that the sport's male establishment may find uncomfortable and she has her sights set on the World Cup. Samoura, a former UN diplomat who became FIFA secretary general and right hand woman to president Gianni Infantino in June, told AFP in an interview that it was demeaning for women's football to rely on the men's World Cup for finance.

Samoura said crowds at the women's World Cup in Canada in 2015 and the women's African Nations Cup in Cameroon last year proved the need to change emphasis. "Normally when the women play in Africa, except for finals, there are not even 2,000 spectators. There (in Cameroon) at each match, there were at least 13,000 people. It was extraordinary," Samoura said in an interview ahead of international women's day today.

"That shows that women's football, which was the poor relation in football, is taking on a new dimension and I believe this rise is irreversible. "Now it is essential to invest in its visibility and attract sponsors to make it an autonomous sport."

"Today, it is the men's World Cup that finances all the other tournaments. It is unacceptable that in the 21st century, with 50 percent of the population made up by women, that we are entirely dependent on one tournament to finance women's activities."

60 MILLION TARGET

FIFA now has a department that concentrates on women's football and federations are set criteria on developing women's football before they get grants from the world body.

"This is an imperative for the 211 member federations," Samoura said. "Our aim is to have 60 million women registered and playing football between now and 2026. That leaves us less than 10 years. It is only through the member federations that we will reach this number."

A 2014 FIFA survey put the number of registered women players at fewer than five million around the world. Samoura, 55, cut her diplomatic teeth working with the World Food Programme and with refugees in Chad. Becoming the number two official at scandal-tainted FIFA was a completely new challenge. "FIFA exists since 1904 and so it took 112 years after its creation for a non-European woman, a Muslim, to take up this post. "Clearly this is a little bit like a glass ceiling falling."

"For me this is also an opportunity to show the rest of the world that football is opening up and that diversity can be applied to football, including in its upper levels." Samoura said she had been accepted with respect at FIFA.

"I come up against obstacles, but not because I am a woman, more because people are not used to upsetting traditions." Football's power brokers



Fatma Samoura

know that Samoura came from the UN machinery. "There are also many themes in football that are dear to me," she added. "Talking about diversity, inclusion, defending human rights is something I was doing every day for 20 years. Clearly there are still a lot of stereotypes in the world of football, as there is sometimes in politics. — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Manchester City v Stoke City 23:00
beIN SPORTS 4 HD

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Barcelona v Paris Saint-Germain 22:45
beIN SPORTS 1 HD
Borussia Dortmund v Benfica 22:45
beIN SPORTS 2 HD

Sports

Disgraced
athletics chief's
son slams
'witch hunt'Ashwin grabs
six as India
stun Australia

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017

ENGLISH FA TO APPOINT MORE WOMEN MEMBERS TO THE BOARD Page 18



NAPLES: Napoli goalkeeper Pepe Reina, right, punches the ball away during the Champions League round of 16, second leg, soccer match between Napoli and Real Madrid at the San Paolo stadium in Naples, Italy, yesterday. — AP

RAMOS, MORATA CRUSH NAPOLI HOPES

NAPLES: Captain Sergio Ramos and Alvaro Morata struck one apiece as 11-time winners Real Madrid secured a seventh successive Champions League quarter-final berth with a clinical 3-1 win over Napoli yesterday. Real, who took a commanding 3-1 first leg lead at the Santiago Bernabeu last month, looked to be facing a tough night in Naples after Dries Mertens finished off a great attacking move to give the hosts a 24th minute lead.

But Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri had warned of the threat from the "world's richest club, with the best players" a day earlier. And Zinedine Zidane's 'Galacticos' emerged from the half-time interval in far more clinical fashion. Ramos rose to head Real level six minutes after the restart and a second header which deflected off Mertens at Pepe Reina's near post gave the Spaniards a 2-1 lead by the 57th minute.

Napoli saw late claims for a penalty waved away

when Mertens tumbled in the box and suffered more woe in the first minute of added-on time when Juventus striker Alvaro Morata came off the bench to hit their third for a 6-2 aggregate score.

Napoli required nothing short of a miracle if they were to reach the last eight for the first time—although a bright opening reflected a growing belief in the football-mad southern city the Azzurri could cause an upset.

Maurizio Sarri's men had 11 shots in the opening period, the most Real had seen in a Champions League game since facing 15 against Juventus in 2013.

Mertens' deflected shot flew over the bar for a corner after Amadou Diawara's inch-perfect pass early on.

But Napoli saw captain Marek Hamsik, Lorenzo Insigne and Mertens fail to beat Keylor Navas in the Real net before the Belgium midfielder sent the stadium into raptures.

On Real's first real foray, Luka Modric outmanoeuvred Kalidou Koulibaly to deliver a back-post cross that Reina collected after a mix-up between Ronaldo and Karim Benzema. Insigne, who caught out Real with a long-range drive in Madrid, came close to another long-distance goal with a dipping shot from 35 yards that forced Navas down low at his near post.

Gareth Bale escaped down the right to deliver a cross that Kroos, from the edge of the area, volleyed straight at Reina. But Real were left ball-watching on 24 minutes after a slick passing move between Hamsik and Mertens that saw the Belgian run in to beat Navas at his bottom left corner.

The San Paolo erupted, but relief reigned moments later when Ronaldo rounded Reina to see his low drive come off the base of the post. Napoli could have had a second but after being sent though by Mertens, Hamsik

fired high and wide before seeing his shot from the right byline blocked by Navas.

When Hamsik gave away possession minutes after the restart, Toni Kroos's dangerous cross to the back post was cleared by the head of Mertens.

But danger of Hamsik's error became apparent when Ramos rose to meet Kroos's corner to stretch the back of the Napoli net. After Allan was cautioned for a challenge that left Casemiro writhing in pain, the Brazilian was replaced by Marko Rog.

But Napoli's dream died a minute later. Kroos delivered again from the corner flag and Ramos's glancing header at the near post came off Mertens to leave Reina rooted to the spot. Napoli hit back, Rog setting up Hamsik for a cross that Navas got down low to smother. As Napoli tired in the closing minutes, Morata ran in to meet the rebound after Reina spilled a Ronaldo strike. — AFP

BAYERN MUNICH HUMILIATE ARSENAL TO REACH Q-FINALS

LONDON: Bayern Munich condemned Arsene Wenger to more humiliation as 10-man Arsenal were eliminated from the Champions League with a crushing 5-1 defeat amid furious protests against the beleaguered Gunners boss yesterday.

Aiming to stage an incredible recovery from a 5-1 first leg deficit, Wenger's side briefly looked capable of a famous escape act when Theo Walcott opened the scoring in the first half at the Emirates Stadium. But any hopes Wenger's recent problems would be erased in historic fashion were brutally dashed by Robert Lewandowski's second half penalty and Laurent Koscielny's dismissal for conceding that spot-kick. Wenger cut a forlorn figure as Arjen Robben and Douglas Costa netted before Arturo Vidal's double fired Bayern into the quarter-finals with a 10-2 aggregate victory.

It was the first time Arsenal had conceded five at the Emirates and by the closing stages, there was a funereal atmosphere on an evening that started with Arsenal fans staging a protest march calling for Wenger to quit and ended with a chorus of boos and banners held up proclaiming: "Enough is enough - Wenger out".

It was yet another chastening experience in the Champions League for Wenger, who has now seen Arsenal eliminated in the last 16 for seven successive seasons.

With their Premier League title hopes in

tatters and even a top four finish far from guaranteed, Wenger's 184th Champions League match as Arsenal boss may well prove to be his last as speculation grows that he will terminate his 21-year reign at the end of a wretched season.

Having restored Alexis Sanchez to his team despite reports the Arsenal forward wants to leave after being dropped for Saturday's loss at Liverpool, it was a sign of the misery to come for Wenger when Danny Welbeck was taken ill in the pre-match warm-up, forcing Olivier Giroud into the line-up. Arsenal would have to make history to go through as no team in the Champions League era had overturned a four-goal deficit and many Gunners fans gave them no chance judging by the swathes of empty red seats around the Emirates.

EMBARRASSING

Even the stay-aways wouldn't have predicted such an embarrassing loss when Walcott struck in the 20th minute.

Taking possession wide on the right flank, Walcott advanced unchecked by the ponderous Bayern defence and, from an acute angle, he unloaded a powerful strike that flashed over Manuel Neuer's unconvincing attempted save and into the roof of the net.

Walcott had a penalty appeal turned down after Xabi Alonso caught the winger and he

was close to a second goal when he surged onto Shkodran Mustafi's pass before firing into the side-netting.

But Giroud, unmarked eight yards out, wastefully headed over from Aaron Ramsey's cross early in the second half, and that would prove Arsenal's final chance.

When Lewandowski got behind Koscielny in the 55th minute, the Arsenal defender's panicked response was to trip the Pole, conceding a penalty and earning himself a red card.

Lewandowski picked himself up to send David Ospina the wrong way with a clinical spot-kick and the Emirates immediately fell into anarchy. Faced with an inevitable exit, Wenger retreated to the dug out as insults rained down on him from frustrated fans, and his players waved the white flag as well.

Fittingly, Bayern's second goal in the 68th minute came about after Sanchez was caught in possession on the edge of his own penalty area, with Robben gleefully picking the Chilean's pocket before slotting past Ospina. That opened the floodgates and Costa curled home in the 78th minute before Vidal punished woeful defending to make it four two minutes later.

With Arsenal's players just waiting to be put out of their misery, Vidal waltzed through to make it five in the 85th minute and Wenger's agony was complete. — AFP



LONDON: Bayern Munich's Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal (R) heads the ball goalward past Arsenal's Spanish defender Hector Bellerin during the UEFA Champions League last 16 second leg football match between Arsenal and Bayern Munich at The Emirates Stadium in London yesterday. — AFP

Kuwait Times 55th Anniversary BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017

The biggest challenge facing women? Jobs

Page 25

China's FX reserves rebound above \$3 trillion in February

Page 25



Australia Central Bank sits on rates

Page 25

US DOLLAR INCHES HIGHER, EYES ON TRADE NUMBERS

Page 24



GENEVA: People stand next to cars at the stand of French carmaker Renault during the first press day of the Geneva International Motor Show yesterday in Geneva. —AFP

LUXURY IN FOCUS AT GENEVA CAR SHOW

EUROPE'S BIGGEST ANNUAL CAR SHOW KICKS OFF

PARIS: Europe's biggest annual car show kicks off in Geneva yesterday with luxury and crossover vehicles in the limelight, but with the emissions scandal still hanging over the industry. Automakers are celebrating the end of the sector's crisis as European sales have returned to levels last seen in 2008 before a global financial meltdown inflicted deep dents on their business. It is a far cry from last year's show where the industry was under a cloud after Volkswagen admitted in 2015 to having installed software in 11 million diesel engines worldwide to circumvent emissions tests, a scandal that will cost it billions in fines and compensation to car owners.

While Volkswagen has survived the crisis, the scandal has focused attention on emissions and the challenges automakers will have in building cars that can meet ever tougher pollution rules. Carmakers are now having to steer toward engines that emit no more than 95 grams of CO2 per kilometer by 2021 to meet European requirements, compared to 130 grams in 2015. But as diesel cars have been getting a bad rap because of emissions scandals, that target looks harder to meet. "Diesel cars emit 15 percent less CO2 per kilometer" than gasoline-fueled models, said Christophe Aufferer, a technology strategist at car parts maker Faurecia.

With electric vehicles still only accounting for a sliver of European car sales, that means gasoline-powered cars have to take up the slack, requiring the industry to squeeze more efficiency out of engines and to reduce vehicles' weight. Research and development costs "have practically doubled in the past decade" said Remi Cornubert at AT Kearney, a consulting firm, and if carmakers fail to succeed, the bill will be high. Automakers failing to meet the CO2 targets-capping petrol consumption to 4.1 liters per 100 kilometers and diesel to 3.6 liters-will have to pay 95 euros (\$100) for every extra CO2 gram emitted by each car-potentially adding up to tens of millions of euros of fines.

New models

Jostling among carmakers for market position is also likely to dominate discussions after French carmaker PSA announced Monday the acquisition of General Motors' European subsidiary, which includes the Opel and Vauxhall brands, for 1.3 billion euros (\$1.38 billion), catapulting it into second place in Europe. And there was more good news for PSA in Geneva on Monday after its Peugeot brand won European car of the year for its 3008 urban 4x4, as the show opened to the press. Volkswagen, meanwhile, unveiled its first prototype autonomous car Monday evening, the electric

Sedric. The German giant, whose brands include Audi and Porsche, said it planned to join a string of other automakers in investing billions of dollars in developing the vehicle over the coming years.

Despite the greater emphasis on fuel economy, the Geneva car show is unlikely to disappoint in terms of its usual blitz and glamour. The legendary Ferrari, Lamborghini, Pagani, McLaren and Bentley have all picked Lake Geneva's shores to present new models. Renault will showcase the final version of its Alpine A110 sports car. "Geneva has always been the show of beautiful automobiles and prestigious racing cars," said Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer at the CAR institute. But the greatest buzz may come from so-called "crossover" vehicles (CUVs), which combine features taken from sports utility vehicles (SUVs) with those of passenger cars.

The segment, including fashionable urban four-wheel drive vehicles, now makes up nearly 30 percent of the European car market and features the Volvo XC60, the Citroen C-Aircross, the D57 Crossback and the Land Rover Velar. Some 180 companies will be present at the 10-day show which opens to the public on March 9 after two press days during which most major corporate announcements are expected. Last year's show attracted 687,000 visitors. —AFP



GENEVA: Matthias Mueller, the CEO of Volkswagen, sits inside the VW autonomous concept car Sedric, during a presentation at the 87th Geneva International Motor Show in Geneva. —AP

STAKES HIGH; GEELY'S VOLVO REPLACES BEST-SELLING SUV

GENEVA: Volvo Car Group unveiled its new XC60 SUV at the Geneva auto show yesterday, the latest launch in a sweeping overhaul of its model line-up under Chinese ownership that will be key to driving sales and earnings ahead of a possible listing. Despite being launched almost a decade ago, the original XC60 has remained popular among buyers and been the automaker's best-selling model since 2009.

It accounts for roughly a third of Volvo's sales, leaving the new model with big shoes to fill as the carmaker looks to expand its niche in a premium market dominated by larger players such as Daimler's Mercedes-Benz and BMW. "The XC60 is in one of the hottest premium segments globally, so getting the execution and launch right is imperative for the growth of the brand," said Bill Rinna, senior manager for North American forecasts at consultancy LMC Automotive.

"Globally, we expect the new XC60 to sell 175,000 units annually. Its two main competitors are not standing still however, as both the Audi Q5 and BMW X3 have or will be getting updates of their own." Volvo sold just over 161,000 XC60s last year. Over the past couple of years, the company has begun delivering new models developed since its purchase by China's Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co. from Ford Motor Co. in 2010, including the larger XC90 SUV and a new 90-

series. Volvo is banking on a joint platform developed under Geely's ownership for all but its smallest models - key to keeping down costs and improving flexibility for a small carmaker like Volvo.

Later this year, it is also launching the XC40 compact SUV, aiming to further capitalize on a strong market for SUVs. "Now we are really entering into a segment that should deliver volume," Volvo Car Group Chief Executive Hakan Samuelsson told reporters. "Before the end of the year we will have the biggest line-up of SUVs we've ever had." After struggling under Ford, sales at one of Sweden's largest companies by sales and staff have risen sharply, hitting a record 534,332 cars last year. Samuelsson has said he expects another record in 2017, the fourth straight if achieved, on the way to an annual target of 800,000 cars in the medium term.

Volvo has also taken steps toward a possible listing, raising 5 billion crowns (\$557 million) through the sale of newly issued preference shares, though Samuelsson has said any flotation is a question for its owner. The new XC60 will be delivered with a range of powertrains, including a plug-in hybrid version, with production set to begin in mid-April at the carmaker's plant in Torslanda, on the outskirts of Gothenburg in western Sweden. —Reuters

AMERICAN TAX BUREAU OPENS OFFICE IN BAHRAIN

KUWAIT: Following the sweeping changes instigated by the US Federal Government's Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) in 2010, American Tax Bureau has opened a new office in Bahrain, located at Manama's Bahrain Financial Harbor to service the growing needs of individual US taxpayers in the kingdom as well as other Gulf States, such as neighboring Saudi Arabia. ATB opened its first office in Kuwait in 2014 and in just three years, has assisted thousands of US citizens and green card holders with their FATCA's needs.

ATB's team brings together 20 years of accumulated expertise in US tax issues. ATB's second office, will offer comprehensive and professional counsel on all individual tax and IRS-related issues. US taxpayers with undisclosed offshore accounts, or those who have not filed annual tax returns, have been reminded repeatedly by the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS), that they must

fully comply with their Federal reporting obligations, to avoid the possibility of facing severe penalties.

ATB's General Manager, Hilmi Hakim (CPA), explained: "Our mission at ATB is to ensure US citizens are accurately advised on the new tax compliance requirements. After success in Kuwait, we are delighted we can now expand our confidential assistance to US citizens in Bahrain and across the Gulf". GCC banks are obliged to report US citizen account holders whose non-US held accounts have balances that reach \$10,000, when combined. The total balance on the individual's account or accounts is sent to the US Treasury department through a system utilizing the Foreign Bank Account Report (FBAR).

Any failure to comply with the new rules could also result in the US government's seizure of all the funds maintained in the overseas bank account. ATB's team of professionals can field the many ques-

tions on tax returns and indeed explain how under certain rules, filing a tax return does not necessarily mean paying tax. FATCA is designed to create greater transparency and make it more difficult for Americans and permanent residents to evade taxes by asking financial institutions to share certain information with the IRS about accounts held outside of the US.

Hakim added "The complexity of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) demands highly-trained individuals who understand the Act in its entirety and the nuances within it". American Tax Bureau's professionally trained staff understand the needs of US citizens living and working abroad, moreover they are available to provide quality customer service and year-round support so that US citizens can be helped to safeguard their hard-earned assets. For more information about the new branch office, kindly visit www.americantaxbureau.com

BURNING LESS OIL AT HOME WILL HELP SAUDI EXPORTS, ARAMCO

CHEAP FUEL, POWER PRICES WEIGH ON THE BUDGET

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia is likely to reduce the amount of oil it burns to generate power this summer as the kingdom hikes domestic energy prices and uses more natural gas in power stations, industry sources said. Burning less crude at home means the world's top oil exporter may not need to push output to the record high of 10.67 million barrels per day (bpd) reached in July last year, even if the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other producers end supply curbs in June.

It may also make the sale of a 5 percent stake in Saudi Aramco more attractive to investors because the national energy giant will have more crude to export, if needed, and can sell fuel at higher prices to the domestic market. "Now we are using more and more natural gas, and with the reforms in electricity prices, crude burning will go down," said a Saudi-based industry source. "This summer you will see less crude burning." Saudi Arabia's domestic energy reforms aim to rein in waste which threatens to erode the amount of oil available for export.

The kingdom's energy subsidies have long kept power and fuel at a fraction of cost price, draining the state budget and giving consumers little incentive to buy smaller cars or switch off power-hungry air conditioners-even when they leave home. But a slide in interna-

tional oil prices to around \$55 a barrel now from above \$100 in 2014 has left a gaping hole in state coffers, encouraging efforts to wean the nation off cheap energy and use more of its huge gas reserves.

"That's a national objective. Aramco's been doing this for years, reducing crude burning by increasing use of gas and encouraging the state power generation sector to become more efficient," said another source familiar with the matter. In December 2015, the government, which spent nearly 300 billion riyals on energy and water subsidies that year, hiked electricity for the industry and gasoline prices at the pump by about 50 percent. More gradual increases are planned until 2020.

Big consumer

Under the 2015 rises, 95 octane gasoline rose to 0.90 riyal (\$0.24) per litre from 0.60 riyal, a big rise for Saudi drivers but still offering them some of the cheapest fuel in the world. A further 30 percent rise could come as early as July, sources said. Cheap fuel prices have helped make Saudi Arabia the world's fifth biggest energy consumer, while its economy is ranked about 20th in size.

The OPEC heavyweight burned an average of 700,000 bpd of oil for electricity to keep the

population cool in the hottest months from May to August, official figures showed. Expanding gas usage is helping cut the hefty level of oil consumption. Aramco aims to nearly double gas production to 23 billion standard cubic feet a day in the next decade, supplying more of the fuel to power stations. In the wake of the price reforms and gas development plans, domestic demand for crude declined about 3.5 percent year-on-year in December 2016 to 2.21 million barrels per day compared to a year earlier, the lowest total for the month of December since 2013, according to an OPEC report.

One industry source said Riyadh might not need to raise output to the record high of July last year as a result of the reforms. "Demand internally will not be high," the source said. The reduction in domestic oil demand comes with an added bonus as the government plans to sell a 5 percent stake of Aramco, in what is expected to be the world's biggest initial public offering of shares worth \$100 billion. The sources said that a reduction in oil usage, while not a specific objective for the IPO, is part of Aramco's plan to improve efficiency and secure the best possible listing price. "More volume (exported) abroad means more revenue for investors," said another industry source. "That should help Aramco's valuation." — Reuters

KUWAIT WATER ASSOCIATION RECEIVES \$12,000 IN FORD CONSERVATION GRANTS

KUWAIT: Ford Motor Company yesterday handed over \$12,000 grant to Kuwait Water Association as part of the 2016 Ford Motor Company Conservation and Environmental Grants initiative. Dr Saleh Mohammad Al Muzaini and Ahmad Jamil Al Kofahi, both lead of Kuwait Water Association (KWA) proposed the Periodic Statistical Study in Educational Facilities for Measuring the Water Consumption in Kuwait. Kuwait has the highest water consumption level in the world, with a daily average of around 500 litres per capita, according to Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR). KWA will collect and analyse data obtained from schools and provide the government with its findings in the hope a better water conservation be implemented in the future.

The grant was awarded by Tim Zimmerman, Vice-President Automotive of Alghanim Auto, the only importer contractually author-

ized by Ford to sell new Ford vehicles, genuine Ford and MotorCraft parts, and provide aftersales support to Ford customers in Kuwait, and Mohammed El Houssami, Ford Middle East's Sales Director to Dr Al Muzaini and Al Kofahi at Ford's new vehicle showroom, service and spare parts center in Kuwait. Apart from Kuwait, the latest recipients of Ford's Conservation and Environmental Grants were successful applicants from Qatar, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia with a total of \$120,000 made available.

Now running for 16 years, Ford Grants has become one of the largest corporate initiatives of its kind in the region, created to empower individuals and non-profit groups that are donating their time and efforts to preserve the environmental well-being of their communities.

The initiative has received support and recognition from various



(From left to right) Tim Zimmerman, Vice President Automotive Alghanim Auto, Dr Saleh Mohammad Al Muzaini, Mohammed El Houssami, Ford Middle East's Sales Director and Ahmad Al Kofahi of Kuwait Water Association are pictured during the event.

governmental and non-governmental environmental authorities from around the Middle East, including the World Wide Fund for

Nature, the Emirates Wildlife Society, the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED) and UNESCO Doha.

ABK HOSTS ANNUAL 'BEST OF THE BEST' AWARDS CEREMONY

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently held its annual 'Best of the Best' awards ceremony on 20th February 2017 at the Jumeirah Hotel.

This annual event is held to recognize the tremendous efforts of staff members in the Bank's Retail Banking Division. The 'Best of the

Best' awards are based on six different reward programs and the award categories are: the A+ 'Golden Team', which is dedicated to the customer service team members in branches, the 'Customer Service Champion' which focuses on the best performing branches in customer service and thirdly, the 'Top Performance' Award which is dedicated to the sales teams.

The fourth category is the 'Operations Award', which is dedicated to the 'Best Operations Office' staff in branches. The fifth category is 'ABK Heroes' which is for the Customer Service staff who serve the Bank's customers internally and externally, The sixth category, the 'Complaint Management Award' is dedicated to the best performing branch in managing and resolving customers' complaints.

Commenting on this award scheme, Stewart Lockie, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, said "We are honored to have such a committed team at the Bank. Their hard work and competence is a key driver of success and it is a pleasure to be able to recognize their outstanding efforts today." Fawzy Al-Thunayan, General Manager of Board Affairs handed out the awards and praised the outstanding efforts of ABK retail staff.



National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report								
At 02:00 PM Previous Day								
Global Stock Indices								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %			
Dow Jones	21,005.71	20,954.34	-51.37	▼	-0.24	6.03		
NASDAQ	5,870.75	5,849.18	-21.57	▼	-0.37	8.66		
SBP 500	2,383.12	2,375.31	-7.81	▼	-0.33	6.10		
Financial Times	7,350.12	7,359.45	9.33	▲	0.13	3.03		
DAX	11,958.40	11,980.07	21.67	▲	0.18	4.35		
CAC 40	4,972.19	4,961.17	-11.02	▼	-0.22	2.03		
Swiss	8,664.80	8,659.04	-5.76	▼	-0.07	5.34		
Nikkei 225	19,379.14	19,344.15	-34.99	▼	-0.18	1.20		
Topix	1,554.90	1,555.04	0.14	▲	0.01	2.40		
Hang Seng	23,596.28	23,681.07	84.79	▲	0.36	7.64		
Straits Times	3,121.51	3,130.44	8.93	▲	0.29	8.67		
MENA Stock Indices								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %			
Kuwait	6,750.76	6,665.90	-84.86	▼	-1.26	14.85		
Saudi Arabia	6,976.35	7,001.80	25.45	▲	0.36	-3.25		
Dubai	3,556.82	3,502.36	-54.46	▼	-1.53	0.73		
Abu Dhabi	4,604.27	4,591.52	-12.75	▼	-0.28	1.27		
Bahrain	1,338.10	1,332.98	-5.12	▼	-0.38	9.64		
Qatar	10,622.54	10,416.89	-205.65	▼	-1.94	1.78		
Oman	5,799.92	5,795.71	-4.21	▼	-0.07	0.30		
Lebanon	1,227.04	1,227.04	0.00	-	0.00	1.18		
Jordan	2,214.72	2,213.15	-1.57	▼	-0.07	2.05		
Egypt	12,623.22	12,746.55	123.33	▲	0.98	2.25		
Morocco	11,978.10	11,918.19	-59.91	▼	-0.50	2.87		
Tunisia	5,580.79	5,580.68	-0.11	▼	0.00	1.68		
Global Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar		12.1618	3.2557	3.0784	2.6684	3.3003	370.73	4.2856
Saudi Riyal	0.08222		0.2677	0.2531	0.2194	0.2714	30.48	0.3524
US Dollar	0.30715	3.7355		0.9455	0.8196	1.0137	113.87	1.3163
Euro	0.32484	3.9507	1.0576		0.8666	1.0725	120.45	1.3925
Sterling Pound	0.37475	4.5577	1.2201	1.1539		1.2375	139.00	1.6069
Swiss Franc	0.30300	3.6850	0.9865	0.9324	0.8081		112.34	1.2985
Japanese Yen	0.00270	0.0328	0.0088	0.0083	0.0072	0.0089		0.0116
Australian Dollar	0.23334	2.8379	0.7597	0.7181	0.6223	0.7701	86.51	
MENA Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30715	3.7355	0.3741	3.6267	0.3832	3.6576	17.3900
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2557		12.1618	1.2178	11.8076	1.2474	11.9082	56.6173
Saudi Riyal	0.2677	0.08222		0.1001	0.9709	0.1026	0.9791	4.6553
Bahraini Dinar	2.6734	0.82115	9.9866		9.6958	1.0243	9.7784	46.4911
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08469	1.0300	0.1031		0.1056	1.0085	4.7950
Omani Riyal	2.6099	0.80164	9.7494	0.9762	9.4655		9.5461	45.3869
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08398	1.0213	0.1023	0.9916	0.1048		4.7545
Egyptian Pound	0.0575	0.01766	0.2148	0.0215	0.2086	0.0220	0.2103	
Global Interest Rates								
Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month	6-Month	1-Year			
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.75	1.19	1.44	1.75	2.06			
US Dollar	0.71	0.84	1.10	1.42	1.80			
Euro	-0.40	-0.39	-0.35	-0.24	-0.11			
Sterling Pound	0.24	0.26	0.35	0.50	0.72			
Swiss Franc	-0.79	-0.79	-0.72	-0.66	-0.50			
Australian Dollar	1.56	1.64	1.62	1.63	1.67			
Japanese Yen	0.00	-0.05	-0.01	0.02	0.13			
Global Bond Yields								
Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year				
United States	1.31	2.02	2.49	3.09				
Europe	-0.89	-0.49	0.30	1.11				
United Kingdom	0.07	0.56	1.18	1.78				
Commodities								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %			
Kuwait Oil	52.99	53.49	0.50	▲	0.94	-0.42		
Brent	54.54	54.60	0.06	▲	0.11	-0.22		
West Texas	53.24	53.14	-0.10	▼	-0.19	-0.96		
Gold	1225.56	1224.86	-0.70	▼	-0.06	6.01		
Silver	17.78	17.72	-0.06	▼	-0.36	10.37		

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.691
Indian Rupees	4.598
Pakistani Rupees	2.921
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.026
Nepali Rupees	2.880
Singapore Dollar	218.110
Hongkong Dollar	39.469
Bangladesh Taka	3.825
Philippine Peso	6.094
Thai Baht	8.750

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.775
Qatari Riyal	84.224
Omani Riyal	796.388
Bahraini Dinar	814.270
UAE Dirham	83.490

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	22.400
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.170
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.231
Tunisian Dinar	134.110
Jordanian Dinar	431.710
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.043
Syrian Lira	2.185
Morocco Dirham	30.799

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	306.450
Euro	325.760
Sterling Pound	376.470
Canadian dollar	229.810
Turkish lira	82.980

Swiss Franc	304.470
Australian Dollar	235.050
US Dollar Buying	305.250

GOLD

20 Gram	252.380
10 Gram	129.110
5 Gram	65.400

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfr Selling Rate

US Dollar	306.100
Canadian Dolla	229.305
Sterling Pound	376.270
Euro	325.525
Swiss Frank	311.260
Bahrain Dinar	811.445
UAE Dirhams	83.730
Qatari Riyals	84.955
Saudi Riyals	82.555
Jordanian Dinar	432.905
Egyptian Pound	18.336
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.027
Indian Rupees	4.597
Pakistani Rupees	2.919
Bangladesh Taka	3.852
Philippines Peso	6.086
Cyprus pound	168.095
Japanese Yen	3.685
Syrian Pound	2.430
Nepalese Rupees	3.870
Malaysian Ringgit	69.700

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.805
Thai Bhat	9.715
Turkish Lira	82.900

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY BUY SELL

Europe	
British Pound	0.368223
Czech Korune	0.003978
Danish Krone	0.039543
Euro	0.318667
Norwegian Krone	0.032007
Romanian Leu	0.071375
Slovakia	0.009195
Swedish Krona	0.029918
Swiss Franc	0.296184
Turkish Lira	0.077284

Australasia	
Australian Dollar	0.225073
New Zealand Dollar	0.217800

America	
Canadian Dollar	0.223351
Georgina Lari	0.138411
US Dollars	0.302350
US Dollars Mint	0.302850

Asia	
Bangladesh Taka	0.003505
Chinese Yuan	0.042973
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037378
Indian Rupee	0.002656

Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002604	0.002784
Kenyan Shilling	0.002979	0.002979
Korean Won	0.000257	0.000272
Malaysian Ringgit	0.065174	0.071174
Nepalese Rupee	0.002967	0.003137
Pakistan Rupee	0.002682	0.002972
Philippine Peso	0.005999	0.006299
Sierra Leone	0.000038	0.000044
Singapore Dollar	0.211859	0.221859
South African Rand	0.017665	0.026065
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001668	0.002248
Taiwan	0.009809	0.009989
Thai Baht	0.008398	0.008948

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.806293	0.814793
Egyptian Pound	0.013840	0.023093
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000195	0.000255
Jordanian Dinar	0.426566	0.435566
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000153	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020184	0.044184
Nigerian Naira	0.000403	0.001038
Omani Riyal	0.789553	0.795233
Qatar Riyal	0.083363	0.084813
Saudi Riyal	0.080633	0.081933
S		



MOHAMED NASER AL-SAYER AND SONS LAUNCHES NEW TOYOTA DELIVERY CENTER

KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and Sons launched the new Toyota Delivery Center in Ardiyah yesterday. The event was attended by Hiroyuki Fukui, Managing Officer Toyota Motor Corporation, Tadashi Fujiwara, Deputy Chief of the Mission from Embassy of Japan, Angela Loan, Charge D'Affaires, Jack Hajjar, Commercial Counselor and Regional Director at Austrade from the Embassy of Australia, Tatang Budie Utama Razak, Ambassador of Indonesia, members from Kuwaiti ministry departments and the Automotive Union, delegates from Toyota Motor Corporation, management partners from the press, representatives of the media, guests from banks and financial institutions, senior management and employees of Al-Sayer Group, among others.

Chairman Faisal Bader Al-Sayer welcomed the guests. "We are opening a mega integrated facility exclusively for our customers, mainly supporting our Toyota operations. I am delighted about this yet another memorable chapter for Al-Sayer that strengthens our many decades of partnership with Toyota Motor Corporation. This partnership will further strengthen in the future as we find better ways to contribute to economic and social sustainability in Kuwait. Al-Sayer Group has reflected Toyota's values of putting the customer first and continuous improvement at the workplace," he said.

"Today's ceremony is dedicated to our beloved customers. We seek to build long-term relationships and market share growth through our passion for competitive excellence in all aspects of customer service. We aim to build a long-term relation with them. I take this opportunity to thank our partners, governing bodies and local authorities for their valued cooperation over the years," he said. "Our employees are the most important asset - we protect and nurture them. I appreciate their dedicated efforts towards tirelessly working to deliver best in class service to add more smiling Toyota customers," concluded Sayer.

CEO Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer thanked the guests for attending the celebration of Al-Sayer's and Toyota's success and commitment to business excellence with the opening of this new facility. "Our present success has been built



CEO Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer

on a strong foundation from the past. Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons Co became the authorized distributor of Toyota in 1954 and started selling cars under efforts initiated by Naser Mohamed Al-Sayer, our honorary chairman," he said.

Since their establishment, MNSS and the Al-Sayer Group's strategy has always been to support Toyota operations in Kuwait with best in the business standards in customer service alongside the best products and being the best employer and responsible corporate citizens. "Various awards that we have earned for customer service from Toyota Motor Corporation over the years are testimony of this approach. Moving forward, we continue to invest in technology enhancement, employee development and most importantly our valuable customers. We are also confident about our infrastructure development and steady expansion plans in the future," added Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer.

"We will be opening new facilities during the next year including a new showroom in Abu Fatira and Jahra, a new service facility in Fahaheel, and a new management office of Al-



Hiroyuki Fukui, Managing Officer Toyota Motor Corporation.

Sayer Rental Cars in Ahmadi - to serve our customers across Kuwait," he noted. "The new Ardiya mega integrated facility that has been constructed on a plot of 18,300 sq m, with a total built-in area of 68,000 sq m, providing space for pre-delivery and delivery section, training centers, meeting rooms, this auditorium and car units storage," highlighted Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer.

COO Bengt Schultz said that this event is a very significant and memorable one for Al-Sayer. "Al-Sayer continues to be a customer-focused organization and our mission is to deliver the best products, facilities and customer service. We are constantly finding new ways of pleasing our customers," he noted. "So the push for infrastructure and opening of new facilities are our top priorities. In 2017, and the following years, our customers will demand more from us. In order to maintain what we achieved and to continue to do more, we will have to be innovative," added Schultz.

"Our way to respond is to engage with our customers one by one, inspired by the words of

Mr Akio Toyoda, President of Toyota Motor Corporation. Taking the time to listen and understand, and to adopt our service to their needs," he said. "Through engagement one by one with our customers, we will ensure the best results in the business. By doing this we will not only satisfy our customers, but we will ensure excitement in the work place. Today's opening ceremony of the new mega delivery center is just another important step, as part of our continuous efforts towards accomplishing our mission," concluded Schultz.

Mega pre-delivery and delivery

Johan Heislitz Senior Business Director, Toyota Group Sales explained the sophistication and technology featured in this facility for the customers. "Welcome to the brand new home of Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and Sons mega pre-delivery and delivery center - we celebrate the grand opening of this magnificent structure," he said. "Today marks the culmination of a strategy that began 10 years ago - an idea about a new and sophisticated operation both for pre-delivery of new Toyota and Lexus vehicles. This facility would now serve as a catalyst for our growth over the next decade with really only one critical objective in mind, and that is customer satisfaction," added Heislitz.

"Consumers are demanding increasingly differentiated services and products to match their individual lifestyles. Addressing these needs of our customers is the key to economic growth and growth in market share in every segment that we compete in," he pointed out. "To put things in some perspective, I would like to mention some of the processes and sophisticated features in this facility."

The Building

"The total footprint of this facility is divided into two basements for Lexus storage, with each basement 18,000 sq m in size. The all-new delivery center is 4,500 sq m in size, pre-delivery area 9,000 sq m and our new vehicle demonstration center is 1,500 sq m in size.

Car wash

"The car wash is a tunnel automated system

from Germany. This company has 60 years' experience and is a world leader in automated systems. Each tunnel can wash up to 120 units per hour - 240 vehicles an hour through the two tunnels. Washing a vehicle will take approximately 4.5 minutes from end to end spaced at 30 second intervals. We have incorporated a complete recycling system with reverse osmosis reducing wastage of water in line with MNSS' green corporate commitment policy. The potential output for this facility is 32 vehicles per hour or 256 units per day in one shift only. This building has been designed also to accommodate our new training center with as many as seven very large training rooms completed for training sales information systems and customer interfacing courses for every level in the sales organization.

Standard Operating Procedures

"We have developed new standard operating procedures, which is a two-man operation building on Toyota VDQI as per our group service division. We conduct many extensive market surveys to better understand our customer requirements and to develop best practices and services that we must offer to our customers. During these surveys, many customers had requested that they would appreciate same-day delivery. This service became a reality some days ago. In cooperation with the ministry of interior, we have inaugurated a system for instant registration with number plates, and this enables our company to offer same-day delivery upon request," stressed Heislitz.

"Our system is equipped with the latest equipment available, ie a token numbering system for fast, efficient and quick delivery. We now have an upmarket accessories boutique, and same-day fitment can be arranged as and when required. This I believe will be much appreciated by our customers," he added. "Not forgetting our fleet customers - we are now in a position to offer the same service as and when required. This building as mentioned opens up a new space commitment and importance designed to meet the increasing demand and expectations of our customer base," he concluded.



Quality control area



Customer waiting area



Photo shows Yousef Al-Marzouq, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Anbaa daily (second left) with some of the guests



Management partners from the press



Customer delivery area



Advanced car washing system

ASIAN STOCKS CLIMB, OIL DOWN AMID US SUPPLY GLUT CONCERNS

SINGAPORE: Asian shares rose yesterday, diverging from New York markets that slipped on concern about President Donald Trump's ability to focus on economic policies. Oil prices were slightly lower amid fears growing US production will offset OPEC cuts. Futures are pointing to a positive open for Britain's FTSE 100 and France's CAC 40. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose 0.6 percent, after inching back in early trade. Japan's Nikkei closed down 0.2 percent.

Australian shares ended up 0.3 percent. They opened soft and moved up on expectations the central bank's policy meeting would leave its interest rate unchanged at 1.5 percent, which it did. The Australian dollar jumped 0.5 percent to

\$0.762. On Monday, US share indexes posted losses of as much as 0.37 percent. Yesterday's reversal in Asian shares "was a little bit surprising," said James Woods, global investment analyst at Rivkin in Sydney.

He attributed the changed course partly to views that Trump is now "making progress on his promises," citing movement toward repealing Obamacare. "The other part is the technical aspect," Woods said. "Things are looking positive, we're seeing positive data reports, so investors are taking the dips as buying opportunities." Republicans unveiled legislation to dismantle the Affordable Care Act on Monday, calling for an end to health insurance mandates and rolling back extra healthcare funding for the poor.

Congressional Democrats denounced the Republican plan, saying it would hurt Americans by requiring them to pay more for healthcare, to the benefit of insurers.

Trump's allegations over the weekend that he was wiretapped by his predecessor Barack Obama, without offering any evidence, also raised concerns about his ability to focus on his promised economic measures, including tax cuts and a boost to infrastructure spending. The euro rose almost 0.1 percent to \$1.0589, following a 0.4 percent slide on Monday after former French Prime Minister Alain Juppe ruled out standing in the country's presidential elections.

On Monday, European stocks posted losses, with Deutsche Bank's falling 7.9 percent, the

biggest drag on the FTSEurofirst 300 index, after the German lender unveiled an 8 billion euro (\$8.47 billion) cash call as part of a major reorganization.

But declines were limited by deals between French carmaker PSA Group and General Motors, and between Standard Life and Aberdeen Asset Management.

The dollar index, which tracks the greenback against a basket of trade-weighted peers, was steady at 101.61, after

Monday's 0.1 percent gain. The dollar was also flat at 113.915, after Monday's 0.15 percent loss. In commodities, US oil pulled back 0.1 percent to \$53.13 a barrel, following Monday's 0.2 percent drop, on ongoing concerns that US production growth may undermine output cuts by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Global benchmark Brent retreated 0.2 percent to \$55.90. — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Tuesday 07 March 2017

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price Index	▼ -84.86	6,665.90	6,750.76	6,756.63	6,639.34
Weighted Index	▼ -4.67	421.05	425.72	425.72	420.31
KSX 15	▼ -10.34	967.84	978.18	978.18	966.86

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	62	▼ 0.0
IPG	400	400	24,500	9,800	2	▼ -20.0
NAPESCO	1,260	1,140	129,866	151,589	68	▼ -60.0
ENERGYH	42.0	39.5	99,150	3,924	21	▼ -2.5
GPI	49.0	46.5	6,331,392	301,784	119	▼ -1.0
ABAR	92	86	31,828	2,744	6	▼ 1.0
Oil & Gas			6,616,756	469,841	216	▼ -44.05

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
KFOUC	310	290	1,228,200	360,433	104	▼ -25.0
BPCC	570	570	50,000	28,500	1	▼ 0.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	700	▼ 0.0
ALQURAIN	345	330	4,799,310	1,626,564	99	▼ 20.0
Basic Materials			6,077,510	2,015,497	204	▼ 1309.05

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
KCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	490	▼ 0.0
CABLE	520	500	109,440	55,585	28	▼ -10.0
SHIP	232	218	146,038	32,792	20	▼ -2.0
PCEM	1,060	1,060	35,500	37,630	10	▼ 0.0
PAPER	455	420	556	235	2	▼ -25.0
MRC	78	69	19,900	1,374	2	▼ 7.8
AGICO	305	295	322,548	96,784	22	▼ 300
GGMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	325	▼ 0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	196	▼ 0.0
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	150	▼ 0.0
NICBM	212	208	100,055	21,211	5	▼ 208
EQUIPMENT	56	54	825,391	45,464	40	▼ 54
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	50	▼ 0.0
GYPJUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	95	▼ 0.0
ALBOOKH	70	68	118,700	8,209	12	▼ 70
AGLTY	600	580	2,674,503	1,584,802	87	▼ 590
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	210	▼ 0.0
CLEANING	52	50	1,067,999	55,086	28	▼ 50
KGL	66	63	839,647	54,155	24	▼ 65
KKPC	174	174	14,709	2,559	3	▼ 174
HUMANSOFT	3,000	3,000	273,061	819,183	58	▼ 3,000
NAFAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	220	▼ 0.0
GFC	58	58	500	29	1	▼ 58
MAYADEEN	30.5	28.0	6,581,580	193,255	96	▼ 28.0
CGC	500	480	9,598	4,714	3	▼ 500
MTCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	56	▼ 0.0
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	820	▼ 0.0
ALFAFCO	244	244	142,400	34,746	3	▼ 244
MUBARRAD	77	75	1,828,965	139,338	43	▼ 76
LOGISTICS	71	70	383,234	26,918	21	▼ 70
SCEM	87	86	40,000	3,445	2	▼ 87
GCEM	88	86	1,619,500	139,497	30	▼ 87
QIC	0.0	0.0	0	0	85	▼ 0.0
FCEM	91	89	1,980,155	177,552	49	▼ 89
RKWC	100	100	52,000	5,200	3	▼ 100
SPCC	88	85	1,154,662	100,876	93	▼ 87
Industrials			20,350,671	3,641,010	685	▼ 1493.15

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
KSH	184	184	995	183	1	▼ 184
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	59	▼ 0.0
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	112	▼ 0.0
CATTL	244	224	4,617	1,067	15	▼ 244
DANAH	99	94	5,258,361	504,677	155	▼ 94
FOOD	0.0	0.0	0	0	2,620	▼ 0.0
Consumer Goods			5,263,973	505,927	171	▼ 1204.73

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	350	▼ 0.0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	920	▼ 0.0
YIACO	265	265	1,575	417	1	▼ 265
Health Care			1,575	417	1	▼ 1416.84

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
KCIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	1,580	▼ 0.0
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	250	▼ 0.0
SULTAN	70	66	589,337	40,450	34	▼ 68
CABLETV	25.5	22.5	164,572	4,056	13	▼ 25.0
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	385	▼ 0.0
IFAIRH	0.0	0.0	0	0	192	▼ 0.0
QULAFUEL	130	126	126,910	16,125	21	▼ 128
MUNTAZAHAT	86	85	343,001	29,155	9	▼ 86
JAZEERA	580	550	74,776	41,974	11	▼ 570
SOOR	132	130	147,256	19,259	19	▼ 130
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	124	▼ 0.0
ALRAI	176	174	689,753	120,092	25	▼ 176
ZIMAH	59	53	4,963,568	271,574	175	▼ 54
Mezzan	980	880	18,906	18,528	3	▼ 980
Consumer Services			7,118,079	561,213	310	▼ 949.58

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
ZAIN	485	480	1,359,691	656,344	51	▼ 485
OOREDOO	1,200	1,180	22,453	26,595	4	▼ 1,180
HITSTELEC	51	48.5	3,782,200	186,617	106	▼ 48.5
VIVA	840	820	127,502	105,713	49	▼ 830
Telecommunications			5,291,846	975,268	210	▼ 1013.13

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
NBK	760	750	340,687	258,622	28	▼ 750
GBK	250	248	1,233,067	307,081	48	▼ 248
CBK	425	425	89	38	1	▼ 425
ABK	305	300	23,270	6,984	3	▼ 305
ALMUTAHED	445	440	58,732	25,986	6	▼ 440
KIB	244	240	1,444,544	349,753	50	▼ 242
BURG	335	330	163,490	53,958	11	▼ 330
KFIN	620	600	3,373,329	2,063,237	110	▼ 610
BOUBYAN	430	420	1,967,417	836,136	80	▼ 420
AUB	244	238	996,327	239,125	31	▼ 240
ITHMR	54	49.5	29,526,193	1,491,874	381	▼ 49.5
WARBANK	270	260	5,034,259	1,326,229	157	▼ 265
Banks			44,161,404	6,959,021	886	▼ 215.54

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
KINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	310	▼ 0.0
GINS	550	550	17	9	1	▼ 550
AINS	490	490	3,863	1,893	3	▼ 490
WINS	102	102	422	43	2	▼ 102
KUWAITRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	186	▼ 0.0
FTI	62	57	764,868	44,077	68	▼ 59
WETHAQ	54	52	495,771	26,561	21	▼ 54
BKIKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	355	▼ 0.0
Insurance			1,264,941	72,583	95	▼ 1100.16

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
SOKOUK	44.5	41.5	7432842	316,096	166	▼ 43.0
KRE	74	71	2,319,773	169,066	35	▼ 72
URC	97	94	42,259	4,018	11	▼ 96
NRE	108	102	3,096,944	327,612	73	▼ 106
SRE	390	390	300,000	117,000	1	▼ 390
TAM	450	450	19	9	1	▼ 450
AREEC	180	172	233,748	41,045	11	▼ 176
MASSALEH	48.0	48.0	88	4	1	▼ 48.0
ARABREC	41.5	39.0	6,493,922	257,900	177	▼ 39.0
ERESCO	46.5	43.5	1,127,075	49,666	41	▼ 43.5
MABANEE	840	830	120,000	100,102	14	▼ 830
INJAZZAT	91	90	250,000	22,550	6	▼ 90
INVESTORS	26.5	26.5	16,485,636	447,879	173	▼ 27.5
IRC	36.5	34.5	1,029,900	36,197	24	▼ 35.0
ALTIJARIA	85	84	87,600	7,410	6	▼ 84
SANAM	56	52	80,309	4,258	7	▼ 56
AAYANRE	82	81	330,880	27,046	15	▼ 82
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	76	▼ 0.0
ALAQARIA	40.0	40.0	41,582	1,663	3	▼ 40.0
MAZAYA	128	124	2,022,651	254,632	38	▼ 128
ADNC	0.0	0.0	0	0	11.0	▼ 0.0
THEMAR						

ECB MEETS UNDER PRESSURE AS INFLATION TOPS TARGET

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: European Central Bank governors will likely resist calls to end a flood of cheap money when they meet tomorrow, analysts said, despite euro-zone inflation topping their near-2.0 percent target. Inflation in the 19-nation single currency area stood at 2.0 percent in February, Eurostat figures showed last week, the first time since 2013 it has outstripped the ECB's mandate of "close to, but below 2.0 percent".

Even before then, critics were urging the Frankfurt institution to wind down its massive monetary easing measures that include buying tens of billions of euros of government and corporate bonds each month, cheap loans to banks, and historically low interest rates. But ECB policymakers have argued that the sudden jump in euro-zone price growth since December is a temporary effect of increased energy prices. "We should not react to individual data points and short-lived increases in inflation," ECB president Mario Draghi told European Parliament lawmakers in February. "Support from our monetary policy measures is still needed."

Analysts largely agree with ECB executive board members that beyond volatile items such as food and energy, underlying pressure on prices from more durable

sources, like increased wages for workers, remains too weak to justify tweaking the stimulus package. "Core inflation has remained low despite the rise in the headline rate," Jennifer McKeown of Capital Economics said. "Even in Germany, where the labor market has been strong for some time, there are few signs of pay pressures." According to Eurostat, unemployment across the euro-zone stood at 9.6 percent in February—steady at the lowest rate since May 2009, but still leaving slack in the market to hold back wage increases, usually a key driver of inflation.

Alert for hints

The ECB has been loath to exit its monetary stimulus program too quickly, afraid of nipping a still-fragile economic recovery in the bud. Tomorrow, policymakers "will not want to add any new uncertainty on the eve of two important elections in the euro-zone"—the Netherlands later this month and France between April and June—ING-Diba bank economist Carsten Brzeski predicted. But governing council members have begun debating in public speeches what the beginning of the end of stimulus could look like.

The bank's "forward guidance," carefully crafted statements about future policy, has long suggested interest rates will

"remain at present or lower levels for an extended period of time"—and certainly until after the bond-buying program is wound down.

Higher interest rates are needed to manage a faster-growing economy with higher inflation. So a change to that language suggesting higher rates could be on the way would be an early indicator that the ECB sees the economic recovery on a firmer footing and is looking to cut back its stimulus programs, Brzeski said. Board member Yves Mersch called for just such a change in early February—but has yet to be echoed by advocates of a more supportive policy like Draghi. Rather than moving this week, policymakers "would wait until after the French elections until they give any direct or big hint at tapering," or gradually winding down bond-buying, Brzeski suggested.

Look, don't leap

With little new economic data to go on since the governing council's last meeting in January, few observers expect the ECB to make drastic changes this week. A new round of forecasts from the central bank's staff "will reveal an upward revision this year from December's projection of 1.3 percent" inflation, Capital Economics' McKeown

forecast, but little change to the predictions for 2018 and beyond. That will leave Draghi comfortable defending his plan to continue buying 60 billion euros of bonds per month until at least December this year.

No respondents in a survey of economists by Bloomberg News expected

the ECB to make changes to its bond-buying or interest rate policy this week. "For the most part, Draghi will, once again, try to keep the hawks (advocates of tighter monetary policy) in check" as the governing council meets away from the cameras, Brzeski predicted. —AFP



FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Photo shows the European Central Bank (ECB) prior to the press conference following the meeting of the Governing Council in Frankfurt am Main. —AFP



Group picture of the winners with Service Hero president.

INFINITI AL-BABTAIN COMPANY RANKS FIRST IN SERVICE HERO

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Company, the authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the state of Kuwait achieved unrivaled success by acquiring service hero first place in car aftersales sector for the fourth consecutive year. According to Service Hero 2016 evaluation index, Infiniti Al-Babtain ranked first in the aftersales service and for cars maintenance. This annual survey performed by 'Service Hero' is based on customers' votes for the quality of the service by service providers, and then best companies are chosen in each sector in Kuwait.

For the fourth consecutive year Infiniti Al-Babtain was ranked first in the aftersales service; which is a result of the Company's ongoing commitment to clients' needs. "We are proud of our great achievements that reflects our continuous dedication to respect the international quality standards and customer care; receiving this award definitely gives us great responsibility and makes us put more efforts, as achieving the top position may be easy but preserving this position forces us to always provide the best," Said Mohammed Shalabi, COO, Al-Babtain Group commenting on this occasion.

REDUCING FOOD WASTE 'IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS'

ROME: For every dollar spent on reducing food waste, companies save an average \$14, according to a study published yesterday that also showed consumers can save money by shrinking their bin bags. The study analyzed 700 restaurants, food manufacturers, retailers and hospitality companies in 17 countries and found 99 percent of them made money from investing in curbing waste. "There are still too many inside business and government who are unaware or unsure about the kind of impact they can have by reducing food loss and waste," Dave Lewis, chief executive of Britain's biggest retailer, Tesco, said in a call with journalists.

Throwing out food wastes the water, energy and fuel needed to grow, store and transport it, campaigners say, while discarded food ends up in landfills where it rots, releasing harmful greenhouse gases. Companies analyzed in the study reduced food waste through measures like improv-

ing refrigeration and switching to more efficient packaging to extend products' shelf-life. In return they gained additional income from selling products made with food saved from the bin, benefited from lower waste management costs and saved money not buying food that would have otherwise been lost.

The study showed how a British-based food manufacturer achieved a more than 300-fold return on investment by running an audit that revealed seven percent of the food it bought remained in bulk containers after they were emptied. "The clear business case should swing people to act," Lewis, who also chairs Champions 12.3, the campaign group that commissioned the first-of-its kind study, added in a statement. With the average US family of four spending roughly \$1,500 a year on food that is thrown away, cutting waste is also a boon for consumers' pockets, the study said. —Reuters

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING WOMEN? WORK

LONDON: The world would be a better place for women if they had access to more and better quality jobs, according to a street survey of women and men in 10 countries in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia. Ahead of International Women's Day on March 8, the Thomson Reuters Foundation asked about 100 people in Britain, Italy, the United States, Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal, India, Thailand, Brazil and Colombia what they saw as the biggest challenge for women.

The answers varied from concerns over violence against women to an unfair share of housework but the overwhelming concern was employment - that women had equal access to jobs, equal pay, and the flexibility to juggle work with raising children. "For any woman having a better life means having a good job. This will make life better - work, a job and a salary to take care of herself and her dependents," said Yolraee

Saiemi, 44, a jewelry seller at a Bangkok market. Abdoulaye Diop Ndao, 26, a security guard in Dakar, Senegal, said life was difficult for women in Senegal. "They wake up early to find work, to buy fish and vegetables to sweep and sort out the house. If we give women good jobs, create businesses for them, we can help our families," he said. "The biggest problem here is employment. They don't have an adequate job. Or they are hustlers," said Richard Kiarie Lutta, a bus driver in Nairobi, Kenya, aged in his 30s. "The world would be better for women if they have a good job."

Fewer women than men work globally, with about half of working age women in jobs in 2015 compared to 76 percent of men, according to figures from the International Labor Organization. Women are paid less in most countries, earning on average only 60-75 percent of men's wages, according to the World Bank. —Reuters

AUSTRALIA'S CENTRAL BANK SITS ON RATES AND SOUNDS NEUTRAL

RBA HOLDS RATES AT 1.5% AS WIDELY EXPECTED

SYDNEY: Australia's central bank held rates steady yesterday, a widely expected decision given policymakers recently signaled a steady outlook for much of the year ahead. The central bank kept rates at a record low of 1.5 percent for an eighth straight month, following easings in August and May last year.

All 67 economists in a Reuters poll expected a steady outcome this week. The Australian dollar inched higher after the rate decision, supported by the outlook for steady policy. It was last up 0.5 percent at \$0.7619 after dropping to a more than one-month low of \$0.7598 this week.

"Today's RBA statement reveals a central bank pleased with both the improving global backdrop and the transition of the Australian economy to better growth and stronger employment," said Scott Haslem, economist at UBS. Haslem expects the RBA to stay pat until the middle of 2018 as it balances disinflationary forces such as record low wage growth and heightened retail competition with sky-rocketing house prices. Governor Philip Lowe has repeatedly emphasized limits to monetary policy and last month said further cuts in interest rates would not be in the national interest as the danger of a debt-fueled boom and bust was just too severe.

With the governor signaling a high bar for a move lower, interbank futures imply a mere 6 percent chance of another cut by August. Yesterday, Lowe maintained his upbeat tone as Australia's A\$1.7 trillion (\$1.3 trillion) economy expanded 2.4 percent in 2016 helped by a jump in commodity prices and stronger

consumer spending. "Exports have risen strongly and non-mining business investment has risen over the past year," Lowe said. "Most measures of business and consumer confidence are at, or above, average." He also reiterated the central bank's forecasts for a gradual pick-up in underlying inflation, which is pinned at a record low of 1.5 percent.

Business confidence

A survey of business expectations by Dun & Bradstreet yesterday found business confidence was at an 18-month high while

plans for capital investments for the second quarter of 2017 were at a two-year peak. "The critical issue will be whether this optimism translates to a lift in actual activity," said Stephen Koukoulas, Dun & Bradstreet economic adviser. So far, there has been little evidence of that with both businesses and households crimping on overall spending.

Data out recently showed retail sales grew at a tepid pace for a third straight month while the outlook for capital expenditure remained uninspiring. Lowe also retained his concerns about

record low wage growth and a tardy labor market with jobs heavily skewed toward part-time work. He is also worried about the high levels of household debt, with the ratio of household debt to disposable income at an all-time peak around 180 percent. "The bank is concerned that a further cut in interest rates could induce some households to borrow beyond their means. The bank is thus prioritizing its concerns about household balance sheets at this point," said NAB's chief economist Ivan Colhoun.—Reuters



SYDNEY: Photo shows tourists taking pictures during sunset over Sydney's iconic landmark Opera House. —AFP

CHINA'S FX RESERVES REBOUND ABOVE \$3 TRILLION IN FEBRUARY

BEIJING: China's foreign exchange reserves unexpectedly rose for the first time in eight months in February, rebounding above \$3 trillion as a regulatory crackdown and a steady yuan helped staunch capital outflows. The rebound in reserves could ease fears in global markets that China will engineer another sharp one-off devaluation of the yuan, which would run the risk of inflaming trade tensions with the new US administration under President Donald Trump.

Reserves rose \$6.92 billion during February to total \$3,005 trillion, their first increase since June 2016, central bank data showed. That compared with a drop of \$12.3 billion in January, when reserves fell to \$2,998 trillion. Economists polled by Reuters had expected forex reserves to drop by \$25 billion in February. Capital Economics said last month's rise suggests China's central bank "purchased foreign exchange in February and that capital outflows stalled".

But the consultancy added that the picture "is murkier than usual around Chinese New Year, when port and bank closures disrupt both trade and financial flows". China's markets closed for a week for the Lunar New Year holiday, which began at the end of January. The State Administration of Foreign Exchange, the foreign exchange regulator, said in a statement that China's foreign exchange reserves are likely to stabilise gradually as pressures on capital outflows ease.

The dollar gained against non-dollar currencies on the international market in February, but prices of assets in which China had invested its foreign exchange reserves increased, the SAFE said. "Obviously, the sentiment has improved in the

Chinese renminbi (yuan) more recently," said Andy Ji, Asian currency strategist at Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Singapore. "But the increase didn't necessarily reflect capital inflows." Firms, after snapping up dollars in past months, are selling them back to the central bank given more stringent capital restrictions and higher yuan interest rates, Ji said.

Tightened rules

China has tightened rules on moving capital outside the country in recent months as it seeks to support the yuan currency and stem a slide in reserves. It burned through nearly \$320 billion of reserves last year but the yuan still fell 6.5 percent against the dollar, its biggest annual drop since 1994. The yuan has steadied in recent weeks as the dollar's rally lost steam. The Chinese currency gained 0.2 percent in February, and is up 0.8 percent in 2017. However, expectations of US interest rate hikes beginning as early as next week have rekindled fears that the yuan could come under renewed pressure. Trump had said during the election campaign that he would declare China a currency manipulator on his first day in office, but his advisers now say they will wait for a final verdict from a US Treasury currency report due in mid-April.

Some analysts noted a subtle change in the language used to describe the yuan in Premier Li Keqiang's annual work report on Sunday had sparked some speculation that policymakers were now less willing to defend the Chinese currency. China will allow bigger fluctuations in the yuan this year, a policy adviser told Reuters on

Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity. "I cannot say the (yuan) depreciation will be bigger than last year, but I can say its fluctuations will be bigger this year than last year," the adviser said. People's Bank of China Deputy Governor Yi Gang, meanwhile, told reporters that Beijing will stick to its managed floating exchange rate framework to keep the yuan currency basically stable.

Tightening its grip

China's banks on Jan. 1 began requiring individuals using their \$50,000 annual foreign currency quota to specify how and when they will use funds, with additional documentation sometimes required. Authorities are also closely examining outbound investments. The sports ministry, for example, has reminded Chinese investors to follow rules on moving capital overseas, after a huge splurge by Chinese buyers on foreign soccer clubs.

In addition to stepping up controls on money leaving the country, authorities have boosted efforts to bolster inflows. The foreign exchange regulator said at the end of last month that it would allow foreign investors in the interbank bond market to trade forwards, forex swaps and options. But restrictions on taking money out of the country may discourage foreign investors, despite recent assurances by the central bank that foreign companies were able to repatriate profits normally. "While further tightening of capital controls since December is meant to forestall capital outflows, it may also wreak havoc on foreign direct investment and investor inflows," analysts at Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi wrote earlier this week. —Reuters

ETIHAD AIRWAYS CONTINUES SUSTAINABILITY DRIVE

ABU DHABI: Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, has continued to make improvements in the fuel efficiency of its fleet, resulting in substantial reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and reinforcing the sustainability credentials of the airline.

The airline's dedicated fuel efficiency team drove numerous initiatives across all operational functions of the business, saving over 60,000 tons of fuel.

This 2.5% improvement during 2016 amounts to nearly 190,000 tons of carbon dioxide savings, the equivalent of

1,200 flights between Abu Dhabi and London or the removal of over 40,000 cars from the road. Fuel consumption is influenced by many factors such as the aircraft and engine type, the weight being carried and the duration of the flight. The airline is working on several key initiatives to optimize efficiency, both with the aircraft itself and through external collaboration with aircraft manufacturers such as Boeing and Airbus.

Richard Hill, Chief Operations Officer for Etihad Airways, said: "Fuel optimization is a top agenda item for any successful and sustainable airline, with Etihad Airways no exception. There have been some encouraging results during 2016 and I'm delighted to see so many of our pilots fully engaged with the program, as this has ensured additional learning opportunities and the identification of new measures that can deliver greater fuel savings in the years ahead. It's a vital part of our sustainability efforts and we will continue to look for ways to improve our performance."

Reducing weight can be a vital part

of fuel savings, with aircraft such as the A380 having a maximum take-off weight of 575 tons, equivalent to 115 African elephants or 218 Toyota Land Cruisers. The airline has made a conscientious effort to reduce the weight of on-board items. A 'weight out' program, which resulted in the removal or replacement of on board items, led to a fuel burn reduction of 1,100 tons of fuel per year.

Weather plays a part in influencing aircraft fuel efficiency. The airline is investing in new technology such as the 'Boeing Wind Uplink' scheme to ensure that flight crews have the latest information on weather patterns, allowing them to plan for the optimum fuel performance of their aircraft during flight. Fuel burn performance is negatively impacted by seasonal fog, requiring additional holding fuel to be carried, inbound to Abu Dhabi and the airline is now collaborating with the Masdar Institute of Science and Technology in Abu Dhabi to enable more accurate fog predictions.

Internally, continuous reviews to

holding fuel policy have allowed for more accurate calculation of additional fuel requirements, using past data to ensure adequate additional fuel requirements are met. Airport staff are also supporting efforts to ensure that ground power is used instead of the auxiliary power unit when aircraft are on the ground. These and many other initiatives have led to the positive results delivered so far with different areas of the business such as Engineering, Airports and Guest Experience working to identify new areas where additional savings can be delivered.

The environmental benefits are not only substantial but the efficiency improvement in 2016 compared to 2015 exceeds the emissions reduction goal that the industry has set itself, currently a 1.5% efficiency improvement across international aviation. By going beyond this Etihad Airways is also contributing to carbon neutral growth targets and the ultimate long term goal - for emissions to be fifty percent of 2005 levels by 2050.



WAHAHA BOSS SEES US SUFFERING MORE IN TRADE WAR WITH CHINA

CHINA'S RICHEST MAN SLAMS 'STUPID' RESTRICTIONS

BEIJING: The chairman of China's biggest beverage maker, Hangzhou Wahaha Group, said the United States would suffer more in any trade war with China, with a loss of access to cheap Chinese-made goods hitting American wallets. US President Donald Trump had campaigned on a promise to confront China more aggressively on trade, including by levying new tariffs on goods from abroad and branding China a currency manipulator.

Beijing says it will work with Washington to resolve any trade disputes, but Chinese state media has warned of retaliation if Trump takes the first steps towards a trade war. "The new American administration has threatened to launch a trade war, but in my view, they will

suffer more from the war," Wahaha Chairman Zong Qinghou told reporters on the sidelines of China's annual parliament meeting yesterday. "People will grumble about the (US) government as domestic prices rise."

Zong, one of China's richest men, also predicted that the US trade deficit with China would persist as long as Washington maintained "stupid" restrictions on high-tech exports to China. The politically sensitive US-China trade deficit stood at \$347 billion last year. China has long asked Washington to loosen its restrictions on exports of sensitive technology, arguing that it could cut its trade deficit by selling more of what China needs. But the strict US export controls against China on a range of products with both military and

civilian uses, such as some computer processors and software, were implemented as a national security measure.

"Western countries, especially the United States, sometimes are stupid, as they ban companies from selling advanced technology products in China," said Zong, who is also a member of parliament. "Only by exporting the products to a broader market can the US cover the investment in the research and development stage." Zong was listed as mainland China's fifth-richest person, worth 112 billion yuan (\$16.24 billion), according to the 2017 Hurun Report, which tracks global wealth. Wahaha, which means laughing baby in Mandarin, exports bottled beverage, drinking water, and its hit product, mixed congee, to the United States. —Reuters



ALARGAN CEO addresses ACK students

ALARGAN HOSTS ACK STUDENTS

KUWAIT: ALARGAN International Real Estate Company hosted students from the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) at its headquarters in ALARGAN Business Park, where a team of engineers and business development specialists from the company gave students a lecture on the notions of sustainability and entrepreneurship in business to drive long-term growth. The lecture was supported by the company's story and growth in developing residential and community projects that support an economically and socially viable urban environment, in an aim that they remain an integral part of the larger urban development process and add value to their surrounding communities.

Khaled Al-Masha'ha said: "At ALARGAN, we believe in our responsibility towards creating a sustainable future in the countries where we operate, be it in the projects we develop, the business and community environments we create, or, most

importantly, in empowering our younger generations with the knowledge and experience they need to continue innovating and bringing solutions that will help them and their country grow in the long-term. We look forward to hosting more of these lectures and wish every student success in their endeavors."

The lecture focused on building sustainable business models, as well as the challenges and opportunities that would face businesses, giving example of ALARGAN's ability to adapt to changes and to lead innovation. Specialists also gave insights on project management, organizational structure, time scheduling and cost estimation. The workshop was followed by an interactive activity and a tour of the ALARGAN Business Park, the first green building in Kuwait and the first development to obtain the Platinum ranking for the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) program, which is awarded by the US Green Building Council (USGBC).



CADILLAC ALGHANIM WINS THE BEST SERVICE CENTER IN GCC

KUWAIT: Cadillac Alghanim, the exclusive distributor of Cadillac in Kuwait, won the 1st place for the Cadillac Best Service Center Award in GCC. This came as a result of its high quality of service. The staff succeeded in completing all the needed car services and maintenance in a record time, and the continuous commitment to the customers, whenever they visit the service center.

Cadillac Alghanim is also proud of Tareq Qassas, its Service Consultant for winning the 2nd place from among 400 other service consultants in the Skills of Service Consultant Competition organized by General Motors (GM) in the GCC. The competition started with an online test to examine all contestants and selected the top 10 consultants who proved their high qualifications of dealing and serving customers. As for the next level, these consultants competed through in-field cases, where they had to show their professionalism, while communicating with customers.

Contestants were evaluated

based on the highest standards set by Cadillac worldwide. Results confirmed the excellence of Cadillac Alghanim's staff who continuously demonstrate distinguished and professional performance in the service center and after-sales services. As part of Cadillac Alghanim's efforts to exceed expectations, customers always receive the very best of offers. The service center is keen on giving their loyal customers a lifetime maintenance experience for their vehicles, starting from the moment they arrive to the minute they leave the center. All employees, in the center, work dedicatedly to inform their customers about their vehicles' performance and their needs, such as the wipers, brakes, engines and oils. Customers get a detailed report that has an estimated budget required to service their vehicles by Cadillac's professional technicians.

"We always welcome the customer, before we even receive the car. The essence of our work is based on giving the customer big attention to see his/her

remarks, needs and expectations, to later our experts customize a plan for his/her car, using the latest technologies. They will work according to the highest international quality standards ensuring that our customer leaves satisfied with the quality, service and professionalism," said Chadi El Chammas, the After-sales General Manager.

Furthermore, the Cadillac Alghanim's "I Care" program is an exceptional customer service initiative that is based on four main pillars: direct communication, answering all customer's inquiries, representing the brand as the symbol of quality and exceeding the customers' expectations of high-quality service.

Alghanim Service Center, located in Shuwaikh, is the world's largest center in terms of quality, size and the operational capacity, where it occupies 73,000 square meters and can service 1,000 vehicles a day with the on-ground team. Besides, the center provides advanced technological systems that allow customers to obtain the best quality alongside highly quali-

fied technicians providing the services. In return, customers will pay less for their maintenance and repairs. Adding to the above, the center also contains a sophisticated paint and blacksmith workshop equipped with the finest paint types, state-of-the-art equipment, spray and dye tools approved by Cadillac. It also contains other services, such as dye change, installation of panoramic roof, upholstery, repair of car pillars among others.

Premium Care Program

Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim & Sons Automotive 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 anywhere in the Middle East for four years (unlimited miles) plus a courtesy transportation and a replacement vehicle upon availability.

KIPCO RECORDS A NET PROFIT OF KD 45.5 M

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - has announced a net profit of KD 45.5 million (\$ 148.7million), or 28.62fils (\$ 9.35cents) per share, for the year ended 31 December 2016, compared to KD 51.2 million (\$167.3 million), or 32.73 fils (\$ 10.7cents). This makes 2016 KIPCO's twenty-fifth year of consecutive profitability. KIPCO's Board of Directors is recommending a cash dividend of 25 per cent (25fils per share), subject to approval by the company's General Assembly and regulatory authorities.

In 2016, total revenue from operations increased 6.6 per cent to KD 661 million (\$ 2.2 billion), compared to KD 620 million (\$ 2 billion) reported in 2015. Consolidated assets increased in 2016 to KD 10 billion (\$ 32.7 billion) from KD 9.6 billion (\$ 31.4 billion) in 2015. Faisal Al Ayyar, KIPCO's Vice Chairman (Executive), said the company's results were in line with expectations for a challenging 2016:



Faisal Al Ayyar

"Thanks to our sound operations and strong financial position, we were able to weather through what we predicted would be a difficult year, and made 2016 our twenty-fifth consecutive year of profitability.

Our core operations - including banking, media, real estate and insurance - continue to show growth despite the global economic slowdown, the regional tensions and currency devaluation in some of the markets in which we operate, and economic reform measures at home. Borgan Bank's profitability remains strong, and our insurance company, GIG, has expanded its network. Our pay-TV company, OSN, has continued to widen its customer base despite increasing market competition, thanks to its focus on offering the best exclusive content in the region. While we look to 2017 with caution, we remain confident that the practices we have in place will enable our businesses to continue to grow."

CBK LAUNCHES ITS 'DOUBLE WELCOME AVIOS' CAMPAIGN

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait is launching a "Double Welcome Avios" campaign for its new CBK British Airways cardholders. All customers who successfully apply for a CBK British Airways card between 1st of March and 30th of April 2017, will have the chance to double their welcome bonus Avios by spending a predefined amount on their card, and that during the first three months after card issuance date. Cardholders who meet these required thresholds will receive a total of AVIOS points that might reach a full flight from Kuwait to London and back (Tax and Fees excluded).

As the only MasterCard British Airways-branded cards in the Middle East, the products combine a world-leading card concept with a global loyalty program, offering cardholders the opportunity to collect Avios points (the reward currency of the British Airways Executive Club) and redeem them

for flights and upgrades. The cards are loaded with benefits that MasterCard provides to customers as Lounge access, global travel Insurance, Free nights in more than 1200 hotels of luxury Starwood hotels around the world (SPG hotels).

Customers will be able to collect Avios on purchases, from booking flights to paying for dinner or fuel or everyday shopping and spend them to pay for flights worldwide with British Airways or any of the 13 airline partners of newworld. The new co-branded credit cards features a number of value-added benefits, including access to MasterCard Priceless Cities, which offers VIP treatment and unique experiences in entertainment, dining, hotels and shopping in cities around the world. MasterCard World and Platinum cardholders also benefit from lounge access, travel insurance and concierge services.

SELF-DRIVING BUS WITH NO BACK-UP DRIVER NEARS CALIFORNIA STREET

SAN RAMON: A pair of \$250,000 autonomous buses began driving around an empty San Francisco Bay Area parking lot on Monday, preparing to move onto a local public road in California's first pilot program for a self-driving vehicle without steering wheel or human operator.

California and other states are weighing the opportunities of becoming a hub of test-

ing a technology that is seen as the future of transportation and the risks from giving up active control of a large, potentially dangerous vehicle.

In most tests of self-driving cars there is still a person seated at the steering wheel, ready to take over, although Alphabet Inc's Waymo tested a car with no steering wheel or pedals in Austin, Texas, as early as 2015.

The bus project in San Ramon, at the Bishop Ranch office park complex, involves two 12-passenger shuttle buses from French private company EasyMile.

The project is backed by a combination of private companies and public transit and air quality authorities, with the intention of turning it into a permanent, expanded operation, said Habib Shamskhou, a program manager

who strolled in front of a moving bus to show that the vehicle would notice him and react. It stopped.

In a test for reporters, one bus cruised a block-long circuit so consistently that it created a dirt track on the tarmac.

California legislators late last year passed a law to allow slow-speed testing of fully autonomous vehicles without steering

wheels or pedals on public roads, with the Bishop Ranch test in mind.

The shuttle buses will test for a few months in the parking lots before operators apply for Department of Motor Vehicles approval under the new law.

The vehicles are expected to swing onto the local street late this year or early in 2018. — Reuters

FROM SHAMOON TO STONEDRILL: ADVANCED NEW DESTRUCTIVE MALWARE DISCOVERED IN THE WILD

DUBAI: Kaspersky Lab's Global Research and Analysis Team has discovered a new sophisticated wiper malware, called StoneDrill. Just like another infamous wiper, Shamoon, it destroys everything on the infected computer. StoneDrill also features advanced anti-detection techniques and espionage tools in its arsenal. In addition to targets in the Middle East, one StoneDrill target has also been discovered in Europe, where wipers used in the Middle East have not previously been spotted in the wild.

In 2012, the Shamoon (also known as Distrack) wiper made a lot of noise by taking down around 35,000 computers in an oil and gas company in the Middle East. This devastating attack left 10% of the world's oil supply potentially at risk. However, the incident was one of a kind, and after it the actor essentially went dark. In late 2016 it returned in the form of Shamoon 2.0 - a far more extensive malicious campaign using a heavily updated version of the 2012 malware.

While exploring these attacks Kaspersky Lab researchers unexpectedly found malware that was built in a similar "style" to Shamoon 2.0. At the same time, it was very different and more sophisticated than Shamoon. They named it StoneDrill.

StoneDrill - a wiper with connections

It is not yet known how StoneDrill is propagated, but once on the attacked machine it injects itself into the memory process of the user's preferred browser. During this process it uses two sophisticated anti-emulation techniques aimed at fooling security solutions installed on the victim machine. The malware then starts destroying the computer's disc files. So far, at least two targets of the StoneDrill wiper have been identified, one based in the Middle East and the other in Europe.

Besides the wiping module, Kaspersky Lab researchers have also found a StoneDrill backdoor, which has apparently been developed by the same code writers and used for espionage purposes. Experts discovered four command and control panels which were used by attackers to run

espionage operations with help of the StoneDrill backdoor against an unknown number of targets. Perhaps the most interesting thing about StoneDrill is that it appears to have connections to several other wipers and espionage operations observed previously. When Kaspersky Lab researchers discovered StoneDrill with the help of Yara-rules created to identify unknown samples of Shamoon, they realised they were looking at a unique piece of malicious code that seems to have been created separately from Shamoon. Even though the two families - Shamoon and StoneDrill - don't share the exact same code base, the mind-set of the authors and their programming "style" appear to be similar. That's why it was possible to identify StoneDrill with the Shamoon-developed Yara-rules.

Code similarities with older known malware were also observed, but this time not between Shamoon and StoneDrill. In fact StoneDrill uses some parts of the code previously spotted in the News Beef APT, also known as Charming Kitten - another malicious campaign which has been active in the last few years.

"We were very intrigued by the similarities and comparisons between these three malicious operations. Was StoneDrill another wiper deployed by the Shamoon actor? Or are StoneDrill and Shamoon two different and unconnected groups that just happened to target Saudi organizations at the same time? Or, two groups which are separate but aligned in their objectives? The latter theory is the most likely one: when it comes to artefacts we can say that while Shamoon embeds Arabic-Yemen resource language sections, StoneDrill embeds mostly Persian resource language sections. Geopolitical analysts would probably be quick to point out that both Iran and Yemen are players in the Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict, and Saudi Arabia is the country where most victims of these operations were found. But of course, we do not exclude the possibility of these artefacts being false flags," - said Mohamad Amin Hasbini, Senior Security Researcher, Global Research and Analysis Team, Kaspersky Lab.



FRANKFURT: This Oct. 28, 2013 file photo shows the US Consulate General in Frankfurt, Germany. WikiLeaks yesterday published thousands of documents purportedly taken from the Central Intelligence Agency's Center for Cyber Intelligence, a dramatic release that appears to expose intimate details of America's cyberespionage toolkit. — AP

WIKILEAKS PUBLISHES CIA TROVE ALLEGING WIDE SCALE HACKING

WASHINGTON: WikiLeaks yesterday published thousands of documents purportedly taken from the Central Intelligence Agency's Center for Cyber Intelligence, a dramatic release that appears to expose intimate details of America's cyberespionage toolkit.

It was not immediately clear how WikiLeaks obtained the information, which included more than 8,700 documents and files. The CIA tools, if authentic, could undermine the confidence that consumers have in the safety and security of their computers, mobile devices and even smart TVs. WikiLeaks said the material came from "an isolated, high-security network situated inside the CIA's Center for Cyber Intelligence in Langley, Virginia." It didn't say how the files were removed, such as possibly by a rogue employee, by hacking a federal contractor working for the CIA or breaking into a staging server where such hacking tools might be temporarily stored.

The more than 8,000 documents cover a host of technical topics, including what appears to be a discussion about how to compromise smart televisions and turn them into improvised surveillance devices. WikiLeaks said the data also include details on the agency's efforts to subvert American software products and smartphones, including Apple's iPhone, Google's Android and Microsoft Windows.

The information dump could not immediately be authenticated by The Associated Press, and the CIA declined comment, but WikiLeaks has a long track record of releasing top secret govern-

ment documents. Experts who've started to sift through the material said that it appeared legitimate and that the release was almost certain to shake the CIA.

Jonathan Liu, a spokesman for the CIA, said: "We do not comment on the authenticity or content of purported intelligence documents." WikiLeaks said the archive "appears to have been circulated among former US government hackers and contractors in an unauthorized manner, one of whom has provided WikiLeaks with portions of the archive."

If the authenticity of the documents is officially confirmed, it would represent yet another catastrophic breach for the US intelligence community at the hands of WikiLeaks and its allies, which have repeatedly humbled Washington with the mass release of classified material, including hundreds of thousands of documents from the State Department and the Pentagon.

WikiLeaks, which has been dropping cryptic hints about the release for a month, said in a lengthy statement that the CIA had "recently" lost control of a massive arsenal of CIA hacking tools as well as associated documentation.

"There's no question that there's a fire drill going on right now," said Jake Williams, a security expert with Augusta, Georgia-based Rendition Infosec. "It wouldn't surprise me that



New CIA Director Michael Pompeo

there are people changing careers - and ending careers - as we speak."

One of the purported CIA malware programs is described in the WikiLeaks documents as a "simple DLL hijacking attempt" that had been tested against Microsoft Windows XP, Vista and 7 operating systems. The technique, which the document called a "Windows FAX DLL injection," introduces computer code that allows an attacker to gain access to a computer process' memory and permissions while at the same time masking the attack. Williams, who has experience dealing with government hackers, said the voluminous files' extensive references to operation security meant they were almost certainly government-backed. "I can't fathom anyone fabricated that amount of operational security concern," he said. "It rings true to me."

"The only people who are having that conversation are people who are engaging in nation-state-level hacking," he said. WikiLeaks said its data also included a "substantial library" of digital espionage techniques borrowed from other countries, including Russia. Bob Ayers, a retired US intelligence official currently working as a security analyst, noted that WikiLeaks has promised to release more CIA documents. "The damage right now is relatively high level," he said. "The potential for really detailed damage will come in the following releases." — AP

NINTENDO SWITCH'S BIG CHALLENGE: LURING GAMERS

NEW YORK: With three kids and constant travel for work, John Hussey jumped at the chance to play an open-world adventure game like "The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild" anywhere, anytime.

After he heard about the Nintendo Switch, a hybrid game machine that works as both a console at home and a tablet on the go, Hussey ordered one in January even though it wouldn't arrive until Friday, when Nintendo's latest game machine debuts. Nintendo will need lots of traditional gamers like Hussey to redeem itself as a console maker, after being eclipsed by Microsoft and Sony in the game-console wars. But Nintendo will also need lots of casual gamers who are satisfied with playing on a smartphone and would never have dreamed of buying a \$300 game machine.

And in trying to appeal to many audiences, Nintendo risks not being the best at serving any one.

Three Lives

The Switch is like three machines in one. Wireless controllers attach to a game tablet for hand held gaming. Take the tablet to a gathering with friends, and you can rest it on a table with a kickstand and detach the controllers for use as stand-alone devices. Back home, slide the tablet into a docking station and snap the controllers into a grip accessory and you have a traditional game console attached to a TV. With each switch - get it? - you can pick up where you left off. "Knowing I could get the 'Zelda' game both at home and on the road, at this stage in my life that's essential," said Hussey, a sales rep from Bloomington, Indiana.

"I can't sit around at home and play a 70-hour game, but if I'm on airplanes or hotels, it's perfect for me." The new "Zelda" game is the biggest available at launch, though Nintendo is also pushing a collection of casual party games called "1-2-Switch." — AP

MICROSOFT ANNOUNCES NEW HEAD FOR MIDEAST, AFRICA

KUWAIT: Microsoft yesterday announced the appointment of Samer Abu Ltaif as the president of its Middle East and Africa (MEA) region.

Abu Ltaif, who joined Microsoft in 2004, has held many senior roles within the organisation including regional director for enterprise and partner group across MEA. Most recently, he was the Regional General Manager of Microsoft Gulf. During his tenure, he led landmark Microsoft initiatives aimed at empowering governments and citizens through innovation, revolutionizing education, stimulating SME growth and entrepreneurship; all to enhance the region's global competitiveness and modernization. Abu Ltaif played a key role in growing Microsoft's presence in the Gulf and developing the company's ecosystem of over 1,400 channel partners.

His vision for Microsoft in MEA is to contribute to the economic and social development of the region. "MEA has tremendous potential. The rich diversity across the region, combined with the fast-growing youth population and innovative spirit, opens up enormous opportunity," says Abu Ltaif. "As Microsoft, we have an important role to play, not only through the innovative technology that we bring to market, but also through our presence across the

region, our focus on developing local talent, and our deep commitment to the communities in which we operate."

A key part of Abu Ltaif's role will be to drive the digital transformation agenda of the region across governments, enterprises, developers and small and medium businesses. His leadership will be instrumental in progressing Microsoft's commitment to empower people, transform businesses, impact societies and fuel a knowledge economy in MEA.

Abu Ltaif will continue to be based in Dubai, which serves as one of the major hubs for Microsoft in the region. He takes over the reins from Microsoft Corporate Vice President, Ali Faramawy, who has headed the region for thirteen years. Faramawy, in turn, takes on a newly announced global role as the head of the Emerging Markets Digital Transformation Organization which has been established within Microsoft.

The new organization will focus primarily on building the capability in emerging markets to drive the adoption of cloud technologies and contribute to sustainable growth.

Innovation, agility, strategic partnerships, modern business models and building cloud skills for Microsoft partners, will be the core focus of this team.



Samer Abu Ltaif



ZAIN KUWAIT SIGNS THREE-YEAR APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT CONTRACT WITH ERICSSON

BARCELONA: During the 2017 Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Zain Kuwait and Ericsson have entered a three-year agreement for application development and modernization of the operator's customer relationship management and enterprise service bus solutions. Under this agreement, Ericsson will provide end-to-end services to Zain Kuwait for system evolution and application configuration, development, integration and testing.

Eaman Al Roudhan, Chief Executive Officer of Zain Kuwait, commented: "Ericsson's application development and modernization services will help us to address organizational complexities and focus on business outcomes. Through this contract we gain direct access to the

latest technologies and highly qualified Ericsson resources who can help to reduce time to market for new consumer offerings and accelerate our digital transformation."

Tarek Saadi, Head of Ericsson GCC and Pakistan, says: "We have a long history of providing IT & Cloud solutions and services to Zain Kuwait and are excited about expanding this relationship to include application development and modernization services covering multi-vendor capabilities in the areas of CRM and Enterprise Service Bus. This new contract strengthens the long-term, strategic relationship between Ericsson and Zain even further."

Zain Kuwait is part of the Zain Group of eight network operators



across the Middle East and Africa serving 47 million active customers. Zain Kuwait has a leading

customer market and value share, serving more than three million active customers.

INDIAN VILLAGE BEATS DROUGHT, ONE RAINDROP AT A TIME

RALEGAN SIDDHI, India: On a hot, dry afternoon at Ralegan Siddhi in India's western state of Maharashtra, Anshu Shaikh climbed effortlessly to a hill top and pointed at the vast expanse of farmland all around. A local guide, Shaikh uses the summit as a viewing gallery to showcase not the village's idyllic setting, but the trenches and stone barriers on the hill's slopes, and earthen dams on the ground to trap each raindrop that falls.

This tiny village - with a population of 2,500 and spread over 900 hectares - is located in Ahmednagar district, where the average annual rainfall is about 500 mm (19.7 inches), the lowest among all districts of Maharashtra, according to weather officials. But Ralegan Siddhi has remained water sufficient for four decades, even in the severe droughts of 2014 and 2015 that triggered nearly 7,000 farmer suicides in Maharashtra - the highest in the country - over crop failure and mounting debts.

Nearly 24,000 farmers committed suicide in India in 2014 and 2015. Ralegan Siddhi's water sufficiency dates back to another drought in 1972 when social activist Anna Hazare started a project that would insulate the village from dry spells. In the years to come, Hazare emerged as a rural development

mascot and the face of a massive anti-corruption crusade. The drought project was his first step into activism. Barriers were erected on Ralegan Siddhi's slopes to stop rainwater run-off which was collected in an intricate network, channelled to a giant well, then pumped into streams that fed farmlands.

"Rain is the only source of water here and we don't waste it," Shaikh, the guide, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Over the years, the groundwater level went up to a few feet below ground from about 200 to 250 feet earlier, according to Thakaram Raut, former headmaster of the village school, who now oversees water conservation training. The number of wells used for irrigating farmland has gone up to 135 from 35, and cultivable land has doubled to about 1,000 acres.

So has the quantity of farm produce. Women don't have to trek long distances for water, which is supplied through taps in all households once every two days, then stored in big, bright-blue cans. "The Ralegan Siddhi watershed model is intuitive, organic and is rooted in compassion and empathy, not as much in science," said groundwater expert Himanshu Kulkarni, who heads a non-profit that deals with groundwater research and education. "The model shows how changed

human behaviour can be linked to how we manage our natural resources."

Anna's water

Wearing sunglasses, Dhondiba Ethoba Authi, 74, sat cross-legged on his one-hectare farmland, next to a pile of harvested millet, keeping a watch on his grazing cattle. This was the second harvest of the year and Authi said he expected to make 35,000 rupees (\$524.27) from the yield. He inherited this land from his parents, but recalls it being barren for a good part of his childhood.

"Farming was erratic then. There were no schools. There was nothing here," Authi said. But that was before 'Anna's water' started flowing into irrigation wells and household taps. "I make money from my farmland and also from the milk my cows produce." Most people in Ralegan Siddhi live in concrete houses. Some households have washing machines. Most have cars or motorbikes.

"We get Anna's water and I operate the washing machine at least five times a week," said Swati Bhalekar, who lives in a brightly painted house, a washing machine at its entrance. Within a decade of the project taking off, neighboring villages started implementing various versions of Anna's model. So far,

86 villages have joined in. "Thirty kms from Ralegan Siddhi is Hiwaze Bazar village, which was inspired by the model but went a step ahead and also started water audits," said Rishiraj Gosaki, a senior geologist with the government's groundwater department.

Every year, village heads at Hiwaze Bazar budget the water collected for irrigation and consumption, and decide the crop pattern farmers will follow through the year - the latter a lesson they learned from Hazare's village. Farmers in Ralegan Siddhi don't grow sugarcane - a water-guzzling crop often blamed for Maharashtra's drought - but millet varieties, maize and vegetables that require less water.

Watershed

"With watershed development, farm yield has improved. People now live in good houses, own vehicles," said Hazare, the brains behind the village project, at his hostel-like accommodation. On a weekday evening, as the time neared for 79-year-old Hazare to emerge from his nap, a motley group of school students, farmers and admirers gathered outside and waited under a tree to meet him, or simply see him.

A Gandhian, Hazare lives the simple life. And now he has another battle on his hands - the village reported drinking

water scarcity, a first in many years, and supply tankers had to be called in from the local government office. "Why have we reached this stage of ordering tankers? That's because people are digging borewells," said Hazare. Hazare closed more than 100 borewells last year and imposed a fine of 10,000 rupees on those digging fresh ones. The water level in the village's recharge well has already improved, he said.

But there is a cost to this progress. "The financial status of villagers has improved. They are standing on their feet - now they don't have time for the village which they had earlier," Hazare said. "The village has produced doctors, government officers and lawyers." Babban Baburao Bhalekar, for instance, was among those who dug trenches on the hills when Hazare started working on the watershed project. "I do whatever Anna says," he said as he made a wooden handle for a farmer's hoe.

Bhalekar sent his daughter to school and she now works in a state-run industrial unit in Ahmednagar. She visits her parents once a week. But migration of young people notwithstanding, Hazare is hopeful the water project will continue. "I could do so much despite not having a good education. The youth of the village is better educated, and will take this forward," Hazare said.—Reuters

MASSIVE HONG KONG SHARK FIN SEIZURE AS BAN FLOUTED

SHARKS SLAUGHTERED FOR FINS TO BE TURNED INTO BOWLS

HONG KONG: Hong Kong authorities have seized more than a ton of shark fins as activists warn traders are sneaking the sought-after delicacy into the city by mislabeling shipments to get around bans by major transporters. The city is one of the world's biggest markets for shark fin—often served as a soup at expensive Chinese banquets—but it prohibits the trade in products taken from endangered species.

Companies including airlines

Cathay Pacific and Virgin and shipping company Maersk have barred the transportation of shark fins following public outcry over the trade, which is blamed for the deaths of tens of millions of sharks every year. Yet in the first two months of 2017 more than a ton of fins from endangered hammerhead sharks and oceanic white tip sharks were seized by Hong Kong customs. Four containers of shark fin weighing 1.3 tons were discovered on separate

occasions at Hong Kong's main seaport and were from India, Egypt, Kenya and Peru, the government said Monday.

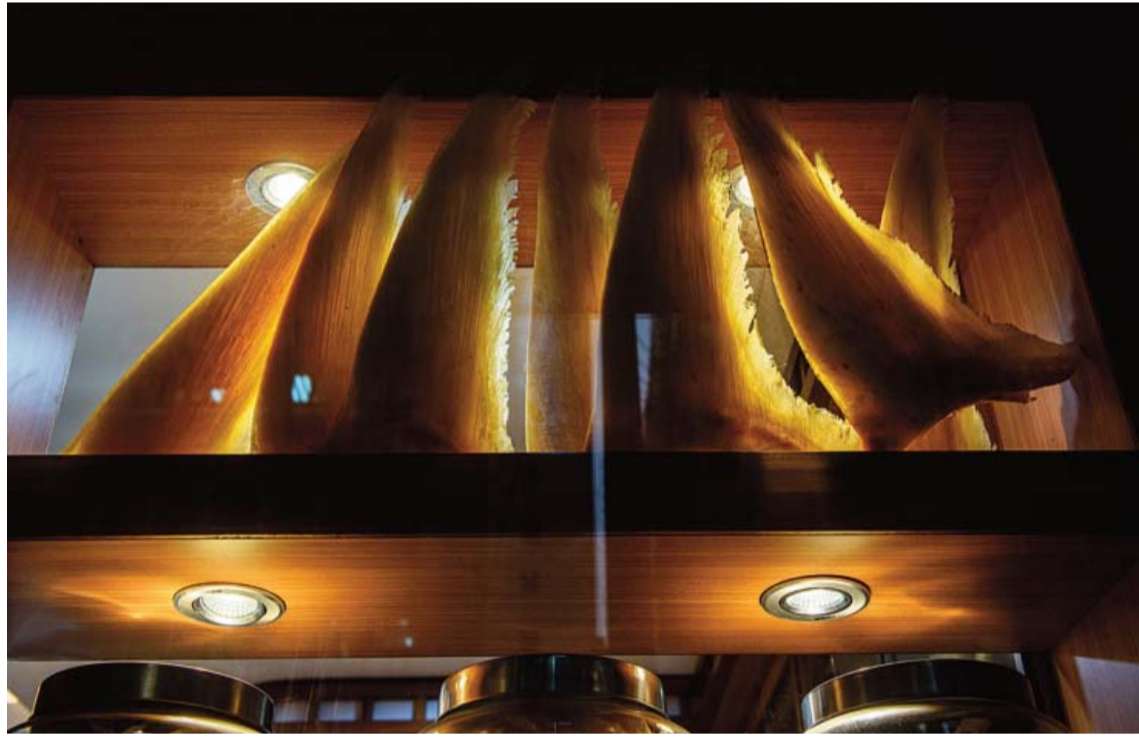
Anyone found trading in products from endangered species could face a fine of HK\$5 million (\$643,952) and two years in jail. The city's government in 2013 said it would stop serving shark fin at official functions, while luxury hotel chains Shangri-La and Peninsula Hotels also took it off their menus in 2012 and 2011. But

the culture of consuming shark fin remains widespread and it is found on menus in seafood restaurants across the city.

The new seizure coincided with the publication of a report by international conservation group Sea Shepherd which said large shipments of fins were still arriving in Hong Kong, despite carrier bans. Traders are sneaking in the product by giving them false labels, the report said. Shipments on Virgin Airlines Cargo and Cathay Pacific have been declared as "fish products", while other shark fin consignments have been marked as "seafood", "dried marine products" and "dried goods", it added.

Cathay banned shark fin shipments on all its flights in 2016, Virgin in 2011. "As with most environment issues, the first challenge is to change the rules. But the second and much harder challenge is to enforce those rules," Sea Shepherd said. Its investigation found large shipments still arriving in the city in recent months, including two 45-foot containers full of fins from the Middle East.

Sea Shepherd is now helping carriers review their systems to ensure the bans are enforced. Virgin Group founder Richard Branson congratulated the Sea Shepherd team for exposing what he called a "foul" trade. "Thousands and thousands of sharks slaughtered just for their fins to be turned into bowls of soup. For those people who have knowingly participated they need to hang their heads in shame," he was cited as saying in Sea Shepherd's statement.—AFP



Hong Kong: In this picture, dried shark fins (top) are displayed in a dried goods shop front in Hong Kong.—AFP

THAILAND SEIZES 422 PIECES OF SMUGGLED ELEPHANT TUSKS

BANGKOK: Thai authorities have seized 422 pieces of elephant tusks and arrested a Gambian man suspected of smuggling the ivory, customs officials said yesterday. The cut-

up tusks were hidden in a shipment listed as unprocessed gemstones, Customs Department Director-General Kulit Sombatsiri said. The parcel was examined because Malawi is regarded

as high-risk for smuggled goods and because a seizure last year had involved Mozambique ivory that was similarly concealed.

Kulit said Friday's seizure of 330 kilograms of smuggled ivory worth around \$480,000 was the first in Thailand this year. Thai customs officials last year confiscated more than 1,200 kilograms of ivory in nine separate cases. Sainy Jagne, 41, of Gambia was arrested in Bangkok on Sunday when he attempted to pick up the contraband, Kulit said. He faces charges of violating customs and wildlife protection laws.

The customs official didn't say where the smuggled ivory was being sent or if other people were suspected of involvement. There is an almost total international ban on the trade in ivory.

Poachers have killed tens of thousands of African elephants for their tusks in recent years to meet demand for ivory in Asia, putting the species at great risk. Thailand is a major transit hub and destination for smuggled tusks, which are often carved into tourist trinkets and ornaments. The biggest demand comes from China.

Last year, the wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC praised Thailand for a huge drop in sales of ivory items resulting from an official crackdown aimed at shedding the country's image as a center for the illicit trade in wildlife goods. Thailand had been considered to have the largest unregulated ivory market in the world, but it instituted amended and new laws in 2014 and 2015. The Elephant Ivory Act regulates domestic ivory markets and criminalized the sale of African elephant ivory.—AP



BANGKOK: Thai police forensic officers collect DNA sample of ivory after a press conference at Customs Suvarnabhumi airport in Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday.—AP



BERLIN: This file photo shows then three-month-old polar bear Fritz in its enclosure in Berlin.—AFP

BERLINERS IN MOURNING AS POLAR BEAR CUB FRITZ DIES

BERLIN: Berliners were distraught yesterday as Fritz, the German capital's four-month-old cuddly polar bear cub, died after suffering from liver inflammation. The uber-cute Fritz was seen as a successor to Knut, the polar bear who shot to international stardom after he was abandoned by his mother and hand-reared in the Berlin Zoo. Fritz was born on November 3, the first polar bear birth in eastern Berlin's Tierpark zoo in 22 years.

He had a twin sibling which died shortly after birth. "We are stunned, very sad and depressed. It is unbelievable how quickly this little polar bear has grown in our hearts," said zoo director Andreas Knieriem. After delighting visitors for years, Knut died suddenly of a suspected brain tumor in 2011 at age four, sparking grief among his legions of fans. In Fritz's case, zookeepers

had found him lying listlessly next to his mother Tonja on Monday morning.

A series of checks found the cub to be suffering from a severe case of liver inflammation. He was given antibiotics and painkillers, but the seriousness of his condition became clear when the Tierpark said Monday they hoped he would survive the night. But by around 7.30 pm (1830 GMT) his breathing became irregular, and he was pronounced dead around half an hour later. An autopsy was being carried out yesterday morning. "Fritz did not make it," said top-selling Bild daily on its online homepage and in a tweet. The chancellery joined in the mourning, with Angela Merkel's chief of staff Peter Altmaier attaching Bild's tweet and adding: "Anyone who remembers little Knut is sad. But above all, we must protect polar bears in nature!"—AFP



This handout picture shows Omsin the turtle being tended to by a veterinarian at the veterinary hospital of the university after doctors successfully removed 915 coins from its stomach.—AFP

BREAKING THE BANK: THAI VETS REMOVE 915 COINS FROM TURTLE

BANGKOK: A sea turtle dubbed 'Piggy Bank' has had her fortunes restored after Thai vets removed 915 coins from her stomach—a deposit built up after years of gulping down good luck pennies tossed into its pond. The 25-year-old turtle, called 'Omsin' in Thai, underwent a grueling seven-hour surgery on Monday to remove the five kilogram hoard of coins. She was sent to Bangkok vets with a cracked shell and an X-ray unexpectedly revealed the haul, which came in various currencies.

"There were 915 coins in her stomach, we removed them one by one," said Nantrika Chansue, a veterinarian in charge of Chulalongkorn hospital's aquatic research centre said. "Piggy

Bank is okay now but she will have to remain at the centre for up to two weeks," the vet added, saying it was the first surgery of its kind. The troubled reptile lived for two decades in a small public park in Chonburi Province.

Visitors tossed coins into her pond seeking to 'make merit' or good luck, a practice vets have urged the public to stop. "A turtle can live up to 80 years and the belief is that throwing coins into the turtle pond will make the coin thrower live longer," Rungroj Thanawongnuvej, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Chulalongkorn said in a statement. "Throwing the coins is more bad karma because it is animal torture," he said.—AFP

ASIAN NATIONS RESTRICT US POULTRY IMPORTS OVER BIRD FLU

SEOUL: South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong have limited imports of US poultry after the United States detected its first case this year of avian flu on a commercial chicken farm, South Korea's government and a US trade group said on Monday. South Korea will ban imports of US poultry and eggs after a strain of H7 bird flu virus was confirmed on Sunday at a chicken farm in Tennessee, South Korea's agriculture ministry said. Japan and Taiwan will block poultry from the state, while Hong Kong will restrict imports from the Tennessee county where the infected flock

was located, said James Sumner, president of the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council, a trade group. The limits will reduce the potential for major US chicken companies, such as Tyson Foods Inc and Pilgrim's Pride, to sell poultry overseas. The Tennessee farm infected with avian flu was contracted to sell birds to Tyson.

South Korea's import ban took effect on Monday, the agriculture ministry said in a statement. Live poultry and eggs are subject to the ban, while heat-treated chicken meat and egg products can still be imported, the statement not-

ed. South Korea, Asia's fourth-largest economy, has been importing eggs from the United States as its worst-ever bird flu, or avian influenza (AI), outbreak has tightened the country's egg supplies.

The latest moves do not affect China, which introduced a ban on imports of US poultry and eggs in late 2015. So far this year South Korea has shipped in nearly 1,049 tons of US eggs, according to ministry data, accounting for more than 98 percent of its total egg imports as of March 3. Sumner said South Korea's decision to prohibit shipments of US shell eggs was disappointing. Its

move to continue imports of certain processed egg products was "good because Korea's got this terrible AI problem and they were definitely in need of eggs," he said.

South Korea resumed US poultry imports in June last year after imposing a ban in early 2016 when bird flu cases were detected in the United States. The resumption of the US import ban means South Korea can import chicken meat from Brazil, Chile, Australia, Canada, the Philippines and Thailand. Live poultry imports are limited to farm birds from New Zealand, Australia and Canada.—Reuters

COULD RESURRECTION CROPS SURVIVE DROUGHT AND FEED A HUNGRY PLANET?

CAPE TOWN: Could harnessing the power of "resurrection plants" - with the ability to survive severe water shortages for years - hold the secret to feeding a hungry planet? Jill Farrant, a biology professor at Cape Town University, hopes that by putting resurrection plants' survival skills into crops, making them drought-tolerant, the world's population could be better fed. Farrant and her team are currently testing the technique on maize, but in theory, it could be applied to any crop, she said.

"Give (the plants) water, and they are fully active within 24 to 48 hours," Farrant told the Thomson Reuters Foundation at her office. Nearly 800 million people go to bed hungry each night, according to the United Nations, with drought one of the greatest threats to food production. In Southern Africa, more than 21 million people need emergency assistance due to a food crisis after the region's worst drought in 35 years and an infestation of the crop-damaging fall armyworm.

Farrant's research has shown that survival mechanisms found in the 135 varieties of resurrection plants, such as the 'Rose of Jericho' and 'Siempre Viva' desert plants, are similar to the desiccation processes found in crop seeds. During a drought, a resurrection plant behaves like a seed, drying up and appearing to be dead, but then bursts back to life when rain finally falls.

"Since all crops produce dry seeds, this implies that the genetic mechanisms for desiccation tolerance exist in crops," said Farrant. The problem is the mechanism is not switched on, she said. By modifying the existing gene composition, Farrant and her team could potentially produce drought-tolerant crops. "By figuring out how they turn on these genes in roots and leaves, we can enable the same processes in leaves and roots of crops under drought conditions," Farrant said.

"Most of the genes responsible for desiccation tolerance are controlled by two master switches," she said, comparing the mechanisms to a household electronic circuit. By understanding how these switches are flipped in vegetative tissues of resurrection plants in response to water loss, Farrant is investigating how to enable the same reaction in crops. Her first trial crops are maize, beans and an edible grass called teff, which accounts for two-thirds of the daily protein intake in hunger-stricken Ethiopia.

Breakthrough

Mel Oliver, research leader of the US Department of Agriculture and professor of plant sciences at the University of Missouri, is also trying to find out how resurrection plants tolerate water loss and recover. "The genes are there, they're just not activated. If we understand how it works in resurrection plants, we can do it in crops," he said by phone. David Orr, Southern Africa spokesman for the UN World Food Program (WFP), said the research could bring benefits to drought-susceptible Southern Africa.

"In a region where climate-related shocks are becoming more frequent and more intense, farming communities are having to contend with drought - and occasionally flooding - as a new reality," he said by email. "By having access to drought-resistant seeds and other agricultural technologies such as water harvesting and irrigation, they will be better equipped to face the future."

Farrant said the research could cost a total of 20 million euros (\$21 million), adding that she needed more funds to continue her work. Nick Vink, chair of the Department of Agricultural Economics at Stellenbosch University in Cape Town, said weighing up the costs versus the benefits of the research was a difficult calculation. "The potential benefit is really very high, while it is not easy to estimate what the probability of success is," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Evidence

Chikelu Mba of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in Rome was hesitant to evaluate the potential of such technologies before seeing evidence-based testing and the impact of modified crops on the environment. "You have to look at the effects of gene modification," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation via Skype.

Small farmers growing maize - a crop that can produce bumper harvests but is susceptible to poor rainfall - may also be persuaded to switch to unmodified crops that are simply better able to resist drought, like beans, the FAO has said. Farrant is confident that in time, she can deliver plants that are resistant to drought. "Five years, and I'll give you a resurrection plant that can provide crops," she said, adding that testing the drought-resistant crops might take a further five years. "Then it is food on your plate, but it might be too long - people need food now."—Reuters



KOUROU: This handout picture taken and released by the European Space Agency (ESA), the Centre national d'études spatiales and the Arianespace satellite launch company shows a Vega launcher carrying the Sentinel-2B satellite lifting off from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana yesterday. —AFP

EUROPE LAUNCHES FOURTH EARTH MONITORING SATELLITE

CAYENNE: Europe launched a fourth satellite yesterday for its Copernicus Earth-monitoring project to track changes in forest cover and air pollution, the European Space Agency (ESA) announced. The 1.1-tonne, "color-vision" Sentinel-2B satellite blasted off on a Vega rocket from Europe's space port in Kourou, French Guiana, overnight, and was successfully placed in Earth orbit, it said. In about three days, controllers will start calibrating instruments to commission the satellite, which is to start operations in three to four months.

"With this launch we are taking another step toward advancing the Copernicus program, which is the most sophisticated Earth observation system in the world," ESA director general Jan Woerner said in a statement. Two more satellites are to follow in the coming months. Sentinel-5B, a twin of Sentinel-2A launched in June 2015, will zoom in on changes in the Earth's land mass and coastal zones-forest cover and pollution in lakes and coastal waters, for example.

Between them, the Sentinel-2 pair will cover the Earth's entire surface in five days. They are placed in the same orbit, on oppo-

site sides of the planet, 180 degrees apart. "Each Sentinel-2 satellite carries an innovative high-resolution multispectral camera with 13 spectral bands for a new perspective of land and vegetation," the agency said. "The combination of high-resolution, novel spectral capabilities, a field of vision covering 290 kilometers and frequent revisit times will provide unprecedented views of Earth."

Sentinel-1A was launched in April 2014 and Sentinel-1B two years later. They are equipped with special cloud-penetrating radar with which to monitor Earth's surface by day and by night, regardless of the weather. Future satellites will focus on ocean data and Earth's atmosphere. By mapping areas stricken by flood or earthquake, Copernicus will also help emergency teams identify worst-hit areas and locate passable roads, railway lines and bridges.

Copernicus, a program of the ESA and European Commission, is named for the 16th-century Polish astronomer who determined that the Earth orbited the Sun, and not the other way round, as convention had it at the time. —AFP

UK ZOO TO CLOSE OVER DEATHS OF HUNDREDS OF ANIMALS

LONDON: A British zoo where nearly 500 animals died of poor nutrition, cramped conditions and hypothermia over four years is set to close after officials on Monday refused to renew its license. Inspectors who surveyed Lakes Safari Zoo in northwest England said they were "dismayed by the obvious deficiencies in the accommodation, the overcrowding and the lack of proper welfare and husbandry".

The local Barrow Borough Council's licensing regulatory committee rejected the application by zoo founder David Gill, who now has 28 days to lodge an appeal. The deaths of 486 animals from January 2013 to September 2016 revealed "a clear picture of poor management with uncontrolled breeding and lack of any program of preventative and curative veterinary medicine", said the inspectors' report. They also 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. 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. —AFP

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MES, MALABAR GOLD AND DIAMONDS TO CONDUCT FREE MEDICAL SCREENING CAMP

The Muslim Education Society (MES) and Malabar Gold and Diamonds, a leading jewelry retailer, will hold their annual medical camp on March 10, 2017 at Pakistan Excel English School near Balkees Masjid Abbasiya. Afsal Khan, Malabar Gold and Diamonds - Country Head, inaugurated the form distribution for the medical camp at the Khaffaba Labor Camp in Mahboula.

The medical screening camp aims to offer medical care to the sick and needy people living in labor camps. The organizers expect the turnout of patients from all nationalities, who live in the labor camps, will number in more than thousands.

Malabar Gold and Diamonds working conjointly with Indian Doctors Forums will start the medical camp at 8:00 am and it will continue till 2:00 pm. The camp will provide free blood sugar tests and cholesterol tests, and patients can avail

of free medicines prescribed by doctors at the camp. MES will provide specialist doctors consultation for all attendees free of cost.

The organizers mentioned that more than 50 specialist doctors are made available on the special occasion, and the Kuwait Heart Foundation will manage a special counter which will assist patients with heart problems. Registration forms are available at all Malabar Gold and Diamonds showrooms.



Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) recently organized a special carnival at Mubarak Kiosk in Mubarakiya under the title of 'KGOC Carnival' in celebration of the National and Liberation days. Several competitions for the public and songs presented by child Shahad Al-Omairi were performed during the event. Speaking on the occasion, KGOC's commercial and public relations manager Ahmad Al-Awadhi said that the carnival was held as part of KGOC's social responsibility activities.



SOUTH KUWAIT TOASTMASTERS CLUB CELEBRATES 250TH MEETING

South Kuwait Toastmasters Club (SKTM), the 14th TM Club in Kuwait has celebrated 250th Meeting on 27th Feb. 2017 at Bliss Center, Mangaf. SKTM, following the TMI practice; is a non-profit organization facilitating the individuals to improve the communication and leadership skills and sharpening one's interpersonal skills. Members live with the club's tag line; 'Where You Learn, Practice and Master', and effectively facilitated by Club Ex-Com and Past Presidents. SKTM Club is unique in Kuwait; as 8 out of 10 Past Presidents are actively participating in the regular club meetings and mentor the budding and experienced toastmasters. Chartered on 11th September 2006; SKTM has successfully completed 10th Anniversary in September 2016.

The meeting was blessed with the presence of District 20A Program Quality Director, Dr Mohammad Makhloof; District 20 Public Relations Manager Nancy Vijo, Area 62 Director Fatima Abdullah, and Area 38 Director VSK Shenoy.

President Kannan Ravi opened the meeting appreciating the Past Ex-Com and members

for their active participation in the meetings. Kannan appraised the meeting participants about the various TMI Awards and District 20 Awards achieved by SKTM Club during the first half of 2016-2017.

The meeting was effectively managed by Past President Ganesan R as the Toastmaster of the Day. In addition to the customary sessions; viz. Prepared Speech, Table Topic and Evaluation Speech; special celebration session was included. Cake cutting and release of Club Newsletter commemorating 250th Meeting were the highlights of the meeting.

In his felicitation speech; Founder President B Muthukumar, cherished the sweet memories of the club progress since its chartering in Sept. 2006. He appreciated all the members and Past Ex-Com for bearing the torch to take the club to greater heights year after year.

The session concluded with Club President presenting the Thank You cards for the guests and Best Speaker awards. The meeting concluded with a sumptuous dinner. SKTM Club meets at Bliss Center, Mangaf on 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month from 7:00 pm till 9:00 pm.



LEARNERS OWN ACADEMY HOSTS FAREWELL CEREMONY FOR STUDENTS

Indian Learners Own Academy (LOA) accorded a grand farewell to the outgoing students of class 12, 2016-17 batch recently. Dr V Binumon, Principal of ICSK (Senior) was the chief guest for the occasion. D K Sharma, the Chairman of LOA was also present on the occasion. It was indeed a memorable day as 18 young graduates of LOA, adorned in their graduation gowns and caps got set to enter a new stage of life.

The graduation ceremony began with the invocation of the Almighty followed by the dazzling tunes of patriotism and diligence both to motherland India and to Kuwait. The invocation of the divine, by lighting the ceremonial lamp, filled the atmosphere with serenity and solemnity appropriate to the occasion. Principal of LOA, Asha Sharma welcomed the dignitaries, teachers, parents and the students of class 12. She expressed her sincere appreciation and gratitude to all the guests for their gracious presence on the solemn occasion. In her welcome speech, the Principal advised the students to set the sky as the limit and to be enterprising enough to attune to the winds of change to be successful in life.

'Swagatam', a semi-classical dance performance by the students of LOA mesmerized the audience to its core. The ensembles of LOA set the stage on fire with a live band performance that enthralled the audience. The choir group of LOA rendered a melodious prayer song.



Nostalgia rained in as student representatives shared their reminiscences of school life. Sweet and bitter memories shared in the tanginess of tears of separation, left the audience emotional.

The much awaited grand event of the day was the presentation of mementoes to the students. With hopes, expectations, aspirations and a sense of pride, each one of the graduates walked on to the stage to accept

the honor of their first graduation from the dignitaries present. A beautiful rendition of the song 'You Raise Me Up' by Sarah Elsa and Runa Akhter captivated the audience leaving them spellbound.

A self-composed poem in Hindi was rendered by Madhuri Jha. A stupendous and fabulous choir performance by the teachers showed their abundant blessings on all the students of Class 12.

The Chief Guest Dr V Binumon in his address to the graduates said, "Graduation Day was a day with a lot of difference". He marveled at the speeches rendered by the students and pointed out one important message i.e. "Do not quit. Do not give up in life". He spoke about gratitude and happiness as the two essential elements that are needed in one's life. He said that if one wanted to achieve success in life, it was very necessary to express gratitude to all those who helped in shaping their personality and molding them into role models for life. He further added that one should not pursue happiness but instead let happiness pursue you. "Grow with a difference. Make a difference in your life. That difference will add beauty to your life." With these words, he concluded his speech and blessed the students wishing them good luck and success in their future life.

The Head boy Shaikh Aymen and Head Girl Merin Maliyeckel proposed the vote of thanks. The ceremony concluded as the young graduates of the day then moved out of the auditorium through a corridor of blessing, ready to step out of school and face the outside world.



AL-MAHROSA RESTAURANT HOSTS 'THEATER MISR' TEAM

Al-Mahrosa Restaurant, one of the most celebrated fine dining oriental restaurants in Kuwait, held a special reception in honor of 'Theater Misr' team who visited Kuwait recently to join the National celebrations. Al-Mahrosa Restaurant - located in Intercontinental Kuwait Hotel (Istiqlal Street, Bneid Al-Gar) - also invited media delegates to enjoy the fine dining experience and authentic Arabian hospitality, where Wael Salem and the restaurant crew welcomed all guests. The renowned actor Ashraf Abdel Baqi along with the theater artists thanked the restaurant management team for their hospitality and the delightful culinary experience.



Miami Band

AL-SHAHEED PARK, LAPA HOST GCC YOUTH FESTIVAL

Al-Shaheed Park and Loyac Academy for Performing Arts (LAPA) hosts a festival for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) youth starting from today. The event, sponsored by National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), includes various activities through which organizers hope to employ GCC youth in the fields of arts. The activities include a gallery for fine arts featuring artists of ages ranging between 13 and 35, in addition to concerts for singers from Kuwait and the GCC such as Abdulaziz Al-Wees, Jassem Mohammad, Bader Al-Shuaibi, Abdulsalam Mohammad and Miami Band.

HOME CENTRE WINS SERVICE HERO AWARD FOR SECOND YEAR IN A ROW

Home Centre, the largest home retailer in the Middle East, has won the Service Hero award in the Home Furniture category for the second consecutive year in recognition of its commitment to providing outstanding service and value to its customers.

Service Hero is the Arab world's only 100 percent consumer-powered customer satisfaction index, which rates 17 industry segments - including cafés, retail banks, mobile operators, home furniture, electronics, and airlines - for customer service. Upon nominating leading brands across every segment, the Service Hero launches a year-long voting process that culminates in the selection of a single winner in each category. Launched in 2010, the index has counted over 150,000 consumer votes on more than 300 private sector companies in Kuwait and has lately expanded its reach to the UAE.

Competing against 15 large multinational brands in the Home Furniture category, Home Centre, which has six stores in Kuwait, received the Service Hero award based on votes cast by customers in Kuwait from 2016 to 2017. Voters ranked the brand on its reliability, speed of service, value for money, product quality, conven-



ience, staff attitude and competence, as well as call centre and website quality. In addition, they compared the expected and actual service experience and rated factors such as overall satisfaction and likelihood of recommending the brand to friends. Accepting the award at the Address Hotel, Dubai, Mederic Payne, CEO of Home Centre, said: "We are delighted to receive this prestigious award for the second year running. What makes the validation even more special is that it comes from our customers, who have always been the prime focus of every initiative and launch at Home Centre."

He added: "We aim to bring them only the very best - both in terms of products and experiences - and this recognition reinforces our long-standing dedication to exceptional customer service. Such distinctions motivate us to double our efforts to ensure we remain the preferred home shopping destination in the region."

To guarantee results that are impartial, objective and accurately reflect the voice of the consumer, Service Hero has partnered with the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) and is a member of the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR).



The Ambassador of Canada to Kuwait Martine Moreau hosted a thank you reception at her residence over the weekend. Local businessmen, media personalities and embassy staff attended the event. —Photos by Joseph Shagra



OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 00:45 The Green Inferno
- 02:30 The Borderlands
- 04:15 Run All Night
- 06:30 Dragon Blade
- 08:45 Rivers Nine
- 10:45 Forbidden Empire
- 12:45 Run All Night
- 14:45 Lucy
- 16:30 Hudson Hawk
- 18:30 Automata
- 20:30 Fast & Furious 7
- 23:00 Mad Max: Fury Road

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:00 Catching Monsters
- 00:55 Gator Boys
- 01:50 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
- 02:45 Bondi Vet
- 03:40 Catching Monsters
- 04:35 Tanked
- 05:25 In Too Deep
- 06:15 Gator Boys
- 07:02 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
- 07:49 Catching Monsters
- 08:36 Call Of The Wildman
- 09:00 Call Of The Wildman
- 09:25 Preposterous Pets
- 10:15 Catching Monsters
- 11:10 In Too Deep
- 11:35 In Too Deep
- 12:05 Tanked
- 13:00 Preposterous Pets
- 13:55 Bondi Vet
- 14:50 Catching Monsters
- 15:45 Gator Boys
- 16:40 In Too Deep
- 17:05 In Too Deep
- 17:35 Tanked
- 18:30 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
- 19:25 Yankee Jungle
- 20:20 Insane Pools: Off The Deep End
- 21:15 Tanked
- 22:10 In Too Deep
- 22:35 Escape To Chimp Eden
- 23:05 Yankee Jungle

BBC FIRST

- 00:35 Doctors
- 01:05 Doctors

- 05:40 Ridiculousness
- 06:05 Ridiculousness
- 06:30 Urban Tarzan
- 06:55 Urban Tarzan
- 07:20 Life Or Debt
- 08:15 Catch A Contractor
- 09:05 Disaster Date
- 09:30 Ridiculousness
- 09:55 Ridiculousness
- 10:20 Workaholics
- 10:45 Disaster Date
- 11:10 Ridiculousness
- 11:35 The It Crowd
- 12:00 Hungry Investors
- 12:50 Workaholics
- 13:15 Lip Sync Battle
- 13:40 The It Crowd
- 14:05 Catch A Contractor
- 14:55 Ridiculousness
- 15:20 Sweat Inc.
- 16:10 Workaholics
- 16:35 Ridiculousness
- 17:00 Ridiculousness
- 17:30 Disaster Date
- 17:55 Lip Sync Battle
- 18:25 Workaholics
- 18:50 Urban Tarzan
- 19:15 Urban Tarzan
- 19:39 The It Crowd
- 20:03 Life Or Debt
- 20:50 Disaster Date
- 21:13 Ridiculousness
- 21:37 Workaholics
- 22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
- 22:30 John Oliver's New York Stand Up Show
- 22:54 Inside Amy Schumer
- 23:18 Chappelle's Show
- 23:42 Tosh.0

Discovery Family

- 00:15 Destroyed In Seconds
- 00:40 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
- 01:30 Prototype This
- 02:20 Australia Smashes Guinness World Records
- 02:45 Australia Smashes Guinness World Records
- 03:10 Guinness World Records Smashed UK
- 04:00 Destroyed In Seconds
- 04:25 Destroyed In Seconds
- 04:50 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
- 05:40 How It's Made
- 06:05 How It's Made
- 06:30 Dirty Jobs
- 07:20 Mythbusters
- 08:00 Dick n' Dom Go Wild
- 08:25 Awesome Adventures
- 08:50 Bondi Vet

- 15:05 Star Darlings
- 15:10 Austin & Ally
- 15:35 Jessie
- 16:00 Bunk'd
- 16:25 Kirby Buckets
- 16:50 Sunny Bunnies
- 16:55 The Zhuzhus
- 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 PJ Masks
- 00:30 PJ Masks
- 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
- 04:00 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
- 08:30 Loopdidoo

- 19:30 How It's Made: Dream Cars
- 19:55 How Do They Do It?
- 20:20 The Island With Bear Grylls
- 21:10 Storage Wars Canada
- 21:35 Storage Wars Canada
- 22:00 Made By Destruction
- 22:25 Made By Destruction
- 22:50 How Do They Do It?
- 23:15 How Do They Do It?
- 23:40 Impossible Engineering

Disney XD

- 00:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA
- 07:00 Gravity Falls
- 07:25 Counterfeit Cat
- 07:50 Atomic Puppet
- 08:15 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 08:25 Danger Mouse
- 08:40 Supa Strikas
- 09:10 K.C. Undercover
- 09:35 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
- 10:00 Lab Rats
- 10:25 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: Bionic Island
- 14:45 Atomic Puppet
- 15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 15:15 Counterfeit Cat
- 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
- 19:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 19:10 Mighty Med
- 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

- 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 Chopped
- 21:00 Food Network Star
- 22:00 Kitchen Inferno
- 23:00 Iron Chef America

- 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 Murdoch Mysteries
- 05:20 Him
- 06:15 Broadchurch
- 07:10 The Chase
- 08:05 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 09:00 Murdoch Mysteries
- 10:00 Him
- 11:00 Broadchurch
- 11:55 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 Paul O'Grady: The Sally Army And Me
- 17:30 Paul O'Grady: The Sally Army And Me
- 18:00 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
- 18:50 Home Fires
- 19:45 Emmerdale
- 20:25 Coronation Street
- 20:45 Coronation Street
- 21:40 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 22:00 Paul O'Grady: The Sally Army And Me
- 22:30 Paul O'Grady: The Sally Army And Me
- 23:00 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
- 23:50 Emmerdale

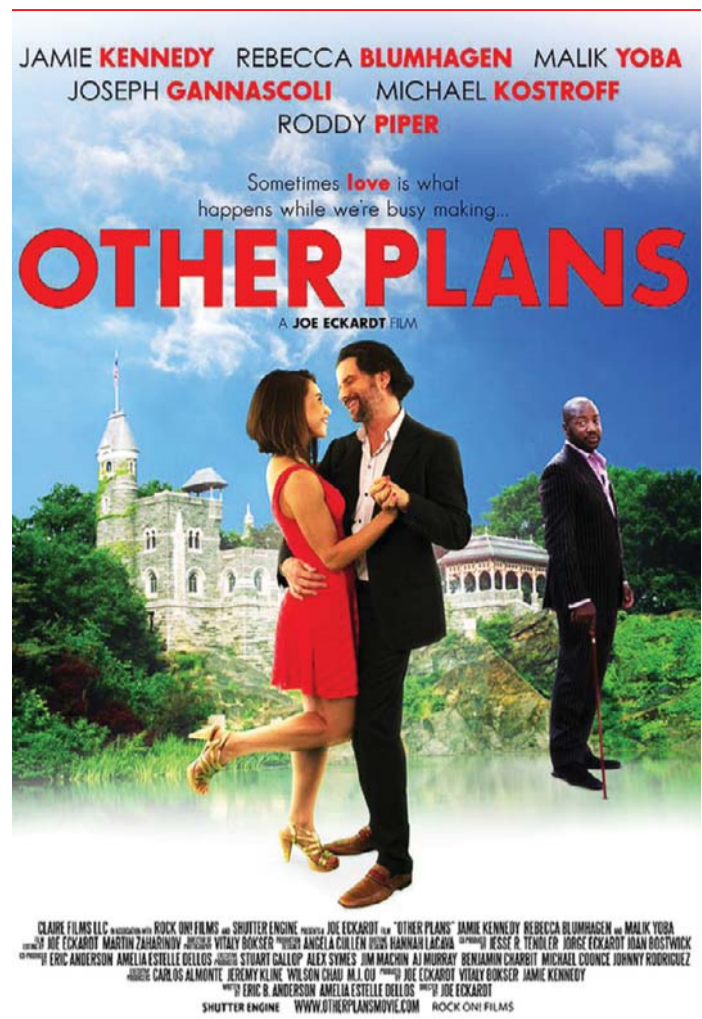
- 13:40 Swamp People
- 14:30 Ax Men
- 15:20 Mountain Men
- 16:10 Shipping Wars
- 16:35 Shipping Wars
- 17:00 Counting Cars
- 17:25 Counting Cars
- 17:50 Pawn Stars
- 18:15 Pawn Stars
- 18:40 Looptu And Pitbull
- 19:30 Swamp People
- 20:20 Mountain Men
- 21:10 American Pickers
- 22:00 Counting Cars
- 22:25 Car Hunters
- 22:50 Forged In Fire
- 23:40 Forged In Fire

H2 HD

- 00:00 Ancient Aliens
- 01:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 02:00 Patton 360
- 03:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 04:00 Missing In Alaska
- 04:50 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
- 05:40 Ancient Aliens
- 06:30 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 07:20 Patton 360
- 08:10 The Universe
- 09:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 10:00 Missing In Alaska
- 11:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
- 12:00 Ancient Aliens
- 13:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 14:00 Patton 360
- 15:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 16:00 Missing In Alaska
- 17:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
- 18:00 Ancient Aliens
- 19:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 20:00 Patton 360
- 21:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 22:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 23:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence

H HD HISTORY

- 00:30 American Pickers
- 01:20 Forged In Fire
- 02:10 Looptu And Pitbull
- 03:00 Swamp People
- 03:50 Storage Wars
- 04:15 American Pickers
- 05:05 Pawn Stars
- 05:30 Pawn Stars
- 06:00 Mountain Men
- 07:00 American Restoration
- 07:25 American Restoration
- 07:50 Shipping Wars
- 08:15 Shipping Wars
- 08:40 Counting Cars
- 09:30 Pawn Stars
- 09:55 Pawn Stars
- 10:20 Storage Wars Miami
- 10:45 Storage Wars Miami
- 11:10 American Pickers
- 12:00 Hunting Hitler
- 12:50 Time Team



OTHER PLANS ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

- 17:30 Africa's Hunters
- 18:30 Wild Case Files
- 19:25 Savage Kingdom
- 20:20 Dangerous Encounters
- 21:10 Predator Falls
- 22:50 Africa's Hunters
- 23:40 Savage Kingdom

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 00:30 Open Season: Scared Silly
- 02:30 American Girl: Grace Stirs Up Success
- 04:30 I'll Be Home For Christmas
- 06:30 Wall-E
- 08:30 Kim Possible: So The Drama
- 10:00 Looney Tunes: Rabbit's Run
- 11:30 Open Season: Scared Silly
- 13:00 Wall-E
- 14:45 Looney Tunes: Rabbit's Run
- 16:15 It Takes Two
- 18:15 Black Beauty
- 20:00 American Girl: Isabelle Dances Into The Spotlight
- 22:00 Marvel Super Hero Adventures: Frost Fight
- 23:30 It Takes Two

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 01:00 Safe Men
- 03:00 A Madea Christmas
- 05:00 Overboard
- 07:00 The Bad News Bears (2005)
- 09:00 A Madea Christmas
- 11:00 Overboard
- 13:00 The Bad News Bears (2005)
- 15:00 Baby's Day Out
- 17:00 Other Plans
- 19:00 Shanghai Noon
- 21:00 It's Complicated
- 23:00 Forgetting Sarah Marshall

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

- 01:00 The Birdcage
- 03:00 The Homesman
- 05:00 A Promise
- 07:00 Days Of Heaven
- 09:00 I Believe In Miracles
- 10:45 The Blind Side
- 13:00 The Sting
- 15:15 Love & Mercy
- 17:15 Still Alice
- 19:00 The Disappearance Of Eleanor Rigby: Her
- 21:00 Changeling
- 23:30 Clouds Of Sils Maria

OSN MOVIES HD

- 00:00 Medicine Man
- 02:45 Faster
- 04:30 Casino Royale
- 07:00 A Civil Action
- 09:00 Ghostbusters II
- 11:00 Amelia
- 13:00 Casino Royale
- 15:30 47 Ronin
- 17:30 Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps
- 19:45 Four Brothers
- 21:45 Quantum Of Solace
- 23:45 A Night At The Roxbury

DISCOVERY SCIENCE

- 00:00 Sport Science
- 00:50 Kings Of Construction
- 01:40 Mythbusters
- 02:30 How Do They Do It?
- 02:55 Food Factory
- 03:20 Sport Science
- 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 Sport Science
- 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 NASA's Unexplained Files
- 13:26 Kings Of Construction
- 14:14 Mythbusters
- 15:02 How Do They Do It?
- 15:26 Food Factory
- 15:50 Close Encounters
- 16:15 Close Encounters
- 16:38 Kings Of Construction
- 17:26 Sport Science
- 18:14 Mythbusters
- 19:02 Close Encounters
- 19:25 Close Encounters
- 19:50 Kings Of Construction

NAT GEO WILD HD

- 00:30 Shark Noodle
- 01:20 Original Fight Club
- 02:10 Animals Gone Wild
- 03:00 Brutal Killers
- 03:50 Dangerous Encounters
- 04:45 Dangerous Encounters
- 05:40 Dead Or Alive
- 06:35 Brutal Killers
- 07:30 Dangerous Encounters
- 08:25 Dangerous Encounters
- 09:20 Dead Or Alive
- 10:15 Africa's Hunters
- 11:10 Wild Case Files
- 12:05 Secrets Of The Wild
- 13:00 Monster Jellyfish
- 13:55 Attack Of The Big Cats
- 14:50 Dangerous Encounters
- 15:45 Dangerous Encounters
- 16:40 Predator Falls



SURVIVOR ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 01:35 Call The Midwife
- 02:30 The Level
- 03:25 Ripper Street
- 04:20 Orphan Black
- 05:05 Doctors
- 05:35 Doctors
- 06:05 New Tricks
- 07:00 Doctors
- 07:30 Doctors
- 08:00 Holly City
- 08:50 Father Brown
- 09:45 Doctor Who
- 11:05 New Tricks
- 12:00 Doctors
- 12:30 Father Brown
- 13:20 Doctor Who
- 14:35 New Tricks
- 15:30 Doctors
- 16:00 Doctors
- 16:30 Father Brown
- 17:15 Doctor Who
- 18:05 New Tricks
- 19:00 Doctors
- 19:30 Eastenders
- 20:05 Father Brown
- 21:00 Poldark
- 22:00 Last Tango In Halifax
- 22:55 Ripper Street
- 23:50 Orphan Black

- 09:40 How It's Made
- 10:05 How It's Made
- 10:30 Prototype This
- 11:20 Mythbusters
- 12:10 Bondi Vet
- 13:00 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
- 13:50 How It's Made
- 14:15 How It's Made
- 14:40 Dirty Jobs
- 15:30 Dick n' Dom Go Wild
- 15:55 Awesome Adventures
- 16:20 Mythbusters
- 17:10 Prototype This
- 18:00 Wildest Africa
- 18:50 Lost & Found With Mike & Jesse
- 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 Wildest Africa
- 23:00 Lost & Found With Mike & Jesse
- 23:50 Destroyed In Seconds

Disney Channel HD

- 08:45 Henry Hugglemonster
- 09:00 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 09:05 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 09:15 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
- 09:30 Miles From Tomorrow
- 09:45 Goldie & Bear
- 09:55 The Lion Guard
- 10:20 PJ Masks
- 10:35 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
- 10:50 Doc McStuffins
- 11:00 Goldie & Bear
- 11:15 PJ Masks
- 11:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 11:35 The Lion Guard
- 12:00 Sofia The First
- 12:30 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
- 12:55 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 13:20 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
- 13:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 14:15 Gummi Bears
- 14:40 Sofia The First
- 15:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 15:35 PJ Masks
- 16:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
- 16:30 The Lion Guard
- 16:55 Unbungalievable
- 17:00 Sofia The First
- 17:30 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
- 17:55 Goldie & Bear
- 18:20 The Lion Guard
- 18:50 PJ Masks
- 19:15 Sofia The First
- 19:40 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
- 20:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 20:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 21:00 PJ Masks
- 21:30 PJ Masks
- 22:00 Unbungalievable
- 22:05 Goldie & Bear
- 22:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 23:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
- 23:25 Gummi Bears
- 23:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 00:30 Fast N' Loud

Discovery Channel HD

- 01:20 Misfit Garage
- 02:10 The Wheel: Survival Games
- 03:00 Rise Of The Warrior Apes
- 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 The Island 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 The Wheel: Survival Games
- 12:25 Legend Of Croc Gold
- 13:15 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
- 14:05 How It's Made: Dream Cars
- 14:30 Storage Wars Canada
- 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
- 18:40 Misfit Garage

EHD

- 00:00 E! News
- 00:15 Botched
- 01:05 Botched
- 01:55 Botched
- 02:50 E! News
- 03:50 WAGS
- 04:45 WAGS
- 05:40 WAGS
- 06:30 Fashion Bloggers
- 07:00 Just Jillian
- 07:55 E! News
- 08:10 Just Jillian
- 09:10 E! News
- 10:10 WAGS Miami
- 11:05 WAGS Miami
- 12:00 WAGS Miami
- 13:00 E! News
- 13:15 WAGS Miami
- 14:10 WAGS
- 15:05 WAGS
- 16:00 E! News
- 16:15 Celebrity Style Story
- 16:40 Celebrity Style Story
- 17:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 18:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 19:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 20:00 E! News
- 21:00 So Cosmo
- 22:00 So Cosmo
- 23:00 So Cosmo

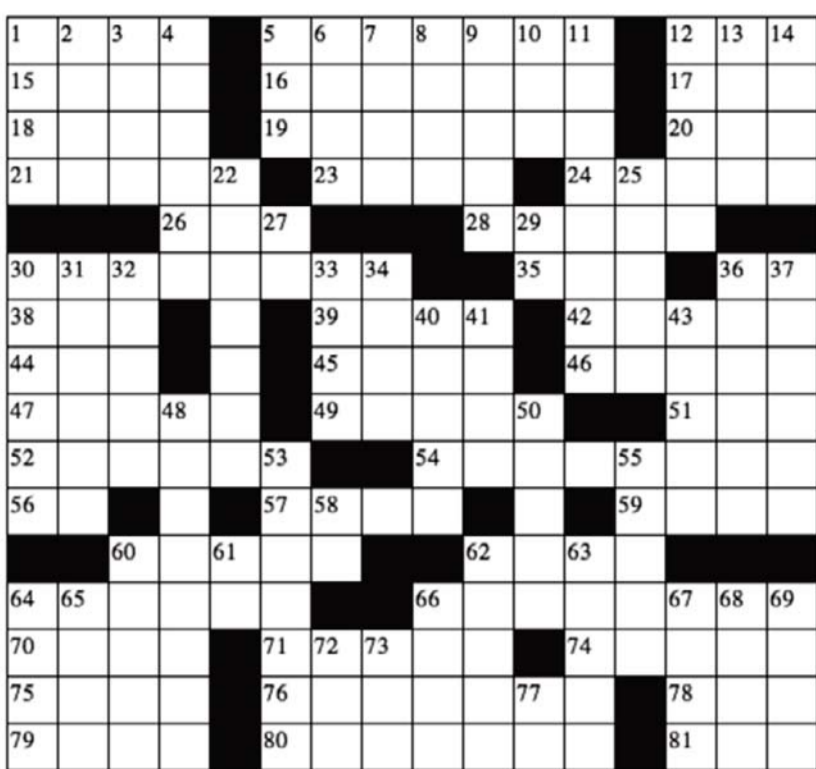
food network

- 00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 01:00 Man Fire Food
- 01:30 Man Fire Food
- 02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 03:00 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
- 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



47 RONIN ON OSN MOVIES HD

CROSSWORD 1541



ACROSS

- The biblical name for ancient Syria.
- Covered with paving material.
- A nucleotide derived from adenosine that occurs in muscle tissue.
- The basic unit of money on Malta.
- The act of storing something.
- 4-wheeled motor vehicle.
- Type genus of the Aceraceae.
- A paved surface in the form of a strip.
- A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
- Building material used as siding or roofing.
- A rapid series of short loud sounds (as might be heard with a stethoscope in some types of respiratory disorders).
- Any of various usually white herons having long plumes during breeding season.
- Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
- Of inferior or mixed breed.
- Clean refuse from.
- The federal agency that insures residential mortgages.
- Black-and-white short-necked web-footed diving bird of northern seas.
- A law passed by US Congress to prevent employees from being injured or contracting diseases in the course of their employment.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- An undergarment worn by women to support their breasts.
- A copy of a written work or composition that has been published (printed on pages bound together).
- A Muslim or Hindu mendicant monk who is regarded as a holy man.
- A coffee cake flavored with orange rind and raisins and almonds.
- A chock or bar wedged under a wheel or between the spokes to prevent a vehicle from rolling down an incline.
- Any high mountain.
- A river that rises in northern Colombia and flows generally eastward to the Orinoco in central Venezuela.
- Impossible to use.
- A brittle silver-white metalloid element that is related to selenium and sulfur.
- A mountainous landlocked communist state in southeastern Asia.
- Horny plate covering and protecting part of the dorsal surface of the digits.
- A genus of tropical American plants have sword-shaped leaves and a fleshy compound fruits composed of the fruits of several flowers (such as pineapples).
- Capital and largest city of Italy.
- An industrial city in the European part of Russia.
- The lofty nest of a bird of prey (such as a hawk or eagle).
- A Chad language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- The trait of lacking restraint or control.
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- Adopted in order to deceive.
- Continually complaining or faultfinding.
- Having undesirable or negative qualities.

DOWN

- By bad luck.
- Possessing material wealth.
- A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
- Russian mathematician (1856-1922).
- Standard time in the 7th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 105th meridian west.
- Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- The ball-and-socket joint between the head of the femur and the acetabulum.
- Fleshy and usually brightly colored cover of some seeds that develops from the ovule stalk and partially or entirely envelopes the seed.
- American patriot who rode with Paul Revere to warn that the British were advancing on Lexington and Concord (1745-1799).
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- United States biochemist (born in Germany) who studied the metabolism of muscles (1884-1951).
- Sour or bitter in taste.
- A long thin piece of cloth or paper as used for binding or fastening.
- The fleshy part of the human body that you sit on.
- Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
- Tropical tree of Central America and West Indies and Puerto Rico having spikes of white flowers.
- An associate degree in nursing.
- A radioactive transuranic element.
- A toxic alkaloid found in certain tropical South American trees that is a powerful relaxant for striated muscles.
- Jordan's port.
- A large number or amount.
- A program under which employees regularly accumulate shares and may ultimately assume control of the company.
- Very hot and finely tapering pepper of special pungency.
- A simple pistil or one element of a compound pistil.
- Falcon-headed solar god.
- A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
- Jordan's port.
- A famous waterfall in Venezuela.
- A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
- Relating to or characteristic of the state or people of Alaska.
- A gliding joint between the distal ends of the tibia and fibula and the proximal end of the talus.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- A Bantu language spoken by the Kamba people in Kenya.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- Of or relating to or supporting Hinduism.
- The longest river of Asia.
- The Hebrew patriarch who saved himself and his family and the animals by building an ark in which they survived 40 days and 40 nights of rain.
- A special way of doing something.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- (Babylonian) A goddess of the watery deep and daughter of Ea.
- No longer having or seeming to have or expecting to have life.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- An angular shape characterized by sharp turns in alternating directions.
- In operation or operational.

Yesterday's Solution

R	U	G	A	B	S	C	I	S	E	G	U	I	B	
U	N	H	M	E	N	U	R	A	E	A	N	O	A	
I	A	A	P	L	U	R	A	L	S	T	I	N	T	
N	U	T	S	E	D	G	E	A	S	C	E	T	I	C
T	A	R	A	F	D	A	A	Y	A	H				
I	B	I	D	E	M	D	N	G	U					
G	E	H	R	A	I	T	A	C	A	R				
U	N	W	E	B	B	E	D	A	B	R	A	S	E	
A	G	A	S	C	A	M	L	I	M	I	T			
N	A	D	A	C	A	N	T	E	C	E	D	E		
A	L	D	U	D	E	E	N	H	A	R	L	E	M	
T	A	K	A	T	A	I	R	A						
S	C	A	D	P	L	I	C	A	C	A	B	G		
L	A	C	M	E	L	A	N	O	M	A	B	A	A	
A	P	C	S	P	A	R	E	R	I	B	E	R	G	
P	E	A	B	A	N	D	A	N	N	A	D	N	A	

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may be in charge of the idea box this week and spend quite a bit of time making something creative from hints or suggestions that may not make much sense. Ideas and suggestions are always on your mind and working with people to make life better for others is uppermost in your category of things-you-love-to-do. You may enjoy the collection of antiques or you may enjoy the decoration scene with a splash of color here or a mirror there. If you are in business for yourself, choosing a partner with the right amount of humor is an important factor. Too serious a partner can encourage you to go deeper into thought. If you are looking for a job, don't be afraid to claim your successes-you will shine like a star. Enjoy your family this afternoon!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Ok, time has passed and the negative parts of last year are behind you. Don't be so afraid to take a chance with new people. Move with the energies of this day. You may gain through a legal maneuver on this day. Your desire to succeed is strengthened, not only financially, but personally as well. You are likely to hear some good news today regarding a matter of importance to you. The afternoon is a good time to relax by doing something totally different from the usual. This may mean learning to skate, learning a new dance step or creating a piece of music for a loved one. You feel unique and proud of your accomplishments. This evening you will enjoy the company of a treasured friend. There is much to talk about this day-many plans to make.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

All that effort you have been putting into your career is beginning to pay. Co-workers come to you for answers and you are feeling confident. This, however, is a time when you may be busy thinking and working at pulling in extra finances. Sensible thought must be given to the practical use of money. Complaints or your recognition of things out-of-balance will keep you on your toes today. Patience and attention to details all afternoon will put you out front in the workplace. You continue to work on that creative project of yours this evening. Tomorrow and the next few days bring opportunities to pull in some extra money. This can be an expansive, creative and even romantic phase, a time you will look back on with pride and fondness.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

There could be a disagreement concerning travel or home this morning; however, by this evening there will be an acceptable compromise. You can handle many subjects at once today, jumping easily from one to the other. Be wise in not extending your energies too far. You will have wonderful opportunities to observe and report on some professional situation. Whether you are working on a thesis report, or studying young children, your opinion is important to others and will gain attention. There are wonderful opportunities for you to counsel others. Success for you is in the recognition of some discovery or insight. Medicine and research, science, technology and psychology are worth your consideration when it comes to vocations.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may feel it necessary to contact an authority figure before your workday begins. This may mean that a stray animal is loose in your neighborhood or some other difficulty is present. You put lots of energy into your professional chores and your progress is successful. You create your own circumstances these days without much consideration of other people's comments. You know what you do best and you manage to direct yourself into successful positions. Determined to reach your personal goals, as well as your professional goals, you proceed with your personal activities in the same determined manner. Intense concentration in work and play leaves little time for relaxation, not to mention receptive input. Think on these things today.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This morning you may take some time to copy an article to give to your co-workers, or spread some type of good news. There are new opportunities that are presented to young people now that will help them get into college. Everything points to your taking the lead in the area of helping, guiding and answering questions. You could feel that your co-worker friends are willing to rotate the work with you in order to make things easier; but you will probably first need to ask for their help. An attitude of gratefulness is catching. A friend or business associate will give you some new ideas on moneymaking opportunities. It is possible that you will join a club this afternoon-an opening awaits you. Any form of creativity may be enjoyed tonight.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may be surprised when someone requests you for a particular job this day. Ask questions, take notes and stay focused... You will see a successful outcome. Others may find you notably witty and eccentric this day. You have a good sense of humor and people enjoy working with you. Later today you may have insights or breakthroughs regarding your living situation. Ideas about additions or repairs to the permanent building construction keep buzzing 'round your head. You will find projects and problems running in a smooth manner before the day ends. Make note of any changes you want to make so that you can become better organized. Your charm is showing this evening-there is plenty of time and energy for romance.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You will want to dive in and tackle whatever work project is available this morning. You are ready to get the day started. There is an air of seriousness in all your dealings with partners. This is a good time to practice discretion. Financial matters are definitely getting better! Some sort of financial windfall is in the cards this week-possibly today. Think about a plan for investing in the future. You have an inclination to engage in new projects or invest in what are best described as shaky investments. Care should be taken when undertaking anything new but planning ahead is a good thing. This afternoon you will be feeling more secure with your spouse or business partner. Expressing affection should be easy and can do much for a close relationship.



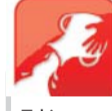
Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may be experiencing confusion over your financial affairs at this time. It just seems to be that time of the year when most of your friends are filing income taxes or have filed and now there is talk of wise investments. Take steps that will bring your budget into a better balance. You may find romantic distractions in the workplace, but it would benefit you to keep your mind on business. This time of the year favors you in the entertainment world-perhaps a sideline. You may even consider being involved with a community or neighborhood musical group or theater company. A fun get-together with friends is in the making. The people you care about will be grateful for your nurturing and kind ways this evening.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Professional responsibilities increase at this time. You have a natural sense for what the public wants and you are willing to take chances. You can only fit so much into one day so it would be a wise move to call a halt to any additional demands on your time later this afternoon. Do not respond by impulse buying during the day. Respond thorough investigation and close scrutiny. You are most persuasive in your communications. Your emotions or the feelings of those around you may be very clear. A special item you have been wanting for a long time is within your reach. There is currently constant input into ideas that will increase your finances. It is up to you to act on this information. Regardless of the weather, there are fun things to do tonight.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Good practical job-related thoughts and ideas are available to you now. Taking care of business is a major theme where your emotional orientation is concerned. You very much want to become organized and you work to get things accomplished in a quick manner. You have the ability to communicate with superiors or describe what you see. Progressive people and idealistic groups or concepts play an important role in your life. You will be experimenting as well as teaching new concepts and putting away a few old ideas and routines. Keep a low profile on your extra-curricular spending and leave your credit cards and check book at home for the next few days. Emotions, yours or others, may be very clear just now. Today, as most days, is a good day.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There are reasons for rules although a few of the older rules undisputedly need changing or deleting. One cannot necessarily change everything in one day but you may be able to devote some of your spare time this birthday to changing laws for the better. Petitions, volunteering to work for politicians, taking on the subject of old laws in a school project or another means of making a better city in which to live is one of your interests that are taking shape at this time. You like to see positive changes happen. It is also fun to think you are the one who got others inspired to do the same. This evening you may enjoy your many friends and family as you come together in friendly fun. Enjoy kicking up your heels with a party!

WORD SEARCH

Old West 2

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 30 letters spell a Will Rogers quotation.

D	W	H	I	S	K	E	Y	B	U	N	K	H	O	U	S	E	T	H	A
N	L	D	A	V	Y	C	R	O	C	K	E	T	T	E	W	R	O	S	A
A	G	U	N	S	L	I	N	G	E	R	P	C	R	Y	A	R	W	T	S
H	C	S	T	L	E	P	T	S	R	I	O	O	N	D	S	A	A	I	K
D	A	A	D	D	R	C	H	U	O	U	S	I	E	L	S	N	R	O	
E	M	T	L	I	E	O	I	N	O	S	S	N	S	T	F	T	T	R	K
R	I	N	S	A	T	E	E	F	L	T	G	T	U	A	K	O	E	U	C
I	N	U	P	G	M	E	W	A	F	P	O	O	L	T	L	O	D	P	I
H	E	D	U	B	R	I	R	E	O	P	O	E	E	S	B	P	T	H	
R	S	N	R	S	U	E	T	S	L	B	Y	G	H	E	R	L	O	A	L
L	H	I	S	E	N	T	Y	A	B	G	A	D	S	L	A	S	R	L	
R	A	C	C	E	S	D	K	N	J	U	M	N	S	L	C	T	E	I	
I	F	O	G	E	O	S	K	B	N	A	A	U	A	S	O	K	E	V	B
G	T	W	C	H	R	M	D	O	H	N	H	T	C	A	S	R	L	D	
N	M	P	T	H	O	O	L	A	H	A	S	E	B	O	L	M	W	O	L
O	F	O	R	B	A	O	U	C	K	R	R	A	P	U	O	I	A	V	I
O	R	K	B	O	G	P	N	S	A	E	R	D	I	T	I	T	G	E	W
L	R	E	L	D	D	A	S	M	E	N	R	M	G	S	L	H	O	R	T
A	R	H	E	H	R	E	C	I	F	O	T	S	O	P	E	N	R	D	
S	E	S	U	O	H	L	O	O	H	C	S	L	L	A	H	N	W	O	T

ASSAY OFFICE	DOCTOR	MINE SHAFT	SCOUTS
BANK ROBBER	DRESSMAKER	OUTLAWS	SHOOTOUT
BARN	FENCE	PELTS	SHOTGUN
BLACKSMITH	GENERAL STORE	PIGS	SPURS
BOOTS	GOLD NUGGET	PIONEERS	STIRRUP
BUCKBOARD	GUNSLINGER	POST OFFICE	TOWN HALL
BUNKHOUSE	HATS	RANCH HAND	TRADING POST
CALAMITY JANE	HIRE HAND	REVOLVER	TUMBLEWEED
CHAPS	HORSES	RUSTLER	WAGON
COAL OIL	ICE HOUSE	SADDLER	WANTED POSTER
DAVY CROCKETT	MARSHALL	SALDOON GIRL	WHISKEY
		SCHOOLHOUSE	WILD BILL HICKOK

Yesterday's Solution

Old West 1

L	L	I	T	H	O	O	B	E	S	K	O	H	W	O	L	P	L	A	
J	U	D	G	E	K	A	N	S	E	L	I	A	R	H	A	S	G		
O	O	D	O	R	H	I	R	O	L	E	W	C	R	I	G	H			
R	O	G	O	L	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A		
R	N	S	M	H	H	R	I	P	R	I	A	G	O	T	P	I	T	H	U
S	S	S	S	H	O	R	E	O	R	A	I	E	L	E	D	M	N		
E	R	I	N	N	A	L	M	D	E	A	N	R	L	E	I	O	D	E	
O	O	D	A	R	A	N	E	O	O	D	O	L	E	K	K	O			
L	A	C	U	R	E	S	A	R	I	B	U	O	A	C	R	E	B	T	
I	H	O	H	I	L	L	U	D	A	N	T	A	A	H	W	T			
A	P	C	H	E	L	S	A	L	L	A	T	M	B	T	O	C	K		
R	A	K	A	L	E	A	L	W	L	S	L	P	S	Y	O	A			
T	R	G	S	H	I	O	W	A	S	H	O	R	E	F	A	L	T	E	
D	G	N	O	O	L	A	S	G	W	R	E	D	I	D	L	G	R		
N	E	B	A	N	K	E	R	M	A	M	U	R	R	I	D	I	R	T	
A	L	I	V	E	S	I	O	C	K	N	A	F	R	E	L	B	A	F	
R	E	T	R	E	N	T	M	D	L	O	G	N	V	F	E	I	Z	L	
B	T	S	H	O	P	K	E	E	P	E	R	L	E	E	F	S	E		

BANKER	FARRIER	LAWMAN	SALOON
BARKEEP	FORT	LIVESTOCK	SHERIFF
BILLY THE KID	FURS	MINER	SHOPKEEPER
BOOT HILL	GOLD MINE	OUTLAW GANG	SITTING BULL
BRAND	GOLD PANNING	PISTOL	STAGECOACH
CAMPFIRE	GRAZE	PLOW HORSE	TELEGRAPH
CATTLE DRIVE	HIRED GUN	POSSE	TRACKER
CHAPARRAL	HOGS	RAILROAD	TRAIL
COAL	HOMESTEAD	RANCH	TRAIN
CORRAL	HOTEL	RATTLESNAKE	UNDERTAKER
COWBOY	JUDGE	RIFLE	WATER TANK
DOC HOLLIDAY	LARIAT	SADDLE	WELL

The hidden message is: A GOOD HORSE MAKES SHORT MILES

Daily SuDoku

		5		8				
	7	6	2	5				
				4		2		
			1	9	5	7		
5	6						3	9
3	7	8		5				
		4		7				
				8	4	6	5	
			5			1		

Yesterday's Solution

5	3	4	1	6	8	9	2	7
9	6	2						

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
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



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 Khalidiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khalidiya 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

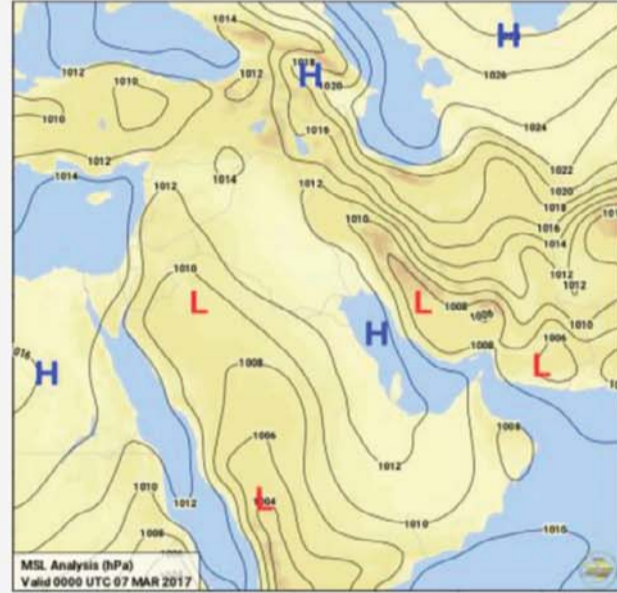
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 07/03/2017-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 26 °C

By Day : Warm with light to moderate north westerly to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h
By Night : Clouds will increase gradually with light to moderate freshening gradually at times variable wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h with a chance for scattered rain that might be thundery at times

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Expected Weather	warm + scattered clouds	warm + blowing dust	warm + scattered clouds	P.C to P + rain + dust
Min Temp °C	13	12	11	13
Max Temp °C	27	28	29	30
Wind Direction	variable wind changing to light to moderate north easterly	north westerly	north westerly to light variable	south easterly
Wind Speed km/h	06 - 28	15 - 40	08 - 26	20 - 45

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	16	27
KUWAIT AIRPORT	10	26
ABDALY	10	26
BUBYAN	11	26
JAHRRA	13	27
FAILAKA ISLAND	13	26
SALMIYAH	16	26
AHMADI	16	25
JAL ALIYAH	11	27
QAROH ISLAND	16	24
UMM AL-MARADEM	16	24
NUWAISSIB	11	26
WAFRA	10	27
MANAGISH	10	27
SALMY	09	28
MUTRIBA	10	27

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	24
Min Temp (°C)	13
Max Rel Hum (%)	67
Min Rel Hum (%)	24
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	53 NW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:08
Sunset	17:51

Prayer Times

Fajr	04:49
Sunrise	06:08
Zuhr	11:59
Asr	15:21
Sunset	17:51
Isha	19:08

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antigua	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-Mikhaizeem 23926920 Dr. Kathem Maarafi 25730465 Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah 25655528 Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi 24577781 Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea 25333501 Urologists Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy 22641534 Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul 22639955 Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi 22616660 Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C) 25313120 Dr. Leons Joseph 66703427	Plastic Surgeons Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf 22547272 Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari 22617700 Dr. Abdel Quttainah 25625030/60 Family Doctor Dr Divya Damodar 23729596/23729581 Psychiatrists Dr. Esam Al-Ansari 22635047 Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan 22613623/0 Gynaecologists & Obstetricians Dr. Adrian 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 Maarooof 25713514 Dr. Pradip Gupare 23713100 Dr. Zacharias Mathew 24334282 Dermatology Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University 23845955 Dentists Dr. Anil Thomas 3729596/3729581 Dr. Shamah Al-Matar 22641071/2 Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed 22562226 Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer 22561444 Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan 22619557 Dr. Abdalateef 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. Foaid Abdallah Al-Ali 22633135	Endocrinologist Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman 25339330 Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari 25658888 Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr 25329924 Physiotherapists & VD Dr. Deyaa Shehab 25722291 Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees 22666288 Rheumatologists: Dr. Adel Al-Awadi 25330060 Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah 25722290 Internist, Chest & Heart DR. Mohammed Akkad 24555050 Ext 210 Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC 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
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Lost Liszt opera to come to life

A rare opera by Franz Liszt has been meticulously restored by a scholar, who described the work as unique in the history of music. The 19th century Hungarian composer was prolific and won a feverish fan base, but he was best known for his piano pieces and only premiered one opera, a one-act work the prodigy completed when he was 13. "Sardanapale," based on Lord Byron's tragedy "Sardanapalo" about the overthrow of a peace-loving but hedonistic Assyrian king, was long thought to have been abandoned.

David Trippett, a senior lecturer at Cambridge University, said he discovered the manuscript in an

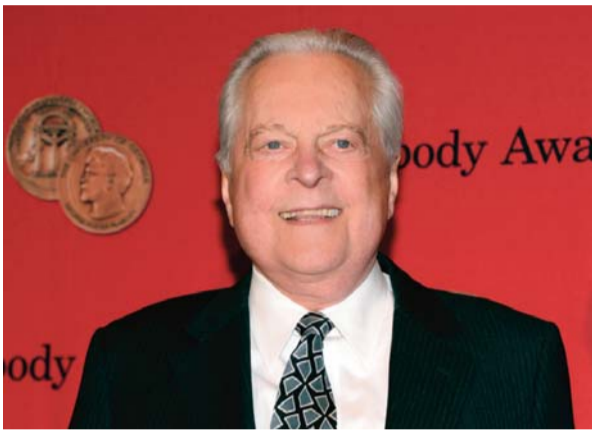
archive in Weimar, Liszt's longtime base in Germany, and spent two years restoring it. "We will never know exactly why he abandoned his work on the opera and I suspect he would have been surprised to learn that it is resurfacing in the 21st century. But I like to think he would have smiled on it," Trippett said in a statement.

Trippett called the opera—which Liszt began in 1849 and is in Italian—groundbreaking as it blended Liszt's characteristic voice with the composer's newfound discovery of Richard Wagner, his contemporary and one of the defining figures in opera. "The music that survives is breathtaking—a unique blend of Italianate lyricism and

harmonic innovation," Trippett said. Only one act of "Sardanapale" survives and Trippett said that it was at first barely legible, with Liszt writing in a shorthand that only he understood.

But Trippett said he was able to recreate the piece as it was clear that Liszt "worked out all the music in his head before he put pen to paper." "To retrieve this music, I've had to try and put myself into the mind of a 19th century composer, a rare challenge and a remarkable opportunity," he said. The scholar plans to premiere "Sardanapale" in June at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition, a leading annual event in Wales for aspiring opera singers.

"Who else gets to premiere a new opera by a superstar composer from two centuries ago?" said the Armenian soprano Anush Hovhannisyanyan, who is taking part in a documentary on the restoration timed for the Cardiff event. Until the re-emergence of "Sardanapale," Liszt was only known in opera for "Don Sanche, ou Le Chateau de l'Amour" ("Don Sanche, or the Castle of Love"), a French-language one-act piece from 1825 that fell into obscurity for decades. — AFP



In this file photo, Robert Osborne attends the 73rd Annual George Foster Peabody Awards in New York. — AP

Robert Osborne, genial face of TCM, dead at 84

Robert Osborne, the genial face of Turner Classic Movies and a walking encyclopedia of classic Hollywood, has died. He was 84. Jennifer Dorian, general manager of TCM, announced Osborne's death Monday. A publicist for the network said he passed away Monday in New York. "His calming presence, gentlemanly style, encyclopedic knowledge of film history, fervent support for film preservation and highly personal interviewing style all combined to make him a truly world-class host," said Dorian.

"Robert's contributions were fundamental in shaping TCM into what it is today and we owe him a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid." A cause of death was not announced, though Osborne's waning health had forced him to miss the previous two TCM Film Festivals, which he hosted annually in Los Angeles. Osborne was there from the inception of Ted Turner's commercial-free classic movie network. To open its first broadcast on April 14, 1994, he introduced "Gone with the Wind." In the decades after, he remained Turner Classic's primary - and often sole - host.

For TCM viewers, Osborne was a constant and comforting presence. He presented nightly films and movies packaged in series like "The Essentials" with bits of history and trivia. He also conducted interviews with stars for the network's guest programmer evenings. His intros - always beginning "Hi, I'm Robert Osborne" - were the warm appetizers to countless feasts of Hollywood classics. In a 2014 interview with The Associated Press, Osborne - who previously worked as a Hollywood Reporter columnist and as host of the Movie Channel - recalled his long-standing obsession with Hollywood.

Even in college, he maintained a black book, nicknamed "Blackie," of his research into films and the details of their making. "I was ready with all that information when a job was created. I prepared for something that didn't exist," said Osborne. Born in Colfax, Washington, Osborne studied journalism at the University of Washington and spent two years in the Air Force in Seattle. He then moved to Los Angeles to make it as an actor, and was signed by Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz's Desilu Studios.

Rambling Reporter

Ball, who remained a mentor to him up until her death in 1989, encouraged Osborne to pursue writing - "especially after she saw me act," Osborne would recall. He joined the Hollywood Reporter in 1977 and for years wrote its "Rambling Reporter" column. But he found his home at TCM. To tape his segments, Osborne flew once a month from his New York home to TCM's Atlanta studio. With Osborne as its ambassador, the cultishly adored TCM developed into a wider-reaching mainstay of movie love, including not just the popular film festival but an annual cruise.

"I get stopped on the street all the time," Osborne once told The New York Times. "People say: 'You got me through cancer last year. You got me past unemployment. You take me away from my troubles.' Exactly what movies did in the '30s and '40s." Osborne was an Academy Awards historian, too. He wrote his first history of the Oscars in 1965 ("Academy Awards Illustrated") and later became its official red-carpet greeter. He wrote several official histories of the Academy Awards, including 2008's "80 Years of the Oscar."

He was unabashed about his proclivity for '30s-'50s-era Hollywood. Turner Classic has somewhat expanded beyond that heyday, and in 2003 brought in Ben Mankiewicz as a second host. Mankiewicz on Monday praised Osborne for forging "a profound link to movie lovers, a visceral sense of connection to our history, to our parents and grandparents." For Osborne, that connection was forged early on, and his affection for Golden Age Hollywood remained forever undimmed. — AP

Chance the Rapper gives \$1m amid Chicago school row

Fast-rising star Chance the Rapper on Monday donated \$1 million to Chicago's schools as he waded into the middle of a political feud that threatens to close down classrooms weeks early. The "Coloring Book" rapper, who last month won three Grammys including the prestigious Best New Artist award, threw a national spotlight on a long-running rift over school funding in the third most populous US city. Chicago has warned that its public schools could shut on June 1, three weeks ahead of schedule, due to a gap of more than \$200 million in funding.

"This isn't about politics, this isn't about posturing, this is about taking care of the kids," Chance the Rapper told a news conference at an elementary school that he streamed to his millions of social media followers. The 23-year-old artist, a Chicago native who attended public schools, said he was donating \$1 million to support arts programming and was not looking to replace state funding. He also promised that his group Social Works Chicago would match every donation of \$100,000 with another \$10,000.

"This check that I donated is a call to action. I'm challenging major companies and corporations in Chicago and all across the nation to donate and to take action," said the rap-

per, at times reading formally in contrast to his on-stage poise. Chance the Rapper has long been an activist and has made appeals to end Chicago's street violence. His father Ken Williams-Bennett is a veteran Chicago political figure who was an aide to former president Barack Obama.

Former first lady Michelle Obama, who has mostly kept a low profile in the weeks since leaving the White House, hailed Chance for "giving back to the Chicago community, which gave us so much." "You are an example of the power of arts education," she wrote on Twitter. Chance, whose real name is Chancelor Bennett, last week met on the school funding dispute with Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner, a Republican. Rauner last year vetoed a funding plan for the schools in a dispute with the legislature as he pushes the school district to reform ballooning pension costs and fix what he calls long-time mismanagement. — AFP

This file photo shows Chance the Rapper arriving for the 59th Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California. — AFP



This image released by Twentieth Century Fox shows Hugh Jackman from the film, Logan. — AP

Logan claws way to top of box office

The "X-Men" spinoff "Logan" - starring Hugh Jackman as the metal-clawed, mutant anti-hero Wolverine-dominated the box office in its opening weekend with a huge \$88.4 million, according to data released Monday. Aimed at a more adult audience, it is the first R-rated outing in the "X-Men" franchise, which began in 2000 and has so far clocked up \$4.4 billion in box office revenue. More of a blood-spattered road movie than a traditional superhero film, it follows Wolverine/Logan as he undertakes one final mission: to protect a young girl who has powers remarkably like his own and is being pursued by dark forces.

Dropping to the runner-up spot in its second week was social horror-thriller "Get Out," which has been the surprise hit of the year, taking \$28.2 million, said box office tracker Exhibitor Relations. Jordan Peele's directorial debut - he is half of the comedy duo "Key and Peele" - follows an African American (Daniel Kaluuya) who goes with his white girlfriend (Allison Williams) to meet her family for the first time, but quickly realizes something sinister is afoot at their country estate.

The smart satire cost \$4.5 million to produce and has already taken \$78 million worldwide, with a tiny domestic drop of just 15 per-

cent from its debut weekend, which is virtually unheard of in the horror genre. Debuting in third place with \$16.2 million was "The Shack," based on a Christian-oriented novel by Canadian author William Young about a grieving man's spiritual journey after his child dies. Fourth place went to CGI comedy "The Lego Batman Movie," with \$11.7 million for a four-week total of \$148.7 million.

Featuring the voice of Will Arnett as the caped crusader, the Warner Bros spinoff of the "The Lego Movie" follows Batman as he tries to save Gotham City from being taken over by the Joker, voiced by Zach Galifianakis. Lionsgate's "John Wick: Chapter 2" came in fifth with \$4.8 million in revenue for a four-week total of \$82.9 million. The thriller stars Keanu Reeves as a hitman forced out of retirement in order to repay a debt to a fellow hired killer with whom he has signed a blood oath.

Rounding out the top 10 are: "Before I Fall" (\$4.7 million) "Hidden Figures" (\$3.8 million) "The Great Wall" (\$3.63 million) "Fifty Shades Darker" (\$3.56 million) "La La Land" (\$3 million) — AFP

Russia gives new Beauty and the Beast film a 16+ rating

Despite pressure from an ultra-conservative lawmaker, Russia's Culture Ministry has approved the release of Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" movie despite protests over a gay character. The ministry said yesterday that it has granted a screening license to the film with a 16-plus age restriction. The film's characters include manservant Le Fou, who plays the sidekick to the story's villain Gaston and, according to director Bill Condon, "is confused about his sexuality." Condon has described a brief scene as a "gay moment."

In Alabama, a drive-in movie theater said it would not be showing the film as planned because of the scene. The culture ministry's decision comes several days after Vitaly Milonov, a lawmaker known for his extreme-right views, petitioned the ministry to ban it. In a letter released by

the RIA Novosti news agency on Saturday, Milonov protested that the film disseminates "overt and shameless propaganda of sin and sexual perversion under the guise of a fairy tale."

Milonov, who was elected to the State Duma last year, is a former local lawmaker in St. Petersburg who has built his political career on opposing LGBT rights. In 2013, Russia passed a federal law banning "gay propaganda" among minors. It was worded vaguely so it can be applied in a wide range of circumstances, for example, making it easy to target gay and lesbian teachers in Russia because they work directly with children. The law was modeled on a St. Petersburg bill that Milonov authored a year earlier. — AP

SPIELBERG, STREEP, HANKS MAY TEAM FOR PENTAGON PAPERS MOVIE

Hollywood dream team Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks and Meryl Streep are considering taking on some classified government documents in a feature film about the Pentagon Papers case. A source close to the project who spoke only on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly said Monday that Spielberg has signed on to direct "The Post," a co-production from Fox and Amblin Entertainment.

Based on a script by Liz Hannah, the film will focus on The Washington Post's 1971 publication of the classified Vietnam War study after a federal judge barred the New York Times from further coverage. The Times had previously published a series of articles from the critical report after military analyst Daniel Ellsberg leaked the top secret documents.

In defiance of the government's efforts to block coverage on grounds of national security concerns, Washington Post publisher Katharine Graham joined forces with the

New York Times in a legal battle over their right to publish. The case went to the Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the press. According to a report by the Hollywood trade publication Deadline, Hanks is in talks to play Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee - which would mark his fifth outing with Spielberg - and Streep is in negotiations for the part of Graham.

Not unlike Graham, Streep recently has established herself as a powerful voice in support of the press and in opposition to the current administration. In a speech at the Golden Globe Awards in January, Streep passionately defended the freedom of the press to "hold power to account" and urged audiences to support the Committee to Protect Journalists. Reps for Spielberg, Streep and Hanks did not immediately respond to request for comment. — AP

La La Land, in live concert form, coming to Hollywood Bowl

Live from Los Angeles, it's "La La Land" live! Lionsgate announced Monday that "La La Land In Concert: A Live-to-Film Celebration" will come to the Hollywood Bowl on May 26-27. The live shows will be conducted by composer Justin Hurwitz, who won two Academy Awards last month for his work on the movie's music. The show will include a 100-piece symphony orchestra, choir and jazz ensemble, along with the film's original vocal recordings from Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone and John Legend. The movie will play along while the musicians perform.

Hurwitz said in an interview with The Associated Press that before working on "La La Land" with director and writer Damien Chazelle, he told his longtime friend that the film would be perfect for the live stage. "The process is just beginning," Hurwitz said of prepping for the live dates. "We're figuring out how to handle visually and musically the various music elements in the movie, and it's a lot of fun brainstorming ideas and solutions. What is exciting is ... to be able to really feature the musicians and show exactly what they're doing."

Tickets go on sale Friday. For the live shows, Hurwitz said they are using the same orchestra contractor from the movie.

Following the Memorial Day dates in Los Angeles, the live production will visit Atlanta; San Diego; San Antonio; Nashville, Tennessee; Washington, D.C.; and other U.S. cities. It will also travel internationally to the United Kingdom, Mexico, Italy, Turkey, Switzerland and Canada. Those dates, along with more cities, will be announced later.

"La La Land" won six Academy Awards, including best director for Chazelle and best actress for Stone. Hurwitz won best original score as well as best original song for "City of Stars," shared with songwriters Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. "There have been a couple times where I was in my apartment and I saw two Oscars sitting there (and) it almost took me a second to register what they were. The thought of those gorgeous, iconic statuettes sitting right there in my apartment is a bit surreal," he said.

He also said it has been dreamlike to hear "people singing my songs back at me" because of the film's success. When asked if he could see "La La Land" on the Broadway stage, Hurwitz said: "Those conversations haven't even started to be honest. ... I think those conversations will happen inevitably, but I don't know if an actual adaptation will happen. — AP



FEATURE



Archeological findings are pictured inside an underground tunnel in east Mosul.



Layla Salih, head of Antiquities for the province of Nineveh, of which Mosul is the capital, stands next to archeological findings inside an underground tunnel in east Mosul. — AFP photos

Jihadist tunnels save Assyrian winged bulls of Mosul

Crawl through a labyrinth of narrow tunnels in near total darkness and suddenly they appear: two great winged bulls dating from the Assyrian empire found intact under the ground of Mosul. But as fighting rages to evict the Islamic State (IS) group from the main city in northern Iraq, it will be a race against time to save the archaeological treasures uncovered in the tunnels. The jihadists dug the network of tunnels to plunder artifacts under a hill housing the tomb of Prophet Jonah, the Nabi Yunus shrine which they dynamited in July 2014.

"We fear it could all collapse at any time," entombing the treasures, said Layla Salih who is in charge of antiquities for Nineveh province. "There are cave-ins in the tunnels every day." Iraqi authorities discovered the underground labyrinth, from which IS plundered to sell on the black market, after they recaptured east Mosul at the end of January. Miraculously, several choice pieces survived the looting and appear as the crouched visitor winds through the maze of tunnels with its scent of damp clay.

Salih said the artifacts date back to the eighth century BC in the Assyrian period and hail from the palace of King Assarhaddon whose existence in the area was known to Iraqi archaeologists. Two mural

sculptures in white marble show the winged bulls with only the sides and feet showing. The tunnels lead to bas-reliefs with inscriptions in cuneiform alphabet and two mural sculptures of four women's faces from the front.

"These finds are very important. They teach us more about Assyrian art. In general, their sculptures show people in profile, whereas here we have women face on," said Salih. She said IS had not been able to extract many of the treasures for fear of the hill collapsing altogether but other removable artifacts, especially pottery, were certainly plundered. Iraqi authorities found 107 items of pottery in a house east of Mosul that were in good condition and most likely exhumed from the tunnels of Nabi Yunus.

Picture of desolation

After their capture of swathes of Iraqi territory to the north and west of Baghdad in 2014, the jihadists carried out a widespread campaign of destruction of archaeological and religious sites. Many shocking scenes were filmed and posted on the internet, such as the destruction of Nimrud, jewel of the Assyrian empire founded in the 13th century BC, with a bulldozer, pickaxes and explosives.

The hilltop of Nabi Yunus is a picture of desolation, the once elegant Jonah's tomb reduced to a ruin of smashed and twisted columns. In the Mosul region alone, "at least 66 archaeological sites have been destroyed, some of them transformed into parking lots. Muslim and Christian places of worship have suffered massive destruction, thousands of manuscripts have disappeared", Iraq's Deputy Culture Minister Qais Rashid told a UNESCO-organized conference in Paris last month. Salim Khalaf, a ministry official, said at the forum that more than 700 archaeological items had been exhumed from the tunnels of Nabi Yunus and sold on the black market.

The priority at the site is to carry out studies on how to stabilize the tunnels and save the hill from collapse, explained Salih. "The security situation in the eastern sector of Mosul is still unstable. There's fear of (IS) drones and terrorist attacks," she said. "We need foreign expertise, but to have that, security must be improved." As if to underline her point, columns of black smoke wafted into the sky over west Mosul as Iraqi forces kept up their anti-IS assault with shelling and air strikes. — AFP



A member of the Iraqi troops stands next to archeological findings inside an underground tunnel in east Mosul.



Street of Praga, Warsaw's district on the right side of Vistula river.



A graffiti on the building of Praga, Warsaw's district on the right side of Vistula river.



Bazar Rozyckiego, old market place in Praga, Warsaw's district on the right side of Vistula river. — AFP photos

Poland's capital is a tale of two cities no more

The Polish capital is a city divided: by a river, by history, by reputation. For years, the right side of the wide Vistula waterway was known for murder and mayhem, while all the power and money went to the left. Not so anymore. Even the relief of the riverbanks is telling, says Halina Cieszkowska, a 95-year-old former teacher and longtime resident of the working class Praga neighborhood on the right. "Warsaw's left bank is on a slope. It's higher up. So they look down on us. And here we are, below," says the energetic great-grandmother.

"Praga was always a worse neighborhood. Neglected... so Praga had an inferiority complex. Still does. Though maybe to a lesser degree now, because we've been trying to fix things," she tells AFP. Praga is now safe, with art galleries, innovative hip bars, renovated prewar buildings and a subway line since 2015, which have all helped bridge the gap between the two sides. Across the river, the left bank boasts the city centre and historic old town, and is not known by any overall name but is sometimes considered by residents on both sides to be Warsaw proper.

Efforts to spruce up Praga began in the 1990s but the city now plans to pump 1.5 billion zloty (350 million euros, \$380 million) into the sprawling right bank to further revitalize the area. The upgrades through 2022 include connecting thousands of apartments to central heating, renovating historical sites and investing in social services to undo years of postwar neglect.

Bermuda Triangle

During World War II, Nazi German forces flattened 85 percent of the left bank, but Praga was spared because it had already been occupied by the Soviet Army. It is in Praga that you can still find exposed redbrick walls, old street lamps, buildings pockmarked with bullet holes and courtyard shrines with statues of the Virgin Mary. That authenticity is why Oscar-winning director Roman Polanski shot his wartime film "The Pianist" there. But because the neighborhood was left standing while the rest of the city was



A chapel from 1943 in the backyard of the building of Praga, Warsaw's district on the right side of Vistula river.

reduced to rubble, all the reconstruction funds went to the left bank.

"Things fell into ruins here," says Praga tailor Jerzy Hlasny, a 63-year-old with a bushy moustache who has worked at his shop for four decades. "Praga was a kind of unwanted child. But things are happening now," he tells AFP, giving as an example heritage buildings renovated with EU money. The neighborhood also came to have "a bad reputation. That it's just lowlives and thieves here", adds Hlasny, who said he himself had been beaten up and still has trouble seeing out of his left eye as a

result, after one night refusing to hand over money to two men who entered his shop.

Warsaw Deputy Mayor Michal Olszewski recalls that when he first moved to Warsaw in 1996, he lived in the part of Praga "known as the Bermuda Triangle, where according to legend you didn't come out alive". The notorious years are long gone. But the lore lingers and many of those born and bred in the district, like Adam Lisiecki from the Praga Museum, are tired of the stereotype.

New face

He says the city "hit the bull's eye" 15 years ago by renovating buildings along one of Praga's main roads, the cobbled Zabkowska Street. "It really changed people's view of Praga... Suddenly there was this exemplary street, a new face which emboldened many residents from the left" to visit, he tells AFP. Zabkowska features 19th century buildings, homes converted into popular bars with traditional Polish pierogi dumplings on the menu, plus other creative initiatives.

"Art soothes the savage beast," says Agnieszka Niedzwiecka, who lives on the left side but in 2010 opened a Praga gallery, whose name translates to "On the right side of the Vistula". It was a welcome sight for residents who said "soon Praga will be associated with art, not alcohol", she tells AFP, while her French Bulldog snores nearby. The project "that will have the biggest economic and social impact on Praga is the second metro line. Hands down", says Olszewski, adding that further Praga stations are planned. Even the Vistula itself now draws people from the two sides together. In summertime, the once forgotten green riverbanks have become the place to be in recent years, in particular the right shore because of its urban beach. "It's incredible that this wild stretch has been preserved in the city centre of a capital," says Lisiecki. "You can have bonfires and barbecues." — AFP



A graffiti on the building of Praga, Warsaw's district on the right side of Vistula river.



A chapel in the backyard of the building of Praga, Warsaw's district on the right side of Vistula river.

FASHION



Models wear creation for Alexander McQueen's Fall-Winter 2017/2018 ready to wear fashion collection in Paris.



Models wear creation for Hermes' Fall-Winter 2017/2018 ready-to-wear fashion collection presented in Paris.



US singer Pharrell Williams poses with French culture minister Audrey Azoulay, right, after being awarded with the medal of Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters during a ceremony at the culture ministry in Paris, France.

McCartney hits high, pays tribute to George Michael in Paris

The rocking soundtrack blasting out the lyrics "Stella's On" had guests including Pamela Anderson and Salma Hayek tapping their feet at the gilded Opera Garnier venue in Paris. It was a knockout, energy-filled show for Stella McCartney - who headlined Monday's installment of Paris Fashion Week and ended with a bittersweet tribute to the late George Michael. Here are some highlights.

Stella's on form

Could it be the strongest show so far this season? McCartney styled sublime, unexpected twists on her classic utilitarian/sexy repertoire. Equestrian looks and checked tailored dresses with high necks sported exaggerated proportions in the sleeve. While, inventive "secondary lapels" - a lapel repeated several times in parallel - had a surreal quality that evoked a jacket in blurred vision. The collection perfectly fused high and low.

The high - an oil painting masterpiece, "Horse Frightened by a Lion," that made an appearance in knit and silk crepe de chine, was framed like a real canvas with square check sleeves. The low - a provocative, stitched conical bust, had guests smiling. Sensual, yet cerebral - sheer, lace negligees were twinned with thick, wintry baggy pants in an ironic touch that nicely defined this stellar show's spirit.

George Michael tribute

The soul of George Michael, who died last year aged 53, lives on at Paris Fashion Week. In a touching tribute, the British singer's hit song "Faith" was pumped up for the finale of Stella McCartney's collection - that saw models dancing together on the runway to rousing applause.

The models congregated in a circle, with arms raised in the air, repeatedly chanting "Faith. Love."

It had model Natalia Vodianova dancing in her front-row seat. Michael was particularly highly regarded in fashion for supporting the industry through music videos such as "Freedom" that famously featured models Cindy Crawford, Christy Turlington, Naomi Campbell and Linda Evangelista. It was a rousing ode - energetic, vibrant and free.

Detox and retox

The daughter of late animal rights activist Linda McCartney, Stella famously is a vegetarian, never uses fur in her shows, and promotes healthy eating. This mantra is now trickling down to the pre-show provisions. Inside Paris' gilded Opera Garnier venue, bleary-eyed guests were deprived of the coffee normally served ahead of the early morning display.

Instead of espresso, it was roasted herbal tea. Monday also saw detox drinks on the menu - one humorously promising a "botox" effect. But whatever effect the detox drink has on the fashion crowd, will surely be undone come Stella McCartney's alcohol-fueled after-party at David Lynch's Silencio club.

Met gala previewed

The Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute previewed parts of its highly-anticipated exhibit Monday honoring Comme des Garcons designer Rei Kawakubo. Kawakubo, 74, attended the sneak-peak session alongside Vogue editor Anna Wintour. Wintour will co-chair the May 1 Met Gala that inaugurates the exhibit with Katy Perry, Tom Brady, Gisele Bundchen and Pharrell Williams. The preview showcased five dramatic, flame-red creations selected from Comme des Garcons collections across three decades - all framed in a neon-lit structure.

The Tokyo-based designer officially founded the cerebral design house in 1973 to critical acclaim - and was dubbed "anti-fashion" for challenging the notions of beauty. Comme des Garcons has been showing collections in Paris since 1981. It's the first time the famed gala, and accompanying exhibit,

will focus on one living designer since 1983, when it highlighted the work of Yves Saint Laurent.

The red and the black at Giambattista Valli

It was red, white and black. The narrow color palette of Italian designer Giambattista Valli provided a pared-down backdrop for a show that explored historic ruffles and frills. High necks with lace-up mid-calf boots - that might have been used for the can-can - evoked the French Belle Epoque's styles at the turn of the 20th century. The can-can was also evoked in a floral white dress with myriad layers of black tulle underskirt that kicked out stylishly as the model walked. Despite the references, the minimalist feeling in a simple red coat, with single, asymmetrical pocket, ensured this collection's contemporary credentials.

L'Oreal Paris fashion award

It was a mini-coup for Giambattista Valli to dress Oscar-winning actress Julianne Moore at Sunday night's L'Oreal Paris fashion grant awards ceremony in Paris. Moore wore an embellished pastel couture gown with a high neck as host of the event that awards a starting designer 10,000 euros (\$10,600) to help launch their brand. Young female designer Coralie Marabelle was this year's winner. The awards drew a host of VIPs including Oscar-nominated actress Isabelle Huppert, model Doutzen Kroes and Gabriel Kane Day Lewis, son of Daniel Day Lewis.

Alexander McQueen's fashion progressions

It was the genesis of fashion over the centuries that unfurled before guests at Alexander McQueen. With primitive-style fringing, beading, thick stitching and long belts, designer Sarah Burton conjured up age-old tribal styles on tight silhouettes. One with black leather shaped over the breast like armor looked like high-fashion's answer to Xena Warrior Princess. This stitching then progressed to weaving: in a woven coat and high-necked sleeveless dress in rough multi-colored thread.

In turn, the weaving gave way to embroidery motifs and patchwork. Then, tailored looks - seen in a menswear tuxedo - moved on to the decorative. Monday's collection showed above all that the abstract and figurative styles of the art-infused house of Alexander McQueen seem to be a thing of the past. Burton has decided to move on and produce clothes to be worn. And who can blame her? It's ready-to-wear, after all.

Pharrell Williams given French culture award

Singer - and Chanel brand ambassador - Pharrell Williams was decorated by France's culture minister Monday for his services to the arts. The 43-year-old, who's a regular in Paris during fashion week, attended the ceremony near the Louvre and said he was "grateful," but sad his wife and children weren't in Paris to share the experience. "France is the center of art," declared the multi-Grammy Award-winning "Happy" singer - after receiving the insignia of Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters. — AP



A model wears a creation for Giambattista Valli's Fall-Winter 2017/2018 ready-to-wear fashion collection presented in Paris.



British fashion designer Stella McCartney waves after her Fall-Winter 2017/2018 ready-to-wear collection presented in Paris.



Models present creation by Stella McCartney during the women's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP/AP photos



Models dance and sing at the end of the Stella McCartney women's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris.

FASHION

CHANEL ROCKETS TO SPACE IN PARIS, RIHANNA'S BACK TO SCHOOL



Chanel rocketed into space yesterday at Paris Fashion Week in an interstellar-themed show spectacular that saw designer Karl Lagerfeld reach for the stars - and a star-filled front row. Meanwhile, Rihanna stunned crowds in a standout citrus lime coat after her Fenty X Puma collection. The theme this season for the singer-turned-fashion designer was Fenty University - and ushered in styles of school-girl-gone-bad. Here are the highlights:

Chanel's Apollo no. 5

Pharrell Williams, Cara Delevingne and Lily-Rose Depp delighted as Lagerfeld pressed the "ignition" button that saw a gargantuan Chanel "Space Agency" rocket take off inside the Grand Palais. It was a return to form for Lagerfeld yesterday, who explored space-infused styles in a fresh-feeling collection that was the 83-year-old's best in seasons.

A round, raised-collar defined the chic aesthetic on skirt-suit styles - evoking a space-helmet neckline while sparkling silver boots merged the utilitarian astronaut-look with a chic Chanel signature - the square black toe. Lagerfeld really had some fun - adorning models with huge reflective, heat-resistant shawl-blankets as they strutted around the giant ceiling-high space shuttle installation that at one point pumped out smoke. It was Paris Fashion's Apollo No. 5.

Rihanna goes back to school

Moving on from her more saccharine, historic Marie Antoinette looks last season, the nascent 29-year-old designer developed a little - going back to college in the scholastic Monday night show. On-trend oversize nerdy glasses, long floppy scarves, huge preppy sweaters, pleated skirts, lycra shorts and sports team uniforms were imagined in orange maroon, apple green, bright yellow and dark blue.

Caps were emblazoned with an "F," denoting the Barbadian star's middle name of Fenty. As is the now the Rihanna signature, many of the looks were given a sexual, edgy twist - here seen in exposed midriffs, flesh-baring shorts and one knit sports crop top with breasts exposed at the bottom.

High-high laced-up baseball boots, in blue, yellow and white added a dose of fetishistic, school-girl provocation.

Rihanna has shown critics that she's growing as a designer with this, more thoughtful collection. But it hasn't convinced everyone. One Twitter observer suggested the star not quit her day job, acerbically commenting: "Please Don't Stop The Music."

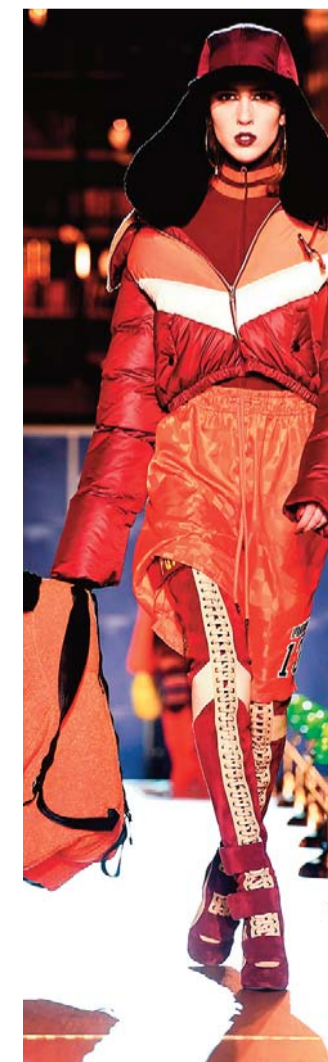
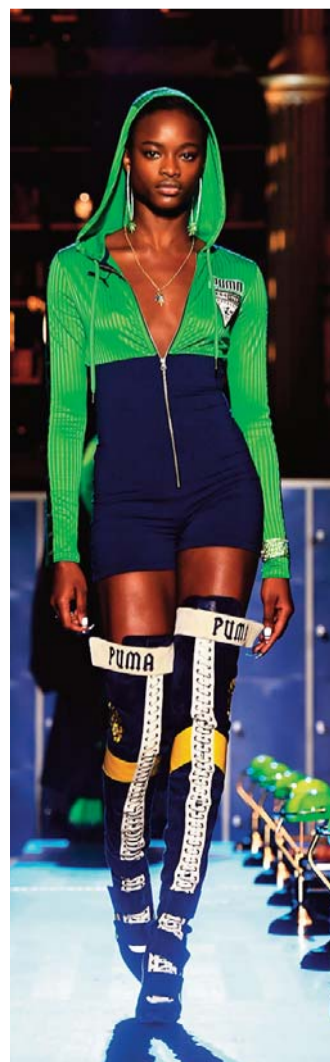
Models walk the runway during the presentation of creations for Chanel during the women's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 ready-to-wear collection fashion show at the Grand Palais in Paris yesterday.



German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld appears after Chanel's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 ready-to-wear fashion collection presented in Paris.



Barbadian singer Rihanna is applauded by English fashion model Cara Delevingne, left, during Rihanna's Fenty Collection from PUMA women's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 ready-to-wear collection fashion show at the Salle Labrouste of the Richelieu-Louvois Library in Paris.



Models present Rihanna's Fenty Collection from PUMA during the women's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP/AP photos

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017

Logan claws way to top of box office

36



This picture shows ferries making their way to dock at the Sydney Harbor. — AFP

New exhibition reveals secret history of Rome's Colosseum

It is famed as the place where gladiators battled lions to the amusement of the citizens of ancient Rome. But of the six million visitors who flock to the Colosseum each year, how many know that during mediaeval times, it was also the fortress base of a powerful Roman family for over two centuries? Or that in the 1600s, it was like a botanical garden? Its state of semi-abandon, combined with a micro-climate, enabled more than 400 species of plants to flourish inside its arched walls. Now, thanks to some archaeological detective work based on discoveries made during a spruce-up, a new exhibition recounts some of the untold stories of one of the world's most-visited monuments.

"The Colosseum: An icon," which opens on a middle floor of the amphitheatre today and runs until next January, shows that life inside the iconic structure did not end with the disintegration of the empire or the final show of the classical era, in 523 AD. "What it shows is the extraordinary capacity the Colosseum has had to assume different identities over the centuries," said Francesco Prosperetti, one of the officials in charge of the jewel in the crown of Italian tourism.

Ram's head, carved antlers

Scholars had long been aware that the mediaeval-era Colosseum had a fortress owned by the Frangipane family. But much of the archaeological evidence of it was lost at the time of 19th-century excavations, when masonry was removed for new buildings or restorations elsewhere in the city. Recent restoration work on upper sections of the partially-intact structure however uncovered traces of what was a raised wooden walkway which served as a lookout for the Frangipanes' soldiers, constantly wary of attacks by rival families.

That has enabled historical experts to put together model and pictorial representations of what the mediaeval Colosseum would have looked like, and these are among the highlights of the new exhibition. Other archaeological finds, including one side of a ram's head and carved antlers, point to the mediaeval Colosseum being a hive of activity with the fortified aristocratic residence serviced by a range of businesses, market gardens and religious institutions.

The wooden fortress was partially destroyed by a 1349 earthquake but its surviving structures were later incorporat-



ed into a hospital sponsored by wealthy families whose seals have been recently found in digs on the site. The collection also explores how the building came to be a reference point for students of architecture from far afield and, following its later fall into an elegant state of semi-abandon, how it inspired Renaissance painters and romantic poets.

Renovation and new boss

Completed in 80 AD, the Colosseum was the biggest amphitheatre built during the Roman Empire. Standing 48.5 meters high, it was capable of hosting 80,000 spectators for feasts of entertainment that encapsulated the brutality, hedonism and engineering genius that were among the defining features of ancient Rome. The first phase of a major makeover of the venue was completed in July 2016 with a number of sections structurally strengthened and

most of the remaining walls water-sprayed to remove centuries of encrusted dirt and grime.

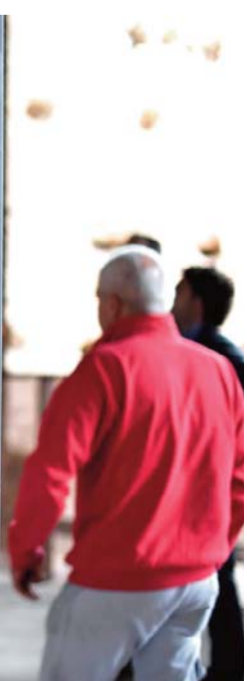
The works were largely financed to a reported tune of 25 million euros (\$26.5 million) — by upmarket shoe and fashion company Tod's. The government has pledged to put up the cash for a second phase which will involve rebuilding the arena floor and make the venue capable of hosting concerts and other cultural events, including re-enactment of some Roman-era events. The culture ministry has also advertised for a new supremo to oversee the Colosseum as part of a broader shake-up of the management of the country's landmark historic and cultural attractions. — AFP



A picture shows models of the Colosseum through the ages during a press preview of the exhibition "Colosseo un'icona" (Colosseum, an icon) in Rome.



A picture shows an ancient map of Rome during a press preview of the exhibition "Colosseo un'icona" (Colosseum, an icon) at the Colosseum in Rome. — AFP photos



A worker prepares the inauguration of the exhibition "Colosseo un'icona" (Colosseum, an icon) in Rome.