

SUBSCRIPTION

Kuwait Times



THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF



MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2017

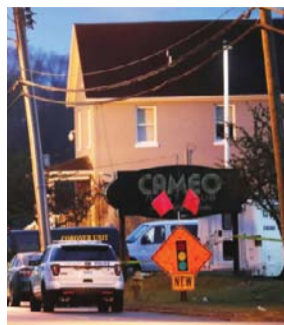
JAMADA ALTHANI 29, 1438 AH

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Woman wants compensation after flooding damages car



One killed, 14 wounded in Ohio nightclub shooting



Innovative fabrics bark up Tokyo fashion tree



Wizards shine as Clippers, Raptors clinch playoff spots



150 FILS
NO: 17180
40 PAGES

OIL PRODUCERS LOOK INTO ROLLOVER OF OUTPUT CUTS

JOINT SAUDI-KUWAIT OILFIELDS TO RESUME OPERATIONS: MARZOUQ



Min 13°
Max 28°
High Tide 11:57 & 23:38
Low Tide 05:48 & 17:50

NOD TO REDUCING DETENTION PERIOD

AID LINK TO LAW REJECTED

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's legal and legislative committee yesterday approved a draft law stipulating to reduce the detention period at police stations to 48 hours, reverting an amendment by the previous Assembly. The opposition-dominated Assembly elected in Feb 2012 had introduced an amendment to cut the detention period from four days to two. It also reduced preventive detention by the public prosecution to just 10 days from 21 previously.

But at the request of the interior ministry, the previous pro-government Assembly increased the detention period back to four days at police stations and 21 days by the public prosecution. A large number of opposition MPs had vowed to introduce the amendment in the current Assembly.

But the Assembly's foreign relations committee rejected a draft law stating that the government cannot provide foreign aid exceeding KD 10 million without the approval of the Assembly through legislation. The draft law was introduced by lawmakers in light of the current difficult financial situation due to the sharp fall in oil revenues.

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: (From left) Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak, Kuwaiti Oil Minister Essam Al-Marzouq and OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo attend a meeting of the 2nd Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee of OPEC yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: A joint committee of ministers from OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers has agreed to review whether a global pact to limit supplies should be extended by six months, it said in a statement yesterday. An earlier draft of the statement had said the committee "reports high level of conformity and recommends a six-month extension". But the final version said only that the committee had requested a technical group and for the OPEC Secretariat to "review the oil market conditions and revert ... in April, 2017 regarding the extension of the voluntary production adjustments".

Oil sector analysts said the lack of an immediate extension could drag on crude prices. "The dropping of the recommendation to extend cuts in favor of technical review committee is likely to lead to a lot of disappointment and potential further liquidation of long positions by money managers that will put downward pressure on oil prices," said Harry Tchilinguirian, head of commodities strategy at BNP Paribas in London. It was not immediately clear why the wording had been changed, although a senior industry source said the committee lacked the legal mandate to recommend an extension.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and rival oil-producing nations were meeting in Kuwait to review progress with their global pact to cut supplies. OPEC and 11 other leading producers including Russia agreed in December to cut their combined output by almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) in the first half of the year. The original deal was to last six months, with the possibility of a six-month extension. "Any country has the freedom to say whether they do or they don't support (an extension). Unless we have conformity with everybody, we cannot go ahead with the extension of the deal," Kuwaiti Oil Minister Essam Al-Marzouq said

Continued on Page 13

THE MONSTER IS BACK



Shrimpy

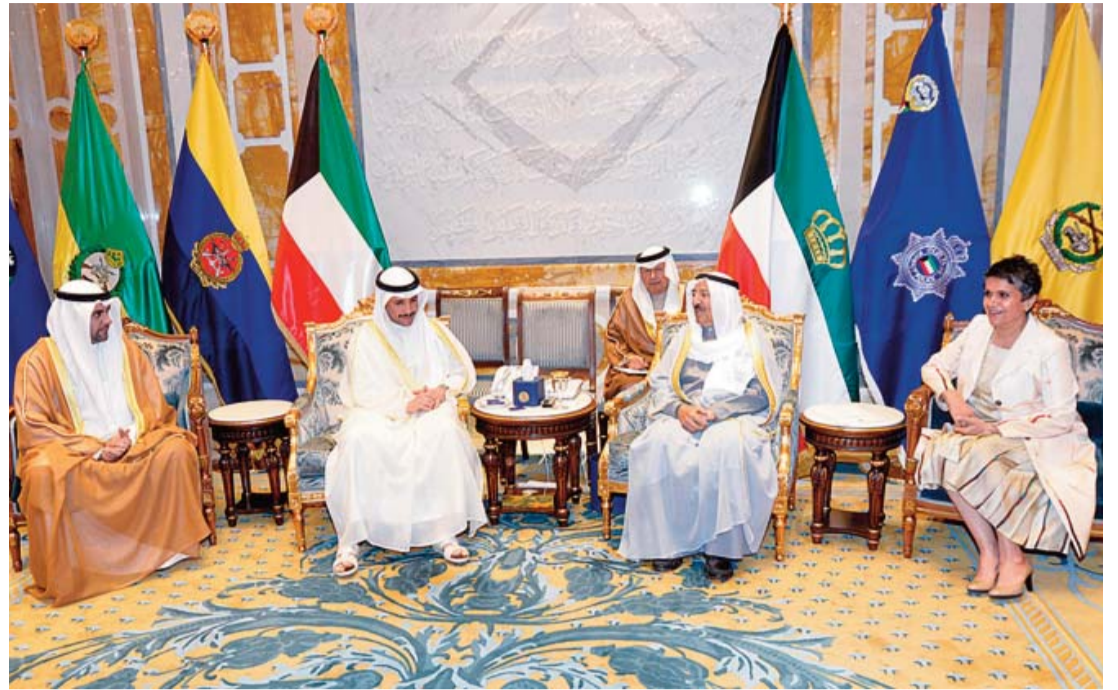


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f SHRIMPYKW



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Essam Al-Marzouq and members of the Joint OPEC-Non-OPEC Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMCC). —KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and members of the delegation who took part in the 24th Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Education and Higher Education Mohammad Al-Fares and newly appointed Assistant Undersecretaries.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and members of the executive committee of the parliamentary caucus.

AMIR MEETS JOINT OIL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah welcomed at Bayan Palace yesterday Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Essam Al-Marzouq and members of Joint OPEC-Non-OPEC Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMCC), which is convening in Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir also received Minister of Education and Higher Education Mohammad Al-Fares who introduced Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry for

Private Education Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Huweila and Assistant Undersecretary of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training Tareq Al-Omairi on the occasion of their recent appointment. The meetings were attended by Acting Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs General Khaled Boudi. Fares later introduced Huweila and Omairi to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received National

Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and members of the executive committee of the parliamentary caucus who took part in the 24th Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in Rabat. The delegation later met with His Highness the Crown Prince as well.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as well as First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh

Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, in addition to State Minister for Cabinet Affairs and acting Information Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Sunday the credentials of the Thai ambassador to the State of Kuwait. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled wished the new ambassador best of luck in his task and more development of bilateral relations. —KUNA

KRCS LAUNCHES DONATION CAMPAIGN FOR YEMEN

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) launched yesterday a campaign to collect donations for people affected by the ongoing war in Yemen, said KRCS' Chairman of Board of Directors Dr Hilal Al-Sayer.

This campaign aims to ease living conditions for Yemenis, as there are over 18 million Yemenis were affected by the war and more than two million children suffering from lack of food and medical items, Sayer said. Yemen is facing one of the worst famines in the world, he said, calling on philanthropists and organizations to contribute to the donation campaign held at KRCS' headquarters.

Sayer also called to support KRCS' projects aiming to develop services for Yemenis in need. These projects include education, health, water resources and food. The society will receive cash and K-Net donations from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm and from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm, as well as online donations through KRCS' website, he noted. —KUNA



KIB MARKS GLOBAL MONEY WEEK 2017

KUWAIT: As part of its pioneering efforts to promote financial literacy nationwide, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) has launched a comprehensive awareness campaign entitled "With KIB, I learnt how to spend and save", to mark the fifth annual Global Money Week (GMW); an international initiative aimed at enhancing economic education amongst children and youth. This year's celebrations are being held under the theme "Learn. Save. Earn" and are taking place across the globe between March 27th and April 2nd.

GMW is an annual global celebration, spearheaded by Child and Youth Finance International (CYFI) - an organization dedicated to economically and socially empowering children and youth worldwide. GMW features a diverse range of events and activities aimed at inspiring children and youth to learn about money, saving, creating livelihoods, gaining employment and becoming entrepreneurs. Since its launch in 2013, the initiative has grown exponentially, with more than 7 million children and youth participants across 132 countries taking part in GMW 2016.

"Financial literacy has long been a cornerstone of our social responsibility program, and we are adamant believers in the importance of spreading economic education amongst our country's children and youth. Educating our youth about the basics of saving and the fundamentals of good money management will enable us to foster a generation of capable and financially-savvy adults; who are capable of building a prosperous and sustainable future for our nation," said Nawaf Najja, Manager of the

Corporate Communications Unit at KIB. "We are extremely proud to be one of the first banks in the region to have partnered with CYFI, and we are thrilled to once again be taking part in the annual Global Money Week celebrations."

This year, KIB has launched a multifaceted awareness campaign, entitled "With KIB, I learnt how to spend and save", featuring a diverse program of activities and initiatives targeting children, youth and parents across Kuwait. One of the highlights of KIB's efforts is a social media campaign taking place throughout Global Money Week. The education-focused campaign is designed to raise awareness about the importance of financial literacy, and seeks to encourage parents to teach their children about good money management and the values of saving starting at an early age.

KIB has always been a passionate advocate of spreading financial awareness and economic education across all segments of the community: from school-age children, all the way to young talents looking to pursue careers within the financial sector. As an established financial institution, KIB draws on its wealth of knowledge and industry experience in order to educate and empower the local community in all areas of finance, business and economics, in an effort to fuel national development across all sectors.

The bank also continues to offer innovative Islamic banking solutions tailor-made to cater to the needs of the youth segment - including the Shabab Al-Dawli youth account and the Haboob children's account, which combine the benefits of saving and investment.



KUWAIT: The Embassy of Pakistan in Kuwait organized a flag hoisting ceremony at its premises over the weekend on the occasion of Pakistan's National Day. Pakistani diplomats, school children and a cross-section of the Pakistani community participated in the event. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Legalese

TERMINATION INDEMNITY

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

One of the most common concerns or topics that I deal with is employment law. Disputes are very common between employers and an employee and since I have experience as an employer and an employee, I can sometimes understand where these disputes arise from. We have cases at the firm from end of service benefits, to transfers, to receiving passports, and so on. If you do have an issue at work, please do not stress, there is always a solution for everything. The best thing to do is to research and try to reach an amicable deal with your employer.

Today I am going to discuss the most common issues in Kuwait for expats and what is the best legal way to deal with them.

Visa transfer

Question: I know that I am entitled to end of service benefits, but my employer refuses to give me any benefits, claiming that I need to transfer my visa first. Is this true?

Fajer: It is very common for employers to state that the end of service benefits will not be given to the employee unless a transfer is first done. I do not think this is fair, transfers can take a long time at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) and employers need to give what is rightfully due to employees. I always advise that when you ask for a transfer in MSAL, also request your indemnity. The Kuwaiti law has given many privileges to the employer and therefore I honestly think that even though the process of obtaining the rights can take a long time, you should ask for your rights in any way possible.

Question: What can I do in order to obtain my end of service benefits?

Fajer: I always advise my clients to first try and negotiate with their employer. If the employer does not want to negotiate, then also ask your lawyer to negotiate on your behalf. If not, then your lawyer can go to court. Before your lawyer takes the issue to court, your lawyer will have to go through MSAL, which is also a safe place for both parties to negotiate.

Time and cost

Question: How long does the process take and how much does it cost to go to a lawyer? Does the court pay me back what I paid the lawyer?

Fajer: The process takes from eight months to two years, depending on the issue itself. The cost also depends on your lawyer and what work your lawyer agrees to do for you. Please note that employment can be costly. The court does rule legal fees for the winning party but the legal fees are inadequate and are way lower than what a lawyer would usually charge.

Question: What do I need to keep in mind when transferring my visa? My transfer is taking way longer than I anticipated and now that my visa has expired, I am worried about the consequences.

Fajer: The first thing to keep in mind is that the process does take a long time and if you do not have permission from your previous employer, then it will take even longer.

The second thing to keep in mind is that your passport should have at least one more year before it expires, otherwise your new residency will not be transferred. You will also need to pay any late fees; they are calculated on a per day basis for every day passed since your visa expired.

I hope the above helps. Should you have any further queries, please feel free to email me at ask@fajtherthelawyer.com

CITIZEN DEMANDS COMPENSATION FOR VEHICLE DAMAGED BY RAIN

PROPOSAL TO ALLOCATE SITE FOR FOOD BANK

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A female citizen yesterday filed the first compensation claim case only 48 hours after heavy rainfall submerged many vehicles around Kuwait. In his argument, the citizen's lawyer Mohammed KhoraiBOT said his client had been through indescribable suffering because of the disaster, saying that she almost lost her life. KhoraiBOT demanded financial compensation for his client for her brand new luxury vehicle that she had bought only two weeks earlier.

Food Bank

Municipal Council member Ali Al-Moussa yesterday proposed allocating a special site to be used as the headquarters of the 'Kuwait Food Bank' at the nongovernmental organizations site in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. Notably, the food

bank was founded upon instructions from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with the aim of boosting public awareness of the importance of food, encouraging voluntary work, improving charity work and professionalism and taking part in aid campaigns in famine and war-stricken spots worldwide.

Youth project

The Secretariat General of the Supreme Council of Planning and Development Council's signed the youth project agreement yesterday with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) yesterday, in presence of Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan. The agreement was signed by the council's Secretary General Khaled Mahdi and UNDP's Resident Representative in Kuwait Zineb Benjelloun.

Commenting on the agreement, minister Roudhan said that it comes within the development plan strategy of investing in youth potentials. Roudhan highlighted that there is a global concern in investing in youth potentials and minds and providing the best working environments for them.

Case adjourned

The court of cassation yesterday adjourned the 'Abdali cell' case in which 24 citizens and an Iranian are facing charges of colluding with Iran and Hezbollah and possessing explosives till May 14 to issue its verdict. The public prosecution demanded strict penal measures for all the accused. In a different case, the court of cassation rejected a contest filed by a Qatari man sentenced to seven years with labor for blasphemy. Notably, the defendant had been arrested by Qatari security authorities and handed over to Kuwait.

MINISTRY WARNS OF RISING ENERGY CONSUMPTION RATES

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) warned about growing electricity and water consumption rates in Kuwait, and predicted the total annual subsidies needed for these utilities to reach KD 10 billion, even after applying the new consumption tariffs. The ministry also urged the public to take serious efforts towards achieving conservation, reducing their electricity and water consumption and building energy-saving houses.

In a letter sent to Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, Minister of Electricity and Water and Minister of Oil Essam Al-Marzouq told him that MEW consumption rates were alarmingly increasing and so are the sums needed to subsidize them. He also expected subsidies to reach KD 10 billion once the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) finishes building 250,000 new under-construction housing units. MEW also demanded the use of energy-saving materials to

build new smart homes that save electricity and water and including them in the conditions on providing citizens with the KD 30,000 construction material subsidy.

Land plots

The Ministry of Interior's Acting Undersecretary Major General Mahmoud Al-Doussary called for allocating special land plots to build police aviation departments in remote areas to the north and south of the country. In a letter sent to Kuwait Municipality, Doussary urged the municipality to allocate the northern site along Saad Al-Abdullah Road and the southern one 14 km before Sabah Al-Ahmad City along Wafra Road.

Retirement

Ten lawmakers demanded allocating one hour in tomorrow's National Assembly session to discuss the government and Civil Service Commission's regulations on retirement.

EMPLOYMENT LAW FOR CHILDREN OF KUWAITI MOTHERS ALL-INCLUSIVE: CSC

KUWAIT: A recent edict granting children born to Kuwaiti mothers greater employment rights does not discriminate on the basis of their fathers' nationalities, Kuwait's Civil Service Commission (CSC) said yesterday. CSC noted in a statement that the law, which grants children of Kuwaiti mothers precedence when it comes to employment in the government sector, is only effective in the event no citizens have been registered for vacancies listed at the CSC.

Moreover, the statement pointed out that certain provisos are in place as it relates to the process of employing non-Kuwaitis and stateless people. On the process of filling up vacancies in the government sector, the statement noted that "priority is given to citizens first, followed by those with Kuwaiti mothers." The statement also clarified that salaries largely hinge on the job itself and that monetary bonuses are dependent upon the occupation. —KUNA



Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah



Dr Mohammad Al-Zuhair



Major General Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah

YOUTH AND TOURISM FORUM KICKS OFF TODAY

KUWAIT: The first Kuwaiti Youth and Tourism Forum kicks off today at the Kuwait Regency Hotel, under the patronage of Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdulla Al-Sabah.

In this regard, representatives of state departments sponsoring the two-day forum stressed the need for cooperation to make sure that the forum becomes a success. Sheikhha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, said that officials have to speed up the process of supporting and encouraging all opportunities for achieving youth people's aspirations.

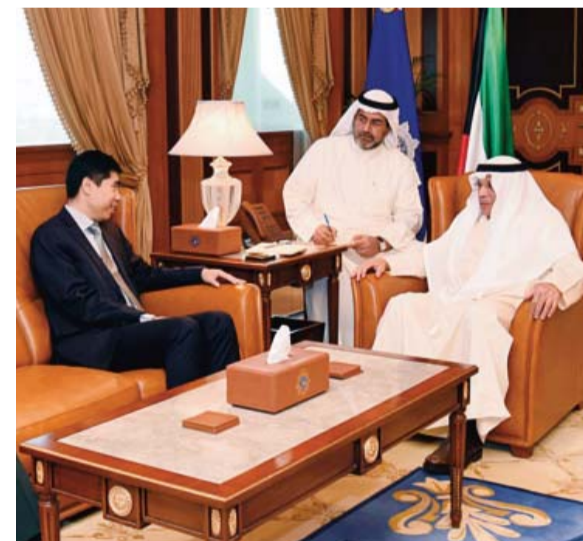
Meanwhile, Dr Mohammad Al-Zuhair, Chairman of the Board of Directors of

the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs Fund), stressed that Kuwait is in dire need to discuss all possible means of motivating the youth and encouraging them to invest in productive sectors and projects.

In the meantime, Major General Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, the Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Passports and Citizenship Affairs, stressed that the forum is an opportunity to promote Kuwait's image as a touristic destination. He added that the Interior Ministry is a major supporter of tourism through the facilities it provides in issuing tourist visit visas for both Arabs and foreigners.



The Civil Service Commission



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah received yesterday the ambassadors of the United States Lawrence Silverman, Russia Alexey Solomatina and China Wang Di. The minister discussed during the separate meetings with the ambassadors matters of mutual concern between Kuwait and their respective countries.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY of KUWAIT

FACULTY OPENINGS (2017-2018 AY)

The College of Business and Economics at the American University of Kuwait (AUK) invites applications for faculty positions in the following fields:

ACCOUNTING
(Position Code No. 17-1601- AUKWEB 02):
Rank Assistant Professor or higher. Ph.D. in Accounting is required, preferably from an AACSB accredited business program. Holders of CPA or other professional certifications are preferred.

MANAGEMENT
(Position Code No. 17-1701- AUKWEB 02):
Rank Assistant Professor or higher, depending upon qualifications and experience. Ph.D. in HRM, Management, or Organizational Behavior is required, preferably from an AACSB accredited business program.

MARKETING
(Position Code No. 17-1301- AUKWEB 02):
Rank Assistant or Associate Professor. Ph.D. in Marketing is required, preferably from an AACSB accredited business program.

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
(Position Code No. 17-1302- AUKWEB 02):
Rank Assistant or Associate Professor. Ph.D. in International Business, or a closely related field is required, preferably from an AACSB accredited business program.

A strong teaching record and evidence of research accomplishments, including publications in legitimate peer reviewed journals and in line with the College's drive for AACSB Accreditation, are expected. Faculty duties include teaching, research, student advising, and service to the department, college, and university. All-but-dissertation candidates are also encouraged to apply, subject to completion by the time they join AUK. Priority given to Kuwaiti nationals.

AUK offers competitive compensation, as well as an attractive and comprehensive benefits package. Contracts are issued for 3 years and are renewable.

Candidates should submit a current CV, writing samples (two), graduate transcript, teaching evaluations, three letters of reference, and a cover letter describing how their teaching and research fits within the mission of the American University of Kuwait and the disciplines of Business and Economics.

Application packages are to be submitted electronically to: faculty@auk.edu.kw (max. 10 MB per e-mail).

In completing your application, please quote the position code number. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

www.auk.edu.kw



KUWAIT: An artist's rendition of the Sheikh Salwa Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Stem Cell and Umbilical Cord. — KUNA



Masharee Al-Khair board member and treasurer Abdul-Aziz Al-Jassar



KIPCO Deputy Chairman Faisal Al-Ayyar

STEM CELL CENTER EPITOMIZES PPP

OPENS MID-SEPTEMBER; FIRST OF ITS KIND IN THE GULF

KUWAIT: The private sector in Kuwait has come to play a major role in various fields of the economic scene, for the good of the entire society, within the concept of social responsibility of the business. This role has been in many cases fulfilled in partnership with the public sector. The Sheikh Salwa Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Stem Cell and Umbilical Cord, which is currently under construction, offers a good model of the public-private partnership (PPP).

Once completed, the center would help scientists are in their research to explore how the cells can be used for a better quality of life for patients suffering from genetic diseases, for instance. Such efforts have already been fruitful, as discoveries in the field have raised hope

for people with incurable diseases such as blood cancers, disorders of the immunity system and metabolism, to have a better standard of life through stem cell transplant.

12,000 square meters

The center is being built on a total area of 12,000 square meters in Al-Sabah Health Zone, opposite to the Maternity Hospital. It includes a three-floor main building and one for utilities, in addition to external landscaping and parking. The facility also includes testing and research laboratories, blood and cord storage banks, research and medical libraries, as well as a lecture theater.

On behalf of the Kuwait Projects Company (KIPCO) and the Group companies, the

Masharee Al-Khair (projects for good) Charity Organization provided a KD 7 million (\$23 million) donation for the Gulf region's first-ever center to be dedicated to stem cell research and the storage of umbilical cords.

In addition, the Advanced Technology Company (ATC), a member of the KIPCO Group, has pledged to provide state-of-the-art equipment for the center's specialized laboratories, cooling systems and stem cell storage facilities. ATC's contribution is valued at KD 1 million.

Once completed in mid-September 2017, the Sheikh Salwa Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Stem Cell and Umbilical Cord will be handed over to the Ministry of Health. KIPCO's donation for the center has been prompted by its

strong belief in the major role of the private sector in all vital sectors in Kuwait so as to cope with the accelerating scientific progress worldwide. It also offers a model example of PPP, for promoting medical services in the country.

Landmark achievement

The center is the first of its kind in the Gulf region, and a landmark achievement in the health sector, said Faisal Al-Ayyar, KIPCO Deputy Chairman. He noted that KIPCO Group of companies allocate one percent of their annual profits for Masharee Al-Khair to offer support to social, health and educational scenes. Ayyar expressed hope that the day would come when storing stem cells would be as easy as ever, and treatment through them a

first choice for incurable diseases, boasting KIPCO's philanthropic role. Abdul-Aziz Al-Jassar, Masharee Al-Khair's board member and treasurer, said meanwhile that KIPCO's donation for the center was prompted by a strong belief in the vital role of the private sector supporting the government's development plans. "We pin great hopes on the would-be center, that will no doubt play a major role for promoting medical research," Jassar said. Founded in 1975, KIPCO has since become one of the Middle East and North African (MENA) region's most successful companies. With holdings in sectors such as financial services, media, manufacturing and real estate, KIPCO Group comprises over 60 companies and employs over 12,000 people in 24 countries. — KUNA

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The Middle East's Largest Students' Art Competition

KUWAIT BEAUTIFUL & GREEN STUDENTS ART COMPETITION

March 19th Till April 20th, 2017

HELLO ARTISTS...

Welcome to the Student's Art Competition. I hope you are ready to paint a beautiful painting and win wonderful prizes. The theme for your painting must be related to planting and greening, basically anything pertaining to our environment. We are looking for a great painting. So, please pick up your color pencils, paint brushes, crayons or whatever you prefer and start drawing and painting.

Good luck to you, our young artists.

- Competition is open to ages from (6 - 8) (9 - 11) (12 - 14) (15 - 17) and Special needs.
- The competition is open for all schools in Kuwait (Government and Private)
- **The competition will start on March 19th and will continue till April 20th 2017.**
- 10 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools participating in the competition will receive an appreciation plaque.
- Any school or individual interested to participate in this competition is welcome to visit the office of Kuwait Times and collect the drawing sheets.
- Drawing sheets will be given to schools FREE of charge.
- Only drawing sheets provided by the Kuwait Times will be allowed.
- You can use any kind of color pencils, paint brushes or crayons.

* For all Jazeera Airways tickets terms and conditions are applied

Kuwait Times Participation Form

If you are interested to participate fill the form and send it to Kuwait Times.

From:

We would like to confirm our participation in the above mentioned activity with the total number of participating student's so the corresponding number of drawing sheets can be delivered to our school.

School:

Tel: Fax:

Address:

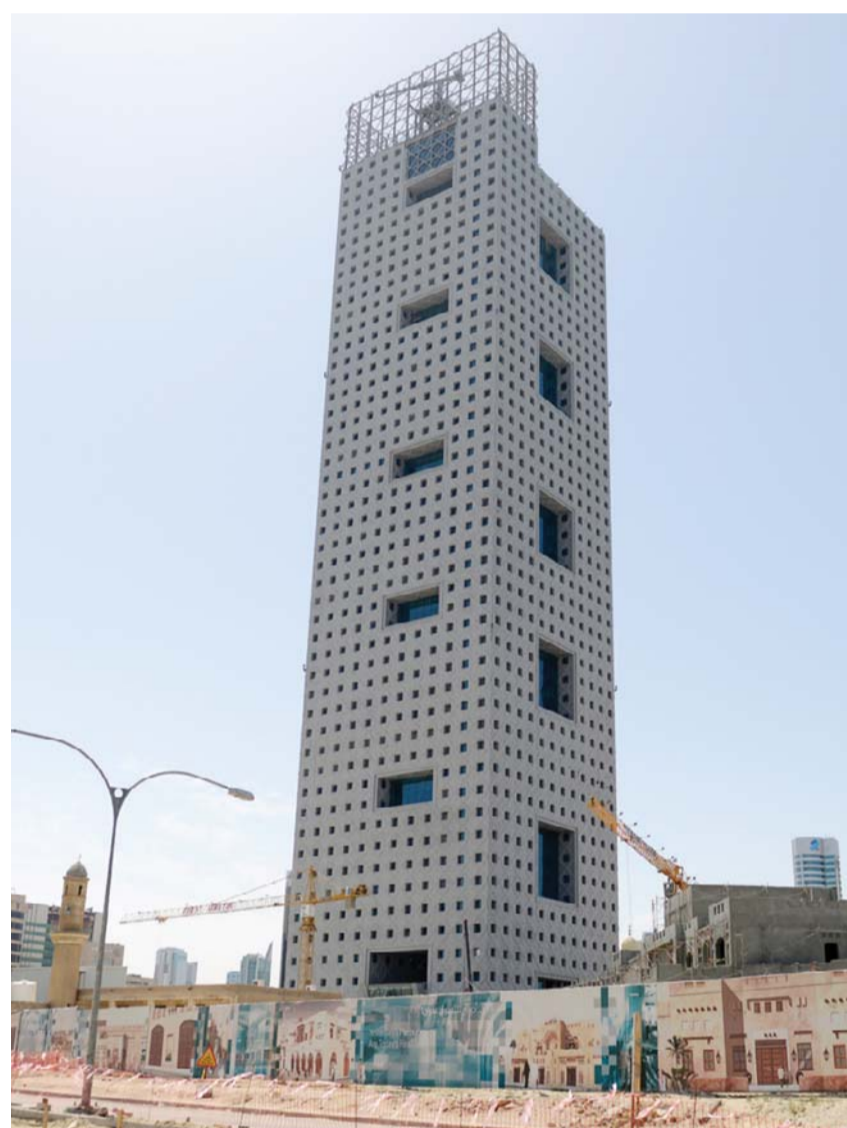
Total number of interested students are
 6 - 8 years 9 - 11 years 12 - 14 years 15 - 17 years Special need

Name: Signature:

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DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: KEY TO ACHIEVE KUWAIT'S 2035 VISION

KUWAIT: Kuwait's economic and financial development projects are a key element to achieve the 'Kuwait Vision 2035', making the country a point of attraction for local and foreign investments. As part of the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-

Sabah to turn Kuwait into a financial and commercial center, the public and private sectors established new buildings for the Kuwait Investment Authority, the Central Bank of Kuwait, the National Bank of Kuwait and the Avenues Mall. — KUNA



The Central Bank of Kuwait



The Avenues Mall



Citizens join EPA officials in lighting candles outside EPA building to mark the Earth Hour.

KUWAIT KEEN ON EARTH HOUR TO SAVE POWER, PRESERVE RESOURCES: EPA DIRECTOR

KUWAIT: Kuwait is eager to share the world the observation of the Earth Hour, Director of the Environmental Public Authority (EPA) Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said on Saturday. Through applying the law on protection of the environment, EPA has assumed the responsibility of preserving natural resources and rationalization of consumption of power, as well as boosting awareness on the hazards of climate change on Kuwait and the globe, the Sheikh Abdullah said in a press statement on the sidelines of the authority's marking of the Earth Hour.

Just like every year, Kuwait marks the occasion by

switching lights off for a whole hour, in line with the country's commitment to the relevant international conventions on maintaining resources and curbing emissions, as a national duty, he added. Referring to the oil spot seen off the Shuaiba port this dawn, the EPA director said it was contained. Initial reports have shown that the spot was caused by a leak from a container at the site. After the spot is removed by the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) over the coming two days, it will be fully investigated, he noted.

Meanwhile, the EPA's deputy director for technical affairs Mohammad Al-Enezi, said that the Earth Hour is to convey an expressive message to the

world that the rationalization of power consumption is of prior importance to curb emissions. Enezi added that the EPA is working on Kuwait's second national report on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in cooperation with the West Asia United Nations Environment Program, and other relevant state bodies.

In addition, the authority is surveying the impact of climate change on the state's major sectors; water resources, fish wealth, and public health and the future outlook of temperature, rainfall and sandstorms, he noted. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Lights are switched off at the Environmental Public Authority to mark the Earth Hour. — KUNA



Candles lit to mark the Earth Hour.

In my view

ONLY IN KUWAIT - PART 11



By Talal Al-Ghannam

local@kuwaittimes.net

Good morning my dear and honorable brothers and sisters. Today, I continue with a new edition of my 'Only in Kuwait' series, in which I pinpoint faults and wrongdoings that people see taking place in Kuwait, with hopes that it reaches concerned authorities so that they can find a solution for those problems.

Only in Kuwait you would be diagnosed at the doctor's office, when suddenly a patient storms in without knocking on the door and complains that the physician is 'taking so much time' while examining each patient.

Only in Kuwait that doctors do not have time to thoroughly examine a patient, since those waiting in line would have no patience to wait.

Only in Kuwait that some doctors are beaten by patients for applying order at the clinic or hospital.

Only in Kuwait that some doctors have pre-written prescription of pain killers and gargle for almost all sore throat cases.

Only in Kuwait that a hospital can make you feel as if you are in a shopping mall.

Only in Kuwait that some doctors examine many cases without even checking the nature of the disease that they might have. And the prescription is always pre-arranged.

Only in Kuwait you see hospitals guarded by policemen.

Only in Kuwait that a bridge which cost KD 23 million to build cannot tolerate an hour of downpour, similar to what happened recently in Mangaf and Sabahiya.

Only in Kuwait people become alarmed whenever it rains, because they fear of the damages that will hit their cars from the 'flying gravel.'

Only in Kuwait that a person can fix his or her vehicle's windshield and struts twice a month because of the flying gravel and the deep manholes in the roads.

Only in Kuwait that driving on the pavement can become a source of joy for many.

Only in Kuwait a 'Slow Down' sign can be read as 'Drive Recklessly.'

Only in Kuwait that many police cars cannot chase those insane drivers who burn their cars' tires when a few drops of rain fall, and end up just watching from afar.

Only in Kuwait that the paperwork needed for a visa transfer transaction from article 20 to 18 can be a nightmare.

Only in Kuwait that having breakfast at work while tens of people are waiting can be a joyful experience.

Only in Kuwait that irresponsible drivers during weddings can gang up against any vehicle whose driver honks at them or tries to zigzag through them.

Only in Kuwait you see many public transportation buses generate dangerous black smoke while police do nothing about it.

Only in Kuwait you see a co-operative society sells a commodity for 500 fils whereas another sells the same item for 750 fils.

Only in Kuwait you find many people bringing in expatriates to work for them, and then complain about their rising numbers in the country.

Only in Kuwait a taxi has no right to pick up or drop off customers because police believes that the taxi has no right to do so, and should keep driving without stoppage.

Till the next article insha Allah

HOUSING MINISTER, CHINESE COMPANY INK INFRASTRUCTURE CONTRACT FOR SOUTH MUTLAA

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Utilities Yasser Abul signed yesterday a contract with a Chinese company for constructing the infrastructure for 18,519 lots of land in South Al-Mutlaa City project.

The contract, worth KD 215.8 million (about \$712.14 million), also covers the sub-power plants for eight neighborhoods in Al-Mutlaa. The ministry will soon sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with China to open up fresh prospects for further cooperation in housing and infrastructure projects, the minister said on the sidelines of the ceremony held at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW).

Eleven companies from several countries bid for the project, Abul said, noting that the Chinese winner is among the leading globally in the field. According to the minister, owners of the land will be handed over the building licenses with the beginning of 2019, then the third contract for the rest of land in the



KUWAIT: Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Utilities Yasser Abul (left) is seen during the signing ceremony. — KUNA

city will be offered for bid.

Meanwhile, PAHW Director General Bader Al-Wugayyan said that work in the eight areas will be carried out over two phases; the first, two years, includes 12,177 lots of land, and the second 6,342, to be

implemented in 30 months once work kicks off. Wugayyan added that the South Al-Mutlaa City project includes 28,288 homes, and public buildings, as well as recreational, educational, sports and service facilities. — KUNA

KFAED LAYS FOUNDATION STONE OF SEWAGE PROJECT IN SOUTH LEBANON

KHIAM: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development's (KFAED) Director General Abdulwahab Al-Bader, has taken part in a ceremony held to lay the foundation stone for the construction of sewage networks and wastewater treatment plant in Marjeyoun - Khiam southern Lebanon with an estimated cost of \$47.562 million.

The ceremony was attended by Lebanese Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil on behalf of Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Nabih Berri,

Minister of Energy Cesar Abi Khalil, President of the Council for Development and Reconstruction Nabil El-Jisr, KFAED's Regional Director Abdullah Al-Sager as well as Lebanese officials. In a speech, Minister Khalil expressed thanks and appreciation to Kuwait which has always pay attention to this project which will help people of southern Lebanon so they could remain in their lands despite various challenges. For his part, Minister Cesar Abi Khalil expressed his happiness with

the implementation of projects in line with the national strategy for sanitation established by the ministry in 2012, adding that since 1990 to 2009, the ministry has spent about \$1,450 billion on the sewage sector.

Meanwhile, Bader said Kuwait Fund has completed 50 years of work in the implementation of projects in Lebanon last year, pointing to Kuwait's continued support for development efforts in Lebanon. The fund has implemented several projects in the region and this project mainly serves the major project of irrigation of the Litani river and assist the sewage project in Khiam, he added.

Lots of towns will benefit from the project, which will contribute to the protection of water sources from pollution. The project is 80 percent funded by the Kuwait Fund where its implementation will take about three years.

Kuwait Fund is implementing in South Lebanon the largest socio-economic development project in Lebanon, namely the Litani water project in the southern provinces of Nabatieh, which provides irrigation of about 15,000 hectares of agricultural land and provide drinking water to 100 towns. — KUNA



KHIAM: Officials pose for a group photo during the ceremony.

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Crime

Report

DRUG POSSESSION

KUWAIT: Police found a citizen in an abnormal condition in Jahra. They found a bag of shabu with him, along with SR 5,000, which was found to be forged. He was sent to concerned authorities. Separately, two young men drew policemen's attention in Farwaniya. They asked for their IDs, and found they were twins on drugs. They had some drugs with them and remnants of hashish joints. Both were taken to Farwaniya police station to be sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

Youngster attempts suicide

KUWAIT: A young man in his 20s tried to commit suicide after his parents insisted that he leaves their home, prompting policemen and detectives to intervene and prevent him from carrying out the attempt. The man was taken to the police station charged with attempted suicide. Meanwhile, his father and mother were summoned for questioning.

Girls' fight

Gossiping led to a fight between four girls in a Salmiya cafe. Patrons of the cafe called police as they were not able to break up the fight. Police took the girls to the police station, where one of them claimed that two girls spoke maliciously about her, and when she admonished them, they beat her. The four are being sent to concerned authorities.

Drunk man arrested

A drunk citizen entered a house thinking it was his in Farwaniya, so he was arrested on two charges. When the man entered the house, those inside were surprised and the women screamed, and he was caught and handed to police. The citizen faces two charges - public drunkenness and entering a house without permission. — Translated from the Arabic press



بن نيت
2017

Al-Rai

POLICE ASSAULT PROBED

KUWAIT: A security source said Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality and Passport Affairs Maj Gen Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah asked for a report about a policeman attacking his colleague at work, and investigate alle-

gations of the policeman stubbing out a cigarette in his face.

A security source said the accused reported to work to guard a building accompanied by a relative, and asked the policeman of the previous shift to hand him the responsibilities,

but he refused, assuming the policeman was not in a normal condition. This angered him, and a verbal exchange ended with exchanging blows, and accusations that the suspect stubbed out the cigarette in his opponent's face. — Al-Rai

PALESTINIAN TEACHERS

By Ahmad Al-Sarraf

I received several comments regarding an article I wrote about bringing Palestinian teachers. Most of those comments were negative, and the feelings of those who sent them can be understandable. I received other comments that were positive, the best of which was from a reader named Raed, in which he said bringing Palestinian teachers, without their families, and other Palestinian workers with them will not change much, and the education ministry should look into the matter of the deteriorating education more deeply.

According to Raed, Kuwait today complains about the general drop in the level of its school graduates, compared with its outstanding level before the heinous Saddam invasion. So, nothing much will be changed unless we restore the situation to 'some' of what it was in the past. The Palestinian teacher was honest in his work because he was teaching Kuwaiti students along with his compatriots and children of the rest of the Arabs, so he was building for his future at his work. Yet, today, if he accepts coming to Kuwait, he will not work with the same enthusiasm, rather will make financial gains his main goal, just like others.

He said that the Kuwaiti student benefited from the presence of the rest of Arab students in the past with him in public schools. Because of their humble financial capacities compared with their Kuwaiti peers, those students were more interested in school and studying, thus providing an incentive for Kuwaiti students. This incentive disappeared today as the non-Kuwaiti element disappeared from government schools.

So, the return of the Palestinian teacher today will not achieve what is hoped for, or make any change, Raed believes, adding that the reason is that this teacher will mostly come alone, as the salary he will receive, which is less than KD 600, cannot help him support a full family, and that most of those he will teach will be Kuwaitis, and his children or nephews are not among them, so his enthusiasm will not be like teachers in the past.

Before the Invasion, the Palestinian teacher considered himself a resident of Kuwait for an indefinite time, so he was living and behaving on this basis, and his salary was not draining the country's resources. But now, this situation will change, according to Raed. He believes that the change will happen due to the disappearance of the semi-loyalty to the country. A teacher will not hesitate to accept any better offer whenever he receives it.

The Palestinian teacher will find himself compelled to ride the wave of private tuition, taking advantage of the extended free time he has. So, Raed says that it is better for the education ministry to think outside the box, and give the choice for expat children to join government schools in exchange of fees that are close to those paid to private schools. With this condition we can create a healthy educational environment, more forgiving towards others and more competitive and rich, one that pushes the Kuwaiti student to benefit from the experience of his colleagues. Also it is possible through the school fees to support the education system and attract the best teachers for lucrative salaries.

Providing the expat with freedom of sending his child to public schools will reduce pressure on private schools; who would then be forced to improve their quality and enhance the educational environment to avoid losing students in favor of public schools. Those are good proposals that are worth studying. Maybe not all of them are applicable, but they need to be subjected to creative thinking to come up with solutions to change the miserable situation of our education.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

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March 12th, 2017 Till April 6th, 2017

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The photo contest begins on March 12, 2017 and ends on April 6, 2017. To ensure eligibility for the contest, please submit files in high resolution:

- **Photographic Camera:** Please submit original files (entries should include metadata if possible) in jpg format on CD or flash memory with hard copy on photo paper (size 300 x 400 millimeters or 11.81 x 15.75 inches)
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- Eighth prize:** Canon Camera PSD 30 BLUE + Camera Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
- Ninth prize:** Canon Camera IXUS 180 BLACK + free Camera Bag. One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait by Jazeera Airways*.
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Al-Anbaa

THE OPPOSITION AND RAMADAN ELECTIONS

By Thaar Al-Rasheedi

According to all available and evident data, everyone is now preparing for parliamentary elections due to be held in June, assuming that the current parliament will be annulled by the first week of May as predicted. This means that the elections will be held in between the first and last week of June. Either way, the elections will be held the Ramadan. This is most likely to happen if the constitutional court annuls the current parliament on May 3rd and thus the cabinet is expected to resign from office in the same week of issuing a decree calling for parliamentary elections, just like what happened with the 2013 parliament. The same scenario is happening again for the same reasons and under the same circumstances leading to the formation of a new parliament to be known as the '2017 National Assembly'.

Some people may believe this is unlikely to happen, but I believe it is possible. We will probably witness early elections this summer which will be the second one to be held during Ramadan in Kuwait's history. I personally believe this will happen and still insist that the current parliament will be dissolved or annulled. However, I tend to believe it will be constitutionally annulled. This is because the government that issued the decree calling for the previous elections was unconstitutional, because it did not include any MP appointed as cabinet member (all the three MPs in the cabinet had resigned before calling for the elections). This makes it an unconstitutional government issuing an unconstitutional call for elections. Many political analysts believe so as well, and are certain it will happen.

So, with less than 50 days before the possible early elections, I expect the current parliament will only hold ordinary sessions as political showoff in preparation for the coming elections, namely on the opposition MPs' side. This does not mean that none of them will try to race to grill His Highness the Prime Minister, though there is no time left for it. Furthermore, it will be too late for the opposition to make such a maneuver. What is clear evident is that everybody is haunted by the possibility of annulling the parliament, that new elections are so near and that the political map will be changed once again but only after the opposition will have lost several opportunities in making it to the second Ramadan-elected parliament. — Translated by Kuwait Times



KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) opened yesterday its first job fair, which is organized by the Planning and Development Department in cooperation with the deanship of students' affairs. The fair runs through tomorrow.



KFH TAKES PART IN JOB FAIR AT GUST

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudan honored Kuwait Finance House (KFH) represented by Group Chief Strategy Officer Engineer Fahad Khaled Al-Mukhaizeem in recognition of its participation in the 19th job fair held at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) that reflects the bank's keenness to support the efforts of qualifying national cadres while offering them suitable job opportunities. A Human Resources team was accessible at KFH's booth at the job fair in order to answer job seekers' queries and educate them on KFH's sectors and departments and its nature of work.

KFH is a pioneer in attracting Kuwaiti manpower where it managed to create high caliber Kuwaiti bankers and investors. Bank received several awards in the field of human resources and 'Kuwaitization': KFH has lately won two Awards at Organizational Learning Conference which are "Best Employer for Job Seekers" and "Best Job Stability Award" at the 2016 Excellence awards ceremony for the institutions of the private sector held by the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program MGRP.

KFH's booth was heavily visited by university students who wanted to explore their potential in joining KFH and the banking sector in general. KFH allows Kuwaitis to hold senior positions and gain experience in various sectors, such as the banking, commercial, real estate, investment, and IT sectors.

KFH's participation confirms the priority bank puts on enhancing its role, in collaboration with the concerned authorities, to reinforce efforts toward providing job opportunities for Kuwaitis, qualifying them, and honing their skills in accordance with international standards.



One killed, 14 wounded in Ohio nightclub shooting

CHINA'S FAVORITE LAM WINS HK LEADERSHIP, VOWS TO HEAL RIFTS

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LONDON: This file photo taken on June 4, 2012 shows a boy getting a boost to see the action from the Mall waiting for the start of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Concert at Buckingham Palace. — AFP

BRITAIN PREPARES TO LAUNCH BREXIT

AN UNPRECEDENTED STEP INTO THE UNKNOWN

LONDON: Britain will take an unprecedented step into the unknown on Wednesday with the first formal move towards leaving the European Union, starting a two-year process that has already divided the country. Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of London on Saturday to protest against Brexit, and Scotland's parliament tomorrow is set to vote in favor of holding an independence referendum.

Scots voted to stay in the EU but the majority verdict in Britain's EU referendum last year was 52 percent in favor of putting an end to a loveless marriage that has lasted more than four decades. Those in favor are impatient for Brexit talks to begin and accuse Prime Minister Theresa May of playing for time since the June referendum. But europhiles are increasingly concerned.

"Stop this madness!" read a banner held up at Saturday's march to parliament held just three days after a terror attack there to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the EU's founding treaty of Rome. Prime Minister Theresa May's formal letter of notification to EU President Donald Tusk will trigger Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty: an exit

clause that no member state has ever used. The EU is expected to issue a first response later this week, followed by a summit of EU leaders on April 29 to adopt guidelines for the talks.

The exit negotiations themselves are not expected to start until at least three weeks after that. The referendum campaign created bitter rifts between different parts of the country, generations and social classes, as well as exposing a chasm between the haves and have-nots of globalisation. Brexit has also sparked a round of soul-searching in the European Union, even fears of a wider break-up. EU leaders at a summit on Saturday adopted a declaration that enshrines for the first time a so-called "multi-speed" Europe, in which some countries can push ahead on key issues while others sit out.

'No deal' scenario

May has said she will respond to a major demand of the Brexit campaign by cutting the numbers of EU immigrants who move to Britain—hundreds of thousands every year

and will have to pull Britain out of the European single market to do so. She has advocated a "clean break" but has also said she wants an "implementation phase" to keep the status quo between Britain leaving the EU and any new arrangement to allow her country to adapt.

As the countdown begins, there is a real chance that negotiations will break down and Britain will be forced out of the EU without any deal in place. Anand Menon of the UK in a Changing Europe research group estimated a 50-percent possibility of this happening, meaning Britain and the EU will have to trade with higher tariffs than now under World Trade Organization membership rules.

Stage is set

"A deal will take a lot more time, goodwill and tact than has been on display from either side," he said. Business leaders have warned that this would be by far the worst scenario but May has said that "no deal is better than a bad deal" and she has the support of pro-Brexit hardliners in her Conservative Party.

The EU says "everything is ready" for Britain to begin its EU exit and officials in Brussels have already outlined a divorce bill for Britain of between 55 and 60 billion euros (\$59 and \$65 billion). "When a country leaves the union there is no punishment, there is no price to pay to leave. But we must settle the accounts, no more, no less," the EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier said on Wednesday.

Britain could get away with not paying anything, according to a recent report published by the House of Lords, but doing so would severely undermine its credibility. The real question will be how much it will pay. London also wants guarantees on the status of more than a million Britons living in other parts of the European Union, using the status of some three million EU citizens in Britain as a bargaining tool. The trickiest part of the negotiations will be on trade relations, which could take years to work out. Former WTO chief and European commissioner Pascal Lamy warned about the complexity of the Brexit process last week, likening it to "removing an egg from an omelette". — AFP

OPPOSITION LEADER ARRESTED, RUSSIANS DEFY PROTEST BANS

MOSCOW: Thousands of Russians demonstrated across the country yesterday to protest against corruption, defying bans on the rallies called by prominent Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny—who was arrested along with scores of others. Navalny called for the protests after publishing a detailed report this month accusing Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev of controlling a property empire through a shadowy network of nonprofit organizations.

The report has been viewed over 11 million times on YouTube, but so far Medvedev has made no comment on the claims. Navalny, who has announced plans to run for president in next year's election, has been rallying supporters in major Russian cities in recent weeks. In Moscow, Navalny called on supporters to walk along the main Tverskaya street, and people congregated on the nearby squares lined with dozens of police vans and rows of riot officers as a police helicopter hovered overhead.

"We have all seen the movie, it gives specific examples of corruption, and there has been no reaction," said Nikolai Moisey, a 26-year-old factory worker. "They steal and they lie but still people will be patient to the end. The protest is a first push for people to start acting." Police detained Navalny shortly after 2:00 pm (1100 GMT) as he was walking to the protest, putting him in a police minibus, and the surrounding crowd briefly tried to block it from driving off, shouting "Shame!" and "Let him out!"

"Guys, I am all right, go on along Tverskaya," Navalny tweeted from the van. Thousands of people filled Pushkin Square, with some shout-

ing "Russia without Putin", referring to protest Vladimir Putin. Some climbed on lamp posts and monument to poet Alexander Pushkin, shouting "impeachment!" Moscow police estimated the protest turnout at seven or eight thousand people, making it one of the biggest non-authorized demonstrations in recent years.

Police officers moved to detain protesters and clear the square, with some using truncheons and pepper spray to disperse the crowd, AFP correspondents observed. "Over 130 people have been detained in Moscow," OVD Info, a website that monitors the detention of activists, said in a Twitter post, adding later that the arrests were continuing. The group had said earlier that its website had been shut down by a distributed denial of service, or DDoS, attack. "The whole country is tired of corruption on such a scale," 50-year-old Natalia Demidova said. "Medvedev should be fired once such exposes come to light." Despite the dramatic scenes in the city, state TV channels did not cover the protests, instead showing soap operas and nature films.

'99 cities'

Elsewhere in the country, about 2,000 gathered in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, carrying signs such as "No to corruption," according to local news website Sib.fm. Some held up images of yellow rubber ducks, following reports that Medvedev has a special house for a duck on one of his properties.

In Saint Petersburg, about 4,000 people

gathered in the city centre. "We're tired of the lies, we have to do something," Sergei Timofeyev told AFP. Local media estimated about 1,500 people turned out in each of the Siberian cities of Krasnoyarsk and Omsk. The Russian constitution allows public gatherings, but recent laws have criminalized protests unauthorized by city authorities, who frequently refuse to grant permission for rallies by Kremlin critics.

Navalny said on his website that 99 Russian cities planned to protest, but that in 72 of them the local authorities did not give permission, citing reasons such as street cleaning, a bell-ringing concert and rival events by various pro-Kremlin groups. Authorities had also pressured students not to attend, with some cities even scheduling exams for Sunday, according to reports.

In the far-eastern city of Vladivostok, about 700 people nonetheless turned up, local website Prima Media said, and a dozen of people were detained by the national guard. In the Ural city of Yekaterinburg, about 1,000 people turned up, according to local Znak.com website. Navalny, a 40-year-old lawyer by training, has pledged to run for president next year, after winning a surprise 27 percent of the vote in Moscow mayor election in 2013. But he has been the subject of several legal prosecutions in recent years, and in February he was found guilty of embezzlement and given a five-year suspended sentence which could make him ineligible to run in next year's election. — AFP



MOSCOW: Police officer detains a protester in downtown Moscow. — AP

EGYPT'S LAST JEWS AIM TO KEEP ALIVE HERITAGE

CAIRO: Once a flourishing community, only a handful of Egyptian Jews, mostly elderly women, remain in the Arab world's most populous country, aiming at least to preserve their heritage. Egypt still has about a dozen synagogues, but like many of the country's monuments they need restoration. Part of the roof of a synagogue in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria caved in last year.

In downtown Cairo, a bustling street lined with old hotels and shops leads to an imposing stone building modeled after an ancient Egyptian temple: The Sha'ar Hashamayim synagogue, built around 1900. Inside, Magda Haroun carefully unrolls Torah scrolls kept in the synagogue's ark. The synagogue is mostly empty these days, but Haroun, 65, remembers when its benches were filled

with worshippers, including her late father Shehata Haroun, a celebrated lawyer. Haroun carries the title of president of Cairo's Jewish community—six elderly women including herself and her mother—and says her task is to preserve a centuries-old heritage. "It's my duty, for future generations," she says. Her mother Marcelle Haroun, 91, cries when she discusses her community's fading past. "According to the stories, Jews lived in Egypt since the pharaohs. Do you want to make centuries of history vanish?" she says. There were between 80,000 and 120,000 Jews in Egypt up until the mid-20th century. They had an impact that far exceeded their numbers in trade and even cinema, with actress and singer Leila Murad dominating the silver screen in the 1940s and 1950s.

Taboo

But the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 led to the disintegration of the community, with many leaving Egypt or being forced out under the regime of president Gamal Abdel Nasser. Today, the Jews of Egypt are estimated to number 18, with 12 of them in the coastal city of Alexandria. Magda Haroun's dream is for Jewish artefacts to be seen by the public, perhaps in a planned museum of Egyptian civilisation. Officially, the government now makes no distinction between Pharaonic, Islamic, Coptic and Jewish heritage, and the antiquities ministry has come up with the funds to fix the roof of Alexandria's synagogue.

"The (antiquities) minister promised me that a museum of civilisations will

open, representing all the civilisations of Egypt," said Magda Haroun. The Egyptian civilisation museum partially opened in February with a small exhibition but there are no definite plans as yet for displaying Jewish artefacts in it. However the minister, Khaled el-Enany, told AFP that in early 2016 he set up a committee to list "all the Jewish monuments and Jewish collections that are in the synagogues". But on a public level, many Egyptians still have a mixed view of their Jewish compatriots. "It remains a complicated question," says Amir Ramses, who made a 2013 documentary, "The Jews of Egypt", on the community's history. "Mentioning the Jews in Egypt was a taboo," he said. Just screening the film in Cairo cinemas was a struggle before

he eventually obtained clearance. When it was shown, the culture ministry requested that it be introduced as a work of the director's "imagination" rather than a documentary.

Although the tiny community has been spared recent attacks by jihadists targeting Christians, the Sha'ar Hashamayim synagogue was attacked in 2010. An assailant hurled a suitcase containing a homemade bomb at the synagogue's entrance, causing no damage. Some in the community prefer to keep a low profile. The head of Alexandria's Jewish community, Youssef Gaon, wanted to be quoted as little as possible when interviewed by AFP. Gaon simply said he "trusts" the Egyptian government will help restore the country's Jewish heritage. — AFP



MOSUL: An Iraqi counter terrorism forces member stands guard in Mosul's Al-Jadida area on March 26, 2017, following air strikes in which civilians have been reportedly killed during an ongoing offensive against the Islamic State (IS) group. — AFP

IRAQI SNIPERS TARGETING MOSUL JIHADISTS USING HUMAN SHIELDS

AIR STRIKES HAVE REPORTEDLY KILLED LARGE NUMBERS OF RESIDENTS

BAGHDAD: Iraq has deployed snipers to target jihadists using civilians as human shields in Mosul, as it investigates air strikes that reportedly killed large numbers of residents in the city, the military said yesterday. Hundreds of thousands of civilians are still trapped in Mosul, caught between advancing Iraqi forces and the Islamic State group jihadists that they are fighting to defeat.

Iraqi officials and witnesses said that air strikes killed civilians in the Mosul al-Jadida area in recent days, but the number of victims—said to range from dozens to hundreds—could not be independently confirmed. IS "began to use citizens as human shields, and we are trying to target them with... snipers to eliminate them," Joint Operations Command spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Rasool told AFP. Iraqi forces are relying on "light and medium weapons, among them sniper (rifles), to hunt for Daesh members" located among civilians, he said.

However, Iraqi forces have also frequently fired mortar rounds and unguided rockets during the battle for west Mosul—weapons that pose a much greater risk to residents of areas where fighting is taking place. Rasool accused IS of gathering civilians together and then blowing up explosives-rigged vehicles nearby to

make it look like "Iraqi forces... are targeting innocent civilians." He also said that Iraq has begun a probe into reports of civilians killed by air strikes in Mosul.

"The defense ministry opened an investigation into this issue," Rasool said. The US-led coalition against IS has indicated that it may have been responsible for at least some of the civilian deaths. "An initial review of strike data... indicates that, at the request of the Iraqi security forces, the coalition struck (IS) fighters and equipment, March 17, in west Mosul at the location corresponding to allegations of civilian casualties," it said in a statement on Saturday.

Mass displacement

At the beginning of this month the international alliance had said that "it is more likely than not, at least 220 civilians have been unintentionally killed by coalition strikes", while other incidents were still under investigation. Two witnesses who have since fled Mosul said that a building with around 170 people inside was destroyed.

One of them, Manhal Sumayr, said that IS snipers had fired on Iraqi forces in the area, after which an aircraft targeted them with a missile. An Iraqi brigadier general said that a total of 27

residential buildings had been hit by multiple days of strikes in west Mosul, and that three of them were completely destroyed. Bashar Al-Kiki, the head of the provincial council for Nineveh, of which Mosul is the capital, said that "dozens" of bodies were still buried under rubble in the city, while Governor Nawfal Hammadi put the toll at hundreds dead.

Other officials also said that hundreds of civilians had been killed. On Saturday, security forces did not permit journalists to reach the area where the strikes were said to have taken place. Following the raids, the United Nations called on parties to the conflict to do "everything possible" to protect civilians in Mosul.

"International humanitarian law is clear. Parties to the conflict—all parties—are obliged to do everything possible to protect civilians. This means that combatants cannot use people as human shields and cannot imperil lives through indiscriminate use of fire-power," said Lise Grande, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for Iraq. According to Iraqi authorities, more than 200,000 people have fled west Mosul since the operation to retake the area was launched on February 19. But the UN has said that around 600,000 are still present inside the city. — AFP

IN MOSUL, A SCHOOL BECOMES A HOSPITAL

MOSUL: Fifteen-year-old Mohammed enthusiastically helps the staff of a makeshift hospital set up in the bullet-scarred school in west Mosul where he himself studied before jihadists seized Iraq's second city. The Islamic State group used the school as part of its program of indoctrination until it lost control of the area during a major Iraqi offensive launched last month, and it is now used to treat people wounded in the ongoing battle for the western side of the city.

Like many buildings in Mosul, the school bears the signs of warfare. In addition to being pockmarked with bullets, most of the windows are broken, walls are cracked and the floor is littered with bullet casings. The entrance hall has been transformed into an emergency room, which is stocked with only limited equipment but still allows for first aid to be administered to the wounded and sick.

One young man lies on a narrow bed, his face pale and tired. "A sniper (from IS) fired at him but missed, so he started to run, and the sniper shot again and hit him," says Fathi Waad, one of the victim's relatives. "This is the third time that someone in the family has been hit by a sniper," he adds.

Each day, the hospital looks after around 100 patients, both civilians and security personnel, often the victims of gunshot wounds, says Aqil Karim, a medic from the elite Counter-Terrorism Service. A dust-covered red pickup suddenly stops in front of the school to deliver a semi-conscious old man whose foot has been injured.

American dream

Unlike the previous patient, he is not the victim of violence, but rather of an accident, and he is also suffering from dehydration. As soon as he arrives, he is carried to a bed, where his wound is washed, disinfected and dressed. Treating him is just as important as tending to those wounded by war in a city where the fighting has destroyed many medical facilities.

More than 200,000 Iraqis have fled west Mosul since Iraqi forces began the assault to retake the area on February 19, the government says, but hundreds of thousands more are still in danger inside the city. With school lessons unlikely to resume at any time soon, several former pupils have returned to the building to help the medical staff.

Indifferent to the sound of gunfire and explosions outside, one of them rushes around helping out where he can, dressed in a tracksuit with a blue hood. Mohammed has barely finished unloading a delivery of equipment when he is already back inside handing out food rations. "We cook, clean the equipment, and when wounded people arrive we help them," says the slender teenager, who is delighted no longer to be in class under the jihadists.

"Our teachers were hard on us. They'd beat us," he says. "And they'd ask us to pledge allegiance to IS." But Mohammed does not see a future for himself in the ruins of a city disfigured by months of heavy fighting. Instead, he yearns to join his relatives in the United States. His dream job once there? "Doctor" of course. — AFP



MOSUL: Displaced Iraqi children, who fled the violence in the northern city of Mosul as a result of a planned operation to retake the city from jihadists, pose for the camera at the Hasan Sham camp. — AFP

HAMAS CLOSES GAZA CROSSING

GAZA CITY: Hamas shut the crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel yesterday after blaming the Jewish state for the assassination of one of its officials in the Palestinian enclave. The interior ministry in Gaza, run by Islamist movement Hamas, said it was shutting the Erez crossing for an indefinite period as it investigates Friday's murder.

It did not give details on the reason behind the closure, though there was speculation authorities may be seeking to prevent those responsible for the killing from leaving. Hamas security forces were deployed along the Gaza borders and exits by sea were also banned, officials said. Hamas officials have blamed the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad and its "collaborators" for the killing of Mazen Faqha, 38, who was shot dead by unknown gunmen. He was killed by four bullets from a pistol equipped with a silencer. Israel has not commented on the shooting. According to Israeli media, Faqha was responsible for cells of Hamas's military wing, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

'Blood is on your hands'

Yesterday, Faqha's wife, Nahed Assida, called on "Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to respond to this assassination." "The price of my husband's blood is in your hands," she said during a women's conference in Gaza. Faqha's

funeral on Saturday drew thousands of Hamas supporters into the streets with chants of "revenge" and "death to Israel." Ismail Haniya, until recently head of Hamas in Gaza, and Yahya Sinwar, who replaced him as leader, headed the procession. According to Hamas, Faqha formed cells for the Islamist group's military wing in the West Bank cities of Tubas, also where he was born, and Jenin. It said he played an important role in preparing two major attacks. They included a suicide attack in the Israeli settlement neighborhood of Gilo in east Jerusalem in 2002 that killed 19 people.

The second was a suicide bus attack later that year that killed nine people in the northern Israeli city of Safed. They were part of a wave of suicide attacks that killed hundreds of Israelis during the second intifada, or uprising, between 2000 and 2005. Israel sentenced him to nine life sentences plus 50 years, but he was released in 2011 along with more than 1,000 other Palestinians in exchange for Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier Hamas had detained for five years, and transferred to Gaza.

Israel did not immediately comment in detail yesterday's closure but said its side of the crossing remained open. The Erez crossing is the only one between Gaza and Israel for people. Another crossing with Israel, Kerem Shalom, is used for goods and remained open yesterday, Palestinian officials said. — AFP

REBEL SUPPORTERS FLOOD YEMEN STREETS ON CONFLICT ANNIVERSARY

SANAA: Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in Yemen's rebel-held capital yesterday in a show of support for the insurgents, two years after a Gulf coalition intervened against the rebels. The Iran-backed Houthi rebels staged a show of force over the weekend with the mass rally in Sanaa and a symbolic court ruling against Yemen's embattled president, whose troops are

supported by the Saudi-led Gulf coalition. Crowds converged on Sabeen Square in Sanaa, raising banners in protest against the Saudi-led intervention and chanting a vow to "resist to the end".

"We came back today to Sabeen Square to send a message to Arabs and Muslims: Does your religion allow you to attack a people in its totality without any reason?"

Abdullah Qadiry told AFP at Sabeen Square. Former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, a Houthi ally and political rival of current head of state Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, appeared briefly in person at the rally to thunderous applause.

Yesterday's protest came a day after a rebel court in Sanaa sentenced Hadi to death in absentia for high treason. The court found Hadi guilty of "usurping the title of president after the end of his term in office... instigating attacks by Saudi Arabia and undermining the independence and integrity of the Republic of Yemen", the rebel-controlled Saba agency said. Six members of the Hadi government were also sentenced to death. Hadi, whose two-year term in office expired in February 2014, now lives in Saudi Arabia, although he also visits his government's temporary capital of Aden.

Iranian 'plot'

The president was placed under house arrest after the Houthis overran the capital in September 2014, and later fled to the southern port city of Aden. The Gulf coalition intervened with air strikes on March 26, 2015, after Houthis advanced on

other parts of the country including Aden. Hadi's forces have since gained ground in the south, but the Houthis still control the capital and strategic ports on the Red Sea coast.

The government-run Saba news agency on Sunday ran an editorial slamming the "rise of the Houthi militia" as an Iranian "plot" targeting Yemen and neighboring Saudi Arabia. On Saturday, Ali Abdullah Saleh denounced Riyadh's role in the conflict. "Free Yemenis will continue to choose resistance, as long as the coalition led by Saudi Arabia continues to choose war," Saba quoted Saleh as saying in a speech marking the anniversary. Rebel leader Abdul Malik Al-Houthi said the coalition had been "living under the illusion that they can take Yemen in a week or a month... but have sunk into the mud".

Possible 'war crime'

Home to one of Al-Qaeda's most dangerous branches, Yemen has a complex history of civil unrest. The rebels, who had long complained of marginalization, in 2011 mobilized protests demanding economic and political reform that led to Saleh's resignation the following year after decades in power. — AP



SANAA: Yemeni supporters of the Houthi movement and former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, attend rally to mark two years of the military intervention by the Saudi-led coalition. — AFP

FEW FOREIGNERS IN E GERMANY BUT XENOPHOBIA IS PREVALENT

FRANKFURT (ODER): A social worker in the drab eastern German city of Frankfurt an der Oder admits she feels isolated at work whenever talk turns to the country's record influx of refugees. "I have to say that my colleagues are not very friendly towards foreigners and I am almost alone in my opinion," Elisabeth, who gave just her first name, told AFP.

Foreigners are rarely seen in the former communist city about 100 kilometers east of Berlin, but as in much of eastern Germany, there is deep suspicion toward migrants. With its attacks on Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to let in around a million asylum seekers since 2015, the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party has found fertile ground in the east.

At the last state elections in 2014, before Germany's migrant crisis erupted, the AfD won 11 seats in the state assembly of Brandenburg, where Frankfurt an der Oder is located. Police commissioner Wilko Moeller, who leads the city's local chapter

of the AfD, noted that the region offers "great potential" for his protest party. In an illustration of how favorable the climate is for the AfD, its deputy chairman Alexander Gauland is running for a national seat in Frankfurt an der Oder in the September 24 general elections.

'Far too many migrants'

With its tall concrete residential blocks in the centre of town, Frankfurt an der Oder, at the border with Poland, has struggled to shed its ex-communist yoke. Like other parts of the eastern region, the city has been losing population. Once home to 87,000 inhabitants, a quarter-century later only 58,000 people are left as many have moved west in search of better opportunities.

The unemployment rate stands at 10 percent, far above the 5.9 percent rate nationwide. And even if foreigners make up just over one percent of the city's population, some 1,400 people-half of them

asylum seekers who arrived in 2015 — many locals still feel that's too many. A retiree, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: "I don't think refugees should have been allowed in like that. Even if we are a social country, we have our own problems. "I am not xenophobic, but that was far too many."

Her sentiment is mirrored across much of Germany's five states in the former communist east, where the number of jobless is higher than the western average and where few migrants are seen on the streets. Even in 2015 — when the mass migrant influx brought the total number of foreigners in Germany to 9.1 million-only 476,000 made their home in the east, according to official data.

'Structural racism'

Hajo Funke, a political scientist at Berlin's Free University, said eastern Germany suffers from a "structural" problem of racism. The former East Germany "was an authoritarian regime that was not

very open to diversity and which did not seek to integrate foreigners," he said. Following reunification in 1990, resentment also built up over the economic gap with western Germany as new prosperity failed to materialize quickly enough, he said.

Just two years later in 1992, race riots rocked the eastern coastal city of Rostock, with mobs flinging petrol bombs and stones at an apartment block housing migrants while thousands of bystanders applauded. More recently, the anti-Islam PEGIDA movement was born in the biggest city in the east, Dresden, and the proportion of assaults against shelters for asylum seekers has been far higher than in the west. The neo-Nazi party NPD also has some 264 elected municipal officials in the east, compared with 74 in the west. Funke noted that the Rostock riots became a template of violence for a generation that grew up during the turbulent reunification years, and became drawn to the extremist movement. — AFP



LILLE: French presidential election candidate for the far-right Front National (FN) party Marine Le Pen (C) acknowledges applause after she delivered a speech during a campaign rally at the Zenith venue. — AFP

NON MERCI: FRENCH VOTERS REJECT POLITICAL CORRUPTION ESTABLISHMENT SEEN AS INTENT ON ENRICHING ITSELF

PARIS: French voters just won't tolerate corruption in politics anymore - that appears to be the message from the swift downfall of the country's powerful security minister. It's a notable shift from the past, when influence peddling seemed endemic and politicians untouchable, even when they were accused of shocking scandals. The change is the result of an aggressive new financial prosecutor, an unprecedented anti-corruption drive by President Francois Hollande, and growing public frustration with a political establishment seen as intent on enriching itself even as ordinary people suffer.

Hollande on Thursday inaugurated the French anti-corruption agency, a public organization focusing on business activity - the latest move in government efforts to fight corruption. Five years ago, Hollande campaigned on the promise to make the French Republic "exemplary." He probably didn't think he would have so much clean up to do in his own camp. Former Interior Minister Bruno Le Roux on Tuesday became the fifth minister to quit the Socialist government over financial wrongdoing allegations. Prosecutors opened an investigation into a report that he hired his two daughters for some two dozen temporary parliamentary jobs, starting when they were 15 and 16 years old.

String of scandals

The case comes as France's electoral cam-

paign is being affected by a string of corruption scandals ahead of the country's two-round presidential election on April 23 and May 7. The conservative candidate Francois Fillon is the target an investigation into allegations that he gave his wife and two children government-funded jobs which they never did. Fillon suggested Thursday that Hollande would intervene in legal cases to try to discredit political rivals. Hollande vigorously denounced those allegations as false and insisted he has never intervened in any judicial procedure.

Fillon, once considered the presidential front-runner, has sunk in polls following the press' first revelations about the jobs in January. Since then, allegations have come out that Fillon was also given suits worth more than 48,000 euros (\$52,000) over the past five years - including two suits worth 13,000 euros (\$14,000) last month. Judges are also investigating whether Fillon and his wife committed fraud and forgery in a cover-up attempt.

His supporters insist the principle of presumption of innocence should protect their candidate. Far-right leader Marine Le Pen and some members of her anti-EU, anti-immigrant National Front party are also targeted in several ongoing investigations. Polls suggest that Le Pen and independent centrist Emmanuel Macron are the two top contenders in the election. The top two vote-getters on April 23 will

compete in a presidential runoff on May 7. For the first time in the country's history, the declarations of assets of all the presidential candidates were published this week on the High Authority for the transparency of public life's website. Hollande's term was tarnished from the start with scandals - the biggest one concerning former budget minister Jerome Cahuzac.

Cahuzac acknowledged owning illegal foreign bank accounts for two decades in March 2013, after denying and publicly lying for months. He was sentenced last year to three years in prison. He has appealed the decision. Cahuzac's case prompted the creation of the new position of a national financial prosecutor three years ago to focus on complex cases of serious economic and financial crime.

Conflict of interest

The government also passed a law in 2013 to force ministers and parliamentarians to declare their assets and avoid any conflict of interest. The same year, another bill tightened France's legal arsenal to fight tax fraud and evasion. In addition to Le Roux and Cahuzac, three lower-profile ministers were forced to quit Hollande's government in the same circumstances, including junior minister for foreign trade Thomas Thevenoud who resigned in 2014 because he was named in an inquiry into tax fraud. He goes on trial next month. — AP

AFTER NEO-NAZI YOUTH, SWEDEN TEACHES VALUE OF TOLERANCE

KRISTINEHAMN: Kimmie Ahlen was once seduced by the violent underpinnings of National Socialist ideology, but today, alarmed by the spread of populism, he has a new mission-teaching tolerance to young Swedes. With a blond buzz cut, piercing blue eyes and beefy shoulders chiseled in the gym and boxing ring, Ahlen makes an imposing impression. The young boy who was once teased by his classmates is long gone, transformed by muscles and tattoos on his fingers and neck.

At an age when most students were enjoying their first flirtations and struggling through book reports, he joined a gang of neo-Nazi skinheads immersed in Nordic mythology and Holocaust denial, convinced of the superiority of the "white race". Many of them were criminals and drug addicts. But that was then. Now 27, Ahlen spends his time warning teenage students in Sweden about the dangerous allure of hatred, in a country of 10 million that has taken in almost 300,000 migrants since 2014.

"The world is different today. Donald Trump is president of the United States and the Sweden Democrats may soon take power in our country," he said in an interview with AFP, referring to the country's far-right party. A municipal youth councilor, he lives alone in a red-and-white cabin on the shores of Lake Vanern, Sweden's biggest lake. Three hours southwest of Stockholm by car, it is an ideal spot for meditation and reflection.

As a shy boy, Ahlen was bullied at school by his classmates and even by some teachers. In his free time, he collected objects he found on the ground. One day, when he was 12, he stumbled across a CD by Ultima Thule, a Swedish white-power rock group popular among neo-Nazis. It was a revelation. "I loved the music," he said. "What really appealed to me was the way they spoke about Sweden. It made me patriotic, a National Socialist, without

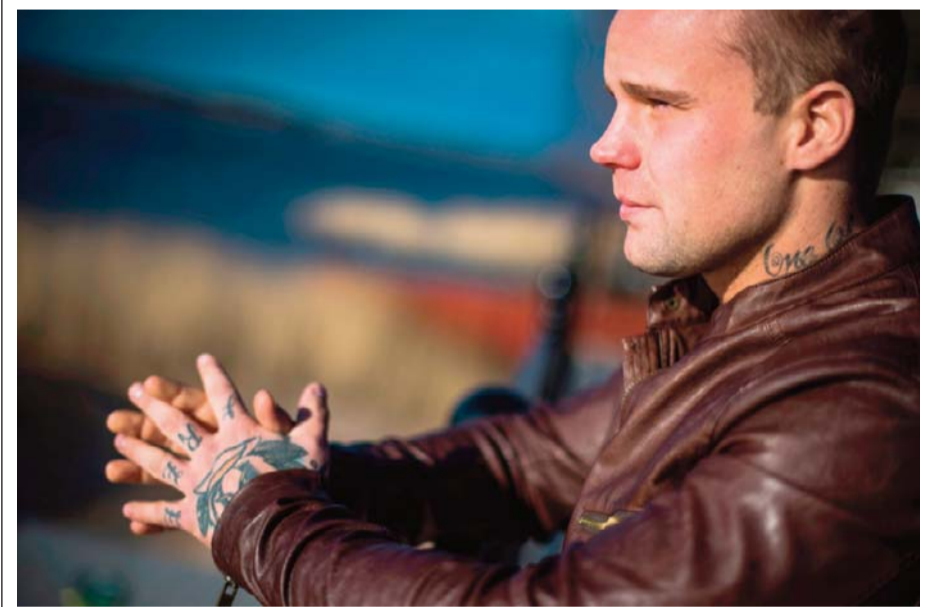
understanding the significance of nationalism at all." Soon afterward he joined the local gang of skinheads in Vallberg, in central Sweden. There was not a single foreigner among the town's 3,000 residents at the time, but unemployment, and hopelessness, were rampant.

'Gave me an identity'

His conversion began with his appearance: At 14, Ahlen donned the neo-Nazi uniform, suiting up in a bomber jacket and Doc Martens. "It gave me an identity, the feeling of being someone," he said. Between 2006 and 2008, he attended neo-Nazi demonstrations across Sweden. When he was not beating up left-wing activists, he was giving speeches: "I remember making up a story about immigrants who barbecued cats and ate them," he said.

He dropped out of high school, began experimenting with drugs, and repeatedly got arrested for crimes including theft and vandalism. And in the end, it was drugs that led almost surreptitiously his turnaround. "It was more fun to do drugs," he acknowledged. He gradually distanced himself from the skinhead crowd, but without abandoning his National Socialist convictions. Until one day, his boxing trainer forced him to spar with an Iranian-born partner.

"It was either that or not learn to box," Ahlen said. "It was around that time I stopped hating people because of their appearance." During a stint in jail for theft, he met a Swedish teacher who helped him to turn the page on racism for good; For the first time, Ahlen felt as though someone was really listening, and he started talking. But it was only during his last stay in jail, a time when his mother was gravely ill, that he decided to change. He got a job and quit hanging out with his friends to spend more time with his new colleagues and started writing poetry. — AFP



KRISTINEHAMN: Former neonazi and drug addict, 27 years-old Swedish Kimmie Ahlen, poses for a picture. — AFP

BULGARIAN LEFT SEEKS ELECTION COMEBACK

SOFIA: Bulgarian voters went to the polls Sunday after a tight election race pitting Socialists seen as closer to Russia against two-times centre-right premier Boyko Borisov, seeking another comeback. Opinion polls in the European Union's poorest country, where the average monthly salary is just 500 euros (\$540) and corruption is rife, also indicate a strong showing by nationalists.

The karate-kicking Borisov's enthusiastically pro-European Union GERB party and the Socialist Party (BSP), newly led by the energetic Kornelia Ninova, are both seen garnering around 30 percent. "I voted for a stable, predictable and united Bulgaria," Borisov said after casting his ballot, adding: "Bulgarians must decide today who is fit to lead this kind of politics so let them choose." Socialist chief Ninova denied that her party's perceived Russian sympathies would have any impact in power. "No foreign country, eastern or western, should be allowed to influence Bulgarian politics," she said.

In the ex-communist nation's third election in four years, many voters are turning away from the main parties towards groups on the fringes, or are not bothering to vote. "The big parties are totally disconnected from the reality of what is going on in Bulgaria and that is outright irresponsible," said IT worker

Alexander Naydenov, 35. "That is why I voted for one of the smaller parties with the hope that they can act as a balance to the big ones."

Borisov, 57, once a bodyguard for Bulgaria's last communist leader, has long been the dominant figure in national politics, serving as premier from 2009 to 2013 and again from 2014 to 2017. In between, the BSP was in power for barely a year. Both times Borisov quit early, first in 2013 after mass protests and then last November after his candidate for the presidency was beaten by an air force general backed by the BSP.

'Second-class member'

If Ninova can become premier this raises the prospect of NATO member Bulgaria, which has long walked a tightrope between East and West, drifting more towards Moscow. Ninova has said she is not content with Bulgaria being a "second-class member" of the EU and that she will veto an extension of EU sanctions on Russia. Russia, with which Bulgaria has long had close cultural and economic ties, has been accused of seeking to expand its influence in other Balkan countries in recent months. But Borisov has also said that he wants more "pragmatic" ties with Russia and Ninova, 48, insists that she remains committed to the EU. — AFP

GERMAN STATE VOTES IN TEST FOR MERKEL

BERLIN: German voters went to the polls Sunday in tiny Saarland state where a resurgent centre-left hopes to strike a first blow in their battle to topple Chancellor Angela Merkel this year. Although the state bordering France is home to just one million people, its vote half a year before national elections is seen as a test of the Social Democrats' rising fortunes under new leader Martin Schulz.

The SPD, having long played second fiddle to Merkel in a national right-left grand coalition, has been re-energized since the folksy and plain-spoken Schulz became its leader in January. The former president of the European Parliament has lifted party support by 10 percent with promises to help the socially disadvantaged and end Merkel's almost 12-year reign in September elections.

The "Schulz mania" has seen younger voters flock to the more than 150-year-old workers' party, which is now polling neck-and-neck with Merkel's conservative bloc-both nationally and in Saarland. The SPD is currently the CDU's unhappy junior partner in Saarland and in the national government-and in both cases hopes to grab power by teaming up with other leftist parties.

Even if the CDU comes out ahead in Saarland, the SPD could potentially seek a coalition with the far-left Linke and possibly the ecologist Greens parties — a so-called "red-red-green" alliance. The same trio is now running the city-state of Berlin, although policy hurdles remain at the national level, given that the Linke, for example, rejects German membership of NATO.

In Saarland, the latest poll for broadcaster ZDF gave the CDU a clear lead at 37 percent over the

SPD's 32 percent, with the SPD's potential ally the Linke scoring 12.5 percent. The incumbent is popular CDU premier Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, 54, often dubbed simply "AKK", who is considered pragmatic and unpretentious, dressing up as a cleaning lady at carnival festivities.

Change 'within reach'

While Merkel long seemed invincible at the ballot box, she has been weakened by a backlash against her decision to open German borders to refugees which has brought in a million asylum

seekers since 2015. This has boosted the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany party which, despite a recent dip in popularity, is still expected to enter the opposition benches of the 11th of Germany's 16 state assemblies on Sunday.

As the refugee crisis has abated, the campaign race is increasingly being fought along traditional ideological lines. While Merkel broadly argues that Germany, the EU's export engine, is prosperous and needs to stay competitive to keep it that way, Schulz points to the army of "working poor" and promises to narrow the wealth gap. — AFP



ROME: This handout picture released by the Italian Presidency (Quirinale) shows Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel arriving, on March 25, 2017 at the Quirinale presidential palace before a meeting with Italian President as part of a special summit of European leaders to mark the 60th anniversary of the bloc's founding treaties. — AFP

EXPLOSIONS KILL 6 AS BANGLADESH FORCES STORM ISLAMIST HIDEOUT

DHAKA: Two explosions ripped through a crowd Saturday, killing six people and injuring some 50 in Bangladesh's northeastern city of Sylhet as army commandos stormed an Islamist extremist hideout, police said. The "powerful" blasts went off some 400 yards from the hideout, targeting police and hundreds of onlookers who were watching the commandos conduct an anti-militant operation at a five-storey apartment building, police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet police Basudeb Banik told AFP "six people including two police officers were killed" in the attack, which was claimed by the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group via its propaganda agency Amaq. He said around 50 people were injured including

about a dozen police and security officers. Several people were reported to be in critical condition, including the head of intelligence of the elite Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), which is tasked with combating Islamist extremism in the country, he said.

Police primarily suspect the blasts were the work of a new faction of the homegrown extremist group, Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), which has been blamed for a wave of attacks in recent years. Police could not confirm if it was a suicide attack but believe one of the attackers could be among the dead. IS claimed via Amaq that there were "dozens killed and wounded among Bangladeshi forces as a result of the detonation of an explosive device", accord-

ing to US-based monitoring agency SITE Intelligence Group.

Banik rejected the claim, saying IS does not have any presence in the country. The blasts occurred after an hours-long exchange of gunfire and commandos rescued "78 civilian hostages" from the hideout where several Islamist militants were holed up in a ground-floor apartment. "Our main task was to rescue the hostages, which we have done successfully. We were able to rescue all 78 people safely," army spokesman Brigadier General Fakhurul Ahsan told reporters. He said the extremists were still inside the apartment building where they had barricaded themselves and laid explosive devices. "As a result the whole operation is being conducted carefully," he said.

30-hour standoff

The commandos backed by armored personnel carriers launched the operation after a more than 30-hour standoff that began early Friday morning when police sealed off the building as militants detonated small bombs. The spokesman could not say how many extremists were in the building, but police said there were at least two including a woman.

"They are Islamist extremists," police spokesman Musa said, adding they shouted "Allahu Akbar" (God is the greatest). Police used loudspeakers to ask the extremists to surrender, but they refused to give up, Musa said. The raid came after a series of suicide attacks on security camps by Islamist extremists this month

including one at a police checkpoint near the country's main international airport on Friday night.

Two of the three attacks, including Friday's blast in which the suicide attacker was killed, were claimed by the Islamic State group. This month a police elite unit also stormed a building outside the port city of Chittagong, killing four members of JMB, including a woman. IS has claimed responsibility for a wave of killings since 2015 including a major attack on a Dhaka cafe last year in which 22 people, including 18 foreign hostages, were killed. The Bangladeshi government denies IS has any presence in the country, arguing instead that a new faction of JMB was behind the attacks. —AFP

PAKISTAN TO BUILD FENCE ALONG DISPUTED BORDER

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan says it has started building a fence along the Afghan border in areas where it says militants have launched cross-border attacks, a move that could worsen tensions with Afghanistan, which has never accepted the colonial-era frontier. Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, the head of Pakistan's armed forces, announced the construction of fencing in "high threat zones" Saturday during a visit to tribal regions along the border, saying it was in the interest of both countries.

The two countries share a 2,400-kilometer internationally recognized border known as the Durand Line, which was drawn in the 19th century, when the British dominated South Asia. The Afghan government has never recognized the border, which runs through the Pashtun heartland, diluting the power of Afghanistan's largest ethnic group on both sides.

Najib Danish, the deputy spokesman for the Afghan Interior Ministry, said authorities had not yet seen any signs of construction along the frontier but would move to prevent any such project. "Building fences or any construction is not acceptable for us and we won't allow anyone to do it," he said. Pakistan and Afghanistan have long accused each other of turning a blind eye to Islamic militants operating along the porous frontier, and Pakistan recently closed the border for more than a month Bajwa said Pakistan is trying to develop a bilateral border security mechanism with Afghanistan.

terrorists who defame Islam and deliberately target innocent people will not escape justice," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said in a statement.

Yasin, who went by several aliases including Ustad Aslam, was accused of plotting the September 20, 2008 bombing on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad that killed dozens of people, including two US service members. He was also said to have been behind a 2009 attack on a bus carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore that killed six Pakistani police officers and two civilians, and wounded six members of the team.

According to official Pakistani 'Most Wanted' lists he was also behind failed attempts to kill former President Pervez Musharraf in 2003 and former Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in 2004. The Pentagon described him as being a native of Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan region, though Pakistani records said he hailed from the country's populous Punjab province. Security analyst Amir Rana said Yasin was the latest in a series of Pakistani militant fugitives to have been killed across the border in Afghanistan, including Qari Saifullah Akhtar, a former close associate of Mullah Omar, who died in a clash with Afghan security forces in January. "He was once a senior figure and one of the Pakistani Taliban's few non-Pashtun leaders," said Rana, but added that Yasin had fallen inactive in recent years after fleeing to Afghanistan.

Pakistan and Afghanistan have long accused each other of harboring militants who carry out attacks in each others' countries. Taliban fighters on Thursday captured Afghanistan's strategic southern district of Sangin, where US and British forces had suffered heavy casualties before it was handed over to Afghan personnel. The Taliban effectively control or contest 10 of 14 districts in Helmand, the deadliest province for British and US troops over the past decade, blighted by a huge opium harvest that helps fund the insurgency. — Agencies



HERAT: In this photograph taken on February 9, 2017, an Italian soldier from NATO's Resolute Support Mission (2L) trains Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers at the Kabul Military Training Centre on the outskirts of Herat. —AFP

NATO TROOPS RACE WINTER TO GIVE AFGHAN FORCES A MORALE BOOST

GIVING THEIR AFGHAN COUNTERPARTS A FIGHTING CHANCE

CAMP ARENA: The target is behind a slope, the advance is unprotected: Crawl, fire! Italian instructors in western Afghanistan have been using the relatively quiet winter to bolster Afghan troops against the Taliban. The war-torn country's security forces are being killed in horrific numbers as they grapple with a militant resurgence, raising questions about how much more they can endure. But under the banner of NATO's Resolute Support mission, Italian forces at Camp Arena in Herat province are racing the coming spring to give their Afghan counterparts a fighting chance.

The Taliban are the main enemy in Herat, which borders southern Helmand, apex of Afghanistan's opium production and most of which is controlled by insurgents. The strategic district of Sangin fell on March 23, another setback underscoring the militants' growing strength. Criminal gangs masterminding trafficking and smuggling operations to neighboring Iran are equally feared.

Confidence, says Camp Arena base commander General Claudio Minghetti, is key. "The main message to the soldiers is that they are in much better condition and better equipped than the enemy, which is of paramount importance for their morale." According to US watchdog SIGAR, casualties among Afghan security forces soared by 35 percent in 2016, with 6,800 soldiers and police killed.

Even the winter, when there is usually a lull in fighting, brought only a measured respite: according to the latest UN report released in early March, the number of clashes increased by a record 30 percent in January 2017 compared to 2016. One challenge is the shortcomings of the

military command. The 207th Brigade stationed in Herat was without a commander for almost two months, until General Ziarat Abed arrived in January after training in Rome and Paris.

General Abed "is on the ground with his men every day, it's new," confirms Colonel Tomaso Capasso, watching the training from the sidelines on Camp Arena's firing range. "This new generation is not like the previous generation, who spent their time in the office," he adds, watching the men crawl in line. "They know how to shoot but not fight together. We have to create a team spirit, we have a month to do it."

Bombs are 'easy'

Moral support and military counseling are what the Italians offered in Farah, one of the four western provinces assigned to them under Resolute Support, when its harassed governor called for help in tackling the insurgency. He wanted NATO to conduct a few strikes to drive the insurgents away, the colonel who led the operation told AFP. "It's easy, but it keeps them in a state of dependency," the colonel, who asked not to be named, said.

Instead, the governor got an Italian deployment of 120 men whose goal was to boost spirits within a week. "In Farah, we found demoralized troops, very young soldiers, ill-trained, ready to surrender," the Italian colonel said, pointing to the "lack of leadership even at the lower levels" of the Afghan army. Resolute Support spokesman General Charles Cleveland confirms that a broad movement is under way at all levels that will continue throughout 2017 to "replace the leaders, those who are corrupt and those who didn't properly deliver what was

expected last year. "It's going to take some time, institutional changes can't happen overnight," he said. For General Minghetti, the lightning Farah operation exemplifies Resolute Support's mandate of training, advising and assisting Afghan forces. "Just the fact that one is present at their side enabled the Afghans to regain control. With a few tips, they were able to show their abilities," he said.

Ominous spring

NATO withdrew its combat forces at the end of 2014, and under Resolute Support there are 11,000 troops including 8,400 Americans still in the country. Camp Arena hosts 900 Italian officers and soldiers, including a detachment of the prestigious Bersaglieri, the elite regiment whose helmets are adorned with moiré feathers, a 200-year-old tradition meant to provide shade.

US General John Nicholson, head of Resolute Support, warned last month that he would need "a few thousand" more troops to finally defeat the Taliban and the increasing threat posed by Islamic State. For Captain "Luca," who could not give his real name as he is part of the Italian special forces, the NDS (Afghanistan's intelligence agency, the National Directorate of Security) and police must be trained together.

After all, they often find themselves fighting side by side, as during an insurgent assault on a military hospital in Kabul on March 8. But time is short. The NDS is rarely available—"they are always mobilized," he says—and the weather is getting warmer, heralding the arrival of spring and Afghanistan's traditional fighting season. "As soon as the weather turns to beautiful, it is over," says Luca. "We will lose them." — AFP



In this June 15, 2016 file photo, a Pakistani army soldier stands guard in Pakistani tribal area of Khyber, near Torkham border post between Pakistan and Afghanistan. —AP

SPAIN'S SOCIALISTS KICK OFF LEADERSHIP BATTLE

MADRID: Deeply divided and weakened by the rise of far-left party Podemos, Spain's Socialists are gearing up for a leadership contest that will see ousted chief Pedro Sanchez attempt a comeback. The 45-year-old former economics professor will be up against two other prominent candidates in a contest that will prove decisive for the future of a party that has run out of steam, much like fellow socialists in France and Britain.

The battle begins in earnest yesterday when Susana Diaz, 42, the president of the southern region of Andalusia and one of Spain's most powerful female politicians, is due to announce she will run in May primaries. A long-time rival of Sanchez, who was ousted in October after a bitter internal rebellion, Diaz will launch her candidacy near Madrid with the backing and presence of two former Socialist prime ministers—Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and Felipe Gonzalez.

That same day, Patxi Lopez, the 57-year-old former president of the Basque Country and already a candidate, will meet with supporters in the northern region of Cantabria.

And Sanchez will head up a gathering in Valencia in the east, having already announced he will attempt a comeback. Much like Britain's Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn, who survived a leadership challenge last year but still faces internal dissent, Sanchez enjoys considerable support among grassroots Socialist activists. Diaz, though, is backed by many high-ranking party members.

'Start to win again'

The primaries due in May at an as-yet unannounced date will see some 180,000 activists vote for their preferred candidate—a choice



MADRID: President of the Regional Government of Andalusia and PSOE member, Susana Diaz gestures during an event to announce her candidacy for the general Secretary of the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Party), initiating her campaign for the party primaries. — AFP

that will determine the future direction of the party. Plagued by bad results in general and regional elections in 2015 and 2016, and challenged from the far-left by Podemos, the Socialist party is struggling to rise again and impose itself.

Podemos, led by the charismatic Pablo Iglesias, has become Spain's third most powerful political force and threatens to overtake the Socialists as the main opposition grouping. "The Socialist party must stop battling to avoid being relegated to third place, it must (instead) start to win again," Socialist lawmaker Eduardo Madina summed up last week.

But how?

Sanchez has been a staunch opponent of Spain's conservative Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and maintains that the party must continue in this vein to have any hope of winning back voters. Rajoy must know that there "will be no Socialist votes for right-wing policies," he has said, deeply critical of corruption scandals impacting the conservatives and of their severe austerity measures. — AFP

VIETNAMESE DETAINEE DIES IN JAPAN'S IMMIGRATION CENTRE

TOKYO: A Vietnamese man held in a Japanese immigration detention centre died on Saturday, six people told Reuters, drawing fresh attention to conditions in the country's detention system. The man died at the East Japan Immigration Center in Ibaraki prefecture, northeast of Tokyo, according to activists, a lawyer and a detainee held at the facility. Two men died at the same facility in 2014.

The deceased man was named Van Huan Nguyen and was one of more than 11,000 refugees that the country took in over the three decades to 2005 in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, according to two of the sources. It was not clear for how long he had been detained or why. Nguyen did not have relatives in Japan but had many friends, said one of the sources who had known him.

"He was a bright, fun person," she said. "I can't believe he died." The Sankei daily reported that the East Japan Immigration Center said a guard had found a Vietnamese man in his forties lying unconscious in his cell alone early

on Saturday. The guard called an ambulance and the detainee was sent to hospital, where his death was confirmed about an hour and a half later, the Sankei said, citing the centre.

The authorities would conduct an autopsy and investigate the cause of death, the Sankei said. The East Japan Immigration Center and the justice ministry, which oversees immigration facilities, could not be reached for comment yesterday. Reuters was not able to independently verify the death or the identity of the deceased. A Reuters investigation last year into the death of a Sri Lankan at a different facility in Tokyo revealed serious deficiencies in medical care and monitoring in the immigration detention system.

Since 2006, at least dozen people have died while in immigration detention, including four cases of suicide. Some detainees are held for months and even years with no clear knowledge of when they will be let out. Many develop depression and insomnia, detainees and psychiatrists have told Reuters. — Reuters

CHINESE PREMIER LI KEQIANG TALKS ABOUT THE ECONOMY, ASIA-PACIFIC AND TAIWAN

Q: China's economic growth has been declining in recent years and we have seen that the projected target of GDP growth in 2017 has been trimmed to about 6.5%. Will this adversely affect the global economy?

Premier Li: I read some foreign media commentary describing the projected GDP growth target of about 6.5% this year as moderate downward adjustment. In fact, 6.5% growth is not a low speed and it would not be easy to meet this target. I can't help but recall a martial art performance I saw at Shaolin Temple, during which a child monk can do over a dozen somersaults at one go quite easily, but several such consecutive somersaults for an adult monk would be quite an accomplishment due to their different size. 6.5% of GDP growth in 2017, if achieved, would generate more additional economic output than last year, as this is a growth attained on the basis of RMB 74 trillion yuan, or US\$11 trillion in GDP. And this growth is projected to generate over 11 million new urban jobs. The measures we take

are consistent with the laws of economics, and moreover, slower growth can help us better focus on enhancing the quality and performance of China's economy.

With respect to risks, we are seeing growing uncertainties in the international economic and political landscape. These are the risks on the external front. As for China, stalled development presents the biggest risk. So it is essential that we maintain steady, medium-high growth and that, in itself, is China's contribution to global stability. We take very seriously the risks we face on the domestic front, including the financial sector. We will take prompt and targeted measures to prevent them from spreading.

I should point out that China's financial system is generally secure and we do not foresee systemic risks. We still have a good reserve of policy options and instruments at our disposal. As the express train of China's economy continues to roll along at medium-high speed, we need to fasten our seat belt and ward off acute outbreaks of risks. Still

less will we allow regional or systemic risks to break out.

Q: Can you explain the steps you are taking to convince the world that China is committed to free trade and an open economy?

Premier Li: Although globalization has encountered some bumps in the road, China has consistently upheld economic globalization and free trade. I believe such a position in itself is a good indication of China's commitment to opening-up. It is fair to say that economic globalization has benefited countries across the world. Some problems may have occurred in this process, for example, with respect to distribution of benefits. But we don't think they are the result of globalization per se but more of an issue of how one responds to it. China is ready to work with other countries to further improve the global governance system. We also believe that economic globalization has been deeply embedded in the global trend of peace, development and cooperation. A closed-

door policy or beggar-thy-neighbor approach leads to no solutions.

Like many countries in the world, China has benefited from economic globalization as it has been opening up ever wider to the outside world. China needs to first run its own things well. But the truth is, this cannot be done with our doors shut. Hence we will only pursue greater openness. Naturally opening-up is a gradual process. The important thing is that we have kept moving forward for the past decades.

Last year, China was still the largest recipient of FDI among developing countries and FDI reached US\$126 billion. In the World Bank's ease of doing business ranking, China moved up 18 spots in 2016 compared with where it was in 2013. We have launched 11 pilot free trade zones starting from Shanghai, and good experience gained from them will be applied across the country. This year we will hold the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation and more steps for opening-up will be introduced. We have pro-

posed to many countries the building of free trade zones or the negotiating of investment and trade agreements. These will all contribute to two-way opening-up.

As for liberalization of global trade, we believe all countries need to work together to push it forward. The world belongs to us all and we all need to do our part to make things better. We are open-minded toward the various regional trading arrangements, established or proposed, and welcome progress in them. When they concern China and where conditions are in place, we would follow an open-minded approach and we would be ready to work with others to push them forward. But China has no intention to reach beyond its role or get involved where we shouldn't. China will participate in and support all initiatives that will promote the liberalization of global trade. We the Chinese understand that the opportunities of economic globalization must be seized through opening-up. They should not be missed no matter what challenges we may face.



HONG KONG: Former Hong Kong Chief Secretary Carrie Lam, center, waves after she declares her victory in the chief executive election of Hong Kong while former Financial Secretary John Tsang, left, and retired judge Woo Kwok-hing stand with her. — AP

CHINA'S FAVORITE LAM WINS HK LEADERSHIP, VOWS TO HEAL RIFTS

VOTE DISMISSED AS A SHAM BY DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's new leader Carrie Lam pledged yesterday to mend political rifts after winning a vote dismissed as a sham by democracy activists who fear the loss of the city's cherished freedoms. The former career civil servant was chosen as next chief executive of the semi-autonomous city by a mainly pro-China committee. She was widely seen as Beijing's favorite candidate.

Her main rival, ex-finance chief John Tsang who was perceived as a more moderate pro-establishment figure, had a clear lead in opinion polls but trailed in the result. It was the first leadership vote since mass "Umbrella Movement" rallies in 2014 calling for fully free elections failed to secure reforms. Pro-democracy activists said none of the candidates truly represented Hong Kong and rejected the vote outright. Hong Kong was handed back to China by colonial ruler Britain in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" formula designed to protect its freedoms and way of life. But 20 years on, there are serious concerns Beijing is undermining the agreement.

Critics say Lam will deepen divisions but she insisted she wants to unify politically polarized Hong Kong. "My priority will be to heal the divide," she said. Lam pledged to uphold Hong Kong's autonomy and protect its core values, including freedom of expression and an independent judiciary. Asked how she would address concerns Beijing is tightening its grip, she said there was "no difference" between the Hong Kong government and Chinese authorities' views

on safeguarding the city's status and liberties. Beijing's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office welcomed Lam's win in a statement which said she "was trusted by the central government".

Frustrated activists

Lam is intensely disliked by the pro-democracy camp after promoting the Beijing-backed political reform package that sparked the protests of 2014. It would have allowed the public to vote for the city's leader in 2017, but would have insisted candidates were vetted first.

Despite huge numbers the rallies failed to win concessions and the package was voted down in the legislature by pro-democracy lawmakers in 2015. Political reform has been shelved ever since. Critics also see Lam as loyal to current unpopular chief executive Leung Chun-ying, viewed by opponents as a Beijing puppet. He will step down in July after five years in charge. Lam, 59, who will be the city's first woman leader, was formerly his deputy.

She won comprehensively with 777 votes against 365 for Tsang. The third and most liberal candidate, retired judge Woo Kwok-hing, received just 21 votes. Around three quarters of the 1,194 members of the election committee were from the pro-China camp. Tsang likened his defeat to waking up from a dream, but said there was no evidence Beijing had influenced the result. Since the failure of the 2014 protests, some activists have called for self-determination for Hong Kong or even independence. But the

pro-democracy movement as a whole has splintered and lost momentum. Political party Demosisto, led by high-profile activist Joshua Wong and young legislator Nathan Law, called yesterday's result "a nightmare to Hongkongers". They said they would plan large-scale civil disobedience to coincide with Lam's inauguration on July 1, when China's President Xi Jinping is expected to visit for the 20th anniversary of the handover. Pro-China and democracy protesters faced off outside the voting venue, with some activists later throwing toilet paper over the walls of China's liaison office.

Uphill struggle

Analysts said Lam's definitive win showed public opinion was not a major factor for Beijing. "Loyalty trumps everything else," said Willy Lam, of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He said the new government and Beijing would want to steer clear of the "hot potato" of political reform for fear of igniting further conflict. Lam has said she wants to focus instead on social issues, including housing. But she will face an uphill struggle to unite a city in which young people in particular have lost faith in the political system and their own prospects. With salaries too low to meet the cost of property in an overpriced market fuelled by mainland money, getting ahead in life is increasingly difficult. Concerns of Beijing's interference have been heightened by the disappearance in 2015 of five Hong Kong booksellers, who resurfaced in detention on the mainland. — AFP

CHINA'S PREMIER LI ARRIVES IN NEW ZEALAND FOR TALKS

WELLINGTON: China's premier has arrived in New Zealand for high-level talks at a time that both countries are pushing to expand free trade. Premier Li Keqiang arrived at Wellington Airport yesterday, where he was greeted at the military terminal by New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English. The premier stepped off his plane, gave a quick wave toward media and then stepped into a waiting car. His motorcade left for Premier House where he was attending a dinner.

As the motorcade left the air-

port, the premier was greeted by Chinese well-wishers wearing red shirts and holding banners and the flags of both China and New Zealand. Unlike on some previous visits by Chinese leaders, there weren't any visible protesters. Li plans to be in the country until Wednesday. As well as a bilateral meeting with English, the premier is planning to visit a factory and a view a photography exhibition. The premier traveled to New Zealand after visiting Australia, where he warned against protectionism and said China wanted to

expand its trading relationship. New Zealand has also been pushing to expand free trade. Last week English announced a goal to have free trade agreements cover 90 percent of exports by 2030, up from just over 50 percent at the moment. As part of that plan, New Zealand will spend tens of millions of dollars opening a new embassy in Ireland, a new high commission in Sri Lanka, and targeting barriers it considers are holding back trade.

The approach from China and New Zealand stands in contrast

to that of the U.S., where President Donald Trump has pulled out of a planned Pacific free-trade agreement and has expressed skepticism about other such agreements. China and Australia represent New Zealand's largest export markets. China buys huge quantities of milk powder from New Zealand, which is used in high-end infant formula. China and New Zealand signed a free-trade agreement in 2008. English said recently the agreement is working well but needs some fine-tuning. — AP

SEX IN THAI CITY FRUSTRATES JUNTA

PATTAYA: With mascots dressed as smiling fish and a police rock band, Thai authorities launched a "Happy Zone" at the weekend to improve the image of a city notorious for sex tourism. Stung by foreign headlines portraying the seaside resort of Pattaya as "Sin City" and "The World's Sex Capital", Thailand's junta has begun a new effort to re-brand it. But the contradictions in Pattaya highlight Thailand's challenge in tackling a side of its tourist industry that remains economically vital while being officially excoriated.

"I want people to see that we are not like what they say. We are not allowing prostitution in these entertainment places," provincial governor Pakkaratorn Teianchai told reporters on the infamous Walking Street in Pattaya, southeast of Bangkok. Less than 10 meters away, women accosted foreign men to offer sex for 2,000 baht (\$60). Others lined up with numbers so customers could take their pick. Masseuses in miniskirts offered "happy ending" massages whose euphemistic title has nothing to do with the Happy Zone of the authorities.

"Everyone is here to make a living," said one 35-year-old woman who came originally from a village in central Thailand. Tagged with the number "136", she declined to give her name. "I would rather be a waitress, but then I couldn't send my children to school and I want them to have a better future than this," she said. In fact, sex tourism is not growing as fast as other aspects of Thailand's tourist industry - the only bright spot for an economy whose expansion has been by far the slowest among major Southeast Asian economies since the 2014 coup.

No official figures show its scale. But there is an indication in the balance of male to female visitors. In 2012, there were nearly 6 men for every 4 women. In 2015, the numbers were pretty much even, according to figures provided to Reuters by the tourism ministry. Sex tourism began in Pattaya when it became an R&R spot for U.S. soldiers during the Vietnam War, though prostitution is just as evident in parts of Bangkok and other resorts. The

number of female sex workers in Thailand was put at over 120,000 in a 2014 UNAIDS report. Some estimates run to double that and not all the women who get paid for sex are full-time prostitutes. Given a 305 baht (\$8.80) a day minimum wage, the chance of earning several times more is an obvious lure, particularly in poorer rural regions.

Crackdown

The latest of many crackdowns in Pattaya happened after foreign newspaper reports last month, which drew an angry response from junta leader Prayuth Chan-ocha, for whom bringing order is a mantra. A handful of bars were raided. Bar owners and working women were fined. Scared to venture out, tourists looking for sex stayed in hotels. Street vendors and shops saw sales tumble. The money which flows to all levels in the city - including law enforcement agencies - fell off.

The Happy Zone approach is a softer way to try to show that something is being done. If it works on Walking Street, the idea will be spread to the less sanitized side streets - the sois. Businesses in the Happy Zone are asked to make the area feel safer, there are increased security patrols, police launched a mobile phone app for visitors to summon them in emergency. "This is a pioneer project to organise a tourist destination and elevate it to promote Thailand's quality tourism," Apichai Krobpetch, chief of Pattaya city police, told Reuters. "We will also stamp out prostitution in the area."

There was no sign of that at the weekend. In fact, Pattaya's sex industry has become an attraction in its own right for the millions of Chinese who make up about one in three visitors to Thailand. Led by guides with pennants, the Chinese tour groups thread quickly along Walking Street, past the go-go bars and the beer bars where young Thai women sit down with foreign men. They only pause to take pictures. "We just came here to see. That's all," laughed twentysomething saleswoman Linda Sieng in a group of 11 tourists from Guagzhou in southern China. — Reuters

HOLLANDE SEEKS BETTER TIES WITH ASIA IN THE FACE OF 'ISOLATIONISM'

SINGAPORE: French President Francois Hollande called yesterday for efforts to intensify the relationship between Europe and Asia in the face of resurgent "isolationism". He was speaking in Singapore, the first stage of the last international tour of his five-year term which will also take him to Malaysia and Indonesia.

"I appeal for us to intensify our exchanges, our trade, political and cultural agreements," he said. "This is all the more necessary because there is a resurgence of protectionism, isolationism and the questioning of... international institutions," he said in a clear allusion to the United States under President Donald Trump.

Europe, Hollande said, must tell Asia that "we have much to do together, much to defend and much to promote". France and Asia, he insisted, share "the same concept of independence and security". Hollande cited the "very high level" of military cooperation between Paris and Singapore, such as the training of Singaporean fighter pilots in France

and joint work on cyber-security. He was speaking at the Asia-Pacific campus in Singapore of France's ESSEC business school after meeting French students, teachers and business leaders during a visit focused largely on economic issues. Hollande was to hold talks later Sunday with his Singapore counterpart Tony Tan Keng Yam. Today, he will open a forum grouping 170 French start-ups which have a presence in Singapore and make a speech on the regional and international situation to the prestigious Singapore Conference.

Tomorrow he travels to Malaysia, which has a continuing relationship with France in defense matters. Hollande's tour ends Wednesday in Indonesia, where he will make the first visit by a French head of state since Francois Mitterrand in 1986. Barring any surprise developments the French president has only one other major commitment abroad before his term ends in mid-May: the post-Brexit European summit on April 29 in Brussels. — AFP



SINGAPORE: French President Francois Hollande (C) reviews a guard of honor during a welcoming ceremony at the Istana presidential palace. — AFP

OIL PRODUCERS LOOK INTO ROLLOVER...

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adding that he hoped a decision would come by the end of April. The oil ministerial committee "expressed its satisfaction with the progress made towards full conformity with the voluntary production adjustments and encouraged all participating countries to press on towards 100 percent conformity," the statement said.

The December accord, aimed at supporting the oil market, has lifted crude to more than \$50 a barrel. But the price gain has encouraged US shale oil producers, which are not part of the pact, to boost output. The committee said it took note that certain factors, such as low seasonal demand, refinery maintenance and rising non-OPEC supply had led to an increase in crude oil stocks. It also observed the liquidation of positions by financial players.

"However, the end of the refinery maintenance season and noticeable slowdown in US stock build as well as the reduction in floating storage will support the positive efforts undertaken to achieve stability in the market," it said. It asked the OPEC Secretariat to review oil market conditions and come back with recommendations in April regarding an extension of the agreement. "This reaffirms the commitment of OPEC and participating non-OPEC countries to continue to cooperate," the statement said.

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said it was too early to say whether there would be an extension, although the agreement was working well and all countries were committed to 100 percent compliance. Olivier Jakob, of oil consultancy Petromatrix, said that with the revision of the ministerial committee's statement, it was becoming more difficult to know who was responsible for what in OPEC. "That is not the best option to provide clarity to the oil markets," Jakob said. Ellen Wald, a consultant on the global energy industry, said: "I think the market will react negatively to the lack of a clear direction on a rollover for the deal."

Before the meeting, Iraqi Oil Minister Jabar Ali Al-Luaibi told reporters there were some encouraging elements that suggested the oil market was improving, and that if all OPEC members agreed measures to help price stability, Iraq would support such steps. "Any decisions taken unanimously by members of OPEC ... Iraq will be part of the decision and will not be deviating from this," Luaibi said. Iraq's oil production is running at 4.312 million bpd this month, Luaibi said, adding that his country had cut its oil exports by 187,000 bpd so far and would reach 210,000 bpd in a few days.

Compliance with the supply-cut deal was 94 percent in February among OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers combined, Russia's Novak said. Russia is committed to cuts of 300,000 bpd by the end of April, Novak said. Novak said he expects global oil stock-

piles to decrease in the second quarter of this year. "The dynamics are positive here, I believe," Novak said, adding that inventories in the United States and other industrialized countries had risen by less than in the past.

Kuwait's oil minister said the market may return to balance by the third quarter of this year if producers comply fully with their production targets. But the minister also warned that crude oil stocks remained high and price volatility was on the rise. "More has to be done. We need to see conformity across the board. We assured ourselves and the world that we would reach our adjustment to 100 percent conformity," Marzouq said.

Marzouq, who heads the joint committee, told a press conference that OPEC compliance had reached 106 percent, while non-OPEC compliance rates remained around 65 percent. The meeting was attended by the oil ministers of Oman, Iraq, UAE, Venezuela and Russia. Bloomberg News reported that Venezuela, Oman and Iraq voiced support in Kuwait for a rollover of the cuts beyond June.

After the output cuts went into effect in January, oil prices rose to above \$55 a barrel before shedding some of the gains due to fears from high inventory levels. But OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo said he expected most of the glut to disappear in three months. "We still believe that the full and timely implementation of the decisions taken last year will see destocking accelerate by the end of the first half of 2017," Barkindo said in his speech. OPEC and non-OPEC producers who signed up to the cuts are scheduled to hold a crucial meeting in late May to consider whether to extend the reductions.

Meanwhile, two oilfields run jointly by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will resume operations within two months after a years-long shutdown spurred by a row between the producers, Marzouq said yesterday. "We will resume operations soon," he told the press conference. "We hope to resume within a couple of months." Marzouq said it would take longer for production at the two fields, located in a neutral zone between the two neighbors and shared equally, to resume because of technical issues.

Marzouq, who said he had been in contact with his Saudi counterpart Khaled Al-Faleh, said technical teams would oversee the issues that initially led to the shutdown more than two years ago. The offshore field at Khafji pumped 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) before production halted in Oct 2014. The onshore field at Wafra, which produced 200,000 bpd, shut down a few months later. Saudi Arabia cited environmental concerns for the shutdown, but industry sources cited a dispute between the two countries. Kuwaiti authorities were unhappy about not being consulted about Riyadh's 2009 decision to renew Saudi Arabian Chevron's operating license for 30 years, industry sources said at the time. — Agencies

IRAN TO SANCTION 15 US FIRMS FOR ISRAEL LINKS

TEHRAN: Iran said yesterday it will impose sanctions on 15 US companies for supporting Israel's "terrorist actions" as part of reprisals for the increasing pressure being announced by Washington lawmakers. The decision, which is largely symbolic since the firms do not do business with Iran, come two days after the US announced new sanctions against groups and individuals that it accuses of collaborating with Iran's weapons program.

The sanctions target firms that provide arms and equipment to Israel "for use against the Palestinians", IRNA said. "All transactions with these firms are forbidden, their assets will be seized and their officials will not be able to obtain a visa," it added. The list included defense firms such as United Technologies, Military Armament

Corporation and Bushmaster Firearms International, as well as Re/Max Real Estate, which Tehran accuses of "buying and selling homes in settlements located in the occupied territories".

In another tit-for-tat move, Iran's parliamentary foreign affairs committee said it would propose a new law labeling the US army and CIA as terrorist groups. The announcement was a response to a new bill put forward by US lawmakers that would see Iran's Revolutionary Guards listed as a terrorist organization. "The American army is present in numerous regional crises such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen and provides vast support to terrorist groups," said Alaeddin Boroujerdi, president of the committee, according to a state television report. — AFP

SUDAN, SAUDIS TO HOLD FIRST JOINT AIR FORCE DRILL

KHARTOUM: Sudan said yesterday it will begin this week a joint air force drill with Saudi Arabia, the first such maneuvers since Khartoum allied with Riyadh after breaking ties with Tehran in 2015. The exercises will be held from March 29 until April 12 in Meroe, north of Khartoum, and will involve hundreds of air force personnel from both countries.

For years, the Islamist regime in Khartoum maintained close relations with Iran, but as sectarian divisions in the region were sharpened by the conflict in Syria, Khartoum allied with Riyadh. In 2015 it announced it would take part in a Saudi-led military intervention in nearby Yemen against Iran-backed rebels. The air drills are aimed at improving the operational capacities of the two air forces, improving techniques related to air operations and promoting coopera-

tion, a senior Sudanese air force officer told reporters.

"The plan to hold these exercises was proposed by our brothers in Saudi Arabia," said Salaheddin Abdul Khalid, acting chief of staff of Sudanese air force. "We have been planning this exercise for nearly a year." Sudan will participate in the maneuvers with more than two dozen fighter planes including MiG-29s and Sukhoi jets, he said. Saudi Arabia will have F-15s and Eurofighter Typhoons taking part. A group of Saudi fighter pilots will also stage an air show in Khartoum between April 10 and 12.

Ties between Khartoum and Riyadh have strengthened after Sudan joined the Saudi-led Arab coalition in Yemen that is fighting the Iran-backed Houthi rebels. "Saudi Arabia is now familiar with our skills and I am myself fighting in Yemen," said Abdul Khalid. — AFP

NOD TO REDUCING DETENTION PERIOD

Continued from Page 1

The legal and legislative panel had approved the draft law and sent it to the foreign relations panel, which is the concerned committee.

The government told the panel's MPs that under the law, all foreign aid must be prescribed in the state budget, which is approved by the Assembly. It added that the government is not permitted to provide any additional aid without the prior approval of the Assembly through a law. As a result, the foreign relations committee said the proposed law is not required and rejected it.

Meanwhile, the Assembly's interior and defense committee requested the Assembly for a fresh two-week period to complete an amendment to the election law that bars convicts from running for Assembly seats.

The amendment was passed in the previous Assembly to deprive those convicted of blasphemy or insulting HH the Amir from the right to contest Assembly elections. Opposition candidates made scrapping this law one of their priority issues. They have submitted key amendments to the law.

The criminal court yesterday issued a fresh three-year term against former MP Abdulhameed Dashti for insulting Saudi Arabia, raising to 46 years the jail terms passed against Dashti for insulting Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and HH the Amir. Dashti has been living outside the country for over a year. He acknowledged the new sentence on his Twitter account and strongly criticized the democratic system in Kuwait. Most of the sentences had not been heard in the appeals court because Dashti is outside Kuwait and his appeals can be tackled only when he returns.

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Washington Watch

ELEVATING
PALESTINIANS

By Dr James J Zogby

It was 40 years ago that I co-founded the Palestine Human Rights Campaign (PHRC) and wrote "Palestinians, the Invisible Victims". I was concerned that in the American mind the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had been reduced to a simple equation: Israeli humanity versus the Palestinian problem. When most Americans thought of the conflict they were able to imagine Israelis as people just like us. They were parents who loved their families. They wanted what we wanted - peace, prosperity, and a chance to watch their children grow and realize their dreams. They had names and faces. They experienced pain and loss. They were real.

Palestinians, on the other hand, were, at best, presented as an abstraction. They were objectified into a faceless mass, without names or personalities. When spoken of at all, they were refugees or terrorists or, after a conflict, mere numbers in a body count. We did not know them as individual people and what we did know was cast in negative stereotypes. The only emotions we ascribed to them were that they were angry and violent and not to be trusted. They were not people to be supported, but a problem to be solved.

It was through this lens that most Americans, both policy makers and the public, at large, viewed the conflict. When given the choice between a people or a problem, it was an easy call to support the Israeli people. This framing of the issue was not by accident. Rather it was the result of a systematic campaign to dehumanize the one side while humanizing the other. It was best captured by the 1960's propaganda film "The Exodus" which transposed the then popular American narrative of pioneers confronting the Indians onto the story of "courageous Israelis" fighting the savage "Arab natives".

During the following decades, this framing of the conflict continued. In 1981, I reported on TV news coverage of a cross border confrontation between Israel and the PLO in Lebanon. On the first day, two Israelis were killed. TV cameras were there interviewing weeping family members, telling their story of fear and pain. The next day Israeli jets bombed the Fakhani neighborhood in West Beirut killing over 383 Lebanese and Palestinian civilians. That night, the TV cameras were again in Northern Israel with more follow up interviews. There was no coverage from Lebanon, just reports of an Arab body count. When the TV coverage did occur a day later, the reporter stood at the end of a bombed out street showing massive destruction. No one was interviewed, no personal stories were told. In Israel the story was the people, in Lebanon it was the buildings and a body count.

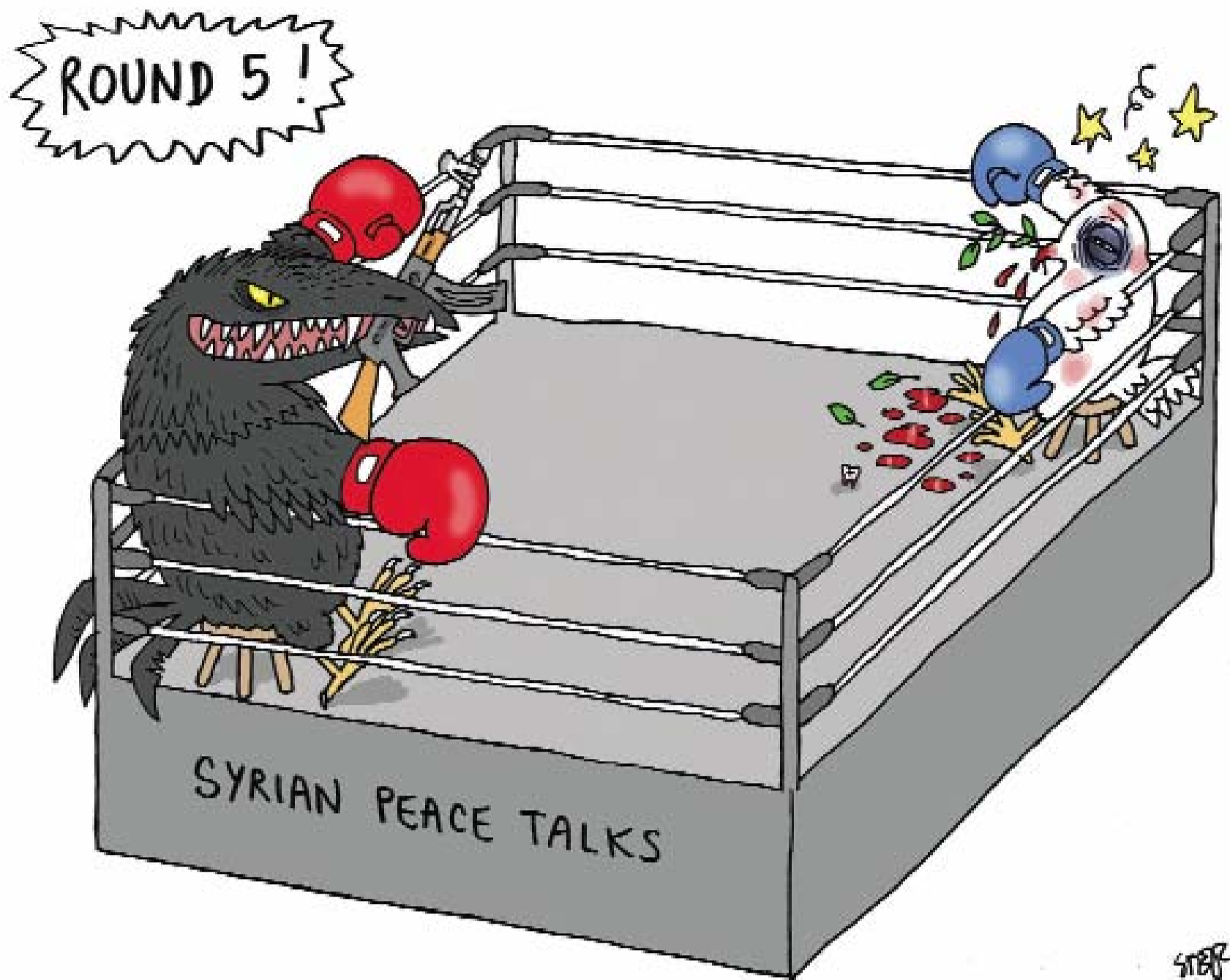
In 1994 when Baruch Goldstein, a young American-Israeli terrorist massacred 29 Muslim worshippers in a Hebron mosque, the Washington Post did a major feature piece trying to understand what happened to turn the young man to violence. The faces, names, and ages of the Palestinian victims never made it into print. Goldstein was the story; his victims were invisible. A few years later a 3-month Israeli baby was murdered by a Palestinian sniper. The story was front page news for three days with pictures and interviews with the weeping parents. When, just days later, a 3-day old Palestinian baby was murdered by an Israeli sniper - no major paper picked up the story. It was only reported on the seventh line of a short AP story. No name was given and the parents were not interviewed. It was as if their child and their pain did not matter.

Invisibility

Palestinian invisibility and/or objectification continues to define the conflict today. Even the most progressive voices in Congress don't speak about Palestinians. Instead they advocate for a "two state solution" to preserve Israel as a Jewish democratic state. A liberal pro-Israel group periodically puts full page ads in the New York Times and the Washington Post calling for two states, making the obscene argument of the demographic threat to the Israel's Jewishness posed by the Palestinian birthrate.

Unfortunately, oftentimes progressives unconsciously contribute to this by failing to elevate Palestinian humanity. Their efforts focus on condemning Israeli policies (which, no doubt, deserve condemnation), calling for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against the State of Israel. While I support BDS, I fear that at times the case for BDS is made without telling the personal stories of Palestinian victims of occupation. Instead of elevating Palestinians, punishing Israel becomes the goal.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute



HOW REPUBLICANS CAN HOBBLE OBAMACARE

Republicans may have failed to overthrow Obamacare this week, but there are plenty of ways they can chip away at it. The Trump administration has already begun using its regulatory authority to water down less prominent aspects of the 2010 healthcare law. Earlier this week, newly confirmed Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price stalled the rollout of mandatory Medicare payment reform programs for heart attack treatment, bypass surgery and joint replacements finalized by the Obama administration in December.

The delays offer a glimpse at how President Donald Trump can use his administrative power to undercut aspects of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), including the insurance exchanges and Medicaid expansion that Republicans had sought to overturn. The Republicans' failure to repeal Obamacare, at least for now, means it remains federal law. Price's power resides in how to interpret that law, and which programs to emphasize and fund. Hospitals and physician groups have been counting on support from Medicare - the federal insurance program for the elderly and disabled - to continue driving payment reform policies built into Obamacare that reward doctors and hospitals for providing high quality care at a lower cost.

The Obama Administration had committed to shifting half of all Medicare payments to these alternative payment models by 2018. Although he has voiced general support for innovative payment programs, Price has been a loud critic of mandatory federal programs that dictate how doctors should deliver healthcare. Providers such as Dr Richard Gillilan, chief executive of Trinity Healthcare, a \$15.9 billion Catholic health system, say they will press on with these alternative payment plans with or without the government's blessing. But they have been actively lobbying Trump officials for support, according to interviews with more than a dozen hospital executives, physicians and policy experts.

Without the backing of Medicare, the biggest payer in the US healthcare system which Price now oversees, the nascent payment reform movement could lose momentum, sidelining a transformation many experts believe is vital to reining in runaway US healthcare spending. Price "can't change the legislation, but of course he's supposed to implement it. He could impact it," said John Rother, chief executive of the National Coalition on Health Care, a broad alliance of healthcare stakeholders that has been lobbying the new administration for support of value-based care.

The move Friday to pull the Republican bill only reinforces the risk to the existing law, which Trump said on Friday "will soon explode". "It seems that the Trump Administration now faces a choice whether to actively

undermine the ACA or reshape it administratively," Larry Levitt, senior vice president at Kaiser Family Foundation, wrote on Twitter. "The ACA marketplaces weren't collapsing, but they could be made to collapse through administrative actions," he added.

New Payment Plans at Risk

The United States spends \$3 trillion a year on healthcare - more by far than 10 other wealthy countries - yet has the lowest life expectancy and the highest infant mortality rate, according to a 2013 Commonwealth Fund report. Health costs have soared thanks in part to the traditional way doctors and hospitals get paid, namely by receiving a fee for

each service they provide. So the more advanced imaging tests a doctor orders or pricey procedures they perform, the more money he or she makes, regardless of whether the patient's health improves. "We have a completely broken economy in healthcare," said Blair Childs, senior vice president at hospital purchasing group Premier Inc. "Literally, all of the incentives in fee-for-service are for higher cost." Alternative payment models are designed to remove incentives that reward overtreatment of patients. Private insurers are on board, with Aetna Inc, Anthem Inc, UnitedHealth Group and most Blue Cross insurers announcing plans to shift half of their reimbursement to alternative payment models to control costs. — Reuters

APPROVAL OF KEYSTONE
HEADACHE FOR TRUDEAU

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was quick to welcome Washington's approval Friday of a major pipeline from Canada into the United States, but observers say it creates political headaches for his administration. Trudeau has sought to strike a balance between two competing policies - supporting Canada's oil and gas sector, which is the sixth largest in the world, and slashing global-warming greenhouse gases.

In approving the Keystone XL pipeline - which would move oil from landlocked Alberta, Canada to US Gulf Coast refineries - US President Donald Trump reversed his predecessor Barack Obama's decision to block it two years ago. The project had first been proposed in 2008. In doing so, Trump has reignited a nearly decade-long feud between environmental activists and the energy industry, leaving Trudeau squeezed in the middle.

"I think Trump's decision hurts

the Trudeau government," Matthew Hoffmann, co-director of the Munk School's Environmental Governance Lab in Toronto told AFP. "I think they would have been happy to let Keystone die because of the US and not have to pay the political costs for its approval." Trudeau's centrist Liberal government remains high in the polls, but critics have highlighted his conflicting climate and economic policies to try to pry open cracks in his armor.

On the one hand he has spoken enthusiastically about the need to stem global warming, but he also recently approved two new domestic pipelines. It's an awkward position that Trudeau has "desperately clung to," said energy specialist Pierre-Olivier Pineau of HEC school in Montreal. The approval of the Keystone pipeline, the first and most favored of projects touted by the industry, will however help to shore up his support on the center-right. And it will help a political ally - a

fledgling progressive government in Alberta led by Rachel Notley. Her New Democrats swept to power for the first time ever in 2015 after four decades of conservative rule.

Oil Sector is Gushing

The Canadian oil and gas sector is naturally pleased about the decision. Alberta's oil has long been discounted \$5-\$10 below market values because there had been no way to get it to tidewater, leaving the United States as its sole buyer. Keystone is expected to carry 830,000 barrels of oil per day, allowing Canada to significantly boost energy exports and demand a better price. This would bring higher oil royalties and tax revenues at a crucial time when Ottawa is struggling with a large deficit, said Jean Thomas Bernard, an economics professor at the University of Ottawa. The oil sector had been Canada's top economic driver for years but was hit hard by the oil slump and 2016 wildfires. — AFP

WILL JACKSON STAY ON THE \$20 BILL?

US President Donald Trump's enthusiasm for his 19th century predecessor Andrew Jackson is stoking fears he may cancel plans to replace that controversial president on the \$20 bill with abolitionist Harriet Tubman. The Treasury Department announced a year ago that by 2020 it would remove slave-owner Jackson's likeness in favor of an image of Tubman, an African-American who escaped from slavery and helped others to freedom on the Underground Railroad.

Tubman, who also fought for women to be granted the right to vote, would be the first African-American as well as the first woman to appear on a US banknote. With nine billion in circulation, the \$20 bill is among the most widely used denomination along with \$1 bills, which number 11.7 billion. During the administration of president Barack Obama, the Treasury conducted a survey on who should be the first woman to appear on the currency, and selected Tubman.

Another survey by "Women on 20s," a group calling for a woman to appear on the \$20 banknote, collected more than a half-million responses in an online poll in which Tubman was first out of four finalists, including civil rights icon Rosa Parks and stateswoman and first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. But since Trump's election, Andrew Jackson's stock has risen strikingly

in the White House, a development that worries Tubman supporters.

Displayed in the Oval Office

"We are keeping a very close eye as to any further signal and any delay or change in the progress towards having design and production ready for Harriet Tubman on

the \$20 bill by 2020," Women on 20s Founder Barbara Ortiz told AFP. Trump "seems to be using every opportunity to extol the virtues of Jackson," she said, recalling was Jackson's a slave owner and his role in the "Trail of Tears". Jackson oversaw the start of forcible expulsions of Native Americans from their ancestral lands



US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew looks at a rendering of Harriet Tubman during a visit to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington in this April 21, 2016 photo. — AFP

in the southeastern United States to areas west of the Mississippi River, resulting in thousands of deaths from starvation, exposure and disease.

As a military officer, Jackson also led an invasion of Spanish Florida to destroy the "Negro Fort," where former slaves had settled. Five days after his inauguration, Trump displayed Jackson's portrait prominently in the Oval Office, drawing inspiration from the former army commander, who was famed for his success in battle against the British and seen as a "man of the people"; Trump's advisor Stephen Bannon also praised Trump's inaugural address as "very Jacksonian".

Last week, Trump laid a wreath by Jackson's tomb at his former Tennessee plantation, marking the 250th anniversary of his birth. Trump praised the "very great" Jackson for taking on "an arrogant elite". "Does that sound familiar to you?" Trump asked. When Tubman's selection was announced during his campaign, Trump panned the choice as "purely politically correct", and said Tubman's picture would be better placed on the \$2 bill, which is hardly used. The Treasury Department declined to comment.

Before his departure, former Treasury secretary Jack Lew considered unveiling the new bill's design publicly to help make the change irreversible. — AFP

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CAF SECRETARY-GENERAL HICHAM EL AMRANI QUILTS



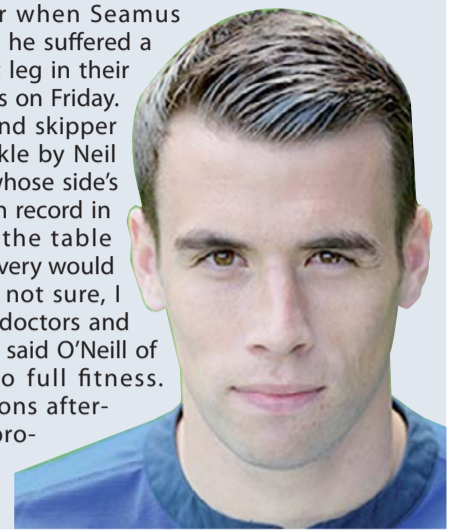
JOHANNESBURG: African Football Confederation (CAF) secretary-general Hicham El Amrani resigned yesterday without giving an explanation. The 37-year-old Moroccan revealed his decision in a letter to African national football associations. His move is probably linked to the defeat of long-serving Cameroonian Issa Hayatou by Malagasy outsider Ahmad Ahmad in the CAF presidential election this month. El Amrani was a Hayatou loyalist, constantly defending his boss, who ruled African football for 29 years, against public and media criticism. He became secretary-general, initially on an interim basis, in 2010 when Egyptian Mustapha Fakhry moved to global football body FIFA. Ahmad, who will serve a four-year term, is scheduled to meet CAF staff today at the Cairo headquarters of the 60-year-old organisation.—AFP

MESUT OZIL FIT TO FACE AZERBAIJAN FOR GERMANY

BAKU: Arsenal's attacking midfielder Mesut Ozil is fit to face Azerbaijan for record-breaking Germany in World Cup qualifier in Baku, the German Football Association (DFB) has confirmed. Gunners' star Ozil had been an injury doubt for the away qualifier after the 28-year-old missed Friday's training session after complaining of back trouble. But Germany's assistant coach Marcus Sorg confirmed Ozil, along with the rest of the squad, is fit for Russia 2018 qualifier, which kicks off at 2000 local time (1600 GMT). "At the final training session in Baku, all 21 players were there, ready to play and Mesut Ozil could train without discomfort," Sorg told dfb.de Germany are five points clear of Azerbaijan at the top of Group C. In Wednesday's 1-0 friendly victory over England in Dortmund, Germany set a new national record by conceding no goals in winning all of their last seven matches. Azerbaijan, who are third in the group, were crushed 4-0 by Northern Ireland in their last qualifier, but Sorg says the world champions can expect a tough away match.—AFP

O'NEILL UNSURE OF COLEMAN RECOVERY

LONDON: Ireland football coach Martin O'Neill says doctors cannot give a fixed time for when Seamus Coleman will return to action after he suffered a horrific double fracture of his right leg in their 2018 World Cup qualifier with Wales on Friday. The 28-year-old fullback and Ireland skipper suffered the injury in a horror tackle by Neil Taylor, who was sent off. O'Neill, whose side's 0-0 draw maintained their unbeaten record in the qualifiers sitting second in the table behind Serbia, told the BBC his recovery would depend on several factors. "I'm not sure, I would only be guessing. Even the doctors and surgeons wouldn't be terribly sure," said O'Neill of the timeline for his recovery to full fitness. "Sometimes there are complications afterwards and injuries can be more prolonged, other times it can be clean and clear sailing.—AFP



EQUESTRIAN

NOURA AL-QUOUD WINS AMIR'S HORSE JUMPING CUP

KUWAIT: Kuwait's horse rider Noura Al-Quoud won the grand prize of HH the Amir Horse Jumping tournament at its conclusion Saturday, which was held at the Hunting and Equestrian Club. The tournament included 14 rounds of various heights and age groups.

Al-Quoud was able to win the round of the 140 cm height in the deeding stage which had eight top finishers in the qualifying stages. Abdelrahman Al-Fuzai was second and Rakan Al-Hasawi third.

Capital governor Thabet Al-Muhanna said those involved with the tournament are very proud with HH the Amir's patronage of the tournament which returned after 20 years of absence, which is an achievement for the HEC board of directors.

Al-Muhanna said HH the Amir's patronage of the Equestrian sport is the most important reason for its development and prosperity, as evident by the levels shown by the winning riders.

Teams competition at the height of 115 cm saw Ahmad Al-Enaz, Abdelrahman Al-

Fuzai and Abdallah Al-Awadhi won first place, followed by Latifa Al-Hajiri, Ghaneema Al-Marzouq and Luloua Al-Essa in second place, while Enaz Al-Enaz, Dafny Helaitus and Jameela Al-Mutawaa won third place.

Ali Al-Kharafi won the minor prize of the 130 cm height, while Bavel Kronko from Belarus won second place and Rakan Al-Hasawi was third.

Ahmad al-Enaz ended in first place of the middle round of the 115 cm height, Ali Al-Kharafi was second and Latifa Al-Hajiri third.

Shamlan Al-Shamlan took first place of the 105 cm height, Fahad Al-Masoud second and Dawood al-Obaidan third.

Zaina Al-Nafeesi won the under 14 category, Abdelrahman Al-Awadhi second, and third place went to Suhaib Al-Mutawa.

The closing ceremony was attended by Minister of Commerce and Industry, Acting State Minister for Youth Affairs Khalid Al-Roudhan, Deputy Director General of Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaiteh, and Chairman of HEC Masoud Hayat.



CYCLING

VALVERDE SEALS CATALONIA WIN

BARCELONA: Alejandro Valverde completed his second Tour of Catalonia win yesterday with his third stage win of the seven-day race to top an all Spanish podium from Alberto Contador and Movistar teammate Albert Soler.

Valverde, 36, added to his victories on stage three and five on the 138.7km stage around Barcelona with an eight-lap circuit to finish in 3hr 08min 50sec. Colombian Jarlinson Pantano was second ahead of Frenchman Arthur Vichot in third.

Valverde extended his winning margin



BARCELONA: Movistar's Spanish rider Alejandro Valverde celebrates on the podium after winning the 97th Volta Catalunya 2017 a 138.7km from Barcelona to Barcelona, in Barcelona yesterday.—AFP

over Contador to 1min 03sec with Soler 1min 16sec back. The scale of Valverde's win is even more impressive given every Movistar rider was handed a one minute penalty for infringements by Jose Joaquin Rojas in Tuesday's team time trial.

Movistar had won the time trial until they were penalised for Rojas giving his teammates a push.

"Inside the team we knew it was an injustice," said Valverde. "They deprived us of our great time trial. I wanted to win (before) but I wanted to win even more after what happened." Victory continues a stellar start to the season for Valverde after also beating Contador by a second to the Tour of Andalusia and winning the one day Tour of Murcia for a fifth time in February.

"I started well, but every day that went by I felt better," he said. "Even today in a demanding short stage with a very tough finale I felt even better than in the previous days." It is the third time Contador has finished second in four races this season as the two-time Tour de France winner was also runner-up in Paris-Nice earlier this month. "We weren't able to win, Alejandro was very strong on all terrains and we have to congratulate him," said Contador, who is in his first season with Trek-Segafredo.

"But I am happy with my performances at the start of the season." Three-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome ended down in 30th overall, over 28 minutes behind Valverde.

The vast majority of the damage to the Briton competing in his first European race of the season was done on Saturday when he was left behind as the peloton split early on and lost over 26 minutes.

Froome attempted to make amends with an unexpected attack on the final lap around the Catalan capital. But he was quickly reeled in by the leaders with five kilometres to go and ended up losing another 1min 04secs on the stage in finishing 48th.—AFP

NISSAN POWERS ABU DHABI DESERT CHALLENGE FOR 14TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

DUBAI: Nissan Middle East is once again shifting into high gear as the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, powered by Nissan, fast approaches. This is the 14th consecutive year in which Nissan will be the principal sponsor of this iconic event, formerly known as the UAE Desert Challenge, which this year runs from April 1 to 6 and will form the third round of this year's FIA World Cup for Cross Country Rallies.

Taking place under the patronage of HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in Al Dafrah Region, the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge is also the opening round of the FIM Cross Country Rallies World Championship for bikes and quads.

Samir Cherfan, Nissan Middle East managing director said: "Over the years Nissan has become synonymous with the Desert Challenge and our relationship with the Automobile and Touring Club of the UAE (ATCUAE) the event organizer, has allowed a deep and mutual level of trust, respect and understanding to develop between us. This in turn has helped grow the reputation of the event to the extent that it's now recognized around the world as one of the toughest and yet most enjoyable challenges on the Cross Country Rallying calendar."

"Nissan has become an invaluable partner in our work to promote and develop the Desert Challenge, and I'm pleased to extend this relationship so that we can increase the event's exposure in the future," said Mohammed Ben Sulayem, President of the ATCUAE, the rally organizers, and President of Emirates Motor Sports Federation.

"Nissan Middle East shares our enthusiasm for the Desert Challenge, as well as our commitment to its long-term success, and I'm confident this partnership will guarantee that the event continues to set the standard in the FIA World Cup for Cross Country Rallies."

Nissan's whole-hearted commitment to motorsport in the region also extends to its backing of individual Middle East-based competitors through factory-level sponsorship. It was this support which helped Qatari driver Adel Abdulla to become the current world champion in the FIA T2 off-road category at the wheel of a Nissan Patrol.

This year, both Adel and fellow competitor

in T2 category, the UAE-based Lebanese driver Emil Khneisser, are receiving a full support package from Nissan, naturally based around the "hero of all terrains" Nissan Patrol.

While Adel is the current FIA T2 world champion, Emil is the reigning Emirates Desert Championship T2 champion.

Samir Cherfan said: "Both of these drivers are exceptionally talented but also tenacious and filled with that unshakeable determination to succeed which is a defining characteristic of competitors from our region. We feel that, as well as being able to do justice to the immense off-road capabilities of the Nissan Patrol through their driving skills, they are fitting ambassadors for both Nissan Middle East and the region's motorsports scene in general. We look forward to their continued success."

Nissan's sponsorship of the Desert Challenge means getting involved well before the event itself gets underway. A fleet of Nissan Patrols is supplied to the ATCUAE in order for officials to map out the course of the special stages in the months leading up to the race. The fleet will be also utilized during the event itself when the Patrols are indispensable for ferrying race officials, marshals, dignitaries and media representatives to control and vantage points on the special stages.

In addition to providing the fleet of Patrols and naming the event "Powered by Nissan" the



carmaker's sponsorship extends to naming a Special Stage. The most challenging single element of the race will be the Nissan Special Stage 2, taking place on April 3. At 289.39kms it is the longest of the five individual Special Stages and will take place among massive dunes in the beautiful desert of the UAE's western region of Al Dafrah.

Coming off the back of Nissan's headline sponsorship of the Dubai International Baja held earlier this month, the carmaker's support for the Desert Challenge reflects its unwavering commitment to motorsport in the region and one that is unrivalled in the Middle East off-road scene.



Sports

Vettel breaks Ferrari's F1 drought with win at Aussie GP



Lyon roars for Australia in fourth India Test with 4 wkts



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SENIOR SERVICE AS GAULTIER WINS BRITISH OPEN TITLE

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DEFOE MARKS COMEBACK AS ENGLAND TOIL TO WIN

LONDON: Jermain Defoe adorned his international comeback with a goal as England toiled to a 2-0 victory over Lithuania in a forgettable World Cup qualifier at Wembley yesterday.

Defoe, 34, was making his first England appearance since November 2013, having been recalled by manager Gareth Southgate, and he marked his return with the opening goal midway through the second half. Substitute Jamie Vardy added a second goal as England tightened their grip on first place in UEFA qualifying Group F in Southgate's first home game as permanent manager.

"We'd have liked a bit more, but I think really only one team came to win the game and it's always difficult to break down a packed defence," said Southgate.

"I'm pleased for the two lads who have got the goals—a great story for Jermain and I felt Jamie added something to us." England are now the last team in European qualifying yet to have conceded a goal. Defoe's strike, the Sunderland veteran's 20th in 56 caps, was an obvious high point and second-half substitute Marcus Rashford delivered an impressive cameo.

But the stubbornly unadventurous nature of Lithuania's approach to the game, which made for a soporific match, meant there was little to shout about from an England perspective.

The game was preceded by the laying of wreaths and a minute's silence in honour of the four people killed and over 50 injured in Wednesday's terror attack in London.

Having tested out a 3-4-2-1 system in the midweek 1-0 friendly defeat in Germany, Southgate reverted to a back four and his side were quickly on the front foot, with Adam Lallana prominent.

The Liverpool midfielder saw a deflected shot caught by Ernestas Setkus and then produced a clever pass down the inside-right channel for Defoe, whose shot was blocked by the Lithuania goalkeeper.

Defoe's penalty-box cunning was one of the reasons Southgate picked him over Vardy and he vindicated his manager's call by putting England ahead in the 22nd minute.

VALSKIS LET-OFF

Raheem Sterling slipped past Egidijus Vaitkusnas on the left before rolling in a cross that Defoe plant-



LONDON: England's Jamie Vardy, left, and Lithuania's Tadas Kijanskas challenge for the ball during the World Cup Group F qualifying soccer match between England and Lithuania at the Wembley Stadium in London, Great Britain, yesterday. — AP

ed into the net for his first international goal since March 2013.

He threatened to notch a 21st England goal moments later, thudding a shot wide from range.

Joe Hart, captain for the day, had been a virtual bystander, but the England goalkeeper was almost embarrassed in first-half stoppage time.

The assistant referee's flag stayed down despite Nerijus Valskis appearing to be blatantly offside and the Lithuanian forward managed to head the ball past Hart, obliging John Stones to hack clear.

As England continued to labour in the second half, they were given another let-off when Vyintas Slivka was unable to find a way past Hart with a free shot from just inside the box.

Short of an Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain curler that Setkus parried, England were offering little in attack and in the 59th minute Southgate turned to his bench, sending on Vardy and Rashford.

Vardy took just seven minutes to find the net, steering a shot between Setkus and his left-hand post after Lallana delicately flicked Kyle Walker's

pass into his path. England continued to dominate, but could not add to their lead despite Rashford's best efforts.

Vardy lobbed over from Rashford's pass and Eric Dier headed wide from a Rashford corner, before the Manchester United forward embarked on a sinewy run that culminated in a sprawling save by Setkus. "I'm very proud of my team because we've been tested by a tremendously strong team, probably the strongest team we've faced until now," said beaten manager Edgaras Jankauskas. —APF

GERMANY STAYS PERFECT WITH 4-1 WIN AGAINST AZERBAIJAN

BAKU: Defending champion Germany stayed perfect in World Cup qualifying despite conceding its first goal in Group C with a 4-1 win in Azerbaijan yesterday. Little-used forward Andre Schuerrle scored two and set up another. Germany coach Joachim Loew had expressed his faith in Schuerrle before the game, despite him making seven of his 15 Bundesliga appearances and five of his six Champions League games as a substitute for Borussia Dortmund this season.

Loew gave Schuerrle his first Germany start for 1 1/2 years and the 26-year-old broke the deadlock in the 19th minute at the Tofiq Bahramov Stadium. Julian Draxler spotted Jonas Hector free to his left and passed for the defender to send it straight back for Schuerrle, who finished from close range.

Just as it seemed the visitors were completely in control, Dimitrij Nazarov equalized in the 31st with a perfectly placed shot inside the far post after four Germany defenders failed to stop Afran Ismaylov from picking him out. It was the first goal Germany had conceded in qualifiers for the 2018 tournament.

Thomas Mueller restored the lead minutes later, running into Schuerrle's pass, taking it past the goalkeeper with his right foot and finishing into the empty net with his left. Joshua Kimmich crossed for Mario Gomez to make it 3-1 with a header before the break. The home side started the second half with renewed vigor, though without troubling Bernd Leno, playing instead of the injured Manuel Neuer in the Germany goal. —AP



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XPELAIR DEALER MEET AND PRODUCT LAUNCH



LONDON: This file photo shows national flags of all countries attending London 2012 Olympic Games are displayed near the "Big Ben" clock Tower, at the Parliament square in London. Brexit challenges Britain's global image of openness and tolerance, but Cool Britannia has what it takes to avoid being suddenly rebranded as uncool just because it quits the EU, advertising professionals say. — AFP

BREXIT CHALLENGES BRITAIN'S GLOBAL IMAGE

SAVING 'COOL BRITANNIA' IMAGE FROM BREXIT BRUISE

LONDON: Brexit challenges Britain's global image of openness and tolerance, but Cool Britannia has what it takes to avoid being suddenly rebranded as uncool just because it quits the EU, advertising professionals say.

From music to film and fashion, Britain has for decades enhanced its image as a modern and dynamic culture. The ease of immigrating and working in Britain helped it build a reputation as a welcoming and hospitable society. But the vote to leave the European Union last June sent a troubling message of tighter border controls and an exit from the EU's single market.

"Brexit is a self-inflicted wound because you are putting the image of openness at risk, that's dangerous," said Matt Scheckner, founder and executive director of Advertising Week.

Unique British culture

"So to send the message that Britain is open for business is vitally important." The effusive New Yorker organized this week the fifth London version of Advertising Week, which attracted 40,000 industry professionals to four days of seminars and events in the capital's

trendy neighborhood of Soho. "The things that make British culture unique remain. Music, fashion, British content, creative content, television, film. I would say all those things are not at risk, because they are driven by creative people," said Scheckner. "But when you look at things like tourism, which is a very big industry, when you look at businesses, it has to employ young talent, the risk is being viewed as an unfriendly place for talent, for young people," he added.

Brexit an 'insular process'

At Advertising Week, dominated by young professionals with an international outlook, there were few supporters of Brexit. Brexit "is an inward-looking and insular process by itself" said Melanie Read of the Aesop agency. But most advertising execs still think it's possible to save Britain's brand by emphasizing the positive.

"People will have to reassert the strengths of the country, the cultural strengths, in their creation," said Matt Donegan, managing director at Social Circle marketing agency. Similarly, advertising professionals thought

Britain could emphasize other, intangible advantages such as its stable political and legal system, a qualified English-speaking workforce and even the capacity of the British people to take the best from foreign cultural influences. Adept marketers could even turn divided public opinion into a positive-presenting a diversity of views as a counterpoint to a uniform, inward-looking bloc.

Richard Staplehurst, a partnerships manager at the Latimer agency, said he remains optimistic on the ability of young people, who mostly voted to remain in the EU, to keep good vibes flowing.

"There will be enough social media activism to show the country is open," he said. "Many people will say 'it's not fair, we want you to come.'" Private activism could act as a counterweight to the often divisive public political debate. "We are naturally outward-looking and naturally innovative," Secretary of State for International Trade Liam Fox told AFP. "It is not because we are leaving the EU that our great culture will disappear," added Latimer's Staplehurst. — AFP



LONDON: People walking over Westminster Bridge wrapped in Union flags, towards the Queen Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben) and The Houses of Parliament in central London. — AFP

ARAB BUSINESSES DEBATE ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

DEAD SEA, Jordan: The Arab business sector is looking forward to promote an economic integration towards wider and more comprehensive spaces to achieve a decent life for the Arab citizen.

This sector hopes that the 28th Arab Summit scheduled to be held in Jordan on Wednesday will support the economic integration by making some decisive decisions. In this context, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Jordan Nael Al-Kabariti said yesterday that Amman Summit will be successful and will take the necessary decisions to meet aspirations of the Arab citizen. Al-Kabariti added that the Arab world is currently undergoing unprecedented conditions affecting the Arab economy and social life. This requires an exceptional and multiplying effort in the direction of joint economic action.

He said that the Greater Arab Free Trade Area continues to face non-tariff barrier, mainly due to technical constraints, not to mention the relatively large increase in the costs of commercial transport, despite that more than 19 years of operation in this region.

He pointed to the importance of a unified Arab strategy to interact with important developments, including China's initiative to build the new Silk Road which start-

ed in 2013 and found its way to implementation vigorously. "It is important to rely on the GCC countries to lead the Arab economic renaissance in the next phase, due to the GCC's integrated economic system and the achievements that we are proud of" Al-Kabariti said. For his part, Chairman of the Arab Business Union Hamdi Al-Tabbaa said in a statement to KUNA that the Union calls to discuss several files to strengthen joint Arab action. Al-Tabbaa added that the summit represents the supreme Arab political will to support joint Arab cooperation. He pointed out that the Union recommended the Arab summit to discuss important economic issues such as (Arab Customs Union), stressing the need to complete the Greater Arab Free Trade Area.

Among the economic files recommended by the Union, Al-Tabbaa said that the (Arab food security) file is a "big dilemma" in the Arab countries, which import more than half of its food needs from outside the Arab world, especially grain, sugar, meat and oil. Moreover, the issue of education, scientific research and technological progress is one of the most important economic issues to be prioritized by the Arab Summit, he added, stressing the importance of developing traditional education to specialized, qualitative, and vocational education. — KUNA

RUSSIA SET TO REPAY ALL SOVIET UNION'S DEBT

MOSCOW: A quarter of a century after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia is finally set to pay off all the foreign debt it inherited from the vanished Communist empire.

Keen to establish a reputation of a reliable borrower-despite Western financial sanctions over the Ukraine conflict-Moscow announced last week it would pay off \$125.2 million in Soviet-era debt to Bosnia-Herzegovina within 45 days. The payment "completes the settlement of the external public debt of the former USSR, which is a historic event," said Russia's deputy finance minister Sergei Storchak.

In February, Moscow paid \$60.6 million to Macedonia. After the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, Russia assumed responsibility for its foreign debt of some \$70 billion.

Paying for perestroika

This was mostly contracted during the difficult perestroika era from 1985 to 1991, a time of failed attempts to reform the USSR's dysfunctional political and economic system. This commitment proved a painful burden in the 1990s as Russia faced catastrophic economic problems that culminated in a humiliating default on its foreign debt in 1998.

But in 2006 — thanks to a steady influx of petrodollars since the early 2000s—Russia was able to pay off its debts to 17 major creditor-countries in the so-called Paris Club. A payment of more than \$20 billion—or 95 percent of the value of all

Soviet-era loans—was made eight years after the 1998 default.

Russia has also allowed itself the luxury of cancelling some country's debts, with Cuba the latest in 2014. The remaining debt chiefly consisted of "commercial" debts that resulted from the imports of goods to the Soviet Union from ally countries. Such debts were formed "in a strange way", Anatoly Aksakov, head of the parliament's economic market committee, told RIA Novosti state news agency. He questioned how such countries turned out to be creditors of the Soviet Union even though it was "a very rich country".

A faultless borrower

In the case of the former Yugoslavia—which the USSR provided with military equipment in exchange for consumer goods—Russia faced the tricky task of dividing up the debt among the countries that emerged from its breakup. "It is politically important: Russia has paid off the USSR's debt to a country that no longer exists," said Yuri Yudenkov, a professor at the Russian University of Economics and Public Administration. "This is very important in terms of reputation: the ability to repay on time, the responsibility," he told AFP. Yudenkov contrasted this with Kiev which has refused to repay a \$3-billion loan Moscow gave the pro-Russian government of former president Viktor Yanukovich before he was ousted from power in 2014. — AFP

KAMCO RECEIVES 'BEST WEALTH MANAGEMENT COMPANY' AWARD



Sana Al-Hadlaq, Chief Wealth Officer of KAMCO, receives the trophy

KUWAIT: KAMCO Investment Company, a leading investment company with one of the largest AUMs in the region, received a plaque for the "Best Wealth Management Company - Kuwait" from International Finance Magazine ("IFM"), a renowned financial publication that recognizes and honors individuals, as well as organizations, in the financial investment industry. Sana Al-Hadlaq, Chief Wealth Officer of KAMCO, received the trophy on behalf of the Company.

This award is one of six awards that the Company received for excellence in 2016. KAMCO was awarded "Best GCC Investment Banking Company" and "Best Investment Management Company - Kuwait" from World Finance. "Best Wealth Management Company - Kuwait" and "Best Real Estate Fund - Kuwait" from International Finance Magazine. "Asset Manager of the Year - Kuwait" from Global Investor and "Best Bond Issuance Manager of the Year GCC" by Global Business Outlook.

Sana Al-Hadlaq said, "We are honored to have been recognized by the International

Finance Magazine as the best wealth management company in Kuwait during 2016. It is a privilege to serve our valued clients with our talented team of experts. This award represents KAMCO's ability to convert its accumulated years of experience and resources into customized plans and tailored wealth management strategies that assist clients in identifying and managing important life priorities. Our Wealth Management team uses their abilities and skills to advise corporates, high net worth individuals, sovereign wealth funds, pensions, endowments, foundations and family offices."

Al-Hadlaq continued to say that the Wealth Management team's leadership and highly skilled experts have assisted in KAMCO's role in becoming one of the leading Asset Management and Investment Banking providers in the local and regional markets. The Team will continue to provide custom tailored innovative products and superior services that exceed the local market expectations.

KAMCO Investment Company is a premier investment company, based in Kuwait with an office in the UAE and presence throughout the GCC region, regulated by the Capital Markets Authority with one of the largest private sector AUMs in the region.

Established in 1998 and listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) in 2003, KAMCO is a subsidiary of United Gulf Bank (UGB).

It has become a leading regional company within its sector offering innovative products and services to its clients, holding over \$11.2 billion of client AUM and has successfully completed 92 investment banking transactions worth over \$13 billion as of 30 September 2016.

With almost two decades of experience in conducting business in Kuwait's dynamic investment industry, KAMCO has successfully established a robust reputation for solidity, characterized by its prudent, conservative investment philosophy and spirit of transparency, which has consistently commanded the goodwill of a wide patron-base.

ALARGAN REPORTS KD1.8M IN NET PROFIT FOR 2016

BOARD RECOMMENDS 10% CASH DIVIDENDS

KUWAIT: ALARGAN International Real Estate Company, one of the leading real estate developers in the Middle East region, yesterday announced a net profit of KD1.8 million and earnings per share (EPS) of 7.09 fils for the year ending in December 31, 2016, in comparison to a net profit of KD16.7 million and earnings per share (EPS) of 65.32 fils in 2015. The Board of Directors also recommended the distribution of 10 percent cash dividends of the share nominal value (10 fils per share).

Commenting on the results, Khaled Al-Mashaan, CEO and Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of ALARGAN International Real Estate Company, said: "Despite a significant increase in our operational earnings, our bottom line in 2016 shows a decrease in comparison to the previous year because of an exceptional one-time gain of KD26.2 million from a divestment that was accounted for in 2015."

"Putting the one-time gain aside, operating profit increased in 2016 to KD2.95 million in comparison to a KD7.07 loss in 2015. Revenues also increased to KD26.8 million in 2016 by 37 percent in comparison to KD19.5 million in 2015. Expenses decreased by 14 percent from KD29.1 million in 2015 to KD25.1 million in 2016."

The increase in operational earnings were driven by the performance of the Company's core income-generating assets, advancements in new developments and strong sales of residential units, as well as yields generated from real estate investments in prime locations in the world.

Al-Mashaan said: "ALARGAN continued to deliver on its strategy launched in 2015 which focuses on improving the performance of its core income-generating assets while operating through a combined developer and investor business model in an aim to deliver a sustainable business that adds value to shareholders, and provides life-enhancing and sustainable solutions in the region."

2016 Financial and operational highlights:

- Increase of revenues in developments, contracting and related services to KD0.3 million in comparison to a loss of KD1.9 million in 2015
- Profit from rents and resorts was sustained at KD6.3 million
- Profit from change in fair value of investment properties in 2016 increased to KD1 million in comparison to KD 5.3 million in loss in 2015
- Total assets decreased by 2.4 percent and total liabilities decreased by 6.1 percent
- Revenues from investments in real estate and securities portfolios and funds increased to KD218,000
- Financing expenses decreased by 33.7 percent

Operational performance

ALARGAN's high-profile resort and commercial developments continued to generate stable revenues from rents and leasing in Kuwait and Bahrain. The Company completed procedures to start leasing in its ALARGAN Business Park located in the Free Trade Zone, an area expected to boom with businesses following the completed transfer of the area's management, and permissions provided to local investors and foreign investments bullishly supported. Developments in Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman continued to advance and sales of housing units under development in Bahrain and Oman saw a strong growth during the year.

Al-Mashaan said: "Our most significant mixed-use and residential developments in 2016 were without a doubt the Al Waha and Telal Al Qurm projects in Oman which received great accolades last year and saw the delivery of the first residential phase in Telal Al Qurm. The new residential phases of our Jeyoun community in Bahrain followed in the success of ARGAN Village. Our commercial developments in Kuwait continue to attract demand

thanks to the unique experiences they provide to visitors."

International investments in real estate

Operating in a combined developer and investor model, ALARGAN has investment in the real estate sector in stable prime locations in Europe, the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) to generate regular income and provide the opportunity for capital appreciation derived from asset values at exit.

Al-Mashaan added: "The shift in strategy to combine development and investments has aided the Company in establishing a larger portfolio of assets that generate recurring revenues while helping ALARGAN weather turbulences related to oil prices and geopolitical uncertainties. Our investments have started yielding returns and are scheduled to mature in 2020."

Strong financial position

In 2016, Capital Intelligence (CI), the international credit rating agency, announced that it has raised its rating on the KD26.5 million bond issued by



Khaled Al-Mashaan

ALARGAN International Real Estate Company in April 2012 to "BBB" and revised the outlook to "stable". The raise was supported by identified resources (cash plus unutilized committed funding lines) in place to repay the obligation. The rating upgrade also reflects the increase in equity and the fall in debt (and therefore leverage). The rating was followed by a cancellation of KD9.14 million in bonds which were repurchased ahead of their maturation in April 2017.

ALARGAN International has also consolidated its financial structure and rearranged risks related to debt instruments by converting short and medium-term obligations into long-term commitments to increase the Company's financial solvency. This was achieved by undertaking credit facility to repay present debts and invest in future projects.

Company outlook

Al-Mashaan said: "With a solid financial position thanks to steady and sustainable income generating products, and a healthy funding structure with minimal reliance on short-term borrowing, ALARGAN is set to continue its growth in 2017 through the scheduled delivery of new projects that enhance our portfolio of assets generating recurring revenues, as well as through developments that continue to add value for the benefit of our society as we follow our motto "Life... as you love it!"

Financially, ALARGAN's bond will come to maturity in April 2017. Operationally, the Company prepares to launch its new ARGAN Square commercial complex in the Salmiya area and its ARGANIA commercial complex in Shuwaikh. It also continues the development of the Jeyoun community in Bahrain, Al Waha and Telal Al Qurm in Oman, as well as plans to move forward in two new projects in Oman. ALARGAN is also taking the next step to expand its operations through an upcoming community development in Morocco which is already at the design phase.



KUWAIT: Panelists on the floor of the CMA conference in Sheraton Hotel, Kuwait yesterday. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

CMA CONFERENCE DISCUSSES CHALLENGES AND ASPIRATIONS

BROKERAGE FIRMS, INVESTMENT COMPANIES, BANK STAFF ATTEND FORUM

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Capital Markets Authority (CMA) held its second annual conference titled 'Capital Markets' Development in the State of Kuwait' yesterday, attended by representatives of brokerage companies, investment companies, bank employees and other related staff. Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of CMA, welcomed the attendees, saying CMA fulfilled its promise to hold this conference annually in the same period. "This is the second consecutive year of the conference. We held it in the first quarter of the year like last year to discuss the most important issues related to CMA's duties and stock exchange activities," he said.

Since the conference that was held last year, many new local stock exchange activities have taken place. "During the previous conference, we announced our intention to develop the capital market, which cannot be executed without compliance with applied international standards and adopting best practices," added Hajraf.

Bursa Kuwait

"Last year, the Kuwait Stock Exchange was transferred from a public institution into a shareholding company. This company is directed according to private sector rules, and since October 2016, it's managed by the Bursa Kuwait Company. Another significant event was applying governance rules starting from June 30, which assures applying best international practices that are similar to international markets. Furthermore, CMA last year issued resolution no. 72/2016 about applying the post-trade model," he pointed out.

"Today's conference sheds light on the achievements of the compliance with applied international standards, in addition to the future tendency on this issue to achieve strategic goals. The strategic plans of CMA sets the base for a leading regional experience that is beyond the regular tools of the monitoring authorities of stock exchange that is usually limited to licensed individuals and investors of all categories," Hajraf said.

He concluded by saying that the National Project of Strengthening Financial Culture that is executed by CMA aims to spread the financial culture among various categories, especially in the educational field, starting from school up to university. "This strategic project will qualify future generations to work in this field and meet the needs of local market."

The first session was on the 'Post-Trade Model' (PTM), where four speakers gave presentations - Muthanna Al-Saleh, Head of the Markets Sector at CMA on the 'Final Post Trade Model'; Anwar Al-Ghaiti, Executive Director, Information Technology and Banking Operations Sector at the Central Bank on 'Central Bank of Kuwait and Commercial Banks' Role in PTM'; Othman Al-Issa, CEO of Kuwait Clearing Company on 'The Kuwait Clearing Company's Strategy in Light of the Final Form of PTM'; and Emine Ebru Akbulut, Deputy Head of the Intermediary Activities Department of the Capital Markets Board of Turkey, who presented a 'Review of the Turkish Experience of PTM'.

The second session was titled 'Bursa Kuwait; Challenges and Aspirations'. Two speakers gave presentations in this session - Khaled Al-Khaled,



KUWAIT: Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of CMA, delivers a speech.

Vice Chairman and CEO, Bursa Kuwait Securities Company and Mohammad Al-Osaimi, Executive Director, Markets Sector, Bursa Kuwait Securities Company, both discussing Bursa Kuwait's strategic initiatives.

The third session was on the 'CMA XBRL Based Electronic Filing Platform' (IFSAH). It was presented by John Turner, CEO, XBRL International, who spoke about the 'Advantages

of Using XBRL for Business Reporting in Capital Markets'; Mohammed Al-Hadari, Deputy CEO for Organizational Services and Support - Securities and Commodities Authority (UAE), who spoke on the 'UAE Experience in Implementing XBRL Based Electronic Filing Platform'; and Abdullah Al-Terkait, Manager of the IFSAH project at CMA, who spoke on the 'Overview of the CMA XBRL Based Electronic Filing Platform'.

EAST GERMAN BOOM TOWN BREAKS POPULIST, BACKWARD STEREOTYPES

JENA, Germany: With higher unemployment rates than western Germany and support for the anti-immigration AfD party reaching 20 percent, the country's former communist east has often been associated with economic decline and xenophobia. But some cities in eastern Germany have emerged as economic bright spots where populist politicians are finding it hard to gain ground. Take the city of Jena in Thuringia state-population 100,000, unemployment rate 6.5 percent.

Long known as a "lighthouse" of the region, the city boasts a flourishing high-tech sector and a strong optical technology sector that even the communist years didn't extinguish.

Just a short walk from the colorful facades of the market square, a white building stands out, bearing the blue letters "Jenoptik". The company's chief executive Michael Mertin, who employs 3,500 people, told AFP that "the combination of high-tech, well-trained employees and internationalisation have certainly been a factor of success".

The company traces its beginnings to the optical giant Carl Zeiss, part of which was nationalised during the communist era. Jenoptik grew out of the nationalised firm after German reunification in 1990. Today, it makes and sells optical systems and laser equipment across the world. During a late-winter visit, the company was playing host to two South Koreans in town to learn how to use its high-precision laser technology that cuts car parts. Jenoptik is not alone in success in Jena,

which now boasts some 5,000 enterprises. A long-standing university has also regained popularity, and students make up a quarter of the population.

'Still prejudices'

"Jena has managed to overcome crises, because the technology companies of the city target a range of markets with varied products and are strong in exports," said Wilfried Roepke, who heads the city's economic promotion agency Jena Wirtschaft (Jena Economy). That makes the city one of a few exceptions in eastern Germany, even if it's not the only success story today.

Mercedes-Benz is investing millions of euros in Ludwigsfeld in Brandenburg state that surrounds Berlin, while BMW has built an ultra-modern factory in Leipzig. Dresden has its Silicon Saxony of IT firms, and in Potsdam, the Babelsberg studios is again attracting international movie producers.

Despite the growing opportunities, "eastern Germany often doesn't have such a positive image, there are still prejudices," said Roepke. That extends to recruitment, where potential employees often have to first overcome an "initial reticence" stemming from the stereotype of eastern Germany as unattractive and backward. A psychological barrier still exists mainly among Germans themselves, said Mertin, who hails from the western city of Cologne. From abroad, "Germany is viewed as a single strong entity," he said. —AFP

BRITAIN TO FIRE STARTING GUN ON BREXIT TALKS

GLOBAL ECONOMY WEEKAHEAD

DUBLIN: The nine-month Brexit "phoney war" is set to come to an end next week when British Prime Minister Theresa May notifies the European Union of Britain's intention to leave...

ing of battle lines. Britain appears to have set its course for a "hard Brexit", where a clean break is favoured to regain control over immigration...

But May has revealed little of her strategy to secure what she calls "the best possible deal" for the world's fifth-largest economy.

Irish vote
"The tone of this process may have implications for sterling markets," said Investec economist Chris Hare.

begins to bite, timelier indicators next week including mortgage approvals, house prices and consumer confidence may be worth watching more closely.

Trump's defeat

Friday's defeat was more than a small stumble: Trump had thrown his full political weight behind the measure, the first big legislative test of his nascent administration.

The vote had been billed by financial markets as a crucial test of Trump's ability to work with Congress to deliver on pro-growth policies like tax cuts and infrastructure spending.

Flash deflation

In a date-heavy week around the world, eurozone flash inflation readings for March stand out after annual price rises surged to a four-year high of 2.0 percent in February...

Rising inflation across the 19-country bloc has put pressure on rate setters to say when and how extraordinary stimulus measures could be scaled back...

"We expect that run to have come to an end this month," wrote economists at RBC Capital Markets, referring to the six consecutive months of year-on-year headline inflation rate rises.

"With the oil price effect abating and underlying inflation still weak, we see headline inflation continuing to moderate from here and falling to 1.5 percent year-on-year by year-end."

Next week also brings a string of emerging central bank policy meetings with Czech rate setters set to hold their last meeting before the bank's self-imposed deadline for lifting a 3-1/2-year old currency cap.

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report
Global
Sunday 26 March 2017

Table with 6 columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low. Rows include Price index, Weighted Index, KSX 15, Volume, Value (KWD), Number of Trades.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include MARIN, IPG, NAPESCO, ENFRGYH, GPI, ABAR, Oil & Gas.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include KFOUC, BPCC, ALKOUT, ALQURAIN, Basic Materials.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include KCEM, CABLE, SHIP, PCEM, PAPER, MRC, ACICO, HCC, KBMMC, NCBM, EQUIPMENT, NCCI, GYSPUM, SALBOOKH, AGLTY, EDU, CLEANING, KGL, KCPC, HUMANSOFT, NAFAS, GFC, MAYADEEN, CGC, MTCC, UPAC, ALAFACO, MUBARRAD, LOGISTICS, SCEM, GCEM, QIC, FCEM, RKWC, SPEK, Industrials.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include KSH, NSH, PAPCO, CATT, DANAH, FOOD, Consumer Goods.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include MHC, ATC, YIACO, Health Care.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include KCIN, KHOT, SULTAN, CABLETV, EYAS, IFAHR, OULAFUEL, MUNTAAZAHAT, JAZERA, SOOR, FUTURKID, ALRAI, ZIMAH, Mezzan, Consumer Services.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include ZAIN, OOREDOO, HITSTELEC, VIVA, Telecommunications.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include NBK, GBK, CBK, ABK, ALMUTAHED, KIB, BURG, KFIN, BOUBAYAN, AUB, ITHMR, WARBABANK, Banks.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include KINS, GINS, AINS, WINS, KUWAITRE, FTI, WETHAQ, BKIKWT, Insurance.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include SOKOUK, KRE, URC, NRE, SRE, TAM, AREFC, MASSALEH, ARABREC, ERESCO, MABANEE, INIAZZAT, INVESTORS, IRC, ALTIJARIA, SANAM, AAYANRE, AQAR, ALAQARIA, MAZAYA, ADNC, THEMAR, TLJARA, TAAMEER, ARGAN, ARGAN, ABYAR, MUNSHAAT, FIRSTDUBAI, KBT, REAM, MENA, ALMUDON, MARAKEZ, REMAL, AWJ, Real Estate.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include KINV, FACIL, IFA, NINV, KPROJ, COAST, SECH, SGC, ARZAN, MARKAZ, KMEFIC, ALAMAN, ALOIA, ALMAL, GIH, AAYAN, BAYANIR, OSOUL, KFIC, KAMCO, NIH, UNICAP, MADAR, ALDERRA, ALSALAM, EKTTITAB, ALMADINA, NOOR, TAMINUV, EXCH, KSHC, ASIYA, GNAHC, AMWAL, ALMUTIAZ, MANAZEL, NIND, BIHC, SENERGY, ACHC, KPCC, TAHSSILAT, JEERANH, EKHOLDING, GFH, INOVEST, Financial Services.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include ASC, OSOS, HAYATCOMM, Technology, SANAD, AFAQ, ALSHAMEL, EFFECT, AJWAN, MASAKEN, DALQAN, ALEID, MIDAN, THURAYA, AMAR, Parallel Market.

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

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report
NBK
At 02:00 PM Previous Day

Table with 6 columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance %, Yearly Performance %. Rows include Dow Jones, NASDAQ, S&P 500, Financial Times, DAX, CAC 40, Swiss, Nikkei 225, Topix, Hang Seng, Straits Times.

Table with 6 columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance %, Yearly Performance %. Rows include Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia.

Table with 9 columns: Currency, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, US Dollar, Euro, Sterling Pound, Swiss Franc, Japanese Yen, Australian Dollar.

Table with 9 columns: Currency, US Dollar, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahraini Dinar, Qatari Riyal, Omani Riyal, Emirates Dirham, Egyptian Pound.

Table with 6 columns: Currency, 1-Week, 1-Month, 3-Month, 6-Month, 1-Year.

Table with 5 columns: Country, 2-Year, 5-Year, 10-Year, 30-Year.

Table with 6 columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance %, Yearly Performance %. Rows include Kuwait Oil, Brent, West Texas, Gold, Silver.

Source: National Bank of Kuwait

AIR ARABIA ADDS TRABZON TO TURKEY NETWORK



SHARJAH: Air Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC), announced Trabzon as its latest Turkish destination to enter its route network, starting 23 June 2017.

The new seasonal non-stop service provides passengers the chance to discover Turkey's historic port city, in addition to its already existing services to Istanbul. The flight will operate three times weekly on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, departing Sharjah International Airport at 21:30, and arriving at Trabzon International Airport at 00:05 local time the next day. The return service will depart Trabzon at 00:45, landing in Sharjah at 5 am local time.

"Trabzon provides travellers with a unique opportunity to experience Turkey's coastal region and witness the history behind one of the oldest trading ports in the country. The new route is a tes-

tament to Air Arabia's commitment to providing affordable holiday destinations to passengers travelling from the UAE," said Adel Al-Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer of Air Arabia. "We are confident that the new destination will provide our visitor with a unique holiday getaway, and further cement trade and bilateral ties between the two nations."

Resting on the bank of the Black Sea, Trabzon is a city filled with religious and historical significance. Featuring a unique coastal backdrop, this picturesque city is known best for its mystical architecture and bazaars. Situated on the upper east side of the country, Trabzon is a calm metropolis distant from the hustle of Istanbul and Ankara.

Air Arabia currently operates flights to 125 routes across the globe from five hubs located in the Middle East and North Africa.

BURGAN BANK WINS 'BEST PROGRAM DELIVERY, IMPLEMENTATION' AWARD

2017 MASTERCARD MENA FORUM IN LONDON

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, the second largest conventional bank in terms of assets, announced that it was awarded the 'Best Program Delivery and Implementation' award at the 2017 MasterCard MENA Leadership Forum, which took place in London, UK during March 2017.

Led by senior regional MasterCard executives and attended by more than 60 participants from across the Middle East and North Africa region,

the Forum aimed at addressing the future of the payments industry and honoring distinctive institutions whose offering of MasterCard's solutions are of the highest standards.

The recognition from Mastercard celebrated the Bank's application of its payment gateway in a short time-frame; a show of dedication and commitment to offering the best to clients combined with highest level of implementation efficiency.

On this occasion, Raed Al-Haqhaq, Burgan Bank Deputy CEO - Kuwait said: "We are proud to receive the 'Best Program Delivery and Implementation' award. As industry leaders we aim to continually focus on offering the best technological solutions to our clients as soon as they hit the market. This award serves as a reflection of the continued commitment to deliver best-in-class products."

Burgan Bank, as one of the market leaders in technology adoption and evolution, and in line with the increasingly dynamic world of digital banking, has introduced a range of novel solutions, including a new payment gateway for merchants and the easy to use 'tap & pay' card to name a few.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

The bank was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2008, making it the first bank in the GCC, and the only bank in Kuwait to receive such accreditation for the third consecutive year. The Bank also has to its credit the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twelve consecutive years.

Burgan Bank, a subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), is a strongly positioned regional Bank in the MENA region.



ETIHAD AIRWAYS REASSURES PASSENGERS FOLLOWING DIRECTIVE ON US FLIGHTS

ABU DHABI: Etihad Airways is reassuring passengers of its highest level of service to minimize disruption following the introduction of a new US travel directive on electronic devices.

Effective March 25, passengers on all US-bound flights from, or transiting through, Abu Dhabi International Airport will not be permitted to carry electronic devices bigger than a smart phone or mobile into the aircraft cabin. Items such as laptop computers, tablets including iPads, gaming devices, cameras and e-readers will be required to be placed in checked-in luggage. Medical devices are exempt and can be carried onboard.

All Etihad Airways' US flights have mobile and Wi-Fi connectivity, together with power and USB points at every seat enabling guests to remain connected through their mobiles and smart phones. And with an onboard inflight entertainment system offering hundreds of hours of free programs, international movies, live TV news and sports channels, interactive games, and music in every seat, guests are able to keep themselves busy throughout their journey without the need of a laptop or tablet.

Etihad Airways is sending email alerts to all US-bound travellers advising of the new directive. Signage is being placed at check-in desks at airports around the world where staff will inform guests to pack any prohibited electronic devices in their checked luggage.

US-bound passengers travelling via Abu Dhabi must check-in their electronic devices at the point of origin. The directive, issued by the US Transportation Security Administration, does not affect flights departing from the United States.

At Abu Dhabi International Airport, all Etihad Airways guests travelling to the United States clear US Immigration and Customs at the US Preclearance facility in Terminal 3 - the only one of its kind in the Middle East. When guests land in the US, they arrive as domestic passengers with no requirement to queue for immigration checks again. Due to the additional security measures, Etihad Airways will deploy more staff at the US Preclearance facility to provide assistance.

To avoid inconvenience, guests are encouraged to pack the prohibited items in their checked baggage prior to reaching the Preclearance facility in Abu Dhabi. Any prohibited electronic devices will have to be declared and placed in padded envelopes before being securely taken to the aircraft luggage hold by staff. Such items will be returned to guests on arrival in the US, while conveniently, other items of checked-in luggage can be collected at the final destination in the United States. Guests are also encouraged to avoid carrying spare battery packs larger than the permitted size as these will not be allowed in either the luggage hold or the cabin.

Peter Baumgartner, Etihad Airways Chief Executive Officer, said: "We remain committed to ensuring we provide guests the highest levels of service and quality experience that we are renowned for, at Abu Dhabi International Airport and throughout their journey to minimize the impact of the new measures. "Etihad Airways offers excellent facilities on the ground at Abu Dhabi International Airport and inflight to keep guests entertained during their journey. While we are communicating the new directive to guests before they begin their travels to the US, we are implementing a number of measures at Abu Dhabi International Airport to ease the process. We continue to work with the relevant authorities and advise guests to comply with the directive to ensure a smooth and uninterrupted journey to the United States."

In addition to the onboard offering, all cabins have a selection of digital lifestyle magazines that can be viewed for free on a smartphone via the Wi-Fi homepage. A variety of printed international magazines and newspapers are also available for guests travelling in the premium cabins. Children receive a kid's pack with games and toys, and there is a Flying Nanny on board to assist parents.

At Abu Dhabi International Airport, passengers have access to free Wi-Fi. Guests travelling in the premium cabins can use Etihad Airways' lounges. For those with sufficient time before departure, guests can pay for access to Etihad's Business Class lounge in Terminals 1 and 3 which offer computer terminals, Wi-Fi, business facilities, and a wide selection of newspapers, business and lifestyle magazines, international cuisine, shower rooms and children's play rooms. First and Business Class guests are also able to use the US Premium Lounge located after the US Immigration checks at Terminal 3.

Guests are able to purchase extra baggage allowance at a discount on airport rates by booking online at etihad.com; through an Etihad Airways reservation office; or via a call centre. In addition, Silver, Gold and Platinum members of Etihad Guest, the airline's loyalty program, are entitled to extra free baggage allowance. While Abu Dhabi International Airport is not listed for a similar ban related to direct flights operating to the United Kingdom, enhanced security screening is likely for guests travelling to London, Manchester and Edinburgh.

Etihad Airways operates 45 flights a week between Abu Dhabi and six cities across the United States - namely New York, Washington, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

For any further updates on the new directive and our policies, guests are advised to check Etihad Airways' website at etihad.com.

VIVA ANNOUNCES NEW MONTHLY BILL CYCLE EFFECTIVE 1 APRIL FOR POSTPAID CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced that with effect of 1 April 2017, postpaid customers' bills will be issued by the first of each month and settlement deadline latest by the 26th of each month.

This new bill cycle revamp will ensure continuous service to VIVA's customers in an effort to serve them better with an enhanced customer experience, with mention that on 22nd of March, the bills issued cover the remaining period of March. Customers can settle their bills through many of our convenient channels including our mobile App, direct debit, online through our portal or through our wide retail network around Kuwait.

GENUINE SPARE PARTS FROM CHEVROLET ALGHANIM CONCLUDES CAMPAIGN DRAW

KUWAIT: With the established popularity of the Genuine Spare Parts campaign, Chevrolet Alghanim, the largest distributor of genuine spare parts from General Motors, held the final draw on March 19th under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce, and in the presence of Chevrolet management. The grand prize winner was announced, receiving an all-new Chevrolet Trax, as well as the winners of other valuable prizes.

This offer lasted from December 16th, 2016 until March 17th, 2017, with the promotion offering customers multiple chances to win valuable prizes. Customers got the chance to win one of 30 iPhone 7 on a number of draws-the first of which already took place on January 17th, 2017, and the second was on February 16th, 2017. As for the grand draw on the new 2017 Chevrolet Trax LT, the event took place on March 19th, 2017.

As the agent of GM in Kuwait, Chevrolet Alghanim provides its customers with world-renowned, genuine spare parts that

enhance customers' safety and prolong vehicles' longevity and performance. Chevrolet Alghanim service facility is equipped with a modern and air-conditioned warehouse that stocks all the required parts using the latest global systems and processes, which include making deliveries to all parts locations in Kuwait.

And because the safety of drivers is top priority for Chevrolet Alghanim, it reaffirms that original spare parts guarantee the vehicle's solid performance, but even more so, they play a major part in securing the safety of the driver, protecting him from any accident or malfunction that non-original parts might cause. This goes beyond brakes and tires to include all parts in the vehicle where any fault might lead to the vehicle become inoperative, or possibly accidents compromising the safety of passengers. Chevrolet provides its clients original spare parts, used worldwide to guarantee passenger safety and vehicle performance, which positively reflects on resale value.



AL-TIJARI ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-NAJMA ACCOUNT DRAW

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the Al-Najma Account daily draw yesterday. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry represented by Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The winners of the Al-Najma daily draw are:

- Hasna Awad Shather — KD 7000,
- Abdulreda Mohamed Merza Iskandry — KD 7000,
- Mohammed Waseem Akhtar Shawkat Ali — KD 7000,
- Mohammad Mustafa Al-Mahameed — KD 7000,
- Soumi Aadam — KD 7000.

Al-Najma awards are now brighter and bigger than ever with the revamped Al-Najma account, all your dreams will be turned to reality. On top of offering the highest daily prize in Kuwait for KD 7,000, now our Mega prize draws got bigger to reach KD 250,000.

The new prizes scheme for Al-Najma account. Daily draw to win KD 7000, Quarterly draws to win great prizes that would start from KD 100,000 to KD 250,000

- 1ST QUARTER — KD 100,000
- 2ND QUARTER — KD 150,000
- 3RD QUARTER — KD 200,000
- 4TH QUARTER — KD 250,000

With Al-Najma you have more chances to win greater prizes

- Each KD 25 kept in your account gives you one chance to win
- Each KD 25 kept in your account for one week will give you a chance to enter the daily draw.
- Each KD 25 kept in your account for 3 months will give you chance to enter the quarterly draw.



GULF BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF FEBRUARY MONTH CAMPAIGN

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank recently announced the names of the 30 lucky winners of its February month promotion "Spend More & Win More" with Gulf Rewards, whereby credit cardholders were offered the chance to win Gulf Points, by entering a raffle draw upon using their credit cards locally or abroad. The draw was held on Wednesday 15 March 2017 in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Gulf Bank would like to congratulate Saeed A M Alsalem, who won the grand prize of 1 Million Gulf Points and Majdi A M Alsaleh, who won the second grand prize of 500,000 Gulf Points.

The bank also announced other 28 lucky winners who won 100,000 Gulf Points each: Jatinder Singh, Abdullah A Albannay, Eiman M Hassan, Maria

Christina, Fahad Mahdi Albusairi, Montaha M H Aljohar, Benjamin Jr Capoon, Suhair K Alsaleh, Saad A Aziz H Juma, Maysa A A Alnassar, Khaled Shamikh Alrashidi, Thukkathi A M Iqbal, Walid A Hasanin, Saad M Aladwani, Dr Jamil S Nasr, Abdulwahab E Alazmi, Najat Khaleel Abbas, Mohammad S H Alhulail, Hilal M Al-Mutairi, Maha Ali Alrefai, Alia A Aseel, Ahmed A Almkhaizeem, Mohammad F A Ali Karam, Khaled Y A A Alali, Rezam M Y Alroumi, Badreah Ali Fahad, Salah F Almohammad, Jobin Joseph.

Gulf Bank is committed to providing its customers with exceptional value and exciting offers that meet their needs, in addition to, presenting them with one of the widest ranges of financial products and banking services currently available in Kuwait.

SEATTLE PLANT FAILURE DUMPS MILLIONS OF GALLONS OF SEWAGE

SEATTLE: Millions of gallons of raw sewage and untreated runoff have poured into the United States' second-largest estuary since a massive sewage treatment plant experienced equipment failures that forced it to stop fully treating Seattle's waste. The county-run facility has been hobbling along at about half-capacity since the Feb. 9 electrical failure resulted in catastrophic flooding that damaged an underground network of pumps, motors, electric panels and other gear.

The sewage treatment plant - Washington state's largest - is only partially treating dirty water that goes down Seattle toilets and washes off roofs and roads before discharging it into Puget Sound. It's likely to face fines for violating federal clean-water laws. "It has been a disaster, and we're not out of it yet. We still don't know really what went wrong," said Jeanne Kohl-Welles, a King County councilwoman whose district includes the 32-acre West Point Treatment

Plant, on the shores of Puget Sound next to Seattle's largest public park.

"We've got to get a handle on it. I'm very concerned about the environment, the effects on marine life in the sound, public health," she added. County officials say crews have been working around the clock to repair about \$25 million in flood-related damages and bring the plant to full operations by the end of April. They note that raw sewage has not flowed from the plant since Feb 16.

In the meantime, Kohl-Welles and other council members have launched an independent probe. They say they want to know what led to the breakdown and make sure this type of disaster doesn't happen again. The sewage spill is a potential black eye for a region that prides itself on its environmental consciousness. Years of work have gone into trying to clean up the nation's second-largest estuary, a vast inlet where water from the Pacific Ocean mixes with water draining from thousands of streams and rivers. One recent effort banned boats from dumping raw or partially treated sewage.

No widespread restrictions

In all, about 30 million gallons of raw sewage have poured into Puget Sound - during the initial breakdown and on two other occasions. "That's a big deal," said Heather Bartlett, water quality manager for the state Department of Ecology. There hasn't been a treatment-plant spill of this magnitude in recent memory. The county is in violation of its clean-water permit until the facility is fully

operational. "The longer it goes on, the greater the probability of an environmental effect," she added.

Untreated sewage and storm water can be harmful to people and aquatic life because they release chemicals and disease-causing germs. People also can get sick eating shellfish contaminated with bacteria from waste; however, most Seattle beaches are closed to shellfish harvesting, and the spill has so far led to no widespread restrictions. "Anytime pollution goes into the sound, it's a concern," said Sheida Sahandy, who directs the Puget Sound Partnership, the state agency in charge of cleaning up the sound.

But water-quality monitoring is in place, repairs are underway and an independent investigation will determine what happened, she said. Wastewater moving through the plant is getting primary treatment. Dirty water is screened to remove trash and debris, with some solids settling out, before it's disinfected, de-chlorinated and released through a 300-foot-deep emergency pipe designed to diffuse the waste into rapid currents. Since Feb 9, there has been no secondary treatment, a process that relies on beneficial organisms to clean the waste and is required by federal clean-water laws.

Making changes

Beaches that closed because of the initial spill reopened Feb 21. County officials have been sampling weekly since the spill. Tests of fecal bacteria, dissolved oxygen and nutrients have been normal. "So far, we have not seen

anything that looks out of the realm of normal," said Kimberle Stark, who manages King County's marine monitoring program. She doesn't expect to see other effects to wildlife because the spill was short and the flow is now being sent through deep-water pipe. Linda Peters, who lives near the plant, said she runs in the area twice a week and can still smell the sewage.

"The idea that sewage is in the water is just terrible," Peters said. "The fact that it could happen and that it wasn't anticipated - it's disturbing." Events unfolded quickly in the early hours of Feb. 9. Power went out to two sets of pumps that discharge treated wastewater into Puget Sound. Float switches designed to detect high water levels inside the tanks also failed, allowing water to top over and flood surrounding areas. Crews worked fast to divert the flows to bypass the plant and go directly into the sound, but the flooding damage was done.

While rain did not cause the electrical failure that set problems in motion, it certainly exacerbated it, said Robert Waddle, plant operations manager. The facility typically handles about 90 million gallons a day, but it was near peak with 440 million gallons because of heavy rain. In the meantime, crews have been working hard to get the plant up and running, replacing motors, lights, pumps and other equipment. As the plant puts things back together, Waddle said they're making changes and adding redundant systems in some cases. "My job is to make sure it doesn't happen again," Waddle said. —AP



CALIFORNIA: In this file photo, the Tijuana River flows near Dairy Mart Road in San Ysidro, California. —AP

NEW YORK SKYSCRAPERS ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

BUILDINGS DESIGNED TO EVOLVE AROUND GLOBAL WARMING

NEW YORK: With a skyline crowded with ever-more luxury towers, the construction of another Manhattan skyscraper wouldn't normally be remarkable. But the American Copper Buildings going up on the East River - a complex of two towers with 764 apartments, panoramic views and a huge entrance hall with a doorman-is different.

Planned just after deadly Hurricane Sandy ravaged New York in October 2012 sounding another alarm about the mounting effects of climate change - it was designed with new threats in mind, reflecting how the real estate world is evolving to account for global warming, in contrast to US President Donald Trump's moves to roll back environmental protection. The huge storm killed more than 40 people in New York, paralyzing the US financial capital for days.

JDS, the company developing the American Copper Buildings, bought the land for the project around the same time. "The whole

thing was a lake, we could have toured the site in a canoe," said Simon Koster, a principal at the company. "We knew something like that would happen again," he added. "So we said, 'How can we make sure that if we lived here, we will not be facing that scenario?' So we let the designers loose."

Tools to survive

One of the main innovations was to ensure residents have access to electricity as long as possible in the event of an outage in the city. Instead of planning an opulent penthouse on the top floor, the architects reserved space for big natural-gas generators designed to keep key equipment functioning if the power fails. Although the machines are situated "in the most valuable real estate of this building," Koster said, "it makes all the other units all the more valuable."

"We are going to have more of these events, it's just being strategic and smart about how you pre-

pare for them," architect Gregg Pasquarelli said. "If we lose power, if you can go up and down in the elevator and your refrigerator works and you have one outlet available that you charge your phone on, you can probably survive in New York for a week," he added. Every kitchen has two electrical outlets reserved for refrigerators connected to a back-up circuit fed by the generators.

That means smartphones can be charged during a breakdown. Traditionally relegated to the basement, the heating, ventilation and large electrical equipment have been installed on the first floor instead, more than 20 feet above the street to minimize the risk of flooding. The main entrance hall is large and austere, with steel pillars and floor tiling designed for outside use.

Wood-paneled walls warm the atmosphere-but the open side panels can dry easily with no damage in the event of flooding. The building's

cheapest studios will be available for rent starting from \$3,000 a month, and include the luxury perks of access to a swimming pool and huge terrace with views of the Empire State Building in addition to the more prosaic bonus of flood resistance.

Embracing resilience

New York is embracing resilient architecture more than most cities in the country because its exorbitantly priced real estate drives up the financial stakes, says Alex Wilson, president of the Vermont-based Resilient Design Institute, which specializes in such issues. Besides electricity, architects are also coming up with ways of providing drinking water-with accessible faucets for everyone now obligatory on lower floors-as well as maintaining reasonable temperatures.

In the event of a summer power outage, "a lot of condominiums are heavily glazed and would become uninhabitable," Wilson said. The city is identifying the most vulnerable existing buildings for adaptation. However, the obstacles for reconstructing older structures are greater than integrating flood resistance during the construction of new projects such as the Copper Buildings - and so are the costs - Wilson said. Politics may also get in the way.

The Trump administration plans to slash the Environmental Protection Agency's budget, which may affect the collection of data to assess weak infrastructure. "If the government stops collecting the data on flooding vulnerabilities, heat waves, then it's going to be harder for the design and development communities to incorporate changes in their design," Wilson said.

Still, he's optimistic the government's rejection of science about the effects of climate change will have only a temporary effect. "The private sector is well aware of this, the insurance industry is increasingly aware of this and these industries will continue to drive progress in resilience." —AFP



TOKYO: A young boy views at a replica of a Fukuiraptor Kitadaniensis, during an exhibition sponsored by the local government of the Fukui prefecture in Tokyo. —AP photos

NEW IDEA SHAKES UP DINOSAUR FAMILY TREE FOR T REX AND PALS

WASHINGTON: Tyrannosaurus Rex and his buddies could be on the move as a new study proposes a massive shake-up of the dinosaur family tree. Scientists who took a deeper look at dinosaur fossils suggest a different evolutionary history for dinosaurs, moving theropods such as T. Rex to a new branch of the family tree and hinting at an earlier and more northern origin for dinosaurs.

The revised dinosaur tree makes more sense than the old one, initially designed more than a century ago based on hip shape, said Matt Baron, a paleontology doctoral student at the University of Cambridge in England. He is the lead author of the study in Wednesday's journal Nature. "If the authors are correct, this really turns our longstanding understanding of dinosaur evolution upside down!" Kristi Curry Rogers, a paleontologist at Macalester College in Minnesota who wasn't part of the study, wrote in an email.

Dinosaurs are split into two groups. One group has bird-like hips and is called Ornithischia (or-ni-THISS'-kee-a). It includes the stegosaurus. The group with reptile-like hips is called Saurischia (saw-RIS'-kee-a), and includes the brontosaurus. Theropods, which include T Rex and the type of dinosaurs that later evolved into modern day birds, were considered an offshoot from the group that includes the brontosaurus. The new study moves them to the group that includes the stegosaurus, but on a different branch.

"It means that animals that we've always thought were very closely related to each other might not be," said Rogers,

who praised the study, saying it prompts a whole bunch of new questions. Baron and colleagues looked at 450 characteristics of 75 dinosaur species. They used computer simulations to try to group together those with similar characteristics, creating tens of thousands of potential dinosaur family trees. The proposed one combines the 80 most likely scenarios, he said.

It may sound like an academic exercise, but it's important to understand how big animals changed with time, Baron said, noting that the dinosaurs ruled Earth for more than 150 million years. His research suggests that dinosaurs popped up 247 million years ago - 10 million years earlier than the standard theory says - with a dinosaur from Tanzania in East Africa. It's called Nyasasaurus, was 6 to 10 feet tall and a plant-eater.

He also found an animal that's not quite a dinosaur, but as close as you can get, that is a reptilian ancestor. And it was in Scotland. Previous theories pointed to dinosaurs first evolving out of the Southern Hemisphere and many outside scientists said there wasn't enough evidence to support Baron's northern concept.

The paper is already dividing dinosaur experts. Famed dinosaur expert Paul Sereno at University of Chicago called the basis of the Baron family tree "weak" and said "the central question the paper leaves unanswered for me is why?" Matthew Carrano, dinosaur curator at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum, said it's hard to side with any theory because early dinosaur fossil records are so incomplete. —AP



NEW YORK: A model of the building stands in a room inside the American Copper Building at 626 First Avenue in New York. —AFP

PEOPLE WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES NEED TO GET OFF THEIR CHAIRS

NEW YORK: People with type 2 diabetes who sit all day have a riskier blood fat mixture than those who move around or exercise periodically throughout the day, according to researchers in Australia. "We have previously shown that interrupting prolonged sitting with light intensity activity after meals reduces risk factors for heart disease and diabetes, such as elevated blood sugars and high blood pressure," said lead author Dr. Megan S. Grace from Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute and Monash University in Melbourne.

Past research has also shown that patients with type 2 diabetes have an altered blood fat profile that contributes to inflammation and insulin resistance and that exercise can improve this profile. "What we found interesting about this study was that breaking up sitting also reduces levels of lipids (fats) in the bloodstream that are associated with risk for type 2 diabetes and its complications," Grace said by email.

"Our study showed that breaks which include either simple resistance exercise or light walking were generally equally beneficial in reducing

blood lipids." Researchers looked at blood lipid profiles in 21 overweight or obese adults with type 2 diabetes under three different conditions: sitting throughout the day (rising only to use the bathroom); breaking up sitting by light walking for three minutes every 30 minutes; and breaking up sitting by doing light exercise like squats and knee raises for three minutes every 30 minutes.

During sitting, and especially after meals, the lipid profile reflected an inflammatory state that also lacked the antioxidants needed to fight inflammation, according to the results in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism. Both light walking and light exercise changed this profile into one that was less inflammatory and had a greater capacity for fighting inflammation. Light exercise also improved fat-burning capacity.

"Our current findings reinforce the message that avoiding prolonged periods of sitting, and finding ways to increase activity across the day, is beneficial for health," Grace said. "In line with the recent American Diabetes Association Position Statement, we recommend interrupting

sitting every 30 minutes with a few minutes of light intensity activity, in addition to regularly taking part in a structured exercise program."

Her best advice: "Stand up, sit less, and move more - particularly after meals." "The results are novel and important because they identified new mechanisms to explain why sitting time has been linked with poor health," said Dr. Sarah Kozey-Keadle from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, who has studied ways to reduce sitting time and increase physical activity.

"Although not directly addressed in this report, the most important message related to physical activity is that exercise can prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes and prevent complications for those who already have type 2 diabetes," she told Reuters Health by email.

"The second message is that there are health benefits for replacing and breaking up sitting time with activities that are not considered exercise, such as standing and lower intensity activities of daily living, especially for people who are currently less active," Kozey-Keadle said. —Reuters



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, a cast of a Tyrannosaurus rex discovered in Montana greets visitors as they enter the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington.



TAIBA HOSPITAL HOSTS ENDOMETRIOSIS AWARENESS EVENT

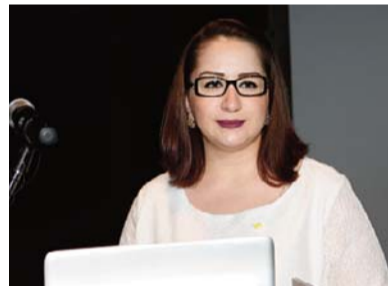
On Saturday March 25 2017, Taiba Hospital hosted a supportive campaign for the World Million Women March aiming to raise awareness about Endometriosis, at Yarmouk Cultural Centre, Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah. The event witnessed large crowds of women and girls of all ages, who listened to the guest speaker Mrs. Zaina Al-Zaben. She started her speech by addressing the importance of women taking care of their health, through regular checkups to ensure they don't have Endometriosis, which cannot be easily diagnosed.

Dr. Salma Kayani, Head of OBGYN Department, presented a lecture on the disease explaining the importance of early detection; she said "Large number of patients don't have any idea of the disease, which is very serious and dangerous because Endometriosis affects health and fertility." Dr. Kayani



Dr. Salma Kayani, Head of OBGYN Department at Taiba Hospital

pointed out that, "Endometriosis has several treatment options from medicines to surgery, according to each patient's case." She emphasized that, "Cure for Endometriosis is possible, but raised the point that the disease can evolve into cancer, if left undiagnosed." Dr. Kayani praised Taiba Hospital's



Layla Al-Awad

efforts in raising awareness as the first hospital in the Middle East for taking an official stand in facing Endometriosis, and she highly appreciated the hospital's care and support given to women facing this chronic disease. At the event, one of Dr. Kayani's patients shared her experience in dealing with Endometriosis. She thanked Taiba Hospital and Dr. Salma



Zaina Al-Zabin

Kayani for their personalized and professional attention.

She had a complicated case that she could eventually find relief from, after a long journey of suffering, and she advised the other women to get themselves checked and receive early treatment to avoid complications. Dr. Kayani then welcomed questions from

the audience and answered them, highlighting all aspects of disease. On behalf of Taiba Hospital, the Deputy CEO Rashid Al-Fadalah thanked Dr. Kayani and Zaben, adding, "Taiba Hospital is committed to its core values of supporting and raising awareness of Endometriosis by bringing the World Million Women March to the Middle East for the last 4 years."

He added, "Taiba Hospital will never compromise in doing our best in offering the best cures from around the world, because women's health is our priority and it is our responsibility to keep them healthy." The participants also marched at the venue, in support of the World Million Women March to raise awareness about Endometriosis, and took group photos to commemorate the event.

Dr. Salma Kayani, Consultant and Head of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Department and Director of Endometriosis Center at Taiba Hospital, is the Kuwait Chair for Endometriosis. She has been formally trained in the medical and surgical treatment of Endometriosis by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (RCOG).

She is internationally recognized and is an authority on Endometriosis with many international publications. She is among the pioneers who developed Endometriosis services in the UK and has been providing this state-of-the-art service in Kuwait for the last four and a half years.

In 2013, Dr. Salma together with the support of Taiba Hospital Senior Management established a dedicated medical and surgical service of an international standard for the treatment of Endometriosis, which was recognized by leading world organizations.

CLINIC

PAGE

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Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem

د. فهد علي المخيزيم

استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368



AL-SAAD CHARITY HOLDS FIRST BAZAAR TO SUPPORT CREATIVE KUWAITI STUDENTS

Al-Saad Charity for Knowledge and Scientific Research recently launched its first charity bazaar at Sheikha mariam Saad Al-Abdullah Ballroom in Qadisiya to use its revenues in supporting female Kuwaiti

students with creative skills in science, math and technology. In this regard, the charity chairperson Sheikha Fadia Al-Saad stressed that the charity efforts come within its role in highlighting students' potentials, developing them

and handling any weaknesses. She added that the charity works hard on investing in female human resources so that participating Kuwaiti girls could grow up into empowered capable women in various fields. On her part,

sheikha Hala Bader Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah stressed the significance of holding charity bazaars to support activities and small projects that would eventually benefit everybody.



GULF BANK HOLDS EXCITING OPEN DAY FOR ITS EMPLOYEES

Gulf Bank organized its annual open day, bringing together employees and their families in a fun gathering. Under the theme 'Our Gathering is Unique', the event was held on Friday, 10 March 2017. This annual event reflects Gulf Bank's commitment to its employees and is one of the ways the Bank acknowledges the team's hard work, loyalty and their ongoing contribu-

tions to the success of the Bank. Gulf Bank was sure to include everyone in this open day, with activities catering to adults and children alike. The day was filled with a variety of activities including children's entertainment like mascots and balloons' shows. Gulf Bank's team, along with their families, enjoyed playing sports activities such as soccer, volleyball, ping-pong, and basketball.

Other activities and entertainment also included: Card games such Kout Bo 6; Kuwaiti Aradah - Al-Janaderia; Palestinian Dabkah; a Yemeni band show; an Indian dance performance; a Kuwaiti concert; and the Bank's talent show! To wrap up the event, Gulf Bank held its open day raffle draw, with valuable prizes for the lucky winners.

While presenting the prizes to the winners, Mrs. Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources, said: "We wanted to recognize the contributions of all of Gulf Bank's employees, whose hard work and commitment are essential to the success of the Bank. We are proud that our working environment encourages teamwork spirit, collaboration, and innovation and inspires commitment. We

are delighted that our staff and families were able to attend this event and enjoy the variety of activities."

Gulf Bank values the dedication of its employees, and expresses its appreciation for their hard work and loyalty by regularly holding various events throughout the year, as well as providing them with exclusive offers for their own benefit.



AL BABBAIN GROUP, KUWAIT CENTRAL BLOOD BANK ORGANIZE BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

Al Babbain Group recently organized a blood donation initiative for its employees in collaboration with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank, for the second consecutive year. The latest initiative to increase the blood stock in the country aims at helping medical facilities save lives. The event took place, at Nissan Al Babbain showroom

located in Al-Rai area. Driven by its Social Corporate Responsibility commitment to being a positive force in the community, the Al Babbain Group is proud to help meeting the needs of Kuwait Central Blood Bank. The initiative also aims to raise awareness about the importance of our individual contribution in enhancing solidarity and

improving health in our society, even through small acts of kindness. Blood donation is a simple act, and Al Babbain Group encourages more people and organizations to donate as to ensure the wellness the society.

Employees of all Al Babbain Group volunteered to donate blood to the Kuwait Central Blood Bank. The

donation process was managed by a dedicated team from the Kuwait Central Blood Bank, who tested all donors to ensure donation eligibility. Al Babbain Group's latest campaign is part of its several Corporate Social Responsibility strategies that highlights the importance of giving back to society.



EMBASSY OF BELGIUM IN KUWAIT, KWA HOLDS POETRY NIGHT 'OMSSIAH'

By Faten Omar

The embassy of Belgium in Kuwait, in collaboration with the Kuwaiti Writer's Association (KWA) held a poetry night 'Omssiyah', in French and Arabic by the Belgian Moroccan poet and writer Taha Adnan, on Wednesday at KWA's premises. The event came on the occasion of the International Francophonie Day and one year after the Brussels attacks, it was moderated by Kuwaiti novelist Taleb Al Refai.

Andy Detaille, Ambassador of Belgium to Kuwait, honored the poet Adnan during the event. "The Francophonie defends cultural diversity, since cultural diversity constitutes an important part of mankind's inheritance," he said. The Ambassador thanked Dr. Talal Al-Rumeidhi, board member of Kuwait Writers' Association and Association of Culture Forum for participating cultural activities.

Meanwhile, Adnan has lived for several years in Brussels.

He read during the event some selection of his poems that he wrote about the Brussels attack where he asked ISIS if God created all kind of people in the whole world just to torture them. He described Brussels and how it allowed all people who lived there to communicate with their different languages and backgrounds.

The Poet Taha Adnan was born 2 August 1970 in Assfi, Morocco. He grew up in Marrakech and since 1996 lives in Brussels, working in the Ministry for Francophone Education. He has published three collections of poetry in Arabic and one in French entitled Transparences (L'Arbre & Paroles, Belgium, 2006). He organizes an annual Arabic literary festival, Al-Salon al-Adabi in Brussels. Grew up in Marrakech and moved to Brussels in 1996. He runs the Brussels Arabic Literary Salon and co-ordinates Arabic Love Poetry in Belgium. His poems have been translated into French and Spanish. He won second prize at the 2011 International Arab Festival of Monodrama in the United Arab Emirates.



Andy Detaille, Ambassador of Belgium to Kuwait



JUMEIRAH MESSILAH BEACH HOTEL AND SPA SHINES A LIGHT ON CLIMATE ACTION

On Saturday March 25th at 8:30 pm, the luxurious resort joined millions of people around the globe to mark Earth Hour by turning off the non-essential lights and other electrical appliances in a move to raise awareness for the need to take action against climate change. Surrounded by the hotel team, General Manager,

Hakan Petek, said: "Earth Hour is an extraordinary initiative that unites people around the world to protect our planet, which is in line with our strong commitment to environmental responsibility and practicing sustainability. Since our opening in May 2013, it is one of the activities that we uphold and we have been at the forefront in driving an

impact for a greener future every year." As part of the milestone, the event brought together hotel colleagues for a human alphabet group photo spelling out the word Earth Hour which was filmed from above the property and is shared on the hotel's social media accounts. On the night of the event, colleagues observed Earth Hour in

their accommodations and demonstrated their support by turning off all their unnecessary lights. Since 2015, the luxury resort has been recognized by Green Globe for its dedication to sustainable management and operations, which represents the hotel's long-term pledge to sustainable practices.



LAPA PRESENTS 'ISMAIL SABILIYYAT' MONODRAMA PLAY

On the occasion of celebrating the World Theatre Day and in the presence of NCCAL's secretary general, Ali Al-Youha and his assistant, Mohammed Al-Assoussi, LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) recently presented the 'Ismail Sabiliyyat' monodrama play

at Al-Dasma theatre stage. The play is based on Ismail Fahad Ismail's book with the same name.

The monodrama played by actress Shirine Hajji directed by Rasoul Al-Sagheer tells the story of Um Qassim, an Iraqi widow who lost her husband during

the Iraqi Iranian war after they had to leave their village. On his death, the husband asks her to bury him back in their home village of Sabiliyyat.

At the sidelines of celebrating the World Theatre Day, LOYAC's board chairperson, Fare'a Al-Sagqaf honored veter-

an Kuwaiti novelist Ismail Fahad Ismail who also expressed his joy with LOYAC's efforts in supporting Kuwaiti theatre and young talented artists. Ismail also announced that arrangements had been made with Kuwait's consol in Irbil to perform the monodrama there.

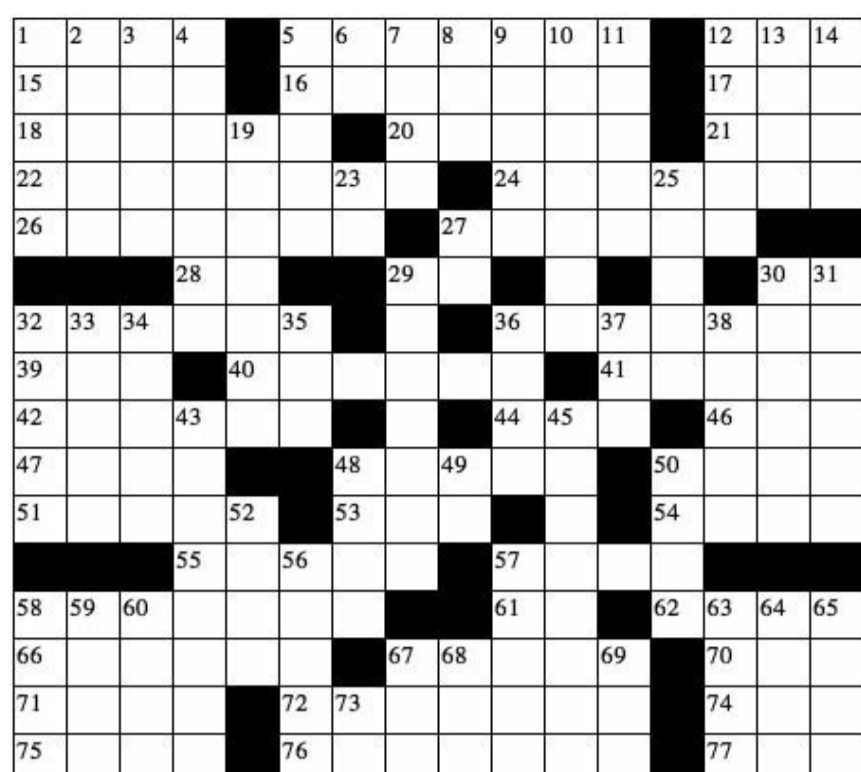
TRADE EXHIBITION

Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) Pakistan, in collaboration with Pakistan Embassy and Kuwait Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI), is organizing a Trade Exhibition inside the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) with effect from 27th March, 2017 for two days.

Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI), established in 1982, is one of the premier business chambers of Pakistan having more than 8000 membership and is known world-over for rich industrial heritage. This is second time, in less than two years, that the SCCI are exhibiting their trade potential in Kuwait.

Under this 2-Day Trade Exhibition on 27th & 28th March, 2017, the trade potential of Pakistan in the range of products like surgical instruments, sportswear, leather & factory garments (including working gloves), martial arts uniforms, ceramic & sanitary wear and military uniform accessories etc will be showcased.

CROSSWORD 1560



ACROSS

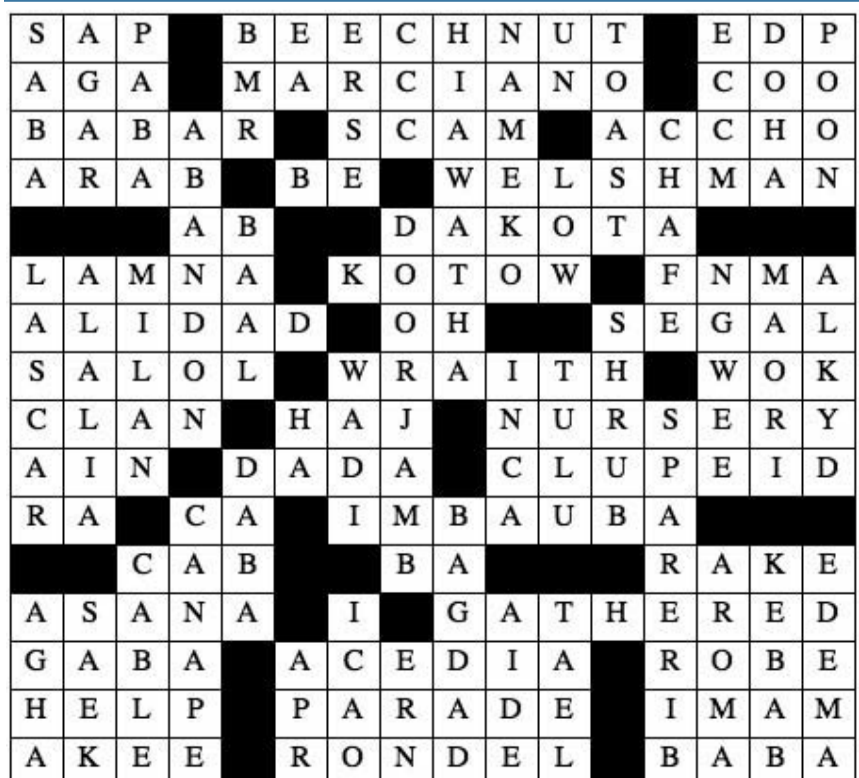
- 1. A port in western Israel on the Mediterranean.
5. Unpleasantly harsh or grating in sound.
12. Support resembling the rib of an animal.
15. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
16. Large snake mackerel with rings like spectacles around its eyes.
17. Canadian hockey player (born 1948).
18. A cavity in the mesoderm of an embryo that gives rise in humans to the pleural cavity and pericardial cavity and peritoneal cavity.
20. With rapid movements.
21. The cry made by sheep.
22. Having a margin with rounded scallops.
24. Rich in significance or implication.
26. The first of the Old Testament patriarchs and the father of Isaac.
28. A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
32. A member of an agricultural people of southern India.
39. A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
40. Activity involved in maintaining something in good working order.
41. A game in which numbered balls are drawn and random and players cover the corresponding numbers on their cards.
42. A shrub or tree of the genus Rhus (usually limited to the non-poisonous members of the genus).
44. (computer science) A coding system that incorporates extra parity bits in order to detect errors.
46. Of a light yellowish-brown color n 1.
47. Large genus of erect or climbing prickly shrubs including roses.
51. A particular environment or walk of life.
53. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
54. (Greek mythology) Greek god of war.
55. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
58. A Dravidian language spoken in southern India.
61. A substance produced by the hypothalamus that is capable of accelerating the secretion of a given hormone by the anterior pituitary gland.
62. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
66. A landlocked republic in eastern Africa.
70. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
71. Type genus of the Rutaceae.
72. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
74. One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
75. (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.
76. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
77. A young woman making her debut into society.

DOWN

- 1. West Indian evergreen with medium to long leaves.
2. Sour or bitter in taste.
3. A party who files a notice with a law court.

- 4. Dragonflies and damselflies.
5. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
6. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
7. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
8. (of music or art) New and of general appeal (especially among young people).
9. Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinted fruit.
10. A streamlined enclosure for an aircraft engine.
11. Relatively large in size or number or extent.
12. Small Old World songbird with a reddish breast.
13. A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
14. (informal) Exceptionally good.
19. Shrubby tree widely distributed along tropical shores.
23. The square of a body of any size of type.
25. Sound of any kind (especially unintelligible or dissonant sound).
27. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
29. An island state in the West Indies in the southeastern Caribbean Sea.
30. A social unit living together.
31. Any handsome young man.
33. Find repugnant.
34. Put out, as of a candle or a light.
35. A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
36. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
37. A mature blood cell that contains hemoglobin to carry oxygen to the bodily tissues.
38. A member of the Mongolian people of central Asia who invaded Russia in the 13th century.
43. (Irish) God of the sea.
45. A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade name Cataflam).
48. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
49. Being one hundred more than three hundred.
50. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
52. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
56. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
57. Annual to perennial herbs of the Mediterranean region.
59. A fit of shivering.
60. An international organization created in 1949 by the North Atlantic Treaty for purposes of collective security.
63. Set down according to a plan.
64. An enclosure made of wire or metal bars in which birds or animals are kept.
65. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
67. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
68. Horny projecting mouth of a bird.
69. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
73. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It is difficult to stay inside today. This may mean chores inside keep you from the beauty of the out-of-doors but more than likely it is just that the responsibilities of this day seem to multiply and you would rather be somewhere else; join the club.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

There are much imagination and creativity when it comes to creative thinking. These insights, coupled with the ability to put your thoughts into words, allow you to captivate and spellbind. You could be seen by others as just the person to be put in charge of some project requiring a conservative mind.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This can be one of your better days for communication and understanding. Out-of-town friends or distant family may want to visit with you and your new family. If your home or family is not equipped to handle company, perhaps a meeting place between cities can make available a get-together.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Changes are in the air and you are looking forward to positive results. This is one of your better days for money. You will be successful-do not push too hard. Throughout today you will receive the best results for your efforts if you practice patience and perseverance.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Taking care of business is a major theme where your emotional orientation is concerned. You crave organization and practicality and you want to get things accomplished. Outer circumstances tend to work in your favor. You may find that you are more organized than before, able to reach new levels of self-discipline.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your organizational skills come into play this morning and help you to complete a difficult project. Your intuition will lead you into important directions. A co-worker may come to visit or perhaps this person goes to the same religious setting that you attend.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

As you help someone today with advice as well as your sympathy, you will be helping yourself. Rewards are for the taking at this time. You may, however, need to think things over before you sign on a dotted line.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your psychic senses are in focus today. Your creative side is active and you could come up with some wonderful ideas that will bring monetary rewards. You may perceive how to proceed with plans and decisions regarding your life situation.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This is a productive day. You could be most persuasive with others and can strategize to everyone's benefit. You may have difficulty concentrating on mundane things-but, your psychic awareness is enhanced and you will intuitively know what is being asked of you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today is a great time to be with others and to work together. Work, health, diet and the other things that take care of us if we take care of them can provide a lot of satisfaction. These things can lead to love and a new self-image, if you stick with them.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Taking care of some personal business is a major theme where your emotional orientation is concerned. You crave organization and practicality and you want to get things accomplished. Sometime today you may be looking for intellectual stimulation in your reading material.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your personal life calls for the solving of challenges. It takes little time for your analytical mind to move through the problems. You will be able to tackle tasks that require real discipline. You could find that you are appreciated or valued for your ability to respond where you are needed.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Songs From the Year 2000

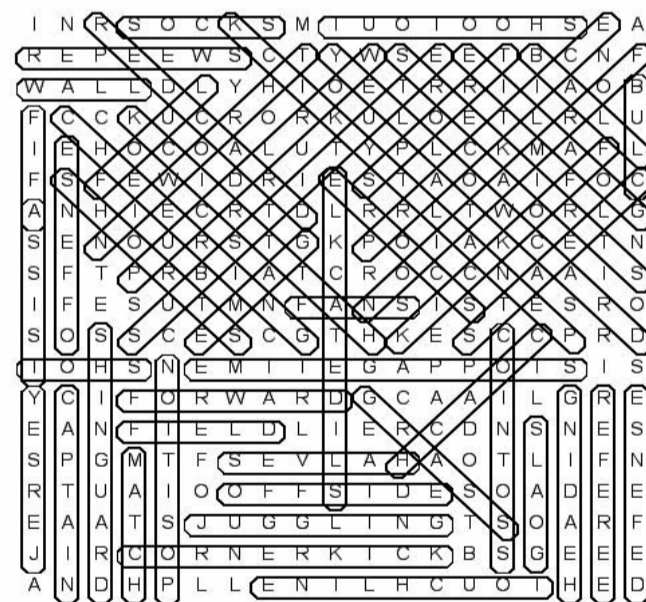
Find and circle all of the songs from the year 2000 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 29 letters spell an additional song title from 2000.



- AMAZED AMERICAN PIE BACK AT ONE BACK HERE BAG LADY BE WITH YOU BEAUTIFUL DAY BENT BREATHE BROADWAY BYE BYE BYE
CALIFORNICATION DESERT ROSE FADED GIRL ON TV HIGHER HOT BOYZ I LIKE IT I NEED YOU I TRY I WANNA KNOW I WISH
INCOMPLETE JUMPIN' JUMPIN' KRYPTONITE LUCKY MARIA MARIA MEET VIRGINIA MINORITY MOST GIRLS MUSIC NO MORE OTHERSIDE
PINCH ME SAY MY NAME SEPARATED SHE BANGS SMOOTH STAN STRONGER THERE YOU GO TRY AGAIN WIFEY WONDERFUL

Yesterday's Solution

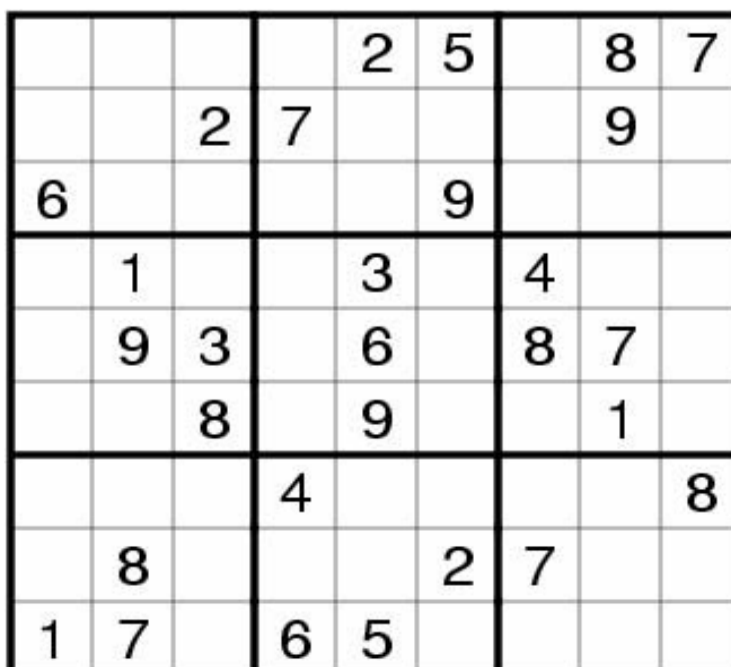
Soccer



- ASSIST BALL CAPTAIN CHEERING CLEATS CLUBS COACH COIN TOSS CORNER KICK DEFENSE FANS FIELD FIFA
FORMATION FORWARD FOUL GAME GOALIE GOALS GRASS HALVES HAT TRICK HEADING JERSEY JUGGLING KICK-OFF
MATCH OFFENSE PENALTY KICK POSITION PRACTICE RED CARD REFEREE SCORE SHIN GUARD SHOOT-OUT SHORTS
SLIDE TACKLE SOCKS SPORT STOPPAGE TIME STRIKERS SUBSTITUTE SWEEPER THROW-IN TOUCHLINE WALL WORLD CUP YELLOW CARD

The hidden message is: IN MANY COUNTRIES SOCCER IS CALLED FOOTBALL

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Table listing hospitals including Sabah Hospital, Amiri Hospital, Maternity Hospital, Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital, Chest Hospital, Farwaniya Hospital, Adan Hospital, Ibn Sina Hospital, Al-Razi Hospital, and Physiotherapy Hospital with their respective phone numbers.

Clinics

Table listing various clinics such as Kaizen center, Rawda, Adaliya, Khaldiya, Kaifan, Shamiya, Shuwaikh, Abdullah Salem, Nuzha, Industrial Shuwaikh, Qadsiya, Dasmah, Bneid Al-Gar, Shaab, Qibla, Ayoun Al-Qibla, Mirqab, Sharq, Salmiya, Jabriya, Maidan Hawally, Bayan, Mishref, W Hawally, Sabah, Jahra, New Jahra, West Jahra, South Jahra, North Jahra, North Jleeb, Ardhiya, Firdous, Omariya, N Khaitan, and Fintas with their phone numbers.



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

Table of 24-hour pharmacies with columns for Governorate, Pharmacy Name, Address, and Phone Number. Locations include Ahmadi, Jahra, Capital, Farwaniya, and Hawally.

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Contact information for the State of Kuwait Meteorological Department: Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817, Fax: (+965) 24348714, www.met.gov.kw

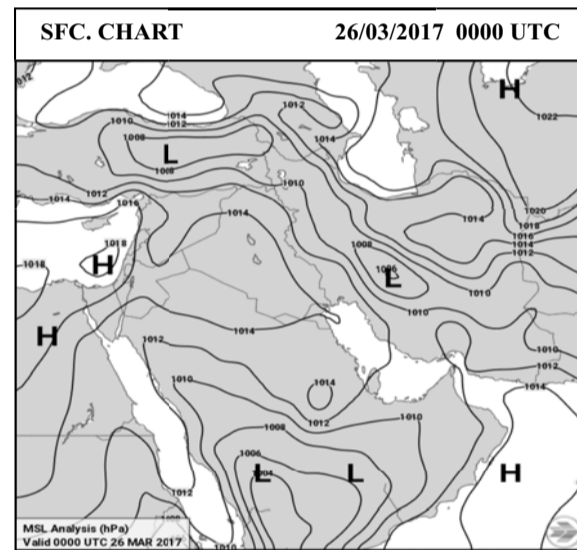
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Sunny with light variable wind changing to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear

BY NIGHT: Fair with light north westerly to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

Table showing weather data for various stations in Kuwait: STATION, MAX. EXP., MIN. REC. Includes locations like KUWAIT CITY, ABDALY, BUBYAN, JAHRA, FAILAKA ISLAND, SALMIYAH, AHMADI, NUWAISIB, WAFRA, and SALMY.



4 DAYS FORECAST table with columns for DAY, DATE, WEATHER, Temperatures (MAX, MIN), Wind Direction, and Wind Speed for Monday through Thursday.

PRAYER TIMES table listing Fajr, Sunrise, Zuhr, Asr, Sunset, and Isha times.

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT table showing MAX. Temp., MIN. Temp., MAX. RH, MIN. RH, MAX. Wind, and TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Large table of international call numbers for various countries including Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Anguilla, Antiga, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bermuda, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Burkina, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Cayman Islands, Central African, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Cyprus (Northern), Czech Republic, Denmark, Diego Garcia, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, England (UK), Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Falkland Islands, Faroe Islands, Fiji, Finland, France, French Guiana, French Polynesia, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Gibraltar, Greece, Greenland, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guam, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Holland (Netherlands), Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ibiza (Spain), Iceland, India, Indian Ocean, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Lesotho, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macau, Macedonia, Madagascar, Majorca, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Martinique, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mexico, Micronesia, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montserrat, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar (Burma), Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Netherlands Antilles, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigar, Nigeria, Niue, Norfolk Island, N. Ireland (UK), North Korea, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Helena, Saint Kitts, Saint Lucia, Saint Pierre, Saint Vincent, Samoa US, Samoa West, San Marino, Sao Tome, Saudi Arabia, Scotland (UK), Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Serbia, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Tokelau, Trinidad, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam, Virgin Islands UK, Virgin Islands US, Wales (UK), Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.



PRIVATE CLINICS

Grid of private clinics categorized by specialty: Ophthalmologists, Plastic Surgeons, Paediatricians, Endocrinologist, Family Doctor, Psychiatrists, Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT), General Practitioners, General Surgeons, Internists, Chest & Heart, Neurologists, Gastrologists, Dermatologist, Dentists, Physiotherapists & VD, Rheumatologists, Consultant Cardiologist, Urologists, Psychologists / Psychotherapists. Each entry includes the doctor's name and contact information.



Cosplayers dressed in fancy costumes have fun in one of the exhibition halls during the Manga-Comic-Con at the International Book Fair in Leipzig, Germany, Saturday, March 25, 2017. Numerous visitors discover the world of illustrated stories at the fourth Manga-Comic-Con. — AP photos

Germany Book Fair Manga



Disney, Universal battle tax bill for Florida theme parks



Cars travel one of the roads leading to Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Fla.



File photo shows the entrance to Sea World is seen, in Orlando, Fla.

It takes a lot of land to accommodate Cinderella's castle, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter and Epcot's 11-country World Showcase - and a hefty purse to pay the property taxes on it. To cut tax bills in the tens of millions of dollars, the specialists at Orlando's famous theme parks have employed methods from the creative - placing cows on undeveloped land and claiming an agricultural exemption - to the traditional - negotiating or appealing to a county board.

Over the past couple of years, however, such tactics aren't quite doing the job: Property assessments and taxes have jumped - and so has the number of lawsuits the theme parks and other businesses have filed against Orange County's property appraiser. That's Rick Singh, who was re-elected to a second four-year term last fall despite the thousands of dollars in donations park officials gave his opponent. In lawsuits filed last year, the theme parks said Singh's office had failed to use proper appraisal methodology. Walt Disney Parks and Resorts issued a statement describing increased assessments on some of its properties for 2015 as "unreasonable and unjustified."

Substantial professional

Beyond such terse statements, officials from Disney, the development arm of Universal Orlando and SeaWorld of Florida are saying very little about an issue they hope to resolve in court. But they have spoken loudly with their wallets. Groups affiliated with all three companies gave \$19,000 to Singh's Republican opponent. Singh, a Democrat, got only \$5,000 from the groups.

The backlash isn't surprising, said Doug Head, chairman of the watchdog group Orange County Watch. Head said the appraiser's position has traditionally been a cushy post for local politicians waiting to retire, but Singh is one of the first to have substantial professional training. "He uses professional expertise, and he clearly figured out there is a lot more value than is properly being reflected," Head said. "He did what he needed to do, and people accustomed to the way business was done weren't happy."

Singh said his methods for assessing properties are no different than those of his predecessors - except when looking at resorts and hotels. Then, he considers their income statements and the local "bed tax" paid by hotel customers, which he said his predecessor didn't use. Income isn't considered when assessing theme parks. "It's a matter of being fair and equitable," Singh said. "If the single mother who is working two jobs has to be held accountable to pay her fair share, so should everybody else."

The importance of the three theme parks to Orange County, which includes Orlando, can't be overstated: The properties owned by Disney, Universal and SeaWorld are valued collectively at about \$10.7 billion.

Properties owned by the largest resort and timeshare companies are worth another \$6.3 billion. The three theme park companies pay 7 percent of the county's property taxes - more than \$135 million last year.

That revenue helps to mitigate the impact of hosting 66 million visitors in 86,000 hotel rooms and 15,500 timeshare units every year,

and to finance law enforcement, schools, parks and public health programs.

Commercial properties

Disney also pays property taxes to a private government established by the Florida Legislature that provides the Disney parks and resorts with services including utilities, roadways and firefighters. Property values for the theme parks, resorts and other large commercial properties are set by a team of almost two dozen of the county's seasoned appraisers in what Singh calls "the most complex tax roll in the world" due to the

constant growth. Singh said the appraisers use a "cost approach" when evaluating theme parks. Tax bills go up not just from rising property values but also from new construction, which is constant at the parks. "What does it cost to improve the land? What does it cost to build this? ... What is the labor cost? Factor in all that and then it depreciates, and that's your cost approach," he said.

But the results are meeting a wall of resistance. Last year, Disney, Universal and SeaWorld filed a dozen lawsuits against Singh's office, the tax collector and the state Department of Revenue. Several other

Orlando resorts also have sued. The companies pay taxes only on their properties' "assessed" values; the "market" values reflect what the properties could be sold for.

SeaWorld is fighting the market and assessed values of its flagship SeaWorld Adventure Park, its Aquatica water park and Discovery Cove, an animal-encounter park. In a separate lawsuit the property appraiser's office filed against SeaWorld in 2015, Singh's office listed a market value of \$192.5 million; SeaWorld listed it at \$143.4 million. Universal is disputing the market value of its 20,000-vehicle parking garage, which has nearly doubled in two years, from \$148.6 million in 2014, to \$297 million in 2016. The garage's assessed value only went up 10 percent a year during that time, however, from \$145 million to \$175 million.

Disney is disputing the assessments of properties including four theme parks, 11 resorts and two water parks. An Associated Press tally of all the properties listed in the lawsuit shows that the appraiser gave them a total market value of more than \$5 billion in 2015. Disney, whose total properties in Orange County have a market value of \$8.2 billion, is not saying publicly what it thinks the value should be. But the company's tax bill from Singh's office jumped from \$84.5 million in 2014 to \$97.2 million in 2015 to \$102.6 million in 2016, an average increase of about 10 percent a year. Those numbers exclude what Disney pays its private government in property taxes. "Similar to other property owners in Orange County, we have no choice but to take action to dispute these errors by the property appraiser," Disney's statement said. — AP



In this file photo, park guests relax and cool off with a water mist under the globe at Universal Studios CityWalk in Orlando, Fla. — AP photos



Models present creations from Hanae Mori by Japanese designer Yu Amatsu.

Innovative fabrics bark up Tokyo fashion tree

Wood fashioned into lace and sculpted into evening dresses: the Hanae Mori Manuscript label led the way this Tokyo Fashion Week in showing the world the original craftsmanship that helps set Japan apart from the crowd. Dresses of persimmon wood lace paired with soft falling black fabric were the star of the show at designer Yu Amatsu's autumn/winter 2017 collection for the brand that left fashionistas giddy with excitement.

Discs of chestnut and walnut were used on a dress of interlocking triangular panels, an homage to Issey Miyake's iconic Bao Bao bag, while wood was fashioned into sleeve ties and delicate butterfly hair pieces. Japan is famous for high-tech and specialty fabrics, which not only supply the likes of Chanel and other celebrated couture houses, but also provide constantly shifting inspiration for homegrown designers. Misha Janette, a Tokyo-based stylist, creative director and blogger who has lived in Japan since 2004, said Japanese fashion was often less about entertainment and more thoughtful with "amazing" material. "They're really, really keen on working with young designers to create new fabrics... that sets them apart," she told AFP. "Each little village has its own special kind of fabric."

Amatsu said the theme of his collection was "combine"-combining fabrics to create something that was both different and more beautiful.

3-D silhouette

The persimmon was originally very hard. "Even the sewing machine needle couldn't go through it," he explained. So he striped it down to 0.14 millimeters wide and bonded it with fabric to make it stronger. He then stitched it into a lace butterfly pattern. "It's quite heavy so when

you move with the dress it makes a 3-D silhouette," he told AFP. Throughout he was careful to preserve the color of the wood, making it look almost like pencil shavings or delicately processed tree bark, and there were belts and statement bags in the same material.

Inspiration comes from the world at large. "I'm always looking around to find something interesting which can be key for new designs, like the movies, music, architecture and so on," he told AFP. But wood was far from the only innovative fabric on the runway this Tokyo Fashion Week, which showcased the work of 52 designers. Husband-and-wife label ROGGYKEI, known best for dressing US superstar Lady Gaga a handful of times, bases itself in Japan's second city of Osaka to be close to specialist fabric factories. The pair have no plans to relocate, recognizing their "made in Japan" heritage was a big boon when they exhibited in Paris in 2012.

Good technique

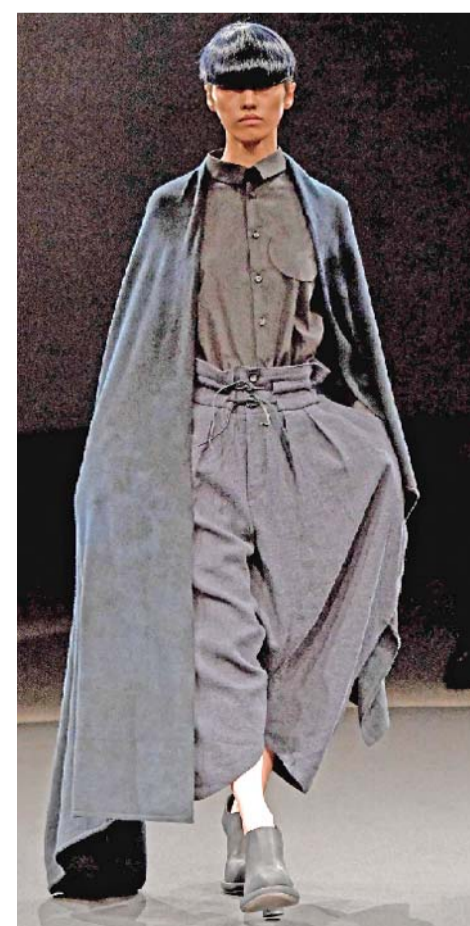
The fabric is 50 percent polyester, 50 percent wool, which designers Hitoshi and Keiko Korogi said makes it more supple. They also use some processed fabrics which they dye and wash. There was a stole made out of a special cashmere woven from Mongolian yarn in Japan's Nara and coated to make it washable and yet prevent pilling. They presented tie-dyed and indigo-dyed stoles too.

ROGGYKEI also used discarded pieces of cloth that would otherwise have been thrown out, and mixed natural materials and chemical fibre. But at least one Japanese designer with an emphasis on

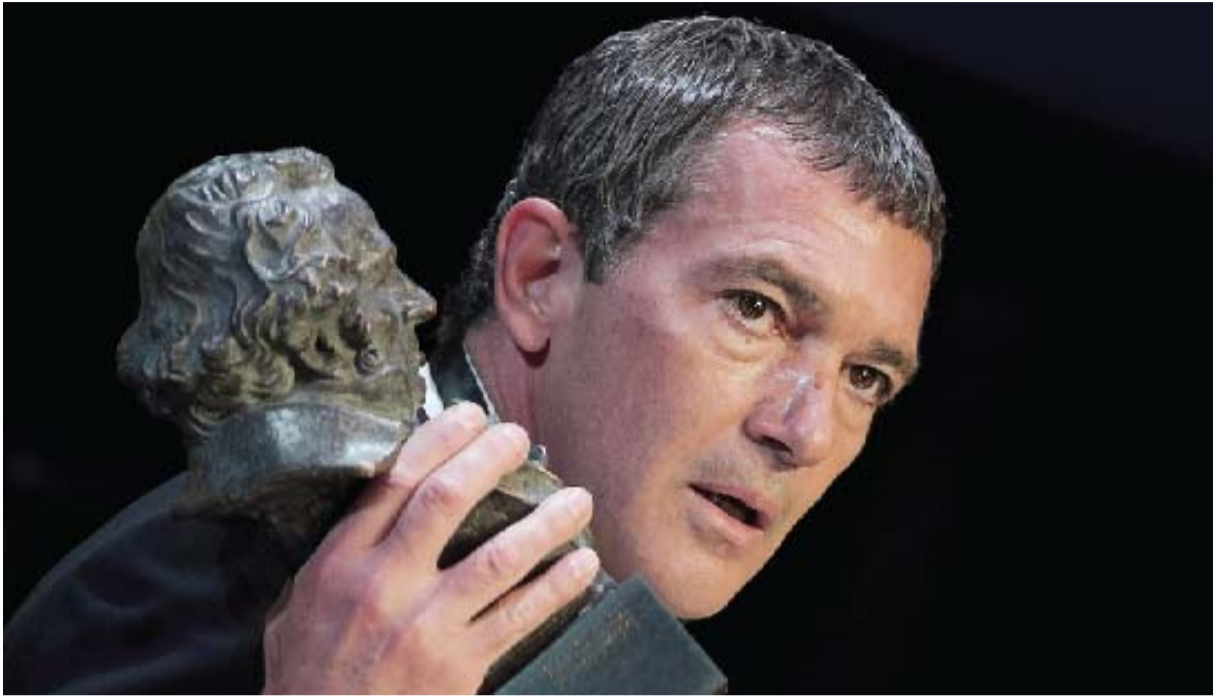


This picture shows Japanese designer Yu Amatsu (center left) and Hanae Mori (center right) posing for photographers with their models after their 2017 Autumn/Winter Collection show of the Tokyo Fashion Week in Tokyo. — AP/AFP photos

cutting edge fabrics admitted to shopping elsewhere. Takuya Morikawa offered a high-energy, Americana-inspired collection of silk dresses, fur and a maroon velvet jumpsuit for label TAAKK, which he set up in 2012 after working for Issey Miyake. "All the fabrics are originals," he told reporters. "The jacquards were made in Japan, but I had the embroidery made in China and India as it would have cost a lot to do in such good quality here." "Of course Japan has good technique, but I am not too hung up on it. I'd rather use good things from everywhere in the world." — AFP



Models present creations by Japanese designers Hitoshi Korogi and Keiko from the "ROGGYKEI".



Antonio Banderas says he's recovered from a heart attack

Spanish film star Antonio Banderas says he has recovered from a heart attack that he had in January. The 56-year-old Banderas tells Spanish media that "I suffered a heart attack on Jan. 26, but it wasn't serious and hasn't caused any damage." Banderas says he underwent a procedure to introduce three stents in his arteries, adding that "it hasn't been as dramatic as some have written."

Banderas' visit to a Swiss clinic had led to speculation about the health of the star known for roles in such films as "The Mask of Zorro," "Desperado," "Philadelphia" and the animated "Puss in Boots." Banderas spoke Saturday at a film festival in his hometown of Malaga in southern Spain, where he received a lifetime achievement award for his career as an actor, director and producer.



Charlie Hunnam's love letter to girlfriend

Charlie Hunnam's latest movie was a "love letter" to his girlfriend. The 36-year-old actor had promised to write to Morgana McNeils, his partner of 12 years, when he was filming scenes for "Lost Cities of Z" in Colombia but was let down by the mail system and so he has dedicated his performance in the movie to her. He said: "We went to Colombia and the mail system doesn't really work very well. It's completely unreliable. I received a letter from her and I realized from the tone of it and things she was saying that she hadn't received the two letters I sent before. I then just stopped writing to her altogether which obviously makes me sound like a total bastard. Appropriately so, but I was very apologetic. I bought her an emerald when I returned home from Colombia, because it's the place of emeralds. But I think she was offended I

brought that up because it felt reductive to her of that real sacrifice she had made for this, which was enormous. I almost hate going to see films I've been in for the first time. But this was a different experience. I took my girlfriend with me, and she watched it and recognized that it was both an apology, a recognition and a love letter to her. We were making it for our loved ones." And now filming is over, Charlie is keen to spend more time with Morgana. He added to the Sunday Mirror newspaper: "I was working on Sons of Anarchy for seven of the last nine years and between every season I'd do a film. I was working 100 hours a week, 51 weeks a year for eight years straight. So if Morgana and I are going to start talking about children and getting married, I'm going to have to figure out a way to balance that a little bit more effectively."

Scarlett Johansson feels icky about gender wage gap



Scarlett Johansson feels "icky" talking about the gender pay gap. The "Ghost in the Shell" star doesn't feel she can make any personal comments about the gender wage gap in Hollywood as she is the highest grossing actress in the industry. She told The Observer newspaper: "There's something icky about me having that conversation unless it applies to a greater whole. I am very fortunate, I make a really good living, and I'm proud to be an actress who's making as much as many of my male peers at this stage. For me to talk about my own personal experience with it feels a little obnoxious. It's part of a larger conversation about feminism in general." Meanwhile, Scarlett previously admitted she is pleased to see more "female energy" on set as of late. She said: "We see more female directors, more women in various departments on set. If you looked around a film set even 10 years

ago, it was basically a bunch of dudes; maybe in the wardrobe department or in the hair and makeup department there would be women. "Now you see more female camera assistants, cinematographers, grips. It's nice to have a diverse group of people so that it doesn't become so one-note - to have a female energy on set, to have different types of people and different vibes, and a more balanced creative environment." And the blonde beauty - who shares two-year-old daughter Rose with her estranged husband Romain Dauriac - previously admitted she found it "disappointing" to be named the highest-grossing actress of all time as she was upset that no other women managed a place in the top 10. She said: "It's exciting to be the only woman in this category [but] it's kind of disappointing actually to be the only woman in this category. That was a little bit of a surprise to me."

Tinie Tempah: Looking sharp comes naturally

The 'Girls Like' hitmaker has confessed that he actually thinks his edgy style is just how he likes to dress and as so happens to make him worthy of titles such as GQ magazine's Best Dressed Man and he thinks it stems from his mother always treating him like he was royalty as a kid. Speaking to the latest issue of NME magazine, he admitted: "I'm not gonna lie, it does come quite naturally. Even when I was a little kid, my mum always treated me like a prince. I'm her first son, one of four." The 28-year-old rapper - who set up his own record and fashion label Disturbing London Records in 2007 - is known for his trademark bow ties and, although he hasn't been wearing them of late he said they will likely make a return as he has an entire cupboard full of them and other items too. Asked if it is the end of his bow tie-wearing days, he said: "No, the dicky bows are not necessarily done - they could make a comeback at any time. "I've got a dicky bow cupboard. I've got a



sunglasses cupboard, watch cupboard, blazer cupboard, everything." Tinie said previously that he believes

regardless of what job he was to have, whether he was in the spotlight or was a cleaner, he would "one million per cent" make sure he dressed well and looked the best he could. Speaking about his style choices, the dark-haired hunk - who was named the Best Dressed Man at the GQ Men of the Year Awards in 2012 - said: "A million per cent. Even if I was emptying dustbins! Whatever job I did, I'd always try to be the most dapper." The dark-haired hunk is currently living in the home, which previously belonged to the late fashion designer Alexander McQueen who died in 2010. And the vocalist believes there is a "creative energy" in his apartment, which has led him to add unusual furnishings, including a zebra model, to the East London accommodation. He explained: "I brought a zebra to add to it, a few bits and bobs. Like there this creative energy in the house, and I've absorbed some of it. People around there still talk about Lee he didn't live in a bubble."

Ronan Keating was told he couldn't sing

Ronan Keating was told by a producer he couldn't sing in the early part of his career. The 'When You Say Nothing At All' hitmaker - who has enjoyed huge success with Boyzone and as a solo artist - worked hard to "prove" the producer was wrong. He said: "[My music career started with] getting cigarettes and bottles of beer thrown at us ... "A producer kept saying, 'The blond one can't sing - get rid of him,' and I knew I could be dropped in a heartbeat. I had to prove them wrong." And Ronan now wants to turn his hand to acting but admits it was tough at first to dispel any myths about him as he was in a boy band. He added: "I'm genuinely excited about it. It's been an issue I've had for most of my career. When you're in a boy band, you're fitting the mould that people want you to be. I spent years foolishly trying to prove myself, trying to make everybody happy. I should have concentrated on the people that mattered to me ... "It's a career I've been trying to do for years and years and years. I've been trying for almost as long as the other career." And Boyzone will be marking their 25th anniversary next year but Ronan admits it hasn't been the same since Stephen Gately passed away in 2009. He told The Sunday Times magazine: "For me, it changed when Steo died. It will never be what it was, but that's fine. "We get that it's all about the nostalgia. So we do it. And it would be wrong not to mark the 25th in some way. We'll do the classics. That's what people want."



Zoe Saldana's sequel fear

Zoe Saldana has a "fear" that 'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2' would flop. The 38-year-old actress reprises her role as Gamora in the Marvel sequel but was concerned there was a huge risk involved in revisiting something that had been so successful. She said: "You would think we'd come back cocky and high-fiving. "Guardians felt to me like going to Vegas, you bet and you win. But the stakes are so much higher now. "There's a fear of losing that speciality, becoming cavalier and comfortable and ruining it. So everybody has been on point." But her co-star Chris Pratt thinks director James Gunn has taken the right approach in making the new film radically different from the first. He said: "James wanted to go so outside of the box that he explodes the box. "It's a serious departure. And in a bigger, better, more explosive way. I really believe that." Though the director confirmed the sequel is "bigger and crazier" than the first movie, he insists that wasn't his intention. He told Empire magazine: "The goal was to create something more honest. "It's deeper in a lot of ways. If the first film was about outsiders who fight their basic nature to become a family, this movie is about being a family." And cast member Dave Bautista has promised there are some "emotional" moments in the movie because of the "family" theme. He said: "It's about family, about chosen family. "It's such a great topic, it hits a lot of emotional points."

Kristen Bell's 'fashion critique' is her husband Dax Shepard



Dax Shepard regularly gives wife Kristen Bell "fashion critiques". The 36-year-old actress has revealed her 42-year-old partner - who she has daughters Lincoln, three, and Delta, two, with - often gives his opinion on her ensemble, but she has hinted his knowledge of the current trends isn't great. Speaking to PEOPLE about the advice she receives, the blonde beauty said: "He [Dax] gives me fashion critiques when I wear something, but he doesn't get everything. "I'm not really dressing for him, I'm dressing for myself and other women. So, when I wear a pair of paper bag trousers, which I think are divine, he's like, 'What grandma did you get this from?! I'm like, you don't get it. You just don't get it.' "The 'Frozen' star - who provided the voice over for the lead role Anna in the Disney animation - has revealed her most preferred wardrobe staple at the moment are hats, which she wears "whenever possible", except for the times when she is having a "great hair day". She explained: "I try to wear hats whenever possible, but it's not always possible because sometimes you're having a great hair day." However, Kristen's friends are desperately trying to get her to ditch the accessory for a pair of sunglasses instead. She said: "But my girlfriend was like, 'Why don't you just wear sunglasses all the time? Then you'll never squint!' So that's my new trick, I'll be wearing sunglasses indoors from now on. I'm going to turn into Jack Nicholson." Meanwhile, the Michigan-born star has revealed she relies on an all-natural deodorant and clothes to avoid putting "harmful" products or ingredients on her skin. She said: "Researching where the clothes I buy come from and educating myself on dyes and how they can sometimes be harmful and how to support companies that are making the right decisions. "I was learning about deodorants and I'm just not sure I want the aluminum. So I was trying to figure out a solution because I live in California and you sweat because the sun is brutal. It's like baking soda and coconut oil, a couple of different things, and I love it. It's my new trick."



The Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles performs at the Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds Memorial Service at The Forest Lawn on Saturday in Los Angeles. — AP/AFP photos



The Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles performs at the Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds Memorial Service at The Forest Lawn on Saturday in Los Angeles.

Reynolds and Fisher honored with humor, music and dance



Todd Fisher hugs Star Wars character R2-D2 at the Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds Memorial Service.



Ben Mankiewicz speaks at the Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds Memorial Service.



Dan Aykroyd speaks at the Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds Memorial Service.

Laughter, music and the tapping of dancing shoes reverberated throughout a public memorial to Debbie Reynolds and Carrie Fisher, which loved ones say is just how the actresses would have wanted it. There were few tears throughout the two-hour ceremony Saturday, which honored the mother-daughter duo's impact on film, culture and those who knew them with a mix of photos, videos, and anecdotes that kept the audience laughing and applauding. Todd Fisher led the ceremony, which he said was intended to bring fans an intimate view of his mother and sister. He called it a show, saying his mother hated to attend memorials.

Hundreds of fans - some wearing "Star Wars" attire - attended the public ceremony that featured numerous family photos and Reynolds' final interview reflecting on her life and philanthropy, and one of Fisher's high school friends sharing some her off-color emails to him. A troupe from Reynolds' dance studio performed an homage to "Singin' in the Rain," the film that catapulted Reynolds to stardom at age 19. After an opening film that was an ode to Fisher's "Star Wars" role, a working R2D2 unit came on stage, mournfully beeped and parked next to a director's chair with Fisher's name on it. Across the stage, near a piano, sat an empty chair with Reynolds' name on it.

Complex relationship

Fisher, 60, an actress and writer who starred as Princess Leia in the original "Star Wars" trilogy, died Dec 27 after suffering a medical emergency days earlier aboard a flight from London. Reynolds, an Oscar-nominated actress for her role in "The Unsinkable Molly Brown," died the following day at age 84. Todd Fisher recounted his mother's final moments and her remark that she wanted to be with her daughter. "It was a very peaceful exit that only my mother could have orchestrated," he said to booming laughter. "She was trained in Hollywood where they teach you to make a great entrance, and exit." Fisher and Reynolds had a complex relationship, with some years of estrangement before they reunited and became close confidantes.

Actor Dan Aykroyd described Fisher, his one-time fiancée, as a chatterbox who never let him speak. He described using the Heimlich maneuver on her once, and joked that if he had been on the plane where Fisher fell ill in December, he "might have been able to save her again." He echoed a sentiment expressed by many early in his remarks. "We really shouldn't be here this soon," he said. The ceremony was attended by several stars, including Rene Russo, Beverly D'Angelo, "Dallas" actress Morgan



People visit the joint gravesite of Carrie Fisher and her mother Debbie Reynolds following a public memorial.

Brittany, actor-director Fisher Stevens, "Brady Bunch" actress Susan Olsen and actor Griffin Dunne. Dunne recounted living with Fisher in New York when they were both young actors, and her initial reactions to working on "Star Wars." He recounted Fisher's assessment of the film: "It's stupid and it's terrible." After the first screening, they both knew she had been wrong. "We knew movies would never be the same, and you just knew Carrie's life would never be the same."

Feminist icon

When speakers weren't delivering one-liners - some that had been uttered or penned by Fisher and Reynolds - music and dance took over the stage. The ceremony featured a new song James Blunt wrote after Fisher's death, and the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles performed a somber rendition of Cyndi Lauper's "True Colors" that celebrated Fisher's status as a feminist icon. Actress Ruta Lee celebrated Reynolds' philanthropy in her eulogy, which included her singing to troops during the Korean War and her later efforts raising millions to help those suffering from mental illness. Carrie Fisher battled mental illness and addiction, explor-

ing her struggles in the book "Postcards from the Edge." Fisher discussed her mother's charitable work in a video clip, joking, "She sort of started what this town was going to need quite a bit of, which was treatment for the mentally ill." Lee said it was OK to feel sadness at the deaths of Reynolds and Fisher, but not to dwell on it. "Debbie the unsinkable and her beautiful daughter would never want us to mourn," she said. Author Gavin de Becker, who attended high school with Fisher and recounted how his infatuation with her turned into a lifelong friendship, said his friend "zoomed through time" and made so many people's lives better. He recounted how Fisher took him on international trips and "gave me so many firsts."

"The first time I had sex was at Carrie's house," de Becker said. "It wasn't with Carrie, but she arranged it." It was one of many tales about the actresses that drew boisterous laughter. After the service, fans were invited to see the actresses' final resting place at Forest Lawn - Hollywood Hills, a storied cemetery where numerous celebrities, including Bette Davis and Liberace, are buried or interred.

Many also paused to snap photos with some of the actresses' memorabilia that was displayed out-

side the theater, including two dresses Fisher wore while filming "Star Wars" and "When Harry Met Sally," and two of Reynolds' costumes from "Singin' in the Rain" and "Unsinkable Molly Brown." — AP



Mourners visit the joint gravesite of Carrie Fisher and her mother Debbie Reynolds following a public memorial on March 25, 2017 in Los Angeles, California.



In this Sept 10, 2011 file photo, Carrie Fisher kisses her mother, Debbie Reynolds, as they arrive at the Primetime Creative Arts Emmy Awards in Los Angeles.



In this Jan 25, 2015 file photo, Debbie Reynolds, winner of the Screen Actors Guild lifetime award, left, and Carrie Fisher pose in the press room at the 21st annual Screen Actors Guild Awards in Los Angeles.



Katie Walker, who bears a tattoo of Carrie Fisher in the role of Princess Leia Organa, which she got in January, visits the joint gravesite for Carrie Fisher and her mother Debbie Reynolds following a public memorial.



Students from the Debbie Reynolds Dance Studio perform at the Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds Memorial Service at The Forest Lawn.



Ruta Lee performs at the Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds Memorial Service.

Lifestyle

MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2017

Reynolds and Fisher honored with humor, music and dance

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A cosplayer dressed in a colorful costume waits in one of the exhibition halls during the Manga-Comic-Con at the International Book Fair in Leipzig, Germany, Saturday. Numerous visitors discover the world of illustrated stories at the fourth Manga-Comic-Con. — AP

Dig deeper before mocking 'crazy' pet parents

It's easy to jump directly to "crazy cat lady" or poke fun at "stay-at-home dog moms" when describing intense relationships between humans and their pets. But for some who spend the bulk of each day with their animals, it's more like a two-way healing labor of love. Amy Hunter, 51, stayed home in Indiana with her three kids when they were little. Years later, she took a work-from-home job after the death of her son, Jake, piled on the loss of another son who had earlier drowned.

Now her daughter is about to graduate from college and Hunter is home full time with two dogs, a brown mix rescue named Apollo, who weighs in at about 90 pounds, and a black Labrador retriever, Rubi. "I've become very, very,

very in tune with them," said Hunter, who lives in Indianapolis. "We got Rubi as a puppy after my first son died. She's been my emotional savior."

Her husband works outside the home, as a plant manager, so it's just mom and dogs during the day. "After my second son died I cried a lot. I was anxiety ridden," Hunter explained. "What I found was how much I could communicate with my dogs." Coleen Balent, 43, understands.

Requiring help

She stays home with her two kids, ages 10 and 8, as her husband works as a computer network engineer for US Navy hospitals outside their home. They've been stationed around the world and have been in the US island territory of Guam, in the western Pacific, for nearly a year. Rounding out the family are three rescue dogs, including one, 13-year-old Paolo, who has serious health issues. She and her husband found him years ago in Sicily, in a boat yard with his mouth taped shut. He had been hit by a car.

"The vet told me he wouldn't make it through the night. I took him home with antibiotics and a nebulizer and he survived," Balent recalled. "Several years later, Paolo broke his back while we were living in Charleston, South Carolina." The accident left him paralyzed, but after \$6,000 in surgery and three months of rehabilitation, he can hobble along, requiring help going up and down stairs and on and off beds. Three years ago, Paolo was diagnosed with diabetes so Balent injects him with insulin twice a day, checking his glucose levels often. "We can barely afford it, and it's a pain," she said. "I can never go anywhere for the day. I'm quite sure everyone thinks I'm crazy. Some people have flat out told me, but Paolo has seen me through two pregnancies, two severe postpartum depressions, an autoimmune disease and three moves to three different countries and continents."

For Hunter, each pet enriches her in different

ways. Her black lab got her off the couch. "She gets me moving, she gets me going. There's no sitting anymore." She even feels her long hours alone with the two have heightened their ability to communicate. It's Apollo who tells her when it's time for breakfast. He's the vocal one. Both dogs comprehend about 250 of her words. Apollo can differentiate between ball, stick and his favorite toy, a Teddy bear. "And they know what shoes I wear. If I put on running shoes, they're staying home. They don't move. If I put on just normal tennis shoes, we're walking and they go find their leashes. If I put on boots or dress shoes or something, they're not going. They know this. It's so funny," Hunter said. "I'm not the crazy dog lady. I know they're not my children, but I just feel very close to them." Stay-at-home writer Kat Faitour, who lives near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is not a "crazy" dog mom. She's a "crazy" cat mom. Faitour worked in the health care industry for more than 20 years, including her last five in a complaint department. "It was draining. The negativity finally got to me," she said. "In the midst of that, my mom became ill and passed away from ovarian cancer in 2013. I didn't have much to give after my mother died and my husband was super encouraging me to stay home and write." With her all day, every day, Faitour said, are "my boys," two nearly 8-year-old cats, including one with "100 health problems."

He's a shaggy, white-haired looker with blue eyes, and he's deaf. The product of an amateur breeder, Conan (named for Conan O'Brien) also suffers from knee and hip dislocations and two herniated discs in his back. Conan requires pain medication in the morning and steroids at night. Higgins, her large gray Norwegian forest cat, is "healthy as a horse," said Faitour, who with her husband is childless by choice. "I've got my boys," she laughed. "They're always with me, always in the room with me. That's how we roll." — AP



In this provided by Amy Hunter, John and Amy Hunter are pictured with their dogs, Apollo, left, and Rubi, a black Labrador retriever, in Brown County State Park south of their home in Indianapolis, Ind. — AP

9-inch marble statue could sell for \$3 million at auction



In this photo provided by Christie's is the 9-inch-tall marble sculpture, called the Guennol Stargazer. — AP

She's small but mighty - and she could be worth more than \$3 million. Christie's announced Friday that a 9-inch-tall marble sculpture, called the Guennol (gwehn-AHL) Stargazer, will be auctioned on April 28 in New York. The statue of a female idol from ancient Turkey dates to around 3000 to 2200 BC. It's thought that the idol was related to fertility.

About 15 nearly complete idols survive. The auctioneer says this one - like most - has a neck injury, suggesting it was ritually "killed" at the time of burial. It has button-like eyes; a vertical, carrot-shaped nose; a pear-type torso; and no discernible chest. The work, from a private collection, has been on loan at The Metropolitan Museum of Art at various times. — AP



This undated photo released by RR Auction shows a portion of a diary written in 1945 by young John F. Kennedy during his brief stint as a journalist after World War II. — AP

JFK diary written in post-World War II Europe up for auction

A diary kept by a young John F. Kennedy during his brief stint as a journalist after World War II in which he reflected on Hitler, the ambitions of the Soviet Union and the weakness of the United Nations is up for auction. The diary was written in 1945 when the 28-year-old Kennedy was a correspondent for Hearst newspapers, rubbing shoulders with world leaders and traveling through a devastated Europe. Boston-based RR Auction says the diary is expected to fetch about \$200,000 at auction April 26.

The 61-page diary, mostly typed but including 12 handwritten pages, was given by Kennedy to Deirdre Henderson, a research assistant in his campaign office in the late 1950s. "What's remarkable is what he foresaw about the future of a world he would lead 16 years later," said Henderson, who lives in the Boston area. The experiences and reflections in the diary undoubtedly influenced Kennedy's presidency, auction house officials said.

"This exceptional diary sheds light on a side of John F. Kennedy seldom explored and confirms America's enduring sense that he was one of the most qualified, intelligent and insightful commanders in chief in American history," said Bobby Livingston, RR's executive vice president. In the diary, Kennedy reflects on his time in a gutted Berlin. "On some of the streets the stench - sweet and sickish from dead bodies - is overwhelming," he wrote. He even saw

Hitler's bunker, speculating that he was not killed. "There is no complete evidence, however, that the body that was found was Hitler's body," he wrote. "The Russians doubt that he is dead." He wrote that Hitler "had in him the stuff of which legends are made." But Henderson said that should not be misinterpreted as sympathy for the German dictator.

"He said that in reference to the mystery surrounding him and not the evil he represented," Henderson said. Kennedy witnessed the territorial ambitions of the Soviet Union in negotiations to rebuild a post-war Germany and the role the US should play. "Yet, if we pull out, we may leave a political vacuum that the Russians will be only too glad to fill," he wrote. Kennedy also expressed doubt about the effectiveness of the fledgling United Nations.

"In practice, I doubt that it will prove effective in the sense of its elaborate mechanics being frequently employed or vitally decisive in deterring war or peace," he wrote. Kennedy, the 35th US president, served from January 1961 until he was assassinated in Dallas on Nov 22, 1963. The information in his diary has been published before. Henderson said she is selling it in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of Kennedy's birth this year and so it can be properly preserved. "This diary is a great testament to what he could have been as president had he not been killed so young," she said. — AP