

Kuwait Vision 2035 includes effective mgmt, ratings boost



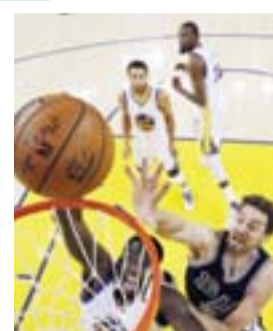
WikiLeaks source Manning freed after 7 years in military prison



Arab Fashion Week brings unisex minimalism to Dubai



Curry shines as Warriors crush Spurs, lead series 2-0



TRUMP TO PROMOTE BUSINESS, REASSURE ALLIES ON SAUDI TRIP

US PRESIDENT TO TALK TOUGH ON RADICALISM • BASHIR TO ATTEND SUMMIT



Min 26°
Max 45°
High Tide 05:33 & 15:33
Low Tide 10:20 & 23:14



40 PAGES

conspiracy theories

HYPOCRISY

By Badrya Darwish
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Even our best writers are starting to follow the current. In the last few years, and especially the past few months, we have heard nothing from parliamentarians and officials except for a propaganda war against expats. Expat this. Expat that. Without even thinking, wherever they see a weakness in services in the country - blame it on the expats. Without studying it. Without admitting the real problems. Push the expat button - it's the right button.

Imagine a well-known respected writer suggesting to get rid of porters at the airport to adjust the demographic imbalance in Kuwait! He also suggested removing expats from the roles of imams and muezzins because they are exhausting the budget of the ministry of awqaf and Islamic affairs. May I ask how many imams and muezzins we have in the mosques? Is this really a number which will reverse the demographic imbalance and open tens of thousands of jobs for our kids?

And we should give valet parking and hospital cleaning jobs to bedoons, according to his idea. So we are not going to give it to our kids but to another stratum of expats. Excuse me! Why are you discriminating between bedoons and other expats? If you haven't given them nationality, this means they are considered expats, I'm sorry.

Of course I agree 100 percent that there is a horrible demographic imbalance. But not only in Kuwait. It is a problem which the whole Gulf is facing since we discovered and started selling petrol and became rich nations, giving citizens the option to select the jobs they like. Because none of us in the Gulf will opt to be a valet, cleaner, servant, tailor, builder, plumber, driver, maid, etc. Our wealth is a gift from God and it allowed us to build our countries, so we need workers. Nothing wrong with that. But people have taken advantage and abused the system big time to make money through human trafficking and visa trading in the millions, especially in Kuwait.

So let's talk about what's the real problem. Let's not start running after airport porters or hospital janitors. Let's talk about the millions of visas traded and hundreds of millions in dinars going into the pockets of influential people.

Thank you very much. That's enough for today. I'm sick of this topic and the hypocrisy of society.



RIYADH: (From left) Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Qatar's Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, Oman's Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash and GCC Secretary General Abdullah bin Rashid Al-Zayani pose for a group picture during a meeting of Gulf foreign ministers in the Saudi capital yesterday. — AFP

WASHINGTON/RIYADH: When US President Donald Trump meets Saudi leaders in Riyadh on Saturday, he can expect a warmer welcome than the one given a year ago to his predecessor Barack Obama, who Riyadh considered soft on arch foe Iran and cool toward a bilateral relationship that is a mainstay of the Middle East's security balance. Beneath the pomp, Riyadh will be looking for assurances that the Trump administration will continue its notably harsher tone toward Iran and keep up pressure, through both rhetoric and action, to stop what Saudi Arabia sees as Tehran's destabilizing activities in the region.

The US-Saudi alliance has experienced turbulence since Riyadh faulted what it saw as Obama's withdrawal from the region, a perceived tilt toward Iran since the 2011 Arab uprisings and a lack of direct action against Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, an Iranian ally. Saudi Arabia will also want to showcase high-profile investment deals with American companies to show progress on its ambitious "Vision 2030" economic and social reform agenda, while Washington says US arms sales worth tens of billions of dollars are in the pipeline.

Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia is the first stop on his maiden international trip since taking office in January. US and Saudi officials are eager to highlight the powerful symbolism of an American president choosing to visit the birthplace of Islam as his first stop rather than to neighbors Canada or Mexico. Besides meeting with Saudi officials, Trump will also meet with leaders of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and have lunch with leaders of more than 50 Muslim countries.

Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir will also attend the gathering in Saudi Arabia on Saturday, but has received no indication whether he will meet Trump

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KPC PROJECTS 47% RISE IN PROFITS ASSEMBLY LIKELY TO HOLD WEEKLY SESSIONS IN RAMADAN

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corp (KPC) net profits are projected to reach KD 544 million in the current fiscal year, up 47 percent on last year's profits due to an increase in the price of oil, head of the National Assembly's budgets committee said yesterday. MP Adnan Abdulsamad said KPC has calculated the price of oil at \$45 a barrel and is projecting to post revenues amounting to over KD 10 billion.

But the lawmaker said that KPC's net profits were coming from non-operating revenues and not from its core business. Abdulsamad said KPC is projecting non-operating profits in the 2017/2018 fiscal year representing interest and investments at KD 939 million. He said certain activities of KPC subsidiaries have been making yearly losses, citing the example of national refiner Kuwait National Petroleum Co (KNPC), which is expected to post losses worth KD 405 million from refining operations in the

current fiscal year. He called for taking decisive measures to deal with such losses.

Abdulsamad said that although KPC has cut its development projects from 70 to 38, costing an estimated KD 18 billion, spending was only 27 percent or KD 5 billion. The lawmaker said the committee called for taking the necessary measures to deal with delays in oil projects, saying that the Audit Bureau has noted delays in 144 projects out of 291 ongoing ventures. For example, the percentage of execution of the clean fuel project reached 50 percent in the latest final accounts, while the target was 61 percent, adding that 17,000 workers were operating on the project, down from the estimated 40,000 employees, Abdulsamad said.

The committee called on KPC and its subsidiaries to exert more efforts to achieve its strategy of boosting crude oil production to 4.0 million barrels per day in 2020, adding that the shortage from the target in the last final account reached 810,000 barrels.

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DUBAI FIRM EYEING ICEBERG HARVESTING FOR FRESHWATER

DUBAI: A Dubai firm's dream of towing icebergs from the Antarctic to the Arabian Peninsula could face some titanic obstacles. Where many see the crumbling polar ice caps as a distressing sign of global warming, the National Advisor Bureau Limited sees it as a source of profit, and a way of offsetting the effects of climate change in the increasingly sweltering Gulf. The firm has drawn up plans to harvest icebergs in the southern Indian Ocean and tow them 9,200 km away to the Gulf, where they could be melted down for freshwater and marketed as a tourist attraction.

"The icebergs are just floating in the Indian Ocean. They are up for grabs to whoever can take them," managing director Abdullah Al-Shehi told AP in his Dubai office. He hopes to begin harvesting them by 2019. It is perhaps no surprise that the idea would originate in Dubai, which is already famous for its indoor ski slope, artificial islands and the world's tallest building. But the plan to harvest icebergs faces a wide array of legal, financial and logistical hurdles - and environmentalists are less than thrilled.

The firm would send ships down to Heard Island, an Australian nature

reserve in the southern Indian Ocean, where they would steer between massive icebergs the size of cities in search of truck-sized chunks known as growlers. Workers would then secure them to the boats with nets and embark on a yearlong cruise to the United Arab Emirates. The company believes that, as most of the icebergs' mass is underwater, they would not melt significantly during the voyage. Shehi said each iceberg would hold around 20 billion gallons of fresh water that could be harvested without costly desalination, which currently provides nearly all of the Gulf region's water.

Masdar, a government-backed clean energy firm in the United Arab Emirates, is exploring new technologies to meet the country's water needs. The United Arab Emirates' Energy Ministry issued a statement this week denying "reports" that an iceberg was in the process of being imported, without specifying the reports to which it referred. Shehi said his project is a private initiative and that he would seek government approval once his firm completes its feasibility study.

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LUCKNOW: An Indian vendor makes kebabs made from beef at the Tunday Kebabi restaurant yesterday. — AFP

FAMOUS BEEF KEBABS ARE BACK ON LUCKNOW MENU

LUCKNOW, India: An Indian restaurant has resumed sales of the beef kebabs it has been making for more than a century, two months after being forced to take the famous dish off the menu under pressure from Hindu hardliners. Tunday Kebabi in Uttar Pradesh had been unable to source the meat for its best-loved dish for two months after the appointment of a Hindu nationalist politician as leader of

the northern state.

Yogi Adityanath took office in March promising tougher penalties for slaughterhouses operating without a licence and for slaughtering cows, which Hindus regard as sacred. A resulting police crackdown led to the state's meat-producing industry grinding to a virtual halt - even though most businesses were producing

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EXPERTS: ANOTHER LARGE-SCALE CYBER ATTACK UNDERWAY

PARIS: Another large-scale, stealthy cyber attack is underway on a scale that could dwarf last week's assault on computers worldwide, a global cyber security firm told AFP yesterday. The new attack targets the same vulnerabilities the WannaCry ransomware worm exploited but, rather than freeze files, uses the hundreds of thousands of computers believed to have been infected to mine virtual currency. Following the detection of the WannaCry attack on Friday, researchers at Proofpoint discovered a new attack linked to WannaCry called Adylkuzz, said Nicolas Godier, a researcher at the computer security firm.

"It uses the hacking tools recently disclosed by the NSA and which have since been fixed by Microsoft in a more stealthy manner and for a different purpose," he said. Instead of completely disabling an infected computer by encrypting data and seeking a ransom payment, Adylkuzz uses the machines it infects to "mine" in a background task a virtual currency, Monero, and transfer the money created to the authors of the virus.

Virtual currencies such as Monero and Bitcoin use the computers of volunteers to record transactions. They are said to "mine" for the currency and are occasionally rewarded with a piece of it.

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This handout photo shows an iceberg floating off the coast of Fujairah, UAE. — AP



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church Aram I. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.

AMIR MEETS CATHOLICOS ARAM I

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church Aram I at Bayan Palace yesterday. The meeting was attended by Acting Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Khaled Boudai.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Moreover, His Highness Sheikh Sabah received Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Nasser,

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness also received Chairman of the Board of the Public Authority for Communications and Information Technology Salem Al-Uthaina.

In other news, His Highness the Amir strongly condemned, in a cable he sent Tuesday to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz, the terrorist attack that killed a soldier in Al-Mansoura neighborhood in Al-Qatif, and injured five others.

In his cable, His Highness the Amir affirmed on Kuwait's full support to the kingdom in taking all the necessary meas-

ures to ensure safety and stability to the nation. His Highness the Amir also expressed speedy recovery to those injured in the attack. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Saudi leadership. Meanwhile, Ghanem sent a similar cable to Saudi Shura Council's Chair Dr Abdullah Al-Sheikh.

A Saudi soldier was killed and five members of the security services were wounded in an RPG attack in Saudi Arabia's Al-Qatif province, the Saudi Interior Ministry said in a statement. The attack by 'terrorists' targeted a security patrol unit in Al-Mansoura neighborhood in Al-Qatif Province. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of the Board of the Public Authority for Communications and Information Technology Salem Al-Uthaina.

OCIS HAS PRE-EMINENT POSITION IN POLITICAL, CULTURAL CIRCLES: SHEIKH DR MOHAMMAD

KUWAIT GLOBAL LEADER IN CULTURAL, CHARITY WORK

OXFORD: Kuwait's Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OCIS) plays a growing role in improving the understanding of the political and literary top brass of the Islamic world through scholarly study. "The patronage of the center since its establishment in 1985 by Prince Charles, of Wales, shows that the politicians and intelligentsia in the United Kingdom hold the center in great esteem," he said.

Sheikh Dr Mohammad, who is member of the OCIS Board of Trustees, made the comments on Tuesday in an interview held on the fringes of the opening ceremony of the OCIS new building. "The center, an affiliate of the University of Oxford, promotes dialogue between the Islamic and western cultures and serves as bridge between the Islamic world and the West through scholarly researches on the true portrait of Islam," he pointed out.

"The idea to establish the center 32 years ago was first conceived by a group of Muslim scholars at the University of Oxford - the world's most prestigious university. "Their suggestion was approved by the two great leaders of the Muslim world - late King Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, of Saudi Arabia, and late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, of Kuwait," he recalled.

"Today, as we celebrate the inauguration of the permanent premises of the center, we aspire for OCIS to double its effort to show the true nature of Islam which is away from extremism and violence," Sheikh Mohammad said, adding that the relationship between Islam and the West matter more today than ever.

Meanwhile, Prince Turki bin Faisal Al-Saud said the leaders of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia made praiseworthy effort to correct the unfair stereotypes about Islam in Britain and the west at large, and promote dialogue and understanding among people with different cultures. "The two sisterly countries work together to highlight the true value of Islam such as tolerance, amity, moderation and coexistence among people with different faiths," he said in a statement.

Prince Turki, also member of the OCIS Board of Trustees, praised Kuwait's humanitarian role and efforts to host conference on aid to needy people and dispute management. The OCIS Board of Trustees, chaired by Dr Abdullah O Nasseef - former president of King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah, includes Prince Turki - director of King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies, Riyadh (Co-Chair); Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, Sultan of Perak (Vice Chair); Sheikh Mohammad - former deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, Kuwait (Chairman of Strategy, Planning and Building

Committee); Khalid Alireza - Chairman of Xenel Industries Ltd (Chairman of Finance Committee); Professor Sir David Clary - president of Magdalen (Chairman of Academic Committee); and Dr Ali Al-Shamlan - former minister of education, Kuwait. It also includes Pehin Dato' Abu Bakar Apang - minister of education, Brunei Darussalam; Professor Keith B Griffin, former president of Magdalen; Dr Abdullah Gul, former president of Turkey; Tun Ahmad Sarji - former chief secretary of Malaysian government; Professor Teresa Morgan; and Eng. Ali Suheimat - former deputy prime minister of Jordan.



Sheikha Hussah Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah attends the ceremony.

At the behest of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) offered essential support to the launching of the OCIS. The last contribution to the center, amounting to GBP 10 million, was made by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 2010.

Global leader

Highness the Amir's Representative Sheikha Hussah Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said that the State of Kuwait is at forefront in supporting cultural, charity, and humanitarian work around the world. Sheikha Hussah made the remarks on sidelines of the 15th anniversary celebration of OCIS, under the auspices of OCIS' Honorary President Prince Charles of Wales. Sheikha Hussah expressed her pleasure to represent His Highness the Amir in such culturally-rich occasion, noting that the such center represent a great opportunity to students completing their study due to its strong bond with the historic Oxford University. The representative added that her country support everything that benefits the human race, including the support by Kuwait to

establish such modern center that support all kinds of cultural activities.

Regarding the role played by Heritage Preservation Fund in areas of conflicts, Sheikha Hussah added Kuwait's huge support comes to preserve heritage in all critical areas and until normal life return back in various countries. The fund's council members include Kuwait, UAE, France, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Germany, US, and the UK. The fund is a non-profit fund registered in Geneva.

Important step

British Crown Prince Charles of Wales said that he was happy with opening of new building of OCIS, terming the move as "important and pivotal" in the Center's history. Prince Charles thanked a number of Arab and Muslim leaders for their generous funding of the establishment of the new building. The new building, he added, would enable OCIS carry out its noble objective by teaching Islamic studies thus building bridges of understanding between cultures and civilizations. Prince Charles called for boosting academic, social and humanitarian efforts to promote dialogue and understanding among cultures, as well as rejection of extremism. He called for supporting all initiatives aimed at encouraging constructive communications and dialogue among civilizations.

Prince Charles said OCIS was an appropriate venue to lead this dialogue at a time social media were promoting fear among faiths. He said civilizations and cultures were complementing each other. Prince Turki hoped the center would be a beacon to teach students the Islamic culture. He thanked all professors and officials in Oxford University who contributed to the establishment of OCIS, as well as the leaders of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Malaysia and Brunei for funding the new building. Prince Turki also commended Prince Charles for his support of OCIS's activities. Dr Farhan Nedhami, OCIS Director, said the center would be a landmark for studies of Islamic and Muslim world from an academic view. He said the OCIS witnessed great evolution since its establishment in 1985 thanked to the funding of Arab and Islamic countries.

Nedhami said OCIS succeeded in expanding contacts with Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. He said Queen Elizabeth II bestowed OCIS with Royal charter to be the first British academic institute focusing on Islamic studies. He added that OCIS would certainly build cultural bridges and be a center of dialogue and understanding among civilizations. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister of Kuwait Khaled Al-Jarallah (right) and Ambassador of Italy to Kuwait Giuseppe Scognamiglio cut the cake during a reception hosted by the Italian Embassy at Regency Hotel yesterday to celebrate Italy's national day. — Photos by Joseph Shagra.

KUWAIT COMMITTED TO MILITARY COOPERATION WITH ITALY: DEPUTY FM

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister of Kuwait Khaled Al-Jarallah asserted Tuesday on Kuwait's commitment to military cooperation with Italy, including the Eurofighter deal. Jarallah made his statement in response to questions by reporters regarding Kuwait's Eurofighter deal, on the sideline of Italy's embassy celebration marking

the country's National Day. The Deputy foreign minister said "Kuwait's always examined steps carefully in such matters, which would boost commitment to military cooperation between the two countries." Jarallah reiterated Kuwait's keenness for similar meetings and gatherings between the two countries. —KUNA



Senior officials, diplomats, media personalities and other dignitaries attended the event.



OXFORD: Kuwait's Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (right) and other officials attend the opening ceremony of the OCIS new building. — KUNA



Ambassador of Italy to Kuwait Giuseppe Scognamiglio welcomes a guest.

GCC OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, SAFETY CONFERENCE UNDERWAY

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Jamal Al-Harbi said on Tuesday night that health-care is the cornerstone of quest for sustainable development. Addressing the opening ceremony of the fifth GCC conference on occupational health and safety, the minister said the agenda of the conference is consistent with the Kuwaiti government's plan for sustainable development. The conference, to last until today, is being organized by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the health ministries of the GCC member states. The latest statistics from the Middle East countries show that out of nearly one million deaths at work sites annually 50,000 could be averted, the minister said.

Dr Harbi urged scaling up the efforts to educate workers at the industrial institutions about the safety rules and ways to prevent physical harm or environmental damage. Kuwait is proud of launching the first medial-industrial center that cares for occupational health in the Gulf region, he said, noting that Al-Shuaiba center serves 35,000 workers at a weekly admission rate of 400 cases. The minister expressed hope that the conference would help raise awareness among the medical and nursing staff about the best practices in dealing with emergencies at the industrial areas. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Jamal Al-Harbi opens the fifth GCC conference on occupational health and safety. — KUNA photos



Minister of Health Dr Jamal Al-Harbi tours an exhibition held as part of the conference.

46 DRUG SUSPECTS ARRESTED IN 2 WEEKS

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Drugs Control General Department recorded 38 cases of trading in drugs in two weeks, arresting 46 suspects in the process. It also impounded 2,358 kg of ice (meth), 1,889 kg of hashish, 1,730 kg of heroin, 864 gm of chemical (synthetic marijuana) and 10,177 illicit tablets during the period from May 1 to 15. The suspects were sent to concerned authorities.

Twenty-five workers were arrested for labor law violation and working for persons other than their sponsors. A citizen was arrested for making domestic helpers work on a daily basis in violation of the law. One helper who was deported as shown at the Interior Ministry's database was found in the country again, which means that she must have managed to return back to the country through forgery. They were all sent to concerned authorities.

Municipality campaign

The Hawally municipality branch carried out a field campaign targeting co-ops, shops and restaurants to make sure their licenses are in order. The campaign resulted in closing two stores that were dealing in foodstuff before obtaining a license.

Crackdown

The domestic help department carried out a security campaign that included several domestic help offices in Hawally govern-



RIYADH: Gulf foreign ministers meet in the Saudi capital Riyadh yesterday, a few days ahead of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit. — AFP

BAHRAINI FM: RIYADH SUMMITS REFLECT GCC'S PEACE ROLE

RIYADH: Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Khalifa said yesterday that the planned summits due in Riyadh during US President Donald Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia reflect the vital role by the GCC in maintaining regional and international peace and stability.

Addressing the 143rd meeting of the Council of Arab Foreign Ministers, Al-Khalifa, who is chairman of the current session of the GCC Ministerial Council, said this also manifests the GCC's responsible positions and continuing efforts to address regional and world challenges and threats. He added that the GCC member states are also keen on deepening partnership and cooperation with effective and influential allies.

He noted that today's meeting aims to make preparations for the 17th consultative meeting of the GCC leaders and the GCC-US summit due in Riyadh. During their meeting, the GCC foreign ministers will mainly discuss a set of reports bearing on the necessary implementation of previous Gulf resolutions and memos of understanding, he pointed out.

Also to be addressed are strategic dialogue between the GCC member states and several friendly countries and blocs, and the latest regional and international developments, the Bahraini foreign minister added.

Kuwaiti Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah is leading Kuwait's delegation in the 143rd session of the GCC ministerial council. The Kuwaiti delegation includes Assistant Foreign



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah arrives for a meeting of the Gulf foreign ministers in the Saudi capital Riyadh yesterday.

Minister for the affairs of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti Ambassador to

Riyadh Sheikh Thamer Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Assistant Foreign Minister for GCC Affairs Ambassador Nasser Al-Mezyen, along with other senior Foreign Ministry officials. — KUNA

MUNICIPALITY URGED TO BEEF UP INSPECTIONS AHEAD OF RAMADAN

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Municipal Council member and Chairman of the technical committee Fahd Al-Sane asked the executive apparatus of Kuwait Municipality to tighten supervision and inspection of shops and co-ops that directly deal with consumers in selling foodstuff, especially since Ramadan is approaching. He said some callous workers and foodstuff traders use the holy month to sell

expired food because of people's increased purchasing power. He said the municipality must activate hotlines to receive consumers' complaints in case of any cheating or sale of goods unfit for human consumption.

Meanwhile, Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi issued 14 administrative decisions to suspend and warn some engineering offices to implement the law and for the sake of public interest. The decisions included the suspension of five engi-

neering offices from carrying out new jobs for one year, six and three months, and some engineers supervising engineering works at the concerned offices were suspended for two years due to violation of construction rules. He said the decisions included warning nine engineering offices for defects in building works. Manfouhi said the construction violations will be accounted for to issue decisions to remove violating offices and contractors.



KUWAIT APPOINTED TO PROMINENT JUSTICE COUNCIL POST: OFFICIAL

CAIRO: Kuwait has been elected as Deputy Chair of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice's Executive Bureau, the country's Minister of Justice announced yesterday. Speaking on the sidelines of the 60th meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice, Kuwaiti Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Fahleh Al-Azb said that this distinction is a testament to the breadth of ties between his country and Arab nations.

On the meeting, he said it tackled a slew of pivotal issues germane to the justice system in the Arab world, chiefly, an anti-terrorism law that aims to ratchet up the fight against terrorism. Moreover, the Kuwaiti Minister of Justice noted that the meeting also yielded plans for a raft of new legislations that will prove instrumental in further developing the Arab justice system.

He also revealed that the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice is due to hold its next meeting in November. With Saudi Arabia at the helm, the council also includes Kuwait, Qatar, Mauritania, Comoros, Iraq and Jordan. — KUNA

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In Brief

DIWAN MINISTER RETURNS

BEIJING: Kuwait's Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation left Beijing yesterday, concluding an official visit to partake in the 'Belt and Road' forum. — KUNA



DEPUTY FM MEETS ENVOY

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah yesterday received Mexican Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Isidro. The meeting focused on bilateral ties and latest regional and international developments. — KUNA



GOVERNOR HONORS COMPANY

KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah honored yesterday Mohammad Al-Baddah, CEO of Nasser Mohammad Al-Baddah Company for his company's efforts in carrying out various projects around the governorate.



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Children play at the Shaheed Park in Kuwait City. — KUNA photo

KFH PARTICIPATES IN 'KUWAIT CAPITAL OF ARAB YOUTH 2017' KICK-OFF CEREMONY

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the 'Kuwait Capital of Arab Youth 2017' kick-off ceremony that was held under the patronage and attendance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace, as part of the bank's keenness to contribute in supporting the youth and boosting their

skills. Attending the ceremony, there was an official delegation from KFH chaired by Vice Chairman Abdulaziz Al-Nafisi, and included Group Chief Strategy Officer, Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem, Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer, Waleed Mandani and Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media, Yousef Al-Ruwaieh.

Al-Nafisi said that KFH is supporting the activities and social, cultural and sport programs that will be held during this occasion, indicating this reiterates the cultural contributions and the key role of Kuwait on the GCC and Arab levels, while allows the youth to positively take part in this event and get acquainted with new experiences that add value to them and enrich their knowledge.

porting this vital category of the society. Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah Under Secretary, Ministry of State for Youth Affairs hailed KFH efforts towards the youth and its keenness on organizing different activities to them. She added that KFH is the first bank to ink an agreement of sponsoring the Kuwait Capital of Arab Youth ceremony, indicating this accentuates the bank's interest in the initiatives if the official government bodies, while represents an example for the institutions of the private sector to follow suit. KFH is the only bank in the region to sponsor a group of Kuwaiti youth who have international achievements. KFH held over 100 initiatives to support the Kuwaiti talents.

He added in a statement on the sidelines of the ceremony, that KFH's participation emanates from its endeavors to contribute in the strategic initiatives of the country that raise the name of Kuwait high on the local and world levels. KFH spares no efforts in supporting the government's initiatives that develop the talents and skills of the youth and cater for their needs.

During the ceremony, His Highness the Amir honored the winners of the Kuwait Youth Excellence and Creativity Award, where two of KFH former employees; Mutlaq Aljasser and Abdullah Alkhuzam were honored. This reiterates the bank's leadership in rehabilitating and qualifying the national manpower to have success stories and raise the name of Kuwait high.

It is worth noting that KFH inked two agreements with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs; one for partnership and collaboration, and the other for supporting and sponsoring the activities of the Kuwait Capital of Arab Youth event. This affirms the bank's commitment towards the youth and reflects its significant role in sup-



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan (center) poses with KFH chaired by Vice Chairman Abdulaziz Al-Nafisi, and included Group Chief Strategy Officer, Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem, Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer, Waleed Mandani and Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media, Yousef Al-Ruwaieh.



KUWAIT: Acting Minister of State for Youth Khaled Al-Roudhan and other officials attend the forum. — KUNA

MINISTER URGES SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM FOR YOUTH INITIATIVE DEVELOPMENT

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Acting Minister of State for Youth Khaled Al-Roudhan said yesterday that it is imperative to create a sustainable youth support system aiming at overhauling integrated economic infrastructure, and providing a supportive economic environment.

laws and procedures as well as amending market regulations. Entrepreneurship development would undoubtedly provide Kuwaiti young people with a golden chance to easily have a license to found small-sized enterprises and to cooperate with the private sector to overhaul the economic system, he added. The National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Development and public and private foundations always organize training courses for Kuwaiti young people, he noted.

In a keynote speech during the entrepreneurship forum, organized by the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs as part of the ongoing festivities of 'Kuwait Capital of Arab Youth 2017', Roudhan said entrepreneurship could be revamped through streamlining corporate founding procedures.

The minister pointed to the fund's key role in supporting young people's initiatives and projects and carrying out petrochemical and logistical projects. The three-day forum focuses on subjects and matters pertinent to entrepreneurship. — KUNA

Roudhan, who doubles as Minister of Commerce and Industry, said to improve entrepreneurship, it is necessary to create new jobs by drawing international companies and making use of their capital, and revising



Director General of the Public Authority for Youth (PAY) Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Youth Meshal Al-Subaie pose with KFH Vice Chairman Abdulaziz Al-Nafisi and other officials.

KUWAITI OFFICIAL HAILS ROBUST ARAB-TURKISH TIES

KUWAIT: Kuwait's relations with Turkey have made rapid progress in all fields, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said yesterday. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah, who doubles as Acting Minister of Information, made the remarks to open a conference on Turkey's ties with the Arab world. On the conference, he said that the event aims to "rekindle the sense of camaraderie between Turkey and the Arab world", as he attributed the improvement in relations to common political ideologies.

Moreover, the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs underlined Kuwait and Turkey's mutual desire to take bilateral ties to new heights, saying the conference was "imperative" and a step towards establishing broader bilateral relations. Meanwhile, MP Nayef Al-Mirdas, a National Assembly inspector and the conference coordinator, said that it was apropos that Kuwait hosts this conference given how instrumental the country can be in furthering Turkey's ties with the Arab world. On cooperation among Arab and Islamic nations, he said it would behoove these countries to



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah

work closely together to deal with obstacles and hardships.

The Kuwaiti MP also thanked all of those who organized this conference, saying he hoped it would pave the way for greater interaction between Turkey and Arab nations. Describing Kuwait as the "pearl of the region," Turkey's Ambassador to Kuwait Murad Tameer said that his country was eager to ameliorate its ties with the Arab world. The Turkish envoy drew parallels between the countries' political leaderships, applauding Kuwait for its 2035 plan for development that he said would lead the country on a path to prosperity.

He also pointed out that trade between Kuwait and Turkey amounts to \$3 billion, saying that "this figure will only rise in the coming years" and that Ankara offers lucrative investment opportunities for Kuwaiti businessmen. Through discussions and workshops, the conference examines strategies to bolster Turkey's ties with the Arab world as well as help align views on issues of mutual concern.—KUNA

IOM HAILS KUWAITI AID FOR DISPLACED IRAQIS IN MOSUL

IRBIL: International Organization for Migration (IOM) hailed yesterday Kuwait's humanitarian aid for more than 100,000 displaced Iraqis affected by the ongoing military operations in Mosul. IOM said in a report that Kuwait contributed with the organization in providing shelters and life-saving care to displaced Iraqis since the military operations began in October 2016.

The report affirmed that Kuwait has played an important role in alleviating the

suffering of the displaced Iraqis, adding that Kuwait funding included emergency shelter by providing tents for 2,000 displaced families, in addition to five caravans ready to run the camp. Kuwait has donated \$30 million for different UN organizations, aiming to aid people in need. Since the beginning of the operations, Kuwait has been delivering food for liberated towns, while also building two hospitals for emergency cases in refugee camps in the area.—KUNA



GREEN LINE RECEIVES INT'L RECOGNITION

KUWAIT: Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), the largest institution working in this field in the world, awarded the Green Line Environmental Group of Kuwait for their efforts in protecting the environment in Kuwait and the region.

Green Line officials expressed pride for receiving this honoring, which came

after participating in a regional conference held by IOSH in Saudi Arabia recently. The conference focused on the health and safety situation in both public and private sectors, and the ways of developing them. Based in the UK, IOSH was founded in 1945 and has 44,000 members around the globe.



OSAKA: The Kuwaiti delegation visits the Toyota center in Japan. — KUNA

KUWAITI ENTREPRENEURS VISIT JAPAN'S MANUFACTURING HUBS

OSAKA: A delegation of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs is currently on a study tour in Japan visiting manufacturing hubs and small-medium manufacturing facilities to learn Japanese expertise, an organizer said yesterday. The 10-day technical visit program is organized by Kuwait Industries Union in cooperation with the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development. According to Kuwait Industries' Union General Manager Huda Al-Baqshi, the aim of the program is to provide first-hand experience of Japanese manufacturing companies and their relationship with small and medium-sized enterprises.

While in Osaka Prefecture, the delegation visited a governmental support facility, known as MOBIO, which promotes innovation and indus-

try partnerships among small and medium-sized manufacturers. Osaka hosts more than 41,000 factories, the largest number in Japan. Founded by the prefectural government in 2009, MOBIO is an integrated support facility to promote innovation and industry partnerships among SME manufacturers. It is equipped with Japan's biggest permanent exhibition hall showcasing SMEs' outstanding technologies and products at its 200 booths, where about 27,000 people, including 400 groups, visit each year.

Their itinerary also included the Entrepreneurial Museum of Challenge and Innovation to trace the growth of Japanese entrepreneurs from villages to the world stage. Many large corporations today started as small enterprises,

including Osaka-origin Panasonic and trading firm Itochu.

The delegation also visited Toyota Motor Company's Motomachi Plant and Kaikan Center in Toyota City in central Japan, where they observed how different models of Toyota cars are produced on the same production line to promptly respond to customer orders. The group saw how body parts are welded using high technology robotic arms. The delegation's study tour is under the supervision of Nour Al-Rughaib representing the Union and Hussain Ashkanani, the group facilitator. The industrial union was established in 1989 with the aim of serving the sector and industrialists, caring for their interests and boosting performance.—KUNA



The Kuwaiti delegation visits MOBIO in Osaka.

KUWAIT VISION 2035 INCLUDES EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT, RATINGS IN INT'L INDICATIONS

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait is seeking to upgrade its rankings in all indications, including administrative and economic ones, through implementing the 'Kuwait 2035 Vision' which is an integrated pillar of an effective government management of the State's resources.

The implementation of the cornerstone contributes to improving rankings of Kuwait in indications of the World Bank and other international institutions, including indicators of business, national efficiency and productivity, governance, corruption and e-services.

Throughout this pillar, General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development aims to reform administrative practices, lessen bureaucracy and enhance transparency, regulatory accountability and effectiveness of government system. During a dialogue session last January, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri stressed that projects related to the cornerstone is a "wider and more comprehensive" structural scheme of the State of Kuwait since its independence. He said that the pillar also includes projects to carry out purchase and tenders electronically, in addition

to a comprehensive reform of civil services through legislations on reforming payroll and appointing leaders.

Activating the pillar, the government sector will witness, in the upcoming period, several projects to raise Kuwait's ratings in terms of using government communications and data from 64 to 67 percent internationally.

The Kuwaiti government is currently putting final touches of the Kuwait's Fourth Structural Scheme, which materializes the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah of transforming Kuwait into a global commercial and financial hub based on the country's strategic goal. It (the pillar) contains several programs, including government management, combating corruption, planning, making public policies, statistics and information, institutional governance and e-government, as well as structural reform. Mona Al-Daas, a senior official at Central Statistical Bureau, said that the statistics and information program is a data system supporting the five-year plans aiming to achieve the 2035 Vision.

She added that the Bureau reached an agreement with the Supreme Council to issue

a total of 254 statistical indications in all human and economic development fields. Kuwait aims to activate statistics and information program through fulfilling modernizing the bureau schemes, providing information to all people and exchanging information between the Bureau and concerned bodies, including the private sector and civil society organizations.

The State of Kuwait is paying much attention to combat corruption across the country and improving transparency, fairness and accountability, which are a goal to achieve sustainable development. The government established Kuwait's center for public policies, national observatory of sustainable development and future studies, and national center of knowledge economy in order to set public policies and raise efficiency of government system.

The program of institutional governance contributes to improving performance of foundations and economy in general to attract investments, support economic performance, and avoid crises.

As for the e-government program, it could be activated through drawing up plans for developing and speeding up e-services, and evolving national automated projects for government services towards the smart government. The State of Kuwait has also enacted some legislations to combat corruption, including the law on establishing the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (PACA), and setting out a coordinative mechanism for a continued follow-up between the government and other bodies.

Furthermore, the government is seeking to carry out several administrative training programs regarding development management. A decree was issued to amend the civil service system on mechanisms of appointment, assessment and promotion. The Vision is based on five aspired results and seven pillars, including developed infrastructure, healthcare, effective government management and others. These pillars has some specified programs and each one includes some strategic projects.—KUNA

QUAY CONSTRUCTION FOR KUWAIT-CHINA REFINERY COMPLEX UNDERWAY: STATE MEDIA

TOKYO: The construction of a quay for a Kuwait-China refinery and petrochemical project in south China's Guangdong Province is scheduled to complete in September, the state-run China Daily reported yesterday. "Wharf engineering is an important part of the project, which is the largest of its kind in China. So far, 64 of 715 piles have been sunk for the construction of an approach bridge for the berthing of ships, and 50 percent of the cast-in-place concrete piles finished," Chen Zixiang, manager for the seawater sub-project, was quoted as saying.

Another six berths will be constructed to

form a fully functional quay, used for loading and unloading coal, heavy items, and liquid chemicals. According to Chen, the entire project, located on Donghai Island in Zhanjiang City, is expected to finish in 2020. "We will make sure we complete the laying of 715 piles in the next four months," Chen added. The project is operated by state-owned Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and China's petrochemical giant Sinopec, the daily said. The 6-square-km complex will be able to process 10 million tons of crude oil and produce 800,000 tons of ethylene annually upon completion of its first construction phase, it said.—KUNA

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Crime

Report

MAN THREATENS DAD WITH FIREARM

KUWAIT: Detectives are on the lookout for a citizen who threatened his father with a pistol and escaped, leaving the weapon behind. Weapon detectives refused to collect the firearm because the suspect was not present. Firdous police department recorded a charge of possession of an unlicensed weapon and making a threat to harm. Meanwhile, Sabah Al-Salem police confiscated 110 AK-47 rounds a suspect used to threaten his brother. The man is said to also have insulted his mother. Although the suspect was arrested, the weapon was missing. He also had drug paraphernalia. But the mother and her son refused to file charges. The rounds and suspect were sent to the weapons collection department.

Imposter wanted for theft

A man who impersonated a police officer stole KD 270 from a Bangladeshi man and escaped, according to the victim's statements to police. The man described the suspects to detectives who are working on the case.

Maid accused of theft

An Iranian man told police his Madagascan maid stole his mobile phone and KD 250 that were in a bag containing documents and jewelry, then disappeared. A case was filed and investigations are ongoing to locate and apprehend the maid for questioning.



Swindler arrested

A citizen was arrested for swindling large amounts of money from people. An undercover police officer stopped a motorist and asked for her ID. They discovered she had swindling cases filed against her by citizens and expats. She was taken to the police station. The suspect had collected large amounts of money for fake real estate projects in many Arab and European countries. — Translated from the Arabic press



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

THE WORST IS YET TO COME

By Dr Najem Abdul Kareem

According to recent statistics, Arabs' declared losses over the past six years reached \$1.2 trillion, which is only the cost of corruption in Arab countries. The list also includes \$640 billion in the form of Arab countries' annual GDP losses; almost complete infrastructure destruction in four Arab countries; Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Syria; \$300 million annually paid to fund anti-terrorism movements by practicing other forms of terrorism; \$900 million as labor losses in Arab countries due to the presence of 30 million unemployed people. Meanwhile, there were 14 million refugees, 8 million displaced and over a million killed and wounded in Arab countries, while the annual cost of refugees reached at least \$50 million. In the meantime, 14 million children were denied access to schools, whereas 70 million Arabs are below poverty threshold.

The above information is to be noted, and sec-

tarian and hatred wars, with all the funding of media promoting and instigating them is also of significance. The strange thing is that all Arabs realize such disasters and are still unable to reorganize themselves. They have no organizations like those in other countries for disaster management. The sense of patriotism is dying in most people and colonization has resulted in creating groups of freedom-fighters who have bravely and gallantly fought battles to liberate their countries. Unfortunately, today's Arabs have given everything to leaders who led their countries into the statistical facts mentioned above. The latest ideals of our rulers is holding meetings that do no more than what aspirin does to dangerous forms of cancer; by spreading around the Arab world. Only God knows what secret agreements have been made with US President Dolan Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The worst is still ahead of us.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

القباس

Al-Qabas

THE MOB AMONG US

By Ahmad Al-Sarraf

Several countries have strived to seek our satisfaction. Their representatives were sent to speak with us, not because of our historic importance, economic power, our influence in the world of finance, our population which is no more than one third of India's population; not for our stock of ballistic missiles, our gold and silver reserves or for our oil which is not of much worth anymore. It is difficult to gain acceptance because the mob among us represent a significant danger against world peace.

The ignorant have caused confusion in Western stock markets and caused disturbance in the world's security situation. Our actions are damaging our economy, tourism industry, and property. It is killing our men, ruining our children's future, destroying hospitals and libraries and causing unmatched ferociousness in the form of people killing each other in Libya, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere. We have reached a point where the enemy of our brother has become our friend, and vice-versa. Our students keep repeating, "we are one Arab nation" while on the other hand we ridicule our cousins.

Why did Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church visit our countries, while we killed his parishioners and did not respect what his church followers have given to our migrants as food, medication and shelter? How did we forget, this noble man washed the feet of the poor Arab immigrants who were kicked out of our countries without differentiating between Muslim and Christian? How does this man kiss the feet of poor immigrants while we kill the best of his church followers, enslave the women, displace children and burn what we could not steal?

What have we become to the world? Egyptians had lived with each other for centuries in peace, then few of us came to kill them, blow up their churches and burn worshippers alive in them. Syrians lived for more than a thousand years together; the Shiites with the Sunni, Kurdish with Alawites, Catholic with Druz, Orthodox with Assyrians, and then came those who destroyed their unity. Iraq's various religions and sects lived and had intermarriage between each other without grudge or enmity. Suddenly, the black plague of Daesh (IS) came and divided neighborhoods, families, religions and sects. Then the president of the largest and richest country in the world makes his first visits to the region. Is it because we are that important to him, or because something must happen to get rid of all what we have done to the world and ourselves as well?

The little Daesh in our minds, will be forced out by the world, if we failed to do that ourselves. Measures have to be taken against violence in all its forms, and we should do something beneficial for the world before we die.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



KUWAIT: The military academy celebrated yesterday the graduation of noncommissioned officers from two training courses organized by the Kuwait Air Force.



Khamenei denounces 'unworthy' election rhetoric in veiled swipe

MACRON BLURS PARTY LINES WITH MIXED FRENCH CABINET

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NEW LONDON, Connecticut: US President Donald Trump arrives at a US Coast Guard Academy commencement ceremony yesterday. — AFP

TRUMP 'ASKED FBI TO STOP FLYNN PROBE'

NO POLITICIAN TREATED 'MORE UNFAIRLY', TRUMP SAYS

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's beleaguered White House was rocked Tuesday by a pair of explosive allegations - that he personally tried to quash an FBI investigation, and that he disclosed highly classified information to top Russian officials. The Republican billionaire's administration, now just barely four months old, was left reeling by the one-two punch, which sparked instant outrage from Democrats demanding a full explanation.

Either claim on its own - that he divulged top-secret information to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during an Oval Office meeting, or that he pressed FBI director James Comey to drop a probe into ex-national security advisor Michael Flynn - would plunge any White House into serious crisis. But the reports - both rebutted by Trump's team - add to a mounting perception of an administration in a perpetual state of chaos.

Trump gave vent to frustrations over his mounting political problems yesterday, declaring that no president in US history had been treated "more unfairly". During a commencement address at the US Coast Guard Academy, Trump urged graduating cadets to follow his example and "fight, fight, fight. Never, ever, give up. Things will work out just fine." "Look at the way I've been treated lately. Especially by the media. No politician in history, and I say

this with great surety, has been treated worse or more unfairly. You can't let them get you down," he said.

As overwhelmed White House staff struggled to explain Trump's decision to tell Lavrov about a specific Islamic State bomb threat gleaned by Israeli intelligence, the New York Times dropped another bombshell. The paper - citing two people who read notes written by Comey - reported that when Comey met Trump the day after Flynn resigned, the president tried to halt any FBI investigation. "I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go," Trump is accused of telling Comey, according to a memo written by the former FBI chief, who was sacked last week. "He is a good guy. I hope you can let this go."

In a letter to acting FBI director Andrew McCabe, the Senate Oversight Committee demanded that all memos and other documents or recordings relating to communications between Trump and Comey be turned over by May 24. "If true, these memoranda raise questions as to whether the president attempted to influence or impede the FBI's investigation as it relates to Lieutenant General Flynn," wrote committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz, a Republican.

The White House quickly denied any sug-

gestion that Trump was trying to obstruct justice - a criminal offense - in his dealings with Comey. "While the president has repeatedly expressed his view that General Flynn is a decent man who served and protected our country, the president has never asked Mr. Comey or anyone else to end any investigation," a US official said on condition of anonymity.

"The president has the utmost respect for our law enforcement agencies, and all investigations. This is not a truthful or accurate portrayal of the conversation between the president and Mr Comey."

Trump spent much of the day trying to put to rest separate allegations that he revealed sensitive information to Lavrov and Moscow's ambassador to Washington, arguing he acted within the law. White House aides refused to say whether the information pertaining to the group's bombmaking capabilities was classified. But the president took to Twitter to insist he had the "absolute right" to share "facts pertaining... to terrorism and airline flight safety" with Russia.

America 'being tested'

Both allegations fueled calls for a special prosecutor to investigate Trump's ties to Russia and even raised questions about whether he

could face impeachment proceedings. "The country is being tested in unprecedented ways. I say to all of my colleagues in the Senate, history is watching," said top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer. The party's number two in the Senate, Dick Durbin, said it was "one of the most serious allegations you can make against a leader - that they're in some way trying to delay or obstruct the administration of justice."

And veteran Republican Senator John McCain called the allegations about the Trump-Lavrov meeting "deeply disturbing". "The time President Trump spent sharing sensitive information with the Russians was time he did not spend focusing on Russia's aggressive behavior," McCain said.

The Russian intelligence scandal also threatens to corrode trust among allies who shared classified information with the United States on the understanding it would be handled within the usual guidelines.

An administration official confirmed to AFP on condition of anonymity that the original intelligence came from Israel.

Trump is scheduled to visit Israel next week - a trip that White House officials indicated would still go ahead. "Israel has full confidence in our intelligence-sharing relationship with the United States and looks forward to deepening that relationship in the years ahead

under President Trump," said Israel's ambassador to the US, Ron Dermer.

No security 'lapse' with Russia

Earlier in the day, National Security Adviser H R McMaster denied Trump had caused a "lapse in national security," saying it was "wholly appropriate for the president to share whatever information he thinks is necessary to advance the security of the American people". McMaster also indicated that Trump could not have revealed sensitive sources or methods. "The president wasn't even aware where this information came from," he said. "He wasn't briefed on the source or method of the information either."

Trump, himself, appeared ready to weather the storm. "We had a very successful meeting with the foreign minister of Russia," he told reporters firing a hail of questions at him. "We're going to have a lot of great success over the next coming years and we want to get as many to help fight terrorism as possible." Trump's meeting with top Russian diplomats last week came one day after he took the rare step of firing Comey. Comey had been overseeing investigations into the Trump campaign's possible collusion with Russia to tilt the 2016 election in his favor. "On a day when we thought things couldn't get any worse, they have," Schumer said. - Agencies

FREED MANNING EYES 'EXCITING' FUTURE

FORT LEAVENWORTH, United States: Chelsea Manning, the transgender army private jailed for one of the largest leaks of classified documents in US history, was released from a maximum-security prison in Kansas yesterday after seven years behind bars. With little fanfare, Manning, 29, walked out of Fort Leavenworth's military jail at 2 am to start a new life, after former president Barack Obama commuted her 35-year sentence just days before leaving office.

"After another anxious four months of waiting, the day has finally arrived. I am looking forward to so much!" said Manning in a statement released by her legal team. She posted a picture on Twitter of her black-and-white Converse baseball shoes with the caption "First steps of freedom!!" followed by a smiley-face emoticon. "Whatever is ahead of me, is far more important than the past," said Manning, whose original release date was set for 2045. "I'm figuring things out right now - which is

exciting, awkward, fun, and all new for me." Manning twice attempted suicide in jail, the second time in an isolation cell where she had been sent as punishment for the first attempt.

Manning was arrested in July 2010 over the release of a huge trove of more than 700,000 classified military and diplomatic documents via WikiLeaks. Lauded as a hero by freedom of speech advocates and as a traitor by others, including President Donald Trump, Manning is expected to head to Maryland, where she lived with an aunt before joining the army as a young man.

'Question marks'

The former military intelligence analyst struggled with gender identity issues while in the service, and eventually began her transition while locked up in the all-male prison in Kansas. "It's going to be a profound change for her," Evan Greer, a friend of Manning, told AFP. "She has been incarcerated for more than seven years and held in conditions that the United Nations considers to be torture. She's been through a tremendous amount." "Understandably she has a lot of question marks about what her life is going to be like next, but it's also her first chance in her adult life that she is really going to be able to define that for herself," Greer said, noting that Manning joined the army at a very young age.

"She is a very driven person and I know she intends to continue what she has always done, which is advocating for others and using her voice to try to make the world a better place so I'd expect that we will be hearing from her before too long," said Greer. — AFP

PUTIN OFFERS RECORDING OF LAVROV-TRUMP EXCHANGE

SOCHI, Russia: Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Moscow could provide a recording of a controversial exchange between Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and US President Donald Trump that has plunged the White House into turmoil. His comments were the first since Trump was hit with accusations that he shared secrets while meeting Lavrov in Washington, the latest crisis to hit the White House amid existing investigations into whether Trump's aides colluded with Moscow during the campaign.

Putin said he was pleased with Lavrov's visit to Washington last week but mocked the idea that Trump had shared secrets during the meeting, calling the allegations "political schizophrenia" and saying people spreading them are either "dumb" or "corrupt". "We can see that political schizophrenia is developing in the United States," Putin told reporters after talks with Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni in the southern Russian city of Sochi. "I cannot otherwise explain the accusations of the president that he handed Lavrov some sort of secrets," Putin added.

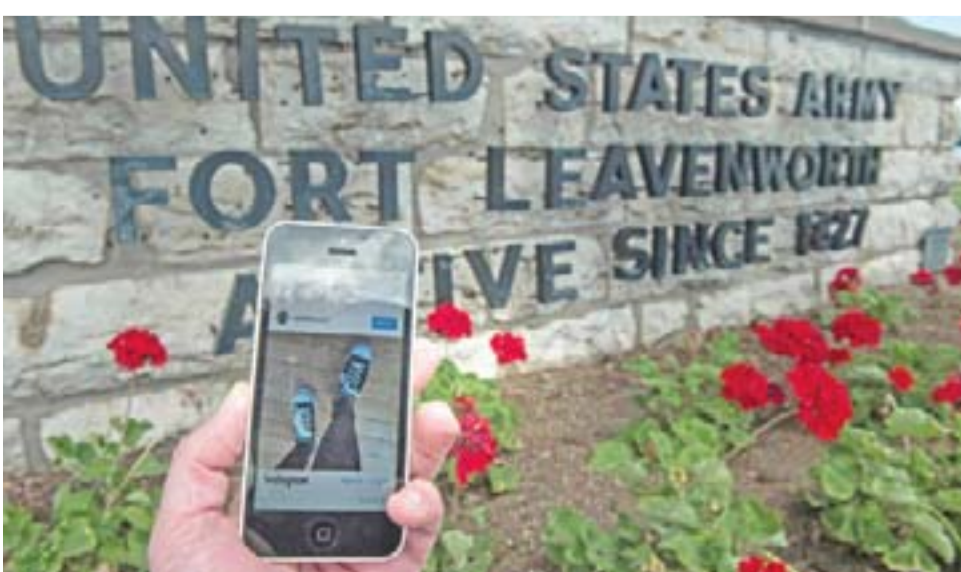
"If the US administration finds it possible, we are ready to provide a recording of the conversation between Lavrov and Trump to the US Congress and Senate," Putin said. Although Putin used the Russian word for

audio recording at the press conference, his foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov said that "audio is not made" at such meetings. "There is a recording kept by a special person present at conversations," Ushakov clarified to Russian news agencies.

Citing unnamed sources, the Washington Post reported that Trump had shared intelligence with Lavrov regarding an Islamic State group terror threat related to the use of laptop computers on airplanes. According to sources cited in the report, that intelligence came from a US ally who had not authorized Washington to pass it on to Moscow.

'Simply dumb'

The fresh US crisis sank the dollar early yesterday as well as Hong Kong stocks amid worries that Trump's economy-boosting and tax-cutting agenda could be derailed, with some experts mentioning possible impeachment. As news emerged that Israel was the initial source of the intel, it attempted to contain the fallout from the scandal, with Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman saying security ties would continue to be "unprecedented" in scope. A US administration official confirmed to AFP on condition of anonymity that the original intelligence came from Israel, which was initially reported by the New York Times. — AFP



LEAVENWORTH, Kansas: This photo illustration shows Chelsea Manning's first Instagram post in front of US Army facility Fort Leavenworth yesterday. — AFP

IRAN VOTES IN HEAD-TO-HEAD BETWEEN DIPLOMACY, RESISTANCE

TEHRAN: Iranian voters will decide the fate of moderate President Hassan Rouhani and his policy of engagement with the West on Friday as he goes head-to-head with hardline cleric Ebrahim Raisi. Rouhani has spent four years trying to pull Iran out of its global isolation, reaching a 2015 deal with world powers that ended some sanctions in exchange for curbs to its nuclear program. But with US President Donald Trump threatening to scrap the deal, and visiting Iran's bitter regional rival Saudi Arabia this weekend, that policy of detente looks increasingly in jeopardy.

Raisi has agreed to stick by the nuclear accord but says Rouhani put too much trust in the West. "We should not show any weakness in the face of the enemy," said the 56-year-old Raisi during a televised debate. The election essentially became a two-horse race after two other candidates, conservative Tehran mayor Mohammad Bagher

Ghalibaf and reformist Eshaq Jahangiri, dropped out this week to boost Raisi and Rouhani respectively.

Rouhani, a 68-year-old cleric, has tried to frame the election as a choice between greater civil liberties and "extremism", and unofficial polls still put him ahead. But he has faced a much tougher campaign than anyone expected just a couple of months ago, as hardliners have savaged his economic record, saying his diplomatic efforts have done little to tackle poverty and unemployment.

Diplomacy vs resistance

Raisi was a relative unknown when he joined the race earlier this year, having mostly worked behind the scenes as a top prosecutor and recently as head of the powerful Imam Reza charitable foundation. A close ally and former pupil of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, he is seen as the preferred choice of the powerful security

establishment, advocating a more self-sufficient "resistance economy" rather than a reliance on foreigners.

Raisi has tried to pick up working-class votes by promising more financial support, as well as playing on his status as a "s-eyed", or direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Meanwhile, Rouhani says he needs more time to rebuild the economy, which was shattered by years of sanctions and mismanagement when he took over in 2013. "At the halfway point, we don't turn back," he tells voters.

He has vowed to work towards removing the remaining, non-nuclear sanctions imposed by the US, which have strangled Iran's efforts to sign trade deals with European and Asian countries. That would be a tall order, given that Trump has launched a 90-day review to see whether he will stick by the nuclear deal at all, let alone remove any other sanctions.

Threat of apathy

While Iranians largely welcomed the reduced tensions with the West, the ongoing economic slump has taken a toll on morale. "My cheques keep bouncing," said Babak, a 35-year-old clothing supplier in south Tehran. "I may vote, but I know it doesn't change anything." Unemployment is officially stuck at 12.5 percent - close to 30 percent for the young - and many more are under-employed or struggling to get by.

Rouhani says he inherited a financial mess from his populist predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who was dramatically barred from standing this year by the Guardian Council after falling foul of the conservative establishment. That has left a vacuum for many working-class voters who fondly recall the construction boom, cash hand-outs and earthy rhetoric of Ahmadinejad's rule. Voter apathy is a threat to the Islamic regime, which stakes its legitimacy on a high turnout every four years. Supreme leader

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said a massive turnout was needed to show the continued popularity of the Islamic regime. "Faced with the enemy, the people should show their determination and calm," he said yesterday.

'Extremism'

Despite the slump, many voters, particularly wealthier urbanites, are attracted to Rouhani's promise of greater social freedoms. At his last major rally in Tehran, thousands chanted for reformist leaders locked up after mass protests in 2009. Rouhani has made thinly veiled references to Raisi's past as a prosecutor during a period in the 1980s when many dissidents were executed. "The people of Iran shall once again announce that they don't approve of those who only called for executions and jail throughout the last 38 years," he said recently, referring to the 1979 revolution. "We've entered this election to tell those practicing violence and extremism that your era is over." —AFP

KHAMENEI DENOUNCES 'UNWORTHY' ELECTION RHETORIC IN VEILED SWIPE

SUPREME LEADER URGES MASSIVE VOTE TO BOLSTER REGIME

DUBAI: Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei denounced the heated rhetoric of Iran's presidential election campaign yesterday as "unworthy", a thinly-veiled rebuke of pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani's attacks on his main conservative challenger. The withdrawal of other conservative candidates has turned tomorrow's election into an unexpectedly tight two-horse race between Rouhani, 68, and hardline cleric Ebrahim Raisi, a 56-year-old protege of the supreme leader.

live television with an open vehemence unseen in the near 40 year history of the Islamic Republic. While Khamenei did not mention any of the candidates specifically, his criticism appeared aimed in particular at Rouhani, who during a debate last week went beyond the bounds of what is normally considered permissible discourse in Iran to cast his foes as power-hungry pawns of the security forces.

"Mr Raisi, you can slander me as much you wish. As a judge of the

improvements to the economy. Under Iran's ruling system, Khamenei, who is 77 and has been in office since 1989, has more authority than the elected president but is traditionally expected to remain above the fray of day-to-day politics. The supreme leader also called for a massive turnout to bolster the regime against its "enemies". Khamenei suggested Iran's foes would be deterred from pursuing regime change if they saw voters flock to the ballot boxes in

Those Who Cut Out Tongues

Rouhani was swept to power four years ago with more than three times as many votes as his nearest rival, on promises to reduce Iran's international isolation and grant more freedoms to people at home.

His main achievement has been a deal with global powers to lift economic sanctions on Iran in return for curbs to its nuclear programme. But widespread economic improvement has yet to materialize, and hardliners accuse him of selling out Iran's interests too cheaply to the West.

The main obstacle to Rouhani's bid for a second term is apathy from reformist voters who carried him to victory last time, many of whom now say they are disappointed by the slow pace of change. Normally known as a mild-mannered pragmatist rather than a gung-ho reformer, Rouhani has tried to fire up the enthusiasm of the pro-reform camp with speeches that break taboos by making open references to human rights abuse by the authorities. He alluded to hardliners last week as "those who cut out tongues and sewed mouths shut".

If no candidate wins 50 percent of the vote tomorrow, a second round run-off would be held a week later. Although the unelected supreme leader holds ultimate authority in Iran and all candidates must be vetted by a hardline clerical body, elections are nevertheless hotly contested and have the power to deliver change within a system of rule overseen by Shiite religious authorities.

In 2009, hundreds of people died and thousands were arrested in protests after reformists disputed the electoral victory of hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The two main reformist candidates from that vote are under house arrest. Tehran residents said police deployments appeared to have been beefed up in some areas of the capital, a normal practice ahead of national polls in Iran, to prevent unrest.



MASHHAD: Iranian President and candidate in the upcoming presidential elections Hassan Rouhani gives an address at a campaign rally in Takhti stadium in this northeastern city yesterday. —AFP

Khamenei's intervention two days before Iranians go to the polls could help sway the vote by signalling the supreme leader's dissatisfaction with Rouhani's conduct. "In the election debates, some remarks were made that were unworthy of the Iranian nation. But the (wide) participation of the people will erase all of that," Khamenei told an audience yesterday, according to his own website.

The two main rivals have traded charges of graft and brutality on

clerical court, you can even issue an arrest order. But please don't abuse religion for power," Rouhani said at one point. At another point he said to Raisi: "Some security and revolutionary groups are busying people to your campaign rallies ... Who finances them?" For his part, Raisi, who as a long-serving member of the judiciary was one of four judges who sentenced thousands of political prisoners to death in the 1980s, attacked Rouhani for failing to deliver promised

tomorrow's poll. "American, European officials and those of the Zionist regime are watching our elections to see the level of participation," he said in quotes carried on his Telegram messenger account. "The Iranian nation has enemies. Faced with the enemy, the people should show its determination and calm," he said. Turnout is all-important to the Iranian regime, which uses regular elections to demonstrate the legitimacy of its Islamic system.

CAMEROON FEMALE PYGMIES BEAR BRUNT OF ALCOHOL ABUSE

DJIBOT, Cameroon: Sporting patchy bruises on her forehead and right cheek, Maria moves gingerly as her four young children chase each other in their pygmy camp on the edge of a forest in eastern Cameroon. "I spent all night fighting with my husband ... he came home very drunk," Maria told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in the village of Djibot, constantly glancing over her shoulder. "He asked me for food, which I had not prepared because I had morning sickness," added the expectant mother, who is in her late twenties. "He started to beat me, and I tried to not let myself get pushed around." Alcoholism is a rapidly growing problem among some 50,000 Baka pygmies - nomadic hunter-gatherers who are usually less than five feet (1.5 m) tall - living in eastern Cameroon. Driven from their ancestral lands by logging and mining firms, and conservation efforts to save elephants and gorillas, and pushed into contact and conflict with forest-dwelling Bantu ethnic groups, many of the Baka are turning to alcohol to cope. Most of the largely illiterate Baka are living in huts made of leaves, bamboo and mud-baked bricks alongside southeast Cameroon's roads, just outside the protected reserves that they need permits to enter.

The women, like Maria, are suffering the most. Many say they are beaten regularly and badly by their drunk husbands, others are wrestling with alcohol abuse themselves, while some have turned blind or even died from drinking home-grown alcohol. Struggling to adapt to life outside the forest, the Baka's problems of poverty, hunger and alcoholism are only likely to worsen, rights activists say. "Alcohol abuse is destroying the social fabric of the pygmies," said Barry Abbott of the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services, a faith-based healthcare organization. "Because of alcohol, insta-

bility prevails in couples ... in most relationships, the woman is beaten," added Abbott, who has worked in pygmy camps across Cameroon for more than a decade.

Concerns over Sex

The Baka are one of the ethnic groups that make up Africa's half a million pygmies, who have long faced discrimination and abuse, from being displayed in human zoos in Europe to enduring enslavement and cannibalism in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They now find themselves caught in a major battle between conservationists trying to save endangered species and activists campaigning for the rights of tribal people, who are unable to secure rights to land they have depended on for centuries.

Survival International has accused the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) of funding anti-poaching guards, who have killed Baka pygmies with impunity, and supporting the creation of three national parks on Baka land a decade ago without their consent. The Baka say this has left them in a desperate food situation, farming only peanuts and plantain in their camps and risking conflict with guards if they enter the forest to forage for fruit and insects, catch fish and hunt animals to eat.

The WWF in February denied the allegations and told the Thomson Reuters Foundation none of them had been substantiated. In another camp in south Cameroon, where the Bagyeli pygmies find their land threatened by logging firms, residents said most children were out-of-school and left unsupervised, with some having even started drinking palm wine and sachets of whiskey. Teenage pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted infections are a major worry for

Cameroon's pygmy populations. "As soon as I told my fiance that I was pregnant, he hid away," said 15-year-old Carrie, staring at the ground while her uncle explained how families were struggling for food, resorting to eating mushrooms and snails, as they were unable to hunt. Some pygmy girls, from both the south and east of Cameroon, are abducted by traffickers and taken to major cities, where they are forced to work as maids for free or used as sex slaves, said Irene Modos, chairwoman of the Baka Development Committee. "Many of these girls have returned home to their communities with AIDS and sexually transmitted infections," Modos said.

'Mum is Drunk, Dad is Drunk'

Several Cameroonian rights groups are working to educate Baka and Bagyeli pygmy communities about the dangers of alcohol abuse, stress the importance of the pygmy women in society, and stop children from falling into the same traps as their parents. "Last year we went to several pygmy villages, picked up all of the empty alcohol containers, hung them in the air and said: 'look at the number of litres of alcohol you are drinking,'" said Messe Venant, who heads Okani, a Baka rights group. "In some homes, mum is drunk, dad is drunk, and the child goes unheard," Venant added. "It calls for dialogue."

The Foyer Our Lady of the Forest (FONDAF) goes into pygmy camps to enrol young children into local schools, where they first only observe the classes, before learning French and being taught by pygmy teachers in order to bring them up to speed. "Some end up first in their class," said FONDAF head Johanne Ongbenok. "But we need funding to teach these children better." —Reuters



Syrian refugee boys gesture to the camera during the inauguration ceremony of a new solar power plant at the Azraq camp for Syrian refugees in northern Jordan yesterday. —AFP

SYRIAN RIVALS WEIGH UN PLAN FOR NEW CHARTER

GENEVA: Rival Syrian delegations yesterday weighed a UN proposal on developing a new constitution for the war-ravaged country, as a new round of peace talks entered a second day. The sixth round of UN-backed negotiations in Geneva is the latest drive to bring a political solution to the conflict which has claimed more than 320,000 lives since 2011. The talks opened with tensions high over a US charge that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government was using a prison crematorium to hide evidence of thousands of murdered detainees.

Syria's government delegation, led by Bashar Al-Jaafari, returned to UN headquarters Wednesday afternoon for a meeting with talks mediator Staffan de Mistura. They were expected to discuss his proposal to create a "consultative" committee of civil society activists and technocrats tasked with setting a roadmap to a new constitution. The team would begin work immediately on "specific options for constitutional drafting" in order to "prevent a constitutional or legal vacuum at any point during the political transition process being negotiated," according to a copy of the document seen by AFP.

Syrian government officials did not respond to requests for comment, but a source close to the delegation confirmed they had received the document. The opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC) has said it has "reservations" about the draft, which it is expected to discuss with de Mistura later yesterday. An opposition source told AFP that the HNC had submitted a list of questions on the document to the UN, including on what "prerogatives" the new committee would have.

'No more committees'

"This paper was a surprise - it was not expected in the first place," the HNC's Munzer Makhos told AFP. "We don't know what the aim is or how it will be implemented. We don't want there to be more committees outside of our control." The UN-backed talks are expected to focus on four separate "baskets": Governance, a new constitution, elections and combating "ter-

rorism" in the war-ravaged country.

While the HNC has insisted on Assad's ouster as part of any political transition, the government sees this demand as a nonstarter. The back-to-back meetings on Tuesday were brief, in line with de Mistura's pledge to keep the talks "rather business-like, rather short". Hopes for a breakthrough remain dim, particularly after US claims of new regime atrocities at the notorious Saydnaya prison near Damascus. Satellite images released by the US State Department appeared to support earlier claims by rights groups that Saydnaya is an execution center, a claim Damascus rejected. Relatives of detained Syrians - some of them imprisoned in Saydnaya - gathered outside the UN in Geneva Wednesday, carrying portraits of their missing loved ones and tearfully writing their names on long strips of paper.

'Different role for Russia'

The HNC has said Washington's accusations about Saydnaya demand a response from the United States and other friendly nations, but also called on Russia to take action. "For us, we need to see a different role for Russia - not only helping Assad commit crimes. We need to see Russia help Syrians decide their fate and their destiny," said HNC spokesman Saleem Al-Meslet. He told journalists that members of the HNC would meet with Russian officials later in the day.

The UN meanwhile confirmed that de Mistura met earlier yesterday with Russia's deputy foreign minister Gennady Gatilov. Jaafari met Gatilov in Geneva on Tuesday. Longtime regime ally Moscow has become a key player in Syria's crisis, launching an air war in support of Assad in 2015 and brokering several agreements aimed at ending the war. The latest effort is a tripartite agreement between Russia, fellow Assad ally Iran, and rebel backer Turkey to create four "de-escalation" zones across some of Syria's bloodiest battlegrounds. It was signed on May 4 in the Kazakh capital Astana as part of parallel negotiations. De Mistura has dismissed suggestions that the Astana talks are competing with the Geneva track, saying they were "working in tandem." —AFP

ISRAEL ALARMED BY TRUMP INTEL LEAK, PLAYS IT DOWN

JERUSALEM: Israel sought yesterday to contain the fallout from Donald Trump's sharing of its intelligence with Russia after the move cast a further shadow over the US president's visit to the country next week. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump spoke by phone on Tuesday afternoon, a spokesman for the premier's office said, while stressing that they only discussed next week's trip during the 20-minute conversation.

But as the news emerged that Israel was the initial source of the intelligence provided to Russia, other Israeli officials spoke of their commitment to continuing security cooperation between their country and Washington. Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said security ties would continue to be "unprecedented" in scope. But he made no mention of Trump divulging intelligence to Russia that a US administration official said had originally come from Israel.

"The security relationship between Israel & our greatest ally the United States, is deep, significant & unprece-

ded in volume," Lieberman wrote on his Twitter account. The relationship "is unprecedented in its contribution to our strength. This is how it has been & how it will continue to be," he added. Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz said he had "complete confidence in the American intelligence community". Netanyahu's office had not responded to requests for comment on the intelligence sharing.

'Chilling effect'

The United States is Israel's most important ally, providing it with more than \$3 billion in defense aid each year. The story grabbed the front pages of every major Israeli newspaper, with the exception of the pro-Netanyahu freesheet Israel Hayom. The Washington Post reported late Monday that Trump revealed what it said was highly classified information on the Islamic State group during a meeting last week with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Moscow's Washington ambassador Sergey Kislyak.

BLACK HARVARD STUDENTS HOLD GRADUATION OF THEIR OWN

BOSTON: Black students at Harvard University are organizing a graduation ceremony of their own this year to recognize the achievements of black students and faculty members some say have been overlooked. More than 700 students and guests are registered to attend Harvard's first Black Commencement, which will take place two days before the school's traditional graduation events. It isn't meant to replace the existing ceremony, student organizers say, but rather to add something that was missing.

"We really wanted an opportunity to give voice to the voiceless at Harvard," said Michael Huggins, president of the Harvard Black Graduate Student Alliance, a campus group that is planning the ceremony. "So many students identify with the African diaspora but don't necessarily feel welcome as part of the larger community, and they don't feel like their stories are being shared."

Harvard joins a growing number of universities that have added graduation events for students of different ethnicities. Some have offered black commencement ceremonies for years, including

Stanford University, Marshall University and the University of Washington. Some have added them more recently, and are also adding events for a variety of cultural groups. The May 23 event at Harvard will feature four student speakers discussing the hurdles they faced on the way to graduation.

Every student will receive a stole made of traditional African kente cloth, meant to symbolize their shared heritage and to be worn with their cap and gown at the university's graduation. Students have raised \$35,000 for the event, mostly from schools within the university. Organizers say some university deans and professors have agreed to attend. A Harvard spokesman declined to comment.

"This event is truly open for everyone," said Huggins, who is graduating with a master's in public policy this month. "We really want this to be an open affair where people can learn about some experiences that often go unnoticed." Students at Harvard began an annual Latino graduation ceremony in 2015, and black undergraduates have held similar events. Students say the new event is the first that's open to black students across the univer-

sity. The University of Delaware held its first ceremony for LGBT students this year, joining dozens of other colleges that have added such "lavender graduation" events in recent years. Along with its traditional commencement, Virginia Commonwealth University last year added new ceremonies for black students, Latinos and military veterans.

"They're small affairs, but they're meaningful," said Michael Porter, a spokesman for the university. "It's really a social event, and one more time to get together as you wind down the college career."

Cultural graduation events are typically started by students, experts say, and often by those who feel marginalized on their campuses. They can be particularly important for black students, many of whom are the first in their families to graduate from college, said M Evelyn Fields, president of the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education. "When you're a little speck of pepper in a sea of salt, you can get lost," said Fields, who is also a professor of early childhood education at South Carolina State University. "They don't want to just be lost in the sea. They want the recognition that they believe

they deserve, for the work that they've done."

Black students at Harvard represent 5 percent of the overall student body, compared with whites, who make up 43 percent, according to federal education data. Campus tensions at the Ivy League school have been heightened over the past two years after a series of racially charged episodes. Harvard police called it a hate crime when framed portraits of several black law professors were defaced in 2015.

No suspect was found. Months later, the law school agreed to abandon its official coat of arms after student activists protested the symbol's ties to an 18th-century slave owner. Organizers of the Black Commencement say it's partly meant to highlight racial disparities on campus. But ultimately it's a celebration of achievement, said Jillian Simons, a law student and president-elect of the Harvard Black Graduate Student Alliance. "We want to acknowledge how far we've come," Simons said. "We want to say that there is a time to be jubilant and to acknowledge something that is positive instead of something that is causing heartache." — AP



NEW ORLEANS: A statue of Confederate general P G T Beauregard is removed after 3 am Central Standard Time yesterday from the entrance to City Park. — AP

NEW ORLEANS TAKES DOWN 3RD CONFEDERATE-ERA MONUMENT

NEW ORLEANS: New Orleans removed a statue honoring Confederate General P G T Beauregard early yesterday morning, marking the third of four historical monuments the city slated for removal because they were deemed racially offensive. Crews laboring under the glare of floodlights began the work of detaching the bottom of the 14-foot-tall statue - a bronze likeness of Beauregard on horseback - from its pedestal on Tuesday night while some 200 bystanders looked on near the entrance of City Park.

Shortly after 3 am CDT (0800 GMT) yesterday, a crane lifted the statue from its base after workers had cleared the area. A stone slab with Beauregard's name on it also was removed, but the statue's empty base was left at the site. The crowd of onlookers, about evenly divided between statue supporters and opponents, were mostly subdued, though a few individuals shouted at one another across the police barricade separating them. Some members of the pro-statue group waved Confederate flags.

The public memorials to Beauregard and other heroes of the US Civil War's pro-slavery Confederacy have been denounced by critics as an affront to the ideals of multi-racial tolerance and diversity in the majority-black Louisiana city. But doing away with the monuments has met with staunch resistance from groups who argue that the statues are never-

theless important symbols of the city's Southern heritage. The City Council voted in 2015 to remove monuments honoring two of the Confederacy's best-known generals - Beauregard and Robert E Lee - as well as Confederate President Jefferson Davis and a 19th-century white supremacist militia. The Crescent City White League monument was taken down on April 24 and the Davis statue on May 11. The Lee memorial is scheduled to go next, though officials have not publicized precise removal dates in advance.

Mayor Mitch Landrieu wrote an editorial published on Monday in The Washington Post defending his decision to support bringing down the statues, which he characterized as one of his proudest moments in public office. "Removing New Orleans's Confederate monuments from places of prominence is an acknowledgment that it is time to take stock of, and then move past, a painful part of our history," Landrieu wrote.

The Louisiana House of Representatives passed a measure on Monday that would require local governments to hold referendums before removing any Confederate monuments. But the bill would not keep New Orleans from proceeding with its plans, said Richard Marksbury, a Tulane University professor and member of the Monumental Task Committee that fought to keep the Confederate monuments in place. — Reuters

VENEZUELA DEATH TOLL HITS 42

CARACAS: A 17-year-old boy and two men died in Venezuela after being shot during anti-government protests, prosecutors said Tuesday, bringing to 42 the number of people killed in six weeks of unrest. The latest deaths made the recent wave of clashes almost as deadly as the last such disturbances in 2014, when 43 people were killed in anti-government protests. "They cannot

in the morning. The current unrest erupted on April 1 when the opposition took to the streets in anger at what they saw as moves to strengthen elected socialist President Nicolas Maduro's hold on power. The government and the opposition have accused each other of sending armed groups to sow violence in the protests.

The boy was hospitalized after being shot in the head Monday during a demonstration in the western town of Pedraza and died early Tuesday, the public prosecution service said in a statement. He was at the scene of a demonstration "when suddenly a group of people arrived and fired several shots, wounding the young man in the head," it said. The department added that two other men, aged 31 and 33, had died from gunshots they suffered in demonstrations in the cities of San Antonio de los Altos and Tachira.

Monday saw the latest in weeks of violence as opponents mounted fresh demonstrations against Maduro. Police have fired tear gas and protesters have hurled rocks and Molotov cocktails in a near-daily series of clashes. The center-right opposition blames elected socialist leader Maduro for an economic crisis that has caused shortages of food and medicine. It wants early elections to remove him from office. Maduro has vowed general elections will take place as scheduled in late 2018 but not before. He has accused the opposition of mounting an "armed insurgency" against him with US backing. — AFP



CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro speaks during a TV program on Tuesday. — AFP

go on killing and torturing people, and getting away with it," said Organization of American States chief Luis Almagro, one of Maduro's harshest international critics.

The UN Security Council will discuss the crisis in Venezuela on Wednesday, diplomats said in New York. The United States requested the closed-door talks to be held

CONSTERNATION ON CAPITOL HILL OVER WHITE HOUSE BOMBHELLS

COMMUNICATION APPEARS TO HAVE BROKEN DOWN

WASHINGTON: Consternation and confusion overtook Capitol Hill on Tuesday as Republicans confronted the revelation that President Donald Trump had disclosed highly classified information to the Russians. Several hours later, lawmakers were shaken anew by reports that the president had asked then-FBI Director James Comey to stop investigating ousted adviser Michael Flynn. Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain said late Tuesday that the developments had reached "a point where it's of Watergate size and scale."

"I think we've seen this movie before," the Arizona Republican said at a dinner to receive the International Republican Institute's Freedom Award. "The shoes continue to drop, and every couple days there's a new aspect." McCain said Trump needs to "get it all out ... and the longer you delay, the longer it's going to last." His comments were reported by The Daily Beast. Yet despite the anxiety and displeasure voiced by McCain and a handful of other prominent GOP lawmakers, Republicans did not appear poised to abandon a president who remains critical to their goals of acting on health care and tax legislation. Several came to his defense and sought to close ranks.

"There isn't anybody who can run the White House without criticism," said Sen Orrin Hatch of Utah, a senior lawmaker. "This man has been subject to more criticism than any predecessor that I know of. They hate him, they didn't like the fact that he won, he beat their favorite, it was a remarkable election." Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell responded tersely "no" when pressed on whether he had concerns about the president's ability to handle classified information, or whether he was losing confidence in Trump. But McConnell acknowledged that "it would be helpful to have less drama emanating from the White House."

Just the opposite happened over the course of Tuesday. First Republicans faced questions on a report initially published in the Washington Post that Trump last week shared details about an Islamic State terror threat with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian Ambassador to the US Sergey Kislyak. As some Republicans defended Trump and others expressed concerns, another bombshell report landed, this time about a memo where Comey wrote that Trump had asked him to shut down an FBI investigation into Flynn, according to a person familiar with the situation. The White House denied what was first reported by The New York Times.

Republicans, caught off-guard, insisted they wanted to hear from Comey, who was fired last week a day before Trump met in the Oval Office with the Russian diplomats. "Let's get to the bottom of what happened with the director. And the



WASHINGTON: An aide (left) speaks with Rep Joe Crowley, chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, and House Oversight and Government Reform Committee ranking member, on Capitol Hill during a news conference yesterday behind a photograph of US President Donald Trump and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. — AP

best way to get to the bottom of it is for him to testify ... I'm not going to take a memo, I want the guy to come in," said Sen Lindsey Graham.

'History is Watching'

Democrats badgered Republicans to stand up to the president, and demanded access to the transcripts of Trump's meeting last week with two Russian diplomats. After the news broke of the Comey memo, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer stood in the chamber and said, "I say to all of my colleagues in the Senate - history is watching."

Yet as the House came back into session Tuesday night some Republicans from conservative districts said their constituents were not overly concerned with any aspect of the Russia story. Addressing the Comey memo, GOP Rep Blake Farenthold of Texas said: "If Comey felt like the president was trying to obstruct justice, Comey would have been duty-bound to report it to the DOJ and act on it. And we're not hearing that happened. I think this is another example of whatever Trump does gets the worst possible spin."

House Republicans were to hold a weekly meet-

ing yesterday morning after which Speaker Paul Ryan was expected to address the matter. Aides have said he hopes for a full explanation from the White House. Democrats pointed out that Ryan had called for Democrat Hillary Clinton to be denied classified briefings after Comey concluded last year that she was careless in how she handled classified information over her email accounts. Ryan's aides countered that in the same July 2016 opinion piece, Ryan also said those classified briefings could resume if Clinton were actually elected.

With the White House in chaos and congressional Republicans struggling to respond, communication appeared to have broken down between the two ends of Pennsylvania Ave. Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr said around midday Tuesday that he'd spent the morning trying to get someone at the White House to call him and explain what had actually happened. "My major concern right now is that I don't know what the president said," Burr said. "I'd like to think somebody from the White House who was in the room is going to get on the phone and tell me what they said. ... Maybe they're busy." — AP

ERDOGAN AND TRUMP HAIL FRIENDSHIP AMID TENSIONS

WASHINGTON: Presidents Donald Trump and Recep Tayyip Erdogan stood side by side at the White House on Tuesday and promised to strengthen strained ties despite the Turkish leader's stern warning about Washington's arming of a Kurdish militia. Fresh from securing his grip on Turkey with a referendum to enhance his powers, Erdogan came to the Oval Office with complaints about US support for Kurdish fighters and what Ankara says is Washington's harboring of the mastermind of a failed coup.

But both leaders also tried gamely to put a brave face on their differences and to renew a key alliance between NATO's leading power and its biggest Muslim member, partners in the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq. "It is absolutely unacceptable to take the YPG-PYD into consideration as partners in the region, and it's going against a global agreement we reached," Erdogan said, referring to the Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG) in Syria. "In the same way, we should never allow those groups who want to change the ethnic or religious structures in the region to use terrorism as a pretext," he added, suggesting that the Kurds are using the anti-IS fight as cover for separatist nationalism.

Trump was one of the first leaders to congratulate Erdogan on winning the April 16 vote to strengthen his office, and his Turkish counterpart repaid the compliment on Tuesday by hailing his host's "legendary triumph" in the US presidential race. "Of course Mr Trump's victory has led to an awakening of new expectations for Turkey and the region it is in. We know the new US administration will not let these hopes be in vain," Erdogan said. The US leader paid tribute to Turkey's historical contributions to the Western alliance's Cold War battles and promised: "Today we face a new enemy in the fight against terrorism and again we seek to face this threat together."



WASHINGTON: Pro-Erdogan supporters wave Turkish flags during a rally in front of the White House on Tuesday. — AFP

Attempted coup

Washington and Ankara are bitterly at odds over US support for the YPG, a Syrian armed faction that acts as the main ground force in the Pentagon's plan to defeat the Islamic State group but that Turkey deems a front for the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). And Erdogan remains angry that the United States continues to host Islamic preacher Fethullah Gulen, a former ally who chose exile in Pennsylvania and who has now been accused of masterminding last year's bloody attempted coup in his homeland. While

the pair shared warm words at their joint public appearance, Erdogan again made it clear that he would never accept an autonomous YPG-led Kurdish area in Syria, and that he had "frankly communicated" his expectation that Washington hand over Gulen. After their meeting, Trump and Erdogan exchanged friendly tweets. The US leader said it was a "great honor" to welcome his guest and the Turk responded by thanking him and declared: "I believe today's meeting will strengthen our longstanding alliance and strategic partnership." —AFP

PRO-EU LIBERAL DEMOCRATS PROMISE NEW BREXIT VOTE

LONDON: Britain's centrist Liberal Democrats launched their party manifesto yesterday with a promise to hold a Brexit referendum, as they seek to win pro-EU votes in next month's national election. Sitting a distant third place in opinion polls ahead of the June 8 vote, the Lib Dems are styling themselves as the party of the 48 percent who voted last year to remain in the European Union.

"We are giving the people of this country the chance to decide on what comes

next with Brexit," party leader Tim Farron told Sky News. "And if the deal that (Prime Minister) Theresa May comes back with is not good enough for you and your family, you should have the right to reject it and to vote to remain," he added. The Lib Dems pledge to hold a referendum on the final Brexit deal following two years of negotiations between London and Brussels, giving voters the chance to reject the agreement and stay in the European Union. The party also promises to keep Britain in the

European single market and continue freedom of movement, both of which have been ruled out by May.

Pro-Europe promises

The prime minister's Conservative Party has surged in the polls in recent months, currently leading with 49 percent of the vote according to a YouGov poll published on May 12. The main opposition Labour party has 31 percent while the Lib Dems lag behind on nine percent, according to the

survey of 1,630 people. The Liberal Democrats nosedived in the 2015 election after five years as the minor coalition partner alongside the centre-right Conservatives, but they are hoping to regain voters with their pro-Europe promises. Such a stance helped the party gain its ninth MP in the 650-seat parliament in a December by-election, beating the eurosceptic Conservative candidate by running a strongly anti-Brexit campaign. In its manifesto the Lib Dems also pledge to guaran-

tee the rights of EU staff working in social care and for the National Health Service, in addition to boosting funding to these areas by £6 billion (£7.8 billion, 7 billion euros).

The extra cash will be raised by increasing income tax by one percent, while the Lib Dems also plan to reverse the Conservatives' cuts to corporation tax. Legalizing cannabis, restricting junk food advertising to children, and suspending the use of bee-harming insecticides called neonicotinoids are also featured in the party's manifesto. — AFP



DELMENHORST: The entrance to the Sergeant Lilienthal barracks (Feldwebel Lilienthal Kaserne) in Delmenhorst, western Germany, is pictured on May 12, 2017. — AFP

GERMAN FAR-RIGHT PLOT REKINDLES DEBATE ON NAZI-ERA WEHRMACHT

BERLIN: The scandal surrounding an attack plot hatched by two far-right soldiers has again forced Germany to confront its dark past—specifically, the role of the Wehrmacht in the Third Reich. Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen has ordered the Bundeswehr to cleanse itself of all links to the Nazi-era army that set the world aflame under Adolf Hitler over 70 years ago.

What seems like an obvious and belated step to many, given documented Wehrmacht atrocities in World War II especially on the eastern front, has also sparked criticism of a "witch hunt" and an unjust blanket condemnation of the conscript army. The sensitive historical question was brought to the fore by the arrests since last month of lieutenant Franco Albrecht, 28, and two alleged co-conspirators including another soldier.

In the bizarre case, the far-right extremist Albrecht allegedly created the fake identity of a Syrian refugee who was granted asylum status, a bed in a shelter and monthly welfare payments. Prosecutors say Albrecht then planned to shoot a pro-refugee politician, possibly former president Joachim Gauck, and blame the murder on his fictitious Syrian alter ego to stoke public fears about jihadist terror. After Albrecht's arrest, von der Leyen was incensed to learn that steel helmets and other memorabilia of the World War II army were openly on display at the Franco-German barracks where the army suspects were stationed. Angry that earlier evidence of Albrecht's far-right worldview had been ignored by superiors out of "a misunderstood esprit de corps," she has ordered the Bundeswehr to sweep all barracks for Wehrmacht items and images.

The search netted another 41 items, including historical coins and pictures, reported national news agency DPA, citing unnamed defense committee sources. "The Wehrmacht is not part of the tradition of the Bundeswehr," said the defense minister, who is often seen as a possible successor to Chancellor Angela Merkel. She ordered a review of the army's 1982 "decree on traditions" which allows displaying Wehrmacht items within their "historical context," telling parliament in the latest hearings yesterday that those rules have "various backdoors." She also said new names would have to be found for barracks still named after World War II figures, including field marshal Erwin Rommel, dubbed the "Desert Fox" for his North Africa campaign.

'Reign of terror'

While there is mainstream condemnation for the Nazis, Gestapo and SS troops, the role

of the millions-strong conscript army is more ambiguous in the minds of many Germans. Hans-Peter Uhl of the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU) criticized von der Leyen's "blanket condemnation" of all German soldiers of the era, urging some "respect for our fathers and grandfathers".

The party's parliamentary vice president, Johannes Singhammer, said they were "drafted under the reign of terror of the Nazis". Former defense minister Rudolf Scharping of the Social Democrats (SPD) deplored the "witch hunt" and charged that "iconoclastic action does not make up for a failure to deal with right-wing extremists in the ranks of the Bundeswehr".

And Theo Sommer, a former senior defense bureaucrat, labeled the sweep "an overreaction, which casts suspicion of Wehrmacht nostalgia over the entire armed forces". He added: "I won't hide the photo of my father as a Wehrmacht soldier in a drawer. 'He served in Rommel's Africa Corps and came back from the war with a belly shot—a brave, upright man who was abused by an ominous, criminal system. I see no reason to be ashamed of him.'"

War crimes

Von der Leyen has been undeterred, a position welcomed by many lawmakers and voters. In the mid-1990s, travelling exhibitions extensively documented Wehrmacht war crimes against Jews, civilians and prisoners of war in eastern Europe and Russia. More than one million people saw the exhibitions, which were frequently targeted by right-wing protests.

Far-left Linke party lawmaker Ulla Jelpke charged the problem starts at the top because some barracks are still named after generals of the Wehrmacht, which she called "an organization of war criminals (who) ... murdered hundreds of thousands, millions of civilians". Von der Leyen has argued that the Bundeswehr should look at its own 60-year tradition in defense of a liberal democracy as a source of pride and meaning.

The Bundeswehr was founded as a purely defence military, but this has since the 1990s been interpreted to cover peacekeeping and conflict prevention abroad. The now 180,000-strong armed forces have joined UN, NATO and other multinational missions from Kosovo to Afghanistan and Mali which must be mandated by parliament. German troops—all volunteers since male conscription ended in 2011 — make their pledge at the Berlin Bendlerblock site that was the headquarters of the unsuccessful military resistance against Hitler. — AFP

A LOOK AT THE FRENCH DEPORTEES WHO WORKED ON HITLER'S SECRET WEAPON

HELFAUT: The Resistance's struggle against Nazi occupation in World War II is well-documented in France but much less is known about thousands of its members forced to work in Nazi Germany on Hitler's secret weapon: the V2 rockets he hoped would bring Britain to its knees. Now, more than 70 years on, France aims to shed light on, and honor, the nearly 9,000 Resistance members who were among thousands of slave laborers to have toiled in icy underground tunnels.

In abhorrent conditions and deprived of daylight or fresh air, 4,500 of the French deportees, believed to be all male, died at the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp in Nordhausen in central eastern Germany after it was set up in August 1943. Nearly a third of those are thought to have perished in the camp's first eight months. Their harrowing stories are being compiled in detail by the La Coupole History and Memory Centre, a World War II museum at Helfaut, near the northern French town of Saint-Omer.

The centre stands at the site of a huge bunker, built as a base for preparing the launch of the V2s. Bombardments of the bunker zone and the Allies' D-Day Normandy landings checked Hitler's V2 ambitions, although Nazi forces still managed to fire off some 3,000 by the end of the war, around half at Britain. Designed to wreak death and destruction on London five minutes after leaving the

French coast, the V2 was the world's first long-range missile. It was designed by Wernher von Braun, who after the war moved to the United States and helped America reach the moon.

'I went through hell'

Dora veteran Georges Jouanin is still uncomprehending. At the age of 94, his memories remain vivid. "How can you want to destroy a country?" he said, in an interview with AFP. "I went through hell at Dora. We slept on lice-infested bunks (stacked on each other inside the tunnels) and worked 18-hour days breaking through rock. We saw our friends die. Forced labour...", he added. Jouanin, a typesetter by training, was deported first to the Buchenwald camp in December 1943 after the Gestapo arrested him in Paris. The next month, he arrived at nearby Dora, where deportees worked in two kilometre-long (1.2-mile) tunnels they had to dig out from scratch to create a subterranean factory out of the range of Allied bombers. The site replaced one bombed at Peenemuende, on Germany's Baltic coast.

More than a third of the 60,000 people interned at Dora—mainly Russians died in unimaginable conditions, says La Coupole historian Laurent Thiery. By 2020, he, together with 20 colleagues aim to piece together a record on the deported Resistance fighters to "again give a face and life to these lost people". — AP

MACRON DISTORTS PARTY LINES WITH MIXED FRENCH CABINET PLANS TO CREATE A BROAD GOVERNING COALITION

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron appointed his first cabinet yesterday mixing Socialists, centrists and rightwingers with newcomers to politics as he pressed ahead with plans to create a broad governing coalition. The new cabinet of 22 people meets campaign pledges of being smaller than its predecessors and having gender parity, with European lawmaker Sylvie Goulard landing the prestigious defense portfolio. She will take over from veteran Socialist Jean-Yves Le Drian who will move over to foreign affairs, while rightwinger Bruno Le Maire was appointed economy minister.

Other key figures instrumental in Macron's sensational victory in this month's election were given senior roles, with the Socialist mayor of Lyon, Gerard Collomb, named as interior minister while centrist ally Francois Bayrou becomes justice minister. Macron faced a tricky balancing act in naming his first government, with the 39-year-old needing to keep his allies happy while opening up positions to the rightwing Republicans party. France's youngest ever president wants to create a new centrist force in French politics-at the expense of the traditional Socialist and Republicans parties-which will be put to the test in parliamentary elections next month. Without a parliamentary majority, he will find it hard to push through his ambitious plans to loosen France's strict labour laws, boost entrepreneurship and reduce class sizes in tough neighborhoods.

Along with politicians, the government will feature new faces from civil society, including black Olympic fencing champion Laura Flessel, renowned environmentalist Nicolas Hulot and publisher Francoise Nyssen. The announcement of the government was delayed by 24-hours on Tuesday, officially due to the need to carry out more extensive screening of candidates, but which might also have been down to last-minute negotiations.

EU priority

Macron has promised a new law introducing higher ethical standards for lawmakers as one of



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron (L) welcomes United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres prior to their meeting at the Elysee Palace. — AFP

his first pieces of legislation and was keen to avoid possible embarrassments, aides said. Former president Francois Hollande was left reeling by revelations in 2012 that his budget minister Jerome Cahuzac, a plastic surgeon, had a bank account in Switzerland where he had hidden income from tax authorities.

In his busy first week, Macron is also set to meet EU Council President Donald Tusk in Paris yesterday as he tackles his top foreign priority of reforming the European Union. The meeting was pushed back at the last-minute from its scheduled time of midday until the evening. Tusk was

one of the first prominent European voices to congratulate Macron on his May 7 presidential election runoff victory over far-right and anti-EU politician Marine Le Pen.

Macron, who ran a staunchly pro-European campaign, kept with tradition by visiting German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday in his first trip abroad after taking office. The pair now at the centre of the European project vowed to give it new impetus, saying they were ready to change treaties if necessary. Macron has urged a deepening of the EU to fight off a recent surge of populism on the continent. — AFP



KINSHASA: Congolese police patrol outside the main prison in Kinshasa, Congo, yesterday. Christian sect members stormed a prison in Congo's capital yesterday, freeing the leader of their movement and 50 others, Congo's justice minister said. Bundu dia Kongo movement leader Ne Mwanda Nsemi is now on the run after a 4 am attack on Malaka prison in Kinshasa, Justice Minister Alexis Thambwe Mwamba told local radio station Top Congo FM. — AFP

KINSHASA RECALLS KABILA 'LIBERATION'

KINSHASA: Two decades after Kinshasa gave itself up willingly to rebel commander Laurent-Désire Kabila, his son Joseph remains at the helm of this vast, conflict-ravaged nation although his rule is mired in political crisis. Back in 1997, the country then known as Zaire was struggling under the authoritarian rule of Joseph Mobutu Sese Seko, who seized power in 1965 and presided over a nepotistic regime steeped in corruption.

His rule came to an abrupt end in May that year when Kabila's Alliance troops marched into the capital and the rebel chief declared himself president of the newly named Democratic Republic of Congo. "They were very young, dirty, starving and collapsing under the weight of their weapons," recalls Chantal Kikalulu of the forces who entered Kinshasa on May 17, a city exhausted by decades of dictatorship. "Without thinking, we offered them food and drink."

Backed by Uganda and Rwanda, Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (ADFL) had begun their rebellion just seven months earlier, staging a rapid takeover which saw Mobutu flee and the rebels welcomed with open arms. "By dawn on May 17, 1997, excited residents of the city were running towards us with bread and water, and even buckets of water to wash ourselves with," recalls

Cedric 'Zimbabwe' Kabeya, who was just 16 when he served in Kabila's army. During the campaign, the ADFL—which had liberally recruited children and teenagers as soldiers—appeared to be far better disciplined than the rag-tag and generally unpaid Zairean Armed Forces (FAZ).

'Had enough'

"Most of the cities fell into our hands without any resistance from Mobutu's men who were demoralised and were just spewed out by the population," recalls Major General Jean-Claude Kifwa, former head of Kabila's guard. The people were happy to cooperate because they had simply "had enough of being humiliated, plundered and gratuitously killed" by FAZ troops, says Kifwa, who is today in charge of defence for the southeastern part of the country.

There was even disillusionment with Mobutu at the highest levels within the army, he adds, saying the rebels had access to "strategic information" which came from the general staff. According to a former senior FAZ officer, the last "real clashes with the enemy" took place at Kenge, 200 kilometres (120 miles) east of Kinshasa. After Kenge fell, there was "no real reason to defend Kinshasa, which would have resulted in a bloodbath" in a metropolis which was home to several million people.

'Liberators'

By May 16, the ADFL was at the gates of the city and Mobutu fled to his hideout on the border with Central African Republic, dying in exile four months later. General Donatien Mahele Lieko, who was chief of staff at the time, decided to surrender without a fight-for which he was quickly assassinated by Mobutu's loyal presidential guards. But history had already been written.

On May 17, ADFL forces entered Kinshasa alongside troops from Rwanda where they were welcomed by crowds hailing them as "liberators!" and shouting: "Kabila, we're waiting for you!" At the time, Kabila enjoyed a particularly favourable international context. As well as the backing of Rwanda and Uganda, the rebel chief also had the support of Angola and Burundi which were determined to oust Mobutu at a time when the dictator's Western support had dried up following the end of the Cold War.

But the enthusiasm over Kabila's victory was short-lived—overtaken by the swift slide towards authoritarianism, subjugation of the opposition and the troublesome presence of Ugandan and Rwandan soldiers on the streets.

"It was total disillusionment," admits Adolphe Muzito, who served as prime minister under Joseph Kabila, the current president, from 2008 to 2012. — AFP

S AFRICAN EVEREST PERMIT DODGER ARRESTED IN NEPAL

KATHMANDU: A South African who attempted to climb Mount Everest without permission has been arrested in Nepal where he faces a \$22,000 fine-double the cost of the permit he was trying to avoid. Ryan Sean Davy handed himself in to authorities in Kathmandu on Tuesday after being caught last week hiding in a cave near Everest's base camp without a permit.

The 43-year-old began swearing and threatening officials from the tourism department during questioning and was arrested under Nepal's strict public order laws, Tourist Police Inspector Tulasha Khatiwada told AFP. He is now in custody and will appear in court next week to face charges related to his Everest attempt and possible additional offences over his conduct during the investigation. "He will be fined and deported as per the Tourism Act of Nepal. He may face further penalty for misbehaving with the police," director of the tourism department Dinesh Bhattarai told AFP.

Foreigners have to pay the Nepal government \$11,000 for permission to climb the 8,848-metre (29,029-foot) peak—a major earner for the impoverished country. Under Nepali law, climbers caught without the mandatory permit are fined \$22,000. Davy could also be blacklisted from the Himalayan nation for five years, or face a 10-year climbing ban when he appears in court next week.

The South African—who describes him-

self on social media as a film director and producer—was caught a short distance from Everest base camp and ordered off the mountain. He had pitched a tent away from the other climbers to try and dodge government officials who monitor all Everest ascents. He told officials he had climbed alone as far as camp two-at 6,400 meters-to acclimatize in preparation for a solo summit bid.

The officials confiscated his passport and instructed him to return to Kathmandu to collect it. Davy said he couldn't afford to fly and would instead walk. He trekked for 185 kilometers to the town of Jiri in northeastern Nepal and then caught a bus to the capital, a Nepali friend of Davy's who asked not to be identified told AFP. His antics have angered many in the close-knit climbing community, who say the South African would have put himself and others in danger if he had attempted to reach the summit alone.

"He did not have any agency to look out for him or call for rescue if anything happened. Other teams would have come to his rescue, and would be exposed to unnecessary dangers," said Ang Tsering Sherpa, head of the Nepal Mountaineering Association. "The system of permits and guides is there for a reason." Davy was caught not far from where more than 1,000 mountaineers and support staff have gathered for the busy spring climbing season. — AFP



JALALABAD: Afghan security forces take up a position at the site of suicide bombing. — AFP

IS SUICIDE BOMBERS STORM AFGHAN STATE BROADCASTER

EXPLOSIONS ROCKED BUILDING WITH JOURNALISTS TRAPPED

JALALABAD: Suicide bombers stormed the national television station in Afghanistan's Jalalabad city yesterday, killing six people as gunfights and explosions rocked the building with journalists trapped inside, officials and eyewitnesses said. At least 17 others were left wounded in the four-hour assault on Radio Television Afghanistan, which marks the latest in a string of attacks on media workers in the conflict-torn country. Islamic State jihadists have claimed responsibility for the raid in eastern Nangarhar province, where the US military dropped its largest non-nuclear bomb last month in an unprecedented strike.

"There were four attackers—one blew himself up at the gate, killing the guard. Three others entered the building but were killed after our security forces fought them for four hours," Nangarhar Governor Gulab Mangal told reporters. "Six people, including four civilians and two policemen, were killed and 17 others wounded," he added. A health worker told AFP that many of those brought to hospital suffered gunshot wounds.

An RTA photographer said he fled the building as soon as the gunfight erupted, but many of his colleagues were stuck inside until the

assailants were killed. Nangarhar province is a hotbed of IS jihadists, who claimed yesterday's attack through its propaganda agency Amaq, the SITE Intelligence Group said. The US military last month dropped the GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb—dubbed the "Mother Of All Bombs"—on IS positions in Nangarhar, killing dozens of jihadists.

The bombing triggered global shock waves, with some condemning the use of Afghanistan as what they called a testing ground for the weapon, and against a militant group that is not considered as big a threat as the resurgent Taliban. According to the US Forces-Afghanistan, defections and recent battlefield losses have reduced the local IS presence from a peak of as many as 3,000 fighters to a maximum of 800.

Deadly country for media

The Pentagon has reportedly asked the White House to send thousands more troops to Afghanistan to break the deadlocked fight against the Taliban. US troops in Afghanistan number about 8,400 today, and there are another 5,000 from NATO allies, who also mainly serve in an advisory capacity—a far cry from the US presence of more than 100,000 six years ago.

Yesterday's attack underscores the growing dangers faced by media workers in Afghanistan as the security situation worsens. The country suffered its deadliest year on record for journalists in 2016, according to the Afghan Journalists' Safety Committee (AJSC), adding that the country is the second most dangerous for reporters in the world after Syria.

At least 13 journalists were killed last year, AJSC said, claiming that the Taliban was behind at least ten of the deaths. In January last year, seven employees of popular TV channel Tolo, which is often critical of the insurgents, were killed in a Taliban suicide bombing in Kabul in what the militant group said was revenge for "spreading propaganda" against them. It was the first major attack on an Afghan media organization since the Taliban were ousted from power in 2001.

Dan Coats, the head of US intelligence agencies, warned last week that the security and political situation in Afghanistan "will also almost certainly deteriorate through 2018, even with a modest increase in the military assistance by the US". US-led forces have been fighting in Afghanistan for almost 16 years, making it America's longest war. — AFP



In this Sept 27, 2015 file photo, trekkers rest at Everest Base Camp, Nepal. — AP

SRI LANKA'S MEN FACE RAPE A DECADE AFTER CIVIL WAR

COLOMBO: Men in Sri Lanka are being raped in custody nearly a decade after the civil war, when sexual assault was routinely used to torture detained Tamils, a report said yesterday. The rape of men and boys remains widespread but unreported, with victims unwilling to come forward due to social stigma and laws criminalizing same-sex relations, the All Survivors Project said in its report. Rape was rife during Sri Lanka's 37-year civil war, but unlike cases involving women there has been little official record or acknowledgement of men being abused by their captors.

At least 100,000 people were killed during the separatist war between government forces and rebels from the Tamil Tigers group, with atrocities recorded by both sides. The vast majority of documented cases of male rape both during and after the war were against Tamils, the largest ethnic minority, the report from the US-based research centre said.

"While the full extent of sexual violence against men and boys is not known... sexual violence against men and boys did not stop with the end of the war in May 2009," the report stated. "Incidents of sexual violence against men continue to be reported during arrests and detentions under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) which has yet to be repealed or reformed despite commitments to so." The 40-page report gave graphic details of how male suspects

held by police or security forces in the aftermath of the war were subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. In cases documented by rights watchdog International Truth and Justice Project, and referenced in the report, Tamil men were gang raped by Sri Lankan soldiers and subjected to other horrific sexual crimes. Promises to address Sri Lanka's wartime past have been slow, with the government resisting calls for an internationally-backed tribunal to investigate atrocities against the island's Tamil population.

But the response to the widespread rape of men and boys has "so far been even less adequate" than for other serious human rights violations, the report said. Homosexuality is illegal in Sri Lanka, discouraging male victims from reporting abuse. Local laws also do not recognize male sexual assault and statutory rape only applies to girls under 16, not boys. The report's authors urged Sri Lanka to include victims of male sexual violence in its much-delayed official response to war-era abuses.

Sri Lankan President President Maithripala Sirisena came to power in January 2015 with strong backing from Tamils, who bore the brunt of the bloody conflict. The International Crisis Group this week warned Sri Lanka that its failure to address its wartime past jeopardised any hope of a lasting peace in the ethnically-divided island. — AFP

MYANMAR TROOPS SHOOT DEAD FOUR JADE MINE SCAVENGERS

YANGON: Myanmar soldiers shot dead four itinerant workers yesterday after they tried to enter a mine to search for gems cast aside by its military owners, according to a local MP. Eleven others were injured when the soldiers opened fire at the mine, in the northwestern region of Sagaing, which is controlled by the military-backed Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd (UMEHL). The soldiers were thought to be working as security guards at the site, one of dozens of jade mines in the area.

"Yesterday they (UMEHL) warned the freelance miners not to come inside of the site," local lawmaker Maung Tay told AFP. "But the miners went there this morning and they shot them. There are four miners dead and eleven injured and they are at the hospital now." The incident comes the same day a screening of a film about the jade industry by Global Witness in Yangon was abruptly cancelled.

Journalists who attended the event at Parkroyal Hotel were read a statement from the hotel saying the corruption watchdog had not gained written permission from the Yangon regional government before the screening. The film, already available online, explored how

Myanmar's military has reaped huge profits from the jade mines in northern Kachin and used them to fuel long-running conflicts with local ethnic groups.

It also called on the government of Aung San Suu Kyi to focus on regulating the jade industry as part of peace talks with armed ethnic groups that are due to start next week. Myanmar produces the world's finest jadeite, a near-translucent green stone prized in China, where it is known as the "stone of heaven" and believed to bring health and luck. An investigation by Global Witness found Kachin's mines produced some \$31 billion of jade in 2014 alone, equivalent to almost half the country's official GDP that year.

But little of the bounty trickles down to impoverished locals who are left to sift through the rubble left by the mining firms that control the industry — many of them controlled by military families and drug lords. Hundreds of itinerant miners are killed by landslides every year searching for gems. Earlier this month police opened a case against five gem scavengers who discovered a huge jade boulder weighing 8.7 tons in Hpakant, Myanmar's main jade-producing region. — AFP

SHARIAH COURT PUNISHES GAY COUPLE WITH CANING

BANDA ACEH: An Islamic Shariah court in Indonesia's conservative Aceh province has sentenced two gay men to public caning for the first time, further undermining the country's moderate image after a top Christian politician was imprisoned for blasphemy. The court, whose sentencing yesterday coincided with International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, said the men, aged 20 and 23, would each be subjected to 85 lashes for having sexual relations. One of the men wept as his sentence was read out and pleaded for leniency. The chief prosecutor, Gulmaini, who goes by one name, said they will be caned next week, before the holy Muslim month of Ramadan starts about May 25.

The couple was arrested in late March after neighborhood vigilantes in the provincial capital Banda Aceh suspected them of being gay and broke into their rented room to catch them having sex. Mobile phone footage that circulated online and formed part of the evidence shows one of the men naked and visibly distressed as he apparently calls for help on his cellphone. The second man is repeatedly pushed by another man who is preventing the couple from leaving the room.

The lead judge, Khairil Jamal, said the men were "legally and convincingly proven to have committed gay sex." He said the three-judge panel decided against imposing the maximum sentence of 100 lashes because the men were polite in court, cooperated with authorities and had no previous convictions. "As Muslims, the defendants should uphold the Shariah law that prevails in Aceh," Jamal said.

Abusive treatment

International human rights groups have described the treatment of the men as abusive and humiliating and called for their immediate release. Human Rights Watch said in April that public caning would constitute torture under international law. Prosecutors had asked that they receive 80 lashes and said the men had waived their right to defense lawyers. It was not clear why but guilty verdicts are certain in most cases that reach the Shariah court.

"The prosecution is very harsh. The verdict is harsher," said Andreas Harsono, Indonesia researcher for Human Rights Watch. "It shows the increasingly conservative judiciary in Indonesia," he said. Aceh is the only province in Muslim-majority Indonesia allowed to practice Shariah law, which was a concession made by the national government in 2006 to end a war with separatists, but other some other areas have introduced Shariah-style bylaws. Aceh implemented an expansion of Islamic bylaws and criminal code two years ago that extended Shariah law to the province's non-Muslims and allows up to 100 lashes for morality offenses including gay sex and sex between unmarried people. Human Rights Watch says the Aceh laws



BANDA ACEH: An Indonesian official (R) escorts a man (L) after his trial at a shariah court. — AFP

violate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Indonesia ratified in 2005.

Caning is also a punishment in Aceh for gambling, drinking alcohol, women who wear tight clothes and men who skip Friday prayers. More than 300 people were caned for such offenses last year. Homosexuality is not illegal elsewhere in Indonesia but a case before the country's top court is seeking to criminalize gay sex and sex outside marriage. Indonesia's reputation for prac-

ticing a moderate form of Islam has been battered in the past year due to attacks on religious minorities, a surge in persecution of gays and a polarizing election campaign for governor of the capital Jakarta that highlighted the growing strength of hard-line Islamic groups. Earlier this month, the outgoing Jakarta governor, a minority Christian, was sentenced to two years in prison for campaign comments deemed as blaspheming the Quran. — AP

INDIA ALLOWS ABORTION FOR 10-YEAR-OLD RAPE VICTIM

NEW DELHI: A 10-year-old girl who was raped will be allowed to have an abortion even though she has crossed the 20-week limit for terminations in India, police in the country said yesterday. The child has said she was repeatedly raped by her stepfather, who has since been arrested. Her case only came to light last week, by which time she had crossed the 20-week legal limit after which terminations are only allowed where there is a danger to the life of the mother or the baby.

The court had asked the medical board to take a call and doctors have decided to go ahead with the abortion, Garima Devi, the police investigation officer assigned to the case, told AFP. The board has not said when they are planning it (abortion) but it will be any time soon. In recent months India's top court has received a number

of petitions from women including rape survivors and trafficking victims seeking abortions where pregnancies had gone beyond 20 weeks.

Activists say the restriction should be extended to 24 weeks as victims of rape are often late to report their pregnancies. The Indian Express said the victim's mother wanted the accused to be set free as he had apologized and that she had other children to take care of.

"The girl's life is destroyed but what will happen to my other children? I need to think about their future too," the daily quoted the mother as saying from a hospital in Rohtak, a district in northern Haryana state. India has a gruesome record on rape, with the capital New Delhi alone registering 2,199 rape cases in 2015 — an average of six a day. — AFP

BRUTAL BACKPACKER ATTACKER JAILED IN AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY: A man who brutally attacked two female backpackers on a remote Australian beach will spend at least 17 years in jail with a judge yesterday accusing him of damaging the country's reputation as a safe destination. Roman Heinze was found guilty of six offences in March over the harrowing ordeal in which the 61-year-old tied up and sexually assaulted a Brazilian woman and beat her German friend with a hammer when she tried to intervene.

As she handed down the sentence for indecent assault, aggravated kidnapping and endan-

gering life, Justice Trish Kelly said, "you have violent and obsessive sexual preoccupations for which you have amply demonstrated you're capable of acting out." "In committing these crimes you have undermined yet again the reputation of this country as a safe, friendly and attractive destination for young backpackers from all over the world," she said, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported from the South Australian Supreme Court.

Heinze met the women through classifieds website Gumtree after they advertised for a ride

from Adelaide to Melbourne. In February last year the trio drove to the remote site of Salt Creek, east of Adelaide, and after setting up camp Heinze and the Brazilian woman went for a walk in nearby sand dunes, the court heard. But he pulled out a knife and bound her wrists and ankles with rope, before cutting off her bikini and sexually assaulting her. The German heard her friend scream and ran to help but was hit in the head four times with a hammer before Heinze drove his car into her.

Despite their ordeal, the women managed to

escape and alerted nearby fishermen, who called police. He was sentenced to 22 years and four months jail with a non-parole period of 17 years. It emerged during the trial that Heinze had previously been convicted of indecently assaulting a woman two years before the Salt Creek attack. Australia is a popular destination for young backpackers, with around 600,000 touring the country every year. They occasionally run into trouble, most recently a British woman who police in March alleged was repeatedly raped, beaten and choked during a two-month hostage ordeal. — AFP



TOKYO: South Korean special presidential envoy Moon Hee-Sang (L) meets with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida (R) at the foreign ministry. — AFP

MISSILE DEFENSE 101: N KOREA COULD HIT WITH NO WARNING HOW LONG WOULD IT TAKE TO HIT ITS PRIMARY TARGETS?

TOKYO: The scenario has become pretty familiar by now. Sometime in the early morning, a missile roars off its launcher in North Korea and flies off - to a splash zone somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. But what if Pyongyang wasn't just testing its hardware or drilling its troops? How long would it take to hit its real-world, primary targets?

Below, two experts talk to The Associated Press about what would happen if North Korea fired at targets near and far. They are David Wright, senior scientist and co-director of the Global Security Program of the Union of Concerned Scientists, and analyst Markus Schiller, of ST Analytics, an independent space technology and rocketry consulting company based in Germany. The takeaway: It would get very messy, very fast.

Seoul: From essentially zero to 6 minutes

Well before North Korea had a nuclear program, it realized it could hold the 10 million people of greater Seoul, the capital of South Korea, hostage with the threat of a massive, conventional artillery strike from its dug-in gun batteries concentrated just north of the Demilitarized Zone. If it were to launch such a strike first, the first wave of shells could land with essentially no warning. Estimates vary as to how much damage such an attack could actually wreak - Pyongyang can't, as it has claimed, reduce Seoul to a sea of ashes before a pulverizing counterattack - but it would be considerable. Seoul's defenses are porous. It has Patriot missile-defense batteries, but they are intended to protect against short-range Scud missiles. They would not help against an artillery attack. The much-talked-about, state-of-the-art THAAD missile defense system deployed in South Korea this month also cannot protect Seoul from either artillery or incoming missiles - it isn't designed to do that from its current site.

To make things uglier, the North could hit the South with chemical or biological warheads. One nuclear scenario that has been raised is an attack on the city of Busan, a major port sometimes

used by the US Navy. That's an option Pyongyang might consider if it believed it was under immediate threat of attack and wanted to make a show of overwhelming force to keep Washington from committing further.

Tokyo: 10-11 minutes

Japan also has Patriot missiles it deploys, among other places, on the grounds of its Defense Ministry in downtown Tokyo. It helped develop with the US the ship-based Aegis system, which is designed to intercept medium-range missiles and potentially intermediate-range ones - that means missiles with a range of less than about 5,000 kilometers.

The Patriots are designed to intercept an incoming missile at its "terminal stage" - just before it hits - if the Aegis ship-based SM-3 missiles fail to intercept them farther out and higher up, at mid-course. Schiller has one strong caution at this point: It remains unknown whether Pyongyang actually has a working nuclear warhead, "not just some nuclear device that goes boom in a tunnel, under laboratory conditions."

But serious questions have been raised over whether this multilayer strategy, even when augmented by the THAAD system, would be a reliable missile shield. One problem is whether it could be overwhelmed by a "swarm" attack - several incoming missiles at the same time. Recognizing the current shield's weaknesses, some Japanese ruling party lawmakers are pushing for a first-strike plan of Japan's own, using ballistic or cruise missiles, or F-35 stealth fighters.

San Francisco: 30-34 minutes

To be classified as an ICBM - intercontinental ballistic missile - the missile must have a minimum range of 5,500 kilometers. North Korea does not at this time have such a missile, as far as the experts can tell. The missile it launched on Sunday came close, flying for 30 minutes on a highly "lofted" trajectory that if flattened out would suggest a range of about 4,500 kilometers.

That's good enough to get it to Guam, the key US military hub in the Pacific, in about 15 minutes. Beyond that, its capabilities are in doubt. Schiller explains that the time it takes for an ICBM to cover its first 5,500 kilometers is usually a little more than 20 minutes. If you fire at something 10,000 kilometers away, however, he says it will still reach it in less than 30 minutes.

So while Wright suggests 33-34 minutes to San Francisco, Schiller predicts a faster trip to the West Coast - saying a missile could hit Seattle (8,000 kilometers) and Los Angeles (9,000 kilometers) away in less than 30 minutes from launch. But that's assuming a North Korean launch from within its own territory. To get around the distance problem, and to bolster its stealth, North Korea is already developing submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Experts believe it will take years for the North to have a sub-based missile it could actually use in an attack, but it successfully tested its first one - named Polaris, the same name as the first US missile of that kind - last year.

Washington DC: 30-39 minutes

New York and Washington are less than 11,000 kilometers away. That translates to about 30 minutes according to Schiller, or 38-39 minutes by Wright's estimate. The United States relies in large part on its Ground-based Missile Defense system, with bases in Vandenberg Air Base in California and Fort Greely, Alaska, to intercept incoming ICBMs. According to the US Missile Defense Agency, which estimates that North Korea now "fields hundreds of missiles that can reach US forces forward deployed to the Republic of Korea and Japan," US missile defense systems like the GMD and THAAD "discourage adversaries from believing they can use ballistic missiles to coerce or intimidate the US or its allies." But critics point out the GMD, which has cost \$40 billion, had six out of its nine test intercepts fail between 2002 and 2016. They claim the strategy has "no credible plan for defeating countermeasures" such as decoys. — AP

CHINA RAPPERS TO SEOUL: 'BIG BROTHER' OPPOSES

BEIJING: A rap group backed by China's government is warning South Korea in a music video that "you're going too far" with the deployment of a US missile defense system, as Beijing seeks to bring its state-supported cultural forces to bear in the international dispute.

A member of the group CD REV said government officials worked with them on the video and helped to promote it on foreign websites, many of which are blocked in China by official censors emboldened by the ruling Communist Party's warnings against foreign "cultural infiltration." In the song, group members chant that "about THAAD we say no, no, no," a reference to the US Army's missile defense system formally known as Terminal High Altitude Area Defense.

Later in the song, they refer to South Korea, saying, "this time, kid, you're going too far" and "your big brother's annoyed," a nod to China's view of itself as the pre-eminent political and economic power in northeast Asia. Beijing vehemently opposes the missile shield, saying its powerful radar will allow it to monitor missile launches, aircraft flights and other sensitive activities in northeastern China. South Korea and the US say it is necessary to guard against North Korea's missile and nuclear weapons activities that threaten South Korea, Japan, US territories and possibly even the continental United States.

CD REV's Wang Zixin told The Associated Press that the group hopes to rally Chinese worldwide against the deployment of THAAD and demonstrate China's "tough stance" on the issue. "We would see government reports and comments, but at the same time, we see the whole event from the position of Chinese," Wang said. In the video, the group also takes shots at what Wang referred to as "vulgar behavior" within China, such as vandalism against South Korean-made Hyundai vehicles.

Non-diplomatic channels

The video - viewed by yesterday more than 300,000 times on Facebook and Twitter and almost 2.7 million times on the Chinese video-posting site Maiopai - represents the latest example of China's use of non-diplomatic channels to broadcast its displeasure with South Korea. Last year, there were reports that China had stopped giving approval to performers of Korean pop music, or "K-pop," to play shows in China, on the heels of Seoul signing the agreement to host THAAD. In March, South Korea officials voiced concerns that Beijing was limiting tourism to their country as an unofficial sanction.

South Korean retailer Lotte, which provided the land for the THAAD deployment, has also been boycotted by Chinese customers and seen construction halted on an amusement park it was building in northeastern China. Such moves underscore a willingness on the part of China's Communist Party leaders to fan the flames of anti-South Korea sentiment, said Korea expert Sung-Yoon Lee of Tufts University in Massachusetts.

"THAAD retaliation is a Chinese government-engineered project," Lee said. "It can be controlled and reversed by Beijing. ... The Chinese public has no interest in the complexities of missile defense systems." South Korea's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to questions about the song, and the video did not appear to garner much attention on the country's social media platforms.

During a phone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping last week, South Korea's new president, Moon Jae-in, said he was aware of Chinese worries about THAAD and asked Xi to help resolve difficulties facing South Korean businesses operating in China. A special envoy representing Moon is due to visit China on Thursday for talks on THAAD and the overall bilateral relationship. — AP



In this undated image made from video, members of CD REV chant about THAAD, the US Army's missile defense system formally known as Terminal High Altitude Area Defense. — AP

STUDENT LEADER A RARE VOICE OF DISSENT IN JUNTA THAILAND

BANGKOK: In a country where dissenting voices have largely been quashed by the military junta, 20-year-old Thai student leader Netiwit Chotiphapthaisal is emerging as one of few figures to speak out. But he is pessimistic about the prospects of a broader revival in opposition nearly three years after the army seized power in Thailand in the name of ending political turmoil.

"Many activists are hopeless and depressed," Netiwit told Reuters in an interview. "The junta created an atmosphere of fear," said Netiwit, recently elected to the student council of Bangkok's prestigious Chulalongkorn University. Criticism of the junta is banned. So is contact with junta critics abroad. Activists, politicians and journalists are frequently detained. Several dissidents have been jailed under laws against insulting the monarchy.

Colonel Pirawat Saengthong from the Internal Security Operations Command, a military unit that deals with national security issues, said he was unable to comment on student groups and Netiwit specifically. Netiwit's refusal to follow a student custom of prostrating oneself in front of a statue of former King Rama V, Chulalongkorn University's namesake, brought him to prominence as an anti-establishment figure last year.

Wong comparison

His stance also drew comparisons with Hong Kong student activist Joshua Wong - youthful face of the anti-Beijing "Umbrella Movement" street protests in 2014. Bearing a passing physical resemblance

to Wong, the bespectacled Netiwit says he is flattered by the comparison and believes Thais could seek someone similar.

"They imagine some kind of heroic activist and Joshua Wong is one," Netiwit said. Netiwit was among student activists who invited Wong to speak on the anniversary of a bloody army crackdown on students in 1976. Wong was refused entry to Thailand and sent home. Netiwit has written three books, including one arguing against military conscription - which he could face when he turns 21.

He has also opposed what he says is a decline in education standards under the junta, which has prioritized deference to authority and the monarchy in schools over academic excellence. The junta now says an election will happen next year, but critics say a new constitution will enshrine military power for years to come. The army took power after protests and street clashes between factions that have polarized Thailand for more than a decade: a military-backed Bangkok elite and supporters of ousted populist leader Thaksin Shinawatra and his sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, ousted as prime minister in 2014.

Netiwit, detained briefly in 2015 after a protest on the coup's anniversary, said he would rather avoid jail. But he would be prepared to lead a street movement if there was appetite. "Many people now are bored with criticizing from Facebook," said Netiwit, who has more than 80,000 followers on his public Facebook page. "I think I can give them some space to do what they want, to change." — Reuters

JAPAN'S PRINCESS TO MARRY HER OCEAN-LOVING LEGAL ASSISTANT

TOKYO: Princess Mako, the granddaughter of Japan's emperor, will marry an ocean-loving legal assistant who can ski, play the violin and cook. Japanese nuptials tend to be highly ritualized, especially for a royal family member, and the buildup to the wedding is likely to take time. A public announcement would come first, then a wedding date would be set and then the couple will make a formal report to the emperor and empress.

Quasi-public NHK TV reported the news late Tuesday and the Imperial Household Agency con-

firmed the report to Japanese media who belong to an exclusive "press club" system. But the agency declined comment to The Associated Press. The man who won the princess' heart spoke to reporters yesterday, and his comments dominated national TV coverage though he gave few details. Kei Komuro said he works as a legal assistant and had just spoken over the phone with Mako, who had been a fellow student at International Christian University in Tokyo.

"When the right time comes, I'd like to talk about it," he told reporters, bowing repeatedly,

wearing a suit and tie. The couple, who are both 25, met at a restaurant in Tokyo's Shibuya about five years ago at a party to talk about studying abroad, and they have been dating several times a month recently, NHK said. Komuro was once tapped as "Prince of the Sea" to promote tourism to the beaches of Shonan in Kanagawa prefecture, a facet of his profile highlighted by local media.

Women can't succeed to the Chrysanthemum Throne. Mako's father and her younger brother are in line to succeed Emperor Akihito, but after her uncle Crown Prince Naruhito, who is first in line. Once she marries, Mako will no longer be a princess and will become a commoner. NHK said Mako has already introduced Komuro to her parents, and they approve. A formal announcement could come as soon as next month, Japanese media said.

Unlike royalty in Great Britain and other European countries, the emperor and his family tend to be cloistered, although they travel abroad and appear at cultural events. Akihito, 83, is the son of Hirohito, Japan's emperor during World War II. Akihito expressed his desire to abdicate last year, and Japan has been preparing legislation especially for him so he can.

Until Japan's defeat at the end of World War II, Hirohito was viewed as divine, and no one had even heard his voice. But the times are changing, and the Japanese public harbors a feeling of openness and familiarity toward the emperor and his family. People are likely to see Mako's marriage as a celebration, although the rituals will continue to be tightly orchestrated. — AP



TOKYO: Kei Komuro, center, is interviewed by reporters in Tokyo yesterday. Princess Mako, the granddaughter of Japan's emperor, is getting married to the ocean lover who can ski, play the violin and cook, according to public broadcaster NHK TV. — AP

TRUMP TO PROMOTE BUSINESS, REASSURE...

Continued from Page 1

there, Sudan's foreign minister said yesterday. Bashir is wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court (ICC) and is shunned by Western leaders, so any direct contact would be a diplomatic bombshell, despite thawing relations between Washington and Khartoum in recent months. Ghandour dismissed the ICC as a "political tool". "It's a white man's court created to indict people in Africa", he said.

"On the question of the Trump-Bashir handshake, nobody can pretend anything, but anyway, President Bashir has been invited by the Saudis to be in that conference," Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour told reporters in Geneva. "We hope that everything will go through as it has been planned, and we look forward for normalization of our relations with the US," Ghandour said, adding that he would travel with Bashir to Riyadh on Friday. Asked if he hoped to see the two leaders shake hands, Ghandour said: "I don't have dreams but I have hopes, and I hope they will be materialized," but added that "a handshake doesn't mean a lot if relations are not (good)".

Critics have accused Trump of being anti-Muslim after he issued a ban, now blocked by US courts, on entry into the United States by citizens of several Muslim-majority countries, citing national security concerns. Trump's visit "sends a clear message that the US is standing with its close allies in the region and that they're not abandoning them," a senior Saudi official told Reuters, reflecting the view many Gulf leaders had of Obama, who they considered had made securing a nuclear deal with Iran a higher priority than the US-Gulf alliance.

Obama's visit to Saudi Arabia in April 2016 was overshadowed by Gulf Arab exasperation with his approach to the region, and doubts about Washington's commitment to regional security. "This (new) administration comes in and ... says, 'No, wait a minute, Iran is active,'" the official said,

referring to Gulf states' views of Iran's involvement through proxies in regional conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Bahrain and Yemen. The Trump administration has called the nuclear agreement with Iran "the worst deal ever negotiated," and senior administration officials have repeatedly criticized Iran's behavior for its support for Assad, its ballistic missile activities and its support for militant groups in the region.

Mustafa Alani, the director of security and defense at the Jeddah-based Gulf Research Center think tank, said that beyond US rhetoric, Gulf leaders would like to see "America classify Iranian-supported militias as terrorist groups." Saudi Arabia will also be looking for further US support in the war in Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition has been fighting the loosely Iran-aligned Houthi group and troops loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh to restore the internationally recognized government to power.

The Obama administration backed Saudi Arabia when it launched air strikes in Yemen in March 2015 but grew sour as it saw the number of civilian casualties grow and curtailed some military support to Riyadh. By contrast, "we don't get criticized about the war in Yemen" by the Trump administration, the senior Saudi official said. In Trump's meeting with GCC leaders, the discussion will revolve around how to strengthen the structures of the group, which includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to be more effective, a senior White House official said.

The Republican US president along with first lady Melania Trump will dine with Saudi royal family members. Trump, known for his penchant for Twitter, will participate in a Twitter forum with young people, National Security Advisor H R McMaster said on Tuesday. Trump will deliver a speech on "the need to confront radical ideology" and participate in the inauguration of a new center intended "to fight radicalism and promote moderation", McMaster said. — Agencies

FAMOUS BEEF KEBABS ARE BACK ON...

Continued from Page 1

beef using buffalo rather than cow meat. For two months, Tunday Kebabi was forced to use chicken or goat meat - to the horror of its loyal customers.

But last week a court ordered the government to resume issuing the licenses that slaughterhouses require to operate legally, breaking the logjam. "I am very happy we are finally selling what we are known for," Abu Bakr, who runs Tunday Kebabi, told AFP. "It is business as usual for us." Customers have flocked to the restaurant

since sales restarted this week. "I left the office a little early and went straight to Tunday's yesterday," said Salman Ahmed Siddiqui, who works in the finance industry. "I cannot express in words the sense of relief and satisfaction I had after eating those kebabs after almost two months."

The 112-year-old restaurant has had to put its prices up slightly as the supply remains lower than before, but says its signature dish is unchanged. "There was no point in having mutton or chicken kebabs at Tunday's, but now when the authentic beef kebabs are back, I will certainly visit," said local housewife Viti Kumar — AFP

EXPERTS: ANOTHER LARGE-SCALE CYBER ATTACK...

Continued from Page 1

Proofpoint said in a blog that symptoms of the attack include loss of access to shared Windows resources and degradation of PC and server performance, effects which some users may not notice immediately. "As it is silent and doesn't trouble the user, the Adylkuzz attack is much more profitable for the cyber criminals. It transforms the infected users into unwitting financial supporters of their attackers," said Godier.

Proofpoint said it has detected infected machines that have transferred several thousand dollars worth of Monero to the creators of the virus. The firm believes Adylkuzz has been on the loose since at least May 2, and perhaps even since April 24, but due to its stealthy nature was not immediately detected. "We don't know how big it is" but "it's much bigger than WannaCry", Proofpoint's vice president for email products, Robert Holmes, told AFP. A US official on Tuesday put the number of computers infected by WannaCry at over 300,000.

"We have seen that before - malwares mining cryptocur-

rency - but not this scale," said Holmes. The WannaCry attack has sparked havoc in computer systems worldwide. Britain's National Health Service, US package delivery giant FedEx, Spanish telecoms giant Telefonica and Germany's Deutsche Bahn rail network were among those hit. While the rate of new infections has slowed, researchers at cyber security firm Check Point said the malware continues to spread rapidly.

And another expert added that despite a quick breakthrough that WannaCry to be slowed down, researchers don't fully understand it. "The problem is that we're still not certain about the origin of the infections" as contrary to many previous attacks it wasn't via emails which deceive users into installing the virus, said the expert on condition of anonymity. More attacks could be soon be underway as the hacker group TheShadowBrokers that leaked the vulnerabilities used by WannaCry and Adylkuzz has threatened to publish more.

It said in a post it would begin providing information monthly by subscription in June, saying that in addition to Windows 10 vulnerabilities it would include "compromised network data from Russian, Chinese, Iranian, or North Korean nukes and missile programs". — AFP

DUBAI FIRM EYEING ICEBERG HARVESTING...

Continued from Page 1

He declined to share the company's cost estimates, and said it has not carried out an environmental impact study.

Robert Brears, the founder of the climate think tank Mitidaption, has studied the feasibility of Antarctic ice harvesting and estimates the project would require an initial outlay of at least \$500 million. The challenges begin at Heard Island, where Australia strictly limits access in order to preserve the area's rich ecosystem of migratory birds, seals, penguins and fish, which could be disrupted by large ships. Antarctica itself is subject to global treaties that mandate environmental regulations and ban mining and military activities.

Even if the firm secures the necessary approvals from multiple governments, the wrangling itself could prove daunting. "There are thousands and thousands of icebergs drifting around and they can move without warning," said Christopher Readinger, who heads the Antarctic team at the US National Ice Center. "Storms down there can be really brutal, and there's really not anyone that can help."

The interagency group uses satellites and floating sensors to track large icebergs in order to warn fishing and science vessels. One of the icebergs it tracked last month was twice the size of Manhattan. Antarctica holds 60 percent of the world's freshwater, frozen in an ice shelf that sheds nearly 1.2 trillion tons of ice-

bergs a year, according to NASA. The ice loss is accelerating as global temperatures warm.

In the Arctic, Canadian "iceberg cowboys" use rifles to blast off chunks of icebergs that are later sold to wineries, breweries and vodka distilleries. A Norwegian company sells 750ml bottles of melted iceberg for \$100 each. But iceberg wranglers off Antarctica would find a leaner herd. "It's the driest ice in the world," Brears said. "You could melt a lot of this ice and get very little water from it."

Environmentalists meanwhile point to simpler measures that could be taken to address climate change in the Middle East, like drip-irrigation, fixing leaks and water conservation. "This region is the heartland of the global oil industry, it will be at the forefront of experiencing these massive, insane heat waves, and there's only one way to avoid this - reducing emissions and keeping all fossil fuels in the ground," said Hoda Baraka, spokeswoman for the climate advocacy group 350.org.

Green investment groups are unlikely to finance the iceberg project, said Charlotte Streck, director of the consultancy firm Climate Focus. She says the project is "an exceptionally futile and expensive way" to solve the Gulf's water woes - and "seems to run counter to all ideas of climate change adaptation". Shehi is undeterred, and insists the project will have no impact on Antarctica or any other natural environment. The whole process, he said, "will be a drop in the ocean". — AP

KPC PROJECTS 47% RISE IN PROFITS

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the Assembly office discussed yesterday the holding of regular sessions during the holy month of Ramadan, expected to start on May 27, MP Thamer Al-Suwait said. He added that the Assembly may hold weekly sessions in Ramadan, but no final decision has been taken, adding that the Assembly is sched-

uled to complete the debate of the budgets before the start of the last 10 days of Ramadan. The constitutional court yesterday agreed to look into two petitions, one challenging the constitutionality of the anti-corruption law and a second challenging a government decision to deprive Kuwaiti women from housing benefits, as unconstitutional. The court will start looking into the challenges in October.



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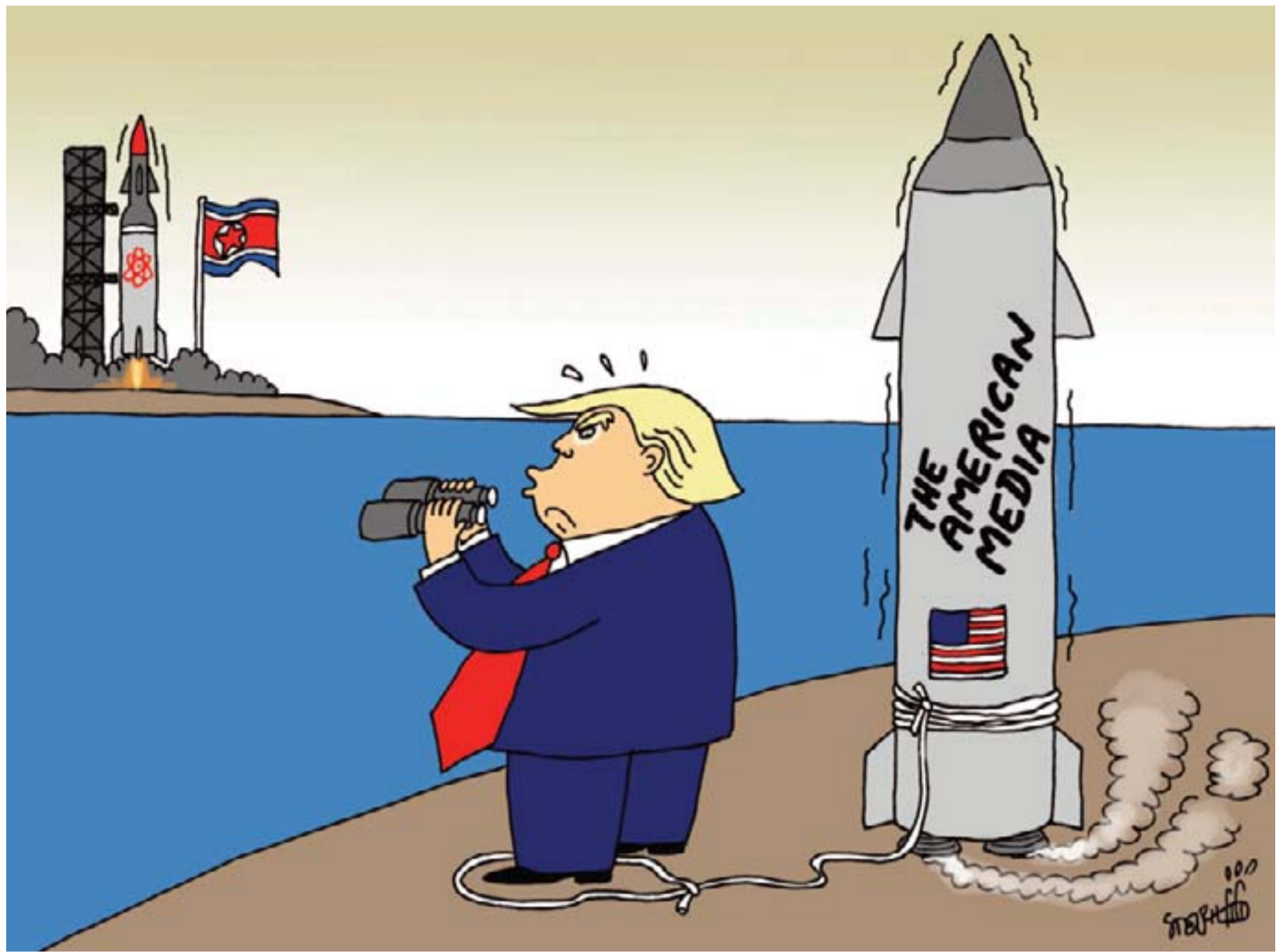
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TRUMP DISCLOSURE BREACH OF TRUST, IF NOT LAW

US President Donald Trump didn't appear to break any law by sharing highly classified information with Russia, but that doesn't make it any less problematic for America's intelligence agencies and their overseas partners. Even as Trump's national security adviser insisted the Oval Office disclosure to visiting Russian diplomats was "wholly appropriate" and routine, few people outside of the White House saw it that way. Especially troubling was that a foreign country provided the intelligence confidentially to the US.

A look at the legal and national security issues at stake:

What did Trump tell The Russians?

Trump shared information about a threat from the Islamic State group while hosting Russia's foreign minister and ambassador to Washington. The threat related to laptops carried on airplanes, according to a senior US official.

The information appears to be related to the basis for a US and British decision in March to bar laptops and tablets from being carried on board international flights from cities in Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Middle East countries. US and European Union officials more recently have discussed expanding the ban to include flights from Europe.

Where did Trump get the information?

The highly classified information about an Islamic State plot was collected by Israel, a crucial source of intelligence and close partner in the fight against some of the America's fiercest threats in the Middle East. A US official who confirmed the disclosure to The Associated Press said the revelation potentially put the source at risk. The White House said Trump wasn't briefed on the source of the intelligence and didn't know where it came from when he passed it along to the Russians.

Was what Trump did legal?

Probably. The system for how US secrets are classified

and the rules for how they're handled derive from an executive order. That means secrets are governed by the president and not by laws passed by Congress. The president's authority to make the classification rules comes from his constitutional powers as the commander in chief and head of the executive branch. Typically, that has been interpreted to mean that the president has the ultimate authority to classify and to declassify information. Put another way, classified information becomes unclassified by default the moment the president chooses to disclose it.

But there are other laws that could come into play when sensitive information is disclosed to harm the US, according to David Pozen, who teaches national security law at Columbia Law School. These include the Espionage Act and Identities Protection Act. Still, it's hard to imagine the president being prosecuted under those laws given that it's his constitutional power to make national security decisions.

So what's the problem?

The disclosure to Russia appeared to violate an intelligence-sharing agreement that provides the US critical information about threats to the nation. A breach of trust raises the possibility that US friends might curtail such intelligence partnerships out of concern their secrets - and their sources and methods - could end up in the wrong hands. The fact that the secrets went to Russia, an adversary of the US and many of its allies, was especially alarming.

US intelligence-sharing agreements include the Five Eyes program with Canada, Australia, Britain and New Zealand. These countries share vast amounts of information and promise not to spy on each other. The US also shares intelligence with countries like Germany that broadly share US national security goals. Russia, a top espionage concern for the US, is different. Even sharing limited amounts of intelligence about terrorist targets with Russia, in Syria for example, has been the source of major controversy in

the past. And Russia's allies and partners include Syria, Iran, China and other American rivals.

How have past presidents handled these issues?

Other American leaders routinely authorized disclosing certain secrets to other countries - but not the way Trump did it. Typically, before disclosing intelligence to another country, there would be an evaluation of costs and benefits, close consultation with the US intelligence community, and detailed consideration of how much to say and in what words so as to mitigate risks. "That way, they can take steps to protect sources and methods," said Steven Pike, a former State Department official who teaches at Syracuse University. The White House acknowledged Trump made the decision essentially on the spot. In fact, it was so unexpected that officials later called the National Security Agency and the CIA to inform them of the breach of protocol and try to limit any damage.

What's all this talk about 'Sources and Methods'?

Intelligence agencies use the phrase "sources and methods" to describe secrets about how intelligence is gathered. Even when intelligence is declassified, the government typically keeps secret the ways it acquired the intelligence. This way, it preserves its ability to collect more intelligence in the future. When the US this week released details about prisoner killings in Syria, it didn't outline exactly how it knew what it claimed to know.

Trump and his aides insist he did not reveal sources and methods to the Russians, and thus didn't put intelligence-gathering at risk. But intelligence experts say it's not that simple. Adversaries can often look at intelligence that has been disclosed and reverse-engineer where it came using a process of elimination. That raises concerns the Islamic State group might be able to identify a vulnerability that spies have been exploiting and cut it off. —AP

REPEATED FALSEHOODS LEAD TO CREDIBILITY GAPS

The White House has been two-stepping with the truth. Starting with press secretary Sean Spicer insisting inaccurately that President Donald Trump drew record-setting inauguration crowds, top presidential advisers have provided information that is provably false or contradicted by others in the White House, including Trump himself. The pattern continued this week, with national security advisers giving one account of what Trump told Russian officials in the Oval Office only to have the president himself revise it.

On Tuesday, the White House denied reports that Trump had asked FBI Director James Comey to shut down an FBI investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn. Democrats and some Republicans greeted those denials skeptically. A look at some of the most credibility-damaging episodes:

What Trump Shared With the Russians

The Washington Post reported Monday that Trump shared highly classified information with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian ambassador to the US Sergey Kislyak about an Islamic State terror threat involving laptop computers on aircraft. Other outlets, including The Associated Press, later confirmed that report.

Version One: White House aides initially disputed the premise of the reporting. "This story is false," deputy

national security adviser Dina Powell said Monday in a written statement. Version Two: Trump weighed in Tuesday by indicating he had the authority to disclose whatever he'd like. He did not deny discussing classified information. "As President I wanted to share with Russia (at an openly scheduled W H meeting) which I have the absolute right to do, facts pertaining ...to terrorism and airline flight safety. Humanitarian reasons, plus I want Russia to greatly step up their fight against ISIS & terrorism," Trump wrote in a pair of tweets.

Why Comey Was Fired

With no notice, Trump last week fired Comey, who had been leading an investigation of possible ties between the Trump campaign and Russian interference in the US presidential election. At first, the White House pinned the decision on Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who'd written a scathing memo about Comey's handling of a probe into Hillary Clinton's use of email.

One: "People in the Justice Department made a very strong recommendation, the president followed it and he made a quick and decisive action to fire James Comey. He took the recommendation seriously. And he made a decision based on that," deputy press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told MSNBC. Two: "He had made a recommendation. But regardless of recommendation, I was going to

fire Comey, knowing there was no good time to do it. And in fact, when I decided to just do it, I said to myself, I said, 'You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story.'" Trump told NBC.

Pence Defends Flynn

Vice President Mike Pence insisted that Flynn had not discussed Obama-era Russian sanctions when he and Kislyak spoke during Trump's transition to power. That assertion was untrue, something the White House blamed on Flynn when it fired him a month later. One: "They did not discuss anything having to do with the United States' decision to expel diplomats or impose sanctions against Russia," Pence said Jan. 15 on CBS. Two: Trump and senior White House advisers learned Jan. 26 that Flynn had discussed sanctions with Kislyak; Trump fired Flynn on Feb 13 for lying to Pence, after news reports described the Flynn-Kislyak talks.

Bowling Green Terrorist Attack?

White House counselor Kellyanne Conway raised eyebrows when she seemed to invent a terrorist attack in Kentucky as she justified the necessity of Trump's controversial travel ban executive order. One: "President Obama had a six-month ban on the Iraqi refugee program after two Iraqis came here to this country, were radicalized, and they were the masterminds behind the Bowling Green massacre," Conway said Feb 3 on MSNBC. "Most people don't

know that because it didn't get covered." Two: Shortly thereafter on Twitter, she wrote that she had meant to say "Bowling Green terrorists." In May 2011, two men in Kentucky were charged with plotting to send weapons and money to Al-Qaeda operatives abroad, prompting the Obama administration to slow down processing of Iraqi refugees seeking Special Immigrant Visas. Conway never corrected her misstatement about refugees being banned.

Trump's Inauguration Crowd Size

Spicer made his debut at the podium Jan. 21 by reading a five-minute statement about the size of Trump's inauguration crowd a day earlier. One: "This was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe," Spicer said. Explaining why white areas were viewable through the crowds, Spicer added: "This was the first time in our nation's history that floor coverings have been used to protect the grass on the Mall."

Two: Days later, Spicer distanced himself from those statements, saying he had been told to make them. Photographs from Barack Obama's first inauguration show a substantially larger in-person gathering, and Nielsen data showed fewer viewer's for Trump's inauguration than for Obama's, as well as for actual TV record-holder Ronald Reagan's. And Mall coverings were used in 2013 for Obama's second inauguration. —AP

Focus

AT US OILFIELD, WHIR OF ACTIVITY CONFOUNDS OPEC

As oilfield workers for Lillis Energy Inc threaded together drill pipes one recent morning in the Permian Basin, a bulldozer cleared sagebrush to make way for the company's fifth well since January. Lillis aims to expand production sevenfold this year in America's most active oilfield. The whirl of activity is all the more impressive after the small firm nearly collapsed in late 2015 - amid unrestrained production from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). As per-barrel prices plummeted, Lillis piled on debt and struggled to pay workers.

Now - with prices higher after a November OPEC decision to cut output - Lillis can't grow fast enough. Such resurrections are common these days in the Permian, which stretches across West Texas and eastern New Mexico. They tell the story of the US shale resurgence and the quandary it poses for OPEC as it struggles to tame a global glut. Surging US production has stalled OPEC's effort to cut supply. Inventories in industrialized nations totaled 3.05 billion barrels in February - about 330 million barrels above the five-year average, according to the International Energy Agency.

The Permian boom will be high on the agenda as OPEC oil ministers begin gathering in Vienna ahead of a May 25 policy meeting to decide whether to extend output cuts. In the long term, too much US output could spur OPEC to open the spigots again - setting off another price war - but for now its member nations' need for revenue makes that unlikely. On Monday, the world's top two oil producers - OPEC heavyweight Saudi Arabia and Russia, a non-OPEC nation - said they had agreed in principle on the need to continue output cuts for an additional nine months, through March 2018.

That would extend the initial agreement, which took effect in January and reduced production by 1.2 barrels per day (bpd) from OPEC nations and another 600,000 bpd from non-OPEC producers, including Russia. The pledge to extend cuts marked an evolution in the thinking of Saudi Arabia Oil Minister Khalid Al-Falih - in response to surging US output. After OPEC's decision in November, Falih expressed confidence that no further supply curbs would be needed because of rising demand.

Then in March, Falih told a Houston energy conference that the "green shoots" in US shale might be "growing too fast" - and warned there would be no "free rides" for US producers benefiting from OPEC production cuts. But by last week, Falih vowed OPEC would do "whatever it takes" to control oversupply. Unlike OPEC nations, US firms are barred by anti-trust laws from colluding to control output or prices, leaving market demand as the only check on production. "I'm really proud American production is offsetting those OPEC cuts," said Lillis Chief Executive Avi Mirman.

Free Ride on OPEC Cuts

Now it appears the free ride for US shale producers will continue at least into next year. US oil output has jumped to 9.31 million bpd this year, up 440,000 bpd from 2016, according to US Energy Information Agency estimates. About a quarter of that production comes from the Permian, where broad-based growth comes from small firms like Lillis, global majors including Exxon Mobil Corp and large independents such as Parsley Energy Inc. OPEC's two-year price war sank hundreds of companies and forced majors including Exxon and Chevron Corp to retrench - but it also and stirred their interest in shale. Exxon paid nearly \$7 billion in February to double its acreage in the Permian. Earlier this month, about 32 km south of Midland, Texas - the center of the basin's industry - a crew from ProPetro Holding Corp was hydraulically fracturing, or fracking, an Exxon well.

Silver silos held 18 million pounds of sand, which would be mixed with 22 million gallons of water and forced into the well, unlocking oil trapped in rock. "We're really approaching the Permian as a major project," Sara Ortwein, president of Exxon's shale-focused subsidiary, XTO Energy, said in an interview. Across the Permian, the number of rigs this year has risen 30 percent and the number of fracking crews has jumped 40 percent, according to Primary Vision, which tracks oilfield service equipment usage. That won't change soon, said Mark Papa, CEO of Centennial Resource Development Inc, which added to its Permian land holdings this month with a \$350 million deal. "A disproportionate amount of US production growth between now and the end of the decade will come from the Permian," Papa said in an interview.

'We're Out of Rigs'

In a reversal from the thousands of layoffs here in 2015, oil companies are hiring briskly. Fracking service provider Keane Group Inc, for instance, has plans to hire at least 240 workers this year. For the growth to continue, however, prices will have to rise for rigs and other services, executives and analysts have said. Paul Mosvold, president of drilling contractor Scandril Inc, has more business than he can handle. "We're out of rigs," he said. "We have been since January." But he won't add more rigs unless producers pay more - maybe \$25,000 per day, instead of the current \$15,000 to \$19,000. That may depend on per-barrel prices going up, an unlikely prospect amid expanding supply. Oil drillers, meanwhile, continue to hunt for new cost-cutting technologies - after already halving the cost of extracting a barrel since 2014. —Reuters

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MAZZARRI TO STEP DOWN AS WATFORD MANAGER

WATFORD: Walter Mazzarri's tenure as Watford manager has ended after just one season as the club said yesterday he would be leaving after Sunday's final Premier League match against Manchester City. The 55-year-old Italian—who replaced Quique Sanchez-Flores after he was fired at the end of last term—has endured a poor end of season although they put up a spirited performance in the 4-3 defeat by champions Chelsea on Monday. Mazzarri becomes the third Watford manager in three years to leave the role despite preserving their Premier League status. Slavisa Jovanovic left in 2015 after gaining them promotion to the elite league whilst Flores departed despite guiding them to the FA Cup semi-finals and 13th place in the table. "After the Board discussed with Walter Mazzarri the club's future goals and aspirations, it was decided he will be stepping down from his position as the club's Head Coach after the final game of the 2016/17 season," read a statement from club chairman Scott Duxbury. —AFP



MALAYSIA-NORTH KOREA MATCH POSTPONED AGAIN

KUALA LUMPUR: An Asian Cup qualifier between Malaysia and North Korea has been postponed a second time to October due to security concerns, with the venue still to be decided, Asian football's governing body said yesterday. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) had scheduled the match for June 8 in Pyongyang but said in a statement that it should be postponed "because of the geo-political tension on the Korean Peninsula." "The game will now be re-scheduled for the next best available FIFA match-day which is Thursday, October 5, 2017," the statement said. "The AFC will closely monitor the safety and security position in coming months." The venue will be decided after an AFC Cup match in Pyongyang between North Korean club Kigwanha SC and Erchim FC of Mongolia on May 31, as well as the AFC Under 23 Championship qualifiers also in the North Korean capital from July 19-23. "After those matches, the AFC will make a decision of the venue for the AFC Asian Cup Qualifier on October 5, 2017," the statement added. Hamidin Mohamad Amin, Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) secretary-general, told AFP that the group welcomes "the wise move" by AFC to postpone the match again.

PAKISTAN BOARD BANS, FINES SPINNER NAWAZ

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board has banned left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz for two months and fined him 200,000 rupees (\$1,900) for violating its anti-corruption code. The PCB said in a statement yesterday that the ban, starting from May 16, could be reduced to one month if Nawaz fulfills certain conditions that include no further breach of its anti-corruption code. Nawaz admitted to the PCB's vigilance and security department that "on one occasion" he was approached by bookmakers and he didn't inform the cricket board in time. The PCB didn't clarify when exactly Nawaz was approached. Nawaz has played three tests, nine one-day internationals and five Twenty20 internationals for Pakistan, taking 19 wickets across all the three formats. The PCB initiated inquiries into spot-fixing after its domestic Twenty20 tournament - the Pakistan Super League - ended in March. Nawaz is the second player to be banned by the PCB after tall fast bowler Mohammad Irfan was banned for one year. —AP



CHICAGO: Cincinnati Reds' Billy Hamilton is unable to catch a fly ball from Chicago Cubs' Jaimer Candelario during the fifth inning of a baseball game. —AP

CHICAGO CUBS BEAT CINCINNATI REDS 9-5

CHICAGO: Slumping sluggers Anthony Rizzo and Kyle Schwarber homered, rookie Ian Happ connected again and the Chicago Cubs beat the Cincinnati Reds 9-5 on Tuesday. Happ hit his second homer in his third major league game and Addison Russell also went deep as Chicago returned to .500 after a lackluster road trip. NL MVP Kris Bryant added two hits in his first appearance after missing three games with an illness.

The Cubs (19-19) had dropped seven of nine, including four of their last six at division leaders Colorado and St. Louis. Schwarber's continued trouble in the lead-off spot and the shaky performance so far by the rotation had created some angst for a fan base expecting more of the same after Chicago's historic World Series championship last year, but no one seemed a bit worried around the team. Willson Contreras had two hits and two RBIs, and John Lackey (4-3) pitched into the sixth inning in the opener of a 10-game homestand. Joey Votto, Zack Cozart and Tucker Barnhart homered for Cincinnati on a warm and windy night at Wrigley Field. But Bronson Arroyo (3-3) was hit hard in five innings, allowing five runs and eight hits.

RANGERS 5, PHILLIES 1

Yu Darvish struck out nine over seven solid innings and Texas beat Philadelphia to stretch the majors' longest active winning streak to seven games. Nomar Mazara had a

solo homer in the first, and Mike Napoli hit a two-run shot in the eighth. Napoli, who came in hitting .165, went 3 for 3. Darvish (4-2) allowed four hits and two walks. He preserved a two-run lead by striking out Brock Stassi with runners at first and second after he allowed his only run on an RBI single by Freddy Galvis in the seventh inning. Phillies starter Jared Eickhoff (0-4) struck out eight and allowed seven hits in his first career start against the franchise that drafted him in 2011.

ORIOLES 13, TIGERS 11

Chris Davis homered in the 12th inning and again in the 13th, and Baltimore finally held on after the second one. Davis led off the 12th with a home run that started a three-run inning for the Orioles, but Detroit rallied with three of its own in the bottom half to keep the game going. Davis came up again with a runner on third in the 13th and hit a two-run shot off Francisco Rodriguez (1-5) that gave Baltimore the lead for good. The Orioles led 7-1 after scoring seven runs in the third, but they squandered that big advantage and needed Mark Trumbo's solo shot with two outs in the ninth just to force extra innings. Baltimore snapped a four-game losing streak. Richard Bleier (1-1) earned his first career win.

ASTROS 12, MARLINS 2

Unbeaten ace Dallas Keuchel became the first seven-game winner in the majors

despite pitching only five innings, his shortest outing this season, and Houston beat swooning Miami. Jake Marisnick tripled his season RBI total to six with a pair of two-run homers against his former team, both coming off the home run sculpture at Marlins Park. Brian McCann also had four RBIs. Keuchel allowed two runs, both in the first inning, and threw 70 pitches before departing with a 10-2 lead. His ERA rose to 1.84. Tom Koehler (1-2) gave up eight runs in three innings, inflating his ERA to 7.04.

NATIONALS 8, PIRATES 4

Bryce Harper belted his 13th home run, Ryan Zimmerman smacked a two-run double to add to his major league-leading RBI total and Washington held off struggling Pittsburgh. Harper's laser to the last row of seats in right field in the ninth gave the 24-year-old star a home run in every ballpark in the National League. He finished with two hits to move ahead of Zimmerman for the major league-lead in batting average (.388). Stephen Strasburg (4-1) allowed three runs in six-plus innings, walking one and striking out three on a night he didn't have his best stuff. Josh Harrison had two hits for the Pirates, including his sixth home run of the season, and also avoided a tag at second base with an acrobatic slide in the sixth. Chad Kuhl (1-4) remained winless since the first week of the season.

ROCKIES 7, TWINS 3

Charlie Blackmon hit a towering two-run homer during a four-run sixth inning and finished with three hits to lead Colorado over Minnesota. Blackmon had three RBIs, Gerardo Parra added a solo homer and Kyle Freeland pitched six innings as first-place Colorado earned its 12th win in 17 road games. Freeland (4-2) allowed three runs, five hits and four walks while striking out three. Greg Holland recorded his 17th save in 17 chances after Minnesota put two runners on in the ninth against Chris Rusin. Byron Buxton hit a solo homer for the Twins, but Phil Hughes (4-2) had another disappointing outing. He gave up five runs, eight hits and a walk in five innings.

ANGELS 7, WHITE SOX 6

Cameron Maybin had five hits, including a tying double in the 11th inning, and Albert Pujols singled home the winning run moments later to give Los Angeles a victory over Chicago. Chicago erased a three-run deficit in the ninth and went ahead 6-5 on Tim Anderson's solo homer in the 11th off Yusmeiro Petit (1-0). But it was the Angels

who pulled off the final comeback. Andrelton Simmons singled leading off the bottom half against closer David Robertson (2-1), and Ben Revere singled with one out. Maybin, batting leadoff for the first time with the Angels, drove a double to left-center that tied it 6-all. After an intentional walk to Mike Trout loaded the bases, Pujols singled to deep center field for his third RBI of the night.

RED SOX 6, CARDINALS 3

Mookie Betts homered and drove in two runs, Jackie Bradley Jr also went deep and Boston beat St Louis in the opener of a two-game interleague series. Bradley had two of Boston's six hits, and starter Eduardo Rodriguez (2-1) allowed three runs and five hits over six innings. Rodriguez walked two, struck out five and threw a season-high 110 pitches. St Louis made three errors and lost for just the second time in 10 games. Lance Lynn (4-2) gave up four runs, two earned, and three hits in six innings, striking out four and walking one. Craig Kimbrel pitched a scoreless ninth for his 12th save in 13 chances.

YANKEES 7, ROYALS 1

Gary Sanchez hit a three-run homer, Chris Carter added a two-run shot and CC Sabathia got back on track as New York rolled over Kansas City. Pitching on six days' rest, Sabathia (3-2) went 6 2/3 shutout innings to win for the first time since April 15. Sanchez drilled an 0-1 pitch from Jason Hammel (1-5) to center field with nobody out in the third, and Carter pounded a 1-1 pitch to almost the same place with two down in the fourth.

GIANTS 2, DODGERS 1

Brandon Belt homered for the fourth time in six games and scored the tiebreaking run on Brandon Crawford's single in the sixth, lifting San Francisco to its fifth straight win. Buster Posey added two hits and Ty Blach (1-2) pitched seven innings, spoiling Dodgers starter Rich Hill's return from the disabled list. Blach allowed one run, five hits and two walks with four strikeouts. San Francisco improved to 5-1 on its homestand after a sluggish nine-game road trip when manager Bruce Bochy's ballclub won only three games. Hunter Strickland retired three batters and Derek Law pitched the ninth for his fourth save.

DIAMONDBACKS 5, METS 4

Yasmany Tomas homered against reeling New York again and Zack Greinke (5-2)

pitched Arizona to a victory. Tomas has gone deep in five consecutive meetings with the Mets, who matched a season high with their sixth straight loss. Tommy Milone (1-1) allowed five runs in 5 2/3 innings. Fernando Rodney pitched the ninth for his 10th save.

RAYS 6, INDIANS 4

Corey Dickerson hit two of Tampa Bay's season-high five home runs in a victory over Cleveland. Dickerson hit solo home runs in the third and fifth off Danny Salazar (2-4). Colby Rasmus and Derek Norris also hit solo shots off Cleveland's starter while Tim Beckham hit a two-run homer off Shawn Armstrong. Jake Odorizzi (3-2) allowed four runs in six innings. Alex Colome pitched out of a ninth-inning jam for his 10th save.

ATHLETICS 9, MARINERS 6

Matt Joyce hit a two-run homer and Mark Canha added a three-run shot in a five-run ninth inning that rallied Oakland over Seattle. Oakland squandered a 4-1 lead thanks to a key two-run error in the seventh and Kyle Seager's solo home run in the eighth that gave Seattle a 5-4 lead. But with a struggling Edwin Diaz removed from the closer role earlier in the day, Steve Cishek was asked to get the final three outs for the Mariners in just his second appearance of the season. Cishek (0-1) was unable to finish the job, giving up a leadoff single to Rajai Davis and watching Joyce hit his fifth homer of the year to give Oakland the lead. Mark Rzepczynski took over and allowed Canha's first homer on a 3-2 pitch. Ryan Madson (1-3) got the win despite giving up Seager's homer.

BRAVES 9, BLUE JAYS 5

Dansby Swanson hit a tiebreaking homer in the seventh inning, Freddie Freeman also had a two-run shot and Atlanta beat Toronto, sweeping their two-game series. Swanson snapped a 5-all tie with a leadoff drive to center off Danny Barnes (0-1). Freeman hit his NL-leading 14th home run, matching Yankees slugger Aaron Judge for most in the majors. Jose Ramirez (2-1) pitched 1 2/3 innings for the win.

BREWERS 6, PADRES 2

Eric Sogard had a career-high four hits and drove in a run, and Jimmy Nelson struck out eight in six-plus innings and hit an RBI single to help Milwaukee beat San Diego. Nelson (2-2) gave up two runs and seven hits, with one walk. Clayton Richard (2-5) lost his third straight decision. — AP

MLB results/standings

San Francisco 2, LA Dodgers 1; Milwaukee 6, San Diego 2; Oakland 9, Seattle 6; LA Angels 7, Chicago White Sox 6 (11 innings); Arizona 5, NY Mets 4; Boston 6, St. Louis 3; NY Yankees 7, Kansas City 1; Colorado 7, Minnesota 3; Chicago Cubs 9, Cincinnati 5; Texas 5, Philadelphia 1; Baltimore 13, Detroit 11 (13 innings); Houston 12, Miami 2; Washington 8, Pittsburgh 4; Tampa Bay 6, Cleveland 4; Atlanta 9, Toronto 5.

American League Eastern Division				National League Eastern Division			
W	L	PCT	GB	Washington	NY Mets	Atlanta	Philadelphia
NY Yankees	23	13	.639	-	16	22	.421
Baltimore	23	14	.622	0.5	15	21	.417
Boston	20	18	.526	4	14	22	.389
Tampa Bay	20	22	.476	6	14	24	.368
Toronto	17	23	.425	8	Central Division		
Minnesota	19	16	.543	-	St. Louis	21	.568
Cleveland	20	18	.526	0.5	Milwaukee	22	.550
Detroit	18	19	.486	2	Chicago Cubs	19	.500
Chicago White Sox	17	20	.459	3	Cincinnati	19	.500
Kansas City	16	22	.421	4.5	Pittsburgh	16	.410
Western Division				Western Division			
Houston	28	12	.700	-	Colorado	25	.625
LA Angels	21	21	.500	8	Arizona	23	.561
Texas	20	20	.500	8	LA Dodgers	22	.550
Seattle	18	22	.450	10	San Francisco	17	.415
Oakland	17	22	.436	10.5	San Diego	15	.366

BENNETT HELPS KIWIS RESTRAIN BANGLADESH

DUBLIN: New Zealand restricted Bangladesh to 257 for nine in the third game of the Tri-Series in Ireland despite three batsmen making half centuries yesterday. Soumya Sarkar, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah all reached 50 but none could go on and Sarkar ended up as the top scorer with 61.

Hamish Bennett, the one change in the Black Caps line-up which beat Ireland in their first match on Sunday, replaced Scott Kuggeleijn—was rewarded for an economical 10-over spell with two wickets in the last over to finish with three for 30. Bangladesh also had to make one change to their first line-up with captain Mashrafe

Mortaza, who had been suspended for the Ireland game last Friday, returning in place of Taskin Ahmed.

The Tigers enjoyed a bright start with Tamim Iqbal and Sarkar putting on 72 for the first wicket but they had lost two wickets by the first drinks break with Tamin caught on the cover boundary for 23 and eight balls later, Sabbir Rahman was bowled by Mitchell Santner, the Black Caps five-wicket man of the match on Sunday.

Santner was even more economical yesterday, conceding just 37 runs, but that was his only wicket and it was Ish Sodhi who upstaged him with two for 40, ending Sarkar's 67-ball innings which

included just five boundaries. Despite the short boundaries at the compact Clontarf ground, Bangladesh struggled to find them with Mahmudullah the most successful, hitting six in his 51 while Mushfiqur hit the only six of the innings in his 55.

Mosaddek Hossain picked up the pace in the closing stages with a run-a-ball 41 (four fours) but it was New Zealand—three places higher than Bangladesh in the rankings—who will be the happier at the break. Despite having 10 players away at the Indian Premier League, they continue to look an impressive outfit although Jimmy Neesham's two wickets cost 68 runs and Seth Rance

in his second ODI, had figures of 0-66 in his nine overs.

INDIA CONFIRM WINDIES TOUR

In other news, India will embark on a limited-overs tour of West Indies next month, soon after the Champions Trophy, their cricket boards have announced. Beginning on June 23 at the Queen's Park Oval in Port of Spain, India will play five one-day games which will be followed by a Twenty20 International at Jamaica's Sabina Park on July 9.

West Indies failed to make the cut for Champions Trophy in England and Wales which features only top eight one-day teams. They will subsequently

host Afghanistan for three Twenty20 and as many one-day internationals between June 2-14. India will be defending their title at the Champions Trophy, the final of which is scheduled on June 18. "We are all looking forward to hosting the Indian Cricket Team so soon after Afghanistan's inaugural tour of the Caribbean," West Indies Cricket Board chief executive Johnny Grave said in a statement. "The five-match ODI series gives our young side the opportunity of playing one of the world's best 50-over sides, and we hope for a competitive series as we strive for automatic qualification for the 2019 Cricket World Cup." —Agencies

ALL BLACKS TO PLAY JAPAN TO BOOST WORLD CUP INTEREST

TOKYO: The All Blacks will travel to Japan next year to play the 2019 Rugby World Cup hosts in a test match aimed at boosting interest in the tournament. Steve Hansen's side will meet the Brave Blossoms at a yet-to-be-decided venue on Nov. 3 before heading to Europe for their end of season tour, the world champions said in a statement. New Zealand Prime Minister Bill English said that the test would help boost the profile of the World Cup, which will be held in Asia for the first time in 2019.

"This will be a fantastic opportunity for promotion of the World Cup here in Japan," English told reporters in Tokyo during a visit as head of a trade delegation. Japan coach Jamie Joseph said his side would stick to their own style against the All Blacks. The 2019 hosts have been drawn alongside Ireland and Scotland for the pool stage. "We can't play the same way as the All Blacks or the Wallabies or the Irish, we have to play our own brand of rugby that is going to be successful when it comes down to World Cup," he added.

Japan Rugby Football Union (JRFU) President Tadashi Okamura added that the match was a perfect appetiser for the first World Cup in Asia. "It is a great pleasure to welcome the All Blacks back to Japan for a

match less than one year out from Japan hosting Rugby World Cup 2019," Okamura said in a statement. "Matches don't come much bigger than against the current world champions. In many ways it will be a curtain-raiser to the tournament in 2019."

The two sides have met five times before, although the first two games in Japan in 1987 were not accorded test status. Their first official test was at the 1995 Rugby World Cup in South Africa where the All Blacks won 145-17. They also met in the 2011 tournament in New Zealand, where the All Blacks won 83-7, before they recorded a 54-6 victory in Tokyo in 2013. The Brave Blossoms have improved markedly since then and recorded the biggest upset in World Cup history when they beat two-times champions South Africa 34-32 in their opening match of the 2015 tournament in England.

New Zealand coach Hansen said the Japan game would help with their preparations for the global showpiece. "The match against the Brave Blossoms will be an important part of our preparation towards 2019," Hansen said in a statement. "It'll give our team the chance to experience the unique environment and culture we will return to the following year." —Reuters



ROME: Russia's Maria Sharapova leaves the court during her match against Mirjana Lucic-Baroni of Croatia at the Rome ATP Tennis Open tournament on May 16, 2017 at the Foro Italico. —AFP

SHARAPOVA VOWS TO 'RISE AGAIN' AFTER SNUB FROM FRENCH OPEN

PARIS: Maria Sharapova vowed to "rise up again" yesterday after she was refused a wildcard for the French Open following her 15-month ban for doping. The Russian former world number one also earned the backing of the head of women's tennis, a day after the French tennis federation's announcement that it would not grant her a wildcard for the event she won in 2012 and 2014. "If this is what it takes to rise up again, then I am in it all the way, everyday," Sharapova wrote on Twitter, in her first remarks on her snub. "No words, games, or actions will ever stop me from reaching my own dreams. And I have many." The five-time Grand Slam champion, 30, was banned for two years for using meldonium, with the penalty later reduced by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), which ruled she was not an intentional doper.

RIVALRY HIT OUT

After the ban expired on April 26 she returned to competition at the Stuttgart Open, reaching the semi-finals, and progressed to the last 32 of the Madrid Open, failing to earn a qualifying spot for Roland Garros, the second Grand Slam of the season and which starts later this month. Many of Sharapova's rivals have hit out at other tournaments giving her preferential treatment, but WTA chief executive Steve Simon called the actions of the French federation (FFT) "groundless", in a strongly worded statement backing her.

Whilst acknowledging that wildcards were granted at a tournament's discretion, Simon said: "What I do not agree with is the basis put forward by the FFT for their decision with respect to Maria Sharapova." Announcing the FFT's decision on Tuesday, President Bernard Giudicelli said giving Sharapova a wildcard would make a nonsense of tennis authorities' ramped-up efforts against doping. But Simon said: "She has complied with the sanction imposed by CAS. The tennis anti-doping program (TADP) is a uniform effort supported by the Grand Slams, WTA, ITF and ATP.

"There are no grounds for any member of the TADP to penalize any player beyond the sanctions set forth in the final decisions resolving these matters," Sharapova is guaranteed a qualifying spot at Wimbledon in July after winning her opening match at the ongoing Rome Masters, although she missed a chance at direct entrance into the main draw after a second-round exit on Tuesday.

Sharapova, whose ranking has plummeted to 211 leaving her reliant on wildcards, could have earned her spot at Wimbledon by reaching the semi-finals in Italy but retired against Mirjana Lucic-Baroni in the final set with a thigh injury. The Russian issued a statement afterwards that failed to address the French Open and said merely that she hoped her injury "is not serious".

NO SERENA, NO SHARAPOVA

The FFT's announcement was eagerly anticipated and Giudicelli spoke on Facebook Live, adding an extra sense of drama. "Nobody can deprive her of her two titles at Roland Garros, but today I can't grant her the wildcard requested," he said, ahead of the May 28-June 11 tournament that will also be missing its other major name—the pregnant Serena Williams.

"The titles won here, she won within the rules without owing anything to anyone. While wildcards exist for players returning from injury,

there is nothing for a return from a doping ban," he added. "I know the media dimension of Maria and I'm measuring the expectations of the public and sponsors, but in all conscience it didn't appear possible to me to go beyond the strict application of the world anti-doping code." Some of Sharapova's rivals have openly criticized her return. Last month former Wimbledon finalist Eugenie Bouchard blasted Sharapova as a "cheater" and suggested she should be kicked out of tennis for life. The absence of Sharapova and Williams, a three-time champion in Paris, leaves the women's French Open field wide open. —AFP

CHINA'S LIN DAN DEMANDS UNPAID SALARY FROM CLUB

SHANGHAI: Chinese badminton superstar Lin Dan, a two-time Olympic champion, has accused his super league club of failing to pay him and six others for the 2016-2017 season. Regarded by some as badminton's greatest ever player, Lin said he felt "bitterly disappointed" and threatened to take legal action after not getting paid by Guangzhou Yueyu badminton club. Lin said the players worked the whole season to keep the club, which signed him last year, from being relegated despite not getting their wages.

"Our understanding towards the club has been met with repeated delay," the 33-year-old wrote to his 3.6 million followers on the Twitter-like Weibo microblogging website. "We have communicated with the club many times about salary payment; however, the club's attitude in solving this has made people helpless and disappointed. We did not hold anything back when we were fighting for the club's honour.

Please don't let our sweat go to waste." Another six of the club's players all posted the same statement on their Weibo accounts. Guangzhou Yueyu were ranked seventh in the eight-team super league's 2016-2017 season, down from fifth in the previous season. Lin Dan's wages for the season, which ended in February, were four million yuan (\$583,000), the state-run Guangzhou Daily reported. According to the newspaper, team chairman Gao Jun, who is also the head coach, said the club has also failed to pay the coaching team and the rest of the Chinese players.

Gao said the club has turned its operation rights to a separate firm run by the club's manager Fu Xun. "It's not very good that we didn't give (salaries) for so long. But we are not avoiding this problem either," news portal Tencent sports quoted Fu Xun as saying. The club could not immediately be reached for comment. —AFP



COLOMBO: Sri Lankan cricket captain Angelo Mathews (C) takes a selfie with members of the Sri Lankan cricket team in Colombo yesterday ahead of their ICC Champions Trophy Tournament against England. —AFP

NADAL EXTENDS WINNING STREAK TO 16, MURRAY PUZZLED AT EXIT

ROME: Rafael Nadal hardly had to get his socks dirty to extend his winning streak to 16 matches. Back to being the best player on tour over the last month, Nadal advanced from his opening match at the Italian Open yesterday when Nicolas Pietrangeli retired in the first set with an apparent injury.

Top-ranked Angelique Kerber, meanwhile, lost her opening match at the Foro Italico to Estonian qualifier Anett Kontaveit 6-4, 6-0. Kerber joined Andy Murray, the top-ranked men's player, on the sidelines after Murray's loss to Fabio Fognini on Tuesday. "Everybody knows I'm not a clay-court specialist," Kerber said. "I was not playing good last year as well. I had a great year, but I mean, these few weeks I was not playing good. And this year it's the same."

Also, Olympic silver medalist Juan Martin del Potro defeated British player Kyle Edmund 7-5, 6-4. Nadal was leading 3-0, 15-30 when Almagro bent over toward the red clay court and grasped his left knee. Nadal went over to Almagro's side of the net to ask what was wrong and consoled his countryman. Almagro then got some medical attention at his chair but quickly retired from the second-round match.

"It's difficult to see what's going on now just after what happened," Nadal said. "He felt something on the knee." The fourth-ranked Nadal remained on court for a practice session. Nadal has won consecutive clay-court tournaments in Monte Carlo, Barcelona and Madrid. He's aiming for an eighth title at the Foro Italico as he prepares for the French Open, which starts in less than two weeks. Nadal will next face either 13th-seeded Jack Sock or Jiri Vesely of the Czech Republic. The 73rd-ranked Almagro had come through qualifying.

Also, seventh-seeded Kei Nishikori beat David Ferrer 7-5, 6-2 and will next face del Potro. Nishikori showed no lingering pain from the right wrist injury that prompted him to withdraw from the quarterfinals in Madrid last week. "My wrist is OK now. I assume to be 100 percent now," Nishikori said. Kerber returned to No 1 this week despite getting eliminated early in her past



ROME: Italy's Fabio Fognini celebrates after winning his match against Britain's Andy Murray during their Rome ATP Tennis Open tournament match on May 16, 2017 at the Foro Italico. —AFP

A-LEAGUE STAR CHARGED WITH DRUG POSSESSION

SYDNEY: A-League star and former Socceroo Mitch Nichols has been charged with drug possession after a police swoop on a Sydney pub, it emerged yesterday. Police allege they found three bags of a white powder, believed to be cocaine, on a 28-year-old when they raided a nightclub with sniffer dogs on Saturday evening. He was widely named in local media as Nichols, who was released by Western Sydney Wanderers last week, with video footage circulating of the raid and the player being questioned.

Police said the man was issued with a field court attendance notice—effectively a ticket—for possessing a prohibited drug, rather than being arrested. He is due to appear in a Sydney court tomorrow. The Wanderers said it was committed to a zero tolerance message when it came to drugs. “While Mitch was released by the club prior to the incident, the player’s wellbeing remains a priority and every

support will be offered to him during this time,” the club said. Football Federation Australia said in a statement it took such issues “very seriously.” The matter has been referred to the FFA integrity department, which has spoken to the club, and will be dealt with under the FFA code of conduct.” The FFA has no clear precedent for drug offences, with the scourge largely bypassing the sport until now. The only other incident of note was in 2015 when traces of a recreational drug were found in the system of Central Coast Mariners midfielder Troy Hearfield during a doping test. He was sacked.

Known as a creative midfielder, Nichols played five times for the national team, making his debut in 2009 with his most recent appearance against Japan in 2014. He played 125 times for Brisbane Roar before moving to Melbourne Victory. Nichols also had stints at Perth Glory and Japan’s Cerezo Osaka before joining the Wanderers in 2015. — AFP



LONDON: Arsenal's Olivier Giroud kicks the ball across goal, from which teammate Alexis Sanchez scored their side's second goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Sunderland at the Emirates Stadium. — AP

REMODELED AGUERO FINALLY GETS GUARDIOLA'S SEAL OF APPROVAL

MANCHESTER: For a player who has excelled for years as a penalty-box poacher, Sergio Aguero found himself doing some unusual things in Manchester City's final home game of the season. When he wasn't dropping deep to link up play with flicks and one-twos, he was drifting out to the wing to leave space in the middle.

He even took the option to pass instead of shoot on occasions. This is a remodeled version of Aguero — and City manager Pep Guardiola wouldn't want it any other way. Aguero didn't score for City in its 3-1 win over West Bromwich Albion in the Premier League on Tuesday, but that's no longer what he is being judged on. At least not by Guardiola.

“An amazing performance,” the Spanish coach said. Guardiola stunned reporters and City fans alike at the start of his first season in English soccer by publicly calling out Aguero, saying he expected more from a player who has long been widely regarded as the best striker in the Premier League. Guardiola wanted to see a better pressing game from Aguero, more teamwork and link-up play, a better work ethic.

Aguero was even dropped for a Champions League game at Barcelona in mid-October, a decision many could not understand. Was this the end for Aguero at City, the club for whom he famously won the league with that 94th-minute goal on the final day of the 2011-12 season? If Aguero wasn't prepared to change his game, it likely would have been, particularly with Gabriel Jesus arriving at City in January and immediately displaying the kind of attributes Guardiola liked in a striker.

MASTERED THE ROLE

On the evidence of the West Brom game, Aguero has finally mastered how to perform the striker role that Guardiola wants. “What I saw from outside when I coached against him, he was a guy in the box to score a goal,” Guardiola said. “I tried

to get him involved in our game, to be involved defensively and especially to help us because I think he has a quality not just to score a goal but to be involved in the process.” Get out from the central defenders, create space behind central defenders if they decide to follow him. He has the quality to give that and make the pass. It's necessary to feel that your teammates and manager and staff and the club are happy whether you score or don't score.”

For the first goal against West Brom, whose ultra-defensive tactics were starting to frustrate City, Aguero came short to receive a pass and carved open the visitors and produced a back-heel flick to play in Kevin De Bruyne, running through from midfield. De Bruyne crossed and Gabriel Jesus tapped in at the far post.

For the second goal less than two minutes later, Aguero again started from deep, running through and passing to another midfield runner in Leroy Sane. The ball dropped for De Bruyne to side-foot home from the edge of the area.

The third goal from Yaya Toure particularly pleased Guardiola, who reacted to the ball hitting the net by spinning on his heels and punching the air with both fists — as much for the build-up as for the goal itself. Again dropping deep and dragging two defenders with him, Aguero played a 1-2 with Toure with a deft reverse pass with his left foot. Toure charged into open space and finished between the goalkeeper's legs. “I like strikers to not be there like a post,” Guardiola said, straightening up his body. “I like when we arrive at the line for them to be there. I like strikers to arrive to the positions, not stay in the positions. I think Sergio does that amazing.” That didn't used to be the case. Aguero has scored 31 goals in all competitions and is enjoying one of his most prolific seasons at City. But Guardiola appears to be getting much more out of the Argentine striker. Maybe Aguero will be staying at City after all. — AP



MANCHESTER: West Bromwich Albion's Claudio Yacob, left, and Manchester City's Sergio Aguero battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match against Manchester City at the Etihad Stadium. — AP

SANCHEZ KEEPS ARSENAL IN RACE, CITY ALL BUT THERE

LONDON: Alexis Sanchez sank Sunderland to keep Arsenal in the hunt for Champions League qualification on Tuesday, while Manchester City all but secured a top-four place by beating West Bromwich Albion. Sanchez scored two late close-range goals to earn Arsenal a 2-0 home victory over relegated Sunderland, while Kevin De Bruyne starred as City comfortably defeated West Brom 3-1 at the Etihad Stadium.

City climb to third in the Premier League, two points above Liverpool and three points clear of Arsenal, with only the teams finishing third and fourth assured to join Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur in the Champions League. “We've got in on the final day many times,” Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger told BBC Sport at the Emirates Stadium. “We made 71 points and were second. We now have 72 and want to go to 75. After that you deal with what happens.” Arsenal must win their final game at home to Everton on Sunday and hope Liverpool slip up at home to relegated Middlesbrough if they are to guarantee a 20th successive season of Champions League football. As well as their points advantage over Arsenal, Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool also have a superior goal difference (+33 to +31).

A point at Watford on Sunday will guarantee a top-four place for Pep Guardiola's City, but they can secure third place—and, crucially, avoid the Champions League play-off round—if they win. A conspicuous number of empty seats at the Emirates Stadium articulated the apathy that has taken hold among Arsenal fans this season and Wenger's team made heavy work of beating Sunderland. They had the best of the first half, with Hector Bellerin striking the outside of the post from one of a succession of home attacks.

But rock-bottom Sunderland twice threatened on the counter-attack, with Arsenal goalkeeper Petr Cech obliged to save from Didier Ndong and Jermain Defoe. Sunderland goalkeeper Jordan Pickford looked set to foil Arsenal in the second half, saving from Aaron Ramsey and substitute Danny Welbeck, but in the 72nd minute the hosts' pressure told.

ZABALETA FAREWELL

Granit Khaka's lofted pass was squared by Mesut Ozil and Sanchez volleyed in his 22nd goal of the league campaign from beneath the crossbar. After Pickford had thwarted Sanchez, Khaka and Alex Iwobi, Sanchez made sure of the points in the 81st minute, heading in after Pickford had blocked Olivier Giroud's volley.

Guardiola is now within touching distance of securing his minimum objective of Champions League qualification following a straightforward home win over West Brom. After Aleksandar Kolarov's free-kick was pushed behind by visiting goalkeeper Ben Foster and Leroy Sane had dragged wide, City went ahead in the 27th minute with a fine team goal.

Sergio Aguero's artful back-heel released De Bruyne, whose deflected cross from the left was tapped in by Gabriel Jesus. De Bruyne doubled City's lead within two minutes when he shaped a half-volley inside the right-hand post from the edge of the box. Yaya Toure added a third shortly before the hour, exchanging passes with Aguero, driving into the box and slotting home.

“Gabriel was amazing, but today I think that the key player was Sergio,” Guardiola said. “He didn't score, but he helped us to play the third man. He made two or three assists, he made an amazing, amazing performance. Sergio played ‘wow,’ like a long time I didn't see.” Guardiola used the final half hour to offer Pablo Zabaleta a

farewell appearance in City's colors. The popular Argentine right-back, who has been at the Etihad for nine years, is due to leave the club at

the end of the season. Substitute Hal-Robson Kanu claimed a consolation goal for West Brom with three minutes remaining. — AFP

LEADER KANE HAS GREAT EXPECTATIONS FOR SPURS

LEICESTER: Harry Kane has backed Tottenham Hotspur to shake off their reputation as title chokers and finally win the Premier League next season. Mauricio Pochettino's side came up short in the title race for the second successive year after Chelsea repelled their determined challenge in the same way Leicester City frustrated them 12 months ago.

Deposed champions Leicester are Tottenham's next opponents at the King Power Stadium today, but Kane's thoughts are already turning to next term. Watching Chelsea's jubilant players celebrate their title triumph was a painful experience for Tottenham striker Kane, who once again has more than 20 goals to his credit without winning a major trophy.

Even so, Kane is convinced it will be Tottenham's turn to hoist the silverware sooner rather than later because Pochettino has built a gifted group that revels in the team-

first ethos preached by their manager. “Everyone just has a special connection here. It's a special bond and I don't think you always get that at clubs,” Kane said. “That has to motivate us to hopefully be out there next year lifting a Premier League together. That's got to be the next step. That's got to be our aim and we've got to use this as motivation to get there.” Tottenham said an emotional farewell to White Hart Lane on Sunday, with a 2-1 win against Manchester United the perfect send-off for the 118-year stadium before it is demolished to make room for a new arena. Tottenham's runners-up berth is their best league finish since 1963, but the progress of Pochettino's side has inevitably prompted reports that several key players could be lured away by bigger clubs in the close-season.

Kane is unmoved by such talk and says Spurs' trajectory makes them as attractive as virtually any club in the world. “We're a family on and off the pitch. We work so hard as a group. Look, there's not many better teams to be at around the world at the moment,” he said. “We've got a very bright future, a great squad, a team that's hungry to win and to learn and to get better. Of course there's going to be rumours over the summer, but I think I'd be very surprised if most of us ain't still here next season.”

'NEXT STEP'

Despite all their promise, Tottenham are yet to win a trophy under Pochettino and their last major prize was the League Cup in 2008. They face the added problem of playing their home games at Wembley next season while the new stadium is built. Yet, ignoring his team's poor results at the national stadium in recent years, England star Kane is adamant they should be aiming high next term.

“Imagine what it would be like winning a Premier League, or winning an FA Cup or a Champions League or something?” he said. “That's got to be our next step. We're young but we're getting more experience year in, year out. We've just got to go and make it happen. We've got the team, we've got the belief, so next season hopefully it's our year.” After their fairytale title last season, this has been a turbulent campaign for Leicester, with poor league form leading to Claudio Ranieri's sacking before a memorable run to the Champions League quarter-finals under Craig Shakespeare.

With two home games left, it could be a long goodbye for Algeria winger Riyad Mahrez, who remains a target for several clubs despite an erratic campaign from last season's PFA Player of the Year. “You don't have a decision to make unless you get an offer, and we haven't had an offer for any one of our players,” Shakespeare said of the transfer talk. “There is always going to be speculation because they are good players.” — AFP



LONDON: Tottenham's Harry Kane celebrates scoring a goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United at White Hart Lane stadium. — AP

DUTCH STAR KUYT RETIRES AS FEYENOORD TRIUMPH

THE HAGUE: Former Dutch international Dirk Kuyt announced his retirement yesterday, three days after his hat-trick steered Feyenoord their first Eredivisie title in 18 years. “Throughout my career I have always followed my heart when taking decisions and that goes for this one too,” Kuyt said in a statement on Feyenoord's website.

“To me this feels like the right time to retire. I have had two fantastic years here since returning to Feyenoord, with this season's title as the absolute pinnacle. “I

had the dream of winning trophies and becoming a champion with Feyenoord. All my dreams have come true.” Kuyt, 36, scored all three goals on Sunday as Rotterdam-based Feyenoord beat Heracles 3-1 to clinch the Dutch title after finishing one point clear of Ajax.

He is expected to stay on at Feyenoord in a technical capacity after calling time on his 19-year playing career. Kuyt made his professional debut at FC Utrecht in 1998, before joining Feyenoord in 2003 where he quickly established himself as a

central figure at De Kuip. After three prolific seasons in Rotterdam, Kuyt was snapped up by Liverpool in 2006 after playing at that year's World Cup in Germany. He scored 71 goals—including a late consolation in Liverpool's 2007 Champions League final defeat to AC Milan—over six seasons with the English club. The Dutchman, who played 104 times for his country, started every game as the Netherlands reached the 2010 World Cup final only to suffer a heartbreaking 1-0 loss to Spain after extra time in Johannesburg. Kuyt endeared him-

self to Liverpool supporters with his commitment and down-to-earth approach, but the goals dried up in his final campaign at Anfield and he was sold to Turkish side Fenerbahce in 2012. He then returned to Feyenoord for a second spell in 2015 on a one-year deal, before extending his stay for one final season. “It's a great moment to be back,” Kuyt told Dutch newspapers at the time. “The difference to my previous stint (at Feyenoord) is that this time around I would really like to win a trophy.” — AFP



ROTTERDAM: In this Sept 15, 2016 file photo Feyenoord's team captain Dirk Kuyt applauds the supporters at the end of the Group A Europa League match between Feyenoord and Manchester United at the De Kuip stadium. — AP

CHINA PROBES HULK INCIDENT WITH LAVEZZI OFF THE HOOK

SHANGHAI: China's football authority said yesterday it is investigating Brazilian star Hulk's alleged altercation with a rival club's staffer, but it saw "no malicious intent" in a separate racially-charged row involving Argentina's Ezequiel Lavezzi. Both South American players, who are among the growing crop of highly paid foreign stars in China's cash-rich Super League, have been embroiled in race-related incidents in recent weeks.

The Chinese Football Association said its disciplinary committee held a hearing last Friday with Hulk, who plays for Shanghai SIPG, and the assistant coach of Guizhou Zhicheng. The hearing came after Guizhou Zhicheng's then head coach Li Bing accused the muscular Brazilian of punching his assistant, Yu Ming, at half-time during SIPG's 3-0 victory earlier this month.

Li had suggested Hulk had a racial motive for the alleged attack, saying that the Brazilian star "cannot be here and despise Chinese people," though he later appeared to back off those comments. Hulk and the Shanghai club have rejected the accusations. CFA spokeswoman Huang Shiwei said in a statement that the association "has zero tolerance towards any behaviour that is not (in line with) sport ethics in the pitch, no matter who that person is. There is no exception."

News of the investigation comes a week after a CFA official, Li Peng, said there was "no evidence" that Hulk had violated any

regulations. But Li Bing, who remains Guizhou's general manager, said on his official Weibo microblog account that he would keep pursuing the charges even though his club said both sides "has reached agreement" in how to handle the incident.

Days after the Hulk incident, the Super League faced another controversy when promotional photos emerged of Lavezzi smiling and pulling the corners of his eyes back. Lavezzi's club, Hebei China Fortune, issued a statement on Sunday saying that the 32-year-old had apologised and insisted he meant no racial offence. "We believe the footballer and the photographer did not have any malicious intent when they were shooting. (We) hope media don't read too much into this," the CFA said yesterday.

"Due to the differences of national conditions and cultures, different hand gestures or expressions have different meanings." But the CFA urged Lavezzi "to regulate his words and actions more" as a public figure. Lavezzi's slant-eyed pose has caused outrage on Chinese social media. Hebei China Fortune said some photos in the Lavezzi promotional shoot were meant to be in a "light-hearted" and "wacky" vein. But the team nonetheless conceded it had not been vigilant enough in the matter and would "draw lessons" from it, vowing to prevent anything similar occurring again. The episode illustrates the potential culture clashes that can arise as Chinese teams spend big on foreign players. —AFP



MADRID: Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema (R) vies with Atletico Madrid's Uruguayan defender Diego Godin (C) and Atletico Madrid's Montenegrin defender Stefan Savic during the UEFA Champions League semifinal second leg football match Club Atletico de Madrid vs Real Madrid CF at the Vicente Calderon stadium. — AFP

GERMANY'S LOEW TO TAKE 7 DEBUTANTS TO CONFED CUP

BERLIN: Germany's head coach Joachim Loew yesterday named seven uncapped players for next month's Confederations Cup in Russia as the injury-hit world champions unveiled an experimental squad. Injury and illness had already sidelined World Cup-winners Mario Goetze, captain Manuel Neuer and Benedikt Hoewedes for the June 17-July 2 competition.

Midfielder Julian Weigl, 21, of Borussia Dortmund, was also ruled out after fracturing his ankle last Saturday. As expected, Loew has reacted by naming an inexperienced 23-man squad—none of whom are over 30 — which he aims to blood a year before Germany launch their defence of the World Cup. Only three of the squad—Matthias Ginter, Julian Draxler and Shkodran Mustafi—won the 2014 World Cup and none of them played in the final.

Ajax winger Amin Younes, 23, is amongst the debutants, along with Hoffenheim's striker Sandro Wagner and midfielder Kerem Demirbay, 23, plus Hertha Berlin's deadball expert, defender Marvin Plattenhardt, 25. At 29, burly forward Wagner is the oldest member of the youthful squad. Premier League midfielders Liverpool's Emre Can, 23, and Manchester City's Leroy Sane, 21, have the chance to add to their handful of caps.

FIRST PLAYERS RESTING

First-choice players like Thomas Mueller, Mats Hummels, Jerome Boateng (all Bayern Munich), plus Real Madrid's Toni Kroos and Arsenal's Mesut Ozil are all left out to rest. "The aim is to bring a few players up to world-class level, so that they can help us in crucial games. Then I'd be happy," explained Loew. "I see the strain on players like Mesut Ozil, Toni Kroos and Mats Hummels, they play almost every three days in crucial weeks. That is emotionally extremely

exhausting, not just physically."

There is no place for veteran striker Mario Gomez, who has scored 30 goals in 70 internationals, as he battles German league relegation with Wolfsburg. Loew has left injury-prone Dortmund winger Marco Reus out to work on his fitness with one eye on the 2018 World Cup. "I talked to him in detail, I would have liked to have taken him, but I had to weigh up the risk," explained Loew.

Reus missed the 2014 World Cup triumph in Brazil after tearing ankle ligaments in a warm-up game and sat out Euro 2016 with a pelvic injury. "He was a big figure in 2014 and it was a set back that he wasn't there," added Loew. "He's determined to be at the 2018 World Cup and everything is geared towards that." Germany squad for Confederations Cup in Russia, June 17-July 2:

Goalkeepers: Bern Leno (Bayer Leverkusen), Marc-Andre Ter Stegen (Barcelona), Kevin Trapp (Paris St-Germain/FRA)

Defenders: Matthias Ginter (Borussia Dortmund), Jonas Hector (Cologne), Benjamin Henrichs (Bayer Leverkusen), Joshua Kimmich (Bayern Munich), Shkodran Mustafi (Arsenal/ENG), Marvin Plattenhardt (Hertha Berlin), Antonio Ruediger (AS Roma/ITA) Niklas Sule (Hoffenheim)

Midfielders: Julian Brandt (Bayer Leverkusen), Emre Can (Liverpool/ENG), Kerem Demirbay (Hoffenheim), Diego Demme (RB Leipzig), Julian Draxler (Paris St-Germain/FRA), Leon Goretzka (Schalke), Sebastian Rudy (Hoffenheim), Leroy Sane (Manchester City/ENG), Lars Stindl (Borussia Moenchengladbach), Amin Younes (Ajax/NED)

Strikers: Sandro Wagner (Hoffenheim), Timo Werner (RB Leipzig) —AFP

VALBUENA ACCUSES 'IMPOTENT' BENZEMA OVER SEX-TAPE SAGA

PARIS: Lyon midfielder Mathieu Valbuena yesterday launched an emotional attack on Karim Benzema over the sex-tape saga, accusing the Real Madrid star of "slander". "Slander is the weapon of the impotent, it is distressing!!! Justice will restore the truth," Valbuena posted on his Twitter account. Valbuena was responding to comments made by Benzema in French sports daily L'Equipe's online edition the day before.

Both men missed Euro 2016 on home soil after an investigation was launched into alleged blackmail in a sex-tape scandal featuring Valbuena which is likely to go to court in France later this year. Investigators suspect Benzema of acting as an intermediary between the presumed blackmailers, including childhood friend Valbuena. On Tuesday Benzema laid the blame for the fallout of the sex tape scandal squarely on the shoulders of Valbuena, the alleged victim.

He went as far as accusing Valbuena of lying just two days ahead of France naming their squad for upcoming 2018 World Cup qualifiers. "He called me scum, said I'd threatened him, made up all kinds of stuff," said Benzema, who remains in international exile with his last France appearance in October 2015. "He's dragged me

through the dirt and sullied my family name," he said. "He's got to stop this nonsense." He's really got to stop making things up. His continued lying is driving me mad. It all came from him this sex-tape business. All he had to say was the truth about what really happened."

BENZEMA REVEALS MACRON CONNECTION

Can Emmanuel Macron save Karim Benzema? Banned from the national team since November 2015 because of his suspected involvement in a corruption scandal, the Real Madrid striker may have found an unexpected supporter in the new French president. Benzema told L'Equipe newspaper yesterday that he met Macron before he started his political career and that they "stayed a bit in touch via messages." Benzema, the most talented striker of his generation, is facing charges relating to an extortion scam over a sex tape featuring France teammate Mathieu Valbuena. When the story broke in 2015, Benzema faced a deluge of criticism and then Prime Minister Manuel Valls landed a heavy blow when he said the former Lyon player had "no place" in the national team. Former French President Francois Hollande was also quoted as

saying in a book last year that Benzema was not an example of morality. Benzema said he is not expecting Macron to intervene in his favor, but hopes the new president won't pillory him. "Maybe he'll speak about me in better words," Benzema said. "When your name is quoted by the prime minister (Valls), then by the French president (Hollande), it gets difficult."

The 29-year-old Benzema, who will feature in his third Champions League final next month when Madrid takes on Juventus, added that he met Macron "three or four times" and had dinner with him. Benzema has achieved another excellent season with Madrid and believes there is no obvious sporting reason for his repeated absence from France coach Didier Deschamps' lists of players. Benzema, whose last game with France dates back to October 2015, is not expected to make the cut when Deschamps announces his players for France's next three games on Thursday. "If the coach tells me straight into the eyes that it is because of soccer, then I will keep working," said Benzema, who has 27 international goals in 81 appearances. "If it's for another reason, then he should tell it to my face, and I will be done with him." — Agencies

LEWANDOWSKI EYES 30+ GOALS TO BREAK RECORD

BERLIN: Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski aims to better his record of 30 league goals in a season and beat Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang to the Bundesliga's top-scorer title on Saturday. His two-goal haul in Bayern's thrilling 5-4 win over RB Leipzig last Saturday left Lewandowski one ahead of Aubameyang of Borussia Dortmund with one game left.

This season's haul matches his personal best, set last term when he won the 'Golden Cannon' trophy-awarded to the Bundesliga's top-scorer-for the second time having won the title in 2013/14 with 20 goals for ex-club Dortmund. Lewandowski wants at least one more goal in Saturday's final home game against Freiburg, while hoping Aubameyang fails to score for Dortmund at home to Bremen.

"I'm not thinking about 'the Cannon', my goal is to get 30 goals plus 'x' when I score one more, then I have beaten my personal record, which is what I want to do," Lewandowski told FCBayern.de. On Saturday, Bayern will be crowned German league champions for the fifth season running when they bid farewell to Philipp Lahm, and Xabi Alonso, who both play their final game before retirement.

"Our biggest motivation should be to say goodbye to two legends, Philipp Lahm and Xabi Alonso—best of all with a good game and lots of goals," added Lewandowski. German magazine Sport Bild report Germany's captain Manuel Neuer, currently sidelined with a foot fracture, will be club skipper next season to replace Lahm. The 33-year-old Lahm has just announced he will become a father for the second time.

Meanwhile, Bayern say they are taking legal action against the Stuttgarter Zeitung newspa-

per for claiming midfielder Joshua Kimmich will leave at the end of the season. The Stuttgart paper claim the German international, who is under contract until 2020, will leave for either ex-club RB Leipzig or Pep Guardiola's Manchester City, but Bayern have slammed the report. "This is a monstrous fallacy," fumed chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. "This story

lacks any foundation. Joshua Kimmich has a contract with FC Bayern until 2020 and will definitely play for the next season for FC Bayern." Kimmich returned from Euro 2016 as Germany's first-choice right-back, but with Lahm playing that position for Bayern, Kimmich has started just 15 league games this season under Carlo Ancelotti. — AFP



FRANKFURT: Joachim Loew (L), head coach of the German national football team, and U21-Coach Stefan Kuntz pose after a press conference at the headquarters of the German Football Federation. — AFP



Robert Lewandowski

CHINESE TAKE OVER PREMIER LEAGUE-CHASING READING

LONDON: Chinese investors who failed in their bid to buy Hull City last year have succeeded in taking over Reading, who are one win away from the Premier League. Brother and sister Dai Yongge and Dai Xiuli snapped up 75 percent of the Championship club with the previous Thai owners retaining a 25 percent stake. The Premier League, who give their opinion on takeovers of clubs who could gain promotion, have been reported to be

"cautious" about the Chinese siblings.

However, the English Football League, who oversee the Championship, League One and League Two, said they would not block the deal. Reading, managed by former Netherlands and Manchester United defender Jaap Stam, on Tuesday saw off Fulham to reach the play-off final. They will learn later Wednesday if their opponents in the final—the winner of which is promoted to the Premier

League—are Sheffield Wednesday or Huddersfield Town.

"The EFL can confirm that they have no objections to the change of control application made by Reading Football Club," a statement said. "Following a full review of the transaction, the EFL has insisted upon—and the club/new owners have agreed to—a number of additional reporting requirements including enhanced financial monitor-

ing, so as to ensure that their performance is consistent with the application we have considered."

The brother-and-sister act unsuccessfully tried to purchase now-relegated Premier League side Hull, with the deal falling through amid speculation they had not met the league's fit and proper person's requirements. Reading chief executive Nigel Howe said the Chinese had ambitious plans, including "invest-

ment which will benefit not only the first-team squad, but which will also help to improve the club's training facilities (and) continue to support its category-one academy program". The siblings are the latest Chinese investors to take control of a Championship club but the only ones with a chance of gaining immediate reward to the Premier League. Aston Villa and Wolves both failed to even reach the play-offs. — AFP

Sports

Sanchez keeps Arsenal in race, City all but there



Valbuena accuses 'impotent' Benzema over sex-tape saga



THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2017

PREDS RALLY, BEAT DUCKS TO TAKE WESTERN FINALS LEAD

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OAKLAND: Patty Mills #8 and LaMarcus Aldridge #12 of the San Antonio Spurs fight for position with Draymond Green #23, JaVale McGee #1, and Kevin Durant #35 of the Golden State Warriors during Game Two of the NBA Western Conference Finals at ORACLE Arena. — AFP

WARRIORS TROUNCE SPURS FOR 2-0 SERIES LEAD

OAKLAND: Steve Kerr provided a strong message, just not from his usual spot on the bench: Play with urgency from the opening tip this time. The Golden State Warriors did just that for their ailing coach watching from the locker room, and left Gregg Popovich questioning and criticizing his Spurs players for a lack of belief and feeling sorry for themselves without injured superstar Kawhi Leonard.

Stephen Curry had 29 points, seven rebounds and seven assists in three quarters and the Warriors trounced on the short-handed Spurs, running away from San Antonio for a 136-100 rout Tuesday night and a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference finals. Kevin Durant added 16 points and Draymond Green provided another impressive all-around performance with 13 points, nine rebounds, six assists, two steals and two blocks. Rookie Patrick McCaw had 18 points and five assists off the bench shooting 6 for 8 as Golden State earned its second-most lopsided postseason victory ever to go to 10-0.

'THE FIRST PUNCH'

"That's just been the message all year, just play with urgency and start the game off with some energy and throw the first punch," Durant said. "Unlike Game 1 we did that tonight. We know they're a little undermanned but they still play extremely hard, so we knew we couldn't come out here and relax and think they were just going to give us the game. We had to go take it." The 36-point Warriors' win is second to a 39-point victory for Philadelphia at St. Louis on April 6, 1948. Jonathon Simmons scored 17 of his 22 points in the first half as the lone bright spot for the Spurs.

"It looked pretty collective to me. I don't think it was one guy who didn't believe and he infected everybody else or anything like that. As a group they just let themselves down," Popovich said. "The truth always quote-unquote sets you free. You can't sugarcoat it or say 'if we had just made a couple shots we'd have been right there. That's pretty lame. So, call it like it is. We didn't come to play. We felt sorry for

ourselves. We need to get slapped and come back and play Game 3 and see who we are."

Leonard re-injured his left ankle in Sunday's 113-111 Game 1 loss after coming down on Zaza Pachulia's foot. Popovich on Monday called out the Warriors starting center for the "dangerous" and "unsportsmanlike" closeout - which had Pachulia insisting he is not a dirty player, was only playing hard, and felt badly that the All-Star forward was injured. Game 3 in the best-of-seven series is Saturday in San Antonio.

Pachulia left the game injured for a Warriors team already without key reserve forward Andre Iguodala, held out because of soreness in his left knee that limited him to 10 minutes in Game 1. An X-ray on Pachulia's bruised right heel was clear but he was scheduled for an MRI on Wednesday. Golden State quickly established its pass-happy, up-tempo style to take the Spurs out from the opening tip. It was a drastic difference from a game of catch-up two days earlier when the Warriors rallied from 25

down and a 20-point halftime deficit.

The bench contributed a season-best 63 points. "They came out with a sense of urgency from the beginning and they played that way for 48 minutes," acting Warriors coach Mike Brown said. Klay Thompson, still struggling to find his steady shooting touch, had 11 points, six rebounds and four assists. The Warriors had 39 assists - the most by any team this postseason - including 30 on their initial 38 baskets. Shaun Livingston scored in double figures for the first time this postseason with 10 points for Golden State. Simmons started in Leonard's place and made 6 of 9 shots to begin the game while the rest of the Spurs were 3 for 22.

LEONARD'S STATUS

Popovich wasn't about to guess whether Leonard would return in time for Saturday's game, saying it could be Friday or even game day before that would be determined. "I have no idea. Just depends on how the ankle heals," Popovich said. "I'd probably list him as question-

able. But the thing that worries me is that he did it again, the exact same thing. So one would logically think maybe it will take longer, but I'm hoping that's not true and we'll have him for Game 3. But I don't know. I don't think we're going to know until Friday and Saturday, probably."

TIP-INS

Spurs: The Spurs had 23 offensive rebounds after 14 in Game 1. ... Patty Mills, playing in place of the injured Tony Parker, had another quiet night. After he went 1 for 8 and missed all six of his 3s in the first game, he finally hit from long range midway through the second Tuesday.

Warriors: Kerr attended his second game this series but again watched behind the scenes as he recovers from a May 5 procedure at Duke University to repair a spinal fluid leak. ... Golden State's 23 first-half assists were its most ever in a playoff half, topping 22 against Phoenix on May 4, 1994. The Warriors notched their fourth 30-assist game this postseason. —AP

ASIAN SOCCER BODY PROBES CLAIMS OF KUWAITI BRIBERY

KUALA LUMPUR: A new investigation into claims that Kuwaiti leaders of the Olympic Council of Asia bribed the region's soccer officials has been opened by the Asian Football Confederation. The AFC announced the internal probe yesterday in fallout from the US Department of Justice's sprawling investigation of corruption in international soccer. It could identify leaders of AFC member federations suspected of taking bribes.

The investigation would look at "the circumstances surrounding the prosecution of former Guam Football Association President Richard Lai," the AFC said in a statement. Although Lai was also a member of the FIFA audit committee, a bigger target of the American case could be longtime Olympic powerbroker Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah of Kuwait.

Lai was an influential AFC executive committee member until last month when he pleaded guilty to charges including wire fraud conspiracy in a Brooklyn federal court. Lai admitted to receiving more than \$850,000 from Kuwait between 2009 and 2014, including from OCA accounts. He said he helped recruit Asian soccer officials who he understood would be offered bribes. The American citizen is awaiting sentence and agreed to pay more than \$1.1 million in penalties.

The AFC, which already suspended Lai, is "duty bound to investigate," newly elected head of integrity Mohammad Ali Al Kamali said. "The allegations contained in Richard Lai's indictment are, if substantiated, extremely serious." Sheikh Ahmad, president of the OCA and the global group of national Olympic bodies known as ANOC, was identified as "co-conspirator 2" in documents published by the Department of Justice and from the Brooklyn court.

The sheikh denied wrongdoing but resigned his FIFA Council seat representing Asia one week ahead of his expected re-election. He also contacted the ethics committees of FIFA and the IOC, where he has been a member for 25 years. Co-conspirator 3 was identified as OCA director general Husain al Musallam of Kuwait, who is also senior vice president of world swimming body FINA. Another unnamed official, co-conspirator 4, was "at various times" an OCA employee and assistant to Al Musallam, the Department of Justice document said. —AP



MANAMA: A member of staff walks towards the building hosting the AFC, Asian Football Confederation Congress 2017. — AP

AINGE'S PATIENCE PAYS WITH CELTICS' DRAFT LOTTERY WIN

WALTHAM: The Boston Celtics have a No 1 seed and the No 1 pick. And Danny Ainge is enjoying them both.

"It's two completely different situations," the Boston basketball boss said Tuesday night after the team won the NBA draft lottery. "One is a lot about the future, and one is in the present. This team is a lot of fun to be around this year." Less than 24 hours after a Game 7 victory that put them in the Eastern Conference finals, the Celtics earned the right to choose first in next month's draft with the pick they received in the 2013 trade that sent Paul Pierce and Kevin Garnett to the Nets.

Owner Wyc Grousbeck was the lucky charm for a team that, despite its shamrock logo, hasn't had such good fortune in the lottery. After having the best odds for the No. 1 pick in 1997, Boston missed out on the chance to get Tim Duncan; in 1986, the Celtics landed the No. 2 overall pick and used it on Len Bias, who died two days later of a cocaine overdose. But now the Celtics, who will open the conference finals against Cleveland can enjoy things while also looking forward to the future.

"It's busy," Grousbeck said. "Game last night, Game 7, a tough Washington team. Game tomorrow against a tough Cleveland team. And now we squeeze in the lottery and win the pick. I don't know what's hap-

pening here. It's pretty amazing." The Celtics had a 25 percent chance to get the top pick, thanks to Brooklyn finishing with the worst record in the league. Boston also got the Nets' first-round picks in 2014, 2016 and 2018. "And look what I leave behind for the Celts on my way out #1 pick," Pierce wrote on Twitter, following by some celebratory emojis. The Los Angeles Lakers got the second pick, and the Philadelphia 76ers will select third in the June 22 draft at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn. The draft is considered a strong one, loaded with point guards such as Markelle Fultz, Lonzo Ball and De'Aaron Fox. "We have plenty of time to decide what to do, but I would imagine we'll make the pick," Grousbeck said. "In this day's NBA, picks are very, very valuable. You've got a young person you can help mold and grow with. Bring him in before the max salaries kick in years later. Makes a lot of sense to keep these picks."

Ainge said the lottery victory, coupled with the team's playoff run, vindicates his decision to hold onto the pick rather than use it as a bargaining chip at the trade deadline. "Sometimes you need to be patient. It's hard for me to be patient. I like action," he said. "It was hard, because it's very tempting. A lot of people want the picks. We just didn't think we were getting the value for it." — AP



'CHAEBOL SNIPER' BECOMES S KOREA'S ANTI-TRUST CHIEF



HONG KONG: A general view shows a multi-storey car park, left, in the Central district in Hong Kong. — AFP

THOUSANDS DEMONSTRATE IN GREECE OVER NEW CUTS
 HOODED YOUTH THROW FIREBOMB, SMASH TV VAN WINDOWS

ATHENS: Thousands of Greeks demonstrated yesterday against a new round of austerity cuts in a 24-hour general strike that disrupted travel and shut down public services. Around 12,000 people took part in separate protests in Athens and another 6,000 in Thessaloniki according to police, a day before the measures are to be approved by parliament. During the Athens protest, hooded youths smashed the windows of a TV van and threw a firebomb at police, who responded with bursts of tear gas.

The walkout cut off maritime traffic for a second day while dozens of flights had to be cancelled or rescheduled and hospitals ran on emergency staff. "We want to send a decisive message to the government, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund that we will not let them cut up our lives," Alekos Perrakis, a senior member of Communist union PAME, told reporters.

The mobilization is aimed against new pension and tax break cuts forced on Greece by its

EU-IMF creditors in return for bailout cash. Overall, the bill to be approved tonight entails 4.9 billion euros (\$5.4 billion) in cuts in 2018-2021, state agency ANA said. The leftist government of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras grudgingly accepted to legislate another round of pension cuts and lower tax breaks applicable in 2019 and 2020 respectively to unlock the cash payment ahead of looming debt repayments in July. The tax break cut on its own "is tantamount to losing one-and-a-half (months) salary," Perrakis said. In return, Greece will enact poverty support measures such as subsidies on rent and medicine over the same period of time.

Protesting policemen

Police unionists unfurled a huge black banner from Lycabettus Hill atop Athens in German and Greek, addressed to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. "What is the life of a police offi-



ATHENS: Members of the 'All Workers militant front' (PAME), a Trade Union coalition, take part in a demonstration marking a 24-hour general strike against a new round of austerity cuts imposed by the country's international creditors in Athens yesterday. — AFP

cer worth?" it asked, referring to the cuts. Under Merkel and her finance minister Wolfgang Schaeuble, eurozone powerhouse Germany has been pushing Greece for the past seven years to make recurring cuts in return for bailout cash.

Germany has footed an important share of Greece's three rescue bailouts since 2010. Athens hopes that the loan payment will be approved by a meeting of eurozone finance ministers on May 22. It also expects a clear pledge later this month on measures to ease repayment on its huge public debt, which represented 179 percent of annual output at the end of last year. Athens also hopes to be finally allowed access to the European Central Bank's asset purchase program, known as quantitative easing, or QE, to help its return to bond markets. There is speculation that Greece plans to issue a three or five-year bond in July. The finance ministry declined to comment on the issue yesterday. — AFP

TINAPA: NIGERIA'S \$450 MILLION WHITE ELEPHANT

CALABAR, Nigeria: With its futuristic film studios, luxury shops and elevated light railway, Tinapa should be a showcase of Nigerian dynamism, a commercial hub for West Africa raking in millions of dollars. But 10 years after it opened, the resort in southeast Nigeria is a ghost town and has become a symbol of monumental waste. Its majestic contours and avant-garde domes rise defiantly out of the bush and palm trees. At the entrance, a giant signboard proclaims: "Tinapa back on track!"

But the few visitors who venture inside are quickly disillusioned. Apart from a few idle employees, not a soul stirs in the endless aisles of shops and warehouses that should have made the capital of Cross River state, Calabar, famous across Nigeria's south. "It's empty there, we have no clients, it's like a cemetery," said one shop assistant in Da Viva, which sells the popular brand of wrapper skirts. "Many have left already," he added, pointing to shuttered premises.

A huge supermarket still displays clothes, furniture and foreign-made knick-knacks but in virtual darkness: the electricity was cut off some time ago. Inside, an old man snoozes in the suffocating heat. Tinapa, with its 80,000 square meters of warehouses and

shops, cost \$450 million (413 million euros) to build. But it has become a financial black hole for its backers.

Economic development

At the turn of the century, Nigeria was on



CALABAR: This photo shows a T-Mart store, one of the few stores still operational at Tinapa in Calabar, Cross River State. — AFP

the point of becoming Africa's biggest economy and leading oil producer. Newly returned to civilian rule, everything seemed possible. A handful of businessmen and architects got together and imagined an international centre of commerce and tourism in a free-trade

zone. Nigeria's biggest banks fell over themselves to finance the project, which was opened in 2007.

"At that time, everyone was excited. Tinapa was going to boost economic development of the whole region and create thousands of jobs," said Bassey Ndem, who was in charge of the project. It aimed to attract Nigerian millionaires, who ordinarily jetted off to Dubai or London to go shopping, as well as make Cross River a commercial crossroads on the Atlantic coast. A plush 242-room hotel with a view over the lagoon and a water park with slides were built to cater for the cream of high society and their families.

Alongside luxury tourism, imported goods would provide for Nigeria and its neighbors such as Cameroon, Chad and Niger, competing with the country's commercial capital, Lagos. "Everything was going well at first," said Ndem. "At the peak, in 2009, we generated \$30 million of revenue. But we faced a lot of resistance from the customs. "They really didn't want the tax-free zone to work."

Goods were supposed to be exempt from import duties in the free-trade zone. But from the beginning, the customs—which has a reputation for rampant corruption—blocked con-

tainers destined for Tinapa in the ports, paralyzing business.

Top down, trickle up

Ndem left in 2012. None of his successors has managed to get Tinapa off the ground. "There was clearly a lack of political will" to make the project succeed, he said, describing himself as angry and frustrated at a "wasted opportunity". For the economist and blogger Nonso Obikili, Tinapa's downfall was largely because of a lack of existing infrastructure to transport goods: bad roads and an average-sized port. "It was a wide project conceived with the deep sea port, which was supposed to enable big ships to come to Calabar," said Obikili. "It was the responsibility of the federal government but finally it wasn't done," he told AFP. In the end, no big name jeweller or pret-a-porter line wanted to invest in the paradise promised by its promoters and the hotel remains desperately empty. The cinema studios have likewise been unable to attract Nollywood's stars, who have largely preferred to stay in Lagos. In "Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria", the British-Nigerian author Noo Saro-Wiwa castigates the leaders in the country of her birth. — AFP

WHAT IS BITCOIN? A LOOK AT THE DIGITAL CURRENCY

DIGITAL CURRENCY DOESN'T INVOLVE BANKS, THIRD PARTIES

NEW YORK: It's worth more than an ounce of gold right now, it's completely digital and it's the currency of choice for the cyberattackers who crippled computer networks around the world in recent days. When the attackers "ransomware" sprang into action, it held victims hostage by encrypting their data and demanding they send payments in bitcoins to regain access to their computers. Bitcoin has a fuzzy history, but it's a type of currency that allows people to buy goods and services and exchange money without involving banks, credit card issuers or other third parties. Here's a brief look at bitcoin:



NEW YORK: In this file photo, Bitcoin logos are displayed at the Inside Bitcoins conference and trade show in New York. —AP

How bitcoins work

Bitcoin is a digital currency that is not tied to a bank or government and allows users to spend money anonymously. The coins are created by users who "mine" them by lending computing power to verify other users' transactions. They receive bitcoins in exchange. The coins also can be bought and sold on exchanges with US dollars and other currencies.

How much is it worth?

One bitcoin recently traded for \$1,734.65, according to Coinbase, a company that helps users exchange bitcoins. That makes it more valuable than an ounce of gold, which trades at less than \$1,230. The value of bitcoins can swing sharply, though. A year ago, one was worth \$457.04, which means that it's nearly quadrupled in the last 12 months. But its price doesn't always go up. A bitcoin's value plunged by 23 percent against the dollar in just a week this past January. It fell by the same amount again in 10 days during March.

Why bitcoins are popular

Bitcoins are basically lines of computer code that are digitally signed each time they travel from one owner to the next. Transactions can be made anonymously, making the currency popular with libertarians as well as tech enthusiasts, speculators - and criminals.

Is it really anonymous?

Yes, to a point. Transactions and accounts can be traced, but the account owners aren't necessarily known. However, investigators might be able to track down the owners when bitcoins are converted to regular currency. For now, the three accounts tied to the ransomware attack appear untouched - and it'll be difficult for perpetrators

How bitcoins are kept secure

The bitcoin network works by harnessing individuals' greed for the collective good. A network of tech-savvy users called miners keep the system honest by pouring their computing power into a blockchain, a global running tally of every bitcoin transaction. The blockchain prevents rogues from spending the same bitcoin twice, and the miners are rewarded for their efforts by being gifted with the occasional bitcoin. As long as miners keep the blockchain secure, counterfeiting shouldn't be an issue.

How bitcoin came to be

It's a mystery. Bitcoin was launched in 2009 by a person or group of people operating under the name Satoshi Nakamoto. Bitcoin was then adopted by a small clutch of enthusiasts. Nakamoto dropped off the map as bitcoin began to attract widespread attention. But proponents say that doesn't matter: The currency obeys its own internal logic. An Australian entrepreneur last year stepped forward and claimed to be the founder of bitcoin, only to say days later that he did not "have the courage" to publish proof that he is. —AP

How much money?

Security experts say the amount of ransom collected so far appears small relative to the extent of the outbreak. Tom Bossert, President Donald Trump's adviser for homeland security and counterterrorism, says it appears less than \$70,000 has been paid in ransoms. It's possible, though, that there are unknown accounts beyond the three identified.

Who's using bitcoin?

Some businesses have jumped on the bitcoin bandwagon amid a flurry of media coverage. Overstock.com accepts payments in bitcoin, for example. The currency has become popular enough that more than 300,000 daily transactions have been occurring recently, according to bitcoin wallet site blockchain.info. A year ago, activity was closer to 230,000 transactions per day. Still, its popularity is low compared with cash and cards, and many individuals and businesses won't accept bitcoins for payments.

<p>National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report At 02:00 PM Previous Day</p>								
Global Stock Indices								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	1-yr Performance %				
Dow Jones	20,981.94	20,979.75	-2.19 ▼	-0.01				
NASDAQ	6,149.67	6,169.67	20.20 ▲	0.33				
S&P 500	2,402.32	2,400.67	-1.65 ▼	-0.07				
Financial Times	7,522.03	7,520.22	-1.81 ▼	-0.02				
DAX	12,804.53	12,763.24	-41.29 ▼	-0.32				
CAC 40	5,406.10	5,384.98	-21.12 ▼	-0.39				
Swiss	9,127.61	9,085.29	-42.32 ▼	-0.46				
Nikkei 225	19,919.92	19,814.88	-105.04 ▼	-0.53				
Toxix	1,584.23	1,575.82	-8.41 ▼	-0.53				
Hang Seng	25,335.94	25,293.63	-42.31 ▼	-0.17				
Straits Times	3,227.71	3,224.10	-3.61 ▼	-0.11				
MENA Stock Indices								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	1-yr Performance %				
Kuwait	6,725.30	6,732.07	6.77 ▲	0.10				
Saudi Arabia	6,940.48	6,938.00	-2.48 ▼	-0.04				
Dubai	3,376.75	3,395.06	18.31 ▲	0.54				
Abu Dhabi	4,582.07	4,593.72	11.65 ▲	0.25				
Bahrain	1,313.59	1,309.76	-3.83 ▼	-0.29				
Qatar	10,125.44	10,144.89	19.45 ▲	0.19				
Oman	5,432.61	5,423.17	-9.44 ▼	-0.17				
Lebanon	1,174.05	1,174.05	0.00	0.00				
Jordan	2,167.78	2,160.54	-7.24 ▼	-0.33				
Egypt	12,936.59	13,054.15	117.56 ▲	0.91				
Morocco	11,636.50	11,614.76	-21.74 ▼	-0.19				
Tunisia	5,737.11	5,733.51	-3.60 ▼	-0.06				
Global Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	Kuwait Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar		12.2279	3.2744	2.9475	2.5246	3.2207	368.11	4.4189
Saudi Riyal	0.08178		0.2678	0.2410	0.2065	0.2624	30.10	0.2614
US Dollar	0.30540	3.7344		0.9002	0.7710	0.9836	112.42	1.3495
Euro	0.33927	4.1485	1.1109		0.8547	1.0929	124.87	1.4993
Sterling Pound	0.39610	4.8435	1.2970	1.1673		1.2759	145.82	1.7511
Swiss Franc	0.31049	3.7967	1.0167	0.9150	0.7838		114.29	1.3720
Japanese Yen	0.00272	0.0332	0.0089	0.0080	0.0069	0.0087		0.0120
Australian Dollar	0.22630	2.7672	0.7410	0.6470	0.5711	0.7288	83.30	
MENA Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	US Dollar	Kuwait Dinar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirati Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30540	3.7344	0.3740	3.4266	0.3832	3.6571	18.0400
Kuwait Dinar	3.2744		12.2279	1.2247	11.8749	1.2546	11.9748	59.0701
Saudi Riyal	0.2678	0.08178		0.1002	0.9711	0.1026	0.9793	4.8308
Bahraini Dinar	2.6727	0.81653	9.9845		9.6963	1.0244	9.7778	48.2327
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08421	1.0297	0.1031		0.1056	1.0054	4.9744
Omani Riyal	2.6099	0.79708	9.7466	0.9762	9.4632		9.5448	47.0834
Emirati Dirham	0.2724	0.08351	1.0211	0.1023	0.9917	0.1048		4.9329
Egyptian Pound	0.0554	0.01893	0.2070	0.0207	0.2010	0.0212	0.2027	
Global Interest Rates								
Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month	6-Month	1-Year			
Kuwait Dinar	1.00	1.38	1.63	1.88	2.13			
US Dollar	0.94	1.00	1.17	1.41	1.73			
Euro	-0.41	-0.39	-0.27	-0.27	-0.14			
Sterling Pound	0.23	0.25	0.31	0.45	0.65			
Swiss Franc	-0.78	-0.78	-0.72	-0.65	-0.48			
Australian Dollar	1.58	1.66	1.82	1.61	1.61			
Japanese Yen	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	0.02	0.13			
Global Bond Yields								
Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year				
United States	1.27	1.82	2.29	2.96				
Europe	-0.69	-0.32	0.42	1.23				
United Kingdom	0.12	0.52	1.11	1.74				
Commodities								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	1-yr Performance %				
Kuwait Oil	49.36	49.36	0.00	0.00				
Brent	51.27	51.27	0.00	0.00				
West Texas	48.69	48.59	-0.10 ▼	-0.21				
Gold	1236.40	1246.07	9.67 ▲	0.78				
Silver	16.82	16.91	0.09 ▲	0.54				

MEXICO EXPECTS NAFTA TALKS BY LATE AUGUST

MEXICO CITY: Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo said on Tuesday he expects US President Donald Trump's administration to tell Congress early next week of plans to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, a move that would produce talks by late August. Guajardo said he would have more information after meeting with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer in Vietnam on Thursday as part of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meetings.

During the 2016 US election campaign, Trump vowed to scrap the 1994 deal between the United States, Canada and Mexico if he cannot adjust it to benefit US interests. "Probably the notification will be sent to Congress by the US executive at sometime early next week," Guajardo told Mexican media on Tuesday a day after meetings in Washington with US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and other US officials.

In Washington, Ross declined to predict the exact timing of the notification, saying that there were more consultations with Congress needed first. In a meeting on Tuesday, US senators said Ross and new US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer expressed their preference to keep the current trilateral format in the NAFTA talks. Guajardo also said that a dispute over sugar with the United States could be resolved within two weeks, before a June 5 deadline to break the impasse.

The US sugar industry pressed the US Commerce Department late last year to withdraw from a 2014 agreement that sets prices and quotas for US imports of Mexican sugar unless the deal could be renegotiated. The US sugar lobby wants Mexico to export less refined sugar and has become emboldened since Trump took office.

A US Commerce Department spokesman said Ross and Guajardo discussed possible solutions and that they continue to work toward a negotiated settlement. Any deal, however, would need agreement from the US sugar producers who brought an anti-dumping case against Mexican competitors. On Monday, Mexico's sugar chamber said no deal had been reached in talks on Monday to resolve the dispute. —Reuters



In this Thursday, May 11, 2017 file photo, a Sotheby's employee displays the Apollo blue diamond and the Artemis pink diamond earrings during a preview at the Sotheby's, in Geneva, Switzerland. —AP

DIAMOND EARRINGS FETCH RECORD \$57.4M AT SWISS AUCTION

GENEVA: Two spectacular diamonds mounted as earrings fetched a record \$57.4 million (51.8 million euros) Tuesday at auction in Geneva, with an unnamed Asia-based buyer netting both, Sotheby's said. The earrings were sold as separate lots. After protracted bidding, the flawless and vivid "The Apollo Blue" fetched \$42.087-million and the equally intensely luminescent "The Artemis Pink" went for \$15.33-million, buyers premium included.

The earrings, named after Greek gods,

had respectively been valued at between \$38-million and \$50-million and \$12.5-million and \$18-million. The 14.54-carat "Apollo Blue" is the largest gemstone in its category ever to be auctioned and has been cut and polished to a pear shape. The 16-carat "Artemis Pink" is near identical in shape. It is also one of the world's most "chemically pure" diamonds, according to the Gemological Institute of America, which experts say gives the stone such a high degree of transparency. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.689
Indian Rupees	4.758
Pakistani Rupees	2.910
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.997
Nepali Rupees	2.981
Singapore Dollar	218.980
Hongkong Dollar	39.195
Bangladesh Taka	3.757
Philippine Peso	6.148
Thai Baht	8.852

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.428
Qatari Riyal	83.867
Omani Riyal	793.009
Bahraini Dinar	810.810
UAE Dirham	83.136

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.400
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.805
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.226
Tunisian Dinar	126.880
Jordanian Dinar	430.150
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.034
Syrian Lira	2.176
Morocco Dirham	31.394

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	305.150
Euro	337.040
Sterling Pound	395.470

Canadian dollar	224.870
Turkish Lira	864.800
Swiss Franc	308.230
Australian Dollar	227.790
US Dollar Buying	303.950

GOLD

20 Gram	251.860
10 Gram	128.850
5 Gram	65.270

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer Selling Rate

US Dollar	304.800
Canadian Dolla	226.525
Sterling Pound	392.135
Euro	328.485
Swiss Frank	305.110
Bahrain Dinar	808.430
UAE Dirhams	83.380
Qatari Riyals	84.605
Saudi Riyals	82.175
Jordanian Dinar	429.815
Egyptian Pound	16.978
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.005
Indian Rupees	4.728
Pakistani Rupees	2.907
Bangladesh Taka	3.742
Philippines Pess0	6.121
Cyprus pound	168.208
Japanese Yen	3.795
Syrian Pound	2.420

Nepalese Rupees	3.950
Malaysian Ringgit	70.185
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.745
Thai Bhat	9.860
Turkish Lira	84.130

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.387148	0.397148
Czech Korune	0.004785	0.016785
Danish Krone	0.041356	0.046356
Euro	0.332440	0.341440
Norwegian Krone	0.031911	0.037111
Romanian Leu	0.074184	0.074184
Slovakia	0.009113	0.019113
Swedish Krona	0.030664	0.035664
Swiss Franc	0.313959	0.313959
Turkish Lira	0.080319	0.090619

Australasia

Australian Dollar	0.217538	0.229538
New Zealand Dollar	0.203730	0.213230

America

Canadian Dollar	0.218439	0.227439
Georgina Lari	0.137619	0.137619
US Dollars	0.300600	0.305000
US Dollars Mint	0.301100	0.305000

Asia

Bangladesh Taka	0.003405	0.003990
Chinese Yuan	0.042718	0.046218

Hong Kong Dollar	0.037032	0.039782
Indian Rupee	0.004115	0.004803
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002622	0.002802
Kenyan Shilling	0.002941	0.002941
Korean Won	0.000262	0.000277
Malaysian Ringgit	0.066452	0.072452
Nepalese Rupee	0.003010	0.003180
Pakistan Rupee	0.002711	0.003001
Philippine Peso	0.006002	0.006302
Sierra Leone	0.000038	0.000044
Singapore Dollar	0.213070	0.223070
South African Rand	0.017198	0.025698
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001633	0.002213
Taiwan	0.009981	0.010161
Thai Baht	0.008492	0.009042

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.801652	0.810152
Egyptian Pound	0.014022	0.019930
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000190	0.000250
Jordanian Dinar	0.424400	0.433400
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000152	0.000252
Morocco Dirhams	0.020688	0.044688
Nigerian Naira	0.000397	0.001032
Omani Riyal	0.785008	0.790688
Qatari Riyal	0.082882	0.084332
Saudi Riyal	0.080167	0.081467
Syrian Pound	0.001292	0.001512
Tunisian Dinar	0.122731	0.130731

FORD TO CUT 1,400 SALARIED JOBS IN NORTH AMERICA, ASIA

DETROIT: Ford will cut 10 percent of its salaried jobs in North America and Asia Pacific this year in an effort to boost profits. The company will offer voluntary early retirement and separation packages to its workers. It expects 1,400 positions to be affected by the end of September. Ford believes it will meet its targets by voluntary means and doesn't expect involuntary layoffs, spokesman Mike Moran said

yesterday. "We remain focused on the three strategic priorities that will create value and drive profitable growth, which include fortifying the profit pillars in our core business, transforming traditionally underperforming areas of our core business and investing aggressively, but prudently, in emerging opportunities," Ford said in an email sent to employees early yesterday. "Reducing costs and becoming

as lean and efficient as possible also remain part of that work." Certain areas of the business won't be targeted, including its product development and credit divisions. Salaried and hourly workers in Ford's plants won't be affected. Information technology and analytics workers also won't be affected. The offer will be open to about 15,300 workers, including 9,600 in the US, 1,000 in

Mexico, 600 in Canada and 4,141 in Asia. The company says it will release more details to employees in June. Ford's stock price has fallen nearly 40 percent over the last three years as investors worry that sales in the US, its biggest market, are peaking. Ford is also spending heavily on technology with an uncertain future, like self-driving vehicles. Earlier this year, it

announced an investment of \$1 billion over five years in Argo AI, an artificial intelligence startup. Net income fell 35 percent to \$1.6 billion in the first quarter. It expects to earn a pretax profit of \$9 billion this year, down from a record of \$10.4 billion in 2016. Shares of Ford Motor Co. fell 4 cents to \$10.90 in premarket trading after the company announced the reductions. —AP



FLORIDA: This photo, shows the entrance for a Target store, in North Miami Beach, Florida. — AP

MINERS, LLOYDS HELP FTSE HOVER NEAR RECORD HIGH

BRITISH LAND FALLS AFTER CAUTIOUS OUTLOOK

LONDON: Britain's top share index held close to a record high yesterday, helped by gains among miners and banking stock Lloyds, though a fall in British Land's stock weighed on housing-focused peers. The blue chip FTSE 100 index was flat in percentage terms at 7,521.33 points by 0918 GMT, within a whisker of a record high hit in the previous session. Traders, however, were more cautious on the FTSE's recent run, which has seen its longest gaining streak since January.

"There's nothing really driving this market higher in terms of positive sentiment," John Moore, a trader at Berkeley Capital, said. "We believe it's a bit of a final short squeeze, getting the last of the bears out of the market before a bit of a move lower." While a broader risk-off mood prevailed among European indexes, Britain's large caps were led by gains in Lloyds, which rose more than 2 percent after the British government sold off its remaining stake in the lender following its bailout in the 2007-2009 global financial crisis.

Investment platform provider Hargreaves Lansdown was also a top gainer, up 2.3 percent and recovering some of its losses from the previous session. Its shares tumbled 8.5 percent on Tuesday, with traders pointing to an announcement from ETF provider Vanguard about plans to sell directly to investors in Europe for the first time. "The HL business model has proved itself to be incredibly resilient in the face of a couple of major headwinds in recent years," Shore Capital analyst Paul McGinnis said in a note. "We would be a lot more nervous around the implications of the Vanguard platform for the fledgling robo-advice sector." Mining stocks also supported the blue chips, with Rio Tinto, Antofagasta and Anglo American all gaining between 1.1 percent and 1.4 percent on the back of steady copper prices.

Precious metals miner Fresnillo was also in demand as the price of gold rose. Broker action lifted shares in Kingfisher, which was up nearly 2 percent after HSBC raised its recommendation on the stock to "buy" from "hold". A Jefferies downgrade to "underperform" from "buy"



LONDON: This file photo shows a man passing a Lloyds logo outside the entrance to an office of Lloyds Banking Group in the City of London. — AFP

weighed on pharma stock Hikma, which dropped 2.6 percent.

Jefferies equity analyst James Vane-Tempest cited the recent delay in US approval for Hikma's generic drug Advair. Results also weighed on British Land, falling 3 percent and on track for its biggest one-day loss in four months after issuing a cautious outlook for the property market due

to Brexit uncertainty. Peers Land Securities Group and Intu Properties also fell. Outside of the blue chips, well-received full-year results from Sophos helped the network security firm hit a fresh lifetime high, up 8.6 percent. The stock has been in demand in the wake of a global 'ransomware' attack, boosting shares in cyber security firms. — Reuters

TARGET PROFIT RISES, THOUGH A KEY SALES MEASURE FALLS

NEW YORK: Target's first-quarter profit rose almost 8 percent as attempts to turn its business around appear to be gaining some traction. Sales at established stores fell for the fourth consecutive quarter, but the decline was less than expected, and online sales surged 22 percent. While the good pieces of news sent shares up more than 2 percent in midday trading yesterday, CEO Brian Cornell still needs to find a way for Target to thrive in the face of intense pressure from Amazon and Wal-Mart. One of Target's key problems is that customer traffic declines extended into the first quarter and the amount shoppers put in their baskets also dropped.

And Target also is still struggling with groceries and essentials, which drive shoppers to the store. "While we are pleased that our first-quarter financial performance was better than expectations, our results are not where we want them to be and we have much more work to do," Cornell told investors. He noted that results have been volatile week to week since Christmas. Facing those challenges, Target had announced plans in February to remodel more than a third of its 1,800 stores over the next three years, speed up its expansion of small-format stores, bolster online operations, and launch new brands.

The company will also use stores as local distribution hubs - using the backroom storage areas to also house goods bought online directly to homes, or held there to be picked up by shoppers. Target is now using about 1,000 stores for direct shipping in a bid to match Amazon's free, two-day delivery available to its Prime customers. With those measures in place, Target said it expects profits to start growing again in 2019 after taking a hit of \$1 billion this year. Cornell had said Target wants to return to more consistent low prices on essentials to deepen loyalty among shoppers, a shift from the temporary discounts it had been promoting.

That might look like it's taking a page from Wal-Mart's playbook. But Cornell said Target is focusing on exclusive brands and the experience customers have in stores as well. Target said it launched a new ad cam-

paign focused its convenient and low-price assortment of everyday items late in the first quarter. All traditional stores have struggled as Amazon and other online retailers draw shoppers away. Under Cornell, Target had cut costs, revitalized its fashion and home decor sections, tested smaller formats, and expanded online services. But Cornell found those efforts were not paying off.

As Target works to rebuild, Wal-Mart is expected to post another quarter of higher customer traffic and increased same-store sales today as its efforts to merge online sales with its vast number of stores click. Wal-Mart had warned in 2015 that stepped-up investments in stores and in its employees would hurt profits. Those investments appear to be paying off. Traffic and sales are solid at stores as a renewed emphasis on low prices has lured shoppers back. Target said it's been seeing significant market share gains across clothing, including women's, children's and swimwear.

And Cornell told reporters that Target is benefiting from other companies closing stores. He estimates that \$45 billion to \$60 billion in sales are up for grabs. The company is also testing a program called Restock that lets its REDcard customers order household essentials like laundry detergent, paper towels and peanut butter and have them delivered to their homes the next day. The service, being tested with employees for now, is similar to Amazon Pantry. It will be expanded to customers in the Minneapolis area this summer.

Target had quietly raised its free shipping threshold to \$35 from \$25 this month, going in the opposite direction of Wal-Mart and Amazon. For the quarter ended April 29, Target earned \$681 million or \$1.23 per share. Adjusted earnings came to \$1.21 per share, well above the 91 cents per share that Wall Street had expected according to FactSet. Revenue fell 1.1 percent to \$16.02 billion, but still beat analyst projections of \$15.62 billion. Comparable-store sales fell 1.3 percent, but that was better than the 3.7 percent decline analysts had expected. Target shares gained \$1.15 to \$55.67, but they're still down more than 24 percent for the year. —AP

UKRAINE PUTS BRAKES ON CORRUPTION BILL ANGERING WEST

KIEV: Ukraine's lawmakers yesterday put the brakes on a bill that has triggered concern from its Western allies for hampering anti-corruption efforts in the graft-riddled former Soviet republic. The decision to rework a bill critics said was meant to protect top politicians and powerful business tycoons was made as an International Monetary Fund team met with Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman in Kiev.

The National Anticorruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) has been highlighted by the IMF as a shining example of Kiev's commitment to pursue fundamental changes demanded by pro-EU protesters who ousted a Russian-backed regime in 2014. But NABU has faced stiff resistance since its launch in December 2015 from embedded institutions such as the general prosecutor's office and the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU).

Analysts view both as controlled by vested interests and incapable of leading independent probes into the financial misdeeds of the upper echelons of power.

The criticized bill would have allowed either prosecutors or the SBU to take over a case from the NABU and then effectively shut it down. The proposal drew a stern rebuke from the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations. Italian ambassador Davide La Cecilia tweeted Monday that the G7 was "concerned about the substance" of the proposed legislation and the "risk to the fight against corruption".

The IMF team is meeting Groysman to check on his willingness to both stamp out corruption that brought down a government last year and pursue belt-tightening policy guidelines set in Ukraine's \$17.5 billion (15.7 billion euro) rescue

package. The first among these involves an overhaul of its budget-draining pension system. IMF mission chief Ron van Rooden said last month that Ukraine's safety net for retirees was unsustainable because it supported nearly a third of the population.

Groysman lacks the political capital to push an overwhelmingly unpopular increase in the retirement age through parliament. But Van Rooden has suggested reducing the number of pensioners by limiting early retirements. He added that the system could be filled with more money by targeting companies and enterprises that avoid paying the pension tax. Groysman unveiled his first pension reform plan yesterday that he was due to discuss with the visiting IMF team. The prime minister provided few immediately details about his proposal. — AFP

WHAT'S YOUR PAST SALARY? LAWMAKERS BAN THE QUESTION

NEW YORK: An awkward job interview question - how much did you make at your last job? - is getting banned in some parts of the country. Massachusetts, New York City and Philadelphia have passed laws that bar employers from asking applicants about their salary history. And several states, including California, Mississippi and Pennsylvania, have proposed similar legislation this year. Supporters say the bans are one way to help close the wage gap between men and women.

Some business advocates, however, say the bans hurt companies that use salary histories to help them set wages. Either way, employment lawyers say the bans may spread. "I would not be surprised if we see other states and cities consider it," says Christine Hendrickson, an employment lawyer at Seyfarth Shaw in Chicago. Here's what you need to know:

When do the laws take effect?

Massachusetts' law is set to go into effect in July of 2018. New York City's ban takes effect in November. Philadelphia's ban was supposed to go into effect May 23, but a judge has temporarily halted it after the city's Chamber of Commerce filed a lawsuit opposing it. The laws block employers from asking applicants about salary history in interviews or on applications. Job applicants can still provide their past pay on their own. And employers may ask applicants what salary range they expect in the role, says Regina E Faul, an employment lawyer and partner at Phillips Nizer in New York.

Lawmakers say asking about salary history continues the cycle of pay inequality,

keeping a woman from getting higher pay at a new job if she reveals her past salary. Letitia James, who authored New York's law and is the city's public advocate, said the ban ensures that "being underpaid once does not condemn anyone to a lifetime of inequity." Job applicants can report those employers, and they may be fined or even face jail time. In New York, the fine can be as much as \$250,000. In Philadelphia, it's \$2,000 per violation, plus 90 days in jail for repeat offenses.

Response from business community

The Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia, which represents about 600,000 businesses, sued the city over the ban last month arguing that it violates employers' free speech rights and makes it harder for companies to set wages and attract top talent. The lawsuit says employers use wage history to identify which job applicants it can or can't afford and helps businesses figure out what the comparable salary is for a certain job.

Locations considering ban

This year, at least 21 states and Washington DC have proposed legislation that would prohibit salary history questions, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. The states are: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Maryland, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, Vermont and Washington. Others may join in. "There's probably going to be a trend toward this," says Faul. —AP

TUSK SAYS EU WANTS SAFEGUARDS AGAINST TRADE DUMPING BY UK

STRASBOURG, France: Any trade deal linking the EU and Britain after Brexit will require guarantees against "unfair competition" by the UK, EU Council President Donald Tusk said yesterday. With tensions high as next month's Brexit talks approach, Britain has said it will fight back if the EU will not strike an acceptable exit deal. This has sparked fears in Brussels that London would attempt to undercut EU regulations after the divorce on a range of issues if talks turn sour.

"The UK must be aware that any free trade agreement will have to ensure a level playing field and encompass safeguards against unfair competitive advantages," Tusk told MEPs at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. This guarantee would involve a wide range of matters, including "tax, social, environmental and regulatory measures and practices," Tusk said. Negotiations on a trade deal are not expected until talks on the fate of the millions EU citizens and Britain's exit bill have made "sufficient progress".

Tusk hailed the EU's remaining 27 members who "have been united, consistent and have demonstrated solidarity with one another since the Brexit referendum last June." The Brexit negotiation "is now in the hands of our capable divorce lawyers," said European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker, who also addressed MEPs, in reference to the EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier. "I want to wish him luck as I know he will leave nothing to chance," Juncker said. — AFP



FRANCE: European Council President Donald Tusk speaks during a debate on the conclusions of the last European Council, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France. — AFP

WORLD'S RICH CONFIDENT THEY CAN SCALE WALL OF GLOBAL RISK

LONDON: The global economic, financial and political landscape has never been shakier, but the world's rich are confident they can steer through the fog of uncertainty in the coming year "without so much as a dent in their finances", a survey showed yesterday. The findings of UBS Wealth Management's survey of more than 2,800 millionaires in seven countries show a high degree of worry about the global financial system on the one hand, and supreme self-confidence and optimism on the other.

Some 82 percent of those surveyed said this is the most unpredictable period in history. More than a quarter are reviewing their investments and almost half said they intend to but haven't yet done so. But more than three quarters (77 pct) believe they can "accurately assess financial risk arising from uncertain events", while 51 percent expect their finances to improve over the coming year compared with 13 percent who expect them to deteriorate.

More than half (57 pct) are optimistic about achieving their long-term goals, compared with 11 percent who are pessimistic. And an overwhelming 86 percent trust their own instincts when making important decisions. "Most millionaires seem to be confident they can steer

their way through the turbulence without so much as a dent in their finances," UBS WM said.

"They identify economic and financial risks as their big concerns and they have serious doubts about the world's corporate and financial system. And yet, they stride into the future with assurance," the report said. Among the other findings, 68 percent say they suffer from "information overload" as they make their investment decisions, and nearly three quarters (72 pct) say short-term distractions get in the way of their financial plans. Still, the report highlighted some aspects of their investment behavior that could ultimately work against them.

For instance, 75 percent of those surveyed see cash as a safe option, "even though it will perform poorly compared with other asset classes in the context of rising inflation." Perhaps surprisingly, younger millionaires are more risk-averse than their older peers. Nearly half of the 18-34 year old group are less willing to take risks after the financial crisis, compared to less than 30 percent of the over-65 bracket. The study surveyed 2,842 millionaires, with investable assets of at least \$1 million, in Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Mexico, Italy, Switzerland and Britain. — Reuters

CONCERNS OVER TRUMP DENT STOCKS, DOLLAR

LONDON: Concern that US President Donald Trump's reform agenda could be slowed down, and that Trump himself could even face the threat of impeachment, added to disappointing US economic data yesterday to hit the dollar and spur a pullback from richly valued stocks.

This follows a week of turmoil at the White House after Trump fired Comey and then discussed sensitive national security information about Islamic State with Russian

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. So far, broadly upbeat global growth has underpinned risky assets and supported the multi-year lows in measures of market volatility.

"The Trump issue seems to come in waves, and now we have another wave," said Hans Peterson, global head of asset allocation, at SEB Investments. "I have been asked if he is going to be impeached. I think that is the type of discussion some (investors) are

having," Peterson said, pointing out that institutional clients are turning cautious. US stock futures were off 0.5 percent, though they were still close to record highs.

More attractively valued European stocks slipped slightly, although the region's brighter economic outlook and better-than-expected corporate profits continue to draw investors.

ment borrowing costs to its tightest level in over six months. This has started to partly reverse a trend that began during the euro zone debt crisis of 2011/2012, where the single currency bloc and the United States' economic paths appeared to diverge.

This reversal was also evident in currency markets, with the euro climbing to its highest since Nov 7 - just before the US presidential election - against the dollar.

set the stage for a strong 2017. "At the moment everyone is focusing on the political relief in Europe and the political unrest in the US," ING's senior rates strategist Martin van Vliet said.

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Wednesday 17 May 2017. Table with columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low, Volume, Value (KWD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes sections for Oil & Gas, Basic Materials, Industrial, Consumer Goods, Health Care, Telecommunications, Banks, Investment Instruments, and Parallel Market.



TOKYO: A man uses a mobile phone in front of an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm in Tokyo, yesterday. —AP

TENCENT NET PROFITS UP 58% IN Q1, TO BEAT ESTIMATES

HONG KONG: Chinese technology giant Tencent yesterday reported first quarter results which exceeded expectations, helped by robust revenues from its hit mobile games. Its overall revenue jumped 55 percent to 49.55 billion yuan year-on-year, while net profit was up 58 percent at 14.48 billion yuan.

Tencent also operates China's biggest messaging service WeChat through which a variety of businesses including gaming,

advertising and social networking have flourished in recent years. Monthly active users for WeChat reached 938 million for the quarter, a year-on-year growth of 23 percent.

Russia's telecoms watchdog said the messaging service "did not provide its contact information for the register of information distribution organizations".

Revenue from its smartphone games achieved 12.9 billion yuan (\$1.88 billion) alone in the first quarter, a 57 percent year-on-year growth.



WOLFSBURG: In this file photo Matthias Mueller, CEO of Volkswagen, looks up as he arrives for a press conference of the German Volkswagen company in Wolfsburg, Germany. —AP

VOLKSWAGEN CEO FACES PROBE OVER 'DIESELGATE'

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Volkswagen chief executive Matthias Mueller yesterday stood in the focus of an investigation into the world's largest carmaker's 'dieselgate' scandal for the first time, along with other key players at the firm.

Porsche SE, separate from VW subsidiary Porsche AG, is a holding company with a majority stake in Volkswagen, and is itself owned by the descendants of renowned VW Beetle inventor Ferdinand Porsche.

before the revelations, making him a target for the present allegations. "Porsche SE sees the accusations raised as unfounded. It believes that it has always fulfilled its duties of publication under capital markets law in an orderly fashion," the firm countered in a statement Wednesday.

Litany of legal woes Investigators opened the latest dossier in February, in response to charges leveled by German financial supervisor BaFin in summer 2016.

Winterkorn has always insisted that he knew nothing about the diesel cheating, but stepped down following the firm's admission that it had taken place.



AN AMAZING GS4 BY GAC EXPERIENCE

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The GS4 by GAC is an SUV that can change your thinking about Chinese-made vehicles. The car can withstand all weather conditions, its performance is superb and its engineering and design are top-notch. The GS4 is equipped with an automatic start-up button, and when the engine starts, the car won't budge if the driver hasn't fastened their seatbelt. The GS4's air-conditioning performs strongly despite the harsh weather.

The GS4 is installed with an LCD dashboard screen to monitor all activities in the car. It has a direct tire monitoring system, GPS voice navigation, six airbags and rear sensors. The GS4 is elegantly and fashionably designed according to current trends and fashion. The GS4 is not only elegant exteriorly, but is has a spacious interior, giving a relaxing and quiet sensation to passengers.

The car is built in China with parts from the world's finest auto suppliers. Bumpers (rear and front) are by Visteon in the US, vehicle wiring harness and switches from Delphi (US), window lifters from Magna (Canada), hydraulic power system, brakes, airbags and seatbelts from TRW (US), the front brakes, anti-theft system and remote control systems are from Continental in Germany, automatic transmission from Aisin (Japan), dashboards from Johnson Controls in the US, electronic stability program, engine management system and fuel injection from Bosch (Germany) and air-conditioning from Denso (Japan).

The GS4 is equipped with technology comparable to well-known brands, with low power consumption and unprecedented steering control. The engine used in this car is a second generation 200T (Turbo) plus seven-speed G-DCT, equipped with GCCS technology and start-stop technology from Germany's Bosch. The steering system is handy and accurate at high speeds. The level of efficiency is as high as 90 percent, which is able to provide the best power for all driving conditions, making it the pride of the GS4, along with the high-performance disc brake system.

The GS4's price tag of KD 4,750 is not expensive, considering its quality and features. The GS4 is the cheapest compared to vehicles having the same features, but with triple the price. The overall experience test-driving the car was an amazing one.



HONDA ADDS FIVE-DOOR CIVIC HATCHBACK FOR 2017

Honda has brought its first five-door Civic hatchback to the US from England, and it comes with a turbocharged four-cylinder engine, the passenger room of a sedan and SUV-like cargo space. The 2017 Civic hatchback has value-priced LX and Sport models, with a starting manufacturer's suggested retail price, including destination charge, of \$20,575 for a base LX with manual transmission. The lowest starting retail price for a Civic hatchback with a continuously variable transmission (CVT) that the driver operates like an automatic is \$21,375.

The engine, generating up to 180 horsepower, is fuel efficient, too, helping the new Civic attain US government fuel economy ratings as high as 31 miles per

gallon in city driving and 40 mpg on highways. Those are better mileage ratings than the smaller, 2017 Chevrolet Spark gasoline-powered hatchback and Fiat 500. The US government also reports the Civic hatchback earned five out of five stars for occupant protection in both frontal and side crash tests. The hatchback's low-to-the-ground body helped achieve five out of five stars for rollover protection, too.

Consumer Reports magazine lists the 2017 Civic, across all body styles which include a sedan and coupe, as one out of five for reliability. The hatchback is a halved model at Honda. The first Honda the company sold in the US was a diminutive, N600 hatchback in 1969 followed by a fuel-thrifty, three-door Civic hatchback in 1972.

Over the years, Civic hatchbacks developed into some memorable, three-door "pocket rockets" that combined small size, lightweight design and spunky power.

Officially, Honda hasn't sold a five-door Civic hatchback in the US until now, though Honda did sell a utilitarian, Civic five door in the 1980s that it called a wagon. Today's Civic hatchback combines most of the interior space of the current Civic four-door sedan with the cargo room buyers expect from the latest small SUVs. The Civic has so much room that the US government classifies it as a "large car." In the front seats, there's a generous 42.3 inches of legroom - the same that's in the Civic sedan.

Rear-seat passengers have 36 inches of

legroom, which is 1.4 inches less than in the sedan. Headroom of 39.3 inches in the front seat is identical to that of the sedan's, with the hatchback's rear-seat headroom shaved just 0.3 inch. The real difference is the cargo space behind the rear seats, which offers 25.7 cubic feet of room, compared with the sedan's 15.1-cubic-foot trunk. The total cargo space in the hatchback grows to 46.2 cubic feet when the back seats are folded.

That's 85 percent of the cargo space found in the back of a Kia Niro small SUV, and the Civic doesn't require a large lift to get items into the car. The test Civic Sport model was surprisingly nimble and composed in its ride. The Sport model wears sizable, 18-inch tires that gripped the

pavement well. Stabilizer bars front and rear, plus a suspension specially tuned for fun, made driving enjoyable. The ride was taut and quite controlled but not overly tight or rough. The electric power steering earned nods of approval for its quick, yet stable response.

The 1.5-liter, double overhead cam, turbocharged, direct-injected four cylinder made the hatchback lively, thanks to 167 foot-pounds of torque coming on by a low, 1,800 rpm. The six-speed manual transmission in the test car was a satisfying shifter. Even with aggressive driving, the test car averaged the government's 33-mpg rating for combined city/highway travel. This was enough for 408 miles of travel on a single, 12.39-gallon tank of gasoline. — AP



KUWAIT AIRWAYS CUTTING OVER TO AMADEUS INVENTORY

KUWAIT CITY: After nine months of preparation, data-transfers, operations and staff training, testing (and re-testing), Kuwait Airways has announced that on Friday May 19 (tomorrow), it will implement its cut-over to the world-leading, Amadeus Altea Suite - for its new inventory, reservations, ticketing and loyalty systems. According to Kuwait Airways' Director of IT and Project Director for the Amadeus Implementation, Abdulmunim Abdulsalam, the cut-over represents a "revolution" in the way the airline will be able to interact with its passengers, customers, as well as its business and travel industry partners.

"The Amadeus Altea Suite is a comprehensive Passenger Service System (PSS) that will simplify and enhance all online and face to face business interactions between Kuwait Airways and our customers," says Abdulsalam. "The project has been divided into two phases: the first being the Inventory Reservations, Ticketing and Loyalty system, which we will cut-over to on the night of 19-20 May; The second being the Departure Control System (DCS), which will be introduced from June onwards, starting with Kuwait Airways domestic and international stations," Abdulsalam continued.

"While the implementation process has been a huge undertaking, it is a once in a generation exercise that was necessary for Kuwait Airways to undertake, so that we can compete effectively in the modern aviation business environment," Abdulsalam added.

Kuwait Airways has stated that customers should be aware that the cut-over process may cause some temporary interruptions to its reservation services. In order to minimize disruption, Kuwait Airways suggests customers avoid using its reservation services between the hours of 7 pm, tomorrow, and 6 am, on May 20.

Kuwait Airways has also confirmed that it will be using its social media platforms to inform the general public about the cut-over, but has stressed that these channels will provide information updates and will not act as a substitute for reservation services, during the system's down-time. "Amadeus Altea provides airlines around the world with a springboard to growth through cutting edge technology, supported by our deep understanding of the airline business," says Maher Koubaa, Vice President, Head of Airline Group, Middle East and Africa at Amadeus.

"We have been working side by side with Kuwait Airways as a business partner to ensure a timely and effective implementation, adapted to the unique needs of the airline. There is a lot to look forward to as we continue to work together to realise the airline's transformation strategy, supported by the complete suite of Altea solutions," Koubaa added. From the commercial perspective, it is claimed that the introduction of the Amadeus Altea Suite will be an effective tool to optimize sales, revenue generation and growth - across multiple distribution channels.

'CHAEBOL SNIPER' BECOMES S KOREA'S ANTI-TRUST CHIEF

PRESIDENT MOON TO BRING BUSINESS POWERHOUSES TO HEEL

SEOUL: An activist economist renowned for his relentless campaign to reform South Korea's scandal-mired business conglomerates such as Samsung was appointed yesterday as the head of the country's powerful anti-trust regulator. Kim Sang-Jo, nicknamed "chaebol sniper" for his sharp criticism of the family-controlled empires, was named as chairman of the Fair Trade Commission (FTC), indicating that President Moon Jae-In plans to make good on election promises to bring the business powerhouses to heel after a string of corruption cases.

"The country's economy has lost much of its past dynamism," Kim told journalists after his appointment was announced. "One of the main reasons is that markets are not fair. I'll do my best to restore a fair market so that every economic player can achieve their full potential," he said. The likes of Samsung and Hyundai, sprawling family-led conglomerates known as "chaebols", were crucial to the South's rapid economic transformation in the 1960s and 70s from the ruins of war.

But they have also turned into objects of public scorn, accused of choking off innovation and engaging in corrupt business practices to ensure the families retain control of their empires. Cozy ties between chaebols and the political elite were exposed by a high-profile scandal that brought down Moon's predecessor



SEOUL: Kim Sang-jo, an economist, talks with reporters after a press conference at the presidential Blue House in Seoul, South Korea yesterday. — AP

Park Geun-Hye, who was sacked in March. Centre-leftist Moon has vowed to bolster the FTC in order to monitor the chaebols and step up measures to stop them exploiting small businesses and subcontractors.

On the campaign trail he vowed to squeeze the four biggest conglomerates-Samsung, Hyundai, SK and LG-labelling them "obstacles to economic growth". Moon also suggested he would revive the FTC's investigation bureau, scrapped in 2005 in a move towards deregulation. Among the casualties in the Park scandal was detained Samsung heir Lee Jae-Yong, who has been put on trial for allegedly bribing Park's secret confidante in exchange for government favors-including state approval for a controversial merger of two Samsung units seen as a key step to ensure a smooth transfer of power to him. Chaebol reform has been pledged many times before-even by Park, and by Moon's own party-but without tangible success. But analysts say there is more momentum for change now, after millions of people took to the streets to demand Park's removal, many of them also targeting the chaebols. Kim previously told journalists that a Moon government would introduce reforms to make corporate governance more transparent and better protect minority shareholders' rights. — AFP

AUB MAKES A CUSTOMERS' DREAM COME TRUE WITH KD 250,000 GRAND PRIZE

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank recently conducted its Al-Hassad-Islamic account weekly draw, Kuwait's leading Shari'ah compliant rewards program that offers a broad range of prizes to the largest number of winners, yesterday. The account provides 26 weekly prizes that are comprised of KD 25,000 as a grand prize and 25 other prizes valued at KD 1,000 each. AUB also offers four quarterly prizes that are valued at KD 250,000 to each winner allowing them to achieve their dreams of travelling, studying abroad, or owning their dream home or car.

On this occasion Ahli United Bank announced, "With this draw, we are adding 26 new winners and prizes to the Al-Hassad Islamic account whereby, the total number of winners annually will include more than 1300. The weekly grand prize winner of KD 25,000 was Mohammad Abdullah Ali Al-Khandari. 25 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 namely: Shahenaz Akbar Haidar Mohammad, Renee Rashed Lotfi Lutgallah, Yousef Mohd Saleeh



Yousef Behbehani, Mohammad Hamad Yousef Al-Yousef, Bader Ali Abdullah Sarkhouh, Huwaida Mohammad Al-Shaikh Saleh Salem, Khaled Mohammad Hasan Malak Aal Haid, Reem E H Al-Husain, Hameed Husain Mohd Dashti, Basima Ghanim Jaber Ali, Mohammad Sahoud Suwailem Al-Ruwaili, Ismaeil Abd Alhussain Ali Al-Zankawi, Hanan Haji Khadeer Hajiah, Yousef Ahmad Yousef Al-Mailam, Basem Abdulrahman Al-Megharbel, Abd Alkhdhar Abdullah Ali Albuloushi, Loulwah Saud Abdullah Al-Kandari, Faeqah Ahmed Yousif Al-Mahameed, Wedad Abdulla Darwish Abdulla, Hameeda Hameed

Khalil Al-Halawachi, Shubbar Mohsen Sharaf, Jalilah Sayed Habib Saleh Al-Arabi, Yaser Ali Abdulwahab Mohd, Fatima Ahmed Abdulla Al-Safi and Khalid Khamis Hussain Khamis.

Ahli United Bank added, "There are increased opportunities that await our current customers and those who are interested in opening an Al-Hassad Islamic account to benefit from the wide range of prizes and opportunities offered this year." Individual customers can open their accounts with a minimum deposit of KD 100, qualifying them to enter the draw.

For every KD 50 deposited in the account, customers are given one chance to enter the quarterly draw. They must have held the minimum deposit requirement for at least two weeks prior to the draw date. The more deposits made, the higher the chances of winning on a weekly basis. Al-Hassad Islamic account's customers in Kuwait and Bahrain are eligible to participate in the draw in line with the program's terms and conditions.

WARBA BANK AWARDED AS 'FAST GROWING BANK IN KUWAIT' 2017

KUWAIT: For the third time in a row, Warba Bank, the fastest growing bank in the corporate and investment sectors, has been awarded the 'Fastest Growing Bank in Kuwait' award for 2017 by Banker Middle East magazine - one of the most credible magazines in banking rating. This new achievement is an addition to the bank's series of achievements which establishes it as one of the leading institutions in the Islamic banking industry, supports its successes, and enhances its market share.

The representatives of the bank received the award at the award ceremony held on May 11 at Emirates Towers Hotel in Dubai, in the presence of a select group of businessmen and economic sector leaders. The awarding magazine is specialized in analyzing and providing comprehensive information about the global finance community in a precise, simple and easy-to-understand way. The awards are based on the vote of readers and users of their website, a range of decision-makers in the business and finance community.

It is a key reference that sheds light on market changes, giving its readers a clear idea of the complex economic processes taking place in the global business community. The Award is based on comparing the bank with its peers in terms of the turnaround time, net profit, assets, volume of deposits, total revenue, and turnaround in return on assets and equity. As a result, Warba Bank was chosen by the magazine to receive the 'Fastest Growing Bank in Kuwait' award for 2017, given its recent successes that granted it honorable growth.

In its selection, the magazine focused on growth benchmarks in the bank's various operations, particularly the fact that it has achieved net profits of KD 2,575M by the end of 2016, with a growth percentage of 160 percent, its assets growth is 45 percent reaching KD 1.1B, and its return on investment growth is 43 percent reaching KD

37.5M. Other criteria have helped the bank win these awards, including the range of services, products, and banking solutions as well as the unique and exclusive digital services that Warba Bank is keen on delivering so as to meet customers' expectations and satisfy their needs.

Commenting on being awarded such prize, Shaheen Hamad Al-Ghanem, the Bank's CEO said, "We are proud to have won the 'Fastest Growing Bank in Kuwait' award for 2017 from Banker Middle East magazine for the third time.

This serves as a solid proof of the bank's fast pace of growth and the effectiveness of its strategy which aims to establish the bank as a leading Islamic bank in the field of corporate banking and banking services for investments in Kuwait, in addition to providing advanced digital services for individuals."

Al-Ghanem Added, "That repeated success reflects the bank's recent successes and the solid foundation of its operations, which are based on in-depth studies of market needs. We continue our development approach and expansion plan at all levels, including targeted operations and investments, in addition to geographical expansion in order to reach all our customers across Kuwait so as to make Warba Bank the first choice for customers who want the best Shari'ah-compliant banking services, the best quality banking solutions, and the most promising investment opportunities."

Al-Ghanem concluded by pointing out that Warba Bank, in the first quarter of 2017, achieved a net profit of KD 1.3M - four times more than what was achieved during the same period last year. This confirms that Warba bank today competes with a high-level of professionalism and does not hesitate to inject investments necessary to diversify its investment portfolio, and aims to provide a viable and stable return for investors and quality banking services.



Shaheen Al-Ghanem

ICELAND'S CENTRAL BANK CUTS RATES TO TAME CURRENCY

REYKJAVIK: Iceland yesterday announced a quarter-point cut in interest rates to curb the growing strength of its national currency, buoyed by booming tourism, and to stimulate inflation. The Central Bank of Iceland said interest rates would be lowered to 4.75 percent as it faces the dilemma of a strong economic growth and the rising Icelandic krona.

The stronger currency pushes down the prices of imported goods and exerts downward pressure on the overall inflation rate. "The outlook is for a strong rise in gross domestic product (GDP) this year," the bank's Monetary Policy Committee said in a statement. The central bank raised its full-year growth forecast for 2017 forecast by one full percentage point to 6.3 percent. Iceland posted in 2016 one of the fastest growth rates in the world, with GDP expanding by 7.2 percent. It also began to suffer from a certain shortage of labor. "Demand pressures in the labor market and the general economy have therefore grown despite increased importation of labor and strong productivity growth," the central bank said. The country is experiencing full employment, with an unemployment rate expected to stabilize at 2.6 percent this year. The central bank has intervened less in the foreign exchange market as it recognizes some advantages in the appreciation of the national currency.

"The krona has played a key role in the economy's adjustment to positive shocks deriving from improved terms of trade and growth in the tourism sector," it said. But inflation remains low overall with two "contradictory forces" - a sharp rise in house prices, in a country of 340,000 inhabitants expecting 2.2 to 2.3 million visitors this year, and stagnation or a drop in other prices. "Inflation measured 1.9 percent in April, broadly similar to the level in the past six months. Underlying inflation appears to have declined in recent months, however," the central bank added. — AFP



Iceland's Central Bank logo on the wall of the bank's main building in Reykjavik.

CHINA'S BANKING REGULATOR TO STEP UP PROTECTION AFTER CYBER ATTACK

BEIJING: China's banking regulator said yesterday it will strengthen cyber security protection at banks to prevent "disruptive systemic risk events" after the global WannaCry "ransomware" attack infected more than 300,000 computers in 150 countries. The China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) said in an emailed statement it has not received any major infection reports from the country's banks on the cyber attack. The attack had infected close to 30,000 Chinese organizations by Saturday evening, Chinese security software maker Qihoo said.

But the spread of the WannaCry worm in the country appeared less aggressive than initially feared, said an official at China's cyber administrator. CBRC also pledged to increase its own cyber security management and risk prevention capabilities, and guide banks to conduct monitoring, assessment, early warning and prevention for similar events. China is preparing to enforce a wide-reaching cyber security law that U.S. business groups say will threaten the operations of foreign firms in the country with strict local data storage laws and stringent surveillance requirements. — Reuters

EHDF MAKES STRONG INROADS IN SECURITY MANAGEMENT

DUBAI: eHosting DataFort (eHDF), the region's leading Managed Hosting and Cloud infrastructure services provider, recently launched its Cyber Defense Centre (CDC) in Dubai Internet City. The CDC comes at a crucial time when organizations in the Middle East are faced with advanced and persistent security threats.

"eHDF's CDC deploys advanced security intelligence and automation tools to help identify threats more quickly and with greater accuracy and precision. Our CDC teams deliver threat hunting services using a combination of Threat Intelligence and end point technologies that allow us to detect more complex threats that may be dormant in a customer's environment," said, Yasser Zeineldin, CEO, eHosting DataFort.

The CDC services assist customers in the complete security life cycle, which starts with log collection, network access control, advanced sandboxing, remediation and incident response. Incident management offers a single dashboard of a customer's security posture, attacks, and incidents. In addition, the unique OPEX based approach allows eHDF to pass on tangible cost benefits to customers planning to enhance their security posture.

Replacing the need for capital investments, through eHDF's, OPEX model, customers eliminate the need for lengthy evaluation and procurement cycles and enjoy ongoing flexible monthly based payment plans. Another key component of the CDC is to focus on customer shaving distributed



Yasser Zeineldin, left, and Jeff Ogden

workloads which could be hosted either On-premise, Public Cloud or a locally hosted Data Centre. In these situations, we are able to provide customers with end-to-end visibility of their infrastructure and protection of their information assets regardless of their location.

eHDF recently launched Real Time Threat

Monitoring (RTTM) services which collects and directs customer data to the Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) solution. The data is then analysed by experts, and based on findings, customers are appraised of and provided with short and long term remedial solutions. The CDC offers the SIEM platform on a pay-as-you-go-ser-

vice model, for companies who have not invested on this technology.

Simultaneously, for customers who have already invested in SIEM, eHDF provides on-premise Remote Monitoring Security Services (RMSS). "Security is a key focus area for most enterprises today. In fact, many of our customers have shown interest in Managed Security Services and this led us to launch the CDC. Our CDC is manned 24x7 by a highly qualified team of security experts. As a leading Managed Services Provider in the UAE, the launch of the CDC was a natural extension of our services and we aim to serve customers from Government, media, construction and real estate, electronics and communications, banking and finance, automotive and retail sectors," added Zeineldin.

The Middle East has been experiencing increased number of ransomware attacks in 2016 and variants of these threats are already growing at a rapid rate in 2017. Our pro-active security intelligence allows us to detect and analyse new threats and build the appropriate controls for our customers. "Our existing managed services portfolio already covers DDoS, firewall management, web application protection services, etc. With the CDC, we will be able to offer proactive monitoring services and our dedicated team of security specialists within the CDC will provide timely identification of threats and adequate remedial measures to meet the customer requirements," concluded, Zeineldin.

KFH'S SROOD SHERIF ON THE FUTURE OF BANKING

By Aakash Bakaya

Kuwait Times got an inside look at the latest technological happenings and trends transforming our world during the DELL/EMC World global conference which took place in Las Vegas from May 8-11. Over the coming days, we'll be providing an in-depth look at all the new announcements during the event. Here, Kuwait Times got in touch with Srood Sherif, the Chief Information Officer for Kuwait Finance House. He spoke about the recent hacking attempt that plagued Kuwait's financial institutions, digitizing the customer experience and the future of banking.

KT: Where do you see mobile banking a couple years down the line? How do you see customer integration and experience improving?

Sherif: We are working on several initiatives, mobile banking is obviously going to progress. For example we are working on depositing cash cheques directly from your mobile device. In our subsidiary in Malaysia we are implementing a new mobile banking system and we are doing the same in Bahrain with internet banking. The world is only going to be more mobile and as I mentioned earlier at the press conference, it's best for companies to stay up-to-date with technology rather than playing catch up or being left behind.

KT: So how advanced do you think mobile banking will get? Do you think we will eventually see customers won't even have to go to the bank?

Sherif: Most definitely. Realistically, some customers will still be more comfortable communicating their needs to a person rather than a machine. When you look back to when ATMs first came out, their pickup rate was a bit slow. But now everybody understands how it works and even takes it complexities for granted as they expect the machine to be there and for them to receive their money.

Five years from now, nobody can accurately say what technologies will come up. Things move in a monthly basis from a technology point of view. So I'm sure mobile banking will slowly take more customers out of the branches and that's why we are embarking on a digital transformation for the group as a whole. So that we can get it and provide for our customers

just as they are looking for something to satisfy their mobile banking needs.

KT: During the press conference you brought up the recent hacking attempt on several of Kuwait's major banks, as CIO what do you think KFH and other financial institutions learnt from that event?

Sherif: After the hack, many of them had actually come to us (KFH) to ask for advice because we were the least affected by the attempt. One of the main precautions we took was moving the SOC (Security Operations Centre) into a 24x7 operation and we began actively monitoring our subsidiaries in Malaysia, Turkey and Bahrain to have all the latest tools. We also get specialists to provide 'health checks' on our systems on regular basis and we changed the provider and went for DELL Secure Works. For us, it's always better to have a third eye rather than be 100% happy with what you already have. I'm sure all the banks are doing the same.

The Central Bank had taken initiative after the hacking and actually called all the CIOs and had a cybersecurity assessment. They brought in some consultants and to decide the security framework for which all banks have to follow. This is sure to improve the all-round security features in every bank around the country.

KT: Finally, can you tell us about your experience with DELL/EMC?

My experience with EMC has been quite long, I believe I worked with them for 17 years. My work experience with DELL on the other hand is quite new as I came on board after the acquisition. EMC was known for customer focus and CEO Michael Dell has proved time and again that he too is heavily focused on the needs of the customers. He actually came and visited us concerning the MENA region just a few weeks ago.

With that perspective, we went on with a major assignment which Central Bank had mandated. It was a CCTV project and we got 450 DELL servers, 12 petabytes of DELL storage and at the same time we used our own Isilon storage platform which is also part of the DELL/EMC project. So far it's been very positive. I can speak for my company and say we are quite happy with relationship and optimistically look forward to developing and continuing it in the future.



CISCO ENCOURAGES FEMALE STUDENTS TO PURSUE CAREERS IN TECHNOLOGY

DUBAI: Cisco hosted its annual Girls Power Tech event at its Dubai office, where more than 60 female students from several schools had the opportunity to interact with technology professionals, Cisco executives, other women role models and peers. Aligned with the UN's global Goals in ICT Day, Cisco's Girls Power Tech is held annually and offers a special learning opportunity for female students to connect with Cisco and other mentors on-site at Cisco offices around the world.

Cisco's Girls Power Tech is a global mentoring initiative that empowers and encourages girls and young women to consider educational and career paths in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and technology. The UAE version of the event included a number of engaging activities, including inspirational talks by prominent women innovators and guest speakers, a morning chat session with senior Cisco executives, in addition to an Internet of Things (IoT) challenge and a speed mentoring session.

"Cisco has multiple initiatives aimed at encouraging young females to pursue careers and education in technology and they stem from our conviction that gender inclusion and empowering women is vital to business and society," said Mike Weston, Vice President of Cisco Middle East. "The benefits of gender diversity are reaped by everyone, not just women, and we have a shared responsibility to do more to increase women's representation in the workforce. Greater inclusion means organizations and the industry as whole gain diverse perspectives, deeper understanding of customers and markets, and ultimately, better performance levels."

The activity-packed day featured inspirational presentations by Azza Al-Mughairy, a prominent Emirati radio and TV host and role model, who spoke on cyber bullying, and Fatima Al-Kaabi, the UAE's youngest inventor and recipient of UAE Pioneers Award, who shared her experiences on innovation and her inspiring journey with the aspiring girls. Ayesha Zainal, Director of Infrastructure Process Development and Performance at du, also spoke on the evolution of telecommunications and what technology could lead to in the future.

During his welcome address, Shukri Eid, Managing Director - East Region, Cisco Middle East, commented "At Cisco we harness the power of inclusion and diversity to foster the best in our people, and to develop a robust community where our differences are our best assets. We will continue our efforts to hire, nurture, promote and support women, especially in technical fields and leadership roles. Promoting opportunities for women to learn from one another and build connections that cultivate continuous learning and career development remains a top priority for us."

Girls Power Tech

For nearly two decades, Cisco has made it a top priority to build a diverse talent pool to meet gender diversity challenges in the technology industry. In addition to driving diversity at its workplace, Cisco is also committed to encouraging young women discover career opportunities in ICT through global initiatives such as Girls Power Tech.

"Girls Power Tech demonstrates our commitment towards improving gender diversity in the technology sector. Cisco recognizes that nurturing and generating interest in technology needs to start at an early age, and this is why so many of our colleagues volunteer their time and ener-



gy to make this annual event a success," said Frida Kleimert, Channel Lead - East Region, Cisco Middle East.

Girls Power Tech is not just a visit to Cisco's offices, but a chance for students to experience the power of Cisco's digital innovations firsthand, and gain insights into topics such as IoT and innovation, as well as the importance of online privacy and the responsible use of technology. Sponsored by Samsung and du, this year's edition included speed mentoring sessions, where students directly interacted with mentors, and an IoT challenge in which groups of students presented their original ideas on potential use cases.

The aspiring young women also had engaged with Cisco executives, including women role models and men who are advocates for women in technology, to hear inspiring stories about

their careers and their vision for what the future holds. The students also had the chance to connect via video-conference with their peers attending similar sessions at Cisco offices in countries including students in Italy, South Africa, Nigeria and Portugal.

Similar events are taking place across more than 100 Cisco offices worldwide, reaching out to more than 5,000 young ladies and involving nearly 2,000 Cisco employee volunteers. As part of its gender diversity efforts, Cisco also holds an annual Women of Impact Conference, a full day event devoted to the development and advancement of women in the technology industry at multiple Cisco sites globally and virtually. Other initiatives include the Cisco Empowered Women's Network, a network of Cisco customers, partners, and employees, who come together to make a difference for women in IT.



OLDER AMERICANS WARM TO NEW TECHNOLOGY

WASHINGTON: Americans over age 65 have stepped up their use of technology, with a growing number using the internet along with smartphones and other electronics, a survey showed yesterday. The Pew Research Center survey found 67 percent of US seniors now go online, with the vast majority of those using high-speed connections. The survey found 42 percent of older adults used a smartphone in 2016 — a fourfold increase from 2011, while one-third used tablets, and a similar number participated in social media.

"Older Americans have consistently been late adopters to new digital technology, but seniors are deepening their experiences with various forms of technology," said lead researcher Monica Anderson. "And while older adults may face unique barriers to using and adopting new technologies, once seniors are online, they tend to incorporate the internet and online activities into their everyday lives." The survey suggests US seniors are feeling good about new technology rather than being dragged into it: More than half

said technology has had a mostly positive impact on society.

Among those online, three out of four said they used the internet on a daily basis and nearly one in 10 were online almost constantly, Pew found. The US has some 46 million adults 65 or older, accounting for some 15 percent of the total population. That percentage is expected to grow to 22 percent by 2050, according to census estimates. The Pew survey noted that senior citizens still lagged the overall population in technology adoption: overall, around 90 percent of US adults use the internet, 77 percent have smartphones and 69 percent use social media.

The survey found that younger seniors—those 65 to 69 — are almost twice as likely as those ages 80 and older to say they ever go online or have broadband at home, and are four times as likely to use smartphones. Technology use also was correlated with income: 87 percent of seniors earning \$75,000 or more a year said they have home broadband, compared with just 27 percent those in households earnings \$30,000 or less. —AFP

SMART BANGLE DELIVERS PREGNANCY TIPS TO WRISTS

MUMBAI: A high-tech bangle that alerts pregnant women to toxic fumes and issues audio tips promises to boost maternal health in South Asia, as smart devices deliver ever more services to remote communities. The colorful, lightweight bangle also bypasses phone-owning men - feeding information directly to expectant mothers - and is built to withstand the rigors of village life.

"In rural areas, mobile connectivity - and mobile access for women - is an issue, as phones are controlled by men," said Pavel Hoq, chief operating officer at Intel Social Business, which developed the new device. "While we had also developed mobile apps

for maternal health, we realised a wearable device solely for women, something she would likely wear all the time, would be better to connect with women in rural areas," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Made of durable plastic, the bangle is water-resistant and has a long-lasting battery that does not require charging throughout the duration of a pregnancy. Nor does it need an internet connection to work. Coel, or carbon monoxide exposure limiter, was created by Intel Social Business Ltd., a joint venture of Intel Corporation, and Bangladesh non-profit Grameen Trust. The device can be recharged and reused many times, Hoq said. —Reuters

CALL FOR CLIMATE SOLIDARITY IN FACE OF TRUMP THREATS

BONN: Countries at high risk of sea-level rise, drought and storms caused by global warming urged world leaders yesterday to stay the course despite America's threatened exit from a UN climate pact. The Paris Agreement struck in 2015 to limit warming by capping emissions from burning coal, oil and gas, is "our lifeline", pleaded the Climate Vulnerable Forum. The grouping represents the interests at UN climate negotiations of over a billion people in nearly 50 countries on five continents.

"As long there is a chance to stop global warming at a level that lets humanity survive and thrive, we should seize it," CVF representative Emmanuel De Guzman, a climate commissioner from the Philippines, said on the sidelines of UN talks under way in Bonn. "This is why we continue to advance

the call for world leaders to keep to the 1.5 goal and to recalibrate climate finance" for poorer countries to build less polluting infrastructure and raise their defences against climate impacts. The Paris Agreement set a limit of two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) limit for average global warming over pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

Also underwritten is an aspirational lower target of 1.5 C, which the CVF considers says is key to the survival of millions of its people. Trump has yet to announce whether or not he intends to execute his threats to withdraw America from the pact which his predecessor, Barack Obama, was instrumental in pushing through. "We really believe that right now without increased climate action no country can ever be great again," said De

Guzman, referring to Trump's campaign slogan: "Make America great again."

'Complicit'

The American president may also opt to abandon the US' pledge to reduce emissions by 26-28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. The new administration has already said it intends to cut funding for the Green Climate Fund and related fora, including the UN climate secretariat under whose auspices the 196-nation Paris Agreement was negotiated. "There should be no backsliding on existing commitments," said a CVF statement, which warned that "inaction is a serious threat to global cooperation."

Trump is only expected to make his announce-

ment after returning from a meeting of the G7 rich nations in Sicily on May 26 and 27, where many are hoping America's peers will put pressure on Trump to stay in the deal. The other six, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan, "must make a strong case for action," argued climate activist Mohamed Adow of Christian Aid, which advocates for poor country causes at the UN forum. "Like witnesses to a violent assault, they will be complicit in the suffering of the world's poor if they refuse to try and steer America back towards the right path." The Paris Agreement's signatories, including a delegation from the United States, are gathered in Bonn until Thursday to work on a nuts-and-bolts "rulebook" for achieving the agreement's goals. — AFP



ACCRA: This file photo shows rescuers trying to remove valuables submerged in a flood after at least 90 people were killed in a petrol station fire in Ghana's capital, Accra.— AFP photos

DREDGING THE DRAINS: THE RACE TO STOP FLOODS IN ACCRA

DISASTERS ARE TAKING US OVER, THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS THAT DO NOT HAVE TO HAPPEN

ACCRA: The seasonal rains are due in Ghana, and like every year since 2015, when more than 150 people were killed during the deluge, the disaster looms heavily over the capital, Accra. Authorities are scrambling to prevent a similar emergency when the heavens open by clearing silt, rubbish and sludge from the open drains and waterways of the coastal city. But unfortunately, the task is easier than it sounds because Accra, like other cities in West Africa and beyond, has seen decades of rapid population growth but not enough investment in infrastructure to keep up.

The city's drainage system was built in 1963, six years after independence from Britain, when the population was about 500,000. Today, Accra is home to about four million but the drains have stayed much the same: channels at the side of roads and houses, open to the elements or covered with paving slabs. "Disasters are taking us over, there are certain things that do not have to happen," hydraulic engineer Wise Ametefe told AFP. "Very little rain doesn't

have to cause flooding in Accra but it's causing flooding. We need to manage the flood."

Done enough?

A dredging project of drains and water bodies in Accra is already making a "big difference", according to Graham Sarbah, drains director at the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. The local government also has plans to reconstruct major drains and build new ones, he added. In the meantime, the question is whether they have done enough to prepare for the torrential downpours that come in June and July, drenching the city with sheets of rain in a gale of wind.

Andy Sabbah, a 47-year-old public transit worker, was in Accra on June 3, 2015. On that day, the rain flooded the streets, causing chaos. Near the Kwame Nkrumah Circle area of the city, people sought shelter under the canopy of a petrol station or in cars on the forecourt. Leaked petrol floating on top of the water caught fire, burning down neighboring buildings as well as the petrol station and trapping

people in vehicles, then the pumps exploded. Sabbah said he watched helplessly as the fire ripped through the neighborhood. He helped clear the bodies once the inferno had died down. Standing where the fuel station once was, next to the charred remains of some of the cars, he looked at the ground and said he lost friends that day. He still struggles to sleep. Drains blocked with rubbish and construction debris were quickly blamed for causing the flooded roads. With the rainy season approaching, Sabbah says he is not sure the government has done enough and is "waiting to see what will happen".

Others are less equivocal. Michael Osei, a 36-year-old tailor who lives in a wooden structure near an open drain, said he had not seen any kind of clean-up efforts. "Anytime it rains the water still overflows the gutter and gets into the stall," he said.

Ad hoc development

In April, Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo pledged to make Accra the cleanest city in Africa by the end of his time in office. The Accra Metropolitan Assembly has said it is introducing a "zero tolerance for filth" policy and vowed to crack down on illegal waste disposal, including the use of plastic bags and packaging that clog the city's gutters. Experts say they believe a cleanup will help, but only up to a point. Most of Accra's population lives in low-income, densely populated communities, according to a 2010 study by Columbia University in New York.

The dwellings, which resemble slum property, are usually built out of necessity, without any consideration of urban planning goals, making them vulnerable to floods. "Ad hoc physical development continues to outpace spatial, infrastructure and economic planning," the study found. For Ametefe, the engineer, and others in Accra, that is the key issue, and one that the authorities are facing in fast-growing cities from Lagos to Ouagadougou and beyond. Until unchecked development is tackled, Accra will continue to suffer through the rainy season, Ametefe said. "If we keep on expanding the city, it means all the infrastructure we have now will not be adequate." — AFP



ACCRA: This file photo shows a man scooping water from his flooded office, two days following heavy flooding and fire at a filling station.

THE EU: WHAT HAPPENED TO CLIMATE'S POSTER CHILD?

PARIS: The 28-member European Union, the third-largest emitter of planet-warming greenhouse gases after China and the United States, has long been held up as the poster child of efforts to save Earth's climate. But after years of taking the lead in talks for a global climate pact, and making tough policy and investment choices to lessen fossil fuel reliance at home, the bloc's resolve now seems to be flagging, analysts say. Europe is responsible for about 10 percent of global emissions. As the world's nations meet in Bonn to negotiate a rulebook for executing the climate-rescue Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015 to limit emissions from burning oil, coal, and gas, here is a look at Europe's role.

History

Having been at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution that sparked the large-scale carbon dioxide pollution of Earth's atmosphere now blamed for global warming, Europe took the lead hundreds of years later in shifting to cleaner energy generated by sources such as the Sun, waves and wind. It was instrumental in passing,

and keeping alive, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement's predecessor, despite opposition from the United States and other developed countries.

Europe also created the first, still the biggest, carbon market in a bid to incentivise companies to pollute less. The Emissions Trading System limits emissions and allows companies to trade in allowances not used.

Then what happened?

The carbon market, which covers about 40 percent of Europe's industrial emissions, has proven ineffective, critics say, and needs urgent reform. Carbon allowances were too generous, resulting in a carbon price too low to encourage savings. The bloc also took on emissions-cutting targets that analysts say are too low to stay under the ceiling for average global warming set in the Paris pact - no more than two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels.

The EU pledged to reduce its own emissions by 20 percent by 2020 over 1990 levels-a goal it is

on course to exceed. With three years to go, the target has already been met even if five countries-Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg and Ireland-are not on track to achieve their national goals.

The European Environment Agency expects the bloc will reach 24 percent in 2020. This goes to show that the target was too "modest" to begin with, according to Celia Gautier of the Climate Action Network, a grouping of NGOs. By 2020, Europe also seeks to boost energy efficiency (less fossil fuel input for the same energy output) by 20 percent, and ensure that 20 percent of energy consumed is from renewables.

According to Eurostat, an agency of the European Commission, renewable energy consumption in Europe was already 16.7 percent in 2014. "In the wake of the Paris Agreement's entry into force, the EU's climate policy effort appears to be slowing, and it has not effectively responded" to an aspirational 1.5 C lower limit also written into the pact, according to the Climate Action Tracker (CAT), a tool created by think-tanks to measure countries' progress. — AFP

KENYA'S PARCHED FARMERS STOP PLOUGHING BUT HARVEST MORE FOOD AND JOBS

IMENTI, Kenya: On a five-acre piece of land being prepared for planting, James Mwenda shouts at his two oxen, commanding them to move in a straight line as they pull a ripper that cuts a long slit into the unploughed ground. The "low-till" farming system - in which land is no longer ploughed and seeds are slotted into largely undisturbed soil - is gaining fans in drought-hit Kenya because it helps preserve moisture in the soil. But Mwenda likes it for another reason: it has given him a job. The 31-year-old is one of more than 1,500 people trained in Kenya to handle the special equipment needed to prepare land and plant crops under the new "low-till" system.

Now he makes money hiring out his services to other farmers in Imenti Central, a sub-county of Meru County, who may not have the funds to buy the specialized equipment themselves. "This is a new farming technique that has shown very positive results for the past two seasons, and many small-scale farmers in this area are now getting hooked to it," said Mwenda, from Kimate village.

"Low-till" or "zero-till" farming is nothing particularly new. It has been increasingly popular around the world since after World War II - and similar no-plough systems were the basis for much ancient agriculture, before the modern plough was invented. But the system - part of a suite of farming techniques known as "conservation agriculture" - is now gaining popularity in Kenya among small-scale farmers trying to beat worsening drought. Introduced to farmers in dry areas in 2015 by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), it is increasingly popular both for its ability to protect harvests and for the job possibilities it offers young farmers able to use the specialized equipment needed.

New jobs

In Imenti Central, a total of 44 young men and women have been trained on how to handle the zero-till farming equipment, said Patrick Ng'ang'a, a former trainer now working as a desk officer in charge of conservation agriculture for Meru County. Mwenda, one of those trained, said income from his low-till planting business now has surpassed his income from farming his own land. "This has become my main source of income," said Mwenda, who now can operate all the hand-held and ox-driven equipment, from rippers and jab planters to oxen-driven planters and shallow weeders.

So far, much of the low-till equipment used in the area has been purchased by the

FAO and is made available free of charge at government offices to groups of farmers trained to use it. But some farmers who have started low-till planting services also are beginning to buy locally fabricated equipment.

"The idea that farmers are willing to purchase some of this equipment on their own is an indication that they are willing to move forward with the zero- or low-till farming techniques," said Mercy Mulevu, the FAO's county program officer in Meru County. According to Ng'ang'a, the government has set a standard fee for every activity conducted using the specialized equipment. "We had to intervene because, given that only a few people understand how to handle the equipment, they were likely going to take advantage and overcharge their clients," he said. Hiring someone to do traditional ploughing of an acre of land in Meru costs about 1,200 Kenyan shillings (\$12), farmers say. But slitting lines using a ripper costs as low as \$6 per acre because it consumes less energy, those doing the work say.

More drought, more grain

Farmers who adopted the new farming techniques in recent years have been able to boost their harvests, which has attracted more farmers and created more jobs providing services to them, Ng'ang'a said. In many dry areas of Kenya, crops planted last season failed as drought swept across much of East Africa. But Margaret Gacheke, one farmer who hires Mwenda's low-till services, said she harvested 15 90-kilo bags of maize per acre from her land in February - higher than the usual 13 bags she gets from the land when rainfall is normal.

"This was far beyond average because my immediate neighbor who used the normal conventional farming method did not harvest anything, despite of having used fertilizers and certified seed," Gacheke said. Using conservation agriculture techniques such as low-till farming over time helps improve harvests as the amount of water-holding organic matter in the soil increases, studies have shown. "The main reason for introducing this technique was to enable communities, particularly in dry-land areas, to build resilience to climate stresses, increase food productivity and engage in agribusiness for income generation," Mulevu said. In Tharaka West, a Meru sub-county, members of Maweni Farmer Field School have grown sorghum for the past two seasons using low-till farming techniques. — Reuters



SANAA: A Yemeni child, suspected of being infected with cholera, receives treatment at a hospital in Sanaa. — AFP

YEMEN CHOLERA DEATH TOLL MOUNTS TO 209: UNICEF

SANAA: A cholera outbreak in Yemen has killed 209 people in recent weeks with 17,200 suspected cases across the war-torn country, the United Nations children's agency said yesterday. UNICEF's Yemen mission said that there had been an "alarming increase" in cholera-related deaths. The agency's Yemen spokesman Mohammed Al-Asaadi told AFP that 3,000 new suspected cholera cases a day were being reported. The International Committee of the Red Cross said Monday that 184 people had died of the disease since April 27, with 11,000 suspected cases across the country.

Cholera is a highly contagious bacterial infection spread through contaminated food or water. UNICEF and the ICRC are part of a joint committee, also including the World Health Organization (WHO), that coordinates with health

authorities and relief groups in Sanaa. Authorities in the capital, which is controlled by Iran-backed Huthi rebels, this week declared a state of emergency over the outbreak, the second wave of cholera cases in less than a year.

Hospitals are struggling to cope with the influx of patients. Two years into a devastating war between the Huthi and government forces backed by a Saudi-led Arab military coalition, more than half the country's medical facilities are out of service. Yemen's conflict has killed more than 8,000 people and wounded around 40,000, according to the WHO. The UN has warned that two-thirds of the population is on the brink of famine. The WHO now classifies Yemen as one of the worst humanitarian emergencies in the world alongside Syria, South Sudan, Nigeria and Iraq. — AFP

MORE THAN HALF OF WORLD'S DEATHS STILL HAVE NO RECORDED CAUSE: WHO

LONDON: More than half of all deaths have no recorded cause, making effective health monitoring and policymaking far more difficult, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday. However, improved collection of statistics meant that 27 million of the world's 56 million estimated deaths in 2015 were registered with a cause compared with only about a third in 2005, the UN health agency's latest global health report said.

The WHO said several countries, including China and Turkey, had made "significant strides" in data

collection. In Iran, it said, 90 percent of deaths are now recorded with details of the causes, compared with 5 percent in 1999. While things have improved significantly in recent years, many countries still do not routinely collect high-quality health data, Marie-Paule Kieny, the WHO's assistant director-general for health systems and innovation, said in a statement.

"If countries don't know what makes people get sick and die, it's a lot harder to know what to do about it," she said. The WHO is working with coun-

tries to strengthen health information systems and improve data quality, she said. This year's WHO report focused on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of internationally agreed targets adopted in 2015 which track issues such as health, climate, sanitation and economic inequality.

It found that while maternal and newborn death rates are declining, the 2015 global neonatal mortality rate was 19 per 1,000 live births and the under-five death rate was 43 per 1,000 live births.

About 830 women died every day due to complications of pregnancy or childbirth in 2015, it said. Looking at infectious diseases, it found that an estimated 2.1 million people were newly infected with HIV in 2015, 35 percent fewer than in 2000.

There were an estimated 212 million malaria cases globally in 2015, the report found, and about 60 percent of the population at risk of the mosquito-borne disease had access to an insecticide-treated net in 2015, compared to 34 percent in 2010. — Reuters

US TEEN DIES OF CAFFEINE OVERDOSE

MIAMI: A coffee, a caffeinated drink and an energy soda proved a deadly combination for a South Carolina teenager who died within two hours of consuming them, triggering warnings about the risks of caffeine overdose. Davis Allen Cripe died on April 26 from a "caffeine-induced cardiac event causing a probable arrhythmia," the Richland County coroner's office in the southern US state wrote in a statement.

Two hours before he collapsed, Cripe drank a cafe latte, a large Diet Mountain Dew and an energy drink. Richland County Coroner Gary Watts noted Tuesday that such occurrences are "highly unusual." "It was mainly due to the time period that he ingested a rapid amount of caffeine that affected his heart," Watts told The Post and

Courier, adding that Cripe had collapsed just 15 minutes after taking the energy drink. The US Food and Drug Administration recommends that adults consume no more than 400 mg of caffeine per day, which is equivalent to four or five cups of coffee.

"While adults should be mindful of their caffeine consumption, it's important for parents to know the risks of children and adolescents consuming caffeine," Jill Michels of the Palmetto Poison Center said in a statement. "Take the time to talk with your children about the dangers of caffeinated drinks." At a news conference on Monday, the boy's father said his son was very careful about drugs and alcohol. "It wasn't a car crash that took his life. Instead, it was an energy drink," Sean Cripe said. — AFP

MOST US TROOPS KICKED OUT FOR MISCONDUCT HAD MENTAL ILLNESS

WASHINGTON: A majority of US troops discharged from the military for misconduct during a four-year period ending in 2015 had been diagnosed with mental health conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, a new study found. The report by the US Government Accountability Office will likely add to scrutiny over whether the US military is doing enough to care for troops identified with mental health issues during their service, instead of simply casting them out.

The GAO analysis showed that 62 percent of the 91,764 service members discharged for misconduct during the fiscal

years 2011 through 2015 had been diagnosed within the previous two years with conditions including PTSD, TBI "or certain other conditions that could be associated with misconduct." Twenty-three percent of the service members received an "other than honorable" discharge, which made them potentially ineligible for health benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Veterans' advocates have long complained about a lack of support for former US service members who do not have honorable discharge papers, something new Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin has announced plans to address. — Reuters



INDONESIA: In this undated file photo released by Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (BOSF), an albino orangutan sits in a cage as it's being quarantined at a rehabilitation center in Nyaru Menteng, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. — AP photos

NAME SOUGHT FOR RARE ALBINO ORANGUTAN RESCUED IN INDONESIA

JAKARTA, Indonesia: A conservation group is asking the public to name a rare albino orangutan that was rescued from villagers on Borneo island last month, hoping it will become a symbol of efforts to save the critically endangered species. The 5-year-old female great ape is being kept in a dimly lit quarantine enclosure with round-the-clock veterinarian care after being rescued in the Indonesian part of the island on April 29, Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation spokesman Nico Hermanu said yesterday. She's the first albino orangutan to be encountered by the foundation in its 25 years of conservation work.

The foundation said in a statement that the orangutan has become an ambassador for her species and it wants a "meaningful" name for her that will reflect the significant conservation challenges that orangutans face in the wild. It said she is sensitive to sunlight due to a complete absence of pigmentation and physically fragile, which is common for rescued orangutans, but gradually improving.

"Understandably, she still has a long way to go in her recovery following the trauma of losing her mother and her illegal capture," the statement said. Hermanu said villagers in Central Kalimantan province on Borneo had the orangutan for two days and claimed it had strayed out of the forest. Other villagers reported its capture to police and a government conservation agency that asked the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation to intervene.

Hermanu said she may only have survived in the wild due to a protective mother that she apparently became separated from. Whether

she can ever be returned to her natural habitat is still uncertain, he said. Orangutans, known for their gentle temperament and intelligence, live in the wild only on the Indonesian island of Sumatra and on Borneo, which is divided among Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature estimates the number of Bornean orangutans has dropped by nearly two-thirds since the early 1970s and will further decline to 47,000 by 2025. Bornean orangutans were declared critically endangered by the IUCN last year due to hunting for their meat and conflicts with planta-

tion workers, which kills 2,000 to 3,000 a year, and destruction of tropical forests for plantation agriculture. The only other orangutan species, the Sumatran orangutan, has been critically endangered since 2008.

Suggested names for the rescued orangutan can be sent to name@orangutan.org.id or by using the hashtag #albinoorangutan on social media until May 14. The group, known as BOS, plans to announce its selection the next day. It and several other conservation groups specialize in rehabilitating captured orangutans and returning them to the wild. — AP



INDONESIA: A keeper examines an albino orangutan at a rehabilitation center in Nyaru Menteng, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia.



BOULDER CITY, Nevada: Arch bridge in the United States of America Hoover Dam, lit up turquoise to promote lung cancer awareness, as seen from O'Callaghan-Tillman Memorial Bridge. — AP

ICONIC HOOVER DAM LIGHTS UP IN TURQUOISE FOR LUNG HEALTH

BOULDER CITY, Nevada: The iconic Hoover Dam near Las Vegas was lit up in turquoise in honor of National Women's Lung Health Week. The Las Vegas Review-Journal reports that the National Historic Landmark changed colors for two hours last Thursday night. The Hoover Dam opened in 1936, generating the first electric power produced by the dam.

Located at the Nevada-Arizona border, the Hoover Dam and other Colorado River facilities now provide drinking water and hydropower to about 40 million residents, farms, tribes and businesses in seven states in the Southwest. The High Roller observation wheel on the Las Vegas Strip also marked the occasion by coordinating its colors to turquoise. — AP

CLINIC PAGE



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KUWAIT UNIT OF MAMOOTY ORGANIZE CHARITY INITIATIVE

Kuwait Unit of Mamooty Fans and Welfare Association distributed kits containing food products among residents of four labor camps in Abbassiya. The charitable donation would provide the expatriate workers with some relief as the private company that had employed them have not paid their salaries in the last four months. The function was inaugurated by the social worker and media person, Hamsa Payyannor, who handed over the first kit. The function was conducted under the leadership of Kuwait Unit Chairman Sainuddin Mukkum, President Manaf Manu, Secretary Ali Venat, Treasurer Jobin and Vice Presidents, Ramshid K P and Niyaas Majeed.



YMCA KUWAIT BIBLE QUIZ 2017

YMCA Kuwait conducted its fifth annual bible quiz for the members from all the churches in Kuwait at Light House Church, NECK, Kuwait City. The portion of the Bible on which the quiz was based were taken from the books of Genesis, Zachariah, Luke and Revelation. Out of the 11 teams registered, 9 teams have attended and actively

participated. The Quiz was managed by an Event Management Group lead by Quiz masters E M Jacob and Finny Cheriyan along with Mathew John for Technical support, Joji K Varghese and Ligish Joy as tabulators and Varghese Mathew and E M Jacob as Judges. The whole event was managed in a well professional manner.

Out of the nine teams, six teams were qualified to the final round. The first three winners of the YMCA Kuwait Bible Quiz 2017 were the following churches. First winner - IPC Church, Ahmadi qualified for Mariam Ever Rolling Trophy, second winner - St Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Salmiya qualified for Dr A T Varghese and Family Ever Rolling Trophy, third

winner - St Gregorios Indian Orthodox Church (Maha Edavaka) qualified for Mathew Eapen and Family Ever Rolling Trophy. The trophies, medals and certificates were distributed by Rev Prince Korah of St James Mar Thoma Church, Salmiya and Rev Johnson Alexander of St Peters CSI Congregation, Kuwait. The Event was inaugurated by Rev Georgie

Varghese of Kuwait City Mar Thoma Church. The meeting was presided over by YMCA Kuwait president, Dr A T Varghese. Parimanam Manoj welcomed the gathering. CA. Mathew Varkey worked as the convener for the Bible Quiz event and Ajosh Mathew compered the program of the day. Joseph, Joint convener, gave the vote of thanks.



The Jahra school program for dental and oral health held week-long activities during which students were brought to a dental center and received information on the proper means of caring for their teeth, as well as proper hygiene.



ICSK CELEBRATES FOUNDATION DAY

ICSK celebrated with a special assembly recently to mark the Foundation Day which falls on May 5th every year. The event began with the recitation of the verses from the Holy Quran followed by the school prayer.

It was followed by the apt thought for the day offering tribute to the institution with an excellence. There was an excellent informative speech depicting the glorious past of ICSK. This was fol-

lowed by a melodious group song by classes IV, V and VI. A motivational skit depicted the role of a school in each one's life. A dance performance made the whole crowd tap their feet to glory. To celebrate this moment KG children gave bal-

loons to the Principal, Vice Principal and the teachers singing with joy a birthday song. A dance performance was a feast to our eyes. Principal Sheryl Dennis addressed the assembly and shared her good thoughts

about the foundation of this esteemed institution. On this day of significance it was opportunity time to award certificate to the winners of CCA competition. The assembly dispersed with the singing of Indian National Anthem.



KUWAIT'S UN MISSION HOLDS HERITAGE EXHIBITION IN NEW YORK

The State of Kuwait's Mission to the UN held the Kuwait Heritage Exhibition on Tuesday, part of a series of events organized by the mission to highlight the Arab Gulf country's role in different domains. The three-day exhibition, held in cooperation with the Heritage Team of the Voluntary Work Center of Kuwait, marks the 54th anniversary of Kuwait's UN membership, Kuwait

Permanent Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi said in a statement. He thanked the heritage team for their preparations of the exhibition and by also making necessary adjustments inside the Mission to receive the guests. Otaibi said he was happy with the visiting diplomats in the first day of the exhibition, where they got acquainted with tradition and

heritage of Kuwait, as well as development of institutions. Kuwait's Ambassador welcomed the visitors before they toured the exhibition. Anwar Al-Rifae, Head of the heritage team and vice-president of the Voluntary Work Center, said the exhibition included rare pieces that narrates history of Kuwait. He added that there were pieces resembling parts of the old Kuwaiti house, in

addition to paintings and photos depicting the development of Kuwait. "We wanted to show the historic beginning of Kuwait by displaying rare and genuine antiquities, which tell the story of our fathers and grandfathers, and their role in this history," he said. Rifae said the Heritage Team also wanted to show the shape of the old Kuwaiti market and the making of the Arabic cof-

fee. He said state institutions were contributing to the exhibition like the Ministry of Public Works, Kuwait Oil Company, Kuwait Airways and the Public Endowment Secretariat. Kuwait Mission has been organizing a series of events as part of its campaign for a non-permanent UN Security Council for 2018-19. Elections for the seat due next month. —KUNA



OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 01:00 Monsters: Dark Continent
03:15 Double Team
05:15 I Am Number Four

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:50 River Monsters
01:45 Bondi Vet
02:40 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet

BBC FIRST

- 00:35 Doctors
01:10 Eastenders
01:40 Benidorm

- 02:45 The Alternative Comedy Experience
03:10 South Park
03:35 South Park

Discovery Family

- 00:15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
00:40 Ultimate Survival
01:30 Science Of The Movies

- 01:25 Hank Zipzer
01:45 The Hive
01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

- 22:25 The Adventures Of The Disney Fairies
22:50 Minnie's Bow-Toons

Discovery Channel HD

- 00:30 Diesel Brothers
01:20 Street Outlaws
02:10 Abandoned Engineering

XD

- 00:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA
07:00 Gravity Falls
07:25 11

- 08:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
09:10 E! News: Daily Pop
10:10 So Cosmos

food network

- 00:00 Guy's Grocery Games
01:00 Chopped
02:00 Kids BBQ Championship



CASINO ROYALE ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 01:50 Duck Dynasty
08:15 Duck Dynasty
08:40 Counting Cars

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 01:15 Inspector Gadget
02:45 The Last Flight Of Noah's Ark
04:30 Ice Princess

NAT GEO people HD

- 00:20 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
00:50 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
01:15 Restoration Man

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 01:45 Garden State
03:30 The Out Of Towners
05:00 Outside Bet

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

- 01:00 A Dangerous Woman
03:00 Masan
05:00 Days Of Heaven

NAT GEO WILD HD

- 00:30 Africa's Blood River
01:20 Super Predators
02:10 Wild 24

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

- 00:30 The Adventures Of Rocky And Bullwinkle
02:15 Bonta
03:45 Doctor Proctor's Fart Powder



TRACERS ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 04:10 The Kettering Incident
05:05 Doctors
05:35 Eastenders

- 05:40 How It's Made
06:30 Storm Chasers
07:20 Mythbusters

- 22:05 Bizaardvark
22:30 That's So Raven
22:55 Star Darlings

- 00:00 E! News
00:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
01:05 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry

EHD

- 00:00 E! News
00:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
01:05 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry

HISTORY HD

- 00:30 American Pickers
01:20 Britain's Bloodiest Dynasty
02:10 Big Easy Motors



LAND OF MINE ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

crime & investigation network

- 00:00 Paranormal State
00:30 Paranormal State
01:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath

ID

- 00:40 Your Worst Nightmare
01:30 Murder Among Friends
02:20 Betrayed

COMEDY CENTRAL

- 00:15 Tosh.0
00:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:05 South Park

Disney Channel HD

- 00:10 Hank Zipzer
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Binny And The Ghost

CLASSIFIEDS

55th
Anniversary

Kuwait Times

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2017

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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (18/05/2017 TO 24/05/2017)

Program	Time
SHARQIA-1 KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD HERE ALONE KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD HERE ALONE	12:00 PM 2:30 PM 5:00 PM 7:15 PM 9:45 PM 12:15 AM
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SHARQIA-3 EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING MAMNO'O MIN AL EKTIRAB AW ALTASWEER MAMNO'O MIN AL EKTIRAB AW ALTASWEER ALIEN: COVENANT	12:45 PM 3:00 PM 5:00 PM 7:15 PM 9:30 PM 11:45 PM
MUHALAB-1 KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD HALF GIRLFRIEND -Hindi KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD	11:30 AM 2:15 PM 4:45 PM 7:15 PM 10:00 PM 12:30 AM
MUHALAB-2 HERE ALONE HERE ALONE HERE ALONE HERE ALONE MAMNO'O MIN AL EKTIRAB AW ALTASWEER MAMNO'O MIN AL EKTIRAB AW ALTASWEER HERE ALONE	12:00 PM 2:15 PM 4:15 PM 6:15 PM 8:15 PM 10:30 PM 12:45 AM
MUHALAB-3 ALIEN: COVENANT NO MON ALIEN: COVENANT ALIEN: COVENANT ALIEN: COVENANT ALIEN: COVENANT ALIEN: COVENANT	11:30 AM 2:00 PM 4:30 PM 7:00 PM 9:30 PM 12:05 AM
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FANAR-2 KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD	11:30 AM 2:00 PM

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FANAR-3 HALF GIRLFRIEND -Hindi HALF GIRLFRIEND -Hindi BAAHUBALI 2: The Conclusion -Hindi HALF GIRLFRIEND -Hindi ALIEN: COVENANT	12:00 PM 3:00 PM 5:45 PM 9:00 PM 11:45 PM
FANAR-4 ALIEN: COVENANT ALIEN: COVENANT ALIEN: COVENANT ALIEN: COVENANT ALIEN: COVENANT ALIEN: COVENANT	12:15 PM 2:45 PM 5:15 PM 7:45 PM 10:15 PM 12:45 AM
FANAR-5 HERE ALONE HERE ALONE THE BOSS BABY THE BOSS BABY HERE ALONE HERE ALONE HERE ALONE	12:30 PM 2:30 PM 4:30 PM 6:30 PM 8:30 PM 10:30 PM 12:30 AM
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AVENUES-1 HERE ALONE HERE ALONE HERE ALONE HOWARD LOVECRAFT & THE FROZEN KINGDOM HERE ALONE HERE ALONE HERE ALONE	1:15 PM 3:15 PM 5:15 PM 7:15 PM 9:15 PM 11:15 PM

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AVENUES-3 THE BOSS BABY THE BOSS BABY THE BOSS BABY THE BOSS BABY THE BOSS BABY ALIEN: COVENANT MONOLITH	11:30 AM 1:45 PM 4:00 PM 6:15 PM 8:30 PM 10:45 PM 1:15 AM
360°-1 KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD	12:45 PM 3:30 PM 6:15 PM 9:00 PM 11:45 PM
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360°-3 HALF GIRLFRIEND -Hindi HALF GIRLFRIEND -Hindi BAAHUBALI 2: The Conclusion -Hindi HALF GIRLFRIEND -Hindi KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD	12:30 PM 3:30 PM 6:30 PM 9:45 PM 12:45 AM
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AL-KOUT.2 EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING HERE ALONE EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING HERE ALONE EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING HERE ALONE	11:30 AM 1:45 PM 4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:15 PM 10:15 PM 12:30 AM
AL-KOUT.3 KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD	12:00 PM 2:30 PM

REQUIRED

Leading Shipping Freight Forwarding & Logistic Company in Kuwait Invites Competent Male Professionals for the Following Post:

Business development Manager

Specialized in liner service, freight forwarding. The ideal candidate must be pro-active, self motivated team player and target driven.

Qualifications:

- Not less than 10 years experience in liner service, shipping logistics & freight forwarding.
 - Good communications skills.
 - Fluent in English (talking & writing).
 - Computer skills.
 - Transferable residence.
- Successful candidates are subject to fixed salary and incentives with career development both in Kuwait and other GCC country.

Interested candidates are requested to send their CV at shippingkw27@gmail.com

ACCOMMODATION

MATRIMONIAL

Sharing accommodation available in Jabriya Block-10, near Indian School and Farah Jamiya, big room with balcony, Central A/C, start from May 2017.
Contact: 55706900/55983570.
(C 5312)
18-5-2017

Sharing accommodation fully furnished (all facilities available) near United Indian School, Abbasiya. Contact 97470947, from 1st June onward. Phillipino family or Phillipino working ladies. (C 5310)
15-5-2017

Proposals invited from parents, for MBBS lady Doctor, 33 years, studied in India, working in USA, US citizen, Orthodox Christian family, seeking suitable alliance from Doctors, Engineers, Chartered Accountants willing to settle in USA.
Email: mjohnjohn@yahoo.com
(C 5309)
17-5-2017

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Nazarius Jacinta Corta S/o Corrad Antonio Joao Francisco Corta holder of Indian Passport No. L0030166 & Civil ID No. 274072802043 has changed my name to Nazareth Jacinto Corte hereafter in all my dealings and document. (C 5311)
18-5-2017

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 03:24
Shorook: 04:54
Duhr: 11:44
Asr: 15:20
Maghrib: 18:35
Isha: 20:02



Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 18/5/2017				Departure Flights on Thursday 18/5/2017			
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
MSC	501	Alexandria	00:05	KAC	564	Amman	21:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:10	KAC	168	Paris	21:05
JZR	553	Alexandria	00:15	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:10
KAC	102	London	00:15	JZR	445	Amsterdam	21:15
SVA	502	Jeddah	00:20	ALK	229	Colombo	21:15
SVA	514	Riyadh	00:25	UAE	859	Dubai	21:15
KAC	786	Jeddah	00:30	FDB	8053	Dubai	21:25
MSC	411	Asyut	00:30	KAC	676	Dubai	21:35
JZR	267	Beirut	00:35	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:50
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
DLH	635	Doha	01:00	NIA	161	Cairo	22:10
JZR	539	Cairo	01:25	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:10
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30	AIC	981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	JZR	241	Amman	22:55
RJA	642	Amman	01:45	JZR	185	Dubai	22:55
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:50	JAI	574	Mumbai	23:00
KKK	6506	Istanbul	01:55	MSC	405	Sohag	23:30
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	FDB	071	Dubai	23:35
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:05	THY	764	Istanbul	23:45
QTR	1086	Doha	02:05	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
PGT	830	Istanbul	02:10	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:10
KAC	418	Manila	02:50	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
MSR	606	Luxor	03:05	PIA	240	Sialkot	00:40
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	MSC	502	Alexandria	01:05
KAC	382	Delhi	03:15	JZR	502	Luxor	01:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	SVA	503	Jeddah	01:20
FDB	069	Dubai	03:15	SVA	515	Riyadh	01:25
QTR	1076	Doha	03:40	MSC	412	Asyut	01:30
KAC	1544	Cairo	03:50	THY	773	Istanbul	01:40
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:00
UAE	873	Dubai	04:15	SAI	442	Lahore	02:30
GEO	170	Bahrain	04:35	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:50
KAC	358	Kochi	04:50	KKK	6505	Istanbul	02:55
FEG	931	Alexandria	05:00	AXB	396	Kozhikode	02:55
THY	770	Istanbul	05:05	KAC	351	Kochi	03:05
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	PGT	831	Istanbul	03:10
JZR	529	Asyut	05:35	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
KAC	362	Colombo	05:50	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:30
BAW	157	London	06:05	MSR	607	Luxor	04:05
KAC	204	Lahore	06:20	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:35	QTR	1087	Doha	04:10
QTR	8511	Doha	06:35	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:10
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:40	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:55	KAC	417	Manila	04:20
KAC	156	Istanbul	07:05	JZR	560	Sohag	04:45
JZR	503	Luxor	07:25	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
KAC	354	Bangalore	07:50	GEO	504	Dubai	05:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	QTR	1077	Doha	05:35
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	FEG	934	Sohag	05:55
AAG	144	Sharjah	08:00	UAE	874	Dubai	06:15
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	RJA	643	Amman	06:25
IRA	673	Ahwaz	08:25	THY	771	Istanbul	06:25
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	773	Riyadh	06:35
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:05	FDB	070	Dubai	07:05
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	JZR	164	Dubai	07:15
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	167	Paris	07:15
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	JZR	238	Amman	07:15
FDK	803	Damascus	10:00	KAC	501	Beirut	07:50
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	613	Bahrain	07:55
KAC	774	Riyadh	10:45	QTR	8512	Doha	08:05
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	BAW	156	London	08:20
PAL	668	Manila	11:00	FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	KAC	791	Madinah	08:35
JZR	561	Sohag	11:10	KAC	513	Tehran	08:45
				JZR	778	Jeddah	08:50
				KAC	117	New York	09:00
				KAC	787	Jeddah	09:15

CROSSWORD 1611



ACROSS

- 1. Not in good physical or mental health.
4. (British) Property that provides tax income for local governments.
12. Lap that forms a cloth border doubled back and stitched down v 1.
15. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
16. Strongly laxative.
17. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
18. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring in the air.
19. The act of playing for stakes in the hope of winning (including the payment of a price for a chance to win a prize).
20. Norse chieftain who became the first duke of Normandy (860-931).
22. Troubled emotionally and usually deeply.
24. A state in northwestern North America.
26. Type genus of the Amidae.
27. The Muskogean language of the Choctaw people.
28. A member of the Iroquoian people formerly living east of Lake Ontario.
30. Type genus of the Tetraonidae.
33. The cry made by sheep.
36. North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
38. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
39. Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
41. Port city of Denmark in eastern Jutland.
43. The battle in 202 BC in which Scipio decisively defeated Hannibal at the end of the second Punic War.
46. An associate degree in applied science.
47. A coffin along with its stand.
48. The chief source of beryllium.
52. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
54. 1/10 gram.
56. A state in midwestern United States.
59. A simple machine consisting of a circular frame with spokes (or a solid disc) that can rotate on a shaft or axle (as in vehicles or other machines).
60. Small often spiny insectivorous mammal of Madagascar.
64. Genus of erect herbs of the Middle East having showy flowers.
67. One of the two main branches of orthodox Islam.
70. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
71. The capital of Lombardy in northern Italy.
73. A genus of Ploceidae.
75. The bureau of the Treasury Department responsible for tax collections.
76. A nearby horizontal passage from the surface into a mine.
77. Someone who takes more time than necessary.
79. Provided with artificial light.
80. Twining perennials having cordate leaves and flowers arranged in conelike spikes.
81. Scottish historian who wrote about the French Revolution (1795-1881).
82. The seat within a bishop's diocese where his cathedral is located adv.

DOWN

- 1. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
2. English film actress (1913-1967).
3. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
4. A meeting for boat races.
5. A new embodiment of a familiar idea.
6. Flat and uninspiring.
7. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
8. Small rounded bread either plain or sweet.
9. Goods (or wreckage) on the sea bed that is attached to a buoy so that it can be recovered.
10. Half the width of an em.
11. A hormone produced by the anterior pituitary gland.
12. Leafless East Indian vine.
13. (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
14. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
21. Measuring instrument in which the echo of a pulse of microwave radiation is used to detect and locate distant objects.
23. Of or relating to the palm of the hand or to the area at the base of the thumb.
25. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
29. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
31. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
32. A European river.
34. Tropical tree of Central America and West Indies and Puerto Rico having spikes of white flowers.
35. State in northeastern India.
37. Goat-like antelope of central Eurasia having a stubby nose like a proboscis.
40. Austrian composer who influenced the classical form of the symphony (1732-1809).
42. Dense growth of hairs covering the body or parts of it (as on the human head).
44. (statistics) Approximating the statistical norm or average or expected value.
45. Lower in esteem.
49. The basic unit of money in Albania.
50. An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.
51. A group of southern Bantu languages.
53. United States naval officer and historian (1840-1914).
55. A stronghold into which people could go for shelter during a battle.
57. Garment consisting of sweat pants and a sweatshirt.
58. Antineoplastic drug (trade name Elspar) sometimes used to treat lymphoblastic leukemia.
61. A bar or bars of rolled steel making a track along which vehicles can roll.
62. Suggestive of the supernatural.
63. Social status or position conferred by a system based on class.
65. (British) A recreational facility including a swimming pool for water sports.
66. A metal frame or container holding cartridges.
68. Precipitation of ice pellets when there are strong rising air currents.
69. In an idle manner.
72. (of securities) Not quoted on a stock exchange.
74. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
78. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are happiest when the goals for each day are understood. Honest, straightforward people have a special place in your heart. It is easiest to work under a boss that has clear expectations. Revising or reassessing your work responsibilities and scheduling may take up most of this day. You could be helping to change several methods of operation. In-depth discussions and probing conversations find you at your mental best. You have a chance to show off your analytical abilities now. Social gatherings are fun and much more interesting than you expected. Take an opportunity to network at this social event . . . You will be pleased with the outcome. You are able to keep ideas and stories in focus that all could learn or enjoy.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This morning is for planning and this afternoon is for carry-through regarding those plans. Later, this afternoon, you will reap the rewards for your hard work. This may also mean a raise or promotion for some past, long-term accomplishment that you may think was forgotten. The people with whom you work are congenial and fun to be with away from work, as well as working as teammates-you are very appreciative. Love and friendships grow closer than ever. Although it is your birthday, you may have to revise a few of your own plans to accommodate old friends that want to stay the night. Laughter and talking over old times can be heard way into the night. Be sure to take pictures for the memory book.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your career can end up at right angles to your own need for growth and change. Emotional material welling up from within you may challenge and threaten the current path, causing you to stop and consider it with care. You will be successfully examining ideas, thoughts and concepts-with an eye to getting rid of those unwanted debts. There is much searching, research, detective work and such. You are in a planning mood and are very clearheaded and able to view the alternate paths. Move forward now. You can see the road ahead and will make the right choices. You may find yourself serving to guide someone younger than you in matters of importance tonight. Perhaps you will be able to encourage him or her to move forward with a special talent.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Careful; you may be very forceful in what you say today. With all of this emotional energy, you could speak or communicate very well but perhaps a little abruptly. Proud, you have an inner need to express feelings and emotions to others. You are driven to leadership positions by a sense of your own inner worth. You have learned to listen carefully when you see someone needs a listening ear; this makes you popular and loved. You have the mental drive to get much accomplished. Heed a warning you may hear from someone in a senior position-do not take roads that go nowhere just for the ride. Pay attention to your dreams and enjoy sharing them. If there is not a lesson to learn, there will be some fun just-suppose types of conversations.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is the perfect time to take risks and dare to be a little eccentric. You will prosper through new insights, inventions and an independent point of view. You have good ideas and co-workers and higher-ups will often stop what they are doing to hear your input. You will be wise to know your subject matter before approaching higher-ups. Challenging authority and striving for success are on your agenda; you tread softly. Ambition is a powerful motivation and can lead you into conflict if you let it get out of control. Properly channeled, it results in great achievements and brings recognition. Events may make it easy for you to be original, have breakthroughs and find new solutions to old problems. This evening is good for friendships.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Keep up your pace in the business world-attention to detail may keep you in demand. Competition is high and your energies match any challenges you come across now. Put your visions and dreams to work. You can be intense, passionate and very personal. You may rush past superficialities and right to the heart of any matter. Your imagination drives you to make your inner vision a reality. Careful-there is aggressiveness in your emotions that may cause you to be prone to emotional outburst. Do not misuse your aggression. This, again, is a period of hard work, both in salvaging some endeavors that appear to be failing and in branching out in new directions. A relaxed atmosphere this evening will put you in the mood for romance.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Career choices, decisions that should be made, may appear to go against or challenge your current sense of security and home environment. The easy way out may not be beneficial to your health and general well-being. Weigh alternatives with care. Your career and path to success seems to be running counter to your need for change and self-growth. Job requirements may stifle your sensitivity-hold you back from growing. Tread this one with care-stay focused. Look for work in science, medicine or a nursery group-plants or children. Being a tour guide may be another consideration. You are thankful for the passion and depth of your nature as it takes you into some of the most interesting places and with the most interesting people.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You should take advantage of furthering your professional aims now. You are at your most appealing and can have the greatest impact on the ones at work who pass out the raises and promotions. If you have been out of work, try particularly hard during this time to find the kind of job you really want. You have fluency in communication and your intellect is sharp. You will be curious, talkative and adept at problem-solving conversations most days. You could come up with new solutions or inventions. You may not, however, value something extraordinary or unusual. Instead, you find yourself appreciating what is quite normal or ordinary. There is much passion that manifests itself in art and a physical desire for the opposite sex this evening.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You have a natural sense of what the public wants and can easily sell items that most people find hard to sell. The business world is lucky to have you. Sales, lectures, presentations of all sorts can be successfully experienced. Clear decisions affecting others could be made now. This afternoon calms a bit as there are opportunities to relax and enjoy some quiet time. Perhaps this is a good time to think and study-you have a real appreciation for ideas and thoughts. You may find yourself enjoying a long telephone conversation, writing a letter or reading a book. You are especially witty this evening as you dine out with loved ones. Others value you for your independence and unique qualities. This is a time when you can expect a little boost and support.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Good eye-hand coordination and sustained effort makes almost any task run well. By midafternoon you will be pleased at your progress. A problem at work that has gone on for a long time is finally nearing its end. It will soon be time for new conquests. Now, understandably, you may feel more like ignoring responsibilities and doing some social visiting. Practice common sense and seek a balance. This is the time you and your co-workers will be given recognition for this hard work. You may be encouraged by an older member of the family to move forward with some special plan-research would be beneficial. You will enjoy waiting on your loved ones this evening. Heal the thought that you are separate from others.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You are at your most practical today. Your own common sense will tell you everything you need to know particularly when it comes to working with others. You can act without haste. You are called on to make decisions pertaining to money matters this morning. You make good use of your ability to sense common sense. A need to be respected is important to you and you look for ways to help others and to step in when your company may need help. You will soon be asked to communicate with powerful people in order to have better working situations. You develop a sense of ambition and practicality and strive for high achievement. A bookstore is an enjoyable place this evening. Special prices for beautiful books bring facts, figures and fantasy your way.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pleasant attitudes are created this Thursday in the home and in the workplace. A need for emotional security is accented; you should not pressure a partner or co-worker into doing things just to please you. You have an increased tendency to partake in working partnerships or group activities today. Mental stimulation is the key for you right now and it is a good idea to make every effort to join in and work with others. Any project begun today should be successful. This evening is a time where you might find a deepening of a love relationship. If you have no love relationship, this could be a time in which you will meet that special person. If you have a special love in your life, now is the time to find ways to nurture and deepen the relationship.

WORD SEARCH

Beatles Songs 1

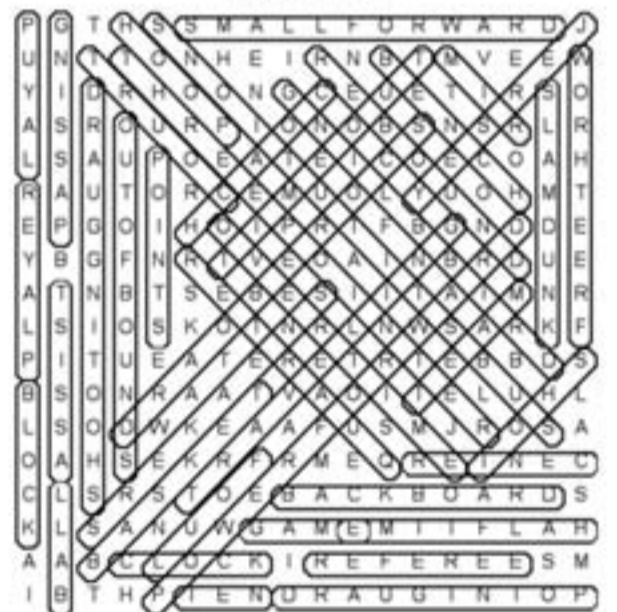
Find and circle all of the songs by The Beatles that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of an additional Beatles song.



- ANOTHER GIRL, ASK ME WHY, BIRTHDAY, BLACKBIRD, CRY BABY CRY, DAY TRIPPER, DEAR PRUDENCE, DIG A PONY, ELEANOR RIGBY, FIXING A HOLE, FLYING GET BACK, GETTING BETTER, HELLO GOODBYE, HEY BULLDOGE, HEY JUDE, HONEY PIE, I ME MINE, I WILL IF I FELL, IN MY LIFE, JULIA, LADY MADONNA, LOVELY RITA, MICHELLE, NO REPLY, OH DARLING, PLEASE PLEASE ME, POLYTHEME PAM, SEXY SADIE, SOMETHING SUN KING, TAXMAN, TELL ME WHY, THE END, TICKET TO RIDE, TWO OF US, WAIT, YER BLUES, YESTERDAY.

Yesterday's Solution

Basketball



- ASSIST, BACKBOARD, BALL, BASKET, BENCH, BLOCK, CENTER, CLOCK, COACH, COURT, DRIBBLING, FOUL, FREE THROW, GAME, HALF-TIME, HOOP, JERSEY, LAY-UP, NET, OUT OF BOUNDS, OVERTIME, PASSING, PLAYER, POINT GUARD, POWER FORWARD, QUARTER, REBOUND, REFEREE, RIM, SCOREBOARD, SHOOTING GUARD, SHOT, SLAM DUNK, SMALL FORWARD, SNEAKERS, SUBSTITUTIONS, TEAM, THREE POINTER, TIME-OUT, TRAVELING.

The hidden message is: THE INVENTOR OF BASKETBALL WAS JAMES NAISMITH

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



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

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaee Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antiga	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Azerbaijan	00994	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lesotho	00266		

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

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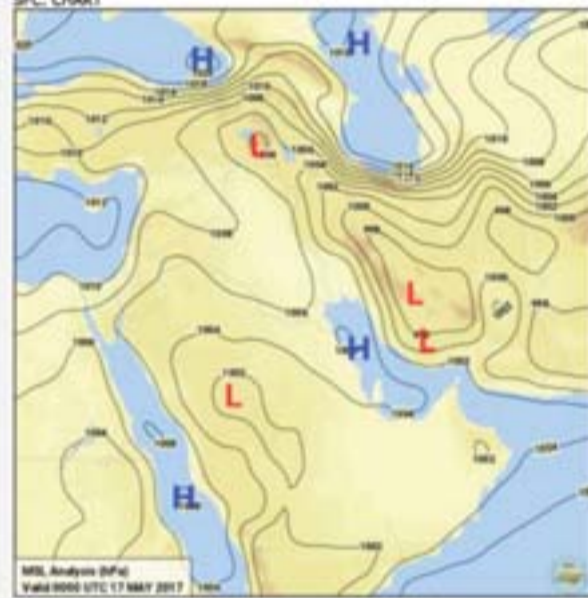
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 17/05/2017-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 44 °C

By Day : Hot with light to moderate north westerly to northerly wind, with speed of 10 - 32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear
By Night : Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Expected Weather	hot + scattered clouds	hot	hot + high clouds	hot + high clouds
Min Temp °C	27	28	29	28
Max Temp °C	45	46	46	46
Wind Direction	north westerly to light variable	variable wind changing to light to moderate south easterly	south easterly	north westerly
Wind Speed km/h	08 - 28	10 - 32	15 - 38	15 - 40

All times are local time (GMT +3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C	EXP
KUWAIT CITY	32		45	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	27		44	
ABDULY	27		45	
BURAYAN	26		41	
JAHRA	30		44	
FALLAJA ISLAND	27		41	
SALMIYAH	31		40	
AHMADI	33		41	
JAL ALIYAH	28		43	
QAROH ISLAND	29		34	
UMH AL-MARADEM	28		38	
KUWAISIB	29		43	
WAFRA	28		44	
SALMIY	27		42	
MUTRIBA	27		45	

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	46
Min Temp (°C)	25
Max Rel Hum (%)	26
Min Rel Hum (%)	07
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	43 SW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	04:54
Sunset	18:34

Prayer Times

Fajr	03:24
Sunrise	04:54
Zuhr	11:44
Asr	15:20
Sunset	18:34
Isha	20:01



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abidallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Foday	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhazeem	23926920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadab	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abidallah Al-Rfae	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abidallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
Dr Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarroof	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gajare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abidallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdalateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abidallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foaid Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. MUSAED FARAJ KHAMEES	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammed Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	Te: 2575077 Fax: 25723123

Psychologists /Psychotherapists	Soor Center Tel: 2290-1677 Fax: 2290 1688	info@soorcenter.com www.soorcenter.com	Kaizen center 25716707	Noor Clinic 23845955	William Schuilenberg, RPC 2290-1677 Zaina Al Zabin, M.Sc. 2290-1677
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MUSIC & MOVIES



(From left 1st Row) French journalist Henri Behar, South Korean director and member of the Feature Film jury Park Chan-wook, German director and member of the Feature Film jury Maren Ade, US actor and member of the Feature Film jury Will Smith, French actress and director and member of the Feature Film jury Agnes Jaoui, Spanish director and President of the Feature Film Jury Pedro Almodovar, US actress and member of the Feature Film jury Jessica Chastain, Italian director and member of the Feature Film jury Paolo Sorrentino, Chinese actress and member of the Feature Film jury Fan Bingbing, and French music composer and member of the Feature Film jury Gabriel Yared, attend yesterday a press conference ahead of the opening ceremony of the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AP/AFP photos

Will Smith, Almodovar open a testy Cannes Film Festival



(From left) French actress and director and member of the Feature Film jury Agnes Jaoui, Chinese actress and member of the Feature Film jury Fan Bingbing, US actress and member of the Feature Film jury Jessica Chastain, US actor and member of the Feature Film jury Will Smith, Spanish director and President of the Feature Film Jury Pedro Almodovar, Italian director and member of the Feature Film jury Paolo Sorrentino, French music composer and member of the Feature Film jury Gabriel Yared, South Korean director and member of the Feature Film jury Park Chan-wook and German director and member of the Feature Film jury Maren Ade pose during a photocall ahead of the opening ceremony.

The 70th Cannes Film Festival opened yesterday under sunny Cote D'Azur skies and the high-wattage smiles of stars including Will Smith and Marion Cotillard. But a brewing storm over Netflix's place at the world's most prestigious film festival continued to steal the spotlight as Cannes rolled out the red carpet. Optimism is high at this year's Cannes, which features a lineup widely considered to be well-stocked with heavyweight filmmakers, including Todd Haynes ("Wonderstruck"), Sofia Coppola ("The Beguiled"), Michael Haneke ("Happy End") and Lynne Ramsay ("You Were Never Really Here"). But rancor and controversy have characterized the preamble to Cannes, as well as its opening day.

For the first time, Cannes selected two Netflix releases - Bong Joon-ho's "Okja" and Noah Baumbach's "The Meyerowitz Stories" - for its Palme d'Or competition. French theaters, which have strict rules regarding streaming service films, rebelled at the thought of a movie that won't play on the big screen winning the Palme d'Or - the biggest award in film next to an Oscar, and to some, even more important. The festival relented and next year won't accept streaming-only films.

Yesterday, Pedro Almodovar, who's presiding over this year's competition jury, read a lengthy statement in which he said: "I personally do not conceive, not only the Palme d'Or, any other prize being given to a film and not being able to see this film on a big screen." The comment was striking coming from the head of the jury that will decide the award, potentially meaning that the Joon-ho and Baumbach films are already out of luck. But Almodovar, a Cannes regular, drew applause for his defense of the theatrical experience, which he said he'll fight for "as long as I'm alive."

Chan-wook, stuck up for Netflix. Later this year, Netflix will debut one of its biggest budget films yet, the \$90 million fantasy thriller "Bright," in which Smith stars.

"In my house, Netflix has been nothing but an absolute benefit," Smith said of his children's viewing habits. "They get to see films they absolutely wouldn't have seen. Netflix brings a great connectivity. There are movies that are not on a screen within 8,000 miles of them. They get to find those artists." Smith, who has not had a film play at Cannes before, was dapperly dressed and cheerfully posing with festival-goers who screamed "Will! Will!" "West Philadelphia is a long way from Cannes," joked an enthusiastic Smith, referring to his hometown.

Security was greater than ever at the French festival, which has stepped up efforts to restrict access, added more metal detectors and even introduced an anti-drone system. France remains under a state of emergency since the November 2015 Paris attacks. This is also the first festival held since the nearby Nice attack last year that killed 86 people. Festival organizers have said everything has been done to maintain a balance of safety and the celebratory atmosphere of the world's most prestigious film festival. On Wednesday, the heightened measures were already causing something unthinkable at the stringently clockwork Cannes: slight delays at screenings and press conferences.

"Since Sept 11, Cannes has ... maximized security measures," festival director Thierry Fremaux said in an interview. "You're in a country which has got a lot of terrorist attacks. Charlie Hebdo, the Bataclan, Nice, one year ago. So we need to pay attention." Arnaud Desplechin's "Ismael's Ghosts," with Mathieu Amalric, Charlotte Gainsbourg and Cotillard, was the opening-night film. Critics, while praising some of the performances, weren't enamored with Desplechin's farcical, self-referential drama about a filmmaker visited by a long missing ex-wife. The Cannes Film Festival runs through May 28, when the Palme d'Or winner and other awards will be announced. — AP

Fantasy thriller

"The size of the screen should not be smaller than the chair you're sitting in. It should not be part of your everyday setting," said the Spanish filmmaker. "You must be small and humble in front of the image that's here." But Smith, a member of the jury that also includes Jessica Chastain, Paolo Sorrentino and Park

Michael Moore filming new documentary on Donald Trump

Filmmaker Michael Moore is making a documentary on Donald Trump entitled "Fahrenheit 11/9," a nod to his most famous work set in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks as well as the date the US president was elected. "Yes, I'm making a movie to get us out of this mess," the award-winning provocateur said on Twitter alongside a link to an article about the film on Variety magazine's website.

According to the site, film producers Bob and Harvey Weinstein have acquired the global rights to the film through one of their companies, Fellowship Adventure Group, which produced Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11." When contacted by AFP, The Weinstein Company, the Weinstein brothers' US film studio, said they were unable to comment. The name of the leftist filmmaker's latest documentary stems from the date the results of last year's presidential election were finalized, November 9, 2016. The vote itself took place the day before.

It comes more than a decade after Moore first shot to fame with "Fahrenheit 9/11," a political documentary about the presidency of George W. Bush in the aftermath of September 11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The film earned him the Palme d'Or prize at the Cannes film festival in 2004. During the 2016 presidential election, Moore sought to mobilize public opinion against Trump and was one of the very few public figures to say the then-candidate stood a strong chance of winning. Three weeks before the election, he rushed out a surprise documentary, "Michael Moore in Trumpland," an ode to Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton that he made in just 12 days. In late July, the 63-year-old - also known for lambasting capitalism, large corporations and assault weapons - will make his debut on stage in the US with a one-man-show on Broadway that returns to the theme of Trump's rise to the White House. — AFP



Michael Moore attends the Turner Upfront 2017 arrivals on the red carpet at The Theater at Madison Square Garden. — AFP

World's most famous movie house turns 90

Shirley Temple did it barefoot. Mel Brooks wore an extra finger. Whoopi Goldberg buried her dreadlocks. Steve McQueen and actress wife Ali MacGraw did it facing the wrong way. An old aphorism says that to visit Los Angeles and not see the iconic hand and foot prints of Hollywood's biggest stars in the imposing courtyard of the TCL Chinese Theatre is like going to the Middle Kingdom and not walking The Great Wall. Today, the world's most famous picture house celebrates 90 years at the epicenter of the movie business, the venue of many of Tinseltown's most glamorous showbiz moments through 16 presidents, a world war and three huge earthquakes.

The night before, veteran filmmaker Ridley Scott becomes the 304th star to sink his hands and feet into the cement squares in the theater's forecourt - maintaining a tradition celebrated by Hollywood's finest, from Mary Pickford through John Wayne and Sophia Loren to Jack Nicholson and Brad Pitt. "It's a real honor to get placed out in the forecourt and when you look at the people we have out there, going back now nine decades, it's incredible," Levi Tinker, resident historian at the Chinese, told AFP.

"You have some of the biggest, brightest, most iconic names in Hollywood history." It all started when movie theater impresario Sid Grauman, one of Hollywood's best known showmen, leased the former home of matinee idol Francis X. Bushman and opened the Chinese on May 18 in 1927 after raising \$2 million. Silent screen star Norma Talmadge clumsily stepped into wet cement on the construction site, witnessed by Grauman who - spying an opportunity - shrugged off her embarrassed apologies and said he would use the footprint to promote the opening.

Priceless

Stars have since seen the ceremonies as a career highlight, often going to a great length to ensure their square stands out from the crowd. Shirley Temple, the youngest honoree in 1935 at just five years old, appeared barefoot, quickly deciding it was a good way to distract the press from the fact that one of her baby teeth had just fallen out. Marilyn Monroe wanted to dot her 'i' with a diamond before being persuaded that the precious stone would probably be stolen. She sunk an earring into her square instead and the exposed half was stolen anyway.

More recently, Mel Brooks concealed until the last minute that one of his hands had a fake sixth finger. "You think after all this time there would be hardly any room. But there's enough space out there to go on for a number of years still," said Tinker, although he added that some big names were missing. Audrey Hepburn was among the few to decline, while James Dean was readying to lay his prints in the presence of "Giant" co-stars Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor when he was killed in a car crash at the age of 24.

Older than the Oscars or the Walk of Fame, the Chinese was Grauman's third LA cinema after the lavish Egyptian a few blocks away and the downtown Million Dollar Theatre. "He wanted to out-do what he had done in those other theaters and he had gone all throughout Europe and Asia looking at different architecture styles and he was very impressed with Chinese. He had a number of artifacts and antiques brought over," said Tinker. The entrepreneur imported temple bells, pagodas and other pieces while Chinese poet and filmmaker Moon Quon supervised artisans from his homeland as they created the many artworks that still decorate the auditorium.

'Making history

The forecourt, with its 40-foot (12-meter) curved walls and copper-topped turrets, is flanked by 10-foot lotus-shaped fountains. Two columns topped by wrought iron masks hold aloft the 90 foot high bronze roof, bordering a dragon carved from stone, while the entrance is guarded by two authentic and priceless -- 15th Century Ming Dynasty Heaven Dogs. On its opening night, tens of thousands lined Hollywood Boulevard as fans tried to catch a glimpse of their favorite stars at the packed 2,200-seat theater for the \$11-a-ticket debut of Cecil B. DeMille's "The King of Kings."

Some five to six million visitors from across the world visit every year as many as the Sistine Chapel in Rome to see their favorite stars immortalized in the cement these days. It is the only single-screen theatre to have been open continuously for nine decades - not including short closures for renovations - and hosts between 35 and 50 premieres a year, more than any other venue in the world. Next up for the iconic institution - which is owned by a board of private investors - is expansion, with a Chinese Theatre due to open in San Diego later in the year, and then there are plans to open in the Middle East and China itself.

Alwyn Hight Kushner, who runs the Chinese, oversaw its transformation into the world's largest IMAX theater in 2013, walking a tightrope between modernizing and preserving its historical features. "What's so special is it's constantly new history. We're making history every single day," she said. — AFP

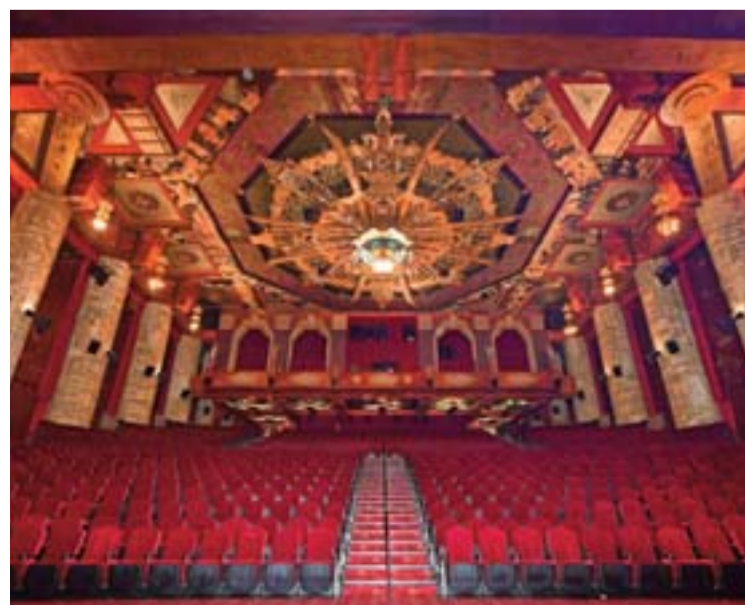
Music cut from 'La La Land' added back in for concert tour

"La La Land" is getting its overture back. An instrumental overture that was cut from the hit musical film starring Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone will be added back in for a touring concert show that kicks off this month at the Hollywood Bowl. Composer Justin Hurwitz said it's one of two new pieces of music that fans of the film will get to hear in "La La Land In Concert: A Live-to-Film Celebration." The overture was written into writer-director Damien Chazelle's initial script and was the first piece of music Hurwitz created for the movie. It was cut after test screenings so the film could open with the jubilant "Another Day of Sun," featuring dancers atop cars stuck on a Los Angeles freeway.

Hurwitz said early versions of the film included the overture and then "Another Day of Sun," which was two big music pieces at the beginning of the movie. "We knew one of them had to go," he said. A version that included the overture as the first number was screened for months

before the filmmakers decided the elaborate dance number should open the film. "Losing one of them was very difficult," the composer said. Hurwitz said audiences would also hear an additional new piece of music - which joins together several key melodies - at the start of the second half of the show.

Hurwitz, who won two Academy Awards for his work on the movie's music, is conducting the live shows May 26 and May 27 at the Hollywood Bowl. More than 50 performances will follow in the US and internationally. The show will include a 100-piece symphony orchestra, choir and jazz ensemble, along with the film's original vocal recordings from Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone and John Legend. The movie will play along while the musicians perform. "There's a lot of melody spread across the orchestra - that's kind of the way I arrange. — AP



The artwork which began in 1928 by Chinese-born American actor Keye Luke remains decorating the ornate ceiling inside the TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood, California, as seen, ahead of the 90th anniversary of one of Hollywood's most iconic landmarks. — AFP photos



Roy Rogers added the hoof prints of his horse Trigger as well as an imprint of his revolver to the cement at his Hand and Foot print ceremony in 1949 in front of the TCL Chinese Theater.

FASHION



Models present on the catwalk creations by Rad Hourani during Arab Fashion Week in Dubai. — AFP photos



ARAB FASHION WEEK brings unisex minimalism to Dubai

Designers, buyers and influencers have descended on Dubai for Arab Fashion Week, a five-day event dedicated to ready couture and resort wear for women, men and those who refuse a label. The show opened Tuesday night with Jordanian-Canadian sensation Rad Hourani, known for his unisex designs, Palestinian-American Jenanne Filat and her menswear lineup straight out of Arkansas, and runway darlings Marchesa.

Hourani sent his models down the catwalk in geometric, binary-transcending designs "based on style preference rather than gender," with men, women and gender non-conforming models in layers of dark boiled wool and poplin, and all in pastel slip-on shoes. Filat, of the US-based menswear line Barakat Bespoke, meanwhile decked her all-men lineup in suits, metallic lipstick, and no shoes.

The week will also showcase designers specializing in abayas, a traditional robe-like dress that is gaining popularity among major labels as they move into regional markets. The International Dwarf Fashion Show will also host a show by American Wardrobe featuring models living with dwarfism.

'Design is for everyone'

While listed as an international fashion week alongside Paris and Milan, the twice-yearly Arab Fashion Week offers exclusively see-now-buy-now collections and pre-collections—an issue that has been met with some contention by traditional gatekeepers in the world of high fashion. "Design is for everyone," explained Hourani, an invited member of the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture, France's exclusive trade association for haute couture.

Hourani, the first unisex designer to join the association, was handpicked in 2010 by Vogue's Anna Wintour and the late Franca Sozzani to showcase his work in Milan. Along with Burberry, he has been a vocal champion of expanding the traditional system, and timeline, of ordering designs strictly as they appear on the runway months in advance. True to his aesthetic, his Dubai show was conceptually complex but structurally clean: square necklines, skirts layered over pants, and matte black shades in sharp contrast against uncoiffed hair and a soundtrack featuring the iconic songs of Lebanese diva Fairuz.

"I don't aim to make men feminine, or women masculine," Hourani told AFP after his show. "It's... to infuse the two anatomies and create one pure unisex neutral pattern. I think it's important to understand what neutrality is, what unisex is about."

'Bold and unapologetic'

On the other end of the spectrum is Marchesa. The brand's trademark fairytale pre-fall collection was an instant hit with the Arab Fashion Week crowd, some of whom put on their Marchesa best for the occasion. Many were still snapping selfies on the catwalk moments after the lights dimmed and music started.

With three-dimensional floral appliques, layers of tulle, long beaded fringe and intricate embroidery in blush, blue and metallics, Marchesa's collection of gowns was met with nods and excited whispers. Her four-year-old refusing to leave his mother backstage, Marchesa co-founder and designer Georgina Chapman made last-minute adjustments to her lineup with her son Dash on her hip. "We've always had a strong clientele base here and I think it's because the Middle Eastern woman, the Arab woman, appreciates fashion," Chapman told AFP.



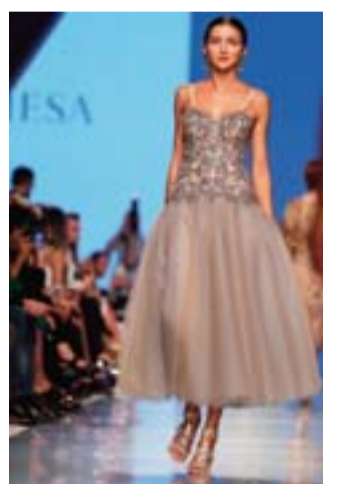
Fashion designer Georgina Chapman, co-founder of Marchesa, waves to the audience on the catwalk after her shows during the Arab Fashion Week.



Models walk down the catwalk wearing designs by Mrhua Mrashua.



Models walk down the catwalk wearing designs by Marchesa.



TRAVEL BEAUTY HACKS THAT HELP TO STAY FRESH AND LOOKING YOUR BEST



As most of you may know, my job requires 'A LOT' of traveling which can be very tiring with constant flights back and forth and jet lag. Over the years, I've come up with some travel beauty hacks which help with making sure I stay fresh and looking my best.

1. Staying make up free while on a flight

I usually try not to wear make up when I'm flying because cabin air is dry which can lead to flaky skin and breakouts if you're wearing heavy make up, so I always make sure I keep make up wipes with me to remove my make up and freshen up if I'm feeling like I need a pick me up.

2. Moisturize Moisturize Moisturize!

Keeping your skin moisturized during a flight is so important if you want to stay looking fresh until you land. I always keep a thick moisturizer with me, which I use like a face mask so I'll apply a thick layer to my face and leave it on for the duration of the flight. I find that doing this makes a huge difference to the appearance of my skin!

3. Stay Hydrated

Staying hydrated is one of the best ways to maintain good skin. I love to keep a refillable water bottle with me that can easily be refilled during the flight to remind me to drink water and stay hydrated! Juices and green tea can also give you a nutritional boost to keep you staying healthy and avoiding the plane germs and potentially getting sick.

4. Clean & Fresh Hair

Lets not forget our hair! We all know that flights can leave your hair looking worse for wear so its important to use products that will keep your hair looking clean and fresh. Dry shampoo will be your best friend during a flight! My favorite dry shampoo brand is Batiste because they have so many different formulas and scents and I find that their products work amazing on my hair. Just a few spritzes into my hair can really make a difference and add some volume and texture, which I love.

5. Multi-use Products

Packing multi-use products is the best way to pack light

but also have everything you need with you! I usually don't have much time to get ready once I arrive at a destination so I like to keep multi-use products in my carry on so I can quickly do my make up before landing. Some of my favorites are:

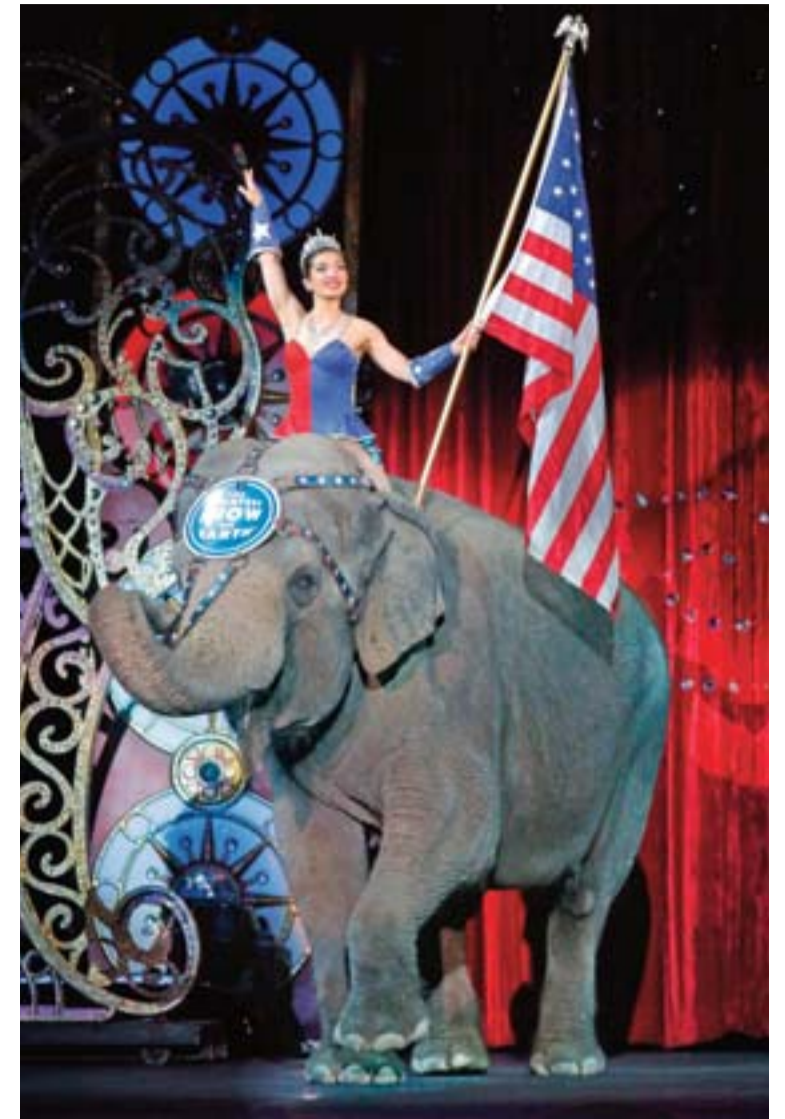
- Tinted moisturizers with SPF that work as a moisturizer, sun protectant, and give coverage.
- Two in one cheek and lip color
- Under eye brightener which reduces dark circles and puffiness as well as moisturizes
- Setting spray which can be used to freshen up during the flight as well as to set your make up
- Brown eyeliner which can be smudged along your lids as eye shadow and used as regular eyeliner.
- Lip salve, which can be used on lips, cuticles, and even the ends of your hair.

Quick tip: Toothpaste is a great multi use product to keep with you to use as a blemish treatment. Toothpaste contains antibacterial ingredients that work amazing at reducing the size and color of a blemish!

FEATURE



Ringmaster Kristen Michelle Wilson, right, hugs a member of the crew after the red unit's final performance.



In this file photo, an Asian elephant performs during the national anthem for the final time in the Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus in Providence, RI.

The last days of the Ringling Bros circus



Ringling Bros clown Ivan Skinfill poses for a selfie photo with children during the intermission of a show, in Providence, RI.



Kristen Michelle Wilson, the first female ringmaster for the Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey circus, stands backstage as she prepares to open the show.



Beth Walters, left, and Stephen Craig, both clowns with Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus talk during the clowns' final group breakfast.



Members of the Ringling Bros Circus Mongolian Marvels warm up backstage before performing in Providence, RI.

An elephant stretches its trunk through a window to soothe a sick child. A woman gives birth and three months later is back performing on the high wire. A handler of big cats weeps as the beasts lope out of the ring for the last time. These stories could come only from circus performers, and in particular one famous circus, the one immortalized as "The Greatest Show on Earth": the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, which is hanging its hat for the last time this weekend.

While the show goes on in other circuses around the world, Ringling is special. The size, the spectacle and the history - stretching back to P.T. Barnum and his traveling museum in the 1800s - set it apart. One of Ringling's two traveling circuses is scheduled to perform its final show Sunday in New York. The other closed this month, in Providence, Rhode Island, and with it, the end to a way of life few others have experienced. The Associated Press was allowed to observe it extensively.

Ringling is the last circus anywhere to travel by train, and while living on a train can be tough, the accommodations are considered a benefit that other circuses don't offer. Perks include the "Pie Car," the mile-long train's dining operation, as well as a circus nursery and school for the many children whose parents make the circus what it is.

Some observations from the home the performers leave behind, from the unit's last circus baptism, their final times goofing around on "Clown Alley," and other moments the world will never see again.

The boss clown

One of Sandor Eke's earliest memories is of an elephant comforting him, stretching its trunk through his trailer window, while he lay recovering from illness. Eke's Hungarian parents were performing at a circus in Sweden, and Eke was just a toddler. A few years later, he'd be a circus performer himself, and aspiring to come to America to join Ringling. He got his wish 20 years ago, as an acrobat. Five years later, his colleagues told him he was funny and would make a good clown.

Now, at age 41, he's the Boss Clown, leader of the clowns on the unit. He's also dad to 2-year-old Michael, and they are enjoying the waning days here together. "You have your own zoo. You can pet an elephant; you can play with the baby tigers," Eke says. "You have your own clowns. Everybody loves you. A circus is a very big family." Someday, he plans to teach his son juggling and other circus skills.

Even so, Eke knows Michael may never join the circus. Eke's wife, a former circus aerialist, has already established their new home in Las Vegas. When the circus closes, Eke hopes to get a job as a "flair" bartender there, doing tricks like juggling bottles. He wonders how life will change. "My normal life is this. My normal life is going on the train, going every week to a different city," Eke says. "It's crazy how much I love circus."

Knowing it's coming to an end has been difficult for his fellow performers and crew, and Eke been spending his time trying to make his circus family laugh. "I don't stop until they smile," he says. "And I do everything. I don't care if I have to dive into a trash can. That's how I want to be remembered. And that's how I want to remember myself. I'm going to go and cry. But I'm going to be happy."

Send out the clowns

Ivan Vargas likes to say his parents fell in love with the air. He is sixth-generation circus. His mother performed on the high wire when they met, his father on the trapeze. Vargas was born between two Ringling Bros. shows in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1990. His father managed to perform in the early

show, then made it across the street to the hospital - in costume - for his son's birth. Vargas is part of Clown Alley. It's not just a place. In one sense, it's the private area backstage where clowns get ready to perform. But it's also how the clowns refer to themselves, a mini-fraternity within the circus, and a microcosm of it.



There's Brian Wright, a circus superfan, of sorts. He was 4 years old when he saw his first Ringling show, and he knew that's what he wanted to do. The Brooklyn, New York, native auditioned three times before finally landing a job as a clown. Now he keeps a book he likes to call the "Clown Bible," which, after four years at Ringling, is now filled with memories, thoughts and jokes he collects when he meets a former clown.

In this April 1, 1963 file photo, a Ringling Bros Circus elephant walks out of a train car as young children watch in the Bronx railroad yard in New York. — AP photos

And there are Nick Lambert and Stephen Craig, neither of whom gave a thought to joining the circus until they were out of college. They ended up here because of their love of acting. Lambert has a plan for his last hours on the circus train, before he heads back to his hometown of Albion, Illinois.

The morning after the last performance, he'll sit in his compartment on the train and open up a cabinet. There, clowns from years past have written their names, shows and years they performed with Ringling. "I'll get to add my name to the door," he says. "I'm the last one in this room before it is all gone."

Restricted by the life

Quarters on the circus train can be tight. Some cabins are so small, you can touch opposite walls with outstretched arms. Many travelers are stuck in their rooms while the train is moving because the only exit is to the outside. Take Jeannie Hamilton. She has been with the circus 12 years, most recently as manager of concessions. While people talk about running



Boss clown Sandor Eke helps his 2-year-old son, Michael Eke step off the Ringling Bros circus red unit's traveling train parked in a rail yard as they head to the arena for a show.



Boss clown Sandor Eke, left, shaves with help from his 2-year-old son, Michael, before putting on his makeup before the opening performance.

FEATURE



Nicole Sanders flies through the air after being shot from a cannon during a show.



Ringling Bros boss clown Sandor Eke dusts his face with powder before performing in a show.



Ringling Bros boss clown Sandor Eke, center, holds his 2-year-old son Michael up to pet a camel before performing in a show.



Clowns Gabor Hrisafis, left, and Beth Walters talk in a hallway of the Dunkin' Donuts center before a performance.



Ringling Bros boss clown Sandor Eke hugs his 2-year-old son Michael after the red unit's final show.

away with the circus as a way to break free, Hamilton said she sometimes felt constrained - either stuck at the arena or stuck on the train.

The train moves much slower than an Amtrak, or even a Honda. Its final run traveled a circuitous route from Hartford, Connecticut, through Springfield and Worcester, Massachusetts, to Providence, Rhode Island. The trip took half a day. By car, the 65-mile distance could be covered in less than two hours. The train cars are, for the most part, being sold, and many have already been auctioned.

So, Hamilton decided to spend that last trip soaking it all in. "Anytime the train was moving, I was on the vestibule," she said, referring to the small standing area between train cars. "Now that it's coming to an end, I was trying to enjoy every minute of it."

celebration on Ringling's show in 146 years," he tells the boy. Father Jerry has been a mainstay for the circus family, marrying many of them in happy times and ministering to them through tragedy. "I just wanted it to be done by Father Jerry," Strickland says. "I've known him for a long time, and I'm happy."

Birth on a wire (or close to it)

Being a circus performer takes commitment, discipline and athleticism, qualities Anna Lebedeva exhibits when she balances on the high wire with her husband, Mustafa Danguir. She executes her tricks so effortlessly, it's hard to believe she had a baby three months ago. It was important to her to perform in Ringling Bros' last shows, she says, and she pushed herself to get back in condition after their son, Amir, was born. "I'm really happy to have a chance to finish this. It's been seven years for us," she says. "This is just history, you know?"

Danguir is the first in his family to perform in the circus. He was discovered doing acrobatic tricks as a child in Tangier, Morocco, and invited to circus school. Lebedeva, originally from Moscow, is sixth-generation circus. They married last year, 30 feet up on the high wire, while the show was in Houston.

Now, they'll move back to Europe. Danguir will appear as a finalist Saturday on the TV show "Arabs Got Talent." The couple dreams of starting their own show, or maybe opening a circus school in Morocco to teach future generations. They're optimistic something good will come along. "We are artists," Danguir says. "We are survivors."

The curtain closes

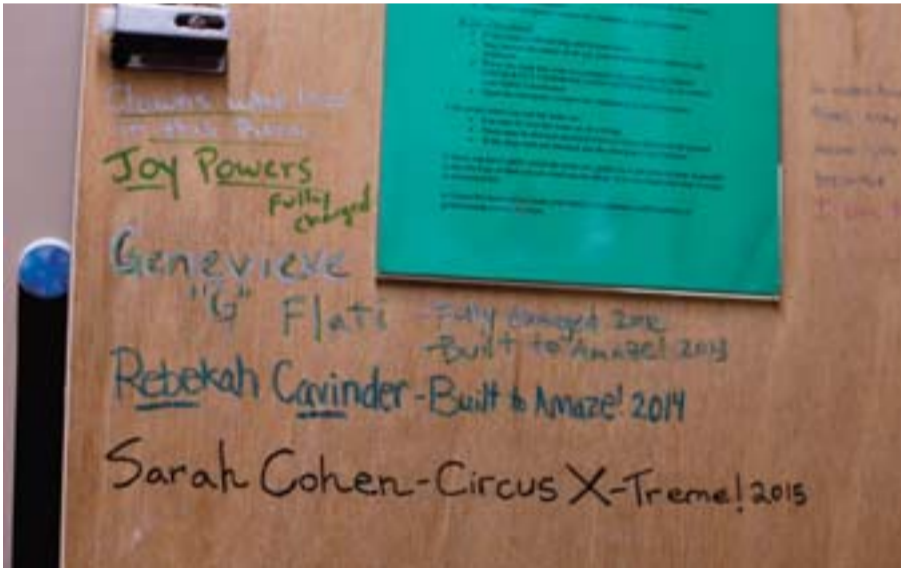
The tiger presenter weeps as he ends his act with the big cats. The animals are owned by Feld Entertainment, which owns Ringling, and Tabayara Maluenda has to say goodbye. The animals will be sent to a center that specializes in tigers, according to a Feld spokesman. Years of protests by animal rights groups are among the things that took their toll on the circus in recent years, along with declining attendance and changing public tastes.

As Maluenda wipes away tears during their last appearance together, he thanks each animal individually as it leaves the ring. One, he embraces and kisses - the first tiger Feld got for him when he joined Ringling 13 years ago, one he raised it from its days as a cub. Finally, after the aerialists, strongmen, the human cannonball and the BMX bikes have all done their tricks, it's over. The ringmaster calls out the families of the performers and crew to join them on the arena floor for a final thank-you. Among them are "Boss Clown" Sandor Eke and his son.

In a few days, the two will fly back to Hungary to visit family before their permanent move to Las Vegas. Eke is planning to visit a circus he has heard about there. "Any time I have a chance to see a circus," he says, "I will be there." But tonight, he stands on the arena floor one last time, holds his son in his arms, and cries. — AP



The Danguir high wire troupe performs during a show.



A cabinet door inside a clown's living quarters on the train displays messages and signatures from past clowns who have lived in that room.

Hamilton would smile, wave and take pictures as she passed by people who had come out to say their final goodbyes to the Ringling train, yell "thank you" and applaud. "Got a lump in my throat," Hamilton says, "every time I saw them."

A circus baptism

Behind Clown Alley, in the depths of the arena, a small group of performers and crew hastily assembles for a baptism. Six-year-old Eddie Strickland is led in by his father, Jimmie, who has been with the circus for 20-some years. The Rev Jerry Hogan, of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Circus and Traveling Shows Ministry, is ready in his vestments, made by the costume department from old elephant blankets and decorated with sequined clown faces, crosses and animal prints.

Heavy equipment rolls by, and people walk through on their way to the bathroom, some pausing for a bit to watch. Father Jerry, as he is known, blesses water taken from the tap a few moments ago, then pours some on Eddie's head. "Eddie, you're going to be famous. This is the last baptism



The audience reacts to performers on the high wire during a performance.



The red unit of Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey circus opens a show in Providence, R.I.



The skyline of Dubai is pictured from the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world standing at 828 meters. — AFP



This undated photo provided by the Museum of Arts and Design shows a display case which includes a mink satchel and a green alligator bag, both from 1988. — AP photos



This undated photo display case that includes a 1973 fuchsia bag featuring embroidery, and one of the larger scale bags, a 1980 travel bag featuring 'gros point' needlepoint embroidery.

Judith Leiber's remarkable tale told in new exhibition at MAD

"I consider her to be a genius, absolutely, without a doubt, and the greatest pathfinder for women. She broke through the glass ceiling so many years ago," said Gerson Leiber about his wife, handbag designer Judith Lieber, at last week's opening of the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) exhibition, "Judith Leiber: Crafting a New York Story." His enthusiasm could be dismissed as familial pride, if not for Judith Lieber's objectively extraordinary accomplishments. She was born Judith Peto in 1921, in Budapest, Hungary. As a Jew, she was not allowed to attend Hungarian universities, and so she went abroad to London to study chemistry. But then, while home on summer vacation in 1939, war broke out and she was stuck in Hungary. While waiting out the war, she apprenticed at a local handbag factory. Her skills as a handbag artisan grew, and she soon became the only woman accepted into the Hungarian handbag guild.

After surviving the war, she came to the US and carved out a place for herself in New York's competitive fashion business. As she worked her way up the hierarchy of Seventh Avenue, she decided to open her own handbag line in 1963. Leiber was intensely involved in every step of production, from designing to crafting the final piece. "As you look around the exhibition, you can see the intense craftsmanship and skill involved in her work," the curator of the exhibition, Samantha de

Tillio, explained. "I think her work really transcends fashion."

The exhibition is designed to look like a jewelry store. The walls are painted purple, like the inside of a plush jewelry box. Mirrored-bottom vitrines dangle from wire scaffolding rigged to the ceiling. Within, a spotlight highlights a vast range of handbag styles, including much of her early work, which was, according to *Women's Wear Daily*, "decidedly understated."

There's a 1993 sleek black woven horsehair envelope trimmed with calfskin, and a 1965 rhinestone-encrusted handled pouch. A burgundy needlepoint "Bon Voyage" tote circa 1980 is displayed near a crystal-embroidered Folk-Art inspired patchwork quilt coin-purse from 1991. So much of her work was inspired by fine art, as evidenced with her Piet Mondrian-inspired snakeskin envelope from 1990. There is also a minaudiere encrusted with crystals shaped into a series of women standing next to each other from 1987, modeled after Faith Ringgold's 1986 art piece *The Purple Quilt* (which, incidentally, is hung on a wall across the room).

First Ladies to princesses to socialites

But that's just in the Jane and Leonard Korman Gallery. Turn a corner into the Tiffany & Co. Foundation Jewelry Gallery, and there's a labyrinth of glass walls showcasing Leiber's best work: her

crystal-encrusted minaudiere's. These ornately jeweled bags that are so small that they are barely bags - the word 'minaudiere' is French for "coquettish air," and the term was coined by famed jeweler Alfred Van Cleef in the 1930s. They are also Leiber's most famous work, worn by nearly everyone important: from First Ladies to princesses to socialites. And it's not hard to imagine why. The bags - ranging from Buddhas to hat boxes; egg-plants to dogs - are little treasures, objects of wit and whimsy, glamour mixed with humor.

The exhibition is difficult to navigate, with descriptions of each bag and paraphernalia tacked on the wall like an afterthought, like it were a menu at a takeout bistro, numbered to reference the tiny numbers in front of each bag. Perhaps it was done to preserve the beauty of the bags, minimizing superfluous embellishment. But it ends up confusing the viewer as one meanders around searching for the bag's year of creation. However, the layout also forces the viewer to stop and consider, to move through the exhibition carefully and analytically. And when you understand Leiber's story, her struggles and her triumphs, it makes her extraordinary work all the more worthy of a second or third glance. This is a business built up by an immigrant woman with the determination to succeed, an inspiration for all who visit. — AP



This undated photo provided by the Museum of Arts and Design shows an installation view of the exhibit 'Judith Leiber: Crafting a New York Story' at the museum in New York.



A rhinestone-encrusted minaudiere modeled after Faith Ringgold's 'The Purple Quilt'.



A minaudiere by Judith Leiber, which was made in 1976 to celebrate the occasion of the American bicentennial.



A brown and white 'Millie' minaudiere with rhinestones owned by Barbara Bush and based on the Bush family dog.



Rhinestone encrusted minaudiere was made in 1978.