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# Kuwait Times



THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF



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**Fishermen say pollution not the main reason for poor catch**



**Comey to testify; Trump says firing 'nut job' FBI chief took off pressure**



**Faith Capital Holding acquires Masbagti**



**James powers Cavaliers in record rout of Celtics**



## TRUMP STARTS SAUDI TRIP WITH MASSIVE ARMS DEAL

KING SALMAN FETES TRUMP WITH TOP HONOR • DEALS WORTH \$380BN INKED



Min 30°  
Max 44°  
High Tide 08:08 & 19:27  
Low Tide 01:16 & 13:50



**RIYADH:** The White House announced a huge arms deal with Saudi Arabia yesterday as US President Donald Trump took his first steps on the world stage, looking to leave mounting troubles behind at home. The \$110 billion deal for Saudi purchases of US defense equipment and services came at the start of an eight-day foreign tour that will also take Trump to Jerusalem, the Vatican and meetings with leaders in Europe.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir said deals worth in excess of \$380 billion were signed during Trump's visit. "That was a tremendous day. Tremendous investments in the United States," Trump said at talks with Saudi King Salman. "Hundreds of billions of dollars of investments into the United States and jobs, jobs, jobs." White House spokesman Sean Spicer hailed the defense agreement as the "largest single arms deal in US history." "This package of defense equipment and services support the long-term security of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region in the face of Iranian threats," a White House official said.

As well as the talks with Salman, Trump met the kingdom's two powerful crown princes yesterday, before giving a speech on Islam to leaders of Muslim countries today. For Riyadh, the visit is an opportunity to rebuild ties with a key ally, strained under Trump's predecessor Barack Obama who Arab Gulf states suspected of a tilt towards their regional rival Iran.

The arms package includes a pledge by the kingdom to assemble 150 Lockheed Martin Blackhawk helicopters in Saudi Arabia, in a \$6 billion deal expected to result in about 450 jobs in the kingdom.

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**RIYADH:** (Left) US President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania Trump and Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz stop for coffee in the terminal of King Khalid International Airport following Trump's arrival yesterday. (Right) Trump receives the Order of Abdulaziz Al-Saud medal from King Salman at the Saudi Royal Court. — AFP

## ROUHANI SWEEPS TO VICTORY AMIR SENDS CONGRATULATIONS

**TEHRAN:** Iran has chosen the "path of engagement with the world" and rejected extremism, President Hassan Rouhani said following his resounding re-election victory yesterday. Rouhani, a 68-year-old moderate cleric who spearheaded a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, said voters had shunned those who wanted to turn the country back to the past. "The Iranian people want to live in peace and friendship with the rest of the world, but will not accept any threat or humiliation," he said on state television.

With 57 percent of the vote, Rouhani scored a convincing victory over hardline cleric Ebrahim Raisi on 38.3 percent. But he faces a stark challenge from US President Donald Trump, who has threatened to tear up the nuclear deal and re-impose sanctions. Rouhani made an apparent dig at regional rival Saudi Arabia, which is currently hosting Trump, saying: "Our people have declared to neighbouring countries and the whole region that the path to ensuring security is the reinforcement of democracy and not relying on foreign powers."

There were jubilant scenes in the capital Tehran, with hundreds of young people singing and dancing in



**TEHRAN:** Newly re-elected Iranian President Hassan Rouhani gestures during a televised speech yesterday. — AFP

the central Vali Asr Square, in spite of police efforts to move them along. Iranians flocked to the polls on Friday, with the turnout reaching 73 percent and forcing election officials to extend voting by several hours. Raisi, 56, had cast himself as a defender of the poor and called for a tougher line with the West, but his revolutionary rhetoric and promise of increased handouts gained limited traction.

The result "shows that Iranian people no longer believe in economic populism and radical change," said Ali Vaez, Iran analyst for the International Crisis Group think tank. "They have the maturity to understand that the solution to their country's predicaments are in competent management of the economy and moderation in international relations," Vaez told AFP.

Continued on Page 13

## AT WEF, ENTREPRENEURS SEEN AS SOLUTION FOR MIDEAST TROUBLES

**DEAD SEA, Jordan:** Digital start-ups run by young Arab entrepreneurs took center stage yesterday at the World Economic Forum, where participants said private sector-driven growth is key to solving the Middle East's stark economic problems, including 30 percent youth unemployment. More than 1,100 politicians and business people came together for the forum's regional meeting. Among them were EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, CEOs from the region and the founders of 100 start-ups from the Arab world.

The forum's regional meeting was held as President Donald Trump, whose young administration is engulfed in controversy, began his first international trip with a visit to



**SHUNEH, Jordan:** Israeli MP Tzipi Livni speaks with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during the opening session of the World Economic Forum held in this Dead Sea resort yesterday. — AFP

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## CONDOLENCES

**Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, management and staff**

**convey their deepest condolences to Al-Nusif and Al-Kharafi Family**

**On the sad demise of Nizar Ahmed Yousef Al-Nusif**

**The Father of Faisal Nizar Al-Nusif**  
Board Member, Zain Group

*May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him*



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sees off His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the airport yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photos



**National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem sees off His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.**

Local Spotlight

# TRUMP IN SAUDI ARABIA



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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**U**S President Donald Trump is visiting Saudi Arabia, and this trip has made headlines in the Arab press since the past week. Speculations and debate over this visit and its impact will not end any time soon. This is not the first visit by an American president to the region and Saudi Arabia, so what is the importance of this visit?

Facts and figures confirm that no American president has ever visited the holy sites of Islam, Judaism and Christianity in a single trip. Trump's journey starts from Saudi Arabia, then onwards to Israel and the Vatican, so apparently it is not merely a foreign and diplomatic trip. Another main reason is that three summits have been arranged during the visit. This is an exceptional event that includes a bilateral summit, a summit with GCC leaders and another meeting with Arab and Muslim leaders.

The Saudi-American summit aims at reaffirming the strong friendship and strengthening political, economic and security ties between the two countries. It certainly conveys the message that no power can defeat terrorism and extremism without the support of the Saudi kingdom and its allies.

The summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council and America aims to discuss the threats to security and stability in the region, and bolster trade relations between the GCC and the United States. Along with the Arab Islamic American summit, these meetings with the US president illustrate the new US administration's desire to reshape the US position in the region, choke Iranian expansion and differentiate between Muslims and extremists. These are three vital gatherings to confirm the US' strong return to the region and the GCC fold led by Saudi Arabia.

Despite Trump's comments during his election campaign in which he criticized Saudi Arabia and Muslims, many people here are not taking them seriously, and more likely as electoral statements. The choice of Saudi Arabia as his first stop is an attempt to counter widespread allegations that the US president is hostile to Islam. It is a good move by Trump, who like all Republicans, appreciates the Saudi role and its importance. Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia confirms that the points of agreement between the two countries are more than points of difference.

It is clear that the move, which coincided with the visit of Saudi Prince Mohammad bin Salman to the United States, has enhanced the chances of economic cooperation and security and political and partnership between the two countries to benefit them in the near and long term.

There is no doubt that Saudi Arabia being the choice of Trump's first foreign visit reflects the kingdom's position as a strategic ally of the United States. The visit is an important message to the adversaries of the kingdom as well as its allies, considering the policy of the previous US administration. Trump represents a major shift against Iran and a return to the old strategic relationship between America and Saudi Arabia since 1945.

It is also an opportunity for the US president to sign economic deals and agreements that he knows are important to American voters, because they will create new jobs. According to the Wall Street Journal, Trump's visit to the kingdom will witness the signing of several major investment agreements worth \$270 billion.

Media analyses will continue until the end of the tour and beyond, but the most important question is how this visit will change the rules of the game in the region. With the Trump administration, it will not be long.

## AMIR HEADS TO RIYADH FOR GCC-US SUMMIT

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation have left for Saudi Arabia yesterday to lead Kuwait's delegation to the 7th consultative summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders, GCC-US summit and Arab-Islamic-US summit in Riyadh. His Highness the Amir was seen off at the airport by His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National

Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Faisal Al-Saud Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Deputy Chairman of the National Guard Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior officials of the

army, police, national guard and Kuwait Fire Service Directorate.

His Highness the Amir's accompanying delegation includes First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh, His

Highness the Amir's Office Chief Ahmad Al-Fahad, Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Mohammad Abdullah Abulhasan, Amiri Protocols Chief Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, Amiri Diwan's Media Chief Yousef Al-Roumi, Chairman of Amiri Diwan's Political and Economic Affairs Sheikh Fawaz Saud Nasser Al-Sabah and senior officials of Amiri Diwan and Foreign Ministry. — KUNA

## 'RENEWABLE ENERGY-MADE IN GERMANY' EXPO STARTS TOMORROW AT THE AVENUES

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Germany is closing down all its nuclear facilities by 2022. But even with the absence of nuclear energy, Germany is now ready to face the world with clean renewable energy, said German Ambassador to Kuwait Karl Bergner as he explained his embassy's plan for a nuclear free Germany. The envoy spoke exclusively with Kuwait Times to announce its 'Renewable Energy-Made in Germany' expo, that will be held from May 22 to 26 at the Avenues.

"In fact, by now, more than 15-20 percent of our energy consumptions is created by non-nuclear energy sources like the hydro, solar and wind energy plants. We managed to continue with the plan since we started the winding down of nuclear energy use since 2011. Thanks to Fukushima nuclear tragedy, our country has really managed to keep distance from nuclear energy. This is the best solution for clean energy which is good for the environment and climate change as a whole," he said.

"The expo will talk about energy consumption, how to reduce it and ways to store the energy created by these technologies," he said. The embassy has also invited various schools to see for themselves the clean renewable technology they are now currently utilizing. The event will take place at the Avenues Mall under the patronage of Essam Al-Marzouq, the Kuwaiti Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water. The expo targets various groups from decision makers to students who want to contribute for the betterment of the entire population.

The expo will focus on the technology they are now

currently using for clean and green environment. The information will be displayed through various panels explaining the technology with up-to-date photographs and figures to explain how it works. The expo will be supported by leading German renewable energy companies and industry associates. The expo covers energy efficiency, heating, mobility, renewable energies, cost of consumers, climate protection, nuclear power, economic aspects, electric grid and energy storage.

The envoy said, the expo is a way to help Kuwaitis decide about their future energy consumption. "From current 1 percent of renewable energy, Kuwait could follow our example to increase it to 15 percent in a few years. In this way we can share our knowledge and probably transfer the technology to countries around the world," he said.

Karl Bergner also suggested that instead of building a power plant, Kuwait could invest in energy efficiency plants to reduce the consumption of energy. "Saudi Arabia Minister of Energy said, 'Oil is just too valuable to just let it burn. If there are ways to reduce the use of petrochemicals, we can certainly use petrochemicals for other purposes.' It is more sustainable and we can reduce the use of fossil energy. As time passes, it will be reduced and cease to exist while we will be searching for other sources. Right now, we need help," he urged.

He also invited students to consider Germany for their bachelor's or higher degree education and for tourists to visit their country. "If you are traveling to Germany especially this summer, please secure your visa early. While I am happy that Kuwaitis can get the visa in three days working time, it is better to apply for a visa ahead of time to avoid further delays," he said.



German Ambassador to Kuwait Karl Bergner

## ATTRACTING FOREIGN CAPITAL ESSENTIAL AMID FALLING OIL PRICES: MINISTER

**DEAD SEA, Jordan:** Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khalid Al-Roudhan has said that attracting foreign investments to Kuwait is basic for Kuwait over the coming period amid the falling prices. Roudhan's made the statement on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) on the Middle East and North Africa at the Dead Sea, Jordan. Themed 'Empowering Generations into the Future,' the forum groups 1,100 public and private sector officials as well as political and business leaders from more than 50 countries.

The forum is a good opportunity to meet with the world's leading companies, and offer the investment opportunities available in Kuwait, the minister added, highlighting the significant steps the country has taken to improve the business environment. Kuwait offers a "very good" legal environment for foreign investors, the minister said.

Roudhan referred to some investment-encouraging legislations, including one allowing 100 percent foreign-owned companies. The forum is a 'major platform' to meet with senior officials and business leaders from various world countries to exchange views and keep pace with trade developments in the region, the minister noted.

He stressed keenness on attending all the workshops and panel discussions of the forum, tackling key issues such as the small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Kuwait has recently launched an intensified plan for simplifying and streamlining the measures for founding SMEs, topped with reducing

the time for issuing business licenses, he said.

### Comprehensive economy

Meanwhile, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Barrak Al-Sabeeh said that Kuwait is hard at work to build a comprehensive economy in partnership with the private sector. The country has drawn up plans and programs for stimulating the economy and diversify the sources of income, through cooperation and partnership with the private sector, Sabeeh said on the sidelines of the opening session.

The minister added that she took part in some of the forum's sessions and workshops, especially on preservation of the environment, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), promoting the business scene, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. Sabeeh lauded Jordan's successful entrepreneurship experience, one of the topics to be discussed by participants in the forum.

The Dead Sea WEF offers a collaborative platform for deciding on the future of the Middle East and North Africa through public-private cooperation. It also aims to address continued geopolitical shifts and humanitarian challenges by supporting multi-stakeholder dialogue on the situation in Syria, Iraq and Libya, and the ongoing refugee crisis. This is the 9th World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa hosted by Jordan, since it was first held in the Dead Sea in 2003. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Aram I, the Chatolicos of the Armenian Church speaks to reporters.



**Aram I, the Chatolicos of the Armenian Church speaks during a ceremony to consecrate the church of Armenia in Kuwait.—Photos by Joseph Shagra**

## ARMENIAN CHATOLICOS VISITS KUWAIT

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Aram I, the Chatolicos of the Armenian Church is on a brief visit to Kuwait to dedicate and consecrate their house of worship in Salwa. The Chatolicos spoke with local reporters yesterday at the Sheraton Hotel where he thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the warm reception and welcome accorded to his entourage. He said that he briefly met with His Highness the Amir and thanked him for the privilege to personally extend greetings of the Armenian church to Kuwait. He also lauded him for the religious tolerance in the country.

"I came to Kuwait to consecrate the church of Armenia in Kuwait. According to tradition,

it is the building where we hold our praise and worship and so it must be consecrated. That is the purpose of my visit. But my visit has several programs and activities including meeting HH the Amir. I visited the Amir six years ago. The people of Kuwait must be proud of their leader, because HH the Amir is a man of time. He is a man of intelligence, wisdom and courage and more importantly a man of tolerance," he said.

"In a world which is becoming more of a global village, we must live together, it is not a question of choice, but it is a must. We are all brothers and must live together. I am happy that we are all witnessing that here in Kuwait. We are all living in this beautiful country with mutual respect. That is all we need, to live in harmony with each other," he said.

er, we must understand and accept each other," he said.

Asked by Kuwait Times whether the Armenian Church in Kuwait has been experiencing the same problem with other Christian communities like the shortage of the house of worship, he said, "I cannot speak on behalf of other Christian communities in Kuwait. I meet them several times, but there is one thing in common I heard from everyone, that they are extremely grateful for HH the Amir for the kind of religious tolerance they have been experiencing here in this country. As for the Armenian Church, we have enough space. We are thankful because through Armenian churches and schools here, we can educate our people. We are just thankful for everything."



A general view showing fishing vessels docked next to the central fish market in Kuwait City.

Special Report:

# Fishermen say pollution not the main reason for low catch rates

## Union laments lack of govt support to struggling profession

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Fishing is one of the oldest professions in Kuwait, and fish is the most popular food in the region. After the discovery of oil, Kuwaitis abandoned this profession and instead hired expat fishermen to work for them. Kuwaitis now practice fishing as a hobby and for commercial purposes. The recent sea pollution and fish deaths have affected the sales of fish, mainly local ones, especially as news reports said the fish were poisoned by pollutants. Incidentally, fishermen are not allowed to fish in the affected area, but some people are still worried.

Kuwait Times met some fishermen at Sharq marina, which is the main place where they gather, to speak about the challenges, problems and other issues related to their job. Kuwait Times also interviewed the head of the Kuwait Fishermen Union to clarify some issues affecting this industry.

Alaa is a new fisherman in Kuwait, who arrived only three months back. He echoed his colleague Hasouna, saying their work has not been affected by the recent fish deaths. "I like my work as a fisherman, and I was doing the same job in Egypt before coming here. Sometimes we face health problems due to the hot weather, especially when we have to stay in the middle of the sea for a few days. Otherwise it is fine. I do not believe that our profession will die out, as it produces the main dish of the people in Kuwait," he said.

### Fishing season

Thaher Al-Suweyan, Head of the Kuwait Fishermen Union, noted that the fishing season will end soon as most fishermen (mostly Egyptian) are fasting in Ramadan and will go back home this month and will stay there until July. "Also from June 1, a fishing ban on zubaidi (pomfret) starts, which remains till the middle of July. Also, now there is a ban on shrimp fishing from the beginning of the year till September 1 in local waters. But on August 1, the season will start in international waters that include Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia," he pointed out.

Fishing has many challenges and dangers. "Many fishermen get sick at sea and suffer various dermatological diseases - even in their eyes - mostly caused by the extreme heat and weather changes. This profession is very strenuous and stressful. We lose one or two fishermen every year, as they face risks such as fires on the boat, accidents and sinking," Suweyan revealed.

This profession also faces many obstacles. "We are suffering since May 30, 2000, when the government demolished the fishermen's village in Doha - now the fishermen do not have a place to live. Also, the owners of the boats face great problems over storing the boats. Some of them keep their boats near their houses in yards, but municipality inspectors have confiscated them in many cases," he explained.

"The government discussed establishing an alternative place for the demolished fishermen village on Boubyan Island, then on Failaka Island, but it never materialized. Now they are discussing building the village in Fintas, but no action has been taken. The government should support us in the same way they do in other GCC countries, where they offer fishermen accommodation and the fishing equipment they need," Suweyan added.

### Dead market

There are no factories for building boats in Kuwait. "All our boats and engines are made in the United Arab Emirates. This market is dead in Kuwait as it is not viable to spend KD 300,000 to KD 400,000 building a factory and then make minimum profits. I am working in this profession for the past 25 years as it is my hobby and I love it, but it is not profitable at all," stressed Suweyan.

Practicing this profession is an expensive affair. "Every year I spend over KD 3,500 to prepare the boat for the new season. The boat needs maintenance including washing, painting, changing the engine oil, gaskets and filters, fixing the winch and buying new fishing tools and ropes," he noted.

The recent pollution affected them somehow due to a lack of information with regards to consumers. "We fish in open waters and not in the affected area, so all our catch is good. Moreover, the fish markets are inspected by vari-



Thaher Al-Suweyan,  
Head of the Kuwait Fishermen Union

ous authorities to ensure the safety of the fish sold. Inspectors from the Ministry of Commerce, Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources and Kuwait Municipality take random samples from time to time and test it in the laboratories of the Ministry of Health. They have never found any diseases in Kuwaiti fish," concluded Suweyan.



KUWAIT: Fisherman Hasouna Eisa (center) speaks to Kuwait Times at Sharq marina. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

### Changes

Hasouna Eisa from Egypt has been working in this profession for 27 years in Kuwait, and has noticed various changes in the industry. "Everything has changed since the time I started my career here. The most significant change is the quantity of fish we used to catch - 10 baskets daily, while today we catch 10 fish. Also, what affected our yield is a ban by the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources to use the one-knot net. It only permits the three-knot net, which does not allow us to catch more fish," he said.

"Due to the decreasing quantity of fish in the market, its price has multiplied manifold. Prices hiked from KD 50 to KD 150 compared to about seven years ago for the same quantity of fish. Regarding pollution and poisoned fish that died in their thousands, we were not really affected much as we do not catch fish in the affected area," Eisa added.



A general view showing fishing vessels docked next to the central fish market in Kuwait City backdropped by the new building of the Central Bank of Kuwait (right).



Fishing boats docked at Sharq marina in Kuwait City, which is the main gathering place for fishermen in Kuwait.



Fishing vessels docked at the Sharq marina, as the new Central Bank of Kuwait building is seen in the background.



Fishermen take a rest as workers transport the catch of the day to the fish market.



KUWAIT: French Ambassador to Kuwait Christian Nakhle hosted a reception recently to celebrate his country's National day. Senior state officials led by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, diplomats, media personalities and other dignitaries attended the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# LOUVRE HOSTS ANCIENT ISLAMIC TREASURES

PARIS: The landmark 13-sq-km Louvre Museum in the heart of the French capital includes an Islamic arts gallery. On display are Quranic verses engraved on wood and ceramic and various utensils. Exhibited treasures date back to the Greek, Romanian, Pharaonic and ancient Mesopotamian times. — KUNA



Damascus shield made from gold and iron in the 18th century.



Kaaba key made from iron in Damascus and engraved with gold and silver, property of Egypt's Sultan Al-Nasser Faraj bin Barquq.



Islamic arts section inside Louvre Museum.



Ceramic plate with engraved Islamic calligraphy made in Damascus between the 16th and 17th centuries.



Islamic arts section inside Louvre Museum.

# COUNCIL MULLS MOBILE TRAILERS FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Chairman of the Municipal Council's legal and financial affairs committee Ali Al-Moussa stressed the council members' keenness on supporting youth and the private sector. Moussa added that the committee will discuss a charter on mobile trailer outlets as a new idea that can be used by young people who are eager to start their own small businesses.


Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah issued ministerial decisions appointing Maj Gen Sheikh Mohammed Yousef Al-Sabah as assistant undersecretary for border security affairs, Maj Gen Abdullah Yousef Al-Muhanna as assistant undersecretary for correctional facilities and verdict execution and Maj Gen Khaled Al-Deyyeen as assistant undersecretary for criminal security affairs to replace Maj Gen Abdul Hameed Al-Awadi, who was referred to retirement as a lieutenant general.

Engineering Ahmad Al-Hassan said his sector have referred the contracts of building, executing and maintaining roads and bridges in South Surra to Minister Abdul Rahman Al-Mutawa to be signed. Hassan said that the total cost of the contract is KD 94.1 million and that the project aims at facilitating traffic flows and reducing traffic accidents in the area.

In other news, MPW has seconded Kuwait Municipality's opinion about the infeasibility of linking Failaka Island and Silk City. In this regard, Hassan sent a letter in which he stressed that the project will need a massive budget and a special feasibility studies.

In my view

## MIDDLE EAST AND THE NEW SILK ROAD



By Labeed Abdal

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The Arab Chinese Relations Seminar organized by the Arab Unity Studies Center in collaboration with the Middle East Studies Center of Shanghai International University, China, is a declaration of new and serious alternatives for the world. Political, Economic and Cultural cooperation between China and the Arab world will always remain a bridge between both the sides, especially with a clear vision of countries' movement and interest-driven mobilization between East and West.

The seminar aimed at finding proper suitable circumstances through exchange of opinions, and running a debate between groups of Arab and Chinese researchers and thinkers discussing issues of joint concern as a means to face latest developments and threats related to NATO and Middle East countries.

Researchers focused on ten factors to achieve a brighter future for those relations, re-activate Chinese-Arab relations in more realistic ways and open wide for more strategic partnership, especially since the world is currently focusing more on China as a 'wise rational man' compared to many new reckless leaders.

The seminar also studied historic and cultural aspects of these relations, the importance of political and economic cooperation and anti-terrorism war, which are all noticeable issues, especially since China is a permanent UN Security Council member. In addition, reviving the Silk Road will be a huge step forward to stop attempts to destroy it as well as destroy the economies of countries that once considered it as its lifeblood, and this will maintain high development rates through the next decade.

**Domestic labor**  
Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh said the domestic labor recruitment company will start operations by the end of August, when all the company regulations are finalized to provide it with technological equipment and skilled staff.

**Promotions**  
Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh

**Road projects**  
The Ministry of Public Works' (MPW) Assistant Undersecretary for Roads

**Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh**



**KUWAIT:** Flames come out of a vehicle following an accident reported along the Fifth Ring Road yesterday.

## INDIAN INDUSTRIALIST MATHEWS DIES AT 81

**KUWAIT:** Sunny Mathews, a well-known Indian industrialist and community leader, passed away yesterday at his residence in Qadisiya, Kuwait following a long illness. He was 81.



Mathews, also called as Mathunny Mathews, played a significant role in the safe air-lift evacuation of about 170,000 Indians from Kuwait during the 1990 Invasion of Kuwait. The evacuation is hailed as the world's largest civilian evacuation in history. Mathews is survived by wife Mary Mathews and children Joy Mathews, Annie Mathews and Susan Mathews.

Indian Ambassador Suni Jain, while conveying condolences to the bereaved family, said he is deeply saddened by the death of Mathews whose invaluable service to the Indian community during the Iraqi Invasion will always be remembered. The ambassador recalled that Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Gen V K Singh had visited the residence of Mathews and wished him speedy recovery when the minister arrived in Kuwait on a state visit in September last year. With the help of Mathews, the massive evacuation of Indians was carried out from 13 August to 11 October 1990 after the Invasion of Kuwait.

Mathews, who hailed from Eraviperoor, Kerala in India, was popularly known as Toyota Sunny in the Indian community owing to his work in Kuwait with the Toyota agency owned by the Al-Sayer Group. He retired in 1989 as its Managing Director. Mathews, who arrived in Kuwait by ship in 1956, was also the chairman of the Indian School in Kuwait and one of the founding members of the Indian Arts Circle.



**KUWAIT:** Illicit pills found with a passenger who tried to smuggle them into Kuwait yesterday.

**A Kuwait Municipality inspector checks a restaurant's kitchen during a recent campaign in Mubarak Al-Kabeer.**

# TWO HURT IN FIFTH RING ROAD CRASH

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** A fire broke out in a vehicle following a collision involving two other vehicles along the Fifth Ring Road, said security sources, noting that firemen rushed to the scene and managed to control the fire. Two people were injured and treated onsite by paramedics.

department said a bedoon inmate at the central prison, who is already serving a two-year sentence for robbery, is facing additional charges of recording a video and posting it on social media from inside the prison. Prison security caught the inmate with a mobile phone, a SIM card and an Internet router. A case was filed and further legal measures are being taken against the suspect.

arrested an Asian man on arrival with 32,000 illicit pills he had hidden in his luggage.

**Inmate charged**  
The Ministry of Interior's relations and security media

**Smuggling foiled**  
Kuwait International Airport custom inspectors

**Crackdown**  
Kuwait Municipality's public relations department announced that Mubarak Al-Kabeer municipality inspectors continued inspections of various co-ops, foodstuff company warehouses, foodstuff stores and restaurants before the advent of Ramadan. The department added that the campaign inspected 177 stores that resulted in confiscating and destroying 60 kilos of expired foodstuff and filing 35 citations.



**KUWAIT:** Shuaiba power plant requested help from the Science Club's diving team to rescue a turtle that was trapped inside a basin, which was done successfully. —By Meshaal Al-Enezi

# PUBLIC EDUCATION STRIVES TO CATCH UP WITH PRIVATE EDUCATION: REPORT

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares acknowledged that public education lacks the administrative flexibility of the private education. Public education is subject to bureaucratic rules, provisions and bylaws that are supervised by the Civil Service Commission, whereas the private sector has its flexible rules and work mechanisms, the minister said.

"For example, (in the private sector), a phone call is enough to secure all the technological needs of the school," he said. The minister added the Ministry of Education has to transform to the thinking patterns and management approaches prevailing in the private sector to reduce paperwork and improve performance.

The main role of the Education Ministry is enhancing the quality of education process in the country, he said. He, however, admitted the lack of an institutional evaluation system, especially for assessing the performance of schools. He emphasized the need for introducing a comprehensive and flexible system in the coming period to develop public education to be able to compete with the private education.

Meanwhile, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Haitham Al-Athari described claims that Kuwaiti parents are opting for private foreign schools in searching for developed

education as "untrue." "The situation in public and private schools is the same. There are high and low-quality private schools and the same applies to public schools," he said. Athari also affirmed that teaching methods in both schools are identical. He said that the Ministry of Education does not rely on the tautological methods, but rather on skills-focused ones. Public schools methods focus on teaching students thinking, interaction, teamwork and technological skills, he clarified.

**Critical thinking**  
Dr Fatma Al-Hashem, who enrolled her children in an American school, said she has chosen an American curriculum because it focuses on harnessing different skills and teaching children critical thinking and innovation. "Foreign schools also organize many activities and events and are not confined to studying. Such activities are not in public schools due to the high-density of classrooms," she said.

Hashem added that foreign schools also help students master the English language. She believes that the private educational institutions have succeeded in making the school an attractive place for students by giving much attention to the essence of the educational process, changing traditional teaching methods, heeding students' needs and better equipping them with the skills they need for the future.

In the meantime, Dr Siham Al-Qabandi said: "Yes, I chose foreign education for my children since the preschool stage." She stressed that most foreign schools are run by highly-qualified educational staff. "My children has enjoyed their study (in a foreign school) and acquired

multiple skills," Qabandi added. She said that she has deep conviction that the best investment is in the children education. "So I wanted to help them to be qualified to live successful lives, especially that I noticed since the beginning that private education focuses on developing student's personality through teaching them self-reliance, interaction and teamwork." She elaborated that the studying in a highly-disciplined foreign school has taught her children who to abide by laws and regulations, starting from school uniform. "They have also participated in the preparation of activities and different sports such as swimming," she said. Qabandi also noted the teaching methods applied in foreign schools help discover students talents. "They also teach students important values such as volunteerism, responsibility and self-reliance."

**Advanced systems**  
Ahmad Saleh, also echoed a similar view. "I have chosen foreign schools because of their discipline and advanced educational systems that do not focus on memorization and dictation, but on skills," said Saleh. He explained that educational methods in the private sector depend on teamwork, mind activity and searching for information in different sources. He stressed the development of curricula and educational system should be a top priority to the state.

Saleh said foreign education was "an indispensable necessity" to catch up with scientific development. Public education does not "cope with the spirit of the time and therefore cannot be base for a true scientific renaissance," he said. —KUNA



**Dr Mohammad Al-Fares**

Crime

Report

WORKER BEATS UP NONPAYING SPONSOR

**KUWAIT:** A citizen reported that an Asian man working for him has assaulted him. Security sources noted that on rushing to the man's house in Jahra, the worker said he was not paid his monthly salary, which was confirmed by the sponsor. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Bootleggers caught

Four Asians were arrested while using a pickup truck belonging to the company they worked for to distribute alcohol and pills, said security sources, noting that a routine patrol suspected the truck and on stopping it and opening the door, the four passengers reeked of alcohol and were all drunk. On searching the truck, detectives found 13 bottles of liquor, in addition to some illicit pills. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Drunk workers

A citizen reported that on returning home, he heard some strange noises and songs from the room of three Asians working for him. The man added that on checking on them, he found that the three laborers were drinking alcohol and having a 'nice time'. The three drunk workers were arrested and a case was filed.

Accident

Five citizens, including two women, were rushed to Adan Hospital with injuries they sustained in a four-car accident along Al-Ghoush Street.

Marital problems

A female citizen filed a complaint against her ex-husband accusing him of trying to kill her using a firearm. However, on arresting the ex-husband, detectives only found a small knife on him and he strongly denied all accusations. Further investigations are in progress.

Fight

Four citizens were arrested for drinking alcohol and fighting in Saad Al-Abdullah, said security sources, noting that initial investigations showed that after drinking, the four wanted to settle some old scores and used sticks, batons and blades before they were arrested. A case was filed.

Search for storekeeper

A search is on for an Asian storekeeper after officials in the company he worked for reported finding 45 containers of construction material and goods missing after conducting an inventory. The officials added that the storekeeper was nowhere to be found and his mobile phone was switched off. A case was filed.

— Translated from the Arabic press



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

WEAPONS TO THE LAST PENNY

By Hassan Al-Essa

**A**l-Rai's recent headline about the goals of US president Donald Trump's visit to the region brought nothing new. The president will ask GCC states for the price of US protection, be that price called as a 'royalty' or 'imperialist Jizya' which will eventually keep draining the region out to the last penny in its financial assets.

According to the news report, Trump will discuss the danger of IS and Iran with regional leaders as the US administration considers Iran as part of the problem rather than part of the solution; which completely matches the Israeli view. The US administration also looks forward to normalizing relations between GCC states and Israel and the more its talks about Iranian threats, the more the chances to normalize. Therefore, Iran will be the historic justification of GCC normalization with Israel; which seems not so far ahead now.

GCC states are the most generous on spending on armament worldwide and it seems that the fall of oil prices has not affected the volume of weapons' deals, as if this was a holy and sacred non-negotiable thing that tolerates no opposing opinion such as the general case in our countries. During his presidential election campaign, Trump expressed intentions to urge GCC states to 'pay

the price for protection' and viewed the matter as a 'fair demand because this is a favor and favors have prices.'

Well, it is noteworthy here to mention that the mafia also provides protection and asks the weak for royalties in return for such protection. In most cases, the protection the mafia provides is from a menace it has itself created and staged. Before Trump's presidency, as symbol of neo-rightists, the issue of draining oil surpluses made by GCC states from international oil prices was nothing new in US and Western policies as such surpluses are usually re-invested in the United States and the West or devoured as prices of weapons' deals made for astronomical figures.

In one of his lectures, Noam Chomsky said that opinion polls show that the majority of Arab people believe that the worst threats come from Israel and its policies; not from Iran. However, regardless of the source of such threats, the future will definitely not be beautiful because economic insolvency is inevitable and regional wars that have been draining Arab blood and funds seem to be expanding without solutions as long as there are no debates or dialogues amongst regional states, which leave the Zionist State as the greatest beneficiary. —Translated by Kuwait Times

Al-Anbaa

HOW TO KNOW IF AN MP IS BLUFFING

By Tha'ar Al-Rasheedi

**W**hen I previously wrote an article about how the fourth electoral constituency MPs switch off their mobile phones the minute they make it into the parliament, many people thought I was exaggerating or was too harsh on those lawmakers. Well, the fact is that what I said is actually a general phenomenon in all constituen-

*We even sent text messages asking them to call back and none of them responded*

cies; where nominees tend to change their mobile phone numbers or switch them off, or sometimes even close down their diwanias once they win the elections and make their way to the parliament, forgetting all about the promises they had made to their voters.

One funny story involving one such lawmaker is that the MP used to ask voters to follow him with their own cars to the ministry if they had concerns with their transactions so that he could use his influence. The story says that the MP usually crashed into other vehicles with his modern eight-cylinder vehicle, leaving them way behind in their four-cylinder vehicles, red lights and traffic congestions. The story suggests that this was the main reason why this particular MPs failed all the following elections.

Another story says that an MP filled his diwaniya with 'hired' guests every week, using people usually hired in weddings and other public occasions such as banquets to fill the place and make the host look so loveable by the people. Well, this trick was discovered when the visitors failed to identify any of those present in the diwaniya neither as the lawmaker's relatives nor as area or constituency subjects.

Honestly speaking, this technique is new in Kuwait and this lawmaker is probably the first and will be the last to use it because he will surely lose all further elections. To prove to a friend that what I wrote was accurate, I asked him to get me the mobile phone numbers of four of the fourth constituency MPs and we tried calling them in vain. We even sent text messages asking them to call back and none of them responded.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



KFH LAUNCHES PLATFORM TO PUBLISH ITS REPORTS, RESEARCH STUDIES IN COLLABORATION WITH REUTERS

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) inked a partnership and collaboration agreement with Thomson Reuters, international business information services provider in an attempt to promote collaboration and enrich knowledge through publishing the reports and economic research prepared by KFH.

These reports cover real-estate trading and values, deposits in the banking sector, measures of inflation in addition to the latest local and global developments in the business and economic fields, primarily issues

en by the highest standards of accuracy and speed.

Mukhaizeem underlined the importance of reports and economic research and studies prepared by KFH, indicating they represent an added value the bank offers to the society. They contribute in providing the specialized and ordinary readers with accurate and ordinary readers with accurate projections and indicators to assist them in making better decisions relying on facts and latest local economic developments along with the implications of the global circum-

ments and special information about Islamic finance.

He illustrated that KFH now offers a new platform of its reports and research to readers and decision makers. This wouldn't have been possible without the significant reliability of KFH reports and the long history of scientific and methodological work. For example, the real estate report published by KFH on a monthly and quarterly basis, which means that KFH obtains documented information and indicators on a large time scale that allows a greater chance to compare and interpret the developments and local market movement, while associating this with the impact of the international markets variables and the implications on different activities and businesses.

He said that KFH will reinforce collaboration with Thomson Reuters to enrich the knowledge and solidify the research efforts, while maximizing Reuters' role as an international news provider especially in the light of the global interest in Kuwait's economy. The agreement also includes training the employees and exchanging reports and information through establishing strong lines of communication between the two sides.

Meanwhile, Business Director at Thomson Reuters Abdulrazak Kouli said that this agreement would support the constructive cooperation with a high-profile and global institution like KFH, indicating Reuters and KFH enjoy a long-standing relationship for more than 20 years now. This relationship is deep rooted and encompass different fields.

He added that the agreement comes in line with Thomson Reuters' strategy that aims at supporting banks and financial institutions in the region while strengthening the efficiency and accuracy of information and automated systems to ensure the optimal use of it.



of concern to Islamic finance industry. "This agreement is an important step forward in enhancing reach of reports and research studies created by KFH. Our collaboration with Reuters will contribute in serving a wide range of interested observers, thus will enhance the value of the reports and research through the impact factors and reactions reports," said Group Chief Strategy Officer at KFH, Engineer Fahad Khaled Al-Mukhaizeem.

He indicated, on the sidelines of inking the agreement, that Thomson Reuters enjoys a prestigious status and reliability in the globe of information and media. It has a proven-track record of achievements in the fields of providing news and information driv-

stances. He added that collaborating with international high-profile institutions in the area of information will definitely offer an important wide-spread platform for KFH research productions.

Moreover, Mukhaizeem reiterated that the agreement is an important opportunity to enhance KFH research and studies presence on the international level, especially that KFH research has achieved a privileged position on the local level, where they are published on KFH.com and on different media outlets.

Such reports and research studies enrich the knowledge of investors and customers, while strengthening ties with them when providing them with the latest economic develop-

BURGAN BANK MARKS SECOND BRANCH OPENING IN FAHAHEEL

HONORING BANK'S COMMITMENT TO FAHAHEEL RESIDENTS

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank announced today that it recently inaugurated its second branch in Fahaheel. The new location is conveniently positioned to ensure that customers residing in Fahaheel and surrounding areas gain easier access to conduct their financial transactions. The newly inaugurated branch expands the Bank's network to 29 branches across Kuwait and 186 branches across the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey.

With an aim to expand the range of financial services and products, the new branch in Fahaheel residential area was officially inaugurated on 17 May 2017 by the Al-Ahmedi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Burgan Bank's Chairman Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Head of Retail Branches Naser Al-Qaisi and other senior bank executives. Equipped with the latest state of the art facilities and technologies, the branch will be operational from Sundays to Thursdays, from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm.

"As Burgan Bank continues to grow under our robust strategy and focused execution, we are pleased to further expand our network to accommodate the financial needs of our growing customer base. By facilitating easy access to financial services across the country, we stay true to our commitment to deliver outstanding customer service for everyone," said Burgan Bank Chairman - Majed Essa Al-Ajeel.

Ahmedi Governor Sheikh Fawaz confirmed the importance of the



banking sector and the strong role it plays in the economic development of Kuwait.

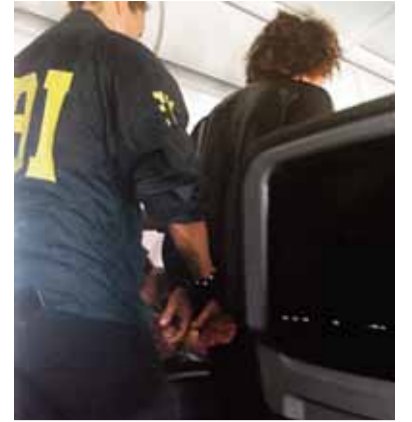
Apart from welcoming the new branch opening, he further commended the level of excellence and international standards followed by Kuwait's most progressive bank. Sheikh Fawaz added, "This enhances the overall financial offerings in the governorate, and more importantly, falls in line with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's mission to provide convenient services to citizens in their area of residence."

During the inauguration ceremony of Burgan Bank's new branch in Al-Fahaheel, the Governor appreciated Burgan Bank's efforts to strengthen its presence and reach out to a wider

community. Sheikh Fawaz reiterated that he seeks to develop Al-Ahmedi area with more Burgan Bank branches, other local as well as international banks and multi exchange companies.

Sheikh Fawaz thanked Burgan Bank for their hard work in completing the new branch, the fourth in Al-Ahmedi and the second in Fahaheel. He wished Burgan Bank future success and also appreciated the willingness of other existing Kuwaiti banks keeping abreast of the latest developments in the banking industry to fulfill the 2035 vision to transform Kuwait into a global financial and trade hub. The recent expansion reflects Burgan Bank commitment to continuously offer high quality customer care and comprehensive banking solutions throughout Kuwait.





**A passenger tries to force his way into the cockpit**

**PENTAGON PLANS TO 'ANNIHILATE' IS FIGHTERS**



**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia's King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud (right), US President Donald Trump and US First Lady Melania Trump look at a display of Saudi modern art at the Saudi Royal Court in Riyadh yesterday. —AFP

**MELANIA TRUMP SKIPS HEADSCARF IN SAUDI**

**RIYADH:** Accompanying her husband on his first international trip, US first lady Melania Trump yesterday stepped off of Air Force One conservatively dressed in long sleeves and pants to conform to the strict dress code that Saudi Arabia enforces for its female citizens. But one thing was missing from her black and gold-belted ensemble: A head scarf. Instead, Mrs. Trump's below-the-shoulder brown hair blew freely in the breeze at King Khalid International Airport in the capital city of Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia is the first stop on a four-nation, five-stop tour that will also take Trump to Israel, Italy and Belgium before President Donald Trump returns to the White House at the end of next week. The first lady is joining the president for the entire trip. Under the kingdom's strict dress code for women, Saudi women and most female visitors are required to wear a loose, black robe, known as an abaya, in public. Most women in Saudi

Arabia also cover their hair and face with a veil known as the niqab.

But covering one's head is not required for foreigners, and some Western women choose to forego the headscarf while in Saudi Arabia. Earlier this year, British Prime Minister Theresa May and German Chancellor Angela Merkel also shunned head coverings, showing how common it is for high-level female visitors to skip wearing a headscarf or an abaya, the loose-fitting, black robe worn by Saudi women. Michelle Obama did not cover her head when she accompanied then-President Barack Obama on a condolence visit in January 2015 after the death of King Abdullah.

And during her time as first lady, Laura Bush generally went without covering her head, though she once briefly donned a head scarf she received as a gift. As Obama's secretary of state, Hillary Clinton also did not cover her head on visits to Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, Trump, whose

long trail of Twitter messages often comes back to haunt him, tweeted his displeasure over Mrs Obama's decision to appear bare-headed in 2015. "Many people are saying it was wonderful that Mrs Obama refused to wear a scarf in Saudi Arabia, but they were insulted. We have enuf enemies," he tweeted, using a short-hand spelling for "enough."

Trump's daughter, Ivanka, a senior White House adviser who is accompanying her father, also did not cover her head. Saudi Arabia adheres to an ultra-conservative interpretation of Islamic Shariah law where unrelated men and women are segregated in most public places. Women are banned from driving, although rights advocates have campaigned to lift that ban. Guardianship laws also require a male relative's consent before a woman can obtain a passport, travel or marry. Often that relative is a father or husband, but in the absence of both can be the woman's own son.—AP

**FIRED FBI CHIEF TO TESTIFY PUBLICLY IN US CONGRESS**

**WASHINGTON:** James Comey, the former FBI chief fired by President Donald Trump, has agreed to publicly testify about Russian interference in the US elections, as fresh allegations increased pressure on the American leader. In an Oval Office meeting with senior Russian officials last week, Trump called Comey a "nut job" and said firing the intelligence chief had relieved "great pressure" on him, The New York Times reported.

The exchange supports claims that Trump sacked Comey over the bureau's probe into possible collusion between the real estate mogul's campaign and Moscow. The Washington Post meanwhile said the FBI has identified an unnamed senior White House official as a "significant person of interest" in its sprawling probe of Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election. The reports came just as Trump flew to Saudi Arabia to kick off his first foreign trip as US leader—highlighting how the controversy over his team's alleged links to Moscow is dogging his fledgling presidency. Comey will testify in open session of the Senate Intelligence Committee at some point after the Memorial Day holiday, May 29, though a date has not yet been set. The ex-FBI chief has not spoken publicly since his surprise firing last week. "I am hopeful that he will clarify for the American people recent events that have been broadly reported in the media," panel Chairman Richard Burr said in a statement.

The top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Mark

Warner, said he expects Comey to "shed light on issues critical to this Committee's investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election." However, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee said Comey declined their invitation to testify before the panel over the circumstances surrounding his abrupt removal. "We're extremely disappointed in James Comey's decision not to testify voluntarily before the Judiciary Committee," said Chairman Chuck Grassley and the panel's top Democrat, Dianne Feinstein, urging Comey to reconsider. "There is no reason he can't testify before both the Intelligence and Judiciary Committees... Given his commitment to the people and the mission of the FBI, we expected him to be responsive to the senators responsible for vetting its next proposed leader." The White House has been thrown into turmoil by a succession of stunning allegations against the president this week, including that he may have obstructed justice by asking Comey to drop an investigation into one of his top advisors.

**Moscow under microscope**

The latest report from the Post, citing unnamed sources familiar with the investigation, undercuts Trump's insistence that his campaign had nothing to do with the Kremlin. Trump's national security advisor Michael Flynn was forced to resign for misleading Vice President Mike Pence about a phone call with the Russian ambassador. The president's son-in-law Jared Kushner is among those whose contacts with the Russian government have come under scrutiny. "I just fired the head of the FBI. He was crazy, a real nut job," Trump told Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov last week, according to the Times, citing notes taken at the meeting and read to the paper by a US official. "I faced great pressure because of Russia. That's taken off."

That flies in the face of the White House's public insistence that Comey's dismissal was not linked to his ongoing investigation. White House spokesman Sean Spicer did not dispute the Times's account. Intercepted Russian communications suggest that Russian officials felt that they had built up such a strong relationship with Flynn that they could use him to influence Trump and his inner circle, CNN reported. It cited current and former administration officials as saying US intelligence officials were so concerned about the conversations between Flynn and the Russians that they would limit how much sensitive information they shared with him.—AFP



**الكويتية KUWAIT AIRWAYS**

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**An announcement to Invitation No (KAC/PP/3/2017) for soliciting quotations for leasing one (1) new building of KAC staff's accommodation in State of Kuwait**

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Kuwait Airways Company is pleased to invite all local individuals, companies, and corporations to participate in soliciting quotations regarding lease of one (1) new building, adjacent or separated, located in Farwanya Governorate, Farwanya Area is advantage, for KAC Staff's accommodation.

Therefore, those interested in presenting their price offers in relation thereto, must accompany with them a copy of this announcement and refer to the office of the Secretary of Tenders and Auctions Committee, located on the ground floor of Kuwait Airways Company main office in Al-Dajeej area, next to Kuwait International Airport. They should attend at the above office starting from the date of publishing this announcement, for purchasing the said bid invitation documents against cash payment of **KD 50 (Kuwaiti Dinar Fifty only)** to be paid to the Treasurer at Kuwait Airways Company Headquarters during office hours. The said amount shall be non-refundable and shall be receipted.

The receipt, together with a copy of this announcement and the bidder's offer must be inserted in a closed envelope and submitted to the Box of Committee Tender office of the at Kuwait Airways Company before the deadline which shall be at **10:30am till 02:00pm on Monday Dated 5/6/2017.**

Bids submitted beyond the aforementioned deadline shall not be entertained whatsoever.

A preliminary meeting shall be convened exactly at, **11:00am on Sunday**, corresponding to **28/5/2017**, at the Meeting room of Supplies & Housing Department, which is located on the ground floor of Kuwait Airways Company main office in Al-Dajeej area, next to Kuwait international Airport. This preliminary meeting will be devoted to replying to the queries raised by the participants responding to the bid invitation stated in this announcement. In case the bidder fails to attend the said meeting, he shall fully comply with the discussions taking place, as well as the decisions and recommendations contained in the minutes of the meeting.

**If you have any further questions, please contact:**  
 Tel.: 24345555 Ext. 2249  
 Or Fax: 24722431

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## CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATS OPEN CONVENTION WITH EYE ON TRUMP

**SACRAMENTO:** California Democrats met yesterday with renewed optimism about their party's chances of adding to their huge majority among the state's 53-member congressional delegation and potentially tipping the balance of power in the US House. In a state where Democrats are itching to lead the liberal resistance to Trump and the Republican Congress, the party's activists find themselves singularly united behind the goal of stunting the GOP.

But the Democrats are also a party divided, still nursing deep divisions between insurgent supporters of Bernie Sanders and the party's establishment wing. The divide was on clear display Friday as they opened their annual three-day convention in Sacramento. Activists demanding government-funded health care for all residents stormed into the convention center and interrupted an introductory speech by Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg with chants about corporate greed.

The annual meeting caps a dizzying week that saw the appointment of a special prosecutor to look into possible Russian coordination with the Trump campaign. Some 3,000 delegates at the nation's largest state Democratic Party will hear from their party's longstanding stalwarts and rising stars. US House Minority

Leader Nancy Pelosi is scheduled to speak along with Sen Kamala Harris, the former state attorney general who often mentioned as a potential 2020 presidential candidate, and all Democrats running for governor.

Rep Adam Schiff, who rose from obscurity to national prominence thanks to his perch as the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee in the Trump era, will give the keynote address. The party's path back to national relevance will likely go through California, where half of the 14 Republicans in Congress represent districts that supported Clinton over Trump. Democrats need to pick up at least 24 Republican-held seats to win the majority in the US House, gaining the power to issue subpoenas and hold hearings to investigate Trump or, as a handful of lawmakers have suggested, to impeach him.

"I think it's important that we start now, so we cannot just educate people but get them engaged," said Tiffany Countryman, a 47-year-old human-resources manager from Lancaster. Countryman said she's seen newly active in Democratic politics and is determined to defeat her Congressman, Steve Knight, the only Republican in Congress from Los Angeles County and a top target for Democrats in next year's election.

Late Saturday, Democrats will settle a

hard-fought race for party chair that has highlighted the divide between longtime party activists and a new breed of progressives, many loyal to former presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, who won a bloc of convention seats earlier this year and is clamoring for changes in party leadership. While both major candidates for party chair endorsed Hillary Clinton's presidential bid, Sanders supporters have rallied around Kimberly Ellis, the former head of an organization that works to elect Democratic women to office.

Ellis has called for new blood in the party, a dig at her main rival, Eric Bauman, the party's vice chair who points to Democrats' dominance in California and says the party needs a steady hand to continue that success. Bauman has lined up the support from the vast majority of elected Democrats and was the overwhelming favorite to win until agitators loyal to Sanders surged Ellis' support. "It's just not enough for the Democratic Party to be the anti-Trump party," Bauman says in a campaign video sent to delegates this week. "We must unite around our shared progressive agenda and values."

Democrats have a tight grip on all of California's levers of power with control of all statewide offices, supermajorities in both legislative chambers and an overwhelming majority if the congressional

delegation. "We've had tremendous success in the electoral sense. We haven't always used our success to advance progressive ideas," said Naida Tushnet, a 75-year-old retired educator from Long Beach who said she's a longtime party volunteer but attending her first state convention.

Tushnet is baffled that such a strong and proudly Democratic state has not

adopted universal, government-funded health care - a policy known as single-payer health care that's become a rallying cry for many liberals. It's time for the party's progressive wing to flex its muscles, she said. "We've got a two-thirds supermajority. Why is there even a discussion about passing single payer?" Tushnet said. —AP



US Senator Bernie Sanders



A man who was detained on an American Airlines flight is driven away from the plane after landing in Honolulu. —AP Photos

## MILITARY JETS ESCORT HAWAII FLIGHT AFTER FRACAS INVOLVING TURK

### PASSENGER TRIES TO FORCE HIS WAY INTO THE COCKPIT

**HONOLULU:** The US military on Friday scrambled two Air Force fighter jets to escort an American Airlines flight into Honolulu International Airport after a disturbance involving a Turkish passenger aboard the plane was reported, officials said. The nature of the fracas was not immediately disclosed by the FBI, the military or American Airlines, but local news media reported a passenger had tried to force his way into the cockpit of Honolulu-bound Flight 31 from Los Angeles. The man was subdued by an off-duty law enforcement officer and others aboard the aircraft, and the flight landed safely at 11:35 am Hawaii time, officials said. No injuries were reported.

Federal authorities were preparing a criminal complaint to charge Turkish national Anil Uskanil, 25, with interference with a flight crew, Federal Bureau of Investigation special-agent-in-charge Paul Delacourt said at a Honolulu news conference. Delacourt, when asked by a reporter if Uskanil tried to break into the cockpit, said the Turkish man was in the aisle of the plane and it was "unclear what his motivation was."

Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) police said separately that Uskanil had been detained, questioned and released hours earlier after he was caught by security there going through a terminal concourse door leading out to the airfield.

Los Angeles airport police spokesman Rob Pedregon said Uskanil was a ticketed American Airlines passenger with a boarding pass who had cleared security screening but claimed that he lost his way because he was tipsy from

drinking. As he did not appear to meet the criteria for public drunkenness, police let him go with a citation for misdemeanor trespassing, Pedregon said. He was escorted to the street in front of the terminal when released, Pedregon said.

Because the LAX incident occurred at about 2:45 a.m. Pacific time, nearly three hours before the first flights of the day, he would have had ample time to get through security again and catch a plane to Hawaii as scheduled, Pedregon said

it is not unusual for LAX passengers to mistakenly go through an unauthorized exit door at the terminal. American Airlines said its Honolulu-bound flight, an Airbus A321, was carrying 181 passengers and six crew members.

One passenger who spoke to HawaiiNewsNow, a consortium of three television network affiliates, said a first-class flight attendant deserved much of the credit for preventing the suspect from reaching the cockpit. "I would just never want

to go against her. She was tasked with keeping him out of there, and she did a great job," Lee Lorenzen told the news outlet. The incident prompted Pacific Command to dispatch a pair of F-22 fighter jets to intercept the passenger plane. "The F-22s escorted the airliner to the airport in accordance with homeland defense procedures. Local law enforcement responded once the civilian airliner was on the ground," said command spokesman Dave Benham said. —Reuters



HONOLULU: A man is escorted off an American Airlines flight after it landed in Honolulu on Friday, May 19, 2017.

## GOP'S COTTON IN IOWA: 'I'M READY FOR NEW BEGINNING'

**COUNCIL BLUFFS:** Arkansas Sen Tom Cotton declared Americans "ready for that new beginning" in Iowa Friday, walking a delicate path by raising his national political profile at a time of turmoil for Donald Trump's White House. The 40-year-old freshman Republican senator sounded national themes as the guest at the Pottawattamie County Republican Party's annual fundraiser in Council Bluffs in conservative western

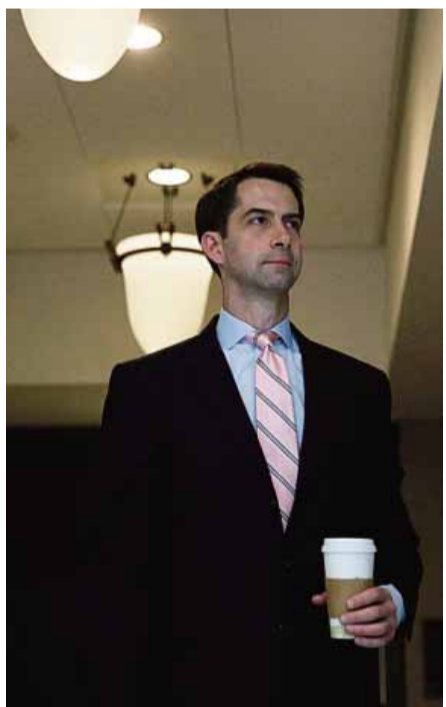
crowd. "But I also want to revive the spirit of the days following." On matters swirling around Trump, Cotton, also tread carefully. Having previously said a special counsel was unnecessary, he declined Friday to endorse Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein's appointment of former FBI Director Bob Mueller to investigate any collusion between Trump's presidential campaign and the Russian government's interference in the campaign.

"I can't evaluate whether it's a good decision or not, the right decision or not. I don't have all the facts, all the reasoning the deputy attorney general had," he told the AP, while praising Mueller as widely respected. Former FBI Director James Comey is expected to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee, on which Cotton sits. Cotton said he hoped to learn what exchanges Comey had with Trump before the president abruptly fired him last week and to see the memos Comey is alleged to have kept.

Pottawattamie County Republican Chairman Jeff Jorgensen said he expects to invite Cotton back to western Iowa. "He was a big hit. He has an open invitation to come back anytime," Jorgensen said after the dinner. "I'm going to get a lot of requests to have him back." Trump, who departed Friday for the first overseas trip of his presidency, would seem to have few worries within the party base in Iowa, at the moment. The GOP base overwhelmingly supports him, said Iowa Republican strategist Doug Gross, a former nominee for governor.

That's despite low national approval and the shroud of congressional committees - and now a special counsel - investigating whether Trump's campaign colluded with Russia to sway the 2016 presidential election. Only if Trump is impeached or the economy turns sour will Trump not be re-nominated, said Gross, who has been a Trump critic. Still, Cotton has begun making friends in Iowa, a move that could pay future dividends - or backfire. "I think a guy like Tom Cotton could actually hurt himself by coming out too early like this," Gross said.

Cotton has made inroads with Iowa Republicans. Early this month, he spoke to the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce's conference in Washington. "He's clearly someone who has a rising national profile," said Joe Murphy of the Greater Des Moines Partnership, one of about 200 who saw Cotton's speech. "He's extremely well versed in many different issues." Besides being a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is investigating Trump's campaign and Russia, Cotton is part of the Senate Republican working group charged with writing health care legislation, now that the GOP-controlled House has passed legislation undoing broad portions of the 2010 Affordable Care Act. —AP



US Senator Tom Cotton

Iowa. It was a role thick with presidential implications despite Trump's solid standing among Iowa Republicans less than four months into his term.

"I'm ready for that new beginning," Cotton added, in closing his 20-minute speech to more than 100 Iowa GOP loyalists and prompting a standing ovation. However, Cotton offered a simple "no" when asked if he was laying the groundwork for a 2020 presidential campaign, or hedging his bets should the Republican Trump not seek re-election. "I'm up for re-election in Arkansas" in 2020, Cotton told The Associated Press before the fundraising dinner at an event center.

Cotton's hosts were standing by the president, and calling their guest's appearance an opportunity for Republican activists to meet a potential future leader. But the event had all the trappings of an early White House exploration. Despite his unambiguous "no," Cotton offered a broad message, as would-be White House prospects often do in Iowa. The veteran of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan suggested the attacks of Sept 11, 2001, were a unifying point for a new generation of Americans.

"I've spent most of my days since 9/11 trying to stop another day like that from happening," he told the fundraising

## TIMES SQUARE MAYHEM RAISES QUESTION ABOUT 'THE DESIGN'

**NEW YORK:** The mayhem and death left in the trail of a car that sped along crowded sidewalks in New York's Times Square has revived calls for banning vehicles from the Manhattan crossroads, one of the world's busiest tourist destinations. The incident on Thursday, which killed one person, injured 20 others and brought a new sense of vulnerability to New Yorkers and visitors alike, has raised concerns about other safety provisions in a recent \$55 million revamp of the area.

The project, completed in 2016 after six years of planning and construction, included a limited number of barricades designed to protect pedestrians. In deciding how many barriers to install, planners wanted to avoid cluttering the square and impeding foot traffic along sidewalks that are often choked with people. Shaped like a bow tie, Times Square takes form around the intersection of Broadway and Seventh Avenue and stretches for nearly six blocks north of 42nd Street.

As the centerpiece of the overhaul, officials closed off five blocks of Broadway to motor vehicles and created two acres of pedestrian plazas. Thursday's incident, in which a driver steered along Seventh Avenue, made a U-turn on to the sidewalk and mowed down pedestrians as he accelerated, prompted questions about whether the Broadway closure was enough. "The closing of Broadway through Times Square was itself intended as (a) pedestrian safety measure, and I think it has been successful in accomplishing that," said David Burney, who was commissioner for design and construction under former Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Burney helped oversee the project for the city and select Norwegian architectural firm Snohetta to design it. "Personally I think this incident supports the argument for closing of all traffic through Times Square," Burney told

Reuters in an email. Even though Thursday's incident was not believed to have been politically motivated, New York City has been on high alert since the attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center on Sept 11, 2001.

More recently, it has grappled with how to protect people from attackers who use vehicles as weapons. Those concerns ratcheted higher last year when militants intentionally drove trucks into holiday crowds in Germany and France, killing scores of people. The Times Square incident might have been even worse if not for the short steel posts, known as bollards, installed last autumn in some parts of the area to protect pedestrians, officials said. "Without those bollards, the incident would have seen far greater harm to pedestrians," Burney said.

One of the posts eventually helped stop the runaway car driven by the 26-year-old suspect, Richard Rojas, now charged with murder, attempted murder and vehicular homicide. But planners never considered putting bollards along all of the sidewalks, Burney and another person involved with planning said. That included the block where the car killed 18-year-old tourist Alyssa Elmsan, even though that stretch of sidewalk was widened in the renovation.

"We wanted to be sure safety measures did not define the public space, while also creating highly effective protective features in the most populated areas," said Craig Dykers, founding partner of Snohetta. "This was a fundamental concept of the redesign as a whole, which focused on reducing visual and physical clutter and confusion," he said. The city envisioned the project as creating two distinct kinds of spaces - pedestrian plazas and sidewalks - with the bollards used mostly to surround and protect the pedestrian zones.

After Thursday's incident, the balance between aesthetics, convenience and safety that

the architects and city officials sought may need to be reassessed, people familiar with the plan said. "It's certainly worth looking at ... in light of this," said Tim Tompkins, president of Times Square Alliance, a business development partnership for the area. Tompkins participated in discussions about the renovation plan. On Friday, police had lined most of the sidewalks around Times Square with temporary concrete and metal barriers, a stark reminder of Thursday's mayhem and the risks inherent in visiting tourist destinations in any city.

In the redesign, decisions on the placement of bollards were based on recommendations from the New York Police Department, Burney said. The city bars the placement of bollards in front of individual buildings unless the NYPD deems them to be a potential target, he said. Deputy Chief William Aubry, who commands Manhattan detectives, said at a news conference on Friday that he could not comment on the department's role in the design process. City Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, who chairs the council's transportation committee, on Friday said he planned to introduce legislation that would require installation of bollards along busy sidewalks.

Mayor Bill de Blasio said on WNYC radio earlier on Friday that the city would consider making changes. "We're going to look at Times Square and see - obviously we'll look at some other key locations - if we have to do different things in our approach," he said. Representatives for de Blasio did not immediately reply to a question about whether he would support Rodriguez's bill. Dykers, of Snohetta, said in an emailed statement that the design firm may also take a second look, with an eye to "further minimize the impact of any future situations without interfering with the open, vibrant and unique character of Times Square." —Reuters

# 'THEY STOLE MY MONEY'

## GREEK DREAMS OF RETIREMENT TURN SOUR

**ATHENS:** It was supposed to be a time to look forward to. After decades of work, retirement was for many meant to provide a chance to slow down and enjoy life. A holiday, an evening out with old friends, the odd fishing trip. Instead, many Greek pensioners say they are struggling to get by. The government has repeatedly cuts old age benefits as part of the country's three international bailouts and many retirees now say they are at breaking point financially. Some have unemployed children they try to help on shrinking pensions, others are seeing rising taxes eat into lifetime savings.

A new austerity bill approved in parliament early Friday cuts their pensions even further, putting their plight in focus. Greece once had a generous pension system - too generous to be sustainable, especially with an aging population. Retirement was possible from as early as the age of 55 after 30 years of work. Many had extra perks: public sector employees could retire

as early as 52. Some women with young children could retire with a reduced pension at 50.

But the financial crisis left Greece reliant on international creditors, who pushed for economic change - not least to pensions. The standard retirement age is now 67. Many early retirement provisions have been abolished. Including pensions, incomes have dropped 40 percent over the last seven years of crisis. Here is a look at the problem through the stories of four pensioners. Mina Griva, 78, widow and former factory worker Griva's husband, who worked in a steel plant in Greece, died eight years ago. Her initial widow's pension of 998 euros (\$1,110) and a 300 euro supplementary pension have been cut to 560 euros and 150 euros respectively.

"They've destroyed us," said Griva, who now helps out daily at a municipal care center for the elderly. "Pensioners are crying." A mother of five, she uses her pension to help her son, who's been unemployed for five

years. She moved out of her small Athens apartment to give it to him, and lives in a single room on the last floor of the building. Now, she avidly watches political talk shows on TV to figure out how much further her pension will drop.

Griva left Greece in 1964 and worked for 15 years in Germany, initially as a cleaner in a cheese factory and later working an ironing press in a clothing factory. Times were tough in Greece then, and she worked double eight-hour shifts to send money home to her family. She saved, and eventually had enough to secure homes for her children, and a small apartment for herself. She thought she was securing her family's future. "We left here to build something," said Griva. Instead, the austerity measures ate into their lives, with new property taxes, layoffs and income cuts. "Now you can't even buy a bread ring for your grandchildren," she said. "I don't know where this will go. Things are very, very hard."

Paraskveas Kokkinakis, 71, former private bank manager Kokkinakis' gross pension when he retired in 2002 was about 2,400 euros. It's now 1,100 euros. He calculates that the new legislation will leave him with 800 euros or less. "I wasn't an employee of the state, getting state money," he said. "Thirty-six years I worked, without burdening the state by one drachma, as the currency was then. Instead, the state came and took away what I worked for." Property taxes have risen but the real estate market is depressed so selling to raise money isn't an option, and Kokkinakis says he's burning through his savings just to pay taxes. Food prices have gone up, so he and his wife only shop for the essentials and keep an eye out for special offers. Things he could do almost without thinking before - buy new clothes, go out to dinner with friends - have ended.

Still, he counts himself among the lucky ones, as he doesn't have college-age children to support. Instead, he and his wife care for their three grandchildren while their parents are at work. "It never crossed my mind that there would be a time when this care-free period - let's call it that - would turn into anxiety." Fotis Milas, 66, former paper factory employee Milas worked for 36 years in the sales departments of two paper factories before retiring seven years ago on a pension of 1,800 euros that's been steadily cut to 1,000 euros. He says he wouldn't object to cuts of 100-300 euros if it was to help the poor, but an 800 euro reduction is too much.

"This is theft, fraud, literally! I tell you. They stole my money." With higher taxes to pay on property he inherited, he struggles to make ends meet. His life has shrunk to his cramped living room in a small first-floor apartment, where he spends much of his days watching television and smoking. "You can't go anywhere. So you shut yourself off at home. Why? Isn't it a shame? Didn't I work? Didn't they withhold contributions from me?" He says one of the few pleasures he has left is his daily coffee with friends.

The new austerity measures are likely to cut his pension to about 800 euros, Milas says. "I will start having a very, very hard time. At the moment, thank God, I'm not hungry. For now." Paraskevi Koliambi, 60, former silversmith and widowed Koliambi, worked with her silversmith husband hand-making decorative items and jewelry. Her husband died about 11 years ago, just as he was about to retire. Her son took over the family business but it is struggling due to a dramatic fall in sales amid the financial crisis.

Koliambi initially received a reduced widow's pension of 780 euros, an amount that's been trimmed to 760. The two annual pension bonuses she used to receive have also been cut. She doesn't know yet how much the new measures will hurt. "I see it as uncertain, the future," she says during a visit to her son's workshop, tucked away in a dingy back alley off of Athens' flea market. "We're trying to hold on. My son is really fighting to keep the business. .... Whatever we had set aside is all gone - on taxes." She puts whatever she can from her small pension toward helping her son, "with the hope that we can manage to keep this business, which is very, very hard." —AP



**ATHENS:** An elderly woman holding an umbrella walks during a rainfall in central Athens. Greek retirees say they are struggling to survive on ever dwindling pensions with repeated cuts imposed by successive governments as part of their country's three international bailouts. —AP



**ATHENS:** An elderly man walks during a rainfall in central Athens. —AP

## DEATH TOLL MOUNTS IN SOUTH LIBYAN ATTACK

**BENGHAZI:** A spokesman for east Libyan armed forces said yesterday that as many as 141 people had been killed a day earlier in an attack on a southern air base, and the head of Libya's United Nations-backed government suspended his defense minister pending an investigation into the incident. The attack at Brak Al-Shati air base shattered a truce in the area, which in recent months had become a flashpoint between military alliances based in eastern and western Libya.

It risks a major escalation in a stop-start conflict between eastern-based factions and rivals loosely aligned with current and former governments in the capital, Tripoli. Ahmed Al-Mismari, a spokesman for the eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA), said 103 of those killed in the attack at the air base were LNA troops, most of them from the 12th Brigade stationed there. They were attacked by a brigade from the western city of Misrata known as the Third Force, which previously controlled the base and is nominally aligned with the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli.

Earlier on Friday, the mayor of Brak Al-Shati and a medical source in the town put the death toll at 89, though the medical official said some bodies had not been brought to the hospital. Mismari said some of the bodies were only collected on Friday. It was not possible to independently verify the number of casualties. Local and LNA officials have said some of those killed were civilians who appeared to have been summarily executed. Mohamed Gliwan, a spokesman for the Third Force, told local TV that LNA troops who were killed inside the base were armed.

Human Rights Watch cited a medical official, an eyewitness, and photo and video footage to say that attacking forces had killed "scores of LNA fighters, some with bullets to the head, in apparent acts of summary execution." UN Libya envoy Martin Kobler called the attack unprovoked and vicious, saying it "must not push (Libya) into further, serious conflict." GNA Prime Minister Fayez Seraj announced that he was suspending both Defense Minister Mahdi Al-Barghathi and Third Force commander Jamal Traiki, "until it is determined who was responsible for violating the ceasefire."

He condemned the escalation at Brak Al-Shati "in the strongest terms" and called for an immediate ceasefire. He denied issuing any instructions to the ministry of defense. Barghathi is a former LNA commander turned opponent of LNA chief Khalifa Haftar. He is widely reported to have played a role in plotting past military operations against the LNA, though his ministry denied ordering Thursday's attack.

The LNA has said Islamist militants and the Benghazi Defense Brigades (BDB), whose members previously fought the LNA in Benghazi, also took part in the attack. Mismari said the LNA had carried out air strikes in the Sabha and Jufra regions in response to the attack. Also on Friday, a car bomb south of Benghazi killed a prominent tribal leader linked to the LNA along with five other people. The blast in Suluq, 31 miles south of Benghazi, also wounded 26 people, a medical source said. The LNA has been fighting a three-year campaign against Islamist militants and other opponents in Benghazi and other parts of eastern Libya. —Reuters

## MISSION UNACCOMPLISHED: UGANDA HALTS HUNT FOR NOTORIOUS WARLORD

**OBO, Central African Republic:** Sweat soaks into the bright red neckerchiefs of the soldiers slouching to attention on a steamy parade ground deep in the inaccessible forests of Central African Republic (CAR). The military display marked the end of a failed years-long hunt for Joseph Kony, leader of the notorious Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group that has its origins in 1980s Uganda.

Arrayed against this elusive, lonely and brutal figure and his dwindling band of fighters, were a host of regional militaries supported by US special forces. And yet, as Ugandan and American troops abandon their "capture or kill" mission, Kony remains at large. The job of finding him now rests with the under-manned and poorly-trained Central African forces. Lieutenant Hubert Zinja, spokesman for Central African troops in the town of Obo-untill this week the nerve centre of the US-backed, Ugandan-led hunt for Kony-insisted they were up to the job. "We are ready with what we have. We have the capacity to fight rebels," Zinja said.

### Civilians abandoned

Civilians in Obo do not share his confidence. Simeon Mbolinjajabe, headmaster of the local secondary school, fears the departure of the Ugandan troops (UPDF) could lead to reprisals from LRA fighters believed to be hiding in the dense bush surrounding the town. "When the UPDF are leaving, the people of Obo think they are abandoning them for any eventual attack because for us their presence means security," said Mbolinjajabe. "We are worrying about what will come after them." For three decades the LRA has cut a swathe of murder, rape and abduction across central Africa, preying on civilians in four different countries. The UN estimates the LRA has slaughtered more than 100,000 people and abducted 60,000 children since it was established by Kony in northern Uganda in 1987. A self-styled mystic and prophet, Kony launched his bloody rebellion to impose his own interpretation of the biblical 'Ten Commandments'. Forced out of Uganda in 2006, the LRA splintered into small units that have roamed the lawless border regions of CAR, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan in the years since. —AFP



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** A woman reacts to a national address by Brazil's President Michel Temer in which he said he would not resign in Rio de Janeiro. —AP

## BRAZIL CRISIS WORSENS

**BRASILIA:** Brazil's political crisis headed into a weekend dominated by protests and President Michel Temer's attempt to secure enough allies to save himself after being accused of obstructing justice. Temer needs to maintain sufficient backing in Congress to ward off calls for his impeachment barely a year after he took over in the wake of his predecessor Dilma Rousseff's own impeachment.

Today, temperatures will rise further with nationwide protests planned by leftist groups demanding Temer step down. The turnout at the protests will be closely watched as a gauge of the public mood. On Friday, the Supreme Court released court filings in which Prosecutor General Rodrigo Janot accused Temer and a senior senator of attempting to block a huge anti-corruption investigation known as "Car Wash." This came after authorities released what they said was a secretly recorded conversation between Temer and a business executive in which the president is purported to have given his blessing to monthly payments of hush money to a jailed politician.

That politician-former lower house speaker Eduardo Cunha is in prison after a "Car Wash" judge convicted him of bribetaking. The "Car Wash" investigation has upended Brazil with scores of politicians indicted or subject to probes into alleged bribe taking and embezzlement. Cunha, formerly one of the most powerful insiders in Congress, has long been rumored to have threatened to spill secrets on other politicians to prosecutors. Temer angrily denied any wrongdoing in a televised address Thursday and rebutted mounting calls for his resignation. He has not spoken in public since then.

### Losing 'moral' standing

Adding fuel to the fire was the release Friday of plea bargain testimony by executives at the huge JBS meatpacking company indicating that they had given Temer \$4.6 million in bribes. The executives also claimed to have paid \$150 million in undeclared campaign funds to former presidents Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Rousseff. Opponents piled on the pressure, with eight impeachment requests filed in Congress.

The powerful Globo newspaper published an editorial at the top of its webpage demanding Temer resign. "Not one citizen conscious of the obligations of citizenship can fail to recognize that the president has lost the moral, ethical, political and administrative conditions to continue governing Brazil," the editorial said. The beleaguered president was holed up Friday at the presidential palace with close aides, a government official said on condition of anonymity. "The government is working on three fronts to end the crisis: Political, judicial and economic," the source said.

Temer's conservative government has angered millions of Brazilians with its ambitious austerity reforms, which include the planned raising of the retirement age to fix the country's unaffordable pension system. Temer is especially loathed on the left for his role in the impeachment of Rousseff. As her vice president, he immediately took over when she was pushed out. On Thursday, thousands of people demonstrated against Temer in the capital Brasilia and in Rio de Janeiro. Even a former chief justice of the Supreme Court, Joaquim Barbosa, said protesters should step in. "There is no other way out. Brazilians must mobilize, must take to the streets to forcefully demand the immediate resignation of Michel Temer," he said on Twitter. —AFP



**NEW ORLEANS:** Workers take down the statue of former confederate general Robert E Lee, which stands over 100 feet tall, in Lee Circle, New Orleans on Friday, May 19, 2017. —AP

## NEW ORLEANS REMOVES STATUES LINKED TO PRO-SLAVERY ERA

**NEW ORLEANS:** Crews in New Orleans on Friday fastened straps around a statue of Confederate General Robert E Lee as the city worked to remove the last of four monuments its leaders see as racially offensive. As the blue straps encircled the bronze figure of Lee with crossed arms atop a 60-foot marble column in the center of a busy traffic circle, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu was half a mile away speaking to an audience that included civil rights leaders, city officials and activists. He told them the statues celebrated "the lost cause of the Confederacy."

Unlike at a removal earlier this month, there were no clashes between supporters and opponents of the statues. Landrieu said the four monuments were out of step with a modern city that embraces people of all races while acknowledging that New Orleans was also once one of the biggest slave markets in America. "We cannot be afraid of the truth," said Landrieu, who along with other city leaders decided to take down the monuments in 2015, a decision that withstood challenges in federal court.

law. Since May 11, crews in New Orleans have removed monuments to Jefferson Davis, president of the pro-slavery Confederacy and PGT Beauregard, a Confederate general.

Last month, a monument was taken down that commemorated an 1874 attack on the racially integrated city police and state militia by a white supremacist group called the Crescent City White League. "The monuments were erected purposefully to send a strong message to all who walked in the shadows (of them) about who was still in charge in this city," Landrieu said. Earlier this month, dozens of supporters of the monuments clashed with hundreds of demonstrators near the site of the Lee statue. The resistance to their removal was from those who argue the monuments are important symbols of the city's Southern heritage.

On Friday, there was no significant presence of those who wanted to keep the monuments. More than 100 supporters of the removals were on hand listening to a jazz band, not unlike a city park in New Orleans on any Friday. Landrieu spokeswoman Erin Burns said the city will hold the monuments and consider proposals to move them to government or non-profit entities. The Lee monument was dedicated in 1884 on the birthday of the first US president, George Washington. The Confederacy was made up of states that attempted to preserve slavery in the South and secede from the United States in the Civil War of 1861 to 1865. —Reuters

## News

in brief



**MASALEMBU ISLAND:** Photo shows survivors of a vessel that caught fire on its car deck, at a local clinic in Masalembu Island, in between Java and Kalimantan mail islands. —AFP

#### 5 dead; Indonesia ferry catches fire in Java Sea

**JAKARTA:** A search for survivors of a ferry that caught fire in the Java Sea, killing five people, has been suspended for the night, an Indonesian search and rescue official said yesterday. The national search and rescue agency's operations director, Ivan Ahmad Riski, said 193 people have been rescued. The number of missing was unclear. The agency's initial figure for the number of people aboard, apparently based on the vessel's manifest, was 178. It is not uncommon for ferries, a regular form of transport in the Indonesian archipelago, to be overcrowded or to carry more passengers than declared. The accident happened on Friday night about 3 kilometers from Masalembu Island. A nearby ship went to the aid of the stricken ferry, which was also carrying many cars and trucks. Riski said survivors told authorities that the fire started on the ferry's vehicle deck and spread uncontrollably, forcing the captain to order all on board to abandon ship. In panic, some people jumped into the sea without wearing lifejackets or waiting for lifeboats, they said, according to Riski.

#### Ben Ali nephew apologizes to Tunisia for corruption

**TUNIS:** Imed Trabelsi, a nephew of toppled Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, apologized to the Tunisian people on national television Friday for the endemic corruption during the regime. In his testimony to the Truth and Dignity Commission (IVD), a tribunal established after the 2011 revolution, Trabelsi recounted how he got rich thanks to a well-oiled system involving the complicity of customs officers, high officials and ministers. "We practically had a monopoly on the banana trade," Trabelsi said, adding that there were also monopolies on real estate and alcohol sales. If another businessman tried to compete "we blocked his load," he added. "The customs officers who worked with us were dedicated to our boat... they blocked the interests of many people and took out our goods before everyone else's," he said, adding that bribes of up to 30,000 dinars (over \$12,000) were given. Trabelsi, who has been in prison since the revolution, "apologized from the bottom of (his) heart" and said he wanted his freedom.

#### School: Student dies as a result of 'choking game'

**BERNARDS TOWNSHIP:** A child in a New Jersey school has died as a result of the "choking game," where kids seek to achieve euphoria by briefly stopping oxygen from reaching the brain, a school superintendent says. Bernards Township Schools Superintendent Nick Markarian said in a letter this week to parents that the student engaged in the game also known as space monkey, the fainting game, or flatliner. His letter said the death earlier this year was "one of the tragic losses of student life we have experienced this year." The superintendent recommended that parents talk to their children and review the search history of their media devices; he noted that students ages 9 to 16 are vulnerable to experimenting with risky behavior. "The early-adolescent brain does not process information in the same manner as an adult brain, and so children in this age group are not able to fully understand the serious consequences," he wrote. Parents have been cooperative in the wake of the student's death, the district said. A spokeswoman declined to say when exactly the death occurred.

#### Propulsion problems put warships out of action

**SYDNEY:** Australia is investigating if problems in the propulsion systems of two \$1.5 billion warships built by manufacturers from Spain, Germany and Britain are the result of design flaws. Naval engineers are trying to figure out exactly what is causing the problems onboard the HMAS Adelaide and HMAS Canberra, the largest ships ever constructed for the Royal Australian Navy. Both Landing Helicopter Docks (LHDs) were built by Spanish firm Navantia using propulsion pods from German company Siemens, and fitted with combat and communications systems by British company BAE Systems. Oils have leaked into parts of the vessels' propulsion system where they shouldn't be, naval chiefs said in a briefing on Friday. "Am I disappointed? Yes. We were not expecting to find this," said Vice Admiral Tim Barrett, the chief of the Royal Australian Navy. Rear Admiral Adam Grunsell, the head of maritime systems in defence force's capability acquisition and sustainment group, said the problem could be a design issue, but stressed it was too early to speculate.

#### Bangladesh's police raid opposition leader office

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh police swooped on the offices of the country's main opposition leader hunting "anti-state documents" yesterday, sparking angry protests by hundreds of party supporters. Officials smashed locks to enter the office of two times former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in Dhaka, in what her party claimed was the latest politically-motivated move against the country's embattled opposition as it prepares for the next general election. Hundreds of supporters of Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) rushed to the site after news spread about the raid and staged a protest outside the two-storey office building in the upscale Gulshan neighborhood. Dozens of police scoured the building for two hours but later said they "have not found any materials" in the search. "We entered the office following a court order to search for anti-state and anti-government documents," Gulshan police chief Abu Baker Siddique said. The BNP said the drive was part of "a conspiracy" against Zia who is facing about three dozen cases of alleged graft, treason and violence.

# TUK-TUKS AND FLAGS AS CAMBODIAN OPPOSITION EYES BELLWETHER POLLS

## CAMBODIANS RALLY AS US WARNS OF INTIMIDATION

**PHNOM PENH:** Tuk-tuks blaring pop music and flag-waving supporters of Cambodia's embattled opposition led a rally yesterday for upcoming local elections, a bellwether for efforts to end the three-decade rule of strongman Hun Sen in next year's national polls. The June 4 vote in more than 1,600 communes-administrative clusters of villages-will take Cambodia's political temperature ahead of a general election in 2018 that is expected to go to the wire.

The opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) are desperate to end Hun Sen's rule, which they say is increasingly corrupt and repressive. But the party has been squarely outmaneuvered by the wily premier, who pegs himself as a stabilizing force in country still recovering from the horrors of the genocidal Khmer Rouge-era. His Cambodia People's Party (CPP) draws the loyalty of many older Cambodians who fear political change could reopen historic wounds and dent a surging economy.

The rival CNRP has been hemmed in by legal cases since losing a disputed 2013 general election by a whisker. Addressing thousands of opposition supporters at a Phnom Penh rally yesterday, CNRP leader Kem Sokha said political change was on the horizon. "We have travelled through obstacles, rainstorms and lightning... but the CNRP has managed to survive and is stepping forward," he said to cheers from the supporters, many with CNRP stickers on their cheeks. Kem Sokha took over the party leadership in March after long-time chief Sam Rainsy stood down amid a welter of legal cases that threatened to see the CNRP disbanded.

A strong showing by the CNRP in the June polls would send "shockwaves" through the ruling party, according to Sebastian Strangio, an expert on Cambodian politics and author of a recent book on the mercurial premier Hun Sen. "The CPP risks losing control of a lower level of government that they have controlled since the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979," he added. Conversely weak support for the CNRP could spell disaster in next year's national vote. The CPP held a rival rally in the capital,



**PHNOM PENH:** Supporters of Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) sit on Tuk-Tuks as they travel along a street during the Commune Election Campaign in Phnom Penh yesterday. —AFP

which also drew thousands. Hun Sen has overseen Cambodia's transition from a country ravaged by genocide to one of the region's fastest growing economies with a young, optimistic population. But many Cambodians have grown weary of endemic corruption and rights abuses while Hun Sen's family and friends have also become hugely wealthy over the years.

#### Political intimidation

Meanwhile, the US State Department called on the government to avoid threats

and political intimidation as the two-week campaigning for the June 4 communal elections started yesterday with tens of thousands of supporters of Hun Sen's ruling party and the main opposition party flooding the streets of the capital. A State Department spokeswoman for East Asia, Alicia Edwards, said in Washington that the US was urging the Cambodian government to "guarantee a political space free from threats or intimidation" and respect freedom of expression for all its citizens.

Cambodia's defense minister has

reportedly warned that the army will "smash the teeth" of anyone protesting a win by the ruling party. Speaking to supporters, opposition leader Kem Sokha said that his party would win the local and general elections but he appealed to party members to be patient. Although accused of violence and intimidation of opponents, Hun Sen could also take some credit for bringing modest economic growth and stability in a country devastated by the communist Khmer Rouge's regime in the 1970s. —Agencies

## AFGHAN VP DOSTUM DEPARTS FOR TURKEY AMID RAPE PROBE

**KABUL:** Afghanistan's embattled vice president Abdul Rashid Dostum has left for Turkey, officials said yesterday, in what could be another long exile for the former warlord following allegations that he raped and tortured a political rival. Dostum, a powerful ethnic Uzbek warlord linked to a catalogue of war crimes, departed late Friday in the middle of a criminal investigation that has drawn attention to the culture of impunity that is hobbling Western-backed efforts to instill the rule of law in Afghanistan.

Speculation is rife that he has sought temporary exile in Turkey in a bid to escape prosecution, with observers saying it could mark the end of his checkered political career in Afghanistan. But a spokesman for Dostum, Bashir Ahmad Tahyanj, insisted that he would return after visiting Turkey for "medical check-ups and to visit his family". Dostum is accused of abducting rival Ahmad Ishchi last year during a game of Buzkashi—a type of polo played with an animal carcass-in northern Jowzjan province.

Dostum, 63, allegedly kept Ishchi hostage in his private compound for five days, where he was said to have been tortured and sodomised, an accusation that Dostum has denied. Nobody was arrested or indicted despite reports that medical evidence backed Ishchi's claims that he was abused. The country's attorney general launched an investigation into the allegations but Dostum evaded questioning by being holed up in his palace in central Kabul, guarded by his armed militiamen.

#### Too powerful to prosecute?

Afghanistan's Western allies initially piled pressure on President Ashraf Ghani's government to prosecute Dostum, who has survived all previous

allegations of abuse. But amid the public standoff it was clear the government favored exile rather than a criminal trial against Dostum, which could trigger violence from his Uzbek support base. Dostum's aides alleged his office staff had not been paid by the government for months, in what was believed to be a pressure tactic to make him leave the country.

The development highlights what human rights defenders call a sobering reality of Afghan politics—some strongmen are simply too powerful to prosecute. "It's a stunning example of what has become standard practice in Afghanistan, not just for Dostum but for anyone in a position of power: having promised to deliver justice the government has shown itself ultimately unwilling to do so," said Patricia Gossman, Afghanistan researcher with Human Rights Watch.

Earlier this month, another former warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who shelled Kabul during the civil war in the 1990s, returned to Kabul as part of a peace deal granting him immunity. In 2008, Dostum was accused of abducting another political rival who had allegedly plotted to assassinate him. Dostum went into exile in Turkey after another long standoff until former president Hamid Karzai called him back. Despite his human rights record, Dostum was invited to join the National Unity Government in 2014 in a bid by Ghani to attract the support of his Uzbek constituency. In a brief statement presidential spokesman Shah Hussain Murtazawi said he wished Dostum "good health". Dostum is believed to have an alcohol problem and suffers from diabetes. But Murtazawi declined to comment when asked whether the president was in contact with Dostum before his departure. —AFP



**This file photo shows Afghan warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam speaking at a ceremony in Sheberghan. —AFP**



**CHARIKAR, Afghanistan:** Georgian soldiers from the NATO coalition look on as an Afghan motorcyclist turns his bike near the site of a roadside bomb blast at Abed Kheel near Charikar district of Parwan province. —AFP

## AFGHAN TALEBAN LAUNCH THREE-PRONGED ASSAULT

**GHAZNI:** Taliban fighters launched a three-pronged attack on parts of the central-eastern Afghan city of Ghazni overnight, driving a Humvee packed with explosives into the entrance of a district governor's compound during the assault, police said yesterday. The assault on Ghazni, on the highway linking the capital Kabul with the southern city of Kandahar, ramps up the Taliban's spring offensive and comes as US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis prepares to present recommendations to President Donald Trump on future troop levels in Afghanistan. In the north of the country, the Taliban has stepped up its operations and targeted Kunduz, a city that they have twice managed to seize for brief periods in the past.

The Taliban have had a strong presence in the province of Ghazni for years, but provincial police chief Aminullah Amerkheil said the overnight attack from three directions was the fiercest launched by the insurgents. However, he said his men had held out. Hashim Zwak, the police chief of

Waghaz district, was wounded in the hand during the fighting. He described how the militants drove a Humvee packed with explosives into the entrance of the district governor's compound and blew it up before other fighters tried to overrun the police defenders. "They put all their effort into it but they could not defeat us," Zwak said from a hospital in Ghazni city.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said, however, that the fighters had gained control of Waghaz district, straddling the highway to the south of the city and fighting was continuing in other areas. He said several members of the security forces had been killed and many vehicles destroyed along with weapons and ammunition. The provincial police chief said the Taliban had suffered far heavier casualties, with 25 fighters killed, while only two members of the security forces died. "The Taliban put all their pressure on Afghan security forces to take control of at least one district but we fought well and pushed them back," Amerkheil said. —Reuters

## NORTH KOREA URGES US TO ROLL BACK 'HOSTILE POLICY'

**UNITED NATIONS:** North Korea's deputy UN envoy said on Friday the United States needed to roll back its "hostile policy" toward the country before there could be talks as Washington raised concern that Pyongyang could be producing a chemical used in a nerve agent. "As everybody knows, the Americans have gestured (toward) dialogue," North Korea's deputy UN ambassador, Kim In Ryong, told reporters. "But what is important is not words, but actions." "The rolling back of the hostile policy towards DPRK is the prerequisite for solving all the problems in the Korean Peninsula," he said. "Therefore, the urgent issue to be settled on Korean Peninsula is to put a definite end to the US hostile policy towards DPRK, the root cause of all problems."

North Korea, also known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), has vowed to develop a missile mounted with a nuclear warhead that can strike the mainland United States, saying the program is necessary to counter US

aggression. US President Donald Trump warned in an interview with Reuters in late April that a "major, major conflict" with North Korea was possible, but said he would prefer a diplomatic outcome to the dispute over its nuclear and missile programs. Trump later said he would be "honored" to meet the North's leader, Kim Jong Un, under the right conditions. A US State Department spokesman said the country would have to "cease all its illegal activities and aggressive behavior in the region."

The UN Security Council first imposed sanctions on North Korea in 2006 and has strengthened the measures in response to the country's five nuclear tests and two long-range rocket launches. Pyongyang is threatening a sixth nuclear test. US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley raised concern on Friday about an application by North Korea to patent a process to produce sodium cyanide, which can be used to make the nerve agent Tabun and is also used in the extraction of gold. —Reuters

## IRAN'S ROUHANI: A MODERATE CLERIC OPEN TO THE WORLD

**TEHRAN:** Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who won re-election yesterday, has spent three decades at the heart of Iran's revolutionary establishment but still faces opposition from hardliners for trying to rebuild ties with the West. The 68-year-old cleric, almost always clad in his white turban, repeated his convincing 2013 victory by bringing together moderates and reformists with his pledges to end Iran's isolation and improve civil rights at home. Born in Semnan province on November 12, 1948, Rouhani is married with four children and holds a doctorate in law from Scotland's Glasgow Caledonian University.

With his snow-white beard, he comes across as jovial and scholarly, if not overly charismatic, when speaking in public. He has presented himself as the candidate of change and social freedoms, attacking his opponents as "extremists" whose "era is over". His first term saw a groundbreaking 2015 deal with world powers that ended many sanctions and a 13-year standoff over Iran's nuclear program. He also brought a more technocratic



**TEHRAN:** A screen shows newly re-elected Iranian President Hassan Rouhani delivering a televised speech in the capital Tehran yesterday. — AFP

But critics said he massively oversold the economic benefits of the nuclear

agreement, and there were fears that continuing stagnation and high unemployment would hurt his re-election bid. That proved unfounded as Rouhani sailed to victory against hardline challenger Ebrahim Raisi, winning 57 percent of the vote on Friday, on the back of a huge turnout. His supporters hope another resounding victory will give him more leverage to ease social restrictions and release activists and opposition leaders jailed after mass protests in 2009. Rouhani's extensive backroom experience, cultivated as a protege to the late revolutionary power-broker Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, puts him in a strong position to negotiate with more conservative forces in the judiciary and security forces.

### 'The diplomatic sheikh'

As Iran's nuclear negotiator in 2003-05, Rouhani earned the nickname "the diplomatic sheikh" from his European interlocutors, but that was also the start of criticism from hardliners at home who accused him of kowtowing to the West.

Before then, Rouhani had been firmly in the revolutionary establishment. He held key defence portfolios during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war before spending 16 years as secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Iran's top security post. When student protesters took to the streets in 1999, Rouhani called them "bandits and saboteurs" and most damningly "the corrupt of the Earth"—a charge that carries the death penalty in Iran.

He remains a member of the conservative Association of Combatant Clergy, although his position on protesters seems to have softened over the years. Rouhani consistently sought to rebuild relations with the United States, and became the first Iranian leader to speak with his counterpart in Washington when Barack Obama phoned in September 2013. He has never been under any illusion about the difficulties of the relationship, telling US journalists in 2002: "America is not keen on independent countries... America is keen on countries that completely surrender themselves and act according to America's demands." — AFP

## IRAN LEADER STOKES DESIRE FOR CHANGE, BUT CAN HE DELIVER?

### ROUHANI CRITICIZES HARDLINERS FOR CURTAILING FREEDOMS

**ANKARA:** A mild-mannered cleric known for decades as an establishment insider, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani reinvented himself as a rabble-rousing political street fighter to secure a decisive re-election victory against a united conservative bloc. Now, having stoked his supporters' yearning for change, he faces the harder task of satisfying them without bringing a backlash from the conservatives who still control most of the levers of power. A pragmatist rather than a gung-ho reformer by nature, Rouhani nevertheless fired up the pro-reform camp with speeches that broke taboos by targeting Iran's hardline elite, from the conservative judiciary to the powerful Revolutionary Guards. Rouhani openly criticized the human rights record of the authorities, speaking at rallies about "those who cut out tongues and sewed mouths shut". In a debate last week he accused Raisi of seeking to

"abuse religion for power". That drew an unusual rebuke directly from the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who called the rhetoric at the debate "unworthy". Rouhani has decisively defeated Khamenei's protegee, hardline judge Ebrahim Raisi. But the supreme leader still makes the ultimate decisions on policy, and his conservative faction still controls the judiciary and security forces.

Rouhani will have to find an accommodation with them, or end up like his reformist predecessor Mohammad Khatami, who whetted Iranians' appetite for change but failed to deliver it during two terms from 1997-2005. "To appeal to change-seeking voters, Rouhani attacked powerful Iranian institutions ... whose cooperation he will need in order to govern effectively," said Karim Sadjadpour senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment who focuses on Iran. Abbas Milani,

director of the Iranian Studies program at Stanford University, said: "Rouhani upped the ante in the past ten days in the rhetoric that he used. Clearly it's going to be difficult to back down on some of this stuff."

### A bridge

Rouhani built his reputation as an establishment figure who could deliver some of the aims sought by reformists without alienating conservatives. "Rouhani is a regime insider. He is loyal to the establishment. He is not a reformist but a bridge between hardliners and reformists," said a former senior official. Born into a religious family in 1948 and rising to the middle ranks within the Shiite clergy, Rouhani was active in the revolution that overthrew the US-backed Shah in 1979. He has held several sensitive jobs in the Islamic Republic, including representing Khamenei for 25 years at the Supreme National Security Council.

When he was swept to office four years ago with three times as many votes as his nearest challenger, Iranians held high hopes that he could fulfill his promises to reduce the country's isolation abroad and bring more freedoms at home. He promised to heal the wounds of the previous presidential vote in 2009, when mass reformist protests were violently crushed after the disputed re-election of hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The crowning achievement of Rouhani's first term was a deal with global powers to curb Iran's nuclear program in return for the lifting of most financial sanctions. Crucially, Rouhani's government won the cautious backing of the hardline supreme leader for the deal.

But since the accord was reached, the promised economic benefits have been slow to arrive. Meanwhile, there was little progress on giving Iranians more freedom at home to gather, communicate and dress as they please. As his campaign for re-election got under way, many reformist voters said they were disillusioned, an apathy Rouhani's allies saw as the biggest threat to his re-election. His fiery rhetoric in the final days of the campaign was intended to whip up support from reformists and remind them of the high stakes. — Reuters



**This undated photo provided by US Air Force shows the WC-135W Constant Phoenix aircraft during flight. A pair of Chinese fighter jets conducted an 'unprofessional' intercept of an American radiation-sniffing surveillance plane over the East China Sea, the US Air Force said Friday, May 19, 2017, the latest in a series of such incidents that have raised US concerns in an already tense region. — AP**

## BEIJING DENIES US ALLEGATIONS

**BEIJING:** China has denied US allegations that two Chinese fighter jets acted unprofessionally in intercepting an American military plane earlier this week, saying that its aircraft were acting in accordance with the law. "Related remarks from the US side are inconsistent with fact," the Chinese Ministry of Defense said in a statement posted to its website late Friday.

"On May 17, a US reconnaissance aircraft was carrying out an operation in airspace over the Chinese Yellow Sea (the northern part of the East China Sea), and Chinese aircraft acted to identify and investigate in accordance with the law," the statement said, calling the action "professional" and "safe". The US Air Force said in an earlier statement Friday that its plane, a WC-135 Constant Phoenix, was conducting a "routine mission" in international airspace when it was intercepted by two Chinese Sukhoi SU-30 fighter aircraft.

The WC-135 is a so-called "sniffer plane" designed to scan the atmosphere for signs of nuclear activity. "The WC-135 was operating in accordance with international law. While we are still investigating the inci-

dent, initial reports from the US aircrew characterized the intercept as unprofessional," the Air Force said. The statement out of Beijing came as Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi discussed preparations for the first round of the China-US diplomatic and security dialogue in a phone conversation Saturday with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted in a statement that Yang and Tillerson "exchanged views... of common concern such as the Korean Peninsula," but did not say whether the aircraft incident was discussed. Mid-air interceptions occur routinely in international airspace, but the US military will often call out foreign pilots if it judges the manoeuvres to be risky or unprofessional.

Meanwhile, China urged the US to halt such reconnaissance exercises in order to prevent future incidents. "The American military's frequent reconnaissance operations are the root cause of security issues between the Chinese and US navy and air forces," the Chinese defense ministry's statement said. — AFP



**TEHRAN:** Supporters of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani flash the victory sign from their cars outside a polling station for the presidential and municipal councils election, in Tehran. — AP

## HARSH SENTENCES FOR ISLAMIC STATE'S SYMPATHIZERS IN BRAZIL TEST NEW LAW

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** After months of trading messages on social media praising violence by the Islamic State militant group, Leonid El Kadre de Melo said it was time to act. "I want to be clear," he wrote in a message recovered by Brazilian authorities on the eve of the Rio 2016 Olympics. "My intention is to put together a real and concrete group" to launch attacks.

While de Melo's defenders portray that message as a bit of social media bravado, it alarmed Brazilian officials worried that the global Games could prove a target for terrorists. De Melo and 12 other men were detained in July during a high-profile sweep under a new law that greatly widened the scope of what could be considered terrorism in Latin America's largest nation. This month, he and seven other of the men were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 6 years to nearly 16 for de Melo, labelled by authorities as the group's leader.

### Would-be plotters

The first - and so far only - use of the law has been controversial in Brazil, a nation that has never suffered a known Islamist terror attack and in a broader region where they have been extremely rare. Former Public Security Secretary Jose Vicente da Silva said the quick reaction of officials "was the only thing that could stop such a crime," and said the sentence was justified given the threat the men posed. But others suggested the law goes too far. "The sentences appear to be exceedingly harsh given what is known about the would-be plotters," said Robert Muggah, research director at Igarape Institute, a Rio-based think tank that has a specialty in crime analysis.

When Congress passed the anti-terrorism law in 2016, Brazilian authorities were under enormous pressure to show they could handle security risks during the Games, particularly amid a spate of "lone-wolf" attacks in Europe and the

United States by radicalized young men claiming allegiance to - but with few prior contacts with - the Islamic State. Many Brazilians saw little need for such a law: The country of 200 million people has seen little open friction involving its 1.5 million Muslim citizens. In recent decades, intelligence agencies have expressed concerns about possible terrorism activity in Brazil's triple border area with Paraguay and Argentina, but residents there wave aside the concerns, saying the region is simply a melting pot of cultures.

### 'Terrorism and "terrorist'

The country accounted for only three of the tens of thousands of foreign fighters for the Islamic State group counted in a 2015 study by the Soufan Group, a private intelligence firm. A more visceral worry for many was possible misuse of anti-terror laws in a country and region that suffered through oppressive conservative dictatorships that killed thousands of South Americans. Human rights groups warned that overly broad language could provide tools to suppress free speech. The law calls for up to eight years in prison for "advocating terrorism," and 10 to 20 years for "joining terrorist organizations," though "terrorism" and "terrorist" are not defined.

In his sentence, federal judge Marcos Josegrei da Silva noted that the men never began planning an attack, but said that "it doesn't matter if there really was any intent to translate public declarations of support into preparations or concrete actions." Still, many doubt the men, most recent converts to Islam, posed much of a threat. Some had visited the Middle East, though authorities have not accused them of making connections with terror groups abroad. The men range in age from 21 to 42, come from different regions of Brazil and have varying levels of education and work experience. — AP

## HIGHLAND VENEZUELAN TOWN BLITZED BY LOOTING, PROTESTS

**LOS TEQUES:** Like many Portuguese immigrants to Venezuela after World War Two, Manuel Fernandes spent a lifetime building a small business: his bread and cake shop in a highland town. It took just one night for it to fall apart. The first he knew of the destruction of his beloved "Bread Mansion" store on a main avenue of Los Teques was when looters triggered the alarm, resulting in a warning call to his cellphone at 7 pm on Wednesday.

Fernandes was stuck at home due to barricades and protests that have become common in seven weeks of anti-government unrest in Venezuela. So he was forced to watch the disaster unfold via live security camera images. "There were hundreds of people. They smashed the glass counters, the fridges. They took everything - ham, cheese, milk, cornflakes, equipment," the 65-year-old said, as workmen secured the shop on Friday with thick metal plates. "I've dedicated everything to this. My family depends on it," said the distraught businessman, on a street where

most neighboring stores were also ransacked in a frenzy of looting in Los Teques this week.

Unrest and protests against President Nicolas Maduro's socialist government since early April have caused at least 46 deaths plus hundreds of injuries and arrests. They have also sparked widespread nighttime looting. When a mob smashed its way into a bakery in El Valle, a working class neighborhood of Caracas, last month, 11 people died, eight of them electrocuted and three shot. This week, Maduro's government sent 2,000 troops to western Tachira state, where scores of businesses have been emptied.

In Los Teques, an hour's drive into hills outside Caracas, locals spoke of up to half a dozen more deaths in looting and clashes this week between security forces and young protesters from a self-styled 'Resistance' movement. There has been no official confirmation of those deaths. Reuters journalists visiting the town on Friday had to negotiate permission from masked youths manning roadblocks and turning back

traffic at the main entrances. Mostly students, the young men said they had put academic work on hold and were determined to stay in the street until Maduro allowed a general election, the main demand of Venezuela's opposition in the current political crisis.

### 'Nothing to lose'

"We are from humble families. We have nothing to lose. I don't even have enough for a bus fare or food. That tyrant Maduro has wrecked everything," said Alfredo, 28, who stopped studying to man barricades and says he runs a unit of 23 "resistance" members. Armed with homemade shields, stones and Molotov cocktails, the youths build barricades with branches, furniture and bags of trash, scrawling slogans like 'No Surrender' on nearby walls.

They turn back traffic and wait for the inevitable arrival of security forces. Some have scars and wounds from intense clashes this week. Oil has been spread on the ground to deter armored vehicles used by the National Guard. Barbed wire is also used. On Friday morning, one man walked up to the barricade with a woman in a wheelchair, and was granted special permission to pass. Some women, trying to visit relatives jailed in a nearby prison, also managed to talk their way through. Mid-morning, some neighbors delivered arepas, a cornmeal flatbread that is Venezuela's staple food, to the youths, offering them words of encouragement and thanks. "You see, they all support us," said Micky, covering his face with a red bandana at a barricade. "We are not coup-mongers like Maduro says. All we want is a general election." The 54-year-old president narrowly won election in 2013 to replace the late Hugo Chavez who died from cancer.

But without his predecessor's charisma, popular touch and unprecedented oil revenues, Maduro has seen his popularity plunge as the economy nosedived, helping the opposition win majority support in the OPEC nation of 30 million people. He accuses foes of an "armed insurrection," with the support of the United States, and blames "fascist" protesters for all the deaths and destruction in Venezuela since April. — Reuters



**CARACAS:** A masked anti-government protester lobs a tear gas canister launched by security forces during clashes in Caracas, Venezuela. — AP

## TRUMP STARTS SAUDI TRIP WITH...

Continued from Page 1

The military package also includes tanks, combat ships, missile defense systems, radar and communications, and cybersecurity technology. National oil giant Saudi Aramco was also expected to sign \$50 billion of deals with US companies, part of a drive to diversify the kingdom's economy beyond oil exports, Aramco's chief executive Amin Nasser said. US technology and engineering conglomerate GE said it had signed \$15 billion of agreements with Saudi organizations.

The US president was earlier given a warm welcome in the oil-rich kingdom - a mood in sharp contrast to Washington where pressure is building after fresh claims over his team's alleged links to Moscow. Air Force One had barely taken off when it was announced late on Friday that James Comey, the former FBI chief fired by Trump, had agreed to testify publicly about Russian interference in the US elections. Reports also emerged that Trump had called Comey "a nut job" and that the FBI had identified a senior White House official as a "significant person of interest" in its probe of Russian meddling.

The president and first lady Melania Trump were greeted by King Salman as they disembarked at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh yesterday morning. Trump and his wife, who dressed conservatively in black but did not cover her hair as Saudi women are required to do, walked side-by-side to the tarmac where they both shook hands with the king. Trump in 2015 criticized then-first lady Michelle Obama for not wearing a headscarf during a visit to Saudi Arabia, saying on Twitter that her hosts had been "insulted". Trump's daughter, Ivanka, also eschewed the scarf. Ivanka's presence dominated Arabic Twitter traffic, with the phrase "bint Trump" - Arabic for daughter of Trump - trending.

Today's speech to dozens of Muslim leaders has been touted as a major event - along the lines of a landmark address to the Islamic world given by Obama in Cairo in 2009. The speech will be especially sensitive given tensions sparked by the Trump administration's attempted travel ban targeting several Muslim-majority nations and accusations of anti-Islamic rhetoric on the campaign trail. Trump wants Gulf states in particular to do more to tackle

extremists such as the Islamic State group. In return he is expected to take a harder line on Iran, where it was announced yesterday that President Hassan Rouhani had won a resounding re-election victory as voters overwhelmingly backed his efforts to reach out to the world.

While most US presidents make their first foreign trip to neighboring Canada or Mexico, 70-year-old Trump has opted instead for the Middle East and Europe. He travels to Israel and the Palestinian Territories tomorrow and Tuesday, and then to the Vatican and to Brussels and Italy for NATO and G7 meetings. The trip is fraught with peril for the real estate magnate, who is known to dislike lengthy travel. The avalanche of revelations in the run-up to his departure has eroded Trump's standing at home, and has revived questions about his ability to strike a presidential tone with his foreign counterparts.

The first leg of the trip is likely to be the easiest - Saudi leaders are keen to work with an administration they see as more in line with their goals. The normally austere kingdom put on a major display for the visit, with the streets of Riyadh lined with US and Saudi flags and billboards featuring Trump and King Salman. The next leg in Israel could be more complicated, despite the history of warm ties between Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The visit is already awash in controversy, from a row over Trump's planned visit to Jerusalem's Western Wall, the holiest prayer site for Jews, to his alleged disclosure of Israeli intelligence to Russian officials.

After meeting Netanyahu in Jerusalem, Trump will see Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas in Bethlehem, part of his efforts to revive the long-stagnant peace process. On Tuesday Trump heads to Rome to meet with Pope Francis. The two men are at odds on everything from climate change to refugee policy, although the pontiff says he will give the US leader an open-minded hearing. The president will then meet NATO members in Brussels and attend a G7 summit in the Sicilian town of Taormina. These meetings - including with new French President Emmanuel Macron - will be closely watched for signs of whether Trump and traditional US allies in Europe can work together. — Agencies



US President Donald Trump is handed a sword during a welcoming ceremony at Murabba Palace in Riyadh. — AP

## AT WEF, ENTREPRENEURS SEEN AS SOLUTION FOR MIDEAST...

Continued from Page 1

Saudi Arabia. In coming days, Trump is to visit Israel and the Palestinian territories before heading to Europe. Mogherini said that Europe does "not see eye to eye" with the Trump administration on major issues such as trade, climate change and funding of UN agencies, but can "easily" work with the US on the conflicts in Syria and between Israelis and Palestinians.

Europe's top diplomat warned that threatened US cuts in funding UN agencies or humanitarian work "would create a major security issue worldwide, including in Europe". The Syria refugee crisis has highlighted the link between aid and security. Hundreds of thousands of civil war refugees have migrated to Europe after facing increasingly difficult conditions in regional host countries, where

cash-strapped aid agencies have struggled to provide basic support.

Iraqi President Fuad Masum called on investors to come to his country and help with reconstruction efforts, particularly in the northern city of Mosul, which was overrun by Islamic State extremists in 2014. Since the fall, Iraqi forces backed by a US-led coalition have slowly advanced in the city, pushing back the militants. Masum said that he hopes Mosul will be liberated "in the next few days," adding that "our country is open to all investors". Masum has described the scope of destruction in Mosul as "horrendous".

On the business side, participants said the region's governments and institutions must provide a nurturing environment for entrepreneurs, including access to financing. Khaled Biyari, the CEO of the Saudi Telecom Company, said the

region's young population - two-thirds are under the age of 30 - can drive the transformation. Moving to a digital economy "can allow the region and the countries in this region to leap frog," Biyari said. "They don't have to go back and do what other developed nations have (done)."

For some entrepreneurs from countries in conflict, the challenges of doing business are much more basic. Hussein Ahmed, one of the start-up founders attending the conference, has begun exporting coffee from war-ravaged Yemen to the US through his company Mocha Hunters. But his efforts are complicated by frequent power outages in his troubled war-torn homeland. "To process the coffee you need machines and machines work with electricity," he said. "Can you imagine running a business without electricity?" — AP

## ROUHANI SWEEPS TO VICTORY

Continued from Page 1

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of congratulations to Rouhani, congratulating him on his reelection. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. Russia, which fights alongside Iran in support of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, was among the first to congratulate Rouhani. President Vladimir Putin sent a telegram confirming "his readiness to continue active joint work... in line with maintaining stability and security in the Middle East and the world as a whole", the Kremlin said. Assad also congratulated Rouhani for earning "the trust the Iranian people gave him to continue bolstering Iran's position".

But European and Asian officials have also welcomed Rouhani's re-election as they pursue lucra-

tive investments in the wake of the nuclear deal, that lifted global sanctions in exchange for curbs to Iran's atomic program. EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini tweeted her vow to work for greater "engagement, regional peace... (and) the expectations of people in Iran". "A lot of investors I hadn't heard from for three months were suddenly phoning me this morning. Some are already in the process of booking their tickets," said Farid Dehdilani, international adviser for the Iranian Privatization Organization.

Rouhani put civil liberties at the heart of his campaign, and pointedly thanked reformist former president Mohammed Khatami, who has been banned from appearing in the media since supporting mass protests in 2009, in his acceptance speech. He pushed boundaries over the past fortnight with his veiled criticism of the conservative-dominated judiciary and security services, telling supporters: "We've entered this elec-

tion to tell those practising violence and extremism that your era is over."

But the economy remains Rouhani's top priority. "Dr Rouhani will more aggressively pursue his economic agenda - investing in factories, production and absorbing foreign capital," said Dehdilani. "I think he'll make the cabinet younger and more agile." Although Rouhani brought inflation down from around 40 percent when he took office in 2013, prices are still rising at nine percent a year.

Oil sales have rebounded since the nuclear deal took effect in January last year, but growth in the rest of the economy has been limited, leaving unemployment at 12.5 percent overall, and at almost 30 percent among young people. "Not everyone who voted for Rouhani thought his record was excellent, but the majority decided his competitor would be even worse," said Tehran University political researcher Foad Izadi. — AFP

Kuwait Times

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Washington Watch

## CLOUD OVER TRUMP TRIP

By Dr James J Zogby

As I write, President Donald Trump is on his way to the Middle East where he has set a high stakes program addressing some of the United States' and the Arab World's most critical concerns: Gulf security, defeating extremism, reining in Iran, and resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is a heady agenda, to be sure, but looming large will be the turmoil that is roiling the Washington the president left behind.

In Trump's mind, the crises he is facing are "fake" and manufactured by his enemies. He complained in a Tweet on the eve of his departure that he is being confronted by "the single greatest witch hunt of a politician in American history". Reality, however, is often at odds with Trump's tweets and this is no exception, because the president has no one to blame but himself for the growing controversies that are putting his presidency at risk. They are the result of his self-destructive narcissism, his ignorance about the workings of government, his dissembling, and his penchant for picking fights with adversaries - including fights he couldn't win. He simply has not understood that being president is different than being the star of his reality TV show or running his real estate/branding enterprise.

As a candidate and as president, Trump often struck out at the media. He called them biased and unfair - and his followers loved it. After the election, his attacks on the media increased and were echoed by his spokespersons. He routinely dismissed the networks and newspapers who criticized him "fake news" and at press events he harangued and/or insulted individual reporters.

### Attacks

While Trump's attacks were different in their harshness and demonstrated lack of civility, he wasn't the first president to use the media as a foil to stir up resentment to serve his political ends. But as questions about the relationships between his key campaign operatives and Russia continued to grow, instead of merely upping the ante against the media outlets that carried these stories, Trump made a fateful decision. He went after the intelligence community, the FBI, and career prosecutors. The media may have served as a useful foil, but when he went after these institutions Trump clearly overreached, picking a fight he could not win.

Ranked by the president's false stories about Michael Flynn and other operatives dealing with Russian agents, the reasons behind his firing of FBI Director Comey and what actually transpired in his conversations with Comey, and what occurred in the Oval Office meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister - these agencies struck back with well-timed leaks that contradicted Trump, setting the stage for the Deputy Attorney General's appointment of a Special Prosecutor, Robert Mueller, to investigate: whether Trump campaign operatives colluded with the Russians; whether Trump or his operatives were under the influence of the Russians; or whether Trump, himself, was guilty of attempting to obstruct justice by pressuring the FBI director to call off his investigation of Flynn.

### Lesson

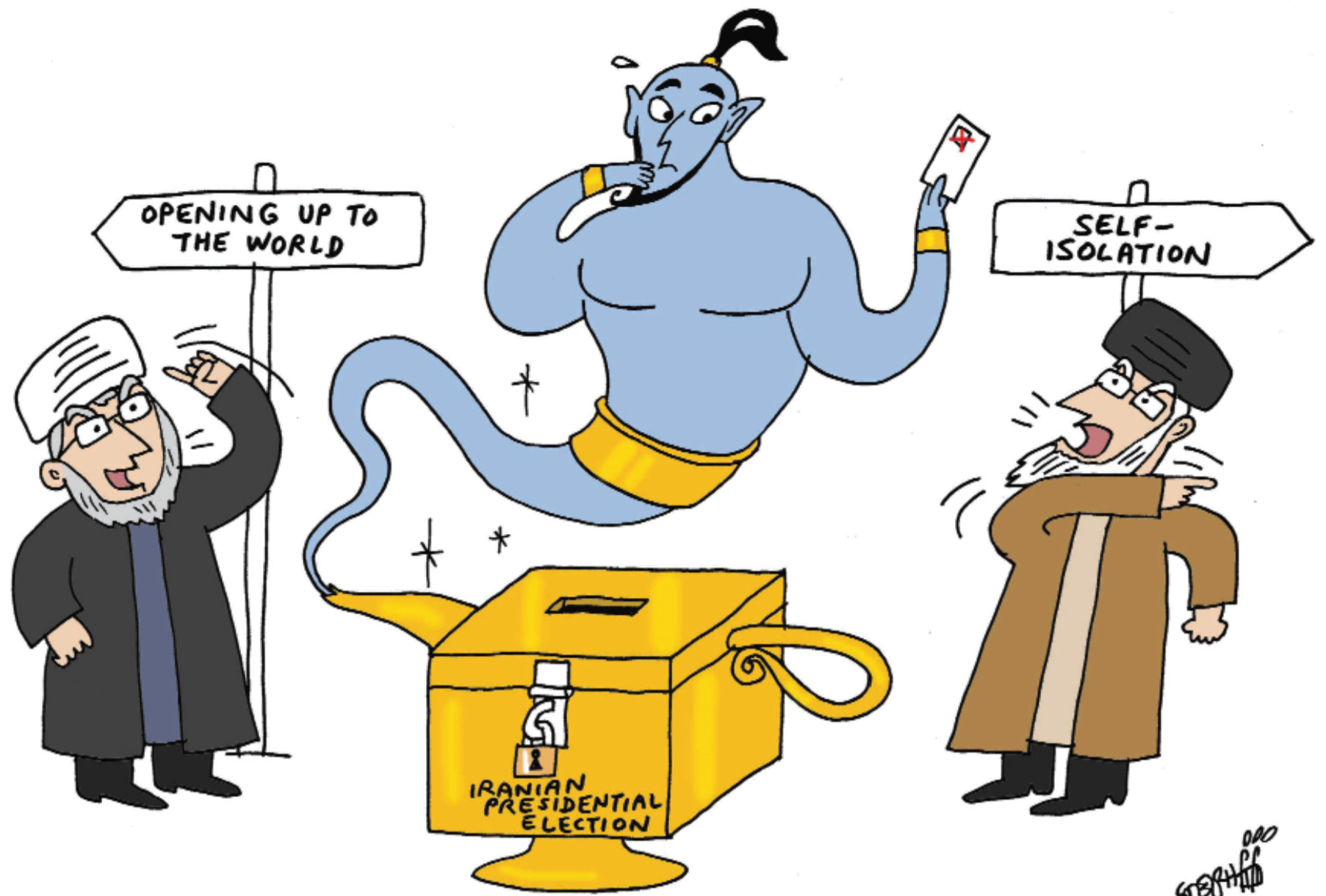
There is a lesson in all of this: You can fight all you want with the press, but don't mess with the FBI or the intelligence agencies or career prosecutors, because they'll mess back - and they have ammunition that gives them an advantage. If Trump had been a bit more knowledgeable about the workings of government and less self-absorbed, he might not have picked these fights. But he did, and now there will be a cloud over his presidency as this investigation continues.

At this point, we don't know where it will lead. What we do know is that Trump's presidency will be weakened and members of his own party (many of whom only begrudgingly accepted his candidacy) will be questioning his leadership. All of this is especially problematic coming on the eve of the president's visit to the Middle East where he is set to participate in a number of meetings with GCC and other Arab and Muslim leaders. In some quarters, there are high expectations for this visit and at least the appearance of an alignment between some GCC key objectives and the stated foreign policy positions of the White House.

The visit will take place under a cloud. In addition to ongoing concerns with the Trump Administration's unpredictability and disarray, and the continuing role of anti-Muslim ideologues within the White House (one of whom has been bizarrely tapped to write the president's Riyadh speech on Islam), it is now necessary to ask whether the president's troubles - that were of his own making - will weaken his ability to deliver on foreign policy goals he has set for himself and the region.

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

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## EXPECT IRAN HARDLINERS TO 'SETTLE SCORES'

Iranians yearning for detente abroad and greater freedoms at home have handed President Hassan Rouhani a second term, but the headline forces he defeated in elections on Friday will remain defiantly opposed to his plans. Rouhani built his resounding win in Friday's presidential election by promising more economic opportunities for Iran's youth, as well as social justice, individual freedoms and political tolerance. He also picked a rare public fight with hardliners close to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, angrily criticizing their favorite in the race, Ebrahim Raisi, a judge seen by reformists as representing the security state at its most fearsome.

The Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), the country's most powerful security force, are unlikely to forget his attacks, which played to widespread frustration with a state that controls how Iranians speak, gather and dress. During one rally Rouhani referred to hardliners as "those who cut out tongues and sewed mouths shut".

"Rouhani will face more pressure in his second term. The Revolutionary Guards and other deep state organisations will create more problems for him," said Meir Javedanfar, an Iranian-born Israeli lecturer on Iran at the Interdisciplinary Centre Herzliya in Israel. "Since the 1979 revolution, whenever hardliners have lost a political battle, they have tried to settle scores." One way the Guards could re-assert their dominance at home would be to stoke more confrontation abroad, where they provide the shock troops for Iran's interventions in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East. "I would worry about the more confrontational policy of the IRGC in the Persian Gulf ... and more confrontational policy with the U.S. and Saudi Arabia," said Javedanfar.

### Collision Course

Rouhani's allies say he still has the wherewithal to deliver progress. An insider from within the upper echelons of power, he has worked with the supreme leader Khamenei for decades. "As the economy is among Khamenei's top priorities, Khamenei will be obliged to give limited backing to Rouhani's liberal economic policy like the cautious support he gave to the nuclear deal," said an official, close to Rouhani's government.

Rouhani, first elected in a landslide in 2013 on a promise to reduce Iran's diplomatic isolation, spent most of his political capital in his first term on a nuclear agreement with six powers that resulted in a lifting of most sanctions in return for curbs on Tehran's nuclear program. Domestic social reforms were largely ignored. But in his second term Rouhani will be under more pressure from his followers to

deliver on changes at home. He has now contributed to that pressure himself by campaigning hard as a reformist, particularly in the final days.

"Clearly it's going to be difficult to back down on some of this stuff," said Abbas Milani, director of the Iranian Studies program at Stanford University. Milani noted "the challenges he gave to the IRGC" as well as promises to release reformist leaders held under house arrest. "All of these are going to put him on a confrontation path if not a collision course with the conservatives," he said.

The internal power struggle in the Islamic Republic is not just a philosophical argument between reformists and hardliners, but a battle to preserve the dominance of a theocratic establishment with vested interests and privileges. The Revolutionary Guards have an extensive business empire to protect, and believe opening up to the West

could lead to regime change. Given the importance of the Guards to the clerical leadership, few Iranians harbor high hopes that Rouhani will to fulfill all his promises.

"Rouhani will likely be unwilling or unable to push back against hardliners... Those who want real change ... will once again - and most unfortunately - be stuck between a rock and a hard place," said Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior Iran analyst at Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Still, the prospect of victory by Raisi, who was one of four judges in the 1980s that approved the death sentences of thousands of political prisoners, was enough to drive even doubtful Iranians out to vote for Rouhani in force. "Iranians are perhaps not overly optimistic that Rouhani can move the country forward, but at least he didn't want to drive the country backward," Karim Sadjadpour, senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment who focuses on Iran, said. — Reuters



An Iranian woman walks past portraits of President Hassan Rouhani outside his campaign headquarters in Tehran yesterday. — AFP

## FULL TANKS AND TANKERS: A STUBBORN OIL GLUT

After the first OPEC oil production cut in eight years took effect in January, oil traders from Houston to Singapore started emptying millions of barrels of crude from storage tanks. Investors hailed the drawdowns as the beginning of the end of a two-year supply glut - raising hopes for steadily rising per-barrel prices. It hasn't worked out that way. Now, many of those same storage tanks are filling back up or draining more slowly than investors and oil firms had expected, according to global inventory estimates and more than a dozen oil traders and shipping sources who told Reuters about storage in facilities that do not make their oil volumes public.

The stalled drawdowns shed light on the broader challenge facing OPEC - the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries - as it struggles to steer the industry out of the downturn caused by oversupply. With U.S. shale oil production surging, inventories remain stubbornly high and prices appear stuck in the low-\$50s per-barrel range. The market has not strengthened enough to drain many major storage facilities around the globe - which OPEC oil ministers had hoped would be a first step toward rebalancing what has been a buyer's market since late 2014.

Estimated inventories in industrialized nations totaled 3.025 billion barrels at the end of March - about 300 million barrels above the five-year average, according to the International Energy Agency's latest monthly report. Preliminary April data indicated stocks would rise further, the IEA said. Crude stocks stood at a record 1.235 billion barrels. OPEC and other non-OPEC

nations - most notably Russia - are now widely expected to extend production cuts for another nine months, through March 2018. A panel reviewing scenarios for the producer group's meeting next week is also looking at the option of deepening the cuts.

The ongoing struggle to thin supplies has forced economists to cut their oil price forecasts. Bank of America, for instance, last week lowered its 2017 target for Brent crude by \$7 a barrel to \$54. During the two-year price war started by OPEC, about half a billion barrels of crude and refined products flowed into storage facilities as oil prices hit lows of less than \$30 a barrel in early 2016. Much of the inventory build-up came as traders started using storage to make easy money on the widening spread between rock-bottom spot oil prices and substantially higher prices for contracts to deliver the oil in future months.

That price spread - a market structure known as contango - allowed traders to profit even after they paid for expensive storage in facilities such as the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port (LOOP) - the only deep-water U.S. oil port and a major conduit for crude imports - or supertankers parked offshore in Singapore. Although the storage trade has been less profitable since the OPEC production cuts, much of that oil remains in tanks, said Chris Bake, an executive committee member at Vitol, the world's largest independent trader, during an industry conference last week in London. "This 550 million barrel-plus inventory build of crude and products that started in 2014 is still very much there," he

said. "How much is going to come out? That is an ongoing debate among all of us."

### 'Clogged' with Oil

From the Malacca Straits in Asia to the ports of Northern Europe and the Gulf of Mexico, drawdowns of global inventories have slowed or even reversed. In the Amsterdam-Rotterdam-Antwerp (ARA) region - one of the most expensive areas in Europe to store oil and the benchmark pricing point for fuel - crude is starting to flow back into storage because refiners are "clogged" with oil, an industry source handling deals in that region told Reuters.

Refined fuel inventories have also jumped suddenly, with gasoil in tanks in the ARA hub rising to an eight-month high earlier this month, according to Dutch consultancy PJK International. Gasoil includes jet fuel, diesel and heating oil. At one of the world's largest oil storage facilities - on the shores of Saldanha Bay in South Africa - millions of barrels were sold in recent months, traders told Reuters.

But more cargoes are flowing right back into its tanks, which can hold 45 million barrels, as sellers struggle to find refiners to buy freshly loaded oil, the traders said. In the Houston region, stored oil stocks touched record levels at the end of March, according to energy information provider Genscape. The state of inventories appears more mixed in Asia. In China, the world's second-largest oil consumer behind the United States, commercial crude stocks hit their lowest level in four years in March, according to the government-controlled Xinhua News Agency. But in nearby South Korea, inventories were

near a record, according to the Korea National Oil Corp.

### Slow Progress

While global inventories remain bloated, there are some signs that the OPEC cuts have dented supplies. Recent data from the US Energy Information Administration showed that nationwide stocks started draining in April this year - the first decrease for that month since 1999. Declining costs for storage is another indication that traders and oil companies are putting less oil in storage than at the height of the price war.

At the largest US storage facility at Cushing, Oklahoma, storage tanks costs about 35 cents a barrel per month, traders say, compared nearly 50 cents a year ago. Parking oil in a supertanker off the shore of Singapore, Asia's refining hub, costs anywhere from 30 to 40 cents a barrel per month, down from 50 to 80 cents just a few months ago. The futures contract for oil storage at the LOOP, off Louisiana's coast, dropped to about 24 cents per barrel recently, one of the lowest prices this year.

Still, the patchy evidence of draining storage has fallen far short of what investors expected after OPEC and non-OPEC nations agreed on production cuts last November. The glut is ending, and tanks are slowly emptying, but not at the rate many oil market players had hoped, said Amrita Sen, chief oil analyst at Energy Aspects. "People were impatient and thought we'd start drawing 10 million barrels a day since the first week of January," she said. "We're still in excess, and there's lots of inventory around." — Reuters

**RATTANON EDGES CLOSER TO THAILAND OPEN WIN**

**BANGKOK:** Twenty-one-year-old Rattanon Wannasrichan hit a flawless 65 yesterday to take a slim overnight lead into the final day at Thailand Open as he bids for a breakthrough Asian Tour title. The up-and-coming Thai star has delighted home fans sharing the clubhouse lead at the end of each of the first two days. Six birdies during yesterday's third round-including a pair on the final two holes-took him to 17-under for the tournament (196). That gave him a one-shot lead over compatriot Panuphol Pittayarat, 24, who scorched around the Thai Country Club in 64 and has dropped only one shot so far this week. Indian ace Gaganjeet Bhullar remained within striking distance on 15-under, with another Thai favorite-Kiradech Aphibarnrat-a shot further back after notching a 65. Only three Thais have won the Thailand Open since 1965. — AFP



**N'DAM WINS TITLE IN SHOCK DECISION**

**TOKYO:** France's Hassan N'Dam won a controversial split decision over Japan's Ryota Murata to capture the WBA middleweight title yesterday. Murata, the 2012 Olympic gold medallist, appeared to dominate the fight in Tokyo, flooring the interim champ in the fourth round and wobbling him on several more occasions. N'Dam, who had survived relentless punishment throughout, sank to his knees as the scores were announced to audible gasps from the Japanese crowd. Murata, who lost for the first time in 13 professional fights, began aggressively and a vicious right hook sent N'Dam crashing to the canvas near the end of the fourth. The Japanese challenger went for the kill, unleashing a series of right-hand bombs that threatened to bring an early end to the fight. N'Dam showed real grit to stay on his feet as his legs buckled twice more in the seventh round. More often than not the former WBO champion's punches simply glanced off the gloves of Murata, who never looked to be in any serious trouble. — AFP

**KIWI BENNETT ACHIEVES YELLOW JERSEY AT CALI**

**LOS ANGELES:** Britain's Jonathan Dibben won the sixth stage of the Tour of California in Big Bear Lake on Friday while Kiwi George Bennett took over the yellow jersey with surprising time trial performance. The 27-year-old Bennett is considered a climbing specialist so his blazing time trial ride through the San Bernardino National Forest was unexpected. "No one expected this less than I did," said Bennett, of Nelson on New Zealand's southern island. "After yesterday I was so disappointed. Today I can't believe it man, I just went. The guy on radio doesn't get excited about much but halfway through he just lit up and I knew I had a good time. When I crossed the line all the cameras started coming and I thought maybe I did something good." Bennett, of the LottoNL-Jumbo team, finished fourth in the stage that relegated teammate Rafal Majka from the first place in the overall standings. Sky's Dibben, 23, won the 24-kilometre (14 mile) stage by signing for his first victory on the World Tour circuit. Brent Bookwalter (BMC) finished second after his strong ride against the clock and Mt. Baldy climb winner Andrew Talansky (Cannondale) placed third in the time trial. —AFP



DETROIT: Tony Barnette #43 of the Texas Rangers pitches against the Detroit Tigers during the sixth inning at Comerica Park. —AFP

**RANGERS BEAT TIGERS FOR 10TH STRAIGHT WIN**

**DETROIT:** Mike Napoli and Joey Gallo homered, and the Texas Rangers beat the Detroit Tigers 5-3 on Friday night for their 10th straight victory. Nick Martinez (1-2) gave up one unearned run and four hits over five innings, ending an 11-start winless streak that dated to Aug. 5, 2015. Matt Bush earned his fifth save in six chances, striking out Alex Avila with runners on the corners and two outs. Daniel Norris (2-3) allowed five runs and seven hits while striking out eight over 5 2/3 innings.

**DODGERS 7, MARLINS 2**

Alex Wood pitched 7 1/3 scoreless innings for his third straight start without allowing a run, and Cody Bellinger, Chris Taylor and Brett Eibner homered to lead the Dodgers to a victory over the Miami Marlins in a game that saw benches empty in the ninth. Wood (5-0) held the Marlins to six hits while walking two and striking out four. He extended his scoreless innings streak to 20 1/3 innings - spanning three-plus starts. Benches and bullpens emptied in the top of the ninth when Dodgers reliever Ross Stripling threw behind the back of Miami's Giancarlo Stanton, one inning after Marlins reliever AJ Ramos hit Eibner with a pitch following Bellinger's two-run homer. Stripling, Dodgers bench coach Bob Geren and Marlins manager Don Mattingly were all ejected. Geren and a heated Mattingly had to

be pulled apart during the players' scrum in the middle of the field. Taylor hit a solo home run in the third and Eibner, just called up from Triple-A Oklahoma City earlier in the day, hit a two-run homer in fourth against Miami right-hander Justin Nicolino (1-1).

**RAYS 5, YANKEES 4**

Evan Longoria got four hits, including a tiebreaking single off Tyler Clippard (0-2) in the eighth inning. Danny Farquhar (2-1) induced an inning-ending double play from Aaron Judge in the eighth, and Alex Colome got three outs for his 11th save. Matt Holliday tied it at 4 on a two-run homer in the eighth off Ryne Stanek.

**BREWERS 6, CUBS 3**

Jett Bandy and Domingo Santana hit two-run singles to lead Milwaukee. On an afternoon with a 46-degree temperature and 37 wind-chill at the start, Bandy walked and scored on Orlando Arcia's bases-loaded infield single for a 4-3 lead in the fifth. The game was delayed 1 hour, 59 minutes in the top of the sixth, and Santana boosted the lead with his single just after the delay. Arcia had three hits and an RBI single off Mike Montgomery (0-3) as the NL Central leaders won for the 10th time in 12 games. Chicago dropped to 21-20 as Cubs pitchers walked 10. Wily Peralta (5-2) struck out

five over two scoreless innings, and Carlos Torres worked the ninth for his first save.

**PHILLIES 7, PIRATES 2**

Jeremy Hellickson (5-1) allowed two runs - one earned - and two hits over six innings, then left after grabbing his right side while running out an RBI double in the seventh. Philadelphia which ended a four-game losing streak, had lost 15 of its previous 18. Maikel Franco and Freddy Galvis had two hits each for the Phillies, and Cameron Rupp hit a three-run homer in the ninth. Trevor Williams (2-3) gave up allowed three runs and four hits in 5 2/3 innings.

**METS 3, ANGELS 0**

Jacob deGrom (3-1) dominated until dealing with a torn callous on the ring finger of his throwing hand in the seventh, then escaped a no-out, bases-loaded jam that inning to help New York avoid what would have been its first eight-game skid since losing 11 straight in 2004. After multiple visits by Mets coaches and a trainer, deGrom survived the seventh with a strikeout, a juggling catch by shortstop Jose Reyes on Ben Revere's bloop into short left and Cameron Maybin's flyout. Jerry Blevins got two outs in his major league-leading 25th appearance, Paul Sewald recorded an out in the eighth and Addison Reed pitched the ninth for his fifth save. Ricky Nolasco (2-3) allowed two runs, one earned, over six innings. Los Angeles had won four straight. Michael Conforto led off the seventh with his team-high 11th homer.

**ROCKIES 12, REDS 6**

Alexi Amarista hit a three-run homer off Lisalberto Bonilla (0-2) and a run-scoring single during Colorado's eight-run, sixth-inning rally. The Rockies lead the NL in wins at 27-16, their best mark through 43 games. Nolan Arenado had a two-run homer off Wandy Peralta. Amarista kept it going with an RBI single during his second at-bat in the inning, matching his career high with four RBIs. Colorado sent 14 batters to the plate and piled up nine hits overall. The Reds have lost seven straight, their longest skid since they dropped 11 in a row last May. Left-hander Tyler Anderson (3-4) allowed two runs, including Eugenio Suarez's homer, in six innings.

**BRAVES 7, NATIONALS 4**

Nick Markakis hit a go-ahead single off Enny Romero (2-2) in the eighth inning and Kurt Suzuki added a two-run homer. Suzuki tied the score 4-4 with a fifth-inning RBI dou-

ble off Gio Gonzalez. Arodys Vizcaino (2-1) got three straight outs, two on strikeouts, in the eighth, and Jim Johnson pitched a perfect ninth for his seventh save.

**INDIANS 5, ASTROS 3**

Edwin Encarnacion hit a two-run homer and Jason Kipnis and Lonnie Chisenhall had solo shots. Trevor Bauer (4-4) gave up three runs and five hits while striking out a season-high nine in 5 2/3 innings to improve to 7-0 in seven career starts against the Astros. Cody Allen got three straight outs to remain perfect in 11 save chances. Encarnacion's home run off Charlie Morton (5-3) tied it at 2-all in the fourth and Kipnis gave the Indians the lead with his home run in the fifth.

**ORIOLES 5, BLUE JAYS 3, 10 INNINGS**

Wellington Castillo hit a pair of homers, including a go-ahead two-run shot in the 10th inning, to lead the Baltimore over Toronto. The Orioles won for just the second time in seven games, but are just a half-game behind the first-place New York Yankees. Castillo tied it at 3 in the sixth with a towering two-run homer off Aaron Sanchez. The Blue Jays seemingly took the lead in the seventh when Baltimore reliever Darren O'Day struck out Justin Smoak with the bases loaded with two outs, but the ball got past Castillo, allowing a runner to score. After a manager's review, however, Smoak was ruled out because the ball hit him during the swing, per major league rules. After Mark Trumbo singled with two outs in the 10th, Castillo followed with a home run off Jason Grilli (1-4). It was his first career game-ending home run. Mychal Givens (4-0) picked up the win for Baltimore.

**TWINS 4, ROYALS 3**

Pinch hitter Kennys Vargas launched a tying, two-run homer in the ninth inning and Jorge Polanco hit a sacrifice fly in the 10th, lifting the Minnesota Twins over the Kansas City Royals. Polanco lofted a soft liner to left field and Joe Mauer beat Alex Gordon's throw to the plate. Al Albuquerque (0-1) walked the first two batters of the inning and reliever Travis Wood walked Max Kepler, loading the bases with no outs for Polanco. Brandon Kintzler (2-0) allowed two hits in the top of the 10th, but snagged a comebacker to start an inning-ending double play.

**GIANTS 6, CARDINALS 5**

Eduardo Nunez doubled in two runs in the ninth inning and the San Francisco Giants rallied

to defeat the St Louis Cardinals. The win improves the Giants to 7-15 away from San Francisco. They have won six of seven overall. The Cardinals dropped their third straight and fourth of six. It's their fourth three-game skid of the season. Bryan Morris (2-0) pitched a perfect eighth inning, striking out two, to pick up the victory. Mark Melancon earned his seventh save. The Giants scored twice off Cardinals closer Seung Hwan Oh (0-2) in the ninth to take the lead. It was Oh's second blown save of the year.

**ATHLETICS 3, RED SOX 2**

Mark Canha hit a leadoff homer in the 10th, one inning after Jackie Bradley Jr robbed a potential game-winning homer by Oakland and the Athletics beat the Boston Red Sox. The A's overcame the sensational catch by Bradley and a record-tying eighth straight double-dig-it strikeout game from Chris Sale to win their second in a row in the series against Boston. Ryan Dull (2-2) pitched a scoreless 10th for the win. Heath Hembree (0-2) was the loser.

**WHITE SOX 2, MARINERS 1**

Melky Cabrera doubled in the go-ahead run with two outs in the top of the 10th inning to lift the Chicago White Sox past the Seattle Mariners. Jose Abreu hit a solo homer in the sixth for the White Sox, who snapped a seven-game road losing streak and four-game overall skid. White Sox starter Jose Quintana allowed just one hit with seven strikeouts over eight innings, but left with the game tied at 1. David Robertson (3-1) pitched the final two innings, retiring all six batters, to earn the win. Mariners reliever Tony Zych (2-1) hit Kevan Smith with a pitch to lead off the 10th. Smith was replaced by pinch-runner Leury Garcia, who advanced to third on a sacrifice bunt and groundout before scoring on Cabrera's double.

**DIAMONDBACKS 10, PADRES 1**

Arizona's Jake Lamb had two home runs and five RBIs as the Diamondbacks coasted after an eight-run first inning to crush the San Diego Padres. Taijuan Walker (4-3) was the beneficiary of the 16-hit attack as Arizona won its fourth straight. Walker, who had lost his last two starts, pitched six scoreless innings and was charged with two hits. Randall Delgado earned his first save. Jered Weaver (0-5) had the shortest non-injury start of his 12-year career. Weaver got just two outs in surrendering seven runs, five hits and two walks. It was San Diego's most lopsided loss of the season as it dropped its fourth straight and ninth of its last 11 games. The Padres fell to 4-13 in May. —AP

**MLB results/standings**

Arizona 10, San Diego 1; Chicago White Sox 2, Seattle 1 (10 innings); LA Dodgers 7, Miami 2; Oakland 3, Boston 2 (10 innings); San Francisco 6, St. Louis 5; Cleveland 5, Houston 3; Minnesota 4, Kansas City 3 (10 innings); Atlanta 7, Washington 4; Colorado 12, Cincinnati 6; NY Mets 3, LA Angels 0; Tampa Bay 5, NY Yankees 4; Texas 5, Detroit 3; Philadelphia 7, Pittsburgh 2; Baltimore 5, Toronto 3 (10 innings); Milwaukee 6, Chicago Cubs 3.

American League Eastern Division				National League Eastern Division			
W	L	PCT	GB	Washington	25	16	.610
NY Yankees	24	15	.615	Atlanta	17	22	.436
Baltimore	24	16	.600	NY Mets	17	23	.425
Boston	21	20	.512	Philadelphia	15	24	.385
Tampa Bay	22	22	.500	Miami	14	27	.341
Toronto	18	25	.419	8			
Central Division				Central Division			
Minnesota	21	17	.553	Milwaukee	25	18	.581
Cleveland	21	19	.525	1	St. Louis	21	18
Detroit	20	20	.500	2	Chicago Cubs	21	20
Chicago White Sox	18	22	.450	4	Cincinnati	19	22
Kansas City	17	24	.415	5.5	Pittsburgh	18	24
Western Division				Western Division			
Houston	29	13	.690	0	Colorado	27	16
Texas	23	20	.535	6.5	Arizona	25	18
LA Angels	22	22	.500	8	LA Dodgers	25	18
Seattle	20	23	.465	9.5	San Francisco	18	25
Oakland	19	23	.452	10	San Diego	15	29

## BASEBALL FAMILY: SCHMIDTS BATTLE THROUGH CANCER, TOMMY JOHN

**COLUMBIA:** As Dwight Schmidt absorbed the news of his younger son's baseball injury, he couldn't help but wonder, "Why my boys?" It wasn't the first time the Marine colonel was faced with life-altering news about his sons. Two years ago, Clemson pitcher Clate Schmidt was diagnosed with nodular sclerosing Hodgkin's lymphoma. Fast forward to this year and Clate's younger brother Clarke, a South Carolina righty projected as a potential first-round pick in the Major League Baseball draft, learned in the middle of his stellar junior season he tore a ligament in his right elbow. Clarke was facing Tommy John surgery and more than a year of rehabilitation. "You can't help but think, 'Why is this happening?'" said Dwight Schmidt, who is in the Marine reserves. "You try and make sense of it all." It's what the Schmidts have had to do - twice. Clarke Schmidt, the Gamecocks' ace, felt some forearm tightness when he left the game at Florida on April 20. He told his family there was nothing to worry about, that some rest and time in the training room would take care of things. But the following Monday, Schmidt was told he had torn the ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow. His season as the Gamecocks ace was over and, perhaps, his high draft status compromised.

### TIME TO HELP

When Clarke told his father the news, his dad hopped in his car and made the three-hour trip from the Atlanta suburbs of Acworth, Georgia, to South Carolina, talking with his son the whole way. Renee Schmidt joined the call with her husband and son, and before long, Clate joined what was now a Schmidt conference call to find out the news. All the Schmidts pledged to bring the same level of concern and support to Clarke that Clate got during his cancer treatments.

"I told him it was my time to help him through," Clate said. That's what brothers do. In 2015, Clarke was Clate's constant companion through numerous chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Clate was a hard-throwing right-hander for the Tigers when he discovered a lump on his neck while showering. That led to his cancer diagnosis and four rounds of chemotherapy. By the summer, and with freshman South Carolina pitcher Clarke alongside, doctors said Clate was cancer free. With the news, Clate hurried back to Clemson for fall ball workouts with the Tigers.

Clate started 15 games his final year

with Clemson, going 8-5 with a 4.83 earned run average. He was drafted last June by the Detroit Tigers in the 20th round. He pitched last season in the New York-Penn League. The Detroit Tigers wanted to see Schmidt improve command of his fastball, which averages about 91 mph, according to the organization's roving minor league pitching coordinator, A.J. Sager. The team understands Schmidt's health ordeal and knows that his strongest, healthiest days are ahead.

"We're seeing him progress and think that can continue," Sager said. Schmidt, 23, is pitching in Florida at Detroit's extended spring training and is likely headed back to the Connecticut Tigers of the New York-Penn League next month. Clate believes his brother will bounce back as strong as before - and he'll do what he can to make sure of that, as Clarke did for him two years ago.

### CANCER BOUT

The Schmidts understand Clarke's injury is not nearly as serious as his brother's bout with cancer. He had surgery in New York on Wednesday. Dwight Schmidt sent group texts to let everyone know the operation went well, with the surgeon telling the family the operation was among the "best" he'd seen. But Clarke's baseball future is still unclear.

For the moment, he's back on campus as the Gamecocks finish the regular season. Dwight Schmidt said the family wanted to get through surgery and start the path to rehab before worrying too much about what's next with baseball. "It's a tough pill to swallow, but I'm going to have worse things in my life," Clarke said. "If this is the worst thing that I have for the rest of my life, then I'll be all right."

Clarke had a 92-94 mph fastball that he locates well, South Carolina coach Chad Holbrook said, which has made him attractive to major league clubs. Clarke, 21, hasn't ruled out returning to the Gamecocks. Holbrook, though, believes the right-hander's potential is so good, a major league club will certainly lock him up in next month's draft. Clate, pitching in the Tigers organization, is also doing well. His condition was checked three months ago before baseball began. "All came back clean," Dwight said. Clate said he will encourage his younger brother over the phone, the internet and, when possible, in person. "I'm ready," Clarke said, "for the long road ahead" And his family will be ready, too. — AP

## VOICE OF UCONN SPENDS OFFSEASON CALLING STRIKES

**MARLBOROUGH:** Bob Joyce has called six national championship games as the radio play-by-play voice of the UConn women's basketball team, but spends the offseason as a baseball umpire. The 51-year-old sportscaster for WTIC-AM says baseball has been a life-long passion and he spends much of his free time officiating everything from Little League to high school varsity games in Connecticut.

Broadcasting and officiating, he says, are very different but have one notable similarity. "You want to get the call right," he said. "That last-second call on a broadcast, you don't want to botch that. And as an umpire, you don't want to botch a call that's going to determine the outcome of a game." Joyce began umpiring in 2005, taking twice-a-week classes during the winter to learn the craft. It was a way to stay connected to the game after his son, Rob, aged out of youth baseball and Joyce was no longer an assistant coach for those teams. He's now a member of two chapters of the Connecticut Board of Approved Umpires.

Most of the baseball players and those watching the games he officiates have no idea who he is. And that's the way he likes it. A few parents will recognize him and some will comment. "He should give us play-by-play on that loudspeaker behind home plate," joked Brian Jeroszko, of Hebron, while watching his son John play during a recent junior varsity game played in Marlborough between RHAM High School and Maloney High School from Meriden.

### KEEPING BUSY

Joyce says keeping track of things such as the count, balks and if a batter has checked his swing keeps him plenty busy. He's never been tempted to do play-by-play in his head while behind the plate.

And he's not a fan of those flashy "Steeeeeerikell!" calls either. "I don't try to do anything to draw attention to myself," Joyce said. "I try to keep my calls simple, just do the job I'm supposed to do and do it the best I can." Portland High School coach Rick Borg first met Joyce when the sportscaster was doing television color commentary for a state championship game. The next season, Joyce was working the plate for some of Portland's games.

"He's a good umpire," Borg said. "I don't have any problem with his strike zone, with him on the bases. He does have a melodic voice as an umpire." Joyce has had his share of interesting calls, the most bizarre probably being the time he had to throw a 10-year-old pitcher out of a game for tackling a runner who was trying to score from third base. "You just kind of stand there, stunned for a moment and then you go to your partner and say, 'Did you just see what I just saw?'" Joyce said.

UConn women's basketball coach Geno Auriemma said he's not surprised Joyce has become a respected umpire. The Hall-of-Fame coach said he's always been impressed by the amount of preparation and attention to detail that goes into Joyce's broadcasts and thinks that likely translates onto the diamond. "My only concern is that this endeavor doesn't lead to him becoming too sympathetic to game officials during our broadcasts," Auriemma joked. Joyce acknowledges that his work as an umpire perhaps makes him less prone to criticizing basketball referees. He said he's made own his share of bad calls, such as the time this spring when he invoked the infield fly rule on what turned out to be a fly ball to the outfield. "It's not easy," he said. "I appreciate more now what they do, absolutely. And I'm not sure I'd like to have Geno Auriemma screaming in my ear." — AP



OTTAWA: Sidney Crosby #87 of the Pittsburgh Penguins takes a shot on Craig Anderson #41 of the Ottawa Senators during the second period in Game Four of the Eastern Conference Final during the 2017 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Canadian Tire Centre. — AFP

## CROSBY, PENGUINS BEAT SENATORS TO TIE SERIES

**OTTAWA:** Matt Murray was back - and so was Sidney Crosby. Crosby had a goal and an assist, Murray made 22 saves in his first start of the playoffs and the Pittsburgh Penguins beat the Ottawa Senators 3-2 on Friday night to even the Eastern Conference finals at 2-2. Crosby had only one point as the defending champion Penguins dropped two of the first three, leading to questions about his health following a jarring concussion in the second round. Murray started for the first time in more than six weeks.

"All I can really do is kind of jump in and try not to think about it," Murray said. "Just try and play with the flow of the game and kind of let yourself get lost in the game a little bit. I thought I did a pretty good job of that tonight. There's a lot of ways I could have been a lot better I thought, but all together felt good about the game." Penguins coach Mike Sullivan turned to Murray after Marc-Andre Fleury was chased in the first period Wednesday night in the Penguins' 5-1 loss in Game 3.

"I thought Matt was solid," Sullivan said. "He made some timely saves for us when we needed it. He has a calm demeanor about him. I thought he was tracking the puck extremely well. And certainly, he made a couple of key saves for us at key times." Brian Dumoulin and Olli Maatta added goals to help Pittsburgh take a 3-0 lead midway through the second period. Clarke MacArthur and Tom Pyatt scored for Ottawa. "They were the better team tonight for two peri-

ods and they deserved the game," Senators coach Guy Boucher said. Game 5 is Sunday in Pittsburgh.

### 'GOOD JOB TONIGHT'

Murray made a strong stop on Mike Hoffman less than two minutes into the game and denied Viktor Stalberg on a pair of follow-up opportunities. The goalie made maybe his best stop on Derick Brassard's backhand, kicking the shot away with his right pad. "He made a really big save early on with his leg save when the guy kind of went around him after a rebound and I think right after that our team went into the offensive side and really played at the puck and gave us that momentum," teammate Chris Kunitz said. "I think we did an all-around good job tonight."

Fleury started the first 15 games for Pittsburgh with Murray mostly sidelined by injury. "I don't want to make this about myself," Fleury said after the game. "We scored some goals. That was nice. We won. It's good." Pittsburgh opened the scoring with 46 seconds left in the first period when Maatta went down the left side and fired a short-side shot past on goalie Craig Anderson. Crosby set up the play.

Pittsburgh's already battered defense took another blow late in the first when Bobby Ryan hit Chad Ruhwedel. Ian Cole immediately throttled Ryan, as Ruhwedel was down on the ice. Ryan somehow escaped a charging penalty on the play, and Cole drew the only call for rough-

ing. The Pens are already without Kris Letang, who is done for the playoffs, and Justin Schultz, who missed the last two games with an upper-body injury.

### BRILLIANCE

Crosby's brilliance showed up again midway through the second on a power play after Jean-Gabriel Pageau ripped off the Pittsburgh star's helmet in a scrum around the net. Crosby stationed himself right on the doorstep to Anderson's left, his right leg hugging the post for support. That didn't allow him to score on the initial setup from Jake Guentzel, but helped him to bang in the follow-up for the 2-0 lead. Guentzel had two assists.

Dumoulin made it 3-0 less than four minutes later with a shot from the left point that caromed in off Ottawa defenseman Dion Phaneuf's skate. Ottawa had mostly neutralized the high-powered Penguins in the first three games, holding them to just three goals - a mark they equaled in less than 32 minutes of Game 4. Pittsburgh seemed to find more speed, got more shots in tight and capitalized on opportunities around the net. Following that initial flurry in the first, the Senators had little going right until the last two minutes of the second when Ryan found MacArthur with a crafty backdoor pass for Ottawa's first goal. The Sens pulled within one with five minutes left when Pyatt got a skate on Erik Karlsson's already-deflected point shot. — AP

## DRENCHED PRACTICES MAKES POLE FAVORITES HARD TO FIND AT INDY

**INDIANAPOLIS:** Sebastien Bourdais took a deep breath Friday. After an early race-day exit last weekend and an engine change Thursday night, he moved into position to contend for the Indianapolis 500 pole. The Dale Coyne Racing driver jumped to the top of the speed chart with some extra horsepower, posting the fastest lap of the week at 233.116 mph. Now the Frenchman and everyone else in Gasoline Alley must wait to see if the constantly changing leader board creates a wide-open pole shootout this weekend.

"It's pretty exciting just to be in the mix, knowing that we seemingly have a chance to do well in qualifying," Bourdais said. "Every other time I've been there, I've never been in contention to really be any kind of factor, and that's just boring. When you're in that position where you know there's going to be something you can do to actually play at the front, then hopefully it happens, because it's a heck of a lot more fun." The practice sessions haven't provided much help sorting out what to expect in qualifying.

Many teams started the week in race trim, rather than using the quicker, lighter qualifying setups. The result: Five different drivers from five different teams found themselves in the No. 1 spot on the leaderboard. And until drivers got the extra boost Friday, the fastest lap of the week came from Jay Howard a 36-year-old driver, whose only career Indy start came in 2011. He went 226.774 on Thursday. The weather hasn't cooperated, either.

### HIGH WINDS

After dealing with high winds Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, rain washed out more than 2 1/2 hours of what was expected to be a busy final full day of practice before the first day of qualifying. More rain is expected Friday night, which could leave drivers with little rubber on the track when qualifying begins Saturday. More rain is expected both days of qualifying, too. The one constant, of course, is everybody expects Team Penske again to be in contention again.

IndyCar Grand Prix winner Will Power and three-time 500 winner Helio Castroneves have alternated the first five pole wins this season and finished one-two in practice Tuesday. "You put 33 drivers running to the limit, we're talking about knife's edge," Castroneves said. "We're going through four corners for four laps and absolutely doing everything you can

to hang onto the last lap, or the last two laps."

Penske's other three drivers - two-time race winner Juan Pablo Montoya, defending series champion Simon Pagenaud and Josef Newgarden - each have started on Indy's three-car front row in the past. Montoya was fifth Friday at 231.682, the fastest Chevrolet driver on the track. Newgarden and Pagenaud each have one race win this season. So the bigger question might be who poses the biggest threat to breaking up Penske's monopoly?

### ALONSO

Team owner Michael Andretti has six cars trying to make the field and his son, Marco, had the fastest car on opening day. Teammate Ryan Hunter-Reay, the 2014 Indy winner, finished among the five fastest each of the four days he turned laps. Two-time Formula One world champion Fernando Alonso, another of Andretti's drivers, posted his best lap of the week Friday, at 231.827. He wound up No. 4 on the speed chart on just his sixth day on the

2.5-mile oval.

"I think it's very impressive, though it's kind of what we expected," said Takuma Sato, another of Andretti's drivers who was third-fastest Friday at 231.969. "Obviously, Fernando is known as one of the best drivers in the world and having this much practice time and support from the team, we thought he would get it up to speed very quickly and he did." Owner-driver Ed Carpenter, a two-time Indy pole winner, was the fastest in Wednesday's abbreviated practice. He finished just ahead of Chip Ganassi Racing star Scott Dixon, who won in 2008 from the pole.

With so much experience up front, so many polished contenders and so many potential changes, anything could happen at Indianapolis - and everybody knows it. "It's a tricky place," Bourdais said. "When you get any sense of consistency through different conditions, sunny, shade, different track temps, humidity, wind, it always gives you confidence. You never know what's going to come at you the next day." — AP



BUDAPEST: Austrian team perform with their clubs during the 33rd Rhythmic Gymnastics European championships. — AFP



INDIANAPOLIS: Zach Veach hits the wall during a practice session for the Indianapolis 500 IndyCar auto race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. — AP





## ICARDI IN, AGUERO OUT FOR ARGENTINA

**BUENOS AIRES:** Inter Milan striker Mauro Icardi and West Ham United midfielder Manuel Lanzini were named on Friday in a squad from which Jorge Sampaoli is expected to pick his first Argentina team next month. Sevilla coach Sampaoli is set to take the vacant Argentina job after the Spanish season ends this weekend and likely to dramatically change the team's tactics.

His first assignment as coach of his country's national team is a friendly against arch-rivals Brazil in Melbourne on June 9, followed by a visit to Singapore four days later. The tour will help him prepare for the run-in to the South American qualifiers for the 2018 World Cup finals in Russia in which Argentina have struggled, particularly in eight out of 14 matches without injured talisman Lionel Messi.

Inter captain Icardi has been banging on the Argentina door since earning a first cap as a substitute in a World Cup qualifier against Uruguay in 2013, while the uncapped Lanzini has had a fine season in the Premier League. Icardi and Alejandro Gomez of Atalanta have both been courted by Italy but turned them down in the hope of playing for the country of their birth.

With Champions League finalists Juventus's attacking duo of Gonzalo Higuain and Paulo Dybala also included, Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero is a notable if not unexpected absentee after poor form in recent Argentina matches. The Argentine FA posted the squad on its official website ([www.afa.com.ar](http://www.afa.com.ar)) without mentioning Sampaoli, who was confirmed last month by its president Claudio Tapia as

their chosen candidate after they sacked Edgardo Bauza.

### SUCCESSOR TALKS

Sampaoli, who has yet to sign a contract with the AFA, said on Friday he would see out his Sevilla tenure with Saturday's home match against Osasuna before taking a job he could not refuse. Sampaoli, a Copa America winner as Chile coach in 2015, had said previously he hoped to one day work with Messi and at the time Luis Enrique announced he was leaving Barcelona earlier this season was touted his successor.

Now Sampaoli has the chance to show he can mould a team around the world's best player capable of winning a major trophy after Argentina finished runners-up in the 2014 World Cup and the 2015 and 2016 Copa America tournaments. The squad of 20 foreign-based players has only four defenders including Javier Mascherano but more are expected to be drafted in from the domestic league with Pablo Zabaleta another veteran dropped.

Mascherano could be asked to take up the defensive duties for his country that he has become used to fulfilling at Barcelona often in a back three which Sampaoli tends to favor. Lanzini, Gomez and the recalled Eduardo Salvio of Benfica are midfielders set to be given a chance as Sampaoli looks for his trademark high tempo attack and pressing. Argentina are fifth in the South American qualifying group from which the top four qualify automatically and will go into a playoff against a team from the Oceania confederation if they remain there. — Reuters

## SPARTAK EYE SEASON-ENDING WIN

**MOSCOW:** Newly-crowned Russian champions Spartak Moscow look set to finish the domestic season in winning style when they visit lowly Arsenal Tula today. Spartak, who top the league on 69 points, 10 clear of second-placed city rivals CSKA, are trying to equal the Russian league record of 72 points which they themselves set in 1999.

The Muscovites look clear favorites against Arsenal, who are second from bottom, but the Tula outfit desperately needs to win to keep alive their slim chances of avoiding relegation. Spartak manager Massimo Carrera said he expects a hard match in Tula adding that he wanted his team to bag all three points anyway. "Of course the match will be tough," he told Russian TV. "Arsenal desperately need points and they have nothing to lose. But our goal remains the same - to reach 72 points. Hopefully, we will manage to do that."

CSKA Moscow, who hope to win a place in next season's Champions League third qualifying round, are also set to add three points to their balance in the match with

Anzhi Makhachkala, who are themselves two points above the relegation play-off zone. The Red Army side's Brazilian midfielder Vitinho said he and his teammates were ready for a difficult encounter adding that he believed in CSKA's ability to secure their top-two finish.

"It's a very important match for both clubs. No doubts it will be a difficult game," Vitinho told CSKA's official site. "CSKA are in a good position. Our fate is in our own hands. We just need to win. I believe we will achieve the desired result." Meanwhile, third-placed Zenit, who are one point adrift of CSKA, will have to pass a stern test on Sunday when they visit two-time former champions Lokomotiv Moscow. But Zenit head coach Mircea Lucescu said he has set his men to win in Moscow. "The championship is not over yet and I know that everything is possible in football," Zenit press service quoted Lucescu as saying. "CSKA can drop points in the match with Anzhi, who need points to avoid the relegation play-offs. Meanwhile, we must prepare the best possible way for the season-ending match and win it." — AFP



**MOSCOW:** Champions Spartak Moscow's manager Massimo Carrera and footballers celebrate with the trophy of the Russian Premier League 2016-2017 after their football match against Terek Grozny at the Otkrytie Arena stadium. — AFP

## OOREDOO WELCOMES BRAND AMBASSADOR AFTER VICTORY

**KUWAIT CITY:** Ooredoo Kuwait, Kuwait's fastest network, welcomed its brand ambassador, the young Kuwaiti athlete Abdulaziz Al-Rashed in the Kuwait Airport's VIP hall last week after winning the XterraOffroad Triathlon in Tahiti. Al-Rashed is the only Arab contestant to win this title. He was received by representatives of Ooredoo, the Public Authority for Sports, in addition to hundreds of his fans and supporters.

Commenting on this, Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait Mijbil Alayoub said: "We're proud of our young athlete Abdulaziz Al-Rashed for his achievement in Tahiti, and we're certain that he will make more achievements in the future with the right support. Our sponsorship from

Abdulaziz stems from our deep-rooted belief in enabling youth to reach their potential."

Al-Rashed's recent title enables him to compete in bigger championships internationally. During the period of his sponsorship with Ooredoo, he won first place in Kuwait's Triathlon which was held at the Corniche Club. He also won the third position in Sharm El-Sheikh ALAMEDA Triathlon, which represents the pinnacle of triathlon competitions in Egypt, providing recreational triathletes with a once in a lifetime opportunity to compete on the same course as Africa's and Arabs' known champions. The tournament attracted hundreds of audiences to watch both the amateurs and the professionals including Africa's best players.



Al-Rashed in between Mijbil Al-Ayoub and Yousuf Al-Shallal



**MADRID:** Real Madrid players attend a training session at Valdebebas Sport City yesterday on the eve of their last Liga football match, against Malaga. — AFP

# MADRID ON VERGE OF LONG-AWAITED TITLE

**MADRID:** Real Madrid are poised to win a first La Liga title in five years today as Zinedine Zidane's men hold a three-point lead over Barcelona heading into the final day of the season. Barca need to beat Eibar at home to have any chance of a third straight title in outgoing coach Luis Enrique's farewell to the Camp Nou. Madrid have looked in ominous form as they've edged towards the title by thrashing Sevilla and Celta Vigo 4-1 in the past week with Cristiano Ronaldo scoring twice in both games.

"We have to continue what we are doing because the league isn't finished yet," warned Zidane after Celta were swept aside on Wednesday. However, having lost just three league games all season it would be a huge shock if 11th-placed Malaga denied Madrid at the final hurdle. Malaga, though, are one of La Liga's form sides having picked up 13 points from their last five games. The Andalusians also did Real a huge favor by beating Barcelona 2-0 last month.

And Malaga's attitude towards the game will

be under the spotlight after some controversial comments from their coach Michel. The former Madrid favourite admitted he wanted the title decided before his old side visited as he would have preferred to give them a "guard of honor" than deal Madrid's chances "a blow". Those statements sparked a war of words between Malaga and Barcelona with Barca lodging a complaint with the Spanish sporting authorities after Malaga's Qatari owner Abdullah Al-Thani described them on Twitter as "the scum of Catalonia".

Barca should at least have Malaga's best player and top scorer this season on their side. Sandro Ramirez made 32 appearances for Barca before moving to Malaga where he has scored 16 goals in his debut season. And Sandro could be bidding his farewell to La Rosaleda with a host of leading Spanish and English clubs interested in his signature for next season.

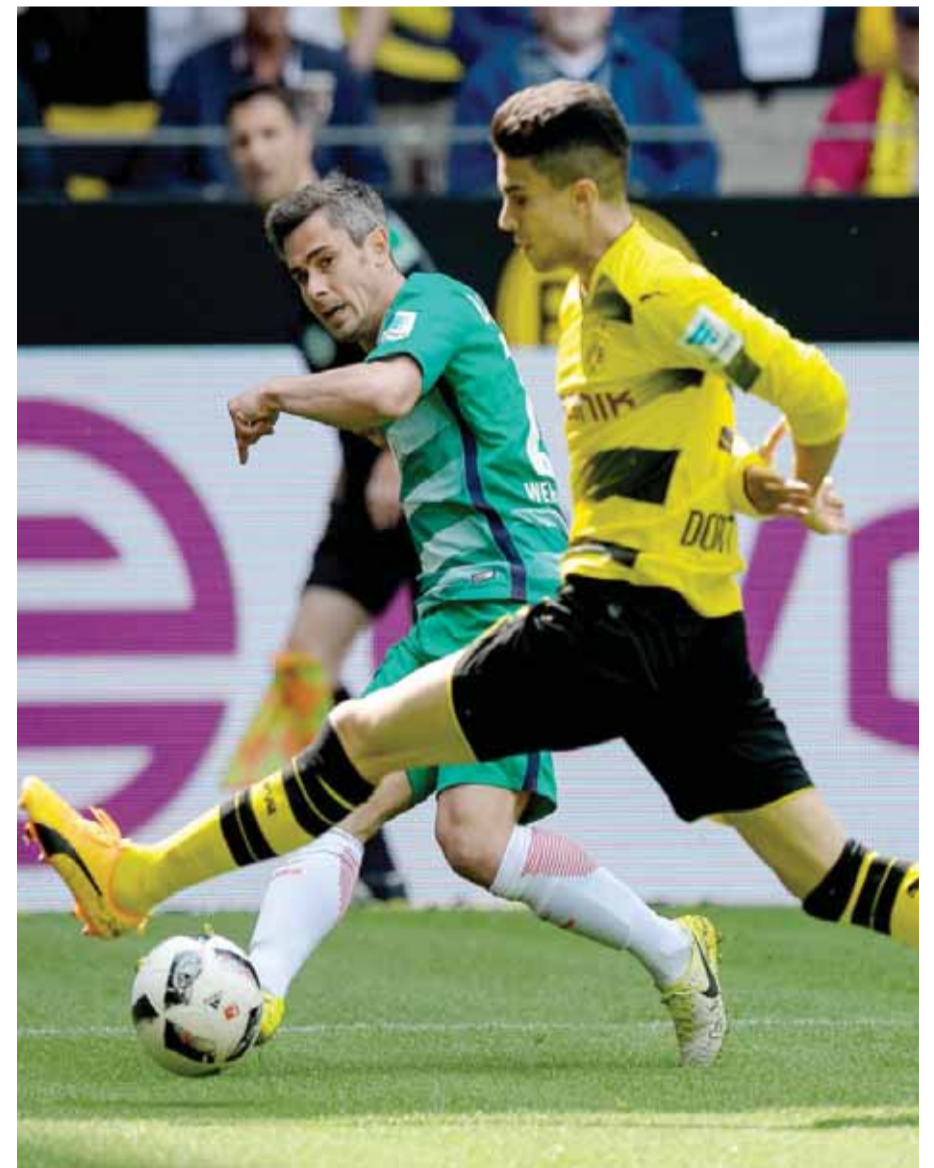
### UNCHANGED SIDE

Zidane is expected to unusually name an

unchanged side from the team that started in Vigo in midweek with a two-week break to come before Madrid face Juventus in the Champions League final. Ronaldo will be looking to build on his stunning record of 13 goals in his last eight games, but Gareth Bale remains sidelined. Barca should at least force Real to get the point they need and give Enrique a victorious farewell when an Eibar side that have run out of steam after a great season visit the Camp Nou.

Atletico Madrid will play their final competitive game at the Vicente Calderon before moving to the 67,000 Wanda Metropolitan next season with Athletic Bilbao the visitors earlier on Sunday. That match will have ramifications for the only issue yet to be resolved as Villarreal, Athletic and Real Sociedad battle for two Europa League places. Villarreal, who have a one point advantage over the two Basque clubs, visit Valencia, whilst Sociedad travel to Celta. However, all three will be guaranteed a place in Europe next season if Barca beat Alaves in the Copa del Rey final next weekend.

Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
<b>ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE</b>			
Southampton v Stoke City	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 8			
Leicester City v Bournemouth	17:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Chelsea v Sunderland	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 6			
Arsenal v Everton	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 2			
Liverpool v Middlesbrough	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 2			
Swansea City v West Bromwich Albion	17:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Manchester United v Crystal Palace	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 5			
Burnley v West Ham United	17:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Watford v Manchester City	17:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Hull City v Tottenham Hotspur	17:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 7			
<b>SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA</b>			
Celta de Vigo v Real Sociedad	17:45		
beIN SPORTS			
Valencia v Villarreal	17:45		
beIN SPORTS			
Atletico de Madrid v Bilbao	17:45		
beIN SPORTS			
Barcelona v Eibar	21:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 2			
Malaga v Real Madrid	21:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 3			
<b>ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE</b>			
Juventus v Crotona	16:00		
beIN SPORTS HD 4			
Milan v Bologna	16:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Udinese Calcio v Sampdoria	16:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Genoa v Torino	16:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Empoli v Atalanta	16:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Sassuolo v Cagliari	16:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Lazio v Inter Milano	21:45		
beIN SPORTS			



**DORTMUND:** Dortmund's defender Marc Bartra and Bremen's midfielder Fin Bartels vie for the ball during the German first division football match between Borussia Dortmund and Werder Bremen. — AFP

## BARTRA RETURNS TO DORTMUND TEAM

**BERLIN:** Defender Marc Bartra played his first game yesterday since fracturing his wrist in a bomb attack on the Borussia Dortmund team bus on April 11. The 26-year-old Spaniard started Dortmund's final Bundesliga game of the season at home to Werder Bremen. It was his first appearance since surgery after fracturing his right wrist when three bombs hit Dortmund's bus on the way to their Champions League quarter-final at home to Monaco last month.

With Bartra in hospital, Dortmund played the first-leg less than 24 hours after the attack, losing 3-2 to Monaco eventually losing 6-3 on aggregate to the French league side. Bartra was released from hospital four days after the bomb

blast. The same day, his team-mates held his number five shirt aloft as they celebrated in front of their home fans after their 3-1 win against Eintracht Frankfurt on April 15.

A German-Russian, identified only as 28-year-old Sergej W., has been charged with the attack and prosecutors have said the motive was financial and not terror-related. He has been charged with attempted murder, setting off explosions and causing serious physical injury. He was hoping to profit from a drop in the football team's share price as a result of the attack. As well as Bartra, a policeman on a motorcycle escorting the bus suffered trauma from the noise of the blast. — AFP



# Sports

Real Madrid on verge of long awaited title

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SUNDAY, MAY 21, 2017

## PUNE TAKE ON MUMBAI IN IPL TITLE SHOWDOWN

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BOSTON: LeBron James #23 of the Cleveland Cavaliers drives to the basket in the first half against the Boston Celtics during Game Two of the 2017 NBA Eastern Conference Finals at TD Garden. —AFP

# CAVS HUMILIATE CELTICS IN RECORD LOSS

**BOSTON:** An NBA playoff-record, 41-point half-time lead. A franchise record for total points. A 13th consecutive playoff win, tying another league record. And LeBron James says the Cleveland Cavaliers can still do better. "I believe we've got another level, as well," he said after Cleveland steamrolled the Boston Celtics with 130-86 on Friday to take a 2-0 lead in the Eastern Conference finals. "As well as we played tonight, we've got a couple of things we can do better. There's no complacency for us now. But we like where we're headed."

Minutes after the NBA announced the three finalists for the MVP award - and James wasn't among them - the Cavaliers star scored 30 points before resting in the fourth quarter. Kevin Love had 21 points and 12 rebounds for Cleveland, which led by 14 points after one quarter, by 72-31 at the half and by 46 after three. Even with all of the starters sitting out the fourth, the 130 points was the most ever scored by the Cavaliers in a playoff game.

Kyrie Irving had 23 points for the Cavaliers,

who return home with a chance to finish off the Celtics in Cleveland. It would be the third straight sweep this postseason for the defending NBA champions, who also won the last three games of last year's finals. Game 3 is tonight.

"It's one game. I don't care if you win by 200 points," Cavaliers coach Tyrone Lue said. "We're going back home, we're not going to get comfortable. We understand that this is a good team. They're not No 1 in the East for no reason." The Celtics played the second half without Isaiah Thomas, who had a strained right hip. Celtics coach Brad Stevens said the star point guard had a nagging injury that he aggravated a week ago during the second-round series against Washington.

Asked how much that hurt his team, Stevens said, "Not 44 points worth." "I don't want to put that on any one guy," he said. "Ultimately, they were terrific. We were poor. You've got to be able to pick up the slack, certainly, when other guys aren't available." With both teams going to

their benches in the fourth, the only suspense was whether the Celtics could avoid the worst playoff loss in franchise history. The Orlando Magic beat them by 47 points in the first round of the 1995 postseason.

### EMBARASSING

Still, it was the worst home playoff loss ever for the most-decorated franchise in NBA history. "It is embarrassing," guard Avery Bradley said. "As a man, as a basketball team, it will say a lot about us how we respond." Thomas finished with just a pair of free throws, missing all six shots from the field. Rookie Jaylen Brown scored a career playoff-high 19 points for Boston.

The game tipped off about 15 minutes after the NBA announced that James Harden, Russell Westbrook and Kawhi Leonard were the finalists for the MVP award - the first time since 2008 that James won't finish in the top three. Lue chuckled when he found out after the game that James was not a finalist. "You've got to give

the award to different people every now and then," Lue said. "But to me, LeBron's the MVP."

James, a four-time MVP, said he did not see the list before the game. "My only job is to try to be the MVP for this team every night," he said. "I know what I bring to the table. This league knows what I bring to the table." James still has a chance for a fourth NBA title - and second in a row. Maybe Golden State can figure out a way to slow him down, or San Antonio, if it can come back in the West. The Celtics haven't found a way, and they're running out of time.

James had 22 points in the first half, when had six of his seven assists and all three of his blocked shots, including a chase-down rejection of Bradley that was reminiscent of the one against Andre Iguodala in Game 7 of the NBA Finals. That one was critical to clinching Cleveland's first championship since the Browns won the NFL title in 1964.

After outprinting the Cavaliers to the No 1 seed in the East and home-court advantage in the final weeks of the season, the Celtics squan-

dered it by losing both games in Boston - without ever having a lead. "It's hard to take," Al Horford said. "We've worked really hard and put ourselves in this position to be here. It's been tough for our group. Tonight was real rough, there's no other way to put it. It's definitely a low point for our group."

### TIP-INS

**Cavaliers:** James is first player with at least 30 points in eight straight playoff games since Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in 1970. ... James played just 33 minutes - a low for this postseason and just the second time he played fewer than 40 in the 2017 playoffs.

**Celtics:** Stevens started Gerald Green in place of Amir Johnson. Green made his first two shots - both 3-pointers - but finished with six points. ... The Celtics missed their first six shots. ... There was a large contingent of New England Patriots sitting courtside, including tight end Rob Gronkowski, backup quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo and owner Robert Kraft. — AP

## XAVI'S AL SADD WIN QATAR'S EMIR CUP

**DOHA:** A dramatic last minute winner gave Al Sadd, skippered by Barcelona legend Xavi Hernandez, victory in the Emir Cup final on Friday, Qatar's biggest domestic cup competition. The match was played in the newly refurbished Khalifa International Stadium, the first 2022 World Cup venue to be completed. Among those watching on in the 40,000-seater air-conditioned stadium was FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

Xavi provided the assist for Jugurtha Hamroun to fire home the winner in injury time, to cap a 2-1 victory for Al Sadd against rivals Al Rayyan, coached by another former Barcelona great, Michael Laudrup. Al Rayyan had taken the lead early in the second half when skipper Rodrigo Tabata scored in the 49th minute. But just seven minutes later, Al Sadd's Hassan Al-Haydous scored from the spot to equalise and set up the thrilling finale.

As much as the game, the biggest star of the night was the stadium itself. Khalifa is the first World Cup venue to be completed, five years ahead of the tournament, and it will also host the 2019 World Athletics Championship. It cost an estimated \$90 million (82 million euros) to refit and is part of a budget of up to \$10 billion Qatar is spending on stadiums and training grounds for 2022.

Khalifa comes complete with the much-talked-about cooling technology that was central to Qatar's controversial bid for the World Cup. It was deployed on Friday, keeping fans cool as temperatures reached 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) before kick-off. The stadium was officially inaugurated by Qatar's leader, Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-

Thani before the match. "In the name of all Arabs, I announce the readiness of Khalifa Stadium for hosting games at the 2022 World Cup," he told the crowd.

It was Al Sadd's second domestic cup win of the season having won the Qatar Cup last month. It is the 16th time they have won the

Emir Cup, a national record. Xavi became the first skipper to lift a trophy at Khalifa since 2014, before the stadium was closed for refurbishment. Three years ago Al Sadd again won the Emir Cup and their skipper that day was another Spanish great, former Real Madrid star, Raul. —AFP



DOHA: Al-Sadd's Spanish captain Xavi (2nd-R) lifts the Qatar Emir Cup following the final football match between Al-Sadd and Al-Rayyan at the Khalifa International Stadium. — AFP

## THIEM ENDS NADAL CLAY COURT STREAK

**ROME:** Austria's Dominic Thiem sent Rafael Nadal crashing out of the Rome Masters on Friday with a 6-4, 6-3 quarter-final victory, ending the Spaniard's 17-match winning run. Nadal, a former seven-time champion in the Italian capital, had dominated Thiem to win the Madrid Masters final last week. But the 30-year-old, seeded fourth in Rome and building up for an assault on a 10th French Open title, was outplayed throughout a thrilling encounter on centre court.

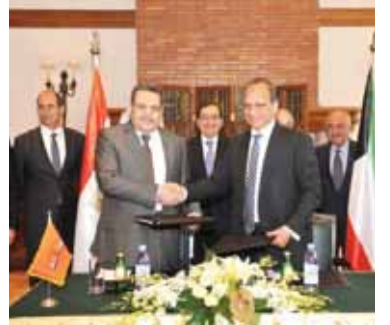
Thiem, the eighth seed, will now meet the winner of the quarter-final clash between four-time winner Novak Djokovic, seeded second, and unseeded Argentinian Juan Martin del Potro. That tie was suspended for the night after torrential rain swept the city. Four-time Djokovic was leading 6-1, 1-2 when play was halted. Nadal, meanwhile, said he intends to have a free weekend before ramping up his preparations for Roland Garros from Monday.

"Tomorrow I'll be in Mallorca fishing or playing golf, or another thing. I'm going to rest a little bit, I think I deserve it," said Nadal. "Then from Monday and Tuesday I will start to prepare for Roland Garros. It's an important event for me. "If you do things well, you have more chances in Roland Garros. I hope to play my best tennis in Roland Garros." Nadal, given a first round bye, played only three games of his second round match with Nicolas Almagro before his unseeded compatriot retired injured on Wednesday.

The 30-year-old made amends for his comparative lack of playing time with a 6-3, 6-4 win over American Jack Sock on Thursday. But from the outset against Thiem, who had also lost to the Spanish star in Barcelona, Nadal looked in trouble. The Austrian's serve, precision and movement were near flawless and soon had Nadal hitting shots wide of the mark.

As the centre court crowd steadily got behind the 23-year-old upstart, Nadal's confidence waned. Thiem, who has a 17-3 record on clay this year, will now look to reach his fourth final of 2017. However, he is 0-4 in career meetings with Djokovic and 0-2 against del Potro. "It's a very tough situation in tennis. I mean, you have a big win, and the next day there is Djokovic or Del Potro waiting," said Thiem after his second victory in six meetings against Nadal, adding to his 2016 Argentina Open semi-final win.

"It remains very, very difficult. But they are both unbelievable, big players. I think it's going to be a tough match between them today. Whoever wins, I have to take on tomorrow." German 20-year-old Alexander Zverev reached his first Masters semi-final with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 victory over Canadian fifth seed Milos Raonic. Zverev will face unseeded John Isner, 12 years his senior, after the giant American clinched a 7-6 (7/3), 2-6, 7-6 (7/2) win over Croatian sixth seed Marin Cilic. "It's another stepping stone in my career," said Zverev. —AFP



**US OPENS PROBE INTO RECALL OF 1.7M HYUNDAI, KIA MODELS**



**HANOI:** Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc delivers a speech at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 23rd Ministers responsible for Trade Meeting at the National Convention Center in Hanoi yesterday. — AFP photos

**TRUMP'S TRADE REP BRINGS 'AMERICA FIRST' TO APEC**  
 US HOLDS BILATERAL TALKS AS CHINA FAVORS FREE TRADE DEAL

**HANOI:** US President Donald Trump's new trade representative held his first face-to-face meetings with some key partners yesterday as the United States charts an "America First" policy that has upended the old global order and sparked fears of protectionism. Robert Lighthizer met ministers from Canada and Japan on the sidelines of a gathering of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, the biggest trade meeting since Trump took office.

Its members account for over 40 percent of world trade. Lighthizer and Japan's economy, trade and industry minister, Hiroshige Seko, agreed on strengthening bilateral trade and removing barriers, a statement from the US trade representative said.

"In particular, both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation to address common concerns with respect to unfair trade practices utilized by third-countries," it said. Lighthizer has in the past criticized China for what he described as unfair practices, although Trump has dropped the anti-China rhetoric of his election campaign. The word "fair" has increasingly entered the US trade lexicon alongside its old mantra of "free" as Trump seeks to do more to enforce or renegotiate trade agreements in the name of protecting American jobs - particularly in manufacturing.

A draft seen by Reuters of the APEC meeting statement to be issued today emphasized free trade and warned of the dangers of protectionism. But the different approaches were evident in Hanoi.

Lighthizer was due to meet about a dozen counterparts there, including China's representative, a US official said. The veteran lawyer and Reagan-era trade negotiator was only confirmed in his new role earlier this month.

**China pushes Asian deal**

China, putting itself forward as a global free trade champion in light of the US shift, is pushing a free trade agreement to encompass the vast majority of Asian economies. The Asia trade deal it favors is called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

Meanwhile, Japan is leading countries that want to persist with the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal ditched by Trump in one of his first acts in office. TPP excludes China and covers a broader scope than the trade agreement favored by Beijing. Negotiators from the so-called TPP-11 met to discuss how the agreement could be taken forward. Ministers from the group will take a decision early today.

The greatest challenge is keeping on board Vietnam and Malaysia, which joined largely to benefit from better access to the US market. Officials from both countries have said that without the Americans they would want to renegotiate. New Zealand Trade Minister Todd McClay said he did not expect a big decision this weekend on how to go forward with the agreement, but hoped for a commitment on working out how to do so.

"That will take some time. It will take most of this year," he told Reuters. "We think the agreement is well balanced. We are willing to engage in conversation to better understand the positions of Malaysia and Vietnam and other countries." Japan hopes the United States will one day rejoin the TPP agreement. But renegotiating the existing North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is a bigger immediate priority for Washington.

Canada's trade minister said his meeting with Lighthizer went well and they discussed "a number of multilateral issues". Lighthizer was also due to meet Mexico's trade minister. — Reuters



**HANOI:** US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer (right) attends the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 23rd Ministers responsible for Trade Meeting at the National Convention Center in Hanoi yesterday.

**GE ANNOUNCES \$15BN OF BUSINESS DEALS WITH SAUDI**  
 SAUDI-US TRADE VOLUME EXCEEDS \$37BN

**RIYADH:** US technology and engineering conglomerate GE said yesterday it had signed \$15 billion of business deals with Saudi Arabia as part of the kingdom's drive to diversify its economy beyond oil. It came as dozens of senior US business executives met Saudi counterparts at a conference coinciding with the visit of President Donald Trump to Riyadh. The agreements, which involve almost \$7 billion of goods and services from GE itself, range from the power and healthcare sectors to the oil and gas industry and mining, GE said. Some of the deals are memorandums of understanding which would require further agreements to materialize.

Among the projects, GE will help make Saudi power generation more efficient and provide digital technology to the operations of oil firm Saudi Aramco, aiming to create \$4 billion of annual productivity improvements at Aramco. It will cooperate in medical research and training.

**Bilateral trade**

Volume of trade exchanges between Saudi Arabia and the United States amounted to 142 billion riyal (\$37.68 billion) in 2016, the Ministry of Commerce and Investment

said. It said in a report issued yesterday that the kingdom's exports to the US, last year, reached 65.6 billion riyal (approximately \$17.48 billion), while its imports from America amounted to 75.8 billion riyal (some \$20.2 billion).

Therefore, the trade balance tilted in favor of the US by 10.1 billion riyal (around \$2.69 billion). The US came second among 10 nations with imports from the kingdom and the first among states with exports to it in 2016. Oil by-products, urea, raw aluminum and ethylene glycol were the main exported materials to the US while the imports were dominated by spare parts, jet and care engines. Number of US-Saudi companies operating in the kingdom reached 588. Branches of American firms working in the Gulf country amounted to 175. Riyadh signed in May 2016 a memo with an American conglomerate for investments worth \$3 billion in strategic sectors. In aviation, an agreement was reached to step up a joint company to produce Blackhawk helicopters in the kingdom. Last year also witnessed signing accords for setting up a Saudi company for marketing small satellites for space imaging. The report included several other mega accords in addition to the \$20 billion partnership between Aramco and Dow Chemical. — Agencies

**GERMAN MINISTER BACKS NAFTA ON MEXICO VISIT**

**MEXICO CITY:** Germany's foreign minister voiced support for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) during a visit to Mexico on Friday, giving a diplomatic boost to the country ahead of its renegotiation of the accord with the Trump administration.

US President Donald Trump has sharply attacked NAFTA for months, and on Thursday his government triggered the process to start overhauling the deal that binds the United States, Canada and Mexico, potentially ushering in formal talks by mid-August. Since taking effect in 1994, NAFTA has been a gateway for scores of multinationals to build factories in North America, channeling billions of dollars' worth of investment into the region by European companies, many of them German.

Following a visit to Washington this week, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel told reporters in Mexico City German firms were concerned about the future of the accord, urging the United States to recognize the benefits it had yielded. "In our view NAFTA is an agreement that doesn't just serve Canada and Mexico, but also the United States," he said at a news conference with his Mexican counterpart Luis Videgaray. "So we're trying, also via our visits to the United States, to make clear that a fair agreement isn't

just in the interests of German companies, but also the United States of America," added Gabriel, who is also Germany's vice chancellor.

Gabriel's visit came ahead of a planned trip to Mexico by Chancellor Angela Merkel on June 9-10, according to two people familiar with the matter, who spoke on condition of anonymity. According to US data, Germany and Mexico last year both ran trade surpluses of more than \$60 billion with the United States, sparking complaints of unfair treatment from Trump, who has threatened aggressive measures to eliminate the deficit.

Germany has given short shrift to Trump's threats, and in January Gabriel said the United States "should build better cars" in response to the New Yorker's claim there were not enough American automobiles on the streets of his home city. During her visit, Merkel would, alongside economic matters, also address the protection of human rights, press freedom and the fight against organized crime in Mexico, areas of significant concern to both governments, Gabriel said. Amidst a resurgence in gang violence, Mexico's government is under increasing pressure to better protect the media after a spate of killings of journalists this year that culminated in two separate deadly attacks this week. — Reuters





**AHMEDABAD:** African Development Bank (ADB) President Akinwumi Adesina gestures as he addresses a press conference in Ahmedabad yesterday ahead of the ADB Annual General Meeting. — AFP

# US OPENS PROBE INTO RECALL OF 1.7M HYUNDAI, KIA MODELS

## REGULATORS COULD FINE KOREAN AUTOMAKERS

**WASHINGTON/SEOUL:** US safety regulators have opened a formal investigation into the recall of nearly 1.7 million vehicles by Hyundai Motor Co and affiliate Kia Motor Corp over engine defects, according to filings published yesterday.

A South Korean whistleblower reported concerns last year to the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which will probe the timeliness of three recalls carried out in the United States and whether they covered enough vehicles. Fines could be imposed on the automakers if the NHTSA determines the recalls were not conducted properly. The agency did not immediately comment on the probe. A Hyundai spokesman in Seoul the company "has conducted recalls in compliance with US regulations and procedure" and will "sincerely" cooperate with the investigation. In 2015, Hyundai recalled 470,000 US Sonata sedans, saying engine failure would result in a vehicle stall, increasing the risk of a crash. At that time, affiliate Kia did not recall its vehicles, which share the same "Theta II" engines.

Kim Gwang-ho, then an engineer at Hyundai, flew to Washington in August 2016 to tell NHTSA the companies should have recalled more vehicles over the problem, citing an internal report. He also reported several alleged safety lapses to

both US and South Korean authorities. On March 31, Hyundai expanded its original US recall to 572,000 Sonata and Santa Fe Sport vehicles with "Theta II" engines, citing the same issue involving manufacturing debris, the NHTSA said. On the same day, Kia also recalled 618,160 Optima, Sorento and Sportage vehicles which use the same engine. The recall, which was also conducted in Canada and South Korea, cost the duo 360 billion won (\$322.40 million).

### "Timeline and scope"

According to the filings published yesterday, the US agency opened a probe May 18 into "both the timeliness and scope" of the "Theta II" engine recalls and their "compliance with reporting requirements." In August 2014, Hyundai agreed to pay a \$17.35 million fine to settle a NHTSA investigation it delayed the recall of 43,500 Genesis cars to fix a brake defect linked to two injuries. NHTSA said in 2014 Hyundai "must change the way they deal with safety-related defects."

Hyundai vowed to make improvements to how it handled safety issues after the fine. In 2015, the company retained former US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood as an adviser on safety issues. Congress voted in 2015 to hike

the maximum fine an automaker can face for a single delayed recall campaign to \$105 million. In an interview with Reuters in April, Kim said he gave the NHTSA 250 pages of internal documents on the alleged engine defect and nine other faults. NHTSA told Reuters soon after it was reviewing Kim's material and "will take appropriate action as warranted." NHTSA did not say whether his complaint led to the recall.

Kim argued that the engine problem was not just with the manufacturing process but also engine design, meaning Hyundai would need to fix engines in all the affected cars, at a steeper cost. Hyundai has denied the allegations. On May 12, Hyundai and Kia said they would recall a further 240,000 vehicles in South Korea after the transport ministry issued a rare compulsory recall order over other five defects flagged by Kim.

Kim, fired in November for allegedly leaking trade secrets about the company's technology and sales to media, had since been reinstated by Hyundai after a ruling by a South Korean government body under whistleblower protection laws. Hyundai filed a complaint disputing the decision. On May 16, he quit the company, which also dropped its criminal complaint against him. — Reuters

## HIGHER-INCOME YOUTH EMPLOYED MORE THAN LOWER-INCOME: STUDY

**DURHAM, NH:** Teenagers from higher-income families are more likely to hold jobs than those from lower-income households, according to University of New Hampshire research that suggests employment itself has become an extracurricular activity.

The university's Carsey School of Public Policy examined the latest numbers from the National Survey of Children's Health, which collects data on about 95,600 children ages 17 years and younger every four to five years. For the report released Tuesday, data was analyzed on about 35,000 children ages 12 to 18. According to the survey, higher-income youths are twice as likely to be employed as their lower-income peers, a finding that researcher Sarah Leonard said was perhaps surprising since one might expect lower-income youth to have higher employment rates. She said that could suggest that after-school jobs have become a form of extracurricular activity.

"This possibility could explain why rural youth are more likely to work - if fewer traditional extracurricular opportunities are available in rural areas, employment may serve as a replacement," she said. Higher-income youth are

one-and-a-half times as likely to participate in extracurricular activities, defined as school-based or extramural activities that aren't required by schools or eligible for school credit, including sports, clubs and other structured activity. The reasons for the disparities are unclear, Leonard said, but it's possible that financial costs, eligibility for and availability of activities could be factors. For example, many schools require students to maintain minimum grade point averages to participate in extracurricular activities.

"If low-income youth have lower academic achievement, as some research shows, their opportunity to participate in school-based extracurricular activities will be diminished," Leonard wrote. "In turn, since extracurricular participation is linked to better grades, decreased participation could also lead to poorer academic achievement."

She suggests policy makers and school systems consider changing their eligibility requirements for school-based activities and making participation in such activities more affordable and accessible. She said colleges and universities should also reconsider admissions policies that are heavily influenced by extracurricular involvement. — AP

## ABK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 'DOUBLE YOUR SALARY' DRAWS

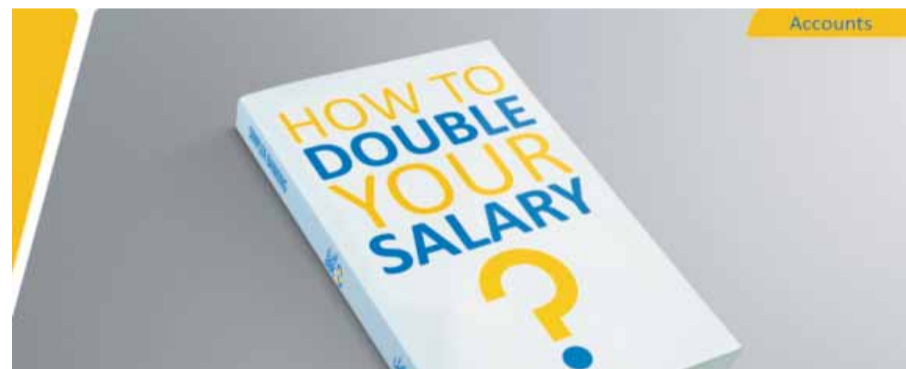
**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its "Double Your Salary" weekly draw on 3rd May, 2017 and 9th May 2017 at the Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, announcing the names of the winners. The promotion includes weekly draws. The campaign will run until 27th June, 2017.

### The winners are:

- Hussain Eissa Turki Rajab, Head Office Branch

- Khaja Khurashi, Fahaheel Branch
- Latifah Falah Faisal Al-Fadhli, Shuwaikh Branch

New customers who transfer their salary to ABK receive KD 300 and will automatically be entered into the weekly draws to double their salaries. Existing customers who are already transferring their salary to ABK are entered into a separate draw. All winners will be contacted personally and a weekly announcement will be made through the media with the winners' names.



## DUTCH MULLS LAW TO PROTECT FIRMS FROM FOREIGN TAKEOVER

**AMSTERDAM:** The Netherlands government yesterday said it is considering a law that would give Dutch publicly listed companies a one-year period of "thinking time" during which they could freely reject any approach by a foreign buyer. The announcement by Economic Affairs Minister Henk Kamp comes amid a surge in nationalist and protectionist sentiment in the Netherlands. It also comes as US paint-maker PPG Industries seeks to buy Dutch based rival Akzo Nobel with a 26.3 billion euro (\$29.47 billion) offer that is widely backed by the company's foreign shareholder base but opposed by the company's Dutch-controlled board.

Kamp has said a takeover of Akzo Nobel is not in the Dutch national interest. The idea of a one-year cool-down period when a foreign company tries to buy a Dutch one has enjoyed backing from several prominent Dutch business leaders, notably former Shell CEO Jeroen van der Veer, and from a range of political parties on the right and left. There is also a backlash among several academics and thinkers who ridicule the idea and say it risks trashing the country's reputation as a place to do business. Kamp said the government is still investigating whether such a law is feasible and will consult with "experts and those involved." — Reuters

# Faith Capital Holding Acquires Masbagti



Mohammed Jaffar, Athbi Alenzi, Nouri Alenzi

## Acquisition Empowers Masbagti to Earn a New Vision & Expand across the GCC



**KUWAIT:** Faith Capital Holding, a Kuwait based venture capital fund that focuses on young, e-commerce businesses in the GCC, announces its acquisition of Masbagti, the 1st e-marketplace for laundries that empowers local businesses to embrace mobile technology. The acquisition of Masbagti represents Faith Capital Holding's strategy & is its first transaction. The two combined entities will be led by Mohammed Jaffar, Deputy Chairman & CEO, Faith Capital.

The Masbagti acquisition is a clear display of Faith Capital Holding's heritage and commitment to invest in working businesses with visionary ideas that have the potential to scale and the inherent ability to grow into a regional business thereby expanding into the whole of GCC. Faith Capital Holding would invest ample time and resources to grow the business and establish a base for scalability. This is in line with Faith Capital Holding's strategy to get engaged heavily in the businesses that it invests in so as to ensure its growth and success not just in the country where it was conceived but to take it to markets across the region. This is precisely why Faith Capital Holding makes only a select number of investments at a time.

Faith Capital Holding is not merely an investor. It is a mentor, evangelist and forerunner for entrepreneurship. Faith Capital Holding has a background that is entrenched in deep-rooted values of ethics and entrepreneurship. Faith Capital Holding believes firmly in the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship and is committed to nurturing businesses

that are founded on the entrepreneurship potential. Faith Capital has a team of dedicated and experienced professionals who possess the ability to take working businesses to scale new heights of success and become leaders in their industry segment.

Speaking of the alignment between Faith Capital Holding and Masbagti, Mohammed Jaffar, Deputy Chairman & CEO of Faith Capital Holding said, "Technology is changing the way businesses operate; there is a whole new culture and way of doing business. Five years ago, we had very little innovation in Kuwait in terms of the startup culture. But today, things are very different. The younger generation is very techsavvy, be it in their thoughts, ideas or adoption of technology. We at Faith Capital Holding encourage businesses that are built around technology and the value that these businesses bring to the community. We encourage startup businesses and provide them with the necessary support, advice, and hands-on guidance to grow their business."

Masbagti, the brainchild of brothers Athbi and Nouri Alenzi, has built its success by leveraging technology and the 'App' economy. The concept of creating an e-marketplace for a low-tech industry like laundry is not just interesting but also extremely innovative.

It's a first and one-of-its-kind service in Kuwait. Recognizing the potential and need for such a marketplace, Masbagti has emerged as a leader in revolutionizing the individual's daily laundry cycle through technology. The app has facilitated the connection between laundry service providers and people who

require their services. In just over a year of launch, Masbagti was able to garner sign-ups with laundry partners across the country, creating a truly local e-marketplace for the laundry business in Kuwait.



"Faith Capital Holding only invests in working businesses, market base concepts that have the scalability to grow into the whole GCC," said Mohammed Jaffar, Deputy Chairman & CEO of Faith Capital Holding. "The region has great potential and we want to encourage young entrepreneurs, such as Athbi & Nouri, to pursue their business ideas and succeed," he continued. "We are extremely excited by the opportunity created by joining hands with Faith Capital Holding team," said Athbi Alenzi, co-founder of Masbagti. "In addition to benefitting from the experience and expertise that Faith Capital Holding has as a visionary and strategic venture capitalist, Masbagti will also get the much needed opportunity and expo-

sure of taking this concept to a larger marketplace, i.e., the entire GCC countries," Alenzi concluded. Speaking of Faith Capital Holding's business ideology, Alenzi expressed that entrepreneurs in the country and region would benefit largely from Faith Capital Holding's experience to empower small business to grow and take their business ideas to the world.

### About Faith Capital

Faith Capital Holding - FCH - is a Kuwaiti based venture capital fund which focuses on young, e-commerce businesses, based in the GCC. FCH endeavors to seek companies with potential to scale up and turn into regional rather than local enterprises. To leverage its culture conducting business into small companies, and demonstrate how ethical business and ethical growth will lead to success is considered a major aspect of FCH.

### About Masbagti

Masbagti is the brainchild of brothers, Athbi & Nouri Alenzi, who stubbornly devoted their time and efforts to accomplish their dream. A dream that inspires the launching of a market place for laundries, a first of its kind, in the region; empowering local business to embrace mobile technology. In just over a year, the list of laundry partners extends to cover all areas across Kuwait. Masbagti is now inspired to reach higher, dream bigger and achieve an aspiring greater presence in the GCC.

Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons  
**Lexus opens a new chapter in brand history**  
**UNVEILS ALL-NEW LC500**  
**THE IMPOSSIBLE BECOMES A REALITY**



**S**even years ago they said we couldn't make a supercar. We took up the challenge and made the LFA. Then they said we couldn't make a premium sports coupe, we have overcome the challenge again. A journey that began with the LFA now culminates in the LC500, the pinnacle of Lexus inspiration and vision, cutting-edge technology, daring design, master craftsmanship, exhilarating performance.

- Alluring, expressively designed performance coupe defines a new era for the global luxury brand
- Flagship model introduces new Multi Stage Hybrid powertrain and the first-ever 10-speed automatic transmission for a luxury automobile
- All-new rear-wheel drive GA-L platform realizes a significantly agile, more refined driving experience
- New multimedia and safety technologies complement the car's masterful craftsmanship to provide a comfortable, pleasurable drive

Mohamed Naser Al Sayer and Lexus, one of the Al-Sayer Holding Companies has unveiled the all new LC, the world-class prestige luxury coupe to introduce a new era of uncompromising design and performance.

The launch event held at Lexus Center Shuwaikh was attended by distinguished guests Manabu Ochiyama Project Manager of the LC, Koji Nagata General Manager for the Middle East and North Africa region, Takayuki Yoshitsugu Chief Representative of Middle East and North Africa Regional Office accompanying delegates from Lexus along with members of the press and media who were welcomed in the presence of Faisal Bader Al-Sayer Chairman, Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer CEO Al-Sayer Holding along with top Management of the Group.

According to Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer "The LC is not just a luxury car, it's a great feeling and experience. It is not only a step-up, but a step-up better than everyone else. Offering the classical segments but now moving the product line-up. After today Lexus will no longer be the same. I am confident that you will find it incredibly fascinating."

"Lexus is here to make the impossible possible, ready to face the challenge head on – to create Experience

Amazing. The journey of evolution at Lexus will continue as it aims to become a luxury lifestyle brand. And we at Al-Sayer will reflect the Lexus values to offer 7 star customer experience exceeding expectations" said Mahmoud Abou-Zahr Business Director Lexus Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons.

The emotional designs and high-performance models issued by Lexus in the last few years preface a new chapter for the brand, one that begins now with the arrival of the all-new 2018 Lexus LC flagship performance coupe. Available now in Lexus dealerships across the GCC and Levant, the LC combines stunning design, scintillating performance, long-distance comfort and premium craftsmanship to join an elite group of international grand touring coupes.

The Lexus LC is a powerful, emotionally stirring realization of the vision of Lexus master driver Aldo Toyoda for a flagship production coupe that echoes the spirit of the hand-built Lexus LFA supercar and delivers the visual impact of the Lexus LF-LC concept.

Koji Sato, Chief Engineer of the Lexus LC, said: "While maximizing the fundamental taste of the LF-LC, we applied completely different specifications to create a design that goes beyond the concept – a design that will captivate you as soon as you see it. In my view, pursuing beautiful design and elaborating superior performance are two very similar aspects. Beauty is the identity of Lexus' design. Every feature of the LC is the result of an integrated approach to design and engineering. The entire team has worked together, including engineers and designers, to create such a great car."

"The all-new Lexus LC is a flagship coupe which represents the evolution of Lexus as a lifestyle brand that will surprise and delight customers. The car symbolizes the beginning of a new phase for Lexus, which is all about creating greater synergy between engineering and design," said Takayuki Yoshitsugu, Chief Representative of Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "The LC makes the strongest statement yet about the brand's future direction, and is the result of painstaking

craftsmanship, attention to detail and an advanced, future-oriented approach to engineering. It's a car that offers a pleasurable driving experience which enhances the user's lifestyle."

Yoshitsugu added, "We are grateful to our customers in the GCC and Levant for their constant support and encouragement for our efforts to push the boundaries of automobile design and engineering, thus inspiring us to strive harder in creating 'ever-better cars'. And we are confident the strong emotional appeal of the all-new Lexus LC will strike a chord with audiences in the region."

#### Provocative, elegant and purely Lexus

Based on the groundbreaking design of the LF-LC concept car which was shown at the 2012 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit, the Lexus LC debuted as a production model at the 2016 edition of NAIAS.

Turning the LF-LC concept into a production model while remaining faithful to its visual excitement required nothing less than a new development process, combining design and engineering disciplines as never before at Lexus. The production LC preserves the concept's adventurous appearance, and the design itself helped achieve performance targets, especially with regard to the low center of gravity, aerodynamics and high-speed stability. Just like its concept predecessor, which won the EyesOn Design award for Concept Car in 2012, the production LC is also a trophy winner, having claimed two awards at the 2016 EyesOn Design Awards—in the Production Car and Interior Design categories.

#### Emotional design that reinforces the Lexus identity

Tadao Mori, Chief Designer of the Lexus LC, said: "This was one of the first times for Lexus that designers were closely involved in the dynamic engineering development, so we could understand the driving goals and support them with the car's design. The 2012 LF-LC concept model was the starting point, not our final goal. This means we didn't just duplicate LF-LC's surfaces and lines onto the production

platform. Even though we decided to maintain LF-LC's design language and theme, we added more emotion. I'd like to thank very much all the colleagues who were involved in the car's development at Lexus International."

Immediately identifiable as a Lexus thanks to its hallmark spindle grille and dynamic character lines, the 2018 LC represents the most passionate expression of the brand's design direction. The grille itself features a unique mesh texture that changes visual tension as it spreads across the front of the car. Independent L-shaped daytime running lights beneath new ultra-compact triple LED headlamps create the distinctive LC front lighting signature. The combination of a large glass panel and blacked-out rear pillars creates a floating roof appearance, and chrome-plated moldings along the edges, which echo the lines of a traditional Japanese sword, amplify the effect.

The body's substantial, "planted" look stems from prominent quarter panels that flare away from the center of the car and door panels that are pulled inward. The flowing lines maintain a consistent tension in the body panels through to the rear, where very slim tail lamps use mirrors to create a three-dimensional sequence of L-shaped graphics. The sweeping roofline tapers rearward between muscular, sloping fender tops, underscoring the car's wide and stable stance, and the Lexus spindle shape is repeated in the rear fascia. Large ducts feed air into the rear wheel arches, the airstream exiting smoothly across the tire sidewall to bolster straight-line stability and steering responsiveness.

The all-new Lexus LC is available in eleven vibrant colors including a newly-developed Naples Yellow Contrast Layering, which accentuates the car's sportiness with the realization of a high intensity yellow for the exterior panels.

#### High-output V8 with sound and fury

Powered by a high-performance V8 engine, the all-new Lexus LC 500 exhales through the variable Active Exhaust upon startup, with the 5-liter naturally





aspirated V8 issuing a clarion call to driving enthusiasts. The LC 500 can sprint from zero to 100 km in less than 4.7 seconds. It's a well-proven performance engine, with a low-mass reciprocating assembly using lightweight forged connecting rods, along with titanium intake and exhaust valves to allow a 7,300-rpm redline. The 32-valve cylinder heads, equipped with performance-tuned VVT-iE (Variable Valve Timing-intelligent by electric motor), take full advantage of the engine's low internal friction and aggressive valvetrain specs.

The D-4S injection system uses direct fuel injection that allows a high compression ratio augmented by port fuel injectors to enhance low-speed response. Under acceleration, the LC 500 reveals its character in a continuously rising power curve, with the 471 hp developed at 7,100 rpm and the torque peak of 55.0 kg-m at 4,800 rpm.

The fast-revving V8 issues a stunning soundtrack amplified by a special resonance tube connecting the intake to the firewall, plus a standard Active Exhaust that rumbles and roars like a high-performance GT should. Lexus considers the sound of the engine to be an important contributor to delivering a genuinely multi-sensory driving pleasure. And in the new LC 500, the company has taken great steps to achieve truly emotional engine sound, where Lexus engineers have worked to combine the sounds produced both by the air intake system at the front and the exhaust system at the rear to create what they describe as a "concert hall" effect inside the cabin, both as the car gains speed and slows down. The sound has been developed specifically for the LC, to reflect the coupe's specific performance qualities. The driver can adjust the natural exhaust sound level via the Drive Mode Select system.

The Lexus LC debuts the first 10-speed automatic transmission for a luxury automobile. Smaller and lighter than some 8-speed units, this new transmission executes shifts at speeds rivaling dual-clutch transmissions, yet with the seamless performance and smoothness of a torque converter automatic. The LC allows manual shifting via magnesium paddles.

Even drivers who pride themselves on making expertly timed shifts, however, will find the advanced electronic control system—which anticipates the driver's inputs by monitoring acceleration, braking and lateral-g forces—always chooses the ideal ratio. Torque converter lock-up engages in all ranges except when starting off to provide a direct feel and also aid fuel efficiency.

The Drive Mode Select feature provides integrated control of multiple systems, offering enhanced driving pleasure by allowing the driver to select drive modes suitable for the situation, or to match their preferred driving style. In addition to the five drive modes set in advance, a Custom Mode has been provided, enabling the user to freely combine each mode. SPORT S+ extracts the most from the powertrain and transmission shifts and also fully opens the baffles in the Active Exhaust under acceleration.

The V8 is a good citizen, too, switching to the Atkinson cycle to enhance fuel efficiency at cruising speeds and Otto cycle for higher performance levels when accelerating, thus providing the perfect mix of power and efficiency.

#### The next-generation hybrid

Lexus, which introduced the world's first luxury hybrid 13 years ago, developed a new Multi Stage Hybrid System specifically for the LC 500h. Like other Lexus hybrid configurations, the Multi Stage Hybrid System teams the gasoline engine with two electric motors/generators, but similarities end there. The Atkinson-cycle 3.5-liter V6 gasoline engine uses D-4S direct fuel injection, and lightweight valvetrain components allow

a 6,600-rpm redline, with Dual VVT-i ensuring ample torque across the engine speed range.

The Multi Stage Hybrid System is a world's first construction that combines the Lexus hybrid system with variable gears. By controlling the output of both the higher rpm 3.5-liter V6 engine and the electric motor, it achieves powerful performance from low speeds through to high range driving. In addition, operating points were selected for high system efficiency from low through to high speeds and the sphere of Electric Vehicle (EV) performance has been enlarged. Altogether, these helped to deliver an emotive driving experience, superior fuel efficiency, and comfortable cruising. The Multi Stage Hybrid System also allows for more electric assist at lower vehicle speeds, and it enables the LC 500h to operate with the gasoline engine off at speeds of up to 140 km/h.

The combined system output is 354 hp, yet that figure does not fully indicate the LC 500h's performance potential. The LC uses an advanced Drivers Mind Index (DMI) control to understand the drivers intentions which helps to optimize gear selection. The power generated from the engine and the motor is rapidly and accurately sent to the tires, providing for a high-performance engine rpm and acceleration in accordance with the drivers intentions. When driving along winding roads, the car changes to a lower gear, and proceeds to actively downshift when braking. On the other hand, during more challenging sports driving, the battery provides additional output so as to achieve a greater torque sensation, thus providing an emotional driving experience that will change the way hybrids have been perceived.

Thanks to the Multi Stage Hybrid System's design, the driver is also able to take advantage of an M mode to select and hold gears manually, using paddle shifts mounted behind the steering wheel. The coordinated control of the Power Split Device and the gear shifting mechanism ensures the gear shift will start instantaneously with the computer receiving the signal from the paddle shift, giving an exceptionally quick response.

Chief Engineer Koji Sato explained: "In the past, people only associated hybrid with 'eco'. We wanted to broaden that perception and create a true high-performance powertrain."

The LC is the first Lexus hybrid to use a compact, lightweight lithium-ion battery. The battery pack fits neatly between the rear seats and the luggage compartment and has a high-power density, with its 84 cells producing 310.8 volts.

#### A chassis with sports car moves

Built on the new Lexus Global Architecture – Luxury (GA-L) platform, the LC harmonizes driving performance, design and craftsmanship in unprecedented ways to achieve a new sense of ingenuity.

Achieving sports car handling with a high degree of ride comfort, while maintaining the low hood height, was a particularly demanding challenge. The solution was a double ball joint front suspension that allows for control of the smallest movements from driver inputs and the road surface, yielding more precise steering response with better initial effort. The LC driver will feel the effectiveness of the suspension design in the immediate response at initial turn-in, controlled body motion and precise, linear response that create a rhythmical and smooth driving experience. The LC's electric power steering (EPS) gives a natural feel, while yielding high handling precision.

The LC exhibits razor-sharp reflexes, exceptional handling balance and rock-solid stability. Rock solid could also describe the stiffest unibody Lexus has

ever produced. The strategic use of lightweight, high-strength steels yields a structure that is resistant to twisting forces. The combination of high-strength steels, aluminum and CFRP, along with deleting a spare tire in favor of run-flat tires and moving the 12v battery to the trunk area, helps yield 52:48 weight distribution (LC 500h). The LC engineers followed an 'inertia spec' to locate as much mass as possible toward the center and lower in the chassis to improve the center of gravity. The low center of gravity also enabled Lexus to reduce the LC's roll angle without making the suspension too stiff, which would hurt ride comfort.

The increased lateral stiffness of the run-flat tires complements the LC's highly rigid suspension, while reduced vertical stiffness aids ride comfort. The high-performance braking system employs 6-piston front brake calipers and 4-piston rear calipers. The LC is available with 21-inch forged alloy wheels that offer a lightweight design, black-and-chrome coating and a polished finish.

To produce the optional carbon fiber roof with its twill weave effect, Lexus employs a new, high-speed resin transfer molding process, developed at the Motomachi factory from a technique originally used in the production of the LFA supercar. Another new technique is used for combining aluminum with steel to help save weight in key areas, notably the front suspension towers.

#### A new benchmark for GT cabins

The dynamic luxury theme of the exterior is carried through into the LC's cabin, which brings together elegance, quality and sophistication with a driver-focused cockpit. The ideal grand touring coupe cabin must strike a balance between function and comfort, sporting intent and luxury. The Lexus LC hits that note with an intuitive layout and an optimal seating position that set the stage for spirited driving. The design places the driver's hip point as close as possible to the car's center of gravity, where feedback from the car is the most communicative to the driver.

The low instrument panel position, together with the low hood line and narrow A pillars, give the low-seated driver a commanding view of the road. All driving controls are easy to reach without altering one's posture. Lexus positioned the information displays at the same height, to reduce the degree of eye movement required to read them. The instrument binnacle houses the latest version of the TFT display technology introduced in the Lexus LFA supercar, including a moving central ring.

Comfort and luxury are no less thorough. The LC's exclusive seats feel as good as they look, with a new two-part construction technique where the main part of the seatback drapes over the shoulder area and then wraps around the seatback. Bolsters in the shoulder area help hold the driver securely in cornering maneuvers, and the optional sports seats feature even more substantial bolsters.

The steering wheel cross section changes around its circumference to allow for variations in grip and twisting of the wrist, and large, substantial feeling magnesium alloy paddle shifters are easily hooked by the fingertips. The front passenger has not been ignored; the side of the center console rises to form an integrated grab handle. With function, there is also beauty and impeccable craftsmanship. The flowing lines of the door panels serve as an extension of an exterior line that flows from the hood and through the windshield to build a sense of continuity between the exterior and interior.

The Lexus LC comes in four distinctive interior color schemes that include new Breezy Blue and Ochre, together with Dark Rose and Black seen in other Lexus models. The quality and finish of the upholstery, trim materials and detailing reflect the Takumi craftsmanship and fine attention to detail for which Lexus is renowned. It can be seen and felt in the hand stitching of the leather-wrapped gearshift lever and the draping treatment of the Alcantara door panel trim, among numerous other details.

The Lexus LC cockpit artfully integrates the brand's latest audio, navigation and connectivity technologies, making them easily accessible. The new Lexus multimedia package combines an inviting graphic user interface with software that enables future enhancements, and the center console features the latest-generation Remote Touch Interface touchpad control, with quick and intuitive operation.

As thrilling as the LC sounds from the outside, Lexus also ensured that sounds inside the cabin would delight those with a fine ear for musical detail. Lexus has enjoyed an auto industry-exclusive partnership with Mark Levinson since 2001, giving its customers the benefit of bespoke audio systems of the highest quality in its vehicles. The new LC follows in this tradition, offering Mark Levinson audio systems with exclusive equipment from their top-of-the-range Reference Product. The 13-speaker audio system uses innovative technologies to deliver concert hall quality sound.

The LC's Mark Levinson audio system also features Clari-Fi music restoration technology that enhances music playback by automatically analyzing and improving the quality of all types of compressed, digitized music sources. It identifies music signals that have been compressed and restores them in real time during playback to achieve an accurate and full listening experience.

#### Comprehensive suite of safety technologies

Both versions of the LC are equipped as standard with Lexus Safety System+, an array of active safety features that can help the driver avoid an accident, or help lessen the consequences of a collision. The system uses a camera and millimeter-wave radar to monitor the road ahead for potential hazards and collision risks.

The package includes advanced driver assistance functions such as Pre-Crash System (PCS), a combination of collision detection and collision preparation systems; Dynamic Radar Cruise Control System (DRCC), which supplements the conventional system with a vehicle-to-vehicle distance control mode that helps maintain a suitable distance from the preceding vehicle; Lane-Keeping Assist (LKA), which uses a camera sensor located in the upper windshield area to detect lane markings while driving and then provides the driver with information and steering assistance in accordance with road and driving conditions; and Automatic High Beam (AHB), which detects nearby light sources such as the headlights or tail lights of vehicles ahead and automatically switches between high beams and low beams to ensure optimum nighttime visibility.

Other safety features on the LC include Lexus Parking Assist (LPA), which makes use of a sensor to notify the driver by display and buzzer of the approximate distance between the vehicle and an obstacle; Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA) system, designed to help prevent potential danger in parking situations; Blind Spot Monitor, which detects and warns the driver of vehicles approaching or positioned in the adjacent lanes; Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), which helps prevent side skids and also to stabilize the vehicle while turning on a curve; as well as Anti-lock Braking System (ABS).









## 12 VACCINES 'MANDATORY' FOR ITALIAN SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

**MILAN:** The Italian government has made 12 vaccines mandatory for children attending school up to age 16 in an effort to combat what it characterizes as misinformation about vaccines. The new measures followed an intense public debate over vaccines after a measles outbreak and political

sniping over accusations that the populist 5-Star movement had emboldened anti-vaccine advocates. Premier Paolo Gentiloni told a news conference that the new rules aimed to combat "anti-scientific theories" that have lowered Italy's vaccination rates in recent years.

The government approved making 12 vaccines, including measles, rubella and chickenpox, mandatory starting this September for children attending Italian pre-schools through the second year of high school. Other required vaccines include tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis B.

Health Minister Beatrice Lorenzin said children will not be accepted into nursery or pre-schools without proof of vaccinations, while parents of children legally obliged to attend school will face hefty fines for noncompliance. The certification will be required every year, she said. — AP

## HEALTH BILL FACES CHALLENGES

**WASHINGTON:** Remember the Republican health care bill? Washington is fixated on President Donald Trump's firing of FBI chief James Comey and burgeoning investigations into possible connections between Trump's presidential campaign and Russia. But in closed-door meetings, Senate Republicans are trying to write legislation dismantling President Barack Obama's health care law. They would substitute their own tax credits, ease coverage requirements and cut the federal-state Medicaid program for the poor and disabled that Obama enlarged. The House passed its version this month, but not without difficulty, and now Republicans who run the Senate are finding hurdles, too. A look at some of those obstacles and what senators are trying to do about them:

### Short-term fix?

GOP senators say they're discussing a possible short-term bill if their health care talks drag on. It might include money to help stabilize shaky insurance markets with subsidies to reduce out-of-pocket costs for low-earning people and letting states offer skimpier, and therefore less expensive, policies. It's unclear Democrats would offer their needed cooperation, but Republicans are talking about it. "We've discussed quite a bit the possibility of a two-step process," said Sen Lamar Alexander, chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. "In 2018 and '19, we'd basically be a rescue team to make sure people can buy insurance."

That could mean Republicans might even temporarily extend Obama's individual mandate - the requirement that people to buy coverage or face tax penalties. It's perhaps the part of Obama's law that Republicans most detest. But it does prompt some people to purchase insurance, which helps curb premiums and make markets viable. Alexander, R-Tenn, said there's a "strong bias" to address short- and long-term problems in a single bill. "If we can't do the real thing, we'd have to do

the next best thing," Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said of short-term legislation.

### Time is ticking

Because Democrats oppose the repeal effort unanimously, Republicans will need 50 of their 52 senators to back their overhaul so Vice President Mike Pence's tie-breaking vote would clinch passage. GOP senators show no signs of producing a bill soon. Time is important, especially with Trump's problems distracting lawmakers. Insurance companies could grow increasingly spooked by the uncertainty and make health care markets even worse by raising premiums or pulling out. Also, the longer it takes Republicans to write the legislation, the less time they'll have for tax cuts and other GOP priorities.

### GOP divisions

The House version would end in 2020 the extra federal payments that states get under Obama's law for expanding Medicaid to additional people. Senate conservatives prefer to start phasing out that money next year. But 20 GOP senators come from states that expanded Medicaid and want to protect those voters, so many would rather reduce the payments over many years. Conservatives and moderates are also bickering over how tightly to cut future spending on the entire Medicaid program.

Many Republicans want to refocus the House's health care tax credits, which grow with people's ages, by boosting subsidies for lower earners. Eager to reduce premiums, many want to roll back Obama mandates such as requiring insurers to cover specified services, including substance abuse counseling, but there are questions about how far to go. Decisions await on helping states subsidize people with costly medical conditions and keeping insurers from fleeing unprofitable markets. Making Medicaid, the tax credits and other programs more generous than the House will cost many billions of dollars. Senators will need ways to pay for that. — AP



**CALIFORNIA:** Several of the thousands of recovered beehives stolen in California are shown in these photos. The bee industry is buzzing over the arrest of a man accused stealing nearly \$1 million in hives from California's almond orchards in one of the biggest such thefts on record. — AP

## BEE INDUSTRY BUZZING: STOLEN HIVES RECOVERED IN CALIFORNIA

NEW HAMPSHIRE LOST AN AVERAGE 65% OF BEEHIVES

**FRESNO:** The bee industry is buzzing over the arrest of a man accused of stealing thousands of hives worth nearly \$1 million from California's almond orchards in one of the biggest such thefts on record. The case has thrown a spotlight on a business many city slickers probably never knew existed: Beekeepers in the US move their colonies around the country by truck and rent them out to farmers to pollinate their flowering crops.

In California, which relies on bees brought in from such places as Missouri, Montana and North Dakota to produce more almonds than any other place in the world, hives began to vanish overnight across several counties three years ago. The break in the case came in late April, when a tip led authorities to a ramshackle "chop shop" of stolen beehives on a corner lot outside Fresno. They arrested 51-year-old Pavel Tveretinov, a beekeeper-turned-criminal from suburban Sacramento, on suspicion of possessing stolen property, investigators said.

"Bees are big money," Sgt. Arley Terrence of the Fresno County Sheriff's Office agriculture crimes unit said Tuesday. "There's a lot of motive to steal." The unexplained mass die-offs of bees in recent years and booming demand for almonds have helped drive up the value of hives. Almonds have increased in popularity amid a marketing push urging health-conscious Americans to eat them in energy bars, crunch on them raw, sprinkle slivers on their salads or pour almond milk on their cereal.

Almond growers rent hives for a few weeks when their trees blossom, allowing the bees to pollinate the flowers as they fly from tree to tree. The blossoms then turn into nuts. Investigators say Tveretinov, the prime suspect in the thefts, went to work at night, removing the hives when the bees are dormant. One of the biggest single thefts came in January, when more than 700 hives vanished from two orchards north of Sacramento. They were recovered in Fresno, more than 200 miles to the south. In total, Tveretinov is responsible for stealing 2,500 hives and equipment worth \$875,000, investigators say.

He was released on \$10,000 bail after his arrest April 28. A telephone number for him could not be found. It was not clear whether he had an attorney who could comment on the charges. The tip came from a beekeeper who needed a place to store his hives and came across the lot used by Tveretinov. There, the beekeeper recognized hive boxes belonging to a friend of his in Missouri who had fallen victim to theft, said sheriff's Detective Andres Solis. Beekeepers customize their boxes to make them unique, imprinting identification numbers and painting them different colors with their logos.

Investigators showed up at the lot and found Tveretinov at work amid a field of mismatched hive boxes. "It's like a chop shop for beehives," Solis said. "They're scattered all over the place." Investigators asked California beekeeper and almond farmer Ryan Cosyns to help sort

through the case. He said it was obvious that Tveretinov had sloppily painted over the boxes with his own brand and used a grinder to remove identification numbers.

"The average person isn't going to be able to look at a box and realize it was stolen," Cosyns said. "Or they're renting at a price where nobody is asking any questions." Beekeeper Yelena Storojenko of Colusa County, who has now recovered some damaged hives filled with dying bees, estimated her family's business lost \$200,000 in rental income, equipment and queen bees, which are necessary for breeding. Each hive is rented out for \$175. "We didn't get everything back," Storojenko said. "The beehives are in horrible condition."

### 65% of beehives

Meanwhile, a first-time survey by the New Hampshire Beekeepers Association shows the state lost an average of 65 percent of its beehives this winter. The survey covered Oct 1, 2016, through March 31; data collected from 261 sites in 130 towns shows the number of hives dropped from 1,004 to 350, the Concord Monitor reports. Merrimack County reported the highest loss. Beehive loss nationwide has been ongoing for years, a particular concern since bees are important pollinators of food crops and natural ecosystems. A national survey found that beekeepers lost more than 40 percent of their honeybee colonies between April 2014 and April 2015. — Agencies



**LOS ANGELES:** California Attorney General Xavier Becerra (center) answers questions after a news conference. Democrats in California, New York and other states are trying to intervene in a federal lawsuit that threatens to undercut funding for the Affordable Care Act. — AP

# CLINIC PAGE



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Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and African ambassadors cut the cake during the Africa Day ceremony. —Photos by Joseph Shagra



## JARALLAH ATTENDS AFRICA DAY CELEBRATIONS

Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said that Kuwait's foreign policy attaches great importance to the friendly relations with the African countries. "We count on support of our African friends while bidding for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council next month,"

he told reporters while attending Africa Day celebration recently. He affirmed keenness on cementing cooperation with the African countries in all domains capitalizing on the rich resources of the continent.

He recalled that Kuwait hosted the third Arab-African sum-

mit in last November. On the global counter-extremism center, to be opened in Saudi Arabia during US President Donald Trump's visit to the kingdom later this month, he said "Kuwait pins high hopes on the center to combat violent extremism and misleading ideology." "The center reflects the commit-

ment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries, notably the brothers in Saudi Arabia, to combat extremism and terrorism," he added. Africa Day, themed "security, peace, stability and sustainable development," was being celebrated by 30 African diplomatic missions in Kuwait. —KUNA



## ACK WINS KOC'S CEO HSSE AWARD FOR THE SECOND YEAR

The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) is pleased to announce that ACK's project titled as 'ACK Health Day' has been selected as one of the winning projects for the KOC CEO HSSE Award 2017. The ACK Health Day has been considered by KOC's committee as a great initiative in spreading awareness to the people on healthy living, as each Health Day event had a theme of its own in which focused on major health effects. ACK's program had exceeded expectations by including sports activities, stage shows, and prize rewarding and major press releases. ACK was the only College to win in the country in this competition under the category of 'educational sector'. The ACK Health Day initiative was

instigated in 2016 as part of the ongoing commitment by the college towards promotion of Healthy Lifestyles for students, staff, their families and the Kuwait community. ACK's Health Day event is under the umbrella of ACK Healthy Living Committee which is composed of staff and students from different levels of the organization to provide diversified Health and Safety promotional culture building functions. The committee is currently working on two main programs which are the ACK Health Day events and Smoking Awareness Program. Further ACK Health Days with differing themes will continue to be held each semester by the college to ensure ongoing commitment to raising health awareness.

## DR JOHNARTS PRESENTS CARICATURE TO KERALA SPEAKER



Artist Dr Johnarts Kalabhavan presented a caricature to the Speaker of Kerala Legislative Assembly Sreeramakrishnan during KALA Kuwait's mega event 'Mayookham' at Qadsiya Sporting Club auditorium on Friday. Johnarts also presented a caricature to visiting film actor V K Sreeraman who was also present during the occasion. Johnarts has entered the 'Asia Book of Records' for caricature presentation in 49 countries becoming the first Asian artist to possess such a record. Recently he was conferred the Honorary Doctorate Degree, "Doctor of Record Breaking", at the World Records University for 'Most Number of Caricatures Presented on Stage'. He has presented water color caricatures to more than 450 famous personalities including public figures, celebrities, musicians and actors over the last few years.



The International Women Group (IWG) - Kuwait Branch in partnership with the National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) hosted a traditional cultural fashion show recently to celebrate women's local fashion and design. —Photos by Joseph Shagra











G O S S I P



## Lady Gaga's longtime friend dies of cancer

The 'Cure' hitmaker took to her Instagram account on Friday to post a heartfelt tribute to her former assistant Sonja Durham, who she wrote her bonus track 'Grigio Girls' on her album 'Joanne' for, after learning she had lost her long battle. Alongside a photograph of her friend, she wrote: "Watching one of my best friends in the world show unfathomable courage, strength, and positivity while battling cancer has really changed my life. Thank you Sonja for inspiring me and all of us every day with your joy. I love you so much it brings tears to my eyes just to think of all the years we've spent together backstage running the show, taking care of each other. You are one of a kind. I'm so proud of you. And you and Andre, your unbreakable beautiful love is what life is all about. You can see it in this photo. Wanted to share this with the world and show them what true beauty looks like. #grigiogirls #sonjadurham @sonjad7777 I love you girl. I love you so much. (sic)" This isn't the first time the 31-year-old singer has honored her pal as she dedicated an acoustic version of 'Edge of Glory' to Sonja, who was battling stage IV cancer, during her headlining slot at Coachella Valley Music

and Arts Festival in April. She said at the time: "My friend Sonja is very sick and I love her so much and if it's okay with you, I'd like to sing this song for her. "I'm sorry you don't feel well. We all wish you were here with us." Recently, Gaga helped Sonja plan her wedding to her partner Andrew Dubois. She wrote on her blog: "Believe it or not, it was a fight and almost didn't happen. Literally why it was planned and pulled off in two weeks! Yes, two weeks! Now you can do that when you have amazingly talented event friends and an Angel that tell you she is going to throw you your dream wedding and there are no arguments. So I cried and cried and if you can believe it let go of total control (I know crazy right) sent them my Pinterest and just asked when they wanted me to show up!!!! "Honestly, if it wasn't for Gaga and the financial contributions from everyone so far I really do not think I would be here. Let's just say I understand why people give up and die because they do not have the resources that I have been given (sic)."

## Jennifer Aniston and Justin Theroux sue their neighbor



The couple has reportedly asked for \$350,000 and punitive damages in a series of legal documents after a man living nearby allegedly threatened to make life "unpleasant" for them because they refused to shell out \$30,000 on sound-proofing walls while they were doing renovation work on their upstairs apartment in New York. According to TMZ, the 45-year-old actor has accused his neighbor of antagonizing his builders, cutting off the water and electricity to his home in Greenwich Village and trying to damage the couple's reputation by going public with their feud. The neighbor - whose identity is not known - allegedly told Justin in an email that any legal moves he took would "open the door to a broad range of allegations that would become publicly available, and which would not please Justin or his wife." The mystery man took aim at the couple after they kicked off renovation work on their lavish apartment earlier this year and he became sick of the noise. Meanwhile, the screenwriter tied the knot with the 48-year-old actress in August 2015 and recently revealed that being married has made their relationship even better. He said recently: "Marriage makes the small things much smaller and the big things small. You have an ally. It's good to have someone have your back." And while he owns a property in the Big Apple, Justin has admitted he's now settled in Los Angeles - a city he wasn't a fan of when he was growing up. He said: "LA is a terrible place to go as a young actor who's just got nothing. You're, like, tearing tickets for people to see the movie. You're not a part of anything. I got a really good piece of advice early on: Don't ever fly yourself to LA. Only go if you're invited and someone bought you a ticket. And I kind of stuck to that, and it worked."

## SHARON OSBOURNE THINKS SHE NEEDS THERAPY FOR HER TELEVISION ADDICTION

The 'X Factor' judge - who spends the majority of her time in the US - has been forced to take six weeks off work while she recuperates from a painful back injury and, during that time away from the cameras, has developed an obsession with watching the British news channels. She explained: "I can't stop watching the news because of what's been going on in the world. I just have to watch it every day. The political climate is all crazy everywhere. I watch the English news, I have the BBC on and I'll have Sky on. I've been off work for six weeks with a back injury and all I did was watch the bloody news. I swear to you, I need therapy." The 64-year-old TV personality is so fixated on the news that she often lashes out at her husband Ozzy Osbourne - who she married in 1982 - if he talks over the bulletins she's been waiting for. She told the Radio Times: "As soon as he sees the news, that's it. He's a big fan of the news. He talks the whole time, he never shuts up and I have to smack his leg. I'm like: 'Shhhhh, I'm going to miss it, you're talking through the piece I've been waiting for.'" Meanwhile, Sharon hasn't just been binge-watching the news while she's been laid up in bed with her bad back as she's also been re-watching old series of the period drama 'Downton Abbey'.



## Gigi and Bella Hadid's step-mother is more like a friend

Shiva Safai has been with the supermodels' father Mohamed Hadid for four years - engaged for two - but has admitted, although she has a great relationship with them, she doesn't think they view her as a motherly figure because they've got their own mom Yolanda Hadid who they tend to go to when they need advice on life. She explained: "I would say I feel more like someone they know they can always trust as a friend, rather than a stepmother. They have an amazing mother who is always involved in their lives and has the best advice and intentions for them. I am very grateful to be part of a family. I have been welcomed in with so much warmth and love. They know they can count on me any time and day and I'm always there cheering them on from the sidelines. "I'm so proud of their success and the beautiful young women they've become." Mohamed was married to Yolanda, with whom he also has 17-year-old son Anwar, from 1994 until their divorce in 2000 but the pair have remained on good terms and regularly attend fashion events together to support their beautiful daughters. The real estate developer also has two daughters Marielle, 36, and Alana, 31, with his first wife Mary Butter, whom he divorced in 1992, and Shiva has admitted she has a good relationship with both of his ex spouses because family "comes first." Speaking on her new show 'Second Wives Club', she's quoted by the Daily Mirror newspaper as saying: "I have a great relationship with his first and second wife. I never like drama. I don't think there should be a reason not to get along, we all want to make sure family comes first. "We often do Thanks Giving, Christmas and birthdays together. At the end of the day it's all about getting along and we do. They're both lovely ladies and I just don't see any reason why we can't get on."

## Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson flattered that people want him to enter politics

The 45-year-old wrestler-turned-actor admitted in a recent interview that he would consider running for the job in 2020 and people have reacted positively to his comments. He told chat show host Jimmy Fallon: "The surge and the groundswell since then has really been amazing. I got to tell you, I'm so incredibly flattered - there's a national poll that just came out this past week ... that brought together Republicans and Democrats in saying that I would beat Donald Trump if we had an election today to become president. I've really been blown away. It's so flattering." And Dwayne thinks he knows why people are so keen for him to enter politics. He said: "I think it's because a lot of people want to see a different leadership - I'm sorry, not different, but a better leadership today. [They want] more poise, less noise. "I also think that over the years I've become a guy that a lot of people relate to. I get up in the morning at a ridiculous hour and go to work, I spend time with the troops, I take care of my family. I love taking care of people ... I've been blown away. I'm very flattered by it. Three and a half years is a long way away, so we'll see." Speaking previously, the 'Baywatch' star claimed he would be a confident leader of the United States as he would take "responsibility" for all of its citizens. He said: "Personally, I feel that if I were president, poise would be important. Leadership would be important. Taking responsibility for everybody. [If I didn't agree with someone] on something, I wouldn't shut them out. I would actually include them."



## Demi Lovato to release new album in 2017



The 24-year-old singer - who released her 'Confident' record in 2015 - is planning to drop a new LP this year and promises it will be much more "soulful" than her previous efforts. She told Billboard: "I'm releasing an album later this year, so my fans can look forward to that. It's more soulful and I want to go more R&B with it. "I actually want to go a totally different way with my album. I want to go more soulful, so we'll see what that ends up turning out like. I'm still in the process of writing and finding the inspiration behind it, so we'll see." Demi also offered some advice to any of her fans who are lacking self-confidence. She said: "I'm all about female empowerment, and I think anytime you can empower other women to be a stronger, better version of herself, I'm all for it. Don't allow anything to get you down. It's all about being the best version of yourself. Whether you have to do daily affirmations and tell yourself that you're beautiful, you're a rock star or strong. You just have to do it." Meanwhile, it was recently revealed that Demi - who recently celebrated five years of sobriety - will star in her own YouTube documentary, 'I Am: Demi Lovato'. YouTube tweeted: "Singer, writer, humanitarian. Get to know the real @ddlovato in 'I Am: Demi Lovato'. Coming soon, exclusively on YouTube." And Demi responded: "I am so excited for you guys to see my doc when it comes out!"

## Harry Styles ends his week-long residency on 'The Late Late Show'

The 'Sign of the Times' hit maker joined the show's host James Corden in his infamous car to bring the week to a close with a bang. Once in their seats, Harry recalled the time he had appeared on the show with his One Direction band mates. James said: "Last time we did this, you were not alone in the car and now you are. Now you're up front." To which Harry replied: "I was back middle ... I feel like I've got more control over the buttons [this time]." And James added: "I don't know if you're speaking on a different level; if you're saying you've got more control over the buttons and the buttons are something deeper." The pair then went into performing Harry's debut solo track 'Sign Of The Times', which the former One Direction star admitted sometimes makes him feel emotional when he sings it. He said: "It makes me cry performing it sometimes. I find it quite emotional ... in like, a cool way." And Harry isn't the only one who was left crying by his music as he revealed his mother got tearful when she heard his solo music. During the 10 minute sketch, the duo also discussed Harry's bold fashion choices and the pair tried on a string of daring outfits including a black string vest top and a gold lycra t-shirt. After an energetic performance of Outkast's 'Hey Ya!' and a flawless duet of Diana Ross and Lionel Richie's 'Endless Love', James read famous movie lines with Harry, who has also branched into acting following One Direction's split. The duo recited iconic movie scenes from 'Titanic' and 'Notting Hill' and finished with a sing-along to Harry's track 'Kiwi'.



MOVIES



Actor Kyle MacLachlan, right, and David Lynch attend the world premiere of the Showtime limited-event series 'Twin Peaks.'



Madchen Amick, a cast member in 'Twin Peaks,' poses at the premiere of the Showtime series.



Cast member Amy Shiels attends the world premiere of the Showtime limited-event series 'Twin Peaks.'

# Cult series 'Twin Peaks' makes long-awaited return

"Twin Peaks," the quirky TV show turned cult classic that gave way to a new age of television, makes its hotly anticipated return yesterday, nearly three decades after its debut. Little has emerged about the third season's 18 episodes, the first of which will air today evening on the cable network Showtime, which took the series over from ABC, home of the first two seasons.

Even most of the show's actors are in the dark about all the details of the small-town drama's revival-only Kyle MacLachlan, who returns in his role as FBI special agent Dale Cooper, was able to have a single read of the entire script. Although viewers have known since the beginning of the second season who killed Laura Palmer—a high school student whose shocking murder launched the plot—an air of mystery lingers.

Most of the show's original cast members have returned to reprise their characters' roles nearly a quarter-century after the second season wrapped. Director David Lynch, who co-created the early '90s series, also returned to direct the reboot of the cult series, his first major project since he directed the film "Inland Empire" 11 years ago. But no matter how the third season of "Twin Peaks" plays out, the show has already cemented its status as a TV masterpiece.

"David Lynch proved that there wasn't just one way of making television," said Damon Lindelof, creator of the hit TV show "Lost," at a Showtime preview segment. Contemporary to "The Cosby Show" and "Roseanne," "Twin Peaks" emerged as unclassifiable—a series whose narrative style, rhythm and music took a striking departure from standard TV fare toward a more cinematic feel. "You felt like watching a movie, but a movie that went on for hours and hours," Lindelof said.

Neither soap opera nor crime series-but simultaneously a bit of both—the show defied all labels, adding to its recipe for success a pinch of the supernatural. Madchen Amick, who plays the waitress Shelly Johnson, told the magazine Entertainment Weekly that the show "gave the audience what they were craving, which was intelligence and mystery and something different."

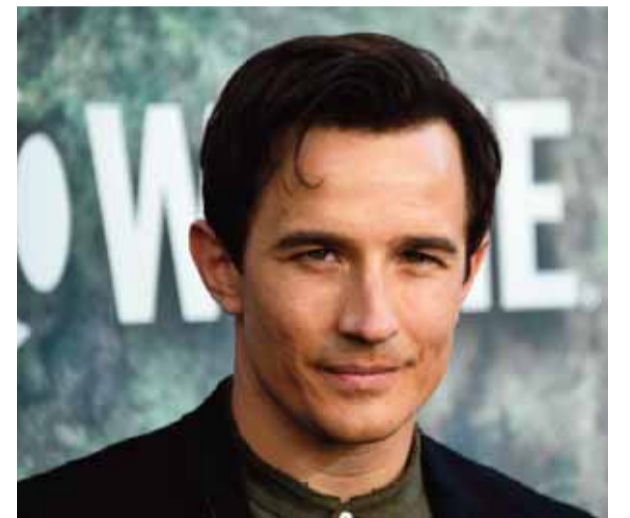
**Cinematic television**

The enigmatic series deliberately left gray areas when traditional television took pains to avoid them. Each episode lasted about an hour, "but it actually necessitated discussion following it," Lindelof said. The show quickly gained a loyal fan base, which has grown decades later thanks to a new generation of devotees who took to binge-watching episodes. For

MacLachlan, "the fans kept the memory alive and they're about to be rewarded." "I hope that they're going to be happy with what we've done."

When the actor went to work on other shows — including the hits "Desperate Housewives" and "Sex and the City" — he said writers would often come to him to sing the praises of "Twin Peaks." "The writers would say to me: 'I didn't really think it was possible to do this, but because of 'Twin Peaks,' suddenly I felt empowered, this is my vision.'" But Gary Edgerton, a television expert at Butler University, said that while the show was in some ways "unlike anything that had been on television before," the influence of shows like "The Sopranos" was "even more significant."

"The idea of cinematic television really found its footing and became much more realized when the emphasis went away from broadcast networks and went into the cable and satellite sector," Edgerton said. There, he said, "audiences were relatively smaller, although still substantial, and the show runners had great ambitions in realizing television as art." "But the question is, would we necessarily have had a Sopranos on television if we didn't have Twin Peaks?" — AFP



Cast member Jesse Johnson attends the world premiere of the Showtime limited-event series 'Twin Peaks,' at the Ace Hotel in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos



Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu

## Virtual reality, gritty thriller bring migrants' plight to Cannes

A helicopter whirs overhead and police take aim from the shadows. You must choose in an instant to join the terrified migrants hiding in the desert or the ones running for their lives. Mexican Oscar-winner Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu has brought a harrowing virtual reality experience set on the US-Mexican border to the Cannes film festival, where the plight of the world's migrants is in the spotlight. The six-minute immersive experience is called "Carne y arena" (Flesh and Sand).

As sirens wail, each live participant-barefoot in sand and wearing VR goggles-experiences the scene alone, joined only by a small band of virtual people hoping to reach America—men, women, children. One screams out in pain and a tragedy looms, but Inarritu mercifully stops short of the worst. "During the past four years in which this project has been growing in my mind, I had the privilege of meeting and interviewing many Mexican and Central American refugees," the maker of "Birdman" and "The Revenant" said.

"Their life stories haunted me, so I invited some of them to collaborate with me in the project." "Carne y arena" is screening at an airport just outside Cannes but back in the sun-kissed

Mediterranean resort town, the refugee issue is also inescapable. Hungarian director Kornel Mundruczo, who stunned Cannes with his Hitchcockian political allegory "White God" in 2014, is in the running for this year's Palme d'Or top prize with "Jupiter's Moon".

The supernatural thriller tells the story of Syrian refugee Aryan who, after being shot several times by a policeman at the border, can levitate at will. When a terrorist plot emerges to bomb the Budapest metro, Aryan gets caught up in a police dragnet as authorities assume the culprits must be migrants.

**My problem is your problem**

Mundruczo admitted the film takes a tough "politically incorrect" look at Hungary's headline refugee policy, without letting the rest of Europe off the hook. "My problem is your problem as well if you are European," he said. "Of course Hungary is an example, and from one perspective, is a bad example. But it can be easily everywhere, so what is our responsibility? What is our answer to (what) is happening over there?"

More than 400,000 migrants passed through

Hungary in 2015 before a highly fortified border fence was built and a deal between the European Union and Turkey and other measures dramatically slowed the influx. Also screening in Cannes is a passion project by veteran British actress Vanessa Redgrave, a long-time activist making her directorial debut at 80. Her documentary "Sea Sorrow" features shots of migrants living in Italy and the now-dismantled Jungle camp in Calais, northern France, interspersed with readings by Ralph Fiennes and Emma Thompson about the human plight of those fleeing war and misery dating back as far as the 17th century.

Redgrave drew on her decades performing William Shakespeare's plays for the film, which takes its own name from "The Tempest". And one of the most keenly awaited contenders at the festival that is still to come — "Happy End" by two-time Palme d'Or winner Michael Haneke — looks at a middle-class family living in Calais who are oblivious to the suffering around them. The Cannes film festival runs until May 28. — AFP

## Imagine Dragons to honor Chris Cornell at Billboard Awards

Imagine Dragons will pay tribute to the late Chris Cornell in words at the Billboard Music Awards today. A spokeswoman for the show's producers, Dick Clark Productions, told The Associated Press on Friday that the rock band will talk about how the Soundgarden and Audioslave singer influenced them before they hit the stage at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. Authorities say Cornell hanged himself early Thursday morning after performing at a concert Wednesday night in Detroit.

Cornell's family said that without toxicology test results completed they don't know what caused his death. Cornell was a leader of the grunge movement with Seattle-based Soundgarden, with whom he gained critical and commercial acclaim. He also found success outside the band with his solo music and the band Temple of the Dog. The 2017 Billboard Music Awards will air live on ABC at 8 pm Eastern/5 pm Pacific. Drake, Miley Cyrus, Cher, Bruno Mars, Ed Sheeran, Celine Dion and others will also perform during the awards show. — AP



In this file photo, Daniel Platzman, from left, Ben McKee, Dan Reynolds, and Daniel Wayne Sermon of Imagine Dragons, winners of the BMI pop award for 'I Bet My Life' arrive at the 64th annual BMI Pop Awards at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AP

## MUSIC &amp; MOVIES

## Hugh Jackman's secret? He didn't know wolverines are real

After playing Wolverine in nine movies, Hugh Jackman arguably knows more about the superhero than anyone. But that wasn't always the case. He recalls researching the animal when he first got the role and being somewhat mistaken about the character. For one thing, he had no idea that a wolverine is a real creature. "I didn't even know there was a wolverine. I literally, embarrassingly did about two weeks of research on wolves."

I was rehearsing for three weeks and I was shooting, so I was kind of on my own. I remember going past an IMAX in Toronto, and there was an IMAX documentary about wolves, and so I thought, "I'll go and see that," Jackman said Wednesday. When they started shooting 2000's "X-Men," director Bryan Singer noticed something wasn't right with Jackman's performance. "He said, 'Are you sort of walking funny, what's going on?' And I said, 'I've

been doing this thing with wolves,' and he goes, 'You know you're not a wolf, right?'" Jackman recalled.

The actor was gently told he was to portray a wolverine, not a wolf. "I said, 'Well, there's no such thing as a wolverine,'" Jackman said. Singer responded: "Go to the zoo, dude! I literally didn't know it existed," Jackman said. A wolverine is a mammal that resembles a small bear but is actually the largest member of the weasel family. The Wolverine that Jackman plays onscreen is a mutant born with super-human senses and the power to heal from almost any wound.

Earlier this year, Jackman marked the character's final performance in "Logan," and is now promoting the film's special treatment "Logan Noir," with a black-and-white version of the film in theaters ahead of the DVD release. While "Logan" takes on a grittier look and feel than the other movies of

the franchise, director James Mangold, who also co-wrote the screenplay, wanted the story to be more sentimental.

"From the very beginning when we set out to make the movie, the one thing we knew is that we wanted to make a movie about family," he said. "Not the kind with a girlfriend or a wife, but the kind where it's forever, and it's your child, or it's your father." "Logan" and "Logan Noir" are currently playing in theaters, and will be available on DVD May 23. — AP

**Hugh Jackman, left, and Dafne Keen pose with their awards for 'Logan' in the press room at the MTV Movie and TV Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. — AP**



Fred Schneider, Cindy Wilson, and Kate Pierson, founding members of The B-52's perform at ACL Live in Austin, Texas. — AFP

## B-52S SINGER MARRIES COUPLE BEFORE SHOW

B-52s singer Kate Pierson had a departure from her pre-show routine as she married two of her fans before the band took the stage. Nathan Garcia, a lifelong fan of the fun-loving New Wave band, eagerly contacted Pierson when he saw The B-52s were playing in his native Austin, Texas. Garcia and his new husband, Benny Vanden Avond, headed backstage Thursday at the Moody Theater where Pierson-ready to perform in a purple dress and scarves-administered their vows.

"I've enjoyed their music for a huge chunk of my life and I thought it would be really fun when I found out that she married people," said Garcia, 47, who books performers for the annual Austin Pride celebration. Sporting matching jackets designed by a friend in a fawn-like pattern, Garcia and VandenAvond added a touch of The B-52s into their vows. They worked in a line from the song "Give Me Back My Man": "I'll give you fish / I'll give you candy / I'll give you everything I have in my hand."

The newlywed couple then went directly to the wedding entertainment of dancing to The B-52s, the group best known for the 1989 hit "Love Shack." Pierson, who has performed other weddings but does not advertise the service, is ordained by the Universal Life Church, a modern denomination whose motto is "do that which is right." It was only the latest merging of nuptials and performance by Garcia, a passionate music fan who said he has 10,000 records or CDs.

He proposed in 2015 during Austin's Fun Fun Fun music festival during a set by Peaches, the electropop singer known for her sexually provocative lyrics, who brought them up to stage as dancers. "Benny had no clue and when he saw me walk out he was like, 'Oh,' because I can dance to anything," he said. But his possible anger turned to delight as Garcia pulled out a ring. Afterward, Peaches fired the festival's "taco cannon." — AP

## Happy? Sad? Sony film gives life to emojis

If emojis were alive, their job would not be easy: called on at all hours to show up on screen happy-faced, with heart-shaped eyes, as mini-pizzas or ... piles of poop. They form the indispensable background to our digital lives. It is almost impossible to imagine a text message without emojis. These thousands of symbols establish the tone to our communications: happy, sad, annoyed, frustrated, ironic. New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) last year recognized their importance, adding them to its collections.

Filmmaker Tony Leondis could not resist the temptation: He has designed a world in which these fantasy figures exist. His "The Emoji Movie," a Sony animation, reaches US theaters in July. "I want to know what the story is behind the phone" where emojis dwell, he told reporters at a round-table discussion attended by AFP. "What is that world? And build from there."

And so was born the city of "Textopolis," located deep in the smartphone of 15-year-old Alex. There, all life revolves around a unique industry: making emojis. Imagine a vast control room, its walls covered with tiny cubicles, each containing one of the fun figures, just waiting for young Alex to employ them in a text.

### Becoming normal

In Leondis's world, the emoji industry works 24 hours a day, in shifts, with each figure ready to jump to the screen at a moment's notice. The work is tedious and allows no change in character: a happy-face emoji must always be happy; same for an angry one. And if an emoji has more than one personality, it is considered a failure of the system. Enter Gene (voiced by T.J. Miller), an emoji born without a filter and having multiple expressions.

Frustrated, Gene embarks on an adventurous effort to become "normal" like other emojis, with the help of his friend "Hi-5"-the "Give me five" hand, voiced by James Corden-and-of hacker Jailbreaker (Ilana Glazer). The protagonists wander through "the cloud" and pass through various cell-phone applications, like Instagram, Spotify and even Candy Crush, where Gene risks being mistaken for a yellow candy and getting crushed as part of the game.

Other voices are provided by Colombian actress Sofia Vergara, as a flamenco dancer, and Jennifer Coolidge, Maya Rudolph, Jake T Austin and Patrick Stewart. Gene, like his father and mother, is supposed to carry on the family tradition



by representing the indifferent emoji "Meh." His family is the supplier of that expression, adding to the pressure on Gene to fall in line. "He not only feels like an outsider, he feels like a failure," says Miller, who took part in the round-table. His adventure is a "last shot at fitting in."

### No longer cool

The film by Leondis, who also directed "Lilo & Stitch 2," has blockbuster potential, according to specialized website Exhibitor Relations: It predicts \$350 million to \$400 million in world ticket sales. The filmmaker explained that the biggest challenge was to create his own design of a cell phone and original emojis not resembling those of any commercial brand. Every illustration was subjected to an almost clinical inspection by the studio's legal department.

The film's writers decided that emojis do not eat or drink. "You're not gonna eat Pizza," quipped Miller. "That's cannibalism." Their scenes of everyday emoji life are full of humor. "So, I told management, I can't work like this. These lights, I'm melting in here," says Ice Cream Cookie in a typical office conversation.

Or... "This is such a lot of..." one employee says, before realizing that he is speaking in front of the excrement emoji (Stewart), who tells him dead-seriously, "No, go ahead, finish that sentence." There is a sort of VIP area where the most popular emojis can gather. A security guard at the door refuses to let Hi-5 enter because he is no longer a member. Alex had traded him in for the clenched fist emoji-cooler, at the moment, in adolescent eyes. — AFP



In this file photo, Amber Heard attends the LA Premiere of 'The Adderall Diaries' in Los Angeles. — AP

## Amber Heard shows off form fitting 'Aquaman' costume

Amber Heard has given the world a glimpse of her look as the underwater alien she plays in the upcoming "Aquaman" film. Heard and "Aquaman" director James Wan shared photos of Heard in character as Aquaman's underwater alien love interest, Mera, on Thursday. Heard sports red hair and a scaly, form-fitting suit in the role. She posted a picture on Twitter with the note, "Meet

Mera." Wan called Heard "exquisite." "Aquaman" stars Jason Momoa as the title character. The cast also includes Nicole Kidman, Willem Dafoe, Dolph Lundgren and Patrick Wilson. Filming is taking place in Australia. It's set for release in December of 2018. — AP



In this file photo, Prince performs at the Billboard Music Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. — AP

## Amandla Stenberg is ready to be a voice for her generation

Eighteen-year-old actress, activist and all-around talent Amandla Stenberg is OK with being considered a voice for her generation. "I kind of accept that responsibility," she said in a recent interview. "I realize that I have this very unique privilege of gaining this attention from a lot of people, whether it's through the internet or through movies, and so I feel like I have no other option than to try to utilize that well, otherwise I feel like it would all be pointless."

Stenberg has gotten attention for her non-binary gender identity, interviewing Gloria Steinem and making a video for her high school's senior class project that went viral, in which she calls out Katy Perry, Miley Cyrus and other stars for appropriating black culture. It's enough to make you forget she played Rue in 2012's "The Hunger Games."

Now Stenberg stars in the new young-adult romance opening Friday, "Everything, Everything." She also recorded a song for the film's soundtrack, then starred in, directed and edited its music video. Stenberg said she wanted to make the movie because it's a whimsical love story with a black girl at its center, yet it has nothing to do with race. "When I was a kid, I wish I could see myself in media in that way, and see myself in media that... wasn't necessarily pointing out or creating a dialogue around my race," she said.

"I wish I could have just seen myself existing

onscreen, so with this film I got to fulfill that desire in a really powerful and incredible way." Getting an opportunity to record one of her favorite songs (Mac DeMarco's "Let My Baby Stay") and make her own music video was an unexpected bonus. "It's probably the most

authentically me thing you can watch, just because I got to control every aspect of it," Stenberg said.

Now that she's gotten a taste of recording and directing, she intends to do more of both, she said. And of course she'll continue acting and writing and speaking out. That outspokenness is partially what drew Tony Award-winning actress Anika Noni Rose to "Everything, Everything." "I think she's extraordinarily smart, forward-thinking and socially conscious," Rose said of Stenberg. Stenberg says activism is a part of her and thus a part of her work, and chances are she may not always get everything right.

"I do think there are times when people assume because I've said some things or have certain mentalities that I know everything and I definitely don't. I'm only 18 and still kind of collecting information about the world by observing it and living in it," she said. "It's important sometimes for people to realize that it's inevitable that I'm going to, in some ways, make mistakes. Or not even make mistakes, but just be someone who's figuring it out." — AP



In this file photo, Amandla Stenberg arrives at WE Day California at the Forum in Inglewood, California. — AP

## Judge confirms Prince's six siblings as heirs to his estate

A judge confirmed Prince's six siblings to be his rightful heirs in a ruling released Friday, bringing them a big step closer to collecting their shares of the music legend's multimillion-dollar estate. Carver County District Judge Kevin Eide formally declared that Prince died without a will and that his heirs are his sister, Tyka Nelson, and five half-siblings - Sharon Nelson, Norrine Nelson, John R. Nelson, Omarr Baker and Alfred Jackson.

The siblings will still have to wait to inherit their shares of Prince's estate, which court filings suggest has an estimated value of about \$200 million, though taxes are expected to consume about half of that. More than 45 people came forward in the wake of Prince's death, claiming to be his wife, children, siblings or other relatives. Some, including a Colorado prison inmate who said he was Prince's son, were ruled out through DNA testing.

Others, such as a woman and girl who claimed to be Prince's niece and grandniece, had their claims rejected as a matter of law. Some of those people filed appeals, and Eide said that if appellate courts send any of the rejected claimants back to him, he will consider them. And until the appeals are resolved, Eide said the siblings won't be able to collect anything without his approval.

And under state law, others who feel they have credible claims of heirship have a year from the judge's order to come forward with

their claims. Eide previously signaled that the six siblings would likely be named Prince's heirs, but he also had said he wouldn't make the declaration until appeals had been decided. Lawyers for the siblings didn't want to wait, though, saying further delays would increase costs to the estate and impede its efficient administration.

The siblings' attorneys didn't immediately reply to phone calls seeking comment Friday. Attorneys for rejected claimants had urged Eide to wait for appeals to be resolved before naming the heirs. Andrew Stoltmann, a lawyer for the woman and girl who say they are Prince's niece and grand-niece, said Friday that he hadn't seen the new ruling but would examine it and determine whether to appeal it.

Prince died April 21, 2016, of an accidental overdose of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid drug 50 times more powerful than heroin. Since his death, Prince's Paisley Park studio complex and home has been turned into a museum and concert venue. His estate has also struck deals to make his albums available by streaming, and next month plans to release a remastered "Purple Rain" album as well as two albums of unreleased music and two concert films. The values of those deals and revenue generated from Paisley Park tours have not been disclosed. — AP

FASHION



**Miranda Kerr** exfoliates her skin with sand when she is on the beach

The 34-year-old model - who was born in Sydney, Australia - has admitted when she is at home she will always take a dip in the sea and when she gets out of the water she will "scrub" her skin with the natural mineral, which is a ritual she has carried out ever since a young age. Speaking to Vogue.com about her beauty hacks, the golden-haired beauty said: "Australians really like that clean, healthy, fresh skin, and slightly underdone tousled hair."

"[We] embrace natural beauty. And I feel like that's reflective of the active lifestyle and being [outdoors]. "When I am home in Australia, I go for a swim in the ocean, and after getting out of that salty water, I'll go on the shoreline and scrub my skin with the sand." And when the fashion icon - who has six-year-old son Flynn with her former partner Orlando Bloom - is not near the salty ocean she will run a bath filled with baking soda and sea salt in a bid to cleanse her body of any toxins, which she claims helps cure any jet lag too.

Speaking about her DIY skincare program, she said: "Another thing I do is take a bath. I make it super hot and I put a pound of baking soda and a pound of sea salt and that draws [the toxins] out of your body." Miranda - who is set to launch her own skincare range Kora Organics this week - will "never" leave her home without her Noni Glow Face Oil, which helps to keep her flawless complexion hydrated. She said: "I never travel without it-it's the best thing to keep my skin hydrated." It's a super easy and quick way to nourish my skin."

**Susan Sarandon** believes staying curious has kept her looking young

The 70-year-old actress is "shocked" she has reached the milestone, which she has described as a "strange moment" in her life, and she has claimed the "secret" to having younger-looking skin is "staying engaged", being inquisitive and to have a "good time" without smoking. The flame-haired beauty told Vogue.co.uk: "I'm shocked to be 70 myself! I keep thinking I'm younger, and I feel that inside! It was kind of a strange moment, that milestone."

"The secret - I mean, honestly, I think staying engaged and staying curious and having a good time is really a lot of it. And not smoking is really important." The "Stepmom" star also think staying hydrated and avoiding anything too extreme has benefitted her complexion, as well as genetics. She added: "I think that staying hydrated and not doing anything too extreme, too... Also I'm not really a drinker. I think a little bit of wine in moderation is probably good, but I think really if you drink heavily it's not great. But I guess good genes. I thank my mother."

The L'Oreal spokesperson regularly asks the cosmetics company to send her new products to sample, although she relies on the brand's Age Perfect Golden Age Soin Jour Rose moisturizer. She said: "For me a lot of it is all about moisturizing. The new L'Oréal Paris moisturizer - Age Perfect Golden Age Soin Jour Rose - is so luxurious. I'm really fond of that. As you get older the key is that it really penetrates but isn't greasy." That's a great advantage of working with L'Oreal, to be able to see things when they first come out. I always ask them to send new things my way. A lot of the lipsticks are really beautiful, really fun colors. I love the one that I've been wearing here in Cannes."



**Kaia Gerber** uses the term 'supermodel' a bit lightly

The 15-year-old catwalk icon has admitted she tries not to throw the term around freely to anyone involved in the fashion industry because she has acknowledged that her 51-year-old mother Cindy Crawford and fellow supermodels in the 90s including Claudia Schiffer and Naomi Campbell were a "popular" group of fashion muses who were "all individual".

Speaking to Byrdie beauty, the golden haired beauty said: "I think supermodel is a term used a bit lightly now, but back in the '90s, it was my mom, Claudia, Naomi, Linda, Christy - this whole group of girls that everyone wanted to be just like. They did a lot of work together, but they were all individual, which I really liked about them. No two of them looked the same. "Each girl represented a different person that one girl could relate to, so if you couldn't relate to my mom, you could relate to Christy or to Linda or to Claudia. I think it was cool for young girls to have all those different role models."

And Kaia has openly admitted to admiring her parent and the idols she worked with. She added: "And I look up to all of them, the image they've created for themselves, this group of really strong, powerful women. I think that is actually starting to come back with this new group of models. "I've always been really into the '90s. I always love going back and looking at photos of my mom when she was closer to my age. You can't deny that we have similarities."

"In my eyes, she's the coolest, nicest person in the world. And I understand that she's 'my mom,' but we've actually become really good friends. As I get older, we get closer, so I haven't really experienced that teenage angst against my parents, which I'm glad about." And Kaia - who is the face of Marc Jacobs' Daisy fragrance - has "always" strived to be like Cindy.

She explained: "And I've always tried to be more like her. I've always looked up to her in the way that she hasn't let anything in the business affect her." However, Kaia feels she is a "40-year-old woman in a child's body" because she "always hangs out" with Cindy and her friends. She said: "I've literally always been a 40-year-old woman in a child's body. From when I was five, I would always hang out with my parents and their friends, so I get along with 50-year-olds perfectly. All of my friends have always been older than me."



Models display creation during Bali Fashion Trend 2018 in Seminyak, near Denpasar on Indonesia's resort island of Bali. — AFP photos



Pippa Middleton, (center) poses for a photograph with her new husband James Matthews.

## From bridesmaid to bride for Prince William's sister-in-law Pippa



Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, left, stands with her daughter Britain's princess Charlotte, and the other bridesmaids and pageboys.

**A**fter turning heads at her sister Kate's wedding to Prince William, Pippa Middleton was yesterday graduating from bridesmaid to bride at what the British media were dubbing the society wedding of the decade. The 33-year-old Pippa made global headlines with a figure-hugging outfit when Kate, now the Duchess of Cambridge, married William, second in line to the throne, in 2011.

Yesterday, she was on her way to exchange vows with wealthy financier James Matthews, 41, at a lavish wedding where William and Kate's young children, Prince George and Princess Charlotte, are expected to play a starring role. The ceremony is taking place at St Mark's Church in Englefield, a quiet village in the Berkshire countryside west of London, near the Middleton family home.

The event will reportedly feature a flypast by a World War II-era Spitfire plane and a party afterwards in a £100,000 (\$130,000, 115,000 euro) glass marquee. The presence of senior royals means security is expected to

be tight, and no-fly zones banning aircraft including drones have been imposed around the area. William and Kate's three-year-old son Prince George-Queen Elizabeth II's great-grandson and third in line to the throne, was to be a page boy.

Princess Charlotte, two, will be a bridesmaid. William's younger brother Prince Harry is also expected to attend the wedding, likely with his US actress girlfriend Meghan Markle. Harry's love life is a source of much speculation, prompting him last year to issue a rare warning to the media not to harass Markle.

### Starting global recognition

Pippa Middleton rocketed into the public eye at her sister's wedding, which had an estimated worldwide television audience of two billion. Pictures of her standing behind the royal bride in a white Alexander McQueen maid of honor's dress filled newspapers for weeks afterwards. "It is a bit startling to achieve global recognition (if that's the

right word) before the age of 30 on account of your sister, your brother-in-law and your bottom," she once wrote.

She is the second of three Middleton children, a year younger than Kate and four years older than businessman James. A socialite on London's posh party circuit, she is a regular guest in the royal box at the Wimbledon tennis championships. She became engaged to Matthews, a former professional racing driver and heir to the Scottish title of Laird of Glen Affric, on July 17 last year.

Middleton graduated from Edinburgh University with an English literature degree, before working part-time for her parents' party paraphernalia business. She has published two books—a 2012 guide to party planning that was widely mocked for offering glaringly obvious advice, and a healthy recipes charity book. She also had a column for a supermarket magazine. — AFP



Michael Middleton, left, walks with his daughter Pippa Middleton, as they arrive for her wedding to James Matthews at St Mark's Church in Englefield, west of London.



Pippa Middleton and her new husband James Matthews leave St Mark's Church in Englefield, west of London, following their wedding ceremony.



Pippa Middleton, sister of Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, arrives for her wedding to James Matthews at St Mark's Church in Englefield, west of London. — AFP photos